

The Future of Business in Pittsburgh

August 2021

Self-Driving Startup Aurora Partners with Toyota & Denso, Plans to Enter Market in 2023

Pittsburgh-headquartered self-driving vehicle technology company Aurora has announced that it plans to go public at a \$13 billion valuation, helping to set the stage for a planned entry into the commercial market in late 2023. Aurora will be listed on Nasdaq through a merger with Reinvent Technology Partners Y, a special purpose acquisition company headed up by LinkedIn co-founder Reid Hoffman and Zynga founder Mark Pincus.



Aurora turns Toyotas and Peterbilt trucks into autonomous vehicles

Aurora's first venture into the market is expected to be a partnership with PACCAR to automate Kenworth and Peterbilt heavy-duty trucks, but it also has goals in the ride-hailing industry. In February of 2021 Aurora announced a "long-term, global, and strategic collaboration" with Japan-based Toyota and Denso. Aurora plans to design, build, and begin testing a fleet of autonomous Toyota Sienna vehicles in 2021, and expects to launch them on ride-hailing networks at a later date. Together these companies desire to enter and lead the driverless ride-sharing market.

"Toyota is dedicated to creating and realizing mobility for all by focusing on technology that will move people safely and responsibly, a vision Aurora shares with us," said Keiji Yamamoto, Operating Officer of Toyota. By combining our expertise and know-how in vehicle control systems, mass-production, Connected Car technology, and our advanced safety support systems with Aurora's industry-leading approach to self-driving technology, we aim to commercialize and deliver safe, high-quality, and affordable autonomous ride-sharing vehicles and services."

Aurora was founded in 2017 by a team of three which included the former chief technology officer of Google's self-driving team, the former program manager of Tesla Autopilot, and a former lead of Uber's self-driving initiative. Aurora became the first company formally authorized to test their autonomous vehicles on public roads in Pennsylvania in 2018. In 2020, Aurora acquired Uber's self-driving car unit, which itself was Pittsburgh-based and had previously received investment from Denso, Toyota, and SoftBank's Vision Fund.

Film and Television Industry “Thriving” in Pittsburgh

While the film and television industry is most often associated with Los Angeles, there’s a reason Pittsburgh has been referred to as “Hollywood East”. According to VisitPittsburgh, Pittsburgh is home to the largest sound stage outside Los Angeles and New York. The craft has been “thriving” locally according to the Pennsylvania Film Industry Association, an organization focused on promoting the economic growth surrounding Pennsylvania film and television production.



This popular view of the Pittsburgh skyline has been featured in numerous films

Noteworthy actors that have filmed in Pittsburgh in recent years include Emma Watson (*The Perks of Being a Wallflower*), Will Smith (*Concussion*), Matt Damon (*Promised Land*), Tom Cruise (*Jack Reacher*), Viola Davis and Chadwick Boseman (*Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*), Jason Momoa (*Sweet Girl*), Denzel Washington (*Fences*), Tom Hanks (*A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood*), and many more. The highest-grossing movie filmed in Pittsburgh was the 2012 Batman film *The Dark Knight Rises*, which took in over a billion dollars globally.

Pittsburgh's film history goes far back, with the city being home to the world's first theater "devoted exclusively to exhibition of moving picture spectacles". Warner Bros. can also trace roots to the city, with the original Warner brothers opening their first theater in nearby New Castle, Pennsylvania in 1903 and starting their film distribution company in Pittsburgh in 1904. The George Romero film *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) forever changed the horror film genre and introduced the world to the modern zombie.

As of summer 2021, multiple films and television shows are currently filming in Pittsburgh including the television series “A League of Their Own” (based on the 1992 Tom Hanks baseball movie of the same name), the Jeff Daniels television series “Rust”, and the Billy Porter film *What If?*.

The city is also home to the Pittsburgh Japanese Film Festival, which features new and classic films coming out of Japan's “innovative and prolific film industry.”

Pittsburgh Business News and Updates

- Son of Pittsburgh native makes Olympic debut for Japan (<https://jewishchronicle.timesofisrael.com/pittsburgh-expat-now-an-olympian-dad-in-japan/>)
- Google's former self-driving car project Waymo opens offices in Pittsburgh (<https://techcrunch.com/2021/07/22/waymo-to-open-offices-in-pittsburgh-an-av-tech-hub/>)
- Redevelopment project begins to turn former steel mill into tech hub (<https://www.post-gazette.com/local/north/2021/07/15/Redevelopment-on-former-Etna-steel-mill-technology-tech-hub/stories/202107150150>)
- Engineering simulation software company Ansys named to "Best Workplaces for Innovators" list (<https://www.ansys.com/news-center/press-releases/03-09-21-ansys-named-fast-companys-annual-list-worlds-most-innovative-companies-2021>)
- Pittsburgh has the most diverse tech market in North America according to "Scoring Tech Talent Report" (<https://nextpittsburgh.com/latest-news/pittsburgh-has-the-most-diverse-tech-market-in-north-america-says-report/>)



About Ryan

Ryan O'Shea is a JETRO Investment Advisor focused on connecting Japanese companies to opportunities in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He is the host of Future Grind, a podcast that explores the ethics and impact of emerging science and technology. In 2017, Ryan co-founded an artificial intelligence startup that was named a Top 10 team in the IBM Watson AI XPRIZE. Ryan has represented NASA and CalTech's Jet Propulsion Laboratory as a Solar System Ambassador and serves both as a World Economic Forum Global Shaper and an ambassador for Pittsburgh AI. He is a graduate of the University of Pittsburgh & serves on the boards of multiple non-profit organizations. He can be reached at Ryan@futuregrind.org.