

# N.O. Firefighters Pension Fund Lakewood Golf Club

**Key innovation:** the New Orleans Firefighters Pension Fund is spearheading the rehabilitation of the Lakewood Country Club to include firemen-related themes throughout the course

**Where they're based:** New Orleans

**Top executive:** Cynthia Rico, golf course general manager

**Year introduced:** under construction

ONCE HIGHLY POPULAR with New Orleans area golfers in the early 1960s, the Lakewood Country Club had fallen on hard times by 2003 when it was closed to the public and on the brink of declaring bankruptcy.

"This place has had a lot of ups and downs," said Cynthia Rico, general manager for the course. "And that was pretty much a down time."

Then along came the New Orleans Firefighters Pension Fund, which in the spring of 2003 bought the property for \$6 million and has since been involved in its rebuilding.

"We thought it was both the right thing to do as well as being a good overall investment," said Richard Hampton, CEO and secretary-treasurer of the pension fund board.

"Traditionally our pension fund has been involved with a variety of projects in the New Orleans area and throughout Louisiana," said Hampton of a fund with nearly 700 active members. "But it gave us special pleasure to be a part of bringing a great facility back to working order."

Renamed Lakewood Golf Club, the facility faced additional challenges because of damages from Hurricane Katrina.

"For a while there was even talk that FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Administration) wanted to use the land to put trailers on it, even though nothing ever came of that," Rico said.

Instead, the renovation work on a course that once hosted the likes of Lee Trevino and Jack Nicklaus, among other golf champions, has continued at an accelerated pace.

Under the direction of golf course architect Ron Garl, the \$9 million renovation includes modernized fairways, tees and greens and features an 18th-hole trap in the shape of flames using red sand imported from Florida.

"There are firefighter themes throughout the course, which we thought were appropriate considering that it is the firefighters pension fund that is developing this whole thing," Hampton said.

Said Rico: "It's just been amazing how the firefighters pension fund got involved with this and has done such good work. It makes me feel that the course, which everyone said was finished, is now going to have a very long future."•

— Garry Boulard



PHOTO BY TRACIE MORRIS SCHAEFER

Cynthia Rico, vice president of operations for the Lakewood Gold Club development, reviews plans for the redeveloped course with New Orleans Firefighter Pension Fund president William Carrouche, left, and pension fund CEO Richard Hampton.