

An In-Depth Look: The Research Triangle Park

North Carolina's Research Triangle Park has long shined as a catalyst for innovation and development. As landscapes, industries, and generations move forward, Colliers was curious of the Park's strategy to attract new companies and continue the partnership between the universities. Denise Southerland and Hannah Hathaway of Colliers' marketing department sat down with Scott Levitan, recently appointed CEO of the Research Triangle Foundation, to find out how the park is pioneering growth opportunity for the Triangle workforce:

Future Outlook and the Emerging Workforce:

Research Triangle Park's original funding source was from large land sales. Now that the land inventory is down to approximately 450 acres, the foundation is creating new and sustainable sources of revenue to support companies wanting to locate in RTP and be central to all areas of the region. The Triangle has experienced a surge in startup and emerging companies, and RTP has become an ideal place to foster that local growth.

The Frontier, one of the Park's original buildings, was renovated in 2015 as a startup incubator space, designed to meet the needs of companies in various stages of growth. Of the over 250 companies doing business in the park, the Frontier houses 80. The emerging business community has shown a significant and consistent need for cheap space to foster growth, and the Frontier has proved to be a great option (it is currently full with a waiting list of 30 companies.) This year, RTP will expand this concept by completing the development of two additional buildings. Building 400, a mix of lab and office space, is set to open in July 2018, offering 2,000-5,000 SF spaces with whole-floor availability. Rents are very competitive (in the low \$20's gross, with fit out) and should come as no surprise that it is already 60% pre-leased. Building 600, at 100,000 SF, will be similar, but offers primarily office space with suites ranging from 1,000-2,000 SF. Future plans for The Frontier involve enhancing outside workspace and implementing new creative retail spaces that will cater to the live-work-play lifestyle.

Spaces for universities to come together in collaboration is a driving force behind the Park's future strategy, and the foundation is encouraged by recent additions to its board from local community colleges and universities. Chancellors and/or presidents from the "big three" (UNC Chapel Hill, Duke, and NC State) are all starting conversations about how to utilize RTP to unite the schools and foster the gathering of tomorrow's workforce at the park.

The Park Center:

The Park Center project, announced in 2015, is still in the works but with revised development plans. The Park is currently in conversations with specialty developers about various project possibilities, ranging from more easily accessed retail, to 1M SF of office space, to hotels and residential units. The possibilities are endless with formal development options as well as more organic growth of startup spaces like the Frontier. Creating places for the benefit of the larger Triangle community is also a significant factor in future plans. "We want RTP to be an open, inclusive place that builds equality and equity in to the work place" says Levitan. "We also want to have spaces that the entire community can benefit from, rather than just employees of park-resident companies. We want to be a welcoming, amenity-rich environment that invites people to RTP."

Economic Development:

With Raleigh being announced on the "shortlist" for Amazon HQ2, there is an increased buzz about the Triangle as a site-selection destination. While our talent pool is arguably one of the best in the nation, Levitan encouraged that the community continue supporting the resources needed for continued growth, and we agree. Mobility continues to be a top issue: public transportation as well as direct flight options at RDU Airport are major factors for companies considering the Triangle – and the Park – for future expansion. Levitan also spoke to the numerous economic development projects that are gaining traction, but still have some margin to cover before they can reach the finish line. "We need public-private partnerships, as well as motivated community members focused on how to overcome that hurdle, because it absolutely must and can be overcome."