



The promise of art

Editorial

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Pittsfield got the big headlines in the Boston Globe this week about how the arts are transforming the city, but it is North Adams that continues to make the most impressive progress.

From the continued international draw of Mass MoCA, with its renowned Sol LeWitt exhibit, to DownStreet Art's wealth of galleries filling up empty storefronts and formerly vacant mills, the visual arts have exploded onto the summer scene. Even City Hall has gotten into the act, with art displays going up this week throughout its corridors, as it joins North Adams Regional Hospital and many local businesses in providing yet more venues for local artists.

This week, perpetual arts whirlwind Eric Rudd -- whose Eclipse Mill artist lofts are now selling in the \$300,000 range -- publicly launched local trolley visits to historic North Adams and arts destinations, with tours leaving Mass MoCA on Thursday, Friday and Saturday afternoons.

Wilco's Solid Sound Festival at MoCA on the weekend of Aug. 13 will bring an estimated 8,000 people to North Adams, and now we hear from the group's drummer that the band is thinking of making the festival an annual occurrence. Meanwhile, MoCA Director Joseph Thompson told mayors who convened for a conference on Wednesday that he wants to add five or six new

permanent or semi-permanent exhibits like the LeWitt display, which should further solidify MoCA's steadily growing reputation and importance in

the art world.

While Pittsfield touts its new cinema center, North Adams managed to get its own movie complex without spending millions in public funds.

We do not begrudge Pittsfield the publicity; in fact we hope that city continues to emulate North Adams in embracing the "creative economy." But the arts alone cannot save either community. More critical mass is needed -- beyond that offered by hopes of a Walmart or Lowe's. Pittsfield must strive to fill its William Stanley Business Park with viable tenants who bring jobs. North Adams needs more business as well, as most of the galleries will depart in the fall, the trolley tours will end, and winter will fast approach.

Arts continues to be an important catalyst, but both cities need more private investment, commitment and creative thinking for true revitalization.

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