The Impact of Creative Entrepreneurs on Community, Placemaking & Poverty

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Rockford, Illinois in 2010

- Urban Fabric was there
- 21% Unemployment – 17,000 manufacturing jobs lost
- 60% + vacancy rate in downtown
- 40,000 people living under the poverty level
- Example of a fast failure in downtown - 2009
Who is the Creative Entrepreneur?

- More than just artists
- Socio-economic class is NOT a factor
- Bored by traditional biz classes
Creating the Creative Business Class

• Using the entrepreneurial talent we had
• How artists and other creative types learn
• Visual Journaling
• Interactive Participation
• Retraining the Brain to Succeed
• And…Business Skills
Using Non-Traditional Incubators

- The City Market
- Pop-up Shops
- In-Store Events
- Creating a Wow Shopping Experience!
Market to Storefront - Bella Luna Bakery

- Started in Rockford City Market June, 2010
- Took creative business class fall 2010
- Worked like crazy from 2010 to 2013
- Looked at 16 different locations in downtown Rockford before finding the right one
- Applied for CDBG funds to build a kitchen at new location in downtown Rockford
- Opened at new location August 2013
- Looking at mass producing their biscotti
Market to Manufacturer – Candle Crest

- Started in the Rockford City Market June, 2010
- Manufacturing soy candles in garage
- Took creative business class in spring 2011
- Worked like crazy from 2010 to 2014 sales increased from $4600 to $100,000+ in 4 years
- Fall 2014 - applied for CDBG funds to expand manufacturing & rented larger facility at 1418 20th St. & hired more employees
- September 19, 2014 opened retail shop
Artistic talents know no socio-economic boundaries, regardless of educational attainment, income levels, mental or physical handicap, race, ethnicity or gender. They can only be underutilized or ignored.
Results are based on a total of four classes given in 2013. Over 82 participants originally registered for the course.
A total of twenty-seven creative entrepreneurs, 42.9\% of participants, either started or expanded businesses in the Rockford region. Many are still located at the City Market and others, especially the artists, are now selling in art galleries and shows in and around Rockford. Five had or started on-line shops at Etsy.com.