

Seattle Parks & Recreation Outdoor Pickleball Study Online Open House

Wednesday, March 30, 2022
Zoom (Virtual)

Project Manager + Project Website

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<https://www.seattle.gov/parks/about-us/projects/2021-2022-outdoor-pickleball-study>

Meeting Notes

Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) is currently conducting an outdoor pickleball study to respond to the explosion of pickleball and high demand for the sport. As part of the public engagement process, SPR hosted an online public meeting on March 30, 2022. There were 130 participants, and the notes below are a summary of the questions received throughout the meeting.

Where additional content or corrections have been included since the meeting took place, that is *indicated in italics*.

Meeting attendees also participated in an online poll, the results of which can be found at the end of the meeting notes.

Define immediate, mid, long planning timelines:

1. Immediate – This summer 2022 for dual striping.
2. Mid – Depends on the context, if it is a conversion than SPRC can do resurfacing and fencing in 1-2 years for court conversion and additional dual striping.
3. Long term – dedicated facilities are 5-10 years depending on timeline for funding but depends a lot on the site too. Both conversion and dedicated courts, depend on the site conditions.

Are indoor and covered/dedicated courts being considered?

We are not looking at indoor courts right now. As we look at potential sites for dedicated courts, covered courts are something SPR would consider. Because pickleball courts require less area than tennis, it costs less to cover the courts.

Is there anything being done to mitigate or address pickleball noise, especially in courts in residential areas?

There are no plans to mitigate per se; but we would look at proximity to residences as we look at specific courts for potential pickleball use. We would avoid noise impacts, if possible, but there are a lot of park activities that cause noise and it is nice to live by a park; so there's a balance pros and cons. *Mitigation is something SPR might look into on a project-specific basis, though.*

What's the timeline for resurfacing and maintaining tennis courts from SPR? And is this posted online/publicly available?

We do have a program for this; it is not very well funded now, but we are working to increase resources for this through the park district funding planning process we're going through now. With more funding for this program, it would increase the rate at which we resurface courts and create a more reliable schedule that we could post. Right now, we can only afford 2-3 sites per year at most.

Re: the discussion of converting tennis courts to pickleball. Are you considering converting other impervious surfaces to pickleball?

We don't have as many basketball courts as tennis courts, and they don't take up as much space, so the feedback we've received from the pickleball community is that they are less desirable because you can't fit as many courts and the striping. *However, there are a few sites we are looking at in existing parking lots or derelict courts that could be candidates for conversion.*

Is there any consideration for how many people that can be accommodated in the court space? (suggesting that fewer tennis players can be accommodated in the space as pickleball players)?

Generally, this is a benefit of pickleball, but we wouldn't eliminate tennis courts for pickleball simply because it accommodates more people. We don't want to eliminate one sport, but rather maintain space for both sports to play within the existing systems.

What if the Seattle Metro Pickleball Association (SMPA) or other stakeholders could raise money for this program, would that change the timeline?

Yes. There are a certain number of conditions that go into the timeline regardless so some things wouldn't change (*i.e. planning, design, permitting timelines*), but often the thing that takes the longest is getting all of the funding together. If there is a combination of funding, that could make things go faster.

The 2:1 ratio on dual striped lines; can you speak to that and how we arrived at that?

Yes, this is something that we have looked at several times and gotten consistent feedback that it is far easier for players of both sports to see the lines and play with this approach. One of the other issues is consistent spacing; making sure courts that are spaced far enough from each other that if you have tennis on one court and pickleball on another that players wouldn't run into each other. We also need to make sure both sports work within existing reservation system to reserve courts (1:1 with each other so they don't overlap). *The other aspect of this that we must consider is that we don't have the capacity to develop and review court-specific layout plans for each dual striped court. Having a standard that can be implemented more universally will better enable us to deliver dual striped courts and lead to a more consistent product across the city.*

Can you speak to why the existing reservation system is a challenge and why there aren't any efforts to address those challenges?

Oliver will need to do more research on this and get back to folks. *See response below on page 3.*

Is the City doing anything to determine actual demand for each sport by facility beyond the public outreach?

Yes, we have been looking at data from reservation system. We've also been considering having people go out to do spot counts at different locations. We may do that this summer, but it takes more

resources. Those two approaches are on a quantitative level. Other information is through observations from field staff or program staff at Community Centers, but that information is more difficult to systematically collect and objectively compare.

Do you have anything to say about color of stripes? Could they be yellow, not purple or blue?

Had initially gone with the standard of USTA that they should be green. We changed last year to make them blue so that they would be more visible. The challenge of yellow is that it is close to the white lines of tennis, making it confusing for both sports.

Amy Lee Tennis + Tennis Center Sand Point at Magnuson – who paid for each?

Amy Lee is publicly owned and operated by SPR staff. Tennis Center Sand Point is entirely privately owned and operated and was privately funded. There is a long-term lease with the City for the land, but the building is owned by Tennis Center Sand Point [*this a correction of the response during meeting, which mistakenly attributed ownership of the building to the City*].

Reservations – has there been any thought given to dedicated play time for each sport?

There has been some thought given to that, it is being discussed internally.

Has any thought been given to adding pickleball to Magnuson and Amy Yee? (To the indoor facilities there)?

For the indoor facilities at Magnuson (Tennis Center Sand Point) that would be up to Tennis Center Sand Point.

At Amy Yee – that is not something that we are exploring currently. We know they feel like they don't have enough space for tennis currently. They are looking to expand and maybe if they are able to expand, they would add pickleball. *The courts at Amy Yee are also used for USTA tournaments, which cannot have dual striping for pickleball lines.*

Can you address the lack of pickleball representation on the Advisory Committee?

With 1-2 exceptions, all members of the advisory committee play pickleball but may not all have organized pickleball affiliations. One thing to highlight is that after doing the pilot striping program in 2017, SPR spent a lot of time talking with SMPA; they helped inform the 2019 pickleball study. And at that time SPR didn't reach out to tennis players. This time we wanted to talk with them as well since our plans will affect them. As we recruited community members for the Advisory Committee, we wanted to make sure that we had at least 2 sole pickleball players, 2 tennis players, and 2 people that played both sports. We've achieved that.

Can you speak to why the existing reservation system is a challenge? Why there aren't any efforts to address those challenges?

Generally, we do recognize that the reservation system can be challenging to work with for some users and acknowledge that feedback. For example, it is difficult for users to see which courts are reserved when. The court reservation system is part of an enterprise ActiveNet system that is used for reservations for SPR programming department-wide. The SPR system administrators receive this feedback and work with the vendor to make incremental improvements.

Regarding the 2:1 ratio, it is possible to use settings within the reservation system which would prevent a tennis court or pickleball court from being reserved if an overlaid court were already reserved for the same time. The challenges presented for reservations when the pickleball and tennis courts have a staggered asymmetric pattern in relation to each other have more to do with what happens on the courts.

First, it could allow reservations of a single pickleball court to block out two tennis courts if the pickleball court or run-out areas straddles two tennis courts. Then you have one user effectively paying the cost of renting a single pickleball court blocking out two tennis courts. The other challenge is that while these reservation rules can be made within the system, if there are pickleball courts adjacent to tennis courts such that their lines don't overlap but are too close to accommodate safe play on both, the "block" for the adjacent court will be unclear for those that want to show up as a drop-in on the adjacent court, which creates an opportunity for collision or conflict.

With a 2:1 ratio the relationship between reservations of tennis court and corresponding pickleball courts is very clear within the system as well as for users on the court.