

Seneca Indians unveil USD 333 million casino-hotel plan

Buffalo, New York (AP) – The Seneca Nation of Indians on Wednesday unveiled plans for a USD 333 million casino and hotel in Buffalo – its third in western New York.

Called Seneca Buffalo Creek, the project includes a 22-story hotel tower, a 90,000-square-foot casino and a 2,500-space parking garage on a nine-acre site in downtown Buffalo.

The casino and hotel complex, thought to be the most expensive private structure ever built in the city, is slated to open in 2010.

„This project is the result of vision, dedication and a willingness to invest,“ said Seneca Gaming Corporation President Barry E. Snyder Sr. „The project is real. The investment is real, and the future for this record project is now.“

The hotel tower and casino will be wrapped in a gleaming metallic facade, and the complex will alter Buffalo’s cityscape. The hotel building, which will be the sixth tallest structure in downtown Buffalo, will be topped by a giant outdoor video screen displaying interior images of the venue and branding messages for Seneca gaming.

Hotel suites will range from 450 square feet to 2,000 square feet, and the hotel plan includes four restaurants and a day spa.

The Seneca Nation, which also operates casinos in Niagara Falls and Salamanca, was given permission to open three western New York casinos under a 2002 agreement with Gov. George Pataki. In exchange, the Senecas must give 18 percent of slot machine profits to the state to share with the host

communities.

The Senecas has been running a smaller temporary casino at the site since early June and are facing lawsuits aimed at blocking the casino project.

„The Seneca Nation of Indians can, of course, build whatever it wishes on property that it owns. But there is ongoing litigation in federal court, that if successful, would preclude any gambling operations on the Buffalo property,“ said Joel S. Rose, co-chairman of Citizens Against Casino Gambling in Erie County.

Rose said his group has no opposition to construction of a hotel, but said „it is difficult to see how one might have any confidence that an isolated hotel in that location would succeed.“

Another group, Citizens for a Better Buffalo, also has sued to block the casino.