

BCU Awarded MEDC Grant to Position Battle Creek for Drones, Missile Defense

October 3, 2018

BATTLE CREEK, Mich. – In September, Battle Creek Unlimited (BCU) was awarded a Defense Industry Growth Area Grant for \$150,000 by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC). The grant is part of the Michigan Defense Center's Protect & Grow Initiative, which seeks to grow the state's defense sector.

BCU will use the grant money to assess Battle Creek's existing aerospace infrastructure and position the city to attract investment from companies developing unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), more commonly referred to as drones. Funds will also be used to identify business opportunities for local companies if/when Battle Creek is designated as the site for the proposed missile defense site.

The Defense Industry Growth Area Grant is intended to expand and grow key defense and homeland security sectors in Michigan, including 3D printing, aerospace, advanced manufacturing, autonomous aerial systems, autonomous ground systems, cybersecurity and robotics. The grant is for a period of one year beginning September 30.

BCU adopted a new five-year strategic plan in August. The plan identifies several priority growth sectors, including Aviation & Defense. The plan seeks to leverage Battle Creek's existing assets, such as the WK Kellogg Airport, which has more than 250 acres of land with runway access available for development.

The Fort Custer Training Center is one of three sites being considered for the Ground-based Midcourse Defense (GMD) installation. A total of 44 Ground-based Interceptors have already been installed at Fort Greely, Alaska, and Vandenberg Air Force Base, California.

Joe Sobieralski, President & CEO of BCU, remarked, "Battle Creek is hitting this at exactly the right moment. The Defense Industry Growth Area Grant aligns perfectly with BCU's newly adopted strategic plan and we are excited to partner with the MEDC on this effort. We believe that autonomous aerial vehicles are the future of the aerospace industry and Battle Creek has the right assets in place to attract companies to the region." Mr. Sobieralski added that "if Fort Custer is chosen for the missile defense site, there will be significant demand for business services. BCU is committed to helping Battle Creek companies take full advantage of this opportunity."

"We are very pleased that BCU submitted and were awarded an Emerging Growth Industry Grant," said Sean Carlson, Executive Director of the MEDC's Michigan Defense Center. "Battle Creek Unlimited is home to two significant military assets in our state. Also, Fort Custer is a finalist for a new Department of Defense mission named the East Coast Missile Defense System. Their solid proposal and this grant will help them to continue to grow the defense industry in Michigan."

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ABOUT BATTLE CREEK UNLIMITED

Established in 1972, Battle Creek Unlimited (BCU) is a private, non-profit corporation which serves as the economic development arm for the City of Battle Creek and manages the Fort Custer

Industrial Park. The Fort Custer Industrial Park is home over 80 businesses, including 25 international companies, and employs over 13,000 people. BCU's mission is to build a strong community by driving strategic investment and job creation.

ABOUT MICHIGAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

The Michigan Economic Development Corporation is the state's marketing arm and lead advocate for business development, job awareness and community development with the focus on growing Michigan's economy. For more information on the MEDC and our initiatives, visit www.MichiganBusiness.org. For Pure Michigan® tourism information, your trip begins at www.michigan.org. Join the conversation on: Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn , and Twitter.

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