

Atrium Center  
300 Boylston Street  
Newton, Massachusetts

Special Permit Request for Laboratory Use

FAQs

- **What is being proposed at the Atrium?**

Atrium Wellness Center, LLC (“Atrium”) has owned The Atrium since August 2012. All of the retail tenants who formerly occupied the Atrium vacated the space in its entirety with The Cheesecake Factory being the last to leave in November 2013. Since that time, the property has undergone a total repositioning and transformation which included the removal of all interior retail finishes and precast exterior panels along with the installation of a state-of-the-art glass curtain wall exterior glazing system. This work was designed by prominent Boston architect Laurence Grossman, AIA, of ADD Inc. (an affiliate of Stantec). The work was performed by John Moriarty & Associates, Inc., a leading construction manager with previous experience in Chestnut Hill.

To reflect the current demand for commercial space in the leasing market, Atrium would like to include attracting tenants in the life sciences sector as an option for tenancy. Atrium can accommodate commercial uses that include general office, medical office, retail, and other specialty similar uses, but the way the Newton Zoning Code is currently written, it does not include life sciences without obtaining a special permit from the City of Newton for such use. Life sciences uses are generally permitted as of right in neighboring cities and towns.

- **Life Sciences Sector Summary**

There are some 450 life sciences companies located in Massachusetts employing nearly 60,000 employees. Life sciences represent the fastest growing segment of the Massachusetts economy. Over 70 life sciences companies are located in the Central Route 128 Market (which includes Newton) representing over 3 million square feet.

Massachusetts life sciences companies earn in excess of \$35 billion in revenues annually and contribute nearly \$10 billion to our local economy. Life sciences users are less intensive than most

other users of real estate and typically have a lower parking ratio and generate fewer vehicle trips.

- **Why propose life sciences at Atrium?**

Newton is a desirable location for high-profile employers if the special permit requirement can be addressed in advance to ensure that Newton is on par with its sister communities such as: Needham, Lexington, Brookline, Waltham, Watertown and Cambridge, among others which are welcoming to the life sciences industry. Newton's educated workforce and proximity to major medical facilities and abundant retail and other amenities make the community an ideal location for major life sciences users and their employees.

- **What permit is required from the City of Newton?**

Life sciences companies typically dedicate a portion of their space to laboratory use. Life sciences companies have office space as the majority of their space utilization needs and a portion for research and development. Laboratory use in the Atrium Center's Business 1 Zoning District would trigger the need to obtain a special permit from the Newton Board of Aldermen.

- **Who are the proposed tenants?**

No specific tenants have been identified for the Atrium Center as of this time. Tenants who have previously expressed an interest in the Atrium include GE Healthcare and Envivo Pharmaceuticals (now Forum Pharmaceuticals). The requested special zoning permit will allow Atrium to compete for tenants without the uncertainty and delay of a future special permit process. Other communities with similar users include, among others: Lexington (Shire and Cubist) and Waltham (Alkermes, Immunogen, Astra Zeneca, Biogen).

- **What type of research will be conducted?**

Life sciences companies perform various types of research, some of which may include elements of recombinant DNA (rDNA) research in their work. Typical companies devote 10-20% of their floor area to laboratory and research and development. The typical lab design includes vinyl floor tile, cabinetry, and general "kitchen

style” equipment in a “clean room” type of environment, formally regulated by various government agencies.

Most of the major life sciences companies utilize rDNA to develop new pharmaceutical products. Companies which do this work include prominent Fortune 500 companies such as, among others, Genzyme, Novartis, Pfizer, Merck and Amgen, in locations such as Lexington, Cambridge, Waltham, Brookline, Watertown, Needham, other portions of the City of Newton and many more cities and towns.

- **Are additional permits required for life sciences research?**

Newton has a specific ordinance regulating rDNA research. Under Revised Ordinances Section 12-21 et seq. any proposal for rDNA research must obtain the approval of the Newton Biosafety Committee, a group of experts in the field, before obtaining a permit from the Commissioner of Health and Human Services. The permit application must include, among other things, plans for safety, training and waste monitoring and a detailed description of the work to be undertaken.

Each applicant for an rDNA permit must establish a biosafety committee and include neighborhood representatives to monitor and review the programs. The committee reviews proposed research with rDNA and determines whether it can be safely conducted in compliance with all applicable regulations. The committee reports at least annually to the Newton Biosafety Committee. In addition, a number of state and federal government agencies regulate the life sciences industry and additional permits may be required from those agencies depending in each case on the particular proposed life sciences research work.

- **What levels of rDNA research might be undertaken at the Atrium Center?**

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Guidelines, developed in the mid-1970’s, describe how to work with rDNA to assure the safety of workers, the public and the environment. These Guidelines are updated periodically.

Atrium will be limited by its special permit to NIH Biosafety Level 1 and Level 2 research facilities which **POSE NO HAZARDS** outside of the lab, and the limitation to Biosafety Level 1 and Level 2 is consistent with regulations adopted by several nearby communities. Absolutely no other levels would be allowed or contemplated.

- **What are the design and safety features for laboratory use at the Atrium?**

All facilities engaged in rDNA are further regulated by other agencies, including but not limited to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the Federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) with regard to laboratory safety and other aspects such as waste disposal. In addition to the safety and operational plans required for the local permit, the laboratory design must include specific features such as negative air pressurization so that air flows into the lab rather than out of the lab. Appropriate ventilation systems as well as biosafety cabinets and chemical fume hoods also are installed. There are specific disposal requirements for materials such as chemicals and rDNA, much the same as in a doctor's office, hospital or medical laboratory.

- **What is the meaning of the levels of research proposed at the Atrium?**

The NIH Biosafety Levels are deemed to categorize the research so as to protect the workers and the public. Level 1 and Level 2 are defined to provide no airborne or inhalation risk to the worker or the environment, while Level 2 may provide some contact risk to the worker, in much the same way as medical waste might pose contact risk to a worker in a physician's office or a blood sample might to a worker in a hospital clinical laboratory. As in a hospital lab or a physician's office the workers' training, protective equipment such as lab coats and gloves, disinfection and waste disposal protocols are intended to protect the employees who might accidentally come into contact with laboratory materials.

- **Are there examples of Biosafety Level 1 and Biosafety Level 2 research facilities near residential areas?**

Yes. Biosafety Level 1 and Level 2 facilities are frequently located near residences. In Cambridge, Novartis and Pfizer are located in Kendall Square and in Boston, Vertex is near the Fan Pier residential area. Also, in Boston the Brigham and Women's Hospital is constructing a new building which will have a Biosafety Level 3 in the immediately adjacent residential neighborhood. The Brigham currently operates a number of Level 1 and 2 laboratories adjacent to residential areas. Examples in nearby towns include the Shire Pharmaceutical campus in Lexington and Alexandria's Arsenal Street facilities in Watertown, each of which abuts

residential areas which include condominiums, cooperatives and single family residential homes.

- **What do other communities do?**

Other communities embrace life sciences in a way that promotes safe and productive research while supporting the local community by leasing commercial space, increasing the real estate tax base and providing related economic benefits. Needham, Waltham, Watertown and Lexington all have moved forward with these types of projects, and Cambridge has led the movement since the mid-1970's. The Mass Biotech Council has given Newton its lowest rating for being friendly to life sciences, and Atrium is eager to change that rating and advance the life sciences industry in Newton, bringing with it additional opportunities as high paying jobs, co-location of supporting companies, increasing property values and enhanced property tax benefits, among others.

- **What is the schedule for completion?**

The Atrium renovation is about 55% complete. The exterior façade is nearing completion and the interior renovations will be completed once a tenant has been identified and a lease has been signed. We are in the process of finalizing lease proposals with several tenants, including retailers comprising of a small bakery, food service and other neighborhood amenities, including a well-recognized office user. We anticipate final completion of the project and the beginning of new tenant openings sometime during the latter half of 2016, in about 15 months or so.

We are happy to answer specific questions and/or put interested persons in touch with our design and consulting teams, which include Needham based Environmental Health & Engineering, Inc., specialty consultants in the life sciences industry.