

Fueling growth: The Flint & Genesee Small Business Support Hub

The VIEW from here

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KRISTINA JOHNSTON



Last week, I had the pleasure of attending a kick-off meeting for the Flint & Genesee Small Business Support Hub. This is a new program administered by the Flint & Genesee Economic Alliance with partners including Doxa Development, Metro Community Development, and the Michigan Small Business Development Center (MI-SBDC). The goal of the hub, which is supported by a nearly \$2.4 million, three-year grant, is to provide comprehensive resources to small businesses throughout Genesee County.

This is one of 27 hubs that has been or will be established in Michigan as part of the state's Small Business Support Hub program. And while every community stands to benefit from their hub, I believe that is especially true for ours. Here's why:

In 2019, we started working on a shared economic vitality plan for our county called Forward Together. During the planning and research process, our consulting company talked about how they measure a community's grit and resilience using data. One measurement is that when times get tough, you see growth in a community's number of new businesses. So, for example, during a time like COVID, which challenged many industries and career paths, we saw a spike in the creation of small businesses.

Today, Flint & Genesee is home to more than 5,400 small businesses, and their success is critical to our region's growth. They create jobs, build a sense of place, and contribute to our region's overall economic well-being. They make Flint & Genesee stronger – and there are dozens of community organizations and programs that offer services designed to help them along the way.

But with so many resources available, it can be challenging for a business owner to know where to start. That's where the Flint & Genesee Small Business Support Hub comes in.

After filling out a quick intake form, an entrepreneur will be connected with someone from our Economic Alliance team. They will provide technical assistance and coaching, and – most importantly – help determine which organizations the client should be referred to. This includes our hub partners, who have strong backgrounds in business plans, personal finance, and loans. It also includes many other service providers within our region's broader entrepreneurial ecosystem.

To make sure that these services are reaching all corners of the county, the Small Business Support Hub has established three affiliate hub locations throughout Genesee County. This includes Berston Field House in Flint, Fenton & Linden Regional Chamber of Commerce, and the City of Swartz Creek Municipal Building. Each location will be staffed by one of our team members on Mondays by appointment.

This is a three-year grant, and while I can't give too much away just yet, I can tell you there's lot more to come, including trainings and events designed to help entrepreneurs take their businesses to the next level.

I'm excited to see this program take off. In the meantime, if you or someone you know could benefit from the

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