

Remodel Master Planning that Saves Money

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PHOTO CREDITS:RAYMOND HEARN

Many people ask me if I believe that these are trying times for golf course architects. My reply is that times have never been more pressure-packed and more exciting for innovative golf course architects. Remodel Master Planning for golf courses has definitely advanced to a higher level in terms of the financial results demanded by clubs in today's market.

A lot is at stake and the pressure to produce is greater than ever when preparing a master plan.

Over the last four years, my office has seen a growing trend among clubs. They have common goals and objectives for their course. These common club goals are:

- Improve strategy and shot value on each hole.
- Decrease high-maintenance areas where possible throughout the course.
- Increase each hole's aesthetic appeal for existing and new members at private clubs.
- Increase each hole's aesthetic appeal for existing and new patrons at public and resort courses.

Put simply, clubs want to touch, feel, and smell the fruits of master planning. They want to increase annual revenue while lowering annual maintenance costs. I don't think any golf course architect will tell you that these are easy goals to achieve. But these goals definitely separate the average architects from the skilled and innovative ones. Architects who excel in meeting these demands will continue to remain busy through difficult times in a sluggish golf industry.

To help illustrate my point, I've put together a few examples from recent master planning contracts. In each, goals were mandated by the client. The priorities on each project were identical to the bulleted items cited above.



Master plan for hole #11 at the Lincolnshire Fields CC in Champaign, Illinois

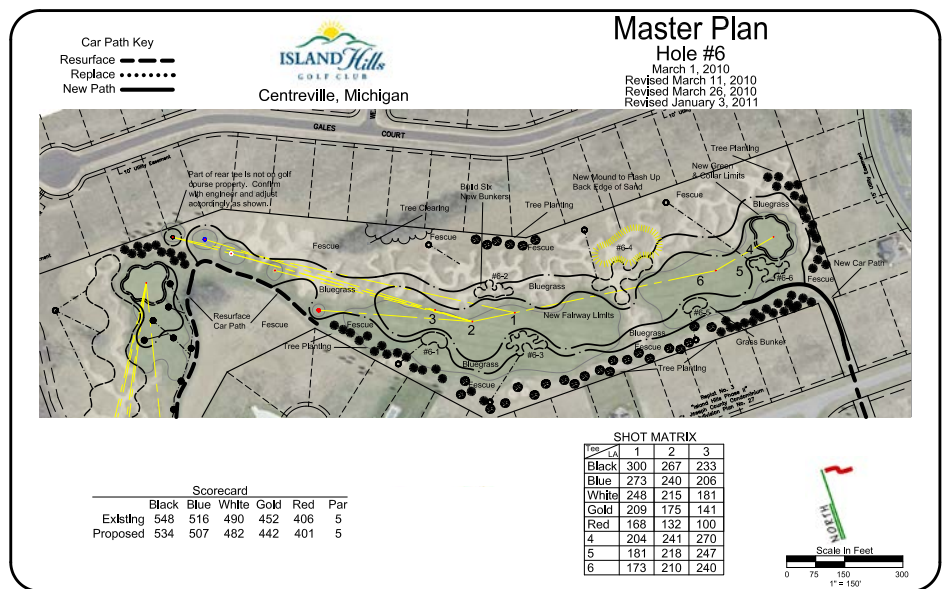


Before and after plans for hole #11 at the Lincolnshire Fields CC in Champaign, Illinois

Michigan club have compliments for the remodeled hole, while the owner and his superintendent, Joe Jehnsen, appreciate the reduced cost of maintaining the hole—a win-win-win for all three interested parties!

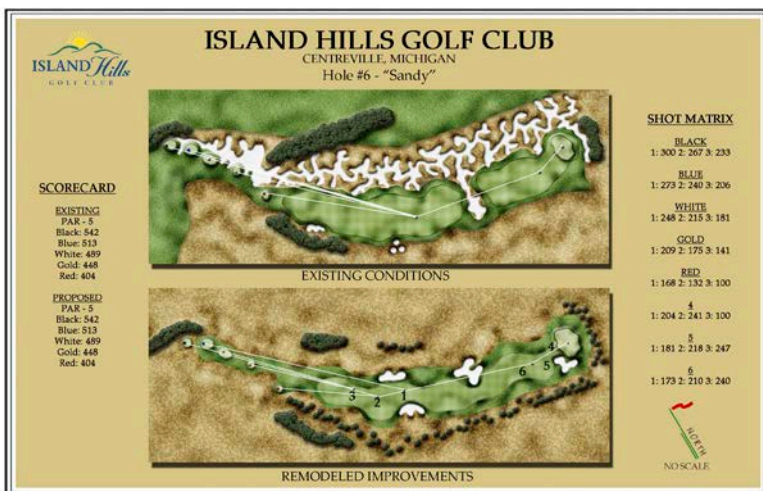
One of our primary goals at Flossmoor Country Club was to increase the amount of low-maintenance secondary rough (fescue and little bluestem) in order to help decrease the area of the higher-maintenance primary rough (Kentucky bluegrass). A glance at the two photos shown above illustrates the impact of the work performed. The members enjoy the dramatic new look of the hole, while superintendent Bob Lively appreciates the lower maintenance the secondary rough areas afford.

At Lincolnshire Fields Country Club, the three greenside bunkers on hole #11 were reduced in size by 50%, while the hole's strategy and shot value increased significantly, due to the new bunker locations. A significant area of low-maintenance fescue is planned for the front right of the tees, replacing the higher-maintenance Kentucky bluegrass rough. The amount of bentgrass approach was also reduced by 50%. The result is a more strategic golf hole that members will enjoy. An added benefit for the members, as well as for superintendent Scott Werner, is that the cost of maintaining this hole will be reduced significantly.



Master plan for hole #6 at the Island Hills GC in Centreville, Michigan

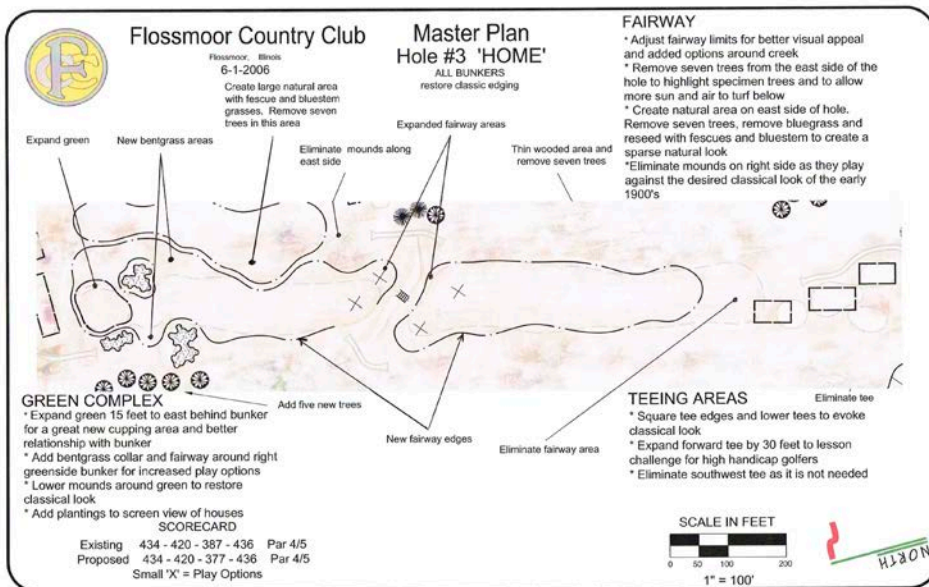
In this example, the strategy and shot value have increased, while the surface areas of the bentgrass fairways and sand bunkers have decreased significantly. Golfers at this Southwest



Before and after plans for hole #6 at Island Hills GC in Centreville, Michigan

Many private club owners and public golf course owners ask me if their course needs a master plan. My answer is simple: if you plan on making any changes or improvements to the golf course, or if you think this could be a possibility (and it virtually always is), then you need a master plan.

A master planning document is a significant tool for the golf club's owner, president, greens committee chairman, general manager, superintendent, and golf professional. The plan ensures that everyone at the club is on the same page in terms of future improvements to the golf course. It's money in the bank from both a fiscal and a diplomatic point of view.



Left: Master Plan for hole #3 at the historic Flossmoor Country Club in Flossmoor, Illinois (Founded in 1899 and former host to PGA Championship)

Below: Before and after plans for hole #3 at Flossmoor Country Club



Each master plan solves unique problems in unique demographic markets. But a common theme is the need for today's master plan to address commonly sought goals, which I repeat for emphasis:

- Improve strategy and shot value on each hole
- Decrease high-maintenance areas, when possible, throughout the course.
- Increase the aesthetic appeal.

Put simply, clubs want master planning to increase annual revenue, while lowering annual maintenance costs. Today's innovative golf course architects need to accept and embrace these demands. When executed properly, these challenging yet exciting goals satisfy the club's objectives. The result will be financially sustainable clubs as well as happy members and board members, happy owners and paying patrons. @



Above (L) Hole #3 at the Flossmoor CC before improvements. Notice all the primary rough and trees on the right side of the hole.
Above (R) New low-maintenance secondary rough area (fescue and little bluestem) on Hole #3.
A "wispy" low-rate seed mix was used where golfers can easily find their errant shot.