



Ford Motor's Dormant Wixom Plant

Flowers are beginning to bloom through the cracks in the foundation that formerly was the economy in the state of Michigan. With the precipitous closure of auto manufacturing plants, and the strong ripples throughout the state's employment base, the state of Michigan has come close to the economic bottom. Now come the opportunities for rebirth.

The popular press is replete with stories about fantastic bargains in the inner-Detroit real estate market, with some foreclosed houses selling for less than \$2,000. This is opening the door for non-profits and start-ups to put down roots. With the lure of a [40% tax credit](#) on production costs (42% in the inner city), Michigan has become the locale for movies such as *Gran Torino*, and various television shows.

One long-lingering question is when would abandoned auto plants be converted to green tech uses? The Detroit Free Press [reports](#) that, at least in the case of one old Ford plant, the answer is "soon".

The Free Press says that Ford Motor Company has struck a tentative deal to sell its Wixom Assembly Plant to a battery manufacturer ([Extreme Power](#)), and a company that builds photovoltaic systems ([Clairvoyant Energy](#)). When it made Lincoln Town Cars and Thunderbirds, the Wixom plant employed 5,000 people. When it closed its doors two years ago, there were 1,000 workers. Xtreme would start out with 1,500 jobs, and Clairvoyant another 300.

Key to the deal is legislation that would raise the cap on state tax credits - something that looks like smart public policy under current conditions. Hopefully, this is just the beginning of opportunities to bring workers back to the auto plants, and to make the jobs green at the same time.