

Promoting golf course projects as 'smart growth'

By JASON STRAKA

A growing collaborative movement between development organizations, such as the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), and environmental groups, like the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), is setting new development precedents around the country.

This new movement is called "Smart Growth" and is aimed at preventing and/or minimizing the effects of "unmanaged growth" or urban sprawl.

This collaborative effort has produced a consortium of development and environmental groups that back certain general principals of "Smart Growth" development including:

- Producing viable, economic development that protects and provides open space and environmentally sensitive areas.
- Providing predictability in the planning process and facilitating development that follows "Smart Growth" patterns to be permitted in a timely manner.
- Removing barriers to "Smart Growth" such as outdated zoning restrictions that separate and prohibit mixed uses.
- Providing safe, manageable land designs that enhance our communities and our quality of life.

While these principals are generally agreed upon, it is evident each supporting organization still places its own spin on the above principals and others they list in their "Smart Growth" policies.

For example, take the NAHB's recent

publication on its support of "Smart Growth." NAHB articles are entitled: "Smart Growth" Means Satisfying Demand for Housing; "Smart Growth" means Economic Growth Prosperity for Local Communities; and Cancel the Crisis: Farmland is not Disappearing.

Undoubtedly, these articles are focused on information that supports the ideals of "Smart Growth" and ways to improve our lives as seen by the homebuilders. They just do it with more of an economic-based spin and place more emphasis on that end of it. Rightfully so, since they are a development-based and -funded organization.

Conversely, the EPA's publication on "Smart Growth" emphasized the environmental end of "Smart Growth." Consider the titles of a few of their articles: "Smart Growth" Site Planning Protects Streams; Protecting Farmland: An Integral Part of Smart Growth; and "Smart Growth" and Floodplain Management.

These seemingly contradicting views on farmland and "Smart Growth" are the spin factor of opposing agencies trying to support the common good of providing viable, economic development while preserving and protecting our open space and natural environment. The essence of "Smart Growth" is to cluster housing closer together than most zoning would normally permit, and keep the "saved" ground as public or recreation open space — money versus environment, in extremely simplified terms, trying to reach a common goal.

What's this got to do with golf and politics? If the light bulb hasn't illumi-



Jason Straka

nated yet, it's that golf courses can be the link between both sides. In most instances, golf courses offer viable, economic income; provide for healthy recreation; and protect our natural environment. Golf courses would seem like the perfect "win-win" compromise that all

interests are seeking.

Not only is this being proven in our suburban corridors — such as the Celebration development in Orlando, Fla., and The Ledges in Huntsville, Ala. — but on urban sites such as Eastlake Country Club in Atlanta.

Affordability, sustainability a must Promoting golf development as "Smart Growth" is beneficial in bringing a greater awareness to golf and its benefits. Golf is in prime position to be the glue or cement of "Smart Growth" development, but it will not be without its hurdles.

In order for golf to be the link between both sides, the golf industry must strive to build and create more affordable, accessible and sustainable courses. Designers, developers and operators must produce courses of economic vitality and protected environments if golf is going to be considered "Smart Growth."

Besides striving to ensure golf development continues to benefit "Smart Growth," the golf industry also faces the challenge of promoting the ideals and goals of "Smart Growth" in itself. Just as golf courses were objectionable to some environmentalists years ago, "Smart Growth" is facing objections of perceived increased densities and mixed residential and commercial use. In fact, certain zoning

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makes it illegal.

"Smart Growth" would suggest that if a 400-acre site was up for development, it is better to have a 200-acre golf course and 400, half-acre lots than 400 one-acre lots with no environmental protection/preservation. A golf course could protect and preserve the environment, an EPA goal, while providing a source of open space recreation and viable income, which is a NAHB goal, all while providing the same units of housing.

This makes perfect sense, yet some communities resist change and/or are ignorant of "Smart Growth." Golf development not only fits the unique niche of being the glue among parties involved with "Smart Growth," but in addition it causes planners, developers and zoning boards to interact with other community entities on a regular basis.

Golf should become an educator and promoter of "Smart Growth" and at the forefront of innovative development and environmental stewardship. However, to teach others, we need to first educate ourselves so as to learn more about "Smart Growth." For more information, contact the NAHB, EPA, or the "Smart Growth" organization website at <http://www.smartgrowth.org>.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Button Hole extends accolades

To the editor:

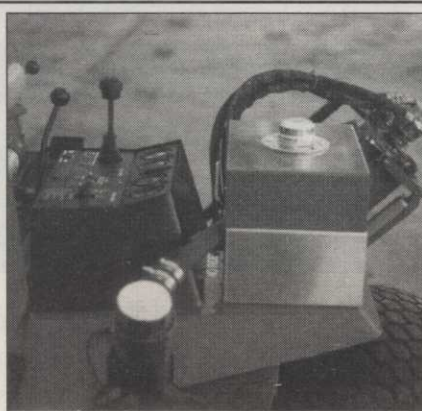
Thank you for the articles about Button Hole (*Golf Course News*, January). Regretfully, I failed to mention the extraordinary contributions, both financially and professionally, made by Sid Prichard's company, Earthforce. The final shaping of our nine holes and the construction of our 16,000-square-foot practice putting green were completed under some very adverse weather conditions.

The diligent work of Gordon Singer, the shaper on the job, confirmed his role of "ghost writer, par excellence" ... no pun intended!

The omission of Earthforce was not our only oversight. By way of explanation, the response and support for Button Hole has been so tremendous it has become very difficult to include all donors, but I would like to at this time.

We have received sizable contributions of materials and equipment from Allen Seed Store, Inc. Lesco, Bruedan Corp., Read Sand & Gravel, River Sand & Gravel, Pawtucket Ready Mix, Tee & Green Sod, Tuckahoe Turf Farms, Turf Products Corp., Dahn Tibbets, Weed and Feed Inc., and Textron Turf Equipment, which has been our largest contribution to date. Without the support and generosity of the above listed companies and countless individuals, Button Hole would be only a dream, rather than a reality.

Sincerely,
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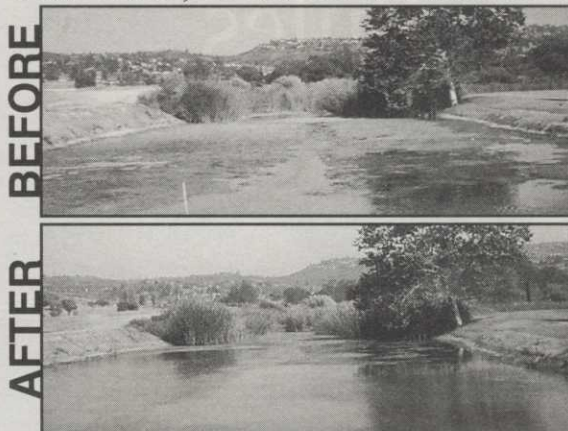
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