

Guideposts and glass “bread crumbs” could be coming to Norfolk's NEON district

By Eric Hartley
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NEON WAYFINDING

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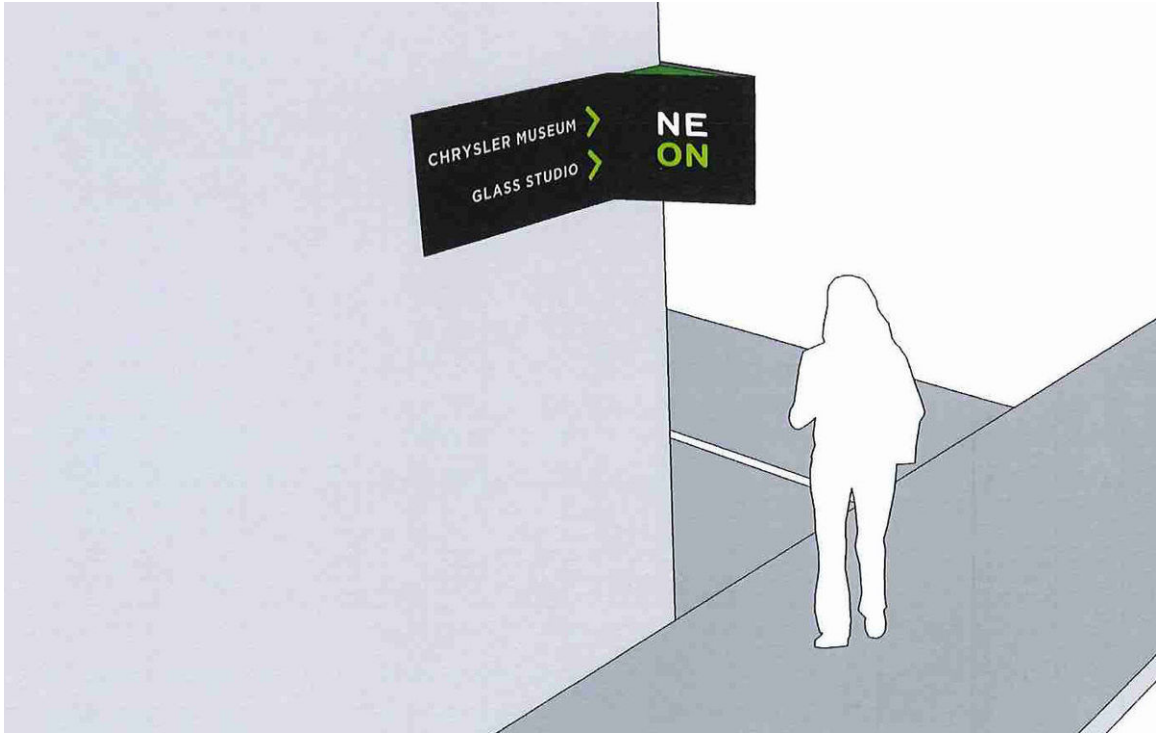
SIGN TYPE D - Revolving Neon Cube

Location: Greyhound Bus Station at the corner of Granby and Brambleton (clean, prime, and paint white sculptural base, install new LED neon green down-lights)



Courtesy of the city of Norfolk

This is a rendering of a proposed sign to mark Norfolk's NEON arts district, on the corner of Brambleton Avenue and Granby Street at the Greyhound station.



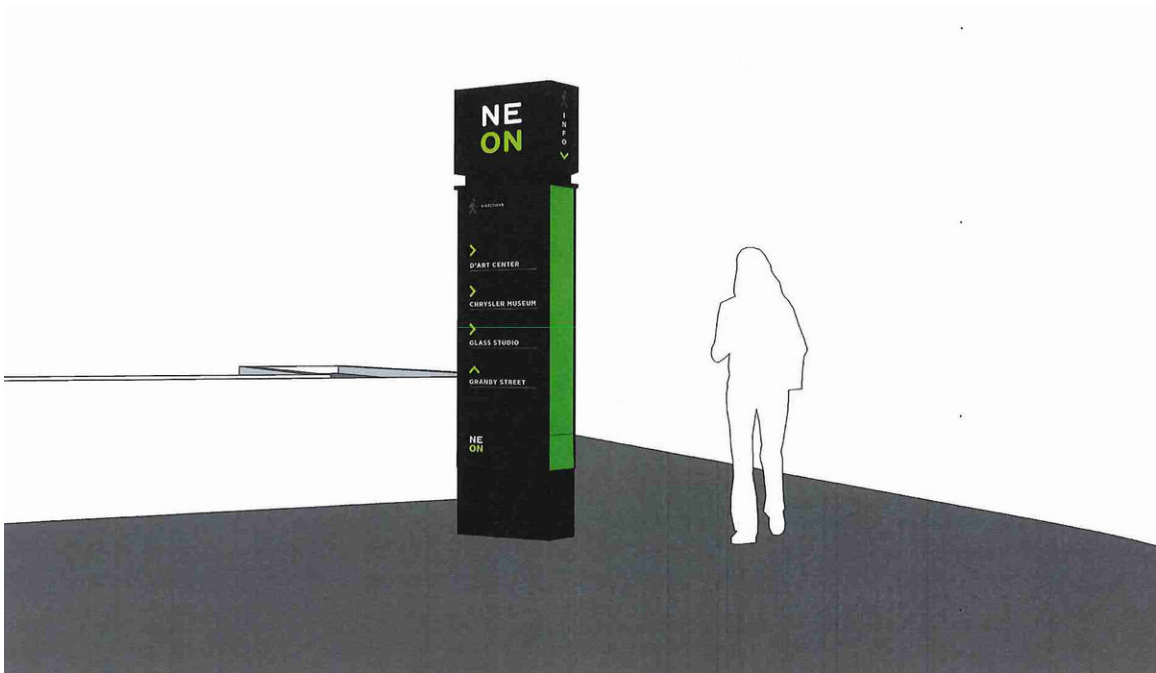
Courtesy of the city of Norfolk

This is a rendering of one style of sign proposed to guide people around Norfolk's NEON arts district.



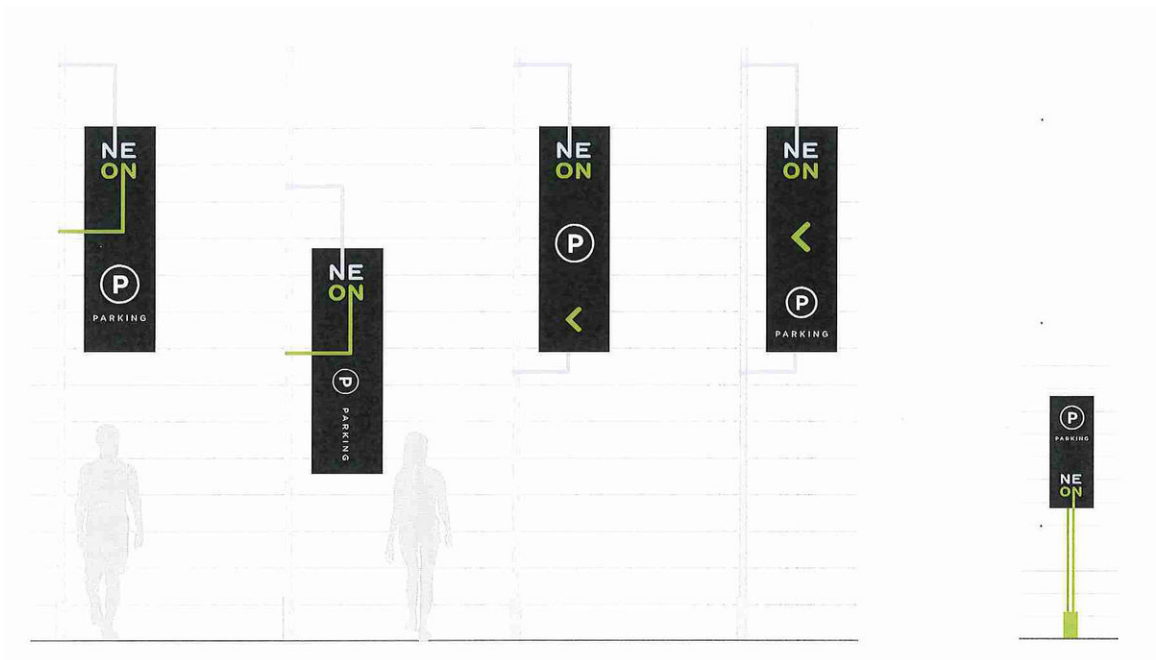
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NORFOLK

Today, you can visit the Chrysler Museum without realizing it's part of an arts

district, and you can stroll along Granby Street ignorant of the wealth of art a short walk west.

That could change under a plan that envisions new signs and a colorful glass-art walking path through the district.

The goal is to create a unique visitor's map of a growing area that's also known as the NEON, for New Energy Of Norfolk.

"We're trying to design a system that gets people cross-pollinating," said Mel Price, whose firm, Work Program Architects, has been developing the plans along with Sway Creative Labs.

A centerpiece: 200 6-inch colored glass discs made by artists at the Chrysler's Perry Glass Studio. They'll be put in a slip-resistant mold and placed along the sidewalks on Grace Street and Olney Road as "bread crumbs" through the arts district.

"They'll kind of sparkle and lead people along the way," Price said. The path and signs will direct pedestrians between Granby Street, the d'Art Center and the Chrysler and its glass studio.

Part of the "wayfinding" system's objective is to help visitors who don't know the NEON exists, aren't sure where to park, can't figure out how to get around – or maybe all of the above.

The plan for the first phase could still change. It needs to be approved by the city's Architectural Review Board, which will [hear a presentation Monday](#), and later the Planning Commission.

Work on the plans started in spring 2016. The first phase is scheduled to be in place before a [Glass Art Society conference at the Chrysler](#) June 1 to 3 that is expected to draw almost 2,000 people, said Rachel McCall, special projects manager for the Downtown Norfolk Council.

Early plans changed after input from business and property owners, artists, residents and city officials.

At one point, the proposal included an extensive network of signs. Some ideas were whimsical: giant microphones, forks, paintbrushes and parking meters to lead people toward live entertainment, food, art and parking.

But collaborators worried about "overpromising" in the young district or making the streets look cluttered. Others objected to signs that pointed people toward

private businesses.

So for now, there will be just a handful of signs along the sidewalk, along with the glass bread crumbs and new parking signs to let people know they can leave their cars at the Chrysler, the Harrison Opera House and The Plot on Granby Street.

“It was very important to our committee for the signage to be creative and beautiful and also work with local artists and fabricators,” McCall said in an email.

To invite people into the arts district, the plan proposes a revolving illuminated cube spelling out NEON at Granby Street and Brambleton Avenue.

It would replace a Greyhound sign that sits atop a white saucer at the corner.

And over time, the plan could expand and change as the NEON grows.

“We’re starting really small and very artistic,” Price said.

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