








Another look

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D'Iberville — In 17 years, Mark Seymour Sr. has fought the government, the environmentalists and even Hurricane Katrina for his dream to build Royal D'Iberville Casino. Now it's the economy that is changing his plans.

A new master plan is ready to go before the D'Iberville Planning Commission for approval. Seymour said he and his partners, Terry Moran and Leland Mitchell, are talking to three groups of developers about building the resort directly west of Interstate 110 on Back Bay.

He'll also have to go back to the Mississippi Gaming Commission with his new plans and he said all the permits will be in place so all the developers have to do is bring the funding.



COURTESY OF MARK SEYMOUR An artist's sketch of the proposed Royal D'Iberville Casino west of Interstate 110 in D'Iberville.

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His new design still has a 60,000-square-foot casino, but now it's atop a parking garage with a roof that will glow at night.

A French Market fronting the water also made the redesign with a multi-story glass entry, and Seymour sees it bustling with vendors peddling fresh flowers and vegetables.

Above that will be stores and restaurants, including a buffet and a steak house.

A harbor and marina would allow guests to arrive by water and a new interstate ramp and wider access road would move the estimated 2,500 visitors per day into the casino.

A hotel is planned north of the casino, but Seymour said he eliminated condos since that market has faded since he drew the original plans.

He estimates the casino resort will need 500 to 800 employees.

"Every night I go home I think of it," he said of his casino.

It was 1992 when he started the approval process for 7.82 acres.

Partners came and went but D'Iberville officials continue to support his vision.

"They've been with me for 14 years," he said.

Mayor Rusty Quave and Seymour recently met with officials from the Mississippi Department of Transportation to look at the road redesign.

From the new I-110 exit, three lanes will go into the resort and Seymour said the traffic flow will be much

improved.

Larger water lines will be installed to serve the resort, drainage will be improved and the sewage plant is being upgraded to handle the additional demand.

Seymour said his latest snag is the economy and he wondered, "How can I still make it work?"

By downsizing and removing the condos, his new design cut costs from \$300 million to \$200 million.

Besides being the first casino drivers will see heading toward Biloxi on I-110, "We're the best protected site," he said.

That area of Back Bay saw a 14-foot rise in the tide during Katrina instead of the storm surge that hit the beach.

Seymour said he's elevated all the occupied structures 20 feet.

Once a developer signs on to the project, there is an ambitious time line envisioned.

If site clearing and infrastructure work can begin this spring and pilings for the parking garage be driven this summer, then Seymour hopes his casino can open by the end of 2010.

"I've dreamed of it and put it together piece by piece."
