

Springfield creating ‘casino impact district’ to spur development around MGM resort

Written by Administrator

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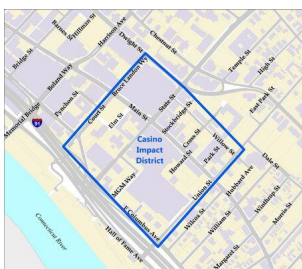
Springfield’s chief development officer told officials this week that new zoning and special incentives are part of the city’s strategy for luring developers to vacant and blighted properties near the [MGM Springfield](#) casino.

At this week’s meeting of the Massachusetts Gaming Commission, city Chief Development Officer Timothy Sheehan said the multi-phase effort includes creating a downtown casino impact district and bringing tenants to buildings along Main Street directly across from the casino.

“At this point, it’s clear that the city ultimately needs to be the driver into what the next phase of development needs to be in and around the casino area,” Sheehan said.

As part of that strategy, the city is exploring how to bring a developer to the city-owned historic [Old First Church at Court Square](#) near the casino for possible residential use, and a focus on art and culture, Sheehan said.

The casino impact district would be bounded by East Columbus Avenue, Court Street / Bruce Landon Way, Dwight Street and Union Street.



Springfield's casino impact district.

The city is also hoping to help spur development of [bank-foreclosed](#) , troubled properties at 113 State St. (the Masonic building at State and Main streets), 11-21 Stockbridge St., and 1115 Main St. (the Colonial Block), Sheehan said.

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There is a potential to work with the bank on a range of redevelopment options, with a top priority of bringing tenants to the first floor spaces, he said.

Another building in that area, known as the Shean building at 1208-1220 Main St., should also be a focus for mixed-use redevelopment opportunities, Sheehan said. It needs initial facade improvements, he said.

In a future phase, the city wants to work toward improvements of the MassMutual Center, including the outdated Civic Center parking garage, Sheehan said. A new garage is needed and additional uses should be considered for that site, he said.

While the casino is "vibrant and active," that energy is not spilling out sufficiently to the surrounding area, Sheehan said.

Gaming Commission officials praised the city's efforts.

"It's not hard to imagine the potential on a lot of those buildings you mentioned as foreclosed upon and the neighborhood around it," commission member Enrique Zuniga said.

"It's exciting, it really is, to think about what you are trying to accomplish there and what a difference it will make," commission member Gayle Cameron said.

The proposed casino impact zone is likely to include land use controls, special use permits, development guidelines, and a fast-track approval process, Sheehan said.

The plan and related zoning changes will need City Council approval, he said.

Some of the strong initial interest development interest in the area around the casino has waned

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to a more speculative investment interest, Sheehan said.

“Ultimately, it has come to us from the city prospective, that we really need to galvanize and guide and facilitate the development and investment that happens within that area,” Sheehan said.

Read more <https://www.masslive.com/mgmspringfield/2020/02/springfield-creating-casino-impact-district-to-spur-development-around-mgm-resort.html>