



CITY OF MARTINEZ

**CITY COUNCIL AGENDA
June 4, 2014**

TO: Mayor and City Council
FROM: Tim Tucker, City Engineer
SUBJECT: Feasibility of Adding a Disc Golf Course
DATE: May 29, 2014

RECOMMENDATION:

By motion direct the Parks Recreation Marina and Cultural Commission (PRMCC) to review the feasibility of adding a disc golf course in the Hidden Lakes Open Space and to hold a neighborhood workshop on the proposal.

BACKGROUND:

The Martinez Disc Golf Club has approached the Chair of the PRMCC to install a disc golf course at Hidden Lakes Open Space. Before holding public workshops and hearing on the proposal the Chair first request that the Council review the proposal to verify it is an activity that would be supported by the Council.

Disc golf is an activity growing in popularity. Several chain nets are supported by metal poles. The poles are separated varying distances. Players throw Frisbees (discs) from a tee area towards the net. The fewest throws needed to land the disc in the nets over the entire course win, similar. Teams have formed over the bay area including Martinez. The Martinez Club has evaluated the feasibility of adding a course to the Hidden Lakes Open Space. Attached is their evaluation.

The PRMCC Park Subcommittee has had one meeting with the group. An additional meeting with the Subcommittee is needed prior to them providing a formal recommendation to the full PRMCC. It is also recommended the Subcommittee hold a neighborhood workshop to discuss the idea with the surrounding neighbors.

One issue discussed by the Subcommittee is if disc golf is an appropriate use of open space. The Municipal Code states the following under "OS" Open Space District Zoning:

Section 22.28.030 Permitted Use

The following uses shall be permitted in this District:

- A. Agricultural uses of all natures;*
- B. Park and recreational uses; trails;*

Based on this definition staff believes disc golf is an allowable recreational use.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The facility would initially be built by the Martinez Disc Golf Club. Although the facilities are very low maintenance, the City would be responsible for maintain the facility once installed, similar to other park improvements.

ACTION:

By motion direct the Parks Recreation Marina and Cultural Commission (PRMCC) to review the feasibility of adding a disc golf course in the Hidden Lakes Open Space and to hold a neighborhood workshop on the proposal.

Attachment:
Suitability of Site

APPROVED BY:


Interim City Manager

Section I: Suitability of Site – General

The Martinez Disc Golf Club is proposing the installation of a disc golf course in Hidden Lakes Park and its surrounding open space. **We consider the potential at Hidden Lakes Park superior to all existing disc golf courses in the East Bay.**

The Club and the professional course designer, Leonard Muise, have walked and studied the park carefully to determine suitability for adding disc golf to existing uses. This initial evaluation takes many site factors into account: existing uses, safety, flora, fauna, soil, slope, wind, drainage, access, and logistics, as well as sport-related factors such as variety, challenge, elevation, aesthetics, and overall flow.

We have used all of these factors to identify areas in the park which have high, medium, or minor potential for safe, compatible, enjoyable, and sustainable disc golf holes. In order to give staff an idea of where holes might be located in these areas, we have also sketched a rough layout of possible holes. (This rough layout is not a proposed layout; it's only for discussion purposes.)

Hidden Lakes Park meets the basic logistical needs of a disc golf course. There is ample parking: 122 spaces + handicap and roundabout spaces. Except for special events, the parking lot is rarely filled beyond 50%; usually, even on sunny weekends, 75+% of the spaces are unoccupied. The park also has drinking fountains and multi-use restrooms. Long-term, the “snack shack” may provide the vendor with an opportunity for disc rentals and sales.

We anticipate that disc golf will have, at worst, a neutral impact on litter in the park. Maintenance workers at local courses (e.g., Benicia, Walnut Creek) are enthusiastic about their courses; they report that their parks are actually cleaner due to the stewardship of the disc golfers. In the letter below, Mike Vickers, Public Services Manager for the City of Walnut Creek, describes the positive impact of the course at Walden Park. (see [Appendix A: Walnut Creek Success](#))

Section II: Suitability of Site – Open Space

Based on both formal open space definitions and the success of existing courses in open space areas, we firmly believe that disc golf is sustainably appropriate for the open space area at Hidden Lakes Park.

Many of disc golf's 5000+ courses are located in areas specifically identified as "open space." Relevant examples of successful open space courses include Lake Herman Regional Park (Benicia, CA) and Evergreen Open Space (Goleta, CA, near Santa Barbara).

In 2010, the City of Benicia installed a 9-hole disc golf course in Benicia Community Park and the adjoining open space of Lake Herman Regional Park. Benicia defines open space as an "essentially unimproved" parcel which may be devoted to several purposes including "outdoor recreation." Benicia has designated Lake Herman Regional Park as an open space area which permits passive activities. Benicia's installation of the course affirms that disc golf is suitable for open space as a passive activity with very limited "improvements." (see [Appendix B1: Benicia General Plan](#))

Note: The Benicia course enjoys a consistent, if modest, level of use. It is wholly funded and maintained by the disc golfers who use it.

In 1995, the town of Goleta, near Santa Barbara, installed a 18-hole disc golf course in Evergreen Open Space. The course has been popular for many years and has successfully evolved as the park itself has evolved. The park description is very similar to Hidden Lakes Park. (see [Appendix B2: Goleta General Plan / Coastal Use Plan](#))

The City of Martinez defines "open space" similar to Benicia, Goleta, and other California cities as detailed in the Open Space Section of the Martinez General Plan and the Hidden Lakes Specific Area Plan. Conservation and preservation of natural characteristics are coupled with community utilization via suitable recreational activities. (see [Appendices B3 & B4: Martinez General Plan, Hidden Lakes Specific Area Plan](#))

Appendix A: Walnut Creek Success Story

Regarding the Walden Disc Golf Course in Walnut Creek, CA;

Parking – We have received very little feedback about parking issues. The community was initially concerned about the disc golfers taking up all the parking that is available, but this just isn't been the case. There is always players using the course, but they seem to be using alternative meaning of transportation. There are a lot of bikers (we are installing a second bike rack), hikers, walkers from local businesses (playing during their lunch hour), and some do drive to the course.

Conditions – This was a great opportunity to improve and make use of the back portion of the park. As we moved through the planning process the community had concerns about trash and litter. When you talk to an avid disc golfer you will often hear them mention “pack in and pack out”, and that is exactly what they do. The disc golf course portion of the park is kept exceptionally clean by the users. The same goes for the restrooms – because of this new amenity the park is experiencing more users and the length of the stay has increased. Staff has experienced no issues with the restrooms.

Overall, the golfers have been an added welcome; in terms of safety and vandalism, this extra set of helpful eyes has been a benefit to the park.

Thanks,

Mike Vickers
City of Walnut Creek
Public Services Manager
Phone: 925-256-3538

Appendix A2: Benicia Success Story

Please contact Mike Dotson at the City of Benicia, he is willing to talk on the phone in regards to their disc golf course.

Mike Dotson, Director of Parks
MDotson@ci.benicia.ca.us
707-746-4288/85 (wk phone)

Appendix B1: Benicia General Plan

(excerpts w/ emphases added)

Benicia General Plan

Open Space Element • One of the seven State-mandated elements of a local general plan, it contains an inventory of privately and publicly owned open-space lands, and adopted goals, policies, and implementation programs for the preservation, protection, and management of open space lands.

Open Space Land • Any parcel or area of land or water that is essentially unimproved and devoted to an open space use for the purposes of (1) the preservation of natural resources, (2) the managed production of resources, (3) **outdoor recreation**, or (4) public health and safety. Refer to Policy 2.1.5 and page 209 – Urban Growth Boundary for further discussion of uses.

Park Land, Parkland • Land that is publicly owned or controlled for the purpose of providing parks, recreation, or **open space for public use**.

Development • The physical extension and/or construction of urban land uses. Development activities include: subdivision of land; construction or alteration of structures, roads, utilities, and other facilities; installation of septic systems; grading; deposit of refuse, debris, or fill materials; and clearing of natural vegetative cover (with the exception of agricultural activities). Routine repair and maintenance activities are exempted.

D. OPEN SPACE AND CONSERVATION OF RESOURCES

State planning law requires cities to plan for “**open space for the preservation of natural resources, the managed production of resources, outdoor recreation**, and public health and safety.” The General Plan Land Use Diagram (found in the back pocket of this Plan) recognizes three categories of open space to meet these requirements:

2. General. Includes publicly-owned open space, land dedicated for permanent open space in residential subdivisions, open space for public health and safety (such as hillsides with slopes over 30 percent), open space for managed production of resources (such as mineral resources), **and open space for conservation of natural resources (such as the Lake Herman watershed)**. Refer to Policy 2.1.5 and page 209 – Urban Growth Boundary for further discussion of uses.

Lake Herman Regional Park

Lake Herman Regional Park is an existing 577-acre lake and open space area located at the northernmost edge of the city. Allowed passive activities in the park include fishing, hiking, and picnicking. Boating is prohibited since the lake is a secondary water supply for the city. A trail system connects Lake Herman with nearby Benicia Community Park.

Appendix B2: Goleta General Plan / Coastal Use Plan

(excerpts w/ emphasis added)

Goleta General Plan/Coastal Land Use Plan 3.0 Open Space Element

CHAPTER 3.0

OPEN SPACE ELEMENT: OPEN SPACE, RECREATION, AND COASTAL ACCESS (OS)

3.1 INTRODUCTION

General Plan Law Requirements [GP]

Open space land is defined by the law as any area of land that is essentially unimproved and designated for one or more of the following open space uses: (1) land for the preservation of natural resources; (2) land for the managed production of resources; (3) **open space for outdoor recreation**; (4) open space for public health and safety; and (5) protection of Native American cultural sites, including burial, historic or archaeological, sacred, or other cultural sites.

TABLE 3-1

EXISTING AND PLANNED PARKS AND OPEN SPACE AREAS

Evergreen Acres: 28.72 acres; 3.47-acre lawn; 2 tennis courts; **18-hole disc golf course**; 1 bench; 3 foot-bridges; playing field; softball backstop; walkways; playground; 2 picnic tables; 1 portable restroom



Appendix B3: Martinez General Plan

(excerpts w/ emphases added)

MARTINEZ GENERAL PLAN

21 LAND USE ELEMENT

21.2 OPEN USE AREAS

21.21 Land to remain for open uses is designated Public Permanent Open Space or Open Space/ Conservation Use Land. These designations shall apply where the following conditions are prevalent: natural conditions such as steep or potentially unstable slope, hazardous geologic conditions, watershed stability and floods hazard, seismic hazard, and fire hazard, which constitute major constraints to development or threats to life and property, where soils, land forms, vegetation, watersheds, creekways, and water bodies combine to provide either a significant habitat for wildlife or agricultural resource and where land forms, vegetation, waterways and surfaces constitute a major scenic and recreational resource which should be preserved either for purposes of public use or protection and shaping of the scenic setting of the community.

22 OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

22.1 PURPOSES

Natural resources and processes are highly interrelated. The elements which deal with the natural resource system have therefore been integrated into a single section of the general plan. The purposes served by the individual elements as mandated by state law have been incorporated into policy which considers their systemic nature. Open Space policies must assure the continued availability of land for the production of food and fiber, the enjoyment of scenic beauty, recreation and for the use and protection of natural resources. Conservation policies are meant to assure the conservation, development and utilization of natural resources including water, forests, soils, rivers, harbors, fisheries, wildlife, minerals and other natural resources. A complete discussion of the supporting material upon which these policies are based is found in the Open Space and Conservation Plan.

30.24 Secure open space and conservation areas both around and within the urbanized area of Central Martinez, afford relief from the urban environment, ensure neighborhood identity, protect scenic vistas and provide for active and passive recreation.

Appendix B4: Hidden Lakes Specific Area Plan

(excerpts w/ emphasis added)

32 HIDDEN LAKES SPECIFIC AREA PLAN

32.2 GOALS

32.21 TO PRESERVE LARGE MASSES OF NATURAL PERMANENT OPEN SPACE AREAS FOR THEIR ECOLOGICAL, ENVIRONMENTAL, AESTHETIC AND RECREATIONAL VALUE TO THE HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE OF PRESENT AND FUTURE RESIDENTS.

32.32 The existing golf course is an appropriate use within the Plan area.