Suffolk Technologies hosts Robotics in Construction 2023 at headquarters in partnership with MassRobotics

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Suffolk Chairman and CEO John Fish speaks to attendees at the Robotics in Construction event hosted by Suffolk Technologies in partnership with MassRobotics. (Photo credit: Cindy Loo)

Boston, MA Robotics and AI are proving to be powerful, innovative resources revolutionizing how buildings are built. To explore how this booming trend can benefit the industry, Suffolk Technologies, the venture capital platform funding the next generation of companies solving built environment challenges, recently hosted Robotics in Construction 2023 at its headquarters in partnership with MassRobotics. The event, sponsored by Autodesk and Hilti Venture, brought together industry experts, investors, construction professionals and robotics startup founders from

around the world for a series of panels, pitches, product demonstrations and networking opportunities.

"While the construction industry is not known for driving innovation and change, we are living in a new norm where increasing efficiencies and improving productivity are absolutely necessary for managing successful projects and providing real value for clients," said John Fish, chairman and CEO of Suffolk. "At Suffolk, our mission is to redefine the way the world builds. To accomplish this ambitious goal, we must bring together the most visionary, forward-thinking leaders and organizations in the industry to share ideas, drive conversation and leverage our most creative ideas to transform the built world through groundbreaking technologies and solutions. We are honored to partner with MassRobotics, Autodesk and Hilti and host the many industry thought leaders who share our exciting vision for the future."

The day-long event welcomed emerging robotics and AI technology startups solving built world challenges.

"Many of our resident startups and those from across the globe are working on technologies that are able to support many industry vertices and construction is an industry ripe for adopting robotics," said Tom Ryden, executive director, MassRobotics. "Robots can help to improve safety and accuracy as well as provide services in areas where there are labor shortages. We were happy to collaborate with Suffolk and Suffolk Technologies in showcasing some of these innovative solutions to the construction industry."

Keynote speaker Josh Lobel, Strategic Projects Executive at Autodesk, followed opening remarks from Mr. Fish and Mr. Ryden. Two panel discussions then explored the on-site challenges faced by industry incumbents for adopting new technologies and what it takes to successfully raise capital as a robotics founder in construction. Later in the day, Johannes Paefgen, Director of Venture Partnership Office for Hilti in Boston, spoke about industry partnerships with robotics startups. The evening culminated with five startups pitching their solutions to the room of industry experts:

Rugged Robotics – Autonomous vehicle which streamlines manual layout processes by marking fully-coordinated A/E designs directly onto unfinished floors.

Element Exo – An exoskeleton that reduces the risk of work-related back injuries.

Reframe Systems – Leveraging modular components and robotic micro-factories to drive down the cost and delivery time of net-zero multifamily residential buildings.

Cleo Robotics – Compact and rugged unmanned aerial vehicle equipped with cutting-edge sensing to collect critical data and assist with inspections in GPS-denied, dangerous and difficult to reach areas.

Renovate Robotics – Robot designed to reduce work at height and make roofing more productive for contractors.

"Given the challenges the construction industry continues to grapple with, such as persistent labor shortages and shrinking margins, robotics holds incredible promise," said Jim Lynch, Senior Vice President and General Manager of Autodesk Construction Solutions. "Many of our forward-thinking customers are already realizing the value of robotics in applications like offsite manufacturing, reality capture and tackling repetitive tasks. When combined with the power of data and machine learning, robotics can supplement human labor to increase job site safety, ensure greater predictability, and improve quality control."

Suffolk Technologies is a venture capital platform that invests in early stage built-world companies, working closely with Suffolk to fuel industry innovation and ensure a more tech-driven, efficient and safer construction process. The firm has made over thirty investments in companies including OpenSpace, Kojo, WINT and CANVAS. Suffolk Technologies also recently launched applications for its fourth annual BOOST program, an intensive six-week accelerator designed to ignite growth and equip pioneering built world startups with the tools to transform the AEC vertical. The eighteen startups that have graduated from the program have raised over $350 million of capital since 2021, with alumni companies including Moxion, Passive Logic, Rugged Robotics, CalcTree, Carbon Title and Qualis Flow (Qflow).

This year's BOOST programming will include Operating Partners, a group of general contractors, building owners and operators, real estate services companies, material providers and trade partners who will engage with this year's cohort throughout the program. The inclusion of Operating Partners is designed to share construction innovation throughout the built world, echoing the mission of Suffolk Technologies' partnership with MassRobotics, Autodesk and Hilti to host this year's Robotics in Construction event.