

May 1, 2014



Executive Summary

This summary presents the findings of the collaborative, community-based Nine Springs Health Impact Assessment (HIA) completed to support the planning process for the future use of the Nine Springs Golf Course property. The HIA includes a report on the health impacts of the alternative park and golf course plans as well as research regarding high priority focus areas that were identified by the Community Advisory Committee, including: physical activity, social cohesion (community connectedness), safety, and environmental health.

Key findings from this Health Impact Assessment include:

Obesity

- The area surrounding the golf course lies within the Fitchburg census block group (014.03.2) ranked #1 for obesity.
- Nearly 1 in 4 (24%) children ages 2-17 in this area are obese.
- Within the #2 ranked census block group (014.02.3), 46% of children ages 2-17 were overweight/obese.
- Mothers giving birth residing in the area also show a higher rate of obesity (30%), when compared to the rest of Fitchburg (21%) and Dane County (22%).

Physical Activity

- Residents and stakeholders perceive there is inadequate open green space and play space for the neighborhood.
- Residents and stakeholders perceive that access to physical activity opportunities outside of the neighborhood is limited due to language and transportation barriers.
- Residents living in the Pines apartment complex are perceived to be particularly isolated and lack opportunities for physical activity.
- The golf course is perceived to offer a unique physical activity opportunity for the elderly due to the walkable terrain and affordability.
- The golf course is perceived to be a significant source of physical activity for regular users (especially passholders).
- Public Health – Madison and Dane County (PHMDC) conservatively estimates the annual return on investment for the potential health benefits associated with increased access to physical activity opportunities (which research suggests reduces levels of obesity) to be over three million dollars per year.

Social Cohesion

- The majority of residents surveyed who live around the golf course agree or strongly agree that people in their neighborhood get along with each other (64%) and are willing to help one another (57%).
- People live in the surrounding community for a significant amount of time; 62% of surveyed residents have resided in this neighborhood for four or more years.

May 1, 2014

- Community involvement in planning and decision making is valued, seen as important by decision makers and service providers, and is needed to maximize health and safety benefits of a park or the golf course.
- Golf course users perceive the course to be welcoming, compared to area residents who perceive the golf course to be unwelcoming.

Safety

- Overall, crime is low and has been on the decline in this area and within the City of Fitchburg over the past four years. In particular, violent crime and drug crime have been very low.
- Service providers, including the Fitchburg Police Department (FPD), view crime and related issues in the area as proportionate to other areas of similar density.
- Design, visibility (lighting/sight lines) and creating a sense of community ownership are key components of ensuring safety in the proposed park plan.

Environmental Health

- Land management of the golf course follows good practice standards.
- Water quality and storm water retention are the biggest environmental concerns of the surrounding residents and stakeholders.

Priority RECOMMENDATIONS if the Park Master Plan is implemented:

- Strengthen community engagement processes to increase social cohesion:
 - Create an inclusive process of broad community engagement for decision making.
 - Offer translation services by the City of Fitchburg for all City meetings and communications.
 - Work with nearby resident leaders, including youth, and existing community organizations (such as the Neighborhood Associations, the Parent Teacher Groups, and the Pines Parent Empowerment Group) to act as liaisons and help plan and communicate available uses and regulations associated with the property. Consider explicit policy language to include this in the plan. Consider hiring some nearby residents on a limited or part-time basis to fill this role.
 - Involve nearby residents, including youth, in developing multiple communication strategies about the uses and regulations associated with the property, including, but not limited to creation of welcoming and easy-to-understand signage, flyers, text messages and social media.
 - Form a Park Watch Group.
- Provide welcoming entrances to the park and features within the park for all ages, races, and abilities.
- Provide no or low-cost opportunities for surrounding low-income residents to participate in physical activity programs.
- Provide no or low-cost community programming and other events in the park such as a farmer's market, movie night on the green, etc.
- Improve access to the park by bicycling, walking, and using public transit.
- Include a community garden within the park plan to offer a gathering space and opportunity for neighbor-to-neighbor interactions across race and class lines.

May 1, 2014

- Build a partnership between the local police force and the community to closely monitor park space (example: *Amigos en Azul*, foot and bike patrol).
- Follow Crime Prevention through Environmental Design recommendations.
- Place signage near water features with information in English and Spanish (and pictorially) regarding the risk of drowning during heavy rains, prohibiting fishing, and swimming.
- Work toward implementation of Watershed Management Plan recommendations to reduce risk of flooding (drowning).

Priority RECOMMENDATIONS if Nine Springs Golf Course is maintained:

- Strengthen community engagement processes to support future success of the golf course and increase social cohesion:
 - Create an inclusive process of broad community engagement for decision making.
 - Offer translation services by the City of Fitchburg for all City meetings and communications.
 - Work with nearby resident leaders, including youth, and existing community organizations (such as the Neighborhood Associations, the Parent Teacher Groups, and the Pines Parent Empowerment Group) to act as liaisons and help plan and communicate available uses and regulations associated with the property. Consider explicit policy language to include this in the plan. Consider hiring some nearby residents on a limited or part-time basis to fill this role.
 - Involve nearby residents, including youth, in developing multiple communication strategies about the uses and regulations associated with the property, including, but not limited to creation of welcoming and easy-to-understand signage, flyers, text messages and social media.
 - Form a local resident/stakeholder board to improve communication between the golf course and surrounding neighborhoods and increase usage by area residents.
- Offer community access to appropriate parts of the golf course during the off-season and after hours for social programs and physical activity opportunities (examples include: winter activities such as ice skating and snow shoeing, movie nights on the green, etc).
- Provide no or low-cost opportunities in the neighborhood for surrounding residents who are low-income to participate in physical activity programming, such as a sliding-fee scale or scholarship program to subsidize golf passes for neighborhood residents.
- Develop scaled down play spaces (such as a small playgrounds) in apartment areas or on the perimeter of the golf course to provide alternatives to kids playing in the parking lots. Public access trails could allow improved accessibility to existing and new play spaces.
- Build a partnership between the local police force and the community (example: *Amigos en Azul*).
- Work toward the implementation of the Watershed Management Plan recommendations to reduce risk of flooding and drowning.
- Update the Spanish translation on the no trespassing signage.

May 1, 2014

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- The complete Nine Springs Health Impact Assessment can be found here:
www.publichealthmdc.com/publications
www.copcdane.org
- The Nine Springs Golf Course – Potential Park Option Master Plan can be found here:
<http://www.city.fitchburg.wi.us/DocumentCenter/View/6411>