



Vision accomplished

Working as a team, accomplished architects and interior designers can give form to your ideas and design a clubhouse that outpaces your expectations.

BY CLAY ULMER

Enter the confines of the world's best clubhouses and you walk into a *feeling*. These clubs respect their surroundings, deliver refined comfort and set a distinct tone. What's more, they function almost flawlessly.

Although such clubs appear to have evolved naturally, they are actually the product of extensive planning by a team of seasoned architects and interior designers with the ability to capture and enhance the owner's vision.

That vision must be based on the needs of those who will use the club, and it must to a certain extent reflect their taste, as members generally consider clubhouses a home away from home. But unlike residences, clubs are complex facilities that incorporate many areas in one structure: a centrally located kitchen, formal and informal dining areas, locker rooms, a fitness center, banquet facilities, a wine cellar, storage areas and loading docks, a golf shop, outdoor amenities and offices. Yet these spaces must flow together both functionally and aesthetically.

Developers and clubs can achieve that end by selecting architects and interior designers experienced in clubhouse work and bringing them together at the inception of the project. Only an experienced team understands the unique operational, maintenance and code issues clubs face.

Bringing the team together at the onset allows the architect and designer to discuss space planning and zoning, furniture layout, adjacent interiors, niches for focal point placements, art, lighting, placement of electrical outlets and other factors. Moreover, the interior designer's contract may include wall, floor and ceiling finishes and the interior trim package. Working together, the team can coordinate interior and exterior aesthetics and maximize the overall impact of the club.

They can also iron out conflicting needs. An architect, for instance, may need several openings in a room to allow for the smooth flow of traffic, while an interior designer may need a stretch of wall space for art. If designers intend to float furniture in the center of a room as conversation areas, they may need outlets near the sofas in the middle of the room, while the architect's plan may show only wall outlets.

This up-front planning also helps establish interior estimates early, so clubs are able to prepare a better budget for the overall project.

At Belfair Plantation on Hilton Head, the design team gave the project an elegant, aged look.



BELFAIR PLANTATION

This residential golf community on Hilton Head Island, S.C., was developed with families in mind. “We envisioned a casual clubhouse that would evoke the feel of an informal residence that had been added on to over time,” says developer Ed Blakely.

The architect brought that vision to life in a rambling 25,000-square-foot building, with wings that resemble additions surrounded by a continuous four-foot hedge. Distressed for an aged effect, the painted brick clubhouse overlooks a sprawling lawn flanked by 14 golf cottages that frame a spectacular view of the marshes of the Colleton River.

Hugh Latta, FASID, chairman of Design Continuum of Atlanta, Ga., brought that warm, inviting tone inside.

“We selected interior stains and finishes with a mellowed look,” Latta says. “We also used pieces with different finishes to create spaces, from the formal painted dining room to a heart pine grill, that look as if the furnishings and accessories had been collected over time.”

In the middle of the project the developer decided to complete the building in stages. Because the architect and interior designer had worked together from the project's inception, they had the entire scheme laid out and were



the architect employed an axial scheme in the form of a wide entry hall focusing on views of the lake. By working together, the architect and interior designer turned what could have been a predictable trudge down a dogtrot hall into a pleasant journey through three individual spaces, with niches for furniture separated by elliptical archways. Known collectively as the grand hall, the area encompasses a reception space, a formal entry accessed by two *porte cocheres* and centered by a round table, and a parlor with seating that connects to dining areas and a gracious veranda.

“We distinguished the three areas with different wainscoting, fabrics and furnishings, then unified them with a hand-painted mural that runs the length of the hallway and reflects the Lowcountry environment,” says Janet Perry, IADA, a senior designer with J. Banks Design Group of Hilton Head.

Even the most formal of the club’s dining experiences, The Berkeley Room, has an easy, inviting air.

Hardwood floors, simple textured fabrics and a palette of robins egg blue and greens lend it a buoyant freshness that’s anything but intimidating.

“The team gave us what we wanted—a balance of formality and ease—with four major spaces, including an outdoor dining veranda, benefiting from dramatic views of the lake and finishing golf holes,” says Blakely.

able to phase the work and still maintain continuity, preempting what could have been a major problem.

“We ended up with just what we wanted,” Blakely says, “an organic looking club with a series of individual rooms, each with its own personality and feel, that hang together gracefully.”

BERKELEY HALL

Blakely and his partners wanted a different, more formal clubhouse for Berkeley Hall in nearby Bluffton, S.C., the posh residential golf community they developed with empty nesters in mind.

“We envisioned an impressive yet inviting space rooted in Southern historical themes,” says Blakely, “something really stunning that would set Berkeley Hall apart. And we wanted to maximize views of the lake behind the clubhouse.”

By attending sessions with the owners and management team, the



architect quickly grasped the developers’ concept.

“They came back quickly and flawlessly with several plans,” says Blakely. “We selected a handsome Jeffersonian Neoclassical design with a Lowcountry feel that perfectly captured our vision.”

A formal axial entrance lined with live oaks leads to the clubhouse, framed by a rising mall bordered by pierced brick walls. “The members really like the dramatic effect the entrance creates,” says Blakely.

To capture the waterfront views,

At Berkeley Hall, the design team conceived a Neoclassical design with a Lowcountry feel.

Tips

for Working with Architects and Interior Designers

- ▶ Club work is much more complex than residential and many other types of commercial projects. Hire appropriate professionals who are experienced in clubhouse work.
- ▶ Consider hiring professionals who have worked as a team on other projects.
- ▶ Bring the interior designer in from the start. This will ensure more accurate budgets, upfront problem solving and more impressive results.
- ▶ Make sure the team knows the demographics of your members, understands how they will use each area of the club and respects the unique local character of your area.
- ▶ Look for architects and designers who create unique spaces that reflect the club's personality. Avoid designers who replicate one look.
- ▶ Consider requesting separate design and procurement fees from the interior designers. Some designers may charge a low design fee and make money on procurement. Getting separate fees from all bidders allows you to make more equitable evaluations.
- ▶ To help set the mood in various spaces, consider hiring a separate lighting designer and acoustics consultant.
- ▶ Don't let your members decorate certain areas of the club and rely on professionals for others. You'll risk ending up with a mishmash of styles.
- ▶ If you rely on a member committee, make sure it includes both men and women who can work together and represent your membership. This will enhance the process and the final product.



THE AUGUSTA COUNTRY CLUB

The member-owned 24,500-square-foot Augusta Country Club in Augusta, Ga., wanted to create more informal spaces to meet the needs of its members. In addition, the members wanted to improve access to all areas through a new grand staircase and elevator and expand the pool area. But they wanted a seamless addition that followed the lead of the existing clubhouse while carefully blending in the new areas.

A member survey revealed that 60 to 70 percent of the club's members wanted more casual, family-friendly areas, including a state-of-the-art fitness center, within the somewhat formal club.

"Our member survey gave us a clear and precise mandate of where we wanted to go," says General Manager Henry Marburger.

With the help of the architect, interior designer and a committee of members, the club decided to add a 7,600-square-foot addition to the lower level that would house a new state-of-the-art fitness center with a separate entrance and the golf shop, which was relocated from the upper level. This allowed the club to build a casual mixed dining area and lounge on the upper level.

While designing the new building, the architects faced a traffic problem from the new entry stairs and men's locker room through the grill. The architect, along with interior designer Bob Brown, ASID, vice president of

Image Design in Atlanta, worked together during space planning to redirect traffic. By adding an interior corridor along the outside of the first floor, they improved functionality and allowed the club to create a gallery to display golf memorabilia, enhancing this historic club's unique personality.

"To create a seamless addition, we're using many of the same materials, windows and trims used in the existing club in the addition," says Brown. "And we're carefully blending the new, more casual areas that require more durable finishes, such as the health center, with the existing formal areas."

During planning, the team also helped members find new ways to use the facility, particularly the pool area. The old pool did not have a usable deck, but the new pool area will be surrounded by a much wider deck, encompass more covered areas and shade trellises and include an outdoor kitchen. This will allow the club to serve food and drinks and hold special events there.

"We knew basically what we wanted, but the architect and designer have worked well with our committee and focus groups to determine square footage, reconfigure existing space and join the new and old areas," says Marburger. 🍷

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