



The Entrepreneurial Trifecta: Manufacturing, Making, & Economic Mobility

Some may ask "Why small-scale manufacturing and entrepreneurship?" Our immediate response is "How much time do you have?" because the list of reasons is so long and so rich with lasting possibilities, we could spend quite some time proving answers. Let us begin by recalling the rich legacy of Black presence in manufacturing as a plentiful labor supply with a proven history of working in difficult conditions for little or even no wages. When it came to escaping the oppressive, life-threatening conditions of the South, it was the industrializing North that was proven to offer employment and educational opportunities for Black migrants. We may even say that the plentiful but inequitable opportunities provided a pathway to the middle class through wages, allowing the eventual transition from employer-provided housing to home ownership. Although educational accommodations were separate and unequal, the need to educate the children of Black migrants and the schools that were established as a result became the seedbed of preparation for a Black, educated professional class.

As we enter a period when the necessity to restore a domestic manufacturing base is more evident than ever before, the current workforce deficit cannot be met without the meaningful participation of the Black populous. In addition, the understanding that "every \$1.00 spent in manufacturing adds another \$2.74 to the economy, the highest multiplier effect of any economic sector, and for every worker in manufacturing, another five employees are hired elsewhere" (Source: NAM calculations using 2018 IMPLAN data), provides an opportunity for Black workers and owners to play a significant role in the restoring of domestic manufacturing and reducing the threat to economic sustainability and national security.

Coppin's substantial position at the intersection of entrepreneurship and local, small-scale manufacturing is evident beyond question. We can start with the [2019 Turning Makerspaces Into Greater Places](#) organizational assessment and economic impact study of Open Works, a leading makerspace in the nation that contributed over \$8 million to Baltimore City and over \$9 million to the State of Maryland economies. A

makerspace is a place in which people with shared interests can gather to work on projects while sharing ideas, equipment, and knowledge. The spaces can make industrial-grade tools available to more people at an affordable price, democratizing access as a result. The report was used to help justify the passage of the [Makerspace Pilot Initiative](#), a \$5 million fund to be spent over five years to “establish or expand” makerspaces throughout the state. The 2019 study was followed by the case study of the Open Works production of PPE for healthcare workers during the COVID-19 healthcare crisis which further demonstrated the potential for such spaces in the local manufacturing ecosystem. Combining the CSE influence on policy and generation of sector knowledge with the reality that West Baltimore is rich in educational, social, and human assets strengthens the institution’s identity as an oasis of academic innovation and a catalyst for economic progress.