Cliffs to open new golf course

Mountain Park green to be ready next year

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On the heels of emerging from bankruptcy protection a week earlier, the Cliffs announced Thursday that it planned to complete and open its Gary Player-designed golf course in the fall of 2013.

The Cliffs at Mountain Park Golf Course, located off scenic Highway 11 in northern Greenville County, will become the seventh golf course in the Cliffs Communities. The course accompanies a planned 5,000-acre residential development set against the mountain backdrop of the Blue Ridge Escarpment.

The course was designed by Gary Player, the world famous golfer and internationally known golf course designer, who moved the North American headquarters of his company, Black Knight International, to Greenville County to locate next to the course.

The announcement comes a week after two Cliffs Communities units emerged from Chapter 11 bankruptcy under a new ownership group called Silver Sun Partners with what the company says is fresh capital to stabilize its country clubs and increase the value of real estate in the private luxury communities.

"I have a tremendous amount of optimism for the future of The Cliffs under the new ownership, especially our project at Mountain Park that will be open for play in the fall of next year," Player said in a press release.

"I continue to enjoy my relationship with The Cliffs and hope to enjoy many more trips to the area as the construction of the course continues."

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The Mountain Park development was Cliffs founder Jim Anthony's most ambitious project when it was announced in 2006. Plans called for 1,500 homes built to surround the course on forested mountains. A European-style village with a mix of condominiums and commercial space began to take shape next to a 13-acre lake next to the course.

Construction stalled after the Cliffs ran into financial trouble that eventually resulted in bankruptcy.

This marks the first announcement since Silver Sun, a partnership between The Carlile Group, Arendale Holdings and SunTx Urbana, said it planned to resume development of amenities that had stalled.

Silver Sun has designated Cliffs Club Partners to manage its club operations and Cliffs Land Partners to handle its real estate sales, according to the release.

The course was about 70 percent complete with some holes nearly finished while others had been roughly graded by this spring. Grassing of the course is expected to be completed over the next several weeks.

The Saluda River divides the Mountain Park course through its heart with holes on either side of the river and a cart-bridge across the expanse. The river location drew concerns from conservation groups throughout design and construction over fears of wastewater discharge into the river, as well as alterations to the channel.

Player scaled down plans to alter the river and use it as a playable hazard. A 25-foot riparian buffer was left along the river banks, and the design group said in the release it designed the course to the highest environmental standards.

"We paid close attention to making the fairways firmer, not use as much water, not use as much fertilizer and take full advantage of the natural characteristics of the land," said Scott Ferrell, president of Gary Player Design.