



Nothing Lasts Forever



Golf courses evolve over time and require periodic renovation work to replace aging infrastructure and restore or modernize design features.

Golf course renovation projects can be messy and expensive; however, nothing lasts forever. This axiom is easily understood if you consider a car or golf course maintenance equipment, but it equally pertains to course features and infrastructure. Whether it is an irrigation system, bunker, cart path, practice tee or putting green; a time will come when infrastructure needs to be replaced or renovated. The American Society of Golf Course Architects—along with the USGA and other allied associations—developed estimates of the [expected life cycle](#) for several course features and infrastructure. These estimates are a good starting point, but it is important to recognize that the actual useful life of golf course features or infrastructure can vary widely depending on climate, grass types, the amount of play, golfer expectations and other factors. Nevertheless, deferring maintenance or investments in infrastructure eventually impacts playing conditions and increases maintenance costs.

Age should not be the only factor that determines the need for a renovation or new construction project. Changes in technology, management philosophy and higher expectations can also necessitate improvements. Repositioning bunkers, adding new tees, modifying putting green design, installing drainage or rebuilding and regrassing playing surfaces are common upgrades that may be necessary for some golf courses to improve playing conditions and enhance the golfer experience.

To make golf courses more [user friendly](#) and affordable, many facilities renovate design features to streamline maintenance, reduce operational costs and improve the golf experience. Such renovations commonly involve eliminating or relocating bunkers, adding forward tees, upgrading practice areas and removing trees that negatively impact play.



Bunkers are costly to maintain. Periodic renovation is required to maintain effective drainage, restore bunker banks and replace contaminated bunker sand.

The effect of certain course features can also change over time, as is the case with trees and landscape plantings that grow larger every year. Any feature that can double or triple in size over its lifetime is likely to have a substantial impact on a golf course landscape and maintenance operation. Mature trees can significantly [impact a golf course maintenance budget](#), architectural design, playing conditions and turf health. Many problems associated with trees can be avoided by selecting proper planting sites and choosing the right tree species. Unfortunately, many facilities are forced to remove problem trees and landscape plantings that have outgrown their location.

Golf courses mature and age; even the best ones need periodic renovation to modernize their design features and infrastructure. Having a well-thought-out [master plan](#) will help prioritize and implement upgrades in both the short and long term. USGA Agronomists and golf course architects also can help identify and prioritize infrastructure and renovation needs. Renovations can be disruptive and expensive, but a well-planned and successfully completed project can make a golf course more enjoyable to play and sometimes less expensive to maintain.