

# Is the Mackinac Center Too Successful?

**A**sk Bill Gates at Microsoft if you can be "too successful." At the zenith of his success, Gates is now decried as being "too big" by many of the same people and institutions who benefit daily from his products.

After completing our most successful year ever, some of our friends perceive the Mackinac Center for Public Policy as too successful. I've been asked a couple of questions that translate roughly as, "Isn't your new \$2.4 million building proof that you no longer need financial support?" and "Couldn't the \$2.4 million have been spent on other, more worthwhile projects?"

Let me explain why the answer to both questions is "no." Two years ago, we were



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18 people crammed into less than 3,500 total square feet of scattered, rented offices with almost no storage or meeting room, no place to host educational events, and inadequate space for the extensive library that is so crucial to our research. The space served us well for nearly a decade, but we

succeeded in outgrowing it. We put our minds to securing major relocation funds from new sources—money that would not be diverted from other Mackinac Center projects and would not otherwise come to us at all.

With the help of campaign co-chairs Ranny Riecker and Alan Ott of Midland, we asked four Midland foundations to fund the lion's share of buying and renovating an abandoned downtown department store building. The foundations saw the renovation as a great economic development project and a way to keep the Mackinac Center in Midland, so they provided the lead gifts. We could not walk away from their \$1.8 million in "new money" that would not have been available to us for other purposes.

With a head start of 75 percent of the funds, we launched the \$400,000 western Michigan component of the campaign, which succeeded in generating more one-time contributions that also would not have been available to us for other projects. In just over one year, we are less than \$45,000 away from completing the campaign.

We're inspired by our beautiful and functional new headquarters, but the Mackinac Center needs funding more than ever to maintain our momentum in advancing free markets, limited government, and individual liberty. I hope our decade of success makes you even more determined to support the Mackinac Center.!