

Put Your Business in Front of Western New York Advertise with Niagara Action.

Contact for pricing



www.niagaraaction.com
(716) 538-8237
contact@niagaraaction.com

Full page • Banner • Half vertical • Grid sizing available
Print, website & social media

BUFFALO ACTION

DELIVERED WEEKLY ACROSS NIAGARA, ERIE & MONROE COUNTIES

ROCHESTER ACTION

NIAGARA ACTION

FREE

June 3rd, 2026 - June 9th, 2026

NiagaraAction.com

Vol. 1, No. 10

FREE

Shocking Body Cam Video Shows Buffalo Officer Marc Hurst Being Shot Six Time

By: Staff Reports

The Buffalo Police Department has released body camera footage from a violent confrontation that left Officer Marc Hurst shot six times while responding to a domestic violence call on the city's East Side, providing new details about the chaotic struggle that nearly turned deadly for several officers.

The video stems from an incident on Tuesday, May 26th, at a residence on Sherman Street when police were dispatched after a woman called for help and reported a frightening situation unfolding inside her home.

According to investigators, officers were sent to 256 Sherman Street at approximately 2:15pm

(Cont. on pg. 7)

Niagara Falls Threatens Foreclosure Against 3,000 Property Owners Over Unpaid Taxes



By: Staff Reports

Thousands of property owners across Niagara Falls are now facing the possibility of foreclosure after the city issued roughly 3,000 warning letters demanding years of unpaid taxes be paid in full by

the end of June.

The sweeping enforcement effort, announced by Mayor Robert Restaino's administration, comes as city officials attempt to recover millions of dollars in

(Cont. on pg. 4)

Bullied at 11, Gone Far Too Soon: Family Remembers Nadiya Santiago After Tragic Death

By: John Watson

An 11-year-old Western New York girl remembered for her bright personality, love of sports, and deep devotion to family is being mourned this week after her tragic death. Her loss has sparked heartbreak throughout the community and renewed painful conversations about bullying and the unseen struggles children can carry.

Nadiya "Nana" Marie Santiago died on May 19th, 2026.

Her death has left family members, friends, classmates, and those who are hearing her story for the first time grappling with grief over a life that ended far too soon.

According to information shared publicly by family and/or friends, bullying was one of the main factors that contributed to Nadiya ending her life. They are now pleading for greater awareness so other families do not experience similar heartbreak.

For Nadiya's family, the issue is no longer a statistic or a headline.

It is deeply personal.

As loved ones continue grieving, they are also speaking publicly in hopes that conversations surrounding bullying become more urgent, more serious and more proactive.

But amid the heartbreak and difficult questions, family members say they want people to remember who Nadiya was beyond the tragedy.

According to loved ones, Nadiya was a bright and energetic child whose personality lit up those around her.

She loved spending time with friends and family, staying active and enjoying the outdoors with her siblings.

Soccer and boxing ranked among

(Cont. on pgs. 12)

SECTIONS

Niagara Tourism.....	2
Niagara Falls.....	3-4
Niagara County.....	5
Buffalo.....	6-7
Erie County.....	8
Rochester.....	9
State News.....	10
National News.....	11
Crime.....	12
Business.....	13-14
Environment.....	15
Horoscopes, Puzzles and Funnies.....	16

The Rule of Law Versus the Modern Day Witch Hunt

By: Sumit Majumdar



True diversity and inclusion require more than corporate mission statements; they require the courage to uphold the rule of law in the face of public outrage. When companies commit to hiring marginalized individuals or those who have made past mistakes, they often find themselves in the crosshairs of a relentless court of public opinion.

A functioning society demands accountability, but it also demands that this accountability be administered impartially. Instead of respecting the lawful path to rehabilitation, segments of the media and the public frequently resort to mob tactics. They weaponize outrage and use guilt by association to isolate the very people

(Cont. on pg. 11)



SIGN UP TODAY

www.buffalobiodiesel.com

1-800-721-1427

**RENEWABLE ENERGY TODAY,
FOR A CLEANER TOMORROW**

Recycling commercial used fryer grease since 2005



NIAGARA TOURISM

\$125 Million Gateway Project Could Bring Hundreds of Homes, Retail and Entertainment to Niagara Falls

Plans Also Call for a Brewery, Indoor Go-Karts, Zipline and Virtual Reality Arcade at Nearby Warehouse; Developer Says Project Will Be Funded Through Private Investment and Financing Sources.

Staff Reports

One of the largest privately funded development proposals announced in Niagara Falls in recent years could reshape a key gateway into the city while adding hundreds of new housing units, retail businesses, entertainment attractions and public amenities aimed at attracting both residents and visitors.

Element Development has unveiled plans for a \$125 million mixed-use project at 901 Buffalo Avenue that would introduce 225 market-rate apartments, 100 condominium units, restaurants, retail space and other amenities across a four-building complex totaling approximately 469,000 square feet.

Known as The Gateway Project, the development is planned for a highly visible corridor near downtown Niagara Falls directly across from the Marriott Courtyard hotel and adjacent to several tourism destinations. Company officials say the project is designed not only to create new housing but also to address what they view as one of Niagara Falls' most significant long-term challenges—retaining and attracting year-round residents.

The proposal calls for three 8-story residential towers, a structured parking ramp and a mixed-use building featuring commercial storefronts on the ground floor and event space above. Developers have also identified two additional parcels that could eventually accommodate further retail development intended to serve both local residents and tourists.

If completed as proposed, the project would significantly expand the city's market-rate housing, something many local officials and developers argue remains in short supply.

Element Development President Nirel Patel said the goal is to create housing options that appeal to working professionals, particularly younger residents who are required to live within city limits due to their employment such as

firefighters, police officers, teachers and other public-sector employees.

Patel argued that attracting and retaining residents requires more than simply building apartments. He said communities must offer the types of amenities and neighborhood experiences that younger professionals increasingly seek when deciding where to live. He described Niagara Falls' challenge as building a stronger residential base while providing amenities commonly found in larger urban areas and noted that younger workers often want vibrant neighborhoods that offer convenience, services and lifestyle opportunities close to home.

All obstacles that Niagara Falls has failed to overcome for decades.

But the development would include more than housing.

According to preliminary plans, residents could have access to neighborhood-serving amenities such as a pharmacy, grocery options and other wellness-oriented services. The broader concept envisions a walkable district where residents can live, work, shop and socialize without relying heavily on automobiles.

However, the Gateway Project is only one piece of a larger vision taking shape along Buffalo Avenue.

Adjacent to the proposed development site at 1001 Buffalo Avenue, Element Development also plans to transform a former paper manufacturing warehouse into a family entertainment destination. Plans for that property include a brewery or distillery, retail space, indoor go-karts, a zipline attraction and a virtual reality sports arcade.

Together, the two developments could create a substantial new activity center between downtown Niagara Falls and Niagara Falls State Park.

Patel said the project is intended to create a neighborhood environment rather than a standalone residential complex. He described the proposal as an effort to convert underutilized land into a walkable district that generates economic activity throughout the year while encouraging interaction between tourists and local residents.

The company already controls approximately seven acres associated with the project area, which sits between Buffalo Avenue, Niagara Falls State Park and the Niagara Scenic Parkway.

Another piece of the proposal involves a small city-owned property.

The Niagara Falls City Council is expected to consider transferring the



abandoned Porter Park property, located at Buffalo Avenue and 10th Street, to Element Development. The parcel sits between project sites and could play a role in connecting various components of the overall development plan.

Mayor Robert Restaino voiced strong support for the proposal and emphasized the need for additional market-rate housing in Niagara Falls.

Restaino indicated the development would help address a long-standing gap in the local housing market and noted that the project's location could offer unique residential views overlooking portions of the Niagara River and surrounding areas near the Falls. He described the proposal as the type of downtown residential development the city has been seeking for years.

The project would also represent another major investment by Patel and his affiliated companies.

Through Rupal Hospitality and Element Development, Patel has already established a growing presence in Niagara Falls. The company owns and operates the Cadence, a 57-room boutique hotel on Rainbow Boulevard, along with Seva Kitchen and Bar. It is also completing a \$14 million expansion of the Marriott Courtyard property located across from the Gateway Project site.

Patel believes increasing Niagara Falls' year-round residential population is critical to the city's long-term economic future.

He pointed to the city's population of roughly 47,000 residents and poverty rate exceeding 20 percent despite decades of strong tourism activity. According to Patel, the challenge is not attracting visitors but ensuring that tourism-related

economic activity translates into broader benefits for local residents and neighborhoods.

He suggested that growing the residential population could help diversify and strengthen the city's tax base while reducing the financial burden carried by commercial property owners.

Unlike many large-scale development projects that depend heavily on public subsidies, Patel said the Gateway Project will be primarily financed through private investment.

According to Patel, funding commitments have already been secured from private investors while additional financing is expected to come from institutional lenders. The company also anticipates utilizing available tax incentive programs including New York's Brownfield Cleanup Program, historic preservation tax credits and federal New Markets Tax Credits.

Those incentives, Patel said, would help reduce overall project debt and improve financial feasibility once construction is complete.

Pending regulatory approvals and final project reviews, Element Development hopes to begin construction within the next 12 to 14 months.

The full buildout is expected to take approximately three years.

If the timeline remains on schedule, The Gateway Project could become one of the most significant residential and mixed-use developments completed in Niagara Falls in a generation, adding hundreds of new housing units, expanding retail opportunities and creating a new district designed to serve both residents and the millions of visitors who travel to Niagara Falls each year.



www.niagaraaction.com

(716) 538-8237

contact@niagaraaction.com

FOLLOW US



@niagaraaction





LOCAL NEWS

NIAGARA FALLS

Retired Republican DPW Chief Could Return to Niagara Falls Payroll as Paid Consultant

Staff Reports

Just weeks after retiring from his position as Niagara Falls Department of Public Works director, former Republican City Councilman Ken Tompkins could soon find himself back working for city government under a proposed consulting arrangement with the Restaino administration.

City officials confirmed that Mayor Robert Restaino's administration is seeking to bring Tompkins back in a temporary role that would place him in charge of overseeing several major municipal projects while the city continues searching for a permanent deputy director of public works.

The proposed arrangement has drawn attention because Tompkins officially retired from city service on April 30th after serving as DPW director, only to now be considered for another city-funded position shortly after leaving office.

A spokesperson for the mayor's office said the administration wants Tompkins to serve as a consultant functioning as acting deputy director of public works, a position that already exists in the city budget but has yet to be permanently filled.

Tompkins, a Republican who previously served two terms on the Niagara Falls City Council, was appointed by Restaino to lead the Department of Public Works in February 2024. Following his retirement, former Deputy Director of Public Works and Parks John Murphy was promoted to replace him as department director.

According to City Hall, the administration believes Tompkins' continued involvement

would help ensure continuity on several projects he has managed since their earliest stages.

Philip Wells, spokesperson for the mayor's office, said Tompkins would continue overseeing projects he had been involved with "since their inception," including construction of the city's new animal shelter at Hyde Park and development of an approximately \$8 million pre-engineered metal building at the DPW facility on New Road.

Tompkins would also continue supervising projects connected to Niagara River Greenway Commission funding. The Greenway Commission oversees projects funded through the relicensing agreement involving the New York Power Authority and is responsible for approving community improvement initiatives throughout the region.

Under the proposed agreement, Tompkins would be paid \$1,325 per month, which breaks down to approximately \$331.25 per week.

In addition to compensation, the agreement would allow him access to a city vehicle and a city-issued cell phone. According to the proposal, Tompkins would be required to pick up the vehicle from the Department of Public Works each day and return it when his work is completed. He would not be permitted to take it home with him.

The Restaino administration is expected to present it to the city council at their next meeting.

Tompkins said the opportunity was not something he actively pursued following retirement. Instead, he said city officials approached him about remaining involved long enough to help

guide two of the city's largest ongoing projects through completion.

According to Tompkins, his involvement would allow Murphy to focus on his responsibilities as the new DPW director while he continues coordinating with contractors, vendors and project managers.

Tompkins said he intends to remain within the earnings limitations imposed on public retirees and emphasized that the position would be part-time.

He noted that retirement regulations limit him to earning no more than \$16,300 in the position.

The proposed consulting arrangement comes as Tompkins is already eligible for city-funded retirement health and dental benefits under a recently approved local law.

Last year, a majority of the Niagara Falls City Council approved changes to the city's benefits ordinance that expanded eligibility for health and dental insurance coverage to certain elected officials who are not represented by collective bargaining agreements.

Under the revised rules, former elected officials can qualify if their age combined with their years of city service equals at least 70 at the time they leave office.

The ordinance applies to elected officials first elected after January 1st, 2008, who remained on the city payroll as of January 1st, 2025, and met the required age and service threshold.

The consulting proposal will ultimately require approval from the Niagara Falls City Council before Tompkins can officially return to work for the city in his new role.

Restaino Administration and NFR Strike Deal, Data Center and Centennial Park Projects to Both Advance

By: Staff Reports

A long-running legal battle that has shaped the future of downtown Niagara Falls is expected to move toward resolution Wednesday night as city lawmakers prepare to consider a settlement between the City of Niagara Falls and Niagara Falls Redevelopment (NFR).

According to administration sources, the agreement is likely to be approved and would clear the way for both Mayor Robert Restaino's proposed Centennial Park project and NFR's planned \$1.5 billion Niagara Digital Campus.

Under the proposed settlement, NFR would transfer 10 acres near Falls and 10th streets to the city for the proposed \$210 million Centennial Park arena and events campus.

In exchange, the city would provide the approvals needed for construction of the Niagara Digital Campus, creating what supporters have described as a "Two-Project Solution" that would allow both developments to move forward.

The agreement calls for NFR to receive \$4.029 million from the city for costs and expenses associated with the property. Public records show NFR originally purchased the parcels for approximately \$1.43 million.

The settlement would also require the city to enact zoning changes, establish a Planned Unit Development (PUD), process parcel subdivisions, provide easements and rights-of-way, and issue and maintain demolition permits tied to the project.

NFR has said the Digital Campus could create at least 500 permanent jobs and more than 1,500 construction jobs. The company has also said the project would be developed with Toronto-based Urbacon.

As with several previous NFR-related projects, whether this project ultimately ever comes to fruition remains to be seen. Their track record does not inspire confidence.

The settlement also contains a non-disparagement clause requiring both the city and NFR to refrain from knowingly making false, negative or derogatory statements about one another.

If approved, the agreement would end years of legal disputes and potentially advance two of the largest development proposals currently planned for Niagara Falls.

Niagara Falls, Ontario Real Estate Market Shows Opportunity as Buyers Gain More Breathing Room

Contributed

Niagara Falls has always had a unique place in Ontario's real estate story. It is not just a tourist city. It is a border city, a retirement destination, a family community, a short-term rental market, a commuter option, and a place where investors continue to watch for long-term opportunity. In 2026, the local housing market is showing a different kind of momentum than the overheated years that followed the pandemic. Prices have softened, listings have improved, and buyers have more room to make careful decisions.

For Niagara Falls residents, this shift may feel like a needed reset. For sellers, it means pricing strategy matters more than it did when homes were moving quickly with fewer conditions. For buyers, it may be one of the more practical windows the market has offered in recent years.

According to April 2026 data from the Niagara Association of REALTORS®, the Niagara Region recorded 556 residential sales, slightly above the 552 sales reported in April 2025. New listings reached 1,483, down from 1,577 a year earlier, while the average days on market rose to 49 days. The overall MLS® HPI composite benchmark price for the region was \$573,700, down 6.3 percent compared with April 2025.

Those numbers suggest a market that is active, but not frantic. Homes are still selling, but buyers are not under the same pressure they faced during the tightest parts of the market. More time on market gives buyers a chance to compare neighbourhoods, review financing, complete inspections, and seek professional advice before committing. **Niagara Falls Is Still Moving, But at a More Measured Pace**

Niagara Falls itself remains one of the region's most-watched housing markets. In April 2026, the Niagara Association of REALTORS® reported 300 new listings in Niagara Falls, up from 282 in April 2025. Sales also increased, with 106 sales in April 2026 compared with 98 a year earlier.

The local benchmark price, however, moved lower. Niagara Falls had an HPI benchmark price of \$563,500 in April 2026, compared with \$603,400 in April 2025. Average days on market also increased from 39 days to 51 days.

For buyers, that combination matters. More listings, slightly higher sales, lower benchmark prices, and longer marketing times can create a more approachable buying environment. It does not mean every property is a bargain, and it does not mean well-priced homes will sit indefinitely. It does mean buyers have more space to assess value.

For sellers, the data points to the importance of realistic pricing. A home that is priced too ag-

gressively may sit longer than expected, especially when buyers have more options. Presentation, condition, location, and pricing strategy are all playing a bigger role than they did when demand was more urgent.

What Is Driving Interest in Niagara Falls Real Estate?

Niagara Falls continues to attract attention for several reasons. The city offers a mix of relative affordability, tourism-driven economic activity, cross-border access, and proximity to other Niagara communities. Buyers may be looking for detached homes, investment properties, retirement options, family homes, or properties that offer more space than they could afford in larger Greater Toronto Area markets.

Niagara Falls also benefits from its location. It is connected to the broader Niagara Region, close to St. Catharines, Welland, Fort Erie, Niagara-on-the-Lake, and the U.S. border. For some buyers, that regional access is just as important as the property itself.

At the same time, buyers are more cautious than they were a few years ago. Higher borrowing costs, increased living expenses, insurance considerations, property taxes, renovation costs, and uncertainty about future interest rates all influence decisions. Many people still want to buy, but they are taking more time to make sure the numbers work.

Why Local Guidance Matters More in This Market

When the market becomes more balanced, professional guidance becomes more important, not less. Buyers need to understand whether a home is priced fairly based on current local conditions, not last year's expectations. Sellers need to understand how competing listings, property condition, and recent comparable sales affect their strategy.

Real estate decisions in Niagara Falls can also involve legal and practical details that are easy to overlook. Title issues, closing timelines, mortgage instructions, purchase conditions, refinancing, condominium status certificates, estate-related property sales, and investment purchases can all affect the transaction.

That is where local professionals can play an important role. Zubic Law, a Niagara Falls law firm, works with home buyers, investors, and clients navigating real estate transactions, refinancing, title transfers, and related legal needs in the region. For buyers and sellers, having a local real estate lawyer involved can help clarify the legal side of the deal and reduce uncertainty before closing.

This is especially helpful in a market where buyers may be taking more time, negotiating conditions, or comparing different types of properties. A real estate transaction is not just about the sale price. It is also about what is in the agreement,

what is registered on title, what obligations must be met, and whether the closing process is organized properly.

Buyers Have More Room, But Not Unlimited Leverage

The current Niagara Falls market gives buyers more breathing room, but that does not mean they can assume every seller is desperate. Good properties in desirable locations can still attract attention, particularly if they are priced properly and show well.

Buyers should use the extra time wisely. That means getting mortgage pre-approval, understanding monthly carrying costs, reviewing property taxes, estimating utilities, checking insurance, and thinking about future resale. A lower price is only one part of the decision. The condition of the home, age of major systems, neighbourhood, zoning, and potential renovation costs can all affect the true value.

For first-time buyers, the softer benchmark price may be encouraging. Still, affordability remains a challenge. Even with lower prices compared with last year, monthly payments can remain significant depending on interest rates, down payment, and household income. Buyers should be realistic about what they can comfortably carry, not just what they technically qualify for.

Sellers Need to Adjust to a More Selective Buyer

For sellers in Niagara Falls, the market is not bad, but it is more selective. Buyers are comparing more options, taking more time, and paying closer attention to price. A home that needs significant work may face more resistance unless it is priced accordingly. A clean, well-maintained, properly presented home may still perform well.

Preparation matters. Small improvements, decluttering, repairs, strong photography, and accurate pricing can make a meaningful difference. Sellers should also be ready for buyers to include conditions, request information, or negotiate more carefully than they might have during a hotter market.

The increase in average days on market is worth noting. A longer selling timeline does not automatically mean a home is undesirable. It simply reflects a market where buyers have more choice and are moving with more caution. Sellers who understand that shift are better positioned to make practical decisions.

Another way sellers are trying to stand out is by completing targeted renovations before listing, especially in older Niagara Falls homes. Bathroom updates, kitchen upgrades, new counters, fresh cabinetry, and more modern finishes can help a property feel cleaner, more current, and easier for buyers to imagine moving into. Local countertop supplier Niagara Kitchen & Countertops has seen

an uptick in homeowners updating older kitchens before bringing their properties to market. In a more selective market, these improvements can help sellers position their listing more competitively, particularly when buyers are comparing renovated homes against properties that may need immediate work after closing.

Niagara Falls Within the Broader Niagara Picture

The broader Niagara market shows variation from one community to another. The Niagara Association of REALTORS® noted that the region as a whole had a sales-to-listings ratio of 37.5 per cent in April 2026, which points to a buyer's market overall. However, conditions differ by municipality. Some communities are closer to balanced territory, while others remain more firmly in buyer's market conditions.

That regional variation matters because Niagara Falls does not exist in isolation. Buyers may compare it with St. Catharines, Welland, Thorold, Fort Erie, or Niagara-on-the-Lake depending on budget and lifestyle. A buyer who cannot find value in one community may look to another. A seller in Niagara Falls is not only competing with homes nearby, but also with similar options across the region.

For local residents, this creates both opportunity and competition. Niagara Falls remains attractive, but pricing and presentation must reflect the broader market.

What to Watch for Through the Rest of 2026

The remainder of 2026 will likely depend on interest rates, inventory, consumer confidence, and whether buyers continue to return to the market as affordability improves. If borrowing costs stabilize and prices remain softer than last year, some sidelined buyers may decide to act. If inventory remains healthy, buyers may continue to have negotiating room.

For Niagara Falls, the key story is not a market collapse or a sudden boom. It is a more balanced environment where decisions need to be made carefully. Buyers have more options. Sellers need a stronger strategy. Local professionals, including REALTORS®, mortgage advisors, inspectors, and real estate lawyers, are becoming especially important in helping people navigate the details.

Real estate in Niagara Falls remains active, but it is no longer a market where assumptions from previous years necessarily apply. That may be a good thing. A steadier market can give both buyers and sellers a better chance to make informed decisions, understand the numbers, and move forward with more confidence.

For a city with tourism strength, regional access, local neighbourhoods, investment interest, and long-term appeal, Niagara Falls continues to be a real estate market worth watching.

NIAGARA FALLS CONT.

Niagara Falls Threatens Foreclosure Against 3,000 Property Owners Over Unpaid Taxes Cont. from Cover

delinquent property taxes that have accumulated across Niagara Falls.

According to the city, the combined unpaid balances tied to the affected properties amount to a staggering sum that the mayor himself believes represents a major threat to the city's finances.

"The amount of outstanding property taxes is almost one-third of our total 2026 fiscal year budget so even recouping a portion of the outstanding amount due to the City would have a significant and positive impact on our budget outlook," said Restaino.

The foreclosure notices were distributed through the city's Billing and Collections Department and target property owners who allegedly still owe city taxes dating back to 2023.

Under the warning letters, owners are being instructed to pay all outstanding city taxes in full along with unpaid school taxes from 2024 and 2025.

City officials say there will be no extensions, no additional grace periods and no further delays.

"There is no further grace period and, if payments are not made by June 30th, the properties will be foreclosed," said Restaino. "The City will then auction those properties through a competitive bidding process."

The move immediately raises the stakes for thousands of Niagara Falls residents and property owners already dealing with mounting finan-

cial pressure from inflation, rising utility costs, increasing insurance rates and higher living expenses throughout Western New York.

Now, many are also facing the possibility of losing homes, rental properties or longtime family-owned buildings if balances are not fully resolved within weeks.

While city officials framed the action as financially necessary, critics of the Restaino administration are questioning how Niagara Falls allowed unpaid tax balances to spiral to levels now equaling nearly one-third of the city's annual budget before launching such a massive foreclosure push.

The situation also highlights the broader financial strain continuing to impact Niagara Falls despite years of promises surrounding downtown redevelopment, tourism growth and economic revitalization projects.

Restaino attempted to downplay the uniqueness of the issue, arguing municipalities across New York are dealing with similar tax collection problems.

"This is a matter that is not unique to Niagara Falls as cities across the region and the state face the same dilemma of property owners who are not making property tax payments leaving municipalities with no choice but to foreclose on properties," he said.

Still, the sheer scale of the notices – approximately 3,000 properties – signals one of the city's largest recent foreclosure enforcement efforts.



The city has not publicly broken down how many of the affected properties are owner-occupied homes versus vacant buildings, rental units or commercial properties.

Nor has the administration detailed how many owners may already be attempting to enter repayment discussions.

Instead, the city's position appears increasingly straightforward: pay the balances in full or risk foreclosure proceedings beginning after June 30th.

If foreclosures proceed, seized properties would eventually be auctioned through competitive bidding.

Such auctions often attract outside investors and developers searching for distressed properties at discounted prices, which is something in the past that has attracted the very people who are now probably not paying their taxes (or just contributing to blight and otherwise not caring for their properties).

The city argues recovering the unpaid taxes is essential to stabilizing municipal finances and funding services moving forward.

But for residents already stretched thin financially, the looming deadline arrives at a particularly difficult time.

Property owners receiving letters are now left scrambling to determine whether they can come up with years of unpaid taxes before the city moves to seize the properties altogether.

Officials are directing impacted residents to contact the Niagara Falls Billing and Collections Department at (716) 286-4350 for additional information regarding balances and foreclosure proceedings.

We also recommend you consult an attorney to determine whether the city would actually be able to commence a foreclosure action as easily as the Restaino administration might have you believe.

International Investment Talks Could Bring Billions in Development to Niagara Falls on Both Sides of the Border

Staff Reports

Discussions involving local leaders, international investors and economic development officials could eventually lead to billions of dollars in new investment in Niagara Falls, according to comments made this week by officials on both sides of the U.S.-Canada border.

The possibility emerged during a radio interview on Tuesday, May 26th, when Niagara Falls, Ontario Mayor Jim Diodati revealed that a major foreign investment group currently exploring large-scale development opportunities in Canada also expressed significant interest in projects on the American side of Niagara Falls.

Speaking during an appearance on WEBR AM 1440's "Viewpoint" program hosted by Tom Darro, Diodati said the investment group is considering a substantial commitment to Niagara Falls, Ontario, while simultaneously exploring opportunities across the border in Niagara Falls, New York.

While Diodati declined to identify the investors or discuss specific proposals due to a non-disclosure agreement, he indicated that the potential scope of the investment could reach into the billions of dollars.

The comments immediately generated interest because they represent one of the first public acknowledgments that international investors may be evaluating a coordinated cross-border development strategy involving both Niagara Falls communities.

According to Diodati, the investors view the Niagara region as a unified destination with economic potential extending beyond a

single municipality or country.

"They see the benefits of investing in both sides of the Falls," said Diodati.

Niagara Falls Mayor Robert Restaino confirmed the following day that discussions have been underway for several weeks and involve conversations about development opportunities that could extend across the international border.

Restaino said the conversations involve representatives associated with an urban economic subcommittee connected to the United Nations and have focused on the broader possibilities for economic growth and infrastructure investment throughout the Niagara region.

Although officials have not disclosed the exact nature of the proposed projects, Restaino suggested that infrastructure improvements could play a major role in any future plans. Specifically, Restaino said they are talking about billions in infrastructure.

The discussions come at a time when both Niagara Falls communities are pursuing ambitious plans to strengthen tourism, improve infrastructure and attract additional private-sector investment.

On the Canadian side, much of the interest appears connected to Ontario's recently announced Destination Niagara strategy.

Unveiled by Ontario Premier Doug Ford and provincial officials last December, the initiative seeks to dramatically expand tourism investment throughout Niagara Falls and the surrounding region. The strategy has been described by supporters as an effort to transform the area into a world-class entertainment and tourism destination, with some officials referring to the vision as

creating a "Las Vegas of the North."

The plan includes significant public and private investment opportunities focused on tourism infrastructure, hospitality, entertainment venues and transportation improvements.

Diodati indicated that the foreign investors currently evaluating opportunities in Niagara Falls, Ontario, are closely aligned with that broader provincial vision.

If realized, the investment could complement a series of ongoing projects already underway.

According to Diodati, Niagara Falls, Ontario currently has approximately \$50 million worth of infrastructure projects either underway or planned. Those projects include upgrades to roads, bridges and other public facilities designed to support continued tourism growth.

The city has also benefited from investments by the Province of Ontario and Niagara Parks, the agency responsible for maintaining and enhancing many of the parks, attractions and public spaces surrounding the Falls.

Tourism remains the economic engine that drives much of the development activity in Niagara Falls, Ontario. The city welcomes millions of visitors annually and has spent decades building a hospitality industry that includes hotels, casinos, restaurants, attractions and entertainment venues.

Diodati emphasized the importance of continuing to invest in tourism infrastructure in order to maintain that economic success.

"It's the goose that lays the golden eggs," said Diodati. "You need to give that goose the best food, the best water, the best

everything because that's the goose that's going to give you the best eggs."

For Niagara Falls, New York, the potential implications could be significant.

Local leaders have spent years pursuing major redevelopment initiatives designed to attract private investment and diversify the city's economy beyond traditional tourism attractions.

However, those have largely failed.

Recent projects have included efforts to improve downtown development, expand waterfront access, strengthen tourism infrastructure and encourage new commercial investment.

A large-scale international investment partnership could potentially accelerate some of those efforts, particularly if infrastructure funding becomes available.

The Falls remains one of the most recognizable tourist destinations in North America, attracting millions of visitors annually. Yet many local officials and economic development advocates have long argued that the American side has untapped potential for additional growth and investment.

Cross-border collaboration has increasingly become a focus for regional leaders who view Niagara Falls as a shared international destination rather than two entirely separate tourism markets.

The possibility of coordinated investment on both sides of the border could create opportunities for transportation improvements, tourism enhancements, hospitality projects and other infrastructure developments designed to benefit the region as a whole.

Discussions are expected to continue in the coming weeks.

AROUND NIAGARA COUNTY

Food Pantry Demand Climbs Across Niagara County as Families Feel Squeeze from Inflation and SNAP Changes

Staff Reports

Food pantries throughout Niagara County are reporting growing demand as rising grocery prices, housing costs and recent changes to federal food assistance programs push more residents to seek help putting food on the table.

From Niagara Falls to North Tonawanda and rural communities such as Newfane, food pantry operators say they are seeing increasing numbers of families, seniors and working residents struggling to keep up with everyday expenses.

Many organizations report that food insecurity, which surged during the COVID-19 pandemic, has remained stubbornly high even as other parts of the economy have improved. With inflation continuing to impact household budgets and federal SNAP benefit changes beginning to take effect, local providers fear demand could increase even further in the months ahead.

At the North Tonawanda Inter-Church Food Pantry, Director Bonnie Schaffer said a growing share of those seeking assistance are senior citizens living on fixed incomes.

According to Schaffer, many older residents are finding it increasingly difficult to stretch retirement income and Social Security benefits as food prices, utility bills and healthcare expenses continue to rise.

The North Tonawanda pantry currently serves approximately 200 families each month. Households are eligible to receive assistance once per month after utilizing food stamps and other available aid programs.

While usage has increased compared to previous years, pantry officials say the needs vary significantly depending on household size and whether families have children.

Statewide data shows SNAP remains a critical source of support for millions of New Yorkers.

According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, approximately 2.9 million New Yorkers, representing about 15% of the state's population, received Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits during 2024. More than half of those recipients were families with children.

By February 2026, the number of SNAP re-

cipients in New York had declined to approximately 2.79 million.

Nationally, roughly 41.7 million Americans received SNAP benefits in 2024, accounting for approximately 12% of the country's population.

In Niagara Falls, the impact on food assistance programs has been even more dramatic.

Heart, Love and Soul has experienced a massive increase in food pantry usage since the pandemic, with demand climbing 135% over the past several years.

Available organizational data shows the number of pantry meals distributed increased from 38,436 in 2021 to 82,548 in 2024.

Demand inside the organization's dining room has also continued rising. Meal service increased from 37,433 meals in 2022 to 43,219 meals in 2024.

The trend has continued into 2026.

Heart, Love and Soul reports that pantry usage during the first four months of this year increased approximately 5% compared to the same period in 2025.

Currently, between 15 and 20 households visit the organization's pantry each day, while the dining room serves between 100 and 150 individuals daily.

Executive Director Mark Baetzholt said demand tends to fluctuate throughout the month with activity typically increasing as families exhaust available resources.

According to Baetzholt, food pantry usage rises significantly toward the end of each month when many households have already spent their available cash and SNAP benefits.

Heart, Love and Soul's service area includes a relatively even mix of white and Black households. However, organization data suggests food insecurity disproportionately affects residents of color.

Baetzholt said the organization believes rising housing costs and inflation are pushing many already vulnerable households deeper into economic hardship.

In the more rural communities of Niagara County, food pantries are seeing similar trends.

The Newfane Community Food Pantry serves families throughout the Newfane Central School District and typically assists approximately 60 families each month.

Coordinator Kathy Phillips said the pantry



has recently begun seeing new families seeking help.

According to Phillips, many residents report struggling to make ends meet in the current economy. She also noted that inflation continues to create challenges not only for families receiving assistance but also for the pantry itself, as rising food prices reduce the purchasing power of donations and food supplies received from local stores and community contributors.

Food pantry operators are also closely monitoring federal policy changes that could affect future demand.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates that reductions included in H.R. 1 could result in nearly \$187 billion in SNAP spending cuts through 2034, making it the largest reduction in the program's history.

Additional work requirements for SNAP recipients took effect March 31st and analysts estimate the changes could eventually result in between 3.5 million and 4 million Americans losing eligibility for benefits.

Local providers say it is still too early to fully understand the impact those changes may have on Niagara County.

These organizations are preparing for the possibility of increased demand if benefit reductions affect more households.

Local agencies received a preview of how quickly demand can spike during last year's 43-day government shutdown, which lasted from October into mid-November.

During that period, many SNAP recipients temporarily lost access to benefits, prompting the Niagara County Department of Social Services to direct affected residents to local food pantries for assistance.

The sudden increase in demand quickly strained resources throughout the county.

In Niagara Falls, the Salvation Army publicly warned in late October that its food pantry inventory had fallen to critically low levels as organizations worked to meet growing community needs.

Food pantry leaders throughout Niagara County say those experiences underscore the importance of maintaining strong emergency food networks.

For now, food pantries across the county remain on the front lines helping thousands of residents each month who are finding it increasingly difficult to afford groceries.

Fire Forces Temporary Closure of Brownie's Custard Stand in Olcott

Staff Reports

One of Olcott's most popular summertime destinations remains closed following a fire that damaged part of the building on Memorial Day, leaving owners awaiting repairs and inspections before they can welcome customers back.

Brownie's Custard Stand, a longtime fixture in the Lakeview Village Shoppes along Main Street in Olcott, was forced to shut down after a fire was discovered inside an exterior wall of the building on Monday, May 25th.

The damage has left a section of the restaurant boarded up while officials assess the structure and crews prepare for repairs.

The incident occurred during what is traditionally one of the busiest days of the year for the seasonal business.

According to ownership, employees alerted management shortly after customers reported seeing smoke coming from the building. While smoke was visible outside, workers initially did not observe smoke conditions inside the restaurant itself.

Owners believe heat generated by the kitchen grill may have gradually transferred into the building's exterior wall where the fire likely smoldered unnoticed for an extended period before

being detected by customers.

Because the fire was concealed within the wall, it apparently remained hidden for much of the day before becoming visible from outside the structure.

At the time of the incident, management had been working at the company's Wilson location and rushed to Olcott after learning of the emergency.

The fire occurred during a holiday rush that had both Brownie's locations experiencing heavy customer traffic.

Firefighters were already working to access the hidden fire when owners arrived.

Emergency crews were forced to open portions of the building's exterior wall to reach the flames. Firefighters cut into the side of the structure and removed portions of the wall in order to extinguish the fire burning within the building materials.

The quick response prevented what could have become a much larger blaze.

Although the damage appears to be limited primarily to the affected wall area, the restaurant remains closed while repairs are planned and inspections are completed.

Brownie's operates from space leased within the Lakeview Village Shoppes complex, a property owned by the Town of Newfane.

At this point, business owners say the



timeline for reopening remains uncertain because contractors must first assess the damage, complete repairs and obtain approvals from health officials.

Ownership expressed hope that the closure will be relatively short. Discussions have already taken place regarding the possibility of serving ice cream only while kitchen repairs are underway.

Town officials reportedly indicated that limited operations could be considered if the Niagara County Health Department approves the arrangement and determines the facility can safely

operate.

The business has already contacted health officials regarding the inspection process and potential requirements for reopening.

Until those approvals are secured, however, the Olcott location will remain closed.

Fortunately for loyal customers, the company continues operating its second location in Wilson.

Ownership says business remains strong there and is encouraging patrons to visit the Wilson restaurant while repairs are underway in Olcott.

BUFFALO

Historic Cruise Ship Arrival in Buffalo Could Bring New Tourism Opportunities for Niagara Falls

Staff Reports

A cruise ship carrying more than 100 passengers made history in Western New York this past week, marking the return of passenger cruise service to Buffalo for the first time in decades and potentially opening a new tourism pipeline that local leaders believe could benefit destinations throughout the region, including Niagara Falls.

The American Patriot, operated by American Cruise Lines, arrived at Buffalo's Erie Basin Marina on Thursday, May 28th, as part of its inaugural Great Lakes voyage, becoming the first cruise ship in decades to dock in the city.

However, the vessel's arrival represents more than just a milestone for Buffalo's waterfront. Tourism officials view it as the beginning of what could become a significant new source of visitors for Western New York.

The 9-day cruise departed from Oswego and travels through several communities along Lake Ontario and the Thousand Islands region before concluding in Buffalo. Along the route, passengers visit destinations including Clayton, Ogdensburg and Rochester before passing through the Welland Canal and arriving in Western New York.

The American Patriot carried approximately 130 passengers on its first Buffalo voyage and remained in the city for two days, allowing visitors time to explore attractions throughout the region.

For local tourism officials, the arrival represents years of work aimed at repositioning Buffalo and Western New York as a destination for leisure travelers.

Patrick Kaler, president and chief executive officer of Visit Buffalo Niagara, described the ship's arrival as the culmination of years of investment in the region's tourism infrastructure, waterfront development and cultural attractions.

"Today marks a milestone for Buffalo and the entire Great Lakes region. A world-class cruise vessel arriving at our waterfront is once again proof that Buffalo has arrived as a premier travel destination," he said.

The cruise industry once played a significant role in Great Lakes transportation, but passenger cruise activity largely disappeared from Buffalo decades ago. The arrival of the American Patriot signals a renewed effort to reconnect the city with a growing niche tourism market that caters largely to retirees and travelers seeking regional cultural experiences.

Local officials believe the opportunities extend far beyond Buffalo's city limits.

Niagara Falls remains one of the most recognizable tourist attractions in North

America drawing millions of visitors annually from around the world. Tourism leaders say cruise passengers arriving in Buffalo are likely to spend time visiting Niagara Falls State Park, the Cave of the Winds, Maid of the Mist, the Niagara Gorge, local wineries and other attractions throughout Niagara County during their stay in Western New York.

Unlike traditional day visitors who may spend only a few hours in the region, cruise passengers often purchase guided excursions, dine at local restaurants, shop at area businesses and stay engaged in regional tourism activities throughout their visit.

That additional spending can have a meaningful impact on local economies.

Visit Buffalo Niagara estimates that cruise ship visits scheduled this year could generate approximately \$1 million in economic activity for Western New York. As additional ships and larger vessels begin arriving in future years, that economic impact could increase substantially.

Officials are already preparing for that growth.

Mark Wendel, President of the Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation, said the current vessel is only the beginning of what officials hope will become a much larger cruise industry presence in Buffalo.

"It's truly amazing," said Wendel. "This is 130-passengers. I can't wait to welcome the next size up and keep on welcoming the bigger boats to Buffalo."

American Cruise Lines, which is headquartered in Connecticut, currently has seven Buffalo stops scheduled this season. Additional traffic is expected from Indiana-based Victory Cruise Lines which has announced multiple Great Lakes itineraries that include Western New York.

The long-term vision extends beyond temporary docking arrangements.

Construction is expected to begin this summer on a permanent cruise terminal at Buffalo's Outer Harbor. The facility is being designed specifically to accommodate larger vessels and increase the region's ability to attract cruise operators from around the world.

Current plans call for seawall improvements, upgraded docking infrastructure and the construction of a U.S. Customs facility. Officials say the customs facility is essential because it would allow cruise ships traveling through Canadian waters to enter Buffalo more efficiently.

The project is expected to be completed by 2028.

Until then, cruise ships will continue using temporary docking locations.

Joan Kesner, chairperson of the Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation, said the



cruise line's eagerness to begin operating in Buffalo prompted the temporary arrangement.

"We know it's a little cozy here at the temporary berth at the Erie Street dock, but it's because American Cruise Line was so excited to get to Buffalo, they couldn't wait two more years," said Kesner.

Representatives from American Cruise Lines also expressed enthusiasm about their new Great Lakes itinerary.

The company's newest route is entirely domestic and showcases destinations throughout Upstate New York before concluding in Buffalo.

"Upstate New York is a gorgeous region of the country and the waterfront communities are especially vibrant, offering so many wonderful experiences," said Alexa Paoella, spokesperson for American Cruise Lines.

The cruise line's commitment to the route appears to be long term as they are already accepting bookings for Great Lakes itineraries through October 2029, signaling confidence in both the route and Western New York.

Tourism leaders believe continued investment in Buffalo's waterfront will help drive that growth.

Over the past decade, hundreds of millions of dollars have been invested in projects at Canalside and the Outer Harbor. Those projects have transformed former industrial areas into public gathering spaces featuring parks, entertainment venues, restaurants, trails and

family attractions.

Officials say those investments are helping change how visitors view Buffalo.

One tourism representative noted that many travelers are surprised to discover the extent of the city's waterfront assets.

"With all the new infrastructure taking place at Canalside as well as the Outer Harbor creating this really welcoming place with our waterfront, a lot of people don't realize that Buffalo is a waterfront city," a Visit Buffalo Niagara representative said. "I think this really proves it now."

Regional tourism officials believe Niagara Falls stands to benefit from those same investments.

The proximity between Buffalo and Niagara Falls allows cruise operators to easily incorporate visits to the Falls into excursion packages, creating opportunities for local hotels, restaurants, transportation providers and attractions to capture additional visitor spending.

For now, the arrival of the American Patriot represents a symbolic first step.

But if local officials achieve their long-term goals, the sight of cruise ships arriving in Buffalo could become increasingly common in the years ahead bringing thousands of additional visitors to Western New York and providing another boost to the tourism economy that drives communities from Buffalo to Niagara Falls.

Buffalo Shifts Away from Demolitions, Launches New Strategy to Save Vacant Homes and Buildings

Staff Reports

The City of Buffalo is making a major change in how it deals with vacant and deteriorating properties, announcing a new policy that prioritizes saving buildings rather than tearing them down.

Mayor Sean Ryan unveiled the city's new "Stabilization First" Demolition Diversion Policy, describing it as a significant departure from decades of relying on demolition as the primary solution to blight.

The policy follows a 60-day demolition moratorium that Ryan ordered on March 19th while city officials reviewed existing practices. During that review, Buffalo's Office of Strategic Planning and Department of Permit and Inspection Services examined how the city handles vacant structures and evaluated alternatives to demolition.

Under the new approach, Buffalo will focus on preserving and stabilizing properties whenever possible. Demolition will be a last resort rather than the default option.

"Demolition has been treated as the default solution to address blight in the City of Buffalo for too long," said Mayor Ryan. "We cannot demolish our way out of a housing shortage. This policy represents a new direction for Buffalo that focuses on preservation, stabilization, accountability, and reinvestment."

City officials said the shift is intended to help preserve Buffalo's housing inventory at a time when affordable housing remains in short supply. The policy is also designed to strengthen neighborhoods, maintain the city's tax base and prevent

properties from falling into irreversible disrepair.

A key component of the initiative involves redirecting federal funding toward preservation efforts.

Approximately \$700,000 in annual Community Development Block Grant funding that was previously used largely for demolitions will now be available for stabilization projects, emergency repairs, weatherproofing and other measures intended to keep structures standing.

Officials believe earlier intervention can reduce long-term costs while preventing buildings from deteriorating to the point where demolition becomes unavoidable.

Deputy Mayor Thomas Baines said the city is attempting to create a more sustainable and strategic system for managing troubled properties.

"This initiative is about creating a smarter and more sustainable framework for neighborhood management," said Baines. "By emphasizing stabilization, proactive maintenance, and earlier intervention, the City is putting itself in a stronger position to preserve property values, reduce long-term costs, and support future redevelopment opportunities. This approach allows us to be more strategic with public resources while helping prevent additional deterioration across our neighborhoods."

The city also plans to take a more aggressive stance toward negligent property owners while working cooperatively with those who are actively trying to improve their buildings.

Under the policy, officials will continue to collaborate with owners who demonstrate good-faith efforts to maintain or rehabilitate their properties. However, when dangerous conditions require

immediate action, the city may perform stabilization work itself or hire contractors to complete the repairs and then bill the property owner for the costs.

The new direction has already earned praise from preservation advocates.

Bernice Radle, executive director of Preservation Buffalo Niagara, said the announcement represents a major victory for those who have long argued that historic structures should be preserved whenever possible.

"Seeing a demolition diversion program emerge from City Hall is all we could have hoped for," said Radle. "Preservation creates jobs, supports tourism, and strengthens neighborhoods. This program recognizes the value of older buildings and their materials, and we applaud the City for taking this important step forward."

Along with the policy announcement, the city released a new stabilization plan for the Department of Permits and Inspections that outlines how vacant structures will be evaluated, secured, maintained and protected from further deterioration.

The plan establishes a framework that seeks to balance public safety concerns with long-term preservation goals.

Commissioner Lou Petrucci said the initiative reflects community concerns about losing housing stock while still recognizing that demolition will sometimes be necessary.

"Mayor Ryan's Demolition Diversion and Stabilization plan challenges us to implement a more strategic approach to stabilizing valued neighborhoods throughout the city," said Petrucci. "While demolitions are still part of the plan, when neces-

sary, the new focus is reflective of the community's desire to preserve our existing housing stock and recognizes that a more measured and deliberate methodology is the best path forward."

Under the stabilization plan, city officials will first conduct detailed assessments of vacant properties, documenting interior and exterior conditions whenever it is safe to do so. Staff will review ownership records, existing code violations and contact property owners to determine whether rehabilitation or stabilization efforts are planned.

Structural evaluations will be conducted to identify risks such as wall failures, water infiltration, collapsing roofs and other hazards. Property owners who fail to address these issues could see the city step in to coordinate repairs using licensed professionals.

For buildings facing immediate threats, the city may implement temporary stabilization measures including shoring, bracing, chimney stabilization and securing unsafe exterior materials.

The plan also establishes maintenance standards requiring attention to grass cutting, debris removal, snow removal, vehicle removal and regular inspections.

Another major focus will be weatherproofing. Officials said proactive measures will be taken to prevent water infiltration and protect structures from additional deterioration, using nationally recognized preservation standards whenever practical.

City leaders are encouraging residents to assist with the effort by reporting vacant or blighted properties through Buffalo's 311 system so that inspectors can evaluate buildings for possible intervention.

BUFFALO CONT.

Buffalo Waterfront Unveils Packed 2026 Outer Harbor Live Concert Lineup Featuring Cake, Ashanti, Rick Ross and More

Staff Reports

Music fans will once again be heading to Buffalo's waterfront this summer as Buffalo Waterfront officials have announced a packed lineup for the 2026 Seneca Buffalo Creek Casino "Outer Harbor Live" concert series at Terminal B.

The annual outdoor concert series, now entering its third season at Terminal B, will feature more than 20 concerts and special events spanning rock, country, hip-hop, R&B, alternative, Americana and tribute performances, along with several major festivals and a Fourth of July weekend celebration on Lake Erie.

Organizers say this year's schedule is one of the most diverse and ambitious line-ups assembled since the waterfront venue opened.

The season began on May 29th when alternative rock favorites Cake hit the stage.

Now, less than a week later, R&B stars Ashanti and Trey Songz will bring their tour to Terminal B on Thursday, June 4th.

Ashanti, whose career exploded during the early 2000s with chart-topping hits such as "Foolish" and "Baby," is set to perform in Buffalo for the first time since 2017. She will be joined by Trey Songz, whose catalog includes popular singles such as "Say Aah" and "Bottoms Up."

The lineup continues throughout June with performances by Mariah The Scientist, Marcus King Band, Young The Giant and Dark Star Orchestra.

July will feature one of the waterfront's signature annual events when M&T Bank presents "Sound & Sky" on July 3.

The patriotic celebration is being held in conjunction with America 250 festivities and will feature orchestral performances, recognizable American musical themes and a fireworks display over Lake Erie.

The concert is scheduled to begin at 7pm with fireworks expected shortly after 9:15pm.

Unlike most events on the schedule, admission to Sound & Sky will be free. However, organizers say tickets will still be required and will be distributed online on a first-come, first-served basis due to capacity limitations.

Guests attending the event will be permitted to bring foldable chairs, though all items will be subject to security screening.

Later in July, waterfront concertgoers will be treated to performances by Slightly Stoopid and rap superstar Rick Ross.

Ross, one of the most recognizable names in hip-hop over the past two decades, will headline the venue's Summer Jam concert on July 26th. The rapper rose to national prominence following the release of his debut album "Port of Miami" in 2006 and became a frequent presence atop the Billboard charts throughout much of the late 2000s and 2010s.

August is shaping up to be one of the busiest months of the season.

The schedule includes performances by Silverstein and Story Of The Year, Alexisonfire, Violent Femmes, Arkells, a tribute concert celebrating the music of ABBA, Fetty Wap and country music star Koe Wetzel.

The month will also feature two large-scale festival events.

The inaugural Country Rising Festival arrives on August 28th and is expected to showcase a new generation of country performers including BigXthaPlug, Redferrin and Graham Barham.

The following day, the Tacos & Tequila Festival returns to Buffalo combining food, drinks and nostalgia-driven entertainment focused on early-2000s hip-hop and R&B music.

The season will continue into the fall with performances by Sam Barber, Taking Back Sunday and Ole 60.

Buffalo Waterfront General Manager Lauren Ford said organizers believe the upcoming season represents one of the strongest lineups yet assembled for the venue.

"Our third season at Terminal B is shaping up to be one of our most exciting yet," said Ford. "We're thrilled to be bringing another diverse performer lineup to Buffalo – between the caliber of music and the stunning waterfront setting, there is no better place to make memories this summer."

The growing popularity of Terminal B reflects broader efforts to transform Buffalo's Outer Harbor into a regional entertainment destination.

Over the past several years, significant public investment has been made in the Outer Harbor and Canalside areas, adding parks, trails, recreational facilities and event spaces designed to attract visitors from across Western New York and Southern Ontario.

The concert series has become one of the centerpiece attractions of those efforts, drawing thousands of visitors to Buffalo's waterfront throughout the summer months and generating additional business for local restaurants, hotels and entertainment venues.

Tickets for all concerts and festivals are available through OuterHarborLive.com. For most performances, general admission gates open one hour before showtime while premium ticket holders receive earlier access.

2026 Outer Harbor Live Concert Schedule

An Evening with Cake — Friday, May 29 | 8pm

Ashanti & Trey Songz — Thursday, June 4 | 7pm

Mariah The Scientist — Saturday, June 6 | 8pm

Marcus King Band, Darling Blue PT2 Tour — Sunday, June 14 | 8pm

Young The Giant, Victory Garden Tour — Tuesday, June 16 | 6:30pm

Dark Star Orchestra — Friday, June 19 | 7pm

Slightly Stoopid, Road Trippin' Summer Tour 2026 — Friday, July 24 | 7:30pm

Rick Ross, Summer Jam — Sunday, July 26 | 7pm

Silverstein & Story Of The Year, Camp Screamo Tour — Friday, Aug. 7 | 7pm

Alexisonfire, Crisis 20 Year Anniversary Tour — Wednesday, Aug. 12 | 6pm

Violent Femmes, 45 Years Tour — Friday, Aug. 14 | 6:30pm

Arkells — Saturday, Aug. 15 | 7pm

The Concert: A Tribute to ABBA — Sunday, Aug. 16 | 7pm

Fetty Wap, Nostalgia Tour — Saturday, Aug. 22 | 8pm

Koe Wetzel, The Night Champion World Tour — Wednesday, Aug. 26 | 6:45pm

Country Rising Festival — Friday, Aug. 28 | 4:30pm

Tacos & Tequila Festival — Saturday, Aug. 29 | 2pm

Sam Barber, The American Route Tour — Tuesday, Sept. 15 | 7pm

Taking Back Sunday — Tuesday, Sept. 29 | 7pm

Ole 60, Off the Grid Tour — Saturday, Oct. 3 | 7pm

Additional information and schedule updates are available through BuffaloWaterfront.com.

Shocking Body Cam Video Shows Buffalo Officer Marc Hurst Being Shot Six Times Cont. from Cover



after a woman reported that her husband had confined her to a room, taken her phone and was armed with a handgun.

When officers arrived, they encountered 33-year-old Minhaz Siddiqui inside the residence. Police Commissioner Erika Shields said officers initially attempted to gain control of the situation through verbal commands, but Siddiqui refused to cooperate.

Newly released body camera footage shows Siddiqui standing in the kitchen area of the home as officers attempted to communicate with him.

"[Siddiqui] was backed into the kitchen, highly agitated and clearly not complying with their verbal commands," said Shields during a news conference earlier in the week.

Investigators said officers entered the kitchen area after Siddiqui refused repeated commands to come out voluntarily.

Shields explained that officers were attempting to place Siddiqui in handcuffs so they could safely investigate the woman's allegations and determine whether she remained in danger.

The confrontation quickly escalated into a physical struggle.

"The suspect was acting in a very agitated manner . . . the subject was unwilling to come out of the kitchen area the officers went in in an attempt to get him into custody. What can best be described as a level of grappling occurred. The officers were trying to get handcuffs on him. He was very combative, very resistant," said Shields.

Police said officers were eventually able to secure one handcuff on Siddiqui, but the situation continued to deteriorate.

"The officers ended up getting one handcuff on him, but he had a concealed weapon on him and they didn't see it obviously," Shields continued.

Authorities later learned Siddiqui is a black belt in Brazilian jiu-jitsu. During the struggle, investigators said he managed to access a handgun concealed in his waistband while multiple officers attempted to restrain him.

"There were four large men there, and they could not get his hand behind his back. It gives you an idea of what officers potentially face every day and how quickly a scene could go south. We are very fortunate that we do not have a line-of-duty death," said Shields.

Police said Siddiqui then pulled the weapon and opened fire.

"Next thing you should know, gunshots rang out, an officer was shot multiple times and fellow officers returned fire," she said.

According to investigators, Siddiqui fired eight rounds during the exchange.

Officer Marc Hurst, a nine-year veteran assigned to Buffalo Police's C District, suffered six gunshot wounds. Authorities said he was struck once in each calf, once in the upper thigh, once in the upper arm and twice in his bullet-proof vest.

Officials said the vest prevented potentially fatal injuries, though the rounds struck both Hurst's police radio and department-issued Taser.

Body camera footage released by the department shows officers immediately returning fire. Shields said two officers discharged their weapons, firing a combined three rounds. Siddiqui was struck an unknown number of times during the exchange.

Following the shooting, officers at the scene immediately began rendering aid.

"The officers on scene did an excellent job rendering aid; I cannot say enough about their training, how it kicked in and how they responded," she said.

Both Hurst and Siddiqui were transported to Erie County Medical Center for treatment.

Police said Siddiqui remains hospitalized in stable condition while facing a charge of first-degree attempted murder. Investigators have indicated additional charges connected to the domestic violence allegations are expected.

Authorities later located the woman who called 911. Police said she was found unharmed inside a room where she had locked herself for protection.

As Officer Hurst continues his recovery, fellow officers and union leaders have praised both his actions and his service to the department.

Buffalo Police Benevolent Association President John Davidson said Hurst underwent surgery following the shooting and continues to make progress.

"From what I understand, [Officer Hurst] is recovering very well. He has had surgery. It had gone well, and he is surrounded by friends and family at the moment," said President of the Buffalo Police Benevolent Association John Davidson in a statement.

Davidson described Hurst as a decorated officer who has earned numerous commendations for heroism and professionalism throughout his nine-year career and is highly respected among fellow officers.

Hurst has received a positive prognosis and remains hospitalized as he continues his recovery.

If you would like to watch the full police body cam footage, you can do so on our website at niagaraaction.com by searching this headline. Viewer discretion is advised.

AROUND ERIE COUNTY

Democratic Majority Rejects Republican Proposal to Bar Politicians from Bills Stadium Luxury Suite

Staff Reports

A proposal that would have prohibited elected officials from entering Erie County's luxury hospitality suite at the new Bills stadium was voted down on Thursday, May 28th, after Democrats on the Erie County Legislature rejected a Republican-backed amendment aimed at keeping politicians out of the taxpayer-funded space.

The debate centered on whether elected officials should be permitted to access the county-owned suite at Highmark Stadium even if they are not using tickets assigned to them personally.

Republican Legislator Lindsay Lorigo introduced the amendment, which would have imposed a complete prohibition on elected officials entering the suite under any circumstances.

"No elected official shall be permitted to enter or use the Center and/or hospitality suite at any time, in any capacity, whether as a formal guest, informal guest, or otherwise," the amendment read. "No exception to this prohibition may be granted by the County Executive's Office or any other administrative authority."

Lorigo argued that if the suite is intended to serve the public, elected officials should remove themselves entirely from access to it in order to avoid any appearance of special treatment.

The proposal failed on a party-line vote.

While Democrats rejected the amendment, lawmakers did approve broader legislation governing the operation of the hospitality suite, including who can receive access and how attendance will be tracked.

Under the approved rules, the Erie County Executive's Office will oversee a lottery system that determines who receives access to the suite. The legislation also requires attendance logs documenting everyone who enters the facility.

The county's hospitality suite has generated scrutiny because it is part of the publicly funded stadium project and will offer premium game-day access that is unavailable to most residents.

According to the legislation, tickets for all preseason games will be reserved for full-time Erie County civil servants through a lottery system administered by the county's Department of Personnel.

Managerial employees, elected officials and employees of elected officials are excluded from participating in that lottery.

The legislation also reserves tickets for three regular-season games each year for economic development purposes.

Any tickets not otherwise reserved will be allocated to charitable organizations.

Lawmakers also included language prohibiting political fundraisers and political events from being held inside the suite.

Despite those restrictions, Lorigo argued

the legislation leaves open a significant loophole because elected officials can still enter the suite even if they are not assigned tickets through the lottery process.

"I proposed that no elected officials would be allowed in the county hospitality suite at the new Bills stadium," said Lorigo. "It is a very simple thing that we should all be able to come together and say if we have this suite for public use, elected officials will not be in it, but unfortunately, the Democrats voted that down."

One of the Democrats who opposed the amendment was Legislator Lawrence Dupre.

Following the vote, Dupre was questioned about whether elected officials should be allowed inside the suite when many taxpayers will never have access to it. He declined to commit to not going in the suite throughout the season.

Democrats who voted against the proposal maintained that elected officials should not be barred from briefly greeting constituents who may be using the suite through the county's approved processes.

Republican, however, countered that the issue is not whether elected officials have tickets but whether they should have any access to the hospitality suite at all.

Lorigo said she believes the legislation leaves room for elected officials to spend extended periods of time inside the suite while claiming they are simply visiting constituents.



Erie County Legislator Lindsay Lorigo.

"I think they want to go in there and shake hands and kiss babies and I just don't think that that's appropriate," said Lorigo. "There's a huge loophole right now where you can go and stand in that suite for really as long as you want. Let's say one of my constituents are in there. They win the lottery. It's a boys and girls club. I'll send them an email and say I hope they enjoy the game. They're not going to see me in there. I think it's totally inappropriate."

The vote means elected officials will not be prohibited from entering the suite, despite the Republican effort to impose a complete ban.

Instead, the county will move forward with the lottery system, attendance logs and restrictions on political events that were included in the broader legislation.

Certain quotes in this article were first reported by WIVB.

Legislature Overrides Poloncarz Veto, Clears Way for 12 and 13-year-olds to Hunt Deer in Erie County

Staff Reports

Erie County lawmakers have overridden County Executive Mark Poloncarz's veto of legislation that allows 12 and 13-year-olds to hunt deer with firearms under the supervision of experienced adult mentors, which ends a years-long political battle over youth hunting in the county.

The override marks a significant defeat for Poloncarz who vetoed the measure earlier this month after raising concerns about hunting-related accidents involving children. It was the second time he had rejected similar legislation having also vetoed a youth hunting bill in 2021.

Despite those concerns, a majority of legislators stood by their original support for the proposal and voted to override the county executive's decision, allowing the law to take effect.

The legislation originally passed the Erie County Legislature on April 30th by a 7-3 vote. There was one legislator absent.

The bill permits 12 and 13-year-olds to participate in deer hunting with firearms while accompanied by an experienced adult mentor, aligning Erie County with a statewide program already operating across New York.

Supporters of the legislation argued that the county had become an outlier by refusing to participate in a program available virtually everywhere else in upstate New York.

According to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, a statewide pilot program established in 2024 allows minors ages 12 and 13 to hunt deer using a crossbow, rifle, shotgun or muzzle-loading firearm while under supervi-

sion.

Erie County had remained the only upstate county where minors in that age group could not obtain the necessary hunting licenses because local authorization had not been granted.

Poloncarz vetoed the bill on May 15th.

In his veto message, the county executive acknowledged that there had been no reported incidents involving 12 and 13-year-old hunters in New York since the state expanded youth hunting opportunities in 2024. However, he cited hunting-related fatalities involving children in other states and argued that the potential risks outweighed the benefits.

Poloncarz also stressed that his opposition was not based on opposition to hunting itself, noting that hunting has long been part of his family's traditions.

"I come from a family that hunts. My father hunted, my brother hunts, and other members of my family hunt. This is not about being against hunting," said Poloncarz. "It is about whether I believe it is appropriate for 12 and 13-year-olds to hunt big game, even with a mentor. Because of the risk, and because of the child fatality reports I have read, I do not believe it is."

The veto set the stage for a showdown in the legislature where supporters of the bill had previously indicated they believed they had enough votes to override the county executive's decision.

That prediction proved accurate.

Following the successful override vote, lead sponsor Frank Todaro said legislators reviewed the available



data and determined there was no evidence suggesting the program posed a significant risk to participating youth.

"I'm pleased that my fellow legislators held firm to override Mark Poloncarz's veto," said Todaro. "The data is clear. There is no indication that this law puts our young people at risk. They were already allowed to hunt smaller game. This simply allows them to hunt big game with adult supervision."

Supporters of the measure have repeatedly pointed out that children in the same age group have long been permitted to participate in other forms of hunting under state regulations. They argued that allowing supervised deer hunting merely expands existing opportunities rather than creating an entirely new activity.

Legislator Chris Greene also praised lawmakers who maintained their support after the veto was issued.

"The legislators were steadfast in

support of the youth hunting law. I'm glad they didn't allow last-minute maneuvering to change their vote," said Greene.

The vote once again highlighted divisions within the legislature.

Lawrence Dupre of Buffalo, Taisha St. Jean Tard of Buffalo and Jeanne Vinal of Amherst all voted against the legislation when it first came before the legislature. Those three lawmakers remained opposed to the measure throughout the debate.

The statewide initiative was established by state lawmakers in February 2024 and was designed to provide young hunters with opportunities similar to those available in many other states throughout the country.

The override means Erie County will now join the rest of upstate New York in allowing eligible 12 and 13-year-olds to obtain licenses and participate in supervised deer hunting through the state's pilot program.

ROCHESTER

Rochester and Monroe County Land \$300 Million State Investment Through Newly Approved Budget

John Watson

Rochester and Monroe County are poised to receive one of the largest state-funded economic development packages in recent memory after lawmakers secured a \$300 million investment through New York's newly approved state budget.

The funding, known as the Rochester-Monroe Transformation Initiative, is intended to support a wide range of infrastructure, public improvement and economic development projects throughout the city and surrounding communities.

State lawmakers representing the Rochester region announced the funding package after the state budget was finalized, describing it as a major commitment to the area's future growth and long-term redevelopment efforts.

The investment arrives as communities across upstate New York continue competing for state dollars aimed at revitalizing aging infrastructure, attracting private investment and strengthening local economies.

Among the most significant projects included in the funding package is a planned \$75 million investment toward the creation and development of High

Falls State Park.

The proposed state park has been viewed by local leaders as a transformative opportunity for Rochester's downtown core. High Falls, one of the region's most recognizable natural landmarks, has long been considered an underutilized asset despite its historic significance and proximity to the Genesee River.

Supporters of the project believe a state park designation could help increase tourism, encourage private investment, create new recreational opportunities and attract additional visitors to the city center.

The remaining \$225 million is expected to be distributed among a variety of projects throughout Rochester and Monroe County.

According to lawmakers, the funding will support infrastructure improvements, transportation upgrades, street reconstruction projects, public facility enhancements and public safety initiatives.

Many communities throughout Monroe County have faced challenges related to aging roads, public buildings and transportation systems. Local leaders have argued that large-scale investments are necessary to modern-

ize infrastructure while creating an environment that encourages business growth and residential development.

The funding package was championed by members of the Greater Rochester Majority State Delegation which includes several state assembly members and senators representing the Rochester region.

The delegation worked during budget negotiations to secure funding specifically earmarked for Monroe County projects.

Local officials say the investment has the potential to generate economic activity far beyond the initial state spending by encouraging private-sector development and additional public investment.

Rochester Mayor Malik Evans praised the funding package and credited the region's state lawmakers for securing resources that city officials believe will help drive future growth.

"I want to thank Rochester's legislative delegation for fighting for a New York State Budget that includes much-needed additional funding for our city and drives critical investments in Rochester and Monroe County. The programs and projects funded in this budget will advance our efforts to drive

growth, attract investment, and put all our residents on a path to economic mobility and generational wealth," said Mayor Evans in a statement.

Evans emphasized that the funding will support economic development efforts, encourage investment and create opportunities for residents throughout the region.

Supporters of the initiative believe the investment could have ripple effects across multiple sectors of the local economy.

Large-scale infrastructure projects often generate construction jobs, engineering contracts and related economic activity. Improvements to transportation networks and public facilities can also make communities more attractive to businesses considering expansion or relocation.

Specific project timelines and funding allocations are expected to be finalized in the coming months as state agencies and local governments begin planning implementation.

Local leaders say the focus now shifts from securing funding to ensuring projects move forward efficiently and deliver the intended benefits to residents throughout Rochester and Monroe County.

Construction Begins on \$72.3 Million Affordable Housing Project in Downtown Rochester

John Watson

A long-vacant office building in downtown Rochester is set for a dramatic transformation after state officials announced the start of construction on a \$72.3 million affordable housing development that will create 129 new apartments in the heart of the city.

The project, known as Gateway Apartments, will convert an empty seven-story office building into affordable housing, marking a significant milestone in Rochester's ongoing efforts to expand housing options and revitalize its downtown core.

The building, originally constructed in 1905, has sat vacant for roughly two decades. Once completed, it will provide 129 affordable apartments for households earning up to 80% of the Area Median Income.

State officials say the development represents an innovative approach to addressing New York's housing shortage by repurposing underutilized commercial properties rather than constructing entirely new buildings.

Governor Kathy Hochul announced the start of construction and highlighted the project as an example of how vacant properties can be transformed into housing opportunities while supporting economic growth and neighborhood revitalization.

The development is notable because it is the first office-to-residential conversion project outside New York City to begin construction under the Housing Our Neighbors with Dignity Act, commonly known as HONDA. The legislation was designed to encourage the conversion of distressed commercial buildings into affordable

housing developments.

Gateway Apartments will offer a mix of studio, one-bedroom and two-bedroom units intended to accommodate a variety of residents from individuals living and working downtown to families seeking affordable housing options.

Located within Rochester's Central Business District, the project places residents within walking distance of public transportation, healthcare providers, educational institutions, retail establishments, restaurants and recreational opportunities.

"Affordable and safe housing is essential to the strength and future of our city and county," said Monroe County Executive Adam Bello. "I applaud the Governor and her team for their creativity and commitment in transforming this large vacant property into brand new affordable housing units that will be able to accommodate a wide range of residents from single people to families. This investment will not only provide stable homes for residents but also help revitalize the surrounding community and create new opportunities for families to thrive."

State housing officials noted that the project builds upon previous investments made along the East Main Street corridor, including the redevelopment of historic properties in the area.

The development will also incorporate a variety of energy-efficient features. Plans call for an all-electric building equipped with ENERGY STAR appliances, LED lighting and modern sustainability measures designed to reduce energy consumption and operating costs.



Accessibility was also a major consideration in the design process.

The project includes fully accessible and adaptable apartments with thirteen units specifically designed for residents with mobility impairments and six units designed to accommodate individuals with sensory disabilities.

Funding for the project comes from a combination of state programs, tax credits and local support.

Additional funding includes \$18.5 million through the state's Middle Income Housing Program, state low-income housing tax credits expected to generate another \$13.6 million in equity, a \$4.1 million first mortgage and \$850,000 from the Community Investment Fund.

The project is also receiving more than \$3.4 million through the Clean Energy Initiative, a partnership between Homes and Community Renewal and the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority.

Empire State Development is contributing \$2 million through its Restore New York program while the City of Rochester is providing \$850,000 through its HOME program.

"The strategic investments Governor Hochul is making in Rochester are helping to fuel the momentum and renaissance we're seeing in downtown today," said City of Rochester Mayor Malik Evans. "Gateway Apartments is a powerful example of that progress, transforming a long-vacant building into high-quality, affordable housing alongside projects like the future Main Street Commons in the heart of our Downtown Revitalization Initiative area. This investment reflects our commitment to creating a more vibrant, connected and inclusive city for all. I'm grateful to Governor Hochul for her continued partnership and her focus on ensuring Rochester residents have access to safe, quality and affordable housing."

STATE NEWS

Hochul Draws Fire for Using State Budget to Push New Gun Restrictions

Staff Reports

Governor Kathy Hochul is facing criticism from gun rights advocates after signing sweeping new firearm restrictions into law through New York's overdue state budget, a move opponents argue sidestepped a full legislative debate on a controversial issue involving 3D-printed firearms and gun components.

The measures, approved as part of the state's \$268 billion spending plan target "ghost guns" and other firearms that can be manufactured or assembled using components produced by 3D printers and milling equipment. The budget package was finalized nearly 60 days after the state's April 1st deadline and includes a series of new criminal penalties and manufacturing requirements aimed at restricting the production and modification of firearms.

Among the provisions are penalties for manufacturing firearms through 3D-printing processes, requirements that 3D printer manufacturers implement safety features designed to "block the production" of firearms and firearm parts, and mandates requiring police departments and sheriff's offices to report recoveries of 3D-printed

weapons.

The legislation also directs firearm manufacturers to redesign certain pistols so they cannot be altered into what lawmakers classify as machine guns.

Hochul defended the new regulations and argued that rapid advancements in firearm technology require updated laws. She said the changes would help preserve New York's "strongest-in-the-nation" gun control framework while continuing efforts to reduce violent crime.

However, critics have focused less on the substance of the legislation and more on how it was enacted. Rather than moving through the traditional legislative process as a standalone bill, the restrictions were slipped into the must-pass state budget, effectively forcing lawmakers to vote on the package as a whole.

The National Rifle Association (NRA) blasted the tactic and accused Hochul and Democrats of using the budget process to secure passage of a divisive measure that might otherwise have faced greater scrutiny.

"This was a strategic and calculated procedural move to put divisive legislation into an all-or-nothing budget bill," said the NRA in a statement. "Despite having a trifecta of

control, Majority Democrats needed over a dozen extenders after missing their April 1st budget deadline."

The organization also argued that the legislation extends far beyond targeting illegal firearm conversions and instead impacts a broad category of legally owned handguns.

Calling the measure a "brazen ban," the NRA pointed specifically to language addressing what the law describes as "convertible pistols."

"This move creates a ban on an entire class of commonly-owned handguns, any gun with a 'cruciform trigger bar,' the group said. 'These guns are banned whether or not a conversion device is actually installed or even possessed.'"

The debate centers largely on ghost guns, which are firearms that can be assembled from separately purchased parts rather than bought as complete, serialized weapons. Because the components are often sold individually, law enforcement officials argue they can bypass many of the safeguards associated with traditional firearm sales including background checks, waiting periods and restrictions on convicted felons.

One of the most high-profile cases

involving a 3D-printed firearm occurred in New York with Luigi Mangione in the fatal shooting of United Healthcare CEO Brian Thompson more than a year ago.

The latest restrictions build on legislation Hochul signed in 2021 that outlawed untraceable ghost guns by criminalizing their sale, requiring serialization and closing what state officials described as loopholes that allowed firearm parts to be purchased and assembled without background checks.

Legal challenges appear likely.

New York has spent years defending firearm regulations in court, including after the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark ruling in the N.Y. State Rifle and Pistol Association v. Bruen case. In that decision, the court struck down a New York law that required applicants to demonstrate "proper cause" before obtaining a permit to carry a firearm.

The NRA indicated it believes the newest restrictions face similar constitutional vulnerabilities.

"Obviously, this bill raises a whole host of constitutional questions," said the NRA. "New York State is no stranger to being sued over its unconstitutional gun laws, but Majority Democrats seemed unmoved by these arguments."

Hochul Signs Sweeping Anti-ICE Laws, Drawing Fierce Backlash Across New York

Staff Reports

Governor Kathy Hochul signed a far-reaching package of immigration-related policies as part of New York's Fiscal Year 2027 budget, enacting some of the nation's most restrictive limits on cooperation between local governments and federal immigration authorities.

The legislation, which was folded into the state's \$268 billion budget, creates new barriers to Immigration and Customs Enforcement operations across New York while expanding legal protections for immigrants, students and others who may come into contact with federal immigration authorities.

Liberals have praised the measures as necessary safeguards against what they describe as overreach by federal immigration officials. Republicans, however, argue the policies prioritize political messaging over public safety and will make it more difficult for local law enforcement agencies to work with federal authorities.

While announcing the package, Hochul defended the legislation and took direct aim at ICE.

"Blatant abuses of power by ICE will not be tolerated in New York," said Hochul while announcing the legislation.

The new laws represent one of the most significant state-level immigration overhauls in recent years and place New York among the states with the strongest restrictions on federal civil immigration enforcement.

One of the most controversial provisions prohibits state and local law enforcement agencies from entering into new 287(g) agreements, which allow local officers to assist federal immigration authorities with certain enforcement functions.

The legislation also bars local

governments from helping finance immigration detention facilities and restricts efforts to modify zoning laws for detention centers without public review.

The governor has previously said that local police departments should focus on crime prevention and community policing rather than federal immigration enforcement.

The legislation additionally limits when immigration authorities may enter non-public portions of state and local facilities without a judicial warrant.

The restrictions apply to a broad list of locations including schools, hospitals, libraries, shelters, child care centers, community centers, student housing facilities, public parks and polling places.

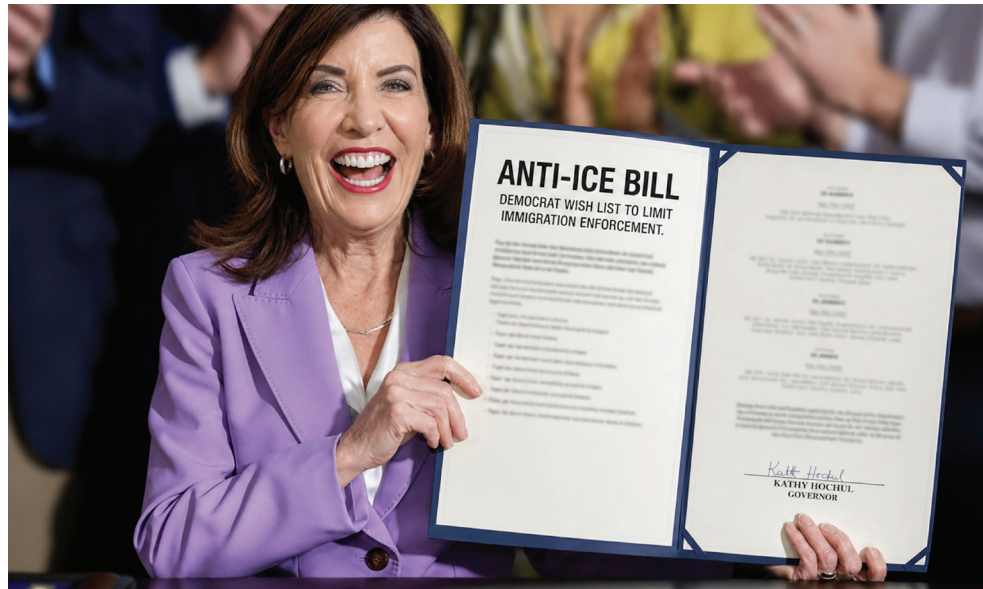
Private institutions such as hospitals and houses of worship are also granted greater authority to deny access to immigration agents who lack judicial warrants.

The budget package further prohibits public employees from conducting civil immigration investigations, sharing certain personal information with immigration authorities, granting access to restricted government spaces without legal authorization or using immigration officers as interpreters.

Another provision creates a legal pathway allowing individuals to pursue claims against federal officials accused of violating constitutional rights.

State lawmakers also expanded protections for immigrant students by formally recognizing access to public education regardless of immigration status, limiting the collection and disclosure of immigration-related information and prohibiting schools from transferring students into immigration custody without a court order.

The legislation includes another highly debated measure aimed at law enforcement transparency. State, local



and federal officers will generally be prohibited from wearing face coverings during interactions with the public, although exceptions remain for medical masks, tactical safety equipment and sunglasses.

Democrats say this promotes accountability. Republicans say it puts ICE agents' lives in danger.

The immigration package has generated immediate opposition from several local officials and law enforcement leaders who argue the measures go too far in restricting communication and cooperation with federal authorities.

New York Governor Hochul Under Fire

Former democratic Governor David Paterson criticized the legislation and described it as an "egregious mistake," warning that the policies could lead to increased legal disputes and conflicts between state and federal governments.

Nassau County Executive Bruce Blakeman, who is running against Hochul for governor, has vowed to challenge portions of the law in court and has refused to back away from existing

immigration cooperation agreements, arguing that local partnerships with ICE help remove individuals accused or convicted of crimes from communities.

Several county sheriffs have also publicly opposed the legislation, with many arguing that ending 287(g) partnerships removes an effective law enforcement tool and could complicate efforts to coordinate with federal agencies.

The budget process itself has also drawn criticism.

Opponents questioned why such significant immigration policy changes were included in a must-pass state budget rather than moving through the traditional legislative process as standalone bills.

With Hochul officially signing the legislation now signed into law, attention now shifts to the courts where legal challenges are anticipated from several local governments and law enforcement officials who argue the new restrictions exceed the state's authority and interfere with public safety operations.

NATIONAL NEWS

The Rule of Law Versus the Modern Day Witch Hunt Cont. from Cover

Sumit Majumdar

President & CEO of Buffalo Biodiesel Inc. | Limited Partner & Director of Energy and Agriculture at Verite Capital Partners

le society should be integrating, threatening the core principles of justice and democratic fairness.

Accountability, Courts, and Separating the Mob from the Law

"There is no grievance that is a fit object of redress by mob law." — Abraham Lincoln

Actions have consequences. Crimes deserve punishment, and society has a right to demand accountability from those who cause harm. But this is precisely why the penal system exists: to enforce justice unbiasedly and proportionally.

The courts were designed to separate the mob from the law. A judge and jury operate on evidence, due process, and codified statutes, whereas a mob operates on emotion, rumor, and bloodlust. When an individual breaks the law, they face penalties, serve their time, and complete a process designed to allow them to re-enter society.

When the public or the media bypasses the judicial system to inflict their own extrajudicial punishment, they are rejecting the very foundation of a civilized society. There is a profound irony in vigilante justice: people who take the law into their own hands are demonstrating a belief that the law does not apply to them. In their self-righteous anger, they adopt the exact same mindset—disregard for the rules and boundaries of society—as the person they are so furious at for violating the law in the first place.

The Constitution and the Tyranny of the Majority

"Whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority, it is time to pause and reflect." — Mark Twain

This separation of law and mob was not an accident; it is the bedrock of the American democratic experiment. The Founding Fathers were acutely aware of the dangers of mob rule, often referring to it as the "tyranny of the majority." They understood that without strict legal frameworks, the loudest, angriest voices would dictate who gets to participate in society and who gets destroyed.

To prevent this, they enshrined Due Process in the Constitution. The 5th Amendment ensures that no one can be deprived of life, liberty, or property without the impartial application of the law. Later, recognizing that the mob was still successfully terrorizing marginalized groups, the nation passed the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments. The 14th Amendment, in particular, guaranteed "equal protection under the laws."

These civil rights amendments were passed specifically to stop the mob from bypassing the law to punish, exclude, and terrorize minorities. They established that an individual's rights are absolute and cannot be voted away by an angry crowd or stripped away by public shaming.

The Digital Pitchfork vs. The Public Square

Human nature dictates that most people do not want to go against the grain. No one wants to be hated, and no one wants to be the target of a mob. The internet understands this fear and weaponizes it perfectly.

The digital age has made the mob exponentially stronger because participation requires zero physical effort. It is no longer about organizing a movement, printing flyers, and mobilizing a protest in the street. Today, joining a mob is a quick tap on a smartphone screen—an endless stream of equal opportunity chime-ins. It is infinitely easier, far more visible, and it brings the hate relentlessly right to your front door.

My main office is located on Court Street. On the weekends, I often see protesters gathering down at Niagara Square. I genuinely applaud them for putting in the physical

effort to come out on a Saturday to voice their beliefs. But I also sometimes chuckle, because the downtown buildings are empty—it is, in many ways, a self-performance where there is no one around to watch or hear them. Yet, as I watch, I often pause and wish that there was an audience. I wish another side was there listening, for no other reason than to hear them out and peacefully, civilly engage.

That kind of civil, face-to-face discourse is exactly what the digital mob has destroyed. The internet has replaced the physical public square with a hyper-reactive arena where engagement is measured only in vitriol and immediate destruction.

Free Speech vs. Free Hate

In this modern era, the mob's pitchforks have been replaced by keyboards. Journalists and commentators who feed this hatred often hide behind the shield of the First Amendment, but there is a distinct difference between free speech and free hate.

Free speech is the right to criticize the government, debate policy, and voice dissenting opinions. Free hate is the weaponization of a platform to stalk, harass, and systematically dismantle an individual's life after the legal system has already had its say. When journalists act as the leaders of a digital mob—digging up resolved legal matters, contacting employers, and inciting mass harassment—they cross the line from reporting to tortious interference.

If critics despise the legal framework of rehabilitation, the democratic solution is to campaign to change the legislation. If they prefer an autocratic system where individuals are forever banished based on the whims of a public tribunal rather than the rule of law, they are rejecting the Constitution itself.

The Irony of Guilt by Association

"The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong." — Mahatma Gandhi

Perhaps the most ugly tool in this modern witch hunt is guilt by association. When a journalist or a public mob decides to target an individual, they rarely stop there. They attack the companies that hire them, the colleagues who work alongside them, and the partners who support them. The goal is to shame everyone in that person's orbit until the company caves and cuts ties.

This is bullying, plain and simple. By attacking a company for giving someone a second chance, the mob effectively bypasses the law, enforcing a lifetime sentence of unemployment and social exile.

The Chilling Effect on Protected Classes

This bullying extends far beyond those with criminal records; it is actively used to chill relationships with various marginalized groups. The weaponization of public shame is frequently aimed at companies that boldly support minorities, Muslims, and the LGBTQ+ community.

To understand the gravity of this, one must look at the modern civil rights frameworks designed to prevent exactly this kind of exclusion. In New York State, the Human Rights Law legally protects individuals from discrimination based on:

Race, Color, and National Origin

- Creed (protecting Muslim individuals and others from religious bigotry)
- Sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression (protecting LGBTQ+ individuals)
- Age, sex, and disability
- Military or veteran status
- Familial, marital, and domestic violence victim status

Crucially, New York State also explicitly protects the pathway to redemption. Under Article 23-A of the NYS Correction Law, it is illegal for employers to unfairly discriminate against a person based on a prior criminal conviction, provided the past offense is not directly related to the specific job and does not pose an unreasonable risk to safety.

The law is clear: discrimination is illegal, and redemption is protected. But the mob's attacks are meant to circumvent these pro-



tections. By generating negative press and leveraging guilt by association, bullies aim to make businesses too terrified of bad PR to hire former offenders, Muslims, transgender individuals, or racial minorities. The fear of being targeted is used to enforce a silent, systemic segregation.

The True Mechanics of Inclusion: Merit Over Checkboxes

"Prejudice is a burden that confuses the past, threatens the future and renders the present inaccessible." — Maya Angelou

Unfortunately, in the modern push for inclusion, many employers have gotten it entirely wrong. They have opted for an easy path, treating diversity as a superficial checkbox exercise rather than a commitment grounded in merit. While a Human Resources department might genuinely believe they are doing a good thing by hitting demographic targets, this approach is fundamentally flawed.

Many well-intentioned advocates argue that marginalized groups need to be placed in these positions specifically because of historical challenges in access to education and opportunities. While those systemic barriers are undeniably real, artificially placing individuals into roles to balance a spreadsheet treats the symptom rather than the disease. The actual cure for inequality of opportunity is to actively increase access to the education, training, and foundational resources that create those opportunities.

But at the hiring table, the focus for true equality must rely solely on merit. Merit acts as the ultimate blind test—the great equalizer that rises above prejudice. From an employer's standpoint, hiring and retention must be strictly merit-based. When diversity mandates outweigh this blind test—particularly to the extent that a company hires incompetent individuals or tolerates disruptive behavior in the name of representation—it spectacularly backfires. Rather than dismantling bigotry, it actively reinforces prejudice, giving critics ammunition to doubt the capabilities of all marginalized hires.

My partner and colleague, Don Jones—Founder and Chairman of Verite Capital Partners—embodies the true mechanics of how this work should be done. Don demands absolute excellence while relentlessly championing diversity and inclusion. Looking back at historical factors—both the broad struggles of the American civil rights movement and his own personal history of breaking through systemic barriers to rise from a janitor to a corporate executive—he knows that real integration requires grit, not just good intentions.

He recently told me, "It's hard, Sumit, to do right. And if it's not hard, it's not right, when it comes to tearing down prejudice."

That truth is universal. Dismantling prejudice through excellence is difficult work. The true purpose of diversity and inclusion is to open the door so that, despite a person's status or background, they can showcase that their job performance is unquestionable. This is what actually destroys prejudice. When a coworker sees a marginalized individual

contributing at a high level and recognizes them as highly valuable to the company, it creates a blinding effect to their protected status. Excellence creates undeniable shared value, and that shared value is the most effective mechanism for a lasting reduction in prejudice.

The Courage to Integrate: A Historical Imperative

"The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy." — Martin Luther King Jr.

When the mob directs its fury at a company for employing a marginalized individual or a former offender, the path of least resistance is dissociation. It is incredibly easy to issue a corporate apology, sever ties, and throw the targeted individual to the wolves to save a brand's image.

But progress has never been achieved by taking the easy way out. Throughout history, true societal advancement has relied entirely on the courage of those who stood their ground and demanded integration. The abolition of slavery required individuals to actively defy the law and society to harbor and defend those deemed property. The fight for women's rights was won because people refused to back down in the face of intense public mockery and institutional exclusion.

During the Civil Rights Movement, Martin Luther King Jr. and his allies faced brutal violence, economic retaliation, and crushing societal pressure. Yet, they—alongside the brave business owners and community leaders who refused to enforce segregation—stood firm.

Today, that same courage is required in the boardroom. Employers who shatter glass ceilings and actively fight hate are the modern inheritors of this legacy. By refusing to capitulate to outrage, these companies choose genuine, merit-based inclusion over exclusion. They recognize that breaking down barriers for minorities, LGBTQ+ individuals, religious groups, and those seeking redemption is a fight worth having, even when it draws the ire of the crowd.

Standing Up to the Bullies

Discrimination and bullying by association are alive and well, dressed up as righteous accountability. But there is nothing righteous about denying someone a chance to earn a living, and there is nothing heroic about destroying a company for practicing genuine, legally protected inclusion.

It is time for individuals and corporations to stand up to these bullies. True inclusion means holding the line when the public pitchforks come out. It means trusting the legal frameworks of our democracy, defending the marginalized, prioritizing unquestionable merit, and refusing to let sensationalist journalism dictate who deserves a place in society.

Democracy thrives on the rule of law, equal opportunity, and the belief that people can pay their debts and move forward. Mob rule thrives on permanent shame. We must choose which society we want to build.



CRIME BLOTTER

CRIME REPORTS PUBLISHED BY NIAGARA ACTION OVER THE LAST WEEK

-Foot Chase on Niagara Falls' East Side Ends with Two in Custody After Guns Recovered.

Two people were taken into custody Wednesday afternoon after Niagara Falls police recovered two guns following a foot chase on the city's East Side. According to the Niagara Falls Police Department, an officer in the 500 block of 20th Street spotted a person wanted for questioning in connection to a gun-related incident from Tuesday. Police said the male was walking with another person when the officer attempted to stop them. Instead, both the adult and juvenile ran east toward 21st Street. Officers noted the juvenile was carrying a backpack while fleeing. Additional officers responded to the area and later located two males matching the suspects' descriptions walking in the 2400 block of Ferry Avenue. Police said the backpack was no longer with them. Both individuals were detained while officers searched the area where the pair allegedly ran. During the search, police recovered a gun magazine in a backyard. Officers later found two firearms between garages behind a residence in the 500 block of 21st Street. A crime scene detective responded to collect the weapons. Police said investigators determined the detained individuals were the same two males who fled from officers and allegedly discarded the firearms during the chase. Charges against both the adult and juvenile are pending.

-Police Respond After 'Creepy' Man Exposes Himself Near Woman and Children in Niagara Falls.

Law enforcement received a call around 2:29pm on May 25th after reports of suspicious activity – later changed to a sex crime – on May 25th on Williams Road in Niagara Falls. Dispatch advised responding officers that a gold color Chevy Equinox parked behind the building with a male driver was exposing himself to other individuals. It was unclear from the police audio whether the male was strictly doing this from inside of his vehicle or whether he would get out and then get back inside. Police responded to the scene. It is unknown if the male suspect was arrested. No further information is available at this time.

-'Fat' Woman Breaks Into Lewiston Home, Man with Rifle was Waiting.

Law enforcement received a call around 2:03am on May 26th after reports of a burglary in Lewiston. The 911 caller told police that a female broke into his residence. When asked if he had any weapons in the house, the caller confirmed that he had a .22 rifle on him. The caller described the female as a "heavy-set" woman. It is unknown how she gained entry to the home as she would have struggled entering through a window or what she was attempting to steal. Police responded to the scene. It is believed the woman was still inside the residence when law enforcement arrived. It is unknown if the female suspect was arrested. No further information is available at this time.

-I'll Stab Your Kids'" Buffalo Robbery Suspect Accused of Threats Against Clerk and Children.

Law enforcement received a call around 11:39pm on May 27th after reports of a theft-in-progress at a corner store on Broadway in Buffalo. The 911 caller told police that the armed suspect told him that he would stab him and his kids who were behind the counter. The caller further told police that the suspect kept approaching the counter with his hands in his pockets as if he was going to pull out a knife or some other weapon. It was not reported what items, if any, he took from the store. The suspect was described as a Hispanic male. Police responded to the scene. It is unknown if the male was located and/or arrested. No further information is available at this time.

-'He's Killing Me for the Presidency': Bizarre Niagara Falls 911 Call.

Law enforcement received a call around 12:55pm on May 28th after reports of a welfare check on 5th Street in Niagara Falls. The 911 caller, a female, told police that an unknown male was "killing her for the presidency." There was no further context to this statement, nor was it immediately clear if she was in immediate danger. Police responded to the scene. It is unknown if the woman was taken for mental health treatment. No further information is available at this time.

-Niagara Falls Woman Says Stranger Tried to Abduct Her at Gas Station. Law enforcement received a call around 8:11am on May 29th after reports of harassment in downtown Niagara Falls on 19th Street at the Coastal gas station. The 911 female caller told police that a male in a dark-colored vehicle with plastic on the back window repeatedly tried to get her into the vehicle with him. He followed her during this encounter. The woman felt fearful for her safety. Police responded to the scene.

It is unknown if the male was still on location when law enforcement arrived. No further information is available at this time.

-Mother Holding 5-month-old Baby Attacked by Child's Father in Niagara Falls. Law enforcement received a call around 11:12pm on May 29th after reports of a domestic disturbance on Portage Road in Niagara Falls. The 911 caller advised that her child's father tried to "choke her out" while she was holding her 5-month-old baby. The woman identified the male by name and said that the suspect was still inside the apartment. Police responded to the scene. It is unknown if the suspect was arrested. No further information is available at this time.

-Mother Sends Autistic, Non-verbal Daughter to ECMC After Violent Attack.

Law enforcement received a call around 7:43pm on May 28th after reports of an assault on Sheridan Drive in Tonawanda. The 911 caller, and mother of the suspect, told police that her "autistic [and] non-verbal daughter began attacking her." This included, according to the caller, "kicking and punching." The mother requested that police have her daughter transported to ECMC so that she's removed from the home. Police and EMS responded to the scene. It is believed the vulnerable child was removed from the residence. No further information is available at this time.

-Niagara Falls Woman Calls Police Saying Wires Are Coming Out of Her Body.

Woman Calls Law enforcement received a call around 7:13am on May 27th after reports of a medical and/or mental health emergency on 5th Street in Niagara Falls. Dispatch advised police that the 911 caller was "rambling on" about "wires being engineered into her body." There were, in fact, no wires in her body. Police responded to the scene. It is believed the woman was taken for mental health treatment. No further information is available at this time.

-Woman Calls Police After Her Bestfriend Starves Herself, Hears Voices and Walks Around Home Naked.

Law enforcement received a call around 8:14pm on May 28th after reports of a medical and/or mental health emergency on 26th Street in Niagara Falls. The 911 caller told police that her friend is having a "mental breakdown, walking through the house naked and saying she might harm herself." The caller tried to contact crisis services who directed them to call 911. The caller also stated that her friend had not eaten in "a few weeks" and is "hearing voices," likely from the lack of food. Police and first responders (likely) responded to the scene. It is unknown if the woman was taken for a mental health evaluation and/or treatment. No further information is available at this time.

-Juvenile Assaults Mother Before Running Away from Motel in Niagara Falls.

Law enforcement received a call around 12:58am on May 28th after reports of a violent domestic disturbance and missing juvenile at the Caravan Motel on Niagara Falls Blvd. in Niagara Falls. The 911 caller told police that his young son was arguing with his older brother when he became violent. His mother intervened in the argument at which time the younger son struck his mother. The young son then left the hotel and ran away. Police noted that there is a language barrier. Police responded to the scene. It is unknown if the young son was located by law enforcement. No further information is available at this time.

-Man Pulls Knife During Money Dispute in Tonawanda.

Law enforcement received a call around 11:51pm on May 29th after reports of menacing with a deadly weapon on Kaufman Avenue in the Town of Tonawanda. The 911 caller told police that a male was refusing to pay him for work performed and "has a knife in his hand." The caller was with the suspect at the time of the call but had not been assaulted. Police responded to the scene. It is unknown if the male with the knife was arrested for menacing. No further information is available at this time.

-Male Predator with No Shirt Chases Little Girls at School Playground in Niagara Falls.

Law enforcement received a call around 3:58pm on May 31st after reports of suspicious activity where a welfare check was requested of young female children near Hyde Park Elementary School in Niagara Falls. The 911 caller stated that an adult male with no shirt on was "chasing after two young girls." He then back into a crick house. The two young girls were playing on the playground at Hyde Park school. They were not harmed during the encounter. Police responded to the scene. It is unknown if law enforcement made contact with the male suspect and if he was arrested. No further information is available at this time.

Bullied at 11, Gone Far Too Soon: Family Remembers Nadiya Santiago After Tragic Death Cont. from Cover



John Watson

her favorite activities.

Her family described her as a child whose kindness and laughter naturally made people smile.

"Nadiya Santiago was a bright, energetic 11-year-old who brought joy to everyone around her. She loved spending time with her friends and family, playing soccer and boxing, and enjoying the outdoors with her siblings."

Family members said her warmth reached countless people.

"Her laughter and kindness touched so many lives, and her absence has left a deep void in the hearts of those who knew her."

Nadiya attended Frontier Middle School in the Frontier Central School District.

Born October 10th, 2014, she was affectionately called "Nana" by many people close to her, though according to her obituary she often preferred being called Nadiya, which is a detail family members say reflected her strong personality and sense of individuality.

Her obituary described her as a cherished daughter whose kindness and warmth were evident to everyone fortunate enough to know her.

Along with overwhelming grief, relatives are also navigating funeral expenses and other unexpected burdens that followed her death.

A public fundraiser established to support the family had raised more than \$25,000 after Niagara Action published this article online with more than 10,000 reading it.

The fundraiser states:

"On May 19th, 2026, Nadiya's life was tragically cut short. Her family is now facing unimaginable grief, along with the sudden burden of funeral arrangements, moving costs, and legal fees as they seek justice and healing. The pain of losing a child is something no family should ever have to endure, and the road ahead will be long and difficult."

The page also contained a message urging greater awareness surrounding bullying and support for families facing similar pain.

"Bullying is a terrible thing and takes the lives of thousands of children each year. We hope to raise awareness and support for families facing similar struggles."

Nadiya's parents later thanked the growing number of supporters contributing to the fundraiser.

"I'm so thankful for the people that are donating she now can have a burial and her lil body can rest in peace thank you guys for making this for her. I love yall"

On Thursday, May 21st, Frontier Middle School Principal Daniel Charland sent a letter to parents and guardians acknowledging the student's death and the emotional impact it has had throughout the school community.

"It is with profound sorrow that I write to inform you of the passing of one our students. This loss is heartbreaking and sudden. Our hearts are with the family as they navigate this incredibly difficult time," said Charland.

Charland described Nadiya as a beloved member of the school community whose presence touched both students and staff.

"Our student was a sweet member of our school community, known for their smile, gracious heart, and academic curiosity," he continued. "In their time at Frontier Middle School, our student touched the lives of many, both students and staff."

School officials said counselors and social workers remain available to assist students and staff members coping with grief and emotional distress in the wake of the tragedy.

"We will continue to work with our students in the coming days to ensure they have the support and resources they need. Please reassure your child that the mixed emotions they might be feeling are normal."

But today we remember the child herself.

The girl who loved soccer.

The girl who boxed.

The girl who loved the outdoors.

The sister.

The daughter.

The friend.

And the child whose family says brought joy everywhere she went.

Her obituary perhaps says it best:

"May Nadiya's boundless spirit guide us all as we navigate through these times of sorrow. Her legacy will live on in the hearts of those she loved and those who loved her."

If you or someone you know is struggling emotionally or talking about self-harm, support is available. Call or text 988 to reach the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline for free, confidential support at any time.

If you would like to donate to the GoFundMe, you can do so on our website.

BUSINESS & FINANCE

The 'Nuclear Issue Lab' and the SMR Delusion

Decommissioning, Generational Indifference, and the Genuine Renewable Baseload Realities for New York State.



Sumit Majumdar
President & CEO of Buffalo
Biodiesel Inc. | Limited Partner &
Director of Energy and Agriculture
at Verite Capital Partners

1. Introduction: Decommissioning and the Knee-Jerk Reaction

New York State currently stands at a critical juncture in its energy transition. As aging, conventional nuclear power plants approach the end of their operational lifespans and facilities like Indian Point proceed through decommissioning, a strange phenomenon has emerged within regulatory and legislative circles: the sudden, reactionary push toward advanced nuclear solutions. Rather than utilizing the decommissioning phase as a strategic pivot toward genuinely sustainable, zero-risk, and cost-effective renewables, policymakers have fallen prey to industry lobbying, actively chasing the unproven promise of Small Modular Reactors (SMRs).

This "knee-jerk" reaction is most evident in the sudden conceptualization of "Nuclear Issue Labs" and state-sponsored nuclear task forces. For decades, the lunacy of expanding nuclear operations without a viable long-term waste disposal strategy was rightfully ignored. The state fundamentally understood that expanding a technology reliant on hazardous extraction, localized radioactive accumulation, and immense taxpayer subsidization was poor policy. Yet, the vacuum created by plant closures has triggered panic. Under the guise of "innovation" and "clean baseload power," these Nuclear Issue Labs are essentially tax-funded marketing vehicles designed to rationalize the deployment of experimental, high-cost SMRs in New York's vulnerable watersheds.

2. Generational Indifference and the Information Deficit

A driving cultural catalyst behind this sudden regulatory pivot is a profound shift in public consciousness, specifically characterized by growing youth indifference toward nuclear hazards. Unlike generations that came of age during the Cold War or lived through the immediate terror of the Chernobyl disaster, today's younger demographic experiences a profound structural disconnect from the historical realities of radiological crises. In contemporary environmental discourse, climate change has been framed almost exclusively as a carbon reduction challenge. Because the nuclear lobby has successfully weaponized this narrative, many young advocates see nuclear energy merely as an abstract "zero-emissions" asset, entirely blind to the downstream ecological devastation of the nuclear fuel chain.

This indifference is systematically engineered by a lack of access to comprehensive information. Textbooks and institutional energy programs frequently sanitize nuclear power, highlighting operational engineering while entirely omitting the physical realities of mining tailings, fuel enrichment contamination, and the physics of high-level spent fuel stewardship. Lacking historical baseline knowledge, a generation detached from Three Mile Island or Fukushima easily falls victim to the slick marketing of SMRs. They mistakenly view modular reactors as a sleek, tech-driven upgrade akin to a consumer electronics cycle, unaware that the underlying radioactive physics, isotope toxicities, and containment liabilities remain entirely identical to legacy systems.

3. The New York Power Mix: Where We Stand

To understand the futility of chasing new

nuclear development, one must first examine the reality of New York's current energy consumption and generation. New York has the most energy-efficient state economy in the nation, largely due to high mass transit utilization in urban centers. As of March 2026, the state generates approximately 50 million MWh annually.

Our current generation mix illustrates a system in transition, heavily reliant on natural gas, but possessing significant hydroelectric baseline capacity. Crucially, the current 16.2% nuclear contribution represents a massive, centralized liability that the state is artificially extending rather than aggressively replacing with distributed, safe alternatives.

4. The Historical Landscape: Comparative Nuclear Catastrophes

The historical reality of commercial nuclear fission is punctuated by catastrophic systemic failures. When a reactor core loses cooling capacity, the transition from operational stability to uncontrollable thermal meltdown occurs exponentially. The table below charts major global radiological disasters, highlighting the long-term containment costs and human health impacts that nuclear advocates routinely trivialize.

5. In-Depth Damage Analysis: The Reality of Fukushima

The 2011 Fukushima Daiichi catastrophe serves as the ultimate case study in the compounded, multi-systemic damage of a nuclear failure. The loss of backup power led directly to the decompression and structural breach of three reactor cores, initiating an environmental and social crisis that continues to escalate fifteen years later.

Population Displacement and Social Fracture

The immediate consequence of the radiological release was the forced evacuation of more than 160,000 residents from the surrounding prefecture. Entire towns were rendered uninhabitable overnight, instantly creating an un-evacuated diaspora of ecological refugees. While parts of the exclusion zone have been officially declared open, a profound psychological barrier remains. Decades of institutional misinformation and the fear of lingering hot spots mean that less than 20% of displaced families have returned, causing a permanent demographic collapse and the erasure of historical regional communities.

Marine Pollution and Ecosystem Bioaccumulation

Unlike Chernobyl, Fukushima is uniquely defined by its catastrophic relationship with the ocean. To prevent the molten fuel cores from melting entirely through the concrete basemats, TEPCO was forced to continuously pump millions of gallons of water directly over the exposed fuel. This heavily contaminated water, laden with high-energy gamma emitters like Cesium-137 and Strontium-90, leaked continuously into the Pacific Ocean.

This heavily contaminated water, laden with high-energy gamma emitters like Cesium-137 and Strontium-90, leaked continuously into the Pacific Ocean. While multi-billion-dollar filtration loops like the Advanced Liquid Processing System (ALPS) were deployed, they cannot filter out Tritium (Radioactive Hydrogen), leading to highly controversial ongoing oceanic dumping programs that threaten Pacific marine lifecycles and commercial fishing sectors through localized bioaccumulation.

Epidemiological Consequences: Cancers and Excess Mortality

The human toll of the disaster cannot be measured solely by the immediate blast casualties. Peer-reviewed epidemiological assessments have tracked a sharp increase in pediatric thyroid cancers within Fukushima Prefecture, driven by initial exposure to Iodine-131. Furthermore, the chaotic nature of the forced evacuation—which pulled fragile patients from intensive care units and elderly residents from safety networks—resulted in over 2,300 recognized stress-related deaths, illustrating that the bureaucratic and logistical response to a nuclear event is frequently as lethal as the radiation itself.

6. The Economics: SMRs, Natural Gas, and Genuine Green Technologies

The central thesis of the Nuclear Issue Lab is that SMRs can provide cost-competitive energy. This is a complete fabrication verified by current market analysis. When analyzing the Levelized Cost of Energy (LCOE), nuclear power is being vastly outperformed by modern renewables. Lazard's LCOE tracking demonstrates that onshore wind and solar PV average around \$40/

MWh and \$50/MWh respectively. In contrast, new-build natural gas combined cycle (CCGT) plants have reached 10-year highs due to turbine shortages and component inflation, settling between \$75-\$130/MWh. Small modular reactors, following the collapse of the UAMPS project, are projected to yield an LCOE of well over \$210/MWh.

Even emerging renewable baseload technologies, such as Wave Energy Converters (WECs) and Deep Geothermal, showcase a far superior long-term cost curve. Geothermal baseline power averages \$55/MWh, matching conventional fossil systems without the volatility of fuel prices or carbon penalties. Current LCOE for wave energy sits near \$180/MWh, but new proprietary designs from companies like CorPower Ocean have reduced maintenance downtime drastically, projecting a sharp drop as the sector achieves commercial scale over the next decade.

The Ratepayer Reality: Capital Costs Per Kilowatt

LCOE is an excellent system-level metric, but the true immediate burden placed on ratepayers can be visualized through the overnight capital cost per kilowatt (\$/kW) required to construct a facility. Once again, nuclear energy fails catastrophically on this metric. Due to labor shortages and supply chain pressure in 2025/2026, the capital cost for new-build Natural Gas CCGT has risen to roughly \$1,600/kW. Solar remains highly accessible at around \$1,000/kW, and Onshore Wind sits near \$1,500/kW. Wave Energy Converters (WECs), though relatively new, command installation costs of \$3,500/kW, while advanced deep geothermal plants require approximately \$4,500/kW for deep exploration and drilling.

However, the actual capital cost of the failed Idaho UAMPS SMR project exploded to \$21,561/kW before it was canceled. Demanding that New York ratepayers finance experimental nuclear infrastructure at over \$21,000 per kW, when firm, predictable baseload options like Geothermal and Wave Energy are scaling at a fraction of the capital cost, represents an engineered fleecing of the public.

7. NYS's Unique Properties: Wave Energy and Geothermal Potential

Rather than pouring billions into experimental nuclear laboratories, New York possesses immense, largely ignored geological and geographical advantages for true renewable baseload power: geothermal and wave energy. Geothermal conversion is highly viable across the state. Systems leveraging ground-source heat pumps (GSHPs) exploit the earth's consistent underground temperatures for localized heating, cooling, and district power. New York's robust regulatory framework, pioneered by NYSEERDA, already supports the integration of geothermal capacity within structural foundations. Unlike nuclear reactors, geothermal systems present zero radiological risk, require minimal surface footprint, and do not threaten the state's freshwater reserves.

Furthermore, parts of Upstate New York and the Southern Tier possess deep sedimentary basins with significant low-to-medium temperature deep geothermal potential. By deploying advanced closed-loop geothermal systems, which circulate working fluids through sealed downhole heat exchangers, the state could extract endless thermal energy without any risk of groundwater contamination or induced seismicity. This offers an unshakable, 24/7 baseload generation option that completely neutralizes the nuclear industry's core narrative.

Equally ignored is the vast potential of wave and tidal energy along the Atlantic coastline and the Long Island Sound. Wave energy converters capture the kinetic energy of ocean swells. Unlike wind or solar, wave patterns are highly predictable and operate around the clock, providing the exact "firm baseload" profile that nuclear advocates claim only fission can provide. By investing in coastal wave energy arrays, New York could generate dense, consistent electricity directly adjacent to the high-demand load centers of New York City and Long Island, negating the need for massive upstate-to-downstate transmission buildouts.

8. The True Cost of Waste: Dry Casks and Pool Economics

The most egregious omission in the "Nuclear Issue Lab" discourse is the ongoing, multi-generational economic burden of spent nuclear fuel (SNF). Because the United States has no centralized geologic repository, SNF must be stored

on-site at commercial plant locations indefinitely. This means that every nuclear facility in New York—whether operational or decommissioned—has become a permanent nuclear waste dump.

The economics of this storage are staggering. When fuel is removed from a reactor, it must be stored in specialized cooling pools for at least five years to manage immense decay heat and radiation. Subsequently, to make room in the pools, the waste is transferred to dry casks. The construction of these interim storage facilities costs approximately \$14 million per site, with annual monitoring costs ranging from \$5.6 million to \$12.7 million after the reactor is shut down. According to government projections, the 100-year net present value (NPV) for reactor-site storage ranges from \$94,762 to \$318,651 per metric ton of heavy metal (MTHM).

9. Lifespans and Toxicity: The Lethal Legacy

Nuclear waste is not a standard industrial byproduct; its lethality extends across geological epochs. Spent nuclear fuel contains fission products and minor actinides that are extraordinarily hazardous. Ten years after removal from a reactor core, the surface dose rate for a single spent fuel assembly exceeds 10,000 rem/hour. To put this in perspective, a whole-body dose of 500 rem received over a short period is universally fatal to humans.

Transuranic elements, like Plutonium-239, will remain hazardous for tens of thousands of years. The notion that SMRs or Nuclear Issue Labs will somehow resolve this physics problem is a deliberate falsehood. If anything, SMRs, due to higher neutron leakage rates from smaller cores, require more highly enriched fuel and will generate proportionately more complex, hard-to-treat waste streams than their predecessors.

10. The Stupidity at Fukushima and New York's Vulnerability

The ultimate counterargument to the expansion of nuclear capacity in New York is the disaster at Fukushima Daiichi. Fukushima was not merely a natural disaster; it was a profound engineering and regulatory collapse. Critical seawater cooling pumps and backup diesel generators were constructed at perilously low elevations, directly exposing them to flooding. This was an act of cost-cutting arrogance, assuming that "improbable" meant "impossible."

New York's reactor fleet—including facilities storing decades of spent fuel—is situated on critical freshwater bodies that supply millions of residents. A loss-of-coolant accident or a breach of the dry cask storage arrays on Lake Ontario or the Hudson River would result in unfathomable radiological contamination and a mass evacuation scenario that the dense infrastructure of NYS simply cannot support. Most critically, NYS is mirroring the very regulatory arrogance that doomed Fukushima. By ignoring the unresolved waste problem, allowing aging plants to receive license extensions, and entertaining the deployment of untested, budget-cut SMRs, New York regulators are betting the safety of the state on the false promise that "it can't happen here."

11. Conclusion: Rejecting the False Paradigm

The creation of Nuclear Issue Labs and the fervent pursuit of Small Modular Reactors during a period of necessary decommissioning is a massive misallocation of state resources. While proponents emphasize the singular benefit of zero air emissions during generation, this advantage is violently outweighed by astronomical LCOE metrics, perpetual multi-million-dollar annual waste monitoring costs, and the creation of highly toxic isotopes like Plutonium-239 that mandate 100,000-year isolation periods.

Instead of chasing the chimera of "cheap" nuclear power, New York State must capitalize on its unique geographic advantages. By pivoting the billions earmarked for nuclear subsidies into the aggressive development of coastal wave energy integration and statewide geothermal baseload systems, we can secure a genuinely safe, cost-effective, and resilient grid. We must correct the engineered information deficit among our youth, reject the knee-jerk panic of the nuclear lobby, and construct a future free from the shadow of perpetual radiological stewardship.

About the Author:

Sumit Majumdar is the President of Buffalo Biodiesel Inc. and a Limited Partner/Lead Advisor for Energy and Agriculture at Verite Capital Partners. For over 20 years, he has been a leading voice in the fight against climate change, specializing in practical solutions for reducing carbon and methane emissions through sustainable fuel technology and industrial oversight.

FINANCIAL MARKETS & COMMODITIES

STOCK MARKET INDEXES

 **DOW JONES** **51,032.46**

 **NASDAQ** **26,972.62**

 **S&P 500** **7,580.06**

 **TSX (CANADA)** **34,769.14**

 **NIKKEI 225** **66,329.50**

 **SSE (CHINA)** **4,068.57**

 **FTSE 100 (UK)** **10,405.34**

METALS COMMODITIES

 **GOLD** **\$4,560.50 per troy oz.**

 **SILVER** **\$75.62 per troy oz.**

 **COPPER** **\$13,615 per metric ton**

 **PLATINUM** **\$1,923.53 per troy oz.**

 **PALLADIUM** **\$1,376.80 per troy oz.**

 **TIN** **\$55,010 per metric ton**

 **NICKEL** **\$18,875 per metric ton**

 **ZINC** **\$3,549 per metric ton**

 **ALUMINUM** **\$3,769.50 per metric ton**

LIVESTOCK

 **LIVE CATTLE** **\$2.41 lb.**

 **FEEDER CATTLE** **\$3.53 lb.**

 **LEAN HOGS** **\$.99 lb.**

 **BEEF** **\$392.32 cwt**

 **POULTRY** **\$1.39 lb.**

AGRICULTURAL COMMODITIES

 **COFFEE** **\$2.656 lb.**

 **SUGAR** **\$.14 lb.**

 **CORN** **\$4.46 bushel**

 **SOYBEANS** **\$11.86 bushel**

 **WHEAT** **\$6.10 bushel**

 **COTTON** **\$.7677 lb.**

 **FCOJ** **\$1.56 lb.**

ENERGY COMMODITIES

 **GASOLINE** **\$4.39 gallon avg.**

 **DIESEL** **\$5.49 gallon avg.**

 **NATURAL GAS** **\$3.29 MMBtu**

 **HEATING OIL** **\$3.44 gallon**

 **WTI (West Texas int.)** **\$87.36 barrel**

 **BRENT CRUDE** **\$92.05 barrel**

 **USED COOKING OIL (UCO)** **\$.78 per lb.**

A SNAPSHOT IN TIME

AS OF 6AM MONDAY, JUNE 1ST, 2026

NA CLIMATE & ENVIRONMENT

THE BLACK GOLD REVOLUTION: How Biochar is Rewiring Agriculture, Reversing Climate Change, and Powering Advanced Technology. A Deep Dive into the Future of Carbon.



Sumit Majumdar

We are living in an era of profound elemental imbalance. Above our heads, a surplus of atmospheric carbon threatens to destabilize global climates, intensifying storms, and disrupting predictable weather patterns. Beneath our feet, the soil—the very skin of the earth—is being stripped of its vital organic carbon through decades of aggressive, chemically driven industrial agriculture. It is a dual crisis of displacement: the carbon is simply in the wrong place.

For centuries, the solution to agricultural and municipal waste management has been remarkably primitive: burn it or bury it. Forestry residue, agricultural stalks, and organic refuse are traditionally left to rot in landfills, releasing immense volumes of methane—a greenhouse gas significantly more potent than carbon dioxide. Alternatively, they are combusted in open air, instantly returning their stored carbon to the atmosphere. But what if we could intercept this cycle? What if we could take the structural carbon built by a plant over its lifetime and lock it away in a form so chemically stable it endures for millennia, all while transforming it into a high-value asset for modern industry?

This is the promise of biochar. Often dismissed by the uninitiated as mere "charcoal," high-grade biochar is, in reality, one of the most sophisticated, multi-functional materials available to modern science. It represents a paradigm shift in how we handle organic waste, moving away from linear disposal and toward a circular, carbon-negative economy. From restoring the degraded farmlands of Western New York to acting as the critical precursor for advanced battery anodes and structural graphene in the world's most cutting-edge industrial hubs, biochar is the black gold of the 21st century.

THE ALCHEMY OF PYROLYSIS: ENGINEERING CARBON

To understand the immense value of biochar, one must first understand its genesis. Biochar is not created through burning; it is born of a highly controlled thermochemical process called pyrolysis. If you set a match to a piece of wood in the open air, the oxygen feeds a combustion reaction. The bonds holding the wood together are broken violently, and the carbon binds with oxygen to create CO₂, leaving behind only a handful of mineral ash.

Pyrolysis, however, is thermal decomposition in the complete, or near-complete, absence of oxygen. When organic biomass—such as wood chips, agricultural stalks, or even processed biological waste—is placed inside a specialized reactor and heated to temperatures ranging from 400°C to 800°C (750°F to 1470°F), it cannot catch fire. Instead, the intense heat causes the volatile compounds within the biomass to vaporize.

As the temperature climbs, the moisture, oils, resins, and non-carbon elements are driven off. These escaping gases are not wasted; they are captured as syngas (synthetic gas), which can be looped back to heat the reactor itself, making the system energy self-sufficient, or utilized to generate baseload electricity. Simultaneously, the condensable vapors are harvested to produce bio-oil and wood vinegar—a highly potent, natural agricultural distillate that serves as an organic pesticide, fungicide, and fertilizer

enhancer.

What remains inside the reactor after the volatile components have been stripped away is biochar. Stripped of hydrogen and oxygen, the remaining carbon atoms reorganize into highly stable, crystalline-like rings. It is a near-pure carbon skeleton of the original plant, permanently preserved against the ravages of natural decay.

THE MICROSCOPIC METROPOLIS: SURFACE ANATOMY

To look at a piece of biochar with the naked eye is to see a brittle, black rock. But to look at it under a scanning electron microscope is to witness a sprawling, cavernous metropolis. The magic of biochar lies almost entirely in its microscopic surface anatomy and its immense porosity.

During pyrolysis, as water and volatile gases violently exit the plant's cellular structure, they leave behind millions of microscopic tunnels, pores, and voids. These pores are generally categorized into three sizes, each serving a critical function:

1. **Macropores (> 50 nanometers):** These are the largest caverns. In the soil, macropores serve as the highways and safe havens for plant root hairs, fungal hyphae (like beneficial mycorrhizal fungi), and large soil microbes. They provide shelter from predators and environmental stress.
2. **Mesopores (2 to 50 nanometers):** These intermediate tunnels are the primary reservoirs for water and dissolved nutrients. Through capillary action, mesopores draw in water and hold it tightly enough to prevent it from evaporating or draining away, yet loosely enough that plant roots can extract it during droughts.
3. **Micropores (< 2 nanometers):** These molecular-sized fissures account for the vast majority of biochar's staggering surface area. A single gram of high-quality biochar can possess an internal surface area of 300 to over 800 square meters. If you unfolded the internal structure of a handful of biochar, it would easily cover an entire tennis court.

Beyond physical space, the surface of biochar is electrochemically active. As it ages, it develops a negative electrical charge, giving it a high Cation Exchange Capacity (CEC). Since many essential plant nutrients (like calcium, potassium, and magnesium) are positively charged cations, they are magnetically drawn to and held by the biochar.

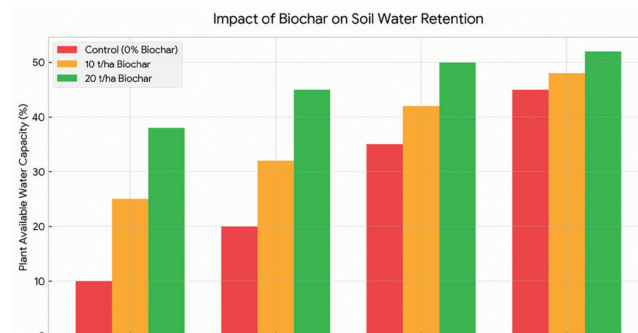
AGRICULTURAL RENAISSANCE & DROUGHT RESILIENCE

The application of biochar in agriculture is not a new science; the indigenous populations of the Amazon basin engineered Terra Preta (dark earth) centuries ago by mixing charcoal, bone, and compost into the heavily leached jungle soils. This created patches of immense, enduring fertility that exist to this day. What is new is our ability to scale this understanding for modern agronomy, utilizing precise, continuous-feed pyrolysis reactors.

In modern industrial agriculture, the economic and environmental benefits are profound. Broadcast farming relies heavily on synthetic NPK (Nitrogen, Phosphorus, Potassium) fertilizers. However, in heavily degraded or sandy soils, up to 50% of these applied chemicals can wash away during heavy rains before the crops can utilize them. This not only wastes millions of dollars for farmers but also leads to severe ecological disasters, such as the toxic algal blooms consistently plaguing Lake Erie and the Niagara watershed due to phosphorus runoff.

By incorporating biochar into commercial fields, the biochar acts as a biological sponge. It absorbs the excess nutrients, locking them within its mesopores and binding them to its negatively charged surface. As the plant roots grow, they seek out the biochar, actively extracting the trapped nutrients on demand. This significantly increases fertilizer efficiency, allowing farmers to apply less chemical input while maintaining or boosting yields.

Equally critical is water management. As global temperatures rise and rainfall patterns become erratic, drought resilience is paramount. The capillary action of biochar's mesopores holds water against gravity, drastically increasing the Plant Available Water (PAW) capacity of



Plant Available Water Capacity. Biochar acts as a microscopic sponge. In sandy soils, where water drains too rapidly, the addition of biochar can increase water retention by up to 150%, providing crucial resilience against drought conditions.

the soil. A field amended with just a 5% volume of biochar can survive weeks longer without rain compared to a control field.

"We are not merely amending soil; we are deploying a permanent infrastructure of carbon beneath the earth that manages water, traps nutrients, and harbors microbial life for centuries."

THE BATTERY REVOLUTION: ENERGY STORAGE

The ultimate echelon of biochar application lies in high technology, specifically energy storage and advanced materials—a focal point of development at cutting-edge hubs like the Green Logic Biochar, Graphene and Nano Technology Center. The global transition to electric vehicles (EVs) and renewable grid storage has triggered an unprecedented demand for lithium-ion batteries.

A critical component of these batteries is the anode, traditionally made from synthetic graphite (a fossil fuel derivative) or mined natural graphite.

Through secondary, ultra-high-temperature processing, biochar can be graphitized or utilized as "hard carbon." The amorphous carbon structures are forced to align into highly ordered, conductive networks. This creates a renewable, plant-based anode material. Because biochar inherently possesses immense porosity, anodes derived from it offer superior lithium-ion diffusion rates, potentially leading to significantly faster charging times.

Furthermore, the battery industry is moving toward silicon-anode batteries to vastly increase capacity. However, silicon expands by up to 300% when absorbing lithium, which causes standard anodes to shatter and fail quickly. Biochar's cavernous macropores provide physical "expansion room" for silicon nanoparticles.

When embedded in a biochar matrix, the silicon can swell and contract within the empty voids without compromising the structural integrity of the battery, unlocking the next generation of high-density energy storage.

CONCRETE INFRASTRUCTURE: CURING FROM WITHIN

Concrete is the most widely used human-made material on Earth. However, the production of Portland cement (the binder in concrete) is responsible for a staggering 8% of all global carbon emissions. Decarbonizing the construction industry is imperative, and biochar offers a two-fold solution: carbon sequestration and physical strengthening.

When high-grade biochar is milled to a precise particle size and added to a concrete mix (typically at 1% to 3% by weight of cement), it acts as an internal curing agent. During the chemical hydration process of curing concrete, water is rapidly consumed. This rapid drying often leads to microscopic shrinkage cracks, which weaken the final structure.

Biochar, acting like the sponge it is, slowly releases its stored water into the concrete matrix as the surrounding cement dries, facilitating perfect, slow hydration from the inside out.

Additionally, biochar particles physically interrupt micro-cracks before they can propagate. For even greater performance, biochar can be processed into flash graphene using joule-heat techniques. When minute amounts of this biochar-derived graphene are added to concrete, it drastically increases both compressive and tensile strength, allowing engineers to use significantly less cement to achieve the required structural load limits.

THE CARBON BLACK SUBSTITUTE

While energy and infrastructure are massive markets, biochar's most immediate disruptive potential lies in substituting carbon black. We live in a world bound by this material. Carbon black is a ubiquitous, highly conductive, and strengthening additive used in everything from the tires on your car to the plastic chassis of electronics, printer inks, and rubber hoses.

The problem is that traditional carbon black is a highly polluting, petroleum-derived product. It is manufactured primarily through the "furnace black" process, which involves combusting heavy, tar-like petroleum residues at extreme temperatures. This process is intensely carbon-positive and environmentally toxic.

What qualifies as carbon black is dictated by two primary metrics: pristine carbon content and surface-to-volume ratio. When biomass is pyrolyzed at the higher end of the temperature spectrum (above 700°C), the resulting biochar is incredibly dense in fixed carbon and possesses electrical conductivity. Through advanced milling and micronization, this high-grade biochar can be reduced to a particle size that perfectly mimics the morphology of petroleum-based carbon black.

The Circular Economy in Action

By substituting biochar for fossil-derived carbon black in the plastics, rubber, and construction industries, we can dramatically lower the carbon footprint of these sectors. We replace a mined, polluting fossil resource with a sustainably sourced, carbon-negative material. A car tire made with biochar no longer represents fossil emissions; it represents atmospheric carbon safely locked away in a functional consumer product.

A VISION FOR WESTERN NEW YORK

The transition toward a sustainable future cannot be achieved solely by doing less harm; it requires technologies that actively heal the biosphere. Biochar represents the ultimate intersection of biological elegance and industrial utility. It takes the oldest process on earth—photosynthesis—and pairs it with advanced thermal engineering to solve multiple modern crises simultaneously.

Here in Western New York, a region with a rich history of industrial innovation, abundant agricultural output, and significant forestry resources, we are uniquely positioned to lead this revolution. By integrating advanced pyrolysis systems, we can divert thousands of tons of organic waste from local landfills. Rather than paying tipping fees to bury this waste and generate methane, we can refine it into base materials for the global economy.

The establishment of facilities like the Green Logic Biochar, Graphene and Nano Technology Center is not just an exercise in environmental stewardship; it is a blueprint for profound economic revitalization. We are engineering a future where the concrete we pour, the plastics we mold, and the batteries we charge are actively sequestering the carbon that is warming our atmosphere. The black gold rush has begun, and the prize is a stabilized climate, resilient food systems, and a greener, smarter industrial economy.

About the Author:

Sumit Majumdar is the President and CEO of Buffalo Biodiesel Inc. For over 20 years, he has been a leading voice in the fight against climate change, specializing in practical, heavy-industrial solutions for reducing carbon and methane emissions, and establishing sustainable circular economies.

Things to plant in your garden

N B U R W W S O H K A E C A R R O T S Y
G A L X S F V I O M M F S M N E Y B K P
H S T R A W B E R R I E S Q C U S E F M
C A S Y T J Z T E K C A N T A L O U P E
U J I O H P L I G I D L H M Y V T I C G
C A Y P B R W F A Y P E F X N C W D L G
U G C G P R A X N K E P U M P K I N S P
M A A P O V O D O W A T E R M E L O N L
B R B A T X K C I E S B O Z C R P C F A
E L B R A Q X B C S U A E U C S U O H N
R I A S T Q K A V O H X Z C E A V R F T
S C G L O B V S H Z L E F C T V Z N M F
Z S E E E C E I R G D I S H Z B B X Z X
F W Q Y S Y I L P C A U L I F L O W E R
K Z R J Y N F L L E G F S N O M M K A K
T O M A T O E S A B P A J I D N D K F C
N P M S Q U A S H N E P Y C W P I A D H
O S B Y W O U F P Y T A E T A J L O K B
L H A Z F K Z Z W E N R N R H Y L O N M
R F E Q V Y E S N R Z K O S S G R O A S

Strawberries	Cauliflower	Watermelon	Basil
Cucumbers	Tomatoes	Zucchini	Corn
Radishes	Potatoes	Broccoli	Peas
Cantaloupe	Pumpkins	Peppers	Dill
Cilantro	Parsley	Squash	
Eggplant	Onions	Oregano	
Beans	Carrots	Cabbage	
Garlic			

Sudoku

		8						
					8			
			8	5			9	
8					6	3	5	
1		3				9		
	6		3			7	8	1
3	8	4	2		1	6	9	5
5	9	1	6	3		2	7	
7		6			9			

			9	8			7	3
	4	7				8		
5				7		1	2	
2	8	1	3	4	7			
9		3	2	6				1
7	6		5		9	2	3	
	3	6		9		5		2
		5			2	9	6	4
4			1	5		3		

	4	1	6		9	7		
3				4	7			
		6	3		1	8		9
9	6	2			5	4		
4	8	3	9	1		5		2
		7	4	3		9		8
6			5			1		7
	7		1	6	8	3		4
	9	4	2	7	3		8	5

	6		1	5				4
7			9			8		
3	8	5		6		2	9	1
				4			3	2
		2	3	9			8	
					5			
	9	6		3		7		
1	5			8	9	4		3
8						5		9



ARIES (March 21 – April 19)

Momentum begins to build around goals that have been developing behind the scenes. This is a good week to revisit unfinished projects and make steady progress. Avoid letting impatience create unnecessary stress. A practical approach will bring stronger results than quick reactions.

TAURUS (April 20 – May 20)

Financial matters and long-term planning take center stage. You may discover a new way to improve stability or strengthen future opportunities. Trust your instincts, but be willing to consider advice from someone with experience. Small adjustments now can lead to meaningful gains later.

GEMINI (May 21 – June 20)

Your season continues to bring confidence, energy, and fresh opportunities. Communication is highlighted, making this an excellent week for meetings, networking, and important conversations. Stay flexible when plans change unexpectedly. A surprise opportunity could emerge through a casual interaction.

CANCER (June 21 – July 22)

A quieter week encourages reflection and preparation. Focus on clearing away distractions and tying up loose ends before taking on new responsibilities. Trust your intuition in personal matters. Rest and self-care will be just as productive as crossing items off your to-do list.

LEO (July 23 – August 22)

Friends, colleagues, and community connections play an important role this week. Teamwork and collaboration can help you accomplish more than expected. Stay open to suggestions and avoid trying to handle everything alone. A shared goal may bring positive momentum.

VIRGO (August 23 – September 22)

Professional responsibilities require attention, but your dedication is beginning to pay off. Recognition may come through consistent effort rather than dramatic achievements. Stay organized and focused on priorities. A leadership opportunity could arise before week's end.

LIBRA (September 23 – October 22)

A desire for adventure, learning, or change may inspire you to explore new possibilities. Whether it's a future plan, educational pursuit, or personal goal, now is the time to think bigger. Keep an open mind and avoid limiting yourself with self-doubt.

SCORPIO (October 23 – November 21)

Important financial or emotional matters may require honest evaluation. Don't shy away from difficult conversations. Addressing issues directly helps create the stability you're seeking. Trust your instincts, but verify details before making commitments.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 – December 21)

Relationships move into focus. Whether personal or professional, cooperation will be more valuable than competition. Listen carefully to the needs of others while clearly expressing your own. A partnership could take a positive step forward.

CAPRICORN (December 22 – January 19)

Productivity becomes a major theme this week. Organizing schedules, improving routines, and focusing on priorities will help reduce stress. Avoid taking on responsibilities that belong to someone else. Consistency remains your greatest strength.

AQUARIUS (January 20 – February 18)

Creativity and enjoyment are highlighted. This is a strong week to pursue hobbies, social events, or projects that spark excitement. Inspiration may come from unexpected places. Allow yourself to have fun without feeling guilty about stepping away from work.

PISCES (February 19 – March 20)

Home and family matters deserve attention. You may feel motivated to strengthen important relationships or improve your surroundings. Emotional honesty brings greater understanding. A supportive conversation could provide reassurance and renewed confidence.