



8 March 2022

To: Oliver Bazinet, Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR)
From: Andrea Petzel + Valerie Pacino, Broadview Planning
RE: Qualitative Analysis of Survey Feedback (revised)

To supplement close-ended questions in the 2022 Seattle Parks & Recreation Pickleball Survey (fielded from January 25 through February 11, 2022), respondents were provided three opportunities to provide open-ended responses.

- Overall, 3378 respondents engaged with the survey, which ultimately had a 75% completion rate. Among these:
 - 225 respondents provided an open-end response to the question, “How did you first become interested in pickleball?”
 - 111 respondents provided an open-end response to the question, “Why do you like to play pickleball?”
 - 1360 respondents provided an open-end response to the question, “Do you have any other thoughts or ideas to share about pickleball or tennis in Seattle?”

Responses were reviewed and common themes were identified during thematic analysis. These themes, as well as select supporting quotations (lightly edited for spelling and grammar), are included below.

Pickleball is a sport that...

...has been a cornerstone of people’s lives for a while.

- *Played it in the late 1970’s on Bainbridge Island.*
- *Began playing at Highline Athletic Club in Burien in the early 1970s.*
- *Played it as a child growing up in Seattle.*
- *Summer camp decades ago.*
- *Growing up here in Seattle, we played in school. We also played during summer. There was a basketball/pickle ball court there.*
- *Played in the early ‘80s then didn’t play for 35 years. Couldn’t believe the pickleball community that has developed; now I play 6 days a week.*

...found new players during the pandemic.

- *This biggest reason was seeing people playing and having fun during the pandemic. There was a consistent group. It helped me to not feel so lonely.*
- *Needed an outdoor activity when Covid started.*
- *Picked it up during Covid shutdown because it is easy to be socially distanced but also social.*
- *Switched from racquetball and squash during the pandemic.*
- *Covid: it’s a socially-distanced, safe sport. Transitioned from off the couch to active again.*

- *Allowed me to safely get exercise and social interaction during Covid isolation, even throughout winter.*

...people anticipate will continue to grow.

- *Pickleball is the fastest growing sport in the world, and every day more people pick up a paddle. Seattle, the birthplace of pickleball, is sorely lacking adequate pickleball courts to accommodate the demand. More courts in neighborhoods will allow pickleball to grow. It is a sport that can be played by young and old, all abilities, and is more social than most sports.*
- *Pickleball is growing so fast there is a real value to having more and better courts. The benefits to getting people moving are invaluable, and it's not just for the older folks!*
- *Pickleball is an extremely popular and accessible activity and what has prevented myself, and everyone I know who plays, from playing more is the availability of the courts.*
- *The future is pickleball.*
- *Pickleball is a growing sport for a reason - it's fun, accessible, and easy to learn. I'd love more courts in any way possible - dedicated or shared with tennis. I used to play pickleball on vacation because that is where we had courts. I know I will play more now with a new court near me in Laurelhurst, so I expect to play even more when the weather is nicer. Thank you for more courts!*
- *Pickleball is the fastest growing spot in the U.S. It's accessible to all age groups and physical abilities. People who have Parkinson's, people who have had strokes, people over 80 years old can play and enjoy it! It's very sociable and fun.*

... is great for the whole family.

- *Great active family game, even with reluctant teens. ;-)*
- *My husband told me it was something we could do together for the rest of our lives.*
- *My kid loves it, and I go to support him.*
- *Easier to play with my young kids.*
- *So fun, and the whole family likes to play.*

...builds community.

- *Meeting new people wherever I go...instant family everywhere!*
- *Recently moved to Seattle & wanted to find a "community."*
- *Building cultural connections in our communities is important now more than ever.*
- *It allows me to grow my social network of caring people, while we are also staying healthy and strong as we age.*
- *It has become one of my 'happy places' to be!*
- *Builds community – good social activity for all ages, all cultures, & all ability levels!*
- *Speed dating activity.*
- *I wanted to meet people as we were new to Seattle.*
- *I have seen & experienced very positive age & cross-cultural exchanges through this sport – tremendous for building a sense of community!*
- *Pickleball has changed our lives for the better, and for literally dozens of others that we know. We've met people from all ages, races, genders, political parties, sexual orientations, religions, etc....and we all bond, play, and laugh together.*
- *I'm delighted to see efforts being made to consider creating pickleball-centric facilities. This is truly a game changer. The whole community benefits. As more and more people look for ways to stay healthy, on-*

lookers get intrigued and want to join. It got me competing at 50 when I've never competed in any sport in my life.

...improves physical and mental health.

- *It helped me beat depression.*
- *Helped with weight loss.*
- *Reduces my anxiety.*
- *Retirement activity for physical health.*
- *I have lost 30 lbs and dropped my A1C from a 13 to a 6 since I started playing pickleball again.*
- *Discovered after a severe medical event to help my recovery.*
- *Thirty-four years ago, I needed physical activity after back surgery.*
- *My elderly mom started playing and it changed her social, physical, and mental health.*
- *Can play with limited mobility.*
- *It is a great way to get regular exercise, and I find hitting balls extraordinarily therapeutic!*

...is flexible, approachable, and fun.

- *I've been playing pickleball since I was 5 in my driveway. That's the beauty of the sport, you can literally setup a court ANYWHERE on pavement.*
- *Flexibility – you don't have to be on a team and show up at specified times.*
- *It is a great way to socialize, and the "drop-in" aspect of the game is so convenient.*
- *I can go anywhere and find players who welcome me to join in.*
- *Very approachable for all skill levels to play together.*
- *Fun! Ease of dropping in and out. Keeps me active & connected. Meet many wonderful people from across the communities. It is inexpensive!*
- *I can't physically play tennis anymore, but I can play pickleball. Plus, it's a drop-in sport that includes everyone at every level. No organization needed.*
- *It's easier to find players to play with than it is to find tennis players. You have to set up a tennis match; but you can just go to a facility that offers pickleball, and the players are very welcoming regardless of your ability.*
- *Pickleball is awesome. I have never seen such a vibrant sports community.*

...spans generations and builds inter-generational engagement.

- *Great way to meet community members and great fun for any age (I'm young and regularly get beat by 70-year-olds).*
- *Young and old play together, and it rocks!*
- *It's such a great sport for all ages and abilities! I have played with 80-year-olds and 14-year-olds. I love how social it is and how low barrier it is for people just learning.*
- *Pickleball is growing very fast, and it's lovely because so many generations can play together and socialize. :)*
- *A sport designed to allow people to remain physically and mentally active well into old age. I play alongside players from 9- to 90-years-old. My experiences show humanity in a positive nature. Skin color, ethnicity, sexuality, age, monetary standard, or status in the community has never become an issue in my several years of playing. From my perspective, no better way to encourage positive human interactions.*

...people are leaving Seattle to play.

- *There aren't any near us, we drive to Bellevue which is much further along with pickleball. Look to other cities for examples.*
- *Bellingham has a wonderful set of dedicated pickleball courts. How come Seattle doesn't know how to put that together? Pickleball is a wonderful social and sports activity. There is a network effect. You don't want to play by yourself. You want to create "hubs" where there is enough critical mass so you know you can find other people playing.*
- *I play up in Shoreview, and it is such a nice set of courts. Wish we had something similar.*

...can impact tennis culture.

- *Seriously, the pickleball players have no concept of how to share public courts. They seem to think that once they are on a court, they can stay as long as they want. At Miller, I constantly see pickleball groups with a "revolving door" of players coming and going, which monopolizes the courts for several hours. One jerk who had been playing for well over two hours wanted to have a physical fight with me when I told him it was past time for him to give up the court. I don't have a problem with the sport. I have a big problem with the rude behavior of the pickleball community.*
- *Rules or etiquette of courts written and posted for Pickleball. Find some players hog the courts and /or refuse to let waiting players "circle" in.*
- *I think promoting pickleball is great, as long as it's not at the expense of tennis facilities or programs. Tennis is extremely popular, as evidenced by the outside courts being full in good weather. They support a very diverse set of players (age, gender, income, race, neighborhood). Also, these courts enable our low-income youth to play and who may be working toward a college scholarship. At the same time, pickleball is growing in popularity for good reasons. Do the right thing: don't pit them against one-another. Build dedicated pickleball courts as an immediate priority.*

...conflicts with tennis, but both sports share a mutual demand for more, and better court resources.

- *We need more high-quality tennis courts (indoor and outdoor) with lights.*
- *Tennis is my top priority and I don't want to see current courts turned into pickleball courts.*
- *Please don't let pickleball interrupt tennis. It's hard to get courts as is.*
- *Seattle has far more demand for public (and private) tennis courts than currently exist. It is critically important to not displace any existing tennis courts use for pickleball and to build additional courts for pickle ball.*
- *Tennis has exploded in the last few years, and it is often impossible to get a court, especially in the rainy seasons but even outdoors in sunny weather. The outdoor courts/nets are deteriorating badly and have not been maintained, especially since the pandemic started. Please put money into maintaining/upgrading tennis courts for tennis players (and adding lights/cover to courts like Amy Yee, as promised years ago), and give pickleball their own courts in or near community centers or parks.*
- *Tennis and tennis court availability has continually been subjected to competition and opposition in the city of Seattle from other pursuits such as bicycle hockey (Cal Anderson Park!), dog walkers seeking enclosures, soccer players who like low nets, skate boarders, roller dancers, and now pickleball people. Tennis can only be played on a dedicated tennis court. All these other pursuits and pastimes can occur anywhere, on any hard surface area or fenced area, outdoors or indoors. In my 16 years of living and playing and working in tennis in the Seattle area, I must say that Seattle has utterly failed the tennis community.... It's a shame, really. Help protect and grow the future and integrity of tennis as a sport. Tennis and pickleball are separate and should never meet on the same court.*

- *There is such a small quantity of tennis courts in the city currently. They also need to be resurfaced as well. It seems other cities seem to allocate the proper resources for nice tennis courts. Please prioritize making pickleball only courts. Maybe reuse basketball courts or old parking lots or just make a pickleball facility.*
- *I think dual striping is workable for the scattered neighborhood courts that are in ones/twos throughout the city. Lower Woodland should be kept as the premiere outdoor tennis-only facility and maintained better. A separate premiere pickleball-only facility would be a good idea.*
- *Pickleball players need their own courts in Seattle. There is already a great deal of contention over tennis courts between tennis players and pickleball players. The tennis courts are already over capacity even without pickleball players using them. Tennis players are waiting for a court sometimes 3- to 4-parties deep per court, especially in the summer, not being able to get a court till time till after 9pm if they are lucky.*
- *There are barely enough tennis courts to accommodate tennis players. With the rise of pickleball popularity, it is becoming increasingly hard to play tennis. High school coaches have to convince pickleball players (and sometimes tennis players) that we have reservations, and they cannot play. It makes for an awkward and sometimes heated situation. More courts city-wide would allow for more tennis and pickleball play. Tennis and pickleball are life-long sports and should be prioritized to meet Seattle's population needs – however they should be considered separate and not share every court space.*
- *As a tennis coach, it's hard to find courts because they're often taken by pickleballers. I think pickleball is great, and we should definitely have more lines on our public courts, but we also need more dedicated pickleball areas to not take up tennis courts!*
- *It takes five minute to learn and play pickleball. Tennis takes more time and skill to develop. My wife and I have spent over 25 years each developing out tennis game only to lose courts to a sport it takes five minutes to learn. Not fair.*

...conflicts with tennis, because tennis players find dual-striped lines and noise from pickleball distracting.

- *Pickleball lines on tennis courts are distracting – for both types of players.*
- *It's difficult to play tennis with pickleball because of the noise.*
- *Please stop ruining tennis courts with pickleball lines.*
- *If more pickleball courts are needed, they should be purpose built: the noise of pickleball is a major nuisance and distraction to tennis players.*
- *Stop re-striping tennis courts with pickleball lines! Have you ever played competitive tennis? Do you have any idea how annoying & frustrating it is to call a ball in or out when you have extra lines for pickleball? You're ruining tennis for those that really enjoy the sport.*
- *Blue on blue pickleball lines on outdoor courts shared with tennis are extremely difficult to see.*
- *Must be separate from tennis. Too noisy.*
- *Please, don't do dual stripes on the tennis courts. It is very distracting and ruins the game.*
- *I strongly oppose dual-striped pickleball/tennis courts. Tennis is defined by the ball going inside and outside of the line and the need to differentiate the two is vital to the game. Tennis players will find the new lines distracting, disrupting play.*
- *Trying to play tennis with pickleball right next to you is too loud & the stripes mess up the courts for tennis players – too confusing. PLEASE find another place to play pickleball!*
- *The tough thing about pickleball and tennis sharing court space is that the pickleball hitting and players tend to be loud (the spectators are even louder).*
- *Having lines for both sports is very distracting. Pickleball players are loud and distracting to tennis players and their ball is constantly on tennis court and need to restart point.*

- Pickle ball is *EXTREMELY* noisy, both because the paddle hitting the ball is noisy and because the players are yelling all the time. Tennis players *HATE* playing near pickleball courts, and nearby neighbors hate them too. Build pickleball courts but isolate them from ALL non-pickleball players.
- Pickleball is lessening the quality of tennis. Lines on tennis courts are horrible. Noise of rackets hitting balls is obnoxious.
- Too dangerous having to watch the ground for multiple boundary lines.
- Being a former tennis pro I understand the debate of pickleball lines on tennis courts. I hate them as well, and it doesn't matter if I'm playing tennis or pickleball – it's confusing both ways.
- Dual striping ruins the courts for tennis. It is a confusing mess. Please do not do this.
- I'm a tennis player and pickleball is the *WORST*. Dual lines are distracting and fewer tennis courts are available. Please exile pickleball to a dedicated facility or area if humanly possible, as far away from tennis, make it Portland or Vancouver if you have to!

...needs supportive policy decisions from SPR to grow and thrive in Seattle.

- Improved reservation system:
 - Also a better reservation system! It's hard to figure out how to reserve the courts and sometimes people don't respect the reservations.
 - Reservations need to be more visible, not only after you select a time, we would schedule around existing reservations if we could see them.
 - Need to rethink reservation rules as well - tennis and pickleball are different sports and require different rules.
- Access to bathrooms, drinking fountains, bike parking facilities:
 - The court I use doesn't have a restroom or running water, just a Honey Bucket. Would stay longer and play more often if facilities were available.
 - Make sure there is water available because athletes get thirsty.
 - We play at Georgetown because we never have a problem getting the court. It's super loud there with planes and trains and the bathrooms are often unavailable.
 - All we need is a safe environment with clean bathrooms.
 - It would be nice to have bike parking facilities, including for e-bikes, near pickleball courts. We'd ride our bikes to courts.
- Options for pickleball programming/instruction through community centers or other venues:
 - I would really love to learn how to play and am hoping that Seattle Parks might consider offering free or low-cost introductory lessons for beginners.
 - Offer learn to play pickleball classes for all ages.
 - Thanks too for the beginner's program last summer at Bitter Lake. It was wonderful and really helped me to get started. I made long term friends and continue to play there as well as other places.
 - Kids' programs - get them started earlier.
- Consult with communities before making changes:
 - Before the city starts to convert existing tennis courts (or even half-court basketball), please consult with the community in which these courts are geographically located. I have seen a lot of white privilege and entitlement show up in these conversations and many of the courts in question are in historically BIPOC communities. The city needs to honor the community's needs over pickleball needs.

Respondents were asked to provide responses to which courts they play pickleball (or tennis) most often, and which courts they prefer

At which Seattle Parks & Recreation facility do you play pickleball most often?



