



Urban theorist expected to focus on change during Utica visit



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UTICA — Talent. Technology. Talent.

Those are the “three T’s” that Richard Florida, an internationally known urban theorist, says will vault a community toward positive change. Local leaders believe Utica already possesses those T’s, but they need a catalyst.

Florida’s speech at 7 p.m. Thursday at the Stanley Center for the Arts could be the spark.

“It will be a real prodding,” said John Zogby, a Utica-based pollster and a friend of Florida’s. “I think we have all of the pieces, and one of the things that is remarkable to me is how many people are doing remarkable things but they don’t know the existence of each other. This provides a kind of conductivity.”

SUBMITTED PHOTO Photo of Richard Florida from the Martin Prosperity Institute posing in the hallway outside of his office in Toronto Nov. 9. Florida will speak at 7 p.m. Thursday at the Stanley Center for the Arts.

Florida, a business and creativity professor at the University of Toronto and a global research professor at New York University and senior editor at the Atlantic magazine, will speak as part of the Community Foundation of Herkimer & Oneida Counties Inc.’s Corporate Sponsors Program Speaker Series.

Florida is expected to speak about the idea of the creative class – those who work in sectors such as technology, education and healthcare, among others, as well as entrepreneurs and innovators. That class makes up about 33 percent of a workforce in any given community.

The members of this class are united by a general “openness to experience,” which is why Florida said those populations cluster in “exciting urban areas.”

Utica has the appropriate pieces for change, Florida said in an email, which can be shown through the eight area colleges and universities as well as having a willingness to accept diversity in the form of the increasing refugee populations.

Inciting change in a community, however, is not secluded to the creative class. Blue collar workers and those in service industries are just as important in moving a society along.

“We have to make sure the contributions of all workers and all residents are valued,” he said in an email.

Peggy O’Shea, CEO of the foundation, said a pre-event gathering will occur from 6 to 7 p.m. and include some of those movers and shakers who are initiating change in the area, including the group organizing the October TEDxUtica event.

“I think this community right now is experiencing a rebirth or growth, and it’s very thrilling for us,” she said.

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