

## Luxury AT AFFORDABLE PRICES

*Art Thomason, The Arizona Republic*

**Luxury and affordability are two words that would seem to be at cross-purposes. But both are being used to describe the makeover that is transforming Mesa's only resort and conference center.**

Built in 1968, the Arizona Golf Resort features 187 rooms, including 98 suites, and has the city's only 18-hole golf course with conference facilities. Officials are hoping that its metamorphosis will allow Mesa to tap into the Valley's high-end tourism market and lure increased corporate business to the East Valley.

"I think we've had the potential for this type of product for a long time," said Robert Brinton, executive director of the Mesa Convention & Visitors Bureau. "And the timing of it is perfect for tapping not only the Boeings, the Talleys and other major corporations, but the growth of new airlines and new aircraft-service businesses such as Cessna and Embraer at Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport."

Brinton estimated that Cessna and Embraer alone would need between 4,000 to 5,000 room nights a year and would likely pick the Mediterranean-style resort for its amenities and its proximity to Gateway, which is about five miles away.

Tidan USA purchased the resort in April for \$23 million and has big plans for the property. The company has not said how much it is spending on the renovations, but it is clearly pumping money into the property's amenities, building a new 60,000-square-foot clubhouse, a separate gazebo bar and restaurant near the driving range and another swimming pool as well as adding water features and other touches.

The clubhouse's interior, which is divided into a series of dining rooms, a lounge and a pro shop, will be opened up, offering guests sweeping views of the golf course. A second story will be added to make room for a luxury spa and high-end dining, said Izhak Benshabat, managing partner of the resort's ownership organization.

In addition, several of the resort's existing suites are being upgraded to "presidential-level" rooms, with elegant furnishings and state-of-the-art appliances that are found in Scottsdale's better resorts.

Benshabat said the Arizona Golf Club's \$23 million purchase price is allowing him to revamp the resort at a fraction of what it would cost to develop a resort of similar quality and size elsewhere in the Valley.

Those savings, he said, will be passed on to the guests, who will enjoy a luxury experience at an affordable price.

"That's why we'll be able to charge \$300 or so for the type of presidential suite that people pay more than \$700 for in Scottsdale," he said.

The renovations are scheduled to be complete by mid-2009.

Scottsdale architect Bent Severin, who has worked on more than 300 projects for the hospitality industry, said the design of this resort will be unique.

"I don't borrow from my other designs," he said. "You have to create for the space. That's the way you achieve landmarks. It's also important to retain the character of the property and mesh with the environment."