

By WAYNE PARRY (AP) – 6 hours ago

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. — Resorts Atlantic City, the nation's first casino to open outside Nevada, will adopt a roaring '20s theme to capitalize on the success of "Boardwalk Empire," the HBO series about Prohibition-era Atlantic City.

Dennis Gomes, who is

buying the casino-hotel with developer Morris Bailey, says dealers, cocktail servers, bellhops and others will dress in 1920s-period costumes, music from that period will play, and even the drinks and casino shows will have a roaring '20s theme.

"A lot of people here are learning 1920s songs now," Gomes told The Associated Press in an interview Thursday morning.

Gomes said the new theme is his plan to remake and save the struggling casino, which is being sold because its former owners stopped making mortgage payments due to the poor economy and cutthroat competition from slots parlors in neighboring states.

The roaring '20s theme is part of the nationwide fascination with "Boardwalk Empire," but also a nod to Resorts' own history. Its main building was built in the 1920s and the decor is already faithful to that period.

The 1920s were "more than just a decade in a history book. It was a decade that defined and shaped our nation," Gomes said. "Beyond that, it was fun, adventurous and exciting, a period in time where people simply let loose to give way to a lifestyle where entertainment was king.

"Resorts will be all of that," he said. "It will define and shape the direction Atlantic City needs to take to survive in an increasingly competitive market. It will be luxurious, it will be fun and it will be one of the leading entertainment spots in Atlantic City."

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Resorts is based in what was originally built as the Chalfont-Haddon Hall Hotel, which has been shown as part of the skyline in "Boardwalk Empire."

A recent interior renovation was done in 1920s style, eliminating the need for expensive construction. Gomes estimates the new costumes will cost about \$1 million.

"It seemed like such a natural," he said. "The property was built in the 1920s and the decor already was from the '20s."

Among the touches being planned: a strolling violinist in a zoot suit, wandering around the casino floor and lobby, playing songs from the '20s and '30s. Drinks — heavy on the whiskey that was illegal yet plentiful during Prohibition — will be served, and casino floor shows and many singers will stay faithful to the period as well.

The changes will take effect in early December, when the new owner take over after the sale is approved by the New Jersey Casino Control Commission. Gomes and Bailey, a New York developer, are paying \$35 million for Resorts — by far the lowest price ever paid for a casino in New Jersey.

Resorts was New Jersey's first casino, opening in 1978.

In a related development, the City Council in Atlantic City dealt a posthumous diss to the real-life star of "Boardwalk Empire," whacking a plan to rename part of a street near the Boardwalk after Enoch "Nucky" Johnson.

The council voted Wednesday night against a proposal to rename part of a street that runs alongside the hotel where Johnson lived and held court, mainly because of the more unsavory aspects of his life.

For 30 years, until he was finally sent to prison in 1941 for tax evasion, Johnson dominated

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Atlantic City — then one of the nation's leading resorts. He controlled not only the Republican political machine that had a stranglehold on government, but also made sure illegal liquor, prostitution and gambling operations flourished under the protection of paid-off officials.

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