

# Tomoka Oaks Times

An Independent Newsletter Focused on Preventing Residential Development of the Tomoka Oaks Golf Course

## Highlights of the Developer's Neighborhood Meeting

Miss Tomoka Oaks (see "Carolyn's Message" on the right) thanks all of her residents who attended the Neighborhood Meeting sessions on February 8, 2023. I was at the first session (5:00 pm) so will report on my experience.

I saw several key City leaders and staff at the first session. Commissioners Susan Persis (our zone 3 representative), Lori Tolland, and Harold Briley attended. Planning Director Steven Spraker was also there.

How was the meeting? Well my "Carolyn's Message" column pretty much sums up the tone. It started off without much warmth or welcome; just the Applicant's representative, Rob Merrell of Cobb Cole, giving introductory comments, followed by panel members giving summaries of density, water, traffic, landscape, proposed amenities, etc. Nothing new was presented, and then the floor was opened up for resident comments.

The three biggest pain points for residents? Traffic, lot sizes, and density. Of the approximate 200 residents in attendance at the 5:00 pm session, I would say 30 went up to the podium to voice their concerns and the majority of those concerns related to increased traffic, incompatible lot widths, and the number of homes proposed per acre. Residents were still waiting in line to speak at 7:00 pm when the second meeting was scheduled to start. I did not attend that second session, but I understand around 100 residents were there and about 10 of them went to the podium but the meeting ended before they were all allowed to speak.

### Traffic Concerns

One of the youngest residents to speak at the first session, probably in her late teens or early twenties, mentioned she grew up riding her bike in Tomoka Oaks and loves to walk our neighborhood. She informed the panel that she was "not a simulation" in the traffic software program that calculated her safety will not be at risk. She wasn't accepting the traffic engineer's assurance that pedestrians will not face increased dangers from

increased traffic. Her genuine concern for her safety, and all those who enjoy walking our neighborhood, was based on actual (not artificial) intelligence.

A mother who lives on S. St. Andrews expressed fear and frustration with the current speeding problem in front of her home which poses a real threat to the safety, and life, of her young child. Compound that by the estimated 2,700 daily trips in and out of the new development, many of them going past her home, and the odds of this mother's fears becoming a reality increase that much more.

Many residents shook their heads when the panelist representing the traffic study stated numerous times that their study results were accurate and did not present safety or stacking issues.



*Escondido Condos with their one and only entrance / exit onto Tomoka Oaks Blvd.*

Perhaps the most heated moment of the evening was brought about by two feisty, silver foxes from Escondido who demanded to know (and rightly so) how they are suppose to navigate left turns out of their only driveway onto Tomoka Oaks Blvd when it will be stacked with Tomoka Oaks residents merging with new residents as both exit onto Nova. Plus exiting Escondido vehicles will have to wait for an opening to turn left on to Tomoka Oaks Blvd when the proposed traffic light is directing cars and construction traffic to turn onto Tomoka Oaks Blvd from Nova, therefore passing directly in front of Escondido's only exit. PLUS add backed up traffic when trains cross Nova Road several times a day, and the problem gets worse.

Other residents brought up traffic concerns for our neighbors in the Trails, Tomoka Oaks North Condos, and

(continued on page 2)



## Carolyn's Message

Dear Neighbors,

In the [January](#) newsletter, I remarked upon the collective desire of our neighborhood to prevent residential development of the golf course. I have come to visual our "collective spirit" as a southern, genteel, older woman (sort of a guardian angel), who presides over our residents, seeking to protect our established character. Let's give her the name "Miss Tomoka Oaks."

I felt Miss Tomoka Oaks' presence when I attended the Neighborhood Meeting on February 8th where I fully expected the Applicant's representatives to attempt to impress us with reasons why we should embrace 300 residential homes on the Tomoka Oaks golf course. In reality, I was underwhelmed.

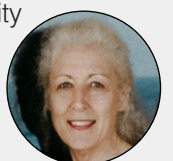
No effort was made by Cobb Cole and their panel of experts to charm our Miss Tomoka. There was barely any pretense of courting our stately lady, or any attempt to woo her over with promises of how their young upstart development will complement the "caliber" of the fine, established neighborhood Miss Tomoka Oaks presides over.

Instead the same tired slides were recycled, showing the same, dare I say, "rhetorical" information? (If you were at the 5:00 pm session, you know what I am talking about.) I at least expected to see a grand rendering of the entrance to this grand upstart, but, alas, our lady was not worthy of such effort. What a pity, for respect and manners would have gone a long way in making this meeting more palatable for her residents.

When it was her homeowners' time to speak, our lady's emboldened residents expressed concerns that this development needs more thought, more community input, more specifics. We were told we had been "heard," but it felt disingenuous and dismissive.

We may have left that meeting feeling dismissed, but I believe Miss Tomoka was proud of her residents. We walked out with heads held high and an even firmer conviction that this development is just wrong. It will destroy our residential character, and we all must unite to prevent any residential development of an amenity that has been at the heart of Tomoka Oaks since 1961.

Not giving in or up,  
Carolyn Davis  
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Aerial view courtesy of [SoundLifePhoto.com](https://www.SoundLifePhoto.com)

# Highlights of the Developer’s Neighborhood Meeting

(continued from page 1)

Tallaquah. I had previously sent the **Tomoka Oaks Times** to residents in the Trails who live on Main Trail, Rio Pinar Trail, and Iroquois Trail to make them aware of the increase in traffic should this PRD get approved. I have now decided to do a mailing to our neighbors in Tallaquah and Tomoka Oaks North Condos too. How many of them are clueless to the traffic issues awaiting them if this PRD is approved? We should all be united in our concern.

### Lot Sizes

Not one resident could comprehend how lot widths of 30’, 40’, 50’, 60’, 70’ and 80’ could ever be compatible with our 100’ wide lots. The modern concept of a “smaller footprint” (meaning bigger houses on smaller lots) is not in any way compatible with Tomoka Oaks houses on larger lots no matter how much the Applicant’s [narrative](#) repeats that it is.



View of Oakmont Circle lot backing up to golf course

And why does the narrative only address lot compatibility with Tomoka Oaks homes that surround the golf course? Tomoka Reserve is being proposed as a neighborhood within our entire neighborhood, and the negative fallout will affect more than just the golf course facing homes.

### Density

Density is the defined number of homes built on a site plan's defined number of acres. The Applicant wants us to believe the density of their development will be equal to or less than the density of Tomoka Oaks. But the density calculations used in their narrative were ambiguous for both Tomoka Reserve and Tomoka Oaks.

One long-time resident of Tomoka Oaks, a retired doctor, summed up the density of Tomoka Reserve as a cancer that will destroy our neighborhood. All he had to do was point to the site plan projected on the screen at the front of the room to get his point across.

### Other Concerns

Other concerns expressed by residents at the podium, besides the manipulation of traffic and density numbers by the Applicant, included:

- Unspecific storm water drainage plans.
- Misleading landscape buffer images showing mature trees rather than the initial baby-sized saplings and shrubs.
- Maintenance of the buffer and who will have “standing” should a Tomoka Reserve resident cut down any buffer vegetation.
- Unclear street parking, driveway lengths, and garage locations of new development.

When comparing notes with other residents after the meeting, it was evident this proposed PRD presents serious challenges for Tomoka Oaks residents. For example:

- The Applicant’s goal seems to be to get the PRD approved with as much “flexible interpretation” as possible for the benefit of whomever develops the property (this Applicant or perhaps builders the Applicant plans to sell the land to). At that point, residents will no longer have any input as the developer(s) work only with the City after PRD approval.
- The Applicant’s claim that the “housing diversity will result in a healthier community” was never explained. This implies Tomoka Oaks is “unhealthy.” Why?
- It appears multi-family high-density housing is hidden in small writing on the site plan. This equals more revenue for a developer but less compatibility with our residential character.
- The Applicant’s representative was unwilling to provide a realistic construction time line. Will it be 3 years, 4 years, 5 or more years?
- The Applicant claims to care about historic tree preservation but during the meeting could not state how many historic trees are on their property.
- Side and rear-loaded garages for most of the development will leave

- current golf-course facing residents looking at what will essentially be parking lots.
- Tomoka Oaks lot counts were incorrect. Applicant Count: 585. Actual count: 547
- Escondido lot counts were also overstated Applicant count: 82. Actual count: 40.
- Applicant’s answers were evasive and minimal regarding important issues such as:
  - ✦ Tomoka Reserve HOA responsibility
  - ✦ Size and number of stories of multi-family homes
  - ✦ A golf course tree removal plan
  - ✦ Ability of existing community services such as schools to handle more students and treatment facilities to handle additional waste.
  - ✦ Construction disturbances.
  - ✦ Who will actually be building the new homes.
  - ✦ Potential redesign of Tomoka Oaks Blvd.

*The most significant take away?* The large number of residents who oppose development. Not one resident spoke in favor of Tomoka Reserve.

The City was in attendance and did listen to residents as detailed in staff's second site plan response (see page 4).

*When all is said and done?* Any development of our green space is just wrong. Plain wrong. Period.

Tomoka Oaks was designed and sold as a master planned community with the coexistence of the golf course and the residential estates contributing reciprocal values. It takes the votes of just 3 commissioners to acknowledge the implied golf course / recreational green space perpetuity residents have relied on for years when purchasing homes in Tomoka Oaks, thus preventing any residential development of the property.



NE view of fairway of vacant Tomoka Oaks golf course, parallel to Oakmont Circle.

# Tomoka Oaks - The Early Days to Present Day

Third in an ongoing series of articles regarding the history of Tomoka Oaks, information that might prevent today's development, and suggestions on how current residents can unite to voice our opposition and protect our property values.

## What's In a Name? And Just Who Was Sam Snead?

So who was Sam Snead, affectionately nicknamed "Slammin' Sammy Snead" by golfers worldwide? And why is he the namesake for the [golf course plat](#) recorded by Volusia County on October 3, 1961 which identifies the property as the "Sam Snead Golf & Country Club"?

Why Sam?

Sam Snead was (and still is) widely regarded as one of the greatest golfers of all time. Conservative estimates place Slammin' Sam's world tournament wins at 135. He held the record for the most all-time wins in PGA Tour history: 82 (Tiger Woods recently tied that 82 PGA record in 2019.) [Wikipedia](#)

Sam was known throughout the golf world for his straw hat and folksy, hill country West Virginia humor. He reportedly never had a golf lesson in his

life and taught himself the game using a set of clubs carved from tree limbs. Yet



Sam Snead

despite his humble beginnings, he was elected to the PGA Hall of Fame in 1953 and was inducted into the World Golf Hall of Fame in 1974. [Wikipedia](#)

Tomoka Oaks, Inc., who conceptualized and developed Tomoka Oaks, knew that for the golf course to be associated with Sam Snead was **HUGE** and had J. Porter Gibson of Sam Snead, Inc. design the golf course in 1956 ([1956 Boundary map](#)). Tomoka Oaks, Inc. sold the golf course property to Golf Course Developers Inc. whose chairman was Slammin' Sammy Snead. And J.

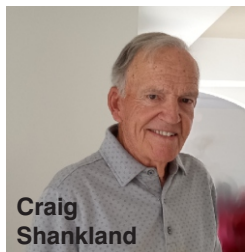
Porter Gibson, formerly of Sam Snead, Inc., was now co-owner of Golf Course Developers, Inc. along with his brother. [DBNJ Oct 10, 1961, page 9](#)

Golf Course Developers, Inc. built the Sam Snead Golf and Country Club course during 1961-1962. After completing the golf course, the property was sold back to Tomoka Oaks, Inc., and the course took the name "Tomoka Oaks Golf and Country Club" thereby tying the golf course to the coexisting Tomoka Oaks Country Club Estates.

The golf course property changed ownership several times during the decades from 1960 thru the present. But every deed still identifies the property as the Sam Snead Golf and Country Club.

## My Interview With PGA Pro and Hall of Fame Inductee Craig Shankland

I mentioned in prior issues of the **Tomoka Oaks Times** that people from our community have reached out to me regarding preserving the golf course. One of those "people" was Craig Shankland who sent me an email letting



Craig Shankland

me know "what a gem" the Sam Snead Golf Course is and sharing that he too is interested in trying to preserve the course.

Not being a golfer (I have never played a round in my life), I had to Google "Craig Shankland" before I replied to his email. I was humbled to discover that this "person" is a PGA Hall of Fame inductee (2018), one of Golf Digest's Top 25 Teachers, as well as Golf Magazine's all-time great teachers. Plus Craig has enjoyed success as a competitor in 7 major championships and as a local golf course owner, manager, and consultant to golf operations around the state of Florida. And, best of all, Craig lives right here in the Trails and wanted to talk to me!

So I cleaned my house (you ladies understand) and invited Craig to my Tomoka Oaks home on January 14th. I showed Craig my golf course view, although I confessed I had no idea what green we overlooked. I thought other residents would find our discussion interesting, so I summarized some of Craig's key comments here regarding

what makes the Tomoka Oaks golf course worthy of preservation.

**Q: Craig, is Tomoka Oaks a "failed" golf course? This is how the current owners describe the property.**

**A:** Tomoka Oaks golf course is a gem. Its unique elevation and coquina soil base allows rapid drainage. Over the years it has been the only area course open for play after a heavy rain event, giving Tomoka Oaks a maximum annual number of days open for play. The design is terrific with two nine-hole loops and the close proximity of tees to greens make the course walkable, a rare feature in these days of mandatory electric carts. So I wouldn't say it failed; it fell on hard times due to economic downturns. And poor management during 2010 - 2021 led to the decline in membership. But the course itself is outstanding.

**Q: Could the Tomoka Oaks golf course prosper in the local market?**

**A:** Locally, golf has never been stronger. Even though River Bend and Indigo Lakes have closed, all

the other area courses are jammed: LPGA, Riviera, Daytona Beach. And golf courses in New Smyrna Beach and Port Orange are thriving. I've been told Oceanside, a private club in Ormond Beach, has a waiting list for membership and has hiked initiation fees. So, yes, I would say our local market can definitely support another golf course.

(Note from Carolyn: In the last 2 years, Oceanside Country Club initiation fee

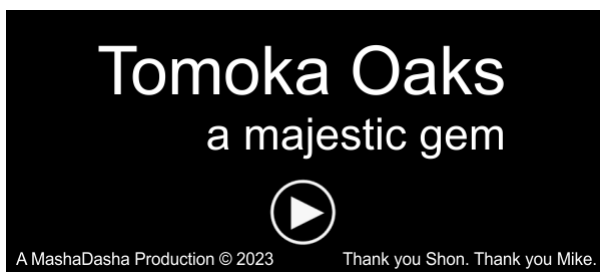
has increased from \$9,000 to \$24,000. And I recently heard Riviera has a 75 person waiting list for memberships. Each day 225 rounds of 18-holes are played at Riviera.)

**Q: What is the status of the national golf course market?**

**A:** Golf is doing well both locally and nationally. The National Golf Foundation, [NGF.org](#), reports that numbers are up everywhere. Just look at LPGA and Riviera - - they are full all the time. Cities are buying courses that have gone under and are making a profit. For example, Philadelphia is reopening its Cobbs Creek municipal course, and Florida municipal courses such as North Palm Beach Country Club are reaping annual net profits of \$1-2 million. Golf courses can make a profit, and do.

Readers, after talking with Craig Shankland, it looks like the developer's claim that Tomoka Oaks is a failed golf course is misleading. It was the economy that failed, not the design or construction of the course. And the prior owners poor management and diminished maintenance is also at fault. But golf itself is currently stronger than ever with many profitable business models underscoring that current success.

The golf course property with its majestic moss-draped oaks, generously wide fairways, and unique coquina base is still the gem in the crown worn by our gracious, stately Miss Tomoka Oaks.



Watch a short video of Craig Shankland at [TomokaOaksHistory.com/#gem](#).



Aerial view courtesy of [SoundLifePhoto.com](#)

# Current status of Developer's application as of March 15, 2023

NOTE: The name of the Development Application with the City of Ormond Beach is called "Tomoka Reserve." Details at [ormondbeach.org/1013/Tomoka-Reserve](http://ormondbeach.org/1013/Tomoka-Reserve)

### Current Stage of the Application:

- 2/21/23 The City's Site Plan Review Committee (SPRC) issued [comments and feedback](#) to the Applicant regarding their second site plan.
- 2/21/23 The City posted [correspondence](#) received from 1/19/23-2/20/2023 regarding Tomoka Reserve. If you sent any development related emails to the City during this time, you should see them [here](#).
- Applicant is required to submit a 3rd site plan no later than approximately August 21. There is not a set number of submittals that determine when a project is ready for public hearing. The submittal and reviews typically seek to reduce the comments. If there is a disagreement among the applicant and staff and no further action can take place, the disagreement would be part of the public hearing review.

**What's happening now?** The Applicant (developer) is reviewing the [comments and feedback](#) the City provided on the Applicant's second site plan. The City waited to send this document until after the Neighborhood Meeting so the City could incorporate resident feedback from the meeting. I reviewed the SPRC's document and prepared a [brief summary](#) for residents.



- Containing a final lot layout showing actual number of lots, dimensions of each lot, and measurable architectural standards.
- Recommending lots abutting the perimeter property be 100' in width.
- Recommending a Type 6 landscape buffer.
- Recommending interior lots be no less than 60' wide.
- Recommending removal of multi-family units.

### The City has asked for:

1. Updated traffic counts and a traffic analysis of the development's impact on the:
  - Stacking of vehicles on Tomoka Oaks Blvd waiting to exit onto Nova
  - Traffic impact to residents living on Tomoka Oaks Blvd, and in Escondido Condos and the Trails.
2. A third site plan:

### Items which the Applicant still must resolve:

- Review and modification of the Tomoka Oaks Blvd
- Specifics on Applicant's density calculations.
- Storm Package and Discharge Structure.
- Volusia County confirmation of adequate school capacity.

- Environmental report & analysis.
- Soil Management Plan.
- An analysis from the appropriate professional or a title opinion that states there are no encumbrances on the subject property.
- How 24' wide roadway will not present parking issues for full time residents, guests, and emergency vehicles.
- A statement from the Applicant committing to keeping the tree at Tomoka Oaks Blvd and Nova.

### Emergency Access

An Emergency Access Auto Turn analysis at 100 N. St. Andrews. I asked the City if the developer had purchased emergency access property yet at 100 N. St. Andrews as shown in the second site plan and was informed Staff had not seen a deed to date. I then checked the Volusia County Property Appraiser's website and did not see any recent sales on that property.

I also asked for clarification of the Emergency Access Thresholds shown on the [Second Site Plan, slide 2](#) at 30 Pine Valley Circle and for the boundary line between 31 & 33 Oakmont Circle. Planning Director Steven Spraker assured me the Fire Department has not mandated any threshold access paths crossing into these properties.

### What's the Applicant's deadline for providing answers and a 3rd site plan?

Approximately Aug 21, 2023. Code allows two (2) 90 day extensions. Will it take 6 months to a year? I'm not sure. But if the recent sighting of **Quality Counts** car counters on trees and street signs in Tomoka Oaks is any indication, the developer is pushing forward.



Now that the dust has settled from the neighborhood meeting, we're asking, "What is the Applicant's strategy?"

Why has it taken the developer almost a year to submit two site plans that essentially contain the same layouts?

Is the developer beginning to realize 300 homes might be an overreach? Will the Applicant submit a third site plan with a reduced number of homes in order to appear responsive and make a stronger case for City Commission approval?

I believe most of us agree that any level of development will irreparably diminish the character of our neighborhood and of our established 60+ year residential community. If you haven't yet joined the growing list of Ormond Beach residents who oppose residential development of the Tomoka Oaks golf course, sign the **Development Opposition form** at [TomokaOaksHistory.com/opposition](http://TomokaOaksHistory.com/opposition)

## COMMISSION CORNER

After the Neighborhood Meeting, I decided to provide the Mayor and each Commissioner copies of the **Tomoka Oaks Times** along with a [letter](#) introducing myself and my effort to prevent any residential development of the Tomoka Oaks golf course. Going forward, I will have this dedicated section of the newsletter to speak directly to our City Commission who will make the final decision on this PRD application.

My first message to you, our Commission, regards **pickleball**. Who would have thought?!

My guess is the Applicant is hoping the proposed pickleball court in the amenity area at the front of the development will be a great selling point for potential buyers and for influencing you that their

development will bring community engagement. In reality, pickleball might just create a huge liability and headache for the City.

A 3/11/23 [CNN article](#) describes how residents living close to pickleball courts have filed lawsuits against cities for the "daily injurious and obnoxious noise levels" generated by the constant popping sound of the ball hitting the paddle. As a kid, did you ever place your finger in your mouth and pop your check? Try it. That's the constant noise that is literally driving residents crazy. And forcing them to move or file law suits.

"Pickleball sound mitigation" is now a thing. Google it. Learn about it. And vote against any OB residential development that proposes pickleball as an amenity.

Thank you.  
*Carolyn*