

## A Planned Golf Course Community

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# Introduction

Suburban America is alive and well. It is perhaps not as homogeneous or rural as it once was, but it certainly still seems to be popular. For many, it is an escape from the congestion, bustling, ringing, flashing, and honking of our urban centers. The golf course community, in particular, is the very antithesis of this suffocating environment. With its manicured swathes of rolling green, shade trees, trickling brooks, brightly clad golfers, and open space. . . it is an atmosphere of leisure.

And, for the homeowner living in a golf course community, the presence of this atmosphere is important. Why? Because it adds value. Certainly the golf course adds dollar value to property. A lot with premium views of a course will sell for much more money than a comparable lot without a view. For some residents, the course is also perceived to be valuable because it is an accessible source of recreation. But most importantly, the golf course is appreciated because it is a visual element, a scenic entity that helps to create that relaxed, scenic, and spacious atmosphere that so many of us seem to want. It is rural and natural and pleasingly sculpted all at once. In short, golf course communities are popular because they incorporate golf. . . and therefore have that enviable scenic character that now, more than ever, is becoming increasingly rare. Even in Suburbia.

And yet despite their popularity, many golf course communities tend to lack the "organic" and spacious atmosphere that they tend to imply. The promise of community is realized instead as an unfortunate dichotomy: "Housing" and "Golf Course". The two land uses are developed almost

independently, with little regard for the community as a whole. The presence of the golf course is usually restricted to peripheral lots, and homesites within the interior portions of the community are ignored and excluded. Residential areas, then, are divided into the "Have's" and the "Have-not's". Therefore, this project addresses a broad, singular goal: To better integrate golf and housing, such that the course's value might be enjoyed by all. . . not just those with frontage property.

## Objectives

- To develop a comprehensive master plan for a golf course community that creatively responds to: the homeowners perspective (defined by readings and a local survey); site conditions and constraints (identified in the site analysis); and "golf", the standards and conditions desired for play.
- To learn; to accumulate knowledge about, and develop an appreciation for, all of the considerations and influences that affect the golf course community.
- To meet the requirements set forth by this course, and complete this project in an organized, efficient, and timely manner.
- To strengthen my abilities, and apply my skills and talents as they pertain to landscape architecture.

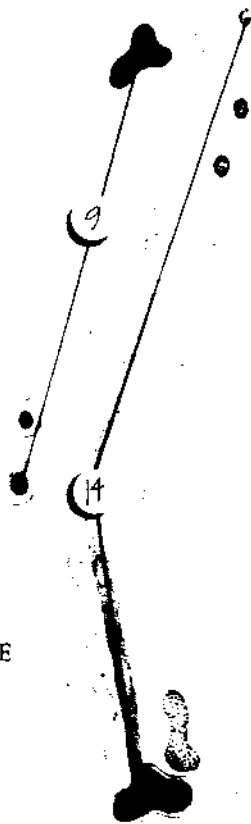


# • THE PLANNED • GOLF COURSE COMMUNITY

## INTRODUCTION

• Often, golf course communities fail to capitalize upon the course as a visual element. In many instances, the golf course and the residential areas appear to have been developed independently... homesites line every inch of the course's periphery, ignoring and excluding interior portions of the community. Therefore, the goal is to better integrate golf and housing, such that golf is perceived to be a highly visible element and an integral part of the community; a pervasive theme that can be appreciated by everyone.

### INTEGRATE

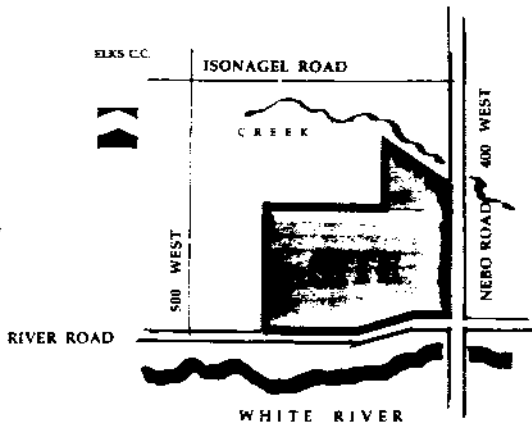


## PROGRAM

• The master plan for this golf course community utilizes a par 72-18 hole course, in accordance with accepted standards for play. It is essentially a dbl. fairway loop with returning nines. The residential portions contain 170 single-family lots: 85 1/2 acre, 70 1/2 acre, and 15 3/4 acre lots. The boulevard roadway system incorporates 23 cul-de-sacs and 13 windows, each of them unique. Additional facilities include a driving range and a clubhouse. Note: of the 170 total lots 115 offer mortgage property and 35 have been situated in woodlot.

## DESCRIPTION

• This project addresses a variety of influences and criteria. Because it has been approached largely from the homeowner's perspective, it responds in part to a local survey that was administered to 100 residents living in neighboring golf course communities. Additional "affecting" factors include: site constraints/opportunities, real estate value, playability, and integrity of the course, and a sense of identity & hierarchy.



## • AN UNDERGRADUATE TERMINAL PROJECT •

# Background

Golf course communities have traditionally been grouped into four development categories: First-home community, second-home recreation community, semi-retirement community, and resort community. (Jones 1974) Of these, only the first-home community is applicable here. It, like the other three types, must respond to site characteristics, local ordinances, a defined market, a targeted budget, the demands and standards of play. But it is unique because its dwellings are inhabited year round. In recent years many first home communities have been incorporating multi-family residential and mixed-use development. (Jones 1974) But traditionally speaking -and in this case as well- the single family residence characterizes the first home golf course community.

The golf course is traditionally the heart of any golf course community, and as identified by Rees Jones in his book Golf Course Developments, there are five basic layout configurations. Each system is uniquely suited to particular conditions and can be adapted or modified into an infinite number of variations. The five "generic" themes, however, include:

1. Single fairway, 18 hole course with returning nines. This layout can be particularly effective in larger developments. Like a greenbelt, the linear nature of the course is maximized to "share the wealth" throughout the community. Because the fairways are aligned in a single "end to end" formation, however, the golfer must face development on both sides of the fairway. This tends to detract from the roomy, natural atmosphere he (or

she) may be seeking and seriously frustrate the average golfer who has a tough time keeping the ball in bounds.

2. Single fairway, 18 hole continuous course. Like the first layout mentioned, this layout emphasizes the "presence" of the course. Again, it can stretch and wind through large developments, but it is perhaps the least desirable configuration for play. The golfer does not have the option of a nine-hole round, and the consistent, single fairway width provides minimal room.

3. Double fairway, 18 hole course with returning nines. A double fairway system, with two holes side by side, offers broad views and plenty of room for error. Like the single fairway layout with returning nines, the golfer is given a choice ( a nine or an eighteen hole round) and the expansive width certainly supports a "golf" atmosphere. The obvious disadvantage is that two golf edges have been sealed, reducing available frontage property.

4. Double fairway continuous 18 hole course. From a visual perspective, this configuration offers all of the advantages of a double fairway layout. It is particularly suited for valley sites that may be long and linear. It too, like the continuous single fairway system, offers only an eighteen hole round. But because two fairways have been aligned side by side, the course needs 15% less land. Additionally, both double fairway layouts are easier to maintain than their single fairway counterparts.

5. 18 hole core golf course. With all 18 holes clustered, this



configuration uses land efficiently. For the golfer, the course has integrity, it is flexible, spacious, and sufficiently buffered from neighboring development. Because the course is so self-contained and compact, frontage property is minimal. This layout can be effectively paired with high density housing.

Regardless of the layout selected, it must be compatible with the physical features of the site. As with any other development, it is always advantageous to work with the elements, rather than against them. The following outline describes the general factors to be considered.

- **Topography** Because earthmoving can be outrageously expensive and seriously detrimental to natural systems that exist, it should be minimized. The golf course is a flexible element, and it can work with the "lay of the land". Certainly landing areas and greens should be relatively level, but the natural roll of the site should dictate the location of the course. Topography must also be considered from a homeowner's perspective. Areas with outstanding views are particularly desirable and will add value to residential property. Thus, lowland or valley areas should be developed with golf (when possible) and the upland areas peppered with housing.
- **Drainage** Bogs, marshes, runoff channels, and floodplains are not suitable for residential development and therefore should be limited (when appropriate) to golf. Because these areas are poorly drained, construction will consume extra time and cost. But in certain situations, a naturally wet or swampy area may be suitable for a man-made lake or pond to help store irrigation water or collect runoff.
- **Vegetation** It is, undeniably, an asset for all areas within the golf course community. For the golfer, specimen trees can add interest and appeal, and strategic value to play.

Woodlot along the periphery of a hole helps to contain poorly hit shots and mask the onlooking homes. "Finally, and not least important, the course takes on an immediate feeling of maturity and age through the presence of grown trees." (Jones 1974) Living in the woods isn't for everyone, but for some homeowners, vegetation enhances the scenic value of property. Development costs, however, may be higher in woodlots, simply because of the extra effort involved in clearing for utilities, roadways and foundations.

- Soil Soils are of serious concern to the developer. A poor soil can occasionally be modified so that it will support turf or hold water, but rarely will it be able to support a building at an acceptable level of cost. Therefore, the best soils should be reserved for residential development. As with all other site factors, existing conditions should be respected and incorporated to minimize cost and environmental damage or disruption whenever possible.
- Water Closely associated with soils, it will affect the placement and nature of the course. Essential for irrigation and desirable as strategic elements, water features also add scenic value to the landscape. In optimum situations, the site's available water supply should fulfill all irrigation demands. If needed, on site storage can be accomplished quite easily, especially if -as in this project- a creek, stream, pond, lake, drainage basin, or well happens to fall within the boundaries of the site.

## The Golf Course

The demands of play for an 18 hole golf course do not change with type of community or setting. To insure safe and enjoyable play, adherence to design standards is mandatory. Fairway width, for example, should average at least 300' (500' for double-loaded holes) to protect the homeowner from errant or misjudged shots. Tradition has dictated that

both sets of nine holes offer variety in shot values (including a balance of par 3's and par 5's), distance, difficulty, and direction (north, south, east and west). Walking distance should be minimized between holes, and woodland, water, bunkers or grade change should compliment the intended strategy of play. As discussed earlier, the golf holes may be aligned in single or double widths. Double loaded holes (2 holes side by side) usually span 500 feet across, which affords expansive views and extra room for poor shots. The downside is that two edges have been sealed, which means less available frontage property. Single loaded holes allow more golf edge, and more frontage property. . . but leave less room for error and, at 300' of width, use space less efficiently.

## New Techniques

Traditional land planning in golf course communities has tended to place lots around the entire perimeter of the golf course but to lock off the course from the internal areas of the project. This isolates the internal lots, diminishes their value and desirability, and slows their sales. It limits the ability of the golf course to create value for all the lots on the property. . . (DJA, 1990)

In an effort to better the standard scenario, David Jensen & Associates out of Denver, Colorado, have developed a new approach. By incorporating "windows" (open space along the golf periphery) into key portions of the project, select views are exposed. Manipulating the roads so that they "touch" the course in these strategic spots can transform an ordinary street into a scenic drive. Locating a "window" along the open end of a cul-de-sac or short drive, affords interior lots secondary views of the course and a sense of neighborhood identity. As Jensen states,

"Homeowners want to know that they live in a golf course community and they want their visitors to know it too." Showcasing the course not only adds value to the development as a whole, it reinforces the image that the community is intended to have.

## Survey

Because the golf course community is an adaptable entity and exists in countless variations, a detailed local survey was administered to supplement the general information just described. 100 surveys were sent out, 80 to residents within the Elks golf course community and 20 to the residents of Woodland Trails. As illustrated on the following page, most questions simply asked for an "opinion"; the intent was to identify likes, dislikes, and wants. 72 surveys were returned, most of them within a week. No discernable differences in opinion (statistically) were detected between the two participating groups.

### conclusions

Of the 72 respondents, 80% identified open space/spaciousness or beauty/scenic view as an advantage most enjoyed. Responses to question number four varied significantly, but 55% said that "their" part of the golf course had indeed been a factor (to some extent) in the selection of their site/home.

Of particular significance to this project were the opinions and evaluations of "view". In defining the importance of "view" and preferred sights or features, a variety of questions were asked. . .

January 12, 1991

J. David Hall  
2008 W. Main St.  
Muncie, Indiana  
47304

Dear Homeowner:

I am a fifth-year senior in the College of Architecture and Planning at Ball State University, and an alumnus of Yorktown. I am desperately attempting to complete my undergraduate thesis (Woodland Trails: A Planned Golf Course Community) on time and would sincerely appreciate your help in obtaining some statistical information. I am administering a brief survey (eight questions) that simply asks for your perceptions - as a homeowner within the Elks golf course community. Your answers to these open-ended questions will assist me in designing a "hypothetical" golf course community. Please answer these questions *from your own point of view* and return the survey to me in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope at your earliest convenience. Thanks for your help and I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

J. David Hall

# SURVEY

... please use the back if necessary ...

1. Do you live: (please circle one)
  1. along a fairway
  2. along a tee
  3. beside a green
  4. across the street from the course
  5. other \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. Is there anything about your house or property's relationship to the Elks Golf Course that bothers you - and if so, what?
  
3. What do you enjoy about your relationship to the golf course?
  
4. Was "your" part of the golf course a deciding factor in the selection of your home/property - and if so, for what reasons?
  
5. Would you like to be able to see more of the golf course - and if so, what parts or features would you like to see?
  
6. Do you feel that you have good views of the golf course - and if not, why?
  
7. Which of the following is most important to you? (please rank them 1 through 4, 1 being most important)
  - Your home's distance from the golf course
  - Your views of the golf course
  - The size of your property/yard
  - Your home's distance from neighboring homes
  
8. If you could live anywhere along the Elks Golf Course, where would it be - and why?

Most with frontage property were happy with their particular view of the course. Statistically speaking, distance from the course correlated well with these responses:

<u>Location relative to course</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Happy with view?</u>
Along a fairway	39	97%
Beside a tee or green	20	95%
Across street from course	13	8%

Many respondents identified additional features that they'd like to be able to see (but currently don't). 60% mentioned woodlot and/or water. 40% preferred golf elements, mostly tees and greens.

Of the four criteria listed in question seven, only two consistently checked in with a first or second place ranking: 'Views of the course' and 'size of property'. Together, they came out on top by a wide margin.

## Program

- The Woodland Trails planned golf course community shall include a par 72, 18-hole golf course in accordance with accepted standards for safety and play.
- The community shall include a clubhouse complex, with parking facilities (150 automobiles), a driving range, and a putting green.
- The residential portions of the community shall contain 170 single-family residential homesites, with a minimum lot size set at 1/3 acre. 50% of these homesites (85 lots) shall be larger than 1/2 acre in size.
- The Woodland Trails golf course community shall include at least 10 "windows".

# Site Analysis

The Woodland Trails project site, approximately 260 acres in size, is located west of Muncie and immediately north of White River. Bounded by River Road to the south and by Nebo Road (400 West) to the east, the site sits within a rural context. Neighboring land uses are predominantly agricultural, with large, cultivated fields bordering the west and northwest edges of the site and the Raintree Morgan Horse Farm lining much of the northeastern boundary. Because a golf course community is now being constructed on the site and little (if anything) still exists in an "undisturbed" state, this site analysis refers to the site as it existed before development (cultivated field).

With very little relief, a single isolated woodlot, and no buildings, the field site exhibits true "agricultural" character. The greatest portion of the site rests flat and smooth - at one time, this was floodplain. A small ridge does run east-west along the southern border of the site, but it isn't exactly impressive. Surprisingly, views from the crest are quite good. A small, meandering stream cuts across the northeastern fringe of the property (the only true "water feature") but it is visible only from its banks. The woodlot includes a variety of mature native species, most of them ash, maple, oak and hickory. The few, additional specimen trees that somehow managed to escape the plow are small in size and of little aesthetic value. Soils here are glacial in origin and, in most instances, compatible with development. They include 12 varieties, and have been outlined on the following page. A detailed soil map and an explanatory site analysis may be found on pages 17 through 20.



- Bs• Brookstone silty clay loam, stony subsoil. Found in flats and depressional areas, may be wet. Slow permeability, high water table.
- Csa• Crosby silt loam, stony subsoil. Familiar to terrace and outwash areas. Like Bs, has cobblestones and boulders. Wetness a major limitation.
- Fsa• Fox silt loam. Found in loamy outwash areas, terraces and eskers. Well drained, suited for development. Originally supported native hardwoods.
- Fsb• Fox silt loam, sloping land. Soil characteristics are typical of the fox series.
- FoC2• Fox loam, eroded land. Typical of the fox series, but with exposed subsoil. A common source of gravel and sand.
- FxB3• Fox gravelly clay loam. Occupies breaks with terrace and outwash areas. Exposed subsoil, may be severely eroded.
- FxC3• As listed above, only more so. . . often adjacent to streams or creeks.
- MnA• Miami silt loam, gravelly substratum. Found in high, flat, upland areas. Deep, well drained soils, low organic content. Suitable for development.
- MnB• Miami silt loam, gravelly substratum. Ridges, knolls, and short slopes (2%-6%).
- OcA• The Ockley series. Deep soils, low in organic content, well drained and nearly level. Outwash and terrace areas. Mixed hardwood native vegetation.
- OcB• Ockley soil. Sloping land (2%-6%), may be subject to erosion. Like OcA, suitable for development.
- Pk• Pewamo silt loam. Very poorly drained, wetness a major limitation. Occupies depressional areas.

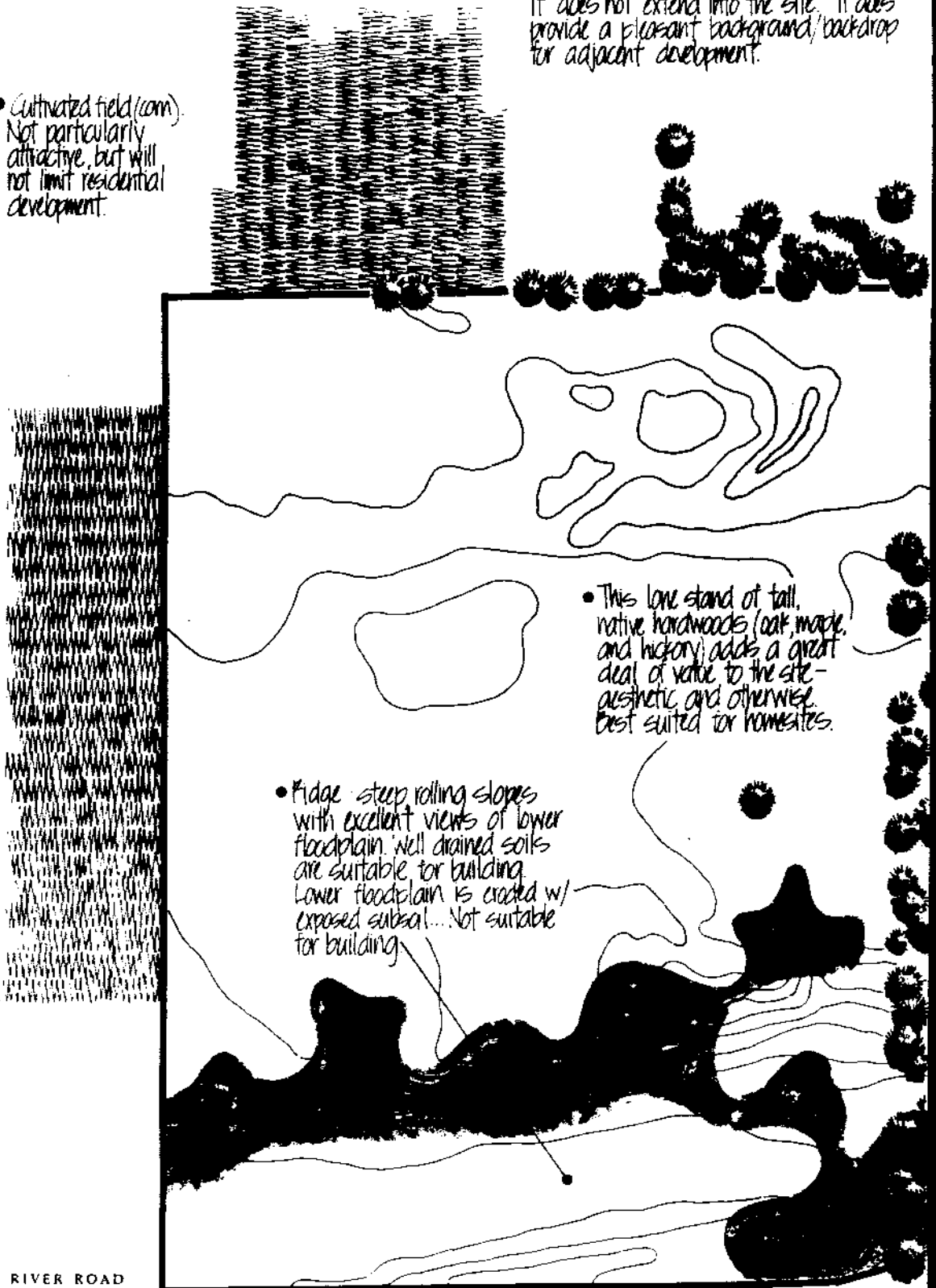




## SITE ANALYSIS

- Cultivated field (corn). Not particularly attractive, but will not limit residential development.

- Saintrye Morgan Horse farm. Property is predominantly mature woodlot with a variety of native species, including maple, oak, and hickory. The stand is tall and dense with some understory and, unfortunately, it does not extend into the site. It does provide a pleasant background/backdrop for adjacent development.

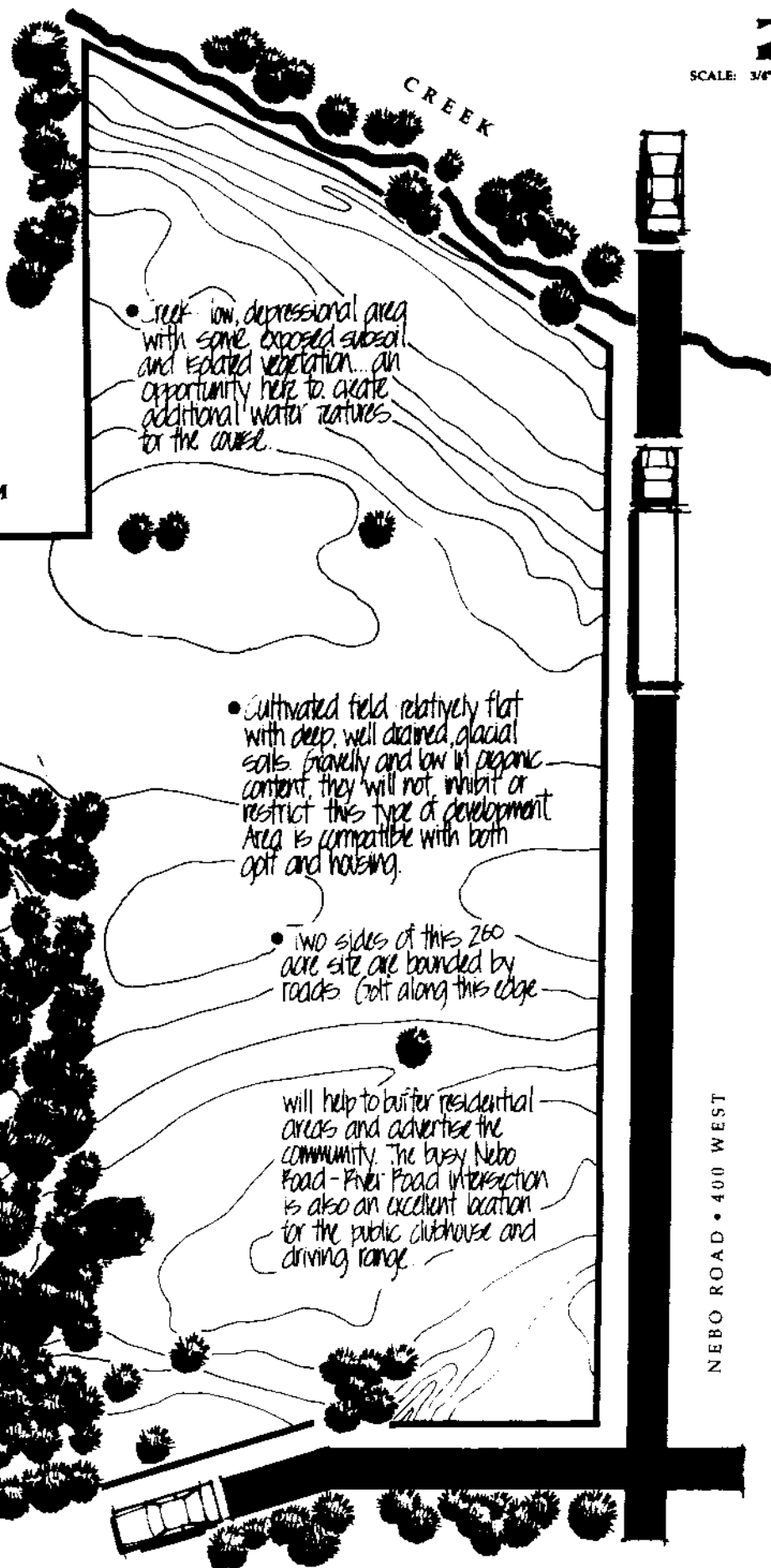


- This lone stand of tall, native hardwoods (oak, maple, and hickory) adds a great deal of value to the site - aesthetic and otherwise. Best suited for homesites.

- Ridge: steep rolling slopes with excellent views of lower floodplain. Well drained soils are suitable for building. Lower floodplain is eroded w/ exposed subsoil... Not suitable for building.



SCALE: 3/8" = 100'



FARM

• creek - low, depression area with some exposed subsoil and exposed vegetation... an opportunity here to create additional water features for the course.

• Cultivated field relatively flat with deep, well drained, glacial soils. Generally and low in organic content, they will not inhibit or restrict this type of development. Area is compatible with both golf and housing.

• Two sides of this 260 acre site are bounded by roads. Golf along this edge.

will help to buffer residential areas and advertise the community. The busy Nebo Road - River Road intersection is also an excellent location for the public clubhouse and driving range.

NEBO ROAD • 400 WEST

# Concept and Techniques

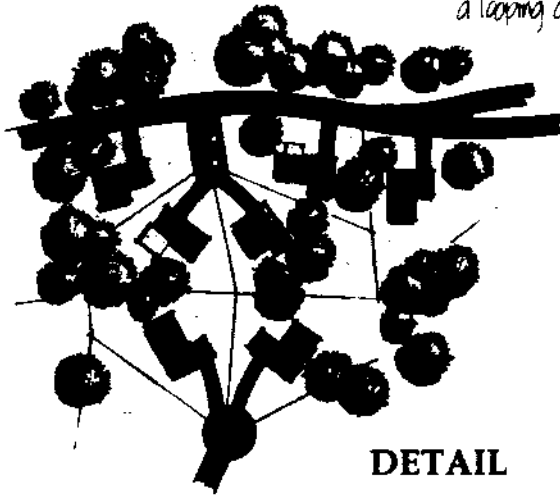
This golf course community makes use of a slightly modified double-fairway loop system, with returning nines. Both nine-hole loops begin and end at the clubhouse, located in the southeastern corner. As described earlier, this system provides the golfer with a suitably 'spacious' atmosphere and affords adjacent neighborhoods expansive views. Because the golf course is the core and central theme of this development, it reaches into all of the large residential sections.

In a very general sense, the structure and form of this golf course community relies upon hierarchy and a sense of identity. The cul-de-sacs differ in size and in form to create neighborhood atmosphere; the larger boulevards incorporate sweeping curves and broad vistas to reinforce the presence of golf. And because the presence of the golf course is so very important to the rest of this community, much of it has been "exposed". As shown on the following page, many of the methods employed by David Jensen & Associates ("Windows and Focals") have been implemented to maximize views of the course. Short winding roads with terminal cul-de-sacs have been situated so that they extend inward from windows. Views into these openings are of water features, woodlot, tees and greens (usually the latter). In some instances, several golf features are visible. The road sections that run between holes 3 and 4, 14 and 15, and 17 and 18 offer unobstructed views of golf on both sides. Golfers cross here, and also become part of the experience.

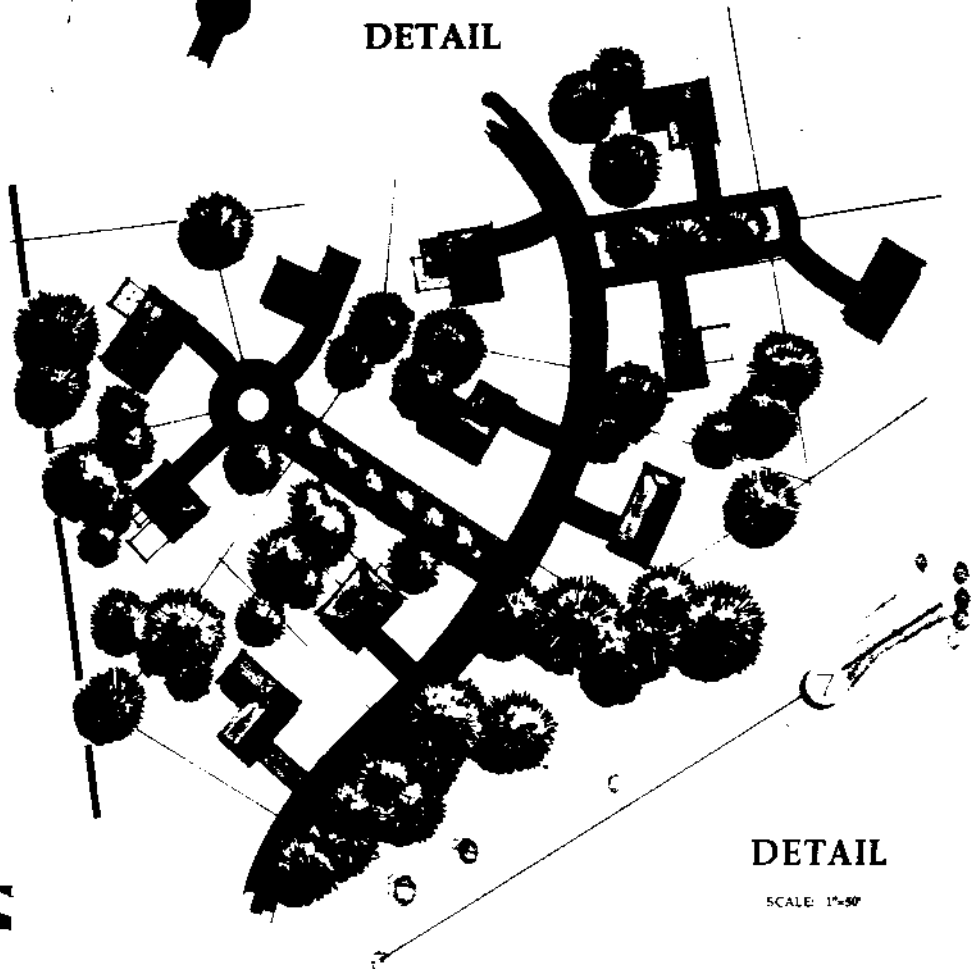


## APPLIED TECHNIQUES

- *Boulevard* - winding roads lined with tall shade trees add interest and variety to the driving experience. The boulevard helps to highlight points of interest, frame entrances and - along the broad northern stretch that brushes up against the course - buffer play, much like a setback. In this community, it also serves as a looping central spine through which all portions of the community are linked. Frontage small *de sacs* along a golf edge can increase the number of homesites with premium views. Trees - they bring a sense of definition and enclosure to the neighborhoods. They introduce verticality to an otherwise flat and uninteresting landscape. Perhaps most importantly, they reinforce and extend the presence of the course.



DETAIL



DETAIL

SCALE 1"=50'

# Master Plan

As detailed in the program, the master plan for this golf course community includes a par 72, 18-hole golf course, a clubhouse complex and 170 residential lots. Golf occupies much of the poorer land, and has been placed along the adjacent roads to buffer development and frame both entrances. In all but one instance, the holes have been double loaded, and both nine-hole loops begin and end at the clubhouse. Because the average golfer slices, most of the holes offer cushion to the right; misguided shots will therefore arc inwards, away from roads and neighboring development. Both River Road and Nebo Road have been "protected" in this manner. From a strategic standpoint, the course employs variety to challenge the golfer. Both nine-hole loops include an even mix of par 3's and 5's (two of each) and frequently vary in orientation; no more than two consecutive holes follow a given direction. Additionally, the first, eighth, ninth, and tenth holes play along woodlot. Walking distances between holes are minimal; most holes have been linked green-to-tee. Of the total 18, only three holes necessitate a walk through a residential right-of-way.

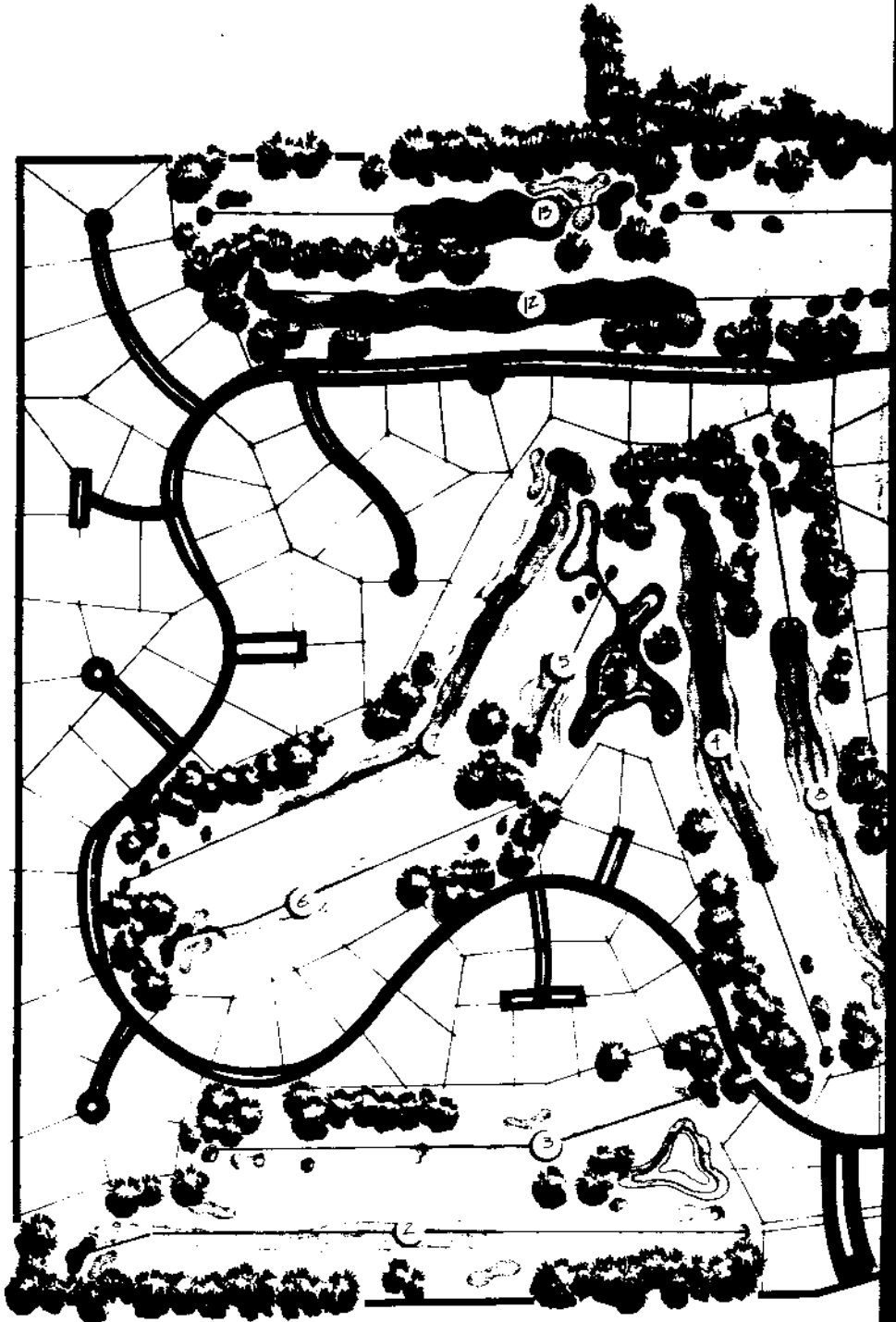
Residential portions of the community tie into a central spine, which in this case has been developed as a broad, shady boulevard with tree lined medians and gently sweeping curves. Segmented by golf into housing clusters, these sections envelope smaller neighborhoods defined by cul-de-sacs, tree lined streets, and "windows". As a whole, the community boasts 23 cul-de-sacs and 13 "windows", each unique in identity, character, and view. The 170 lot total includes 115 frontage, or "golf edge" lots and 35 wooded sites. Properties range from 1/3 of an acre to a full acre in size. . .



# MASTER PLAN

• As shown in this plan, the community features a par 72, 18-hole golf course, a driving range, a clubhouse, and 170 single family lots. In accordance with this project's emphasis upon "view," the master plan includes 115 frontage lots and 13 windows that expose attractive portions of the course (specifically, tees, greens, and water features).  
Composition: 85 1/3 (+) acre lots, 70 1/2 (+) acre lots, 15 3/4 (+) acre lots.

CULTIVATED FIELD

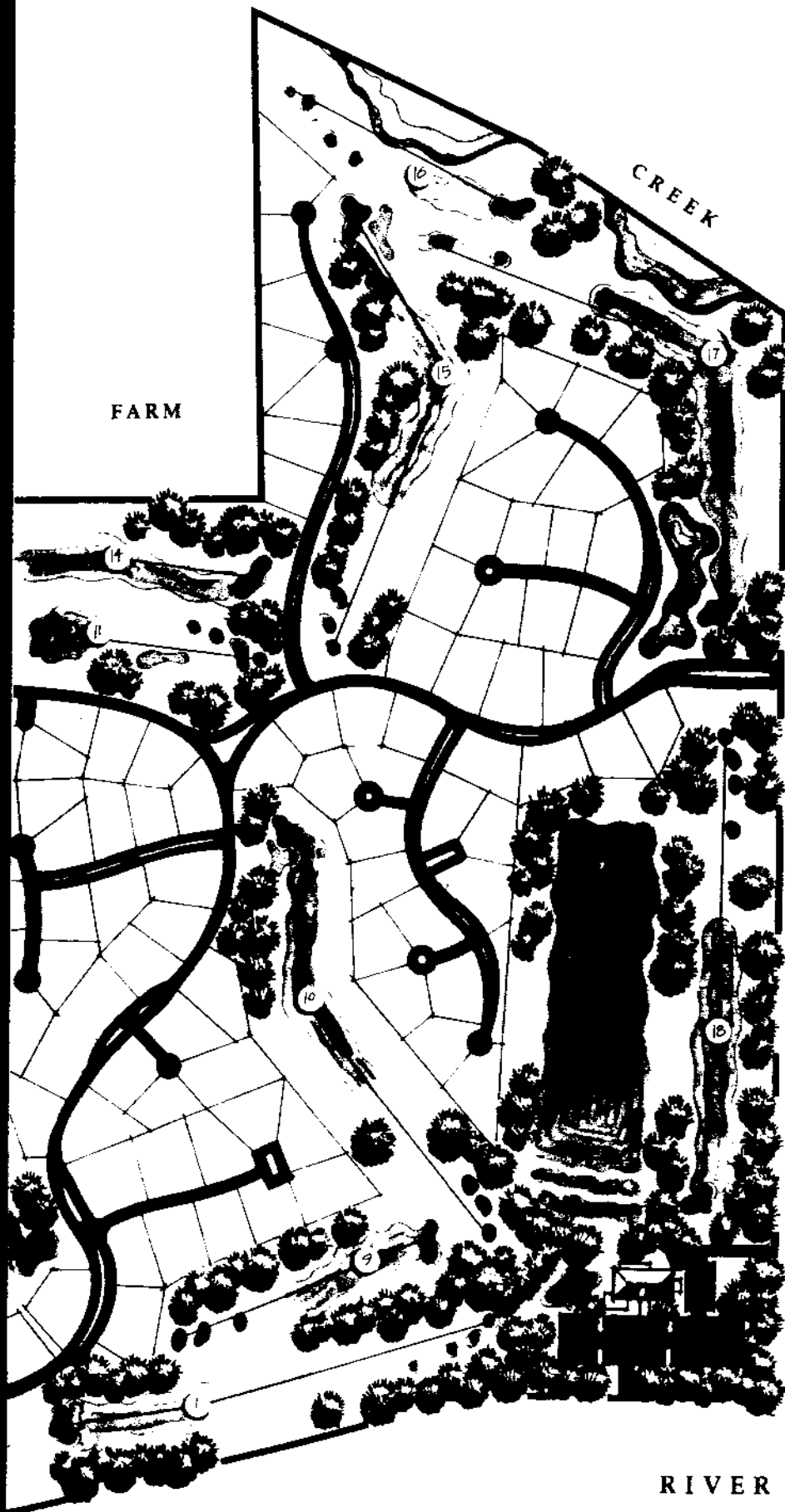


RIVER ROAD





SCALE: 3/4"=100'



FARM

CREEK

NEBO ROAD • 400 W

CLUBHOUSE

RIVER ROAD

## Lot Size

## Number of Homesites

1/3 acre +	85
1/2 acre +	70
3/4 acre +	15

The clubhouse complex sits alone in the southeastern corner of the development, visible and accessible from the busy Nebo-River Road intersection. An icon and an advertisement for the image of this community, the clubhouse adjoins golf, and golf only.

## **Conclusion**

The golf course community is a complex kind of being; it must respond to, and attempt to balance, a number of variables. Because it is a residential community, and, also a golf course, it must account for two perspectives: Homeowner, and golfer. Traditionally, the former has been sacrificed or compromised to some extent.

Land use plans that are designed merely to maximize golf frontage do not necessarily maximize overall real estate values. Land values are maximized by strategic lot siting that provides a mix of lots fronting and looking into the course, and by a plan that makes it feel as if the golf component belongs to the whole community.

(Anderson, 1991)

No two homeowners have exactly the same preferences when it comes to view or lot size or location. And it doesn't matter. Because "equitable distribution of value", in this case, simply means *more of a good thing*.

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