Annual Report
Fiscal Year 2014-2015

venture Portland
Dear Friends,

Venture Portland began FY 14-15 with strong leadership, including energized members and stable Executive Team, and an aggressive work plan focused on building business district capacity, promotion and infrastructure excellence that resulted in major successes for Portland’s neighborhood business districts. The following report outlines Venture Portland’s FY 2014-2015 accomplishments.

After five years of strategic growth, Venture Portland’s efforts to build business district and organizational capacity resulted in significant, sustained growth. Critical partnerships with key stakeholders and a compelling message about the economic importance of neighborhood businesses resulted in increased recognition for the value of Venture Portland and neighborhood business districts to Portland’s economy. And, diverse new leaders continued to guide Venture Portland successfully into the future.

The coming year will be another one of growth for Venture Portland. After five years of significant change, the organization is financially stable with a strong track record of success. Venture Portland begins FY 2015-2016, its 30th year, with a clear focus on neighborhood economic development and the infrastructure, programs and leadership to meaningfully support neighborhood business districts and positively impact Portland’s economy.

Brian Alfano
Venture Portland President
Executive Summary 2014-2015

1,248 hours of individualized technical assistance (64% increase)
420 requests (31% increase)
447 business district leaders from 48 districts attended 30 capacity building events (11% increase)

40 Mentoring Connections across districts

137 staff visits to business districts (18% increase)
100 large scale business district events attracted more than 1 million visitors

Venture Portland’s Board contributed 1,745 volunteer hours

$79,000 awarded to 22 districts for 29 projects leveraging $260,266

33% membership and 234% revenue increase in business districts city wide
Venture Portland implemented a year-long series of capacity building programs including significant training and technical assistance for business district leaders. Representatives from 48 business districts participated in at least one of Venture Portland’s capacity building programs. By addressing every stage of a business district association’s lifecycle and all aspects of business district operations from good governance to membership growth, Venture Portland strengthened business districts: between 12/31/09 and 12/31/14, membership increased 48% and revenue increased 327% across business districts city wide. Additional achievements are noted below.

**Training and Technical Assistance**

Working with partners to align and coordinate resources, Venture Portland increased participation in its training and technical assistance program 6% over FY 13-14 with 447 business district leaders attending one of 30 capacity building trainings and interest group events (11% increase) that covered everything from the legal responsibilities of nonprofit officers to business district identity and asset mapping. The organization continued its successful ‘mini-series’ training format with 2-part ‘Hottest Ticket in Town’ and ‘Distinguished District’ series. However, as more business districts transitioned focus from governance to member service and economic development, staff shifted needed resources to technical assistance, addressing 420 requests for individualized help from business districts city wide (31% increase over FY 13-14).

**“This training was helpful for building my business’s future”**
- Belmont Area Business Owner

**Posies Bakery & Cafe, Kenton Business District**

*Identity Crisis – Building a Better Brand* Training
Training and Technical Assistance Continued
The shift from classroom training to personalized assistance for districts and their leaders also signaled a shift in district focus, with a 150% increase in technical assistance requests addressing member services, economic development and advocacy. Staff provided significant strategic support to 21 districts (50% increase over FY 13-14), helping associations successfully navigate major transitions and implement significant new member-serving programs. In addition, participation in Venture Portland’s Interest Groups doubled, reinforcing district’s desire for sustained, high-touch assistance over time.

Venture Portland awarded a Start-up Support Grant to an emerging neighborhood business association and helped two additional districts assess formation readiness. Expanded training content, including guides, activities, tools and case studies were posted on ventureportland.org (training page views increased 104% over FY 13-14) and in the Resource Library. In total, Venture Portland provided 2,051.25 hours of training and technical assistance to business district leaders from emerging and established districts, a 39% increase over FY 13-14 and a 137% increase over FY 10-11.
Support Neighborhood Business Districts

Best Practices
Recognizing the wealth of expertise in Portland’s neighborhood business districts, Venture Portland continued business district sharing by featuring 13 business district leaders and case studies at trainings. Venture Portland facilitated 40 ‘mentoring connections’, linking leaders from business districts city wide to discuss best practices around district formation, IRS exemption, grants, insurance, banners, membership, personnel, branding, websites and storefront vacancies. Venture Portland brought together leaders from the city’s four industrial districts to discuss shared issues and future collaboration and restructured its Interest Groups for business district designers, event coordinators, officers, Presidents and staffers to increase collective leadership skills and connect colleagues across districts. Interest Group participation increased 125% over FY 13-14 as a result.

Venture Portland continued to use the ‘Business District Annual Check-up’ and ‘Benchmarking Success’ tools to help districts ensure governance, membership and financial infrastructure excellence and created additional best practice tools including checklists for effective conflict resolution, meetings and leadership development; an inclusive board recruitment matrix and asset mapping and brand development exercises. Venture Portland assessed training attendee confidence/knowledge with revised training evaluations: 77% attendees stated an increased confidence in implementing training topics overall; 77% increased confidence in improving district brand/identity; 80% increased confidence in their legal role and nonprofit governance requirements and 84% increased confidence in planning and managing signature/seasonal events.

Facilitated 40 ‘mentoring connections’ linking leaders from business districts city wide to discuss best practices.
To increase Portlanders’ understanding of the value of business districts to the city’s economy, Venture Portland strengthened partnerships with key opinion leaders and stakeholders. The organization continued its run of successful earned media coverage, facilitating 35 media interviews (26 for business district leaders) and securing 78 positive media stories with 81 business district mentions (161% increase over FY 13-14). Additional successes are noted below.

**Annual Marketing Campaigns**

Venture Portland supported four annual marketing campaigns ‘Summer Local’, ‘Fall Into Local’, ‘Localize the Season/#PledgeLocalPDX’ and ‘Portland Celebrates Small’ with calendars featuring 150 business district events (61% increase over FY 13-14), earned media, strategic partnerships and new collateral. In partnership with Commissioner Fish, Venture Portland secured a City Council proclamation for ‘Portland Celebrates Small Business Saturday’ and unanimous pledge from Commissioners to shop local during the holidays. The organization’s ongoing relationship with Little Boxes generated 18,230 store visits and $324,000 in holiday retail sales over Black Friday and Small Business Saturday. And, the fourth annual ‘Portland Celebrates Small’ campaign was expanded with local retailers distributing 28,000 ‘Thank You Receipts’ to customers highlighting the economic impact of neighborhood businesses during National Small Business Week.
PROMOTE AND MARKET NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESS DISTRICTS

Website/Electronic Communications/Social Media
Venture Portland featured 1,000 business district events and meetings (24% increase over FY 13-14) on its online calendar and added significant new content to ventureportland.org resulting in a 15% increase in site visits. After analyzing social media trends, the organization increased Facebook and Twitter followers 31% and Facebook reach 414% over FY 13-14 with strategic campaigns and consistent posts highlighting business district events city wide (55% original content). Venture Portland distributed 27 issues of its newsletters to more than 2,500 business district leaders and supporters (32% increase over FY 13-14).

Brand/District Identity
Venture Portland launched a ‘District Designers’ Interest Group, bringing a diverse group of designers together to improve district identity efforts city wide. Working closely with these professionals, the organization updated business district design tools including ‘Design Guidelines’ and best practices for working with designers. Venture Portland hosted a 2-part ‘Distinguished Districts’ training series focused on asset mapping and destination marketing. Working with a pro-bono designer, Venture Portland maintained design standards for campaign collateral to reinforce its brand and continued to trademark its intellectual property, adding proprietary capacity building tools to its protected portfolio. Finally, Venture Portland branded its new office with interior/exterior signage, the business district manifesto and a ‘best-in-class gallery’ featuring 50 district event posters and print collateral.

Featured 1,000 business district events and meetings (24% increase).

Halloween in the Village, Multnomah Village Business District
Promote and Market Neighborhood Business Districts

Partnerships/External Affairs/Special Events

Venture Portland hosted its third annual gala, ‘Celebrate Our City’, highlighting neighborhood businesses, business districts and the organization’s 29th anniversary. Venture Portland strengthened relationships with key stakeholders including City Bureaus, City Council, Craft3, EcoDistrict Incubator, Elders in Action, First Stop Portland, Metro Council, Multnomah County Commission, Neighborhood Notes, Oregon Solutions, Port of Portland, Portland Business Alliance, SBA, SBAC, SBDC, Travel Portland, US Congressional Delegation and Uber to align and coordinate resources. Venture Portland's Executive Team continued to represent the organization on several business support and City-facilitated groups and consistently appeared before City Council and other legislative bodies, including during a proclamation supporting Small Business Saturday. Venture Portland worked closely with PDC to support neighborhood economic development activities, BPS to ensure neighborhood economic development and business districts were well represented in the Comprehensive Plan and PBOT to streamline the street closure permit process and secure business district feedback on the transportation system plan. In partnership with Mayor Hales and Commissioners Fish and Novick, staff helped neighborhood businesses and business districts take advantage of the MLS All Star Game, implement the City’s Sick Leave Ordinance, mitigate the effect of Bureau construction and the proposed ‘Portland Street Fund’ on businesses and events and take advantage of the newly increased Owner’s Compensation Deduction ($100,000, effective Tax Year 2014).
Implement Bi-Annual Grants Program

Funding Neighborhood Economic Development
Venture Portland continued its robust grantmaking portfolio with biannual Benchmark, annual Economic Development and as-needed Start-up Support grants; using one-time funds, the organization also helped districts take advantage of the MLS All Star Game and individualized economic analysis. Representatives from 32 business districts attended the Grant Certification Training where they received district-specific benchmark progress reports to help them strategically plan grant projects. Venture Portland provided 329.45 hours of technical assistance (48% increase) to business districts over 12 days of dedicated ‘Grants Office Hours’, helping 30 business districts plan and execute grants. Three districts took advantage of ‘Grants Office Hours’ for the first time and 7 districts (24% of applicants) used a first-time grant writer. Business districts received 26 Benchmark grants in one of seven categories designated as components of a successful and self-sustaining business district and one Economic Development grant focused on job and business retention/creation and neighborhood business revenue growth. Staff discussed Start-up Support grants with three emerging districts and awarded funds to Stadium District-Goose Hollow. In total, Venture Portland awarded $79,000 to fund 29 projects in 22 business districts, leveraging more than $260,000 in additional private investment (74% increase).

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Hawthorne Blvd Kick Kick Score, Grant Funded

Jade District Night Market, Grant Funded
STRENGTHEN VENTURE PORTLAND CAPACITY

Venture Portland continued to refine its internal systems and used its successful operations as best practice models for business districts. The organization is financially stable with a strong track record of effective program and brand implementation. As a result, significant positive results were achieved as noted below.

City Council Liaison
Venture Portland continued its strong relationship with Commissioner Fish and his team. Commissioner Fish spoke at Venture Portland’s Office Open House, ‘District On The Move’ (Central Eastside), ‘OpenFest’ (Division/Clinton), Little Boxes press events (St. Johns, Nob Hill), Woodstock Annual Meeting, Venture Portland Annual Meeting, East Portland Pilot Project Launch and BES Construction Forums (Beaumont, Hawthorne, Hollywood). The Commissioner’s office once again facilitated meetings for Venture Portland with BES and Street Fair Permitting Bureaus to ensure neighborhood business districts were represented in City planning and support district’s large summer events. And, Commissioner Fish proclaimed ‘Portland Celebrates Small Business Saturday’ and encouraged Portlanders to ‘Pledge Local’ during the critical holiday retail period.

Membership
Venture Portland ended the year with 33 members, including 2 new members. Based on individual district membership and revenue growth, 3% of Venture Portland’s business district members increased a membership level contributing to a 360% revenue increase over 2009. The organization worked with eight emerging districts – providing significant technical assistance on association structure and formation, membership, revenue generation and budgeting, events and leadership development – bringing member prospects into Venture Portland. And, Venture Portland continued its ‘Affiliates’ Program, increasing participating partners 150% over FY 13-14.

Facilitated 16 town hall meetings for business district leaders to impact public policy.
STRENGTHEN VENTURE PORTLAND CAPACITY

Governance
Venture Portland's membership elected 30 delegates at the organization’s Annual Meeting, bringing together diverse business district leaders from across the city. Of those elected, 40% were new to the Board, adding fresh perspectives to Venture Portland’s leadership while maintaining 100% Board participation on committees. Venture Portland’s dedicated leaders came together for 39 meetings (more than 3 per month) and contributed 1,745 volunteer hours to build organizational and business district capacity and market and promote business districts. These volunteer hours, equal to .85 FTE or 34 hours/week were in addition to each Board member’s work in their own business and business district. For the fourth year, 100% of Board members signed Anti-Harassment, Confidentiality/Code of Conduct, Conflict of Interest and Whistleblower policies and the organization completed its annual governance audit or ‘Check-up’, ensuring infrastructure excellence and modeling governance best practices for neighborhood business districts.

Finances
Venture Portland successfully completed its fifth external financial review, objectively confirming that business district dues and the City’s funds were well-managed and modeling GAAP best practices for business districts. After five years focused on improving Venture Portland’s fiscal position, the organization’s financial foundation is strong. Venture Portland maintained its six-month operating reserve, a non-profit best practice, and generated $45,000 in private revenue. This revenue, combined with business district grant award matching funds, brings Venture Portland’s total contract leverage to $309,226, a 1-to-1 match.
**STRENGTHEN VENTURE PORTLAND CAPACITY**

**Personnel**
Venture Portland maintained full programming all year, despite a staff vacancy at mid-year. The vacancy provided an opportunity to restructure staffing to better meet the evolving needs of neighborhood business districts. Staff took advantage of professional development opportunities and gained valuable skills in nonprofit management, change management, grants administration, message/brand development and the changing media environment and legislative advocacy, and each employee received an annual performance review. Venture Portland continued to leverage staff’s expertise with outside consultants. Finally, staff visited business districts 137 times, attending 63 events and 74 meetings (including 25 that were grant funded), increasing understanding of each district’s unique character, business mix, issues and volunteers to better deliver services and share best practices.

**Office/Operations**
Venture Portland settled into its new office which provided significant new benefits to business districts. The space features a formal Resource Library, Business District Computer Bar and flexible-use Conference Room, as well as expanded work space for staff. Venture Portland utilized contractors, furniture and equipment from 13 business districts for the extensive six-month build-out. Despite an unexpected 30-day office closure, Venture Portland maintained ongoing customer service and operations while implementing an effective work-from-home strategy. Using the Board-approved Document Retention and Destruction policy, staff continued to streamline files, protecting the organization’s archives and strengthening office record-keeping. Staff utilized ‘year start’ and ‘year-end’ in-service periods to thoroughly launch and analyze programs, laying the foundation for ongoing success. And, continued increases in operations efficiency allowed the organization to prioritize building business district capacity and expand external affairs and promotional efforts.

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CONCLUSION

Once again, Venture Portland ended the year a much stronger organization than when it began. After five years of strategic change, Venture Portland’s efforts to build organizational and business district capacity resulted in significant, sustained growth. Critical partnerships with key stakeholders and a compelling message about the economic importance of neighborhood businesses resulted in increased recognition for the value of Venture Portland and neighborhood business districts to Portland’s economy. And, diverse new leaders continued to guide Venture Portland successfully into the future.

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Venture Portland and neighborhood business districts worked together to grow Portland’s economy
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<td>82nd Avenue of Roses Business Association</td>
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<td>Belmont Area Business Association</td>
<td>Hollywood Boosters Business Association</td>
<td>Old Town/Chinatown Community Association</td>
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About Venture Portland

Venture Portland means business. Through grants, training and technical assistance the organization invests in the smart, strategic growth of Portland’s unique neighborhood business districts. Together, Portland’s neighborhood business districts contain 19,000 businesses and provide 250,000 jobs. Venture Portland’s board leadership comes from the diverse business districts city wide that collectively represent local, regional, national and international demand for goods and services. For more information visit ventureportland.org.