GM-Rooted Flint Manufacturing Plant On Auction Block

David Runk, Associated Press Writer

DETROIT (AP) — A Flint manufacturing and office complex that includes a building constructed in the 1920s by the founder of General Motors and that still houses his one-time office will be auctioned off Tuesday.

The Great Lakes Technology Centre, as it's now known, will be auctioned off in four parts. No reserve prices have been set.

Joseph Caleca, the complex's property manager who has been leading tours ahead of the auction, said he hopes the new owners will use the complex for modern manufacturing and that it will help invigorate the economy of Flint, a city 55 miles northwest of Detroit that is emblematic of the region's industrial decline.

"Anyone that has any kind of vision or imagination, they can turn this into anything they can dream of," Caleca said.

The approximately 40-acre site was redeveloped by John Miller and Tom Vigliotti in 1987 as a high-tech engineering and development facility for GM, but the last of the workers affiliated with the Detroit-based automaker are moving out this month.

Miller said the sale has attracted interest from international bidders. He said more than $140 million was spent on renovations at the site, which has been used by auto parts makers and more recently by businesses including a medical training facility.

"It still has lots of life left in it," Miller said.

GM was founded in 1908 by Billy Durant, owner of Flint's Buick Motor Co. Williams & Williams, the auction company that's handling the sale, said Durant's office is intact in the three-story building he built.

Outside the complex, a historical marker details the site's role in the unionization of the auto industry. In 1936-37, a sit-down strike at a Fisher Body plant there helped lead to United Auto Workers representation.

Two of the facilities being sold were built in 1989. The complex, which includes about 693,000 of building space, is designed to allow for easy conversion from manufacturing to offices and back again, if needed.

The sale prices will be released Tuesday, but the auction company doesn't plan to disclose identities of the winning bidders.

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Associated Press Writer Jeff Karoub contributed to this report.

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