

# PITTSBURGH BUSINESS TIMES

## COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

# Carnegie Mellon University celebrates groundbreaking of the \$100M 'RIC' at Hazelwood Green

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Leave it to Carnegie Mellon University to include a robot in the ceremonial shoveling to commemorate the construction start of its new \$100 million development investment at Hazelwood Green.

Along with a healthy line of officials that included university President Farnam Jahanian, Richard King Mellon Foundation Director Sam Reiman and many others, a four-wheeled contraption decorated with eyes hunched at the edge of the ritual heap of dirt.

That robot will be very much at home in the new facility that CMU and its development team that includes Perkins Eastman as the design firm and a construction joint venture of Gilbane Building Co. and Mosites Construction will soon erect on a parcel at Hazelwood Green over the next two years.

The project is expected to open in 2025 as the Robotics Innovation Center, a research facility.

"The Robotics Innovation Center will serve as a hub of innovation center for robotics, AI research and technology development," said Jahanian, of a facility that will serve as a resource for the university's school of engineering and computer science. "Once RIC is complete, it will significantly expand the amount of space available for innovation and discovery."

Carnegie Mellon celebrated the start of the new facility a day after it received a vote from the board of the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh to buy the National Robotics Engineering Center in Lawrenceville, as the university expands its network of technology-related facilities in the city.

Jahanian put the cost of the facility at \$100 million, up from previously cited estimates of \$90 million for 150,000-square-foot building expected to simulate multiple different kinds of environments in which to test and operate robots. That includes a 1.5-acre outdoor running "room," an aquarium, a drone cage, as well as wet labs among the building's features.

Jeff Young, executive director of the Pittsburgh office of Perkins Eastman, and an architect involved



A host of dignitaries and officials that included Carnegie Mellon University President Farnam Jahanian and Richard King Mellon Foundation Director Sam Reiman pose at a groundbreaking with a university robot to celebrate the construction start of the new Robotics Innovation Center at Hazelwood Green.

with the project, said the RIC is designed to support all kinds of research and development, with a design approach to support hard use in what's likely to be the first ground-up building to be constructed at Hazelwood Green.

"It's maker space kind of on steroids," he said. "It's almost like a warehouse space or a souped up shed." Jahanian was quick to thank and praise the various supporters and funders that allowed the project to come together.

"We're not here by chance or luck," he said, acknowledging the "remarkable alignment" of support and resources for the project.

The biggest funder by far of the RIC is the Richard King Mellon Foundation, which announced a \$150 million gift that was the largest of its kind in its history in 2021, with \$45 million of the sum to be dedicated to the RIC building at Hazelwood Green.

Sam Reiman, director of RK Mellon, compared the new investment to a \$5 million grant the foundation gave to Carnegie Mellon in 1964, an amount that adjusted for inflation roughly equals around \$50 million now to be dedicated to the then un-

heard of field of computer science.

"That remarkable sum was invested into something people hadn't even heard of," he said, detailing the long history between his foundation and the university that has involved "more than a shared surname" but a shared vision as well.

Bill Sanders, dean of the College of Engineering at Carnegie Mellon University, pointed out just what a resource he expects the RIC will prove to be.

"The new facility will provide space and capabilities that are not available anywhere on campus or anywhere in Pittsburgh and will serve a wide variety of programming," he said.

He also expects to see collaboration between occupants of the RIC as well as for the University of Pittsburgh's new BioForge biomanufacturing facility, for which site work has also ready started at a nearby site at Hazelwood Green.

"The University of Pittsburgh building is planned to open around the same time as our new facility," added Sanders.