



**StartingBlock
Madison**

For Immediate Release: Friday, December 12, 2014

**StartingBlock Madison announces plans for an entrepreneurial hub,
with significant support from American Family Insurance**

StartingBlock Madison (SBM), with significant support from American Family Insurance, announced plans today to create a 50,000 square-foot entrepreneurial hub in the Capital East district of Downtown Madison.

Pending additional funding from the private sector, construction of the building would begin in the fall of 2015.

“Madison has all the individual pieces to be a world-class entrepreneurial city. This hub will help bring those pieces together, a place where next-generation companies can be created and grow within a supportive community,” said Terry Sivesind, president of the StartingBlock Madison board of directors.

In addition, the hub will provide educational programs for teens and young adults interested in engineering, computer sciences, manufacturing and other skill sets critical for the future work force.

American Family has pledged a major investment toward construction of the building, joining the City of Madison, which has committed \$1.5 million in its 2015 budget. StartingBlock Madison hopes the American Family investment, details of which are still being finalized, will help attract additional private funding needed for the project.

“American Family Insurance believes in the power of dreams, combined with the entrepreneurial spirit, commitment and collaboration needed to achieve those dreams,” said Jack Salzwedel, American Family president and chief executive officer.

American Family’s involvement in StartingBlock Madison “continues our support of innovation and emerging companies that can benefit our customers and the community,” said Salzwedel. He noted its venture capital investments in business startups and sponsorship of business accelerators, such as gener8tor in Wisconsin and home automation accelerator with Microsoft.

“The potential of Starting Block Madison to foster economic growth and job creation in our community is strong and definitely worth pursuing,” he said. “It will not only help create our region’s next

generation of companies, it will develop talented, motivated young people needed by existing employers to innovate in their marketplace.”

The entrepreneurial hub will provide the space and resources needed to get started, literally finding the “starting blocks” needed for success:

- Affordable, flexible office and co-working space
- Peer networking and mentoring
- Access to peers, mentors, investment and professional advisors (sponsors)
- Accelerator programs (i.e. gener8tor)
- Collaboration, meeting and conference space
- Educational programming, workshops and community-building events
- Sector67 community maker/hacker space
- Home for Capitol Entrepreneurs, a 300-member organization of founders/leaders of Madison area startups

By growing a vibrant, interconnected ecosystem from our existing entrepreneurial community, StartingBlock will be a place where entrepreneurs can:

- Turn innovative ideas into profitable businesses and accelerate job creation
- Grow our innovation culture into a startup hub
- Propel our technology, healthcare and creative digital sectors
- Spark our next generation of dreamers and inventors

Planning and design of the facility will be completed and construction started in 2015. Occupancy of the facility is targeted for 2016.

About StartingBlock Madison: Starting Block Madison (SBM) is dedicated to supporting entrepreneurship, education and economic growth in the Madison region. SBM’s origins date back to 2012 when a group of entrepreneurs and technology and civic leaders began to pursue the idea of a single location that offered the critical components needed by entrepreneurs to start and grow businesses, create jobs and stimulate the regional economy. In late 2013, the group officially formed StartingBlock Madison, Inc. as a Wisconsin non-stock corporation.

About American Family Insurance

Madison, Wis.-based American Family Insurance is the nation's third-largest mutual property/casualty insurance company and ranks 373rd on the Fortune 500 list. The company sells American Family-brand products, including auto, homeowners, life, business and farm/ranch insurance, through its exclusive agents in 19 states. American Family affiliates ([The General](#), [Homesite](#) and [AssureStart](#)) also provide options for consumers who want to manage their insurance matters directly over the Internet or by phone. Web: www.amfam.com; Facebook: www.facebook.com/amfam; Twitter: www.twitter.com/amfam. Google+ plus.google.com/+amfam/

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