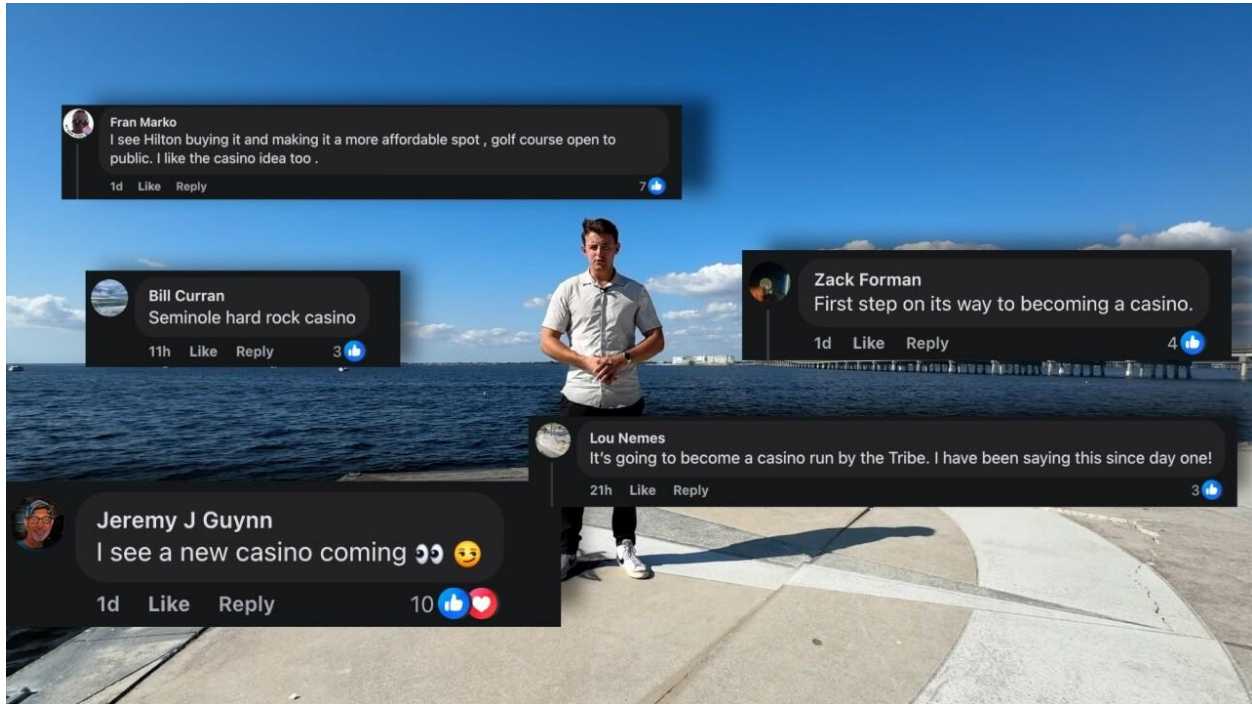




## NEVER GOING TO HAPPEN: Experts say a casino at Sunseeker is not in the cards

Rumors of the Sunseeker Resort turning into a casino have circulated since construction began.



Could the Sunseeker Resort turn into a casino? Experts say its not in the cards.

By: [Alex Orenczuk](#) Posted 9:50 PM, Feb 06, 2025

PORT CHARLOTTE, Fla. — After Allegiant Travel Co announced it was selling at least a [majority stake](#) in the Sunseeker Resort on Tuesday, rumors of the resort being turned into a casino began to circulate online.

The rumors of a casino at the resort first started during its construction. The resort opened in Dec. 2023 after delays from COVID and Hurricane Ian, pushing the building \$225 million over budget.

The misfortune continued for the luxury resort, as it has reported low occupancy and earnings in its 13 months of business. Now Allegiant plans to cut its losses, hoping to have the sale completed by the summer.

While dozens of comments online call for the resort to rebrand into a casino, experts say that's not in the cards.

“Never going to happen,” said Bob Jarvis, a law professor at Nova Southeastern University. “And the reason for that is because we do not permit casinos that are not run by the Seminoles or the Miccosukees.”

Attorney Kevin Jursinski has litigated against the state and local governments in several gaming cases. He doubled down, saying the idea of turning Sunseeker into a casino was a bust.

“I don’t think the Sunseeker would be able to qualify to have gaming or a casino,” said Jursinski. “There’s things that they could do under certain exemptions but it’s not going to be a full blown casino, not going to happen.”



Anvar Ruziev - WFTX

Jursinski explained that the exemptions are in regard to 'Pari-Mutuel' organizations like horse racing tracks and Jai Alai facilities that can open card rooms, this too he said is unlikely for Sunseeker.

He said other exemptions are made for fraternal organizations that are able to play 'instant-bingo' also known as pull tabs.

“The limited exemptions that they could get, I don't really think would fit there,” said Jursinski.

Jarvis told Fox 4 that even if the Seminoles purchased the resort, federal law would prevent the Tribe from making it into a casino.

“The statute says that you have to have that gambling on Indian land, and an Indian tribe that is simply buying property, that property does not automatically become Indian land,” explained Jarvis.

He said in that case, the Tribe would have to get the federal government to designate the land as Indian land.

“The Seminoles would then have to try to get the U.S. Department of the Interior to take that property where Sunseeker sits and take it into a trust for the Tribe,” said Jarvis. “And that’s just not going to happen.”



Fox 4 - Sunseeker Resort.

In another hypothetical, if a non-tribal company wanted to turn Sunseeker into a casino, it would take a statewide voter referendum to approve expanding gambling to those such companies.

“That's why you don't see large Las Vegas companies like Sands or Wynn or MGM trying to come into Florida because it's just basically impossible,” said Jarvis. “So, I don't know who started the rumors about Sunseeker but they don't know what they're talking about, there's absolutely no chance and we can move on.”

Allegiant has stated representatives from Hilton and Marriott have toured the property, and other experts have told Fox 4 that it will likely be a [hospitality industry giant](#) who buys the property.

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