



Evanston Labs building nears completion as downtown's newest high-rise

Shun Graves, Assistant City Editor

Wrapped in glass and 10 stories tall, a new laboratory and office space nearing completion stands as the newest addition to the downtown Evanston skyline.

Evanston Labs, set for completion this year, could herald the arrival of the life sciences industry in the city. Negotiations with potential tenants are ongoing as the Chicago region could soon see “exponential growth” in the biosciences, said Morgan Baer-Blaska, a vice president with Evanston Labs’ developer Trammell Crow Company.

“Thus far, we are seeing that the demand is a mix of local Chicagoland users, companies who look for proximity to Northwestern University, as well as national and international companies looking to expand in Chicagoland,” Baer-Blaska said in a statement to The Daily. “This diversity of demand is a testament to the strength of Chicagoland’s life sciences ecosystem.”

The building, located at 710 Clark St., will offer over 175,000 square feet of office and laboratory spaces. The rooftop terrace will have grills and firepits for all lab and office tenants, while each floor will have private balconies, Baer-Blaska added. And the ground floor will feature Etta, a “wood-fired” restaurant.

Trammell Crow has touted the facility’s proximity to Northwestern — and to a life sciences “cluster” on the North Shore — as a selling point for the new office space. The firm has also developed urban laboratories in Chicago, which ranks among the top 10 cities in the U.S. for life sciences employment and job growth.

Evanston Labs’ completion will arrive at a critical juncture for downtown Evanston. Office vacancies have remained high, even as two divisions of UL Enterprises recently opened headquarters just blocks from the new high rise.

The new building’s unique laboratory use could make it better positioned to draw workers and customers, Downtown Evanston Executive Director Andy Vick said.



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The Evanston Labs development has neared completion, and negotiations continue with potential tenants for the office and laboratory space, officials said.

“The nature of these businesses and the need to have laboratory space is they’re going to have to work downtown more regularly,” he said. “That translates into more people being downtown who can then patronize the restaurants, patronize the retail businesses and take advantage of some of the professional services that are downtown as well.”

The Evanston Labs development replaced the former Burger King, which closed in 2020. The city’s Planning and Development Committee greenlighted the project in 2022, with Ald. Melissa Wynne (3rd) lauding the building’s design.

But Evanston Labs’ contemporary architecture and imposing size have brought detractors as well.

“It’s big, and it’s modern in an odd way,” said Linda Otto, who lives nearby. “The architecture is very idiosyncratic, and it doesn’t really fit in with anything around it. It just sort of calls attention to itself, it seems. I mean, it might be wonderful inside.”

Vick called the design “bold” and a strong contributor to Evanston’s “architectural diversity.” Evanston Labs’ individual terraces add to the building’s appeal, he said.

The building also rises over what some residents dubbed the city’s “rattiest block.” Though Baer-Blaska said no such issue has arisen at the site, downtown Evanston has taken steps throughout the district to ameliorate the rodent issue, Vick said.

“We’re also working with our landscaping team at BrightView to, as dollars are available, add steel or metal mesh in some of the planters to prevent rats from burrowing in there,” he added. “We’re aware that there’s a situation.”

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