City Council Regular Meeting - April 27, 2023

2. Golf Repurposing Study

Pam Lucenkiw, Co-chair OURS-Winnipeg

OURS-Winnipeg supports the Golf Course Re-purposing Study to be accepted as information with amendments and some reservations as outlined below.

Statement in Schedule A - 'The City of Winnipeg's municipal golf courses are major placeholders of greenspace within the City. This is a critical statement because these lands probably would not be currently under the public domain if they had not been utilized as golf courses. As golf courses they have generated some income to offset maintaining the land as greenspace to provide benefits now and for the future. These large greenspaces contribute to climate resiliency and biodiversity preservation. The golf lands are major nature preserves and are usually adjacent to waterways so are prime lands for wildlife/natural corridors and habitat areas.

The Consultant's Reports provide good basic research for each course, their history and the indigenous heritage report and some repurposing options. However, the primary value of the report is the basic research, history and heritage report. The repurposing initiatives have gaps when it comes to an environmental perspective and nature based options that are integral to the value of these lands.

This submission requests amendments, and observes gaps in observing golf land contributions to climate resilience, biodiversity preservation and potential nature based solutions.

The direction for the Repurposing report changed over the three years it took to complete. The report began with one of its primary goals being the generation of revenue from sale and development of golf land to support the Transformative Fund. When the City approved amendments to the new city planning documents in June 2021 the housing development option was removed and the report adjusted.

A Blumberg Supplement was added to the repurposing study when City Council voted in January 2022 to NOT sell it and to take if off the list of surplus properties.

1st Amendment proposed to repurposing reports
Add – "Consideration of municipal Golf courses as major nature preserves and greenspace"
This key amendment to Complete Communities 2.0 was approved by Council in June 2021 and is central to the Repurposing Golf Courses reports.

The City of Vancouver's Study[i] of its Urban golf courses shows they play a vital role in conserving urban biodiversity in several ways, including

- providing refuge for wildlife as a result of less human disturbance and preserved large old trees,
- a place to stop and refuel for migratory birds, and
- potential to provide ecological or functional connectivity among green spaces in an urban area.

2nd Amendment to John Blumberg Supplemental Report p. 9
Remove 'Scenario 4 option – Sell or Lease to the RM of Headingley - if the City of Winnipeg no longer requires the site for golf course or alternative recreation purposes' The sale of Blumberg is contrary to the City Council vote in January 2022 to NOT sell it and the planning document direction to acquire 1000 additional acres of new parkland.

3rd Amendment to Blumberg Supplement option "that considers to build a river road for motor traffic on the Blumberg property continuing through the soccer and softball properties."
This option is contrary to the principles of the Master Greenspace and Natural Corridors plan and does not consider the wildlife corridor and habitat unique to the logger head shrike, an endangered species. The river corridor is the most biodiverse area of the property and would be compromised by a road.

Winnipeg and Headingley are members of the Winnipeg Metropolitan Region and could work together to extend the natural corridor and NOT have an option to put a road along the river bank for vehicles.

The reports offer repurposing activities of sports fields, walking, dog walking and gardening. They do not include the full suite of passive recreational and educational use opportunities: nature reserve (for quietly cleaning the air and water, storing carbon, supporting biodiversity) wildlife habitat, wildlife corridor, wildlife viewing, birding, nature photography, nature walks, forest bathing, natural classrooms (such as Seven Oaks School Division's land based learning program).

The Nordic Cross Country Ski Centre, located on Windsor Park Golf Course is a true jewel in the centre of the city and is unique in the country. It is the only Nordic Ski Centre between Thunderbay and the Rockies and the only urban x-country ski centre in the country. Managed by the Cross Country Ski Association of Manitoba since 2000, the Nordic Ski Centre grooms 10 km of trails for high performance to recreational skiers and has 110 lights for night skiing. This is a model for multi-use of golf courses with skiing in the winter, golf in the summer and a wildlife and nature preserve year round. The Nordic Ski Centre also grooms trails at Wildwood

Golf Course. The Nordic Ski Centre acknowledged that options presented in the repurposing study for the Windsor Park Golf Course could jeopardize its future.

Multi-functional golf courses are popular in Europe where golf courses are seen to have several roles to play in addition to golf such as natural and cultural values and biological diversity and areas for active outdoor recreation. Reports can be found at the links below.
http://www.sterf.org/Media/Get/1788/multifunctional-golf-courses-an-underutilised-resource, and
https://www.ngcoa.org/golf-business-weekly/2020/november/week-3/multifunctional-courses

The Canoe Club Repurposing PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY was released in November 2017. There are insights from the public as to what they wanted to see as uses of the Canoe Club Golf Course.

The summary provided 34 options in an on-line survey.
Passive uses of the space were the most desired by the public (walking, picnicking, and jogging, skiing, fitness).
The five least supported recreational activities were sports fields:

Over the three years since the repurposing reports were begun the view of nature and greenspace has evolved.

- Master Greenspace and Natural Corridor Plan and Biodiversity Policy,
- COPS 15 goals and targets for Biodiversity,
- Montreal Pledge
- Decade of Ecosystem Restoration,
- Climate change goals to 2030 and 2050,
- Increasing interest in nature-based solutions to protect against climate shock,

Climate change resilience, flood mitigation, biodiversity functions, economic benefits are all services provided by large greenspaces that do not seem to be considered in the study.

The Prairie Climate Centre provides a key messages on the benefits of greenspace

• Investing in urban ecosystems and green infrastructure can provide lower-cost solutions to multiple challenges when compared to traditional infrastructure solutions.

The Golf Course Repurposing Study seems premature at this time for making major decisions about the golf lands without being informed by the recent global environmental reports and Master Greenspace Plan.

[ii] [i] BIODIVERSITY AUDIT OF VANCOUVER PARK BOARD GOLF COURSES https://sustain.ubc.ca/sites/default/files/2020-54_Biodiversity%20Audit%20of%20Vancouver%20Park_Oyunkhishig.pdf