

## New Gilbert hotel, meeting facility to open soon

by **William Hermann** - May. 13, 2010

The Arizona Republic

Bob Yost says building a \$21 million hotel and convention center in Gilbert during the present economic downturn wasn't as suicidal as it might seem.

"It may sound kind of contrary to what's going on, but it has turned out to be a very good deal for us. More people would be building now if they could get financing," said Yost, 55, owner of Structures Inc. and Power Hotels Corp., based in Mesa.

"Our financing is being done internally and it was a good time to build because costs are down," he said. "Materials and labor are about 20 percent lower now. There has been a savings in the millions."

Yost's new 121-room boutique Legado Hotel and its SanTan Elegante Conference and Reception Center, with a ballroom that can seat 1,000, is a first for Gilbert, which had no venue for large meetings or conventions.

"It is going to be our first conference center and will be very attractive," Gilbert Chamber of Commerce President Kathy Tilque said.

"It will be great to have them," she said. "One thing we are lacking in this community is meeting space, and especially any meeting space where you can hold more than 250 people in a sit-down setting. Their opening will significantly help our tourism efforts as well."

Town officials are high on the center.

Gilbert Business Development Manager Dan Henderson called it "a major positive in the whole area."

"It's a much-needed amenity in Gilbert and the whole East Valley," he said. "It will find many users, and the city itself could use it as the mayor and the council want more access to the public with meetings and presentations."

Construction on the hotel and conference center on SanTan Village Parkway between Williams Field and Ray roads began in June. Yost says he foresees a "soft opening as early as the end of May, and a grand opening in June."

Linda Propoggio, general manager for the conference center and hotel, certainly hopes they're open in June. She said her staff has for weeks been booking wedding receptions and other activities at the center for next month.

"We've already had a lot of interest and have weddings on the books," Propoggio said. "People have long wanted a place in Gilbert for medium-size meetings and for large social events. We're answering a real need."

Yost has lived in the Southeast Valley for most of his life and says he saw the need for such a center "some years ago; it just took a little while to get it going."

Yost has a home in Washington state as well as one in Mesa and one in Gilbert. He also owns a ranch in eastern Arizona, but having lived in Gilbert for many years, he said, "I am glad to do something for this town."

"We are going to keep tax dollars in Gilbert, and we are going to offer good jobs, which is key today," he said. "There will be jobs running the hotel, keeping the rooms flipped, jobs in the restaurant and kitchen of the hotel and in the banquet kitchen in the conference center."

And, Yost noted, jobs at the hotel and center mean jobs outside it. "We will be sending out linen, buying food, our guests will go to the movies and to the mall; we'll be good for the whole area."

Yost's Power Hotels Corp. owns the Best Western Legacy Inn & Suites at 4470 S. Power Road, in Mesa, which opened in April 2009.

Yost said "recognizing a need" was a key to building that hotel, too.

"Arizona State University's Polytechnic campus is just down the road," he said. "With the hotel on Power Road, we provided a place near that campus. Now, with the conference center, the ASU folks have a needed meeting venue. We think we'll hear from them a lot."

Read more: <http://www.azcentral.com/business/news/articles/2010/05/13/20100513gilbert-convention-center-0514.html#ixzz0orPovjMj>