

No slots planned at new mall

BY MARY FRANCES GURTON
STAFF WRITER

ARCADIA An activist group's claim that 240 slot-style gambling machines will make up part of The Shops at Santa Anita planned for Arcadia is incorrect, according to Santa Anita Park and city officials. "As of today, adding Horse Wizard gaming machines is not a part of the plan" for the new development, said George Haines, general manager of Santa Anita Park. Arcadia First "is misinformed and the rumors about what we're doing here are completely false. We have legally offered pari-mutuel wagering since 1934."

The dispute is over a proposal by Caruso Development of a new regional mall, tentatively called The Shops at Santa Anita.

Bernetta Reade, executive director of Arcadia First, a group sponsored by nearby Westfield Santa Anita mall owners, which opposes the new project altogether, said plans for 240 new machines were real and were not properly disclosed.

Reade said she discovered the machines' inclusion in an Architectural Design Review, a document separate from the current Revised Draft Environmental Impact Report on the table for consideration.

"The machines are not talked about anywhere in the environmental documents," she said. "In the absence of full disclosure of all of the impacts of the development, the current [Revised Draft Environmental Impact Report] is inadequate. There needs to be a dialogue about exactly what it is they are planning to do, and that is not happening."

City officials agreed with Haines, saying the claims amounted to a "non-issue."

"Of course we going to analyze all of the impacts of every aspect" of the plan, said City Manager Bill Kelly in a written statement. "We can call for Measures that mitigate the negative environmental impacts of the development... We do not, however, have the right to stop Santa Anita from trying to increase attendance at their facility that they feel would make their business more successful."

Haines said the park has offered patrons the use of 47 of the "little-used" machines, which are regulated by the California Horse Racing Board and not the city, for several years.

"We are a horse-wagering enterprise," he added, "that is what we are in business to do."

People using the machines, which have the look and feel of slot machines, are actually betting on a real horse race that is taking place somewhere else in the country, according to Haines. In the past, park officials have backed legislation, at one point even proposing their own initiative, to approve the use of some slot machines at race tracks.

"But I don't foresee such a law being passed in California," Haines said.



WALT MANCINI / STAFF

NOT WELCOME: Residents and a business group oppose the possible addition of about 160 Horse Wizard gaming machines, like these at Santa Anita Racetrack, at Santa Anita Mall.