



# Gardens Golf is Growing

by Casey Mitchell, Director of Golf

**“There hasn’t been this much optimism and new activity in the golf business since the turn of the century.”**

Those are the words of Joe Beditz, President and C.E.O. of the National Golf Foundation in an April 2021 article. His comments reflect something everyone in the Golf world realized in 2020: Golf is at an all-time high.

Despite the pandemic and its positive effect on golf across the nation, traffic at Sandhill Crane Golf Club has held steady with 40,000-45,000 annual rounds for over the last decade. In 2013, Palm Beach Gardens began exploring their options for acquiring land and expanding the golf course offerings.

As part of an agreement with the developers of Avenir, the City acquired roughly 115 acres which was earmarked for recreational use. Community involvement charettes held in 2013 and 2015, alongside a professional market study done by True Club Solutions in 2020, all came to the same conclusion—public golf trends in our area are on the rise. Demand indices of the golfing household participation rate within 10 miles of Sandhill Crane Golf Club are at 25% above the national average and seasonal household

participation rates are at 57% above the national average. With planned construction of 3,100 residences to the west of Sandhill Crane Golf Club over the next 20+ years in the Ancient Tree and Avenir developments, a Town Center that houses retail outlets, restaurants, a proposed hotel, and a large office complex, it was clear that the economic growth of western Palm Beach Gardens favors additional recreational development.

As part of the market study, an evaluation of industry trends and use-maximization of the property were also reviewed. Three quotes were received by course designers to provide cost-estimates, proposals, and ultimately a recommendation of use and amenities that best fit the needs of the residents and the available funding for the project. City and Golf Administration, True Club Solutions, and Nicklaus Design were all in concurrence that a Par-



3 golf course was the best choice for the City’s western golf expansion.

Accompanying the Par-3 course is a two-story driving range with Top Tracer Technology – an innovative practice tool used by the PGA Tour that provides players valuable data such as shot distance, height, and ball speed. The range will also allow players the ability to compete against other players world-wide in long drive, capture the flag, or nearest to the pin competitions and affords them the opportunity to play virtual golf on iconic, world-class



golf courses such as Pebble Beach or St. Andrews. Players will be able to track and store their statistics, analyze multiple data points, and record and share videos of their swing all at the tip of their fingers.

A Solicitation for Qualifications opened in February 2021 for the design of the Par-3 golf course and accompanying practice facilities. Seven respondents were assessed with the contract awarded in March to the highest-ranking firm by committee evaluation, Nicklaus Design. Concurrently, Golf and Community Services Administrative staff worked with Ohlson Lavoie, an architecture design firm, on a 14,000 square foot satellite clubhouse which is slated to incorporate eighteen covered driving range bays on two stories, a golf shop with retail, two multipurpose rooms opening to the range for event rental, office space with a conference room, a second-floor indoor/outdoor bar, a first-floor outdoor bar, and food and beverage concessions to service both the clubhouse and driving range.

These improvements will not be funded through “tax dollars”. On January 20, 2021,

a Public Improvement Bond was issued to the City in the amount of \$14,000,000. This bond will be paid back through recreation impact fees, non-ad valorem golf revenues, and the non-ad valorem unrestricted golf fund revenues. Annual revenue contributions of the expansion are also used to pay back the bond.

The overall goal of the course is for it to be a strategic, yet playable, design with several template greens adding character and enjoyment to the holes ranging from 69 to 253 yards. The star of the course is the 19th hole island green which will be used for the ongoing charity shootout initiative that was founded in 2018 in an effort to raise funds for our local non-profits.

Palm Beach Gardens is excited to expand the recreational offerings, bringing the work of a world-renowned course designer, tour player, and Majors Champion to the City to create a fun and inclusive atmosphere for our residents and guests. The Sandhill Crane Golf Club Par-3 is tentatively scheduled for its grand opening in November 2022 where we hope to see you on the links!

**PROPOSED PAR-3 COURSE FEATURES:**

- ▶ 3,100-yard Par-3
- ▶ 18-holes plus a 19th “Shoot-out”/ Tie-Breaker Island Green Hole
- ▶ 18 feet of elevation changes
- ▶ Holes ranging from 69 to 253 yards

**OTHER PROPOSED AMENITIES:**

- ▶ 14,000 square foot satellite clubhouse with second-story driving range bays
- ▶ Outdoor event area
- ▶ Grass Driving Range
- ▶ 35,000 square foot Putting Course
- ▶ Food and beverage options
- ▶ Golf Shop
- ▶ Multipurpose and Event Rental Space

**OPPOSITE PAGE** (top): The satellite clubhouse will feature a second-story driving range.  
**OPPOSITE PAGE** (inset): The outdoor event area will include an outdoor bar.  
**THIS PAGE** (top): Sandhill Crane Golf Club’s proposed Par-3 course designed by Nicklaus Design.