

I f G a m b l i n g C o m e s . . .

The location, design and
management of urban casinos

A Working for Downtown Forum
with Downtown Buffalo 2002!



R o b e r t G . S h i b l e y a n d B r a d s h a w H o v e y , E d i t o r s



The Urban Design Project
School of Architecture and Planning



University at Buffalo
The State University of New York

ISBN: 1-931612-10-2

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On the cover: An artist's view of a restored Genesee Street and a new casino behind the Statler building. From *Reclaiming Genesee Street*, City of Buffalo.

If Gambling Comes...

The location, design and
management of urban casinos

A roundtable discussion sponsored by
*Working for Downtown and
Downtown Buffalo 2002!*

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Bradshaw Hovey**
Editors

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With
William N. Thompson
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Mayor of Buffalo
Sam Hoyt
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This publication is supported by funds for the Downtown Buffalo 2002! program, a partnership of the City of Buffalo, Buffalo Place Inc., and the Urban Design Project in the University at Buffalo's School of Architecture and Planning. The partners are working to review and, as appropriate, help implement the Downtown Buffalo Strategic Plan.

Working Together...    *...Making It Work!*

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P r e f a c e

In September 2001, Working for Downtown brought together a panel of experts and elected officials to discuss the future of casino gambling in Buffalo. Unlike a lot of discussions about casino gambling, the issue on the table wasn't whether or not we should have a casino. At the time, that decision was in the hands of the Governor, Legislature, and the Seneca Nation of Indians. Instead, the issue was — if the decision is to go forward with a casino in Buffalo — what do we need to do to make the most of the venture? Where should it be located? What are the crucial management issues? And how should such a facility be designed?

This booklet provides a record of that conversation. We think it constitutes a form of knowledge on the subject. And we hope that its publication will provide a broader public with some of the information and insights necessary to approach the issues involved in casino development thoughtfully and constructively.

Our panelists defined a range of views on the subject. Buffalo Mayor Anthony Masiello and Seneca Nation Tribal Councilor Rick Jemison are both strong advocates of a casino in Buffalo, seeing a casino as an important element in securing the economic future for their City and Nation respectively.

Assembly member Sam Hoyt stood as an unequivocal opponent, judging the economic balance sheet for a casino to be decidedly in the negative from the perspective of the local community.

Two other members of the panel were less committed to a position, although no less opinionated: Professor William N. Thompson as a student of the casino industry, and Professor Kent Kleinman as a critic of the peculiar architecture of that industry.

Even given their diversity of perspectives, the panelists were able to identify some common ground on the issues of casino location, management, and design. For some on the panel this meant finding a way to maximize the benefits of a casino in Buffalo. For others it was all about minimizing the costs of letting gambling into our community. But for all it was about making the most of the venture, welcome or not.

- The casino ought to be located in downtown Buffalo in order to take advantage of existing infrastructure, to reuse the stock of existing buildings, and create synergies with other visitor attractions.

- A gambling facility needs to be integrated with the city — physically through the careful design of entries and connections, programmatically through business arrangements — to make sure the economic benefits are widely shared locally.
- A casino should be pitched toward tourists not residents to make sure the casino attracts outside revenues, avoids exploiting local players, and complements efforts to build convention and tourism business.
- Casino revenues must accrue mainly to local government rather than the State — to pay for new infrastructure and services, to invest in downtown redevelopment, to support tourism development and marketing, and to help provide for the general needs of City and County.

Casino gambling may or may not ever come to Buffalo. But if it does, we owe it to ourselves to learn from the successes and failures of other cities, and to carefully consider where we should build a casino, what shape it should take, and how it should be managed. We hope this publication can contribute to that process.

Robert G. Shibley and Bradshaw Hovey

Editors

The Panelists

William N. Thompson is professor of public administration at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas, and an internationally recognized expert on casino gambling. He has also studied lotteries and other gambling pastimes. He has an interest in the social and economic impacts of gaming, as well as the political context of casinos and other games of chance, and the regulation and management of the gaming industry.

Anthony M. Masiello is the Mayor of the City of Buffalo, first elected in 1993 and re-elected to a third four-year term in November 2001. Mayor Masiello is a former member of the Buffalo Common Council, and served seven terms in the New York State Senate. He is a strong supporter of a casino for downtown Buffalo and sees casino development as an important part of the strategic plan for the ongoing redevelopment of Buffalo's city center.

Sam Hoyt represents the 144th district in the New York State Assembly, to which he was first elected in 1992. His district includes Buffalo's West Side, Black Rock, Riverside, Grand Island, and parts of North Buffalo. Also a strong supporter of redevelopment in downtown Buffalo, Assembly member Hoyt opposes establishment of a casino in downtown Buffalo as unlikely to produce a net economic benefit for the city or region.

Rick Jemison is a member of the Tribal Council of the Seneca Nation of Indians, and a supporter of the agreement between the Seneca and the State of New York to locate casinos in Buffalo and Niagara Falls. Mr. Jemison is a 1976 graduate of St. Lawrence University where he majored in political science and government. He currently serves on many of the tribal council's committees, including the Class 3 gaming committee.

Kent Kleinman is Professor of Architecture and chair of the Department of Architecture in the School of Architecture and Planning at the University at Buffalo. Professor Kleinman is an author, scholar and most recently, a distinguished academic administrator.

Robert Shibley, moderator for this panel, is Professor of Architecture and Planning at the University at Buffalo School of Architecture and Planning, and director of the Urban Design Project there. He is also director of Downtown Buffalo 2002! Professor Shibley is former chair of the Department of Architecture, a licensed architect, a certified planner, and author of five books on urban design.

Casinos

Location, design and management of urban casinos

"If you're going to have casinos, be ready to embrace gambling. You be ready to love gambling. We love gambling in Las Vegas. It is our spouse, our wife, our husband."

—Bill Thompson

ROBERT SHIBLEY: The purpose of this panel, unequivocally, is not to debate whether or not casino gambling should come to Buffalo. Rather, our purpose is to understand — assuming that casino gambling is going to come — what are the conditions that would make it a significant success or failure? We hope our panelists, representing a range of perspectives and types of expertise, can help us gain that understanding.

Toward that end, we are going to look at three broad questions. The first is about location. If there is a casino in Buffalo's future, what are the criteria for locating the facility? Should it be downtown, on the waterfront, or somewhere else, and why? Can the region handle more than one casino on the U.S. side of the border?

Second, we'll address issues of management. We'll do this, certainly not from the perspective of the sovereign Seneca Nation, but from the standpoint of the public choices that must be made about how revenues from the casino are shared with the public, how these are allocated among public entities and for what uses, and how they are managed.

Third, we'll raise questions of design. What are the performance criteria for the design of a casino in Buffalo? What are the urban design requirements of a successful casino? How should the casino relate physically to the larger downtown? What functions should be within the casino — restaurants, entertainment, shopping, for example — and what should be provided in surrounding facilities?

We may not answer these questions fully. But we hope we'll get smarter as we explore them together and inform public decision-making about casino gambling. We would like to start with Bill Thompson, who is perhaps most neutral in terms of the local debate, for some background on casinos, their location, management, and design.

WILLIAM THOMPSON: If you're going to have a casino, you want to be like Las Vegas. I'm not neutral about the Las Vegas strip. It's wonderful. It's an economic engine unsurpassed in tourism worldwide. If you want to have a casino, you want to be like Las Vegas. Don't be like the people in Iowa that said, we're going to have a campaign for casinos, but what we're going to have is riverboat Huck Finn rides — with prizes. You want to be like Las Vegas.

MGM Grand Detroit Casino, used with permission



Casino promoters present gambling as wholesome fun and excitement, like at the craps table at the MGM Grand Casino in Detroit.

When Detroit passed their proposition, they said, "well, you know, as a model, we're looking at Gary, Indiana." I said, well, if that's your model, you will be very successful, but at what? If your model is Las Vegas, you might not be totally successful, but at least you'll be aiming at the right target. Your target is not Gary, Indiana. Your target is Las Vegas. If you want to have casinos, be like Las Vegas.

Also, if you're going to have casinos, be ready to embrace gambling. You be ready to love gambling. We love gambling in Las Vegas. It is our spouse, our wife, our husband. Gambling. We are married to gambling. We've embraced it. We love it. And we are committed to it.

Don't be like Winnipeg, Canada and say, "well, we have to have it because people are gambling anyway, so we'll have it. But you

know, it's bad. Yeah, we want tourism, but we'll close it on Sundays." You get a lot of this ambivalence. "Well, we'll put it on a boat. It's gotta be on the water. We really want it, but we don't want it near us." If you embrace it, you be ready to love it. Make it work. Make it work for you.

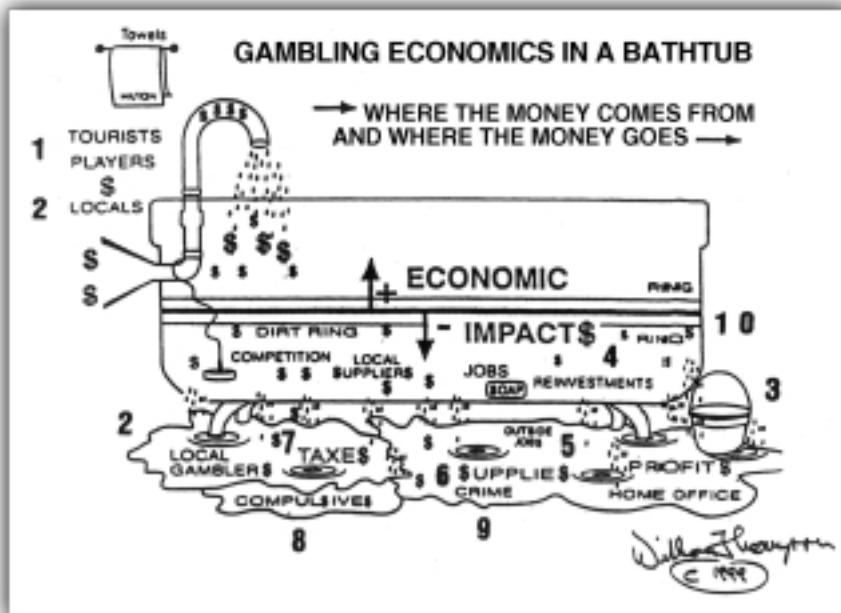
How does it work? Will it work for you? I've got a model. It's a very simple, input-output model. The main question you have to ask — and this relates directly to operation, architecture, design, management and so forth — where does the money come from and where does the money go? Your essential question is: can we get outside money into the Buffalo economy by having a casino? Can we get outside money in?

Where does outside money come from? Well, tourists. Ninety percent of the money

coming into Las Vegas casinos is tourist money. It's coming from outside our economy. In Buffalo you're not going to get 90 percent from tourists, but you're going to get some. So, you need to figure out how you are going to tie tourism to the casino.

You also need to figure out how much casino money you might get back. Right now you are exporting millions of dollars to casinos in other cities. How much of

William N. Thompson



Casino economics is like water in a bathtub. Some of it goes in the tub – benefits to the local economy – some of it goes on the floor – costs, liabilities, and lost revenues.

that can you get back? Forget about Las Vegas. You're not going to retrieve that money. But you can very well retrieve some of the money you're sending to Niagara Falls, Ontario. How much is that? And what percentage of that can you get back? You need to research that.

This was the strategy for casinos in Detroit. But you have a big advantage over Detroit. Windsor is only a mile away and there are loads of people that like to go to Canada rather than downtown Detroit. They have had a hard time drawing people back. You've got 25 miles and three tolls between you and Niagara Falls. Plus, you don't have a good highway — believe me, I drove it last night — and there's an international crossing. So, you have a big advantage over Detroit on keeping the hometown money home if you put a casino here.

But the question is still how much? How much? If you can retrieve, say, 25 percent of the money you're now losing, and then you can add another 10 or 20 percent from tourists, you're in the ballgame to make a casino work.

Then you have to look at the other side. Where is the money going? New York State wants to take most of the 25 percent public share away to Albany. Work on that. This is a big disadvantage for you in the structure of the plan. If the state would commit a share of that money to Buffalo for redevelopment projects, then you'd neutralize the loss effect.

"All the market studies are within a few dollars of each other and they all indicate that this area can support two gaming facilities, one in Niagara Falls, one in Buffalo."

—Rick Jemison

The issue is similar to the bottom-line profits that go to the tribe. How will they choose to spend or invest their 20 or 30 percent of the money? Will they build houses using Buffalo builders, contractors, and so forth? That money stays in the economy and that's good for your region.

One big advantage of having a Native American casino is they don't have to pay state or federal taxes. I know some people don't like this. But from the perspective of the regional economy, it's a good thing because otherwise the money would go to Albany or Washington. Instead, the money will stay here. But, will the tribe commit to spending the money in the Buffalo area? Will they commit to downtown redevelopment projects?

You have to answer these questions — and more. If the answers are the right ones, a casino can work for Buffalo. If the answers are the wrong answers — if you don't have enough tourism — I don't think the money you retrieve from Niagara Falls will be enough to make the casino worth your while.

Location

Where does a casino belong?

HIBLEY: Rick Jemison, if you would, talk to us a little bit about what the Seneca Nation of Indians is considering with regard to locations. Specifically, is it one casino or two casinos, and if just one, will it be in Buffalo or Niagara Falls?

RICK JEMISON: Up to this point, the Seneca Nation has been the prime mover behind this concept. We put forward the investment in terms of market studies, other research, the weekly meetings in Albany to work out a

memorandum of understanding with the Governor, all the litigation, and now legislation — we've taken all the bumps in the road and we're ready to move forward.

Is gaming in Buffalo viable? Definitely. All of our research shows that this is a great market. The Seneca Nation itself has undertaken market studies. We also issued a request for proposals to which six different developers

responded, and each of them did a market study. The City has done a market study through the Mayor's Task Force. The Governor has done a market study. Basically, all these market studies are within a few dollars of each other and they all indicate, most definitely, that this area can support two gaming facilities, one in Niagara Falls, one in Buffalo. Where they will be located, specifically, is up to the Tribal Council and a final decision has not been made. But they will both be within the metropolitan area. That's the best market.

We have also decided that the business of the Seneca Nation is going to be gaming. A successful casino needs a lot of ancillary services to make a whole package — restaurants, entertainment, accommodation, and other things — but we are going to have our hands full opening and then operating the casino. So, we are going to need to have some strong partnerships with the private sector as well as local government to create a whole attraction. The Seneca Nation will focus on operating the casino.

"If we put it downtown it will help generate spin-off investments and attract new customers for our theaters, entertainment, restaurants and hotels."

—Tony Masiello



From Reclaiming Genesee Street, City of Buffalo.

Mayor Masiello's panel on casino location envisioned a new gambling facility as part of a dramatic plan to reclaim Genesee Street as a major thoroughfare connecting downtown to the waterfront.

Local government will get its share of the revenues. The memorandum of understanding that was signed between the President of the Seneca Nation and the Governor provided for that. What that specific share will be is between the City and the Governor. We didn't feel it was our place to negotiate that issue. But there will be new revenues to provide for the increased need for public services that the casino may generate, not only police, fire, streets, and sewage, but for transportation studies and improved infrastructure, too. The City will be able to tap into those revenues to cover those new costs.

SHIBLEY: Mayor, you have also done a lot of thinking about location — downtown versus waterfront, for example. Tell us how you see the issue.

TONY MASIELLO: First of all, we do have a very good market for casino gaming in Buffalo. Everything we've learned — from our studies, our consultants, and from conversations with developers in the casino business — indicates there is a \$600 to \$650 million market left on this side of the border. The consultants tell us that breaks down to about a \$400 million market for Buffalo and \$225 to \$250 million market for Niagara Falls. So, it is a very good market.

"Casinos are designed to draw people in, keep them inside for the longest possible period of time, and take as much money from them as possible. The spin-offs simply don't exist."

—Sam Hoyt

Michael Groll, The Buffalo News, used with permission.



Professor William N. Thompson from the University of Nevada at Las Vegas shared his knowledge of the casino industry with Mayor Masiello and others.

But location is crucial. The memorandum of understanding between the Seneca Nation, agreed to by the Governor and adopted by the Legislature specifies that one casino will be in the Convention Center in Niagara Falls. But the MOU is not specific about a location in Buffalo. My contention is that, in order to make the most of the economic impact of a casino in Buffalo, we need to have a stand-alone gaming facility in our downtown.

If we put it downtown it will help generate spin-off investments and attract new customers for our theaters, entertainment, restaurants and hotels. We already have an infrastructure downtown — hotels, restaurants, theaters, as well as transportation and parking — that we won't have to create on some other location. The casino will only make them stronger. Our restaurants can have business seven nights a week, not just the weekend. Our theaters can have customers twelve months a year. And the people of our community can find new jobs, not only in these businesses, but in the casino itself, in partnership with the Seneca Nation.

"If you only have local money supporting new jobs, you are just moving jobs around. You have to build a structure to get the outside money in."

—Bill Thompson

S H I B L E Y :

A s s e m b l y m a n , Professor Thompson says if we are to have gambling we should emulate Las Vegas. The Mayor suggests a single stand-alone facility in downtown Buffalo. That seems like two different visions. Where are you on that spectrum?

SAM HOYT: First of all, as many people are already aware, I'm opposed to casino gambling in Western New York. I don't think it will have the economic

impact that some people claim it will. Still, I was a bit apprehensive about participating in this forum because Tony Masiello is a very close friend of mine. I am a great admirer of his. He and I agree on just about everything — and there's this one exception.

But I'm against a casino in Buffalo, especially the kind of full-scale Las Vegas-style casino, with all the bells and whistles, that Professor Thompson is suggesting. The research shows that this kind of facility will have the most dramatic, negative economic impact on the community. That's my number one concern. I may not be on the winning side and casinos may come to Western New York anyway. But that's my position.

If casinos do come, however, I want to do everything I can to make sure that we get the best results possible. That's why I think that we ought to be very cautious about introducing that Las Vegas-style of casino. These are buildings that are designed for the very purpose of drawing people in, keeping them inside for the longest possible peri-

od of time, and taking as much money from that customer as possible. Therefore, the spin-offs that so many people speak of simply don't exist.

In fact, there will be a negative economic impact. The Governor's own report said so. Back in 1996, I believe, George Pataki issued a report that said if an Indian-run casino was located in downtown Buffalo, there would be a net loss of 1,200 jobs. A net loss of 1,200 jobs! Every one of us in this room should be concerned about that. If we are going to dramatically change the fabric of this community by introducing gambling to downtown Buffalo, I think we ought to be absolutely certain that there's a positive economic spin-off and not a negative one.



From Reclaiming Genesee Street, City of Buffalo.

The casino panel's plan for downtown would reestablish the connection between downtown — including a new casino — and the waterfront.

Some localities have preferred to keep casino gambling at arm's length, sometimes by placing it offshore on "river-boats." Here is a proposal for the Bridgeport Sporting Club by The Jerde Partnership, Metropolis.

SHIBLEY: Well, here we have it. The Seneca Nation and the Mayor say it's a positive economic return. The Assemblyman says he doesn't see it. Let's take it back to Professor Thompson for a minute.

THOMPSON: We have 36 million tourists coming to Las Vegas every year. On average, they spend four nights and five days. They only spend four hours a day gambling. They have 12 hours a day, 14 hours a day, for other things — which include eating, of course. Shows. Shopping. Walking, which is probably the biggest tourist activity in Las Vegas and it's free. So they do a lot of other things.

And you have a lot of other things to do, too. I was surprised this morning to drive north out Delaware Avenue. You have beautiful streets. You have a beautiful lakeshore. I was thinking, goodness, with a casino and with a million tourists here, you'll have carriages taking people out there. You have a lot of things that could be developed for tourists.

You don't need 36 million visitors a year. If you have one casino that does about \$300 million in revenues a year, and if you can get just 20 percent of that revenue from tourists, from convention people that will be spending extra convention money that they aren't already spending, then you make it successful. If you can't, you don't make it successful. But, the casino will integrate with the town.

Whether the casino is alone or the casino is attached to one hotel, or it's attached to the two or three that seem to be in this area — there will be some internal dynamics. For instance, the casino in New Orleans has no hotel. Well, it's a little hard to comp a player when you have to spend \$250 a night to pay for their hotel room. It's a little easier

in Vegas when you give away one of your own hotel rooms and it only costs you \$30 or \$40. But, you can work those things out. They haven't worked out too well in New Orleans, but it can be part of the formula here.

You also have to rescue money from Buffalo that's now going to Ontario. I would see the casino in Niagara Falls, NY as more of a satellite casino, or a smaller facility that would block people that might otherwise use the Interstate to get to Niagara Falls, Ontario. But a casino better located could also have this collateral advantage. The casino could allow the Convention Center to be reconstructed, reconfigured, and become vibrant again — so, that would be an attraction. I think there are 15 million visitors to Niagara Falls annually. Most of them go to the Canadian side for conferences. I think the casino could be the catalyst for some building renovation and draw those people back.

"My fear is that we're going to be picking our own pockets. If that's the case, the casino is a loser."

—Sam Hoyt

Courtesy of The Jerde Partnership, www.jerde.com



The dynamic here in Buffalo would be different. A casino would provide a general economic boost. But it could have that very catalytic effect. So, you have to go through all the questions here and some of the answers are negative. Some of the answers are positive, and you have to assess whether it would work.

SHIBLEY: But what about the notion that we have to become Las Vegas to cash in on this?

THOMPSON: Well, no. You have to become *like* Las Vegas. That means you have to capture outside dollars and you have to have an entertainment experience — not a gambling experience, but an entertainment experience — and that's got to be for a large share of your customers. Now, on the downside, if you do have just more and more people from Buffalo going to the casinos and they're going every day, then you have social problems. But, you don't want that model.

I'm afraid that is a model that is being developed in Detroit. Detroit has three new casinos. The Windsor casino has not been hurt. They're building a new hotel. Their revenues are back and they're going up. Evidently, Detroit did not take the people away from Windsor. You want to make sure you take the people away from Niagara Falls, Ontario.

"If we assume the market is limited by a picture of Buffalo as it stands today, then we are looking at a smaller market. But we assume things will continue to change. The casino will change the market."

—Rick Jemison

MASIELLO: I think the key point Professor Thompson made is that visitors may gamble for four or five hours a day and then be off looking for other things to do. They're not there all day and all night gambling. That's why I favor

a stand-alone casino downtown — close to our theater district, close to Chippewa Street, and close to our hotels, restaurants, and sporting venues. As I said before, we already have the infrastructure in place to

make downtown Buffalo a total attraction. And it's high quality and first class right in our urban core community.

SHIBLEY: Can you put some more numbers on the economic impact you anticipate, Mayor?

MASIELLO: Our consultants believe there will be approximately 3,000 jobs as a direct result of one 100,000 square foot casino in downtown Buffalo, plus another 4,000 jobs as an indirect result. Those 7,000 jobs will generate about \$250 million in income for those workers. But we also know that there's an indirect impact — in this case about two and a half times that \$250 million in new purchasing power in our community. So this is a tremendous economic engine for our city. It will create investment for private sector jobs with no government subsidies, as well as the indirect impact on the rest of the community. Some of the players will be local residents. But it will also be people who come to Buffalo every day to do business. And with the appropriate convention center near a new casino we will draw even more new visitors to our city.

SHIBLEY: Is it too early to be going to the bank with these new jobs and new tourism visitors?

THOMPSON: The new jobs are very recognizable. However, if they are supported just by local money you will have job offsets. You will lose other jobs, so you won't have a net job gain. So this is the question. If you can get outside money coming in to support the jobs, you will have job growth. If you only have local money supporting new jobs, you are just moving jobs around. You have to build a structure to get the outside money in.

HOYT: If I thought that this was going to have a positive economic impact on our community I would be the first one to support it. I don't think that the evidence shows

that it will. We need to pay attention to the likelihood that the market will be over-saturated with gambling. If this proposal goes forward, we're talking about having six or seven gambling facilities within a 60- or 70-mile radius of where we sit today. The studies cited today about the viability of gambling, first of all, were produced by advocates of gambling, and second of all include market areas, like Toronto and New York City, from which I do not think we will be able to draw.

Now, I love my city. Next to the Mayor, nobody loves it more than I do. But, I don't believe that the City of Buffalo will attract visitors from the New York City area or from Toronto to gamble here when there are multiple casino opportunities within just a stone's throw of each of those communities. As Professor Thompson has said, if we don't draw a large number of tourists to our casino, it won't be successful as an economic development strategy. Despite all of our great tourism assets, which we're developing under the leadership of the Mayor and others, I simply don't see hundreds of thousands of visitors coming to Buffalo to gamble. My fear is that we're going to be picking our own pockets. If that's the case, as Professor Thompson told us, the casino is a loser.

SHIBLEY: So, we've got jobs and job offsets. We've got tourism and we've got the threat of over-saturation. Mr. Jemison, can you help us here? How's it going?

JEMISON: Well, if we assume the market will be limited by a picture of Buffalo as it stands today, then we will be looking at a considerably smaller market. But we are assuming that things will continue to change. I think "change" is the key word. The casino will change the market to some degree. But we are also expecting continued change — continued improvements — in all of the other attractions the community has

to offer. We already have The Zoo, the Albright-Knox, the Historical Society, the Theater District, and major league sports teams. But there's more that can be done, and more that is being done. A new casino can be an important part of changing our market for visitors.

Regarding jobs, we agree with the estimate of 3,000 direct jobs and 4,000 indirect jobs. A very modest percentage of these will be for members of the Seneca Nation. Our intention was clear in the memorandum of understanding. For example, local law enforcement agencies will serve the casino. That means officers will be added to the force because of the casino, and for every police officer added that means another family with an income. The Seneca Nation needs probably 700 to 800 jobs for our own people. So, all the other positions are going to be filled from folks within the community. I look at it in terms of a family. Seven thousand new jobs means 7,000 families that have at least one wage earner to pay the bills.

Anytime you add a wage earner into a household, it has to help. It's got to stimulate the local economy because that dollar is going to be turning over and over locally. Even with the Seneca Nation — we may have gas stations and smoke shops that you all heard about — but where do we go to buy our clothes? Where do we go to buy our cars? Who do we pay for our utilities? The dollars that we spend even within the Seneca Nation get turned over and over within the Western New York economy. What happens to the Western New York economy is good for the Seneca Nation. What happens to the Seneca Nation economy is good for Western New York.

"This is a tremendous economic engine for our city. It will create investment for private sector jobs with no government subsidies... With the appropriate convention center near a new casino we will draw even more new visitors to our city."

— Tony Masiello

Design

Can we make a casino to fit Buffalo?

HIBLEY: Professor Kleinman, you've recently returned from a trip to Detroit. Can you give us some insight about casinos from the design perspective?

KENT KLEINMAN: Sure. I returned from Detroit this weekend. But the weekend before I went to Niagara Falls. I'm becoming one of these compulsives that Bill was talking about. So, I want to take you on a tour through the eyes of someone who's looking at the architecture of the Niagara Falls casino because I think it's revealing. I clearly subscribe to the notion that if you look at the form and the shape and the motifs of architecture, you can read something about the intentions of the people that are putting a thing together.

As you arrive at the Niagara Falls casino, you drive past a river, past a view, up a hill and pull into a four-story parking structure. If you're lucky and you park on the river side of the parking structure, it's actually a phenomenal view. If you're unlucky, like I was, you park on the other side and you see it not

at all. If you leave the fourth floor of the parking structure you have ten strides until you hit the front door of the casino. That takes about five seconds.

The front lobby is a vaulted rotunda marked with a canopied pseudo-ceiling. And if you look up, you'll notice that it's a simulated

twilight sky with little speckles of lights that simulate stars coming out. Which is a suggestion that that is the quality of light you will encounter for the rest of your time in the casino. You enter into another room, again on the upper floor, and it's called the Courtyard. The naming of these places, I think, is significant. The Courtyard is a space that is surrounded with false facades of pseudo-Victorian buildings. The windows are all mirrored glass. Which is to say they're not actual windows at all.

If you move through the Courtyard, you enter the Conservatory, which is modeled, of course, on the Butterfly Conservatory. And, if you look around, you will see motifs of butterflies fluttering on the walls and on the ceiling and even in the carpet. The room next to the Conservatory has a sky clerestory in it and it's called The Garden. If you look around the frieze of this room, you see painted faux landscapes and blue skies.

In the middle of the building is the grand circulation facility, which is a set of escalators, a stair, and it too, has a kind of pseudo-baroque vaulted ceiling. This is a really extraordinary piece of artifice. The ceiling changes — the weather changes — inside. It goes from a fairly clear twilight sky to thunder and lightning, which is produced with light effects. It's all very visible. If you look closely, in the flower pots, you'll see there are lights with moving apparatus that produce thunder and lightning.

"The only time you get to see the river is if you exit the facility and look away from the casino toward the falls. Then you realize that you are in one of the great natural wonders of the world."

—Kent Kleinman



The Urban Design Project

Like many casinos, the recently constructed Casino Niagara insulates the visitor from anything outside of the building.

If you go down to the bottom floor, you can eventually exit out onto the riverside. The most extraordinary part of this casino is probably that entrance, the part that faces the river. It's about a 30-story-high glass façade facing nothing but Niagara Falls, which is a sight to behold, of course. But, it is made of mirrored glass, which means you cannot see outside. So, the only time you get to see the river again is if you exit the facility and then actually look away from the casino toward the falls. Then you realize that you are actually in one of the great natural wonders of the world.

A walk around the perimeter of the building is quite instructive. There are very few doors to the casino other than the one we just entered and left from. There are no windows on grade at all. The only windows are on the fifth floor. That's the administration wing. There are about ten of them on a whole block building. The only place where you see outside activity is around the side: if you pass by the dumpsters there are 4 picnic tables where people eat their lunch and then go back into the casino.

"Our casinos do have doors, you know. Doors that you can find. The Mirage, has an atrium and there is light coming in and some of the places actually have windows and a few of them have clocks."

—Bill Thompson

Now, this is not an anomaly. If you go to Detroit, you can see very similar things. There are three casinos there. One of them is in a very interesting building, the former Wonder Bread factory. It's actually an extraordinary facility. They went through great efforts to brick up all the windows in

MGM Grand Detroit Casino, used with permission.



that one. You go into the parking garage. You exit over a bridge and then once inside the casino, you're

in The Motor City Casino, but that's all you know about the Motor City. At the MGM Grand, there's the same kind of typology. You park and never see the city.

The unabashedly fortress-like MGM Grand Casino in Detroit lures security-conscious patrons with a promise of "daylight parking all night long."

The Greek Town Casino is different and I think if you want to, we should talk more about that model because, urbanistically, it offers some hope. You probably see where I'm going with this. I think the design of the casino is intended to keep you inside. It's not in the nature of these facilities to connect to the urban fabric. It's not in the nature of these facilities to be penetrated by openings and doors and to connect to other facilities. It's not natural for these facilities to try to connect you to things that are beyond their own four walls. It doesn't mean it can't be done. But if we're going to put one of these facilities in downtown Buffalo, we have to bear in mind, the design challenges are huge. Not just from an architectural perspective, but from the culture of the people who build these things. From that perspective, I think the challenges are very large.

SHIBLEY: Professor Thompson, how is Las Vegas addressing such issues?

"There's no reason why we should not design and build attractive parking ramps that also include retail, and maybe hotel and casino in one building."

—Tony Masiello

THOMPSON: I think we're getting a change in Las Vegas. We used to subscribe to the theory that we should capture visitors and keep them in one building. But now we know we have to share the tourist with all of Las Vegas. Twenty, thirty years ago, it was the high roller that came to Las Vegas. Now it is the tourist. We're the leading overnight tourist attraction in the world.

Our casinos do have doors, you know. Doors that you can find. At Caesar's you still might get lost trying to get outside, trying to go to a restaurant, trying to see a glimmer of light.

But the Mirage, has an atrium and there is light coming in and some of the places actually have windows and a few of them have clocks.

SHIBLEY: Do you mean functioning clocks? (laughter).

THOMPSON: We do want people to be connected to the world. The Greek Town casino was identified as a place that's connected to the city. It's built along an atrium — I think it's called Trapper's Alley — with many shops. The shops, of course, have been revitalized now that the casino is there. The new Tiger Stadium or whatever it's called — Comerica Park — is only two blocks away from the casino. The people-mover is right at the casino and can take people to the Cobo Hall Convention area and the Red Wings hockey games. It's really connected — the one place that is suc-

cessful in terms of relating the visitor to what Detroit offers.

I might mention, when the Detroit casinos opened, people were asking: "could this be a convention area?" I said look, you have everything it took us 50 years to build in Las Vegas. And, we still don't have professional sports teams. Now you think of Buffalo — you have two professional major league sports teams. We've been begging for them but, for all the social and political reasons, the leagues seem to reject us. Not until the last few years could we really support the teams, but we have over a million people and we probably could now.

You already have an airport. It took us 50 years to develop an airport. You have a zoo. We don't really have a zoo. Art museums —



Courtesy of Greektown Casino, Detroit, Michigan. Operated by the Millennium Management Group, LLC.

The Greektown Casino in downtown Detroit opens to the street and the surrounding city.

we have two casinos now that are developing world-class art museums, but up until this moment, we didn't have them. It's taken us so much time to do this. You already have theater. We don't have live theater. We do have some theater in the casinos — some of them do put on theatrical shows, but we've never had live theater. You already have that. So you already have many of the elements that it took us 50 years to develop. So, you have a leg up on starting something. The question is: will you? Can you make the connections? Will the casino help? And I'm saying, it can. I'm not answering the question though. I'm not saying that it will.

SHIBLEY: Mr. Jemison, you've looked now at several proposals from developers. Do you think these developers are headed toward delivering an "innie" or an "outie" facility? (laughter)

JEMISON: I have never heard it put quite that way, but I would like to say an "outie." As I said earlier, from the very beginning we have recognized that this was going to be a partnership. So far it has been a partnership of mutual respect. We — the Seneca Nation — extended our hand and the Mayor

has graciously grasped our hand and agreed to walk through this process with us. The business community has come

forward. They've extended their hand. We've extended our hand. We agree that we're going to work together in a partnership to bring forward the best possible outcome for everyone.

"There is still a kind of innate culture in the casino industry, which is averse to intermingling with or being transparent to the community."

—Kent Kleinman

Courtesy of Architectural Review.



We're looking at the first-stage plans here. This is just the initial step. It doesn't deter-

mine what we're going to do five, ten or fifteen years down the road. I don't believe that we should limit ourselves. If someone out there has an idea, has a dream, they should follow up on it. We've looked at things that we thought were completely out of the question. For example, in the state of Wisconsin they've created a number of indoor water parks, completely enclosed. They have the same type of weather that Buffalo has. They are indoor amusement parks with Indian gaming. They don't look at the weather as a deterrent. They look at it as another circumstance they have to deal with. Is a glass half full or is it half empty? Our philosophy has been, it's half full and there's a great potential for positive change.

SHIBLEY: Professor Kleinman, if it's important for the casino to connect to the city around it, how would you constrain the urban design surrounding a facility like this to insure it didn't give us the kind of experience that you painted so clearly in Niagara Falls?

KLEINMAN: It's not easy to list the parameters. A major point would be that if we don't pay close attention to the design of these

Contemporary casinos often feature fantastic interiors like this outrageous Gaudi-esque design at the Las Vegas Sunset Station casino.

"One casino in Las Vegas had the old strategy: keep them inside. That was the Aladdin and it is now going into Chapter 11."

—Bill Thompson

facilities they tend to become insular and inward looking. My take on these kind of problems is that the more challenging the assignment, the more interesting the solution will be from an architectural perspective. I think we actually have a huge amount of architectural talent in this very community to start to put proposals on the table that would be radically different, even from Greek Town.

Although Greek Town does have Trappers Alley and it does intermingle with the community in a way that one would say is desirable, you need to look more closely. It has windows. It has glass in the windows. It has shutters on the windows. And the shutters are nailed closed and you can't open them. You know, so there is still a kind of innate culture in the casino industry, which is averse to intermingling with or being transparent to the community.

It is not that it can't be overcome and I think that it's a fantastic architectural premise to work with. But, if that premise isn't put squarely on the table, I think it will be ignored. We will end up with a product that is not going to deliver the kind of transparency I think the Mayor is hoping that it will have. I concur that downtown Buffalo has a huge amount of assets, particularly the existing infrastructure. It's terribly exciting. There are many ways to do parking ramps. We've got the worst of them in Buffalo. There are very exciting ways to do parking. You know, I think one could design fantastic parking if it's presented as a design problem. If it's just a functional prob-

lem, you're going to end up with the type of parking that you see everywhere.

MASIELLO: Kent was very eloquent in describing how unattractive casinos have been. Quite frankly, though, most buildings I have seen in this city and other cities built after the 1940's haven't been all that attractive either. This is not just casinos, but other privately owned buildings. I see this as an opportunity to inject design standards. Not only is there no reason why we can't build attractive parking ramps. There's no reason why we should not design and build attractive ramps that also include retail, and maybe hotel and casino in one building. You will be hearing in the near future that this Mayor, along with the private sector, have engaged architects from our community to think through the location and create a design for an attractive casino that is accessible, that fits our urban fabric, and that capitalizes on all the assets of our downtown.

I think accessibility is also a key. I've talked with the mayors of Detroit, Windsor, and Niagara Falls, Ontario. They all stress the importance of access. A casino customer has to be able to get to the casino and get out of the casino. But you also need to keep in mind how that casino impacts the rest of the businesses and buildings in your downtown community. You're going to have people going to casinos 24 hours a day. You also have people coming into your city to work at 8:00 a.m., and leaving at 5:00 or 6:00 p.m. We need to serve both. So, I've asked those with professional expertise in these areas to look very carefully at design and access and to look very, very carefully at how a casino can interact with the other well-established assets in our downtown community.

THOMPSON: Yes on access. I would emphasize walking access — walking in and walking out. The old Las Vegas thinking was that we have to capture the player because if they leave we lose their patronage. That's the thinking that has permeated the industry, and that's why the casino in Niagara Falls turned out the way it did. This actually has more relevance in Las Vegas. We still think we have to capture them, because if they look out the window, they see another casino. If they have a run of bad luck they figure they might have good luck at the next casino.

But if you only have one casino in a town, it changes the whole formula. I spent 1986-87 on sabbatical in Europe studying casinos. I visited 140 casinos. They had windows. They had clocks. They had open areas where you could go out on the lawn. They would invite their players to have a nice long dinner, not a fast buffet. They didn't have to worry if they went outside they would lose them to another casino. In Buffalo you will have a nice 25-mile buffer and you won't have to worry about this. Players are not going to go out to their car and drive to Niagara Falls. If it were next door, you would worry about it. But it's not, so I think you can have your casino open to the city and open for pedestrian traffic.

One casino in Las Vegas had the old strategy: we keep them inside. That was the Aladdin and it is now going into Chapter 11. Or maybe it's already in bankruptcy. Anyway, we hope it stays open. We hope Hilton buys it and revives it, but they're going to have to spend \$100 million building a door onto the strip because they did not have a doorway for the people walking up and down the strip. They put it around the side, where you'd have to walk 100 yards off the strip to get to it and it's been terrible for business. Accessibility on foot is very, very important and these links are important. As far as traffic is concerned: you'll enjoy having traffic jams in Buffalo. (laughter)

MGM Grand Detroit Casino, used with permission



With a drink in one hand, a cup of coins in the other, and a slot machine in front of you, the outside world seems light years away.

Management

What is needed to make it worth our while?

HIBLEY: Assemblyman, so we've got windows, clocks, leisure walking, we're connected to all our stores downtown — talk to us.

HOYT: If it's going to happen — and remember, in the end I am opposed — we must recognize that we have in Buffalo an incredible inventory of great American architecture. No other city, other than Chicago, has a greater inventory of American-designed buildings as magnificent as ours. If we're going to go forward with this, let's keep that in mind. Where possible, we should reuse existing buildings. There's talk of using the Statler office building, the former Statler hotel. That makes sense to me. The Statler is an incredible building. Whether we turn it into a hotel again or the casino itself, it makes sense to reuse it.

We might also use this development as a way to reduce office vacancy rates in downtown Buffalo. Our vacancy rates are hovering around 25 percent. If current Statler tenants move into other vacant buildings downtown as a result of redevelopment that's a benefit. But the key point is to remember that our incredible architecture is one of the things that is great about Buffalo. If we go forward with a new convention center — God knows the one we have is the ugliest thing ever built — and if we go forward with a casino we have to protect our great architecture by reusing the old and making sure the new is designed according to appropriate design standards. Frank Lloyd Wright, Louis Sullivan, H.H. Richardson, I.M. Pei, E.B. Greene — the list of our great architects goes on and on.

THOMPSON: We haven't talked yet about crime or compulsive gambling. There will be problems. But you can manage the problems by making sure your casino is designed for tourism and for a Buffalo experience. We overlooked compulsive gambling in Las Vegas until recently. It never was a problem in Las Vegas until we became a major urban center. Now the local residents are gambling. We've constructed a whole series of casinos

The social impacts of casinos — crime and compulsive gambling — can be mitigated through design and management. The Taj Mahal Hotel in Atlantic City and its neighbors.

"How do we continue to reinvest in the urban infrastructure of culture, entertainment, and architecture that we already have? With money that comes back to the City from the State's share of those revenues."

—Tony Masiello



Courtesy of the Atlantic City Press.

that are called locals' casinos. Don't make your casino a locals' casino. Make it by design a tourist casino, whether the players will be locals or not. If people come for a two or three-day experience and go home, they're not candidates to become compulsive gamblers. If you design a casino for a

player to come in every day, you're designing one for compulsive gamblers. Compulsive gambling is a variable on the chart. It's not a fixed figure. You can deal with it through design and through other management decisions.

The same goes for crime. Ambient casino crime is a factor that can be controlled. I think Las Vegas will come out ahead in the post-September 11 period because we're a place that is very secure. We have cameras everywhere. We have good perimeter security around the casinos. These are things you will need here as well. Crime that occurs in the community, away from the casino, might occur anyway and might be more severe because you have gambling in the community. But all of these are factors that you can control.

"The tap that has always flowed freely from Albany and Washington will be reduced to a drip. We need to be careful about grandiose new projects and focus on the important ones that are on the table today and get them done."

—Sam Hoyt

It's also important to reinvest the profits in the operation. You have to make sure the casino has deep pockets so it keeps up to date, keeps refurbishing itself, modernizes, and buys new machines every two or three years when new

models come out. We get reinvestment in Las Vegas. Our whole strip was built, and is continually rebuilt, by existing casinos reinvesting their profits.

MASIELLO: That's a good point. But I would also say it is just as important to reinvest the public revenues generated by the casino in public services and infrastructure that

MGM Grand Detroit Casino used with permission.



Casino interiors offer players an image of luxury, like in the "VIP Room" at the MGM Grand Casino in Detroit.

support the casino. According to the memorandum of understanding, New York State's share over a 14-year period would be approximately \$950 million. Over those 14 years the State's share will rise from 18 percent to 25 percent. Right now there is no share of those monies dedicated to local government, city or county. Quite frankly, I think we should get the lion's share of that money.

We should also designate those funds for specific purposes in our city, including investment in downtown economic redevelopment projects. How do we build this infrastructure? How do we reconnect the city with the water? How do we reconnect our city with the other assets of our community? How do we continue to reinvest in the urban infrastructure of culture, entertainment, and architecture that we already have? The answer is with money that comes back to the City from the State's share of those revenues.

We should also designate revenue for neighborhood investment. No city can live with a downtown core alone. We also need to have

neighborhoods where people live, where they raise their children, and where their children go to school. We also need a share of this revenue to create and improve upon the services we need to provide for the citizens of our city — police, fire, parks, and schools.

It is of paramount importance that we go to the State Legislature and the Governor with a bona fide plan that designates revenues for economic development and reinvestment in downtown. We are working on such a plan right now. Among other things, it should include the creation of an entity — like the corporation that developed Battery Park City — to be a conduit for these investments, manage them, and bring to fruition the kind of change we want to see in downtown.

HOYT: I agree that the local share of revenues has to be much bigger. The number that has been discussed is three percent. That's inexcusable. It's totally unacceptable. Again, if casinos are going to happen, one of the battles I will wage is to make sure that the City of Buffalo, Erie County, and other local governments get a very significant share of the revenue. We ought to reverse it. The state can have three percent and we'll start negotiating from that point.

Where should it go? Well, I think the Mayor has done a good job over the last few years in building a consensus for community priorities. He held the Neighborhood Summits to ask people in every Council district "what are your priorities?" He created a strategic plan for downtown and, again, asked people to express their priorities. What should we be investing in? It was a very good, bottom-up process.

My number one priority is to invest our money in public education. This city will never, ever achieve the economic renaissance we desire until we restore confidence

in Buffalo's public schools. With the leadership of the Mayor, we have gone forward with the joint schools construction project, which will invest up to \$1 billion in building six new schools and rehabilitating every other school in Buffalo. But, guess what? That \$1 billion requires a local match of at least six percent — that's at least \$60 million. So, before we start creating new projects that are going to cost hundreds of millions of dollars, let's make sure that project gets done.

The Mayor has grand ideas for Memorial Auditorium and I've been working closely with him on that. That project needs to get done. The Canal District project is important to the future of Buffalo — as important as any other project we're involved in. That needs to get done. And you know what? If there's a big stream of revenue coming in, we ought to take down the Skyway. If we're going to do the waterfront right, we ought to remove the Skyway.

We've got a list of projects on the table in Buffalo that easily is over \$1 billion in cost. We've got to set priorities as a community. The Mayor's efforts to do that from the bottom-up have been excellent. After that, we've got to set our minds to making sure they get funded. We are hitting very difficult economic times in the United States and in New York State. The great prosperity that the rest of the country enjoyed during the 1990's is no longer there. The tap that has always flowed freely from Albany and from Washington will be reduced to a drip. So, we need to be careful about proposing all sorts of grandiose new projects and we need to focus on the important ones that are on the table today and getting them done.

MASIELLO: Thanks Sam. You did a great job outlining how we could spend the money. Now, can I get your vote on getting it done? (laughter)

Can Buffalo compete?

"The outer harbor is some of the most valuable land in Buffalo and I don't think it's the best use of that land to put big boxes there in the form of a casino and a hotel."

—Tony Masiello

HIBLEY: We have time for some questions from the audience.

JUDITH FISHER: Professor Thompson, I've been listening to you very carefully today and I really appreciate your remarks. We have a proposal to put the casino downtown, but we also have some people who think we should put the casino on the waterfront. What do you think will be the impact of a downtown casino on the productivity of our downtown workforce and, in turn, on the decisions of business leaders to locate and invest in downtown Buffalo?

THOMPSON: Well, business people will locate where there will be business activity. If a casino creates business activity for them, they'll be happy to locate. Otherwise, I think the casino should be structured as a tourist casino, even if all the players are not going to be tourists. The casino should not look at the surrounding office buildings and say, "there's our market." These things can be designed in. If it takes you ten minutes to get inside and get located then it can't be a lunch hour facility with people running in and running out. Don't have the check cashing wheels that we have in Las Vegas. You could avoid things like the slot card clubs and so forth. Overall, the design and the layout can make it more compatible with a downtown location.

The objective with a downtown casino in Buffalo will be to connect gaming with hotels, restaurants, entertainment, shopping, and theater.

MASIELLO: Let me just add a couple of reasons why the casino should go downtown and not on the waterfront. First, the outer harbor is some of the most valuable land in Buffalo and I don't think it's the best use of that land to put big boxes there in the form of a casino and a hotel. Second, it isn't the best use of our limited funds to build a whole new infrastructure out there when we already have one downtown. And, third, if we build the casino downtown, near a new convention center, and all the amenities we already have, we can create the kind of year-round, round the clock, seven-days-a-week activity that will bring new people into our downtown community.

ROGER TREVINO: Professor Thompson, can you give us an idea of the sales per square foot in retail in Las Vegas and also the average restaurant tab, maybe measured against the norms in the country?

THOMPSON: We have the full range of restaurants. We have very nice restaurants outside of casinos and inside of casinos as well. As a matter of fact, we're going for the finest restaurants in the world inside casinos now. Revenue per square foot shopping



From Reclaiming Genesee Street, City of Buffalo.

"Casinos spend about three percent of their revenues on marketing. Make sure the marketing plan is directed at tourists. Casino marketing will promote the casino. But it should also sell Buffalo."

—Bill Thompson

— I'm not sure what the numbers are. But the Forum shopping center at Caesar's Palace, is the number one shopping area in the world at about \$1,500 a square foot.

MASIELLO: The issue of restaurants is important. Everybody thinks casino visitors all eat in the casino or the casino hotel. I've been to casinos — in Windsor, Ontario, for example — where you could eat dinner at any restaurant you want and come back and they will pick up the tab. Mike Militello is nodding his head. We want to bring visitors to Buffalo — tourists as well as gamblers — and we want them to go to our restaurants. In partnership with the Seneca Nation, we can work out, first, what kind of restaurants are in the casino itself, and second, arrangements for people to eat in restaurants outside of the casino.

MIKE SENTER: It's obvious to me from the discussion today that the success of this venture hinges on attracting enough tourists. What happens if we fail and we get mostly local gamblers? Professor Thompson, do you think it will fail? And Mr. Jemison, what do you do if it does?

THOMPSON: About 40 percent of the total has to be money from outside for this to have a net positive economic impact on your community. But you're sending a lot of money over to Niagara Falls already. Any money you pull back from Niagara Falls is, in effect, outside money. If you pulled all your money back from Niagara Falls, it would be successful just with local gamblers. But, you won't pull it all back. I did a study of the Native American casinos in Wisconsin, and with 20 percent out-of-state money, Wisconsin came out ahead. I think you'll get comparable results here. Plus, the money you draw back from Ontario will make this a success. So, your initial goal should be to get 20 percent of the business from tourists.

JEMISON: We don't believe that this is going to fail. As Professor Thompson pointed out,

the whole image of gaming and the philosophy behind it have changed. It's no longer gaming per se. It's entertainment. It's family entertainment. Nowadays, whole families travel. They don't leave the children home. The children go with them. We are now seeing child care facilities in casinos. The whole family can go to a city and stay for three, four, five days. We might do what they have done at Disneyland, where parents get a beeper keyed to a bracelet on their child and you can check on your child any time. Casinos now provide, not just playrooms, but computers, and activities for everyone from young children to adolescents. These are the kinds of activities that we're considering. We don't want to focus just on the adults. We want to focus on the whole family because that increases our chances of getting more patrons in. It is entertainment. It's the entertainment industry.

SHIBLEY: If we fail, we may have renovated a few buildings in the process, if nothing else.

JAMES DERBY: I worked in the tourism industry in Niagara Falls for many years, and think it is a misconception that Buffalo can draw a significant number of tourists to a



Casino Niagara presents an alluring entranceway, but once patrons enter they leave the outside world far behind.

Courtesy of Greektown Casino, Detroit, Michigan.
Operated by the Millennium Management Group, LLC.



The Greektown Casino features a grand entrance, accessible to the street and city.

casino downtown. There's very little to offer tourists in Buffalo. The zoo? The art gallery? Big deal. The tourists want to go to Niagara Falls, Ontario. As for the casino gamblers, they don't go to any of the tourism attractions anyway. How do you expect this to work when the tourists you are banking on won't come?

THOMPSON: I think you do have tourist attractions here. I think I was very surprised that all the grass was mowed up Delaware Avenue. You do have things that could be very attractive to people around the country and you need to build on those and promote them.

It is worth mentioning that Niagara Falls, Ontario hasn't received all the economic benefit that they might have. The provincial government in Toronto takes 50 percent of the profits out of Niagara Falls. The casino there has been some stimulus for building three or four new hotels. But the economic boom of the 1990's also contributed to that. The money Niagara Falls gets is basically regional money. They don't get outside tourist money. But they do get Buffalo money. And it's only because of the international border that it is outside money. If the border wasn't there, Americans would be getting the jobs and income and it would help the U.S. economy as much as the Canadian.

MASIELLO: I think Buffalo has extraordinary tourist attractions. We just haven't taken full advantage of them yet. It's just one example, but look at what the Monet exhibit at the Albright-Knox did in terms of bringing in visitors. I admit that we do a poor job in marketing our city and its assets. We have to do much better. But we have a very strong infrastructure of attractions, especially in certain niche markets of art,

architecture, and history. We need to invest in marketing those attractions. And we need to invest in those attractions themselves. But we do have extraordinary things to see and do here in Buffalo.

SHIBLEY: We have time for just one more question, and then summaries from the panel.

MIKE MILITELLO: Mine's a short statement, really, not a question. We have a tremendous resource in Buffalo and we have bricks and mortar, nuts and bolts. Should the Seneca Nation decide to build a casino in Buffalo and in Niagara Falls, it will spark the entertainment entrepreneurs here. There's nobody that's ever competed with us, from the days of the Town Casino going forward. Buffalo has an amazing amount of entertainment resources. We may build brand new nightclubs to hold two or three thousand people. We may have a place in the Seneca Nation's gaming budget to put on these shows, bring in new entertainment, build these grand restaurants, and to attract even bigger names. But what we all have as Buffalonians, but also as Americans, is our ability to compete. We've always won that battle of marketing and entertainment

"The whole image of gaming and the philosophy behind it have changed. It's no longer gaming per se. It's entertainment. It's family entertainment."

—Rick Jemison

and we'll continue to look forward to the opportunity to fight that battle when the time comes.

SHIBLEY: Thank you. We're going to take a minute each from our panelists to make a short concluding statement and then a very big thank you to this panel.

THOMPSON: Let me add just one note. Look at the marketing plan. Casinos spend about three percent of their revenues on marketing. Make sure the marketing plan is directed at tourists. Casino marketing will promote the casino. But it should also sell Buffalo. Make sure it does.

MASIELLO: Casino gaming — a single stand-alone casino in our downtown community — is not a cure-all for Buffalo. I see it as part of a larger effort to create jobs, generate new revenue, and attract new private investment without public subsidy. I believe that with the proper design standards and planning, we can create a gaming experience in our urban core that will generate jobs, generate activity and augment the existing institutions of entertainment, hotels and restaurants, and give us the financial wherewithal to reinvest in economic redevelopment, neighborhoods, and city services.

HOYT: Speaking of marketing, I asked for a copy of the marketing study two months ago and still haven't received it. We in Albany are being asked to make a very important public policy decision that will have an important impact on our community for decades, perhaps generations. I would recommend to those who are partners in the casino proposal to provide the information we need to make an educated decision.

I'm still opposed to casino gambling. I'm convinced that we can do much better than casinos to build our community. Otherwise, I think we're heading in the right direction. The Buffalo Niagara Enterprise initiative is a positive development. We need to re-market and re-image our community to the nation. But I think we are sending a conflicting message. Are we the high-tech, sophisticated, hard-working town of the BNE? Or are we the home of gambling? Frankly, if we are the latter, and if I'm a CEO or corporate

site selector elsewhere in the country, I'm going to think twice about relocating in Buffalo.

Fundamental economic development for Buffalo has to start from scratch — by dramatically reducing taxes on the State level and on the local level, and by dramatically reducing the utility costs we have in New York State. Only then, when we can make New York State more business friendly. Only then when we can compete with the border communities and border states. Only then will we really begin to see the true, long-term economic development and job creation that we need here in Buffalo.

KENT KLEINMAN: I agree with Sam's characterization of this city as being one of the great ones in terms of turn of the century American architecture. But here's a cautionary note: as we know, that fabric is always fragile and needs a lot of attention all the time. It occurs to me that we are, in fact, sitting in a building (the Hyatt Regency Buffalo addition) that is of questionable value to the urban fabric. So, if we're going to go ahead with this, we should do so carefully, knowing that the wrong decisions have long-lasting effect on the city.

RICK JEMISON: Before we close, I would be remiss if I did not introduce you to Cyrus Schindler, President of the Seneca Nation. I regard him as one of the greatest presidents the Seneca Nation has ever had.

In the government of the Seneca Nation we have a sixteen-member Tribal Council that deliberates and makes the decisions that move our nation forward. All of us have developed a relationship of mutual respect with the government of the City of Buffalo, members of the New York State Assembly, the Senate, the Governor's office, U.S. Senators, and the Congressmen. But perhaps the most important relationship is with the people of Western New York. They are the greatest resource the region has. We're very resourceful. And in the long run this thing is going to be successful because we will all come together and put our minds together to see what we can make, and great things will be accomplished. Thank you.



The Urban Design Project is a center in the University of Buffalo School of Architecture and Planning devoted to service, teaching and research in the pursuit of a critical practice of urban design. It seeks to serve the communities of the Buffalo Niagara city-region by bringing urban design students and faculty together with local governments, community based organizations and citizens in general, to engage the work of making better places and stronger communities. It also works to enrich the body of knowledge about the practice of urban design – in general and with specific interest in the places, sites, neighborhoods, and districts of our region.