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Kalamazoo, Michigan: Global Manufacturing Gives New Life to Old Buildings

Demolition can often be bittersweet. While it may be the best business move, it can also generate a sense of sadness and loss since buildings often represent the history and legacy of the company — to colleagues as well as to the community.

Pfizer Global Engineering (PGE) has been exploring new ways to minimize the environmental impact of building demolitions while preserving the company's legacy. By partnering with site engineering, procurement, remediation, and EHS, the team has been successful in redeployment, recycling, and salvage of assets to assure landfill footprint expansion is minimal while preserving history. The Kalamazoo, Michigan Building 88 demolition project is one such example.

'New Life' for Parts of Kalamazoo Building — 90% Recycled

The Upjohn Company constructed Kalamazoo's Building 88 in 1959 to serve as its world headquarters. It housed more than 240,000 square feet of office space, resting on 42 acres of land. However, the large office space was no longer needed because of operating changes at the facility and the cost of maintaining it was extremely high.

Engineers noted the structure's great features, including high-quality fitments, landscaping and building materials — full height granite walls, floor-to-ceiling glass, and stone retaining walls. So the decision was made to remove the building and return the land to its natural state.

Recognizing the emotional attachment local colleagues and the community had to Building 88 as well as the potential for recycling many of its assets, the Kalamazoo project team was determined to preserve as many assets as possible. They recycled the granite, glass, stone and wood paneling, and redeployed furniture, substations and chillers. Some of the beautiful marble from the facility was reused to line walkways at Pfizer's downtown campus. Assets that could not be redeployed within Pfizer were sold or donated to nonprofit agencies. The company donated furniture, granite and other landscaping materials to Western Michigan University (WMU) for use in a campus upgrade project. The stately mahogany Upjohn board of directors table was also given to WMU where it is proudly being used. Pfizer held a "Come and Get It Day" for local nonprofits, who arrived by the dozens to select chairs, desks and other office assets free of charge.

In addition, the company recycled building materials that included:

- 1,900 tons of asphalt
- 6,800 tons of steel
- 400 tons of nonferrous metals
- Building concrete was crushed and used as backfill for the site

Over 35,300 tons of waste was avoided and landfill footprint spared through the redeployment, recycle, and reuse of materials, setting a very high standard for responsible demolition going forward. Best of all, precious pieces of Pfizer's heritage live on beyond the company and within the community.