

Issue 20 | Fall 2014

BY DESIGN



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Also: Pace of Play flyer • Poppy Hills renovation • Public golf • ASGCA publications

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Chapter 1

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In with the new...

I will confess that there were some nerves when we decided that our topic for the cover story of this edition of *By Design* would be new golf courses being built in North America.

Would there be enough content to fill our usual four pages? As it turns out, we should have been worried about it taking up *too much* space. It turns out that many ASGCA member architects are working on brand new golf courses in America, in numbers that we have not seen in the past few years.

Some are projects that have been on hold, and revived now that developers think the economic conditions can support the build. Others are brand new projects that have been launched for a variety of different reasons. Our cover story provides a fascinating insight into the drivers behind these new developments.

The industry has weathered the storm well, and come out with the ability to produce golf courses that can have a positive impact on communities in economic, social and environmental terms. I look forward to tracking progress on the excellent work by ASGCA members both in North America and throughout the rest of the world.

Enjoy the issue!



Lee Schmidt
President
American Society of Golf Course Architects

BY DESIGN

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CONTENTS

Digest 5

A round-up of recent news from the ASGCA, including the release of a new flyer to help clubs improve pace of play and updates on ASGCA member projects throughout the world

New builds 8

ASGCA members are working on brand new golf courses throughout North America. Adam Lawrence investigates the driving forces behind these new projects

Poppy Hills 18

We find out about the recently completed renovation of Poppy Hills Golf Course in California

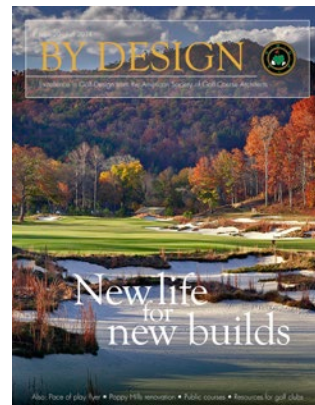
Public golf 20

ASGCA Treasurer Greg Martin outlines multiple benefits of public golf

ASGCA publications 22

Marc Whitney provides an overview of the resources that ASGCA has created to help golf clubs with decision-making

COVER



The Cliffs at Mountain Park was designed by Gary Player with architect Jeff Lawrence, ASGCA. Photo by Jason Brown, Trident Image Group




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Pace of Play flyer

Helping clubs increase speed of play

The ASGCA has—in cooperation with the United States Golf Association—produced a checklist and tips for clubs working with a golf course architect to improve pace of play.

The guidance identifies five basic ingredients that contribute to getting courses to move faster—and smoother:

player abilities; course management; set-up; maintenance and turf conditions; and course design—the key variable that sets it all in motion.

The goal of pace of play initiatives—which are now being tackled by all of golf's major organizations—is to create an even flow of golfers as they play the game,

minimizing waiting times and creating a more enjoyable experience.

Members of the ASGCA are uniquely qualified to assist course owners and operators with pace-of-play improvement, while also preserving the spirit of the game—to make sure that courses offer the fun and challenging aspects that keep golfers coming back.

The ASGCA's Pace of Play flyer is available as a free download via www.asgca.org/publications.



GCBA Meeting

ASGCA at golf builders' meeting

ASGCA President Lee Schmidt led an ASGCA contingent to the Golf Course Builders Association of America meeting, held in August 2014 at the PGA Championship in Louisville, Kentucky. Schmidt moderated a panel that addressed seed and sod technology and inventory. Joining him were Jacklin Seed's Rick Elyea, Atlas Turf's John Holmes and West Coast Turf's John Marman. The group agreed that supply is tight, as farms can make more money with other crops right now, and many turf farms were lost during the recession.

Schmidt also presented an ASGCA update to attendees. Among other items, he noted: "A recent survey found that 96.5 percent of ASGCA members are designing new courses in a way that conserves water and,

when possible, uses alternative sources of water. And nearly 83 percent are advising clients on the relationship between turfgrass selection and water consumption, and even renovating golf courses for installation of more effective grasses."



ASGCA President Lee Schmidt (left) participated in an expert panel discussion at the meeting

Inverness completes regrassing project

Shawn Smith, ASGCA of Hills & Forrest has overseen the completion of a 12-month project to regrass the playing surfaces at the Inverness Club in Toledo, Ohio. The project reduces the need for fungicide applications and restores the greens to the shapes originally designed by Donald Ross.



Shangri-La renovation project completed

The 27-hole Shangri-La Golf Club in Monkey Island, Oklahoma has officially reopened following a two-year redesign project overseen by Tom Clark, ASGCA Past President. Work on the Heritage and Legends nines was conducted in phases so that at least 18 holes were available for play at all times during the renovation.

Rogers hired for renovation project at Pine Lake

Drew Rogers, ASGCA has been hired to carry out a renovation project at Pine Lake Country Club in Orchard Lake, Michigan. The architect has used aerial photography from the 1930s to help restore the design intentions of original architect Willie Park Jr.

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Sustainability in Golf

Golf's leaders gather to shape sustainable future



Image: John Brackett

Experience Green, with the Sea Pines Resort, will host the second annual *Sustainability in Golf* event

The second annual *Sustainability in Golf* event is set for Sept. 25-27, 2014 at Sea Pines Resort on Hilton Head Island, South Carolina. Presented by Experience Green and Sea Pines, the conference seeks to educate golf industry leaders about golf management practices that “generate profit with purpose” and focus on the “triple bottom line” to benefit the planet, its people and prosperity.

The schedule includes presentations from ASGCA, the National Golf Course Owners Association of America, The Toro Company and the County of San Luis Obispo, where the Dairy Creek public golf course designed by the late John Harbottle, ASGCA, has become the first in the world to achieve zero waste.

For more information and to register, visit the event's website at www.sustainabilityingolf.org.

Toro Centenary

Toro celebrates 100 year anniversary

Over 2,000 employees, retirees, channel and business partners, and other guests gathered at The Toro Company



headquarters in Bloomington, Minnesota as the golf equipment and irrigation firm celebrated its 100 year anniversary.

Governor Mark Dayton presented an official proclamation declaring July 10, 2014 as 'Toro Day' in the state of Minnesota. Michael J. Hoffman, chairman and chief executive officer of The Toro Company, said: “We are honored to have such talented employees around the world and individuals who have served the company throughout our history, along with great channel and business partners, who work every day to serve our customers and help advance our efforts in the industry.”



Fry/Straka selected for Little Mountain

Work has started on a renovation project at Little Mountain Country Club in Concord, Ohio, with the aim to improve playability and attract a wider range of the golfing public to the course. Architect Jason Straka, ASGCA intends to develop a faster and more enjoyable round, and improve the course's conditioning.



Historic Keller course reopens

Keller Golf Course in Maplewood, Minnesota—host of two PGA Championships and many PGA Tour events—has reopened following an extensive renovation project overseen by Richard Mandell, ASGCA Associate. “Now golfers have width,” says Mandell, “which introduces angle options, leading to choices to be made by the golfer.”

More information on all of the above projects and more by ASGCA members is available at the *Golf Course Architecture* website: www.golfcoursearchitecture.net

New golf courses | Adam Lawrence

America builds. again

New build projects are moving again, with ASGCA members actively working on entirely new courses throughout North America. Adam Lawrence discovers more



The Cliffs at Mountain Park in South Carolina,
designed by Gary Player with architect
Jeff Lawrence, ASGCA, opened last year

For golf architects, the years since 2008 have been mostly filled with renovation work. Helping golf clubs improve their courses, making them easier to maintain, more fun to play and more environmentally sustainable is important work, but it's not, generally, why most golf architects chose their profession. The reason young men and women dream of being golf architects is simple; they want to design and build their own courses.

Now, there is evidence this is changing; new golf construction is starting to move at a pace we have not seen since the economic crash. Tentatively, we can assert that developers are regaining confidence, and are recognizing that the fundamental reasons that make golf a potent asset to a larger development remain intact. Better still, we can observe a wide range of different business models behind the projects currently in progress, implying that

different parts of the development community now see the appeal of new golf. Best of all, a number of these business models are new, a direct response to the economic changes of the past six years.

The high profile, high end remote retreat has been one of the most successful leisure and property business models since the 1990s. Both in golf and other sectors, developers have proved that affluent clients will pay well to visit—and to



The Wyoming Club

Location: Newcastle, Wyoming
 Architect: Steve Forrest, ASGCA Past President
 and Shawn Smith, ASGCA
www.wyomingclub.com



own property in—locations that offer beauty and a ‘back to nature’ feel alongside great activities, whether these be golf, horseback riding, fishing or whatever. Sand Hills Golf Club in Nebraska was perhaps the trailblazer from a golfing point of view, and many developers since have sought to replicate some of the appeal of Dick Youngscap, Bill Coore, ASGCA and Ben Crenshaw’s creation.

Not all have succeeded. Creating a destination in the back of beyond is inevitably a high-risk exercise. But that hasn’t stopped backers of both private and public projects trying, and more are on the stocks.

The Wyoming Club

Among the most exciting is the new Wyoming Club, located in the east of the state, just across the border from the Black Hills of South Dakota.

The Wyoming Club is being developed by the Weinreis family, the owners of the largest privately held cattle ranching business in the United States. “We first came on board the project back in 2007,” says Steve Forrest, ASGCA Past President and partner, with Arthur Hills, ASGCA Fellow, in the design firm Hills & Forrest. “The family had started work on a small development—they originally

planned 14 housing plots. They wanted to create a family legacy, but they didn’t quite know how to do it.”

“The site is 1,500 acres. If you were just building golf it’d be enough for seven and a half courses,” laughs Shawn Smith, ASGCA, who is working with Forrest on the project. “It includes a really nice valley that would be a great site for a course, and we did several routing studies for that piece of land. But it also includes a sandstone mesa, and the family always liked to take people up to the top to show them the great view from the plateau.”

“Because it is such a big property, we suggested involving a land planning

“All the time the project was on hold, I worried that we would never get to build it, because it is the sort of property that defines a career

Steve Forrest, ASGCA Past President

firm from Boulder, Colorado,” says Forrest. “The land planners wanted to put 50 lots up on the mesa, but, in discussions with the clients, I said ‘It would be nice to have 50 homeowners see this view, but if you put the golf course up here, you get to sell the view again every day’. They agreed, and after about 15 different routings we had something everyone was happy with. The best thing of all is that the plateau is big enough for eighteen holes but not for anything else—even the driving range will be off the top of the plateau.”

Hills & Forrest signed a contract with the Weinreis family back in 2007, and completed the design in 2008. The documents went out to contractors, and construction was set to start in 2009 when, due to the sinking economy, the clients pulled the plug. “We called every six months, and just recently, the clients concluded it was time to push the button,” says Forrest. “We have started to clear, and the site is really being revealed. The family’s lead guy, who is not really a golf person, though he does play occasionally, likes to go up there, and he says that every time he does he is blown away by the views. Truly, I have never seen a site like this. All the time the project was on hold, I worried that we would never get to build it, because it is the sort of property that defines a career. It is like an island in the sky that happens to be the perfect size for a golf course. If you compare it to oceanfront courses, there you have the sea on one side and the other side is usually less spectacular. Here, the magnificent views continue, and change, as you work your way around the site.”

Wyoming Club will be a second home facility, with between 100-150 homes in the first phase. “The houses are 100 feet or more below the golf course,” says Smith. “The site is so natural that the course itself really has to match, so we are going to make it rugged and rough. We will use lots of the existing features—the craggy dead trees hanging off the cliff, the sagebrush. Clearing will finish this year, and we will get as



Minot Country Club
Location: Minot, North Dakota
Architect: Jim Engh, ASGCA
www.minotcountryclub.com



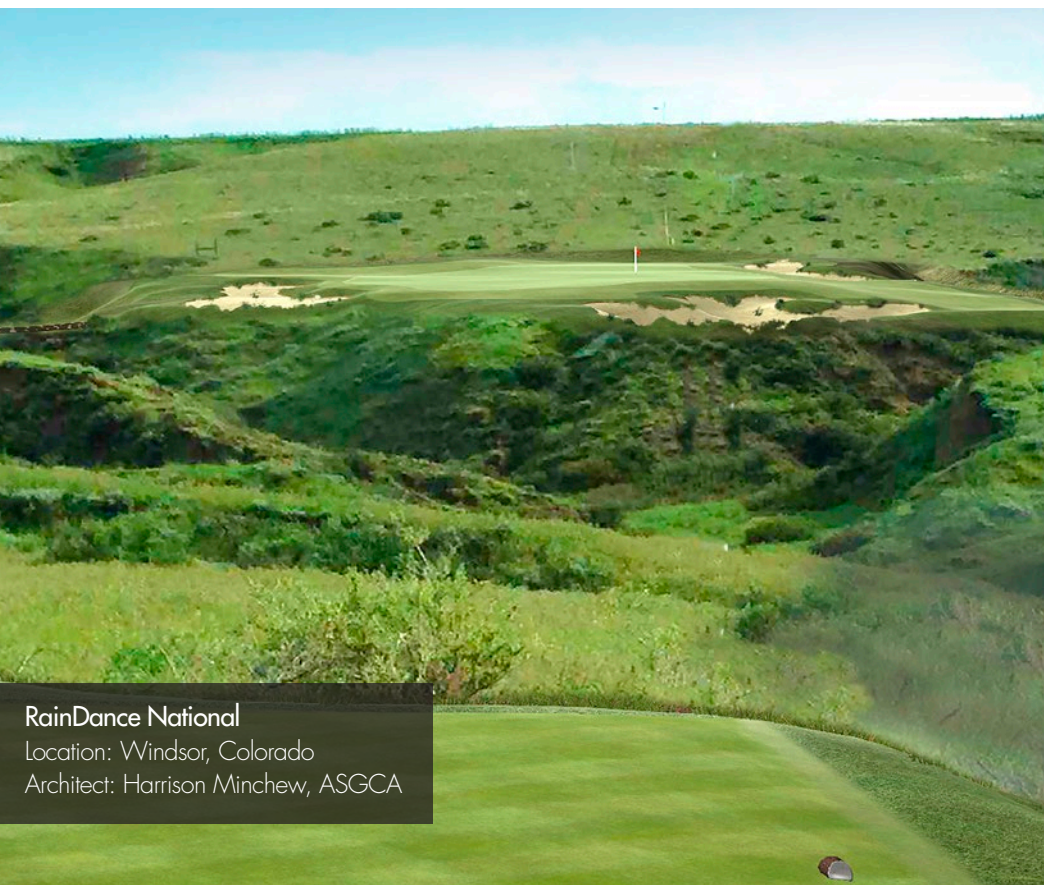
much of the construction as we can done in 2015. It is going to be something very special.”

Minot County Club

Over in North Dakota, architect Jim Engh, ASGCA, is hard at work on another new course, this time with a very different backstory. Minot Country Club, in the town of the same name, was originally designed in the 1920s by Tom Vardon, the brother of the great Harry. “I grew up in a town called Dickinson, about 200 miles away,” says Engh. “We played a lot

of tournaments at Minot, so I have a bunch of history with the place.”

Unfortunately for Minot golfers, the club’s original site always proved prone to flooding. The Souris River flows south from Canada to Minot before turning back to the north and returning to Canada. When the river broke its banks, the course would flood, and, over time, the club and city built a series of levees to mitigate potential flood risks. These levees though proved inadequate to protect against a huge flood that came in 2011. “It was a 500-year storm, and the defenses just



RainDance National

Location: Windsor, Colorado

Architect: Harrison Minchew, ASGCA



couldn't cope," says Engh. "The flood destroyed both the clubhouse and the course. The club had insurance on the clubhouse and was able to sell the land, so they decided to pick everything up and move to a new course south of town. Minot and the area around it is booming because of natural gas and oil exploration, so it is a strong local economy.

"Most people think North Dakota is going to be totally flat—and the old course was—but this one is in a valley," Engh continues. "We have lots of elevated tee shots playing down to the valley floor, and a creek comes into play on several holes. Lots of the native contours are being preserved, and the fairways are massively large—because the wind blows strong there!"

Nine holes have been seeded and the course will open in the summer of 2015.

RainDance National

In the town of Windsor, near Fort Collins in the north of Colorado, the economy is also strong because of the energy industry, in this case oil drilling. And here, too, an entrepreneurial developer has concluded that golf is the way to drive forward a planned housing project. Martin Lind, owner of the nearby Pelican Lakes course, designed by the late Ted Robinson, Sr, ASGCA, is working with Champions Tour player Fred Funk and golf architect Harrison Minchew, ASGCA, to build another course only three miles away.

Named RainDance National, construction on the course will start next year. "Fred met Martin back in 2009 and they hit it off," says Minchew. "Martin showed Fred the RainDance property, where he intended to do another real estate development at some point, and said to him 'You want to do your first signature design here?' Fred contacted me—we met back in 2004 when he came by the Palmer Design office to learn a little about golf architecture—and that's how it started.

"There are lots of beautiful arroyos on the site—it could be one of the best I have ever seen," he continues. "When I first got the topo map I said 'wow'. When I got the aerial I said 'wow'. When I first went out there

“When I got the topo and aerial, I said ‘wow’! When I first went out there and saw the property I said ‘You gotta be kidding me!’”

Harrison Minchew, ASGCA



The Country Club at The Golden Nugget

Location: Lake Charles, Louisiana

Architect: Todd Eckenrode, ASGCA

www.goldennuggetlc.com



and saw the property I said ‘You gotta be kidding me!’”

“The oil business is fueling the housing business around there,” Minchew explains. “You drive up from the Denver airport and feel as though you’re in the middle of nowhere, then you come off the highway and there’s a lot going on. The site is 1,100 acres. The real estate part will be parceled off and sold to large housebuilders. Martin owns 60 percent and has a development partner who owns the rest. The golf course component is 325 acres, and recently I have been spending a lot of time thinking about how we keep real estate developments from spoiling courses. So when Martin called this January and said ‘We’re ready to sign the contract and get going’, I told him I wondered if we had stuck too much to the original land plan with my routing. I wanted to do a ‘what-if’ exercise and see what would happen if I put the clubhouse where I thought it should be. And that worked perfectly—now the clubhouse has a view of all the arroyos and the

big lake, and we have 250 feet from tees to the property line, so we have really wide corridors where real estate is going to be adjacent. I said ‘Martin, we want to buffer the real estate from the golf’. He said ‘I don’t believe in real estate with golf course views. They’re living in a community. Screen it.’ We’re going to do some planting, lower the golf course, make some big berms. The theme of the golf course is going to be the prairie grasses, so we will transplant that material and build topography on the holes that are in the flatter areas. Those are also the areas where we need to screen the homes.

“We’ll start construction in May of next year and probably have half a dozen holes seeded by the end of the year. Continue irrigation during the winter, finish seeding in 2016, and maybe have a soft opening towards the end of that year with a full opening in 2017. Martin is going to build it in house—we’re going to get the best shapers I’ve ever worked with—and take our time. We have total flexibility to get it in there the

way we want. The practice area is on a hillside, with 100 feet of elevation change. There’s no rock there; we can move dirt easily and cheaply. So in the winter, Martin is going to turn it into a ski slope. There aren’t many bunny slopes with 100 feet of elevation. At the top, there’ll be ice skating.”

The Country Club at The Golden Nugget

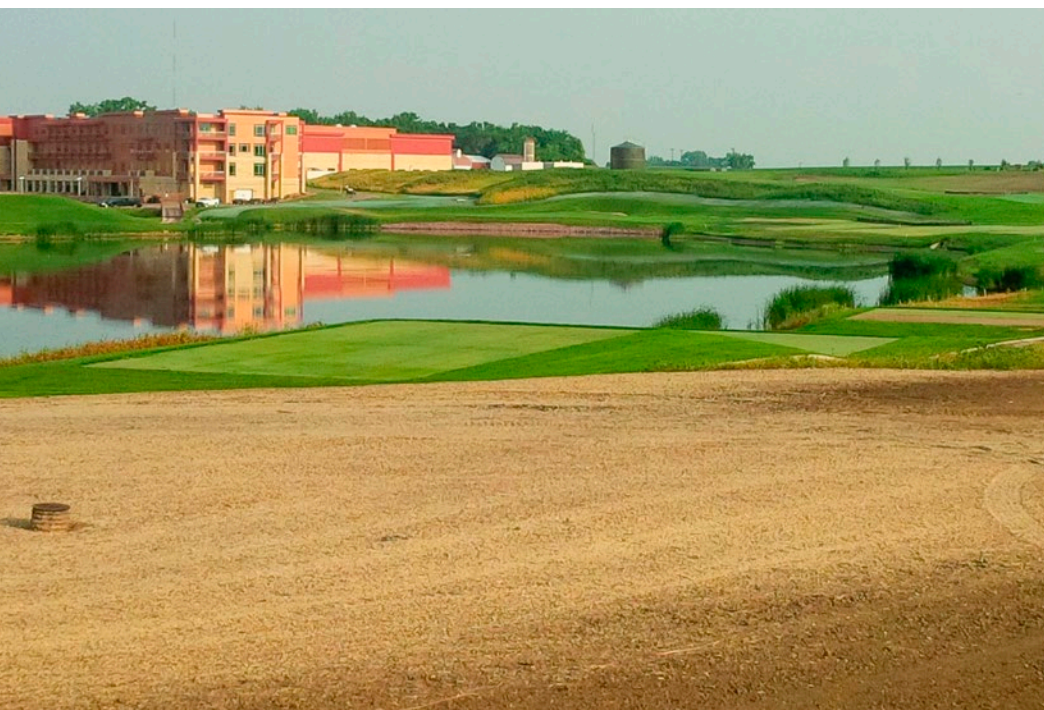
Another business model that continues to thrive is gambling, and casino developments are at the heart of two new courses currently under construction in different parts of the U.S. In Lake Charles, Louisiana, architect Todd Eckenrode, ASGCA, is close to completing a course for the massive new Golden Nugget casino development. Parent company Landry’s, owned by billionaire entrepreneur Tilman Fertitta, bought the Lake Charles project, already under construction, from Pinnacle Entertainment in 2013, and it will open late this year, with over 700 rooms and suites.

The Falls at Grand Falls

Location: Larchwood, Iowa
Architect: Rees Jones, ASGCA Past President
www.grandfallscasinoresort.com



Images: Grand Falls Casino



The Country Club at The Golden Nugget sits alongside the Calcasieu River, mostly on land that has been reclaimed from the river since the creation of a levee system some years ago. “A few small hills of pure sand remained in the middle of the site, covered in loblolly pines,” says Eckenrode. “We routed the golf

course to maximize their impact, with a variety of tees and greens playing off them. The site is open, so many acres of waste bunkering are a dominant feature of the course. Bold, dramatic green contours abound, creating diverse and interesting play. But the real jewel of the site is the river frontage, where the five closing

holes are located. Two par threes and a drivable par four hug Indian Bay, a natural cove in the river. These lead into two challenging finishing holes, a par four and a par five, both along the Calcasieu River, where it’s not unusual to be playing alongside a massive freighter, a group of kayakers or a local fisherman out after some redfish.”

The Falls at Grand Falls

Up in the north of Iowa, at the Grand Falls casino resort, another course is underway, designed by ASGCA Past President Rees Jones and his associate Bryce Swanson, ASGCA. Opening in Spring 2015, Jones describes the course as ‘a new style,’ with fewer bunkers and more ground game options. “The budget at Grand Falls is not elaborate—it is intended to be a \$50 daily fee operation,” he says. “We were building courses that were too expensive to sustain themselves. Now, we have to find new ways of making our courses interesting and enjoyable, while keeping the cost of construction and maintenance under control.”

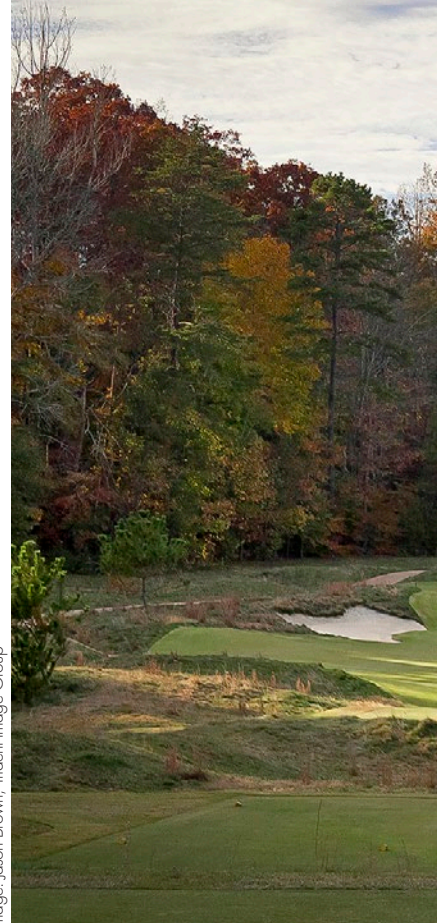
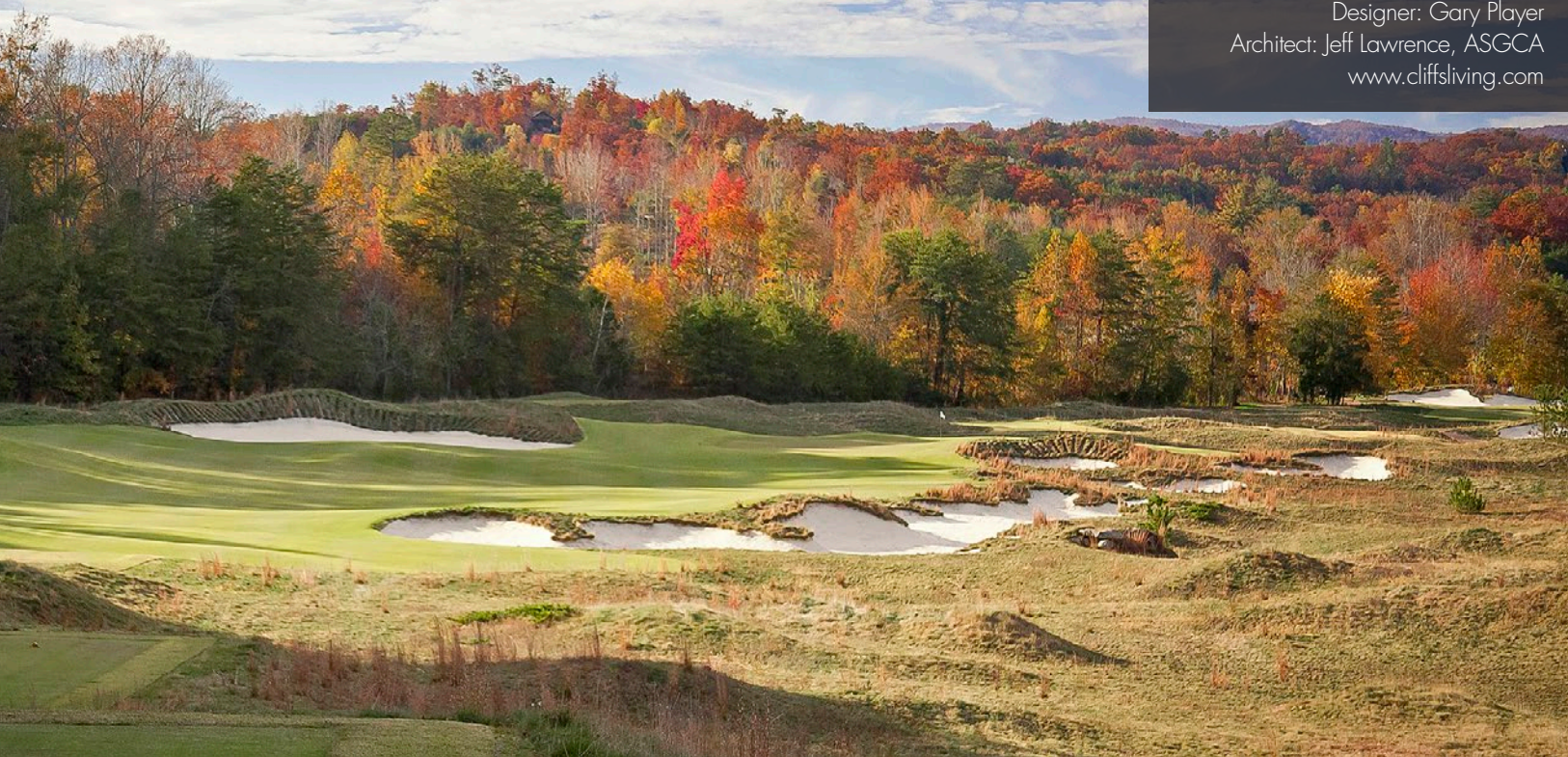


Image: Jason Brown, Trident Image Group



The Cliffs at Mountain Park

One characteristic that most of the projects underway right now share is resilience, on the part of the developer and golf architect alike. Jeff Lawrence, ASGCA, senior designer for Gary Player's design firm on the recently-opened Cliffs at Mountain Park in South Carolina, says the course's completion marked the end of a rollercoaster ride through the economic conditions of the last five years. "The Cliffs Communities is one of the largest real estate and golf developments in the U.S.," says Lawrence. "The original developer established a relationship with Mr. Player, and that eventually resulted in an agreement to design the seventh course at the Cliffs. But the relationship got bigger—we moved our corporate HQ to Travelers Rest, on the golf course that we designed."

But when the economy collapsed, the original developer lost control of the Cliffs developments. A consortium of three investors eventually took over—since reduced to one—and the course was completed, and opened late in 2013. "You have to be more thought-provoking in the market conditions we have today," says Lawrence. "How do we deliver a product that's going to advance the golf industry? Words like maintainable, sustainable and eco-friendly are far more important now than they have ever been. I look out of my office window at the course, and it's great, but to build it we had to work with environmentalists, clients, budget, schedule and the changing of the ownership. It used to be so much easier when budgets weren't so tight. Now, everything is under

the microscope. We have to deliver a product that is everything to everybody.

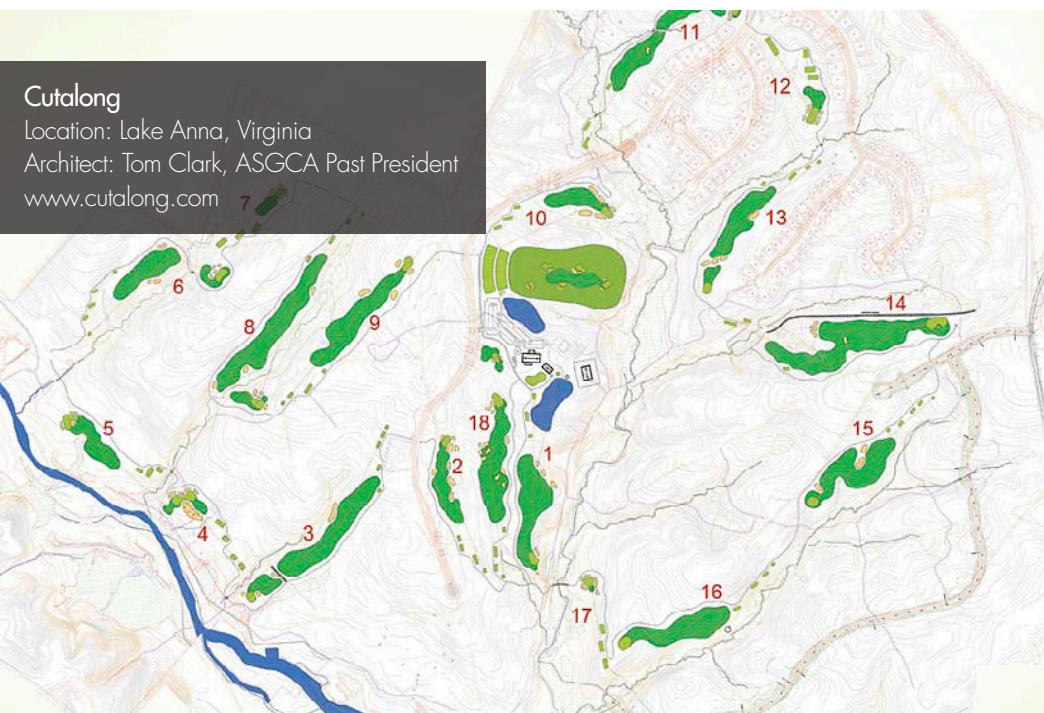
"On every project, Mr. Player directs us to think about water resources, the ecology of the site, the playability for all players, and in terms of the routing – how do we arrange it so people can play three, five or eight holes, rather than just focusing on 18-hole rounds? At Mountain Park we rerouted the course three times after construction started, because of environmental restrictions that became clear during process. It took five years to complete for financial and permitting reasons. The river runs through the property, and naturally we wanted to build golf holes that played over and alongside it. But we had to modify the routing to limit crossings of the river, even after some holes had been shaped!"

“Now, everything is under the microscope. We have to deliver a product that is everything to everybody

Jeff Lawrence, ASGCA

Cutalong

Location: Lake Anna, Virginia
 Architect: Tom Clark, ASGCA Past President
www.cutalong.com

**Cutalong**

Virginia-based architect Tom Clark, ASGCA Past President, who has two courses currently in construction, echoes Lawrence's view that timescales and complexity of projects have changed in the new economic environment. "At Cutalong, a 1,000

acre site on Lake Anna, the second largest lake in Virginia, we have been working on a course project since 1999," he says. "We master-planned the site back in 2000 when golf was still king and planned 27 holes. I came up with the idea of trying to do another National Golf

Links. I had an intern one summer and we researched the best courses from Ireland, England and Scotland and the best hole concepts. Two developers later, and the project downsized to 18 holes, Ron Whitten and I are now in the middle of building the course. It was in 2012 that we went out for bids, awarded the contract and went to work. The contractor came in late summer and was told to stop construction in late fall, by which time we'd rough graded four holes. The second year comes—we finished eight more holes and he pulled the plug again. Hopefully we'll finish those four holes and the practice facilities this year—and then do the rest of the course next year, opening the full 18 in early 2016."

Clark says the key lesson he's learned from Cutalong is not to go all-in too early. "Start small!" he says. "We bid to build the practice facilities and a four-hole loop, so that people who were buying lots would have real golf holes to look at. It's a segmented approach."



Lebovic

Location: Aurora, Ontario

Architect: Doug Carrick, ASGCA Past President

lebovichomes.com/golf

Lebovic

Up in Canada, ASGCA Past President Doug Carrick would echo Clark's thoughts about project timescales. Carrick's Lebovic course project in the town of Aurora north of Toronto has been on his books since 1996—and the owner originally bought the property back in the 1980s! "The property fell within the Oak Ridges Moraine, which is designated as sensitive," he says. "As a result there are a lot of restrictions on what can be done in that area. But the location is good—a 40-minute drive from downtown Toronto—the setting is very picturesque for both golf and housing, and the southern Ontario housing market is still fairly strong. The recession had very little to do with slowing Lebovic—it was all about planning. We have 11 holes seeded, and hope to have the build completed by the end of September for an opening next summer."

At Carrick's other in-build project, Friday Harbour on the south shore of Lake Simcoe, an hour north of

Toronto, work began in 2001. "The property had an existing small marina, and the client bought the property with the intention of developing a resort community with golf and a much expanded marina, plus real estate," he says. "There was a local ratepayers group opposed to the development and took it to an Ontario Municipal Board hearing. We won, but it took several years to go through approvals. The project includes 2,000 holiday homes—low rise and townhouse homes, centered around the 40-acre marina, which has 1,000 slips. Early plans for the golf course had it integrated with the marina and housing, but through the planning process there was around 150 acres of protected green space that the township wanted to preserve as a nature reserve between marina and golf course. So now the course is roughly half a mile from the resort center. The marina is being excavated now—it's about two million cubic meters of glacial till. This is being moved to the golf

course, so we have some significant fills! We're about half way through the earthmoving, and the plan is to be completed by end 2015 for opening in 2016." ●

// The recession had very little to do with slowing Lebovic – it was all about planning

Doug Carrick,
ASGCA Past President

Poppy Hills Golf Club | Toby Ingleton

More Poppy with less water

Environmental responsibility was a key tenet for the renovation of Poppy Hills Golf Course in California. *By Design* finds out more

As the golf industry emerges from the recession, many clubs that had put improvement programs on hold have now started to invest more in their courses. Golf architects are busy with renovation projects as clubs seek to repair elements of the course that are worn out. This presents an opportunity to improve both environmental sustainability and the playing experience, and distinguish a course from others in the locality.

And there are few localities in golf as prestigious as the Monterey Bay area in northern California. It is here that one of the most high profile and ambitious renovation projects in recent years was completed in April this year. With neighbours as illustrious as Cypress Point, Pebble Beach and Spyglass Hill, the owners

of Poppy Hills would need to do something special to get noticed.


Originally designed in 1986 by ASGCA Past President Robert Trent Jones Jr., Poppy Hills Golf Course is owned and operated by the Northern California Golf Association (NCGA).

The decision to renovate began with the need to replace an irrigation system that was becoming difficult to maintain. “We could have just replaced the irrigation system,” says NCGA’s Scott Seward. “But we looked at this as an opportunity to evaluate the property and do a complete renovation.”

The NCGA hired the Robert Trent Jones II (RTJ II) firm to oversee the new design and selected Toro® for the new irrigation system. The state-of-the-art Toro GDC 2-wire irrigation system—with Lynx® Central Control

software and integrated Turf Guard® wireless sensors—gives Poppy Hills significant control of their water use. Water conservation would be a key goal of the project, not just to reduce water costs but also to reduce power requirements and the overall carbon footprint for the course. At the same time, firmer and faster surfaces would make Poppy Hills more enjoyable to play, enabling a traditional ground game that isn’t possible with softer surfaces that hold too much water.

“We worked with the NCGA and Toro to perform a water audit for the property and formulated many concept drawings to figure out ways to save water, use water more efficiently, and simultaneously improve other aspects of the playing experience,” says Bruce Charlton, ASGCA, chief design officer of RTJ II.



New soil moisture technologies were used to help make design decisions that would have a positive effect on water



Images: Joann Dosi, courtesy of NCGA



One of the keys to decision-making about the renovation was Toro's PrecisionSense™ service, which was used to map the course to quantify soil moisture, acidity, topographical aspect and other factors related to water use.

This type of information allowed the architects to make design decisions that would also have a positive effect on water. The renovation project saw a reduction in the area of irrigated turf from 82 to 62 acres (despite widening fairways and the total course being lengthened from 6,857 to more than 7,000 yards). A five inch layer of sand was added to the course, improving drainage and allowing newly selected grasses to thrive with less water. A pond was removed—reducing loss of water through evaporation—and a natural

creek that had been buried during original construction was restored.

“The course is now much more natural. It's part of the land instead of being forced. The doglegs have been softened and the severity of green contours refined,” says Seward.

The great success of projects like Poppy Hills is achieving the dual goals of environmental responsibility and improved playability. Most golfers who visit will notice how comfortably the course sits within its surroundings, the firmer surfaces, the removal of rough or the reshaped fairways and greens—all of which enhance the playing experience. What they won't necessarily realise is that all of these features also contribute to improving environmental sustainability, by allowing for the more efficient

movement and usage of water throughout the course.

Poppy Hills has achieved something very special indeed—early visitors have compared it to another widely acclaimed golf design project of recent years—the Pinehurst No. 2 course renovated by Ben Crenshaw and Bill Coore, ASGCA which this year successfully hosted back-to-back U.S. Opens. Poppy Hills will host the Champions Tour later this year, but perhaps more importantly it also provides the golfers of northern California with a venue that stands proudly alongside its famous—and less accessible—neighbours.

To find out more about the Poppy Hills renovation, read the [renovation post on the NCGA website](#) or download the [RTJ II case study on water conservation](#).

Public courses not only survive, but thrive

ASGCA Treasurer Greg Martin has long been an advocate for public golf course facilities. Where communities cite challenges to operating public facilities, Martin details solutions in a piece adapted from an article written for the Illinois-based *Daily Herald* newspaper

Public golf courses, like other businesses in golf and beyond, have faced financial challenges. These may be related to uncooperative weather, discounted rates, increased maintenance expectations, debt servicing and declining golfer participation. But as I have seen in the Midwest and across the United States, overall, public golf is not only surviving, but thriving. The past ten years have seen the single greatest economic downturn in the last 70 years. The fact that more courses haven't closed is the big story.

Public golf is necessary for reasons beyond cost/benefit. Consider:

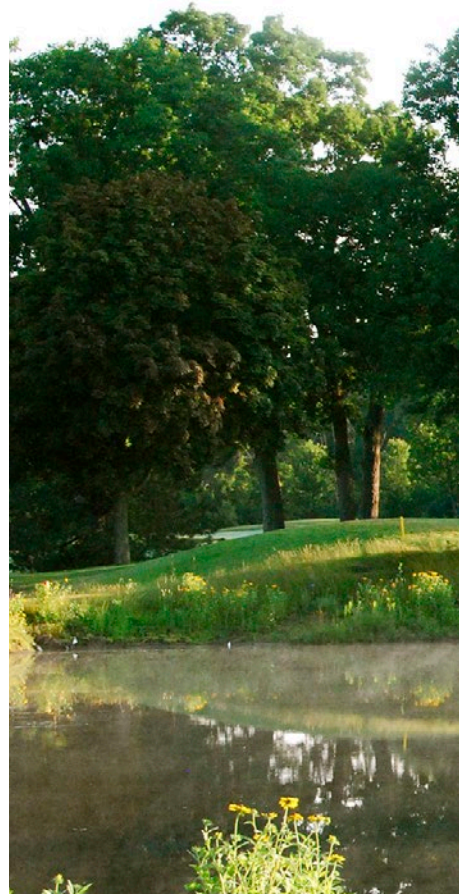
1. In some cases, taxpayers are footing the bill for losses at public courses. But for years, golf carried the load. Public/park district golf subsidized other recreational activities and public golf provided community-wide economic benefit. Profits from golf courses were used to improve playgrounds and subsidize other less profitable endeavors.

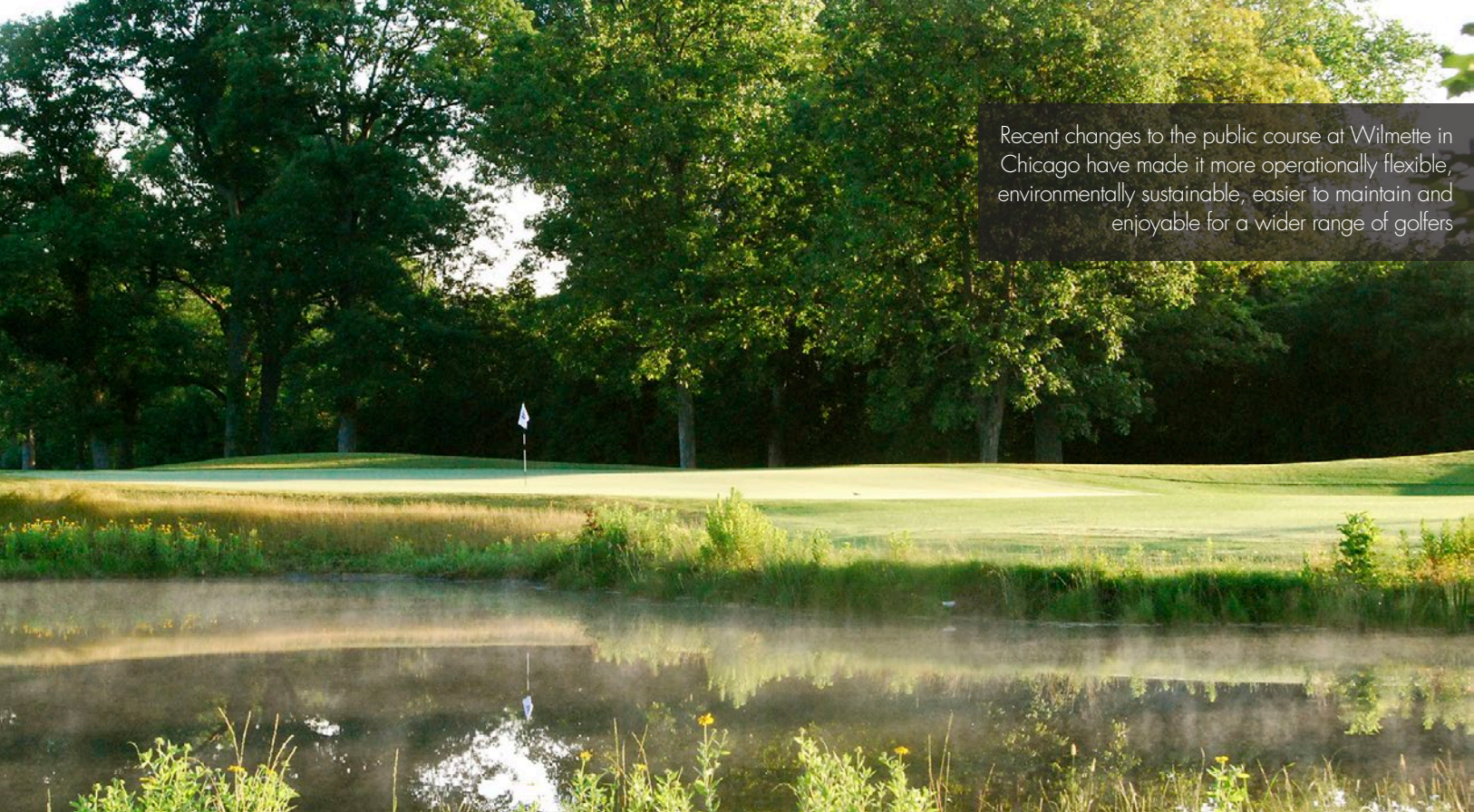
2. Multiple sources profess golfers are leaving the game. A deeper look shows those leaving the game were considered 'infrequent golfers'—

playing fewer than five rounds per year. In fact, frequent golfers want to play. The golf industry continues to change and is providing more enjoyable, playable and cost effective courses for interaction.

3. For every golf course that is operating in the red, many others turned a profit during the most dreadful of economic conditions. Systematic changes to the design, operations or maintenance were made to create a sustainable enterprise. Thoughtful environmental, operational and strategic changes revive any golf operation. A landscape asset like a golf course must not be subject to knee-jerk reactions due to near-term economic cycles, but rather long-term planning and thoughtful design to accommodate the most appropriate and viable economic operation.

4. Maintenance and operational costs have been stabilizing for years. As golfers continue to adjust their expectations for conditioning, maintenance costs will moderate. The 2014 U.S. Open at Pinehurst No. 2 showed how reduced maintenance can still produce visually stunning golf facilities that engage golfers.





Recent changes to the public course at Wilmette in Chicago have made it more operationally flexible, environmentally sustainable, easier to maintain and enjoyable for a wider range of golfers

ASGCA has long advocated the reduction of maintenance—a ‘brown is the new green’ philosophy. This perspective will take time to seep into the golfing culture. But it has already taken hold.

5. Initiatives like First Tee, Hook a Kid on Golf and others are introducing the game to millions of children. These programs advocate a life-long sport to this ‘wired’ or ‘video’ generation. Nothing is more important than getting the youth participating in games outside, in the fresh air. Public golf plays a significant role in that advocacy.

6. Finally, public golf courses provide benefit beyond recreation. Many provide neighborhood stormwater management, flood control, wetlands or other environmental habitat, tree preservation or water quality

enhancement, as well as aesthetic benefit. It is impossible to place value on these benefits beyond those for the golfing public.

Most of the golf courses I have renovated in the last ten years are actively seeking ways to promote multiple environmental benefits while providing a solid recreational experience. This is not unreasonable, it is visionary. Golf courses are unique in that they are flexible, malleable and can ‘form fit’ into a variety of challenging sites to provide green space sanctuary or buffer from suburban and urban sprawl.

Yes, economic conditions challenge the game. Any new golf course, or those that seek to renovate, must be thoughtful and considerate of the golfer, the environment and the cost to implement these changes. Only then will golf endure.

The golf industry is actively seeking ways to promote benefits that reach beyond the boundaries of the golf course. Those benefits are echoing and will be felt by golfers, non-golfers and the communities in which they reside. The narrow view sees unprofitable operations. The big picture sees value that will resonate far beyond the golf course. ●



Greg Martin

With over 20 years’ experience in golf course architecture, ASGCA Treasurer Greg Martin is principal of Martin Design Partnership and can be contacted by emailing g-martin@mdpltd.com.

// A landscape asset like a golf course must not be subject to knee-jerk reactions due to near-term economic cycles

A valuable resource

The ASGCA has developed a wealth of information resources on golf course architecture, many of which are available as free downloads. Director of Marketing and Communications Marc Whitney explains more.



Marc Whitney

Director of Marketing and Communications at ASGCA, Marc Whitney has 25 years of experience in sports public relations and marketing. He currently also serves as an adjunct professor in the College of Communications at Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wis.

Page 5 of this issue of *By Design* includes information on the new Pace of Play flyer developed by the American Society of Golf Course Architects (ASGCA) and the United States Golf Association. This is the latest in a series of pieces created by ASGCA to bring information forward, starting—or continuing—conversations on everything from designing and building a new course to the expected life cycle of a cart path and other golf course components.

ASGCA produces a wealth of free, comprehensive informational pieces to assist in all areas concerning building/remodeling a golf course, the environment and promoting the game. They are available for free download at www.asgca.org/free-publications.

Available publications include:

- Golf & Water—How the Game is Working for the Environment
- Golf Course Turfgrass Reduction: Environmentally and Strategically Sustainable
- Life Cycle Chart
- Master Planning for Golf Courses: Questions & Answers
- Sample Request for Proposal for Golf Course Architectural Services
- Selecting Your Golf Course Architect: Questions & Answers

- The Cost Factor: Tips & Techniques for Reducing Annual Maintenance Costs
- The Golf Course Development Process: Questions & Answers
- The Golf Course Remodeling Process: Questions & Answers
- Value of the Golf Course Talking Points
- Pace of Play: Checklist and Tips.

Each publication offers detailed information developed over the near 70-year history of the ASGCA and builds on the experience of ASGCA members, who each average more than 100 projects worked on and 25 years professional experience.

For example, a section of *The Golf Course Remodeling Process: Questions & Answers* addresses some frequently asked questions, such as:

What is included in a Master Plan?

Typically a Master Plan will include: Prioritization of the goals and objectives; Visual Master Plan of areas of improvements; Phasing recommendations; Optional approaches; Probable costs.

A Master Plan is more than just a visual plan for improvements. Equally important are the written details of budgets, costs, phasing

consideration and impact to the course. Impacts can include better course conditioning, strategy, playability, safety and pace of play.

When do we bring in a golf course architect?

For any remodeling project, bringing an ASGCA member on board to begin the process will have many advantages. Foremost among these advantages is having the ability to get professionals opinions on such considerations as existing conditions, optional approaches, safety matters and prioritization of the basic goals established by the ownership/membership. Budgeting is also a key component at this stage. The golf course architect will be able to address the realities of a given project and provide advice on what approach is best in terms of planning and scheduling.

These resources have assisted golf course owners, managers, superintendents and other decision makers for some time. Regular updates ensure the information presented is timely and lasting. ●

Download any of these publications at www.asgca.org/publications or write to info@asgca.org.



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