

## Horseshoe casino, city mount a hiring campaign

Written by Administrator  
Sunday, 04 May 2014 16:02 -

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Richard Lee Floyd Sr. went to the Southeast Anchor Library on Eastern Avenue on Tuesday, walking on a cane and two prosthetic legs, in hopes of part-time work, something to supplement his Social Security disability check, and occupy his days.

"I want to be able to do something ... instead of lying around the house," said Floyd, 61, who worked as a building custodian before circulation failure from diabetes took both lower legs 10 years ago.

Floyd joined about 40 others attracted to the [Highlandtown](#) library by the Horseshoe Casino Baltimore's hiring blitz, which rolled in bearing posters of a winning 7-7-7 slots payout and chips piled high, oversized squeezable red dice for stress relief — and a shot at one of about 1,700 full- and part-time jobs at what will be Maryland's fifth casino.

It's the city's biggest single hiring binge since [Harborplace](#) opened in 1980, one city official said. The jobs are available in a city where the March [unemployment rate](#) was 8.3 percent, considerably higher than the statewide figure of 5.6 percent. That's about 23,700 people in the city out of work, according to the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation, which explains why the city is doing everything it can to help get city residents jobs at the casino.

"This is a true citywide strategy," Karen Sitnick, director of the Mayor's Office of Employment Development, said, adding that she wants to make sure "we could say we left no stone unturned to make sure the majority of those jobs go to city residents."

The \$442 million casino rising on Russell Street south of M&T Bank Stadium needs slot machine attendants, valets, food and drink servers, maintenance technicians, housekeepers, administrators and security guards, not to mention dealers, before it opens in August or September.

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The Horseshoe will compete not only with other casinos but potentially every hotel and restaurant in the region for hospitality workers.

Horseshoe filled all the seats in its recently started 12-week dealer academy, although no one has been hired yet. And it's pushing to sign people up for the last of three mass hiring events scheduled today through Wednesday at M&T Bank Stadium. Applicants can interview at the event for about 1,000 non-dealer jobs, all requiring background checks and drug tests.

Richard Clinch, a Maryland economist with Battelle Memorial Institute, said trying to fill so many jobs is daunting, but doable.

"The question is, can they fill it in a six-month time frame? Yes. Is it going to be a stretch? Yes," said Clinch, who has worked as a consultant on gaming in the past for the state and [Penn National Gaming](#), the original and previous owner of Hollywood Casino, Perryville, Maryland's first casino.

He said the city has done a good job organizing these sorts of employment drives in the past, but he expects its goal of landing most of the jobs may be difficult because of the screening requirements.

The state gaming license requirements exclude anyone from working in a casino in any capacity who cannot pass a drug test and who in the previous seven years has been convicted of a "crime of moral turpitude," as the law puts it. Those crimes include, but are not limited to fraud, treason, theft, perjury and forgery, said a spokesman for the Maryland Lottery and Gaming Control Agency.

As Horseshoe gets closer to opening, Clinch said he wouldn't be surprised to see "some pilfering from other casinos" for employees, as well as heightened competition with local restaurants for workers.

"There's competition for employees in the hospitality industry as a whole," Chad Barnhill, Horseshoe's general manager, said.

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Horseshoe needs to fill its jobs even as Maryland Live, the state's largest casino, continues to hire. Maryland Live, about a dozen miles south of the Horseshoe in [Hanover](#), employs about 3,000 people and plans job fairs in May and June, aiming to fill about 300 jobs, including dealers, cashiers, cooks, bartenders and security personnel.

The competition for qualified workers presages the looming battle between the two casinos for gamblers.

"There's going to be a competition for employees and for customers when it comes down to it," Rob Norton, Maryland Live's general manager, said.

Until the state's sixth casino opens in [Prince George's County](#), possibly in 2016, Maryland Live and Horseshoe will be the state's largest casinos and the closest together geographically.

Opened nearly two years ago by [the Cordish Cos.](#)

, Maryland Live brought in nearly 80 percent of the March revenue received by the state's four casinos, a share that analysts expect to shrink once Horseshoe opens.

Maryland Live has not seen many employees leave for Horseshoe, Norton said, and there's been no bidding war driving up wages. But, he acknowledged, that rivalry may heat up as Horseshoe gets closer to opening.

Barnhill said he expects the two will compete less for the jobs on the casino floor than for hospitality workers. And that competition occurs with all area restaurants and hotels.

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