

A large, illuminated sign for MGM Springfield. The letters "MGM" are on the top line and "SPRINGFIELD" is on the bottom line, both in a bright orange, dotted font. The sign is set against a dark background with a purple and pink sky. Below the sign is a circular logo featuring a stylized lion's head.

# MGM SPRINGFIELD



## A New Era Begins

MGM Springfield will open for business on August 24, thus ending a seven-year-long effort to bring a resort casino to Springfield's South End and beginning a new era in the city's history. In this special section, we'll look at what brought us to this moment and what MGM's arrival means to a wide range of constituencies, from those now working for the company to those doing business with it.

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# The Moment Is Here

## Springfield Begins a New and Intriguing Chapter in its History

By George O'Brien

**B**ack about 1,300 days or so ago, several hundred business and civic leaders and other dignitaries gathered in bright sunshine in Springfield's South End to witness the official ground-breaking ceremonies for MGM Springfield.

### Analysis

Those in attendance that day would probably struggle now to remember what that area looked like back then. Maybe not. The former Zanetti School and the old correctional facility (known as the 'alcohol jail' to many) on Howard Street were considerable landmarks, and it's not difficult to conjure up remembrances of them and other structures now gone.

More to the point, it was virtually impossible for anyone there that day to stretch their imagination and conceive of the complex that occupies that site now. We had all seen the renderings, but back on that warm spring day, those architect's drawings were a long, long way from reality.

Indeed, even though the journey



*Few in attendance at the groundbreaking ceremonies three and half years ago could have imagined how Springfield's South End would be transformed by MGM Springfield.*

began well before that day, those groundbreaking ceremonies marked the official moment, for most of us, anyway, when the \$960 million MGM Springfield project became real. And even then, it didn't actually seem real.

This was (and is) Springfield after all, and in the minds of many, something this big, something this grand, something this potentially life-altering, just wasn't going to happen here.

MGM was going to change its mind. The Legislature was going to screw things up. Something bad was going to happen.

But here we are, 1,300 or so days later. It is real, and is happening, even if for some it seems surreal.

That phrase 'history-making' is overused these days, to the point where it doesn't mean much anymore. The talking heads at ESPN use

it almost every night to refer to some relief pitcher, hockey goalie, or field goal kicker achieving some obscure statistical milestone.

But with MGM Springfield, it fits. The city hasn't really seen anything like this probably since George Washington picked that acreage on the hill above downtown as the site of the young nation's first arsenal — what became the Springfield Armory. The armory, as most know, changed the course of this city and this region in all kinds of ways.

The innovation and craftsmanship that marked the Armory's early days — and all its days, for that matter — sparked waves of related businesses and an entire business sector — precision manufacturing. Meanwhile, the solid jobs available at the Armory spurred wealth and the construction of the large, beautiful homes that gave the city its nickname.

What kind of chapter in the city's history will MGM author?

**New Chapter**  
Continued on page A22

# Thank you MGM for delivering on your promise.

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and now so is **Springfield.**



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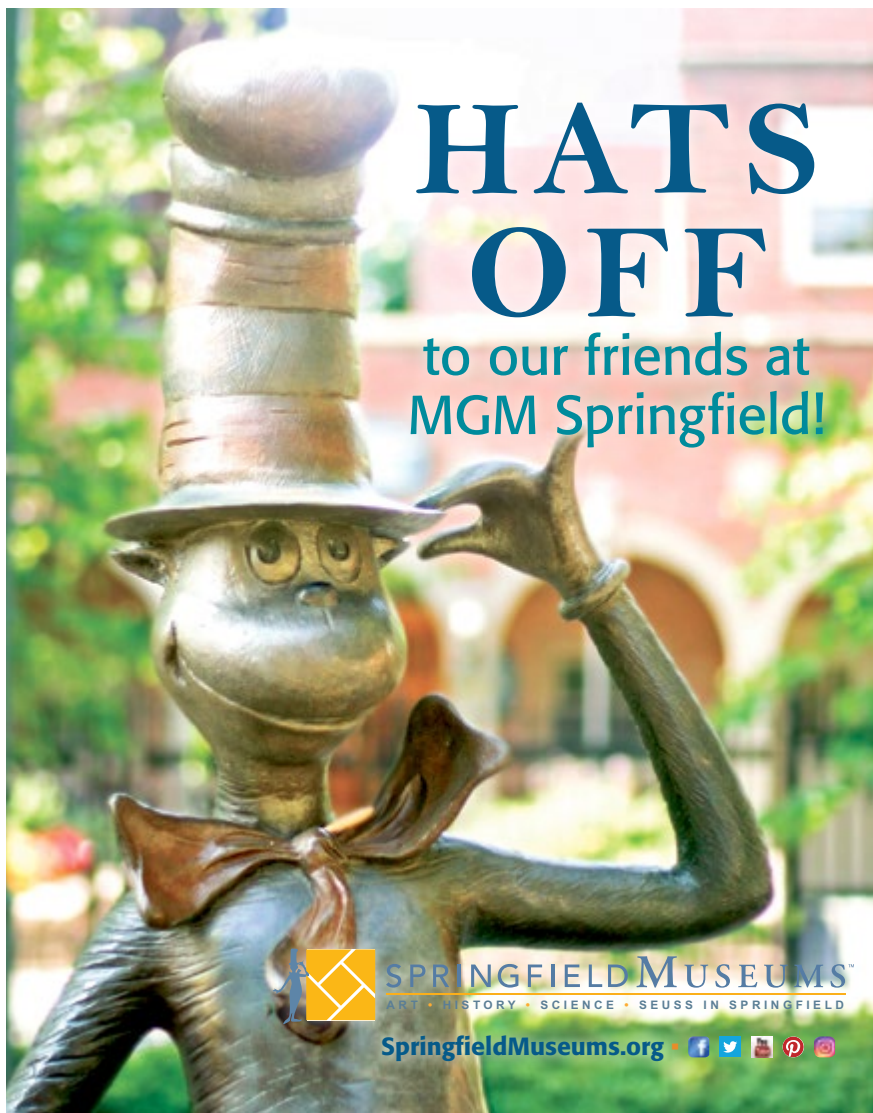
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# From Their Perspective

## Area Business, Civic Leaders Weigh in on MGM and its Impact on the Region

*Editor's Note: As the countdown to MGM's grand opening ticks down to the final hours, we asked a number of area business and civic leaders for their thoughts on what this momentous development means for Springfield and the surrounding region.*



**NANCY F. CREED**, president, Springfield Regional Chamber

"MGM is already making a difference in the local economy — from job creation to utilizing local vendors and suppliers to attracting all types of folks to downtown. You see those results every day. Just this past week, I met a couple from Sardinia who were here on leisure travel. The streets are bustling with people; restaurants are filling up; people are lined up to get coffee at cafes. It is an exciting time in Springfield and in the region and I can only imagine what more is to come once they officially open!"

**RICHARD SULLIVAN**, president and CEO, Economic Development Council of Western Mass.

"MGM presents an exciting economic opportunity for Springfield and Western Mass. Certainly the almost \$1 billion investment in downtown Springfield, the construction jobs, and now permanent 3,000 new jobs are significant. However, the real opportunity is the yearly \$50 million purchase of goods and services from the existing local economy. MGM has worked diligently to fulfill this commitment. All of this investment will stay local and provide our local businesses an opportunity to grow.

MGM also presents an opportunity to grow our travel and tourism economy and our convention business. Western Mass already has a lot to offer with the Hall of Fame, Museums, Yankee Candle, Northampton restaurant scene, the Armory, and Six Flags. Adding the new casino and entertainment options brings the region's culinary and hospitality offerings to a new level."



**PETER ROSSKOTHEN**, owner, Log Cabin, Delaney House, Delaney's Market & D. Hotel & Suites:

"I am excited about the excitement. I hope to see some new businesses in downtown soon. I know that MGM will cannibalize some of our businesses, but we should be able to compensate for that with increased tourism and the support of its employees. Increased tax revenue, plus the commitment of funds from MGM to promote tourism should increase visitation to our market. I am hopeful that this rising tide lifts

all boats. Welcome MGM!"



**MARY KAY WYDRA**, president of the Greater Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau:

"The primary role of the Greater Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau is to attract visitors to Western Mass., and MGM Springfield will certainly help us accomplish that. Tourism is the state's third-largest industry and continuing to grow in our region. We are confident that MGM Springfield's incredible new development with a variety of entertainment in the heart of downtown will bring more visitors. It's our

job to encourage these folks to see more, do more, and stay longer, because that translates into additional spending. All of this extra revenue enhances businesses, governments, and residents across our region alike."

**Thoughts**  
Continued on page A6



On behalf of GreatHorse  
and The Starting Gate,  
we wish to congratulate  
**MGM Springfield**  
on your grand opening.

From our family to yours,  
welcome to western  
Massachusetts!



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To our friends at **MGM Springfield**,  
wishing you all the best for your  
grand opening and beyond!

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**KEVIN KENNEDY**, chief development officer for the city of Springfield  
"MGM and its \$1.1 billion investment in Springfield is a game changer for the region. The job-creation, repeat vendor spending, and world-class entertainment will impact us well beyond anything we

could have hoped for in the aftermath of the tornado. Trains through Union Station will provide first-class transportation south to Hartford and New York. In 2019 the service will expand as far north as Greenfield. More than 400 new units of market-rate housing have been created in the downtown. The excitement is real and it will hit home when we welcome Stevie Wonder on Sept. 1."



**ROBERT A. NAKOSTEEN**, professor, Isenberg School of Management, UMass Amherst  
"Manufacturing activity in Springfield peaked in the 19th century, and though interrupted by two World Wars, has been in decline ever since. Though anchored by Mass

Mutual and Baystate Health, employment growth in the city has been tepid or non-existent for a long time. Now, the MGM casino promises to bring renewed vitality and growth to Springfield. After a construc-

tion phase that created 2,000 jobs, once the Casino is fully operational it will employ 3000 people, with some of the hiring from long-neglected pools of available labor. To put these numbers in perspective, from 2010 through 2017, as the state economy was in a strong rebound from the "Great Recession," Springfield added less than 4,000 jobs overall."



**NICOLE GRIFFIN**, chief talent officer and owner, Manehire  
"ManeHire is thrilled that this day has come when we can celebrate the opening of MGM Springfield. This investment will continue to induce development in the city and support both our tourist and

surrounding businesses. The economic development and workforce impact MGM Springfield is providing is just what the city needed. Congratulations MGM Springfield and the residents of Springfield. We did it! #TheCityofWinners."



**PAUL ROBBINS**, president, Paul Robbins Associates Strategic Communications  
"The term 'game-changer' is probably overused, but this may be one instance where it applies. Springfield, under many administrations, has been seeking to reinvent the core city. There have been

many great ideas through the years, but each lacked the economic engine required, which MGM supplies, to create real transformational change downtown. It will

be fascinating to see if and how that extends through the city center and regionally on things like job growth and housing values."



**JACK DILL**, president, Colebrook Realty Corp.  
"While I wasn't a proponent of gaming in Springfield, I have been impressed with how MGM made the case and met its obligations through the approval and development process. Much of the impact on existing businesses in the

area will depend on MGM's ability to expand the market by drawing customers from outside the region and from other venues. If they succeed in long-term market expansion, other businesses in the food, lodging, and entertainment sectors should benefit. If they don't succeed in growing the market, cannibalization would be an obvious outcome. I imagine MGM will make a concerted effort in the first several months to build market share and demonstrate the new casino's value proposition; that would impact competitors of all types in the short term following the facility's opening. We are already seeing the employment impacts in regional and local unemployment data; the Casino, CRRC, and an overall expanding regional economy have been good for job growth in segments that weren't previously experiencing strong employment demand. We have observed wage rates and time to fill open positions reflecting this demand."

# CHEERS

to a new era in entertainment!

MassMutual Center is thrilled to welcome MGM Springfield to downtown.

Congratulations on your Grand Opening!

From your friends at **MassMutual Center**



# THIS IS A FIRST

New England is a proud place.

With a long history of firsts.

From events that altered the nation's destiny to innovations that have changed the world.

And now we're about to see another first. Because with the arrival of MGM Springfield comes a new vision of entertainment for the area. One that blends world-class gaming, dining and nightlife with community offerings including a skating rink, farmers market, bowling alley and upscale cinema.

All integrated into the heart of a city center, in a property that not only coexists with its surroundings, but celebrates them.

By blending forward-thinking entertainment with the area's rich history and unique local character, MGM Springfield is reimagining what this proud region can be.

It's the first of its kind, in a place that's no stranger to firsts.



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**NATE COSTA**, president, Springfield Thunderbirds  
“I believe that MGM is going to be a game-changer for downtown Springfield. Everything they have planned is going to be top-notch, and first class — from their events to their facilities. To have a world-renowned brand steps

away from the MassMutual Center and other downtown landmarks, I believe it will spur even more economic development and life in our city. They are also our presenting partner, and an organization that has stepped up and supported our vision from day one. We couldn't be more excited for MGM to open their doors, and to join us in the true renaissance of a great American downtown. It truly will be a first in this city.”

**EUGENE CASSIDY**, president and CEO of the Eastern States Exposition

“The arrival of MGM presents a number of opportunities for this region, especially with regard to tourism, conventions, meetings — bringing a wide array of groups to the Greater Springfield area. The Big E already hosts a wide array of trade shows and events, but the arrival of MGM presents a great opportunity to drive more trade-show business to this region. To say that there is now a world-class resort casino in Springfield will be a great sales tool.”

**DAVID CRUISE**, president and chief executive officer, the Regional Employment Board of Hampden County

“The MGM casino is not about table games and entertainment, it's about economic development and sustainable job-creation. It's about the continued economic resurgence of the host community and the continued economic expansion of a critical region of the Commonwealth. We've always looked upon this as a job-creation initiative. We've always felt that our responsibility is to look at the broader region and make sure that the opening of MGM is a catalyst that helps everyone grow.”



**JOHN DOLEVA**, president and CEO, Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame

“The Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame formally welcomes our ‘new’ neighbor, MGM, to Springfield with their beautiful new expansive complex just across the high-

way from the Hall of Fame. MGM has already proven to be an active, energetic and committed community partner and we know that our work together will provide visitors very unique options as they visit the Springfield region. The advent of the MGM property will be a magnet to our community and all attractions and businesses need to be prepared to put our best foot forward to complement the influx of these new and affluent customers.”



**KATE PHELON**, executive director of the Greater Westfield Chamber of Commerce

“Back in 2013, I remember being contacted by MGM with regards to building a casino in Springfield. While they didn't even have the contract at that time, I must admit I

was quite intrigued with the call. Fast forward to the present, and in a few days' time, our area will have a world-renowned casino right in our back yard. We all know and understand the economic impact it will have primarily for Springfield, the vendors who were able to meander the procurement process, and those who are now employed with a prestigious enterprise. It is, no doubt, a very exciting moment for Western Massachusetts, when we are so often overlooked by major corporations. Having met and worked with several of the MGM teams over the past several years, I was impressed with their accessibility, enthusiasm, and genuine concern for fulfilling their contractual obligations. And, might I add, about wanting their guests to have an exceptionally good time. Whether you are for or against gambling, the opening of MGM will be electrifying, and only time will tell if it is sustainable.”



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# An MGM Chronology

*Editor's Note: MGM's opening on August 24 will cap a more-than-seven-year-long process of bringing a resort casino to Springfield's South End. Here is a chronology of the events that brought us to this moment in Springfield's history.*

■ **NOV. 2011:** Gov. Deval Patrick signs "An Act Establishing Expanded Gaming in the Commonwealth," allowing for up to three destination resort casinos located in three geographically diverse regions across the state, as well as one slots-only facility. The act states that the Commonwealth will receive 25% of gross gaming revenues, and also creates an independent body, the Massachusetts Gaming Commission, to oversee the implementation and licensing process.

■ **AUGUST 2012:** MGM formally announces its interest in a resort casino in Springfield. In fact, a total of three proposals for casinos



*Original designs called for a 25-story large glass-façade hotel; they were changed in late 2015 to include a five-story hotel along Main Street.*

emerge in the City of Homes — MGM, which targets the city's tornado-damaged South End; Penn National, which proffers a development in the North End; and Ameristar, which hones in on the former Westinghouse site.

■ **DEC. 2012:** Ameristar withdraws its proposal for the

Westinghouse site, leaving just two competing projects in Springfield.

■ **APRIL 2013:** Mayor Dominic Sarno selects MGM Springfield as the winning proposal for the city of Springfield, ending Penn National's bid in the North End.

■ **JULY 2013:** Springfield voters approve the casino project at a referendum, with 58% of voters in favor. The project is now one of three proposals competing to win the Western Mass. casino license, along with Hard Rock's proposal in West Springfield, alongside

the Big E fairgrounds, and Mohegan Sun's proposal for Palmer, just off the Mass Pike.

■ **SEPT. 2013:** West Springfield voters block the Hard Rock proposal, leaving only MGM and Mohegan Sun in the race for the region's sole casino license.

■ **NOV. 2013:** Palmer voters follow suit, defeating Mohegan Sun's project, leaving MGM Springfield as the only Western Mass. proposal standing. Had either Hard Rock or Mohegan Sun won voter approval, the Gaming Commission would have had to make the final decision — but the commission must still give the official go-ahead to MGM.

■ **JAN. 2014:** Michael Mathis, vice president of Global Gaming Development for MGM's hospitality division, is named president and chief operating officer of the MGM Springfield project. "I'm appreciative and grateful for this opportunity," he said at the time. "There is much to be done in and around Springfield to bring this exciting project to com-

**Chronology**  
Continued on page A22

## HCC & STCC Congratulate MGM Springfield. *Our Partner in Education.*

STCC President John B. Cook,  
MGM Springfield Manager Alex Dixon,  
and HCC President Christina Royal  
pictured at the Massachusetts Casino  
Career Training Institute at 95 State Street  
in Downtown Springfield.



Massachusetts Casino Career  
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[www.mccti.org](http://www.mccti.org)



**MGM SPRINGFIELD**  
A NEW ERA BEGINS



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## MGM Springfield

throughout this seven year journey.  
What was once just a vision for a new  
day in western Mass has become an  
astonishing reality. Congratulations on  
the Grand Opening - we can't wait to  
celebrate another milestone with you all!

Dennis Murphy, Anthony Abdelahad, & Tierney Flaherty



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Staff Photo

Dennis King says that only a few weeks ago, he was thinking about selling off some vehicles and downsizing; a huge contract with MGM has certainly changed the trajectory of his company.

## Hitting the Jackpot

### Dozens of Area Companies Become Coveted MGM Vendors

**For some, the contracts are truly life-changing, providing an opportunity to add employees, not cut back. For others, they amount to solid additions to the portfolio. In every case, though, status as an MGM vendor has brought with it a significant payoff.**

By George O'Brien

**D**ennis King says that, from the day MGM first set its sights on Springfield, he became focused on doing business with the casino giant.

But he didn't let this pursuit consume him, nor did he allow himself to get too excited, because, from the start, and to borrow a phrase from the gaming industry, King, president of Chicopee-based King Ward Coach Lines, considered himself a long shot. A real long shot.

That's because Peter Pan Bus Lines in Springfield is his main competitor, and, outwardly, he thought his rival was, to borrow a phrase from his own industry, more or less in the driver's seat when it came to winning a coveted contract to provide a variety of services to MGM.

So when he received that initial e-mail a few weeks back indicating that the casino giant would like to do business him, he stayed in his seat, but he was more than a little taken aback.

"I never, in my wildest dreams, thought this was going to happen; I'm shocked we got this," he told *BusinessWest*, referring to a contract that will make MGM his biggest account. "I was told to my face that they were going to go with Peter Pan."

The contract calls for King Ward to provide shuttle service from parking lots at the Big E to the casino the first few days it's open, and also daily services (line runs) from Worcester, Brattleboro, Vt. (down through Hampshire County), the Berkshires, Holyoke and Chicopee, Hartford, and other Connecticut communities — three buses a day doing six runs.

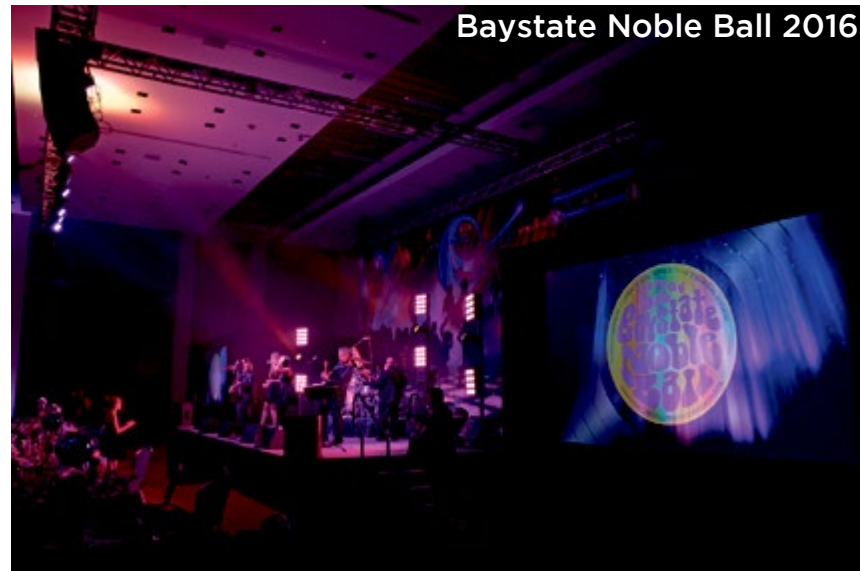
To say that this contract is huge — the word King used himself a number of times — would be, well, a huge understatement.

Indeed, King, projecting that the opening of MGM Springfield would put a real hurt on the company's line runs and

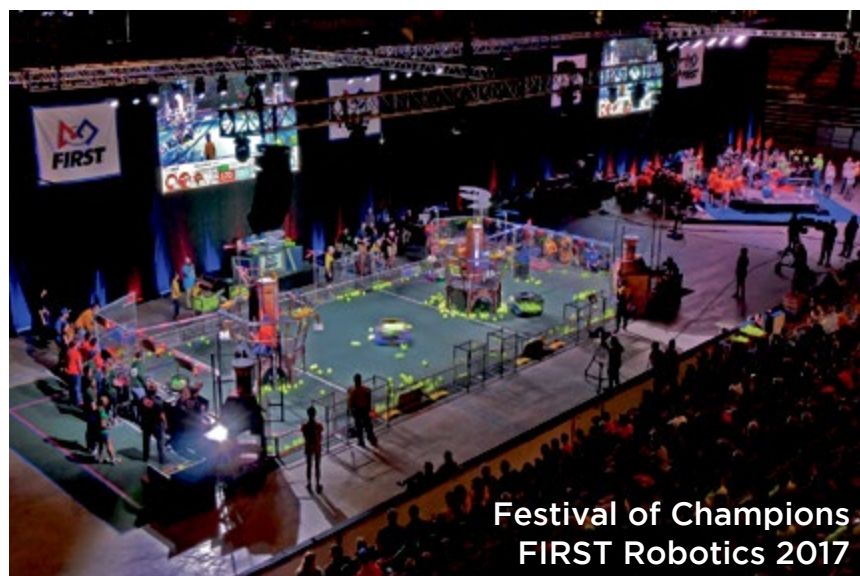
***"I never, in my wildest dreams, thought this was going to happen; I'm shocked we got this."***

**Jackpot**  
Continued on page A14





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# MGM Springfield

*Editor's Note: From the beginning, MGM Springfield has touted its \$960 million resort casino as, well, much more than a casino, and as the property gets set to open, one can clearly see that this is the case. Here is a quick glimpse at the South End property and all that it will offer visitors:*

## The Casino

The expansive 125,000-square-foot gaming floor will feature approximately 2,550 slot machines, 120 gaming tables, a poker room and high-limit VIP gaming area for a variety of experiences.

## Accommodations

- The boutique-style five-story hotel will feature 250 eclectic guestrooms inspired by the historic significance, iconic architecture and literary legacy of its urban surroundings. Each space is punctuated by details such as quotations from the works of Emily Dickinson and whimsical Merriam-Webster-inspired works of art.

## Dining Experiences

MGM Springfield will offer an array of new-to-market food and beverage spots, including:

- **CAL MARE:** Award-winning celebrity chef Michael Mina will introduce a must-experience restaurant to the New England dining scene with Cal Mare, an Italian concept evoking the vibrant seaside elegance of Italy's Amalfi Coast. With accolades including James Beard Foundation "Who's Who of Food & Beverage" inductee in 2013, Gayot Restaurateur of the Year 2011, Bon Appétit Chef of the Year 2005 and more, Mina continues to dazzle the culinary world with bold dining concepts. For Cal Mare, Mina and MINA Group are collaborating with San Francisco's Chef of the Year Adam Sobel, for whom the concept has been a passion project for several years. Seafood from the Mediterranean and Pacific Ocean will be essential menu offerings, as well as fresh handmade pastas and brick-oven pizzas. Charcoal grilled fish, crudos and lighter Italian cuisine will inspire the restaurant's colorful menu, while the beverage program will spotlight coastal Italian wines and an extensive list of Amari including house-made limoncellos and craft cocktails.

- **THE CHANDLER STEAKHOUSE:** The name and location of The Chandler Steakhouse hold a special place in Springfield history. The restaurant is located in the former Union House Hotel — later renamed the Chandler Hotel — which was preserved as part of the development of MGM Springfield and incorporated into the new resort. Guests will savor the finest seafood and steaks at The Chandler Steakhouse, which will be helmed by Hell's Kitchen season-14 winner, Meghan Gill. The restaurant will offer cuts of meat made with 100% Midwest Angus beef that has been dry aged in-house for 21 days. Guests will watch their dinner as it is prepared over an open mesquite charcoal broiler through a glass-walled kitchen serving signature dishes such as northwest salmon, whole steamed lobster or a tomahawk ribeye.

- **TAP SPORTS BAR:** Building off the success it found at MGM Grand Las Vegas, MGM Grand Detroit and MGM National Harbor, TAP Sports Bar will make





# eld: At a Glance



its mark on downtown Springfield. TAP will feature a 10-lane bowling alley, arcade, and beer garden, and fans can keep up with live game action on state-of-the-art HD TVs, as well as a massive video wall featuring 32 screens that can operate individually or as one giant image. Hundreds of hand-selected, vintage memorabilia pieces will be displayed prominently in the bar and dining areas, all carefully chosen to represent the surrounding area's deeply rooted sports history. Adjacent to the sports bar, TAP's arcade and bowling alley will be energetic and eclectic gathering spots for gaming, drinking and socializing. The space also will house a playful area featuring vintage video games, billiards, shuffleboard, air hockey and foosball. TAP will serve up Springfield-inspired menu items, including TAP's Hall of Fame Burger, signature wings and Reubens. Beer aficionados will appreciate the vast varieties on tap and draft at TAP's beer garden, which also will showcase local brewery partners.

- **SOUTH END MARKET:** Adding a gourmet twist to the classic food hall, the bustling South End Market will feature a variety of quick-casual dining spots. Located off Main Street, the Market will house Wicked Noodles, a pan-Asian restaurant; Jack's Lobster Shack, offering lobster rolls and New England-style clam chowder; an all-American eatery at Bill's Diner; and healthy options at the Hearth Grill. Additionally, guests will be able to sit and sip at a Wine & Cheese bar or satisfy their sweet tooth at a Gelato & Espresso counter.

## Meeting Facilities

In addition to large-scale convention capabilities at MassMutual Center, MGM Springfield will offer approximately 34,000 square feet of space to accommodate meetings and events ranging from business to social gatherings. The meeting and event center will feature ballrooms, meeting rooms and boardrooms adjacent to a 6,200-square-foot outdoor terrace that will flood pre-function areas with natural light. All meeting spaces will incorporate sister property names highlighting the resort's connection to other top destinations around the country: The 10,600-square-foot ARIA Ballroom; 5,600-square-foot Bellagio Ballroom; 1,000-square-foot Borgata Meeting Room; and the 1,000-square-foot Beau Rivage Boardroom. For larger groups, the nearby MassMutual Center offers 100,000 square feet of large-scale event space.

## Retail

MGM Springfield will offer a retail lineup with a decidedly local flavor, with:

- **INDIAN MOTORCYCLE:** The Springfield-born pioneers of the American motorcycle industry, will debut the brand's first-ever apparel store as an anchor tenant of MGM Springfield. retail collection. The store will offer items from the brand's casual apparel line, the Indian Motorcycle 1901 Fashion Collection, which includes graphic tees, sweatshirts, hoodies and jackets inspired by Indian Motorcycle's rich heritage. Indian Motorcycle jewelry and accessories also will be available for purchase. Mirroring the aesthetic of the store's product lines, the space will feature an industrial-yet-modern vibe with exposed, vaulted ceilings and concrete and wood elements.

- **HANNOUSH JEWELERS:** Founded in Spring-

**MGM: At a glance**  
Continued on page A23



nos, Foxwoods and Mohegan Sun, and coupling that with not getting the MGM contract (which, again, was his prediction), was preparing to make cutbacks.

"I had intentions of downsizing my company, selling off vehicles and reducing staff, because Mohegan and Foxwoods are big destinations for us," he told *BusinessWest*, adding that now, with this contract in hand, he has bought additional

***"It's a huge deal for D-13 Group, as a new company, to supply a brand and international entity such as MGM; to add them to our profile is a significant development for us."***

vehicles — vans to handle smaller groups traveling to the casino but also other destinations — and projects that he will have to hire a new dispatcher and several more drivers.

Thus, MGM's contract is a game changer in every sense of that phrase, and King is certainly not alone in seeing his future altered in a profound manner.

Rebeca Merigian can certainly relate, although the future is already here.

*BusinessWest* first caught up with her in April, when the ink was drying, figuratively but almost

charter service to the Connecticut casinos,

literally, on a contract for the fourth-generation dry-cleaning business she now owns to handle essentially every uniform to be worn by an MGM Springfield employee.

At that time, she projected that the contract would double the volume of business at a company that had seen little, if any, growth in years, and add a few bodies to the payroll. When we circled back recently, as work was coming in from the casino in ever-larger amounts, her predictions were coming to pass.

"The work is really starting to roll in; we've been preparing the wardrobe department for about three weeks now," she said earlier this month, adding that racks at the company are filled with chef coats, shirts for the table games dealers, suits for limo drivers, and much more. "We've broken records here."

Not every business owner that is now an MGM vendor is going to have the kind of life-altering experience that King and Merigian are enjoying, but for dozens of companies, MGM, which is expected to spend \$50 million a year on goods and services from local suppliers, has become a



Staff Photo

Rebeca Merigian says that a year ago, the focus at Park Cleaners was on survival. A massive contract with MGM Springfield has changed all that, and prompted her to buy new equipment such as the steam tunnel behind her.

very solid addition to the portfolio, one that will give their products exposure to thousands of people a day and to individuals from across the country and probably around the world.

A partial list of these vendors includes a host of businesses, small and large, from brewers to produce providers; fruit-basket makers to a kitchen-supply

**Jackpot**  
Continued on page A16

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Staff Photo

Ray Berry, right, with partner Bill Collins, shows off King of Hearts Lager, to be sold exclusively at MGM Springfield.

### Jackpot

Continued from page A14

outfit; a hand-dryer maker to a mattress manufacturer.

Some of the businesses, like Williams Distributing in Chicopee, have long histories, while others, like White Lion Brewery and the D-13 Group are startups or next-stage ventures.

As the casino prepares to open in a matter of hours, not weeks or even days, *BusinessWest* takes another look at one of the more important aspects of MGM's arrival — the boost to be received by a number of area businesses across a host of sectors.

### Lion Around

Ray Berry has already enjoyed a good deal of success with his craft beer label White Lion. Indeed, the brand has moved well beyond Western Mass., and is now statewide, having made deep inroads into the lucrative Boston market, with the north and south shores being the next targets.

But the contract Berry signed to provide MGM with an exclusive label, to be called King of Hearts Lager, is perhaps the most significant development in the brand's short history because of the exposure it will provide.

"To be in a position to have our brand and lager in front of thousands of people on a daily basis extends our brand and our visibility tremendously," he told *BusinessWest*. "And we believe that with the right approach, and the right strategic conversations, we'll be able to broaden our relationship accordingly."

Berry said MGM and White Lion have been in discussions about doing business together for some time now. After the food and beverage lineup for the casino was finalized, that allowed the parties to take those talks to a higher level, with the focus on being creative, he noted.

The result was King of Hearts Lager.

"We wanted to present some brand standards that would be appealing to MGM Springfield and their team, and we presented them with several concepts," Berry explained. "We went through several meetings, which also included some pilot taste tests, and we decided to move forward with the King of Hearts name."

Thus, the bottle has two lions on it — the White Lion logo around the middle, and the MGM Lion on the neck. People will only be able to drink this label at MGM, but, as Berry noted earlier, visitors to the casino — and up to 10,000 are expected each day — will be introduced to the brand and, hopefully, compelled to look for it at home.

*"A year ago, we were talking about survival. Now, it's about managing this incredible surge in volume; it's amazing."*



“When you think about the kinds of people who will be going to MGM — the global connoisseur, the festival goer, families, individuals coming in for events — all of them may encounter the White Lion brand,” he noted. “And when they get back to their respective geographic area, they may go to their local restaurant or package tour and be able to extend that experience.”

Bill Gagnon sounded a somewhat similar tone, only he was talking about a much different kind of experience — the one that takes place at the end of a visit to the men’s or ladies’ room.

Gagon is president of Natick-based D-13 Group, suppliers of Integrated Sink Systems, which, as that name implies brings a host of components together in one system, including the XLERA-TORsync Hand Dryer, produced in East Longmeadow by Excel Dryer, the company started and still led by his father, Dennis.



Staff Photo

Bill Gagnon says MGM Springfield’s order for 96 integrated sink systems will generate some real momentum for D-13 Group, the startup venture he launched last year.

MGM has ordered 96 of the integrated systems for its restaurants, hotel, and meeting facilities, said Bill Gagnon, adding the company and its signature product are still just getting off the ground, and MGM’s contract provides a huge boost.

But the MGM corporation is actually a repeat customer, he noted, adding that the first real client for the integrated system was MGM’s National Harbor Casino in Maryland; the units at MGM Springfield are what he described as the “production version.”

“And in between, we’ve done some new jobs,” he said, listing the JFK Library in Boston, Red Rose Pizza in Springfield, and other projects. “It’s a huge deal for D-13 Group, as a new company, to supply a brand and international entity such as MGM; to add them to our profile is a significant development for us.”

**“It’s a huge deal for D-13 Group, as a new company, to supply a brand and international entity such as MGM; to add them to our profile is a significant development for us.”**

### Along for the Ride

The same could certainly be said for King Ward, the company started by King’s father, Robert, and partner Russ Ward. The venture turns 30 this year, and, as its president noted earlier, this wasn’t shaping up to be a great anniversary year.

Indeed, the company had developed a very solid business taking individuals and a wide array of groups to the Connecticut casinos and especially Mohegan Sun — it’s a few miles closer than Foxwoods and, said King, that makes a big difference (Mohegan has been the company’s biggest destination) — and much of that business was gener-

**Jackpot**  
Continued on page A23

# LET THE GAMES BEGIN



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# In Good Company

## Area Residents Find Opportunity Knocks at MGM Springfield

*Editor's Note: From the start, one of the main focal points of the discussion involving MGM Springfield has been the employment opportunities it will bring to the region. Overall, MGM has had to fill roughly 3,000 positions, and it's filled most of them with residents of the 413. With each job awarded, there is a story. Here are five of them:*

**NAME:** Karisma Roach  
**AGE:** 24  
**RESIDENCE:** Springfield  
**POSITION:** Cage Cashier

*Why did you seek employment at MGM Springfield?:*

I've been looking for a better job opportunity for so long and it is finally here. When I came from St. Thomas a couple years ago I never thought I would have the opportunity to build my career at such an amazing company."

*What does this opportunity mean for you?:*

This feels just like a dream come true. This is my first full-time and steady job. I remember I cried when I got the position, because I really needed it. I have no words to describe how I feel. But I feel like I'm part of MGM Springfield. I love the management and the staff."



**NAME:** Keishla Morales  
**AGE:** 21  
**RESIDENCE:** Springfield  
**POSITION:** Table Games Dealer

*Why did you seek employment at MGM Springfield?:*

First of all, I think that MGM is one of the biggest companies worldwide, but most of all in United States. I am taking advantage of the opportunity of working for the first casino at Springfield. This is my reward for all my hard-work successfully completing the Blackjack and Carnival Games courses at MCCTI."

*What does this opportunity mean for you?:*

This opportunity means EVERYTHING to me. I have never gambled before, but now I love dealing cards. I'm thankful for all the instructors that helped me out in the process.

I've had so many struggles in my short life, but being part of this company makes me feel that I can finally take control and secure my future. It makes me feel that I will be able to raise and provide my daughter everything she needs. I'm very happy to finally be here. I look forward to being in the casino life and meet all my co-workers. This experience makes me feel excited, comfortable, but most of all thankful."



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**NAME:** Miguel Figueroa  
**AGE:** 43  
**RESIDENCE:** Longmeadow  
**POSITION:** Executive Chef at TAP Sports Bar

*Why did you seek employment at MGM Springfield?:*  
 I saw the opportunity to grow and the stability the company provides. It's exciting to grow a concept like TAP. I'm very lucky to lead an outlet like this. I've been to Vegas a few times, and I thought it would be great to have something like that in Springfield. It was a no-brainer when I was asked to join the team."

*What does this opportunity mean for you?:*  
 This means a lot. It solidifies that I have made it far, and my hard work has paid off. Running this operation means the world to me, and gives me a sense of pride. Leading one of the outlets the casino has is the ultimate goal as a chef. It separates the good from the great. I feel like I have arrived.



**NAME:** Timothy Mock  
**AGE:** 40  
**RESIDENCE:** Connecticut (Moving to Springfield)  
**POSITION:** Security Officer

*Why did you seek employment at MGM Springfield?:*  
 I wanted to be a part of the SHOW. I am a people person, and I love helping people. I wanted to meet different types of people from all different cultures, and MGM provides that. I wanted to be a part of it all."

*What does this opportunity mean for you?:*  
 Working here allows me to be me. I'm fun-loving, outgoing, and I love life. This is who I am. I appreciate MGM for giving me this opportunity. It's dear to my heart. Being chosen to be a part of this family is very special, and I get to embark on this journey of my life.

**NAME:** Jonathan De Arce  
**AGE:** 32  
**RESIDENCE:** Springfield  
**POSITION:** Executive chef for the South End Market

*Why did you seek employment at MGM Springfield?:*  
 Because I'm from Springfield! I heard about this property since the beginning. I went to Boston for five years, I gained experience, and as soon as I knew that this was real I knew it was my opportunity to come back. I know what MGM Springfield means to the area, I'm aware of where this city has been, and excited about where it is going to be very soon.

*What does this opportunity mean for you?:*  
 It means everything! The possibilities are endless. Learning from all the leaders, being able to receive training in Vegas, visiting other properties, meeting all the Executives, this is definitely an eye opener! Sky is the limit!"



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PRESIDENT, FOOD & BEVERAGE



**ALEX DIXON:** GENERAL MANAGER



**ANIKA GASKINS:** VICE PRESIDENT,  
NATIONAL MARKETING



**BRIAN JORDAN:** DIRECTOR,  
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**MONIQUE MESSIER:** EXECUTIVE  
DIRECTOR, SALES



**SARAH MOORE:** VICE PRESIDENT,  
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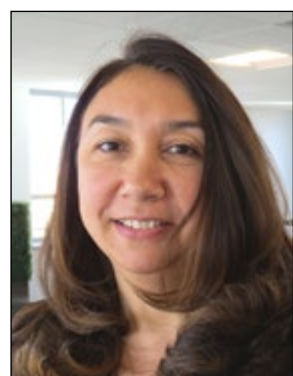
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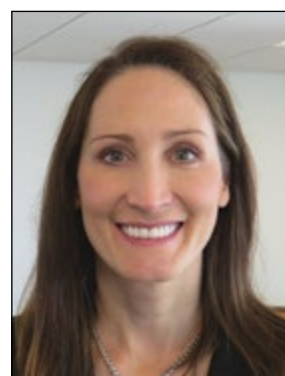
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## New Chapter

Continued from page A2

We really don't know. No one does. Back 30 years or so ago, the good people of Atlantic City hailed the gambling palaces being built there then as a renaissance, a rebirth for a city that had fallen on some very hard times. We all know how that turned out.

MGM Springfield is opening at a time when competition for the gambling dollar has never been stiffer, and the pace of competition will only accelerate as states and regions look to cash in on what appears to be a sure thing.

Only ... there is no such thing, as anyone who gambles can surely tell you.

And while MGM Springfield is many things to many people, it is, overall, a gamble, and people shouldn't ever forget that. And when you gamble, you can win, you can lose, and you can break even.

A lot can happen over the next few years or the next few decades, but we choose to believe that the city and this region will see this gamble pay off.

It will pay off in jobs, in vibrancy, in a trickle-down effect to other businesses in many sectors, and above all, in making this city relevant again, something it really hasn't been for a long time. Remember, before that groundbreaking ceremony, there hadn't been a significant private-sector development in downtown Springfield in almost 30

years.

Not every development will be positive; some businesses will definitely be hurt by the arrival of MGM, and there will be more traffic and hassles getting in and out of the city. And there is the very real possibility that many of those coming to visit MGM will get back in their cars, buses, and limos at the end of the stay and get right back on I-91 north or south and leave Springfield behind.

But for city leaders, the state, the Gaming Commission, this region as a whole, and especially MGM, this was a gamble well worth taking. In the end, we don't believe anyone will regret putting their chips on Springfield and letting it ride.

Those are the kinds of words that can certainly come back to haunt someone, but we don't believe they will. This is, as they say in this business, a solid bet — for MGM and this region.

*BusinessWest* invited area business and civic leaders to offer their thoughts on what the arrival of MGM Springfield means for this region. Maybe Peter Roskoth, owner of the Log Cabin and a host of other businesses, all of them to compete with MGM in one way or another, said it best: "I am excited about the excitement."

So are we. ♦

*George O'Brien is the editor of BusinessWest.*

## Chronology

Continued from page A9

pletion. I look forward to continuing to build a team that will create a world-class urban casino-resort proposal and anchor a renaissance for this important Gateway City and the region around it."

■ **JUNE 2014:** The Gaming Commission unanimously votes to grant the Western Mass. license to MGM. The commission's decision comes after an extensive, two-year process of hearings and background investigations culminating in a final week of hearings and deliberations.

■ **NOV. 2014:** The final roadblock for MGM's development falls when a referendum attempting to ban casinos in the state fails, with more than 59% of voters giving the go-ahead to the Commonwealth's casino era. The four-year process of opening MGM Springfield begins in earnest, with MGM planning to create about 3,000 permanent jobs to benefit the local job market.

■ **JAN. 2015:** MGM Resorts International names Seth Stratton vice president and general counsel of MGM Springfield. Stratton, a Springfield native and Longmeadow resident, is responsible for overseeing legal affairs and government relations at the casino resort.

■ **MARCH 2015:** Brian Packer is named vice president of Development and Construction for MGM Springfield, and a groundbreaking ceremony is held at the site.

■ **JUNE 2015:** Springfield officials announce that Springfield will coordinate the casino project in the South End with the multi-year reconstruction of the Interstate 91 viaduct through the city's downtown, which will delay the opening until 2018. The original target date was late 2017.

■ **SEPT. 2015:** MGM unveils a redesigned site plan for the project, abandoning the planned 25-story glass-facade hotel on State Street, in favor of a five-story hotel to be located on Main Street. The changes also include the reduction of the parking garage



*This rendering shows the revised design of MGM Springfield, with this view capturing the landscape on State Street.*



*Alex Dixon was named general manager of MGM Springfield in the spring of 2017.*

become the exclusive venue manager of the MassMutual Center.

■ **MARCH 2017:** Hundreds of construction workers, city officials, MGM employees, and others gather at the future casino site to watch a crane raise the final steel beam into place in a topping-off ceremony.

■ **JUNE 2017:** Alex Dixon, a third-generation casino worker and former assistant general manager at the Horseshoe Baltimore Casino, assumes the duties of general manager of MGM Springfield. "A big part of my role is

to help facilitate and build a culture," he told *BusinessWest* at the time. "And the only way you can do that is by touching people and having an opportunity to not only impart the vision, but listen."

■ **NOV. 2017:** The MGM Springfield Career Center officially opens for business, with mass hiring events commencing two months later — a period when most of the casino's 3,000 employees will be hired. Under

the host-community agreement, 35% of those employees will be from Springfield, and 90% from a combination of Springfield and the greater region.

■ **DEC. 2017:** The Massachusetts Casino Career Training Institute, a joint effort between Holyoke Community College and Springfield Technical Community College, opens, with classes launching in February.

■ **MAY 2018:** Passersby finally see signage for the casino and hotel, including the MGM Springfield sign atop the parking garage, highly visible from I-91. Meanwhile, a dome is raised atop the MGM Springfield hotel, just above the hotel's presidential suite.

■ **JUNE 2018:** MGM Springfield hosts its final pre-opening hiring event, interviewing hundreds of applicants and hiring many of them on the spot.

■ **AUGUST 2018:** Plans are announced for MGM Springfield's Aug. 24 grand opening, which will be preceded by a parade down Main Street at 10:30 a.m. from the corner of State and Main streets, featuring the world-famous Budweiser Clydesdales. The procession will arrive at MGM Springfield at 11 a.m., at which time the doors to the casino will officially open — never to close.



## MGM at a Glance

Continued from page A13

field in 1980, Hannoush Jewelers is a family-owned and operated business. The MGM Springfield location will be a flagship for the expanding brand that boasts more than 50 locations throughout Massachusetts. Guests can expect to find pieces from sought-after designers such as Tacori, Breitling, Alex and Ani, Pandora and more.

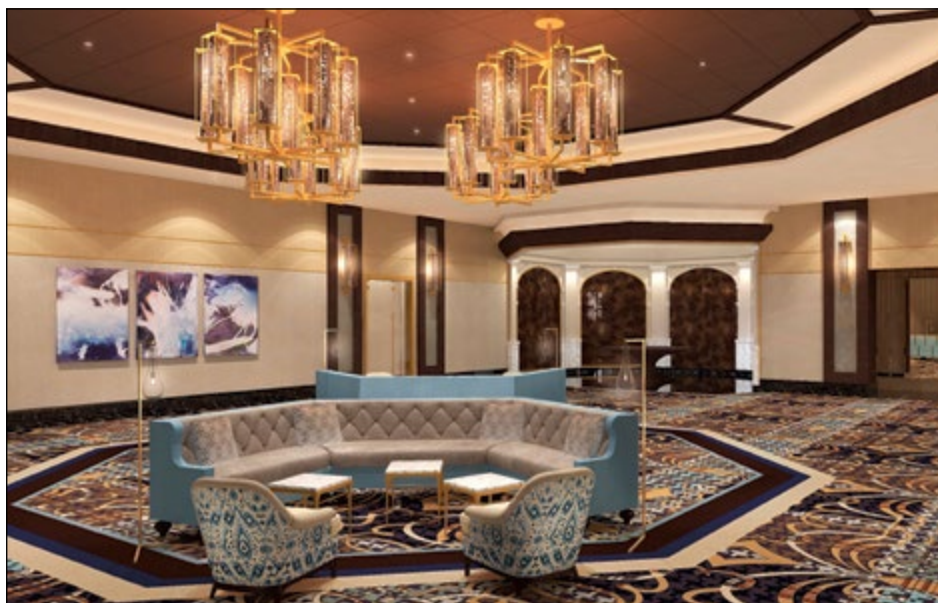
• **KRINGLE CANDLE:** Kringle Candle unites heritage and innovation in its signature line of all-white, ultra-fragrant, pure-burning candles. The Springfield boutique will be situated in the First Spiritualist Church space (a historic High Victorian Gothic church that was literally lifted from its foundation and relocated approximately 600 feet to its new permanent home). It will draw inspiration from Kringle Candle's thriving Bernardston shopping destination, featuring candles, eclectic gifts, keepsakes and chocolates alongside a gourmet café offering sandwiches, salads and pastries for breakfast, lunch, or dinner.

### Entertainment

The 8,000-seat MassMutual Center is MGM Springfield's official entertainment venue, serving as the home for large-scale conventions and events. MGM Springfield also will partner with other local venues, such as Symphony Hall, for live events;

### More Entertainment

Guests can tee up at MGM Springfield's Topgolf® Swing Suite, a new social gathering spot featuring high-tech immersive golf simulators and a lively lounge with delicious food and beverage offerings. The resort also will



MGM Springfield will feature 34,000 square feet of space to accommodate meetings and conventions.

feature an eight-screen movie theater complex; 10-lane bowling center; serene spa; and an 8,000-square-foot pool situated within a terraced rooftop garden.

### Open Air Plaza

Inspired by the classic New England town common, MGM Springfield will create a lively outdoor plaza and thriving public space, with the iconic 19th century Springfield Armory at its center. The historic United States arsenal will provide the backdrop for the open-air marketplace, which will feature live events, local artisans, farmers markets and seasonal programming including an outdoor ice rink. The plaza will become the anchor for the neighborhood's pedestrian crowd, encouraging guests to explore the many local businesses and attractions nearby.

### Art

Woven through all elements of the resort, a public fine art program inspired by the industrial ethos of Springfield will feature a captivating collection of commissioned and hand-selected pieces by international and local artists from Springfield, the greater Berkshires, New England and beyond. The property also will feature an exclusive exhibit, "Cabinet of Curiosities: Springfield Innovations from the Springfield Museums," curated in partnership with the Springfield Museums to showcase turn-of-the-century objects throughout the resort, such as a 1925 Edison Western Union Stock Ticker, a 1915 Springfield-made Telegraph, and an 1895 Edison Home Phonograph.

## Jackpot

Continued from page A17

ated from the Greater Springfield area.

With the arrival of MGM Springfield, King was projecting that many of those customers would be gambling closer to home, and a decent number wouldn't need a bus to get there. Couple that with not getting the MGM contract, and things were looking quite glum.

But then, King got that e-mail from a consultant working for MGM who essentially started the dialogue that led to the contract. Things didn't happen overnight, or even over a few nights, for that matter — there were some serious negotiations over specific routes — but the deal got done, as they say.

And it's a huge deal for King Ward, which is located just a few hundred yards from the runways at Westover Air Reserve Base and has carved out a nice business dominated by charters to destinations ranging from the Bronx Zoo to Fenway Park.

The contract provides a steady stream of income, said King, and the timing of many line runs — the buses

drop off passengers at 9:30 and pick them up at 2:30 p.m. — allows the company to deploy its buses elsewhere during that stretch, perhaps for charters to MGM Springfield.

"This is the biggest thing that will ever happen to our company," he said.

Rebecca Merigian could likely say the

*"This is the biggest thing that will ever happen to our company."*

same thing. Park Cleaners has had big customers in the past, including MassMutual, but nothing like this. Each of the 3,000 MGM employees will have three uniforms, and Park will handle all of that. But there is also dry cleaning coming in from employees, and new business opportunities developing, such as work for the meeting facilities at the casino complex.

The volume became so great so quickly — "we're pushing about 500

pieces a day, and they haven't opened yet" — the company bought some new equipment, specifically a so-called 'steam tunnel,' and has plans to add additional workers. Regular customers are happier because the company is now open Saturdays and Sundays.

Meanwhile, the van the company has long used to make its deliveries is no longer sufficient, said Merigian, adding that among all the other things she's doing, she's researching 24-foot box trucks.

All this represents quite a reversal of fortune.

"A year ago, we were talking about survival," she said. "Now, it's about managing this incredible surge in volume; it's amazing."

### Cashing In

While a comparatively small company, King Ward had already made its mark in this region, becoming the transportation provider for a host of

area institutions, ranging from Mount Holyoke College to the Springfield Thunderbirds.

There are buses at the company's terminal wrapped in those clients' logos and colors, said King, and soon they'll be joined by a few bearing the MGM lion.

The company won't be charging MGM for the cost of the wrap jobs, he noted, adding that this perhaps the least he can do for a client — and a contract — that has changed the trajectory of the company in, well, a huge way.

There are a few other area businesses enjoying a similar life-altering experience, and for dozens more, MGM is providing a tremendous lift.

In a few days, visitors to the casino complex can dream about hitting the jackpot; several area businesses already have. ♦

George O'Brien can be reached at [obrien@businesswest.com](mailto:obrien@businesswest.com)



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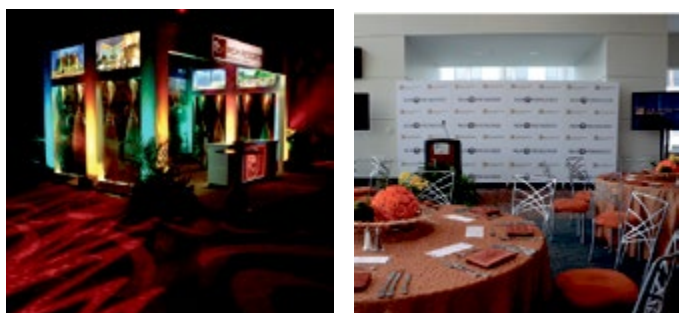
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**Election Night Watch Party at the Basketball Hall of Fame**  
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