

## **Carpe diem**

Burlington is at a crossroads when it comes to the potential of a creative economy. The Long Range Planning Commission, Planning and Zoning and CEDO are aware of this. What I would like to suggest is a way to get started in a concrete way that would resolve several ongoing problems. These include the resignation of Peter Owens at CEDO and the on-going discussions around the establishment of a PlanBTVSE steering committee on the one hand and confrontational issues around BCA on the other (I have written a separate paper on the BCA issue. Please contact me if you would like to see that.).

“Creative economy” is a term we see in a number of connections, from the guiding principles being adopted by the development of PlanBTVSE, and in the same place to “creative place making,” as well as a broader discussion based on the economic contribution of the arts as is being used, for example, by the Vermont Arts Council. We can broaden this even further using Burlington's South End as an inspiration. It can provide an example both in understanding what sort of creative making-activity is involved and where optimal incentives can yield best results. A broader conception of a creative economy must not be limited to how an arts council may define art. It must also see where these and all arts merge with an economy that “creates” that includes a broad area of hands-on work commonly referred to as artisan, craft, micro-manufacturing, etc. The focus should be a broader effort to optimize a creative economy that is firmly rooted in the community at large.

The basic need here boils down to the need for a constructive form of cross-genre collaboration in decision-making. I wish to suggest that the Long-Range Planning Committee (and City Council) take the lead in organizing a forum for the creative economy that will have that authority.

What I believe is required now is a higher level authority that, based on my suggested broadening of the concept “creative,” guide the creative economy. As a start, establish a broader area “creative economy forum” that will be able to set guidelines for optimal components of a creative economy, and which would include (a) establishing the component of a community-based strategy for economic development within a creative economy framework; and (b) create a framework to engage area creators in a constructive way leading to concrete proposals.

Step one I would suggest that City Council establish an “arts forum,” not run by BCA, to hear what the arts community has to say as a basis to establish an entity that can pursue possible solutions within the framework of the creative economy. With regard to BCA, these could include re-structuring BCA to allow for a more community-oriented arts authority that will provide the interface between its activities and what the new community entity may establish in open dialogue and/or establish an entity with constructive oversight over BCA that will better define its mandate in an empowered community. This would establish a community-based means to address what role the arts and arts organizations play as part of the creative economy. Ask the City to convene this forum to resolve differences and take stock of potential. Once established,

Step two: the next steps should fall on CEDO. Now, with a new community-focus with Meagan Tuttle at Planning and Zoning, with Peter Owens leaving, it is possible to establish the guidelines that the LRPC is seeking through a broader mandate for CEDO by ensuring that the new director takes the creative economy as a main focus (and not infill for affordable housing, etc).

Step three: this would possible involve the establishment of a community-based “council” on the creative economy with broad authority over the various organizations, including BCA and other arts organizations, as well as other such “steering committees” that would be set up to incentivize development.

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