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BY DESIGN



Excellence in Golf Design from the American Society of Golf Course Architects

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What are golf course architects doing?

In the final piece in our series from Jon Last of Sports & Leisure Research Group, we find out about the different types of projects that architects have been working on.

This is my third and final article in a series based on the findings of our research program, *Golf Facility Market Trend Watch*, developed with the American Society of Golf Course Architects.

In the first piece we discovered that a golf course renovation was the most coveted enhancement

For this article, I am turning my attention to the type of projects that golf course architects are working on.

We asked the golf course architects who participated in our survey (which was conducted in September 2017) to indicate which type of projects they had been involved with over the previous 24 months.

pipes last 5-10 years (and are often replaced at the same time as bunker sand). These are among the items with the shortest lifespan, which is likely to be a contributory factor to projects like these being so common for golf course architects.

Also notable is the potential savings in annual maintenance costs that can be made through a bunker renovation. Marc Whitney, ASGCA Director of Marketing, says: "One effective way for a golf club to reduce annual maintenance costs is to get an expert to review its bunkers. It's possible that strategy can be maintained, or even improved, with fewer bunkers, and sometimes formal sand bunkers can be replaced by landforms or other natural features that are less costly to maintain."

Another specific project type that is associated with maintenance and resource cost savings is the elimination or modification of irrigated areas, an activity that 52% of golf course architects have been involved with in the past two years. (Download *The Cost Factor* via the

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for guests and members of a golf club. And in the last issue of *By Design* I highlighted what our survey respondents felt were the most important factors for facility management to pull the trigger on a golf course renovation project; confirming the cost, upgrading infrastructure to increase its longevity and, for private clubs, member retention.

Figure 1 shows that bunker work is the most common. Almost four of every five architects (79%) indicated that they had been involved in a re-bunkering project during that period.

The ASGCA's *Expected Life Cycle Chart* (available from the Resources section of asgca.org) indicates that bunker sand has a lifetime of 5-7 years and bunker drainage

Resources section of asgca.org for more techniques for reducing annual maintenance costs.)

Master plan development was the second most popular type of project for golf course architects, with 77% having been involved with master plan work in the previous two years. By developing a master plan, a golf club has a reference point for all future changes to the golf course, ensuring that all work is done with a common goal in mind and allowing clubs to anticipate, schedule and budget for work on the golf course (for more information, download *Master Planning for Golf Courses* via the Resources section of asgca.org).

For nearly one in four golf course architects, master planning is also the area of business activity which has generated the most revenue (see Figure 2).

The third and fourth most popular types of project are short game development (77%) and practice area improvements (75%), both of which are attractive for golfers that want to work on their game and maybe don't have time for a full round.

And rounding out the top five types of project that golf course architects have been involved with is green complex redesign or renovation. This emphasizes the point I made in the last issue of *By Design*, that condition of greens is the top-ranking priority for customers.

I was encouraged to find that 49% of golf course architects have been involved with a new golf course design and construction in the past two years, and new course work is a top revenue earner for 13% of golf course architects. This may be a far cry from the golf course construction boom of the 1980s, but it's a positive sign for the industry that so many architects continue to have new golf course design work among their projects. ●



Jon Last is founder and President of Sports & Leisure Research Group, a full-service marketing research consultancy.

Figure 1: Architects are working on a multitude of projects
Golf course architects were involved in the following projects in the two years to September 2017



Figure 2: Which projects provide the most revenue?
Type of projects ranked as the number one revenue earner by golf course architects

