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Lake Worth is about to get more culture

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LAKE WORTH — The agency that promotes the arts in Palm Beach County plans to move its headquarters to downtown Lake Worth.

The city's Community Redevelopment Agency board voted unanimously Tuesday to give the Palm Beach County Cultural Council up to \$700,000 toward the renovation of a downtown building for a new headquarters.



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The nonprofit cultural council has 120 days to purchase a building to be eligible for the money, which will be conveyed through a 10-year, no-interest "forgivable loan."

"We're very serious about a move to Lake Worth, the details of which we'll figure out in the next three months," said Rena Blades, the cultural council's chief executive officer.

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The cultural council operates with a staff of 12, uses bed-tax money to promote the arts in Palm Beach County and is currently based in an office building at 1555 Palm Beach Lakes Blvd.

Blades said the council would like to base its headquarters in a pedestrian-friendly area such as downtown Lake Worth. They are looking for 9,000 to 15,000 square feet of space with ground-floor access and space for art exhibits and artist training.

"It kind of puts Lake Worth on the map as the center for arts and culture in Palm Beach County," CRA Executive Director Joan Oliva said of the cultural council's relocation plan.

Mayor Jeff Clemens said the cultural council's move makes sense because Lake Worth, home of the annual Street Painting Festival, is an arts-based city.

"It's the perfect centerpiece for downtown Lake Worth," said Tom Ramiccio, president of the Greater Lake Worth Chamber of Commerce. "This is going to be the catalyst for the second rebirth and revitalization of downtown."

Providing incentives to bring the cultural council downtown is part of a comprehensive cultural redevelopment plan the CRA is developing with consultant Mark Barone. Plans include bringing more artists into the city, helping them market their work and giving them incentives to move into and improve blighted neighborhoods.

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