

Derek Small

Hello Rebecca,

Like most of my neighbours, facing a risk to the beauty of our community is of grave concern to me. The further development of the Millcroft sub-division to the detriment of residents and local wildlife is unfortunate. Seeing a golf course ripped up for more houses is disheartening but understandable from a capitalistic perspective. The owner of the golf course has money tied up in the business. A successful business owner aspires to earn an acceptable rate of return on their capital.

If the current business is not generating an attractive return, other options should be considered. Repurposing the land is one option. Working to grow the existing business is another, as is selling the golf course. The builder sees repurposing parcels of the land while keeping an operational golf course as the most profitable option at this time. I suspect not operating a golf course at all and developing all the land in the future is the next step. This eventual outcome will come at great cost to residents of Millcroft and the city itself.

I encourage you and your team to consider the real costs of further developing the Millcroft sub-division against the real limited benefits to the city and its residents.

What is the true future of the golf course?

With the reduction in the total length of the golf course, it will not attract additional attendance. Many avid golfers already consider the course to be too short. With the elimination of three par fives to be replaced by par 3 holes would make the course a joke for any skilled golfer. I suspect revenues for the new course will fall as a result.

This puts into question the future of the golf course. If course revenues fall to a point where the course can no longer be a sustainable business, what happens to the remaining land? It is forced to be developed if the city is not willing to step in and buy it? Does the city want to own two golf courses?

Does the stated objective of safety have any merit?

One of the rationales for the course change is to make it safer. I don't believe safety has anything to do with the plan. Two of the holes that will be destroyed are the widest and therefore safest holes on the course. I live on the 18th hole 200 yards from the tee. This is the most hazardous part of the course according to course records I believe. None of the proposed changes will address this. Over the course history, many options could and should have been considered if safety issues were a concern.

I will add the shortening the course by close to 2000 yards will eliminate any serious golfer from using the course. Weekend warriors and amateurs will need to fill the tee times to fill the calendar. Does anyone believe this reality will make the course safer?

Below is an excerpt from an article I found

Richard Guest

February 28, 2020 at 3:22 pm

The argument that this is for safety reasons is a complete smokescreen! In Millcroft Greens own presentation the number of golf ball hits is highest by more than 40% on HOLE #18- a hole they aren't even planning to touch! The number of hits on the 2 holes they want to eliminate and cover with housing have, combined, fewer hits from golf balls than hole #14 (which they just plan to shorten for no plausible reason!). The 2 holes on which they want to build, partially, (#s1&16) have about 12 hits (TOTAL!) So spare us the phoney rationale- there is ZERO concern for preserving green space, the natural ecosystems in the development, the 400+ trees that are being cut down to build houses. No mention of safety for school children adding another 150-200 cars in an already "traffic calmed", congested neighbourhood. It's just another money grab for developers/builders, tax levies for the city, and loss of value for homeowners. No-one should buy Millcroft Green/ Argo Development's story about "concerns for safety from ball strikes"! If anything, reducing Millcroft to a beginner-type par 3 course will draw beginner golfers and more, not less, errant ball flights!

Simple nets that protect high risk homes are commonplace in most golf course communities. I am not aware of one net installed in Millcroft at this time. Stating safety is a primary issue insults the intelligence of residents and city councillors in my opinion.

Is there economic benefit if existing homes face declining property values?

Further development will obviously impact the property values of those homes that forfeit their golf course view. The total loss of value will be in tens of millions I suspect. But that financial hit may be just the beginning. If the golf course is eventually completely ruined, the entire community will lose its lustre. Millcroft is a luxurious community that gives cache to the entire city. It draws new community members from all over the GTA. A sub-division without a golf course would not do this.

What is the true community and environmental impact?

Loss of green space from increased urban density is always a challenge for a city that wants to grow. When I first moved to Burlington in 2001, I was told that development on the north side of Dundas was never going to happen. Obviously the real estate agent that told me this was quite wrong! Recognizing every square foot of land is subject to different usage is a good lesson to learn.

For many residents of Millcroft, the home they have represents an oasis in the middle of a city they all love. It is a tremendous luxury to have manicured natural space throughout the sub-division. It is the primary reason residents purchased homes in the community. The land that supports and nurtures what limited wildlife the city still has is to be treasured. Further loss of greenspace in a city that has grown significantly in the last two decades is tragic.

What can residents do to work with the course owner and ensure the survival of the gold course?

Many residents feel very entitled about the access and support of the golf course in their community. Although we as residents have no financial stake in the business, we feel it should continue to operate to sustain the current enjoyment our personal properties provide as a result of the courses existence. We are wrong to think this. Someone has to pay for the luxury of having a manicured landscape throughout our neighbourhood. We should understand that in the face of a non-viable

alternative, such as a profitable golf course, that the burden to support this luxury falls in the hands of residents.

If the course development is really just about money, which I think everyone can plainly see, then that is the issue residents should be discussing with the course owner. Whether it's a course maintenance fee, mandatory membership, or added tax on homes that back onto the course, are things that should be tabled as an alternative to ensure the golf course remains profitable.

Can the city tax Millcroft residents and support the owner with the tax proceeds?

Outside of residents directly compensating the course owner directly, perhaps a specific tax for all residents of a golf course community should be considered. If residents truly want the golf course to remain as is, we should be willing to pay for it. That would be great solution in my view. That is if the land wasn't sold to the developer initially for such a low price that a reasonable profit by operating the course was all but guaranteed.

How as the land originally acquired?

Is the course not part of some greenbelt plan? Was that not part of the initial deal to acquire the land in the first place? If so, the owner should have no right or expectation to benefit from converting the land to more houses. Though I'm not an expert, I would suspect concessions by the city/region/province would have been made when the land was initially acquired. To profit from a gift is just plain wrong.

Thank you for considering my issues with the proposed development. I hope a resolution with the golf course owner can be found that sustains the beauty of our neighbourhood as it is today. Seeing a sharp reduction in the greenspace in the sub-division would be truly unfortunate.

Sincerely,

Derek Small