

Committee of the Whole (2) Report

DATE: Tuesday, March 18, 2025

WARD(S): ALL

TITLE: TENNIS AND PICKLEBALL STRATEGY

FROM:

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

ACTION: DECISION

Purpose

To provide Council with an overview of the Tennis and Pickleball Strategy, including proposed recommendations for implementation that address gaps, opportunities and priorities while identifying additional locations to support existing community tennis clubs in offering affordable programming options for Vaughan residents.

Report Highlights

- Staff initiated the Tennis and Pickleball Strategy to review existing racquet sport courts and provision standards to propose an approach to address growing and changing court use, demand and community needs, including community clubs.
- Requests to modify or upgrade existing racquet sport court provision and/or service levels are received on an ongoing basis from residents, interested service providers and potential partners and Community Service Organizations.
- The current state of racquet sport courts and provision in Vaughan was reviewed, and jurisdictional research on other municipalities was conducted and benchmarked against Vaughan to understand best management practices and illuminate gaps and opportunities for improvement.
- Extensive consultation with Community Service Organizations and two rounds of community engagement were completed to understand user preferences.
- Based on analysis of research and public consultation results, the Strategy provides 11 recommendations on key themes around tennis and pickleball court development, programming, community clubs, and court management.

Recommendations

1. THAT the Tennis and Pickleball Strategy, dated February 2025 (Attachment 1), be approved in principle;
2. THAT staff be authorized to implement the recommendations of the Tennis and Pickleball Strategy with funding for design and construction of state of good repair and capital projects prioritized through existing approved park renewal program budgets and submitted for consideration in future annual capital budgets;
3. THAT staff be authorized to extend permits for the use of courts at Matthew Park to the Vaughan Tennis Club and Dufferin District Park to the Thornhill Park Tennis Club in support of their expansion needs; and
4. THAT staff be authorized to negotiate the Lease, Permits, Construction and Maintenance Agreement with Thornhill Park Community Club for the design, construction, and maintenance of an air supported structure at Dufferin District Park tennis courts, and report back to Council as a soon as practicable.

Background

Overview of Tennis and Pickleball Facilities and Strategic Planning in Vaughan

The City of Vaughan faces growing and evolving demands for tennis and racquet sports courts due to population growth, increased urbanization and limited available land for new public parks and facilities. To address these challenges, the City must strategically allocate resources and prioritize initiatives based on identified gaps and opportunities to maintain service levels and meet the expanding needs of residents and community partners.

Existing Facilities and Expansion Plans

Currently, Vaughan has 134 tennis courts in 58 locations, 71 lit, and 63 unlit courts. Additionally, there are 32 shared-use pickleball courts at 16 locations and four dedicated lit pickleball courts. By the end of 2025, the City plans to add eight dedicated pickleball courts and five new tennis courts (three lit and two unlit).

The 2018 Active Together Master Plan established a tennis court provision target of one court per 5,000 residents in new residential areas, prioritizing upgrades to existing facilities and developing design guidelines to maximize court usage. However, the Active Together Master Plan does not address geographic gaps in tennis court availability or establish provision standards for pickleball, though it does recommend reviewing the types of courts provided.

Responding to the Rise of Pickleball

In 2021, the City initiated a Pickleball Study to address the sport's growing popularity. This led to a pilot project implementing shared-use pickleball lines at seven tennis courts across six park locations.

In April 2022, Council approved staff recommendations from the Pickleball Study to incorporate shared-use pickleball lines on tennis courts and to develop new pickleball courts using a city-wide provision standard.

In June 2022, staff presented a Pickleball Project Update to Council, outlining site selection criteria and planning considerations for new courts at Carville District Park (planned to open in Spring 2025) and Le Parc Park (opened in November 2024), adding eight dedicated courts.

In May 2023, Council received a presentation from staff on the status of pickleball courts rollout, which included development of the recommendation to issue the Request for Expression of Interest (RFEOI), and received direction to explore the development of a Pickleball Hub in Vaughan.

Community Service Organizations and Court Access

Two Community Service Organizations (CSOs) operate volunteer-led tennis programs in Vaughan: the Thornhill Park Tennis Club and Vaughan Tennis Club (formerly Kleinburg Tennis Club). Both clubs have reported a need for expanded access to courts to accommodate increasing membership demand.

Beam Group Study and Service Enhancements

In September 2023, the City retained consultant Beam Group to conduct a comprehensive study of racquet sport provision levels and court facilities (Attachment 1). The study aims to:

1. Address diverse resident needs, from beginners to competitive players.
2. Develop service levels for outdoor court infrastructure.
3. Identify optimal locations for future outdoor court development.
4. Maximize the use of existing outdoor court infrastructure.
5. Enhance programming for tennis and pickleball where needed.
6. Support community clubs and identify partnership opportunities with tennis and pickleball organizations.

Exploring Partnerships for Tennis and Pickleball

In October 2023, the City issued a Request for Expression of Interest (RFEOI) to formalize potential partnerships for a dedicated pickleball hub, following Council's

direction to explore pickleball provision partnerships opportunities. A total of five proposals were received by Procurement Services in response to the RFEOI. Based on the information received through the RFEOI process, there is minimal market interest to invest in developing a pickleball hub of a minimum of 12 courts and associated facilities. Rather, the interest seems to be in partnering with the City to manage and operate a facility, once one is developed by the City.

In June 2024, staff received a letter from the Ontario Tennis Association (OTA) confirming an interest in partnering with the City to develop a Provincial Tennis Training Centre at NMRP. The proposal includes approximately ten indoor and ten outdoor tennis courts with an air supported structure (bubble) to provide year-round programming, training facilities and administrative office space. Staff are in discussions with the OTA to explore the proposal in detail under Council direction.

Previous Reports/Authority

[Active Together Master Plan \(2018\)](#)

[Pickleball Study and 2021 Pilot Project Update](#) Item 5, Report No. 19, of the Committee of the Whole (2), which was adopted without amendment by the Council of the City of Vaughan on April 26, 2022

[Pickleball Project Update](#) Item 29, Report No. 30, of the Committee of the Whole (2), which was adopted without amendment by the Council of the City of Vaughan on June 28, 2022

[Pickleball Project Update May 2023](#) Item 9, Report No. 23, of the Committee of the Whole (2), which was adopted without amendment by the Council of the City of Vaughan on May 16, 2023

Analysis and Options

An extensive public consultation process was conducted to shape the strategy, engaging 1512 participants over two phases.

Phase One (November 2023):

This phase gathered high-level public preferences and insights into how Vaughan residents access racquet court infrastructure and programming. A mix of in-person and online engagement were used to maximize accessibility, including an online survey, five pop-up events, and an online focus group session. Participation: 1022 individuals

Phase Two (April and May of 2024):

This phase deepened understanding of residents' needs and provided detailed feedback on potential options, including choices and trade-offs. Engagement methods included an online survey, two in-person open house events, six online focus group sessions. Participation: 490 individuals

Throughout the study, Vaughan Tennis Club and Thornhill Park Community Club were consulted regularly to gather ongoing feedback and ensure they were informed of the strategy's progress.

Additionally, a jurisdictional review was conducted, analyzing nine municipal tennis and pickleball strategies and policies from Ontario, Canada, and international municipalities to identify best practices and benchmarks for recommendations.

Court Usage Data Collection

Data was collected at nine tennis court locations through in-person observations and 19 tennis court locations through self-reported online/on-site submissions. This methodology informed several recommendations and provided scalable insights for future park redevelopment projects.

The strategy includes 11 recommendations under four key themes of Court Infrastructure, Racquet Sports Programming, Community Clubs Support, Court Management System.

Recommendation 1: *Update levels of service for outdoor courts*

- Key minimum service level updates for new or upgraded tennis and pickleball courts at neighborhood and district parks have been formalized in the report which include: number of courts per location, setbacks, seating, shade, and wind mitigation.

Recommendation 2: *Upgrade existing tennis courts and build new dedicated and shared-use pickleball facilities*

- Maintain the existing tennis provision target of **1 tennis court per 5,000 residents** in new residential areas.
- Introduce a pickleball provision target of **1 court per 5,000 residents** in new residential areas.
- Prioritize developing **dedicated pickleball courts** west of Highway 400. Two locations have been identified:
 - **Sonoma Heights Community Park (2 to 4 courts) - Ward 2**
 - **Matthew Park (2 to 4 courts) - Ward 3**
- Additional locations to be considered include Maxey Park and Chatfield District Park subject to further review.
- Park locations that should be prioritized to consider adding lighting, once they come up for renewal are Dufferin District Park, North Thornhill District Park, Brett Yerex Park, Komura Park, and Hawstone Park.

Recommendation 3 and 4: *Increase covered facilities and explore a Covered Hub Facility for Tennis and Pickleball*

- Raise Vaughan's covered court proportion from 3% to 10% by adding 10 courts within 10 years by partnering with non-profits and sport organizations, ensuring reduced rates and public access.

- Assess the feasibility of a covered hub with four tennis courts and 10 pickleball courts, requiring an estimated \$7 to \$8.5 million investment through partnerships.
- Prioritize accessibility, partnerships, and third-party operational management.
- Initial exploratory work has started through the Pickleball Hub RFEOI and will continue through separate discussion on potential partnerships at the North Maple Regional Park.
- Explore expanding Le Parc Park into a pickleball hub and feasibility of renovating the existing washroom building.

Recommendation 5 and 6: *Expand Beginner and Intermediate Programs*

- Continue investing in beginner and intermediate-level programs for tennis and pickleball.
- Pilot drop-in programs to assess demand.

Recommendation 7 and 8: *Support Existing Clubs and Enable New Community Clubs*

- Vaughan Tennis Club:
 - Address expansion challenges at Bindertwine Park by developing new courts at Saigon Park (4-6 years away) or other emerging future opportunities that meet location criteria and club needs. The park would be planned to allow for developing a future club house however alternative sources of funding outside development charges or taxation would have to be secured to implement.
 - A short-term solution is permitting up to two courts at **Matthew Park**.
- Thornhill Park Tennis Club:
 - Permit three courts at **Dufferin District Park** for winter use with a court cover structure under a negotiated agreement to determine parties responsible for capital cost sharing items, revenue sharing, lease and permitting terms, operating and maintenance responsibilities. Developing the tennis courts for a cover structure will consider future renovations and parking requirements of the Dufferin Clark Community Center and District Park.
 - Aligns with the target of 10% covered courts.
- Facilitate the establishment of new tennis and pickleball clubs to enhance programming access.
- Avoid overlapping with existing clubs and prioritize improving access in underserved areas.

Recommendations 9, 10 and 11: *Court Management Systems*

- Implement a 12-month court booking pilot using the PerfectMind system at four to six locations.
- Benefits include reduced wait times, optimized use, and valuable court use data collection.
- Encourage residents to report court conditions online through Service Vaughan to complement staff assessments.
- Deploy motion sensors at four to six pilot locations to gather data on court usage, complemented by in-person observations.

Refer to Attachment 2 for a map of key court investments based on recommendations 2, 4 and 7.

Financial Impact

The following recommendations will have a financial impact and commitment to be identified in future budget request. All other recommendations do not have financial commitments at this time.

Recommendation 2: Develop two to four pickleball courts at two locations west of Highway 400 (approximately \$550,000 per location) and light courts as they come up for renewal (\$75,000 to \$150,000 per location), funded via Community Development Charge reserves and submitted for approval in the 2026 annual capital budget.

Recommendation 7: Redirect approved Parks Infrastructure Renewal Program (PD-9582-22) funding to renew three courts at Matthew Park (approximately \$750,000) to advance providing Vaughan Tennis Club access to permit courts in the short term. Courts at Saigon Park and/or other suitable locations will be identified through future annual capital budget submissions funded via Community Development Charge reserves.

Recommendation 9: Implement court booking pilot using existing resources and systems with additional informational signage costs that can be absorbed by existing operational and capital funding.

Recommendation 11: Funding for sensor equipment (approximately \$15,000) will be identified in and submitted for approval in the 2026 annual capital budget.

Operational Impact

New pickleball courts will require maintenance needs which will be manageable within current resources. Extending court permitting for clubs will have minimal operational impact, while online booking and sensor pilots may require operational review prior to scaling citywide.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

None

Conclusion

Tennis and pickleball are vital to promoting active, connected communities in Vaughan. This strategy, backed by extensive public input and jurisdictional research, provides a clear roadmap to improve infrastructure, expand programming, support community clubs, and enhance court management. By implementing these recommendations,

Vaughan can meet current and future demands, ensuring these sports thrive and contribute to residents' health and well-being.

For more information, please contact: Stefan Tzianetas, Director, Facilities and Parks Delivery, ext. 8196.

Attachments

1. Tennis and Pickleball Strategy, Beam Group, February 2025
2. Key Court Capital Investments Map

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