Georgians Could Reap Significant Benefit from Casino Resorts

*Potential legalized gaming is on the minds of legislators as well as major casino operators and developers with potential sites already under consideration in northeast Georgia.*

Even before the Georgia General Assembly convenes in January, several well-known casino operators are scouting Georgia for potential sites to develop destination resorts that would include casino gaming. Rick Lackey of City Commercial Real Estate recently announced that more than 5,000 acres of potential resort sites are currently under listing agreements with the company.

Legislative leaders are poised to introduce legislation again in the upcoming session of the Georgia General Assembly. Rep. Ron Stephens (R-Savannah), chairman of the House Economic Development and Tourism committee, has been a champion of gaming legislation in years past and plans to sponsor similar legislation in 2021. Gaming legislation requires passage by two-thirds of legislators and the governor’s signature before being placed as a referendum on the ballot for voter approval.

“There has been a groundswell of support for legalized gaming throughout the state,” said Stephens. “Georgians support the economic opportunities presented by casino resorts, especially jobs and revenue that they would bring to local communities.”

Resorts would be strategically located adjacent to interstates around the state to attract drive-to and drive-through tourism. Thousands of tourists stop in Georgia every year to either change planes en route to destinations around the world, or to buy gas as they travel by car to vacation destinations in Florida and other areas. Casino resorts would seek to capture the business of those tourist as well as serve as planned vacation destinations.

“While it may seem that metro Atlanta would be an obvious location, rural Georgia may very well have better locations,” says City Commercial Real Estate’s Lackey. “In fact, Lavonia in northeast Georgia has one of the best destination resort sites with 5 miles of shoreline on Lake Hartwell within a 500 acre tract.”

Generally, successful destination resorts with casinos draw customers that can easily travel by car and are within 2 to 5 hour drive times of major population centers. The Lavonia site on I-85 at exit 177 is located between Atlanta, Greenville and Charlotte. Population within a 2-hour drive is 8.6 million and within a 5 hour drive the population jumps to 37.6 million. During college football season the property is within a 1-hour drive of both the 93,000 seat Sanford Stadium in Athens and Death Valley's 81,000 seats in Clemson.

“Tax revenue from proceeds is one thing, but there are a lot of general economic development benefits including new hotels, restaurants and entertainment that bring in jobs and local taxes,” said Rep. Alan Powell, (R- Hartwell), Chairman of the Regulated Industries Committee. “There is more at stake than just gambling, and it’s up to the people of Georgia to make the final decision.”

“Designers of The Battery, the popular mixed-use development and home to the Braves, have master planned a mixed used development on the Lavonia property that includes 3 hotels, casinos, an 18-hole championship golf course, conference center, a class A campground, estate homes, senior living, workforce housing, retail, and family entertainment,” added Lackey. “A development of this magnitude would require a capital investment of between $500 million and $1 billion and create between 5000 and 6000 local jobs.”

**About City Commercial Real Estate**

City Commercial Real Estate, Inc. is a boutique commercial real estate brokerage and advisory company based in Atlanta. The company offers more than 35 years of experience in all types of commercial real estate transactions and unparalleled relationships in the commercial real estate and development industry throughout the country. For more information, visit [www.CityCRE.com](http://www.CityCRE.com).