



First tee off at Potomac Shores

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by [Jill Palermo, InsideNoVa.com](#)

After a nearly eight-year hiatus, the golf course at Potomac Shores is finally open to the public.

The par-72, “Jack Nicklaus Signature Design” course was first complete back in 2007 as part of the former Harbor Station residential project that was underway on the largely undeveloped Cherry Hill peninsula. But the recession forced the project’s developer, Kettler, into foreclosure shortly thereafter.

The golf course never opened and was overgrown when the new developer, SunCal, bought the property out of receivership in 2009 with plans to relaunch the nearly 4,000-home, mixed-use development under the new name Potomac Shores. The golf course, and its 8,000 square-foot club house, were among the first things the Irvine, Calif.-based SunCal tackled once the project formally received the green light from Prince William County officials last June. In the months since, the golf course was reworked to make it more player-friendly – tees were shortened, among other things -- with the intention to open when the new clubhouse was completed this spring.

Those plans were right on schedule Monday morning when the first two golfers – Iraq war veteran Nick McCormick and retired FBI employee Rick Young – took the first ceremonial swings on the first tee. Young, of Woodbridge, said he’s an avid golfer who has spent the past few years admiring the course during frequent walks along its scenic cart paths and fairways. Along the way, he’d gotten to know the course staff and jumped at the chance to be one of its first official players. “When I first saw this course I just fell in love with it. It’s up and down and up and down, and I love that,” Young said of the course’s hilly terrain. “This is going to be the course in Northern Virginia.”

McCormick, 30, is an Army reservist and Washington resident who works with the Iraq

and Afghanistan Veterans of America. He said SunCal reached out to IAVA as a way to express their appreciation and establish the new golf course as “veteran friendly.” McCormick said he expects the course will offer a welcome escape for both active-duty and former military members, both of which are plentiful in the Washington metro area. “This, obviously, is sort of a hidden gem outside D.C.,” he added.

And that’s exactly the idea SunCal and NVR homebuilders, which is selling Tidewater-styled luxury homes (starting in the low \$500,000s), hope the golf course will help promote – Potomac Shores as a “hidden gem” that will offer a commuter-friendly community complete with a Virginia Railway Express train station, a retail town center, a luxury resort hotel, two schools and a “corporate campus” while simultaneously celebrating the peninsula’s natural riverfront bluffs with walking trails, a canoe launch and, eventually, a 450-slip marina.

“When you come out here you decompress,” said David Soyka, SunCal’s vice president of public affairs, who was in town for the golf course’s opening day. “You start to hear the birds and there’s eagles flying around and osprey.” Although the Cherry Hill area, best known for its iconic Tim’s Rivershore Restaurant, still feels fairly remote and desolate, Potomac Shores is moving forward with its ambitious plans for the development, Soyka said.

Work is scheduled to begin later this year on the Shores Club, a residents’-only pool and recreation center, slated to open in 2015. About 40 residents now call Potomac Shores home, and 100 of the 371 homes slated for the first neighborhood have been sold. The second phase of the residential area is in the planning stage, Soyka said. Eventually, Potomac Shores could have as many as 3,987 residential units – a mix of single-family, townhomes and condos or apartments.

So far, however, SunCal has yet to find an operator for the resort, however, and the VRE station, planned for 2017, is still awaiting a deal with freight-carrier CSX that hinges on an 11-mile double-track expansion that will increase capacity on the rail line. Soyka said rail expansion has won federal funding and is on the Commonwealth Transportation Board’s agenda for its upcoming June meeting. SunCal has pledged \$20 million to build the station once state and federal transportation officials sign off. “When that happens, it will be full-steam ahead,” Soyka said. The planned town center and corporate campus area will likely remain on hold until the train station moves forward, Soyka said.

But for now, golfers who are willing to pay green fees between \$65 and \$115 (weekday afternoons cost less) are welcome to enjoy what golf course superintendent David McGregor calls “just a spectacular place” around which the community was built – not the other way around. “It’s not a golf course in a community,” McGregor, a London native, insists. “It’s a golf course on the shores of the Potomac. It’s a golf course in a

natural, hardwood forest near the Potomac.”

Also opening this week is the Tidewater Grill, a restaurant that seats about 50 and serves lunch and dinner from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Head Chef Matthew Blazey, formerly executive sous chef at the Hyatt-Regency Minneapolis, says the restaurant will feature coastal and southern cuisine, including crab cakes and barbecue. Tidewater Grill is also gearing up to host group events like receptions and rehearsal dinners, and will have some special offerings around its super-large fire pit on the patio overlooking the golf course, such as hot cocoa and s'mores. “We’re trying to keep it simple but done really well,” Blazey said.



Nick McCormick, an Iraq war veteran, takes the first official swing at the newly-opened Potomac Shores golf course in south Woodbridge.

By Patrick Ryan/For Prince William Today