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Scott Daniels Real Estate Views! 2

Builders target fairways as Broward's open spaces disappear.

Builders target fairways as Broward's open spaces disappear.

By Buddy Nevins South Florida Sun-Sentinel

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Less than six years after voters approved spending \$400 million in bonds to preserve open space and revamp parks, most of the money has been spent and roughly 900 acres of Broward County land saved from development.The 2000 Safe Parks and Land Preservation Bond Program bankrolled the county's purchase of former orange groves, riverbanks, pinelands, wetlands, trailheads and slivers of beach.

What's left? Golf courses.To the dismay of many residents, developers increasingly eye these remaining chunks of green space for houses, condominiums and hotel rooms.Plans are in the works to build on more than 550 acres of courses in Coral Springs, Fort Lauderdale, Hollywood, Lauderhill, Margate, Oakland Park, Pembroke Pines and Tamarac, a South Florida Sun-Sentinel examination of development proposals, plans and interviews with city officials found."It's a function of the dwindling supply of land in Broward County. You are going to see a lot more golf courses being redeveloped," predicted Dennis Mele, a land-use lawyer whose client wants to build on one of three Inverrary courses in Lauderhill.Builders see golf courses as the last remaining open space where large multimillion-dollar developments can be built. Politicians see benefits from increased property values and the large amount of cash that will flow into city hall. But many golf course neighbors prefer to keep the greens and large trees outside their windows rather than more houses and condominiums."They are destroying our way of life," said Sherry Taylor, who fears her quiet seniors community in Tamarac will be damaged by more than 750 new homes to be built on the Monterey and Sabal Palm golf-course sites.Politicians must weigh the anger of residents like Taylor against

Broward's best-known lawyer-lobbyists, hired to pave the way for golf course redevelopment. The group of investors that wants to build houses on part of American Golfers Club in Fort Lauderdale includes County Commissioner Jim Scott. The investors hired former Fort Lauderdale City Attorney Don Hall to advocate their project. Beyond saying he was not a major investor in the project and that he would abstain from voting on it, Scott declined to comment. Prestige Homes, which wants to build on the courses in Tamarac, has hired not only the veteran land-use lawyer Jerry Knight, but also Beverly Stracher, who was Tamarac Mayor Beth Flansbaum-Talabisco's campaign strategist in the March election. Stracher explained her value to the developer: "I ran Beth Flansbaum-Talabisco's campaign so I know a lot about the city." Knight, who spoke for the developer, said he believes the project is best for Tamarac. Tamarac city commissioners in March unanimously took the first step toward allowing Prestige Homes to build on the two courses despite protests from hundreds of residents who wanted to preserve the 160 acres as open space. The project replacing the two Tamarac courses will generate more than \$1 million in new city taxes than the courses provided, according to a study prepared for City Hall. Offsetting the city's tax benefit, the new development puts more cars on roads and more students in schools. The Sabal Palm project alone will add roughly two-dozen car trips a day compared to the traffic generated by a golf course, and more than 300 new students in classrooms costing public schools more than \$1.8 million annually, according to school system and county data. In return for permission to develop two Tamarac golf courses, Prestige Homes agreed to donate 31 acres for recreation and earmarked \$2 million to solve neighborhood traffic problems caused by the project. It also promised to sell 10 percent of the homes as affordable housing. The Tamarac deal came after negotiations between city officials and developers. Law professor Michael Allan Wolf said negotiations that consider the nearby residents are often the best route to take. Wolf, a University of Florida law school land-use expert, said governments could hinder and maybe stop golf course projects, if they wanted, because nearly every developer seeking to replace a golf course needs multiple city, county and state approvals. But turning down such projects may not be the best policy, Wolf said.

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