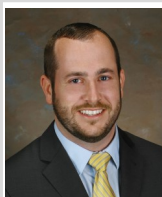


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From the President's Desk

By Joe Sobieralski
President & CEO

BCU hosted its annual Economic Outlook on February 18, at the Kellogg Arena in downtown Battle Creek. The event was an opportunity for us to update the community on BCU's recent activities and upcoming projects. This year, more than 320 business and community leaders registered to attend, the most ever for this event.

BCU is about 18 months into its new strategic plan. In that time, 5 new companies have established operations in Battle Creek and 260 new jobs paying more than \$17 per hour have been created. In that same period, more than \$66.8 million in capital investments have been announced. BCU has received \$4.5 million in grant dollars and helped bring in more than \$12.9 million in funding from the MEDC. To date, BCU has awarded over \$1.5 million dollars to projects, with more to come.

At this year's event, I was excited to announce several big projects:

- BCU purchased the former Kmart property on Capital Avenue downtown. BCU's plan is to demolish the building in order to reduce blight and prepare the site for future investment.
- Hollander Development will construct 80 new affordable apartments downtown. A new 7-story building will be built on the site of the former Shrank's Cafeteria. In addition, the developer will renovate the building at 17 W. Michigan Avenue, converting the top floors into apartments.
- BCU is working with Chicago-based real estate developer on a large cannabis development in the Fort Custer Industrial Park. The preliminary design calls for several large buildings totaling more than 1 million square feet of space which will accommodate multiple users. The development will provide facilities custom built for cannabis growers, processors, testing facilities, and logistics providers.

See "President's Desk" on page 4

The U.S. Census Begins in March

The U.S. Census Bureau is required by law to conduct a full count of the U.S. population every 10 years. This includes everyone living in the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and five U.S. territories (Puerto Rico, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands). In mid-March, the Census Bureau will begin mailing out the 2020 Census notices to households across the country.

The census is used to determine how much funding local communities receive for key public services as well as how many seats each state gets in Congress. State and local officials also use census data to draw boundaries for congressional, state legislative, and school districts.

This data will be used over the next 10 years to help determine where to build new schools, firehouses, highways, and roads. The results of the 2020 Census impact more than \$675 billion in annual federal funding for programs like Medicaid, Head Start, grants for public transportation, school lunch programs, mental health services, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Business owners rely on census numbers to make decisions, such as

where to open new stores, restaurants, factories, offices, where to expand operations, where to recruit employees, and which products and services to offer.

Without accurate responses, Battle Creek could lose out on millions of dollars in vital federal funding.

The 2020 Census will be mailed to all households nationwide, starting on March 12. April 1 is Census Day: by then, all households should have received a notice to participate in the 2020 Census.

The census can be completed in three ways: online, by phone, or by mail. All responses are confidential and will not be shared with law enforcement. When completing the census, respondents will report where they live as of April 1, 2020.

The census counts anyone living in the U.S.: citizens, permanent residents, and foreign nationals living here for work or study. From May through July, census takers will begin visiting homes that have not responded to the 2020 Census to help make sure everyone is counted.

For more information, visit www.2020census.gov.

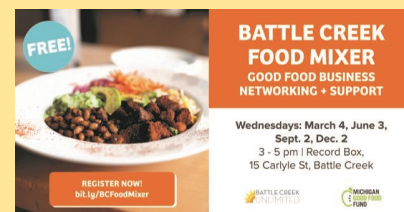
SAVE THE DATE: 2020 Battle Creek Food Mixers

BCU and the Michigan Good Food Fund will hold a series of four networking events in 2020. These events are open to food entrepreneurs interested in learning more about real estate, kitchen space, food processing, marketing and financing. Local and regional business support organizations will be on hand to answer questions and talk about their services.

These networking events are free but advance registration is required. The mixers will be held in downtown Battle Creek at the Record Box (15 Carlyle

Street). The first event will be held on Wednesday, March 4, 3-5 p.m. Subsequent events are scheduled for June 3, September 2 and December 2.

To register, visit bit.ly/BCFoodMixer



BCU Announces Two New Board Members

BCU is pleased to announce the appointment of two new members to its Board of Directors.

Joining the Board of Directors are Dr. Adrien Bennings and Andrew (Drew) Schweitzer. "Both new Board members will bring new talent and expertise to the table. We are very fortunate to have them by our side as we continue to work together with local partners and stakeholders to strengthen our community," said Joe Sobieralski, President & CEO of BCU.

Dr. Adrien Bennings is the President of Kellogg Community College (KCC). Dr. Bennings joined KCC on January 6, 2020, after a national search. Dr. Bennings previously was the Vice President for Finance and

Administration at Clovis Community College in Clovis, New Mexico. Dr. Bennings earned a Ph.D. in Higher Education from Texas Tech University, a Master of Business Administration from Wayland Baptist University, and a Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Development from Texas A&M University.

Drew Schweitzer is the President and CEO of Schweitzer, Inc., a local construction company that was founded in 1962. Mr. Schweitzer has over 25 years of experience in the construction industry and holds a Bachelor of Science in Building and Construction Management from Michigan State University. In addition to his new duties on the BCU Board of Directors, Mr. Schweitzer is the Chair of the

KCC Foundation and is on the Binder Park Zoo Board of Directors.

The BCU Board of Directors is comprised of 15 community partners and stakeholders who provide governance and guidance to support BCU. BCU's mission is to build a strong community by driving strategic investment and job creation. BCU's vision is to engage the community to meet the opportunities and challenges of the future. Working together with our partners, BCU has been able to make a significant positive impact on Battle Creek over the years and will continue to do so in the future with the continued vision and support of our dedicated Board of Directors.

Lori Schroll Retires

At the end of December, BCU said goodbye to longtime employee Lori Schroll. Lori grew up in Battle Creek and joined BCU as the receptionist in 1979. At the time, BCU was still in the early stages of developing the Fort Custer Industrial Park. Over the years, Lori's role evolved and in 2002, she was promoted to Controller. For 17 years, she was responsible for maintaining BCU's financial records and reporting. BCU congratulates Lori on a successful career and appreciates her four decades of dedicated service. We wish her all the best in retirement.



SAVE THE DATE: Fort Custer Spring Mixer - Wednesday, March 11

BCU, Michigan Works! Southwest, and Goodwill Industries will hold the 3rd annual Fort Custer Industrial Park Spring Mixer on Wednesday, March 11. The event is open to all companies with operations in the Fort Custer Industrial Park. The event will be hosted at Rosler Metal Finishing (1551 Denso Road) from 4:00 – 7:00 p.m. Come join us for this networking event and enjoy food, drinks and a YETI cooler giveaway! The event is free but advance registration is requested. To register, visit [SpringMixerBC.eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/spring-mixer-2020-tickets-111111111111)

BCU Hosts BCPS Junior Achievement Students

On Wednesday, February 19, BCU hosted five students from Battle Creek Central High School's Junior Achievement Program. BCU President & CEO Joe Sobieralski explained BCU's mission and provided an overview of recent activities. Individual staff introduced themselves, talked about their roles at BCU and how they got into economic development. The group also toured the facilities and learned about BCU's history. Vice Presidents Bridgette Jones and Robert Corder conducted a mock interview exercise for the students to help prepare them for future job interviews. The students, all sophomores, are part of BCCHS's Business Academy.



GVSU Opens Battle Creek Regional Outreach Center

On January 16, Grand Valley State University's (GVSU) Battle Creek Regional Outreach Center held its open house that included area residents, community members, students, and business owners in attendance. The Outreach Center was made possible by a grant awarded last year to GVSU by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

The Outreach Center supports career exploration and provides individualized educational planning assistance to facilitate education goal attainment. The Center also supports the educational goals of K-12 students, transfer students, and adults in the Battle Creek community. Some of the resources and support the Outreach Center provides include: college and career exploration, college admission application and essay support, college advising, assistance with the FAFSA student

aid application, scholarship application/essay support, and education events.

Walk-ins are welcome, and the Outreach Center is open Monday through Friday, 8:00–5:00 p.m. The Outreach Center is located in downtown Battle Creek at 8 W. Michigan Avenue.

GVSU, established in 1960, is a public liberal arts universality based in Allendale, Michigan. GVSU has over 300 areas of study with 24,033 total students and has an employment rating of 95 percent for its students. Join us in welcoming the GVSU Outreach Center to the Battle Creek community.



**GRAND VALLEY
STATE UNIVERSITY**

Company Spotlight: Cask & Kettle

BCU recently spoke with Pete Borozan, CEO of Cask & Kettle, a beverage start-up company based in downtown Battle Creek. The company makes hot craft cocktails for home brewing systems like Keurig with flavors like Irish Coffee, Spiked Dry Cider, Hot Blonde Coffee, and Mexican Coffee.

Founded in 2017, Cask & Kettle was spun out of JPG Resources, a food industry consulting firm also in Battle Creek. Pete explained that the idea for the product came after a long meeting when one of the participants said they could use a cup of coffee. Another person chimed in that they would like an Irish coffee.

The group immediately got to thinking about the potential for a hot cocktail that could be made instantly in a one-demand coffee maker. As experienced food executives, they

recognized just how big their idea could be. The team incorporated in late 2017 and spent the next year perfecting the concept. Pete said they spent a lot of time developing the flavor profile of the coffee so that it has notes of smoke, caramel, and vanilla.

Each Cask & Kettle pod includes the liquid concentrate and alcohol. To serve, you just drop the pod into the home brew system. With the press of a button, your hot cocktail is ready to drink.

Pete said that sales have been strong as consumers discover the product. Cask & Kettle products are currently being sold in 10 states, with Florida to be added in April. Because each state has different regulations, Pete noted that selling a cocktail product is very different from selling frozen pizza or

cookies. Locally, Cask & Kettle is available at Mega-Bev. He said the company is developing relationships with several big-box retailers and hopes to be in Meijer stores sometime this year. The team has an aggressive social media strategy as well.

Pete noted that local sourcing is a priority for Cask & Kettle. The alcohol is produced by Temperance Distilling in Temperance, Michigan. The Spiked Dry Cider uses St. Julian apple cider. The company also uses a local partner for its packaging.

To learn more about Cask & Kettle, visit www.caskandkettleusa.com



Downtown Update

Take a windshield tour down Michigan Avenue and it's hard to miss the orange cones, temporary fencing, and construction crews. These signal continued progress – and an uptick in downtown Battle Creek redevelopment. Several previously announced, long-awaited projects have finally begun, including New Holland Brewing. Other developments, like The Milton, progress toward completion.

Jay Andrew Development Co., owners of 103 W. Michigan Avenue, are the most recent recipient of the Real Estate Improvement Fund – a program in downtown Battle Creek. Courtesy of a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, awarded funds are committed to fixed assets and other building improvements. Jay Andrew Development Co. has taken a phased approach, beginning with light demo and facility cleanout. The roof, which needs repairing, is a priority. Further plans include a white box for the ground floor, which can be subdivided and tailored for prospective commercial tenants. The second-floor proposal makes way for a variety of apartments, some of which will be affordable units.

New Holland Brewing has started the buildout at its upcoming location at 64 W. Michigan Avenue, after a final State grant was awarded. New Holland's plans for its new Battle Creek home continue to grow. With a total project investment of \$5 million, New Holland will improve over 13,500 square feet of space and support an anticipated 50 new jobs.

Another downtown brewery, Handmap Brewing, is also closer to opening. Handmap, on the first floor of the Record Box, has invested over a half million dollars, improved 6,000 square feet and adding 12 jobs. One floor up, Collab BC has opened a coworking office space for entrepreneurs, consultants, freelancers, and others. Amenities include desk space, conference rooms, private call rooms, a studio, kitchen space, and printers/scanners. The top floor Record Box Loft is an event space hosting holiday parties, weddings, networking mixers, and other gatherings. The venue has been wildly popular in its early months, with some folks already booking events for 2021. Total investment for revitalizing the Record Box is north of \$2 million.

Real Estate Improvement Fund activities are underway on the opposite end of downtown, too. LKV Ventures, which is investing over \$600,000 to rehabilitate 70 E. Michigan Avenue, is making way for storefront retail with multiple apartments on the second and third floors – including affordable units. Nearby, JPG Resources has upgraded its fire suppression system and nears completion on the buildout for Café Rica's new home, which will celebrated its grand opening February 29. All told, the JPG Resources-Café Rica project has generated over a half million dollars in investment and will create 35 jobs.

Elsewhere downtown, Rafaynee Southern Cuisine received a \$50,000 grant from BCU for the buildout of its kitchen. The new equipment enables Rafaynee to expand its menu. Additionally, Umami Ramen (a recipient of the Real Estate Improvement Fund) progresses on its \$805,000 renovation of 215 W. Michigan Avenue. Umami Ramen's relocation will improve 3,000 square feet, support 18 jobs and potential for expanded hours of operations.

BC Cargo Now Accepting Applications

The City of Battle Creek is now accepting applications for BC Cargo's 2020 season.

BC Cargo is a seasonal pop-up shop marketplace. It was established in 2018 by the City's Small Business Development team as a creative and affordable way to launch small businesses in downtown Battle Creek. It is comprised of seven recycled shipping

containers and two pop up carts, located at 35 W. Hamblin Avenue.

The BC Cargo merchant application is a competitive process. Selections will be made in March, with the season running from May through October.

BC Cargo is open to a variety of retail product and food service establishments. Previous

seasons included clothing boutiques, restaurants, coffee shops, collaboratives, design memorabilia, and souvenir shops.

To learn more or to apply, visit bccargo.org or contact the Battle Creek Small Business Development Team at smallbusinessinfo@battlecreekmi.gov.

Career Academy Volunteers Needed: March 23-24

Battle Creek Central High School is in need of volunteers who can attend Project-Based Learning Presentations on Monday, March 23, and Tuesday, March 24.

BCCHS 9th grade students are working on projects to redesign a package to be more space efficient and environmentally friendly. Some students will focus more on space efficiency, while others focus more on environmental impact through design efforts. Volunteers are needed to participate as authentic audience members and evaluate student

presentations and provide constructive feedback. All backgrounds are welcome but professionals with engineering, package design, and environmental efficiency experience are especially needed.

Use this link to register and select available times: <https://bit.ly/2Tlp6ex>. For more information, contact Sarah Kerry, Community Engagement Specialist at Goodwill Industries, at 269-788-6500 x2028 or via email at skerry@goodwillcmh.org.

Out and About



BCU's Vice President for Operations Bridgette Jones attended a luncheon in December hosted by the local chapter of the National Public Works Association (NPA). The NPA recognized the walking path along Hill Brady Road with an award for Project of the Year. Bridgette joined representatives from the City's Department of Public Works.



BCU welcomed representatives from UACJ's corporate office in Japan to Battle Creek in December. From left: Mitch Yoshida, John Sanford, Joe Sobieralski, Alan Fujii and Kimitoshi Inagaki.

Contact Us

Battle Creek Unlimited (BCU) is focused on investment generation and job creation in Battle Creek, Michigan. BCU works closely with community partners to attract new companies to the Battle Creek region while also supporting the growth of existing companies. BCU was established in 1972 to develop the Fort Custer Industrial Park (FCIP), the largest industrial park in Michigan. Today the FCIP is home to over 80 companies, including 25 international organizations, which collectively employ more than 13,000 people. FCIP covers more than 3,000 acres, with over 1,000 acres available for development, and offers convenient access to rail, air cargo, interstate, and international trade highways as well as an international Port of Entry and a Foreign-Trade Zone.

Battle Creek Unlimited

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BCUNewsletter@bcunlimited.org

Follow BCU online:



President's Desk ...cont'd

- BCU is finalizing the sale of 85 acres to Industrial Partners USA, LLC. The property is just off I-94 at Exit 92. The developers plan to build three large spec buildings, each up to 250,000 square feet. The buildings will have 32' ceilings, multiple truck docks, and be able to accommodate multiple tenants. The developers plan to break ground this year and have the first building ready in 2021.

Jim Robey of the W.E. Upjohn Institute shared some facts and figures about the current state of the economy. GDP continues to grow but employment is slowing. Michigan has seen some declines in key sectors like retail and healthcare, but vehicle sales remain strong. Locally, the Battle Creek area is nearly at full employment, but the local labor participation rate is below the state and national averages. Battle Creek's manufacturing sector is very strong and a greater proportion of the labor force in Battle Creek is employed than in the past. Jim noted that housing remains a challenge for the region; new home construction is flat but prices are rising.

Economic development consultant Janet Ady shared her insights on BCU's recent efforts and the way site selection has changed over the last 20 years. She emphasized that land in an industrial park is no longer enough to attract new investment: today companies are looking for communities which have an available workforce, resources in place to train those people, and strategies for retaining those workers and attracting new ones. More importantly, companies look for communities with a variety of housing options, good schools, and entertainment amenities. She applauded BCU's five-year strategic plan, which was adopted in 2018. Janet said that BCU's focus on community development, especially in the downtown corridor, is exactly what was needed. She highlighted the need for broad community support, especially from employers who have great latitude to make themselves the employer of choice.

Special thanks go out to our sponsors, including Consumers Energy; MotorShop Electrical Construction Co.; Battle Creek Community Foundation; Duncan Aviation; Gallagher Uniform; ITC Holdings; Kellogg's; Kreis, Enderle, Hudgins & Borsos, PC; Kellogg Community College; Mumford, Schubel, Macfarlane & Barnett, PLLC; Schweitzer, Inc.; Semco Energy; SME; Varnum LLP; Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 333; and Miller Foundation. We appreciate their generous support which makes this event possible.

To watch the economic outlook online or download the presentations, visit: <https://bit.ly/2PFzheV>

