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## Quest keeping headquarters in New Jersey after tax credits, will move to Secaucus

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After getting a 10-year, \$18.6-million tax break offer from the state to keep jobs in New Jersey, Quest Diagnostics announced Monday that it is moving its corporate headquarters from Madison to Secaucus.

CEO Steve Rusckowski said in a statement that the move “allows us to retain our New Jersey employees while being in better proximity to public transportation and many of our major health-care partners.”

The new location will be at 500 Plaza Drive, in the Harmon Meadow office, hotel and retail complex. The building also houses the headquarters of the Children’s Place retail chain. The complex has shuttle bus service to the Secaucus Junction rail station and NJ Transit buses into New York City.

The medical testing company said it expects to make the 30-mile move in September 2017. The new location will have a total of 600 workers – 250 from its office in Lyndhurst and 350 from the Madison office.

Quest moved its headquarters from Lyndhurst to Madison in 2007. The move to Secaucus reflects a recent trend of corporations choosing locations closer to New York City, rather than office parks in the more distant suburbs. Many young workers prefer more urban workplaces closer to public transit.

The New Jersey Economic Development Authority last month approved the 10-year tax break for Quest under the state’s Grow New Jersey program, aimed at attracting or retaining jobs in the Garden State. Quest said it had been offered incentives by other states, and considered a move to Tampa, where it has a logistics and human resources hub that employs several hundred people.

John Boyd of the Boyd Co., a corporate relocation adviser in Princeton, said that health and pharmaceutical companies like to be in New Jersey because of its high concentration of skilled workers in those fields.

“We’re finding that it’s increasingly difficult to retain key people” when one of those companies moves out of state, he said.

But even with its attractive workforce, Boyd said, the state still must give incentives because other states offer them, and to offset the high cost of doing business in New Jersey.

“Companies in New Jersey are at a competitive disadvantage in terms of labor costs, real estate costs and power costs,” he said. “New Jersey, in our opinion, needs the very robust incentive program that it has in place now.”

However, New Jersey Policy Perspective, a progressive group that has questioned the use of corporate incentives, criticized the tax breaks for Quest.

“Doling out millions of dollars to help very profitable corporations shift jobs around the state is a failed economic development strategy, and it will make it all that much harder for New Jersey to invest in tried-and-true policies to boost the economy in the future,” said Jon Whiten, vice president of NJPP.

Quest employs more than 2,300 people throughout the state and 44,000 overall. The company’s largest laboratory is in Teterboro. About 1,330 people work in Teterboro, half in the labs and half in other functions, according to a company spokesman.

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