



CITY OF BATTLE CREEK

CITY MANAGER - COMMUNICATIONS

Oct. 25, 2019

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information contact: City Manager's Office, 269-966-3378; Battle Creek Unlimited, 269-962-7526

City leaders invited to Japan for business program

BATTLE CREEK, Mich. — Several city leaders will travel to Japan next week to participate in a business networking program organized by the Japan Foundation, an organization dedicated to cultivating friendship and cultural exchange programs between Japan and the rest of the world.

Mayor Mark Behnke, City Manager Rebecca Fleury, and Battle Creek Unlimited President and CEO Joe Sobieralski accepted an invitation from the Consulate General of Japan in Detroit to apply for and, ultimately, be accepted to the Grassroots Exchange Network-Japan (GEN-J) Invitation Program.

This program hosts groups of local community and business leaders from U.S. regions with a high Japanese corporate/residential presence. Its purpose is to educate local leaders about Japan, and facilitate business and people-to-people networking.

Battle Creek leaders will join a group with leaders from Georgia and Tennessee. Rob Minard, Chief of Staff to Michigan House of Representatives Speaker Lee Chatfield, also will attend.

The group's itinerary includes a visit to DENSO headquarters in Nagoya. The DENSO plant in Battle Creek is the largest facility in the Fort Custer Industrial Park, and produces air conditioning products for automakers. The schedule also includes visits to the Japan External Trade Organization, Japan Business Federation, and Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The group will participate in a tea ceremony, and visit attractions including Inuyama Castle, a national treasure and one of the oldest original castles remaining in Japan.

U.S. officials from Illinois, Indiana, Georgia, Kentucky, Texas, and Wisconsin will participate in similar GEN-J trips, with featured visits to Kikkoman Corp. and Nippon Steel Corp.

"I am honored to represent the city during this program," Behnke said. "What a wonderful opportunity to explore the business and culture of Japan, to enhance our connections to that country, and inform our relationships with our Japanese neighbors here in Battle Creek."

Battle Creek has been developing relationships in Japan since the mid-1970s. Today, Battle Creek is home to 19 Japanese manufacturers, which collectively employ more than 7,000 people.

The Japan Foundation will fund most of the experience, including city leaders' airfare, transportation in Japan, hotel, host and interpreter, and meals.

###