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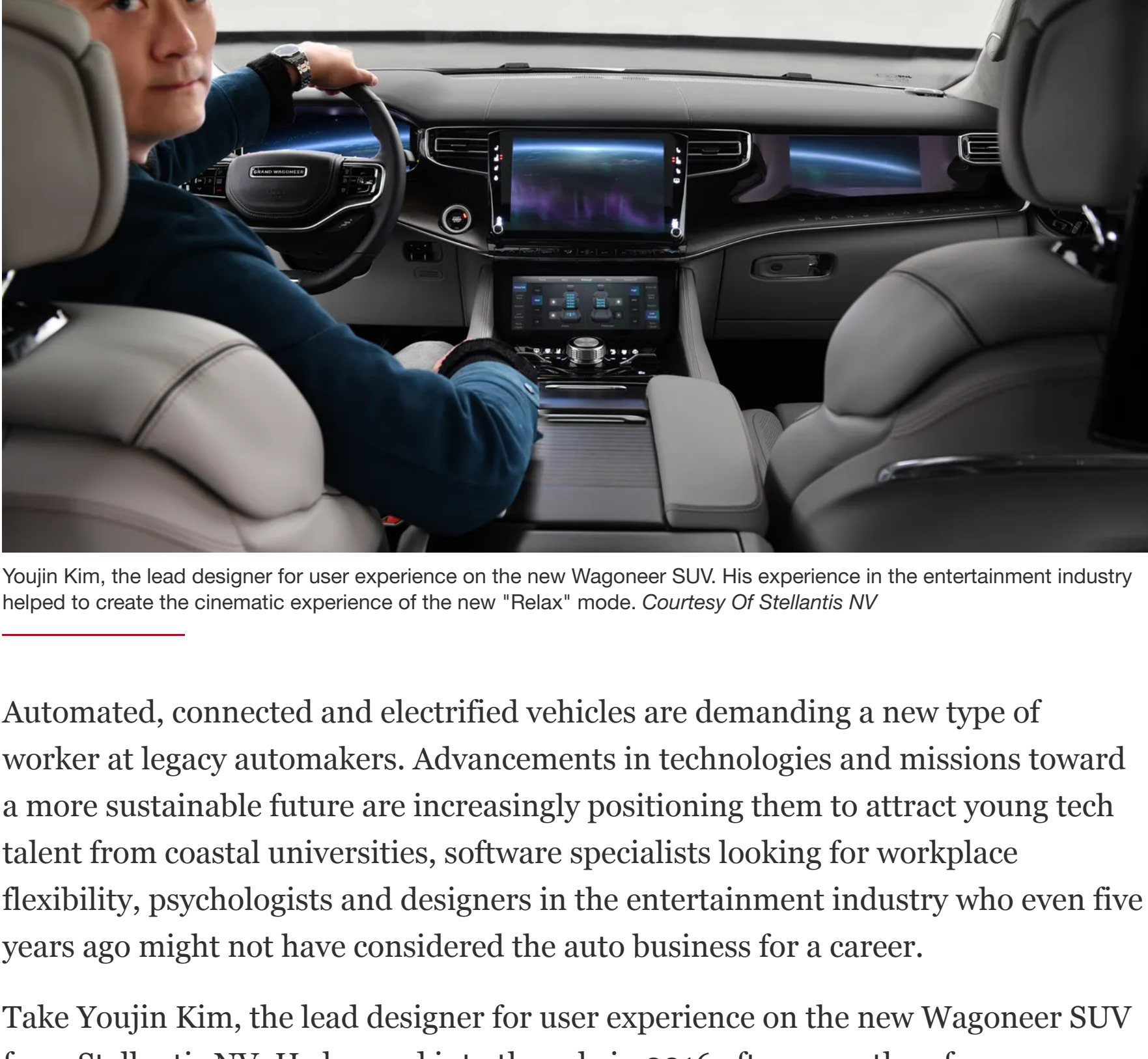
# Automakers tap Disney designers, EV racers, software specialists to drive their future

**Breana Noble, Jordyn Grzelewski and Kalea Hall** The Detroit News  
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An Emmy-winning former Disney designer helped develop the Jeep Wagoneer. A University of Pennsylvania grad wants a future without car accidents. And Ford Motor Co.'s software engineers help to tap the monetary potential of data.



Yujin Kim, the lead designer for user experience on the new Wagoneer SUV. His experience in the entertainment industry helped to create the cinematic experience of the new "Relax" mode. Courtesy Of Stellantis NV

Automated, connected and electrified vehicles are demanding a new type of worker at legacy automakers. Advancements in technologies and missions toward a more sustainable future are increasingly positioning them to attract young tech talent from coastal universities, software specialists looking for workplace flexibility, psychologists and designers in the entertainment industry who even five years ago might not have considered the auto business for a career.

Take Yujin Kim, the lead designer for user experience on the new Wagoneer SUV from Stellantis NV. He hopped into the role in 2016 after more than four years as a graphic designer at Walt Disney Television. He designed Marvel marketing videos, ESPN opening screens for the World Cup and Olympics, and graphics appearing in New York City's Times Square. His work even won two Emmy Awards.

"I never imagined I could work with the automotive industry at the time," said Kim, 38, of Rochester Hills. "Everyone got hired in the entertainment industry right after college and never thought about working in automotive."

## 'This is the future'

Kim graduated from New York City's School of Visual Arts with a degree in fine arts and graphic design and motion design in 2012. That was less than two years after the debut of the iPad.

"I never imagined the big displays could come into the automotive industry," he said. When they did and became an increasing draw for customers, it opened his mind to the possibilities.

Kim had been a car enthusiast since he was a child growing up in Seoul, Korea. His favorite playground as a 4-year-old was the mountains, where sat Willys Jeeps left there from the Korean War.

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"I was always amazed," Kim said. "It was like, 'This is my dream car.'"

Even when he came to traffic-congested New York at the age of 28, Kim had his Jeep Wrangler.

"I saw some improvements that I could make," he said about the vehicle's infotainment system. "With my skill set, I created some of the vision videos to actually express what it could be for the future automotive. I submitted it to the recruiter website for, at the time, it was FCA and now is Stellantis. I never thought twice I was going to get contacted."

It was just around that time, though, that Vince Galante — now Stellantis' chief designer of UX, or user experience, and advanced design — was moving from his role as an exterior vehicle designer. He was tasked with enhancing Fiat Chrysler Automobiles NV's UX team focused on the Uconnect infotainment system, now a leader in the industry, and the customer experience of its vehicles.

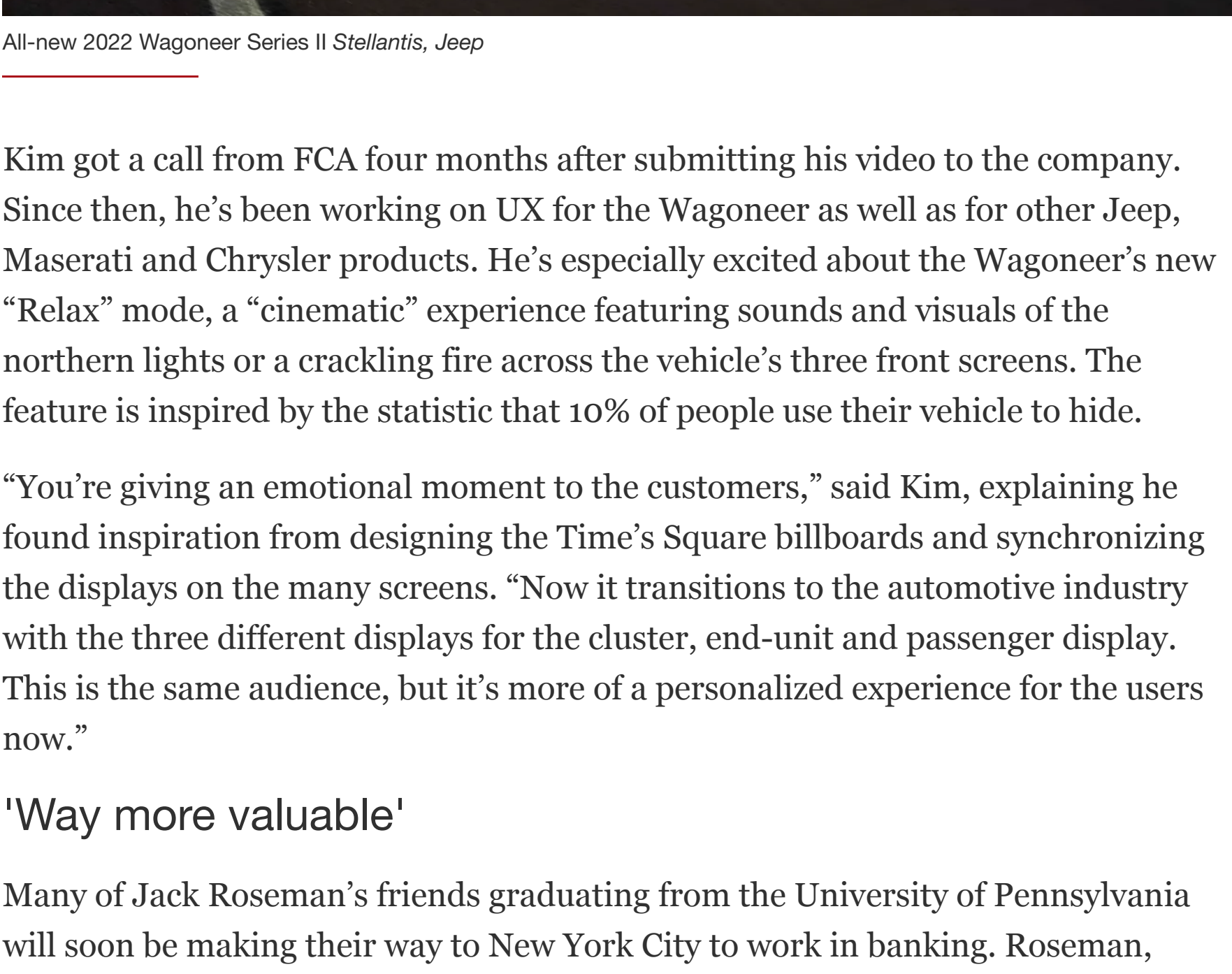
"On day one, I had no clue what UX was at all," Galante said. "We started talking and working, and my brain was exploding: 'This is the future.'"

It meant installing Amazon.com Inc.'s Alexa virtual assistant and now its Fire TV into the cars, which meant the team needed web designers. It meant using Unreal Engine and Unity, platforms used to make video games, so the company hired designers from that industry. It also meant being in tune with how customers think and react to certain stimuli, so the team found UX designers with psychology backgrounds.

"It's hard to find them," Galante said.

The global UX team has tripled over the past three years, he said. Many hires come from recommendations or job-seekers applying. The company also has broadened its college recruitment pipeline beyond Detroit's College for Creative Studies and ArtCenter College of Design in Pasadena, California.

On the psychology front, it's partnered with Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh for projects over the past three to four years. The team's recruiter also looks to the Academy of Art University in San Francisco and the Cleveland Institute of Art and the University of Cincinnati in Ohio.



All-new 2022 Wagoneer Series II Stellantis, Jeep

Kim got a call from FCA four months after submitting his video to the company. Since then, he's been working on UX for the Wagoneer as well as for other Jeep, Maserati and Chrysler products. He's especially excited about the Wagoneer's new "Relax" mode, a "cinematic" experience featuring sounds and visuals of the northern lights or a crackling fire across the vehicle's three front screens. The feature is inspired by the statistic that 10% of people use their vehicle to hide.

"You're giving an emotional moment to the customers," said Kim, explaining he found inspiration from designing the Time's Square billboards and synchronizing the displays on the many screens. "Now it transitions to the automotive industry with the three different displays for the cluster, end-unit and passenger display. This is the same audience, but it's more of a personalized experience for the users now."

## 'Way more valuable'

Many of Jack Roseman's friends graduating from the University of Pennsylvania will soon be making their way to New York City to work in banking. Roseman, however, will head to the Motor City, a place he's never been but where he's hoping to make a difference in the auto industry.

The 23-year-old from the Philadelphia area didn't grow up in a family of autoworkers like many Michiganians. But he will start his career at General Motors Co. next month as a software engineer after he graduated Monday.

"Everyone wants to work at Google, Facebook," Roseman said. "In my mind, I wasn't really shooting for companies like that because I just thought they were overhyped and not as valuable from a societal standpoint as something like moving millions of people every day so that they can get to their jobs. That's just way more valuable to me."

Roseman sees the societal value in the electric and autonomous technologies GM and others are developing. He wants to help prevent human-error crashes with self-driving cars, create better software so vehicles can communicate on the road and develop more sustainable transportation.

GM since 2017 has proclaimed its mission to reach zero emissions, zero crashes and zero congestion with its EV and AV technologies. The Detroit automaker in the last year has accelerated its EV plans. The end goal is to have a complete zero-emission lineup by 2035.

"I will say that one of the biggest things that attracted me was GM's huge change towards being a more technology-focused company," Roseman said.

Last November, GM set a goal to hire 3,000 new employees in engineering, design and information technology "to help transform the future of product development and software as a service."

Roseman was a kid who "always liked to build stuff." With his 3D printer, he would make his ideas tangible. Then he turned to computer science and the creative possibilities that exist with just an internet connection.

His interest in electric-vehicle making peaked when he joined the Penn Electric Racing team, competing against other universities "to conceive, design, fabricate, develop and compete with small, formula-style vehicles," according to the competition's website.

"I just found it to be very challenging," he said. "There's so much potential in what you can do when you electrify a car and connect sensors to it with smart computers."

## 'Software-led'

Ford, meanwhile, wants to shift its business model from one in which customers primarily make one-time large purchases to one that keeps customers coming back and paying for data-driven features and services with over-the-air updates.

To that end, the Blue Oval has been on something of a hiring spree. Alex Purdy, head of business operations for enterprise connectivity, said last week that Ford employs about 6,000 software engineers and data scientists — 600 of whom have been hired in the last year alone.

"From here on, facilitated by next-generation tech now standard in our newest F-150 and Mach-E models, we approach every opportunity as a software-led company," he said.



Doron Elliott works on his computer at River Place in Detroit. Elliott, a manager who is part of an embedded software development group within Ford Autonomous Vehicles. Max Ortiz, The Detroit News

Doron Elliott began building the embedded software development group three years ago within Ford's autonomous vehicle division. He's witnessed firsthand the growth of software development capabilities over his 15-year career at Ford, where his focus previously had been in infotainment.

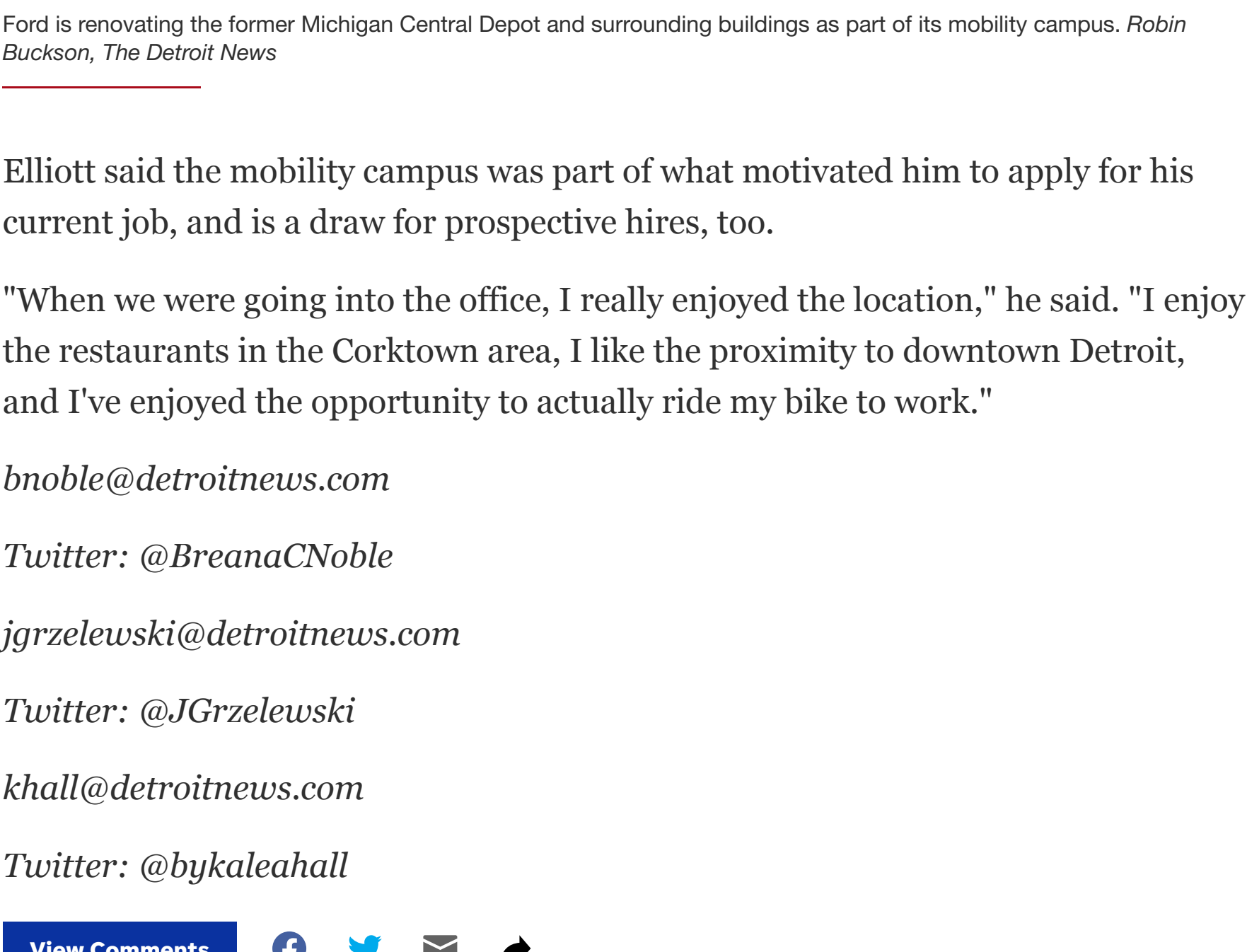
"When looking at a new vehicle today, our vehicles have thousands of parts and millions upon millions of lines of code," said Elliott, a native Detroiter who graduated from Oakland University and lives near downtown Detroit. "We are really shifting to having a significant focus on software development. We've talked about bringing more software development in-house ... and that's been a pretty significant shift in the last 15 years, to where we're now hiring software developers, developing our own solutions and delivering them to the market."

Elliott's team works on software that will be integrated into autonomous vehicles the automaker is developing to bring commercial self-driving services to market next year.

"What really excites me about Ford and more specifically our AV division is that we are trying to solve one of the most difficult technological challenges related to mobility that our industry has faced in our generation," Elliott said. "And the opportunity to be a part of the team that develops a portion of that technology to deliver this solution to the public is extremely appealing to me."

Many of the employees tasked with addressing those challenges were based prior to the pandemic-induced stay-at-home orders at Ford's under-construction mobility campus in Corktown. The automaker is renovating the former Michigan Central Depot and surrounding buildings there.

Ford sees the new campus as a recruiting tool along with the major update to its research and engineering campus in Dearborn. That project aims to transform dozens of outdated buildings into a consolidated, modern workplace that offers flexibility for in-person and remote work while providing employees and members of the public an appealing, walkable experience.



Ford is renovating the former Michigan Central Depot and surrounding buildings as part of its mobility campus. Robin Buckson, The Detroit News

Elliott said the mobility campus was part of what motivated him to apply for his current job, and is a draw for prospective hires, too.

"When we were going into the office, I really enjoyed the location," he said. "I enjoy the restaurants in the Corktown area, I like the proximity to downtown Detroit, and I've enjoyed the opportunity to actually ride my bike to work."

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