

Now: 'Jobs are moving to people'

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OGDEN -- Conventional wisdom as it relates to job growth suggests that if you build it, they will come.

A leading author suggests that in the new world economy, the reverse is closer to the truth.

"Jobs are moving to people, not the other way around," says Richard Florida, whose 2004 book "The Rise of the Creative Class" has been heralded domestically and internationally as an indicator of America's economic future.

"Our fundamental notions about the economy are not holding up," said Florida, who spoke to a crowd of about 80 earlier this week in downtown Ogden while touring in support of his new book, "Who's Your City?"

The book challenges the popular notion that in the age of globalization and the Internet, where people choose to live is becoming increasingly irrelevant.

"The world is not flat," Florida said. "Place in our age is the single most important economic and social factor. It determines what jobs and options you have."

He cited what he calls the "three Ts" of economic development -- technology, talent and tolerance -- as keys to economic prosperity.

"You need to have technology in the community. You've got to be a place that attracts talent, a magnet. And, you need diversity and tolerance among the people," he said. "When all three of those come together, you get an economic windfall."

He cited an example from Pittsburgh, where he was working on an economic revitalization project for the city at Carnegie Mellon University in the late 1990s.

The Web company Lycos was at the heart of the plan, but one day, the company up and left for the Boston area.

"It wasn't a cost decision. Boston is a much more expensive place to do business," he said.

"They moved for one reason: Access to the pool of knowledgeable, talented and creative people already living in Boston."

Florida says a vibrant arts, cultural and recreational scene is a vital part of economic development because communities with those amenities are more likely to attract the kinds of people who will run the "idea-driven economy" of the future.

"Critics say I have a Bohemian or gay agenda. It's seen as an elitist, cosmopolitan, urban and yuppie group," he said, "but my basic premise is that every single human being is creative, and we can't afford to waste that creative energy and talent."

He compared the current economic turmoil to the late 19th century, when the nation was shifting from an agricultural society to a new system of capitalism.

"Now we're shifting from an industrial system to one based on ideas. Of course it is disruptive. It's going to fundamentally change where our wealth and prosperity come from."