

A new corporate address: Flexible-stay community brings a new type of amenity to Florham Park campus

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AVE Florham Park features 65,000 square feet of amenity space for both residents and corporate clients that partner with Korman Communities. — Courtesy: Rockefeller Group/Korman Communities

By Joshua Burd

In a time when developers are increasingly creative with the amenities they offer at suburban office parks, corporate housing has become the latest offering at a campus in Florham Park.

This past spring, the Rockefeller Group and Korman Communities debuted AVE Florham Park, a 256-unit, flexible stay residential complex that sits among several existing and under-construction office buildings off Route 24 and Park Avenue. Tenants such as BASF Corp. have been quick to make use of the upscale facility, leasing more than a half-dozen units for employees who are visiting the campus for training and other purposes.

And the community has already become a focal point for the developer as it markets another planned addition to the campus — a new 300,000-square-foot office building known as 110 Park Ave.

“It changes the dynamic of 110 Park Ave. versus any other potential build-to-suit site out there,” said Clark Macheimer, senior vice president and regional development officer for Rockefeller Group’s New Jersey/Pennsylvania office. “When somebody is looking at that space, they’re thinking differently, and that’s causing some interest in 110 that may not have been there without AVE being completed.”

The firm has set up its marketing office for the office project inside the state-of-the-art AVE community, which saw its first residents move in around mid-April. It is the latest piece of what is known as The Green at Florham Park, a 268-acre redevelopment area that also includes a new Summit Medical Group office building and the New York Jets training complex.



Clark Macheimer

But the target market for AVE Florham Park goes well beyond The Green. The property sits within one of the state’s best-performing submarkets for suburban office space, including corporate destinations such as Short Hills, Madison, Hanover and Summit.

“It’s actually a sweet spot,” said Lea Anne Welsh, chief operating officer of Korman Communities and president of AVE. “If we look at the business that we’re accommodating now and the corporations and the individuals that we’re talking to for future needs, people are looking for flexibility, they are looking for comfort.

“They’re basically looking for all of their needs to be taken care of while they’re in transition or while they’re relocating to the area on assignment,” she added. “That is why we built Florham Park and why the AVE concept continues to grow, because there is that need for a more homelike experience while somebody is in transition.”

With some 65,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor amenity space, AVE Florham Park offers a luxury setting for both corporate clients and extended-stay residents, including retirees or those who are in the midst of downsizing. It is the fourth AVE property in New Jersey for Korman and one of about a dozen in the Northeast.

Welsh said Korman has built upon what it has learned at the other AVE locations, especially when it comes to amenities and common spaces. That means more offerings such as the café area, the outdoor pool space, the fitness center or the conference rooms and breakout spaces.



Lea Anne Welsh

“People want options from an interior and exterior standpoint,” Welsh said. “What we really did learn is that we needed more space ... And we created a space where we could be having a

resident event, yet accommodating a corporate client's business meeting, which is important to us — that people didn't feel like they're on top of each other."

When it comes to the property's furnished suites, Welsh expects the average length of stay to be around six or more months "based on the business that we're accommodating now and the business that we know is in the market." That's why she believes it offers a true middle ground between a hotel and a traditional apartment.



AVE Florham Park, a 256-unit flexible stay community, opened in mid-April as the latest piece of the master-planned redevelopment known as The Green at Florham Park.

Both Welsh and Macheimer expect AVE to complement the other phases that are remaining for The Green at Florham Park. Among them is an upscale, 161-room Archer hotel that is slated to be complete by early next year and provide additional options for those visiting the campus. Also under construction is a new Summit Medical Group MD Anderson Cancer Center, which is expected to draw patients from well beyond New Jersey and perhaps even beyond the U.S.

In fact, Welsh noted the AVE property in the Somerset section of Franklin already serves that purpose, given its proximity to the ProCure Proton Therapy Center in the township. She said the property has "at any point in time between eight and 15 residents who are undergoing treatment at that center, and we believe that we're going to be having the same relationship with MD Anderson."

The other remaining piece of The Green will be a new 425-unit active adult community built by Pulte Homes on the eastern portion of the site, which is expected to move through the entitlement process later this year. That will round out a plan that is more than 10 years in the making, part of an effort to redevelop a large swath of a former ExxonMobil research campus in the borough.

Machemer has often credited local officials for their cooperation during the development process, but said it was especially critical when it came to the AVE component.

“You look at typical zoning and you don’t have corporate suites or extended stay within the zoning,” Machemer said. “Florham Park created zoning to allow for this use, so without their support, we could not have made this happen. So they’ve done a great job. ... They saw the benefits of it and we couldn’t have done it without them.”

Feeling at home

Other AVE locations in New Jersey include Clifton, Somerset and Union. For corporations such as Merck & Co., which is headquartered in Kenilworth but has a global footprint, features such as a 24-hour concierge have helped reduce the stress that comes with temporary corporate housing or extended-stay facilities.

“That’s a very different model than other corporate housing-type facilities,” said Heather Leigh Tuttle, director of global mobility with Merck. She said it can be unsettling when “employees show up at 10 o’clock at night after a 12-hour flight and they have to remember a code for a lockbox to get their key, and it’s not good when you get that phone call of ‘I can’t find a key to get into my apartment.’”

“So having more of a hotel concierge with a homier feel is just a great match, certainly, for our employees.”

AVE President Lea Anne Welsh said that’s a critical element in not only the design of the complex, but in how Korman Communities assembles its staff at the property.

“When people walk in, we want them to feel a sense of community,” she said. “We want them to be a part of something, because when you’re in transition — whether you’re transitioning locally or whether you’re transitioning from another part of the country or the world — just feeling comfortable in asking for help is important.

“So we really feel one of the differentiating facts is not just the physical beauty of the building, but also our team really making it come alive.”