



Land Reserved for Parking, Golf, and the Dead, USA

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Land reserved for parking, golf, and the dead, U.S.A.

Mason Gaffney, orig. 1988

This is a rough estimate, to get the feel of the subject. There are about 200,000,000 cars registered in the U.S. One parking space, plus access lanes, is about 500 sq. ft. (Skeptical? Go out and measure it.) Curbside parking obviates access lanes, but on balance often requires more wasted land because one car parked by a curb blocks a whole lane. Private garages at the backs of lots require long driveways that preempt a large share of their lots. (If you have one, measure it.) All told, 500 sq. ft. may be too low a figure. But we will use it here. It equals 1/87 acre.

How many parking spaces are there per car? For this rough cut, let's figure four. That is why you can usually find a parking space: at home, at work, at the shopping mall, the drive-in restaurant, the doctor's, church, the theatre, the airport, school, the ball park, at play, by the curb at your friends' houses, anywhere you go. In shopping malls there is extra space for peak loads, empty except at Christmas. Shopping centers generally figure a 5/1 ratio of parking space to store space. When in doubt, firms acquire extra land for parking as an interim use while it rises in value, a form of income that is virtually tax-free.

800,000,000 parking spaces x 1/87 acre = 9.2^m acres. That is quite a revolution in urban land use; in 1950, ⁴8 years ago, Harland Bartholomew measured land in use in all central cities (over 50,000 pop.) in the U.S., and it was just 4m acres, for all urban land uses!

9.2m acres = 14,368 sq. mi. (there are 640 acres/sq. mi.).
How much is 14,368 sq. mi.? It is:

13.4 x Rhode Island (1067 sq.mi.)
7.4 x Delaware (1965 sq.mi.)
1.4 x Maryland (9941 sq.mi.)
.092 x California (155,652 sq.mi.)

✓ That allows nothing for streets, aprons, car sales lots and graveyards, highways, offramps, interchanges, etc.; and nothing for trucks, buses, or military vehicles.

As parking demands push everything else farther apart, more car-miles are needed to traverse the parking and street spaces.

Thus the auto creates much of the demand for itself: a "positive feedback loop."

While we're at it, another land-hog is golf. There are over 12,000 golf courses in the U.S. (100 in Riverside County), and growing fast. What price open space? An average course uses about 180 acres. The total comes to 2.16 m acres, or 3375 sq.mi. Watering that grass uses lakes-full of water. In California the land and water are both largely tax-exempt.

Cemeteries also preempt a lot of land. Some cities have long anticipated Baer's thesis of cities as cemeteries, only quite literally. In Milwaukee, for example, cemeteries occupy more space than all industry. Much of the land is reserved for future burials. Money is made speculating in non-profit, tax-exempt cemetery lots, and the living have to traverse the space to earn their daily bread. Some people defend cemeteries by assuming that the open space puts a premium on the value of adjoining land, but the evidence indicates the reverse. I studied market values of bare land in Milwaukee, 1963-67, using several thousand sales: instead of a premium, there is a discount on land across the street from cemeteries.

MORE MATERIALS, SOURCES, FOR UPDATING

1. TPE, 7 Apr 91, E1.

Operating courses in U.S.	13,951
Opened in 1990	281
% rise	2.0%
Under constrn	561
Planned	781
Operating in Coachella V.	82
Planned in Riv. Cty.	50

Total U.S. acres, est. $14,000 \times 200a = 2.8m \text{ acs} = 4375 \text{ s.m.}$
 Cf. MD = $10,577 \text{ s.m.} = 6.77m \text{ ac}^1$
 DE = $2057 \text{ s.m.} = 1.32m \text{ ac}$
 RI = $1214 \text{ s.m.} = .777m \text{ ac}$

$2.8m \text{ acs} / 250m \text{ people} = 488 \text{ sf/cap.}$ A pretty vast figure, if we compare it with md. homesite of $10,000 \text{ sf/home}$, or 2500 sf/cap.

2. Children's encyclopedia (date?), article on golf by Gary Middlecoff.

No. of golf courses, U.S.	11,700
Pvt	4,800
Daily fee	5,200
Public	1,700

Est. l.v. = \$4.5b
 One 18 holer = from 90 to 250 acs.

3. One parking stall = $20' \times 10' = 200 \text{ s.f.}$

4. LAX parking contract is nation's largest municipal parking enterprise, with annual revs of \$52m. Were going to award contract to a Bradley political supporter, Homer Broome, of AMPCO parking. But voted 3-2 to let new Commission decide. Riordan influence may have prevented this.

Cf. landing fees of ca. \$15m, rising to \$45m. Parking revs are from LAX + Ontario + Van Nuys. Not clear if landing fees refer to them, too, or just LAX. Assuming they refer to all

¹State areas from Websters 9th New Collegiate abridged dict. Sources in text on p.1 differ slightly, may exclude water?

three, then parking gross revs > landing fees, even after increase.

(See \f\smss\airslots\mtrls, #1.)

Thus, GRIDLOCK means rents. Rightly handled, rents control gridlock, and also raise revenues.

5. Karl Schoenberger, 1993, "Tujunga golf project finds tycoon deep in rough." LAT 5 July p.1.

Minoru Isutani lost \$340m on Pebble Beach. Paid \$841m in 1990.

Rumored ties to Japnese mob, money laundering. Japan's r.e. industry is a "demi-monde." Made his money in Japnese golf courses.

Proposed selling memberships in Pebble Beach at \$740,000 @. Raised storm of protest. Coastal Commish forbade him to sell pvt memberships.

Japan r.e. also crashed, 1990-91, hurting him there.

Profit in courses linked to sale of adjoining homesites. However, note that is reciprocal: viability of golf course depends on surrounding homes. It is not all one way.

Now, Isutani wants to build \$50m course at mouth of Big Tujunga Cyn. Seems to be broke, however, beset with liens and lawsuits.

6. 1993, golf driving ranges are growing fast as an "interim" use of speculative landholdings with aborted plans.

7. TPE 3 Feb 95 B4

Developer Henry C. "Chuck" Cox wants to build 2 golf courses - with County help! (Tax exemption isn't enough?) One is between Tyler and La Sierra, abutting Santa Anna R.; the other in Norco. He wants County to issue bonds to pay for them! In return, they'll get eventual ownership. Had approached City of Riverside, it backed away.

8. A "caravansary" was an inn for caravans. It needed wide yards to accommodate camels, wagons, etc. - like a modern truck stop.

Local trade, meantime, was on foot. Today, however, every local business in s. Cal. has become like an ancient caravansary, providing parking. Internal trade has become as clumsy as trans-Asiatic trade used to be.

9. TPE 15 Aug 95 C1

Nat. Golf Fdtn pubs figs on no. of public golf holes per 100,000 people. Nat. ave. = 43 per 100k people; L.A./Long Beach offers 13 per 100k people. Ranks 298 out of 302 urban areas in public golf hole supply per 100k. (I presume "L.A./Long Beach" does not include Coachella Valley.)

(If every 18-holer is 180 acres, then one hole is 10 acres, so 43 holes means 430 acres, so 43 holes per 100k people means 187 s.f./capita - not much. So the mass of land must be in private clubs.)

"Public" course means daily fee. Many fees are >\$100.

(Of course, this says nothing about pvt. clubs. I presume that L.A., with its penchant for privatization and clubs, ranks higher here.)

10.