

Fractured tribe proposes casino near Disneyland

Garden Grove – An Indian tribe has formally proposed building a Las Vegas-style casino complex in hopes of making Garden Grove a tourist destination.

The Gabrielino-Tongva Tribe's proposal calls for two casinos with 7,500 slot machines, two upscale hotels and a 10,000-seat stadium. It also promises a college scholarship for every high school graduate in Garden Grove, USD 5.1 billion to the city over 30 years, payment of USD 100 million for infrastructure improvements and nearly 10,000 permanent jobs.

The plan was submitted to the city this week.

„Everybody knows Disneyland is a huge tourist attraction and so are big Indian casinos,“ said Jonathan Stein, who identifies himself as the CEO of the tribe. „Casinos just generate gobs and gobs of money, and everyone is going to benefit from this.“

Chet Yoshizaki, the city's economic development director, said council members were expected to view the tribe's proposal along with others for the site within a few weeks and narrow the field.

The casino plan already has skeptics, including one from within the tribe. Frank Cardenas, an attorney for another faction of the splintered Southern California tribe, called the casino plan „classic extravagance on the part of Mr. Stein.“

„History suggests this is a man who is all hat and no cattle,“ said Cardenas, whose faction is battling in court with Stein's group for leadership.

There are about 2,000 Gabrielinos in Southern California. The tribe has yet to achieve federal recognition, which could complicate or doom its casino efforts.

Stein said he had discussed a casino with Inglewood officials but preferred Garden Grove because of its proximity to Disneyland and the lack of competition nearby.

Cheryl Schmit, director of Stand Up for California, a nonprofit tribal gambling watchdog, called the proposal a „nonstarter.“

Because the Gabrielinos have no federal land, the tribe would have to promote a statewide ballot measure allowing state-recognized tribes to build casinos, Schmit said.

Stein said the tribe can open a casino in Garden Grove with passage of a „Gabrielino Gaming bill“ in the Legislature and a negotiated compact with Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Assemblyman Jose Solorio, D-Santa Ana, has been approached by Stein to help write such a bill and said he is considering it.