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Advanced manufacturing thrives in the city of East Providence - by Roberto DaSilva

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The term “advanced manufacturing” is used to describe the use of innovative technologies to create new products and refine existing products. The city of East Providence is proud of the growth of its advanced manufacturing sector, with a number of high-profile manufacturers either establishing or expanding their facilities. The number of local residents working in manufacturing has declined over the past few decades. However, the city saw an increase in these jobs between 2010 and 2020. This stands in contrast to the decline in statewide manufacturing jobs during the same period.

East Providence is fortunate to be home to the North American headquarters of Igus. The German company is a global manufacturer and distributor of engineered plastics and polymer-based products. The company relocated their manufacturing operations from Germany and operates its 189,000 s/f facility in the city. The firm also plans a \$200 million, 700,000 s/f expansion which is expected to provide 150 additional jobs. The international firm, Nexans, is also investing in a nearby manufacturing facility due to their relationship with Igus.

Aspen Aerogels is another advanced manufacturing success story in East Providence. The Mass.-based company designs, develops and manufactures high-tech aerogel insulation for use in a variety of industrial and research applications. The company has steadily expanded with hundreds of jobs at its local facility. The company spent \$30 million to retrofit an existing building to meet the needs of its commercial, military and aerospace customers.

Eaton Aerospace is a company that employs over 200 people and expects to add an additional 50 new employees in the next few years. The company manufactures critical components used in the aerospace industry. In 2013, the East Providence Waterfront Development District Commission was awarded \$5 million in disaster relief funding from the federal government for renovations to Eaton’s local facility after its previous location was flooded.

Nordson EFD is a world-leading designer and manufacturer of fluid dispensing systems and packaging. In 2008 the firm was outgrowing its existing manufacturing space and was searching for a new location to serve as its U.S. headquarters. After considering out-of-state locations, the company chose to remain in East Providence based on the quality of its existing employees and the availability of a high-quality facility. Today, hundreds of workers are employed at the company’s modern facility.

The latest major advanced manufacturing investment in East Providence is that of Zoll Medical Corp. This business develops medical devices and software solutions that advance emergency care and save lives. The company purchased the former Hasbro distribution facility for \$18 million and plans to spend up to \$14 million on its conversion into a manufacturing facility.

These investments showcase the city’s value as a center for advanced manufacturing. These cutting edge companies are benefitting local residents through higher paying jobs that build wealth and promote upward mobility. Their presence creates a skilled labor pool for other potential businesses and provides local tax revenue to help the city deliver government services.

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