

The Future of Business in Pittsburgh

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Gecko Robotics Keeps Humans Safe with Robotic Inspections

A Pittsburgh-based Gecko Robotics develops and operates robots to automate infrastructure inspections. Their wall-climbing robots perform inspections on tanks, boilers, scrubbers, piping, and more. Traditionally, these dangerous jobs were done by humans, resulting in death and injury. Now, Gecko makes these tasks safer by keeping personnel out of harm's way. The industries primarily served by Gecko Robotics include power, oil and gas, pulp and paper, chemical, and government.

Gecko Robotics began developing their technology in 2016 to modernize the historically stagnant industrial inspection industry. They focus on inspections using acoustic, laser, electromagnetic and other non-destructive testing modules. The Gecko Robotics Inspection Team (GRIT) deploys globally to provide inspection services. Once Gecko's robots gather the required data, their software helps predict when and where infrastructure failure will occur. The inspection data is presented in 2D and 3D within their cloud-based organizer called Gecko Portal.



In November of 2019, Gecko visited Japan as part of BIZ SAITAMA to demonstrate how they are using robots to conduct industrial inspections. Shortly after their visit to Japan, Gecko Robotics announced a funding round of \$40 million led by Drive Capital with participation from previous investors including Founders Fund and Y-Combinator. Gecko's angel investors include famous Pittsburgh native Mark Cuban, Justin Kan (founder/CEO of Atrium and Twitch) and Paul Buchheit (Creator of Gmail and Partner at Y-Combinator).

In January of 2021, Gecko Robotics announced plans to move their operations to a new 70,000 square foot building, doubling the size of their Pittsburgh headquarters and R&D facility. With this move, Gecko re-emphasized their commitment to the Pittsburgh region, even as their business is expanding globally.

Recently Gecko announced their most advanced robot, the TOKA Flex. The TOKA Flex can dynamically adapt from flat surfaces to pipes down to 6" in diameter. This is made possible by an independent steering, suspension, and electronic drive for each of the four permanent magnetic wheels. The robot is also aided by an onboard driving camera. Inspections with the TOKA FLEX are available immediately. For more information, visit geckorobotics.com.

Japan-America Society of Pennsylvania Builds Bridges to Japan

The Japan-America Society of Pennsylvania, or JASP, is a non-profit organization that has been dedicated to improving international understanding and strengthening the ties between Japan and the Pittsburgh region for the last 35 years. Their core mission is to serve as the go-to information source for, and liaison between, the Japanese and American business, cultural, and educational communities in Western Pennsylvania.



In addition to providing opportunities for businesses in the Pittsburgh area to connect with people and opportunities in Japan, the JASP has also worked throughout its history to provide education about Japan and Japanese culture. One of the initiatives of the JASP is their Japan in the Schools (JIS) program, which started in 1997 to bring knowledge of Japan into classrooms in the Pittsburgh area. A wide variety of topics are covered in visits to local schools, including Japanese history, language, culture, and origami. They also host a Japanese-English Reading Circle to promote language learning through reading and language exchange.

The Japan-America Society of Pennsylvania's other programming includes classes and a lecture series that have covered topics such as Japanese tea, ceramics, sake, sushi, and more. They are the managing organization for Pittsburgh Taiko, a local kumi-daiko group, and also host dinners and golf outings for both members and the public.

The JASP is affiliated with the National Association of Japan-America Societies, which exists to "strengthen cooperation and understanding between the peoples of Japan and the United States by providing programs, services, and information to and facilitating cooperation among its member societies".

The organization is funded through membership fees, fundraisers, and grants. Membership in the JASP is extended to individuals, non-profit organizations, and corporations. Noteworthy members include Deloitte, Mitsubishi Electric, Calgon Carbon (a Kururay company), Oriden, Wheeling-Nippon Steel, and the University of Pittsburgh. For more information, or to donate or become a member, visit <https://www.japansocietypa.org/>.

Pittsburgh Business News and Updates

- Sheetz becomes the first convenience store chain to accept digital currencies such as bitcoin, ether, dogecoin, & more - (<https://pittsburgh.cbslocal.com/2021/05/28/sheetz-bitcoin-cryptocurrencies/>)
- Near Earth Autonomy partners with German company Volocopter GmbH to test NEA's autonomous flight technology on VoloDrone aircraft (<https://asianaviation.com/volocopter-near-earth-autonomy-partner-on-autonomous-flight-capabilities-for-volodrone/>)
- With over \$5 million in new funding, Metafy seeks to turn video gamers into professional coaches (<https://news.crunchbase.com/news/josh-fabian-metafy-something-ventured/>)
- DeltaTrainer, a remote personal training company, raised over \$3 million to boost development of its platform and wearable technology (<https://finance.yahoo.com/news/deltatrainer-raises-3-3m-one-121500053.html>)
- Tokyo native Fuyuo Ueyama discusses his experiences living in Pittsburgh (<https://pittsburgh.cbslocal.com/2021/05/25/western-pennsylvania-asian-american-pacific-islanders-culture/>)



About Ryan

Ryan O'Shea is a JETRO Investment Advisor focused on connecting Japanese companies to opportunities in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He is the host of Future Grind, a podcast that explores the ethics and impact of emerging science and technology. In 2017, Ryan co-founded an artificial intelligence startup that was named a Top 10 team in the IBM Watson AI XPRIZE. Ryan has represented NASA and CalTech's Jet Propulsion Laboratory as a Solar System Ambassador and serves both as a World Economic Forum Global Shaper and an ambassador for Pittsburgh AI. He is a graduate of the University of Pittsburgh & serves on the boards of multiple non-profit organizations. He can be reached at Ryan@futuregrind.org.