

MEDIA ADVISORY

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155 South Bradford Street
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Unlock the Block Launches in Downtown Dover

Second round of successful small business initiative expands for round two.

DOVER, DE (September 16, 2019) The Downtown Dover Partnership, NCALL and a full team of resource partners comprising the “Unlock the Block team” are pleased to launch the second round of the program on September 16th on Loockerman Street in the heart of Dover’s central business district. Unlock the Block encourages economic vitality, facilitates re-development of first-floor commercial properties, and contributes to a vibrant commercial district in downtown Dover by securing owners of retail and professional goods and service businesses that have the capacity to serve/draw local and regional customers alike. The initiative originated from NCALL’s Restoring Central Dover Economic Development Working Group and targeted applicants are successful, established business owners that wish to expand.

As a result of the first round of Unlock the Block in 2018, Monique Walker, owner of Sweets & Treats, recently opened her bakery at 147 S. Governors Ave. Previously a very successful operator of a Christiana Mall kiosk, Ms. Walker sold out of inventory most weekends and was ready to not only expand to a brick and mortar, but also into event planning. Monique continues to operate at the Capital City Farmers Market on Wednesday’s while running her store Tuesday through Saturday.

“Successful outcomes in recruiting new businesses, fitting out spaces, getting finances in order and launching a successful opening take time,” said Judy Diogo, President of the Central Delaware Chamber of Commerce and co-chair of the working group. “One big advantage is that the resource team that comprises Unlock the Block effectively becomes a ‘single point of contact’ whereby one-on-one help is available at each juncture of the process.” In addition to the Downtown Dover Partnership and NCALL, partners in this initiative include City of Dover, Central Delaware Chamber of Commerce, TruAccess Capital (formerly First State Community Loan Fund), Delaware Division of Small Business and the Small Business Development Center.

This year, the team not only seeks to recruit at least one new business to the business district but has expanded the program to assisting current downtown Dover businesses that plan to expand substantially in footprint, inventory, or customer base by March of 2020. “It is important to first support the businesses that have already made an investment in downtown and are operating successfully,” said DDP Executive Director Diane Laird and co-chair of the working group. “These business owners already have a proven track record and we’d like to see them become even more profitable through additional square footage to accommodate more inventory or expanded product lines to diversify their customer base.”

Business owner applicants that best exhibit capacity to be successfully located in or expand within one of the properties will advance to an opportunity to “pitch” their concept. Selected business owners will receive a package of incentives customized to their needs. The package will be determined on a case by case basis and may include a combination of technical services, monetary reimbursements, or other incentives, though not necessarily each. Examples could include advertising/marketing or accounting assistance; building infrastructure, cosmetic enhancements, or business signage; essential equipment; web site design; and may include a Chamber of Commerce one-year membership and application fees waived by TruAccess Capital with possible expediting of loan process.

Targeted businesses include but are not limited to women’s clothing, fitness-related, healthy lifestyle such as frozen fruit bowls, smoothies, cooking and gourmet shop (cheeses, oils), a wine shop, and florist. Four properties are currently in the portfolio of available spaces in downtown located on Loockerman Street, South Bradford, and South Street Alley. They can be viewed at the project website: DowntownDoverPartnership.com.

Deadline for entries is October 18th. Target date to announce selectees is the end of November.

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Restoring Central Dover is an initiative of NCALL and offer a multitude of strategies for a strong central Dover community. Visit NCALL.org

The Downtown Dover Partnership is committed to driving an improved quality of life for the residents and visitors of Dover, Delaware, through collective collaboration, economic development and promotion of downtown Dover’s unique historic properties. Call 302-678-2940 or visit: DowntownDoverPartnership.com