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**Empire State Development Announces Start of Construction on New Hotel in Niagara Falls**

*With state funding, DoubleTree by Hilton set to be newest hotel on Upper Niagara River*

Empire State Development today announced the start of construction for a \$27 million DoubleTree by Hilton hotel in downtown Niagara Falls. The project, which includes significant demolition at the former Fallside Hotel, taking down the entire two-story section fronting the Robert Moses Parkway, renovating the four-story section of the building and building a nine story tower overlooking the Niagara River, coincides with work on the Robert Moses Parkway Riverway Project that broke ground two weeks ago. Merani Hotel Group is developing the property.

“Niagara Falls is in the midst of a hotel boom that will serve the region’s growing tourist base,” said Empire State Development President, CEO & Commissioner Kenneth Adams. “From developing the former Rainbow Mall into Wonder Falls, improvements to Niagara Falls State Park, to expanding recreational opportunities and the opening of the city’s waterfront, Governor Cuomo is working hard to make Niagara Falls stronger than ever. Projects like Merani Hotel Group’s DoubleTree by Hilton will increase tax revenues while meeting the demand for high-quality hotels in the city.”

“I am very excited to be a part on the ongoing growth of Niagara Falls,” said Merani Hotel Group President Faisal Merani. “This project has been in the works a long time, and to begin on it now at the same time as so much is happening in the city, and now to have an opening date that coincides with the Robert Moses Parkway opening is amazing, and couldn’t have worked out any better. This will be our third project in Niagara Falls, and won’t be our last. I would like to thank Governor Cuomo and USA Niagara for their partnership in helping to make this project a reality.”

The hotel at 401 Buffalo Avenue will have 194 rooms; 16,000 square feet of banquet facilities, including a 550 person ballroom; an indoor pool; a gym; a signature restaurant with an outdoor patio area facing the Niagara River; and quality accommodations offering commanding views of the river’s upper rapids. The project will help to fulfill the need for additional quality

downtown lodging, contribute to the overall beautification and usability of the area and create 55 new jobs. The hotel is expected to open May 2016 and will be the first DoubleTree in Niagara Falls.

“With the recent start of the Riverway Project, we can see how reconnecting a city to its waterfront can bring major economic benefits and private sector investment,” said City of Niagara Falls Mayor Paul Dyster. “With Merani Hotel Group’s investment, there is currently over \$40 million in private investment along the one-mile stretch of the soon to be reconfigured Robert Moses Parkway South. The Doubletree Hotel project and future projects that follow will help city residents and visitors to rediscover the city’s waterfront and will serve as a catalyst to the development of our tourism industry.”

Merani Hotel Group will receive a \$2 million convertible loan from Empire State Development’s Upstate Regional Blueprint Fund and a \$750,000 capital grant from USA Niagara Development Corporation to redevelop the former Fallside Hotel.

“This project represents another significant private investment along the upper Niagara River that will be a catalyst for the Buffalo Avenue neighborhood,” said USA Niagara Development Corporation President Christopher Schoepflin. “The location for this major redevelopment will take full advantage of the Riverway project with views and access to the Niagara Falls waterfront. Congratulations and thank you to the Merani family for their confidence and investment in downtown Niagara Falls.”

Assemblyman John Ceretto said, “I am thrilled that Merani Hotel Group’s project is moving forward in Niagara Falls. This recognizable brand is uniquely positioned between Niagara Falls and its most valuable assets, the State Park and waterfront. Thanks to Governor Cuomo and USA Niagara Development for pushing projects like these that will draw tourists from around the world for longer stays.”

A study performed in 2011 by HVS Consulting and Valuation Services, a consulting firm specializing in the hospitality industry, found that Niagara Falls, New York had a lack of high-end hotel rooms, which puts it at a competitive disadvantage to its Canadian counterpart. There are 3,000 hotel rooms on the American side and roughly 66 percent of those are economy lodging or independent properties, according to the study. There are approximately 16,000 hotel rooms on the Canadian side.

The DoubleTee by Hilton project is among the more than \$40 million of private investment along the one-mile stretch of the new \$18.8 million Riverway Project, which will enhance access to the waterfront and to Niagara Falls State Park. For the first time in more than 50 years, residents and visitors will be able to access a complete trail network to facilitate hiking, biking, fishing, and cross-country skiing once the Riverway Project is complete in the spring of 2016.

USA Niagara, 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](http://www.usaniagara.com).

**About Merani Hotel Group**

Merani Hotel Group is a privately held company with experience developing, operating and managing hotels, restaurants and retail outlets in Niagara Falls, New York and Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada. Along with their Canadian properties, the Canadian hotelier also owns and operates the Four Points by Sheraton and Holiday Inn hotels in Niagara Falls, New York.

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