Modernizing the Iconic Bell Labs Building with American Standard

It is no easy feat to renovate an iconic building that spans two million square feet. But that's exactly what a forward-thinking developer did with the former Bell Labs building in creating Bell Works.

The behemoth complex in Holmdel, NJ was the research and development headquarters for Bell Telephone. For four decades, Bell Labs housed over 5,000 of the leading scientific minds of their day. Revolutionary inventions were developed within its walls, such as satellite voice transmission, personal pagers, touch-tone telephones, the UNIX operating system, cellular networks and transatlantic fiber optic cable. Despite the notable advancements, rising operational costs and business changes in the telecommunications industry forced the parent company of Bell Labs to sell the property in 2006. After a period of vacancy, the historic structure was threatened with the wrecking ball. It was rescued by Somerset Development in 2013 and has been reimagined as a metroburb – "a metropolis in suburbia."

The newly resurrected Bell Works is a mixed-use development that honors the heritage of this famous structure. The 1962 building was the vision of architect Eero Saarinen, who also created the Gateway Arch in St. Louis, the TWA Flight Center at JFK International Airport and the IBM Thomas J. Watson Research Center near New York City. The innovative modernist design was Saarinen's last creation before he passed away during construction.

Connected by a cross-shaped atrium, the building's four pavilions can serve as an entire business ecosystem. The site is intended to provide everything to its tenants that they would find working in an urban center. The ground floor functions as a town center, complete with bakeries, delis, coffee shops, banking, jewelry stores and a branch of the local library. The upper levels are reserved for offices, leased primarily by high-tech companies that specialize in energy, finance, human resources, legal, insurance, biotechnology, photonics, and digital marketing.

A building of this magnitude requires hundreds of toilets and urinals to serve the needs of its occupants. With restrooms on every floor, a major part of the building's renovation focused on updating its plumbing fixtures. Because restrooms are the one location that every tenant will use, they are an important aspect of a property's branding. Bell Works needed new restrooms that would reflect its rebirth as a hub for innovation.

To simplify the renovation process, Somerset Development wanted to work with a single plumbing manufacturer that could supply all of the fixtures at a competitive price. Clean design lines, easy maintenance, and water efficiency were also important attributes. With easy-to-install products that have great design and durability, the NJ-based American Standard brand was selected to provide Bell Works' chinaware, faucets, and flush valves.

The Afwall Millennium FloWise toilet is a wall-hung unit. Paired with the Selectronic concealed flush valve, it uses 1.28 gallons per flush (gpf). This rate is 20 percent less than the federal standard of 1.6 gpf, which helps Bell Works reduce its total water consumption. Afwall's siphon jet flush also meets the highest MaP (Maximum Performance) Score,

meaning it can remove 1,000 grams, or 2.2 pounds of solid waste in a single flush without clogging. Its vitreous china base and solid polypropylene plastic seat feature EverClean, an antimicrobial additive that inhibits the growth of stain and odor causing bacteria, mold and mildew on the surface.

The Decorum FloWise urinal graces the men's restrooms with water savings of 0.125 gpf. The sleek, compact design and concealed flush valve also help the restrooms retain Bell Works' modernist aesthetics. In addition to the EverClean treatment, this wall-hung unit has a flushing rim that creates a washdown action to remove biological residue. The Decorum urinal is a GREEN GOOD DESIGN award winner, a unique twist as architect Saarinen was one of the original founders of the original GOOD DESIGN competition which promotes and fosters a greater public understanding and acceptance for modern design.

To minimize maintenance issues, the Afwall toilet and Decorum urinal use Selectronic concealed flush valves that include a self-cleaning piston with an integral wiper spring. This significantly reduces clogging, providing a better experience for Bell Works tenants and reduced maintenance costs for the facility. Powered by a lithium battery DC power kit, the Selectronic valves offer long-life performance with a fail-safe operation that automatically shuts off when the battery expires--or in the event of power loss--preventing water waste and the risk of flooding.

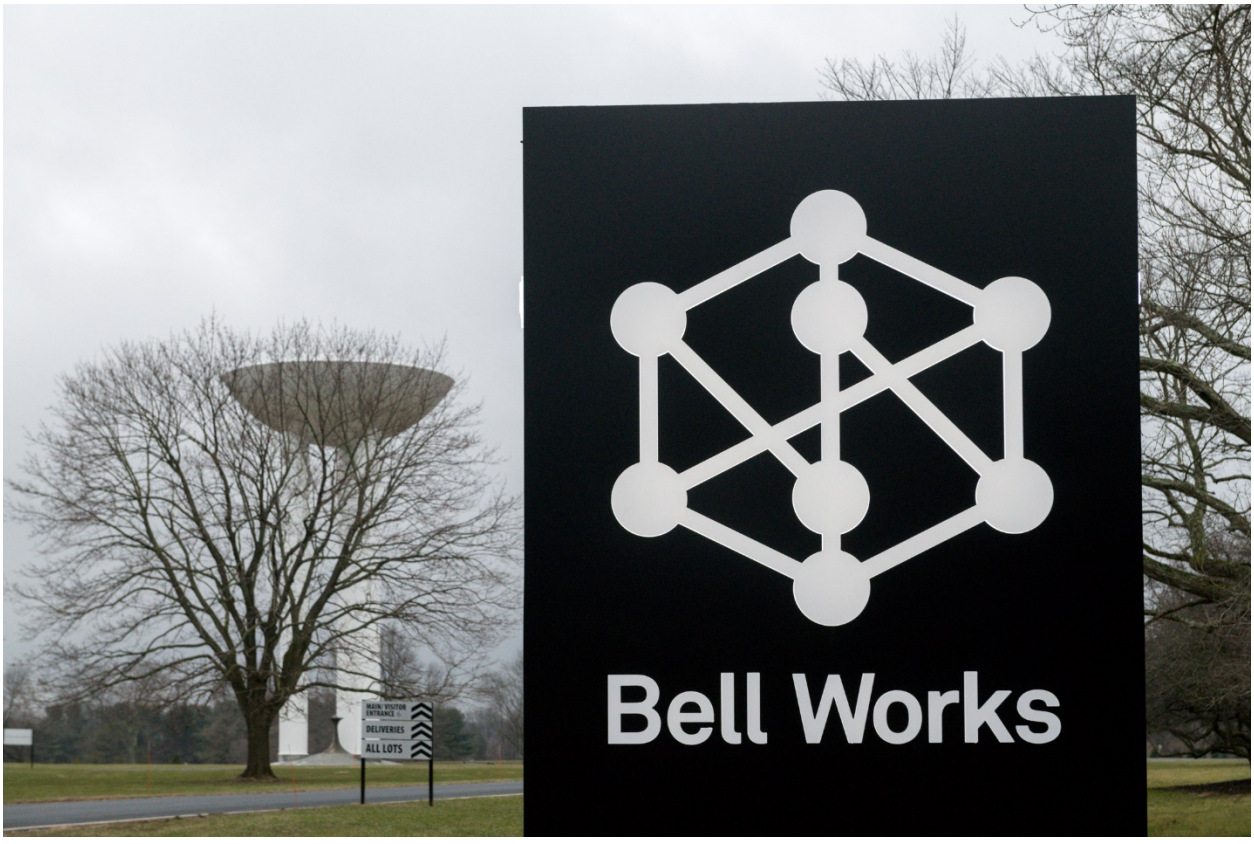
The wall-hung, ADA-compliant Decorum wall-hung lavatory sinks are paired with Selectronic faucets that provide hands-free operation at 0.5 gallons per minute (gpm). The non-aerated spray is activated by an infrared sensor at the faucet base. The solenoid valve and electronics are integrated within the polished chrome sprout, which eliminates the visual clutter of a bulky control box. The vandal-resistant design is ideal for Bell Works, as its shops are open to the public.

Bell Works was also impressed by the five-year warranty offered on American Standard brand products. The warranty gives Bell Works peace of mind because it guarantees that

the china and mechanical components will be repaired or replaced in the unlikely event of a problem.

The striking reinvention of Bell Labs has earned it an Award of Excellence for Modernism in America by Docomomo US, a TOBY Best in NJ Award from BOMA, a Planning Award from the County of Monmouth and a Leadership in Real Estate Award from Urban Land Institute. Its updated restrooms with American Standard plumbing fixtures are just one of the noticeable ways Bell Works has preserved Eero Saarinen's modernist vision and brought this historic building back to life as an innovative suburban hub.

Bell Works is described by its developer as a "metroburb"



The site is intended to provide everything to its tenants that they would find working in an urban center. The upper floors are dedicated to office space, while the ground floor functions as a town center, all connected by a cross-shaped atrium.

American Standard Decorum urinals and sinks provide coordinated suite fixtures for the office restrooms, complementing Bell Works' modernist aesthetics.

The Decorum FloWise urinal, a GREEN GOOD Design award-winner, is eco-friendly using just 0.125 gallons of water with each flush.

The Afwall Millennium FloWise toilet and hands-free Selectronic concealed flush valve uses 1.28 gallons per flush, which is 20 percent less than the federal standard.

The wall-hung, ADA-compliant Decorum sinks are paired with Selectronic faucets that provide hands-free operation.

Selectronic faucets are activated by an infrared sensor at the faucet base. The solenoid valve and electronics are integrated within the polished chrome sprout, which eliminates the visual clutter of a bulky control box.

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