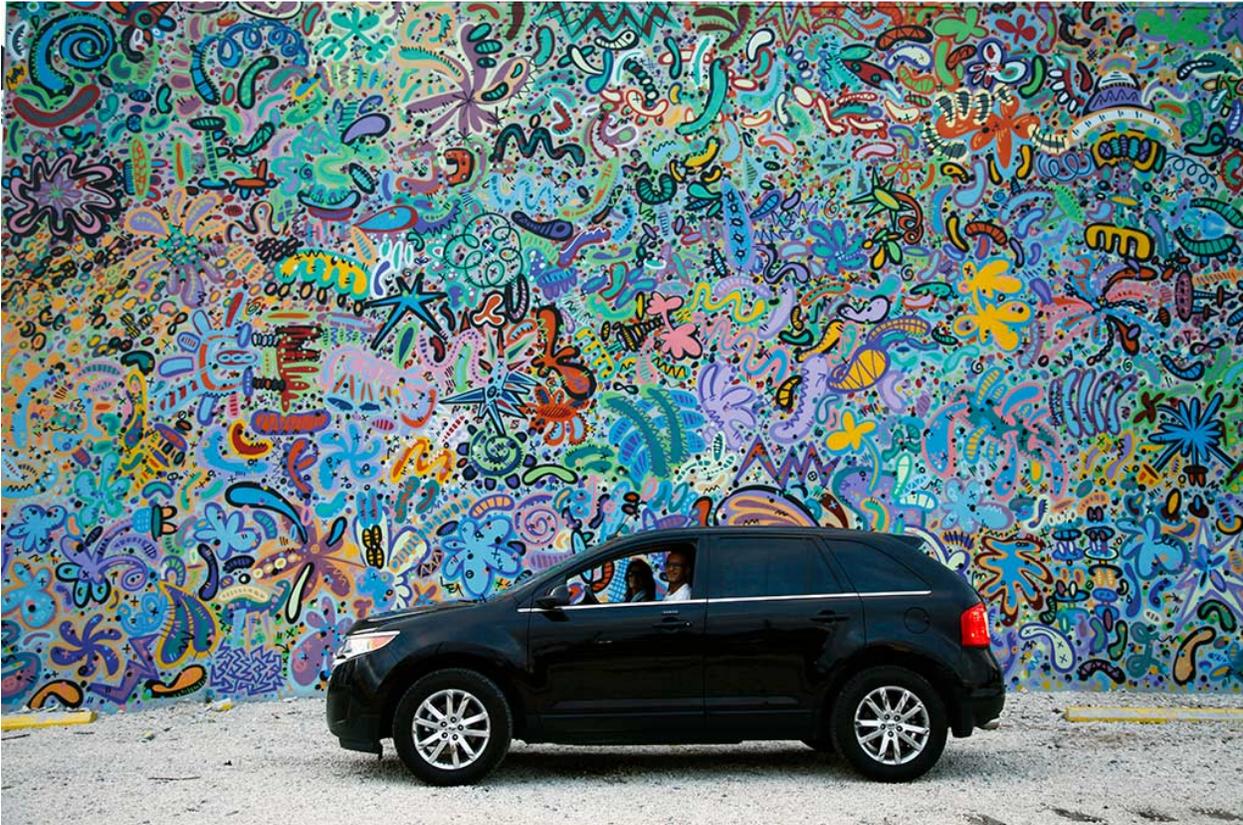


How Startup Creative Communities Impact Urban Travel

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Miami's Wynwood Arts District is promoted as the world's largest outdoor graffiti museum. Elido Turco / [Flickr](#)

The third annual [StartUp Miami](#) event this month focused on the decentralizing shift in tech startupland and entrepreneurial culture across America, and how that's shaping the reurbanization movement in major cities.

We attended to see how this is impacting travel and tourism. Presented by *The Atlantic* and its sister website [CityLab](#), StartUp Miami brings entrepreneurs together to share their insights in building products and services across different sectors, including hospitality and tourism, which leverage disruptive shifts in technology and macro consumer behaviors.

The 2015 event was again hosted by Richard Florida, who coined the term “Creative Class” in his seminal 2004 book, “The Rise of the Creative Class.” Today, Florida is the founder of the [Creative Class Group](#) consultancy firm, director of the Martin Prosperity Institute at the University of Toronto’s Rotman School of Management, and a regular contributor to CityLab.

The big idea every year at StartUp Miami is that tech companies and innovative young business owners are sprouting up everywhere around urban centers in America. They’re often shying away from traditional tech and economic hubs like San Jose, San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York and Boston due to increasingly high costs of living and commercial operations, and intense competition for capital.

Instead, they’re moving to cities like Miami, Austin, Seattle, New Orleans, Detroit, Philadelphia, Raleigh, Boulder, and many others, and they’re developing a strong loyalty to emerging, often previously distressed downtown neighborhoods where they tend to congregate and collaborate.

That knowledge migration is accelerating the renewal of American urban cores devalued and abandoned decades ago due to suburban flight and the widespread loss of manufacturing. The shift is also establishing new tight-knit communities where today’s startup entrepreneurs are as interested in building their communities and supporting other business as much as they are their own businesses.

Think of it as startup companies building [startup communities](#).

How Reurbanization is Impacting Travel

The result of this urban renewal and economic development is not only drawing local residents to these neighborhoods. Districts from West Oakland to Williamsburg, Brooklyn are also attracting a new breed of tourists over the last decade seeking the creative energy in adaptive reuse neighborhoods, with a new and vibrant tech/startup atmosphere layered in with the existing arts and cultural scenes.

Some of the other personalities at StartUp Miami this year relating to tourism and hospitality included Vikram Dendi, strategy director at Microsoft Research behind the Skype Translator project; Veronica Juarez, director of government relations at Lyft; and chef Tom Colicchio, owner of Crafted Hospitality.

Throughout this event, many of the speakers and panelists used the emerging communities of [Wynwood](#)—promoted as the world’s largest graffiti museum— and the [Design District](#) just north of downtown Miami as a petri dish to illustrate today’s trends in reurbanization in a real world setting.

Specifically, places like the Panther Coffee shop, Wynwood Kitchen & Bar, and The Lab Miami co-work space are continuously called out as some of the primary incubators creating so much exposure around the districts. Colicchio said the reason he finally decided that Miami could support a restaurant of his was because he saw the local community support for the fresh roasted coffee beans at Panther Coffee.

But this is not a story about Miami. What's happening in Wynwood is happening to some degree in every first-tier city in America.

We spoke with Florida after the event to hear how this urban disruption in downtown cores is impacting cities as tourism destinations, and how tourism bureaus can potentially shift their narrative to support them better.

Skift: When you look at these emerging neighborhoods like Wynwood in Miami, it seems there's a grassroots effort at collaborative community building among entrepreneurs. What's driving that?

Richard Florida: Before, I think entrepreneurs were interested in solely building their businesses, but it does seem like a real thrust with this new generation of creative class entrepreneurs, and this goes back to when I was writing the original book, is that we want to be part of the community. We want to help build the community.

So I was at Panther Coffee on Sunday and it was the most jammed place in all of Greater Miami. These are the kind of places that are in real authentic urban neighborhoods that people find exciting. And it wasn't just Miamians. It's become something of a tourist hotspot also, so I think Wynwood and neighborhoods like it in so many other cities are signalling a change.

Skift: Restaurants always seem to be the first into these post-industrial districts, and even more so in once really distressed areas like New Orleans after Katrina, and Oakland and Detroit today.

Florida: Human beings like to eat, and they want experiences that are enriching, so there's a long history of restaurants becoming the kind of anchor, if you will, of neighborhoods transitioning and upgrading. You look at a place like Wynwood and the Design District in Miami, it really was a trail of restaurants that started it all. It was Michael's Genuine, which really created attention in the Design District. And then it was Tony Goldman's restaurants—Joey's and the Wynwood Kitchen & Bar—and then Panther Coffee, of course, that created the early attention in Wynwood.

Skift: What is placemaking, and why is it becoming more prominent in popular discussion?

Florida: My view of this, it's a shift from an old industrial economy organized around large factories in suburban locations, organized around people in their nuclear families ensconced in their suburban homes with private backyards, to an economy of knowledge. And that economy of knowledge requires proximity and density. It isn't just that people like cities, or they like urban neighborhoods. They're an economic driver with startups, entrepreneurs and companies coming back to cities, with talented people meeting talented people, because we are more productive, we are more innovative, we are more creative in them.

We generate more wealth when we're densely packed together in urban environments. So that's the core driver, and placemaking has emerged because people more and more recognize that they want to get these engines of economic activity started, so they have to make their neighborhoods exciting. But the way placemaking works is not this heavy-handed, top-down, government

placemaking. It's the kind of placemaking that [Jane Jacobs](#) always talked about that comes from the bottom up, from neighborhood-based entrepreneurs and community-based people like Panther Coffee that are driving this.

Skift: So how can tourism bureaus, such as Miami & The Beaches, help support these neighborhoods more and drive more visitors to them, so they can see a different side of the destination popular with locals?

Florida: I think the key thing in Miami is to stop thinking of Miami as a tourist city, and for the tourism board to create a great city. That's what happened in New York. **New York doesn't think of itself as a tourist city. It's a city that millions upon millions of tourists visit because it is a great city.** And I think Miami is caught in this outmoded narrative between tourists and locals, because Miami is a city for everyone.

There are people who come through for a day, there are part-time residents, and there are people who live here year-round, and they're all part of the same mix. And it seems to me that promoting a deeper tourist experience, a real authentic tourist experience, is getting away from the blingy nightlife and shopping and shallow experiences that don't really contribute to creating a great city.

I mentioned at StartUp Miami that one of the things that Las Vegas did was it turned itself into this great city for meetings and conventions for all sorts of high-end businesses. So when [Miami Beach] Mayor Levine talks about transforming the Miami Beach Convention Center into a convention center of idea exchange and creative networking, that's where Miami has to go.

If you think about it, the best thing happening to Miami now is Art Basel, which brings the most money. There's way more money going into the community than a Super Bowl. It is really the way in which the community is transforming itself, and it's a lever for attracting people to come live here.

I think that's the way we've got to go to get to a more intellectually engaging, stimulating kind of tourism. And that's going to be a change from just getting bodies in hotel rooms and cruise ships. Miami is right now torn in this battle of narratives. So are you the place to party all night or is it a place to move your family and build your business. Great cities like New York and London marry those two narratives, and that's what Miami needs, to be both a great city to visit and a great city to live in.

Skift: So, in your view, tourism bureaus should do more to promote these emerging neighborhoods?

Florida: Absolutely. People are looking for that. When my friends come to visit, even when they come to Art Basel, I show them my Miami. I get them away from the convention center, away from Ocean Drive, off of Lincoln Road. I take them to the art collections, the Rubell and others, and they're like "Whoa, this is amazing!" So I think that's the kind of thing that people are looking for and it's incumbent on our infrastructure to expose people to that.

Skift: At StartUp Miami, you discussed how Miami is a “hub of hubs.” Can you expand on that a bit?

Florida: It is based on Miami’s strategic location, because it has a great airport and it’s particularly a place that resonates with Latin Americans, so it’s a place where people from the urban hubs in Latin America and Europe and the United States want to be. For all of those millions of people and entrepreneurs, Miami is a convening point, and I think that’s a real advantage for Miami.

Skift: The Lyft session at StartUp Miami was a crowd favorite. What was your takeaway from that?

Florida: With Lyft, we’re seeing this real revolution in mobility, and how people get around and how they don’t want to own a car. The other transit options here in Miami are simply awful.

So ride-sharing services like Lyft make a great deal of sense. What I particularly took away from that conversation is a way not only get more affluent people around, but it’s a way for drivers to make money with their own cars and supplement their income. The other thing is, we know there’s a spatial mismatch between where disadvantaged people live and where jobs are, so it could be a way to connect more low income people to more jobs.



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