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SARASOTA COUNTY

Sarasota County open to buying old golf course property, but cost keeps commissioners from taking action

by: [Allyson Henning](#)

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SARASOTA COUNTY (WFLA) — Sarasota County commissioners seem open to the idea of purchasing a 49-acre former golf course property in the Gulf Gate Estates community. If acquired by the county, it could remain green space with a potential to benefit local water quality and improve stormwater infrastructure. Right now, it is owned by a developer who wants to bring 106 single-family homes to the site.

Residents started their push for the county acquisition a while back, but in recent weeks, it has been gaining more attention.

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During an October meeting, the county's public works director Spencer Anderson described the developer as a "willing seller." The county appraised the property at around \$3.8 million, but Anderson explained to commissioners last month that the developer said they wanted "multiples" of the appraised value.

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Sarasota County sent 8 On Your Side the following statement:

“On October 24, 2024, the Board considered a presentation on the Gulf Gate golf course property and ultimately provided direction to remain open to purchasing the property but not to pursue such at this time due to the property owner wanting “multiples” of the current appraised value.”

Residents, however, are staying hopeful the parcel will remain green space for the sake of the environment.

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“We are concerned with our stormwater management system, we lack a lot of that because the county’s ordinances and everything did not exist when Gulf Gate and these surrounding communities were built. We are sort of playing a catch-up game in terms of stormwater excess and flood prevention, and that is one of our big concerns. Another concern is water quality,” said Gulf Gate Golf Course Committee member Cass Smith.

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Director of the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program, Dr. Dave Tomasko pointed out the bay’s water quality is improving thanks to hundreds of millions of dollars worth of investments in the last several years, but with so much new development cropping up throughout the region, holding the line on pollutant loads tied to that growth isn’t going to come easy.

“If we don’t do more than what we are doing right now, then we could backslide and all of the good progress we have made in the last couple of years could slip away from us. New development does less pollution than the older development, but it is not zero. So the non-zero increase in nutrient loads has to be offset and finding a place big enough to do a big project to offset the new development increase is rare and that is why this is a neat opportunity,” said Dr. Tomasko.

Other residents we heard from feel the county acquisition would mean minimal disruption to the soil, which is contaminated in some areas with arsenic from the former golf course.

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Multiple other developers have tried bringing housing to the land in the past, but without anything ever coming to fruition.

“There is a reason why. Our hope is that the current owner comes to meet the county at the county’s offer. The county made a very fair offer at the appraised value,” said Goff.

8 On Your Side reached out to the developer, 13th Floor Homes, about the project and the potential sale. A spokesperson sent us the following statement:

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“Our intent since acquiring this property has always been to move forward with approved plans for the development of 106 new single-family homes. We are excited start development next year and welcome new residents to the community before year’s end. At the same time, our plans have not, and will not, affect our willingness to keep an open dialogue with the County as we continue the development process.”

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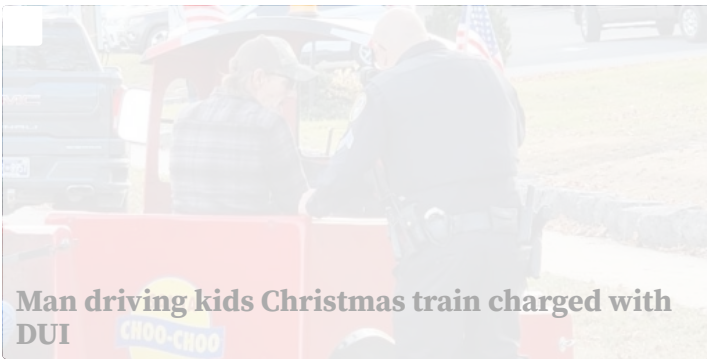
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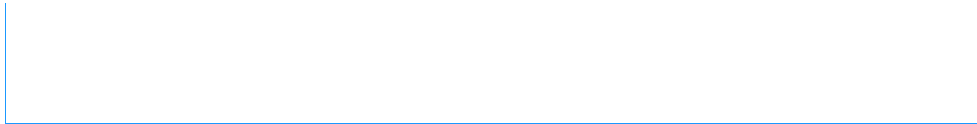


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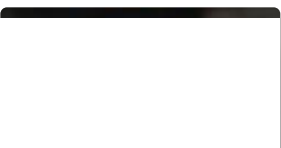


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