New owner to develop The Cliffs village space

Delayed project at Mountain Park is expected to begin next month

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When golf legend Gary Player arrived by helicopter at The Cliffs at Mountain Park a decade ago to announce plans for the golf course his company was designing there, part of the vision was a village-style commercial development at its hub.

Work on the Village at Mountain Park, as it was called, began, but its development stalled with the 2008 housing crisis.

This week, a new owner closed on the 18-acre property near the intersection of U.S. 25 and State 11, and the dream of a village with residential, commercial, retail, medical and office space – open to the public – is on its way to being fulfilled.

"People will see this village and it will become, I think, in itself a destination," said Steve Hamblen of Fairview Builders, the developer.

Construction is scheduled to start in the first quarter of 2017. A completion date hasn't been announced.

The roads and utilities, and some businesses, including a dental practice, several doctors' offices and the Cliffs Information Center, are already in place. The Cliffs at Mountain Park Wellness Center will open at the site in January.

"So in a way it's just like moving in and building it out to what everyone thought was going to happen," Hamblen said.

A veterinary office and a wine and cheese shop are among businesses that have expressed interest in operating at the Village, said Kent Smith, president of Cliffs and Partners. This will cut down on travel time for residents who go to Greenville or Hendersonville, North Carolina, for some goods and services, Smith said.

"It will offer conveniences not only to those property owners but

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VILLAGE AT MOUNTAIN PAR

ge at Mountain Park will span 18 acres and feature residential, commercial, retail, medical and office space.

Village

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the residents of northern Greenville County as well," he said. "It will morph into kind of a hub for conveniences and socializing for fellow members."

Now that the housing market has recovered and the Cliffs has experienced healthy sales – more than $100 million in 2016, with 125 houses currently under construction – the time was right to go ahead with the village's construction, Smith said.

The Village at Mountain Park will include 10 luxury waterfront homes with panoramic golf course views, a bed and breakfast, assisted and independent living facilities and a public square with retail and commercial space.

Although the Gary Player Group, which originally planned on operating its golf course design business from there, has moved its operation to downtown Greenville, the new development marks another sign of the continuing recovery of The Cliffs, which went into bankruptcy during the Great Recession.

Founded in 1991 by Jim Anthony, a former telephone company lineman, The Cliffs encompassed thousands of acres of scenic, luxury resort-style developments in the Upstate and western North Carolina and was hitting its stride by 2006 with the likes of Gary Player and Tiger Woods designing golf courses. Player planned to move his world headquarters there, an idea later abandoned as the demand for new golf courses crashed along with the economy after 2008.

A new company called Silver Sun Partners re-assembled many of the pieces of Anthony's former empire by 2013.

Community leaders say the importance of The Cliffs to the Upstate goes beyond the more than 500 jobs that the communities provide.

In addition to the payroll, The Cliffs generates property tax revenue for local governments and draws affluent newcomers who donate to schools and patronize downtown restaurants.

Cliffs marketing — amounting to more than $10 million a year in its heyday, according to a former top salesman — gave the Upstate national exposure and meant business for local advertising firms.

And conservationists say The Cliffs plays a key role in maintaining the character of Scenic Highway 11.