

HIDDEN VALLEY GOLF COURSE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR SUSTAINABILITY



HVGC Working Group:

Josh Bricker	Parks and Recreation Board
Brian Canavan	Citizen
Scott Fanok	Citizen
Lucas Ratliff	Citizen
Ed Schlote	Citizen
Cindy Sheets	Citizen
Scott Zagorski	Citizen

Parks and Natural Resource Department:

Khris Kohler	Golf Course Superintendent
Linda Mathews	City Staff Liaison
Ted Miller	Parks & Natural Resource Director

The Challenge

The Hidden Valley Golf Course has been operating at a revenue loss for the past several years. With the current financial trend the golf course will not be able to sustain itself and will deplete the fund balance within 3-4 years. The golf course has always been marketed as a public facility that serves the community with a challenging par 3 course with affordable fees.

The four challenges intended to be addressed through this strategic planning effort are:

1. Seeking operating efficiencies to reduce operating expenditures, where possible; while maintaining current course standards.
2. Encouraging increased golf play, thereby increasing revenue.
3. Establishing an ongoing strategy for funding necessary capital repair and repair projects.
4. Increasing revenue per round to address increasing operating costs due to inflation while providing a cost value to our citizens.

Background

The Hidden Valley Golf Course is operated by the Parks and Natural Resource Department as an enterprise fund revenues generated from fees support operations and capital repair and replacement projects. The course is a 1,647 yard, par 28, 9 hole course that opened in 1968. The City began operating the course in 1975.

The golf course revenue began declining in 2004 and typically loses about \$15,000 a year which has been covered by the fund balance. The City has initiated several steps including cutting operating costs, clubhouse remodeling (2016) and personnel changes. At the end of 2016, it was decided to form a working group comprised of local citizens and city staff with an interest in improving the golf course to increase revenue. Two categories were identified where improvement could be done that would be beneficial to revenues Marketing and Operations.

Marketing

Goal 1. Adding a golf specific social media component to market and inform the public- utilizing the city Facebook page and establishing a Twitter account to distribute or gather information.

Objective 1: Inform the public about weather/maintenance/special event related closings or limited hours (voicemail will still be utilized on land line).

Objective 2: Advertising course specials or special events

Action Items:

- Social media accounts will be used to advertise.

Objective 3: Gather public feedback on improvements

Action Items:

- Golf Course Superintendent will notify Community Affairs Office of any updates.
- Plan special events and advertise on social media.

Goal 2. Promote outings, leagues and tournaments to engage the community.

Objective 1: Reorganize the Little Brown Jug tournament to restore as a valued community event.

Action Items:

- City Staff/Working Group to begin search for new event organizer and supporter.
- If event is continued:
 - establish date that would allow for maximum participants (prior to school golf season).
 - involve local schools in promoting.

Objective 2: Advertise to local businesses in an effort to promote league play.

Action Items:

- offer special discounts to businesses that would align with wellness and employee benefit packages.

Objective 3: Introduce trending golf games that attract family oriented events.

Action Items:

- Facilitate golf activities such as “Games on the Range” where range ball targets are added to the driving range such as Golf-Tic Tac Toe, 21, Climb the Ladder, and H.O.R.S.E. or create your own point scoring game with the targets. Promote food (possibly catered) and beverage menu.
- Introduce Big Hole Golf where the cup increases from 4.25” to 8”. This would allow for faster play and open up the game to a wider audience.

Goal 3. Engage the community.

Objective 1: Market to millennial generation.

Action Items:

- Millennial generation values time so promote opportunities at HVGC to complete a round of golf in 1 and ½ hours or less.
- Promote a family night golf, where kids are welcome to complete rounds with parents.
- Promotions should focus on evenings and weekends.
- Promotions through Facebook (City’s page), Instagram, Twitter and YMCA.

Objective 2: Market to senior generation.

Action Items:

- Offer discounts for non-peak times to try and fill playing voids.
- Promote access to the course working with adjacent senior communities.

Objective 3: Integrate the course into the fabric of the surrounding communities

Action Items:

- Open the course to additional recreational activities such as a multi-use trail that aligns with Delaware Run allowing the non-golfing public to experience and appreciate the beauty of the course.

Objective 4: Expand the marketing database.

Action Items:

- Install a point of sale system that tracks all the golfers that use the course so that events and specials can be communicated. Improve database for accurate tracking of clientele to identify and categorize.
- Train staff to properly use bar code system to increase accuracy of sales system.
- Reach out to different clientele and open new markets such as students from the high schools, middle schools and Ohio Wesleyan University
- Gauge interest in The First Tee program and evaluate.
- Promote a “Factory” League that targets the 1st shift workforce, league play would start at 3:30 would fill the typically slow periods.

Objective 5: User Surveys.

Action Items:

- Utilize Twitter to gather public feedback on how to improve the course.
- Accept suggestions through clubhouse staff.
- Monitor social media to gain feedback on new or existing events.
- Update website to allow comments.

Operations

Goal 1. Review revenue sources and look for opportunities to increase revenues.

Objective 1: Review course rates and suggest increases/decreases.

Action Items

- Strive to stay 10% under the regional average.
- Adjust the course rates (recommended by Parks & Recreation Board-1.17.17).

Objective 2: Introduce alcohol sales.

Action Items:

- Alcohol introduction schedule:
 - Will require a 10-12 weeks for permit processing.
 - Initial investment of \$3,500-\$4,500 for ice maker, refrigerator and coolers.
 - Ideally a decision by beginning of March would allow lead time for sales in May.
- First year will require pay down of startup costs.
- Regularly train staff that serve alcohol on protocols to minimize problems.
- On site consumption only

Objective 3: City staff to review golf course staffing options to maximize efficiency.

Action Items:

- Golf Course Superintendent may need to dedicate time in clubhouse.
- Utilize seasonal staff when possible, to reduce operational fees.

- Introduce volunteer staff to capture lost sales and move play along during busy periods

Objective 4: Review sponsorships to cover costs of materials and increase revenues.

Action Items:

- Look into sponsors on scorecards.
- Look into hole sponsors.

Goal 2. Identify a Capital Improvement Plan funding repair and replacement of facility infrastructure.

Objective 1: Develop a Capital Improvement Plan that analyzes the infrastructure and associated life cycle costs.

Action Items:

- Provide cost estimates and estimated life cycle for capital improvements, examples of repair and replacement projects include:
 - Ongoing cart path repair and replacement costs.
 - Irrigation system- replace faulty heads.
 - Stream bank restoration.
 - Equipment replacement.

Implementation Plan

FY 2017

- Parks and Natural Resource Staff to establish Instagram and Twitter accounts. Account will be managed by staff and inform public about HVGC and Parks and Natural Resource Department. Accounts to be linked to City’s Twitter and Facebook account so updates can be relayed.
 - No Cost
- Implement Alcohol Sales.

Permit	-\$376.00	
Ice Maker	-\$1,650.00	
Beverage Refrigerator	-\$2,000.00	
Estimated Revenue	\$10,000.00	(estimate based on \$300 revenue per week and research from other courses)
Estimated Increase	\$6,000.00	(note first year profits will be offset by initial equipment purchases)
- Annual golf course fee review (completed).

Regular Rounds	\$2,500.00	(\$0.50 increase)
Student	-\$750.00	(\$1.00 decrease)
Estimated increase	\$1,750.00	
- Review staffing needs and determine if there are any areas where staffing can be more efficient.

Volunteer staff	No Cost	(allow golfing privileges based on volunteer hours-course rangers)
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- Promote a “Games on the Range” event in early June. Based on popularity, determine if a series events should be promoted in July/August.

Estimated Increase	\$1,500.00
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