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Golf Course Value | Erik Larsen

# Value of the golf course

During my year as ASGCA President I am proud to be 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 emphasised enough.

My work and what I see from other architects has shown time and again the incredible value a golf course has for everything it touches: people, environment, wildlife, the community, the local economy and more. However, there remains an audience which views the design and construction of a golf course as an intrusion that takes more from the community than it gives—which is why architects need to be educators.

*Environment:* 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, homes avoided damage. In Brookfield Hills in Wisconsin, seven inches of rain in 24 hours left the course unplayable for several days, but the basements in neighboring homes remained 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.

At Chambers Bay in Washington (host to the 2010 U.S. Amateur and the 2015 U.S. Open), Robert Trent Jones Jr., ASGCA and Bruce Charlton, ASGCA have designed a walking-only course on county grounds. The course 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 is not unusual to see people 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. 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



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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:* 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?

ASGCA is working with our industry partners in We Are Golf to share our message with politicians and other decision makers. We Are Golf has also produced materials to help owners and course managers calculate the financial benefits produced for their community by a golf course.

As an association that loves golf and works to create sustainable layouts for others who love the game, ASGCA has seen firsthand how golf courses truly benefit their communities. It’s important to share this message with those who aren’t familiar with the positive benefits of golf courses.

Our next issue of *By Design* will feature more on the value of the golf course. We hope that it encourages you to continue thinking of ways in which you can promote the value of the golf course in your community. ●