

NEW: Latest golf course-to-housing project is a 436-unit development in Delray

By Mike Diamond

Palm Greens in Delray Beach is the latest Palm Beach County golf course that will be converted to a housing project.

County commissioners will decide Thursday whether to grant final approval for Delray Trails, a 436-unit housing project that will be built on the 110-acre, 18-hole golf course that closed in 2016. The Palm Beach County Zoning Commission has approved it.

The developer, 13th Floor Homes, will build 164 single family homes, 180 two-story town homes and 92 coach homes along with 28 acres of lakes and walking trails. Like Palm Greens, Delray Trails will be a 55+ community and will be part of the Palm Greens development.

Palm Greens currently consists of 2,864 housing units divided into two associations. Delray Trails will have its own association.

13th Floor is seeking a "Development Order Amendment" to reconfigure the final master plan for Palm Greens to add residential units.

Initial plans called for a fire-rescue station to be built at Delray Trails on a 2.4-acre tract of land but opposition from Palm Greens resulted in a decision to relocate the facility.

"This is a win-win for everyone concerned," said Susan Herman, president of Palm Greens Condo 2. "It will be a wonderful facelift for us."

Palm Greens is more than 40 years old. 13th Floor has agreed to build a 25,000- square-foot clubhouse with a patio, three pools, four additional tennis courts, four pickle ball courts along with bocce ball and shuffleboard courts.

Herman said the clubhouse "will be state of the art" that will be available for all of Palm Greens to use. Ken Tuma of Urban Design Kilday Studios in West Palm Beach, the builder's agent, said the agreement to build new recreational facilities was essential in gaining support of the condominium associations. The current clubhouse will remain open until the new one is completed at Delray Trails, according to Herman.

13th Floor Home's Division President Mike Nunziata said the process was a "collaborative one" that resulted in a final product that will work for existing and future residents.

Golf course conversions are part of a national trend. According to data from the National Golf Foundation, participation in golf in the United States declined by nearly 20% from 2003 to 2014.

In Boynton Beach, Indian Spring Country Club sold to Concert Golf Partners of Newport Beach, Calif. Concert Golf already has poured money into upgrading the facility. Concert Golf also bought The Fountains Country Club in suburban Lake Worth.

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Polo Trace Golf Club in Delray Beach was sold to a developer.

Palm Greens residents overwhelmingly voted to approve the project. The community is located west of Military Trail, east of Jog Road and between the Lake Worth Drainage District L-29 Canal and Lake Ida Road.

Zoning Commission Chair Sheri Scarborough praised the developer and the condominium associations for working together to resolve differences, noting that this is how the process is supposed to work.

Tuma told zoning commissioners there were 16 meetings since December 2017 with Palm Greens representatives to develop a project that would be acceptable to the community. "We have come a long way from that first meeting," he said.

Unlike the Fountains, the golf course at Palm Greens was always privately owned. Homeowners were not called upon to pay maintenance fees to operate it. The golf course owner could not profitably operate it.

Herman said the Palm Greens community looks forward to the Delray Trails development as it will be a significant improvement over living next to a shuttered golf course.

Construction is expected to be completed sometime in 2022, according to papers submitted to the county.