Land designated for Start-Up NY projects

The College of Nanoscale Science and Engineering has been approved for the Start-Up NY tax abatement program — a move with long-term implications for the “Buffalo Billion” projects in various stages of development.

For now, CNSE’s plan only designates land at sites in Albany and Canandaigua for the program, which essentially provides eligible companies with a tax-free environment for 10 years.

But as the college has increasingly become an economic development vehicle for Gov. Andrew Cuomo across New York state, its subsidiaries will own the facilities of several high-profile projects currently underway in Buffalo. Those projects aim to cluster private businesses around expensive equipment that would be prohibitively expensive for them to buy in their own right, and Start-Up NY is envisioned as another vital cog in incentivizing private investment.

CNSE-owned Buffalo projects which will likely end up under the Start-Up NY umbrella include:

- The Buffalo High-Tech Manufacturing and Innovation Hub at RiverBend, a 90-acre site in South Buffalo where the state has pledged $225 million to build out the initial facilities. Two California companies, Soraa and Silevo, have already signed on to the project and expect to invest a collective $1.5 billion into it.
- The Buffalo Medical Manufacturing and Innovation Hub, which will occupy the seventh floor of Ciminelli Real Estate Corp.’s Conventus building on the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus. The building is under construction and the project expected to be operational in the first quarter of 2015.

The state has pledged $50 million to the project, and ESD documents envision a total of $250 million going into the project. That includes Albany Molecular Research Inc., an initial tenant that will bring its $30 million molecule library to the medical campus from Washington state.

- The Buffalo Information Technology Manufacturing and Innovation Hub, for which a
location is still being sought. The state has pledged $55 million to the project, which will be anchored by IBM.

“Gov. Cuomo’s Start-Up NY initiative is bolstering SUNY’s capacity to provide new opportunities for our students while driving economic development through innovative partnerships with business and industry,” said Nancy Zimpher, chancellor of the State University of New York, in a news release. “Nanotechnology industries and workforce training will continue to be critical elements of New York’s growing world class and globally competitive innovation economy.”

Another “Buffalo Billion” project, the supercomputing partnership between the New York Genome Center and University at Buffalo, is being supported with $105 million in state funds. It will take place at UB’s Center for Computational Research, not CNSE-owned land, but involves the same concept: expensive institution-owned equipment and several initial private anchors, including Empire Genomics, CTG Inc., Aesku.Diagnostics and Lineagen. The latter two have already applied to Start-Up NY.

Dan Miner is Business First's enterprise reporter. He also covers education and public companies.