

Coconut Creek casino to reveal new look next week

The Seminole Casino Coconut Creek will debut its USD 32 million facelift next week, the first phase of plans to transform the gambling site into a destination resort.

The Tuesday unveiling comes as the casino prepares for competition in northern Broward County with The Isle Casino & Racing at Pompano Park, formerly Pompano Park Harness Track. The Pompano Park casino could open with 1,500 Las Vegas-style slot machines as early as next week if it passes state inspection today.

Since opening in 2000, the Seminole Casino Coconut Creek has been a sturdy, but unspectacular, venue with bingo-style slot machines and poker.

The third largest of the Seminoles' seven casinos, it largely has been overshadowed the past few years by the tribe's two Hard Rock complexes near Hollywood and Tampa.

With the Coconut Creek renovations, what was a „warehouse-style building“ will become a place offering amenities that one could expect at world-class casinos, said Seminole Gaming CEO James Allen.

Patrons will be greeted by the sight of a 20-foot-wide handcrafted chandelier designed to look like hundreds of butterflies.

Customers will be able to dine at a 290-seat restaurant where they can get everything from a slice of pizza to part of a 60-pound pesto-roasted grouper with a blood orange in its mouth. Then they can dance at the Nectar Lounge, a nightclub with a purple heartwood stage and decorated with imported Italian stained glass.

„[The expansion] would rival anything in Las Vegas or Atlantic City,“ Allen said.

The casino also is adding nearly 500 slot machines – increasing the number to 1,520, said the casino’s general manager, Steve Bonner.

Allen said there’s enough of a market for the Coconut Creek casino, near State Road 7 and Sample Road, and the future Pompano Park casino, which is seven miles away.

But the Seminoles have been keeping an eye on Pompano Park. In a federal application to have land surrounding the Coconut Creek casino declared sovereign, the tribe briefly mentioned that Pompano Park’s development was „of special concern.“

The Pompano Park casino is set to become the third of Broward’s four pari-mutuels to have Las Vegas-style slot machines, following Gulfstream Park Racing & Casino and Mardi Gras Racetrack & Gaming Center, both in Hallandale Beach.

The state Department of Business and Professional Regulation is set to inspect the casino today. Pompano Park officials said Tuesday that if they pass, they could open as early as next week, but they declined to give a specific date.

What is at the Coconut Creek casino could soon become part of a massive hotel-entertainment complex. The Seminoles have filed preliminary plans at Coconut Creek City Hall to build a 24-story, 1,500-room hotel, the largest in Broward County, along with an expanded casino floor larger than the one at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino near Hollywood.

Most of the complex, except for the casino and 500 hotel rooms, would be built on 44 acres that the Seminoles own but that is not sovereign land. That land is subject to city, county and state regulations. The tribe has petitioned the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs to have that land declared sovereign, effectively removing any city oversight.

Coconut Creek has until today to support or object to the Seminoles' land trust application.