



**Effective Golf Course Systems**

**Prairie View Golf Course  
Operations Analysis**

**Prepared for the City of Worthington**

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# Introduction

## **Introduction**

The city of Worthington contracted effective Golf Course Systems to study the Prairie View Golf Course. A course owned and operated by the city. The course had become more dependant on municipal funds than was desired. In theory, the course was chartered and built to support its operating costs.

The past several years has seen golf participation drop considerably. Three major factors precipitated this downturn: the events of 9/11 and the extreme downturn in the economy over the past 2 years and overbuilding courses over last 15 years

This report is intended to look at the present operations and suggest possible solutions to help increase revenues and reduce expenses. In addition, a comparative analysis of the Worthington Country Club operation as it might interface with Prairie View's mission. To observe operations and make recommendations that could or would improve the financial situation at Prairie View. Finally, to provide the city with possible options to move forward.

Effective Golf Course Systems (EGCS) is thankful for the opportunity to work with the Worthington City Administration, the Board and staff of the Worthington Country Club (WCC), Prairie View's staff and other members of the community at large. We sincerely hope this information assists you in your decision process.

If we may be of further assistance, please contact us.

John Valliere, President EGCS  
Roger Harrold, PhD and EGCS Principal

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## Industry Trends

Golf is a wonderful recreational pastime. Some unique values that are often overlooked are the wonderful social and moral lessons that are intrinsic in the game. Basic values observed are those of honesty, fairness and social interaction. Most other sports and athletics do not afford these opportunities. Persons of various skills and abilities can play together within golf's handicap system. Intergenerational play is also a large plus for this activity. Golf is also relatively affordable with over 80% of it played on public golf courses.

### **Global Trends**

Globally, golf is still growing with its roots in the country of Scotland over 600 years ago. Both Europe and Asia continue to build courses at a near record pace. One only needs to look at the top 20 players on the Ladies Professional Golf Association Tour to observe that 10 of these 20 are South Koreans.

The male players in the game are now such an international collection that US dominance has been replaced by fierce competition from all corners of the globe.

### **National Trends**

On a national basis, the Tiger Woods phenomenon continues to attract the youth. The National Golf Foundation (NGF) lists some 16,000 golf courses across the country with approximately 7,500 of them being 9-hole layouts. The NGF would be the first to admit that it missed the mark back in the 1980's when it established the need to open a golf course each day, for a decade. To meet growing demands, the nation proceeded to meet that challenge and in the late 1990's actually surpassed the goal by opening over 400 courses in one year. This overbuilding was aided by courses being built for the wrong reasons. Real estate sales became the driving force before need. Many of these ventures are now failing and also affecting courses that were fulfilling a bona fide recreational need.

The rise of many other types of athletics for youth has also affected golf nationally. Soccer and lacrosse, for example, are gaining in popularity across the country. The advent of electronic games and personal electronic devices also detract from athletics as a whole.

There is a trend that as traditional mature golfers drop out of the game, the number of youth recruited to replenish these same golfers is not being pursued. Other athletic activities seem to have recruiting in place through coaches and school traditions for such sports as football, baseball and basketball.

Still the number of companies that promote and support golf has never been greater. In these tough economic times the widespread sponsorship of golf, though somewhat weakened, continues to advocate for charity and business.

The summation on national golf is that it is cyclical. As the numbers of courses that have been overbuilt in some metropolitan areas go out of business, it will bring supply and demand back into balance. As baby boomers retire we will see a slight increase in rounds played. We must also move through this troubled economy. The private course is most at risk in this difficult economic time as private club memberships drop sharply. Many of these "core" golfers will not stop playing the game; they will just migrate to a good public facility. The upper bracket of private clubs will be least affected. The middle bracket will lose large numbers of members and will need to reduce membership amenities drastically. The lower bracket private clubs will need to take steps to survive. Of this last category a change in charter may be necessary. For example becoming semi-private to encourage outside play. Possibly moving from a non-profit 501-C(3) to a taxable public facility.

Other national trends will see the increase of golf management companies, especially in southern climates and in inefficient public facilities. In some municipal operations, union wage structure motivates cities to contract out golf and F & B operations. Three major trends will eventually emerge. (1) A

reduction of total golf facilities (2) a slow but gradual increase in total number of rounds played, but not necessarily an equal amount of growth in the total numbers of golfers (3) the cost of public golf will stabilize somewhat, meaning that discounting of golf will decrease and expensive or high end daily fee golf will become less prevalent.

## **State Trends**

The state of golf in Minnesota is healthy given the difficult economic times. For this calendar year through August we have seen a year over year increase of 7% according to the National Golf Foundation (NGF). Some of this is attributable to favorable weather. The NGF organization contacts over 4000 reporting courses across the country in tracking rounds played and other golf data each month. Weather is always a large factor in total rounds played. A late spring or heavy daytime rains are most detrimental.

Minnesota has over 500 golf courses. They are a mix of types: private, semi-private and daily fee or public. To define the courses so that when ECGS refers to a particular classification, we offer this:

Private – a membership only club. Not open for public play.

Semi-private – mostly private but will permit “out of town” play and local on occasional basis.

Daily fee – a public course, which may be privately or publicly owned. It may also have corporate ownership. We also have one other sub set of this public facility and that is a resort course.

These cater primarily to its guests but also may be open to the public at large. Minnesota has a number of nationally recognized destination golf resorts. Grand View and Madden’s are two of the more prominent examples.

In an economic report produced by SRI International Corp., of Alexandria, VA to and for the Minnesota Golf Association (MGA) in 2007, the findings were as follows: Minnesota’s direct golf economy is \$1.2 billion. When total economic impact of these



golf-related activities is considered (such as golf facility operations, capital investment, hospitality, tourism and charitable events) Minnesota's golf industry generates approximately \$2.4 billion in direct, indirect and induced economic output. \$776.7 million of wage income with 34,650 jobs created. "While the study points out how broadly golf impacts the Minnesota economy, it also highlights the importance that every golf course plays in its local community." Says Tom Ryan, MGA Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer.

Golf related tourism is about \$360 million. Other facts from the report: *Minnesota Retailer's Net Revenue on Consumer Purchases in Golf Supplies for 2006*

Golf Equipment	\$40.4 M
Golf Apparel	\$7.1 M
Golf Media	\$0.3 M
Total	\$47.8 M

The state has a wonderful reputation for it's varied venue for old "ship of the line" private clubs such as Interlachen, Summerset and Town and Country Club with 100-year-old histories. Following close behind are numerous public courses such as Keller (St. Paul) and Frances Gross, with over 80 years of providing recreation to their communities. Another prominent course is Hazeltine. Hazeltine has hosted both the Men's and Women's U.S. Open Championship. This year it hosted the PGA Championship.

Rural Minnesota is dotted with beautiful 9 and 18-hole jewels where amateur rivalries such as the Pine and Palm in Alexandria and the Resorter's in Detroit Lakes are legendary. Many of these courses are maintained in excellent condition and feature clubhouses with great dining and friendly "Minnesota Nice" communities.

With the recent economic downturn, Minnesota golf courses have been hit with lower trends in play for the past several years. From a high in the 1999-2000 season there has been a gradual decrease in total activity. The trends follow the national statistics, which are impacted by less leisure activity time, less disposable income,

in some cases (2007) bad weather extremes and an industry that did not readily adapt to the changes.

The construction of courses has slowed to about one course per year in Minnesota, with some nine hole additions or course revisions. There is also about 1-3 courses per year that cease to remain open. The outlook is for a few more courses to close. Especially where over-building took place in the urban and suburban areas. The struggle that small rural communities encounter is how do they maintain these recreational amenities throughout these slow economic times. Some courses serve a fairly large region while others have competition just a few miles away. The correlation between numbers of courses and population is the first step towards viable and sustainable operations.

Minnesota is looking at these operations within the context of need, availability, cost and of course future growth, both in the community and golf in general. In many Minnesota counties, there has been a decrease in population.

Charitable giving by Minnesota golf industry in 2006 was \$52.4 million.

Minnesota Golf Real Estate Revenues in 2006 was \$177.0 million.

Minnesota golf related travel expenditures in 2006 were \$360.5 million. \*

\*“The Minnesota Golf Economy 2006”

The various golf facilities broken out by type is:

Private	55
Public (daily fee/semi private)	351
Municipal	81
University	2
Resort	19
Total	508*

Golf in Minnesota is not presently in a growth pattern giving the economic times. However, it is not experiencing a steep decline in rounds played. There is a shift away from expensive venues towards more conservative cost effective courses. The other emerging trend is reduced golf merchandise sales.

## **Local Trends**

In Worthington Minnesota and the surrounding area (25-35 miles), a number of challenging well-maintained golf courses exist. In Worthington there are two good 18-hole courses: Worthington Country Club (private) and Prairie View Golf Course (municipal public). It is these two courses for which this report is compiled.

Other nearby courses are:

Adrian	18 holes
Luverne	9 holes
Town and Country (Fulda – 9 holes)	
Windom	9 Holes

The Worthington CC is an older well-established country club with a very long and proud history dating to the 1930's. Prairie View Golf Course is an 18-hole course that is slightly more than 25 years old. The community make-up and its relative change have affected the financial well being of both these courses. They basically serve two different customer bases.

Worthington CC meets the need of those people who enjoy the social aspects of family golf and to some extent a higher level of competitive golf also. The usual private club amenities of full food service, a full bar, swimming pool and banquet facilities are all available. A PGA professional is on staff year round and serves as the manager also. The course condition is excellent and the superintendent does an outstanding job. EGCS' observations of industry norms, record keeping and attention to course conditions is excellent. The course layout and hole strategy bodes well for both competition and beginner level/family enjoyment. Some

water problems exist during unseasonable downpours. The clubhouse condition is suitable for banquet functions and food handling procedures are adhered to. The carpet appears to be in need of some updating, as do the lavatories. However, these items are not substandard, just slightly “dated”.

A quick overview of the Prairie View golf’s physical layout and operation follows. The course condition is outstanding. The greens, tees, and fairways would rate above most public courses in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area. The course is in exceptional condition. Much credit should be given to the superintendent, Mr. Kevin Black. With a somewhat small staff, he has manicured the course to be above his competition. ECGS made numerous visits to the course and on each visit the fairways, greens, and tees were well maintained. The course layout is very good. It is a Joel Goldstrand design with a nice mix of holes that was built into the existing terrain with a minimum of disruption to the landscape.

The one factor that can be a detractor is the constant wind. This also can be looked at as a fun and interesting challenge. Not unlike the course at Dakota Ridge in Morton, MN.

There was no evidence of disease or weed infestation in the grasses on the course. The irrigation system is adequate but a possible improvement would be a variable speed pump. This would even out flow, reduce electric demand, and reduce “water hammer” which can be detrimental to irrigation pipes.

The Prairie View clubhouse meets the needs of a golf operation of this magnitude and is designed in such a manner as to be convenient to control both 1 and 10 tees. It can be a one person operation during most daily situations. The clubhouse has a room that provides space for small to medium size meetings. It too is convenient for serving and service from the pro shop counter. The kitchen is small but adequate. The concept was never to be into food service in a large way. Most group outings can be catered or be facilitated outside in a BBQ arrangement. The parking lot is large and generous. Golf car storage is detached from the main building, which is excellent. This reduces the chance of fire. On

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## **Prairie View GC Operations**

the wish list would be a fire suppression system in golf storage as considerable value exists within these garages.

This is a brief overview of the two facilities. A brief comment as to location might be warranted at this time. Worthington CC is conveniently located on a fairly busy municipal street, where ease of access is evident.

Prairie View is not quite so convenient and presents a couple of problems. First there is no safe edge of the roadway or sidewalk from the city center to the course. It is dangerous because of traffic speed and without a major investment, closes out the possibility of youth getting to and from the course without supervision. If a sidewalk existed, it might encourage golfers who walk to actually bring their clubs on a pull or push cart to and from the course. It is also possible that golf club storage might be considered.

### **Prairie View Golf Course Club Operations**

This portion of the report will delve into the actual daily, weekly, monthly and annual business performance. To a certain extent, not every possible facet could be looked at, nor was it observed. There were and are limitations to the scope of the information gathering. However, many hours were spent interviewing community leaders, residents, staff and the golfing community to ascertain the most accurate information to compile this report. In some cases strong opinions surfaced. EGCS is not unfamiliar with these types of feelings and takes them very seriously. It is also important that all parties realize that EGCS must bring forth the unvarnished truth in the most candid manner possible, so that you the decision-makers may make the tough choices that may be necessary.

EGCS looked at:

- Course Administration
- Finances
- Course Conditions

- Amenities – Pool-Clubhouse
- Golf Cars
- Driving Range/Practice Facilities
- Lessons
- Marketing
- Attitude of Staff
- Food and Beverage
- Competition
- Community Make Up
- Contracted Golf Management
- Dynamics of Collaborative Golf Operations with WCC

We examined each category.

The following are opinions and observations by EGCS Principals.

### **Administration**

The Administration of the Prairie View course is essentially a sound and normal municipal golf operation with accountability from the course Manager up to the City Manager.

Within the course itself, there are only two basic departments: course administration and maintenance. The on-site manager, Alice Hoffman, is a good communicator and completes the needed course administration with tact, efficiency and promptness. Her duties include establishing and enforcing rules of play for the course (with certain approvals), promoting and fostering play, hiring and training staff, maintaining food and beverage inventories, purchasing golf merchandise, and scheduling events and league play. Additional duties include creation of inventory controls as well as fiduciary methods, prompt deposits of all receipts and preventing “inventory shrinkage”.

The course Manager is also charged with the task of making certain that the facility is safe for the customer as well as the employees. The Manager must also protect city buildings, vehicles and property, as well as prepare and execute a course budget in conjunction with the Superintendent and City Manager.

Additional managerial duties include production of reports of cash flow and various accounts, as well as suggest and approve course building improvements and purchases. Expense controls must be exercised, and employees must be scheduled while overseeing the entire operation seven days per week, 14 hours per day for approximately 210 days. All this can only be achieved with dependable, loyal employees.

- Presently, the Manager works a split schedule between the Golf Course and Community Center, and although it may reduce full time wages against the golf operations, the absence of the golf Manager to promote the course/club play distracts from business. Timely decision making when business opportunities arise, need to be made. Customers are fickle and sometimes will call another course without hesitation.
- More time at the facility by the Manager permits more time to promote the course and create an environment to introduce golfers to one another. Employees below management level tend not to create a sense of camaraderie or belonging. EGCS feels that a person at Prairie View requires at least 40 hours per week, creating a consistent “face” for the business.
- Create a strong method to track all rounds played by category: member, league and walk-in.
- Review and refine an Employee Handbook that outlines city policies, course policies (for both employees and customers) and has a protocol in place for emergencies for staff and customers. This protocol is shared with Police and Fire Departments.
- Institute a marketing plan
- Institute a lesson and teaching program.
- Review cash control systems including a system for occasional ticket control checks.



- Encourage management personnel to participate in peer professional associations.
- Have periodic planning meetings (quarterly) with City Manager, Parks Director, Golf Advisory Board Member, Superintendent, and whomever else that is crucial to the success of Prairie View's operation. You may want to include a City Council Member.

EGCS' charge is the overview of Prairie View course and to also look at the economies of scale to see what facts of the Worthington CC (WCC) that might be a positive factor for both golf operations. With this in mind, EGCS will make recommendations as they arise within the list of topics to be covered. It is understood that a critique of the WCC operations is not within the scope of this report. Any such observation that may be noted can be obtained by contacting EGCS Principals, John Valliere or Roger Harrold, PhD.

In the administrative area there does not seem to be too many areas of commonality for cost reduction. However, a joint effort for promoting golf in Worthington could be a strong possibility. Shared Junior programs, two course golf events over two or more days, lesson programs by the WCC Golf Professional, and simple food catered events from WCC to the PVCC might be examples of working together.

EGCS observed excellent communications between the two course Superintendents and a strong willingness to help each other. This extends to occasional equipment loan but mostly to advice and council – both ways. Both are knowledgeable and professional.

Moving to the two Managers, there is an absence of any communication. EGCS advises that a dialogue, even small, might help both local golf operations.

## **Finances**

Looking at the PVGC profit and Loss Statement that was provided and comparing it to surrounding golf course operations there is one very obvious imbalance. This is the low revenue picture.

EGCS carefully looked at the expense side of the PVG operations. They are very much in line with a facility of this magnitude. In addition, there is much to be said for the level of efficiency that exists for the operation. EGCS did not look at multiyear in depth expenses. We were however assured that the information provided was very representative.

Only two items seem to be slightly out of industry norms for courses in this region: capital equipment purchase and equipment repair. EGCS does feel that there should be a definite annual amount set aside for equipment replacement.

The wage or labor structure seems to be in line with courses of equal size and operation. The distribution of maintenance and clubhouse labor is very much in line with operational needs. The conclusion is that given the operation loss, the revenue side of the ledger is the only avenue to move this facility towards solvency. As an enterprise operation, the city desires to reduce or eliminate the dependency on the general fund. A broader discussion of this point will come later in this report.

## **Course Conditions**

The PVGC as mentioned in the opening statement is in excellent condition. The greens, tees and fairways are well maintained. They are in fact superior to many high-end public facilities. There was no evidence of turf disease or high incidence of weed infestation. With the exception of some minor drainage issues, the course conditions are outstanding.

The irrigation system is sound. A desire to replace the constant speed well pump is valid. A variable speed pump would be more

efficient and reduce pressure within the system. It is, however, an expensive improvement.

Some thought was given to the number of acres under maintenance. In other words, could less mowing and in some cases less fertilizer and watering effectively reduce costs? The basic answer is yes it would. However, historically there was an issue of many lost balls when mowing patterns were narrow and this slowed down play. Given this perception, it is a small return on investment so continuing to keep fairways wide and rough lower, is the correct path.

The WCC is well maintained with a superior and knowledgeable staff. Course improvements are constant and much of these are done “in house” or by contribution by club members. The club has statewide recognition for its beautiful and challenging layout.

### **Amenities**

The PVCC does not possess tennis courts, pool or other recreational activities. The course could be utilized for additional recreational activities, such as cross country skiing, by using the clubhouse as a center. The same might be true for skating. Careful consideration of this should be looked at as the costs may outweigh the benefits. There may presently exist resources to meet the community needs. No additional amenities were considered or recommended.

The WCC does have a pool, which appears to be under-utilized. It is convenient and has been recently upgraded. The construction of a new YMCA community pool may be the factor to WCC and Worthington at large. This new facility is geographically close to WCC. EGCS makes no recommendations.

## **Golf Cars**

Golf cars should be a profit center for any course. Today's golf cars are efficient, safe, low maintenance and mostly trouble free. They come in two types: gas or electric. Electric cars are quieter and more environmentally friendly because they emit no exhaust. They are also more expensive and require battery replacement every 3-4 years. Urban courses tend to own or lease a complete fleet of cars. There is more profit in owning, but less worry or maintenance in leasing.

Rural courses tend to permit privately owned golf cars, complete with storage garages. This can work with the club having an arrangement with the private owner to store his/her vehicle. For a fee, the private owner may pay for:

1. Trail or course usage fee.
2. Storage.
3. Fuel/Electricity.

Other arrangements are common and these are the problem areas. When private vehicles are kept at either a public or a private club, the use and enforcement of rules is problematic. Example: "Immediate family members may use a car without charge." This is quite often abused and places course/club employees in a difficult enforcement position. Club administration becomes difficult and fosters distrust. The club or course may lose needed income.

EGCS recommends careful and complete course rules in this area. List the permitted family use members, and empower the course/club employees to collect fees and resolve disputes at a later time. All parties understand that this is a privilege and the proceeds will help maintain the respective facilities.

Any arrangement to co-use or rent out a private golf car vehicle should be spelled out in advance. The fees should be examined and possibly increase annually. These precepts are applicable to both WCC and PVGC. They should be discussed, agreed upon

and enforced at each individual club. It will make improvements to each club's bottom line.

Lease or rental cars should always be cleaned, serviced and inspected on a regular basis. Do not forget to do the paperwork on these inspections. Customer accidents can be followed by insurance company attorneys who could insinuate mechanical neglect.

### **Driving Range/Practice Facilities**

The PVGC Driving Range is in excellent condition with good turf and golf balls are clean and affordable. It is underutilized. The course should promote this to the community, even if it is "Free Practice Balls on Tuesdays" or a 2 for 1 coupon in the local paper. Perhaps create a downloadable coupon for kids under 18, or reduce the price of range balls if a golfer signs up for a lesson.

The practice green and driving range are in a good location within view of the clubhouse staff. Provision for a practice sand bunker might be a long-term goal.

The WCC has an excellent range facility, which is also in a good location.

### **Lesson Program**

The future of Prairie View Golf relies heavily on the local growth of the game. Ron Woods is a tireless worker for the Junior Golf program and makes many personal sacrifices to foster and promote goodwill to the youth of the community. As a 1<sup>st</sup> Ward Alderman and retired educator, he is the embodiment of community leadership. EGCS spoke at length with this gentleman regarding the growth of golf and the changing face of Worthington.

Woods agrees strongly with EGCS that a good lesson program should be established. Roger Harrold (EGCS) and Ron Wood discussed the possibility of having a PGA Professional who would

travel from course to course, teaching both private and group lessons. This would reduce the financial burden on any single golf club to fund the entire income of a teaching professional. EGCS spoke with the state section of PGA, who listed successful programs of this kind taking place in Rochester and Fargo/Moorhead. This should be explored.

The lesson program for adults needs to be planned and executed immediately. It should be an integral part of the marketing plan. The marketing program should include not only lessons, but a mentoring plan to advise these new people to visit the course to learn the rules and etiquette of the game. These programs exist elsewhere and can be replicated.

The lesson program should be listed in the Parks and Recreation brochures, with times, costs and other vital information. Mention that clubs will be made available to use at no cost. This information should be placed on the city web site.

Additional learning programs include the national program called "The First Tee." It fosters and promotes Junior Golf and is sponsored by the United States Golf Association (USGA) and the PGA. Initial contacts have been established between Dr. Wood and the local chapter at Eagle Lake Youth Golf Center in Plymouth, Minnesota. The Chapter Administrator is Troy Nygaard. EGCS spoke with him and he has consented to help in this endeavor. His phone number is (763) 694-7695.

There is a need for good junior golf clubs for the youth of the community. They might be available for a small fee or checked out at no charge. This should be investigated. Get online at [USKidsgolf.com](http://USKidsgolf.com). Perhaps a sponsor (Swift) could be found. At the moment, cut-down clubs are used and they tend to be heavy and unbalanced.

Adult lessons should be given in different levels of ability, from beginner to advanced players and private or semi-private

Tomorrow's business depends on the creation of a large customer base. All courses should participate and encourage the growth of the game through a lesson program for both youth and adults.

The possibility of WCC conducting a combined lesson program for both Prairie View and WCC is one area that mutual cooperation could be consummated. It's a natural. There would need to be some agreements between the two golf clubs. At present, Pro/Manager Jim Hall may or may not have the adequate time to be available for such a program. Mr. Hall indicated to EGCS that he does not teach on a large scale. More investigation needs to be done if something like this could occur.

There may be more possibilities with the local college and high school to promote youth lesson programming at both WCC and PVGC. There needs to be an outreach to the various ethnic groups that make up the Worthington community. The lesson program for youth is an excellent point to start. As this multi-cultural community evolves, this will help with the success of both courses.

## **Marketing**

The financial well-being of the Prairie View Golf Course falls squarely on the ability to increase rounds of play. The course is woefully underutilized. One of the primary reasons is that there lacks a marketing plan to bring customers to this excellent course. Some serious planning needs to be started to encourage golfers to want to come to play this facility. A budget needs to be established to accomplish this goal. You may need guidance and outside help. Presently, you will be inviting golfers from other courses to come and play Prairie View. Perhaps you will need to create events that get golfers to play so they will return.

Electronic media needs to be updated and be interactive so that course events and promotions can be seen routinely. Create and constantly update a customer database.

The course might include an interactive, password-protected reservation system.

The lesson program needs to be put together and promulgated.

A spokesperson for the course needs to reach out to the business community. Prairie View could host a Worthington Chamber of Commerce meeting. EGCS visited with Darlene Macklin, Executive Director, of the Chamber and CVB, she is supportive and made suggestions for contacts. Business outings start there with her business contacts.

Find a path to teach the game to the business community workers. Create business golf leagues.

Contact other courses to see what works for them, for membership programs.

Develop and work with the friends of PV golf to strengthen the men's club. Grow it. Establish a membership goal. Help the leadership of that club to use the course more. Add incentives.

Do the same for the small ladies league.

Promote the growth of the ladies league by sponsoring weekly gift certificates. Host a luncheon to invite new guests – free?!

Advertise in local company newsletters. Perhaps a trade out of a free round(s) with inclusion in the Swift Company newsletter.

Call on businesses and invite company leaders to play a free round if they will help promote PV. This kind of promotion needs prior approval including corresponding dollar values.

Call the local hotels and motels and set up a program to have their employees send you customers. Provide a brochure – include free rental clubs as an enticement to play. Remember, PV gains the green fees and perhaps the golf car fees too.



Network with surrounding towns and courses to create additional rounds by core golfers. Promote interclub rivalry and play.

Encourage the city council and city boards and commissions to host a golf event, which would introduce various members to each other and give a short talk about Worthington parks, recreation and Prairie View Golf. Invite the WCC President, manager and superintendent. Many of them have never seen or played the course.

Explore advertising on the Golf Channel. It is relatively inexpensive and reaches the core golfer.

Create a nice brochure with course and clubhouse views. Design it to have shelf life (without rates or membership fees). Distribute it through the city utility billing and any other pathway including the school system.

Arrange school class visits that permits a golf driving range visit. Putting green contest and a chipping contest into a small basket. This will create course familiarization and a sense of fun and challenge.

Perhaps the course needs its own website separate from the city. Many municipal courses do this. It permits easy links to the following golf sites:

Minnesota Golf Association  
Explore Minnesota Golf Alliance  
Explore Minnesota Tourism  
Minnesota PGA

All of which connect to a wide range of the public golf courses. To find examples, go to [www.Mngolf.org](http://www.Mngolf.org) and search different course websites.

These are but a few ideas and thoughts to begin to grow the marketing side of the equation. The efforts will take time and resources. However, empty tee times are a complete loss. As each 10 minutes goes by there is no shelf life to that inventory.

Every method to increase play should be tried, including free golf for juniors or beginners during certain times. Maintaining a golf course with taxpayer assistance could provide some recreation for a nominal cost.

Remember, that is precisely what the parks system facilitates in many cases. This is inexpensive or free park utilization. This would only encourage inexpensive youth participation on a course already in place and maintained. The LA County golf courses permit youth play for one dollar. See the enclosed flyer.

Today and now is the time to build tomorrows customers.

There are definite possibilities for WCC and PVGC to market Worthington golf as a destination. The rather nice color ad in the Worthington Visitor Magazine is an example of a great promotion. This marketing could promote both courses.

## **Personnel**

The staff at PVGC is dedicated and attentive to the needs of the golfing public. They create a warm and pleasant atmosphere. As mentioned in the paragraphs on administration, the manger wears many hats and is spread too thin to accomplish all the tasks which accompany the position. In order for the course to embark on a concerted growth plan, additional hours for marketing must be found, or it will need to be outsourced. If the city has a media or communications person, that might suffice. However, the individual should have some working knowledge of golf.

EGCS recommends that during the summer months that the golf course manager be present a minimum of 40 hours per week. If an arrangement could be made to make this person an exempt employee it might be beneficial. This would mean long spring and summer hours but subsequent compensatory time off when the course is closed. The intent is to have senior management present to promote play and growth as much as possible.

# LA COUNTY GOLF SYSTEM



## MORE REASONS TO PLAY L.A. COUNTY GOLF

**Free Golf Lessons, \$1 Green Fees and Junior Tournaments for \$14 to \$25**  
**Is the Los Angeles County Golf System for real?**

You bet we are! The Los Angeles County Golf System, operated by the Department of Parks and Recreation, through partnerships with today's leaders in the golf industry, continues to offer quality golf experiences at competitive prices.

### Free Junior Golf Lessons

Free junior golf lessons are offered year-round in the L.A. County Junior Golf Program. After school and summer programs are available. After school programs are Monday through Friday from 3:45 pm until 5:00 pm. Summer programs are Monday through Friday from 9:00 am until 11:00 am; 12:00 pm until 2:00 pm and from 2:30 pm until 4:30 pm. The L.A. County Junior Golf Program travels to all seventeen County Golf Courses. Fliers are available online or at the golf courses prior to the start of each program and signups are first come first serve. For more info visit our website at [www.lacountyjunorgolf.com](http://www.lacountyjunorgolf.com)

### Junior Golfer Appreciation Month

Join us in celebrating "July is Junior

Golfer Appreciation Month". Any junior golfer aged 18 and under can play golf for \$1 after 12:00 pm daily, when accompanied by a regular fee paying partner. This special is available every day in July at each golf course and is sponsored by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors.

### L.A. County PLGA Junior Golf Championship

The summer of 2009 will welcome the 4th Annual Los Angeles County Public Links Golf Association Junior Golf Championship. A total of 1,153 junior golfers competed last year with 128 juniors qualifying for the Championship Final. Seven L.A. County Junior Golf Champions were awarded crystal trophies and their names are engraved on the perpetual trophy. This year's events begin in July and will be played at Los Verdes G.C., Alondra G.C., Whittier Narrows G.C., Knollwood G.C. and El Cariso G.C. The Championship Final will be played at Mountain Meadows G.C. in September. Applications are available at all County Golf Courses or on the website.

### 54th Annual Len Kennett Junior Golf Championship

There will also be a separate junior golf tournament at Lakewood G.C., celebrating legendary golf professional Len Kennett's 54 years of sponsoring junior golf championships. Over 280 players competed in this one day event last year.

### L.A. County Junior Golf Club

Also check out the FREE L.A. County Junior Golf Club. Free membership is available to all juniors who want to join. You will receive a USGA Handicap Index, compliments of the Public Links Golf Association. Our website has all the information.

The L.A. County Golf System proudly welcomes junior golfers to our facilities. We look forward to your participation. For more information, please contact Mike McMonegal, Program Director at (626) 821-4648 or Tim Smith, Program Director at (626) 254-8533. Email to [mmcmonegal@parks.lacounty.gov](mailto:mmcmonegal@parks.lacounty.gov) or [tsmith@parks.lacounty.gov](mailto:tsmith@parks.lacounty.gov)

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# Southwest Minnesota's Premier Golf Course

Worthington Country Club offers only the finest in golf and social facilities - superb recreational amenities in a hidden haven of exquisite natural beauty. Club membership is available in a variety of progressive tiers of Social and Golf levels.

## CATERING & DAILY DINING

The beautiful Worthington Clubhouse is available for banquet and catered functions and also houses our club lounge, which is ideal for those wishing to relax after a round of golf.

Contact Julie Catering/Dining at 507-376-5142

We have PGA Professional  
available for private or  
group lessons.  
Pro Shop: 507-376-4281

**Just "playing through?" Take a few hours to tee-off  
on Worthington's finest 18-hole golf course!**

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WORTHINGTON COUNTRY CLUB

The maintenance department appears to have a good rotation for weekends and weekly work production developed.

There is a definite need for group outing promotion and management. This would encompass promotion, booking, price structures, scoring, merchandise and possible food catering. What is presently done is not bad, it just needs to be increased and staff support to accomplish it. There are businesses in town that would have a golf outing if it was presented to them. Even small outings build business.

The WCC staff situation was not examined in much detail. There did not seem to be a large amount of cross-over utilization possible with the exception of the golf professional and the food and beverage catering.

An event held at Prairie View golf could be able to move to the country club for beverages and dinner. This must fall within the WCC guidelines on outside events and total income from hosted events (for tax purposes).

### **Food and Beverage**

The food and beverage operation at PVGC is adequate for the day-to-day operation. A coffee and hot chocolate premix machine might create a better quality product and would ensure everyone pays for their respective cup. It would also be slightly more profitable without any labor. It's worth exploring with a local vendor.

The cookouts serve as a great mixer and are handled without problems.

EGCS did not observe the consumption or sale of alcoholic beverages. The inventory or security aspects also were not observed. A word of caution to the management of both the WCC and PVGC is to always stay vigilant. Minors can be very innovative.

The level of play at PVGC does not support a beverage cart person.

At least two inspections of the food preparation area should be conducted each golfing season. This is to ensure the health and safety of food serving. The good news is that Alice Hoffman is a licensed food server that adheres to established state food license standards.

In most cases group meetings should rely on either box lunches or licensed caterers. It is possible to dispense snacks and candy by vending machines.

### **Competition**

EGCS examined the operations of surrounding courses that present the most competition. By far the leading facility that presents competition is the Adrian 18 hole public course. It is a well-maintained course. It's set on the south side of the community of Adrian with good local town access. The population of Adrian is 1,230, which is considerably less than Worthington. The condition of the course is good to excellent. The course is not an older course, but rather relatively new to the region.

The cost of a family membership at Adrian is \$600 for a family. A student is \$150. Single memberships are \$480. Single annual range use is \$53/year. Men's Club membership is \$25/year and Women's club membership is \$20/year. Annual cart fee is \$350/year.

Daily green fees are as follows:

Monday-Thursday	(9)	\$13
	(18)	\$20
Friday-Sunday	(9)	\$15
	(18)	\$25

The weekly traffic count is low with 20-40 rounds per day. Weekends see 80+ rounds both days.

Adrian maintains a fleet of 40 rental carts plus a number of privately owned vehicles.

The Clubhouse is not large and serves primarily hot dogs and cold drinks. It will accommodate a group cookout. The parking lot is medium sized and unpaved.

This course is somewhat popular with folks who have left the Worthington CC.

### **Luverne**

This is a nine hole public course that dates back to the early 1930's. It is classified as a semi-private club. At one time membership was as high as 500 members. A strong Men's and Women's Club exist at this course. At one time it considered expanding to 18 holes.

Of note: In 1979 Jerilyn "Jeri" Britz of this course won the USGA Women's National Championship at Brooklawn CC in Fairfield, Connecticut.

Although this is considerably more miles from Worthington, it is a strong regional draw. It is a parkland course with many trees. It is semi-private with public fees as follows:

Weekday	(9)	\$13
	(18)	\$20
Weekend	(9)	\$19
	(18)	\$26

### **Fulda**

This is a 9-hole public course that is 16 miles north of Worthington. It is a public course with membership fees of:

Family	\$530
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Single		\$530
Weekday	(9)	\$12
	(18)	\$17
Weekend	(9)	\$14
Weekend	(18)	\$19

The clubhouse serves sandwiches, pizza and beverages. The men's and women's leagues are small, with 25 and 16 members respectively.

EGCS feels that with the exception of Adrian, surrounding courses do not present a large hurdle to the PVGC. Persons living close to those courses are going to play them, for no other reason than geographic convenience. Worthington, with its much larger population presents a far greater potential.

### **Community Make-Up**

The Worthington community is an agriculture-based regional service center. It is strategically located on US Interstate 90 in southwest Minnesota. The population base is approximately 13,000. Large poultry processing plants employ many citizens. Numerous small service industries that support farming and agriculture are headquartered here. Sales and service of farm machinery is very much evident. The city's setting is most picturesque, and surrounds a medium-sized lake. The Minnesota West Community College is located in Worthington.

The school system has strong enrollment and is ethnically diverse. In recent years, Worthington has seen a demographic shift from predominantly descendants of European descent to a more Hispanic, Asian and African cultured population. This change in population makeup has had impacts on many facets of Worthington. Different ethnic foods, traditions, school enrollment and even recreational activities are taking place. The last item is an important factor as to why golf is not as popular as it once was in the city.



The future of golf in Worthington depends upon the desire to attract these various ethnic populations to the game. EGCS believes this is desirable and a goal that is attainable.

The PVGC presents the obvious platform to facilitate the introduction of golf to these demographics. In addition, it would also serve as one more opportunity to weave the community fabric together.

### **Contracted Golf Management**

There are approximately 75 golf course management companies nationally. The largest is Meadowbrook with some 350 courses under either ownership or contract. Other firms are American Golf, Troon, Kemper Sports and Continental Golf, based out of Minnesota.

Their *modus operandi* is to come to your course and take over the complete operation. They will employ their own staff in all leadership positions. The normal contract is from 5 to 7 years, depending on many aspects. Factors that affect length of contract are: improvement demands by the owner, traffic potential, percent of retained profit, circumstances such as real estate sales or member ownership.

To be succinct, PVGC is not a candidate for a management company. The exception being, if the city would like to maintain the course and be willing to accept a sizeable management fee, regardless of profit or loss, then a management company would entertain a contract.

EGCS presently recommends against this.

The true bottom line here is that management companies are in business to make a profit. PVGC is not prepared to add to the expense side of the ledger at this time.

Management companies in southern states where play is 10 to 12 months per year, and are high volume remain the most likely

candidates. This is especially true of course with poor, entrenched staff or union problems. The owners will write a short, two-year contract and extract themselves from a difficult situation.

There is one other detraction to outside management firms and that is a potential loss of control. This occurs when the operator closes buildings and food concessions at their convenience. Residents can become unhappy with no direct input.

### **Dynamics of Collaborative Golf Operations**

The two golf clubs in Worthington should meet to establish methods that benefit both operations. To a large degree, they are two distinct customer bases. Worthington CC caters to the more affluent, more accomplished golf family members.

Prairie View caters to the whole golfing community. Some examples are: beginning golfers, youth, youth whose parents do not golf, and occasional golfers. Another example is golfers who like to play at numerous venues and do not want to be attached to one club. Golfers who can well afford the country club, but for whatever reason choose not to, is yet another example. This is common for a person who loves golf but opts out of social settings.

So how can both clubs help each other in this tough economic climate? Already mentioned is a golf lesson program. Food catering for some events. Shared maintenance equipment/staff. Golf progression, i.e. learn at Prairie View and join WCC. Promote Worthington as a golf destination with two excellent golf courses. Create events that utilize both courses and increase play at both. Look for ways to help each other. Lastly, speak positively of each course.

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## Findings

## Findings

The crossroads golf has reached in Worthington is crucial to the community. With some 13,000 residents, golf should be a part of the recreational programming. Cultural changes have added a new dimension to the city. The other overriding issue at present is how much financial support can be conveyed to continue having a public golf facility?

Before we attempt to answer that question we should also ask why municipalities or governmental agencies provide municipal parks and recreational programming in the first place? The answer is, with emphasis, for the public good.

Cities meet the needs of residents that the private sector may not view as a necessity. As a result, the Worthington Parks Department maintains programs and parks at taxpayers expense and wishes. For example, tennis courts are free for public use and maintained by the city. This is only pointed out to create a balanced view. A city golf course is nothing more than a city park for a special use. Hopefully, the user fees defray the costs of operation.

EGCS has examined the various possibilities or options that are available to Worthington. They are as follows:

- 1) **Close Prairie View** – This would virtually eliminate public golf in the community. It would decrease the appeal for Worthington. Think college and youth participation...adult recreation...employment now and in the future. The present investment would see a low return on a sale of equipment.
- 2) **Close Prairie View and convert the country club to a public facility** – this option is not on the table by the club membership.

- 3) **Close Prairie View but allow daily fee play at the country club** – A possibility, but the Country Club would have to propose this.
- 4) **Retain both courses** – Make a concerted effort to improve both operations by marketing and promotion.
- 5) **Sell the Prairie View course to a private entity with a deed restriction that it be maintained as a public golf course for future use** – It is very difficult to attract buyers for golf courses without real estate or destination facilities.

EGCS would advocate option 4 – retain both courses at the present time, with several caveats. There appears to have been little effort to grow golf, particularly at Prairie View. Growing golf requires the application of specific strategies by staff with the skills to market golf and develop and manage programs. Only a fraction of the tee times are actually used. Creative initiatives should be sought to make use of the available times.

One thought would be to give these tee times away, FREE, to young golfers enrolled in a junior development program. The future of golf will be determined by the involvement of today's youth in the game. This will not happen without a serious effort on the part of the community. It calls for a commitment of time and leadership skills to develop and operate the program. A devoted PGA professional must lead the way in providing a fun atmosphere to teach youth the rules and etiquette of the game, attract senior mentors to accompany the young players as they learn, collect sets of junior golf clubs, etc.

Any action undertaken with respect to the two courses should be reviewed 4 or 5 years later. EGCS feels confident that it has fulfilled the goals it set out to accomplish. We stand ready to assist the city in its decision process, and therefore will objectively answer any questions regarding our observations.

Thank you.