



Pitt BioForge, which will be built at Hazelwood Green, will catalyze the biomedical economy in Pittsburgh and accelerate the availability of new therapies and cures.

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

Blossoms from Brownfields Stage for a New Pittsburgh Economy

Pitt announced in November that it received a \$100 million grant from the Richard King Mellon Foundation to fill a vital missing link in the region's economy.

The grant will help build a highly specialized biomanufacturing facility on an old mill site and former brownfield in Hazelwood. Called Pitt BioForge, the facility will leverage the biomedical and clinical expertise at Pitt and UPMC. The project is also designed to increase economic opportunity for residents in and around Pittsburgh's Hazelwood neighborhood.

"The University of Pittsburgh is a leader in biomedical research, but we could not have made this leap without the Richard King Mellon Foundation's transformational gift," Chancellor Patrick Gallagher says.

The planned 200,000 to 250,000-square-foot Pitt BioForge facility will benefit an array of research projects. It should propel forward the experimental work of Leah Byrne, a PhD assistant professor of ophthal-

mology, who aims to restore sight to patients with retinal disease. She uses engineered viruses that deliver snippets of DNA directly to cells in the retina. Currently, no facility in Pittsburgh, and only a select few worldwide, can create the required tools at the scale she needs.

Bringing biomanufacturing to the city helps eliminate supply-chain hurdles. One upshot, which will be life-changing or even life-saving for some, is that Pittsburghers will have access to the very latest therapies—and those should be available sooner than they typically are now.

"This type of facility would broadly facilitate the commercialization of novel technologies and drugs, including new cellular therapies, antigens for vaccine development and new devices that can deliver therapies in a manner that is more effective, safe and patient friendly," says Louis Faló, an MD, PhD and chair of the University of Pittsburgh's Department of Dermatology. He leads a team pioneering microneedle arrays for administering vaccines and other therapies.

The location for the facility, Hazelwood Green, is a 178-acre former industrial site being developed as a mix of office, retail, affordable housing and community space. —*Staff reports*