A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

Venture Portland began the year with strong leadership, including energized members, a stable Executive Team and 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 16-17 accomplishments.

In its 31st year, 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 of the value of Venture Portland and neighborhood business districts to Portland’s economy. Diverse new leaders guided Venture Portland successfully into the future.

The coming year will be another one of growth for Venture Portland. After seven years of significant change, the organization is financially stable with a strong track record of success. Venture Portland begins FY 17-18 with a clear focus on neighborhood economic development and the programs, leadership and infrastructure to successfully continue supporting Portland’s neighborhood business districts.

Michelle Wood

Venture Portland President
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 2016-2017

2,926 hours of individualized technical assistance (25% increase)
602 requests (24% increase)
754 business district leaders from 47 districts attended capacity building programs (19% increase)
622 social media posts highlighting 69 district events and 1,291 businesses
130% membership and 631% revenue increase in business districts city wide

1,184 volunteer hours contributed by Venture Portland’s Board

$96,000* awarded to 20 districts for 34 projects leveraging $521,837
*largest total awards in grants program history & 5-to-1 match!

226 staff visits to business districts (24% increase)
55 Capacity Building Events

100 large scale business district events attracted more than 1 million visitors
SUPPORT NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESS DISTRICTS

Working with our partners to align and coordinate resources, Venture Portland implemented a year-long series of capacity building programs including significant training and technical assistance for business district leaders. Representatives from 47 business districts and Affiliates 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 over the last three years, Venture Portland strengthened business districts; between 12/31/09 and 12/31/16, membership increased 130% and revenue increased 63% across business districts city wide, with districts collectively crossing the $1 million threshold for revenue for the first time.

Training and Technical Assistance
Venture Portland increased participation in its training and technical assistance program 21% over FY 15-16 with 754 business district leaders (19% increase) attending one of 55 capacity building trainings and interest group events (6% increase) that covered everything from the legal responsibilities of nonprofit officers to business district identity and website design and maintenance. Using business district feedback, the organization restructured its public training program to feature Trainings (90-minute introductions to Benchmark topics) and Workshops (3-hour, in-depth sessions on Priority Benchmarks helped attendees create immediately actionable programs/plans). ‘In-District’ trainings again provided district-specific content and reached 4% of total capacity building attendees.

“Your input and counsel is wonderful and will be very helpful with expanding our membership”

“Great to hear stories about different small business experiences”
SUPPORT NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESS DISTRICTS

Training and Technical Assistance Continued
Last year’s resource transition to technical assistance continued to pay off as staff addressed 602 individual requests from business districts city wide (24% increase over FY 15-16 and a 43% increase over 24 months) and district leaders’ participation continued to shift from general classroom training to personalized assistance including significant utilization of new Fee-for-Service Consulting. Venture Portland emphasized proactive infrastructure and staffing improvements this year, leading to a 145% increase in governance TA requests. Staff helped 14 districts (48% members) strengthen governance and add critical infrastructure including assessing and revising bylaws, assessing Annual Check-ups (9 districts, 33% members) and corporate documents (11 districts, 36% members). Districts also continued to increase their focus on member service and economic development, with 39 more requests for technical assistance in these areas. While gains in service delivery efficiency enabled the organization to address 24% more requests, increases in advocacy and crisis management assistance continue to take significant staff time. Participation in Venture Portland’s Interest Groups was stable, reinforcing district’s desire for sustained, high-touch assistance over time.

Provided 2,926 hours of training and technical assistance (25% increase) to 754 business district leaders.

Staff provided significant strategic support to 21 districts (72% members), helping associations successfully navigate major transitions and implement significant new member-serving programs. Venture Portland continued start-up support for four districts and helped two additional districts assess formation readiness. In total, Venture Portland provided 2,926 hours of training and technical assistance to business district leaders from emerging and established districts, a 25% increase over FY 15-16.
**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 business district leaders and case studies at trainings. The creation of 28 new tools on ‘recurring topics’ helped staff increase service delivery efficiency and manage the 24% increase in requests for assistance by disseminating 229 samples and tools to 97% of members. Venture Portland facilitated 24 ‘mentoring connections’, linking leaders from business districts city wide to discuss best practices around district formation, IRS exemption, grants, events, insurance, banners, membership, personnel, branding and websites.

Addressed **602** district-specific requests from business districts city wide (**24% increase**).

Venture Portland continued refining ‘interest groups’ for business district Presidents and staffers and launched a new group for Treasurers to increase collective leadership skills and connect colleagues across districts; 70% of members participated in the new Treasurers group. Finally, Venture Portland assessed training attendee confidence/knowledge: 87% attendees stated increased confidence in all training topics.
PROMOTE AND MARKET NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESS DISTRICTS

Venture Portland continued its run of positive media coverage for the organization and neighborhood business districts. 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. As a result, the organization facilitated 37 media interviews (32 for business district leaders) and secured 95 positive media stories (12% increase) with 132 business district mentions. Venture Portland also helped two districts implement crisis communications strategies and manage an additional 70 media hits including national coverage in The Atlantic, NPR, New York Magazine and the Washington Post.

Block x Block: Kenton’s quaint downtown core

Kenton Cycle Repair, Kenton Business District

Black Friday is out, Small Business Saturday is in

Small Business Saturday, Nob Hill Business District

Do Your Mother’s Day Shopping at a Pop-up Shop

Walk Williams, Williams District
PROMOTE AND MARKET NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESS DISTRICTS

Annual Marketing Campaigns
Venture Portland supported five annual marketing campaigns: ‘Summer Local’, ‘Fall Into Local’, ‘Localize the Season/#PledgeLocalPDX’, #pdxLOVESmallbiz and ‘Portland Celebrates Small’ with calendars featuring 95 business district events (8 first-time events), earned media, strategic partnerships and new collateral. The organization placed its first OpEd, co-written with Commissioner Fish, encouraging Portlanders to ‘Show Some Love to Neighborhood Businesses on Valentine’s Day’ in the Portland Tribune. Our ongoing relationship with Little Boxes generated 19,253 store visits and $395,000 in holiday retail sales over 16 shopping hours on Black Friday and Small Business Saturday. Additionally, we connected elected officials to neighborhood businesses through two district tours during seasonal events and activities.

Published 622 (7% increase) social media posts promoting 69 district events and 1,291 businesses.

Website/Electronic Communications/Social Media
Venture Portland maintained its online calendar featuring more than 1,200 business district events and meetings and added a new series of educational videos. After analyzing FY 15-16’s huge gains in social media, the organization once again increased followers 27% and Facebook reach 14% with increased consistent posts highlighting business district events city wide (75% original content). Venture Portland distributed 14 issues of its newsletters, including three district profiles, to more than 3,000 business district leaders and supporters (5% increase).

Venture Out calendar featured 1,200 district activities.
PROMOTE AND MARKET NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESS DISTRICTS

Brand
Venture Portland continued its sought-after ‘Distinguished Districts’ training series focused on destination marketing and helped 19 districts (66% members) plan and implement district identity projects. Working with a pro-bono designer, Venture Portland maintained design standards for campaign collateral to reinforce its brand and utilized both its 30th anniversary and regular logo. Finally, the organization continued to trademark its intellectual property, adding proprietary capacity building tools to its protected portfolio.

Partnerships/External Affairs/Special Events
Venture Portland strengthened relationships with key stakeholders including Airbnb, City Bureaus, City Council, Elders in Action, Portland Business Alliance, Prosper Portland, SBA, SBDC and Travel Portland 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. Venture Portland worked closely with Prosper Portland 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 City Commissioners, staff helped neighborhood businesses and business districts mitigate the effect of Bureau construction and permit costs.
IMPLEMENT BI-ANNUAL GRANTS PROGRAM

Venture Portland continued its robust grantmaking portfolio with biannual Benchmark, annual Economic Development and as-needed Start-up Support grants. Representatives from 29 business districts attended the Grant Certification Training where they received district-specific benchmark progress reports. Staff provided 196.25 hours of technical assistance to business districts over 14 days of dedicated ‘Grants Office Hours’, helping 22 business districts plan and execute grants. Two districts (10% of applicants) used a first-time grant writer and three districts (14% of funded applicants) were funded for the first time since 2014. Business districts received 24 Benchmark grants in one of seven categories designated as components of a successful and self-sustaining business district, one Economic Development grant focused on job and business retention/creation and neighborhood business revenue growth, one Start-up Support grant and eight Pilot Project grants. Staff also discussed Start-up Support grants with two emerging districts. In total, Venture Portland awarded $96,000 (single largest award sum since program launch in 1995) to fund 34 projects in 20 business districts, leveraging an additional $521,837 in private investment (45% increase), an almost 5-to-1 match. Venture Portland maintained formal variance and evaluation processes, including attending 58 grant-funded meetings and events, to ensure appropriate stewardship of grant funds and increase transparent Grants Committee oversight across grant cycles.
STRENGTHEN VENTURE PORTLAND CAPACITY

After six years of infrastructure improvement, 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 successful program and brand implementation. In addition, the expansion of the Pilot Project and launch of ‘Fee-for-Service Consulting’ provided critical resources that enabled the organization to invest in additional staffing and development of new resources, tools and templates. As a result, significant positive results were achieved.

City Council Liaison
Venture Portland continued its strong relationship with Commissioner Fish and his team. Commissioner Fish spoke at Venture Portland’s Annual Meeting. He co-hosted several crime prevention and business support meetings (Central Eastside, Old Town Chinatown) and toured Multnomah Village and Nob Hill.

Membership
Venture Portland ended the year with 29 members (90% retention rate), including 2 new members and 5 upgrades. Based on individual district membership and revenue growth, 17% of Venture Portland’s business district members increased a membership level contributing to a 23% revenue increase over 2016. Staff worked with six 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, including like-minded business support entities in the organization.

Secured 100% street closure permits for business district events in the public right of way.

Commissioner Fish (right), NW Wools, Multnomah Village

Commissioner Fish, KitchenCru, Old Town Chinatown
**STRENGTHEN VENTURE PORTLAND CAPACITY**

**Governance**
At the organization’s 3rd Annual Meeting Venture Portland’s membership elected 25 delegates, 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 leadership stability. In May, the Board re-elected its President, VP, Secretary and Treasurer. Venture Portland’s dedicated leaders came together for 37 meetings (more than 3 per month); contributing 1,184.25 volunteer hours to build organizational and business district capacity and market and promote business districts. These volunteer hours, equal to .58 FTE or 23 hours/week were in addition to each Board member’s work in their own business and business district. Results of the organization’s second annual Board survey show Board members contribute an additional 225.5 volunteer hours/year (more than four times the US average) to 72 other organizations. For the fifth year, 100% of Board members served on a Committee and 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.

Board members contributed **1,184**
volunteer hours equal to **23** hours/week.

*Venture Portland's Board of Directors*

**Finances**
Venture Portland successfully completed its sixth 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 six 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 $95,795 in private revenue. This revenue, combined with business district grant award matching funds, brings Venture Portland’s total contract leverage to $617,632, a more than 1-to-1 match.
STRENGTHEN VENTURE PORTLAND CAPACITY

**Personnel**
Despite a vacancy, Venture Portland's staff maintained full programming all year. The vacancy, and new programs, added personnel and 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, business district and financial management; grants administration; message/brand development; change management; urban planning; diversity, equity and inclusion and personal safety and de-escalation, and each employee received an annual performance review. Venture Portland continued to leverage staff’s expertise with outside consultants. Finally, staff visited business districts 226 times (24% increase), attending 56 events and 171 meetings (including 58 that were grant funded), increasing understanding of each district’s unique character, issues and volunteers to better deliver services and share best practices.

**Office/Operations**
Venture Portland launched new member benefits including secure mail delivery service and low-cost equipment rental. The organization also made its space available to business districts, City partners and other stakeholders, hosting 24 no-cost meetings (33% increase over FY 15-16). 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. Continued increases in operations efficiency allowed the organization to prioritize building business district capacity and expand external affairs and promotional efforts.

Staff visited business districts **226 times** (24% increase), including attending **58** grant funded events and meetings.
PORTLAND PILOT PROJECT: YEAR 2

Results:

• **257** NEW Members  
  (70% increase, 67% members new)

• **27** NEW Board Members (21% people of color)

• **$212,721** NEW Revenue (93% increase)

• **13** NEW Events, **9** EXPANDED Events and  
  **14** District Identity Projects

• **37** Positive MEDIA Stories

• **3** NEW Websites
PILOT PROJECT: 82\textsuperscript{nd} AVENUE OF ROSES

- **NEW** ‘President’s Coupon Book’
- **NEW** ‘Around the World in 82 Dishes’ (45 participating businesses)
- Managed Parade Cancellation (64 media stories)
PILOT PROJECT: FOSTER AREA

• **NEW** District Map
• **NEW** District Brand and Website
• **NEW** ‘Tasting Tour’
• **EXPANDED** ‘Winter Tree Lighting’ (300 attendees)
• East PDX Stands Together Statement of Values
PILOT PROJECT: GATEWAY AREA

• **NEW** ‘Shop Gateway for the Holidays’
• **NEW** District Website
• **EXPANDED** ‘Earth Day Clean-up’
  (24 volunteers, **100% increase**)
• **EXPANDED** ‘Gateway Celebrates Small’
  (17 participating businesses, **113% increase**)

*Taking Care of Business* Gateway Area District Clean-up
PILOT PROJECT: KENTON

• **NEW** ‘Kenton Garage Sale/Beer Fest’ (Sept 2017)
• **EXPANDED** ‘Wooden Nickel’ and Tree Lighting (9 sponsors, 250 attendees)
• **EXPANDED** ‘Trick or Treat on Denver Street’ (34 businesses, 1,000 attendees)
• **EXPANDED** Street Fair (7,000 attendees)
PILOT PROJECT: MIDWAY

• **NEW** ‘Midway Money Book’ (17 businesses and district map)

• **NEW** ‘Business to Buttes’ and ‘Grow Midway Passport’

• **NEW** Website (41 business micro-sites, addressed digital divide)
PILOT PROJECT: MONTAVILLA/EAST TABOR

- **NEW** ‘Frosty Fest’ (35 participating businesses, 75% increase)

- **EXPANDED** Street Fair (12,000 attendees)

- **EXPANDED** ‘Trick or Treat on Glisan Street’ (60% increase in participants)
PILOT PROJECT: PARKROSE

- **NEW** ‘Shop Parkrose Coupon Book’ (sent to 1,100 district homes)
- **NEW** Website and Map
- **EXPANDED** ‘Trunk or Treat’ (attracted 1,100 attendees, 43% increase)
PILOT PROJECT: WILLIAMS DISTRICT

- **NEW** ‘Walk Williams’ (passport features 30 businesses)
- **NEW** ‘Welcome Williams Kits’ (features 29 businesses)
- **EXPANDED** ‘Shop Williams Late’
- **EXPANDED** Website and Map
CONCLUSION

Once again, Venture Portland ended the year a much stronger organization than when it began. In its 31st year, 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 of the value of Venture Portland and neighborhood business districts to Portland’s economy. Diverse new leaders guided Venture Portland successfully into the future.

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Venture Portland and neighborhood business districts worked together to grow Portland’s economy
VENTURE PORTLAND MEANS BUSINESS

The business of Portland is about more than business.
It’s about people, neighborhoods and culture. It’s about finding the right space. Raising capital. Creating jobs. And being flexible. It’s about passion. And dedication. And starting something because you believe your idea is THE IDEA.

It’s about a vision for our city.
One that business owners, residents and government officials share. A vision that celebrates the individualism and distinct flavor that makes Portland Portland. The knowledge that our diverse neighborhoods and unique views make up the very fabric that binds our city together.

The business of Portland is about a lot more than just business.
It’s about building capacity to build the city. Growing the economy to grow prosperity. And connecting capital, creativity and community.

It’s about growing business and connecting neighborhoods.
Like the pioneers who forged the Oregon Trail, Portlanders explore – we seek new experiences and find the next big thing. We innovate. Incubate. And get involved. With an eye to the future we leverage seed money into success, and make more out of the neighborhood business districts we call home.
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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 19,200 businesses and provide 267,000 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.