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## EDITORIAL: The dark side of catering to the creative class

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A little more than 14 years ago, government planners and enthusiastic citizens listened eagerly to a presentation by Carnegie Mellon University professor Richard Florida, whose ideas on the “creative class” they were sure would help transform this city.

In the city’s ongoing efforts to transform downtown into the vital heart of the city, you can see those ideas still in play today: Nurture the creativity in our own citizens and seek to attract other creative people, make the community as attractive to creative people as possible, give creative people what they like in a community, which is authenticity of setting and experience, diversity in everything (especially people and activities) and a tolerance that values all individuals.

That is well and good, but Florida now confesses there is a dark side to his vision, and Fort Wayne should pay close attention to that, too.

Florida’s predictions have come true more quickly than he expected. “I would have never predicted that this urban revival would come steamrolling through the way it has,” he said in a recent interview. And the stampede of creative types into urban areas has had benefits.

But there have been major costs that Florida didn’t anticipate 15 years ago, which he lays out in his latest book, “The New Urban Crisis.” Rents in the most dynamic cities have skyrocketed, pricing out many ordinary Americans. Cities have become more segregated by income and economic class. Mixed-income neighborhoods have been on the decline, replaced by concentrated pockets of wealth and poverty.

He praises “the clustering of knowledge assets, technology, firms, startups, universities, human capital, talent that so many of us have seen as the motor for innovation and entrepreneurship and productivity and economic growth.” But that same clustering is also at the root of “deep divides in our society.”

Fort Wayne doesn’t need to stop the course it’s on, but it must be mindful of a couple of things: One, it can’t concentrate so much on downtown that it forgets the neighborhoods that have been the glue holding the city together. And it can’t be so enthralled with the creative class that it neglects the working class that keeps the city going.

In a nutshell, we must not be so focused on where we’re going that we forget where we came from.

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