

# Prince Ink moving from Phoebus to Norfolk



The Prince Ink Co. plans to move from Phoebus to downtown Norfolk next year. (Submitted photo)



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Downtown Norfolk is luring Prince Ink from Phoebus in Vibrant Spaces program

Downtown Norfolk is luring The Prince Ink Co. from Phoebus.

The small screen printing business was offered \$20,000 and half off rent for two years as part of the Downtown Norfolk Council's Vibrant Spaces grant program. The program is designed to enliven downtown Norfolk with unique street-level businesses. Prince Ink plans to move to 433 Granby St. as one of three new business winners announced by the council earlier in December.

"We plan on making a splash," said Matt Wallace, who runs Prince Ink with his brother Dustin Wallace.

While the business is moving into roughly the same size 2,500-square-foot space as its Phoebus spot at 120 E. Mellen St., it is expanding services and enhancing its retail presence, Matt Wallace said. The business is shooting for an early spring opening in Norfolk.

The store will feature products made not only by Prince Ink but also from clients both locally and from across the country, he said. The idea is to offer customers unique products that showcase craftsmanship. For instance, he said the shop plans to carry playing cards made by a Las Vegas company Prince Ink made shirts for.

Additionally, the company plans to hire an operator to use the 100-year-old letterpress machine that's been on display in Prince Ink's front window in Phoebus for the past year and a half to print items such as stationery, invitations or business cards, Wallace said.

"We're going to take the time to make something special," he said. "As soon as you see it or touch it, you instantly know it's quality."

Passersby and visitors will be able to see the letterpress printing in action in the front window, he said. Inside, patrons can also see how the screen printing process works through a wall of reclaimed windows and partition.



The Prince Ink Co. plans to relocate from 120 E. Mellen St. in Phoebus to downtown Norfolk to enhance its retail presence. (Anthony Pakingan/Apak Media)

"When you see somebody making the shirt, you appreciate it more," Wallace said.

To that end, Prince Ink plans on working with clients to host workshops or demonstrations to tie into the movement that's growing in the Norfolk arts district nearby.

Prince Ink, currently a three-man team, anticipates more foot traffic in downtown Norfolk, and so may need to add help in the retail area, Wallace said. In addition to a letterpress machine operator, Prince Ink may eventually hire on a graphic designer, he said.

The Wallace brothers first started the business as a full-service design and print studio called Fairwell Design in 2009 before becoming overworked. So, in 2011, the business rebranded as The Prince Ink Co. focusing on what they did best: screen printing. Prince Ink moved to Phoebus in February 2012.

"With the new space, I feel like it's time for us to evolve the brand again," Wallace said.

The move comes as a loss for Phoebus, which has been trying to grow its arts and creative business scene. In October, the Hampton City Council approved designating downtown Hampton and Phoebus as part of an arts and cultural district, which can help arts-based businesses access fee waivers and grants. The district takes effect Jan. 1.

According to a release from the Downtown Norfolk Council, other new business winners of the Vibrant Spaces program include:

- Lamia's Crepes at 401 Granby St.,
- Muddy Paws Downtown, a pet supplies shop at 400 Granby St.

The Brick Anchor Brew-House at 241 Granby St., Work-Release, an event venue and art gallery at 759 Granby St., and The Hurrah Players at 112 W. Wilson Ave. will participate in the matching grant program to improve their facades and street presence, the council said.

For more information on the company, go to [PrinceInk.com](http://PrinceInk.com) or find updates via [princeinkco](https://www.instagram.com/princeinkco) on Instagram. For information on the Downtown Norfolk Council, go to [downtownnorfolk.org](http://downtownnorfolk.org).

*Bozick can be reached at 757-247-4741. Sign up for a free weekday business news email at [TidewaterBiz.com](http://TidewaterBiz.com).*