

*2018 Winnipeg Municipal Election Candidate Question
(Updated in 2019)*

6. Protection of City-owned Golf Courses

As a Councillor, what steps will you take to protect the city-owned golf courses as greenspace 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 greenspace 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 precious resources. There is no doubt any decision to sell and/or develop any part of 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, a rejected tennis stadium proposal and rezoning to multifamily housing. Twice the land area 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 transferred from the Parks Department to Golf Services Special Operating Agency and from a recreation agency that served the common good to a focus on profitability. 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 greenspace 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. The [*Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses*](#) provides a program for the ecological management of golf

courses. There is one certified golf course in Winnipeg and 82 across Canada. Clear Lake Golf Course in Manitoba has a clause in its 25-year contract requiring it to be operated organically. As leases are renewed it is an opportunity for the City to show commitment to improving the environment and reaping the benefits of a healthier ecosystem.

In Europe, multifunctional golf courses have great potential to support multiple functions for biodiversity, carbon sequestration and social wellbeing of people. Golf courses can contribute to innovative education programs by offering a variety of areas for outdoor learning. There is a social potential in moving toward more environmentally friendly management of golf, as golf course operators are increasingly describing the natural attributes of their courses and declaring their work toward helping 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>

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>

Sterf Multifunctional Golf Courses

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

Winnipeg Golf Services Special Operating Agency – 2019 Business Plan

<http://clkapps.winnipeg.ca/dmis/ViewDoc.asp?DocId=17757&SectionId=&InitUrl=>

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

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

Windsor Park Nordic Centre, Winnipeg's Central Cross Country Ski Park

<http://windsorparknordic.ca/>

Clear Lake Golf Course, Manitoba

<https://www.clearlakegolfcourse.com/>

Canoe Club Golf Course, Reimagining

<https://winnipeg.ca/PPD/PublicEngagement/CanoeClub/default.stm>