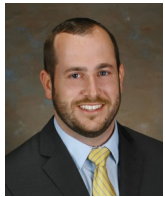


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## From the President's Desk



By Joe Sobieralski  
President & CEO

What a difference a year makes! So much has happened in the past twelve months. Despite the continued pandemic, the BCU team has had an incredibly busy year. We have accomplished a lot and there are loads of good things happening in Battle Creek.

- BCU completed the demolition of the former Kmart on Capital Avenue. The site will be used as greenspace in preparation for future development.
- Industrial Partners USA completed construction on the Watkins Road spec building. It features 270,000 square feet of space with 32' ceilings. The focus now is identifying a company to fill the space.
- BCU completed the sale of land to Viking-Cives in the Fort Custer Industrial Park for their new snowplow facility.
- Work is well underway on the renovation of the McCamly Hotel. The design process is nearly complete. We liquidated all the contents of the facility and have begun interior demolition. Most importantly, we are close to securing all the funding for the project. This includes \$2 million in state appropriations passed by the Michigan Legislature and signed by Gov. Whitmer. More announcements about the hotel will be coming in the new year.
- BCU submitted a grant application to the US Economic Development Agency for the Build Back Better Regional Challenge for the creation of a drone park at the Kellogg Executive Airport. On December 13, we were notified that Battle Creek was not selected for a Phase 1 award. Of 529 applicants, only 60 organizations were chosen for a Phase 1 grant.

See "President's Desk" on Page 4

## Viking-Cives Purchases 40 Acres in Fort Custer Industrial Park

At the end of November, BCU finalized the sale of land to Viking-Cives. BCU has been working with the Georgia-based company since May 2020. It manufactures snowplows and ice control equipment and is part of the Cives Corporation. Its sister company Cives Steel is one of the largest structural steel fabricators in the US.

Viking-Cives chose two parcels along Shiga Drive in the Fort Custer Industrial Park, totaling 40 acres. The company will build a new manufacturing facility, with an expected total investment of \$25 million. The facility will feature 75,000 square feet for manufacturing and 10,000 square feet of office space.

The company expects to employ 91 people within three years. This will be the company's fourth manufacturing facility.

Viking-Cives also considered a site in Kalamazoo, as well as sites in Indiana and Ontario. The company received over \$755,000 in performance-based grants from the Michigan Business Development Program. Battle Creek provided a 50% industrial facility tax abatement. The company expects to break ground in the spring.

BCU is excited to welcome Viking-Cives to Battle Creek and looks forward to working with them for many years to come.

## WMU Dedicates Expanded College of Aviation

On Friday, September 17, Western Michigan University officially dedicated the expanded College of Aviation, located at the Battle Creek Executive Airport. The \$20 million Aviation Education Center (AEC) has been in the works for more than a decade and significantly increases educational opportunities for WMU's aviation students. The ceremony included remarks from Congressman Fred Upton, Michigan State Representative Jim Haadsma, WMU Trustee Lynn Chen-Zhang, and College of Aviation Dean Emeritus Capt. Dave Powell.

The new facility doubles the number of students it can accommodate. Students now have access to 11 classrooms, six advanced flight simulators, larger gathering areas, and 25 new pilot briefing rooms. The briefing rooms are one of Capt. Powell's favorite features and provide students the opportunity to interact with flight instructors in a private, one-on-one setting. The old building had only six. The facility also includes a new paint lab, making it one of the few

colleges in the country where students can experience the entire process of painting an aircraft.

The entire facility was built with aviation in mind, with aviation details incorporated into the building's design. The light fixtures are shaped like propellers. The building does not have hallways; it has concourses. It features floor to ceiling windows that look directly onto the airport tarmac. The impressive space will enable the university to better prepare its students for their future careers.



WMU's new Aviation Education Center

See WMU on page 2

## BCU Competes in 2021 CIR Kickball Classic

In September, BCU participated in the annual Kickball Classic, organized by Community Inclusive Recreation (CIR). The event, which was cancelled last year, was held at Bailey Park. The tournament provides an opportunity for people with physical and mental disabilities to compete on teams sponsored and staffed by area businesses and organizations.

CIR was established by Linda Linke in 1994 in tribute to her brother-in-law Leonard, who had Down's Syndrome. Linda created CIR in response to a lack of recreational activities for people like Leonard. CIR believes that every person should be valued, respected, and accepted, and that everyone has a gift to offer

the community and deserves the right to fully participate.

The event pairs Allstar with teams in the competition. The CIR Allstars included wheelchair users, visually impaired and hearing-impaired players, players with autism, and those players who might have an intellectual or developmental. All proceeds from the event support CIR programs.

Our team this year was comprised of people from BCU, Ministry Designs, and Plumeria Botanical Boutique. Twelve teams in total took part in this year's event, with the Battle Creek Metropolitan Area Moustache Society

(BCMAMS) team defeating Lakeview Ford's team in the final.

BCU had a great time, and is already thinking ahead and recruiting for its 2022 team.



*BCU's 2021 Kickball Classic Team*

## John Hughes joins BCU Team

BCU is pleased to announce the addition of John Hughes to its team. John will further BCU's efforts in business retention, expansion, and workforce development. As an economic development specialist, John will collaborate alongside the BCU team as it continues to generate jobs and investment in Battle Creek.

John brings experience in the industrial and commercial real estate industries. Most recently, John was an EQS manager and lead trainer for GCI located in

Coldwater. Prior to that, he worked as a commercial sales advisor for Waterland Properties where he gained local market knowledge working closely with businesses and the community.

John is currently furthering his education in business management at Kellogg Community College.



## Aviation Director Larry Bowron Retires after 21 Years

At the end of October, Larry Bowron retired as the Aviation Director for the Battle Creek Executive Airport (BTL). Before coming to Battle Creek in 2000, Larry spent eight years in Arizona as the Airport Operations Manager for the City of Scottsdale. BTL is part of the Battle Creek Tax Increment Finance Authority (BCTIFA) and Larry worked closely with BCU to help grow the airport. BCU congratulates Larry on his retirement and thanks him for more than two decades of service.

The City named Phil Kroll as Assistant Aviation Director. Phil comes to Battle Creek after five years with the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority and almost four years with the Chicago Department of Aviation. Phil completed his BA in Aviation Management at WMU's College of Aviation and his Master's degree in Aviation Management from Purdue University. We are excited to welcome Phil back to Battle Creek and look forward to working with him.

## Japan Update Program

On Thursday, October 28, BCU partnered with the Battle Creek Japan Club for a special briefing for Japanese companies doing business in Battle Creek. Despite the ongoing pandemic, almost two dozen people participated in-person or online via Zoom.

Mayor Mark Behnke delivered opening remarks and thanked the Japanese companies for their continued commitment to Battle Creek. Assistant City Manager Ted Dearing made a presentation about city government and talked about the services provided by the various city departments. BCU President & CEO Joe Sobieralski gave an update on BCU's activities over the past year and shared his outlook for 2022. Closing remarks were made by the Consul General of Japan in Detroit Yusuke Shindo, who expressed his appreciation for

all that BCU and the City of Battle Creek have done to make Japanese companies feel at home here. The program wrapped up with a brief Q&A session, followed by time for networking. The Japanese executives were eager to meet Mayor Behnke and Consul General Shindo and exchange business cards.



*Battle Creek Mayor Mark Behnke, Consul General Yusuke Shindo, and other guests enjoy dinner after the Japan Update program in Battle Creek.*

## WMU cont'd from page 1

WMU's College of Aviation is the third largest collegiate aviation program in the nation and the only program to have partnerships with United Airlines' Aviate, Delta's Propel, and AAR's EAGLE Career Pathway Program. These programs provide students with a clear path to a career through training and mentorship. All of this at a time when the aviation sector is facing an alarming shortage of both pilots and mechanics.

Said Capt. Powell, "If you talk to some of our graduates who are now flying for the airlines, they're gushing about how great this is. Everything here is state of the art. We're delivering the most sophisticated flight training of any program in America."



*BCU President & CEO Joe Sobieralski poses with Capt. Powell at the ACE dedication in September.*

## BCU Hosts Virtual Townhall on Childcare

BCU hosted a virtual townhall meeting on Thursday, November 18 to explore solutions to the childcare crisis in Battle Creek.

The city is facing a severe shortage of early childhood workers and is struggling to meet the demand for childcare generated from the city's reopening and the return of many parents to in-person employment. Research shows that the national childcare workforce has shrunk 15% since pre-pandemic times. Roughly 35% of childcare workers were laid off at the beginning of the pandemic. Many local companies are dealing with this reality.

Our community's ability to find, afford, and secure quality childcare stands in the way of many employee's return to work.

Representatives from Pulse (formerly BC Pulse), the Battle Creek Shared Services Alliance (BCSSA), KinderCare, and BCU discussed the current state of childcare in Battle Creek as well as local efforts to address the problem.

Launched in 2012, Pulse is focused on helping employers make positive changes which will improve Battle Creek's early childhood

ecosystem. Pulse's work is made possible by a grant and support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

The BCSSA is an initiative from the Battle Creek Community Foundation which supports local childcare centers. BCSSA provides professional staff development; business services, such as revenue management, payroll services, and business analysis & metrics; centralized enrollment services and wait-list management; and center supports, including interpreter services, behavioral specialists, licensing support and board development.

## Congrats to Capt. Dave Powell on his Retirement

At the recent dedication for the new Aviation Education Center, Capt. Dave Powell announced his retirement as Dean of the College of Aviation. Capt. Powell came to WMU in 2003, after 17 years flying for United Airlines. Before that, he spent 14 years in the U.S. Airforce as a fighter pilot and flight instructor.

During his tenure, Capt. Powell was a tireless promoter of the College of Aviation and helped

propel the school to national prominence. He also served on the BCU Board of Directors and the recent UAV Task Force.

In recognition of his 19 years of service, the WMU College of Aviation inducted Capt. Powell into its Hall of Honor in November.

BCU congratulates Capt. Powell on his retirement and wishes him many happy days on his sailboat.

## Battle Creek Celebrates Japan Ties with Origami Sculptures

Visitors to Battle Creek will notice several new sculptures throughout downtown. These are part of the City's Origami Sculpture Project, a public art initiative which celebrates Battle Creek's decades-long connection with Japan and its sister city, Takasaki.

The exhibit was funded through a \$9,500 grant from the Battle Creek Community Foundation, and \$4,000 from the Small Business Development Organization. Eight sculptures were installed in October, all created by local artists. The

sculptures will be on display for a year.

The public will be asked to vote for their favorite. The Small Business Development Office for the City of Battle Creek will then purchase the winning piece to place on permanent display.

Battle Creek's relationship with Japan has grown since the partnership began in 1984. The city now has the fifth largest Japanese population of Michigan's cities and is home to more than 20 Japanese companies.

## The Milton Opens its Mezzanine to the Public in December

Thanks to a generous donation from Robert and Shirley McFee, the mezzanine at The Milton will be open to the public for the month of December.

The 19-story building opened in 1931 as an office building. At 238.5 feet tall, it is the tallest building in Battle Creek. The interior boasts 115,000 square feet with a 55-foot dome. Despite its grandeur, the building fell into disrepair by the late 1990s. Several attempts to restore the property were unsuccessful until recently.

Developer Mark Harmsen initially got involved in the project as a consultant to one of previous owners. When that company pulled out, Mark took over as the lead developer. BCU, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Battle

Creek Community Foundation (BCCF), the City of Battle Creek, the MEDC, and many other local partners supported the project. In January 2020, the property reopened as The Milton, with 85 market-rate apartments. Two years later, the building is full and has a waiting list for apartments.

Renovation of The Milton included restoring the art deco paintings in the mezzanine. Two artists worked for months to return the space to its original glory. BCCF is working with the developer to manage the mezzanine level and lease the space. Throughout the month of December, it will be open Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday from 11 AM to 2 PM. Visitors will be able to come in and enjoy refreshments and see the restored interior for free.

## Michigan a Top 5 State for FDI

In December, the Global Business Alliance (GBA) released a report which examines the impact of inbound foreign direct investment (FDI) on US job creation in all 50 states. Michigan was recognized as being among the top 5 states for FDI jobs growth in 2021. Michigan was the only state to rank among the top 5 in all three categories:

- #3 for States with the Most FDI-Created Manufacturing Jobs – 202,300 jobs
- #4 for States with the Biggest Concentration of FDI Jobs (as a percentage of total private sector employment) – 8.2%
- #4 for States with the Fastest Growth in FDI-Created Jobs (2016 to 2020) – 33.0% increase

Over the past five years, global companies have invested \$11.8 billion in projects in Michigan, creating 36,400 jobs.

Michigan is home to more than 1,500 foreign companies with more than 5,000 locations statewide. Battle Creek has more than two dozen international companies with operations in the Fort Custer Industrial Park, representing Austria, Canada, Denmark, German, and Japan. Denso, the Japanese Tier-1 automotive parts company, is now the city's largest employer.

The GBA report is available here: <https://bit.ly/3rVMqT4>



## President's Desk...cont'd from Page 1

- In September, Ohio-based Redwood Living Inc. announced the start of a new apartment complex in Battle Creek, south of 94, off M-66 and Glenn Cross Road. The company is building 162 single-story apartment homes, ranging in size from 1,294-1,620 square feet. Monthly rent will start at \$1,699. The first units will be ready for move-in in December.
  - In November, Bronson broke ground on its new Behavioral Health Hospital, to be located at Glenn Cross Road and M-66. Bronson is partnering with Acadia Health on the new \$35 million facility. It will have 96 beds and will provide treatment for those who struggle with mental health disorders such as anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The new facility is expected to open in early 2023.
  - Bright Light Early Care and Education is scheduled to open soon in the historic Sullivan Barn, located at 49 S. Cass Street. Owner Lindsay Potter has leased two floors and will provide care for up to 90 infants and toddlers. December enrollment is full.
- They are now finishing renovations and starting staff training.
- In November, Robert Corder and I made a quick trip to Germany. This was our first business trip in almost two years. We met with one of the German companies in the industrial park which is considering an expansion. Along with the MEDC, we proposed a short-term option which would keep them in Battle Creek for the next five years as well as a long-term solution.
  - We continue to see significant interest in Calhoun County's two mega-sites, especially from automotive electric vehicle (EV) and Lithium-ion battery manufacturers. Calhoun County is home to two of the three largest parcels available for development in Michigan. BCU is working closely with our partners in Marshall and at the MEDC.
- 2021 has certainly been a year to remember. I am looking forward to enjoying the holidays, relaxing, and reflecting.
- On behalf of the BCU staff, I want to wish everyone happy holidays and a terrific New Year!

## Battle Creek Receives \$155,000 Grant for Lead Pipes

In November, the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) announced that the City of Battle Creek will receive a \$155,000 grant to locate lead service lines. The money is part of more than \$2 million in grants awarded under the MI Clean Water plan.

The city will use the funds to purchase a hydro excavator, which will be used to help identify what kind of material water services lines are made of. The city has thousands of lines which are made from a variety of materials, including copper, lead, or galvanized steel pipe. Once the lead lines are identified, then they can be replaced. The city will remove at least 5% of the lead lines each year over the next 20 years. By 2041, all lead service lines should be replaced.

Battle Creek's drinking water is well below the federal cutoff for lead levels, thanks to the city's corrosion control effort. According to Battle Creek Public Works Utility Administrator Perry Hart,

the removal of lead service lines is more precautionary than urgent.

Battle Creek has over 368 miles of water mains located throughout the Battle Creek area. It also has more than 414 miles of sanitary sewer mains in the region, as well as 124 sanitary sewer lift stations. Water for the City of Battle Creek is sourced from a bedrock aquifer. The water is pumped from 22 wells, whose depths range from 100 to 150 feet.

Battle Creek has abundant water and waste water capacity. The city's municipal water system has can produce as much as 30 million gallons per day (MGD), with average daily usage of approximately 10 MGD. Similarly, the city's sewer system can process approximately 30 MGD, with average daily use around 10 MDG.

The City's 2020 Water Quality Report (released in 2021) is available here: <https://bit.ly/3DapMJf>

## BCU Visits Germany



Joe Sobieralski poses with Dr. Ekkehard Kohler, President of Bleistahl, during BCU's recent trip to Germany. Dr. Kohler and his staff gave BCU a tour of their facilities in Wetter and Gelsenkirchen.

## 2022 Economic Outlook

*In 2021, BCU opted not to hold its annual Economic Outlook due to coronavirus pandemic. We are tentatively planning to hold the 2022 Economic Outlook in late February or early March. We hope to be able to hold the event in person. As we move forward, more details will be announced via social media.*

## Contact BCU

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. The 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

[www.bcunlimited.org](http://www.bcunlimited.org)  
4950 W. Dickman Road, Suite 1  
Battle Creek, MI 49037

Tel 269-962-7526

Email comments, questions or suggestions to:  
[BCUNewsletter@bcunlimited.org](mailto:BCUNewsletter@bcunlimited.org)

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