BATTLE CREEK UNLIMITED

Summer 2026, Volume 10, Issue 3

Quarterly News

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From the President's Desk

By Joe Sobieralski
President & CEO

The weather has gotten cooler and the days are getting shorter, meaning that summer will soon come to an end. It has been a busy few months for the Battle Creek Unlimited (BCU) team.

In early June, construction officially kicked off on Project Blue Light, now known as Riverbend at Capital. This project has been several years in the making and will create 80 new apartments in downtown and as well as a new childcare facility.

In June, WK Kellogg Co announced a $100,000 gift to the Battle Creek Housing Fund. Funds will be used to build new housing and rehab existing units in Battle Creek. And in late June, it was announced that the Bean Tower project was awarded $2.9 million from the State of Michigan's Revitalization and Placemaking (RAP) Program. This project will convert the building at 99 West Michigan Avenue into a three-story development with apartments and entertainment space.

In June, I traveled to Europe and joined Governor Gretchen Whitmer, Quentin Messer, Jr., President and CEO of the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) and Stacy Flathau, Chief Corporate Affairs Officer of WK Kellogg Co., for a meeting in Luxembourg with Lapo Civilleti, Ferrero Group CEO. We had a good discussion about Ferrero's acquisition of WK Kellogg Co and their con-tinued commitment to Battle Creek.

During the trip, I also visited Eurosatory 2026, one of the largest trade shows for the defense industry.

See "President's Desk" on page 8

Riverbend at Capital Breaks Ground at Former Kmart Site

The former Kmart property in downtown Battle Creek took a big step toward a new future with the recent groundbreaking of Riverbend at Capital, a $30.2 million mixed-use redevelopment at 10 Fountain Street.

On June 11, BCU, Edison Community Partners, Hollander Development, and other community stakeholders came together to celebrate the start of construction. The project will feature an attractive four-story building with 80 one- and two-bedroom apartments, with 48 affordable units and 32 workforce units serving residents earning approximately 80% to 120% of the area median income. It will also include a separate 10,000-square-foot building which will house a childcare facility. This is the first phase of a broad redevelopment strategy for the nearly 10-acre site.

Kmart closed in 2018 and was demolished by BCU in 2021. Originally known as "Project Blue Light" in a nod to Kmart's famous Blue Light Specials, the development is now moving forward as Riverbend at Capital.

See "Riverbend" on page 7

WK Kellogg Co Invests in Battle Creek Housing Fund

On June 11, WK Kellogg Co announced a $100,000 investment in the Battle Creek Housing Fund. This will support efforts to expand housing opportunities and strengthen Battle Creek's long-term economic future.

The Battle Creek Housing Fund was launched with seed funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and local partners to address a critical housing shortage in the community, estimated at more than 3,000 units. The Fund aims to support the development and rehabilitation of 1,000 housing units by 2035, including both affordable and market-rate housing.

WK Kellogg Co's contribution adds another major local employer to a growing list of public, private, and philanthropic partners supporting the Fund. The coalition includes the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the City of Battle Creek, BCU, and Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC).

"Battle Creek is more than our headquarters, it's our home," said Stacy Flathau, Chief Corporate Affairs Officer for WK Kellogg Co. "This investment reflects our deep commitment to the community that shaped our company and our people and continues today."

See "Housing Fund" on page 6

Mars Snacking Foundation Invests in START Kitchen

The Mars Snacking Foundation is investing in Battle Creek's next generation of food entrepreneurs with a $120,000 grant to BCU to expand the capacity of the START Kitchen and Café at the Battle Creek Innovation Hub.

The grant is part of a broader $1.7 million investment by the Mars Snacking Foundation to support organizations and initiatives serving Battle Creek and Calhoun County. The foundation's investment into the START Kitchen will provide additional resources and capacity for the food-business incubator, helping entrepreneurs develop, test, and grow their businesses.

START Kitchen and Café provides aspiring food entrepreneurs with access to a commercial kitchen facility and an environment where they can develop products, refine their business concepts, and gain experience operating in the food industry. Expanding the program's capacity will allow it to serve more entrepreneurs while strengthening the Innovation Hub's role as a center for entrepreneurship and economic development.

The investment also reflects Mars' long-standing connection to Battle Creek and its commitment to supporting stronger communities through partnerships and local initiatives.

"At Mars, we believe stronger communities are built through partnership, local leadership, and long-term investment," said Anne Vela-Wagner, Executive Director of the Mars Snacking Foundation.

The grant is one piece of a larger package of community investments addressing food access and economic opportunity throughout the region. Other grants include $500,000 to the Battle Creek Community Foundation, $910,000 to United Way of South Central Michigan, and $200,000 to South Michigan Food Bank.

For BCU, the investment will help START Kitchen build on its mission of turning culinary ideas into viable businesses, creating opportunities for entrepreneurs while contributing to Battle Creek's growing food and entrepreneurial ecosystem.

MARS SNACKING Foundation

MICH-AIR: Building the Infrastructure for the Future of Flight in Battle Creek

It was a busy summer for MICH-AIR, BCU's advanced air mobility initiative. In late July, we completed the installation of sensors for the beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS) system, which will enable remote and autonomous vehicles to operate in Battle Creek. Radars were installed atop the DoubleTree Hotel in downtown Battle Creek, along with Remote ID and ADS-B sensors. Remote ID and ADS-B sensors were also deployed on top of the old air traffic control tower, which is now part of Western Michigan University's College of Aviation. We partnered with Michigan Civil Air Patrol to conduct a detailed mapping of the radar coverage area.

With the hardware in place, our development partner ResilienX is working on the system which will combine the sensor data into an application that operators of uncrewed aircraft can use to safely operate around the Battle Creek Executive Airport (BTL). The ResilienX team has also begun work on the FAA's Near-Term Approval Process (NTAP). We expect the process to be completed by the end of 2026.

In July, Grand Rapids-based InterMet Systems successfully demonstrated its CopterSonde drone in Battle Creek. The company manufactures weather balloons and has created a reusable drone which can collect high-resolution atmospheric data for weather forecasting and aviation applications. This demo was conducted in partnership with NextEnergy and the Michigan Office of Future Mobility and Electrification (OFME) as part of the state's effort to support the development of advanced air mobility (AAM) technologies.

In August, the 110th Wing of the Michigan Air National Guard in Battle Creek conducted a combat readiness exercise simulating a drone incursion on base. The three-day exercise was part of Northern Strike 26-2, one of the nation's largest joint reserve readiness exercises, bringing together thousands of service members to train in realistic, complex scenarios. As part of the exercise, the Michigan Civil Air Patrol flew drones around the installation while 110th Wing personnel trained to identify, assess, and respond to UAS activity.

We are also ramping up our outreach efforts. Staff participated in ReShore 2026 in Traverse City, an event focused on advanced manufacturing and mobility. In August, BCU's Robert Corder spoke to the Lakeview Neighborhood Planning Council about MICH-AIR. In September, the Michigan Association of Airport Executives Fall Conference will highlight MICH-AIR. Looking ahead, the Michigan Drone Association will bring their annual conference to Battle Creek in April 2027.

As infrastructure takes shape and new partnerships develop, MICH-AIR is helping Battle Creek move from vision to reality and positioning BTL at the forefront of the future of flight.

ABOVE: Staff from InterMet Systems show off their CopterSonde drone.

BELOW: The MICH-AIR team on top of the DoubleTree Hotel during the flight mapping for the BVLOS system.

Remembering Dr. John J.H. "Joe" Schwarz (1937—2026)

Longtime BCU board member Dr. John J.H. "Joe" Schwarz passed away on May 27 at the age of 88. He was a lifelong public servant whose career spanned medicine, military service, local government, the Michigan Senate, and the U.S. Congress.

Dr. Schwarz grew up in Battle Creek and graduated from Battle Creek Central High School in 1955. He attended the University of Michigan and later earned his medical degree from Wayne State University in 1964. Before enlisting in the Navy, Dr. Schwarz interned at the Los Angeles County Hospital. Continuing his family's record of service, Dr. Schwarz served as a battalion surgeon alongside combat units in Vietnam and Southeast Asia. He would go on to serve as a Assistant Naval Attache at the U.S. Embassy in Indonesia and later served with the CIA.

Dr. Schwarz returned to Battle Creek in 1974 and set up his medical practice as an ENT/ head and neck surgeon. For years, he proudly served as the team physician for the Battle Creek Central Bearcats football team. Dr. Schwarz was a strong proponent of Federally Qualified Health Systems and treated countless patients over the years, ensuring they had access to excellent care regardless of their insurance status.

Dr. Shwarz was elected to the Battle Creek City Commission in 1979 and became Mayor in 1984. As Mayor, he was instrumental in the City's efforts to extend the runway at W. K. Kellogg Airport (now Battle Creek Executive Airport) and keeping the Air National Guard in Battle Creek.

Dr. Schwarz was elected to the Michigan Senate in 1986 and served there for16 years. While in Lansing, he chaired the Higher Education Committee and was named president pro tempore. In 2004, he was elected to represent Michigan's 7th Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives.

While in Congress, the Battle Creek Air National Guard Base was once again threatened with closure. Dr. Schwarz fought aggressively to save it from being shut down. Through his efforts, the Battle Creek base was the only facility in the nation to be removed from the closure list. Battle Creek's Air National Guard Base continues to thrive today, due in large part to Dr. Schwarz's leadership.

After leaving politics, Dr. Schwarz continued to be active in the community, practicing medicine and serving on numerous boards and committees, including the BCU Board. For almost 20 years, he served as a lecturer in public policy at the University of Michigan's Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy.

Few people have had the impact on Battle Creek that Dr. Schwarz did. Throughout his career, he was known for his independence, pragmatism, and willingness to place community and country above party. He spoke often about the importance of local government and the responsibility of elected officials to focus on the fundamentals of public life: roads, bridges, water, public safety, education, and health care. Dr. Schwarz cared deeply for the people of Battle Creek and the community benefited greatly from his years of selfless service.

On behalf of the BCU Staff and Board of Directors, we extend our deepest condolences to Dr. Schwarz's family and friends.

Duncan Aviation Named One of the USA's Best Companies to Work For

Duncan Aviation was recently named one of the Best Companies to Work For by U.S. News & World Report. The company earned top ratings in three key categories: Overall, Aerospace, and Midwest.

Duncan Aviation operates a major aircraft service facility at the Battle Creek Executive Airport (BTL). This national recognition highlights the company's status as a premier local employer and a cornerstone of Southwest Michigan's aviation economy.

U.S. News & World Report evaluated companies on six core pillars critical to today's job seekers:

- Pay and Benefits
- Work-Life Balance
- Job and Company Stability
- Physical and Psychological Comfort
- Belonging and Esteem
- Career Development

To be considered, companies must have at least 1,000 employees, more than $500 million in annual revenue, and a strong foundation of employee feedback, including a minimum of 75 Glassdoor reviews between 2021 and 2025.

This recognition comes as Duncan Aviation celebrates its 70th anniversary. Chairman Todd Duncan emphasized that this award is a direct reflection of the organization's people-first philosophy.

"We've always believed that when you invest in people, by creating opportunities to grow, fostering strong relationships, and maintaining a culture of respect. They, in turn, take exceptional care of our customers," said Duncan. "Being recognized by U.S. News is an honor, but our greatest accomplishment will always be the talented people who make Duncan Aviation the company it is today."

Duncan Aviation provides comprehensive aircraft services, offering career paths in airframe maintenance, avionics, engineering, interior design, paint, sales, and corporate support. As employers nationwide compete for skilled technical talent, a strong workplace reputation is a powerful advantage.

Congratulations to everyone at Duncan Aviation on this well deserved recognition. To explore opportunities at Duncan, visit **www.DuncanAviation.aero/Careers**.

Duncan Aviation Chairman Emeritus Robert Duncan and his wife Karen pose with local management and leaders from the Western Michigan University College of Aviation during a recent visit to Battle Creek.

Geislinger and TRMI Celebrate Major Milestones

Congratulations to both Geislinger Corporation and TRMI, which marked major milestones this summer.

On Tuesday, June 16, Geislinger celebrated its 25th anniversary in Battle Creek. Employees, families, and friends enjoyed guided tours of the plant, food trucks, and games. The family-held company was founded in Salzburg, Austria in 1958. It established operations in the Fort Custer Industrial Park in 2001. The company manufactures custom powertrain components, including torsional vibration dampers, elastic high-damping couplings, and composite shaft lines for heavy-duty marine, rail, wind power, and industrial applications.

From left: Geislinger Corporation Chief Commercial Officer Jerry Kleinhenz, Geislinger GmbH Managing Director Mattias Geislingler, Geislinger Chief Executive Office Jason Woodard, and Geislinger GmbH Managing Director Benjamin Geislinger.

On Saturday, August 1, TRMI hosted an open house to mark their 40th anniversary. The Japanese Tier1 supplier was founded in 1948 in Aichi Prefecture near Nagoya. Tokai Rika U.S.A., Inc. (known today as TRMI) was established in Battle Creek in 1986. It is a leading manufacturer of automotive components such as window regulators, cruise control, turn signals, multi-function, and HVAC switches.

FROM LEFT: Former TRMI President Yoshihiro Sato, TRMI President Chris Bryant, Michigan State Rep. Steve Frisbie, Michigan State Sen. Thomas Albert, and TRAM, Inc. President Gustav Svensson.

Bean Tower to Bring New Housing and Entertainment to Battle Creek

The long-vacant building located at 99 West Michigan Avenue is poised for a dramatic transformation. The 25,000-square-foot building, which has been empty for nearly two decades, will be redeveloped as Bean Tower, a $12.7 million mixed-use project featuring housing, dining, and entertainment.

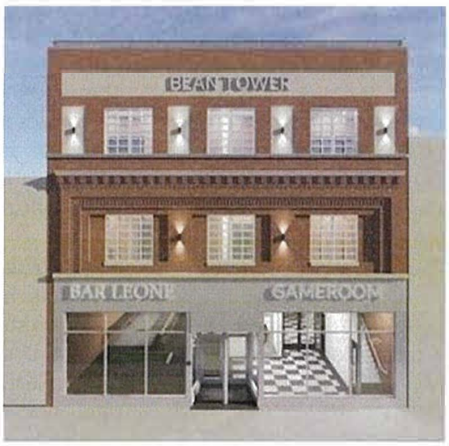
The project is being developed by Percy and Carla Bean, owners of The Bean Property Group LLC. The Beans have deep roots in Battle Creek and see this project as an opportunity to contribute to the revitalization of their hometown. Plans for the building include ten apartments, a Creole restaurant on the first floor, a basement game room, and a rooftop event space.

BCU acquired the property in 2019 and invested more than $800,000 to stabilize the building before selling it to the Bean Property Group.

The project will be supported by a $2.9 million grant from the State of Michigan's Revitalization and Placemaking (RAP) Program. Michigan Community Capital will provide $10 million in federal New Markets Tax Credits. Additional support includes a $1 million low-interest loan through the Battle Creek Brownfield Redevelopment Authority as well as local tax incentives.

For BCU, Bean Tower represents another example of how strategic investment, creative financing, and public-private partnerships can transform challenging properties into productive assets that bring new housing, businesses, and activity to downtown Battle Creek.

"Projects like this would not be possible without the multi-layered and creative approach to financing, tools provided by the MEDC, and dedicated and patient ownership willingness to take the journey," said BCU President & CEO Joe Sobieralski.



Concept image for Bean Tower, located at 99 W Michigan Avenue. The project will include 10 residences as well as a restaurant, game room, and rooftop event space. The project is being supported by a grant from the MEDC's Revitalization and Placemaking (RAP) Program.

Battle Creek Food Reimagined Update

Recap: What's Cookin' in BC – August

Thanks to everyone who joined us on Tuesday, August 11 at UpRoot Market & Eatery for our latest What's Cookin' in BC. Attendees heard from the MSU Product Center, got the latest updates from BC Food Reimagined, and connected with food entrepreneurs, community members, and resource partners.

Save the Date: What's Cookin' in BC – September

Join us for the next What's Cookin' in BC on Wednesday, September 9 from 4–6 PM at the Battle Creek Innovation Hub. Connect with local entrepreneurs, community partners, and resources supporting food businesses across our region.

Congratulations to the Food and Bev Founders Cohort Graduates!

We're proud to celebrate the graduation of the Winter 2026 class of the Founders Cohort, powered by JPG Resources. This is the last graduating class of BCFR-SBSH 1.0, which concluded on August 24. This cohort included 6 founders representing 5 brands. Offered by BC Food Reimagined under its Small Business Support program, this initiative supports scaling food and beverage start-ups statewide, helping founders take their business to the next level. Congrats to all of the graduates on this achievement.

New Cohort Launch: Summer 2026

Our Summer 2026 Cohort of the Founders program recently launched with 7 founders representing 5 brands. We look forward to supporting this new group of food and beverage entrepreneurs as they grow their companies.

Pitch Night: Michigan Veteran Entrepreneur Lab (MVE-Lab)

Join us on Wednesday, September 23 at the Battle Creek Innovation Hub for a business pitch event hosted by the GVSU's Michigan Veteran Entrepreneur Lab, a startup accelerator for veterans and military-connected families. This free event will start at 6 PM. **https://tinyurl.com/3mt6h2nm**

Southwest Michigan Partnership

BCFR is excited to be part of a regional partnership led by Southwest Michigan First (SMF). This initiative is supported by the MEDC's Small Business Support Hubs 2.0 program. It will expand access to coaching, technical assistance, mentorship, capital readiness, and connections for entrepreneurs across Southwest Michigan. We are grateful to SMF for leading this collaborative effort. More info is available at: **https://tinyurl.com/599a7yns**

KCC Earns National Recognition, Strengthens Path to WMU

Kellogg Community College (KCC) was recently ranked among the nation's top community colleges, placing 17th out of 613 institutions nationwide in WalletHub's 2026 "Best & Worst Community Colleges" report. The ranking places KCC among the top 2.8% of community colleges in the country and second among Michigan's 23 community colleges.

WalletHub evaluated colleges across 18 measures in three key areas: cost and financing, education outcomes, and career outcomes. Factors included tuition, student-to-faculty ratios, graduation rates, and graduate salaries.

The recognition reinforces KCC's long-standing role as a leading higher education institution in the region and reflects its ability to provide students with an affordable, high-quality education that prepares them for careers and continued academic success.

KCC is also making it easier for students to take the next step toward a bachelor's degree through a new partnership with Western Michigan University (WMU).

On August 12, WMU President Russ Kavalhuna and KCC President Paul Watson II signed an agreement establishing the Bronco Bound Guarantee, which provides eligible KCC students with guaranteed admission to WMU after completing an associate degree. The partnership is designed to make transferring as seamless as possible, with no application or transcript fees.

KCC students will also be automatically considered for annual WMU scholarships ranging from $500 to $3,000. In addition, KCC students will receive complimentary admission to most Bronco athletic events, helping them become part of the WMU community.

Together, KCC's national ranking and the Bronco Bound Guarantee highlight the growing opportunities available to students in the Battle Creek region, providing an affordable starting point at KCC and a clear pathway to a four-year degree and career success.

WMU President Russ Kavalhuna and KCC President Paul Watson II shake hands after signing the Bronco Bound Guarantee.

Battle Creek Earns Michigan Green Communities Gold Certification

The City of Battle Creek has again earned Gold certification through the Michigan Green Communities (MGC) program, continuing a streak that dates back to 2022.

The MGC Challenge is an annual statewide program that tracks and recognizes sustainability achievements by local governments. Communities can earn Bronze, Silver, Gold, or Platinum certification based on actions taken to improve environmental stewardship, sustainability, and quality of life.

Battle Creek achieved Gold certification for efforts in planning, land use, economic development, energy efficiency, renewable energy, materials management, water protection, clean mobility, and community engagement.

The city's sustainability efforts include residential curbside recycling, special collection events for materials such as electronics, polystyrene foam and scrap tires, and the planting of more than 3,000 native trees and shrubs throughout Battle Creek over the past two years.

The city also supports community cleanup and stewardship events and continues outreach efforts that help neighbors protect local waterways and groundwater resources.

This year, 68 Michigan communities were recognized through the challenge. Participants reported actions completed during 2025 to advance sustainability goals in their communities.

The MGC Communities program is available at no cost to local governments across the state. The program provides networking opportunities, benchmarking tools, and technical assistance that help communities strengthen sustainability efforts, protect infrastructure, and improve quality of life for residents.

The MGC program is supported by several statewide partners, including the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy; Michigan Department of Health and Human Services; Michigan Economic Development Corporation; Michigan Department of Transportation; Michigan Department of Natural Resources; Michigan Association of Counties; Michigan Municipal League; and Michigan Townships Association.

Additional information about the program is available at **migreencommunities.com**

Kristen Balko Joins BCU Team

In August, BCU welcomed Kristen Balko to the team as the Operations & Board Coordinator.

Kristen brings a diverse professional background, including progressive safety experience in manufacturing with Tier 1 automotive suppliers. She is also a proud veteran of the U.S. Air Force. In her new position, Kristen supports BCU's office operations and provides coordination for the BCU Board of Directors and our seven other boards.

Kristen brings strong communication and organizational skills, a professional leadership presence, and an ability to effectively manage multiple priorities. She has already demonstrated her initiative and willingness to hit the ground running, and we look forward to the positive contributions she will make to BCU and the Battle Creek community.

New Coworking Space Opens Downtown

A new coworking space is now available in downtown Battle Creek. Launch 269 opened in May on the second floor of the Battle Creek Innovation Hub, located at 50 West Jackson Street. The facility is managed by Battle Creek Food Reimagined (BCFR) and is designed to give entrepreneurs and remote workers a place to work and connect.

Launch 269 offers furnished workspace, private offices, meeting and training rooms, content-creation space, business amenities, and flexible options that make it easy to work, meet, create, and connect without the overhead of a traditional office. The facility is staffed Monday through Friday, 8 AM - 5 PM.

The Battle Creek Innovation Hub is owned by BCU. In addition to BCFR and Launch 269, the building houses Grand Valley State University (GVSU) and DelectAble Sweets and Treats. For info on pricing and availability, or to book a tour of the Launch 269 facility, contact Jonah Hurtado-Macias at 269-446-4527 or **hurtado-macias@bcunlimited.org**

Shared working space at Launch 269 in downtown Battle Creek.

Housing Fund, from page 1

Housing is increasingly recognized as an important component of economic and workforce development. A stronger supply of quality housing can help employers attract and retain workers while providing families with greater stability and opportunity.

The investment also continues the legacy of W.K. Kellogg, whose commitment to the health and wellbeing of children and families helped shape Battle Creek more than a century ago.

La June Montgomery Tabron, President and CEO of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, praised WK Kellogg Co's investment, noting that housing is "an essential workforce and economic development priority."

This contribution demonstrates the important role that companies like WK Kellogg Co can play in addressing Battle Creek's housing needs and building a stronger, more vibrant community for years to come.

Riverbend, from page 1

In addition to the main building, the project will include a second stand-alone building which will house the childcare facility as well as community services and resident amenity space. The addition of an early childhood learning center will provide an important benefit for families while contributing to the area's broader workforce and economic development goals.

"The groundbreaking marks the first chapter of a larger story, one that will continue through future phases, future investments, and future opportunities for the people of Battle Creek," said BCU President & CEO Joe Sobieralski.

Riverbend at Capital is designed with sustainability in mind and will pursue Enterprise Green Communities Plus standards. Planned features include solar carports, electric vehicle charging stations, and high-performance building materials designed to improve energy efficiency and support future net-zero energy operations.

AVB will serve as the construction manager for the project. Bright Light Early Care and Education will operate the childcare facility.

The project is supported by $5 million in state funding, a $3 million grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and approximately $4.4 million in city tax abatements.

Future phases could add more mixed-income housing, retail, and small-scale commercial space, along with expanded public green spaces and amenities, all of which will help connect surrounding neighborhoods with downtown and create a vibrant new destination along the Kalamazoo River.

ABOVE: Developers, city leaders, and community partners break ground on the Riverbend at Capital project on Thursday, June 11.

BELOW: The first phase of the project features a four-story building which will have 80 apartments. It also will include a separate multipurpose community center that will house an early childhood learning center.

Michigan Ranked 6th Best State for Doing Business

Michigan continues to build its reputation as a leading destination for business investment. In July, CNBC ranked the state number 6 in its rankings of America's Top States for Business. The recognition marks the fifth time Michigan has earned a Top 10 ranking under Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and represents a significant rise from No. 24 in 2019.

Michigan ranked ahead of competitors like Georgia, Florida, and Indiana. The state also maintained its No. 4 ranking for Cost of Doing Business, reflecting its competitive business tax climate, wage and utility costs, real estate expenses, and incentives that help reduce the cost of investment.

CNBC's annual rankings evaluate states across 138 metrics in 10 categories that influence corporate site selection and economic competitiveness. The rankings consider factors including workforce, infrastructure, economy, access to capital, and quality of life.

Michigan's strong showing reflects continued investment in its people, places, and projects. The state has emerged as a national leader in advanced manufacturing, automotive production, and semiconductor development, while also strengthening workforce development and supporting innovation and entrepreneurship. New initiatives like the Michigan Innovation Fund and R&D tax credit further position the state for long-term growth.

For Battle Creek, the ranking reinforces the state's growing appeal to companies looking to invest, expand, and create jobs. With a skilled workforce, competitive operating costs, and significant investments in infrastructure and economic development, Michigan is increasingly positioned to compete successfully for major business opportunities.

The full list is available here:
https://tinyurl.com/ye272vfk

BCU Out & About

In early June, BCU's Urban Planner Kris Martin met with students from the Battle Creek Area Math and Science Center's AP Environmental Biology Class. He talked with them about Battle Creek's restoration of the Kalamazoo River and then joined their clean-up of the river downtown.

BCU hosted a manufacturing roundtable in June at the Battle Creek Innovation Hub focused on AI in the manufacturing sector. Speakers shared real world insights on how AI is impacting efficiency, training, quality control, and decision-making, while also addressing data privacy, ethics, workforce impacts, and the need for thoughtful AI policies. Thanks to our speakers, including Pete Messina of Real Data Solutions; Brian Hernandez of Sector 7 LLC; Chris Schmelzer of The ChangeMindset Co; Carter Lyons of Duncan Aviation; and Ben Tomlinson of KRESA.

In August, the Japanese Consul General in Detroit Hajime Kishimori hosted an event at his residence to connect Japanese companies with representatives from Battle Creek and Lansing. Battle Creek was represented by Mayor Mark Behnke as well as BCU's Robert Corder and Ken Masumoto.

President's Desk, cont'd from page 1

The event is held every two years in Paris. More than 2,600 companies from more than 65 countries exhibited at this year's show. I spoke with several manufacturers about MICH-AIR, the advanced air mobility hub under development at the Battle Creek Executive Airport (BTL).

Speaking of MICH-AIR, the hardware for the beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS) system was installed in July. Sensors were mounted on the top of DoubleTree Hotel downtown and at the WMU College of Aviation at BTL. ResilienX, our partner on the project, is now focused on developing the software which will integrate the sensor data and enable autonomous & remote aircraft to operate at BTL.

Another project nearing completion is the expansion of R + L Carriers on Columbia Avenue, across from the airport. The Ohio-based freight company operates a network of over 230 freight terminals and service centers across the country. They kicked off their expansion in Battle Creek in 2024. The facility will grow from 31 acres to more than 48 acres and add a new maintenance garage as well as additional truck parking. The project is expected to be completed by November 1.

Most recently, demolition of the buildings at 185 Capital Avenue SW and 199 Capital Avenue SW was completed in August. These properties are located across from the former Horrocks store and will be held for future development for the River Naturalization Project.

I hope everyone has a pleasant Labor Day holiday and enjoys the final few weeks of summer.

BCU President & CEO Joe Sobieralski (second from right) and WK Kellogg Co Chief Corporate Affairs Officer Stacy Flathau (fourth from right) with the Michigan delegation at Casa Ferrero in Luxembourg. Gov. Grethen Whitmer (fifth from right) stands next Lapo Civiletti, Ferrero Group CEO.

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 approximately 500 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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