

Frigid temperatures can't cool enthusiasm for Hempfield mini casino

Written by Administrator
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The gaming facility being built at Westmoreland Mall might be licensed as a so-called mini casino, but officials said there won't be anything small about it.

"Let us assure you, there is nothing that is second class about this facility," said Joe Weinberg, managing partner and CEO of resort and gaming entertainment for The Cordish Companies. "This is going to be a world-class regional destination. It will set the standard in this region. ... We're very proud to be developing it here in Westmoreland County."

Weinberg and others from Maryland-based Cordish gathered on a frigid Wednesday morning with local elected officials and others to ceremoniously [break ground](#) outside the former Bon-Ton store in Hempfield. Construction workers wearing hard hats took a break from their jobs at the \$150 million [Live! Casino](#) to attend the ceremony. [L](#)

Officials [expect the facility](#) to create 960 direct and indirect jobs during the [construction phase](#) and more than 500 ongoing jobs in a variety of fields, from finance to security, once the casino opens. There will be 750 slot machines, 30 table games, dining, entertainment, the possibility of sports betting and millions of dollars in economic impact. The facility is expected to open next year.

Weinberg announced the site will be home to Live! Casino's national concept Sports & Social Steel City, a two-level sports dining area with 450 seats.

"With this facility, once we're up and operating, we'll create nearly \$200 million of economic impact annually, which will include \$47 million of taxes to the state each year, of which about \$3 million will roll into the local benefit from those funds paid," said Rob Norton, president of Cordish Global Gaming.

About a dozen municipal and state leaders joined Cordish officials to shovel dirt that was placed in the mall parking lot for the ceremonial groundbreaking.

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Cordish's license was approved by the state gaming board in August. Pittsburgh-based Mascaro Construction Co. has been hired as the general contractor for the project.

The casino will make the mall a destination location, said Chad Amond, president of the Westmoreland County Chamber of Commerce.

"This is positively going to impact Westmoreland County and beyond," he said.

Recruiting for employees is going to start in the next couple of months, Norton said. A breakdown of the number of jobs in each field and pay rates has not been finalized.

"Hiring preferences will be given to local residents first and then the surrounding communities," he said. "The casino industry is exciting, and it is a spectacular place if you enjoy service and the opportunity to work and be close to all kinds of interesting people."

State Sen. Kim Ward, R-Hempfield, and state Rep. George Dunbar, R-Penn Township, both praised the project and the economic possibilities it brings to the county.

"It was just so terrible to see these surrounding counties gaining all these economic development dollars and then leveraging them for more money from the state and federal government and we were just left out of that loop," Ward said.

Plus, the construction fits into the county's goals to attract a new workforce and keep residents from leaving.

"This is really a win-win, and it fits in with the county ... comprehensive plan that they're talking about keeping Westmoreland County residents in Westmoreland County long term," Dunbar said. "This is not just a gambling hall; this is not just a mini casino. Those terms don't do justice. This is going to be an entertainment destination; this is going to be a hub for Westmoreland County. We're very excited for the future, we're very excited to have you here and we can't

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thank you enough.”

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