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The Patriot-News

MIXED MESSAGES

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP OFFERED MIXED MESSAGES MONDAY ABOUT THE PATH AHEAD FOR THE U.S. WAR AGAINST IRAN, DECLARING THAT HE WAS IN NO RUSH TO END THE CONFLICT. **B1**

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NFL

Pittsburgh readies for surge of visitors with major planning and high hopes



The main stage for the NFL Draft will be set up outside Acrisure Stadium on Pittsburgh's North Shore. *Susan Glaser, Advance Local*

Pittsburgh officials are estimating the economic impact of hosting the NFL Draft could be more than \$120 million.

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With 700,000 people expected in Pittsburgh this week for the NFL Draft, the Steel City is primed to host visitors for one of the biggest events in its history.

"We're definitely ready, especially when you think of the broad footprint of the draft in Pittsburgh," said Jerad Bachar, the president and CEO of VisitPITTSBURGH, the city's tourism and marketing bureau.

"You've got the North Shore, including Acrisure Stadium, so that stadium will be open, Point State Park, which is also a very expansive green space, Market Square, Arts Landing are all going to be programmed so you really have a large surface area for people to spread out and really experience the draft in a lot of places," he said.

The first-round of the draft kicks off at 8 p.m. Thursday followed by rounds 2 and 3 at 7 p.m. on Friday and rounds 4 to 7 at noon on Saturday.

Activities and events are spread out from Acrisure Stadium on the city's North Side, where an enormous Draft Theatre has been constructed, across the Allegheny River to Point State Park, downtown Pittsburgh and the city's Cultural District.



Arts Landing is a key part of a \$600 million plan to revitalize Downtown Pittsburgh. The opening of this outdoor civic space comes just ahead of the NFL Draft. *Commonwealth Media Services*

MORE NFL COVERAGE

Trade winds are blowing for Eagles **C1**

Steelers calmly await Rodgers decision **C1**

Bachar gave a uniquely Pittsburgh comparison when talking about the influx of visitors anticipated in the city, comparing it to a popular parade that draws hundreds of thousands of spectators.

"We often just tell people it's like the St. Patrick's Day Parade," he said, "just three days in a row."

Based on the last few drafts, Pittsburgh officials are estimating the economic impact could be anywhere from \$120 million to over \$200 million.

According to Public Source, state and local governments have invested \$19 million into preparing for the draft as well as Gov. Josh Shapiro's \$600 million commitment to boost Pittsburgh's downtown area with amenities such as Arts Landing.

The state's funding, noted the outlet, comes amid planning for celebrations marking the nation's 250th birthday, and Major League Baseball's All-Star game and World Cup matches in Philadelphia later this summer.

Bachar said measuring success for the draft includes the economic benefit as well as public relations and marketing, civic pride and potential business development opportunities.

When he spoke to PennLive last week, Bachar said there had been 4 billion media placements for Pittsburgh because of the draft across social media, publications and TV, giving the city an opening to brand itself nationally and globally.

"The attention on Pittsburgh has just been incredible," he said.

Branding is "absolutely critical" to his agency's mission, said Bachar, because that and continued marketing efforts can pay dividends down the road when it comes to attracting companies, investments, tourism and new residents.

"In order to be competitive as a destination," he said, "you need to have strong **SEE NFL DRAFT, A2**

SPECIAL REPORT THE BIG PAYOUT

How insiders turned public funds into private gains

A PennLive investigation exposes a troubling pattern of politically connected grants in Dauphin County.

Juliette Rihl and DaniRae Renno
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Dauphin County gave the company of a borough council president \$40,000 to buy a luxury pickup truck after he applied for a gaming grant.

Brian Proctor, who at the time was one of the top officials in Steelton, said he needed the truck to make 12 produce deliveries to low-income residents living in subsidized housing.

Three years later, the 2020 RAM 1500 Limited with leather-trimmed seats, a 12-inch touchscreen display and a 5.7L V8 engine is regularly parked outside Proctor's house in Hershey.

It's unclear how many deliveries he made, because Proctor didn't respond to questions and the person in charge of the housing units said she didn't know.

Dauphin County receives money for gaming grants, which are funded with gambling revenue from Hollywood Casino at Penn National Race Course. The grants are by law supposed to be used for things like emergency services, infrastructure upgrades and other projects in the public interest, though the law doesn't define those terms.

Many grants bankrolled private businesses owned by friends, family members and political allies of the county's power players, a PennLive investigation found. **SEE SPECIAL REPORT, A4**

ABOUT THIS SERIES

Two cents of every dollar fed into a slot machine at Hollywood Casino at Penn National Race Course flows into Dauphin County coffers.

Over the years, that money — along with 1% of the casino's online gambling revenue — has snowballed into a jackpot of more than a quarter of a billion dollars that the county is supposed to use to address public needs. Half of the money is unrestricted, meaning the county can use it for almost anything, but the other half must be used for grants, many of which help build new firehouses, repair roads and support nonprofits like food pantries and the YMCA.

The county has also used millions of dollars in casino revenue to fund nearly 100 grants to private businesses.

This is one story in a series on the gaming grant program and where the money goes. To read the entire series, go to pennlive.com/gaming-grants.

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