



Monroe County Legislature

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Legislator – District 17

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County of Monroe Industrial Development Agency
City Place
50 West Main Street
Suite 1150
Rochester, NY 14614

COMIDA Board Members,

I urge you to vote against the proposed incentive package for TopGolf. While this project would be a welcome addition to Monroe County's entertainment options, we should not subsidize the venture. In short, TopGolf is a sand trap for Monroe County taxpayers.

First, TopGolf has a history of inflating employment projections. A 2021 press release for its Long Island location [claimed](#) there would be 500 jobs. Yet the following year, the Brookhaven IDA reported the venue employed only 159 full-time equivalents. TopGolf is projecting 293 jobs will be created in Monroe County within three years, 131 full-time and 162 part-time. That's 212 full-time equivalents (dividing 162 by two), one-third more than Long Island, which has a larger facility than the one proposed for Monroe County.

Second, overall, these are not great jobs. The Brookhaven IDA [reported](#) the jobs at the Long Island location had an average salary of \$30,000 a year in 2022, about minimum wage. The Monroe County application indicates an average salary of \$42,332 over 10 years, which means if one assumes 3.5% raises per year, average pay would be \$17.35 an hour in the first year. Part-time workers don't have access to benefits such as health care and retirement accounts. The public assistance these employees would need, including SNAP and Medicaid, should be included as part of the cost-benefit analysis of the project.

Third, it would appear the project benefits are not being calculated properly. The TopGolf [application](#) calculates total earnings for 293 full-time employees. But TopGolf's own data shows it would create 212 – not 293 – full-time equivalents. Using the 212 figure would reduce total direct employee earnings over 10 years by 28% or \$35 million.

Fourth, retail projects should not get taxpayer subsidies. By giving TopGolf taxpayer dollars, we would be hurting other local restaurants and entertainment businesses, which would in effect, be subsidizing the competition. As for the claim TopGolf would be a tourist attraction, to my knowledge, COMIDA has not done an independent analysis. Such an analysis should be able to tell us what percentage of customers are anticipated to come from outside the metro area, as well as their projected spending.

Fifth, despite their claims, the developers would likely build here anyway. They've already spent \$17 million acquiring land for this and other projects at CityGate, [according to the Rochester Business Journal](#). That's not including the money they have sunk into extensive litigation involving the site. I bet they're not going anywhere if we deny them these funds, and in fact, they've built facilities in [places that offered them nothing](#). What's more, TopGolf Calloway Brands brought in more than \$1 billion in revenue in the first quarter, so they don't need help from Monroe County taxpayers. Rochester is a big golf town, and TopGolf should be courting us, not the other way around.

Monroe County residents deserve to know the true benefits and costs of projects before teeing off on millions of dollars in tax breaks. For now, this incentive package is a swing and miss.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rachel Barnhart".

Rachel Barnhart – Legislator District 17