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Toronto, ON

January 10, 2022

**To:** Infrastructure and Environment Committee, City of Toronto

**Re:** January 11, 2022 agenda item IE27.6 'Review of City of Toronto Golf Courses'

On October 2, 2019 Toronto City Council declared a Climate Emergency and committed to take action to tackle climate change (1). We believe that the recommendations provided in the city staff report to the Infrastructure and Environment Committee dated December 17, 2021 fail to identify the opportunities that alternative uses of golf course lands could have to mitigate carbon emissions and increase climate resiliency in our city.

There are approximately 2,180 acres of land dedicated to golf courses in the City of Toronto including both the 11 private and 7 municipally owned courses, which is equal to about 1.4% of the city's total land area (2). Municipally owned courses cover approximately 660 acres, a combined area larger than High Park. This is a significant land resource that could be leveraged for improved climate resilience, food security, and social justice.

The environmental impacts of fertilizer, pesticide, and herbicide use in intensely managed turf grass typical in Toronto's municipally owned golf course is well known, including potentially significant sources of nutrient loading to groundwater and surface water (3). The extensive coverage of turf grasses also contributes to biodiversity loss, and contributes to carbon emissions from the use of gas powered mowers.

We believe that a master planning process for the future of Dentonia Park Golf Course should be initiated, but that its purpose should not include 'improved golf offerings'. There are better uses for this land that are simply not compatible with golf programs, and thus we believe that the following uses should be prioritized:

- Indigenous led place-making and programming.
- Prioritize the recreational needs of local residents.
- Fix a major barrier to connectivity in the Taylor Massey creek trail system by creating a public, year-round pedestrian and cycling connection between Warden Woods to the east of Pharmacy Ave and Taylor Creek Park to the west of Victoria Park Ave.
- Increase neighbourhood food security by developing a district-scale urban agriculture hub including community gardens and urban farm plots for use by local social enterprises. These uses are well suited to Dentonia given that a significant portion of the golf course is on

tablelands (i.e. above the floodplain), as well as proximity to transit and high density neighbourhoods.

- Eliminate or significantly reduce pesticide, herbicide, and fertilizer use by reducing the area of high-maintenance turf grass.
- Increase and improve habitat, biodiversity, stormwater management, and carbon sequestration via the naturalization of woodlands, meadows and wetlands.
- Improve the highly degraded creek waterway and improve flood mitigation.

Sincerely,  
Design Climate Action

*Signed:*

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Footnotes:

1. City of Toronto News Release: *City Council declares climate emergency and commits to accelerating action to address climate change*, October 2, 2019, <https://www.toronto.ca/news/city-council-declares-climate-emergency-and-commits-to-accelerating-action-to-address-climate-change/>
2. Based on mapping analysis using Google Earth.
3. Bock EM, Easton ZM. *Export of nitrogen and phosphorus from golf courses: A review*. J Environ Manage. 2020.