

\$670 million Newburgh casino among 22 N.Y. proposals

Written by Administrator
Sunday, 27 April 2014 06:17 -

Craig Wolf, Poughkeepsie Journal 10:16 p.m. EDT April 25, 2014



The Mohegan Sun resort and casino is located in Uncasville, Conn., on the Mohegan Indian Reservation. (Photo: Gannett News Service, Todd Plitt/USA TODAY/File)

Story Highlights

- Newburgh casino proposal one of 22 statewide
- Saratoga group eyes \$670 million investment

NEWBURGH – A casino developer wants to build a \$670 million gaming and entertainment resort in the Town of Newburgh near where Interstate 84 crosses the Thruway.

It's one of 22 plans across New York state whose developers have paid the state \$1 million to get a spot on New York's list of contenders for approval. As many as four will be granted a go-ahead license before year's end, following voter approval of a constitutional amendment allowing gambling at venues that are not on Indian reservations.

This one, to be called the Hudson Valley Casino and Resort, is proposed by Saratoga Casino and Raceway, a company based in Saratoga Springs with a facility there.

It's one of several bids targeting the counties of Orange, Ulster and Sullivan. The state plans to

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approve one facility for the mid-Hudson-Catskills region. No proposals have surfaced for Dutchess County, but this one is the closest.

In an announcement Friday, Saratoga said it proposes a 500-room resort hotel, dining, entertainment venues and 20,000 square feet of space "dedicated to high-end retail." The site is 70 acres and is on Route 17K across from the Orange County Choppers store.

Sponsors say it would be a "permanent economic engine for the region." They offered a statement that said the project would create "2,400 construction jobs and more than 2,500 permanent good-paying jobs with benefits."

That estimate is likely based on some multiplier formula used in economic development projections that include indirect jobs, suggested Cathy Maloney, president of Dutchess County Economic Development Corp.

But she said the project, though in a neighboring county, would likely have a net economic benefit to Dutchess.

"I think the impact that we would see from the casinos in either Orange or Ulster or Sullivan is the potential for local vendors to sell their products to the casinos and also, depending how close they are, we're going to see some jobs benefits," Maloney said. "People are going to be commuting to those jobs."

Vendor sales and jobs are clear benefits, said Charles North, president of the Dutchess County Regional Chamber of Commerce. "It's only a drive away," he said. The only negative is that there are some people who don't like gambling.

"Bottom line is that this is a good thing for all of us in the Hudson Valley," North said.

On the other hand, the plan has the potential to pull dollars out of Dutchess as people travel to

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casinos across the river.

Maloney wasn't much troubled by that prospect, though, because different attractions draw different kinds of tourists.

"Tourists that come to Dutchess County aren't going to sit home and say, 'Oooh, do I want to go to a flashy casino? Do I want to go to sophisticated Dutchess County?' " she said. She thinks a casino would not have a negative impact on Dutchess' tourism.

"It's a totally different audience," she said.

Orange County Executive Steven Neuhaus has several casino proposals to look at, and took a neutral stance.

"Gaming interest in our county has been welcome, but sustained economic growth from casino development depends on host community support, including due consideration for transportation-infrastructure capacity," he said in a statement.

"I have encouraged all interested groups to meet with local leaders and members of the community in order to gauge levels of support for any potential project. I have stated consistently that (a) casino siting in Orange County must enjoy the support of the local community."

The statement from Saratoga estimated that \$6.85 million a year would be paid to the Town of Newburgh and to Orange County. That is based on a state formula of what is required for local revenue. A full application is due to the state by June 30.

Saratoga has a casino in Black Hawk, Colorado, and a stake in the Ellis Park Race Course in Henderson, Kentucky, a spokesman said.

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