

"Wizard of Oz" casino to open near Syracuse

Written by Administrator
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Joseph Spector, JSPECTOR@Gannett.com 1:20 p.m. EDT April 30, 2015



A photo of the plan for the Oneida Indian Nation's \$20 million Wizard of Oz-themed casino. (Photo: Oneida Indian Nation)

ALBANY – The Oneida Indian Nation in central New York said Thursday it plans to open its new \$20 million upstate, *Wizard of Oz*-themed casino on June 2, a move seen as a way to counter a casino expected for the Finger Lakes.

The Oneidas, who own the sprawling Turning Stone Casino in Verona, Oneida County, announced soon after [the state picked the Lago casino Dec. 17](#) for one of three casino licenses that it would open the Yellow Brick Road Casino in Chittenango, Madison County, about 15 miles from downtown Syracuse.

"Guests will have the opportunity to explore the new \$20 million gaming venue inspired by the Village of Chittenango's close connection with the American classic book *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*," the tribe said in a statement.

The casino is located within the Oneidas' territory, allowing them to open it without state approval.

"Infused with whimsical *Wizard of Oz* fun, the Yellow Brick Road Casino will boast more than 430 Vegas-style cash slot machines, a 500-seat bingo hall called the Wizard Hall, an intimate Keno Lounge, the Oz General Store, and an impressive lineup of just-announced bars and

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restaurants," the news release said.

L. Frank Baum, who wrote the book, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, was born in Chittenango in 1856, and the place embraces its connection to the book and movie, including an annual festival called "[Oz-Stravaganza](#)!"

The Lago casino, owned by Rochester-area mall magnate Thomas Wilmot, is expected to open within two years, and it will be located in Tyre, Seneca County — which is between Rochester and Syracuse.

The new casinos will add to the plethora of gaming options in central and western New York. The Lago casino is only a half-hour away from the Finger Lakes racetrack, which has VLTs, and further west is Batavia Downs and the three Seneca casinos in the Buffalo area.

[Finger Lakes racetrack is suing](#) to try to block the Lago casino, saying it will hurt the track's business.

Lago was among three proposals picked by the state Gaming Facility Location Board for upstate casinos. The other two were in Thompson, Sullivan County, and Schenectady. The state recently opened bidding for a fourth casino in the Southern Tier.

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