

# Beckman Instruments, Inc. Administration Building

**4300 N. Harbor Boulevard**

**1954**

**Style: Midcentury Modern**

**Status: Local Landmark;  
Listed on the National Register**



Constructed in 1953-54, the headquarters and administrative office building of Beckman Instruments, Inc. (later Beckman Coulter, Inc.) is an early local example of Midcentury Modern architecture applied to a non-residential building. From its completion in 1954 to 2010, the structure served as the headquarters of Beckman Instruments and later iterations of the corporation. The 40-acre property owned by Beckman Instruments was the first large high-tech industrial “campus” to be developed in Fullerton, and one of the earliest in postwar Orange County; the facility served as both a planning and architectural model for high-tech complexes that followed in the 1950s and 1960s.

Designed by notable and prolific architect Lawrence Whitney Davidson, the Administration Building is one-story, but its irregular footprint comprises over 43,000 sq. ft. of interior space. At the time, the building’s design was highly modern and reflected the precision and high technology associated with Arnold O. Beckman and Beckman Instruments. The building’s main architectural features include cut stone and smooth stucco walls, a flat roof with a wide overhang, and a modular window treatment. A good portion of the structure has glass curtain walls with a wide overhang, and a modular pattern. The exceptionally large cantilevered roof, almost wing-like in appearance with its floating profile and tapered design, is the defining feature of the building.

Arnold O. Beckman was a brilliant inventor, entrepreneur, industrialist and philanthropist. He spent untold hours working at the Harbor Boulevard facility and was an active presence in the city, participating in local business and civic groups and important events. Before relocating to Fullerton, Beckman Instruments (formerly National Technical Laboratories) was scattered at sixteen different locations in Pasadena and South Pasadena. While at its new Fullerton location, Beckman Instruments became a

unified, cohesive, multinational corporation recognized around the world as the top producer of precision instruments for a wide variety of industries.

As the first high-tech company in Fullerton, Beckman Instruments, Inc. was one of the most iconic and important companies in the history of postwar Fullerton. Beckman Instruments became an integral part of the Fullerton's postwar growth and development, not only providing extensive employment and revenue to the city, but also becoming part of the social, cultural, and geographical landscape of the city. Without question, Beckman Instruments, Inc. was one of the most important companies in the city's growth.

The administration building at the Harbor Boulevard facility is the last remaining physical reminder of the company's presence in the city. In 2006, Beckman Coulter, Inc. moved to Brea, and the 40-acre property was eventually sold. All of the Beckman Instruments' facilities, except the Administration Building, were demolished in 2016. In 2017, a development plan for a light industrial complex was approved for the 40-acre property, which includes the retention and restoration of the historic Administration Building along with the construction of seven new buildings. In 2019, the firm A. J. Kirkwood & Associates, Inc. finished a complete restoration of the building for its own use as the company's headquarters.



**Beckman Instruments, Inc. Administration Building, ca. 1955**



**A.J. Kirkwood & Associates, Inc., 2020**