



June 29, 2020

An Open Letter from Battle Creek Unlimited:

Re: Commitment to Equity, Inclusion, and Policy Change

Systematic inequities and racism are realities that exist in our society. We hear, see, and empathize with the Black Community's anger and pain. As protests, conversations, and policy changes have elevated to an emotional turning point in our country surrounding the realities that exist in our Communities of Colors, particularly in our Black Community, we must do more. We are here to listen, learn, and collectively advance policy change.

In its 50-year history, Battle Creek Unlimited has traditionally been focused on, and known for, its work with large industrial attraction projects. More recently, our strategic plan has called for broader and more comprehensive community-wide economic development beyond just industrial attraction. At the same time, we have been referred to as a supportive leader within our community. We are proud to have a record of diversity and inclusion, and fortunate to partner with many organizations within our community to advance work on equitable outcomes. Economic development organizations such as Battle Creek Unlimited and its leadership have the unique ability, and the responsibility, to not only influence policy, but to lead and advocate for equitable community and economic development outcomes.

Although as an organization we can point to equitable actions, we know we can do more. BCU is committed to advancing racial equity within our own organization, our community, and within the profession of economic development. Outlined below is our commitment to equity, inclusion, and policy change:

- BCU will integrate learning and best practices into our staff professional development activities to advance our knowledge related to diversity, inclusion, and racial equity to impact change.
- BCU already observes Martin Luther King, Jr. as a paid holiday and will also add Juneteenth as a paid holiday for learning, reflection and volunteering at BCU.
- BCU will work to further diversify our Boards and Committees to ensure they are reflective of our community demographics.
- BCU will more intentionally partner with organizations that are led by, or primarily serve our Communities of Color, to ensure that our strategic plan is truly creating an equitable community.
- BCU will expand incentive programs to be more equitable and inclusive for our Communities of Color; this will include expanded outreach to ensure maximum participation.
- BCU will establish an annual paid internship program dedicated to students from our Communities of Color in partnership with the Battle Creek Public Schools Career Academy.

Beyond the points listed above, we will be at multiple community tables listening more than ever, so we can continue to address, evolve, and influence policy changes that will lead to more equitable outcomes for our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Joe Sobieralski", is written over a faint, light blue circular stamp or watermark.

Joe Sobieralski
President & CEO
Battle Creek Unlimited