

**Subject:**

On the Importance of Saving Ann Arbor's Golf Courses

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**From:** Jeff Crockett**Sent:** Tuesday, July 1, 2025 12:25 PM**To:** Planning <Planning@a2gov.org>; City Council <CityCouncil@a2gov.org>**Subject:** On the Importance of Saving Ann Arbor's Golf Courses

Dear Members of the Planning Commission and City Council,

My name is Jeff Crockett, a golfer of 60 years who has lived at 506 E. Kingsley for 45 years. I have played in a golf league of 12 at Leslie Park for 15 years. But, beyond that, I have played numerous times at Leslie Park and Huron Hills with my son and love both courses. I am deeply concerned about the recent attacks on golf courses by members of the Planning Commission, the City Council, and pro-density social media influencers. There have been numerous public statements over the past year advocating for the closure of local golf courses and their replacement with housing.

Recently, what has fueled concerns in the large Ann Arbor golf community is a statement on the Comprehensive Plan that excludes golf courses and other local parks from the parks calculation. That is, the Comprehensive plan on page 56 indicates that there are 13.6 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents in Ann Arbor. Yet, the 2023-2027 PROS Plan indicates that there are 17.96 acres per 1000 residents. The discrepancy was not noted until it was recently discovered. When the discrepancy was revealed, there was a general public alarm. According to Ms. Disch in a Facebook post, the discrepancy was not a mistake. It was a judgment call. The public outcry resulted in a joint statement from the Planning and Parks Staff shared by CM Disch that there are no current plans to close the golf courses and that the only way that could happen was by a city-wide vote. Judgment call or not, it was a mistake to omit the PROS Plan park total of 17.96 acres in the CLUP and not to explain the discrepancy.

Soon after, a loophole was discovered that few people knew about which allows the City to create 99 year leases to repurpose the golf courses and parks to private developers. This has already occurred with Fuller Field, which was partially leased to the University of Michigan for use as a parking lot. All of this uncertainty has greatly stressed the Ann Arbor golfing communities, who would likely mount a fierce opposition to any changes to the golf courses. Statements made by Planning Commissioners and Council Members who have expressed opposition to golf courses have enflamed the fears. , City Council members need to pass a resolution indicating that the golf courses and parks will not be leased without voter approval. Also, the Planning Commission should include a similar preemptive statement prohibiting the lease of public parks without voter approval in the CLUP. Failure to do so will result in a further erosion of trust for both the Planning Commission and City Council.

Please understand that golf in Ann Arbor is not simply a sport. It is a diverse community. High school golf teams play there. Business is transacted during rounds on golf courses. Golfers from out of town frequently patronize local businesses. Individual golfers or twosomes are paired with golfers they don't know. You can learn a lot about another person when you play a round of golf lasting 4-5 hours, and new friendships frequently emerge.

Leslie Park was built in 1967, and is the recipient of several prominent awards, such as Golf Digest's #1 Municipal Course in Michigan, Ann Arbor News' Best Place to Golf, Michigan Golfer's Top Ten Muni's, and Michigan Golf Network's Top Ten Funnest to Play. Leslie Park is also honored to be one of 12 Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary golf courses in the state of Michigan. It teams with Monarchs in the Rough, which is a partnership between Audubon International and Environmental Defense Fund. Huron Hills was built

in 1922 and is an excellent course for beginners, juniors, seniors, and families. It is noted for dramatic elevation changes and views of the Huron River. Both golf courses are open to the public during the off-season and are popular sites for cross-country skiing and sledding. Both courses are wildlife sanctuaries. The Huron Hills clubhouse recently received a Historic Preservation award from the Historic District Commission.

I appreciate that building affordable housing is an important goal. But, much of the housing that will likely result from the current Comprehensive Plan will be market-rate housing. What worries a lot of Ann Arbor residents is that the density increase proposed in the currently CLUP will do little to create affordable housing but will negatively impact the quality of life of current residents who have paid property taxes for many years to support local government. That is unfair and simply unacceptable. What further worries me is that the statement from the Planning Commission and Parks Department only says there are no **current** plans to get rid of golf courses, leaving open the possibility that the future plan could change. You can be assured that from now on, the Ann Arbor golfing community will pay much closer attention to any action of the Planning Commission and City Council that threatens golf courses. A statement in the CLUP recognizing the many contributions of the golf courses to the Ann Arbor community would help quiet the recent public outcry.