



Edison Arts Foundation

A 501(c) 3 non-profit fine arts organization



The Edison Center

Building an Equitable Entrepreneurial Ecosystem for Lasting COVID Recovery and Resiliency

Project Information

The Edison Arts Foundation, a community-driven 501c3 organization, envisioned The HBDi Accelerator at Edison Center to be a catalyst for equitable small business development, job creation, COVID recovery, and economic prosperity in the Houston-Galveston region and in the eastern area of Fort Bend Houston. The project site is located at 7100 West Fuqua in East Fort Bend County in far southwest Houston and within the Fort Bend Houston Super Neighborhood. The Super Neighborhood is bordered by the Sam Houston Tollway to the north, McHard Road to the south, Fondren Road to the west, and Hiram Clark Road to the east. The project site is in proximity to Opportunity Zone tracts 48157670400 and 48157670200. The City of Houston has designated the area surrounding the project site a Complete Community. Complete Communities are areas in high need of economic development, access to quality amenities and services, affordable housing, jobs, healthcare, high-quality schools, early learning, and afterschool programs. The Fort Bend County- Houston area particularly will benefit from this investment.

Scope of Work

The Edison Arts Foundation requests use of the approved \$2,000,000 Fort Bend County ARPA funding investment to convert an existing 1980's era grocery/retail center into a 26,000 SF Small Business Incubator/Accelerator Facility, called the HBDi Accelerator at The Edison Center. This facility will create an equitable entrepreneurial ecosystem in a historically underserved African American community in the eastern portion of Fort Bend County. The existing structure is located on 12.5 acres of land that is owned by the Edison Arts Foundation at 7100 West Fuqua. The proposed scope of work will reinvent a former Kroger shopping center that has been mostly abandoned for nearly a decade, creating blight and diminishing area property tax values. The ARPA funds investment will repurpose 26,000 SF of the obsolete existing one story structure with

new modern, flexible interior spaces, new façade, new energy-efficient roofing, electrical, mechanical, and plumbing will add to the efficiency of the building. A new parking lot overlay and parking lot lighting is included in the plans. There will also be an additional 1,500 SF 2nd story space added on the west side of the building to overlook festival green park space.

The new HBDi Accelerator at The Edison Center will offer public and private spaces, along with an array of programming and start-up support services. Facility amenities will include:

- 24/7 access to affordable individual or shared offices
- State-of-the-art Conference and Meeting Rooms
- 5,615 SF Co-op kitchen and light manufacturing/packaging space
- Strong Wifi and Bandwidth connectivity
- Printers/Copiers/Scanners
- Restaurant and Café
- Janitorial Services

The HBDi Accelerator will combine these amenities along with robust programming designed to stimulate economic growth, support the expansion of small businesses, combat community deterioration and foster employment opportunities for low-moderate income citizens in the surrounding counties.

The HBDi Incubator program will target broad range of industries and sectors including e-commerce, technology, healthcare, marketing/ communications, international trade, arts/entertainment, personal care, wellness products, specialty food manufacturing, and general business services.

Project Task List:

- Secure Collaborative Partners - Complete
- Prepare Incubator Management Plan – Complete
- Invite Potential HBDi Accelerator Tenants – Complete
- Submit Fort Bend County ARPA Grant – Complete
- Secure Matching Funds – Complete
- Project Start Date – 12 Month Schedule Based on an approximate start on 11/13/2021

Economic Conditions

On March 13, 2020, Gov. Greg Abbott issued a statewide COVID 19 disaster declaration, followed days later by sweeping action to contain the spread of the coronavirus across Texas that closed restaurants and schools, among other social distancing restrictions. The region is experiencing unprecedented economic disruptions. Locally, the region contends with the dual effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the downturn in oil and gas markets. In April 2020, employers in the Houston-Galveston region LOST 312,100 jobs across a variety of industries. According to the June 25-30 Household Pulse Survey from the U.S. Census Bureau, of the nation's 15 largest metropolitan statistical areas, respondents in the Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land MSA report the highest level of loss in employment income (64%), expected loss in income (52%), housing insecurity (45.7%) and food scarcity (16.9%). Simultaneously, minority-owned small businesses have been hit disproportionately hard due to the pandemic and corresponding economic crisis. According to a new special report by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and MetLife, minority-owned business owners are more likely than non-minority owners to report difficulty obtaining loans, express fears about permanently closing, and predict declining revenues in the coming year.

Community Needs

The eastern portion of Fort Bend County lacks many of the community facilities and resources that can be found in more prosperous areas of Fort Bend County. The once-thriving historically African American community has suffered decades of decline, blight, and erosion of property values and requires revitalization. The reduced tax base has resulted in educational disparities for area families. Schools here are underperforming, and a high achievement gap exists.

“Healthy communities are built on a strong economic base. Access to fundamental elements of financial stability such as jobs, credit, and entrepreneurial resources is essential to ensuring that all Houstonians can contribute to the building of a vibrant, equitable Houston.”-Understanding Houston, Economic Opportunity (Greater Houston Community Foundation)

Incubators

Incubators – A Region Wide Priority Supporting entrepreneurial ecosystems, business incubators, and accelerators is a local and regional priority according to several leading economic and community development organizations, including The Gulf Coast Economic Development District, Houston-Galveston Area Council, Fort Bend Economic Development Council, and the City of Houston Economic Development, Complete Communities.

A strategic report for the Fort Bend Economic Development Council by The Canon echoes this call to action and recommends the establishment of at least three strategically placed hubs of entrepreneurship in the county each equipped with programs focused on scaling and innovating.

Meeting the Challenge

Meeting the Challenge - A Locally Driven Solution

The Accelerator has tremendous potential to create the conditions for economic growth and opportunity in the area through entrepreneurship training, access to capital, small business development, and job creation. To help our valuable small business institutions weather the storm, the HBDi Accelerator will provide a range of services needed to pivot, adapt, and innovate their business models.

Priority Outcomes for the project are to (1) retain existing jobs, (2) generate additional revenue, (3) create quality jobs. To accomplish these goals, the services provided in the HBDi Accelerator at The Edison Center will address gaps and barriers experienced by minority small business firms in the current regional landscape.



IMPACT

In addition to economic rescue The HBDi Accelerator at The Edison Center project will address a multitude of recovery, resilience, equity, and sustainability eligibilities and investment priorities including but not limited to:

- Replace lost public sector revenue to strengthen support for vital public services and help retain jobs
- Support immediate economic stabilization for households and businesses
- Address systemic public health and economic challenges that have contributed to the unequal impact of the pandemic on certain populations

- Support for vulnerable populations to access medical or public health services
- Enhancement of healthcare capacity, including alternative care facilities
- Services or outreach to promote access to health and social services
- Address negative economic impacts caused by the public health emergency, including economic harms to workers, households, small businesses, impacted industries, and the public sector
- Address the disproportionate public health and economic impacts of the crisis on the hardest-hit communities, populations, and households
- Addressing health disparities and the social determinants of health
- Investments in housing and neighborhoods
- Addressing educational disparities through new or expanded early learning services, and offering educational services like tutoring or afterschool programs as well as services to address social, emotional, and mental health needs
- Promoting healthy childhood environments, including new or expanded high quality childcare
- Invest in water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure, making necessary investments to support vital wastewater and stormwater infrastructure
- Expand access to broadband internet.

SUMMARY

This project responds to the unprecedented business disruptions caused by COVID 19. The Fort Bend County ARPA funds investment will create a hub for small businesses across industries and counties to access resources, training and capital needed to pivot to a new economic reality. Additionally, it is sustainable and there is strong support from a wide range of regional stake holders. There is a broad and diverse constituency supporting the efforts of the Edison Arts Foundation to successfully bring the Accelerator at Edison Center on-line. Collaborative partners include the City of Houston Economic Development, Houston Business Development, Inc., the Greater Houston Black Chamber, the City of Missouri City, Fort Bend County Judge KP George, The City of Houston Council Member Martha Castex-Tatum, District K, Fort Bend Super Neighborhood 41, and Fort Bend ISD.



***Edison
Arts Foundation***

Family. Community. Arts
Strengthening the Family. Bridging the Community. Developing the Arts