

The Arizona Republic

Building Biotech's Future in Phoenix Groundbreaking Today for TGEN's New Home

by Jodie Snyder

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A year ago, city and state officials were sweating it out if Arizona would land Jeffrey Trent and two genomics research centers.

Today, they will be happily breaking a sweat at a groundbreaking ceremony for the Phoenix Bioscience Center at Copper Square, the new home for the Translational Genomics Research Institute and the International Genomics Consortium.

About 500 people are expected for the event.

State and civic leaders see the building and its occupants as catalysts for everything from economic development to a downtown renaissance.

The bioscience center will be built by the city of Phoenix at Seventh and Fillmore streets. Three of its six stories will house the Translational Genomics Research Institute, known as TGen. The International Genomics Consortium, a National Institutes of Health research lab and Alexandria Real Estate Equities will occupy a floor apiece. The building is expected to be completed in late 2004.

"It's astounding when you think that a year ago, TGen was merely a concept without even a name. Now it's breaking ground downtown with more than 100 employees," said John Murphy, executive director for the Flinn Foundation, which pledged \$15 million to statewide efforts to raise more than \$100 million to encourage Trent to return to Phoenix. Trent, an Arcadia High School graduate, had been the scientific director of the National Genome Research Institute at the National Institutes of Health.

"We are just in a great spot. This was exactly the right effort," Phoenix Mayor Skip Rimsza said. The bioscience center is the city's contribution to the biotech effort.

The mayor will chair the Flinn Foundation's steering committee to follow up on a consultant's suggestions about the state's biotech industry.

So far, the Arizona Department of Commerce has identified 45 active biotech projects across the United States, either companies looking to expand to or locate in the state, said Maria Laughner, biotech specialist for the department.

Decisions on at least four of those projects will be made by the end of August, she said. Sites for another six to eight projects will be decided by the end of 2003.

Businesses most likely to locate near TGen will be smaller companies or satellite operations, said Richard Love, TGen's chief operating officer.

"The odds of a larger company are not very good," he said.

TGen has been in discussions with some companies but Love would not elaborate.

TGen also is looking at bringing in revenues on its own. The non-profit has applied for 15 grants, or \$10 million in funding, from the National Institutes of Health. Winners of the grants will be announced this fall.

TGen is also working strategic partnerships with the state universities, Southwest Autism Research Center and the Mexico-based National Institute of Genomic Medicine.

And TGen has been active in talking with existing Arizona researchers, said Dr. Joseph Rogers, president of the Sun Health Research Institute. TGen and Sun Health have joined forces to apply for a \$4 million to \$5 million grant for Alzheimer's research.

The vision becomes reality,

"Phoenix and TGen are getting attention. We are getting noticed by scientists and businesses. People are talking about us."

-- Richard Love, chief operating officer,

Translational Genomics Research Institute

"(Deciding to go after biotech) It was the best strategic decision I have ever made, except for marrying my wife."

-- Skip Rimsza, Phoenix mayor

"The vision is becoming reality. TGen's new home will allow our researchers to accelerate the pace of discovery and improve the lives of people around the world."

-- Jeffrey Trent, president and scientific director of TGen

Phoenix Bioscience Center at Copper Square

Location: On Fillmore Street between Fifth and Seventh streets.

Today's event: Groundbreaking for a six-story building that will serve as headquarters for the Translational Genomics Research Institute and the International Genomics Consortium.

Other tenants: Alexandria Real Estate Equities and National Institutes of Health research organization.

Size: 168,000 square feet. Cost: \$45.5 million.

Architect: The SmithGroup Inc. is the project's architect, engineer and designer.

General contractor: DPR Construction.

Completion date: October 2004.