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Gambling Alert - November 30, 2022



Concerns aired on temporary N. Side casino

City officials and Bally's Corp. leaders aimed to allay some concerns from residents about the planned transformation of Medinah Temple downtown into a temporary casino at a community meeting Tuesday evening.

Bally's casino is set to temporarily occupy the historic Medinah Temple, 600 N. Wabash Ave., before moving to its permanent riverfront location on Chicago Avenue and Halsted Street. The gambling company won the city's approval of a new site in River West in May.

In the ensuing months, Bally's and city officials have held meetings with members of the community to answer their concerns, which include increased traffic in the neighborhood and job opportunities for minorities.

The meeting Tuesday was held at Voco hotel in River North.

Christopher Jewett, Bally's vice president of corporate development, and Ameet Patel, senior vice president of regional operations, discussed job fairs and some of the community-based initiatives the company has planned in the coming months.

Tim Doron, who works for Fish Transportation and is a senior traffic consultant on the project, presented findings in a report commissioned by Bally's on the parking surrounding the site. The report found the nearly 5,000-plus spaces in nearby garages were "adequate" to cover the estimated peak demand of about 500 spaces during normal casino operating hours.

"Suffice it to say there is plentiful parking in the area," Doron said, causing some members of the audience to shake their heads. He added that he visited the parking garages near Medinah Temple during peak times and counted empty spaces. Doron also presented diagrams showing how the valet parking, loading and unloading zones and ride share systems would operate on the streets surrounding the casino.

Some neighbors weren't convinced by Doron's report. The Rev. Lisa Hackney-James of St. James Cathedral, which is about a block away from the temple, was concerned about parishioners being able to find parking to attend Sunday services.

"I have families with children who drive down and drag their kids to church, and I'm wondering what assurance they'll have that they're not going to show up to a saturated parking situation," Hackney-James said during the public comment period. [READ](#)

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