

Downtown Norfolk's First Fridays party coming in August, extended to 16 blocks

By SONIA RAO

THE VIRGINIAN-PILOT I

JUL 07, 2021 AT 2:30 PM



A crowd cheers on Granby Street in Norfolk during the First Fridays street festival on Friday, April 7, 2017. (Steve Earley)

Downtown Norfolk's First Fridays, a block party with live entertainment, is expanding. First Fridays will now be held across 16 blocks from Granby Street to Main Street and from Bute Street extending east to Monticello Avenue and west to Boush Street, the Downtown Norfolk Council announced Wednesday. Previously, the event was held on just three blocks.

This is the first event in the region to use a new Virginia ABC local special event license, and the second one in Virginia.

This means people can take alcoholic beverages purchased at participating bars and restaurants out of the restaurants, as long as they remain within the 16-block bubble. Access points will be controlled with Downtown Norfolk Council Staff, volunteers and off-duty police/sheriff officers. Consumption of alcohol is not permitted outside of the 16-block event bubble.

“You can really explore downtown, the whole 16 blocks of it, with your drink in hand,” Downtown Norfolk Council Director of Marketing & Communications Jessica Kliner said. “I could walk from Saltine at The Main or Hell’s Kitchen with a drink in my hand, all the way down Granby Street.”

She said this allows people attending to have more choices for what they want to drink and eat. Before, there was only a small selection of beer and wine sold.

“Now you go into businesses that could be having a margarita special, or slushies, or whatever they may do,” Kliner said.

It’s also a way to support more local businesses downtown. Kevin Blair, owner of Hell’s Kitchen on Granby Street, said at prior First Fridays, bars and restaurants lost potential revenue.

“To have the opportunity to sell the alcohol to the guests right downtown in addition to the food, it’s an added bonus,” he said. “It’s a fantastic opportunity for us.”

The first event will be Aug. 6 from 5 to 8:30 p.m.