

Rivers Casino expansion gets go-ahead from Des Plaines City Council

Written by Administrator

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A proposed \$87 million expansion of Rivers Casino hit the jackpot with Des Plaines aldermen on Monday night, getting an enthusiastic go-ahead from the city Council.

The next step for the project -- set to bring more gambling machines, a poker room, an events center and a new restaurant to the facility at 3000 S. River Road -- is consent from the Illinois Gaming Board.

A gaming board vote hasn't been scheduled, but the project "is in front of them," Rivers spokesman Dennis Culloton said.

Plans call for the two-story addition to be built between the existing casino building and the four-story parking garage on the north side of the 20-acre property.

If approved, the addition will add 78,000 square feet to the 140,363-square-foot casino building, which opened in 2011.

Gambling space will expand by 33,000 square feet, city documents indicate. The number of gambling positions would increase by 699 to about 2,000.

The 2019 gambling expansion law allowed for existing casinos to expand slot machines and table games to that threshold, from 1,200 seats. The casino added some positions shortly after the law passed, Culloton said.

The poker room will be on the second floor. Ground-level gambling areas will expand as well.

An events center will occupy 10,100 square feet on the second floor, while the new restaurant will be on the first floor, said Todd Shaffer of [Haeger Engineering](#), the firm handling the project.

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Because the expansion will go where the valet stand is now, that service will move to the nearby garage, as will a drop-off and pickup area for customers, Shaffer said.

Construction could begin this spring and take about a year. The new ground-level areas could be ready for patrons in January 2022 with the second-story areas completed in March 2022.

The casino will remain open during construction.

To pave the way for the expansion, the council unanimously approved requested changes to Rivers' development plans.

Before the vote, 6th Ward Alderman Malcolm Chester lauded the proposal, saying it's "great for us and the city."

The plan also earned kudos from Alderman Carla Brookman, who praised Rivers' management and owners for supporting a variety of community projects in addition to pumping millions of dollars in gambling revenue into the city coffers.

"They have really become a part of the community," Brookman said. "They are a great partner."

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Rivers is set to expand while the Arlington International Racecourse in nearby Arlington Heights is preparing to shut down for good. Churchill Downs Inc., which owns the racetrack and a 61% share of the casino, decided in 2019 not to pursue slot machines and table games at Arlington and instead focused on its investment in Rivers.

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