

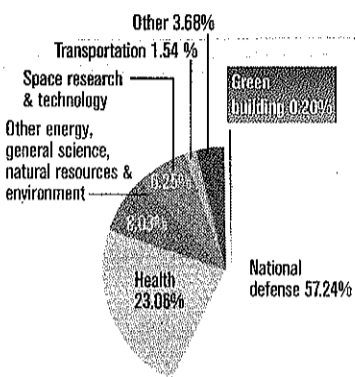
In Depth:

STRUCTURES/DESIGN

Charting it out

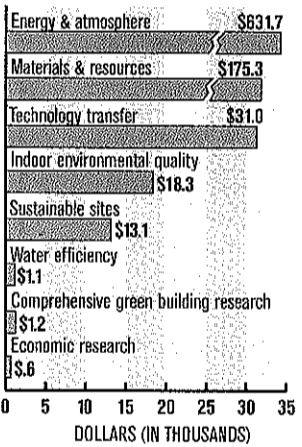
Both "green building," or improving a building's energy efficiency and environment, and a design-build process are contemporary topics:

Federal research



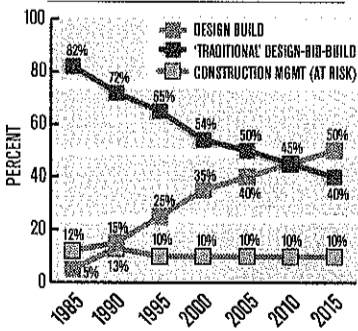
Between 2002 and 2004, green building research was 0.2% of all federally funded research.

Funding



Energy is by far the best-funded topic federally within green building.

Design and build



The design-build industry association says design-build is growing in non-residential construction in the U.S.

SOURCE: U.S. GREEN BUILDING COUNCIL; DESIGN-BUILD INSTITUTE OF AMERICA

Former GE site gets MODERN reinvention

BY BRAD BERTON
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When developers and designers looked to turn south San Jose's former General Electric Motor Plant property into a bustling commercial center, they considered strategies for preserving the heritage of a historically significant facility dating back to the 1940s.

It didn't take long to determine that the 55-acre industrial complex's smallish — but striking — main office building could be a key element driving the design of the entire new \$142 million "power"-type shopping center dubbed The Plant.

While it would certainly be challenging to evoke the two-story building's Art Moderne styling throughout the development, it helped to work from a structure with "so much character" that no one seriously considered razing it, says The Plant's lead architect Ken Rodrigues.

"We look at it as the center of the entire property, so the whole design scheme really fell into place based on its style and detailing," says Rodrigues, principal of his namesake Mountain View architectural firm. "But we also knew from the start the main challenge would be paying homage to that building's architecture."

Rodrigues was consulting General Electric Co. on redevelopment prospect long before The Plant's developer Westrust began pursuing the property.

The various design responses to that challenge bring many Art Moderne and related architectural and artistic influences from the first half of the 20th Century to The Plant, including the numerous "big-box" stores underlying the power center development concept.

For instance, the Target store is getting unusual architectural treatments such as decorative entry canopies and chevron-style detailing atop its parapet walls. "It's definitely a different style than you're nor-

mally going to see with a Target store," Rodrigues says.

Now nearing completion at Curtner Avenue and Monterey Road, The Plant features many elements typically characterizing the Art Moderne style: a streamlined industrial-looking motif with smooth surfaces, rounded edges and flat roofs, and geometric-based ornamentation including aluminum and stainless-steel trims and railings.

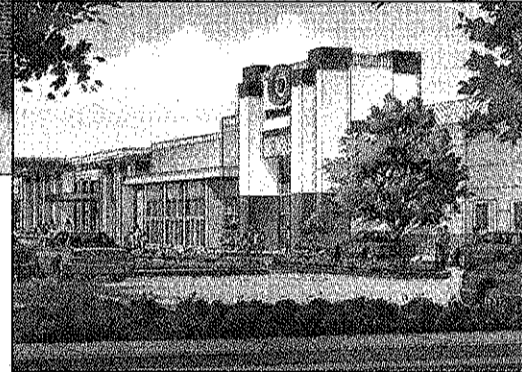
Rodrigues says The Plant incorporates a mix of influences from Art Moderne as well as Art Deco and Industrial styles drawing on architecture seen back in the 1920s and '30s.

Exterior materials are heavy on plaster, aluminum, tile and glass, not to mention plenty of neon lighting in the signage throughout the property.

As for the preserved 17,000-square-foot building, crews are busy restoring and re-glazing the metal-sash windows and "delicately" punching in new ground-floor doorways for the retailers. The top floor will encompass about 8,500 square feet of office space including a 2,000-foot community center and The Plant's management offices, says Westrust co-managing partner Ricardo Capretta.

During the complex's peak operational periods, more than 3,000 GE workers at any time were making motors for agricultural pumps and components for nuclear power plants. That created some environmental remediation requirements, including hauling more than 10,000 truckloads of soil to landfills.

City officials also let GE and in turn Westrust know they'd prefer to see a portion of the project devoted to a pedestrian-friendly "town square" area with outdoor dining and room for community events, says Capretta. "The area is generally retail-deficient, so this area will act as something of a town square for the entire district."



DENNIS G. HENDRICKS

The Target store, under construction above and in an artists conceptual drawing, is part of the industrial complex, called The Plant, being built on the former General Electric Motor Plant property at Curtner Avenue and Monterey Road.

This focal point for The Plant includes plenty of space for performances and other gatherings as well as dining. It became something of a pedestrian "pocket" surrounded by a series of six structures, continues Capretta, who earned masters degrees in architecture/urban planning and business administration.

Capretta aimed to lay out the streetscape with a community feel that invites visitors to park and stroll along numerous walkways and paths. The central four-lane arterial help divide The Plant into a back section for the big-box operations, with smaller merchants in the front portion.

Westrust, headed by Capretta and co-founder Charles Smith, is developing the 653,000-square-foot center in a joint venture with Pacific Coast Capital Partners and Vornado Realty Trust. In addition to Target, major tenants are to include Home Depot, Best Buy, Babies "R" Us, Toys "R" Us and PetSmart.

Cornish & Carey Commercial is the outside leasing agent working with Westrust's in-house marketing personnel in San Francisco. Bill Comstock at Debra Nichols Design is The Plant's signage consultant. Its chief engineering consultant is Carl Moore of the big Psomas firm, and its geotechnical consultant is Matthew D. Holm of TRC Lowney.

BRAD BERTON is a freelance writer specializing in real estate. He is based in Portland, Ore.