

Written by Administrator
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The Ilitch family's successful pursuit of the Detroit Pistons may have garnered more publicity, but that deal could be dwarfed financially by their quiet—possibly \$1 billion—effort to construct casinos for an American Indian tribe on Long Island.

Marian Ilitch, sole owner of Detroit's MotorCity Casino and matriarch of the family whose fortune is built on the Little Caesars

Enterprises Inc. pizza chain, has a casino development deal with the Southampton, N.Y.-based Shinnecock Indian Nation. The Shinnecocks recently said they may build up to three casinos now that the tribe has won official federal recognition.

The U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs this month rejected final objections to its acknowledgment of the Shinnecock as a federally recognized American Indian tribe. It is now seeking to build a casino, with Ilitch-family financial backing, to improve the lives of its roughly 1,200 members, who live on about 800 acres, mainly in mobile homes.

Such formal recognition, which the Shinnecock tribe first sought in 1978, is needed to open an Indian-run casino under federal law. It also makes the tribe eligible for federal housing, health and education funding.

Ms. Ilitch has been working with the tribe since 2003 on plans to build and operate a casino in the Hamptons. Casinos could also be built elsewhere on the island to serve a bigger population base.

Additional state and federal legal, environmental and regulatory approvals are needed before a casino project can start. Industry insiders note that is a long process in which longer-recognized New York tribes have been mired for years.

The tribe hopes to build a more lucrative Class III casino, which allows table games in addition to video slot machines under federal law. A Class III casino must share revenue with the state.

“The tribe is hearing proposals from various communities, developers, (and) looking for a

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location or locations for potential casino sites around Long Island,” Shield said.

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