



**OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS**  
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### **University of Charleston Receives \$1.9M Funding to Create the UC Downtown Innovation Hub**

**Charleston, WV** - The University of Charleston (UC) will be creating the UC Downtown Innovation Hub (DIH) to help small businesses in the Kanawha Valley scale up and grow. The UC DIH co-locates a business coworking space, business accelerator, coaching, advising, employee training, and community event space at the corner of Capitol and Lee Streets in the heart of downtown Charleston, West Virginia's capitol city. The services provided will assist small businesses in creating economic opportunities, create and retain jobs, and generate private investment.

Primary funding comes from a U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant award in the amount of \$1,590,123 in support of the University of Charleston Downtown Innovation Hub. The DIH project is funded under the Assistance to Coal Communities initiative that assists communities severely impacted by the declining use of coal. In addition, both the City of Charleston and Benedum Foundation are providing matching funds to the University of Charleston of \$247,531 and \$150,000 respectively, to support entrepreneurial and innovation growth throughout the Charleston region. Our partner collaboration brings the total DIH funding to \$1,987,654 to be used over a three-year period.

“The University of Charleston has a long tradition of innovation and growth,” said UC President Marty Roth. “We are excited to bring our business, leadership, entrepreneurship, and digital design expertise, along with our deep network of partners, into downtown Charleston to support the entrepreneurial ecosystem. The DIH will further UC’s commitment as *Charleston’s University™*.”

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Both West Virginia Senators played pivotal roles in helping UC secure the U.S. EDA funding. “West Virginia’s small businesses are truly the backbone of our local economies,” Senator Shelley Moore Capito said. “Our small businesses deserve to operate in an environment that fosters and encourages growth, and the creation of the Downtown Innovation Hub in Charleston will help do just that.” Senator Joe Manchin also shared that “this announcement is great news for the University of Charleston and the entire Kanawha County Community. The new Downtown Innovation Hub will support sustainable economic growth throughout the region that will create good-paying jobs and spur economic opportunity.”

The UC DIH fills a need for the entrepreneurial and innovation community. The business coworking space focusses on offering resources such as high-speed internet and conference meeting space to entrepreneurs and innovators who would otherwise not have those assets available. Remote workers will find the Hub to be a valuable information and networking resource. The business accelerator will concentrate on delivering programming and expertise to businesses with a proven business model who are ready to scale. The DIH will use a train, consult, and coaching model. “The UC DIH will leverage intellectual capital from staff and faculty to provide advanced training to businesses and leverage other university assets such as the H. B. Wehrle Jr. Sales and Marketing Center,” according to UC’s Director of Innovation David Ramsburg. “The UC DIH will provide consulting services to help businesses solve current business challenges and provide them with executive coaching which is currently out of reach to most growing businesses due to access and cost. In addition, students will have opportunities to both learn from and assist small businesses, which will energize entrepreneurial activities and help to retain them here.”

The UC DIH will not only focus on the business needs of the area but also provide new community experiences by unlocking the exceptional creativity and talent in the area. Artists and other creatives will have the opportunity to display their work throughout the Hub. To further the downtown offerings to the community, the DIH will develop events such as open mic nights, guest speaker series, and student showcase collections to promote new vibrancy in the downtown area. The Hub further intends to participate as an active member of the community by engaging in Charleston’s Artwalks, various festivals, and other community events.

“The University of Charleston’s Downtown Innovation Hub will be another new and exciting addition to our vibrant downtown,” explained City of Charleston Mayor Amy Shuler Goodwin. “Having a strong presence from UC downtown will provide endless opportunities for students to interact with local businesses and residents and bring even more energy to our already thriving downtown area. We are excited about this new venture with UC, and we are proud to have supported this project from its inception.”

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The UC DIH location was formerly occupied by the Capitol Conference Center and the Chesapeake Bagel shop at the corner of Capitol and Lee Streets. These street-level spaces are part of Commercial Holdings' home office building. "As entrepreneurs ourselves, Fonda and I understand the need for the exact services UC will offer to small businesses," shared John Elliot, owner of Commercial Holdings. "We are equally passionate about Charleston and it being an increasingly vibrant place to live, work, and recreate. We are delighted to share our space with UC with whom we have had a robust relationship for many years, and excited to share our experiences with many of the business owners the Hub will serve."

Design and build out of the DIH will begin immediately, with an opening anticipated by early 2023.

For more information on the U.S. EDA grant award, please see this [May 24, 2022 announcement](#).

For questions or more information about the University of Charleston Downtown Innovation Hub, please contact UC Vice President for Communications Dave Traube at [davidtraube@ucwv.edu](mailto:davidtraube@ucwv.edu).

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The University of Charleston is an independent, coeducational, residential university located in the capital of West Virginia, with a second location in Beckley, WV. UC serves approximately 2,620 students from 49 states and 53 countries. The University has four distinct schools: The School of Arts and Sciences, the Bert Bradford School of Health Sciences (which includes the Physician Assistant Program), the School of Business and Leadership, and the UC School of Pharmacy. The University's mission is *to educate each student for a life of productive work, enlightened living, and community involvement*.