



2024

ANN ARBOR
SPARK

Semi-Annual Report | July – December

City of Ann Arbor



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Ann Arbor SPARK will advance the economy of the Ann Arbor region by establishing it as a desired place for innovation, business location and growth, and for talented people to live and work. The Ann Arbor region will be recognized for its academic, business, and community resources, and its collaborative culture.

annarborusa.org

Ann Arbor SPARK | City of Ann Arbor

Semi-Annual Report

This report focuses primarily on activity completed and results achieved by Ann Arbor SPARK's Business Development team in 2024 in Washtenaw County. We look forward to expanding our strategic vision through 2025 and beyond.



Driving Smart Economic Growth in Service of Prosperity for All

The world is undergoing a sea of change in how people work, where they live, and what they value. The pandemic has exacerbated economic inequalities and made progress on environmental sustainability more difficult. A strategy of smart growth in service of prosperity for all will respond to these new challenges and create opportunities that will benefit our region. To deliver on this shared purpose with a strong commitment to equity and environmental stewardship, Ann Arbor SPARK will focus its efforts in the next three years on the four strategic directions below that have the potential to deliver value, mitigate risks, and are strengths of the organization. Our priorities include:



Customized Business Attraction, Expansion, and Retention Support in Your Backyard

Ann Arbor SPARK is dedicated to supporting your business with real-time, relevant resources for attraction, expansion, and retention. Our team provides feasibility studies, site selection assistance, economic and labor market data, industry sector and compensation analysis, and connections to key regional, state, and national partners. Whether your business is growing, relocating, or exploring new opportunities, we are here to help. Contact Phil Santer at phil@annarborusa.org to learn more.

FY 2024 AT A GLANCE



Ann Arbor SPARK's guide simplifies the process of opening a business in Washtenaw County, providing entrepreneurs with step-by-step resources on site selection, permits, and compliance to support local business growth. See [page 8](#) for additional details.



WASHTENAW COUNTY METRICS



PROJECT
SUCCESSES



NEW JOB
COMMITMENTS



TOTAL
INVESTMENT

In '23 and '24

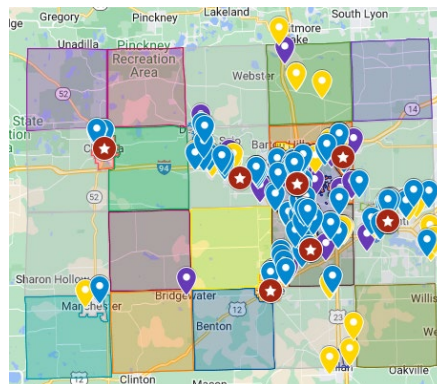


growth calls were
made in the
City of Ann Arbor
reaching a total of

4,094

full-time staff across
these companies.

SPARK IMPACT MAP: FY 2024



See [page 7](#) and [page 13](#) for details related to project successes in the City of Ann Arbor.

Testimonials and Client Feedback

Entrepreneurial Services and Business Development

At Ann Arbor SPARK, we prioritize gathering and utilizing client feedback to continually improve our services. Our approach is divided into two key areas: entrepreneurial services and business development.

Entrepreneurial Services

Ann Arbor SPARK collects feedback from clients receiving funding or business support from LDFA funds to evaluate satisfaction and gather insights. Our process includes:

- **Annual Surveys:** Gauging overall satisfaction and challenges.
- **Ongoing Feedback:** Encouraging continuous communication throughout the year.
- **Data-Driven Improvements:** Refining services based on feedback.

SPARK recently analyzed 79 responses to the question, "Do you have any recommendations on how to improve SPARK's startup support programs?" The findings are as follows:

- **Positive Sentiments:** Founders appreciate the support and resources provided, describing SPARK as fantastic, wonderful, and excellent to work with.
- **Neutral Sentiments:** Suggestions for improvement include more networking opportunities, pitching events, regular meetings, clearer documentation, increased engagement for virtual office users, and consolidated software tools.
- **No Negative Sentiments:** Feedback is generally supportive and appreciative.

Business Development

We solicit anonymous feedback from businesses after each support project, whether for expansion or attraction. This involves:

- **Post-Project Surveys:** Assessing effectiveness and quality of SPARK support provided.
- **Interviews:** Conducting detailed discussions for deeper insights.
- **Analysis:** Identifying success areas and improvement opportunities.

"Being part of such a renowned program not only validates our business model but also motivates our team to work harder and smarter. We are eager to collaborate with the talented professionals at Ann Arbor SPARK and other startups within the community. Together, we believe we can create meaningful impacts and drive economic growth in our region."



- Start My Lease

"Extremely satisfied with the support received from the Ann Arbor SPARK team."

"Ann Arbor SPARK's team has been a fantastic partner to work with, from building a relationship with us over the years, to supporting our greater startup ecosystem. They truly are the best and we're grateful for their help and support expanding into the Ann Arbor business community."



Highlights of Activities and Accomplishments

Business Development

Maximize job creation and capital investment by growing the region's GDP through the retention and expansion of established driving industry companies that sell goods and services outside the Ann Arbor region, and through the targeted attraction domestically and internationally of similar companies that could succeed in our region.

FY 2024 ACTIVITIES & NEWS

Project Success Stories | City of Ann Arbor

Successes described in this section were made possible by direct support from Ann Arbor SPARK's business development team. In total, the business development team supported three successful attraction and expansion projects in the City of Ann Arbor during 2024 resulting in \$53,760 in total company investment, the creation of four new jobs, and the retention of eleven jobs. These companies have the potential for future growth in our region.



Fark Labs USA: Fark Labs USA serves as a strategic gateway for startups and entrepreneurs seeking to enter and thrive in the American market. The company established their North American HQ in Ann Arbor by signing a lease at Venue resulting in an investment of \$1,500 and two new jobs.



Khenda: Khenda is an AI-powered continuous improvement platform for the manufacturing industry aiming to help companies minimize waste and increase efficiency. The Turkish startup relocated their global headquarters to Ann Arbor at Venue by 4M and brings two full-time positions.



Johnson Controls established a flexible workspace at Bamboo in Downtown Ann Arbor, accommodating 11 staff members with room for future expansion. This \$50,880 investment in a soft-landing space lays the groundwork for the company's continued growth in the region.

Collaborative Regional Representation and Site Readiness for Economic Growth in Washtenaw County

Ann Arbor SPARK and the Detroit Regional Partnership (DRP) collaborate to attract and retain businesses, promote economic growth, and showcase the region's strengths.



While DRP leads global attraction efforts, SPARK focuses on Washtenaw County, ensuring businesses have a clear view of local assets like workforce talent and site readiness.

SPARK also advances site development through the Strategic Site Readiness Program (SSRP) grant, enhancing infrastructure and preparing industrial sites for investment. Recent efforts include enrolling Scio Township and Ypsilanti Township sites in DRP's VIP program, offering shovel-ready options to attract businesses and support regional growth. Contact Phil Santer for more information about the SSRP funding.

FY 2024 ACTIVITIES & NEWS

Guide to Opening a Business in Washtenaw County: Supporting Entrepreneurs Across Communities

7 STEPS TO OPENING A BUSINESS

STEP 1

SITE EVALUATION

Verify if site is located within an area that allows your business.

STEP 2

PAUSE BEFORE PURCHASING

Take the time to gather necessary history and expertise before entering a Purchase Agreement.

STEP 3

PLANNING & ZONING APPROVALS

Obtain approval from the Planning Department.

STEP 4

BUSINESS LICENSE APPLICATION

Apply for a Business License from the City Clerk.

STEP 5

BUILDING PERMITS & APPROVALS

Obtain a Certificate of Compliance from the Building Department. This includes applying for construction work permits and scheduling building, mechanical, plumbing, electrical and fire inspections.

STEP 6

BUSINESS LICENSE

Obtain a Business License from the City Clerk. Make sure to renew the license by (insert date) and schedule the bi-annual Business License inspection.

STEP 7

OPEN YOUR BUSINESS

ANNUAL BUSINESS LICENSE RENEWAL

Ann Arbor SPARK has created a comprehensive guide to help entrepreneurs successfully establish businesses in communities across Washtenaw County. This resource simplifies the complex process of starting a business by providing clear information on site selection, zoning and permitting, licensing, and compliance with local regulations.

The guide is tailored to meet the needs of small business owners in diverse communities, offering valuable insights into local requirements and practical tips for navigating them. The guide equips entrepreneurs with the knowledge they need to identify the right location, secure necessary approvals, and prepare for a successful launch.

In addition to the guide, SPARK offers supplementary resources, including mentorship, networking opportunities, and funding assistance, to further support small business success. This initiative reflects SPARK's commitment to fostering entrepreneurship and economic growth throughout Washtenaw County.

For more details and to access the full guide, visit [Ann Arbor SPARK's website](#).

Local Talent Retention Efforts

In 2024, SPARK worked to retain skilled talent in Ann Arbor following the closure of Qiagen's NeuMoDx facility. We developed and distributed a resume book featuring impacted employees to local life sciences companies, highlighting expertise in molecular biology, microbiology, software engineering, clinical research, and regulatory compliance. An email outreach campaign encouraged employer connections, and we reinforced these efforts through discussions during company retention visits. These actions helped keep highly skilled professionals in the local workforce and supported Ann Arbor's life sciences industry.

FY 2024 ACTIVITIES & NEWS

Driving Sustainability: Ann Arbor's Green Business Challenge and Beyond

Launched in May 2024, the Ann Arbor Green Business Challenge (A2 GBC) is a collaboration between Ann Arbor SPARK and the City's Office of Sustainability and Innovations, designed to promote and support sustainability among local businesses. The program offers resources, recognition, and certification based on achievements across categories such as energy, water, mobility, and resilience.

In its first year, A2 GBC registered 23 businesses, including Zingerman's and Cinnaholic, which earned bronze certifications. Momentum has grown through initiatives like the Sustainable Future Forum, a new a2Tech360 event, and monthly Sustainability Meetups that foster collaboration and innovation. A partnership with Fresh Coast Climate Solutions supports participants with tailored sustainability plans aligned with Ann Arbor's A2ZERO goals.

In addition to the GBC, SPARK's 2024 sustainability efforts included hosting the inaugural Sustainable Future Forum during a2Tech360 and developing strategies for future initiatives. These efforts highlight SPARK's commitment to advancing Ann Arbor's leadership in sustainability and innovation.



Regional Child Care Planning Initiative Update

Recognizing the critical shortage of child care, Ann Arbor SPARK partnered with the Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC) to launch a regional child care planning initiative in 2022. This effort united local providers, employers, and community leaders to form the Child Care Coalition, which released the "[Caring for Our Future](#)" action plan in May 2024.

Ann Arbor SPARK sincerely thanks the City of Ann Arbor for its recent zoning and land use changes, which are instrumental in accommodating child care growth and directly support these efforts. In 2025, SPARK and the coalition are exploring implementation grant funding to further advance these goals, ensuring long-term benefits for families, businesses, and the local economy.

City of Ann Arbor Metrics

| Companies Assisted | | 2023 - 2024 |
|--|--|-------------|
| Number of growth visits | | 90 |
| Number of attraction prospect site visits ¹ | | 7 |
| Number of responses to attraction prospect or site consultant requests for proposals ² | | 21 |
| Jobs | | |
| Projected to be created (over the next 3 years) ³ | | 40 |
| Jobs projected to be retained | | 95 |
| Investment | | |
| Taxable value of new private investment | \$ | 1,728,180 |
| Total value of private investment | \$ | 3,465,360 |
| Miscellaneous | | |
| Number and value of investments leveraged through and including federal and state grants and incentives, foundations and other sources that assisted businesses or organizations | No incentives awarded in the City of Ann Arbor in 2024 | |
| Retained Investment | | 2012 - 2024 |
| Taxable value of retained private investment ⁴ | \$ | 89,059,921 |

¹Number of discreet projects that were physically toured around sites in the City of Ann Arbor.

²Number of requests to which SPARK electronically submitted properties located in the City of Ann Arbor.

³These jobs are projected to be added over the next three years, we will update the numbers as we interact with the companies and determine progress.

⁴Calculated using the total value of private investment captured by Ann Arbor SPARK from 2012 – 2024 in the amount of \$178,119,842.



SPARK celebrates all projects that may have an impact on our region.
We do not count jobs and investments where SPARK was not directly involved.

Business Development Metrics

How Do We Count New Job Commitments?

SPARK acts as project manager for both the communities it supports and the companies it serves. Our project management efforts can be simple, such as conducting data analysis that a company may use in its business planning, or as complex as full project management for significant company expansions.

This would include everything from:

- Connecting them to proper resources
- Working with the site selection community to help determine a location for a project
- Fully managing the tax incentive paperwork and the process it may require
- Creating communication plans
- Traveling to company locations outside of the state
- Making presentations to key public and private decision makers
- Talent recruitment efforts



When companies apply for local or state incentives, they fill out applications that require both job creation and investment estimates. SPARK considers these projects a success after it is publicly announced, or when the proper approval process has taken place for the incentive sought by the company. SPARK's jobs and investments numbers are based on these project announcements provided by the companies. SPARK monitors actual job creation, and those results are shown in this report.

SPARK provides support either directly to companies or by supporting the consultants the company utilizes during attraction or expansion projects. Whatever role SPARK might play, we capture jobs and investments for projects that we have played an active role in helping a company decide to move forward in our region.

SPARK celebrates all projects that may have an impact on our region. We do not count jobs or investments for projects where SPARK was not directly involved.

FY 2024

BUSINESS RETENTION, EXPANSION, AND ATTRACTION

Growth calls are a core economic development strategy that involve proactively outreaching and engaging with the existing employer base in our region to determine where they face opportunities and challenges. Growth calls recognize that businesses are dynamic entities that involve constant change. These calls allow SPARK to:

- gather information about local businesses that can be aggregated to reveal trends,
- determine valuable resources that could assist in the company's development,
- identify growth projects that require assistance, and
- serve as an ombudsman between businesses and government.

SPARK conducts hundreds of targeted growth calls each year that result in numerous referrals to resources, services and opportunities of which companies are often unaware. The most common referrals involve accessing talent, access to capital or business development/sales opportunities. Proactive outreach helps companies address challenges before they become problems, supports their continued growth and helps them see that this region is invested in their success.



SPARK HELD GROWTH VISITS WITH

41 COMPANIES

IN 2024 IN THE CITY OF ANN ARBOR

These companies ranged from 1 to 400 employees and encompassed a diverse range of industries including Advanced Information Technology, Healthcare, Life Sciences, Advanced Automotive, Business Services, Manufacturing, Banking and Finance, Education, Research and Development, and Food and Beverage.

Together, they represent 2,218.5 full-time employees.

FY 2024

BUSINESS RETENTION, EXPANSION, AND ATTRACTION

| Company Name | Current FTE (as of growth visit) |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| AdAdapted, Inc. | 58 |
| Alpha-Otto Technologies, Inc. | 2 |
| Arbor Assays, Inc. | 23 |
| Atomic Object | 39 |
| Atwell LLC | 12 |
| Betty Brigade | 16 |
| CareEvolution, Inc. | 40 |
| Comerica Bank | 25 |
| DaySmart Software | 90 |
| DEO USA, Inc. | 2 |
| Duo Security | 400 |
| Endra Inc. | 18 |
| Fifth Eye, Inc. | 1 |
| FreightVerify, Inc | 95 |
| H.E.H. Human Electric Hybrids LLC | 4 |
| Hobbs + Black Architects | 69 |
| Human Element, Inc. | 19 |
| ITHAKA | 150 |
| Johnson Controls-Ann Arbor Technology Office | 11 |
| Kumanu, Inc. | 32 |
| MACOM Integrated Circuits-Ann Arbor | 50 |
| MemryX Inc. | 15 |

FY 2024

BUSINESS RETENTION, EXPANSION, AND ATTRACTION

| Company Name | Current FTE (as of growth visit) |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| Mindo Chocolate Makers, LLC | 3 |
| MS Bioworks LLC | 5 |
| National Advanced Mobility Consortium, Inc | 18 |
| OcuSciences, Inc | 5.5 |
| Rehmann | 105 |
| SafeSend | 45 |
| Sartorius AG | 163 |
| SBD North America | 16 |
| Schwab | 120 |
| Sequoia Applied Solutions, Inc. | 14 |
| SkySpecs, Inc. | 300 |
| Smart Eye | 5 |
| Thrive2Liv, LLC | 6 |
| Torrent Consulting, LLC | 25 |
| Utilidata | 12 |
| Virtual EM Inc. | 2 |
| Voxel51, Inc. | 37 |
| Zoller Inc. | 106 |
| Zomedica Corp. | 60 |

Q4 2024

PROJECT PIPELINE

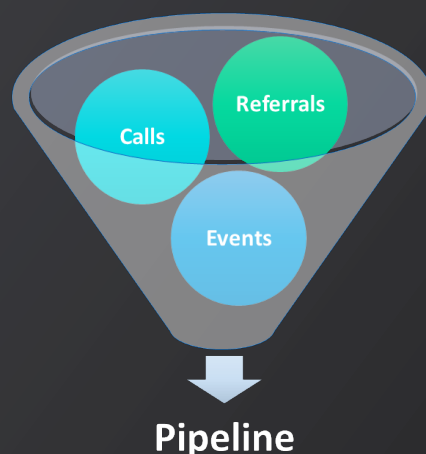
SPARK's project pipeline is a tool that enables our business development team to monitor the status of all active calls, referrals, events, and more. Our pipeline keeps us ahead of the game and allows our team to quickly prioritize high-impact projects and identify and address any issues in collaboration with our partners along the way.



CURRENT PIPELINE AT A GLANCE

49 PROJECTS

SPARK's current pipeline represents the potential for 5,805 new jobs, 603 retained jobs, and nearly \$2.3 billion in total investments in the region. Projects represent a variety of industry sectors, including Research and Development, Life Sciences, Advanced Information Technology, Alternative Energy, Advanced Manufacturing, Advanced Materials, Food and Beverage, and Business Services.



Pipeline Update

In 2024, the business development team, in partnership with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) and the Detroit Regional Partnership (DRP), observed a slow start to site search activity. However, the second half of the year saw increased interest, particularly in data center opportunities.

Most prospects sought vacant, industrial-zoned land, with some requiring specialized features, such as higher ceiling heights, which remain limited in the current inventory. Despite the early slowdown, SPARK capitalized on the resurgence in activity to attract new businesses and support regional growth.



Highlights of Activities and Accomplishments

Entrepreneurial Services

At SPARK, we foster the entrepreneurial spirit by helping startups and early stage companies thrive. We have two business incubators, mentoring programs, and a knowledgeable team ready to connect companies to the resources they need to succeed.

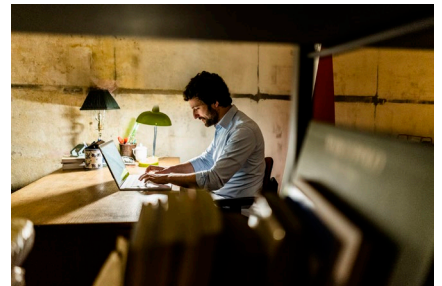
Ann Arbor SPARK | Entrepreneurial Services

Small Business Support Hub Update: More than 150 Washtenaw County Companies Enrolled!

The Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) awarded grants to 27 organizations, including Ann Arbor SPARK, to serve as entrepreneurial hubs across the state of Michigan, providing comprehensive resources and support to the state's small businesses. SPARK's Small Business Support (SBSH) program provides resources and guidance for early-stage and growing businesses in the region, helping them navigate challenges and access capital.

SPARK has partnered with the [Howell Chamber of Commerce](#), [Jewish Family Services](#), [Launch 734 from Monroe County Business Alliance](#), the [Michigan SBDC Greater Washtenaw Region](#), the [Michigan SBDC's Uplift Michigan™ Business Development Program](#), and the [Washtenaw Community College Entrepreneurship Center](#), to grow the services and resources available to small business owners throughout the region. SPARK provides centralized administration of the grant, enabling strategic partners to focus on the rapid deployment of programming and services. Kristine Nash-Wong, the director of entrepreneurial services at the SPARK East Innovation Center in Ypsilanti will lead the effort.

As of January 2025, the program has supported 315 active companies, including 153 in Washtenaw County. Of the Washtenaw County companies, 111 are early-stage businesses, 112 are microbusinesses (1-10 employees), and 109 are minority-owned businesses. This reflects the program's continued commitment to fostering economic growth and diversity across the county and beyond.



The funding for these services is provided by a grant from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC). This grant enables our partner organizations and Ann Arbor SPARK to provide these resources and support at no cost to eligible businesses.

Ann Arbor SPARK | Entrepreneurial Services

Unlocking Growth in Washtenaw County: SizeUp Business Intelligence Tools Launching Soon



We are thrilled to introduce SizeUp's innovative business intelligence tools, designed to empower local businesses with smarter, data-driven decision-making capabilities. Launching on March 3, 2025, these tools provide small and medium-sized businesses access to advanced market research, competitive analysis, and strategic insights typically reserved for large corporations. By equipping businesses with these resources, we aim to foster growth, enhance competitiveness, and strengthen the economic vitality of our community.

Key Features of SizeUp:

1. **Performance Benchmarking:** Businesses can compare their performance against industry peers, gaining insights into areas such as revenue, size, and salaries.
2. **Market Analysis:** Identify potential customers, suppliers, and competitors through detailed mapping, enabling strategic planning and expansion.
3. **Advertising Optimization:** Determine optimal locations for advertising by analyzing demographic and business data, ensuring marketing efforts reach the most promising audiences.
4. **Demographic Insights:** Access interactive maps showcasing demographic, labor force, and consumer expenditure data to better understand the local market landscape.

By integrating SizeUp into our economic development initiatives, we aim to:

- Assist local businesses in making data-driven decisions.
- Foster job creation and economic growth within the community.
- Provide scalable support to a broad range of enterprises.
- Expand and enhance Small Business Support Hub (SBSH) resources.

This initiative underscores our commitment to leveraging innovative solutions to support and strengthen our local economy.



Highlights of Activities and Accomplishments

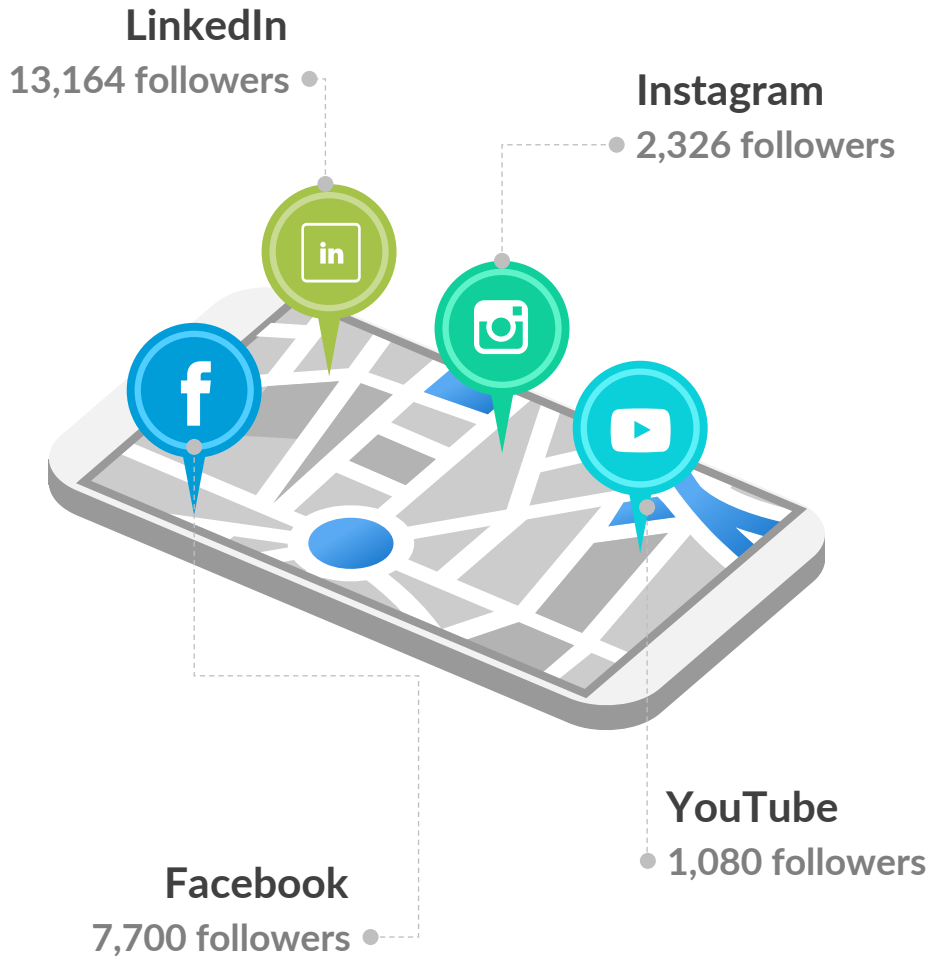
Talent Engagement, Events, and Marketing the Region

For nearly 20 years, SPARK has served the greater Ann Arbor region as a catalyst for economic development. We accomplish this by building awareness of the region as a destination for business and manufacturing development and growth. Our team of knowledge experts attracts, develops, strengthens, and invests in driving industries to help our communities prosper.

Social Media Activity

Across all Platforms

24,270 followers as of January 2025



tech home coming

CONNECT WITH COMPANIES HIRING IN THE ANN ARBOR REGION.

Tech Homecoming offers job seekers a unique opportunity to network with area companies looking to hire in a happy hour setting. The goal of the event is to connect talented professionals with Ann Arbor and its vibrant tech ecosystem, which has produced hundreds of startups and billions in enterprise value in the past five years. In 2024, the event was hosted at Venue by 4M with nine participating companies and nearly 565 registered job seekers (50% increase over 2023).

PARTICIPATING COMPANIES



MEDC PARTNERSHIP



Tech Homecoming is part of the Back to Michigan effort to attract and retain talent in the state. To learn more, visit BacktoMichigan.com



MICHIGAN ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

SPONSORS



HEATHER NASH
PHOTOGRAPHY

a2TECH360 EVENT RECAP

From Startups to Sustainability: Innovations and Highlights from a2Tech360 2024

a2Tech360, Ann Arbor's leading week-long event celebrating technology, innovation, and entrepreneurship, successfully concluded on September 27, 2024. The ninth edition attracted over 2,000 attendees and featured eight signature events alongside twelve partner events, including investment showcases, sustainability forums, and the culminating Tech Trek street fair that showcased cutting-edge technologies throughout downtown Ann Arbor.

Organized by Ann Arbor SPARK and the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti Local Development Finance Authority, a2Tech360 highlighted Washtenaw County's robust tech ecosystem and its position as a national hub for innovation. The event series provided valuable opportunities for startups to secure investments, entrepreneurs to network with industry leaders, and attendees to engage with the latest trends in mobility, sustainability, investment, and entrepreneurship.

Paul Krutko, President and CEO of Ann Arbor SPARK, stated, "a2Tech360 continues to be a vital platform for showcasing the region's entrepreneurial talent and technological advancements. The event not only attracts national attention but also fosters collaborations that drive our dynamic startup ecosystem forward."

The diverse participation, including entrepreneurs, venture capitalists, community leaders, government officials, and academic representatives, underscores Ann Arbor's role in driving economic growth and maintaining its leadership in the national technology landscape. a2Tech360's success this year highlights the critical importance of ongoing support for initiatives that promote innovation and economic development in the region.

Read the full article, including a rundown of highlights from each event, [here](#).



a2TECH360

SOWING THE SEEDS OF INNOVATION

SEPTEMBER 24 – OCTOBER 3

A SERIES OF EVENTS
CELEBRATING OUR
REGION'S SPIRIT OF
INNOVATION



LEARN MORE AT
A2TECH360.COM

ORGANIZED BY
ANN ARBOR

SPARK

ANN ARBOR-YPSILANTI

IDEA
Local Development Finance Authority

FY 2024

Ann Arbor SPARK Press Releases

Ann Arbor SPARK Announces \$150K Investment in SecuritySnares as Part of Michigan Innovate Capital Fund Program: Ann Arbor SPARK announces a pivotal \$150,000 investment in SecuritySnares, a trailblazing B2B cybersecurity company, as part of its \$500,000 pre-seed funding round. This investment marks the first of many from the [Michigan Innovate Capital Fund \(MICF\) program's \\$5 million allocation to SPARK](#), which will be deployed over a 2.5-year period. 2/19/2024

Navigating Site Selection: Ann Arbor's Strategic Advantage: Phil Santer, senior vice president and chief of staff for Ann Arbor SPARK led a webinar on the key factors of site selection for companies looking to expand or relocate. He covered topics like strategic planning, team assembly, project motivations, and partnerships with universities. Santer also shared success stories like KLA and Wacker, emphasizing the importance of incentives and financial support. 2/19/2024

Southeast Michigan Offers Huge Opportunities for Startup, Tech Interns: Ann Arbor and Southeast Michigan are home to a variety of excellent internship opportunities for people looking to work in tech, at startups, or pursue their own ventures. The startup community here is tight-knit and supportive, making it a great opportunity to make meaningful connections to kickstart your career and support future employment. 2/22/2024

CEO Podcast: Governor Rick Snyder, SensCy: In this episode, host Paul Krutko celebrates Ann Arbor SPARK's 20 years of impact on the region with a special guest, Governor Rick Snyder, the organization's founding chair and former Michigan Governor. They delve into Snyder's foundational role in SPARK's creation, his entrepreneurial background including founding two venture capital firms and leading Gateway, and his views on SPARK's significant impact on Ann Arbor's economic development. Listen [here](#). 3/7/2024

CEO Podcast: Stephen Forrest, University of Michigan: In this episode, host Paul Krutko welcomes Dr. Stephen Forrest, a distinguished professor at the University of Michigan known for his work in organic LEDs and thin films. Dr. Forrest discusses his initial involvement with SPARK, motivated by his background in entrepreneurship and innovation. Dr. Forrest credits SPARK as a vital ally in cultural and entrepreneurial shifts within the university and the broader community. Listen [here](#). 3/7/2024

Ann Arbor SPARK Ignites Sustainability Conversation at SXSW's Midwest House: Amidst the innovative flurry of South by Southwest (SXSW) 2024, Midwest House again emerged as a beacon of inspiration and provided an entertaining home base for entrepreneurs from Michigan and beyond. Monday's Michigan Day festivities at Midwest House provided a vibrant display of dialogue, music, innovation, and direction-setting for the future of sustainability and technology. 3/21/2024

FY 2024

Ann Arbor SPARK Press Releases

CEO Podcast: Tim Marshall, Bank of Ann Arbor: In this episode, host Paul Krutko welcomes Tim Marshall, president and CEO of Bank of Ann Arbor. The conversation explores SPARK's origins, its impact on the region, and the collaboration between academia, government, and the private sector, as well as SPARK's contributions to the community, the importance of continued involvement, and perspectives on its future. Listen [here](#). 3/22/2024

Ann Arbor SPARK Ignites Innovation with \$150K Investment in Medical Device Pioneer M3D: Ann Arbor SPARK has announced a \$150,000 investment in M3D as part of the company's pre-seed funding round. This investment marks a significant milestone as the second deployment of funds from the Michigan Innovate Capital Fund (MICF) allocation, following an agreement that sees Ann Arbor SPARK investing \$5 million over a 2.5-year period. 3/25/2024

Unveiling Michigan's Brightest Startups and a \$25,000 Grand Prize Winner at Ann Arbor SPARK's Boot Camp Celebration: Michigan's entrepreneurial ecosystem applauded four early-stage companies Wednesday evening at Ann Arbor SPARK's Entrepreneur Boot Camp Celebration. The companies, Hippo Creates, STEMpro, Tackboard, and PolicySwift pitched their ideas to a panel of judges for a chance to receive a \$25,000 investment. 3/28/2024

Ann Arbor's Bold New Green Business Challenge: The City of Ann Arbor, in partnership with Ann Arbor SPARK, is proud to unveil the *Ann Arbor Green Business Challenge* (A2 GBC), an exciting initiative set to revolutionize sustainability efforts in the local business community. 5/2/2024

Ann Arbor SPARK Invests \$150K in Insight Voice, Inc. as Part of Expansive Tech Initiative: Ann Arbor SPARK, a catalyst for economic development in Southeast Michigan, announces a \$150,000 investment in Insight Voice, Inc. This investment is part of Insight Voice's \$500,000 pre-seed funding round aimed at enhancing its innovative content marketing automation platform. This marks the third investment facilitated by the Michigan Innovation Capital Fund (MICF), which has allocated \$5 million to SPARK over a 2.5-year period to boost tech-focused startups across Michigan. 5/7/2024

Local Coalition Working to Address Child Care in the Region Releases Action Plan to Support Providers, Families, and Area Employers: The Livingston and Washtenaw Counties Child Care Coalition—a group of local child care providers, families, policymakers, and economic development professionals—has [released an action plan to improve the state of child care in the region](#). 5/14/2024

FY 2024

Ann Arbor SPARK Press Releases

[Ann Arbor Welcomes Sartorius' Advanced Bioanalytics Center, Bolstering Local Biotech](#)

Sector: The life science group Sartorius opened its new Center of Excellence for Bioanalytics in Ann Arbor, two years after breaking ground on Research Park Drive in the City of Ann Arbor. Sartorius has invested approximately \$100 million in this state-of-the-art facility, which consolidates existing sites and functions in Ann Arbor. The number of employees at the site is expected to double over time. 6/7/2024

[Washtenaw Community College Entrepreneurship Center Launches Tech Ecosystem](#)

Development Pilot Project to Empower Entrepreneurs: Washtenaw Community College Entrepreneurship Center announced the launch of its Tech Ecosystem Development Pilot Project aimed at fostering innovation and empowering local entrepreneurs. This collaborative initiative, funded and supported by the Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti SmartZone LDFA, SPARK, and the WCC Entrepreneurship Center, marks a significant milestone in our commitment to building a robust, inclusive tech ecosystem in Washtenaw County. 6/18/2024

[CEO Podcast: Kelly Sexton, Associate Vice President for Research – Innovation Partnerships and Economic Impact at the University of Michigan](#)

In this episode, Paul and Kelly discuss her goals as the new board chair at Ann Arbor SPARK, including building a sustainable future for organizations, making Ann Arbor an entrepreneurial hub, and addressing talent and capital challenges. Listen to the full episode [here](#). 8/5/2024

[Ann Arbor SPARK Fuels Growth with \\$150,000 Investments in Clair and CubeWorks](#): Ann Arbor SPARK is proud to announce a significant investment of \$150,000 each in two pioneering tech companies, Clair and CubeWorks, through the Michigan Innovation Capital Fund (MICF). 8/7/2024

[CEO Podcast: David Ruud, DTE Energy](#): In this episode, Paul interviews David Ruud, SPARK's outgoing board chair and Chief Financial Officer of DTE Energy. They discuss David's impact on the region's economic development. Listen to the full episode [here](#). 9/4/2024

[Top Startups Take Center Stage at Invest360: Winners Announced in Tech, Healthcare, and](#)

[Mobility Sectors](#): On Friday, September 20th, the Invest360 event, held at the University of Michigan Golf Course Clubhouse, celebrated some of Southeast Michigan's most innovative early-stage companies. 9/23/2024

[High-Growth Companies Honored at 2024 FastTrack Awards, Celebrating Regional Economic](#)

[Vitality](#): The University of Michigan Golf Course Clubhouse was abuzz with excitement on Friday, September 20, as Ann Arbor SPARK hosted the annual FastTrack Awards, a highlight of the a2Tech360 event series. 9/23/2024

FY 2024

Ann Arbor SPARK Press Releases

[Ann Arbor SPARK Showcasing Mobility Startups at The Battery Show, Oct 8-10:](#) Ann Arbor SPARK will be exhibiting at The Battery Show, North America's premier event for advanced battery technology, at Huntington Place in Detroit from October 8-10, 2024. 9/26/2024

[From Startups to Sustainability: Innovations and Highlights from a2Tech360 2024:](#) a2Tech360, Ann Arbor's premier week-long celebration of technology, innovation, and entrepreneurship, wrapped up on Friday, September 27, drawing thousands of attendees across a variety of events that highlighted the region's thriving tech ecosystem. 9/30/2024

[New Collaboration Strengthens Support for Small Businesses in Washtenaw, Livingston, and Monroe Counties:](#) A new collaboration among organizations, including Ann Arbor SPARK, the Entrepreneurship Center at Washtenaw Community College, and the Michigan SBDC Greater Washtenaw Region, has been launched to support small businesses in Washtenaw, Livingston, and Monroe counties. 10/14/2024

[Celebrating Innovation: Ann Arbor SPARK's Entrepreneur Boot Camp Winners:](#) Ann Arbor SPARK's Entrepreneur Boot Camp awarded Perpetual Sciences \$25,000 for its innovative hydrocephalus treatment system, with Capture Tech earning second place for its carbon-sequestering technology. The Boot Camp, funded by the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti LDFA, supports early-stage startups in refining their business ideas and fostering growth. 10/23/2024

[Washtenaw County Welcomes Cutting-Edge AI Research Facility in Collaboration with U-M and Los Alamos National Laboratory:](#) Washtenaw County will host a cutting-edge AI research facility through a collaboration between the University of Michigan and Los Alamos National Laboratory. Located in Ypsilanti Township, the facility will advance AI and high-performance computing, create workforce development opportunities, and strengthen the region's role as a leader in innovation and technology. 12/5/2024

[2024 Highlights: Ann Arbor SPARK's Impact on Michigan's Startup Growth:](#) In 2024, Ann Arbor SPARK invested in 23 Michigan startups with support from the \$5 million Michigan Innovate Capital Fund. These investments, including innovative companies like M3D Technologies and CircNova, highlight SPARK's commitment to fostering resilience and growth in the state's startup ecosystem. 12/17/2024

[Michigan Legislature Passes Ann Arbor SPARK's Legislative Priorities:](#) Innovation Fund and R&D Tax Credit: In December 2024, the Michigan Legislature approved the \$60 million Michigan Innovation Fund and an R&D tax credit, both priorities championed by Ann Arbor SPARK. 12/23/2024

To view all press releases from Ann Arbor SPARK, visit our [Regional News](#) page.

Ann Arbor SPARK | Municipal Services

Counties, cities, and townships are valued partners. Cultivating prosperity in the communities we serve is how we define success. Ann Arbor SPARK is proud to serve your community and provide real-time, relevant resources for whatever you need related to business attraction, expansion, and retention, when you need it. Our business development team can assist with feasibility studies, review available sites for projects of any size, provide economic and labor market data and analysis, industry sector analysis, compensation analysis, facilitate connections to regional, state, and national partners, and much more. When municipalities invest in Ann Arbor SPARK, we are able to deliver specific benefits and results.

Municipal Investor Benefits

- Participation in SPARK's public-sector committee, which focuses on economic development opportunities in Washtenaw and Livingston counties and southeast MI.
- Outreach and services to growing companies located within their communities.
- The inclusion of appropriate real estate options and development of responses to requests for sites/proposals for business attraction.
- Access to regional and real estate data, demographic and business information, and the ability to leverage SPARK staff for customized research and data requests.
- Access to SPARK events.
- Consultation and deal structuring for economic development incentive programs and project management for major investment or job creation projects.

For higher-level municipal investors, Ann Arbor SPARK can provide guidance on strategic projects. This could include data, implementation of a specific economic development strategy like [Redevelopment Ready Communities®](#), neighborhood improvement programs, marketing of high-priority development projects, or other community-focused projects.

Additional consultation services could include, but are not limited to:

- Economic development strategies
- Brief economic impact studies
- Economic development technical assistance
- Grant support and technical assistance
- EPA brownfield assistance
- Workforce and talent pipeline development strategies
- Resources for state incentive programs
- Deal structuring and negotiation
- TIF projections
- Review or development of pro formas
- Assistance with PA 198s
- Customized research and data analyses



Contact Phil Santer at phil@annarborusa.org to learn more.



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Ann Arbor SPARK will advance the economy of the Ann Arbor region by establishing it as a desired place for innovation, business location and growth, and for talented people to live and work. The Ann Arbor region will be recognized for its academic, business, and community resources, and its collaborative culture.