



Neighborhoods
Canal Place

Entrepreneurs Key Redevelopment of old BF Goodrich, Selle Buildings

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Just 20 years ago, the stretch of abandoned BF Goodrich buildings along South Main Street was a grim reminder of the City's industrial decline. At that time, BF Goodrich was planning to demolish the structures and market the property.

But visionary developers recognized the potential of purchasing the old factories and transforming them into stimulating work environments that would appeal to young, creative, upwardly mobile professionals.

Redeveloped as Canal Place and the AES Business Campus, the buildings are now emblematic of Akron's evolution from an industrial powerhouse into a high-tech knowledge center.

The rubber workers of yesteryear are gone—replaced by graphic designers, architects, attorneys, advertising agency professionals, engineers, and computer and telecomm geeks. The spirit of industry and innovation that made Akron the “Rubber Capital” has been reignited throughout Canal Place and the AES building, as well as at the nearby Selle Generator Works and GoJo Industries. With a combined 4,000 people working in the South Main Street area, the district serves as a showcase for the City's efforts to bring tech jobs to Akron.

Totalling 1.4 million square feet, Canal Place is home to more than 100 companies, employing about 2,200. “With all the different types of firms here, there's a lot of potential for shared resources and knowledge,” says Stephen Stoner, facilities man-

ager for Canal Place.


Stoner adds that Canal Place, a vacant BF Goodrich factory redeveloped in 1988, has been a catalyst in the revitalization of downtown Akron. “Canal Place has encouraged people to come and see what South Akron can be.”

The Tell Companies transformed a former BF Goodrich property into the AES complex in 1994. Along with the headquarters of Advanced Elastomer Systems (AES), a polymer research firm, the building also houses the Brouse, McDowell law firm and Malone Advertising, one of Northeast Ohio's largest ad agencies.

Across from Canal Place is the Selle Generator Works, a post-incubator business office. Built in 1885 as the Selle Wagon Wheel & Gear factory, the facility was redeveloped in 2002 by Tony Troppe and Todd Ederer.

By adapting old buildings for reuse, Troppe says developers are creating “cool environments” that will attract youthful, creative types. “These workers are going to enjoy the patina of old brick versus the drywall of modern offices,” he notes.

At Selle (pronounced “SELL-ee”), the anchor tenant is Summa Enterprise Group, an entrepreneurial subsidiary of Summa Health System that was created to bring health-based products and services to the market.

Troppe says that cities of the future will be built around knowledge centers such as the Selle Generator Works and Canal Place. In Akron's case, the proximity of the University of Akron, GoJo Industries and Akron's industrial incubator at Canal Place, will bring synergies in which “people can translate ideas to marketplace,” he adds. 

Today meets yesterday at the Selle complex (top), while BFG's former “mahogany row” is home to Canal Place tenants (bottom).

