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## **GM to Hire 1,000 at New Atlanta IT Center**



*Governor Nathan Deal (left) and GM Chief Information Officer Randy Mott talk with the press after they announced a new GM IT information center to be built in Roswell.*

By Greg Bluestein

General Motors is making a comeback in metro Atlanta four years after closing its Doraville auto plant, lured partly by \$20 million in incentives.

GM said Thursday it will employ about 1,000 IT workers at a new \$26 million technology development center in Roswell. The operation, based in a sprawling facility once used by UPS, is already beginning to hire software developers, database managers and other high-skilled workers to design the company's back-office technical infrastructure.

"Not only is it 1,000 jobs, but they're high-paying jobs," said Deal. "These are the types of jobs Georgia can be proud of."

The deal came together over an eight-month period, and the center is expected to open in March. The state incentives funds include \$17.5 million in job tax credits and another \$2.5 million from the state REBA fund, a pot used for closing major economic development deals.

It's far less than the state used to seal other deals. Georgia offered up \$78 million in state incentives plus a workforce training program to land a Baxter International pharmaceutical plant last year that will employ 1,500 by 2018. And the state used \$45 million in tax credits and grants to lure a massive Caterpillar plant to the Athens area.

Officials say it's a reflection of GM's desire to locate here because of the high-trained workforce from Georgia Tech and other local institutions.

The Roswell center will be one of four GM opens around the country as it brings IT operations in-house, and Georgia was selected over several other sites in the region. Randy Mott, GM's chief information officer, said the company was drawn by the region's talent pool, geographic advantages and quality of living.

"We've done our homework and we know the greater Atlanta area is a great place to live and work," said Mott.

Georgia officials have long wanted to expand the state's economic base from one centered on agriculture and manufacturing toward more innovation and research positions. Lawmakers last year relaxed some requirements for R&D tax credits and made it easier for companies to qualify for tax credits for creating high-paying posts.



*Roswell Mayor Jere Wood talks with the press following the announcement of a new GM IT information center.*

The new focus - borne partly from the reality that corporate relocations and huge plant projects are scarcer since the Great Recession - could already be seeing results. Panasonic opened a new innovation center last year that would employ 100 people and Elavon, a payment processor, announced plans last week for a research hub that would employ about 50. State officials say AirWatch, a mobile software firm, is considering adding up to 700 jobs in the next few years and Deal said more are in the pipeline.

"It has a multiplier effect," he said. "This will allow us to keep more really high-qualified jobs in Georgia."

It could also spawn spinoff companies, as talented scientists and researchers parlay their skills in new ways. John Boyd of The Boyd Co., a New Jersey-based site selection firm, called the focus on innovation-based jobs a "logical extension of developing an advanced engineering base."

"I think Georgia is among the leaders in that regard," Boyd said.

Chris Cummiskey, the head of Georgia's economic development department, said the state must seek to lure in more "knowledge-based" jobs in order to remain competitive with regional and national rivals.

“This shows the diversity of Georgia’s economy,” he said. “This shows we are now an innovation center.”

At Thursday’s announcement, Roswell Mayor Jere Wood could hardly contain his excitement. In a quiet conference room minutes before the details were unveiled, he bounded to the governor and thanked him for the state’s support. Later, addressing an audience of dozens of attendees, he proclaimed it his best day in 15 years in office.

“We’re at full employment now. We’re out of the recession thanks to you,” he said, motioning to the GM executive. “And we expect even more jobs to come.”

**Staff writer J. Scott Trubey contributed to this report. Job seekers interested in applying for jobs can search here: <http://jobs.gm.com/search/?q&locationsearch=Atlanta%2C+GA>**