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Town of Burlington approves four articles for life science development

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Burlington, MA On January 27th, at town meeting, the town voted unanimously in favor of four separate warrant articles, opening up additional development opportunities for life sciences uses as a by-right use in three new sites located along I-95/Rte. 128. The vote will allow biotech companies to consider new locations within Boston Metro without the need for a special permit for land use.

This change allows for new real estate opportunities that enable the growth of the region's life science growing cluster. JLL, a leading commercial real estate firm, reports that there is an aggregate of nearly 1.2 million s/f of lab space needed over the next 12-18 months from current lab tenants and with the lab vacancy in Cambridge hovering at 2%, the town will now offer new options for life sciences companies to consider in a MassBIO BioReady Platinum-ranked community.

Boston remains the epi-center for life sciences - commanding \$10 billion in funding in Massachusetts alone. Burlington has worked hard to understand the regional dynamics of evolving industries as well as the needs of employees. In the 1990s when software technology was expanding, the area established itself as the tech capital of Rte. 128.

In the 2000's Burlington understood that amenities were critical to where businesses located in order to attract employees and the Town implemented new mixed-use commercial districts with improved walkability.

Burlington's planning director, Kristin Kassner, a key champion on the life sciences zoning initiative, said "In 2018 we began the life science journey to understand how to better position Burlington to support the growing industry. In January 2019, Town Meeting approved important zoning amendments that helped to create a bigger star on the map. In September of 2019, we received the coveted Platinum rating from the Massachusetts Biotechnology Council. And this Monday, January 2020, we took another big step forward by rezoning sites to allow for by-right life science uses." After the vote, Mrs. Kassner added, "I am extremely encouraged by the support from our residents and the effort to diversify industries within the Town of Burlington. This is the continuation of proactive planning for the type of growth we want to see in Burlington."

Robert Buckley with Riemer & Braunstein, the attorney representing the property owners responded to the vote of approval by saying, "The action by Town Meeting is another indication of how Burlington over the years has been at the forefront of implanting creative and proactive policies to encourage and sustain economic development."

The zoning changes expanded the High Rise Industrial district and also included revisions that set the maximum height of buildings to 90 feet and allow for under-building parking. The goal is to encourage redevelopment of sites with strong highway visibility, near existing amenities, but also enhance opportunities for greenspace, walkability and flexibility in design. The three sites include: 1) 400-600 Summit Dr. owned by the Gutierrez Company, 2) 3 Van de Graaff Dr. owned by American Landmark III LLC, and 3) 60 Blanchard Rd., a site controlled by the Nordblom Company.

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