







## Casino, Diamondhead hook up

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DIAMONDHEAD — Where the Diamondhead Yacht Club Restaurant stood before Hurricane Katrina, a new waterfront restaurant has sprouted from the ground and could be open by Labor Day.

Known as the Pier House, the restaurant will have 3,000 square feet of covered space, offering sweeping views of the Jourdan River and the northern reaches of the Bay of St. Louis. It will be open to the general public and operated by the Silver Slipper Casino.

“It will be a comfortable, reasonably-priced place,” Silver Slipper General Manager John Ferrucci said.



J.R. WELSH/SUN HERALD The Pier House restaurant could be open for business by Labor Day. The new waterfront eatery is being built where the Diamondhead Yacht Club restaurant stood before Katrina. It will be operated by the Silver Slipper Casino.

The restaurant will serve about 100 people in the dining room, 50 at the bar, and another 50 on an outside patio and deck area that will run the length of the raised building. The former Yacht Club restaurant that stood in the same area was washed away by Katrina on Aug. 29, 2005.

Menus and equipment are now being selected for the \$1.1 million project as construction nears completion, and an application has been made for a state liquor license. An original anticipated opening date in July has been pushed back to Labor Day.

“July kind of slipped away from us,” Ferrucci said, but he still anticipates opening by summer’s end: “We wanted to be able to take advantage of some of this good weather, and we’re hoping to be open for early September.”

Pier House resulted from an unusual agreement between Silver Slipper Casino Venture and the Diamondhead County Club and Property Owners

Association. The agreement called for Silver Slipper to put up a non-refundable deposit to be used toward the project, while the POA agreed to pay the bulk of construction costs.

The Silver Slipper has exclusive operating rights to the restaurant and will lease the facility under a 10-year, renewable lease. In addition to lease payments, Silver Slipper has agreed to pay a hefty percentage of net profits to the POA.

Total estimated costs to build and equip the operation are around \$1.1 million. If costs run higher than expected, the POA and Silver Slipper will negotiate payments on the overage.

The restaurant site is in an area of Diamondhead located south of Interstate 10. The POA has a boat launch next door and has been restoring nearby piers that were lost to Katrina. Some pier space will be maintained for visiting boaters who dine at the restaurant, Ferrucci said.

Recently, the Hancock County Board of Supervisors turned down a zoning change request that would have allowed Jacobs Casinos to build a hotel-casino complex within shouting distance of the Pier House site. The

POA agreement provides that if Silver Slipper ever opens a casino that uses any portion of the restaurant site, the casino company will repay the POA restaurant construction costs.

Only Silver Slipper employees will work at Pier House. And the casino, which is located miles away at Bayou Caddy, intends to use the new restaurant in a cross-marketing plan and make Diamondhead amenities available to gambling customers. Silver Slipper already provides the chance for its customers to play on Diamondhead's golf courses and the POA direct-bills the casino for the usage, Ferrucci said.

One benefit to Diamondhead will be the community's exposure to people who may not have known about it before, he added.

"We're going to promote the Pier House to our entire database. This will be tremendous exposure for Diamondhead to about a quarter of a million people," Ferrucci said. "It's just going to be a comfortable, casual place, in keeping with the fine food we serve here at the casino"

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