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## Business

# BRDG Park in Creve Coeur Keeps On Growing

Patch sits down with the man in charge about where the research hub is headed.

By [Jason Sibert](#) | [Email the author](#) | 6:00am

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St. Louis and Creve Coeur should continue to be a player in the plant science field, if recent trends are any indication.

BRDG Park, short for BioResearch and Development Growth Park at the Donald Danforth Plant Science Center in Creve Coeur, has been the center of plenty of corporate activity in recent weeks with news that two companies were about to relocate there.

HighQuest Partners is a consulting company which works with firms in the global food, agribusiness, and clean technology sectors on strategy, investment/mergers and acquisitions. Allied Blending will establish a specialty research lab that will concentrate on product development research and testing on formulations for processed cheese.

Allied Blending Technical Services Director Dr. John Fannon said Allied was interested in the BRDG Park location because of St. Louis' reputation as a scientific talent magnet. Allied operates its headquarters and lab facilities in Keokuk, Iowa.

"Our current lab is in an isolated location," Fannon said. "In St. Louis we're surrounded by top notch scientists. We've been trying to hire someone for six months in Keokuk and it's hard to get employees to move there. Since we've started the move to St. Louis we've hired one person and are looking for a second."

High Quest Partners is already in St. Louis, but will relocate from its current home on Clayton Rd. near Ladue.

"It's good for us to be located where there's a lot of people in the same industry," HighQuest Director Philippe de Laperouse said. "This is a focal point nationally and internationally for agricultural technology companies. It's a great opportunity for us to network with people who have a similar skill set."

Here's a look at BRDG Park by the numbers:

- Opened in 2009
- 110,000 sq. ft. with plans to add 2 buildings for a total of 450,000 square feet of lab and office space.
- 150 work at the park with plans for 1,200
- Research jobs can start at around \$75,000 annually,
- Lab technicians can start at around \$40,000

“BRDG Park will help attract companies and help companies that are home-grown grow and thrive in an industry sector I think will be key in the next years and decades,” BRDG Park President Sam Fiorello said. For example, Monsanto, headquartered across the street from the facility, recently announced the purchase of Divergence, Inc., which is based at BRDG Park.

Looking even further into the future, Fiorello said there’s light industrial real estate located north of BRDG Park which would be ideally suited to accommodate growth beyond 450,000 square feet. He said the center would work with St. Louis County officials about the possibility of such an expansion.

Fiorello said BRDG looks far and wide for talent.

“We’re talking to companies from around the world, early-stage, mid-stage and large companies and explaining to them why they should be here,” he said. “We’re talking to companies from Malaysia, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and Brazil.”

Access to the Danforth Plant Science Center’s greenhouses and labs are big selling points for BRDG tenants, according to Robyn Frankel, a public relations manager for the facility. Access to the plant science center is an asset for the BRDG tenants because many of the firms don’t have resources for that type of facility, Frankel said. The two buildings serve different functions, as individual scientists at the Danforth Plant Science Center work on projects they hope to commercialize while all of the BRDG tenants are commercial companies working in the fields of life science, plant science, and clean technology.

Together, the combined resources of BRDG Park and the Danforth Plant Science Center are enticing enough to lure scientists from technology hub cities like Chicago, Boston and London to Creve Coeur and St. Louis.

“In 11 years we’ve gone from an idea of having an independent plant research institute to today having the largest independent plant research institute in the world,” Fiorello said.

“These are places people say we can’t compete with and we’ve been able to get the ones we wanted,” he said. “They’ve bought into our dream and I think we can do more of that.”

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