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Cape artist lends talent to downtown vision; CRA aims to lure eclectic mix of business with new program

By **DREW WINCHESTER**,
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For the Community Redevelopment Agency, turning downtown Cape Coral into a viable destination for shopping and dining is more than just luring business to the area.



MICHAEL PISTELLA

Its plans call for beckoning a certain type of finely tuned eclecticism; artists and musicians have as much a place within their long-term vision as a neighborhood bistro or tavern.

Cape Coral artist Ann McCarty stands near the mural she painted for Rick's Music, which is opening soon on Cape Coral Parkway.

Cape artist Ann McCarty falls squarely into that vision. A muralist, McCarty was commissioned by Rick's Music owner Rick Shafer to design a mural along the western wall of his forthcoming store.

"I know the owner," McCarty said. "He called and asked me to put musicians on his building for his theme."

Those themes are part of the CRA's new facade grant program, which allows downtown business owners to use the sides of their buildings to feature art that is tailor-made for their particular businesses. McCarty's mural is the first



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of the new program.

“We have a lot of canvasses in the downtown area, we have a lot of buildings,” said CRA Project Manager Richard Orth.

Shafer wanted his music store, scheduled to open in late June or early July, in the heart of downtown. He said he had been “waiting his whole life” for such a prime location.

“Finding a location like this, that appears only once or twice in somebody’s lifetime, I couldn’t pass it up,” Shafer said.

Specialty stores like Rick’s Music are integral to the CRA’s plan, lending itself to what Orth called a natural mix of businesses.

“It’s a destination retail location,” Orth said. “(Rick’s Music) is really one of those specialty retail stores that encourages people to come down here.”

These kind of projects are what the CRA hopes will nurture the downtown area into a place that people drive to, not through.

Though it has no true end goal, the organization plans to stay on track and continue to grow, as well as continue to attract artists to work and grow themselves, in downtown Cape Coral.

“We’re looking for that artisan draw,” said CRA Marketing Manager Helen Ramey. “This is the beginning of what we would want the downtown to turn into.”

As for McCarty, who also teaches art at the Pine Island Art Association in Matlacha and the Cape Coral Art Studio, she plans on continuing to do what she has done for the last nine years: paint murals, both interior and exterior.

Doing the mural at Rick’s Music is her way of helping the CRA, downtown Cape Coral and her friend, the owner himself.

“I never had much talent for music, but I have a fine appreciation for it,” McCarty said.

Artists interested in the CRA facade grant program can contact Richard Orth or Helen Ramey at 549-5615. Orth said the CRA will connect artists and business owners looking for murals.

To learn more about Ann McCarty and her work, visit: annmccartygallery.com.