

# The Fairfield Ledger

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## Study: 'Creative class' helps county's economy

By:

A new study by a University of Iowa economics professor suggests Iowa counties with a higher concentration of people who are part of the so-called "creative class" have stronger prospects for economic growth, and that some of the highest concentrations are in Jefferson County.

The study, by professor John Solow in the Tippie College of Business, ranks all of Iowa's 99 counties in a Creativity Index based on the one developed by economist Richard Florida, author of the national bestseller "The Rise of the Creative Class." Florida's suggestion that the U.S. economy is becoming a knowledge-based one that will be driven by creative initiatives argues that those places that will fare best economically are the places that are most attractive to creative people.

Using Florida's model, Solow ranked each of Iowa's 99 counties to create an Iowa Creativity Index. The top five counties on the list all boast either urban population centers or major universities: Johnson, Story, Linn, Polk, Scott. Those five counties have an average population of 194,309. Jefferson County, population 15,945, comes in at number six.

"That's making a statement," said Brent Willett, Fairfield Area Chamber of Commerce and Fairfield Economic Development Association executive director. "Florida's argument is that young college graduates will increasingly do more than simply find a job and move to wherever the job is. Today, more and more educated, talented people are choosing the place first - often a place which combines a high quality of life, high-tech or creative job opportunities, and, increasingly, a commitment to sustainability - and then finding work. Jefferson County happens to offer all of that. This is a real honor, but we shouldn't be surprised."

Fairfield Mayor Ed Malloy added, "The link between creativity and economic growth is demonstrated throughout every corner of our great community. I am thrilled with the place Fairfield has among the large metro-counties in the state as one of the premier creative communities. Many of our entrepreneurs are familiar with Richard Florida's work, and this is a great honor to be rated so high."

Florida measured counties for their creativity with three categories: technology, which counts the number of people employed in high-tech industries; talent, which counts the number of people who work in such businesses as computers, math, art, architecture, engineering, the law, health care and other professions that tend to require some kind of advanced education; and tolerance, which measures an area's racial integration, and the number of people who work as authors, artists, dancers, musicians, actors and other similar artistic professions.

Rustin Lippincott, executive director of the Fairfield Iowa Convention and Visitors Bureau, said, "This terrific news demonstrates tangibly the creative energy that makes Fairfield residents, businesses and attractions what they are: some of the best and most diverse in the region. This ranking brings the sort of notoriety that is already spurring regional interest from potential residents and visitors, and is critical to our visitor economy. Creativity spawns excitement, and that's what we have in Fairfield."

With growth-contributing elements ranging from the availability of fiber-speed Internet to employers in the financial services, advanced manufacturing, technology, publishing fields; to the artistic and performance opportunities offered by the Fairfield Arts & Convention Center; to the work of the Fairfield Green Planning Commission; to the near-completion of the Jefferson County Loop Trail; to a diverse economy which supports agriculture, manufacturing and entrepreneurship at the same time all put Jefferson County in a unique position; the next rural county on Solow's list can't be found at least until Poweshiek at number 13, Willett noted.

(A portion of this article is from the University of Iowa News Service in Iowa City.)

For the complete article, see the Friday, September 19, 2008, Fairfield Ledger.

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