TRANSFORMING SOLVAY
With a long tradition of science and innovation, Solvay is at the cutting edge of advances in new materials technologies and specialty chemistry, often setting benchmarks in best practice and product quality. Solvay’s approach to innovation is rooted in addressing society’s needs – and is core to how it evolves.

As the pace of change in the world accelerates, the company founded by Ernest Solvay more than 155 years ago continues to adapt, with a long-term strategy in mind. Multiple acquisitions and divestments in recent years have shifted the Group’s focus from traditional, high-volume products towards high-growth, high-value advanced materials and formulations, tailored to the needs of its markets and customers. With this focus, Solvay aims to build a model of sustainable chemistry that contributes to meeting societal challenges.

SOLVAY’S VISION
Solvay’s plans for the transformation of its 1952 campus in Saint-Fons, in France’s Lyon region, and creation of its largest Global Innovation & Technology Center, symbolize the Group’s values: innovating, acting sustainably for society, being open and connected with the world.

Similar to the transformation of the Solvay Campus in Brussels with new headquarters and a Material Science Application Center, Solvay’s ambition is to bring its employees together in one modern building that reflects the transformed group and its humanist vision of science, fosters innovation, attracts talent and makes its people proud.

Part of the company’s specialty chemistry, research & innovation (R&I) and industrial expertise in Europe will be combined to accelerate the development of sustainable innovations. Diverse and complementary teams from Saint-Fons, Collonges and Aubervilliers will join colleagues by 2022, doubling the number of people working on the site to 1,000. Business and support functions will be located in Lyon city.

The I&T Center will enable Solvay to support growth of its markets by improving its products, processes and partnerships with customers. The reimagined site will become Solvay’s largest global showcase of innovation and technology.

INNOVATION
OPENNESS
AND
INTERACTION

THE ENTRANCE – CENTRAL MALL
The open and airy central mall will be the true functional and emotional heart of the site. With its vertical and horizontal architectural lines cross-crossing, it will reinforce the sense of interaction and community.
THE POWER OF KNOWLEDGE-SHARING

By bringing research teams from different locations into one state-of-the-art center, Solvay will maximize the power of knowledge-sharing. Its design will promote collaborative intelligence from the initial conception of an idea to production, the customer solution and all the way to the consumer experience as well as between the different businesses there. This end-to-end approach – spanning research, processes, applications and industrialization – will permit a more responsive, customer-oriented and agile innovation process. As well as uniting Solvay’s own diverse talent into one buzzing hub, this model of ‘open innovation’ will be further strengthened by the proximity of external research and innovation partners.

The campus will plug into the wider academic and business expertise of Lyon’s ‘Chemical Valley’ ecosystem – further strengthening Solvay’s established reputation for innovation.

CONNECTED INNOVATION

Solvay’s customers, in cutting-edge markets like aerospace, automotive and smart devices, require technological innovation delivered as quickly as possible with top-tier talent and personalized service. Solvay is becoming more agile and faster to serve customers better. There will be simpler, fewer processes and shorter lines of communication. This will free up employees to spend more time with customers to co-create solutions.

The new I&T Center will develop innovative chemistry for energy, high-tech materials and performance formulations based on advanced technologies: non-carbonaceous materials, rare earths and silica, bio-based additives and lightweighting or metal-replacement materials to promote resource efficiency. Key focus areas include sustainable energy and storage, sustainable mobility, protection of the environment and wellbeing.

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AGILE I&T CENTER

The I&T Center integrates five key R&D and industrial functional areas: synthesis, analysis, application, pilots and engineering & technology. These unique value-creating areas of expertise are close in proximity to foster collaborative innovation. Spaces can be reconfigured according to needs.

INTERACTIVE LABORATORIES

The laboratory units are comfortable, light and transparent. Their modular and functional design allows them to be reshaped to meet the requirements of different research projects. They are integrated into adjacent spaces, and each unit overlooks a green patio. The laboratories can also be seen from the shared areas, with glazed windows that will allow for interaction.
THE ARCHITECT’S RESPONSE TO SOLVAY’S VISION

CHOOSING THE ARCHITECT

Three projects – from multidisciplinary teams of architects, engineers, landscape technicians, designers, landscapers and sustainability experts – were shortlisted in April from five pre-selected earlier in the year.

Solvay employees were involved in selecting the entries, before a jury chose Patriarche as the winner. The consortium consists of Patriarche, EGIS Group, TECTA, BASE, Indigo, Convergence and NewQuest. Architect Jean-Loup Patriarche is the overall director, with architect Bernard Maillet and engineer Matthieu Hindié completing the trio that will oversee the project.

ABOUT PATRIARCHE.

An innovation-driven architectural and engineering firm, Patriarche, works in public and private urban planning, with projects in Europe, Africa, Asia and North America. It has a dynamic team of architects, planners, engineers, economists, illustrators and graphic designers, with more than 210 employees in offices in Paris, Lyon, Chambéry and Bordeaux in France and Basel, Switzerland. Visit www.patriarche.fr
WHAT THE ARCHITECT SAYS
Jean-Loup Patriarche:

“We create relevant workspaces for its users and internally we have especially focused on New Ways of Working. When Solvay came to us with this ambitious project, we wanted to design an innovative building that would support its strategy.

The challenge was to radically change the existing site while allowing employees to continue their activities. Convinced that the wellbeing of Solvay’s employees at work depends on a structure that reflects the company’s culture and transformation, our solution was simple: a single, compact and functional building which adapts seamlessly to its urban setting and natural surrounds.

Within the context of New Ways of Working, we envisage a dynamic, unified space that fosters connection and knowledge-sharing between Solvay’s diverse teams and its customers.”

THE ARCHITECTURAL VISION

The winning consortium will reimagine the 1952 Saint-Fons campus into a dynamic area aligned with Solvay’s values. The location, adjacent to the highway, inspired the I&T Center’s iconic urban exterior – a bioclimatic façade that seems to ripple like a molecular chain. This symbolizes the interconnectedness of the campus’ various functions, expressing inclusion, energy and dynamism.

The center’s 40,000 m² will be equally divided between laboratory and office areas.

An open and airy central mall – the centerpiece of the campus with its light-suffused lobby area and soaring four-volume atrium – will link all laboratories, communal areas and tertiary spaces. Floor-to-ceiling windows will create a sense of connectedness with the external landscape and the world beyond.

Attractive, activity-based customizable workspaces and laboratories – which can be modified and redeveloped as needs evolve – will foster the working comfort of colleagues, customers, suppliers and partners. State-of-the-art digital applications will allow for easy connections anywhere, anytime, for any purpose, enhancing comfort and productivity.

Some of the reasons Solvay chose this team:
> Vision for an aesthetically beautiful building connected to wooded parkland.
> Configuration of the new campus as the heart of a dynamic ecosystem.
> Workspaces and common areas designed to stimulate easier communication.
> A space that promotes wellbeing and work-life balance.
COMMITTED TO SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is a priority for Solvay, not only in the way it aims to apply its innovations, but also in how it operates as a company. Solvay is committed to minimizing its industrial waste and the impact of its manufacturing processes on air, water and soil quality by adopting methods that optimize energy efficiency, water use and consumption of raw materials.

The new ‘smart building’ will be nearly carbon neutral, using geothermal energy and solar cells, and be well ventilated through use of double-skin technology. Rainwater will be harvested and reused as much as possible. The extensive digital applications will contribute to the building’s smart use of energy.

Solvay’s own solutions, including solar-controlled glass, architectural coating and insulation materials, will be widely used in the project. The site aims to achieve the BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) certified level of ‘Excellent’.

As part of its ‘Solvay Way’ approach to sustainability, the Group encourages the protection of biodiversity around its buildings and facilities. The new I&T Center will promote this approach and capitalize on the site’s environmental advantages. The Saint-Fons site’s rolling lawns and adjacent woods already offer a wide variety of tree species. The location is also home to several rare orchid species, with an action plan in place to protect them, and to 12 beehives producing around 100 kilos of honey a year.

The natural aspect of the campus is an integral part of the architect’s holistic vision. Green elements include the terraces, which flow from the main building, a water garden, orchard, forest and wooded fringe. These are linked to and visible from the main building, organically connecting the internal and external worlds.

Each element of the Saint-Fons campus will reflect Solvay’s ambition and commitment to sustainability. Careful consideration has been given to the connection between adjacent roads, pavements, parking and microtopography, and the surrounding natural environment, as well as the interplay between the center’s activities and their impact on air, soil quality and climate.
CHEMISTRY COMMUNITY
Saint-Fons is ideally located in the heart of the region’s famous Chemical Valley, south of Lyon city. Known as the birthplace of chemistry in France, this area has long been a base for chemical pioneers. Today, it is home to a thriving ecosystem of industrial groups, SMEs, start-ups and academic institutions, linking to push the boundaries of science.

The site will host third parties, including one of Axel’One’s three platforms, the Innovative Materials Platform. Axel’One is a collaborative platform, co-founded by Solvay, dedicated to chemistry and the environment. It promotes projects aimed at developing composite and biosourced materials, and materials for sustainable construction and recycling.

The Valley is also the base of Axelera – the competitive cluster for the chemical, energy and environment sectors in Lyon and Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes – of which Solvay is a founding member. Axelera seeks to facilitate competitive solutions for the chemical, environment and energy industries, and then promote them on an international scale.

By anchoring itself in France’s foremost chemistry community, Solvay can tap into a vast network of skills and knowledge and attract the best scientists from across Europe. Solvay’s project benefits from the full backing of local and regional authorities, including the Saint-Fons and Feyzin municipalities, the Greater Lyon metropolis and the Auvergne Rhône-Alpes regions as well as the Sytral and Aderly organizations.

A THRIVING ECOSYSTEM
The amphitheater, formed by two sets of bleachers, is the building’s distinctive meeting point and collaborative heart. In this versatile space, employees and guests can give presentations, discuss, read and work, as well as enjoy social and cultural events. Removable doors allow the space to open onto the gardens to the south, linked to one of the many green pockets.
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