



SUBTROPOLIS

THE SITE OF THE POSTAL SERVICE'S UNDERGROUND FULFILLMENT CENTER

It's not Batman's lair or an underground city in a dystopian zombie movie—it's where the Postal Service stores stamps. SubTropolis is an enormous underground office and warehouse complex in Kansas City, MO, that houses the USPS Stamp Fulfillment Services (SFS) office.

From its cavernous office, SFS ships hundreds of millions of stamps, stationery and other products daily to customers—postal patrons, businesses and collectors—that order them online, from catalogues, or by phone and fax and mail. It also ships to post offices for retail sales.

"It's a very interesting place to work," USPS Director of Stamp Services Bill Gicker, who oversees SFS and its 180 employees, said. And it's a big place to work—SFS occupies 520,000 square feet. But with 7 million square feet of commercial space available, space is what SubTropolis has going for it.

SFS is only a small part of this enormous office and storage complex that began in the 1940s as a mine. The 270-million-year-old limestone dug out of the mine was used to pave roads and airport tarmacs in Kansas City. The miners left behind 55 million square feet of underground space, with 14 million square feet suitable for use as office and warehouse space. Lamar Hunt, the late owner of the NFL's Kansas City Chiefs, saw the

potential and, through his company Hunt Midwest, developed about half of the usable space for commercial use. The company opened SubTropolis for tenants in 1964; SFS arrived with its stamps in 1982. Hunt Midwest calls SubTropolis the world's largest underground office space.

The room-and-pillar method of mining, which digs open space under a roof held up by pillars of rock left in place at regular intervals, turned out to be a great way to organize office space. In between the pillars, 10 miles of roads and two miles of railroad track allow tenants to move their goods in and out, with 500-plus truck docks providing access to the outside world. The pillars also function as address markers to navigate the cavernous space—SFS is located at Pillar 210.

Doing business underground is inexpensive compared to above-ground building space—it was cheaper to use the old mine than to build a new building, so rent is about half of what buildings on the surface charge. But construction cost isn't the only advantage.

One of the entrances into SubTropolis



