

FIRST MASTER-PLANNED AUTOPLEX ON TRIBAL LANDS IN THE US



PRAGMATIC VISIONARIES

Story and photos by Joe Sage

The Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community has rapidly increased its involvement in a variety of significant commercial enterprises both on and off Community land. A major catalyst to much of this has been the northeastern leg of the Arizona I01 Freeway.

The area was already home to Scottsdale Community College, founded in 1970 and built on 160 acres of Community land with a 100-year lease. The Pavilions at Talking Stick shopping center (formerly known as Scottsdale Pavilions) arrived in the late 1980s, as the freeway was first scratched into place. (The Pavilions location is known for its long-running Saturday night McDonald's Rock 'n Roll car show.)

But the land had primarily remained open agricultural and tribal residential.

As the Loop 101 Freeway was planned, it's clear that Scottsdale did not want it running through its narrowest stretch, so a deal was

struck for right-of-way through agricultural Community lands to the east.

The Community, on the other hand, could see value in the freeway running through, and development along the 101 has been extensive, selective and clever—Casino Arizona, the Talking Stick Golf Course and high-rise casino hotel, Salt River Fields at Talking Stick (the first Major League Baseball spring training ballpark ever on tribal lands), Butterfly Wonderland, the OdySea Aquarium nearing completion, commercial complexes that are home to headquarters of some internationally known companies, a Courtyard by Marriott hotel—and more already underway.

Thus it is appropriate that the Community referred to themselves as “pragmatic visionaries” at another recent groundbreaking. As stewards of the land and its peoples, while also residents of the broader thriving Salt River Valley (aka Valley of the Sun), they are committed to achieving quality

of life and modern returns for tribal members.

It's thus that we were on hand for a press conference in early December, to reveal something that was confidential going in, but guaranteed to be big. Skies were clear and temperatures perfect as we gathered in a tent with tribal dignitaries, business leaders and other media—on what turns out to be the site of a new 70-acre auto dealership campus between Pima Road and the 101, just north of Indian School Road. Its name, announced by Community President Delbert W Ray, Sr, will be Scottsdale Autoshow at Salt River.

(Yes, we can see room for name confusion with the weekly car show nearby on Indian Bend.)

With 247,000 cars driving by each day, the exposure the complex receives will be second to few.

The project is developed in cooperation with Mullin 360 and will be anchored by the Chapman Automotive Group, the largest privately owned dealership group in Arizona and also the nation's



Tribal leaders introduce and bless the new 70-acre autoplex coming to the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community: (from left) the event's Master of Ceremonies Pacer Reina; Councilman Thomas Largo, Sr; and SRPMIC President Delbert W Ray, Sr. | Outlining the autoplex business details are (continuing left to right) Chapman Automotive Group CEO Eddie Davault; and Mullin 360 President Jim Mullin.

(Right, top to bottom) DJ MrPBody (mrpbody.com) spins 'em at a reception after the groundbreaking. Crews are ready to go to work on the ambitious project. Chapman dealers display some of their wares.

25th largest automotive consortium. Set to invest some \$60 million into the new project, Chapman will be relocating its existing brands of Chrysler-Jeep-Dodge, Volkswagen and Ford from the old Motor Mile on McDowell Road in Scottsdale.

Chapman Automotive Group CEO Eddie Davault calls it “the largest investment in our company's history” and adds that Chapman is “pleased to be making some history with the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community and their new enterprise.”

A late-breaking announcement added a fourth

dealership—a brand new Courtesy Volvo—to the project. A little over half the total acreage is as yet undesignated.

Mullin 360 president Jim Mullin said the auto park will set new standards in Arizona and across the country, with such features as navigation nodes and specialty treated asphalt in the loop road for superior test drive experiences. The significant sales tax boost from the development will enable expansion of infrastructure, children's programs and medical care within the Community.

The project is set to open in January 2017. ■



(Left to right) | Superintendent of the BIA Salt River Agency Office George Patton | Realty Officer of the BIA Western Regional Office Stan Webb; | Councilman Ricardo Leonard | SRPMIC Vice President Martin Harvier | Mullin 360 President Jim Mullin; | Chapman Automotive Group CEO Eddie Davault; | SRPMIC President Delbert W Ray, Sr | Councilman Michael Dallas, Sr | Councilwoman Jenelle Howard; | Councilman Thomas Largo, Sr | Councilwoman Deanna Scabby | and Councilman David Antone.