

Putting a casino next to Arundel Mills Mall would likely cause a lot of concerns for mall security, but it might alleviate the problem of parents leaving their kids in the car while they go gambling.

They'd leave them at the mall instead.

I can understand the reasoning for the location sought by the developer of the project. The mall area

draws a lot of people on any given day, and even if they don't stop at the casino that day, seeing it may prompt them to come back and try it at a later time.

Plus, for gamblers, there's the added advantage of offering something else to do if you are looking for a break from dumping money into one of the 4,750 slot machines planned for the place.

Generally speaking, I think the gambling locations are better if there are other things to do too. If you are in a building out in the middle of nowhere gambling and you get tired, the only thing to do is go home. But if there are other things to see and do, perhaps you'll go take advantage of some of those and come back later.

But the first thought that popped into my head when they proposed this particular venue was that there would probably be a whole lot of kids dumped off at the mall while their parents went gambling. Some of them, no doubt, would be still hanging around when the mall closed, wondering where their parents were.

In Bucks County in Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board warned Parx Casino that it needed to do a better job policing its parking lot after five different instances in a matter of months this past summer of parents leaving their kids in the car while they were inside gambling.

In one instance a woman faced charges after leaving her 15-year-old and 8-year-old in the car for six hours. The kids eventually called their father, who came and got them.

The problem isn't isolated to Pennsylvania. In fact, from Canada to New Zealand and just about everywhere else where there is legalized gambling there are parents who have left their children in vehicles so they could try to beat the odds at a slot machine or table game.

In more than one instance the offenders told authorities that they lost track of time, as if leaving the kids in the car wouldn't have been a problem if they were just going to run in for a few minutes of gambling.

These same folks, and probably many others, will see a golden opportunity if a slots parlor opens next to a mall. Kids love to hang out at malls, so what's the problem?

For mall security, the problem is going to be a whole lot more unattended kids running around. And judging by the ages of some of the kids that parents have left in vehicles while they went to gamble, I'd guess that the average age of those unattended kids would be a lot lower. Perhaps the mall will set up a room for daycare or to hold all the kids while they await their parents' return from the slots parlor. At least that way they would be safe.

Most parents greet their youngster's first request to go to the mall with friends with great trepidation. What if something happens? What if a predator is lurking about? What if any number of things? It's normal for parents to worry about the safety of their children. Well, most parents.

Those who are leaving their kids in the car while they go gamble obviously have a problem. They need to get help for their gambling addiction, and quickly. But the fact is that there are many people who fall into this category, and even some good parents likely will drop their kids off at the mall, run over to the slots parlor and lose track of time.

No, putting a slots parlor next to the mall probably isn't the best idea. Hopefully, regardless of the outcome of the referendum in Anne Arundel County, the developers of the project will see that the potential danger to children isn't worth the money they'll see in profits.

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## Lee: Slots don't mix with the mall - Carroll County Times

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