Michigan and Japan: International Friends and Partners

Guest View

Rick Snyder
Governor,
State of Michigan

As Governor of Michigan, I am proud—and grateful—for the strong partnership between Michigan and Japan. The long history of the Michigan-Shiga Sister-State Agreement is an outstanding example of how two states with different histories and cultures can connect deeply and culturally with each other—even though those states are on opposite ends of the world.

50 years ago, Michigan entered a sister-state partnership with Shiga Prefecture in Japan. This agreement has since spurred a cross-cultural exchange of activites between Michigan and Shiga, including student and teacher exchanges, cultural events, art exhibits and artist exchanges as well as economic development initiatives.

This past fall I had the opportunity to visit Japan and foster the strong economic and cultural exchanges between our two states. The more we share what we can learn from

Outreach to the Heartland

From the Chief Executive Director

Ralph Inforzato
Chief Executive Director,
JETRO Chicago

At no other time in the recent history of the Japan-Midwest relationship has there been such a high level of interest by the American Heartland in Japan and also a great deal of attention from Japan in our Midwest region. Americans are happy to stop me after presentations to talk through their recent experiences in Japan, or tell me about their interactions with Japanese companies that have invested in their region or city. Even on a personal basis, in early December, I was astounded by meeting Kelly Carlton, mother of high school twin daughters from Princeton, Indiana, who told me how they were profoundly changed upon returning from Japan after their summer home stay in Tahara City, Aichi Prefecture, which is Princeton’s sister city. She said, “My daughters came back changed in the sense that they were so much more focused on learning; they are trying to continue their Japanese language studies and want to return to the country. They want to share their experience in the Japanese culture.”

In this small Town Hall meeting of local citizens and community leaders organized by Princeton Mayor Brad Schmidt, I was impressed by the keen insights and profound experiences that these Hoosiers had gained from Japan. I am a listener—not a talker—and their stories of meeting Japanese are as rich in nuance and detail as they are compelling. I accompanied Japan Consul-General Naoki Ito, who responded in such a heartfelt and eloquent manner at this gathering, as only he can, that we all felt a deep sense of “Kizuna”, or a bond among us.

My office is receiving so many requests to visit and interact with the local Midwest communities. Community representatives want to speak about the opportunity to seek new and support
JETRO Around the Midwest
Seminars, Meetings and Events

On January 18 in Indianapolis, the Japan America Society of Indiana celebrated the Japan Culture Center Opening and the 120th Anniversary of The Consulate-General of Japan in Chicago. Above, Consul-General Naoki Ito and JETRO’s Ralph Inforzato were among guests at the Kagamiwari Sake ceremony.

JETRO Chicago met with additional civic and business leaders on December 21. Pictured at right, John Mandabach, Business Development Executive, Bowman Family Holdings; Mayor R.C. Klipsch, City of Petersburg Indiana; Ralph Inforzato and Tsubasa Hashimoto, JETRO Chicago; Paul Wheatley, President, The Wheatley Group; and Ashley Polen Willis, Executive Dir., Pike County Economic Development Corp.

On December 19, JETRO Chicago paid a visit to Washington, Indiana to meet with local officials and business leaders. Pictured at right, Ron Arnold, Executive Director Daviess County, Indiana; Ralph Inforzato, JETRO Chicago; Mayor Joseph Wellman, Washington, Indiana; and Tsubasa Hashimoto, JETRO Chicago.

On December 20, Mayor Joe Yochum of the City of Vincennes, Indiana welcomed JETRO Chicago. At left, Ralph Inforzato is greeted by Mayor Yochum.

Rolling Through Indiana

On November 16, JETRO Chicago invited both the food and beverage industry and the public to experience the tea that Japan is famous for. JETRO held its last tea-focused event in 2011 and, since then, Americans have increasingly embraced tea-drinking for not only its healthy and refreshing reputation but its wide assortment of flavor profiles. Tea is so widely available in the U.S. these days that JETRO chose to once again offer the chance to learn first-hand what makes Japanese green tea so special.

Tea Specialist Mr. Oscar Brekell from Japan Tea Export Organization was the guest speaker for both the industry and public sessions, which gathered over 100 people. Mr. Brekell, a certified Nihoncha (Sencha) Japanese Tea Instructor, is the first non-Japanese person to work at the organization and lectures across the world. He spoke on the tea-growing regions of Japan and how growing, shading methods and harvesting the tea leaves result in very different grades of tea. Japanese green teas are usually described as full sun, shaded or roasted and both water temperature and steeping time for preparing them varies to best retain their different characters, Brekell explained.

The guests sampled several hot brewed teas as well as one he had cold-brewed for a day – a method becoming increasingly popular resulting in a smoother, less astringent drink. Following the presentation, four tea importers offered guests samples of their products from Japan, including a range of steamed and roasted green teas; an assortment of matcha powders for whisking into traditional hot matcha, culinary-grade for cooking, sweetened for blending with cold or hot milk, and conveniently packaged in portable single servings; ready-to-drink green teas and a rare cultivar-sourced bottled tea. Exhibiting were Itoen, Teagschwendner, Rishi Tea, The Tea House/Kanes and Chocolatines, proving chocolate pairs very well with green tea.

JETRO continues to bring quality Japanese food and beverage products to the attention of American food professionals in part by holding such events. More recently, JETRO has expanded their audience at times to include the public to hopefully deepen their understanding of and interest in Japan’s delicious products.

Article prepared by Cathleen Moore, JETRO Chicago
JETRO’s “Grass-roots Caravan” Welcomed to Jefferson County, IL

Jefferson County Development Corporation was delighted to host Japan’s team from the Consulate-General Chicago office and JETRO for a visit to Mount Vernon, in Southern Illinois, last November. Consul-General Naoki Ito calls his initiative to visit communities with a Japanese business presence the “grass-roots caravan.” We wanted Jefferson County’s visit to express the grass-roots role of small towns in economic development.

Southern Illinois is the best kept secret in economic development. A lower cost of living and property, reduced traffic congestion, and ample access to roads, rail and barge transportation make our communities the ideal place for manufacturing, agriculture and logistics-based commerce. Mount Vernon’s employment area provides 172,000 people within a 30-minute drive. Despite manufacturers building in the Deep South, our plant managers and staff share that our workforce productivity is envied by their sister plants in southern states.

Our November 29 visit began with an introduction to leaders at Magnum Steel Works, a fabricating plant specializing in long-wall mining equipment for Komatsu Mining Corp. We met with Komatsu representatives, State Senator Paul Schimpf, State Representative Terri Bryant, Mayor Lewis, County Board Chair Draege and others who spent the day with the team.

Next, we stopped at Continental Tire the Americas’ Mount Vernon Plant, with 3,500 employees. It is an outstanding example of German FDI, with multiple expansions valued at more than $800 million since 2006 and past partnerships with Yokohama Tire. Rend Lake College’s apprenticeship program with Continental is now in its 11th year.

Rend Lake College hosted a luncheon and roundtable discussion of workforce and education initiatives. We surprised attendees with an appearance by Governor Bruce Rauner, who articulated the connection between education and economic development. Southern Illinois University’s Carbondale Chancellor outlined their relationship with Rend Lake College, their automotive tech center, and plans for the future.

The Governor joined our tour of Marion’s AISIN Manufacturing Illinois plant, and also meetings with officials from AISIN Light Metals and AISIN Electric Illinois. These three divisions employ 2,500 people. Of interest was their training “dojo” and their participation in the “Apprenticeship Plus” program with Magnum Steel Works, National Railway Equipment, and Phoenix Modular Elevator.

Our dinner at Cedarhurst Center for the Arts showcased a presentation by North American Lighting (NAL), part of the Koito Group, with facilities in Paris, Salem and Flora, and more than 3,700 employees statewide. Local government and corporate officials from six counties networked with the Consulate-General’s team, allies from Intersect Illinois, the Illinois Department of Commerce, and the Illinois Manufacturer’s Association.

We truly appreciate our partnership with Consul-General Ito and JETRO, and our teamwork with the Japanese companies in Southern Illinois. Japanese FDI broadens the client base, improves R&D and production methods, and creates jobs and opportunities for smaller businesses. For example, NAL is responsible for sizeable growth at Schulte Industries. Through Komatsu’s acquisition of Joy Global Mining, Magnum Steel has new service offerings too. Jefferson County welcomes additional investment in manufacturing, freight & logistics, agriculture and other areas. Our companies are succeeding here and you are welcome to join us!

Housewares Show Features 12 Companies in Japan Pavilions

For the seventh time JETRO has organized the Japan Pavilion at the International Home and Housewares Show (IH+HS), at Chicago’s McCormick Place, March 10-13, 2018. 12 companies will be exhibiting in two pavilions, one in the North Hall (Booth #7944) and one in the South Hall (Booth #870). Five of the 12 companies will be exhibiting at IH+HS for the first time. All of the exhibitors will be showcasing the highest quality of “Made in Japan” home goods, including traditional Japanese cutlery, chopsticks, cooking pots, wooden cutting boards, tea tumblers, 3-D frames, eco-friendly tote bags, bathroom accessories, and cleaning items.

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Rochelle, Illinois Welcomes JETRO Chicago Visit

During my recent visit to Japan as part of Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner’s delegation, I had the distinct pleasure of being introduced to JETRO Chicago Chief Executive Director Ralph Inforzato and Consul-General Naoki Ito. After a short conversation, I invited them to come to Rochelle to explore the many opportunities we have to offer Japanese companies who seek to establish operations in the U.S. Much to my surprise, within just weeks of returning from Japan their visit was arranged for November 10th.

The tour of the City began with a delegation briefing on the day’s events in the City’s Conference Center. Then it was off to the Rochelle Municipal Airport where a helicopter was standing by to take our guests on an aerial tour of the City, which was followed up by a presentation about the more than $80M in infrastructure investments the City has made to attract industrial development. We then toured the Silgan Manufacturing plant which high speed technology produces 2 billion “can ends” per year which are used primarily for food packaging. The delegation then traveled to the MightyVine Hydroponic Growing center where they were briefed on the art of growing tomatoes 24 hours a day 365 days a year in a highly controlled “clean” environment. Sampling these tomatoes, the delegation enjoyed what are probably the best tasting tomatoes in the world.

A business roundtable luncheon was held where Mr. Inforzato and Consul-General Ito addressed a group of 30 industrial leaders and elected officials. Mr Inforzato spoke to the group by highlighting the significant infrastructure that the community has built to attract industrial development. He said, “The infrastructure investment is an indication of strong leadership.” He also went on to say “What impresses me most about Rochelle is the passionate leadership for building and growing a stable economy.” The tour ended with a tour of the Rochelle Business and Technology Center, which is a co-location data center for six internet providers and multiple users. Before departing, CED Inforzato and Consul-General Ito met with a group of City leaders. Mr. Ito’s parting remark was “I can see that Rochelle is the “hub” for everything from roads, railroads, good school facilities, and ample land for further industrial development”.

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Guest View

Jason T. Anderson
CEO, Greater Rochelle (IL) Economic Development Corporation

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Guest View

Caley Clinton
Manager - Marketing Communications & PR
Komatsu Mining Corp. Group

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The acquisition has brought together four of the most innovative brands in mining: Komatsu, an equipment design and manufacturing powerhouse since 1921; Joy, known for underground soft and hard rock equipment dating back to 1919; P&H, an industry-leader in surface mining equipment since 1884; and Montabert, a leader in hydraulic demolition and drilling equipment dating back to 1919.

“Acquisition was an important means of rapidly expanding our ability to create enhanced value for our customers,” Komatsu Ltd. President and CEO Tetsuji Ohashi said. “The P&H, Joy and Montabert products align perfectly with existing Komatsu offerings, allowing us to provide customers with a full set of solutions.”

P&H electric rope shovels and wheel loaders pair with Komatsu haul trucks, while the Joy and Montabert products bring underground and hard rock mining to Komatsu’s portfolio. Beyond its brands, the company is also leveraging its manufacturing expertise and dedication to service to combine best practices worldwide with the goal of being indispensable to its mining customers.

When Komatsu America Corp., a subsidiary of Komatsu Ltd. completed its $3.7 billion acquisition of Milwaukee-based Joy Global Inc. in April it was the largest acquisition in the Tokyo-based company’s history. Now, more than six months after the deal closed, the companies are coming together globally to rapidly enhance and increase Komatsu’s offerings for mining customers worldwide.

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Success for Stratasys Japan Co., Ltd. ... 3D Printer Company with Minnesota Roots

Stratasys Ltd., the world’s largest 3D printer manufacturer, set up a company in Japan in 2012. The company offers a wide range of 3D printers from large, high-performance printers for industrial use to ‘prosumer’ printers. It is now five years since Stratasys started business in Japan. This article is excerpted from a 2017 interview with Hiroaki Katayama, President and CEO of Stratasys Japan, who talks about Stratasys’s business expansion and future plans in Japan. You can find the complete success story at https://www.jetro.go.jp/en/invest/success_stories/stratasys.html.

Stratasys was founded in the U.S. state of Minnesota in 1989. After the merger with Objet, a leading company in the same industry in Israel in 2012, the Japanese subsidiary of Objet changed its name to Stratasys Japan in July 2012. Stratasys is now the world’s largest 3D printer manufacturer. The company’s decision to enter the Japanese market was not only because Japan was Stratasys’ second largest market after the United States, but also because they reasoned the market would allow them to grow through collaboration with Japanese companies. In Asia, the Chinese 3D printer market has been expanding rapidly in recent years and gaining significance. However, Stratasys believes that Japan continues to be the most important country in the region.

In Japan, 3D printers have been attracting attention for the past few years, but the initial excitement has calmed since around 2016. Nevertheless, interests in industrial applications of 3D printing are growing gradually. Keeping pace with fast-growing 3D printer markets in the world, Stratasys has steadily increased its sales. The global 3D printer market, however, grew just 17.4% in 2016, down from 25.9% in 2015. Much of the downturn came from declines in sales at Stratasys and 3D Systems, the two industry giants, which together account for 21.7% of the industry’s $6 billion global market.

Although Stratasys Japan’s sales have been flat since 2016, President Katayama remains positive. “The reason for the flat sales is that 3D printers are in a transitional stage toward being used for direct digital manufacturing (DDM). 3D printers have mainly been used to make prototypes in the manufacturing industry so far, but now they have started to be used to create jigs and parts for product manufacturing or end products. If this trend continues, they will eventually be used for mass production, resulting in a spike in the use of 3D printing,” he explains.

Stratasys recently transferred a member of the R&D group in Israel to Japan to collaborate on improving the 3D printing technology, and to evaluate Japanese companies’ technologies. Since then, negotiations on technical partnerships with several major Japanese companies have been underway. Fields for collaboration range widely from sensors and LEDs to materials and energy-conservation. Stratasys is considering establishing an R&D center in Japan in the near future to further promote these activities.

The president expresses his hope, saying: “Stratasys has been collaborating with overseas companies such as Siemens, Ford, Boeing and McLaren but is also hoping to jointly develop products with Japanese companies, who are inherently very cooperative and keen on creating new value for society through joint projects.”

Stratasys sees that in addition to automotive and aerospace industries where 3D printing technology is currently most used, 3D printing in the medical, dental, art and entertainment fields have significant capacity for expansion.

Stratasys has been receiving detailed information on the Japanese government’s subsidies for R&D and IoT from JETRO for their business expansion in Japan. The company has also been taking advantage of support from JETRO such as the provision of information on potential partners. Stratasys plans to seek further help from JETRO for their future developments in Japan, especially for establishment of their R&D facility.

JETRO Assists Six Startups at CES

The International Consumer Electronics Show (CES) once again broke its own records for size and attendance this past January. CES 2018, the world’s preeminent technology showcase and innovation catalyst, featured more than 3,900 exhibitors, including 900 startups participating in the Eureka Park marketplace. JETRO Chicago exhibited for the first time in Eureka Park, featuring six Japanese startup companies with an array of innovative technologies.

Aroma Bit introduced a new digital sensor that identifies and creates visual “fingerprints” for smells, which effectively “digitizes the last of the five senses we have”. BONX Inc introduced the hands-free, voice-activated, group communication device called Grip that allows athletes and outdoor enthusiasts to stay in touch no matter where they are. Borderless showcased the CrossHelmet, a “smart helmet” that utilizes high-tech solutions to improve rider safety and comfort. MJL Inc., a Tokyo-based robotics company, showcased Tapia, a personal AI robot companion. Novars Inc. introduced the ‘smart battery’ MaBeee, which is an AA battery-shaped IoT device that lets users take full control of an item such as a toy with their smartphone. Triple W showcased a non-invasive ultrasound device that tracks bladder fullness to help people with incontinence avoid accidents.
Governor Snyder ... from page 1
each other, the more we realize how much we already have in common.
Michigan is the leader in automotive research and design. We have a strong manufacturing base and we have a
talented workforce. Those qualities are attractive to businesses considering expanding in the United States, and as
the world becomes increasingly interconnected it's important that we work
together to cultivate mutual investments and stronger relationships.
The DENSO Corporation's decision to expand its North American headquarters in Southfield, Michigan will help create an even better environment for the development of advanced mobility vehicles and technologies. I look forward to building on these partnerships—and creating new ones—with a focus on cultivating business growth and economic vitality for both of our states.

Michigan's partnership with Shiga is not just about economic growth—it is also about deepening our understanding and appreciation of each other's vibrant culture and traditions. Last year Michigan celebrated the grand opening of a new Japan gallery at the Detroit Institute of Arts. Thanks to the support of the Japan Business Society of Detroit and a

Guest View: Battle Creek ... from page 1
the Department of Commerce's International Trade Administration, SelectUSA promotes job creation and inbound foreign direct investment. SelectUSA staff are stationed at embassies and consulates all over the world and work with foreign companies considering expansion into the USA. SelectUSA holds regular events to connect foreign companies with economic development organizations (EDOs), helping local communities build relationships with prospective international investors.

The theme for the Osaka and Nagoya seminars was “Innovation in the USA”. BCU was one of ten organizations selected to participate, and one of only two organizations representing cities. The other EDOs represented different states across the country.

The Osaka seminar started with a market briefing on Osaka and the Kansai region, followed by a presentation on the Osaka Innovation Hub, the city's impressive new tech incubator. After lunch, the formal program began. Approximately 100 people attended the event, filling the room to capacity. Each EDO gave a brief presentation about their competitive advantage and how they assist foreign companies coming in to their region. The presentations were followed by a networking reception, allowing the speakers the opportunity to interact with the attendees.

My message to the attendees was that Battle Creek is where innovations are manufactured. During the seminar, I had one-on-one meetings with three Japanese companies. These firms were interested in expanding their business into the USA and were eager to learn about Battle Creek.

Day two began with an early morning ride on the shinkansen to Nagoya. Due to the big snow storm in Tokyo, our train was significantly delayed. Fortunately we were able to get to the Nagoya Chamber of Commerce in time for the preliminary program, which included a market briefing on Nagoya and the Chubu region. Approximately 50 people braved the snow and ice to attend the seminar in Nagoya, with most companies in the automotive industry.

During the break, I met with another of the Japanese companies which requested a one-on-one meeting. This company is a large automotive supplier with multiple subsidiary companies, one of which already has a sales office in Michigan. They are beginning to look for manufacturing sites in the Midwest and wanted to know about the resources in Battle Creek for Japanese companies.

After the seminar, Gary Schaefer, the American Consul-General in Nagoya, graciously hosted a reception at his home. I met a number of top executives from some of Japan’s largest automotive companies. It was a great evening of networking.

The trip, albeit brief and with a few hiccups, was a great way for BCU to meet some new prospects and talk about Battle Creek. Thanks to the SelectUSA team in Japan and Washington, DC, I was able to interact with companies that I might never have been able to meet otherwise.

In addition to events like this one in foreign countries, SelectUSA also holds an annual Investment Summit in Washington, DC. The 2017 event attracted more than 2,800 participants from over 60 international markets, including over 1,200 global business investors. I am already registered to attend the June summit and am looking forward to connecting with more international companies looking to enter the U.S. market.
JETRO publishes 2017 Survey on Business Conditions of Japanese Companies in the U.S.

In October and November of 2017, JETRO conducted a survey on the state of Japanese manufacturers (producers and sellers) operating in the U.S. The results are summarized in a 31-page report, available for download as a PDF.

Topics surveyed included: (1) Sales performance, (2) Future business direction, (3) Procurement and sales destination, (4) Challenges in management, and (5) Changing business environment.

The survey reported that 74.4% of the respondents forecast profits, bringing the figure to over 70% for six consecutive years (the longest period in the 36 year history of the report).

Additionally 41% of reporting companies had increased local employees in the previous year; bringing the figure to over 40% for the past six years. With the favorable business environment in the U.S., 57.1%, up from 2016, were considering expansion within two years.

Among challenges in the management (factors related to increase in costs), the top item was “recruitment of workers” (70.6%), up 7.1 points from 2016, followed by “increase in labor cost” (68.7%), indicating HR-related concerns.


JETRO releases new Attractive Sectors Market Reports

A number of new reports have been issued by JETRO, introducing attractive sectors focusing on promising industries for overseas companies that are considering FDI into Japan. Here are the most recent of these reports, each available as a downloadable PDF:

- Smart Robots
- Biopharmaceuticals and Biosimilars
- Smart agriculture
- VR / AR
- Renewable Energy

Look for these reports on the JETRO headquarters site at https://www.jetro.go.jp/en/invest/attract.html. You’ll also find a number of reports on other sectors, published earlier.

JETRO publishes Invest Japan Report 2017


The report covers a number of significant points, and discusses them in detail, including:

1. The significant increase in Japan’s inward FDI, with stock and inflow both marking record highs.
2. The new trend of inward FDI in Japan, with foreign technology contributing to innovation in Japanese society.
3. Efforts and programs to make Japan the most business-friendly country in the world


You can download the complete report in English at https://www.jetro.go.jp/en/invest/reports/.

Contact JETRO Chicago • www.jetro.go.jp/usa/
Chief Executive Director ... from page 1

existing Japanese companies in their local regions. Our Midwest governors, mayors, economic development executives, academic leaders and their students all want to obtain a richer understanding of how the Japanese presence has grown and importantly how it can be sustained in the American Heartland.

The focus of Michigan Governor Rick Snyder’s article in this Midwest Newsletter is the fifty-year history of Michigan’s Sister State relationship with Shiga Prefecture. Through the years, I have personally heard Governor Snyder speak with passion about three things: the economic comeback of the State of Michigan; his perspectives regarding Japan; and his relationship with Shiga Prefecture. The personal relationship he has developed with Shiga Governor Taizo Mikazuki is one of a deep sense of trust. Perhaps an important component of the U.S.-Japan bilateral relationship, which is often unnoticed, is built by governors like Rick Snyder with his commitment to developing a close sub-national relationship between Michigan and Shiga. I also saw this same type of state-to-prefecture dynamic in Indianapolis in late October as Aichi Governor Hideaki Ohmura visited Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb. Well over 250 Hoosiers came to the Friends of Aichi Reception, held in Indianapolis, to welcome Governor Ohmura and his team. Japanese governors traveling to meet their counterparts in the Midwest to get a sense of what the Heartland of America is all about is a positive movement that we have not seen before.

I believe we are also seeing a wellspring of interest from our Midwestern mayors and their economic development teams, specifically those from small and medium size cities. These include Fort Wayne, Indiana; Evansville, Indiana; and Columbus, Ohio, all of which are just as active with Japan as their counterparts in large global cities like Chicago, if not more.

I think local leaders from these small Midwest cities can clearly see the sustainable business growth and job creation of Japanese companies in their respective states and can react quickly enough to create an economic strategy or adjust an existing plan to include a Japan development effort.

This support of Japanese investment expansion is what I see happening from economic development professionals like Mark Petersen, Chicago; Joe Sobieralski, Battle Creek, Michigan; Deborah Scherer, Columbus, Ohio; Jason Anderson, Rochelle, Illinois; and Greg Wathan, Evansville, Indiana. I realize these people may remain faceless to you. They do not write policy papers (although they should), but actually they do much more.

They travel to global markets, especially to Japan, to build relationships with Japanese companies that invest in their regions and their communities. Simply put, they sustain the virtuous cycle of Midwest job creation by Japanese investment. A Japan-focused economic development strategy has been the hallmark of Jim Plump, Executive Director, Jackson County Economic Development Corporation (located in Indiana), who has successfully visited Japan for decades. It is refreshing that new local Midwest economic development groups are focusing more intently on Japanese company investment in their cities and counties.

As a matter of fact, two of our friends, Jason Hester, President, Greater Columbus (IN) Economic Development Corporation; and Jonathon Hallberg, Executive Director, Jefferson County (IL) Economic Development Corporation; and Jonathon Hallberg, Jefferson County Development, Mount Vernon, IL, also wish to visit Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb. Well over 250 Hoosiers came to the Friends of Aichi Reception, held in Indianapolis, to welcome Governor Ohmura and his team.

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I believe we are also seeing a wellspring of interest from our Midwestern mayors and their economic development teams, specifically those from small and medium size cities. These include Fort Wayne, Indiana; Evansville, Indiana; and Columbus, Ohio, all of which are just as active with Japan as their counterparts in large global cities like Chicago, if not more.

I think local leaders from these small Midwest cities can clearly see the sustainable business growth and job creation of Japanese companies in their respective states and can react quickly enough to create an economic strategy or adjust an existing plan to include a Japan development effort.

This support of Japanese investment expansion is what I see happening from economic development professionals like Mark Petersen, Chicago; Joe Sobieralski, Battle Creek, Michigan; Deborah Scherer, Columbus, Ohio; Jason Anderson, Rochelle, Illinois; and Greg Wathan, Evansville, Indiana. I realize these people may remain faceless to you. They do not write policy papers (although they should), but actually they do much more. They travel to global markets, especially to Japan, to build relationships with Japanese companies that invest in their regions and their communities. Simply put, they sustain the virtuous cycle of Midwest job creation by Japanese investment. A Japan-focused economic development strategy has been the hallmark of Jim Plump, Executive Director, Jackson County Economic Development Corporation (located in Indiana), who has successfully visited Japan for decades. It is refreshing that new local Midwest economic development groups are focusing more intently on Japanese company investment in their cities and counties.

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