

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

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A RACE TO THE TOP OF THE TABLE

Like many regions and cities across the United States, Los Angeles has gone through challenging times over the past two years. Thankfully, because of its geographical size and diverse economy, the city has weathered the economic slowdown quite well.

Demographics have also played a vital role in strengthening the economy: There is a growing population of young people becoming more active in the workplace and starting their own businesses.

To guide this new crop of entrepreneurs and business leaders, Mari Miyoshi wants to play a new role as mentor. Miyoshi, who also heads Sumitomo Realty & Development USA, is the newest chairperson of the Japan America Society of Southern California.

"This is my new mission and commitment over the past two years. I want change to happen and give this chance to the younger generation, who will serve as a bridge. Yes, older people may have more experiences, but the youth has the motivation and dedication. I want to bring those together," Miyoshi explained.

"We have more essential jobs than any county and in the country. And almost 64% of the region's jobs are considered essential. Because we are one of the most diverse economies in the U.S., we have several legs of the stool to stand on. Kern County is considered the population center of California and is a four-hour drive from 40 million consumers. And we're very excited about the levels of new investment coming in," said Kern Economic Development Corp. President and CEO Richard Chapman.

Because the headquarters of SpaceX is located in Hawthorne, in southern Los Angeles County, there has been rapid growth in the aerospace, defense and space exploration industries. Another industry cluster that has shown robust growth is biotechnology, bioscience and life sciences, prompting county officials to prioritize those sectors over the next five years.

Meanwhile, some companies have moved to other states in search of lower operating costs. But there also are many companies that have returned to Southern California, realizing that lower costs don't necessarily result in greater efficiency.

"When companies grow to a certain size, some will look for cheaper places to operate. We explain to our clients and potential customers that while cheaper is cheaper, cheaper is not always better. There's a reason why so many companies have already selected LA. We have great assets, including the top two container ports in North America. That makes transporting goods and products more efficient," said Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation COO Stephen Cheung.

Aside from accessibility and connectivity, companies have returned to take advantage of the top talent and abundant resources in the region. Today, cities and towns in Southern California have stepped up their efforts to promote themselves as affordable, convenient and ideal places to live and work.

"We've always had a tremendously strong relationship with Japan. That has made San Diego a better place. I hope our talent and technology has also made Japan

better. After the last two years, we're looking to build new partnerships and renew old ones. As we continue to tackle various global problems, we can do it better when we work together. We can form good international partnerships focused on our talent pipeline, infrastructure and housing," said Nikia Clarke, executive director of San Diego Regional Economic Development Corp. World Trade Center San Diego.

With pandemic restrictions easing, a growing number of cities and towns have intensified their efforts to promote their areas and attract new investment, especially from abroad.

"We are constantly meeting with new businesses and new delegations, inviting them to see what we have to offer. As one of the safest, greenest, and highly educated cities, we have the ingredients to help businesses succeed. You have to come here, experience the city for yourself. We are always open to hosting people. Reach out, let us know what you need, and we'll make it happen," said Irvine Mayor Farrah Khan.

Aliso Viejo in Orange County is among those cities starting to grab the attention of international investors.

"Foreign direct investment is important to our city to keep our economy growing. We have a great base of businesses and foreign companies that is interested in investing in our city because of the great things and the innovation that is happening in this area. Our priority is to maintain a healthy and steady source of funding to ensure the best quality of life for our residents," said Aliso Viejo City Manager David Doyle.

BUSINESS LEADER FORGES NEW ROLE AS MENTOR TO THE YOUNG

"I want to give the younger generation a chance to make a change," said Mari Miyoshi, the first woman to be named president and CEO of Sumitomo Realty & Development USA and chairwoman of the Japan America Society of Southern California.

It wasn't an easy decision for Miyoshi when she agreed to lead the JASSC because of the group's 113-year history and the huge responsibility that came with it, not to mention the demands of being president and CEO of SRD USA.

"They have asked me many times to lead JASSC. Just by thinking about it, I didn't know how I'd manage my busy schedule. Before I committed, I first wanted to make sure that I can give more than a 100%. When the time came that I knew I was fully ready, I finally accepted the offer," Miyoshi recalled.



Mari Miyoshi, president and CEO of Sumitomo Realty & Development USA and chairwoman of the Japan America Society of Southern California

As only the second woman to chair the JASSC, Miyoshi wants to change the focus of the people she will work with. She believes that the younger generation has a lot to offer. Their determination and eagerness to meet her global vision will deliver benefits to the JASSC. Diversity will be another objective for Miyoshi, who emphasizes that nationality, race and gender will not be a factor in serving the JASSC.

→ <https://www.jas-social.org>

→ <http://www.sumitomo-rd.co.jp>



JFE ENGINEERING: BUILDING A CLEANER EARTH AND CARBON NEUTRAL SOCIETIES

Over the past 10 years, JFE Engineering America Inc. has kept up with developments in the domestic market and expanded its scope of work to include energy efficiency, energy utilization of new technologies and energy technologies that meet the demands of its American partners and customers.

"To transition to these business activities, JFE seeks to develop joint ventures in the Japanese market and third countries by combining its cutting-edge technology with the technology of American companies," said JFE Engineering America President and CEO Naoki Hara.

During U.S. President Joe Biden's visit to Japan, he and Prime Minister Fumio Kishida announced a new framework for economic cooperation that will usher in carbon neutral societies. Both leaders also resolved to build a strong bilateral supply chain and agreed to keep promoting the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy."

"To achieve this, JFE Engineering America aims to develop a demonstration project in Japan with American companies that have the technology to contribute to decarbonizing applications. Once the technology is proven successful, JFE will seek to deploy them to Southeast Asia with its American partners," Hara said.

"For instance, last year JFE decided to make a large investment to establish a base in its facility to manufacture the components that form the basis of offshore wind power generation systems.



JFE Engineering America President and CEO Naoki Hara

This not only contributes to the Japanese government's plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to virtually zero by 2050, but is also in line with the clean energy policy the U.S. government is calling for. We believe that Japan and the United States can collaborate in such efforts," Hara continued.

"The Japan-U.S. alliance has entered a new phase. Amid rapid changes in the world, business models also need to move forward in connecting countries, including those of the Indo-Pacific region. Expanding beyond bilateral trade relations will prove pivotal in the future," he added.

→ www.jfe-eng.co.jp/en



AKT TRADING: IT'S BEEN BUSINESS AS USUAL AMID CRISIS

As an importer of products from Japan, AKT Trading Inc. was hit hard by a slowdown in logistics and transport caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the health crisis, the Torrance-based firm stayed true to its commitment to act as a one-stop shop for Japanese food and beverage exporters to the United States and facilitate smooth business.

"We always try to make the best match between Japanese

producers and U.S. customers, as well as find unique products. Following the lifting of import restrictions in November 2021, we became the first importer of Japanese melons into the mainland United States," said AKT Trading President Akikazu Kimura, who enjoys introducing new products from Japan to American consumers.

"We constantly do our research and if they need a permit, we will get it for them.

Regulations always change; we teach them and help them with that. That is very helpful for Japanese manufacturers, for example," Kimura added.

Even amid the uncertainty brought by the pandemic, AKT Trading managed to introduce new Japanese products to American consumers. While millions of businesses struggled to maintain sales, the company only needed to shift its focus.

"Our dried candied yuzu (citrus fruit) peel was included in the premium sushi box served in the VIP room at the SoFi Stadium in Los Angeles. It was an honor that our yuzu was used for Super Bowl 2022. We also imported tuna a couple of times in 2021 from Nagasaki Prefecture, which was sold in a sushi bar in a high-end American grocery chain," Kimura said.

→ <https://aktusa.com>



Refusing to compromise on freshness, AKT Trading sources its tuna from a farm in Nagasaki.



LEARN ABOUT TUNA FROM NAGASAKI VIA THIS QR CODE



AKT's candied yuzu peel (bottom left) debuted during Super Bowl LVI at SoFi Stadium on Feb. 13.

LITIGATION FIRM WINS TRIALS AND ARBITRATIONS FOR JAPANESE COMPANIES

Headquartered in California, Kitagawa & Ebert is one of the few American law firms that have won trials and arbitrations for Japanese business clients in federal courts and arbitrations in multiple states.

It represents many prominent Japanese clients in the United States and has lawyers licensed in California, Texas, Georgia, New York, Michigan, Nevada and Alabama, including those admitted to practice before the U.S. Supreme Court. They also have satellite offices in both Texas (by appointment) and Georgia (by appointment).

"Japanese businesses entrust us with complex business litigation matters and engage our firm for guidance on business legal risk management. We are experienced U.S. business lawyers who win difficult trials and arbitrations," said Partner Lisa Kitagawa, who is the third of only four American lawyers to have graduated from Kyoto University.

"In the USA, only 1% of civil cases go to trial, so very few U.S. lawyers have actual trial and arbitration experience," she added.

"We are respected for our winning strategies and ability to communicate persuasively and respectfully with clients, opposing lawyers, judges and arbitrators. We skillfully navigate through complex business matters and build bridges so that our clients succeed and win," Kitagawa added.

Partner James Ebert, who also attended Kyoto University, is a lawyer and a California certified public accountant.

"Kitagawa & Ebert is a Japanese bilingual practice that excels at legal strategy and has mastered the legal research, legal writing and litigation skills which are required for complex business litigation, trials and arbitrations. Other Japanese bilingual lawyers lack actual litigation or trial experience, and do not have a deep understanding of U.S. history and business culture," Kitagawa said.

Because of its sophisticated utilization of technology amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the firm continues to grow and expand its Japanese client base, which encompasses a broad spectrum of industries, including energy, technology, automotive, food, logistics, manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, real estate, finance, investment, entertainment and the internet.

"With our firm's extensive business experience, Japanese bilingual team and understanding of U.S. and Japan cultures, we are successful in winning complex business disputes. We also have a busy transactional business practice in contracts, corporate, real estate, employment and other matters," Kitagawa said.

"We understand the complexities of doing business in the USA. We provide experienced business strategies, including risk management for our clients' success in the USA," she added.

→ <http://www.japanuslaw.com>



Kitagawa & Ebert Partners Lisa Kitagawa and James Ebert



CALIFORNIA CITY SEEKS NEW PARTNERS

As the state's third-largest city in terms of land area, California City needs a higher profile if its ambitions to become an important economic center are to become reality, according to Mayor Jeanie O'Laughlin.

"We are looking for good partners that we can grow with and learn from. Those partnerships must make our city a better place. I believe that at the end of the day, we have a lot of potential that hasn't even been tapped yet," O'Laughlin said.

Located in the Northern Antelope Valley in Kern County, California City is easily accessible by road, which makes it a good location for businesses looking for cost-effective locations outside Los Angeles.

"I'd like to see some type of manufacturing here. We're very well located. Using Freeway 14, we are only a three-hour drive from Las Vegas Airport. That's less time than what it takes for me to go to LAX. The 14 goes up to Mammoth Lakes and Northern California. We also have Freeway 58, which is a main highway that goes to Bakersfield and also connects to Freeway 5, which goes up north," the mayor explained.



California City Mayor Jeanie O'Laughlin

"I've always thought manufacturing and distribution businesses would work well here because they would give us more jobs. We definitely want to have more employment opportunities," she added.

→ <http://californiacity-ca.gov>



ZOJIRUSHI: U.S. BUSINESS IS THRIVING

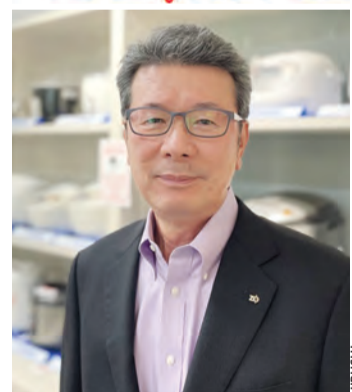
Founded in Osaka in 1918, Zojirushi Corp. looked to the American market when its breadmakers did not perform as expected by Japanese consumers. Recognizing that Asians preferred rice over bread for their daily meals, the kitchen appliance maker set up its U.S. headquarters in Southern California in 1987.

As an initial step to penetrate the huge U.S. market, Zojirushi partnered with such distributors and retailers as Macy's, Bed Bath & Beyond, and Crate and Barrel before further stepping up efforts to reach more customers by venturing into e-commerce. Its careful research and hard work paid off.

For Zojirushi America Corp. President Tatsu Yamasaki, the decision to take its products online was the best thing that ever happened to the company, pointing out that it consistently receives 5-star ratings on Amazon.com.

Its foray into e-commerce was also especially beneficial during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Like everyone, I had to make



Zojirushi America Corp. President Tatsu Yamasaki

difficult personal sacrifices during the pandemic. But our sales went up because many people stopped going out and realized that it was more satisfying to cook at home and easier to purchase our products online. We are grateful that more customers discovered Zojirushi products online," Yamasaki said.

→ www.zojirushi.com

SAN BERNARDINO PAVES FRESH PATHS TOWARD GROWTH

Thanks in large part to the opening of its international airport, San Bernardino has built a strong reputation as an ideal business location. The centrally located airport, which serves about 4 million residents of the Inland Empire, was instrumental in the city's efforts to attract new investors, among them Amazon and Tesla, which have set up major operations facilities there.

To attract more foreign investment, the city has set up special economic zones, among them the San Bernardino International Airport (SBD). Having recently launched its first scheduled service, officials are confident that SBD presents itself as a solid investment opportunity for Japanese companies. While the airport currently operates domestic flights, its runway can accommodate larger planes.

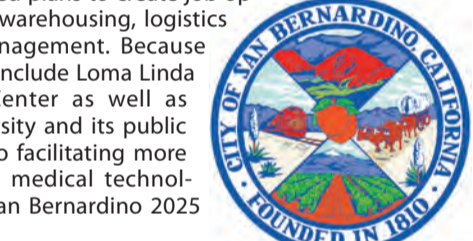
Anticipating the need for workers from new investors, San Bernardino also unveiled plans to create job opportunities, mostly in warehousing, logistics and supply chain management. Because its biggest employers include Loma Linda University Medical Center as well as California State University and its public schools, the city is also facilitating more work in research and medical technology in line with the San Bernardino 2025 Growth Plan.

City officials believe that the growth plan provides an excellent opportunity for residents and businesses. The plan envisions the establishment of a research triangle park either near the airport or the much-used Interstate 215 freeway.

San Bernardino has also built and invested about \$25 million in a health gateway college in partnership with Loma Linda University, which officials hope will become a great incubator for more research in biotech and pharmaceuticals. The city plans to double that investment in the coming years.

→ <https://sbcity.org>

→ <https://www.sbdairport.com>



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