



Creating a State-of-the-Art Clubhouse Experience at Sea Pines Country Club

This blog post is an excerpt from the April-May issue of Club Management Magazine in which the club received nation recognition from the Club Managers Association of America (CMAA)

By Shane Sharp

There was a time not long ago when the phrase “state of the art” and clubhouse were decidedly at odds with each other. The notion of a “traditional” county club invoked visions of stately red-brick exteriors and baroque interiors, collectively casting a level exclusivity that struck fear (and loathing) among younger generations.

Fast-forward to 2020 and clubs throughout the U.S. are not only on the leading edge of architectural and interior design, many are setting trends evoking envy among their private sector peers. In doing so, they are becoming eminently more approachable and appealing to a more diverse set of members and prospects.

“Technology is the main ingredient in state-of-the-art design and clubs investing in tech that provides entertainment will win the day,” said Tom Hoch, president of Tom Hoch Design. “For example, golf simulators paired with creative food and beverage, social zones, arcade gaming and even bowling take the member experience to a new level and increase a club’s revenue like never before.”



Hoch and his team are amid a reimagining of the Des Moines (Iowa) Golf and Country Club that includes the creation of “Dye’s Den.” A golf simulator-focused game room modeled after the TopGolf and Drive Shack concepts, Dye’s Den features a synthetic putting green, full-service bar and cozy couches for lounging with friends.

“The space for Dye’s Den was created by relocating the golf cart and golf club storage,” Hoch said. “It will host league play, club fitting, parties and more. The buzz around the club is palpable and it is still a year away from reality.”

Club innovation often manifests in food and beverage, namely casual dining on-trend enough to compete with even the most popular restaurants in a given market.

“We are hearing from many clubs we work with about the need for destination style restaurants and bars,” said Kristin Nichols, principal with interior design firm Larson Nichols. “This is achieved by creating different dining venues with their own style and even naming and creating their own logo for these restaurants.”

State-of-the-art design can also vary by region depending upon not only climate, but meteorological patterns and directional orientation. Grady Woods, president of Grady L. Woods Architects, works predominantly on projects in the Southeastern U.S. He sees a blurring of the lines between indoor and outdoor areas as a trend that will carry on well beyond 2020.

“Some of the most advanced design techniques and materials are those that integrate interior and exterior spaces,” Woods said. “Members who move south and join clubs where the climate allows them to be outside year-round want to be outside year-round.”

Sea Pines Country Club

Case in point being Sea Pines Country Club, tucked inside the gates of Sea Pines Plantation on Hilton Head Island. The club’s “Vision 2020” plan adopted in 2016 called for a complete transformation and modernization of the club’s dining, fitness and pool facilities.



Club leadership recognized an opportunity to enhance the clubhouse’s relationship to its location, namely its enviable setting along one of the island’s most expansive tidal marshes. Woods worked closely with the board and General Manager and Chief Operating Officer Robbie Ames to develop a series of connections between the built and natural environment.

“Our views of the tidal marsh are uniquely Lowcountry and a major ‘wow factor’ for the club, and it was important that we accentuate that strength,” Ames said. “We wanted members to be able to enjoy more of the outdoors and the panorama without leaving the club.”

A new screened in patio was added during the first phase of the project allowing members eating at the new Blue Heron Pub and Grille to dine alfresco. Providing even more proximity to the marsh, a new brick paver outdoor patio and firepit was built just steps from the outdoor dining.

A bocce ball court was added in February near the firepit amid a copse of live oaks, creating an indelible connection between indoor and outdoor amenities that was previously non-existent.

“That area by the clubhouse wasn’t being utilized and it is one of the most beautiful spots on property,” Woods said. “Now, the club takes full advantage of its setting.”



Also part of phase one, the pool deck overlooking the marsh was resurfaced, a new splash pool and shade structure were installed, and the indoor saline lap pool was fully renovated.

Phase two, completed last year, created an additional connection to the pool area with the opening of a new fitness center with a lively grab-and-go café serving fresh entrees, small plates and espresso drinks.

A working herb and vegetable garden just beyond the edge of the pool deck supplied the finishing touch on Sea Pines Country Club's complete renaissance.

To learn more about memberships at Sea Pines Country Club, click [here](#) or contact Nic Booth at (843) 671-2335 or nbooth@seapinescountryclub.com.

Shane Sharp is a golf writer based in Greenville, S.C. He's a contributing editor at GOLF Magazine, and a regular contributor to Palmetto Golfer.