

## A proposed \$1.5 billion casino near Sterling Forest State Park would be felt in Rockland.

Written by Administrator

Tuesday, 22 July 2014 14:55 -

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The trailhead for the Sterling Ridge Trail, which is part of the 22,000 acre Sterling Forest State Park. The site is close to where a proposed casino would be built in nearby Tuxedo. Genting Americas wants to build a \$1.5 billion casino where the Tuxedo Ridge Ski Center is located and the annual New York Renaissance Faire is held. (Photo: Seth Harrison/The Journal News) [Buy Photo](#)

### Story Highlights

- Genting wants to build a \$1.5 billion casino on the periphery of Sterling Forest State Park in Tuxedo.
- Caesars is proposing an \$880 million casino in Woodbury village, near Woodbury Common outlets
- Sloatsburg Mayor Carl Wright said he is anti-casino because he wants Tuxedo to stay rural, rustic.
- Genting says its casino would compliment the area, protect water and wetlands, be a "green" facility

**TUXEDO** – Sterling Forest State Park is a 22,000-acre refuge surrounded by one of the most densely populated regions of the country. It is a host to part of the Appalachian Trail and a watershed that serves New York and New Jersey.

Genting Americas wants to build a \$1.5 billion casino on the forest's periphery, where the Tuxedo Ridge Ski Center is located and the annual New York Renaissance Faire is held. The plan calls for pumping money into both to help create a variety of entertainment options in one place.

It is one of 17 proposals vying for four casino permits to help upstate redevelopment, and the closest to the Lower Hudson Valley. About 20 minutes north on the Thruway, Caesars New York is eyeing property near Woodbury Common Premium Outlets for an \$880 million destination casino.

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Municipal officials have approved the projects and welcome the financial support and jobs they would bring. In Tuxedo and the surrounding vicinity, where there seems to be more opposition, critics say a 1,000-room hotel and casino would hurt the area's special character, harm the water supply and ecosystem, and create traffic jams.



Genting Group wants to build Sterling Forest Resort at Tuxedo Ridge Ski Center in Orange County(Photo: Submitted)

Genting's promotional materials say it would be "complimentary" to the region, landscape and community.

Sloatsburg Mayor Carl Wright said he wants the area to stay rural and rustic. "Years ago, many of us fought to get that area put in reserve, and many, many people worked very hard to get

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Sterling Forest Corp. put into trust" for all to enjoy, he said, referring to an effort to block development.

If the state approves a casino in Tuxedo, it will impact Sloatsburg, Wright said. "We're going to get the traffic. These people are going to be moving through Sloatsburg. Whether it's on (Route) 17 or the Thruway, it's going to be a demand for our services," he said, citing ambulance and police.

Sunil Patel, a partner at Home Town Food Market on Route 17 in Tuxedo, said the corridor gets more traffic during ski season and in the summer for the faire, but not enough at other times. "We want to do better and hopefully if a casino comes, hopefully we'll get more business," he said.

Rikki Kipple, producer of the New York Renaissance Faire, said Genting has proposed the group host additional events, such as concerts and an annual ice carnival. The company wants to bring back gardens that used to be at the site, so the festival's footprint would have to shift a little.

Kipple isn't convinced that casinos are the answer to the need for jobs and a thriving economy, saying they seem to provide a "short-lived boost" only. But given that the voters of the state have asked for casinos, "I think Genting is an extremely upstanding, fair company," Kipple said.

Genting said in a recent statement that it would build a "green" development with "environmentally conscious building techniques" and rehabilitate "long-neglected open spaces." It would create a new Thruway exit; build a \$15 million water reclamation facility that will improve water quality and hydrology; remove invasive species from wetlands; and procure or generate 10 percent of annual electricity usage from renewable energy sources.

Last week , a group of 18 Tuxedo residents sued the town, claiming officials violated state law in approving a zoning district for a casino without analyzing potential environmental impact. The suit said a casino would subject them to "significantly increased traffic, noise and other externalities."

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Genting Americas, which is not named in the suit, believes the town "has proceeded in a prudent manner and this will be resolved expeditiously as the proposed use is consistent" with Tuxedo's 2011 town plan update, spokesman Michael Levoff said in an email.

Michael Sussman, lawyer for the residents, said he started a group opposed to the Orange County casino plans. "It makes no sense conceptually to have one in Orange County and think you're going to have anything anywhere else in the region," he said, referring to casino proposals in Sullivan and Ulster counties.

Moody's Investors Service said June 30 that it downgraded its casino industry outlook from stable to negative due to declining revenues everywhere except Nevada. Atlantic City casinos are being shuttered and competition continues to grow. Connecticut, Pennsylvania and Massachusetts all have casinos now.

### **Casinos in New York**

- New York already has five Indian casinos, nine racetrack casinos (racinos), and 29,000 slot machines.
- A state panel will approve permits for up to four upstate gambling resorts later this year. In seven years, the state will allow up to three new casinos, or conversions, downstate, which includes Westchester, Rockland and Putnam.
- Sixteen companies and partnerships last month submitted 17 proposals. Nine are in the Catskills/Hudson Valley, and six of those in Orange. The closest in Orange are in Tuxedo and Woodbury village.
- Company presentations of proposals will take place this fall, followed by public hearings in each of the three casino development regions – Catskills/Hudson Valley, Capital Region and eastern Southern Tier.

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The \$1.5 billion casino and resort (below) would be built on the edge of the 22,000-acre Sterling Forest State Park in Tuxedo (above).

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