



Ann Arbor SPARK

Semi-Annual Report
City of Ann Arbor
January 1, 2023 – June 30, 2023



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.

<https://annarborusa.org/>



Semi-Annual Report

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REPORT CONTENTS

- 03 Report Summary and Strategic Priorities
- 04 Municipal Services Overview
- 05 Business Development Activity & Metrics
- 11 Companies Visited
- 14 Project Pipeline
- 15 Washtenaw County Economic Outlook
- 16 Marketing Updates *(Upcoming Events and Press Releases)*
- 19 2023 Legislative Priorities
- 24 Contact Details

Ann Arbor SPARK | City of Ann Arbor

Semi-Annual Report

This report focuses primarily on activity completed and results achieved by Ann Arbor SPARK during the first half of 2023 within the City of Ann Arbor. We look forward to expanding our strategic vision in 2023 and beyond.



Driving Smart Economic Growth in Service of Prosperity for All

The world is undergoing a sea of change of 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 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 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. Contact Phil Santer at phil@annarborusa.org to learn more.

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

MEET OUR BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT TEAM

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



Ann Arbor SPARK

Business Development Mission

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.



YTD 2023 BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT HIGHLIGHTS

City of Ann Arbor

Downtown Office Space Utilization Research

Ann Arbor SPARK and the University of Michigan's Quantitative Methods in the Social Sciences (QMSS) program are currently in the planning stage of a research project that will take place during the fall 2023 semester. The research will be focused on identifying ways to capture and/or predict downtown office space utilization as hybrid work environments become a more permanent fixture. QMSS students will identify comparable communities and research best practices related to downtown utilization initiatives, creative use of office space, and more. The Ann Arbor DDA will be a critical partner as this project develops. More details to come.

Best Practices in Economic Development Research

On behalf of the City of Ann Arbor, a national benchmarking study is underway to identify the factors driving economic development in ten communities across the United States and Canada. The study is proceeding according to the established scope of work and timeline. The SPARK team is conducting an extensive review of available public information, interviewing key individuals within selected municipalities, and developing written reports with analysis and recommendations specifically for the City of Ann Arbor. The final report will be delivered to the City by October 31, 2023.

Ann Arbor SPARK's CEO Podcast: Milton Dohoney

Milton Dohoney, Jr., the City Administrator for the City of Ann Arbor, discusses the importance of growth, the vitality of the downtown community, the upcoming Bicentennial celebration, and more in a recent episode of SPARK's CEO podcast series. Listen to the full interview [here](#).

Project Management Support for Partners

Ann Arbor SPARK acts as project manager for both the communities it supports and the companies it serves. Our project management efforts can be fairly 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 includes, but is not limited to:

- Connecting companies or communities to appropriate resources
- Working with the site selection community to help determine a location for a project
- Fully managing the process of obtaining a tax incentive, including paperwork
- Creating communication plans
- Traveling to company locations outside of the state
- Making presentations to key public and private decision makers
- Support company and community talent recruitment efforts

FY 2022 BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT HIGHLIGHTS

City of Ann Arbor

Project Successes

During the first half of 2023, Ann Arbor SPARK successfully assisted five companies as they either planted roots in the Ann Arbor area or relocated their operations, resulting in the creation of seven new jobs and a total capital investment of \$50,400.



Green Stone and FreightMiner both located in Ann Arbor by taking a virtual presence at SPARK Central Innovation Center (SCIC). Capoom also established a virtual presence at SCIC as part of relocating the company's U.S. headquarters to Ann Arbor.



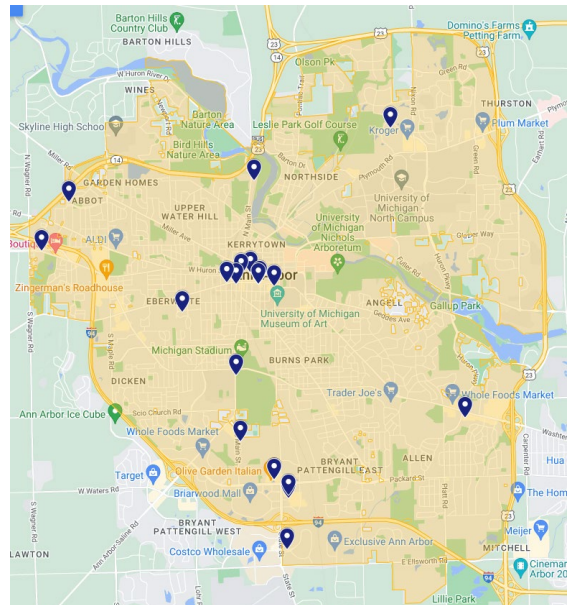
Both NAVV Systems and Spellbound were retained after losing or outgrowing their office space downtown. Both companies have moved into available office space at SCIC.



SPARK Retention Visits and Company Growth Calls

SPARK's business development team members connected with 27 companies representing over 1,500 full-time employees from a variety of industries in the City of Ann Arbor during Q1 and Q2 2023.

Companies visited range in size from 0.5 to 400 employees and represent the Advanced Materials, Alternative Energy, Advanced Information Technology, Homeland Security and Defense, Education, Healthcare, Life Sciences, Business Services, Aerospace, and Banking and Finance industries.



The full list of companies visited can be found on pages 12-13 of this report.

FY 2022 BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT HIGHLIGHTS

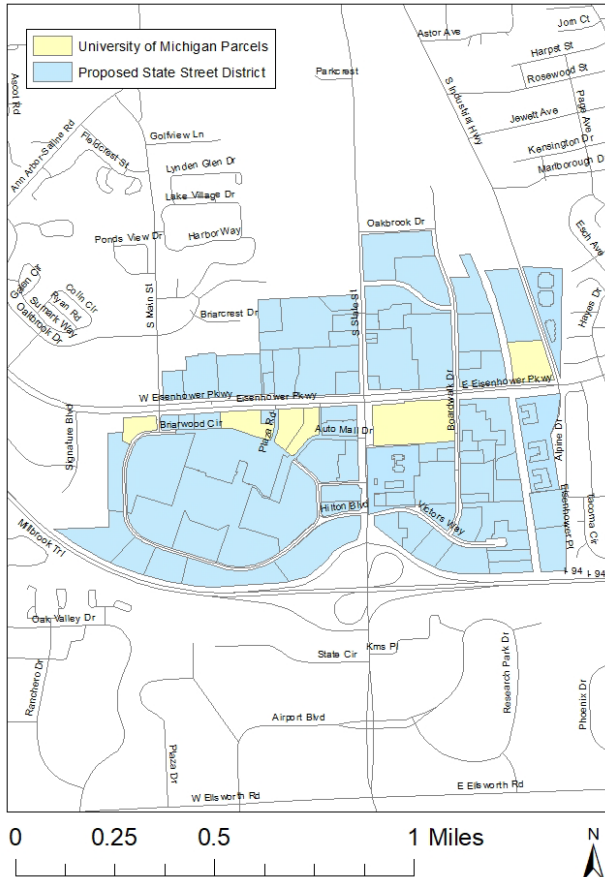
City of Ann Arbor

State Street Gateway: Business Improvement Zone (BIZ) Plan

Ann Arbor SPARK staff have been instrumental in the process of creating a special assessment district within the City of Ann Arbor, known as the State Street BIZ. The purpose of the State Street BIZ is to promote the area as an attractive and inviting gateway into the City of Ann Arbor from I-94 and areas south of I-94 and as a commercially vibrant and diverse business district for research and innovation, retail and office purposes.

To accomplish this, the BIZ will arrange for, oversee, and fund the following projects in the area:

- Median improvements
- Wayfinding and placemaking signage
- Marketing package
- Mowing and trash removal
- Pedestrian improvements



Next steps in the process include:

1. Presenting the petition to the City Clerk signed by owners whose properties constitute a minimum of 30% (measured by SEV) of all commercial property in the proposed BIZ.
2. City Clerk administers a vote of the property owners; more than 60% need to approve to create the BIZ.
3. Once approved, assessments are included in annual tax payments.
4. BIZ Board meets quarterly thereafter.

CITY OF ANN ARBOR METRICS

Companies Assisted		YTD 2023
Number of growth visits held		27
Number of attraction prospect site visits ¹		3*
Number of responses to attraction prospect or site consultant requests for proposals ²		6
Jobs		
Projected to be created (over the next 3 years) ³		7
Jobs projected to be retained		23
Investment		
Taxable value of new private investment		\$ 25,200
Total value of private investment		\$ 50,400
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 ⁴	No incentives awarded to companies in the City of Ann Arbor in Q1 or Q2 2023	

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.

⁴[Michigan Economic Development Corporation Business Development Program Projects](#)

*The COVID-19 crisis limited our ability to physically tour space. This figure includes virtual visits done with site consultants that lead global site search projects.



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.

Ann Arbor SPARK Metrics:

JOBS

SPARK acts as project manager for both the communities it supports and the companies it serves. Our project management efforts can be fairly 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 supports a company directly or it supports the consultants the company utilizes during its expansion. Whatever role SPARK might play, we capture jobs and investments for projects that we have played an active role in helping a company make a decision to move forward.

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.

YTD 2023

COMPANIES VISITED

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

27 COMPANIES

January 1, 2023 - June 30, 2023

These companies ranged from 0.5 to 400 employees and encompassed a diverse range of industries including Advanced Materials, Alternative Energy, Advanced Information Technology, Homeland Security and Defense, Education, Healthcare, Life Sciences, Business Services, Aerospace, and Banking and Finance.

Together, companies contacted represent 1,521 full-time employees.

YTD 2023

COMPANIES VISITED

Company Name	Current FTE (as of growth visit)
ALTrality, LLC	6
Black Tea Motorbikes USA	1
Censys, Inc.	125
DaySmart Software	90
DEO USA, Inc.	2
e-cell secure, LLC	1
Feonix Mobility Rising Ann Arbor	1
Fresh Coast Climate Solutions	8
Genomenon, Inc.	100
Google AdWords	400
InfoReady Corporation	26
J. Keller Properties	10
Jottful, LLC	9
Larky, Inc.	14
LiveRoad Analytics Inc	3
Mouvit, LLC	0.5
NAVV Systems, Inc.	13
Office Evolution	1
SBD North America	20
Sequoia Applied Solutions, Inc.	14

YTD 2023

COMPANIES VISITED

Company Name	Current FTE (as of growth visit)
SkySpecs, Inc.	248
Soundskrit	23
Synecdoche Design	7
Topiary Capital	1
Torrent Consulting, LLC	145
Wolverine Radar Company	2
Workit Health, Inc.	250

Q2 2023

PROJECT PIPELINE

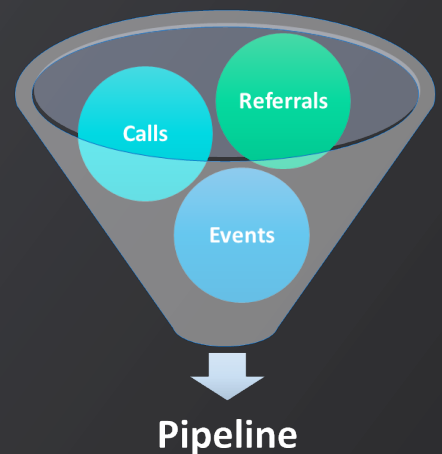
SPARK's project pipeline is a tool that enables our business development team to monitor the status of all active calls, referrals, events, and more. Our pipeline keeps us ahead of the game and allows our team to quickly prioritize high-impact projects and identify and address any issues in collaboration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



CURRENT PIPELINE AT A GLANCE

77 PROJECTS

SPARK's current pipeline represents the potential for 5,212 new jobs, 2,803 retained jobs, and more than \$1.3 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, Advanced Automotive, and Business Services.



Pipeline Update

The business development team continues to field an unprecedented number of site search requests for space in Washtenaw and Livingston counties for both attraction and expansion projects. Site search requests come in for both existing space and vacant land to suited for new construction, but the most common requests this year so far have been for vacant land suited for industrial use (whether it be light industrial for the purpose of R&D or heavy industrial for manufacturing purposes).

As always, our team works closely with state and regional partners to keep sites in Washtenaw County at the forefront for companies when aiding with attraction, retention, and growth activities.

Washtenaw County Economic Outlook Highlights and Takeaways | 2023 – 2025

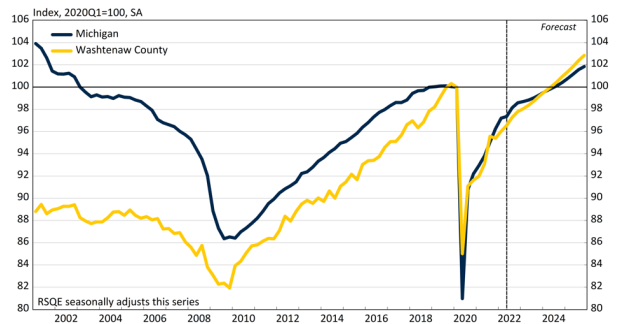
Gabriel Ehrlich and Donald Grimes from the University of Michigan’s [Research Seminar in Quantitative Economics \(RSQE\)](#) presented the economic outlook for Washtenaw County during a luncheon organized by the [Washtenaw Economic Club](#) – an event that Ann Arbor SPARK is proud to sponsor. The event took place at the newly renovated Morris J. Lawrence Building at WCC on March 14, 2023.

Ann Arbor SPARK’s Director of Research Melissa Sheldon, who moderated the Q&A session at the presentation, provided this high-level summary of the Washtenaw County Forecast.

[Read the full report](#)
[View the presentation](#)

The RSQE team describes 2022 as a, “challenging one for both the national and local economies.” According to U-M’s analysis, “the initial strength and optimism about the pace of the economic recovery gave way to concerns about inflation and the risk of a downturn in the broader economy” as 2022 progressed. Despite the challenging circumstances, Washtenaw County recovered some payroll employment from the depths of the pandemic in early 2022

**Quarterly Payroll Employment Indices,
Michigan and Washtenaw County**



RSQE, March 2023

and payroll employment is now expected to return to its pre-pandemic level in Q2 2024. Growth is anticipated and Washtenaw is expected to outpace the state’s recovery.

Reflecting on 2022

A mild national recession/economic slowdown is expected later this year or in early 2024, but Michigan should be well-supported by the strength of the existing automotive industry. The state is well-supported by the auto industry and related manufacturing base, but Washtenaw County is becoming less dependent upon blue-collar industries, including manufacturing.

According to RSQE, the local auto manufacturing industry has been losing jobs for the past several years. In 2002, it employed 14,500 people, but its job count fell all the way to 3,800 by 2021. In 2022, employment fell further to 2,600, but RSQE suspects that decline was due to an establishment reclassification. Despite the growth expected in other sectors within the county, the RSQE staff do not expect any recovery over the next three years related to manufacturing which leaves a once local powerhouse industry with only 2,600 employees in 2025.

View the full list of highlights and takeaways [here](#).



Ann Arbor SPARK

Talent Engagement and Marketing the Region

For more than 15 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.



Inclusive Workplace Series

DEI Awareness

The [Inclusive Workplace Series](#) provides training and guidance to growing companies in the greater Ann Arbor region who want to incorporate various aspects of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) as they grow and develop their business.

The series helps executives, HR professionals, team members, and all champions and allies learn how to build a more inclusive workplace culture. This free online event series will drill down into a specific topic and participants will benefit from the event's interactive format.

Each of the Inclusive Workshop Series events is free, but registration is required. Participants can choose to attend as many events as applicable; attending the entire series is not required. Due to the interactive nature of this series, participation is limited, and recordings of the events will not be publicly available.

Upcoming Session Topics

Inclusive Leadership: Leaders who are aware of unconscious bias can create more inclusive environments, are more effective, and can manage change better.

DEI Awareness: Understand individual differences and diversity domains, gain awareness of unconscious bias and where it comes from, and more.

Diversity Talent Hiring: Diverse organizations perform better. Learn the skills you need to attract and hire diverse candidates.

Inclusive Leadership: Recognize your own implicit bias and how to address it. Learn about micro inequities, microaggressions, and devaluing of others.

Inclusive Communications: Gain understanding of a framework to help with inclusive communication and learn specific methods for communicating inclusively at all levels.

a2TECH360

September 14 – 22, 2023



A Week-long Celebration of Innovation

A series of events bringing together entrepreneurs, researchers, investors, businesses, academic institutions, and job seekers. Discover the latest in innovation and collaborate with like-minded tech enthusiasts!



Registration is open!

Visit a2Tech360.com to learn more and make your own event schedule.

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IDEA
Innovation Development & Entrepreneurship Alliance

Ann Arbor SPARK | 2023 Legislative Priorities

We have an unprecedented opportunity to work with our legislative delegation at the State of Michigan due to the funding opportunities that are now available to us and our community partners. We are working to provide access points for our partners, but here are some key points we're driving at a regional level.

- 1. Business Improvement Zone Changes:** Authorization amendment. In collaboration with the City of Detroit, a bill to modify existing legislation will be reintroduced.
- 2. Michigan Startup Evergreen Fund:** Authorization and Appropriation. Collaboration between University of Michigan, Invest Detroit, Ann Arbor SPARK, BRCC – Western Michigan University, Michigan Technological University, Wayne State University, Michigan Venture Capital Association and TechTown (Legislation authorize allocations specifically to entities listed and include program rules – do not leave up to MEDC or another state agency, limit rule to fiduciary). \$126M to be split among the collaboration partners.
- 3. Establish State Research and Development Tax Credit :** Authorization. Only Midwestern state without credit and only one of handful nationwide without one, puts us at a competitive disadvantage with Ohio, Indiana, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. Keep it simple, if the company is eligible for the federal R&D credit, they receive the Michigan credit. R&D facilities are sweet spot for Ann Arbor region.
- 4. SOAR:** Authorization and Appropriation. SPARK supports funding in general but in specific believes that there are differences between the opportunities for the different regions of the state and for the Ann Arbor region some funding should be reserved for projects needing 40 to 50 acres (think KLA, Wacker Chemical, Sartorius) that create significant taxable value and employment with job yields equal to a large 1000-acre battery plant. It is harder to get MEDC to fund smaller economic development projects than it has ever been.
- 5. Allocate Economic Development Funding to the Twelve Regional Partnerships:** Appropriation (related to #4). We and our Economic Development Leaders for Michigan Partners believe a better model for resourcing economic development is to allocate funds to the regionals where local boards with long histories can make better decisions on what projects to invest in than top down one size fits all decision in Lansing by short term staff members...this is Ohio's approach with Jobs Ohio. This will result in long term regional success that will aggregate up for results for the entire state. MEDC now has over 250 employees and continues to hire. Request is \$100M to be divided by population among the 12 regional partnerships.
- 6. Funding for Entrepreneurial Programs:** Appropriation. During the Snyder and through the Whitmer Administrations' support in MEDC's budget has declined from \$100M per year to \$15M. Some of this funding does support SPARK's work plan. Recommend increasing this appropriation to \$32M with specific direction that it be used for entrepreneurial support programs. We, as a state, are not walking our talk.
- 7. Reinstate Good Jobs for Michigan Incentive Program:** Reauthorization (no budget implications on existing revenue). Excellent attraction and expansion incentive program that SPARK used to attract KLA R&D facility (\$70M investment, 700+ jobs). Whitmer Administration let lapse. Proposed program was renamed Michigan Employment Opportunity and was being advocated by Senator Horn.

January 1, 2023 – June 30, 2023

Ann Arbor SPARK Press Releases

Employer-Led Advanced Manufacturing Technician Training Program Launches in Southeast Michigan: A new chapter of the Federation for Advanced Manufacturing Education (FAME) is launching in southeast Michigan. The training program which equips students with the skills required for the rapidly evolving manufacturing industry provides a debt-free path to an Associate degree. 1/11/2023

US EPA Approves the SnifferDRONE™ for Monitoring Landfill Methane Emissions: Sniffer Robotics, a leading environmental technology-enabled services company, announced the US EPA has broadly approved its SnifferDRONE method to monitor landfill methane emissions as an alternative to existing federal regulations. The EPA regulatory approval with complete details can be read [here](#). 1/11/2023

U-M Startup LearningClues Selected for the 2023 GSV Cup “Elite 200”: LearningClues, a start-up from U-M, has been selected to The Elite 200, the distinguished list of semifinalists set to compete in the 2023 GSV Cup. The cup, powered by GSV Ventures, Google Cloud, HolonIQ, HubSpot for Startups, and ASU RealmSpark, will award \$1MM in cash & prizes. 1/16/2023

Ann Arbor SPARK Hires Sarah Cicotte as Director of Mobility, Driving Continued Innovation in Region’s Thriving Industry:

Ann Arbor SPARK is pleased to announce the hiring of Sarah Cicotte as its new Director of Mobility. In her new role, Cicotte will lead the organization’s efforts to drive innovation and growth in the region’s mobility industry. 2/21/2023



Michigan Works! Southeast Receives up to \$3.6 Million to Assist Area Businesses: Michigan Works! Southeast will receive up to \$3.6 Million from the Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Opportunity (LEO) to train workers at 66 companies throughout the region. Collectively, these 66 companies will train 1,883 employees, which includes 789 new hires and 330 United States Dept. of Labor Registered Apprentices. 2/2/2023

CEO Podcast: Dr. Santa Ono, President of the University of Michigan: In this episode, Dr. Santa J. Ono, the newly appointed president of the University of Michigan, discusses the importance of universities and their partnerships with the private sector in creating and growing technology-based companies, and how these collaborations help commercialize research and benefit the Ann Arbor region’s economy. Listen [here](#). 3/20/2023

Recapping the Best of SXSW 2023: Highlights and Insights: South by Southwest (SXSW) is an annual conference and festival in Austin, Texas, that brings together a diverse range of professionals from various industries, including music, film, technology, and entrepreneurship. The event allows attendees to network, learn from thought leaders, and experience new ideas and innovations. Learn more about Midwest House and the themes of SXSW [here](#). 3/31/2023

January 1, 2023 – June 30, 2023

Ann Arbor SPARK Press Releases

Washtenaw County Economic Outlook Highlights and Takeaways: The RSQE team describes 2022 as a “challenging one for both the national and local economies.” According to U-M’s analysis, “the initial strength and optimism about the pace of the economic recovery gave way to concerns about inflation and the risk of a downturn in the broader economy” as 2022 progressed. Despite the challenging circumstances, Washtenaw County recovered some payroll employment from the depths of the pandemic in early 2022 and payroll employment is now expected to return to its pre-pandemic level in Q2 2024. Growth is anticipated in the county and Washtenaw is expected to outpace the state’s recovery in the next few years. 4/10/2023

How to Create University-Business Partnerships to Develop Talent and Opportunities in Ann Arbor: Ann Arbor is well known as a “college town” and the companies located here have the chance to develop deep partnerships with our universities and colleges. But what makes strong partnerships? These relationships can drive innovation, attract talent, and create opportunities for collaboration. As research and development and nurturing talent become tougher, organizations that leverage these relationships are better prepared to handle a dynamic market. These are some ways to build effective connections between business and higher education in Ann Arbor. 4/14/2023

CEO Podcast: Milton Dohoney, Jr., Ann Arbor City Administrator: In this episode, Milton Dohoney, Jr., the City Administrator for the City of Ann Arbor, discusses the importance of growth, the vitality of the downtown community, the upcoming Bicentennial celebration, and more. Listen to the full interview [here](#). 4/17/2023

May Mobility’s Expansion in Ann Arbor Focused on Growing its Autonomous Vehicle Fleet: [May Mobility, Inc.](#), founded in 2017 and headquartered in Ann Arbor, deploys autonomous shuttles to help people get where they need to go safely and easily. May Mobility currently has 197 employees in Michigan. May Mobility plans to expand at its existing location in Ann Arbor, where it will add IT equipment and expand its engineering capabilities. 4/25/2023

The Current Funding Environment for Early-Stage Companies: It’s been widely reported that funding for startups has gotten very tight in the last year, and the environment in Michigan is no different. Angel investment was down across Michigan in 2022, with deal count declining by 30% from 2021, and angel dollars invested down 33% from 2021. This was consistent with national trends in early-stage funding, with venture capital deals down 14% from 2021 and dollars invested declining by 35%. 4/26/2023

Ann Arbor SPARK Recognized as 2023 Creative Campaign Awardee by United Way of Washtenaw County: Ann Arbor SPARK, a driving force in the economic development of the Ann Arbor region, has been awarded the 2023 Creative Campaign Awardee by the United Way of Washtenaw County. The award recognizes Ann Arbor SPARK’s commitment to supporting health, education, and financial stability for all in the county. 4/27/2023

January 1, 2023 – June 30, 2023

Ann Arbor SPARK Press Releases

[GAASHRM Partners With Ann Arbor SPARK, Cahoots and Tech Companies in Downtown Ann Arbor to Highlight Local Talent](#): On Thursday, May 18th, a collaborative event organized by Ann Arbor SPARK and a local network of human resources professionals (the Greater Ann Arbor Society for Human Resources Management, aka 'GAASHRM') will spotlight Ann Arbor's growing technology hub and some of the people that make the tech sector so extraordinary. 5/5/2023

[Sniffer Closes \\$2.0M Seed Round Featuring Major Angel Fund Investors](#): Sniffer Robotics, a leading environmental technology enabled services firm, today announced first and substantial close of a \$2 million seed funding round, led by the [Michigan Angel Fund](#). Other investors include [Michigan Rise](#), Naruhisa Nakagawa (founder of [Caygan Capital](#)), and Abhishek Desai of Desai Ventures (London). 5/5/2023

[Comcast RISE Program Expands to Washtenaw County](#): Comcast, one of the largest media and telecommunications companies in the world, has announced the expansion of its Comcast RISE program to Washtenaw County. Comcast RISE is committed to supporting the growth of all small businesses, while advancing the objectives of diversity, equity, and inclusion, as well as community investment. The program was created to help businesses and their communities thrive with a focus on economic growth. 5/10/2023

[OneMagnify Acquires RXA to Extend Data-Driven Solutions Capabilities](#): OneMagnify, a global leader in marketing and data-driven solutions backed by leading private equity firm Crestview Partners, today announced its strategic acquisition of RXA, a data analytics and artificial intelligence (AI) company. Financial details were not disclosed. 5/12/2023

[CEO Podcast: Skip Simms, Michigan Angel Fund Manager](#): In this episode, Skip Simms, recently retired from Ann Arbor SPARK, shares the history of the Michigan Angel Fund, SPARK's origin story, and what retirement looks like for his family. Listen to the full interview [here](#). 5/15/2023

[KLA and imec Accounce MOU to Advance the Electrification of the Automotive Industry](#): KLA Corporation (NASDAQ: KLAC) and imec announced the intention to establish the Semiconductor Talent and Automotive Research (STAR) initiative, focusing on developing the talent base and infrastructure necessary to accelerate advanced semiconductor applications for electrification and autonomous mobility and move the automotive industry forward. The initiative builds on over 25 years of collaboration between imec and KLA. 5/17/2023

[Celebrating Success and Investments: Ann Arbor SPARK Annual Meeting Highlights Regional Economic Achievements](#): The 2023 Annual Meeting of Ann Arbor SPARK took place today at Eastern Michigan University's Student Center. The event celebrated the organization's accomplishments over the past year, featuring a review of SPARK's 2022 annual report, an awards program recognizing noteworthy projects and contributions, and a keynote address by Dr. Santa Ono, president of the University of Michigan. 5/25/2023

January 1, 2023 – June 30, 2023

Ann Arbor SPARK Press Releases

[Using Student Engagement to Solve Problems and Engage New Ways of Thinking:](#) In today's fast-paced business world, companies are constantly searching for innovative solutions to address their challenges and drive growth. One valuable resource they can tap into is the Multidisciplinary Action Project (MAP) program at the University of Michigan. This blog post delves into how companies can leverage the MAP program to overcome business obstacles, harness fresh talent, and boost their research and development (R&D) efforts. 5/31/2023

[Gov. Whitmer Celebrates Toyota North America Investing \\$47.7M in York Township, Establishing New STEM Initiative in Michigan:](#) Gov. Whitmer announced that Toyota North America is expanding at its facility in York Township, a project that is expected to generate a total capital investment of up to \$47.7 million. The global automaker is also planning to launch a new "Driving Possibilities" STEM initiative, a community engagement program focused on preparing youth for the careers of tomorrow. 6/8/2023

[140 New Jobs Coming to Ann Arbor with Expansion of Logistics Provider RXO Corporate Solutions:](#) Gov. Whitmer joined MEDC to announce that RXO Corporate Solutions, a leading provider of asset-light transportation solutions, is expanding in Ann Arbor with support from the Michigan Strategic Fund. The project is expected to generate a total capital investment of \$2.35 million and create 140 jobs. 6/8/2023

[Ann Arbor SPARK Launches Coalition to Address Child Care Challenges in Livingston and Washtenaw Counties:](#) In May, Ann Arbor SPARK launched the Livingston and Washtenaw Counties Child Care Coalition. This effort brings together local child care providers, families, policymakers, and businesses to address the issue of child care from an economic development perspective. The coalition will work together to develop and implement a regional action plan over the next 12 months. 6/12/2023

[CEO Podcast: Sonya Callahan, VP of Comcast Business:](#) In this episode, Sonya Callahan, Comcast's Vice President of Business, shares with guest host Phil Santer, Senior Vice President and Chief of Staff at Ann Arbor SPARK, more about the efforts Comcast is making to connect with the community. Listen to the full episode [here](#). 6/19/2023



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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.