

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Town of Dryden commissioned Tallman & Demarest Architects, LLP to develop a feasibility study for the Lakeview Golf Course. The objective of the study was to determine the viability of the existing golf course design and whether or not it is in the Town's best interest to purchase and/or operate the facility.

The study includes a review of the Town's open space planning objectives, the current golf demand by way of a comprehensive report by the National Golf Foundation, a review of the past, current, and future golf operation, and an assessment of the design of the golf course facility.

This study does not include a comprehensive financial or legal analysis of the existing golf course or future land-use possibilities. This is primarily a review of the design of the golf course with some discussion of the operation and golf demand as it informs the relative quality of design.

Following are a list of key findings and recommendations developed in response to the information gathered. It is important to note that much of this study is based on objective facts but some of it is based on subjective information provided to the study team as well as our own subjective interpretations. In other words, the following are our professional opinions as architects and designers. The Town Board may need further consultation with an attorney and accountant to develop a final decision regarding the fate of the golf course.

Key Findings

1. The Town of Dryden Conservation Advisory Council recognizes the Lakeview Golf Course (abutting Dryden Lake) as an important managed open space asset.
2. There is an oversupply of value-fee golf courses in the local golf market and an under-supply of standard and premium golf courses.
3. There are presently two 18-hole standard-fee golf facilities, both in Cortland, in development.
4. It is apparent that the management of the course has diminished over the past several years with a significant decrease in revenue.
5. The course has been operated with the bare minimum of maintenance.
6. The operation and revenue of the facility when it was 9-holes was once very similar to the City of Ithaca municipal golf course with revenue and expenses about even.
7. An 18-hole facility has far greater potential to be profitable than a 9-hole facility.
8. The Lakeview golf course made only one-fifth of the projected revenue during its first year as an 18-hole facility and significantly LESS revenue than it made as a 9-hole facility.
9. Nationwide there has been a trend towards municipally owned golf facilities becoming operated by private individuals or companies.
10. This is a picturesque golf course with incredible views of Dryden Lake and the surrounding rural landscape.

11. However, there are a number of serious design flaws including greens that are too small and unplayable, holes that are too close together, blind greens and hazards, and a clubhouse and maintenance buildings in need of structural upgrades and renovation.

General Recommendations

1. It is recommended that the Town ensure that the land currently comprising the golf course remains a managed open space asset for the members of the Dryden community.
2. It is not advised that the Town attempt to keep the golf course as an 18-hole facility in its current configuration.
3. However, it is advised that the Town attempts to keep all of the parcels together as one managed facility to prevent the loss of opportunity to develop the golf course into an 18-hole facility at a later date.

It does not seem to matter if the Town accomplishes these general recommendations directly through purchasing the golf course or somehow assisting a private individual to take control of the facility.

It might be feasible to provide a private owner/operator with tax abatements or other incentives in exchange for adopting an environmental strategy consistent with the Town's goals regarding managed open space assets.

Short-Term Goals

A number of short-term goals have been identified. These goals should be achieved within the next 1 to 2 golfing seasons.

4. It is recommended that a fair and enjoyable 9-hole layout be reconstructed – preferably the original 9-hole layout with only minor modifications.
5. The golf club needs a qualified energetic, trained business manager who understands the operation of a successful golf club, its employees, and the administration of a profitable restaurant.
6. The manager should attempt to restore the nightly leagues, tournaments, outings, and overall golfer camaraderie.
7. Capital improvements should include purchasing new equipment and rebuilding a limited number of greens and tees.
8. The facility should incorporate an environmental strategy that includes participation in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program.

The facility could have a small amount of positive net income but will unlikely have significant revenue as a 9-hole layout and may possibly lose money during the short-term period.

Long-Term Goals

Long-term goals should be achieved within the next 2 to 5 years.

9. Additional land should be acquired to construct either a full-length 18-hole facility that is competitive with the other value and standard fee golf courses in the area OR a high quality 9-hole course with market rate housing lots incorporated into a golf community.
10. The expanded facility would abandon most of the existing holes and establish a more fair and enjoyable golf experience for the local golfer with a high enough quality to attract repeat visitors from surrounding counties.
11. The existing clubhouse and maintenance buildings should be either completely renovated with structural upgrades or replaced with modest yet functional buildings.
12. The expanded facility should allow for an expanded environmental buffer and multi-use trail around Dryden Lake if possible as well as other non-golf, year-round education and recreational opportunities for the community.

An 18-hole facility has much greater revenue potential than a 9-hole facility. There are currently two new 18-hole courses in development within a 10-mile radius of the Lakeview course. It is difficult to say that Lakeview could be a successful 18-hole facility unless it can differentiate itself within the value and standard-fee golf market. With this in mind, a higher quality 9-hole facility surrounded by market-rate housing might be a more appropriate land use.