

Committee of the Whole (2) Report

DATE: Tuesday, May 9, 2023 **WARD(S):** ALL

TITLE: PICKLEBALL PROJECT UPDATE MAY 2023

FROM:

Vince Musacchio, Deputy City Manager, Infrastructure Development
Gus Michaels, Deputy City Manager, Community Services

ACTION: DECISION

Purpose

To provide an update on city-wide pickleball initiatives, including discussions with the Corte Group on a potential public-private partnership, to help address the growing demand for pickleball facilities.

Report Highlights

- Pickleball is an emerging sport experiencing a popularity boom in Canada, particularly among older adults and seniors.
- In April 2022 the results of the Pickleball Study were presented and supported by Council to continue incorporating pickleball as shared-use with tennis and to develop new dedicated pickleball courts city-wide based on identified provision standards.
- There are currently nine (9) shared-use (pickleball and tennis) courts open to the public city-wide on a first come first served basis.
- Council has approved development of eighteen (18) additional pickleball courts, including ten (10) additional shared-use courts and (8) new dedicated pickleball courts at two locations (Carrville Community Centre and District Park and Le Parc Park).
- Staff have had several meetings with the Corte Group to review their interest and proposal to develop a dedicated pickleball hub through a public-private partnership and recommend holding off on further discussions at this time.

Recommendation

1. THAT this report be received for information.

Background

On April 12, 2022, staff presented the results of the Pickleball Study which included a comprehensive community engagement strategy and public survey. The Study was initiated in 2021 based on recommendations of the 2018 Active Together Master Plan which identified pickleball as an emerging sport experiencing a popularity boom in Canada, particularly among older adults and seniors. A key component of the study was to review the feasibility of using existing tennis courts through re-lining to accommodate shared-use between pickleball and tennis.

On April 26, 2022, Council approved the staff recommendations to continue to incorporate pickleball as shared-use with tennis and to develop new dedicated pickleball courts based on the city-wide provision standards.

On June 28, 2022, Council approved converting two tennis court locations to dedicated pickleball courts at Le Parc Park and development of dedicated pickleball courts at the future Carrville Community Centre, Library and District Park. Staff also provided an update on various pickleball initiatives including an update on discussions with Corte Group. Council directed staff to continue discussions with the Corte Group and report back in Q1 2023.

Previous Reports/Authority

[Committee of the Whole \(2\) April 12, 2022 \(Item 5, Report No. 19\)](#)

[Committee of the Whole \(2\) June 21, 2022 \(item 29, Report No. 30\)](#)

[Committee of the Whole \(2\) September 20, 2022 \(Staff Communication 2\)](#)

Analysis and Options

There are currently nine (9) shared-use (pickleball and tennis) outdoor courts open for public use city-wide. Council has also approved development of eighteen (18) additional outdoor pickleball courts city-wide for both dedicated pickleball (8 courts) and shared-use with tennis (10 courts)

As supported by Council through the 2023 budget process, and to help the City meet growing demand for pickleball, staff are moving forward with the development of new pickleball courts city-wide. Capital development plans are being implemented to deliver additional pickleball courts on two separate streams – adding line work at existing tennis

courts for shared-use tennis/pickleball, and through the design and construction of dedicated pickleball courts.

The following table summarizes City of Vaughan outdoor pickleball court initiatives:

Location	# of courts	Type	Est. In-Service Date	Ward
Maple Community District Park	1	Outdoor shared use court	Existing	1
Maxey Park	1	Outdoor shared use court	Existing	2
Woodbridge Highland Park	2	Outdoor shared use courts	Q3 2023	2
Giovanni Caboto Park	1	Outdoor shared use court	Existing	3
Chatfield District Park	2	Outdoor shared use courts	Q3 2023	3
Carrville Community Centre, Library and District Park	4	Outdoor dedicated courts	Q3 2024	4
Le Parc Park	4	Outdoor dedicated courts	Q3 2024	4
North Thornhill District Park	1	Outdoor shared use court	Existing	4
North Thornhill District Park	2	Outdoor shared use courts	Q3 2023	4
York Hill District Park	1	Outdoor shared use court	Existing	5
Dufferin District Park	2	Outdoor shared use courts	Existing	5
Rosedale Park North	1	Outdoor shared use court	Existing	5
Promenade Green	1	Outdoor shared use court	Existing	5
Wade Gate Park	2	Outdoor shared use court	Q3 2023	5
Glen Shields Park	2	Outdoor shared use courts	Q3 2023	5
Total	27			

Implementing the above locations will increase the total number of pickleball courts provided city-wide to nineteen (19) shared-use pickleball courts by end of 2023 and eight (8) dedicated pickleball courts by end of 2024, for a total of 27 outdoor pickleball courts city-wide.

City currently offers indoor shared use pickleball courts at three (3) locations for registered and drop-in programs, increasing to four (4) with the addition the Carville location by end of 2024.

Recreational indoor drop-in programs are a first come first serve open forum for different skill levels to practice and participate in game play, with each session running between 1.5 – 2 hours. Currently there are three community centres offering ten (10) indoor shared-use courts and an additional three (3) courts will be offered at the future Carrville Community Centre planned to be completed by the end of 2024.

Location	# of courts	Type	Est. In-Service Date	Ward
Al Palladini Community Centre	3	Indoor shared-use court	Existing	2
North Thornhill Community Centre	3	Indoor shared-use court	Existing	4
Carrville Community Centre	3	Indoor Shared-use court	Q4 2024	4
Dufferin Clark Community Centre	4	Indoor shared-use court	Existing	5
Total	13			

Consideration of additional pickleball court locations for retrofit and new development be included in the scope of work of the Tennis and Racquet Sports Court Strategy planned by staff to be undertaken in 2023;

Staff will be undertaking the Tennis and Racquet Sports Court Strategy in 2023. The study will include a review of current tennis court inventory and utilization, current community tennis club operations, community interest and requests, and recommend accommodations to meet current and projected need for tennis and upcoming outdoor racket sports such as pickleball. The study would make recommendations for the City to implement new standards for a variety of racquet sports provisions and opportunities for private/public partnerships, accompanied by policies and procedures. Based on this study, future pickleball court locations will be determined as well as identify opportunities to provide locations where year-round access to tennis and pickleball courts through covered locations e.g. seasonal self supported dome.

Opportunities for residents to participate in indoor pickleball programs continues to be provided at Community Centres across the City. Seasonal evaluations of additional locations and variety in times are completed by staff to meet program demand and balance program space.

Recreation Services currently offers a variety of Pickleball programs that Vaughan residents can register for:

Learn to Play programs introduce players to the game of pickleball and teaches them the basic skills on how to play the game.

Pickleball Ladder programs are designed so that players engage in games with others of similar skill levels. This is a more competitive option for registered programming, where the ranking on a ladder is based upon the players winning percentage (the ratio of points won to total points possible). Players move up or down the ladder based upon their winning percentage. This is a great option for those looking to play at their level (beginner, intermediate and advanced).

These programs along with the addition of the aforementioned outdoor and indoor courts help supplement the growing demand for pickleball. Attachment 2 is a handout prepared by staff and will be used to inform the public through various City channels on the above initiatives.

Since June 2022, staff met with the Corte Group on several occasions to explore mutually beneficial opportunities, exchange information, discuss potential business plans, review current City levels of service, and potential sites

On February 3, 2023, Corte Group provided a written proposal (Attachment 1). Staff have reviewed the proposal and requested further detail and clarification from the Corte Group on aspects of the proposal. Below is summary of the proposal and staff review:

- 1- The proposal recommends providing a complex consisting of 20 indoor courts and 20 outdoor courts with associated indoor administration facilities. The total area for such a complex is in the order of approximately 8,000 square metres (85,000 square feet) excluding parking, access roads, pathways and other ancillary facilities.
- 2- The proposal suggests considering the Carrville Community Centre, Library and District Park as a potential location, utilizing both indoor and outdoor areas of the project site. The Carrville Community Centre, Library and District Park program and land area restrictions limit the possibility of introducing a pickleball complex. With construction one third underway and a plan for completion by Q3 2024, any changes of this magnitude would significantly alter project delivery dates and budget.

- 3- The proposal requires the City to be responsible for funding, developing and securing the land, facility and infrastructure for a proposed pickleball complex. Corte Group would operate the facility at a profit with the City benefiting from a portion of operational revenues and contribution towards recouping some of the City's capital investment. The land and capital investment costs are dependent on a feasible location. A high-level order of magnitude facility cost estimate would be in the range of \$10 to \$15 million excluding land costs, price escalations, tax, operational and administrative charges.
- 4- The proposal suggests that the Corte Group will operate the facility without any additional costs to the City. The expected annual operational expenses are estimated to be in the order of \$900,000/year covered by both membership and non-dues revenue. The financials on the City's ability to recover costs over a reasonable term and type of lease arrangement are not clear at this time. The feasibility of partnering on such an initiative would require a fulsome feasibility study, market analysis and risk assessment. While the probability of the risk of no real market for such an initiative is low relative to demand from local market as indicated by anecdotal evidence to date, a formal market demand analysis is a critical first step in assessing the market dynamics likely to impact the nature, timing, and success of this partnership as well as sensitivity towards changing trends. Furthermore, the proposal is not clear on the opportunities of offering public access to the facility or offering subsidized rates to Vaughan residents and how such allocations would be costed as part of a feasible business model.
- 5- The competitive risk with either new organizations or players formulating similar initiatives, existing institutions or private actors providing a similar offering, the launch of similar projects either by new or existing establishments or organizations locally is quite high. Further analysis would be required to review demographic and lifestyle profiles of potential users, features, amenities, and qualities likely to attract potential investors and buyers, and the type and likelihood of risks that may affect the financial feasibility of a potential investment and partnership. In the absence of a full-fledged due diligence study, an investment of this order of magnitude exposes the City to high risk.

Based on the above review, staff recommend holding off any further discussions with the Corte Group at this time. Alternatively, staff will consider the merits of developing a Request for Expression of Interest (RFEOI) related to pickleball facilities through a formal procurement process based on a defined scope and associated principles of a business plan. The RFEOI would provide the City with an indication of the current market interest to explore potential opportunities and to assess risks associated with capital investment

and/or partnership opportunities that are in alignment with City priorities and funding capabilities.

Financial Impact

Funding to implement the pickleball initiatives identified above have been included in approved Capital and Operating budgets utilizing a combination of Community Services DC funding for growth components and non-DC sources for park infrastructure renewal.

Operational Impact

Additional operating costs or revenues are anticipated as a result of these projects. Funding for maintenance and lifecycle repair/replacement will be identified for consideration in future budgets as required based on the in-service date(s) of proposed projects.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

None.

Conclusion

Pickleball is an emerging sport experiencing a popularity boom in Canada, particularly among older adults and seniors. The City is in the process of providing a total of 27 pickleball courts by the end of 2024. Staff also met and explored opportunities with the Corte Group to discuss their interest to develop a dedicated pickleball hub through a public-private partnership. Through the discussions and material exchanged and reviewed to date with the Corte Group, and given the order of magnitude investment required to consider this endeavour, staff recommend holding off any further discussion with the Corte Group at this time. Alternatively, staff will consider the merits in developing a Request for Expression of Interest (RFEOI) through a formal procurement process based on a defined scope and associated principles of a business plan.

For more information, please contact:

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Attachments

1. Corte Group Proposal - Vaughan Pickleball Facility Overview February 3, 2023
2. Pickleball Communications Handout

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