

New York casinos

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File photo (Photo: Getty Images/Creatas RF)

Story Highlights

- A state siting board is scheduled to seek casino applications in March
- Possible locations: The Catskills, the Capital Region and Southern Tier/Finger Lakes region
- Wilmot wants to build a \$350 million complex just off the Thruway in the Finger Lakes region

ALBANY – New York is gearing up to take applications for four new upstate casinos at a time when some gambling operations in the region are in a slump.

A state siting board is scheduled to seek casino applications in March, four months after voters approved a state constitutional amendment to allow Las Vegas-style casinos beyond Indian land.

A number of gambling operations in New York and neighboring states has reported lower revenues since the vote amid the harsh winter. But applicants seem unfazed, saying that, over the long term, their casinos could tap into gambling dollars now going to other states.

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Feb. 5: [Senecas ID casino property, Henrietta supervisor says](#)

Jan. 17: [Henrietta gets two casino-related visits](#)

"You can't look at a 90-day window. There could be a million reasons you get these short-term ups or downs," said Thomas Wilmot Sr., chairman of Rochester-based developer Wilmorite, citing state figures. "But if you look at the last five years, it's been a very steady increase in play."

Wilmot wants to build a \$350 million Wilmot Casino & Resort complex just off the Thruway in the Finger Lakes region, saying it could lure millions more to the area.

"If you look at the last five years, it's been a very steady increase in play."

— Thomas Wilmot Sr.

The casinos would debut in a state that already has five Indian casinos and nine racinos with slot-like video lottery terminals. Casinos also are operating in three neighboring states, and Massachusetts is in the process of siting casinos.

Some of those casinos have felt the pinch of more regional competition, including the debut in 2011 of highly lucrative Resorts World Casino, a racino in the New York City borough of Queens. Atlantic City's casino revenue fell below \$3 billion last year for the first time in 22 years.

In New York, statewide racino net revenue has been down the past two months compared to a year earlier. Resorts World, which accounts for more than 40 percent of the statewide net revenue, has bucked that trend.

Jan. 21: [William Johnson doesn't support a casino](#)

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Dec. 12: [Wilmot proposes Seneca County casino](#)

Still, more than a half-dozen potential casino operators have expressed interest in putting up the \$1 million casino application this year. Those who plan on applying say there is room for more gambling upstate.

The operators of the Traditions at the Glen resort propose spending \$150 million to expand with a casino, even though they are roughly 90 minutes north of Pennsylvania's Mohegan Sun at Pocono Downs, 90 minutes south of The Oneida's Turning Stone casino and 30 minutes east of Tioga Downs Casino, which is also expected to vie for a full casino license.

"A casino at Traditions would help keep a lot of that revenue from leaving Binghamton. I think it would also help draw a lot across state lines," said Traditions' Peter Walsh.

Casinos in the Southern Tier could have a tougher time flourishing because of Mohegan, said John Sabini, former chairman of New York's Racing and Wagering Board. But he believes there is a market in upstate New York.

"We just have to be aware of the fact that we were late to the game and that the likelihood is that our facilities won't be jammed with out-of-state tourists," said Sabini, now a consultant. "But rather, we're playing defense and keeping New York money in New York."

[Gov. Andrew Cuomo's administration](#) projects the four casinos to be located in the Catskills, the Capital Region and Southern Tier/Finger Lakes regions will bring in \$312.7 million annually for schools, property tax relief and local governments.

They will be competing for at least some gambling dollars now going to New York's racinos. The racinos in Monticello, Saratoga Springs and Tioga County can apply to become full casinos based on their locations. But there are worries racinos left to compete with Las Vegas-style casinos with slots and table games could face a difficult road.

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"There's a point where you're going to reach saturation, if you haven't already gotten there," said Gary Greenberg, minority owner of Vernon Downs Casino & Hotel in central New York.

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