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## Empty downtown storefronts to be filled for Final Four

BY ERIC D. LAWRENCE • FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER • MARCH 20, 2009

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As Detroit gears up to host its first NCAA Final Four championship next month, some downtown storefronts are getting a face-lift, at least temporarily.

Designers, architects and other artists will be showing off their handiwork in 21 displays as part of the Detroit Storefront Design Competition, said John Connors, project manager for the nonprofit Downtown Detroit Partnership.

Connors has been heading up efforts already under way to place white display boxes in vacant storefronts along parts of Woodward Avenue downtown. Connors said at least one building has as many as nine boxes for the artists to display their works.

"We've created space for them to fill," Connors said.

Organizers were unavailable Thursday to talk about the specifics of the competition, including how many artists will participate and what prize would go to the winners.

The storefront displays run north on Woodward from about Congress Street to Park Avenue. The teams of artists should finish building their displays by next weekend, Connors said.

Judging will take place in about two weeks, just before the Final Four college basketball tournament April 4-6 at Ford Field. The tournament is hosted by the University of Detroit Mercy.

Contact **ERIC D. LAWRENCE** at 313-223-4272 or [elaurence@freepress.com](mailto:elaurence@freepress.com).

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