

= Rohm and Haas Corporate Headquarters =

The Rohm and Haas Corporate Headquarters in Philadelphia , Pennsylvania , United States was built as the headquarters for the former chemical manufacturing company Rohm and Haas . Completed in 1964 , the building was the first private investment for the urban renewal of the Independence Mall area . Only two blocks from Independence Hall the building , designed by Pietro Belluschi and George M. Ewing Co . , was lauded for its respect to the nearby park and historical buildings . Philadelphia 's city planners praised the Rohm and Haas Corporate Headquarters as a standard for all redevelopment buildings .

The nine @-@ story building 's most notable feature is its translucent , corrugated sunscreens . Supported by aluminum lattices throughout the building 's facade , the sunscreens are made of Rohm and Haas 's principal product , Plexiglas . In 2007 the Rohm and Haas Corporate Headquarters was listed on the National Register of Historic Places and today is considered one of the best examples of the International style .

= = History = =

The Rohm and Haas Corporate Headquarters was conceived as part of the city of Philadelphia 's plan to improve and revive the area around Independence Hall . Along with the creation of a park north of Independence Hall , the area saw the construction of new and modern buildings including a federal courthouse , a new Philadelphia Mint and the Rohm and Haas Building . For the revival of the Independence Mall area , city planner Edmund Bacon approached Otto Haas to move Rohm and Haas , a Philadelphia @-@ based chemical manufacturing company , to Independence Mall . According to legend , Haas reportedly said , " This city may or may not survive . But if companies like Rohm and Haas desert it , then surely the city will not survive ! " Federal funds for private investors investing in urban renewal land was also a significant factor in Rohm and Haas 's decision to stay in Philadelphia .

In 1959 Rohm and Haas , the first private investor to build on the Independence Mall , first commissioned Philadelphia @-@ based George M. Ewing Co. to design their new headquarters . Ewing 's design was met with a poor response from the City Art Commission , and Rohm and Haas decided on using a leading architect and approached Pietro Belluschi . At the time the dean of architecture and planning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology , Belluschi worked with George M. Ewing Co. to redesign Ewing 's original plan . The new design was completed in a few months and was approved by Rohm and Haas , the City Planning Commission , the Redevelopment Authority , and the City Art Commission . Construction began in 1963 and was completed in 1964 , costing close to US \$ 10 million . Rohm and Haas moved from their old Washington Square headquarters into the new building in 1965 .

By the 2000s , the Rohm and Haas Corporate Headquarters needed upgrades to its building systems and facilities . The company spent two years deciding whether to renovate its current building or to move to cheaper , more modern space in Center City . In 2006 Rohm and Haas decided to stay in the current building and spend up to US \$ 25 million on renovations . The building 's architecture and layout were the main reason for the company to stay . The building allows single departments to stay together on the same floor , while in a Center City skyscraper departments would likely have to be spread out over several floors .

RMJM Hillier was hired to handle the building 's renovations . The original plan was well received but exceeded the renovation 's budget . To help pay for the renovations , RMJM Hillier tried to get the building declared a National Historic Landmark , which would allow the company to get tax credits . Usually buildings less than fifty years old are not considered , but the building 's significance in Modern architecture kept the state of Pennsylvania and the National Park Service interested . While not designated a National Historic Landmark , the building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on February 9 , 2007 .

To help get the Rohm and Haas Corporate Headquarters listed as a landmark , RMJM Hillier and Rohm and Haas focused renovations on opening up floor space and modernizing systems . A part

of the original plan that altered the building 's facade was abandoned , but the facade received a thorough cleaning . Inside , most of the enclosed office space was removed and replaced with open workstations . The new layout was also designed to let more light into the interior of the building . The work spaces also received new furniture , which replaced some that dated back to the 1960s . The dining area was moved from the basement to street level in a space that was previously occupied by a bank , but had lain vacant for several years . Security , telecommunications , and central plant systems were also upgraded and modernized . The interior renovations finished around May 2008 , with improvements to the surrounding plaza completed several months later .

= = Building = =

Starting from George M. Ewing 's original design of an office tower , Pietro Belluschi and George M. Ewing Co. turned the Rohm and Haas Corporate Headquarters into a 300 @, @ 000 @-@ square @-@ foot (28 @, @ 000 m2) , nine @-@ story low horizontal block . At the corner of 6th Street and Market Street , two blocks away from Independence Hall , the Rohm and Haas Corporate Headquarters front facade runs parallel along 6th Street looking towards the Independence Mall . The reinforced concrete framed building sits on flaring concrete columns and is set back from the street by a raised plaza . The landscaped plaza cuts through the middle of the ground level of the building , opening up to a larger plaza with a fountain and small pool . The plaza behind the building allows public access to an alley that leads to Seventh Street .

To help keep the building cool , Belluschi added bronze @-@ colored translucent corrugated panel sunscreens to the facade . Supported by a bronze anodized aluminum lattice , the sunscreens are made of Rohm and Haas 's principal product , Plexiglas . The use of sunscreens and dark colors gave the facade a textured pattern and overall effect of avoiding making the building appear oversized . Besides the sunscreens , Plexiglas was used in the board room , in a few of the artistic commissions and light fixtures by designer György Kepes .

The building was very well received by Philadelphia 's city planners , who felt it set a standard for redevelopment buildings . The building was designed to contrast , but not overwhelm the nearby 18th @-@ century Georgian architecture . The Washington Post architecture critic Wolf Von Eckardt praised the building for its sensitivity to the nearby historic buildings , and how it related to the texture and small size of Independence Hall and at the same time the large open space of Independence Mall . The Corporate Headquarters has also been praised for its logical configuration , the building being described as " a very well done rational office building . " Today the Rohm and Haas Corporate Headquarters is considered one of the best examples of the International style .