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Former GM plant succeeds as bustling business park

The Midlink Business Park in Kalamazoo is now 80 percent occupied a decade after General Motors closed the facility

Laura Clapper | [Tue Aug 24, 2010](#)

TAGS: Candlewood Suites, community economic sustainability, community redevelopment, General Motors, Hackman Capital Partners, Inc, Kaiser Aluminum, Midlink Business Park, Seneca Medical, Southwest Michigan First

When Pease Air Force Base in Newington, New Hampshire closed in 1991, the entire Seacoast community became anxious about how its closing would affect the economy and the community. Though I was a kid at the time, I remember the buzz and rumors concerning the creation of a business park and the importance of creating a sustainable local economy. The Base kept the economy afloat and its closure was certainly a blow for the locals. Almost two decades later, the Pease International Trade Port, formerly Pease Air Force Base, is a bustling business park that also houses the Air National Guard base.

It's in this spirit that I enjoy stories of successful community redevelopment after an anchor business packs up shop and leaves the community trying to survive economically in its wake. Southwest Michigan First, an organization dedicated to the redevelopment of the Kalamazoo Region announced a progress report on the Midlink Business Park, the business complex that was formerly a General Motors factory.

GM's former Kalamazoo plant is now home to 13 companies and once again plays a vital role in the sustainability of the local economy. Businesses including Kaiser Aluminum, Seneca Medical Inc and Candlewood Suites employ hundreds of local workers. Kaiser Aluminum alone invested over \$100 million in the plant.

"When General Motors closed the plant in 1999, we had a potential white elephant on our hands," recalled Ron Kitchens, CEO of Southwest Michigan First, the regional economic development agency in a statement. "Instead, we viewed it as prime real estate midway between Detroit and Chicago and we moved quickly to capitalize on the opportunity. It's since risen like a phoenix from the ashes."

Southwest Michigan First worked with Hackman Capital Partners to turn the 2.2 million-square-foot motor plant into a modern business park. The Midlink Business Park is now over 80 percent occupied and current tenants are clearing space to expand into the surrounding area. The redevelopment agency is targeting more businesses to move into the business park.

Source: Southwest Michigan First

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