Rock Ohio Caesars LLC (ROC) is moving forward with plans for a Phase I gaming development in the heart of downtown Cleveland. Dan Gilbert, Rock Gaming CEO, and Gary Loveman, chairman, CEO and President of Caesars Entertainment Corporation, top City, County and State officials, and community and business leaders took place in a ground breaking ceremony.

By JAMES W. WADE III
Staff Reporter

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After comprehensive design and investment analysis, Horseshoe Casino Cleveland is expected to be the first casino in Ohio, with a grand opening expected in early 2012. Cleveland's new casino will be located in the Historic Higbee Building on Public Square near the city's entertainment district. Construction bid packages will be issued over the next several weeks, and work will begin soon after.

“I am bullish on Cleveland's future,” said Gilbert, who also is majority owner of the city’s NBA franchise, the Cleveland Cavaliers, and founder of Quicken Loans Inc., which operates one of its lending centers in downtown Cleveland with 300 full-time employees. “This tremendous opportunity for economic development grew out of our passion to help revitalize this great city. We are confident that the economic activity our project will generate will make a strong impact on Cleveland, the region and the entire state of Ohio.”

“With the announcement that Horseshoe Casino Cleveland will be the first casino to open in Ohio, Cleveland is well on its way to becoming a 24-hour city,” said Cleveland Mayor Frank G. Jackson. “By locating in the Historic Higbee Building at Public Square, we will be attracting visitors to the heart of downtown Cleveland and putting thousands of people to work. I want to thank Rock Ohio Caesars for their commitment to this casino and their investment in Cleveland.”

After successfully leading the November 2009 constitutional amendment approving full-service gaming in the state’s four largest cities, Rock Gaming selected Caesars Entertainment, as its partner. The resulting joint venture, Rock Ohio Caesars, will develop and operate casinos in the downtowns of both Cleveland and Cincinnati. Caesars will manage day-to-day operations at both casinos.

Gilbert and Loveman said their teams carefully selected the Horseshoe brand for the development based on similarities between the namesake’s history and Cleveland’s culture. Loveman said that a classic, dedicated and comfortable experience will await visitors to Horseshoe Cleveland. Horseshoe is the brand-leader in all markets where it operates.

Rock Ohio Caesars expects to invest more than $350 million to transform approximately 300,000 sq. ft. of space over four floors of the Higbee Building into a first-class gaming destination. It is expected that more than 2,000 slot machines, 65 table games, a high-limits area, an action-packed World Series of Poker® room, and a VIP player’s lounge will occupy the 96,000 sq. ft. of gaming. The casino will offer an international buffet restaurant and a food court with local partners providing regional fare. A main-floor feature bar will round out the food, beverage and entertainment offerings.

New lighting, signage and awning designs are planned to breathe new life into the exterior of the building. Horseshoe Cleveland Casino will be prominently located along one of the city’s main thoroughfares. The casino will offer primary entrances at Public Square on the north end

and Prospect Street on the south. A third entrance will be accessible in the casino's base level which connects to Tower City Center, a major shopping and commerce destination.

Nearly 2,000 construction workers will work on the Horseshoe Cleveland development over the coming months. Later this year, Horseshoe Cleveland will hire and train approximately 1,600 new employees to work in the casino. Rock Ohio Caesars has committed to hire at least 90 percent of casino employees from the Cleveland metropolitan area. Economic inclusion will be a priority in all aspects of the project.

Marcus Glover will serve as the general manager for the casino. Glover will have overall management responsibilities for Horseshoe Cleveland. Glover was most recently assistant general manager and vice president of operations at Harrah's St. Louis.

Glover will also be responsible for upholding Caesars' world-class operating standards by overseeing all gaming, food and beverage, customer relations and administrative functions. One of Glover's key roles will be to ensure that the casino is developed to maximize connectivity and local economic impact. "I look forward to meeting with the local hotel, restaurant and retail community to discuss potential relationships to service the casino's future guests," Glover said.