

Designing Projects With Perfect Pitch

*Coordinating course and clubhouse architecture can
produce harmonious designs* / ALEX CARTER



Attention, developers. If you're tuning up for a new project, remember this: Architecture has often been defined as frozen music. That's because, in both disciplines, the various elements must blend into a harmonious whole, as one sour note can throw an entire production off key.

Take golf course and clubhouse design, for example. The club may include a diverse mix of functions, including retail space, restaurants, offices and other public and private areas. It must operate smoothly, offer an inviting ambience and

merge both functionally and aesthetically with the golf course. To make all this happen, the golf course architect and clubhouse architect should play in tune from day one.

In their rush to complete the course, however, many developers give the golf course top billing and let the clubhouse play second fiddle. Once the course is well under way, they select a clubhouse architect and present him with a site on which to work. Unfortunately, the site is often too restrictive, the views uninspiring, and the functional requirements needed for a smooth golf operation

difficult to accommodate. This can result in a discordant design.

Hiring both the course and clubhouse architects at the beginning allows each to maximize the natural advantages of the site, pre-empt expensive problems and create compositions in which the course and the clubhouse complement each other.

"Ideally, the clubhouse firm should be hired early enough to help select the club site," says Ron Garl, a golf course architect. "This affects so many things downstream that it's really important to have them involved from the very beginning."

Architectural Coordination Improves Function

First, there are the practical considerations. Design coordination allows the clubhouse architect to tell the course architect how much space will be required for such issues as parking, carts, staging areas, service entrances, and trash removal and circulation. This allows a smooth operational tempo to be built *into* the project.

Coordination can also cut construction costs, particularly those related to site work. With a little forethought, the team can combine the course and club site work. If, for instance, the club site needs to be elevated to accommodate galleries for

viewing tournaments, the architects can inform the course contractor early in the process. The builders can then use soil excavated during course construction on the clubhouse.

If the project is a residential community, the architects can position the course and club to enhance the value of the surrounding land, and they can deliver more creative designs. Belfair Plantation, a golf community located near Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, was designed in this fashion. The project includes 750 home sites, a 30-acre learning center, a large activity center, two 18-hole courses and a 25,000-square-foot clubhouse.

The course and clubhouse architects began by developing a site plan to coordinate work. As a result, they were able to position the elevated clubhouse at the closed end of a U-shaped area flanked with two rows of guest cottages. The club and cottages overlook a

layered vista that moves from terraced lawns to the course to views of the marshes and Colleton River beyond.

"By having the architects work as a team, we were able to re-position the clubhouse and create six additional cottages, with all taking full advantage of the water views," says development partner Ed Blakely.

By fostering a team mentality, the developers achieved a holistic design that has outpaced projected sales and garnered rave reviews from critics.

Coordinated Planning Enhances Form

Then, there are aesthetic considerations. Golf clubs have to be functional, yet elegant and inviting. And they should maximize views of the course so that it becomes something of an outdoor stage for guests within the club.

Working together, the architects can plan a more lyrical visual approach.

They can also position the clubhouse so that it looks as if it's situated in the only possible place it could be and appears as natural as the trees around it.

A team mentality allows the architects to fine-tune other aesthetic features as well. They can make sure the clubhouse captures views of the 18th green and the first tee, position the restaurants so that the evening sun doesn't shine into the eyes of diners, and plan the many details that make the difference between an ordinary golf experience and one that deserves a standing ovation.

So let your architects work as a team. That way, they can pre-empt expensive problems and design harmonious courses and clubhouses that keep players coming back for repeat performances. 🏌️

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