

OUR WORK

Accelerator for America is a recognized center of excellence and trusted resource in our two founding focus areas of economic development and transit and infrastructure; we bring together the public, private, philanthropic, non-profit and academic sectors to achieve ground level results.

We engage in the hands-on work of building capital stacks, identifying funding partners, advising project owners and ballot campaigns, and otherwise 'unsticking what's stuck' to advance opportunity for disinvested communities.

In short, we serve as the critical intermediary, bringing essential resources to bear in solving the most challenging problems that hinder economic mobility and community building.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

The blighted 1925 American Life Building in downtown Birmingham had been used only for document storage since the 1970s until 2000, when it was completely vacated and listed on Operation New Birmingham's 12 Most Wanted list of prominent downtown buildings in need of renovation.

Accelerator was integral in the American Life Building redevelopment, supporting Mayor Woodfin in drawing investors into the Opportunity Zone project and building the complicated capital stack to bring it to fruition. It now houses 140 one and two bedroom apartments that bring much needed housing and vibrancy to the neighborhood.

Accelerator recently engaged with Birmingham to maximize the benefits of the 2022 World Games. Accelerator partnered with the Mastercard Center for Inclusive Growth and the City to prepare Black owned small businesses for opportunities as suppliers and travel and tourism vendors for the July 2022 Games. Accelerator is working on other place-based initiatives that will support Black owned businesses over the next several years, including the #BuyBlackBham partnership with Mastercard that created a Black Business Directory and provides cashback incentives for shopping at Black owned businesses.

DAYTON, OHIO

Shuttered for 30 years, the circa 1904 Dayton Arcade stood as a monument to the decline of the city's urban core. The complex of nine buildings — topped by a dramatic glass-domed rotunda, 70 feet (21 m) high and 90 feet (27 m) in diameter listed on the National Register of Historic Places — was the target of multiple revitalization attempts, but they fell short because the project lacked the resources and leadership tenacity to build the required coalition of partners and capital.

Then-Mayor Nan Whaley made bringing the Arcade back to life a cause to celebrate, and Accelerator got to work helping the city write an investment prospectus, develop an investment playbook for the project, and ultimately complete the complicated development deals that led to the Arcade's rebirth. The project required over 20 funding sources and countless partners. A catalytic moment in this journey was Gem City Rising, an event Accelerator hosted to focus investor attention on the Arcade and other key projects in Dayton that attracted the necessary private and philanthropic capital along with the required technical expertise to bring the project to life.

Our partner Bruce Katz, who with his team at Drexel University's Nowak Metro Finance Lab worked closely with us on this project and joined us in multiple visits to Dayton, calls the Arcade "the most transformative project in America." Accelerator propelled this project across the finish line, culminating with the first certificates of occupancy being issued in 2020. Today, despite the pandemic, the Arcade is home to businesses, residents and cultural events. Mixed-income apartments are full of new downtown neighbors, the rotunda is hosting weddings and celebrations, businesses are incubating and operating, and more phases are underway.



ERIE, PENNSYLVANIA

Erie is a city built to support a population of 150,000, but whose population dropped to around 100,000 as it shed industrial jobs and other opportunities. Accelerator worked with committed local stakeholders to develop an investment prospectus for the city, and we organized the Erie Homecoming event to showcase its implementation, including the work of the Downtown Development Corporation (more than \$7 million invested to date) and a \$50 million Qualified Opportunity Fund seeded by the Erie Insurance Co., the city's homegrown Fortune 500 company. Accelerator also brought Erie stakeholders and investors together at our Investor Summit at Stanford University that resulted in a commitment of \$10 million for local startups by CapZone.

As Matthew Wachter of the Erie Downtown Development Corporation said, "We have a lot of work ahead, but Opportunity Zones are giving the local community an injection of confidence and capital, needed even more given the challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic. Thank you for making this possible in the nation's poorest zip code. Opportunity Zones are giving this community new life, optimism, and a fighting chance to turn the tide following 50 years of the "slow drip of decline" in the rustbelt."

Building on the initial pre-pandemic work through Opportunity Zones, Erie is moving full steam ahead with a full Investment Playbook and significant new investment in the project area.



KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

Infrastructure

The construction of US Highway 71 divided two African American neighborhoods, including the Prospect Ave. business corridor, a historic hub of Black owned businesses. Thousands of residents were displaced and much of the street grid in the area was disconnected. In addition, Highway 71 is currently the most dangerous and deadliest traffic corridor in Kansas City; adjacent Prospect Ave. is the second deadliest. Many of the crashes involve pedestrians crossing a six-lane divided highway at informal crossings to access transit and services.

Through Accelerator's partnership with WSP USA, Kansas City was able to submit a request for \$7.5 million in funding, for the first major effort by the city to mitigate the economic and neighborhood disruption caused by Highway 71 since it was completed in the late 1990s. Through the Accelerator/WSP partnership, the city also plans to submit a grant for DoT's Reconnecting Communities program.

According to Kansas City Mayor and Accelerator Advisory Council Co-Chair Quinton Lucas: "Accelerator's support throughout our US-71 grant application process has been pivotal, providing the city with the resources and expertise necessary to pursue improvements to one of the most dangerous highways in our region and to right the wrongs of our city's past. Accelerator's support helped jump-start efforts to improve an important area of our community, which has been historically underinvested in and divided by oppressive highway design practices."

Workforce Development

According to the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, there are 91,000 available jobs and 46,000 job seekers in their region. This is a crisis that requires reskilling, upskilling, and increasing talent in manufacturing, professional and technical services, healthcare, and transportation. To help employers and job seekers connect the dots, The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation enlisted Accelerator for America to host several events in Kansas City focused on workforce development. These sessions led to the Accelerator's current development of a data tool to provide insight into the workforce user experience for deployment in Kansas City and nationally. This tool is being developed in partnership with mySidewalk, a data analytics company located in Kansas City.

It maps the user experience to shed light on where gaps and opportunities exist. The tool will include a performance dashboard that will be updated monthly with key metrics. Ideally, this will lead to a better understanding of the ecosystem to prompt regional collaboration among public, private, and philanthropic organizations on solutions.



LANSING, MICHIGAN

Accelerator held an economic development bootcamp convening city leaders, economic developers and investors. From that summit and with support from Accelerator, the city created Lansing's Investment Prospectus, which promotes a number of deals that are attractive to investors and that serve community needs. Several are now underway or complete, including two mixed-use projects of \$41.5 million and \$44 million, which revitalized blighted areas of the city and brought 40 residential apartments, a 37,000 square foot urban grocery store and a 122 room Courtyard by Marriott, the first new hotel downtown in more than 30 years. Coming full circle, our President and CEO Mary Ellen Wiederwohl stayed at the new hotel on a visit to Lansing in June and talked with Mayor Andy Schor and the developer about what's next for Lansing!



**TRANSIT &
INFRASTRUCTURE****AUSTIN, TEXAS**

Austin, TX is currently the 11th largest city in the country and is adding over 1,100 residents and 155 cars every week. To tackle the city's legendary traffic concerns, civic leaders in Austin developed Project Connect, a multi-modal transportation improvement plan intended to address congestion through massive expansion and development of bus and rail routes and nine new park and ride facilities, reduce emissions by converting to an all electric bus fleet, address pedestrian safety through the development of dedicated pathways and bike lanes, all while creating thousands of jobs and improving access to essential services, education and healthcare for all of Austin's residents. Project Connect also ensures that Austin's 18,000 affordable housing units stay affordable by dedicating \$300 million toward Anti-Displacement Funding and Equitable Transit-Oriented Development.

Through Austin Mayor Steve Adler and his office, Accelerator engaged with the Project Connect coalition on the ground in Austin on long-term planning and strategy and participated in weekly video meetings with the leadership team during the 'Yes on Proposition A' campaign as it headed toward a 57.92 percent victory on the November 3, 2020 ballot. Proposition A increases property taxes in the City of Austin to generate \$7.1 billion in funding over the next 13 years.





CINCINNATI, OHIO

The transit system serving the Cincinnati metropolitan area was decades out of date when then-Mayor John Cranley began leading a coalition to place a measure on the ballot to increase funding to the Southwestern Ohio Regional Transit Authority (SORTA). A measure was crafted and set to appear on the ballot in 2018, when Mayor Cranley engaged with Accelerator, and it became apparent that the initiative as structured was likely to fail. With public opinion and policy research support from Accelerator, the measure was retooled into Issue 7, a 0.8% sales tax that would repeal and replace an existing 0.3% earnings tax that inadequately funded SORTA. Issue 7 was set for the March 17, 2020 ballot, with voting-by-mail extended through April 28 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. It passed with 50.36% of the vote (67,698 - 66,718) and is projected to raise \$3.25 billion over its 25 year life span.

With improved funding, Cincinnati is bringing to life its Reinventing Metro plan, offering the region bold, new transit innovations that will help grow the regional economy and better connect the community to jobs, education, health care and entertainment. New transit centers and park & ride locations, more new buses with free Wi-Fi, charging ports and other amenities, more suburban job connectivity with new demand-response service, and Bus Rapid Transit corridors offering faster travel through limited-stop service are all coming online for Cincinnati.

- 26 routes with more frequent service
- 18 routes with longer service hours
- 8 new routes
- 8 route alignment changes
- 7 routes with 24-hour service on major corridors
- Access service improvements
- More weekend service

PHOENIX, ARIZONA

Shortly after Mayor Kate Gallego took office, she faced a well funded anti-transit ballot proposition that sought to overturn an earlier voter approved tax increase to fund light rail expansion. The anti-tax effort was funded by an organized, out of state political operation that in the previous year had played a role in the defeat of a transit measure in Nashville, TN.

Mayor Gallego, through her mayoral relationships, knew of the Accelerator's specific expertise in transit-oriented ballot measures and reached out to us to participate in the strategy that ultimately defeated Proposition 105, which would have prevented the \$1 billion, five-mile light rail extension connecting Downtown and South Phoenix that is now underway.

"We're really proud of the campaign that came together to support 'No on 105'. It brought together business leaders, unions, nonprofits, we had older adults working alongside students, it crossed party lines and included people from every part of our city." - Kate Gallego

The 28-mile-long system now runs from Phoenix to Tempe and Mesa featuring 38 stations, 472 identified projects and over \$16 billion in total capital investment. Regional transportation officials want to expand it to 66 miles by 2034. Due to Valley Metro's continued development, 2,974 affordable housing units have access to public transportation and increased opportunity throughout Phoenix.



COVID RELIEF

Within days of Los Angeles' first COVID-19 shut downs, Accelerator partnered with the Mayor's Office, the Mayor's Fund for Los Angeles and our partners at Mastercard City Possible to create the Angeleno Card, a direct financial assistance model that provided rapid relief to more than 100,000 LA residents who had lost income as a result of the pandemic.

The program's success in efficiently and effectively distributing \$36,753,800 through no-fee, prepaid debit cards attracted the interest of the Open Society Foundations, which then partnered with us to adapt and replicate the Angeleno Card model into 10 additional communities across the country.

Through the Accelerator Relief Card initiative, over \$20 million of financial assistance has been provided to more than 30,000 residents of Atlanta, GA; Austin, TX; Birmingham, AL; Chattanooga, TN; the State of Connecticut; Dayton, OH; Louisville, KY; Oklahoma City, OK; the State of Rhode Island; and Salt Lake City, UT.