



Thanks to artists Joyce Hayes, Marcellus Walker, and Alijhae West, this mural adorns the old Star Theater in Historic Goldsboro.

SANFORD HAS BECOME SEMINOLE COUNTY'S EPICENTER OF ART. TAKE A TOUR OF THIS COLORFUL, CULTURAL CORRIDOR.

ART AROUND EVERY CORNER

by Jill Duff-Hoppes

The City of Sanford's arts scene is thriving. In fact, the town long known as Celery City has become one of Central Florida's hippest cultural hubs.

Sanford boasts a trifecta of creative offerings – performing, visual, and culinary arts – all of which combine to keep residents engaged in their community and visitors coming back for more.

Historic Downtown Sanford is home to two performing arts theaters that present musicals, plays, dance productions, concerts, and much more. Art galleries and studios add to the creative vibe, as do music and film festivals. There's also the very popular St. Johns River Festival of the Arts, which takes over downtown's First Street each spring.

A quick search for #Sanfording on social media proves just how many arts and cultural events are available to experience.

"Sanford is the heart of the arts scene in Seminole," says Dr. Tom Tomerlin, the city's economic development director. "We value the arts and its contribution to enhancing a genuine *quality of place* here in Sanford."

PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

One of the most striking ways Sanford has embraced the arts is through a series of high-profile public-art projects – thanks to the efforts of the City of Sanford Public Art Commission (PAC).

This year alone, three noteworthy projects have been unveiled with much fanfare. For starters, 18 utility boxes throughout the Historic Downtown area have been wrapped with bright artwork from nine different artists.

Also, five large stainless-steel gull sculptures have been installed at the city's RiverWalk. Sculpted by artist Dale Rogers of Massachusetts, the soaring silver birds have wingspans of six feet each.

And, Central Florida chainsaw artist Mark Rice preserved part of a dying tree at the Sanford Civic Center by turning it into a buzzworthy work of art.

While those are the latest creative additions, outdoor murals have been popping up for years on privately-owned and city



Sanford Artist John Sullivan shows off a downtown utility box wrapped with his art.



Early Morning on the Econlockhatchee by Sanford photographer Reg Garner is on display at City Hall.

buildings. Murals dot Sanford's landscape from City Hall to the old Star Theater in Goldsboro's Historic Black community to East Airport Boulevard.

Sanford also regularly showcases artwork inside City Hall with rotating exhibits that make the building more inviting for visitors and employees alike.

"Art enriches a person's life," says Lisa Holder, the city's chief communications and cultural affairs administrator and the PAC's staff liaison. "The arts add vibrancy to a community with little splashes of positivity."

All signs point to even more cultural growth on Sanford's horizon.

"We will continue to push for arts," says Pamela Lynch, executive director of the city's Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA). "We continue to look at ways to increase our art footprint."

For example, the CRA board is purchasing three additional gull sculptures to bolster the flock already on display. The board has also agreed to fund the purchase of several concrete pads to add more sculptures downtown.

"Our community is hungry for this; they love it," says Sanford artist Kim House, who serves on the all-volunteer Public Art Commission. "With art, the interest in the community itself increases, and all of a sudden you have a trendy hotspot."

"There's a renaissance for art here," Lisa says, "and this is just the beginning."

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