

# State of the City of Battle Creek

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MAYOR MARK BEHNKE

JAN. 13, 2020



# Historic 2020

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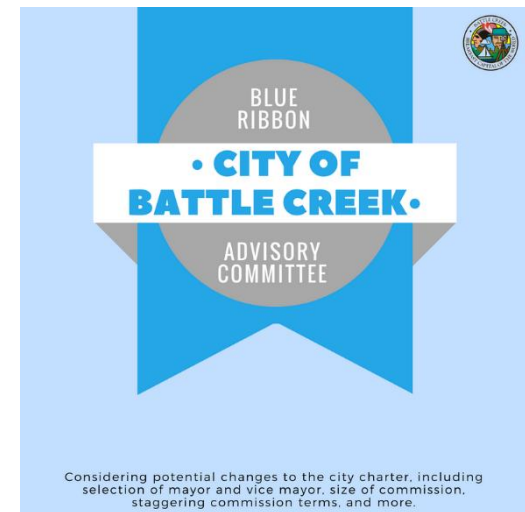
- Ballot question on whether Battle Creek will direct-elect the mayor
- Safety, and Fire and Police department relationships with neighbors and the community
- Affordable and accessible housing objectives
- Community prosperity and economic development



# Election – Blue Ribbon work

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- In 2018 the City Commission appointed a **Blue Ribbon Advisory Committee** to discuss / make recommendations related to the city charter.
- Battle Creek will see two ballot questions on March 10 related to this work.
- Commission approved first ballot question, which asks voters if we should remove all **gendered language** from city charter, using they/them instead of he/him/she/her.



# Election – Mayor vote

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- Commission approved language that allows Battle Creek voters to weigh in on the **direct election of the mayor** as a separate office.
- If approved on March 10, voters in November will elect five ward commissioners, three at-large commissioners, and one mayor, for a total remaining at nine.
- Current process is voters elect five ward and four at-large commissioners, and commission elects mayor and vice mayor among themselves.
- **Current process has been in the city charter since 1960.**
- Last time voters had this option was 1980 – the proposal gave the mayor role to the at-large candidate with the most votes. Voters rejected this.



# Election – Please participate!

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- Elections in 2020:

- March 10 – presidential primary
- May 5 – potential for any special proposals
- Aug. 4 – primary
- Nov. 3 – general presidential

- This is a City Commission election year!

- Please get out and vote. Lots of information is at [battlecreekmi.gov/elections](http://battlecreekmi.gov/elections).

- **Important changes:**

- Anyone can vote absentee; you don't need a reason
- You can register to vote up to and on election day (within 14 days of the election, it must be in person)



# Safety – Fire Department

- Smoke detector neighborhood blitzes – after a fatal fire
- Adopt-a-School – each city firehouse connected to Battle Creek elementary schools as a support resource
- Immense community outreach
  - Willard Library story times
  - Fire Prevention Week – all kindergarten students
  - Presence at community events
  - Many visits to schools and hosting at firehouses
- Constant training
  - Fire Officer/Staff and Command – battalion chiefs
  - Incident Safety Officer – all officers
  - Incident Command – all officers



# Safety – Police Department

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- Byrne Grant – connecting police and neighborhoods
- Crisis Intervention Team – addressing mental health needs with Summit Pointe
- Accreditation
  - BCPD
  - Forensic Science Unit (lab)
- Immense community outreach
  - Shop with a Cop
  - Bicycles for children
  - Toys for Tots / Stuff a Truck
  - Citizens Police Academy
  - Presence at community events



# Housing – Affordable/accessible

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- Battle Creek needs more housing types, at multiple price points, for varying income levels.
- Battle Creek issues also are not only related to affordability, but also **accessibility**.
- Barriers affecting our neighbors:
  - Past evictions
  - Criminal records
  - Inability to save first/last month's rent and security deposit
- Barriers can lead to neighbors living in local shelters, hotels/motels, or on the street.
- City works with agencies like Summit Pointe and the Calhoun County Homeless Coalition to address these issues.





# Housing – Programs/strategies

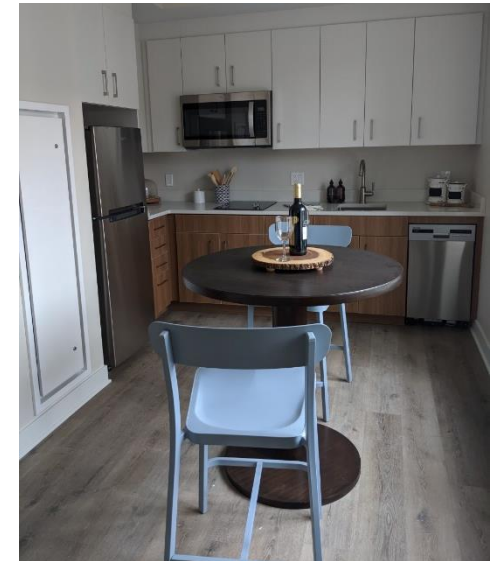
- **Hotel/motel ordinance** – Goal of introduction in early 2020; provide more oversight, and use as a framework to improve conditions at troubled hotels/motels.
- **211** – We encourage neighbors to call 211 to explore local services – direct connection to Summit Pointe, other agencies that assist with housing, mental health services, much more.
- **Community Development** – City division collaborates on this work, with a goal to create strong, sustainable, inclusive neighborhoods and quality, affordable homes.
  - Working to engage landlords interested in “second chance” rentals – better accessibility.
- **Innovation** – Purpose Built Communities and 20-minute Village
- **Other work** – Legal Services helping with eviction situations; faith-based organizations analyzing affordable housing location.



# Housing – A look ahead

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- Seeing greater interest in the Southwest Michigan market for mixed-income housing and tax credit projects.
- City engaged with at least four different housing developers, looking to implement Battle Creek projects ranging from 100 percent permanent supportive housing to market rate.
- Optimism for positive change and increased housing options in 2020!



# Economy – Japanese companies

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- Historic opportunity in October 2019 – Mayor, City Manager, BCU President/CEO invited to Tokyo Japan – **Grassroots Exchange Network-Japan Invitation Program (GEN-J)**.
  - Program hosts local community/business leaders from U.S. regions with high Japanese presence.
  - Educate local leaders about Japan, facilitate business and in-person networking.
- Great opportunity to explore business and culture, enhance Battle Creek's connections to Japan, inform relationships with our Japanese neighbors.
- Battle Creek developing relationships with Japan since mid-1970s.
- Battle Creek home to 19 Japanese manufacturers, employing more than 7,000.





# Economy – Small business

- Big focus on improving processes for our small businesses.
- City continues to support small business with development team playing critical role as business liaison.
- Mapping commercial districts community-wide, identifying needs/gaps in service.
- Engaging business owners through aggressive retention program.
- Ongoing technical assistance, innovative solutions – BC Cargo.
- New data tools in 2020.



# Economy - Airport

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- New look – **Battle Creek Executive Airport at Kellogg Field (BTL)**
- 2017 Strategic Business Plan
- **One of the city's most promising economic development assets.**
- Western Michigan University College of Aviation – 80 years
  - \$22 million expansion; expect enrollment to increase
  - Help with pilot and aircraft mechanic shortages
- WACO Classic Aircraft
  - \$18 million expansion: two new hangars, new fabrication shop, new FBO with second floor restaurant
  - Remanufacture the 1919 F13 Junkers
- More development opportunities on west side of airport; UAS.



# Economy - Prosperity

- Lack of labor participation – lags behind state/national averages.
  - Battle Creek Unlimited working with partners to address.
- Real Estate Improvement Fund grants – downtown projects
- BC Vision – jobs, education, culture of vitality
- Battle Creek Public Schools Transformation – academics, healthy culture, positive experience
- Strong neighborhoods – sub-area plans, starting Near North Side
- **2020 Economic Outlook**, hosted by Battle Creek Unlimited
  - Tuesday, Feb. 18 – 7-9:30 a.m. – Kellogg Arena
  - Free, open to the public – registration required – [bcunlimited.org](http://bcunlimited.org)

**Residential:** The Near North Side's housing stock and proximity to Downtown and hospital employment centers suggests a strong pilot opportunity.



# Questions?

Thank you to the Battle Creek Chamber of Commerce for hosting this event.

Thank YOU for joining us today.

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