

Overland Park Golf Course is one of South Denver's oldest and most treasured open spaces. Join us in keeping it out of the hands of Philip Anschutz's global entertainment empire.



With the blessing of Mayor Michael Hancock's administration, Anschutz Entertainment Group (AEG) is moving ahead with plans to take over the entire 70-acre golf course for several weeks each year, beginning in 2018 – to stage a large-scale, for-profit music festival that would bring unprecedented disruption, crowds and traffic to the small, historic Overland Park neighborhood.

Multi-day live-music events are held in all kinds of venues – from old railyards and county fairgrounds to facilities like the National Western Complex and, in the case of Coachella, an abandoned polo club. But whoever heard of staging one on the carefully tended fairways and greens of a golf course? A quick Google search turns up nothing – check it out yourself.

Who's pushing this idea – and why? Since when does our city allow its precious open

spaces to be used as profit centers by private interests?

We strongly oppose AEG's proposal, and we think you will, too, after considering the key facts, figures and unanswered questions surrounding this reckless and poorly thought-out proposal.



Overland Park, established in 1895, is the oldest 18-hole municipal golf course west of the Mississippi. Nestled along the east bank of the South Platte River a few minutes from downtown Denver, the course's narrow fairways and small, well-bunkered greens offer a challenge to golfers of any skill level. Because it is relatively flat and easy to walk, Overland is especially popular among older golfers, says Joe Pinson, the course's head professional.



A certified Audubon habitat, the golf course provides nesting places, food, water and a migratory flyway for a wide variety of birds – from great horned owls, bald eagles and sharp-shinned hawks to warblers, kingfishers, flickers, nuthatches and chickadees. Within its confines are a pond; rabbits, foxes, beaver and other wildlife; ornamental shrubs and grasses; and hundreds of mature trees – including green ash, hackberry, cottonwood, pines, poplar, willow, cottonwood, crabapple and juniper – vulnerable to crowd-associated damage.

AEG's proposal gives short shrift to the adverse impacts of jamming up to 200,000 people over a three-day period each year into this fragile ecosystem. It has not offered – nor has City Hall so far required – anything beyond sketchy promises of mitigating damage and “restoring” the golf course following each year's festival.



Just as sketchy are AEG's plans to deal with a number of key concerns: traffic and parking, security, noise, trash, public drunkenness, and disruption and property damage in the surrounding neighborhood. Because tickets will be pricey (typically, in the \$450 range for a weekend), the festival can be expected to draw hundreds of people who can't afford tickets to the fringes of the site to camp out in backyards, atop Ruby Hill and along the river and bike path.



Grassroots opposition to the proposed music festival has grown steadily over the past several months, fueled by the clearly pro-AEG stance of District 7 Councilman Jolon Clark, Denver Parks and Recreation Manager Happy Haynes and other city officials.

Two recent “public forums” hosted by Councilman Clark were monopolized by the presentations of AEG representatives – with opportunities for comment and questions strictly limited to a few minutes at the end of each meeting. Those presentations provided a troubling glimpse of what AEG has in mind.

Every year, the golf course would be taken over by AEG in late summer for nearly two months. Each festival would require 2-3 weeks of set-up, including the construction of up to five performance stages; facilities for concessions, vendors and auxiliary activities; gates and ticket booths; walkways and emergency escape routes. Everything from portable toilets to fences to generators would be trucked in to the site. Each festival would be followed by 2-3 weeks of deconstruction and cleanup.



A major selling point for the proposed music festival is that it would be an economic shot-in-the-arm for the city, generating a couple million dollars a year in taxes and fees. Some of that revenue could benefit both the golf course and the Overland Park neighborhood at some point, say Councilman Clark and other city officials – although they stop well short of offering anything like a guarantee.

But consider this: Denver has one of the hottest economies in the nation, and its already robust municipal budget has been augmented by a huge new revenue stream: more than \$180 million a year in taxes on medical and recreational marijuana. To put it in perspective, the potential revenues from AEG’s proposed festival are dwarfed by what the city collects in just two or three days of marijuana sales.

Then there’s this overriding question: Does Denver really need a large-scale outdoor music festival? According to a recent survey by *Westword*, Denver boasts 98 live-music

venues – ranging from small clubs and converted movie theaters all the way up to Red Rocks Amphitheater, Fiddler’s Green and the Pepsi Center – more than even the music meccas of Nashville, Tenn., and Austin, Texas. Roughly 650 concerts are staged in metropolitan Denver each year, by *Westword’s* count.



And that number is about to grow with the opening this summer of Levitt Pavilion, located – get this! – in Ruby Hill Park, just across the river from Overland Golf Course. Built by the city in partnership with a nonprofit foundation, the \$4.8 million Levitt Pavilion will be a permanent outdoor performance space offering 50 free public concerts each summer. The Levitt Pavilion project has generated some concern about the impact of traffic and parking, but for the most part is seen as contributing to the vitality, character and cohesion of surrounding neighborhoods.

In his public presentations on the proposed festival, AEG representative Dave Ehrlich has stated that AEG “will not do this festival here if the community doesn’t want it.”

That’s why it’s important that those of us who value and want to protect Overland Golf Course make sure that the right questions are being asked and answered, and that our voices are heard.

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