

Report to Council



Date: April 17, 2023
To: Council
From: City Manager
Subject: Pickleball and Tennis Long Term Parks Planning
Department: Parks & Buildings Planning

Recommendation:

THAT Council receives for information, the report from Parks & Buildings Planning dated April 17, 2023, with respect to future strategy for outdoor pickleball and tennis courts within the city's parks system;

AND THAT Council directs staff to proceed with the design of both Glenmore Recreation Park and DeHart Park in accordance with this strategy.

Purpose:

To endorse the long-term parks planning strategy concerning outdoor pickleball and tennis court provision in Kelowna.

Background:

The sports of pickleball and tennis are easy to learn, fun to play and exceptionally social. These user characteristics have accounted for a dramatic rise in new memberships within both sports and retains active players that maintain their lifestyle well into their 80's and 90's, while simultaneously attracting younger enthusiasts to both sports.

Current recreational user demand surpasses the City's existing outdoor court inventory. Within the 2015 Kelowna Tennis Strategy, a standard of one public tennis court per 4,180 population was recommended which translates to 34 courts based on the 2021 census to meet the City's current needs but does not account for future use.

In Kelowna there are presently 12 existing pickleball courts and 26 existing tennis courts throughout the city's park system, along with a club operated tennis facility at Okanagan Mission Tennis. In addition, there are a minimum of nine new pickleball and three new tennis courts being added to our city inventory within the 2023-24 capital construction budget. Even with these additions, supply of courts will still not meet current user needs.

Pickleball

With our warmer temperatures, British Columbia has become a national 'hotspot' for pickleball, and the provincial association has witnessed a 600% increase in membership since its inception in 2017. At the end of 2022, the provincial association reported a total membership of 13,025 players participating in 82 affiliated and associated clubs including those established in Kelowna.

Pickleball Kelowna membership is currently held at 600, but their numbers are adversely limited by the lack of available court facilities in the city. Club registration for the 2023 season sold out within 15 minutes of its term opening and the club retains a waiting list of 100 people. Additionally, the pickleball clubs' membership is also limited in total available court hours as they must share with public use.

Tennis

The sport of tennis has experienced a 250% growth in frequent adult players over the past decade and a 300% growth in frequent players under the age of 12 (Tennis Canada). This resurgence in popularity is due in large part to the international success of young Canadian tennis players such as British Columbia's own Vasek Pospisil (from Vernon) or Calvin Thalheimer (and other high-level athletes here in Kelowna), as well as other prominent young Canadians like Bianca Andreescu, Francoise Abanda, Dennis Shapovalov, and Felix Auger Aliassime.

Discussion:

The increasing popularity and local growth in membership within the sports of pickleball and tennis is placing rising pressure on our current inventory to deliver further access to both outdoor and indoor courts that can accommodate tournament play, athlete development, as well as improved overall user experiences for the public. In direct response to these mounting user demands, a future court provision has been conceived to meet immediate and future growth needs for both sports that is aligned with the City's program delivery model, and includes centralized Feature Destination Courts and decentralized, neighbourhood-based Satellite Hub Courts.

Feature Destination Courts will allow the purposeful development of new and enhanced facilities at central locations within Kelowna. These courts would showcase better-quality court surfacing and key amenities such as shelters, washrooms, changerooms, lighting, and bleachers in addition to conformance to provincial sports association standards, dimensions and court quantities required for tournaments. The Feature Destination Courts are intentionally situated beside primary transportation routes, are close to nearby ancillary tourism services such as hotels, restaurants, stores, etc. which are crucial for national and provincial tournament consideration, as well as the provision of suitable transit facilities and proper on-site parking.

Feature Destination Courts are proposed at Parkinson Recreation Park for the sport of pickleball and Mission Recreation Park for the sport of tennis. The two central locations meet all stated criterion plus will benefit from shared amenities associated with future sports and recreation facility developments in our 10-year Capital Plan, such as the CNC Expansion and Activity Centre projects in Mission Recreation Parks or the Parkinson Recreation Park redevelopment. Perhaps most importantly, new and enhanced pickleball and tennis courts at Feature Destinations will help to attract better coaches to the City of Kelowna and in this manner also enhance the development of our local athletes.

It is of note, that Kelowna has lost provincial and national hosting opportunities as the city does not meet the minimal numbers of sport courts to be considered for further pickleball and tennis tournaments. Others in the valley have been quick to capitalize on the opportunity to host these types of sporting events.

Satellite Hub Courts are intentionally decentralized to best serve the citizens of Kelowna at the community or neighbourhood park-level through increased hours of court availability that does not compete with local clubs for outdoor court time. The supportive amenities at these locations will be more limited than those found at Feature Destinations to promote short-term and informal use.

Existing pickleball and tennis courts already in our city inventory will comprise much of the proposed Satellite Hub Courts but will be balanced with newer courts developed in upcoming community and neighbourhood parks, such as those proposed in the Glenmore Recreation Park and DeHart Community Park projects for 2023-24. Furthermore, the city's annual Parks Operations budget allows existing local courts to be modernized through court resurfacing or twinning opportunities such as the resurfacing of Hartwick Park and Jack Robertson Park in 2023.

Currently, there are no indoor pickleball or tennis court facilities within the City of Kelowna system that provide year-round play for public or club use. However, the city continues to explore opportunities and partnership options for future developments. Any proposed indoor facilities would be aligned with the City's program delivery model.

Conclusion:

The City of Kelowna recognizes the growing user demand within the sports of pickleball and tennis in British Columbia, as well as our evident local need for more provisions for outdoor courts. Our long-term parks planning initiative to create Feature Destination Courts and Satellite Hub Courts throughout the city is an immediate response to this call-to-action. Furthermore, the planning initiative will allow incremental growth and expansion for both new and existing pickleball and tennis facilities that are coordinated with existing capital and operational funding.

Internal Circulation:

Active Living & Culture
Community Communications
Infrastructure
Parks and Building Planning
Parks Operations
Partnerships
Financial Services.

Considerations applicable to this report:

Existing Policy

Parks Master Plan: Phase 1

The first phase of the *Parks Master Plan: Our Kelowna - As We Play* serves as a framework to help guide Council and city staff in making long-range park planning, capital development or rehabilitation project decisions to sustain Kelowna's portfolio of parks, trails, and natural areas over the next forty years. This

phase emphasizes the historic development of parks within Kelowna, plus current recreation trends, best practices, and vision statement with key park implementation goals and objectives.

Kelowna Tennis Strategy – provides recommendations on the number of outdoor tennis courts required to meet local community needs as well as an approach to determining the implications of the City's participation in a project to develop an indoor tennis facility.

Kelowna Community Sport Plan – a comprehensive document that provides a framework for the local sport system to guide decision-making and provide direction for strategic leadership.

The Indoor Recreation Facility Strategy - is intended to bring clarity to the City's thinking about the future provision of indoor sport and recreation infrastructure and establish rationale for why and how the City will make investment decisions about important community assets.

Considerations not applicable to this report:

Legal/Statutory Authority:

Legal/Statutory Procedural Requirements:

Financial/Budgetary Considerations:

External Agency/Public Comments:

Submitted by: S. Johansson, Parks and Open Space Planner

Reviewed by: R. Parlane, Parks & Buildings Planning Manager

Approved for inclusion: D. Edstrom, Divisional Director, Partnership & Investments

Attachment 1 - Pickleball and Tennis - LT Parks Planning Initiative Presentation

cc: Divisional Director, Corporate Strategic Services
Divisional Director, Partnership & Investments
Acting Divisional Director, Financial Services
Divisional Director, Planning & Development Services