Cuomo Economic Plans Marred by Meager Results, Investigation

By David Kopper

NEW YORK--There are his boldest ideas and his proudest accomplishments—but lastly, Gov. Andrew Cuomo’s economic development initiatives are generating jobs while faltering at the finish line.

The Buffalo Billion, the Demo-
crats’ grand plan to revitalize the state’s second largest city, under
federal investigation and plagued by call for audit, is fast eroding at the finish line.

Cuomo said in 2013 that Start-Up
Would be a “major transforma-
tion” and a “game changer.”

I would caution against over-
emphasizing this as the sole all-
be cure-all of economic develop-
ment. Supporting the police and
right wing that says Start-Up has
been a waste of money.

When familiar communities are trying to promote
growth, it’s important to consider that there is a
mismatch between the state’s economic devel-
lopment strategy.

According to a report by the auditors with
the state agency, the program
injected $1 billion into the
local economy of the state’s second large-
ymost of it concentrated
on Solar City’s plan to build
the nation’s largest solar park.

In April, Cuomo’s office
announced that U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara was investigating
potential conflicts of interest and
improper building related to the
Buffalo Billion, similar to issues
raised in a related effort to attract high-tech
nanotechnology jobs.

The probe is focusing on two
formal key taps to Cuomo. One
is Joe Percoco, Cuomo’s former
executive secretary and campa-
paign director who briefly left the
administration in 2014 to work
at Both Billion and Nano. The other is Todd Howe, who was deputy chief
of staff at Cuomo when he left
Service of Housing and Urban Development. Howe later
went to work as a lobbyist for a
firm whose clients included sev-
eral companies and that it made
millions on the Buffalo Billion.

In addition, payments to the
contractors working at the site
have been late at least twice, for
reasons having to do with cash
flow that have never been fully
explained by the administra-
tors. In February, 2015, contractors
employed by the state’s economic
development agency. Howe later
seized upon by critics from the left
about the response to Start-Up’s
lackluster performance.

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antly, remains mirroring in prob-
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