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## Bioworks creates TriMetis to manage new lab



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The **Memphis Bioworks Foundation** has launched a new for-profit company that will run the Memphis Specialized Laboratory when it opens in May.

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The company, TriMetis, will be tasked with acquiring customers who will use the \$26 million facility to develop pharmaceutical products or medical devices and shepherd them through Good Laboratory Practice and other processes required by the **U.S. Food and Drug Administration**.

[Phil Cestaro](#), president of TriMetis, says the lab will focus on the pre-clinical phase of research and fill the void that has resulted in Memphis-based companies taking their research outside of the city. He estimates \$3 million to \$5 million in research leaves the city each year.

"The chances of that work coming back isn't likely, so this is an important part of keeping Memphis ideas in town," Cestaro says. "We can get businesses established here and keep the jobs here."

The Specialized Laboratory currently has four employees and will expand to 15 when it opens. Cestaro says when it is operating at full capacity, it will employ as many as 50 people, including lab technicians who come from local schools.

"Not everyone in there needs to be a Ph.D., and there will be an opportunity to move up," he says. "Our research developer started out as a technician."

The building, designed by Self + Tucker Architects, includes 14 labs for testing of smaller animals, such as rats, as well as four labs for testing of larger animals. It is the third building built at the 5-acre site that previously housed Baptist Hospital. That site has seen an estimated \$120 million in construction that includes the University of Tennessee School of Pharmacy and the Regional Biocontainment Laboratory.

"The area ties into the UT campus and other buildings are planned in the future," says [Brandon Wellford](#), CFO of the Memphis Bioworks Foundation. "The research park is coming to life."

[Jimmie Tucker](#), a principal with Self+Tucker, says despite the building being relatively "low profile," it includes an outdoor plaza and pedestrian friendly elements including shaded walkways between buildings. It also includes a green roof with grass installed. Rainwater will be recycled and used for irrigation.

Wellford says TriMetis presents another dimension to the ecosystem in which an idea or discovery can be developed into a full-fledged company.

Cestaro, who was previously president of SCRI Global Services, a subsidiary of Hospital Corp. of America, and director of life sciences product management and strategy at Oracle Corp., has expertise to help start-up biotech companies with business planning.

"These are scientists, so (business planning) is not part of their strengths," Cestaro says. "We can help people with their standard operating procedures and tie it into a turnkey solution."

TriMetis has begun courting companies that have research and development needs outside of the city, and while that is a challenge, Cestaro says when the lab is completed, it will have the benefit of state-of-the-art equipment and testing expertise. As more device and pharmaceutical companies begin to outsource product testing, the laboratory is coming online at an opportune time.

“You beat the competition by having the expertise, providing the right service and having quality,” he says. “The facility ties it all together. We’re starting out in the right place and we’re going to keep up with it.”

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