

Waterpark, ziplines, restaurants for South Philly if 'Tomato King' gets casino

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If tomato king Joe Procacci gets Philadelphia's second casino license, Philadelphia will also get a new entertainment district with restaurants, retail, sports facilities, zip-lines, a golf driving range, a dry ski/skateboarding park, water park, and live music.

LoSo Entertainment Center (the name is an abbreviation for Lower South), would sit adjacent to PHL Local Gaming's proposed Casino Revolution, on land that the Lower South District Comprehensive Plan identifies as the Food Distribution area. About 25 acres are currently owned by Procacci, with additional acreage now owned by the city. The complex would be next to the casino, between the Stadium Complex, public park land, and FDR Park Golf Club in the west, and the Delaware river in the east.

The area is currently home to “warehouses and some businesses,” said PHL Local spokesman Bruce Crawley. He said there would be “no loss of any existing jobs, at Procacci or other industrial tenants on that footprint. We would work with the city to have those jobs moved, those businesses transferred, within the South Philadelphia community.”

Said PHL Local Gaming President Joseph Canfora: "The plan would be to create a unique attraction that would appeal to local residents, as well as to visitors to the City of Philadelphia. It's also important to note that, consistent with its family-friendly mission, visitors would not have to actually enter the casino, itself, to participate in the Center's attractions."

The entertainment project is predicated on receiving the license because it would benefit from the casino and hotel, which Canfora said would "serve as a transformative catalyst for the overall Lower South District of the City of Philadelphia, enhancing economic impact and creating jobs and business opportunities."

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PHL Local Gaming has talked to the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation about its potential interest in the land, Crawley said.

Procacci hinted to PlanPhilly about his ideas for 25 acres owned by PIDC on an August tour of Plant 5 and other property he hopes will be the site of the city's second casino. See earlier story [here](#) .

PHL has given renderings and other details to both the city and the Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board. But Crawley said the later was done as more of an FYI – PGCB approval would not be needed for this project, which is separate from the casino.

Construction on the project would start about nine months from when PHL Local was awarded the license, Crawley said. This is the projected “early open” date of a portion of the casino project. LoSo would be built in phases over about 10 years, with the first phase focused on restaurants and retail.

Crawley said the PHL local team has been working on the entertainment complex idea for four or five months. He said the idea is in part a response to discussions with the city leaders who are analyzing the six proposals to see which one or ones would be best for Philadelphia. One of the big criteria: Which proposal would do the most to stimulate economic development outside of the casino itself.

The casino team has also talked to representatives of the local hospitality and tourism industry, Crawley said. “They've said one of the things Philadelphia is lacking is an attraction with a wow factor, a fun factor, that is a specific reason to come to the city, other than the traditional historical, museum, and restaurants.”

“Over the first three years, the LoSo Entertainment Center is expected to generate 598 direct and indirect jobs, which would grow to a total of 6059 direct and indirect employment opportunities in its tenth year of operation,” Canfora said in the statement. “We also fully expect that total construction costs, in excess of our direct, casino-related costs, would grow by an additional \$431.9 million, that the assessed value of the improvements to the area would be \$278 million and that the annual property tax revenue would be \$3.7 million.”

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