

Municipal golf courses: a win-win proposition

Cities are using landfills, gravel pits and farmlands to make space for the deluge of Baby Boomer golfers entering the ranks.

■ Municipal golf courses provide much more value to a community than basic recreation.

"Properly designed and maintained, a public golf course is an environmental oasis and economic asset to the community," says Don Knott, president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects. "The value of municipal golf courses is becoming increasingly obvious. As urban areas become more populated, the environmental, social and financial contributions municipal courses make take on added significance."

Consumer demand for more golf courses remains strong. An estimated 25 million golfers play more than 500 million rounds of golf annually on nearly 15,000 courses, according to the National Golf Foundation. What's more, 358 new courses opened for play in 1993. Of that number, 81 percent were public facilities.

Knott and other ASGCA members design new courses and redesign existing facilities to develop land that provides much sought-after recreation as well as revenue. The key, says Knott, begins with sound course design.

"It's in the planning and design phase that responsible solutions are found for environmental and playability issues," adds Knott.

In California, ASGCA member Damian Pascuzzo designed the Santa Clara Golf & Tennis Club. Located on a former landfill, the municipal course is an example of proactive design and forward-thinking construction.

Detailed surface drainage patterns, a heavy clay cap, high density polyethylene pipe (temperature tolerant, strong resistance to water, fusible) for irrigation systems and

properly-installed methane gas vents were all critical design features.

The course averages nearly 200 rounds of golf a day. Greens fees are \$12 for residents, \$21 for non-residents—extremely affordable, especially in this part of California—and generate an estimated \$1.15 million in annual revenues.

Farther east, the village of Channahon, Ill., embarked on a project to reclaim an abandoned sand and gravel pit and develop farmland on 160 acres and transform it into a public golf course.

Former ASGCA president Dick Nugent designed the 18-hole facility based on the idea that if the community could incorporate a public course into its recreation program, it would make Channahon a more attractive place to golf...and live.

Nugent faced several serious design challenges, including sensitive wetland



You want environmentally friendly? Here Lassing Pointe superintendent Jerry Coldiron inspects a bird's nest for inhabitants.

topographic features offered by the mine pit and adjacent wetlands. Chuck Czoce, director of parks and recreation estimates that more than 30,500 rounds of golf are played each year, producing revenue of just under \$1 million.

West Lock Municipal Golf Course, Honolulu, Hawaii, separates a National Wildlife Refuge and a planned commercial development. The refuge contains a habitat for endangered waterbirds like the Hawaiian coot, wood duck and stilt.

Original plans called for building residential housing on the land. A golf course was proposed, based on the idea that it could balance commercial and wildlife needs, according to ASGCA member architect Rodney Wright.

The course not only protects wildlife species from urban development, but it also provides more than 70,000 rounds of golf each year. Fees range from \$4 to \$12 per round and required carts cost \$12 per round. Estimated total revenues are \$1.8 million.

—The ASGCA publishes *An Environmental Approach to Golf Course Development*. For a copy, send a check for \$10 to the ASGCA, 221 N. LaSalle St., Chicago, IL 60601.



Municipalities can take advantage of the public's desire for affordable golf courses. This public course—Lassing Pointe in Florence, Ky.—has been a money-maker since it opened in 1993.

areas, spoil piles (a remnant of the mine), concrete and other debris. In August, 1993, the Heritage Bluff Golf Club opened for play. The course features USGA-approved greens and takes advantage of the unique