UPCOMING DATES

DECEMBER

17-19
Council, 9:30 a.m.

JANUARY

8 Preservation Board, 9:30 a.m.

9 Etobicoke York Community Council, 9:30 a.m.

North York Community Council, 9:30 a.m.

13 Budget Committee (2025 budget launch), 9:30 a.m.

14 Scarborough Community Council, 9:30 a.m.

Toronto and East York Community Council, 9:30 a.m.

15 - 17
Budget Committee (2025 budget review), 9:30 a.m.

20 Board of Health, 9:30 a.m.

21-22

Budget Committee (budget subcommittees – public presentations on 2025 Budget), 9:30 a.m.

23 Planning & Housing Committee, 9:30 a.m.

24 Budget Committee (2025 Budget wrap-up), 9:30 a.m.

28 Executive Committee, 9:30 a.m.

30 CreateTO, 1:30 p.m.

31 Preservation Board, 9:30 a.m.

FEBRUARY

5 Council (Special), 9:30 a.m.

10 Board of Health, 9:30 a.m.

11 Council (Special – 2025 Budget), 9:30 a.m.

12 Preservation Board, 9:30 a.m.

19 Etobicoke York Community Council, 9:30 a.m.

North York Community Council, 9:30 a.m.

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TORONTO • GREATER TORONTO & HAMILTON AREA

LIFE SCIENCES FACILITY IN TORONTO'S JUNCTION WILL ADD WET LAB SPACE TO MEET GROWING DEMAND

SEEKING SUITABLE SPACES FOR SCIENCE

Lana Hall

A new life sciences facility being developed near Toronto's Junction neighbourhood could help fill a growing need for more wet lab space in the GTHA, space designed for handling and researching a range of 'wet' materials, such as biological matter and chemicals. But some in the real estate industry say that without a stronger commitment from both the private sector and other levels of government, Toronto will still lag behind in the development of life sciences facilities compared to similar-sized cities in the United States.

Designed for a site at 77 Wade Avenue near the intersection of Bloor Street West and Lansdowne Avenue, **Seeker Labs**' new life sciences complex, known as Catalyst, will consist of a seven-storey, 155,000 square-foot building with wet lab space to meet the market's growing demand. The new facility will contain space for both start-ups and established companies in the life sciences sector.

DIALOG partner **Jay Levine**, who is leading the project's design, explains that constructing a life sciences facility requires a different approach than a traditional office building. Firstly, a life sciences building must be designed to handle significantly more ductwork, which usually means higher floor-to-floor heights. Air must be pulled into the building, heated or cooled, and purified before being pumped back outside. While a conventional office building typically exchanges air once an hour, a life sciences facility must do this ten times an hour. These buildings also require more electrical infrastructure and structural integrity, the latter to prevent building vibration from impacting lab specimens.

DIALOG also made another unusual design choice: opting to locate a set of staircases at the forefront of the building rather than the more conventional option of running them through the building's central, enclosed core. Highlighting the staircases as a central feature will allow them more natural light and, ideally, encourage mobility between floors.

"The nature of science, especially in Canada, is that there's a much more collaborative, collegial sense," says Levine. "We're encouraging people to move up and down and engage with colleagues on other floors. Even though they may be competing businesses, they're collaborating businesses."

CONTINUED PAGE 3

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SPACES FOR SCIENCE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

That openness will also translate to the public, Levine told *NRU*. With floor-to-ceiling glass windows, life sciences tenants at 77 Wade will have a view of the city, while residents in the area will be able to see into the building itself.

"[Seeker Labs] wanted the science on display," he says.

But getting to this stage hasn't been easy, neither logistically nor financially. The development of the facility at 77 Wade comes at a time when the GTHA as a whole faces a troubling shortage of wet lab spaces. In fact, **CBRE** estimates that there is currently an unmet demand for 3.5 million square feet of lab space in the GTHA.

In Toronto, the **MaRS** innovation hub near College Street and University Avenue is the only existing third-party lab space available to companies not working in the academic or hospital sectors. But the MaRS facility is 99.8 per cent full, and has had to turn away companies seeking lab space on a weekly basis.

Catalyst could help fill that gap, but without more of this lab space, the GTHA risks losing significant growth in its life science sector, says **Toronto Global** CEO **Stephen Lund**.

"The implications of that are international life sciences companies that are looking to grow and expand, they're not going to look at Toronto if there's no space for wet labs," he told *NRU*. "And secondly, a lot of our young [life science companies] that grow from start-ups and scale up and keep going, they also need space. So, it's a bit of a double whammy. You're not going to attract international

CONTINUED PAGE 4

Top: Rendering showing an exterior view of Seeker Labs' life sciences facility currently under construction at 77 Wade Avenue in the Junction neighbourhood in Toronto. The seven-storey 155,000-square-foot building will contain much-needed wet lab space for both start-ups and established research organizations in the life sciences sector.

SOURCE: DIALOG

Bottom: Rendering of the interior lab space planned for Seeker Labs' life sciences facility, currently under construction at 77 Wade Avenue. The facility is being developed at a time when Toronto, the GTHA, and the Greater Golden Horseshoe Area face a troubling shortage of wet lab space. CBRE estimates that there is currently unmet demand for 3.5 million square feet of lab space in the GTHA. Although wet lab facilities can be challenging to develop, both logistically and financially, sources say without more of them, Toronto risks losing valuable science talent and opportunities to be part of the growing life sciences sector.

SOURCE: DIALOG

SPACES FOR SCIENCE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

companies and our local companies, if they can't fin a place to grow, they're going to go somewhere else."

Lund says he would like to see more government incentives or private-public partnerships to encourage the growth and development of more life sciences facilities locally, similar to the **City of Boston**, which is largely considered a global hub for life sciences innovation.

"It's not something where you flip a switch. Boston is successful, but that didn't happen overnight. It took a lot of time, a lot of effort and a lot of involvement from the private sector, but also the government really stepping up and making it a world-class centre."

Seeker Labs managing partner **Cary Solomon**, says the organization was able to develop the Catalyst building in part because Edmonton-based pension fund **AIMCo** was "entrepreneurial" enough to sign a contract before the building had a confirmed tenant base. If more of these developments could obtain financing, Solomon believes, the Junction neighbourhood could be the next hub for life sciences buildings in Toronto.

While many of the City's existing medical and life sciences facilities are located within what's sometimes referred to as "The Innovation District," near College Street and University Avenue, most properties in that area are owned by either the **Province of Ontario**, the **University of Toronto** or the **University Health Network** (UHN). In the Junction, says Solomon, there is more land available—much of which is already zoned for commercial or industrial use—and the area is well-served by existing amenities and transit, including the TTC, GO Transit and the UP Express.

"The new precinct for life sciences, we believe very strongly, is going to be where we're building this building [at 77 Wade]," he says.

Rendering of common space planned for Seeker Labs' life sciences facility, currently under construction at 77 Wade Avenue in the Junction neighbourhood in Toronto. The building is being designed to facilitate contact and collaboration among life sciences tenants.

SOURCE: DIALOG