

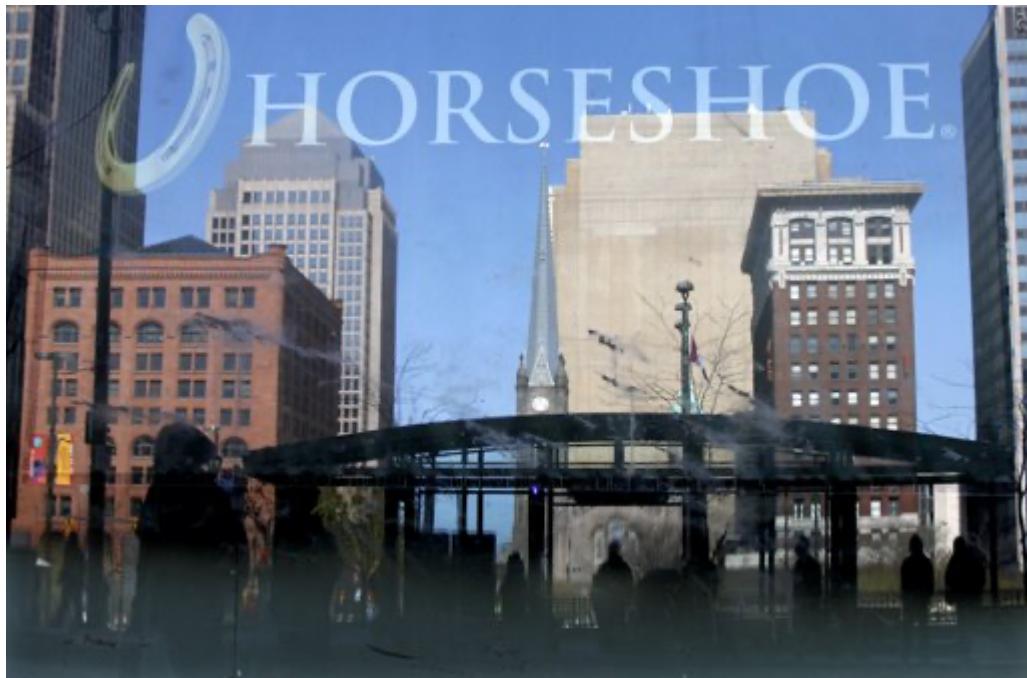
03.27.12 ap.org (Associated Press)

## **Tourism campaign taps into Ohio's first casino**

### **Boosters betting Ohio's first casino, other new attractions, will bring visitors to Cleveland**

**AP** Associated Press

*By Thomas j. Sheeran, Associated Press*



People are seen reflected in the window of the new Horseshoe Casino which is being built in Cleveland on Tuesday, March 27, 2012. Tourism boosters hoping to maximize \$2 billion in new attractions, including Ohio's first casino, and existing attractions, like the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum and the Great Lakes Science Center, kicked off a five-year campaign Tuesday to spruce up Cleveland and make it more visitor-friendly. (AP Photo/Amy Sancetta)

CLEVELAND (AP) -- Tourism boosters hoping to maximize \$2 billion in new attractions, including Ohio's first casino, kicked off a five-year campaign Tuesday to spruce up Cleveland and make it more visitor-friendly.

"This is a pivotal time in our community," said Len Komoroski, president of the NBA Cleveland Cavaliers and chairman of the Positively Cleveland travel-tourism agency.

Agency leaders outlined a series of initiatives, including making it easier for visitors to navigate the city and adding trolley service linking the casino to hotels and lakefront attractions.

David Gilbert, president of Positively Cleveland, said making the mid-May opening of the Horseshoe casino a positive experience is a priority.

Signs directing visitors to the casino will be installed by the opening date, Gilbert told travel planners from the region's tourism industry.

Plans also were outlined for improving the look of downtown park spaces, including the casino's front door on Public Square.

"We're trying to make it as accommodating as possible," said Tony Coyne, chair of the Cleveland City Planning Commission.

Tour planners will promote cruise-style all-in-one package deals including air fare, hotels and attractions. The casino has signed off on the idea and will encourage visitors at area attractions like the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum to sample the casino.

The casino has said it will try to parlay interest in city attractions and won't have Las Vegas-style shows of its own.

"We have a lot of national tourist attractions we'll be able to draw from," Marcus Glover, casino general manager, said earlier during a construction tour of the casino.

The first phase of the \$350 million casino will open in the renovated Higbee department store. Toledo's casino opens several weeks later, with those in Cincinnati and Columbus to follow.

Other new attractions highlighted by the tourism agency in Cleveland include a convention center and medical trade show exhibition hall, both under construction near the casino, a \$350 million Cleveland Museum of Art renovation and expansion project under way, a recently opened aquarium and four hotel projects, most within walking distance of the casino and scheduled to open by next year.

The convention center will replace an aging convention facility at the same location, the medical trade show exhibition hall is being built where an office building and parking deck once stood, and the aquarium is located in a renovated 19th century streetcar powerhouse.

The statewide referendum which approved casino gambling in 2009 was fueled in part by the promise of jobs. In Cleveland, there were 17,100 jobless people and an unemployment rate of 10.3 percent last month, higher than Ohio's 8.5 percent and the 8 percent rate in Cuyahoga County, which includes Cleveland.

Tourism is a \$5.9 billion industry and the fourth largest employer in Cuyahoga County, according to Positively Cleveland.

03.28.12 ap.org (Associated Press)

## Tourism campaign taps into Ohio's first casino



CLEVELAND (AP) - Tourism boosters have kicked off a five-year campaign to spruce up Cleveland and make it more visitor-friendly as they seek to maximize \$2 billion in new attractions, including Ohio's first casino, a new convention center and an adjacent showcase for innovations in health care.

Leaders of the Positively Cleveland travel-tourism agency outlined a series of initiatives on Tuesday. They include making it easier for visitors to navigate the city and adding trolley service linking the casino to hotels and lakefront attractions.

Agency president David Gilbert said making the mid-May opening of the Horseshoe casino a positive experience is a priority. He told travel planners from the region's tourism industry that signs directing visitors to the casino will be installed by the opening date.

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