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Ancora L&G selected as developer of 212,000 s/f life sciences project in the state’s Innovation and Design District

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Providence, RI Governor Dan McKee said that a major life sciences development project is moving forward in the state’s Innovation and Design District on the former I-195 land. The 212,000 s/f, seven-story building will house a new public health lab for the state of Rhode Island, while also providing additional lab space available for lease to organizations in the local life sciences community. Ancora L&G – a 50:50 partnership between the alternative asset origination arm of leading United Kingdom financial services group, Legal & General, Legal & General Capital, and North Carolina-based real estate developer, Ancora–has been selected as the developer for the State Health Laboratories following a competitive RFP process.

Gov. Daniel McKee

“Rhode Island has momentum – and this project is crucial to ensuring the momentum continues in the areas of public health and our economy,” said governor McKee. “We’re grateful for all the partners who came together to ensure Rhode Island maximizes this significant economic development opportunity while advancing the state’s important public health goals.”

The Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) State Health Laboratories will anchor the facility, with the remaining floors available to academic and industry partners in the biotechnology field. The 80,000 s/f State Health Laboratories will provide updated and flexible space to accommodate biological and chemical testing for a variety of infectious disease, environmental, and forensic

testing services.

To help attract additional tenants and encourage a thriving mix of public and private entities focused on health and medicine, Brown University has signed a letter of intent with Ancora to lease 20,000 s/f of laboratory space in the building.

Josh Parker, CEO of Ancora L&G, said, “We are delighted to have been selected as the developer for the RIDOH State Health Laboratories. The development will deliver much-needed infrastructure for Rhode Island, including state-of-the-art public health labs that will enhance the State’s ability to test for and manage a broad range of infectious diseases and illnesses, together with private-sector lab space to support expansion of the area’s growing bioscience ecosystem. We are excited to be working on this project, demonstrating our ability to deliver against the needs of our anchor institution partners.”

This public/private partnership follows a condominium model with ownership of the State Health Laboratories unit conveyed to the state of Rhode Island on completion, and Ancora L&G retaining ownership of the private laboratory space. Funding for the \$81.7 million state laboratory comes from an Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity Grant from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC). The total project cost is expected to be \$165 million.

“This new facility will not only make our state safer, but it will make our state more attractive for investment in the life sciences,” said lieutenant governor Sabina Matos. “This is a smart, two-pronged investment in supporting both our economy and our health experts at RIDOH.”

“The old lab space is past its prime and this new one will be a game changer. It will be better designed and equipped to enhance the state’s ability to test for serious health threats. This federally-financed project will serve Rhode Island for generations. When it’s completed, it will help guard against future public health emergencies and pandemics,” said U.S. senator Jack Reed, a senior member of the Appropriations Committee. “I’m pleased that the state has selected the former 195 land for our new federally funded state-of-the-art public health lab,” said U.S. senator Whitehouse. “The significant federal investment we secured will help keep Rhode Islanders safe from infectious diseases and add a landmark addition to the District’s growing life sciences cluster.”

“The COVID-19 pandemic made it clear that preparedness is key when public health emergencies strike,” said U.S. congressman Jim Langevin. “I’m thrilled that governor McKee and his administration are partnering with Ancora L&G to expand our public health infrastructure by breaking ground on a new state health lab. This facility will help ensure that we have state-of-the-art technology at the ready if and when the next crisis arrives. In the meantime, it will deliver fast and reliable medical results to patients all across Rhode Island.”

“This CDC grant and public-private partnership will create critically needed bioscience infrastructure in Rhode Island,” said U.S. congressman David Cicilline. “The new facility will provide a modern space for the state’s Department of Health and other scientists to conduct cutting-edge research, helping to ensure we are prepared to identify and respond to new viruses and infectious diseases. I

look forward to not only breaking ground on the new facility, but to the groundbreaking innovation that it will support.”

The project is the result of a multi-partner collaboration, which alongside Ancora L&G and its development partner GRE, a regional development services company serving the Science and Technology sector, includes the RI Department of Administration, the I-195 Redevelopment District Commission, the RI Commerce Corporation, the RI Executive Office of Health and Human Services, and RIDOH.

Building on its long-standing commitment to supporting Jewelry District projects that contribute to the economic vitality of the city and the state, Brown University has signed a letter of intent with Ancora Partners to lease 20,000 s/f of laboratory space in the building for a period of 10 years. Brown has a substantial amount of academic activity relevant to the mission of RIDOH located nearby, including education and research at the Warren Alpert Medical School, Laboratories for Molecular Medicine and School of Public Health. This summer, Brown began work toward creating an integrated life sciences building in the district and simultaneously developed an expansive plan to significantly increase the impact of its research benefiting communities locally, nationally and globally.

Brown University president Christina Paxson said the university will continue to prioritize investments related to life sciences research and economic activity in the Jewelry District, especially when Brown’s participation can help to incentivize investments from new partners seeking a presence in Rhode Island.

“Often, the certainty that comes with tenancy from a Rhode Island anchor institution is an essential factor as private developers consider new investments in Providence,” Paxson said. “We’re pleased that Brown’s role in this project will help drive other investment, much in the way we did for South St. Landing and the Innovation Center at 225 Dyer. We can act as a catalyst for further development while we also strengthen our infrastructure to enable even more high-impact re-search in health, medicine and other fields that makes a positive difference in the lives of people in Rhode Island and well beyond.”

“The pandemic proved how critical it is to have a modern State Health Lab to meet such increased health demands,” said speaker Joseph Shekarchi and president of the senate Dominick Ruggerio. “We strongly support this facility, and we are pleased the federal government provided funding to enable our state to make such an important investment.”

The public design review process will begin at the I-195 Redevelopment District Commission meeting on October 19 where Ancora L&G will present their design. There will also be an opportunity for public comment and a presentation by the Commission’s design consultant.

“This public-private partnership is exactly the catalyst needed to propel life science development in the District,” said Robert Davis, chairman of the I-195 Redevelopment District Commission. “The 130,000 s/f of private lab space could not have been built except through this kind of partnership

and its presence will pave the way for more life science businesses to grow and energize Rhode Island's economy.”

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need for public health laboratories to rapidly scale up testing and apply new technologies like pathogen genomic sequencing,” said Glen Gallagher Ph.D., the director of RIDOH’s State Health Laboratories. “The commitment of this new laboratory space will allow our staff to work more efficiently and safely while positioning the laboratory to respond to emerging infectious disease and chemical public health concerns for decades to come.”

With 50,000 s/f of direct usable space, the new lab will offer a larger, more modern and technologically advanced workspace than the current state health lab located at 50 Orms St. Like the Orms St. location, the new lab will include a Biosafety Level 3 facility and will be able to provide critical services for a variety of infectious disease, environmental, and forensic testing needs. The updated space will allow the State Health Laboratory to be more flexible in response to emerging threats and applying new technologies including the expanding field of genome sequencing.

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