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Facilities Approach to Tennis and Pickleball

As the national governing body for the sport of tennis in Canada and in concert with feedback from municipal recreation professionals, Tennis Canada is putting forth a Statement of Guidance for the development, expansion, and renovation of public facilities and spaces related to tennis and pickleball. This guidance is presented to aid municipal decision-makers within facility operations in Parks and Recreation departments in planning, utilization, and construction of public courts for tennis and pickleball use. Tennis and Pickleball participation is growing in popularity amongst Canadians throughout the country and we recognize that both sports have enthusiastic supporters advocating for their respective sport; therefore, we hope that these key insights and solutions will assist municipal recreational leaders in determining the best way to support the growth and development of these sports.

PARTICIPATION DATA INDICATES THE FOLLOWING:

- Tennis¹: One half of Canadians state they have some interest in tennis, and one in ten are very interested, making tennis one of the most popular sports in Canada. In 2023, nearly 5 million Canadians claim they played tennis in the past year.
- Pickleball²: An estimated 850,000 to 900,000 households have at least one pickleball player and 45% of those households play at least four times/week.

There are emerging trends around public court usage and near-term solutions being tested by municipalities coast-to-coast-to-coast as evident through a study Tennis Canada conducted in 2022. Some of the key learnings and best practices from this research are shared below.

1. 2023 Canadian Tennis Participation and Interest @CWooo
2. Pickleball Canada, January 2022



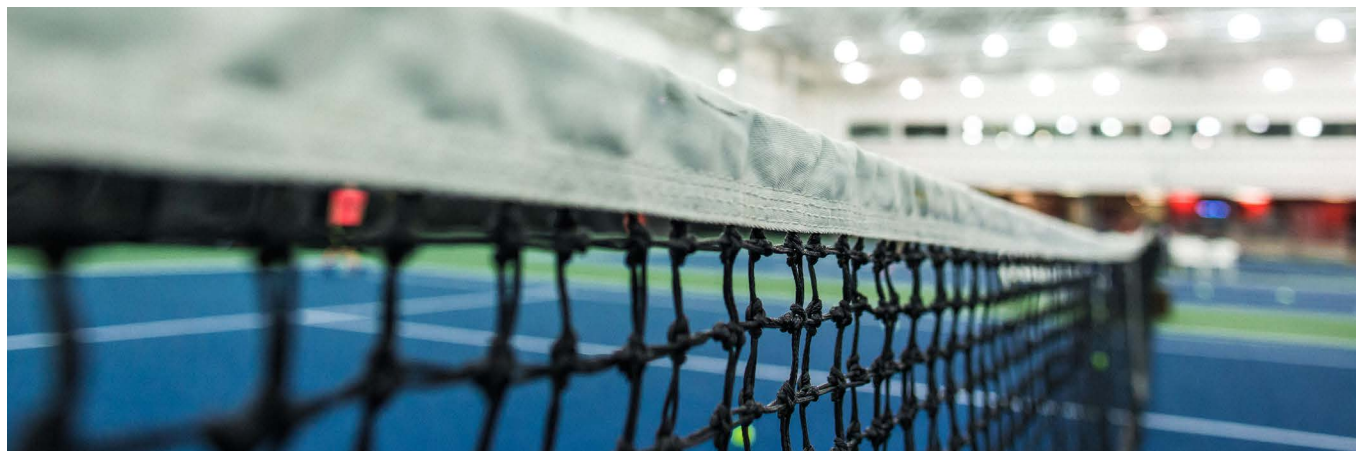


Photo Credit: Audric Gagnon

Key Learnings and Best Practices

Tennis Canada embarked on research in 2022 into the largest 100 municipalities from coast-to-coast to better understand the evolution of both sports as it relates to public court usage and municipal planning.

Our findings indicate first and foremost that a multitude of approaches by municipalities have been implemented and tested as near-term solutions specifically around court usage. Some approaches have worked, and some have not. Some examples of key learnings and best practices by municipalities in how best to support the growth of recreational tennis and pickleball in Canada are highlighted below:

1. Best practice approach is to preserve tennis courts for tennis participants and build and/or allocate dedicated courts for pickleball.
2. Municipalities reported either reversing their decision to have tennis and pickleball participants share the same courts by adding different colour lines to an existing tennis court for pickleball, or at minimum, many are re-examining this approach at the time the research was conducted because it led to dissatisfaction amongst participants from both tennis and pickleball.
3. Tennis nets are not appropriate for recreational pickleball, and municipalities reported nets being damaged as a result, which is leading to increasing costs to municipalities.
4. Blended lines (i.e., pickleball lines being added onto a tennis court for multi-use) are best when they are painted in a shade that is similar to the court colour.
5. Court usage is best managed by implementing court booking technology. This technology also provides municipalities with accurate sport participation data, which can better inform future planning.
6. 1:1 pickleball to tennis court conversion ratio is not the optimal solution for either sport.



Top Solutions

OPTION #1: SPORT SPECIFIC SITES

Preserve tennis courts for tennis and build dedicated new courts for pickleball.

Given the growth and popularity of both sports, the ideal solution to increased demand is the development and/or expansion of sport-specific public sites. The development of tennis and pickleball facilities as singular focused sport-specific sites and courts will provide optimum opportunity for use, harmony, and program/revenue generation for each sport that may be unavailable in shared-use scenarios. These facilities should be offered either as one central facility complex or as separate sport-specific developments to best meet the needs of the community. The goal is to ensure both sports have the infrastructure in place to maintain existing programs and play as well as allow for future growth (Examples 1a & 1b).



Example 1a : Rendering of a sport-specific site with playground incorporated



Example 1b : Sobeys Stadium, ON

OPTION #2: NON-TRADITIONAL SPACES

If sport-specific sites are not possible, both tennis and pickleball can be played and enjoyed in non-traditional spaces. Look at all hard surface areas for possible conversion, such as multi-sport court sites (Example 2a), concrete slabs (Example 2b), outdoor hockey rinks during non winter months, and/or vacant parking lot locations. When contemplating any type of conversion affiliated with public facility infrastructure, safety must be at the forefront of all considerations.



Example 2a : Pickelball court on a concrete slab.



Example 2b : Pickelball court on a multi-sport site.

OPTION #3: SHARED USE OF COURTS

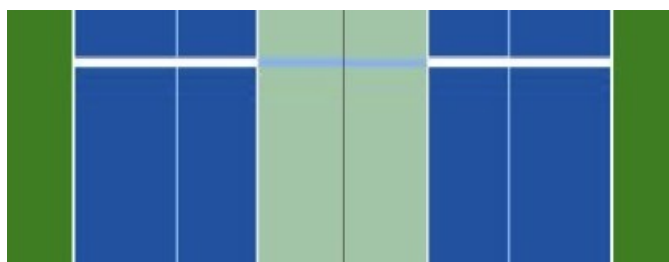
In the event that sport-specific sites and non-traditional spaces are not possible and all efforts to build dedicated pickleball courts have been exhausted, shared usage through blended playing lines on existing tennis and pickleball courts is advisable. This recommendation stands for sites with two (2) or fewer tennis courts. For sites with three (3) or more tennis courts, every effort should be made to utilize Option #1 or #2 due to the sustained growth and increasing public demand for both sports.

Recommended guideline when utilizing standalone pickleball courts for tennis play:

- Add blended tennis service box lines to pickleball courts for short court tennis play (Example 3a).

Recommended guidelines when executing blended pickleball lines at sites with two (2) or fewer tennis courts:

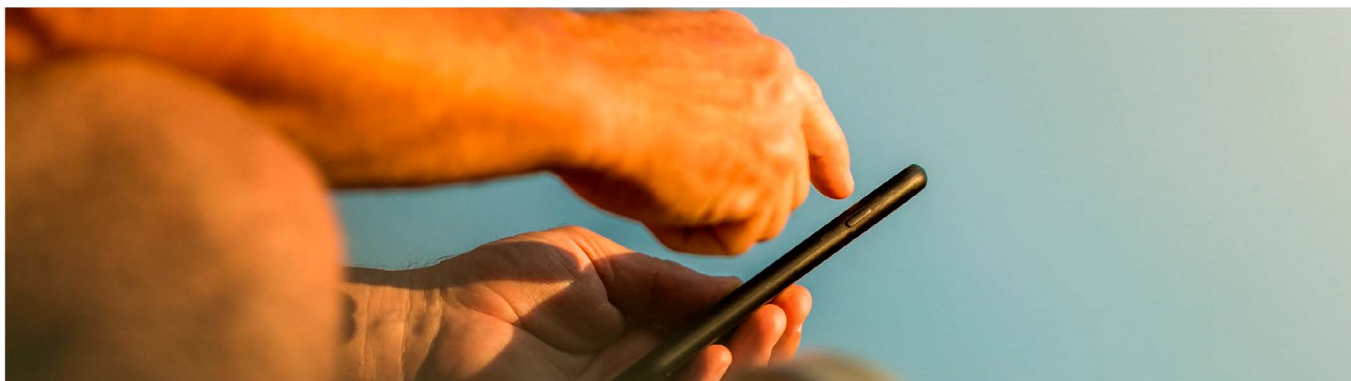
- Up to two pickleball court blended lines can be added to a 78' tennis court, one on either side of the net.
- Whenever possible, utilize a shared tennis service line or a tennis baseline with pickleball blended line.
- All blended pickleball lines shall be textured line paint that is a shade lighter within the same color family as the playing surface (Example 3b).
- Blended pickleball lines should terminate three (3) inches from the 78-foot court tennis lines.
- Blended pickleball lines should be 1 ½ inches wide.
- Utilize painters' tape to refrain from damaging the acrylic surface when adding temporary playing lines.
- Utilize portable pickleball nets to avoid damage that can be incurred when lowering tennis nets.



Example 3a : Pickleball court with blended tennis service box lines in light blue.



Example 3b : Blended lines in the same color family as the playing surface.



Additional Recommendations

UTILIZE AN ONLINE COURT BOOKING SYSTEM TO MANAGE COURT USAGE.

The benefits to a municipality of using an online court booking system are two-fold:

- 1) An online court booking system allows the municipality to organize court usage time and provides a beneficial service to participants who wish to book court time in advance. When courts are used for both pickleball and tennis, a booking system will help to manage the variance in match lengths between pickleball and tennis and the variance in player rotation frequency, reducing conflict and ensure optimal court usage.
- 2) The data generated from this type of tool will better inform municipal staff of exact court usage for future planning purposes.

Many established tennis clubs in Canada currently utilize a court booking system to manage their businesses; therefore, this type of system has become an important piece of business technology for operating and organizing tennis. This technology can be used to organize both pickleball and tennis on public courts going forward. Tennis Canada has a partnership with an internationally recognized booking system called Clubspark. This system is currently widely used in leading tennis nations, like Australia, Great Britain, and the USA.

For additional information or to discuss projects before decisions are made regarding tennis and pickleball expansion and additions, contact the Tennis Canada Facilities Development for complementary consultative resources at www.tenniscanada.com/facilities-program/ or email facilities@tenniscanada.com

Disclaimer

This statement is for informational purposes only. This statement reflects Tennis Canada's view of best practices with respect to site development for tennis and pickleball courts in Canadian municipalities. It was authored after consultation with other organizations but reflects only Tennis Canada's views and the views of no other organization. Tennis Canada has tried to present the data contained herein accurately, but it has not been able to independently verify all information in each case. Municipalities are encouraged to seek additional information and expertise when making final decisions regarding the siting and construction of tennis and pickleball courts.

