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COLORADO SPOTLIGHT

Indoors or Outdoors

Life-science industry contract manufacturers relish their lifestyle perks at the southern end of Colorado's biotech corridor.

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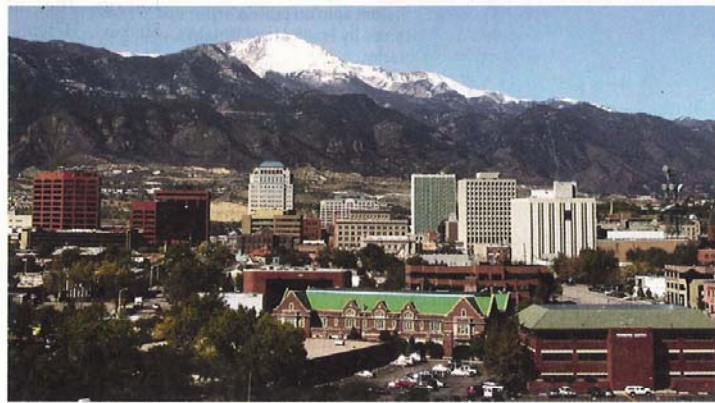
When **Coast Independent Review Board (IRB)** finally pulled the trigger on a western U.S. location for its operations center, Colorado Springs was the target, besting locations in Fort Collins, Colo.; Mesa, Ariz.; and North Carolina.

"I spent several months scouting locations in the western United States before selecting Colorado Springs," says Darren McDaniel, CEO and founder of Coast IRB, an ethics board that monitors patient safety in new drug and medical device studies for the pharmaceutical industry. "Ultimately, I chose Colorado Springs, because the culture focuses on balance. It is a city with a solid work ethic, a passion for the outdoors, a relaxed lifestyle and interpersonal relationships based on community."

Coast IRB employs 60 people at its Lake Forest, Calif., headquarters; it is filling 180 positions in Colorado Springs.

"Colorado Springs' biotech and pharmaceutical industries are very strong, which bodes well for us," adds McDaniel. Coast IRB joins about 380 other companies in the biotech and related fields in Colorado, clustered primarily in Fort Collins, Boulder, Colorado Springs and the Denver metro area. Statewide, the bioscience industry employs 16,000 with an average salary of US\$63,000.

Provident Pharmaceuticals, a start-up contract manufacturer, recently began operations in Colorado Springs, thanks in part to company President Brian Crook's being a Coloradan.



A balance of low-key lifestyle, high-tech resources and abundant talent makes Colorado Springs a natural for life sciences operations.

"We could have gone anywhere in the country, including back east, where many of the customers are," says Crook. "But we chose Colorado Springs for a number of reasons," including its four-season outdoors lifestyle.

Local Resources

Just as appealing to Crook is the presence of the University of Colorado and Colorado State University, as well as some private colleges, which keeps the work force well stocked.



Darren McDaniel

"We just hired a chief financial officer with quite a bit of experience dealing with start-up organizations and a director of operations with 35 years of pharmaceutical-industry experience," notes Crook. "Both these people were in the area. We have also been able to tap into the retired military work force," he says, "and about 40 percent of them have advanced degrees."

A biotech incubator is in place at the University of Colorado at Colorado

Springs (UCCS), and Crook sees a steady influx of biotech companies. Provident itself is growing from 14,400 sq. ft. (1,340 sq. m.) to 24,000 sq. ft. (2,230 sq. m.), and will need to build a manufacturing facility within the next two years.

Six-year-old **Aspire Biotech**, a bio-materials and medical-device company specializing in contract R&D work, is embarking on production of materials to make the products it has designed.

"I have lived all over America," says the company's founder and president, Ian Askill. But for his money, "You can't beat the climate, the cost of living or the attitude of the people" in Colorado Springs.

"As a biotech start-up company, it would have been easier for me in a bunch of other states," says Askill, and Denver would have been easier within Colorado. But his involvement with the Bioenergetics Institute at UCCS and with other commercialization initiatives and love for the area kept him in Colorado Springs: "I can live in a great house here that is seven minutes from work. There are not many cities in which you can do that." **SITE**