

2018 Winnipeg Municipal Election Candidate Question

6. Protection of City-Owned Golf Courses

If elected, what steps would you take to protect the city-owned golf courses as green spaces for public access and to ensure they are available for generations to come, if not as golf courses then as parks? What steps will you take to maintain and enhance the ecological integrity of these lands, many located along river corridors?

Perspective:

City-owned golf courses are first and foremost green space as they are zoned park land. The Winnipeg Charter requires City Council to meet a higher standard to make changes to land that is zoned park land by requiring a 2/3 vote, providing extra protection from conversion of parks to non-park uses. The 12 city-owned golf courses make up 12% (1100 acres) of park zoned land in the city, a significant portion of park and connecting green ways. For residents and wildlife these are priceless resources. There is no doubt any decision to sell and develop them would be permanent. If built on there is no way future generations would be able to afford to buy them back for recreational use.

The golf courses are located in areas that are identified for densification which makes it important for them to remain as greenspace to serve a growing population. These lands are under threat from development each time their leases expire forcing residents to rally to protect them. They are also threatened by piecemeal development projects such as a spa and a rejected tennis stadium proposal. Twice the land of the Canoe Club was reduced to allow space for residential buildings in return for funds to allow the golf course to continue.

In 2002, the golf courses were framed by the City as a seasonal business entity or real estate interest after being moved from the Parks Department to Golf Services Special Operating Agency. They became run down, while the income they earned was transferred to general revenue. Their value has been measured solely by the dollars generated over the golf season even though they are a rich and significant part of Winnipeg's green space inventory and are used for recreation, both formal and informal, year round.

Lease renewals for City-owned golf courses should include standards to improve their ecological attributes. Other cities are investing in future ecological benefits of their golf course lands; Calgary, for example, has six Audubon certified golf courses. Clear Lake Golf Course in Manitoba has a clause in its 25-year contract requiring it to be operated organically. In Europe Multifunctional golf courses have great potential to support multiple values, for biodiversity,

carbon sequestration and social wellbeing of people. Golf courses can contribute to improved teaching by offering a variety of green areas for outdoor learning. There is a social potential in moving towards more environmentally friendly management of golf as golf courses are increasingly describing nature attributes of their course and mentioning work toward biodiversity and the environment.

References:

Golf courses as outdoor class rooms

<http://www.sterf.org/sv/projects/project-list/go-outdoors-and-use-the-golf-area-in-a-pedagogical-way>

Sterf Multifunctional golf Courses

<http://www.sterf.org/Media/Get/2337/article-multifunctional-golf-courses>

Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf

<https://auduboninternational.org/acspgolf>

STERF, leading international centre of expertise in sustainable golf course management

<http://www.sterf.org/sv/projects/project-list?pid=14>

Winnipeg Golf Services Special Operating Agency – 2018 Business Plan, Page 5

<http://clkapps.winnipeg.ca/DMIS/ViewPdf.asp?SectionId=485515&isMobile=yes>

As hundreds of golf courses close, nature gets a chance to make a comeback

<https://ensia.com/features/golf-courses/>