

Clubhouse goes back in time

success story Renovation takes club image from dull modern to rich traditional by Bruce Buckley

When Hillwood Country Club in Nashville, Tenn., sought to better establish itself among the local traditional country clubs, it found it had an image problem. While the golf course was a big draw for prospective members, the bland 1950s-era ranch-style clubhouse didn't instill a sense of pride that one might expect from a country club. Meanwhile, years of additions to the clubhouse were unsympathetic to operational flow.

The club decided it wanted to improve the image of its clubhouse to attract more members, but it didn't want to neglect its existing 290 members. So, the club embarked on a five-year multi-phased renovation of the facility, led by architectural firm CCI/Chris Consultants, which kept parts of the clubhouse open to continue serving members while other areas were reworked.

"We never closed," said Wally Smith, general manager of Hillwood Country Club. "We built a wall down a hallway and moved things to one side, then when that was done we switched."

The first phase, started in early 1999, included the renovation of the entry — a centerpiece of the new design. The exterior was given a more traditional look with the addition of indigenous stone materials, highlighted by a prominent porte-cochere.

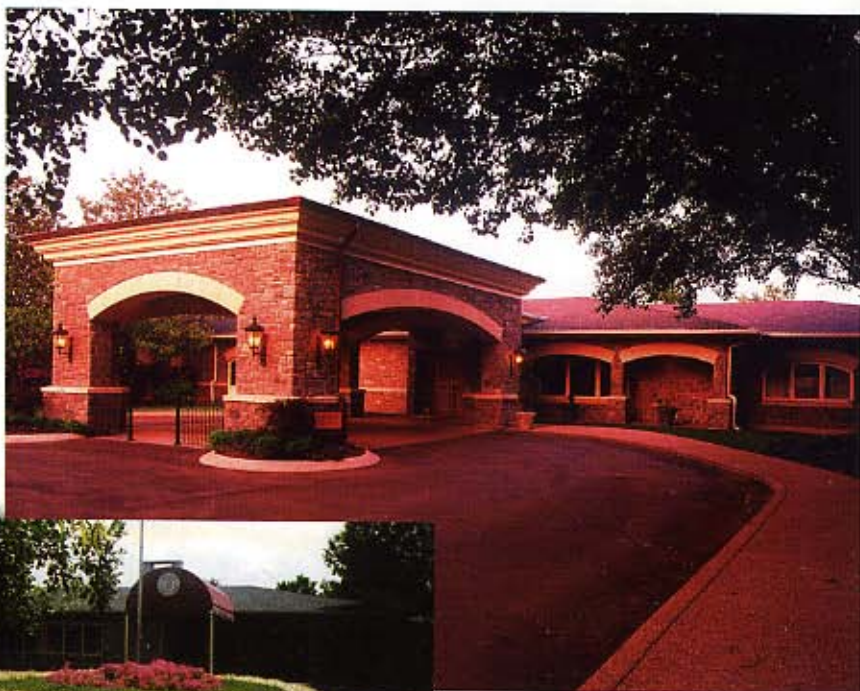
"It originally had a very low-slung residential look to it," said Ryan Yakel, executive vice president and chief operating officer of Chris Consultants. "We wanted to take it away from that look and give it a better sense of arrival."

Stone was also used to construct new patio and terrace areas in the rear of the clubhouse.

The first phase also included reworking the living room and function rooms. The areas were given a better feeling of warmth

BEFORE (below): Hillwood's '50s-style clubhouse was too bland to help attract new members.

AFTER (right): A dramatic new entryway helped set the tone at Hillwood Country Club's renovated clubhouse.



with cherry wood accents, including a fireplace. Yakel said these areas were renovated during the golf season, while the pro shop, locker rooms and grillroom were left open to serve members during the height of play.

During the following off-season, work was done on the other half of the clubhouse, with function rooms completed in time for the holidays. Likewise, the main golf service areas were completed in time for the start of the next season.

The majority of the clubhouse was completed for a summer 2000 opening gala.

Work then focused on other aspects of the club, such as the tennis and pool areas. However, Chris Consultants was brought back in to renovate more of the original clubhouse, such as the kitchen, bar and lounge areas. That work was completed in February.

In addition to the facelift, the

clubhouse received some needed improvements to operational efficiency. Flow was improved to ease staff access to service areas, and banquet space was maximized to handle more guests. The

and \$1.5 million in furnishings. Members were only assessed once for \$3,500 in 1998. The rest of the construction was funded with new memberships. The club now has 575 members with a waiting list, and initiation fees have jumped from \$15,000 in 1998 to \$27,500 today.

Smith credits much of the success of the project to the club's unique governance system, which is headed by a chief operating officer, not committees.

Smith was able to work with smaller groups of members to make decisions in a timely manner and streamline the process.

Even though the club sought a traditional image, Smith said its modernized governance system made the difference.

"Those traditional styles of running clubs are old and antiquated," he said.

"We gave the clubhouse a sense of flow and stronger sense of separation between function rooms."

— Ryan Yakel, COO, Chris Consultants

kitchen was also upgraded to help staff handle multiple functions simultaneously.

"It had a very disjointed floor-plan because of the additions over the years," Yakel said. "We gave the clubhouse a sense of flow and stronger sense of separation between function rooms."

In the end, the renovation cost \$4.5 million in construction