New Building Dedicated at Gateway Park

A national model of urban redevelopment, WPI’s Gateway Park adds first-class office and laboratory space, creating jobs and expanding the city’s tax base.

WORCESTER, Mass. – May 1, 2013 – Federal, state, and local leaders joined members of the Central Massachusetts business and academic community today to dedicate the newest building at Worcester Polytechnic Institute’s (WPI) Gateway Park. Built and owned by the O’Connell Development Group (ODG) of Holyoke, Mass., the $32 million building is home to growing companies, educational programs, and state-of-the-art research laboratories.

“We are pleased today to celebrate the opening of this building as the embodiment of a vision built upon strong relationships between the academic, business, and public sectors to create a competitive and sustainable economy here in Worcester,” said Dennis A. Fitzpatrick, president of The O’Connell Companies. “In doing so we celebrate not only those who brought us to this point, but also our tenants whose innovative work will touch the future. We are proud to enable their success by creating this new building.”

The new four-story, 92,000-square-foot building is located at 50 Prescott St. in Worcester. It was designed and built to comply with U.S. Green Building Council guidelines. An application for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification is pending with the council.

“Today we dedicate a new building and validate the vision of our community,” said Dennis Berkey, president and CEO of WPI. “Gateway Park draws upon this city’s proud history of innovation and looks to the future with expansive opportunities for education, discovery, and the development of new technologies that will grow our economy and improve the human condition.”
More than 100 people attended the dedication ceremony, including city, state, and national leaders who have been involved in the planning and development of Gateway Park.

“The momentum we celebrate today at Gateway Park is yet another example of how the people and institutions of Massachusetts rise to the challenge of improving our communities and building a better future for our Commonwealth,” said Massachusetts Lt. Governor Timothy Murray, who as mayor of Worcester was instrumental in helping assemble the land for the development of Gateway Park. “The transformation of this area is stunning. From an underutilized brownfield, to this beautiful new addition to our community, Gateway Park epitomizes the results of strategic public investment leveraging significant private investment for job creation and economic development.”

Congressman Jim McGovern, who has led the effort on the federal level to direct resources to help develop the park, said, “Gateway Park is a perfect representation of Worcester's rebirth. Its transformation from abandoned brownfields to a cutting-edge life sciences park is a key piece in our efforts to boost economic development in Worcester, and a testament to what can happen when all levels of government work closely with colleges, non-profits, companies, and private developers to bring a vision to life. I want to commend the city, WPI, and O'Connell Development for their dedication to ensuring that Worcester will be a high-tech job hub for years to come.”

Some 35,000 square feet of the new building is occupied by three WPI programs: the Biomanufacturing Education and Training Center (BETC), an expanded Fire Protection Engineering research and burn laboratory, and the graduate division of WPI’s School of Business. Siemens Metal Technologies occupies the top two floors of the building, with 200 employees in sales, engineering, finance, and management departments.

Massachusetts Biomedical Initiatives (MBI) has leased space in the new building to create an incubator for emerging life sciences companies. Much of the MBI space will be used by Blue Sky BioServices (formerly Blue Sky Biotech), a contract research company that has outgrown its space in MBI’s incubator at the WPI Life Sciences and Bioengineering Center (LSBC) in
Gateway Park. The fit-out of the BETC and MBI laboratory elements of the new building were funded in large part by a $5.15 million grant from the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center.

“This unique new facility will create jobs, provide training for the next generation of life sciences workers, foster the growth of new companies, and advance scientific research,” said Susan Windham-Bannister, PhD, president and CEO of the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center. “In addition to housing young emerging companies, the facility includes a first-in-the-region center for biomanufacturing training and education that will meet the workforce needs of industry, provide for a more inclusive workforce, and enhance Massachusetts' strengths as a leader in this field.”

By design, Gateway Park has been developed as a property tax-paying entity, to help provide new resources for the City of Worcester to support important public services. Under the terms of a Tax Increment Financing agreement between ODG and the city, the new building at Gateway Park will pay an estimated $5.2 million in property taxes to Worcester over 16 years.

“This project is a world-class example of public and private partners working together for a common goal,” said Worcester Mayor Joseph Petty. “WPI continues to be one of the best community partners we have. The university’s work in the Gateway Park area, to expand its academic and research programs while attracting private investment and creating sustainable employment opportunities in our city, is remarkable.”

Worcester City Manager Michael O’Brien agreed, saying “The addition of this 92,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art, laboratory and office building further establishes Gateway Park as a major center for the advancement of the life sciences industry in New England. The public-private partnership, led by WPI, has proven once again to be an invaluable resource for downtown growth and development, creating hundreds of new jobs and business opportunities in our city.”

To date, WPI has led the investment of more than $110 million in Gateway Park, a comprehensive urban redevelopment project that has transformed a blighted and underutilized area in the core of the city into a clean, thriving, mixed-use park that is home to a growing range of academic, research, and commercial enterprises. The first building at Gateway Park, the
125,000-square-foot LSBC, opened in 2007 and is fully occupied. Gateway’s $12.5 million, 660-space parking garage also opened in 2007 to serve the buildings now occupied in the park.

The Gateway Park project has been recognized as a national model of environmental stewardship and urban redevelopment. In 2007, the park won the prestigious Phoenix Award for its successful redevelopment of an old industrial site. Also in 2007, the U.S. Department of Commerce gave Gateway Park the Excellence in Economic Development Award for Urban or Suburban Economic Development. In 2008, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts designated Gateway Park as the anchor for the state’s first Growth District, a new initiative to accelerate job creation in locations that are primed and ready for development. The master plan for Gateway Park includes space for three additional buildings and expansion of the parking garage.

The architect of the new building is Perkins+Will. TD Banknorth provided the financing. ODG has secured a long-term ground lease from WPI for the building site, and will own and operate the new facility.

About O’Connell Development Group
The O’Connell Development Group (ODG) is the entrepreneurial arm of The O’Connell Companies, Inc., a 130 year old construction and development company headquartered in Holyoke, Massachusetts. ODG has developed, financed, and managed a variety of challenging development projects including industrial, retail, office, housing, and hydroelectric projects throughout New England. In addition, ODG develops and operates biosolid treatment facilities throughout the United States through its subsidiary, New England Fertilizer Company.

About Worcester Polytechnic Institute
Founded in 1865 in Worcester, Mass., WPI is one of the nation's first engineering and technology universities. Its 14 academic departments offer more than 50 undergraduate and graduate degree programs in science, engineering, technology, business, the social sciences, and the humanities and arts, leading to bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral degrees. WPI's talented faculty work with students on interdisciplinary research that seeks solutions to important and socially relevant problems in fields as diverse as the life sciences and bioengineering, energy, information security, materials processing, and robotics. Students also have the opportunity to make a difference to communities and organizations around the world through the university's innovative Global Perspective Program. There are more than 30 WPI project centers throughout North America and Central America, Africa, Australia, Asia, and Europe.

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