

Golf Communities: To Be (Bundled) or Not to Be (Bundled)



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It's Not the Only Question

By Ginny Cooper

It's not a simple "yes" or "no" question — whether or not to offer bundled golf in new communities. Good for the developer, yes, in terms of raising capital with which to build. But with recent polls indicating that the next generation of retirees is looking for a lifestyle that includes an emphasis on fitness, environmentally focused amenities like walking trails, bike paths and plenty of connectivity, golf is not the powerhouse draw it once was.

Golf, however, long has been a staple on the Florida real estate scene and how to repackage the older courses and clubs to appeal to a younger buyer has some communities upgrading amenities, offering creative

membership alternatives and utilizing the Web for marketing and communications.

The Winning Ways of Wyndemere

Wyndemere was recently named "Best Community" as well as "Best Private Country Club" in the Naples Daily News Reader's Choice Awards. It was the first time in the history of the Choice Award Program that Collier County residents voted both awards to a single community. At 93%, Wyndemere resident ratings for overall club satisfaction and perceived membership value are among the highest ever seen for a gated community club according to the McMahon Group, a full-service consulting

firm that provides facility and strategic planning to private clubs worldwide.

It's easy to see why when you visit the club's Web site at www.wyndemere.com. Every facet of life at Wyndemere is thoroughly addressed and includes a section of questions to consider before investing in a golf course community which discusses the pros and cons of various golf membership types. Up-to-the-minute weekly Open House information is easily available in downloadable PDF documents. Fitness calendars, spa services, staff biographies, membership forms and newsletters, are all online.

Wyndemere Director of Membership Cheri Knapp, CMP has done a tremendous amount of work on the club's Web site in response to the baby-boomer demographic. "They are accustomed to shopping online," explains Knapp, "so all of our homes for sale are hosted under a dedicated tab."

Knapp has been with the community for 21 years and has developed keen insight into what continues to make Wyndemere a sought-after destination. "Financial soundness is so important to buyers these days; they read the papers and are making their choices very carefully!" In 2009 the club renovated all 27 holes of the golf course with new greens and bunkers and repaved all 7 miles of the community's roadways. Both projects were completed without an assessment and the club still has money in the bank.

Sound financial management isn't the only drawing card for recession-weary buyers. "Quality of life is what it's all about," says Knapp. "We are always looking ahead, never resting in our mission to provide what our members want." In 2005 it was a new 6,200-square-foot lakeside fitness center complete with locker rooms, saunas, steam rooms and a full-service spa. A staff of 10 instructors and trainers offer classes from aerobics to zumba, as well as personal training. "And we have partnered with Naples Community Hospital to provide onsite physical therapy three days a week in our facility," she said. There is an active Weight Watchers group in the community and the club's chef has incorporated menu items that fit the program's guidelines. "When you have a mandatory membership requirement (golf or social), such as ours, you

really pay attention to what the members want," Knapp said. It's worked for Wyndemere.

The Best of Both Worlds at Quail Creek

"Quail Creek Country Club offers the best of both worlds for country club members because its members can, and often do, live anywhere they choose while enjoying the privileges of being a member of an active, private, premier country club," explains Joan Bilson, the Club's membership director. "Quail Creek is unique in Naples in that 70% of its members do not live in the community surrounding the Club (Quail Creek Estates). Since off-campus members constitute the majority, they have representation equal to the homeowners on the Board of Directors." Although membership in the Club is not mandatory for the residents of Quail Creek



Estates, Bilson says the vast majority of homeowners do elect to become Club members and enjoy the convenience of driving their private golf carts to and from the Club. Quail Creek Estates is a small community of 292 single-family homes (no condominiums) situated on large, private lots.

The first club to establish itself in North Naples, Quail Creek is debt-free and has been member-owned for 25 years. Bilson says that membership has always included active younger members. "The very popular holiday and summer tennis/golf programs for children have been features of the Club for many years. The club's large pool is open to all members, their families and guests. Children are welcomed in the clubhouse and those under 12 dine at buffets for half-price or choose selections from a menu designed especially for them."

It is, however, the introduction in 2009 of a category of membership geared toward a younger demographic that is a special feature at Quail Creek. The Associate Golf (AG) membership is available for those between the ages of 21 and 45. AG members enjoy all of the privileges of a full golf membership (except voting) at a reduced joining fee and with a generous four-year payment plan. The

annual dues are discounted from the Class A golf membership dues and monthly capital maintenance dues are slightly less as well. The AG membership does not provide for any equity. At age 46 the member must convert to a Class A membership, although they may convert at any time prior to reaching age 46. They then pay the difference between the amount already paid and the prevailing rate for a Class A golf membership with equity.

Quail Creek's membership is capped at 580 for the 36-hole club. By design, it is one of the lowest member-per-hole ratios in the Naples area, according to their website at www.quailcreekcc.com.

The tennis facility has 13 Har-Tru courts and boasts a very active program run by a pro who is a Master Professional, one of the few with this distinction in the country. High-quality fitness training and equipment and luxury spa services add value to the Social Membership.

Kensington Expands on the Traditional

The traditional trilogy of Equity Golf, Equity Sports and Equity Social Memberships at Kensington Country Club is now augmented by a non-proprietary, non-transferable Associate Golf Membership, the number of which is limited to 350 minus the number of Equity Golf Memberships outstanding. Kensington has also introduced a membership targeted to the under-45-year-old age bracket, called the Intermediate Golf Membership.

Opening the Gate to the Vineyards

Vineyards Country Club is for the first time offering full golf memberships to non-residents for a limited-time offer of only \$35,000. The debt-free country club can provide a guarantee of no assessments ever. Membership in the Vineyards offers 36 holes of championship golf, 12 Har-Tru tennis courts, and an award-winning fitness center.

Legendary Lifestyle Beyond the Green

Southwest Florida arguably has the largest per capita number of golf holes in the US. But the region is known for so much more than simply great golf. The legendary lifestyle beyond the green is making inroads, and the golf course communities and clubs embracing it will benefit.

