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USAN BOARD OF DIRECTORS APPROVES BOUNDARY REVISION

Development District will now include Aquarium of Niagara, Boundary Change Will Help Facilitate City's Cultural District

USA Niagara Development Corporation (USAN) Board of Directors today met and approved expanded boundaries for the USAN Development District, helping facilitate a cultural district as proposed in the City of Niagara Falls' Comprehensive Plan. The revised boundaries will now include nearly 22 acres north of Main Street, including the area surrounding the Aquarium of Niagara, improving USAN's ability to fulfill its long-term vision for a cultural destination that is an integral component of local economic development and revitalization plans.

"This strategic refinement of USAN's boundary is a natural fit for our efforts," said USAN President Christopher Schoepflin. "The boundary expansion passed today will not only help with efforts for the Aquarium, but will also enhance the city's capacity to create a cultural district as described in its Comprehensive Plan."

Since its inception in 2001, USAN, through its parent organization Empire State Development (ESD), has facilitated select efforts outside of the USAN District, such as with the Aquarium. With \$90,000 in ESD assistance, the Aquarium, which opened in 1965 and is the only such facility in the Buffalo-Niagara region, recently completed a master plan for a multiyear upgrade and expansion program of the facility. The boundary change will benefit the Aquarium by including its area within the focus of USAN's future economic development efforts.

The approval of a boundary expansion does not include additional funding for projects or an increase in USAN's annual capital investment budget. While expanding the District will not commit USAN to any specific financial assistance for the Aquarium, the expansion of the District may assist the Aquarium in other fund raising efforts.

The expanded boundary line for the District takes into account Aquarium officials' near-term desire for their facility to be within the District, along with other general planning principles: to preserve a logical geographic continuity of the boundary, inclusion of related properties (such as opposing block faces on selected streets) and preserving opportunities for potential longer-term initiatives to facilitate the city's adopted Comprehensive Plan policies.

The city's proposed cultural district includes the area surrounding the Aquarium, the Niagara Gorge Discovery Center and would include at least one other enclosed or outdoor cultural and/or performance attraction, along with an integrated system of pedestrian access linking this portion of downtown with the Niagara River Gorge. Also included are the city-owned lands at DeFranco Park and a collection of architecturally historic residential, commercial, and lodging structures.

"I'm pleased that the USAN Board of Directors agrees that it should expand its footprint to include the only aquarium in the State of New York, the Aquarium of Niagara," said Senator Mark Grisanti. "We have much work ahead of us, but with an expanded geographic district and the inclusion of the Aquarium, I believe our efforts will be strengthened, leading to the success and prosperity of Niagara Falls."

"The passage of expanded territorial limits for the USAN District will increase the state agency's future economic development efforts, generating more investor interest downtown and adding to the economic growth and tourist interest expected with the opening of the new culinary arts center and Aquarium upgrades," said Assemblymen John Ceretto. "It's also clear to me that the reconfiguring of the boundaries to include the Aquarium will ultimately benefit this important resource in our region."

"This expansion, which serves as a positive reflection on the progress USAN is making, will offer additional investors the development expertise and resources of USAN's staff," said City of Niagara Falls Mayor Paul Dyster. "It is my hope that this expansion will also lead to additional funding for USAN that can, in turn, spur downtown development."

"We feel the aquarium is an important part of both the visitor experience as well as a significant regional asset," said Aquarium of Niagara Executive Director Nancy Chapin. "The action taken today recognizes that fact and will provide greater opportunity to achieve our goals of renovation and expansion."

USAN, a subsidiary of Empire State Development Corporation, is solely dedicated to the support and promotion of economic development initiatives in Niagara Falls by leveraging private investment and encouraging growth and renewal of the tourism industry in the City of Niagara Falls. For more information, visit www.usaniagara.com.

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