

# Deciphering Creative Cities Forum



## Creative Cities Network First Meeting

The Deciphering Creative Cities forum held to launch the Creative Cities Network brought together urban leaders and catalyst speakers to share their insights and begin to get beyond the rhetoric on creative cities.

Speakers and participants alike rose to the challenge.

**Here are a few of the potent ideas that emerged from the forum.**

## Context from the National Meeting

- Bill Bishop's presentation on 'The Big Sort' highlighted the trend towards intensified clustering of like-minded people in America. **We are sorting ourselves by beliefs, values and lifestyles.** That poses a major challenge for urban leaders. A few cities likely to be big winners but many more cities will not benefit from this trend.

- Joe Cortright's '**Theories of Urban Success**' presents a palette of **opportunities for cities**, outlining the theories that cities have drawn upon for revitalization efforts summarized under 3 families: firms, people and place.

## Speaker Insights

- **The Power of One Connected:**

This session asked panelists from different perspectives to consider: **In a time where the ultimate resources are ideas, connections and innovation, how can we facilitate these very things?**

- Ben Self – **Online tools are being used in new ways to network, organize and act.** This has implications for how to engage people with issues, the degree to which they expect to be engaged and how city leaders might harness this energy and resource to the advantage of their cities.

- Joyce Bromberg – **Design principles for encouraging interaction in workplaces offer insights for the creation of public spaces.** Essential to exchange are: artifacts for presenting or sharing information, a comfortable and inspiring setting, face to face interaction, and forming a **'shared mind'** or a common purpose.
- Johann Zietsman – The creativity (and propensity for ideas, connections, innovation) of a collective can be observed through several characteristics:
  - Identity or **DNA** of a city
  - **Flexibility** and openness to risk
  - **Ownership**: level of ownership and engagement
  - **Leadership**: degree to which the focus is on people and on the future.
- **Places of Innovation:**
  - Joyce Bromberg and Mark Baloga – This workshop explored the design principles used at Steelcase for designing places for interaction, creativity and innovation in work environments and how these could be applied to the public realm.
    - User-centered design enables context-appropriate spaces tailored to people's needs. Observation is important to customizing experience of place.
    - **Social, spatial and informational dimensions are fundamental to environments for interaction geared towards innovation.**

- Places should be treated as an ecology, so the impact of changes to elements of a place need to be considered.
- Shelley Evenson – Examining library amenities for opportunities to engage young professionals, Carnegie Mellon University students proposed ideas for adapting service provision. A common theme was **the desire of young professionals for a sense of community in the library experience.**
- **Deciphering Creative Cities workshop:**

Catalyst speakers presented their ideas on creative cities and illustrated with case studies how these concepts have been applied.

  - Tim Jones – Toronto's increasingly intentional development as a creative city has grown through a process involving several elements: debate, infrastructure (as an expression of quality, aspiration and change), events, imagining (through consultation, building the story, shifting mindsets), strategy development and cross-sector collaboration to implement strategies. Tim emphasized the need to **develop the conditions for a creative city to exist.**
  - Jasmin Aber – Providing an overview of concepts that have formed the basis of creative cities ideas to date, Jasmin discussed the value of creative cities and **how creative cities concepts can be applied to designing urban environments.**

- Johann Zietsman – The concept of **‘Ubuntu’ expresses the importance of a sense of collective and mutual well-being and connectedness** for enabling people, and therefore a place, to flourish. Johann’s case studies highlighted the importance of unlocking the potential in people and providing access to opportunity. Case studies also illustrated the value of creativity for re-defining places, for identity of place to evolve with its populations, and to assist transformation of places through finding common purpose.

#### Thursday’s small group discussions:

- Group one discussion: **People, connections and assets are key dimensions to achieve a creative city.** Of those elements, city leaders have the most influence on connections and, to some extent, assets. This has implications for focusing the energies of city leaders developing creative cities.
- Group two discussion: Creative cities is a process for generating better quality of life as an overall goal. Creative cities are evolutionary and constantly transitioning by their very nature. They are about adaptability and flexibility. To foster a creative city **it is necessary to create an environment in which people can contribute to the ‘process’ of creative cities** – where they can ‘plug-in’ and contribute easily, thereby tapping the potential of all individuals.  
**Creative cities are a whole ecosystem.** Leaders must tap existing potential and foster conditions for success rather than construct an end product or “artifacts.”

These ideas provide fertile ground for us to continue the Creative Cities Network conversation.

## So what’s next?

**By recognizing that creativity exists in everyone, the opportunity for cities to succeed significantly expands.** As Paul Krutko so beautifully summarized: between two existing paradigms for cities expressed by Tom Friedman’s ‘race-to-the-bottom’, flat world view versus Richard Florida and Bill Bishop’s spiky world, **perhaps a third paradigm emerges in the creative cities world view.** In this view, **a city’s success depends on the ability to tap or unleash the creative potential** that exists in its people, connections and assets.

The challenge is: **HOW? How can you ‘unlock the potential’ for creativity and innovation in cities?**

And, what are the conditions that will enable a climate or environment in which people can contribute and creativity and innovation can flourish?

Our next Creative Cities Network meeting will focus on these questions. Join us to share and discuss examples of ways to ‘unlock the potential’ for creativity in cities.

This second meeting will be held in New Orleans to coincide with the Urban Next Summit CEOs for Cities is co-hosting with NOLA YURP on July 24 and 25. We anticipate the third Creative Cities Network meeting will be held in early November alongside the Fall National Meeting.

# Refining the Network

With valued input from participants the focus of the Network program has been reconfirmed.

## The Creative Cities Network will

- Enable participants to generate insights and advance understanding of creative cities concepts through connecting with the ideas, knowledge, skills and experience of peer urban leaders as well as experts from diverse fields.
- Provide a forum for mutual exchange, interaction and inspiration.
- Result in greater clarity on creative cities – what they are in essence, how to enable them, where to focus energies and what to aim for.

CEOs for Cities will facilitate the exchange and provide the opportunity for the Network conversations to take place. We aim to capture and express the ideas and energy that result to better communicate the value and opportunities creative cities can offer.



# Thank you to all our contributors for this forum

## Speakers-

Jasmin Aber of UC Berkeley California's Institute of Urban Design and Regional Development & Center for Global Metropolitan Studies

Mark Baloga, Principal Researcher, WorkSpace Futures, Steelcase

Joyce Bromberg, Director, Research, Steelcase  
Shelley Evenson, Associate Professor at Carnegie Mellon University

Tim Jones, President and CEO of Artscape

Ben Self, Founding Partner, Blue State Digital

Johann Zietsman, Director of Mesa Arts & Culture Department and Mesa Arts Center

## Deciphering Creative Cities, Thursday 15 May, Workshop Attendees-

Mr. Eric Avner, Vice President of Economic Development, Haile/US Bank Foundation

Ms. Lisa Abuaf, Sr. Project Manager, Portland Development Commission

Dr. Terry Christensen, Professor, San José State University

Mr. Craig Dunham, Principal, The Rubinoff Company

Ms. Christine Fulton, Vice President of External Relations and Public Finance, DOC-ECONOMOU

Ms. Karen Gagnon, Cool Cities Program Manager, Michigan State Housing Development Authority

Mr. Peter Kageyama, Past President, CreativeTampaBay

Ms. Wee-Lin Khoo, Strategist, Ministry of Trade and Industry, Singapore

Mr. Diego Kolsky, Founder & Principal, Brandfields

Mr. Paul Krutko, Chief Development Officer, City of San José

Ms. Donna Manion, Chairman, CreativeTampaBay

Ms. Lucy Meade, Director of Marketing and Development, Venture Richmond

Ms. Sally Mizerak, President & CEO, Performance Drivers, Inc.

Ms. Mary Navarro, Senior Program Officer, The Heinz Endowments

Ms. Eve Picker, President & CEO, No Wall Productions, Inc.

Mr. Edward A. Shriver, Jr., Principal, Strada

Ms. Kim Walesh, Assistant Director - Economic Development, City of San José

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