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'We have some talent here'

City receives
high marks
for creativity
sector: study

By Murray McNeill

A NEW study of creative sectors in 11 North America cities including Winnipeg gives the city high marks in a variety of categories, including No. 1 for the number of "bohemians" and No. 2 for "super creative" workers.

The study by The Martin Prosperity Institute at the University of Toronto and Pittsburgh consulting firm Catalytic Inc. used criteria touted by U.S. urban economist Richard Florida and championed locally by former Winnipeg mayor Glen Murray.

It finds that overall, Winnipeg's environment is conducive to the growth of the highly valued creative class, which is deemed essential for staffing creative, high-paying industries such as the information and communications technology (ICT) sector.

The study, paid for by the Information Communication Technology Association of Manitoba (ICTAM), says there are 100,910 members of this creative class in Winnipeg, including designers, entertainers, health-care practitioners, researchers, various professionals, educators, and so on.

ICTAM executive director Kathy Knight said local software developer ID Fusion Software, on Provencher Boulevard, is a good example of a firm that has adopted many of the key attributes in the report to its operations. It has a highly diversified workforce — something that Catalytic managing partner Lou Musante says is a key driver of innovation.

ID Fusion president and CEO Christian Dandeneau said 12 of the 11-year-old firm's 16 full-time workers are either Métis or members of a visible minority. That includes workers from India, Africa and Argentina.

"We really look for people who are not from a mainstream culture and can bring a different perspective on things," Dandeneau said, adding not only has that approach contributed to the company's success, "but it's something I realize now that I have to do even more of."

Knight said the advocacy group's officials wanted to see how Winnipeg's creative sector stacked up against those in other North American cities,



Christian Dandeneau is president and CEO of ID Fusion Software, which has a highly diversified workforce.

and were pleased to see it ranked No. 3 among the 11 similarly sized Canadian and U.S. centres.

The study evaluated Winnipeg's creative sector in four key areas: technology and innovation, talent and workers, tolerance and diversity, and territorial assets and quality of place.

She said that because of its thriving music and arts community, association officials figured Winnipeg would score well on the Bohemian index benchmark, which falls under "tolerance and diversity" and reflects the number of professional, artistically creative people in the local workforce. Not only did it do well, it had the top score in that category.

And they were surprised to see Winnipeg ranked second in the "super-creative core" category, which falls under "talent" and represents the number of employees in the computer, architecture/engineering, science, education, arts and design occupations.

"This is really good news," Musante told ICTAM's annual meeting Thursday, where the study results were released. "This says we have some talent here."

What ICTAM officials weren't expecting, however, was Winnipeg's relatively poor showing — eighth — in the number of visible minorities in the local population.

"I thought we would have been off the charts," Knight said.

The study's other co-author — Kevin Stolarick, research director for The Martin Prosperity Institute — said the low ranking may be due in part to the fact that some of the U.S. cities have large Hispanic and Afro-American populations. So they would score high in the visible-minority category.

She said it was also disappointing to see Winnipeg's last-place showing for patent activity. Although its creativity sector scored well for making use of intellectual property developed else-

How city stacks up

Here's how Winnipeg's creativity sector stacks up against those in 10 other similarly sized North American cities:

- The others are Hamilton, Quebec City, Stockton, Calif., Sarasota, Fla., Greensboro, N.C., Springfield, Mass., McAllen, Texas, Akron, Ohio, Columbia, S.C., and El Paso, Texas.
- The two cities with a higher

overall ranking than Winnipeg are Quebec City and Hamilton.

- No. 1:** Bohemian index
- No. 2:** Super-creative workers
- No. 4:** Creative class as a percentage of local workforce
- No. 8:** Percentage of visible minorities in local population in 2006
- No. 10:** Number of patents issued in 2005
- No. 10:** Patent growth from 2000 to 2005

where, it isn't good at developing new intellectual property on its own.

"We'll put a group together to take a really hard look at it," Knight said. "We want to see what some of the barriers to innovation are, and what are some of the things we can do to overcome them."

She said the association also plans

to use the study as a basis for further developing the province's burgeoning ICT industry, which boasts about 15,000 employees, more than 1,500 companies, and more than \$700 million in sales, including \$227 million in exports.

murray.mcneill@freepress.mb.ca