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EDITOR'S PICK

Fraser Wood Elements expanding after six months in downtown Fredericksburg

NEW SHOP IN DOWNTOWN FREDERICKSBURG WILL OPEN A WORKSHOP NEXT DOOR

BY LINDLEY ESTES / THE FREE LANCE-STAR Dec 7, 2014

Fraser Wood Elements opened just six months ago, but it's already planning an expansion to keep up with demand for its artisanal wood products.

The downtown Fredericksburg store, which offers mostly locally made reclaimed and refinished wood items, is setting itself up to offer new workshop and programming space next door beginning in March.

"We are getting requests for demonstrations," owner David Fraser said. "This gives us that space, and space to display more artisan woodwork."

He leased 1,500 square feet through Jarrell Properties last month to expand his current storefront at 820 Caroline St. The new space is a two-story building behind Du Jardin at 822 Caroline St. and fronting Jail Alley.

As its name implies, Fraser Wood Elements carries all manner of wooden products, including furniture, flooring, accessories and larger decorative pieces. The store's 2,000-square feet of display space had become a little cramped, Fraser said.

Moving some of those items into the new space will free up display areas in the store for new, locally made products. He said it had also become apparent that people were interested in seeing things being made during the woodcarving and pin-turning demonstrations he's held.

“People really packed in to the shop,” he said. “They were enthralled. The community wants to see local talent in action.”

Fraser sold reclaimed wood in Charleston before opening his shop in Fredericksburg. He said that, for him, supporting woodworking is a way to remind people that these artisans still exist and can demonstrate and create quality products that can become heirlooms.

“There are a lot of these artists here locally,” he said. “And no one knows they exist.”

When Fraser was growing up in South Carolina, a neighbor would make him wooden toys. He still has those, and plans on giving them to his 13-month-old son. He also hopes to teach his son about woodworking to keep the tradition alive.

Fraser’s new workshop expansion will also help customers feel more connected to what is offered in the store, he said. He’s expanding his custom-made table and wood flooring offerings, for example, and people will be able to come to the workshop to see components of the table they hope to build, and the work being done to create it.

There will also be opportunities for classes in the new space if artisans want to offer them.

Fraser Wood Elements recently competed in Made in FredVa, a Shark Tank-style business competition that awards startup expenses to the winner, to start classes.

However, the judges weren’t sold on the idea that classes could turn a profit even though they thought bringing together people downtown for such events was noteworthy.

Although the store didn’t win, Fraser said the experience was incredible for a new business, and he learned how to make the expansion profitable during the event.

Fraser and his team are doing their own build-out of the new workshop. Member Cameron Salisbury, who has worked there since October, said she’s excited to be able to offer people a place downtown to “get back to basics.”

“These [demonstrations] show things we take for granted with machines,” she said.

“Being able to expand is great,” Fraser said. “We have been blessed by the community’s response to us and are even getting the opportunity for projects in D.C.”

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