

WinStar spreads its wings

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The Chickasaw Nation is building a new 18-story hotel tower at its WinStar World Casino. (Maiké Sabolich)

THACKERVILLE – The Chickasaw Nation is building a new 18-story hotel tower at its already sprawling WinStar World Casino off Interstate 35 in Thackerville.

Once completed, the 500-room hotel is expected to create about 150 permanent jobs for the area and expand the casino's draw as a regional tourism attraction.

"We believe this new hotel will enhance the positive economic impact WinStar has in this area by employing more local residents and bringing more visitors to the area," Chickasaw Nation Gov. Bill Anoatubby said in a statement.

Construction recently began on the hotel tower next door to the existing 12-story WinStar hotel. The two hotel towers will share a grand entrance, a new pool and a 50,000-square-foot garden filled with landscaping additional pools, spas and other water features.

The hotel addition is slated for completion in summer 2013.

The additional hotel rooms will benefit tourism in the region as a whole, making the casino more of a regional draw for conventions and other events, said Kim Little, executive director of the Arbuckle Country Marketing Association.

"It is definitely a draw for us," Little said. "Typically, we might have lost those people to Louisiana and Las Vegas, but we're giving ... some options (for those) who want to stay in the state."

Construction is also under way on a 54,000-square-foot expansion of the WinStar Casino, which will include more games, two restaurants and a multipurpose room. The roof of the new addition will be topped with a copy of the 12-story stainless steel metal globe called the Unisphere that was commissioned for the 1964 New York World's Fair to commemorate the beginning of the Space Age. Construction on the casino expansion is expected to wrap up this spring.