



Rhode Island: A Life Sciences Hub with a New \$155 Million Biotech Plant in the Works

By **Laurie White** - September 13, 2018

The life sciences sector has been one of Rhode Island's strategic priorities in recent years, with public, private and academic institutions across the state working together to stir up activity in the sector.



Laurie White. Courtesy Photo.

The latest news? Earlier this summer, [Rubius Therapeutics](#), a biotech company based in Cambridge, Mass., [announced](#) that it will invest up to \$155 million over the next five years in renovating a 135,000-square-foot manufacturing facility in Smithfield. Rubius believes that the new class of medicine it is developing, Red Cell Therapeutics, will provide life-changing or life-saving benefits for patients with severe diseases.

Just a few months earlier, in April, Amgen rolled out plans to build the first commercial scale, next-generation biomanufacturing plant in the U.S. right here in Rhode Island. The company will spend approximately \$200 million to build the 120,000-square-foot plant in West Greenwich, on its current Amgen Rhode Island 75-acre campus. Amgen subsidiary Immunex will use the plant, which broke ground about six weeks ago, to manufacture a variety of biologic

therapeutic products.

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Together, Rubius and Amgen will create more than 360 full-time jobs in manufacturing and biotech operations and many more hundreds of construction and validation jobs. It's worth noting that wages for biotech workers in Rhode Island average \$85,864, nearly 70 percent higher than the state's average private sector wage (\$50,929). With a presence in Rhode Island since 2002, Amgen has been awarded by the Providence Business News as one of Rhode Island's Best Places to Work more than 10 times. Headquartered in Thousand Oaks, California, the company employs 625 full-time staff members in Rhode Island today.

It's not surprising that biotech, pharma and medical technology companies like Johnson & Johnson, EpiVax, Rubius and Amgen are choosing to locate their manufacturing facilities and R&D centers in Rhode Island. We bring to the table some amazing ingredients that are truly unique to any other cluster in the nation, including the availability of affordable facilities, business-friendly incentives, a lower cost of living and access to talent from top universities — as well as to the glut of research and raw science coming out of them.

Brown, Johnson and Wales University, our other eight colleges and universities, and even the Davies Career and Technical High School have enabled our growing innovation capacity. Rhode Island has also invested significantly in the larger workforce, tailoring training programs specifically to the needs of local employers. The Real Jobs Rhode Island program, for example, is equipping our biotech manufacturers with more process technicians and folks who can work on a manufacturing line today, while the Wavemaker Fellowship is empowering R.I. college graduates to pursue careers in STEM and other key sectors, and reimbursing them for their student loans in return. Many of the 2018 Wavemaker recipients, [announced earlier this month](#), are employed by local biotech and healthcare companies.

The life sciences industry in Rhode Island is flourishing because stakeholders across the state have invested passionately in it. Together, we've built a powerful ecosystem around a forward-thinking industry that will continue to power our state's momentum.

Laurie White is president of the Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce. Read her other Rhode Island Inno contributions [here](#).

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