A History of Performance

For 2016, the Chevrolet Camaro will come with a trio of available engines.

The one with the highest output — the 6.2-liter LT1 V8 that generates 455 horsepower and 455 lb-ft of torque — will make the new Camaro SS the most powerful SS to ever come off of Chevy's Camaro production lines.

However, the Camaro, in all its forms, has been offering impressive performance for nearly 50 years.

Shoppers in the 1960s only had 602 chances to drive the 1967 Z/28 home from their local Chevy dealer. The Trans-Am racing homologation special put smiles on faces by putting 290 factory-rated horsepower from a 302-cubic-inch small-block V8 on the streets through a close-ratio four-speed manual gearbox. Chevrolet's 1969 Camaro was quite a performer, too. In fact, back in 2011, bow tie fans voted it the "Best Chevy of All Time."

Blacktops and dragstrips in the 1970s also were lit up by Z28 Camaros, including the 1977 models. Dealers sold 14,349 of them and a total of 218,853 Camaros that year — the first year the Camaro outsold the Ford Mustang.

The 1985 IROC-Z gave Camaro buyers in the Reagan era 215 horsepower from an all-new 5.0-liter Tuned Port Injection V8.

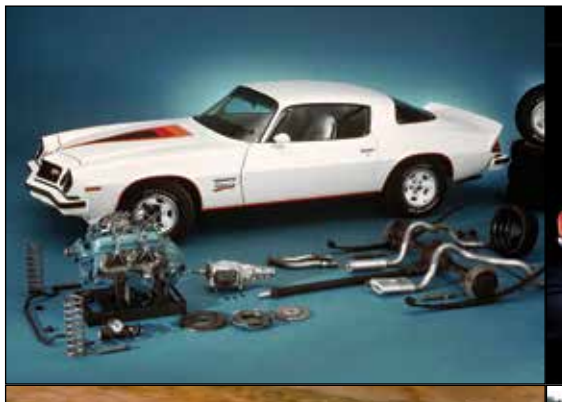
In the 1998 model year, the Camaro became available with the all-aluminum, 5.7-liter LS1 V8. Under the hood of an SS, it cranked out 320 horsepower. That number translated to an even more impressive one: a 0-60 mph time of roughly 5.2 seconds.

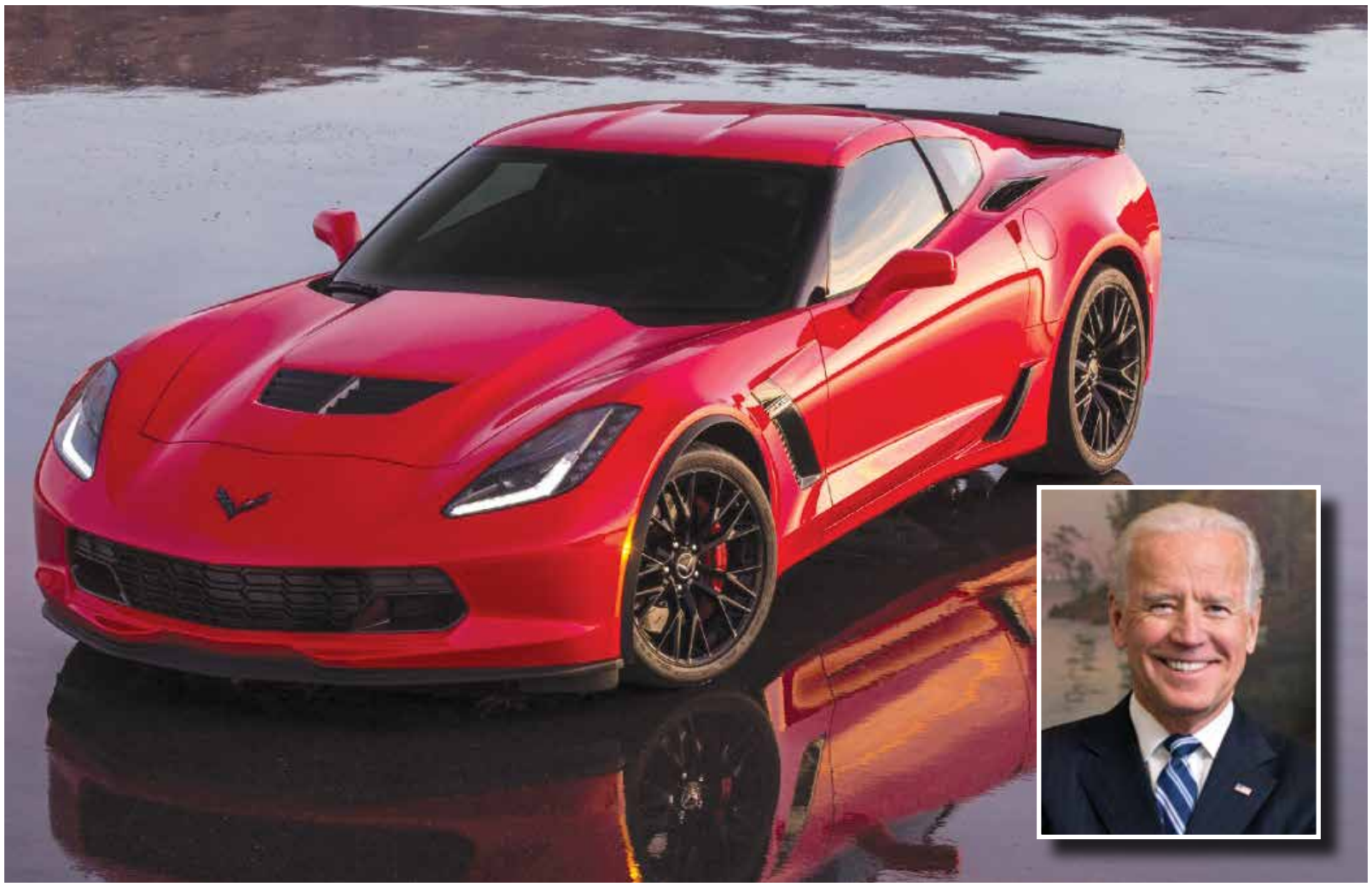
PHOTOS COURTESY OF GM

Unfortunately, it took Chevrolet much longer than that to bring the Camaro back after it discontinued the icon in the early 2000s. The Camaro finally returned to the market in the spring of 2009 as a 2010 model. SS Camaros stormed off dealership lots with the 426 horsepower provided by a 6.2-liter LS3 V8. The track-focused Z/28, reintroduced for 2014, featured a 505-horsepower, hand-built 7.0-liter V8 from the Z06 version of the sixth-generation Corvette.

The 2016 Camaro will go on sale later this year and give customers a variety of engine options, from a mightier V8 to power-rich four-cylinder (275 turbo-charged horsepower) and six-cylinder (335 horsepower) options.

Here's to the next five decades of Camaro performance.





White House Approved

Once politicians reach a certain level of power, their experience with cars changes drastically. They largely cease to be drivers. They spend the majority of their time in the back seat of an armored limousine instead of behind the wheel of a high-performance sports car.

Perhaps no politician is more aware of that reality than Vice President Joe Biden. He grew up around cars. His father managed GM dealerships in Delaware. Biden went on to own a 1956 Chevrolet.

Last year, he told the United Auto Workers about his restored Goodwood Green 1967 Corvette Sting Ray, which he called a "quarter horse." The second-in-command let a prominent automotive magazine know in 2011 that his C2 has a 350-horsepower, 327-cubic-inch V8 under the hood and "really gets up and goes." Biden loves his 'Vette so much, he once put on a bathing suit and washed and Simonized it. Unfortunately, Biden's Secret Service bodyguards don't allow him to drive the shapely classic for the sake of his safety.

Biden also has a soft spot for the newest versions of the Corvette. In early 2014, he announced to the UAW that he was looking forward to the upcoming 2015 Z06. The American supercar draws 650 horsepower from its supercharged 6.2-liter LT4 V8 and — in performance-enhancing Z07 trim — can hit 60 mph in as few as 2.95 seconds. It's also capable of tripping the quarter mile lights in 10.95 seconds while flying down the drag strip at 127 mph.

Given numbers like those and Biden's history with America's sports car, what the vice president said at the 2015 Yale commencement ceremony should come as no surprise. He told the school's graduates, "Corvettes are better than Porsches. They're quicker and they corner as well."

If Biden decides not to run for the presidency in 2016, he'll have more time to drive the Z06 of his dreams and race his brother in his 556-horsepower Cadillac CTS-V or to show one of his Porsche-driving friends why the new Corvette Stingray is "the best buy in America."

C7 Z06 Joins Powerful Tradition

The new Corvette Stingray offers as much as 460 horsepower and 465 lb-ft of torque. For those buyers seeking even greater levels of power and exhilaration, there's the Corvette Z06.

COURTESY OF GM

The high-performance version of America's sports car was created in the form of an option package for 1963 "split-window" Sting Ray buyers who wanted to take their new cars to the track. There, they would benefit from a Z06-specific thicker front stabilizer bar, larger-diameter shocks and stiffer springs. More heat- and wear-resistant brake linings and a larger gas tank also gave Z06 racers an advantage. A 360-horsepower, 327-cubic-inch V8 certainly helped, too.

From 2001 until 2004, the Z06 roared around road courses as its own special model. Compared to the Corvette coupe, the track-focused hardtop weighed approximately 100 pounds less, thanks to features such as a titanium exhaust system, thinner glass, and lighter wheels. That reduction was complemented by an increase — in horsepower; Chevrolet put an LS6 V8 with a more aggressive camshaft and higher-compression pistons under the hood. Output went from 385 horsepower in 2001 to a 2002 high of 405 with the help of additional engine modifications.

Wider front and rear fenders, a bespoke light-weight aluminum frame, unique wheels and a massive 7.0-liter LS7 V8 with 505 horsepower helped the 2006-2013 Z06 stand apart from the standard sixth-generation Corvette. A car equipped with the available Z07 Performance Package's carbon ceramic-matrix brake rotors, Michelin Pilot Sport Cup tires, carbon fiber exterior parts and Magnetic Selective Ride Control stood apart from other performance cars in general by lapping the Nürburgring in 7:22.68.

The current Z06, which Chevrolet introduced for the 2015 model year in coupe and convertible body styles, generates a staggering 650 horsepower and 650 lb-ft of torque from a supercharged 6.2-liter LT4 V8. With its available eight-speed automatic and the newest version of the Z07 package, the C7 Z06 can generate 1.2g of lateral acceleration and hit 60 mph in less than three seconds. The 2016 Z06 will zoom into your local Chevy dealership later this year.

7 Generations, 3 Plants, One Car

In the past 62 years, Chevrolet has sold more than 1.6 million Corvettes. Since 1981, the automotive performance icon has zoomed out of a factory in Bowling Green, Ky., a place now synonymous with the rolling legend.

However, before that time, two other cities played major roles in manufacturing the Corvette, the world's longest-running, continuously produced passenger car.

Following its 1953 introduction to the world at General Motors' Motorama show in New York City's Waldorf Astoria hotel, the Corvette was produced at a factory in Flint, Michigan. Workers there built the first 300 cars by hand.

By 1954, Corvette production had been relocated to St. Louis, Missouri. Employees at that location crafted approximately 700,000 first-, second- and third-generation models by the time assembly was moved to the state of Kentucky in 1981.

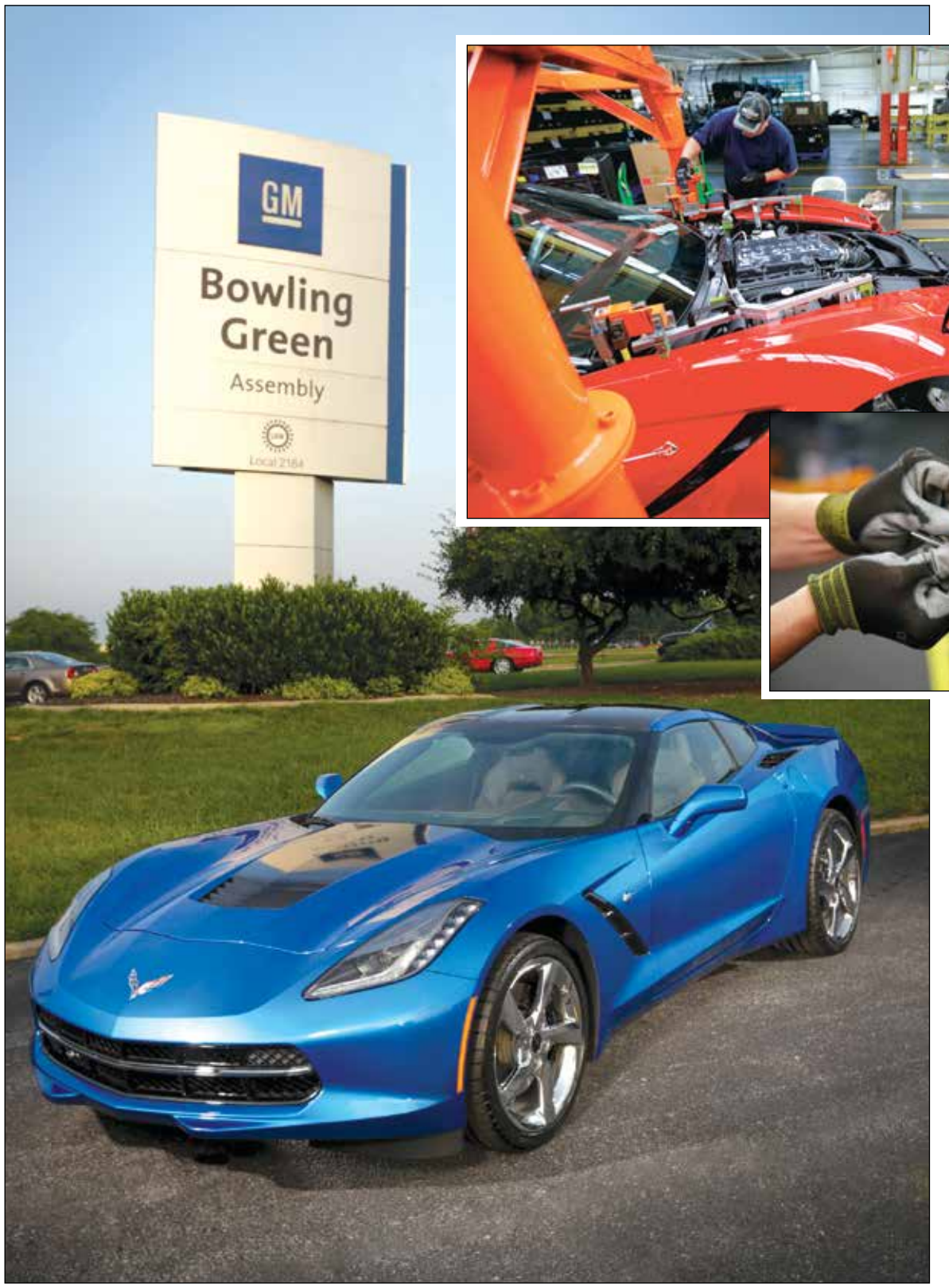
The city of Bowling Green has been the home of Corvette — and the place where many milestones in the car's history have been reached — ever since then.

For example, on July 2, 1992, employees at the facility built the 1-millionth Corvette. June of 2003 found the Bowling Green workforce celebrating the 50th anniversary of its V8-powered legacy. Customers got their ticket to the party when they purchased a Corvette with a 50th anniversary package, which included special paint and badges and Magnetic Selective Ride Control.

In 2011, General Motors made a major announcement. To prepare for production of the seventh-generation Corvette, it would be investing $131 million into upgrading its Kentucky facility. A large part of that amount, $52 million, went toward building a new body shop that would create the C7's aluminum frame in-house.

As of March 2015, Corvette Z06 customers can take part in Bowling Green Assembly's professionally guided Engine Build Experience and put together the 650-horsepower supercharged LT4 that will power the flagship American sports cars.

GM will be constructing a new 450,000 square-foot paint shop at the Corvette plant over the next two years. The environment-friendly facility is part of a $439-million series of changes the automaker will be making at the home of America's sports car.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF GM

80 Years of Suburban

Suburban is the auto industry's longest-running nameplate. Families first packed in and hit the road back in 1935.

For the past 80 years, it's been continuously updating and improving its legendary people-mover.

The first version of the model, originally called the "Suburban Carryall," was only produced from 1935 until 1936, but it came in a two-door body style that would endure for decades.

Output from the Suburban's "Stovebolt" inline-six engine grew from 60 to 79 horsepower for the Art Deco-influenced second-generation model.

World War II required the services of many vehicles, including the Suburban, whose third generation ran from 1941 until 1946.

After the war, Chevrolet significantly redesigned its truck line. That included the 1947-55 Suburban.

The next version featured "second series" styling between 1955 and 1959. That meant the Suburban wore a wraparound windshield and bodywork that was flush with its fenders for the first time.

Buyers of Suburbans produced between 1960 and 1966 had their choice of two-wheel (denoted by the letter C) or four-wheel drive (identified by the letter K) and a variety of engines, including two V8s.

When the seventh generation of the Suburban came to market in 1967, it arrived with three doors — a front door on the driver's side and front and rear doors on the passenger side.

That version was succeeded by the four-door eighth-generation Suburban in 1973. The SUV gained electronic fuel injection for greater gas mileage in the late 1980s. In 1991, it was discontinued.

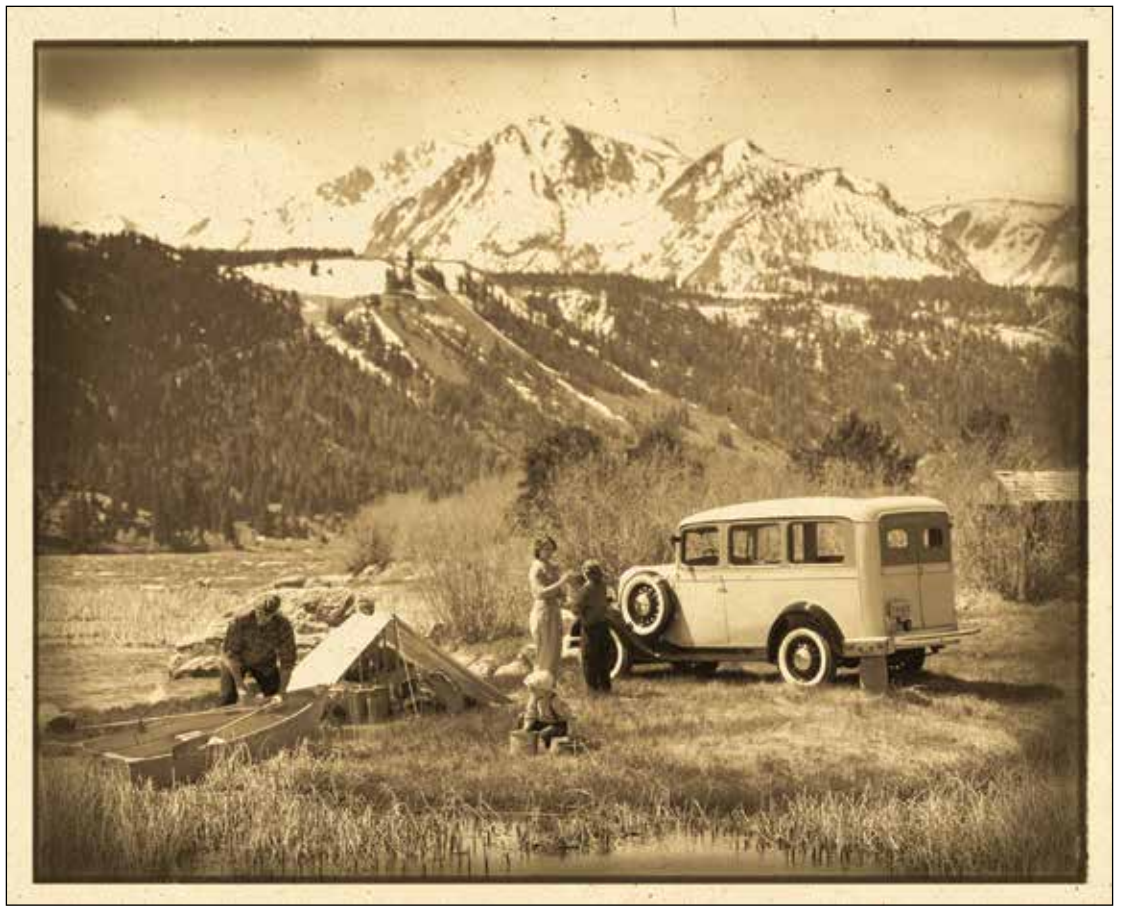
A more carlike ride and four-wheel antilock brakes are just a couple of the features that became available on the ninth generation of the Suburban. Chevrolet produced it from 1992 until 1999.

New exterior styling, interiors, and engines — including a pair of Vortec V8s — came to the 2000-2006 Suburban.

Chevrolet introduced the 11th iteration of the Suburban in 2007. Three years later, it celebrated the transportation icon's 75th anniversary.

Although the Suburban has now been around for 80 years, Chevrolet continues to make it even better.

The 12th generation of the four-wheeled institution, launched for the 2015 model year, has class-leading fuel economy of 15 mpg city and 22 mpg highway as well as OnStar 4G LTE connectivity.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF GM

Past and Future Meet

General Motors been making brilliant innovations accessible to the car-buying public for more than a century.

The company created the automotive industry's first emissions control device with its Positive Crankcase Ventilation (PCV) valve, then made it standard on all GM cars sold in the United States beginning in 1963. When it launched OnStar in 1996, the world had never experienced an in-vehicle, hands-free voice communication system.

For decades, the future of GM's automotive engineering and design has been coming from the Warren Technical Center, a location with a past that stretches back to the first half of the 20th century.

Alfred P. Sloan Jr., GM's chairman and CEO from 1937 until 1956, suggested that his company build a compound in which to keep its research projects. That recommendation began taking a physical form in Warren, Michigan in 1949. The $100-million industrial research complex officially opened in 1956.

Today, more than 19,000 people work at the Warren Technical Center. There, forward-looking products and practices share space with GM's rich heritage.

Every year, employees at the campus enter their vehicles into a car show. In 2011, 20 Chevrolets were chosen from that year's event to be featured in the Woodward Dream Cruise Parade that was part of the automaker's 100th anniversary celebration.

The Warren Technical Center is known for its four-wheeled creations, but last year, two-wheeled transportation started appearing in greater numbers throughout the 61-building mini metropolis. GM began a program with bike sharing company Zagster in which employees would be able to check out naturally emissions-free bicycles to use — instead of cars or shuttle buses — to get around the 330-acre campus.

GM announced this May that it will invest $1 billion into the center, which is now a National Historic Landmark, to support the growth of future business.

It will create roughly 2,600 new jobs there in the process. The people employed in those positions and their co-workers will benefit from new design studios and rebuilt and renovated R&D labs, among many other things.

Such improvements at the Warren Technical Center will help General Motors make technological breakthroughs and visually stunning models for generations to come.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF GM

Chevy Gives Volt a Recharge

It's shocking that Chevrolet was able to improve upon the Volt, the innovative car that blends environment-friendly and gas-saving electric power with the range-extending convenience of a gas-powered engine.

However, Chevy did just that with the 2016 Volt, which starts the second generation of a rolling win-win situation.

Chevrolet sold the first iteration of its innovative "green" vehicle between the 2011 and 2015 model years. At the end of that run, the Volt featured a 17.1-kWh lithium-ion battery pack connected to a 149-horsepower electric drive unit. That combination allowed Volt drivers to travel an EPA-estimated 38 miles without using a drop of gas.

For those who needed to go longer distances, the 2015 Volt had an 84-horsepower 1.4-liter gasoline-powered engine that provided as many as 342 miles of additional range.

Those are impressive numbers, but Chevrolet knew it could hit higher ones with its newest version of the Volt, and it has.

The 2016 Volt's new electric drive hardware and direct-injected 1.5-liter four-cylinder engine enable it to not only generate more power but go further in both pure-electric and extended-range modes.

Its new 150-horsepower two-motor electric drive unit is 100 pounds lighter than the hardware it replaces and up to 12 percent more efficient. The Volt's battery pack has a higher 18.4 kWh capacity despite weighing more than 20 pounds less than its predecessor.

Electric acceleration from zero to 60 mph is now 7 percent quicker at 8.4 seconds. Once up to cruising speed, owners of the 2016 Volt can go an estimated 50 miles on electricity alone.

The four-cylinder engine in the Volt generates 101 horsepower and returns a GM-estimated 41 combined (city and highway) mpg.

Total driving range, using both electricity and gas, is estimated to be an impressive 430 miles.

While Volt owners are on the move, they can more easily operate the 2016 model's intuitively placed controls. Owners of Apple's iPhone 5 or later model phones can make/send and receive calls and text messages, pull up maps, play music, and access other features through Apple CarPlay via the Volt's 8-inch touchscreen or Siri.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF GM