



# **Municipal Golf as a Whole-in-One Investment in Sustainable Development** New Paradigms of Possibility

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## About Driving the Green

At [Driving the Green](#), we strive for a future where golf provides a foundation that creates equity, prosperity and sustainability for the communities where the game lives.

We are a full-service consultancy focused on supporting municipal golf facilities and regional associations in their quest to drive economic growth for their operation, social prosperity for their local community and environmental revitalization for their surrounding ecosystems, integrating multi-level diversity through all three.

We use our platform to share the stories, opportunities and strategies that connect ideas, solutions and stakeholders with a future that is resilient, regenerative and reciprocal. We connect the dots to bridge sustainability theory into practice through each stakeholder's context.

## About this paper

We believe municipal golf has the power to “[provide substantive support and capacity building](#)” to meet some of our most basic human needs. We wrote this paper to highlight the immense opportunity golf has to address some of our world's greatest challenges.

We used the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals framework as a blueprint to show how golf is currently supporting global sustainable development and the opportunities available for municipal golf to provide the inspiration and guidance needed for your facility to become a pillar of your local community.

# 17 SDGs + 1 Game

## **Municipal golf is primed to shift paradigms of possibility and address seventeen Sustainable Development Goals through one game.**

Municipal golf can be a cornerstone of how municipalities meet the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. Each golf course holds the opportunity to become a center of community and personal Well-Being that regenerates natural systems, meets a diversity of deep underlying needs and provides meaningful workforce development.

Historically, golf shows cyclical growth in participation and revenue. Its success depends upon a booming economy and stable weather patterns. Neither factor is sustainable or reliable.

Opportunity remains for golf to build resilience by reversing the growth model, instead positioning itself to grow the economy and stabilize the climate through regenerative design. The economy grows golf; golf grows the economy. Yet, the economy is just one system, nested within other systems of ecology and civilization. Every golf course holds the potential to support economic growth while addressing a range of global Sustainable Development Goals and introducing new beginners to the game's timeless lessons and principles.

Municipal golf in particular provides the ideal point of affordable access that offers beginners a model of golf that is fun, inclusive and measurably regenerative – a model that heals both its players and the natural resources upon which it is played; a model of golf that acts as a bridge between local and global.

Municipal golf courses are primarily located in urban environments as the affordable access point to discover golf. By 2050, two-thirds of the US population will live in urban environments. Moreover, a majority of that population will be non-white, and still over half will be women. Yet today, just 24% of on-course golfers are women and under 20% are non-white.

Golf's early history in Scotland was an inclusive model that turned underutilized "linksland" into a fun game and a mirror for the wide expression of our deepest personal qualities, while connecting communities through a landscape that bridges nature with civilization.

Municipal golf is primed for a renaissance that provides intrinsic meaning for both players and providers. It will facilitate human connection while meeting our full hierarchy of needs, including even our most basic survival needs through food production, carbon sequestration, wastewater management and restoring ecosystem services – among many possibilities.

Municipal golf can lead a story of hope, joy and alignment of our play instincts with the higher purpose of bettering life – for the player, for surrounding communities and the planet.

The following presents a bridge between the (seemingly im-)possible and the practical:

- ❖ **Why** Municipal Golf is a Whole-in-One Investment
- ❖ **How** Municipal Golf Can Grow the Economy While Meeting Everyone's Needs
- ❖ **Who** Will Help You Drive the Green at Every Level
- ❖ **What** the Golf Industry Can Do to Address Sustainable Development (**Appendix**)

# Why Municipal Golf is a Whole-in-One Investment

Envisioning new paradigms of possibility

## **Golf transforms the economy (and thus the world)**

Golf's participants include some of the most influential leaders in the world. It is a "game of presidents" sponsored by the most powerful firms in energy, banking, finance and hospitality. Golf is also at the heart of business (an [estimated 90%](#) of Fortune 500 CEOs play golf). Business affects democracy and holds arguably more power in today's civilization than governments. Through its social, financial and natural capital, the golf industry holds the keys to unlock meaningful change and sustainable value creation.

Municipal golf represents the lifeblood of golf participation. If municipal facilities can lead the golf industry in a new direction of fun, inclusion and regenerative ecological design, then the sport of golf may inspire its broader business context to align profit with people and the planet. Golf may soon serve as **a model of what civilization could be** – providing equal opportunity and regeneration, healing people and the planet through play.

## **Golf creates abundance for ecology, community and economy.**

Golf's existence depends on a healthy biosphere and healthy participants. No sport relies on the environment quite like golf, but no other sport can address ecology, community and economy with golf's breadth and magnitude.

Golf does not need to be a net cost to municipalities. If it is to be supplemented by taxpayer funding, then golf must position itself to help municipal governments achieve sustainable development goals, ensuring long-term and holistic value creation for communities. Better yet, let's imagine **municipal golf designing itself beyond cost reduction and harm mitigation**. Municipal golf leads communities toward health, happiness, safety, education and connection, replacing scarcity with abundance and designing itself beyond zero-sum trade-offs, while providing triple-win returns for community, ecology and economy.

## **Golf provides Well-Being for all (with emphasis on Being)**

Providing Well-Being means **welcoming diversity to the golf course in every possible way** – diversity of participants, recreational options and revenue streams, diversity of flora and fauna, and at the broadest level, welcoming diversity in expression or ways of Being.

Leading sustainable development is about embracing possibilities and inviting everyone into the value creation for community, ecology and economy. Golf meets underlying needs by reconnecting us to nature, our loved ones and the latent potential within ourselves. Golf tournaments and events provide outlets for nonprofits to fundraise, supporting crucial social programs, while the game itself leads to [longer lifespans](#).

# How Municipal Golf Can Grow the Economy While Meeting Everyone's Needs

**Social programming** will invite golfers and non-golfers alike while developing vital community relationships and partnerships.

## Workforce Development

Municipal golf facilities set in urban areas are often in need of labor in both quality and quantity. The [Western Golf Association Evans Scholar Foundation](#) assists golf courses with establishing and developing youth caddie programs and provides full tuition and housing college scholarships for high-achieving caddies.

### Outcomes of Implementation

In 2020, there were 1,045 Evans Scholars at 19 universities with 50% of them coming from homes with less than \$70,000 in household income.

## Food Waste Reduction

Food waste comprises 40% of what is sent to the landfill. Food waste and other organic materials emit methane gas as it decomposes. According to the [EPA](#), methane accounts for 20% of global GHG emissions and is 25% more potent than carbon dioxide in contributing to global climate change.

### Outcomes of Implementation

[North Shore Country Club](#) turns their facility's food waste into vermicompost, creating a soil amendment that enhances their course's soil structure, reducing water usage and lowering irrigation, fertilizer and supply chain costs.

## STEM Education

Providing quality STEM (Science, Tech, Engineering, Math) education opportunities for students of all socioeconomic backgrounds is vital to ensuring that future leaders are prepared to handle the ecological and economic challenges of the Anthropocene.

### Outcomes of Implementation

The GCSAA's [First Green](#) pairs golf courses with local schools for unique STEM learning programs designed to inspire students to pursue STEM education and career opportunities. A 2017 report from the [U.S. Dept. of Commerce](#) shows that STEM educated workers earn 29% higher wages than those in non-STEM related fields.

# How Municipal Golf Can Grow the Economy While Meeting Everyone's Needs

**Ecological design** creates regenerative impacts while reducing cost structure and/or generating new revenue streams (thus improving affordability and accessibility).

## Biochar

The world's healthiest natural grasslands with the deepest roots occur in charred, carbon-rich soils. Biochar is a soil amendment that mimics the charred biomass that develops naturally after wildfires. Like their natural counterparts, biochar amendments allow for healthy, biodiverse soils that drain effectively.

### Outcomes of implementation

[Biochar](#) can save golf courses a conservative estimate of 30-40% in water consumption and other inputs, according to Will Bowden of New Zealand Turf Management Solutions and David Disbrow of Universal Biocarbon.

## Living water treatment technologies

Several [cost-effective water remediation technologies](#) have been shown to transform wasteful by-products into value and regenerate bodies of water while mitigating harm. Golf can address the political threats of its water usage proactively by actually "creating" more potable water than it uses.

### Outcomes of implementation

Wastewater from the Harwich Landfill in NJ contained most of the EPA's top fifteen priority pollutants. John Todd's "[living eco-machines](#)" transformed that wastewater into clear and potable water with 99.9% of contaminants removed.

## Agroforestry

Just under 30 acres of the median golf course are "out-of-play" (hence, not really used productively). Half of golf courses have even greater out-of-play areas. Considering alternative land uses in the earliest stages of the design process could open room for [agroforestry operations](#) that can integrate systems of trees, other crops and even livestock to maximize yield efficiency and create positive externalities without harming play.

### Outcomes of implementation

Agroforestry could transform underutilized out-of-play areas at a golf facility into sustainable sources of local food that invite non-golfers, reduce operating costs and diversify revenue streams. Such systems create ecosystem services like nutrient cycling, water filtration and carbon sequestration, among other benefits.

# **How** Municipal Golf Can Grow the Economy While Meeting Everyone's Needs

## **Other Strategies in Ecological Design and Community Programming**

### **Other Ecological Design Strategies and Tools**

Aquaculture

On-site waste management

Vermicomposting and other forms of composting

Creating carbon sinks

Energy production

Heat-mapping software to optimize land-use efficiency

Using drones to identify water efficiency challenges

Rainwater harvesting

Reverse osmosis of seawater

Probiotics for soil

Designing and building pollinator habitats

### **Other Social Strategies and Tools**

Local, state and federal grants/funds

Renewable energy production

Community agriculture & farmer's markets

Junior and women golf programs

Fundraising golf tournaments

EV charging stations

Community clean-ups & volunteer programs

Waste & energy reduction plans

Local and regional corporate sponsorship

Materials recycling & waste reduction and diversion

Community health & wellness programs

Birdwatching

STEM fieldtrips

# Who Can Help You Drive the Green at Every Level

## Driving the Green in Five Principles

### Aligning Theory and Practice

The world of sustainability theory is large and complex. Our job is to understand it, simplify it for you and bring that theory into practice within your specific context. Our first principle is identifying the needs of a variety of stakeholders. By understanding what is salient in your context, we start to build a map of best-fit solutions, which we can filter for feasibility, desirability and profitability.

### Celebrating Diversity

Diversity is both the ultimate means (practice) and the ultimate end (theory), going well beyond surface-level characteristics. Golf is all about diversity of expression – how you swing, where you play, who you are. Similarly, our approach encourages a diversity of perspectives and stakeholder needs. We help you diversify revenue streams off-the-course, while on-course, we look to build biodiversity and a demographic of player participation that reflects the diversity of surrounding communities.

### Embracing a Play of Opposites

Creativity arises out of embracing the tension between opposites – ought and is, theoretical and practical, right-brain and left. What's the best outcome we can hope for? What are tangible and proven first steps to create undeniable value? Our approach implements sky-is-the-limit thinking while identifying available resources and competencies. What's possible? What's now?

### Harmonizing Systems

Creating abundance, resources and lasting value requires building from our map of resources, stakeholder needs and possibilities to identify leverage points that optimize resource efficiency. We view parts in relation to the whole rather than isolation, implementing circular and non-linear thinking. We carefully consider the interplay of economy, ecology and community to produce maximum impact with minimum input.

### Fostering New Connections

Our goals are the same as yours: bring new players into the game and to your golf course, while maximizing value creation for all. First, we identify what resources, partnerships and solutions can bring new value into reality, then we help you to capture that value by attracting new customers. We're the bridge. We'll connect you to our growing network of leaders at the intersection of golf and sustainability, and share your story to a new audience.

## Free consultation!

We help you identify endless possibilities to achieve your community's sustainable development goals. Connect with us on a free video chat so we can discuss and understand your key challenges and brainstorm ways for you to start your sustainability journey.

E-mail us at [connect@drivingthegreen.golf](mailto:connect@drivingthegreen.golf) to schedule your free consultation today!





# Appendix

**What** the Golf Industry Can Do to Address Sustainable Development



**17 SDGs + 1 Game**



## **SDG 1: No Poverty**

End poverty in all its forms everywhere.

### **Key fact**

According to the 2020 Census, the poverty rate for the United States increased by 1.0% from 2019, the first increase in five years.

### **What can golf do about it?**

- ❖ Protect, restore and enhance natural assets and ecosystems.
- ❖ Achieve a sustainable business model to provide the community with lasting economic benefits.
- ❖ Ensure equitable access to public lands and services provided on them.

### **Prompt for you**

What proportion of the population in your city lives below the national poverty line?  
(United States = \$12,760)



## **SDG 2: Zero Hunger**

End hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

### **Key Fact**

Due to a combination of factors (including exercise and lack of access to nutritional food sources), [more than half of US adults are prediabetic or diabetic](#), while non-white groups show higher rates of metabolic disorders.

### **What can golf do about it?**

- ❖ Transition non-playing areas into vegetable gardens and donate any food grown on property to the local community.
- ❖ Provide nutritious and healthy food options and source local ingredients
- ❖ Implement resilient agronomic/agricultural practices to maintain or even regenerate ecosystems, improving the land, soil and critical habitats (e.g., pollinators).

### **Key example: the “edible” golf course**

[Laguna Lăng Cô Golf Club](#) of Vietnam restored 5 hectares of rice paddy in its renovation, from which it produces and donates up to 20 tons of rice per year.



### **SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being**

Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all no matter their age.

#### **Key fact**

The R&A's 2020 [Golf and Health Report](#) shows golfers live longer healthier lives (5 years longer to be exact – even after controlling for gender, race and socioeconomic status).

#### **What can golf do about it?**

- ❖ Encourage players to walk the course and provide affordable access to push & pull carts.
- ❖ Provide sunscreen, warm-up facilities, water and healthy food options for all players.
- ❖ Communicate and promote the health benefits of regular physical activity.
- ❖ Design alternative programming to promote health and invite non-golfers.

#### **One idea for you**

Close your golf course for one weekend morning and host a community fundraising 5k/fun run benefiting a local charity, encouraging non-golfers to enjoy the open greenspace.



### **SDG 4: Quality Education**

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

#### **Key fact**

Despite being ranked #1 in the world for “Best Educational Systems” by [World Population Review](#), the United States routinely lags behind other developed economies in [Math, Science and Reading test scores](#).

#### **What can golf do about it?**

- ❖ Develop scholarships opportunities and continuing education programs for staff regardless of employment status (full vs. part-time or seasonal).
- ❖ Host sustainable design contests to accelerate community innovation and impact.
- ❖ Initiate internship program with local high schools, colleges and universities targeted at students from diverse backgrounds with a career focus in environmental sciences, architecture, public policy and business to work and train at facilities.

#### **One idea for you**

Connect with the regional GCSAA chapter to host a STEM education field trip through the GCSAA [First Green](#) program.



## **SDG 5: Gender Equality**

Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

### **Key facts**

The latest data from the NGF show that just under one quarter of on-course golfers are women, and yet they comprise over half of the population. Moreover, [research](#) suggests that increasing female participation could represent a \$35 billion economic value for the golf industry.

### **What can golf do about it?**

- ❖ Establish partnerships and programs with [LPGA-USGA Girls Golf](#) and [Black Girls Golf](#).
- ❖ Host women and girls-only golf engagement events like tournaments, group lessons, or fashion/trunk shows.
- ❖ Develop a women in golf mentorship program where established female golfers at your facility are paired with beginner female golfers.

### **Key example: off-course golf entertainment venues**

While women represent just 24% of on-course golfers, they also comprise [45% of off-course golfers](#) (including golf entertainment venues like Topgolf and Drive Shack). These businesses show the model of a fun, inclusive, welcoming atmosphere from which all munis could learn.



## **SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation**

Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

### **Key fact**

Drought and flooding conditions will become increasingly volatile as a result of continued climate change. Each drought event in the US costs the nation an [estimated \\$10 billion](#).

### **What can golf do about it?**

- ❖ Measure irrigation and water use and establish resource controls like hand watering and reducing the size of maintained turf.
- ❖ Install [Elkay Bottle Fillers](#) in and around clubhouse and golf course to provide access to free filtered water for refillable bottles.
- ❖ Consider [rainwater harvesting](#) for irrigation use.

### **Key example: treating on-site gray-water**

[Laguna Phuket Golf Club](#), built upon a formerly abandoned tin mining facility, built on-site irrigation lagoons that treat gray water from the laundry facilities of the resort.



## **SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy**

Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.

### **Key fact**

According to the [US Energy Information Association](#), renewable energy sources accounted for about 12% of total US energy consumption and about 20% of electricity generation in 2020.

### **What can golf do about it?**

- ❖ Install solar panels on roofs of clubhouse and maintenance facilities.
- ❖ Purchase energy from renewable sources.
- ❖ Install Electric Vehicle charging stations in the parking lot.

### **Key example: lower the bill for both carbon footprint and electricity cost**

Lochemse Golf Club in the Netherlands installed 288 solar panels on the driving range roof and maintenance facility that provide 40-50% of its electricity needs.



## **SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth**

Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

### **Key facts**

[Latest data](#) estimate that the golf industry impacts an estimated 1.9 million jobs in the US and supports \$84 billion of total economic impact (direct and indirect value combined).

### **What can golf do about it?**

- ❖ Pay a living wage to employees and provide employee benefits like health insurance, free meals, golf course access and education reimbursement.
- ❖ Upgrade technology to streamline productivity and innovation.
- ❖ Focus on hiring more women and people from diverse backgrounds.

### **Key prompt for all municipal golf facilities**

What percentage of your workforce is made up of women and minorities, and does that mirror the demographics of who plays at your facility?



## **SDG 9: Industry Innovation and Infrastructure**

Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.

### **Key fact**

Sustainable industrial innovation requires changing the relationship of business to nature. A [2020 report](#) from the World Economic Forum estimates that \$44 trillion of annual economic value (over half the world's GDP) is moderately or highly dependent on nature through value chains and direct operations.

### **What can golf do about it?**

- ❖ Update and renovate facility HVAC systems.
- ❖ Install LED and CFL lights to lower energy costs.
- ❖ Install secure WiFi and invite the community to use the facility as co-working space.

### **Key idea for you**

Research state and federal grant programs. Partner with construction firms to create innovation and design contests.



## **SDG 10: Reduce Inequalities**

Reduce inequality within and among countries.

### **Key fact**

We might assume that more equitable countries and communities may see more equitable participation in golf. Roughly a third of golfers in the Netherlands are women, and Holland has [significantly more total female golfers than England](#) despite having fewer courses (nearly by a factor of ten -- Holland has just over 200 courses while England has nearly 2,000, and more than any other country in Europe).

### **What can golf do about it?**

- ❖ Create community partnerships with local National Urban League affiliate or other social justice advocacy organizations.
- ❖ Host a food or clothing drive benefiting needy and at-risk populations within the community.
- ❖ Hire a diversity of gender, race, age, and other groups that mirrors the diversity of participants you want to attract

### **Key example: The PGA WORKS program**

[PGA WORKS](#) is a strategic initiative designed to diversify the golf industry's workforce and leverages fellowships, scholarships and career exploration events to inspire and engage diverse talent for key employment positions in the golf industry.



## SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

### Key fact

Many municipal golf courses are located in urban and metropolitan areas. [Over 4 in 5 Americans live in urban areas](#), and by 2050, that number could exceed 90%.

### What can golf do about?

- ❖ Create programs and initiatives that invite and entice non-golfers to visit the golf facility and utilize the open, green spaces.
- ❖ Establish integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change and resilience to disasters.
- ❖ Meet fundamental needs like water filtration, food production, and even energy production to ensure status as an “essential” community operation.

### Key example: The Old Course

The Old Course at Saint Andrews brings in [over 45,000 rounds per year](#) despite closing every Sunday as a greenspace open to the community. The Open Championship in 2015 at the Old Course brought in [over £140m](#) to the Scottish economy.



## SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production

Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

### Key Fact

By 2050 (less than three decades from now, mind you), plastic production is [projected to double](#) and ocean plastic [could outweigh fish](#).

### What can golf do about it?

- ❖ Establish strict procurement policies with vendors and suppliers.
- ❖ Implement on-site recycling programs and host community e-waste collection events.
- ❖ Perform bi-annual waste audits to identify opportunities to decrease waste streams.

### Key example: bunkers made from recycled glass

[Recycled glass](#) can be used as a replacement of sand for bunker renovation projects. [The Ranch at Laguna Beach](#) uses glass for its bunker renovations, sourced from every glass bottle that gets crushed on-site using the GLSand glass-bottle crusher of New Zealand based [Expleco](#).



## **SDG 13: Climate Action**

Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

### **Key fact**

The ten warmest years on global record (between 1880 and 2020) have all occurred since 2005. [2020 was the second warmest year on record](#), just behind 2016.

### **What can golf do about it?**

- ❖ Ban all single use plastic use on property.
- ❖ Develop a climate action plan in accordance with state and local goals.
- ❖ Create a public relations campaign to promote programs and encourage other civic leaders and community stakeholders to join.

### **Key example: Sentosa Golf Club**

On April 29, 2021, Singapore's Sentosa Golf Club [committed](#) to becoming the world's first ever carbon neutral golf club by 2022.



## **SDG 14: Life Below Water**

Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

### **Key fact**

Roughly [80% of marine pollution originates on land](#) (including pesticides from agriculture and other land uses like golf, plastic production and untreated wastewater or sewage).

### **What can golf do about it?**

- ❖ Implement sustainable aquaculture to reduce stress on fisheries and ecosystems
- ❖ Implement water reclamation and treatment (e.g., reverse osmosis).
- ❖ Install riparian buffers (shoreline or [floating](#)) to limit runoff into aquatic ecosystems.

### **Key example: The Preserve at Oak Meadow**

Prior to a 2017 renovation, [The Preserve at Oak Meadows](#) periodically flooded, shutting down operations for weeks at a time. The design team, led by Greg Martin ASGCA, redesigned the course to absorb floodwater, controlling 20 million additional gallons of water while creating and restoring 35 acres of wetland and 40 acres of prairie ground.





## SDG 15: Life on Land

Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.

### Key fact

Particularly in urban environments, golf courses are proven to hold potential in [boosting biodiversity](#) relative to land-development alternatives.

### What can golf do about it?

- ❖ Identify and remove non-native invasive plant species through a vegetation assessment.
- ❖ Naturalize no-play areas to foster native species of vegetation and wildlife including pollinator gardens and bird and bat houses.
- ❖ Prioritize soil health and microbial biodiversity to reduce inputs and sequester carbon.

### Key example: Royal St. George's Golf Club

Between hosting the 2011 and 2021 Open Championships, [Royal St. George's](#) embarked on a decade-long quest to modernize and naturalize the golf course to recreate a duneland paradise.



## SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

### Key fact

Research shows that inequality correlates positively with ([and causes](#)) higher rates of crime and homicide. Supporting peace and equity promotes safer societies.

### What can golf do about it?

- ❖ Support and promote human rights initiatives in conjunction with local/state programs.
- ❖ Expand access to include all people in surrounding communities.
- ❖ Support equity in your local community and help provide equal opportunity to climb the socioeconomic ladder (providing opportunities in personal/professional development).

### Prompt for you

How can your municipal golf facility help disadvantaged youth rewrite the future and open new pathways for their communities to become safer, better educated and more equitable?



## **SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals**

Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

### **Our take**

The golf industry remains fragmented on important issues that impact its many associations, facilities and other constituents. No framework currently exists for the consistent collaboration of major industry associations regarding the sustainable development goals above.

### **What can golf do about it?**

- ❖ Develop community partnerships to discover, implement and manage sustainability initiatives.
- ❖ Measure and report on the impact of the implemented initiatives and create community best management practices.
- ❖ Incorporate golf course operation into city and state climate action plans.

### **Key example: United States Golf Association**

As part of its mission to champion and advance the game of golf and actively engage in the sustainability effort across sports, the USGA joined the United Nation's [Sports for Climate Action Initiative](#).

## **Consider some possible “deep drives” to address multiple SDGs at once, driving the green within ecology, community and economy...**

Investment in municipal golf does not require trade-offs. Municipal golf is rather part of an interconnected ecosystem wherein social, environmental and economic interests support and nurture each other.

# Make your facility a “wellness community”

If the 2020 [Golf and Health Report](#) from the R&A shows one thing, it’s the potential of golf to address the health & well-being (SDG 3) of its participants.

The Global Institute for Wellness [describes](#) a wellness community as **“a group of people living in close proximity who share common goals, interests and experiences in proactively pursuing wellness across its many dimensions”**.

Moreover, Gallup divides individual “Well-Being” into five essential elements, including career, social, financial, physical, and community. With the right design, your golf facility can address all five. Your golf facility can be a workplace of meaning and vocation that develops leaders while attracting and retaining top talent. It can facilitate healthier relationships among your community. It can provide affordable recreation while paying living wages. Golf meets the physical needs of the mind and body, and within communities, it can create a sense of belonging by welcoming social diversity while also enhancing biodiversity through sustainable ecological design.



# Think beyond 'less harm' and regenerate natural systems.

The word “sustainable” means different things to different people. To some it means “the less harmful alternative”. At Driving the Green, we recognize sustainable to mean **that which can be sustained** or will survive over the long-run. For your golf facility, sustainability then means the continued survival and thriving of your bottom line (profit), surrounding communities (people) and surrounding ecosystems (planet). To ensure the long-term survival of all three, it is imperative to think beyond “less harmful” alternatives, and instead collaborate with nature to design healing for surrounding communities and ecosystems. The operation must aim to provide tangibly net-positive value.

For example, your facility can apply water treatment technologies that transform graywater, storm water and even wastewater into uncontaminated, drinkable water. That means not only using less potable water, but even possibly “creating” it.

The same logic can apply to your carbon footprint. Your golf course can be designed to capture and sequester more carbon than it emits. If a golf course can become regenerative, then who could argue against its status as an “essential” business? Meeting essential needs is imperative to surviving economic recession (particularly pandemics).



# Make your municipal golf facility the most engaging and impactful place where a community member can work.

According to [Gallup](#), over 70% of employees in the US are not engaged with their work, while 15% report being actively disengaged. While no such statistics exist for the golf industry, one might imagine that its high turnover and labor shortages would be reflected in a far higher percentage of disengaged workers. That doesn't just mean that golf workers are dissatisfied, but likely that the golfer will also be dissatisfied as a result of poor customer service quality and course conditions.

## How might your golf facility reverse this?

What if instead, your golf facility was the most exciting place to work within your community? Golf's labor problem could be addressed by creating jobs with purpose and meaning, so that workers can be a part of something greater than themselves or even the golf industry. Your golf facility can provide connection and equal opportunity to fulfill one's potential while addressing critical community and global challenges. If working at your muni facility could be seen as a meaningful career development opportunity, and one that pays a living wage, then a larger pool of applicants could lead to a larger pool of highly skilled and qualified applicants, thus fueling the culture and results you seek. The intrinsic motivation associated with higher purpose will then translate readily into triple-bottom line results.

Along with the points above, your staff can reflect the diversity that you aim to attract in your participation. For example, with more female and minority workers on staff, female and minority golfers will feel more welcomed and invited to play. Then your culture can reflect the golf culture we all want to create – fun, inclusive and regenerative, for ecology, community and economy.

