



PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
August 19, 2015

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Bolstering Downtown Startups on “Startup Day Across America” Congressman Peters, Partnership Convene Tech Community to Celebrate Successes, Raise Awareness for Downtown’s Growing Startup Ecosystem

As part of its ongoing efforts to support the startup community, the Downtown San Diego Partnership and Congressman Scott Peters convened today entrepreneurs, investors and startup pioneers on “Startup Day Across America” to discuss what it will take at the federal level to nurture and grow Downtown San Diego’s thriving tech startup ecosystem.

“San Diego is home to world-class innovators and tech pioneers that are creating jobs and boosting our region’s economy,” Rep. Peters said. “Today we engaged with leaders of the startup community on the opportunities and challenges they face. Supporting our new and small businesses so they can grow and create jobs is a top priority and the best way for me to know how to help them is to hear from them directly.”

The town hall discussion was held at Classy -- one of Downtown’s most successful and ever-expanding technology companies – and offered attendees from the tech community the opportunity to engage with Congressman Peters about their experiences solving real-life challenges facing San Diego startups. Wednesday marked the 4th annual National Startup Day, where more than three dozen members of Congress showcased the role startup business plays in innovation and job creation across the country.

“We know more startup companies, particularly tech companies, are moving to our Downtown in search of an environment that helps drive innovation,” said Kris Michell, president and CEO of the Downtown San Diego Partnership. “Startup Day Across America is an important event and critical step forward because it provides a platform to showcase the role startups play in the region’s economy as well as an opportunity to advocate for resources needed to grow the tech cluster. Startup successes yield returns that benefit the entire region, so it’s important for everyone to play a role.”

Increasingly, startup companies and their employees are searching for urban centers that provide both the energy and synergy to fuel emerging technologies. There are currently more than 70 tech startups in

Downtown San Diego. According to the UT San Diego, more than 30 companies from a variety of industries have relocated to Downtown within the past 18 months. To continue this trend, elected leaders and stakeholders must work hand-in-hand with the startup community to address San Diego's opportunities and challenges.

Among the priorities and feedback discussed were:

- Establishing a prominent online forum where tech successes, big and small, can be showcased and shared within and outside of San Diego.
- Creating a mechanism to connect potential investors and startup entrepreneurs in San Diego for the purposes of encouraging them to direct investment dollars locally.
- Crafting a direct line between local universities and Downtown startups to attract, retain and train the talent needed to foster innovation and meet the needs of these growing startups.

Feedback from today's discussion will be taken back to the Downtown Partnership's Tech Startup Committee to be included in a comprehensive recruitment and retention strategy focused on bringing businesses and talent to the urban core. The Partnership created its 40-member Tech Startup Committee in 2013 to support and grow Downtown's tech community, a key area of focus in its 20-year vision plan called "Imagine Downtown."

Startup entrepreneurs from Downtown's leading startup community in attendance:

Scot Chisholm, Classy

Pat Walsh, Classy

Stephen Cox, TakeLessons

Chester Ng, SweetLabs

Kristine Long, EvoNexus

Brian Jones, Zeeto Media

Jarrold Russell, Underground Elephant

Alex Rolek, Brandisty

Bradley Schnell, Playground

Mike Kenny, Co-Merge

Ryan Sisson, Fifty & Fifty

Melani Gordon, TapHunter

Craig Goldberg, 6° Business Networking

Ettiene DeBruin, 7CTO's

Allison Long Pettine, Seed San Diego

Downtown Startups Speak Up on "Startup Day Across America"

*"You don't need to move to Silicon Valley to build a successful startup. I moved here in 1999, finished college at San Diego State University and quickly grew fond of staying and building my career in San Diego. I founded and launched my second company, TapHunter, in 2012 with the support of EvoNexus and handfuls of mentors. More than three years later I am proud to say we're one of San Diego's fastest growing tech startups. I knew it was possible and I was determined to prove it." – **Melani Gordon, CEO and co-founder, TapHunter***

"San Diego has a fantastic talent pool for building and growing startups, from stellar universities like UCSD to successful tech companies like Qualcomm. While the pool is inarguably smaller than Silicon Valley, startups do

have an advantage here as recruiting is not as hyper competitive and employees aren't 'startup-hopping' month-to-month. The three startups I've been fortunate enough to participate in – SweetLabs, DivX, MP3.com - were able to hire hundreds in sunny San Diego and prove that you can indeed pull it off in this incredible city. 'Startup Day Across America' is a great opportunity to showcase our homegrown talent and innovation, while advocating for the needs of our growing startup community here in San Diego." –**Chester Ng, Co-founder, SweetLabs**

"San Diego's innovation economy has a wave of fresh energy that is aligning the efforts of our local entrepreneurs, elected officials, nonprofits, universities, developers and city planners. I look around and see everyone doing their part to collectively water our tech-startup ecosystem--and these efforts are yielding dividends. 2014 was a record year for startup creation, the "second-job problem" is on the decline, San Diego Startup Week had record attendance this year, UC San Diego also launched The Basement incubator/accelerator, and the Brookings Institute named Downtown San Diego as one of the nation's premier Innovation Districts. To all the ambitious minds out there, you can and should achieve professional success while liking where you live; it's not a zero-sum game. The gravitas of this economic reinvention reflects our community's unique ability to collaborate. We are positioned to become a national example of how to build a community of innovation. Now it's on us to work together to make sure that "Startup Day Across America" becomes a day of action, and it starts with events like this." -- **Jarrold Russell, Director of Public Affairs, Underground Elephant**

"As the startup scene in San Diego grows we attract not only more great businesses but also more talent. Talent is the key to building the companies we have now and the new great startups of tomorrow. Downtown has the unique opportunity, and responsibility, to become the hub of tech and startups in San Diego. Downtown already serves as the hub of influence for our region and so if we want tech and startups to expand throughout San Diego, it needs to start in here. The proximity of a Downtown environment can help to more quickly and effectively build the community within this industry and I think it's important to recognize and facilitate that." – **Ryan Sisson, Vice President of Business Development, Fifty & Fifty**

"At Zeeto we feel very fortunate to be a part of our emerging startup community here in downtown San Diego. There are not too many cities around the country that have such a base of support like we do here. The Partnership and our local elected officials want to see us succeed - they understand that startups are the future of our city." – **Brian Jones, Director of Public Affairs, Zeeto Media**

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The Downtown San Diego Partnership is a non-profit, member-based organization that serves as the leading advocate for the revitalization and economic health of Downtown. To learn more about the Downtown Partnership, visit www.downtownsandiego.org.

Classy is the world's fastest growing fundraising platform for social impact organizations. Since 2011, Classy has enabled millions of people across 300K individual campaigns to help fund more than 1,500 organizations. From cutting-edge health programs to educational advancement, Classy customers are tackling the world's greatest challenges with the power of the Classy platform. For more information about Classy, visit: <https://www.classy.org/>.

