

## Place-Based Economic Development

### Placemaking

**Student Design Summit:** OED is partnering with Midtown Detroit, Inc., the University of Michigan, and College for Creative Studies on a fourth Student Design Summit. The Student Design Summit is a complementary component of the Detroit Cultural Center Planning Initiative (CCPI) meant to engage students in contemporary design practice and community involvement. Originally scheduled for February 4 and 5, the Winter 2022 Design Summit was postponed due to Covid-19 and will now take place on February 25 and 26. Open to high school and university students in the State of Michigan, the Design Summit will provide an opportunity for students to work in teams to explore the concept of what it means for a place to be welcoming and inclusive, while conceptualizing a future welcome center for Detroit's Cultural Center. Applications are due February 15.

### Mobility

Wayne State began subsidizing four-hour Dart and annual MoGo passes for all enrolled students, as well as full- and part-time employees on September 1, allowing them to ride DDOT and SMART buses, the QLINE streetcar, and MoGo bikes for free. Through December 31, 690 Warriors purchased 8,799 subsidized four-hour Dart passes. More than 1,000 Warriors signed up for free annual MoGo passes, taking nearly 6,000 trips, and MoGo stations located on our campus were the top three busiest stations in MoGo's entire network this fall.

To participate, Warriors needed to download the Dart app and enter a semester-specific eligibility code or sign up using their Wayne State email address on a customized MoGo webpage, and follow the instructions provided. Students without smartphones or who prefer a paper pass can pick up a 31-Day Dart pass at The W Food Pantry and Wardrobe. Learn more at [go.wayne.edu/waynerides](https://go.wayne.edu/waynerides).

## TechTown Programs

### TECH PROGRAMS

**Capital:** The Rocket Community Fund provided \$200,000 (1/2022) in funding to our Tech Startup Fund to support 10-15 startups as they prepare for external investment by helping them to achieve their critical milestones.

In 2021, TechTown was awarded \$106,755 in Business Accelerator Funding on behalf of 7 clients. Our clients raised about \$4.5 million in follow-on funding in 2021, including \$2M for Rivet Work.

The Catalyst Angel Program, funded by the EDA, started training its first angel investors on 1/11/22 via ACA Angel University. Help us recruit emerging Black, Latinx, and/or women investors by referring them to the interest form linked here: <https://survey.zohopublic.com/zs/OKD7fy>.

**Start Studio MVP:** The startups selected for the inaugural cohort of Start Studio MVP are American Advantage HHC (Cleamon Moorer), Indigo Packaging and Consulting - True Fleet (Camille Corr Chism), and Pilot/Eye Breathe Design (Eddi Gonzalez). The founders from these companies will each be mentored by a technical advisor to complete a revenue-generating early prototype over six weeks. The program will conclude on February 16, 2022. After that time, the public will be able to vote on their favorite early-stage product.

Applications for **Start Studio Discovery** opened on February 9. In Start Studio Discovery, participants validate their early tech ideas through customer discovery interviews.

Applications opened for **TechTown Incubator** on February 14. Incubator provides six months of operations-focused, individualized coaching and hands-on-assistance with key functions for revenue-generating tech businesses that are preparing to scale.

We have begun recruiting for **TechTown Traction** which will start February 22. Traction guides founders on their optimum path to generate recurring, predictable revenue.

#### SMALL BUSINESS SERVICES

**313 STRONG** supports the sustainability of neighborhood, brick and mortar businesses in Detroit, Highland Park, and Hamtramck by providing customized business support, with an emphasis on access to capital and skill building in finance, operations, and marketing.

A tax preparation workshop was hosted in partnership with Accounting Aid Society in Spanish, led by 313 Strong Strategist Mayte Penman on February 8th. This is the first in a series of Spanish-language workshops planned for the year, following our goals towards providing more comprehensive language accessibility throughout the organization.

As part of our continued partnership in the Detroit Means Business collaborative, the 313 STRONG team is planning a Small Business Conference with the Detroit Economic Growth Corporation focused on small business recovery. The event will take place in April.

**Retail Boot Camp (RBC)** is recruiting for applicants for the spring 2022 cohort. For the first time since the onset of COVID, we are returning to conduct two Retail Boot Camp cohorts (spring and fall) annually. Information sessions were held on January 20, January 27, February 3 and February 10. Applications close on 2/13. The spring cohort begins on March 24<sup>th</sup> and will be delivered virtually; in-person program delivery is being considered for the fall cohort.

Upcoming small business grand openings include Breadless (RBC Alum 2020), Crummies (RBC Alum 2019), Detroit Soul (313 Strong), K Walker Collective (RBC 2020 Alum).

Several RBC alumni were named as Motor City Match round 18 winners: Naturally FLYY, Black Diamond Beauty Supply (Jessical Blair Beauty), For Her Cosmetics, Breadless, Mature.

In January, RBC alum Joshua Ashford of Webdroid celebrated the public launch of a BGCSM gaming lab created in partnership with the Red Wings.

**The Shop** at TechTown will return on March 30<sup>th</sup> with limited vendors.

### ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION

TechTown delivers free, expert resources to the public through flagship programs like Strategy Sessions (formerly Open Office Hours) and Ask An Expert. Strategy Sessions are available to both tech startups and neighborhood small businesses. During Strategy Sessions, a TechTown team member helps prioritize business goals and directs entrepreneurs to the appropriate programs, resources and experts in TechTown's Professional Services Network and the Detroit entrepreneurial ecosystem. Through the Ask an Expert program, members of TechTown's Professional Services Network provide free, expert consultations through a range of skills and specialties such as web development, HR, logistics/fulfillment, accounting and marketing. We held 38 **Strategy Sessions** during the covered period of December 21, 2021, through January 22, 2022. Due to the holiday break and scheduling issues, we recorded only 1 **Ask An Expert** appointment during the period of December 21, 2021, and January 22, 2022. We have corrected the issues and are back to our normal cadence of appointments.

We continue to work on improving the customer experience for our on-demand professional development workshop series **TechTown Training Series** which is designed to help entrepreneurs build core business acumen and problem solve real-time business challenges. 8 businesses accessed the training portal from December 21, 2021 Through January 22, 2022.

#### Topics Covered

- December 2021 – What Business Owners need to Know for 2021 Taxes Ben Cunningham CPA
- December 2021 Surviving the Tax Season. Diamond Reynolds, CPA (WSU Instructor)
- January 2022 – Behavioral Finance – a look at financial processes for a successful 2022

Our **Building Business Podcast** provides practical advice through lived experience from entrepreneurs, TechTown Professional Service Network (PSN) providers and industry leaders. In this review period, we recorded interviews with Director of Technology-based programming Dr. Marlo Rencher and legal expert Erin Bonahoom – whom we are highlighting as PSN of the first quarter of 2022.

Additionally, we re-launched the TechTown **Alumni Newsletter** after a strategic planning hiatus, which provides timely resources, sales and marketing opportunities and celebrates the achievements of entrepreneurs served by TechTown programs.

## TechTown Operations

### Coworking/Office Space

The building occupancy rate remains at 100% with a waiting list (thanks in large part to the dedication and hard work of TechTown's frontline staff (including facilities staff, community ambassadors, and collaborative workspace staff)). We are transitioning multiple small conference rooms into private offices with short-term leases to further meet demand. Meeting room bookings are steady in frequency, but the volume of activity remains low compared to pre-pandemic scenarios. This year's primary areas of focus include: further refining building operations, managing large-scale infrastructure improvements, and increasing coworking revenue.

The TechTown staff suite inside the building will be redesigned this year to accommodate a new approach to onsite work that encourages staff to match the space to the appropriate activity (example: reserving Zoom-meeting-heavy days for remote work environments and leveraging new and dynamic group engagement spaces for work that is best suited for in-person interaction). Project completion expected in Q2.

### **Strategy**

TechTown staff are preparing for an org-wide strategic planning process that will ultimately produce a 3-year strategic plan for execution in 2023-2025. Led by consultants at 313 Creative, the team will use its recent visioning conversations (see resulting text below) as a foundation for the planning effort.

*Our collective work (TechTown, Co.act, WSU OED) plays a significant role in **generating equitable community wealth and reducing intergenerational poverty** through entrepreneurship, business and nonprofit development, placemaking, and talent support.*

### **Human Resources**

TechTown is focused on staff growth and development in 2022, with particular emphasis on investing in its director-level leaders. In an effort to further build individual skill sets and peer working relationships, the HR Team will facilitate an expanded professional development program (Q1) and directors retreat (Q3).

In an effort to remain competitive in the market for talent (and to invest in the retention of existing staff), TechTown will roll out a 401k employer matching program (Q1).

### **Data + Systems**

TechTown continues to build out its customer relationship management (CRM) platform to better track the lifecycle of its entrepreneurial clients and to support more sophisticated data collection and analysis. Data collection through client surveys has proven to be an incomplete and inconsistent source of information for the organization's reporting and evaluation requirements, so the Systems Innovation Team is focused on creating a model that will incentivize clients to share their data more frequently.

As a follow-up to the establishment of internal org metrics, staff have created a draft list of external impact metrics for use in marketing and communications collateral, grant proposals and reporting, and published reports. The list has been reviewed by the TechTown Board Executive Committee and will be finalized in Q1.

## **Nonprofit Capacity-Building & Innovation**

### **Co.act Detroit**

**Background:** In December of 2017, TechTown Detroit was awarded a three-year grant from the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation to launch the Center for Nonprofit Support at 6568 Woodward Avenue, just five blocks from the current TechTown building. Partners in the launch of the Center include the Michigan Nonprofit Association and Michigan Community Resources locally, as well as Community Wealth Partners nationally. Detroit's nonprofit community is both diverse and expansive, addressing the myriad needs and opportunities across southeast Michigan with relevant and impactful programming. However, many of these nonprofit organizations struggle to sustain themselves and fight a constant uphill battle to keep their doors open and invest in their staffs' long-term development. At the same time, countless opportunities for nonprofits in our region to collaborate, leverage efforts and deepen their impact go unrealized, either for lack of knowledge of one another's work or lack of capacity to solidify connections. Through the establishment of Co.act Detroit (formerly known as the Nonprofit Center for Support), the Foundation, TechTown and our community partners will meet these challenges of our nonprofit sector head-on.

**Brand Identity and Communications:** Co.act Detroit is currently refining the communications plan to align with the 2022-2024 strategic framework plan. A key focus is continuing to increase awareness about Co.act Detroit programming through local and national digital and media platforms. We have also relaunch our podcast series, in partnership with Homemade Stories, to align with our evolving program strategy. We are currently finalizing a multi-tiered 2022 communications plan supported by Earlyworks LLC. Co.act Detroit continues to partner with Issue Media and the Michigan Nonprofit Association to produce the Nonprofit Journal, which uplifts nonprofit storytelling across Southeast Michigan.

**Programming:** Co.act Detroit continues to offer all of our programming virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022, we will explore a soft relaunch of our space and a hybrid program model of virtual and in person offerings. In partnership with the Knight Foundation, Co.act Detroit recently completed stakeholder convenings to disseminate the findings of the recently completed BIPOC Nonprofit Leadership Census. Co.act recently closed applications for the KIP:D+ grant program, receiving 264 applications. This represents approximately \$30million in fund requested and a 75% increase from the past 3 years of the program. Co.act and our community partners will complete phase II of the application process by mid March.

#### **Strategy & Fund Development:**

Co.act Detroit has released a 2 year impact report, highlighting our accomplishments since launching in June 2019. We are also finalizing a strategic framework action plans to support the implementation of our 2022-2024 strategic framework plan. We recently completed a fund development needs assessment and fund development plan and a case for investment will be completed in March 2022. Co.act was recently invited to submit a grant funding proposal to the McGregor Fund.