

## 4 STARS PLANNED FOR MESA GOLF RESORT

*Art Thomason, The Arizona Republic*

**Izhak Ben Shabat sat in Mesa's only golf resort and conference center wondering aloud why more businesses aren't appealing to the city's mid- to high-income consumers. "Mesa's going to be the next boon for the Valley," Ben Shabat said. "It's going to turn around, and this is why we're investing so much in the East Valley."**

More precisely, the managing partner of Tidan USA, a real estate organization, said the company laid out \$160 million last year for property in the Southeast Valley, and that's just the beginning. The investment didn't include the \$23 million Tidan paid last month to buy the Arizona Golf Resort, an acquisition for which the company has elaborate plans.

"We're not talking about changing the world, but we'd like to turn it into a great, three-and-half to four-star resort," Ben Shabat said.

Built in 1968, the sprawling Mediterranean-style resort includes 187 rooms situated in clusters throughout the property and is Mesa's sole 18-hole golf course with conference facilities.

Immediate plans are to add two swimming pools before winter, Ben Shabat said. A cabana and bar also are to be built between the ninth and tenth holes. The biggest changes begin next year after conceptual plans to rebuild and add a second story to the main clubhouse, lounge and dining rooms are refined and approved by the city.

"We're going to open it up and have a huge lobby," he said. "We'll have a great restaurant on the first floor and a high-end pro shop. The second story will include a high-end spa and lounge and high-end dining."

A professional golf course design team will be reviewing the course for improvements, he said.

While the goal is to sharpen the resort's curb appeal and ratchet the furnishings, ambience and food up several notches on the quality chain, Ben Shabat said plans are to keep the popular oasis affordable for the middle-income earner. "We're not talking about dinners that cost hundreds," he said. "You can have better quality and better service without spending a lot. And the level of service is pivotal to what we are doing. It's about training and everyone understanding what we're doing here."

Tidan's plans for the property brought cheers from Mesa Councilman Scott Somers, whose 6th district includes the resort. "Mesa doesn't have a four- or five-star resort," Somers said. "The opportunity to take this and turn it into one is exciting. It's good for the neighborhood and certainly good for east Mesa."

The resort is the second major investment by Tidan in Mesa. Tidan USA purchased the Orange Grove Apartments, a 396-unit complex at 111 N. Gilbert Road last year from Terrace Park Apartments LLC \$25.26 million.

Izhak Ben Shabat, 30, a native of Israel and former captain in the Israel Air Force, started his investment in real estate after helping found a Phoenix-based cosmetics manufacturing and distribution company. The company, Seacret Spa, is one of the largest distributors of cosmetics in the country, he said.

Ben Shabat said Tidan USA is part of Montreal-based Tidan Group and intends to keep expanding in the East Valley. The Tidan Group is commercial office, retail, residential, mixed use industrial and hospitality properties in Canada and the United States.

"They have an opportunity to distinguish themselves with stuff coming into that area that will be below what they intend to do," said Robert Brinton, executive director of the Mesa Convention & Visitors Bureau. "If they come in and get themselves in that higher up category I think it will position them very well for the future market in that area."

TIDAN USA

