

## Saab's headquarters moving to Royal Oak

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Saab Automotive employees will start moving into a new Royal Oak headquarters as early as today — in a move that will reinforce the company's new independence from General Motors Co.

The new Royal Oak headquarters will house 60 employees responsible for sales and marketing, advertising, technical assistance and customer support.

Saab is investing \$2.4 million in the new headquarters and the state of Michigan, Oakland County and the city of Royal Oak also have offered grants and tax breaks totaling more than \$1.4 million to help finance Saab's move to the suburbs.

**“This is very good news. It's a lot bigger than 60 jobs,” said Van Conway of automotive industry consultant Conway, MacKenzie and Dunleavy. “The symbolism is terrific because its shows this is still the center of the auto industry.”**

Saab's decision to relocate in Oakland County from Detroit also underscores that “there is a tremendous talent base here, and there is an infrastructure here. My view is that this is an acknowledgment the talent can be cost-competitive. There is a great talent pool that is willing to work.

**“I hope people around the country get it,” Conway said. “People don't realize all the innovation in the automotive industry is done around southeast Michigan.”**

Landing Saab was well worth whatever incentives were put up by the state, Oakland County and Royal Oak, he said.

**“The benefits are worth way more than they spent,” he said.**

Doug Smith, an Oakland County deputy executive, said the Saab decision will bring other benefits to Oakland County. The county now has a chance to bring other companies to the area that supply Saab, Smith said.

“We’re delighted they chose Royal Oak for their headquarters,” added Smith, who noted Saab also considered moving to Connecticut.

“The state worked hard on this,” said Smith, adding he believed the decision ultimately turned on the excellent quality of life available in Oakland County.

The city of Royal Oak approved a personal property tax abatement with an estimated value of \$29,000 in support of the project.

The plans to move from the GM headquarters in Detroit’s Renaissance Center was approved in November but stalled when a potential buyer dropped plans to acquire Saab from GM. The plans were put on hold pending the sale, said Mike Colleran, the chief operating officer for the new Saab organization in North America.

Saab was given a last-minute reprieve last month when it closed a \$406 million deal and transferred the Saab name and other assets from GM to Spyker Cars N.V.

The final plan to put the headquarters in Royal Oak is considered a major win for the Detroit area because it will bring visitors from all over the world to the region and firms up southeast Michigan’s reputation as the center of the auto industry in North America.

Colleran said Saab’s top priority now is to get vehicles to its 216 dealers across North America.

“We’ve got to get some product to our dealers (as soon as possible). We’ve got some cars pre-built and they should be at dealers by end of the first week in March,” Colleran said.

Colleran added that Saab plans to re-establish the brand as an import in the eyes of consumers.

“It’s very important for us to get back to our Swedish roots and our aircraft heritage,” he said.

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