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SQUARE FEET

Bank Takes Environmental Step Into Rural Town

By LONG HWA-SHU

METTAWA, Ill.

HSBBC, the giant London-based bank, has moved its North American headquarters to a sprawling facility that it bills as carbon neutral in this hamlet about 30 miles north of Chicago.

The 560,000-square-foot building, a five-story, H-shaped structure, was developed for more than \$100 million on 29 acres with easy access to Interstate 94, between Chicago and Milwaukee.

HSBC North America Holdings, one of the 10 largest financial services companies in the United States, selected Mettawa from a list of 50 possible sites in the Chicago area, said Mike Brown, senior vice president for corporate real estate. "We had overgrown our former headquarters in Prospects Heights," 11 miles to the south, "which we occupied since 1979," he said.

The new headquarters will enable HSBC North America to bring 3,000 employees under one roof in a relocation that is expected to be completed this month. They had been scattered among six sites in the Chicago area.

The interior of the new building has many striking features. The amenities include a health club; a nondenominational prayer room; and nearly 80 meeting rooms, each with a spectacular photograph creating a geographic theme, and all equipped for teleconferences with offices around the world. Emergency medical care, dry cleaning and banking services are also offered.

The bank, with the assistance of the developer and architect, is seeking gold certification from the United States Green Building Council for the building's environ-



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The lobby and main stairwell at the new North American headquarters for HSBC, which was intended to be carbon neutral.

mental initiatives. These include collecting roof water for flushing toilets; using Prairie-style, drought-resistant landscaping to reduce the need for watering; and relying on light-guided window treatments, which track the sun's position to trim the need for heating and air-conditioning.

In addition, parts of the roof are planted with vegetation, and all of the electricity used in the building is bought from renewable or non-carbon-emitting resources, including wind farms.

To reduce waste, paper cups and plates are not allowed in the cafeteria, except at the Starbucks stand. Employees who drive fuel-efficient vehicles are given preferred parking.

Mettawa, once predominantly a horse farm, was chosen in part because of its open space and rural setting. The village, with only 500 people and an area of about five square miles, is so small that it does not have a village hall; officials meet in the St. Basil of Ostrog Serbian Orthodox Church.

Mettawa's operating budget is less than \$1 million, mostly from building permits and sales taxes from the CDW Corporation and an Interstate 94 rest stop. The recent opening of two hotels is expected to raise the town's revenue. "Whatever surplus we have, we set aside to purchase land to preserve green space," said the mayor, Barry L. MacLean.

The sprawling, steel-glass HSBC complex with composite granite facing was built to the bank's specifications by Hamilton Partners, a developer based in Itasca, Ill., which owns and manages 12 million square feet of office buildings, mostly in the Chicago area, but also in Denver and Salt Lake City. Construction

on the headquarters began in April 2006.

But HSBC, which signed a 13-year lease with Hamilton, will soon have the Swiss bank UBS as its landlord. The property has been under contract to be purchased by UBS Realty Investors, with closing set for July 10, according to Michael Rolfs, a partner at Hamilton.

The UBS unit confirmed the pending purchase but declined to give the price. Under its lease with Hamilton, HSBC has the option to renew the lease, for two five-year terms. Mr. Brown of HSBC said that the terms of the lease would continue unchanged after the sale.

Hamilton, which once owned 90 acres in Mettawa, also built the 160,000-square-foot CDW building in 2000, Mr. Rolfs said. It later sold it to a group of private investors. It also sold six acres to White Lodging of Merrillville, Ind., which built the 130-room Marriott Residence Inn and the 170-room Hilton Garden Inn here. The hotels, the village's first, opened in May.

The HSBC building is guarded by two bronze lions, each weighing 2,250 pounds. They are reproductions of a pair that has stood outside the HSBC branch in Hong Kong since 1935.

The company traces its beginning to the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, which was established in 1865 to finance the growing trade between China and Europe, principally England. The parent company has offices in 83 countries and 10,000 branches.

Stephen Wright, president of Wright Heerema Architects of Chicago and the principal designer, said his design team used the Green Building Council's LEED rating system as a guideline for sustain-

ability. LEED stands for leadership in energy, environmental design.

"The unique shape and orientation of the building, for instance, is an outgrowth of our goal to maximize southern exposure and minimize the east and west exposure," Mr. Wright said. "We want to control the sun."

Mr. Wright was one of the architects who designed the previous headquarters. "We didn't have the technology then as what we have now," he said.

The technology gives HSBC employees the ability to individually adjust the air flow under their feet. Such features, he said, enhance productivity.

HSBC also has a policy allowing its employees to work as many as two days a week at home to enable them to save time and money on commuting. Nearly 20 percent of the workers sometimes work at home.

To try to achieve the company's goal of reducing waste by 85 percent, employees, from the chief executive on down, are required to empty the trash totes that hang under each desk after work.

In addition, glass, plastic and aluminum are deposited in separate receptacles for recycling. Printers are programmed to print on both sides of the paper. Instead of working at night, cleaning crews are scheduled to work during the day to cut down on lighting costs.

It is not only the rules for workers in the building that make it stand out. Mr. Wright, who has been an architect for 35 years, said the HSBC structure raised the bar for green and smart buildings.

"This is the most sophisticated environmentally sensitive building we've ever designed," he said.