



# City of Niagara Falls, New York

Robert M. Restaino

Mayor

## **Submission by Robert Restaino, Mayor, Niagara Falls, NY**

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

The value of New York State owned properties in Niagara Falls is approximately \$284 million dollars which is approximately 15% of the city's total assessed property value.

If I was able to tax the state-owned and state-authority property, Niagara Reservation State Park, land owned by the New York State Power Authority and other tax-exempt acreage, Niagara Falls would collect approximately \$11 million dollars annually.

Not to mention the 51 acres of Seneca Nation territory located in the city's downtown tourism district, where the Seneca Niagara Gaming Corporation operates its flagship gaming facility, fueling station, and premier cannabis retail dispensary in the City of Niagara Falls.

Other cities can make similar claims about not being able to tax state owned property not to the degree that Niagara Falls is impacted.

Approximately 70 acres in the central business district is owned by a private entity that has not invested one dollar in our city in over 25 years.

Across the border, the Ontario government has announced a multi-billion dollar effort to double the tourism sector's economic impact. They are thinking big and I would impress upon you all that the adoption of that mentality is what is direly needed for the revitalization of Niagara Falls USA.

We are working our way through a lawsuit to reclaim approximately 10 acres of land from the private entity I just mentioned through an eminent domain process to build what we believe will be a transformative economic development project for our city.



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In fact, I have been advocating some of your colleagues and the Governor for \$200 million in funding for this project – Centennial Park – that we are confident will generate year-round tourism to Niagara Falls and expand workforce opportunities.

New York has invested hundreds of millions in dollars in projects such as the new \$2 billion Buffalo Bills Stadium, billions of dollars of incentives for the Micron campus in Central New York and as announced in the last year's state budget, \$400 hundred million to redevelop downtown Albany.

Building a year-round, multi-purpose facility with a focus on amateur and youth sports is one of the fastest-growing segments in the hospitality and tourism industry.

A study that was funded in part by Empire State Development that dispels the notion that Centennial Park is a pipe dream.

The feasibility study's economic impact model has estimated that the new event center will generate over a \$50 million total economic impact in the first 5 years of operation.

This project has the potential to add to the downtown revitalization of Niagara Falls by stimulating local businesses, encouraging new development, and increasing foot traffic by attracting year-round activities and events.

By extending the tourism season our residents will be able to work year-round; they won't have to look for another job or go on unemployment.

Most of our tourism workforce is female and 75% are minority; working part time limiting their economic opportunities. Working full-time provides them the opportunity to earn more money and with that the ability to find more stable housing, including owning their own home. It gives them purchasing power and economic mobility.



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Extending the tourism season will provide families with more hours to earn a sustained income, health benefits, childcare plans, and more.

The results of the feasibility study demonstrate the significant return on investment from building Centennial Park.

We are grateful to Governor Hochul and our state delegation for their support of the city. This study verifies that we have something really good to pursue in Centennial Park and the timing is right.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Robert Restaino

Mayor