

Golf Course Remodeling

Trends to Increase Play, Reduce Budgets

By the American Society of Golf Course Architects

Ever-tightening budgets and calls to make the most of green space can put pressure on public golf operations. How can parks managers capitalize on one of the biggest assets in their systems—the golf course? Consider how trends in golf course remodeling can help park and recreation professionals meet today's budget and environmental challenges.

Why remodel?

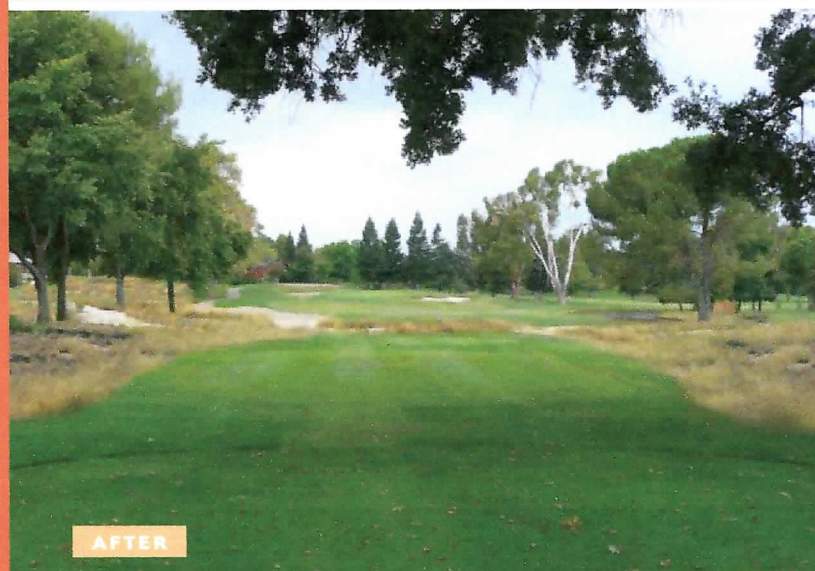
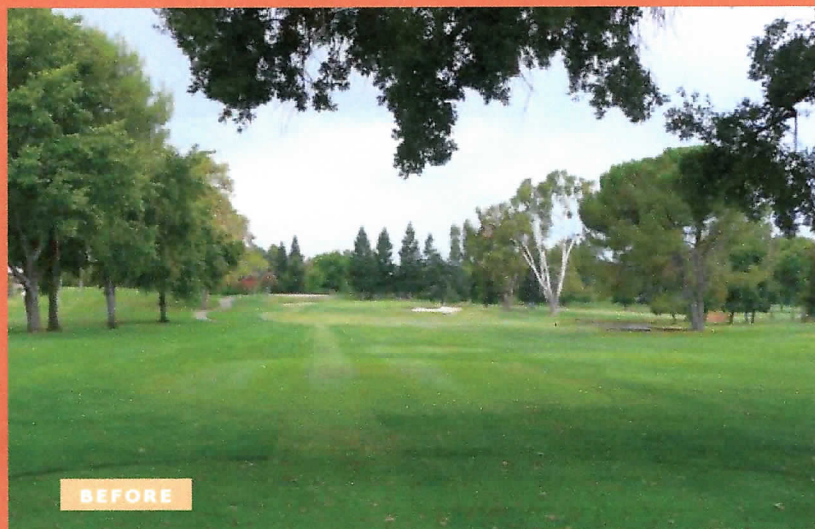
There can be as many reasons to consider a remodeling project as there are holes on a golf course: correcting turf conditions and inadequate drainage, improving safety conditions, increasing pace of play, improving the overall look and appearance of the course, and improving value to stay competitive.

Walk your course with a critical eye. What challenges do you face in managing the course? What challenges do residents face in playing the course? How might changes to the course improve the bottom line?

Trends in Remodeling and Maintenance

A recent survey of members of the American Society of Golf Course Architects (ASGCA) found several trends in how golf course architects are advising their clients:

■ **Reduce maintained turfgrass:** Most areas of the country are facing reduced water supplies and/or water quality. Rather than cutting back on water to keep turf healthy, why not cut back on the amount of turfgrass that needs to be watered, fertilized, and mowed? A golf course architect can advise operators on where to remove



Using photo editing, Andrew Staples, ASGCA Associate of Golf Resource Group, modifies the 17th hole at North Ridge Country Club, Sacramento, California, to show how it would look with maintained turf grass removed and replaced with drought-resistant native plantings. The hole retains its strategic intent, but has less turfgrass to water, fertilize, and mow.

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turfgrass and how to replace it with native plants or other materials while maintaining the strategic intent of the layout.

■ **Introduce enhanced practice facilities and “looping threes”:** One of the most commonly-mentioned reasons people cite for leaving golf or not taking it up is, “It takes too long to play.” Ninety-seven percent of ASGCA members surveyed say they are improving or expanding practice facilities to help operators draw more players. Having more opportunities to practice shots off the playing field can make the transition to a full round less intimidating.

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Another trend is to remodel a course to include two, three, or even more “looping threes.” The idea is to re-route a course to allow a player to play three holes and return to the clubhouse. This allows a time-constrained player the flexibility to play three or six holes, and can lead to more players out onto the course. A golf course architect can take pictures of a layout and simulate how a re-routed course might look.

■ **Move to larger tee decks, softer green contours, and simpler bunker surrounds:** Each of these tweaks to areas of a golf course that see heavy use or need intensive maintenance attention can save money. Increasing the size of tee decks results in reduced wear and tees can be maintained in less time using larger equipment. Softening green contours allows the use of triplex mowers rather than hand mowers. And changing bunker surrounds to native grasses reduces labor time spent tending to tricky turfgrass edges.

The NRPA website has a number of resources provided by ASGCA on the golf portal: www.nrpa.org/golf. There, members can find brochures with more tips for planning a golf course remodel and running more cost-effective golf operations. “The Cost Factor: Tips & Techniques for Reducing Annual Maintenance Costs” was recently compiled by ASGCA, the Golf Course Builders Association of America, and the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. “The Golf Course Remodeling Process: Questions and Answers” walks through the feasibility and planning process. For information on finding a golf course architect, visit ASGCA’s website at www.asgca.org.

■ **Lose the bunkers:** Converting some formal sand bunkers to fairway or turfgrass-based natural landforms helps the bottom line in two ways: sand bunker maintenance is reduced (hand trimming, drainage maintenance, and sand replacement), and pace of play increases when players spend less time shooting out of hazards. As with turfgrass reduction, a golf course architect can advise on reducing the number of sand bunkers while maintaining the golf course’s strategic intent.

The golf course is a community asset. Making sure it is welcoming to today’s golfer and designed for efficient management needn’t break the bank. For information on finding a golf course architect, visit ASGCA’s website at www.asgca.org.



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