



Crews work Tuesday to remove old artificial turn from the Riverbend Driving Range. MARK KLAAS, Kent Reporter

# Riverbend Driving Range improvements continuing in Kent

City awards contract for new parking lot, sidewalks, landscaping

By Steve Hunter

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The improvements keep on coming to the city of Kent's Riverbend Driving Range and surrounding area.

A contractor is scheduled to start work in March on a new driving range parking lot, a Russell Road bike/pedestrian connection to the Green River Trail and lighting, sidewalk and landscaping improvements along West Meeker Street next to Riverbend.

The Kent City Council awarded a \$2.3 million bid to Pacific-based ICON Materials on Feb. 4 for the Meet Me on Meeker Sidewalk and Riverbend Driving Range improvements. The city received eight bids that ranged from \$2.3 million to \$2.9 million, with four in the \$2.3 million bracket.

“I am delighted to bring you these bids,” Public Works Director Tim LaPorte said to the council. “We have not seen bids (this tight). ...that shows a very good bid package.”

LaPorte said the project included staff work by Public Works, Parks and Economic and Community Development. The city received a \$250,000 grant from the state Transportation Improvement Board to help pay for the project. The rest of the funds will come from the city’s business and occupation tax as well as some of the proceeds from the \$10.5 million sale of the Riverbend par 3 golf course to the developer of the Ethos Apartments along West Meeker Street and across from the Riverbend 18-hole course.

“It’s a lot of fun to see what’s happening out there,” LaPorte said about the changes near Riverbend. “It’s an incredible facelift.”

The project will include a multimodal promenade on the south side of Meeker Street (west of Russell Road), a new raised crosswalk, traffic islands, two-way shared use path, streetscape amenities, wider sidewalk, street trees and vegetated buffers, pedestrian signals, pedestrian lighting and street lighting, according to the city’s website. A new sidewalk on Russell Road south of Meeker Street will connect with the Green River Trail.

Work is expected to begin in March and finish in July.

Meanwhile, crews continue this week on phase one to remove the outdated artificial turf from the driving range. The city will replace that turf with natural grass. Crews will regrade the range area to improve drainage and install irrigation. Perimeter poles and fencing on the eastern portion of the range will be replaced and relocated to allow for expansion of the building in the next phase.

That driving range turf replacement work is part of a \$1.4 million contract awarded by the council in December to Buckley-based Mike McClung Construction Co.

“We are still hoping for phase I completion by the end of April,” said Parks Director Julie Parascondola in a Tuesday email. “We are excited to be transitioning away from artificial turf and ‘Going Green,’ by planting real grass this time around. The range will no longer have capital lifecycle

burdens by having to replace artificial turf after 13-plus years, which was our previous challenge. Real grass will not need to be replaced and will provide a much improved visual appearance for our golfers well into the long term future, supporting the course's business plan goals and customer experience.”

The third and final phase of Riverbend improvements will include building renovations and the addition of 14 new driving stalls to connect to the existing 32 stations, which will be upgraded. All the work is expected to be completed by July, so the city can begin to collect revenue from all of the driving range improvements. That phase is expected to go out to bid soon.

“One of the major elements to bring in significant revenue to the golf course is the expansion of the driving range,” Parascondola said in December to the council. “It is also the catalyst to transition the golf course into the positive black.”

The city is using \$6 million of the par 3 property sale for improvements at Riverbend and \$4 million to pay off debt at the complex, which loses money each year, although those losses were reduced with the par 3 closure.

A reopening date for the driving range remains to be determined.

Parascondola said a soft opening will be considered before all the work is completed to give the public access as soon as possible.

“I'd like to just send an appreciation side note out to Riverbend's golf community for their patience and we are doing everything we can to get the range reopened as soon possible,” Parascondola said. “While many initiatives take time to launch or complete, there are lots of great things happening at the course, which hopefully they are noticing.”



A look at where sidewalk improvements will be made near the Riverbend Driving Range, as well as the site of the new parking lot. COURTESY GRAPHIC, City of Kent

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