

New London to host creative-economy conference

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New London — New London next year will host a biennial conference that focuses on the creative economy, the Southeastern Connecticut Cultural Coalition announced Tuesday.

The New England Foundation for the Arts (<http://www.nefa.org>) will host the 2017 Creative Communities Exchange (<http://www.nefa.org/events/creative-communities-exchange>) next June, with the expectation of up to 300 visitors. The CCX conference, featuring networking and workshops, chose the cultural coalition and New London in a competitive process that previously saw exchanges in Keene, N.H.; Portland, Maine; North Adams, Mass., and Providence.

Local venues for the conference will include the Garde Arts Center, Hygienic Art and art spaces in the Harris Place building on State Street.

"New London met the criteria for serving as the host city by demonstrating its engagement with the creative sector in community planning, revitalization and growth," according to a release.

In a separate announcement, the cultural coalition said it will open in October a new office at the Foundry 66 co-working space in Norwich. The office was made possible by a \$20,000 grant from the state's Small Business Express program intended to spur job creation throughout Connecticut.

"The grant demonstrates the state's confidence in our organization as a growing and valuable business to our region," said Wendy Bury, executive director of the cultural coalition. "This grant will expand our services and programs to support our region's creative sector."

The creative sector will be front and center at the CCX conference, which will focus on downtown revitalization, collaborative projects and other issues of interest to the creative community. A special roundtable meeting will be held this fall at a date yet to be announced to discuss plans for the conference, which will bring together planners, politicians, businesspeople and representatives of the arts, education, media and tourism.

"We are thrilled with the news that NEFA has selected New London as the host city for this event and that the cultural coalition has made that possible," Mayor Michael Passero said in a statement. "The creative sector is part of the fabric of our city — past, present and future — and we look forward to showcasing New London next year."

New England Foundation for the Arts officials met with Passero and Tammy Daugherty, director of the Office of Development and Planning, as they narrowed the choices for their next conference, according to a release. NEFA helps fund artists and cultural groups, analyzes their financial contributions and acts as a regional partner for various agencies and foundations.

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