

## Atlantic City's newest casino Revel ready to bring the wow factor

By DONALD WITTKOWSKI Staff Writer | Posted: Saturday, March 17, 2012 4:31 pm

**ATLANTIC CITY** — The word “revel” means to celebrate or have fun. The casino known as Revel hopes to embody fun through its fantasyland architecture, glitzy attractions and a beach-inspired party vibe.

Carrying a price tag of \$2.4 billion, Revel is Atlantic City’s most expensive casino ever, but it is nowhere near the largest. It will have 1,898 guest rooms, fewer than the hotel inventory at four other casinos in town. Revel’s gambling floor features 130,000 square feet of space, putting it around midpack in the casino industry.

Admirers say Revel’s size isn’t what sets it apart from other casinos. They say its trump card will be its ability to dazzle.

“Revel brings the wow factor,” said state Sen. Jim Whelan, D-Atlantic. “Some of it is the fact that it’s a new property, but it’s another step in the direction of a property being a new resort — in their case, being a beach resort. I can assure you they have the most magnificent views in town. They look out over the most beautiful beaches in the Inlet.”

Revel’s cutting-edge design by the Miami-based Arquitectonica architectural firm embraces the beach and ocean. The casino and its 47-story hotel tower are positioned to take advantage of the water views in the South Inlet section. Reflecting the ocean theme, the building’s curvy, glass-cloaked facade appears as though sculpted by waves.

“Besides what I’m told about the exciting architectural elements, the awesomeness of the architecture itself, the height of the building and so on, the wow comes from the way they incorporate the beach in a way the other properties weren’t allowed to,” Whelan said, referring to former construction restrictions that had been placed on other casinos.

Revel opens on April 2, giving the struggling Atlantic City market its first new casino in nine years and what may be its last multibillion-dollar gambling resort for decades to come. An eight-week preview period, during which owner Revel Entertainment Group will gradually bring more hotel rooms and attractions online, culminates in a formal grand opening celebration over Memorial Day weekend.

“I think Revel is going to be a must-see attraction for a lot of reasons, for a lot of groups — how it is integrated into the beachfront, how it is integrated into the neighborhood,” said Michael Pollock, managing director of Spectrum Gaming Group, a casino consulting firm. “It will reach a wider variety of affluent adults who, for a variety of reasons, have stayed away from Atlantic City.”

Revel did not make a company representative available to The Press of Atlantic City for an interview. In the past, Revel executives have resisted describing the complex as a casino, calling it a “lifestyle resort.”

Up to this point, USA Today is the only media outlet given access inside the nearly completed building. Revel is scheduled to give the rest of the media a tour on Tuesday.

Photos published by USA Today revealed luxurious surroundings, including guest rooms described by the paper “as sleek and chic as any in Las Vegas.” Revel’s upscale decor also features marble imported from Italy and China.

Revel plans to entertain its guests by stocking the property with 14 restaurants, 55,000

square feet of retail space and 10 pools. A lineup of celebrity chefs will oversee the dining operations. A burlesque club operated by nightclub impresario Ivan Kane of Las Vegas and Hollywood fame will be connected to the casino floor.

Anti-smoking groups have praised Revel for its no-smoking policy. The property will be virtually smokefree — the first Atlantic City casino to ban smoking — except for one outdoor smoking area next to a nightclub.

Revel has divided the property into four distinct areas, all of them perched well above sea level to give panoramic views of the beachfront and Boardwalk. They are:

n Revelry, so-named for its vibrant atmosphere. This area showcases the casino, restaurants, shops, nightclubs, a dayclub featuring a salt-water pool and cabanas, and The Social, an intimate performance space seating 700 people.

n The Mezz, which includes Ovation Hall, a headliner-act theater with a 5,050-seat capacity. Also within The Mezz section is the Think Tank, 160,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor meeting space, and a poker room.

n Resort, the hotel tower that encompasses nearly 1,900 guest rooms and suites, each with an ocean view. A 31,000-square-foot spa will be tucked inside this part of the complex.

n The Lobby, featuring nearly two acres of elaborately landscaped outdoor space and an “InOut Pool,” which begins indoors and continues outside. Guests will also be able to relax at the O2, an area with six living rooms, bars, a pool bar and a bistro.

The hotel lobby is six stories above the ocean. An atrium-like area, enclosed in glass and equipped with escalators, rises through the middle of the building to connect several floors, including the lobby, the casino, the meeting rooms and the valet-parking entrance.

Perhaps most striking is Revel’s glistening hotel tower, soaring 710 feet high, easily the tallest building in the city’s skyline. Topping the tower is a large sphere that resembles a giant golf ball. The iconic ball will be part of Revel’s exterior lighting.

Even the drive up to Revel’s valet entrance promises to dazzle. The roadway will run beneath the casino, then rise up several levels to deposit guests at a porte cochere that also features ocean views.

Ken Adams, a gambling analyst and casino consultant, believes Revel will be a huge attraction, drawing new customers from throughout the Northeast, as far away as Boston. He said Revel combines the trendy Las Vegas-style amenities with Atlantic City’s old-fashioned charms.

“What exactly made Atlantic City years ago? The beach and Boardwalk,” Adams said. “People came to Atlantic City in the summer because it had a lovely beach and lovely weather and they would just hang out there. It was a successful model for Atlantic City for 40 years. The modern version of it should work just as well, I would think.”

Pollock, of Spectrum Gaming, said that Revel’s management team, headed by CEO Kevin DeSanctis, has studied the market long enough to know which strategies will work and which ones should be discarded.

“One of the lessons is, if you develop something of a higher quality and develop a business model that works, you can grow the market,” Pollock said.

However, some other analysts have predicted that Revel may not expand the Atlantic City market to any great degree — instead, cannibalizing business from existing casinos. The

posh Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa, the city's top-grossing property, is expected to vie with Revel for well-heeled customers.

Borgata is spending \$50 million to remodel its hotel rooms, gaining a fresh new look to compete with a brand new rival. Golden Nugget Atlantic City, the former Trump Marina Hotel Casino, is completing a \$150 million renovation of its casino floor, hotel rooms and restaurants to strengthen its position in the marketplace.

Megaresorts such as Borgata, Harrah's Resort, Trump Taj Mahal Casino Resort and Tropicana Casino and Resort will rely on their immense size and array of attractions to try to fend off the new competitor. All four of those casinos have bigger gambling floors and more hotel rooms than Revel, but Pollock noted that size alone may not carry the day.

"Being the biggest is not necessarily the main factor. We have seen that in Las Vegas," he said.

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