



The Terrace at Regina

Creating Advantages:

Economic development by way of innovation

There are less than one million residents in the province of Saskatchewan. Based on the province's size, that means they could each have 7,000 square feet of land to themselves.

However, that doesn't mean Saskatchewan is less innovative than denser provinces—it's just the opposite. Saskatchewan's two largest cities—Saskatoon and Regina—boast some of the most progressive technology parks in the country thanks to Innovation Place.

Innovation Place is a provincial Crown corporation, meaning it is wholly owned by the Saskatchewan government while operating like a private business.

"The reason we exist is to try and create economic development using research parks as our vehicles," says Ken Loeppky, Vice President and COO of Innovation Place.

Innovation Place's technology park in Saskatoon is its largest, span-

ning 1.12 million square feet. It's also the corporation's first and oldest project; Innovation Place signed the land lease with the neighboring University of Saskatchewan in 1978. The tenants of its 19 buildings are mostly involved with agricultural research, biotechnology, engineering and information technology.

The research park in Regina is focused on energy and environmental businesses and research, including enhanced oil recovery, carbon dioxide sequestration, hydrogen research and the study of sustainable community development practices. Innovation Place expanded to Regina in 1998 and created a more condensed park, currently with only five existing buildings and two under construction.

"We try to create developments at the parks that complement the research activity at nearby universities and the strengths of the surrounding communities," says Loeppky.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

The only other development under Innovation Place's umbrella is a single building in Prince Albert. The Forest Centre is 90,000 square feet that clusters together natural resource and forestry businesses in Northern Saskatchewan.

IDENTIFYING DEMAND

Saskatchewan's economic development, especially in Innovation Place's technology parks, is far from stagnant. Innovation Place monitors the needs of its location and presses forward with development and redevelopment based on identified demand.

"Typically, our identified demand is a list of tenants who have expressed interest in taking additional space if it becomes available," explains Loepky. In most cases, those tenants come from within the park, but the list also includes businesses in the community, province and beyond. "It's really those who have identified themselves or who we have identified that we could come to terms with regarding financial circumstances and timing relative to their existing leases."

When space opens up, Innovation Place examines its list of identified demand to find the best fit for the type of building it plans to construct. Typically, this means Innovation Place has 25 to 50 percent of every new building preleased prior to development with a long list of additional clients who would have a high likelihood of moving into the building.

In the case of the upcoming 2 Research Drive redevelopment in Regina, roughly 90 percent of its 68,000 square feet will already be leased when it opens in March.

"We've been very successful in getting enough clients identified, getting their letters of intent and having offers to lease prior to approving construction," says Loepky. "And then we've been quite successful at leasing the balance of the buildings during construction."

MEETING DEMAND

Two recent projects in Regina and one in Saskatoon compose Innovation Place's newest convoy of developments and redevelopments.

In Saskatoon, 121 Research Drive opened in October of 2007 and was fully leased by the following spring. The \$25 million development features enough space to allow businesses to consolidate offices.

"We identified park tenants who wanted to consolidate, whose offices were in multiple locations," says Loepky. "We built the building specifically with a large floor plate, good emergency power and Internet access to accommodate them."

The locations that were vacated during consolidation are being used by smaller companies that either wanted to expand from within the park or who wanted to relocate to the park. In fact, so many businesses want to get into the park that it's becoming pressed for space, causing Innovation Place to become creative with 121 Research Drive's basement.

"We're going to try a little experiment there in taking about 10,000 square feet in the basement and developing it into an office environment," says Loepky. The basement will include new windows, exposed piping and a food and coffee service station. "It might be conducive to a small company looking for a cool, funky environment."

In Regina, the 2 Research Drive redevelopment will take a small existing building and build it up on the surrounding land while it stays operational and intact. The main addition in the \$17.3 million redevelopment will be office space with a basement for computer rooms and a fitness area.

When it opens, one of 2 Research Drive's primary tenants will be Springboard West Innovations, a nonprofit organization that fosters entrepreneurship in the community. Numerous offices within the research park have expressed interest in relocating to 2 Research Drive just to be able to work closely with Springboard West.

The second building at the Regina technology park is being developed by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Government Services to be a provincial health monitoring laboratory—one of which exists in every province of Canada.

"We neighbor a technology institution that trains nurses and lab techs and also a university that trains biologists, so the health monitoring lab will be right between those," says Loepky. "It will almost cer-

tainly be the most sophisticated provincial health laboratory in Canada when it's complete."

SURPASSING DEMAND

Not content to do the minimum, Innovation Place has also enacted a series of green initiatives in all of its new construction, especially emphasizing building envelope and mechanical systems. The Forest Centre was LEED Gold certified, while the developments at the research parks are currently on the cusp between LEED Silver and LEED Gold, prior to certification.

Innovation Place even won Silver in the Institute of Public Administration of Canada's 2008 Innovative Management awards. The corporation's contractors and subcontractors are engaged directly by Innovation Place, paid hourly rather than by percentage and often are asked to compare sustainable systems or attempt other techniques in system or building design.

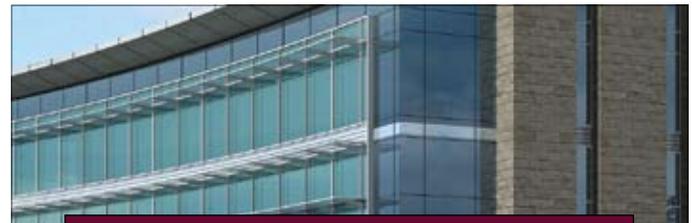
"We believe we get much better engineering, architecture and design since they're not motivated to use packaged solutions; they're motivated to be innovative and come up with new solutions for what you're asking them to do," says Loepky.

Saskatoon and Regina may be small, but Innovation Place has provided them with some of the most advanced developments around—with two more concept designs for Regina and one for Saskatoon complete and ready for the next couple of years.

"We have some perceived and some real locational disadvantages compared to big cities like Calgary or Edmonton, just from the sheer lack of market size, but we're taking away some of them by creating an environment that makes companies want to stay and grow in the community," says Loepky. 🌱

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