

# Hobbs Brook Moves on \$90M Office Spec Plan

By Joe Clements

May 25, 2007



Margulies

**WALTHAM, MA** — Signaling that the Central Route 128 office market is firmly entrenched in a full-fledged space race, Hobbs Brook Management has retained Boston architect Margulies & Associates to design a first-rate campus at 175 Wyman St. barely

a month after acquiring the 27.5-acre property for \$38.1 million. Sources estimate the 335,000-sf complex could be delivered within 24 months, possibly fetching rents not seen in suburban Boston since the regional recession took hold in 2002.

“We’re thrilled,” founder Marc Margulies tells GlobeSt.com shortly after hearing of his firm’s selection for a venture expected to cost around \$90 million. “It’s a great project for us.” Already known for several high-profile architectural assignments in Boston, and familiar to HBM management through fit out work at the real estate company’s abutting Hobbs Brook Office Park, Margulies & Associates beat out a bevy of renowned competitors to get the nod. The difference included “a fresh approach,” corporate design expertise and demonstrated knowledge of sustainable development, says HBM first vice president Donald Oldmixon.

“Our intention is to build green,” explains Oldmixon, forecasting a facility capable of meeting the LEED standard. Margulies embraces sustainability, having just assisted Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Massachusetts in developing one new sustainable building and renovating another facility. The firm is also designing an eight-story residential/retail building in South Boston under the green mantra.

Margulies expressed surprise that sustainable design hardly registered in a review of top priorities among developers highlighted during the May RealShare Boston conference. “It’s here to stay,” insists Margulies, who

places the upfront premium at about 1% to 2% of project cost. Elements such as waterless toilets can save huge amounts of money, he adds, “and tenants absolutely want it. If they have a choice of going into a green building, they will always go.”

HBM is to be lauded for making the green commitment, says Margulies, who also likely appreciates the developer’s vow to create one of the premier addresses on Route 128 at the core Totten Pond Road intersection. “I can’t think of a better site out there,” says Margulies. Besides vehicular access, the architect praises the water views of Waltham’s nearby reservoir and the hills of Weston, and says the topography allows 175 Wyman St. to enjoy those vistas while staying within zoning limits. The existing structures will likely be replaced by one to three buildings, says Margulies, explaining that city and neighborhood preference will be among the factors determining a final design.

The efficient footprint is also helped by Hobbs Brook Office Park being so close, adds Margulies, with the property able to tap into that 12-building, 1.5-million-sf campus and its various services that will not need to be replicated at 175 Wyman St. The efficiency will provide for a greater ratio of lease-able space in 175 Wyman St.

Oldmixon says the venture is designed to capture top-flight tenants, acknowledging the possibility that the \$50 per sf rate could ultimately be achieved as the core Waltham market heads toward that level. The development team also hopes to get the project going to meet the growing demand, but several million square feet of speculative space is already underway or on the drawing boards. Although he would not provide a timeframe until getting the neighborhood response, Oldmixon says the hiring of Margulies & Associates shows that HBM means business. “We are not a slow group here,” he says. Wyman Street Advisors of Waltham is exclusive leasing agent for the new project.