

SciPark Aims to Make New Jersey the New Silicon Valley

SciPark, a massive 32.3 acre R&D campus designed for high tech, biomedical and pharmaceutical companies, is offering New Jersey a chance to capitalize on its storied scientific history.

By Lily Barback
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The state of New Jersey has long been a stronghold for scientific research. Its scientific history is rich, as the state was once home to both Thomas Edison and Albert Einstein. Fifteen of the 25 largest pharmaceutical companies such as Johnson & Johnson, Merck, Bayer HealthCare and Bristol-Myers Squibb operate in New Jersey. Manufacturing companies are also an important industry in the state. The leading supplier of commercial water heaters, the manufacturers of barcode hardware and the world's leading manufacturer of glitter are all located in the state. Life science and technology also have footholds in the state with companies like LifeCell Corp., ECI Technology, Inc. and more. Because of these industries, R&D has always been important to New Jersey, which has the highest concentration of science professionals in America.

According to BioNJ, an organization dedicated to advancing biotechnology in New Jersey, the industry has enjoyed steady growth over the years.

"New Jersey is a hub for the biotechnology industry which has been growing for many years," says Debbie Hart, President of BioNJ. "There were 30 technology companies in New Jersey in 1994, 85 in 1998 and there are more than 235 today, not including pharma or medical device companies."



New Jersey's currently under construction SciPark, a 32.3 acre R&D campus, comprises four planned buildings that will play host to an assortment of science and technology companies.

The location of the state is ideal, situated close to both Philadelphia and New York City. And, because of time zones, researchers can communicate with both California and Europe in the same business day. But, the best part of the sciences in New Jersey is the universities. Princeton, Rutgers, Univ. of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ) and the New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT) churn out scientists with Masters and PhDs every year. Put that together with the fact that the state has the seventh highest number of PhD scientists per 1,000 workers and it becomes obvious that New Jersey is a science hub.

New Jersey also works to entice new companies with assorted tax exemption programs and grants for the sciences. "State government plays a great role," Hart says. "Chris Christie's administration has aimed to make New Jersey very business friendly and an attractive place for industry to be."

Construction of SciPark

Adding to Jersey's illustrious history is the currently under construction SciPark, a 32.3-acre science technology campus being constructed in the Princeton area in East

Windsor Township. It is situated in the well-established private, non-profit development called Einstein's Alley, which advocates for the economic growth of technology companies.

"We are aware of the incredible amount of intellectual capital in the biotechnology and life sciences sectors here in New Jersey," says Michael Witmond, Director of Marketing and Leasing for Woodmont Properties, the company that is executing SciPark. "What separates New Jersey from other biotech clusters like Boston and San Diego is its prominent pharmaceutical sector and skilled labor pool. By building SciPark in the central New Jersey corridor known as Einstein Alley, we hope to spur the rapid growth of those industries within the state."

The SciPark is designed to be both beautiful and functional with four planned state-of-the-art buildings. The buildings will face onto a plaza to harbor a sense of community, and within the park, there will be picnic areas, a jogging path and an outdrive to screen trucks from view.

"Woodmont Properties along with its partner, Simon Developments, envisioned a campus



SciPark is located in Einstein's Alley, a location well-suited for collaboration and teamwork.

environment where people wanted to come to work and a place where employees could be inspired," Witmond says. The developers worked closely with the community of East Windsor Township including the mayor, Janice Mironov, to ensure that the park would fit in well with the area.

The first company to sign a lease in SciPark is Elementis Specialties, a global specialty chemicals company. Elementis should be moving into its location—a 65,000 sq. ft. building—this coming summer. The other three buildings in SciPark are planned but not under construction as the developers want to wait until they have an "anchor tenant" for each building. However, a company needn't take over a whole building as Elementis plans to do. Each building can be divided into sections as small as 3,000 sq. ft.

Location, location, location

Although not associated with the SciPark, Katherine Kish, Executive Director of Einstein's Alley, says, "The location [of SciPark] is convenient and central for easy access from both within and outside the state. That location has always been good for science, and its history goes back to early satellite development days when it was once the site of RCA Astro."

In today's climate of globalization and instant technology that allows people from all over the world to connect in real-time, New Jersey still remains strong. After all, there is still a benefit to speaking in person as opposed to through e-mail and web connections,

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- Michael Witmond,
of Woodmont Properties.

especially as technology is fallible. Within Einstein's Alley and the SciPark, there are professionals in fields that include life science, bioscience, renewable energy and advanced manufacturing. Working in such close proximity makes it a great place "for smart people who want to work with other smart people on creative, innovative projects," Kish says.

The area around Einstein's Alley is also ideal for these collaborations. As Kish points out, "great universities are within a short drive. Transportation between centers of innovation is easy. It's an hour by train to NYC or Philadelphia, and flying to Europe, Asia, Boston or the West Coast is easy."

Looking ahead

As the economy slowly picks up, it's important to reinvest in industry. Investing in the sciences is a reliable choice as there will continually be new developments. The momentum in the science industries in New Jersey remains steady and there is no reason to think that that growth is going to stop. The state has become a magnet.

"Companies want to be with other like

companies," BioNJ's Hart says. "The industry tends to cluster together." With ventures like Einstein's Alley and SciPark, there is even more room for growth. Because of its past, present and future, New Jersey understands the importance of the science industry and remains committed to its strong science roots.

"N.J. was once a great center for manufacturing, then it became a great center for pharmaceuticals," Kish says. "Going forward, the state's economy needs to build on its innovative, entrepreneurial history and foster new industries that can blossom here."

The face of technology is ever-evolving. It's important not to get stuck in the moment as the latest cutting edge technology today may be a relic six months from now.

"Because technology changes so fast, much of the product in the marketplace is already out of date," says Witmond. "SciPark provides a blank canvas to meet the newest requirements in state-of-the-art R&D facilities."

Kish agrees with Witmond and also has high expectations for SciPark.

"My dream is that projects like SciPark will help Einstein's Alley be at the top of a list of the world's great innovation destinations and that it will be mentioned by entrepreneurs along with Silicon Valley as one of the places that a technology company should be."