



## Loudoun County, Virginia

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## NEWS RELEASE

Office of the County Administrator, Public Affairs and Communications  
1 Harrison Street, SE, P.O. Box 7000, Leesburg, VA 20177-7000  
703-777-0113 • Fax 703-771-5841

For Immediate Release  
August 8, 2022

Media Contact: Glen Barbour, Public Affairs and Communications Officer  
703-771-5086, [Glen.Barbour@loudoun.gov](mailto:Glen.Barbour@loudoun.gov)

### **County Purchases Former Westpark Golf Course; Plans for Passive Park**

The Loudoun County Board of Supervisors has closed on the purchase of three parcels of land totaling 134 acres that made up the former Westpark Golf Course in Leesburg. The county purchased the property for \$3.8 million from a private owner who purchased the land several years ago following the closure of the golf course.

The county did not purchase an 8.2-acre parcel on which the former Westpark Hotel is located. This parcel remains privately owned and any future development is subject to the Town of Leesburg's regulations.

The new county-owned land, located around the Leesburg Country Club Subdivision and along Country Club Drive, has been placed into a conservation easement, which will preserve the natural landscape. In the coming years, the county is interested in developing the property into a passive park consisting of walking and biking trails with many natural and minimally disturbed areas. The passive park will be designed following input from members of the community and will be based on the requirements for property within the conservation easement.

The existing golf cart paths are open to the public for running, walking and biking while the planning process for the future passive park is conducted.

#### **Grass Mowing & Current Activity**

Effective immediately, Loudoun County has assumed responsibility for maintaining the property, which is surrounded by homes. Among the key maintenance needs is the mowing of grass. Because the property is now in conservation easement, it will no longer be operated or maintained as a golf course. As a result, the mowing of grass will be accomplished in a manner that is different than residents experienced when the property was a golf course.

Currently, grass mowing will follow the following procedures:

- A swath of grass for approximately 20 feet from residential property lines where the Westpark property grass meets residents' grass will be cut regularly.
- A 4-foot swath of grass along the existing golf cart paths will be cut regularly to ensure the paths are walkable.
- The whole property will receive rough-cut mowing two times each year, in a manner commonly referred to as "bush hog" mowing.

Residents should not cut grass on the county-owned property that abuts their property.

In addition to grass mowing activities, residents may observe county staff and contractors on and around the property conducting various activities. One significant activity is the establishment

of observable property boundaries. All structures on the former golf course, including the former club house and maintenance sheds, are secured. Trespassing in and around the structures is not permitted.

### **Conservation Easement & Environmental Benefits**

A [conservation easement](#) is a voluntary, legal agreement that permanently limits uses of the land in order to protect its conservation values, such as to preserve cultural and historical sites and protect environments by maintaining them in a close-to-natural state. Currently, there are more than 75,000 acres of land in Loudoun County protected by conservation easements.

The placement of the Westpark property into conservation easement imposes certain restrictions on the use of the land. Any use that is inconsistent with the conservation values described in the easement, which is posted on the county's website, is prohibited.

The easement restricts certain aspects of how the county maintains the property. For instance, the county must protect a 150-foot riparian buffer along each edge of Dry Mill Branch and Tuscarora Creek. Mowing in the riparian buffer may only occur 3 times per year to control invasive species or protect trees and vegetation planted in the buffer strip. The county may not remove trees or vegetation except for invasive species, dead or dying trees, or trees posing a human health or safety hazard. Clear-cutting of trees on the property is prohibited.

In addition to preserving the natural landscape for use as a public passive park, the purchase of the Westpark property is expected to be a valuable asset in Loudoun County's ongoing environmental preservation efforts. The property can help the county meet environmental requirements from the Commonwealth of Virginia while also helping to mitigate the impact of other public development projects throughout the county. Improvements on the property, such as wetland and stream restoration projects, reforestation of portions of the site, and enhanced stormwater management infrastructure, are expected to result in significant nutrient and sediment reductions that will benefit local water quality as well as result in outcomes that are environmentally beneficial.

### **Future Passive Park**

The county purchased the Westpark property with plans to transform the land into a passive public park, to include establishing natural trails at the park.

The county allocated funding in fiscal years 2023 and 2024 for professional services that will help the county begin to plan the future passive park. This process includes conducting various assessments and obtaining input from members of the public regarding the park's design. The county's Capital Improvement Program includes funding for construction of the new passive park in fiscal year 2026.

### **Public Input**

The public will have the opportunity for input into the design of the future passive park on the Westpark property. In the coming months, Loudoun County will begin the public process that includes public information meetings for residents to learn more about passive park plans, as well as

opportunities for residents to view and respond to design concepts. Informed by public input, the Board of Supervisors will approve a final design before any construction begins.

### **More Information & Contact Us**

To learn more and to subscribe to email and text updates on Westpark property and future passive park, visit [loudoun.gov/westparkproperty](http://loudoun.gov/westparkproperty). In addition, comments and questions may be submitted through an online form that is linked on the webpage.

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