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MICHIGAN BUSINESS

Yoga studios are moving away from suburbs and into Detroit neighborhoods



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People are continuing to seek yoga, meditation and massages as a way to relax, and Detroit businesses have been creating spaces to do so.

More yoga studios are moving away from the suburbs and into Detroit's neighborhoods, such as Balance & Flow Yoga Studio, which moved from Livonia to Detroit's west side this year, and The Trap Yoga & Massage Studio moved from Lathrup Village to Detroit's Riverfront neighborhood in 2021.

"When we were in the space in Livonia, a lot of students or people from the city (Detroit) would actually come by and say, 'If you all (move) closer or in the city I will come more often,'" said Thaddaeus Irby, co-owner of Balance & Flow Yoga Studio. "This was right in the smack dab middle of the COVID, too, so a lot of people were struggling with the connections and looking for a way to manage stress and grief."

Since the yoga studio moved to Detroit, the same people who wished the space was in the city are now regularly attending classes.

Yoga is thought to have originated in India, tracing back 5,000 years with practitioners focusing on strength, flexibility and breathing, according to Google Arts & Culture. Some of the different types of yoga include yin, a practice where one holds a pose for a long time; hatha, a slow paced classic practice, and vinyasa, which involves a movement with every breath, the website mindbodygreen explains.

"Yoga itself is a practice that allows people to connect with themselves — their mind or body, their soul — and it allows them to breathe through it all," Irby said. "It can be a very personal

practice. One of the biggest things I try to do at the onset of every yoga class is make the place safe and sacred so anyone feels comfortable enough to practice there."

Yoga's popularity continues to grow in the country. A Wellness Creative Co. report from January says there are 41,079 yoga studios in the U.S. The report also states that the industry is worth over \$88 billion worldwide, with a projection of \$215 billion by 2025.

Detroit Yoga Lab was one of the first yoga studios to open in the city. Some of the other yoga spaces that have since opened in the city include Citizen Yoga Studio; Yoganic Flow, which is a nonprofit; and Midtown Yoga Wellness Center. Below is a list of yoga studios that are either new to the city or have been a go-to space for more than a decade.

Balance & Flow Yoga Studio

Princess Galloway and Thaddaeus Irby became friends while attending yoga teacher training in 2020 and now are business partners. The two opened Balance & Flow Yoga Studio in April at 18728 W. Warren Ave. in Detroit. The business offers different forms of yoga, such as yin, which is restorative yoga, and vinyasa, a dance yoga class, Reiki healing, meditation and massages. The studio also sells items like sage that Galloway wraps herself.

"I always tell people to cleanse the energy that they sit in," said Galloway, who also is a nurse. "Cleansing energy and your space is important."

There are plans to add to the studio, as well. The basement will be turned into a lounge spa that is reserved for members, and there is a goal to open an urban garden behind the building. And upstairs, there currently is an Airbnb space that is already available to book.

"Our plan is to find another building and expand our products and services throughout the city," Irby said.

Memberships are \$50 a month for unlimited yoga classes. Find out more at www.balanceflowyogadetroit.com.

The Trap Yoga & Massage Studio

Jamel Randall, 37 and of Detroit, is the owner of The Trap Yoga & Massage Studio, which opened in 2016 in a different location. It is now at a 2,200-square-foot space at 3179 Franklin St. in Detroit with 14 yoga teachers. The newer location opened in 2021, and it typically hosts up to four classes a day.

This yoga studio has a few unique features. First, the music adds to the vibe. Attendees can do yoga while listening to trap music (a form of hip-hop) during the Trap n' Flow course. Then, it offers a variety of yoga types, including meditation, restorative, a storytelling method and yin yoga, along with massages. It also trains yoga teachers.

And community service is top of mind for this studio. It takes its yoga courses to seven schools, six community centers and hosts pop-ups across the city. It also hosts free yoga for kids on Sundays.

“It was necessary,” Randall said. “My aim was not so much that I wanted four classes at the studio. My goal is to get the message to as many people as possible in a genuine way. And so if that means that we’ve got to come to you, that’s all fine with me.”

Memberships for this studio cost \$75 a month for unlimited yoga. To find out more information, visit www.thetrapstudio.com.

Welcome Home Yoga & Wellness

Co-founders and married couple Robyn and Melissa Childers opened Welcome Home Yoga & Wellness in October. The LGBTQ+-owned studio is located at 635 W. Seven Mile Road in Detroit.

Robyn Childers, who uses they/them pronouns, was brought to the practice of yoga after experiencing a bad car accident in 2009. Childers decided to go to yoga teacher training to heal after having life threatening injuries. It led Childers to a yoga lifestyle that includes teaching yoga. Melissa Childers was on a path to becoming a teacher, but her plans changed after getting her first massage. She has been a massage therapist for 21 years.

The studio offers vinyasa, yin and meditation yoga, along with several massage options such as classic massages, prenatal, aromatherapy, cupping, hot stone, reflexology and athletic recovery.

The studio expects to launch a new membership program in June with a 10% neighborhood discount.

On June 11, the studio is participating in the annual Detroit-based Palmer Park 5k Run & Walk with outdoor yoga. Register at welcomehomeyoga.com/palmer-park-5k.

Detroit Yoga Lab

Naomi Gold, owner of Detroit Yoga Lab, signed a lease for her Detroit-based studio in 2010. The studio, located at 69 W. Forest St. in Detroit, offers yin, vinyasa, slow flow, restorative and fusion yoga, along with a happy hour class. And myofascial classes are available for athletes to work with the fascia tissue in the body.

“Our philosophy around yoga is that our teachers have the space to be themselves, so we don't run scripted classes and everybody doesn't have to teach exactly the same,” said Gold, 46 who lives in Grosse Pointe. “So a vinyasa class is going to be vinyasa, but people get to be themselves in teaching it. We don't believe that yoga has to be done exactly one way.”

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Classes are offered at the studio, outdoors and online, and there are several membership packages that allow attendees to create a flexible schedule, including student memberships.

In addition, there is a Namaste Non-profit Partnership Program, which offers free yoga and events to all nonprofits in the city in an effort to make the practice more accessible for community members. And all proceeds from the studio's weekly happy hour classes go to The Children's Center in Detroit, which is a nonprofit that provides assistance to children through clinical services, social work and education. This initiative is part of the studio's goals to help families and children in the foster system.

Gold also hosts yoga teacher training in the space. An unlimited yoga membership for a new member starts at \$70 for the first month, and increases to \$108 a month. Find out more at detroityogalab.com.

LisaHillaryJ Yoga & Massage

Lisa Johnson, 49 and of Detroit, offers hatha, vinyasa, slow burn and ashtanga yoga, along with massage therapy, energy healing using crystals, hapé plant medicine and acupuncture. Her Detroit-based business is called LisaHillaryJ Yoga & Massage, but you have to book first to get the address for the exact location.

Johnson has been a licensed massage therapist for over 20 years. She learned yoga 20 years ago, as well, and started teaching it about 13 years ago. She's also a plant medicine healer,

which is the practice of preventing sickness through plants in its various forms, such as herbs, capsules, tinctures, powder, flower essences and tea. Overall, Johnson's studio is a space of healing.

"It's not just about yoga for me," Johnson said. "My background is bringing down your nervous system, calming down your cortisol levels, slowing down your heart rate, lowering down your blood pressure, relieving yourself from trauma. So I hope that there's some peace when they leave."

Classes take place Monday through Wednesday, and Johnson also teaches yoga instructors three days a week. Find out how to sign up for a yoga class or book an appointment at lisahillaryj.com.