

# HAMPTON VA

## NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

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## City takes first steps towards transforming Armory

**March 4, 2016** – City officials have taken the first step towards transforming the 80-year-old Hampton Armory on North King Street into a craft brewery and entertainment venue called “The Vanguard.”

A development company formed by partners in Norfolk-based Spacemakers Inc. — a general contracting company with years of experience across Hampton Roads, including the recent construction of breweries in Norfolk, Virginia Beach and Newport News — has submitted plans that would include separate areas for the brewery, a distillery, a restaurant and live entertainment venue.

John Randal Thomas, managing member of the new developer – called 504-520 N. King St. – said he went to a December walk-through of the Armory thinking he might find someone looking for a contractor. An hour later he left with his own plans for the property.

“Hampton has a real appeal for me,” said Thomas, who has been in the area for some 30 years. “I saw an opportunity to create something that I enjoy.” Thomas said he and his partner, Bjorn Marshall, plan to maintain the historic nature of the Armory while building what they hope will become a premier destination in the city.

“I am very excited to see one of our historic buildings take on a new life,” said Mayor George Wallace. “This project will be a destination asset in our diverse downtown.”

The developer’s proposal “detailed a unique venue that will complement the growing food and arts scene downtown,” said Leonard Sledge, Hampton’s director of Economic Development. The combined experience of the new development team and their partners was also very compelling, Sledge said.

“The Downtown Hampton Development Partnership is excited to have another solid project in downtown,” said Jimmy Cerracchio, executive director of the Partnership. “We need more attractions in downtown Hampton and this project will anchor more retail and residential development. It will be a great addition to the current restaurants and nightlife in downtown.”

The new developer was one of two companies that responded to the city's "request for proposals" late last year. The request sought an experienced operator or developer who would reuse the 14,000 square foot building as a craft brewery, distillery, or live entertainment venue.

Proposals were reviewed by a committee that included representatives from the city's Planning and Economic Development departments, the city attorney's office, the city manager's office, and the city's Procurement office. Hampton officials said the developer's proposal was selected because it most closely aligned with recommendations found in the Downtown Hampton Master Plan.

The developer received an "intent to award" letter from the city this week. After a 10-day waiting period, that letter converts to a bid award and plans for the development project and sale of the building will be finalized.

Built in 1936, the distinctive armory building is located a short distance from the new District Court building and just a few blocks from downtown.

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