

A Message From Mayor Elaine Scruggs

Our city could be changed forever by decisions made in Washington DC. The impact of these decisions is not being fully explained. Instead, our city's future is repeatedly marginalized to a question of whether people would like a casino in Glendale.

Federal law allows gaming on Indian Reservations and the Tohono O'odham Nation wants to create a reservation to build a casino on 134 acres they purchased in Glendale. That Tribe, however, has no aboriginal lands near Glendale: its governmental seat is 180 miles away. Yet federal action could establish the Nation as a sovereign entity within the city's boundaries.

Glendale citizens should know that Indian reservations enjoy legal exemptions not available to off-reservation individuals and businesses. Although the issues created by these exemptions are many, space limitations allow only a couple to be addressed here: exemption from taxes and zoning laws. No city revenue will be generated by the casino, resort and other development on the Nation's land. Unlike private development, which produces sales tax revenue to pay for city services, development on this reservation would contribute nothing. In fact, exemption from taxes gives the nation a competitive advantage over other businesses in the area that pay taxes to support municipal services.

Zoning restrictions do not apply to Indian lands. Businesses on reservations compete with other nearby businesses but are free from land use, health and safety, and other important regulations. Zoning laws guide development so that citizens get what they want and expect – and prevent what they don't. Zoning laws have addressed citizen concerns about adult uses, payday loans, pawnshops, etc. But, Glendale's zoning laws would not apply to reservation land. So, those business and even apartments for workers could be built on the reservation without regard to height, density, landscaping and other Glendale regulations.

The Nation's disregard of the benefits of zoning was demonstrated last May when the Nation announced its plans to build a maximum-security prison within 500 feet of homes in the town of Sahuarita. "Outsiders have no control over what happens on sovereign Indian land," stated on tribal officer, as he defended the prison as providing jobs and revenue. The Nation has said the city's concerns can be addressed later, after their reservation is established. But "later" will be too late. As mentioned above, space limitations disallow discussion of the many other issues – impact on the Northern Parkway, Glendale Airport and Luke Air Force Base flight patterns; formal opposition from other tribes, the renewal of racetrack gaming, which Arizona voters rejected in 2002, because gaming is coming to Glendale's neighborhoods. More information about the impact of the nation's proposal is available at www.glendaleaz.com/indianreservation.

What do you think? Please e-mail me and your councilmembers with your thoughts. Above all, please do not be lulled into thinking this is only about whether there should be a resort/casino at 91st and Northern Avenues.