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### Davie to pay \$4.5 million for golf course

#### Town plans to run Arrowhead as a public facility; but experts see tough road to profits

By Susannah Bryan, Sun Sentinel

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DAVIE



Davie has bid \$4.5 million for the Arrowhead Golf Course from the state, which purchased the land for the drainage rights, but has no plans to operate the golf course.  
(Amy Beth Bennett, Sun Sentinel / October 12, 2010)

In a rush to beat out a competing offer, Davie has bid \$4.5 million for the 18-hole Arrowhead Golf Course.

That's \$1.4 million more than the lone competitor's bid, from a group formed by Mitchell Osceola.

Town officials hope to close on the 134-acre course by the end of November and be open for business by January. They are still researching what it will cost to own and operate the fairways.

"The goal is to make it self-sufficient to break even, and hopefully make some money," town spokesman Braulio Rosa said of the 40-year-old course. "We want to make it affordable for people to come to golf. We want to fill that niche. Golf is an expensive sport."

But experts question the wisdom of spending tax dollars on a golf course when so many municipal and private golf courses are struggling. The lucky ones break even. Others are forced to shut down as they face the double whammy of a downswing in the economy and declining interest in the sport.

And South Florida is already saturated with golf courses, said Richard Singer, a spokesman for the Jupiter-based National Golf Foundation.

"The demand doesn't match the supply," Singer said. "We have seen declines in revenue and we have seen some troubled properties close."

Singer said any municipality looking to get into the golf course business should do its research first.

"I would strongly recommend doing a study first to get your arms around what is going to be involved," he said. "Will you give lessons and have tournaments and leagues? Will it be a four-star facility or a two-star facility?"

Davie officials say they are getting a great deal on the course, located west of University Drive on the south and north side of Nova Drive. The course sits just half-a-mile north of the private Grande Oaks Golf Course.

Arrowhead has been out of commission since December 2008, when the state Department of Transportation bought the land for \$7.4 million from NGP Realty Sub L.P. State officials needed 60 acres of wetlands to provide drainage for the expansion of Interstate 595. After expanding the lakes at Arrowhead to collect stormwater runoff, the state put the course up for sale.

To pay for the land, Davie has allocated \$3.5 million from emergency reserves and \$1 million from the town's open space bonds.

It's not the first time Davie considered buying the course.

Kathy Cox was on the Davie council in 1988 when town voters rejected a plan to buy and renovate Arrowhead for \$3.5 million.

She didn't think it was a good idea then – or now.

"I don't think it's a good idea for a town to be in that business," Cox said. "I don't know that anyone makes money on municipal golf courses. If they don't go in the hole, they'll be doing real well."

Davie resident Neil Rosenberg was thrilled – and perplexed – by the news.

"Golf courses are tough sells these days," said Rosenberg, who lives near the course. "Any idea when they are going to open this course? I'm kind of glad I'll have a place to play close by."

Then, he said with a laugh, "If they took it out of reserves, I guess I already paid for it."

The cost of running a successful golf course extends beyond buying the land, experts say.

If Davie takes over at Arrowhead, the town will have to renovate or build a new clubhouse. That can cost from \$2 million to \$3 million even for a no-frills building, said Matt Blackburn, a spokesman for the Weitz Company in West Palm Beach, a builder of golf courses nationwide.

Davie Councilman Bryan Caletka says staffers estimate the cost at \$500,000. Caletka says the town is still researching what it will cost to run the fairways.

At least six cities in [Broward County](#) own a golf course: Hollywood, Lauderhill, Pembroke Pines, Plantation, Pompano Beach and Sunrise.

In [Palm Beach County](#), [Boca Raton](#), [Delray Beach](#) and [Boynton Beach](#) also are in the golf course business.

The [Delray Beach](#) Municipal Golf Course has been \$100,000 in the hole the past two years, said Bob Barcinski, assistant city manager in [Delray Beach](#).

"Next year we are projecting to break even," he said. "Part of the problem is the economy. And there are so many golf courses in [Palm Beach County](#), there's just too much competition."

Sunrise Commissioner Sheila Alu was surprised any town would want to buy a golf course in an economic downturn.

"They're money pits," Alu said. "In these times, when golf courses are going bankrupt across the nation, I don't see the benefit to residents. I know that our golf course has never made money."

In Hollywood, all three city-owned fairways break even, said city spokeswoman Raelin Storey.

"The money they earn goes back into maintaining the golf course," she said. "We're not making money but we're not losing money either."

*Staff researcher Barbara Hijek contributed to this report.*

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