

They might be giants

What is the world's largest industrial park doing to lower its carbon footprint?

By [Kat Kerlin](#)

Buildings are huge resource-suckers. They account for 72 percent of electricity use in the United States, according to the U.S. Green Building Council. So if you were to build one that was about a million square feet, would you do anything to contribute less to that number?

Fifteen miles east of Sparks, off USA Parkway, sits the world's largest industrial park, the Tahoe Reno Industrial Center. Encompassing more than half of Storey County, the 100 square miles of land once zoned for agriculture is now slowly being developed with large warehouses.

Regarding the chance to build more efficiently than developers have in the past, David Loring, managing partner of Developing Arts, said, "Our industry is becoming more attuned to that." A carpenters union hired his company when they decided to invest their pension fund in a Nevada warehouse. The one they built is now LEED-Gold certified. The 632,000 square-foot building was built on spec during better economic times, and like so many buildings now, is empty, waiting by the phone in its best dress until the economy turns around. Standing inside its cavernous walls, Loring and Development Arts vice president Shannon Wiseman pointed out its LEED-worthy features: a reflective white roof, skylights that nearly dismiss the need for artificial lighting, low-flow fixtures, designated recycling space, and recycled carpet among them.

"A lot of this is just good building practices anyway," said Wiseman. Why not document it and get a LEED certification for it, she reasoned.

But one LEED Gold warehouse is just a blip within a 107,000-acre property. Currently, all but 1 million of the 11 million square feet of developed land is taken by 27 companies, including Walmart, Petsmart and the Food Bank of Northern Nevada. And that's just phase one.

"Less than 5 percent of the park is developed now," said the center's broker Len Gilman.

So what else is the world's largest industrial park doing to lower its carbon footprint?



Shannon Wiseman and David Loring of Development Arts stand inside the LEED-Gold building they helped develop at the Tahoe Reno Industrial Center.

Photo By kat kerlin

For more information about the Tahoe Reno Industrial Center, call 343-1135 or visit www.lancegilman.com.

Gilman said the center has a contract to develop a 7,000-acre wind farm, which could go on line in about a decade. Also with a roughly 10-year timeline, the University of Nevada, Reno plans to have a biofuels plant at the center, converting algae to energy. Advanced Refining Concepts, which is working to turn natural gas into a liquid form to use in diesel motors, also plans to have a space at the park. Fulcrum Bioengineering has already committed to turning municipal solid waste into ethanol there. And nonprofit Black Rock Solar recently installed a 150-kilowatt solar array on the Food Bank's sizable roof.

Yet in the end, miles of warehouses can only be so green, and the Tahoe Reno Industrial Center is no eco-wonderland. For one thing, there's currently no public transportation from Reno-Sparks to the center, leaving the 30,000 to 40,000 employees said to work there with no reasonable alternative but to drive. Yet its rather blank canvas represents an opportunity for developers to think about the mark they and their buildings leave, if they choose to take it.