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AeroFarms breaks ground for Newark headquarters, vertical farm

By **Joshua Burd**, July 10, 2015 at 11:16 AM



AeroFarms executives and state and city officials broke ground for the company's new headquarters and vertical farm in Newark. - (OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR)

AeroFarms might have its roots in central New York, but the venture is no stranger to the Garden State.

The business, based on a concept known as vertical farming, has spent more than four years partnering with Philip's Academy Charter School in Newark, according to state officials. That has allowed students there to have a vertical farm in their dining hall, giving them a unique "farm-to-table" experience that shows how their food is grown and providing them with fresh, locally sourced produce.

And its connections to Newark are about to grow exponentially.

On Thursday, AeroFarms CEO David Rosenberg joined local and state officials in the city to break ground on the company's new headquarters and indoor vertical farm. Located in Newark's Ironbound District — at the site of a vacant warehouse — the 69,000-square-foot facility will use the company's aeroponics technology and LED lights to grow year-round crops without sun, soil or pesticides.

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“This isn’t your father’s farming. The farms of the future — like AeroFarms — rely ever more closely on technology,” acting Gov. Kim Guadagno said in a prepared statement Thursday. “As agriculture faces rising demand and limited resources, we celebrate an important step in tackling those challenges head-on.”



A rendering of the 'indoor vertical farm' in Newark. - (AEROFARMS)

The first phase of the \$30 million facility is expected to be complete later this year, creating about 78 jobs, according to a news release. The project is transforming a former steel factory on Rome Street owned by RBH Group, as part of the developer’s larger plan known as Maker’s Village.

When it’s fully complete next spring, the AeroFarms project will have the capacity to grow up to 2 million pounds of baby leafy greens and herbs per year, the news release said. Its year-round growing cycle offers 75 times more productivity per square foot annually than a traditional field farm while consuming more than 95 percent less water.

“Today’s groundbreaking takes us one step closer to addressing the tremendous demand for our locally grown produce that is setting a new culinary standard for freshness and taste,” Rosenberg said. “We are excited to redefine not only the Garden State, but also agriculture overall.”

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Originally headquartered in Ithaca, New York, AeroFarms is coming to Newark with the help of \$6.55 million Grow New Jersey tax credit from the state Economic Development Authority. Partners in the project also include RBH Group, Goldman Sachs and Prudential Financial, whose executives were also on hand for Thursday’s groundbreaking ceremony.

Construction will be overseen by Chris Barry of Hollister Construction Services, a Parsippany-based firm that’s also working on RBH Group’s Teachers Village project in Newark. The AeroFarms facility was designed by KSS Architects, with construction engineering services provided Harrison-Hamnett P.C.

Also on hand Thursday were Newark Mayor Ras Baraka and a host of other city officials, who touted the project as a source of a sustainable business and jobs in community with an unemployment rate that is twice the national

average.

“Newark is becoming a destination for high-tech and environmentally friendly development, and this project in the East Ward will bring jobs and prosperity to our city,” Baraka said in a prepared statement. “This development initiative is a win for everyone involved, and will have a major impact on our city’s economic and physical health, and our efforts to transform Newark into a city we can all believe in.”

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