



City Manager announces creative team to lead Star City's transformation

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Roanoke, Virginia, known as the only city in the United States with a mountain in its official limits and for its [10,000 pound neon star](#), has often been the leader in innovative government across the region. The [Roanoke Star](#), for example, stands as a testament to the power of public-private partnerships and the enduring institutions that can be created when citizen-businesses and government share a common vision. This is the essence of progress.

Last week, Star City Manager **Darlene Burcham** issued

a call to the community to identify 30 local leaders who hold the key to turning Roanoke into one of the most desirable and sustainable communities in the country. The 30 individuals selected must be willing to serve as "Creative Connectors" by volunteering their time and skills for four to five hours a week for the next 12 months as part of the [Creative Communities Leadership Program \(CCLP\)](#), which was launched by the [Creative Class Group \(CCG\)](#), a world renowned advisory services firm associated with leading academic [Richard Florida](#).

Florida's article "*The Rise of the Creative Class*" from the [Washington Monthly](#) is subtitled, "Why cities without gays and rock bands are losing the economic development race," and makes a powerful argument that a city cannot thrive without a vibrant creative segment of the community that pushes the city forward. A successful city, according to **Florida**, will harness that creative energy and use it to transform the city's economic vision during times of economic crisis. The presence of an open gay community is often a signal that a city has a thriving *creative-class*. Inclusion and tolerance may have financial rewards.

Interestingly, the **Congressional Budget Office** and [UCLA](#) have concluded that [gay communities are good for the economy](#) (Source: [CBS News](#)). [Ken Reibel](#), in "The Economic Case for Gay Equality," notes that

the estimated 15.3 million gay adults in the United States have a combined buying power of more than \$660 billion, and it's estimated to grow to \$835 billion by 2011, according to **Witeck-Combs Communications**, a strategic marketing communications firm.

Burcham's press release specifically mentions "*orientation*" in its list of desirable applicants, which in other regions of the country may not be an unusual addition. However, in a region dominated by conservatives and religious fundamentalists, **Burcham's** conscious addition speaks volumes about Roanoke City's leadership role in the Valley and beyond.

According to the City's press release . . .

The **CCLP** will be launched at a two-day seminar for the selected leaders on March 30 and 31, where the Creative Class Group will work with them to build an understanding of the creative economy, the community's 4T's (Talent, Technology, Tolerance, and Territory Assets), identify strategic economic goals, and develop a framework of projects to engage the Roanoke community.

Once again, **Roanoke** leads the way in offering an inclusive vision of progress for southwest Virginia.

Posted by Hank Bostwick | Filed Under [City Government](#), [Local](#), [Roanoke](#)