

# *Proposal for*

## **Corry North Hills Golf Course**

Presented By:

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“Innovation Through Collaboration” Program

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### **Introduction/Background**

Corry North Hills Golf Course is a community asset of Corry, PA. “Due to predetermined requirements and specified agreements, the course cannot be leased or sold nor can it be developed.” The team was asked to “find creative ways to use the vast amount of land and other assets beyond the golf course to generate income to allow for continued maintenance and optimum use of the assets.”

This 18 hole course enjoys a historic good reputation for its design and overall beauty from golfers in the region. It has regularly attracted golfers from a 30-40 mile radius but that has declined over the last few years. Issues driving the decline have included pricing relative to other options and overall maintenance.

Golf is popular near Corry and there is no shortage of choices in the region. There are 3 courses in Corry and 10 more in a 20 mile radius. While the pandemic initially negatively affected golf courses, according to the National Golf Foundation and Golf Datatech, rounds played have increased significantly toward the end of 2020 and into 2021.

- November 2020 up 56.5% compared to November 2019
- All of 2020 up 13.9% vs. all of 2019

Also according to the National Golf Foundation:

- 1 out of every 3 Americans age 6 and up either played a round of golf, watched the sport, or read about it in 2019.
- 34.2 Million Americans aged 6 and up played a round of golf either on a course or off (simulator) in 2019.
- 2.5 Million Americans played golf for the first time in 2019.
- The largest category of golfers is the 18-34 year old age range with 6.1 million on course participants and another 3.9 million off course participants. Both of these categories have stayed steady over the past 5-6 years.
- 2.5 Million Juniors played on a golf course in 2019. This has also been a stable number fluctuating between 2.5 and 3 million each year over the past several years.
- 36% of Juniors are girls today compared to 15% in 2000.
- 5.6 Million of on-course golfers are female.
- 15.6 Million people who didn't play in 2019 said they would be “very interested” in playing on a golf course. This represents significant “latent” demand.

And, those were the 2019 numbers. According to Golf Digest, [“Golf’s Surge in Popularity in 2020 Was Even Better Than Predicted.”](#)

Finally, Penn State University recently released research indicating that pursuit of outdoor activity has increased as a result of the pandemic.

These data points are, of course, national and there are no similar data for the Corry region specifically. Compiling that data would have been outside the scope of this project. However, it is appropriate to translate these national numbers to the population in the Corry region. The growth of Junior players, female players, and the latent opportunities are largely what this proposal is based upon. The fact remains that there is a lot of upside for Corry North Hills Golf Course and the steps required to capture this upside are not complicated.

### **Decision Makers**

This project was spearheaded by Impact Corry led by Chuck Gray. Key decision makers regarding this project include the following individuals:

- Mayor
- Members of City Council
- Les Utegg, Superintendent of Corry North Hills Golf Course

### **Problem Statement**

Due to the increasingly competitive golf market in the area, a problematic political relationship, and a lack of updates and maintenance, Corry North Hills is not currently able to be a completely self-sustaining entity that benefits the entire Corry area and the region.

### **Alternatives**

In this case, several alternatives were considered and eliminated from consideration. Some include:

Disc Golf on the property.

- Close proximity to traditional golfers would actually result in a reduction of traditional golfers utilizing the course.
- Difficult terrain would require significant expense to develop into a viable disc golf course.
- Trees and land would need to be cleared to create fairways, tees, and holes.
- There are very few (and none in the area) examples of disc golf courses that generate revenue. Most disc golf courses are on public park space and open to the community to play.
- *This could very well be a great addition to an existing municipal park as a way to enhance quality of life and it would not require ongoing investment other than mowing/maintenance once it is constructed.*

Foot Golf on the property.

- Similar to the disc golf considerations above. This MAY be something that could be added as an additional attraction on another part of the property at some point but it would only be as a “value add” and not a priority nor would this have any significant impact right now.

## Driving Range

- Only currently one viable location on the property.
- Practice tees would be either near the driveway and hitting to a narrowing space toward #18 tee or the practice tees would be located near the #18 tee and hitting uphill toward the driveway.
- Could be considered in the future if adjacent land becomes available.
- Costly to develop and still not enough room to be effective.
- *If property becomes available, this should be investigated but at this time, it is out of the control of anyone related to the course.*

## Recommendation

Based on our analysis, interviews with the stakeholders, interviews with similar courses in PA and OH, and our own observations of the course and its facilities, the focus for this area should remain GOLF and Corry North Hills Golf Course should implement the following actions over a 1 year, 2-3 year, and 4 year period.

All of these recommendations take into consideration the impact on the following target groups:

- Existing golfers--those that regularly play Corry North Hills.
- Lost golfers--those that have played there in the past but have opted to focus on other courses.
- "Latent" golfers—those who would like to start golfing but haven't.
- Junior golfers.
- Women golfers.

Each part recommendation will link to which target groups it will address and how.

## Year 1

These items are critical to the perception and "curb appeal" of Corry North Hills and to Les' desire to grow the course utilization to 25000 rounds a year. These items will provide immediate impact on existing golfers as they arrive at the course for the first time this season.

### *Before the beginning of the season*

1. Re-Establish Golf Commission
  - a. This should be a completely separate entity and operate with autonomy under clear guidelines for the benefit of the ongoing success and sustainability of Corry North Hills.
2. Create "General Manager" position
  - a. This frees up Les to focus on the course itself as well as allows Ron to focus on duties more appropriate for a PGA golf pro.
  - b. Would handle day-to-day business of the course
    - i. Inventory
    - ii. Food sales/prep
    - iii. Sales (except outings—that would be Ron)
    - iv. Producing reports for the Golf Commission
      1. Rounds played
      2. Revenue
      3. Etc.
    - v. Scheduling
    - vi. Coordinating with Les
  - c. Paid hourly for length of season

3. Select new food items
  - a. Higher quality dogs, brats, burgers, and grilled chicken patties.
  - b. Higher quality buns
  - c. Easy, grab and go, but good quality.
  - d. Consider updating food prep equipment if necessary
  - e. This will be managed by new GM
  - f. Consider Maplevale Farms as a supplier
    - i. Excellent quality with local connection
  - g. Quality food would encourage more “after round” lingering
    - i. Improved alcohol sales.
4. Clean up landscaping around Club House and Cart House
  - a. Trim/remove shrubbery
  - b. Plant grass
  - c. Minor cost. May even be able to get volunteers to complete this work in exchange for rounds of golf.
5. Paint/Repair exterior of Club House and Cart House
  - a. Some of the wood trim needs repaired.
  - b. Critical to the “curb appeal” of the course.
  - c. Est \$2000-\$4000 material and labor
6. Repair cart path
  - a. Dig out failed areas and properly provide foundation for new asphalt
  - b. \$500 per affected area (at least 8 areas with immediate need for total cost of approximately \$4000)
7. Repair bridges
  - a. At least one immediate need
  - b. Est \$1000
8. Replace sign on #3
  - a. Est \$500
9. Freshen sand traps
  - a. Consider converting some to grass bunkers for easier/lower cost maintenance
  - b. New sand in as many traps as possible
  - c. Est. unknown given unknown current cost of sand.
    - i. However, a course we are aware of was able to re-sand 10 bunkers for about \$3000 a couple years ago.

*\*Marketing the course and the improvements that are happening/ongoing will be critical to the success of this plan. First, golfers should SEE things happening at the course as they arrive for the first time in the season. Second, social media should emphasize all the updates, improvements, and plans in order to create excitement for what is happening. The Golf Commission along with the General Manager need to continually look for ways to increase the awareness of the “new” or “updated” Corry North Hills.*

#### *Early in Season*

1. Rearrange interior of clubhouse.
  - a. Move chips display (takes up way too much space and does not need to be in the seating area.
  - b. Organize seating area to take advantage of view/windows.
    - i. New furniture in future.
2. Build 10x10 addition for golf pro office
  - a. Reclaims space inside.

- b. Improves appearance of interior.
- c. Locate off Southeast corner of clubhouse onto patio.
  - i. Takes some patio space that is not being used.
  - ii. To the right of the door to patio from clubhouse
- d. \$5000-\$8000
  - i. Baseboard heat
  - ii. Window a/c
- 3. Golf pro would be able to use this space to schedule lessons, book outings, and manage the pro shop.
- 4. Consider moving pro shop items closer to this room.
  - a. Creates a more defined space for pro-shop vs. eating area.

### Year 2-3

- 1. Move to cart leasing program
  - a. Having one-brand of carts improves perception of the course.
  - b. Maintenance costs are built in to leasing program.
  - c. New carts possible every three years.
  - d. Controlled/plannable cash flows.
  - e. Increased golfer satisfaction.
- 2. Update/Improve Patio space
  - a. Replace/Freshen up furniture (Est \$300-4000 depending on if furniture is painted or replaced)
    - i. Could be as simple as cleaning and painting
  - b. Add TV (Est \$300)
  - c. Hang "bare bulb" lighting over the space. (Est \$200)
  - d. Expand patio footprint. (Est \$25000)
    - i. Extend patio another 10 linear feet to the East.
    - ii. Will require concrete, compacted dirt fill, and retaining wall construction.
    - iii. Provides significantly increased gathering space that could make the course more popular for outings and other events.
  - e. Cover expanded area with sail-style canvas shade. (Est \$1500)

### 4+ Years

- 1. Golf simulator (Est \$25000)
  - a. Models vary in price dramatically
  - b. Develops year-round business
  - c. Est revenue generation based on 6 hours of use/day, 7 days a week, over the 4 off months (672 hours) at \$25/hr.
    - i. \$16,800
  - d. Additional revenue during the regular season for warm-up, driving range activity.
  - e. Additional revenue from increase golf pro usage.
  - f. Location options
    - i. Enclose patio area and place simulator in NW corner of Clubhouse where eating area currently is.
    - ii. Build addition off the SW corner near the golf pro office and pro shop.
      - 1. This is preferred as it preserves the view of the course from the clubhouse.
    - iii. Need 15-18 ft width and as little as 10 ft deep.

- iv. Recommended at least 10 ft ceiling.

## Implementation

We recommend that the items above be implemented in the order that they are presented in this report. The benefit of this is that it builds excitement for the improvements in the course because something will be happening consistently over the next few years.

Consider the following additional steps:

### *Year 1*

1. Hiring GM—perhaps an existing employee would be a good candidate.
  - a. As stated above, responsibilities could include
    - i. Daily operations of the course
      1. Scheduling labor
      2. Booking tee times
      3. Inventory management (except pro-shop items)
      4. Food prep/sales
      5. Customer service
      6. Preparation of reports for Golf Commission
      7. This person could also deal with social media outlets to promote everything that is going on with the course.
        - a. If not the GM, then someone needs to be designated to do that and the GM should be involved in deciding what is promoted online.
    - ii. Partner with Superintendent for the running of the course
    - iii. GM and Superintendent report to Golf Commission quarterly or as needed.
2. Have Maplevale Farms chef present options for new food items at the course.
  - a. Could provide a “taste test” for Golf Commission, new GM, and Superintendent
3. Reach out to current members to offer “free round of golf” coupon in exchange for “clean the landscape” day at the Clubhouse.
  - a. Cost is negligible.
  - b. Superintendent can create a list of landscaping items to be done.
  - c. People can come with their own tools and even pick which projects they want to work on.
4. Have existing maintenance crew prep Club House and Cart House for paint.
  - a. They may be able to do the necessary repairs on trim, walls, patching, etc. to prep for paint.
  - b. Consider having the crew paint. Could save on total cost.
5. Select most critical areas of the cart path to repair/replace
  - a. Prioritize based on condition.
  - b. Consider hiring city crews to do the work.
6. Consider having simple, wooden, flat bridge constructed to replace damaged bridge.
  - a. This could likely be handled by Les and the crew with existing equipment.
7. Contact sign company for estimate on replacing sign on #3.
  - a. Should be the same design as every other sign on the course.
8. Determine how many bunkers need re-sanded or could/should be converted to grass bunkers.
  - a. Get estimate on sand.

- b. Labor can be handled by Les.
- 9. Remove any unnecessary items from seating area
  - a. Chips get moved to smaller rack behind the counter.
  - b. Arrange seating area to take advantage of the view and create as much “feel” of large space as possible.
  - c. Perhaps see if a local interior designer would donate their services to assist in this.
- 10. Get estimates from local construction firms for the creation of new office space for golf pro.
  - a. Consider using existing window opening in SW corner of wall to create door for the new pro office.
  - b. Pro office should have windows at least so that pro can view practice green from the office.
- 11. Relocate pro shop items to space outside the new pro office.

#### *Year 2-3*

1. Determine how many golf carts the course needs ideally
2. Contact golf cart leasing companies (at least three)
  - a. Have those companies provide bids for leasing the number of carts you have determined you need.
  - b. Include regular maintenance
  - c. Trade in program to new lease
  - d. Consider a 3 year program
3. Contact local concrete contractors to give estimate for a 10 ft extension of patio to the East.
  - a. Will require building up base and creating of retaining wall.
    - i. Does not need to be a decorative retaining wall in order to save cost.
    - ii. Face of retaining wall can be covered with landscape items.
  - b. Construction of the extended patio can take place during the season if needed.
    - i. Should not interfere with playability of the course.
    - ii. Temporary impact on outdoor seating area.
4. Determine if patio furniture can be refreshed/painted or need to be replaced.
  - a. Consider need for additional pieces to accommodate expanded footprint of the patio.
5. Existing crew can complete the following items:
  - a. Installation of TV
  - b. Installation of sun shade
  - c. Installation of lights
  - d. GM can create list of options for the purchase of each of those items

#### *Year 4+*

1. With golf pro, determine needed/desired features of golf simulators.
  - a. Create list of models and prices
  - b. Determine needed space
  - c. Determine potential locations in the clubhouse or for an addition
  - d. Determine initial pricing structure
    - i. Recommend starting with:
      1. \$25/hr. (it takes about 1 hr to play 18 holes)
      2. Consider discounts for purchase of multi-hour cards
      3. Consider creating simulator leagues
      4. Consider discounted rates for Members of the course
      5. Consider creating a simulator-only membership

6. Determine hours of operation/availability
  7. Determine hours to block for pro/lessons
  8. Determine staffing needs
2. Get necessary estimates for the construction of the location for the simulator.
  3. Keep in mind the possibility for the addition of a second simulator when determining location.
    - a. In other words, it would be good to choose a location that can easily be made to accommodate a second sim without having to re-think everything when that time comes.

## **Evaluation**

The following items should be considered as a means to evaluate the success of this effort over the next couple years.

1. Rounds played
  - a. Les' goal is to get to 25000/yr.
    - i. 2021 rounds played was around 18000
2. Total Revenue
  - a. This would include food, pro-shop sales, lessons, memberships, etc.
3. Memberships
  - a. Should show a growth over the previous year
    - i. We would not expect significant growth this year because the projects will just be starting. 2023 season should show membership growth.
4. Pro-related revenue.
  - a. With the new office, the addition of a GM, and more time to devote to being a golf pro, we would expect revenue related to golf pro activities to increase year over year.
5. Outings
  - a. With the improvement to the curb appeal and course maintenance, we would expect to see booked outings increase in 2023 and beyond.

*\*We would suggest that reporting be developed by the new GM that would provide a quarterly snapshot of these items related to the same period the year prior. This reporting could/should be provided to the Golf Commission.*