

PRESS RELEASE

**MEDIA CONTACT**  
**SEAN KAMMER**  
DOWNTOWN MANAGER  
248-914-4589  
SEAN.KAMMER@ROMI.GOV

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## Proving Grounds Coffee to Bring Family-Friendly Vibes to Former Gayle's Chocolate Space

Milford Coffee Shop to Open Second Location in Downtown Royal Oak and Include Ice Cream, Rentable Conference Rooms, Study Rooms, and Children' Play Area.



*James Courtney (left) and Daman Auvenshine (right) in front of the former Gayle's Chocolates Space, where they have signed a lease to open a second location of Proving Grounds Coffee in Downtown Royal Oak.*

**March 19, 2019— Royal Oak, MI—** The owners of Proving Grounds Coffee have announced that they have signed a lease to open a second location of their successful coffee shop in the



former Gayle's Chocolates Space, located at 417 South Washington Avenue in downtown Royal Oak. The Milford-based independent coffee shop roasts its own beans on-demand, sells ice cream, and serves as a community hub for students, families, and for those who need to just crack open a laptop and get some work done.

James Courtney and Daman Auvenshine are the two partners that are breathing life back into the space that served Gayle's Chocolates for over thirty years. They join the growing list of independent businesses choosing downtown Royal Oak.

"We are a family-friendly destination with a warm and welcoming atmosphere," Courtney said. According to Courtney, crafting a memorable and positive experience is essential to that atmosphere. "It's not enough that we make a good product, we need to engage with that person and brighten their day," he adds.

Having just signed the lease, Courtney and Auvenshine have a bold vision for the space that includes opening the 3500 square foot second floor for a private study space, rentable event room for parties or conferences, and a large common area for families with children.

"The café will include a soft seating area with a stage for live entertainment, a window to view our roasting room, and places to sit and work," said Courtney, describing the layout of the main floor. "Eventually, we will be producing our own ice cream on site as well."

Proving Grounds is one of many developments that focuses on drawing families into downtown. "This will offer people a place to take their kids in downtown Royal Oak," said Courtney. Proving Grounds will be located just around the corner from where the Commission for the Arts holds the Summer Concert Series in July and August, and down the street from where Mathnasium, a professional tutoring service, will be locating at 515 South Washington Avenue. Additionally, it will be joining Kaizen Ramen in filling key vacancies on South Washington Avenue between Fourth and Fifth streets, generating more foot traffic and economic activity on the street commonly referred to as 'Royal Oak's second Main Street.' Courtney is confident that his business will benefit the surrounding area by inviting more foot traffic. "When we opened our first location in Milford, many nearby businesses opened late in the day or not at all on Mondays or Tuesdays. Our business brought more people to the block and our neighbors are now open longer and on more days," said Courtney.

Mayor Michael Fournier welcomed the news, "We're pleased to see a family-oriented business placing roots in our vibrant downtown, showing that Royal Oak is a place where people stay and play, not just grab and go. This new business reflects our changing demographics and strengthening neighborhoods as families continue to choose Royal Oak. Proving Grounds is one of seven new businesses that have recently opened or will open in downtown. It's clear the plan we've put in place is attracting new businesses."

Proving Grounds joins the list of new businesses opening in downtown Royal Oak, which includes Kaydense Galleria on Fourth Street, and Vera Asian and Sake Sushi on Main Street. Other new businesses are set to open in the near future that include Kaizen Ramen on South Washington, City Ramen on Main Street, and Bar Louie.



Downtown Manager Sean Kammer likewise celebrated the fact that the space was filled by an independent small business.

“I’m pleased to see businesses like Proving Grounds come to downtown Royal Oak. From hearing James and Daman describe their vision, it sounds like they will be adding a new and energetic character to downtown. Their business will bring a sense of authenticity that I think people will appreciate and find refreshing. It’s a great concept that will attract families living in the neighborhoods to downtown,” said Kammer. “We often overlook that we are the closest downtown to the Detroit Zoo, which is one of the largest family attractions in the state.”

“I’m looking forward to meeting the families of Royal Oak,” said Auvenshine. The two expect that Proving Grounds will be open in the early summer of 2019.

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