

Sutton officials add community's financial resources 'to do the job right' at Fox Hollow

By MARK LESLIE

SUTTON, Neb. — JFK suggested "Ask not what your country can do for you..." But in this small-town community, city officials asked, "What can we do for you?" And therein lies the key to the success story that has become Fox Hollow Country Club.

When floods and winds essentially washed away the old nine-hole Horseshoe Bend Golf Course, the golf association set its sights on rebuilding the track on roughly the same site. But the 40 acres it had available would have meant many concessions in quality, and ultimately, perhaps, failure.

"There was not room enough to do it right," said City Administrator Mac Tilberg. "The grass-roots effort of a small community is always full of compromises. That compromise here was: 'Let's do what we can with what we have to work with.' It was then that the city asked, 'Can public resources assist to do it right?'"

The city needed to build a drainage way through town that would affect the proposed course, and saw the opportunity to improve the prospects for a better golf facility.

Nebraskan teamwork

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RainBird system with close to 300 heads. And we had relatively few problems."

- The irrigation crew drilled an irrigation well that provides 2,000 gallons per minute, and another towns person donated the pump.

Van Kirk did the major earth-moving, and owner John Van Kirk ran a bulldozer to do a lot of shaping on the fairways while Glorso shaped all the greens and bunkers.

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"Compared to other courses in small towns, this has a lot of character," Glorso said, "mainly because of the natural terrain. There are some swales off the farm fields adjacent to us."

Towns have built courses for less money, "but they basically run a harrow over the ground and seed it," Glorso said. "This course is not typical of what the average small town has."

Tilberg was more adamant. "This course is pretty magnificent," he said.

Newman echoed: "Glorso made sure our golf course was unique — and it is. Most towns in this rural area have average courses. But ours is going to be quite a challenge."

Being intimately involved in such an effort "was a lot of fun," said Glorso, who has worked on high-end projects at the far end of the financial spectrum. "It gave you a good feeling about what people will do together."

A market analysis had suggested that "a much nicer course could pay for itself as well," Tilberg said. "Private resources were not 100 percent available to make it happen."

So, it was proven that two groups are stronger than one.

"If anything, what makes this course unique is the mix of citizens and government," said Mayor Virgil Ulmer. "A lot of courses are built in this part of the country by municipalities, or by volunteers where the

municipality doesn't have the wherewithal. People form an association and put a course together. In our case, we blended the two.

By doing that, we were able to keep the golf course privately held, but it still will be open to the public. It has enabled us to build a nicer course" than if either the municipality or volunteers had done it alone.

With the Community Re-development Authority (CRA) involved in the drainage project,

"we now had the ability to move this course with some local government intervention," Tilberg said. "The CRA is the long arm of the government and has the capacity to work with these agreements and cut the deals. We basically redeveloped the golf course from where it was to where it is now."

Officials, he said, "helped move the golf course to a nicer site adjacent to the highway, where it became a course genuinely for the public. It has a view and a good

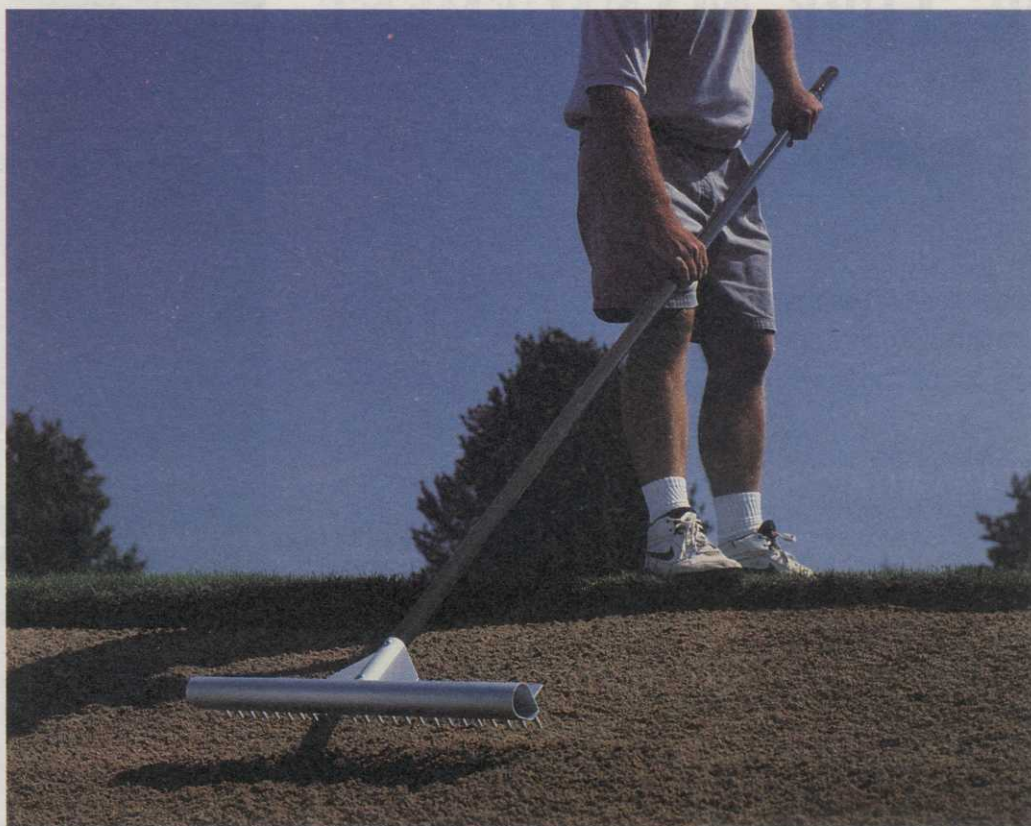
market site location that made it more than just our little course in the middle of town that no one else would know about."

Kicking in \$300,000, the city arranged legal agreements with the private sector, Fox Hollow Golf Club Association. The association is repaying the public participation in a couple of different debt-service schedules — one on a payment of a certain amount per year until the note is paid off; another being a tax increment financing that is like a tax abatement.

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