

# Architects mull uses for Lucent building

## Weekend session spawns 6 proposals

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KEYPORT BUREAU

**HOLMDEL** — There are at least six different ways in which the 472-acre former Lucent Technologies and Bells Labs property can be reused.

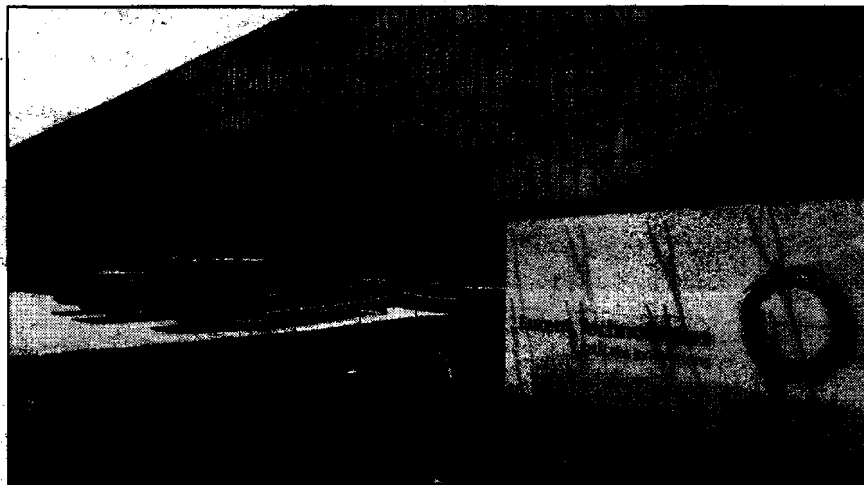
At least, that's what some 38 seasoned designers, architects, engineers and scholars concluded after a weekend of brainstorming design ideas of how the 2 million-square-foot building designed by famous Finnish architect Eero Saarinen can be preserved.

Subsequent to addressing the importance of the colossal glass and aluminum building off Crawfords Corner Road, as well as the preservation challenges facing it, the professionals proposed to reuse it either:

- as a health care center.
- as a multiuniversity graduate center.
- by finding another high-tech owner.
- as a research and development production facility.
- as residential apartments or condos.
- as a new urbanist community.

Sunday's event was a volunteer initiative by members of national and regional preservation groups working to save the site, which has been deemed eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.

Called a charrette, or a collaborative planning process, the function began Friday with a



Thirty-eight seasoned designers, architects, engineers and scholars met during the weekend to brainstorm ways to reuse the former Lucent building in Holmdel, which was designed by famous Finnish architect Eero Saarinen.

(PRESS FILE PHOTO)

tour of the historic Lucent building and ended with discussions by several residents and former Lucent employees. On Saturday, the professionals spent the day in the Senior/Community Center for a closed session during which they came up design illustrations and schemes for the site. Professionals presented their findings Sunday to the community and asked for input.

"They (the design proposals) represent different plausible uses for which there is a market currently, and that might make sense here," said Clinton J. Andrews, an associate professor at Rutgers University's Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy who moderated the event.

"It's clear to us now there are solutions to the problems that the previous development pro-

posals were complaining about," Andrews said. "Our sense was the previous development proposals were all about a glitzy presentation and not very much hard thought about the real design issues."

In 2006, development company Preferred Real Estate Investments of Conshohocken, Pa., agreed to purchase the Lucent site. The private developer wanted to knock down the massive building and turn the property into a mix of commercial and age-restricted residential development. Officials from Preferred had said reusing the building was not a good option.

That plan, however, never went through. Last November, a purchase agreement between Lucent and Preferred was terminated. Officials from the development company did not say why they backed out of the contract.

Andrews said the next step would be to create a report of the findings and share the information with the public.

Michael Calafati, historic resources chairman of the American Institute of Architects' New Jersey chapter, called the week-end-long event exhilarating.

"What the uses (design proposals) all investigated are ways of adapting the building into the future," Calafati said. "We've begun to show what really could be done."

The Bells Labs building was erected in 1962 and was expanded in 1966 and 1982. In 1964, cosmic microwave background radiation, a form of electromagnetic radiation, was discovered by a physicist and astronomer working at Bells Labs.

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