

Written by Administrator

Wednesday, 09 October 2019 11:52 -

Highway 371 in Anza has long been flanked by a hilly and very rural landscape filled with scrub plants, pine trees and the occasional home, but commuters are starting to see something new on their drives: a resort in progress.

The new Cahuilla Casino Hotel is under construction and slated for a Spring 2020 opening. It will replace its next door neighbor, the original Cahuilla Casino, which has operated out of a cozy, tent-like structure for 23 years.

In the current casino, a restaurant, bar and slot machines sit mere steps from one another, but the new property will be much more spacious by comparison. The \$35.2 million project will boast a 33,000-square-foot gaming floor with 353 slot machines and four table games; a 15,000-square-foot, four-story hotel with 58 rooms; a 7,000-square-foot outdoor event space and a restaurant. It's expected to add 50 jobs to an existing 120.

The new facility in Riverside County is still a lot smaller than some of its neighbors in San Diego County and the Coachella Valley that boast luxe pool complexes and gigantic hotel towers, but that's part of the plan for the Cahuilla Band of Indians.

"This is more of a marathon for us and not a sprint," said Daniel Salgado, tribal council chairman for the Cahuilla Band. "We're not going to try to get a dollar really quick and think that we're going build this massive thing just to compete with the people down the road. It's not that. We're living within our means and we're going to win this race for ourselves."

Salgado said that this is not the first time the Cahuilla Band has considered expanding. The casino planned to expand in the early 2000s, but that project never came to fruition because of its planned scope and size.

"I think it was a large dream that maybe was unrealistic, especially at the time," Salgado said. "It was a massive project that we wanted to do."

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Salgado said this project is much more feasible financially. He said the tribe has focused more on needs than wants. For example, they are not including a conference center. A pool isn't part of the plan, either, although Salgado said there's space for one in the future.

The construction of the casino hotel is the first major addition since the construction of the Mountain Sky Travel Center convenience store and gas station, which was completed in early November 2015.

Salgado said the addition of the service center has not only "provided a great boost to the community," but has also been vital in times of need, [such as when the Cranston fire happened in Summer 2018.](#)

"When that went down, because we're the only ones up here with a generator source, our gas station stayed open the whole time," Salgado said. "Everything stayed open. The restaurant, food for the firefighters, everything. We did a lot because we were the only entity up here with generator power."

The casino's expansion is aimed at providing an upgraded and nice environment for the casino's existing clientele, many of whom are from the local area, Salgado said. But the tribe is also hoping to attract some of the increasing traffic coming from travelers along Highway 371. He said the highway has increasingly been driven as an alternative to traffic-prone Interstate 10.

"The increased traffic count does help and obviously with the convenience store we want them to stop in and use our gas and our convenience store... and if they happen to stop in and they be that type of customer that games as well then we're certainly willing to welcome them," Salgado said.

A deeper look at the new resort

On a recent weekday construction crews were hard at work both on the future gaming floor and the hotel wing.

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The focal point of the gaming floor will be a bar centrally located in the back of the casino boasting six 60-inch TVs that will either be playing sports or music videos. The bar will have custom drinks, craft beers and local wines available for purchase. Not far from the bar will be the table games pit, which will have such games as blackjack, 3 card poker and Ultimate Texas Hold'em. On one side of the gaming floor will be a [high-limit room](#) with about 12 slot machines.

The resort will boast new restaurant Ribbonwood Grill. It will be the replacement restaurant for Roadrunner Bar & Grill at the existing casino. Unlike Roadrunner, which was located in close proximity to the gaming floor, Ribbonwood Grill will have its own dedicated space. It will boast many of the same comfort food items that Roadrunner is known for — such as burgers and salads — but it will also have some elevated pub style food and seasonal items.

On the hotel side, the largest of the rooms will be the two one-bedroom suites that are 645 square feet each. The amenities include a 65-inch flat screen TV with sound bar in the bedroom, 49-inch flat screen TV in the living room, walk-in shower and separate bath tub.

The smallest of the rooms, dubbed deluxe king rooms, are 314 square feet and feature a California king bed, 49-inch flat screen TV. The one-bedroom suites can be turned into two-bedroom suites if a guest also reserves an adjoining deluxe king room.

Outside the first floor of the hotel will be the event space, which can be used for private events and weddings, that will offer a direct view of nearby Cahuilla Mountain. The area will have dedicated fire pits and planter boxes for fresh herbs that will be used at the Ribbonwood Grill.

Reservations for the new resort are open with rooms available beginning May 1, 2020 via Cahuilla's website.

While the hotel won't open until the spring, Cahuilla has already changed its name to Cahuilla Casino Hotel both online and on social media.

Salgado said the reason for changing the name early is not only to get casino staff acclimated to the upcoming changes, but also to create buzz and excitement for the new resort's opening.

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What will become of the old casino? It will ultimately be removed when the new resort opens and something will eventually be built in its place, according to Salgado.

"We struggled with that, you know?" he said. "Because it's where we started from."

If you go

Where: 52702 Highway 371, Anza

Information: cahuillacasinohotel.com

Read more <https://www.dailynews.com/2019/10/09/the-new-cahuilla-casino-hotel-is-under-construction-go-inside-and-find-out-what-it-will-have/>