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Refurbished M@dison Building shows off entrepreneurial chops

The word “hub” gets thrown around a lot when developers talk about their projects, especially in commercial real-estate. So obligatory grains of salt were set aside when Dan Gilbert’s family of companies began touting the newly refurbished M@dison Building as a hub of tech and entrepreneurial activity. Please refrain from passing the salt.

The M@dison Building is a sight to behold when it comes to an entrepreneurial-oriented office environment. It’s made for the 21st Century with its available technology, edgy loft-style design and quality-of-life amenities, such as big windows overlooking Grand Circus Park and a rooftop deck practically looking into Comerica Park.

“This is very much a launchpad for new start-up companies,” says Josh Linkner, CEO of Detroit Venture Partners, a venture capital firm focused on early stage tech start-ups. He adds that the creative atmosphere that is enabled by the building’s design and housing of multiple firms both big and small make it an attractive place for creatives and entrepreneurs. “This is a commitment to entrepreneurship in Detroit,” Linkner adds.

The M@dison Building is home to a handful of venture capital firms, led by Detroit Venture Partners. These VCs use the two floors of the building to house a number of their portfolio companies, such as start-ups Are You a Human (its software reinvents CAPTCHA technology) and Detroit Labs (an mobile app maker). Also sharing the M@dison Building is longtime marketing staple Skidmore Studio, which moved its headquarters from downtown Royal Oak to the building. Quicken Loans, which Gilbert founded and chairs, also utilizes the building from time to time.

Detroit Labs leveraged these sorts of synergies, the momentum Gilbert has been building downtown and the proximity to General Motors headquarters to develop an app for Chevrolet’s Super Bowl campaign. The 9-month-old start-up was able to pivot and put together the app on the fly, partly thanks to its location and the connections it enables.

“I’m not sure Detroit Labs gets the Chevy ad being in another office building,” Gilbert says. “It’s all about connectivity and the environment.”

Source: Josh Linkner, CEO of Detroit Venture Partners and Dan Gilbert, chairman of Quicken Loans

Writer: Jon Zemke

Read more about Metro Detroit’s growing entrepreneurial ecosystem at SEMichiganStartup.com.