

# Sands to start Singapore construction by end of year

Las Vegas Sands, which won a bid to build Singapore's first casino, is in talks with the government to refine the project's design and expects to start construction by the end of the year, a company official said.

„Since the design was approved, we have been working through with the Singapore Tourism Board and the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) to refine the design,“ senior vice president of Asian development Stephen Weaver said. „In general, it is a question of refining it for better utility for tenants and for users,“ Weaver told reporters on the sidelines of an international conference here on the shopping mall industry.

Construction for the Marina Bay Sands in Singapore's downtown area should start by the end of this year. The casino is to open in 2009. Weaver said another series of meetings will be held later this month to look at issues such as internal layout to improve traffic flows, creating more interest along the building's facade and adding entry points.

Sands in May beat Las Vegas rivals MGM Mirage and Harrah's Entertainment and Malaysia's Genting International for the right to build the casino on Marina Bay with its overall proposal aimed at strengthening Singapore's position as a top conventions destination.

The US gaming operator, which already has an Asian presence in the southern Chinese enclave of Macau, will invest more than USD 3.18 billion into the casino resort, making it one of the most expensive projects of its kind.

Singapore has also invited bids for its second casino project on Sentosa island. The bidding will close on October 10 and the winner be announced by the end of the year. One of the

bidder, Bahamas-based Kerzner International and its local partner, real estate developer CapitaLand, disclosed Tuesday the appointment of celebrated architect Frank Gehry as the principal designer of its proposed Sentosa project.

Gehry, whose world-famous designs include the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain, is a winner of the Pritzker Architecture Prize modelled on the Nobel awards.