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THE LIST

New course to debut soon south of Austin

ELSEWHERE IN THE REGION, GOLF COURSES AND CLUBHOUSES GET A REFRESH

The first new public golf course to be built in Texas in five years is expected to open soon.

Kissing Tree Golf Course will debut this summer as part of a new 55-plus adult community by the same name that recently opened in San Marcos. It is an 18-hole course designed by Gary Stephenson and will be open to the public, according to an announcement.

By the time it opens, the course will be accredited as a Signature Program facility, a certification granted by Audubon International that means it is committed to sustainable resource management such as using natural fertilizers and reclaimed water.

Originally set to open in late 2017, the debut is now set for July of this year, though a few select players have already given the course a try. Troon Golf LLC of Scottsdale, Arizona, will manage course operations. Josh Clay is the club's general manager and Justin Becker is director of agronomy. The director of golf and head PGA professional have not yet been hired.

The Kissing Tree neighborhood — located on 1,332 acres just west of the San Marcos Premium Outlets — will include up to 3,200 homes when completely built out and is one of the largest developments to ever hit the fast-growing city between Austin and San Antonio.

The name is derived from Texas Gov. Sam Houston's affection for the ladies, who were attending his gubernatorial speech delivered in front of a mighty oak tree in San Marcos in 1857.

Other notable new courses to open in Texas in recent years include one in Dallas called Trinity Forest Golf Course, which is built on a landfill and hosts Southern Methodist University's golf team. Closer to Houston in Montgomery, Bluejack National took itself as the first U.S. course designed by pro golfer Tiger Woods. Both courses opened in 2016 and are private.

Local renovations, sales

Omni Barton Creek in West Austin is updating the irrigation system and redesigning bunkers, doing native-area restoration and sand-capping work at its Fazio Foothills course.

It's expected to reopen around July and is part of a \$150 million renovation that will add 180 rooms in a new tower and refresh or expand the spa, dining areas, event pavilion, conference center, infinity pool and tennis complex.

The resort's two courses, Fazio Canyon and Fazio Foothills, are ranked Nos. 1 and 3 respectively for best golf courses in Texas, based on a 2016-2017 ranking published by Golf Magazine.

Forest Creek, which is north of Austin, is under new management by Kemper Sports Inc. of Illinois as of January.

The course is undergoing a renovation and is expected to reopen by August.

The city of Round Rock is investing \$5.1M to rebuild the greens, renovate bunkers, replace the irrigation system, repair or replace bridges, prune trees and update the driving range.

Also of note north of Austin, Sun City's White Wing Golf Course and Cimarron Hills Golf Course both completed renovations in 2017.

On the west side of the region, Lago Vista Golf Club's Highland Lakes Course is closed and in the process of being sold by the city of Lago Vista. Local real estate veteran David Buttross is the buyer. He anticipates the deal will close by May and the course will reopen at a later date. Lago Vista Golf Club's other public course called the Lago Vista Course is not part of

the sale and remains open.

Pine Forest Golf Club in Bastrop was also sold in December to Buttross. The course is open but Buttross plans to spend about \$1 million in renovations to add event space, a boat dock and upscale camping options.

— Patricia Rogers, @AJHeserzcher

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