

Ten Things to Consider Before Renovating



Editor's Note: I am unable to give credit to the author of these ten tips. The article appeared in at least two newsletters - The Greenside (GCSA of New Jersey - March/April 1999, pp 14 & 15) and The Keynoter (PA Turfgrass Council - February 1999, p 12), but neither publication noted an author, either. If I learn who that person is, I will let readers know in a future issue. Until then, take this good advice to heart.

If your club is considering a major renovation or expansion, you need to make sure it will address member and club needs not only today, but 10 years from now.

1. **Will spending money on your facility be money well spent?**

Consider the market and existing clientele. Does improving your facility mean increasing the cost of a round of golf? If so, will the market support the increase? Conversely, you may need to make improvements just to compete with the new golf course down the street.

2. **To plan or not to plan?**

A master renovation plan is a strategic tool used to guide future golf course improvements. Develop one comprehensive plan that covers the entire golf course rather than several small, loosely connected plans. A comprehensive plan gives the "big picture" and ensures an integrated approach to improving the facility.

3. **Focus on the fundamental first.**

One of the first things to think about is where to make improvements. Review all golf course features - tees, putting surfaces, hazards, practice areas, etc. - and focus initially on improvements that will address fundamental issues of playability, strategy, shot value, maintainability, drainage, aesthetics and safety. Addressing shortcomings in these areas is a first step in the right direction.

4. **Don't let the budget get in the way of a sound comprehensive plan.**

A budget should be used as a tool to schedule a necessary improvement. Prioritize improvements and then implement them as a budget allows. Before long, the plan of improvements will be implemented.

5. **What are some of the factors that impact the cost of remodeling a golf course?**

Scope of improvements, availability of qualified contractors, using in-house vs. contractors, materials cost and time of year.

6. **How to handle disruption of play?**

Typically, phasing improvements minimizes impact to the entire golf course and allows a portion of the course to remain open for play. Other ways to minimize disruption include using temporary tees and greens and changing the routing of the course. Scheduling work during off-peak play times is also an option.

7. **Determine if in-house resources can complete some of the work or if all work will be completed by outside contractors.**

In most cases, in-house resources can perform some golf course improvements. Tasks such as stripping sod, tree removal, minor drainage and minor irrigation system modifications can usually be completed by a maintenance crew.

8. **Who should be included in a master planning project?**

The key to a successful master plan depends on input from the individuals who are responsible for the fiscal or daily operations of the facility. These are the major contributors in the planning team: golf course superintendent, golf pro, green committee chairperson, long range planning committee chairperson, representative men, women, junior and senior golfers, golf course architect.

9. **How long does it take to complete a master plan renovation document?**

This depends on the scope of the project, but preparation of a master plan document should take about 60 to 120 days.

10. **Work with an architect who has golf course renovation experience.**

Many architects consider golf course renovation work more challenging than new course work design because of "built-in" constraints associated with existing courses. Often renovation work requires working around existing irrigation systems, drainage, trees and parts of the golf course that are to be preserved. Renovation work requires a certain level of experience and it pays to work with an architect who has course renovation experience. ♣