A few years ago, a three-year Gallup study of 26 U.S. cities found the things that create the greatest emotional connection between people and their community are social offerings, openness and aesthetics. These things beat out civic involvement, social capital, education, perception of the local economy, leadership, safety, emotional well-being and basic services! The 26 cities in the survey with the highest levels of emotional attachment also had the highest rates of GDP growth over time.

Many of us in Aurora would agree that social offerings, openness and aesthetics are critical to creating community in our great city. That is why public art has become such an important ingredient in public planning – not just in Aurora – but across the country and the world. Public art occupies a unique position within the art world: it’s free, there are no tickets, you don’t have to dress up, you can view it alone or in groups, and it’s open to everyone.

Last month, we saw the opening of the R Line, and with that opening, we have the opportunity to enjoy eight new public art installations. This issue of Aurora Creates celebrates these new additions to public art in Aurora and their ability to create spaces for all of us to enjoy.

It’s exciting to see the R Line sailing through Aurora. From the artistic perspective, nothing is more exciting than the addition of dynamic new works of public art. The public art at the eight Aurora stations represents a partnership between the city of Aurora and RTD that is unprecedented in size and scope. The art is dynamic, diverse and helps define individual neighborhoods as well the personality of this city. The central theme of color, light and motion unites all of these projects.

Picking up our journey from the previous edition of Aurora Creates, which featured the two sculptures at the Iliff Station and parking garage, the next stop heading north is the Florida Station where we encounter “Our Community Dance” on the pedestrian bridge. The artwork by Seattle artist Koryn Rolstad is experienced as a lovely visual element by those driving north and south on I-225. Pedestrians using the bridge experience the visual elements from an entirely different perspective and are also treated to a musical component that is overlaid with sounds that are relevant to the images that they see as they walk through the bridge.

Next stop, Aurora Metro Center Station on Sable Boulevard and Alameda Avenue. Here, Colorado artist John King created “Sunrise,” a large kinetic, metal sculpture of the sun, located near the station platform. Try turning the large wheel and the smaller wheels to create changing effects as the sunlight reflects off of the spinning colored metal components. Come back this spring when there will be more to see, as muralist Ted Esselstyn completes a street-level component along Sable Boulevard.

When you park at the 2nd and Abilene Station Park-n-Ride, you will cross a small pedestrian bridge over the High Line Canal to reach the station. Kentucky artist Douwe Blumburg has provided an archway and two bas-relief components reflecting on the contemporary and historic modes of transportation in the area.

At the Fitzsimons Station we encounter another installation by Koryn Rolstad, this one in the form of a whimsical landscape adding a much needed splash of color to the environment. It is delightful to come upon it as you turn the bend in the road heading west, and it is easy to imagine that those golfing to the south might find the colors, shapes and gestures an amusing addition to the landscape.

The up-cycled sculptural installation of bicycles by Alabama artist Chris Fennell will be installed at the 13th Avenue Station in late March or April.
Since last February and for the next two years, Assetou Xango is Aurora’s Poet Laureate. At her young age, she has been published (by the Santa Fe University of Art and Design), featured on HBO, performed a TED talk in front of 2,700 people and performed a TED talk in front of 2,700 people and taught poetry workshops to youth as she continues her own poetry work at local and national levels. Currently, Xango is the school program coordinator at Creative Strategies for Change, a local nonprofit that teaches a variety of art courses in K-12 schools. The city’s poet laureate program provides a recognized poet with the opportunity to advocate and promote poetry and literature within the city.

How did you first get interested in the spoken word?
I was first introduced to spoken word by world-renowned poets Panama Soweto, Bianca Mikahn and Ken Arkind in my sophomore year of high school (Overland High School in Aurora). They came to my school and performed, and I was immediately obsessed. I began rote memorizing their poems, and soon after that I was writing my own.

What have been some of your most challenging artistic assignments?
Nothing has truly felt like an assignment in my life as a writer. I have had the luxury of writing when and whatever I want. With that freedom, the only challenge has been continuing to produce, which I don’t really view as a problem but others might. Our culture is very production-centric. It seems you are only as good as your last project and each one has a short expiration date. The issue I find with this is that it is incongruent with our nature. If we look around, we find that everything in nature moves in cycles. I believe this to most certainly be true with artists. There must be periods of incubation and testing, there are times when ideas are just blossoming, there are times when they are in full swing, and there are times we are reaping the benefits of our hard work prior to needing to rest again. I believe anything else would be disingenuous.

What do you love about the arts and culture in Aurora?
I love the diversity in Aurora. This may be a clichéd but it’s so incredibly true. Aurora does diversity better than anywhere I’ve ever seen. I think that other places try to manufacture it. I feel it is often people, not of cultures, attempting to cultivate those cultures when they can feel inauthentic. Aurora seems the home of immigrants and wanderers; the culture and arts fostered here are so distinct and genuine.

What are your hopes for your artistic growth?
I feel it gets slightly better every time I write and perform. I want to continue doing that because it often seems that simple. I also want to write in forms I have not tried before such as sonnets and sestinas. I am altogether excited to continue doing what I love and believe doing so will continue to strengthen my craft.

SPRING Dance Recitals

Spring is a very exciting time of year for Aurora Dance Arts! The Spring Dance Recitals are a time of celebration, creativity, and the pay-off for all the hard work and passion that our dance students and instructors have poured into this amazing dance program throughout the year. There will be two performances of the 3-7 year old age group recital, titled “Magical World of Disney,” on Saturday, May 20, at 1:30 and 3:30 p.m. There will also be two recitals for the older students, titled “Fairytales and Fantasy Creatures,” on June 2 and 3 at 7 p.m. All performances will take place at Hinkley High School and are open to the public. Tickets go on sale May 1 and cost $8. They may be purchased by calling 303.326.8308 or in person at Meadowood Recreation Center. Please join Aurora Dance Arts for these magical performances… another example of something worth discovering in the city of Aurora! Learn more at AuroraGov.org/Dance.
april

sunday 2 • closing sunday 9
“Chinglish”
(Senior Discount)
2 p.m. $
Aurora Fox Arts Center
9900 E. Colfax Ave.

friday 7
Opening Night:
“A Time to Kill”
Vintage Theatre
1468 Dayton St.

wednesday 12
National Poetry Month
Tribute: Dr. Ramon Del Castillo,
jazz legend Freddy Rodriguez Jr.
and Mudra Dance Studio
Presented by the Colorado Folk Arts Council
and Metropolitan State University of Denver
Noon - 1 p.m.
Aurora Fox Arts Center

saturday 15
Ukulele Lessons and
Hawaiian Culture Program
1 - 3 p.m.
Aurora History Museum
15051 E. Alameda Parkway

wednesday 19
Lecture: The Native American
Graves Protection and
Repatriation Act (NAGPRA)
Noon - 1 p.m. $
Aurora History Museum
15051 E. Alameda Parkway

saturday 22
Antique Appraisal Fair
Call 303.739.6705 to reserve an
entrance time.
No walk-ins accepted. • $
9 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Aurora Central Library
14949 E. Alameda Parkway

sunday 23
Injury Recognition &
Dancer Anatomy/
Kinesiology Workshop
Aurora Dance Arts
1 - 2:30 p.m. • $
Meadow Hills Golf Course
3609 S. Dawson St.

saturday 29
Aurora’s 126th Birthday
Aurora History Museum and
DeLaney Farm Historic District
11 a.m. - 4 p.m.
15051 E. Alameda Parkway and
170 S. Chambers Road

april 21-may 28
“Priscilla, Queen of the
Desert”
April 21 - May 28
Aurora Fox Arts Center
9900 E. Colfax Ave.
Special Performances • $
• Friday, April 21 • 7:30 p.m.
Opening Night and Reception
• Saturday, April 22 • 7:30 p.m.
Drag Night Discount
• Friday, April 28 • 7:30 p.m.
Free Beer Friday
• Sunday, April 30 • 2 p.m.
Senior Discount
• Sunday, May 28 • 2 p.m.
Closing Night

Lecture: The Native American
Graves Protection and
Repatriation Act (NAGPRA)
Noon - 1 p.m. $
Aurora History Museum
15051 E. Alameda Parkway

Ukulele Lessons and
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National Poetry Month
Tribute: Dr. Ramon Del Castillo,
jazz legend Freddy Rodriguez Jr.
and Mudra Dance Studio
Presented by the Colorado Folk Arts Council
and Metropolitan State University of Denver
Noon - 1 p.m.
Aurora Fox Arts Center
Aurora Potters’ Guild Spring Pottery Sale
Ecotech Institute • 1400 S. Abilene St.
Friday • Noon - 8 p.m. and Saturday • 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Lecture: Let it Grow!
The human use, identification & conservation of native plants
Noon – 1 p.m. • $
Aurora History Museum
15051 E. Alameda Parkway

Concert: “Arts for a Better Tomorrow”
Aurora Symphony Orchestra
3 p.m. • $
North Middle School
12095 Montview Blvd.

Injury Recognition & Dancer Anatomy/Kinesiology Workshop
Aurora Dance Arts
1– 2:30 p.m. • $
Expo Recreation Center
10955 E. Exposition Ave.

Concert: “Heartbreak Hotel”
Aurora Singers
East Middle School
1275 Fraser St.
Saturday 6 • 7 p.m. • $
Sunday 7 • 2 p.m. • $

Performances celebrating Cinco de Mayo
Presented by the Colorado Folk Arts Council and Metropolitan State University of Denver
Noon - 1 p.m.
Aurora Fox Arts Center
9900 E. Colfax Ave.

Ukulele Lessons and Hawaiian Culture Program
1 - 3 p.m.
Aurora History Museum

Dance Concert: Spinoff
Kim Robards Dance
7 p.m. • $
People’s Arts Center
9995 E Colfax Ave.

The Magical World of Disney®
Aurora Dance Arts
The 2017 Pre-Level Spring Dance Recitals
1:30 and 3:30 p.m. • $
Hinkley High School
1250 S. Chambers Road

Robert Stanley Innovation Station
Aurora History Museum
Sundays, March 19 - July 9

“Double Exposure” Exhibit DAVA
March 30 - June 9

“A Time to Kill”
Vintage Theatre • $
April 7 - May 21

“The Intelligent Design of Jenny Chow”
Vintage Theatre • $
March 31 - May 21

“From Manufacturing to Marketplace: Innovation at Stanley Aviation” Exhibit
Aurora History Museum
March 14 - July 9

“The Doctor Will See You” Exhibit
Aurora History Museum
Through July 23

Aurora Artists Guild Art Exhibit
Aurora Municipal Building
2nd floor mezzanine
March 1 - May 31

Ongoing
NEW EXHIBIT

Explores History of Stanley Aviation

Aurora’s Stanley Aviation was a leader in aerospace engineering and manufacturing for over 50 years. Now, Stanley Marketplace, a community of like-minded businesses and people, keeps innovating at the same location.

Aurora History Museum’s newest exhibit, “From Manufacturing to Marketplace: Innovation at Stanley Aviation,” runs March 14 through July 9 and highlights the technology and the people that made Stanley Aviation a success. The exhibit provides insight about how Stanley Aviation’s history of innovation has carried on into the new Stanley Marketplace. Stanley Marketplace’s redevelopment of the former aviation facility embraces the site’s history in a new community-focused marketplace.

Every Sunday during the exhibit, the Aurora History Museum will feature the Robert Stanley Innovation Station, which will test museum visitors’ problem-solving and innovation skills in the spirit of Stanley Aviation. Originally founded in Buffalo, New York, in 1948 by aviation pioneer Robert Stanley, the company opened its Aurora facility at 2501 Dallas St. in 1954. Stanley Aviation designed, developed and manufactured ejection seats as well as other innovative air and aerospace technologies until it closed its Aurora facilities in 2007. Local entrepreneurs bought the property in 2014 and turned it into Stanley Marketplace, which opened its doors in late 2016.

Admission to the Aurora History Museum is always free. For more information, call 303.739.6660 or visit AuroraMuseum.org.

“Stories Interweave” by Tucson artist Joe O’Connell is located on the station plazas underneath the Colfax Bridge Station. Eight light sculptures tell the stories of Aurora residents, many of them immigrants and refugees. Each sculpture includes the word “community” written in the native language of the storyteller. A color-changing light show takes place on the station plazas, visible from dusk to dawn or whenever it becomes dark enough to see the LED images projected onto the underside of the bridge structure. This thoughtful piece captures the diversity that makes Aurora such a rich and strong community.

The last stop is at Peoria Station. Here, “Biota,” by Arizona Blessing Hancock, was installed last spring when the A-Line opened. The sculpture is intended to give the impression of a biological form that is replicating itself and reflects the importance of the Fitzsimons Campus to this region.

So, take an artistic journey on the R Line…and join us for the official art dedications in summer!

Next time you visit Stanley Marketplace, make sure to stop by the pop-up art gallery ATOWN ART on the second floor. Aurora Cultural Arts District (ACAD) is hosting this art space where they will rotate work by and performances from local artists. ATOWN ART will open during dinner time Thursdays and Fridays and all day on weekends through May.
OPENING SOON
Multi-use Arts Facility in ACAD

A new multi-use arts space will soon provide new opportunities to Aurora’s diverse arts community. Located in the heart of the Aurora Cultural Arts District (ACAD) at 9995 E. Colfax Ave., on the northwest corner of East Colfax Avenue and Florence Street, a vacant commercial building built in 1943 last used for retail by People’s Rent to Own (hence its unofficial, yet popular name “People’s Building”), is in the final stages of a $1.5 million renovation by the city of Aurora.

When completed in April, the ground floor of the building will include a 1,700-square foot restaurant and a 4,300-square foot space for arts programming, including a 4,000-square foot “open” area supported by 180 retractable seats. The basement level will offer approximately 6,000 square feet of space that could be left open or subdivided to accommodate studios, offices and/or intimate venues.

The improvements will result in a minimally finished interior, including ceilings, lighting, plumbing, heating and cooling, interior walls, electrical outlets, elevator, restrooms and floor finishes, making the building functionally ready to lease and for tenant improvements.

The city is currently looking for prospective users for both ground floor and basement spaces at extremely competitive rental rates. Parties may seek to rent space either on an hourly, production, or longer-term lease basis. Interested parties, including individual artists, nonprofit and for-profit organizations, schools, arts-supporting businesses and other arts-supportive endeavors can submit their interest in renting the space by completing an online survey at surveymonkey.com/r/PeoplesBldg.

OPPORTUNITIES
Professional Development
Artist: Display Your Work
Aurora’s Art in Public Places Program is always looking for artists for a variety of projects, including public art commissions, serving on art selection panels and temporary exhibitions in the indoor gallery space in the Aurora Municipal Center – area open to schools, charitable organizations and veterans’ groups as well as individual artists; art must be displayed for a minimum of two weeks. If interested in temporary exhibits, please use the email address below and include your name, the media you work with, dates you would like to display and photos of your work. For the other opportunities, please contact us at publicart@auroragov.org or 303.739.6744.

Art Classes for All
Aurora’s Cultural Services Division offers a large assortment of arts classes for all ages and all abilities, including dance (many styles to choose from), piano, guitar, painting, drawing, pottery, acting and musical theatre. For more information, please check the Recreation Guide at AuroraGov.org/Recreation.
“Priscilla, Queen of the Desert” takes the Aurora Fox Arts Center stage beginning April 21. This lavish musical, based on the 1994 film, tells the story of two drag queens and a transgender woman as they traverse the Australian outback in their bus named Priscilla. Along the way the three friends encounter homophobia and other challenges. Among its many well-known songs are “It’s Raining Men,” “True Colors,” “We Belong,” “Thank God I’m a Country Boy,” “I Love the Nightlife,” “Go West,” “MacArthur Park,” and “I Will Survive.”

The Aurora Fox is well known for introducing audiences to unique cultures. Priscilla will be no exception. “When we choose a show like ‘Black Elk Speaks,’ ‘Chinglish’ or Priscilla, first we make sure we can get people involved in the production that truly understand the culture being depicted,” said Executive Producer Charles Packard. “We want the show to be entertaining and honest. We want our audiences to have an experience that leaves them with a fuller understanding of people they might not meet in their daily lives. We also want members of the various communities to be proud of the way their story is told on The Fox stage. We need talented representatives.”

The show is directed and choreographed by Broadway veteran Eden Lane. Lane is a local celebrity who covers local arts on “InFocus with Eden Lane” on PBS, and arts, politics and lifestyle on various network Denver affiliates. Lane is the first openly transgender person in mainstream television broadcasting in the U.S. She knows the culture. She has experienced the wonderful and tragic things that occur in the show. She, with the cast, will guide you on the most FABULOUS road trip of your life.

“Priscilla, Queen of the Desert,” a regional premiere, runs through May 28. For tickets and show times, visit AuroraFoxArtsCenter.org.