

MEMORANDUM



TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
FROM: VICTOR CARDENAS, CITY MANAGER
SUBJECT: MIDWEST JAPAN CONFERENCE 2026
DATE: SEPTEMBER 15, 2026

On September 9, 2026, Mayor Fischer and I traveled to Indianapolis to attend the 2026 Midwest U.S.-Japan Association Conference. The City of Novi has participated in this conference for several years, with the event alternating between locations in the Midwest and Japan. The last U.S.-based conference attended by City representatives was held in Chicago in 2022.

This year's conference brought together government, economic development, and business leaders from across the Midwest and Japan. Governor Gretchen Whitmer attended, along with representatives from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) and Detroit Regional Partnership (DRP). During the conference, we had the opportunity to connect with Consul General of Japan in Detroit Hajime "Jimmy" Kishimori; Kakeru Hada, who previously visited Novi through CLAIR; Governor Taizo Mikazuki of Shiga Prefecture, Michigan's sister state; and Japan's Ambassador to the United States, Shigeo Yamada.

Sheryl Walsh-Molloy, Charles Boulard and Regina Swick joined us on Thursday evening as the City, in partnership with the Detroit Regional Partnership, hosted a small reception for representatives of Novi- and Michigan-based companies. The reception provided an additional opportunity to strengthen relationships with our existing Japanese business community and make new connections.



We also met with representatives from several Japan-based companies, including TriOrb, a mobility technology company developing ball-driven omnidirectional movement platforms. TriOrb currently has a presence at Newlab at Michigan Central and is seeking a larger space. We have a follow-up meeting scheduled with company representatives next week and plan to show them two to three available properties in Novi for consideration.

Mayor Fischer and I also met with MEDC and State of Michigan representatives involved in facilitating sister-city relationships. Through those conversations, Novi was encouraged to explore a potential relationship with Maibara, a community of approximately 40,000 residents in Shiga Prefecture along Lake Biwa. Michigan and Shiga have maintained a longstanding sister-state relationship, with cultural exchanges between the two regions taking place regularly. We will continue exploring whether a relationship with Maibara could provide meaningful opportunities for cultural, educational, and economic exchange.

Finally, following Novi's recent visit with representatives of the Japan Local Government Center/CLAIR in New York, the City has been invited to participate in the 2027 CLAIR Fellowship Program. Sheryl Walsh-Molloy will represent the City during the fellowship, which will take place in Japan in February 2027. This opportunity builds upon Novi's longstanding relationship with CLAIR and provides another avenue to strengthen the City's connections with communities and organizations in Japan.