



'Creative Class' guru loves Dayton

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Richard Florida, author of "The Rise of the Creative Class," gave an interview recently in which he said great things about Dayton. Florida's Toronto-based consulting group is working with the region's creative-class types to imagine, organize and realize initiatives that excite especially young and talented people, but that also make a community a better place for everybody.

The full interview doesn't break any new ground if you're familiar with Florida's work. Here's the part about Dayton:

"I was just in Cincinnati and in Dayton, another city I love. They're historical centers of innovation, every one from steel innovation to aluminum innovation, to electronics, to the Wright Brothers, to the car. This is one of the greatest innovative and entrepreneurial centers in the world.

"They have probably one of the greatest clusters of universities in the history of the planet. They're producing phenomenal talent, but, unfortunately, that talent leaves. So, in *The Rise of the Creative Class*, I said the one thing that it needs to become is more open-minded and tolerant. It needs to be more diverse and inclusive. ...

"Another thing the region suffers from is really poor leadership. And I think the reason that is, it really bears the imprint, that as the economy is changing to newer things, away from manufacturing, the leadership still reflects that top-down, vertical, 1950s organization mentality. So you get these conflicts between old-style democratic political machine and business-led organizations.

"Those conflicts become very dysfunctional. I think one of the other things is that if older cities could achieve better leadership, leadership that was more in tune with the future.

"We were working with 30 community catalysts in Greater Dayton a couple weeks ago, and I was blown away by what's happened in downtown Dayton. It's a more interesting and exciting place, filled with arts and restaurants and renovated houses and buildings. But, too, (about) how these 30 catalysts — black, white, young, old, Hispanic, Latino — how much they cared about making their city better. And I think that's the kind of thing you see in parts of Ohio and Illinois, there's this incredible sense that people care, and I think unleashing that energy in people is really key. ..."

Florida knows something about Dayton, having given a speech here several years ago and tailoring his remarks then to what was and wasn't happening. His company is being paid \$150,000 for its current work, but there's no reason to think the guy's opinions are for sale — and you can't buy this kind of praise.