



Value of the Golf Course

THOSE OF US WHO MANAGE AND BELONG TO CLUBS THAT INCLUDE GOLF UNDERSTAND WHAT VALUE A GOLF COURSE HAS: A BEAUTIFUL PLAYING FIELD, A HAVEN FOR WILDLIFE AND A PEACEFUL GREEN SPACE FOR CAMARADERIE AND STILLNESS.

However, some people not as connected to the game question the value of a golf course. I argue it has additional value well beyond golf.

As president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects (ASGCA), I'm spending my year at the helm working with our members and other partners in promoting the "value of the golf course," an effort to demonstrate the benefits to individuals and communities provided by the course. The three pillars of this value – environmental, social and financial – cannot be overemphasized.

This fall and winter, we at ASGCA are compiling research to support the assertion that a golf course has value, and plan to release both that research and a tool that will help clubs assess the economic value and impact a golf course has on their own communities.

In the meantime, though, here's a rundown of what we're already sharing with our members so they can begin to spread the word in their own communities about the "value of the golf course:"

Environment: There is a value, which encompasses golf and its uniqueness as a game of integrity, competitiveness and fellowship that's played on dynamic playing grounds. Beyond the game that's played on the land, the golf course serves as green space, wildlife and flora habitat.

The economic value of the golf course has been documented, accounting for a \$76 billion impact in the United States each year...Each course has its own value that includes jobs, taxes, charitable fundraising, home values, hospitality/tourism and more. What would be the negative economic impact on all areas of a community if that course were not there?

The storm water retention benefits afforded by a golf course dramatically illustrate the environmental value to surrounding areas. Heavy rains this past summer in parts of the U.S. led to record flooding.

However, in areas where a golf course was designed to handle storm water, area homes avoided damage. This was true in with the help of Brookfield Hills in



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Brookfield, Wis., where seven inches of rain in 24 hours left the course unplayable for several days, but the basements in neighboring homes dry.

Some say a golf course is an infringement on green space. And while it has been pointed out in the past how a course can enhance green space rather than inhibit it, the public needs to begin thinking of a golf course as green space.

This fall, Lake County, Ill., is trying to decide how a nine-hole golf course can best be designed and constructed on a former army base bordered by Lake Michigan on one side and a forest preserve on the other. Some local residents are concerned the course will cut off access to hiking trails and other natural habitats.

In the United States, I suggest they look at Chambers Bay in University Place, Wash., the host to the 2010 U.S. Amateur and the 2015 U.S. Open. Robert Trent Jones, Jr., ASGCA and Bruce Charlton, ASGCA designed the walking-only course on county grounds that complements Puget Sound and works with the natural

landscape, allowing for hiking trails and continued access to county grounds by non-golfers.

The finest example of a golf course interacting with players and non-players may be St. Andrews, Scotland. It's not unusual to see folks walking across the famed course on their way to the beach.

Social: Social and health benefits afforded by a golf course can easily be lost if they are not stated and repeated. Golf leads to better health. Certainly, walking a golf course leads to better health. Anyone looking for a moderately paced, cardiovascular workout would be hard-pressed to find something better than walking the nine or 18 holes designed to work with the natural undulations of the land.

A course can also be used for other activities that benefit the community, like trails for jogging and cross-country skiing or as concert space. The driving range at a golf course is a great place to bring in a portable movie screen. Invite area residents to the course for an evening's entertainment under the stars, perhaps they will return for a lesson or a round of golf.

Financial: The economic value of the golf course has been documented, accounting for a \$76 billion impact in the United States each year. But how well does the public understand what that number represents?

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more. What would be the negative economic impact on all areas of a community if that course were not there?

ASGCA is working with our industry partners in 'We Are Golf' to share our message with politicians and other decision makers who can impact our industry. We Are Golf has also produced materials to help owners and course managers calculate the totality of the financial benefits produced for their community by a golf course. (www.wearegolf.org)

All of us in the golf industry have contact with neighbors in our communities who question the how golf fits in. Join my fellow ASGCA members and me by having some information, like what I've shared here, ready at hand to help you educate those not as familiar with the game about the "value of the golf course." **BR**

Erik Larsen, ASGCA is serving a one-year term as president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects. Larsen is executive vice president, senior golf course architect of Arnold Palmer Design Company (APDC), based in Orlando, Fla. Erik is also a member of the American Society of Landscape Architects, Urban Land Institute, and is a CLARB certified Landscape Architect. Since joining APDC in 1983, Erik has been involved in the design of more than 100 completed golf courses worldwide. He can be reached at (407) 876-1068 or erik@arnoldpalmerdesign.com.



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