

# Downtown Norfolk Council's Vibrant Spaces program receives 97 applications

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The Downtown Norfolk Council's Vibrant Spaces program, which the council hopes will inspire current and future business owners to bring uniquely urban storefronts to the streets of downtown Norfolk, has received 97 submissions.

That number is more than triple the anticipated amount of submissions.

The program launched May 20, and asked interested current and potential businesses to submit online proposals outlining ideas to help bring vibrant and unique spaces to the downtown Norfolk area.

More than 100 people came to the open house session on June 13. The application deadline ended July 12.

The project is two-pronged: One part will help make existing businesses more vibrant, and the other will help create vibrant businesses in empty locations.

As part of the catalyst program, the Downtown Norfolk Council will match up to \$10,000 for businesses to spruce up their existing spaces.

The council also will offer \$20,000 in capital and half of market rent for two years to six entrepreneurs who submit the best business plan.

The money was raised by the Downtown Norfolk Council from downtown stakeholders, and five property owners agreed to lease their space at a discounted price.

A selection committee comprised of people with interests in downtown is reviewing submissions and will choose the winners based on the business ideas that most effectively align with goals of the program.

"This is another great step forward for Downtown," said Drew Ungvarsky, committee chair in a news release. "These new businesses and enhancements to existing businesses will further define Downtown's unique qualities. We are incredibly pleased with the overwhelming response we've received and the quality of the applicants."

All applicants will be notified in early September. After being notified, winners will have three weeks to negotiate leases with landlords. A special public notification will be scheduled during the month of September.

