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CCF move could drive \$15M job

600 Clinic workers may shift to Independence tech center with proposed two-story addition

By **STAN BULLARD, SHANNON MORTLAND**

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The Independence Technology Center is in line for an expansion likely to cost upwards of \$15 million if the Cleveland Clinic Foundation proceeds with plans to consolidate more of its financial staff — perhaps as many as 600 employees — at the complex on Brecksville Road.

Developer Dick Pace, whose Cumberland Development Group owns the complex in Independence through a limited liability corporation, said last week that the Clinic is “looking at being the tenant” in a 100,000-square-foot addition he has proposed for the tech center, which currently encompasses 167,000 square feet.

The plan for a two-story addition — two floors of 50,000 square feet apiece — on the building’s east side won preliminary approval this month from the Independence Planning Commission and the suburb’s Architecture Review Board. Before the project can proceed, it will need more city approvals.

However, the preliminary approval allows the developer to proceed with seeking bids from contractors who would design and build the addition, Mr. Pace said. Those cost estimates would clear the way for tying up financing and other details, perhaps by the end of the month.

Ron White, economic development coordinator for Independence, said Mr. Pace and members of his team told the city Planning Commission at its May 5 meeting that the plan would provide space for the Clinic to consolidate 500 to 600 more jobs in its finance division from other sites in the area.

Mr. White estimated the Clinic would employ more than 1,200 people at the tech center after the proposed addition opens in 2011. The tech center already is home to 600 employees in the Clinic’s finance, payroll and acute home health care units, as well as tenants from other concerns.

Heather Phillips, a Clinic spokeswoman, acknowledged that negotiations with Mr. Pace are under way, but declined to discuss the project because “it’s very preliminary.” She also would not confirm details of the number of jobs that the Clinic would move to the property or where those employees work.

Because more employment at the tech center would bring more traffic to the site, the city plans to shift the path of Selig Drive so that it lines up with the tech center’s entrance and, at a shared cost with the developer, to add a traffic signal. Selig Drive is the home to the suburb’s city hall, fire station, a branch of the Cuyahoga County Public Library, two schools and sports fields.

Mr. White declined to characterize the road realignment and traffic signal as incentives for the developer and the Clinic to expand in the suburb. Independence does not offer property tax abatement, but it benefits from a low property tax rate.

"We think it's the right thing to do," Mr. White said of the planned road investment. "We think it will be needed."

Mr. Pace said he plans for the building addition to qualify for a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating. Mr. Pace said the plan incorporates a geothermal heating system.

The tech center was expanded by 25,000 square feet previously, which would make the proposed addition the second since Mr. Pace in 2002 bought the then-empty former steel research center from International Steel Group, which later was bought by what is now ArcelorMittal. The former Republic Steel Corp. built the structure, at 6801 Brecksville Road, in 1957.



The Independence Technology
Center

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