

Manufacturing

California beverage manufacturer plans \$420 million project in Winter Haven



Image: San Antonio Business Journal

A Niagara Bottling plant in Seguin, Texas



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Jun 26, 2024

Niagara Bottling LLC plans to create at least 100 full-time jobs at a new 1.45 million-square-foot manufacturing plant in Winter Haven's Central Florida Intermodal Logistics Center.

The California-based beverage supplier received a tax exemption for the approximately \$422 million project in 2023. The company was expected to officially break ground that year but has yet to do so.

The "Project Mist" site plan was approved in February, according to the city of Winter Haven. Preliminary site work is underway. The master developer of the Intermodal Logistics Center, Phoenix-based Tratt Properties, sold Niagara 64 acres in the park in 2023, according to Polk County property records.

The new plant represents a sizable investment and aligns with Polk County's economic development goals as it seeks to grow its advanced manufacturing capabilities. It's also a win for the Intermodal Logistics Center, which is home to a Coke Florida plant and Florida Can Manufacturing. The industrial park has rail access serviced by CSX Corp., and economic developers and business leaders have long touted the property for its job creation potential. The property sat dormant for several years after its 2014 launch but is starting to gain traction with manufacturers.

Niagara Bottling representatives couldn't be reached for comment. In public records, the company is listed as Banana George LLC, an homage to the late barefoot waterski athlete from Winter Haven.



Niagara, one of the largest suppliers of private-label bottled water in North America, also has a facility in Groveland.

The agreement between Niagara and Polk County sets an expectation of creating at least 100 jobs paying a median wage of over \$58,000 – higher than the county's average annual wage. Niagara is required to invest at least \$125 million in the facility, use local vendors when practical and submit annual update reports.

In return, the company will receive a 95% reduction in property taxes between 2026 and 2035.

"This is a very important tool in our economic development kit," Winter Haven EDC President Bruce Lyon said at a county commission meeting last year. "In this case, it's an important part of the company's due diligence as they go through the process of selecting sites."

Polk County voters approved using such tax exemptions in a 2020 referendum. This project is the first to occur under new guidelines that raised the bar for capital investment and average wages.