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TO	Community Services Committee	
DESTINATAIRE	Comité des services communautaires	
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FILE NUMBER	ACS2025-RCF-GEN-0003	
SUBJECT	<b>Outdoor Tennis and Pickleball Strategy</b>	
OBJET	<b>Stratégie du tennis et du pickleball extérieur</b>	

## **PURPOSE**

This memo provides information to the Community Services Committee on the Outdoor Tennis and Pickleball Strategy developed by the Recreation, Cultural and Facility Services (RCFS) department and consultation with community stakeholders.

## **BACKGROUND**

The continued popularity of tennis, coupled with the increased popularity of pickleball, has significantly increased the demand for outdoor courts throughout the City of Ottawa. As these sports continue to grow, effective management of court spaces is essential to ensure an enjoyable experience for residents.

The City currently operates over 315 outdoor tennis and pickleball courts, including combination courts (shared tennis and pickleball lines), single sport courts and municipal membership club courts. Public courts are outdoor courts that are free and available to all residents and may also be rented to individuals and groups on a limited basis. Municipal membership clubs operate tennis and pickleball courts at City parks on behalf of the City through recreation service delivery agreements, with tennis or pickleball players paying a fee to use club courts and to receive club benefits and privileges. The rising demand for pickleball courts highlights the need for standards that support pickleball growth while sharing space with tennis in both existing and future court locations.

In October 2021, City Council approved the Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan (PRFMP), which highlighted the need for additional outdoor tennis and pickleball courts. The plan identified the need to build 24 new tennis courts and 39 new pickleball courts, including shared courts, by 2031 in order to maintain the approved service levels for a growing population. Additionally, the PRFMP recommended creating a comprehensive Outdoor Tennis and Pickleball Strategy.

Strategy development focused on identifying criteria important to both the community as well as tennis and pickleball clubs and players. The final strategy addresses known issues such as noise concerns, creating design and location guidelines which will support both sports. The strategy benefits both outdoor tennis and pickleball by providing standardized best practices to maximize shared court use and meet the growing demands of both sports.

## **DISCUSSION**

The *Outdoor Tennis and Pickleball Strategy* (Document 1) is the product of extensive benchmarking, consultation and engagement with a wide range of partners, including municipalities across Canada, residents, municipal tennis and pickleball clubs and local sport associations. The strategy reflects and balances the priorities of these groups, outlines considerations to assess user experience on an ongoing basis and includes mechanisms to gather input for selecting future court locations.

Prior to developing the strategy, City staff identified noise concerns as a key consideration for supporting the growth of pickleball. The distinctive sound of paddles striking pickleballs can reach pitches that are not typically encountered in tennis, potentially disrupting residents in close proximity to shared courts. To address these concerns, City staff engaged BAP Acoustics Ltd., Canadian leaders in pickleball noise mitigation, as technical advisors. Their report, *Noise Planning Guidelines for Outdoor Pickleball Courts: City of Ottawa* (Document 2), has been referenced and utilized to establish best practice court setback distances, ground type considerations, and more.

### **Public Engagement**

Engagement opportunities included an online Engage Ottawa survey from October to December of 2023, and virtual consultations in December 2023, with participation as follows:

- 127 participants in virtual consultations
- 1,125 survey responses received.

Engagement results were shared through Engage Ottawa in the *What We Learned* report (Document 3) and laid the foundation of the strategy's key objectives.

Staff then shared a draft Strategy on Engage Ottawa for public feedback from February 11 to March 4, 2025. A virtual consultation was held on February 25 with tennis and pickleball clubs to review the draft strategy. Based on feedback from club representatives and the 39 emails received through the project inbox, the strategy was updated to include:

- court measurement specifications and a standard double pickleball court layout;
- specification that tennis club applications for court conversions will be considered upon request, as opposed to the bi-annual review for public courts, and

- clarification that court setback distances are subject to the existence of sound barriers, advances in noise reduction technology, and changes to pickleball paddle and ball materials.

## **Key Strategy Objectives**

1. The final strategy will serve as reference for current operations, as well as future development, and meets the following objectives: **Provide safe, equitable and accessible outdoor tennis and pickleball courts for public recreational use.**
  - Outdoor drop-in and club-operated tennis and pickleball courts must follow the City's Equity and Diversity Policy and are open to all.
  - Public courts are available on a first-come, first-served basis.
  - Exclusive rentals are allowed but are limited to 50% of available court time and space.
  - Established standards for lighting, fencing, netting, and surface materials for safety and accessibility.
2. **Design and location guidelines to support future courts.**
  - Established double court configurations for both sports, with flexible options for single/multi-sport facilities.
  - Combination courts will be the standard, where feasible, to maximize use.
  - Requests for public court conversions and/or additions of pickleball lines will be reviewed semi-annually, while club requests will be accepted at any time.
  - Established best practice of north-south court orientation to reduce sun glare.
  - Formalizes public consultation requirements for new park developments, including setback considerations.
3. **Establish noise mitigation guidelines for pickleball courts.**
  - BAP Acoustics Ltd. provided expert noise mitigation guidelines.
  - Setback distance requirements vary based on court size and surrounding terrain.
  - Recommended court placement near natural barriers and softer ground where possible.
  - Hours of play to be indicated by signage.
  - Specified need for community engagement for remedial planning.
  - Noise barrier evaluation will be conducted on a case-by-case basis, as required.
4. **Inform operational decisions related to Municipal Tennis Club Agreements**

- City staff will work with the club when there are court conversion requests, including public notification and engagement.
- Next phase will review club membership models and court maintenance/lifecycle renewal for both clubs and public courts.

### **Considerations for further development**

Through the strategy's consultations and engagement, residents identified additional opportunities to further improve the City's outdoor tennis and pickleball courts. In response, the project team has committed to evaluating and updating the following components as a second phase of the strategy.

1. Municipal tennis and pickleball clubs continue to be a priority for the department. Staff will work with clubs to update the existing municipal tennis and pickleball club model to reflect current trends and further support clubs in their operations.
2. The project team will collaborate with Public Works and Asset Management to reassess and update maintenance and lifecycle renewal guidelines for outdoor tennis and pickleball courts.

### **Conclusion**

Staff will post the final strategy to Ottawa.ca and the Engage Ottawa pages. Strategy guidelines will be implemented in all future and current court development, followed by the initiation of phase 2.

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CC: SLT

### **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

Outdoor Tennis and Pickleball Strategy

What We Learned Report

BAP Acoustics Report