From Greens to General Plans: Reinventing Abandoned Golf Courses

A Senior Project
presented to
the Faculty of the City and Regional Department
California Polytechnic State University – San Luis Obispo

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of the Requirements for the Degree
Bachelor of Science

By

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1. Introduction

1.1. Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Professor Keith Woodcock for his guidance, understanding, and support in creating this project. This project would not have been possible without his help and feedback. Additionally, I would like to thank the City and Regional Planning Department faculty, staff, and students for their encouragement and support. I am grateful to have gotten an excellent education in the field of City and Regional Planning during my time at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo.

1.2. Abstract

This paper examines three case studies from different areas of the western United States to analyze the challenges and opportunities associated with redeveloping underutilized or abandoned golf courses. By examining how different communities from across the region have approached this process, this study aims to inform city planners, developers, policymakers, and other stakeholders about the intricacies and potential pitfalls of this process. It concludes with a list of necessary considerations for the redevelopment of any golf course and recommends best practices to follow throughout the process of redevelopment.

1.3. Background

Many golf courses are being shut down. In fact, over 800 golf courses have closed in the United States in the past decade (Kotecki, 2018). Environmental disasters, rising cost of maintenance, and lowering interest in the sport are all driving these closures. How can cities use these abandoned open spaces to create opportunities for housing, commercial, retail, and more?
2. Relevant Case Studies

The three case studies discussed in this section show the process of transforming abandoned golf courses in large cities, golf destination communities, and suburbs. Riverwalk is set in a large city, Prescott Preserve is set in a golf destination community, and the former Wayne Golf Course is set in a suburb. Overall, looking at the similarities and differences between these projects gives insight into how golf courses can be redeveloped in different types of communities.

2.1. Riverwalk – San Diego, CA

Riverwalk will be the first transit-oriented district in San Diego and will be built on the existing Riverwalk Golf Course. The project is 200 acres, with 97 acres devoted to open space and trails along the restored San Diego River. Uses for the rest of the site include multifamily residential units, retail, and office space. The neighborhood will be centered around a new stop on the Metropolitan Transit System Green Line (Riverwalk San Diego, 2023).

Mission Valley is a planning area located in the heart of the City and County of San Diego, with a population of 18,849 people (San Diego Association of Governments, 2010). It offers a less than a 20-minute commute to most major employment centers (Whitelaw, 2021). The Mediterranean climate of Mission Valley will allow the community to enjoy the public amenities provided by the project year-round.

2.1.1. Existing Conditions of the Site

The course opened in the 1950s and was first known as the Mission Valley Golf Course. Later, it was renamed the Stardust Country Club. It hosted many Professional Golf Association
(PGA) events and professional golf stars such as Arnold Palmer and Phil Mickelson. In the 1980s, a plan for construction on the Riverwalk site was approved by the City of San Diego. However, the plan was never implemented and was replaced by the current Riverwalk Specific Plan. In the 1990s, the course was redesigned due to the construction of the San Diego Trolley and was transformed into the Riverwalk Country Club, which officially opened to the public in 1998 (Holland, 2016). Nine holes of the original 27-hole golf course were closed at the beginning of the Riverwalk project and are no longer operational.

Today, the site is home to the Riverwalk Country Club. This public golf course offers an 18-hole golf course and has a total par of 72. Golfers enjoy many amenities such as a night-led driving range, short game area, the Golf Learning Center, and a clubhouse with shopping and dining opportunities. The golf course also hosts events such as weddings and private celebrations for community members (Riverwalk Golf Course, 2022).
Figure 2.1.1.1: Riverwalk Golf Course – Map

Source: SANDAG/SanGIS Regional GIS Data Warehouse Open Data Portal, 2023
The report to the City of San Diego Planning Commission, dated October 15, 2020, provides detailed description of the land use and zoning designations of the site. It notes that ‘the Mission Valley Community Plan designates the Project site as Residential (High Density) in the northeastern and northwestern portions of the site; Office and Visitor Commercial in the northcentral, northeastern, and southeastern portions of the site; and Potential Park/Open Space in the central portion of the site. The site is in the RM-4-10, CC-3-9, OC-1-1, and OP-1-1 zones, and within the Mission Valley Community Plan (MVCP). The site is also located within the Affordable Housing Parking Demand Overlay Zone, the Transit Area Overlay Zone, the Transit Priority Area, the Airport Land Use Compatibility Overlay Zone for Montgomery Field, the Airport Influence Area for San Diego International Airport (SDIA) and Montgomery Field
(Review Area 2) as depicted in the adopted Airport Land Use Compatibility Plans (ALUCPs) and the Federal Aviation Administration Part 77 Notification Area for the SDIA and Montgomery Field. The site is located within the San Diego River Park Master Plan (2013) Lower Valley Reach area, which encompasses the entirety of the Mission Valley community from I-15 in the east to I-5 in the west. In addition, the Project is located within the City’s Multi-Habitat Planning Area (MHPA) and the Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) Subarea.’

The City Council agreed to approve amendments to the Mission Valley Community Plan, City of San Diego General Plan, and the San Diego Municipal Code as part of the project. It also rescinded the former Levi-Cushman Specific Plan, created in the 1980s, and replaced it with the Riverwalk Specific Plan. Figures 2.1.1.3 and 2.1.1.4 show the current land use and zoning designations for the site.
Figure 2.1.1.3: Riverwalk Golf Course – Land Use (Map)

Source: SANDAG/SanGIS Regional GIS Data Warehouse Open Data Portal, 2023
2.1.2. Existing Conditions of the Surrounding Area

2.1.2.1. Location and Setting

The project is in Mission Valley, which is a planning area that makes up part of the larger City of San Diego. It is bounded by Friars Road on the north, the eastern banks of the San Diego River on the east, the southern slopes of the valley on the south, and Interstate 5 on the west. Significant attractions include the San Diego River, Interstate 8, and Qualcomm Stadium.
Mission Valley has multiple forms of public transit, including bus routes and two trolley lines. The project will construct a new stop on the Green Line, located in between the existing Morena/Linda Vista and Fashion Valley stops. Overall, Mission Valley has 103 public transit stops. More details can be found in Figures 2.1.2.3 and 2.1.2.4 below.

Source: SANDAG/SanGIS Regional GIS Data Warehouse Open Data Portal, 2023
Figure 2.1.2.1.3. Mission Valley – Public Transit (Table)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode of Transportation</th>
<th>Route Number</th>
<th>Route Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Bus</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>North Park – Fashion Valley</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bus</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>Grantville Trolley – Baltimore &amp; Lake Murray</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Grantville Trolley via Camino del Rio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Downtown – Rancho Bernardo Transit Station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>25</td>
<td>Fashion Valley – Kearny Mesa Transit Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bus</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Old Town – UTC via Pacific Beach</td>
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<td>San Ysidro – UTC</td>
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<td>Green Line</td>
<td>Santee – 12\textsuperscript{th} &amp; Imperial</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SANDAG/SanGIS Regional GIS Data Warehouse Open Data Portal, 2023
Figure 2.1.2.1.4: Mission Valley – Metropolitan Transit System, Regional Transit Map

Source: Metropolitan Transit System, 2023
The Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) Trolley System holds significant importance to the project as new development will be centered around a new trolley stop on the Green Line. Figure 2.1.2.5 shows a map of all trolley lines in San Diego.

**Figure 2.1.2.1.5: Mission Valley – Metropolitan Transit System (Map)**

![Trolley System Map](image)

*Source: Metropolitan Transit System, 2023*

Mission Valley is at risk for multiple hazards, such as fire hazards, flood risks, earthquake faults, landslides, and liquefaction. These can be seen in Figures 2.1.2.6 and 2.1.2.7 below.
Figure 2.1.2.1.6: Mission Valley – Hazards (Map)

Source: SANDAG/SanGIS Regional GIS Data Warehouse Open Data Portal, 2023
2.1.2.2. Population and Demographics

2.1.2.2.1. Race

Mission Valley has a total population of 18,849 people. Of the total population, 61 percent are White, 18 percent are Hispanic, 11 percent are Asian, six percent are Black, four percent are two or more races, one percent are Pacific Islander, less than one percent are
American Indian, and less than one percent are another race. This can be visualized clearly by viewing Figure 2.1.2.1.1 below.

![Figure 2.1.2.1.1: Mission Valley – Population by Race](image)

Source: San Diego Association of Governments, 2010

2.1.2.2.2. Age and Sex

Mission Valley has a younger population than most communities, with 48 percent between the ages of 20 to 34. Figure 2.1.2.2.2.1 shows the population pyramid for Mission Valley.
2.1.2.2.3. Educational Attainment

Mission Valley is a highly educated area, with 23 percent having some college experience, eight percent having an associate degree, and 40 percent of the population over 25 years old having obtained a bachelor’s degree. Figure 2.1.2.2.3.1 shows this more clearly.
2.1.2.4. Poverty Status

Mission Valley has a poverty rate of 13 percent, which is comparable to the surrounding area. Currently, the City of San Diego has a poverty rate of 11.7 percent for all residents (United States Census Bureau, 2021).
2.1.2.2.5. Household Income

The population is evenly distributed into income brackets, which showcases the economic diversity of the community. The majority of people are neither low-income nor extremely high-income. This is more clearly explained by viewing Figure 2.1.2.2.5.1 below.
2.1.2.6. Housing Value

Roughly half of all housing in Mission Valley is valued from $300,000 to $499,999. The housing value does not vary as much as population income brackets, suggesting there are not as many housing options for those with a lower income. The affordable housing provided by this project will increase housing diversity in the community.

Source: San Diego Association of Governments, 2010
2.1.3. Project Description

The project will be a 200-acre mixed use community that includes 97 acres of parks. The other 103 acres will contain 4,300 multifamily units with 430 affordable housing units, 150,000 square feet of retail, and 1,000,000 square feet of office space. It will create four unified districts of Riverwalk – North District, Central District, Park District, and South District. The new neighborhood will be centered around a new Metropolitan Transit System Green Line trolley stop. The restoration of the San Diego River will be a primary focus of the project. Transportation improvements include a new transit station, new bike and pedestrian access, improved bike facilities, new San Diego River trail, 8 new stoplights, and widening of all frontage roads. The focus on transit will also ensure equity for people that cannot afford cars. A European-style town square will be built directly across from the trolley stop and a main street.
constructed to run through the site. Overall, this project creates many residential units that are close to existing amenities and provides valuable infill development (Riverwalk San Diego, 2022).

Figure 2.1.3.1: Riverwalk – Site Plan

Source: Riverwalk San Diego, 2022
Figure 2.1.3.2: Riverwalk – Multimodal Improvements

Source: Riverwalk San Diego, 2022
Figure 2.1.3.3: Riverwalk – Town Square

Source: Riverwalk San Diego, 2022

Figure 2.1.3.4: Riverwalk – San Diego River Park

Source: Riverwalk San Diego, 2022
2.1.4. Public Outreach Process

The developer Hines gathered stakeholder and community input in nearly 100 meetings held from 2017 to 2020 and consulted with the Mission Valley Planning Group as part of its public outreach process. Hines asked for preferences in design, retail, and programming for the project and the river park. One interactive strategy deployed was the use of a ‘mobility station’ to give input on where they currently experience the most traffic and where they see potential traffic problems’ (Clemetson, 2017). Problems raised by residents included traffic, parking, and a potential increase in homelessness in the area due to the project. As a result, the Riverwalk team hired a person to develop a strategy for how to address homelessness for the project. The selected strategy was to create a business improvement district to fund programs that
deal with homelessness on the site. Based on feedback from these meetings, design alternatives were developed and the community selected one for further design.

Later in the process, meetings about the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the site were held regarding potential environmental impacts of the project, mitigations for these harms, and possible project alternatives. Hines worked to emphasize changes to the project made because of community feedback. It was noted that Riverwalk submitted a Historical Resources Technical Report for the Riverwalk Golf Course in December 2019 as part of the consideration of alternatives for the project as part of the EIR process. However, the site was not deemed eligible to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places, California Register of Historical Resources, City of San Diego Register of Designated Historical Resources, or as a historical resource under the California Environmental Quality Act (ASM Affiliates, 2019). The Riverwalk project was approved unanimously by the San Diego City Council on November 17, 2020, and broke ground on September 27, 2022 (Riverwalk San Diego, 2022).
Figure 2.1.4.1: Riverwalk – Public Outreach Meeting (10/07/2017)

Source: Riverwalk San Diego, 2020
2.1.5. Lessons Learned

- Ideal sites are located close to housing, but are not part of a specific housing development
- Ideal sites create infill development and are not located on the outskirts of cities
- Showcasing and emphasizing the unique features of the site contribute to placemaking
- Large amounts of land allow for multiple uses and flexibility on the locations of those uses
Many courses offer opportunities to restore natural habitat, and can remain as an open space.

Parts of the golf course can remain open during construction.

Valuable opportunities to address any deficit of needed land uses.

The project should help to deficit of land uses, add supplement for a deficient of land uses, such as providing increased housing or park space as needed.

Public input creates adjustments that are helpful to the project and the community, and raises support for the project.

Community meetings provide transparency and allow the public to take a part in creating the project.

2.2. Prescott Preserve – Palm Springs, CA

The proposed Prescott Preserve is a former golf course that was bought by Oswit Land Trust to transform into a nature preserve. The site was previously known as the Mesquite Country Club and has a total acreage of 120 acres. Plans for Prescott Preserve include creating four zones, each with its own overarching theme. Each zone will require work such as clearing non-native plants, burying old paths, and grading. Installing new plants, paths, and interpretive features will bring new life to the site. However, the future of the project is uncertain due to a lawsuit against Oswit Land Trust by the Mesquite Country Club Homeowners Association.

Palm Springs is a golf destination and has a population of 44,799 people. It is in the Coachella Valley in Riverside County and is around 100 miles away from Los Angeles. Palm Springs is part of the Mojave Desert, which gives it a dry and warm climate. The Prescott Preserve will focus on restoring and maintaining the natural habitat of the desert.
2.2.1. Existing Conditions of the Site

This property was originally developed as the Mesquite Country Club, an 18-hole golf course located in the heart of Palm Springs. The course was opened in 1985 and was accompanied by 600 condominiums (Palm Springs, 2020). During the late 2010s and early 2020s, the golf course started to fail financially. The owners intended to sell the land for development, but instead it was purchased by Oswit Land Trust to use as a natural preserve in the summer of 2022 (Oswit Land Trust, 2022).

Oswit Land Trust has already done some work on the property since buying it. In their surveys of the site, Oswit discovered 19 species of special concern on the property, including the federally endangered Casey’s June beetle. See Figure 2.2.1.5 below for a full list of the species of special concern discovered on the site. This has demonstrated the importance of this property to the local ecosystem and the necessity of preserving it for future generations. The grass on the property has not been watered to create a more natural habitat and prepare for future work in changing the landscape (Gray, 2023). In addition, progress has been made in ‘clearing trash and brush from the property, repairing bridges, fixing irrigation leaks, and hiring landscape architects and an environmental firm, among a couple dozen other tasks.’ This will ensure public safety and provide a clean slate for planned improvements. (Balchan, 2023).

However, the plans for a nature preserve are not without controversy. The Mesquite Country Club Homeowners Association (HOA) filed a lawsuit against Oswit Land Trust, arguing that creating a nature preserve violates a lease agreement with the previous owner of the property. The lease agreement states that the owner must follow “Golf Course Ordinance” rules and has not been amended. Attorneys wrote that the project would cause financial harm to HOA members if a portion of their monthly fees goes towards creation of the preserve. Oswit Land
Trust was hoping to resolve this lawsuit quickly, as they were seeking a $10.8 million grant from the California Wildlife Conservation Board to fully restore all 120 acres. The two parties were unable to meet an agreement and Oswit could not participate in the Wildlife Conservation Board hearing, held on August 24, 2023, to receive the grant money. It is unclear how Oswit Land Trust will move forward and what will be done with the property. Complicating the situation further is the fact that ‘illegal encampments have been routinely cleaned up since the property has exchanged hands to Oswit.’ If Oswit Land Trust is unable to develop the site, encampments may become more prominent on the site and fences may have to be erected to keep people off the property (Gray, 2023).
Figure 2.2.1.1: Prescott Preserve – Map

Source: Riverside County Information Technology, n.d.
The land use category of the site is Open Space – Parks and Recreation. The parcels that make up the project are zoned as PD, R-1-C, and W respectively. R-1-C is a single-family residential zone that restricts houses to ten thousand (10,000) square feet. W is a watercourse zone, which falls under the category of open space zones. PD is a planned development district. No specific plans apply to this project. See Figures 2.2.1.3 and 2.2.1.4 for more information.
Figure 2.1.1.3: Prescott Preserve – Land Use (Map)

Source: City of Palm Springs, 2014
Figure 2.2.1.4: Prescott Preserve – Zoning (Map)

Source: Newell, 2015; Riverside County Information Technology, n.d.
2.2.2. **Existing Conditions of the Surrounding Area**

2.2.2.1. **Location and Setting**

The project is in Palm Springs, which is a popular vacation destination known for its golf courses and sunny weather. Many Hollywood celebrities have lived and vacationed in Palm Springs over the years due to its proximity to Los Angeles. Significant nearby attractions include Mount San Jacinto State Park, Joshua Tree National Park, the Coachella and Stagecoach music festivals, the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway, and downtown Palm Springs. The area is also known for its large LGBTQ+ community and hosts the Greater Palm Springs Pride Celebration annually, which is one of the largest Pride celebrations in the country (Doherty, 2021).
Figure 2.2.1.1: Palm Springs – Context (Map)

Source: Riverside County Information Technology, n.d.
Palm Springs is currently served by SunLine Transit Agency. This bus system has three routes, Route 1WV, Route 2, and Route 4, that stop in Palm Springs with 141 total public transit stops (SunLine Transit Agency, 2023). See Figure 2.2.2.1.3 below for more details.
Palm Springs is at risk for multiple hazards, such as fire hazards, flood risks, earthquake faults, landslides, and liquefaction. These can be seen in Figures 2.1.2.4 and 2.1.2.5 below.
Figure 2.2.1.4: Palm Springs – Hazards (Map)

Source: Riverside County Information Technology, n.d.
2.2.2.2. Population and Demographics

2.2.2.2.1. Race

Palm Springs has a total population of 44,799 people. Of the total population, 76 percent are White, 24 percent are Hispanic, five percent are Asian, five percent are Black, seven percent are two or more races, less than one percent are Pacific Islander, percent are American Indian, and six percent are another race. This can be visualized clearly by viewing Figure 2.2.2.2.1.1 below.
2.2.2.2. Age and Sex

Palm Springs has an older population and is known for being a popular retirement destination. The majority of people in Palm Springs are 50 to 70 years old.
2.2.2.3. Educational Attainment

Palm Springs is a well-educated community, with 75 percent of people having at least some college experience.
2.2.2.4. Individual Income

Palm Springs is a wealthier community, with 41 percent of people making more than $75,000. The high income in the area can be attributed to the popularity it enjoys among both tourists and Hollywood celebrities. The median annual income for men is $64,661, while the median annual income for women is $51,841.
2.2.2.5. Poverty Status

In Palm Springs, 15 percent of the population is under the poverty line. The surrounding Coachella Valley has a high rate of poverty that most likely contributes to this statistic.

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021*
2.2.3. Project Description

The plans for Prescott Preserve are currently unclear. As a result of an ongoing lawsuit, Oswit Land Trust was unable to secure the $10.8 million grant from the California Wildlife Conservation Board to fully restore all 120 acres. This project description will therefore consist of planned improvements that Oswit Land Trust had hoped to make on the site.

The restoration plan breaks up the preserve into four different zones, with each zone requiring demolition, grading, irrigation, plantings, and maintenance. Zone 1 is the Desert Fan Palm Oasis, Zone 2 is the Sonoran Creosote Bush Scrub, Zone 3 is the Desert Dry Wash Woodland, and Zone 4 is the Perimeter Screen Buffer (Non-Native). Zone 4 is the buffer between the preserve and the residential condominiums located nearby. The Oswit Land Trust will maintain the strips of land on both sides of Farrell that run between the street and preserve.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021
The maintenance includes watering and trimming the existing nonnative plants on the perimeter. More details can be found in Figures 2.2.3.2 and 2.2.3.3 below (Gray, 2023).

The golf course must be cleared of non-native plants and turfgrass for native flora and fauna to thrive. Oswit Land Trust will also remove or bury the concrete golf cart paths, install public access paths, and install interpretive features. The goal is to complete all restoration within two planting seasons, which runs from November to April (Balchan, 2023).

The existing clubhouse is not part of the plans for restoration. Oswit Land Trust did not purchase the 10 acres of land that houses the existing clubhouse, as it was never for sale. No plans have been announced as to what the current owner will do with the clubhouse (Gray, 2023).

Figure 2.2.3.1: Prescott Preserve – Site Plan

Source: Oswit Land Trust, 2023
Figure 2.2.3.2: Prescott Preserve – Cost Summary

$10.8 Million requested for restoration of:
120 acres in 4 zones over 2 seasons

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<tr>
<th>Zone</th>
<th>Size (sq. ft.)</th>
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<td>Desert Dry Wash Woodland</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perimeter Screening Buffer (Non-Native)</td>
<td>959,907</td>
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Source: Gray, 2023
2.2.4. Public Outreach Process

A lawsuit between the Oswit Land Trust and Mesquite Country Club Homeowners’ Association has produced an uncertain future for the project. The Homeowners Association states that they hold a lease on the land that says the owner must follow “Golf Course Ordinance.” This lease remains intact (Gray, 2023). Lawyers for the Homeowners Association argue that creating a nature preserve violates the lease on the property and would cause financial harm to members if a portion of their monthly fees goes towards the creation of the preserve (Balchan, 2023). The Mesquite Country Club Homeowners Association Board of Directors elaborated on reasons for the lawsuits, stating that ‘our homeowners purchased their homes in this community with the reasonable expectation that they would continue to be adjacent to a golf course and that they
would have access to those facilities. Our community’s recorded CC&Rs and lease with the golf course owners guarantee those rights for the next 52 years. The board will oppose (and always has opposed) any unchecked residential development of the golf course property and will not approve any development that will adversely affect home values or homeowner health and safety’ (Selberg et al., 2023).

Added to these concerns are declarations by Oswit Land Trust that they will not attempt to drive coyotes off the completed nature preserve. They believe that coyotes are part of the ecosystem throughout the country and have been in Palm Springs since before residents arrived. Furthermore, the trust feels that they cannot pick and choose which species they want to have (Gray, 2023). See Figure 2.2.3.4. for more information on the dog and coyote policies that will be implemented by the Oswit Land Trust.

The Oswit Land Trust opposes the lawsuit, stating that ‘the fact is that we have owned the property for 10 months and have done more for that land than the previous owner ever did and the HOA has not given us one cent. However, their tennis courts are on our land (which we are supposed to receive payment for), they have storage in one of our buildings (and haven’t paid rent), their employees use our parking lot without paying rent, we continue to maintain landscaping for the HOA (just to be a good neighbor) and more’ (Balchan, 2023).

The dismissal of the lawsuit is time-sensitive for the Oswit Land Trust, as California Wildlife Conservation Board was set to vote on a $10.8 million grant for the project on August 24. The grant money is essential to completely restore the property, and it is unclear how the project will proceed as the lawsuit led to missing the deadline for the meeting (Balchan, 2023). Failing to continue the project will create a larger issue for the community, as illegal
encampments have been routinely cleaned up since the purchase of the property. Fences may have to be erected to prevent trespassing and to protect residents from wildlife (Gray, 2023).

Figure 2.2.4.1: Prescott Preserve – Announcement of Purchase (07/26/2022)
2.2.5. Lessons Learned

- Discussions with nearby residents and stakeholders are an important part of the process in deciding how the site should be transformed

- Do not force a specific vision for the site without public input as this will lead to public backlash

- Be flexible and open to feedback

- Prioritize clear communication and provide specifics about what the vision is for the site in terms of timeline, cost, and impacts on the community

- Check legal documents to see what uses are permitted on the site ahead of time

- Consider how to maintain the golf course before construction starts

Source: Gray, 2023
2.3. Former Wayne Golf Course - Bothell, WA

The former Wayne Golf Course is a former golf course that was transformed into a municipal public park by the City of Bothell in Washington. The total acreage of the site is 89 acres. The planned restoration of the Sammamish River and Waynita Creek will create 13 acres of habitat for salmon and restore the natural environment of the site. Further work will need to be done in creating a master plan to determine possible “passive uses,” or those that will not damage or disturb the natural resources of the site.

Bothell is a suburb located 15 miles from Seattle. The city is in both King and Snohomish counties, but the former Wayne Golf Course is in King County. The community has experienced a rapid transformation in the past forty years, going from a town of 8,000 people to 48,000 people in a short amount of time (City of Bothell, n.d.). The climate of Bothell is typical of the Pacific Northwest, with rainy, overcast winters and drier, warmer summers.

2.3.1. Existing Conditions of the Site

The City of Bothell ‘acquired the development rights to the “front nine” of the Golf Course in 1998 with the objective of continuing the front nine as a public golf course’ (City of Bothell, 2012). The first proposal to transform the former Wayne Golf Course came in 2014, when developers announced interest in building townhouses and single-family homes on the site. In protest, residents formed the non-profit organization OneBothell to advocate for the preservation of the golf course as open space for the community (City of Bothell, 2019).

The City of Bothell then decided to work with OneBothell, King County, and Forterra to attempt to buy all 89 acres of the former golf course by the end of 2018. Forterra, a local conservation and sustainability organization, bought the entire property in 2016 to protect it as
potential parkland and to save it from development (Forterra, 2017). Afterwards, they gave the City of Bothell and King County three years to come up with the money to buy the property. The City of Bothell paid $3.8 million for all 89 acres, while King County bought two of the conservation easements at $7.7 million with sales finalized in June 2019. These delays were caused by a need to work with complex partnerships and continuous issues with funding to buy the land (City of Bothell, 2019).

The former Wayne Golf Course is currently open to the public but needs improvements before being fully completed. The total acreage of the site is 89 acres, with 85 acres being conservation easements or environmentally sensitive areas that must remain “passive use” only. Out of those 85 acres, 13 acres will be used as a salmon habitat while 69 acres will be used for passive uses such as ‘hiking, walking, running, picnicking, bird-watching, legal fishing, biking, and drop-in sports such as flag football and soccer’ (City of Bothwell, 2023). Because of these restrictions, no organized sports or events are allowed to take place in the park. The remaining four acres were not included in the original 1996 Conservation Easement but must complement and enhance the remainder of the site in how it is used. The former clubhouse of the golf course is used to provide public parking.
Figure 2.3.1.1: Former Wayne Golf Course – Map

Source: City of Bothell, 2023
The site is zoned as Shoreline Master Plan (SMP). The Shoreline Master Plan is a necessary element of the General Plan under Washington State law. It ‘contains regulations which apply to portions of the City within 200 feet of the ordinary high water mark of North Creek and the Sammamish River, plus associated wetlands’ (City of Bothell, 2021). The most recent version of the Shoreline Master Plan was updated in May 2012, before the city acquired
the former Wayne Golf Course. One of the goals of the Shoreline Master Plan is to ‘encourage the continued operation of the Wayne Golf Course as a shoreline recreation use.’ Interestingly, it notes that ‘expansion and/or alteration of the existing golf course should be allowed consistent with the following: A. Any expansion and/or alteration results in no net loss of ecological functions; B. The special features of a waterfront golf course are recognized and accommodated; C. Maintenance procedures consistent with this SMP are developed.’ The specific plan for the park must abide by these regulations and produce insignificant impacts on the environment.

**Figure 2.3.1.3. Former Wayne Golf Course – Land Use (Map)**

*Source: City of Bothell, 2023*
2.3.2. Existing Conditions of the Surrounding Area

2.3.2.1. Location and Setting

The project is in Bothell, which is a suburb in the greater Seattle Metropolitan Area. Important landmarks in Bothell include the Sammamish River and the University of Washington Bothell campus. The University of Washington Bothell campus has propelled massive growth in the region, with the creation of many jobs and services leading to an increase in population.

Source: City of Bothell, 2023
Figure 2.3.2.1.1: Bothell – Context (Map)

Source: City of Bothell, 2023
Bothell is currently served by Community Transit, Sound Transit, and King County Metro and has 37 public transit stops. See Figures 2.3.2.1.6 and 2.3.2.1.7 below for more details.
Figure 2.3.2.1.3: Bothell – Public Transit (Table)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transit Agency</th>
<th>Route Number</th>
<th>Route Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Transit</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>Mariner Park &amp; Ride/Hardeson Road – Bothell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Transit</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>Mariner P&amp;R – Bothell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King County Metro</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>Kirkland, Juanita, Brickyard, Bothell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King County Metro</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>Kirkland, Rose Hill, Totem Lake, Brickyard, Bothell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King County Metro</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>Bothell, Kenmore, Lake Forest Park, Lake City, University District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sound Transit</td>
<td>522</td>
<td>Woodinville – Roosevelt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sound Transit</td>
<td>535</td>
<td>Lynnwood – Bellevue</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Community Transit, 2023; King County, 2023; Sound Transit, 2023

Figure 2.3.2.1.4: Bothell – Public Transit (Map)

Source: City of Bothell, 2023, Community Transit, n.d.; King County Metro, n.d.; Sound Transit, n.d.
Hazards in Bothell include flooding, liquefaction, and landslides. Figure 2.3.2.1.5 shows areas in the community that are subject to these hazards.

Figure 2.3.2.1.5: Bothell – Hazards (Map)

Source: City of Bothell, 2023, Community Transit, n.d.; King County Metro, n.d.; Sound Transit, n.d.
2.3.2.2. Population and Demographics

2.3.2.2.1. Race

Bothell has a total population of 47,355 people. 69 percent are White, 10 percent are Hispanic, 18 percent are Asian, one percent are Black, seven percent are two or more races, less than one percent are Pacific Islander, less than one percent are American Indian, and four percent are another race. This can be visualized clearly by viewing Figure 2.3.2.2.1.1 below.

Figure 2.4.2.2.1.1: Bothell – Population by Race

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021

2.3.2.2.2. Age and Sex

Bothell has a younger population as a result of the University of Washington Bothell campus being located in the city. The majority of people in Bothell are 25 to 50 years old.
2.3.2.2.3. Educational Attainment

Bothell has a highly educated population, with 80 percent of people having attended at least some college. This reflects the emphasis on academic achievement created by the University of Washington Bothell campus.
2.3.2.4. Individual Income

Bothell is a high-income community, with 56 percent of the population earning more than $75,000 annually. The median annual income for men is $100,513, while the median annual income for women is $62,445.
2.3.2.2.5. Poverty Status

The poverty status in Bothell is extremely low, with only five percent of people qualifying as below the property line.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021
2.3.3. Project Description

While the site is currently open to the public, the City of Bothell is currently in the process of producing a master plan for the park. The creation of a master plan will expand upon possibilities for the site and alleviate concerns about the ability of the city to maintain and program this property because of its size. The park is currently unnamed, but options for names will be explored during the master planning process. Since June 2019, Bothell has collected ground and surface data for the site, selected a preferred alternative out of four design options, and conducted stakeholder and public outreach. Construction is anticipated to start in 2025 and last two years. Based on current projection, it is estimated that the construction cost for the restoration project will be $6.45 million (City of Bothell, 2023). This will be integrated into the master plan process for the park. The master plan will look at possibilities for renaming the park.
consider possible uses for the site, and improvements such as trail building or bridge replacement. This will require further work and coordination with established partnerships. The park also requires more immediate work to make it safe for the public, such as clearing hazards and maintaining the park for public safety. This is of financial concern to the city as the estimated annual cost of maintenance is $180,000 (City of Bothell, 2019).

2.3.4. Public Outreach Process

In January 2016, the Wayne Golf Course committee was formed to discuss acquisition of the Wayne Golf Course. Committee members included the Mayor, two Council members, City staff, King County staff, Forterra staff, and representatives from OneBothell (City of Bothell, 2017). The inclusion of community organizations in this committee was a limited attempt at considering public feedback for the project. In general, public engagement has been minimal as the work done so far has been related to acquisition of the property. Meetings have been held mostly in the form of informational sessions informing the public about the history of the project and its current conditions. However, the city has begun public engagement specifically on the Sammamish River and Waynita Creek Restoration project, and a preferred alternative for the restoration was selected to move forward in the design process on December 6, 2022 (City of Bothell, 2023). Public engagement for the former Wayne Golf Course may increase as the City of Bothell starts the master planning process and decides more in depth what the park will look like in the future.
2.3.5. Lessons Learned

- Conduct community outreach to determine how the golf course should be transformed
- Create partnerships with other organizations such as local non-profits and government agencies to acquire the property and to further achieve goals
- Apply for grants and funding as needed
- Consider which improvements need to be made before opening the golf course to the public and which ones can be done later
• Consider maintenance costs and impact on city budget if turning the golf course into a park as it is a lot of land and will be more expensive than other parks
• Continue to involve community organizations as a bridge between the city and the public
• Consider agreements that already apply to the site and how that can limit what can be built or what uses the site can have
• Opportunities for restoring habitat for endangered species

3. Recommendations and Best Practices

Overall, these case studies have demonstrated different challenges and opportunities during the redevelopment process. Each project is unique and provides insight that applies to other potential projects. As seen below, the recommended strategies are the result of careful review of each case study by noting the similarities and differences between each project. These strategies will make the redevelopment process of underutilized or abandoned golf courses more successful.

3.1. Research the Site and Surrounding Area

• **Environmental:** Does the site have any environmental concerns? Are there species of special concern on the site? Does the site have critical natural habitat that can be restored for public use? Is it experiencing impacts of climate change that could worsen in the future?
• **Infrastructure:** Is there existing infrastructure capacity, such as water, sewer, power, and traffic, to create new uses on the site?
- **Location:** Where is the site located within the city? Is it in a central location or on the outskirts of the community? How does the site connect to the rest of the community? What existing modes of transportation can be used to get to the site? Is the community in a rural, suburban, or urban area and how does it connect to the region around it?

- **Ownership:** Who owns the course? If the site is a municipal golf course, public agencies have more control over how they are developed.

- **Property Restrictions:** Does the property have easements or other covenants, conditions, and restrictions that may be barriers in integrating mixed-use or residential onsite?

- **Size:** What is the size of the site? A larger site can allow for phased redevelopment or more impactful projects.

- **Uses:** Is the site abandoned or still operating? What potential uses could complement nearby uses and be feasible for this site? What are needed land uses in the community, such as housing or open space?

- **Utilities:** What are the existing utilities on the site? What needs to be done to physically prepare the site for development?

3.2. **Further Considerations**

- **Cost:** What is the cost of redevelopment and what are potential funding sources? If funded by a public agency, how will it fit into the budget?

- **Impacts:** What will the impacts be on residents, property values, traffic, and the environment? What impacts will be created during construction?

- **Length:** How long will the project last? What is the estimated completion date?
• **Programming:** Who are the intended users of the site?

3.3. **Evaluate and Adjust Regulations**

• **Development Standards and Incentives:** Are there non-discretionary density or height bonuses available for specific residential uses, such as for affordable housing, through local or State regulation? Are there existing regulatory incentives that can promote the conversion of golf courses to residential uses?

• **Environmental Impact Reports:** Can the agency conduct Program-level EIRs as part of a specific plan for golf course sites to define and include development parameters and streamline future entitlement processes? Does the agency offer technical assistance for environmental clean-up or programs that provide entitlement support to developers with polluted sites?

• **General Plan Amendment:** Do any updates need to be made to the General Plan? Have recent Housing Element updates identify specific municipal golf courses that can be rezoned? Have infrastructure needs for overall new residential capacity been assessed citywide as part of regulatory planning efforts such as a Housing Element or Land Use Element?

• **Parking Incentives:** Does the agency provide parking reductions for residential or mixed-use development as part of any existing ordinances that could apply to the conversion of golf course sites?

• **Permits:** Is there a task force in place dedicated to the permitting or processing of sites that require remediation? If residential or mixed-use development is permitted, is a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) required?
• **Specific Plans:** Can the agency create a Specific Plan or other regulatory framework that provides a pathway and incentives to redevelop a golf course opportunity site, and attract developer interest to consolidate site ownership and move forward with redevelopment?

• **Zoning Amendment:** Are there any other requirements in existing codes and ordinances? Are golf courses a protected use (such as Open Space) within your jurisdiction, that may be prohibited for conversion to other uses? Does the underlying zone prohibit by-right residential uses (single-family detached or multi-family dwelling units)? Does the agency have an existing mixed-use overlay zone or affordable housing overlay zone that can be applied to golf course conversion?

**Figure 3.3.1: Tools to Evaluate and Adjust Regulations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tools</th>
<th>When To Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. General Plan Amendment Along With Zoning Amendment or Ordinance</td>
<td>Use this tool when the underlying zoning designation for an individual site or the provisions of a zoning designation need to be updated to permit multifamily residential uses at urban densities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Specific Plan, Area Plan, or Corridor Plan</td>
<td>Use this tool when existing regulatory requirements for commercial uses within a certain opportunity area or district need to be amended to allow for multifamily residential or mixed-use development at urban densities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Parking Incentive/Amendment.</td>
<td>Use this tool when a site can be made more attractive for redevelopment to residential by reducing the minimum parking requirement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Flexible Development Standards or Development Incentives</td>
<td>Use this tool when a site can be made more attractive for redevelopment by providing density, height bonuses, reduction in setbacks, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Streamlined or Expedited Review Process</td>
<td>Use this tool when a site can be made more attractive for redevelopment to residential by minimizing timelines for entitlement and any discretionary review processes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Program EIRs</td>
<td>Use this tool when area-wide program EIRs for change of use and intensity can speed up the entitlement process and timelines, and reduce risk for individual redevelopment projects.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. Streamlined In-Lieu fees / Development Impact Fees for Impact Mitigation. Use this tool to make redevelopment of a site more attractive by reducing uncertainty on development timelines through a streamlined in-lieu fee process.

8. District-Wide Traffic Impact Studies Use this tool when streamlined impact fees for traffic impacts from new development can create more efficient entitlement process for site conversion.

Source: Southern California Association of Governments, 2022

3.4. Fund and Implement New Infrastructure

- **Funding:** Are there possibilities to create special funding mechanisms to fund infrastructure investments for targeted areas or districts? Can incremental infrastructure improvements to support phased development on the site be achieved through development impact fees or in-lieu fees?

- **Needs:** Have infrastructure needs for overall new residential capacity been assessed citywide as part of regulatory planning efforts such as a Housing Element or Land Use Element?

Figure 3.4.1: Tools to Fund and Implement New Infrastructure Projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tools</th>
<th>When To Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Enhanced Infrastructure Financing Districts (EIFDs)/Community Revitalization and Investment Authorities (CRIAs)</td>
<td>Use this tool to initiate investments in infrastructure upgrades in districts or opportunity areas that are identified for redevelopment potential.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Community Facilities District (CFD)</td>
<td>Use this tool to help in funding upgrades and maintenance for infrastructure and facilities needed to support new development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Federal and State Funding for Infrastructure such as the Justice 40 Initiative</td>
<td>Use this tool to fund infrastructure investments, such as water, sewer, and broadband investments in disadvantaged areas within jurisdiction to support housing development.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Southern California Association of Governments, 2022
### 3.5. Facilitate Community Involvement

Stakeholder groups include:

- **Public**: Residents, groups that currently use the site, and groups that could use the site in the future.

- **Private**: Golf course owners, contractors and firms hired to complete the project, and previous housing developers.

- **Government**: Governmental agencies that service the area, such as cities, counties, and transit agencies.

Potential strategies to build community support include:

- **Required Community Outreach that Addresses Community Priorities**: Are developers required to conduct community outreach contingent upon development approval? Is a developer required to adapt the program and design to reasonably accommodate community priorities such as open space provision, protecting views, etc. received during the outreach process? Can the agency undertake a broad-based community engagement effort as part of a specific planning exercise for a golf course opportunity site to integrate community priorities into design standards for new development?

- **Community Benefits**: Can development approvals include community benefits agreements for large scale sites?
Figure 3.5.1: Tools to Facilitate Community Involvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tools</th>
<th>When To Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Proactive Community and Stakeholder Engagement</td>
<td>Use this tool when embarking on a large-scale redevelopment project or a citywide, corridor or district level planning effort to set up community outreach procedures to identify and gather community goals and priorities through a community advisory committee or broader outreach format.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Tailored Community Benefits Agreements</td>
<td>Use this tool to integrate equitable development objectives and community priorities into redevelopment on larger-scale sites that will have an impact in the neighborhood or community.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Southern California Association of Governments, 2022

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