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ECONOMICS

The Creative Class

By Robert William Wolff

When was the last time you read or heard someone say that LGBTQ folk are among the factors key to the success of a region or urban area? Richard Florida, one of the most influential people

One anticipated outcome of the new creative economy is that while an economy based on manufacturing and services was essential for early and mid-20th century communities in the USA that wanted to attract residents,

Florida goes on to highlight the high-tech industry in the area, as well as its youthful orientation. Thus, for the size of Burlington, with the state's civil union law in place and organizations such as SafeSpace,

In Florida's book *Cities and the Creative Class*, Burlington, Vermont is recognized as an urban area that demonstrates in day-to-day life how a creative economy functions.

in the field of public policy, has written three books that stress the importance of diversity, including a wealth of LGBTQ people, in developing the economies of geographic areas in the 21st century. Florida is an economist who recently left his post as professor in regional economic development at Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, to become a professor in public policy at George Mason University in Virginia. His books are *The Rise of the Creative Class ... and how it's transforming work, leisure & everyday life*; *Cities and the Creative Class*; and *The Flight of the Creative Class*.

Florida introduces the "creative economy" as the 21st century's definition of a successful economy, shifting from economies based on manufacturing and services. He states that at the core of a creative economy is the diversity LGBTQ people and other minorities provide to a community. To support his work, Florida uses "The Gay Index," * which includes maps of each state, high density areas within some states and large populations of same-sex couples based on the 2000 census.

In discussing the creative economy, Florida postulates that the "three T's" of technology, talent and tolerance underpin the definition of successful economies of cities in the 21st century. Measuring factors against various indexes recognized in academia, Florida and his associates found that only in urban areas where the three T's were present did a creative economy exist. By "creative economy," Florida means an economy design that includes: engineering, science, technology, computer technology, software, writing and performing of music, choreography of dance, theatre artists, restaurateurs, craftspeople, painters, printmakers and sculptors.

the 21st century institutions that require creative people will need to move to locations where creative people wish to live and work. Then, these institutions will have to create work situations that fit the needs and desires of the creative people they wish to attract.

Although Florida tells his story partly through numbers and graphs, he also provides a more human aspect with his interviews of people who

Outright Vermont, RU12? Queer Community Center, Mountain Pride Media and PFLAG of Champlain Valley, the city becomes an attractive place for those who seek a good place to live in a small city. And, clearly, the welcome mat is out for LGBTQ people who consider moving to the area.

For many LGBTQ folks, Florida's books can be a prideful, inspiring and refreshing look at one of the many ways our com-

Creative Economy Public Discussions

- Rutland High School: March 30 at 4 pm. For more information e-mail RutlandCreative@yahoo.com or call Tara at the Rutland Regional Planning Commission at 802.775.0871.
- St. Albans: Franklin County Senior Center, April 11 at 4 pm. Contact Karen at St. Albans For the Future at 802.524.1500.
- Windsor: American Legion Hall, April 24 at 4 pm. Contact Ann Lawler at the American Precision Museum, alawless@americanprecision.org or at 802.674.5781.

choose to move from one community to another.

In his book "Cities and the Creative Class," Florida recognizes Burlington, Vermont as an urban area that demonstrates in day-to-day life how a creative economy functions; while giving a nod to the LGBTQ community's contributions to Burlington's economic success.

Florida states that "Burlington has sought to combine economic development, environmental health, and outdoor amenities into a powerful package for generating sustainable economic advantage. The city has combined entrepreneurship, commitment to diversity, progressive and participatory civic culture; and commitment to the environmental and natural amenities to spur economic development."

community supports and enriches the general welfare of 21st century society. And, in a time when the dominant US political party is moving back to the "burn 'em" attitude of Europe in the 1700's, Florida's research and findings that queer people are key to the economies of communities is encouraging. ▼

To learn more about Richard Florida's works, see www.creativeclass.org.

* *The Gay Index*, by Gary J. Gates and Jason Ost, Urban Institute Press.

➔ Robert William Wolff is a scenery and lighting designer and potter who lives in Randolph, Vt. He is a member of the R.U.1.2? board of directors and a volunteer at OITM.

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