

Silo Ridge Field Club

in Amenia, New York

The third hole at Silo Ridge Field Club rises to a green framed by silos that have stood on the property for decades.

Discovery Land Company brings its unique model to the Met Area. **BY JEFF NEUMAN**

From the apex of DeLaVergne Hill on New York State Route 44, one of Dutchess County's most cherished views stretches across the rolling hills and green fields. The valley below is framed by ridges that go for miles on either side; the sun traverses daily, bringing slanting rays in the hours when dawn wanes and dusk approaches. It's the kind of vista that has drawn city dwellers for over a century, a place of horse farms and fly-fishing, an escape from a building-bound work life to the recreational pleasures of the great outdoors.

The newest addition to this multimillion-dollar landscape is the Silo Ridge Field Club, which lies directly below the curve at DeLaVergne Hill. The golf course, which will hold its official opening event on August 1, is a Tom Fazio design that takes advantage of the dramatic elevations to provide sweeping views and varied challenges.

Golf is the initial attraction, but it is hardly the only one. Silo Ridge is the first community in the northeast developed by the Arizona-based Discovery Land Company. Its properties elsewhere – Gozzer Ranch, beside Lake Coeur d’Alene in Idaho; CordeValle Golf Club in Santa Clara County, California; the Estancia Club and Mirabel Golf Club in greater Scottsdale; Iron Horse in Whitefish, Montana; and Baker’s Bay Golf and Ocean Club in the Bahamas, to name just a few – have turned residents into adherents with Discovery’s insistence on excellence, service, and fun.

“When I was with the Texas Rangers I lived in Vaquero, outside Dallas, one of Discovery’s first properties,” says Yankees first baseman Mark Teixeira, who now owns a place at Baker’s Bay and is building one at Silo Ridge. “I got to know their CEO Mike Meldman, got to know some guys that owned other Discovery properties, and when you visit them and play some golf and go fishing or whatever, you just realize what a great model they’ve built – a kind of family supervacation all in the same spot within a safe and private community.”

“When you stand on the first tee and **look out over the vistas**, it has a great Irish feel to it.” —Tom Fazio

The Discovery Land Company approach could be called year-round summer camp on steroids. Teixeira describes a typical four-day visit to Baker’s Bay as including “golf, tennis, snorkeling, fishing, lobster-diving, kite-boarding – have great meals, have a party.” At a time when country clubs are hungry to attract young families and involve them in club activities, Discovery has hit upon a formula built around providing recreational opportunities—outdoors as much as possible—for parents, kids, and grandparents too.

“We are a playground for families that want a private residential community with services and amenities beyond that of any resort they’ve ever been to,” says Silo Ridge’s sales manager Dan O’Callaghan. “Equestrian facilities, archery, fly-fishing, shooting at Tamarack, hiking at Catamount, racing at Lime Rock – we want to utilize the community and all the activities the Hudson Valley has to offer.”

Silo Ridge will provide concierge services for mom and dad – “send us a shopping list, and we’ll see that your kitchen is always stocked when you arrive,” says O’Callaghan – and coordinators for the youngsters enjoying its Outdoor Pursuits program. And if the weather’s not good for hiking a rail trail or mountain-biking or sporting clays, there’s the indoor field house with facilities (and referees) for basketball, lacrosse, or maybe roller hockey, along with the climbing wall and fitness facilities and more.

Discovery was founded by Mike Meldman, a real estate developer then living in Scottsdale. A divorced dad at the time, he tried to imagine the kind of place where his sons would look forward to spending time with him and would want to bring their friends; that became the driving philosophy behind his properties.

“We do lifestyle communities that are developed for families, like the traditional old-fashioned club where you grow up somewhere, you’re a member and your parents are members, the family are members and everybody kind of knows each other,” he says. To help achieve that goal, he made memberships vertical for families: if you are a member (and membership is included in the real estate purchase), then your parents are members and so are your children



Morning sunlight casts long shadows across the first fairway. Inset: A rocky creek provides a picturesque backdrop to the 18th green.

and grandchildren and so on without restrictions.

“One of the things that attracted me was that, yes, there’s an emphasis on service but there’s a casualness, too,” says Brian Crowell, newly installed as the Director of Golf at Silo Ridge, “I think we need that if we’re going to attract people to the game. Music is encouraged; no one’s going to look at you funny if you wear your hat backwards or shirt untucked or any of that stuff. We need to move away from that stuffy model if clubs are going to survive, and I’m excited to be part of something that’s taking the lead in that direction.”

Meldman had been looking for a site in the Met Area for a long

time, “but it’s just not that easy to find it. It’s not like there’s five, six, seven hundred acres of [available] land you could do these type of projects on.” The Silo Ridge property had a previous Ernie Els-designed golf course on it, and its owners, the Torres family, had been trying to develop a resort with homesites and a large hotel since 1999. The zoning hurdles had largely been cleared, which made it especially attractive to Discovery when the opportunity to team with the Torres’ Stoneleaf Partners came about.

The hotel plans were scrapped, and the developers worked closely with the Amenia community to fine-tune plans for the full project,

which will include 245 units of housing and is expected to generate \$64 million in tax revenues for the town, schools, fire districts, and Dutchess County over the next ten years. Environmental standards stricter than the region’s requirements have been put in place; eighty percent of the project’s 670 acres will be preserved as open space. And the Discovery Land Company Foundation, as it does at each of the company’s properties, is already supporting local charities that serve children in shelters and in foster care, with resources and involvement that go beyond simply donating money. “The Foundation’s efforts were an extremely important factor in my going to

Clockwise from far left: The Roost Bar looks out on the practice facility, and will feature a full bar, food, and music; a few vegetables from the organic garden, which will provide a complete club-to-table dining experience; excavated rock stands behind the 11th green; Meldman and Fazio during construction of The Summit in Las Vegas; the barn near the organic farm; a morning fog layer above the golf course.

Silo Ridge,” says Crowell.

Residents coming up from the city can avoid weekend traffic by taking Metro-North’s Harlem Line to its end at the Wassaic Station in Amenia, where a shuttle will take them the remaining two and a half miles to Silo Ridge. Discovery Land

stand on the first tee and look out over the vistas, the elevations and the long-range views, and you see those fields that are planted with soy bean and other green vegetation, it reminds you of Ireland. It has a great Irish feel to it.”

The course begins at a high point, and tumbles some 150 feet over the opening holes until it reaches its floor at the seventh green. The first eight holes form one section of the routing; the ninth brings you to a natural amphitheater setting for the tenth and eighteenth holes, and the eleventh through

green’s frame. Each part, each phase of the property creates a different setting for each individual hole, but it flows very naturally.

“Look at the third hole, rising to a green in front of two silos that were renovated and updated – isn’t it appropriate that we’d have a green setting in front of a silo at Silo Ridge? It’s a natural.”

The most difficult aspect for golfers may be tearing themselves away from Discovery’s signature “comfort stations” – deluxe versions of a snack shack that re-envision the humble halfway house

summer of 2017. The company is still in the process of getting the necessary approvals for a clustered development of 82 residences tied to the new golf course it will create amid the coastal pines.

There is no question Discovery Land Company’s model is aimed at a small and extremely well-heeled population of buyers. Nonetheless, its emphasis on active fun and come-as-you-are casualness fits the contemporary family better than the traditional unchanging country club. “Many private clubs in the Met Area have worked hard to create a more



Company is working with the MTA in the hopes of adding a private luxury car for Silo Ridge residents and guests to the Harlem Line train in peak season. Even without this extra fillip, Meldman points out that the community is closer to New York than other equivalent destinations elsewhere in the country: “It’s an hour and a half drive from the city, right?” he says. “LA people drive two and a half hours to Palm Springs. In the Bay Area, they drive three and a half hours to Lake Tahoe.” (And Hamptons visitors can spend that much time on Route 27 alone.)

When they arrive, they’ll find a golf course that takes full advantage of the special qualities of the site. “It’s so dynamic,” says Fazio, the noted architect who designs all of Discovery’s new courses. “When you

seventeenth follow a loop with more elevation changes and many rock outcroppings.

“The design comes from what nature gives you, taking what’s there and then incorporating it,” says Fazio. “The number one challenge was the elevation changes, how you fit in the holes where you can see the tee shot land, the areas where you want the green, and how you deal with the elements that are on the ground. In some places that’s rock – it’s a challenge to move rock, but it leaves you with such great settings.”

On the eleventh hole, for example, Fazio wanted to lower the location for the green by four feet, leaving an uphill approach but decreasing the severity. “When we cut the land, it happened to be in an area of rock, so we kept the backdrop of the rock for the

by elevating it to a gourmet’s (and gourmand’s) delight. The first, located between the third green and fourth tee, will feature many standard items but also a wall of penny candy, a soft-serve machine, a “better butter bar” with ten different nut butters (all made locally) to spread on assorted crackers and jams, and locally-sourced custom quarter-foot hot dogs for a short quick bite. The other, between the eleventh green and twelfth tee, is on the savory side, with more local products – meats and cheeses – as well as health snacks, beef jerky, a margarita machine and Bloody Mary Bar.

Silo Ridge Field Club is not the company’s only venture in the Met Area. A proposed golf club project in Quogue is in the works; its beach club is under construction, expected to open in the

family-centric environment,” notes MGA Executive Director Jay Mottola. “What Mike Meldman is planning at Silo Ridge, and what he has done with Discovery’s clubs around the world, is a leading example of this trend. Clubs of the future are going to have to find ways to make golf and the entire club experience fun, and that is exactly what they’re doing at Silo Ridge.”

“When you take the whole northeast,” says Meldman, “there’s not one community that provides the full gamut of activities and services that we provide. We think the market doesn’t know they’re dying for it because they haven’t experienced it yet, but I think once they experience it, they’ll be craving it. It’s just a good way to hang with your friends and family.” ■