

# *Sample of a Membership Development Plan for the Private Club*



*Private Club Logo*

*"to make the right decisions you  
need to ask the right questions and  
get the right information"*



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220 Creek Run Court  
Alpharetta GA 30005  
404-229-0718

[www.ferreiracompany.com](http://www.ferreiracompany.com)

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## **PREFACE**

The Ferreira Company (FC), a private club-consulting firm, was contracted by The Club (TC) to develop a membership plan for the TC. The Ferreira Company accomplished this analysis through on-site visits and meetings at the TC; performing telephone surveys with Members who had resigned and individuals who matched the Member profile; receiving feedback from current Members and spouses through a written survey and focus groups; visiting private clubs in the area; and analyzing the demographic makeup of the area around the Club.

The membership analysis describes characteristics of TC's membership, including average age, average length of membership for its Members, the zip code addresses of its Members, and resignation reasons of prior Members. A review of past membership and marketing programs at TC is summarized. A review of the telephone survey with individuals who met the profile of a prospective Member follows the resigning member section. A competitive analysis of direct private clubs in the surrounding area includes: their initiation fees and annual dues. A demographic analysis of the area within a 10-mile radius of the TC lists the demographics of that market area and estimated number of prospective Members and banquet business. Recommendations follow the analysis.

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## OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

The Club (TC), a member-owned city-athletic club, has experienced a slight increase in the number of members over the last two years after sustaining decreases in the number of Members over the previous three years. The Club's membership total of 1,105, as of August, is about 100 memberships below the number the TC had a decade ago. The TC membership was composed of the following membership categories as of August.

**TABLE 1**

**Membership By Category**

<i>Categories</i>	<i>August</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<b><i>Members</i></b>		
Family	436	39.5%
Single	36	3.3%
Single Legacy	9	0.8%
Family Legacy	18	1.6%
Non-Resident	45	4.1%
Non-Court Family	56	5.0%
Non-Court Single	16	1.5%
Social	147	13.3%
Junior	138	12.5%
<b><i>Total</i></b>	<b><i>901</i></b>	<b><i>81.6%</i></b>
<b><i>Other Members</i></b>		
Life Capital	25	2.3%
Life	58	5.3%
Senior	32	2.9%
Associate	1	-
Lady Family	1	-
Individual	44	4.0%
Non-Stock Family	38	3.4%
Non-Stock Single	5	0.5%
<b><i>Total Other</i></b>	<b><i>204</i></b>	<b><i>18.4%</i></b>
<b><i>Grand Total</i></b>	<b><i>1,105</i></b>	<b><i>100%</i></b>

## MEMBERSHIP ANALYSIS

### AGE OF MEMBERS

The median age of TC Members is 53 years, with 25 percent under the age of 43, and 25 percent over 66 years of age. This average age level is slightly less than the average at other private city clubs across North America. This is a good range of ages for a Club to have.

**TABLE 2**

**Age of Members**

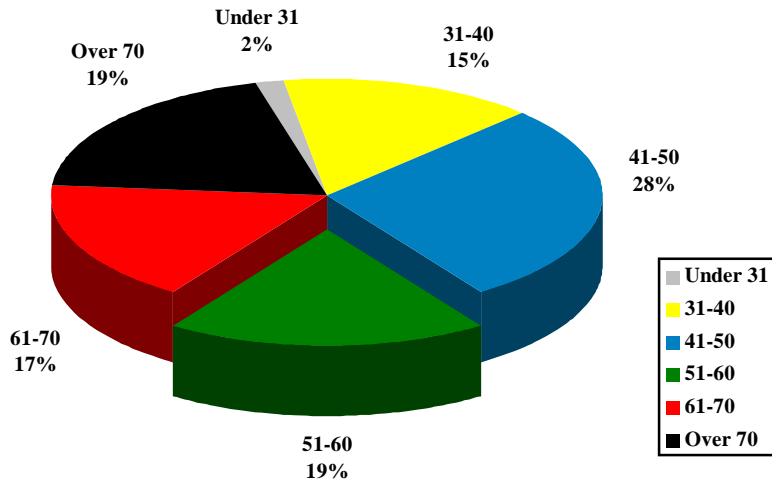
	<i>Number*</i>	<i>Mean Age in Years</i>	<i>Median Age in Years</i>	<i>50% Age Range in Years**</i>
Members	905	54.9	53	43-66

<i>Age</i>	<i>Number of Members*</i>	<i>Percent %</i>
<b>Members</b>		
Under 31	15	1.7%
31 to 40	135	14.9%
41 to 50	254	28.1%
51 to 60	172	19.0%
61 to 70	154	17.0%
Over 70	175	19.3%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>905</b>	<b>100%</b>

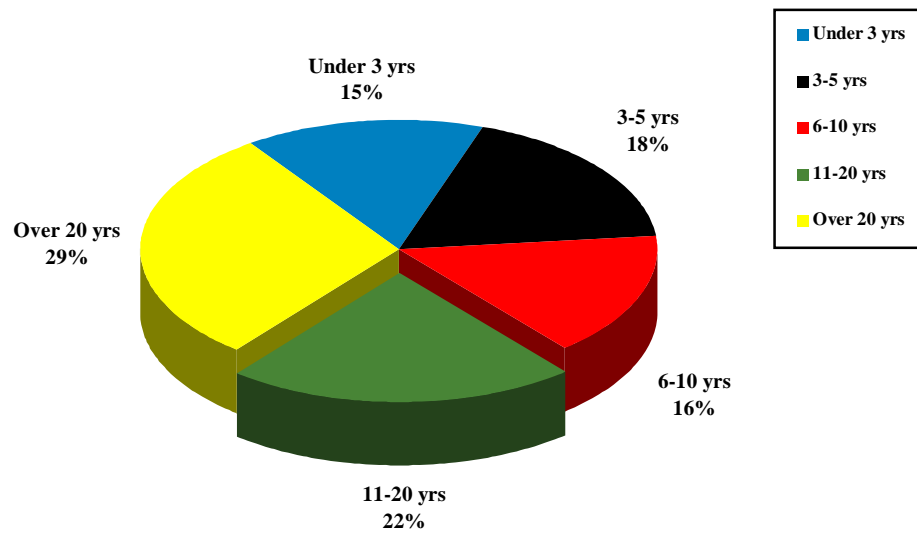
\* Number of Members with information in computer files about their age.

\*\* Age range for the middle half of the membership; median plus and minus 25%.

**FIGURE 1**  
**Age of Members**



**FIGURE 2**  
**Length of Membership for Members**



LENGTH OF MEMBERSHIP

The average length of time that a Member has been at the Club is 11 years. This is similar to the average length of membership reported by other private city-athletic clubs across North America.

**TABLE 3****Length of Membership**

	<i>Number</i>	<i>Mean Length in Years</i>	<i>Median Length in Years</i>	<i>50% Range in Years*</i>
Members	1,105	12.7	11	4-22

<i>Length of Membership</i>	<i>Number of Members</i>	<i>Percent %</i>
<b>Members</b>		
Less than 3 years	165	14.9%
3 to 5 years	200	18.1%
6 to 10 years	172	15.6%
11 to 20 years	242	21.9%
Over 20 years	326	29.5%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1,105</b>	<b>100%</b>

\* Length of membership range for the middle half of the membership; median plus and minus 25%.



ZIP/POSTAL CODES OF MEMBERS

The majority of the Members (76%) reside in five zip/postal codes that lie within a 10-mile radius of the Club. The largest number of Members (27%) reported a zip/postal code address just west of the Club (11111). The next largest percentage (23%) resides in 22222, which is very near the Club. The next three zip/postal codes most reported by the Members were 33333 (12%), 44444 (9%), and 55555 (5%). These zip/postal codes were farther from the club (approximately 5 miles or more). Almost 40% of the Members live in the two zip/postal code areas (11111 and 33333) that the city projects as the fastest growth areas in the year decade. Approximately half of Members who recently joined the Club reside in these two zip/postal codes.

**TABLE 4****Zip/Postal Codes of Members**

<i>Zip/Postal Code</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Number of Members</i>	<i>Percent of Members</i>
<b><i>City Areas:</i></b>			
11111	West of Club	298	27%
22222	Around the Club	254	23%
33333	Northwest of Club	132	12%
44444	Southwest of Club	99	9%
55555	Southeast of Club	55	5%
<b><i>Sub-Total</i></b>		<b>838</b>	<b>76%</b>
<b><i>Other City Areas:</i></b>			
66666	Outer City Area	101	9%
77777	Outer City Area	77	7%
<b><i>Outside City Area:</i></b>			
	Within State/Province	56	5%
	Outside State/Province	33	3%
<b><i>Sub-Total</i></b>		<b>267</b>	<b>24%</b>
<b><i>TOTAL</i></b>		<b>1,105</b>	<b>100%</b>

## OTHER MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

- Membership is diverse in age, income level, use of the club, etc.
- Members use a variety of activities at the Club: tennis, pool, fitness, dining, social activities, etc.
- Wide range in economic ability within the Membership.
- A family-oriented club that has a very friendly Membership.
- Older Members live close to the Club, younger Members live farther away and further west.
- A large number of the Family Members do not use the tennis courts or participate in tennis programs.
- Approximately 25% of the Members use the Club just for dining and social use.
- Mothers and children use the pool heavily.

## REASONS FOR RESIGNATION

The reasons cited for resignations were based on information obtained from a telephone survey of TC Members who had resigned in the last three years. A total of 87 former Members were contacted by telephone during the months of July and August.

Many former Members (85%) cited factors that were not controllable by the Club as their reasons for resigning. Retirement was the resignation reason most frequently reported by the former Members. This was reported by 27 of the Members who had resigned (23%). Other uncontrollable reasons cited were: death of the Member/Spouse or poor health (21%), Members resigned because of financial reasons (10%), and change in employment or his/her employer's refusal to pay Club dues (4%). Moreover, 31 of the phone numbers of resigned Members were disconnected or had a forwarding number out of the City's Area. This indicates that a large number of the resigned Members (27%) had moved or relocated to an area outside of the city (an uncontrollable resignation reason for the TC).

The Club can control three of the reasons cited (15%) by implementing changes in operations and/or policy. A summary of the reasons is listed in Table 6. Based on feedback from the resigned Members, they are no longer Members because of poor food quality (7%) and tennis court availability (5%). Operational changes can minimize the effect both of these have on resignations. The food related problems should be corrected with the new chef. The comments about the Club's tennis court availability centered on the indoor court availability during prime time in the winter months. The Club should consider a permanent structure or a bubble on two of the outdoor courts in the winter months. These are policy changes the Club should consider. The last reason (joined another Club) can be controlled by ensuring that the TC offers its Members services that a premier Club would offer at a high-end, but competitive price. The questions asked of the resigning Members and a summary of the results can be found in Appendix C. Although not controllable by the Club, Members who cite financial difficulties should be placed on inactive status and be able to reinstate easily.

Overall, former Members thought highly of the Club and rated its facilities and services highly. Slightly more than two-thirds of the respondents felt that TC was too expensive. Seven former Members belong to two other clubs in the city: three at ABC Country Club, two at XYZ Swim & Racquet Club and two at the 123 Club. They wanted TC to lower its dues, offer a membership with golf reciprocal privileges, and operational/policy changes mentioned in the previous paragraph.

**TABLE 6**  
**Reasons For Resignation**

<i>Reasons</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent %</i>
<b><i>Uncontrollable Reasons</i></b>		
Retired	27	23%
Deceased/Poor Health/Spouse Deceased	25	21%
Financial Reasons	12	10%
Changed Jobs/Company Won't Pay	5	4%
Relocation/Moved	31	27%
<b><i>Total</i></b>	<b><i>100</i></b>	<b><i>85%</i></b>
<b><i>Controllable Reasons</i></b>		
Food Problems	8	7%
Tennis Court Availability	6	5%
Joined Another Club	4	3%
<b><i>Total</i></b>	<b><i>18</i></b>	<b><i>15%</i></b>
<b><i>Combined Total</i></b>	<b><i>118</i></b>	<b><i>100%</i></b>

## **TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS OF POTENTIAL MEMBERS**

### SELECTION OF INDIVIDUALS

A list of individuals who fit part of the profile of a potential Member at TC was purchased from American Business Information. The criteria used was: household income over \$150,000; the individual was a homeowner; between the ages of 40 and 60; and the residence was located in zip codes 11111, 22222, 33333, 44444, and 55555 (the most frequently listed zip code by current TC Members). The list of individuals is found in Appendix A.

### RESULTS

A total of 100 individuals were contacted in late July by telephone and asked if they had been to the Club, their perception of the Club, if they had thought about joining, and if so, why they hadn't joined. Fourteen percent had been a member at some private club, while only 12 percent are currently members at other clubs in the city: ABC Country Club, Country Club of DEF, GHI Country Club and JKL Country Club. More than 60 percent of the individuals had been to TC. The first impression that many of these individuals had about TC was that it has a good tennis program (56% of respondents). The second, third and fourth most often cited impressions were: the Club has tradition and prestige (30%); the food and service are good (29%); and the Club is too exclusive in nature (22%).

The main reason given for not joining TC is the perception that it's too expensive (42%). Other often cited reasons were: too far from work (22%); current financial problems (21%); not their lifestyle (18%); not tennis players (10%); and they are retired (8%). Over half (54%) of those surveyed indicated they knew a TC Member, but only 14 percent had ever been asked to join. Almost 40 percent don't know a TC Member, and therefore cannot get a sponsor. Overall, the perception of the Club was good among these individuals who felt TC had a good image in the community. Approximately 10% of the respondents indicated that the dining areas were only average in appearance. Refer to Appendix D for the interview questions asked and the complete results of the telephone interviews.

## AREA ECONOMY

### AREA LABOR MARKET NEWS

A very positive trend reported is that the number of manufacturing jobs in the city has slowly increased since it bottomed-out in four years ago. The manufacturing industry has averaged an increase of 10,000 jobs per month since four years ago, which contributed to half of the new jobs created in the city last year. This indicates that the economy, especially in the manufacturing industry has rebounded. The computer industry is strong as usual. Construction is still in a recession, as demonstrated by the continued decline in housing starts.

Available office space declined in the suburbs, and vacancy rates declined from 15.1 a year earlier to 14.4 percent. This indicates a possible increase in the number of businesses or the level of business service firms are doing in the area.

### AREA REGIONAL ECONOMIST REPORT

Overall the City's MSA appears to have stabilized their economy last year after a number of years of recession. The projection for next year is a stabilization to mild growth in most economic sectors except construction. The largest growth sector is the service industry. This will result in a relatively higher concentration of employment in managerial occupations. The decline in construction and other non-manufacturing jobs will offset the increase in service jobs for no overall net employment gain. This is a better employment outlook, though, than the decline experienced in previous years in the city. The unemployment rate in the city continues to exceed the area's unemployment rate by about one percent.

The projected fastest growing age category in the country till the turn of the century is the 45 to 54 year old (baby boomer). An estimated 400,000 will enter this age category by next year. This age group typically concentrates on wealth accumulation and is at its peak earning capacity. An important change in baby boomers' life-style is the resurgence of the traditional family life and emphasis on raising a family.

All of these economic factors are optimistic for The Club:

- More service companies produce more managers who are likely to join a club for prestige and networking.
  - Growth in baby boomers means more individuals entering peak earning periods when they typically join private clubs.
  - The baby boomers renewed interest in the family and a club membership is important to wealthy families.
-

## PAST MEMBERSHIP AND MARKETING EFFORTS

### PRIOR MEMBERSHIP PROGRAMS

The TC has implemented some membership programs to encourage Members to refer prospects for membership. In the past, the Club has relied on Members to promote the Club and sponsor their friends and associates. There is an opportunity for the Club to gain more Members by implementing more aggressive programs to identify candidates for membership and pursuing those individuals.

## COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS

### PRIVATE CLUBS

The following clubs, within the city's area, are in direct competition with the TC.

ABC Country Club (ABC)	(1)
123 Club (123)	(2)
XYZ Swim & Racquet Club (XYZ)	(3)

The following organizations and country clubs, within the city area, are secondary competition with the TC. The country clubs mostly emphasize golf, but some have very good tennis programs such as Country Club of DEF, which has indoor courts. GHI Country Club and JKL Country Club are closer to the new west-end residential communities. Country clubs could add indoor and outdoor tennis courts to become more competitive.

Country Club of DEF  
GHI Country Club  
JKL Country Club  
YMCA for fitness

The initiation fees for the three direct competitors are listed in Table 7. Table 8 lists the annual dues for these clubs.

**TABLE 7****Initiation Fees****PRIVATE CLUBS**

		<i>ABC</i>	<i>123</i>	<i>XYZ</i>
<i>Membership Type</i>	<i>TC</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>
Family	<b>4,500</b>	3,000	2,500	1,750
Single	<b>2,000</b>	1,500	1,250	1,000
Non-Court Family	<b>1,750</b>	1,250	1,000	750
Non-Court Single	<b>750</b>	600	500	400
Social	<b>500</b>	-	-	-
Non-Resident	<b>500</b>	-	-	-
Junior (21-30)	<b>500</b>	-	400	-
Family Court	-	1,500	1,250	1,000
Single Court	-	1,250	1,000	750

**TABLE 8****Annual Dues****PRIVATE CLUBS**

		<i>ABC</i>	<i>123</i>	<i>XYZ</i>
<i>Membership Type</i>	<i>TC</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>
Family	<b>129</b>	125	100.54-126.30	105
Single	<b>94</b>	91	72.73	80
Non-Court Family	<b>98</b>	85	60.50-72.59	70
Non-Court Single	<b>73</b>	70	41.80	55
Social	<b>29</b>	-	-	-
Non-Resident	<b>35</b>	-	-	-
Junior (21-30)	<b>60</b>	-	48.43	-
Family Court	-	91	66.39-80.79	80
Single Court	-	85	60.76	70



**TABLE 9**  
**Competitive Grid**  
**PRIVATE CLUBS**

		<i>ABC</i>	<i>123</i>	<i>XYZ</i>
<i>Features</i>	<i>TC</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>
Number of Members - Total	<b>1,105</b>	2,500	852	890
Maximum Number of Members - Total	<b>1,500</b>	3,000	900	1,000
Dining Rooms	<b>Attractive</b>	Attractive adult & child snack area	Attractive but dated	Average
Lobby/Entrance	<b>Attractive</b>	Unattractive	Attractive but dated	Small Average
Decor Rest of Club	<b>Showing age Outdated</b>	Showing age	Interior attractive, exterior poor	Average
Ballroom/Largest Room Seating	<b>175</b>	300	450	150
Tennis Courts	Outdoor Indoor/Bubble	8 4	6 0	7 2
Swimming Pool(s)	<b>Outdoor, Baby</b>	Outdoor and patio	Indoor, 25 meter	Outdoor
Athletic/Fitness Center	<b>Small crowded outdated</b>	Small good equipment selection	Large, state of the art equipment	Small; ave. equip., area is crowded
Squash	International Doubles American Single	4 1 1	0 0 0	4 2 1
Locker room	<b>Showing age</b>	Small average	Large attractive	Average
Unique Activities/Features	<b>Has "true" universal fee \$300 annual</b>	Curling, 5-pin bowl, boating, lawn bowl	Lawn & reg bowl, skating, salon	Balcony overlooking tennis courts
Landscaping	<b>Average</b>	Nice lake view/docks	Very Attractive	Unattractive parking lot
Parking	<b>Small - inadequate</b>	Large - unattractive	Covered Pay	Open small
Club Brochure	<b>Poor</b>	Attractive	New attractive	Attractive
Membership Sales Person	<b>Yes</b>	Yes	Yes	No

## DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

An analysis of the city's area was performed using a ten-mile radius from the TC. Within these areas are the following key demographics \* listed in Table 10.

**TABLE 10**

### Demographics Membership

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>10 Mile Radius</i>
<b>Population</b>	
Projected Population	239,184
Estimated Population	224,686
<b>Households</b>	
Projected Households	544,015
Estimated Households	527,132
<b>Owner Occupied Property Values</b>	
Median Property Value	\$96,209
\$100,000-149,000	19,369
\$150,000 Plus	15,298
<b>Total of \$100,000 Plus</b>	<b>34,667</b>
<b>Estimated Household Income</b>	
Median Household Income	\$40,222
Mean Household Income	\$55,035
\$75,000-99,999	17,458
\$100,000-149,999	11,054
\$150,000 Plus	8,853
<b>Total of \$75,000 Plus</b>	<b>37,365</b>
<b>Occupation</b>	
Executive and Managerial	39,269
Professional Specialty	41,974
Technical Support	10,870
Sales	33,808
<b>Total Professionals</b>	<b>125,921</b>

\* Source, PCensus Data Report (Refer to Appendix B for complete report)

Based on the cited demographics, there are approximately 340 additional prospective Members within a 10-mile radius. This range was estimated using the demographic makeup at a radius distance from the Club of 10 miles. This number does not include the Club's current Members. This was estimated from the calculations in Table 11.

**TABLE 11****Membership Demographics and Estimations**

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>10 Mile Radius</i>
Households	$224,686 \times 0.5\% = 1,124$
Owner Occupied Property Values of \$100,000 Plus	$34,667 \times 3.5\% = 1,213$
Household Income of \$75,000 Plus	$37,365 \times 3.0\% = 1,120$
Professional Occupations	$125,921 \times 1.0\% = 1,259$
Average Estimate of Potential Members	$(1,124 + 1,213 + 1,120 + 1,259)/4 = 1,179$
Current Number of Members Within the 10 mile Radius	838
<b><i>Projected Number of Additional Prospects</i></b>	<b><i>341</i></b>

## PRIVATE CLUB'S MEMBERSHIP AGE PROJECTION

**TABLE 12**

### Demographic Age Changes Among Members, Spouses, and Children in Ten Years

Age	Ten Year Projected Percent Change in the City's Population	Club's Current Number of Members	Ten Year Projected Number of Members With No Cap	Ten Year Percent Change in Club Members With No Cap
0-4	-27.0%	216	165	-23.6%
5-9	-11.4%	276	246	-10.9%
10-14	20.5%	255	321	25.9%
15-19	45.8%	162	255	57.4%
20-24	32.1%	108	156	44.4%
25-29	-13.3%	135	117	-13.3%
30-34	-29.6%	153	108	-29.4%
35-39	-26.4%	231	177	-23.4%
40-44	5.0%	279	303	8.6%
45-49	47.8%	225	354	57.3%
50-54	66.0%	198	336	69.7%
55-59	80.4%	168	312	85.7%
60-64	62.4%	120	207	72.5%
65-69	46.3%	126	183	45.2%
70-74	20.7%	117	141	20.5%
75-79	14.8%	96	114	18.8%
80-84	57.0%	57	96	68.4%
85-89	76.8%	30	57	90.0%
90+	164.0%	15	39	160.0%
	16.1%	2967	3687	24.3%

Model Assumptions:

- ◆ Economy will not change
- ◆ The average age of Members joining and the number per household joining will remain at the current level
- ◆ The average age of Members resigning and dying will stay at its current level
- ◆ The mortality rate of Club Members will be similar to the rate for individuals with high disposable income
- ◆ The number of total memberships allowed by the club will be between its 1,000 and 1,250

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the data collected (Club data analysis, telephone interviews with former Members and prospective Members, market analysis, mission, etc.), the following are the major directions or issues the Club should address:

### Club's Mission

*The Club is a private club that offers the premier tennis program in the area and provides outstanding dining, social, and sports services to its Members, families, and guests.*

### Goals

- 1. Maintain status as the city's and area's private club with the premier tennis program.*
  - 2. Sustain a full membership with waiting categories in Class A, Non-Court, and Social Membership.*
-

## ***ABBREVIATED ACTION PLAN***

### ***1. Maintain status as the city's and area's private club with the premier tennis program.***

#### Objectives:

- Continue to make TC the premier tennis club in the city, while striving to make TC the private club with the premier tennis program in that section of the country.
- Maintain strong tennis programs, staff, and facilities because of their importance to Members and the Club's unique position in the market place.
- Continue to be a full-service private club, offering a variety of activities, but with a strong emphasis in tennis.
- Decrease the number of resignations because of dissatisfaction with the Club.
- Insure the Club is family-oriented.

#### Actions:

- Implement a variety of tennis and social activities/programs to make the Club more family-oriented.
  - The tennis programs should expand beyond serving primarily the adult members, by adding five new junior programs.
  - Continue the strong tennis programs that appeal to families and children, develop other programs that complement the excellent programs now in place, i.e. teaching lessons, clinics, events, etc.
  - Maintain a high quality tennis staff to ensure quality programs.
  - Implement an exit interview process for members resigning.
-

## ***2. Maintain a full membership with waiting categories in Class A, Non-Court, and Social Membership.***

### Objectives:

- Ensure the financial stability of the Club with a constant stream of revenue for operations and capital improvements.
- Identify prospects who meet the criteria for membership in TC.
- Contact the prospects and discuss the opportunities for membership.
- Increase the number of Full Members by 120 in the next two years.
- Increase the number of Social Members by 50 in the next two years.
- Membership committee becomes more recruitment-oriented to assist Membership Director in identifying prospects.
- Continue to screen candidates for Membership to maintain the caliber of individuals who are Members.
- Change policies, procedures, and operations to insure that TC has a waiting list for membership.

### Actions:

- The Membership Director identifies current Members who may know the identified prospect and contact that Member to see if s/he would be willing to contact the prospective candidate about Membership.
  - Send brochures and materials directly to candidates identified as prospective Members by the membership committee, Board, or other Members. The identified current Member who is willing to sponsor the candidate will be identified in the letter to the candidate to maintain the reputation that the Club requires sponsorship.
  - The Membership Committee or a membership staff member contacts prospects who have been sent materials as follow-up and/or contacts the prospective candidate for Membership.
  - Aggressive membership programs will NOT eliminate the sponsorship requirement, posting of a proposed individual to the Membership, etc. which are the safeguard methods for maintaining the standards for Membership.
  - Members resigning due to financial problems will be allowed to go inactive or pay a lower dues structure for a set period of time
  - Identify 150-175 candidates for membership each year who have the same profile as current Members.
  - Host 3-4 Member functions so that new Members can meet current Members.
  - Decrease the number of letters of recommendations required for prospective Members from its current level of four to two or three. This will minimize the barriers for individuals relocating to the city. Maintain other screening processes: posting candidates names to the general Membership, credit check, etc.
-

## **APPENDIX A**

### **List of Potential Members From American Business Information**