

Ep. 19 - September Hargrove_mixdown

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SPEAKERS

Announcer, Ed Clemente, September Hargrove



Announcer 00:01

Welcome to The Michigan Opportunity, an economic development podcast featuring candid conversations with business leaders across Michigan. You'll hear firsthand accounts from Michigan business leaders and innovators about how the state is driving job growth and business investment, supporting a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem, building vibrant communities and helping to attract and retain one of the most diverse and significant workforces in the nation.



Ed Clemente 00:28

Welcome to The Michigan Opportunity brought to you by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation. Hello, my name is Ed Clemente, and I'm your host today for the show. And today we're very fortunate to have September, Hargrove, she's the Vice President and Detroit Program Officer for JPMorgan Chase and Company, did I get that all right, September? (You did Ed.) And thank you very much for taking time out of your busy schedule. I know you've got a handful all the time, when you're doing stuff, especially during COVID, you've been pretty busy. I want to but this is important for the state to hear the story of what JPMorgan Chase is doing. And so what do you tell people? Why did they make this commitment? What is the commitment they made to Detroit?

S

September Hargrove 01:13

Absolutely. First, thanks for having me on the podcast. This is my first podcast. So really excited to be able to share our story here in the state of Michigan, what we're doing in Detroit, around economic opportunity. And so our work in Detroit really started back in May of 2013, when Jamie Diamond was at a shareholder meeting and there was a proposal that was on the table before the shareholders. And you know, after the vote, Jamie reached out to all of the folks that were proponents of the proposal, just for a follow up conversation. And in doing so he spoke with Lee Saunders from ASME (American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees) asked me who's the President. And in that conversation, they talked about what was happening in Detroit post-bankruptcy. And he really, you know, imposed upon Jamie and the firm to you know, think about what could we be doing to support what was happening in Detroit. And so he came back and tapped the head of Global Responsibility, Peter Shear and said, go to Detroit, get on the ground, ask questions about what's going on and see what we can do. And as a result of that conversation, and the follow-up work, where we spent six months on the ground, just talking to partners, and really trying to understand what was happening. You know, we initially started with \$100 million commitment to support Detroit's economic recovery. And we've since increased that commitment to reach \$200 million by the end of 2022.

E

Ed Clemente 02:33

So, like, it's interesting. So what was the gap between the \$100 then when you decided to say, hey, there's some real opportunities here that like was there like a couple years between or was a pretty quick?

S

September Hargrove 02:45

Originally, it was really quick. So the initial commitment was \$100 million that we do over five years. And so around year three, we realized we'd already exceeded 100 million. But there were so many additional opportunities for us to continue to work here on the ground. And so in 2017, we increased at \$250 million. And then again, in 2019, for the fifth anniversary, we went ahead and increased it a final investment of \$15 million to reach \$200 million. And for us, we realize that in the beginning, it was really about like how can we best support some of the key issues on the ground, blight, economic development, workforce. And then midway through we realize, you know, downtown and Midtown, we're starting to see a real resurgence there. Yet, when we look out to the neighborhoods across the city of Detroit, we weren't seeing that same level of progress. And so we really shifted our focus in 2017, to make deeper investments in Detroit's neighborhoods. And we've supported organizations that are in the neighborhoods, as well as economic development on commercial corridors to really be a catalyst for additional investment. And then in

2019, we realized that despite all of these efforts, as well as the additional investment that's coming to the city, black families in the city that represent 80% of the Detroit population, if you look at the economic indicators for this group, they tend to do much worse than their counterparts across like all socio economic indicators, housing, entrepreneurship, workforce, you know, life expectancy. And so we put together a strategy that really allowed for us to go deeper and invest in intervention that will help create more wealth building and economic opportunity pathways for Detroit's black families. And so that's kind of where we are in year seven of our investment, really continuing to look at interventions and programs and partnerships that will allow for more individuals to have access to economic opportunity.

E

Ed Clemente 04:35

Yeah, having been involved with Detroit, over a series of my careers, either as a trustee for Wayne County Community College or as a State Rep. We had Kevin Johnson on but the neighborhood's have always been the biggest challenge because Midtown downtown, you know, it's been a struggle for that as well. But the neighborhoods are the real key, I think, to the turnaround more than anything. And I'm glad you guys are focusing on that. That's great. (We agree.) Yeah. So. So are you like your job specifically? Are you sort of the gatekeeper? Or are you sort of the person that identifies the projects? Then you run out like JPMorgan Chase based out of New York? I can't remember. Yeah.

S

September Hargrove 05:16

So we're headquartered headquartered out of New York. That's actually where I first started with the firm. But we have a global presence. And so we've been in the Detroit market for over 85 years. And we've been here in both as a line of business as well as investing philanthropically. But, you know, it was in 2014, where we launched this new investment in Detroit initiative. And so my job, I think gatekeepers, probably a little harsh. But you know, I lead the philanthropic strategy and investment portfolio here. So it's my responsibility to identify like, what are the problems that we're trying to solve for, and who are the best partners and the best solutions that we could lift up to be able to address those problems. So in many ways, you know, a lot of folks come to me with great proposals, I don't always get the chance to invest in all of them. So in one way, I am a gatekeeper, but I see myself more as like a dot connector and a problem solver and really putting together the right partners, programs, and opportunities to work towards building a more inclusive economy here in the city.

E

Ed Clemente 06:19

It's always hard when you're the person that's got to pick like one out of 10 or whatever and it's usually it's a tough job to do no matter what, especially when you're talking about people's livelihoods. I imagine that's a tough responsibility at times for you.

S September Hargrove 06:33

It is I have to say no more than I get to say yes, but yeah, it come with the job.

E Ed Clemente 06:38

Yeah, you know how it goes. Um, you also you, we talked about a little bit off the record. But there's a bit of a blueprint, it seems like for a JPMorgan Chase, that you guys have had this initiative in a few other cities around the United States, right. (Actually, globally.) Oh, globally, let's hear that.

S September Hargrove 06:59

Yeah, so we realized that this model for impact that we started here in Detroit, you know, it can be replicated in other places. So we really approach our community investment work, not only just what we can be doing from a giving standpoint to philanthropy, but really looking across the board of all of our lines of business, how can we show up in markets with this in a more coordinated approach, and so we've taken this model for impact that really is data driven, leveraging the insights from our institute, now tapping into our Policy Center to push you know, advocacy for issues that impact low income and underserved communities. And, you know, we've taken these inflated investments to other places. So following Detroit, we invested made a big commitment to Chicago, Washington, DC, Paris, as well as the San Francisco Greater Bay Area,

E Ed Clemente 07:50

You didn't get a chance to work on the Paris one, did you?

S September Hargrove 07:53

Just a little bit, I originally started on the Advancing Cities team, where we were looking at how do we, you know, export this Detroit Model for Impact to other places, and then, you know, ended up taking over the Detroit work exclusively.



Ed Clemente 08:05

It's funny at one time, when I was in the legislature, we were benchmarking ourselves, actually Detroit a little bit with Berlin. And because they were having a lot of the similar issues, you know, we're having, but sometimes the comparison could be global cities around the world, even for Detroit's opportunities too. As you work through this, do you also, I'm sure you got key stakeholders, but is there any other ones you might have not mentioned that makes your job, you know, helpful when you're partnering with these projects?



September Hargrove 08:36

Absolutely. My job is not possible without collaboration and partnerships with nonprofits and other funders. You know, while we have made a significant investment and commitment to Detroit, our approach is to not go at it alone, and so we really welcome the opportunity to work closely with others. You know, a great example of this as Entrepreneurs of Color Fund. It's a partnership that we have with the Kellogg Foundation, Kresge Foundation, Ralph C. Wilson Foundation, Detroit Development Fund, which is a CDFI, Fifth Third Bank and Liberty Bank, which is a minority depository institution, and we created this \$22 million fund to support minority entrepreneurs get access to capital, and it's really focused on your neighborhood-based businesses in Detroit. I think that's just a great example of like how we are able to partner together with others and support more individuals have again, that opportunity to build wealth for themselves through entrepreneurship.



Ed Clemente 09:29

You mentioned one acronym in there, I think it was CDFI. Could you tell the listeners what that means?



September Hargrove 09:34

Absolutely. A CDFI is a community to community development, financial institution. And these are really kind of the community banks that were created through the Department of Treasury to support more riskier entrepreneurs. And so they're able to do like smaller dollar loans. They provide a lot of technical assistance and coaching to small businesses, and really help kind of build them up so that way they are able to, you know, eventually become a client a traditional bank like Chase.



Announcer 10:02

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Ed Clemente 10:19

You have sort of a very unusual path, how you got to this job, but you know, you've come you've overcome a lot of barriers to get to this point. Beyond just educational ones, right? Could you share a little bit about your background?



September Hargrove 10:37

Absolutely. So I am originally from California, I grew up claim Sacramento, which is our capital, but really grew up in the Central Valley and really like, you know, rural, impoverished community. And unfortunately, my mother was a an addict. And so that created a lot of instability for me and my five brothers growing up, you know, we moved around a lot, we experienced homelessness, and ended up in foster care. So I actually emancipated from the foster care system when I was 17. I was fortunate enough, however, through the support of having some really, really amazing teachers that were there to kind of keep me on this pathway, to be able to go to college, I went to UC Berkeley for undergrad, and then you know, ended up going to Harvard. So it's really, you know, as I reflect, I'm just humbled by the fact that I can say that, you know, I've been from homelessness and sleeping in cars and homeless shelters to, you know, be at an institution like Harvard. And then from that, to even have a career that started in the California State Senate, to being able to work for former Mayor Mitch Landrieu in New Orleans, and even President Obama as a White House fellow. And now, you know, a Vice President at one of the most well regarded banks in the world. And I will say like, what was always my motivation is that I wanted to ensure that other individuals, especially my brothers, that, despite the circumstance, we were born into that that shouldn't limit what our opportunities could be, you know, I didn't want to be the exception, I want my experience to be you know, more of a commonplace like to be the rule that, regardless of where you may start in this journey, that you know, if you have the desire, and you have the resilience that you should be able to become whoever you want to be.



Ed Clemente 12:14

You know, you should take the opportunity, if you like, to give a shout out to any teacher, who might have really helped you, maybe when you were younger, you're on a podcast, might as well take advantage of it.

S September Hargrove 12:25

Absolutely, Miss Shirley Roberts and Miss Jean Geighan. They were my student leadership teachers when I was in high school, they were amazing. They gave me the ability to dream so big, and to think of myself as more than just the girl that was in foster care. But rather than I can be this amazing woman, I would also shout out Jason Sample, who was my mentor in high school, who I'm still very close with, he actually officiated my marriage. And it's just so great to have people that saw beyond my circumstance, and really, you know, saw my potential. And so for the three of them, I am extremely grateful.

E Ed Clemente 13:03

Yeah, it's always nice when people see something in you, you don't see yourself. (Definitely) Yeah, that's always a helpful thing. In fact, you actually, I've got other questions, but I want to leap over to one earlier and you kind of touched on a little bit, but would you give any career advice for people if you could, you know, let's stick with high school kids? Because it seems like you had a lot of influence on you there. But that you are giving a mini commencement thing? What would you sort of tell them at least a few points that they should focus on as they make decisions and move forward?

S September Hargrove 13:35

Yea, so, I haven't actually entitled my commencement speech, operating with a why not me attitude? I feel like a lot of the times I question, you know, why is this happening to me, you know, do I deserve to be at this table? Do I deserve to be in this fellowship? Do I deserve this job? And then I had to kind of shift my thinking, like, why not me? Who is more qualified to advocate on behalf of individuals that have come up with experiences like mine? And so I think you have to just move past the imposter syndrome? And don't think about, you know, what your deficit is, but think about, you know, what is it that you meekly positions you to be in that room to give a perspective that others can't, and just remember that you're here for a reason, and that anyone can have impact. And then also just follow up? I know that simple advice, but so many individuals reach out to me for you know, coffee conversations, and I'm like, yeah, let's get time on the calendar and they never follow up. And so you never know what opportunity you might be missing on because you failed to follow up. So that would be my advice.

E Ed Clemente 14:35

You know, someone once told me to be successful, show up 15 minutes early for every meeting. You know, it's amazing how many conversations you can have before those kinds

of meetings sometimes too (Absolutely.) I'm gonna jump back to the work side of things sorry with commencement speech is over but is there you know, you you spoke, you focus on a lot of entrepreneurs, you said, but is there certain sectors that are more conducive to what you try to do? Because I'm sure, you know, you want to make sure it's the best use of you know, the funds, right? So do you focus on certain industries, or is it pretty wide open?

S

September Hargrove 15:17

So where a lot of our investments pretty industry agnostic, however, we do try to focus more on organizations that are just or small businesses that are just starting up. Solo entrepreneurs, micro enterprises, these are small businesses that have less than five employees. However, I realized in COVID, that there's a lack of support for existing businesses, not only in Detroit, but really across the state and that they too need additional access to capital and technical assistance programs to help them build their businesses. And so, you know, as I look ahead, and our portfolio and the work that I want to be doing and how we're showing up, it's how can I support more existing businesses be able to grow, especially in a world that's becoming much more technology driven? How can we help businesses get online get found identify multiple streams of revenue, as well as just improve their overall financial acumen, a lot of the times as a small business owner, you know, you're wearing multiple hats, and you're not thinking about the financial health of the business, or sometimes your own financial health and things get intermingled. And that could have negative consequences in the future. And so really looking at more opportunities to support growing entrepreneurs, so that way, they can hire more people in communities and create more kind of return on that investment. As we're looking across all of the different pillars that we we focus on.

E

Ed Clemente 16:37

I know, you're we talked about youth, but when I was a trustee for the college, our average graduation rate was like over 30. And there were single moms most of the times, right. And that's a harder population, I would guess, to get them to get tax tech savvy, as you were just mentioning, that's got to be a challenge, I would presume for a lot of folks, especially with digital divide, and things like that, especially in urban and underserved populations.

S

September Hargrove 17:03

Yeah, no, I would agree. In Detroit, especially we identify that so many individuals are disconnected. And so we're really happy to support last year, the initiative with a lot of organizations, I think it was Connect Detroit where we supported all Detroit Public School students to be able to get access to laptops and internet so that way, they could continue

their education while we were, you know, all working from home and doing school from home, but also thinking more about, you know, the supports that small businesses need and you know, single mothers. So we're definitely continuing to work with organizations to think about not only the traditional business tools that they need, but also some of these other things like financial literacy and digital literacy to help them be successful.

E

Ed Clemente 17:46

Yeah, that was a challenge. Trying to get financial literacy as part of the curriculum in high schools was pretty tough challenge sometimes. The the, is there any trends or other futuristic things, you think beyond what you've already mentioned, that you see on the horizon that might affect, you know, how Detroit does or how your job may change, due to say, you know, whatever it might be like the introduction, say, of more distance learning or remote, travel, whatever it might be?

S

September Hargrove 18:20

Well, there definitely are quite a few things. But one thing that I definitely want to center our conversation around is the racial wealth gap and racial equity. I think that this, in my experience here in Detroit, I've seen this disparity as really our biggest handicap. Kellogg did a report called the Kellogg Foundation back in 2015, that looked at across Michigan, the racial wealth gap, is creating such a huge impact on our economic output, and that if we were able to close that gap, I think they said it would be something like a \$31 billion increase in our economic output. And so I feel like until we're really able to have candid conversations around racial equity, we really need to figure out how that's impacting our overall ability to be successful as a state.

E

Ed Clemente 19:04

Yeah. And you know, like you said, before you you're looking at this empathically, not sympathetically, right, because you've gone through it in some degree or another in your career. Do you when you go out with these projects, is there any successes you might want to mention, that you thought, something you might have been involved with that sort of had a beginning? And is still succeeding kind of thing?

S

September Hargrove 19:28

Yeah, absolutely. Um, so we've already talked a little bit about the Entrepreneurs of Color Fund which I think has been a great program. Another one that we have a program that we help stand up that I think has been really impactful is the Equitable Development

Initiative, in partnership with the Capital Impact Partners. And as we look across the city of Detroit, you know, we want to ensure that the residents of Detroit, and minority developers especially get to be a part of the rebuilding. And so this is a program that helps support emerging minority developers get the technical assistance that they need to be able to build kind of their book of business. As well as get connected to mentors, and then you know, capital to be able to execute on projects. And this program has been so successful here in Detroit, we've now actually scaled it to other cities. And so we launched Equitable Development Initiative in Washington, DC, I think, last year, and there are a couple of other cities where this is planned to expand to and so it's just been really great to be able to look up and see how Capital Impact Partners is now, working with more minority developers that are working in the neighborhoods, and being able to employ individuals from those neighborhoods to be a part of this rebuilding

E

Ed Clemente 20:35

You don't necessarily have to I don't want to spot on this, but if people wanted to know about all these things, do you recommend going to your just JPMorgan, you know, website, or would you? Yeah, how would you tell people if they heard this podcast, what they should do.

S

September Hargrove 20:50

I would say, you know, Google, JPMorgan Chase Corporate Responsibility, and then they'll take you to a page and there's a whole Detroit kind of micro-page within our corporate responsibility site. And it really tracks our progress over the last seven years of the different investments that we've made, our partners as well as spotlights on some of the individuals and entrepreneurs that have directly benefited from our investment here in the city.

E

Ed Clemente 21:12

You're obviously a good ambassador for Detroit as well as JPMorgan Chase, too. So congratulations. The last question is, I forgot to ask how long have you lived? Now, did you do? How many years?

S

September Hargrove 21:29

I moved here in March of 2019? So not very long.



Ed Clemente 21:33

So it's question I don't know. What do you like best so far about moving to Michigan.



September Hargrove 21:38

So I love being outdoors during the Michigan spring and summer, I will say that you all have some of the most beautiful parks. We often my husband and my son, you know, we will go to a different Metro Park on the weekends or even just sit in the backyard, and really take advantage of you know, this time-limited, good weather season that you all have here in Michigan.



Ed Clemente 22:02

You've lived around the country, it was in New Orleans, California, Washington, DC. I don't know where else you've lived, but (New York and Boston) but yeah, Washington. Yeah. So you've had quite a great opportunity to really do some comparison for us as well. I at this point, I mean, if there's anything else you want to add, if not, want to thank you again September Hargrove, Vice President Detroit Program Officer at JPMorgan Chase and Company. Thanks again September for doing the show today.



September Hargrove 22:34

Yeah, no it was it's my pleasure. Thank you so much for having me Ed.



Announcer 22:38

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