

Tapatio Springs gets a facelift

George Strait, Tom Cusick are finishing Tapatio Springs.

By Valentino Lucio,

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G.W. Arnold takes a swing on the No. 1 tee box of the Lakes Course at the newly renovated Resort at Tapatio Springs near Boerne on Thursday, Nov. 10, 2011.

The Resort at Tapatio Springs is celebrating its 30th anniversary this month — and it's showing off its face-lift.

About eight months after country music star [George Strait](#) and area entrepreneur [Tom P. Cusick Jr.](#) entered into a lease/purchase agreement for the 250-acre property in Boerne, they are putting the finishing touches on several renovations, breathing new life into the once-troubled resort.

For years, cracked paint, faded carpet and crumbling facades were prominent throughout the resort and the golf course was a crunchy brown.

“You can't imagine, it was so disgusting,” Cusick said. “I can see why no one wanted to stay here. But now we want to invite people back.”

The majority of work was done to the resort's clubhouse and 112-room hotel.

Stone and stucco facades accentuate the property, giving it a Southwestern flair. The entire clubhouse was gutted and now houses an updated bar, locker rooms, pro shop and La Cascada, a restaurant that offers an eclectic menu.

The hotel, which once gleamed a bright red, now blends with the Hill County's landscape. It has queen and king bedrooms that start at about \$150 per night. There are 10 suites, including Strait's private suite, which can be rented when he's not using it for \$1,200 per night. Each room got new carpet, furniture and bedding and other updates that Cusick hopes will attract more people to stay at the resort.

Not all the updates are finished — but they'll never be done “tweaking and improving the resort,” Cusick added.

With several resorts nearby, those updates were necessary for Tapatio Springs to stay competitive.

“Tapatio Springs has tremendous upside potential,” said Henry Feldman, hospitality consultant for Martin Feldman Hospitality. “It needed money being spent on it; it needed to be brought up to date.”

Since Cusick and Strait started running the resort, they've added 90 members to its roster, bringing the total to 220.

Although the resort has members, it is open to the public.

Besides being in need of a face-lift, the resort has had a troubled past.

Its financial issues started last year when the then-owners defaulted on a \$15 million loan.

Then Lonnie R. Nowlin stepped forward, offering to buy the property. He and a companion subsequently were arrested on theft charges last September for writing bad checks connected to business at the resort. He never took the ownership.

The property eventually hit the auction block a few months after the owners filed for bankruptcy in April 2010.

Adding to the resort's woes was an outdated irrigation system that turned the green golf course into a brown eyesore.

But keeping the fairways green should be easier going forward.

The newly created Kendall County Fresh Water Supply District No. 1 will purchase treated sewage effluent from Boerne to supply water to the golf resort and, eventually, to nearby homes. Construction on the irrigation system to distribute that water is expected to begin early next year, and funding for it will come from private and public entities, Cusick said.

“The members and people who live here were given so many promises and nothing was ever delivered,” Cusick said. “And now it's so rewarding to see how pumped people are about the work we're doing.”

G.W. Arnold, an electrical engineer who retired from Kelly AFB, has lived in a garden home off the 13th hole for 15 years. Despite all the problems, he never thought about selling his home. After seeing all the updates take shape, he's beginning to notice more and more people visiting the resort, a place he's happy to call home.

“Seven months ago, this place looked like hell,” Arnold said. “Now I'm ecstatic, grinning from ear to ear. I've never seen this place look so nice.”