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Real Estate

Jack Nicklaus is right at home at Creighton Farms in northern Virginia; you will be, too

ALDIE, Va. -- It's taken a few years for **Creighton Farms** to get its feet steady as a viable first- and second-home golf community in the heart of Virginia's horse country.

But for the exiting homeowners and buyers who are taking a look, it seems like it may have been worth the wait.



Courtesy of Southworth Development
Jack Nicklaus, seen here with Southworth Development partners David Southworth (L) and Joe Deitch, is building a home at Creighton Farms.

most notably the Renaissance Club in Massachusetts, Machrihanish Dunes in Scotland and the non-golf marina community Meredith Bay on New Hampshire's Lake Winnepesaukee.

Fortunately, the [golf course at Creighton Farms](#) was the first thing completed. Opened in 2007, it was named to just about every "best new private courses" list, including ones by Golf Digest, Golf Magazine and Golfweek. The Jack Nicklaus Signature Golf Course was recognized as a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary for its positive environmental practices.

While a limited number of outside memberships will be available to local residents, the exclusivity of the golf course is a big selling point of the community. Included in the purchase of a home site is membership to the golf club (which costs \$40,000), which was the site of the 2011 Senior PGA Professional National Championship.

Unfortunately, the original developers got little done besides the course. Since 2009, the Southworth folks have been very busy, and today the 964-acre community has had most of its infrastructure finished. About 100 golf club memberships have been sold, 20 homes are occupied or under construction, and nearly 60 more are scheduled to begin construction in the spring, including the Nicklaus family home.



Courtesy of Southworth Development
The new 32,000-square-foot clubhouse at Creighton Farms.

tend to favor privacy and security.

While many second-home enclaves are seasonal or for extended vacations, Creighton Farms enjoys a large potential drive market and could be a weekend escape for owners from Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington, D.C. It could even be the primary residence for a D.C. commuter. It is located in Loudoun County -- on rolling terrain set amid horse farms -- in a location many consider the most beautiful part of Virginia, an area with few such luxury developments.



Courtesy of Southworth Development
A golf club membership is included in the purchase of a home site at Creighton Farms.

Even Jack Nicklaus is building a house here.

Like many golf developments around the country, Creighton Farms was flying high before the economic downturn. The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company even bought an equity stake and took on the management of the club, even though there was no hotel component, one of the company's earliest forays into pure real estate.

Then came the crash and a slowdown of lot sales. Two years ago, Ritz-Carlton decided to sell. The new owner is Southworth Development, a small-but-successful operator of vacation and golf-centric communities,



Courtesy of Southworth Development
The Jack Nicklaus Signature Golf Course at Creighton Farms opened in 2007.

Nicklaus has designed a lot of golf courses, a lot of signature courses, but he hardly builds a home at every one. There are only 184 lots at Creighton Farms -- all for single-family "estate homes" -- on properties from one to seven acres. The overall concept is one of exclusivity -- a gated, low-density community with large homes and a golf course that isn't crowded.

This is particularly appealing given its proximity to Washington, D.C. (30 miles away), making it likely Creighton Farms will attract some power brokers from D.C., who

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There are only around 90 lots remaining, and prices run from just less than \$500,000 to just more than \$1.3 million. The least-expensive homes are around \$1 million, though that is a lot of house, about 3,200 square feet on a full acre. Many buyers will erect custom homes, but for those who do not want to go through the trouble, a number of turnkey plans have been developed for immediate construction.

The biggest recent improvement here is the brand new clubhouse, which should be open for Christmas. It's a spectacular 32,000-square-foot edifice that includes nine hotel-style club rooms for members whose houses are not done or for homeowners hosting guests. It also features a ballroom, pro shop, men's and ladies locker rooms, spa treatment rooms, dining room, library, billiards room and Jack's Pub (themed around Nicklaus' accomplishments).

With the opening of this facility, Creighton Farms immediately moves from a mere golf course to a resort-like complex with multiple dining outlets and other activities available. Future plans include a Sports & Wellness Center, Tennis Center and large resort pool.

Larry Olmsted has written more than 1,000 articles on golf and golf travel, for the likes of Golf Magazine, T&L Golf, LINKS, Golf & Travel, Men's Health, Men's Journal, USA Today, and many others. He broke the Guinness World Record for golf travel and wrote Getting into Guinness, as well as Golf Travel by Design. He was the founding editor of The Golf Insider, and the golf columnist for both USA Today.com and US Airways Magazine.

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Any opinions expressed above are those of the writer and do not necessarily represent the views of the management. The information in this story was accurate at the time of publication. All contact information, directions and prices should be confirmed directly with the golf course or resort before making reservations and/or travel plans.

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