

The proposed 860-home Point at Northshore development suffered another big setback last week when a Pierce County Superior Court judge affirmed a City of Tacoma decision denying permits.

Judge Katherine Stolz made the ruling on July 1 regarding the controversial project, which would include 366 houses and 494 townhomes on the current fairways and greens on the 116-acre Northshore Golf Course in Northeast Tacoma, bordering Federal Way.

North Shore Golf Associates, the owners of the course, and Northshore Investors, the proposed developers, had appealed earlier decisions by the City of Tacoma hearing examiner and the Tacoma City Council. The two groups wanted the court to issue the approvals allowing for the redevelopment of the Northshore Golf Course.

A local group, SaveNETacoma Coalition, lauded the ruling by Stolz as another win for residents against shutting down the golf course to build more homes. The group has been battling for more than four years.

“This is a resounding victory,” said SaveNETacoma’s attorney, Gary Huff.

Stolz is expected to sign and enter a written order on her ruling by July 22. Once the order is signed, the developers and golf course owners will have 30 days to appeal to the state’s Court of Appeals, according to Huff.

The Tacoma City Council ruled in April 2010 to uphold a hearing examiner’s decision protecting the golf course from being developed.

North Shore Golf Associates claims it is losing profits by owning the course and wishes to sell the land. In 2007, Northshore Investors LLC proposed to purchase the course and subsequently erect the 860-home The Point at Northshore over the fairways. Northshore Investors and North Shore Associates have been at odds with the City of Tacoma since the land use application was filed. The City of Federal Way has also had its concerns about the proposed development.

Pierce County Hearing Examiner Wick Dufford, in January 2010, ruled against several aspects of the development. He denied the preliminary plat and site plan and recommended the denial of an application for a rezone modification, which was needed to construct over the golf course.

In making his decision, Dufford considered 1981 and 1979 documents, agreed upon by North Shore Golf Associates and the City of Tacoma. The paperwork dictates the course is to perpetually serve as open space in connection with the surrounding The Northshore Country Club Estates, homes which currently line fairways.

In 1981, the golf course was rezoned as a Planned Residential District (PRD). The development of The Northshore Country Club Estates relied on the golf course to fill its open space requirements. North Shore Golf Associates entered into an Open Space Taxation Agreement (OSTA), which permitted the course to be used as open space for the neighborhood in exchange for a tax exemption on their property.

The OSTA reads: “The applicant shall submit a legal agreement, which is binding upon all parties and which may be enforced by the City of Tacoma. It should provide that the property in question will maintain and always have the use of the adjacent golf course for its open space and density requirement which has been relied upon by the applicant in securing approval of this request.”

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