

## **Itsuwa KY, LLC officially coming to Bardstown**

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By Kacie Goode

Bardstown's partnership with International companies was strengthened Thursday as Itsuwa KY, LLC formally announced its plans to locate to Bardstown.

"This is good news for Itsuwa, this is good news for the Bardstown community, and it's certainly good news for Kentucky," said Lt. Gov. Crit Luallen at Thursday's event, welcoming the Japanese-owned company.

Itsuwa KY specializes in coating and painting automotive parts for part suppliers of Toyota Motor Manufacturing.

"As a supplier to the automotive industry, Itsuwa is the perfect corporate partner for Kentucky," Luallen said. "We're home to more than 460 automotive-related industries that employ more than 85,000 Kentuckians. That ranks us the third-highest in all of the industry-related employment in the U.S."

The company has purchased nearly 16 acres in the Wilson Industrial Park, which will allow construction of a 32,000 square-foot facility and create 43 new jobs with an investment of \$5.2 million into Kentucky's economy, Luallen said.

"New location projects like this one have helped Kentucky recover and exceed the state's economic losses that were suffered during the Great Recession."

She also said the state has been committed to helping Itsuwa, recently approving \$850,000 in state incentives for the project.

Itsuwa is the eighth Japanese company to locate in Nelson County, said Nelson County Economic Development Agency President Kim Huston.

Luallen said continued investments being made by International companies in the commonwealth have affected unemployment rates for the state.

As of Thursday morning, Luallen said, jobless rates for February in Kentucky fell to 5.2 percent and have been below the national unemployment rate for the past seven months.

"In Nelson County, unemployment dropped from 9.1 percent last year to the current rate of 5.9 percent," she said.

More than 170 Japanese facilities are now located in Kentucky, Luallen said, employing more than 40,000 Kentuckians.

While local partnerships with Japanese-owned companies continue to grow, the Bardstown expansion will make only the second U.S. location for Itsuwa with the first in Indiana.

“We are wanting to expand business, not just in the United States, but all over the world,” said Itsuwa KY General Manager Akira Hayashi. “A lot of our potential customers are already here in Kentucky, so it was (an) obvious choice for us to add a second plant in Kentucky.”

Huston said the process of Itsuwa choosing Nelson County as its location took about nine months, noting that the company was looking at four other communities in the state.

Huston said part of what made Bardstown stand out was its designation as a

“Most Beautiful Small Town in America.”

“I never thought when we won that award it would come down to industrial development, but that was one of the things they really liked, she said. “They wanted to locate in a community like us.”

Brad Krumm, an accountant for Itsuwa who traveled from Indiana to attend the announcement, agreed.

“We were so warmly welcomed down here,” he said. “This is tremendous ... we look forward to a very good beginning and contributing well to the community.”

Itsuwa Kentucky is a subsidiary of Itsuwa Sesisakusyo Co. Ltd. Established in 1973, aside from coating and painting automotive parts, the company also designs and builds its own equipment, including robot spray paint systems. The Bardstown facility is expected to be operational early next year.



*KACIE GOODE/The Kentucky Standard*

Itsuwa KY, LLC announced its expansion to Bardstown Thursday at My Old Kentucky Home Great Hall. Bardstown will be the second U.S. location for the Japanese company. Pictured are, from left, Judge-Executive Dean Watts, Lt. Gov. Crit Luallen, Itsuwa KY General Manager Akira Hayashi, NCEDA President Kim Huston, Bardstown Mayor John Royalty and Itsuwa Accountant Brad Krumm.