

Toledo's new casino boasts Old Hollywood decor, 2,000 slot machines -- and no smoking

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TOLEDO -- This city is getting ready for its closeup.

The Glass City goes for Tinseltown glitz with the opening next week of the second of four casinos planned for Ohio, this one evoking the art deco glamour of Hollywood's golden age.

Big movie posters and publicity shots of Humphrey Bogart, Marilyn Monroe, Liz Taylor, Tony Curtis and Audrey Hepburn adorn the decor with a heavy overlay of video screens at the \$270-million Hollywood Casino Toledo, set to debut May 29.

The only things missing Monday morning during the casino's media tour were actual customers -- though dealers, servers, cooks and others were running through practice games and preparing food in rehearsal for the opening -- and the constant drone of the jingles and tones of slot machines, which weren't in full operation.

And one more thing: Smoke. Toledo's casino will be smoke-free, a key reason metro Detroiters who go to the Detroit casinos may flock south on I-75 to exit 199B along the Maumee River. It's an hour's drive or less for many residents of southeast Michigan, right into roughly 2,600 covered parking spaces at the gambling hall. The Caesars Windsor casino also is smoke free but requires a trip through customs and the U.S.-Canada border.

"It's easily accessible," Toledo casino general manager Richard St. Jean said this morning. "The parking's great. It's a nice, fresh, clean environment.

"People will choose to come here because it's nonsmoking. But what we're really proud of is ... we're going to have the friendliest team members bar none."

The casino, owned by Penn National Gaming, will offer 125,000 square feet of gambling space on one floor.

Workers were putting finishing touches on the casino that will feature 2,002 slot machines, 20 poker tables, 60 tables for blackjack, craps, roulette and other games. It also features restaurants including the high-end Final Cut Steak and Seafood, an Epic Buffet, a sandwich and burger shop and two flashy bars, one with a stage with nightly live entertainment.

The decor is all 1930s with modern touches, including ornate cast resin pillars made

to look like ornate stone.

Designs in red, blue and gold swirl on carpets in the gaming floor. Blue is replaced by black in the carpet of the high-limit gambling area open to the rest of the casino but separated by pillars and golden gates. Its ceiling is covered in gold leaf.

The main Scene Bar -- a sleek sports bar that will offer gourmet versions of pub fare -- is surrounded by floor-to-ceiling panes of glass with dozens of large video screens offering multiple sports to watch. It's at the center of the casino and is anchored by a lighted bar.

Signs above the cashier station and other spots are in backlit red art deco fonts, and restroom entrances are framed with glowing blue glass panes.

The casino is expecting thousands of people to show up for the opening at 2 p.m. May 29, preceded by an invitation-only ribbon cutting. The casino expects 2.8 million visitors a year.

Ohio voters in 2009 approved a casino each in Ohio's four largest cities. The first opened last week in Cleveland. Casinos in Columbus and Cincinnati will open later.

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