

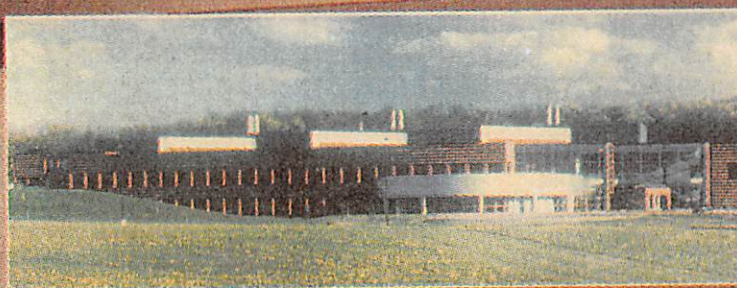
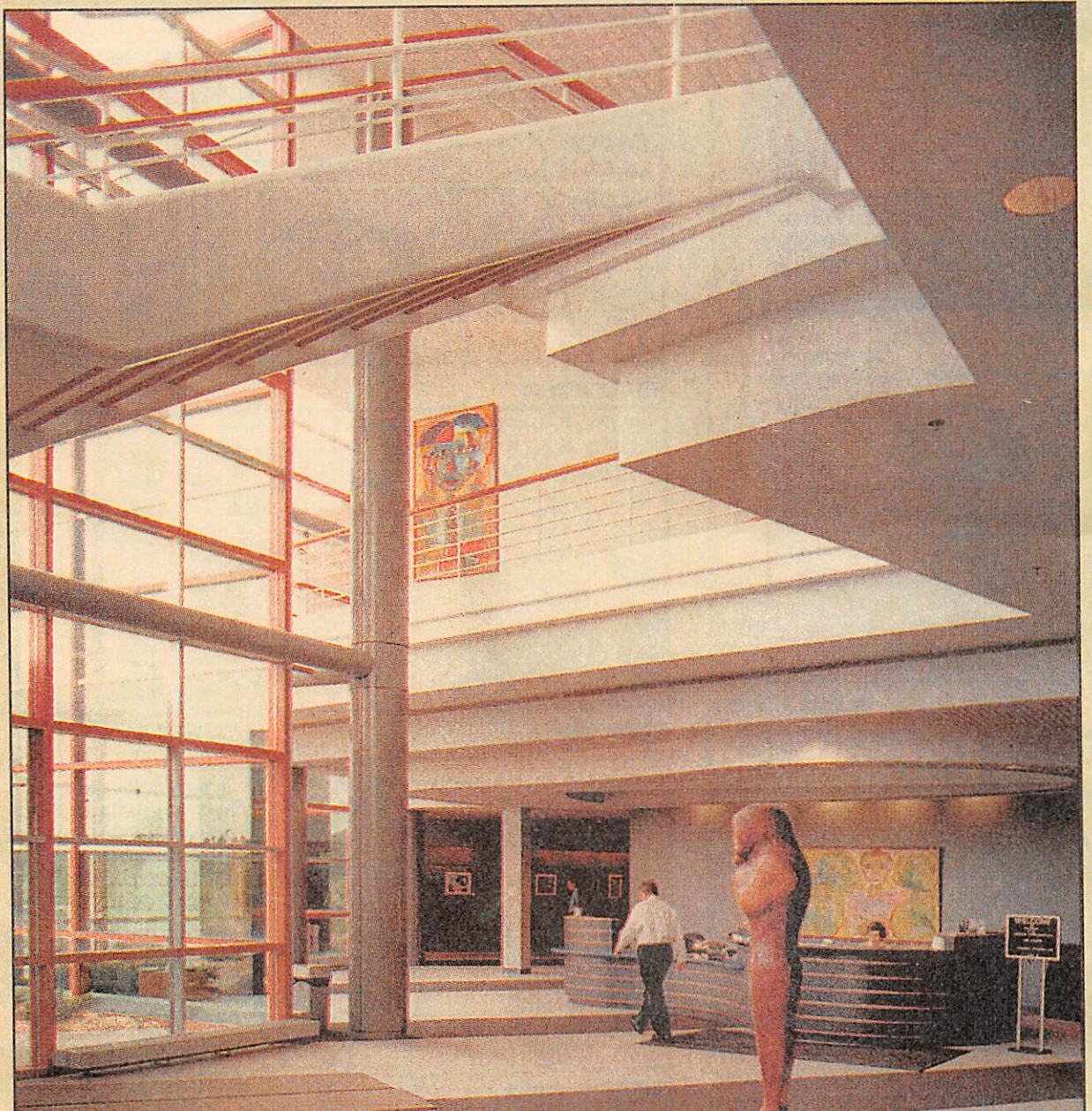


# LIFEStyle

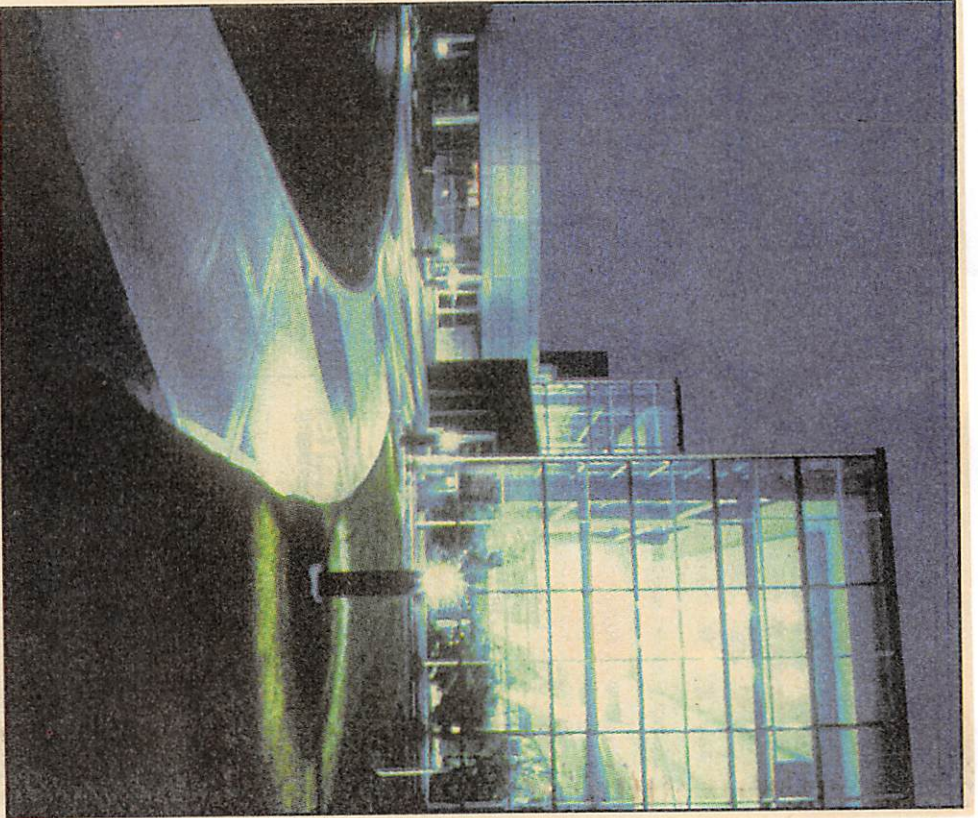
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## High-tech function balanced with appealing style







The entrance to Promega's BiPharmaceutical Technology Center has a translucent lightness, with the circular auditorium (left) offsetting the building's oblong main structure.



# WIN AIA AWARDS

By Kevin Lynch

The Capital Times

It was a new wrinkle on the face, a wrinkle in time.

The Knickerbocker Place rejuvenated Monroe Street by making it look a century older.

The idea for this small shopping mall design was to simulate a group of buildings that had grown into a neighborhood market district over many years. Just like the good old days.

It's a remarkable act of artful subterfuge. After all, strip malls are the environmental low life of inmodern urban planning.

You know the look: a street scarred with wide, scabby stretches of oily pavement; uniform storefronts with glaring red, black or blue markings, such as \$2.99!! \$3.99!! PIZZAPIZZA!! Inside are stores gorged with stuff you don't really need. Cars cluster like big, filthy flies.

Then there's the Knickerbocker Place.

The individualized stores blend modern convenience with turn-of-the-century style and cozy graciousness. A landscaping scheme almost redeems the parking lot.

As strip malls go, this one can stay.

The sensitive marketing ideas and redolent architecture were good enough to earn the Knickerbocker Place one of the Honor Awards from the Wisconsin chapter of the American Institute of Architects. The mall was one of only six statewide projects to receive architecture's top state award in 1996.

Architects, a proud lot, rarely acknowledge strip malls, even though this is bread-and-butter work for them. On the other hand, this is an urban plague that today's auto-addicted convenience consumers tolerate. So it's partly up to architects to improve them.

"Anywhere, U.S.A., is what they usually amount to," says Bill Babcock, executive director of the Wisconsin chapter of AIA.

Continued on Page 6D



Long and low, Promega's new BioPharmaceutical Technology Center (inset above) conveys high-tech scale without overwhelming its setting. The entrance interior (above) is spacious, inviting and artful. The Knickerbocker Place on Monroe Street (left) lends turn-of-the-century charm and distinction to a strip mall.

## Winning tech center invites, charms

By Kevin Lynch

The Capital Times

FITCHBURG — The massive form sits in a gently rolling glen surrounded by prairie and oak woodlands. Several sets of slender smokestacks rise above a single row of dark windows running along the structure's 600-foot length. It might be a futuristic ocean liner. Or a mothership from another galaxy. It looks at home in the grassy waves.

It's been there for about a year now, with a name as big as its shape: the BioPharmaceutical Technology Center of the Promega Corp.

What goes on inside? Promega manufactures products for genetic research and DNA typing.

So in a sense, the closer you get to the

building, the closer you get to the future.

The BTC, as it is called, encompasses 300,000 square feet, but the relatively low profile becomes open and inviting as you walk up to the huge glass entryway, with its translucent colors and curving, open-air staircase.

The two-story glass enclosure doesn't convey the image of many corporate entrances: genuflect before my millions. Rather, you may find yourself charmed by all the glowing, colorful faces. They are paintings and sculpture by Francis X. Nnaggenda, a noted Nigerian artist.

That all translates into an architectural style good enough to win the facility an Honor Award recently from the Wisconsin chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

Continued on Page 6D



# Promega

Continued from Page 1D

Corporations long ago learned the good public relations value of using original, appealing art in their entrances.

But the BTC seems to follow its best foot forward with a strong community orientation, which one wouldn't expect of a big corporate facility out in this remote spot.

However, it's really not far from the big city, located at 5445 E. Cheryl Parkway, just off Fish Hatchery Road north of Lacy Road.

And the structure's circular, 300-seat state-of-the-art auditorium is available for community groups. The Madison public schools have already used it extensively, says the building's head architect Rick Parfrey of Strang Inc., who seems as excited about his creation's community value as its architectural qualities.

"Other Fitchburg groups have had consortiums and symposiums there," Parfrey says. "It's really a multipurpose auditorium for many different kinds of people in the community."

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Part of the building's early success has to do with how it balances high-tech authority and functions with appealing style, both inside and out. Parfrey's design mercifully avoids the "white box effect" of office parks that litter the urban landscape like Chinese take-out refuse of Rex, the Ravenous Eat-at-Your-Desk Junior Exec.

Such undesirable patterns are averted with warm, red brick masonry in the building's oblong main body. This long stretch is offset by the circular, silver-toned auditorium, which billows out beside the glass-enclosed entryway. Run-

ning along the building's rooftop is a trio of large triangular air vent tunnels that nicely offset the three pairs of smokestacks above.

Rectangle, triangle, cylinder and circle. In this era, it's not radical, but it's a variety of essential forms maximized imaginatively.

"We have so many of these corporate industrial park type projects that all use the same design vocabulary," said the AIA awarding jury. "But this one is used more successfully. The variance of materials seemed to fit with the overall architecture."

Parfrey says that the building is "still evolving because of its multiple-use design and different spaces."

The center is an education and research facility that Promega CEO Bill Linton uses as a "teaching tool," says Dan Brethorst, a Promega spokesman.

The BTC facilities include several "start-up" pharmaceutical operations, Ophidian Pharmaceutical and the BTC Training Institute.

This makes it philosophically akin to Promega's Faraday Center, an incubator center for start-up companies.

The company also takes pride in its large day care center located just to the west of the BTC. The center can accommodate 175 children divided by age groups in five houses.

"Bill Linton cares about his employees and wanted their kids close by, to make life easier for everyone," Brethorst says.

Life is also easier with the new employee cafeteria/meeting place, with its curvaceous glass-and-oak-enclosed walls. Promega partially underwrites its employee meals.

The center's children are also now using the BTC auditorium's platform stage for performing arts activities.

The day care center is open to the public at rates comparable to those employees get.