

Historic church in MGM Springfield casino footprint to get 2nd life as restaurant

Updated Mar 24, 2019; Posted Mar 10, 2015

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SPRINGFIELD — The historic First Spiritualist Church currently on Bliss Street in the city's South End will get a second lease on life as it is relocated on the grounds of the coming MGM Springfield casino.

While MGM Resorts International eyed the building for preservation in early 2013, well ahead of it securing the city's approval for the \$800 million project, the company just recently announced where it would fit into the nearly finalized site plan.

The Victorian Gothic church built in 1887 will be moved across land MGM recently acquired to find a new home on Union Street, behind the old State Armory with the planned outdoor ice skating rink sitting in between the two historic structures.

According to Chuck Irving, president of MGM's local retail partner Davenport Properties, the church will host some type of restaurant or food/beverage operation.

"We could create something there that would engage the skating rink off the back," Irving recently told the Springfield Historical Commission as the two sides worked to finalize plans regarding the fate of four other historic structures in the casino footprint.

The church was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1987. The city of Springfield assessed the value of the church itself at \$657,500 with the land being worth an additional \$148,100.

MGM purchased the church, currently located at 33—37 Bliss St., in January 2013 for \$725,000. The parish relocated to Chicopee and since then, future use of the building has had several potential suggested uses ranging from a wedding chapel to a formal restaurant or a day care facility.