

by Harry Eckhoff
National Golf Foundation Consultant
Mid-Atlantic Region

Fact: About half the golfers play on 13 percent of the

nation's courses. It's startling that 5.4 million of the game's followers cram onto less than 1,500 facilities. That's an average of more than 3,800 per course.

Straddled with such a burdening population load, the municipal courses of America are still viable in the face of spiraling costs and fewer and fewer tax dollars. Logic would suggest more and more municipal courses blossoming yearly, but statistics show that although the number of such facilities has grown in the last 20 years, the percentage of the total has not.

Owned and operated by government agencies ranging from states to park districts, a municipal courses' chief goal is to provide facilities to the greatest number of citizens at the most reasonable costs. In view of the increased costs at private and daily fee operations, golfers have turned to the municipal course as an answer to the escalating price of play.

Figures from the National Golf Foundation show that over the years, the municipal course has kept its position sturdy in the business scheme. In 1931 there were 5,691 courses in play of which 543 were municipal. From 1931 to 1953, America's course growth stagnated. In fact, there were 635 fewer courses in 1953 than reported in 1931.

With the addition of television into the golf picture and an illuminating personality like Arnold Palmer, the game came into a renaissance period, rejuvenating building prospects on all levels. In the 21-year span from 1953 to 1974, the facility number has soared to nearly 11,000, a 115 percent jump in the period.

The need for courses in many areas of the country is becoming critical and with the addition of matching Federal grants, many local governments are taking the first steps at building their own operations. Urban population pressures, public interest in open space and ecology have given local governments an opportunity to apply for aid from the U.S. department of Interior's Bureau of Outdoor Recreation. Many municipalities hope to take advantage of the 50 percent matching grant program for land acquisition. The Federal government also has a plan available in which certain lands can be turned over to local governments gratis, if the areas are used for recreation purposes.

Such funded operations often include the additional aspects of tennis courts, swimming pools, artificial ice skating rinks, playground and picnic areas, a community center, camping, hiking, nature study and sometimes ski areas and horseback riding trails. A prominent example of this type of facility was exhibited recently during the 56th PGA Championship at Tanglewood Park in Clemmons, N.C. Donated to the state of North Carolina by the late W. N. Reynolds, Tanglewood became one of the nation's finest recreation areas in 1951. Besides most of the features referred to above, the park also has a 14-acre lake.

West Virginia is another state that has added golf facilities to its park system. Four of the West Virginia state parks offer courses. The latest addition was opened last June

at Cacapon State Park near Berkeley Springs.

Located 40 miles east of New York City, Bethpage Park is probably the world's busiest municipal golf complex. Bethpage facilities include five excellent 18-hole regulation layouts, all operating out of the same clubhouse. Over 320,000 rounds are played yearly at Bethpage.

Historically, golf has always been a game of the people. The renowned St. Andrew's Golf Course in Scotland was founded in 1754 as a public facility. To this day, two of the four 18-hole courses at St. Andrew's are public operations.

Municipal courses in the United States are as old as the game's history in this country. Tracing as far back as 1880, the nation's first municipal course opened for play at Van Courtland Park near New York City. It proved so popular, the city built a second course at Pelham Bay in 1897.

For any size community, a course creates both tangible and intangible benefits. Affording a welcome stretch of maintained open space, adding freshness and color to the landscape — and making the community more attractive to citizens and visitors alike, the course becomes an asset.

It furnishes a central location for civic events including golf tournaments, public meetings, awards banquets, picnics and outings. It offers a financial base for larger recreation complexes and programs. Since the course is usually the largest revenue producing unit in a municipal recreation program, the income will help pay for additional facilities. *to page 38*

Surrounding property benefits from a more enjoyable environment, pride of ownership, higher sales and tax values. A center for school connected and summer youth activity programs is established for both social and recreational events. The course will attract more conventions, longer visits for family and friends, more professional and busi-

ness persons as new residents and more money to the local economy.

New business employing up to 20 or more persons in season with a budget often ranging from \$100,000 up is another factor. An outdoor sport that can be enjoyed equally by citizens of all age groups and of both sexes is thus provided.

Golf is rapidly becoming a popular pastime for senior citizens desiring mental and physical activity in

retirement. The Milwaukee County Park Commission reports that senior golf play on its 14 municipal golf courses increased from 4.7 percent of the total rounds played in 1966 to 17.5 percent in 1973. The year by year percentages were: 1967 — 5.7; 1968 — 6.7; 1969 — 8.1; 1970 — 9.9; 1971 — 11.7; 1972 — 13.2 and 1973 — 17.5. Senior citizens (age 62 and over) may play 18 holes of golf for \$1.10. Juniors pay \$1.25 and adults \$3.50. Junior and senior rates are not in effect on weekends and holiday. No season permits are offered. All golfers play on a daily fee basis.

In 1973, Milwaukee County's 14 courses enjoyed 601,350 rounds with senior play accounting for 105,322 of the total. Junior play — also popular — totaled 56,890 rounds during the year.

Milwaukee County's complex, one of the nation's finest, includes 135 holes of regulation golf (seven 18's and one nine hole course) and 63 holes of par-3 golf (five nines and one 18). Total acreage for all courses approximates 1,377.

Last year, 58 new municipal courses, 16 of which were additions to existing facilities, opened for play in the nation. This is a new high for a given year. A similar, or larger, number is expected to open for play in 1974.

What positive action can a municipality desirous of developing its first municipal golf course take in getting such a project underway? Governments considering new golf facilities often establish an executive course study committee composed of certain council members or park and recreation board members. The practice of appointing a citizens advisory committee to work with the study committee often proves effective. An expense budget should be authorized by the city for use of both groups. Membership of the citizens advisory committee usually ranges from nine to 15 persons, representing a cross section of businessmen, civic group leaders, persons prominent in golf, men and women, young and old.

Not exactly holding the priorities of police protection, street improvement and schooling, municipal golf courses can still be a good investment and pay off in the long run.

Buy now, spray later. Once.

You have time now to plan for spring. If you used trimec®-based "Fairway" for broadleaf control last season, your herbicide decision will be easy. You'll use the same thing. With a new name: "Fairway weed-no-more®." It has the same single application effectiveness and economy. The same safety for shrubs, flowers and sensitive grasses.

Trimec® makes "Fairway" work. Our patented formula of 2,4-D, MCPP and dicamba intensifies the effect of each chemical. They work better together, so it takes a smaller amount of each to do the job. Safely, economically, effectively.



GT 74-24

No common broadleaf weed yet has been able to withstand proper "Fairway weed-no-more®" applications.

Get some.

PBI - GORDON CORPORATION
300 SOUTH THIRD STREET KANSAS CITY, KANSAS 66118

**VISIT OUR BOOTH #150 AT
GOLF COURSE SUPT. SHOW**

U.S. Patent 3,284,186
trimec
TURF HERBICIDES®

For More Details Circle (105) on Reply Card