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Developer: Novo Nordisk's new HQ will be design trend setter

By [Joshua Burd](#)



Artists rendering of the new Novo Nordisk headquarters.

The rain pounded on the white tent that covered dozens of people who gathered on a gloomy Wednesday for the groundbreaking of the new **Novo Nordisk** headquarters, in Plainsboro. But Lt. Gov. **Kim Guadagno**, the state's business and economic development guru, had a different take on the weather.

"It's not raining in New Jersey any day we get to announce jobs, construction and cranes going up in any part of the state, but most importantly in a part of the state that we intend to develop," Guadagno said at the southern Middlesex County site.

Guadagno joined business leaders and other public officials at the former Merrill Lynch building on Scudders Mill Road, where Danish pharmaceutical giant Novo Nordisk plans to open its new U.S. headquarters in 2013. The project, which will include a top-to-bottom gut rehabilitation that results in a LEED-certified office building, was touted by several speakers as a trend setter for development.

The 770,000-square-foot building, which will be leased by Novo Nordisk, will be stripped to its frame and given a new façade, roof, interior and mechanical systems, said **Kurt Eichler**, executive vice president of **LCOR**, a Pennsylvania-based real estate investment and development company that is a partner in the project.

"Developers are going to look at this project as a new and fresh way to go about development," said Eichler, who noted that planners considered other options, including a build-to-suit project on an adjacent site.

Anthony DiTomasso Jr., co-CEO of **Ivy Equities**, said his company bought the site and began to court Novo Nordisk about three years ago, first through **Newmark Knight Frank** broker **Steven Tolkach**. It took convincing, he said, but the pharmaceutical company ultimately was sold on the opportunity to occupy a building that will be financially, socially and environmentally responsible.

"We know New Jersey has a lot of empty office space. We were thinking about building a new building, but is this really responsible?" Novo Nordisk U.S. President **Jerzy Gruhn** asked. "No, I think it's a much better way to renovate and rejuvenate the old building in such nice surroundings."

Novo Nordisk, a leading diabetes researcher, has about 4,000 employees in the United States, where it has been operating for 25 years, Gruhn said. The rapidly growing company will occupy about 500,000 square feet of the 770,000-square-foot building, giving it room to further expand its New Jersey operations.

The project is a joint venture led by Ivy Equities and LCOR, in partnership with **Intercontinental Real Estate Corp.** It is expected to create an additional 200 jobs for the company, along with hundreds of union construction jobs, Guadagno said. She also said it will help reinforce the state's position as the medicine chest of the world, calling life sciences and pharmaceutical companies the "life's blood" and future of New Jersey.

"It sends a very loud message, because Novo Nordisk from now on will be the ambassador for every other pharmaceutical company that wants to come here," Guadagno said.