



City of Ottawa

**2025 Outdoor Tennis & Pickleball
Strategy**

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Executive Summary

The Recreation, Cultural and Facilities Services (RCFS) department's supply of outdoor tennis and pickleball courts is comprised of both drop-in and club-operated courts. The demand for outdoor pickleball courts is steadily increasing across Ottawa, while outdoor tennis courts continue to be well utilized. Pickleball and tennis share many of the same outdoor court standards and therefore, often share court space. This has presented unique challenges for tennis and pickleball players and the surrounding community. As such, an Outdoor Tennis and Pickleball Strategy has been developed to establish clear guidelines and protocols for seasonal outdoor tennis and pickleball courts throughout the city of Ottawa.

The RCFS department continues to prioritize healthy communities and partner relationships. The Outdoor Tennis and Pickleball Strategy will ensure that communities across Ottawa have access to safe, equitable and inclusive tennis and pickleball courts, while strengthening relationships with municipal membership clubs. Further, the strategy will serve as a reference guide for future management, oversight, and development of all new drop-in and club-operated outdoor tennis and pickleball courts, or courts undergoing transformative renovations or upgrades, such as a court expansion.

The objectives of the strategy are to:

- Provide safe, equitable and accessible outdoor tennis and pickleball courts for public recreational use.
- Design and location guidelines to support future courts.
- Establish noise mitigation guidelines for pickleball courts.
- Inform operational decisions related to Municipal Tennis Club Agreements.

*Indoor tennis and pickleball courts are out of scope for this strategy.

Introduction

Background

Pickleball is the fastest growing sport in North America and demand for outdoor court space is steadily increasing across the city of Ottawa. A need for guidelines and protocols for outdoor tennis and pickleball courts was identified to provide clarity and consistency for the public and City staff.

Currently, the RCFS department has an existing inventory of 315 outdoor tennis courts and 172 outdoor pickleball courts (shared tennis and pickleball courts are counted as one tennis court and one pickleball court). The Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan has identified the growth of both outdoor sports by 2031, with 24 new outdoor tennis courts and 39 new outdoor pickleball courts.

There are currently 24 tennis and pickleball clubs, which operate 117 tennis and

pickleball courts at City parks on behalf of the City of Ottawa through recreation service delivery agreements. Nineteen (19) clubs provide tennis-only facilities, 4 provide both tennis and pickleball facilities and 1 club has pickleball-only facilities. Tennis or pickleball players must meet membership requirements to play at outdoor clubs.

Development of the Strategy

Methodology

The Outdoor Tennis and Pickleball Strategy was developed by the City of Ottawa’s RCFS Department in consultation with municipal tennis and pickleball clubs and residents. As Canadian leaders in pickleball noise mitigation research and data, BAP Acoustics Ltd. were engaged as technical advisors. They conducted extensive research to guide the City of Ottawa’s direction to manage noise from outdoor pickleball play. Pickleball noise mitigation guidelines outlined below are supported by the results of the *Noise Planning Guidelines for Outdoor Pickleball Courts: City of Ottawa* report.

The strategy’s development process was inclusive and collaborative, with engagement taking place from October 27 to December 31, 2023. Residents were invited to participate through an online survey and through virtual consultations.

Public Engagement Key Facts:

- 1215 survey responses were received:
 - 1191 English
 - 24 French
- 127 people attended three consultations.
- 88 comments were submitted through email.

Full engagement results are available in the Outdoor Tennis and Pickleball Strategy’s *What We Learned* report.

Key Considerations:

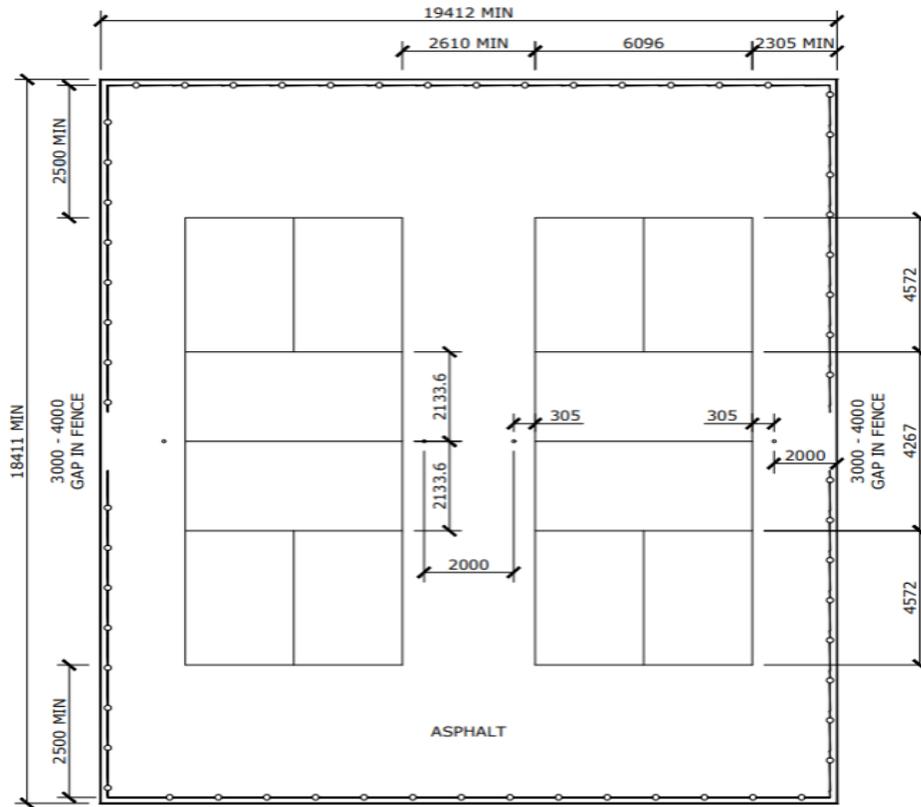
The following guidelines are applicable to all City of Ottawa drop-in and club-operated tennis and pickleball courts.

1. Outdoor Court Minimum Standards

a) Future Outdoor Court Standards

Outdoor Court Measure	Standard
Court size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tennis: double courts (1x2 grid) • Pickleball: double courts (1x2 grid)

Figure 2: Standard double pickleball court layout. Measurements are provided in millimetres.



b) Future Outdoor Court Locations

As per the *Park Development Manual*, the City of Ottawa will undertake public consultation for all new park development sites. The recommended pickleball court setback distances will be included in the public consultation process and any reductions will be shared for consideration.

Court Orientation: Where possible, courts should be laid out as close to a north-south orientation as possible to mitigate the impacts of sun glare on players.

c) Adaptations and Conversions of Existing Public Tennis Courts

Requests to add pickleball lines on an existing outdoor public tennis court or convert an existing outdoor public tennis court to a pickleball court will be considered by the RCFS Department on a semi-annual basis, in March and September. Club requests will be considered at any time.

The Department will assess all requests, and those deemed advantageous and consistent with this strategy will be posted on Engage Ottawa. Community Associations

and Ward Councillors will be notified, and residents will be invited to submit comments to the Department. Neighbours residing closer than the pickleball noise mitigation setback distances (Figure 3), or that border the proposed site, will also be consulted.

The Department will work with the Community Association and/or the Ward Councillor to approve or deny the request.

2. Outdoor Pickleball Noise Mitigation

Noise from pickleball has been a source of complaints due to the loud and repetitive sounds of the ball hitting paddles. The City of Ottawa engaged a third-party consultant to conduct research and develop a comprehensive acoustics report to support a data-informed approach to pickleball noise mitigation. The following strategic guidelines are best practices that support the results of the “*Noise Planning Guidelines for Outdoor Pickleball Courts: City of Ottawa*” report.

In accordance with the City of Ottawa Noise By-Law (2017-255), the Ontario Ministry of Environment NPC-300 Guidelines, and Health Canada’s “*Guidance for Evaluating Human Health Impacts in Environmental Assessment: NOISE*”, the following guidelines aim to reduce noise from pickleball to a maximum 50dBa for nearby residents.

a) General Considerations

When considering a site for outdoor pickleball courts, the following will be considered:

- **Setback Distance:** Setback distance between the courts and the nearest residential property line will typically be the primary determinant of whether the introduction of a pickleball court will result in noise complaints.
- **Ground Type:** Preference should be given to sites where there is acoustically soft ground (e.g. grass, foliage) between the pickleball courts and bordering residential property lines.
- **Terrain obstacles:** Wherever possible, pickleball courts should be sited to take advantage of naturally occurring terrain obstacles (e.g., locating the pickleball courts behind a berm). Conversely, situations should be avoided where residences or the upper-level dwellings of high-rise buildings will overlook the courts.

b) Best Practice Court Setback Distances

Setback distances to meet the maximum 50 dBA limit apply to the perimeter of the court lines to ensure measurements are consistent from court to court.

Figure 3 includes setback distances applicable to the following scenarios:

- No noise mitigation and intervening terrain between the courts and residences is acoustically hard (e.g., pavement).
- No noise mitigation and intervening terrain between the courts and residences is acoustically soft (e.g., grass, loose soil).

The following chart (Figure 2) identifies best practice distances from court lines to the nearest residential property line to mitigate noise from pickleball courts to reach 50dBa. The distances are based on current technology and are subject to review.

Figure 3: Noise Mitigation Setback Distances to reach 50dBA

Number of Courts	Setback Distance (m)	
	Hard Ground	Soft Ground
1	45	35
2 (1x2 grid)	65	50
4 (2x2 grid)	90	75
6 (2x3 grid)	105	85
8 (2x4 grid)	120	90
12 (3x4 grid)	160	115
14 (2x7 grid)	175	120

c) Limited Pickleball Hours of Play:

Signs will be used to enforce time of day conditions on existing outdoor pickleball courts. The RCFS Department will engage with the community in remedial planning as needed and final decisions will be made under delegated authority.

d) Noise Barriers

Noise barriers are not part of the City of Ottawa’s base level of service provision and will only be considered on a site-by-site basis.

3. Outdoor Court Equity, Diversity and Access

a) Equity and Diversity

The City’s outdoor drop-in and club-operated tennis and pickleball courts shall abide by the City of Ottawa’s Equity and Diversity Policy to “foster an environment that respects people’s dignity, ideas and beliefs, thereby ensuring equity and diversity in employment

and ensuring customers and others have access to City facilities, products, services, and grants as defined by human rights legislation”.

The City of Ottawa’s tennis and pickleball courts are open to all and most courts are wheelchair accessible. We welcome every member of the community to use the facilities.

b) Outdoor Public Court Access

Consideration	Standard
Outdoor Public Court Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor public courts are accessible on a first come, first served basis. • General hours of operation are from 5am to 11pm unless otherwise posted (see <u>Parks and Facilities (By-law No. 2004-276)</u>) • All new or reconstructed courts will include paths with grades not exceeding 5%.
Exclusive Use Rentals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusive use rentals are available through tennis@ottawa.ca • Rentals cannot exceed 50% of the court space available in a park to leave space for drop-in usage. • Rentals cannot exceed 50% of available time to leave space for drop-in usage.

4. Outdoor Drop-In Court Equipment / Infrastructure

Equipment / Infrastructure	Standard
a) Court Lighting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drop-in court standard: No lighting. <i>*Lighting on new drop-in outdoor courts may be considered based on the site-specific needs and considerations.</i> • If installed, all lighting would have met illuminating Engineering Society of North America (IES) standards at time of installation. • Lighting must be Energy efficient.
b) Tennis/Pickleball Nets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tennis net (914 mm high) standard on all tennis and combination courts • Pickleball net (860 mm high) on all single sport pickleball courts • Nets to be replaced on an as-needed basis.

c) Court Fencing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Material: black vinyl chain link 6 gauge • 3,050 mm in height with two 3,000 mm – 4,000 mm openings at centre of court (in line with nets)
d) Court Surfacing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surface material: 50mm HL3 Fine Asphalt PG 58-34 SP 9.5B over adequate subgrade based on soil conditions.
e) Court lines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tennis line painting: white, 50mm in width • Pickleball line painting: yellow, 50mm in width
f) Practice Walls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing practice walls will be repaired when possible. • No new practice walls are planned to be installed.

5. Outdoor Drop-In Court Conditions of Use

Conditions of Use	Standard
Wait Procedure	Racquets and paddles hung on peg boards located outside of courts in order of arrival.
Maximum Play Time	<p>Players waiting: 30-minute maximum play time.</p> <p>No players waiting: Unlimited play time.</p>

Next Steps

The City of Ottawa will follow the key considerations as outlined in this report for all existing and future outdoor drop-in tennis and pickleball sites. This report will inform decisions regarding club-operated tennis and/or pickleball clubs.

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. The tennis and pickleball membership club model.
2. Outdoor tennis and pickleball court maintenance and lifecycle renewal guidelines.

We look forward to strengthening relationships with municipal clubs and continuing to offer safe outdoor recreational spaces for residents through these additional considerations of the Outdoor Tennis and Pickleball Strategy.

References

BAP Acoustics Ltd (2024). *Noise Planning Guidelines for Outdoor Pickleball Courts: City of Ottawa*

City of Ottawa (2024). Outdoor Tennis and Pickleball Strategy: "What We Learned" Report. Available at engage.ottawa.ca/tennis_pickleball

City of Ottawa (2024). *Maintenance Quality Standards*

City of Ottawa (2021). Parks and Facilities By-law No. 2004-276

City of Ottawa (2021). *Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan*

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City of Ottawa (2018). *Equity & Inclusion Lens Handbook*.

City of Ottawa (2017). *Park Development Manual, Second Edition*.