

Technology & Trees

Nestled among the trees at the end of Providence Mine Road in Nevada City, the area's newest business park is taking shape. Adjacent to the Grass Valley (Group) campus, Nevada City Tech Center is carrying on its neighbor's tradition of open spaces and outdoor amenities while taking into account the needs of today's tech companies.

The site, which includes a total of 110 acres, was owned by Tektronix, Grass Valley's former parent company. Development of the property began in the 1980s and now includes 160,000 square feet of space occupied by Grass Valley with room for expansion.

When Tektronix sold the company, it maintained ownership of undeveloped acreage. Here's where Lock Richards, local commercial realtor, enters the picture. Owner of Sperry Van Ness/Highland Commercial, he was approached by Tektronix about handling sale of the property which included entitlements from the City of Nevada City for 210,000 square feet of office and

research and development space, a great selling point.

With no local takers for the 44 acre property, Richards looked to Bay Area contacts and connected with Mike Hooper and Robert Upton, partners in Campus Property Group of San Rafael.

Broad based, they were looking for projects. After research, it was determined western Nevada County could support a commercial development that would offer larger facilities and had the ability to meet the power requirements of modern high tech companies lacking in older buildings.

The developers first look at the property was late summer of 2005; escrow closed in March 2006. The first building was started in August of that year and completed in May 2007 – less than a year later.

According to Upton, they did not want to bring people up from the Bay Area, so they hired a local team including the architecture firm of Daggett Designs and contractor True-Line Builders. Nevada City Tech Center also received financing from Citizens

Bank of Northern California and Lock Richards' company took on the marketing.

"It was a fantastic end result," says Upton of the center's first building. "The process of getting there shows how well the team worked together." Owned by the Nevada City Tech Center, the 29,000 square foot, two-story Empire Building is now home to the fast growing research and development division of 2Wire, a San Jose tech company.

Currently under construction at the center is Liberty Hill, a building which can house seven office condominiums with individual entrances. Using the same local team, completion is scheduled for next spring.

The tech center's master plan calls for 10 buildings set among the trees and surrounded by 20 acres of open space with an extensive trail network. Already completed is the Maidu Grove located in the middle of the project and so named because of the grinding rocks on the site. The grove includes basketball, bocce and picnic tables. PCC



First to be completed in the Nevada City Tech Center, is the Empire Building. It is 80% occupied by 2Wire, a company that provides global telecom carriers with broadband products, software and service platforms.

Photo: Paula C. Collins