

Come see what we've got cooking.

THE DINING GUIDE@ WWW.REVIEWJOURNAL.COM/DINING

Business PRESS

Monday, December 04, 2006

Home | News | Columnists | Classifieds | Archives | Contact Us



New Strip development is really going vertical

BY ARNOLD M. KNIGHTLY

The new owner of the dormant Wet 'n Wild land has a tall order in mind for the Strip property -- a 1,888-foot-tall hotel tower.

Texas-based developer Christopher Milam wants to build a 142-story obelisk as the centerpiece of a hotel-resort-casino project, according to plans presented to the Clark County Planning Commission late last month. "It makes sense in Las Vegas," Milam explained. "A 4,000-room hotel on the Las Vegas Strip is just fine whereas, in most non-gaming markets, a 400-room hotel would be plenty large."

The structure would be the tallest building in the Western Hemisphere and the tallest hotel tower in the world. The 1,149-foot-high Stratosphere Casino Hotel & Tower, less than a mile north on Las Vegas Boulevard, is currently the tallest building west of the Mississippi River.

To realize his dream, Milam first has to surmount many regulatory hurdles. His biggest may be persuading the Federal Aviation Administration and Nellis Air Force Base that the project will not be a flight hazard.

Pending a final height-determination study by the FAA, the Planning Commission approved all the use permits and design reviews -- except for the height waiver. The full County Commission will likely review the project at its March 21, 2007 meeting.

The Texas developer may think his project, modeled on the 2,313-foot-tall Burj Dubai pinnacle, is "just fine." But it has already attracted a few powerful opponents upset about its height.

The FAA sent Milam a "Notice Of Presumed Hazard," dated Nov. 4. It began a 60-day period in which Milam must respond, or else the approval process will begin again. A typical study takes one to six months, according to the FAA, although a more complex study can take longer.

"The big problem with the proposed 1,888-foot tower is that it would punch

Marketplace

Search Classifieds:

Come on... you deserve it

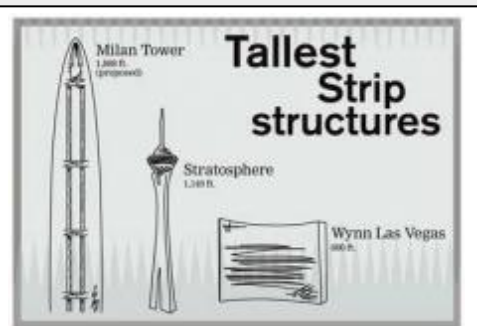


Pamper yourself with a visit to a Spa

LIVE LIKE A QUEEN LAS VEGAS STYLE Find some choice deals on hotel/air/car & more.



Research your next Vegas getaway by checking out the Travel section on reviewjournal.com



Maureen Adamo | Business Press

- News
- News Update
- Business Wire
- Press Releases
- Columnists
- Business Profile
- Classifieds
- Executive Calendar
- Networking
- Subscribe
- Archives
- Contact Us
- Links
- Media Kit
- Home

SPONSORED LINKS

into the airspace that airplanes use while performing instrument arrivals and departures into and out of McCarran," said FAA spokesman Ian Gregor, adding that any height exceeding 708 feet would have an adverse effect on air traffic.

Milam is currently working with Washington, D.C.-based consulting firm JDA Aviation Technology Solutions to develop a response to the FAA's notice. Once a determination becomes final, the decision would have to be appealed to FAA's Airspace & Rules Division. Clark County development code mandates that county officials cannot vary or grant waivers from the final determination of the FAA.

Attending into the wee hours of the Planning Commission meeting -- the item was not heard until after 9:30 p.m. -- was outgoing Clark County Aviation Director Randall Walker, as well as representatives from Nellis.

While Walker would only say he was there to "monitor" the issue and did not speak, his attendance was noted by one of the commissioners.

Col. Timothy Green, Nellis' mission support commander, submitted a letter from 99th Wing Commander Col. Michael Bartley asking that Clark County deny Milam's application. Describing the project as "of significant concern to Nellis," the letter said that the project could result "in a loss of critical aircrew training (and) represents an unnecessary level of risk to the long-term sustainability of Nellis AFB operations."

"You'll find that quote, that exact language, every time this issue comes up for them, whether it's a residential neighborhood close to them or a new retail center outside the base or a building on the Strip," Milam rejoined. "It's a policy they have. Nellis is never going to say, 'We love tall buildings in the valley.' That's never going to happen."

While Milam admits that the project is at the outer reaches of the base's airspace, he is said that he has been in discussions with Nellis and believes that, being eight miles from the base, that the issue can be resolved.

Even if it is, some are skeptical the project can be realized. "We've seen a lot of these out-of-towners come and go," said John Restrepo, principal of Restrepo Consulting Group, a Las Vegas real estate-research firm. "I find it difficult to believe that they can pull off a project like this unless they have financial strength, development experience and a recognizable brand."

Some are even more vehement. "We've filed a complaint with the county on this project," said Bruce Hiatt, owner of Luxury Realty Group, which specializes in high-rise real estate. "It's completely out of character with the neighborhood, and it has an immediate impact on neighboring projects such as Sky Las Vegas, Turnberry Place, and Fontainebleau."

"There are a whole host of issues that something like this creates including traffic, emergency services, parking, and obstruction of views," Hiatt lamented. "It casts extreme shadows on nearby properties. Would something of this size and scale even sell in a slowing real estate market? I don't know."

Staff Writer Tony Illia and News Editor David Mckee also contributed to this report.

aknightly@lvbusinesspress.com | 702-871-6780 x316

