

THE *Art* OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Kentucky is harnessing culture to build stronger communities.

by GARY DAUGHTERS

Creative industries are underestimated as drivers of economic development. They make for creative places.

Creative places attract skilled workers and tourists. Kentucky, through its support of the arts and other creative enterprises, understands this.

Louisville's Hackerspace enables creative people to meet, inspire one another and collaborate. The River Arts Greenway in Hazard strives to inspire entrepreneurship and downtown revitalization by providing a civic space for making and displaying art. The aging Carter House Hotel in Vanceburg has been converted into a community conference center, bed-and-breakfast and training space for entrepreneurial education.

The arts are increasingly crucial to the branding and attraction efforts of

communities large and small, as the young and talented workers they seek want excitement and sense of place.

Here are four of the many Kentucky communities showing leadership in the arts.

BEREA: A Unique History

As early as the 1870s, Berea was recognized as a center for traditional Appalachian crafts. Today, arts and culture are still at the core of Berea's social and economic growth.

The Kentucky Artisan Center at Berea was created as an economic development initiative. Having hosted more than a million visitors since its opening in 2003, the Artisan Center promotes Kentucky culture and provides visibility to artists engaged in regional pursuits such as jewelry, pottery, weaving, statuary and other handicrafts.



Berea's Festival of Learnshops, which runs for two weeks each July, encourages visitors to lengthen their stays in the city of 15,000 by enrolling in classes teaching dulcimer, blacksmithing, creative writing and other local traditions.

PADUCAH: UNESCO Creative City

Paducah is home to the National Quilt Museum and, in 2013, was named a UNESCO Creative City of Crafts and Folk Art. The city's Artist Relocation Program, through which artists purchase abandoned homes and properties at greatly reduced costs, has helped revive the city's LowerTown section.

Paducah is one of six creative districts as certified by the Kentucky Arts Council. It's home to the American Quilters Society, which hosts QuiltWeek in Paducah each April. The Quilt Museum attracts thousands of visitors annually, generating millions of dollars from tourists. The city is using the UNESCO designation to increase the numbers of tourists it gets by promoting Paducah as an arts destination.

OWENSBORO: Theater of Innovation

In Owensboro, on the banks of the Ohio River in Western Kentucky, an innovative program centered on a downtown theater is helping students from three colleges develop the skills they need to take the world's stage.

Opened in 1992, RiverPark Center boasts a 1,500-seat theater that is home to both the city's symphony and to world-class touring productions from "Fiddler on the Roof" to "The Producers."

RiverPark Center receives substantial support from the state, including the Kentucky Arts Council. Owensboro Technical College, Brescia University and Kentucky Wesleyan offer degrees in theater production that leverage the Benefits of RiverPark Center.

LOUISVILLE: The Arts as Economic Development

Louisville boasts of having established the nation's first contemporary art

chamber of commerce, IDEAS 40203, named for a city ZIP code. As a contemporary arts chamber, IDEAS' main member groups are professional artists, entrepreneurs and nonprofits engaged in social entrepreneurship.

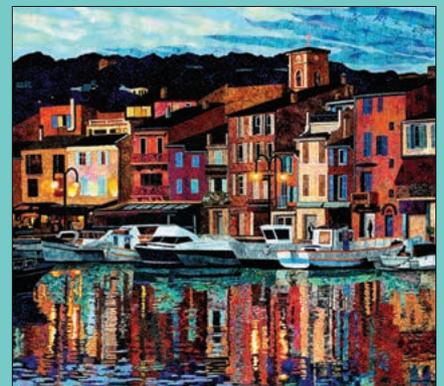
IDEAS organizes gatherings for artists and entrepreneurs to pitch new project ideas to potential funders, offers small business workshops for aspiring professional artists and has sponsored music and dance performances for young people as an alternative to violence.

IDEAS has partnered with YouthBuild Louisville, an education, job training and leadership program, to send two local youth to apprentice in France with the King's Kitchen Garden at Versailles.

"That's economic development," says Theo Edmonds, an artist and lawyer who co-founded IDEAS. "We're using education, we're using art, we're using landscape architecture to provide opportunities for two young leaders who have proven by their actions that they are willing to work for it."

In south central Kentucky's Somerset, The Center for Rural Development, a nonprofit founded in 1996, provides space and programming for arts and cultural programming, first-responder certification courses, leadership training and business and technology services for the region's companies. By hosting events, performances and educational opportunities, The Center for Rural Development enriches the region through culture, workforce training and community and business development.

The Mountain Arts Center in the Eastern Kentucky city of Prestonsburg welcomes audiences for musical performances in educational workshops in traditional Appalachian, bluegrass, gospel, country, rock and more. Its commercial recording studio, professional instructors in a wide range of instruments and styles, arts gallery and arts education room provide the Center with attractive, multifunctional opportunities to celebrate, preserve and promote regional artistry.



Paducah's National Quilt Museum attracts thousands of visitors annually and has generated millions of dollars for the community.

Photos Courtesy of The National Quilt Museum