

MAJOR MAKEOVER IN THE WORKS FOR EAST VALLEY'S ONLY 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," he said. "It's going to turn around, and this is why we're investing so much in the East Valley."

Ben Shabat, managing partner of Tidan USA, a real estate organization, paid \$23 million last month to buy the Arizona Golf Resort, a property for which the owner has elaborate plans. "We're not talking about changing the world, but we'd like to turn it into a great, 3 1/2- to four-star resort," Ben Shabat said.

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

Ben Shabat wants to add two swimming pools before winter and plans to build a cabana and bar between the course's ninth and 10th holes.

Any proposals require city approval before work can start. A professional design team will review the course for improvements, he said.

"We're going to open it up and have a huge lobby," Ben Shabat 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."

While the goal is to sharpen the resort's curb appeal and ratchet up the ambience and food, Ben Shabat said he wants to keep the popular oasis affordable. "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 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 for \$25.26 million.

In addition, Tidan USA spent \$160 million last year for property in the southeast Valley.

Izhak Ben Shabat, 30, a native of Israel and former captain in the Israel air force, started investing 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 U.S., 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 deals with 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 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."

TIDAN USA

