

Huge water park and sports complex proposed for former casino site

By [Tim Logan](#)

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A site once eyed for a casino in the western Massachusetts town of Palmer could soon be home to a \$650 million water park and youth sports complex.

Developers Wednesday morning will unveil plans for a huge indoor-outdoor sports facility with a resort hotel and two water parks at a 250-acre location near Exit 8 on the Massachusetts Turnpike. It's a bid to draw youth sports teams, and their families, from hundreds of miles around.

"This destination water park, sports resort and spa will draw visitors from throughout the Northeast," said Trip Knox, of The Palmer Sports Group, which is proposing the project. "The strategic location of the resort near the confluence of the Massachusetts Turnpike and in close proximity to Routes 84 and 91 will make it a convenient destination offering sports recreation to meet a growing demand."

A preliminary site map shared by developers shows an array of baseball and soccer fields, "indoor sports bubble," buildings for hockey and basketball and even beach volleyball, along with water parks, a hotel and spa. There are also several dozen townhouses in the complex.

The project, which has been in the works for two years, will need approval from Palmer's Planning Board, and may seek state assistance for street work and other infrastructure in the region.

Located along Route 32, the property where the owners of Mohegan Sun spent several years planning a casino, until voters in the town of about 12,000 narrowly rejected the idea in 2013. Mohegan then signed a deal to build a casino at Suffolk Downs in Revere, but state gaming officials awarded the only Boston-area casino license to Wynn Resorts' project in Everett.

Palmer officials, and the casino site's owner, have been looking for a new use for the massive tract of land ever since. Michael D'Amato, also of the Palmer Sports Group, said he hoped the sports complex, along with the newly opened MGM casino in nearby Springfield, would help cement the area as a tourism destination.

"With the recent opening of the MGM Springfield casino, this represents a synergistic project that will draw even more visitors to the Valley, making Palmer the true gateway to all of Western Massachusetts," D'Amato said.

Tim Logan can be reached at tim.logan@globe.com. Follow him on Twitter at [@bytimlogan](https://twitter.com/bytimlogan).