

# Attitude at Altitude

## Urbanists' debate highlights conference

BY ROBERT SCHWAB, EDITOR, COLORADO BIZ

I don't think it's going to be a battle of the titans," said Rodgers Frantz, president of the Richard Florida Creative Group, a Pennsylvania-based consultant firm that manages author and economic-development guru Richard Florida.

Even if not, the first ever face-to-face public event matching Florida and one of his most often quoted rivals, Joel Kotkin, a California author and urban-development guru, will be well worth watching when it occurs in Denver on May 20.

Florida and Kotkin will hold what each hopes will be a "discussion" of their differences during the keynote luncheon of a city-and-state sponsored, two-day conference on the role of arts and culture in metropolitan development. The conference will be held May 20-21 at the King Center on the Auraria campus of the University of Colorado at Denver. The Florida-Kotkin debate, however, will be held at the Seawell Ballroom at the Denver Center for the Performing Arts from 12:15-2:30 p.m.

Florida has been made famous locally by Denver Mayor John Hickenlooper, whose adoption of Florida's principles outlined in the author's first and most famous book, "The Rise of the Creative Class," has bolstered both Hickenlooper's and Florida's national reputations.

As economic drivers of great cities, Kotkin casts Florida's endorsement of inner-city cultural development as secondary to the creation of safe, family-friendly neighborhoods, whether in a city's core or in its outlying suburbs. "People want to own a home where there are decent schools and they can get a good job," Kotkin said in an interview.

Florida, on the other hand, has just published a new book: "The Flight of the Creative Class ... The New Global Competition for Talent," in which he argues that the creative, bohemian types who have helped the economic rebound of America's greatest cities are fleeing the country for less restrictive, more liberating environments.

Kotkin says he has found no evidence of such a phenomenon while researching his own new book "The City, A Global History."

But Frantz, Florida's spokesman, said the author is looking forward to meeting Kotkin in Denver. "I have great regard for Joel Kotkin's work, ideas and books, and I think we agree on as many points as we diverge on," Florida said in an e-mail. "The only way these ideas develop and grow is through the kind of engagement and informed debate Joel and I are both looking forward to."

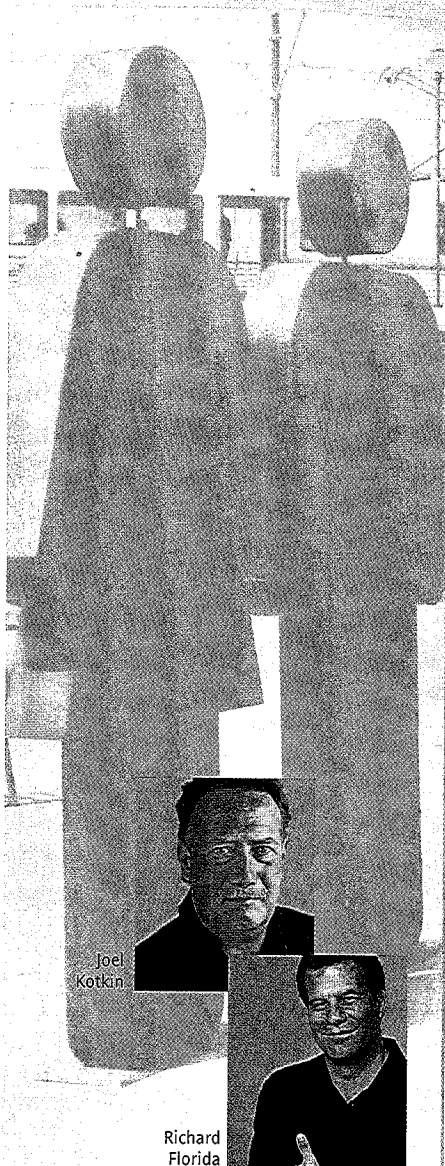
The conference, dubbed "C3 — Culture, Commerce, Community," has been put together by UCD, the city government's Denver Office of Cultural Affairs, the state's Colorado Council on the Arts, the Lab at Belmar, a private arts-promotion group in southwest Denver, and the Colorado Business Committee of the Arts.

### FORUM TO FOCUS ON FASTRACKS

The Leadership Denver Alumni Association, a group of past participants in a chamber-of-commerce training partnership for area executives, will host Joel Kotkin at LDAA's annual Spring Forum called "FastTracks and the New Urban Fabric of Metro Denver."

The forum will be held May 19 at the King Center on the Auraria campus, and will include a public keynote address from Kotkin at 5:30 p.m. at the center.

In an interview, Kotkin said metropolitan Denver shouldn't expect the \$4.7 billion FastTracks project to break the usual patterns of development great cities often take. It, like other rapid-transit systems built nationwide, Kotkin said, probably won't draw as many riders as proponents of the project initially projected. Kotkin has just completed a three-year study of the great cities of the world. The results of his research are in his new book, "The City, A Global History."



Joel Kotkin

Richard Florida