

## Plans for Wiscasset entertainment complex grow to \$5.4 million

Thibeaults eye June 2017 opening

By SUSAN JOHNS | Posted: Wednesday, January 6, 2016 - 8:00am

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Updated exterior look of a proposed entertainment complex on Wiscasset's Gardiner Road. Courtesy of Vincent Thibeault

The Wiscasset couple looking to build a family entertainment complex on Gardiner Road has bought the lot for \$60,000 and spent \$16,000 on a feasibility study. The next steps are to land the funding for the project, hire civil engineers and an architect and, when a site plan is ready, go back to the Wiscasset Planning Board, possibly in April, Vincent Thibeault said Monday.

The couple hope to open V & S Factory in June 2017; it's projected to draw 112,600 visitors a year, Thibeault said.

In a new interview, Thibeault gave an update on his and wife Sally Thibeault's plans, which have grown from an approximately \$3,000,000 project with six bowling lanes and other entertainment, to a \$5,400,000 one with 12 lanes and other changes.

A planned 1,200-square-foot gaming room has expanded to about 3,000 square feet, with a higher ceiling for an elevated ropes course, Vincent Thibeault said. "So someone down below on a video game can look up and see the people on the ropes course."

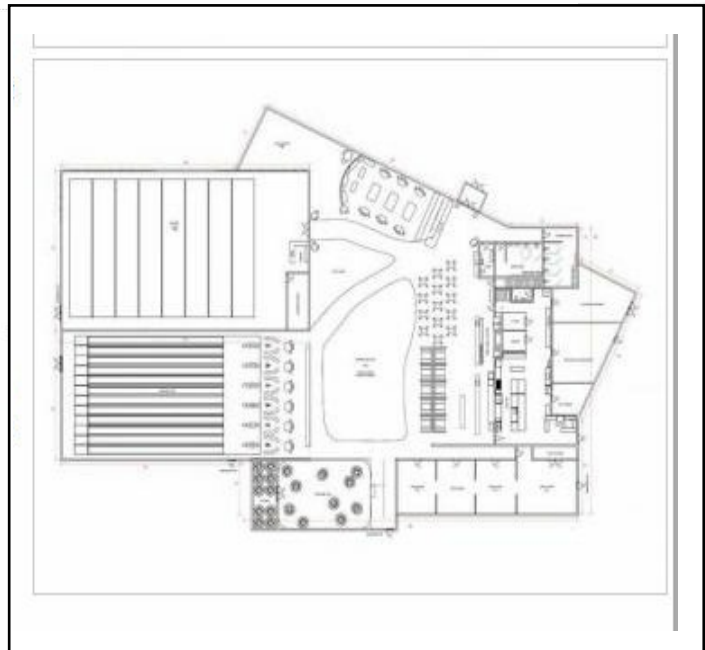
The couple had also eyed a track for remote-control cars; in its place are plans instead for "Spin Zone" bumper cars, which are more interactive, Thibeault said. And instead of a traditional rock-climbing wall, the couple plan to go with "Clip and Climb" modules.

The latest incarnations of the plans result from consultations with the New Jersey-based Amusement Entertainment Management (AEM). The couple also put in a lot of late nights at the computer; although the project has had little movement publicly in recent months, the work has been continuing, step by step, Thibeault said. "We're chugging along ... A lot has been behind the scenes."

The Thibeaults ran into no sticking points with the planning board in preliminary talks in May 2015. Shortly after, abutting property owner Anthony Vitti said he will fight having the complex's driveway near his property line.

Vincent Thibeault on Monday said that as planning has continued, he has not been in contact with Vitti about it. Vitti will have his opportunity to raise his concerns to the planning board, Thibeault said.

Vitti plans to. "I'll be there every step of the way," the Gardiner Road resident said in an interview Tuesday.



He has the same concerns he shared in a 2015 interview. The only new development he noted is that he has obtained an easement for his existing, paved driveway; the driveway to his home is, and has been, on the lot the Thibeaults now own, he said. That lot's deed did not previously show an easement, Vitti said.

Thibeault remains confident that the entertainment complex will come to fruition. He and his wife are now 95 percent sure it will, based on AEM's feasibility study, he said.

The study looked at the market 10, 20 and 40 miles out from the site; the results were better than the Thibeaults had expected, in terms of the market the business could tap and the lack of competition with the same offerings, he said. "This will be a viable proposal for the midcoast region and will be supported by the market."

Asked about existing bowling centers in Brunswick and elsewhere, he said V & S Factory's other offerings including batting cages and the newly planned "junior adventure zone" for toddlers, will set it apart and help the bowling portion of the complex bring in more money.

One bowling lane in an entertainment complex can make about \$50,000 more a year than one in a traditional bowling center, he said.

"(Bowling is) going to be a very vital piece of this."

The Thibeaults paid for the feasibility study out-of-pocket; the contract for a second phase with AEM, aimed at securing the project's funding, will likely be worked out in the next couple of weeks; its cost may run as high as 1 percent of the total project and would likely be funded with the loan money, Thibeault said.

Plans call for exploring a possible federal loan through the Small Business Association or a U.S. Department of Agriculture economic development program. The location meets the program's economic guidelines, he said.

The expanded project plans also mean more projected hires: The complex would open with about 40 employees, Thibeault said.