

A vision in glass: Norfolk's planned art- themed hotel

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Thé N. Pham | The Virginian-Pilot
The Royster Building at 201 Granby St. in Norfolk



Courtesy Provenance Hotels
The lobby and front desk of the glass-art-themed Hotel Murano in Tacoma, Wash.



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The lobby and front desk of the glass-art-themed Hotel Murano in

Tacoma, Wash.

While building a modern luxury hotel, the two also want to preserve – and restore – the historic feel of the 104-year-old building.

For a start, they plan to remove a false ceiling in the lobby that hides an ornate, carved ceiling.

“Bringing that building back to life from a historical perspective is really exciting for us,” Chris Perry said.

Stiffler said the building is the right size for a boutique hotel, and there’s nothing else like it around. The target market, he said, will be Generation Xers and millennials.

“What that’s code for is disposable income and a desire for travel,” Stiffler said.

He and Perry want to capture travelers who don’t want the big-hotel experience and might otherwise find a place to stay through Airbnb.

The hotel would have a permanent art collection and rotating exhibits that would include local artists. Some of it would come from Doug and Pat Perry, who started collecting glass art about 15 years ago and have 50 to 60 pieces.

They’re also commissioning Dutch artist Peter Bremers to create what Doug Perry called an “iconic” art piece for the hotel.

Bremers, who met Doug and Pat Perry about six years ago

when they bought one of his pieces, visited Norfolk this week to look at the Royster Building.

He said the Perrys approached him a few weeks ago, and he's still thinking of ideas. But he wants the artwork to remind people of childhood and have "an imagery that's going to put a smile on your face."

Chris Perry and Stiffler met with Marriott officials Monday and plan to hire a branding expert. Besides the name – "The Royster" is a candidate – many other details remain to be worked out.

The 21c hotels, in Louisville and elsewhere, have glass penguins as signature art. So will the Norfolk hotel have, say, glass mermaids?

"Who knows?" Chris Perry said with a smile.

Figuring it all out, he said, is part of the fun.