

In this issue...

- From the President's Desk
- Changes to BCU Board of Directors
- BCU Unveils Plan for McCamly Hotel
- Bleistahl, Duncan Aviation Announce Expansions
- BASF Toda America CEO Recognized
- The Milton Honored for Historic Preservation
- In-Person Retention Visits Resume
- BCU Wins MiBiz Award for McCamly Project
- BCU Travels to NYC for MEDC Market Blitz
- Seasonal Events Returning to Downtown
- Road Construction Update: I-94 & I-69
- Watkins Road Upgrades Continue
- Connect Battle Creek Launched
- Planning for the Christmas Parade is Underway

From the President's Desk



By Joe Sobieralski
President & CEO

Spring has sprung and BCU is busier than ever. In April, I had the privilege of delivering an update on economic development in Battle Creek to the Battle Creek Area Chamber of Commerce. Due to COVID-19, this was the Chamber's first in-person event in almost two years. In my presentation, I talked about all the good things which are going on in Battle Creek. Some of the highlights include:

- Viking Cives will soon break ground on its facility in the Fort Custer Industrial Park where they will build snow plows.
- The spec building on Watkins Road is complete and the developer is finalizing terms for a tenant who will lease 150,000 square feet; this will leave 120,000 square feet available.
- Duncan Aviation announced a \$30 million expansion, which will add more than 60 jobs.

See "President's Desk" on Page 4

Changes to BCU Board

BCU is please to announce several changes to the Board of Directors. Current Board Chair John Gallagher will pass the gavel to Erick Stewart. Mr. Gallagher, who joined the BCU board in 1982 and has served as its chair since 2014, will stay on as a regular member. Mr. Stewart joined the BCU board in 2018 and served on the Battle Creek Tax Increment Finance Authority (BCTIFA) board for 16 years.

Toshiya Kawashima, Senior Vice President at DENSO Manufacturing Michigan Inc. (DMMI), and Dr. Paul Watson, Interim President at Kellogg Community College (KCC) will join BCU's Board of Directors. Kevin Carson from DMMI and Dr. Adrien Bennings from KCC have stepped down from their positions on the board.

See "Board Changes" on Page 4

BCU Unveils Plan for McCamly Hotel

In April, BCU officially publicized its plan for the renovation of the former McCamly Plaza Hotel and adjacent McCamly Place downtown. The 265,000-square foot complex is to be completely renovated at a cost of more than \$59 million.

Renovations will include complete upgrades to the mechanical and HVAC systems, and five new elevators. The guest rooms will all be brand new, as well as the lobby, ballroom, and meeting spaces. The hotel will have a new restaurant with a farm-to-table menu, a new bar and beer garden, and new kitchen. The building will also receive new roofs, high efficiency windows, and a refreshed exterior. The facility will offer over 24,000 square feet of modern meeting space of various sizes and configurations. The hotel's 16th floor will feature a cocktail lounge with panoramic views of the city complemented by three meeting spaces that can be configured for one large event.

When complete, the hotel will have 180,000 square feet of space and 239 guest rooms. The renovated hotel will operate as a DoubleTree by Hilton and be managed by 6PM Hospitality Partners. The property is owned by 50 Capital Ave Development Corp., which is owned by BCU. The hotel is expected to reopen in Q3 of 2023.

The 85,000-square foot McCamly Place, which is separate from the hotel, was recently demolished. Plans call for building back approximately 19,745 square feet of new space. Demolition will not include Festival Market Square. It will add outdoor green space to complement the existing Festival Market Square structure, located in the heart of downtown Battle Creek.

The project will include a workforce training/educational component for the anticipated 165 operational jobs.

See "Hotel" on page 4

Bleistahl and Duncan Aviation Announce Expansion Plans

Two local employers recently announced plans for multi million-dollar expansions of their facilities, which will create 130 new jobs.

In early April, Duncan Aviation announced a \$30 million investment at its facility at the Battle Creek Executive Airport. Duncan already has 335,000 square feet of space in Battle Creek and employs 660 people. This new investment will create at least 61 new jobs and add 200,000 square feet of hangar, office, shop, and storage space.

Based in Nebraska, Duncan Aviation maintains and repairs privately-owned jets. In addition to Battle Creek, the company has service facilities in Lincoln, Nebraska and Provo, Utah, as well as dozens of small maintenance centers across the country.

The company began as Kal-Aero Inc.

in 1967, with the current facility built in 1992. Duncan Aviation acquired Kal-Aero in 1998. The facility was most recently expanded in 2017. Duncan's growth at the airport follows major expansions at the WMU College of Aviation and WACO Aircraft in 2021.

Duncan's expansion is being supported with a performance-based grant of \$488,000 from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC). Locally, the City of Battle Creek and the Battle Creek Tax Increment Finance Authority (BCTIFA) will provide up to \$2,500,000 to upgrade the airport apron.

"We feel like this is a home for us and we want to grow here [in Battle Creek]," said Andy Richards, Duncan Aviation's Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer.

See "Expansions" on page 4

BASF Toda America CEO Recognized as a Leader in EV Sector

CRAIN'S 2022
**NOTABLE
LEADERS IN EV**



Vuk Milojkovic
CEO, BASF Toda America

Congratulations to Vuk Milojkovic, CEO of BASF Toda America (BTA), who was recently named a notable leader in the electric vehicle industry by Crain's Detroit.

"The EV market in North America continues to grow due in large part to the advancement in battery technologies. Central to this effort is Vuk and his team at BTA, who are ... operating the largest NA commercial-scale cathode active materials manufacturing facility right here in Battle

Creek," said BTA Site Manager Wir Wong.

Vuk Milojkovic leads a team of about 100 people. They are also responsible for developing next-generation CAM materials in Ohio and establishing world-scale CAM production, supporting the domestic EV battery supply chain. He also implemented measures to improve the use of BASF's manufacturing assets, increasing the production and supply of cathode material by 30 percent.

Kudos to Vuk Milojkovic and everyone on the BTA team for this worthy recognition.

The Milton Receives Governor's Award for Historic Preservation

Each year the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the State Historic Preservation Review Board identify worthy recipients to receive the Governor's Awards for Historic Preservation. The awards recognize property owners who rehabilitate their buildings; developers who transform underutilized historic structures into vital economic assets; and other organizations such as academic institutions, nonprofits, and local governments who strive to preserve Michigan's important historic and cultural resources.

The Milton in Battle Creek was one of seven projects recognized recently at a ceremony hosted by the MEDC and SHPO. The former Old-Merchants National Bank & Trust

Building was converted into 85-market rate apartments, which significantly contributes to the vitality of downtown Battle Creek.

The Art Deco tower in downtown Battle Creek opened in 1931 and was once home to the largest financial institution between Detroit and Chicago. The building was vacant by 2011 and in need of rehabilitation. After a \$38 million renovation, the building is once again occupied by residential tenants and offers commercial and event spaces on the ground floor under its new identity as The Milton.

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer Martha MacFarlane-Faes said in a statement that the preservation of Michigan's historic

sites are vital to understanding the past. "Each year during National Historic Preservation Month, the Governor's Award program gives us an opportunity to recognize standout historic preservation efforts across the state, exemplifying the collaboration and deep impact preservation can have in Michigan communities," MacFarlane-Faes said. "This year's diverse group of awards has inspired additional preservation activity and economic investment, and illustrate projects that represent preservation best practices."

Other projects in Manistee Township, Bay City, Ypsilanti, Leelanau County, Detroit and Kalamazoo were also honored.

BCU Resuming In-Person Retention Visits

BCU works to have an official meeting with each of the companies in the Fort Custer Industrial Park every year, as well as several key employers throughout the city. We usually have more than 100 retention visits annually.

These interactions provide us with the opportunity to meet with company leaders one-on-one, to discuss any challenges the company may be dealing with and to provide information on programs which may be of benefit. These meetings enable us to build closer relationships with the companies we serve, which helps us to support their growth. We typically meet with the company president and the HR leader for about an hour. During the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person meetings were put on hold. John Hughes, who joined BCU in November 2021 and will lead BCU's company outreach to existing employers, is now scheduling retention visits. Meetings can be virtual or in-person.

To those companies which have already scheduled meetings, we greatly appreciate your time. For those companies which John has not contacted yet, we look forward to meeting with you soon.

BCU Wins MiBiz Award for Economic Development

In March, MiBiz recognized BCU with its Deal of the Year award for Economic Development for the redevelopment of the hotel at McCamly Plaza. The BCU team attended the awards ceremony at the McKay Tower in Grand Rapids, along with partners from the Miller Foundation, 6 PM Hospitality Partners, the Calhoun Calhoun County Visitors Bureau, Seber Tans PLC, Kreis, Enderle, Hudgins & Borsos P.C., and Varnum LLP.



BCU's Bridgette Jones and Joe Sobieralski accept the Deal of the Year award for Economic Development from MiBiz's Justine Burdette.

BCU Visits New York City with MEDC



BCU Vice President Robert Corder participated in the MEDC's NYC Market Blitz in May. The state and local EDOs shared info about Michigan and networked with several site consultants in the New York region. Gov. Whitmer also hosted a cocktail reception and posed for a group photo.

Seasonal Events Returning to Downtown

The warm weather is bringing events back to downtown Battle Creek. We have already had the first annual Cinco de Mayo Fiesta last month, supported by Voces, the City's Small Business Development Office, and BCU.

Full Blast, Willard Beach Park, and the Safari Splash Pad at Claude Evans Park are all open daily. The Battle Creek Farmers Market at Festival Market Square is also open. The market is held every Wednesday from 9 AM to 1 PM. It will run through October.

Perhaps most exciting is the return of the National Cereal Festival 2022 on Saturday, June 11. This signature festival highlights Battle Creek's heritage as the birthplace of the cereal industry and is a tradition that has drawn people far and wide for over 50 years.

This family-friendly festival includes a variety of entertainment; live music, children's activities, inflatables, and of course FREE cereal for all!

We look forward to seeing everyone out and about all summer long.



Road Construction Update - Lane Closures at I-94 & I-69 Interchange

Drivers can expect delays at the I-94/I-69 interchange beginning May 23, as the \$210 million project to rebuild 25 miles of highway between Marshall and Charlotte continues.

According to the MDOT, construction in 2022 in Calhoun County will include:

- Rebuilding northbound I-69 from I-94 to north of Ainger Road and rebuilding interchange ramps
- Rebuilding a portion of the I-94/I-69 interchange
- Replacing the 15 Mile Road bridge over I-94

Traffic along I-94 will be limited to one lane in both directions at I-69 through August. Construction crews will build temporary crossovers on I-94 ahead of rebuilding both eastbound and westbound I-94 at I-69.

MDOT began work on I-69 south of I-94 in Calhoun County to Island Highway in Eaton County in 2021. Work is expected to be complete in November 2023.



To view the MDOT project timeline, visit: <https://bit.ly/3x66NyQ>

Watkins Road Upgrades Continue

Work on Watkins Road continues. The road is being widened and resurfaced from Mercury Drive to the CN train tracks, almost two thirds of a mile. New turn lanes will also be added at the intersection. Crews are schedule to begin paving in early June, with the project expected to be complete later in the month.



Christmas Parade Planning Has Begun!

While we just celebrated Memorial Day, BCU is already looking ahead to the holidays! BCU President & CEO Joe Sobieralski has lined up an antique Oliver tractor from the 1950s to pull a float in the annual Battle Creek Christmas Parade this year.

The parade has been a Battle Creek tradition since 1979. The event is organized annually by the Harper Creek Optimists Club. After skipping 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic, the parade returned last year on November 20th. The 2021 parade began at 5:45 p.m. and traveled down Michigan Avenue from Washington Street to Commerce Point. The parade kicked off the Battle Creek International Festival of Lights.

No word yet on what BCU's float will look like but one thing is for sure: it will be pulled by the coolest tractor in town!



Connect Battle Creek Launched to Help Job Seekers and Companies



Are you looking for a job? Are you a company looking to hire? Connect Battle Creek is a new tool that can help.

Connect Battle Creek is a collaboration between several local organizations working together to improve the workforce. It provides a centralized workforce hub for the Battle Creek community.

- **Job seekers** can find the resources that they need to get or keep a good job.
- **Employers** can find ways to address workforce challenges and grow their business so that their workers can have a positive work experience.

- **Community organizations** can list their services so that people who need them can find them.

Information, resources, and assistance designed to connect job seekers and businesses to the community organizations that serve Battle Creek — it is what Connect Battle Creek is all about. Connect Battle Creek's founding partners include Goodwill Industries, Kellogg Community College, Michigan Works!, and the Woman's Co-op, with financial support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

For more information, visit: www.connectbattlecreek.com

Expansions, from page 1

"Not only because the community takes care of us and partners with us, but also because a lot of our business is on the east coast of the United States and it's closer to come here than Nebraska for your aircraft needs."

Remarking on the Battle Creek Executive Airport, Richards added, "It's very rare to have an airport of this size, with a 10,000-foot runway, and vacant land. That's becoming rarer and rarer. There is such a need for hanger space because of the growing aviation industry."

More recently, Bleistahl North America announced an \$8.7 million expansion at its facility in the Fort Custer Industrial Park. Bleistahl, which established operations in Battle Creek in 2013, manufactures powder metal valve train components for Ford, General Motors, and Stellantis. Its parent company Bleistahl GmbH & Co. is based in Wetter, Germany and has been supplying parts for the auto industry worldwide since 1954.

Bleistahl has experienced significant growth in recent years. The company will invest in new equipment and expand operations to include a fourth shift. In total, they expect to add 69 new employees. The MEDC will provide Bleistahl with a performance-based grant of \$414,000.

"We are thrilled to expand our manufacturing operations in Battle Creek, with the support of Battle Creek Unlimited, and the MEDC. Customer demand has increased, and we will subsequently need to increase our overall production," said Bleistahl North America LP Managing Director Anthony Tuthill. "Battle Creek has a skilled and talented workforce, many of which have already joined our team, and we are excited to add to our team as we continue to grow."

BCU is grateful that Duncan Aviation and Bleistahl have chosen to grow their operations in Battle Creek and looks forward to working with each of them for years to come.

Presidents Desk, from page 1

In April, the Battle Creek City Commission voted to extend the Battle Creek Tax Increment Finance Authority (BCTIFA) for 25 years. The BCTIFA would have expired in June 2030; the BCTIFA will now be extended until June 30, 2047. This extension will allow for a 25-year amortization on any project bonds.

While companies continue to expand and grow in the industrial park, we continue to see significant interest in companies looking for mega sites, meaning sites which require more than 1,000 acres. Calhoun County is fortunate to be home to two of Michigan's largest mega sites.

BCU is also working to secure support for economic development projects around town. We were able to secure

funding from the City, County, and State in support of the McCamly Hotel redevelopment. We are working with state and federal elected officials on funding requests for the drone park at the Battle Creek Executive Airport and river naturalization downtown.

One new project we are working on is the proposed closure of the VA Medical Center (VAMC). A report from the VA's Asset and Infrastructure Review (AIR) Commission released in March recommended moving inpatient and outpatient services from Battle Creek to Kent County. The Battle Creek VAMC opened in 1924 and has 30 buildings situated on 206 acres. The Battle Creek VAMC is an invaluable resource and we are committed to working with local stakeholders and elected officials on a community response.

Hotel, from page 1

BCU will partner with local and regional workforce and educational organizations to create meaningful training and career opportunities for local residents and youth.

BCU is in the final stages of financing the project. This includes working with senior lenders and the MEDC. Nearly \$30M in grants have already been secured. Generous contributions have been made by the following organizations: W.K. Kellogg Foundation; Miller Foundation; State of Michigan; City of Battle Creek; Calhoun County; Kellogg Company; Calhoun County Visitors Bureau; Consumers Energy Foundation; BBCH Community Partners; and BCU.

"We are excited to engage with our workforce and educational partners in the coming months, as we begin laying the foundations for the workforce/educational components of the project," said BCU President & CEO Joe Sobieralski.

Sobieralski stated, "It has been a long process. This project started in December 2019. We are excited to return this historic building to productive use. Having a hotel of this size and magnitude will significantly contribute to the

economic vitality of downtown Battle Creek and the entire city. We cannot thank our partners and contributors enough for their continued support and generosity. This multi-faceted project will be a showpiece for our great city and will once again make Battle Creek a destination for entertainment and events."

A video illustrating the proposed plans can be found here: <https://streamable.com/ndijiy>



Concept for the renovated McCamly Hotel, scheduled to be completed in late 2023. The renovated hotel will have all new mechanicals, HVAC, elevators, kitchen and bar, new meeting rooms and guest rooms. The brick is being stained in May and June, with new windows to be installed soon after.

Board Changes, from page 1

BCU has greatly benefited from Mr. Gallagher's leadership, especially during the coronavirus pandemic. We greatly appreciate his ongoing commitment to Battle Creek.

Thank you to Mr. Carson and Dr. Bennings for their service. We welcome Mr. Kawashima and Dr. Watson to the BCU Board of Directors and look forward to Mr. Stewart's tenure as Board Chair.

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 nearly 90 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.

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