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Vantage Builders completes cannabis cultivation facility for Sanctuary Medicinals

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Littleton, MA Vantage Builders, Inc. completed the transformation of a former warehouse building into a cannabis cultivation facility for Sanctuary Medicinals. Located at 234 Taylor St., the facility has eight grow rooms and facilities for producing marijuana edibles and oils.

The new location is Sanctuary Medicinals' second cultivation facility. Vantage worked closely with Sanctuary's management to fully understand the firm's unique methodology and approach to growing cannabis to ensure the facility supported its precise needs. The location is for cultivation and production only, there is no dispensary on-site.

"We are very pleased to be in Littleton, which is centrally located to the five dispensary locations that we will supply," said Jason Sidman, CEO of Sanctuary Medicinals. "We are dedicated to the town and plan to be very active community members. We appreciate the efforts of the Vantage Builders team, whose experience in constructing a cultivation facility was critical to our opening."

Vantage followed plans by Tony Fallon Architecture for the 24,000 s/f building. Working in the formerly open warehouse area, the team constructed multiple rooms to enable the cultivation, processing, storage and shipping of cannabis products.

Most of the space is dedicated to the eight grow rooms. Each grow room is approximately 2,400 s/f in size and designed to maximize cultivation capacity.

Rather than simply grow on the ground level, the plants are housed in long shelving units with three tiers, known as a vertical grow system, enabling Sanctuary to fully utilize all the space in the room and produce upwards of 20,000 plants. The shelving units are track-mounted and can be easily moved a few feet laterally with the simple turn of a wheel.

The other production areas include the kitchen, extraction, drying, water and packaging rooms. The 1,600-square-foot kitchen has three ovens, a freezer and refrigerator. Eight to ten employees will work in the kitchen, creating cannabis edibles, including baked goods and chocolates. In the extraction room, workers will process cannabis to make tinctures, lotions and oils, including Rick Simpson oil. An explosion-proof section of the extraction area ensures safe processing of the oils.

The large drying room, maintained at a much higher temperature and lower humidity than the rest of the facility, ensures that the cannabis is properly dried before processing. As with the grow rooms,

Careful consideration was given to using the vertical space afforded by the building's high ceilings. Plants are hung from floor to ceiling, using a custom-built system developed by Sanctuary, with drying lasting for several days. In the packaging room, workers will use carefully calibrated machines to package processed goods, which are shipped to dispensaries and wholesalers.

Sanctuary workers control the plants' hydration and feeding from the water room, where the facility's intricate irrigation system is managed. PVC piping delivers the nutrients where and when needed, dictated by Sanctuary's precise growing schedule. The irrigation system is designed to reuse up to 95 percent of its water, making the facility very environmentally friendly. The system collects condensation and any excess water, passes it through filtration and purifiers, and reintroduces it back to the growing process.

Climate control is a critical factor in cannabis cultivation, with each stage of the process requiring its own precise levels of temperature and humidity. To provide this level of control Vantage installed extensive HVAC and electrical systems and utilized proper materials in the buildout. The HVAC system features two 300-ton chillers and two 2-million BTU boilers, while each grown room has its own dedicated air handler, either one or two units depending on the room size, to deliver cool, dehumidified air that has not been circulated to other building areas. Between the chiller and boiler supplies, the facility contains several miles of welded steel pipe, which required significant planning and installation.

Of similar importance is the electrical system, which is backed up with a 1 megawatt generator to ensure the facility maintains operation. Humidity control was also factored into the building materials. All interior walls are built with insulated panels with closed cell structure to keep moisture out, while epoxy flooring provides similar protection.

The location has approximately 2,500 square feet of office space for the company's employees. The facility features multiple levels of security. All areas are constantly monitored by cameras and access is allowed only by security card and biometric fingerprint scanners.

"As we've seen with other projects, the process of cultivating and processing cannabis is extremely precise," said Ed Silva, principal, Vantage Builders. "While the facility is housed in a former industrial building, much of the project had more in common with laboratory and cleanroom buildouts that we've completed. Our focus was to support Sanctuary Medicinals' vision for cultivation, which they have refined at their other facilities, and to get them up and running as quickly as possible."

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