
ELITE CASINO RESORTS

Grand Island Casino Resort Marks One-Year Anniversary with Nearly \$250 Million in Economic Impact

Elite Casino Resorts' \$185 million destination has become one of the most significant economic engines in Central Nebraska, generating hundreds of jobs, millions in investment, and record tax revenue in its first year of operations

GRAND ISLAND, NE — One year ago, [Grand Island Casino Resort](#) opened the doors to its \$185 million permanent resort at Fonner Park — a bet on Grand Island that has paid off in ways few could have predicted. The resort has generated over **\$245 million in total direct economic impact**, establishing itself as one of the most powerful economic forces in Central Nebraska.

The resort now employs **430 hospitality professionals** with **\$16.4 million in annual wages and benefits** — making it one of Grand Island's largest single-site employers and a major contributor to a local economy historically anchored by agriculture and manufacturing. Since operations began in December 2022, the resort has paid **almost \$32 million in total wages and benefits** to its team members.

The fiscal impact extends well beyond the resort's walls. In the past 12 months, Grand Island Casino Resort has generated over **\$3.8 million in city and county tax revenue** and over **\$12 million in state gaming, sales, payroll and lodging taxes**. Since December 2022, total tax contributions have exceeded **\$35 million**. Locally, the Hall County Board of Supervisors has already put casino proceeds to work, using \$819,000 in gaming revenue to directly reduce the county property tax levy — saving Hall County property owners an estimated \$10.94 per \$100,000 of assessed valuation. Under Nebraska law, 70 percent of state gaming tax revenue is directed to the Property Tax Credit Cash Fund, meaning Grand Island Casino Resort is also contributing to property tax relief efforts for homeowners statewide.

“When we broke ground here, we made a promise to Grand Island: this resort would be more than entertainment — it would be an economic engine for the entire region,” said **Dan Kehl**, CEO of Elite Casino Resorts. “With almost a quarter of a billion dollars in economic impact in our first year and more than \$28 million spent directly with Grand Island and Nebraska-owned businesses, I think we've delivered on that promise. And we're just getting started.”

The numbers tell a story of accelerating momentum. Gaming revenue at the resort reached \$55 million in 2025 — a **57 percent increase** over the prior year — and February 2026 saw \$5.6 million in monthly gaming revenue, an 85.5 percent year-over-year gain. Grand Island ranked as the **22nd fastest-growing metro area in the nation** for economic growth, and the casino resort is a central driver of that trajectory. The resort is also proving to be a powerful draw for visitors from across the region. More than \$45 million in gaming revenue or 70 percent of Grand Island

Casino Resort's revenues come from outside the local area reinforcing the resort's role as a destination that brings new spending to the community.

Elite Casino Resorts continues to invest in the property and community. The company helped facilitate funding for a **1,000-space expansion of Fonner Park's surface parking** — infrastructure that paves the way for further growth at the 240-acre campus that also hosts the Nebraska State Fair, the Heartland Events Center, and the Hall County Fair.

The resort has also become a lifeline for Nebraska's Thoroughbred racing heritage, contributing more than **\$13 million to Fonner Park** to invest in and sustain horse racing, including over **\$4.8 million for Fonner Park racing purses**, and over **\$1.2 million for the Nebraska Thoroughbred Breeders Association**.

"My mission has always been to provide for the horses, horsemen, staff, and guests of Fonner Park," said **Chris Kotulak**, CEO of Fonner Park. "Grand Island Casino Resort is an integral partner in supporting Thoroughbred racing in Nebraska. The resort is bringing new guests to Fonner Park who are discovering racing for the first time — helping breathe new life into the future of Thoroughbred racing in our state."

Grand Island Casino Resort is a year-round destination for local residents and visitors alike, offering a 24-hour Vegas-inspired casino experience with 750 slot machines, 20 table games, sports wagering, a private poker room, a 162-room luxury hotel, a full-service spa with indoor and outdoor pools, and a variety of dining options including the signature Ruthie's Steak & Seafood with panoramic views of Central Nebraska.

For more information, visit www.grandislandresort.com.