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## Ann Markusen: Reaping the hidden artistic dividend

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Most of us think economic vitality is still about manufacturing prowess, high tech, business services and people buying cars and houses. The arts? Something superfluous, nice if you can afford them, flourishing only where enlightened wealth supports them.

But for a successful regional economy, there's a payoff on the arts -- an *artistic dividend* -- that is pervasive. In an exploratory study, my colleague David King and I found that concentrations of artists raise overall productivity and earnings in a regional economy in multiple ways. Many artists export their work, bringing income to a region. Their creativity and skills enhance the design, production and marketing of products and services in other sectors. Artists purchase supplies, lease space and employ accountants, attorneys and other professionals, sometimes inducing innovation among their suppliers. And firms find it easier to recruit top-notch employees by demonstrating the abundance of artistic activity in a region.

Artists are more likely to be self-employed. Many build remarkably entrepreneurial careers. Rather than living in poverty, working menial jobs or waiting for the next grant or role, they actively seek diverse markets and venues for their work. Here in the Twin Cities, many artists distribute their work via the Internet, design firms, art fairs, galleries and publishers. Many dancers, actors and musicians live here but travel to audition and work, bringing their pay back home.

Compared with similarly sized metropolitan areas, the Twin Cities hosts a large contingent of artists (actors, directors, performance artists, dancers, choreographers, musicians, composers, writers, painters, sculptors and photographers).

Estimating the size of the artistic dividend by the share of artists in the regional workforce, we find the preeminence of New York and Los Angeles as artistic centers waning. Artists are spreading out toward selective second-tier cities such as San Francisco, Seattle, Albuquerque and Minneapolis-St. Paul. Artistic concentration is not a function of rapid growth -- fast-growing Atlanta and Dallas-Fort Worth have below-average concentrations of artists, as do slower-growing Chicago, Pittsburgh and Cleveland.

Why is our region so attractive? Artists identify three features of the Twin Cities as key to their decisions to stay or locate here: vibrant artistic networks, enhanced by live/work spaces and unique membership organizations like the Loft; an array of arts venues and generous arts funding; and quality of life at affordable prices.

Networks of artists offer apprenticeships to younger and career-switching aspirants. The Loft and the local chapter of the National Writers Union have contributed to the high incidence of writers in the region. Artists' connections with, and learning from, each other multiply in renovated studios and live/work spaces like the California Building, Lowertown's Tilsner Artists Cooperation and Frogtown's Family Lofts.

The Twin Cities artistic dividend is a product of past commitments by philanthropists, patrons and government. The advent of ambitious groups such as the Guthrie Theater, Walker Art Center and St. Paul Chamber Orchestra diversified regional arts offerings beyond an older tradition under which a city had just one major fine arts museum, one symphony orchestra and one choice of a traveling Broadway show. This wider, richer competition has enlivened the arts scene, beckoned larger audiences, and attracted more actors, dancers, musicians and visual artists.