

Appendix 4.8-1:

Historical Evaluation of the
Green Tree Golf Course,
Vacaville, California



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Davis, California 95618
530.757.2521 (voice) / 530.757.2566 (fax)
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June 18, 2019

Stuart Poulter, Associate Planner
EMC Planning Group
301 Lighthouse Avenue, Ste C
Monterey, CA 93940

Re: Historic evaluation of the Green Tree Golf Course, Vacaville, California.

Dear Mr. Poulter:

This cover letter summarizes the findings of the evaluation JRP Historical Consulting, LLC (JRP) conducted of the former Green Tree Golf Course property in Vacaville, California. JRP inventoried this built environment resource, including the golf course buildings, structures, and landscaped areas, i.e., fairways, putting greens, and cart paths. JRP presented the findings of the inventory and evaluation of built resources on Department of Parks and Recreation 523 (DPR 523) forms, which are attached.

Methods and Qualifications

JRP professionally qualified staff conducted the field survey in April 2019 and prepared a full property description on DPR 523 Primary and Building, Structure, Object records, including photographs and maps of the property. JRP conducted research in primary and secondary sources, including property records, historic newspapers, aerial photographs, and published histories, to establish the appropriate historic context and property-specific history of the course design and construction, and presented this information, along with the evaluation on the DPR 523 record sheets. The evaluation applied the significance criteria of both the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) and the California Register of Historical Resources (California Register). JRP project lead, Meta Bunse, a JRP principal, oversaw the project and has nearly 30 years of experience in cultural resources compliance. Cheryl Brookshear was the primary author of the DPR 523 records and is a staff historian with more than 10 years of experience in the field. Both meet and exceed the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards under History and Architectural History.

Summary of Findings

The Green Tree Golf Course does not meet the criteria for listing in the National Register or the California Register, nor is it an historical resource for the purposes of CEQA. The property does not meet the eligibility criteria because it does not have historically important associations with events or trends of development at the local, state, or national level, nor does the course have a direct association with a historically important individual. Green Tree was designed by a known

golf course designer, but this property is not important when viewed within the context of his body of work. In general, the golf course is a modest example of post-war course design and it is not an important example of its type, period, or method of construction. Finally, the property is not important for information potential and it is otherwise well-documented. This property has been evaluated in accordance with Section 15064.5(a)(2)-(3) of the CEQA Guidelines, using the criteria outlined in Section 5024.1 of the California Public Resources Code. Please refer to the attached DPR 523 form set for the full description, context, and evaluation of the property.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Meta Bunse".

Meta Bunse
President / Principal

State of California – The Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
PRIMARY RECORD

Primary # _____
HRI # _____
Trinomial _____
NRHP Status Code 6Z

Other Listings _____
Review Code _____ Reviewer _____ Date _____

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*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder) Green Tree Golf Course

P1. Other Identifier: Green Tree Golf Course

*P2. Location: Not for Publication Unrestricted

*a. County Solano

and (P2b and P2c or P2d. Attach a Location Map as necessary.)

*b. USGS 7.5' Quad Allendale/ Elmira Date 1978/1980; Los Putos Grant; M.D. B.M.

c. Address 999 Leisure Town Road City Vacaville Zip 95687

d. UTM: (give more than one for large and/or linear resources) Zone _____; _____ mE/ _____ mN

e. Other Locational Data: (e.g., parcel #, directions to resource, elevation, etc., as appropriate)

Assessor Parcel Numbers: 0133-120-340; 0134-020-180; 0134-020-240; 0134-020-290; 0134-020-300; 0134-020-310; 0134-020-320; 0134-020-330; 0134-020-340; 0134-020-350; 0134-020-360; 0134-020-380; 0134-020-450; 0134-020-460; 0134-033-010; 0134-033-370; 0134-033-380; 0134-033-400; 0134-180-030; 0134-180-040; 0134-181-130; 0134-181-140; 0134-183-140; 0134-183-150; 0134-310-010; 0134-332-100; 0134-332-180.

*P3a. Description: (Describe resource and its major elements. Include design, materials, condition, alterations, size, setting, and boundaries)

This form records the buildings and landscape features of the Green Tree Golf Course complex, situated on the west side of Leisure Town Road near the eastern city limit of Vacaville, CA in Solano County (**Photograph 1**). The approximately 140-acre complex consists of a clubhouse, a warehouse, a driving range, a putting green, a chipping green, an 18-hole championship golf course, a 9-hole executive golf course, multiple integral water reservoirs, and several modern restrooms and water management facilities (see Site Map on Continuation Sheet). The property is bordered by the Leisure Town retirement community on its west and south sides. Commercial development associated with Interstate 80 (I-80) characterizes the area to the north of the property while most of the land to the east remains agricultural (see Continuation Sheet).

*P3b. Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes) HP6 – 1- 3 Story Commercial Building; HP29 – Landscape Architecture

*P4. Resources Present: Building Structure Object Site District Element of District Other (Isolates, etc.)

P5a. Photo or Drawing (Photo required for buildings, structures, and objects.)



*P5b. Description of Photo: (View, date, accession #) Green Tree Golf Course clubhouse and warehouse, camera facing northwest, April 12, 2019

*P6. Date Constructed/Age and Sources: Historic Prehistoric Both
1960 (San Francisco Examiner)

*P7. Owner and Address:
Green Tree South, LLC
P.O. Box 2540
Napa, CA 94558

*P8. Recorded by: (Name, affiliation, address)
Cheryl Brookshear and
Michelle Van Meter
JRP Historical Consulting, LLC
2850 Spafford Street
Davis, CA 95618

*P9. Date Recorded: April 12, 2019

*P10. Survey Type: (Describe) Intensive

*P11. Report Citation: (Cite survey report and other sources, or enter "none.") None

*Attachments: None Location Map Sketch Map Continuation Sheet Building, Structure, and Object Record Archaeological Record
 District Record Linear Feature Record Milling Station Record Rock Art Record Artifact Record Photograph Record
 Other (list) _____

DPR 523A (1/95)

*Required Information

*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder) Green Tree Golf Course

B1. Historic Name: Leisure Town Golf Course/ Green Tree Golf Course

B2. Common Name: Vacaville Golf Course

B3. Original Use: Golf Course B4. Present Use: Abandoned

*B5. Architectural Style: Mid-Century Golf Course

*B6. Construction History: (Construction date, alteration, and date of alterations) Club house, executive course and driving range, 1960; nine holes of championship course, 1961; all holes open 1962; course renovated in 1979 lengthening 9th hold; automatic sprinklers system installed 1980s; Restrooms constructed in the late 1980s; well house built on executive course and pump house installed over existing pumps near 15th hole, 1990s.

*B7. Moved? No Yes Unknown Date: _____ Original Location: _____

*B8. Related Features: _____

B9. Architect: William F. Ball b. Builder: Syar Industries, Inc.

*B10. Significance: Theme n/a Area n/a

Period of Significance n/a Property Type n/a Applicable Criteria n/a

(Discuss importance in terms of historical or architectural context as defined by theme, period, and geographic scope. Also address integrity.)

The Green Tree Golf Course does not meet the criteria for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) or the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR), nor is it an historical resource for the purposes of CEQA. This property has been evaluated in accordance with Section 15064.5(a)(2)-(3) of the CEQA Guidelines, using the criteria outlined in Section 5024.1 of the California Public Resources Code.

Historic Context

The Green Tree Golf Course, constructed in 1960-1962, sits on the eastern edge of the City of Vacaville, just south and east of Interstate 80. This area developed following World War II as the city passed its centennial.

(See Continuation Sheet).

B11. Additional Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes) HP4 – Ancillary Building

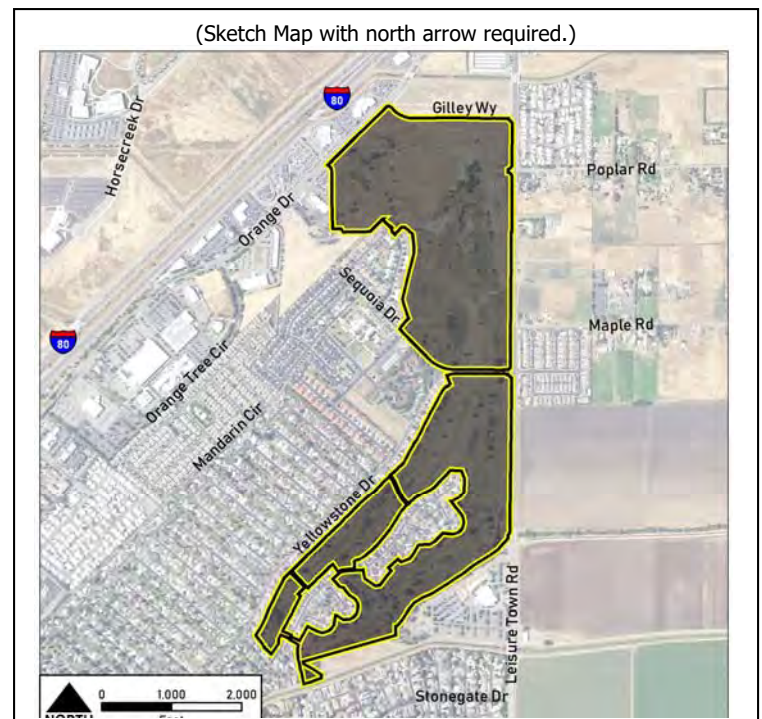
*B12. References: Robert M. Graves, *Golf Course Design* (New York: J. Wiley, 1998); Ronald H. Limbaugh and Walter A. Payne, *Vacaville: the Heritage of a California Community* (Vacaville, CA: Vacaville City Council, 1978); Mary Fenix, *Leisure Town Then* (Vacaville, CA: Mary Fenix, 1992); also see footnotes.

B13. Remarks:

*B14. Evaluator: Cheryl Brookshear

*Date of Evaluation: May 2019

(This space reserved for official comments.)



P3a. Description (continued):

Clubhouse

The Green Tree Golf Course clubhouse began construction in 1960 and its present configuration reflects renovation campaigns that were carried out during the late-20th century. The clubhouse is located on the northern half of the property, between the 9-hole executive golf course and the 18-hole championship golf course. At the core of the building is the original L-plan clubhouse and attached to its northwest corner is a golf cart storage shed that extends to the north. The original portion of the building sits atop a concrete foundation and has a cross-gable roof clad in grey composition shingles. The deep overhanging roof has open eaves and projecting, or prow end gables. HVAC units are installed along the roof ridgeline. The walls are concrete masonry block, with vertically-grooved plywood siding above the window and door openings, as well as below some of the windows.

The inner ell of the building faces south and east toward a large asphalt-paved parking area (**Photograph 2**). Entrances to each wing are sheltered beneath a wood pergola that extends the length of the façade, including the ell and the south gable end. Both wood-frame glass doors feature patterned glass, with a grid design. The door on the east-facing wall is flanked by a ticket window set in a fixed wood frame. Fenestration on the south-facing wall consists of large, fixed, wood-frame windows arranged in a pair, and a ribbon of four windows, (**Photograph 3**). A replacement sliding window with a vinyl frame punctuates the south façade to the east of the ribbon of four windows.

The original clubhouse structure has three gable ends because of a short extension at the back (north) side of the building. The south-facing gable end has two sets of paired large, fixed frame windows and is sheltered by the aforementioned pergola (**Photograph 4**). The east gable end features a flush metal door and a rectangular louvered vent, but otherwise lacks fenestration (**Photograph 5**). The north-facing gable end is largely concealed by a modern addition (**Photograph 6-7**). The rear, north side of the clubhouse features two evenly-spaced, flush metal doors (**Photograph 7**). A modern addition extends from the northwest gable end (**Photograph 6 and Photograph 7**). The addition has a side-gable roof clad in composition shingles. Its siding is vertically-grooved plywood. The addition has a single entrance on its east-facing side and a sliding window with a vinyl frame on its north gable end. Adjacent to the addition are two detached outbuildings with metal shed roofs (**Photograph 8**).

A very long shed extends from the northwest side of the clubhouse is the original side-gabled golf cart storage structure. The storage shed is sided with grooved plywood panels on its west side and the open side is secured with chain link fencing on its east side (**Photograph 9 and Photograph 10**). The roofing material is raised seam metal. The golf cart staging area is an open-air, covered space at the south end of the structure. Here, the fenestration pattern on the west side of the clubhouse is visible (**Photograph 11**). The openings consist of a band of windows with fixed wood frames and a glazed door. During the mid-2000s, the facility was expanded on its east side to accommodate more vehicles. A modern metal-sided trailer connects at the north end of the structure (**Photograph 12**). Adjacent to the rear is a wood-frame shelter on a concrete pad (**Photograph 13**).

Warehouse

The warehouse, located near the entrance to the property on along Leisure Town Road, was constructed concurrently with the club house. The warehouse faces a large parking area. The wood-frame building has a rectangular plan that sits on a concrete foundation. The side-gable roof is clad in narrow corrugated metal sheets and a metal ridge cap. The roof-wall juncture is finished with simple wood boards, is nearly flush with the sides of the building, leaving no eaves exposed and the gable ends feature a plain wood fascia with no overhang. The siding is corrugated metal panels, similar to those used for the roof cladding. Utilities and light fixtures are located at various locations on the building's exterior.

The warehouse is entered via a sliding barn door on the center of the west side (**Photograph 14**). To either side of the door are two sets of paired, horizontally-oriented windows set in fixed wood frames. The windows are placed just below the roofline. The north gable end includes two sets of paired windows with fixed wood frames and a small rectangular vent near the peak of the gable (**Photograph 15**). Electrical lines connect to a power meter that is mounted between the windows. The south gable end lacks openings except for rectangular louvered vent sheltered beneath a pent canopy near the roofline (**Photograph 16**). Sections of replacement corrugated metal siding suggest the south gable end's former fenestration pattern.

A rectangular poured concrete pad extends out from the building face towards the south. The rear, east-facing side of the warehouse is fenestrated by five sets of paired windows with fixed wood frames (**Photograph 17**). The horizontally-oriented windows are evenly spaced and punctuate the building face just below the roofline.

In the vicinity of the warehouse are two ancillary structures: a modular office unit and a fueling station for course maintenance equipment and vehicles. The rectangular-plan office unit is situated immediately adjacent to the west façade of the warehouse (**Photograph 18**). The office is sided in corrugated metal, with a vertically-grooved plywood board skirt at the bottom of the wall, probably masking the piers supporting the modular building. The office is entered on its north side by a set portable metal steps and its remaining three sides are fenestrated by aluminum-frame sliding windows. The fueling station is located south of the warehouse and consists of two metal fuel tanks, the round tank on a metal cradle and the square take set inside a containment well with concrete sides. Both tanks are surrounded by rounded concrete bollards (**Photograph 19**).

Driving Range

The driving range is located directly west of the clubhouse, opposite the cart storage shed, and is oriented on an east-to-west axis. A wood curb separates the uncovered teeing platform from an asphalt-paved walkway that flanks the west side of the clubhouse (**Photograph 20**). Though partially obscured by vegetative growth, segments of brick pavers are visible on the platform. The platform opens onto a broad, grassy area with largely consistent topography. The range is surrounded with a chain link fence and concrete mounts for field lights are in place alongside the tee platform.

Putting and Chipping Greens

The putting and chipping greens are located southeast of the clubhouse. The putting green is composed of a flat, oblong surface that is slightly elevated above the surrounding ground level (**Photograph 21**). Disking to control weeds and other vegetation has eliminated signs of turf maintenance and created an uneven surface. The green is identifiable by slight changes in vegetation. All other identifying features, such as tees, holes, and flags, have been removed. The chipping green is located east of the putting green. The chipping green is also identifiable by changes in vegetation and ground slope. The green has an irregular oval shape that is markedly flat compared to its surroundings. As with the putting green, all other identifying features have been removed from the site.

18-Hole Golf Course

The 18-hole, championship-level golf course in the Green Tree complex was completed in 1962 and comprises the southern three-quarters of the property (**Site Map**). The course layout is slightly J-shaped, with the top of the J on the north near the putting green, and the south near Green Tree Drive. Sequoia Drive crosses the course in a roughly east-west alignment and is crossed four times during play. Beginning just south of the putting and chipping greens, the direction of play is generally oriented on a north-to-south axis. The tees and greens are connected by long, rolling fairways (**Photograph 22**). The fairways are delineated by rows of planted trees and other shrubs. Travel throughout the course is aided by asphalt-paved golf cart paths (**Photograph 23**). Access points at both ends of the course connect the paths to the adjacent housing developments (**Photograph 24**). Near the north end of the course, low fences and greenways provide neighboring homes with unobstructed views of the course (**Photograph 25**).

Each hole is comprised of a tee, fairway, and green. In most cases these are now difficult to identify as weed abatement activities have altered turf and resulted in a generally uneven surface. The tees, located at the beginning of each fairway, display subtle variations but are generally elevated areas of land topped by a flat, grassy surface. Tees in the southern section of the course adjacent to housing developments are surrounded by protective chain link barriers (**Photograph 26**). The greens also vary in dimension and shape, but are typically identifiable as flat, raised areas at the end of each fairway (**Photograph 27**). Holes range from par three to par five with most rating a par four. The first nine have a slight curve to the play, the last nine include more straight-line holes along with three short holes. Remnants of sand bunkers, such as the one located at Hole 3, are located sporadically throughout. Remnants are visible as large irregular depressions with differentiated vegetation (**Photograph 28**). All other identifying features, such as flags and holes, are have also been removed.

Three earth and stone-lined reservoirs, connected by a system of pumphouses, meandering channels, and other water control structures, are located at various locations on the course (**Photograph 29**, **Photograph 30**, and **Photograph 31**). The reservoirs serve partly as flood control and also as water hazards for holes 1, 4, 9 and 10. Two modern pumphouses are located in the central region of the course and feature plywood siding and gable roofs with metal cladding (**Photograph 32**).

Multiple other modern structures are dispersed throughout the 18-hole golf course, including restrooms and a city sewer lift station (see Site Map on Continuation Sheet). A standard restroom building located adjacent to Hole 15, serves as a halfway point (**Photograph 33**). The restrooms are square-plan buildings with pyramidal roofs clad in raised seam metal panels. The sewer lift station, at the entrance to the complex, is rectangular in plan and sheathed in stucco siding (**Photograph 34**).

9-Hole Executive Golf Course

The 9-hole executive golf course, completed in 1960, comprises the northernmost portion of the complex and is a series of short holes surrounding the driving range. The topography of the course is defined by a combination of flat surfaces and shallow rolling hills with very few trees (**Photograph 35**). As with the 18-hole champion course, weed abatement activity has disrupted the turf and resulted in uneven surfaces. Compared to the 18-hole course, the compact character of the 9-hole course offers direct sightlines from tee to green, and also between holes. The 9-hole course includes a single water feature at its center (**Photograph 36**). This earth-lined reservoir is connected to those located on the 18-hole course via a modern pumphouse on its south bank (**Photograph 37**).

B10. Significance (continued):

City of Vacaville

In 1850, an American land agent purchased nine square miles from Manuel Vacca, who was fighting to retain *Rancho Los Puntos*, one of the first Mexican land grants in Solano County. The town of Vacaville was laid out upon a single square mile of this purchase, about two and a half miles southwest of what would become the Green Tree Golf Course. The new town was on the main Solano County route between the growing cities of San Francisco and Sacramento and served as a commercial center for the surrounding agricultural land. As with most of California, early agriculture began with cattle and stock raising and transitioned to dry-farmed wheat culture. By the 1870s, however, Vacaville found its niche in fruit production. The construction of the California Pacific Railroad in 1868 through Vaca Station, now Elmira, expanded the market for locally produced fruit and export of fresh orchard fruit continued to bring prosperity to Vacaville through the beginning of the twentieth century.¹

By the 1880s, Solano County was considered California's most important fruit-producing county. Vaca Valley, containing Vacaville and Pleasants Valley to the north, were at the center of this trend. Agriculture spurred growth and the advent of the automobile encouraged development along Vacaville's Main Street, which became a part of the state highway system in 1913. Local orchardists Helen and "Bunny" Powers started selling fruit from their front yard facing the highway in 1921, establishing the well-known Nut Tree restaurant and fruit stand north of the subject property. By 1925 Vacaville was shipping over 1,350 rail-car loads of fruit per year, but the height of fruit culture ended in the during the Great Depression in the 1930s when the

¹ Mildred Brooke Hoover, et. al., *Historic Spots in California*, 4th edition, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 463; James D. Hart, *A Companion to California*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 413; *History of Solano County*, (San Francisco: Wood, Alley, & Co, 1879) reprinted by Solano County Genealogical Society, 1994, 30, 288; Jerry Bowen, "Solano the Way it Was, John Curry and the Vaca-Pena Land Grant Cases," *The Vacaville Reporter*, March 6, 2000; and Frank L. Keegan, *Solano The Crossroads County: an Illustrated History*, (Fairfield: Windsor Publications, 1989), 35-36; Ronald H. Limbaugh and Walter A. Payne, *Vacaville: the Heritage of a California Community* (Vacaville, CA: Vacaville City Council, 1978), 26, 30, 35, 50, 55, 65.

fruit from the irrigated Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys beat the smaller, but sweeter, Vacaville fruit to market. Combined with the overall economic slump and generational shift among growers, Vacaville's orchard fruit economy was over.²

Vacaville began growing again during and after World War II. The war brought what would become known as Travis Air Force Base to the southwest of town, and the Basic Vegetable Products Company (Basic) saw rapid growth and expansion and provided a new focus for the local agricultural economy. Basic produced dehydrated onions and had securing a military supply contract during the war that allowed the company to rapidly expand. Vacaville also grew during the war, as federal housing programs supported limited construction to house workers for both Basic and Travis AFB. After the war, however, Vacaville was poised for rapid expansion.³

Several factors contributed to Vacaville's extensive growth following World War II. The town's economy diversified to include more food processing, and Travis Air Force Base brought many new residents to the region. The state also constructed the Vacaville Medical Facility to treat psychiatric issues in the prison population and it became another significant employer. The improved highway through town, then known as US 40 (and eventually re-numbered as I-80), provided easy access between Vacaville and the San Francisco Bay region, which had also experienced exponential growth during World War II. These factors made Vacaville an attractive option to the many residents drawn to California for new economic opportunities and pleasant weather from other states. Vacaville struggled to accommodate increased growth while protecting the valuable agricultural land south of the highway. Despite general plans and measures designed to help Vacaville direct its growth, housing demand skyrocketed as the population exploded from a pre-World War II average population of around 1,200, to an estimated 38,000 in the late 1970s.⁴ It was during this post war growth that large residential developments were established, northeast of the old Vacaville town center.

Leisure Town

Leisure Town is an active senior housing development where ownership is limited to households where at least one member is 50 or older, and there are no permanent residents under 19. This age restriction, included in the original covenants, remains in place. The Green Tree Golf Course is not technically a part of the Leisure Town development, however, Leisure Town residences back up to the course and advertising for the development highlighted proximity to the course, so the development history of both is provided here.

The evolution of age restricted communities like Leisure Town began in the 1950s as senior citizens were a growing population following World War II. This demographic of new seniors had access to Social Security funds and pensions that provided more financial stability in retirement than previous generations. They were also healthier as a result of medical improvements through the first half of the twentieth century. Families dispersed more during this period as younger generations sought opportunities on the frontiers and urban centers and seniors moved to warmer and more benevolent climates. Developers had marketed real estate to middle-class visitors during the winter months in the 1920s by promoting Florida's weather, and after World War II it became a mecca for retirees. The federal government also incentivized retirement communities beginning in the 1930s by shoring up the financial system and grew through the subsequent decades to support redevelopment, low income, and veteran's housing. By the late 1950s federal programs began to provide supports for senior housing. Legislation limited mortgage guarantees to non-profit organizations at first, but in 1959, Section 231 of the Federal Housing Act provided mortgage insurance for profit-making developments housing seniors.⁵

² *History of Solano County* (San Francisco: Wood, Alley and Co, 1879 reprinted Fairfield, California: Solano County Genealogical Society, 1994), 316; Limbaugh and Payne, *Vacaville: the Heritage of a California Community*, 127, 211-212, 220,233, 241.

³ Limbaugh and Payne, *Vacaville: the Heritage of a California Community*, 272-275.

⁴ Limbaugh and Payne, *Vacaville: the Heritage of a California Community*, 280-284, 289-291.

⁵ Grace Milgram, *A Chronology of Housing Legislation and Selected Executive Actions, 1892-1992*, Congressional Research Service for House Committee on Banking, Finance and Urban Affairs and the House Subcommittee on Housing and Community Development, 1992: 67, 74, 82; Judith Ann Trolander, *From Sun Cities to the Villages: A History of Active Adult, Age-Restricted Communities* (s.l.: University Press of Florida, 2011), 2-6.

Marketing to retirees for suburban housing developments continued following World War II, but the first age restricted community was not established until 1954 when Ben Schleifer developed Youngtown outside Phoenix, Arizona. Schleifer's development did not include many of the amenities that later became common in retirement communities, but it did ban children. The residents of Youngtown created their own clubs and organizations, including the first chapter of the American Association of Retired Persons. Perhaps the best-known early retirement communities are those of the developers Del Webb and Ross Cortese. Del Webb's first retirement community was Sun City, established outside of Phoenix beginning in 1959, and Ross Cortese developed Leisure World in Seal Beach, California beginning in 1960. Webb's developments at Sun City and then at Kern City in Bakersfield, California, focused upon active living and offered a variety of recreational facilities within the development, such as the golf course integrated into the residential area of Sun City, Phoenix. Webb's designers designed the layout so that a maximum number of houses would back onto the course. The development marketers advertised the moderately priced homes paired with the aspirational aspects of country club golf and the course also served as green space for the community. Proximity to golf courses and recreational facilities ultimately became a wildly popular format for intergenerational developments during the post war decades, as well.⁶

The success of Sun City did not go unnoticed. In Vacaville, Leisure Town, Incorporated, formed in February 1958, and purchased most of the land between what is now Leisure Town Road and Nut Tree Road, and Ulatis Creek and Interstate 80. The company took several years to devise plans for a new retirement community development on the property and the Vacaville City Council approved plans for Leisure Town in the summer of 1962.⁷ Like Del Webb's properties, the subdivision included a variety of amenities for residents. A "town center," which was to include a social hall, crafts facilities, swimming pool and patio, game fields, shopping, motel, churches, and professional offices, were grouped together at the northeast end of the development on four blocks, although ultimately only partially developed. Most of the residential areas of Leisure Town were located on a series of looping roads ending and beginning on Yellowstone Drive. Walkways behind the residences were to provide alternate transportation away from the vehicular roadways and add to a park like feel. Leisure Town, Inc, turned over maintenance and operation of these facilities to residents in the form of the Leisure Town Home Association. Common areas within the community became the property of the association which then managed these areas. The golf course, while featured in advertising and overall descriptions of the development, was actually a separate business development. Unlike the other amenities for residents, golf was available for a reduced rate, but was not free to all residents. Execution of the complete Leisure Town project continued into the 1970s, west of the golf course.⁸

Leisure Town was a joint partnership between Syar Industries and Harm Brothers of Sacramento. C.M. "Tony" Syar had begun a construction-contractor business in 1932. In the 1940s, he established two ready-mix concrete plants in Vallejo and Fairfield and supplied military construction at Mare Island Naval Shipyard and Travis Air Force Base during World War II. The company continued to grow in the subsequent decades adding a few side ventures. During operations of Syar Industries, Tony Syar met the Harm Brothers who were Sacramento builders and the two companies partnered for a variety of projects, including Leisure Town. As developers and builders they were not particularly ardent supporters of retirement communities as such, but saw them as a business opportunity. By 1968 they developed other portions of the Syar holdings, although without the covenants, conditions, and restrictions that accompanied Leisure Town parcels to ensure that owners and occupants would be older adults. These later subdivisions, including the Green Tree Units 1-5 southeast of Yellowstone Drive and along the southern end of the Green Tree golf course, as well as Golf Course Estates Units 1 and 2 in the middle of the golf course, did

⁶ Trolander, *From Sun Cities to the Villages*, 40-45, 47, 64-65, 97).

⁷ California Secretary of State, Leisure Town Incorporated C0349961, <https://businesssearch.sos.ca.gov/CBS/Detail>, accessed May 2019; Solano County Recorder, Solano County Assessor-Recorders Office Public Records Research, Deed Index Lawrence Harris ex us, Robert Christiansen et ux, J Bruce Fratis et ux, Norman Wren et ux, Sinclair Dobbins, Walter Kashuba et us to Leisure Town Inc, January 7, 1959, Official Records Book 955, 301, <http://recorderonline.solanocounty.com/Search/Pages/SearchSimple.aspx>, accessed May 2019; "Leisure Town Planned in Vacaville," *Oakland Tribune*, Jul. 22, 1962, 83.

⁸ Ruth + Krushkhov and Saski, Walker & Associates, *Leisure Town A Planned Community for Active Retirement, Vacaville, California*, for Syar Incorporated, 1962, <https://www.ltha.org/history>, accessed April 2019; Leisure Town, Inc., *Leisure Town, Vacaville, California* [sales brochure], 1962, 16 <https://www.ltha.org/history>, accessed April 2019; Solano County Recorder, Town Center apartments Unit No. 1-A Leisure Town, Vacaville, CA, October 1975, Subdivision Map Book 31, 63-64; Mary Fenix, *Leisure Town Then* (Vacaville, CA: Mary Fenix, 1992).

not include age restrictions or access to the Leisure Town amenities and were essentially typical post-war housing tracts. Early purchasers of Leisure Town properties felt that these later developments should have been a part of Leisure Town and the continued expansion of the community became an issue of contention. Residential subdivision of the area in the vicinity of the golf course, south of I-80 between Nut Tree Drive and Leisure Town Road, continued into the 1990s.⁹

Golf Course Design

Golf has its origins in Scotland starting in the mid-fifteenth century with courses situated on hilly grazing land along the coastline. Little formal design went into early courses, except for the removal of some vegetation and placement of holes in locations that created challenging and interesting play. Golf in the United States evolved through periods of popularity and corresponding evolution in golf course design. The sport's first period of popularity in the US occurred during the economic expansion of the late nineteenth century and associated rise of a wealthy upper class. Interest in the game continued to grow in the early twentieth century, propelled by the victory of American amateur golfer Francis Ouimet in the US Open Championship in 1913. Ouimet defeated heavily favored British professional golfers Harry Vardon and Ted Ray in the tournament, and became the first amateur to win the US Open. Ouimet's achievement captured America's attention, and the story was front page news throughout the country and helped bring a greater awareness of golf. Coinciding with rising popularity of the sport during this era, golf course design became a professional craft.¹⁰

In California, the first course was built in Southern California at the Riverside Country Club in 1891. At this time, very few public golf courses existed, and the sport was that of the upper classes who had access to private courses and country clubs. This elite, wealthy, upper-class aspect of golf and golf culture influenced golf course design during this era and elevated aesthetic importance of golf courses. Golf courses consisted not only of the holes, tees, and greens of the course itself, but also included clubhouses for socializing, dining, and drinking, before and after a golf match. Many golf course members would congregate at the clubhouse for food or drink, even on days when they did not golf. The golf course, then, functioned as a sporting facility, but also as a verdant setting for social affairs, contributing to a high value placed on golf course aesthetics, particularly near the clubhouse.¹¹

During the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century golf course design evolved. The early courses, identified by golf course designer Michael J. Hurzan, were "laid out" courses and "built" courses. Laid out courses were created by little or no earthmoving. For this type, designers first identified spots with naturally occurring short grasses to serve as putting greens, then chose tee areas to play to these greens. In between, tall vegetation would be removed where necessary to create fairways. All vegetation was existing, native plants and minimally maintained and served as natural hazards. Courses were marked simply with stakes to designate tee and green area, and maps help guide players. Often, hole routes would cross each other.¹²

The other type of course was constructed on land not naturally conducive to a golf course, and was considered a "built" course. This method of golf course design began in the late nineteenth and became more common in the early twentieth century as earthmoving machinery such as bulldozers was invented. Built courses involved extensive modification of the landscape to create fairways, greens, tees, and hazards. In many cases, landscapes were completely altered from their natural state as golf course designers used extensive earthmoving to create water features, clear vegetation, plant trees and grasses, and build sand traps. Natural features, such as creeks or rock outcroppings, were often incorporated into golf course design, which continued to increase in sophistication and detail. Designers would specify different types of grass to be planted in certain areas and cut to

⁹ Syar Industries, "Syar Industries History," 2016, <http://syar.com/about-syar-history.html>, accessed April 2019; Mike Stone, Golf Course Manager to Cheryl Brookshear, personal interview May 15, 2019; Solano County Recorder, Green Tree Unit 1, December 1968, Subdivision Map Book 24, 53-55; Solano County Recorder, Golf Course Estates Unit 2, February 1991, Subdivision Map Book 55, 35-41; Mary Fenix, *Leisure Town Then* (Vacaville, CA: Mary Fenix, 1992).

¹⁰ Robert M. Graves, *Golf Course Design* (New York: J. Wiley, 1998), 3-8; Tom Fazio, *Golf Course Designs* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc, 2000), 98-100.

¹¹ Edwin G. Coopman, *History of the San Francisco Golf Club* (San Francisco, CA: San Francisco Golf Club, 1978), 24.

¹² Michael J. Hurdzan, *Golf Course Architecture: Evolutions in Design, Construction, and Restoration Technology* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2006), 3-4.

different lengths. Putting greens were of a short, dense grass variety and cut low to create a smooth surface. Fairways, that part of a hole running along the ideal playing route from tee to green, were another type of grass cut neatly to allow for easy ball striking. Roughs, which are adjunct to the fairways and the destination of balls that strayed off the ideal path, had longer, unkempt grass, making it difficult to strike the ball. These courses were expensive to build and characterized by well thought-out, challenging holes with great aesthetic appeal. Noted golf course designers of this time, known as the Golden Age of golf course design, included A.W. Tillinghast, Stanley Thompson, and William Flynn.¹³

The built course type required more technical expertise by the designer than laid out courses, and were more formal, requiring skilled craft and draftsmanship to produce detailed plans, not to mean execution of the plans and management of a construction team. As the complexity of golf courses increased, golf course designers – increasingly called golf course architects – were people with formal training as civil engineers, landscape architects, or land planners. And, as such, golf courses became heavily influenced by the trends in these fields, such as the picturesque movement of landscape architecture as innovated by Andrew Jackson Downing and Frederick Law Olmstead.¹⁴ This philosophy of landscape architecture, sometimes called the “Natural Style,” embraced a manipulated, but not artificial looking landscape that maintained and enhanced many aspects of the natural environment such as using common local plants and existing natural features. While seeking to maintain as much of the natural landscape as possible, some practitioners of the Natural Style, such as John McClaren, who as Superintendent of Golden Gate Park from 1889 until 1943, oversaw the complete transformation of a natural landscape of tree-less, windswept sand dunes into a “naturalistic” landscape of forests, shrubs, meadows, and lakes that created the illusion of nature, and required extensive earthmoving, irrigation, and planning to achieve.¹⁵

After World War II, golf’s popularity rose dramatically and with it, the demand for more golf courses. The surge in golfers began in earnest after the Korean Conflict ended in 1953 and increased steadily through the 1960s. During this time, the sport expanded its demographic reach from an exclusively upper-class sport, to the new middle-class players taking up the sport. Golf requires large expanses of open land and the post war housing tracts were opening new areas to development that were perfectly suited to middle-class, post-war suburban culture and its increased leisure time and expendable income. Televised tournaments, beginning in the late 1950s, further propelled the sport’s popularity as players such as Arnold Palmer and Jack Nicklaus became household names. To meet the demand of so many new golfers, hundreds of new golf courses were being built each year in the US, reaching a high of more than 400 courses debuting in 1960 and openings remained high through for the rest of the decade.¹⁶

The exponential growth in the popularity of golf and its widening appeal to the masses in the 1950s and 1960s triggered a new era in golf course design that followed two different paths: “high style” courses and “public” courses. The high style courses, similar to those built during the Golden Age of the pre-World War II era, were characterized by extensive planning, expense, attention, and effort paid to landscape architecture to create beautiful, park-like settings, as well as the same level of effort and thought put into designing creative, challenging golf holes. These courses were built at private country clubs for wealthy, elite patrons who could afford expensive membership dues. Public courses did not require a membership, had affordable green fees, and were financed and built by private entrepreneurs or local governments. These courses had smaller construction and maintenance budgets, and sought broad appeal and quick construction, resulting in a less aesthetically pleasing and less challenging course. Public courses were basic, relatively unimaginative, functional facilities that had all of the necessary components, but lacked the high-quality design of private courses. Public course designers attended to aesthetics and added an occasional high style landscape architecture element as budgets would allow. The holes were also designed to be playable for a wide range of skill levels with ample fairways, moderate hole lengths, and hazards that seldom came into play, a design philosophy that encouraged people to play the sport, rather than frustrate and discourage. This did not preclude distinct design in public courses. The most prolific golf architect of the period, Robert Trent Jones, designed both public and private courses.

¹³ Hurdzan, *Golf Course Architecture*, 3-7; G.C. Thomas, *Golf Architecture in America* (Los Angeles: Times-Mirror Press, 1927), 169, 201.

¹⁴ Hurdzan, *Golf Course Architecture*, 4-7; G.C. Thomas, *Golf Architecture in America*, 169, 201; Graves, *Golf Course Design*, 5.

¹⁵ Linda Flint McClelland, “Historic Park Landscapes in National and State Parks,” National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, August 8, 1995, 1-13; Douglas Nelson, “Golden Gate Park,” National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, June 2004, 7.1-7.2.

¹⁶ Graves, *Golf Course Design*, 3-8; Fazio, *Golf Course Designs*, 98-100; “Golfing is Big Leisure Boom,” *Los Angeles Times*, 30 January 1966, S4.

His signature was a “heroic” hole style. Suitable for both novices and skilled players, this type of hole provided two options. A player can select to make shorter, safer approaches to the green, or attempt a stroke that overcomes an obstacle and approaches the green, if that shot is missed however the course makes it difficult to correct.¹⁷

Green Tree Golf Course

Planning for Green Tree had begun by 1959. The course was separated from the land owned by Leisure Town, Inc., and deeded directly to the Sayars who owned and operated it under Green Tree South, LLC. The various executive and championship courses came online during the next few years as the landscaping matured because through the 1980s turf required time to develop from seed. The first part of Green Tree to open was the nine-hole executive course and driving range in 1960. Norman “Bill” Wren, one of the previous landowners, had come up with the concept for these nine holes played from three tee locations. Next, the first half of the championship course opened in the summer of 1961 and by the time advertising for the first Leisure Town parcels began in 1962, the golf course was offering both the executive short course and 18-hole championship course.¹⁸

The design of Green Tree Golf Course is attributed William F. Bell, a well-known golf course architect, although some press accounts credited the design to Fred Blanchard. Blanchard worked as a golf professional managing courses and contributing to their designs. Prior to arriving at Green Tree he had served at Yolo Fliers Club and Tahoe Paradise golf courses, but it appears his contribution was overseeing the construction at Green Tree.¹⁹ William F. Bell, on the other hand, was the son of famed golf course architect William Park Bell and was born in Pasadena, California in 1918. Upon completing his studies at the University of Southern California in the early-1940s and serving as a turf consultant for the US Army Corps of Engineers during World War II, Bell began working alongside his father. Together, the father-son pair collaborated on numerous prestigious courses, including the Tucson, Newport Beach, Bakersfield, and Torrey Pines Country Clubs. Bell assumed leadership of the firm after his father’s passing in 1953. In his honor, Bell renamed the company William P. Bell and Son. Though particularly active in Southern California from then on, Bell has been credited with the design of hundreds of courses throughout the Western states and Hawaii.²⁰

As was the case with Green Tree, many of Bell’s early courses were integrated into suburban housing developments, such as Bermuda Dunes, which was completed in 1957 near Indio, California. Perhaps because of their near contemporaneous dates of design and construction, Bermuda Dunes and Green Tree share similar features, such as narrow, linear fairways lined by trees and residences. The hallmarks of Bell’s designs continued to evolve over the following decades and many included interesting terrain and natural features or expansive views that were simply not possible on the former agricultural land outside Vacaville. Santa Barbara’s Sandpiper Golf Club, developed in 1972, is one of his most famous courses and represents the pinnacle of this late career. Situated atop a coastal bluff, the course’s circular design and purposeful placement of vegetation and landscape features allows for sweeping views of the ocean from nearly every location.²¹ By the time his death in 1984, Bell had been a 34-year member of the American Society of Golf Course Architects. In 2008, both he and his father were inducted into the Southland Golf Hall of Fame and later the Southern California Golf Association Hall of Fame in 2017.²²

¹⁷ Geoff Shackelford, *Grounds for Golf* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2003), 41-45; Hurdzan, *Golf Course Architecture*, 3, 26; Fazio, *Golf Course Designs*, 68; Graves, *Golf Course Design*, 26.

¹⁸ Ray Haywood, “It Says Here: Young Fans May Yet Save Baseball,” *Oakland Tribune*, Aug. 14, 1959: 45, 49; “Vacaville Gets New Golf Course,” *San Francisco Examiner*, November 6, 1960: 49; “Now Open” [advertisement], *San Francisco Examiner*, August 12, 1961: 47; *Leisure Town* [promotional brochure], Leisure Town Home Association, <https://www.ltha.org/history>, accessed May 2019.

¹⁹ “Vacaville Gets New Golf Course,” *San Francisco Examiner*, November 6, 1960: 49;

²⁰ “William F. Bell,” American Society of Golf Course Architects, 2019, accessed May 16, 2019, <https://asgca.org/architect/wfbell/>; “Architect,” DeBell Golf Club, 2019, accessed May 16, 2019, <https://www.debellgolf.com/golf-course/history/architect>. “Bell Legacy,” William Bell Society, accessed May 16, 2019, <https://williambellsociety.wordpress.com/bell-legacy/>.

²¹ “Riverside County Officials Given Preview of Bermuda Dunes Future,” *The Desert Sun*, January 24, 1957: 9; “Course Tour & Scorecard,” Bermuda Dunes Country Club, 2014, accessed May 16, 2019, <http://www.bermudadunescc.com/golf>; “Sandpiper History,” Sandpiper, 2019, accessed May 16, 2019, <https://www.sandpipergolf.com/golf-course/course-information>; “Course Map,” Sandpiper, 2019, accessed May 16, 2019, <https://www.sandpipergolf.com/golf-course/course-tour>.

²² “William F. Bell,” American Society of Golf Course Architects, 2019, accessed May 16, 2019, <https://asgca.org/architect/wfbell/>; “Bell Legacy,” William Bell Society, accessed May 16, 2019, <https://williambellsociety.wordpress.com/bell-legacy/>.

Green Tree was in operation for about 55 years, finally closing in 2016, and during its active years the course underwent several changes. Robert Muir Graves remodeled the course in 1979. It was at this time that the ninth hole of the championship course was lengthened by 100 yards. Green Tree installed irrigation in the 1980s as many courses gained automated irrigation systems so that the facilities would look more like those seen in televised matches. Construction of the surrounding subdivisions in the 1970s and 1990s required protective installation of fences along the tees to protect the nearby homes from wayward balls. A well house, pump house, and restrooms were also constructed at various locations on the course in the late 1980s and 1990s. When the Syars closed Green Tree in 2016, the irrigation system and golf furniture (holes, flags, ball washers, benches, etc.) were removed. The course has since been subject to weed control measures and the grounds are tilled annually to reduce weeds and the potential for wildfire.²³

Evaluation of Significance

This property does not have direct important associations with significant historic events, patterns, or trends of development (NRHP Criterion A / CRHR Criterion 1). Green Tree Golf Course was constructed as part of a wave of golf popularity through the 1950s and 1960s and it is a typical example for that period. Green Tree was one of hundreds of public golf courses constructed during this pattern of development, however, mere association with a trend is not enough to merit eligibility under these criteria and the facility is not significant within the context of the trend. This property is not significant for an association with the lives of persons important to history (NRHP Criterion B/CRHR Criterion 2). Operation and management of the course has occurred through several individuals who served as the professional manager of the course and provided instruction or advice for golfers. Research did not reveal that any of these professionals played a demonstrably significant role in golf history.

Under NRHP Criterion C / CRHR Criterion 3, this property is not a significant example of a type, period, or method of construction. The golf course is a modest example of public golf course architecture from the 1960s and does not feature any notable or influential design attributes, nor does it represent an important evolution or transition in public golf course design in general. While designed by noted golf course landscape architect William F. Bell, the course does not express an important phase in his career and Green Tree is an unremarkable example of his work that does not express a particular important aspect or phase of his career. The original site offered few natural features to inspire the design and Bell does not appear to have created any particularly distinguished features or details in the course, probably because of its public nature and limited budget for design, construction, and operations. Under NRHP Criterion D / CRHR Criterion 4, the property is not a significant or likely source of important information about historic construction materials or technologies that otherwise would not be available through documentary evidence. The land use and layout of the extant golf course, and the relationship the buildings and structures have with the surrounding landscape, is typical for golf courses and do not appear to provide important information within the broader economic, social, and cultural setting of the region during its historic-period occupation.

This evaluation also examined the golf course as a potential component of the larger Leisure Town development and did not identify a potential historic district to which the golf course would contribute. Leisure Town was constructed in the early years of the larger trend of retirement community development, but was a minor example of such communities that did not ultimately play an important role in the evolution of the trend. While developed simultaneously, the golf course was maintained as a separate entity open to the public and did not provide amenities or special services exclusive to Leisure Town residents. Furthermore, Leisure Town was not fully constructed as planned, and the golf course adjoined only a small portion of the retirement community along Monterey Drive and was not an integral component of the subdivision design.

Recent changes have affected the integrity of the Green Tree golf course. The closure of the course and removal of all course furniture and equipment including the irrigation system, and subsequent weed and vegetation control activities have affected the design, materials, and workmanship. Because golf courses require regular maintenance to delineate rough, fairway, and greens, the feeling and association of the golf course has been eliminated as well. The course does retain its location and general setting.

²³ Mike Stone, Green Tree Golf Course Manager to Cheryl Brookshear, JRP Historical Consulting, personal interview May 15, 2019; Ryan McCarthy, "Green Tree Golf Club Closes after 55 Years," *Daily Republic*, February 24, 2016, A1.

Photographs (continued):



Photograph 2: Clubhouse primary façade, facing northwest, April 12, 2019.



Photograph 3: View of fenestration on the south-facing section of the primary façade of the clubhouse, camera facing north, April 12, 2019.



Photograph 4: Clubhouse south gable end, camera facing north, April 12, 2019.



Photograph 5: Clubhouse east gable end, camera facing west, April 12, 2019.



Photograph 6: North gable end of the clubhouse, obscured by modern addition, camera facing southwest, April 12, 2019.



Photograph 7: Rear, north side of the clubhouse, showing the location of the modern addition, camera facing southwest, April 12, 2019.



Photograph 8: Detached outbuildings adjacent to the modern addition, camera facing southwest, April 12, 2019.



Photograph 9: View of the west side of the golf cart storage structure, enclosed by plywood, camera facing northeast, April 12, 2019.



Photograph 10: View of the east side of the golf cart storage structure, enclosed by chainlink fencing, camera facing southwest, April 12, 2019.



Photograph 11: Golf cart staging area, showing the fenestration of the west side of the clubhouse, camera facing east, April 12, 2019.



Photograph 12: Modern trailer attached to the golf cart storage structure, camera facing south, April 12, 2019.



Photograph 13: Wood-frame shelter located northeast of the clubhouse and golf cart storage structure, camera facing northeast, April 12, 2019.



Photograph 14: Warehouse primary façade, camera facing east, April 12, 2019.



Photograph 15: Warehouse, north gable end, facing south, April 12, 2019.



Photograph 16: South gable end of the warehouse, showing the concrete pad, camera facing north, April 12, 2019.



Photograph 17: Warehouse rear (east side), camera facing west, April 12, 2019.



Photograph 18: Modular office, camera facing northeast, April 12, 2019.



Photograph 19: Fueling station located south of the warehouse, camera facing south, April 12, 2019.



Photograph 20: Driving range, camera facing west, April 12, 2019.



Photograph 21: Putting green, notice slight change in vegetation, camera facing southwest, April 12, 2019.



Photograph 22: Looking down the fairway of Hole 14, showing trees lining each side, camera facing north, April 12, 2019.



Photograph 23: Typical view of a golf cart path, taken near the clubhouse, camera facing south, April 12, 2019.



Photograph 24: Golf cart path cutting through residential area at the south end of the course, camera facing west, April 12, 2019.



Photograph 25: Low yard fences along the western boundary of the course, camera facing southwest, April 12, 2019.



Photograph 26: Tee for Hole 5, showing protective chain link fence, camera facing north, April 12, 2019.



Photograph 27: Green for Hole 5, camera facing south, April 12, 2019.



Photograph 28: Remains of a sand bunker at Hole 3, camera facing northeast, April 12, 2019.



Photograph 29: View of the reservoir located closest to the clubhouse, camera facing east, April 12, 2019.



Photograph 30: View of the reservoir near the center of the course, camera facing northwest, April 12, 2019.



Photograph 31: View of the reservoir located near the south end of the course, camera facing southwest, April 12, 2019.



Photograph 32: View of a pumphouse, located on the central reservoir, camera facing east, April 12, 2019.



Photograph 33: View of a restroom near Hole 15, camera facing northeast, April 12, 2019.



Photograph 34: Sewer lift station, camera facing north, April 12, 2019.



Photograph 35: Panoramic view of the 9-hole golf course, camera facing east, April 12, 2019.



Photograph 36: Water reservoir at the center of the 9-hole golf course, camera facing north, April 12, 2019.



Photograph 37: Pumphouse located on the 9-hole course reservoir, camera facing northwest, April 12, 2019.

Site Map:



source: JRP (2019); NAIP (2016); Solano County GIS (2019).