

Innovation Square Lights Up Fiber-Based Broadband for Students, Businesses in Rochester, New York

Innovation Square, a new multiple-dwelling-unit (MDU) property in a revitalized area of downtown Rochester, is set on attracting local college students and businesses.

BROADBAND COMMUNITIES thanks Robert Gallina, senior project manager for Gallina Development; Lauren Gallina, marketing director for Gallina Development; Ben Garvey, CEO, president and founder of Great Lakes Gaming; and Andre Green, director of sales and strategic growth at Greenlight Networks for helping gather information for this profile.

By Sean Buckley / *Broadband Communities*

When one thinks of New York state, maybe the glitz of Manhattan or the hipness of the Hudson Valley come to mind. Rochester might not be the first place one thinks of. However, according to a 2021–2022 U.S. News & World Report article, Rochester is the fourth-best place to live in New York. The city’s downtown revitalization and innovation may be one reason.

A draw for students, businesses and retailers is the city’s latest offering: Innovation Square, the tallest building in the city, currently being developed by Gallina Development as a multipurpose property with attractive housing options for students at six area colleges: the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), the University of Rochester, St. John Fisher College, Nazareth College, SUNY Brockport, and SUNY Geneseo.

In addition to furnished, upscale student housing, the building will be home to businesses and coworking space. People who

live or work there will be in the heart of Rochester’s thriving food scene, cultural attractions and the Downtown Innovation Zone, which offers students an opportunity to connect with high-tech companies for internship and mentoring programs.

Fiber-based broadband provided by Greenlight Networks is an essential amenity. Though it is still an emerging provider, Greenlight is centered on establishing its brand recognition in the Rochester market, and its partnership with Innovation Square plays a big role.

Andre Green, director of sales and strategic growth for Greenlight Networks, says the company focuses on driving growth in homeowner associations, MDUs and other commercial opportunities, such as the Rochester International Airport. The provider also has several agreements to provide services to student housing facilities in and around the University of Rochester and RIT.



To highlight the partnership between Innovation Square and Greenlight Networks, the two main entrances of the property have large lightbox signs.

“Students living on campus or near a university campus require high bandwidth, whether they are doing their work, streaming different services or gaming,” Green says. “One of the top amenities people care about is their internet service.”

Having partnered with Gallina Development on other projects, Greenlight sees its role at Innovation Square as a collaborator.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

The old saying, “location, location, location,” is definitely true for Innovation Square. The emergence of Innovation Square and Rochester’s Downtown Innovation Zone reflects the city’s ongoing transition.

Since 2000, investors have poured \$2.5 billion into downtown Rochester, 52 downtown commercial buildings have been converted to residential and mixed-use, and 13 new residential projects have been built. Today, about 8,860 residents live downtown.

Location was crucial for Ben Garvey, the CEO, president and founder of Great Lakes Gaming (GLG), which will occupy the 22nd floor of Innovation Square. The GLG Gaming Lounge, which Garvey calls “the country club of gaming,” will host 12 high-end PC stations, two private streaming booths, three couch console setups and a café with healthy food

options for members and guests.

Garvey first learned about Innovation Square a year ago, when he was a senior at RIT. He liked that it would be a good place for students to live and establish businesses. The floor GLG occupies “provides the perfect amount of space – not too much and not too little – and we don’t have to share [the floor], which is great because gaming can get busy and loud,” Garvey says. “Also, the tall ceilings make it better for energy, heating and cooling.”

Because Innovation Square is a mixed-use development, Green says, commercial tenants such as GLG will be able to operate more efficiently. “Residents and commercial tenants will both benefit from high-speed internet service.”

Innovation Square plans to add shared workspaces to its mix of amenities. Through a national operator, Serendipity Labs, the building will offer upscale workspace for remote or

hybrid workers. Coworking and flexible offices will be located on the 23rd and 24th floors.

“Rochester is ranked as one of the 20 best places to live for quality of life,” said John Arenas, the chairman and CEO of Serendipity Labs, in a release. “Our mission is to offer trusted knowledge workers inspiring workplaces that align their work life with their lifestyle – Rochester is an ideal city for us.”

CONSISTENT CONNECTIVITY

Greenlight will equip every room in Innovation Square with fiber-based internet. Students and businesses will also be able to access Wi-Fi throughout the property. Greenlight will install more than a dozen Wi-Fi access points on top of fiber to each unit across the property.

“Because [Innovation Square] will be attracting students from multiple universities and institutions, having Greenlight Networks provide a high-

PROPERTY OF THE MONTH HIGHLIGHTS

~ Innovation Square in Rochester, New York ~

- Greenlight Networks fiber optic internet
- Common-area wireless
- Two- and three-bedroom apartments
- Private bedrooms



Residential apartment units include Greenlight Networks' 500 Mbps fiber internet service with options to upgrade up to 2 Gbps.

speed internet connection in every room is invaluable,” Green says.

For Garvey, the benefit of Greenlight’s broadband service is consistent connectivity. “I moved into an apartment in downtown Rochester [with Greenlight internet service] and have not had a single issue with my internet,” he says.

In addition, Greenlight offers flexible bandwidth options. Internet speed is not crucial for GLG’s gaming business, but it is for its live broadcast. Greenlight brings fiber right to GLG’s floor, so GLG has the option to get 10 Gbps symmetrical services, but Garvey says there’s no need to right now.

“In terms of bandwidth, there’s a lot of flexibility in what Greenlight can provide,” he adds. “Greenlight internet is doing what it claims, and its brand means something in Rochester.”

VITAL STATISTICS

Property Description: At 443 feet tall with 30 floors, Innovation Square, formerly Xerox Tower, is the tallest building in Rochester. Gallina Development is transforming it into a mixed-use building with furnished student housing, coworking space

and businesses. It’s located in the revitalized Rochester Downtown Innovation Zone and is close to many excellent restaurants and cultural attractions.

Demographics: Students from several Rochester-area colleges, universities and institutions.

Greenfield or retrofit: Complete renovation

Number of units: 204 residential units planned

Style: High-rise

Time to deploy: Two to three years

Date services started being delivered: July 2021

Special requirements: None

LESSONS LEARNED

What was the biggest challenge?

The project’s biggest challenge was timing to ensure service was in place when the building came online. The uncertainty of the student housing market during the pandemic was also a challenge.

What was the most significant success? Fully leasing phase 1 of the project.

What should other owners consider before they begin a similar deployment? Be aware of installation timing to ensure the service is up and running when residents move in.

SERVICES

Services offered or planned on the network: Residential apartment units include Greenlight Networks high-speed 500 Mbps fiber internet service with options to upgrade up to 2 Gbps. Residents can use the fiber-based broadband network to support over-the-top voice services, such as Vonage, and Hulu and Amazon Prime online video platforms.

Common-area wireless: Greenlight supports common-area Wi-Fi services. It installed eight access points providing a 500 Mbps wireless connection throughout Innovation Square’s main tower lobby and second-floor student spaces. Fifteen access points offer a 1 Gbps wireless connection throughout the property’s auditorium. Nine access points, including two in the outdoor student courtyard, provide a 500 Mbps wireless connection throughout the fitness center and lounge.

Concierge services: Innovation Square provides a host of concierge services, including access control, building/home monitoring and control, and building management applications for the property developer.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Technical support:

Greenlight Networks provides technical support for Innovation Square residents.

BUSINESS

Which parts of the network are owned by the service provider, and which parts are owned by the property owner? Greenlight Networks owns the fiber backbone

and all distribution equipment for its network.

Is there a marketing agreement with the property owner? Yes, Gallina Development and Greenlight Networks established a nonexclusive marketing agreement.

How do the service provider and owner work together to market the services? What marketing approaches have been particularly successful? The two main entrances of the property each have large “Innovation Square Powered by Greenlight Networks” lightbox signs. Residents also are provided information with the message: “Welcome to Innovation Square Powered by Greenlight Networks.” The property has an “Innovation Square Powered by Greenlight Networks” media box sticker with a QR code leading to a webpage for residents with information about Greenlight.

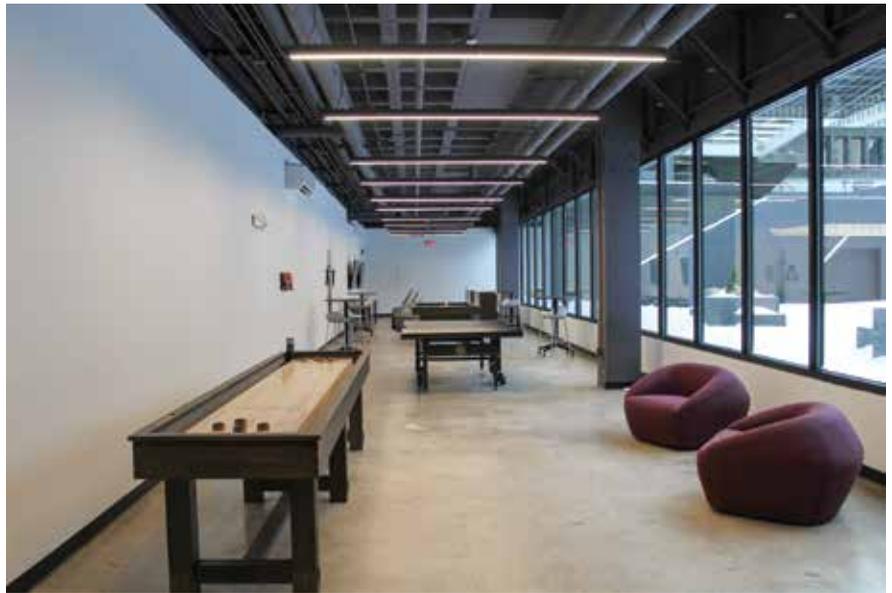
Is there a bulk-service agreement? If so, what services are included? There’s a bulk-service agreement for residential units. Each apartment unit has an individual Greenlight fiber optic connection with 500 Mbps service. Residents may upgrade their apartments’ internet speeds, up to a 2 Gbps connection, at a discounted monthly rate.

NETWORK BENEFITS

Is there any evidence that the network helps attract and retain residents, increase property values, etc.?

The presence of Greenlight Networks’ fiber-based internet has had four significant impacts on retaining and attracting residents:

- Higher rent: Renters are willing to pay an additional 8 percent a month for an apartment with fiber optic internet access.
- Reduced turnover: Access to fiber optic internet increases tenant satisfaction, retention rates and the likelihood of getting a referral. Installing fiber



Greenlight supports common-area Wi-Fi services.

optic cable in apartments is a win-win for property owners and residents.

- Increase property value: Property owners can increase their property value by 3.1 percent just by having fiber installed.
- Future-forward/future-proof: Traditional copper wiring is expensive and has limitations, including reduced bandwidth capabilities. Each year, the need for bandwidth increases as new technology arises – and consumer demand rises with it. Fiber does not have these limitations and with its installation in apartment buildings, it will be ready to handle residents’ needs for years to come.

TECHNOLOGY

Broadband architecture: Greenlight uses fiber to the building to the main distribution frame, then splits with fiber runs to individual distribution frames (IDF) on each floor of the central tower and throughout the other areas of the property. Greenlight installed fiber, which is home run to each

IDF and each apartment. The fiber terminates in a Greenlight optical network terminal (ONT) with internet access delivered via an Ethernet cable or a wireless router.

Where are ONTs placed? Greenlight’s GPON-based ONTs are in the media panel located in the front closet of each apartment.

Methods for running cables:

Greenlight ran fiber cables through the building by using the property’s existing chase ways and underground garage/tunnels.

Vendors/products:

- Greenlight Networks (fiber optic internet service provider)
- Nokia (XGS-PON, GPON equipment) ❖



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