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Biotech space on tap at Prince William

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- Bill Flook
- Reporter
- Email: bflook@bizjournals.com

Will the Innovation@Prince William technology park be the answer to [Northern Virginia's persistent wet lab drought](#)? If all things go as planned, the 1,600-acre office park may see a rare glut of construction aimed — at least partially — at the region's life sciences industry.

We'd [already reported that two Manassas-based firms](#) — Rinker Design Associates and [NAL Research Corp.](#) — bought a five-acre, \$8.5 million plot in the office park with plans to build their joint 45,000-square-foot headquarters building, which they're calling Discovery Center I. But those plans now also include a second 45,000-square-foot Discovery Center II, to be marketed to local biotechs and nearby [George Mason University](#).

Commercial real estate firm Avison Young, which announced the purchase Tuesday, represented the companies in the sale and will handle leasing the remaining space in Discovery Center I and all of Discovery Center II.

The first building is slated to break ground in March and finish construction in February next year. Avison Young did not provide a timeline for the second building, though because it's not meant to be speculatively built, it will likely depend on nailing down biotech or other tenants first.

Still, it's encouraging news for the Innovation technology park, which has [seen more than its share of difficulties](#) in the biotech sector in the past few years. The site, which [could be home to a separate 75,000-square-foot lab expansion by GMU](#), now looks like the next best hope for life sciences in Northern Virginia.

Avison Young has extended proposals for about 30 percent of Discovery II to local biotechs, and plans to submit a proposal to GMU, said Avison Young Principal Dan Gonzalez. He suggested Discovery II would meet GMU's lab space requirements for the next few years until they can fund and carry out their own expansion plans. The firm is also pursuing a small bioscience center and accelerator in Discovery I and, Gonzalez added, state funding to outfit Discovery II with speculative wet lab space, something sorely lacking in that part of the commonwealth.

Avison Young is also targeting government contractors and tech firms as potential tenants in Discovery Center II, Principal **Tom Sandlin** said in a statement announcing the second building.

bflook@bizjournals.com or 703.258.0831.
[Twitter.com/BillFlook](https://twitter.com/BillFlook)