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'Creative class' group makes economic growth plans

By [Stephanie Gottschlich](#)

Staff Writer

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DAYTON — The 32 local "creative class catalysts," the moniker given to volunteers working to grow a creative class in the Dayton and Springfield areas, announced five initiatives on Thursday, March 6, for spurring the area's economy through developing local creative talent.

After meeting for two days at the Cannery Art and Design Center in downtown Dayton with urban theorist Richard Florida, author of the best-selling book "Rise of the Creative Class," the group generated ideas based on the region's talent, tolerance, technology and territorial assets.

Concentrating on the "four T's" helps attract a creative class, according to Florida's theories.

The catalysts studied Dayton's and Springfield's results on several Florida-developed indexes and economic data compiled by his firm, the Creative Class Group. A task force representing 20 groups hired the company in January with \$150,000 raised from individuals and local organizations.

"We are not consultants here," Florida told the group Thursday. "If you want to build a community here that will keep its population, you have to build it. We provide the tools."

The catalysts came up with these five ideas:

- **Film Dayton:** Launch a film festival in Dayton, establishing a seed fund for aspiring movie makers and leveraging the area's 30 to 40 film professionals into a new industry. The effort would work with three film festivals already held in Dayton to create a local film scene.
- **Innovation Collaborative:** Bring artists and engineers together to exchange new ideas. Dayton has 50 percent more engineers and 5 percent more artists than the national average, according to an analysis by the Creative Class Group.
- **Young Creatives Summit:** Involve people under age 40 in more non-profit boards to include them in the area's decision making.
- **Community Pride:** Raise awareness of Dayton's diversity and assets, starting with showcasing the area better at the Dayton International Airport, the largest introduction to Dayton for visitors.

- Dayton Creative Incubator: Using the technology incubator concept, put "techie" and artists together under one roof to bring them to life.

Communities nationwide have hired Florida's company to help them foster an environment that retains a talented work force, attracts new talent from around the globe and empowers their regions.

Florida argues that metropolitan regions with high concentrations of high-tech and knowledge workers, artistic types, gay men and "high bohemians" correlates to a higher level of economic development than areas without them.

A creative class fosters an open, dynamic and professional environment that attracts other people, along with businesses and other investment. He focuses on attracting the creative class as a means to reinvigorate a region, instead of focusing on infrastructure projects such as sports stadiums and shopping centers.

He has devised his own ranking systems that rate cities by a "Bohemian index," a "Gay index," a "diversity index" and similar criteria. The Dayton and Springfield regions, the group found, ranks high on the Bohemian index and has 50 percent more engineers per capita than the national average.

Florida holds a doctorate from Columbia University and works at the Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto.

Prior to that, he spent two years at George Mason University's School of Public Policy and taught at Carnegie Mellon University's Heinz School from 1987 to 2005.

He has written four books on the creative class. Florida started his career at Ohio State University.

For more on the Creative Region Initiative or to become involved, contact Sean Creighton, executive director of the Southwestern Ohio Council for Higher Education, at (937) 258-8890.

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