



Shadow Creek Ranch: How strategic collaboration delivered \$1 Million in annual savings

A community built to impress

Shadow Creek Ranch, a master-planned community in Texas, is home to nearly 6,300 single-family residences spread across four distinct villages: Biscayne Bay, Emerald Bay, Diamond Bay, and Reflection Bay. The neighborhood features 19 lakes, 20 million square feet of landscaping, and a robust amenities package that includes recreation centers, playgrounds, parks, and trails. Shadow Creek Ranch is a vibrant and evolving community, known for its forward-thinking leadership and resident-focused management.

The water bill wake-up call

By 2022, escalating city water costs for irrigation had reached \$1.2 million annually. The board and management team recognized the urgent need to reduce expenses and improve sustainability, especially given the region's drought-prone climate. "We were spending all this money on city water, but we had all this water in these wells available. Is there a way to utilize them to our benefit?" recalls Jennifer Doest, president of both the master association and Village of Biscayne Bay.



From wells to wins

Leveraging the community's 19 lakes and wells, the team, led by General Manager Dan Westman and supported by FirstService Residential, initiated a major capital improvement project to convert the majority of irrigation from city water to lake water. This required extensive due diligence, technical assessments, and coordination among five different vendors. "It was a brainchild that they were able to bring to fruition with the help of our excellent landscaper and other vendors," says Jennifer.

The conversion increased irrigation coverage using lake water from 20% to 95%. The

municipal utility districts (MUDs) funded the \$1.3 million project, so the association did not bear the direct cost. The team regularly tests lake water quality and soil samples, adjusting fertilizer as needed to manage the impact of drainage water on landscaping.



Savings in action

The project reduced the annual water bill from \$1.2 million to approximately \$330,000, yielding nearly \$1 million in yearly savings. “Being able to provide a cost savings of that magnitude allows us to keep the dues lower than maybe they would be, and reallocate some of those funds to projects short-term and long-term so that we can be more fiscally responsible for the community,” notes Jennifer.

Savings are now being invested in capital improvements including upgrades to basketball courts, and the addition of new amenities like pickleball courts. “We’re reinvesting in amenities to keep Shadow Creek Ranch competitive with newer communities and to maintain high property values,” says Dan.



Planning for progress

Shadow Creek Ranch’s governance structure ensures resident representation, with each village having its own board and the presidents forming the master association board. The current board and management team have established a detailed 10-year strategic plan, improving long-term planning and fiscal responsibility. “Prior to this board and FirstService Residential, we didn’t really have that kind of future planning. Now, it’s really been beneficial for us to see where the savings is, where those additional funds can be reallocated, and how we can better the community from a long-term standpoint,” says Jennifer.



A model for success

Both board members and management credit the success of the project to strong collaboration and a proactive, resident-focused approach. “We have a very forward-thinking board. There’s great synergy amongst all our boards, and the team at FirstService Residential has

been instrumental in making this happen,” says Jennifer. She also praised the on-site team, noting, “They are top notch—a well-oiled machine. We’re indebted to Tiffeny for helping put this team together. They’ve been instrumental in helping us move our neighborhood forward”.

Staying ahead of the curve

Shadow Creek Ranch’s irrigation conversion project is a testament to what’s possible when visionary leadership, expert management, and community collaboration come together. The result: substantial cost savings, enhanced amenities, and a strategic plan for continued success.

