

Here's what to expect at Finksburg's soon-to-be renovated River Downs Golf Club



A photo of the current entrance to River Downs Golf Club in Finksburg and a mockup of the future entrance. (Rafiq Islam/Courtesy)



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PUBLISHED: January 11, 2026 at 5:00 AM EST

Brown grass and the apparent overgrowth on parts of the property might seem like a challenge for a future golf hub, but the Islams, the club's new owners, are eager to make major investments to once again inspire the excitement that previously surrounded the club.

Clarinda de Guzman Islam said she and her husband are “making sure that that sense of community starts coming back here,” as they develop and execute plans for renovations.

The sale of River Downs, located at 1900 River Downs Drive, was finalized in November. The club has been a fixture of the Carroll County golf scene since it opened in 1995. The 18-hole course was designed by famed golf course architect Arthur Hills. Par at the 6,873-yard course is 72.



Clarinda de Guzman Islam said that the week after the sale closed, people from the neighboring residential area dropped by to meet the new owners, see whether there were new developments and offer suggestions.

“We were very excited about that.” she said. She also said several



Sofia Islam, Clarinda de Guzman Islam, Rafiq Islam and Elise Islam at the River Downs Golf Club in Finksburg in December 2025. The Islams are the new owners of the golf club. (Rafiq Islam/Courtesy)

The property does pose some difficulties: Facilities from the 1990s need modernization, weather issues could limit playtime and the rural location limits visibility. However, overall, the owners expressed excitement about the club's future and are eager to welcome the community back to a local golf mainstay.

Mark Sizemore, 68, is a golf coach who used to teach at River Downs. Now, he is consulting the owners on how to improve the course to better suit golfers of all playing levels. He last played on the course in November 2023.

River Downs was sometimes too challenging for beginner players or players who were not advanced. "We are looking at ways to, I call it, 'soften the golf course' a little bit, make it easier to play," he said. He hopes that newer players and experienced players alike can enjoy their time on the course.

The owners plan to enhance the driving range, including adding software that shows golfers their performance stats, such as swing analysis. They also plan to install three golf simulators, Rafiq Islam said. Simulators offer a playing experience that can continue even in the colder months.

They plan to enhance existing fairways and greens and upgrade event spaces to host charity tournaments, weddings, farmers markets and vendor events. A mockup of the future River Downs shows a multitier fountain, improved landscaping, and a revitalized lobby.

On the community outreach side, Clarinda de Guzman Islam said they hope to host local schools, Carroll Community College, McDaniel College and University of Maryland for practices and field trips.

“Our overall vision for this place is really getting back some community engagement and focusing on the community at large,” she said.

Another communal aspect in the owners’ plans is the “Science on the Green” program, offering science, technology, engineering and mathematics educational opportunities.

Samien Islam, the 19-year-old nephew of the owners, is a sophomore at University of Waterloo in Canada studying biochemistry. He said he’s helping his uncle develop the “Science on the Green” programming. Learning through golf is “a fun way to learn science, rather than just sitting in the classroom getting possibly bored,” he said.

A soft opening of the driving range (with portable bay covers), a golf simulator and the restaurant is set for March 1. By June 27, the new owners hope to open the full course. In 2026, playing will be limited as the grass fully develops. By 2027, the owners say they expect the operation to be in full swing.

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