

Designing issues bring little consensus

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"Still horrible," said Ray Richard, who is based in the troubled Northeast, which has not yet shaken off the recession.

A balanced response was given by Jeffrey Brauer of Texas, who said: "Based on our activity level, and the activity of architects and builders I have talked to, it must be true that financing is easier to get."

But he said a bond counsel responsible for securing bonds on most of the public courses in Texas indicated "some bad projects have been financed in the public golf arena and the public sector is still casting a wary eye in the financial community."

RADIO-OPERATED IRRIGATION

Nearly four out of five architects said radio-operated irrigation technology is growing more popular.

But Mike Beebe of McCumber Golf Design noted that people should not understand this to mean they are more popular than computer-controlled systems, which they are not, he said.

Ronald Fream of California warned, "Too much sophistication adds cost and does not always improve results."

And Brauer and John LaFoy of South Carolina said radio-controlled units are more adapted to retrofit situations on existing courses, Brauer adding, "We see little value in specifying them for new construction."

LESS IRRIGATED AREA

In regard to designing courses with less irrigated areas, answers correlated with the areas of the country where an architect is busy.

Many responding in the positive explained "somewhat," or "in some cases."

But, among those responding negatively Bob Lohman of Illinois explained, "No. We are [already] at minimum in the Midwest"; and Tom Marzolf of Fazio Golf Course Designers, Inc. said, "Clients want irrigated turf."

NEW TURFGRASSES

Meanwhile, university and corporate breeding of new turfgrasses are apparently reaping a harvest.

Architects gave a reserved response about specifying new grasses. Most are doing so, but to a limited extent.

"In some cases," said Lester George of Virginia. "For example, I am specifying the use of buffalograss in Texas, where I have ready access to the supplier. We have water consumption concerns and there is less area to irrigate."

LaFoy is specing new varieties for putting surfaces, he said.

Fream said he is concentrating

on drought- and disease-tolerant cultivars as well as those requiring less maintenance.

And Tom Johnson of Washington said, "Yes" but specified: "Varieties of old standards, however."

In many cases, architects, builders, project superintendents — and owners — prefer to wait and let others take any "chances" with new varieties instead of acting as the "pioneers" and committing their own money.

Projects getting underway in Illinois

Three new 18-hole golf course projects are moving forward in Illinois.

An 18-hole championship layout and nine-hole putting course are part of a 2,650-acre planned community scheduled to break ground in Huntley by spring. Prime Group hopes to receive final approval for the 4,690-home golf community sometime in February and to begin construction in March. Bob Lohman is the course architect. The course would be ready for play in early 1997. Corporate offices, parks, retail stores and an outlet mall are also planned as

part of the Prime Group project.

In Elburn, Inland Land Appreciation Fund has presented a conceptual plan to develop a 625-acre golf community in Elburn Village. An 18-hole course surrounded by 1,500 homes is envisioned in the project, according to Inland planner Joe Abel.

The village of Cahokia, meanwhile, is building an 18-hole municipal golf course that could break ground this spring. The project's contractor is Svendsen Builders Inc. and the developer is Fairway Golf Development.

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