



**Henry DeLozier** is a principal in the Global Golf Advisors consultancy. DeLozier joined Global Golf Advisors in 2008 after nine years as the vice president of golf for Pulte Homes. He is a past president of the National Golf Course Owners Association's board of directors and serves on the PGA of America's Employers Advisory Council.

## GOLF AND THE NEXT GENERATION

The next upswing in the housing cycle is underway, which means a new generation of golf courses and communities will soon emerge. There's no doubt that post-recession courses and communities must be more efficient and more sustainable than those that sprung up in golf's boom days. But the question developers and builders must ask is how to integrate these new demands while continuing to attract homebuyers who are drawn to the property and aspirational value provided by golf.

What will be different in the upcoming cycle? We should look for three important changes in the priorities of next-generation homebuyers: women will influence purchase decisions more than men; buyers will seek financial stability and transparency; and environmental sustainability will be a priority.

**WOMEN ARE LEADING THE WAY.** According to Martha Barletta, the visionary author of *Marketing to Women*, women make 91 percent of home-purchase decisions. Their vote determines location and lifestyle elements of the communities where their families live.

Foremost, women seek a place that complements their interests in



(fountains and waterfalls) and socialization characteristics.

Accordingly, in the most recent housing boom, developers and homebuilders began to make community planning attractive to women.

**FINANCIAL STABILITY IS CRITICAL.** "May I see your balance sheet?" This is one of the entry-level questions asked of club managers and membership directors by new-member prospects. Bruised by the recent recessionary cycle, prospective members are more cautious and alert to the financial condition of any club they might join. Women are deliberate shoppers, and their search for a club membership now involves an evaluation of the finances of prospective clubs.

Club leaders would be wise to prepare concise and easy-to-understand descriptions of the topic once thought

water consumption and conscientious use of fertilizers, pesticides and other inputs, golf offers the safe and sustainable haven sought by many of today's homeowners. Undoubtedly, pressure will continue to be directed at golf courses by politicians, environmentalists and other activists over their environmental practices.

Golf's defense should be a strong offense aimed at education of all stakeholders, starting with club members. Golf has the opportunity to demonstrate highly sustainable business practices. But club leaders and executives need to do a better job of articulating its case as a responsible environmental steward.

Prospective members should know how chemicals are handled and stored and how the staff monitors their use. The superintendent should publish a roster of inputs used so club members develop trust and confidence in the club's environmental practices. Clubs might even post important aspects of its fertility program on its website and ask the superintendent to provide a description and explanation. Demonstrating a commitment to a reduction in water and chemical use not only helps educate and inform their members, but also encourages their support as ambassadors.

Golf communities have an opportunity to create market differentiation through effective environmental programs. But before breaking ground, developers should know the answers to four questions: What entity owns and controls water supply? How long is the secured-supply life cycle? What is the backup supply source? And how do you shop for water sources? In the previous development cycle, builders and lending institutions weren't diligent enough in seeking answers to these questions. My bet is that we've learned our lessons. **GCI**

**Golf's defense should be a strong offense aimed at education of all stakeholders, starting with club members.**

socialization. When buying property, women are alert to four Fs: friends, family, fun and fitness. When it comes to choosing real estate options, the most attractive elements for women are golf courses, long-view characteristics of the property, orientation to water edges (shores) and features

to be confidential and which only arose from indiscreet questions. New members want to join a club that is both financially secure and transparent.

**ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY MATTERS.** Staffed by experts trained in the sciences of turf care, responsible