

Instead of casino giveaways, concerts and restaurants, the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino's biggest promotion this month is a ... garage.

On Wednesday, the Hard Rock will open a nine-story garage called Winner's Way, designed to make parking easier and walks to the casino shorter at the 100-acre Hollywood property. Total cost: \$50

million.

“Come Dec. 15, parking is no longer a dirty word,” says a TV ad.

Parking has been a big headache: More than 50 percent of the Hard Rock's regular gamblers said that there's been at least one time when fear of a parking hassle has kept them away, according to a Hard Rock survey of its players.

“It's been a challenge since Day One,” Seminoles' CEO James Allen said. The casino opened in 2004.

When it comes to casinos, you can't overestimate the importance of parking, said analyst Alex Bumazhny of Fitch Ratings in New York.

“If you have people walking 20 minutes to get to your facility, they may choose to go somewhere else,” Bumazhny said. “It's vital for a casino, especially in Florida, where it's rainy and hot.”

Diane Calderon, a weekly slots player from Pembroke Pines, agreed.

“I won't come here on Saturday nights or if I know there's a big concert,” said Calderon, 54. “The high rollers all valet park, so I think the garage will help the average player, like me.”

She said she spends ``\$100 max" on her visits, which is in line with a lot of people. A recent nationwide casino survey said half of all gamblers wager \$50 or less per trip and three-fourths cap their spending at \$100 a visit. Like most casinos, the Hard Rock doesn't disclose player data.

Walkways into the casino

During peak season, the Hard Rock gets up to 40,000 visitors a day, Allen said. They park either in the four-story garage at the back of the property, at the Lucky Street garage that's closer to the bars and restaurants, or on uncovered paved or gravel lots.

The patrons who park outdoors have to snake their way through traffic to their destination. Two walkways from the new garage will change that, leading people above the traffic, Allen said.

``We wanted to address not only the parking situation but the pedestrian traffic," Allen said.

The garage also will have several lanes in and out of the garage, making it easier to navigate than the two other garages. Allen said the Lucky Street garage design was hampered because it's on a narrow tract of land, which explains why drivers have a harder time maneuvering.

The new garage will make the Hard Rock more like a Las Vegas casino because the main walkway will dump patrons directly onto the ding-ding-ding of the slot floor.

Private garages, security cameras

The new garage takes care of high rollers by offering seven private parking spots -- a garage within a garage -- that have a door shut behind the car. An elevator can be accessed with a keypad and personal ID number.

Overall garage security includes a police patrol on bicycles, 160 cameras and a "blue light" system where visitors who sense trouble can push a button to contact security. A camera immediately focuses on the button-pusher as help is dispatched.

"No other casino can match what we have in terms of security," Allen said.

The garage will look like a big video billboard because a giant LED screen wraps its midsection. The screen can promote upcoming Hard Rock events.

"We wanted to give it a Times Square feel," Allen said.

Allen said the garage distances the Hard Rock from horse and dog tracks with slots in South Florida by being the only venue with covered parking. All casinos have free parking and offer valet service. The garage gives the Hard Rock more than 12,000 spaces, more than half of which will be in covered garages.

"We recognize this is something we needed to spend capital dollars on," Allen said.

The garage is part of a \$275 million expansion at four Seminole properties in Florida. In addition to the Hard Rock garage, about \$125 million will go toward the Seminole Casino Coconut Creek to expand the casino and add a garage, \$75 million for the Tampa Hard Rock and \$25 million for Seminole Hollywood Classic for building improvements.

[Powered by WizardRSS](#) | [Work At Home Jobs](#)

Source: <http://news.google.com/news/url?sa=t&fd=R&usg=AFQjCNGl2ZO-GiXNikKw6EOtq1JioD-ddA&url=http://www.miamiherald.com/2010/12/14/1972534/seminole-hard-rock-hotel-casino.html>