

Innovation hub

Resilient Akron places big bet on Bounce

Akron is a city built on innovation. Even after many of the rubber companies left the area, entrepreneurs worked to create new technologies, define themselves in different industries and build businesses — many of which got their start at the Akron Global Business Accelerator — that helped the city reinvent itself.



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President and CEO

The Burton D. Morgan Foundation

Leveraging its extensive experience in venture philanthropy and ecosystem expansion, Morgan Foundation today is pursuing a strategic blueprint that will drive entrepreneurial growth and education regionally and nationally by supporting those with the courage to power our economy.

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Bounce, Akron's new Innovation Hub, will build upon the rich legacy of the Accelerator.

Housed in a vast eight-floor former BF Goodrich factory building, Bounce's kinetic name is grounded in Akron's Rubber City heritage, but also is a look with excitement and vigor into the future. The historic former plant in downtown Akron offers space for innovation and startup activity, and will undergo renovations this year to transform into a place that facilitates interconnections and collisions of ideas as innovative people explore together.

The rebirth of this building will be about far more than real estate. Bounce is looking to spearhead the reinvention of the Akron economy. It seeks to become a diehard ecosystem builder not just for Akron's startup community, but also for the entire innovation pipeline. Bounce will be Akron's breeding ground for open innovation, linking startups, scaleups, universities, corporations, creatives and the community to the resources they need to invent, build and drive the economy forward.

The building will feature a makerspace, cafe, University of Akron eSports lab, networking and coworking spaces, the Bit Factory tech accelerator and the new eBay Retail Revival Program, along with offices for more than 50 entrepreneurial companies. Bounce will also offer programs to help entrepreneurs and innovators advance their ideas.

Local entrepreneur Doug Weintraub was named Bounce's new CEO in March, and he has a big vision for what Bounce will become. He looks at Bounce "as a catalyst and connector in the ecosystem, building upon the special sauce that makes Akron unique." He added, "The value that this hub of innovation will create for our city has the potential to be game changing."

Heather Roszczyk, Akron's liaison to Bounce, also believes that the future for Bounce looks bright. She observed that "Akron has deep roots in innovation. And while we certainly have seen a period of challenges, we are now seeing a powerful upswing in entrepreneurial energy. Bounce is perfectly timed to fuel that momentum. Over the past two years, I've seen an increase in communication and cooperation among stakeholders as well as unlikely partners like the creative sector and the tech industry. I see Bounce as that place where the foundation of Akron innovation meets the future, and creates something incredible."

In his 2018 State of the City address, Akron's Mayor Dan Horrigan shared that since the time of its founding, Akron has been "a place where entrepreneurs and business innovators can thrive; and Akron's revitalization will continue to be driven by entrepreneurs. Bounce will be the front door for anyone who is or wants to advance entrepreneurship."

We are excited to continue our work on the Bounce Innovation Hub and see the Mayor's vision come to life over the coming months. This is a great opportunity for all of Northeast Ohio, and exciting times for those who seek to collaborate and innovate. ●