

# Midnight is late enough for slots at New Orleans' Fair Grounds

Posted by [The Times-Picayune editorial page staff](#)

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Chris Granger / The Times-Picayune

The Fair Grounds is located in the middle of a New Orleans historic neighborhood.

The owners of the Fair Grounds [want to keep slot machines on until 4 a.m.](#), but that would be unfair to Faubourg St. John and other neighborhoods near the track. The New Orleans City Council shouldn't allow expanded hours.

Residents fear the crime, traffic and other ills that would come from allowing gambling to continue into the early morning hours. Those are valid concerns. While other racetracks in the state have 24-hour slots, they are not located in the middle of a historic residential neighborhood.

Track officials argue that crime in the area hasn't increased since [hundreds of slot machines were introduced in 2005](#). And they suggest that a 4 a.m. closing time would mean less traffic because people would leave over a longer period of time instead of exiting en masse at midnight.

But there's no guarantee that traffic would be eased by longer hours, and it's reasonable to anticipate more crime, litter, noise and disorderliness if gamblers are allowed to keep playing until 4 a.m.

The midnight closing time is the price that the Fair Grounds had to pay to get slot machines approved at the track. The owners argued for 24-hour slots back in 2005 but backed down when they encountered strong opposition. Now, they're trying to chip away at that compromise. Opponents fear that the ultimate goal is 24-hour gambling, and it's easy to see why they think so.

The Fair Grounds is trying to make its proposal more palatable by promising to create a beautification fund and replace more frequently two New Orleans Police Department patrol cars used in the area. The track also has proposed trying the longer hours on a trial basis.

The owners have even tried to paint this as an economic development boon that will create jobs.

But a few flower beds and new patrol cars can't protect the character of this neighborhood from the tentacles of expanded gambling. The City Council and the Fair Grounds' neighbors made it quite clear just four years ago how much they are willing to tolerate. Nothing has happened to make a "racino" more acceptable in the intervening years, and the City Council should make sure that the original agreement stands.