

City Hall to Launch \$20 Million Biotech Hub at Brooklyn Navy Yard

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Mayor Eric Adams wants to create a 50,000-square-foot center to cultivate the growing life sciences and biotech industry at the historic shipyard.



The Brooklyn Navy Yard has become a home for several tech-centric endeavors. | Paul Frangipane/Shutterstock

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Mayor Eric Adams is set to announce a \$20 million boost for a new “innovation lab” at the Brooklyn Navy Yard that will focus on the biotech industry — with future plans to invest in a hub that would provide workforce training and space for more industry startups.

The mayor will make the announcement Thursday during his State of the City address at Queens Theatre inside Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, where he'll outline the agenda for his sophomore year, officials told THE CITY.

News for those who live, work and play in Brooklyn and beyond

“With a first-in-the-nation incubator at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, startups right here in New York City transform the way we eat, build, and protect our environment — all while creating good-paying jobs for New Yorkers and positioning the city’s economy for the future,” Adams said in a statement.

“Sustainable biology is a game-changing industry that will play a pivotal role in creating the sustainable materials, products, and industries of the future while accelerating our transition to a zero-waste economy,” said Andrew Kimball, the president and CEO of the city’s Economic Development Corp.

The 50,000-square-foot incubator is expected to open at the Brooklyn Navy Yard in the next few years and provide office space, research lab, and programming space to biotechnology startups and companies, officials said.

It’s the first incubator of its kind in the country, according to officials from the EDC, which is one of many partners in the project, along with Empire State Development, the Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation, the Partnership Fund for New York City and Newlab, a technology center that launched there in 2016.

Satish Rao, the chief product officer at Newlab, said the city’s interest and investments should help the biology and traditional life sciences fields continue to grow.

“We really think we can continue to leverage what New York brings to the table — people want to come here and work,” he said of the new investment.

The hub will receive \$20 million from the city, which is part of a \$1 billion commitment to the LifeSci NYC initiative launched in June of 2021 under former Mayor Bill de Blasio, according to city officials.

The goal was to create 40,000 new jobs over the next 15 years and establish the city as the hub of life-sciences innovation.

Investing in and providing the space for modern technology firms to grow is “what creates dedicated and long-term jobs,” Rao said.

“We want companies to come here and gain traction by being part of the community and part of the ecosystem, so there’s a reason for a company to stay here and grow,” he said.

New York City has regained only 85% of the jobs lost in the pandemic, which lags behind the rest of the nation.

A ‘Rapidly Expanding Industry’

In addition to the \$20 million investment, Adams will also announce a plan for a hub that will focus on “materials innovation,” a newer aspect of biotechnology.

That work can be seen in companies already based in Brooklyn, like Algiknit, launched at an innovation hub at the Brooklyn Army Terminal, which uses algae to create yarn. Already at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, the firm Tômtext creates “vegan leather” by using things like seashells and “mushroom waste.”

“Through this new initiative, New York City will build off the years of progress to establish ourselves as a global leader in life sciences and cement ourselves as a leader in this new, rapidly expanding industry,” said Kimball.



A nanotronics lab in the Brooklyn Navy Yard. | lev radin/Shutterstock

The EDC will release a request for expressions of interest for the project on Thursday, and will choose an organization to lead it later this year, according to officials.

Prospective candidates will be asked to highlight ways in which they will partner with existing companies and industries in New York City that can benefit from biotech innovation, as well as focus on workforce developments to hire diverse New Yorkers, according to a draft copy of the proposal reviewed by THE CITY.

The hub will feature a lab and a business accelerator program, and it will be designed to foster collaboration, according to the draft.

Job creation and healing the economy have been core issues for the mayor since he was elected in November 2021, but challenges have abounded as the city recovers from the deadly pandemic.

Last March, the mayor said he would focus on helping small businesses and investing in industries like life sciences.

Months later, he and Gov. Kathy Hochul unveiled a major life sciences center would be built at CUNY's Hunter College, called the Science Park and Research Campus — or SPARC.

The center will cost \$1.6 billion and house Hunter's nursing school, a new public high school focused on preparing students for jobs in healthcare and science, and commercial office space.

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