

St. Pete area is bustling with golf development

It might not be as busy as the 1980s, but Florida remains a pocket of steady development.

One of the more interesting new projects is in St. Petersburg, where a 270-acre former county dump known as Toytown may soon be transformed into a public 27-hole golf complex designed by Lee Trevino.

Eighteen Construction of Jacksonville, a company controlled by Trevino, will pay \$5,000 for the right to negotiate exclusively with Pinellas County officials to lease the property. Toytown, located near Interstate

275 and Roosevelt Boulevard in northeast St. Petersburg, served as the county's landfill until 10 years ago when it was closed and sealed. The county has been trying to market the site ever since.

In Orlando, the 533-acre first phase of the Remington golf community in Osceola County has been sold for \$3.2 million. In a joint venture, the Remington Partnership and Clifton, Ezell and Clifton Inc. will design and build a 7,000-yard, 18-hole golf course. U.S. Homes, Ryland Homes and David Weekly Homes plan to build 1,200 houses in

the community starting this coming summer.

Across the state in Vero Beach, discussions are underway to build a golf course community on 400 acres near the Horizon Outlet Mall. Developer Jim Coffey reportedly owns about a third of the tract and has received assurances from the five other abutting property owners that they are willing to sell. In addition to an 18-hole links and homes, a restaurant and motel are also under consideration.

Several factors determine vitality

By LAURENCE HIRSH

Golfers have no end of strong opinions about what makes a good course. But what contributes most to a golf property's economic health and vitality?

The following seven factors often are responsible for adding value to a golf course:

1. Course Conditioning — Ask yourself: Are players inclined to return because greens are in great shape? Are fairways wide enough, or too wide? Has the course's appearance been enhanced with mulched beds, ornamental grasses and flowers? Do amenities such as tee signs, ball washers, benches, hole liners, etc., add to the property's overall image?

2. Pace of Play — A brisk pace increases the enjoyment of most players, allows more people to play and improves the course's income generating potential. Large tees quicken the game, while providing adequate areas for all levels of players. Hazards should not penalize novice and average golfers too severely or constantly create bottlenecks. Rangers and yardage markers also help keep the game moving.

3. Location — Does your golf facility have good visibility from the highway? Use directional signs and a clearly marked entrance to make sure people know where you are and how to get there. If you are making improvements, put up a sign to inform the public.

4. Practice Range — Practice ranges are relatively low-cost, high-revenue facilities. If your golf property doesn't have one, consider building one with good tee areas, targets and floodlights. Are teaching facilities available?

5. Clubhouse — Don't overdo clubhouse services, especially at public facilities. Hot dogs and beer fit the bill at most daily fee courses. However, an attractive pro shop, stocked with desirable clothing, club lines and logged merchandise, usually is a good investment. Courteous service is a must.

6. Maintenance — Avoid difficult maintenance areas or outdated methods that add to operating costs. Practices to examine include manual vs. automatic irrigation, hand-mowed vs. tri-plexed greens, rough maintenance, and bunker appearance and consistency.

7. Special Events — Depending on your market, hosting tour events, USGA qualifiers, and amateur and college competitions may have bottom line benefits.

Laurence A. Hirsh, MAI, SGA, is president of Golf Property Analysts, Harrisburg, Pa., and a founding member and past president of the Society of Golf Appraisers. Golf Property Analysts specializes in appraising golf course properties.

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