

## Big plans take hold in Mesquite

Developers move ahead on upscale RV park and hotel-casino projects.

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The Salt Lake Tribune

Salt Lake Tribune Posted: 02/08/2009 05:53:00 PM MST

**Mesquite, Nev.»** The recession was here, but seems to have already moved on.

Despite a bad national economy and shrinking gambling revenues, that forced layoffs here at one of the city's three casinos last fall, developers are moving ahead with plans for a new upscale RV park and a major hotel-casino development.

Sometime later this spring the hills north of Interstate 15 here will change from barren terrain to a swanky site filled with bungalows and a place to park luxury motor homes.

A Las Vegas developer has worked for the past three years to develop an exclusive resort so RVs will have a place to park when visiting Mesquite.

If just parking the palace is not enough, owners can choose to build a "bungalow" to serve as a separate home next to their RV.

"The [sites] will start at \$150,000 and go up from there," said Matthew Brimhall, vice president of sales for Solstice Motor Coach Resort and Country Club.

In the future, visitors will be able to relax at a 60,000-square-foot casino or shop at an adjacent retail complex being developed that will include a 450-room hotel.

Brimhall said about 100 people have paid a \$5,000 refundable deposit for a site to park the luxury RVs which can cost anywhere from \$500,000 to \$2.5 million.

Brimhall said the resort is based on similar facilities in Palm Springs and Palm Desert in California.

Inquiries have come from around the West from many retired RV'ers, Brimhall said.

"We're getting between 200 and 300 calls a month," he said.

Brimhall said the 211 sites will be on a terraced slope providing unobstructed views of Mesquite Valley.

Residents will have full hookups to their motor coaches and services including fueling, washing and storage.

For several months, crews have moved massive amounts of earth to contour the site that slated to be ready by May.

A \$160 million hotel, commercial area and casino will follow.

George Rapson, director of the resort's operations, said in planning for the complex, it took more than two years to get a permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to reroute a wash across the property.

"It has taken extensive work to get where we are today," Rapson said.

The company is confident about the project's success even during the current sluggish economic conditions.

"Our market research shows what will work and the high-end motor coach owners seem to be recession proof," Rapson said. "What we offer is in high demand."

Rapson expects the casino component will succeed, even though one The Oasis laid off several hundred workers in December.

"Granted it's not the best moment for Mesquite, but the community has weathered [the recession] pretty well and we believe it will continue to do so," Rapson said. "Where there are challenges, there are also opportunities."

Mesquite Mayor Susan Holecheck said the Solstice resort will benefit the community, which recently has seen 20 other businesses open their doors.

Also, plans were approved last week for a sports resort development adjacent to Solstice's motor coach resort.

Holecheck expects the Solstice project to succeed because it is consistent with a high number of retirees and second-home owners who have houses in Mesquite.

The bad economy might even be a positive factor in the resort's success.

"I don't know if families will be taking trips to the Caribbean or Europe these days," Holecheck said. "Depending on gas prices, more people will be taking driving vacations. We have to keep a positive outlook and momentum."

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