

HistoGenetics seeks to buy Nokia site

Ossining biotech company wants building for R&D

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Nokia's North American headquarters in Harrison might be bought by HistoGenetics to be used as a biotech lab. / Andrew Klappholz/The Journal News

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HARRISON — HistoGenetics, the fast-growing biotech company from Ossining, isn't satisfied with acquiring Malcolm Pirnie's old office building on the Platinum Mile.

They also have their eye on the Nokia's soon-to-be-vacant North American headquarters next door.

The deal for 104 Corporate Park Drive in Harrison is done, and a second deal to purchase 102 Corporate Park Drive — the Nokia property — is being negotiated, HistoGenetics president Nezh Cereb said.

The site, which Nokia opened in 2006 after a \$30 million renovation, is nearly vacant. About 275 workers there were laid off as part a downsizing announced last year. A receptionist said Friday that the building will be completely closed by the end of the month.

HistoGenetics, which provides hospitals and transplant centers with fast and high resolution DNA sequence-based tissue-typing services, has applied for tax breaks for about \$10 million that it is proposing to spend on furnishing and construction at the Nokia building.

According to HistoGenetics' application with the Westchester Industrial Development Agency, the biotech company is looking to move its research and development operation to the Nokia property

and use neighboring 104 Corporate Park Drive as storage and possibly even rent some of it out. The company would also keep its Ossining office at 300 Executive Blvd.

A public hearing will be held at Harrison Town Hall at 10 a.m. today on the HistoGenetics proposal.

The anticipated payroll at 102 Corporate Park Drive, which such tax breaks are often tied to, is projected to start with 70 employees earning a total of \$2.5 million.

After a year it would rise to 100 employees making \$3 million, with 150 employees making \$3.5 million in the second year, according to the application.

Nokia, a Finnish mobile phone company that was once a leader in its field, received a \$700,000 grant from the Empire State Development Corp. when it came to Westchester, but now faces a potential cash penalty for leaving, state officials have said.

A buyer for the building is welcomed news for business leaders.

Marissa Brent, executive director of the Westchester County Association, said her group set a goal last May to cut the county's 6 million square feet of vacant office space in half.

She said they're on their way toward hitting that target, citing the pending Nokia deal as a big chunk of an estimated 1 million square feet that's poised to come off the market.