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August 2021

Colleton River Continues to Refine and Redefine Private Lowco...

By Scott Kauffman

When visionary developer Charles Fraser created Sea Pines on Hilton Head Island in 1962, the course put South Carolina on the golf map and the sustainable residential resort-style development became the model for eco-friendly master-planned golf communities for decades to come.



Nearly 60 years later and not far from the iconic 5,200-acre resort community that annually plays host to the PGA Tour RBC Heritage, developers and architects are still applying Fraser's timeless and thoughtful land planning principles. Along a nearby stretch of U.S. Route 278 on the mainland in Bluffton, South Carolina, however, the developments are being done at a whole new level to be sure.

Indeed, Sea Pines is known for being one of the first master-planned golf course residential developments along the East Coast, and certainly the most innovative resort development of its time. The numerous upscale private golf club developments dotted along Highway 278 are synonymous with private club living at its finest.

One place that continues to refine and redefine this compelling and luxurious Lowcountry lifestyle is Colleton River, which was developed by William "Bill" Goodwin Jr., who now owns Sea Pines and Kiawah Island Golf Resort.

When Colleton River opened nearly 30 years ago just 1.5 miles from the bridgehead to Hilton Head Island, the club was an immediate hit with a Jack Nicklaus Signature course and world-class 30,000-square-foot clubhouse situated on 1,500 pristine acres surrounded by seven miles of scenic shoreline. After adding another top-ranked layout designed by Pete Dye in 1998, along with another 20,000-square-foot clubhouse to go with an Augusta National-style par-3 course, Colleton River's reputation was cemented as one of the best private golf club communities in America.

Now fully owned by the resident members, including the recent acquisition of 100 remaining prime homesites from the original developer, Colleton River is about to embark on another important chapter in the club's evolution to ensure its future sustainability as not only one of the best overall gated waterfront golf clubs in the country, but one that remains as relevant as ever from a non-golf perspective.

That partly explains the club's recent approval for a \$16.5 million "Amenities Project" that will "enhance the quality of life for existing members while supporting the growth and real estate objectives of Colleton's revitalization plan," the club recently announced. Another strategic fiscal component to the club's future is the introduction of a limited number of new "lifestyle memberships" to go with the club's goal of approximately 600 full-time golf memberships that now cost \$35,000. Lifestyle memberships will have the same initiation fees according to general manager/chief operating officer Tim Bakels.

Award-winning Kuo Diedrich Chi Architects, Colleton River Club management and a resident-led "Renovation Task Force" collaborated for the past year in framing a vision for the new amenity improvements. Bakels says the club should start construction at the end of 2021 with a completion date in 2023. Among the future plans being designed by the KDC team of architects/planners: a new 11,000-square-foot plus fitness complex and wellness center; new poolside cafe, numerous bocce and pickleball courts; new six-court tennis center, and striking renovations Dye Clubhouse to feature expanded dining and food-and-beverage venues.

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Certainly one of the highlights of the major amenities project will be the newly reimagined Dye Clubhouse and its signature new restaurant and "sweeping indoor-outdoor bar" that overlooks one of Colleton River's more picturesque waterfront points, according to KDC principal Howard Kuo.

Bakels, hired by Colleton River in 2013 after running esteemed private clubs such as Hamilton Farm Golf Club in Gladstone, New Jersey, and Desert Highlands in Scottsdale, is equally as excited about the ongoing foodie revolution sweeping through the private club industry and about to come to Colleton River.

"We're going to be turning the Dye Clubhouse into one of the top restaurants in the Lowcountry," Bakels adds. "First of all, the views are second to none from the top floor. It's going to be hip; it's going to be trendy; it's going to be social; and we're going to be serving high-end food and the best quality products that are all locally sourced. It's going to be perfect."

In some respects, it's private club perfection that not even Charles Fraser could have ever imagined.

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