



Posted on Tue, Apr. 06, 2010

'Creative Class' author to speak at summit

Summit to show how to marry creativity, economic development

By Beverly Fortune
bfortune@herald-leader.com

Richard Florida's best-selling book *The Rise of the Creative Class* has prompted many cities to shift from traditional ideas of economic development, such as giving tax breaks to lure businesses, to focusing on amenities like developing a lively arts and cultural scene, preserving historic buildings, creating vibrancy of street life, and embracing ethnic and racial diversity.

In his book, Florida says these quality-of-life issues are important to educated and productive people who power innovation and entrepreneurial and economic growth.

Florida will be the keynote speaker Wednesday night at the opening of the Creative Cities Summit in Lexington, a three-day international conference of people focused on economic development and revitalization of their communities. The summit, Wednesday through Friday, will be concentrated at Lexington Center but will involve other locations, too.

Florida "talks about the intersection between quality of life and work-force development and talent retention, how those things working together are so important," said Anthony Wright of the mayor's office of economic development.

Wright heard Florida in 2008 at a Creative Cities Summit in Detroit, which he attended with several others from Lexington on a trip funded by a John S. and James L. Knight Foundation grant.

Wright was so inspired after hearing Florida that he approached Peter Kageyama, whose company produces Creative Cities Summits, about bringing the event to Lexington. This week's summit will be Kageyama's third.

Once Kageyama agreed, he visited Lexington for a least one week a month for the past year.

Wright said Lexington has creative and talented people, "but that doesn't mean we can't open ourselves up and even attract more."

The summit has the potential to be a "coalescing event" that Wright anticipates will bring talented people in the community together. "It can equip them with information, stimulate them like I was in Detroit, to go out and make changes," he said.

Another speaker will be Jeremy Gutsche, author of *Exploiting Chaos*, who notes in his book that times of change and uncertainty can spark the greatest opportunities for innovation.

"He talks about future trends," Wright said. "We want him here to open our minds and inspire us to say, 'OK, where do we need to go from here?'"

Kageyama said the framework for the summit is "a crisis is a terrible thing to waste. Cities big and small, we're all in this economic turmoil together."

It is strategic, he said, for communities to look at ways to use this crisis to emerge stronger at the end of it.

"It's doing things like asking: What do we value the most? Where can we cut? Where can we become more creative and innovative in our approaches to economic development?" Wright said.

Organizers expect more than 500 attendees, a diverse group that will include economic development professionals, artists and arts advocates, government officials, urban planners, architects, business leaders, young professionals, educators, entrepreneurs and college students.

One session will look at issues and opportunities facing the African-American creative class; another will focus on female entrepreneurs. Mike Lydon, co-author of *The Smart Growth Manual*, will talk about "taking your streets back

from the tyranny of the highway department."

Bill Strickland will talk about how he established the Manchester-Bidwell arts and jobs training center for disadvantaged adults and young people in the poorest section of Pittsburgh. A group from Detroit will share ideas on how their depressed, post-industrial city is creating a new future for itself.

The summit will present a mix of theory and real-world examples of best practices of how cities are changing and reinventing themselves, said downtown developer Phil Holoubek, who helped organize the summit. "And those real experiences are critical. If it was just theory, it would not be as powerful."

Reach Beverly Fortune at (859) 231-3251 or 1-800-950-6397, Ext. 3251.

© 2010 Kentucky.com and wire service sources. All Rights Reserved. <http://www.kentucky.com>