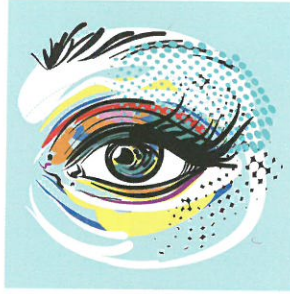


ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Creative Fuel

The arts invigorate local economies and enhance civic life

by Erika D. Peterman



A seemingly random act of art in downtown **West Palm Beach** drew a crowd in an unexpected place on March 9: a public parking garage. At 7:00 p.m., passersby turned into spectators as a modern dance troupe began performing on the Evernia Street parking garage stairwell. The audience swelled to about 2,000 people as the evening went on.

“It was insanely cool,” said **Raphael Clemente, executive director of the West Palm Beach Downtown Development Authority (DDA)**.

Though it might have appeared spontaneous, “Evernia” was a planned collaboration between the DDA and the Demetrius Klein Dance Company – the region’s oldest modern dance troupe – and part of an ongoing, deliberate

investment to maintain a bustling cultural environment downtown. About eight years ago, the DDA began working with local artists to enliven “dead spaces” around town by using visual art, pop-up dance performances and even a boogie-woogie band playing on the street at lunchtime.

“The impact was obvious,” said Clemente, who has a background in urban planning. “Suddenly, these unloved places had a cool factor about them.”

In cities of all sizes across Florida, investments in the arts are yielding positive returns not only in quality of life, but also dollars and cents. From festivals to museums to symphony concerts in parks, the arts are a powerful economic development force in the Sunshine State that generate billions in direct and

indirect revenue, create jobs and boost tourism.

Arts and culture are also an industry. The most recently published “Arts & Economic Prosperity” report from Americans for the Arts (No. 4, published in 2012, based on fiscal year 2010), showed that nonprofit arts activities were major generators of local and state government revenue in each of the 16 Florida regions that participated. (“Arts & Economic Prosperity V” will be released in June.) For example:

Volusia County – Nonprofit arts and cultural organizations and their audiences generated \$1,540,000 in local government revenue and \$2,140,000 in state government revenue.

Alachua County – Nonprofit arts and cultural organizations and their

Low-Cost Ways to Bring the Arts Alive

It doesn't take a lot of money to begin raising a city's artistic quotient. Here are some tips from **West Palm Beach Downtown Development Authority Executive Director Raphael Clemente**:

Engage the local arts community

“I can't say enough about giving local artists the opportunity. They really understand the city, and it helps grow your arts scene by making the work of local artists more visible. It's an upward spiral.”

Be diverse and be yourself.

“Don't do all street art or all sculpture. Do things that are unique to your place. Showcasing the character of your community is the most powerful way of having impact.”

Think big but start small if necessary

“What I would say to any elected official is to be open to trying new things and doing things on a big scale. I would tell staff to understand that their leadership might not be ready to swallow that 50-foot mural, so start small.”

Embrace ‘permarary’

“These are things that can be undone if people really don't like them. Public art can be quite permanent and some of it very expensive, but a performance is only going to happen at that moment. Paint is another great thing that can go away if people don't like it.”



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audiences generated \$3,220,000 in local government revenue and \$4,042,000 in state government revenue.

Central Florida - Nonprofit arts and cultural organizations and their audiences generated \$15,249,000 in local government revenue and \$20,596,000 in state government revenue.

Miami-Dade County - Nonprofit arts and cultural organizations and their audiences generated \$39,212,000 in local government revenue and \$65,731,000 in state government revenue.

MEASURING RESULTS

This connection is evident in **Jacksonville**. The city's official arts agency, the Cultural Council of Greater Jacksonville (CCGJ), receives annual funding from the City Council to provide cultural service grants to local arts organizations following a yearlong application and selection process. **CCGJ Executive Director Tony Allegretti** said that grantees' economic contributions to the city have increased to \$77 million from \$58 million since he began in 2014. To get an idea of the return on investment, consider that the CCGJ awarded about \$2.5 million to 25 eligible organizations in fiscal year 2016-17.

To quantify the financial impact of its cultural service grant program, CCGJ performs rigorous surveys to measure things such as how many vendors the grantees did business with, the number of jobs related to their activities, and



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how many residents and visitors were served.

"It's taxpayer money, so it's really important that we do a great job with the program," Allegretti said. "We have to advocate every year to be part of the city budget, and if you don't show excellence and results, it would be a vulnerable thing. Even the least artsy elected official understands the economic side of it. If we're trying to compel someone who isn't necessarily a symphony season ticket holder, we can drive home the economic advantages."

Cities with thriving arts scenes also have a self-marketing advantage that benefits local businesses and attracts new ones.

"When we recruit companies to move here or expand, what we've got to show is that this is a compelling place - that

there's a lot of innovation and creativity," Allegretti said.

Clemente said he often hears from companies in downtown West Palm Beach that recruiting younger workers is easier now than in previous years. Fostering cultural vibrancy enhances a city's reputation as a desirable place to live and do business, he said.

"If your place is viewed as the 'it' place, cool factor plays a large role in that, and art is a major driver of that perception," Clemente said. "You will be more competitive for investment dollars and all those things that drive your local economy."

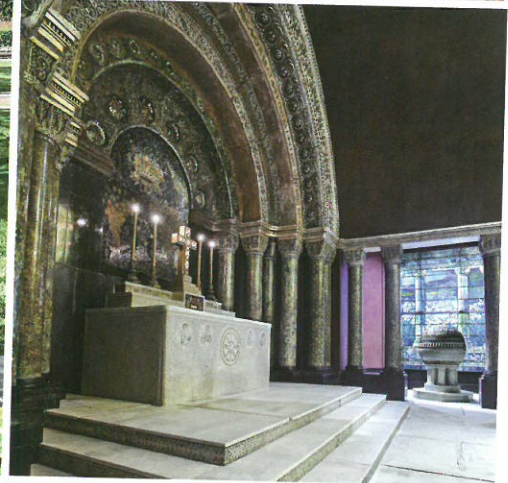
TEAMING UP

In any city, partnerships are essential to cultivating cultural vitality. Through its arts and culture subcommittee, the **City of Winter Park** is working closely with private arts institutions to raise awareness of its impressive local arts scene, which includes at least seven highly regarded museums within nine square miles, and events such as the annual Winter Park Sidewalk Art Festival, which brought 350,000 people to town this spring. The result of this particular public-private collaboration, launching in June, is a comprehensive website directory that will allow users to plan an entire day of arts experiences based on what each participating organization is offering at that time.

City of Winter Park **Communications Director Clarissa Howard** said that each



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PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE CITY OF WINTER PARK

entity will retain its own marketing arm, but the website will provide a one-stop shop for arts devotees and the uninitiated. That includes city residents who, for example, might not know that the city's own Charles Hosmer Museum of American Art houses the world's most comprehensive collection of works by renowned artist Louis Comfort Tiffany.

"The visitors to our museums are very international and less local. The city really wants to bring more residents in, too," Howard said "This opens the eyes of new audiences to the arts, but also [is a resource] for people who are already fans, supporters and patrons of these organizations. It wouldn't succeed if we didn't have the buy-in of the private entities."

Local artists themselves can be the most valuable partners of all in a city's effort to heighten its cultural profile. In the case of downtown West Palm Beach, artists were eager to be active players in that process.

"Artists are some of the most expressive, passionate people, particularly about what they do," Clemente said. "We made sure we paid the artists. That was their job or their second job, and we wanted to be sure we were known as respecting the art and the artists themselves. It's been one of the best moves we've made, and we've gotten a lot of bang for our buck."

Though it is well established as an arts hub, the **City of Dunedin** invited Clemente to town for two days of intensive discussion about urban arts and historic preservation in November 2016. Dunedin **Vice Mayor Deborah Kynes** said Clemente's "placemaking" approach to arts and culture aligns with Dunedin's emphasis on being a unique, culturally rich community.

"I think we got some of his energy and said we wanted to do some unusual things," Kynes said.

The City of Dunedin will soon seek proposals from regional artists to create a public-private art installation called "Give Me Shelter," using a donated bus shelter – complete with a solar-powered charging station – near the entrance of Mease Dunedin Hospital-Baycare. The city's partners include the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority, which provided the bus shelter, and Mease-Baycare.

"Arts, culture and historic preservation go to the heart of placemaking," Kynes said. "All this interweaving of the arts and culture and history – that's what I believe is a major component of bringing people to our city to work, live, play and invest."

COMMUNITY 'LOVE NOTES'

Of course, cities benefit from arts and culture in many ways beyond the bottom line. Cultural experiences and public art

can foster social connections and create a sense of personal attachment to community spaces. The City of Jacksonville's permanent collection of public art – 94 pieces with 34 more soon to debut – enhances a variety of areas citywide, and the private sector has added even more to the canvas. Allegretti noted that the nonprofit Art Republic brought artists from across the world to Jacksonville to create "huge, brilliant murals that help improve quality of life all over the place."

A city's cultural establishments, such as performing arts theaters and museums, have obvious value. But also important are what Clemente calls "instigations," or art that occurs outside of traditional venues and often takes people by surprise.

"When you take art out of those institutions and you put it in the public space for free and it's just there ... I like to call it love notes to your community. Maybe it's a mural or it's a beautiful thing just for the sake of being a beautiful thing for the public," he said. "What I have been continually amazed by is how frequently people take photographs of the artwork or other things, post it on social media and tag it as downtown West Palm Beach. Our people are marketing our place. They want to show how cool this stuff is."

Erika D. Peterman is a freelance writer. 