



CREATIVE**MANY**

CREATIVEstate[®]
2016 Creative Industries Report **MICHIGAN**

REGIONAL PROFILE

Flint

Spinning Circle/Shooting
Cloud by Raphael Shirley
for "Free City 2013"
organized by the Flint
Public Art Project.

Photo Credit: Raphael Shirley

REGIONAL PROFILE

Flint





Flint: Revitalization

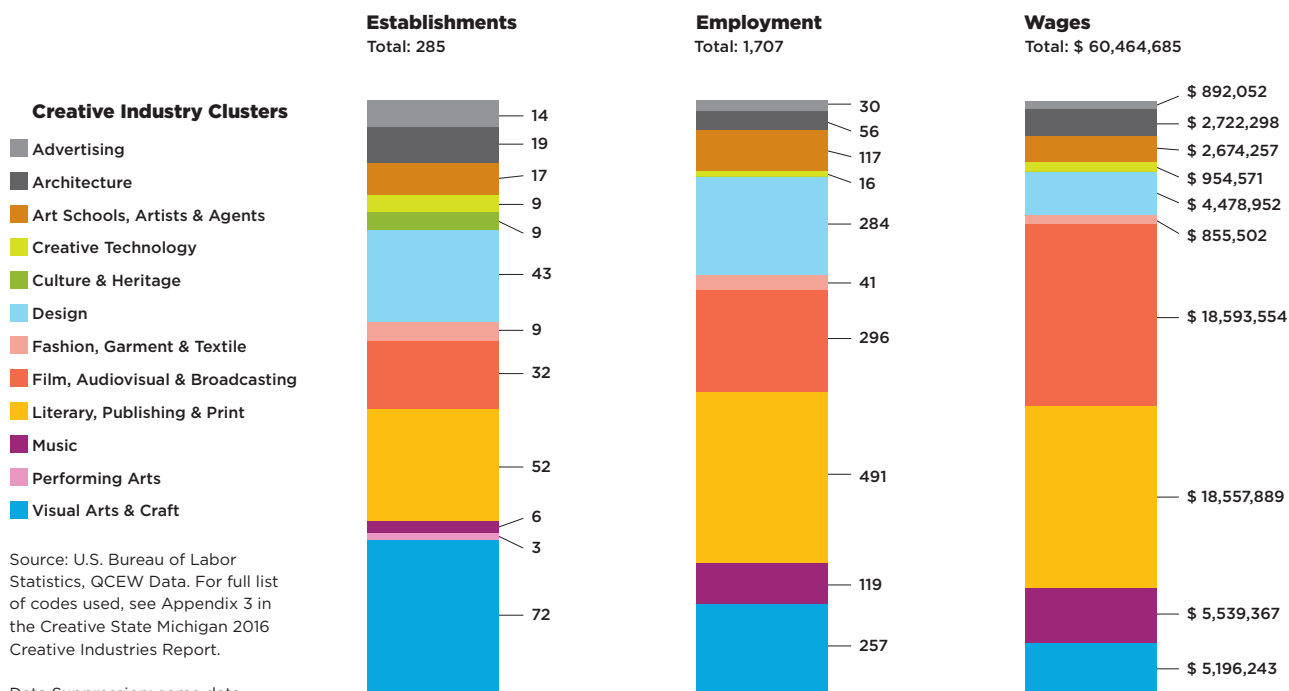
Despite hardships, creative industries are thriving and determined to grow.

Flint saw the largest positive change in employment (26%) and wages (55%) in creative industries in this report. The Advertising sector saw a dramatic decline of over 70% of employees, but both Visual Arts and Craft industries and Design increased in the study period, although several design industry codes had too few establishments to report employment data. Similarly, due to the small number of reporting enterprises, there was no data for wages or employment for Culture and Heritage in 2014.

Municipal leaders, together with a broad cross-section of Flint residents, have worked to build a vision of a re-invigorated and flourishing city. They have identified creative activity, engagement and education in Flint as critical tools in the promotion of civic involvement, urban transformation and placemaking. The

Creative Industries in Flint* Distribution in 2014

*Genesee County



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, QCEW Data. For full list of codes used, see Appendix 3 in the Creative State Michigan 2016 Creative Industries Report.

Data Suppression: some data values are suppressed because of confidentiality or data quality.

New Businesses

“Dean Yeotis said he plans to host a soft opening of Totem Books, 620 W. Court St., on Black Friday, Nov. 27 (2015)... The store also will offer music, art, coffee, food, films, lectures, book clubs and discussion groups, Yeotis said.

‘I opened my vinyl record store, Found Sound, in Ferndale in 2012 at a time when most independent record stores were closing. We are now an award winning and thriving establishment,’ Yeotis said. ‘I realize Flint is a unique market and the location may not be an obvious choice, however, in the words of the famed American author F. Scott Fitzgerald, sometimes ‘a man has to have brains enough to recognize the impossibility of a situation, yet heart enough to proceed anyway.’”

Adams, D. (2016). *Attorney opening new bookstore in former liquor store in Flint*. MLive. [online] Available at: http://www.mlive.com/news/flint/index.ssf/2015/11/totem_books_to_open_in_former.html

ambitious Master Plan for a Sustainable Flint adopted in 2013 specifically calls out art and culture as foundational elements in the return to social equity and economic regeneration. A core goal is that “arts and culture should be a part of everyone’s daily life and accessible to all.”¹

Part of bringing that goal to reality involves creating opportunities for wider community participation. With a remarkable heritage of cultural institutions providing homes for art, music and theater, Flint’s assets have not always been broadly utilized. Recent efforts to more fully activate the Flint Cultural Center campus demonstrate the intent to be inclusive and open. The Flint Institute of Arts provides free access to visitors on Saturdays through support from FirstMerit Bank in an effort to increase access for a broader population. In October, Flint Local 432, an all ages, alcohol-free performance space, celebrated 30 years of hosting music with a weekend-long series of music and culinary events. Now part of the nonprofit organization Red Ink Flint, the performance venue sits alongside maker spaces and youth programming facilities to provide productive opportunities to build skills and experiences.

Elimination of blight is a high priority. Despite a slowing rate of population decline, house vacancy through tax foreclosure or abandonment remains a complicated issue in Flint. The Flint Public Art Project, an ArtPlace America awardee, continues to organize “public events, workshops and temporary installations to inspire residents to re-imagine the city, (and) reclaim vacant and under-utilized buildings and lots.”² Working with city planning officials, and collaborating with both international and local artists, the team works to build a new narrative of Flint using art and design as tools of revitalization. Several recent projects have received widespread attention outside of Flint and are helping to establish improved and different perceptions of the city.

Profile of Creative Industry in Flint* for 2011-2014

***Genesee County**

Year	Establishments	Employment	Wages	Nonemployer Establishments
2011	316	1,352	\$38,937,980	2,109
2012	303	1,339	\$40,475,795	2,136
2013	294	1,715	\$58,169,008	2,043
2014	285	1,707	\$60,464,685	N/A

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, QCEW program. For full list of codes used, see Appendix 3 in the Creative State Michigan 2016 Creative Industries Report.

Creative Industry in Flint* Change from 2011-2014

***Genesee County**

	Establishments	Employment	Wages	Nonemployer Establishments
Change	-9.81%	+26.26%	+55.28%	-3.13% (2011-2013)

Imagine Flint

“Imagine a Flint where arts and culture are sewn into the fabric of every neighborhood, with homes, churches, schools, and community centers acting as artistic laboratories of creative innovation, community engagement, and civic pride.

Imagine Flint as a regional creative hub with a dynamic creative economy, where arts and culture are an integral piece in defining local quality of life and artists are the City’s innovative problem solvers and visionary thinkers.”

Beaverstock, J., Faulconbridge, J., Nativel, C. and Taylor, P. (2011). *The Globalization of Advertising: Agencies, Cities and Spaces of Creativity*. London: Routledge Studies in Human Geography.

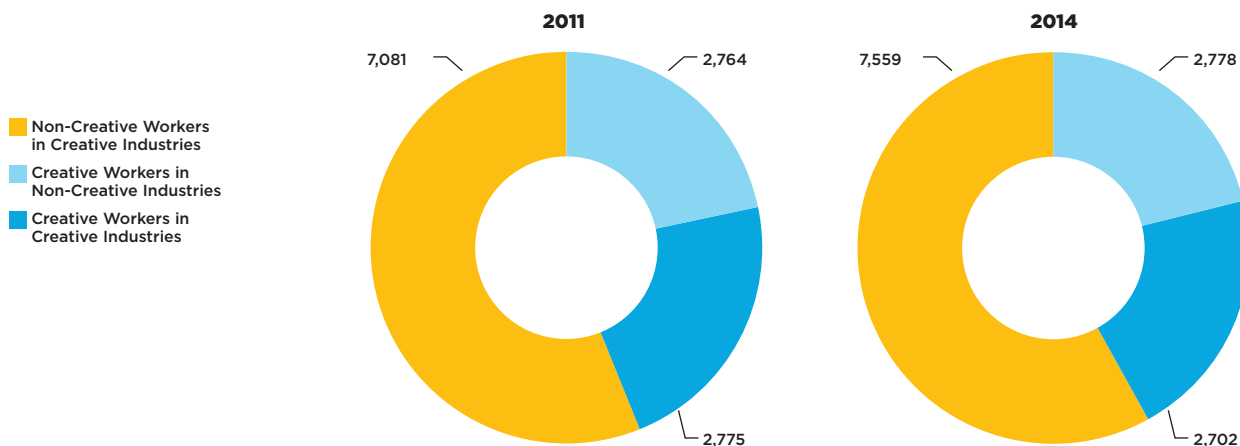
Efforts to transform and revitalize the downtown area have resulted in award winning urban planning and design initiatives. The Buckham Alley redevelopment project will create interconnected spaces that flow towards the Riverside Park and provide safe and attractive pedestrian spaces alongside the main street. This key component of economic redevelopment signals a reclamation of neglected spaces and confidence in the transformational value of architectural and urban design.

Emerging design driven businesses are also finding opportunities in Flint. In particular, fashion garments and accessories companies are emerging. The annual Vehicle City Fashion Week provides a platform for young designers to build fashion industry awareness and establish networks. Influenced by streetwear, GoodBoy Clothing was formed in 2014 to bring authentic and high quality fashion into wide circulation. The company has expanded to include local manufacturing of hats, bags and menswear building on auto industry sewing skills. ArticleOne Eyewear is creating nationally distributed high-style products while building its social mission and is headquartered in Flint.

A small but growing creative technology sector is emerging in Flint with employment in software development and graphic design occupations expanding. Named one of Michigan’s top 50 companies to watch in 2015, Spud Software has discovered a successful niche in custom designed enterprise solutions and currently employs 50 people.³ Interactive digital agencies are also expanding and require the skills of designers and creative thinkers to compete. These companies point to a belief in the future potential of the city.

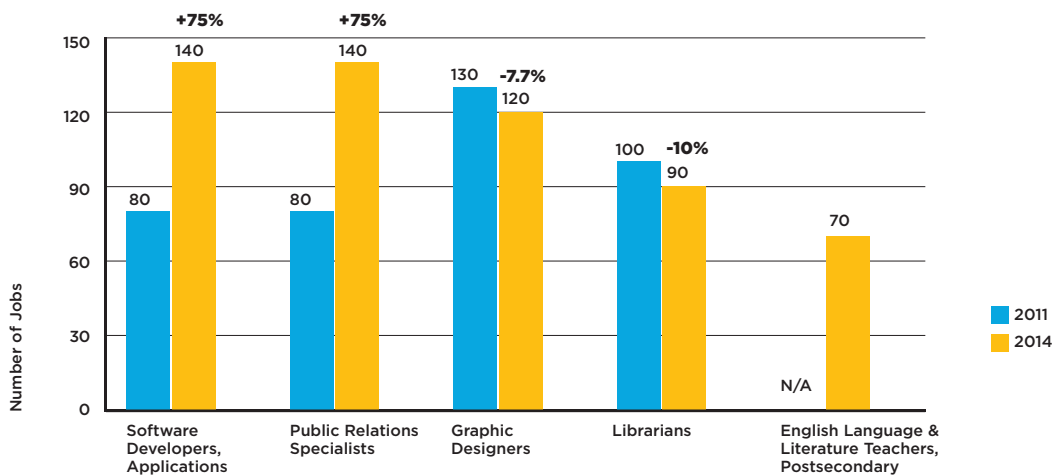
1. Imagine Flint, (2013). *Master Plan for a Sustainable Flint: Arts and Culture Plan*. [online] Flint, p.265. Available at: <https://www.arts.gov/exploring-our-town/sites/arts.gov/exploring-our-town/files/2014%20Arts%20%26%20Culture%20Plan%20Greater%20Flint%20Arts%20Council.pdf> [Accessed 14 Dec. 2016].
2. Flint Public Art Project, (n.d.). About FPAP. [online] Available at: <http://flintpublicartproject.com/about-fpap/> [Accessed 14 Nov. 2015].
3. Spud Software, (n.d.). *About Spud Software | From History To Their Values*. [online] Available at: <http://www.spudsoftware.com/about-spud.html> [Accessed 25 Oct. 2015].

Creative Employment Breakdown for Flint MSA



Source: Economic Modeling Specialists Incorporated, 2015.

Top Creative Occupations in Flint MSA by Employment



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics program.
 Included codes: 15-1132: Software Developers, Applications, 27-3031: Public Relations Specialists, 27-1024: Graphic Designers, 25-4021: Librarians, 25-1123: English Language and Literature Teachers, Postsecondary.

Percentage change in total regional creative industries wages, 2011-2014

+55.3%

2014 regional creative industries location quotient compared to U.S.

0.38

Top Paid Creative Occupations in Flint MSA for 2014

Job Title	Average Wages
Marketing Managers	\$108,060
Public Relations Managers	\$82,370
Software Developers, Applications	\$71,750
Computer Programmers	\$70,080
Public Relations Specialists	\$56,850

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics program.
 For full list of codes used, see Appendix 3 in the Creative State Michigan 2016 Creative Industries Report.

Flint has seen a significant increase in terms of employment and wages in the creative industries. However, the region’s average wage for creative occupations still remains low at \$57,581 compared to the state average of \$70,615. There has been a large increase in the number of Public Relations Specialists and Software Developers, yet the highest paid occupations fall far below the state average (for example Public Relations Managers in Flint make \$21,865 less than the state average for this occupation).



Tunde Olaniran released his latest album *Transgressor* in August 2015.

Photo Credit: Tim Jagielo

CASE STUDY: FLINT & GENESEE COUNTY

Tunde Olaniran

Flint-based artist and performer uses music to engage audiences viscerally, while seeking to engage on a political level.

Outreach Manager for Planned Parenthood with a Master's degree in public administration is not the typical background of a multi-talented artist and musician. But Tunde Olaniran isn't typical in any sense.

Olaniran's creative practice has no boundaries. Sometimes dubbed an experimental pop artist, and known for his high-energy and theatrical performances, he is not content to just sing or rap. He writes and produces his own lyrics and compositions, designs his and his dancers' costumes and choreographs his own shows. Adding to his multiple talents, Olaniran has written for the science fiction anthology, *Octavia's Brood*. Co-edited by Walidah Imarisha and adrienne maree brown, the anthology acknowledges the legacy of Octavia Butler, one of the first black female science fiction

writers to gain recognition in the field. Olaniran's recent albums and performances have gained national attention through profiles and reviews in the *New York Times*, *Rolling Stone* magazine, *Huffington Post*, *SPIN* magazine and on *National Public Radio* and *MTV*.

While his music engages audiences viscerally, he also seeks to engage on a political level. Living in Flint since the age of 12, Olaniran is committed to building a better city. He has seen the impact of compromised access to clean water first hand through his work with youth. Water is a theme that runs through his creative output, flowing from a desire to raise awareness of health issues in Flint and Detroit.

Inspired by a workshop in Detroit organized by adrienne maree brown, Olaniran teamed up with *Raise It*

Up! Youth Arts & Awareness' *Brave New Voices* poetry group to host a speculative fiction writing workshop at Flint Public Library. *Flint: A Sci-Fi Love Story* was born. During these workshops participants created and shared science-fiction prose, short stories and narratives about the future of the city. Recognizing the theme of loss that surfaced in the writing, Olaniran collaborated with other musicians in Flint to create a new song called "Everyone's Missing", which was featured at the workshop series' culminating concert.

Despite his active artistic practice and national recognition, Olaniran isn't giving up his day job yet. The financial supports that are necessary to initiate and nurture a thriving creative practice are still lacking in Flint. ■

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Creative Industries Report.

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