

Baxter Travenol Corporate Headquarters

Deerfield, Illinois 1972

I wish to speak tonight about the architectural significance of the Baxter campus. Internationally renowned and respected architect Myron Goldsmith and structural engineer Fazlur Khan, both partners in the firm that designed the Baxter campus, Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill, explored innovative structural systems as graduate thesis advisors at the Illinois Institute of Technology College of Architecture. Their work with graduate students on high rise design led to such buildings as the John Hancock Center and Sears Tower in Chicago. In addition to high rise design, work was also done on large span structures; it was this research into cable stayed suspension roofs that was first realized in the Central Facilities Building at Baxter Travenol. This unique design, along with the crisp white structures of the office buildings, is a distinguished landmark viewed by travelers on I-94.

The large indoor space uninterrupted by columns allows for ultimate flexibility ala Mies van der Rohe's concept of "universal space." Originally the building included a 1,000-seat employee cafeteria and an auditorium, training center, and medical center, but the building's flexibility allows for any number of future functions such as a community center, recreation center, or educational facility.

We all certainly recognize that as economies change, building programs do as well. While large scale distribution centers have been expanding in recent years, please note that Amazon is currently closing and abandoning plans for dozens of warehouses around the world. It would be a shame to tear down an architecturally significant building and replace it with a banal giant of a building that could well be empty in a few years, and not easily adaptable for other uses.

A more long-term feasible model is being realized at the former Ameritech Corporate Headquarters in Hoffman Estates, Illinois. Somerset Development is repurposing this campus as a "metroburbs", a large-scale mixed-use building, with great access, office, retail, entertainment, hospitality, residential, health, fitness, everything you would find in a metropolis but in a great suburban location. Somerset Development also successfully completed repurposing of the Bell Works in New Jersey, as featured in Apple TV's show "Severance." The former McDonald's corporate headquarters in Oak Brook is also seeing a redevelopment that preserves the existing buildings.

In conclusion, I acknowledge the company's need to sell the property, but I ask that you consider a more suitable developer that can preserve the buildings and turn the complex into something more beneficial to the community of Deerfield.