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The Commercial Real Estate News of New Jersey

Advance: Bridgewater life sciences campus now 80 percent leased

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The New Jersey Center of Excellence in Bridgewater — Courtesy: Advance Realty

By Joshua Burd

The commercial space at a sprawling redevelopment site in Bridgewater is now 80 percent leased, following two new deals and growth by existing tenants in the life sciences sector.

The property's owners, Advance Realty and CrossHarbor Capital Partners LLC, announced the new activity at what's known as the New Jersey Center of Excellence. The new tenants include Avantor Performance Materials and Vertice Pharma, while Matinas Biopharma is the latest tenant to expand its space at the former Sanofi U.S. research campus on Route 202/206.



All told, the campus has 800,000 square feet of leasable commercial space.

Avantor, a supplier of ultra-high-purity performance materials and solutions for the life sciences and advanced technology markets, has leased 26,769 square feet, according to a news release.

Vertice, which manufactures, markets and distributes pharmaceutical products, will occupy 4,491 square feet.

“Since acquiring the Center of Excellence less than four years ago, we’ve worked tirelessly to transform it into a premier workplace destination that attracts the brightest stars of the life sciences and biopharmaceutical industries while providing early-stage companies the space and infrastructure they need to grow,” said Peter Cocozziello, founder and CEO of Advance Realty. “As we draw nearer to the start of construction on the residential and retail components of what will be a one-of-a-kind town center, it’s exciting to see our belief in the project validated by the incredible amount of leasing activity.”

In each transaction, Advance was represented by Director of Asset Management Barry Quiner and the JLL team of Daniel Loughlin, Robert Ryan, Craig Eisenhardt and Scott Stange.

Avantor was represented by The Garibaldi Group Executive Managing Director Jerry Moore, while Vertice was represented by John M. Cahill II, Keith Keppler and Howard Cross of Cresa New York. Matinas, a publicly traded company that develops anti-infectives to combat drug-resistant infections known as “superbugs,” signed a 14,336-square-foot lease and will consolidate multiple labs at the property, the news release said. The company was represented by Savills Studley Managing Director Jack Feeney.

Advance and CrossHarbor acquired the property in 2013 after Sanofi, a French pharmaceutical giant, announced it was moving its R&D center to the Boston area. The campus included 1.2 million-square feet of office and state-of-the-art lab space, including about 800,000 square feet of modern facilities that could be preserved and repopulated with new tenants.

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But Advance also has a master plan that calls for 400 luxury apartments and urban-style amenities, including restaurants, a grocer, entertainment, shops and outdoor recreation. Construction on the town center portion of the project is set to begin later this year.

Avantor's new space will be in what Advance calls the "crown jewel" building, known as JR1, which can still accommodate tenants seeking 20,000 to 100,000 square feet.

"At our new innovation center in Bridgewater, we will be working with our customers to drive collaborative development and product commercialization," Ashish Kulkarni, Avantor's executive vice president and chief technology officer, said in a prepared statement. "We're excited to take occupancy of our new state-of-the-art space, and to continue accelerating innovation for our global life sciences and advanced technologies customers."

Vertice, meantime, will occupy 4,491 square feet on the first floor of building L. Indranil Nandi, the company's vice president of R&D, said it was "imperative our researchers have access to world-class facilities" in order to make high-quality pharmaceuticals more affordable.

Its new space at the Center of Excellence "will play an important role in ensuring we remain at the forefront of a competitive and constantly changing industry," Nandi said.

Matinas has been a tenant at NJCOE since 2015 and is one of several life science firms that have helped stabilize the property, while Advance sought local approvals for the mixed-use portion. The first tenants to commit to the space following Sanofi's announcement included Ashland Specialty Ingredients and Amneal Pharmaceuticals.

Since then, Advance has secured a commitment from Nestlé Health Science to build a new 180,000-square-foot headquarters and R&D facility at the 110-acre campus. The developer says life science tenants have been attracted to features such as its redundant utility infrastructure, a full-service cafeteria, common board room and 120-seat auditorium.

For Matinas, the expanded space will provide an opportunity for continued growth near its Bedminster headquarters.



“Our time at the Center of Excellence has been extremely valuable as we continue to expand and further our mission to fight drug-resistant infections,” said Roelof Rongen, Matinas’ co-founder and CEO. “As we sought more space to meet our demanding technical needs and to create an environment where our employees can continue to thrive and collaborate, it proved to be the perfect fit.”