

Ellman offers 'little-known' facts about Glendale connection

By Carolyn Dryer

While many Glendalians already know that the Glendale Arena and Cardinals Stadium the two biggest sports projects to hit the West Valley, it would probably come as a surprise to many that the city blocks of development centered between 91st Avenue and the Loop 101 along Glendale Avenue are viewed as "the most significant urban development in the country" by Shopping Center Business.

Developer Steve Ellman said, "It really all started with Joe Arpaio, who got me thrown out of Scottsdale."

The East Valley city was the Coyotes' first choice for its hockey arena. That deal went sour, and eventually, a deal was struck with Glendale. At one point, there was talk that Arpaio would like to have the former Los Arcos Mall property for a second Tent City for his jail inmates.

After Ellman narrowed down the number of people who had been doing business in Glendale since 1978, he had his own long-time business owner story to tell. He said in March 1978, he and Jerry Storey opened their office in Glendale, when the city's population was just 85,000. Their product? The Arizona Pennysaver.

"I have a long history with the City of Glendale," Ellman said.

More recently, as Mayor Elaine Scruggs pointed out in her remarks to a packed house of Glendale Chamber of Commerce luncheon attendees, she and other members of the city council and staff met "Mystery Man," Ellman March 12, 2001. At that meeting, the topic of discussion was how to tear down and rebuild a blighted shopping center at 59th and Northern avenues.

Thirty days later, Scruggs said, the council met and approved five memorandums of agreement to do business with Ellman and redevelop Manistee Town Center. Nov. 27, 2001, council approved five final development agreements that included the Glendale Arena construction and massive mixed-use around the arena, in addition to what would become Northern Crossing at 59th and Northern.



Maricopa County Sheriff's Office Chief Deputy Dave Hendershott, Sheriff Joe Arpaio, Steve Ellman and Mayor Elaine Scruggs share a table during the Glendale Chamber of Commerce business luncheon last week.

Fast forward from April 3, 2002, when groundbreaking took place at Glendale Arena, to Dec. 27, 2003, when the first Coyotes hockey game was played.

"This is lightning speed," Scruggs said. "And in terms of government work, unheard of.

"This is all about economic development, and the catalyst is our next speaker."

Scruggs reminded the luncheon audience that when Northern Crossing opened in March 2004, it was two years ahead of schedule.

Today, Ellman said, with anchor tenants Lowe's and Wal-Mart, the center is "a significant sales tax generator for the city."

Turning to Westgate development, Ellman said plans have changed. What was once slated to have 1.6 million square feet of commercial/residential space has been modified and changed to 6.5 million square feet, a combination of sports, entertainment, marketing and urban development.

Organizers of a convention in Las Vegas next week have designated Westgate "The Best in the West," Ellman said.

Glendale Arena has already garnered its own laurels, with Pollstar and Venue Today naming it as the best concert venue in North America. Ellman said the arena is projecting 150 event days this year. In its first year of operation, it was ranked 54th in the United States, he said, and last year, it was ranked 18th in the world.

Once Westgate is complete, it will house the largest movie theater in the state with 4,000 seats, and 860 residential townhouses and lofts. In Trammell Crow's first release of 179 units, Ellman said, there were 1,300 buyers lined up.

Westgate's master plan calls for three more hotels along the freeway side of the 223 acres (which Ellman said are in escrow), and an 85,000-square-foot convention center the city is building.

"I expect every meeting in the Valley is going to be held there," he said.

Ellman called John Q. Hammond, who is building a Renaissance four-star hotel on the Westgate property, a "great operator. He gets it."

All of the financing for the entire project has been finalized, Ellman said. Between the stadium, arena, Phase I of Westgate, Trammell Crow, the condominiums and Cabela's across the street, Ellman said the investment totals \$1 billion.

And, when New Year's Eve rolls around this year, Ellman said it is appropriate that a New Year's Eve party be held at Westgate. He said the entertainment portion of the project is modeled after Times Square in New York City.

"We have been called Times Square West," he said. "So, it is appropriate to have a New Year's Eve party."

All of the development happened because, Ellman said, "we have good partners." He said it was he who brought Cox Communications to Arizona in 1977. But even that long-term relationship did not stand in the way of forming a partnership with Qwest to produce all the telecommunications at Westgate.

As for signage and media, Ellman reminded the audience that he owns 50 percent of Clear Channel Canada, and Clear Channel is Westgate's media partner. It will control the 100-foot entry tower at the freeway that will announce all the Westgate events.

A \$5.8 million water feature he called public art will entertain visitors to Westgate every hour, Ellman said.

"It will be a prize jewel for the City of Glendale," he said.

He predicted Westgate would be visited by 22 million people by 2011.

In one of his final comments, Ellman talked about how important Glendale's leadership was to the success of Westgate, and he chided Scottsdale leaders.

"I drove by Los Arcos just the other day," he said. "In five years, Glendale ends up with \$1 billion of new development, and Scottsdale ended up with 13 palm trees."