

[back to article](#)



Printed on page BM1

Art lofts hastened by waiver

By [Dale White](#)

Published: Friday, April 3, 2009 at 1:00 a.m.

A developer who specializes in building artist lofts hopes to expedite a proposed apartment complex on 14th Street West and take advantage of Bradenton's recent decision to waive impact fees for a year.

Depending on the building's square footage and number of rental units, Wisconsin-based Gorman & Company could shave roughly \$145,000 off its costs by taking advantage of the temporary moratorium on city impact fees.

It could save another \$147,000 or so when a one-year waiver of impact fees for the School Board goes into effect. That waiver is awaiting approval by the Manatee County Commission.

The city is anxious for Gorman's plans to get under way and not just because construction within the city is at a standstill and laborers need jobs.

The complex of homes and studios for working artists would give a redevelopment boost to a stretch of the Tamiami Trail long challenged by crime and blight – as well as reinforce the city's effort to promote itself as a cultural destination.

The waiver of impact fees is motivating Gorman to try to proceed at an accelerated pace, if it can get the financing.

"It's on our radar screen," Tom Capp of Gorman & Company said of the opportunity to significantly lower its costs.

Gorman intends to arrange private financing and, through the state, get affordable

housing subsidies for a three-story building with roughly 75 apartments at 1405 14th St. W. The developer hopes to have construction under way before the city impact fee waivers expire on April 1, 2010.

For a developer to qualify for the exemptions, construction must begin no more than 30 days after the city issues the building permit.

Impact fees are intended to make new development pay for roads, parks and public safety facilities.

The City Council approved the fee waivers last week, hoping to stimulate the local economy.

Councilman Patrick Roff said the city set an expiration date to motivate developers to get their plans rolling forward.

"We were hoping it would spur someone on," Roff said. "And this is an excellent project."

Gorman intends to build a complex similar to six other live-work developments it has built in the Midwest – such as Park East Enterprise Lofts in Milwaukee. Resident artists share amenities such as a sales gallery, a pottery room with a kiln, a painting studio, a woodworking room and a theater for media presentations.

The complex would be built on 3.1 acres that the Downtown Development Authority acquired in 2005 and 2006 so it could demolish the dilapidated Manatee Inns motel and two homes on adjoining lots.

Last fall, the authority considered three developers' proposals for the site and chose Gorman.

"They responded brilliantly to the request for proposals," DDA director Mike Kennedy said. "They did their homework."

The DDA preferred Gorman because it not only proposed a mixed-use development with affordable housing but an emphasis on resident artists.

"This will be the western gateway into the Village of the Arts," Kennedy said, referring to a downtown neighborhood where numerous artists reside in homes with studios and galleries.

Capp said that when Gorman researched Bradenton, the company was pleased to

learn about Realize Bradenton – an ongoing project to promote the city as an arts and cultural destination.

"That was the key," Capp said. "We read an earlier draft of the Realize Bradenton plan. When we saw that kind of planning going on, we knew we could do a specialized development that would fit right in."

This story appeared in print on page BM1
