


TEED UP

Lakewood Ranch Celebrates 30th Anniversary

And Welcomes Heritage Golf Group to the Family

by JG Walker





Turning 30 is a milestone in any life; a time to reflect on accomplishments so far and look to see what may lie ahead. In 2024, Lakewood Ranch (LWR) in southwest Florida near Sarasota marks the 30th year since community building began and its success has been unrivaled. Today with more than 72,000 residents living in neighborhood villages throughout its 33,000+ master-planned acres, Lakewood Ranch has sold more new homes than any other multi-generational community in the United States for the past six years in a row.

But Lakewood Ranch has no intention of resting on those laurels. In fact, the community is welcoming a new neighbor this year, one that's already bringing new life to a revered LWR institution that's been a centerpiece of its social and recreational lifestyle from the beginning.



Heritage Golf Debuts With Style

In March of this year, LWR community developer Schroeder-Manatee Ranch, Inc., announced that the Lakewood Ranch Golf & Country Club (LWRG&CC) had been acquired by Heritage Golf Group. The purchase included all three of the club's top-rated private courses, two designed by the legendary Arnold Palmer—King's Dunes and Cypress Lakes—as well as the Royal Lakes layout by architect Rick Robbins. Also part of the deal were two clubhouses and the Member's Golf Academy, along with club amenities like its state-of-the-art fitness facilities, aquatics center with two heated pools, and 40 tennis and pickleball courts.

Just a month later, Heritage also bought the adjacent Legacy Golf Club with its renowned Arnold Palmer Signature course, plus clubhouse and practice facilities. The Legacy immediately became part of the Lakewood Ranch Golf & Country Club (LWRG&CC), now thought to be the only private club in America with three championship courses designed by Palmer. With the

LWRG&CC addition, the fast-growing Heritage Golf Group now owns and operates 37 country clubs and premium daily fee and resort golf properties in 14 states.

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"We are incredibly excited and honored to become part of the Lakewood Ranch family," says Heritage Golf Group's chief operating officer Jim Oliver. "The warm and vibrant Lakewood Ranch community caught our eye with its unique charm and diverse offerings, while our company brings a wealth of experience in owning and operating clubs within residential neighborhoods, making this acquisition a perfect match for us."

But for Heritage Golf, buying LWRG&CC and adding the Legacy Club's facilities to the mix is just the start. "We're investing millions of dollars to bring extensive upgrades to all four of our Lakewood Ranch golf courses," says Oliver, noting that a new full-service clubhouse and improvements to the existing fitness and racquet-sports facilities are also coming. "The Legacy course is currently undergoing a comprehensive renovation. We're introducing

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new greens, tees, bunkers, fairways, and cart paths, all while preserving the course’s original character and making it even more enjoyable for everyone.”

Similar upgrades are also ongoing at the Cypress Links layout and both golf courses are anticipating a reopening for member play in the fourth quarter of 2024. Future renovations of the Royal Lakes and King’s Dunes courses are in the planning stages.

Among the new benefits for LWRG&CC members is the opportunity to join the company’s HeritagePlus program, which grants exclusive access to play on other Heritage-owned courses nationwide. That impressive roster includes two other premier golf clubs in the Sarasota area—Venetian Golf Club and TPC Prestancia—and five more in Florida, plus top-flight golf destinations from the Carolina coast to the mountains of Colorado.

Along with new investments and membership bonuses, Heritage Golf Group has brought a fresh vitality to the expanded Lakewood Ranch Golf & Country Club. “This beloved club holds a special place in our hearts,” Oliver concludes, “and we can’t wait to see what the future holds.”

The Good Life at The Ranch

LWRG&CC members may have a hard time choosing their favorite from among the club’s 72 holes of golf. But that’s not even the half of it because Lakewood Ranch is home to five more on-site 18-hole courses.

The gateway to golf for many first-time visitors to LWR is the Ritz-Carlton Members Club, home to an impressive design by renowned architect Tom Fazio. The course is available for club member play and guests of the Ritz-Carlton resort hotel, which is located about 13 miles away in Sarasota.

Esplanade Golf and Country Club features a private championship course with additional resort-style amenities like restaurants, racquet-sports courts, heated lagoon pools, and a spa. The semi-private Esplanade at Azario, built in 2020, is the newest course at LWR, while Lakewood National also welcomes a mix of member and daily-fee play on its 36 holes of Arnold Palmer-designed challenge.

In addition to the Sarasota Polo Club, Lakewood Ranch is also home to the Premier Sports Campus with its 23 multi-use

fields for competitions from soccer and lacrosse tournaments to Little League baseball and senior softball games. More than 150 miles of hiking/biking trails connect 13 community and county parks, while nearly all of the LWR residential villages feature neighborhood clubhouse amenities like pools, fitness centers, and tennis/pickleball courts that are just a brisk stroll or golf-cart ride away.

The healthy local lifestyle is further enhanced by the hospital and out-patient services offered at the Lakewood Ranch Medical Center, plus dental, therapeutic, and specialty-care offices nearby and scattered throughout the LWR community. Many are conveniently located in neighborhood centers that are anchored by grocery stores and include retail shops, health and beauty services, coffee bars, and casual cafes.

The focus of the community’s active social lifestyle are the Lakewood Ranch town centers: Waterside Place features The Farmers’ Market, recently honored as Florida’s best for the second year in a row, and cultural events like the “Sights and Sounds” performing arts series. The Main Street town center hosts its own inviting mix of restaurants, shops, and services, plus the always popular “Music on Main” shows every month that support local non-profit groups.

Lakewood Ranch offers an impressive variety of residential options in 95 unique neighborhoods located in more than 30 distinctive LWR villages. Single-family homes with two to six bedrooms, townhouses, and villas by leading Florida builders start in the \$300,000s. Choice apartments and single-family rental homes are also now available.

And to keep track of it all, there’s a new app for that. With the recent debut of myLWR, residents have information at their fingertips about village happenings, club meetings, school schedules, business openings, utility services, volunteer opportunities, and community events at LWR and throughout the greater Sarasota area.

“As we celebrate 30 years of community development, Lakewood Ranch remains America’s best-selling master-planned community for all ages,” says Sandy Shahinian, LWR vice-president for sales and marketing. “Our extensive amenities, including the Lakewood Ranch Golf & Country Club and other golf offerings, set us apart and are a key reason why so many choose to call Lakewood Ranch home. We are continually striving to offer even more opportunities for connection and recreation.” **LakewoodRanch.com**