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Golf course eyes 8 to 10 'casitas' by next year

By [Mary Clarkin](#)

Golf devotees drawn to Hutchinson to watch the men's U.S. Senior Open next year at Prairie Dunes Country Club will be able to book their stays on another area golf course.

Perhaps as many as eight to 10 casitas (Spanish for "little houses") could be on line at Cottonwood Hills by the July 6-9, 2006, championship, according to Lane Neville, president of the Cottonwood Hills master-planned golf development being launched at East 4th and Buhler Road.

Casitas will be capable of accommodating four guests per site and available for a nightly or weekly rental. Eventually, there could be 54 casitas - capable of housing more than 200 people - constructed at Cottonwood Hills.

Site planners have identified two prospective locations for hotels in Cottonwood Hills - a Courtyard by Marriott-like hotel could arise along Buhler Road north of the intersection at 4th and a smaller resort hotel could be constructed near the golf course.

No deal has been struck, however, for either envisioned hotel project.

The 18-hole course is being shaped and fairways will be sodded this spring. A limited opening is scheduled in September 2005, with a public opening of the course to occur in April 2006.

Residential lots at Cottonwood Hills will be available for sale after final platting has occurred this spring.

Marriott Golf, a division of Marriott Hotels, will manage the Cottonwood Hills golf course. Marriott Golf vice president of development Kevin Hammock said he "is going to be pressing those conversations this spring" about bringing a hotel - at some point - to the development.

"It would certainly be a couple of years to where it would make sense," Hammock said.

More immediately, Marriott Golf will hire a golf course superintendent, who would start work this spring.

The superintendent, in turn, will hire a mechanic and groundskeepers, Hammock said, and Marriott Golf "will begin to take possession a hole or two at a time."

"Sometime during this year," he continued, "we'll have a director of golf, and we'll hire a head golf professional and assistant golf professionals, and hire merchandising people and tournament coordinators and get a lot of people from the Hutchinson area involved as Marriott associates."

Cottonwood Hills' Web site - www.cottonwoodhills.net - describes a "self-contained" community "complete with its own restaurants, theaters, schools and offices," in addition to the golf course and various housing options, ranging from the casitas to town homes to single-family homes with lots large enough to keep horses.

Neville said the "theaters" referred to outdoor amphitheaters and "schools" referred to land available if Buhler USD 313 should someday need another school location.

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