

Growing a Downtown Arts District

How do you grow an arts district? For Urbana, Ill., residents, it was about organizing locally and enlisting city officials to offer tangible economic incentives to potential galleries.

In the spring of 2006, there were three core arts-related businesses in close proximity: Cinema Gallery, International Galleries and Griggs Street Potters. Cinema Gallery owner Carolyn Baxley saw a potential for growth. "I wanted to develop a creative cluster of arts-related businesses with common goals," she says.

Baxley teamed up with 40 North | 88 West art council's former executive director Jennifer Armstrong to start working with the city to establish an incentive program.

The official City of Urbana's Art Gallery Incentive Program consists of a monthly rent subsidy and a one-time start-up grant. Arts-related businesses that qualify receive up to 50% of their monthly rent amount or \$600 per month for 12 months. To offset relocation, advertising or tenant improvement costs, businesses may also apply for a \$2,000 grant.

"The incentive program has helped attract 14 retail businesses to downtown Urbana over the past two years—in a struggling economy," local redevelopment specialist Ryan Brault explains. "It has helped fill spaces that would have otherwise been vacant, generated tax revenue and increased the overall vibrancy of downtown Urbana."

But the cooperative spirit doesn't stop there. Through the Urbana Business Association, local businesses band together to produce co-op advertising and events, including gallery openings, festivals and art installations.

To learn more about the program, visit www.urbanabusiness.com.

—Claire Patterson Blome

Downtown Urbana, Ill., has flourished under its Art Gallery Incentive Program, even during tough economic times.



Jewelry Week Hits Las Vegas

Sin City is going to be glittering even more than usual this spring, as artists, designers, dealers and retailers from around the world gather for Jewelry Week in June.

The centerpiece of the week is JCK Las Vegas, which attracts 20,000 buyers to the area. The 19th annual show will take place June 4-7, offering retailers fashion-forward selections in jewelry, gems and timepieces.

Over the years, many other tradeshows have joined Jewelry Week to take advantage of the unique energy in the city and add a specialized market to the landscape. Among the other shows on this year's roster are:

- The 12th annual GLDA Las Vegas Gem & Jewelry trade show, offering gemstones, one-of-a-kind jewelry and estate jewelry May 31-June 3.

- The AGTA GemFair, featuring 200 exhibitors of gemstones, cultured pearls and gemstone jewelry, June 3-7.

- The 15th annual Couture show, attracting luxury retailers with cutting-edge jewelry designs June 3-7.

Making its debut at Jewelry Week this year, NICHE: The Show will offer jewelry retailers a handcrafted alternative—all exhibitors are artists working in the U.S. and Canada. Taking place June 6-8, the show is the latest venture of The Rosen Group, NICHE magazine's parent company.

Also coinciding with Jewelry Week is the American Craft Retailers Expo (ACRE). The show will bring North American craft artists working in all mediums to Las Vegas June 5-7. —Sara Baker

Goldsmith Constance Wicklund Gildea will be exhibiting at NICHE: The Show June 6-8.

