

THE VANISHING URBAN COURSE

If permitted to continue unharnessed, urban sprawl will leave behind only concrete and asphalt where once the open space and greenery of golf courses offered respite. The club industry and the public must join to halt further devastation. GOLF Magazine offers a hard-hitting plan of action

IN these days of frequent clash between public interests and business interests, it is rare when the two can come together in support of a cause for the good of the public and the benefit of an industry. GOLFDOM's sister publication, GOLF Magazine, in its October issue presents just such a cause in "Golf: America's Vanishing Green Belt"—an article that will rally the nation's golfers behind the troubled club industry.

Golf club administrators and officials are well aware of the problems that beset the industry and threaten the very existence of many clubs, particularly in metropolitan areas.

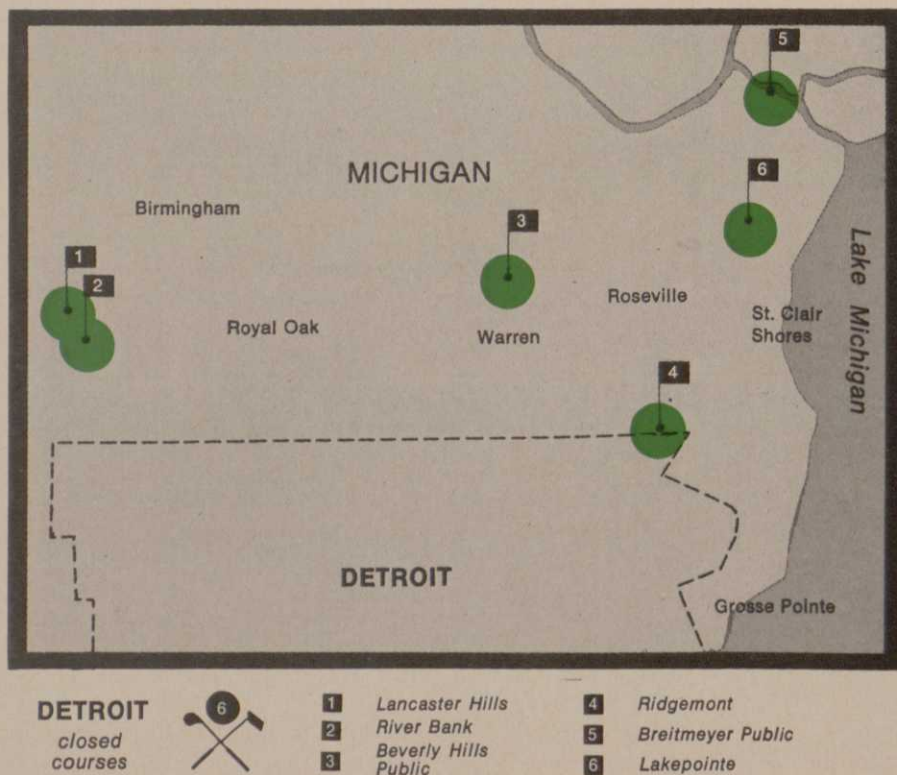
GOLFDOM and the major industry associations have been alerting clubs to these conditions, and the list is growing with great rapidity.

- Soaring property taxes as hard-pressed municipalities, particularly in megalopolis areas, revise assessments on golf courses.
- Rising operating costs in the wake of wage law changes and inflated prices.
- Higher insurance costs combined with the continual need for more protection as replacement values increase.
- New taxes to be paid on non-member income.

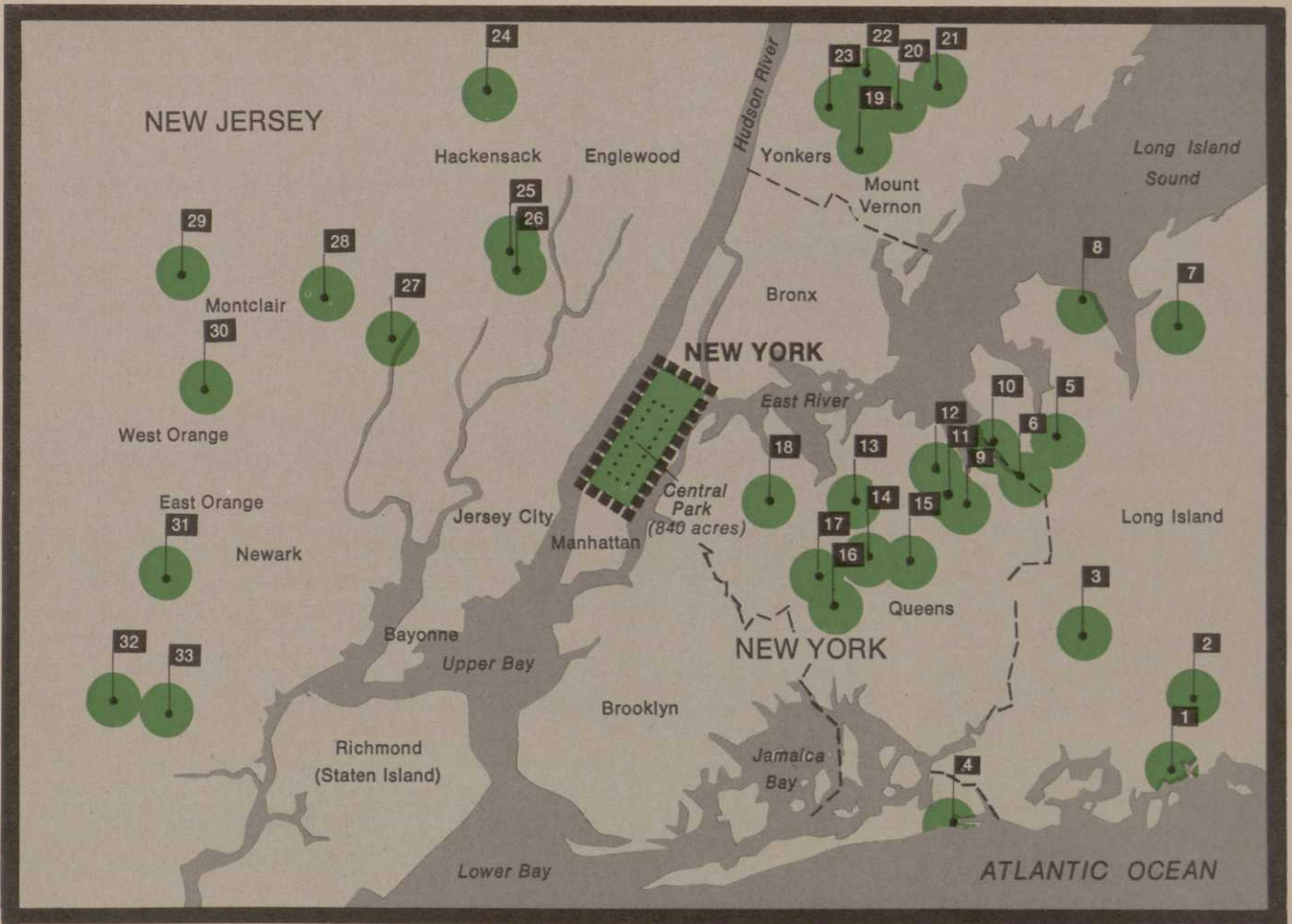
These are just a few of the problems that are tightening the stranglehold on clubs. And in seeking solutions, they find themselves foiled at almost every turn. If a club attempts to meet new property tax costs by increasing its non-member business, it runs the risk of losing its non-profit status. If a club tries to levy special assess-

ments, it is likely to meet member resistance in these days of belt tightening. Tell a golfer about this financial treadmill and he may offer, at best, a sympathetic nod. But GOLF hits Americans with the hard fact that the resulting tragedy of these problems is theirs.

Hundreds of golf courses offering green respite to the dreary concrete shroud of urban development are surrendering the land to asphalt, steel and concrete. Taxes and the too-sweet deals of builders are smothering the fairways and greens which once made urban life more than endless stone.



LOST FOREVER to fast-growing suburbs are thousands of acres of golf course land. This map of northern Detroit, much of it suburb, shows fairly recent loss of six golf courses.



NEW YORK



- | | | | | |
|---|---------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1 Oceanside | 7 Cedar Creek | 15 Hillcrest | 22 Hudson River | 27 Yountakan |
| 2 Willow Brook | 8 Guggenheim | 16 Queen Valley | 23 Grassy Sprain | 28 Elmbrook |
| 3 Valley Stream | 9 Oakland | 17 Arrowbrook | 24 Orchard Hills (took nine holes) | 29 Ferncliffe |
| 4 Ocean Country Club | 10 Soundview | 18 Jackson Heights (12 holes) | 25 Aviation (36 holes) | 30 West Orange |
| 5 Greentree | 11 Old Belle Claire | 19 Lawrence Park West | 26 Teterboro | 31 Battleground |
| 6 Lake Success (Deepdale, suffered land loss due to expressway) | 12 Bayside Links | 20 Hickory (formerly Oakridge) | | 32 Locust Grove |
| | 13 Old Country Club | 21 Broadmoor | | 33 Sunnyfield |
| | 14 Pomonok | | | |

LOST FOREVER to the over-all New York metropolitan area in a single generation as a result of commercial acquisition of golf courses: a green belt of 5,511 acres, equal in size to more than one-third of Manhattan Island.

Sound like science fiction? It's not. It's a process that has been going on for three decades and continues to go on with greater acceleration. Since the beginning of 1968 alone, according to a National Golf Foundation compilation, almost 100 golf courses have been wiped out mostly because of replacement by housing, industry and shopping centers or because of taxation. GOLF and GOLFDOM believe it must and can be halted.

For nearly half a year, GOLF has consulted with ecologists, urban planners, architects and government officials, and has charted on maps, reproduced here, the steady conversion of open golf courses into concrete shopping centers and real estate developments. From this research, a solution of economic and ecological simplicity emerged: Make golf courses an integral part of a massive "green belt" pro-

gram. Use the existing golf courses and build new ones on the edges of urban centers to prevent them from joining into one city. These green barricades can be federally subsidized for the public good much as the Government subsidized airlines for a while to help create a viable industry. In this case, the Government would be subsidizing a viable environment. England, with greater population pressures, has instituted such a program and many golf courses are within the green belts.

Experts agree that the ecological balance and the needs of plant life are not destroyed when a golf course is built. Moreover, golf courses even exceed parks as feasible green belt material, because they provide financial returns.

(Continued)

The problem now is to get such a green belt program under way, and GOLF recommends a five-point plan that can do it.

1. The Federal government should encourage states and cities to declare certain areas surrounding urban concentrations as green belt lands. This can be done through Federal subsidies which would compensate state and city governments for the taxes they would ordinarily get from industry or housing on the same land.

2. City and state governments would, in turn, allow golf courses in green belt areas and other recreational facilities to be tax exempt, or at least to enjoy a lesser tax rate, which would enable them to survive.

3. Land zoned as green belts would be required by law to remain green. This would eliminate the pressures to turn a meadow into a cement factory. It would be zoned green, much as some areas are zoned residential and others industrial or commercial.

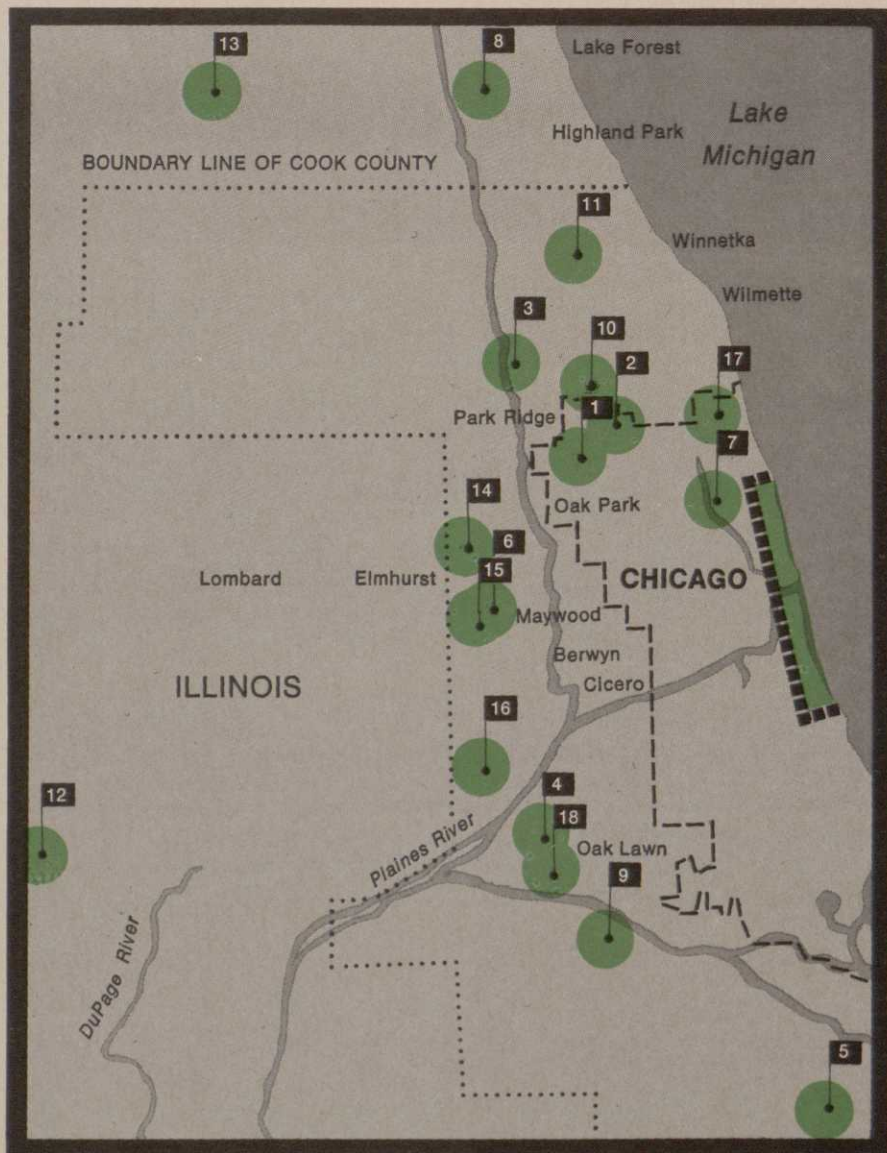
4. Courses already in urban areas and open to the public should be encouraged to remain as courses through further use of Federal subsidies by cities and states—e.g., compensating the owners who might be tempted to sell to a housing developer. The compensation would stipulate that the owner could only sell his course to another green-belt type operation.

5. The Federal government should act now while the plan is feasible. There is land available now, belts of it, scattered between the growing metropolises. Once this land is built on, it is no longer economically feasible to return it to nature.

GOLF has laid the groundwork for a sound green belt program. But the club industry, with the backing of a concerned public, must now pick up the ball. Golfers undoubtedly will be incensed by the grim situation related in GOLF's article and will be ready, as never before, to take action. Club administrators and officials and organizations such as the Alliance of Club and Golf Organizations must lead the way for and work with these concerned private citizens to make their demands known on every level of government. Unify your efforts by forming green belt committees.

is awaiting passage by Congress. This bill is desperately in need of amendment. The bill provides for Federal grants to states for extensive studies and development of land use plans, but offers no Federal aid to bring these plans to fruition. You and your members should write your Congressmen now, asking them to initiate action that will make the bill into an effective land saving measure.

GOLFDOM urges you to read the article, "Golf: America's Vanishing Green Belt," in the October issue of GOLF Magazine to get a full picture of the existing threat to America's golf courses and to its environment. □



- CHICAGO**
- 18** closed courses
- | | | |
|-------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| 1 Big Oaks | 7 Mid-City | 13 Wanconda |
| 2 Bunker Hill | 8 Mill Road Farm | 14 Westward Ho |
| 3 Dempster | 9 Navajo Fields | 15 Hillside Public |
| 4 Dynell | 10 Tam O'Shanter | 16 Acacai |
| 5 Lansing Airport | 11 Techny Fields | 17 Edgewater |
| 6 Maywood | 12 Waubonsie | 18 Walnut Hills |

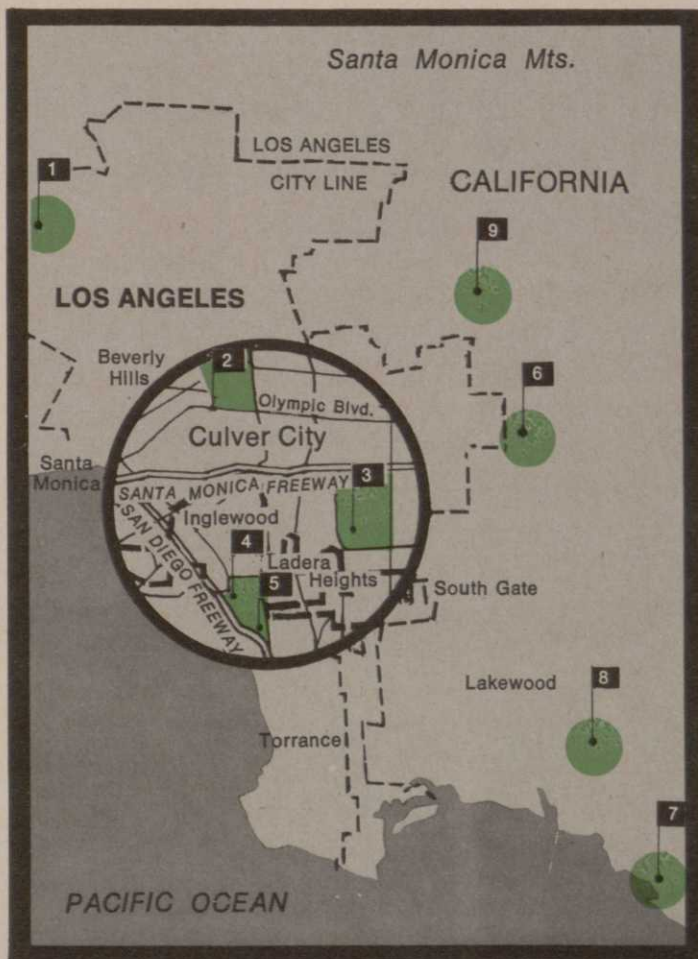
Currently, Senator Henry M. Jackson's National Land Use Policy Bill

LOST FOREVER to the City of Chicago since 1947 are 2,907 acres of golf course. This would have made up green belts 20 times the size of the Chicago Loop.

Red-faced about green belt

About six months ago, not long after news had appeared of the sale of another 18-hole golf course to a shopping center builder—this time in Georgia—GOLF's and GOLF-DOM's Editorial Director, John Fry, set about planning a major article which would uncover the real extent of the golf land lost to urban development across the nation. The assumption at the time was that a wealth of facts would be available about a situation so dangerous to the national environment. But as the weeks wore on, information failed to turn up. Writer Dick Sapir journeyed to Washington only to find Federal bureaucracies either ignorant of, or indifferent to, the land loss. GOLF Magazine's assistant editor Ann Heavner called planning offices in dozens of cities and states asking for figures and facts on golf courses which had disappeared in recent years and on possible future losses which these cities presumably should be studying. In every case, she encountered widespread ignorance.

Faced with this almost complete absence of information Editorial Director Fry assigned Sapir, Heavner and a network of stringers to dig up the facts. The study zeroed in on five cities: New York, Chicago, Cleveland, Los Angeles and Detroit, where the permanent loss of green belt due to the liquidation of golf courses could be demonstrated most graphically. The resulting maps, by artist Robert Ritter, showing the extent of permanent open land loss, accompany the story.



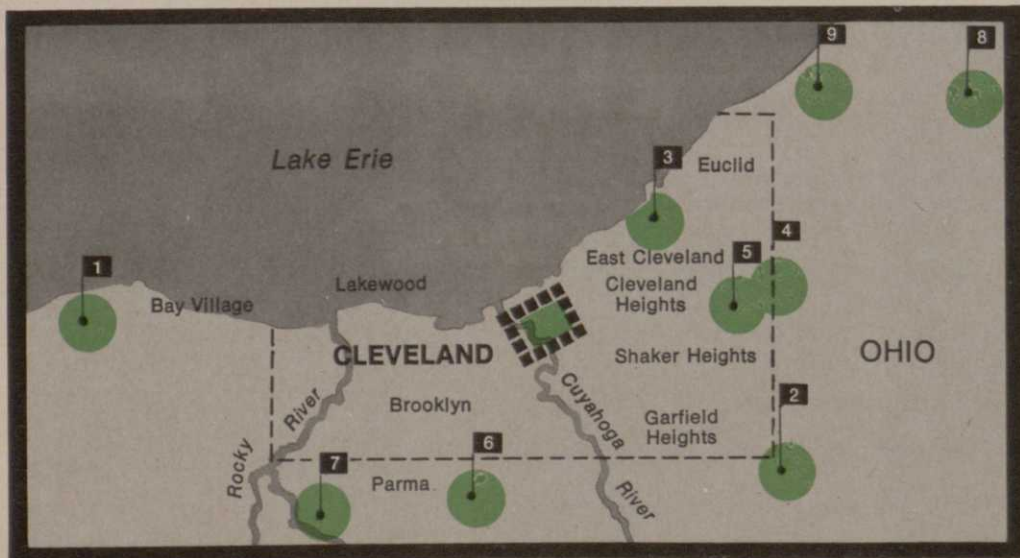
LOS ANGELES



- 1 San Fernando Valley
- 2 Old California
- 3 Sunset Fields (54 holes)
- 4 Baldwin Hills
- 5 Foxhills
- 6 Southern California
- 7 Huntington Beach (just sold)
- 8 Long Beach Golf Course
- 9 Carmelita Approach G. C.

LOST FOREVER, near the center of Los Angeles, nine golf courses totaling 1,460 acres. Other privately held golf courses in the L.A. area currently are threatened with sale to developers.

LOST FOREVER to the City of Cleveland as a result of disappearing golf courses since 1940: green belts equal to 1,377 acres, or 333 city blocks carved out of Cleveland.



CLEVELAND



- 1 Deauville
- 2 Terrace C C
- 3 Lake Shore
- 4 Mayfield Heights
- 5 University Heights
- 6 Ridgewood
- 7 Berea
- 8 Mentor Headland
- 9 Willowick