

# A casino would transform the Nassau Hub



A rendering of the development proposed by Las Vegas Sands at the Nassau Coliseum site, which includes a hotel and a casino. Credit: Las Vegas Sands

By **Scott Rechler** Guest essay Updated January 17, 2023 4:49 pm

Last year, Nassau Coliseum celebrated its 50th year in operation. Once home to the Stanley Cup-winning New York Islanders, the iconic arena hosted legendary acts like Elvis Presley, Billy Joel, and the New York Nets with Dr. J. The Coliseum put Long Island on the map when it came to world-class entertainment and sports. Unfortunately, you won't find the biggest acts performing at the Coliseum today. They and the Islanders are playing before thousands of fans about 20 miles away at the new, state-of-the-art UBS Arena in Belmont.

The Coliseum stands on a site known as the Nassau Hub, surrounded by acres of vacant parking lots. My company, RXR, has tried to develop the site for nearly two decades. After countless hours meeting with county executives, county legislators, and thousands of local community members, it's clear Long Islanders envision a project that transforms the site into a best-in-class destination for both area residents and visitors from around the world. A destination that elevates the Hub as both a premier entertainment experience and an economic generator.

However, the biggest obstacle to turning this vision into reality is the commercial viability of a site saddled with a nearly obsolete half-century-old arena – a former economic stalwart that is now an economic albatross.

For years, my team and I looked for unique and innovative ways to develop the site. We reviewed alternative plans and reached out unsuccessfully to potential anchor tenants. But, with the state recently embarking on a process to award three gaming licenses for downstate New York, Long Island has been presented with a once-in-a-generation opportunity. And Las Vegas Sands, the most valuable gaming and hospitality company in the world, has selected the Hub as its preferred location to bid for one of the three licenses. If awarded, Sands will build a premier entertainment destination with new community-focused public open space, exceptional hotels, a live performance venue, flexible meeting and conference facilities, cultural entertainment spaces, world-class restaurants, a luxury spa, a high-quality gaming casino, and more.

Once complete, the project would transform the Hub into a site of which Long Islanders can be proud. Just as important, the project would bring vital economic activity to the Island, including tens of thousands of union jobs to construct and operate the facility. It also would bring millions in new tax revenue for the surrounding communities to support local schools, police and fire departments, and more. These benefits are made possible because of a gaming operation that makes up only 10% of the total project. Nassau County Executive Bruce Blakeman has called for a transformative plan unlike any other, and Sands has more than risen to the occasion.

A project of this magnitude warrants community input. That's why Sands is re-activating the working groups RXR established when we were selected master developer of the Hub in 2019. These working groups, comprised of community members, will work with Sands to co-create a development plan that maximizes economic opportunity, helps to build stronger communities, and protects quality of life.

After nearly 20 years of working on this project, I can assure you that the Nassau Hub will not miraculously transform into the global destination of Long Islanders' dreams. It requires action. It requires seizing opportunities when they present themselves. And today, we have been presented with a rare opportunity. An opportunity to create a globally renowned entertainment destination with the world's most valuable gaming and hospitality company. This is our chance, Long Island – let's seize it!

This guest essay reflects the views of Scott Rechler, chairman and chief executive of RXR Realty.