



The Business of Art

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By Congressman Dennis Moore
Promoting the arts can help improve the local economy.

In business, staying still is fatal. Businesses and the economies they run must always be searching for the next big trend and new ways to grow. Now, the next big thing may be one of humankind's oldest occupations.

Art has not typically been considered big business in the 21st century, especially not the grassroots, often non-profit art communities fueled by local artists. However, new research shows that investing in and promoting the arts are simple, cost-effective ways to bolster local economies.

The numbers are impressive. For every \$1,000 spent annually by a non-profit art business, the community reaps three full-time jobs with \$90,554 in annual household income, an additional \$2,623 in annual revenue for local governments and \$3,479 for state governments. Specifically, a 2004 study to assess the effect of the non-profit arts industry on the five-county Kansas City metropolitan area found that the industry generated \$297 million annually, created 4,516 full-time jobs, and drew \$3 million in revenue for local governments.

These numbers reflect only the direct economic benefits. This industry comes with additional advantages; one being that these are mostly local endeavors. These businesses tend to buy locally and employ local artists. The artists spend their money locally and the revenue generated stays in the Kansas City area longer. Our children also benefit from participating in the arts. Research demonstrates that a significant link exists between arts education and students' academic performance, as well as their social development, motivations, attitudes and disposition toward learning.

Art events, like the Plaza Art Fair, hold still more promise. The study found that 4.5 million people attended such events in the Kansas City metro area in 2004, but only 14 percent were from out of town. Visitors spend, on average, about twice what locals spend at such events. By investing even more to strengthen our thriving arts community in Kansas City, we can encourage more cultural tourism dollars.

The benefits could not be clearer. The arts are central to the economic growth and cultural vitality of communities around the world. Now is the time for local governments and the business community to join forces and invest in the arts for Kansas City. Both will prosper financially and the community as a whole will be enriched culturally and economically.

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