

# Biotech Building In Plans For USF

FUNDING IS NEEDED FOR PROJECT IN RESEARCH PARK

By CAROL GENTRY  
The Tampa Tribune

**TAMPA** — Planning is under way for a four-story building at University of South Florida Research Park to house fast-growing, life-science companies, USF officials say.

Space in the new building will be leased to promising biotech companies that are not yet big or rich enough to build their own facilities. Such companies need wet labs, reverse ventilation rooms and other specialized facilities, said Rod Casto, executive director of the USF Research Foundation.

The building could also serve as a graduation site for tenants in the Tampa Bay Technology Incubator, where USF and public agencies provide administrative support to 20 start-ups at a time.

"Space for small biotech companies is extremely hard to find," Casto said. "No one in the commercial market is willing to build it, because it's expensive and high-risk."

Even though no tenants are lined

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Project's shell estimated at \$20 million.

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**ROD CASTO**  
Executive director of  
USF Research Foundation

## BUSINESS

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### BIOTECH BUILDING

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up for the project, which makes it speculative, Casto said he is confident the building will be sorely needed by the time it is ready, 12 to 18 months from now. He hopes to break ground by summer.

State and local officials praised the move.

"I couldn't be more excited about it," said Bruce Register, corporate business development manager for Hillsborough County. "There's a big difference between this type of building and a regular office building. It just needs to be done."

#### Building Is A 'Critical Piece'

In their fast-growth stage, biotech companies have to use capital for research and development, said Russell Allen, president of BioFlorida Inc., a non-profit association for the life-science industry.

"Venture capitalists who invest in these companies typically do not want their investments going into building infrastructure," Allen said. "It's very difficult for them to find an affordable place to go. This will take care of a critical piece of the life cycle [of biotech companies]."

Before USF Research Foundation can seek bond financing for the project, estimated to cost \$20 million just for the shell, it needs authorization from the USF board of trustees and the Board of Governors of the State University System. Carl Carlucci, USF's chief financial officer and executive



Tribune file photo by CRYSTAL L. LAUDERDALE (2005)

**Rod Casto, executive director of the USF Research Foundation, and Carl P. Carlucci, USF's chief financial officer and executive vice president, hope to break ground by summer on a building planned to house biotech companies at the school's research park.**

vice president, said he has submitted the request to the trustees.

The building, planned to run 125,000 to 140,000 square feet, will front on Fowler Avenue, Casto said. It will lie just south of the Business Partnerships Building, which opened 1½ years ago.

That structure, often called the "red building" because of its unusual color, houses the biotech incubator on its first floor. Start-ups that survive and prosper would be able to move into a suitable commercial space just a stone's throw away.

Casto said the USF Research Foundation felt the time was right to launch this project because lease revenues from the existing complex reached \$3.5 million last year, up 40 percent from the year before.

"We're covering our debt, so we can move on to the next one," Casto said.

Sixty percent of space in the red building is already leased, and broker Clay Sovich of Atlanta-based Carter & Associ-

ates LLC said he has recently shown a number of would-be tenants the remaining space on the second and third floors.

"We anticipate rapid activity in that building," Sovich said. "Literally, we'll be out of space by the end of this year."

#### 1 Step In Long-Term Agenda

Intezyne Technologies LLC, one of the start-ups from the incubator, has already moved out. It subleased 3,000 square feet from the university in the Interdisciplinary Research Building, which is connected to the red building, and has reserved another 2,000 square feet for expansion.

Carlucci said the new building is part of USF President Judy Genshaft's long-term plan to build and nurture the research park on the USF campus.

"This is a long-term agenda that Judy set out. She said, OK, we're going to do this step by step."

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