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Turf golf course idea

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An alderman's attempt to save a private golf course from development is a bad idea. It should be turfed immediately. Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart hopes to convince council colleagues to buy the Shaw-Nee Slopes course, even though Geo-Energy Enterprises has a conditional offer to buy the land. She will bring the idea to council on Dec. 15 and ask that staff be directed to review the possibility of owning and running the course, and to seek funding options that could include provincial and city dollars.

Colley-Urquhart's motives are understandable -- addressing community opposition to new development -- and we don't entirely blame her. Aldermen who administer a property-rights lecture to constituents, damage their chances of re-election. However, the city has no business intervening in real estate deals between private parties, except in rare cases where land is required for pressing public needs--one might make such an argument when a road is to be widened. However, protecting a golf course its owners can apparently no longer afford to operate is not a council function, and should absolutely not become a council habit. Nor should it be a council function to step in when residents disapprove of a development. Calgary's Not-In-My-Backyard mentality being what it is, the city would end up its own biggest landlord.

City control of development is exercised through its power to zone. If residents near Shaw-Nee Slopes can persuade aldermen this golf course shouldn't be zoned to accommodate Geo-Energy's proposal, fine. Otherwise they, like so many other Calgarians, will have to get used to having new neighbours.

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