

Proposed SE Kansas casino could draw Springfield business from Downstream Casino

Written by Administrator

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Investors have proposed to build a \$130 million casino in Kansas, just west of I-44 near Joplin and minutes from Downstream Casino in Oklahoma. (Photo: Getty Images/iStockphoto)

If a proposal by a collection of investors is approved by Kansas lawmakers, Springfield area casino lovers would have two destinations to visit, both roughly 80 miles west of Springfield on I-44 but in two different states.

A collection of Kansas investors proposed on Monday building a \$130 million casino in southeast Kansas' Cherokee County, becoming the third such group to express an interest in vying for the state's last remaining casino license.

Castle Rock Casino Resort announced Monday it wants to develop a \$130 million casino in southeast Kansas' Cherokee County, becoming the third such group to express an interest in vying for the state's last remaining casino license.

The proposed casino would feature 1,400 slot machines, 35 table games and a poker room with 16 tables. Also proposed are a 200-room hotel, three restaurants and a health club and spa. The company said it could open by June 2016, if it wins the contract.

Castle Rock said its project would be less than one mile north of I-44 on U.S. 400. That's five to 10 miles from the Quapaw Tribe's Downstream Casino Resort in Oklahoma, by News-Leader calculations. Both casinos would take less than 90 minutes away by car from downtown Springfield.

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Kansas has three privately built, state-owned casinos developed under a 2007 law that provided for casinos in four specific regions. Casinos were built in three zones: the Boot Hill Casino in Dodge City; Kansas Star Casino in Mulvane; and Hollywood Casino in Kansas City, Kansas.

But developers have shied away from the southeast Kansas license in part because of competition from Oklahoma's Downstream Casino Resort that opened near the state line in 2008. In a move to spur interest in the state's southeastern region, lawmakers earlier this year reduced the investment required of prospective casino developers to build there from \$250 million to \$50 million.

Castle Rock is owned by a group of Kansas partners that include Rodney and Brandon Steven, Dave Burk, Dave Wells, W.G. Farha II, Mike Vess and others, according to the company.

Last month, the Southeast Kansas Casino Group said it was interested in developing a casino, hotel and restaurant just southeast of Pittsburg. Earlier this year, the Quapaw Tribe's Downstream Casino in partnership with another developer proposed building a casino, restaurant and event center near Frontenac.

The state is accepting applications until Dec. 19. The State Lottery Commission then reviews the applications to ensure they meet financial and other standards and holds hearings. Approved projects then go to a seven-member Lottery Gaming Facility Review Board, which makes the final selection.

The Cherokee County Commission on Monday endorsed the project from Castle Rock, said Cherokee County Clerk Rodney Edmondson.

News-Leader reporter Sony Hocklander contributed to this report.

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