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July 16, 2018 12:00 AM |

Give life sciences space and watch it boom

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New York Stem Cell Foundation

With tech startups and the world's best scientific and medical-research universities, New York City has long been at the crossroads of technology, science and medicine. Workers in pharma, robotics, personalized medicine, disease research and patient treatment will soon be joined by those developing the applied life sciences of the future as the commercialization of global health continues.

Growth will also come from new developments such as synthetic biology, which promises applications across a broad range of industries such as energy, agriculture, healthcare, chemicals, materials and bioremediation.

Think leather-inspired materials made in laboratories. Bricks made from fungus. Real meat made from animal cells instead of animals. Fabric made from algae. Eggs without chickens.

Given these and other drivers, the life-science industry in New York and the number of jobs it provides are both poised for rapid growth. Yet, the small amount of life-science real estate in New York—approximately 1.7 million square feet—is fully occupied. Adding more is crucial to jumpstarting the industry's growth.

In recognition of this need, the city recently announced its intention to establish an Applied Life Sciences Hub, which is the flagship project of the mayor's 10-year, \$500 million [LifeSci NYC](#) investment. This is a critical first step if New York is to become a competitive life-science cluster.

The efforts of the city are integral to moving this effort forward. But if we look at these steps within the context of powerhouse life-science markets San Francisco and Cambridge, home to over 30 million square feet of mixed commercial and academic life-science space, it is clear that New York's real estate community will need to play a continuing role in the development strategy. Many opportunities lie within existing building stock. Building owners should consider the financial benefits of retrofitting existing real estate from office into lab space. These efforts could significantly expand the amount of commercial life-science space in the city.

Two non-academic projects that came on line in recent years are at the forefront of New York City's life-science ecosystem: the New York Genome Center and the New York Stem Cell Foundation. The Genome Center is an independent, nonprofit academic research institution at the forefront of



diseases of our time. Both located in existing office buildings that were retrofitted; in each case, a building within a building was constructed. Both provide case studies for creating space for life science use.

Several recent developments suggest that this is the time for commercial life sciences to take off in New York City. Collaborations involving established life-science organizations are looking to jumpstart the growth of new biomedical, biotechnical and research companies.

The collaboration of Johnson & Johnson Innovation, the Genome Center and New York state launched JLABS @ NYC open to biotech, pharmaceutical, medical-device or consumer and health-tech companies. Already 370 companies are present in the portfolio across all JLABS sites, 80% of which are thriving. The incubator provides a source of technology, health care education, services and mentorship that enhances the life-science industry while promoting local job growth. The collaborative is expected to house more than 30 new companies in the next two years in New York City.

BioLabs—a national network of co-working facilities designed to help science-based startups go further, faster on limited capital investment—is developing a 50,000-square-foot co-working space in Hudson Square. With 120 wet-lab benches, state-of-the-art equipment, programming, and unparalleled access to a broad range of pharma, biotech, and other industry partners, the supportive co-working community will bring forth advancements and employment opportunities for as many as 35 high-potential startups over the next three years.

New startups launched by respected scientists from New York City academic institutions, with major financing from well-established venture capital investors, will require significant expansion space in the coming years. These startups include but are not limited to Kallyope, Quentis Therapeutics, Petra Pharma, Lodo Therapeutics and Kyras Therapeutics.

Now is the time for the New York City real estate community to respond. The short-term challenge is to quickly secure the right space to create interconnected dynamic environments while larger, ground-up developments are planned for the longer term. Retrofitting of existing buildings can be undertaken in phases to make it financially feasible, with the amount of space expanding as demand does.

By collaborating with scientists, biotech, engineering, design and construction professionals, building owners and developers can create new environments that will allow us to reimagine New York City using biology. Creating buildings and clustered communities fit-to-order for innovative startups and expanding established commercial life-science pacesetters will trigger advancements and employment opportunities that far surpass those seen before in the city's commercial life-sciences industry.

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