

Crystal Lagoons is the 'next wave' of entertainment

- By Alex Gallagher, Glendale Star Staff Writer
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The resort will be a “must stop” for visitors and a “must see” for locals.

Glendale Mayor Jerry Weiers said the much-hyped Crystal Lagoons Island Resort is much more than a water park. It’s a world-class destination.

“This is not a water park, this is Crystal Lagoons,” he said at the groundbreaking. “This is going to be second to none in the state. Don’t let anyone tell you this is just a water park.”

Weiers was among the dignitaries present for the June 10 event.

The resort, which will be set on just over 48 acres of land at 95th Avenue and Cardinals Way, will feature an 11-acre lagoon 8- to 10-feet deep along; a hotel with more than 600 rooms; restaurants and bars; experiential retail stores; a 4-D theater and the first Mattel-themed adventure park.

Although Crystal Lagoons Island Resort is perfect for out-of-town visitors, Weiers said it's great for locals' staycations.

"There's going to be a lot of people who won't be going out of state because they won't have to in order to come here," Weiers said. "They won't have to buy plane tickets, rental cars or worry about hotels in other states. They can just drive into Glendale and get an incredible weekend vacation."

Crystal Lagoons Island Resort began as a vision three years ago, but it became reality in September.

"In September of 2020, our city council approved the concept and the necessary documents needed to bring Crystal Lagoons Island Resort to Glendale," said Yucca District Councilmember Joyce Clark.

She called it "the most significant project in Glendale" since the now-dubbed Gila River Arena opened in 2003, followed by State Farm Stadium in 2006.

"This is a trifecta," Clark said. "If people are coming for football or hockey, now they can come to recreate, swim, shop and enjoy the entertainment at Crystal Lagoons."

Weiers added, "I know that Crystal Lagoons Island Resort will add so much more to the visitor experience, and it'll make this destination a must stop for visitors as well as a must see for residents."

Weiers and Clark hope the development will influence future projects.

"This is destined to have a major impact, not just in Glendale, not just in Arizona but throughout the Southwest," Clark said. "This is a signature project and I do not doubt that there will be others like it."

Though the project drew early skepticism and had taxpayers anxious, Weiers said he believes it will be beneficial.

The resort is projected to create an estimated 1,800 jobs and bring in hundreds of millions of dollars in local revenue over the next 25 years. The resort also projects that, once it is fully operational, it will see 5,000 to 6,000 visitors daily.

“It is going to produce a major impact, not just on Westgate, not just on Zanjero apartments, not just on the casino, but it will also provide the impetus for people to finish developing whatever little parcels are left in the area,” Clark said.

Crystal Lagoons Island Resort is slated to open in fall 2022. Weiers said he expects it will be finished on time.

“Glendale’s team has both a reputation and commitment to helping this project move forward in a timely manner,” Weiers said.

Mark Cornell, president of attractions and entertainment for Crystal Lagoons Island Resort, is pleased with the partnership.

“When we came upon Glendale, something special happened from the very beginning,” Cornell said. “It ranged from true visionary thinking, the cultivation of concepts and ideas and things just came together. Every great once in a while you find the right team and the right people. That is the case here.”

Glendale City Manager Kevin Phelps said the excitement is palpable in the area.

“I think we’ve all experienced the notion of something being over-hyped,” Phelps said. “What I’m going to tell you is, if anything, we are underhyping what this project will mean to our community, to the entertainment district and to the city of Glendale.”

Crystal Lagoons Island Resort Vice President Eric Cherasia called the destination the “next wave of family entertainment,” as it features the first Mattel Adventure Park.

“It’s not often to have an opportunity to create something completely original,” Cornell said. “Mattel has an epic array of evergreen brands that continue to be relevant across multiple platforms and generations.”

The main attractions will include a Thomas and Friends indoor theme park that will include the first Thomas electric-battery powered passenger train as well as a Hot Wheels high thrill looping roller coaster.

Other attractions include Hot Wheels go-karts among all skill levels, a family roller coaster, interactive AR racing systems and full-sized Thomas and Friends rides.

Crystal Lagoons Island Resort will also offer exclusive Hot Wheels and Thomas and Friends retail stores.

“When we began to develop the attraction plan for the Crystal Lagoons Island Resort, we knew we wanted to create something incredibly special,” Cornell said.

Mattel will share the iconic toy brand in a new way.

“This partnership provides an opportunity for families to experience Mattel’s portfolio of brands in a whole new way for us,” said Megan Pashel, senior manager of global franchise marketing. “There will be something for everyone in the family.”

Now that the ground has been broken, the real challenge has begun.

“I know that the real work starts now as they move full speed ahead to deliver this project before Glendale hosts the Super Bowl on Sunday, Feb. 12, 2023,” Weiers said.

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