

# The Future of Business in Pittsburgh

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## Pittsburgh Emerges as Prime Destination for Japanese Businesses

Pittsburgh's reputation as a hub for advanced manufacturing, robotics, and innovation continues to attract investment from Japan-based companies, according to a recent [Pittsburgh Business Times article by the Regional Industrial Development Corporation \(RIDC\)](#). In November 2024, Mitsubishi Electric Power Products, Inc. (MEPPI) announced an \$86 million investment to build new facilities and laboratories in the region, potentially adding more than 1,000 jobs.

This follows Kubota Corporation's acquisition of Bloomfield Robotics, a Pittsburgh startup leveraging AI for crop monitoring, and Nippon Steel's proposed \$1 billion modernization of U.S. Steel. These investments reinforce Pittsburgh's status as a focal point for international business, particularly from Japan. The region is already home to a strong roster of Japan-based firms, including Hitachi Energy, Hitachi Rail, YKK AP, DENSO's Pittsburgh Innovation Lab, and Komatsu Mining Corporation. Overall, Japanese companies employ more than 21,000 people throughout the commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

"Pittsburgh has become known globally as a leading hub for innovation, particularly in the fields of robotics, artificial intelligence and biotechnology. Japanese companies, many of which are leaders in advanced manufacturing and technology sectors, are naturally drawn to these strengths," said RIDC President Donald F. Smith, Jr.

The region's appeal is further supported by world-class research institutions such as Carnegie Mellon University and the University of Pittsburgh, along with an extensive transportation infrastructure network that places major population centers just a short drive or flight away, making Pittsburgh an ideal logistics hub.

RIDC Senior Vice President Timothy White adds, "The combination of community-driven culture, quality of life and cost of living, proximity to a skilled workforce, great universities and an innovation economy, along with an existing cluster of Japan-based companies, are increasing the region's appeal and are likely to support the growth of this important industry cluster in the future."



YKK AP Technologies Lab operates in Pittsburgh at Mill 19.

## Softbank Negotiating \$500 Million Investment in Pittsburgh's Skild AI



Photo Courtesy Skild AI

Japanese investment giant SoftBank Group is in advanced talks to lead a \$500 million funding round for Skild AI, a Carnegie Mellon University spinoff developing general-purpose AI for robotics, according to [Financial Times](#) and other media reports. If completed, the investment would bring Skild AI's valuation to \$4 billion.

Founded in 2023 by CMU professors Deepak Pathak and Abhinav Gupta, Skild AI is creating adaptable AI models for robots across industries, from manufacturing to healthcare. The company previously raised \$300 million in July 2024, with backing from Jeff Bezos, Amazon, Sequoia Capital, and SoftBank, among others.

SoftBank's investment in Skild AI aligns with its broader strategy of funding AI and robotics breakthroughs. The Tokyo-based conglomerate has a growing footprint in Pittsburgh's tech ecosystem, having reportedly invested \$1 billion in self-driving truck startup Stack AV. It is also a major partner in the Stargate AI data center, a joint project with OpenAI and Oracle.

With Pittsburgh's AI and robotics sector rapidly expanding, SoftBank's deepening involvement underscores the city's role as a global innovation center. If finalized, the new funding would support Skild AI's expansion and commercialization efforts, helping bring its next-generation robotics intelligence to real-world applications.

## Pittsburgh Business News and Updates

- Trump Policies Expected to be a Net Positive for Japan  
(<https://www.oxfordeconomics.com/resource/trump-policies-provide-tailwinds-for-industries-with-exceptions-in-japan/>)
- The Future of Manufacturing and Medicine Rising in Pittsburgh  
(<https://elevate.bio/elevated-insights/the-future-of-manufacturing-and-medicine-rising-in-pittsburghs-hazelwood-green/>)
- PIT Airport Microgrid Draws Interest from Japan  
(<https://runwaygirlnetwork.com/2024/10/pittsburgh-international-solar-farm-hydrogen/>)
- The Rise of Pittsburgh as the Robotics Capital (<https://autonomyglobal.co/the-rise-of-pittsburgh-as-the-robotics-capital-from-steel-town-to-dual-use-tech-hub/>)
- Pennsylvania's Energy Leaders Drive Clean Energy Collaboration in Japan  
(<https://teampa.com/2024/10/forging-a-sustainable-future-pennsylvanias-energy-leaders-drive-clean-energy-collaboration-in-japan/>)



### 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, and also works with the Pittsburgh Robotics Network. 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.