

# Local Entrepreneurs Energize Downtown Freeport Spaces with Town Fit-Up Grant Funding

*New Investment Comes as Town Invites Proposals for Historic Bartol Building in the Heart of Downtown Freeport*

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FREEPORT, MAINE. Samantha and Ben Zanfagna were looking for a convenient space in a dynamic village center to launch their new hot yoga studio, [Uprise Hot Yoga](#), when they found 21 Main Street in Downtown Freeport. To update the 19-century space with new electrical, plumbing, HVAC, and refinished floors, the entrepreneurs matched \$15,000 of personal funds with \$10,000 from Freeport's new Business Fit-Up Grant program. The result is a sparkling new community gathering space that is fostering healthy lifestyles and community connections, while attracting regular visitors to Main Street.

"We really appreciate the Freeport community's support to bring our vision to life," said Samantha. "Our classes are selling out and we have added six employees so far with a plan to add six more to increase our offerings. The response has been amazing."

In addition to Zanfagnas, three additional entrepreneurs are leveraging Town Fit-Up funds to activate spaces in Freeport and diversify Downtown offerings. Currently, \$40,000 in Fit-Up funds have been committed and will be matched with \$115,000 in private investment to create a projected 10-15 jobs in Freeport.

Natalya Nikitina will open *Loom Clothing and Home* on May 6, 2024, in the updated second floor space above Sperry at 56 Main Street. *Loom* is a curated collection of the best sustainable and ethical fashion brands that ensure their workers are treated fairly across the supply chain. Nikitina and the property owner are matching \$10,000 in Fit-Up funds with approximately \$20,000 in private investment to refresh the retail space and create up to six jobs in the coming months.

"I find that women look for brands that they can trust for contemporary wardrobe pieces with attention to detail and a focus on sustainable materials," said Nikitina. "Loom will be that trusted source with a personal touch right on Main Street."

Kelleigh Dulany is creating a sauna and cold plunge experience at *Brewster House* at 180 Main Street in Freeport. Modeled off similar offerings in Scandinavia, the heat/cold experience is a recognized

wellness therapy that reduces inflammation, increases circulation, and improves mood and mental clarity. The facility is in development and will leverage \$10,000 in Fit-Up funds with approximately \$30,000 in private investment.

“I’m thrilled to create a gathering space for residents and visitors to experience sauna / cold plunge right in Downtown Freeport,” said Dulany. “After encountering the tradition in Norway, I fell in love and became inspired to share this practice in a convenient location that my neighbors can experience with their friends or on their way home from work, or within walking distance for a tourist visiting L.L.Bean’s Flagship Store.”

Colleen Brink is opening *Twist Salon* on Depot Street in Downtown Freeport with support from the Town’s Fit Up program. Brink and her partner Thomas Kivler are investing approximately \$70,000 plus \$10,000 in Fit-up funds to retrofit an existing garage into a bright, comfortable salon.

“My clients and I love the idea of being in Downtown Freeport,” said Brink. “To be within walking distance to the shops or a good cup of coffee will only add to the *Twist* experience.”

The Freeport Business Fit-Up Grant Program offers matching grants for projects that redevelop, restore, renovate, and reconfigure commercial properties in Freeport’s Downtown and along U.S. Route 1. The Fit-Up Grant Program will distribute an additional \$20,000 in Town funding for projects that enhance local business vitality and diversify Freeport’s offerings.

The new investment comes at a time of revitalization in Freeport’s Downtown, and the Town is issuing a Request for Proposals for a new tenant to activate the historic Bartol Building at 55 Main Street to build on the momentum. The Bartol Building has been a center of community and retail activity for decades.

“We’re thrilled to match Fit-Up grant funds with local entrepreneurs who are investing their creative energy and resources in Downtown Freeport,” said Freeport’s new Town Manager, Sophia Wilson. “The Bartol Building’s next user will be an important partner in advancing Freeport’s Downtown Vision.”

Freeport’s Downtown Vision Plan is a blueprint for new investment to support a vibrant downtown district with gathering spaces, public art, new housing and business development, and enhanced bicycle and pedestrian connectivity to enhance the experience of residents and visitors.

Fit-Up Program details and the Bartol Building Request for Proposals are available at [www.choosefreeport.com](http://www.choosefreeport.com). The deadline to respond to the Bartol Building RFP is Thursday, April 25<sup>th</sup> at 12pm. Interested parties are encouraged to contact Brett Richardson at (207) 865-4743, ext.117 to discuss their project goals and proposal application process.

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