

Bovis Lend Lease shifts local focus to life sciences

A company that at times has been a major player in commercial construction in Boston is refocusing its local business and leaving behind a sector in which it once thrived.

Bovis Lend Lease is dropping its residential and mixed-use business to focus on life sciences, said **Robert Thomsen**, who runs life sciences operations in mid-Atlantic states, Europe and Asia for the New York-based company.

Thomsen said there will be a reduction in head count. And the company will relocate its Boston office from its current location on Lincoln Street. When Bovis announced it was moving there less than two years ago, the company said it was taking 22,000 square feet.

“(The Boston) location is a very, very large office for the amount of work that is on the books,” said Thomsen, who is based in New Jersey.

Thomsen declined to say where the remaining Boston staff might go — the company is still eyeing new space — other than to hint at areas that are bristling with life sciences companies.

“We’re not able to maintain our current size,” he said in an interview.

But Thomsen, who has two dozen years under his belt doing life sciences work at Bovis, is “optimistic” about the new direction for the Boston office.

“It’s kind of repositioning based on the kind of work we do best and what work there is in the market,” he said.

Local construction industry players may know Thomsen from Bovis’ work on the **Merck** laboratory complex on land leased from **Emmanuel College** in the Fenway.

“I was intimately involved in the sale of that project as well as in the delivery of that project,” Thomsen said.

Bovis also has done extensive work with companies including **Boston Scientific Corp.** and **Genzyme Corp.**

During the last major commercial

building spree in Boston, Bovis managed some of the most desirable projects for a construction company. They included graduate student housing at the **Massachusetts Institute of Technology** and the new **W Hotel**.

The other side of Newbury Street

If you read last week’s column about tough times on Newbury Street, then you know that some important landlords and their representatives in the neighborhood are fretting over the leasing climate.

As you may recall, we quoted one veteran broker as saying there’s never been as much retail vacancy on the swank shopping strip as there is right now.

Well, it turns out some other important players disagree vehemently. That group includes some folks at the **Boston Redevelopment Authority**.

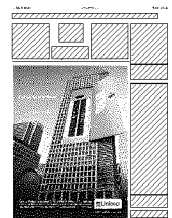
The agency supplied a list of businesses moving to, or growing along, Newbury Street since July 2009. It includes: Iris Gallery, Jonathan Adler, Clifford Michael, **Hotel Chocolat**, Annabelle Jones, Ben Sherman, S.Kuhlman; Basiques, Joe’s American Bar and Grill, Ted Baker, Latitude Gallery, Warlox Wireless, Piattini Café, Pazzo Restaurant, and Fresco Flowers.

Also look for: Cotelac, Second Time Around, Mumbia Chopstix, Raven Bookstore, Ibex, Brooklyn Industries, Converse, Diane Von Furstenberg, Vera Wang Bridal, Max Brenner, Met Bar, All Saints and Forever.

Michael Jammen of **The Newbury Line** also took exception with the column.

“The street is currently 94.7 percent leased based on the 336 retail storefronts that we track,” he said.

“Starting during the fourth quarter of 2009, leasing activity picked up significantly,” he added. “In addition to



our completed deals, we have multiple prospects for our remaining vacant space and our buildings under development. We anticipate this momentum continuing throughout 2010.”

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