

# OH City Home To Jeep Sees Auto Industry Revival

John Seewer, Associated Press

TOLEDO, Ohio (AP) — This Ohio town that has been churning out Jeeps since World War II, watching its fortunes rise and fall with the well-being of Detroit's automakers, is now finding itself in an enviable position within the car industry.

Chrysler and General Motors have promised in recent months to spend more than \$800 million on retooling and expanding their factories here.

These moves will create 1,400 jobs and keep thousands more at the three factories operated by the major automakers and at the smaller parts plants that supply them.

The auto revival is raising spirits around Ohio's fourth-largest city, where high-paying factory jobs have dwindled. Just an hour south of Detroit, the city for generations supplied the auto industry with spark plugs, transmissions and glass. But it has lost a third of its manufacturing jobs over the last decade and unemployment now hovers above 10 percent, just above the state average.

That's why Toledo Mayor Mike Bell called Chrysler Group LLC's decision announced Wednesday — to add 1,100 jobs and make its assembly plant a key part of its future — "the equivalent of a blood transfusion for our city."

It's safe to say these deals would have been hard to pull off without cooperation among the major players.

"This didn't happen overnight," said Ken Lortz, who's in charge of the United Auto Workers in Ohio. "It was labor, it was management, it was government, it was everybody sitting there saying what do we need. And through that process we got tremendous investment made all over Ohio and particularly in northwest Ohio."

Ohio Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur, a Democrat from Toledo who is wildly popular among auto workers, credited them for sacrificing pay and benefits and accepting lower wages for new hires in recent contracts in order to make sure the automakers didn't leave town.

"Sacrifice and partnership," she said. "Sacrifice by all the workers. Partnership between the company, the union, the city, state and federal government. They worked together to do something no one of them could have done alone."

Chrysler worker Richard Gartee, who's been making Jeeps for 28 years, said all sides recognized what was at stake.

"It's been a pretty big turnaround," said Gartee, 56. "We still make a good wage, but remember we gave up a lot."

## **OH City Home To Jeep Sees Auto Industry Revival**

Published on Industrial Maintenance & Plant Operation (<http://www.impomag.com>)

---

Chrysler's assembly plant, which opened in 2001, now has about 1,800 workers and produces the Jeep Liberty and Wrangler along with the soon-to-be-discontinued Dodge Nitro.

The plant will begin producing a new Jeep sport utility vehicle in 2013 to replace the Liberty. But expectations are that it won't be the only new model coming to Toledo.

Chrysler CEO Sergio Marchionne said last week there will be a new vehicle to replace the Nitro and hinted that other vehicles could be built on the same assembly line. He also said there's a chance of expanding Wrangler production if its sales increase overseas.

"This plant has been at the heart of what we've done," he said, adding that the latest expansion "reinforces the special relationship between Chrysler and the city of Toledo."

Chrysler in August said it would put \$72 million into its suburban Toledo plant that makes torque converters and steering columns, allowing it to maintain 640 workers.

That came after General Motors Corp. said in May that it would hire at least 250 workers at a transmission factory that already employs 1,700 people.

Chrysler worker James Young, 39, said he's hopes the investments will spread throughout the city.

"Hopefully it trickles down," he said, "to everybody, not just us."

**Source URL (retrieved on 12/20/2014 - 9:42am):**

<http://www.impomag.com/news/2011/11/oh-city-home-jeep-sees-auto-industry-revival>