Cleveland Horseshoe Casino is now open.

By James W. Wade III

Staff Reporter

CLEVELAND- After a night of glitz and glamour, patrons walked into the Horseshoe Casino Cleveland at 9:30 p.m. Monday night. And, two hours after it opened, the Horseshoe Casino paid out its first $50,000 jackpot.

A line outside the casino wrapped around the block until 2:45 a.m. when the crowds died down. It was a beautiful night for many politicians, city officials, and a few celebrities.

The night started with a VIP, invitation only reception onPublic Squarethat served thousands. Cavs legend Austin Carr was one of the announcers who highlighted the night.

Owner Dan Gilbert thanked all many who had any type of involvement with the $350 million dollar project.

“This is an urban casino. This is a casino designed and developed to help invigorate downtownClevelandand make the city an entertainment center,” Gilbert said. “Hopefully, you’ll frequent all the surrounding establishments. We’re promoting two-way traffic.”

In the months leading up to the casino opening, new businesses have been opening their doors downtown and existing businesses have hired on more staff.

There was not a ribbon cutting in the traditional sense. Instead, the casino marked its arrival with a unique 3D video projected onto the side of theHigbeeBuilding, featuring iconic images of

a city hoping for new growth.

“When you walk into the casino today, hopefully you’ll see more than a casino, but a classy and intimate entertainment center that really has the soul ofClevelandinvolved here,” Gilbert told the cheering crowd.

General manager Marcus Glover said the employees appreciate the pride and swagger of the Horseshoe brand, calling them some of the best and brightest in northeastOhio. “One of the things I’ll tell is they’re very nervous, so give them some patience.”

About $350 million was invested into Phase I of the casino and it’s expected to bring in 5 million visitors annually. Work on Phase II will start soon along Huron Street across from Quicken Loans Arena and will be operated by one of Caesars Entertainment’s other brands.

“We’ve never been welcomed more warmly. We’ve never worked in a more supportive and engaging environment,” said Caesars CEO Gary Loveman.

The world’s largest gaming company is already in 14 different jurisdictions, Loveman said. With brief comments from Mayor Frank Jackson and costumed women in elaborate, feather headdresses, all eyes were on the building itself as it transformed into an enormous screen

"It’s here. There’s been a lot of attempts and people said it would never happen,” saidJackson. “Those investments in this casino will help us be a 24-hour city.”

“It’s time. It’s time. It’s definitely time,” said Gilbert, sporting a red bowtie, which has become the signature look of his son, Nick.