

Arizona Republic

Tribe unveils updated designs for proposed Glendale casino

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Courtesy of Hnedak Bobo Group

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He said the casino has been redesigned to fit in architecturally with its surroundings, namely University of Phoenix Stadium. It is currently drawn at 55,000 square feet, which is about a third of the original size. Tribal leaders say it could grow in future phases.

Glendale City Council members Phil Lieberman and Norma Alvarez were there to support the plans at 95th and Northern avenues near the city's sports and entertainment district.

Lieberman called the resort and casino the "perfect drawing card" for nearby Westgate City Center. When work might begin on the venue remains unknown given the legal challenges it faces. Plus, the tribe must still seek federal approval to allow gaming on the land.

Glendale attorneys will be in court Feb. 17 to challenge the federal decision to create a reservation there.

Tohono O'odham leaders, in Glendale this week, unveiled updated renderings of the tribe's proposed resort and casino, which show scaled back gaming and hotel plans.

The tribe had to adjust plans after Glendale won a legal battle, saying about one-third of the 134 acres of tribal-owned land fell within the city limits. The tribe is appealing that decision, but got federal approval for a reservation on 54 of the acres that were within the county.

The tribe redesigned and scaled back its project to better fit the smaller acreage approved as a reservation.

Casino plans

The updated renderings show some major changes. The casino was pushed to the opposite side of the property, farther from Raymond S. Kellis High School on 91st Avenue. A 3-acre atrium with botanical garden was eliminated, and the hotel was downsized to 400-500 rooms, from 600.

The Tohono O'odham Nation expects two construction phases to happen one right after the other.

Phase 1 would take 18 to 24 months to complete. The phase would involve a 54,750-square-foot casino, shops and restaurants, including a sports bar, a casino bar, buffet and 24-hour café.

Phase 2 would take 12 to 18 months to build and include the hotel and an 80,000-square-foot convention center and additional retail.

Renderings show changes

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Economic boost?

A tribal-commissioned study estimates the project would create 6,000 construction jobs and more than 3,000 permanent jobs.

Peoria Mayor Bob Barrett has embraced the casino, calling it a huge economic boost for the Valley.

Glendale's elected leaders, except for two, oppose the project. Their concerns include loss of municipal control over land deemed a reservation and that the casino would unfairly compete with nearby businesses because it would not have to charge sales tax.

Timeline for casino fight

- 2003 - Tohono O'odham Nation purchases 135 acres at 91st and Northern avenues.
- January 2009 - Tribe announces its resort and casino plans and files application to U.S. Department of Interior to take the 135 acres into the reservation system.
- April - Glendale City Council votes 6-1 on a resolution opposing the casino.
- July - Tribe sues Glendale to void its claim that 46 acres of the 135 acres were annexed by the city and are within its jurisdiction.

- March 2010 - Maricopa County Superior Court rules in favor of Glendale's land claim, meaning the tribe can develop only on unincorporated or county-governed land. Tribe has filed an appeal.
- March - Tribe sues the Interior Department, claiming it is stalling the tribe's application to turn the site into a casino. Tribe scales back its reservation request to 54 acres.
- July - Interior accepts tribe's application to take the 54 acres into trust.
- September - Glendale Gila River Indian Community and five Gila tribal members sue Interior over its decision.
- December - Judge allows four state lawmakers to join challenge against Interior's decision.
- December - Gov. Jan Brewer files brief in support of Glendale.
- January 2011 - Tribe unveils updated renderings of casino project.
- Feb. 17 - Oral arguments in the case expected to begin.