



PROFITABLE GOLF:

CASE STUDIES IN
FINANCIAL SUCCESS



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INTRODUCTION

THE STORY OF GOLF DEVELOPMENT'S POSITIVE ROI

Depending on the source, the game of golf was invented in the 13th century in Holland, or in the 15th century in Scotland. The first Open Championship – the world's oldest tournament – was held in Scotland in 1860, and continues to enjoy robust audiences. According to the National Golf Foundation in 2018, more than 24 million people worldwide play golf (with another eight million counted as “off course” golfers), and according to the Royal & Ancient in 2018, those 24 - 32 million people could choose from more than 38,000 golf courses around the world to play their rounds on.

And yet, for all its longevity, for the millions of people who play the game, the narrative that golf is a bad investment can creep into conversations about real estate development or land use or leisure time trends.

For those who develop and create golf's playing fields, that longevity and continued popularity point to opportunity to include layouts in new developments, and to remodel existing layouts to reflect evolving ways to play.

While it's true that new golf development has slowed, today's golf facilities – whether new or remodeled – are being developed with a keen understanding of an evolving marketplace. Practice facilities are being expanded to welcome new players, more attention is being paid to infrastructure that will support efficient operations, and surrounding communities with flooding or water quality issues are benefitting from smart design and engineering of courses.

In short, creative solutions are leading to golf serving as more than a recreational amenity. These solutions are resulting in positive return on investment for many stakeholders, from owners and players to communities and the environment.

As the great golfer Ben Hogan said, “The most important shot in golf is the next one.” Following are examples of forward-looking facilities developed or remodeled by golf course architects working with clients who recognized the wisdom of looking ahead.

QUICK TAKES

EXAMPLES OF POSITIVE ROI

The case studies that follow feature golf in many different forms: residential real estate development, resort golf, municipal facilities, traditional country clubs, and locations around North America.

While the types of facilities vary, the approach to development or remodeling has one important similarity: the golf course architect worked with the client to find a creative solution that would result in profit.

Here are some quick takes from each of the following cases:

COMPASS POINTE GOLF CLUB, LELAND, NORTH CAROLINA

Timing is Everything

This residential golf development had a promising start in 2006, but ran against the Great Recession in 2008. Rather than move forward at the same pace, the developer waited for the market to improve, matched construction to sales, and even shaped future golf holes so potential purchasers could imagine their views. Sometimes a site is right for golf, and its development just requires perseverance and good timing. Compass Pointe developers waited, and the restart took off when the market was right.

SAN PEDRO PAR THREE, SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

Let there be Light

The City of San Antonio has run a robust municipal golf program since it opened its first course in 1916. A well-located course near downtown had barely been touched since its launch in the 1940s, and the city put funding toward renovating its 45 acres. The transformation of San Pedro to a lighted, par-three course with driving range attracted play from the day it opened, becoming the number one revenue producer for the city's eight-course system.

CAMELBACK GOLF CLUB – AMBIENTE COURSE

SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA

Coming Out in the Wash

This landmark JW Marriott property scored high in every aspect, except golf. The company was losing market share due to a weak course prone to washouts and deferred maintenance. Sometimes the best solution is significant change and upfront investment, and the Marriott corporation turned to the golf course architect to repair the environmental profile while improving the layout's strategic intent. The result is one of the top revenue-generating properties in Marriott Golf's worldwide portfolio.

BENTWATER YACHT & COUNTRY CLUB, MONTGOMERY, TEXAS

Sustainable Bundle Approach

Like more than a dozen successful master-planned developments in Texas, the developer of a 1,500 acre development on Lake Conroe near Houston designed Bentwater Yacht & Country Club to be economically sustainable indefinitely. Each customer in this highly sought-after development was required to be a member of the onsite club, and each change in home ownership included a transfer fee to help support capital needs of the club. The development has thrived, and grown, since its launch in the mid-1980s.

BAYLANDS GOLF LINKS, PALO ALTO, CALIFORNIA

High Tech Recreational Asset

A modest parkland course that was originally seen as an answer to a flood control project ended up providing not only needed neighborhood flood mitigation, but was developed into a City of Palo Alto recreational attraction. A complicated land transfer/soil importation/short game development plan resulted in a new golf asset in the middle of Silicon Valley's technology hub.

SHANGRI-LA GOLF, MONKEY ISLAND, OKLAHOMA

Smaller is Better

A private club and residential development in Oklahoma was down to just 87 members. A fresh look at the site led to a master plan that downsized the golf from 36 holes to 27. The transformation of the project attracted a new 120-room hotel and conference center, and a bump in memberships up to 500.

LONGLEAF GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB, SOUTHERN PINES, NORTH CAROLINA

Data-Driven Drives

A club that was enjoying success saw an opportunity to rebrand for an audience attracted to a more flexible, playable course. The “Long-leaf Tee System,” a novel way to use the practice range to determine which tee to play from (which can change for any golfer from day to day), resulted in economic success that hinges on matching the golf course to the right player, who can select from as many as seven tees per hole.

LAS LOMAS CLUB DE GOLF, GUADALAJARA, JALISCO, MEXICO

City Dump to Sought-After Residence

Environmental and economic issues often go hand-in-hand. In this case, the site of a city dump was transformed into an attractive golf and residential development, which included an all-new city water supply. The years-long mitigation, planning and construction resulted in a city with surging property values in a sought-after neighborhood, all surrounding a new golf facility that made the development possible.

NAPLES BEACH HOTEL AND GOLF CLUB, NAPLES, FLORIDA

Local Strength

A 70-year-old facility on the Gulf of Mexico benefited from a hotel overhaul, but the adjacent golf course suffered from poor conditioning and practice facilities that needed updating. A re-routing plan that took advantage of unused land resulted in improved strategy, a much-improved practice facility and infrastructure changes that improved maintenance. The local community embraced the changes as an amenity everyone can enjoy, as well as providing improved neighborhood drainage.

VESTAVIA COUNTRY CLUB, VESTAVIA, ALABAMA

Tradition Drives Change

Master Planning often offers the chance to plan for renovation in a thoughtful, affordable way. The issues with Vestavia’s layout – antiquated irrigation system, poor drainage, lack of strategic playing options and routing that sometimes posed safety hazards – were addressed by staff and members. Since re-opening post-renovation, the club has attracted 98 new families, with the average age of new members in their mid-to-late 30s.

SHADOW HILLS GOLF CLUB – SOUTH COURSE INDIO, CALIFORNIA

Sometimes It Just Takes a Tweak

The Del Webb Sun City model is popular because of its home design, active community and wide array of recreational options. Golf has always been a centerpiece of the Del Webb lifestyle, but rounds on this course were down. After an assessment of the layouts, bunker playability and practice facility use were flagged as areas of improvement. The resulting Montecito 18-Hole Putting Course is now a popular amenity, with increased and extended use, along with providing a point of separation from other facilities in the golf-rich Coachella Valley.

CASE STUDIES

Golf course architects work with clients in innovative ways to develop and renovate golf facilities that post positive return on investment.

Following are case studies that demonstrate these innovations through projects in both the public and private sectors. Some took years to plan and complete, and some were straightforward and efficient. But all were good investments for their owners – and other constituents.



COMPASS POINTE GOLF CLUB

LELAND, NORTH CAROLINA

GOLF COURSE ARCHITECTS: RICK ROBBINS, ASGCA
AND BRIAN LUSSIER, ASGCA



the situation In 2006, two well-respected developers from Wilmington, North Carolina, acquired a 2,300-acre site in Leland. They launched an aggressive master planning effort on the development known as Compass Pointe. The developers had several specifications for the master plan, including certification as an Audubon International Community, inclusion of a high level of amenities and a resort-living feel. The centerpiece of the development is a 27-hole golf course designed by Rick Robbins, ASGCA, and Brian Lussier, ASGCA. Unfortunately, just as the project was getting started, the Great Recession of 2008 occurred. Real estate sales slowed significantly and the golf course was put on hold. With a high debt load and reduced cash flow from sales, the original developers were forced to sell their position in the project back to the original landowner. The owners looked for a way to re-start the project and move forward with golf course development.

the approach The return of long-time developer Bobby Harrelson to Compass Pointe immediately provided potential buyers with increased financial security. This helped keep sales at a sustainable level during the worst of the recession. However, Harrelson and Robbins talked often about the need to at least get some movement started on the course but only within the cash flow limits set by sales. The first step was to hire a local shaper who could make the areas being cleared and excavated for lots look like the designed golf holes. A marketing “buzz” started immediately about the golf course opening but Harrelson told everyone “it will open when it opens” and continued to work on the course as cash flow allowed.

the solutions Step number one in the solution was for the architect and developer to work together to implement a program that allowed for construction of the course to proceed at a pace that matched available funds. Hiring a talented local shaper to work directly with direction from the designer gave the owner flexibility on speed of work to be done. Use of on-site sand for greens and bunkers saved on materials costs as did the direct purchase of all other materials. The shaper became the general contractor for all intents as the developer kept giving him more areas of responsibility.

the takeaways Compass Pointe is a highly successful project that came very close to not being done at all. Shortly after the golf course restarted, sales began to move upward. Within a few months not only were sales on the rise, but the average prices were rising as well. Developer credibility, a well-planned and landscaped community and a naturalistic style course that was built within the time frame set by cash flow have combined to make the entire project successful. As an example, the chart below shows sales of lots for each year from 2011 - 2019. Note the year 2013 (the year the owner restarted the golf course shaping) compared to the previous years. As you can see, the number of sales went from 56 to 147; the average

price increased by \$35,000 and revenues increased by over \$13,000,000! Starting the golf course and following through until completion kept sales at high level through this year and it is expected the developer will sell in excess of \$50,000,000 in 2020. The takeaway here is patience, perseverance, planning and teamwork can turn a liability into a valuable asset.

Year	# of lots	Avg price/lot	Annual revenue
2011	63	\$90,000	\$5,670,000
2012	56	\$90,000	\$5,040,000
2013	147	\$125,000	\$18,375,000
2014	202	\$125,000	\$25,250,000
2015	167	\$130,000	\$21,710,000
2016	129	\$135,000	\$17,415,000
2017	154	\$140,000	\$21,560,000
2018	164	\$145,000	\$23,780,000
2019	179	\$150,000	\$26,850,000





SAN PEDRO PAR THREE

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

ARCHITECT: JEFF BLUME, ASGCA

the situation The City of San Antonio has operated numerous golf facilities within its limits dating back to the construction of its first municipal course, Brackenridge Park, in 1916. One of the courses is San Pedro Par Three Golf Course and Driving Range, which dated to the early 40's and had remained virtually untouched (the clubhouse, the course, the irrigation system, etc.) since then. San Pedro had an excellent downtown location and enough land (45 acres) to warrant a new renovation.

The city made that 45 acres available to design a new, lighted par three course with driving range, and asked for a fun, family-friendly golf course linked to a first-class driving range for all levels of golfers.

the situation It was important to re-frame this venue to accommodate every group that played the course, utilizing one scorecard, with every hole the same par for both men and women. This included paying attention to forced carries and insuring that the shots required from each set of tees did not exceed the capabilities of the players. It was also important that the tee markers could be moved so turf wear could be spread around, as well as provide flexibility in length from the same set of tees.

the solutions The traditional four-tee approach would not solve the project's goals. As the plans developed it became obvious that something like the Longleaf Tee Initiative would be a tremendous benefit. Therefore, once plans were developed for the tees, a six-tee system was put into place utilizing most of the existing tees and adding 28 additional ones. Most of the tees were forward tees, although several were rear tees, stretching the course out some for the better players. It was important that every caliber of player got something in this project. Because of the traditional course design, many greens were close to the tee for the next hole, allowing for placement of some "walk – on" tees adjacent to the greens.

the takeaways The project took about 14 months to complete but the City of San Antonio could not be more pleased. The new San Pedro lighted Par Three and Driving Range has become the center of golf activity in town. Golfers are using the facility until late in the evening and the facility is attracting families and new golfers. A strong teaching program has been put in place and San Pedro has become the go-to place for both middle and high school golf teams.

Financially, the property became the number one revenue producer for the eight-course system from the first month of operations and remains so a year and a half later. San Pedro is truly a golf success story.



CAMELBACK GOLF CLUB – AMBIENTE COURSE

SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA

GOLF COURSE ARCHITECTS: FRY/STRAKA GLOBAL GOLF COURSE DESIGN
ON BEHALF OF HURDZAN/FRY ENVIRONMENTAL GOLF COURSE DESIGN

the situation The JW Marriott Scottsdale Camelback Inn is a Scottsdale, Arizona landmark. However, one of its two golf courses had developed such a negative reputation that business was being driven to competing facilities with better golf courses but with inferior hotel accommodations. The existing course was failing to attract clients due to its lack of visual appeal, declining conditions and weak strategic quality. With its 200 acres of maintained, irrigated turf and non-native trees it lacked environmental sensitivity and was costly to maintain. Additionally, the golf course was located in an urban desert ‘wash,’ which is essentially a desert floodway. Flooding frequently rendered the course unplayable for days at a time, causing massive maintenance problems and significant loss of golf and hotel revenue.

the approach Though remaining in the same development corridor, dramatic changes to the course’s routing, contouring and vegetation types were proposed. During the planning and permitting stages, the Army Corps of Engineers and the two townships where the course is located were heavily involved to ensure major flood events would not negatively impact the surrounding community. The lead architect spent a tremendous amount of time on site to ensure that grading plans were followed to exact precision in key flood zones and that the project adhered to a definitive budget and timeline.

the solutions In order to minimize course closures and reduce revenue loss during flood events, the desert wash was lowered in elevation and the fill material was utilized to raise critical play areas of the new golf holes. In addition to the dramatic visual improvements, the raised playing surfaces, with the addition of eight bridges, created high and dry golf features that stay open even during moderate flood events.

In contrast to the preceding course, the remodeled Ambiente has only 90 acres of maintained turfgrass. The remaining 110 acres have been replanted with a native mix of plant materials, along with wildflowers to add visual interest and animal habitat to increase pollinators. The result is a golf course with better drainage, more visual and architectural interest, and significantly improved maintenance.



the takeaways The improved visual, play and maintenance characteristics have garnered a wealth of praise throughout the golf world, bringing with it an influx of customers, new memberships and increased revenue for the resort. The course was named to Best New Courses of 2013 by Golf Digest and the #1 Renovation of the Year by Golf Inc, has been consistently ranked among the best courses in the state, and has been featured on nationally televised golf programming and in many significant golf publications. The course has been able to remain open during moderate flood events since its opening and to maximize revenue opportunities.

The culmination of course accolades, attraction of customers to the resort and ability to stay open more often through flood events led Camelback to become one of the top revenue-generating properties in Marriott Golf’s worldwide portfolio in 2017.



LONGLEAF GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB

SOUTHERN PINES, NORTH CAROLINA

GOLF COURSE ARCHITECT: BILL BERGIN, ASGCA

the situation Longleaf Golf & Country Club was a club struggling with a declining membership and a lack of identity in a highly competitive golf environment. It was one of about ten courses used in the annual U.S. Kids Golf World Championship. U.S. Kids Golf purchased Longleaf Golf & Country Club to become their “living laboratory” and to showcase their innovative ideas and family philosophy.

the approach The importance of family cannot be overlooked in the purchase of Longleaf. The name was changed to the Longleaf Golf & Family Club and it became the new home of the U.S. Kids Golf Academy. As home of the Academy, the quality and flow of the practice areas needed a major upgrade. As host to junior golfers during the World Championship, the course needed to be scaled to fit its competitors. A new way of looking at golf was developed in order to create a course that was designed to fit each golfer rather than forcing the golfer to conform to the course.

the solutions Improving the flow of the property and making it comfortable for parents to keep up with the participants was the first phase. By shifting the putting green from in front of the clubhouse to a wooded area just behind the clubhouse, players no longer had to deal with cars and the parking lot. In order to create an ample and diverse short game facility, the nines were reversed and the original 18th hole was shortened, making room for a short game facility that featured two practice greens, a bunker and numerous chipping areas. This allows classes

to have plenty of space to practice. Finally, the range teeing area was greatly expanded and reshaped, leaving the entire range with multiple targets within easy reach for most users.

Further work included the addition of the Longleaf Tee System and Bottlebrush. Longleaf features seven tees per hole with Blue tees starting at just over 3200 yards and finishing with Red tees at just under 6700 yards. The Longleaf Tee System allows players to play from a tee position that matches up with their distance capabilities. Bottlebrush is a six hole Short Course with holes ranging from fifty to one hundred yards. This “grow the game” facility features small greens complexes that are scaled beautifully for kids and boasts challenging but fun green surrounds reminiscent of those typically associated with Pinehurst and Donald Ross. All players can improve their games by honing their skills on Bottlebrush, and it is the perfect place to introduce new golfers to the game. A typical round at Bottlebrush can be played in just over thirty minutes.

Finally, all of the greens on the course were modified and resurfaced, converting from bentgrass that continued to struggle to Mini



Verde bermuda grass, which thrives in this region. Along with the greens project, 75 percent of the bunkers on the course were reshaped and rough areas were returned to a more natural sandscape.

the takeaways Longleaf Golf & Family Club is the home of a thriving junior golf academy. It is also the flagship for the Longleaf Tee System. Rounds are up 20 percent in the first year following the renovation and 93 percent of rounds played by women have been from tees that previously did not exist. The culture at Longleaf is changing the way people look at playing golf, and elements from this project are being used on most projects at Bergin Golf Designs.



BAYLANDS GOLF LINKS

PALO ALTO, CALIFORNIA

GOLF COURSE ARCHITECT: FORREST RICHARDSON, ASGCA

the situation A 1950s parkland-style bayside golf course had become compromised by its sea level setting and years of salt intrusion from soils below. Once heralded as the best public layout in what would become Silicon Valley, the City of Palo Alto municipal course had by 2010 reached a low point in terms of conditions and rounds played.

Along the edges of the course is San Francisquito Creek, in desperate need of improvements to help control flooding of homes and property in several nearby neighborhoods.

As the golf course is part of the Baylands Nature Preserve, a 2,000 acre portion of San Francisco Bay dedicated to recreation, bird watching, and untouched open space, many voices suggested the course become more compatible with the Baylands.

the approach Originally a flood control project with a look to widening the creek, eventually the approach was to study options, each measured for their suitability and associated impacts to the golf course. Citizens and public agencies all weighed in during a two-year process aimed at finding the best solution for several objectives: flood control, environmental sustainability, preservation of the golf course and experience, and public access adjacent to the layout.

the solutions Ultimately six plans were created, with one famously dubbed “Plan G.” Developed by Forrest Richardson, ASGCA, Plan G took away all the constraints to leave portions of the old course intact and, in addition to the original objectives, carved out 10.5 acres of usable land with a valuation of more than \$50 million.

The City realized this land was a tremendous

asset, not to mention it being unlikely they would ever again have access to a parcel that size within their landlocked City.

Exhaustive studies resulted in the realization that a full, 100 percent transformation of the course would ultimately have the greatest return on investment.

Roughly \$9 million was budgeted for the work, which included offsets for compensation for the land transferred to the flood district and for importation of soil to the site to raise the turfed areas and mitigate poor conditions.

Hallmarks of the final plan included: soil importation (\$2 million in revenue realized); a new course, transformed to match the Baylands native landscape and terrain; a new brand and image: “Baylands Golf Links;” full accommodation of trails, flood control and future clubhouse planning; and a new short game area and three-hole designated youth course.



the takeaways Despite permitting delays and significant issues with sequencing the creek project, Palo Alto has been able to realize a new golf asset that is now a “point of pride” as it once was when the original William P. and William F. Bell course was inaugurated in the 1950s.

Baylands Golf Links now harkens back to its primary asset — the second-to-none location within the world’s technology hub of Silicon Valley and its amazing setting along San Francisco Bay. Sharing the neighborhood with Google, Facebook and thousands of start-up employers, Baylands Golf Links now occupies a place as a “must play” golf course in the Bay Area.



NAPLES BEACH HOTEL AND GOLF CLUB

NAPLES, FLORIDA

GOLF COURSE ARCHITECT: JOHN SANFORD, ASGCA

the situation The Naples Beach Hotel is located directly on the Gulf of Mexico in Florida. At 70 years old, the hotel was overhauled in 2014 but the golf course had not been improved for many years. Guests enjoyed the hotel's prime location and improvements, but were playing golf elsewhere due to the layout's poor conditions and lack of full-scale practice facilities.

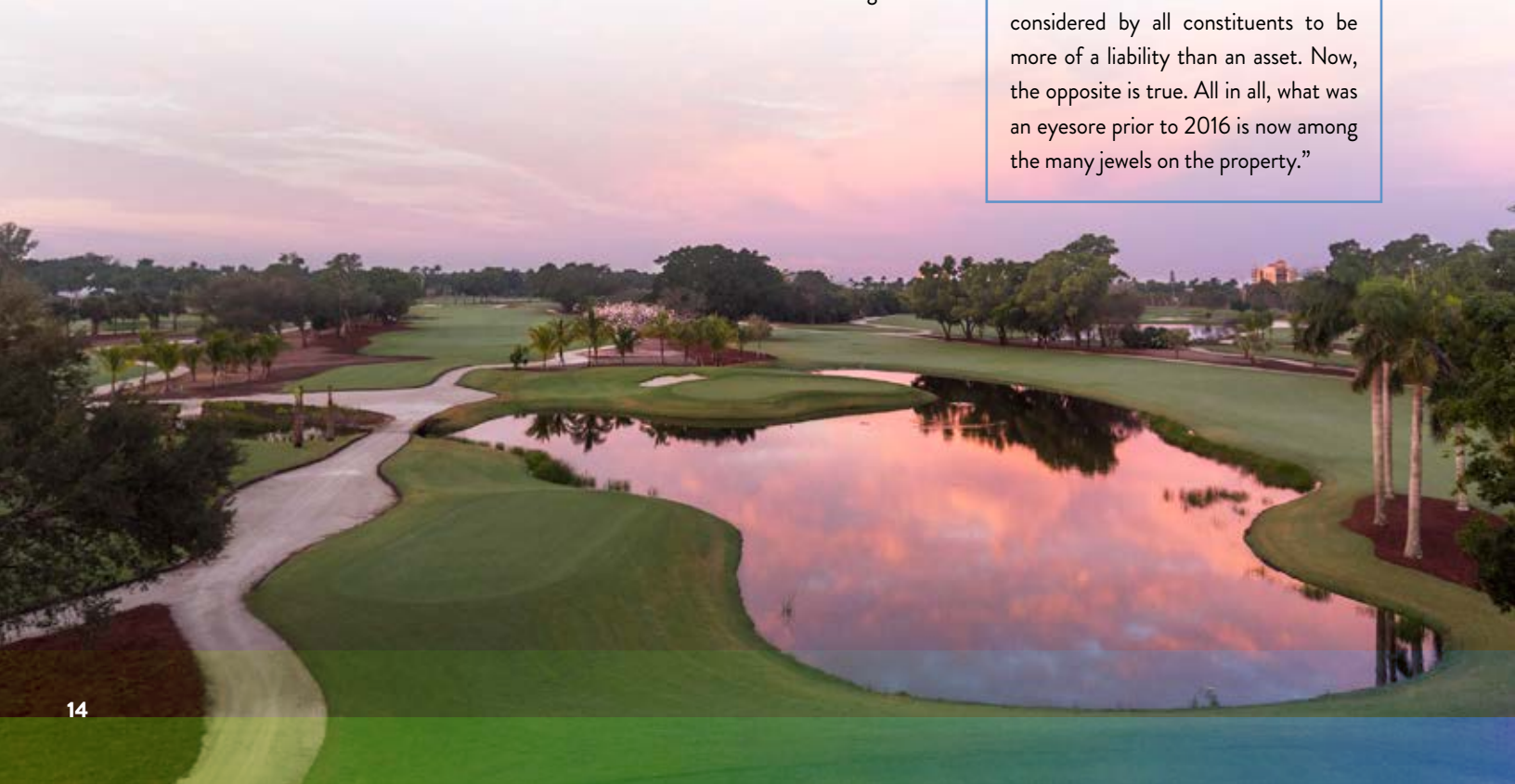
Sanford Golf Design was contacted in 2015 by the owners and after a brief design competition was awarded the design contract. After the contract was signed, the owners inquired about a co-designer and Jack Nicklaus was recommended, not knowing he had previous experience at the property; Mr. Nicklaus had played the course when he was 11 years old with his father and broke 40 for the first time (37 on the front nine)! When the opportunity was brought to his attention, he was eager to get involved.

the approach The site is 100 acres and the course measured at 6200 yards with a very small practice range and no short game area. The owners wanted a longer course with more tee options for all levels of play, along with a larger range and short game area to meet current standards. The course was rerouted to take advantage of some unused property, and the existing range was given up for much needed parking at the hotel. The entire course was reconstructed, saving some key trees that had environmental and sentimental value to the owners.

the solutions By rerouting golf holes to utilize the entire property, clearing exotic vegetation and designing some "double greens," the course was lengthened to 6900 yards, along with a 300-plus-yard practice range and short game area. An all-new water management system, irrigation, drainage and grasses provided much-needed infrastructure improvement and a platform for proper maintenance. While the course was lengthened by 700 yards, the irrigated turf area was reduced by some 20 percent, adding to the environmental sustainability of the facility. Irrigation water is treated effluent supplied by the City of Naples; consumption has been reduced with the new design.

the takeaways By investing capital in their older golf course, the owners were able to increase their local membership by 1000 percent and overall revenue by more than 50 percent. The new course also contributed to revenue increases in other departments throughout the hotel and property.

The community of Naples has embraced the renovated golf course as an amenity everyone can enjoy, as well as providing improved neighborhood drainage. And, according to the owner, "Prior to the construction work led by John Sanford and the Nicklaus team, our course was considered by all constituents to be more of a liability than an asset. Now, the opposite is true. All in all, what was an eyesore prior to 2016 is now among the many jewels on the property."



LAS LOMAS CLUB DE GOLF

GUADALAJARA, JALISCO, MEXICO

GOLF COURSE ARCHITECT: MARK HOLLINGER, ASGCA, FASLA

the situation Mark E. Hollinger, ASGCA, FASLA of JMP Golf Design Group, was hired to design and develop a new residential golf community on the outskirts of Guadalajara, Mexico, on 300 acres of land. The site was severely degraded and heavily eroded, with a city road running directly through the middle. Further, it had been used for over 40 years as a city dump for building debris and other types of medical waste and garbage.

While the terrain was manageable with fine views of the city, there existed almost no vegetation due to the poor silt-like existing soils, which were unable to hold moisture to support vegetation. The only source of water was a seasonal, heavily-polluted stream running along a boundary. The bisecting roadway produced a lot of noise pollution.

the approach The tight piece of land, the amount of residential the client was expecting, and the issues listed above made this project daunting. Each issue at hand influenced the other in a negative way and the team was forced to tackle each problem one-by-one in order to find a successful solution.

the solutions The site areas of garbage, debris and decaying trash were the most pressing to resolve. The team immediately initiated a massive trash excavation, removal and separation production program. For over a year, garbage was excavated, organic materials were separated from inorganic, and the inorganic debris was hauled offsite. The organic material was mixed in with the poor existing soils and created a usable soil mix which could support plant life.

Roadway noise pollution was solved by building a series of tall sound walls and utilized crossing roadway underpasses for vehicular and golf access. This, along with screen landscaping plantings, worked quite well to make the roadway disappear.

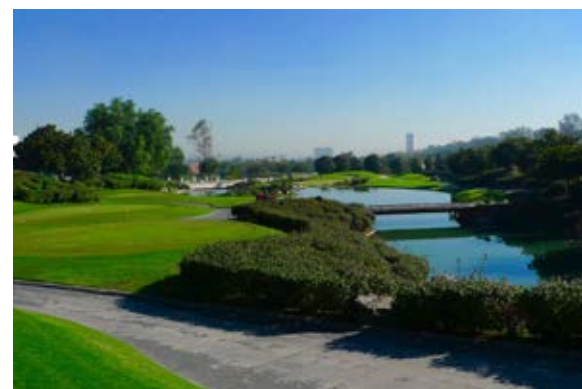
The problem of site features was solved with dramatic golf design highlighting some existing terrain where possible and creating compelling water features.

Finally, the land plan carefully integrated the golf routing with surrounding residential development areas and utilized the terrain to provide wonderful golf views from every development parcel.

The issue of water was the most challenging to overcome and it dictated the character of the golf and entire landscape environment. Water retention capacity needed to increase at the site, along with the purity of the highly polluted water available; overall, water use efficiency needed to improve. First, a state-of-the-art wastewater treatment facility was installed which purified the water that flowed nearby. Also, turf grasses and landscape materials were installed which did not require as much water and could tolerate the increased salts found in treated effluent irrigation. Finally, an intricate subsurface drainage and storage system was designed, thereby allowing gathering, storing and reuse of the water which entered our site. After tying all these systems together, water supply was improved enough to meet irrigation requirements for the golf course and common areas.



the takeaways With current advanced golf design and construction technology, architects are able to design and build world class golf courses on sites where seemingly insurmountable conditions exist. Las Lomas Golf Club now has more than 800 club members, and, importantly, the environment which the golf course helped create for this urban residential development has allowed this project to become one of the most sought after addresses in all of Guadalajara. Today, hundreds of residential homes encircle the golf course and many new mid-rises are being constructed to enjoy the view of this naturally lovely green golf environment. Sometimes a golf course can be a very good thing indeed!



BENTWATER YACHT & COUNTRY CLUB

MONTGOMERY, TEXAS

GOLF COURSE ARCHITECTS: JAY MORRISH, ASGCA & TOM WEISKOPF, SCOTT MILLER, JEFFREY D. BLUME, ASGCA

the situation Having successfully completed more than a dozen golf course master-planned developments in southeast Texas, Houston-area developer and philanthropist J.B. “Bruce” Belin Jr. embarked on the creation of Bentwater Yacht & County Club, the centerpiece of a 1,500 acre development on Lake Conroe just north of Houston. But how to continue to develop new communities with the tools to thrive?

the approach Belin, who developed Bentwater in the mid-1980s, created most of his communities in a bundled approach, meaning that every customer who bought property in the development had to be a member of the club in some capacity. Although popular today, Belin’s approach was very innovative when he first used it in the 1960s. His model required a certain amount of acreage to accommodate enough homesites to support the club amenities, as well as enough golf course frontage to amenitize the higher end residential offerings. Typically, Belin’s properties provided affordable homes and amenities to their residents due to the sheer number of members (all of whom had to be property owners).

The development’s first golf course was designed by Jay Morrish, ASGCA and Tom Weiskopf; this initial offering included a tennis and swimming complex, and a yacht club. The second golf course was designed by Scott Miller in the early 1990s as additional



homesite acreage was brought to market. In 2004, just after a fitness facility was added to Bentwater, Belin hired Jeffrey D. Blume, ASGCA to design the final, most exclusive golf course, Grand Pines Golf Club. This layout is surrounded by the Sam Houston National Forest and Lake Conroe, ensuring no housing will ever border the course.

the solutions The genius of Belin’s approach is that it requires the stakeholders in a community to support the club amenities both through dues and patronage of the club facilities. At Bentwater, the creation of three new golf courses over a 15-to-20-year period kept the community in the limelight to support the sale of over 3,000 homesites.

Another aspect of Belin’s model that addresses the long-term viability of the club amenities

is that the dues structure is permanent. The fact that all property owners are required to participate gives Bentwater the room to keep individual cost down below the typical market value of similar quality competitors. In addition, as properties resale within the community, transfer fees are collected to help support the capital needs of the club amenities.

the takeaways Belin’s bundled approach to his communities has created multiple healthy, vibrant clubs in the Houston marketplace, and ensured their futures for generations to come. Building in support through mandatory homeowner participation not only provides the club amenities with a guaranteed source of revenue, but also protects and enhances property owners’ home values through well-maintained and manicured facilities. Each of the three golf courses, along with other recreational amenities, has undergone significant renovation over the last four years at no cost to the membership.





SHANGRI-LA GOLF

MONKEY ISLAND, OKLAHOMA

GOLF COURSE ARCHITECT: TOM CLARK, ASGCA

the situation Shangri-La Resort was once a proud complex consisting of 36 holes of golf, a modest clubhouse, a marina and a small housing component. It had fallen on hard times and was down to just 87 members when an entrepreneur, Eddy Gibbs, entered the picture in the beginning of this decade.

the approach A master plan was quickly developed, downsizing the golf to 27 holes, identifying a new clubhouse location, and finding room for expanded dwelling units. The first phase of construction on the golf course included a complete rebuild of nine holes and the practice facility. The resort sits on the shores of Grand Lake, and some of the holes brought the lake into play, while the new clubhouse was constructed with a sweeping panorama of the golf course, ponds and main lake. The golf course architect was part of Dale Forrest's United Golf design/build team.

the solutions The plan launched with remodeling on the championship 18 where most of the green bunkers were redone to spruce up the curb appeal of the course. The next big push was to rebuild the next nine, which was a combination of holes that would eventually become the Heritage and Legends courses, while keeping 18 holes in play at all times. The big challenge was fitting the new green complexes in and around the already completed bunkering and having any new

green and fairway bunkering consistent with the style already adapted.

In order to expedite the process, the tees, fairway and bunker surrounds were all solid sodded and the greens seeded to bent grass. There was some minor rerouting and lengthening and shortening of holes as well as some extensive tree work to open up visibility throughout the course and to provide sunlight and air circulation. A series of water features were developed throughout the course, which provided a welcome respite from those hot Oklahoma summers.

The marina complex was updated and expanded and golfers started pouring in via boat from all over the lake. Phase 3 saw the final holes completed and then, upon opening, separated into the Heritage and Legends 9s. The final phase of work on the course was the conversion of all the bunkers to Better Billy Bunker, which happened concurrently with the construction of a new 120-room hotel and conference center. Nearly 30 new units were developed and occupied, with room left for some "stay and play" units surrounding two of the 9-hole layout finishing holes.



the takeaways The membership has grown to approximately 500. Due to increased outside play from the hotel and around the lake, ground is being broken late Winter 2020 for an 18-hole par 3 course with a WWII theme preliminarily called *The Battlefield*, and plans have been drawn for a 9-hole championship addition.



VESTAVIA COUNTY CLUB

BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

GOLF COURSE ARCHITECT: LESTER GEORGE, ASGCA

the situation Vestavia Country Club (VCC) was a club with high potential, due to its location within the supporting community, as well as one of the most beautiful and unique sites in the Southeast. But the members complained about several issues. First, an aging infrastructure that included a 27-year-old irrigation system, poor drainage, and insufficient airflow made consistent conditioning impossible. Second, the design of the course lacked strategy and variety, with regard to distance and options. Finally, the routing caused several golfer safety issues that put the Club at risk. Due to these challenges, VCC was not meeting the needs of its members, and was not attracting enough young, potential members.

the approach The Club decided to pursue a renovation project. The Architect, Lester George, ASGCA, created a Master Plan after leading focus groups at VCC which included Department Heads and all levels of players. The Club spent three years developing the Master Plan and educating its members with small group meetings and bigger Town Hall meetings. George spent significant time on-site meeting with members and staff to formulate the Master Plan, which was eventually presented to the Membership for approval.

the solutions The Club adopted the Master Plan, and VCC started implementation by installing a state-of-the-art irrigation system that used HDPE pipe to irrigate the entire property. It also created new drainage patterns

that would capture water to supplement the lone irrigation lake, as well as move water away from poorly draining areas. New grass varieties, including a drought-tolerant Zoysia and a warm climate-specific Bentgrass, were used to help combat the sometimes-harsh Alabama weather while also being able to thrive on a site that was mostly rock. Classic design elements--such as a Redan, Principal's Nose, Short and a Biarritz style green--were used for their timeless strategy. These elements, along with significant tree-clearing to take advantage of Appalachian Mountain views, provided marketplace differentiation. VCC also created an outdoor event patio for members to use for social gatherings, private events, weddings, and various club functions - complete with a fireplace, common area, lawn, and recirculating water feature to separate the patio from the course.

the takeaways VCC has had 130 new member families (including 179 children) join since January, 2017. The average age of a new member is 37. Their junior golf program has increased from 45 participants to 115 from 2018 to 2019, and the youth and vibrancy of Vestavia Country Club is at an all-time high. The significantly-improved course garnered a Design Excellence Award from the ASGCA and was on Golf Digest's Best New Course list in 2018. Most importantly, the new course has sparked a renewed interest in golf from the membership, as well as an uptick in new members joining. During the course shutdown, the Club did not lower the initiation fee but restructured the initiation fee deferred payment plan, with a more appealing down payment and extended deferred payments.



SHADOW HILLS GOLF CLUB - SOUTH COURSE

INDIO, CALIFORNIA

GOLF COURSE ARCHITECT: BRIAN COSTELLO, ASGCA, JMP GOLF DESIGN GROUP



the situation Sun City Shadow Hills is a 55+ active adult community located in Coachella Valley next to Palm Springs, California. The development features two golf courses with separate clubhouses amongst the 3,450 homes. This community amenity is well-used by homeowners, and management tracks maintenance and use in order to retain residents. Some issues flagged for attention were bunker playability, tree management and an outdated practice facility. JMP Golf Design Group was retained to generate a Long Range Renovation Master Plan for the Shadow Hills Golf Club - South Course which is an 18-hole, par 71, 6,789-yard parkland style layout originally designed by Schmidt-Curley.

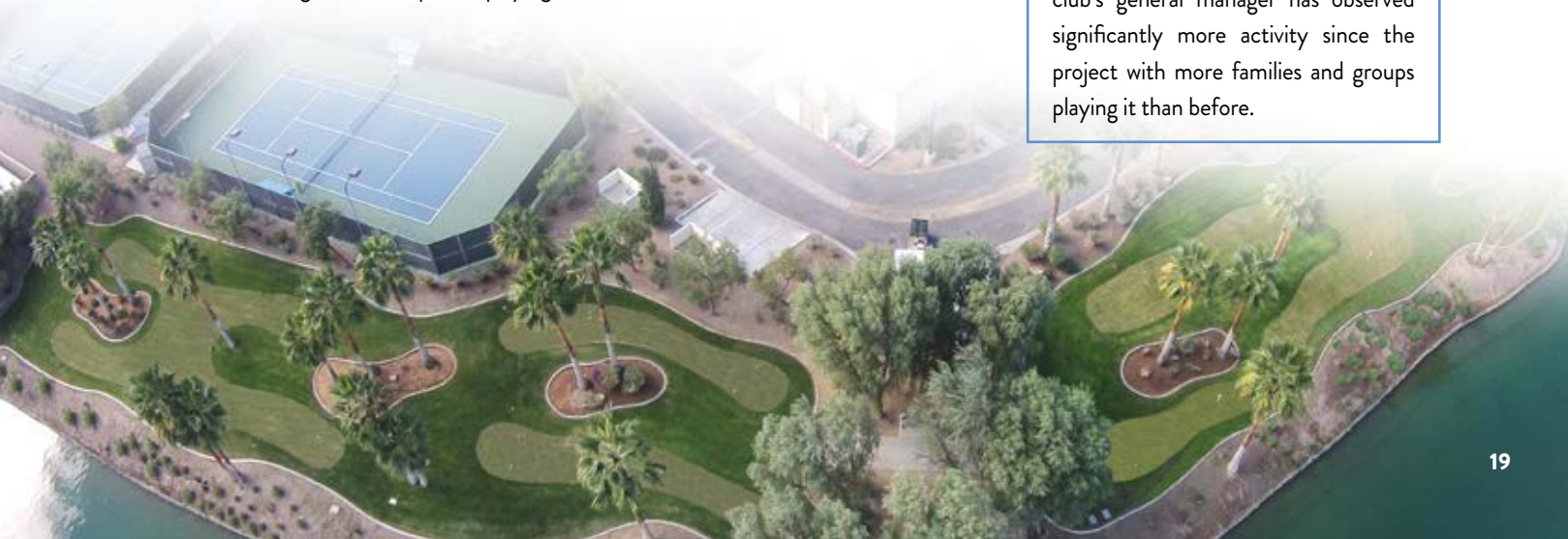
the approach The Renovation Master Plan would provide an overall assessment of the golf course, practice facility and 18-hole putting course located at the community center Montecito Clubhouse. In addition, the report would also identify areas throughout the golf course to reduce turf grass.

the solutions The Final Renovation Master Plan was approved by the Board of Directors with several key items identified for inclusion with the Phase 1 Implementation portion of the work. The Bunker Restoration would address concerns of playability, consistency, wash-outs and to clean-up the edges to restore original conditions. The Practice Facility would be reconfigured to include a 70 percent larger practice putting green and no net loss on the original 73,000 square-foot tee. The 18-hole Putting Course would be redesigned to improve playing



conditions by regrading the corridors and immediate surrounds to significantly reduce the side slope and introduce bumper mounds and landforms to encourage creative and alternative lines of play. In addition, the removal of 19 acacia trees would improve shade issues and highlight the remaining signature groves of palm trees. The putting course would also benefit from lighting to offer a pleasant evening activity next to the community clubhouse.

the takeaways Implementation of the Renovation Master Plan resulted in an enhanced golf experience for the community and regional market. The Bunker Restoration component improved on playability, maintainability and visual presentation. The Practice Facility improvements, in particular the much larger practice putting green, added a dramatic introduction to players and guests as it is their first view of the course when walking from the Pro Shop. The Montecito 18-Hole Putting Course is now an amenity that the community is proud of and provides separation from other communities in the Coachella Valley. This has increased and extended use of the facility and can be leveraged as a retention tool and in the sales of homes. In addition, the club's general manager has observed significantly more activity since the project with more families and groups playing it than before.



COURSE OF THE FUTURE

Golf course architects are dedicated to helping clients apply trends in design to get the most out of their facilities. To demonstrate the kind of forward thinking going on in golf course architecture, ASGCA launched the “Course of the Future.”

This interactive feature - brainchild of Forrest Richardson, ASGCA - on the ASGCA website (www.asgca.org) demonstrates, through video and pictures, multiple ways facilities are saving water, appealing to families, reinventing the game and saving money, among other innovations.

Here’s a screen shot of the Course of the Future. Visit the page soon to see what ASGCA members are doing to reimagine how golf is managed and played, with an eye toward keeping the game healthy and profitable.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The American Society of Golf Course Architects (ASGCA) and the ASGCA Foundation would like to thank the following ASGCA members and board members for their assistance in research and production of this book:

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 Bentwater Yacht & Country Club: pp. 2, 16
 Brian Costello/Del Webb Sun City Shadow Hills: p. 19
 Mark Hollinger, ASGCA: p. 15
 Dave Sansom: cover, pp. 3, 4, 9, 11, 13, 14
 Evan Schiller: p. 8, 18

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For more background on golf development, please visit the following websites:

American Society of Golf Course Architects	www.asgca.org
Club Managers Association of America	www.cmaa.org
Golf Course Builders Association of America	www.gcbaa.org
Golf Course Superintendents Association of America	www.gcsaa.org
National Golf Foundation	www.ngf.org
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ABOUT THE ASGCA FOUNDATION

The ASGCA Foundation was formed in 1973 as the non-profit educational and charitable arm of the American Society of Golf Course Architects. Its mission upon founding was to help fund the research of golf course design and to disseminate that information to those interested in designating green space for recreational purposes. Early Foundation projects included the publication of books on the topics of developing practical golf facilities and environmental development of golf.

Today's ASGCA Foundation has expanded its focus to the broader support of the success of golf facilities. Recent projects have included a symposium on forward tees and the publication of books on golf and its commitment to the stewardship of water.

The Foundation also supports the future of golf course architecture by funding scholarship programs for high school students (with The First Tee) and for college students who hope to practice golf course architecture (with Wadsworth Golf Charities).

The ASGCA Foundation is overseen by a nine-member board of directors who administers programs to fit the mission of supporting of the success of golf facilities. To learn more about Foundation activities, or to donate to this 501(c)(3), visit www.asgcafoundation.org.



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