

Southridge Golf Course developer talks about the latest changes

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GRAPHIC COURTESY REGGIE SANTILLI BERESFORD RESERVE — The latest plans for Beresford Reserve, a 168-acre development planned on the former Southridge Golf Course in DeLand. When the development last came to the DeLand City Commission, the plan was for 709 units of residential housing. Now, that's down to 615: 47 single-family homes on 40-foot-wide lots, 139 single-family homes on 50-foot-wide lots, 37 single-family homes on 60-foot-wide lots, 49 single-family homes on 70-foot-wide lots, 189 rental town homes and 154 other town homes. The park on the development's northeast side has grown, too, to nearly double the size it was when the development first came before the City Commission in May of this year. The park, now a public park, will also include a volleyball court, a pickleball court and a sculpture garden.

A 168-acre housing development proposed for the former Southridge Golf Course, on East Beresford Avenue between South Boston and South Hill Avenues, in DeLand has been transformed. The number of homes has been reduced again, and a planned 10-acre private park has morphed to 21 acres, and it will be a park open to the public.

Organized, persistent and vocal opposition to what was initially an 800-home plan has changed it into a better, more community-minded project, developer Owais Khanani said.

Khanani is a managing partner with [Elevation Development](#). He said opposition this loud to a proposed development is “an anomaly,” but all projects, wherever they’re being built, come with challenges.

“We’ve done projects where there’s pushback, but once the neighbors understand what we’re proposing really benefits the area, we just have to go through various committee meetings and City Commission meetings just to satisfy the members. That’s what matters, right?” Khanani told *The Beacon*. “I wouldn’t say this is more or less than some of the

other challenges we face, it's just the challenges we're facing, and we're committed to successfully moving through the process."



*PHOTO COURTESY OWAIS
KHANANI
Owais Khanani*

The challenges of transforming the southeast DeLand parcel into Beresford Reserve include pesticides like arsenic and dieldrin that are commonly found in the soil of former golf courses. There's also detritus buried in a former borrow pit on the property. Khanani said the Elevation team knows what needs to be done and is working toward resolving those challenges if the project is approved.

This isn't Khanani's or Elevation Development's first foray into DeLand or West Volusia. The company is also developing Lincoln Oaks, a 266-home subdivision on North Orange Avenue near the AdventHealth DeLand hospital, and the 170-home Liberty Station in Orange City.

Khanani said the opposition to Beresford Reserve has made it a better project.

The biggest change since the plan was last seen by DeLandites is the project's density. When the DeLand City Commission first reviewed the development in May, the maximum density called for 861 units. When the project came back a month later, that was down to 709. The new figure, as of the latest plans provided to *The Beacon*, is 615 units.



The former plans for the development included more homes and less green space.

Another big change is the park.

As originally proposed, a park of roughly 10 acres would sit on top of an area that was used in the 1950s as a sand mine, or borrow pit, according to environmental studies. If you ask locals who lived in DeLand at the time, “borrow pit” is a fancy name for “dump.”

Soil testing indicated the pit contains demolition materials common for such borrow pits like glass, concrete and other detritus. Members of the public complained, after seeing historical maps and soil-testing results, that the park did not cover the entirety of the borrow pit.



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The new plans show a 21.3-acre public park with a volleyball court, a pickleball court, a sculpture garden and a putting green — seemingly a nod to Beresford Reserve’s past life as a golf course.

The amount of green space, overall, has nearly doubled. In June, the project included 27.65 acres of green space. Now, roughly 50 acres will stay green.

All these changes — from reducing the density to putting a sculpture garden where most subdivisions have a few benches and maybe a fountain — have definitely reduced the amount of money Elevation will make, Khanani said.

“We’ve been so deep into this project, that rather than ... walking away, we were like, listen, we’re already financially tied to it, how do we make it work?” he said. “It’s a different financial model. It’s not just that we’re losing lots; we’re contributing more, but it’s a project that I think we would be proud of once it’s said and done.”

Even with all of the pushback from the community on Beresford Reserve, Khanani said, he would be happy to work in the DeLand area again.

“DeLand is a very strong market, and it’s going to continue to grow. A lot of people may not like to hear that, but that’s the reality of it,” Khanani said. “For developers, there are opportunities there. It’s a market that I’d love to do additional projects in given the opportunity.”

Beresford Reserve is expected to return to the DeLand City Commission for a vote in late October or early November.

The DeLand City Commission meets at 7 p.m. on the first and third Monday of every month at DeLand City Hall, 120 S. Florida Ave.

All meetings are open to the public and can also be listened to live, online, [HERE](#).

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