

# Dayton Daily News

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## Once a 'Little Detroit,' Dayton region has two of final five GM sites in Ohio

By Thomas Gnau  
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As General Motors soon ends production at its Lordstown plant in northeast Ohio and readies to close a facility in Butler County, Ohio and the Dayton area continue a long transition away from being vital components of a job-generating behemoth.

GM has always been based in Detroit. But its gigantic parts division Delco literally had Dayton in its name. (Dayton Engineering Laboratories Co.). It had manufacturing plants throughout the state for decades. In 2000, GM still employed 26,000 Ohioans.

The recent announcement will leave Moraine's DMAX engine plant and a parts warehouse in Butler County as two of the final five GM locations in Ohio. Together they employ an estimated 4,600 people. That is about the same as work for Crown Equipment Corp., the fork-lift manufacturer based in New Bremen. Honda of America Manufacturing, by comparison, has 15,000 Ohio employees.

"(Dayton) was a huge, huge, huge GM town 40 or 50 years," said David Kudla, chief executive of Grand Blanc, Mich.-based Mainstay Capital Management and an auto industry analyst. "And now there's nothing."

Kudla grew up in Dayton. His dad, a teacher, worked as a guard at a GM/Inland plant in Vandalia during summers for more than a decade. He earned more as a GM guard than as a teacher with a master's degree, Kudla said.

Since a \$49.5 billion federal bailout a decade ago, GM emerged from bankruptcy to return as a profitable company. ...

... The automaker said it is "committed to maintaining a strong manufacturing presence in the U.S., as evidenced by our more than \$22 billion investments in U.S. operations since 2009," the company said in a November statement.

The American market remains the most profitable one for GM, Kudla said.

"Really, for profit, it's still about North America," Kudla said. ...

... Former Daytonian David Kudla understands that people may struggle with the fact that GM is cutting jobs while doing well.

But the market is well past what he called "peak-auto." ...

... Since 2016, the market has generally plateaued, and sales in China have dropped, as well, Kudla said.

GM CEO Mary Barra's objective is to "do it now — do the restructuring, do the belt-tightening," he said.

"It is about being pretty proactive and doing it now, instead of doing it in more of a reactionary mode, which GM and other auto companies have been guilty of in past auto cycles," Kudla said. "It's a bitter pill for many to swallow."

GM's Cain agreed the automaker is trying to position itself for today and future, for the crossovers and trucks that are popular now, as well electric and autonomous vehicles some expect to grow in prominence. ...

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