

Landfill to Become Driving Range

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The site of a former landfill just north of the golf course is going green—literally. A new driving range and parking area will be built on a ten-acre site that was used twenty years ago for dumping trash. The driving range will feature 15 floodlit practice stalls and a grass hitting area. For golfers who need work on their short game, the range will also offer a practice green and chipping area.

That section of the base has gone virtually unused since 1970, when the landfill was closed and simply filled in with dirt, as was common practice in those days. The layers of garbage under the soil were then forgotten until last year, when a small explosion caused by methane gas buildup inside a maintenance building injured a worker and prompted an investigation. The discovery of the landfill, in which general refuse and possibly some industrial wastes had been deposited, prompted the base to take action to clean up the land.

Officials want to assure base personnel that the land's previous use is no cause for concern. The contamination was capped in 1983 with three feet of clay and covered with a layer of earth. To construct the driving range, everything will be built up, including the irrigation system, so the cap is not disturbed. Vents will also be installed to release trapped methane, and "no smoking" signs will be posted nearby.

Turning closed landfills into golf courses is somewhat of a trend, according to developer Matt Stevens. "It really is the best use of the land. A lot of communities are looking at this option because, once a landfill is full, there's not much else you can do with it. Building anything is highly restricted, and you can't plant trees because the roots could disturb the cap. A golf course just makes sense."

Area golfers seem to agree. "As long as they do things the right way, I don't see a problem," said Captain Taylor Marks, who was found teeing off at Jenks Golf Course on Sunday afternoon. Another golfer added, "Turning an old pile of trash into a place to have fun seems like a great idea to me."

The new driving range should be completed by the fall of 1991.