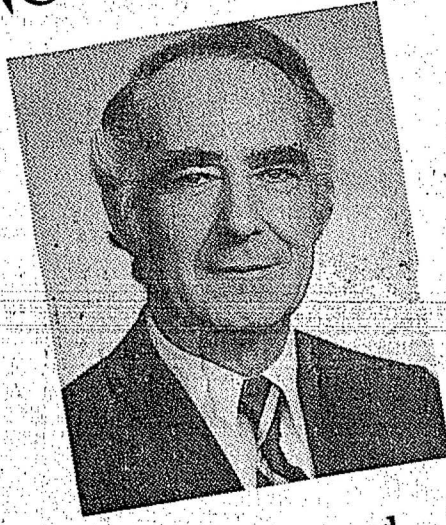




MICHAEL C. O'LAUGHLIN
Mayor

City of Niagara Falls, New York

Office of the Mayor



June 24, 1990

Dear Friends and Neighbors;

As the Mayor of our City of Niagara Falls for the past 14 years, we have experienced together tremendous joys and bitter disappointments. To the credit of this community, we have always found the strength and ability to work together to overcome any obstacle.

While we have managed, over the past three years, to stabilize taxes, reduce unemployment, and generate surpluses in our city budget, no one should think that our economic challenges are behind us.

We must work even harder to build a better Niagara Falls for our residents, our seniors, our children -- the Mega Mall Project can be the cornerstone of this effort.

We have a proven, and immensely successful company in Benderson Development, ready and willing to invest \$100 million over the tired pavement of East Falls Street. Yet, there is a danger that this opportunity may slip through our hands.

This danger originates in the spread of misinformation. I address many of the questions that have come up about the mall on this page. Please take the time to read about this project and its benefits to Niagara.

This project is not about a mall. This project is about creating a future for our young people in this city. This project is also about creating new revenue sources to ease the property tax burden on our citizens. This Mega Mall will entirely change the character of this area.

If you support this project, as I do, we need to hear from you. Please call my office at 286-4311 and let me know that you're behind the growth and positive future of our city.

Thank you for supporting our city.

Sincerely,

Michael C. O'Laughlin
Mayor

FACTS ABOUT THE MEGA MALL

Benderson buys land: **\$4 million**

Benderson pays to build Mall: **\$100 million**

Mall pays double, triple, property taxes.

City clears site.

*"a better
Niagara Falls
for our
residents, our
seniors, our
children"*

Is the developer getting a free ride?

The answer to this question has always been, "NO"! The developer, from the very beginning, agreed to mortgage his future to invest \$80 million in this city. The more recent good news is that this investment will now reach \$100 million of his money.

Will the developer get the land for free?

The developer has agreed to pay the city over \$4 million for the land and other considerations.

Is the City giving the developer \$30 million for the Mega Mall?

Again, the answer to this is a resounding "NO"! The City's role in the project is to clear the land, relocate the residents, and make the site suitable for development. This is where the city's investment is going -- not to the developer! We are an older city. We do not have farmland and vacant acreage that is available for such developments in other towns. And before the land is cleared, we will have an iron-clad contract that will transform the East Falls Street area into the vibrant commercial area that it once was.

Is the City risking a \$30 million debt in case of default?

No! What makes this project special is the support this City would receive from the New York State Job Development Authority (JDA) which would guarantee the repayment of this money and eliminate risk by the City. This is what the JDA was created to do for projects across the state and it has done this well. Neither the City nor the County would sign a mortgage on the property. Governor Cuomo is supporting the JDA involvement in this project. Sales tax revenues, not property tax dollars, are being pledged.

Will the Mega Mall pay property taxes?

Yes! Through the tax agreements with the developer, the City, Schools and County will:

Double the existing taxes paid by current occupants of the site in the first year of operation (\$800,000).

Triple this same tax base after 8 years and progress to *full* taxes after 25 years. This includes \$1.2 million in property taxes in year 11 and \$1.6 million in taxes in the final year!

Each of these additional tax dollars in the doubling, tripling, and quadrupling agreement will ease your property tax burden for the city, county and schools.

How does the money borrowed by the government get paid back?

The Mega mall will pay for itself. When people shop at the mall -- millions of new people from outside of Western New York -- they will pay sales taxes on their purchases. The City and County get a portion of these payments, and it will be this money that will be used to cover the \$30 million in expenditures to clear the land and relocate the residents. *Not your property tax dollars.* If the mall is not built, we will not have the increased sales taxes, and will still have a problem area of land to deal with that has been available for development for 20 years, without serious offers.

In addition, the sales taxes generated will also be shared by the county, county townships and villages. This amounts to over a hundred million dollars over a 20 year period. This sales tax revenue will help local government keep their property taxes down.

Is the City treating the Armenian Churches fairly?

The City has made every effort to find a compromise with the Armenian community. We have offered many options. The problem is that the existing churches stand physically in the middle of the gateway to this project off Quay Street. With the construction of a 5-block long building, on a limited site between major roadways, the Mega Mall can't easily be "moved." The developer and the City are seeking a workable solution to this problem with the Armenian representatives. Proposals so far include:

1. Paying for relocation of the churches to another site.
2. Physically moving the church structures.
3. Keeping the "consecrated" church ground from project use.

Out of respect to the Armenian Community, we will continue to seek an acceptable alternative. This project is too important to the City of Niagara Falls not to build.

Why should the City impose relocation on anyone?

This project goes to the heart of our problem of providing opportunities and jobs for our young people to remain in our community. Stores in this mall will need accountants, insurance, supplies, printers, cleaning, landscaping, lawyers, and people of all professions. These jobs will be available for our young people to keep our families together. Unfortunately, to accomplish this, we must move some people and businesses to other sections of our city. For the good of the future of our city, we feel this action must be taken.

How much can the City and County expect to make over 20 years?

After paying the debt to finance the land clearance and resident relocation, these are the projections on sales tax profits:

City of Niagara Falls	\$28 million
Town of Lewiston	\$7 million
Town of Niagara	\$2 million
City of Lockport	\$15 million
County of Niagara	\$65 million
Total of all County cities/towns	\$162 million

Why do we need another mall in our area?

This is not just another mall. The factory outlet concept has the power to attract shoppers from hundreds of miles, thus bringing new shoppers and new dollars into a community.

The Mega Mall will create jobs on all levels: sales, management, professional services, and much more.

- 1,500 construction jobs.
- 500 management level jobs to run the stores.
- 1,000 sales and entry level jobs
- PLUS...

Niagara Street frontage property will be developed with commercial properties and service businesses, creating even more private sector jobs, paying even more taxes.

Rainbow Centre Mall, Main Street, Third Street, and Pine Avenue will be able to attract new businesses through the large increase in traffic through their business areas.

The Convention Center will generate new revenues through a much expanded marketing program. Conventions are attracted to cities that have "things to do and see" for the conventioners. We'll have the best in shopping, plus the wonder of Niagara Falls and our attractions. The Mega Mall will generate increased hotel and motel bookings, increase the bed tax paid by visitors, and again, generate even more sales taxes and property taxes.

Tourism will be enhanced by the Mega Mall. People will shop and stay in our community longer. Spending additional money on hotel rooms, in our restaurants, at service stations, attractions, etc. We will be able to compete for visitors in the world marketplace.

Support the Mega Mall...Call the Mayor's Office at 286-4311.

2 Armenian churches in mall's way

• More waiting, 3A

By MARY WOZNIAK
Niagara Gazette

Niagara Gazette
1/11/90

The proposed Niagara Factory Outlet Mega Mall will displace more than homeowners, renters and businesses on the city's East Side.

Western New York's Armenian congregation also will be left without a church. St. Sarkis Armenian Apostolic Church at 300 Ninth St. is part of the area to be razed to make way for the proposed mall. So is St. Hagop's Armenian Apostolic Church, located in the neighboring Armenian Community Center at 322 Ninth St.

"We heard about it from other people. We had not been contacted officially about it to date," said Maggie Abdo. She and Mary M. Mukhtarian represented the St. Sarkis Parish Council on Wednesday at City Hall at the monthly meeting held to hear concerns of people who will be displaced by the mall.

Ms. Abdo said she did not know how many people are served by both churches. What she does know is that if the churches are torn down, area Armenians will have to go to Rochester to attend an Apostolic church service, she said.

Ms. Mukhtarian said the city should not have considered the churches part of the mall project. "A church is not like a house," she said. "A church is consecrated ground. It is considered holy."

Nevertheless, the city can take the land, said William K. Clark, city community development director. Larry Krizan, city coordinator of development services, had made some attempts to contact church representatives, he said.

Aris Ohanessian, chairman of the community center, said he spoke with Krizan six months ago but has not heard anything since. The center serves Armenian people from a wide area, including Buffalo, Lockport, Olean and Bradford, Pa., he said. "We've served people from Rochester, Hamilton, (Ont.) and St. Catharines for 70 or 80 years."

"We're going to talk with them and discuss what their needs are, their preferences really, what other options are acceptable to them," Clark said. "It's not like relocating a business, although that's the way the government would have to treat them."

The city can buy the real estate from the parishes and the center, he said. "We can help them find an alternate location and we can help them with moving expenses. Their question was, how do you put a value on a church. You're looking at something that's been in the community for years. It's got more of a theological value or spiritual value. You can't look at it just like a piece of real estate. We don't really know how the appraiser will look at it," Clark said.

The ideal would be to keep them in Niagara Falls, but that depends on the real estate market, he said.

Abdo's view of the ideal solution differs: "We don't like to move. We like to stay where we are."

Mega mall relocation lagging

Niagara Gazette 1/11/90

By MARY WOZNIAK
Niagara Gazette

Hurry up and wait.

Residents in the area to be cleared for the proposed Niagara Factory Outlet Mega Mall found out Wednesday that they will have to be patient a little longer before they get the final answers to their numerous relocation questions.

The project is behind schedule but progress is being made, Community Development Director William K. Clark told them at a monthly meeting held in City Hall. "The Benderson people are very interested in getting going on this," he said. "They're waiting for the city's go-ahead."

The city hopes to settle on an appraiser for properties in the area by Jan. 31, he said. The environmental review of the site should be completed by mid-February. The city also needs state Job Development Authority approval for bonds to be

issued to the Urban Renewal Agency for the \$27 million needed to clear the site, he said.

Larry Krizan, coordinator of development services, may travel to Albany next week to present the proposal. If all the pieces of the puzzle fall into place, officials should start making offers to residents in April, Clark said.

After an appraisal is done, an offer will be made. If the offer is not satisfactory to the owner, then an "appraisal review" takes place, Clark said. If there is no resolve, the city will take the property through eminent domain and the homeowner can go to court. But before the court date, a second appraisal will be made, he said.

Offers will be made first to residents living on the mall "footpath," or boundary lines of the building itself, he said. This covers roughly from Falls Street to about a block

south, then from 10th to about 14th streets.

Robert Yamonaco of Ninth Street wondered whether the city would try to force the East Side residents to re-settle in properties that become available in Love Canal. Clark said the city cannot steer residents to a particular area.

On the other hand, Mark Mellon of 15th Street said he would not mind moving into the Love Canal neighborhood and asked if residents displaced by the mall would be given preferred status for properties there. Clark said no such arrangements have been made at this point, but that it was a possibility.

Clark told one resident that the federal government has raised the cap on relocation costs from \$15,000 to \$22,500. The relocation cost is in addition to the purchase price of the property.

The next meeting is tentatively set for Feb. 14 at Holy Trinity Church.

METROPOLITAN NEWS

The Buffalo News 1/21/90

Palillo seeks to rescind mega-mall commitments

Councilman wants Falls to delay action, ask state attorney general's ruling

By JOANN SCELSA
News Niagara County Bureau

NIAGARA FALLS — Councilman Jacob A. Palillo wants the Council to rescind commitments it made last month to the proposed \$111 million factory outlet shopping mall.

If the Council fails to rescind its Dec. 11 resolution, Palillo will ask it to seek an opinion from the state attorney general on the measure's legality and to put off action on the project until that question is resolved.

The Council will take up Palillo's resolutions when it meets Monday in City Hall.

Last month it gave the mayor authority to "undertake and continue such measures as he shall determine to be necessary and appropriate, and consistent with prior authorizations granted by the City Council, to further the development of the factory outlet mega-mall."

It authorized the mayor to remove the city from the Niagara County sales tax distribution system if necessary; to transfer to the Urban Renewal Agency

all city-owned properties on the East Side mall site along with all easements, utility lines and rights of way needed for the project, and to seek other sources of funding, such as state and federal grants.

Mayor Michael C. O'Laughlin said he thinks both of Palillo's proposals are illegal. He said the City Charter gives him the authority to negotiate contracts "subject to ratification by the Council."

Other city officials warned that Palillo's action could hurt the project.

City Administrator Mark R. Palesh said Palillo's proposals, if approved, "would be a hindrance to a major project."

"It is not our intention to pre-empt the legislative process in any way," he said. "However, the developers have now spent considerable amounts of money, and we cannot allow them to continue to spend money without a clear signal that we're interested."

Councilman Anthony J. Rendina said that if the Council is committed to economic recovery, "our role should be to be fully supportive of this developer" and not "to thwart the executive

branch's attempts to negotiate." He said that by approving Palillo's resolutions, the Council would "send a message that (the city) is very inconsistent and unbusinesslike" and that the executive and legislative branches don't work as a team.

The Council's resolution commits the city to come up with the money to complete the project if no other funding sources are found.

The developer, Benderson Niagara Associates, has arranged for \$80 million in private financing, with the rest to be obtained through public funding.

To make way for the mall, 100 single-family homes, 200 rental units and 50 businesses will have to be removed from the area bounded by Quay and Niagara streets, Portage Road and Buffalo Avenue.

Before the Council's Dec. 11 vote, Larry Krizan, coordinator of development services, said that without the Council approvals, the developer would have only a handshake agreement.

The developer had spent \$500,000 to \$1 million on the project without a

formal contract, a spokesman said. Councilwoman Barbara A. Geracitano and Councilman Guy T. Sottile voted against the resolutions, saying they were uncomfortable binding the Council in advance.

Frank A. Soda, the Council's chairman at the time, said nothing in the resolutions would prevent the Council from exercising checks and balances on the project in the future.

Palillo, however, disagrees.

"I'm contending there is too much latitude given, and we don't have final approval on it," he said.

"The whole thing just gives (the mayor) total control to give them whatever he wants. When he comes back for final approval, he doesn't even need it because we've already given it. I'm sitting here as a rookie councilman, and I have to live with something I didn't even get a chance to vote on."

But Assistant Corporation Counsel William W. Zarr said that while the December action committed the city to the mall, the Council still has the last say on the terms of the final agreement.

Monday, February 5, 1990—3A

Officials argue over \$4 million mall increase

By MARY WOZNIAK
Niagara Gazette

The city needs more greenbacks to acquire and clear the land for the proposed Factory Outlet Mega Mall, and that makes Councilman Jacob A. Palillo see red.

An extra \$4 million in bond money is needed to fund the bond to acquire and clear the site, according to Mayor Michael C. O'Laughlin. This increases the amount of bond money to be raised from \$27 million to \$31 million.

Palillo said that "as a matter of courtesy," the mayor should have come to the City Council for approval before seeking the extra \$4 million.

Palillo conceded no such permission is needed, according to a resolution passed by the Council in December 1989. The resolution authorized the mayor to proceed with formal contract negotiations with Benderson Development Company of Buffalo, the mall's developer.

The mayor already has the power to negotiate under the City Charter. Palillo said the resolution amounted to prior approval of a mall contract and attempted to repeal the resolution at the last council meeting. Council Chairman Henry J. Buchalski argued that the contract must come back to the council for final approval or rejection. The attempt to repeal the resolution failed.

The resolution states that if funds from state, federal or other sources "are insufficient to cover the public portion of the cost of the project, or if the public portion of the project exceeds current cost estimates," any additional funds required may be provided by the city, subject to council approval.

The bond will be funded through increased sales tax revenues the mall is expected to generate, not from city coffers, the mayor said. Since no extra funds from the city's general fund are expected to be needed to cover the increased cost of the bond, no permission from the council is needed to raise the amount of bond money sought.

"I would think that before he would go out to seek this amount, he would at least notify the

council," Palillo said.

The mayor said Sunday that he did notify council members at Wednesday's Urban Renewal Agency meeting. "We didn't really ask approval," the mayor said. "If they (council members) wanted to voice disapproval, they could have then."

Those who think the bond funding sought is too high or too low or who recommend that the city not proceed may send him a memo, the mayor said, emphasizing that the council gets to accept or reject any final contract. "But we do keep them abreast of where we're going, so there are no surprises when it comes to the final vote."

The extra \$4 million is needed to cover the increased cost of borrowing, O'Laughlin said. "The line of credit and increased cost of bonding just came out more than what we estimated at first."

The fact that the city now needs an estimated \$4 million more in bond money to acquire and clear the site means the city must come up with a total of \$7 million more in bond money for the project than the amount originally estimated six months ago, Palillo said.

The original estimate of the total cost to acquire and clear the site was \$31 million. The city was supposed to come up with \$24 million of that figure through increased sales tax revenues, and asked the county to join in the funding plan. The other \$7 million was to come from an Urban Development Action Grant.

But the federal government awarded the city only \$4 million of the \$7 million requested. Meanwhile, the county balked, saying it would not consider joining the city's funding plan until 15 conditions were met by the mall's developer, Benderson Development Company of Buffalo. Benderson refused.

That meant the city had to come up with \$27 million on its own, unless the county changed its tune. If the city and county do not agree on a plan by March, the mayor has said he will exercise his option to pre-empt the city's share of sales tax revenue to fund the bond.

1 For coverage of Niagara area news
call the Gazette City Desk at 282-2311
9 a.m. to 1 a.m. Monday through Friday
5:30 p.m. to 1:30 a.m. weekends.
City Editor is Gary Housey

Niagara Gazette

Editorial 6A
Today 7-8A

Wednesday, February 14, 1990—3A

East Side properties to be appraised

Process focuses on 327 buildings to be razed for proposed mall

By MARY WOZNIAK
Niagara Gazette

Appraisers will take to the streets early next month to take stock of properties that must be razed to make way for the proposed Factory Outlet Mega Mall, a city development official said Tuesday.

Letters will be sent within the next two weeks to residents of the area informing them that the appraisers will be in their neighborhood by "the first or second week in March," said William K. Clark, city director of community development.

Clark announced Jan. 31 that the GAR Associates of Amherst was awarded a \$194,000 contract to appraise 327 properties that must be cleared before the mall can be built. Appraisers from the firm will be at the regular monthly update meeting for residents who will be displaced by the mall, at 6:30 p.m. Thursday at Holy Trinity School, 1419 Falls St.

It will be combined with a meeting of the East Side Neighborhood Advisory Committee or all who are interested in an update on the

Benderson Development Co.'s proposed mall. Clark, Mayor Michael C. O'Laughlin and Larry Krizan, city coordinator of development services, will also be available along with the appraisers to answer questions.

The two Armenian churches in the path of the proposed mall have already had an update from city development officials. The demolition of St. Sarkis Armenian Apostolic Church at 300 Ninth St. and St. Hagop's Armenian Apostolic Church, located in the neighboring Armenian Community Center at 322 Ninth St., will mean Western New York's Armenian congregations will be left without a church. The next-closest Armenian church is in Rochester.

"Basically, they're at the front entrance to the project," said Clark. "Long range, what we see happening is the churches will eventually be appraised and acquired and the churches will be relocated, hopefully within the city of Niagara Falls.

"Obviously, they're not happy about it," Clark said of the congregations.

Mary M. Mukhtarian, a spokesman for the

St. Sarkis Parish Council, said Larry Krizan met with the council within the last two weeks. "I believe he was very appropriately trying to take the appropriate steps to rectify the initial insensitivity of not having contacted the Armenian church regarding this situation," she said.

"We don't feel that we should be moving. He felt that is basically a foregone conclusion." It is not just a matter of taking the church and moving it from one location to another, "just like moving to a brand new apartment," she said. "Armenian churches aren't known for just going and fitting into somebody else's already-built building."

Arsen Avdoian, chairman of the St. Sarkis Parish Council, said "We don't know what to do. We don't want to go. That's the consensus." He said that Krizan suggested putting a memorial, such as a flower garden, indicating that the spot had once been the site of St. Sarkis church.

GAR Associates will be setting up a toll-free telephone number "so people can get a hold of them any time, basically," he said.

The Amherst firm will be doing first-run appraisals, Clark said. If the property owners and the city do not come to a voluntary sale agreement, the city can invoke eminent domain to take title to the property and a second appraiser will be called for. "We're figuring about 100 appraisals will be contested," Clark said. The city is moving toward hiring Girasole Appraisal Co. of 473 Third St. to do the follow-up appraisals, he said.

Ralph F. Aversa, former councilman and owner of Aversa Appraisal & Research, had sent a letter earlier this month to city officials protesting that there was enough appraisal work at the site to split among three other local firms besides Girasole. Aversa's firm cannot bid on property appraisals for the city until 1991.

"We felt Girasole was better qualified to do the project with GAR," Clark said. "It was a combination of qualifications, price and ability to complete the project in a tight time frame."

GAR has a 90-day contract to complete the first appraisals, he said.

Planned razings sadden Armenians

Community says church is their link to the past

By GREGORY WILLIAMS
Special to the Gazette

For local Armenians, the prospect of their church being bulldozed to make way for a proposed mall threatens their future and past.

Many Armenians say they cherish their churches because of a history of being driven from them. Since their parents were driven from Turkey along with 1.75 million other Armenians during the genocide of 1915, they continue to resist abandoning a church for any reason, said Sema Tarpinian, a member of St. Sarkis Armenian Apostolic Church. "We've been displaced again and again during this century," she said.

St. Sarkis, 300 Ninth St., and St. Hagop's Armenian Apostolic Church, located in the Armenian community center, 322 Ninth St., would be demolished to make room for the Benderson Development Co.'s Factory Outlet Mega Mall on the East Side. Also slated for demolition would be 326 other properties.

"My soul is crying," said Jean Ajemian, a professor of languages at Niagara County Community College. "Some people who go to this church can trace their ancestors back three or four centuries. It connects us to the past."

Members of the Armenian community say they feel linked to the church because Armenia was the first in the world to adopt Christianity as a nation in 301 A.D., and religion is a large part of Armenian identity.

"It's not just a religion, it's a way of life," said Mary M. Mukhtarian, a spokesman for St. Sarkis. She said that Christianity is part of the definition of being Armenian, and that the Armenian church building is a unique and integral part of the faith. The church has to be built by the specific instructions of the spiritual leader, Mukhtarian said.

Mukhtarian said city officials are not being as sensitive to the Armenians as they are toward Holy Trinity Catholic Church, which also borders the mall site.



James Neiss / Niagara Gazette

Mary M. Mukhtarian stands in front of a stained-glass window at St. Sarkis Armenian Apostolic Church, 300 Ninth St. She says the church building, which is slated for demolition, is an integral part of the religion.

"We are simply not including Holy Trinity in the plan," said Larry Krizan, city coordinator for development services.

"The Armenian churches are included," Krizan said. The church and community center are at the "gateway to the project," he said. "In every project of this size, there will be people who will not be helped. It's a matter of geography."

Pulling up stakes won't be easy. "It's against church tradition to inhabit another building that is already built," said Maggie Abda, another spokesman for St. Sarkis. "It's very upsetting."

Others treasure the church as a reminder of their parents and grandparents who fled Armenia in 1915 and built the church more than 30 years later.

"The church has been there since 1953, 37 years," said Tarpinian, whose parents helped build the church. The thought of moving, Tarpinian said, is "very difficult for those who built the church. It was a very long struggle."

"I was old enough to remember

the church being built," said Liz Sarkissian, a parishioner. "My eldest brother used to have to leave his dinner because he was on the building committee," she said.

"It's inconceivable to say, 'Just get up and move,'" Sarkissian said. "This is a great tragedy, our parents put so much effort in it. They slaved to put aside money for the church."

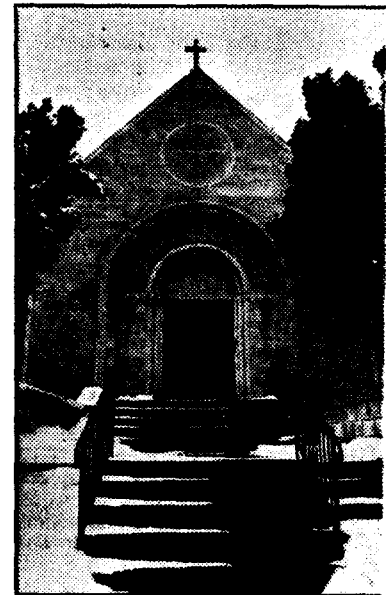
St. Sarkis is the only legitimate Armenian church building in Western New York, according to Abda. "This church serves at least 1,000 people. Not only those who are born and raised here, but any Armenian coming to the area."

"We want our city to prosper. We just don't want to move," Sarkissian said.

Each Armenian Apostolic church is a replica of the cathedral in Etchmiadzin, Armenia, Adjemian said.

"It's architecturally perfect," he said.

"Ninety-nine percent of the people don't want to move," said Arsen Avdoian, chairman of St. Sarkis



James Neiss / Niagara Gazette

St. Sarkis, like all Armenian apostolic churches, is a replica of the cathedral in Etchmiadzin, Armenia.

Parish Council. "We're not belligerent," he said. "We just don't want to leave."

From our readers

Let's spare St. Sarkis

Garrett 3/16/90

Why should St. Sarkis Armenian Apostolic Church be demolished? Why can't it be incorporated into the proposed mega mall? We've been to cities where such an idea has been done very effectively.

In Quebec, in the center of the city, there is a mall with such a plan. The entrance to the church is off one of the corridors of the Mall. This does not detract from the mall or the church. In Toronto, at Eaton Center, one of the exits opens up to a small garden and a very old church. I think this idea is a good compromise.

It could be worked out to everyone's satisfaction. It's painful to watch the destruction of all the old buildings that contribute to the character of a city like Niagara Falls. I would like to know why every nook and cranny in our city is considered tourist territory. Why can't there be some consideration for us, the people of Niagara Falls who have lived here and paid taxes for most of our lives?

The demolition of St. Sarkis Church would be a disgrace. The mall developers would not only be destroying a precious relic, they would be destroying an important part of the Armenian people's history in this area.

—Marie D. Proctor
Niagara Falls

Church could add to mall

I agree with Marie Proe about incorporating St. Sarkis into the proposed mall. I have been to Toronto and during my wanderings after a busy day at the Eaton Centre I took a refreshing time-out at the old preserved church that she wrote about. It was such a pleasant break.

I was able to walk around the inside of the church, read the interesting information that was put out about the history of the church, pick up some interesting religious tracts, and spend some refreshing moments in quiet contemplation. Why always think in terms of destruction instead of preservation? A building like St. Sarkis would add to the diversity of the mall.

It is not my church so I do not write out of any selfish reasons, other than feeling that this preservation would only add to, not take away from, the mall. I feel further that any other local landmarks that are in the path of the mall, if possible, should also be preserved. I'm sure the planners could incorporate other colorful landmark-type areas in an effort to promote goodwill with the natives of Niagara Falls. Sometimes it only takes a little extra thoughtfulness and consideration.

Niagara Gazette
3/16/90
Jean Ferraro
Niagara Falls

Church isn't mall gateway

I heartily agree with the recent letter of Marie D. Proe regarding the St. Sarkis Armenian Church.

Just to show you how ridiculous the argument that Larry Krizan (city coordinator of development services) advances that this area is the key to the construction of the Benderson mall, let me show you three examples of why it won't hold water.

In the downtown Rainbow Mall area we have three churches right in the middle of all that valuable real estate. There is St. Peter's Episcopal Church at Rainbow Boulevard and Second Street; St. Mary of the Cataract at 259 Fourth St. next to the Convention and Civic Center and First Presbyterian Church at 311 Rainbow Blvd. They are right in the middle of the most valuable real estate this city has to offer.

Now all of a sudden a small church way out on 10th Street becomes a key to further progress in this city?

There is a very famous case about the process of removing churches. The Trinity Church is at one end of Wall Street in New York City and is one of the most valuable pieces of real estate in the world, but it's still there after a 100 years. I haven't heard of Donald Trump saying its the key to progress in New York City and should be removed.

Maybe some of the people who want St. Sarkis torn down should visit it.

3/23/90 - C.P. Williamson
J. Zelle
Niagara Falls

From our readers

Niagara Gazette 3/27/90

Church gets more support

How clearly Marie Proe and Jean Ferraro have resolved a simple solution in keeping our Armenian church, St. Sarkis, on Ninth Street.

Now let us take this moment to ask each of you out there who have, and belong to a vibrant and strong parish, this question:

What if the church that you were baptized in, confirmed in, went to school at, were married in and your family members were buried from was suddenly snatched away from your well-planned world?

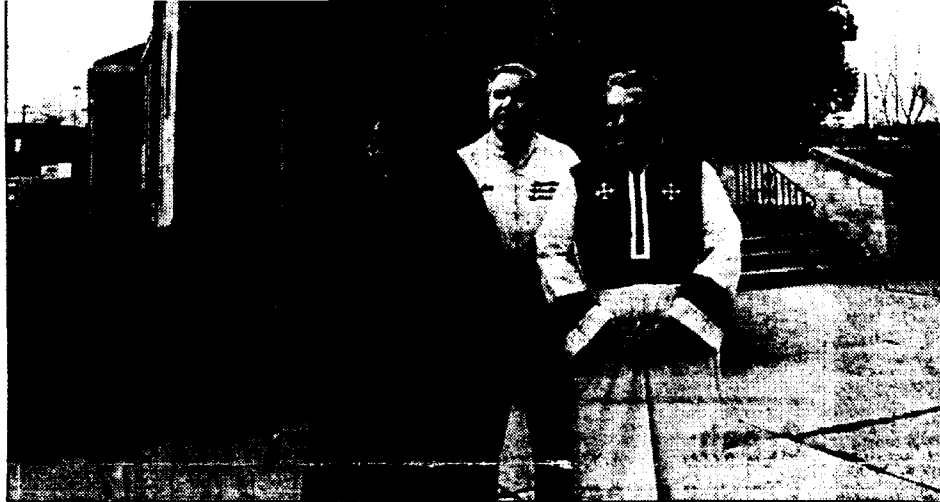
As proud Armenians, our church is not only held together with brick, straw and mortar but also sealed with strong bands of loving and caring people who represent their house of God, just as you do. Our parents were the bricklayers.

Our forefathers instilled in us the value of our church and the existence of keeping our faith alive through our caravan of people and our Armenian heritage. All this may sadly end if the wrong decision is made by city officials.

We do not feel the destruction of our church will enhance the progress of the city. This monumental church will radiate what it stands for, the representation of both ethnic and religious tradition, which we have kept alive here in the United States and Canada. We hope and pray the Armenian lobby will be instrumental toward the correct decision which will be made in the near future.

A standing ovation to those people who voiced their opinions in this devastating nightmare.

—Albert and Sylvia Choolokian
Niagara Falls



Leaders of St. Sarkis Armenian Apostolic Church opposed to relocating to make room for a mall include, from left, the Rev. Kegham Zakarian, James Barbato and Arsen Avdian.

Armenian churches fight move to make way for Falls mall

By JOANN SCELISA *THE BUFFALO NEWS*
News Niagara County Bureau 4/1/90

NIAGARA FALLS — Members of two Armenian churches on Ninth Street don't want to make way for the proposed \$115 million factory-outlet shopping mall.

But city officials say St. Sarkis Armenian Apostolic Church and St. Hagop's Armenian Apostolic Church and Community Center are located at what is to be the main entrance to the mega-mall planned by Benderson Niagara Associates.

"We are 100 percent against them taking our building down. We don't want relocation, and we don't want any money, and we don't want them turning the church where our children were married and our grandchildren were baptized into a parking lot," said Harry Ishkhanian of St. Hagop's.

Ishkhanian said local Armenians, including many who immigrated here in fear of massacres in Turkey, find the threat of losing the church very disturbing. This year, he said, the Armenian community is commemorating the 75th anniversary of the events of 1915, when, Armenians claim, 1.5 million were massacred by Turks.

"Now, in Niagara Falls our people are being morally massacred and mentally devastated," Ishkhanian said.

Maggie Abdo of St. Sarkis said church members don't want to stop the retail development, but desire only to prevent their church from being demolished to make way for it.

"We can live next to the mall. We can coexist. That's what we'd like to do," Ms. Abdo said. Church members, she added, encourage construction of the mall, which they believe would beautify the area and benefit the entire community.

St. Sarkis at 300 Ninth St. and St. Hagop at 322 Ninth St. are among about 320 properties that the city plans to acquire and demolish in the 100-acre area bounded by Quay Street, Niagara Street, Portage Road and Buffalo Avenue.

Ms. Abdo and Mary M. Mukhtarian are the spokeswomen for St. Sarkis, which has about 800 members in Western New York. Ishkhanian is chairman of the board of trustees of St. Hagop's, which has about 100 members. The churches are the only Armenian houses of worship within a three-hour drive and serve the Armenian community throughout Western New York.

"Our view is we have no intent of moving," Ms. Mukhtarian said.

Ms. Abdo and Ms. Mukhtarian, who both live in Williamsville, said they especially oppose the city's plan because their church isn't needed for the mall itself.

"We have been very upset that our church will

be razed to make a parking lot. We consider this consecrated ground," Ms. Mukhtarian said.

Larry Krizan, city development coordinator, said the Armenian churches are strategically located at what is to be the main entrance to the mall at Quay and East Falls streets.

The church spokeswomen said Armenians believe that once church ground is consecrated, it cannot be unconsecrated.

"It is sacrilegious that anyone would tear it down to make a parking lot. ... We don't let people walk around on our altar. Imagine people parking their cars on it," Ms. Mukhtarian said.

She said only those who are officiating at Mass are allowed to walk on the altar and only in special footwear for that use.

Ms. Mukhtarian says she believes sparing the churches wouldn't detract from the mall. She said three churches — St. Mark of the Cataract Catholic Church at 259 Fourth St., St. Peter's Episcopal Church on Rainbow Boulevard and Second Street and First Presbyterian Church of Ni-

agara Falls at 311 Rainbow Boulevard North — were spared when the rest of the downtown area was razed during the heyday of urban renewal. "They add humanity to the downtown area," she said.

She also noted that the city does not plan to acquire Holy Trinity Catholic Church on East Falls Street or New Hope Baptist Church on Buffalo Avenue.

Krizan said the Baptist church is near several properties, like the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority bus terminal, that the city does not intend to acquire. The area, he added, is not in the prime commercial space.

He said the Holy Trinity site would be important to the project, but the city believes the cost to acquire the church would be prohibitive. Krizan also said Holy Trinity is a much older building than the Armenian churches. It also is historically and architecturally prominent, which might make the building difficult to demolish.

He said the decisions on what churches would be acquired were made on financial, geographical and historical factors, not religious ones.

Community Development Director William K. Clark said the city has met once or twice with members of each church and plans to continue to work with them to find alternate locations for the churches. He said officials hope the churches will remain in the city because of the contribution they make to the cultural diversity of the community.

If the city and churches cannot come to an agreement, Clark said the city could acquire them through its right of eminent domain.

The church spokesmen said few, if any, churches' members will be relocated because of the mall, because most live north of Niagara Street.

"We can live next to the mall. We can coexist. That's what we'd like to do."

Maggie Abdo

St. Sarkis Armenian Church parishioner

From our readers



St. Hagop's a parking lot?

I'm writing about St. Hagop's Armenian Church.

We hear comments about a church being torn down. It is a fact that two Armenian churches exist in Niagara Falls, N.Y., one of which is St. Hagop's Armenian Apostolic Church and Community Center, 322 Ninth St.

This year we are commemorating the 75th anniversary of the 1915 genocide, when Turks, trying to demolish an entire nation, massacred a million and a half Armenians. After that, Armenians scattered all over the world, many to the United States seeking the freedom that America offered. In this day and age, the 20th Century, when our country is helping other nations solve their problems, there exists a problem here in Niagara Falls. Again, our people are being morally and mentally devastated.

Many people were married and many children were baptized in this church, including my own. So tell me, what do I tell my children when they ask: "Mom, where were we baptized?" Do I tell them they were baptized where there now stands a parking lot?

—Anna (Ishkhanian) Hanner
Niagara Falls

M/M/M

Environmental study creates delay for Falls mall

By BILL McEMEEKIN

An environmental impact statement for a proposed \$111 million shopping mall in Niagara Falls has fallen behind schedule, pushing back a request to the state Job Development Authority to back bonds for the project.

Niagara Falls Urban Renewal Agency officials had hoped to have a request before the development authority this month seeking a guarantee for \$24 million in agency bonds that will be used to finance acquisition and building demolition of a 100-acre parcel on the city's East Side.

But that request will not come this month and may not come until June, said Larry Krizan, urban renewal agency director.

There is little sense in seeking development authority backing for the bonds because site work cannot begin until an impact statement is finished, he said.

Benderson Development Co. Inc. of Buffalo wants to build a 1.2 million-square-foot outlet shopping mall on the East Side site. Benderson Development officials could not be reached for comment.

The company plans to invest \$5 million in cash and has received approval for \$75 million in bond financing through the Niagara County Industrial Development Agency for the project.

However, before the site can be turned over to the developer for construction to begin, the urban renewal agency must buy and demolish more than 200 homes and 100 businesses as well as help relocate those who are displaced by the project.

To finance site clearance, the agency last summer issued \$24 million in bonds. It wants the Job Development Authority guarantee for the bonds in order to make them more marketable.

The city in July set a timetable for completing public portions of the project, but that schedule is now off by several weeks, Krizan said the schedule may have been

optimistic when set, but emphasized such delays are to be expected given the size and complexity of the project.

A draft of the environmental impact statement, required under state law, is expected by the end of April. The statement will assess the environmental quality of the mall site and the project's impact on such areas as traffic and the effect on surrounding neighborhoods.

"Everything we have to date is encouraging," Krizan said.

How bonds used to finance the site clearance will be repaid still has not been settled.

In September, the Niagara County Legislature approved a plan allowing some of the sales tax money generated by the mall to be used in repaying principal and interest. That approval came with 15 contin-

gencies, many unacceptable to the developer and city.

Among those items was a demand that the developer pay \$200,000 a year for 20 years as compensation for fair market value of the land on which it plans to build. The developer will lease the land from the Niagara Falls Urban Renewal Agency for \$1 a year for 99 years.

Since then, the city has weighed breaking away from the county's population-based sales tax distribution formula. Under that plan, the city would receive only a share of sales tax generated in the city. After the state received its share, the city and county would divide the remainder equally.

Krizan said city officials will meet informally with county Legislature leadership this week in an attempt to resolve differ-

ences over the bond financing issue.

"The open-door policy is still very much in place," Krizan said.

Lee Simonson, chairman of the Republican-controlled Legislature, said informal discussions between the county and city have been productive, but so far the city has offered no formal response to the Legislature's initiative.

"The city has to come back," Simonson said. "The ball has been in their court since we passed our resolution in September."

The Legislature is willing to listen to any proposals the city makes that will help the project succeed, he said. However, he said the county still wants the developer to make payment in exchange for fair market value of the land.

"Our position is clear," Simonson said.

Here's Looking At You Buffalo

When we look at Buffalo, we see a thriving city offering everything from splendid entertainment to exciting professional sports teams.

We see a city that is growing and offering for investors, developers, and builders a unique opportunity to participate in the economic success of the 1990's.

Buffalo Area Theatre

When we look at Buffalo, we see a city that has been here for over 100 years, and is still improving.

Dog pound building sold to Toronto firm

By JAMES FINK

A Toronto real estate holding company has acquired the Niagara Street building that houses the Buffalo animal shelter.

O'Shanter Resources Inc. has purchased the building located at 1242-1274 Niagara St. from local businessman and one time city comptroller Sidney Freedman. The company paid \$836,000 for the 100,000-square-foot building, according to documents filed March 22 in the Erie County clerk's office.

The building is the second one owned by O'Shanter Resources on Niagara Street. The other building is at Niagara and Maryland streets.

"They bought it strictly as an investment," said Francis "Bud" Greune, O'Shanter Resources local counsel.

Greune said the new owners are working with the building's tenants to make sure they stay in the facility. The animal shelter has been in the building since the mid-1960s.

Fabian Tryjankowski, shelter superintendent, said the city leases space in the building on a yearly basis. The shelter occupies about 12,000 square feet that includes 103 kennels, offices and indoor parking for 12 trucks.

Several small businesses also lease space in the building. About 40,000 square feet is vacant, Greune said.

The four-story brick building was built in 1943.

1 For coverage of Niagara area news
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9 a.m. to 1 a.m. Monday through Friday
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City Editor is Gary Housey

Niagara Gazette

Tuesday, April 3, 1990 — 3A

Editorial 6A
Today 7-8A

Palillo tries to 'kill the mega mall'

Council denies resolution; meeting set today with county officials

By MARY WOZNAK
Niagara Gazette

The City Council Monday kayoed a move by Councilman Jacob A. Palillo that the city's chief development official termed an attempt to "kill the mega mall."

Larry Krizan, city coordinator of development services, said it was "somewhat depressing" to see the resolution on the agenda calling for the city to acquire and put up for bid the nearly 100 acres that have been designated as the site of the proposed Factory Outlet Mega Mall.

The resolution failed 5-1, with Palillo casting the sole yes vote. Council Chairman Henry J. Buchalski was out of town for the meeting. Councilman Anthony F. Quaranto acted as chairman in his absence.

Mayor Michael C. O'Laughlin told the council the resolution would interfere with the right of the mayor and executive branch of government to negotiate contracts.

In the meantime, he said a meeting would be held this morning with county Legislature leaders to discuss the city's plan to acquire and clear the site of the proposed mall. That plan would utilize increased sales tax revenues the mall is expected to generate.

Krizan said the meeting would be attended by members of the Industrial Development Agency and County Legislature Chairman Lee Simonson, R-Lewiston. Councilman Guy "Tom" Sottile said that the city must be "convincing enough" to make the county leaders realize that something good for Niagara Falls will also be good for the county.

The council passed a resolution sponsored by

Councilman Barbara A. Geracitano to amend the city sign and billboard ordinance to allow billboards in commercial districts. The move calls for requests to be made through the Department of Planning and Inspections for City Council approval of any sign, canopy or awning which would encroach on a public right-of-way. Department Director Samuel M. Ferraro opposed the move.

The council sent a request to the mayor to hold a meeting, to be conducted by Ferraro, for business owners and others to review the sign ordinance and make recommendations for possible changes.

The council also adopted a resolution banning skateboards from city streets. Police officers will be directed to confiscate the skateboards of those found to be in violation. Skateboards may be returned after a hearing

and payment of a \$25 fine.

The council did not discuss whether skateboards should be banned from sidewalks or areas such as E. Dent Lackey Plaza. But a resolution was passed asking the mayor to decide which city parking lots might be used as skateboard parks. DeFranco Park and the South Avenue parking lot were suggested.

The council also requested that the mayor and city administrator permit the New York State Compensation Board to continue to use Council Chambers in City Hall for workers' compensation hearings, until another suitable site in the city can be found. City Administrator Mark R. Palesh had asked the Compensation Board to move the hearings because of the extra burden they place on parking at the City Hall lot. Palesh was ill and did not attend the session.

Architect ^{Niagara Gazette 4/4/90} is hired for mega mall

By MARY WOZNIAK
Niagara Gazette

The same firm that designed the Walden Galleria mall in Cheektowaga has been chosen by the Benderson Development Co. for its proposed Factory Outlet Mega Mall.

The firm, Dal Pos Architect of Syracuse, has built 30 to 50 malls, said Randy Benderson. He and other Benderson officials attended a reception to show support for the mega mall, held Tuesday at the Best Western Red Jacket Inn by the Niagara Falls Area Chamber of Commerce.

Dal Pos was chosen in part because of its experience with two-level malls, said Rex Burgher, vice president of development for Benderson. The firm's design increases the area of the mega mall from 1.2 million square feet to 1.4 million square feet, Benderson said. "We interviewed about 10 architects. We were the most impressed with this group," he said.

The businessmen and businesswomen at the meeting seemed impressed with the efforts of the Bendersons. About 400 were at the meeting, according to Larry Krizan, city coordinator of development services.

Christopher H. Brown, chairman of the chamber of commerce board of directors, told the throng it was time to accentuate the positive. "I'm tired of always hearing the nay-sayers," he said. Brown later said the event was necessary to show that support for the mall was still strong, not because it was slipping.

Republican Councilmen Jacob A. Palillo and Barbara A. Geracitano, who have both cautioned against supporting the mall, were absent.

Councilman Anthony F. Quaranto likened the coming of the Bendersons to Niagara Falls to the coming of the Magi to Bethlehem. Councilman Anthony J. Rendina held up a sign that read "I support the mega mall," and led the crowd in repeating it aloud thrice.

Meanwhile, Mayor Michael C. O'Laughlin said he senses that his meeting Tuesday with county legislative leaders and IDA members may have opened the door a crack wider to acceptance of his mall funding proposal.

Mall

MALL continued on page 7A

Continued from page 1A

He wants the county to join the city in a plan to fund acquiring and clearing the mall site with the increased sales tax revenues the mall is expected to generate. The parties will meet again within a month, he said.

Burgher said that Benderson has

spent more than \$500,000 on architectural designs, marketing and advertising for the proposed mall. The budget will be about \$2 million annually "just to market the city and the mall," he said. "This project is no fallacy. This project is no illusion. This is not David Copperfield disappearing over the falls," Burgher told the audience. "This is real. It's also time to get serious about it."

Niagara Gazette 4/5/90
**St. Sarkis'
is no box**

Here are some words in favor of St. Sarkis.

Sure, knock down St. Sarkis Armenian Apostolic Church to make room for the proposed factory-outlet mall. Tearing down St. Sarkis and slapping an asphalt parking lot in its place would definitely enhance the maze of cement boxes, some call modern buildings, in our downtown area. Why would our city want to keep a building like St. Sarkis Church around to detract from the architectural beauty of the cement boxes that already adorn our downtown area? Furthermore, one city official stated that St. Sarkis Church isn't as historically prominent as one other church. I agree, and if the city hurries up and demolishes it, yes, it never will be.

In all honesty, the only buildings downtown that are architecturally attractive and add some highlight to that area of town are the churches, Cataract Restaurant, Norstar Bank and Niagara Gazette.

If the city's planners can't figure out a way to work St. Sarkis Church and the little greenery around it into their mall project plans, which by the way I am in favor of, it will say a great deal about their lack of skill, lack of imagination and lack of discerning what is quaintly attractive to the tourists' eyes and to the people in our community.

—Joel M. Malinverni
Niagara Falls

Let's spare these churches

We have written about the possible destruction of the Armenian churches on Ninth Street, St. Sarkis and St. Hagop's, because of the proposed mega mall.

St. Hagop's is the church of our parents, who were active and hard-working members of that parish.

We support and defend both churches because neither should be torn down to further progress here in our city. Each is Armenian, and each holds loving people with strong faith and tradition. This is one of the most important nourishments in the sustaining of life.

No one needs to mention or take away the strong dedication that our parents left or had to their church. We as children knew every avenue of love our parents gave to their church. St. Hagop's held a strong value in their lives, which can never be replaced.

We are now active members of Sacred Heart Parish, and would be devastated if our parish were taken away from us.

4/10/90
Garrett
- Mr. and Mrs.
Albert Choolokian
Niagara Falls



Eliisa Olderman / Niagara Gazette

William L. Griggs of 12th Street asks if the funding to acquire and clear the site for the proposed Niagara Factory Outlet Mega Mall has fallen into place yet. He spoke at a meeting for residents to be displaced by the mega mall, held Wednesday in City Hall.

Armenians seek change in mall plan

By MARY WOZNIAK
Niagara Gazette

A representative of two Armenian churches that will be razed to make way for the Niagara Factory Outlet Mega Mall made a plea before a city official Wednesday for the churches to be spared the wrecking ball.

"You keep pointing out we are at the all-important entrance" to the mall, said Liz Sarkisian, representing a group of members of the congregations of St. Sarkis Armenian Apostolic Church at 300 Ninth St. and St. Hagop's Armenian Apostolic Church, in the neighboring Armenian Community Center at 322 Ninth St.



Liz Sarkisian

"We want the Benderson people to understand we welcome them," she said. Yet she said in past urban renewal projects, the city has shown the ability to work around churches, notably First Presbyterian Church of Niagara Falls on Rainbow Boulevard North and St. Mary's of the Cataract Roman Catholic Church next to the Niagara Falls Convention and Civic Center.

PLEA continued on page 4A

City asks county for \$3 million more for mega mall

By KAREN R. ECKHARDT
Niagara Gazette

Niagara Falls officials are no longer looking for a \$24 million commitment from Niagara County lawmakers to help fund the Factory Outlet Mega Mall. Instead, the price tag is \$3 million more.

And even though city and county leaders have been meeting privately on the project, there are signs that it won't be easy to convince the Legislature to support a \$27 million

financing package, based entirely on new sales tax revenues the mall is expected to generate over 20 years.

After hearing of the higher cost Wednesday, Legislature Majority Leader Philo J. Brooks was doubtful that it would be smooth sailing in county legislative waters.

"I wouldn't say it would kill it (county funding), but the \$3 million isn't going to help it any, that's for sure," said Brooks, R-Ransomville. "The additional \$3 million does create just that many more problems. It isn't going

to make it any easier for the city to sell that."

But Mayor Michael G. O'Laughlin said he doesn't foresee any problem with the mall generating another \$3 million of revenue to cover the additional amount. "I don't think the amount is the item, because it's not really money out of the county's coffers," he said. "The increased sales tax revenues (will) more than cover that. Absolutely."

Last fall, legislators rejected a \$24 million financing agreement with the city, predicating their contribution on 15 contingency

items. The most controversial one was the county's request for Benderson Development Co. to pay another \$200,000 annually for 20 years to cover the fair market value of the mall property.

And now the city is short \$3 million, partly because it received only \$4 million of a \$7 million federal Urban Development Action Grant, O'Laughlin said. Increased insurance and line-of-credit costs have also contributed to the shortfall, he said.

FINANCING continued on page 4A

Plea

Continued from page 1A

"We know Urban Renewal is a powerful agency. You have the right of eminent domain in one hand and the wrecking ball in the other." The human factor lies in between, she said. "Aren't you men of conscience after all?"

William K. Clark, director of the city's Department of Community Development, said that the churches were still on the list of sites to be acquired and cleared for the mall. He said they are located in the proposed mall parking lot, about 50 feet from the facade of the mall, facing Quay Street.

Clark said 61 of 327 properties in the 100-acre mall area have already been appraised by GAR Associates Inc. of Amherst. Offers will be made on properties starting in July, he said. The city is required to give residents 90 days to relocate, Clark said.

Results of the environmental impact statement are not complete and aren't expected for another month, Clark said. The state office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation has now determined that an archaeological survey must be done at the site to see if there are any ruins, Clark said. There are no indications that anything archaeologically significant is at the site, he said. "We don't see this as a real problem."

Neither is environmental testing at the former Silbergeld Junkyard property off 13th Street expected to result in any problem for the mall, Clark said. It has been identified as a Department of Environmental Conservation "suspect site," according to Larry Krizan, city coordinator of development services.

Mayor Michael C. O'Laughlin is scheduled to go before the full board of the state Job Development Authority around April 26, Clark said. The city wants the JDA to guarantee the bonds needed to acquire and clear the site for the mega mall. The JDA is then expected to reserve decision until its next monthly meeting, so "we won't know anything until the end of May," Clark said.

.....
The Buffalo News 4/14/90
Armenians to remember deaths

NIAGARA FALLS — The local Armenian community this month will commemorate the deaths of 1.5 million during the 75th anniversary of what some have called the Armenian genocide.

Members of St. Sarkis and St. Hagop Armenian Apostolic churches will mark the event by laying a wreath at 6 p.m. April 24, the official day of commemoration, at the Armenian Monument, Main Street and Pine Avenue.

A formal commemorative program will be held April 29 in the churches, starting with a memorial service at 11:30 a.m. in St. Sarkis, 300 Ninth St., followed by a candlelight procession to St. Hagop's, 322 Ninth St., where a memorial luncheon will be held at noon and a program at 1 p.m.

From our readers

Niagara Gazette 4/16/90



Armenians are pushed around

The city of Niagara Falls is trying to take the St. Hagop Church and Armenian Community Center Inc. and St. Sarkis Church for the mega mall. The center and church have fulfilled the spiritual and cultural needs of the Armenian community. It's a tradition that you will find a cultural center next to an Armenian Church. At St. Hagop's in Niagara Falls, one of the smaller communities, they are in the same building.

The Armenian nation accepted Christianity in the year 301 A.D., 12 years before the Edict of Milan, where the Emperor Constantine decreed that Christianity should enjoy equal privileges with paganism. The first cathedral was built in the year 303. It is still standing today.

During past urban renewal projects, city officials found room to keep St. Mary of the Cataract, St. Peter's Episcopal Church, First Presbyterian Church, Holy Trinity and New Hope Baptist Church. It is a good thing that they did. They are all vital to this community.

But now they want to remove the two Armenian properties because of the mega mall. This is supposed to be a blighted area. Come and look in the 300 block of 9th Street. The homes there are just as nice as any in the city. I don't know what it is with certain members of the city administration. About eight years ago, one of the councilmen tried to have a monument at Pine Avenue and Main Street, Veterans Park, removed. The monument was dedicated to the 1,500,000 Armenians who perished by the actions of the army of the Ottoman Empire who said the Armenians were helping the Allies — Russia, the United States, France and England. These Armenians died just like the soldiers did, but they were soldiers without arms.

A few years back, without any notice, the Armenians, Lebanese, and the black community were not asked to participate in the summer experience at the E. Dent Lackey Plaza. There was no reason given. These groups had participated for years at great expense.

The Armenian community has been around Niagara Falls since before 1900. I feel that this ethnic group has been pushed around enough.

We don't want to move.

William Saroyan, the famous playwright, wrote the following before his death:

"I should like to see any power in this world destroy this race, this small tribe of unimportant people whose history is ended, whose wars have been fought and lost, whose structures have crumbled, whose literature is unread, whose music is unheard, and whose prayers are no more answered. Go ahead, destroy this race! Destroy Armenia! See if you can do it. Send them from their homes into the desert. Let them have neither bread nor water. Burn their homes and churches. Then, see if they will not laugh again, see if they will not sing and pray again. For, when two of them meet anywhere in the world, see if they will not create a new Armenia."

—Aris Ohanessian
Niagara Falls

Niagara
Gazette
4/19/90

Falls resolution commemorates Armenian genocide

All they want is acknowledgment. All they want is an apology.

Armenians seek both from the Turkish government they say is responsible for the deaths of 1.5 million Armenians from 1915-1923. They say both are necessary before justice is served and healing can begin.

Tuesday is the 75th anniversary of the start of the massacre. The Armenians say the proper term for it is genocide.

"It happened during the reign of the Ottoman empire, but no government can claim innocence in this case," said the Rev. Kegham Zakarian, pastor of St. Sarkis Armenian Apostolic Church, 300 Ninth St. "The present government of Turkey is as guilty as the Ottoman empire," he said. Historical Armenia is now the eastern part of Turkey, he said.

Mary M. Mukhtarian, a spokesman for St. Sarkis, points to Sen. Paul Simon's Jan. 24 entry in the Congressional Record of a paper written by

Van Krikorian, director of government and legal affairs at the Armenian Assembly of America in Washington, D.C.

The paper refers to an order that calls for the deportation and murder of Armenians, issued in December 1914 by the then-ruling Committee of Union and Progress Party. The order can be found in the British archives. The Turkish government denies that the genocide occurred.

But the Armenian population of more than two million was reduced to under 100,000, Krikorian wrote. "Those people did not simply disappear." The tragedy, he said, was used by Hitler to lay the foundation for the Holocaust as he urged the military on in a 1939 speech: "Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?"

In the Congressional Record, Sen. Simon cites Krikorian's paper in a push for the passage of an Armenian Genocide resolution to acknowledge that the event occurred and establish



Inside
City
Hall
By MARY
WOZNIAK

April 24 as a national day of remembrance. The joint resolution was introduced by Sen. Robert Dole. The Bush administration was against the resolution and it failed several weeks ago, Ms. Mukhtarian said.

The primary reason for the genocide was religious, Ms. Mukhtarian said. Armenia was the first country to accept Christianity as its official religion in 301 A.D., she said. "This immediately made them the enemy of anybody different." Throughout

history, Armenians have kept religion as the most important aspect of their existence, she said.

Zakarian says Armenians have no quarrel with other religions. Their quarrel is with a government policy that refuses to acknowledge the massacre happened.

Niagara Falls has taken that step. The City Council passed a resolution Monday commemorating April 24 as "a day of remembrance for the victims of the Armenian genocide."

"We really are very happy about the resolution," Ms. Mukhtarian said.

Harry Ishkanian agreed the support is welcome but he wants more. Ishkanian, of St. Hagop's Armenian Apostolic Church at 322 Ninth St., is co-chairman of the committee that is organizing events for the two Armenian churches to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the genocide.

He wants the city to admit that there is a way to build the proposed Factory Outlet Mega Mall without

razing the two churches.

Asked if the city can find any way to let the churches stand, Larry Krizan, the city's chief development official, replied: "We consider it every day, but we have not been able to resolve the issue. Right now it is still necessary to take the church."

Krizan sees no incongruity in the city's supporting the Armenian people by commemorating the Armenian genocide on the one hand, yet forcing the two churches to move to make way for the mega mall on the other. From an urban planning standpoint, there is no correlation between the relocation of the churches and "the tragic history of the Armenian people," he said.

Too often, the issue is likened to "a developer vs. the Armenian people or the city vs. the Armenian church," he said. But the "greater good" of the community as a whole has to be looked at, in terms of numerous employment opportunities for those who need them and helping to keep the

children of Niagara Falls from migrating out of the city once they reach working age, he said.

"We feel (the mega mall) will help preserve the community here in the large sense." It is a large economic development to help heal a community psyche wounded by 30 years of economic depression, he said.

Donna Otabachian is a member of the Armenian community who also hopes the city's latest response in support of the Armenian people will lead to a change in the decision to raze the churches. "Again, we don't want to stop progress," she said. "Armenians are very resourceful. They want to be with progressive movements. But we don't want to endure additional suffering that only a generation or two in the past have." For those who see their community uprooted "it will be a big piece of their heart taken away from them," she said.

Mary Wozniak covers City Hall for the Niagara Gazette.

The Editorial Notebook

Armenia, Remembered

After 50 years, Moscow admits that Stalin ordered the killing of thousands of Polish officers in Katyn. After 40 years, a new Government in East Germany joins West Germany in acknowledging accountability for Hitler's crimes against the Jews. But after 75 years, Turkey insists that charges of mass killings of Armenians are grossly exaggerated by survivors and descendants.

Indeed, Turkish resentment is so vehement that the United States Senate drew back from approving a resolution designating April 24 as a day of remembrance of "the Armenian Genocide of 1915-1923." It is the word "genocide" that most angers Turks, who view it as a slanderous simplification of a confused and tragic episode.

There is justice in the Turkish argument that historians differ on exactly what happened. It's also true that Turkish diplomats have been viciously targeted by Armenian extremists. And one can grant a valid American concern about gratuitously offending a NATO ally.

Nevertheless, something abominable occurred in Anatolia. An Armenian community of a million or more was reduced to negligible numbers. Turkish authorities concede that at least 600,000 Armenians perished in communal violence or in a forced exodus. Others fled Turkey, bearing memories that still sear a stateless people.

What is lacking in the Turkish response is even a hint of generous contrition for excesses that resulted in so many deaths. Instead, by pouncing on disputed particulars, official Turkish handbooks seem to suggest the Armenian case is mostly a fabrication. This is not the path to reconciliation.

Accidents of World War I brought on the Armenian catastrophe. In 1915, Russia turned back an Ottoman inva-

Something Terrible Happened in 1915

sion of Transcaucasia and czarist troops soon entered northeastern Turkey. Long-established Armenian communities were located on both sides of the eastern front. Fearing that Christian Armenians would rise in aid of Russia, Ottoman leaders ordered their mass deportation.

Even granting a military justification, the order was carried out ruthlessly. This is borne out by press reports, diplomatic dispatches and accounts of historians, including Arnold Toynbee, who invoked the word "genocide." It is graphically documented in eyewitness descriptions by Leslie Davis, the U.S. Consul in Harput, who visited devastated villages.

To Mr. Davis, whose forgotten reports are reprinted in full in a recent book, "The Slaughterhouse Province," there was no doubt what was happening: it wasn't expulsion, but "wholesale massacre."

And it passed from memory, so much so that Hitler remarked to his generals, on Aug. 22, 1939: "Who today remembers the Armenian extermination?" A Niagara of ink has spilled over the authenticity of this quotation. The context is frequently garbled; Hitler was talking about his planned invasion of Poland, not about the Jews. But an account of the speech was secretly transmitted to the British in 1939 by one of those present, Adm. Wilhelm Canaris; this is a matter of record, not a concoction.

What adds to the sorrows of Armenia is that so much of the argument concerns precise numbers, faded documents and whether or not Kemal Ataturk, the creator of the Turkish Republic, in fact deplored the killings in a 1926 press interview. A horrible wrong occurred, and Turkey would stand taller in the world if it ceased blaming the victims.

KARLE MEYER

NEW YORK TIMES APRIL 22, 1990

An Open Letter to Senator Robert Byrd

The Armenian Reporter
April 1990

Dear Senator Byrd:

Senate Resolution 212 introduced by Senator Robert Dole commemorates a sad day in our history, and honors many members of my family. They were killed by the Government of Ottoman Turkey for no reason other than they were Armenian. Your opposition to this bill, compels me to relate our story to you, a story that I have previously related to other members of Congress.

My father lost his entire family in those tragic events and was the sole survivor. He searched for his family, mother, father, brothers, sisters, wife and small child from 1915 to 1926. He found no one. My mother lost about three fourths of her family and only survived by a miracle. My father then married my mother, came to America, raised a new family here, but those tragic events were with us from birth, and had their effect upon us also.

My mother has described the last days of her village to me. Turkish gendarmes and the military entered. All Armenians had been previously disarmed so they simply waited like lambs to a slaughter. The men were all chained and my grandfather told my mother in his last words to do all she could to grow up and be a nice person. The men were marched to the Euphrates river and were shot in cold blood. It took four bullets to kill my grandfather. These events were relayed to her by a survivor who somehow was not killed or drowned in the Euphrates.

After the men were murdered, the women and children were marched and marched until many died. Many were raped and many killed themselves and their children to avoid exposure to the barbarians. My mother saw all of this. I heard all of it and I listened and remembered.

Ambassador Henry Morgenthau was in the vanguard of those who protested and of those who tried to stop the mass murder. In *Morgenthau, Ambassador Morgenthau's Story*, Doubleday, Page & Co., 1918, p.334, Talaat Bey, the Turkish Minister of the Interior tells Morgenthau that he is a Jew, and Jews and Moslems had always lived together harmoniously, and Jews in Turkey were given good treatment. Then he states, "Why can't you let us do with these Christians as we please."

Seventy-five years have passed now and Turkey and her apologists have a new story to tell. It was war, they say, and both sides suffered. The Armen-

ians committed atrocities against the Turks. They were working against Turkey.

In my family history no one committed atrocities against the Turks and therefore had to be killed by them. Who were the guerrillas in my family in that interior village far from the Turkish-Russian Front? What had my family done wrong? They obeyed all laws. They were Armenian.

The suffering of our people in the long 3000 year history parallels the suffering of the Jewish people. Even today the Armenian people in the USSR are suffering from the affects of the major earthquake of about one year ago. Simultaneously, great difficulties are being experienced from the Azeri Turks in Azerbaijan SSR. The events in Sumgait, Azerbaijan SSR in February, 1988 are still vivid in our minds.

The Soviet Government didn't act decisively after the pogroms in Sumgait. The pogroms of Baku and other cities in Azerbaijan SSR, followed in January 1990. These in turn were followed by attacks on Armenian people in Dajikstan SSR and Uzbekstan SSR. Why? They were Armenian.

In Nazi Germany Hitler knew well the Armenian history. Germany, like Turkey, was also at war and the Jews like the Armenians, were also a threatening minority. The mass murder of Jews followed just as the murder of Armenians in 1915-23. I'm sure that the Nazi's felt just as correct in their actions as Ottoman Turkey did in 1915. I am sure that Jews were in the underground and some were perhaps communists in Germany. I'm sure that some were even ready to try to overthrow Hitler. However, Hitler knew no one remembered the Armenians, who would remember the Jews?

None of these actions which parallel the reasons cited by "modern and progressive" Turkey for actions taken against the Armenians, justified the death of innocent men, women and children in the holocaust anymore than the deaths of innocents in my family. All Armenian families experienced similar events. Today the once thriving Armenian community in Anatolia doesn't exist. Why?

It is a tragedy for Turkey to be unable to address the issue, but Turkey is a backward country, lacks courage, and needs the mechanism of psychological denial to protect itself. The horror of those events is too great for Turkey, an immature nation, to admit. Almost a greater tragedy, however, is that

our country, through its State Department referred to the events as "alleged" massacres. President Bush has reneged on a campaign statement when he stated, "The United States must acknowledge the attempted Genocide of the Armenian people in the last years of the Ottoman Empire, based upon the testimony of survivors (like my mother and father), scholars and indeed our own representatives at the time, if we are to insure that such horrors are not repeated--I would join Congress in commemorating the victims of that period." He changed his mind, and you, a key leader, led the opposition to this bill.

When a government like the United States shakes in its boots at the thought of offending an important NATO ally like Turkey, I feel great shame. I feel great shame for America because this country was built by the desperate, the weak, and the poor, and in our past we have a history of being an advocate of righteousness. Now, for political expedience America engages in all types of activities unbecoming a great nation.

Turkey is economically weak, and has remained a backward, sick nation, not capable of addressing the truth. This resolution would not have harmed the Republic of Turkey in any manner, no more than the admission of the holocaust hurt Germany in the Post World War II Years. Your victory in the Senate was shallow and the real loser was the United States. Can we ever believe that the majority of Americans in this Senate stand for truth, human rights and justice? Can we ever believe that President Bush, when he speaks to the American people, stands for truth, human rights and justice?

Some day, I believe, Turkey will mature and the issue will be properly addressed. Turkey some day will unwrap the "robes of self-righteousness" and will admit the errors of the Sultans of the Ottoman Empire. Until then we Armenians will not be able to forget what our parents, grandparents and relatives experienced in 1915. Until then we will continue to remind the world of those events. Until then we will "mourn and commemorate".

Thank you for reading this letter.

Sincerely Yours,
Deran Hanesian
Professor
Nutley, N.J.

The Buffalo News 4/23/90

Armenian massacre commemorated

NEW YORK (AP) — About 4,000 people massed in Times Square Sunday to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the massacre of hundreds of thousands of Armenians by the Turkish Ottoman Empire.

Mayor David N. Dinkins and Sen. Alfonse D'Amato, R-N.Y., who were among a contingent of legislators and civic leaders attending the rally, called on Turkey to admit its role in the massacre.

Armenians claim that 1.5 million people were massacred, but the Turks say 300,000 Armenians died during a mass deportation. Historians have estimated that 600,000 Armenians perished.



Niagara Gazette 4/25/90

Elisa Olderman / Niagara Gazette

Remembering

The Rev. Kegham Zakarian of St. Hagop's Armenian Apostolic Church, left, and Deacon Arsen Avdoian of St. Sarkis Armenian Apostolic Church took part in a ceremony Tuesday observing the 75th anniversary of the Armenian genocide. The ceremony took place at the Armenian Monument at Pine Avenue and Main Street.

Niagara Gazette 4/25/90

Churches will help the mall

I do know why I feel compelled to write this. I wrote a few years ago when the Ghermezian brothers talked about a mall in this area and that I did not believe it a was good idea.

I have not changed my mind. I also wrote about the grand prix race and said it would not be a success in Niagara Falls.

This letter is not about the past. It is about the churches in the mall area. The churches are the foundation of America. The churches are the foundation of society. The churches are the pillars of our faith. The churches are a part of our city and country.

To destroy them would be a disaster.

All church members in the city and area should get behind the churches in this area to save them. The churches are near enough to the edge of this area that the mall design can be drawn to accommodate them. In time I believe that they can, or will become an asset to the mall.

—Edward L. Steadman
Lockport



Niagara Gazette 4/25/90
Guest commentary

By JEAN ADJEMIAN

Seventy-five years have passed since the infamous day of April 24, 1915 when the Turks launched their planned, systematic genocide of the Armenians. Some 1.5 million Armenians — two-thirds of the Armenians living in their ancestral land — were either massacred or forced into interminable marches and left to perish in the deserts of what is now Iraq and Syria. The rest fled to exile to the four corners of the world.

By exterminating the Armenians, the Turks had hoped to "solve," once and for all, the embarrassing "Armenian Question." Years of exploitation, injustice and repression by the Turks since they invaded Armenia in the 14th century prompted Armenian leaders to demand reforms and implore Western powers to intervene on their behalf. Although sympathetic to the Armenian plea, the Allies, entrenched in a war with Germany, were not able to take any practical measure of their "little ally."

Since the end of World War I, Armenian leaders in the Diaspora have attempted, through diplomatic channels, to induce the Turks to admit the crimes of their predecessors and make appropriate reparations. In spite of the overwhelming evidence, the Turks, however, with unequalled insolence, claim that the "few thousand" Armenians who lost their lives in that period were "normal casualties of war."

The most irrefutable evidence has been provided by Henry Morgenthau, the then American ambassador to Turkey who sent a wire home to disclose the fate of the Armenians. He admitted that his report didn't contain "the most terrible details, for a complete narration of the sadistic orgies of which the Armenian men and women were the victims can never be printed in an American publication."

The most exhaustive evidence is contained in Armenian Atrocities: The Murder of a Nation, by Arnold Toynbee, in which the renowned historian has compiled several eyewitness testimonies of the massacres and the processions of death.

The most damaging evidence is the trial of Soghomon Tehlirian, a young Armenian student who, in 1921, in a crowded thoroughfare in Berlin, shot and killed at point blank Talaat Pasha, the architect of the "final solution." (Talaat Pasha, considered persona non grata by the Turkish government because of war crimes, had hoped to find safe refuge in a friendly country.)

After a long and emotional trial, the jury found the defendant innocent. A story in the New York Post said, "The courtroom applause that greeted the release of Soghomon Tehlirian shows that Germany will yet make unanimous the world's verdict regarding the slaughter of the Armenians. Even a court in Germany, which had been Turkey's ally during the war, could not find it possible to punish the student who avenged the massacres of the Armenians — one-and-a-half-million innocent Christians — by slaying Talaat Pasha, for-

mer prime minister of Turkey."

A world verdict, however, is far from reality, even though the latest announcements from Europe are encouraging. Meeting in Paris in 1984, the Permanent People's Tribunal, an impressive body of Nobel laureates and individuals of international reputation and undisputed integrity, after analyzing the evidence, rendered its verdict: "The Armenian Genocide is an international crime for which the Turkish state must assume responsibility." Moreover, in 1987, members of the European Parliament, meeting in Strassburg, France, adopted a resolution demanding that the Turkish government recognize the Armenian Genocide and stressing that Turkey's admission to the European Economic Community would be contingent upon its recognition.

While the truth has triumphed in Europe, geo-political and economic considerations have blindfolded certain officials in Washington. Not too long ago, the U.S. State Department announced that "because of the historical record of the 1915 events in Asia Minor is ambiguous, it does not endorse allegations that the Turkish government committed a genocide against the Armenians."

For many years, Armenian-Americans have called on Congress to adopt a resolution recognizing the genocide. But on every occasion (last month was the most recent one), sponsors and supporters have been unsuccessful in obtaining the necessary votes for passage of the resolution. Opponents claim that such a resolution does not serve our national interests and would damage our relationship with a "good friend and ally." One can't help but wonder who the real friends of Turkey are, and whose interests would the resolution jeopardize? The American people? Or corporations like Lockheed, Boeing, General Dynamic, McDonnell Douglas and Coca Cola, among many others, who lobbied to defeat the resolution?

Will the Armenians ever have their catharsis as the Jews did after the world's recognition of the Holocaust? If this is a morally ordered universe, they will. Meanwhile, for the Armenian-Americans of Niagara Falls who are commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Genocide, the impending razing of their church and community center to make room for a mall is compounding their forlornness. Unlike other ethnic or religious groups in town, they no longer have the persuasive voice to influence the decision-making machinery. The tearing down of their sanctuary appears to be a "fait accompli."

For intangible economic considerations, Niagara Falls will go on record to be the first city in the free world to eradicate vestiges of Armenian culture, a sacrilegious act which will drive the wedge deeper into the wounded soul of the Armenian community.

Jean Adjemian of Niagara Falls is a professor of modern languages at Niagara County Community College and an authority on Armenian history.

3214 Neazara Ave
Neazara Falls, N.Y.
14305

April 26, 1990

Dear Mrs. Muecklerian,

I am rather surprised you did not call me after I spoke to Mrs. Anderson last week. Perhaps she misunderstood my message or questioned my motives. There is a lot to explain, so I'll try to write it all down, although it would have been so much easier just to talk to you.

The only reason I'm bothering with all this is I really think it is a shame to have a church such as yours replaced by a parking lot.

Time is of an essence. So far, they've done no digging and the monetary negotiations have not been settled. It's still only a plan. Plans can be changed if met with enough opposition from the right people. Letters to the newspaper are not enough, although they have been numerous. They should tell you that there is support + interest out there, outside of your own people.

My son, who lives in Syracuse has been active in recent months trying to save a historical house from demolition. The project is coming along as he expects to be successful. When he became aware of my letter to the Gazette about saving your church, he called me and gave me some information I tried to pass on to you. He gave me the names of a couple groups who could be helpful to your people if you really want to pursue saving your church. There is no payment involved. There are volunteer groups. There is a lot of envelope stuffing, meetings, etc. I do not know

the ins & outs of all this procedure. My son expressed a willingness to discuss this over the phone, ^{with you} if you were interested. He is willing to tell you how to get the ball rolling. This is what I tried to convey to Mrs Anderson.

The groups for the preservation of historical buildings (and churches) for western N.Y. are as follows:

Landmark Soc. of Western N.Y., 130 Spruay St.,
Rochester N.Y. Beth Teall 714 544 7029

and. The Preservation Coalition

Buffalo, N.Y. Susan Mc. Cartney 714 882 6675

Perhaps you have already contacted these sources.
At any rate, I shall not try to contact you again.
If you want to get help from my son, you may
call me. 297-4271

Sincerely,
Marie Proe

4/27/70. talked to Marie

1-312-116-5099 Tony Proe

RELIGION NEWS

The Buffalo News 4/28/90

Armenians will honor victims of slaughter

Requiem, candlelight procession to mark tragic events of 1915-17

By RICHARD E. BALDWIN
News Niagara Bureau Chief

NIAGARA FALLS — Armenians massacred 75 years ago in Turkey will be remembered during a brief requiem at 11:30 a.m. Sunday in St. Sarkis Armenian Apostolic Church, 300 Ninth St.

After the service, a candlelight procession will lead to St. Hagop Armenian Apostolic Church, next door at 322 Ninth St., where a memorial luncheon will begin at noon.

Aristide D. Caratzas, publisher of "The Slaughterhouse Province: An American Diplomat's Report on the Armenian Genocide, 1915-1917," will speak during a program after the luncheon.

Caratzas' book is based on the observations of Leslie A. Davis, U.S. consul at Harput in eastern Asia Minor from 1915 to 1917. The book contains copies of Davis' consular dispatches to the U.S. embassy at Constantinople, and of the Ottoman government's deportation proclamation to relocate the Armenians.

St. Sarkis and St. Hagop are the only Armenian Apostolic Churches in the state west of Syracuse. They serve a sizable community of Armenian-Americans, which developed in the Niagara Falls area during the last two or three generations.

About 85 people took part in a ceremony here Tuesday in commemoration of the massacre, while thousands of Armenian-Americans attended similar events in many other U.S. cities and at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery, Washington. Choirs from both churches sang in Armenian at a monument placed at Main Street and Pine Avenue as a memorial to the "Armenian martyrs of the 1915 genocide."

The Very Rev. Kegham Zakarian, pastor at St. Sarkis, prayed "for the repose of the souls" of the martyrs. A floral wreath was placed at the monument, while an American flag flew above it. Deacons and altar boys joined their pastor in the solemn ritual.

Tuesday was the 75th anniversary of the date that Armenians regard as the beginning of

a campaign by the Ottoman Empire, forerunner of modern-day Turkey, to commit genocide against its Armenian minority. More than 200 Armenian leaders allegedly were arrested and killed on that date.

Armenians claim the Turks killed 1.5 million people from 1915 to 1923, but Turkey claims 300,000 Armenians died, along with Turks as victims of a civil war, famine and disease that plagued the country in the waning days of the Ottoman Empire. Turkey says Armenians started the civil war, in collusion with Czarist Russia, in order to form an independent state.

Some historians estimate that 600,000 Armenians perished.

Armenians, who trace their roots to the second millennium B.C., once commanded a mighty empire stretching from the Caspian Sea to the Mediterranean. They enjoyed a two-year period of independence early in this century in territory that now is the Soviet Republic of Armenia.

County building won't be 'malled'

Niagara Gazette 4/28/90

No change in plans for Armenian churches located 1 block away

By KAREN R. ECKHARDT
Niagara Gazette

The mega mall wrecking ball will spare Niagara County's 10th Street Human Resources Building, even though two Armenian churches a block away won't be so lucky.

City officials Friday insisted that the building, which also houses the Niagara Falls auto bureau, won't be in the way of the \$111 million factory outlet mega mall proposed for 100 acres on the East Side.

"It never appeared to be in the line of traffic needs," said Mayor Michael C. O'Laughlin. "Unfortunately, the Armenian churches were in the way."

What is good news for the county, though, is

just the opposite for members of the Armenian community. They are upset with the city's plans to raze St. Sarkis Armenian Apostolic Church at 300 Ninth St. and St. Hagop's Armenian Apostolic Church, located in the neighboring Armenian Community Center at 322 Ninth St.

Overall, county officials seem relieved, but some say they still know little about the city's plans for parking near the building or how the mall will be built around it. An estimated 350 to 375 employees work in the building for the health and social services departments, health clinics and the Department of Motor Vehicles.

"From what I can see, the city officials are making the decisions without the county," said

Legislator Gerald E. Meal, R-Royalton, who chairs the legislative Public Works Committee. But "I think we could get along as long as the parking is provided for."

Other lawmakers echoed his concern that parking spaces be available to accommodate employees and the public, but many said they're still waiting to learn more about the impact of the mall on the area where the office building is located, along with an adjacent parking lot.

Building a mall around the building is "just one of the challenges," said William K. Clark, the city's community development director. "We'll have to work around it. We can't afford to acquire a building like that," given the cost

of the project.

O'Laughlin, however, dismissed the cost issue, saying instead that the building will be saved since it won't interfere with the flow of traffic and delivering of supplies to the mall. "It has nothing to do whatsoever with who is there and who is not there," he said.

Quay and Niagara streets will be used for the mall's main entrance area, and both churches "happen to be in the direct line of traffic," O'Laughlin said.

The developer, Benderson Development Co. didn't return telephone calls from the Gazette Friday to elaborate on its architectural plan near the county building. Designs for the mall still aren't complete, O'Laughlin said.

Writer says ^{Niagara Gazette} spare church ^{4/30/90}

Many years ago I served as an altar boy at the Polish National Church. I knew very little about the Armenian people until I met and married my wife. As we started our family, I learned much about the Armenian people whose endurance against centuries of persecution has been a heroic struggle which seems to continue in a variety of ways.

My first daughter was baptized at home by a visiting Armenian priest because the Armenian community was still trying to amass the funds to build a church. Through the years, many obstacles confronted them, especially the Great Depression. But those early immigrants, having gone through persecution by the Turks in their ancestral land and having seen their nation virtually destroyed because of their Christian faith, began to thrive in the atmosphere of free America. If they worked hard and built their church, no power in this free society would have the right to tear it down. In the interim, while they raised their funds they were invited several times annually by gracious pastors of St. Peter's Episcopal Church to hold their masses there, or if they were fortunate enough to have a car, they crossed the border on special holy days to attend mass at the closest Armenian Church in St. Catharines, Ont.

Finally St. Sarkis was built in 1953, a memorable year for our family particularly because our second daughter was to be the first baptized in our brand new church. Years later, sadly, our 19-year-old son Mark was buried from St. Sarkis. Our grandchildren have steadily attended Sunday school, and our latest grandson, Mark, five months old, was recently baptized there.

Today we face the adamant stand of urban renewal and the threat that the church will be demolished and moved from the site that those early immigrants reared with so much sacrifice and pride. We experience some sad scenes. Our elderly, who still live in the vicinity of St. Sarkis, come to church and worry how far they will have to travel to pray and light a candle. Our young people are concerned about where they will marry and raise their children.

Armenians have survived only because they are a people of strong faith. Today, as they face the devastating prospect of seeing the walls of their church come down, they keep that faith and pray that compassionate hearts will prevail.

—James Barbato
Niagara Falls

Armenians remember genocide

Niagara
Gazette
4/30/90

By CATHALENA E. BURCH
Niagara Gazette

David Gamboian of Lewiston can't talk about the Armenian genocide of 1915-23 without tears welling up in his dark eyes.

His 80-year-old mother, Zozan, was one of only three children in her family to survive the killings by the Ottoman government in Turkey, which Armenians say wiped out more than 1.5 million of their people.

"She's very bitter," Gamboian said during ceremonies Sunday to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Armenian genocide. "It hurt my mother very much. I don't remember her telling us to hate (the Turkish people), but she personally hates them."

"We've been cheated because we grew up without grandparents," added Gamboian's wife, Shirley. "Our past is wiped out."

More than 250 area Armenian-Americans gathered for Sunday's ceremonies at St. Sarkis Armenian Church and St. Hagop Armenian Apostolic Church, both on Ninth Street. The ceremonies were held five days after the worldwide genocide memorial day last Tuesday.

The two churches, the only Armenian churches in New York state west of Syracuse, have held memorial services for the past 35 years to commemorate the start of the genocide on April 24, 1915, said organizer Aris Ohanessian, secretary of the Armenian Community Center.

In the beginning, the ceremonies were somber events, filled with tearful testimonies of the atrocities committed during the eight-year killing period. The emotions are still the same, although the mood of the yearly gatherings has become more upbeat, Ohanessian said.

"Now we celebrate to show the Turkish government that we've overcome," he said.

Many of those attending Sunday had relatives who survived the genocide, which Turkish officials still deny ever took place. The ceremony participants said they hope that by remembering the tragedy every year, it will force the Turkish government to admit finally that the Ottoman government tried to wipe out an entire group of people.

"It was a tragedy perpetrated by the Turkish government, and we have to remember every year," the Rev. Keghan Zakarian of St. Sarkis said during a memorial service Sunday.

Like other first-generation Armenian-Americans, the Gamboians have repeated their parents' stories to their own children. They hope their children will continue to carry on the fight they inherited from birth.

"All the Turks have to do is admit it," said Gregian Berge, a Lewiston resident whose father survived the genocide. "Until then, the memorials will continue, and the children and grandchildren are going to continue fighting."

1 For coverage of Niagara area news call the Gazette City Desk at 282-2311 9 a.m. to 1 a.m. Monday through Friday 5:30 p.m. to 1:30 a.m. weekends. City Editor is Gary Housey

Niagara Gazette

Thursday, May 3, 1990 — 3A

Editorial 9A
Today 10-13A

Falls URA adopts diminished role Community Development Department to carry on agency's work

By MARY WOZNIAK
Niagara Gazette

The Niagara Falls Urban Renewal Agency gave up center stage Wednesday in the city's economic development scenario.

The URA closed out its last three projects and turned its assets over to the city's Community Development Department.

William K. Clark, director of that department, took over leadership of the URA from Larry Krizan, who stepped down as executive director. Krizan will remain as a consultant to the URA and retains his position as city coordinator of development services, the city's chief development official.

Krizan said it was fitting that Clark take over, since the Community Development Department will have the responsibility of executing remaining URA projects.

The closed-out projects include the Highland-Hyde Park Industrial Area, with leftover funds of \$5,000; an East Side neighborhood development program, with assets of \$750,000 and the Allen-Mackenna Industrial Park, with as-



Larry Krizan
bonds.

The Community Development department will now oversee the completion of such URA projects as the construction to take place on Parcel 4, once the legal settlement between David Cordish, developer of the Rainbow Centre, and Peter Stranges, local developer, is completed; and any assistance to the United Office Building renovation project.

The URA also approved a proposal by the Benderson Development Co. to build a distribu-

tion facility on 1.3 acres directly west of the Maryland-Maple Incubator. The project will be on a remaining piece of URA land between Maple and Maryland avenues, facing Highland Avenue.

tion facility on 1.3 acres directly west of the Maryland-Maple Incubator. The project will be on a remaining piece of URA land between Maple and Maryland avenues, facing Highland Avenue.

The truck-transfer facility will cover 5,000 square feet, said James E. Engel, executive director of the NFC Development Corp. He said the project value was \$400,000.

David A. DePaolo, Benderson director of project planning, said construction of the facility may begin this summer. He said that the tenant would be "a nationally recognized freight company" that he declined to name. The project would create about 10 jobs, he said.

The URA also approved a proposal by the L&R Graphic Supply Co. Inc. of Mississauga, Ont., to buy 1.5 acres in the Highland-Hyde Park Industrial area for \$29,403. Krizan said the company produces photographic materials and plans a \$600,000 project, including a 20,000-square-foot building.

Engel said the firm expects to do \$10 million

worth of business in 1990. One-third of that business would come here, he said. The project is expected to create 20 jobs over three years in the salary range of \$10,000-\$40,000, Engel said.

Krizan said the Benderson and L&R Graphic projects, along with a possible tenant for the vacant Pages building and a proposed expansion of Parmed Inc. on seven-tenths of an acre, effectively closes out the Highland-Hyde Park Urban Renewal Industrial Park.

At the NFC Development Corp. meeting following the URA meeting, executive director Engel announced a planned new 27-acre industrial park, including 400,000 square feet of industrial buildings, bounded by Highland and Beech avenues in the city's Economic Development Zone. The \$1.4 million to demolish existing structures and prepare the site will be funded by a \$580,000 loan from the state Job Development Authority; a \$420,000 loan from the Regional Economic Development Partnership Program; a \$280,000 grant from the REDPP; and \$140,000 in cash from the NFC, Engel said.

Niagara Gazette May 4, 1990

Rewriting history in 90s

Lot of 'I am sorries' out there

This is the year that making history finally became a daily event, sort of like making coffee. We got up in the morning, put on the water and counted the number of governments or assumptions that toppled overnight.

But making history, it turns out, is more than churning out dates for future students to memorize on their time charts. Making history is also, and in tandem, rewriting the past.

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This is often an offshoot of current events. History changes hands as quickly as governments. The past is among the spoils that go to the victors. The new contenders for power, whether democratic or royal, stake their claims on history.



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Both the Soviets and the Germans are promoting their own right to rule, their legitimacy, on confessions of past wrongdoing. Charles Maier, a Harvard historian, compares this approach to that of psychiatry: "When people enter therapy, they have to remember. When regimes cleanse themselves, they have to take on the task of remembering, for the first time, things that took place that they'd like to forget."

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Ultimately what is most important is not the sudden I-am-sorries, but the willingness to use the past as a prod for a future worth remembering.

Ellen Goodman is a columnist for the Boston Globe.

Niagara Gazette May 4, 1990

Mall needs good climate

There is nothing worse than a missed opportunity, and the city of Niagara Falls can not afford to miss an opportunity!

We feel that the issue of the St. Sarkis Armenian Church and the St. Hagop Armenian Apostolic Church needs to be addressed.

In Niagara Falls we need to build a vision for a "climate of creative cooperation."

Why not keep these churches in place and enhance their properties with trees and landscaping?

This will equally show that we are concerned about our residents as we are about attracting new businesses.

This is what is in the hearts of our people. People want to feel good about the new opportunity that the mall presents and also want to respect our institutions and traditions.

Nobody want to see churches torn down. It violates a sense of sacredness which a community as religious as Niagara Falls values.

This also can provide a mission for these congregations, as it has for congregations and churches already in the area, First Presbyterian, St. Peter's Episcopal, and St. Mary of the Cataract.

Christ's ministry was directed toward the market place.

If you have ever been to the Eaton Centre you will see how the architect included the Anglican Church in their design. It worked for Toronto, why not Niagara Falls!

The visibility of churches for tourist has always been of importance to tourist and congregations. This is important because this symbol of cooperation shows that the city of Niagara Falls cares about the spiritual vitality as well as commerce.

What is more important than for the residents of Niagara Falls to feel good about their mall. We must build this vision of a "climate for creative cooperation" because the residents of Niagara Falls will also have to be sold on this mall, too.

—Earl LaRocca
William McIntosh
Albert Laese
S. Cyril Hurnyak
North End Clergy Coalition

Church-in-the-mall possible future trend

The Toronto Star 5/5/90

A SMALL sign between Diana Sweets and the Pink Pearl restaurants in Mississauga's Square One shopping centre reads "Peace Lutheran Church." You could quite easily miss it if you were not looking for it.

Walk through the doors between the restaurants, down a wide service corridor and you reach the entrance of one of only two churches in Canada located in a shopping mall.

At first glance it looks like any conventional church interior; a small altar, banners on the wall, an organ. There are no windows, but behind the altar there is a large piece of stained-glass, backlit by artificial light.

Peace Lutheran Church is not your run-of-the-mill church on the corner with steeple and cross. But with 4,000 mall parking spaces, it is one city centre church with no parking problem. And it is a church with accessibility far beyond what most other churches have.

Peace Lutheran, one of about 650 Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Canada congregations, was founded in 1974 as a "marketplace ministry" and has been an active member of the ecumenical Open Door drop-in and resource centre since it was established in the mall 16 years ago.

But, until February, the congregation gathered in the mall's auditorium for Sunday service. The congregation of about 85 families now has a home in what was once the mall's administrative office.

"The congregation had reached a static position, had grown to a certain level, and had not seemed to get beyond that," the Rev. Robert Hutchison said of the congregation's decision to look for a home it could call its own.

Hutchison came to Peace Lutheran in 1984 with the understanding the congregation was interested in finding a permanent facility so it could have an identifiable presence in the centre of the community. But sky-rocketing land prices and high rental costs soon put an end to any dreams of building a new church in Mississauga's city centre.

Hutchison recalled that in 1986, when the congregation was looking at a piece of Mississauga property as a possible church site, the price of the land jumped in a two-week period from \$350,000 to \$750,000 an acre. This happened at a time when the national church was strapped for funds, having separated from the parent U.S. body to form a Canadian church.

Hutchison estimated that land in Mississauga's city core now runs at \$2 million an acre and a new church would need two acres to allow for adequate parking. Peace Lutheran had been priced out of the market. Providentially, last summer, the Square One management offered rental of their former administration space for an annual rent of \$37,000. The 3,000 square feet of space has been converted into a sanctuary, a minister's office, Sunday school area, kitchen and nursing area.

Although Hutchison says there is no other place he would rather be and that he has the backing of most of his congregation, others are not so sure.

"We have lost people over this," he said. "One member said 'I want a church building to take my grandchildren to.' What that has to do with the gospel I don't know."

Others think the money paid in rent is lost although Hutchison argues that the annual rental is less than what the congregation would be paying in interest on



FRANK CALLEA/TORONTO STAR

REV. ROBERT HUTCHISON: Created a place of rest and sanctuary for anyone seeking respite from the stress and bustle of the world.

a new building. "And there are still some people who feel this is an intermediary step and that one day we will move out into a traditional church building."

Hutchison said he wants to create a place of rest and sanctuary for anyone seeking respite from the stress and bustle of the world. One evening recently, an East Indian couple wandered in and asked if they could pray in the church. Permission was granted and the couple set up their prayer mat in a corner. For Hutchison, the church-in-the-mall is a natural trend of the future.

"But I am not sure the (national) church is willing to see it that way. In our development here, the most co-operative people were in the mall. It's still difficult to get this concept across to our national (church) division."

Hutchison is not sure how the experiment is going to work out. For one thing, the congregation needs to swell by 50 families if the congregation is to pay its own way.

"But I do think it is the way to go. I'm the eternal optimist. We have a five year lease and I think we will be around to renew the lease."

RELIGION



MICHAEL McATEER

Nations look back — with remorse

The Buffalo News 5/5/90

BOSTON — This is the year that making history finally became a daily event, sort of like making coffee. We got up in the morning, put on the water and counted the number of governments or assumptions that toppled overnight.

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By ELLEN GOODMAN

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Boston Globe

May 7, 1990

The City of Niagara Falls
Office of the Mayor
Niagara Falls,
New York 14302

Notice of Intent to file Federal Environmental Impact Statement and Notice of Public Scoping Meeting
Benderson MegaMall Development
in Niagara Falls

During 1990, the City of Niagara Falls (the "City") plans to request that the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development make funds available under Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 (the "Act") to be used in the development of the Factory Outlet MegaMall (the "Project") in Niagara Falls, New York.

It has been determined by the City, as the "lead agency" for the Project, pursuant to Section 104(h) of Title I of the Act and applicable regulations (40 C.F.R. Parts 1500-1508 and 24 CFR Part 58), that this request for release of Federal funds will constitute an action with the potential of significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. Accordingly, the City will prepare a draft Environmental Impact Statement ("DEIS") on the Project, in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.

This notice is to inform the public and interested agencies and persons about the Project and the preparation of the DEIS, and to solicit comments and information for consideration in the DEIS.

The principal benefits of the Project are: the strengthening of the economic and commercial potential of the area; the revitalization of the local neighborhood; and the projection of new tax revenues for the City. The Project involves a cooperative effort by the City and Benderson Development Corporation, and will use Federal, State, local, and private funds in its development.

The site proposed for the Project is located between Niagara Street on the north and Buffalo and Erie Avenues on the south, and between the Quay Street Extension on the west and Portage Road on the east. It covers approximately 100 acres. The Project will involve amendments to the existing Urban Renewal and Comprehensive Plans and rezoning, and the construction of approximately 1.4 million square feet of commercial space. The Project will also involve the demolition of approximately 275 improved properties and the relocation of approximately 98 homeowners, 250 residential tenants, and 45 commercial uses (including community facilities).

An Urban Development Action Grant ("UDAG") of \$4 million will help finance the acquisition, relocation, clearance, and site improvement parts of the project. The entire project will proceed in two phases. The first phase is scheduled to commence in the fall of 1990 and will be completed within approximately 12 months. The cost of phase one is estimated to be approximately 38 million dollars. This phase will include amendment of the City's Urban Renewal and comprehensive plans, rezoning, acquisition of existing properties, relocation of households and businesses, clearance activities, and site improvements. Phase two will involve an expenditure of approximately 80 million dollars, and will include construction of a mall with approximately 1.4 million square feet of commercial space, and approximately 6000 parking spaces. A third phase is still tentative, but may include a hotel and/or further commercial development.

The City has decided to prepare the DEIS because the Project is an important undertaking and is anticipated to have potentially significant environmental impacts on the site and on the general vicinity of the site. These potential impacts, which will be more fully discussed in the DEIS, are briefly described as follows: Before construction takes place, approximately 275 improved properties must be acquired, and about 98 homeowners, 250 residential tenants, and 45 commercial uses (including community facilities) relocated. The impact of the necessary relocation must be considered. During the Project's construction and operation, the proposed Project will attract large numbers of people to the site. Efficient and safe transportation of these people will therefore necessitate consideration of existing and future traffic and mass transportation patterns and of parking needs. In addition, the Project will require consideration of possible noise, air quality, hazardous waste, socioeconomic, land use and community, secondary and other impacts, including effects of the Project on historical and archaeological resources. The DEIS will analyze and describe these impacts and will also set forth the Project's physical and visual features and its location, size, scope and constituent elements, including a discussion of measures that may be employed to mitigate or eliminate any potential adverse impacts.

The DEIS will also describe and analyze reasonable alternatives to the Project, including development for another use, differing scales of development, different configurations for the project, alternative sites and the "no build" alternative.

The DEIS is expected to be published and distributed in the spring of 1990. After its publication, a copy of the DEIS will be on file and available for public inspection at the following locations:

The Department of Housing and Urban Development, Buffalo, New York

Niagara Falls Public Library
Niagara Falls Public Library - LaSalle Branch

The Niagara Falls City Clerk's Office

The U.S.E.P.A. Public Information Office

The City of Niagara Falls Environmental Services Department

The notice is part of the process for determining the scope of the issues to be addressed in the DEIS, for identifying data and significant environmental issues related to the Project, and for identifying cooperating agencies. To assist in this scoping process, a public scoping meeting will be held in the City Council Chambers, City Hall, 745 Main Street, Niagara Falls, New York 14302 on May 23, 1990 at 7:00 P.M.

All interested agencies, groups and persons who are unable to attend the public scoping meeting are invited to submit written comments with respect to the proposed scope of the DEIS. Such comments, to be considered, should be received on or before 21 days after date of notice.

For further information, please contact the applicant at the following address and telephone number:

Applicant:
City of Niagara Falls
c/o Environmental Services Dept.
745 Main Street
Niagara Falls, New York 14302
Attention: David Brooks
Environmental Services Director
Telephone: (716) 286-4444
Dated: Niagara Falls, New York
May 7, 1990
Michael C. O'Laughlin, Mayor
City Hall
745 Main Street
Niagara Falls, New York 14302
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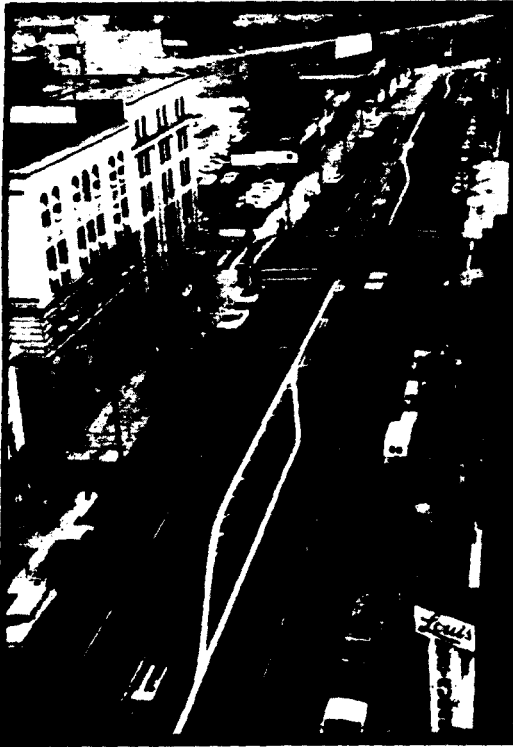
Niagara
Gazette
May 7, 1990

SPECIAL REPORT

NIAGARA COUNTY

Moving in on the Olcott breakwall
Erie County launches a real estate invasion

24
25



Left: Falls Street, looking east, in 1965. Below: Falls Street, looking west toward Prospect Park, in 1967.

Photos courtesy of Niagara Falls Public Library



End of an era

Urban renewal reaches retirement age after a long and often troubled career



Above: Old Falls Street as it appears today, looking west toward Prospect Park. Right: A model from about 1971 of the urban renewal vision for downtown Niagara Falls.



By BILL McMEEKIN

It happened so quietly that if you blinked, you missed the passing of an era.

On April 3, the Niagara Falls Urban Renewal Agency began winding down its direct involvement in downtown development in Niagara Falls.

Though the agency will remain active throughout Benderson Development Co. Inc.'s proposed outlet mall project, administration of other downtown projects has been shifted to the city's Community Development Department.

For all practical purposes, the agency that in the minds of many stands for much that has gone wrong in Niagara Falls is heading into mothballs.

Urban renewal.

In Niagara Falls, the words are enough to make the most stouthearted civic booster blanch. It has created controversy, changed lives, swayed political campaigns.

Now urban renewal in Niagara Falls has reached the beginning of the end. Or is it the beginning of something else?

"I think it's very much a transitional item. I think that the hopes that were built up and died with urban renewal clearance had a psychological effect on this city that was negative. We are finally overcoming that," said Larry Krizan, the city's development chief and Urban Renewal Agency director.

It is impossible to discuss Niagara Falls' urban renewal program without mentioning E. Dent Lackey, who was mayor from 1964 to 1975.

Under the white-maned Lackey, a fiery orator with a showman's flair, the city dreamed and dreamed big. It was Lackey who in the 1960s spoke of Niagara Falls walking on the "twin legs" of industry and tourism.

In unveiling a downtown master plan in July 1971, Lackey said urban renewal "will help us build Niagara Falls into a truly international city."

His vision was construction of 2,100 guest rooms in five hotels, 450,000 square feet of retail space and 210,000 square feet of office space carrying a total public-private sector price tag of nearly \$200 million.

"When the plan is carried out to completion, Niagara Falls will have one of the most breathtaking natural wonders of the world next to one of the most attractive downtowns in the United States," Daniel Collins, a former Urban Renewal Agency director, said at the time.

Many longtime Niagara Falls residents bathe Falls Street and the South End in the warm glow of nostalgia. The Strand and Cataract theaters, the old Beir's department store, the Imperial and the Henry Hubbs hotels all float down the gentle steam of memory.

In a final project report prepared in April 1965, the city characterized downtown as a hodgepodge of deteriorating buildings with a variety of clashing uses laid out on a rigid and poorly designed street pattern.

"Over half the buildings are substandard to a point which requires their clearance," the report stated. "It is not an attractive area, but one which is shabby and uninviting."

Please turn to page 27

Continued from preceding page
open this month. The idea behind the projects is to provide tourism-related attractions that will lengthen visitor stays.

Construction of Falls Street Faire and Falls Street Station has been hampered at times by financing problems and disputes between the developer and contractors and labor unions working on the projects.

Some people also don't like the way they look.

Niagara Falls Neighborhood Housing Services Inc. plans to buy the long-vacant United Office Building, an art deco landmark, and convert it to a retail-residential-office complex.

It is across Rainbow Boulevard from the low-slung, pre-cast buildings that will be Falls Street Faire and Falls Street Station. Merino praises the concepts of the developments and predicts they will be a boon for downtown. He is troubled, however, that the projects may clash with a building as graceful as the United.

"You drive downtown and you're a block away from one of the wonders of the world, and you've got two buildings with zero architectural integrity," Merino said.

The South End is seldom praised, often buried.

So what is new here? A sense of optimism among some that, like cockroaches that survive a nuclear holocaust, downtown Niagara Falls may be ready to sustain far more life than it already does.

Little can be done to eradicate the sins of the past. The question is whether Niagara Falls can overcome them.

"The people I run into in the community usually say, 'Niagara Falls will succeed in spite of itself,'" Merino said.

The project that many believe carries the most hope for resuscitating the city is Benderson Development's proposed \$80 million, 1.2 million-square-foot outlet shopping mall.

The project would consume about 90 acres of a generally decrepit neighborhood near downtown and turn an estimated \$350 million in annual sales. The mall would allow the developer to further mine the rich vein of Canadians pouring over the border and capture some of the estimated 10 million people who visit Niagara Falls every year.

"It only takes common sense to understand the benefits of the project," said Rex Burgher, vice president of marketing for Benderson Development.

In showing the site to prospective tenants, Burgher notes many of them voice concerns over the lack of tourism activity downtown, occupancy rates in local hotels, underutilization of the Niagara Falls Convention and Civic Center.

The mall project, backed annually by \$2.5 million of the developer's marketing money, could dramatically change that, Burgher said.

The mall could draw so much additional activity that development officials envision the city staying out of commercial venture financing altogether and sticking solely to industrial development projects.

If residents express doubts about this mall, as some vociferously have, perhaps it is because the honeymoon capital has been down the aisle so many times with so many other developers. There is no forgetting the Ghermezian brothers, who wooed the city in 1986 and 1987 with plans for a \$1.2 billion retail and entertainment behemoth that never happened.

The current mall project is tangled in a dispute between the city and county over how urban renewal agency bonds, needed to finance a \$34 million site clearance for the mall, will be repaid.

Environmental studies still need to be completed, property appraised and acquired, and residents and businesses relocated.

Even projects that offer awesome eco-

nomie potential do not come easy in Niagara Falls.

Nor can Benderson Development's mall proposal take all the credit for any optimism expressed about the future of downtown Niagara Falls.

Development land is scarce. A \$7.3 million hotel development is expected to break ground opposite E. Dent Lackey Plaza later this year. Rainbow Centre plans an 80,000-square-foot expansion on a vacant parcel opposite the mall. Another developer plans a motel and amusement complex near the Rainbow Centre expansion.

Yet Krizan views the Benderson Development project as pivotal, not only for its raw development potential, but in how the city sees itself.

In terms of development, the mall is perhaps the city's last chance for a dramatic, one-time transformation of downtown, a transformation urban renewal set out to accomplish and fell short of the



Downtown as it appeared in the mid '70s during the urban renewal heyday.

Photo courtesy of the Niagara Falls Public Library

mark, Krizan said. In terms of image, perhaps it would give the city's residents the overwhelming proof they need to believe in their downtown again.

"The mega-mall, in my opinion," said Krizan, "is a major step for the city in reaching its potential, not only in economic development, but in image." □



Left to right: Richard B. Searns, president of Key Resource Group; Anthony J. Carroll, Marine relationship manager; and Jari King, Key Resource vice president.

THIS INC. 500 COMPANY "COULDN'T HAVE DONE IT WITHOUT MARINE!"

Key Resource Group has worked it out with Marine Midland Bank since 1982.

Number 186 on Inc. magazine's list of the country's 500 fastest growing firms is Key Resource Group. And Richard B. Searns, president, credits much of the company's success to the responsiveness of Marine Midland Bank.

"They're very flexible in their ability to accomplish what we need," Rick Searns explains. "The temporary help business is a great consumer of cash - the more business you do, the more cash you need. We need a bank that understands the peculiarities of this business."

The company's Carrie Allen division provides temporary and permanent clerical and permanent administrative personnel to area businesses. The Recruitment Group affiliate offers executive placement. The Professional Software Services division markets computer consulting and software packages throughout the U.S. and Canada.

Key Resource Group appreciates "Marine's complete range of services," notes Anthony J. Carroll, relationship manager, who reports there is an "excellent rapport" between the bank and its client. Financing through Marine enabled the firm to acquire its new corporate headquarters, while a substantial working capital line of credit supports continued growth in a fast growing industry.

A bank with the expertise and the willingness to help your company achieve its growth objectives is as close as your nearest Marine Midland branch. Or call Anthony Carroll, assistant vice president, at 632-3743.

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EDITORIAL

BUSINESS FIRST IN BUFFALO

Niagara Falls' new start

The federal urban renewal program has been particularly troublesome in Niagara Falls. Now that the program's formal aspects are ending after 20 years, perhaps it is time for the city's government, residents and neighbors to begin looking differently at it.

Many still feel Niagara Falls never will regain its vitality from the days before bulldozers came and leveled the Falls Street tourist district.

But memories are not an appropriate blueprint for development. Niagara Falls has changed too much since then, and it will continue to change. That's one of the things that makes a city a city.

So now seems a good time to consider urban renewal for the opportunities it continues to create.

It is fair to say that much of urban renewal's outcome has been imperfect and that plenty of mistakes were made in rebuilding the city's downtown. But that too is one of the things that makes a city a city.

Finally, it is time to define the city's relationship with the cataract.

Encroachment by business to the river's edge has been beaten back for now. The surrounding park has been enlarged and invigorated. The highway that once passed through it has been removed.

Yet, proposals to improve access to the Niagara River gorge have largely been misunderstood as crass exploitation of the river's beauty.

This is not a call for a return to the days when the only way to get a glimpse of the falls was to pay for a look through a peephole in a fence.

But despite its beauty, Niagara Falls is not the Grand Canyon. It is not 200 miles long, 10 miles wide or a mile deep. It is not wilderness. It has been an urban center since before the Grand Canyon even had an English name.

Millions of dollars have been spent in Niagara Falls to give visitors something to do after viewing the cataract. Niagara Falls has a need and a right to draw tourists. It's one of the things that makes this city a city.

Pour it on in Toronto

Marketing efforts by local organizations are getting the word out across the nation and into Canada about business opportunities in Buffalo.

But according to experts in Canada's real estate industry, residents of Toronto remain ignorant of the changes that have taken place here.

That's unfortunate, considering cost comparisons. Moving 90 minutes or so out of Toronto and into Buffalo can cut two-thirds from the price of a house and 20 percent from the mortgage rate.

To be sure, moving a residence from one country to another is difficult and often impossible. And



Something gets lost in the

Given Americans' passion for lists—from "The People's Almanac" to the Business First Top 25 Book of Lists—I have no doubt that the recently released book, "Managerial Literacy: What Today's Managers Must Know to Succeed," will be an immense hit. But I doubt it will be very useful to most readers.

Authors Gary Shaw and Jack Weber, both professors at graduate business schools, have compiled a list of 1,200 business terms they believe are essential to modern

demics in bu companies W takeovers. It offices of the they're talkin street outside Brother's Bar

Imagine th buys this Ber stay up night breakfast tab that say "Th "situational l wart student of the terms i grade as a ma

And what talking about his workers, if he's lost hi

That's imp insit that wi function in d "Managen in an importa authors state managers en lary in this t

GUEST NOTEBOOK

Dougald MacDonald

managers. In order to succeed in business, a person should be familiar with at least 80 percent of these words and phrases, the authors argue.

Ready to test yourself? Included in the publicity material for "Managerial Literacy" was a list of 20 sample terms. They were:

- Cash Cow
- Critical Path Method (CPM)
- Discount Window
- Edge Act Company
- Equity Kicker
- Fighting Brand

Niagara Gazette 5/10/90

She supports St. Hagop's

I am a non-Armenian and want to express my point of view concerning the decision of demolishing St. Hagop's Armenian Church and Community Center, which is actually a multi-cultural center.

We've been associated with the Armenian Center for many years. We get our spiritual needs satisfied at the center.

We have gospel singings a few times a year at the center.

I read that they have 100 members. That's an understatement, considering how many members of the Armenian community the center actually serves. I believe the number is in the thousands. On my last appointment, I tried to reserve the center for the months of April and October. I was informed I could get it for April, but not October because they had to give way to the mega-mall. I'm pleading with this project's developers to let the buildings stand.

—Gladys B. Riley
Niagara Falls

Council sideshow provides a free night of entertainment

Step right up, folks.

View the City Council sideshow.

Six men and one woman providing non-stop entertainment biweekly for an hour or two. The members vote on agenda items, but sometimes the resolutions seem incidental. Often they appear to be used as political backdrops for council members to air their beefs with city government — and each other.

Best of all, it's free.

At Monday's meeting, the entertainment began with a resolution to rescind the Council's opposition to a state Department of Transportation plan to build a new exit ramp from the Robert Moses Parkway where Main Street turns into Rainbow Boulevard South. The resolution was sponsored by three Democratic councilmen and Republican Councilman Michael S. Gawel.

The state DOT plan goes right through property owned by the Roger W. Roffle family, which planned to build a \$4 million hotel there.

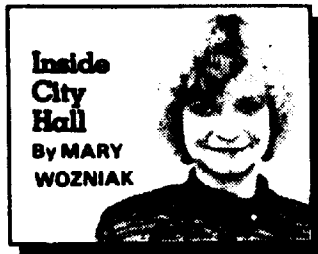
The council had been against the state DOT plan. But the Niagara Falls Bridge Commission had told the council that the state DOT plan was included in an overall plan for the expansion of the Rainbow Bridge Plaza to 25 booths. Unless the council rescinded its opposition to the DOT plan, the \$32 million bridge expansion plan would have to go back to the drawing board. The council rescinded its opposition by a 4-3 vote.

Republican Councilman Jacob A. Palillo was against it. He said that the bridge commission plan was nothing more than a way to funnel more shoppers to the Benderson Development Co.'s proposed factory outlet mega mall and create traffic jams.

"This city is being led by madmen drunk with power," Palillo said.

Democratic Councilman Anthony J. Rendina turned his back to the dais.

"Tony, why don't you turn your face around?" Florence Acotto, a Re-



publican supporter of Councilman Barbara A. Geracitano and Palillo, called out from the audience.

"He's sleeping, Florence," Palillo answered. "We don't have a government of checks and balances. And there's proof," he said, pointing at Rendina. "We get a government of whatever Mike wants, Mike gets," he said of Democratic Mayor Michael C. O'Laughlin.

"What we have here is the Democrats against the Republicans. Cold

war. Political war," Palillo continued. "There are only two real Republicans on this council. One is owned by the Democrats." Palillo was referring to Councilman Michael S. Gawel, who was one of the sponsors of the resolution.

Gawel leaned forward. "Jake, shut up," he said.

The reappointment of Willie C. Fields Sr. to the Niagara Falls Civil Service Commission prompted some fancy political dancing on the dais. The council first voted on a resolution sponsored by Councilman Anthony F. Quaranto to remove it from the table, where it had been placed at the April 30 meeting, and vote on it.

Last on the agenda was another resolution sponsored by Rendina to vote on the Fields appointment. In between were two other resolutions, one to appoint Republican Committeeman Linda L. Schug to the commission, sponsored by Geracitano and Palillo, and one to appoint Republican Josephine Tavano, sponsored by Democratic Council

Chairman Henry J. Buchalski.

Rendina said he added the second Fields resolution to the agenda at the last minute. "I put it on after seeing the two additional resolutions being introduced with different names involved," he said, "and strategizing that in the event Mr. Fields' resolution was not removed from the table and in the event it was removed from the table and defeated," Fields could still be considered under Rendina's separate resolution.

Geracitano asked if it was legal for the Council to vote to remove the Fields' appointment from the table and vote on it, then give the council another chance to vote on it later if it failed. Assistant Corporation Counsel William Zarr said it was.

"Baloney," said Geracitano.

Fields' appointment was removed from the table and defeated. Buchalski and Councilman Guy "Tom" Sottile abstained on both votes, to the hoots of the audience. Schug's candidacy for the spot was

also defeated. Buchalski and Sottile both voted for Tavano, but that resolution was also defeated. When Fields' appointment came up the second time, Geracitano first abstained, then changed her vote to no after a remark by Buchalski.

"I'm woman enough to vote no. Now let's see how you're going to vote, buddy. You're on the spot," she told him. Both Buchalski and Sottile voted for Fields this time around. The appointment passed with four Democratic votes.

Buchalski said it was his prerogative to change his mind. Fields said after the meeting he was grateful to the people who supported him. "It's a routine appointment. It turned into a three-ring circus, which it never should have been."

"I feel like Barnum and Bailey," Buchalski said after the meeting.

Pass the popcorn.

Mary Wozniak covers City Hall for the Niagara Gazette.

From our readers



Mega mall gets thumbs down

There has been a lot of talk about the mega mall and how the mayor and City Council think it's such a good idea. For whom? Surely not for the taxpayers of Niagara Falls.

We have already some white elephants that already burden the taxpayers.

The Rainbow Centre is a loser and the parking ramp and Niagara Falls Convention and Civic Center are losers. The convention center was built in spite of the fact that historically, across the country, convention centers are non-profit.

Now Benderson Corp. is proposing a mega mall, although the Rainbow Centre has never remained full. The Summit Park Mall also has vacancies and the parking ramp is a disaster.

If the Benderson firm thinks the mall is such a good idea, why don't they finance all of it? Why does the city have to float \$34 million bonds to help build it, including the removal of two churches?

City officials claim the sales tax will pay off the \$34 million bond. How long will it take at 7 percent interest and on how many sales to pay that money back?

What will happen when the Canadians no longer find it profitable to cross the border to shop? This small city, whose residents are already overtaxed, will have to bear the burden.

The low-paying jobs the mall will generate aren't worth the gamble. Let's stop kidding ourselves and the people of the city. Benderson is going to walk off with a bundle of money and the taxpayers are going to be left holding the bag.

—Phillip Mazzu
Niagara Falls

Monorail would link mega mall to parks

Niagara Gazette 5/17/90

By Don Glynn
Niagara Gazette

LEWISTON — A New Jersey firm will detail plans Wednesday for an elevated monorail system which would link the proposed mega mall with Prospect Park and Artpark.

The system would cost an estimated \$12 million per mile. It would encompass Goat Island and loop through the South End — including the site of the planned mall and Old Falls Street — and along a route bordering the Robert Moses Parkway to Lewiston.

Two weeks ago, officials of Toyo, a U.S. subsidiary of a Japanese corporation, said they had completed a \$100,000 feasibility study for a "people mover" train that would operate along the edge of the gorge, between Prospect Park and Lewiston. That system was described as magnetic levitation, with trains operating on a thin layer of air less than an inch above the rails.

The other proposal has been submitted to the regional state park commission by GTS Associates of Titan PRT Systems, Park Ridge, N.J.

"We have not taken any position on

this," said Mario J. Pirastru, regional director of the state park commission. "We simply agreed to listen to their plans." The GTS Associates presentation is set for 10 a.m. at the state park visitors center.

Pirastru briefly mentioned the monorail plan Wednesday during the park commission meeting at Artpark. None of the monorail development firm officials was present and the park commissioners declined any comment until they learned more about the project.

While details are sketchy, initial plans indicate the 15-mile system would include stations near Prospect Park and at the proposed mega mall on the city's East Side. The developers also are reportedly suggesting an alternate plan for linking the system with the Canadian side of the river.

The trains are designed to travel about 20 miles per hour and carry 30 passengers.

During the prime tourist season, it would operate 12 hours daily.

The "Astroglide" train, a single steel beam monorail, is similar to the system operated at Disneyworld in Orlando, Fla., and other major amusement parks in the nation.

Armenian churches caught in path of Falls development

Metro Community News - Niagara Falls East Edition
5/20/90

By Bob Kostoff

A gathering storm of protest over proposed demolition of two Armenian churches is rapidly spreading throughout Niagara County outside the close-knit Armenian community centered in Niagara Falls.

But the letters, petitions, vocal protestations and constitutional question have yet to sway officials of the city and of the design plans.

Mayor Michael C. O'Laughlin believes that monetary negotiations with the churches may have a bearing on the final sentiments of the Armenian Community and church officials.

But that, too, remains to be seen.

Many feel the Armenian churches were not given the same consideration as other churches because their Niagara Falls numbers are small and not that impressive at the voting booths.

But the gathering support from outside the Armenian Community, especially by other sympathetic church groups, could become increasingly important.

The May monthly meeting of East Side residents concerned with the Megamall project was cancelled, indicating a slowing pace of movement for the mall. The fate of the Ninth Street Armenian churches often becomes a vocal part of such meetings.

Delays are also being experienced, officials noted, in gaining an environmental report on a former junk yard in the area and in gaining approval for bond backing by the state Job Development Authority.

The churches in question are St. Sarkis Armenian Church and St. Hagop Armenian Apostolic Church which are located next door to each other at Ninth and East Falls streets. Each year, those within and without the Armenian Community enjoy the ethnic picnics at each church and community centers.

City Director of Development Serves Larry Krizan and head of Community Development William Clark, received petitions asking that the churches be spared. The petitions, also supplied to Metro Community News, list residents from Lewiston, Sanborn and other areas of the county.

The names include members of clergy and residents outside the Armenian churches.

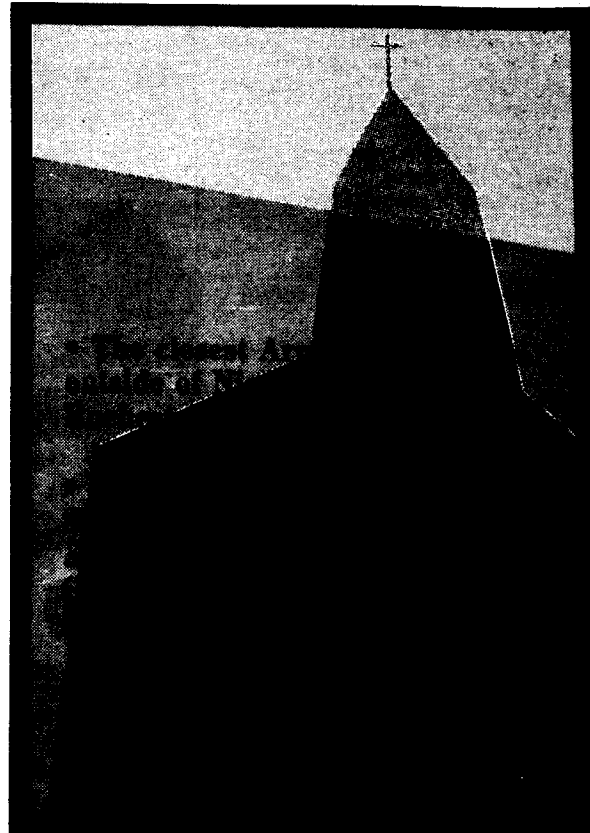
An interesting point in the matter is the U.S. Constitutional question of separation of church and state. That was raised by Arthur Garabedian at a recent council meeting.

And, at that time, he pledged his financial resources to fight any condemnation and demolition of the churches. He said the constitution designating separation of church and state would not allow the state to take over the church against the wishes of the congregations.

However, Krizan and O'Laughlin have maintained that the two churches are right in the pathway of the entrance to the mall and the design cannot be changed to accommodate them.

Many are angered at this position, however, in light of the decision to keep the Holy Trinity Catholic Church located at the other end of the project near Portage Road and East Falls Street.

And a group called the North End Clergy coalition points out that churches have been inte-



grated into other developments, including the Niagara Falls downtown Urban Renewal project.

Churches left in the downtown project include St. Mary's of the Cataract Catholic Church, St. Peter's Episcopal Church and the First Presbyterian Church.

And the coalition pointed out that an Anglican Church was included in the design for the Eaton Centre in Toronto.

The petition to Krizan and Clark uses a stronger approach for persuasion, saying "Armenians suffered enough from the Turks without losing their homes and churches to the Mammon Cultists here."

It also notes that the signers will boycott the Megamall if it is built and will "use all legal and ethical means to hinder the careers of those responsible for this abomination should this atrocity come about."

Members of the Armenian community recently commemorated the anniversary of the genocide conducted on Armenians by the Turks of the Ottoman Empire who ruled middle eastern European states with an iron and unfeeling fist for about 50 years.

The question of the monetary offer for the churches is also a delicate one. Many Armenians wonder how a price could be attached to a religion because churches represent much more than mere brick and mortar.

The east side area where the Megamall is to go is generally run down, but many of the homes, especially near the Armenian churches, have been kept in good shape throughout the years.

And there are no plans to demolish the fairly new Niagara County Human Resources Building at Tenth Street and East Falls Street, just a block east of the Armenian churches.

Niagara Gazette
5/20/90

From our readers

Two churches must be kept

I am a concerned Armenian-American worried about St. Hagop's Church and community center giving way to the mega mall.

In the past, every day coming back from work, my first job was to read the front page and world news in the Gazette. But lately it has been different. Now I'm following the letters to the editor.

I read of someone pointing out a few beautifully structured buildings and calling the rest of them boxes. I don't want to start a war of words, but I'd like to bring something to the public's attention: know it or not, like it or not, two Armenian churches exist in Niagara Falls and our church, St. Hagop's, is consecrated too.

Besides the church, which has 100 members, there are organizations such as the Armenian Relief Society and the Ladies Guild of St. Hagop's. These organizations were a big asset in helping the earthquake survivors. Our members still drive back and forth to the Ronald McDonald House and Children's Hospital in Buffalo to help a youngster who is waiting for a prosthesis for her right arm.

It is time for the public to know what our people mean to us and what big hearts we have.

I also note that St. Hagop's and St. Sarkis' churches recently commemorated the 75th anniversary of the Armenian massacre in 1915.

—Harry Ishkhanian
Lewiston

1 For coverage of Niagara area news call the Gazette City Desk at 282-2311 9 a.m. to 1 a.m. Monday through Friday, noon to 1:30 a.m. weekends. Gary Housey is city editor.

Niagara Gazette

Tuesday, May 22, 1990 — 3A

Editorial 6A
Today 7-18A

Public invited to probe mall impact

Meeting will discuss issues to be addressed in environmental study

By Mary Wozniak
Niagara Gazette

A public meeting to determine the scope of issues that need to be explored in a environmental impact statement for the proposed Factory Outlet Mega Mall will be held at 7 p.m. Wednesday in City Hall, 745 Main St.

The city must prepare a draft environmental impact statement to comply with the National Environmental Policy act of 1969, since a \$4 million federal Housing and Urban Development grant will be used to help fund the mall project, and the project is expected to have a significant impact on the environment of the area.

"Part of the federal requirements are that before you complete an environmental impact review, the public has to have a chance to comment on whether the range of issues that you're

addressing is complete and sufficient, and that's what the purpose of that meeting is for," said Larry Krizan, city coordinator of development services.

One issue the environmental impact statement will consider is the impact of the relocation of people from the mall site — nearly 100 acres bordered by Niagara Street, Buffalo Avenue, Quay Street and Portage Road. About 275 properties will be demolished. About 98 homeowners, 250 residential tenants, and 45 commercial and community entities, including several churches, will be relocated.

Other issues include future traffic and mass transportation patterns, noise, air quality and hazardous waste.

The former Silbergeld Junkyard property is near the center of the mall site. It is on the list of inactive hazardous waste site dumps com-

plied by the state's Interagency Task Force. It was placed on the list based on the complaint of an East Side resident who called the Niagara County Health Department in 1978 and reported seeing local industries dumping the contents of drums there.

The state Department of Environmental Conservation did not investigate the site further. The environmental impact statement is expected to determine what problem, if any, exists at the site. Last September, David Brooks, city director of Environmental Services, called the former Silbergeld property "one of the most benign dump sites I've ever seen." City officials have since said they do not expect the results of testing at the site to jeopardize the mall project.

The much-delayed draft environmental impact statement will not be released for at least a month after the public meeting Wednesday,

Krizan said. "We feel we have to do an exceptionally thorough job and we're doing it. It's common for people who wish to stop or delay projects to procedurally challenge the environmental impact statement."

The draft environmental impact statement will suggest ways to ease any possible adverse effects of the mall project on the area. It will also analyze project alternatives, including development of the land for another use, alternative sites for the project, and the effect on the area if the mega mall is not built.

The meeting is for the public to tell city officials what they think the potential impacts of the project are. However, Brooks fears it will turn into a "gripping" session, or a forum for people to voice opposition to the project.

"That's not what it's supposed to be," he said. "If it does turn out that way, we'll probably limit people's comments to get them to focus narrowly on the topic."

From our readers

Niagara Gazette 5/22/90

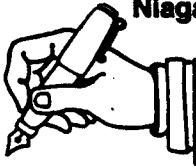
Razing churches offends writer

I am appalled and disgusted with Niagara Falls city officials and the firm that is planning the mega mall. It is hard to believe that they plan to tear down two Armenian churches. These houses of worship serve the entire area, including Lewiston, Youngstown, the Town of Niagara and Niagara Falls. These churches have been well maintained and a pride to this ethnic group and the community as a whole.

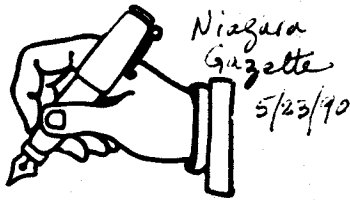
Officials managed nicely to keep the county building intact and also managed to preserve another church. The disgusting part of the whole thing is that a church will come down and in its place will be a parking lot.

Every person in the city of Niagara Falls should be up in arms knowing it could happen to them at any time. There certainly will be Armenian people using the mall and the church will be their place of worship. This whole affair is disgusting and certainly the planning board and engineers could have tried to use their heads. It is not too late to redeem yourselves.

—Kathryn Eitel
Niagara Falls



From our readers



St. Sarkis is special church

During the summer of my 16th birthday, my father's sister — my Aunt Mary — and I drove from our hometown in Holland, N.Y. to the annual picnic at St. Sarkis Apostolic Church in Niagara Falls. Growing up in Holland, which was devoid of Armenians, I had always been curious about my partial Armenian heritage, and that hour's drive was to fill a void that had always lingered in my heart. It literally transported me to my Armenian roots. I felt the warmth and hospitality of this loving church the moment I entered its doors.

Had St. Sarkis Church not been so accessible to my hometown, I know I would have fast been assimilated into American life without any viable Armenian identity. Indeed there was limited information about this ancient race which had struggled to retain its identity through centuries of oppression. As a student hungry for information, I read nothing about Armenians in school textbooks. There was no flag representing Armenia in international settings like the United Nations. As a fourth generation Armenian I'd long lost my great-grandparents who'd escaped the massacres in Adana, Turkey in 1909, and from whom I might have gained some knowledge of the 2500 year history of the Armenian people.

That trip with my aunt to an Armenian picnic satisfied the hungry curiosity of a young mind and it also shaped my future. Now at the age of 27 having married an Armenian and settled in Niagara Falls, our family is part of the Armenian community. But there is unrest about the future of our church. The site on which St. Sarkis presently stands represents home and roots. All aspects of Armenian culture are embraced in our beautiful church: language, music, dance, food, and art. Recently, during a meeting in our church hall our four-year-old daughter, cavorting on the stage, suddenly cried out "They're not really going to make this church fall on my head, are they?" It was a telling question that might have echoed from those same Armenian refugees who had raised their church as a lasting symbol against the oppression they had escaped.

Since our ancestral lands were devastated we Armenians look upon our church as our haven, and it is the chief factor of our continued existence as an integral nation.

Let St. Sarkis co-exist with the proposed Benderson mall for the many Armenian-American generations to come.

—Donna M. Otabachian
Niagara Falls

A little comparison shopping shows

'mega' potential

Niagara
Gazette
5/24/90

A wise consumer will comparison shop.

In light of the public meeting Wednesday on the impact the proposed Factory Outlet Mega Mall would have on the environment in which it is built, let's compare what happened after the Potomac Mills manufacturers' outlet mall opened in 1985 in Prince William County, Va., with what officials expect to happen here after the mega mall opens in spring of 1992.

A video tape prepared after a visit to Potomac Mills in late March by City Assessor Dominic Penale and Larry Krizan, city coordinator of development services, tells a tale of retail joy. Is a similar shopping and development nirvana in store for Niagara Falls?

Clyde E. Rice, mall assistant general manager and director of operations, said Potomac Mills already has expanded from about 800,000 square feet to 1.2 million square feet, and another expansion of 800,000 to 1 million square feet is in store.

The mall has 200 stores. It brings in 5,000 or more buses per year from as far away as North Carolina, Tennessee and Buffalo. On an average Saturday, 75,000 people shop at the mall. On peak Saturdays during summer and holidays, 150,000 come to shop, Rice said.

John R. Gessaman, director of the office of economic development for Prince William County, said Potomac Mills is the No. 1 shopping attraction in Virginia, bringing in 10 million to 12 million visitors per year.

The proposed mega mall in Niagara Falls will have 1.4 million square feet and 280 stores. It is expected to draw about 5,000 bus groups per year. Krizan said 1,250 bus groups per year come to the current Factory Outlet Mall on Military Road, so extrapolating by the increase in size alone makes 5,000 a realistic estimate.

Krizan also believes the 12 million- to 15 million-visitor market per year in the area who come to see the falls is virtually untapped. "We also have



the pressure of Canadian shoppers, which doesn't exist in Virginia," he said. He expects 20 million shoppers a year to come to the mall.

Canadian shoppers are expected to provide at least 50 percent of the mall's anticipated \$350 million in sales, he said. The rest will come from the Northeast and Midwest United States, from a range of about 500 miles, according to Rex Burgher, vice president of development for the Benderson Development Co., mall developers.

Rice said the Potomac Mills mall employs 3,000 people, with 400-plus management jobs. The mega mall is supposed to provide 500 management jobs with an average salary of \$20,000-plus per year, 800 sales jobs and 700 entry-level jobs. Krizan said that if the city brought in a small industry that would provide 500 jobs at \$20,000-plus per year, people would consider it "ideal." He thinks the mega mall should be considered in the same way.

Lurty C. Houff Jr., assistant manager of assessments for Prince William County, says Potomac Mills' real-estate assessment is \$1,163,000 per year.

The mega mall will pay \$800,000 in property taxes per year for eight years, then \$1.2 million per year, going up to full assessment in the 25th year, Krizan said. The 100-acre site currently brings in about \$400,000 in city, county and school taxes, of which the city's share is about 45 percent, or \$120,000.

The total benefit from the Potomac

Mills mall in taxes, including sales tax, is \$3.9 million, Houff said. Prince William County's sales tax is 4.5 percent.

Krizan estimates that the mall will generate \$9 million in sales taxes, so the total tax benefit including property taxes would be \$9.8 million a year. Niagara County's sales tax is 7 percent.

Ken Baxter, a Prince William County real estate appraiser, says Potomac Mills has generated \$175 million worth of new construction in the area surrounding it. Development has included two shopping centers, one new hotel, several restaurants and a light industrial park. Increased tax revenues have helped to keep taxes down, he said.

Road improvements are in store for the area to handle increased traffic, Baxter said. Property owners in the area who must give up their property for the road expansion are now getting \$10 to \$12 per square foot. The price was about \$2.50 per square foot for land before the mall was built, he

said.

City assessor Penale said the mall's surrounding development was what impressed him most. But Potomac Mills was built on undeveloped land in the suburbs, while the mega mall is an inner-city project. Would development be as likely to spring up around in the mall in the inner city as it would in the suburbs? Penale said he expects to see a lot of development on the north side of Niagara Street.

Krizan expects the mall to generate \$60 million in new development, or about one-third that generated by Potomac Mills.

These comparisons put what already is up against what officials expect to be. But Penale said the trip convinced him to endorse the mall. "I think it would be beneficial to the city, not only to the tax base but to the overall image of the city."

What say the wise consumer?

Mary Wozniak covers City Hall for the Niagara Gazette.

Niagara Gazette 5/24/90

Mega mall draws ire of citizens

By Cheryl Greenhouse
Niagara Gazette

True to the fears expressed by city officials, Wednesday's public scoping meeting on the issues that need to be explored in an environmental impact statement for the proposed Factory Outlet Mega Mall turned into a forum for people to voice opposition to the project.

More than 100 people filled the Council Chambers in City Hall and about 21 people expressed their views on the project.

Most comments focused on the displacement of residents and small businesses, the demolition of the St. Sarkis Armenian Church, 300 Ninth St., and other churches in the mall site, and future traffic patterns.

Because a \$4 million federal Housing and Urban Development grant will be used to help fund the mall project, and because the project is expected to have a significant impact on the environment, the city must prepare a draft environmental impact statement to comply with the National Environmental Policy act of 1969.

Richard A. Harrall, principal planning and development consultant for Harrall-Michalowski Associates, the company that will be preparing the environmental impact statement, said the draft should be done in late June.

A public hearing on the statement will be held after the draft is completed.

"We don't feel that the city should go out of its way to approach a developer like Benderson at the expense of residents and businesses that have been paying taxes," said Christopher Chiappone, who represented a construction business at 240 Portage Road. "If Canadians want to come over and shop, let them buy Armenian food or Italian food. Let's preserve our heritage."

The proposed \$111 million mall would consist of nearly 100 acres bordered by Niagara Street, Buffalo Avenue, Quay Street and Portage Road. About 275 properties would be demolished, displacing about 98 homeowners, 250 residential tenants and 45 commercial and community entities, including several churches.

"We came here for our religious freedom," said Alexander Arutunjan of Willow Avenue, a parishioner at St. Sarkis Armenian Church. "We are not looking for money. We want our churches and community centers to stay where they are."

The Rev. Margaret Wilson, a 30-year-resident of Ninth Street, said she does not mind making way for the mall as long as the Armenian church can stay.

"My property is right in front of the Armenian Church. You're welcome to take my house as long as you get me a place to stay in Lockport," she said. "You can take my house, but leave the Armenian Church there."

Guest commentary

By Deran Hanesian

The first Armenian immigrants began to arrive in Niagara Falls about the turn of this century. Immigration was slow until the World War I period. Seventy-five years ago, on April 24, 1915, the government of Ottoman Turkey embarked upon the attempted genocide of the Armenian people. Villages were decimated, churches destroyed, and 1.5 million people were massacred. It was to be the final solution to the Armenian question. Many of the survivors came to Niagara Falls and among them, my parents. The Armenian community in Niagara Falls grew and almost all of the immigrants settled in the East Falls Street area. They began to rebuild their lives, had new families again, built homes and dreamed of an Armenian church. This dream began to become reality in the 1920s when ground was purchased at the corner of Ninth and East Falls Streets. The exact year, I believe, was 1924.

Then came 1929, the Great Depression. These events shattered their dreams. Many, including my father, worked at the Aluminum Company of America plant, which was located near the present site of the Howard Johnson's Hotel, not far from the falls. The plant closed and along with massive layoffs at other plants, many were out of work.

The economic struggle continued throughout the 1930s, but the dream of an Armenian church in Niagara Falls never died.

During the 1940s, the war brought prosperity to the factories in Niagara Falls. Many of the children of these immigrants served in the Armed Forces. The war ended and our soldiers returned.

New families were formed and the first grandchildren of the immigrants were born. Having found new security economically, the immigrants began to purchase new homes in the more affluent area one or two blocks north of East Falls Street. A few, fortunate enough to own automobiles, moved a bit farther away. With the new security and stability, the community began to vigorously develop the plans for our church and fulfill a long dream.

Finally, ground was broken in the early 1950s and the ground was blessed with our nr76 oil. St. Sarkis was consecrated in September, 1953. The holy oil used in both consecrations represented continuity. Unfortunately, my father never saw his dream, and I was elected to our first parish council.

It was during this period that the Niagara Mohawk Power Corp.'s plant collapsed into the gorge and essentially eliminated all 25-cycle power to the old factories. Many factories left Niagara Falls.

Our Armenian people have witnessed the destruction of our churches by Persians, Arabs, Seljuk Turks, Mongols and Ottoman Turks who have conquered our land over these past 2,000 years. It seems that we Armenians build, and others destroy what we have built.

St. Sarkis, in particular, and the Armenian Church, in general, represent more to us than a house of worship. They represent to us our homeland from which we were evicted over the centuries, and finally by the Turks in 1915. They represent to us our history and above all, our Christian history which placed us in the role of being the first nation in the world to accept Christianity as a state religion. This event occurred in 301 A.D.

Barbaric conquerors, through the history of mankind, have destroyed and pillaged. Who, however, would ever dream that our church, our roots, our history would be destroyed by intelligent people in Niagara Falls?

Who, furthermore, would ever dream that the reason for this destruction is, for all things, the construction of a mall to house factory outlet stores.

Why, I ask, cannot our architects use imagination and incorporate this ancient history into the mall? Why must this history be destroyed? The churches were not destroyed in downtown Niagara Falls during urban renewal. Churches weren't destroyed in Newark, N.J. during urban renewal. In the the Wall Street area, the old Trinity Church and cemetery, together with a nearby tiny, lovely, old Greek Church, stand among the towering skyscrapers. Why not destroy these churches? Were they not in the way? Was land not valuable where they stood? In Budapest, Hungary, the modern Budapest Hilton was built in a historic area and the architect, using imagination, built a modern hotel to blend with the architecture of an ancient church on the site.

Our people have suffered throughout history. Finally, in Niagara Falls after a long struggle, a dream of a church became a reality.

I do not believe that the citizens of Niagara Falls can accept the destruction of our church. Certainly the imagination of the planners, developers, and architects is not that limited that they cannot save these structures, representative of an ancient, persecuted people. Is our only alternative to place these same people and the government of the city of Niagara Falls alongside the Persians, Arabs, Seljuk Turks, Mongols, and Ottoman Turks who defeated us and then destroyed our homes and our churches?

I pray not, because the end result would be the same for our people.

Niagara
Gazette
7/26/50

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Then came 1929, the Great Depression. These events shattered their dreams. Many, including my father, worked at the Aluminum Company of America plant, which was located near the present site of the Howard Johnson's Hotel, not far from the falls. The plant closed and along with massive layoffs at other plants, many were out of work.

The economic struggle continued throughout the 1930s, but the dream of an Armenian church in Niagara Falls never died.

During the 1940s, the war brought prosperity to the factories in Niagara Falls. Many of the children of these immigrants served in the Armed Forces. The war ended and our soldiers returned.

New families were formed and the first grandchildren of the immigrants were born. Having found new security economically, the immigrants began to purchase new homes in the more affluent area one or two blocks north of East Falls Street. A few, fortunate enough to own automobiles, moved a bit farther away. With the new security and stability, the community began to vigorously develop the plans for our church and fulfill a long dream.

Finally, ground was broken in the early 1950s and the ground was blessed with our nr76 oil. St. Sarkis was consecrated in September, 1953. The holy oil used in both consecrations represented continuity. Unfortunately, my father never saw his dream, and I was elected to our first parish council.

It was during this period that the Niagara Mohawk Power Corp.'s plant collapsed into the gorge and essentially eliminated all 25-cycle power to the old factories. Many factories left Niagara Falls.

Simultaneously, urban renewal became important everywhere in downtown Niagara Falls. Many fine old buildings were destroyed, but churches were not. They exist among the new buildings to this day.

resent to us our history and above all, our Christian history which placed us in the role of being the first nation in the world to accept Christianity as a state religion. This event occurred in 301 A.D.

Barbaric conquerors, through the history of mankind, have destroyed and pillaged. Who, however, would ever dream that our church, our roots, our history would be destroyed by intelligent people in Niagara Falls?

Who, furthermore, would ever dream that the reason for this destruction is, for all things, the construction of a mall to house factory outlet stores.

Why, I ask, cannot our architects use imagination and incorporate this ancient history into the mall? Why must this history be destroyed? The churches were not destroyed in downtown Niagara Falls during urban renewal. Churches weren't destroyed in Newark, N.J. during urban renewal. In the the Wall Street area, the old Trinity Church and cemetery, together with a nearby tiny, lovely, old Greek Church, stand among the towering skyscrapers. Why not destroy these churches? Were they not in the way? Was land not valuable where they stood? In Budapest, Hungary, the modern Budapest Hilton was built in a historic area and the architect, using imagination, built a modern hotel to blend with the architecture of an ancient church on the site.

Our people have suffered throughout history. Finally, in Niagara Falls after a long struggle, a dream of a church became a reality.

I do not believe that the citizens of Niagara Falls can accept the destruction of our church. Certainly the imagination of the planners, developers, and architects is not that limited that they cannot save these structures, representative of an ancient, persecuted people. Is our only alternative to place these same people and the government of the city of Niagara Falls alongside the Persians, Arabs, Seljuk Turks, Mongols, and Ottoman Turks who defeated us and then destroyed our homes and our churches?

I pray not, because the end result would be the same for our people.

Deran Hanesian is professor of chemical engineering and acting deputy director at the Center for Plastics Recycling Research in Piscataway, N.J.

Niagara Gazette 5/31/70

Start caring for the people

I am not of Armenian descent but I grew up with a friend who is.

Through him I came to know and become friends with many people of the Armenian community. They are a proud, close-knit people, very friendly and very helpful to those in need. They have suffered much in their history. They came to enjoy this country to escape persecution and to enjoy religious and personal freedom. Their churches are a rallying point for them, a place to get together, to remember, to worship.

Now someone wants to take that away from them for the sake of another mall.

I find it hard to believe in this age of advanced engineering and technology that they can't find a way to incorporate two churches in the (mall) design, as was done in Toronto. We all know who this mall is being built for.

I think it's time for our city government to start caring for the people who live here as much as they care for the people who shop here.

— Gary McMahon
Niagara Falls

THE BUFFALO NEWS 7/31/90

Plans for mall in Falls must not doom church

As parents, we are concerned about the planned demolition of St. Sarkis Armenian Apostolic Church in Niagara Falls by the city in order to build the proposed Benderson mall.

The plan is to raze our church in order to provide parking space for the mall.

There's nothing new about proposing demolition of churches in Niagara Falls for city projects. In the past, our downtown churches were threatened in the massive acquisition for the present Rainbow Center. Thankfully, those churches were spared. Now St. Sarkis is experiencing the same trauma.

We deplore the lack of conscience on the part of city planners to turn consecrated earth into tarred surface for automobiles. Our church is determined to stay and co-exist with the planned mall. Perhaps our fight against such questionable and unconscionable tactics will preserve the sanctity of future houses of worship they may want out of their way.

ELI OTABACHIAN
DONNA M. OTABACHIAN
Niagara Falls

From our readers

Niagara Gazette 6/14/70

Veterans want churches kept

The membership of the Armenian American Vets are asking all the veterans in Niagara County to support us in the fight to save our churches from needless destruction.

Since our existence in 1946, we vets of World War II, Korea and Vietnam have never asked others for help. We were too proud, but our churches mean too much to us and the loss would be too great for us not to ask.

A sketch of the proposed Benderson Mega Mall is available at the Niagara Falls Engineer Department. It shows that the Armenian churches are nowhere near the mall. The churches are about 400 feet west of the Niagara County Building that is staying. Then why the destruction? For greed and power!

For 44 years we vets believed the statement, "for God and country." Now there are people who want to take "God" out of the statement and make it "for greed and country."

— Arsen Garijanian
Armenian American Veterans
Lewiston

Niagara Gazette 6/4/70

Why disrupt worshippers?

Through 40 years of Communist occupation of Poland, there have been many church-state conflicts, harassments, and persecution of the Catholic faithful. The United States, on the other hand, has prided itself on its many freedoms, not the least of which is the freedom to worship. I am afraid this freedom is being eroded.

In Poland, when a church stood in the way of urban development (and many churches there are larger than St. Hagop's and St. Sarkis' put together), the government moved it to a location approved by the church authorities, at its own expense. Why was this possible? Because the people stood up for their rights.

The people of Niagara Falls, regardless of their religious affiliation, should protest with one voice against this gross infringement of the rights of the Armenian faithful in our city. Otherwise, freedom of religion will exist only for the largest groups or when religious worship does not get in the way of big business.

— Wanda Slawinska
Niagara Falls

From our readers

Niagara Gazette 6/8/90

Mall project is critiqued

We are being subjected to another well-planned bit of propaganda as to why the citizens and taxpayers should furnish land and money to bankroll another shopping mall for outside interests. They are using an edited tape as a wedge to soften any local objections to back this money-maker.

My question is why go over 500 miles to use a mall located in Potomac Mills, Va., as a model when we have some of the finest malls in the northeastern part of the United States as models?

Their attitude seems to say that our shoppers in this area have to be brought up to the present method of creating malls. Let me say the shoppers in this area are experts when it comes to malls. Within a radius of 30 miles of this city there are 10 or 12 of the finest malls open for the most discriminating shopper in our area. Also, locally, with the Summit Park Mall, we have a fine and very successful operation right here at home, plus the various plaza types in the Town of Niagara and on Military Road.

Now, as to conditions under which the Potomac Mills mall was built, I wonder if they are the same facing downtown Niagara Falls? Has Potomac Mills lost most of its tax base? Has it lost over half of its industry and has the population fallen from 110,000 to about 65,000 in a few years?

And who supports this mall in Potomac Mills? Wealthy people, retired people, or middle income people? And does it have the competition that this area has for the shopping dollars? I'm sure it does not have a situation that we have here due to the influx of trade and shoppers from our friends across the border. This by the way can only be considered as being on a temporary basis due to the value of the Canadian dollar at present and the lack of strict enforcement of the duty on purchased goods by Canadian authorities.

I believe it is only fair if these businessmen behind the Benderson mall are businessmen and if this is such a brilliant idea they should not hesitate to put their money where their mouth is or shut up.

I have said many times in the past, Niagara Falls has been "malled to death."

— C.P. Williamson
Niagara Falls



Leaders of St. Sarkis Armenian Apostolic Church opposed to relocating to make room for a mall include, from left, the Rev. Kegham Zakarian, James Barbato and Arsen Avdician.

Armenian churches fight move to make way for Falls mall

By JOANN SCIELSA
News Niagara County Bureau 4/1/90

NIAGARA FALLS — Members of two Armenian churches on Ninth Street don't want to make way for the proposed \$115 million factory-outlet shopping mall.

But city officials say St. Sarkis Armenian Apostolic Church and St. Hagop's Armenian Apostolic Church and Community Center are located at what is to be the main entrance to the mega-mall planned by Benderson Niagara Associates.

"We are 100 percent against them taking our building down. We don't want relocation, and we don't want any money, and we don't want them turning the church where our children were married and our grandchildren were baptized into a parking lot," said Harry Ishkhanian of St. Hagop's.

Ishkhanian said local Armenians, including many who immigrated here in fear of massacres in Turkey, find the threat of losing the church very disturbing. This year, he said, the Armenian community is commemorating the 75th anniversary of the events of 1915, when, Armenians claim, 1.5 million were massacred by Turks.

"Now, in Niagara Falls our people are being morally massacred and mentally devastated," Ishkhanian said.

Maggie Abdo of St. Sarkis said church members don't want to stop the retail development, but desire only to prevent their church from being demolished to make way for it.

"We can live next to the mall. We can coexist. That's what we'd like to do," Ms. Abdo said. Church members, she added, encourage construction of the mall, which they believe would beautify the area and benefit the entire community.

St. Sarkis at 300 Ninth St. and St. Hagop at 322 Ninth St. are among about 320 properties that the city plans to acquire and demolish in the 100-acre area bounded by Quay Street, Niagara Street, Portage Road and Buffalo Avenue.

Ms. Abdo and Mary M. Mukhtarian are the spokeswomen for St. Sarkis, which has about 800 members in Western New York. Ishkhanian is chairman of the board of trustees of St. Hagop's, which has about 100 members. The churches are the only Armenian houses of worship within a three-hour drive and serve the Armenian community throughout Western New York.

"Our view is we have no intent of moving," Ms. Mukhtarian said.

Ms. Abdo and Ms. Mukhtarian, who both live in Williamsville, said they especially oppose the city's plan because their church isn't needed for the mall itself.

"We have been very upset that our church will

be razed to make a parking lot. We consider this consecrated ground," Ms. Mukhtarian said.

Larry Krizan, city development coordinator, said the Armenian churches are strategically located at what is to be the main entrance to the mall at Quay and East Falls streets.

The church spokeswomen said Armenians believe that once church ground is consecrated, it cannot be unconsecrated.

"It is sacrilegious that anyone would tear it down to make a parking lot. ... We don't let people walk around on our altar. Imagine people parking their cars on it," Ms. Mukhtarian said.

She said only those who are officiating at Mass are allowed to walk on the altar and only in special footwear for that use.

Ms. Mukhtarian says she believes sparing the churches wouldn't detract from the mall. She said three churches — St. Mary of the Cataract Catholic Church at 259 Fourth St., St. Peter's Episcopal Church on Rainbow Boulevard and Second Street and First Presbyterian Church of Ni-

agara Falls at 311 Rainbow Boulevard North — were spared when the rest of the downtown area was razed during the heyday of urban renewal. "They add humanity to the downtown area," she said.

She also noted that the city does not plan to acquire Holy Trinity Catholic Church on East Falls Street or New Hope Baptist Church on Buffalo Avenue.

Krizan said the Baptist church is near several properties, like the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority bus terminal, that the city does not intend to acquire. The area, he added, is not in the prime commercial space.

He said the Holy Trinity site would be important to the project, but the city believes the cost to acquire the church would be prohibitive. Krizan also said Holy Trinity is a much older building than the Armenian churches. It also is historically and architecturally prominent, which might make the building difficult to demolish.

He said the decisions on what churches would be acquired were made on financial, geographical and historical factors, not religious ones.

Community Development Director William K. Clark said the city has met once or twice with members of each church and plans to continue to work with them to find alternate locations for the churches. He said officials hope the churches will remain in the city because of the contribution they make to the cultural diversity of the community.

If the city and churches cannot come to an agreement, Clark said the city could acquire them through its right of eminent domain.

The church spokesmen said few, if any, churches' members will be relocated because of the mall, because most live north of Niagara Street.

"We can live next to the mall. We can coexist. That's what we'd like to do."

Maggie Abdo

St. Sarkis Armenian Church parishioner