



Going Green in the City

LOCATED IN THE CENTER OF A NEWLY REVITALIZED NORFOLK, VA., HISTORIC DISTRICT, THE GYM DOWNTOWN IS TAKING A FRESH APPROACH TO CUSTOMER SERVICE—AND GETTING RESULTS!

BOBBY WRIGHT OPENED THE GYM DOWNTOWN, A full-service facility on the second and third floors of an old building in the Granby Historic District of downtown Norfolk, in 2002 as part of an effort to revitalize the neighborhood. Previously, there were very few tenants in this older part of the city, and Wright knew a fitness club would help create traffic on the street.

Today, The Gym Downtown is a cornerstone of the renaissance that has taken place here and is surrounded by a variety of thriving retail stores, clubs, restaurants and residents. "From the beginning, the club invigorated our block from early in the morning until late at night, and now it also provides good traffic for first-floor tenants," Wright says.

Although it's a great location, according to Wright, the biggest challenge the club faced upon opening was increasing exposure. "Since we are located in a mixed-use building, we don't have first-floor street frontage like many clubs," he says. "To overcome this, we do a large amount of grass-roots marketing; we regularly hand out flyers and free passes on the sidewalk and remain actively involved in the local business community and civic organizations." The club has also implemented a rewards program that allows members to save money while shopping at more than 30 other local businesses.

Recently, The Gym Downtown also became the 2009 winner of the *Norfolk Clean Business Award*, gaining even more attention for its efforts to go green. Many of the changes the club made to receive this honor were surprisingly simple, and included asking members to

take shorter showers, turning off lights in unused areas, doing laundry only when a full load accumulates, installing recycling bins in every workout room and keeping the thermostat at a moderate setting year-round.

For the last three years, the club has also utilized Eclipse curtains in the cardio room and aerobics studio. According to Wright, they are proven to block out 99 percent of the sun's heat and can

save up to 25 percent on electrical cooling costs. In addition, most of The Gym Downtown's cardio machines are not connected to a power source, but rather they activate only when a user sets the machine in motion. Lastly, with posters printed on recycled paper, the club announced to members that it has dispensed with the use of toxic, chemical cleaners and has subscribed to a system of non-toxic, enzyme-based cleaners produced by WowGreen. "We also publicized this to our members in our monthly newsletter because we wanted them to understand what we were doing and share our pride in our 'green' efforts," says Wright.

All of this has ultimately paid off, allowing The Gym Downtown to grow and thrive despite the fact that some of the largest fitness chains in America are nearby. Wright says he made a commitment upon opening to never allow personal service to slide, and the club has continued to live up to this promise by checking periodically with *all* members—either by phone, e-mail or in person—to make sure everyone is getting the most out of membership.

"We have a great location, and we have passionate, caring and encouraging staff to keep members excited and energized about their workouts," Wright says. "And another key to our success has been our ability to attract quality members, who in turn care about each other." As a result, Wright says there is quite a bit of networking that takes place at The Gym Downtown, giving even more value to the cost of membership. "We are proud to be recognized as a 'green' business, and to be part of the a new sense of community downtown, making it a place where people want to live and play, not just work," he says. -CS

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE GYM DOWNTOWN, GO TO WWW.GYMDOWNTOWN.COM OR CALL 757.321.4863.



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