

Cultural Initiatives Releases *Creative Community Index*

*National Creativity Expert Richard Florida
Addresses Findings at Tech Museum Event*

San José, CA – Cultural Initiatives Silicon Valley on July 9th released the results of a groundbreaking two year study that examines the state of creativity in Silicon Valley and its impacts on community development. *The Creative Community Index* shows that 71% of Valley residents either consider themselves artists or have a creative hobby, and nearly half (42%) describe their jobs as requiring “a lot of creativity.” Nearly everyone surveyed (95%) responded that students should have a minimum of one hour of arts education per week, with 66% calling for three hours of arts instruction per week. However, despite the strong public support, fewer than 36% of Santa Clara County elementary students receive as much as one hour of arts instruction per week; 38% of parents said that their children received no arts instruction at all.

The report was presented at the Tech Museum of Innovation on July 9th with a keynote address by Carnegie Mellon University’s Richard Florida. The study’s release coincides with the recent publication of Dr. Florida’s *The Rise of the Creative Class: and how it’s transforming work, leisure, community and everyday life*. Florida argues that in an age dependent on innovation and independent thinking, regions will compete to attract a new kind of educated, creative and productive workforce on the basis of quality of life, openness to diversity and the overall atmosphere promoting creativity—including the health and vitality of their arts and cultural sectors.

While our region rates very strong in Florida’s analysis of places that are able to attract and retain creative workers, he does warn in his book that the Silicon Valley model of economic development, “creating R&D parks, office complexes, technology incubators and the like, all on a quintessentially suburban model,” is on the decline. “The bottom line is that cities need a *people* climate even more than they need a business climate. This means supporting creativity across the board – in all its various facets and dimensions—and building a community that is attractive to creative people, not just high tech companies.” (p. 283)

Cultural Initiatives’ *Creativity Community Index* looks at how Silicon Valley is supporting creativity across the board. Not surprisingly, the study documents that residents here are extremely creative:

- **71% of residents consider themselves to be artistic or to have a creative hobby**; 44% consider a close family member to be an artist
- 42% describe their jobs as requiring “a lot creativity”
- 12% of the Santa Clara County workforce falls into what Richard Florida describes as the workforce’s “super-creative” core. On average, these jobs earn 42% more than the average pay of other jobs in the region

- 12% of residents describe having a personal creative outlet that is technology related, such as web design and software development. This is higher than all other traditionally “non-artistic” creative activities described by residents such as writing, gardening, collecting art, or cooking.

In addition, arts and cultural participation are of strong interest to residents here:

- 80% have attended a live performance in the past 12 months
- 60% have visited a museum
- 92% could identify a cultural activity they enjoy participating in with others.
- Of the 51% of residents who described themselves as artists in some way, 77% considered their personal artistic activities as highly important to them.

However, on a ten-point scale, with 10 being high, at least half the community rates the region as “poor” or “fair” in providing cultural offerings:

- 53% rated the region with a six or lower as a place to attend performances or visit museums.
- 44% gave a six or lower rating to the question of participating in cultural activities with others.

The disconnect between public expectations and reality is most vividly seen in the data produced on arts education:

- 92% of residents believe that students should be required to learn the arts
- **95% of residents believe that the arts should be taught in the classroom at least one hour per week. Two-thirds (66%) believe students should receive a minimum of 3 hours per week. Unfortunately, fewer than 36% of students are receiving even just one hour per week currently.**
- 38% of parents reported that their children received no arts instruction of any kind—in school or privately.

The overall picture of the nonprofit arts sector that came through in the research was one of relatively small and undercapitalized organizations that are nevertheless contributing great value to the community:

- 53% have budgets under \$100,000
- Only 40% of organizations have a paid full-time director
- 52% provide an education program serving K-12 schools, but 85% of the students are reached with only one-visit experiences
- 65% have created original work in the last five years.

“In order to have the kind of creative environment we need to build our community and fuel our economy, we have to start with the schools.” Cultural Initiatives Silicon Valley Executive Director, John Kreidler said. “Teaching the arts is a fundamental first step in developing imagination, encouraging broad-thinking and building a life-long appreciation and participation in the arts. Richard Florida’s work and our Silicon Valley focused research show us that as a community, we need to pay attention to our cultural sector in order to stay competitive.”

About the Creative Community Index:

The Creative Community Index was originally commissioned by the John and James L. Knight Foundation as part of a three-city pilot study to develop cultural indicators of the nonprofit arts sector. In collaboration with City of San José's Office of Cultural Affairs, Cultural Initiatives developed an exhaustive database of 531 Silicon Valley nonprofit arts and cultural organizations. These groups were surveyed on a range of programming, financial and management issues. Cultural Initiatives received responses from 125 organizations and conducted in-depth interviews with 22 of them.

Going beyond the original study request from the Knight Foundation, Cultural Initiatives designed a multi-language public opinion survey to learn more about community attitudes and practices around cultural participation and how they differ across ethnicities. In-person interviews with 361 Silicon Valley residents were conducted in English, Spanish and Vietnamese at 18 locations throughout Santa Clara County. This kind of multi-language cultural participation survey is believed to be the first of its kind in the country.

About Cultural Initiatives Silicon Valley

Cultural Initiatives Silicon Valley is a public benefit organization formed in response to the research and planning efforts of over 1,000 committed community leaders, and dedicated to the development of a comprehensive plan for the cultural transformation of Silicon Valley. Its mission is to advance the vitality of Silicon Valley through broad cultural participation, quality creative education in our schools and a development of an informed and committed leadership in the community.

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