URBAN NEEDS GIVE RISE TO URBAN OPPORTUNITIES

Urban centers can be vibrant, exciting, and highly productive places, but residents and visitors are often faced with an array of unique challenges. Urban residents often express concerns in several broad categories:

- jobs and economic development
- youth recreation and enrichment
- transportation
- affordable housing
- public utilities and infrastructure
- telecommunications access
- environmental safety and sustainability
- education and job training
- public safety
- food and nutrition options
- health care access
- affordable financial services
- news, media, arts, and entertainment
- access to retail products and services

Governments, foundations, and not-for-profit companies have long been associated with efforts to make improvements in the above categories, but in spite of those efforts, significant urban needs persist. The Urban Entrepreneurship Initiative (UEI) encourages and facilitates the creation of sustainable, scalable, for-profit companies that address the needs of urban communities. Entrepreneurs have a long history of service to urban communities, and rapidly accelerating technology and knowledge in a variety of fields gives rise to new business models for solving previously intractable problems.
This Urban Entrepreneurship initiative will support the work of entrepreneurs, business development organizations, and education institutions by the following primary means:

- providing tools for urban entrepreneur education and training
- connecting urban entrepreneurs with strategic advice and financing opportunities
- providing an information exchange for case studies, business models, technical innovations, and other useful information
- recognizing, publicizing, and rewarding notable urban entrepreneur achievements

The Urban Entrepreneurship Initiative is not designed to supplant the work of existing business development “accelerator” programs. Rather, the Initiative aims to make such programs, and the entrepreneurs who participate in them, more effective and productive by providing a set of tools for business model development, community engagement, and resource accumulation tailored to the needs of urban entrepreneurs.

**URBAN ENTREPRENEURSHIP – DEFINITION**

Urban entrepreneurship is business activity that seeks to address the needs of densely populated communities. Specifically, the Urban Entrepreneurship Initiative defines the term urban entrepreneurship as follows: Business innovation that produces needed products and services for urban communities, or makes a significant number of jobs available to urban residents.

**URBAN ENTREPRENEURSHIP INITIATIVE -- DEFINITION**

An organization and a set of programs that encourages, facilitates, and enables the development of for-profit businesses that explicitly and intentionally address the needs of urban communities.

**THE OBJECTIVE: A SUSTAINABLE HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE IN URBAN COMMUNITIES**

Ensuring a high quality of life for urban dwellers is an important objective. In the United States, 220 million people (71.2 percent of the total population) live in cities with populations of 50,000 or more (source: 2010 U.S. census). Globally, the past forty years has seen a tremendous population shift toward cities. In 1975, just over 1.5 billion of the world’s inhabitants lived in cities. As of 2005, nearly one of every two people on the planet (approximately 3.2 billion) was a city dweller (source: World Urban Forum III report, 2006).
Many urban centers in the United States have been devastated by rapid suburbanization and economic globalization. In the state of Michigan, once-great cities such as Detroit, Flint, Pontiac, and Saginaw have experienced dramatic quality of life decline in most if not all of the above-mentioned categories. In urban centers such as these, the lack of solutions has had a double-edged effect: citizens pay to remediate the effects of economic devastation, and also pay the costs associated with developing and maintaining new infrastructure inside and outside the urban core.

**URBAN ENTREPRENEURSHIP INITIATIVE: PROGRAM ELEMENTS**

The Urban Entrepreneurship Initiative will employ several strategies to achieve its mission. Among these are:

- provide *specialized* tools for educating and training aspiring urban entrepreneurs
- build, maintain, and share an “urban needs” database
- build, maintain, and share an “urban business models” database
- build, maintain, and share a library of urban entrepreneurship case studies
- inventory best practices for urban community engagement and design practices
- connect urban entrepreneurs with on-going strategic, technical, and financial support
- work with schools and community partners (such as community-based incubators and accelerators) to tailor, refine, deliver, and assess programs
- identify, recognize, and reward especially innovative business models
- Periodically convene key stakeholders to assess results and plan improvements

**SPECIFIC PROGRAMS**

**Urban Innovation Corps** – an accelerator curriculum specifically designed to facilitate creation of businesses that identify and address a significant urban need. The Urban Launchpad curriculum will focus on the processes of community engagement, needs identification and prioritization, opportunity scoping and validation, product development, and business model development. The Urban Launchpad curriculum will be designed for delivery by existing business development organizations.

**Urban Entrepreneurship Exchange** – a one-stop cloud resource for urban entrepreneurship case studies, business models, community engagement and human-centered design best practices, and “urban needs” database.

**Urban Entrepreneurship Symposium** – an annual gathering designed to foster connections between urban entrepreneurs and recognize significant developments. Ultimately, the Symposium will bring together urban entrepreneurs from cities around the world to share and discuss business models and best practices. The Symposium will also showcase one or more of the following business innovation competitions:

- **Urban Business Innovation Challenge** – an open competition to identify business models that address a significant urban community need.
- **Urban Jobs Challenge** – an open competition to identify business models and business proposals that feature significant numbers of jobs for low-skill urban residents.
- **Urban Innovation Stars** – a student (high school, college) competition to identify business models and business proposals that address an urban community need while producing student employment opportunities.
BENEFITS
Successful execution of an Urban Entrepreneurship Initiative will result in significant benefits to several stakeholders. Here are but a few of the benefits:

- **Urban communities**
  - More/better products and services
  - More employment opportunities
  - Entrepreneurial culture
  - Better overall quality of life

- **Entrepreneurs**
  - Market intelligence
  - Design-for-urban expertise
  - Proven business models
  - Technology, strategic advice, and finance
  - Connections

- **Incubators and Accelerators**
  - Education content focused on urban solutions
  - Better prepared clients
  - More urban-focused ventures
  - Better client success rate

- **Corporate/business partners/sponsors**
  - New markets and customers
  - New and better products
  - Market intelligence
  - Better customer relationships

- **Academic partners**
  - New areas for academic inquiry
  - More intellectual property transfer opportunities
  - New subjects/cases for courses
  - Better-prepared entrepreneurship students

- **Municipalities/Governments**
  - Increased quantity and diversity of economic activity
o More engaged, entrepreneurial citizens
o More tax revenue

EXAMPLES OF NEW BUSINESS MODELS THAT BENEFIT URBAN CITIZENS
Entrepreneurs have been providing innovative solutions in urban settings for as long as cities have existed. The present condition of rapidly accelerating technology and knowledge in a variety of fields gives rise to new business models for solving previously intractable problems. Here are but a few examples of innovative businesses, large and small, that aim to provide solutions in urban settings.

- Uber and other ride-sharing services provide affordable transportation in areas that are underserved by traditional taxis and mass transit systems, and provide employment for independent drivers.
- ShotSpotter helps law enforcement identify the source of bullets fired in an urban setting in order to help apprehend perpetrators and enhance public safety.
- Loveland Technologies facilitates more effective urban land use, blight removal, and greater investment by making the status of every land parcel available in a database that is accessible to the public.
- DRS, a healthcare services business, employs retired doctors as well as local guides and drivers to make medical house calls in underserved urban neighborhoods.

Detroit contrast

FINDINGS AND NEXT STEPS
The author and associates recently spent several months investigating the need, importance, design framework, and sustainability of an urban entrepreneurship initiative. This investigation culminated in an event titled Urban Entrepreneurship Symposium 2014, at which participants explored urban entrepreneurship case studies, discussed methods for effectively engaging urban communities, and explored the kinds of strategic and financial support systems urban entrepreneurs need. The keynote speaker at the Symposium was Dr. Jeffrey Robinson, academic director of the Rutgers University Center for Urban Entrepreneurship and Economic Development (Rutgers CUEED). The Rutgers program is one of the few, if not the only, academic programs in the United States focused explicitly on business innovation in urban communities.

The objective of the research effort leading up to the Symposium, and of the Symposium itself, was to determine the answers to several questions:
• What other organizations are focused on facilitating sustainable, scalable business solutions for urban problems? How are they similar to or different from UEI? What partnership opportunities exist with such organizations?
• How do the above mentioned stakeholders feel about a UEI program? Are they prepared to participate/partner/sponsor?
• Is the above mentioned list of general urban problem areas complete? If not, what areas need to be added? What specific compelling examples can be cited in the above general problem areas?
• What other examples of new, compelling, urban-focused business models can be cited?
• Who are the potential program sponsors and supporters?
• What are the first-year program design, cost, and success measures?

FINDINGS
Through interviews conducted during our investigation, the information provided by UES 2014 speakers and panelists, and the survey results and comments provided by Symposium attendees, we were able to answer most, if not all, of the above questions. Here, in a nutshell, is what we found.

➢ Business incubator and accelerator programs exist in most cities of moderate size, and at many colleges and universities. However, few of these programs focus explicitly on urban entrepreneurship, and none that we identified had a curriculum that was focused on facilitating urban entrepreneurship. One notable exception is a business accelerator program called TUMML, which is based in San Francisco, California. In the State of Michigan, we discussed the urban entrepreneurship concept with representatives of University of Michigan, the Detroit Technology Exchange, Wayne State University, Michigan State University, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, and more. These organizations have all expressed support for the concept, and all were participants in or sponsors of the Urban Entrepreneurship Symposium.

➢ We experienced extremely high receptivity to the concept of an urban entrepreneurship initiative amongst aspiring entrepreneurs and community members. Our symposium venue had a capacity of 200 people, and we had to cut off registrations at 300. More than two-thirds of the attendees indicated that they were from a large urban community, even though the event was held in Ann Arbor, which is more than 30 miles from Detroit. During the run-up to the Symposium and at the event itself, we heard from many community members who wished to address problems in their communities via entrepreneurship. Many of these people expressed a desire for strategic and/or financial assistance.

➢ The list of “urban needs” categories cited at the beginning of this document seems reasonably complete, but the list remains open for revision. Identifying specific needs that result in business opportunities and economic growth requires deep, on-going engagement with specific communities.

➢ During UES 2014, we highlighted several compelling urban entrepreneurship businesses and business models. One of our panel discussions was titled “Urban Entrepreneurship Case Studies,” and another was titled “Community Engagement Methods.” Participants in both of these panels identified innovative businesses, large and small, that are currently addressing important community needs. These businesses are detailed in Appendix B.

➢ The list of potential Urban Entrepreneurship Initiative sponsors and supporters is long. Potential financial supporters/sponsors include foundations, government agencies, corporations, financial institutions, and academic institutions. Support of UEI can have a multiplicative effect, since the aim of UEI is to make the work of existing business incubators, accelerators, and academic programs more focused and effective.
NEXT STEPS

FORMALIZE THE ORGANIZATION
Until now, UEI has been an ad hoc organization. Now that the need for the organization has been established, and a clear mission identified, it is time to formally register the organization. We intend to organize UEI as a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit company.

BROADEN THE SCOPE
Much of the benefit of UEI is based upon its scope, i.e., the ability to make business innovations created in one urban setting available to entrepreneurs in other areas. Therefore we will expand the scope of our activities, including Urban Entrepreneurship Symposium 2015, to include more U.S. cities and a sampling of cities outside the U.S.

BEGIN BUILDING TOOLS
We will begin the development of urban entrepreneurship-specific curricula and course materials. We will develop materials suitable for seminar (3-6 hours) presentations, “boot camp” (6-8 weeks) experiences, and semester-long courses. We will also develop the tools needed to build an “urban conditions and needs” database for a particular locale.
# APPENDIX A: URBAN ENTREPRENEURSHIP SYMPOSIUM 2014 AGENDA

Event Program – Urban Entrepreneurship Symposium 2014  
Friday, October 10, 2014, 8 am to 2 pm  
Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library  
1000 Beal Avenue, Ann Arbor, Michigan  48109

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:00 am to 8:40 am</td>
<td>Registration, Reception and Continental Breakfast</td>
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| 8:45 am to 9:00 am | Welcome and Overview  
W. David Tarver, Founder, Urban Entrepreneurship Initiative |
| 9:00 am to 9:05 am | Introduction of Keynote Speaker  
Marcus Harris, ProsperUs Detroit                                    |
| 9:05 am to 9:30 am | Keynote Address  
Dr. Jeffrey Robinson, Academic Director, Rutgers University Center for Entrepreneurship and Economic Development |
| 9:35 am to 10:20 am | Panel 1: Urban Entrepreneurship Case Studies  
Moderator: Forrest Carter, Associate Professor of Marketing, Eli Broad School of Business, Michigan State University |
|                 | Panelists:  
Steve Boch, Business CEO, Shinola  
Mike Evans, Senior Developer, Loveland Technologies  
Noam Kimelman, Co-Owner, Fresh Corner Café  
Sheila McBride, Founder, GradeCheck  
Mike White, General Manager, Uber/Michigan |
| 10:20 am to 10:30 am | Break |
| 10:30 am to 11:10 am | Panel 2: Community Engagement Methods  
Moderator: Marlo Rencher, Co-Founder, Snapsure; Executive Director, Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Cleary University |
|                 | Panelists:  
Brian Flanagan, Managing Director, U-M Ross Leadership Initiative  
Sebastian Jackson, Founder, The Social Club Grooming Company  
Christopher Prater, Co-Owner, Thrift On The Avenue  
Nick Tobier, Associate Professor, U-M Penny W. Stamps School of Art and Design |
| 11:15 am to 11:50 am | Panel 3: Student-Led Entrepreneurship  
Moderator: Matt Gibson, Associate Director for Student Ventures, U-M Center for Entrepreneurship |
|                 | Panelists:  
Justine Sheu, Myles Morgan and Justin Cook, “Evolve”  
Jamarr Hill and Erica Hill, “Transwer” |
| 11:50 am to 12:00 pm | Break |
| 12:05 pm to 12:45 pm | Panel: Facilitating Urban Entrepreneurship |
Moderator: Leslie Smith, President and CEO, TechTown Detroit

Panelists:
Patricia Glaza, Vice-President, Invest Detroit
Stella Safari, CEO, Startup Effect
Jamie Shea, Managing Director for Investments, Mission Throttle

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<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>12:50 pm to 1:00 pm</td>
<td>“Innovate Blue: Michigan’s Commitment to Entrepreneurship Education,” Thomas Zurbuchen, U-M Associate Dean for Entrepreneurial Programs; Professor, Space Science and Aerospace Engineering; Senior Counselor to Provost for Entrepreneurial Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:00 pm to 2:00 pm</td>
<td>Luncheon Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:20 pm to 1:30 pm</td>
<td>Welcome and Remarks, Tom Frank, Executive Director, U-M Center for Entrepreneurship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:30 pm to 2:00 pm</td>
<td>Luncheon Keynote: A Conversation with Jill Ford, special counselor to Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan for entrepreneurial initiatives</td>
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APPENDIX B: URBAN ENTREPRENEURSHIP SYMPOSIUM 2014 CASE STUDIES

FRESH CORNER CAFÉ

Fresh Corner Café seeks to solve the problem of lack of accessibility to high quality food for lower income Detroiters by delivering prepackaged, healthy and delicious meals to corner stores all around the city.

The idea was first born from a class at University of Michigan called Social Venture Creation, where the founder, Noam Kimelman, sought to create a revenue generating model that also addressed a social concern. Their team saw food access in Detroit as an important problem. Inadequate access to healthy food leads to higher rates of disease and obesity. Noam’s team noticed that Detroit lacked a sufficient amount of grocery stores but did have a lot of corner stores, especially in lower income areas, and they came up with the idea of stocking these corner stores with healthy and convenient meals.

After a few iterations of the company, running focus groups, and conducting surveys with the community, they realized that people really valued convenience. So they moved from providing prepackaged ingredients which people could cook themselves to ready-made meals like salads and wraps. Fresh Corner Café works with three separate restaurants in Detroit to supply their healthy and delicious meals: Food, Peaches, and Green; Brooklyn Street Local; and Lunchtime Detroit.

In addition to selling their product wholesale to convenience stores and gas stations, Fresh Corner Café also provides a catering service and a workplace café service. A wide range of consumers seek out Fresh Corner Café for its catering service including universities, companies in Detroit, and nonprofit and community groups. The workplace café service is an innovative self-serve fresh vending concept in which a company has a cooler of Fresh Corner Café meals and employees simply take what they want and pay based on an honor code.

Noam definitely views the social good that Fresh Corner Café delivers as a competitive business strategy. His company was born from a social mission and operates everyday with it in mind: to ensure that all Detroiters have immediate access to a high quality, delicious meal wherever they eat, work and play. Although they may have slightly higher catering prices than comparable companies, Noam finds that organizations are willing to pay slightly more because they know they are supporting positive change in the community.

Noam has found that changing people’s food habits is hard. People are used to fast food and trying to get them to pay a little bit more for a higher quality meal has been a challenge. His team has sought to find the people in Detroit who want to eat healthier but have not previously had any affordable options. Increased brand awareness about Fresh Corner occurs at a community level through word of mouth and through postcards that they send to businesses and other organizations in Detroit. Fresh Corner works with the food community in Detroit to stay engaged with the real people they are trying to help.

Fresh Corner Café meals can be found in 20 corner stores in Detroit and in 7 workplaces. Looking forward, Noam wants to increase the amount of workplaces to 20 to create a one to one ratio with the corner stores. The catering service and the workplace vending are more profitable and Noam sees expansion in those areas as an opportunity to lower the costs of the ready-made meals in corner stores and therefore increase the availability of their product.
UBER

Uber is an innovative technology company that connects riders with drivers to provide a safe, convenient, and cost-effective method of transportation within metro areas. Additionally, Uber adds value to drivers, who are not employees of Uber, by providing them with the economic opportunity to make additional money in their free time using their own existing assets.

When looking to enter new markets, Uber generally finds cities that have a lot of current users and look to see if there would be enough available drivers. Once they launch in a new market, Uber generally notifies the press and emails people who have already signed up for the service. Uber succeeds in a wide variety of cities, from those with great transportation infrastructure such as New York and San Francisco and those which lack effective transportation options such as Detroit.

Uber launched in Michigan in 2013 and has been successful in filling in some gaps in transportation access in Detroit. The ride service has also been well-received by college students in Ann Arbor.

Drivers generally pay about 20% in commission for each ride to Uber. All riders have an account with Uber with their credit or debit card information attached and they are automatically charged at the end of their journey, which adds an element of convenience that people love.

Uber’s competitive advantage is its efficient use of information, speed and user experience. It’s often cheaper than taxis and you don’t need to call a cab company and wait twenty to thirty minutes. Rather, you simply press a button on your smartphone and a car will usually find you in about five minutes. Uber is able to do this by utilizing their massive amount of information to identify where in a particular city there is a high demand for rides. At the end of your trip, you don’t need to deal with paying in cash or swiping a card either. Instead, you just get out of the car and Uber automatically charges your card on your account. Uber also ensures the safety of the rides through an extensive vetting process which includes background checks, examinations of driving records, and a constant feedback loop that asks riders to rate their drivers after each trip. Uber also provides commercial level insurance and checks the national sex offender list.

Because Uber’s model is so innovative, the company often faces challenges with local regulations and legislation. Uber currently is operating under a two year operating plan with Detroit and is actively working with city councils and staff to change some of these limiting rules.

The benefits of Uber have extended beyond affordability and convenience. There have been studies that show that an Uber presence in cities has lead to reductions in DUIs. Also because of Uber’s unique model, people in areas identified by their cities as underserved by taxis have gained access to rides. 4 out of 10 Uber trips in the city of Chicago have been identified as driving to underserved areas, parts of the city where for safety and other reasons, taxis don’t go as often. As
Uber grows and continues to increase the efficiency of its system, for some people owning a car doesn’t make financial sense. Depending on how much you drive in a city, Uber could be a feasible alternative to owning a car. Less cars on the road leads to less carbon emissions, more jobs for drivers, and reduced need for parking spaces.

Uber is in five cities in Michigan and the rider base grows each week, while providing hundreds of drivers full-time or part-time work. Uber’s ultimate goal is to reduce the need for car ownership, so they will continue to expand their services in more markets and work on the efficiency of their platform.

GRADECHECK
Sheila McBride’s son was college bound with a scholarship to play basketball but he wasn’t on track to succeed academically in college. Sheila was determined to ensure that her son would graduate high school, meet the NCAA academic requirements, and thrive in the classroom. She created a system that started as an excel sheet to track all of the important information about her son’s academic life as well as college requirements. Once her son graduated high school and went on to play college basketball on a scholarship other parents in similar situations began approaching her for help. She began formalizing her system and GradeCheck was born.

GradeCheck utilizes a sophisticated program to help high school student-athletes achieve their dreams of playing sports in college by helping improve their academic success. The program utilizes data and information to track where students stand to help determine where they need to go—GradeCheck has an online national database with information from every single high school in the country as well as college requirements and scholarship details. GradeCheck tracks a student’s GPA, courses, and test scores, and helps set goals to graduate and meet NCAA academic requirements. Besides the robust program, GradeCheck provides valuable mentoring and referrals to trusted people who are in positions to help with anything from SAT tutoring to picking the right classes.

One in three Detroit student athletes don’t qualify to play in the NCAA based solely on academic requirements. The requirements to play sports in high school are often much lower than in college so students get blindsided by the more rigorous requirements in place at the college level. GradeCheck is committed helping these student-athletes not only qualify to play sports in college but to do well while they are there.

GradeCheck sells two kind of annual memberships to individual students—Platinum and Gold. In addition, GradeCheck works with high schools around the country to implement their system to help their students. They have students from all over the country, including California and Mississippi. Despite the national reach, there is a strong focus on giving back to the community and helping local kids.

So far, Sheila and GradeCheck have invested a lot of time and money into improving the system to make it as easy and useful as possible for students. Moving forward, Sheila plans on ramping up marketing and public relations efforts in order to increase brand awareness for GradeCheck. She also plans on establishing a non-profit arm to give students who can’t afford it access to the benefits of a GradeCheck membership. GradeCheck is a purpose-driven company that continues to strive to help student-athletes transform their lives by earning university scholarships.

SHINOLA
In 2011, Shinola, a luxury watch, leather and bike shop, opened in Midtown on a mission to bring back American craftsmanship and manufacturing to Detroit. Shinola produces handmade watches that sell for between $600-$1000 and hand-built bicycles that sell for about $1000. In addition to bikes, leather goods, and watches, Shinola produces a wide variety of other products including footballs, flags, clothing, blankets, and desk pieces. They are a vertically integrated business that takes as much pride in its retail store as it does its factories.
Shinola doesn’t just talk about bringing manufacturing back to Detroit. They’ve built two factories in the College for Creative Studies—one 30,000 square foot watch factory and one 12,000 square foot leather factory. In 90% of its 320 employees are Detroiters, and many automobile plant workers.

Its upscale and luxurious products and storefront managed to attract customers despite Detroit’s struggles. Shinola’s incredible success can be attributed to the quality of its products and its dedication to the community of Detroit.

Shinola takes pride in its design and craftsmanship and views its price tag as a great value compared to competitors. Shinola watches are built to last a lifetime. They’ve found that people are willing to pay more for authentic, quality goods made in Detroit by Detroiters. Shinola has bought into the idea that people love products made locally by the community, and its success has proven them to be right.

Last year, Shinola produced 50,000 watches and sold all of them. In their first six months, they achieved 20 million dollars in sales and expect in the next three years to hit 100 million in revenue. They’ve gone from three employees in 2011 when they started to currently employing 320—mostly Detroiters. Shinola’s growth has been exponential and they plan on opening eight more stores in the next five years. They plan on ramping up production, adding more categories of products, and continuing the same processes that have led to its incredible success. That means continuing to build authentic pieces with only the most quality components and hand assembled by only the most skilled craftspeople. Shinola has revived a storied American brand and is on a mission to revive the industry that made Detroit great.

THRIFT ON THE AVENUE
Chris Prater, a native Detroiter and co-founder of Thrift on the Avenue (TOTA), grew up with 13 siblings and with one working parent, so thrift shopping was ingrained in his lifestyle before Macklemore made it cool. About a year and a half ago, Chris and his wife Tanisha answered an open call for a pop up store from Revolve Detroit. The couple had the idea to bring their thrifting experiences to Detroit by creating an upscale retail clothing store in their native city. They then won a $10,000 grant and Thrift on the Avenue was born.
Chris and Tanisha knew that they wanted to do business in Detroit—they wanted to be a part of the current economic and cultural boom that is revitalizing the Motor City. They are currently located in Midtown Detroit and attract a variety of customers—anyone who believes that quality clothing doesn’t have to come at a high price. TOTA does the hard labor of finding the hidden gems in thrift stores around the country including California and Brooklyn. They work hard at ensuring the quality of the pieces that they bring back to Detroit.

In the spirit of contributing to Detroit’s comeback, Thrift on the Avenue maintains active partnerships with the Coalition of Temporary Shelters and Dress for Success Michigan. A portion of the store’s profit is dedicated to support these organizations. In addition to donations, TOTA will invite women from the shelter to the store and they will receive makeovers including hair, makeup, and a new wardrobe. To spread awareness that these struggling women are individuals and not stereotypes, Thrift on the Avenue puts QR codes on its store window that links to these women’s stories.

Thrift on the Avenue heavily utilizes social media, especially Facebook and even more so Instagram. They post pictures and take advantage of social media by directly interacting with Detroiterers. They believe in interacting with people to adapt and continue to improve. For example, based on customer feedback, TOTA, originally a women’s clothing store, started adding men’s clothing, and it’s been very well-received.

Thrift on the Avenue has enjoyed a ton of success and plans on opening up more storefronts next summer in Detroit, including locations in Midtown and the Avenue of Fashion. They also plan on ramping up their involvement and partnership with the Coalition of Temporary Shelters and Dress for Success Michigan. Chris and Tanisha Prater will their commitment to enable people to dress well on a budget in their native city by making Thrift on the Avenue the best it can be.
APPENDIX C: URBAN ENTREPRENEURSHIP SYMPOSIUM 2014 ATTENDEE SURVEY RESULTS

See attached attendee poll results.