

VALUE OF THE GOLF COURSE

TALKING POINTS



AMERICAN SOCIETY OF
GOLF COURSE ARCHITECTS

Preface

A golf course has value as a beautiful playing field for a great game, but has additional value well beyond golf.

As 2010-2011 ASGCA President Erik Larsen has stated, “Golf courses benefit communities as revenue and tax sources, green space, wildlife and plant sanctuaries and aid in water filtration, among other uses. There is an inherent goodness to the community that comes from the

positive **financial, social** and **environmental** impact of a golf course.”

A golf course’s value is not limited to private facilities. According to a recent survey conducted by the National Recreation and Park Association, more than 90% of municipal golf managers recognize golf courses of all types provide economic, environmental and social benefits to their communities.

The following has been prepared to help those in and around the game better understand the true Value of the Golf Course. We hope you find interest in the information and invite you to share it with others.

For more information and updates please visit www.asgca.org or www.WeAreGolf.org.

Financial

Research conducted in 2005 by SRI International found the U.S. golf economy alone generates **\$76 billion** of goods and services annually and employs two million people.

Each golf course has its own value, positively impacting the community through jobs, taxes, charitable fundraising, high-valued homes surrounding the course, hospitality/tourism and more. What would be the negative economic impact on the

area if that course were not there?

The We Are Golf initiative has detailed information at the national level at <http://wearegolf.org/economic-impact>. Information is also posted for 20 individual states and the list is growing. For example, the golf industry employs 160,000 people in California alone, leading to a direct impact on the state's economy each year of \$6.9 billion.

The game's impact on smaller

states is no less impressive. The South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism reported golf's economic impact for 2009 in the state at more than \$700 million, including \$276 million in federal, state and local taxes, and more than 33,000 employees.

A good portion of that impact was generated by tourists—people coming to South Carolina specifically to golf or including golf as part of business or other leisure activity.

To assist golf courses in determining the economic impact their course has on its community, visit **<http://www.wearegolf.org/spreadsheet>**. There you will find a simple form to assist in calculating the impact jobs, taxes and additional revenues have on the surrounding area.

Time and again it has been shown golf = jobs. The building of a new course in Idaho in 2008 showed construction alone provided the equivalent of one year of

employment for more than 300 people, and facility operations was worth the equivalent of 43.5 full-time jobs each year.

Another valuable area where a golf course assists a community is property values on or near a golf course.

Studies indicating the positive impact a green space and parks have on U.S. home and real estate values dates back to 1873, when it was shown homes near New York's Central Park rose at an appreciably

higher rate than those more removed from the park.

Larry Hirsh of Golf Property Analysts noted in his article “The Economic Impact of Golf,” “In many cases, often because of the high investment in lot value, owners often build large and expensive homes, all of which generates additional tax revenue as a result of the existence of the golf course.”

Surveys show people rank “open space,” “natural beauty” and

“parks” as important when making home-buying decisions.

Golf course architects have worked for generations to ensure park space is preserved, the natural beauty of land enhanced and the desires of homeowners met when designing fun, challenging courses.

How does your golf course directly benefit the local economy?

Social

Golf is a game of social interaction. Some say there is no better way to learn about people than to walk 18 holes with them.

The social nature of the game lends itself well to conducting business. Many rounds each year are played by business partners and associates, and many business decisions are made on the course.

The social and health benefits afforded by a golf course can easily be lost if they are not stated and repeated. According to “Eight Astonishing Benefits of Walking,” walking a golf course leads to better health; one researcher equated walking 18 holes to the value of 40-70% of an intense aerobics exercise class.

Anyone looking for a moderately paced, cardiovascular workout would be hard-pressed to find something better than walking nine

or 18 holes designed to work with the natural undulation of the land.

Additional benefits from walking a golf course mentioned in the same article include:

- Lowering the risk of Type 2 diabetes
- Reducing stress
- Preventing heart disease
- Decreasing need for medication

The course can also be used for other activities benefiting the community, like trails for jogging

and cross-country skiing or as concert space. The driving range at a golf course can be utilized for gatherings, special events or outdoor shows. Some courses have even brought in portable movie screens. Area residents visiting the course for entertainment may return for a lesson or even a round of golf.

Just as when joining any social club, a golf course provides the chance to meet new, interesting people and increase social interaction.

Noted golf author James Dodson has written extensively on the social benefits of golf and golf courses. He comments:

Golf is demonstrably the most social game on earth.

If an average golf swing takes roughly two seconds of time, and the average player shoots 90, that amounts to roughly only three minutes of physical playing time during an average four-hour round of golf. The rest of that golf round is spent walking, talking, observing nature, revising your grocery list, getting to know someone you just met on the first tee, cursing your luck,

meditating...in short, doing a variety of things you could never do in any other sport.

A round of golf, as the cliché goes, reveals character, but it also reveals characters. As a general rule, owing to golf's cruel Darwinist nature, golfers of all levels tend to be folks equipped with a striking sense of humor. We learn to laugh at ourselves and the foibles of others as we fumble after life's most difficult and frustrating game. Baseball great Ted Williams once told Sam Snead golf was far easier than baseball because a golfer hits his ball off a stationary peg rather than a ball moving 90 m.p.h.

“That may be,” Snead told him, “but a golfer has to play his foul balls.”

No other game provides as many funny stories, jokes, painful laughs and self-revelations as golf.

That’s because golf remains the most human of games, as difficult as it is poetic, forever new, able to reveal both our best qualities and our strongest weaknesses in the span of a single swing of the club or an afternoon’s outing with friends or strangers.

In what other game do dogged victims of inexorable fate—i.e. opponents—remove their caps and shake hands at the end—and maybe even go off together for a beer?

There is no game better suited for making a friend or acquaintance that lasts anywhere from a few hours to a lifetime. Moreover, the friendships you make in golf often endure for decades, and there is no greater connective social tissue between the generations than time spent chasing Old Man Par in another family member's company.

How can your course provide additional social value to the community beyond playing the game?

Environmental

The game of golf is intrinsically a thing of beauty. Seldom does someone refer to the “beauty” of a basketball court or a bowling center, yet the word is used regularly in regards to golf.

The environment can help relieve stress, clear your mind, forget your troubles and simply enjoy the moment; provided you keep your drives in the short grass and your three-putts to a minimum.

The benefits to the environment itself are numerous.

The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America surveyed more than 16,000 golf courses and learned the average course covers 150 acres, approximately 100 acres of which are maintained turf grass. The remaining 50 acres are devoted to forests, woodlands and water bodies. In fact, more space is reserved for water bodies than tees and greens combined.

Other items of note from GCSAA...

- Only 14% of golf facilities use water from municipal systems.
- Recycled water is used by 12% of facilities, while 53% would use effluent water if it were available.
- Using data from soil sensors to determine irrigation decisions continues to rise.

Water continues to be a prime environmental concern.

As irrigation consultant Dale Winchester points out, among the many water-related areas architects consider during planning are:

- Turf grass selection requiring less water to maintain
- Reduction of maintained/irrigated area
- Alternate sources of irrigation water (secondary, storm water, etc.)
- Minimal surface areas of lakes/ponds

The storm water retention benefits afforded by a golf course dramatically illustrate the environmental value to surrounding areas. Heavy rains in the U.S. during the summer of 2010 led to record flooding in some areas.

However, where a golf course was designed to handle storm water, homes avoided damage.

Golf courses also benefit a community by serving as breaks in the fire line during hazardous fire events.

Patrick Gross of USGA Green Section noted several examples in his article, “Golf Courses on the Fire Line,” including:

“In October 2003, a wildfire consumed 750,000 acres north of Los Angeles, destroying 3,500 homes and causing 22 deaths. Tierra Rejada Golf Club in Moorpark, Calif. (designed by Robert Cupp, ASGCA), was in the path of the fire. According to general manager Tom Szwedzinski, the firebreak created by the golf course prevented the flames from crossing Hwy. 22 into a densely populated Moorpark neighborhood.”

It has been pointed out in the past how a course can enhance green space rather than inhibit it, but the public needs to begin thinking about a golf course as green space.

At Chambers Bay in Washington (host to the 2010 U.S. Amateur and 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 ground by non-golfers.

How does your course work with the environment and served to enhance it? How have the surrounding communities benefited from the efforts of your golf course and its people?

Sources

Economic

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Social

Golf’s Social Benefits

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Web Sites

We Are Golf

<http://www.wearegolf.org>

American Society of Golf
Course Architects

<http://www.asgca.org>

Club Managers Association of America

<http://www.cmaa.org>

Environmental Institute for Golf

www.eifg.org

Golf Course Builders Association
of America

www.gcbaa.org

Golf Course Superintendents Association
of America

www.gcsaa.org

National Golf Course Owners Association

www.ngcoa.org

Professional Golfers Association
of America

www.pga.com

United States Golf Association

www.usga.org



American Society of Golf Course Architects

125 N. Executive Drive, Suite 302
Brookfield, WI 53005

p: 262-786-5960

f: 262-786-5919

www.asgca.org