



Ann Arbor SPARK

2020 Annual Report
Washtenaw County
Jan 1, 2020 – Dec 31, 2020



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/>

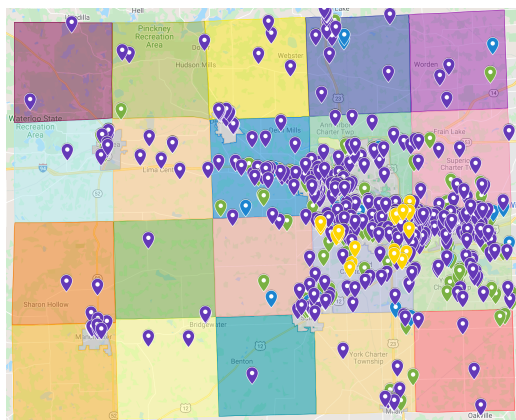
2020 At-a-Glance | Full Year Overview

2020 SPOTLIGHT - COVID-19 RESPONSE and ADAPTATION

At this time, Ann Arbor SPARK is diligently working on efforts where we can be the most effective and helpful, and adapting our programming to maximize engagement while prioritizing safety.

- In 2020, we worked to distribute funds from grant programs across Washtenaw and Livingston counties, see pages 15-19 for grant information specific to Washtenaw County.
- Our technology-focused event series [a2tech360](#) moved to virtual format in 2020, extending our reach and engaging attendees and speakers nationally and globally.
- [Tech Homecoming](#) also moved virtual in 2020, as part of the Back to Michigan campaign.

Small Business Grants – State and Local



Ann Arbor SPARK was the fiduciary for four local and state grant programs including the Washtenaw Small Business Emergency Relief Fund and the Michigan Small Business Relief and Restart Programs.

In 2020, Ann Arbor SPARK deployed \$4.6 million in grants to 901 companies registered in Washtenaw County.



126
GROWTH CALLS

2020 total

of full-time staff at
these companies:

11,526

11 Project
Successes

Adastec Corp., Atlatec, Fifth Eye, Inc., Human Element, Inc., Interplai Inc., Invisible AI Inc., May Mobility, Inc., Ride in Tandem, Inc., SEOUL ROBOTICS USA, INC., Wacker - Silicones R&D Center in Scio, Yandex Self-Driving Cars



525 NEW
JOBS

71 Projects in
the Pipeline

Influence of COVID-19:

Fewer projects were added to the pipeline in 2020, but projects are staying in the pipeline longer, indicating decision timelines have extended.



126 RETAINED
JOBS

TOTAL
INVESTMENT

2020 total



77.7 M

Main Sources: Wacker, May
Mobility, Human Element



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.



Washtenaw County Metrics

Companies Assisted		2020
Number of growth visits		126
Number of attraction prospect site visits ¹		0*
Number of responses to attraction prospect or site consultant requests for proposals ²		21
Jobs – 2020 Projects		
Projected to be created (over the next 3 years) ³		525
Actual jobs created (in the first year)		68.5
Jobs projected to be retained		126
Actual jobs retained		126
Investment		
Taxable value of new private investment		\$38,859,465
Total value of private investment		\$77,718,931
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		3 incentives valued at \$1,960,000

¹Number of discreet projects that were physically toured around sites in Washtenaw County.

²Number of requests to which SPARK electronically submitted properties located in Washtenaw County.

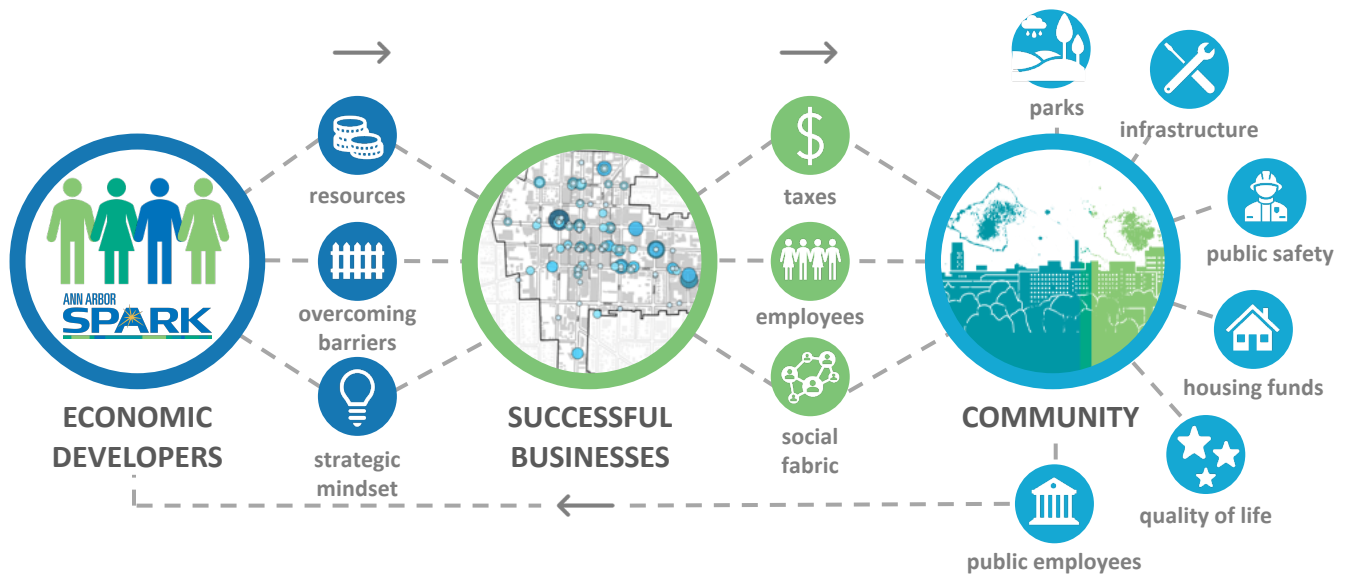
³These jobs are projected to be added over the next three years, we will update the numbers as we interact with the companies and determine progress.

*The COVID-19 pandemic has limited our ability to physically tour space in 2020.

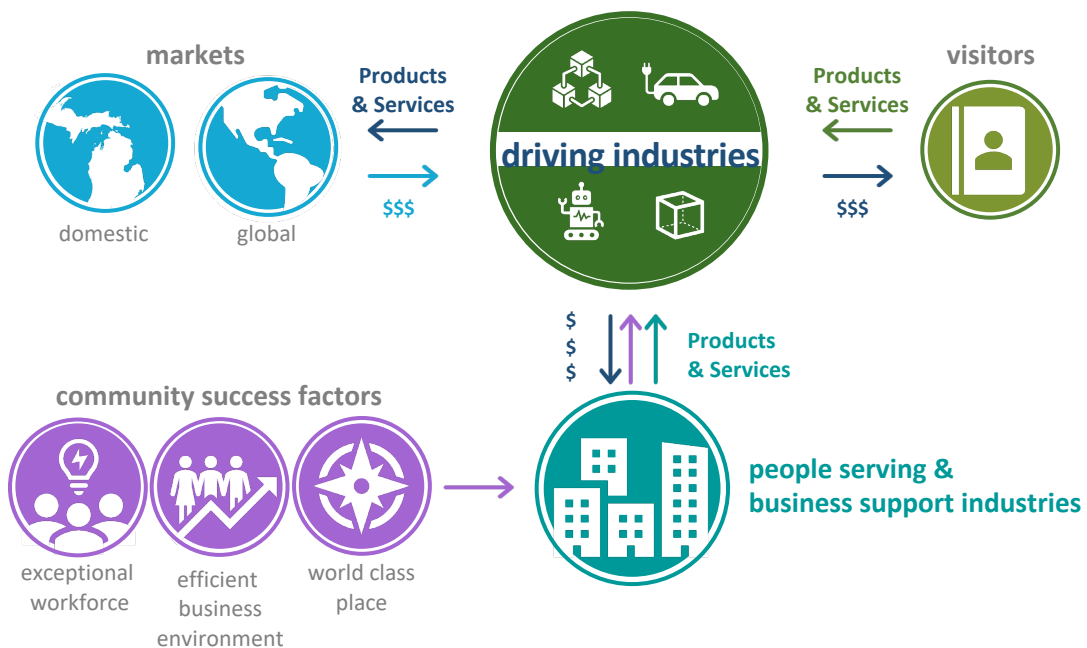


SPARK celebrates all projects that may have an impact on our region. We do not count jobs and investments where SPARK was not directly involved.

Why Communities Invest in Economic Development



Driving Industries: the foundation for the growth of a resilient economy



Project Successes – 2020

Adastec Corp. – City of Ann Arbor

Turkish mobility company working on autonomous buses. First footprint in the US, soft landing at SPARK Central.

Fifth Eye, Inc – City of Ann Arbor

Local digital health company expanded from co-working space to subleased office in downtown.

Interplai Inc. – City of Ann Arbor

SPARK successfully attracted this last-mile robot delivery startup to SPARK Central.

May Mobility, Inc. – Pittsfield Township

Local mobility company expanding in Pittsfield Township, 100 new jobs and \$11.8 million in investment.

SEOUL ROBOTICS USA, INC. – City of Ann Arbor

Korean mobility company working on LIDAR vision software. First footprint in the US, soft landing with business development person in Ann Arbor.

Yandex Self Driving Cars – City of Ann Arbor

Russian mobility company working on autonomous cars. Small garage and lots of testing. Estimated investment \$3 million & 60 new jobs over 3 years.

Atlatec – City of Ann Arbor

German mobility company working on high-definition simulation maps. First footprint in the US, soft landing at SPARK Central.

Human Element, Inc. – City of Ann Arbor

Local tech company received MEDC BDP grant for creation of 26 new jobs.

Invisible AI Inc. – City of Ann Arbor

San Francisco smart manufacturing company set up second office at SPARK Central.

Ride in Tandem, Inc. – City of Ann Arbor

SPARK successfully attracted this financial literacy and management startup to SPARK Central.

Wacker - Silicones R&D Center – City of Ann Arbor

Culmination of 3-year project, new R&D facility in Pittsfield Township. 300 new jobs, \$51 million investment.



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 they are 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 where we have played an active role in helping a company decide 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.

Ann Arbor SPARK metrics – Jobs

Companies assisted in 2020 in Washtenaw County

Specific Projects Unique ID#	Projected New Jobs (2020)	Actual New Jobs (created since beginning of project)	Projected Retained Jobs	Actual Retained Jobs (as of 12/31/20)	Current FTE (as of last contact)
11893*	0	2	0	0	2
14252*	0	25	0	0	25
8657	15	0	5	5	5
7098	26	7	31	31	38
12842*	20	2	0	0	2
11951*	1	7.5	0	0	7.5
8341	100	20	65	65	85
12903*	1	0	2	2	2
11867*	2	1	0	0	1
8234*	300	0	23	23	23
12185*	60	4	0	0	4
TOTAL	525	68.5	126	126	194.5

* = Attraction project, company new to the area

Ann Arbor SPARK metrics – Investment

Companies assisted in 2020 in Washtenaw County

Specific Projects Unique ID#	Projected New Investment	Taxable Value of New Investment	Notes re: investment leveraged and source
11893*	\$1,380	\$690	
14252*	\$1,680	\$840	
8657	\$100,000	\$50,000	
7098	\$11,690,000	\$5,845,000	\$260,000 BDP Credit
12842*	\$1,380	\$690	
11951*	\$1,380	\$690	
8341	\$11,810,000	\$5,905,000	\$700,000 BDP Credit
12903*	\$4,140	\$2,070	
11867*	\$12,160	\$6,080	
8234*	\$51,096,811	\$25,548,406	\$1,000,000 BDP Credit, 12-year PA 198 Abatement
12185*	\$3,000,000	\$1,500,000	
TOTAL	\$77,718,931	\$38,859,465.5	126

* = Attraction project, company new to the area

PA 198 = tax abatement at the municipal level

BDP = Business Development Program (an MEDC state incentive)

January 1, 2020 – December 31, 2020

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. In 2020, the SPARK team pivoted to virtual calls.

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. **Companies go where they are wanted, and stay where they are appreciated.**

SPARK HELD GROWTH VISITS WITH

 **126 COMPANIES**

IN 2020

These companies ranged from 1 to 1,495 employees and encompassed a wide range of industries including Information Technology, Life Sciences, Automotive, Manufacturing, Aerospace, and Business Services.

Together, they represent 11,526 full-time employees.

Companies Visited in 2020

Company Name	Current FTE (as of growth visit)	Taxing Municipality
Adaptive Energy LLC	23	Pittsfield Township
AMI Manchester	54	Manchester Township
Ampres Incorporated	3	Pittsfield Township
Ann Arbor T-shirt Company	76	City of Ann Arbor
Arbor Research Collaborative for Health	105	Ann Arbor Township
Arbor Scientific	12	City of Saline
Arvin Sango, Inc.	9	Northfield Township
Autaza Technology Inc.	2	City of Ann Arbor
AVAcore Technologies, Inc.	2.5	Scio Township
Backyard Brains Incorporated	7	City of Ann Arbor
Barracuda Networks, Inc.	225	City of Ann Arbor
Black & Veatch Corp.	248	City of Ann Arbor
Bluewrist USA, Inc.	2	Scio Township
Bosal NA	6	Ypsilanti Township
CaelynX	23	City of Ann Arbor
Censys, Inc.	65	City of Ann Arbor
Citra Lighting	3	Ann Arbor Township
Comerica Bank	25	City of Ann Arbor
Connect Space, Inc.	0	City of Ann Arbor
Coretec	2	Scio Township
Criteo	75	City of Ann Arbor
Cybernet Systems Corporation	38	Pittsfield Township
DaySmart Software	87	City of Ann Arbor
DERQ USA, INC.	2	City of Ann Arbor
DO:Better	3	City of Ypsilanti
DocNetwork	53	Pittsfield Township
Dog Might Games	16	Scio Township

Companies Visited in 2020

Company Name	Current FTE (as of growth visit)	Taxing Municipality
Domino's Pizza	1000	Ann Arbor Township
Duo Security	400	City of Ann Arbor
Engage	1	City of Ann Arbor
ESi	16	Pittsfield Township
Expedia*	0	City of Ann Arbor
Fifth Eye, Inc.	5	City of Ann Arbor
Fine Point Consulting	1	Scio Township
FordLabs	75	City of Ann Arbor
Gambyt	23	City of Ann Arbor
GeoNexus Technologies, LLC.	20	City of Ann Arbor
GM & T Engineering Inc	2	Ypsilanti Township
Gorilla Group - Ann Arbor Office	10	City of Dexter
HealPay	10	City of Ann Arbor
Hines Industries	40	Scio Township
HistoSonics, Inc.	37	Scio Township
HLX Engines, LLC	2	City of Ypsilanti
Hook Studios	35	City of Ann Arbor
Human Element, Inc.	38	City of Ann Arbor
Humantech	50	Pittsfield Township
IBM Watson Health	700	City of Ann Arbor
IndustryStar Solutions LLC	14	City of Ann Arbor
INTVO LLC	4	City of Ann Arbor
Jottful, LLC	3.5	City of Ann Arbor
K-Space Associates, Inc.	33	City of Dexter
KLA Corporation	185	City of Ann Arbor

*The Expedia office in Ann Arbor has since closed. SPARK worked with the head of Ann Arbor office to connect laid off employees to companies.

Companies Visited in 2020

Company Name	Current FTE (as of growth visit)	Taxing Municipality
Kyocera Unimerco Tooling Inc.	76	Pittsfield Township
Lakeside Software R&D	37	City of Ann Arbor
Lear Corporation	8	City of Ann Arbor
LiquidGoldConcept, Inc.	4	City of Ypsilanti
LiveRoad Analytics Inc	1	City of Ann Arbor
LLamasoft	300	City of Ann Arbor
Lycera, Inc	19	Pittsfield Township
LYONSCG	39	City of Ann Arbor
Mathematica Policy Research	55	City of Ann Arbor
MAXAR-Ypsilanti	220	Ypsilanti Township
May Mobility, Inc.	85	Pittsfield Township
McNaughton & Gunn, Inc.	160	City of Saline
Michigan Critical Care Consultants, Inc.	92	City of Dexter
Michigan Ladder Company	30	City of Ypsilanti
Millendo Therapeutics, Inc.	25	City of Ann Arbor
MMI Engineered Solutions, Inc	130	City of Saline
Modelon, Inc	8	Ann Arbor Township
Motawi Tileworks, Inc.	43	Scio Township
Nanosystems, Inc.	3	Scio Township
Navitas Advanced Solutions Group	142	Pittsfield Township
Navya Technology	16	City of Saline
Nerd Face LLC	3	City of Ann Arbor
NETSCOUT	160	City of Ann Arbor
NetWorks Group	22	City of Ann Arbor
NeuroNexus Technologies	30	Pittsfield Township
Nexient	430	Pittsfield Township
NSF International	313	Ann Arbor Township
OG Technologies	11	Pittsfield Township

Companies Visited in 2020

Company Name	Current FTE (as of growth visit)	Taxing Municipality
Omnex/AQSR, Inc.	40	City of Ann Arbor
ONL Therapeutics, Inc.	5	City of Ann Arbor
Optiflow Incorporated	49	Scio Township
Orchid MacDee, Inc	115	Lima Township
Otava	40	City of Ann Arbor
Pacific Industrial Development Corporation	0	Pittsfield Township
Perficient	25	City of Ann Arbor
Phire Group	25	City of Ann Arbor
Phoenix Contact Services Inc.	50	Pittsfield Township
Pollard Banknote Ltd.	270	Ypsilanti Township
ProQuest	570	City of Ann Arbor
R&B Plastics Machinery	39	City of Saline
R&L Carriers - Ypsilanti	214	Ypsilanti Township
Refraction AI, Inc.	11	City of Ann Arbor
Rydberg Technologies Inc.	7	City of Ann Arbor
SafeSend	10	Scio Township
Saline Lectronics	210	City of Saline
SBD North America	20	City of Ann Arbor
SEOUL ROBOTICS USA, INC.	1	City of Ann Arbor
Sesame Solar, Inc.	6	City of Ypsilanti
Ship/Rec LLC	20	City of Ypsilanti
SiTime	5	City of Dexter
SkySpecs, Inc.	75	City of Ann Arbor
Smart Eye	3	City of Ann Arbor
Solar Tonic LLC	3	City of Ann Arbor
Southwest Research Institute	11	Pittsfield Township
Swift BioSciences Inc	34	Scio Township
Synecdoche Design	9	City of Ann Arbor

Companies Visited in 2020

Company Name	Current FTE (as of growth visit)	Taxing Municipality
TD Ameritrade	175	City of Ann Arbor
The Back Office Studio LLC	2	City of Ypsilanti
The Really Useful Information Company	40	Pittsfield Township
Thomson Reuters	1155	Pittsfield Township
Toyota Technical Center Ann Arbor	1495	Ann Arbor Township
Treetown Tech LLC	15	City of Ann Arbor
TSRL, Inc.	10	Pittsfield Township
UBE Machinery, Inc.	57	Pittsfield Township
Ubiquiti	8	City of Ann Arbor
Ugly Dog Distillery, LLC	15	City of Chelsea
Utilities Instrumentation Services, Inc	52	City of Dexter
Vayu (U.S.), Inc.	3	City of Ann Arbor
VGKids	18	City of Ypsilanti
Voxel51, Inc.	8	City of Ann Arbor
Whiplash Merchandising	3	City of Ypsilanti
White Pine Software Technologies, LLC	5	City of Ypsilanti
Workit Health, Inc.	15	City of Ann Arbor
XPO	250	Ann Arbor Township
Total Companies visited: 126		Total # of FTE at all visited companies: 11,526

Facilitations, advocacy initiatives, and communication efforts by SPARK to address economic development needs and concerns

- In January 2020, Ann Arbor SPARK hosted the **Commercial Real Estate Trends Symposium** at the U-M Golf Club. The program was focused on the release of the annual Swisher Commercial Vacancy Report, and featured speaker Don Grimes from the University of Michigan's Research Seminar in Quantitative Economics. (pg 24)
- Ann Arbor SPARK staffed an ACM [Real Estate Showcase event](#) in February 2020 that welcomed commercial real estate professionals to the site to officially launch the site-ready real estate at the tech park at ACM.
- Representatives from SPARK's business development and entrepreneurial services team met with the **University of Michigan's Business Engagement Center** staff twice in 2020, in the spring and fall. This bi-annual meeting allows the two teams to share leads, initiatives, and information to be more collaborative toward their respective missions.
- **Ann Arbor Startup Ecosystem 101** e-book released – Ann Arbor SPARK [has produced an e-book](#) addressing some of the approaches, information, and resources that can help with talent acquisition in the Greater Ann Arbor Region. (pg 25)
- SPARK sponsored the Washtenaw Economic Club luncheon's **Economic Outlook** event in March 2020. The highly anticipated yearly event featured Gabe Ehrlich and Don Grimes from the University of Michigan's Research Seminar in Quantitative Economics giving their 2020-2022 forecast for Washtenaw County. SPARK's director of research Alex West moderated the panel. (pg 24)
- Ann Arbor SPARK was the fiduciary for four local and state grant programs including the **Washtenaw Small Business Emergency Relief Fund** and the **Michigan Small Business Relief and Restart Programs**. Between all four programs SPARK deployed \$4.6 million in grants to 901 companies registered in Washtenaw County. (pgs 19-23)
- In May, SPARK launched the [Business Recovery Center](#) as a long-term solution for businesses to access COVID-19 resources. **The Business Recovery Center** serves as a single destination for organizations looking for expert advice and information on how to adapt to today's business climate and allows site visitors to view a full range of resources, register for upcoming online events, view pre-recorded webinars and read profiles about regional businesses withstanding the pandemic.

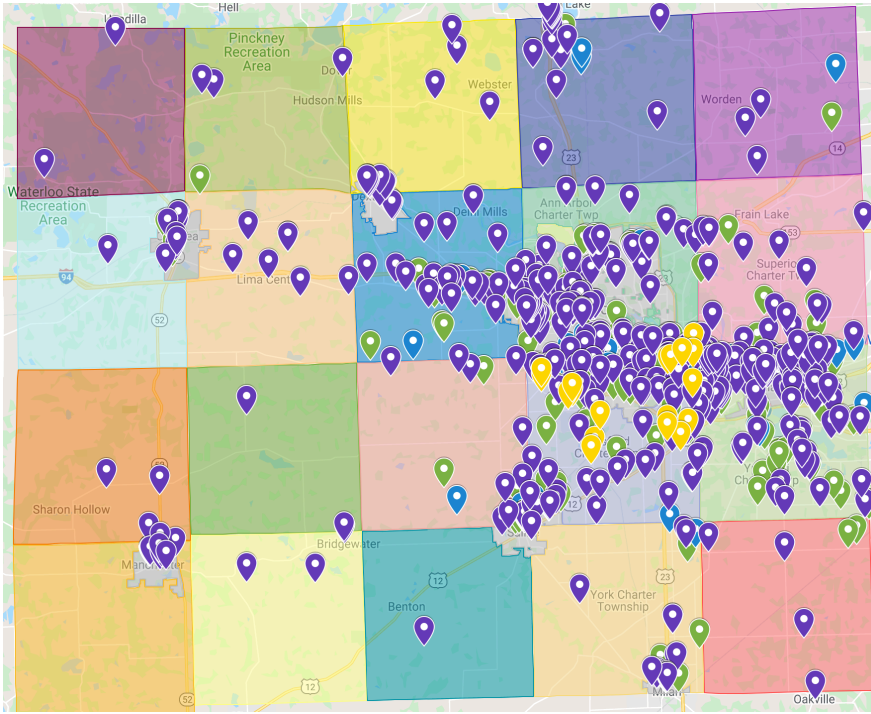
Facilitations, advocacy initiatives, and communication efforts by SPARK to address economic development needs and concerns (continued)

- In June 2020, Ann Arbor SPARK joined economic developers from across the state to form **Economic Development Leaders for Michigan (EDLM)** to protect and advance economic development initiatives through direct legislative advocacy as the state forges ahead in the COVID-19 pandemic. The priority of the Economic Development Leaders for Michigan is to drive long-term economic growth and keep Michigan competitive in terms of state and local incentives for business retention, expansion, attraction, startup creation, and support for early stage companies. Along with others, EDLM members recently partnered with the Michigan legislature and the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) to administer \$100 million in restart grants to help small businesses keep their doors open and their employees on payroll. In addition, EDLM publishes op-eds championing economic development efforts across the state. ([Crains](#), [Grand Rapids Business Journal](#))

2020 presented challenges for in-person connections, but also allowed for innovation in virtual relationship-building. While we were unable to host international delegations or attend international conferences, we were still able to build connections nationally and internationally through virtual conferences and communication.

- **A2tech360** moved to a virtual format in 2020, with 16 events across 10 days of programming, and over 4,000 total registrations from 37 states and 25 countries. (pgs 27-29)
- In November 2020, Ann Arbor SPARK planned and ran the fifth annual **Tech Homecoming**, an event whose goal is to connect talented out-of-towners with Ann Arbor and its vibrant tech ecosystem, which has produced hundreds of startups and billions in enterprise value in the past five years. It was held virtually as part of the Back to Michigan statewide talent event, with 290 people attending and over 600 registered, sharing their resumes and LinkedIn profiles with 22 participating regional tech companies. This year, 42% of attendees were out of state. (pg 30)
- In December 2020, The **International Association of Science Parks and Areas of Innovation (IASP)** held their annual conference virtually, and SPARK's Director of Mobility Programs Komal Doshi presented a paper "Strategies for Building a Human Centered Living Lab for Mobility Solutions." The audience for this event is the very definition of international, with attendees from nearly every country.

Small Business Grant Programs 2020 – Washtenaw County Overview



SPARK would like to thank the review committees for these programs, especially those from Washtenaw County's Office of Community and Economic Development, Washtenaw County's Racial Equity Office, WCC's Entrepreneurship Center, and the advisory review from the Small Business Development Center.

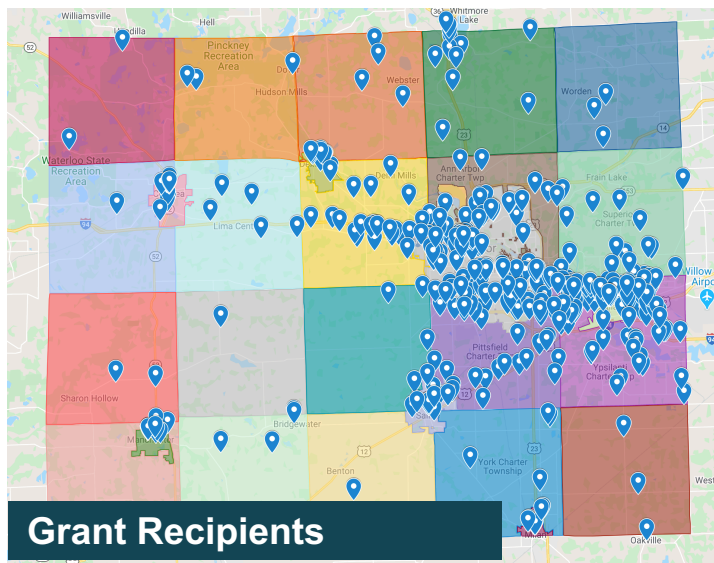
Blue = Relief Program awardees
Green = Restart Program awardees
Purple = Washtenaw Emergency Relief Fund awardees
Yellow = Pittsfield Township Grant awardees

Michigan Small Business Relief Program	Michigan Small Business Restart Program	Washtenaw Emergency Relief Fund	Pittsfield Township Grants
\$327,000 available in Washtenaw	\$2.95 million available in Washtenaw	\$1.4 million available in Washtenaw	\$50,000 available in Pittsfield Township
65 companies received grants of \$5,000	298 companies received grants of \$5,000 and \$10,000	525 companies received grants of \$1,000, \$2,500, and \$5,000	20 companies received grants of \$2,500

The demand for funding was overwhelming. The need far exceeded the funds. Nearly **2,500** companies in the county applied for the limited amount of funding. **\$45+ million** in need was requested, but only **\$4.6 million** was available to disperse in Washtenaw County between the four programs.

In 2020, Ann Arbor SPARK deployed \$4.6 million in grants to 901 companies registered in Washtenaw County.

Washtenaw Small Business Emergency Relief Fund – Overview and Recipients



April-May 2020

The Emergency Relief Fund was established to support small businesses of less than 50 employees with grants during the COVID-19 crisis. The review committee was comprised of staff from Ann Arbor SPARK, WCC's Entrepreneurship Center, Washtenaw County's Office of Community and Economic Development, Washtenaw County Racial Equity Office, and advisory review from the Small Business Development Center. The committee also called on Sean Duval, Lisa Bee, Ryan Wallace, and Maura Thompson for the larger company review.

529 Grants Awarded

Grants Ranged Between
\$1,000 - \$5,000

\$1.38 Million
Total Funding Dispersed

Contributors:



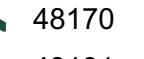
WASHTENAW
COUNTY Michigan



RALPH C. WILSON, JR.
FOUNDATION



Ann Arbor Area
Community Foundation



The Song Foundation

The Jenkins Foundation

Zip Code

%

48197	23.20%
48103	13.30%
48104	13.30%
48198	10.90%
48105	7.90%
48108	7.70%
48176	5.40%
48160	3.80%
48130	3.60%
48118	3.40%
48158	3.00%
48189	2.80%
48137	0.60%
48170	0.40%
48191	0.40%

Top 10 Industry Sectors Represented

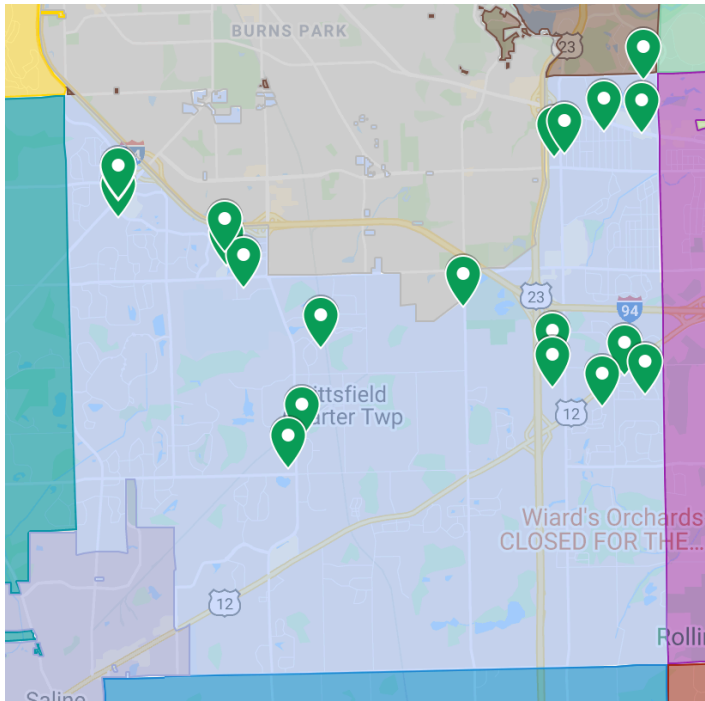
1. Bar/restaurant (13.4%)
2. Barbershop/salon (10%)
3. Retail (7.6%)
4. Massage/Acupuncture/Chiropractor (6.7%)
5. Childcare (5.2%)
6. Fitness (5.2%)
7. Home and Business Services (3.9%)
8. Construction (3%)
9. Moving/Cleaning (3%)
10. Media production/marketing (2.8%)

Pittsfield Township Grants

Overview and Recipients

April-May 2020

The Pittsfield Township Grant was created to address the financial hardship due to the COVID-19 crisis. The fund provides working capital grants of up to \$2,500 to qualifying small businesses in Pittsfield Township.



20 Companies
Awarded



**Grants of
\$2,500**

**TOTAL FUNDING
DISBURSED**

\$ 50,000

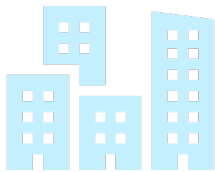
Recipients: 54th Group LLC, Advanced Asthma, Allergy and Immunology Care, Beauty Spot, Benton1, LLC, Body Specs, Buddy's Pizza, Busybody's Student Laundry, Design and Test Technology Inc., Gym America, Inc., Kit Fuller LMSW LLC, Massie Homes, LLC, Menchie's Frozen Yogurt, Schrader Tire and Oil, Inc, Sissel K. Imsland Bridges, Sodium Dental, Solar Tonic LLC, Still Waters Counseling, LLC, TDF II Hauling, The OmniMedia Group, Universal Management Company

Michigan Small Business Relief Program

Washtenaw and Livingston Counties

April 2020

97 Local
Companies
awarded grants
of **\$5,000**



66 in Washtenaw, 31 in Livingston



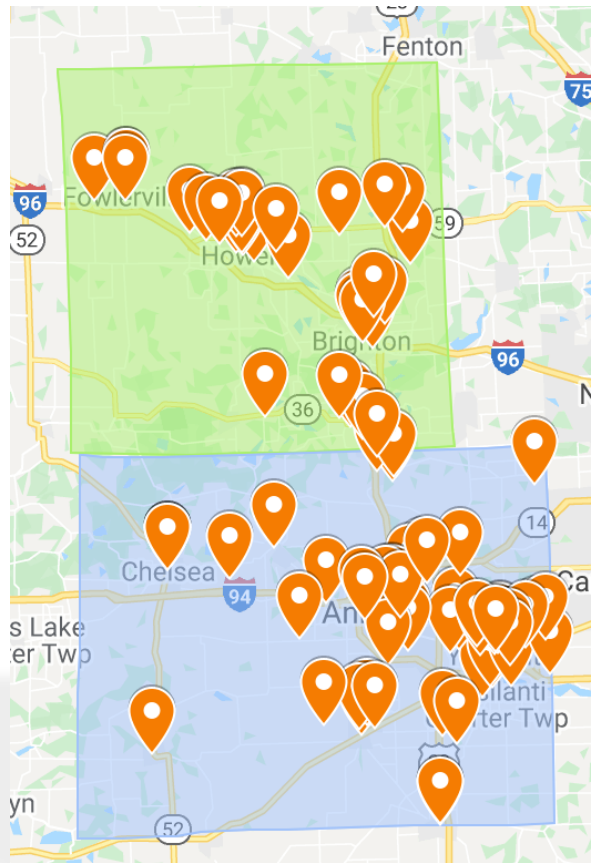
1,026
Jobs Retained

* Self-reported by companies at time of application.

1,543
Applications

\$15+ million
requested

\$485,000
available



Grant Recipients

Ann Arbor SPARK led a regional effort to receive and disburse \$900,000 for the 6-county Greater Ann Arbor Region from the State of Michigan. The state provided \$327,000 for companies in Washtenaw County, and \$158,000 for companies in Livingston County.

The review panel for Washtenaw County applicants was comprised of representatives from Washtenaw County's Racial Equity Office, the Washtenaw Office of Community & Economic Development, Washtenaw Community College, and Ann Arbor SPARK.

In Livingston County, the review panel was comprised of representatives from the Economic Development Council for Livingston County, Ann Arbor SPARK, and the Livingston County Convention and Visitors Bureau.

The full list of Relief grant recipients is available [on our website here](#).

Michigan Small Business Restart Program

Washtenaw and Livingston Counties

Sept 2020

451 Local
Companies
awarded grants of
\$5,000 or \$10,000



298 in Washtenaw, 153 in Livingston



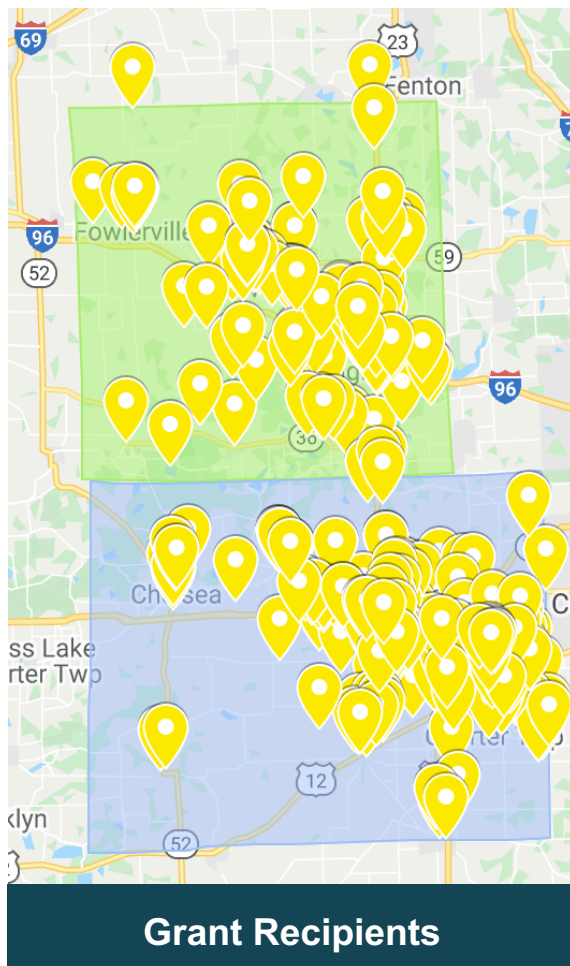
2,809
Jobs Retained

* Self-reported by companies at time of application.

2,113
Applications

\$36+ million
requested

\$4.5 million
available



Ann Arbor SPARK led a regional effort to receive and disburse \$8.5 million for the six-county Greater Ann Arbor Region from the State of Michigan. The state provided \$2.95 million for companies in Washtenaw County, and \$1.5 million for companies in Livingston County.

The review panel for Washtenaw County applicants was comprised of representatives from Washtenaw County's Racial Equity Office, the Washtenaw Office of Community & Economic Development, Washtenaw Community College, and Ann Arbor SPARK.

In Livingston County, the review panel was comprised of representatives from the Economic Development Council for Livingston County, Ann Arbor SPARK, and the Livingston County Convention and Visitors Bureau.

The full list of Restart grant recipients is available [on our website here](#).

Commercial Real Estate Trends Symposium

January 8, 2020

U-M Golf Course Clubhouse

The event was held at the University of Michigan Golf Course Club House and welcomed 200 area professionals spanning the fields of real estate, banking, and real estate development.

The Swisher report includes breakdowns of vacancy rates by sub-market and charts vacancy trends over the last 25 years. The goal of the report is to help industry professionals better understand the current market and assist in planning real estate decisions. The event paired the report's release with a presentation on the area's economic forecast from Don Grimes, regional economic specialist for the University of Michigan's Research Seminar in Quantitative Economics.



eBook: Ann Arbor's Startup Ecosystem 101

Ann Arbor is home to some of the fastest-growing companies in the Midwest, ranging from tech to healthcare to mobility — and people are starting to take notice. In 2019, Bloomberg identified Ann Arbor as a Top New U.S. Tech Hub

Supporting the hundreds of Ann Arbor-based entrepreneurs is a robust **startup ecosystem** comprised of the companies, people, and organizations helping startups succeed. This new eBook from Ann Arbor SPARK provides a quick introduction to the innovation-focused community thriving in Ann Arbor.

Check out our [Ann Arbor Startup Ecosystem 101 ebook](#) for an overview of what's happening and how you can get involved.

The eBook has info on:

- Notable startup “exits”
- Lists of startups in mobility, life science, and technology
- Startups origin stories
- Fast-growing company profiles
- Startup ecosystem partners and resources
- Case studies



2020 Washtenaw County Economic Outlook: Highlights and Key Takeaways

Gabriel M. Ehrlich and Donald R. Grimes from the [Research Seminar in Quantitative Economics](#) (RSQE) at the University of Michigan presented the Washtenaw County economic forecast during an online webinar organized by the Washtenaw Economic Club — an event that Ann Arbor SPARK is proud to sponsor. The webinar occurred on May 29, 2020.

This year's forecast came during the COVID-19 global pandemic, one that has significantly impacted Michigan's residents and will have a far-reaching economic impact. Ann Arbor SPARK's Director of Research Alex West, who moderated the webinar, provided this high-level summary of the Washtenaw County Forecast.

[Read the full report](#)

[View the presentation](#)

Below is an excerpt of the blog post summarizing the outlook presentation. [Read the full blog here.](#)

THE PATH TO RECOVERY WILL BE GRADUAL, AND CONDITIONAL.

The forecast was made with a few key assumptions: University of Michigan students returning in the fall, the prevention of a second wave of the outbreak, and federal funding for states and local governments. Even with these conditions, most economic indicators will see a sharp decline this year and a gradual recovery for the next two years, barely reaching 2019 levels by 2022.

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN REMAINS A CONSTANT SOURCE OF STABILITY.

Washtenaw County has held up better than other communities throughout Michigan as well as compared to the state as a whole. This is largely due to the University of Michigan acting as a regional stabilizer, even amid wage freezes and layoffs. The institution itself remains, which significantly impacts present and future economic indicators.

WASHTENAW COUNTY INDUSTRIES WILL NOT ALL FARE EQUALLY.

Based on a myriad of factors — some existing before the pandemic — certain industries in the county may not recover from this recession. On the other hand, some industries will experience a minimal impact while others may grow. However, the recovery will not keep up with the growth in the labor force. As a result, Ehrlich and Grimes forecast an increase of the unemployment rate from 2.9 percent in 2019 to 5.4 percent in 2022.

CAVEATS REMAIN, THE OVERALL OUTLOOK IS HOPEFUL.

While Washtenaw County has not escaped the impact of the COVID-19 Recession, this region will fare relatively better than the state and nation as a whole. Overall (and given significant assumptions), RSQE forecasts that Washtenaw County will experience a two-year economic setback, with unemployment numbers lagging behind other key indicators. The University of Michigan's presence anchors the region, providing jobs and an influx of the student population which bolsters the local economy.

a2TECH360

7 days, 16 inspiring events showcasing Ann Arbor's spirit of innovation to the world

2020 Virtual Events Recap

 FASTTRACK AWARDS	 MICHIGAN ANGEL SUMMIT	 DIGITAL SUMMER CLINIC COMPANY AND INTERN SPOTLIGHTS	 CELEBRATE INVENTION M TECH TRANSFER UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN	 INVEST360	 ENTREPRENEUR BOOT CAMP CELEBRATION	 2030 What the Future Holds	 ANN ARBOR SPARK ANNUAL MEETING
SEPTEMBER 18	SEPTEMBER 21	SEPTEMBER 21	SEPTEMBER 21 - 24	SEPTEMBER 21 - 25	SEPTEMBER 22	SEPTEMBER 22	SEPTEMBER 22
 MOBILITY SUMMIT	 Applied AI Conference	 WOMEN IN TECH	 TECH ON THE EDGE CELEBRATING THE INNOVATION OF 40+ BIO TECH COMPANIES FROM THE "EDGE" OF THE ANN ARBOR REGION	 A2EF SOCIAL IMPACT PITCH COMPETITION	 TECH TALK	 A2 TECH TREK TECH TREK	 MOBILITY ROW
SEPTEMBER 23	SEPTEMBER 23	SEPTEMBER 23	SEPTEMBER 24	SEPTEMBER 24	SEPTEMBER 25	SEPTEMBER 25	SEPTEMBER 25

8 new programs in 2020
4 New SPARK Hosted Events
2 New Treks

77K

Website Visits
+114% from 2019

4,000+

Total Registrations

3.2M+

Social Media Views

18M+

Google Display
Ad Impressions
+950% from 2019

16

Events
+1 from 2019

140K

Campaign Emails
+52% from 2019

View all events and take the Trek anytime at

<https://a2tech360.com/>

a2TECH360

7 days, 16 inspiring events showcasing Ann Arbor's spirit of innovation to the world

2020 Virtual Events Recap

Tech Trek & Mobility Row Impact (So Far)



1,400+

Interactive Map
Tours Taken



2,000+

Company Tour
Video Views



89 Hours

Cumulative Time Spent
Watching Company
Videos

a2TECH360 Geographic Reach

Top Visiting States

- Illinois
- California
- Florida
- Ohio
- Virginia
- Texas
- North Carolina
- Pennsylvania
- New York

Attracted registrants from

37 states

and

25 countries

a2TECH360

7 days, 16 inspiring events showcasing Ann Arbor's spirit of innovation to the world

2020 Virtual Events Recap

Student Tech Trek



300 participating students



We were able to engage all three major local colleges this year (University of Michigan, Eastern Michigan University, and Washtenaw Community College

Because of its virtual format we were able to open the Trek up to more students (roughly 300 students in total), making it the highest attended Student Trek both SPARK and UM CFE has hosted to date.

Job Seeker Trek



200 participating candidates



Job seekers connected directly with representatives and recruiters from 16 of the Ann Arbor region's hiring companies. A separate registration was required and resume documents were collected for further engagement.

Q4 2020 Activity – Events



November 24, 2020

Held virtually as part of [Back to Michigan](#), a statewide effort to connect job seekers with hiring companies

Event numbers

646 signs ups (partially registered)
482 fully registered
290 attendees
669 chats

Analysis of all registrants who provided location information

Of the 422 candidates with information...
126 were from Michigan (outside of Region 6 or 10)
42 were out-of-state
4 were international
...41% of registrants were out of area

Analysis of attendees who provided location information (removes no-shows)

Of the 257 that attended...
81 were from Michigan (outside of Region 4)
27 were out of state
0 were international
...42% of attendees were out of area

Participating companies:



2020

Innovate Ypsi Program Update

2020 Highlights

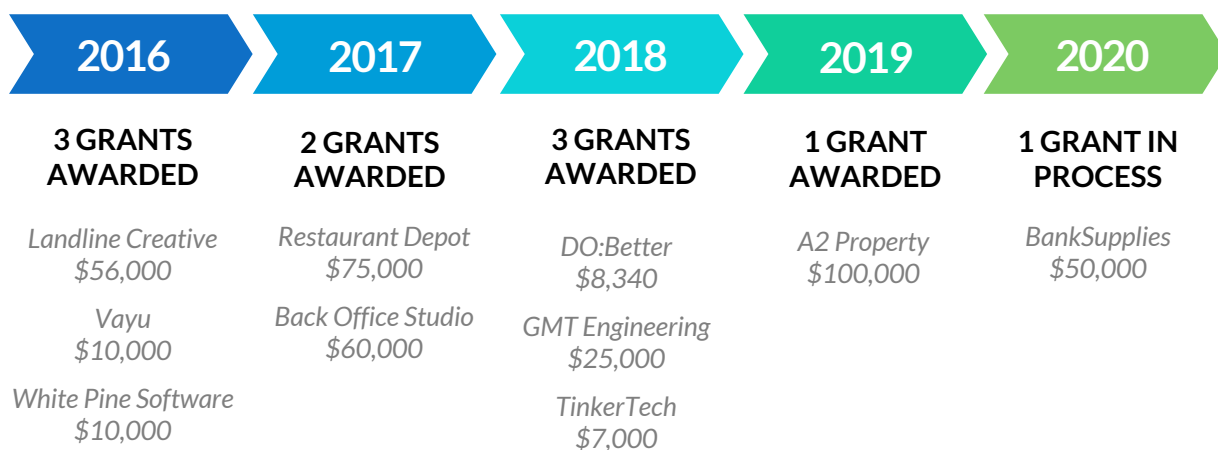
There was no new development for the Innovate Ypsi program in 2020 as the focus has been on working with Ypsilanti companies through the various small business relief funds. The SPARK East Innovation Center is currently the largest source of leads for this program.

LiquidGold Concept and HLX Engineers, two current clients of SPARK East, are companies that are looking to expand in the next year.

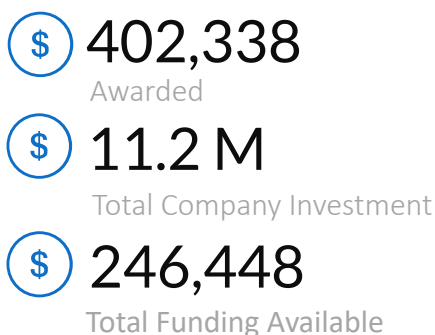
Since 2015, SPARK has provided more than \$400,000 in Innovate Ypsi grants that have resulted in more than \$11.2 million in investment and more than 200 new jobs.

2015 – KICKOFF EVENT

Ann Arbor SPARK, in partnership with Innovate Ypsi program committee, announces incentive program



2015-2020 Summary



Washtenaw County Press Releases - 2020

University of Michigan Credit Union Donates \$5,000 to the Community Action Network with Help of More Than 70 Local Businesses: Twenty local students will have the opportunity to take advantage of a six-week summer program designed to prepare teens for their potential career goals thanks to a recent donation of \$5,000 to the Community Action Network (CAN) from the University of Michigan Credit Union (UMCU). This gift was made possible with the help of 71 local businesses during UMCU's "Shop Local Give Local" campaign.

Agita Labs Wins \$25,000 as "Best of" Ann Arbor SPARK's Entrepreneur Boot Camp: At the conclusion of its latest Entrepreneur Boot Camp, Ann Arbor SPARK awarded Agita Labs its \$25,000 Best of Boot Camp prize and Culturebie its \$10,000 runner up prize. New to Entrepreneur Boot Camp is a third-place prize, awarded to Shout, which won desk space at the SPARK Central Innovation Center for three months. The winners were selected by an esteemed panel of experts, based on the business's investor pitch.

Ann Arbor SPARK Reschedules Annual Meeting for September: Due to the uncertainty created by COVID-19, Ann Arbor SPARK is postponing its annual meeting to Tuesday, September 22, 2020. The event will be held at the Eastern Michigan University Student Center from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., as originally planned.

Ann Arbor's R2 Space Receives Defense Innovation Unit Award: R2 Space, Inc. that it was awarded a contract by the Defense Innovation Unit (DIU). DIU is charged with pulling in the nation's best innovative commercial technologies for use by the Department of Defense (DoD). DIU will accelerate R2 Space's cutting-edge RADAR satellite technology capable of imaging the earth during the day, at night, and through the clouds. In late 2019, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation and Ann Arbor SPARK worked with R2 Space to establish the company's headquarters in Ann Arbor.

LiquidGoldConcept Receives Publication in the International Breastfeeding Journal: The team at LiquidGoldConcept collaborated with the University of Michigan and the Institute for the Advancement of Breastfeeding and Lactation Education to present the development of their Lactation Simulation Model and explore how physician residents, nurse-midwifery students, and clinical lactation experts responded to LSM prototypes.

American Center for Mobility Names Reuben Sarkar President & CEO: Sarkar will oversee the strategic direction of the award-winning smart city test center, work with the board of directors to accelerate the center's ongoing development in the areas of mobility technology testing, standards, research and education and engage with government and mobility industry stakeholders. Reuben joins the ACM team from Forge Nano, a corporate venture-backed start-up, where he served as the Chief Product Officer. Notably, Reuben also worked for the U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE) where he served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Transportation, while earlier on in his career, he worked at the former General Motors plant that once stood on ACM's historic site in Willow Run. Reuben is a native to Michigan graduating from the University of Michigan with degrees in both Chemical Engineering and an MBA from the Ross Business School.

2020 Press Releases

[Ann Arbor SPARK Launches SPARK.tech Virtual Workshop for Startups:](#) For the first time, Ann Arbor SPARK is making its Entrepreneur Boot Camp curriculum available online. The three-part webinar series, SPARK.tech, is designed to guide innovators who have a tech-related business idea through the first stages of bringing their product or service to market. SPARK.tech is a complementary program to Ann Arbor SPARK's Entrepreneur Boot Camp, which will continue to offer critical one-on-one coaching to participating startups that are part of its business accelerator program.

[Michigan Angel Community Releases Annual Report: 1322 Angels Invested \\$73.6 Million in Startups:](#) The Michigan Angel Community recently released its 2019 annual research report. The study aimed to capture data on meaningful metrics by surveying angel groups, individual angels, as well as angel-funded companies. "Since we started publishing this report in 2017, angel activity across Michigan has steadily increased," explained Skip Simms, Michigan Angel Fund managing director and Ann Arbor SPARK senior vice president. "Our inaugural report discovered 797 angels in Michigan, who invested \$41.9 million in startups here. This past year, that number swelled to 1,322 angels who invested \$73.6 million in Michigan companies."

[LoanSense Shifts Platform to Provide Personalized Student Loan Advisory Services Direct to Consumers, Including Information and Opportunities within the COVID-19 Relief Bill:](#) LoanSense is a digital student loan advisor that simplifies the loan repayment process through customized plans and solutions that lead toward loan forgiveness. While that mission remains unchanged, LoanSense's approach has taken a drastic turn over the course of the past few months—from initially collaborating with employers to offer loan assistance as an employee benefit to now working directly with individual consumers. Closely following the development and announcement of the CARES Act, LoanSense founder and CEO Catalina Kaiyoorawongs restructured the existing platform to transform it to service the individual consumer as well as continue to help employers aid their employees with student debt.

[Business expansions bring new investments to support economic growth in Michigan:](#) Human Element, Inc., headquartered in Ann Arbor, provides integrated eCommerce and web-based business solutions for corporate clients throughout the United States. The company is growing due to increased demand and plans to purchase and renovate an existing building in Washtenaw County. The project is expected to generate a total private investment of nearly \$11.7 million and create 26 high-paying jobs. As a result, Human Element has been awarded a \$260,000 Michigan Business Development Program performance-based grant. The company considered sites in Colorado, Oregon, Texas, and Washington, as well as the possibility of hiring remote workers, before choosing to expand and create jobs in Michigan. Ann Arbor SPARK has worked with the company and will provide staff time and resources in support of the project.

[Statewide platform to connect Michigan employers with PPE producers, suppliers as non-essential businesses begin to re-open:](#) With efforts to re-engage Michigan's economy underway through recent executive orders signed by Governor Gretchen Whitmer, the Pure Michigan Business Connect program through the Michigan Economic Development Corporation has developed a portal specifically designed to support the personal protective equipment (PPE) needs of Michigan businesses as they start the process of re-opening. Both Michigan businesses in need of PPE, as well as businesses with goods and services that might be able to support organizations in safeguarding their employees and customers as they transition to in-person operations, are encouraged to submit information on the portal.

2020 Press Releases

[Deerfield commits up to \\$130M to commercialize drug discovery at the University of Michigan](#): A new partnership between the University of Michigan and health care investment firm Deerfield Management Co. will create a company to commercialize therapeutic projects that hold promise in solving unmet medical needs. U-M and Deerfield on Wednesday announced the launch of Great Lakes Discoveries LLC. Deerfield has committed up to \$130 million over the next decade to invest in biomedical research at U-M with the aim of developing potentially life-saving drugs and disease treatments.

[From the Hospital to the Workplace: NavvTrack® Helps Employers with COVID-19 Social Distancing Application for Contact Detection, Contact Tracing & Social Distancing](#): Navv Systems, Inc. (NSI) is a healthcare technology company providing “wayfinding” solutions, like NavvTrack®, designed to help hospitals see the location of support staff (transport, housekeeping, couriers, etc.) and communicate with them in real time. Working with a large Detroit hospital system in one of the first and hardest hit metro regions in the U.S., NSI has had a unique view on the evolving impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. As local car manufacturers were among the first in the country to undertake large-scale return-to-work planning—it became quickly apparent that the same technology helping hospitals safely care for patients could help companies safely take care of their employees. Working closely with the support of SPARK, the NSI team quickly shifted focus to the rapid roll-out of NavvTrack for COVID-19 contact detection and tracing.

[LeaseMagnets Delivers Zero-Contact Property Tour with High-Touch Experience Uniquely Tailored to Interests of Prospective Tenants](#): LeaseMagnets is an Ann Arbor tech startup dedicated to helping property management companies deliver a more engaging leasing experience that seamlessly flows between online and in-person interactions. When the pandemic brought foot-traffic to a standstill, the LeaseMagnets team immediately acted to help customers replace the in-person site tour by recreating the experience virtually. This new solution would not only help maintain the inflow of leases, but also go beyond the relatively “new” streaming tours, which still required a live agent on the other end. Together with The George, a local Ann Arbor apartment complex, the team developed a completely virtual, “choose your own video” tour that integrated effortlessly into the existing LeaseMagnets property management platform. LeaseMagnets’ new virtual tour yields advantages that extend far beyond the current pandemic. It enables a 24-hour, seven days a week availability that was not possible with a traditional guided tour, increasing the number of tours possible at any given time.

[Ann Arbor SPARK’s Annual a2Tech360 Goes Virtual for 2020](#): Ann Arbor SPARK recently announced its popular annual a2Tech360 programming will be delivered virtually this year, September 18-26, 2020. An Ann Arbor SPARK initiative, a2Tech360 promotes the Ann Arbor region as an area of innovation. Offering more than a week of tech-related events, a2Tech360 creates connections between entrepreneurs, researchers, investors, businesses, educational institutions, nonprofits, job seekers, and the general public to generate discussion, ideas, and new opportunities.

2020 Press Releases

May Mobility's expansion in Ann Arbor underscores Michigan's leadership position in autonomous and connected vehicle technology: Michigan continues to demonstrate its leadership in the mobility and autonomous vehicles sector as May Mobility, a global developer of autonomous shuttles, announced plans to expand in Ann Arbor with support from the Michigan Strategic Fund, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation announced today. The project is expected to create 100 high-paying, high-tech jobs. May Mobility is looking to expand all aspects of its services, including enhancements to its Autonomous Vehicle (AV) shuttle fleet, a project that will generate a total private investment of \$11.8 million and create 100 high-wage engineering and tech jobs in Ann Arbor. Today, the Michigan Strategic Fund awarded the company a \$700,000 Michigan Business Development Program performance-based grant in support of the project.

Ann Arbor SPARK Hosts Virtual Ann Arbor Mobility Summit Featuring Inspiring Panels, Fireside Chats, Breakout Sessions: Ann Arbor SPARK will host its third annual Ann Arbor Mobility Summit on September 23 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. The event features visionaries from across the globe to share, learn, and inspire. The theme for this year is to focus on the strategies to build resiliency within the mobility ecosystem. Discussions will focus on topic areas ranging from sustainability, supply chain, connected and autonomous vehicle technology, improving access, innovative partnerships, and more. The Ann Arbor Mobility Summit is part of Ann Arbor SPARK's a2Tech360 program, featuring seven days of 16 inspiring events showcasing Ann Arbor's spirit of innovation to the world.

Ann Arbor SPARK Announces Virtual 2020 Annual Meeting Featuring Keynote Speaker Jon Roberts of TIP Partners: Ann Arbor SPARK will host its annual meeting virtually from noon to 1:30 p.m. on September 22, 2020. The Ann Arbor SPARK Annual Meeting highlights the projects and people who have impacted our region's economy the most in the last year and previews new projects and initiatives for the coming year. Ann Arbor SPARK's annual meeting was postponed due to the COVID crisis and is, for the first time, part of Ann Arbor SPARK's a2Tech360 program. This year's keynote presenter, Jon Roberts of TIP Strategies, is an internationally known leader in identifying and understanding how macro issues such as climate change, equity, and the COVID crisis impact local communities.

Ann Arbor SPARK Adds New Invest360 Investor Showcase to a2Tech360 Events: New to this year's a2Tech360 program is Invest360, a mini-series of events hosted by Ann Arbor SPARK from September 21 to September 25. Invest360 leverages our regional strengths in information technology, mobility, and healthcare and provides a curated group of companies exposure to the greater investor community. Invest360 is embedded in the programming of the Michigan Angel Summit, Mobility Summit, and MI-HQ's Tech on the Edge. During each of the Invest360 information technology, mobility, and healthcare sessions, one company will be chosen, by a panel of judges, to receive a \$50,000 check. These three chosen companies will then pitch virtually, the morning of Friday, September 25 for the chance to win the People's Choice vote and an additional \$50,000.

Fourth Annual Tech Talk Goes Virtual on September 25: This fall, Ann Arbor SPARK will present its fourth annual Tech Talk as part of the a2Tech360 series of events. The free, virtual program features inspiring TED-style talks from some of Ann Arbor's most interesting and impactful business leaders. Presenters will offer origin stories, behind-the-scenes accounts of the technologies being developed in the region, and how our speakers have achieved success in their careers.

2020 Press Releases

Michigan Angel Summit to Deliver Incredible Speaker Line Up, Valuable Content for New and Existing Angels Alike: Ann Arbor SPARK will host the third annual Michigan Angel Summit on September 21 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. This virtual program will provide attendees valuable information to those considering angel investing as well as those who have been investing in entrepreneurs and startups for years. The event's keynote speakers are Rick Timmins, an angel investor with the Central Texas Angel Network, and Linda L. Smith, Co-Chair of the Global Business Angel Network. Both speakers are board members of the Angel Capital Association. Rick will present New Data on American Angels, providing insight on the growth of angel investing in the U. S., while Linda will share what is happening in Washington, D. C. to encourage entrepreneurship and angel investment. The Michigan Angel Summit agenda also includes panel presentations on term sheets, boards, non-dilutive financing, exits, and funding trends. The event will conclude with an interview of University of Michigan President Mark Schlissel.

More than 50 Ann Arbor Tech Companies to Virtually Open Doors to Community, Job Seekers: Leading technology companies will participate in the sixth annual A2 Tech Trek and third annual Mobility Row on September 25 starting at 1 p.m. A virtual program for 2020, the free event invites the public to explore technology companies and organizations throughout the Ann Arbor region. Attendees will access the virtual experience via an interactive map where each company location features a behind-the-scenes video produced for Tech Trek and Mobility Row. Filters will allow attendees to search for specific companies or list by industry. The map functionality will also include a quick filter for companies participating in the virtual Mobility Row. Each video will create a fun, educational engagement that reflects their unique culture and demonstrates their product or service.

Ann Arbor SPARK Hosts 2nd Annual Women in Tech on September 23: Ann Arbor SPARK will host the second annual Women in Tech event on Wednesday, September 23. The free, virtual event, from noon to 1 p.m., features three leading women in IT — Dr. Lauren Bigelow, MJ Cartwright, and Dr. Ariella Shikan — who will share their personal stories and offer attendees insight on what it takes to achieve success. Women in Tech is part of Ann Arbor SPARK's a2Tech360 program, featuring seven days of 16 inspiring events showcasing Ann Arbor's spirit of innovation to the world.

ADI Wins Open Automation and Digital Twin Project with the Digital Manufacturing Institute: ADI announces the win of an Open Automation (OA) and Digital Twin (DT) Testbed project that will develop an Integration Test Environment (ITE) for process manufacturing to be installed on the MxD factory floor in Chicago, IL later this year. The ITE deliverable will run ADI's ADEPT industrial computing software platform and will enable the development and test of OA and DT concepts for industry members, and provide a real-time plug-and-play computing and connectivity framework to accelerate the deployment of these high-impact smart manufacturing technologies. Ann Arbor SPARK has supported ADI's staff growth and investment in Ann Arbor.

Regional Companies Celebrated for Remarkable Growth at Annual a2Tech360 FastTrack Awards: Kicking off a2Tech360, Ann Arbor SPARK presented its 22nd annual FastTrack Awards to 19 companies located in Washtenaw and Livingston counties. More than half of the 2020 FastTrack Award recipients were multiple-year winners. FastTrack Awards are presented to companies with consistent and substantial records of growth. Recipients of this year's awards were required to have revenue of at least \$100,000 in 2016, with an average growth of at least 20 percent for the following three years.

2020 Press Releases

[Ann Arbor SPARK Hosts Annual Meeting, Details 2019 Results and Efforts to Support Businesses During COVID:](#) At its annual meeting, Ann Arbor SPARK presented the results of its work in 2019 as well as its work to-date to support the business community during COVID-19. At the meeting, which was rescheduled from an in-person event in April to a virtual event during a2Tech360, SPARK announced that MI-HQ was selected as the Business Development Project of the Year. May Mobility was also named as the Entrepreneurial Company of the Year, and Ted Dacko as Volunteer Leader of the Year at the event.

[Ann Arbor SPARK to go 100 percent renewable energy with DTE Energy's MIGreenPower program:](#) Ann Arbor SPARK, a non-profit organization building cross-sector, regional economic growth, and DTE Energy today announced that Ann Arbor SPARK has committed to 100 percent renewable energy through DTE's MIGreenPower program. Ann Arbor SPARK's investment in MIGreenPower will offset 334,000 pounds of CO2 annually, equivalent to the carbon removed by 200 acres of U.S. forests in one year.

[Economic Development Leaders for Michigan Form Partnership to Accelerate State Economy:](#) Economic developers from across the state recently partnered to form Economic Development Leaders for Michigan (EDLM) to protect and advance economic development initiatives through direct legislative advocacy as the state forges ahead in the COVID-19 pandemic. The priority of the Economic Development Leaders for Michigan is to drive long-term economic growth and keep Michigan competitive in terms of state and local incentives for business retention, expansion, attraction, startup creation, and support for early stage companies. Along with others, EDLM members recently partnered with the Michigan legislature and the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) to administer \$100 million in restart grants to help small businesses keep their doors open and their employees on payroll.

[Ann Arbor's R2 Space re-brands as 'Orbital Effects' upon hitting growth commitment to Michigan:](#) Michigan's small satellite startup, R2 Space, announced that it is now "Orbital Effects". The company is focused on addressing critical U.S. national security challenges using its cutting-edge radar satellite technologies. The name change celebrates milestones within the company, including meeting commitments to the State of Michigan to add 30 new employees to its Ann Arbor team – a feat accomplished in less than a year. In late 2019, the company announced its plans to relocate and expand its headquarters in Ann Arbor. CEO and co-founder, Reuben Sorensen, PhD, knew early on that Michigan offered the specialized and highly qualified workforce needed to scale the team.

[Wacker Chemical Corporation establishing North American Innovation Center & Regional Headquarters in Pittsfield Charter Township:](#) Wacker is building a new North American Innovation Center & Regional Headquarters that will house its North American headquarters and R&D operations. This is WACKER's second expansion in Michigan in recent years. In 2017, the company established a Silicones R&D Center in Ann Arbor. The new headquarters project is expected to create 70 highly paid jobs and generate a total private investment of \$51 million, resulting in a \$1 million Michigan Business Development Program grant from the Michigan Strategic Fund. Michigan was chosen for the North American Innovation Center & Regional Headquarters over competing sites in Tennessee and Ohio. Ann Arbor SPARK worked with WACKER for more than four years, helping the company locate its R&D facility here, where it has access to the technical talent it needs to advance its business.

2020 Press Releases

[Talking Tech – Working with Ann Arbor SPARK, Michigan Language Center Leadership takes English Language Classes from Local to Global](#): Michigan Language Center (MLC) announces the expansion of English language education and communications services with a comprehensive suite of online programming for corporations, universities and individual international students. Quite literally an Ann Arbor “institution”, MLC was founded in 1978 by University of Michigan alumni Ira Fisher and Susan Hawley to provide English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for the many international students attending university in the Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti area. The MLC mission quickly grew to include ESL education and business culture training for local companies with global teams.

[Ann Arbor SPARK Receives Excellence in Economic Development Award from the International Economic Development Council](#): Ann Arbor SPARK won a gold category award for its Ann Arbor as a Mobility Living Lab, a project in the Public-Private Partnerships category of the International Economic Development Council (IEDC)’s 2020 Excellence in Economic Development Awards Program. The honor was presented Thursday, October 16 at an awards ceremony during the IEDC Annual Conference. Ann Arbor SPARK works closely with the region’s academic institutions, public officials, and private sector businesses to build an environment that attracts mobility companies and talent to the region.

[Ann Arbor SPARK Connects Job Seekers and Employers at Tech Homecoming, November 24](#): Ann Arbor SPARK’s annual Tech Homecoming event is going virtual this year. Tech Homecoming, an event that connects growing companies and job seekers, will be held online this year on Tuesday, November 24, from 3 to 7 p.m. Although Tech Homecoming is free, registration is required. This year’s Tech Homecoming is being offered as part of Back to Michigan, a nine-region effort to attract attention to careers available across the state. Back to Michigan, held November 17-24, aims to connect people interested in relocating to Michigan, and current residents who are unemployed, directly with hiring employers.

[UMCU Awarded Two Top Workplace Honors for Outstanding Commitment to Employees](#): The University of Michigan Credit Union (UMCU) has been recognized as a top workplace with two prestigious awards by Metro Detroit’s Best and Brightest Companies to Work For® by MichBusiness and The Detroit Free Press.

[Continuing to Support Small Businesses during the Pandemic: Ann Arbor SPARK Receives Consumers Energy Foundation Grant](#): Ann Arbor SPARK, along with its private, public, foundation, and university partners, has been working hard to respond to the pandemic and the resulting economic crisis. Throughout 2020, SPARK consistently has been a reliable resource for small business owners looking for support, from coordinating hyper-focused virtual events to regionally administering and distributing state and local funds earmarked for COVID relief. The Consumers Energy Foundation recognized the value of Ann Arbor SPARK and awarded the organization a \$50,000 grant as part of a special program designed to provide economic development assistance across the state.



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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.