

Beckett Ridge Golf Club's New Owner Plans Improvements, Additions



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The new owner of Beckett Ridge Golf Club plans to preserve the course and is considering a future new development on the prime spot of Butler County real estate.

The 158-acre golf course was purchased by John Gilbert, of West Chester Twp., this past May.

Gilbert is working to upgrade the grounds and facilities at the club, which was founded in 1975. He said the club had become worn down a bit under a previous owner who lives in Florida and owned about 10 other courses.

“I’d like to maintain the course ... and then clean it up,” said Gilbert of the site, which was once private but has been a community course for at least the past seven years.

With other Butler County golf courses shutting down, Gilbert decided to spend nearly \$2 million to purchase the site, according to records with the Butler County Auditor’s Office.

“We’re being given feedback that the course is in the best condition it’s been in 20 years,” he said.

Gilbert’s “ultimate” plan for the site would be to construct two, eight-story buildings for an assisted living facility with three levels of care.

“There’s some space up here where we could still maintain the benefits of the community with the golf course but we can also help out the seniors,” he said. “I read a report that says West Chester is very much in need of assisted living and senior living housing and the demographics for it are prime.”

The assisted living would be integrated not just with the golf course, but also with the community, he said.

“You figure these folks have a lot of grandchildren in the area, they’re going to frequent Union Centre, they’re going to frequent Liberty Center, they’re going to go out for brunch,” Gilbert said. “They’re quiet, they don’t need a lot of parking, yet they pay taxes and support the community through shopping and spending.”

He said the use is “a good fit” versus some of the other allowable land uses for the site.

“There’s no restrictions on the 158 acres. They expired after 25 years ... in 2000,” he said. “There were some proposed layouts that show 268 homes, but that’s not the direction that I want to go.”

The property offers sweeping views of much of the surrounding area, including downtown Cincinnati, Gilbert said.

“The views here are the best in West Chester,” he said. “At night it looks like Los Angeles because of all the lights. It’s beautiful.”

Craig Fanning, a general manager of the golf club in 1980-1982 and a former co-owner, said the fact that Gilbert lives locally means he can devote more time and energy to the course and “stay on top of things.”

“That, in and of itself, contributes a lot to the success of the operation,” Fanning said. “He’s made a lot of improvement and ... he’s got a lot of good ideas and is looking to do a lot more.”