

## USA Basketball to boost Valley economy

### Training hub to draw streams of visitors

by **Carrie Watters** - Nov. 18, 2008 12:00 AM  
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Hundreds of up-and-coming hoops players will trek to Glendale each year as USA Basketball confirmed Monday it will move its headquarters and training operations to the Valley, bringing an annual economic boost pegged at \$63.4 million.

USA Basketball is the governing body of international basketball in the United States, fielding national teams for international competitions, the pinnacle being the men's and women's Olympic teams.

In a rough economy, news is enough that Gov. Janet Napolitano is expected to attend today's official announcement, which should follow the Glendale City Council's vote on the deal.

Hundreds of construction jobs will be created to build the \$53.8 million training campus along Loop 101 off Maryland Avenue. Once completed, as early as 2010, the campus will feature a training center, offices, a hotel, a Midwestern University sports medicine clinic and a fitness center. In all it should create 324 direct jobs, and nearly double that when including peripheral jobs, such as those in tourism.

The campus is expected to add \$26.5 million to Glendale's tax coffers over the next 25 years. But its larger value is part of a winning puzzle the city has pieced together, said Valley economist Elliott Pollack, who completed an economic-impact study on the deal.

"They just create a lot of synergies that do not exist anywhere else, with the possible exception of downtown (Phoenix)," Pollack said. "It's fairly amazing - it's working even in what is a terrible economic environment."

Within about a two-mile radius in the past five years, Glendale has added professional hockey, professional football, Major League Baseball and now amateur basketball. It has hosted a college football championship and Super Bowl XLII.

That intense focus on "an impressive and growing roster of sports properties" held sway over Val Ackerman, USA Basketball's past board chairwoman, who led the scouting expedition from the group's 29-year home in Colorado Springs.

City Manager Ed Beasley, who has navigated Glendale's rise, said other sports governing bodies have made inquiries - and he isn't closing that door - but the city's goal is to create a destination that attracts quality development. USA Basketball's Olympic dream teams, made up of NBA and WNBA stars, offers that buzz.

City leaders advocate for those senior teams to train here, although the agreement acknowledges that could depend on logistics. The deal requires only some Olympian presence, which could mean an exhibition match at nearby Jobing.com Arena or players working with area youth.

USA Basketball stretches beyond the Olympics, fielding national teams for players as young as 15. The training center is where athletes will prepare for such competitions as the new youth Olympics and the Pan American Games.

Keeping with the push for development that takes Glendale beyond a bedroom community, Beasley called USA Basketball a commanding anchor tenant for Main Street Glendale.

The private development project is anticipated to cover 500 acres that winds from University of Phoenix Stadium on the opposite side of the loop down to Glendale's spring training ballpark on Camelback Road, a second major anchor for Main Street.

The city is putting in roads and infrastructure around its spring training baseball stadium, which will benefit the private development.

In contrast, city incentives for the basketball deal are minimal - rebating hotel taxes for athletes.

Scottsdale-based Rightpath Development Group, the developers behind Main Street, will bear numerous expenses, down to \$150,000 to relocate USA Basketball from Colorado.

Rightpath will build, operate and maintain the training center. USA Basketball will have a 30-year-lease without rent and two 10-year renewal options.

The governing body will keep receipts from ticket and other sales at its events.

Rightpath will also build, at a minimum, a three-star, 150-room hotel, and give 2,500 room nights to USA Basketball for athletes training at the center, as well as provide meals, free of cost.

Rick Burton, a principal with Rightpath, had no complaints. He said USA Basketball is an asset that will help lure other high-end tenants.

USA Basketball does most of its training from May to September, but that could expand now that it will have its own training center. The organization and others involved in the deal said they want to try to increase training opportunities not only for elite athletes but for local teams.

"This shows all the possibilities," Beasley said. "If you can practice where a LeBron James has practiced, you can see how he conducts himself, and how you conduct yourself . . . it doesn't mean you are going to be a professional ball player, but you are going to be exposed to it."