

# FATE OF GOLF IN CITIES HINGES ON LOCAL PLANNING

By  
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BUTLER**  
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From Maryland

Remarks made at the 1961 annual meeting of the Maryland State Golf Association.

I know it must have been a great relief to all of you, as it was to me, to learn that the new President of the United States is every bit as fond of golf as his predecessor was and is. All that publicity about Touch Football was so much political camouflage. In fact, news stories out of Florida a few weeks ago revealed that President Kennedy had played golf six days in a row. Some of us weekend golfers were momentarily overcome with envy perhaps, but good sportsmanship reasserted itself and we wished the President good luck and no need for mulligans off the first tee.

We all know and agree that golf is a wonderful game for relaxation, for getting our minds off things at the office. But I consider golf to be much more than a recreational pastime. Golf can also be most educational. In fact, as this new Administration settles down to the demanding task of running the United States of America, I would like to suggest to the various members of the Cabinet that they visit the golf course as frequently as possible for the following reasons:

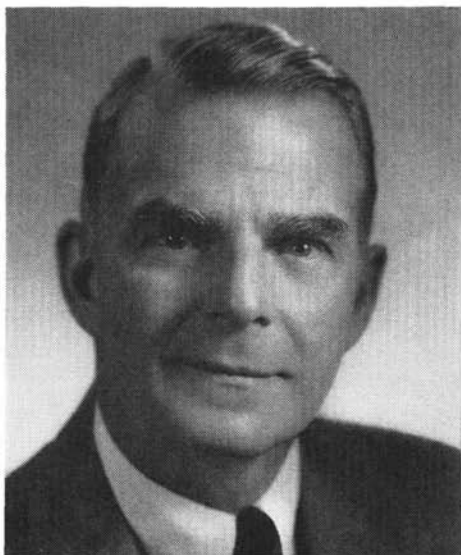
Dean Rusk, Secretary of State, can practice the highest degree of diplomacy when he catches his opponent teeing up in the rough.

Douglas Dillon, Secretary of the Treasury, can lead the fight against inflation by not counting whiffs.

Robert McNamara, Secretary of Defense, can delve into the mysteries of "guided missiles" while attempting to keep his ball in the middle of the fairway.

Arthur Goldberg, Secretary of Labor, can pick up some pointers about labor conditions when he tries to find a caddy on Sunday morning at 11:30 a. m.

Luther Hodges, Secretary of Commerce, can stimulate the economy with a Buy American program in the Pro Shop and



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urging all to use new balls on the water holes.

Stewart Udall, Secretary of the Interior, can advance the cause of conservatism by starting a national program to replace all divots.

Orville Freeman, Secretary of Agriculture, can liquidate some of his food surpluses by distributing sandwiches to the higher handicaps before they begin their 6-hour rounds.

J. Edward Day, Postmaster General, can experience first hand the working conditions of postal carriers by carrying his own bag.

Abraham Ribicoff, Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, can personally probe some of the reasons for the serious mental health problem in this Nation while trying to blast out of an overhanging bunker.

Adlai Stevenson, our Ambassador to the United Nations, can exercise his well-known eloquence and persuasion while explaining to his partner why he missed an 18-inch putt for a tie on the last hole.

And last, but not least, Robert Kennedy, Attorney General of the United States, can right a long-standing injustice by recommending the permanent elimination of the stroke and distance penalty for hitting a ball out of bounds.

If the Cabinet observes my most respectful suggestion to take up or continue their golf, I predict that great successes will come their way. Over 150 years ago it was said that the Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton. In a similar way, it may be written by future historians that the Cold War was won on the fairways and greens of Chevy Chase and Burning Tree.

Now, on a more serious note, gentlemen, I would like to discuss briefly some of the problems that confront country clubs and all recreation areas in our rapidly developing society.

### **Outdoor Recreation Crisis**

A crisis in outdoor recreation appears to be approaching. Each year the gap between the active demand and the opportunities for outdoor recreation grows wider and the gap between the potential demand and opportunity wider still. From all signs outdoor recreation in the United States has reached the take-off point. What up until now has been largely a matter of inconvenience to an increasing number of individuals is turning into a serious national problem that not only concerns the use of many million acres of land but also a large segment of our whole national pattern of life.

The main point is this: We Americans don't just want outdoor recreation, we need it. Moving from farms to cities and suburbs has not meant turning our backs on land and water and open sky. As a people, we don't feel right unless we can get back from time to time to the outdoors. If we should ever lose this urge, there will have been a profound change in the national character. Meanwhile, it is abundantly clear that outdoor recreation is not just one alternative use of family income and leisure time that rises and falls automatically with changing costs and fashions. Meeting the demand

of such recreation is a national problem of the first rank.

To get some idea of the magnitude of this problem, let's examine the four factors that appear to be the main components of total demands.

### **A Population Boom**

1. Population. There will be about twice as many people in the United States in the year 2000 as there were in 1950. Projecting future birth rates is a tricky business but it is reasonable to expect a national population of 240 million in 1980 and 310 million in 2000. We know too that even a larger proportion of the future population will be city people who will have to look to specialized areas for getting outdoors.

### **Buying Power to Double**

2. Buying Power. People will have more money to spend—perhaps twice as much per person in 2000 as in 1950. This will greatly stimulate use of recreation areas. Income after taxes averaged about \$1600 per person in 1956. A reasonable estimate for the year 2000 is in the neighborhood of \$3600.

### **The 28-Hour Work Week**

3. Leisure. People will have more time for outdoor recreation. The average number of hours worked per week has been dropping steadily, from around 70 in 1850 to around 40 in 1950. The 8-hour day 5-day week is by now nearly standard, and its relation to the great rise in all kinds of outdoor recreation is obvious. The future prospect is for still shorter working days and weeks and for longer and more widespread vacations. A reasonable estimate for the year may well be an average work week of about 28 hours. Gentlemen, those of us still around will be able to play a leisurely 18 holes after work with no trouble at all.

### **More Leisure Travel**

4. Mobility. People will travel more. In 1900, when steam and electric railroads were the chief forms of transportation (together with the horse), the average traveler covered about 500 miles a year. Today, with the airplane and the family automobile, the yearly average has risen to about 5,000 miles. Although part of the growth represents a great increase

in commuting, there still is a large gain left over for leisure travel. A reasonable estimate for the year 2000 is an average of about 9,000 miles a year for each traveler. In other words, the golfer of the year 2000 will take in stride a drive of 10 or 20 miles from his home to the golf course.

All four of these forces are pushing in the same direction and all reinforce each other. To get some idea of the total effect, we need to multiply rather than to add. Twice as many people, twice as much income per person, 1.5 times as much leisure, and nearly twice as much travel comes out to roughly 10 times as much demand for outdoor recreation in the year 2000 as in 1950.

The word "roughly" is used advisedly. We don't know that the estimates for 2000 will turn out as projected. We don't know exactly how they will act upon each other. The total increase in recreational demand might be as small as 5 times or as great as 15 times. But a tenfold increase seems the best single figure.

#### **Advance Planning Needed**

Now it's as obvious as a straight downhill putt that this increase calls for advance planning. And it so happens that a National Outdoor Recreation Commission has been formed to study the Nation's future recreational requirements and to evaluate the assets available for fulfilling these needs. You might think that any one of you gentlemen here tonight could go to this Commission and receive some valuable information and assistance about where golf courses fit into the future of this country.

But you would be disappointed if you did drop by the headquarters of the National Outdoor Recreation Commission. In fact you would be shown the front door—albeit most politely. Why? Because the Act of Congress which created the Outdoor Recreation Commission states that: "Outdoor recreation resources shall not mean nor include recreation facilities, programs and opportunities usually associated with urban development, such as playgrounds, stadiums, golf courses, city parks and zoos."

In other words, gentlemen, you are on your own. But not completely. For instance, the National Golf Foundation was founded as a non-profit organization in

1936 by the major makers of golf equipment. Its purpose: "To broaden opportunities for all Americans to enjoy golf, 'The Game of a Lifetime,' by assisting in the development of more golf facilities and the promotion of golf activities of all types, wherever needed." Its function: "To gather and evaluate information in all areas of golf from every possible source, and to make this information available to anyone needing it."

Although the National Golf Foundation is concerned with every area of golf activity, its prime objective is to encourage and assist new golf course development. This emphasis is all important for the nation's golfing population will always be limited by the number of courses available. At the same time, each new course that opens for play attracts new players to the game. This in turn creates more pressure for additional courses. Because of the very nature of this cycle, there will never be enough golf courses to completely satisfy the demand for places to play.

Golf courses seem to be forgotten. It is up to you gentlemen to remind the public again and again of the need for recreation and therefore of the need for golf courses. The Federal Government can do little in this area for it is primarily a state affair.

#### **A Giant Metropolis**

And the squeeze will get increasingly tighter on open land. There is talk of a giant metropolis stretching from Boston to Norfolk by the year 2000. Fifty or 75 million people will live in that great slice of land. They will need and expect recreation. It will be men like yourselves working in conjunction with state planning boards who will insure that room is provided for golf courses.

How can that be done? Well, first the growth of such urban areas demands that state legislation set sound standards and procedures for urban development. You will quickly learn that open space, like charity, begins at home.

Second, the powers and resources of state government need to be marshalled in support of regional-metropolitan planning including planning for the early acquisition of large natural areas.

Thirdly, and most important, state government must gird for the massive

assault which metropolitan populations make upon basic resource areas.

To emphasize how important and how needed is your interest, I would like to quote from a letter that I received only yestrday from the Planning Department of the State of Maryland.

"I have searched the records and studies of this agency and the reports of local planning agencies within Maryland. I have been unable to uncover anything specifically referring to tax relief or other measures aimed at encouraging private golf courses for permanent urban land use.

"The subject of open space preservation is receiving wide attention and study. Golf courses are quite naturally a very important factor in open space planning and study.

"As you know, public awareness is just beginning to crystallize on the alarming

need to preserve open areas for recreation. The major avenues for an economical solution are largely untried. In any case successful open space preservation will depend upon local attitudes and local planning."

Let me repeat that last sentence, if I may. "In any case successful open space preservation will depend upon local attitudes and local planning."

#### Golf Needs Defenders

All of this, gentlemen, adds up to one thing: Outdoor recreation in general and the Sport of a Lifetime, Golf, in particular, needs defenders to guarantee its place in the great urban areas of tomorrow.

If the America of tomorrow is to have something other than miniature golf courses and driving ranges, we all must begin to plan today for a place for new, bigger and better Chevy Chases and Rolling Roads.

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