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IT'S MORE THAN JUST BUSINESS

Japan, with around 1,500 companies that have generated more than 150,000 jobs in the region, plays an integral part in the economy of the U.S. Midwest, widely known as the industrial heartland.

Consul General of Japan in Chicago Jun Yanagi said the region served as "a strategic base for many Japanese companies" that enables them to develop their businesses "across the country and beyond," while **Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Chicago Executive Director Tetsuro Mitani** said it was a "land of promises and haven for investors seeking holistic business development."

Collectively, the states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin are among the world's most productive regions.

"Considering the combined GDP (gross domestic product) of all Midwestern states, we have the fifth-largest economic production worldwide," said **Midwest U.S. Japan Association Chairman Gordon Dobbie**.

Although known traditionally for manufacturing, the Midwestern states have attracted a new type of partner and investor, one that has recognized the area's suitability for growing their businesses in the 21st century, in fields such as electric vehicles (EV), green energy and technology, and life sciences.

"This is a fascinating time for the automotive industry in the Great Lakes region. In the past three years, 87% of OEM (original equipment manufacturer) investment has been in the EV battery sector, while EV and hybrid vehicles have seen a 15% increase in the market share compared to pre-pandemic levels," said **Alan Amici, CEO and president of the Center for Automotive Research in Michigan**.

Meanwhile, Lafayette in Indiana is building on its legacy as a center of advanced manufacturing, determined to become the production hub of semiconductor and microelectronics production in the Midwest with the help of Purdue University.

"With SK Hynix planning to invest nearly \$4 billion to build an advanced chip-packaging facility in West Lafayette, we are at the crossroads of next-generation tech manufacturing in the Midwest," said **Lafayette Mayor Tony Roswarski**.

Collaboration between the industrial and education sectors has grown much closer over the years with the recognition that such efforts, both cross-country and cross-border, lead to life-changing research and innovation.

"Strengthening research partnerships with Japan is key to solving global challenges and is redefining

the term 'impossible,'" said **University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Chancellor Robert Jones**.

Also in Illinois, Jefferson County announced last year that Texas-based Manner Polymers will build its first 100% renewable energy-powered factory.

"Green production and supply chain processes will be a key priority for foreign investors, including the Japanese. We're developing better renewable energy infrastructure and technologies to meet future challenges," said **Jefferson County Development Corp. Executive Director Tony Iriti**.

On the other hand, **Wisconsin Economic Development Corp. Secretary and CEO Melissa Hughes** credits her state's ability to adapt and innovate for attracting foreign investment, the largest of which is Kikkoman, one of the world's largest soy sauce producers.

Marking its 50th year in Wisconsin last year, Kikkoman has thrived in the state thanks to its business-friendly climate, the excellent work ethic of its residents, and easy access to soybeans, wheat and plenty of high-quality water.

"Our U.S. operations account for 70% of our business outside Japan. Kikkoman's Wisconsin facility symbolizes global market success," said **Kikkoman Corp. Representative Director Osamu Mogi**.

Across the region and industries, the Japan connection is highly valued.

"Investment opportunities in the life sciences and medical technology sector are booming here. We are setting the stage for Japanese investors to leverage our decades-long expertise and sophisticated ecosystem by partnering with innovators in Japan," said **Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership CEO and President Stephane Frijia**.

This long-running trans-Pacific partnership in business could not have happened if Americans did not take to heart important Japanese cultural values.

"We also believe in *omotenashi* (selfless hospitality) and *kizuna* (enduring bonds). Our hospitality towards our foreign partners centers on welcoming them and forging strong bonds of trust for years to come," said **Huntington Mayor Richard Strick**.

The same attention to the importance of long-term partnerships is at the heart of Indianapolis-based law firm Barnes & Thornburg LLP.

"The Midwest takes nothing for granted. While it offers unique benefits in terms of its central location, skilled workers, and countless business synergies, we embrace Japanese leaders as true friends and make deliberate efforts to prioritize their needs, community and culture," said **Partner Pete Morse**. ■

THIS LAW FIRM MIXES BUSINESS AND FRIENDSHIP

"Honored partnerships" and "cherished friendships" are how **Barnes & Thornburg** describes its relationships with all its Japanese clients.

The Indianapolis-based law firm has become one of the 100 largest and fastest-growing in the United States, thanks to its steadfast service to Japanese businesses.

The firm's Japanese Services Group is among the oldest and largest in the country, supporting hundreds of Japanese clients around the world. It includes Japanese lawyers, honorary consuls to Japan and other professionals with careers helping Japanese organizations achieve their goals.

The continued rapid growth in its Japanese client base is no surprise to **Partner Pete Morse**, who heads the firm's Global Services practice group.

"We never forget the reason we exist: to anticipate business trends, remain attentive to client needs and ensure their priorities remain ours. That includes handling legal matters, making regular visits to Japan and client sites, providing legal education, making introductions to government officials and even helping find a perfect gift for one of their customer's big anniversaries," Morse said. ■

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Barnes & Thornburg Partner Pete Morse



N.E. INDIANA ATTRACTS JAPANESE LIFE SCIENCES & GREEN TECH

Northeast Indiana has become the fastest-growing metropolitan area in the Great Lakes region.

In 2022, Japanese-owned Teijin Automotive Technologies invested over \$100 million in its facility in Huntington.

Over the past decade, the state has attracted more than \$1 billion in investments from several Japanese companies, including Asahi Tech America, Yamaguchi Manufacturing USA, and Yukiya USA Gasket, because of its robust infrastructure, strong workforce, energy-efficient climate and capacity-building programs.

Encouraged by the upward trend, the **Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership (NEI)** wants to deepen its relationship with Japanese businesses by widening its focus to include other rapidly growing industries.

"We are astute to the growing Japanese interest in the life sciences, medical technologies and clean energy. Making these sectors more investable is a key objective for us," said **NEI President and CEO Stephane Frijia**.

This year, NEI partnered with the Kinki Bio-Industry Development Organization, a Japanese biotechnology and medical technology association based in the Kansai region on the main island of Honshu, and has begun talks with Kyoto University for research cooperation in life sciences. It hopes to form more partnerships in musculoskeletal technologies, regenerative medicine, robotics and other supplemental technologies.

"Global life sciences and medical technology brands, like Zimmer Biomet, DePuy Sythes and Plug and Play trust our ecosystem. Our next step is to align our resources and strengths with Japanese companies and innovators," Frijia said.

NEI also sees many opportunities for collaboration with the Japanese in developing clean energy solutions within the automotive sector.

"Infrastructure and technology are key enablers of investment in the clean energy sector. Our region is not only well equipped



Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership President and CEO Stephane Frijia

with these, but we are also building green hydrogen and green steel manufacturing capabilities actively to sustain future investment. We are committed to being the launch pad for global solutions," Frijia said. ■

→ <https://neindiana.com>



HUNTINGTON: PARTNERS TODAY, FRIENDS TOMORROW

Huntington in Indiana celebrated the fresh vote of confidence from Japanese investors as Teijin Automotive Technologies opened its expanded factory in the city in April and conducted an official ribbon cutting on May 4.

"Our Japanese partners are community leaders in Huntington. We are honored to have their trust and grateful for their commitment to enhancing the vitality of our home," said **Mayor Richard Strick**.

The city's regular appearance on Site Selection Magazine's list of the Top 100 Micropolitans provides validation of the fertile ecosystem for local and international businesses in Huntington.

Situated in the heart of Northeast Indiana, the city lies along major highways (the I-69 and the four-lane "US-24 Corridor"), is close to Norfolk

Southern's main railway line, and provides access to more than 400,000 highly skilled workers.

Huntington's development is complemented by the region's thriving social infrastructure, which includes award-winning hospitals and health care centers, affordable housing and diverse leisure facilities.

Huntington County United Economic Development Executive Director Mark Wickersham said the city strives to become the "right partners" for all investors, their businesses and their families.

"Our mission is to be the partners of today and the friends of tomorrow," said Wickersham, who takes inspiration from the cherished Japanese value of *omotenashi*. ■

→ <https://www.hcued.com>



Huntington Mayor Richard Strick (right) and HCUED Executive Director Mark Wickersham (front left) cut the ribbon at the site of Teijin Automotive Technologies' expanded facilities.



LAFAYETTE LAYS FOUNDATION FOR JAPANESE SUCCESS

The Greater Lafayette Region and the city of Lafayette in northwest Indiana kicked off 2024 with a string of new investment deals. The region's and city's efforts to diversify their industrial base amid rising demand have begun to bear fruit.

In February, construction and engineering machinery manufacturer Caterpillar announced a \$725 million expansion to its plant in Lafayette. In April, South Korean chipmaker SK Hynix said it would build a \$4 billion advanced chip-packaging facility in West Lafayette.

While investors from around the world head to Lafayette, the Japanese business community was the first to recognize the benefits of operating in the city. In 1986, Subaru set up its only assembly plant and since then has invested more than \$2.2 billion in Lafayette and raised annual production to 410,000 vehicles.

Mayor Tony Roswarski attributes the city's success with Japanese investors to the region's distinctive business culture.

"In Lafayette, two plus two doesn't equal four but eight, because we get things done at a quicker pace here. Fostering a conducive business culture relies on a collaborative partnership among different stakeholders," Roswarski said.

"The Greater Lafayette region takes pride in its close collaboration with education partners like Purdue University and Ivy Tech Community College, alongside business partners and their suppliers, ensuring alignment at every level," the mayor added.

Apart from focusing on the investment climate, the city also focuses on improving quality of life for its residents and their families.

"We draw inspiration from the Japanese value that emphasizes a holistic quality of life, which is why our administration is dedicated to investing in our business partners and their families," said Roswarski, who oversees a \$40 million program to expand housing and a \$50 million project to improve the city's recreational spaces. ■

→ <https://www.lafayette.in.gov>



Lafayette Mayor Tony Roswarski

JEFFERSON COUNTY SECURES \$54 M INVESTMENT FOR GREEN FACTORY

Coinciding with a nearly year-old program to promote sustainability and innovation, **Jefferson County Development Corp.** has announced plans by Manner Polymers to build a 100% solar-powered manufacturing plant in the city of Mount Vernon in southern Illinois.

The facility, estimated to cost \$54 million, will be connected to a nearby 6-hectare solar field, which will be a cost-effective and reliable source of electricity for the Texas-based plastic compound manufacturer.

Touted to be "the most environmentally sustainable compound plant in the world" by **Manner Polymers' CEO Raj Bhargava**, this facility underscores Jefferson County's shift towards building renewable energy sources locally, positioning the region as an ideal

location for businesses pursuing sustainable growth.

"I am proud to say that Jefferson County is now not only to be a great place to work and live but will also be a premier destination for clean energy projects. Manner Polymer's commitment to our region is a testament to our commitment to sustainability," said **JCDC Executive Director Tony Iriti**.

Drawing on Jefferson County's strength in advanced manufacturing, Iriti envisions a future wherein the region will lead in clean manufacturing.

"Green and clean is the way forward. We possess the talent, space and infrastructure to support many such success stories. We welcome businesses and individuals to join us in our pursuit of sustainability as innovation and



Jefferson County Development Corp. Executive Director Tony Iriti

environmental stewardship thrive in our region," he said. ■

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SUBARU OF INDIANA AUTOMOTIVE



In Greater Lafayette, Indiana, we've developed a thriving workforce that can meet the demands of your company!

THAT'S WHAT MAKES US *Greater*



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