

# CAPE SOKOL VISITS THE CORTEX DISTRICT

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## The Cortex District

On a sunny afternoon in May, the Capes Sokol [Business](#) and [Real Estate](#) Practice Group ventured to the Cortex District to get a first-hand look at the thriving hub of innovation, entrepreneurship and economic activity for the St. Louis region, known as Cortex.

Cortex was formed in 2002 by five of St. Louis' cornerstone organizations: [Washington University in St. Louis](#), [BJC Healthcare](#), [University of Missouri – St. Louis](#), [St. Louis University](#), and the [Missouri Botanical Garden](#). These organizations recognized the untapped commercial potential of connecting world-class research with entrepreneurs and established business and investors.

The vision of Cortex has already yielded significant dividends. Since its inception, Cortex has generated 4,200 technology-related jobs, and it is anticipated to generate more than 15,000 jobs. More than 250 companies, such as [Boeing](#), [Square](#) and [Microsoft](#), have chosen to locate within Cortex.

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## Capes Sokol Tour: Cortex District

### Vicia

We began our field trip at the recently-opened [Vicia](#), the first full-service restaurant within Cortex. Vicia celebrates vegetable-forward cuisine and is committed to sourcing the best local ingredients possible. Since Capes Sokol represented Vicia owners Tara and Michael Gallina with respect to their lease of Vicia's space at 4260 Forest Park Avenue, it was especially gratifying to sample their delicious food within the sleek, visually-appealing environment they have created.

We had a wonderful lunch and can attest to the [critical acclaim](#) that Vicia has received. With full stomachs, we moved on to the next stop on our tour.

### TechShop

TechShop is located on the north side of the same building that houses Vicia. In a collaborative and creative environment, TechShop provides a "workshop" for its members containing more than \$1 million worth of highly sophisticated professional design tools and equipment, including laser cutters, 3D printers, plastics (with capability to create vacuum forming molds) and electronics labs, a machine shop, a woodshop, a metalworking shop, a textiles department, welding stations, design software and class and conference rooms. Membership is available to people willing to pay a fee and receive the requisite training to operate the equipment safely.

TechShop strives to remove the barriers to creation by offering instructional classes so that novices, as well as experienced craftspeople may prove the efficacy of their inventions by creating functional prototypes. TechShop's location within Cortex encourages a synergy between neighboring startups and potential investors.

We put on our close-toed shoes and walked the entire shop floor to learn about the amazing equipment, tools and services that TechShop offers. It was truly a fascinating experience! Thanks to the vision of Cortex's founders, St. Louis is fortunate to be home to one of the few TechShops in the county.

### Cortex Commons and Future MetroLink Station

On our way to tour the @4240 building, we ventured through Cortex Commons, a public park within Cortex. Nearby is the future site of a [MetroLink](#) station. The Cortex MetroLink station is unique in that it is being funded by a public-private partnership. The station is [anticipated to open in late 2018](#).

### @4240

@4240 is the name of an historic Western Electric-Southwestern Bell Distribution building located at 4240 Duncan Avenue that was recently renovated and now provides 183,000 square feet of office and lab space, including co-working space, for tenants in a variety of industries. With the exception

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of a few historic relics that offer context for the building's original purpose, the interior of the building would be unrecognizable to anybody who visited prior to renovations.

@4240 is a hub of economic and social activity within Cortex. It is managed by CIC St. Louis, and was designed to promote interactions among its tenants, which include startups, as well as Fortune 500 companies. The building offers desirable communal amenities, in a beautiful and environmentally-friendly certified LEED Platinum building.

@4240 is also home to [Venture Café St. Louis](#), a non-profit sister organization to CIC St. Louis, which has the mission to "connect innovators to make things happen." Venture Café hosts a Weekly Gathering every Thursday, open to the public, and offers networking and educational opportunities for attendees.

## **CIC@CET**

We next journeyed to the CIC@CET building, located just around the corner, north of Forest Park Parkway at 20 S Sarah Street, which is the home of the [Center for Emerging Technologies \(CET\)](#). CET was established in 2002, and is Missouri's largest and oldest innovation center.

CIC@CET provides 88,000 square feet of space within an historic structure that was formerly occupied by the Dorris Motor Company. Like @4240, CIC@CET is managed by CIC St. Louis, and offers comparable co-working spaces and amenities, including shared and private lab space.

## **Retreat Gastropub**

Inspired, exhilarated and exhausted from our tour, we sought refuge at [Retreat Gastropub](#), which is located at 6 N Sarah Street, just a short walk from CIC@CET. Retreat opened in 2015, just as a number of significant developments in Cortex and the surrounding neighborhoods were being completed. We enjoyed learning about Retreat's decision to locate in the vibrant, evolving southwestern corner of the Central West End.

We thoroughly enjoyed the culinary offerings and libations served at Retreat, while reflecting on the exciting opportunities that Cortex is inspiring for the St. Louis region.

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