Portfolio Update

Mid-April 2026 · Marshall Rhinehart

Portfolio Context

Since the mid-March update, the studio has moved on several fronts at once. The most consequential shifts: direct exterminator feedback has sharpened what RodentRadar is actually selling; a property-management-industry partnership track has opened; BitHustle's role has expanded from internal engine to daily-use personal product; Claude Code has replaced OpenClaw as the development backend; and the workshop is preparing for a monthly portfolio-day cadence starting in May.

The twelve projects remain the active body of work — a catalog, not a rolling challenge. Two internal platforms now structure how the work moves: DuoCore on the hardware side (one PCB running three products) and BitHustle on the software side (agent-and-workflow orchestration over Claude Code). Platform improvements compound across products. New products become viable as specific buyer conversations sharpen, not as separate R&D investments.

This update covers nine of the twelve projects. Three (CouplesBenefits, EstateSaleSignup, FlipCleaner) will be folded into the May update as their positioning firms up.

Key Themes Since March

1. Truck rolls, not monitoring, is the value.
Exterminators we've spoken with since March have consistently reframed what RodentRadar is selling. The value isn't monitoring for its own sake — it's avoiding trips in the truck. A route that used to require a scheduled check-in can be driven only when data says it needs to be. That reframing tightens the pitch and suggests product extensions.

2. Sticky pad variant under evaluation.
The same truck-roll logic applies to sticky-pad checks. A monitored sticky pad — scheduled image upload with activity detection — would be a natural DuoCore variant: same PCB, different firmware, different form factor. Under evaluation now, not yet in prototype. The value proposition extends the exterminator-first positioning rather than pivoting away from it.

3. Property-management-industry partnership track.
A recently-funded property management platform (Series A, September 2025) has a business model that depends on provider efficiency — exactly the truck-roll problem. Early conversations are exploring what a partnership or co-developed product could look like. Not committed yet, but the fit is unusually clean. Their $28M round is explicitly earmarked in part for product innovation and deeper integrations.

4. BitHustle: now internal engine AND external product.
March's open question — "what's the external wedge?" — answered itself through daily use. BitHustle has been the tool the founder runs on personally for the past month, with features added most days.

External positioning is being refined through actual use rather than speculative design. The one-line explanation stays deliberately simple ("started as a todo list, grew into how I run everything") and lets the product overdeliver on first use — the Notion / Obsidian / Things pattern.

5. Claude Code replaces OpenClaw.

The agent orchestration backend has migrated. OpenClaw's economics became unfavorable; Claude Code proved the better fit on both capability and cost. BitHustle's orchestration layer abstracts the backend, so the migration was low-friction and did not cost studio velocity.

6. Feedback velocity is the new constraint.

AI has compressed build time across the portfolio. Feature development is no longer the bottleneck — feedback from real users is. May's priority across projects is onboarding testers, not shipping more features. This is a studio-level operational shift, not a project-specific one.

7. WNY48 and incoming relationships.

The WNY48 hackathon in April surfaced new programmer relationships, including strong AI-skilled talent who have expressed interest in working on the projects. Their networks have begun reaching out. This shapes both the workshop cadence plans and the May feedback push.

The Workshop

The studio operates out of a mini-makerspace at 469 Franklin, adjacent to but outside the Innovation Center / startup corridor. Small, curated, and in use.

The space has supported Karl Smith's Truest North Compass since its founding — now a shipping hardware business with 1,500+ units in customers' hands and strong reviews. Karl runs his own business out of the workshop; his PCB expertise is a resource the DuoCore hardware work draws on when needed. CAD and 3D printing are handled by a longtime neighborhood collaborator — six years of hardware tinkering together, with a temperament for solving problems once and iterating rather than producing at volume.

A few changes starting in May. Daily presence at the workshop resumes in late April (having worked from home through the Buffalo winter). The second Tuesday of each month becomes *portfolio day* — an open, low-pressure afternoon with working hardware on the tables and the current state of each project demonstrable in person. The coworking tables in the connected room are available to the right collaborators without charge. The tech and startup library (several hundred volumes) begins circulating.

The ambition for the space is modest and specific: critical mass of like-minded people showing up consistently enough to create their own momentum. Not an incubator, not an event series, not a coworking business. A room where serious work happens and visitors can see it.

Project Score Matrix

Scoring uses the same six dimensions as March, each on a 1–10 scale: Technical Readiness, Market Clarity, Customer Discovery, Strategic Value, Team / Resources, and an overall Momentum score reflecting direction of travel since last update. Values marked with an arrow moved since March.

Note: values below are the author's current read and should be verified against the March baseline before external circulation.

Project	Tech	Mkt	CD	Strat	Team	Mom
RodentRadar	9	8↑	8↑	9	7	↑↑
WiSpyAlert	8	8	5	8	6	→
MedicationDiary	5	7	4	9	5	↑
BitHustle	8↑	6↑	5↑	9	7↑	↑↑
EstateSalesUSA	7	7	5	7	6	→
EntryOrder	6	5	3	6	5	→
BestOfferQR	7	5	3	6	5	→
MyAlphaPics	8	7	5	6	6	→
SomeDo	6	5	3	5	5	→

Most movement this month on RodentRadar (customer-discovery and market-clarity gains from exterminator conversations) and BitHustle (technical readiness up, external positioning clarifying from daily use). MedicationDiary's strategic value continues to read high; readiness remains the gating factor. The other projects held roughly steady with small adjustments reflecting the month's feedback-gathering focus rather than new feature work.

Project Snapshots

Nine projects this month. The three hardware products share DuoCore and are grouped first. Software projects follow.

Hardware — DuoCore Platform

One PCB with dual ESP32 processors, factory-configured across three products by firmware rather than hardware variant. Same assembly jig, same programming station, same OTA update system, same device management interface. Platform improvements benefit all three products automatically.

RodentRadar

Status: Shipping. Partner program active. Most mature in the portfolio.

Commercial monitoring for pest control professionals. Direct exterminator feedback this month reframed the pitch around truck-roll reduction — a sharper and more operationally grounded value story than generic monitoring. Detailed development history at 36in36.com/rodentradar_journey.php.

30-day outlook: Tighten messaging around truck-roll economics. Evaluate sticky-pad variant. Advance property-management-platform partnership conversations. Grow partner count.

WiSpyAlert

Status: Shipping consumer product. Waitlist-based release.

Detects unknown wireless devices in a home — hidden cameras, unrecognized phones, surveillance hardware. ADT's $170M acquisition of Origin AI (shipping in 2027) externally validated the category; WiSpyAlert is shipping now. Same DuoCore base, different firmware.

30-day outlook: Consumer channel learning. Feedback from early buyers shapes next features and positioning refinements.

MedicationDiary

Status: Pre-launch. Most ambitious project in the portfolio.

Aging-in-place platform: motion baselining sensors, help-button clicker, medication dispenser with pickup detection, caregiver-presence base, caregiver management software. The original project — the sensing platform was built for this, and RodentRadar became the simpler proving ground for the shared hardware. Four pieces of hardware plus coordination software is the only unified system in the aging-in-place space attempting this scope.

30-day outlook: Hardware refinement continues. Pre-launch positioning work. Early conversations with aging-in-place channels begin forming.

Software

BitHustle

Status: Live platform. Running internally and externally.

Two roles. **Externally:** a personal life OS — tasks, projects, health, finance, scoring, an AI agent named Bit. The founder has run his life on it daily for the past month, adding features most days through real use rather than speculative design. **Internally:** the agent-and-workflow layer that orchestrates development across the portfolio, now running on Claude Code (migrated from OpenClaw). Same engine, two surfaces.

30-day outlook: Onboard a small number of external testers. Feedback, not features, is the constraint. One-line positioning stays deliberately simple.

EstateSalesUSA

Status: Live directory. Clear vertical, crowded category.

Directory and signup platform for estate sales. Sits in a cluster with EstateSaleSignup and BestOfferQR that all orbit the same life event (someone's parents die, someone downsizes, someone needs to move stuff). Naming the cluster explicitly in May's update may be the right move.

30-day outlook: Hold steady. May priority is user feedback, not feature work.

EntryOrder (added this update)

Status: Live. Queue-position marketplace thesis.

Platform for managing entry order and queue position at events or sales where first-come-first-served matters. The parent concept behind EstateSaleSignup; the thesis generalizes beyond estate sales. Added to this update as the broader applicability has become clearer.

30-day outlook: Identify two or three adjacent verticals where the queue-marketplace model fits.

BestOfferQR (added this update)

Status: Live. Bids-on-physical-items via QR.

QR-code-driven offer collection on physical items — paste a code on something you're willing to sell, let buyers submit offers, negotiate asynchronously. Ties into the estate/downsizing cluster naturally but applies anywhere someone is selling physical goods informally.

30-day outlook: User testing. Specifically, real sellers in real downsizing or estate contexts.

MyAlphaPics

Status: Live. Ready-to-sell consumer software.

Parent-facing photo product drawn from direct personal experience with young kids. Cleanest of the software products in terms of pitch clarity and shipping completeness.

30-day outlook: Paid-acquisition test against a narrow audience to generate real signal on CAC and retention.

SomeDo

Status: Live. Community-scale todo thesis.

Shared-list community tool. Sits alone in the portfolio (not part of a cluster, not hardware-dependent) and carries its own distinct thesis.

30-day outlook: Quiet month. Feedback-focused rather than feature-focused.

Finance

Section placeholder — actuals to be filled in. Structure follows March: runway, monthly burn, revenue by product (RodentRadar kit sales and partner program, WiSpyAlert waitlist conversions, BitHustle subscriptions as they come online), and planned capital deployment for May.

Notable change since March: Claude Code backend costs replaced OpenClaw orchestration costs with a favorable swing. Workshop operating cost remains stable; portfolio day cadence starting in May adds minor incremental costs (hospitality, printed materials for visitors) that do not materially affect burn.

Appendix: AI Operating Model

The studio's current AI stack, as of mid-April 2026:

Primary development and orchestration backend: Claude Code.

Migrated this month from an OpenClaw-based orchestration pattern as OpenClaw economics became unfavorable. Claude Code provides better capability and cost structure for the studio's use pattern (agentic development across many small and medium projects).

BitHustle's role: agent and workflow layer on top of the backend.

BitHustle is the only project that is simultaneously platform and product. Internally it orchestrates development across the portfolio; externally it is a personal life OS the founder uses daily. The abstraction between BitHustle and the underlying AI backend made this month's migration low-friction — a capability worth preserving, since backend economics will continue to shift.

Operational implication: feedback velocity is now the constraint.

AI has compressed build time across the portfolio to the point where shipping features is rarely the bottleneck. The bottleneck is now getting features in front of real users fast enough to shape what gets built next. May's work across every project is organized around this — more testers, tighter feedback loops, smaller feature iterations. This is a generalizable observation about AI-accelerated building and not unique to this studio.

— Mid-April 2026 Update. Next update: mid-May 2026.