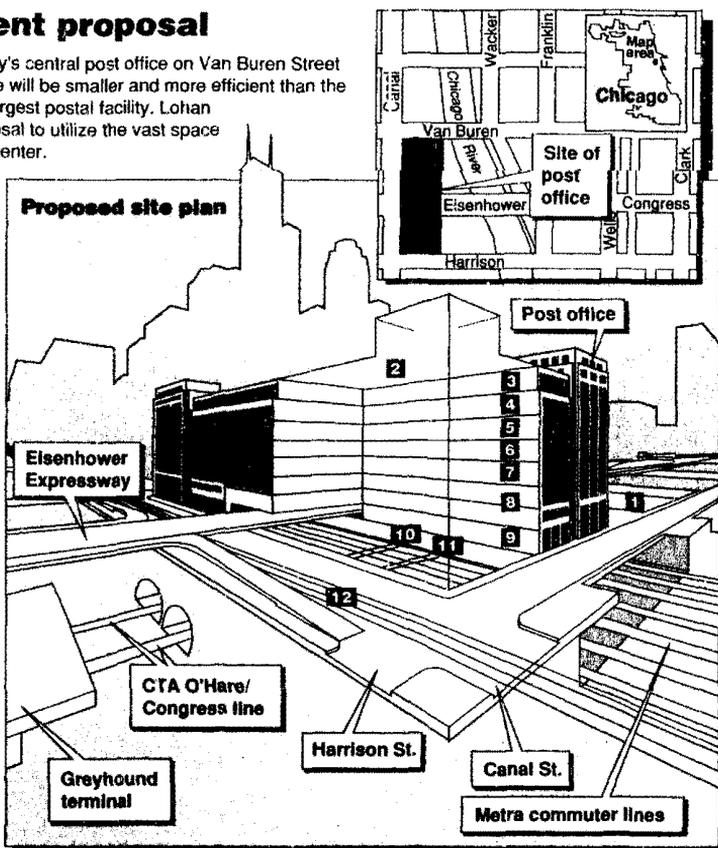


Post office redevelopment proposal

The U.S. Postal Service will be replacing the city's central post office on Van Buren Street with a new building adjacent to it. The new structure will be smaller and more efficient than the existing 3 million square foot building, the world's largest postal facility. Lohan Associates, an architectural firm, has made a proposal to utilize the vast space of the old building as a transportation/government center.

- 1 Water taxi station:** Along the Chicago River, for possible water transit system.
- 2 Heliport:** To provide quick link to airports for business travelers.
- 3 Municipal offices:** Relocated from 500 N. Pestigo, 320 N. Clark and other buildings.
- 4 County offices:** Moved from Daley Center, City Hall and other locations.
- 5 County courts:** Relocated from Daley Center and 320 N. Clark building to relieve overcrowding.
- 6 Illinois State Police Regional Headquarters:** State police have increased activities in the city since assuming responsibility for patrolling expressways.
- 7 Chicago Police Headquarters:** Moved from South Loop location, 1121 S. State.
- 8 Parking facility:** Short or long term, including overnight parking for travelers.
- 9 Taxi port:** Adjacent to or in facility.
- 10 Metra station:** To serve growing South and Southwest Loop areas. Could be linked to Congress/ O'Hare line, providing direct downtown access.
- 11 CTA station:** CTA Congress/O'Hare rapid transit station under post office could be renovated.
- 12 Downtown light rail:** Station for proposed circulator could be built on Canal Street, adjacent to the new center.

Proposed site plan



Source: Lohan Associates

Chicago Tribune/Rick Tuma and Tracy Herman

Plan for old post office a cops, rehabbers story

By Charles Hayes

Chicago's soon-to-be-vacated central post office should be redeveloped into a multimodal transportation and government center that would consolidate several city and county offices, add needed courtrooms and be a new headquarters for city and state police.

That proposal is being quietly circulated among civic leaders by architect Dirk Lohan and planner John V. La Motte, principals of Lohan Associates, a major Chicago architectural firm.

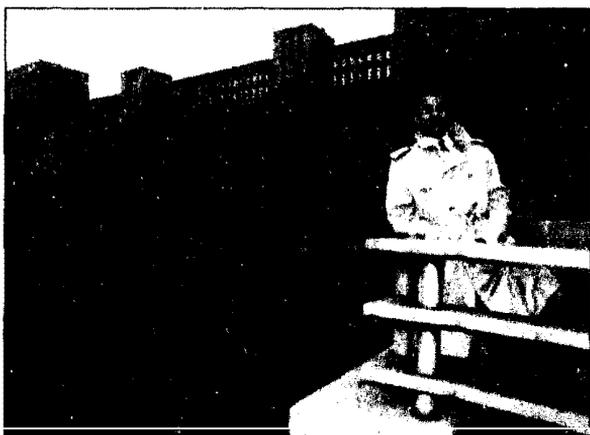
They say their plan would help relax the enormous fiscal pressure bearing on city and state governments by providing needed space at a premium location and a bargain price. It also would enable the U.S. Postal Service to unload a potential white elephant, the 3-million-square-foot building that straddles the Eisenhower Ex-

pressway like a gateway to downtown.

"In this climate of limited funds for everybody, it occurred to us to think about this huge hulk, which no one knows what to do with," said Lohan, whose recent projects include the addition to the Shedd Aquarium. "We began considering possibilities two years ago because we were concerned about a high-profile building vacant and crumbling for decades and no one with \$30 million to tear it down."

Lohan and La Motte began to formalize their ideas and concepts in earnest four months ago. This week they are releasing their suggestions, outlined in "Chicago's Post Office: A Common Sense Proposal for a Tight Budget City," which they hope will be a catalyst for further discussion and study.

The center's transportation component would include a new



Tribune photo by Eduardo Contreras

John V. La Motte is a principal of Lohan Associates, the architects that have proposed new uses for the old post office.

Metra Commuter Station linked to the Chicago Transit Authority's Congress/O'Hare subway line, rehabilitation of the CTA rapid transit station under the post office, establishment of a station on Canal Street for the proposed

downtown light rail circulator, creation of a CTA bus staging area and development of a taxi port to provide direct taxi connections for employees, transit riders or

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motorists.

A major component of the proposal is creation of a large, centrally located indoor parking facility with direct access to the center as well as public transportation and all major expressways.

Longer-range possibilities for the transportation center include a heliport on the building's roof to link airports and serve downtown business travelers as well as a water taxi station if a Chicago River transit system is established.

Replacement of Chicago's obsolete main post office has been discussed for 10 years, but there has been a question about what to do with the building, the world's largest mail-handling facility.

The question has taken on fresh urgency with the recent announcement that construction will start this spring on a \$241.4 million Chicago Main Post Office building.

The 965,000-square-foot structure will rise on 16 acres at Harrison and Canal Streets, one block south of the existing post office, and should be completed within three years, according to postal officials who said no plans have been made for the obsolete building.

"As part of our automation, we have the need for a different type of building to accommodate the new machines that we are deploying," said Anthony Frank, U.S.

postmaster general.

He said the Postal Service has 40 facilities under construction at an average cost of \$60 million each. In the Chicago area, that includes facilities at O'Hare International Airport and in northwest suburban Palatine.

Frank said he anticipates the postal service spending an additional \$6 billion to \$7 billion in the next five years to continue the modernization.

"We're very active in real estate right now," he said.

The construction will leave the postal service with a number of surplus sites, including the huge downtown Chicago facility built in 1932.

Some, such as a processing center in west suburban River Grove, will be sold. But Frank said the service also will consider becoming a joint-venture partner with private sector firms in the redevelopment of many of the properties.

"A variety of alternative uses for the building have been considered over the years, including a computer/communication mart, urban theme park or dormitory-style housing for Yuppies," La Motte said. "None of them are practical for a building so large, so prominent and so strategically located.

"Redevelopment as a government/transportation center has all the right ingredients: definite facilities needs, a great location and an existing building large enough to accommodate a multitude of uses," he said. "The Postal Service would get rid of a very big headache; the city and county would gain consolidated, more ef-

'Redevelopment [of Chicago's main post office] as a government-transportation center has all the right ingredients.'

—John V. La Motte,
principal, Lohan Associates

ficient facilities; the police would gain a long overdue headquarters with improved parking and access; and the public would get centrally located, easily accessible government offices and courts."

Rehabilitation costs for offices would be recouped in part by the proposal's recommendation to move police headquarters at 1121 S. State St. and municipal offices at 500 N. Peshtigo Ct. and 320 N. Clark St. It proposes selling those buildings for redevelopment and returning the properties to the tax rolls.

"The current police headquarters is obsolete, overcrowded and has severe parking problems," La Motte said. "Regardless of whether this proposal is implemented, a new headquarters will have to be provided. This location would give the police better access to the city and enable them to drive directly into the building and park on the same level as the new headquarters."

He said there has been discussion of a regional headquarters for the state police, who now patrol the expressways.

"State police also could drive di-

rectly into the building, park on the same level as their headquarters, and also be near the relocated Chicago police headquarters to facilitate communication," La Motte said.

Cook County has been searching for office space to relieve overcrowding and to expand its courts. The new center would put courts in the same building with Chicago and state police.

"Most important, the courts would be more accessible from commuter stations and expressways, with adequate parking directly in the center," La Motte added.

Access and convenience also were cited by Lohan as essential ingredients of their proposal.

"Government should be accessible to people, and much of it is not now conveniently located," he said. "A multifunction government center would be beneficial to the public."

Lohan and La Motte hope their proposal will spur the city to form a city/Postal Service task force to undertake a more comprehensive study of their concept.

They emphasized the importance of looking at the building as a great opportunity rather than seeing it as a problem and mothballing it.

"Each phase of our proposal needs further study, especially a financial feasibility study to determine costs and savings," La Motte said. "We've offered some possible ideas and others may have additional suggestions."