



ACCELERATE

JACKSON COUNTY

ANNUAL REPORT

2024



A Letter from 2024 Board Chair, Martha Fuerstenau, *American 1 Credit Union*

“There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about.”
— Margaret J. Wheatley, Renowned Author,
Teacher, & Management Consultant

If there is one word that could accurately describe 2024 for Accelerate Jackson County, it would be “change.” In late 2022, the board of directors of Accelerate Jackson County embarked on a journey to develop a vision and strategic direction for our predecessor organization, the Enterprise Group, prompted by the upcoming retirement of our former President & CEO. Over the course of several months, the board worked diligently to refine the organization’s vision to guide the hiring of our new President & CEO. The three key areas of focus are:

- Establish Collaborative Relationships
- Attain an Assessment of Assets and Develop a Plan for Growth
- Promote the EG/AJC Brand to Internal & External Organizations

We conducted a national search for our new President & CEO, and in November 2023, we appointed Keith Gillenwater as the new leader of Accelerate Jackson County. We knew he would carry forward the important work of the former Enterprise Group while guiding us in an exciting new direction.

Fast forward to today, and the board of directors of Accelerate Jackson County is incredibly proud of our progress. In 2024, we welcomed new businesses to the Jackson Technology Park North, earned one of ten inaugural Shovel-Ready certifications in the state’s MI Sites program, leveraged grant funds into the community, and forged new partnerships with businesses, non-profits, and government entities across Jackson County and the state of Michigan. We also embraced a much-needed rebranding into the newly named Accelerate Jackson County. Along the way, we’ve rediscovered what the community values most.

You will read more about these projects and many others in this report — but know that this is just the beginning. We are committed to taking economic development in Jackson County to the next level, and we are energized about the possibilities that lie ahead.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Martha Fuerstenau". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and a stylized "F".



A Letter from the President & CEO, Keith Gillenwater

"Every new beginning comes from some other beginning's end." – Seneca

As we embark on a new chapter in our journey, I am filled with immense pride and optimism for the future of Accelerate Jackson County. The past year has been a period of significant transformation and growth for our organization, and I am excited to share our progress and vision with you in my first annual report as the President & CEO of Accelerate Jackson County.

When I started in February 2024 at the former Enterprise Group of Jackson, I was charged by our board of directors – made up of community leaders representing a diverse swath of organizations from across Jackson County – to reimagine our role in the community while building upon our past successes and creating new partnerships that would propel us into the future. Over the course of the next 10 months, we welcomed new team members, adopted a strategic plan, rebranded into Accelerate Jackson County, and expanded our scope of work. Despite these major changes, our commitment to excellence remained unwavering.

Our renewed focus on business development activities was remarkable, with 115 visits to existing Jackson County businesses demonstrating our efforts to better serve our community. We helped Midbrook Manufacturing & Fabrication, a long-term Jackson County business expand as our first new tenant in the Jackson Technology Park North. We also spent considerable efforts to market our area to site location consultants, including hosting several for a long weekend in Jackson County.

We created new partnerships as a cornerstone for our success going forward. We have partnered to launch new events and projects with the Jackson County Chamber of Commerce, Experience Jackson, JAMA, the ShopRat Foundation, and many others – and that is just the beginning for Accelerate Jackson County. One of our significant projects, the E. Michigan Ave. corridor improvement initiative, is a testament to our collaborative spirit that brought together stakeholders from three different local governments along with representatives from businesses, non-profits, and many others to reimagine the future of this vital corridor.

As we continue into our next chapter, I am confident that our collective efforts will continue to drive positive change and growth for Jackson County. Thank you for your unwavering support and belief in our mission. This is a new beginning, and together, we are accelerating towards a brighter future.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keith A. Gillenwater". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Mission

Accelerate Jackson County will build and sustain a vibrant, diversified economy thereby improving Jackson's quality of life.

Vision

Accelerate Jackson County's vision is to foster relationships and collaborate with public/private entities to improve the health, lives, and economic vibrancy of the Jackson County community.

Who We Are

At Accelerate Jackson County, we are dedicated to driving economic growth and enhancing the quality of life for all who live and work in Jackson County. Our mission is to build and sustain a vibrant, diversified economy that offers opportunities for individuals, families, and businesses to thrive. We aim to accomplish this by fostering meaningful relationships and collaborating with both public and private entities. Through these partnerships, we are committed to improving the health, well-being, and overall economic vibrancy of our community, ensuring a prosperous future for generations to come.



THE ACCELERATE JACKSON COUNTY TEAM



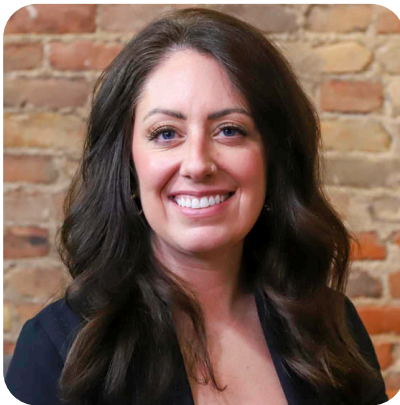
Keith Gillenwater
President & CEO



Debbie Kelly
Vice President



Emily Weaver
Project Manager of
Economic Development



Sara Owen
Executive Assistant



Mike Hindenach
APEX Program Manager



David Froman
APEX Counselor



Shannon Barker
APEX Technician



Joan Stroede
Staff Accountant
Lally Group, PC



Martha Fuerstenau
American 1 Credit Union True Community Credit Union
Board Chair



Chrissy Siders
Vice Chair



Joe Shaughnessy
MACI
Treasurer/Secretary



Tony Baker
County National Bank



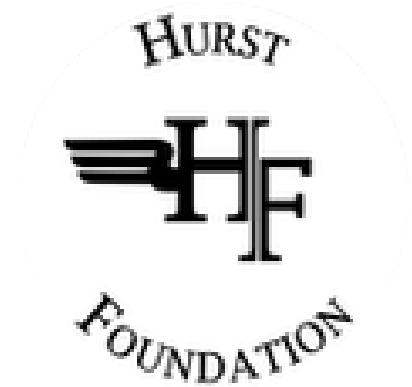
Collin Cote
JAAR



Brian Glick
Alro Steel Corporation



Keith Gillenwater
Accelerate Jackson County



Anthony Hurst
Hurst Foundation



Pete Jancek
Blackman Charter
Township



Tim Levy
Industrial Steel Treating



Andy Mercer
R.W. Mercer



Emily Moorhead
Henry Ford Health



Mike Overton
Jackson County



Dan Phelan
Jackson College



Jason Sanders
First Midwest Advisors



John Schmitz
Dawn Foods



Hendrik Schuur
Henry Ford Health
(Retired)



Jason Shore
Consumers Energy



James E. (Steve) Shotwell
Jackson County
Commissioner



Tim Sparks
Consumers Energy
(Retired)



John Waldron
Southern Michigan
Bank & Trust



Ric Walton
Walton Insurance

Jackson Challenge 2025

Capital Campaign: January 1, 2021 - December 31, 2025

Campaign Goals

Raise
\$3,000,000

Create/Retain
1,500 jobs



Total \$3,000,980.00

Campaign Achievements as of January 15, 2025



1,357

New/Retained Jobs Committed



\$131,604,775.00

New Investment Committed

ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Strategic Planning

With our change in leadership and bringing our new President & CEO Keith Gillenwater into the organization, we had an opportunity to undertake a comprehensive strategic planning initiative in Spring 2024. This planning initiative was based upon the feedback that Keith was able to get from approximately seventy meetings in his first ninety days with a variety of stakeholders including Accelerate Jackson County board members, private businesses, non-profit organizations, elected officials, and other stakeholders from across Jackson County, while interspersing that with meetings from external stakeholders such as the Michigan Economic Development Corporation and our economic development peer organizations.

After compiling all of the feedback we received, we organized it into different focus areas and conducted an offsite board retreat. From this, we created and adopted our new modified balanced scorecard approach with four pillars of focus: business development, livability, workforce & talent, and organizational excellence. Since that time, we have been working to implement the goals on the scorecard and advancing multiple initiatives to accomplish our mission of building and sustaining a vibrant diversified economy and improving Jackson County's quality of life.

Staffing

This was a big (and busy!) year for hiring at Accelerate Jackson County. With the pending retirement of our former CEO, the Accelerate Jackson County board of directors embarked on an strategic planning initiative to lay out a vision of what was important for Jackson County going forward and to shape the vision for who they wanted to hire as the next President & CEO. The board utilized Jorgenson Pace to conduct a national search for our new President & CEO, and the board hired Keith Gillenwater in late 2023. Keith brought with him eighteen years of experience in economic and community development in the state of Indiana, and quickly hit the ground running in February 2024.

In addition to Keith, we had changeover with our Vice President – Economic Development and administrative assistants leaving in early 2024. We added two new staff members to our team in May 2024:

- Emily Weaver - Project Manager for Economic Development
- Sara Owen - Executive Assistant

Both are Jackson County natives and have made a significant impact on the organization in a short time, with Emily focusing on economic development and marketing projects, and Sara taking on the office management and administrative duties as well as assisting with managing our governmental entities.

ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Debbie Kelly started her 26th year at Accelerate Jackson County as well, starting as an administrative assistant and was promoted in 2024 to Vice President. Debbie manages our governmental entity contracts and grants in addition to leading several development projects.

Accelerate Jackson County is fully staffed and ready to serve Jackson County!

Professional Development

Accelerate Jackson County values our employees and we expect our team to constantly strive to be the best. Achieving organizational excellence requires our employees commitment to constantly improving and being the best economic development team that our community deserves.

To that end, each of our team members undertakes professional development and continuing education each year. This includes attendance at industry conferences & workshops, participation in professional associations, and other continuing education. Our President & CEO Keith Gillenwater is a member of several professional economic development associations, and as a certified economic development professional (CEcD) and Master Economic Development Practitioner (MEDP), he is required to attend or undertake several continuing education requirements to maintain his certifications and even presented at the Mid-America Economic Development Council's Best Practices conference in Sioux Falls, SD this summer. Emily Weaver & Sara Owen both attended the Basic Economic Development Practitioner's Course in Lansing, MI this fall which is certified by the International Economic Development Council and hosted by the Michigan Economic Developer's Association (where Keith also led the session on Strategic Planning for Economic Development). Finally, Debbie attended workshops on Michigan SMART Zone management as well as sessions on industrial site certification & the new MI Sites program.

New CRM

In line with our focus on improving efficiency and organization, we've transitioned to a new CRM system, EDOiQ, replacing our previous platform, Salesforce. This switch will streamline our processes by providing a more intuitive, user-friendly interface that better suits our team's needs. EDOiQ will enhance both internal communication and customer relationship management, allowing for faster access to information and more effective tracking of client interactions. Adopting this new system puts us in a stronger position to streamline our workflows and boost overall productivity.

ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Office Organization

This year, we've made several key updates to our office, all designed to enhance our work environment and brand identity. As part of our rebranding efforts, we gave the office a fresh coat of paint, reflecting our new look and creating a modern, vibrant atmosphere for the team. We also switched to a more cost-effective phone and internet provider, improving service while saving money. To further enhance comfort and productivity, we updated the look of our lobby and common area. Additionally, we revised our employee handbook to better align with our evolving culture and policies. These changes not only support our rebranding but also demonstrate our commitment to fostering a positive and efficient workplace. We appreciate the support of all of our partners in our office upgrades, including Consumers Energy Foundation, American 1 Credit Union, Renovations Plus, and Johnson Sign Company.



PROJECTS

Jackson Technology Park North

Accelerate Jackson County provides staffing services to the Blackman Charter Township Local Development Finance Authority (BLDFA), owners of the Jackson Technology Park North (JPTN). In 2024, we finished constructing infrastructure for JPTN and completed road improvements along County Farm Road from Springport/Airport Roads to Dearing Road. Jackson County, Blackman Charter Township, and its Local Development Finance Authority, assisted by AJC staff, received a \$6M grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) to improve our community with the rehabilitation of County Farm Road to include turn lanes, traffic signals, and, most importantly, sidewalks. For JPTN, a new road, curb and gutter, storm sewer, sanitary sewer, water main, and detention pond were constructed. Additional financing of this \$9.4 M project was graciously provided by Jackson County and Blackman Charter Township, with project management and construction oversight by the Jackson County Department of Transportation team and AJC staff.

AJC staff conducted the groundbreaking for Midbrook Manufacturing & Fabrication in early December with their purchase of 13.2 acres and the approval for the second JPTN tenant, Louis 1884 Investments, in mid-December for 12 acres. Between the two new JPTN tenants, our community will benefit from over \$13M in new investment, almost 77 retained/saved jobs, and 55 new jobs. AJC staff is also working with a local manufacturing company that plans to build a second facility on the south side of County Farm Road in early 2025.



PROJECTS

MI Sites Shovel-Ready Designation

The Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) created the *MI Sites* Program in 2024, in collaboration with Quest Site Solutions, along with multiple state agencies and economic development stakeholders, to enhance the readiness of industrial properties in the State of Michigan. The primary objective of the *MI Sites* Program is to develop a statewide portfolio of best-in-class shovel-ready sites to address the real estate needs of companies seeking to locate or expand in Michigan. To help accomplish this objective, consistent statewide criteria for site readiness was established, and the data and information collected during the program was utilized to determine the current readiness classification of each property – Bronze, Silver, or Gold. Accelerate Jackson County (AJC) staff spearheaded and completed this extensive request for information process. As a result, Jackson Technology Park North was designated as Bronze in the *MI Sites* Program, and we are close to earning the Silver certificate, which we will pursue in 2025. An additional outcome of this program is the marketing package that AJC and the Blackman Charter Township Local Development Finance Authority (BLDFA) can provide to potential tenants that truly sets this site above others for development in Michigan.

Hayes Hotel

Accelerate Jackson County was asked by the City of Jackson to assist with the ongoing redevelopment efforts at the former Hayes Hotel in downtown Jackson. The Hayes, which opened as a hotel in 1926 was one of the cornerstones of downtown Jackson for fifty years until it closed in 1975 and ultimately was acquired by the city upon Consumer's Energy moving into their current headquarters in 2003. Since then, the Hayes has had several potential development projects proposed that could not make it off of the ground for various reasons.

Since 2022, the City of Jackson has been working with a development company on a redevelopment project that would convert the building into close to 100 apartments along with event, retail, and restaurant space. During this time, the cost for the redevelopment has continued to rise and the City of Jackson asked Accelerate Jackson County as well as the Jackson County Chamber of Commerce for any assistance we could provide to help keep this project moving forward. Collectively, we worked to assist the city with receiving a \$4.5 million allocation through the Michigan Economic Development Corporation in the 2025 State budget which is needed to help close the funding gap for the project. Accelerate Jackson County will continue to assist the City of Jackson to bring this project to fruition and restore the former Hayes Hotel to its cornerstone status in the continued resurgence of downtown Jackson.

PROJECTS

Parma Land Due Diligence Grant

One of the critical functions of Accelerate Jackson County is to ensure that we have development-ready sites for businesses to locate within. We accomplish this through working with our local government partners, developers, private landowners, and others to ensure that we have a number of sites available that can accommodate different businesses that could thrive in our community. Not every site, however, can meet the stringent criteria to reach what we refer to as a shovel-ready or development-ready site.

Our first step is to evaluate a potential site to assess its geographic viability to determine if it would be an attractive site for development while also determining if there is an owner that is willing to sell for a new development. After this important step, we undertake a series of due diligence evaluations on the site to determine if it is indeed buildable. This could include assessments such as surveys, soil borings, wetland delineations, topographic reports, and other reports. These evaluations, however, can be costly.

To that end, we seek out opportunities to help underwrite the cost of these so that we can make the best decisions as it relates to the developability of a particular site.

Accelerate Jackson County, in partnership with Greater Ann Arbor Region, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, and the Michigan Strategic Fund applied for and was awarded grant funding in the amount of \$85,000 to underwrite needed due diligence on land located in Sandstone Township and in the area of the Village of Parma LDFA. This funding will allow Accelerate Jackson County to perform an ALTA survey, soil borings, wetland delineation assessments, initial design layouts, archeological and endangered species literature review, and other assessments in order to determine the viability of developing several hundred acres of land for commercial and industrial development. Assessment work will take place in 2025, and the results will help us determine the next steps in any potential development.

Projects/Leads Report

This year, Accelerate Jackson County received dozens of site search inquiries from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC). Of those, we were eligible to respond to and actively engaged in eight projects. While these inquiries have not yet resulted in secured projects, all eight are still active and have not finalized a location decision.

Although we did not secure any projects through the MEDC site searches this year, we see this as a key step toward future success. The efforts put into refining our processes, streamlining our RFI submission procedure, building relationships, and gathering valuable market intelligence will play a pivotal role in attracting projects in future years. We are confident that the strong foundation we have established will position us to win projects in the future, fostering long-term economic growth for our region. It also highlights a key need in our community that AJC is actively working to address by bringing additional shovel-ready sites, and modern commercial and industrial properties onto the market.

PROJECTS

Business Retention and Expansion Visits

Our Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) initiative played a pivotal role in supporting local businesses, enhancing economic resilience, and fostering long-term growth within our community. Through regular visits to existing businesses, we were able to identify their needs, tackle challenges, and offer tailored resources to help them thrive and expand. These visits not only strengthened relationships with key employers but also provided valuable insights that shaped our local economic development strategies.

In 2024, we conducted visits to 115 companies. Several times, we coordinated these visits with our many partners, including MI Works! SE, MEDC, and Norfolk Southern Railway, to ensure local manufacturers were informed about the full range of resources available to them. Moving forward, we are committed to continuing this initiative in 2025, with plans to connect with even more businesses and manufacturers, further supporting our community's growth and resilience.

Built Here Videos

This past year, AJC along with The Shop Rat Foundation and Uncharted Films Co., received funds to produce a series of five videos highlighting unique manufacturing companies in Jackson County. The "Built Here" video project was designed to effectively communicate the stories of local businesses, showcase their core values, and highlight their products and services in a captivating and impactful way. With an emphasis on high-quality production, compelling storytelling, and strategic distribution, the promotional videos have played a pivotal role in strengthening the overall brand presence of the featured companies.



We've successfully completed the first video, which focuses on Angling AI, and are currently in pre-production for the second video. We're also finalizing plans for the remaining three manufacturing companies and coordinating schedules to ensure smooth production timeline. Given the anticipated success of these videos, we're exploring the possibility of expanding this initiative to include a couple of videos per year moving forward. This ongoing project will be an invaluable resource to showcase Jackson County's thriving manufacturing sector.

PROJECTS

East Michigan Ave Corridor

Accelerate Jackson County has been an active member of both the steering committee as well as the working group for the establishment of an E. Michigan Ave. corridor improvement project.

In early 2024, the City of Jackson, along with several area business leaders, convened a meeting of key stakeholders along the E. Michigan Ave. corridor in Jackson County. The goal of the initiative was to bring to the forefront the need to look at what redevelopment and improvements could be made along the E. Michigan Ave. corridor. Those meetings led to the establishment of a working group made up of community stakeholders in the area to further define the corridor and ultimately to recommend bringing in an outside consultant to assist with the development of a feasibility and land development study for the corridor. The corridor is defined as the Business Loop I-94 with the boundaries of Ganson Street to the north, M-127 to the east, the railroad tracks to the south, and Cooper Street to the west, and which encompasses parts of the City of Jackson, Blackman Charter Township, and Leoni Township.

Accelerate Jackson County further assisted this initiative by serving as the convening organization to issue an RFP for the work and as the fiscal body for the initiative, and we are excited to see what 2025 brings as we work to move this much needed work forward!

Marketing

This year, our marketing efforts have been focused on boosting brand visibility, increasing engagement, and strengthening customer relationships through a mix of traditional and digital strategies. Our key initiatives have centered around digital transformation, fostering community connections, and executing targeted campaigns to enhance our presence within the community.

One of our standout initiatives was the creation of a streamlined marketing piece for Jackson County. This resource highlights our key industrial parks, manufacturing plants, and showcases the parks, attractions, and community events that make Jackson County truly special. Additionally, we collaborated with ERA Reardon to develop a real estate flyer featuring one of our key industrial locations, which will help increase exposure and attract new businesses to the area.

Looking ahead, we plan to continue initiatives like these, expanding our presence on social media, and working to strengthen our community engagement. Our goal is to have content from our organization, or our partners shared every day, boosting brand and community awareness in the process.

PROJECTS

Site Location Consultant Interactions & FAM Tour

One of the key tasks Accelerate Jackson County is charged with is to attract new businesses to our community. These efforts can take many forms, but one of the most common ways is to market Jackson County to site location consultants. Typically, when a company is looking to grow or expand, if they are looking outside of their community, they will engage with a site location consultant to help them make the best location decision. Site location consultants typically consist of a mix of corporate real estate professionals, attorneys, finance professionals, and former economic development professionals, and they play a crucial role in the decision-making process for businesses looking to expand or relocate. These consultants then help a company weigh out hundreds of factors, such as cost, infrastructure, workforce suitability, and quality of life, to determine the best possible location for a company to expand into that gives them the best chance of being successful. By building relationships with site location consultants, Accelerate Jackson County ensures that we are on the radar and being considered as a potential site for a new business investment.

Marketing to site location consultants also allows Accelerate Jackson County to stay informed about industry trends and the specific needs of businesses that we may be seeking to explore an opportunity in Jackson County. By maintaining open lines of communication with these consultants, we gain valuable insights into what companies are looking for in a new location. We then use this information to tailor our marketing strategies and improve Jackson County's competitiveness. Furthermore, it helps us to anticipate and address potential challenges, ensuring that we remain an attractive destination for business investment in the long term.

To that end, marketing to and interacting with site location consultants is one of Accelerate Jackson County's main efforts. Throughout the year, we send personalized notes, text messages, and other communications to consultants that we have developed relationships with to keep them apprised of the great things happening in Jackson County. We also partnered with Phil Morgan at ERA Reardon Realty here in Jackson to produce a mailer that we sent out to 100 targeted consultants highlighting an attractive available industrial property, and in September our President & CEO Keith Gillenwater represented Jackson County on a trip to Dallas, TX in conjunction with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation to meet with site location consultants.

PROJECTS

However, our biggest effort in this arena took place in August 2024. AJC, along with Experience Jackson County and Lenawee Now (Lenawee County, MI's economic development organization), organized the first ever Familiarization (FAM) Tour of Jackson & Lenawee Counties. We brought in three site location consultants from across the country to spend three days in our communities, which culminated in attending the Firekeeper's 400 NASCAR race at the Michigan International Speedway (jointly located in Jackson & Lenawee Counties).

Over the course of the trip, the three consultants received an immersive experience into Jackson County, from visiting & touring companies like Michigan Automotive Compressor where they got to see the marriage of traditional automotive parts manufacturing with the integration of new EV technology to seeing the best we have to offer in quality of life amenities with a visit to Sandhill Crane Vineyards, dinner at Veritas, and even a round of golf at the Grande Golf Club. Along the way, they met with government and business leaders, local officials, and truly got to experience a taste of what life is like in Jackson County – and due to the rousing success of our FAM Tour, this is an experience we will replicate each year going forward! Site location consultants play a critical role in our efforts to bring new investment into Jackson County, and we will continue to build upon these efforts each year.

Manufacturing Matters: Jackson Podcast

Accelerate Jackson County, in partnership with the Jackson Area Manufacturer's Association (JAMA) is excited to launch the first podcast dedicated to celebrating and supporting the manufacturing industry of Jackson County, MI. Manufacturing Matters: Jackson is a project that we started working on in mid-2024 to plan and we are excited to rollout our first episode in late January 2025.

Throughout our podcast, we will highlight the importance of manufacturing in Jackson County, spotlighting companies both large and small while also showcasing the various supporting partners who collaborate to support this important industry in Jackson County. You can find more information about Manufacturing Matters: Jackson on your favorite podcast app, including Apple, Spotify, Amazon, as well as our video feed on YouTube (search Manufacturing Matters: Jackson).

PROJECTS

Economic Summit and JAXPO

Accelerate Jackson County (AJC) was a proud partner with the Jackson County Chamber of Commerce to host the first annual economic summit held prior to a favorite annual community event - JAXPO. JAXPO offers a unique chance for businesses to connect, share ideas, and celebrate the innovation happening here in Jackson. AJC hosts a booth at JAXPO every year to meet new people, which offers an opportunity to engage with the business community and our many stakeholders. In addition to JAXPO, the first annual Economic Summit was held that focused on local economic trends and workforce development. Dr. Dan Giedeman, chair of Grand Valley State University's economics department, delivered the keynote, providing a local, national, and global perspective on today's economy. Panelists from Peak Manufacturing, Jackson College, and Henry Ford discussed innovative solutions to workforce challenges and shared insights on what to expect in 2025.

Re-Branding

Accelerate Jackson County engaged with our partners at The Next Move Group in conjunction with GRO Marketing to create a brand that features a modernized logo, vibrant colors, and sleek typography that emphasizes Accelerate Jackson County's forward-thinking approach to economic development. The updated visual identity is paired with an enhanced digital presence that is more user-friendly and engaging, making it easier for businesses, investors, and local communities to access the resources and support they need. This rebrand is a significant step toward aligning our visual identity, messaging, and community experience with our future goals.

The rebranding also reflects Accelerate Jackson County's dedication to driving innovation, supporting businesses, and creating sustainable, thriving communities. For more than 25 years, our organization has played an instrumental role in advancing economic development through strategic partnerships, impactful investments, and by providing tailored services to support local businesses. This next chapter in Accelerate Jackson County's history focuses on expanding our communities reach and influence as a destination for new investment and in fostering a growth mindset.



ACCELERATE JACKSON COUNTY

BUILDING JACKSON COUNTY, MI SINCE 1997

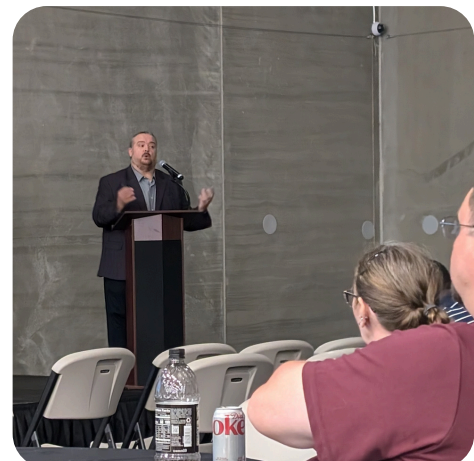
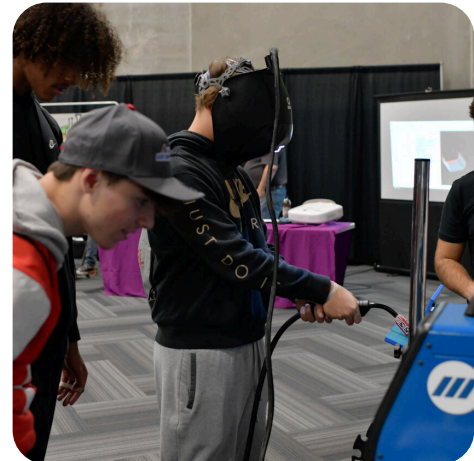
PROJECTS

Manufacturing Day

Accelerate Jackson County participates with the Manufacturing Talent Coalition whose mission is to empower tomorrow's makers by creating a vibrant future through manufacturing excellence. The goal of this committee over the next few years is aimed at positively impacting thousands of young individuals by equipping them with essential manufacturing skills, and contributing to the development of a sustainable, innovative, and diverse manufacturing sector.

In previous years, our MFG Day events were primarily orchestrated tours with area manufacturing companies in partnership with Jackson Public Schools and included tours of local colleges for the students. The interest from other school districts and manufacturing companies grew, and the committee was challenged to make a bigger and better MFG Day celebration for our community! In collaboration with our partners from the Jackson Area Manufacturers Association, The Shop Rat Foundation, Lean Rocket Lab, Jackson College, and Michigan Works! Southeast, we hosted the first Jackson County Manufacturing Day Tradeshow at the end of September 2024 at the American 1 Event Center.

Our first MFG Day Tradeshow was a success, welcoming several school districts and over 300 11th and 12th-grade students to the Student Showcase on Friday. Thursday's event was open to the public and featured industry-related pitch competitions and speakers. The tradeshow also provided a valuable opportunity for Keith Gillenwater, AJC President & CEO, to deliver an economic update and discuss how AJC markets Jackson County. Approximately 60 manufacturers and support companies participated with exhibitor booths, allowing attendees to explore the latest technologies, industry trends, and career opportunities. Manufacturers had the chance to network, while students engaged with employers and explored potential career paths in the field. Looking ahead, the committee will host the second tradeshow in 2025, and beginning in 2026, the event will alternate yearly with guided onsite tours at local manufacturers for students and companies.



PARTNERSHIPS

Overview

In the realm of economic development, the significance of robust partnerships cannot be overstated. Economic development organizations like Accelerate Jackson County thrive on the synergy derived from collaborative efforts with a diverse array of stakeholders, including government bodies, private enterprises, educational institutions, peer organizations, and the non-profit community. By pooling resources, expertise, and networks, these partnerships allow Accelerate Jackson County to tackle complex challenges more effectively than we could on our own. These partnerships also serve as the bedrock for fostering innovation, attracting investment, and driving sustainable growth. The partnerships Accelerate Jackson County have worked to develop also bring about a multiplier effect, where the combined impact of our collaboration far exceeds the sum of any individual effort. In that spirit, we have worked to create as many local and regional partnerships as possible.

Local Government

Accelerate Jackson County manages several governmental entities on behalf of local governments across Jackson County, including directly for Jackson County, Blackman Charter Township, and the Village of Parma. We offer this service as we have experience and a system in place for reporting, meeting tracking, and accounting, and we undergo annual financial audits on both our 501c3 and 501c6 entities. We are currently in discussions with four other local governments to either re-establish defunct entities that have previously sunset and that now are desired by the community or to establish new entities with them. We stand ready to assist any community that desires our assistance! See more in our Fee-for-Services Entity Section.

Jackson County Chamber of Commerce & Experience Jackson County

We have built a very strong partnership with the Jackson County Chamber of Commerce & Experience Jackson County. Ryan Tarrant, President & CEO of both the Chamber & Experience Jackson County, and our President & CEO, Keith Gillenwater, meet regularly to discuss big-picture initiatives that will ultimately move the needle in the community. Both share a growth mindset perspective to not only maintain everything that makes Jackson County great but to build new opportunities to attract businesses, talent, and quality of life amenities to our community.

In 2024, we partnered with the Chamber on several events, including the new CEO Roundtable wherein we brought several C-Suite executives into the same room to talk candidly about issues of the day, an effort we plan to continue going forward. We also



JACKSON COUNTY
Chamber of Commerce



PARTNERSHIPS

partnered on the first annual Jackson County Economic Summit, bringing in Dr. Dan Giedeman, Professor of Economics at Grand Valley State University to deliver our keynote address along with a panel of local HR representatives and plant managers to speak on the topic of workforce development. Finally, our organizations meet regularly to plan and are planning the launch of several large collaborative projects in 2025.

On the Experience Jackson County side, our largest collaboration was with our 2024 Familiarization Tour (see PROJECTS section for more details). We partnered with Experience Jackson County to host several site location consultants on a tour to see all that Jackson County has to offer, which culminated in watching the Firekeeper's 400 at the Michigan International Speedway.

Jackson Area Manufacturers Association (JAMA)

We are excited to launch the new Manufacturing Matters: Jackson podcast in conjunction with JAMA. This is the first podcast focusing on supporting and celebrating Jackson County's manufacturing industry, and will premiere in January



2025. This is being produced in conjunction with our partners at JTV. We are also working with JAMA, the Chamber, Jackson College, and other workforce partners on a new workforce collaborative in Jackson County with a goal of streamlining and better aligning the workforce development system in Jackson County to better serve both our employers and employees.

Region 2 Planning Commission

We are partnering with Region 2 Planning Commission and Experience Jackson on the new Southern Michigan Outdoors initiative. Keith Gillenwater was invited by Region 2's Executive Director Jacob Hurt to participate along with a group of community leaders in a short site visit to Bentonville, AR to learn more about the brand they have created around outdoor recreation. Bentonville – and what they have specifically created to serve cyclists of all types - serves as an aspirational goal for what we could be with our new Southern Michigan Outdoors regional brand. This will have an outsized impact on our future economic development efforts beyond simply encouraging a healthy lifestyle and increased outdoor activity. Quality of place plays an increasingly important role in attracting both talent and new business investment beyond those businesses that support tourism directly. We view this as an opportunity to encourage new business and entrepreneurial starts to support the brand.

We also serve on the Jackson Area Comprehensive Transportation Study's Policy and Technical Advisory committees that are coordinated by Region 2. We are on these committees to represent economic development interests as it relates to transportation assets and coordination with other agencies.



PARTNERSHIPS

Jackson Commercial Contractor's Association

Keith has also joined the board of the Jackson Area Commercial Contractor's to better support our local contractors in not only our work but to do our part to ensure they get opportunities to bid on and or participate in local projects.



JCCA
JACKSON COMMERCIAL
CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION

Workforce Partnerships

In alignment with our mission to drive economic development and foster talent, we prioritized building and strengthening workforce partnerships this year. By collaborating with local organizations, educational institutions, and industry leaders, we've expanded opportunities for skill development, job creation, and workforce preparedness. These partnerships have not only supported the local talent pool but also contributed to long-term community sustainability and growth.

In an effort to drive workforce development, we regularly meet with Michigan Works! Southeast, Michigan Manufacturing Technology Center, Jackson Area Manufacturing Association, The Shop Rat Foundation, and Jackson County Intermediate School District to not only help with the current workforce demand but to also see how we can get the next generation interested and invested in manufacturing. By continuing to foster these relationships, we're contributing to a thriving, resilient workforce that is ready to meet the challenges of tomorrow. These partnerships will remain a cornerstone of our strategy as we look to the future, ensuring that our community remains competitive, inclusive, and forward-thinking.



FEE-FOR-SERVICE ENTITIES

Overview

Accelerate Jackson County has built several relationships with our local governments since our founding in 1997. In addition to our work representing Jackson County as the economic development arm of the community, we contract individually to manage several entities on behalf of our local governments to include the Jackson County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority, the Economic Development Corporation of Jackson County, Blackman Charter Township Local Development Finance Authority, Blackman Charter Township Downtown Development Authority, and the Village of Parma Local Development Finance Authority. Over the years, the number of entities that we have managed has fluctuated as the development goals of a community have changed, but we stand ready to assist any community to reach their economic and community development goals.

The Jackson County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority

The Jackson County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (JCBRA), which is staffed and served by Accelerate Jackson County, Inc. (AJC), is a sanctioned authority created to address brownfield, blighted, or functionally obsolete sites county-wide. The JCBRA was established in 1998 under the Brownfield Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Act 381 of 1996, as amended.

The JCBRA assists participating municipalities and developers using tax increment financing, grants, loans, and other incentives. The JCBRA has the authority to provide funding to conduct Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments (ESAs), which include Baseline Environmental Assessments and due care plans. JCBRA funds could also be used to support cleanup planning and community outreach activities. Additionally, through an approved Brownfield Plan; the Brownfield Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Act 381 of 1996 allows a local governmental unit (LGU) to continue to receive the existing taxes on the property, capture the increased tax revenue resulting from a redevelopment project, and use that incremental tax capture to reimburse the authority and/or the developer to help offset the costs of environmental and non-environmental eligible activities.

The funds are a unique funding source AJC can offer for business site selection decisions as part of Jackson County's economic development toolbox. The JCBRA contracts with Fishbeck for environmental services.

In the fall of 2024, the Jackson County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (JCBRA) successfully closed out its U.S. EPA Assessment Grant, which funded environmental assessments for 18 projects, totaling \$280,903.55 in expenditures. These efforts included seven (7) Phase I and fourteen (14) Phase II Environmental Site Assessments, supporting key projects like the American 1 Credit Union Event Center and Biggby Coffee. The grant leveraged \$6.75 million in new investments and created 14 new jobs, with every dollar of EPA funds generating \$22.50 in private investment, exceeding the national average of \$20.45.

FEE-FOR-SERVICE ENTITIES

The Blackman Charter Township Local Development Finance Authority

The Blackman Charter Township Local Development Finance Authority (BLDFA) was created in 1991 to fund the infrastructure needs of a new industrial development to attract TAC Manufacturing. Tenants in the BLDFA also include JSP, JSP Sheet Foam LLC, BASF/Chemetall, and Technique, Inc. Governed by Michigan Public Act 57 of 2018, the BLDFA operates through a Tax Increment Financing & Development Plan. The Blackman Local Development Finance Authority (BLDFA) consists of the 80-acre parcel south on County Farm Road, with a portion of the property designated as a SmartZone, as well as the 180 acres on the north side, known as the Jackson Technology Park North. BLDFA Tax Increment Financing (TIF) captures taxes generated from new capital investment within the district, except for 50 percent of school and debt millage. The TIF can be used for project-related public infrastructure improvements (i.e., road, water, sewer, site development) within the boundary of the LDFA.

In 2024, the Blackman Local Development Finance Authority (BLDFA) achieved notable progress on several key projects and initiatives. The Midbrook project, which broke ground earlier in the year, is progressing well and is expected to be completed by January 2026, bringing significant economic benefits to the community. Another major development involves Louis 1884 Industries, Inc., who has committed to purchasing 12 acres in JTPN. Louis 1884 Industries, Inc. plans to invest \$8-10 million in a new facility, which will include space for Black Hawk Industrial Distributors and for future expansion, contributing to job creation and retention in the region. The JTPN property has also earned Bronze status under the *MI Sites* program, enhancing its appeal to potential investors, and we will pursue Silver status in 2025. The BLDFA continues to refine its pricing strategy to remain competitive and ensure project costs are covered. These efforts reflect the BLDFA's ongoing commitment to driving development and prosperity in Blackman Charter Township.



FEE-FOR-SERVICE ENTITIES

The Blackman Charter Township Downtown Development Authority

The Blackman Charter Township Downtown Development Authority (BDDA) was created by Ordinance No. 55 of the Blackman Charter Township Board on November 21, 1988. The district was created to encourage and assist development in the area primarily southwest of the I-94 and Airport Road interchange. In 1993, the BDDA was reinstated, and boundaries were expanded to include a portion of Scheele Industrial Park northeast of the I-94 and Airport Road interchange and south on Airport Road to a point where a proposed waterline extension would connect with an existing water line on Argyle Road. The expansion also included several parcels of land adjacent to Meijer. In 2004, the BDDA expanded to the east with a northern border of Springport Road, an eastern border of US-127, and a southern border of the parcels along Boardman Road, back to the original Authority western boundary.

The Blackman Charter Township Downtown Development Authority (BDDA) made significant strides in 2024, focusing on property development, infrastructure improvements, and financial planning. Key initiatives included the cleanup and marketing of County Airport and DDA properties, with plans to add a fifth lane and a 10-foot paved pathway to Airport Road in collaboration with JCDOT. Financially, the Township is on track to pay off its bonds by May 2025, achieving a debt-free status.

The Village of Parma Local Development Authority

In 1991, the Village of Parma and Sandstone Township created its Local Development Finance Authority (PLDFA) to fund infrastructure and industrial development for Michigan Automotive Compressor, Inc (MACI), the largest manufacturing company in Jackson County. The PLDFA currently has 24 acres of Industrial Property available for immediate development, of the 191 total acres within in the PLDFA. An LDFA encourages local units of government to prevent conditions of unemployment and promote economic growth. Governed by Public Act 281 of 1986, an LDFA captures tax increment financing in an effort to develop areas with the highest potential for development.

In 2024, Accelerate Jackson County secured a Strategic Site Readiness Program grant from GAAR and the MEDC to conduct updated due diligence studies, ensuring shovel-readiness for the Parma-Sandstone LDFA property. AJC staff reviewed three RFPs and selected an engineering firm to conduct due diligence studies to ensure our community had another shovel ready site in Jackson County. The property was actively marketed through the AJC and Greater Ann Arbor Region/Zoom Prospector websites, generating several inquiries, including RFIs from the Michigan Development Corporation, and attracting interest from local companies seeking relocation or expansion opportunities.

FEE-FOR-SERVICE ENTITIES

The Economic Development Corporation of Jackson County

The Economic Development Corporation of Jackson County (EDC) was incorporated in 1977. The EDC is staffed and served by Accelerate Jackson (previously The Enterprise Group of Jackson, Inc.) as we serve as Jackson County's economic development agency. Their purpose is to bring quality jobs and new investment to the county and help existing businesses succeed. The EDC manages two financial incentive programs:

1. The Revolving Loan Fund Program
2. The Private Activity Bond Program, formerly known as the Industrial Development Revenue Bond Program.

The EDC achieved significant milestones, including increased visibility through AJC's Business Retention and Expansion Visits program, where the Revolving Loan Fund Program was discussed as a potential economic development tool. Since its inception, the EDC loan portfolio consists of 47 loans totaling \$4.4 million, which leveraged nearly \$50 million in investments, retained 930 jobs, and created 586 new jobs. Currently, the EDC has approximately \$483,000 to loan from the Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) and in 2024, staff began working with four potential RLF applicants which will hopefully come to fruition in early 2025.

APEX ACCELERATOR

The South Central Michigan APEX Accelerator (SCMAA) provides government contracting assistance for six counties that include Clinton, Eaton, Hillsdale, Ingham, Jackson, and Lenawee. SCMAA is staffed by three dedicated professionals with additional administrative support from Accelerate Jackson County. AJC hosts the program and provides office space in Jackson. Additional office space in Lansing is provided by the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce.

Mission

To serve as the axis for new and existing businesses to strengthen the defense industrial base by accelerating innovation, fostering ingenuity, and establishing resilient and diverse supply chains.

Vision

To build a diverse and resilient domestic industrial base that can deliver preeminent solutions to the military and other government users.

Services

No Cost Guidance: Providing contract support, proposal and registration assistance, suitability assessments and more at no cost to you.

Suitability Assessment: Evaluating your company's readiness for government opportunities and guide you on effective positioning for success.

Registration Assistance: registering with essential government databases to facilitate your company's participation in the government marketplace.

Market Research: Pinpointing the agencies in need of your product or service.

Bid Opportunity Identification: Setting up daily notifications of government contract opportunities your company is eligible to bid on.

Networking Opportunities: Extending opportunities to meet buying officers, prime contractors, and other businesses.

Proposal Assistance: Supporting complex solicitations packages, securing specifications, drawings, and understanding pricing, ensuring you capture every contract opportunity.

Contract Support: After winning a contract, help is available for some contract performance issues and audits.



SOUTH CENTRAL MICHIGAN APEX ACCELERATOR

	Total Program	Jackson County	%
Clients			
Active Clients	269	62	23.05
New Clients	47	7	22.85
Counseling Sessions	267	61	22.85
Socioeconomic			
New 8(a)DBE	1	0	0
New WOSB	5	1	20
New SDVOSB	9	4	44.44
New Hub Zone	2	0	0
Client Contracts			
Awarded	1072	293	27.33
Value	\$340,188,191.21	\$28,325,162.84	8.33

2024 INVESTOR LIST

Airmaster Fan	J.V. Butterfield
Alro Steel	Jackson Area Association of Realtors
ARCH Cutting Tools	Jackson College
American 1 Credit Union	Jackson County
American Title Company	Jackson County BRA
Art Moehn	Jackson County Chamber of Commerce
Baker College	Jackson County ISD
Blackman Charter Township	JTV
Blackman Charter Township DDA	Junior Achievement
Blackman Charter Township LDFA	Lally Group, PC
Comerica Bank	Lean Rocket Lab
Commonwealth Associates	Lomar Machine & Tool
Commonwealth Commerce Center	Michigan Automotive Compressor, Inc.
Consumers Energy	Michigan Manufacturing Technology Center
County National Bank	Michigan Works! Southeast
Dawn Foods	O'Harrow
Economic Development Corporation	Orbitform
Elco Enterprises	Parma LDFA
Emmons Services	Petty Machine & Tool
Eaglewood Electric	PNC Bank
First Midwest Advisors, LLC.	R. W. Mercer
Fishbeck	Rehmann
Flagstar Bank	Smith Group JJR
Great Lakes Industry	Southern Michigan Bank & Trust
Henry Ford Health	Spring Arbor University
Huntington Bank	Summit Township
Hurst Foundation	True Community Credit Union
Independent Bank	U.S. Staffing
Industrial Steel Treating	Walton Agency
International Transmission Company	Willis Foundation



Thank You!

To all our valued investors. We look forward to a successful 2025!

Accelerate Jackson County



*For any questions, feedback,
or further inquiries, please don't
hesitate to reach out to us.*

Phone Number

517-788-4455

Website

www.acceleratejacksoncounty.org

