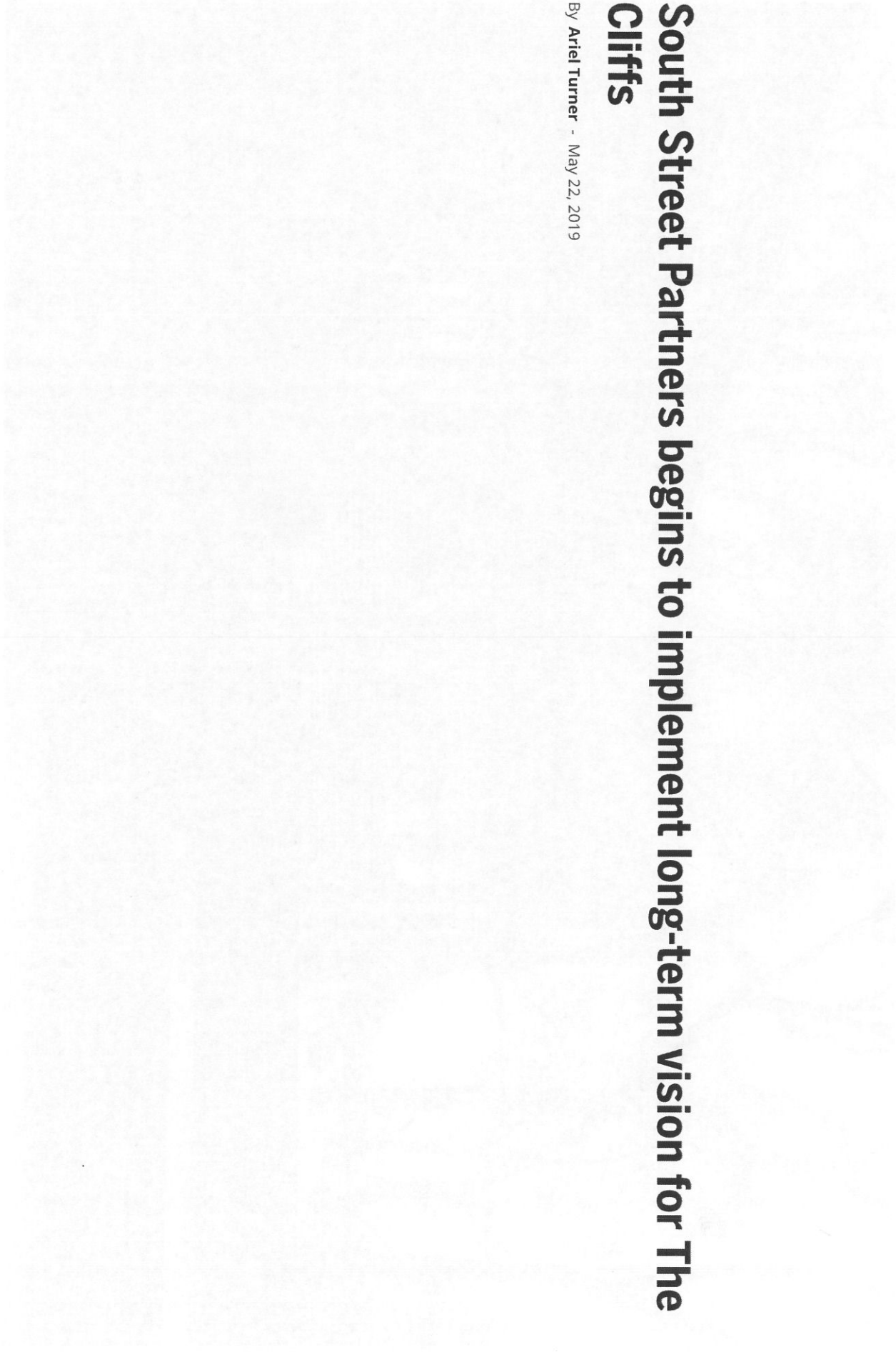


South Street Partners begins to implement long-term vision for The Cliffs

By Ariel Turner - May 22, 2019





The Marsh House at Kiawah Island. Courtesy of Kiawah Island Real Estate/Photography by Patrick O'Brien

"The last thing we needed was another golf course."

Chris Randolph of South Street Partners – the new owners of The Cliffs communities – remembers thinking that after the group acquired Kiawah Partners in 2013 and were determining what to do with a large centrally located piece of land on Kiawah Island, which already had half a dozen notable courses.

Instead of the somewhat expected usage for a property large enough for 18 holes, the group transformed the land into a park accessible to all residents and suitable for all ages. And it turns out, homes facing the park became some of the most valuable residential real estate in the area, Randolph says.

Kiawah Partners, along with the exclusive brokerage Kiawah Island Real Estate and the private club component Kiawah Island Club, encompasses multiple private communities, club houses, and golf courses, many of which were in need of updating, or in some cases, a complete overhaul, when Charleston- and Charlotte-based South Street Partners acquired the assets.

Since 2013, in addition to the creation of the park, the ownership group completely renovated The Beach House club house with a new restaurant from celebrated Charleston chef Mike Lata; brought in the expertise of chef Tom Colicchio, the New York restaurateur seen on Bravo TV's Top Chef, to oversee the Cassique club restaurant; built The Marsh House, a modern oasis with infinity pool overlooking the marsh; and continues to implement other changes while looking for ways to keep the golf communities not only thriving, but also attractive to a new and younger generation of club members.



The new Beach Club restaurant from Charleston chef Mike Lata on Kiawah Island. Courtesy of Kiawah Island Real Estate/Photography by Patrick O'Brien

They also jumped in with significant charitable giving and involvement in the Lowcountry in the areas of education, healthcare, and providing employment for the surrounding low-income residents.

It's those types of strategic decisions at Kiawah that give insight into what South Street Partners has planned for The Cliffs' future, including participation in the Greenville area non-profit community, bolstering an already active club, enhancing dining amenities, creating an option for guests and potential buyers to experience The Cliffs on a short-term basis, and starting a home-building company exclusive to the communities.

Some of those long-term plans have already been set in motion.

Since acquiring the collection of seven private luxury mountain and lake club communities in the western Carolina mountains on Feb. 28, South Street Partners logged Q1 sales 30 percent higher than last year's and broke ground on The Cliffs at Keowee Vineyards Lakehouse Randolph says will be similar to The Marsh House concept of fitting in with the surroundings and providing the wow factor.



The Marsh House on Kiawah Island. Courtesy of Kiawah Island Real Estate/Photography by Patrick O'Brien

Designed by Paul Zugg, of Signature Architects in Clemson, The Lakehouse will feature natural materials and colors that complement the Lake Keowee setting.

"This project aligns strongly with our vision to take The Cliffs communities to new heights through a well-rounded, lifestyle-focused approach to the private club experience," said South Street partner Will Culp previously of the Lakehouse addition.

The Cliffs and South Street Partners also announced recently that Rob Duckett will assume the role of president of The Cliffs and vice president of operations for South Street Partners, effective June 1. In this role, Duckett will oversee day-to-day operations of The Cliffs' three divisions: Cliffs Clubs, Cliffs Land, and Cliffs Realty.



Rob Duckett, newly named president of The Cliffs. Photo courtesy of The Cliffs

With more than 30 years of experience working in hospitality management and 23 years in private club management, Duckett joins The Cliffs after 16 years with Discovery Land Company, where South Street partner Jordan Phillips and managing partner Patrick Melton also previously worked.

Most recently, Duckett served as general manager and chief executive officer of Mountaintop Golf and Lake Club in Cashiers, North Carolina.

"Adding Rob to the team is an important step in the initial phase of our long-range operating plan at The Cliffs," Melton said. "In addition to his decades of experience, Rob has a proven track record of success in private club management at some of the nation's most admired clubs. We look forward to his contributions as we continue to elevate all aspects of The Cliffs experience for current and future homeowners and members."



From left to right: South Street Partners Will Culp, Jordan Phillips, Patrick Melton, and Chris Randolph. Courtesy of Kiawah Island Real Estate/Photography by Patrick O'Brien

Phillips said when he and Melton were developing communities in the Cashiers area with Discovery Land Company, they always looked at The Cliffs as a potential opportunity, but waited until the timing was right.

"Greenville for us has always been in our sights from our investment perspective. Watching the downtown grow and have all the investment coming into the river front area – it's been incredible to watch," Randolph says. "Seeing Greenville's growth gave us that much more conviction."

One of the over-arching goals with The Cliffs is to connect the communities more to Greenville, Randolph says.

Culp says South Street's investment in The Cliffs is long-term and the partners intend to become part of the Greenville community in both business and personal ways.

"We're around for the long haul," he says.



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