

# Alderman proposes a halt to rezoning golf courses and recreation areas

## Feud over Shaw-Nee Slopes redevelopment at heart of Colley-Urquhart's thinking

BY RICHARD CUTHBERTSON, CALGARY HERALD    OCTOBER 12, 2011



Shaw-Nee Slopes Golf Course in southwest Calgary has closed, with the new owner proposing to redevelop the land to hold 1,500 residential units.

**Photograph by:** Grant Black, Calgary Herald

CALGARY — As a battle festers over the fate of a private southwest golf course that closed earlier this month, one alderman wants the city to take a close look at protecting Calgary links and other recreation land from future redevelopment.

It's a proposal that Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart admits will be controversial, and giving "implicit permanency" to golf courses, lake communities and other similar districts could well pit the wishes of local residents against the interests of the landowners.

It's all been sparked by the wrestling match over the Shaw-Nee Slopes Golf Course, which has been a fixture north of Millrise neighbourhood, but was sold to a developer a couple of years ago.

The new owner is looking to redevelop the land, building 1,500 residential units on the 52 hectares, a proposed combination of houses and apartments opposed by nearby residents of the Shawnee Slopes

neighbourhood.

"It's the slippery slope of the Shaw-Nee Golf Course," Colley-Urquhart said. "If this proceeds to fall and can be totally redesigned and redeveloped, then it can pretty well, in my view, happen to any recreational lifestyle community in Calgary."

The alderman will be making the pitch for an examination of changes to the Municipal Development Plan at a November meeting of city council, adding that people who buy into "lifestyle" communities should have some certainty that such a lifestyle remains.

But some are questioning the wisdom of any attempt to make golf courses and other recreation zones fixtures that will never go away. And others suggest there's no way under provincial legislation to force them to remain.

There are 21 golf courses within city limits. Eight are owned by the city, while the remainder are not, although four do lease city land.

A spokesman for the Shaw-Nee Slopes developer said he hopes the alderman's notice of motion isn't a stalling tactic.

Ray Clark, who speaks for GeoEnergy Enterprises Ltd., said it's been known for years the golf course would at some point close and, under provincial law, landowners have the right to apply for rezoning.

"You can't strip property rights," Clark said. "If there's a desire at any government level to 'protect,' then they have to attempt to buy it."

Redevelopment proposals first go through the hands of the city planning department and then head to the Calgary planning commission. City council holds a public hearing and the decision to allow or reject a project ultimately lies in the hands of aldermen and the mayor.

The Shaw-Nee Slopes redevelopment proposal is still at the city's planning department.

Ald. Brian Pincott has four golf courses in his ward, but argues it's not necessarily in the best interests to make them perpetual fixtures, and the city should continue to evaluate what's best done with the land.

Things change, Pincott said, pointing to people who bought into neighbourhoods with a mountain view that is now blocked by new development.

"Cities evolve and that means that land uses, and uses change over time," he said. "Where we have our downtown office buildings used to be really nice single family residential."

But major recreation areas, like golf courses, should be protected, according to Ted Allen, who lives

next to Shaw-Nee Slopes and is a director with the local community association.

He said the association is not opposed to closing the golf course per se, but is rather against rezoning the land from recreation district.

“If you start rezoning recreational land, what are you going to do? You’re going to ghettoize Calgary,” Allen said. “Recreation land, in my view, is at the very heart and soul of what constitutes a livable city.”

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