

Tribe hires key casino developer

JCJ Architecture to create
22-acre site's master plan

By Skip Descant

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An architecture firm known for designing large-scale casino hotel complexes has been selected to plan the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians' 22-acre downtown site that will serve as the tribe's next hotel entertainment district.

JCJ Architecture of San Diego has been named Tuesday as the firm to master-plan the site, most famously home to the former Spa Resort hotel.

The site extends from the corner Tahquitz Canyon Way and Indian Canyon Drive to the

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corner of Indian Canyon and Amado Road, and east to El Segundo Road. The Hilton Palm Springs is not included in the master-planning site, according to tribe officials.

It's not yet clear what level of development Agua Caliente has in mind, how many rooms the new hotel will include or if any expansion to the current Spa Casino is envisioned.

"The Tribal Council selected JCJ today. So the master planning process will be getting underway soon and nothing has been set in stone," wrote Kate Anderson, spokeswoman for Agua Caliente, in an email.

JCJ's regional projects include the existing and second hotel tower for Viejas Casino & Resort Hotel in Alpine, Hawaiian Gardens Casino in Hawaiian Gardens, Wild Horse Pass Hotel and Casino in Chandler, Ariz., and Hollywood Park in Los Angeles, among other projects.

The range of the firm's work nationally includes \$1 billion in construction value at Foxwoods Resort Casino and the nation's top slot revenue generator, Resorts World Casino New York City.

"JCJ clearly demonstrated their overwhelming desire to work with us on creating a master plan for this site," Tribal Chairman Jeff L. Grubbe said in a statement.

"Creating a master plan will include a dynamic approach that will center

around the Agua Caliente hot mineral spring and defining a renewed area around it, transforming the site into a dynamic destination."

In early summer when the tribe announced plans to raze the 1960s-era hotel and spa to make way for a development that would better Agua Caliente's "vision" for the future, tribe officials dismissed a 2007 plan that would have built a 10-story hotel complex on the site.

"Those plans are not alive," Tom Davis, chief planning and development officer for the tribe, said in a July interview.

Soon after, the Agua Caliente began dismantling the historic midcentury modern hotel, much to the consternation of the city's preservation community, which had pushed for an approach that might preserve or reuse some of the building.

Demolition is expected to be complete in summer 2015, according to Agua Caliente officials.

Palm Springs Preservation Foundation officials said the hope is the tribe will keep the development in scale with the city's village character.

"What remains to be seen is the size and scope of this project," said Erik Rosenow, president of the PSPF, in an email. "If the entire 22 acres is developed, that would likely include the post office as I believe that is on leased land. I hope that as the master-plan moves forward, the complex remains at scale with the rest of downtown's architecture."

The hotel's contents are being sold off, starting Friday in a Black Friday shopping themed liquidation sale, which opens to the public Friday at 9 a.m.