

COUNTRY CHIC

THE **OX RIDGE RIDING AND RACQUET CLUB** UNDERGOES A MASSIVE RENOVATION



Equestrians can now enjoy new stables, a massive indoor arena and lots of room for equipment.

OX RIDGE HUNT CLUB may be 104 years old, but the well-loved Darien riding club is just getting started.

Now known as Ox Ridge Riding and Racquet Club, the facility and grounds are knee-deep in a massive \$11.5 million renovation that will benefit members in a whole new way. The club, which currently serves roughly 60 members, will be able to serve 250 members with a huge new range of offerings including paddle tennis and squash. Club executives are able to partly finance the project through funds gained by selling 16.25 acres of protected land back to the town of Darien in 2017.

"That land will be open to members of the town to use, but can never be built on," stressed the club's president Richard Colligan. "Selling it back to the town has really allowed us to grow."

Staying true to its award-winning equestrian roots, the expansive 27,000-square-foot, 67-stall stable has just been completed, all with an extra-large indoor ring, top-of-the-line footing, tack rooms, treadmills and heated bathing area for horses. Outside, there's even more room for them to roam across the 22-acre property along with new jumper and hunter rings.

The biggest change will likely be the June opening of the 18,000-square-foot clubhouse which will house a fitness center (complete with Peloton equipment), pro shop, men's and women's locker rooms, a squash court with six singles and two doubles courts and a full-service restaurant and bar to serve traditional American grill fare to members only. The outside of the clubhouse will have a large wrap around



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Artist renderings of the new club show a state-of-the-art fitness facility overlooking the squash courts. A full-service restaurant will serve lunch and dinner daily. The exterior of the clubhouse has a wrap around terrace for year-round outdoor dining.

porch with a fireplace and opportunity for outdoor dining. The new clubhouse will also allow Ox Ridge to offer more private events and a new outdoor lawn space will specifically be for outdoor events. The design, Colligan explained, will stay true to its architectural roots but offer modern conveniences.

"We call it understated country charm," he says. "It will be comfortable and inviting but upgraded in a big way."

In addition, Colligan said there will be four new paddle tennis courts built outside, complete with lights for night play and a warming hut.

Along with the renovation, the club will continue to offer members the

ability to take riding lessons, whether with their own on-location horse or with one of the club's own highly-trained horses and ponies. Caretakers live on-site to ensure 24/7 care for the horses. Colligan also announced the hiring of Will Newnham, a well-seasoned squash player and the new head squash professional at Ox Ridge. Newnham, who grew up in England and now lives in Stamford, comes to the club from the Racquet & Tennis Club in Manhattan. At Ox Ridge, Newnham will establish and develop a squash program to encourage all ages and skill levels in the sport.

"We will have the only squash facility

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—RICHARD COLLIGAN, PRESIDENT, OX RIDGE

in Darien and one of the largest in the area," Colligan said. "Squash is only growing in popularity."

Colligan says he's confident that the additions and improvements underway will drive membership. He hopes to attract young families in the area looking for a "different kind of club."

"Mom can work out while her daughter takes a riding lesson and her son plays squash," he says. "Then they can all meet for lunch at the restaurant. That's the kind of club we want to be, to serve our members who have a range of interests."

Membership ranges from \$5,000 to \$50,000.

ARTIST RENDERINGS: CONTRIBUTED

BY THE NUMBERS
OX RIDGE RIDING AND RACQUET CLUB

\$11.5 million was spent on the extensive renovation

22 sprawling acres of land is home to the grounds

8 squash courts—six singles, two doubles