

The Golf Course Remodeling Process

Questions & Answers



A PUBLICATION OF THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF GOLF COURSE ARCHITECTS



The remodeling of a golf course is undertaken for a variety of reasons. The American Society of Golf Course Architects (ASGCA) has prepared this document as a guide for the golf course owner or club planning a remodeling project.

Additional information is available at www.asgca.org, an on-line resource for owners, managers and green committees.

WHY REMODEL?

The competition to attract new players to a facility, combined with the aging of many courses, constitutes the primary reasons to remodel. The five most common factors leading to a remodeling program are:

1. Overcoming Economic Problems
2. Correcting Maintenance Problems
3. Making Adjustments Because of Design Problems
4. Improving Aesthetics
5. Restoring Historic Value

Some specific reasons include:

- A desire to rebuild greens
- Correcting poor turf conditions and inadequate drainage
- Addition, reworking or eliminating bunkers
- Replacement or expansion of the irrigation system
- A need to make the course more (or less) difficult
- Adding tees to allow for more (or less) length
- A need to improve safety considerations
- A need to increase the pace of play
- Adapting the course to a particular golfer type
- Restoring historical integrity
- Improving aesthetics
- Desire to attract regional or national tournaments
- Improving value and staying competitive

WHERE DO WE BEGIN?

Besides identifying the reasons to undertake a remodeling program, it is essential to identify basic goals for your remodeling project.

Basic goals are set by the golf course management, owner, and/or club members, and should involve the golf course superintendent. The basic goals are a list of preliminary needs and wants — they form the assumptions that will be used to identify viable design solutions that will be recommended in concert with a qualified golf course architect.

It is important to realize that these initial goals are likely to change. They should not be considered “final” by any means. Design solutions, options, costs and ideas brought to the table as the process unfolds are all influences which might be a cause for change and refinement of these early directions.

WHEN DO WE BRING IN A GOLF COURSE ARCHITECT?

All golf courses are encouraged to maintain a relationship with a professional and qualified golf course architect. However, this is not always the case. As golf courses change ownership and committees elect new members, relationships are often lost in the shuffle.

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 professional 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.

WHAT IS THE BEST METHOD OF SELECTING A GOLF COURSE ARCHITECT?

The process will vary depending on your situation. The American Society of Golf Course Architects publishes a guide entitled, “Selecting Your Golf Course Architect”. This guide is available on-line at www.asgca.org, or by contacting the ASGCA at (262)786-5960.

HOW DO YOU GO ABOUT DEFINING THE SCOPE OF WORK?

Once you have created an initial list of goals — your “wish list” — and you have selected a qualified golf course architect, the next step is to define a scope of work.

Although it is sometimes possible to define a scope of work *before* working with your golf course architect, this sequence will take away some of the most valuable expertise you can gain from working with a golf course architect.

The recommended approach is to engage the golf course architect for the purpose of helping to prepare the scope of work that will lead to the final improvements. Members of the ASGCA are uniquely qualified to consult on all matters of golf course remodeling, and each member has access to experts available to address specialized issues.

In a majority of situations the initial process leads to a “Master Plan”, an organized presentation which addresses your initial goals and objectives. A well-executed master plan brings the entire project into focus.

WHAT IS INCLUDED IN A MASTER PLAN?

The master plan is a roadmap to the entire project. Typically a master plan will include the following key parts:

- Prioritization of the goals and objectives
- Visual master plan of areas of improvement
- Phasing recommendations
- Optional approaches
- Probable costs

Despite popular belief, a master plan is more than just a visual plan of the improvements. Equally important are the written details of budgets, costs, phasing considerations and impacts to the course. Impacts can include better course conditioning, strategy, playability, safety and pace of play.

WHO CREATES THE MASTER PLAN?

ASGCA golf course architects have the diverse knowledge and experience to prepare a golf course master plan. Equally important is their ability to help you make decisions that will be most cost effective and will yield the results that are needed to meet goals and objectives.

Although golf course superintendents, club managers, golf course builders and others all have expertise which is useful to the process, their training is specific. Their input is most valuable when used in concert with the counsel of a professional golf course architect.

HOW DO WE MOVE FORWARD?

An essential ingredient is communication. All remodeling projects must be clearly defined and planned in order to unfold smoothly. A typical sequence may be as follows:

1. Development of initial goals & objectives
2. Golf course architect's initial site visit and research into the course's history/design
3. Preparation of preliminary plans, options, priorities & budget
4. Presentation & discussion of approaches, ideas and project components
5. Preparation of master plan (illustrative plan, descriptions and accompanying costs/phasing)
6. Approval of the master plan
7. Construction plans and specifications for bidding/negotiation
8. Solicitation of bids from golf course builders
9. Award of contract for improvements
10. Field observation and interpretation by the golf course architect during the work
11. Grow-in of disturbed areas

WHAT ABOUT DISRUPTION?

Disruption of the golf course is a reality of all remodeling work. But, by carefully timing work, improvements can be carried out with the greatest sensitivity to all concerned. The details of phasing and course closure should be carefully covered as part of the planning process.

HOW DO WE SELECT A BUILDER?

Your golf course architect can assist you in pre-qualifying golf course builders, such as those certified by the Golf Course Builders Association of America. Once a list is established, plans and specifications (a bid package) is provided to each of the qualified builders. Course owners typically select a contractor based on price, qualifications and the familiarity of the builder with a particular type of remodeling work. Regional expertise is also an important factor to consider.

In some circumstances it can be beneficial to negotiate a contract with a particular golf course builder. In this case the golf course architect and the owner will still need a set of plans and specifications in order to arrive at a contract.

HOW ARE PROJECTS FUNDED?

There are several ways remodeling projects are funded, including issuing bonds (for public projects), increasing green fees/dues, special assessments, commercial loans, and through capital improvement funds. Improvement will also have an affect on revenues and maintenance costs — this is often the greatest determining factor in making remodeling a feasible investment.

Remodeling Checklist:

Common steps in a remodeling project

- Development of Initial Goals & Objectives**
- Golf Course Architect's Initial Site Visit and Research Into the Course's History/Design**
- Preparation of Preliminary Plans, Options, Priorities & Budget**
- Presentation & Discussion of Approaches, Ideas and Project Components**
- Preparation of Master Plan (illustrative plan, descriptions and accompanying costs/phasing)**
- Approval of the Master Plan**
- Construction Plans and Specifications for Bidding/Negotiation**
- Solicitation of Bids from Golf Course Builders**
- Award of Contract for Improvements**
- Field Observation and Interpretation by the Golf Course Architect During the Work**
- Grow-in of Disturbed Areas**

The ASGCA also presents a series of "Remodeling University" educational symposiums. This "Short Course to a Better Course" provides golf course decision-makers with detailed help in evaluating whether their golf course may need to be remodeled. To obtain a current schedule of events, contact the ASGCA at (262) 786-5960.

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Resources for Remodeling:

Free ASGCA Publications:

- **Golf Course Component Life Cycle Chart**
- **Selecting Your Golf Course Architect**
- **The Master Planning Process**
- **ASGCA Membership List**
- **Request for Proposal for Golf Course Architectural Services**

Other Books & Publications:

Building a Practical Golf Facility — A Step-By-Step Guide to Realizing a Dream, Second Edition
Michael Hurdzan, ASGCA
ASGCA (2005)

Classic Golf Hole Design: Using the Greatest Holes as Inspiration for Modern Courses
Robert Muir Graves, ASGCA
Geoffrey S. Cornish, ASGCA
John Wiley & Sons (2002)

Clubhouse Design & Renovation
National Golf Foundation (2001)

An Environmental Approach to Golf Course Development
Bill Love, ASGCA
ASGCA (1999)

Golf Course Architecture: Design, Construction & Restoration, Second Edition
Michael Hurdzan, ASGCA
John Wiley & Sons (2006)

Golf Greens: History, Design and Construction
Michael Hurdzan, ASGCA
John Wiley & Sons (2004)

Guidelines for Financing a Golf Course — A Step-by-step Guide to Securing Financing or Re-financing for Your Project
National Golf Foundation (1999)

Routing the Golf Course
Forrest L. Richardson, ASGCA
John Wiley & Sons (2002)

Allied Organizations & Websites

ASGCA Website:
www.asgca.org

Club Managers Association of America (CMAA)
www.cmaa.org

Golf Course Builders Association of America (GCBA)
www.gcbaa.org

Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA)
www.gcsaa.org

The Irrigation Association
www.irrigation.org

National Golf Course Owners Association (NGCOA)
www.ngcoa.org

National Golf Foundation (NGF)
www.ngf.org

PGA of America (Regional Sections)
www.pga.com/home/sections

United States Golf Association (USGA) Green Section
www.usga.org/green



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