

Committee of the Whole (2) Report

DATE: Tuesday, April 12, 2022

WARD(S): ALL

TITLE: PICKLEBALL STUDY AND 2021 PILOT PROJECT UPDATE

FROM:

Vince Musacchio, Deputy City Manager, Infrastructure Development

ACTION: DECISION

Purpose

To present the Pickleball Study (the “Study”) prepared by staff and the outcome of the 2021 Pickleball Pilot project implemented on existing tennis courts last season.

Report Highlights

- The Study initiated through recommendations of the 2018 Active Together Master Plan to evaluate the feasibility of using existing tennis courts (re-lining) to accommodate shared use between pickleball and tennis.
- Pickleball is an emerging sport experiencing a popularity boom in Canada, particularly among older adults and seniors.
- An online survey was conducted between February 19, 2021 and March 15, 2021 with approximately 305 residents providing response to the survey.
- The Study identified seven (7) tennis courts in six (6) parks across the City to make them compatible for pickleball play for shared use.
- A pilot project was implemented for the 2021 playing season at these locations with positive feedback received overall
- It is recommended that pickleball continue to be provided as shared use on select tennis courts and that development of new stand-alone sites be considered in new park developments based on provision standards

Recommendations

1. THAT the Pickleball Study prepared by staff be received and that staff continue to incorporate pickleball as shared use with tennis and develop new dedicated pickleball courts based on the City-wide provision standards.

Background

Pickleball is an emerging sport experiencing a popularity boom in Canada, particularly among older adults and seniors. Pickleball is a paddleball sport, combining elements of tennis, badminton, and ping-pong. It is played with a paddle and a wiffleball (a plastic ball with holes) on a badminton-sized court approx. 20 feet by 44 feet (6m x 13m) with a slightly modified tennis net (approximately 50 mm lower in height). The sport can be played as doubles or singles and can be enjoyed by all ages and skill levels. With the number of older adults expected to increase at a faster rate than the overall population in the City of Vaughan, growing interest in pickleball has been noticed by staff. This has been amplified due to provincial COVID-19 pandemic gathering restrictions, temporary closure of municipal community centres, personal preference/perception of safety, the desire to be active, and the ability to play with more people outdoors.

The 2018 Active Together Master Plan (ATMP) was approved in principle by Council on May 23, 2018 and sets out a vision for a healthier and more mobile community. The vision, goals and objectives of the Study reflects the following recommendation set out in the ATMP:

38. Undertake a pilot project to evaluate the feasibility of re-purposing existing tennis courts (re-lining) to share use between tennis and pickleball.

The Study identifies suitable locations within municipal parks with existing tennis courts for pickleball lining, as well as establish a new level of service for outdoor facilities. The scope of the Study includes the following:

1. Measures interest and demand of existing user(s)/groups;
2. Identifies suitable locations that can be line painted with pickleball courts;
3. Establishes facility standards and specifications; and
4. Identifies a new service level provision for pickleball courts

The results of the Study serve as a business case for the implementation of dedicated pickleball facilities and establish suggested facility provision standards. The Study helps inform Recreation Services on the opportunities to establish a future Vaughan Pickleball

League and registered pickleball programs. Outdoor courts will complement current pickleball registered programs being offered by the City at Al Palladini Community Centre, Garnet A. Williams Community Centre and North Thornhill Community Centre.

Public Consultation

Staff solicited public input on the Study through an online survey. The survey ran from February 19, 2021 to March 15, 2021. Through the survey, participants were able to provide feedback on the following:

1. Familiarity and general experience with the game;
2. Facility preferences (e.g., collocation, dedicated facility, etc.);
3. Gameplay preferences (e.g., time/day of play, length of play, etc.);
4. Interest in participating in leagues or City run programs; and
5. Demographics and general location of interest

The online survey was advertised through City social media channels, digital signboards, Councilor e-letter and email distribution to key stakeholders. In total, the survey received positive responses, with 307 residents participating in the survey. Feedback was received from residents across the City with the highest concentration from the Thornhill and Carrville communities. Detailed findings of the survey is provided in the Pickleball Study report (Attachment 1).

Previous Reports/Authority

[Active Together Master Plan for Parks, Recreation and Libraries – 2018 Review and Update \(Item 1, Report No. 20 of the Committee of the Whole \(Working Session\), May 23, 2018\)](#)

[2018 Parks Redevelopment Strategy \(Item 2, Report No. 20 of the Committee of the Whole \(Working Session\), May 23, 2018\)](#)

Analysis and Options

A variety of site selection criteria help determine suitable tennis court sites for pickleball lining

Building upon the findings of the survey, background research on pickleball, and information collected through consultation user groups, staff considered the following site selection criteria to identify potential sites:

- A. User Base
 - i. Service area population
 - ii. Local interest
 - iii. Permitting restrictions

B. Existing Tennis Court Conditions

- i. Number of tennis courts
- ii. Surfacing material
- iii. Surfacing condition
- iv. Court wind exposure

C. Amenities

- i. Court lighting
- ii. Access to parking
- iii. Access to washrooms

Online Survey Key Findings

The online survey results collected a sample size of 307 respondents and general profile of pickleball users in the City.

Users:

- 305 individuals participated in the online survey;
- 269 (88%) of respondents are aware of or played pickleball;
- 219 (72%) of respondents are from Vaughan with rest from neighbouring cities;
- 214 (70%) of respondents are between the age of 35 to 64,
- 46 (15%) of respondents are above the age of 65;
- 183 (60%) of respondents identify as intermediate players;
- 183 (60%) of respondents play once or more per week for 1 to 3 hours;
- 244 (80%) of respondents are not part of a formal pickleball club; and
- 183 (60%) of respondents indicated an interest to be part of a Vaughan League.

Gameplay:

- Casual play is preferred followed by “city run drop in” program;
- An hour-long game allotment is preferred if shared with tennis;
- Suggestions on allowing longer time or to allow for a game to 11 points;
- Dedicated facility is preferred by players;
- Play time preferred over weekdays spread throughout the day with least preferred between 4 and 6 pm; and
- Preference over the weekend to play from the morning up to 4pm.

Facility feedback:

- High support with sharing pickleball with tennis courts.
- Equal mix of indoor and outdoor play is practiced.
- Preference to play at a facility fixed nets vs portable net.
- Respondents have equally played on both dedicated and shared courts;
- High support to participate in a focus group; and
- 125 respondents provided contact information for future updates.

Six (6) tennis court locations were short listed for the 2021 pickleball pilot project

The City currently has 58 tennis court locations. Following the review and input received through public consultation, six (6) tennis court locations scored the highest and had been identified by participants through the online survey. Through discussions with Recreational Services staff, one (1) of the locations at Dufferin District Park was lined with two pickleball courts in order to support the competitive pickleball ladders program held over the summer of 2021.

The six (6) locations recommended for pickleball lining include (refer to Attachment No. 1 for Pickleball Location Map):

	Location	Ward	Community	No. of Courts
1	Maple Community Park	Ward 1	Maple Community	1
2	Maxey Park	Ward 2	Woodbridge Community	1
3	Giovanni Caboto Park	Ward 3	Woodbridge Community	1
4	North Thornhill District Park	Ward 4	Carrville Community	1
5	York Hill District Park	Ward 5	Thornhill Community	1
6	Dufferin District Park	Ward 5	Thornhill Community	2
	Total Courts			7

The seven (7) selected courts were lined by Parks, Forestry & Horticulture Operations staff between May 2021 and June 2021. Selected courts also included courtesy signage to advise users of the Tennis/Pickleball shared use, a brief description of the pickleball sport and department contact information for additional information.

Programming

These seven (7) courts are expected to be used throughout the season and will require minimal maintenance beyond existing service levels for existing courts.

The use of the courts and any resulting conflicts due to shared use will be monitored by staff. Should an increase in conflict of use be noticed through an increase use of the courts, consideration may be given to the development of a self-regulated booking systems. Examples include additional instructions on self-organization rules which could be supplemented by booking notice boards. The City will continue to offer indoor and outdoor pickleball programming which include learn-to-play pickleball workshop, competitive pickleball ladders program for older adults, and is considering a Pickleball League in 2022.

Service Levels

Based on comments received from user groups and a general review of comparable facilities throughout the GTA and beyond, the following level of service is recommended for Pickleball Courts planning and implementation:

Standard Level of Service: It is recommended that dedicated outdoor Pickleball Courts be offered as part of the facilities to be considered in the future as part of park programming to serve new growth areas or redevelopment of existing parks as guided by the Park Redevelopment Strategy. The following are to be considered when planning and implementing Pickleball courts:

1. Courts are to be develop in pairs;
2. Courts are to adopt provincial game standard dimensions;
3. Courts to include fixed pickleball net equipment;
4. Courts to include perimeter fencing and entry gates;
5. Court surfaces are to be painted acrylic on suitable hardscape;
6. Court lighting to be provided on a case-by-case basis;
7. Court signage to include courtesy and game rules; and
8. Due consideration is made on potential noise nuisance when locating courts.

Purpose-built pickleball courts provision level at a City-wide will be determined based on the outcomes of the pilot study and future development on a case by case basis. However, it is recommended that moving forward where three or more tennis courts are being provided through new parks or park redevelopment, that one of the courts be considered for purpose-built pickleball courts with the aim of rolling courts in the initial stages equally throughout Vaughan's communities. This would translate to providing in the initial stages seven (7) pairs of purpose built pickleball courts by 2031 achieving a target provision level of 1 court per 30,000 residents (based on a population forecast of 424,500 by 2031). A future level of service will be reviewed and refined concurrently with the implementation of the pilot program.

The provision of pickleball facilities may be continued to be addressed through refurbishment and lining projects on existing courts. Additional pickleball courts can continue to be provided on a case-by-case basis through the lining of existing tennis courts, in pairs at a minimum.

Enhanced Level of Service: It is recommended that items associated with higher capital and maintenance costs may be considered through sponsorship or donations from an affiliated organization or through special funding or grants, which could include:

1. Wind screens; and
2. Notice board

Financial Impact

The capital and operating costs to implement Pickleball Courts will be determined through future capital projects and reviewed through future capital budget requests.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

None

Conclusion

A public consultation process was undertaken to assess potential locations for pickleball courts within neighbourhoods across the City. Through the evaluation and public engagement process, seven (7) existing tennis courts were lined for pickleball courts as a pilot project in 2021 and will continue to be monitored for use by staff.

Staff recommend that the findings of the Pickleball Study be used to guide the implementation and capital budget planning through future park development or redevelopment opportunities.

For more information, please contact: Michael Habib, Acting Manager, Parks and Open Space Planning, Extension 8092

Attachments

1. Pickleball Study – March 9, 2022

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