

Office building owner lobbies artful use of empty space on weekends

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by [Carl Cronan](#)

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Ben Wacksman believes he has found a way to promote local artists and commercial property at the same time -- by opening building lobbies on weekends as exhibit space.

The **president of Capital Realty Investors LLC** is planning to host the inaugural New Tampa Arts Festival on Nov. 18-19 at the Palm Lake at Tampa Palms office building, 15310 Amberly Drive. More than 50 artisans are expected to participate.

"Our property goes mostly unused on the weekends, yet it's a beautiful setting with a lake and dozens of 100 year-old oaks," Wacksman said. "Why not put the property to work on the weekend to benefit the arts?"

Wacksman, a former Hillsborough County commissioner, said he would like to see other landlords open their facilities as fine or performing arts venues, pointing out that it's a good way to showcase their own buildings to people who might not otherwise visit them.

Although Palm Lake is fully occupied, he said promoting the building is strictly secondary to exposing local artists to broader audiences in upscale settings.

"The opportunities are endless, and we certainly have a growing population that will appreciate additional venues," Wacksman said.

The New Tampa Arts Festival has a prize purse of nearly \$10,000, with exhibits touching on the entire medium landscape including oils and acrylic paintings, photography, glass and ceramics, sculptures, and murals.

Tampa-based Capital Realty owns more than 1 million square feet of commercial properties in the Tampa Bay area as well as south Florida. In October it paid \$8.6 million for 8900 Grand Oak, a three-story, 68,000-square-foot office building at Hidden River Corporate Park in north Tampa.