

## **MEMshop to support longer lasting 'pop-up' retail on Broad Avenue**

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Memphis' pop-up retail phenomenon progresses next week to a pop-up-and-stay tool for neighborhood revitalization.

MEMshop reappears April 19 for Historic Broad Avenue Art District's Spring Art Walk, with three small businesses to fill vacant or under-used commercial space.

But this time the businesses will stay in place for up to six months — or possibly permanently — instead of packing up after a day-long event or three weeks of holiday shopping.

The longer-lasting MEMshop not only demonstrates what's possible for new or start-up businesses, "it gives us an opportunity to have a few new businesses move in and add to our retail and daily-open shops," said David Wayne Brown, president of the Historic Broad Avenue Business Association.

Opening at 2535 Broad will be Five In One Social Club, at 2563 Broad will be NJ Woods Gallery & Design, and at 2593 Broad will be My Heavenly Creations.

"We've never had retail or storefront space," said Alice Laskey-Castle, who owns with her husband, Michael Andrews, the Five In One Social Club. Their enterprise includes making art, selling local art, teaching arts and crafts, and hosting a social club. "We're very excited about street traffic."

Folk-art painter Nancy Jane Woods and her daughter Khara Woods, who provides graphic design and website services, have been working together out of their home. The larger space "will free me up to create larger pieces," said Nancy Jane, a full-time artist for 12 years. "I'll be able to experiment with other art tools, different media."

Khara seeks the exposure of a storefront for her business, saying, "I think having space will lend the business more credibility and professionalism."

Shalene McLaughlin and husband Jay McLaughlin's My Heavenly Creations makes soaps, candles, bath salts, lip gloss, lotions and more, and also teaches how to make them. They've been working out of their Olive Branch home kitchen the past year.

The business plan and 12-month projection plan the Mayor's Innovation Delivery Team helped them create "is helpful," Shalene said. "Things we didn't think about at first."

They were the three businesses chosen out of 33 applying to participate in the latest MEMshop.

The Mayor's Innovation Delivery Team, funded by a \$4.8 million Bloomberg Philanthropies grant, will offer the pop-up businesses steeply discounted rent and 40 hours each of marketing and planning support.

For their part, the landlords receive either rent or free renovation to their spaces.

The MEMshop goals are to reduce the commercial vacancy rate, support existing businesses and help grow new businesses.

The Broad Avenue business district helped build momentum for MEMshop in fall 2010 with its catalytic New Face for An Old Broad. For a weekend, the grassroots event filled empty commercial space with pop-up businesses and used temporary paint to make the district more pedestrian and cycling friendly. Volunteers striped extra on-street parking and bike lanes.

That event has been credited with drawing new businesses and new investors to Broad, and helping to make permanent on-street parking and bike lanes.

Pop-up businesses reappeared last fall through a MEMfix event at the commercially distressed Crosstown business district, and in December for three weeks when temporary businesses helped fill much of Overton Square.

A second MEMfix — called MEMFix Highland-Walker — occurs 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday to showcase what is possible at the University District's Highland-Walker intersection. That event also will activate the street with pop-up retail, music and art while showing new ways for pedestrians can interact with the neighborhood.

As far as the Broad district has come since New Face for An Old Broad, the street still needs more life during the day.

"One thing we hear from businesses along Broad, they need more retail to keep up foot traffic and help activate the street," said Abby Miller, project officer for the Mayor's Innovation Delivery Team. "And keep people returning to the neighborhood."

Thanks to the Bloomberg money, MEMshop removes some of the downside for fledgling businesses.

"We heard time and time again about the risk factor of investing life savings in the first six months and not having complementary support," Miller said.

The program offers three initial months of no rent, except the cost of utilities, taxes and insurance. "And we structured a payment plan based on their business plan for months four, five and six," Miller said.

Some arrangements could become permanent. “We do have a clause with each business,” Miller said. “If a long-term lease does come up, we’d be able to relocate them if necessary. We wouldn’t want to stop the private sector from doing what it does.”



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