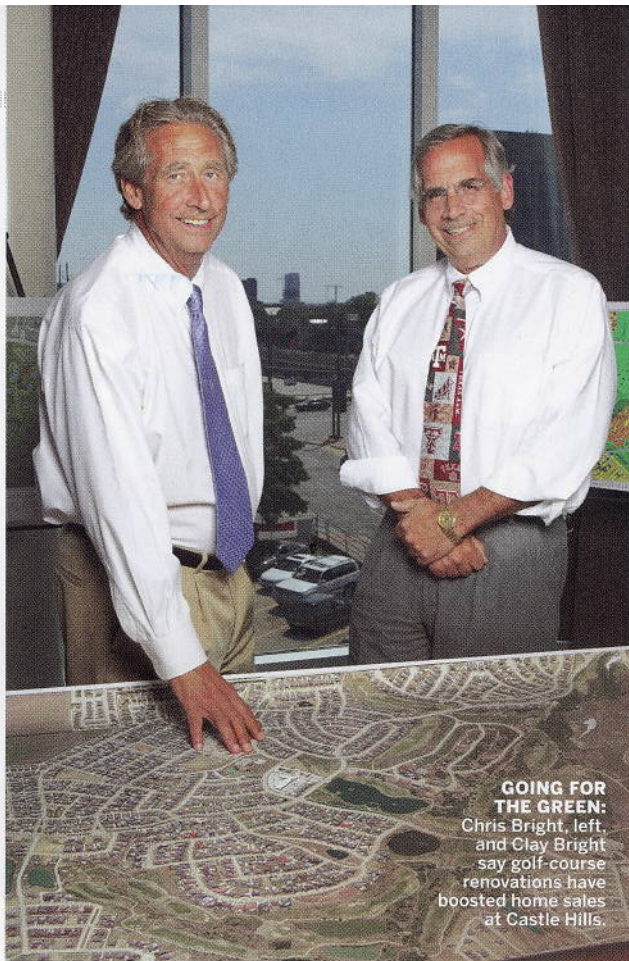


Bright Idea

Chris Bright and Clay Bright have bet big on their multimillion-dollar, Hank Haney-led renovation of Castle Hills' golf course. BY **ART STRICKLIN**



GOING FOR THE GREEN: Chris Bright, left, and Clay Bright say golf course renovations have boosted home sales at Castle Hills.

THE TWO SONS OF LEGENDARY NORTH Texas businessman H.R. "Bum" Bright are taking a gamble, much like their famous father often did. This time, the brothers are betting on an overlooked economic generator—an upscale golf course—to enhance their signature real estate development.

Castle Hills, a 2,500-acre masterplanned community in Lewisville, is owned by Chris Bright, 59, and Clay Bright, 57. Together they run Bright Cos., which, along with real estate, has oil and gas, homebuilding, marketing, and banking interests.

Their father, who passed away in 2004, had varied interests, too—including the Dallas Cowboys, which he sold to Jerry Jones in 1989.

With about 2,300 homes and amenity retail space, Castle Hills is the brothers' highest-profile real estate development. But its golf component had gone noticeably downhill over the last several years. Its recent renovation, the brothers believe, will lead to more revenue for Castle Hills, originally the Bright family farm.

When Castle Hills opened in 1998, it featured an upscale public-access golf course designed by famous local architect Jay Morrish. Over the years the quality of the course, overseen by a series of management companies, deteriorated.

The brothers regained control of the course in the fall of 2010, and a broker friend of Clay's helped set up a meeting with Hank Haney, the well-respected North Texas-based golf instructor.

Haney, the famous former teacher to Tiger Woods, had toured the world playing golf, and gave the Bright brothers a vision of what could occur at Castle Hills.

The course, which was renamed the Lakes at Castle Hills to spotlight its abundance of water, was shut down during the summer of 2011 while Morrish, the Brights, and Haney worked to enhance the original par 72-layout. Haney also agreed to move his world teaching golf school headquarters to Castle Hills.

The course reopened in the fall of 2011 as a semi-private facility with greatly enhanced playing conditions and customer service. "I think our dad would like the improvements here—he liked first-class things," Clay says.

The brothers spent about \$2 million on course renovations and have budgeted another \$7 million to \$8 million for ongoing enhancements, plus a new resort-style pool and larger, multi-story clubhouse, both of which are slated to open next year.

The investment seems to be paying off. Home sales are up 20 percent since the golf course reopened. What's more, Castle Hills was named 2012 Community of the Year by the National Association of Home Builders.