

## **Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus to revamp Trico site \$4.5 million in funding to aid transformation to innovation center**

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Armed with a \$4.5 million cash transfusion, the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus is pushing ahead with a key physical expansion.

Patrick Whelan, BNMC chief operating officer, said funding approved last week by the Empire State Development Corp. will aid a \$12 million effort to turn a portion of the former Trico windshield wiper plant into a high-tech innovation center.

“We want to attract private bio-medical companies to Buffalo that are beyond the incubator stage, but not quite ready to make the leap to a stand-alone facility,” Whelan said. “We think the Trico building will be help us do that.”

The City of Buffalo served as the pass-through entity for the state development funds, putting in an \$8 million application through its office of Strategic Investment.

The medical campus acquired the former Trico complex, located at Goodell and Ellicott streets in downtown Buffalo, through a bankruptcy auction last September. In its initial move to overhaul the turn-of-the-20th-century industrial site, the BNMC will update a four-story, 125,000-square-foot addition at 640 Ellicott St. into a mix of labs, offices and warehouse space.

Whelan said campus representatives aggressively pitched the site at BIO 2008, an international bio-medical conference last month in San Diego, and received a lot of positive responses.

“I’d say we have a package that’s pretty powerful,” Whelan said. “We had strong interviews with eight or nine companies that were all very receptive. They might not have thought about Buffalo before, but I believe we got their attention.”

The goal of the innovation center is to give young biotech companies enough private space to conduct proprietary research, but also provide a slate of shared services ranging from phone and computer infrastructure, to a secure warehouse capable of handling the most complicated international shipping and receiving demands.

Whelan cited discussions with an unidentified German medical device firm seeking its first U. S. outpost.

“They want a site where they can get sales and support on the ground pretty quickly, then establish testing labs, and eventually manufacturing operations,” Whelan said. “That’s exactly the kind of business scenario we will be positioned to handle.”

The BNMC expects to attract not only national and international firms to the Trico site, but also

use it as a “next step” for companies that have outgrown their existing incubator space on the main campus.

“But we need them to be mature enough to be able to pay rent, because we’re going to be borrowing a lot of money to make this center a reality,” Whelan added.

In addition to the just-announced \$4.5 million grant from Empire State Development, the innovation center effort has also received \$1 million through the John R. Oshei Foundation and in-kind assistance from National Grid. The balance of the \$12 million, top-to-bottom Trico building renovations will be paid for through loans and bonds.

Specific project plans call for the building’s 35,000-square-foot ground floor to be converted to a mix of state-of-the-art lab and warehouse space. Negotiations are underway to retain Sitel, a data firm formerly known as ClientLogic, as a long-term tenant on the second floor.

The 25,000-square-foot third floor has been gutted, and will be rebuilt to accommodate tenant needs. That space is envisioned as a cluster of small, private laboratories, supported by a communal lab area.

The fourth floor will become hard-walled office space, and will also be home to the BNMC’s executive headquarters.

“We’re going to make the move over by the end of year and be a part what’s happening over there,” Whelan said.

The Trico building makeover will also include installation of new windows, elevators, heating, cooling and air handling systems, and a new roof.

The BNMC is also weighing how to reuse the main, six-story Trico plant building. That sprawling structure, which totals more than 500,000 square feet, needs significant repairs. Earlier this year, loose bricks on its parapet along Goodell Street led to the closure of the sidewalk below.

The medical campus also purchased the plant’s five-acre parking lot as part of the bankruptcy auction. The properties were sold off last fall to settle claims against the estate of late developer Stephen B. McGarvey, who had envisioned the plant as a mixed-use complex of residential, office and retail space.