



Fantasy Springs Casino Corvette

The \$200 million expansion and the first Native American-owned Starbucks are just the beginning of the Indio empire for the Fantasy Springs resort, its chief executive vowed last week.

"Fantasy Springs Casino is not MGM Grand or Bellagio," said CEO James McKennan. "The area is growing and casinos are planning to grow with the area. The Coachella Valley allowed 20,000 new homes in 2004," he said.

Fantasy Springs plans to add 300-400-room hotels by 2010. The office is coming soon. The resort plan includes a shopping mall, a timeshare, an 18-hole golf course, a day spa, and a cultural center.

Mission Indian's Cabazon Band, which consists of 30 members, employs 1,250 people at the Fantasy Springs Casino.

Fantasy Springs was in Seattle on Jan. 31 in negotiations with Starbucks Coffee Co. The casino will house Starbucks' first Native American coffee franchise, said Kevin Williams, director of hotel operations and sales.

"We heard the confirmed voicemail that Starbucks will be here today," he said on Jan. 31. Starbucks will open in April.

Fantasy Springs On Jan. 13, it opened a 12-story, 251-room hotel and a 100,000-square-foot special event center. And it added 44 slot machines, expanding to up to 2,000 units under the state's smaller facilities.

The casino has added a 24-hour cafe, buffet, and steakhouse. The casino boasts a 24-lane bowling alley, which was built in 1999.

The event center is designed to handle up to 4,000 people for trade shows, meetings and banquets, Williams said. The conference room is equipped with wireless technology and presentation equipment.

The event center is reserved for May as a corporate event. More than 15,000 people visited the casino from Jan. 14 to Jan. 23 to watch "Balagan," a circus-style show in the sun.

"Any new products bring new attractions to the region," said Jane Brady, director of the Palm Springs Desert Resort and Visitors Bureau's tourism bureau. "The casino brings different aspects to common tourist attractions like golf and tennis. [Fantasy Springs] is a destination because of its entertainment centers and hotels. They can now find bigger groups."

However, Fantasy Springs Casino will charge hotel customers a visit fee as part of a deal with Riverside County, McKennon said. [슬롯사이트](#)

The county agreed in 2003 to manage \$145 million in tax-free bonds for the construction of hotels, convention centers and parking lots.

In return, the tribe paid the city of Coachella \$3.4 million for road improvements at Vista Villa North in Coachella. The tribe also agreed to pay Riverside County \$20 million over 18 years, funded by visitor fees charged to hotel guests. The visitor fees are similar to temporary residence taxes that the hotel charges guests.

The temporary occupancy tax is levied on tourists staying at hotels for 30 days or less. In Riverside County, the tax is about 10 percent, and the casino visitor fee is about the same. The visitor fee will not disrupt operations, said Cabazon spokeswoman Nancy Conrad. "The tribe wanted to level the playing field with hotels other than reservations because we wanted to work jointly with local governments, maintain good relations, and keep competition fair."

"We're here and we're not going anywhere. We're not like most businesses that can just pick up and leave. We need them to help Riverside County as much as they need to help us." Williams said Fantasy Springs attracted most of its customers in California. The casino has had a \$28 million economic impact on the Coachella Valley. That number will increase to \$180 million by 2007 due to the expansion, Conrad said.