DENVER: Creative Capital of the Rocky Mountain West

Powering Innovation Economies

Urban Land Institute
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Director of Creative Sector Initiatives
Arts & Venues Denver
About Denver

- Denver’s creative sector
  - 2,900 creative enterprises employing 19,000 people
  - 8 distinct arts districts representing 120 galleries
  - 180 film-related businesses
  - 160 performance venues

- World-class cultural assets

- Recent cultural capital projects

- Resurgence of city-provided cultural programming & public art projects

- Strong DIY spirit: Active, innovative, engaged

- Responsive to the changing economic climate
Benefits of the Creative Sector

**Measurable benefits:**
- Jobs
- Economic activity & impact
- Cultural tourism
- Arts education

**Immeasurable benefits:**
- Provide unique experiences for residents
- Promote neighborhood revitalization and vitality
- Attract a talented workforce
- Advance a brand

Minsuk Cho
Pavilion for Public Discourse at City Park
DNC, 2088
Create Denver seeks to strengthen the overall health and vitality of Denver by supporting the growth and development of the creative sector, including individual artists and creative enterprises such as film, music, art galleries, art districts, fashion and graphic design.

- Economic gardening initiative
Principles

- Innovative
- Collaborative
- Honor DIY spirit
- What is the City uniquely positioned to support or accomplish?
Strategies

- Heat-seeking
- Opportunistic
- Program development vs. policy development
- Focus on business development & entrepreneurship
Pop-Up Store

- First store incubated during Create Denver Week: 26 artists, 150 items sold
- Second store prototyped at the Denver Pavilions for 5 months: $100,000 gross sales
- Current store at Denver Pavilions; currently subleases to the new Denver Design Incubator

Program Impact:
- Direct economic impact for the artists
- Exporting Denver’s brand
- Incubated a new business and provided test market for artists
- Lease of vacant storefront
Create Denver Loan Fund

- Microloan program for creative businesses
- **20** loans totaling **$275,000** to creative businesses since 2007
- Borrowers include blue chip galleries to hipster DIY craft store to snowsport apparel
11-week business plan course designed for Denver’s creative entrepreneurs

Partner with Denver Metro Small Business Development Center

51 entrepreneurs enrolled and completed the course
Create Denver Week

- 4-day event with 150 creative enterprises collaborating on programming

- Program purpose:
  - Showcase
  - Bridge
  - Catalyze
  - Advance the Create Denver brand

- How do you “Create Denver”?
Design by Colorado exhibition

- **28** Colorado designers, August 2011 – February 2012
- Collaboration between Create Denver, Colorado Creative Industries and DIA
- **60,000** travelers will pass the exhibition daily
- Exemplify and reinforce Denver and Colorado’s brand
Future Steps

- Arts District Summit
- Policy development
- Place-based opportunity
  - In-fill development
  - Denver Union Station
- Business incubation, expansion, attraction & retention
- Diversity
- Brand development
THANK YOU