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## Scientific breakthrough: Baltimore's bioparks enjoy a growth spurt

Baltimore Business Journal - by [Scott Graham](#) Staff

Here's some good news for an industry that was short on highlights during the recession: Companies are taking more space in Baltimore's two emerging biotechnology research centers; at least one firm is mulling a venture capital-backed funding round; and plans to expand the **University of Maryland**, Baltimore's biopark are still on the table.

James L. Hughes, UMB's vice president of research and development, said the college's proposal to triple the size of the UMB BioPark — from an initial plan of about 600,000 square feet to 1.8 million square feet — will go before Baltimore's design and architecture board this spring.

The Baltimore Business Journal first reported June 19 that UMB leaders plan to spend about \$800 million on an expansion that could include three 10- to 14-story office towers. But first, Baltimore's Urban Design and Architecture Review Panel must approve it.

Meanwhile, the UMB BioPark on downtown's west side has signed four new biotech firms to space in its second research building, Hughes said. Among them is Biomere LLC, a subsidiary of Massachusetts-based Biomedical Research Models Inc. that has taken about 17,000 square feet in the 235,000-square-foot building and is led by a local industry veteran Dr. Blake Paterson.

The company, which develops and uses animal testing models to determine how drugs will affect humans who have diseases such as diabetes and multiple sclerosis, will open its doors next month.

Paterson, formerly CEO of Baltimore's Alba Therapeutics, also moved his startup, Chesapeake BioDiscovery Management LLC, into space at UMB's BioPark earlier this month. The two-person shop wants to help commercialize technologies developed by researchers and UMB and other Maryland colleges.

UMB also has signed leases with **Fyodor Biotechnologies Corp.**, another two-person company developing a treatment for detecting malaria, and PharmaJet, a medical device manufacturer based in Colorado that opened a small office here staffed by one employee.

While terms of the deals were not disclosed, the average rental rate per square foot in that area of town is \$21.72, according to a fourth-quarter 2009 report published by **MacKenzie Commercial Real Estate Services**.

On the city's east side, BioMarker Strategies, a three-year-old biotech developing a cancer diagnostic test, has doubled the space it is leasing in the John G. Rangos Building at the Science + Technology Park at Johns Hopkins, said Scott Allocco, the company's president. BioMarker has signed up for 2,500 square feet and plans to hire two more employees — including a senior research and development executive — within the next few months, he said.

Terms of that deal also weren't disclosed, but the going rate for space in that area is \$21.57, according to MacKenzie's report.

BioMarker's growth is being fueled by the \$4 million the company raised from private investors and Baltimore's **Abell Foundation**, Allocco said. And depending on the appetite of venture capitalists in Series A funding rounds, BioMarker could look for more cash from institutional investors, he said.

To help it assess the venture market, BioMarker recently added the former managing director of New York-based Maverick Capital, Christy Williams Wyskiel, to its board of directors.

About 40,000 square feet is available in the second building at the UMB BioPark, Hughes said. Meanwhile, the project's developer, Wexford Equities of Hanover, is searching for an anchor tenant before beginning construction on the planned third building, which is slated to include 180,000 square feet.