

SAY NO TO THE CASINO CIVIC ASSOCIATION

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Residents Ask Gov. Hochul to Ensure Land Disposition Process Complies With New York State Law

County Continues to Refuse to Conduct Environmental and Public Review

Today, residents from across Nassau County asked Governor Kathy Hochul to notify county officials that if they plan to compete for a NYS gaming license, they must conduct a thorough environmental and public review before the taxpayer-owned Nassau HUB land is leased to Las Vegas Sands (LVS). Despite a court decision last week which found that Nassau County violated both the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) and the County Open Meetings Law in approving the lease transfer, Nassau County continues to refuse to conduct the required studies and is instead appealing the court's decision.

County Executive Bruce Blakeman should now do what he should have done in the first place – conduct a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and engage the public to make sure we understand the scope of the proposed casino project; the anticipated impacts on our infrastructure, natural resources, economy, and community; and the County's plan to mitigate the impacts. Instead, Nassau County is wasting more taxpayer money on legal battles that would allow the county to avoid their public disclosure responsibilities to our communities.

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AN OPEN LETTER TO GOVERNOR KATHY HOCHUL

November 16, 2023

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York State
New York State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Hochul:

We write to bring to your attention the inappropriate, extra-legal actions County Executive Bruce Blakeman has been taking in his effort to secure a gaming license for Las Vegas Sands (LVS) at the Nassau Coliseum site. The LVS proposal, if approved, would be the second-largest casino in the country, a massive 4-million sq. ft. structure. Although it is clear that the project will have significant impacts on our quality of life, Nassau tax-payers have been uniformly excluded from understanding the proposal, its wide-ranging impacts, and the mitigation planned to address those impacts.

Last week, NYS Supreme Court Judge Sarika Kapoor ruled that the land disposition process Nassau County conducted last spring was in violation of the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA), and annulled the Nassau HUB lease transfer to LVS. Although ordered by the judge to start the land

disposition process over again, this time in compliance with the law, County Executive Blakeman is continuing his efforts to thwart involvement by the residents most impacted by the project. On November 10th, Nassau County appealed and Justice Lourdes M. Ventura of the NYS Appellate Division put a temporary hold on the lower court's ruling, and set Nov. 21st for a hearing on the County's appeal. In their appeal, County lawyers indicated that their attempts to short-circuit the public notification and SEQRA requirements are an effort to expedite and strengthen their candidacy for a NYS gaming license. It's hard to believe that the County's evasion of public participation and environmental review requirements is what the state intended in creating the competitive licensing process.

To date, local residents have expressed concerns over increased traffic, air and water pollution, strains on Long Island's drinking water, higher rates of crime and gambling addiction, and lower property values, all of which compounded year after year, will have very significant negative impacts on Nassau County's people, infrastructure, natural resources, and economy. None of these impacts have been fully acknowledged or addressed:

- Traffic impacts: Many of the roads in the vicinity are already at peak capacity, especially during certain hours of the day. LVS is projecting 25,000 gamblers and employees daily to travel to the site, situated in a densely populated community without mass transit. A full traffic study (and mitigation plan) is needed for local roads, as well as roadways across Long Island that feed into the HUB.
- Increased crime: Gambling addicts frequently turn to crime to support their addiction. [Studies](#) show they are seven times more likely to be arrested than non-gamblers. Overall, crime rates in suburban communities hosting casinos increase by 9%. Why would our elected officials invite higher crime rates without assuring us that they fully understand and are mitigating the impacts?
- Drinking water: Long Island's sole source aquifers must be conserved and protected. LVS plans to pull 875,000 gallons per day from our aquifer. Where is the long term plan to manage this fragile resource?
- Depressed property values: According to the [National Association of Realtors](#), "The impact of casinos on local property values is unambiguously negative. (Casinos) act as parasites upon them. Unsurprisingly, such communities also suffer higher rates of home foreclosure and other forms of economic distress and domestic violence." The value of homes near a new casino often drops by 2-10%. Home values are not only a main source of retirement savings for residents, the property taxes residents pay also comprise a substantial part of our community's tax base.
- Shadows, streetscapes, views and light pollution: Two new hotel towers will be 26 stories tall - twice as tall as the Marriott, disturbing the site line for miles. 9-story parking garages will tower over the recently built \$180 million MSK Cancer Care facility. Comprehensive shadow and light pollution assessments need to be disclosed.
- Sewage/air quality/energy use: At almost 4 million sq ft, running 24/7, with 12,450 parking spaces in three multi-level garages, this structure will strain the County's energy resources, and place inordinate demands on sewage infrastructure.
- Gambling losses and local economic impact: LVS projects annual gambling losses by patrons to exceed \$2 billion/year, or \$5.5 million per day, approximately 10 times the money lost by visitors to Jakes 58. How much of that \$2 billion will come from Long Islanders who will be losing discretionary dollars that will no longer be spent in Long Island downtowns and restaurants?

- Gambling addiction and social/community impacts: A casino within 10 miles of home has a significant effect on problem gambling and is associated with a [90 percent increase in the odds of being a pathological or problem gambler](#). Among severe problem gamblers, [approx 1 out of 5 report they've attempted suicide in the past year](#).

The Court has determined that Nassau County officials tried to skirt the law and their responsibilities to the public in "an attempt to avoid public scrutiny of the proposed lease transfer." County Executive Blakeman knows that a massive, predatory casino in the center of our community couldn't withstand legitimate scrutiny by the people. If it can be safely assumed that it is not the State's intention that casino license applicants try to circumvent the environmental and public review process, we ask that you notify Nassau County that a thorough environmental and public review must be completed before the land is disposed of to LVS if they want to be considered for a NYS gaming license, regardless of the outcome of the higher court's deliberations on appeal.

Sincerely,

*SAY NO TO THE CASINO CIVIC ASSOCIATION**
www.nocasinonassau.org

Cc: Bruce Blakeman, Nassau County Executive
Richard Nicoletto, Presiding Officer, Nassau County Legislature
Kevan Abraham, Minority Caucus Leader, Nassau County Legislature
Nassau County Legislators
Leonard H. Shapiro, Chair, Nassau County Planning Commission
Brian O'Dwyer, Chair, NYS Gaming and Racing
Don Clavin, Supervisor, Town of Hempstead
Steven Rhoads, NYS Senate District 5
Jack Martins, NYS Senate District 7
Patricia Canzoneri-Fitzpatrick, NYS Senate District 9
Nassau County's State Assembly Delegation
NYS DEC Commissioner Basil Seggos

* *Say No to the Casino Civic Association* is a non-partisan group, composed of Republicans, Democrats, and Independents from across Nassau County, who have come together with one goal: to stop the Las Vegas Sands Casino proposal. The group believes that a casino will have an unequivocally negative impact on our community and irrevocably change the character of our county. The group believes that a casino will lead to an increase in crime, gambling addiction, bankruptcy and home foreclosure rates; exacerbate traffic problems; impact our natural environment including air and water quality; depress home values; and strain law enforcement. We invite everyone in Nassau County to join us and get involved by signing our petition on our new website, www.nocasinonassau.org, joining our Facebook group, and following us on Twitter and Instagram, @NoCasinoLI.