



# Quarterly News

## In this issue...

- From the President's Desk
- ResilienX Selected for MICH-AIR BVLOS System
- Clear Vue Cyclones Opens in Fort Custer Industrial Park
- Report: Kellogg Community College is a Wise Investment
- Assistant City Manager Ted Dearing to Retire in April
- MI Hub for Manufacturers Helps Small Companies Compete
- Duncan Aviation Named to List of Most Trusted Companies
- Café Rica Celebrates its 10th Anniversary
- Michigan Reconnect Provides Tuition Support for Adults
- DENSO to Acquire Systex Products
- Changes to the BCTIFA, BCLDFA, and BCBRA Boards
- Hill Brady Road to be Repaved
- Battle Creek Food Reimagined Update
- DLA Hosts Leadership Summit in Battle Creek
- City Launches Housing Podcast
- BCU Out & About

## ResilienX Selected for MICH-AIR BVLOS System

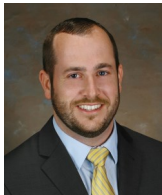
In January, BCU announced that it had selected ResilienX, Inc. to develop the ground-based sense and avoid system for MICH-AIR, the advanced air mobility hub under development at the Battle Creek Executive Airport (BTL). This system will enable remote and autonomous aircraft to operate in Battle Creek and beyond.

Based in Syracuse, New York, ResilienX is a leading provider of digital infrastructure for beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS) operations. ResilienX will deliver an integrated physical and digital operating environment that will allow routine BVLOS operations across the Battle Creek region.

The multi-year effort establishes Battle Creek as one of the nation's most advanced hubs for scalable uncrewed and advanced air mobility operations.

The project will deploy a fully integrated BVLOS ecosystem combining cooperative and non-cooperative surveillance, digital airspace services, and aviation-grade safety assurance. Once operational, the MICH-AIR BVLOS environment will support a wide range of use cases, including public safety, infrastructure inspection, medical logistics, advanced manufacturing, and future defense and security missions.

See "BVLOS" on page 7



## From the President's Desk

By Joe Sobieralski  
President & CEO

The new year is off to a fast start at Battle Creek Unlimited (BCU). Our mission remains unchanged: building a stronger community through strategic investment, job creation, and intentional development. For 2026, the BCU team is focused on setting the stage for growth. We are taking a proactive approach to housing and site preparation, which will help us bring future investments to Battle Creek.

Housing continues to be one of Battle Creek's biggest challenges. In January, the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) awarded \$1 million in matching grant funding opportunity for the Battle Creek Housing Development Fund. This fund is an initiative among BCU, the

the City of Battle Creek, LISC, and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. The fund will be utilized to offset development costs and bring new housing to the market.

On February 19, Governor Gretchen Whitmer announced a \$5 million grant for Project Blue Light, the new apartment project to be built on the former Kmart site downtown. The funds are from the MEDC's Revitalization and Placemaking (RAP) program. The project will include 80 apartments as well as a childcare center. Most recently, the Battle Creek Brownfield Redevelopment Authority, which BCU administers, approved a new housing brownfield plan which would

See "President's Desk" on Page 7

## Clear Vue Cyclones Opens in Fort Custer Industrial Park

Clear Vue Cyclones, a premier manufacturer of high-performance dust collection and air handling systems, recently commenced operations in Battle Creek's Fort Custer Industrial Park. This follows the company's acquisition by Advanced Capabilities Company (ADCAP Co.) in September 2025. Formerly based in Liberty, South Carolina, the company is now operating from its new facility at 1255 Hill Brady Road.

Founded in 2004, Clear Vue Cyclones has built a strong reputation for designing and

manufacturing high-performance dust collection and air handling systems for woodworking and industrial applications.

Clear Vue Cyclones' systems are based on a revolutionary design created by Bill Pentz. This design is able to achieve over 99% separation efficiency before materials reach the filters and capture fine airborne particles far more effectively than traditional cyclone systems.

See "Cyclones" on page 6

## Report: KCC is a Wise Investment for Students and the Community

A recent study conducted by Lightcast, an economic data analysis firm, found that Kellogg Community College (KCC) generates approximately \$331 million annually for the local economy, an impact that is equal to 1.9% of the gross regional product of a service area that includes Barry, Branch, Calhoun, and Eaton counties.

“We’ve known that KCC impacts the lives of individual learners as they advance their careers and educational success,” said KCC President Dr. Paul Watson. “With this new data, now we know the measurable financial impact of our institution and our alumni, demonstrating how much the area economy relies on KCC’s continued success.”

The report analyzed data from local, state, and federal sources. It concluded that KCC is a reliable investment for students and taxpayers. KCC operates primarily on funding from local property taxes, state appropriations, grants, and tuition revenue.

For students, KCC alumni receive a stream of higher future earnings that continues to

grow throughout their working lives. For example, students with an associate degree from KCC are expected to earn up to \$9,400 more than someone with only a high school diploma. This amounts to \$376,000 more in total lifetime earnings. This represents an average annual return of 16.2% after attending KCC, where in-district tuition is currently \$136.50 per credit hour.

Michigan taxpayers, who provide KCC with \$35 million annually through state and local taxes, benefit in several ways, resulting in a cumulative value of \$1.30 returned for every dollar of public money invested in KCC.

As KCC students earn more, they pay more in taxes throughout their working lives. Their employees also make higher tax payments as they increase their output and purchases of goods and services. And because education is statistically correlated with a variety of lifestyle changes, KCC graduates generate savings in health care, the justice system, and income assistance.

There are also significant societal benefits.

KCC students are less likely to incur costs related to smoking, obesity, substance abuse, and depression. They are also more likely to remain employed and less likely to be arrested or require public assistance.

Altogether, the social benefits of KCC represent a present value of \$494.9 million. After factoring in the \$67.2 million that it costs to fund KCC annually, this results in a return of \$7.40 in benefits for every dollar invested in KCC.

“The results of the analysis demonstrate that KCC remains a strong investment for three major stakeholder groups: students, taxpayers and society,” Dr. Watson said. “Students receive a great return for their investment in an education from KCC while taxpayers’ investment returns more to government budgets and society’s investment creates a range of social benefits in Michigan and beyond.”

To read the full report, visit: [kellogg.edu/impact](http://kellogg.edu/impact).

## Battle Creek Assistant City Manager Ted Dearing to Retire

In January, the City of Battle Creek announced that Assistant City Manager Ted Dearing would retire in April. Mr. Dearing has been a fixture in Battle Creek for more than three decades, serving in a variety of roles. He was elected as a City Commissioner four times (1993–2000) and served three terms as Mayor. He served as the CEO of the Battle Creek Area Chamber of Commerce before joining the City of Battle Creek in 2007.

Mr. Dearing began his career at City Hall in the Recreation Department before moving to the Cereal City Development Corp. In April 2015, he was named the Assistant City Manager for Community and Economic Development, where he worked closely with BCU.

In December 2024, Mr. Dearing was named the Interim City Manager, a position he held through September 2025 when Amanda Zimmerlin started as the City’s new City Manager.

Over the years, Mr. Dearing has demonstrated a deep commitment to Battle Creek. The community has benefitted greatly from his experience and knowledge. We commend Mr. Dearing for his service and wish him the best in retirement.



## MI Hub for Manufacturers Helps Small Companies Compete

In 2025, Michigan’s Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO) launched the MI Hub for Manufacturers, a tool designed to help local businesses grow, access funding, and stay competitive. More than over 100 companies across the state have already used the platform to apply for \$17 million in grants and loans, and to access events, resources, and tools to grow their business and train staff.

The hub is the result of a partnership between LEO, the MEDC, and the business advisory firm Next Street. Resources include one-on-one consultations with expert advisors; digital learning on key concepts with on-demand resources; vetted local programs and resources; live events and seminars; and financ-

ing options, including grant opportunities and debt products.

The hub has three key objectives: streamline access to technical assistance and funding; help firms modernize, diversify, and adapt to changing demand; and foster stronger connections among manufacturers, startups, and large companies.

MI Hub for Manufacturers is free to use and open to any Michigan manufacturing business, from early-stage companies to established firms. To learn more or to sign up, visit:

[mihubformanufacturers.com](http://mihubformanufacturers.com)



**Michigan  
Hub for  
Manufacturers**

## Duncan Aviation Named to Forbes' List of Most Trusted Companies

Congratulations to Duncan Aviation, which was included in Forbes Magazine's 2026 list of the Most Trusted Companies in America. This honor recognizes the confidence that customers place in the company to deliver safe, transparent, and reliable aircraft services, project after project.

The annual list recognizes organizations that consistently earn trust through ethical practices, strong performance, positive customer experiences, and employee engagement. For aircraft owners and operators, this recognition reinforces what they depend on every day: clear communication, uncompromising safety standards, and work performed right the first time.

"This recognition reflects the culture our employees create every day," said Todd Duncan, Chairman of Duncan Aviation. "Trust is foundational in business aviation, where safety, quality, and integrity are non-negotiable. Our team's commitment to doing the right thing, on every aircraft, on every project, is what earns the confidence of our customers."

Duncan Aviation is the world's largest family-owned business jet Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) provider. Founded in 1956, the company provides comprehensive services including airframe, engine, avionics, paint, and interior work for business aircraft. It supports business aircraft operators, government agencies, and other aircraft service providers. The company has full service centers in Battle Creek, Michigan; Lincoln, Nebraska; and Provo, Utah. In addition, it has dozens of satellite locations across the country to provide customers with the quickest response to any maintenance situation that may arise.

For Duncan Aviation, trust is inseparable from quality and safety. As a leading MRO service provider, attention to detail, regulatory compliance, and craftsmanship are critical. Customers rely on Duncan Aviation not only for technical expertise, but also for transparency throughout the maintenance process.

"Our customers expect consistency, honesty, and follow-through," said Mike Minchow, President of Duncan Aviation. "That's why

we focus on how the work is done, not just the final result. Every team member understands that trust is earned through daily actions, meeting commitments, communicating clearly, and delivering safe, high-quality work. Being named to the Forbes Most Trusted Companies list reinforces the standards our customers expect and deserve."

The full list of Forbes's Most Trusted Companies in America is available here: [Forbes.com/most-trusted](https://Forbes.com/most-trusted)



## Café Rica Celebrates its 10th Anniversary

Café Rica is celebrating their 10th anniversary in Battle Creek in 2026. The company was founded by brothers Jackson and Tristan Bredehoft in 2016 originally as a distributor of Costa Rican coffee. The pair initially began bottling cold brew coffee to promote their beans.

In 2018, with the support of Battle Creek's Small Business Development Team, Café Rica opened a pop-up café downtown at BC Cargo. Soon after, they moved into the City-owned incubator space at 80 W. Michigan Avenue, sharing space, with Simply Sensational Berries. In February 2020, the brothers opened the doors on their permanent home at 62 E. Michigan Avenue. The renovation of the building, which is owned by JPG Resources and has its offices on the second floor, was supported with a grant from BCU's Real Estate Improvement Fund. In May 2024, the company opened a roasting facility on Capital Avenue.

While building a thriving business, Café Rica has received a long list of awards. It has repeatedly been named Battle Creek's best coffee shop, and recognized as the Small Business of the Year by the Battle Creek Area Chamber of Commerce. The company received a Good For Michigan award in 2023 for governance, recognizing their mission, ethics, and transparency. Café Rica received special recognition for their "Story of Inspiration" at the 2025 Pure Michigan Governor's Conference on Tourism.

After a decade, Café Rica has evolved in a vibrant space, serving coffee, craft cocktails, and delicious food. Today, the Bredehoft brothers are focused on growing the market for their bottled coffee drinks as well as their roasted coffee beans. They are also dedicated to fostering community in Battle Creek. From the very beginning, Café Rica has hosted art shows, open-air markets, farm-to-table dinners, music and

poetry performances, as well as opening their space to the community for meetings and events.

Congratulations to Tristan and Jackson and everyone on the Café Rica team for all that they have accomplished. We look forward to seeing what you will do in the next 10 years.



Café Rica founders Jackson (left) and Tristan Bredehoft in their pop-up café at BC Cargo.

## Michigan Reconnect Provides Tuition Support for Adults

In early February, Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer and the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP) celebrated the fifth anniversary of Michigan Reconnect, the state's tuition-free community college program for adults. The milestone highlights the program's proven impact in helping adult learners return to college, gain skills for in-demand careers, and advance Michigan's long-term workforce and education goals.

"Since 2021, more than 200,000 Michiganders have taken their first step towards college thanks to Michigan Reconnect. They will learn new skills and get good-paying, high-tech jobs, unlocking new futures for themselves and their families. We've boosted our postsecondary rate from 45% to nearly 52%," said Gov. Whitmer.

Since its launch in 2021, Michigan Reconnect has welcomed more than 200,000

applicants, with over 66,500 students enrolling in community colleges across the state. More than 14,000 learners have earned degrees or certificates, gaining skills for careers that strengthen Michigan's workforce and economic competitiveness.

To support students on their educational journeys, the program pairs students with Reconnect Navigators who provide personalized guidance to help students apply for financial aid, set career goals, select programs of study, register for classes, and create graduation plans. This support helps students stay on track from enrollment through completion.

To learn more about Michigan Reconnect or to apply, visit [Michigan.gov/Reconnect](https://Michigan.gov/Reconnect). MiLEAP also offers scholarships that support Michiganders at every stage of life and with different education goals. Learn more at [Michigan.gov/MiStudentAid](https://Michigan.gov/MiStudentAid).

## Changes to the BCTIFA, BCLDFA, and BCBRA Boards

In November, Battle Creek City Manager Amanda Zimmerlin officially joined the Board of Directors for the Battle Creek Tax Increment Finance Authority (BCTIFA), as well as the Battle Creek Local Development Finance Authority (BCLDFA) and the Battle Creek Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (BCBRA). She replaced Ted Dearing, who was added to the boards in 2024 when he was named Interim City Manager.

Also in November, Michelle Darner stepped down from her position on the BCTIFA and BCBRA boards. Ms. Darner, formerly of DENSO Manufacturing of Michigan, Inc., had served as a company representative since 2017.

We thank Mr. Dearing and Ms. Darner for their dedicated service and look forward to working with Ms. Zimmerlin.

## DENSO to Acquire Systex Products

In early January, DENSO Manufacturing Michigan, Inc. (DMMI) announced that it would acquire Systex Products Corporation (SPC) from Shimizu Industry Co., Ltd. The deal will bring together two Battle Creek manufacturers, strengthening DMMI's thermal manufacturing capabilities and operational efficiency. It will also enhance collaboration between the teams at each location. The acquisition is expected to be complete by January 1, 2027.

Shimizu is part of the DENSO corporate family. Both companies are based in Kariya, in Japan's Aichi Prefecture. Systex was established in Battle Creek in 1992. It manufactures components for automotive air conditioning and engine cooling systems. In total, the company's two buildings in the Fort Custer Industrial Park have more than 200,000 square feet. More than 200 Systex team members will transition and become DENSO employees.

This move is the latest in DENSO's strategy to optimize its North American manufacturing operations. It will also reinforce

the company's ability to produce next-gen thermal products and position DENSO to continue to meet customers' evolving needs.

DMMI President Shuichi Kamakura said, "Integrating SPC into DMMI is a strategic step that will make our operations stronger and more agile. By combining teams, systems, and capabilities in Battle Creek, we will improve our competitiveness and focus on efficient, high-quality manufacturing that supports our customers across the region. We look forward to working together over the next 12 months to ensure a smooth transition."

Established in 1984, DMMI was DENSO's first U.S. manufacturing site. Today the Battle Creek location is a leading manufacturer of automotive thermal solutions. DMMI has more than 2,100 employees in Battle Creek. Its campus in the Fort Custer Industrial Park features over 1.3 million square feet of production, warehouse, and administrative floor space across seven buildings.

## Hill Brady Road to be Repaved

Planning is underway for Hill Brady Road to be repaved in 2026. The project is expected to start sometime in late Spring. The street will be repaved from the Dickman Road intersection to the Skyline Drive roundabout. The road will remain open during construction but traffic will be reduced to one lane in each direction. This is expected to be one of the season's first paving projects in Battle Creek. Drivers should expect delays and plan accordingly.

In 2025, a section of Brady Road

between Dickman Road to Brydges Drive was resurfaced. In total, approximately 1,000 feet of road was repaved.

We will share more information as it becomes available. Follow BCU online for updates.



## Battle Creek Food Reimagined Update

Earlier this month marked a powerful momentum for Battle Creek Food Reimagined's entrepreneurial ecosystem, and the energy is only building.

At the Battle Creek Innovation Hub, the Recipe for Success Cohort officially kicked off, welcoming food entrepreneurs ready to transform family recipes, late-night ideas, and bold dreams into viable, sustainable businesses. Over eight weeks, participants are diving deep into pricing strategy, storytelling, cost structures, operations, and financial fundamentals, gaining the clarity and confidence needed to move from a passion project to a scalable enterprise.

Designed in partnership with Battle Creek Food Reimagined (BCFR), this educational series continues to create space for founders who are serious about building businesses that last.

That spirit of growth was also on display at the 15th Cohort Celebration of the Michigan Veteran Entrepreneur Lab (MVE-Lab), where budding entrepreneurs took the stage to present ventures shaped by weeks of discipline, mentorship, and determination. John Capers, representing BCFR, was awarded Judges' Award. Congratulations also to Thomas Walk, recipient of the People's Choice Award.

The "Profitability of Your Food Business" workshop, hosted by BCFR in collaboration with Food Finance Institute, University of Wisconsin, brought together dedicated food entrepreneurs ready to build smarter, scale stronger, and protect their margins.

We tackled real strategies for scaling beyond the commercial kitchen, investing wisely, navigating inspections, and expanding distribution without sacrificing profit. Because growth without profit is just noise.

We are deeply grateful to every founder who showed up engaged, asked thoughtful questions, and leaned into the numbers. Your commitment to building sustainable food businesses is what strengthens this ecosystem. A special thank you to our presenters: Peter Robertson, University of Wisconsin; Dana Edwards, Sprout; Jose Aste,

MSU Product Center; and Jonah Hurtado-Macias, BCFR. Finally, thanks to Felicia from DelectAble Treats and Sweets for the delicious food that fueled meaningful conversation. We are thankful for this growing community, and we are just getting started!

### 2026 FOOD PRIZE

Food Prize 2026 is a regional food business competition and industry convening designed to support new and existing food entrepreneurs across Michigan.

The event combines a pitch competition, food product showcase, and educational summit, bringing together food business owners, support organizations, funders, and industry partners. Food Prize 2026 will take place on March 21 in downtown Battle Creek at the Kellogg Arena and Battle Creek Innovation Hub.

Applications for the 2026 Food Prize Regional Pitch Competition closed on February 14. Finalists will be announced the week of February 22. The in-person pitch competition will take place in the morning on Saturday, March 21. The Open4BizBC Summit will be held in the afternoon from 12 PM– 4 PM. Admission is free and spectators will be able to taste items from competitors.



*LEFT: The Recipe for Success Cohort kicked off on January 13th at the Battle Creek Innovation Hub. This 8-week educational training series, designed in partnership with BCFR, is for anyone ready to move from "I love to cook" to "I'm building a business."*



*RIGHT: The MVE-Lab's 15th Cohort wrapped up in early February. Congrats to everyone who participated.*

### BCFR RIBBON CUTTING

Later this spring, BCFR will celebrate another exciting milestone as we open the doors to our new space in the Battle Creek Innovation Hub. This space will provide expanded resources to support Battle Creek's growing entrepreneurial community. More details will be announced as they become available.

### DELECTABLE TREATS AND SWEETS OPENS

Beginning on Tuesday, February 24, DelectAble Treats and Sweets will officially be open for business inside the Battle Creek Innovation Hub. This exciting addition brings even more flavor and entrepreneurial success to the space, showcasing what's possible when local founders are equipped with the right support, resources, and community. We invite you to stop by, support local, and experience the sweet results of hard work and vision firsthand.

From educational intensives to pitch competitions and public celebrations, Q1 2026 reflects more than programming; it reflects progress. Together, we are cultivating an ecosystem where food founders and innovators have the tools, mentorship, and community they need to thrive.

## Defense Logistics Agency hosts Leadership Summit in Battle Creek

In late January, the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) Disposition Services held its annual leadership summit in Battle Creek. The event was held at the Hart-Dole-Inouye Federal Center where Disposition Services is based and brought together senior DLA leaders from around the world.

The DLA manages the end-to-end global defense supply chain, from raw materials to end user disposition, for the five military services, 11 combatant commands, as well as federal, state, and local partner agencies. With a staff of approximately 25,000, the

DLA is responsible for providing food/water, clothing and textiles; bulk petroleum and other energy products; construction materials and equipment; personal demand items, medical material and equipment; and repair parts for land, sea, and air systems.

DLA Disposition Services manages the disposal, reutilization, transfer, and donation of excess military property worldwide. It handles hazardous waste, demilitarization, and surplus sales, providing critical, cost-saving supply chain solutions for the warfighter. This includes everything from old

office furniture to entire warships: when the military has a piece of equipment they no longer need, it is turned over to the experts at the DLA's Disposition Services.

During the three-day event, senior leaders reviewed the agency's current efforts as well as new initiatives to help them better manage the defense supply chain. Participants also discussed new technologies such as robotics, AI, and warehouse management systems, as well as topics like employee leave, staffing, labor relations, and training needs.



Nearly 100 senior DLA leaders from around the world gathered in Battle Creek for the Disposition Services Leadership Summit in late January.

### Cyclones, cont'd from page 1

Key product differentiators include:

- High-efficiency separation
- Transparent construction using impact-resistant PETG plastic, which allows users to monitor their operations.
- Advanced air filtration, with industry-leading efficiency
- Industrial-grade steel impellers, which remain balanced and true

Clear Vue Cyclones also provides design and layout services for ductwork, tailored to each customer's specific workspace. Clear Vue systems are optimized for peak performance and safety, making them ideal for everyone from hobbyists to industrial manufacturers.

Along with a commitment to quality manufacturing, Clear Vue Cyclones is focused on providing outstanding customer service. The new management team is

developing both Business-to-Business (B2B) and Direct-to-Consumer (D2C) markets.

"Our goal is to honor the legacy of the Clear Vue Cyclones brand while investing in improvements that enhance performance, service, and long-term reliability," said Scott Fuhrman, owner & CEO. "As air quality standards become more stringent, manufacturers need systems that protect workers, improve the environment, and reduce operating costs. Clear Vue is uniquely positioned to meet those needs."

BCU President & CEO Joe Sobieralski said, "Clear Vue Cyclones is a fantastic addition to the Fort Custer Industrial Park and to Battle Creek's growing advanced manufacturing base. Their decision to relocate their headquarters and manufacturing operations to here is a testament to the strength of our region's industrial infrastructure and skilled workforce."

"We are incredibly grateful to our loyal customers who have supported us over the past year," Fuhrman added. "We're excited about what the future holds and look forward to serving both new and returning customers from our new Michigan home."

To learn more about Clear Vue Cyclones, visit [www.clearvuecyclones.com](http://www.clearvuecyclones.com) or call 888-299-0221.



Clear Vue Cyclones owner & CEO Scott Fuhrman poses with one of their vacuum systems at their new Battle Creek facility.

**BVLOS, cont'd from page 1**

The BVLOS system is a key part of BCU's MICH-AIR initiative, which seeks to attract aerospace investment and create high-skill jobs in Battle Creek. In 2018, BCU received a grant from the Michigan Defense Center (now the Michigan Office of Defense and Aerospace Innovation) to determine Battle Creek's capacity to support advanced air mobility (AAM), including electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) vehicles as well as remote and autonomous aircraft. The study concluded that Battle Creek is well positioned to attract investment from AAM companies, due to its airport, available capacity in the air and on the ground, existing company base, strategic location, and community assets.

In 2023, BCU secured a \$7 million appropriation in the 2024 Michigan State Budget. The 'Make it in Michigan' budget also included \$10 million for advanced aerial mobility/drone infrastructure projects including vertiports, drone hubs, drone ports, and last mile delivery.

BTL is a Class D general aviation facility, with ample airspace capacity and more than 200 acres available for development. Western Michigan University's College of Aviation is based at BTL, where it trains both pilots and airplane mechanics. The Michigan Air National Guard's 110th Wing is also based at BTL, where it has a remote drone operations center. BTL is home to Duncan Aviation, which services and maintains business jets; WACO Aircraft, a niche builder of modern biplanes; and Junkers Aircraft, which produces a retro 1930s sports plane. The airport is adjacent to the Fort Custer Industrial Park, the largest facility of its kind in Michigan. BTL will serve as a key spoke for AAM manufacturing in Michigan.

The system to be deployed in Battle Creek will be scalable across Michigan and beyond. It is designed to expand over time, supporting additional operators, new mission profiles, and integration with future state and national drone corridors. The BVLOS ecosystem establishes a critical differentiator for the region, enabling capabilities that few airports in the United States can offer today.

"This project is about more than enabling drone flights," said BCU President & CEO Joe Sobieralski. "It is about creating sustainable infrastructure that allows companies, agencies, and researchers to operate safely, at scale, and with confidence. Partnering with ResilienX accelerates our vision for MICH-AIR and strengthens Battle Creek's role in the future of aviation."

"Battle Creek is making a deliberate investment in infrastructure, not experiments," said Andrew Carter, CEO of ResilienX. "MICH-AIR is building a repeatable, standards-aligned BVLOS environment that supports real operations, real users, and long-term economic growth. This project reflects exactly how regions should approach advanced air mobility."

ResilienX brings deep experience from FAA-approved GBSAA programs, state-scale BVLOS deployments, and ongoing commercial and government operations nationwide. In December, ResilienX announced a collaboration with Michigan Central in Detroit to demonstrate their ORION-X system, which provides on-demand drone flights. In Battle Creek, the initial deployment phase is underway and will progress through system installation, regulatory approvals, and operational demonstrations. The system is expected to be up and running within 12 months.

**President's Desk, cont'd from page 1**

create more than 100 new single-family homes. This plan is in the early stages, with no date set for groundbreaking.

BCU also continues to prepare industrial sites for development. In December, the 124-acre site on West Columbia received a Bronze designation in the MEDC's MI Sites program. The property, located across from the Battle Creek Executive Airport (BTL), would be ideal for a food & beverage or aviation company. In late December, BCU secured additional funding to prepare a 60-acre site off West Columbia, right off Exit 92. Funds will be used for a site survey, wetland delineation, geotechnical

analysis, and endangered species assessment, as well as preliminary site engineering. We will continue to pursue additional state dollars to prepare sites in the Fort Custer Industrial Park and at BTL.

Work is accelerating on MICH-AIR, our advanced air mobility initiative at BTL. ResilienX was chosen to build the ground-based sense and avoid system, which will allow remote and autonomous aircraft to fly in Battle Creek. BCU staff will attend the AUVSI Xponential event in Detroit in May, where MICH-AIR will have a booth.

See "President's Desk" on Page 8

# City Launches Housing Podcast

Housing remains one of Battle Creek's biggest challenges. In January, the City of Battle Creek has released the first episode of the BC City Connection: Housing Edition, part of the Battle Creek Community Connection Podcast. This series explores local housing issues, projects, and the decision making behind them, helping residents better understand how housing shapes our community.

In the first episode, Planning Supervisor Darcy Schmitt explains how the city is addressing Battle Creek's housing shortage. She discusses efforts to update the community's Master Plan, remove barriers to build more quickly, expand mixed-use zoning, encourage infill housing, and support accessory dwelling units (ADUs). Darcy also highlights how public input, neighborhood councils, and community surveys guide every step and how residents can get involved.

You can find the podcast wherever you listen, or stream it directly from [battlecreekpodcast.com](http://battlecreekpodcast.com). If you prefer to watch the video interview of each episode, you can find the series playlist on the city's YouTube Channel.

More Housing Edition episodes are in production and will be shared as they are released each month. Visit the [city website](http://citywebsite.com) for more information on the city's housing strategy and how you can get involved.



## President's Desk, cont'd from page 1

Xponential is one of the largest conferences for the autonomous industry, and this is the first time for it to be held in Michigan

As a state, Michigan is focused on mobility, which includes vehicles on the road, as well as in the water and in the sky. In February, Gov. Whitmer announced Michigan's new Defense and Aerospace Strategic Plan, a five-year roadmap designed to grow the state's defense and aerospace sectors, strengthen national security, and create high-paying jobs that support Michigan's economy. Also in February, the Department of War designated Michigan's National All-Domain Warfighting Center (NADWC) as a National Range for Deep Uncrewed Aerial Systems Training. This designation positions Michigan as a leader in defense innovation. The NADWC has nearly 200,000 acres of maneuver space at Camp Grayling and more than 17,000 square miles of special-use

airspace at the Alpena Combat Readiness Training Center. BCU's strategic priorities are closely aligned with the states' and we are well positioned to attract aviation and defense companies to Battle Creek as they look to expand and grow their business in Michigan.

Finally, I was honored to attend President Donald Trump's 2026 State of the Union address in February as Rep. Bill Huizenga's guest. BCU works closely with all of our elected officials, both local and those in Lansing and Washington, DC. Rep. Huizenga and I talked about several important issues, including the Hart-Dole-Inouye Federal Center, drones, and Golden Dome, all of which are important for Battle Creek. I greatly appreciated all of the time Rep. Huizenga spent with me during my visit as well as his leadership and engagement on issues directly affecting Battle Creek.

Looking forward to a productive and prosperous 2026.



Following the State of the Union, BCU President & CEO Joe Sobieralski and Rep. Bill Huizenga spoke with several cabinet officials, including Secretary of War Pete Hegseth (above left, center) and Secretary of Transportation Sean Duffy (above right, center).



## 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.

### Battle Creek Unlimited

[www.bcuunlimited.org](http://www.bcuunlimited.org)  
4950 W. Dickman Road, Suite 1  
Battle Creek, MI 49037  
TEL 269-962-7526

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

Follow BCU online:



## BCU Out & About



ABOVE: BCU's Robert Corder (left) and Ken Masumoto (right) met with Kosuke Megumi from DENSO Manufacturing North Carolina (Battle Creek) in December before he returned to Japan after more than four years in Battle Creek.



LEFT: BCU President & CEO Joe Sobieralski wished the Battle Creek Japan Club members a prosperous 2026 at their annual New Year Party in January.



ABOVE: Representatives from BCU and the MEDC toured TRMI's facility in the Fort Custer Industrial Park in February.

BELOW: Congrats to the team at ProTec Panel and Truss which shipped the first job from their new Battle Creek location in February. The Indiana-based company opened their new facility on Watkins Road last year.

