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Plan to replace golf course with housing draws fire

By CBC News
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A plan to bulldoze a golf course in southwest Calgary and replace it with a new housing development is facing stiff opposition from many of the residents who live in the area.

Geo-Energy Enterprises, which owns the Shaw-Nee Slopes golf course, hosted the third in a series of open houses Wednesday, showing off its vision for the site north of James McKeivitt Road S.W. and west of Macleod Trail.

The plan includes low-density detached homes, condominiums and a community centre, all "surrounded by trees, greenery and open spaces," according to the company's website.

But the Shawnee-Evergreen community association held its own town hall meeting Wednesday, where president Gloria Dingwall said residents voiced strong opposition to the plan.

"The issue is we bought into this neighbourhood because of the golf course. If you take that away and put 1,600 condo units then the neighbourhood you bought into is gone," she said.

The association plans to make the fight an election issue, lobbying all mayoral and aldermanic candidates in the civic vote in October, Dingwall added.

"If this can happen here, it can happen anywhere."

The developer will be dealing with a new council and mayor by the time all the necessary applications are made to re-designate the area's land use status, said Les Humphrey, Geo-Energy's senior planning consultant.

"We'll be dealing with all the aldermen and looking at the city issues in a comprehensive manner."

Community feels mistreated

But according to Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart, who represents the area, Geo-Energy has done a poor job so far, leaving the community feeling mistreated.

"To assume and to go circulate their application to all my colleagues and kind of go around my back and go around the back of the community - we really feel that they disrespected us," Colley-Urquhart said.

"This community really feels that they have been poorly treated by this developer."

Since the developer proposed replacing the golf course with housing, the value of homes surrounding it has suffered, said area resident like Don Chudyk.

"My house has gone down \$100,000 in property assessment over the last year."

But Geo-Energy's plan to replace the golf course still faces a tough fight, according to Colley-Urquhart.

"They spent millions of dollars to buy a golf course. And that's really all they purchased here," she said. "This is the battle royale."

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