

Creative math

A George Mason University professor says affluent consumers are pooling in cities with a reputation for being tolerant and diverse.

Your first two books—*The Rise of the Creative Class* (Perseus Books Group, 2002) and *The Flight of the Creative Class* (Collins, 2005)—deal with the evolution of, and competition for, the creative class. What does this group look like? The creative class is a fast-growing, highly educated, and well-paid segment of the population that now includes more than 38 million Americans—roughly 30 percent of the entire U.S. workforce. The core of this new class includes scientists, engineers, professors, novelists, artists, entertainers, designers, architects, cultural figures, think-tank researchers, and other opinion makers. Beyond this core group, the creative class also includes professionals, technicians, and other workers who engage in creative problem solving in knowledge-intensive industries.

What other insights into these consumers can you share? I did some research with the Gallup Organization for my new book, which will be out in early 2007, to find out where people want to live and work. We conducted surveys, interviews, and focus groups with 3,000 Americans across 20 major metropolitan areas. Besides wanting the usual attributes of low crime, great schools, and a thriving job market, members of the creative class want to be in a place that is exciting and challenging, is open to new ideas, and values them as individuals.

How are these consumers affecting local economies and real estate markets? Those regions of the United States that have large numbers of creative-class members are also among the most affluent and fastest growing. According to available evidence, there's a large-scale re-sorting of people nationwide. For example, the population of college graduates is much more concentrated today than it was in 1970, when it was relatively evenly spread across the country. About a dozen metropolitan regions in the United States are becoming centers of the creative class. The list isn't surprising: San Francisco; Seattle; Boston; New York; Chicago; Denver; Silicon Valley, Calif.; Austin, Texas; and the Research Triangle in North Carolina.

What impact is the creative class having on housing types or features? For members of the creative class, the idea of living in one place and commuting to another is over. Their work patterns are very much 24/7. Because they spend more time working in their home, their housing needs to accommodate the new combinations of live-work.

The real estate sector also needs to invent new types of intermediate work spaces outside the home for them. Too often, the only options for alternative work space today are a coffeehouse or a hotel lobby. I tell my friends who are real estate developers that when they do a major new development, they have to think not only about places for living and working but also about "third places" that can be used for business meetings and as alternative work spaces.

What else are you tracking that could emerge as an important trend? I'm keeping an eye on the rise of what I call the "super-multiple households"—that is, the growing number of people who have two or three homes that they use a great deal. Communities are going to have to adapt to having an increased number of residents who live in the locale for only one-half or one-third of the year. As more and more people move among their different homes, communities are going to have to adjust to being part of that flow. — *B.G. Yovovich*

For more about Florida, go to www.creativeclass.org.



PHOTO FOR RM BY ADAM AUJEL ©2006