



Biotech Lab Building Boom in Massachusetts

[Erik Mellgren 7/23/08](#)

A huge new biotech lab complex is being planned for Burlington, MA, according to a [report in the *Boston Globe*](#). The proposed \$2 billion development is the brainchild of developer Patriot Partners, which is already building out the nearby 96-acre Lexington Technology Park at the site of the old Raytheon headquarters. If realized, the Burlington plan would produce New England's largest life sciences complex, including 2 million square feet of lab and office space, as well as shops and 2,000 units of housing for the elderly. The plan seems to be rather preliminary, though, given that the company still doesn't own the land and probably would have to build bridges and ramps to make it accessible.

As the *Globe* notes, there are already a number of other big developments aiming at the needs of the life science industry under way, like Alexandria Real Estate Equities' planned 1.5 million-square-foot lab complex near Kendall Square in Cambridge.

Taken together, these Burlington and Cambridge developments would add 3.5 million square feet of life sciences labs to what's already in existence in the region. If I have done my mental conversion to metrics correctly, that is nearly six times as much space as the former [Pharmacia corporate R&D labs](#) used to occupy in my Swedish hometown Uppsala some years ago. Will there really be a demand for all these facilities? (As a Scandinavian, raised on soccer, not baseball, I can't just believe that if you build it, they will come.)

Patriot Partners doesn't have any future tenants lined up for the Burlington site, though it hopes that life science companies will continue to move to the suburbs. At the same time, rising gas prices, and energy costs overall, might make more central locations more attractive. That is why Alexandria is betting on a location close to the Kendall Square subway stop instead, as Xconomy [reported in June](#).

"I think that in the long run the life science industry in the region will continue to grow. Will the growth be adequate to fill all the properties being proposed? That remains to be seen," says Tom Andrews, senior vice president at Alexandria.