

Grass over garbage: Golf courses give landfill sites a second life

By Jason Scott Deegan, Senior Staff Writer
Sep 25, 2017



Liberty National is one of the most expensive and high-profile golf courses ever constructed on top of a former landfill or industrial site. (Getty Images)



The backdrop of the Manhattan skyline at Trump Golf Links at Ferry Point is hard to beat. (Mike Bailey/Golf Advisor)



The site of Granite Links Golf Club outside Boston was a landfill and mine used for the city's famous "Big dig." (Courtesy of Granite Links G.C.)



Harborside International Golf Center is just 16 minutes from The Loop around Chicago. (Courtesy of Harborside International G.C.)



No. 17 at Widows Walk, the course's signature hole, is a par 3 with views of the North River and Atlantic Ocean in the distance. (Jeffrey White/GolfPublisher.com)



The Eisenhower Course at Industry Hills Golf Club in California. (Oleg Volovik/Golf Advisor)



McCullough's Emerald Golf Links was transformed from an old landfill. (Jason Scott Deegan/Golf Advisor)



The sod bunkers at The Home Course strike fear into players at the first green. (Jason Scott Deegan/TravelGolf)



The 17th green on the Coal Creek course at The Golf Club at Newcastle views the Seattle skyline. (Jason Scott Deegan/Golf Advisor)



The Federal Bureau of Reclamation owns the site for TPC Scottsdale, home to 36 holes and a luxury Fairmont hotel. (Courtesy of TPC Scottsdale)



The ultra-exclusive Bayonne Golf Club, featuring great views of New York City, is built on a former landfill. (Matt Ginella/Golf Advisor)



Built on a hazardous industrial site, Harbor Shores will host the 2018 KitchenAid Senior PGA Championship in Benton Harbor, Mich. (Gary Kellner/PGA Photography via Getty Images)



Trinity Forest, which will host the 2018 AT&T Byron Nelson, sits on top of a former landfill near Dallas. (Courtesy of Scot Miller/Trinity Forest)



In the Bronx, New York City-owned Trump Golf Links at Ferry Point took over a decade and more than \$100 million to complete. (Mike Bailey/Golf Advisor)

The 2017 Presidents Cup (<http://www.golfchannel.com/topics/events/presidents-cup.htm>) at Liberty National Golf Club in Jersey City, N.J., will showcase the New York City skyline along the Hudson River. The private club's stirring views of the Statue of Liberty would be a fitting backdrop to an American victory.

It's hard to believe this beautiful grass playground was once a garbage dump. Tom Kite and the late Bob Cupp considered Liberty National (<http://www.golfadvisor.com/courses/19814-liberty-national-golf-course/>) a crowning achievement when it opened in 2006. The pros openly griped about some of its features during The Barclays, a FedEx Cup playoff event in 2009 and 2013, but they better get used to its latest version, which has been tweaked since those events. An agreement between club founder Paul Fireman, the chairman of Reebok, and the PGA TOUR will bring 10 tournaments to the course over the span of 25 years.

Liberty National isn't the only high-profile course to emerge from a pile of garbage. In this photo gallery, we spotlight more than a dozen of them, including the famous Stadium course at TPC Scottsdale (<http://www.golfadvisor.com/courses/15722-tpc-scottsdale-the-stadium-course/>), developed from parts of an illegal dumping ground and "brownfield," a term used by the Environmental Protection Agency to describe a "real property, (where) the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant or contaminant."

Video: The long, expensive and rewarding history of Liberty National



According to a 2003 article in the Chicago Tribune (http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2003-07-06/news/0307060360_1_landfills-golf-courses-national-golf-foundation), at least 70 courses around the country have been built from former landfills and "brownfields." Others have opened since then, including two Jack Nicklaus municipal projects, Michigan's Harbor Shores Golf Club (<http://www.golfadvisor.com/courses/24395-harbor-shores/>) (site of several Senior PGA Championships) and New York's high-profile Trump Golf Links at Ferry Point (<http://www.golfadvisor.com/courses/34980-trump-golf-links-at-ferry-point/>), the Trump Golf-managed course that took decades to build in the Bronx. Trinity Forest Golf Course (<http://www.golfadvisor.com/courses/35906-trinity-forest-golf-club/>), the future host of the AT&T Byron Nelson set within the Texas Blackland Prairie eco-region southeast of downtown Dallas, rests atop two capped sites in the former South Loop Landfill. Courses carved from a quarry or built upon old mining sites will be featured in a separate story.

It's an expensive and complicated process to turn trash into someone's golf treasure. Tons of dirt must be used to "cap" the debris on the site. The methane gas produced by the decaying material underground must then be released through vents aboveground.

Architect Stephen Kay called transforming a former landfill 15 miles from Atlantic City into the McCullough's Emerald Golf Links (<http://www.golfadvisor.com/courses/16406-mccullough-s-emerald-golf-links/>) a "complicated" task. The 6,535-yard par-71 course in New Jersey's Egg Harbor Township, spearheaded by township mayor James "Sonny" McCullough, took more than a decade to develop, opening in 2002. Kay routed the tees and greens around more than 150 metal hexagon-shaped methane gas vents. The ones he couldn't avoid, he hid with berms in the fairway.

Del Ratcliffe, the president of Ratcliffe Golf Services, manages two courses built on landfills in Charlotte, N.C., the Charles T. Myers Golf Course (<http://www.golfadvisor.com/courses/1175-charles-t-myers-public-golf-course/>) and the Renaissance Park Golf Course (<http://www.golfadvisor.com/courses/1178-renaissance-park-golf-course/>), which will be renamed the Harry L. Jones Sr. Golf Course next month. Both facilities have experienced problems with the ground settling due to decaying material underneath the course.

According to the Tribune article, "At one time, the (Myers) golf course was known for the amber-colored ooze that crept from the fourth fairway." Most recent reviews of the Myers course on Golf Advisor are positive with comments such as "Always surprised by this place," "Above and beyond," and "A GREAT FIND."

"Over the years we have learned a lot about the challenges of managing these unique facilities," Ratcliffe wrote in an e-mail. "However, the most important thing I think I have learned is there is still a LOT we still have to learn!"

Ratcliffe indicated that SCS Engineers and architect Ron Garl are working to solve ongoing problems at Renaissance Park.

"(The ground movement) negatively affects a lot of things – from drainage to irrigation lines to breaking up the cart paths. In some instances, the settling has caused the contours of the greens to change dramatically. We are in Phase II of a very involved study process where we are seeking remedies for the problems," Ratcliffe wrote in an e-mail.

Other facilities have reported instances where old junk flies out of the ground, along with the divot, when players hit shots. Most golfers are willing to forgive the issues that occasionally arise at these facilities - the bad smells and unearthed garbage. These courses have given new life to land once burdened with a grim future.

Consider the golf scene in New York. Where would it be without the Bayonne Golf Club, Liberty National and Ferry Point? New Yorkers likely wouldn't be enjoying the Presidents Cup this week, that's for sure.

Video: Landfills repurposed as golf courses are nothing new



AND THESE TYPES OF PROJECTS REPRESENT SOME OF THE MOST EXPENSIVE GOLF COURSE CONSTRUCTION EVER BUILT.

Sep 25, 2017

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