

# Ultimate Wealth Builders

## Maynard Jackson: Creating A Bully Pulpit For Black Business

THIS BOLD POLITICIAN USED HIS CITY HALL OFFICE TO CREATE BLACK MILLIONAIRES

By Derek T. Dingle

he audacity of Maynard Holbrook Jackson was apparent from one of his first acts as mayor of Atlanta. In 1974, Jackson told the city's business leaders he was going to expand Hartsfield Airport into an international hub. One of his requirements, however, was that 25% of all contracts for the \$450 million project be set aside for minority firms. His new policy led to a two-year fight in which opponents tried to persuade the governor and state legislature to yank the airport expansion project from the Jackson administration. By 1976, Jackson had prevailed with a modified version of his plan as well as a commitment from corporations to engage in joint ventures with minority firms. His action boosted the percentage of contracts to minorities from less than 1% in 1973 to roughly 39% by 1978 and produced three times more general contractors than any other U.S. city.

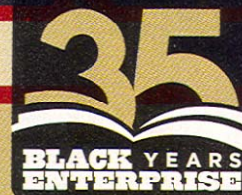
No other public official, black or white, created more African American millionaires than Jackson. As mayor of Atlanta during the 1970s and again in the '90s, he used his office to level the playing field for African American entrepreneurs and, as a result, bolstered the city's black middle class. He was largely responsible for catapulting a number of black companies to the ranks of the **BE 100s**. Firms such as The Gourmet Companies (No. 21 on the **BE INDUSTRIAL/SERVICE 100** list with \$169 million in sales) and H. J. Russell & Co. (No. 12 on the **BE INDUSTRIAL/SERVICE 100** list with \$302.99 million in sales) have been mainstays on our rankings ever since. "Jackson was like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. when it came to ensuring African Americans got a chance to participate in the nation's economic marketplace," says Herman Russell, chairman and CEO of the nation's largest black-owned construction company.

Jackson established a national model for creating access to contracts for black businesses that was emulated by mayors in other major cities like Detroit, Los Angeles, Boston, and Chicago. From friends and foes alike, he is considered one of the godfathers of affirmative action.

Throughout his tenure, Jackson remade Atlanta into an international city and one of the nation's economic leaders. During the mid-1970s, he gained approval and funding for the expansion of Hartsfield Airport and the development of Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transportation, which were considered the twin engines of Atlanta's astounding growth over the next two decades. In fact, Jackson's set-aside policies pushed the Federal Aviation Administration to get minority contractors involved in other airport projects. Jackson also involved black entrepreneurs in every major bond financing for the city of Atlanta. And when he brought the 1996 Summer Olympics to the city, he was just as vigilant in ensuring minority businesses received a significant share of contracts. From 1992 to 1994, the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games awarded minority suppliers \$10.7 million of the \$23.9 million in contracts to architects and engineers. Black companies—from construction firms to apparel manufacturers—benefited hugely from Olympics activity.

Jackson was an entrepreneur in his own right. In 1987, he launched Jackson Securities L.L.C. (No. 7 on the **BE INVESTMENT BANKS** list with \$44.05 billion in total managed issues). He used his strategic skills and political muscle to land multimillion-dollar contracts and build his enterprise into one of the nation's largest black investment banks. In 1994, Jackson, along with his daughter Brooke Jackson Edmond and food industry veteran Daniel Halpern, formed Jackmont Hospitality Inc., an Atlanta-based food services company.

Jackson's legacy includes a long list of political and business protégés, such as Atlanta's current mayor, Shirley Franklin, who served in his administration; Reuben McDaniel, CEO of Jackson Securities; and scores of financial professionals he mentored through the National Association of Securities Professionals, the organization he helped create in the 1980s. As a tribute to his contributions, the airport that he helped transform—which in many ways can be viewed as a monument to black business development—now bears his name. **BE**



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