

Saving an essential community institution

By Joseph W. Brady

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At the time I relocated from Santa Barbara to Victorville in May of 1988, many key business meetings among industry leaders, developers, investors, etc., were held at the Best Western Green Tree Hotel. The Green Tree area was developed by Clyde Tatum, father of James B. Tatum and one of my early mentors. Clyde Tatum was also instrumental in positioning the Victorville Civic Center, along with a number of other important contributions to the development of the Victor Valley.

Upon learning with great sadness that the City of Victorville was contemplating the possible closure of the Green Tree Golf Course, I immediately reached out to the senior associates within the city and asked them the following:

1. How many homes are above the golf course?
 - a. The answer from the city was rather revealing. There are 689 parcels that border the Green Tree Golf Course and are considered “high economic impact parcels.” Parcels within the Green Tree area — bounded by Pebble Beach Drive on the north, Rodeo Drive on the east, Mariposa Road on the west and Yates Road (Green Tree Boulevard on the south) — also include 473 parcels that are considered low economic impact due to the fact that they are not directly adjacent to or abut the golf course.
2. What are their current assessed values based on the San Bernardino County Assessor and what would their assessed value be if they were reduced by 40 to 50 percent if the golf course were to close?
 - a. Under the high impact parcels, the current total property value based on the San Bernardino County Assessor’s Office is \$81,614,675 and the estimated property taxes paid currently is \$816,146.75.

b. If you coupled that with the low impact parcels (those not associated with the golf course within the Green Tree area) their total property value is \$39,006,116 and the estimated property taxes that they pay is \$390,061.16.

c. When you take into account all of the parcels, their current total assessed value (remember assessed value by the San Bernardino County Assessor's Office is different than fair market value) is currently \$120,620,791 and the estimated property taxes that they pay is \$1,206,207.91.

The homes that immediately abut the golf course, along with those in close proximity to it, generate nearly \$200,000 in annual property tax revenue, which, in addition to being allocated to the city, provide support for numerous government entities such as our elementary and high schools, Victor Valley Community College and the San Bernardino County General Fund.

Should the Green Tree Golf Course face closure these homes can reasonably be expected to lose up to half of their assessed value, based on the price history of homes in other High Desert communities that are located by closed golf courses.

Closure of the golf course would also negatively affect the ability of the owners of homes nearby and adjacent to it to resell their homes at values that are much higher than their current assessment, thereby depriving government of even more tax revenue. Taking all of these factors into consideration, the loss of property tax revenues could easily fall into the range of \$150,000 to \$300,000 annually.

More importantly, the closure of the golf course would lead to serious deterioration of a neighborhood that has historically been one of the city's most stable residential areas. This could create a snowball effect whereby properties in neighborhoods throughout the city are devalued.

As a 30-year resident of Victorville with a strong commitment to the social and economic vitality of our community I am hopeful that the City of Victorville and their City Council can collectively formulate and implement a creative strategy for saving Green Tree that can avoid closure of this essential community institution.

The effect of its closure would go far beyond its direct economic impact, imperiling the very social fabric of an area that is already facing severe challenges. The Green Tree Golf Course is worth preserving; I hope that our community leaders prove to be up to the task of doing so.

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