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# Councilmembers raise concerns over selection process for Glendale parking facility




The owners of the VAI Resort plan to build a public parking garage to support the VAI Resort and surrounding entertainment district in Glendale.

CITY OF GLENDALE DOCUMENTS



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The city of Glendale has moved forward with a construction agreement [for a new \\$71 million parking garage](#) to support the \$1 billion VAI Resort amid an ongoing lawsuit with the Arizona Cardinals.

City Council approved the agreement with North Dakota-based Fisher Sand & Gravel Co. in a 4-2 vote on Feb. 27, after posting a request for qualifications for the project and receiving four bids for the garage.

Fisher Sand & Gravel, which is also developing the massive VAI Resort and Mattel Adventure Park in Glendale through VAI Global Development, is expected to build the five-level garage with more than 3,000 spaces on the city's black lot, which is currently used for State Farm Stadium events and games.

The approval of the design-build construction agreement came a few months after the city publicly unveiled its plans for the new parking garage to support the major resort project.

At the time – prior to the request for qualifications process being posted – city officials said in November that Fisher Sand & Gravel would be paid \$71 million to build the public garage while the city expects to be reimbursed through parking fees.

The city previously said the resort owner could lease and operate the parking facility for 25 years with two 10-year renewal options. The developer would also be able to pay the city \$58 million for the right to retain 77.5% of the net revenue from the parking garage, the city said in November.

## **Arizona Cardinals file suit against Glendale**

Shortly after the city's plans for a garage were unveiled, the Arizona Sports and Tourism Authority and Arizona Cardinals [sued the city of Glendale because of concerns](#) that the proposed parking garage would violate longstanding parking agreements and interfere with major sporting events such as the upcoming NCAA Final Four men's basketball tournament at State Farm Stadium in early April.

A hearing was held for the lawsuit in January after the Cardinals requested a temporary restraining order to prevent the city from moving forward with the garage. A judge has yet to rule on the request for a preliminary injunction.

After the Cardinals filed a lawsuit, Glendale published a request for qualifications in December 2023 for the parking facility with a budget of \$70 million to \$80 million, according to the RFQ. A city report in February said 24 firms attended the pre-submittal conference while four firms submitted statements of qualification for the parking project.

According to the bidding information on the city's website, firms that attended the conference included Mortenson, Kimley-Horn, PK Associates, Okland, Kitchell, Sundt, Chasse, Fisher Sand & Gravel and several others. It's unclear which firms applied other than Fisher Sand & Gravel.

According to a city report, a selection committee "scored Fisher the highest scoring firm and agreed that Fisher demonstrated the capabilities to deliver this project according to the schedule and budgeted outline."

At the Feb. 27 Council meeting, a resident of Glendale's Cholla district pointed out that the city had named Fisher the selected contractor for the parking garage prior to the request for proposals.

"This creates the appearance that the city pre-selected Fisher and that the design-build procurement process was not fair and open," the resident said at the meeting, requesting a continuation of city's vote on the construction agreement.

In the city's budget that was approved in June 2023, the city earmarked an initial \$16 million for a project labeled "VAI parking garage," which was described as an "investment to purchase an equity share of a parking garage to be constructed by the VAI Resort," according to the fiscal year 2023-2024 budget.

"Investment in this parking garage will both assist the city in meeting its contractual parking obligations and help to ensure the success of the VAI Resort," budget documents said, noting that the garage could free up land for development. The VAI Resort parking structure was included in the city's capital improvement program.

## **Glendale councilmembers voice concerns over project**

Councilmember Jamie Aldama, who represents the Ocotillo District, voted against the construction agreement. He said he has not seen data to support the development of a new parking garage in the city's sports and entertainment district. He also raised concerns about the selection process for the contractor.

"We spend more time on RFPs for lower dollar amounts than \$71.5 million," Aldama said during the meeting. "It shouldn't be a practice that the city of Glendale holds on lacking the RFP process or any type of procurement process. This in my opinion has favor written all over it."

"We don't need a parking garage absent the VAI Resort," he added.

Councilmember Laura Tolmachoff of the Cholla District also voted against the agreement due to "a number of concerns," she said at the meeting.

Councilmember Joyce Clark, who represents the the Yucca District, where the VAI Resort is being developed, said she supports a new public parking garage in the city's sports and entertainment district, which she said was "long overdue" and needed as Valley-based YAM Properties builds out more of the parking lots in Westgate.

"This is a public parking garage that will belong to the city of Glendale," she said. Clark said VAI Resort will also include a minimum of 2,500 on-site parking spaces underground or on the surface.

"I think that will go a long way toward meeting the demand they need for parking spaces," she said.

Councilmember Bart Turner also voiced his support for the public parking garage during the meeting.

"I see this as ultimately a classic public-private partnership, I think it will lead to more activity, more tax income for the city and our citizens in that area," Turner said.

The [VAI Resort and Mattel Adventure Park](#) is set to be one of the largest resorts in Arizona with 1,100 hotel rooms across four hotel towers, a \$50 million amphitheater and music venue, luxury shops and dining and other entertainment components in Glendale's sports and entertainment district.

The resort, which recently [secured C3 Presents and Live Nation as event booking partners](#), is expected to have an annual \$32 million impact to the city of Glendale over 25 years.