

# Building Scene

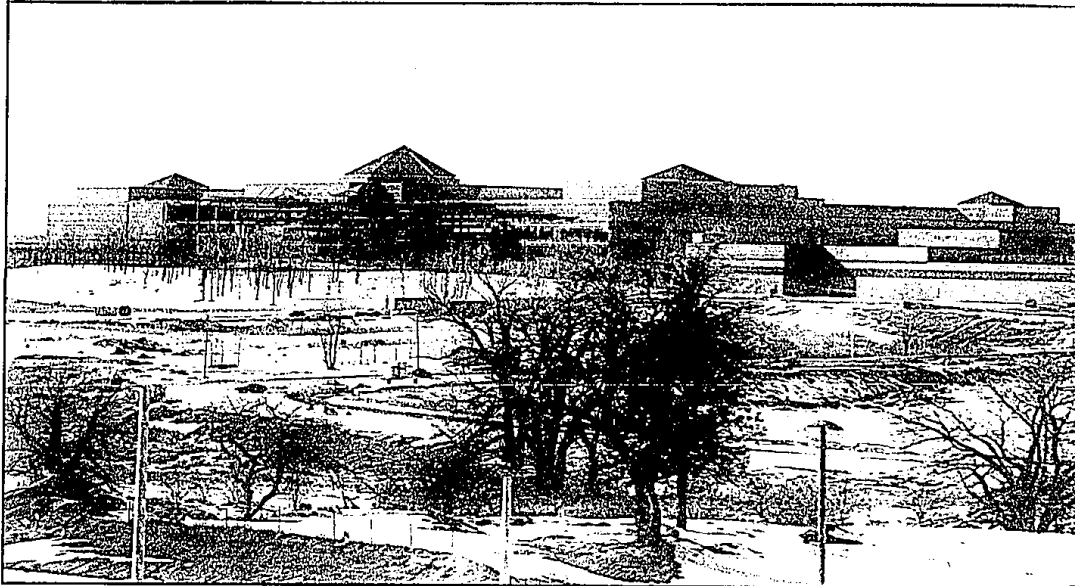
Marilyn Fitchett editor/591-2300

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JIM RIDER/staff photographer

The Chrysler Technology Center, northeast of M-59 and I-75 in Auburn Hills, will house Chrysler's main design and engineering staff who will guide the automobile manufacturer's innovations into the 21st century.

## Chrysler tech center nears completion

By Gerald Frawley  
staff writer

Four years after ground was broken for the \$1 billion Chrysler Technology Center, the mammoth project is moving ahead — albeit slowly. Everything is on schedule, and everyone remains as committed to the project as they were when it was announced in December 1984, say Chrysler, state, county and local officials. (See related stories on Pages 2 and 3.)

Nevertheless, Chrysler has indefinitely postponed plans for phase two of the technology center and an adjacent 40-acre automotive supplier park.

Plans for the 3.3-million-square-foot phase one of the project are un-

changed, and the company still intends to open the project in the early 1990s, said Chrysler spokesman James Kenyon.

"We've been saying for over a year now the entire facility is going to be open in 1992," he said.

THE MASSIVE structure, north of Featherstone Road and east of I-75, is in the northwest corner of the 1,800-acre Oakland Technology Park in Auburn Hills. The technology center was heralded as a major cornerstone to the park along with GMF Robotics, Electronic Data Systems and Comerica.

The center will be the focal point for Chrysler's high-tech design, innovation and testing programs.

Recent announcements by

Chrysler concerning plant closings, reductions in the work force and the elimination of profit sharing for this year in no way impact the technology center on the 508 acres in the northeast corner of the M-59 and I-75 intersection, Kenyon said.

The technology center's main structure is virtually complete, but it will take another two years before all of the work will be done, Kenyon said.

"It is a huge facility and not all of it can be built at one time.

"MR. IACOCOA said (at a recent news conference) that we're still committed to our \$1.5 billion product development program — the technical center is the crown jewel of our

future plans," he said.

The cost cutting efforts will produce a "leaner, meaner Chrysler" that will be able to take on the 1990s as a more competitive, efficient organization, Kenyon said.

"We need the technology center to do that.

PLANS FOR the second phase of the technology center have been indefinitely postponed since March 1989, Kenyon said, as have plans for an adjacent automotive supplier park.

"We have interest in continuing the auto supplier park — there are

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## Chrysler sale pending

A leaner, meaner Chrysler is selling its crown jewel — the Chrysler Technology Center — to raise more than \$800 million in assets for use in other divisions of the company.

Chrysler will lease the technology center from the purchaser until the year 2020 when it will revert back to the auto manufacturer.

Chrysler manager of media relations Thomas Houston said Tuesday the sale will not affect construction at the site or operations once the facility is completed.

Chrysler will sell the facility to Manufacturers Hanover Co. of California which will sell the bonds as the Auburn Hills Trust.

Auburn Hills Trust will sell more than \$800 million worth of bonds to purchase the property, after which it will be leased to Auburn Hills Services Corp., a service of the property management company Cushman & Wakefield with offices in Southfield.

## Project consistent with planning goals

By Gerald Frawley  
staff writer

The Chrysler Technology Center hasn't been an easy project to pull off for Chrysler, but if it were started today it might be even more difficult to build.

Development is far more complex today than it was even in 1985 — land prices in southeast Michigan have skyrocketed, anti-development sentiment is growing, assembling enough land for a major project is difficult, and government agencies are far less likely to agree to pay for infrastructure improvements in redeveloped areas.

But despite the complications involved in building such a large project, state and company officials say they would do it all over again — the project is that important.

THE TECHNOLOGY center is "the crown jewel" in the manufacturer's \$1.5 billion product development program that will help Chrysler regain its competitive edge in the coming decade, said Chrysler spokesman James Kenyon.

Chrysler's current facilities don't compare with Ford and General Motors technology centers where innovations are tried and tested years before they reach the market, he said.

To compete in the increasingly competitive market, Chrysler needs a similar technology center.

Even with the present economic belt tightening and the increasing emphasis on controlling and slowing growth, Chrysler's technology center would still be built, said Bill Lontz of the Michigan Department of Commerce economic development division.

Building incentives and tax abatements awarded to the project may be more difficult to come by today, but the benefits of the project — jobs and tax base — merit its construction, he said.

"EVERYTHING ABOUT the project is consistent with what we're doing in the Six Pack group," Lontz said.

Six Pack, the nickname given to the Greater Detroit Economic Development Group, is made up of representatives of Detroit, Wayne, Oakland and

Macomb counties and the departments of transportation and commerce.

The group was formed with the intent of slowing urban sprawl by "redirecting it away from the cornfields toward areas with adequate infrastructure," Lontz said.

The main criteria for projects is that they be in areas designated for development in the SEMCOG sewer service map, Lontz said.

"That area has always been marked for development in the map.

"It is an in-fill project — it had water, it had sewers, it had existing roads — we merely had to expand on what was there," Lontz said. "Not only would it have been developed, but we would have pursued it just as vigorously today as we did then."

Projects farther north and west of Pontiac are less likely to get the nod from economic development planners because sewer extensions are becoming increasingly rare.

"But Chrysler is right on the edge."

ALL THE controlled growth planning principles being discussed by state and county agencies would still allow the project, said Lou Lambert of the Department of Transportation planning division.

"If you look at all the guidelines, it would still be consistent with what we're doing.

"If it were a true green field, we might have some problems, but it's not," he said.

When people consider the amount of work put into the area, they should remember much of the work was planned prior to the Oakland Tech Park or the Chrysler Technology Center.

"From a state perspective, it's still one of the best projects we could have for the area and we would have made every effort to get it in there," Lambert said.

It is difficult to say whether the project would be built today because, even though there are many factors making large projects difficult, development is still largely market driven, said Oakland County Road Commission spokesman John Joy.

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