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Artists bring buildings to life in Everett

Placed in vacant storefronts, the artists are helping revitalize downtown Everett.

By [Debra Smith](#), Herald Writer

EVERETT — Morrie Trautman wanted to rent his vacant building downtown but tenants weren't exactly beating down his door.

Then he heard about a new program to let artists set up shop in empty Everett buildings.

Since then two painters and a photographer have set up studios in his Hewitt Avenue storefront.

People are stopping by, and his building is being noticed. Last month, he started getting calls from potential tenants.

He's not sure if it's the extra visibility or the economy turning around. Either way, he likes the program.

"It's a win-win situation," he said. "Vacant space doesn't do anybody any good."

The Arts Council of Snohomish County program may just help revitalize downtown.

Lanie McMullin, Everett's executive director of economic development, got the idea from a Seattle artist. The artist started creating art to end the revolving door of failed businesses in his building. And it worked.

"This was my twist on the idea," she said. "Why don't we invite artists to be in these buildings?"

Now the Arts Council has placed artists in vacant downtown storefronts. The Art in Great Spaces runs through the end of September. The project is partly paid for by a grant from the city.

Using art as a revitalization tool isn't new, she said.

In any big city, artists seek out the cheapest square footage, and that's generally in the less savory parts of town. Artists move in and more people come to patronize the theaters and galleries. Restaurants want to locate nearby. Then the condos come. Suddenly the neighborhood is hip.

McMullin sees downtown Everett, with its historic brick buildings, as an area ripe for Seattle artists.

She said artists from Seattle will be brought by bus to tour vacant Everett spaces.

She has already heard from artists who are surprised by how much studio space their money will buy in Everett. Artists will rent spaces that building owners often have trouble renting, such as basements and second floors.

"Everybody wins," she said. "The artist gets the studio space, the building owner finds an appropriate tenant and we get a ton of foot traffic and creative energy."

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Learn more

For more information call 425-257-8380 or go to www.artscouncilofsnoco.org.

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