

Fort Pierce takes leap of faith with sculpture, plaza

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FORT PIERCE Residents driving by City Hall the past few days may have noticed a towering crane installing a 25-foot bronze sculpture.

Sculptor Pat Cochran from Shadetree Studio, a fine arts foundry in St. Lucie Village, designed the city's \$9,000 Art in Public Places project a sculpture with a stainless steel infrastructure called "Leap of Faith."

"It's all about challenges and faith," Cochran said. "We just have to take a leap and believe in what we're doing. We believe this piece symbolizes that's what the city has done. We've come so far in the last few years."

The sculpture arrived Saturday, and installation began Sunday. Cochran said he hopes to finish putting it together Tuesday. Originally, the installation was scheduled for a week earlier, but high winds forced it to be postponed.

The sculpture is of an older man jumping off a diving board into a bed of roses. Cochran modeled the man after two people from the community, but he wants residents to figure out who they are.

He wanted to send a message by creating a positive piece.

"It's also about the challenges we're all facing now," he said. "People are really struggling just to survive."

The project originally cost \$4,000, but Fort Pierce Redevelopment Agency Director Jon Ward added onto the price because he wanted to use bronze instead of a plastic material for the roses. He said it would be cheaper in the long run.

“I want the whole piece to be a permanent piece,” Ward said. “I don’t want to worry about the maintenance.”

City spokeswoman Anne Satterlee said money for the city’s Art in Public Places comes from capital projects in the city. The city takes a small percentage of money invested for capital improvement projects and puts it into a fund to be used to buy public art.

A 15-member committee formed to determine places for public art, and Ward said the city always wanted to design a plaza between City Hall and the parking garage.

“It’s a natural place for a significant sculpture,” he said.

A subcommittee of five members from the public reviewed about 15 different artists’ submissions and narrowed them down to three finalists before choosing the winner who conveyed the message it wanted. Ward said the City Commission approved the selection in March.

“We want to speak to the future of the city in real positive terms,” he said. “We wanted a piece that lasted the test of time that gave a hopeful and creative message looking at the future.”

