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Art fills downtown Cape Coral's blank canvases

Owners of buildings may get cash for artwork

By JL Watson

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The musicians are lined up, playing to the crowd.

Their audience is the 36,000 cars a day that pass by the building at 1411 Cape Coral Parkway East. The musical mural, painted by local artist Ann McCarty, is part of an effort to bring more art to public places in downtown Cape Coral.

Rick Shafer, owner of Rick's Music and Electronics, which is set to open in July, approached McCarty about painting something that would hint at what was behind the big blank wall.

"We've been in business for 11 years, selling electronics," Shafer said. "We're moving and adding music so I was thinking of something with musicians or musical instruments so people would know what we do."

The 75-foot-long wall was the perfect canvas for something large, like the silhouettes that McCarty proposed.

"It's simple and gives the message," Shafer said. "I like it."

McCarty, who works as a muralist and painter, said she measured several times in order to get her subjects the correct size. It was the largest mural she had ever attempted.

"I had to make sure things were in proportion," she said. "I had to really set it up."

Once the measuring was complete McCarty spent time painting the silhouettes by hand. The result is large, if not larger than life.

"I enjoyed painting big," McCarty said.

When Shafer contacted McCarty about his idea, he didn't know that his vision was part of a larger Community Redevelopment Agency plan for downtown Cape Coral.

Helen Ramey, marketing director for the CRA, was thrilled when she heard of Shafer's plan.

"So many of our older buildings are a blank canvas," she said. "Art on buildings is a great feature to have aesthetically, but it let's people know what's in the building."

Owners who qualify can receive reimbursements from the CRA for property improvements in the CRA district. The Facade Grant Program allows as

much as \$5,000 on a \$10,000 investment for building improvements. To qualify, building owners must fill out an application that outlines their plans for the building.

Shafer believes his building will encourage other owners to fill downtown Cape Coral with art.

"It's right in line with what other cities are doing," he said. "If you go to Miami you see themes popping up, but it was sheer coincidence (for us) as far as what the city's trying to do."
