

There are many factors that influence a company, or an individual, to select one community over another but when it comes to attracting higher wage jobs and creative talent, the strength of arts and culture in a community is more important than ever. As we continue to add quality jobs to the region, especially those that require innovation and creativity, our support for and investment in arts and culture has become an imperative.

We are better than most: According to the *Arts & Economic Prosperity 5 (AEP5)* national economic impact study, the City of Reno's nonprofit spending on the arts *is double the national median* at \$89 million. This spending by organizations and their audiences supports 2,658 full-time equivalent jobs, generates \$52.8 million in household income to local residents, and delivers \$8 million in local and state government revenue.

However, it may not be enough to really differentiate us from other communities. Every community has a bevy of museums, performing arts programs, and arts in the streets. If we truly want to be the next great city, we need to embrace the arts as an expression of “who we are” and what we value. According to Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, “a high-tech, highly educated workforce prefers a location with creative amenities...and a flourishing arts and culture sector.”

The arts and culture “feel” of a community add value in so many ways. The arts adds creative and innovative jobs like those at the Generator, where Burning Man art is created and assembled, or the Philharmonic where the musicians are employed full time. The arts also drives tourism and sparks creativity and innovation, critical skills employers seek when hiring. Additionally, communities that embrace the arts have higher civic engagement, lower crime rates and lower poverty rates, according to the University of Pennsylvania research.

So as a community, what can we do to “embrace the arts?” We must do more; given that this is increasingly important to our economic vitality. ***Engage in the Arts:*** This seems simple, regular visits to an arts and culture events or venues is more important than ever. It will help to introduce the next generation to the arts and support the starving artists and the programs they provide. ***As a business, consider adding arts and culture as an expense line:*** There are many businesses that support the arts, but unfortunately, most do not. Direct support as in a donation to your favorite arts program, season tickets, memberships, board involvement or just buying tickets for your employees will help.

Arts and Culture are increasingly important to economic development. The workforce, we need to grow our technology and advanced manufacturing sectors, makes decisions on where to live based on “the feel” of a community. Name one “great city” that does not have exceptional arts and culture? The “new” Reno-Sparks is happening, but we need to embrace the arts in a new way as well, if we are to get to the next level on our path to greatness.