

Date: March 8, 2022	Originator's files:
To: Chair and Members of General Committee	
From: Jodi Robillos, Commissioner of Community Services	Meeting date: March 30, 2022

Subject

Pickleball in the City of Mississauga

Recommendation

That the Corporate Report entitled "Pickleball in the City of Mississauga" dated March 8, 2022 from the Commissioner of Community Services be received for information.

Executive Summary

- The 2019 City of Mississauga Parks & Forestry Master Plan guides the City of Mississauga in delivering future parks and forestry services including outdoor recreation facilities over a five year period to the year 2023. This plan includes recommendations to increase opportunities for residents to participate in pickleball.
- This report provides an overview of the progress that has been made towards these recommendations, updates on additional initiatives planned and/or underway including improvements identified by stakeholders that can be made over the short term.
- Planning for the next Future Directions cycle is anticipated to begin in late 2022 and will present an opportunity for a more in-depth review of current practices and additional community engagement to set the direction of the future development and investment in both outdoor and indoor sports facilities, programs and services.
- The City is committed to ongoing meaningful engagement with residents and stakeholders to guide planning, implementation and continuous improvement for ongoing work to support the growth of Pickleball.

Background

Pickleball is a sport for all ages that combines many elements of tennis, badminton and ping-pong. It is played indoors or outdoors with a paddle that is about twice the size of table tennis paddles and a perforated plastic ball. The sport first started appearing in Canada in the early 1970's and is considered to be one of the fastest growing sports in North America.

The 2019 City of Mississauga Parks & Forestry Master Plan guides the City of Mississauga in delivering future parks and forestry services including outdoor recreation facilities over a five year period to the year 2023. Steady progress has been made towards the two key recommendations to increase opportunities for residents to participate in pickleball:

- Recommendation 30: Include pickleball lines where feasible when public tennis courts are being re-surfaced. New tennis courts should be evaluated to determine opportunities to jointly meet tennis and pickleball needs.
- Recommendation 31: Consider opportunities to provide a dedicated outdoor pickleball facility. A location should be chosen that can accommodate between six and eight pickleball courts. Provision of amenities over and above court conversions should be jointly funded by the City and pickleball organizations that would use the complex.

The City currently provides a mix of public access tennis courts and club courts, with a growing number of courts being lined for pickleball play. The first pickleball lines were installed on public tennis courts in 2016 at Mississauga Valley Park. Tennis and pickleball court locations are viewable on "Find a Park" at Mississauga.ca. (See attached map in Appendix 1).

	Lined for Pickleball & Tennis	Lined for Tennis Only	Total Courts
Public Courts	36	46	82
Club Courts	8	60	68
Total	44	106	150

The clubs courts are operated by 18 non-profit community groups in accordance with the City's Community Group Registry Program (Policy 08-01-01) and through established Management & Operations Agreements. According to most recent membership statistics (2020), these clubs are serving a total of 4,656 members. While community tennis clubs have been encouraged to consider incorporating pickleball into their programs, the decision rests with each Club Board of Directors based on the authority granted through the Management and Operation Agreement. Currently three community tennis clubs can accommodate pickleball. Collectively 134 members of these clubs identify primarily as pickleball users in 2021: Sheridan Tennis Club (80/345 members); Meadowwood Tennis Club (40/240 members); Orchard Heights Tennis Association (14/329 members). Erin Mills Tennis Club, while having 2 courts lined for pickleball, do not currently have any pickleball members.

Additionally, through the efforts of Ward 9 Councillor Pat Saito, the City has also recently taken advantage of an opportunity to partner with the Peel District School Board to construct four (4) dedicated pickleball courts at the West Credit Secondary School in 2021.

The City contributed \$100,000 as partial costs for the construction of these courts via the Canada Community Building Fund in Ward 9. The Courts are owned and operated by the Peel District School Board (PDSB) however the funding agreement between the City and the PDSB allows for public access to the facility when school is not in session during weekends, evenings and summer. (CG 0365-2020).

Over the past two seasons, in a large part due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the City has experienced an increase in demand for many outdoor sports and activities including tennis, basketball and pickleball. With the increased demand over recent years, a decision was made to keep public courts open year round in 2020, continuing forward with future years.

Several initiatives have been implemented to increase access to the sport for Mississauga Residents. A summary of the recreational offerings is as follows:

	2015	2019	2021*	2022**
Drop In Activities				
Programs	2	74	67	118
Locations	1	8	9	9
Hours per Week	4	172	146	238
Registered Activities				
Programs	0	1	2	15
Participants	0	21	36	180
Locations	0	1	1	2
Hours per Week	0	2	4	15

*In 2021, programming was offered from July through to year end due to Covid-19 closures. Community centre locations included Churchill Meadows, Clarkson, Frank McKechnie, Huron Park, Meadowvale, Mississauga Valley, River Grove, South Common and the Mississauga Seniors' Centre

**2022 offering are estimated based on anticipated demand.

Further to the program offerings highlighted above, the City successfully implemented the Ontario Sport & Recreation Communities grant application in 2018 to offer a "no cost learn to play" program in collaboration with Pickleball Mississauga Association (PMA) and was proud to host the Ontario 55+ Games, which included pickleball and a legacy of equipment that continues to be used as part of City programming.

Comments

Planning for the next Future Directions Cycle will begin in late 2022 and will present an opportunity for a more in-depth review of current practices and additional community engagement to set the direction for the further development and investment in both outdoor and indoor sports facilities, programs and services. This process will delve deeper into future pickleball service level needs and will include the review of criteria and distribution across the City.

Several short term initiatives are also planned and/or underway that will continue to advance the recommendations in the current Future Directions Master Plan and support continuous improvement of the City's existing inventory of mixed public tennis/pickleball courts, the development of dedicated pickleball courts, indoor drop in and instructional programming and ongoing community engagement:

Continuous Improvement of Mixed Public Tennis/Pickleball Courts

Where feasible, pickleball lines have been added to public tennis courts when these courts have been re-surfaced and/or when new courts have been developed. This approach provides a relatively quick and cost effective way in a growing urban municipality to increase the availability of pickleball amenities for residents. It also provides the ability for residents to access the activity of their choosing at no cost without the need advanced coordination or administration. By the end of the 2021-2022 construction season the number of courts lined for pickleball will increase from 44 to 53.

The "Court Code of Conduct" states that "courts are available on a first come first serve basis" and that users are to "limit court time to 30 minutes of play if others are waiting". Signage outlining the court code of conduct has recently been revised (formerly the tennis court code of conduct) and installation is in progress. In addition, "reserve next" court signs are already being deployed with a universal logo capturing both tennis and pickleball racquets to reinforce and support the 30 minutes of play time and shared use (Appendix 2).

Feedback received by PMA and other court users indicate that it is challenging to accommodate mixed tennis and pickleball play at the same time, particularly during peak times, due to differences in court size, scoring systems and pace of play. Without precise user data, it is difficult to identify which courts may be suitable for repurposing or delineating separate areas or times for dedicated pickleball play without impact to other user groups including tennis players. This will be further assessed and evaluated through the master planning process.

A mixed multi-use court is preferred until the City is able to quantify the demands for outdoor tennis and pickleball more precisely and increase the supply of dedicated pickleball courts. In the meantime, the City will continue to encourage community tennis clubs to add pickleball lines and/or opportunities for dedicated pickleball play on club courts. Staff will also seek additional opportunities for shared use agreements with school boards to add pickleball lines to their tennis courts and make them available for public use.

Development of Dedicated Pickleball Courts

Other municipalities have been addressing the demand for pickleball by repurposing existing tennis courts and/or adding pickleball lines to existing tennis surfaces. Across Ontario, dedicated Pickleball facilities have been built in a growing number of municipalities including Hamilton, Kingston, Collingwood, Wasaga Beach, Hanover, Burlington, Oakville, St. Thomas and Whitby. There is also a growing private sector industry to deliver pickleball across the country. For example, within Mississauga, the Ontario Racquet Club has outdoor dedicated pickleball courts for their members.

Feedback previously provided by PMA has indicated a preference for dedicated outdoor public pickleball courts at a central location. A Downtown Parks Public Engagement process was initiated in summer 2020, presenting an opportunity to consider dedicated pickleball courts. The feedback gathered through this process along with the recommendations in the Future Directions Master Plan will inform the future development of three parks in the Downtown. Pending public engagement, the recommendations include:

- Zonta Meadows - eight dedicated public outdoor pickleball courts and one public tennis court lined for pickleball and related amenities including parking and washrooms.
- John “Bud” Cleary - one new public tennis court lined for pickleball.
- Future park at M City – amenities to be confirmed.

As part of the next steps to refine the plans and park designs there will be continued public engagement in 2022. Residents can be notified of future engagement opportunities by subscribing to news alerts on the project website. It is anticipated that these projects will be completed by the end of 2024.

In the shorter term one dedicated court is planned for Dellwood Park (Ward 1) and one dedicated court is planned for Serson Park (Ward 1) pending public process in 2022. Additionally, staff continue to assess opportunities for dedicated pickleball facilities as they arise, such as further partnerships with local school boards.

Growing Drop-In and Instructional Programs

As outlined above, there are several opportunities for residents to participate in unstructured drop in programs as well as instructional “Learn to Play” pickleball programs at various indoor facilities across the City. Staff continue to monitor participation trends for both drop-in and “Learn to Play” and plan to increase program offerings as users begin to return to facilities, expanding drop-in opportunities to evenings and weekends where possible and leveraging available space such as arena floors in the off-season.

Currently, the City does not offer outdoor pickleball lessons but this will continue to be evaluated on a seasonal basis. Community Tennis Clubs including Sheridan and Meadowwood offer outdoor pickleball lessons for members.

Individuals or groups interested may also request to permit gym space through our Recreation Customer Service Centre for dedicated, self-organized pickleball play. Registered groups in the City's Community Group Registry Program are eligible to access space at a discount (i.e. the affiliated rate vs. resident rate).

Ongoing Community Engagement

Pickleball Mississauga Association (PMA) has been a registered Community Sport Provider in the Community Group Registry Program since 2011 and as of 2020, reported a membership of 309 with representation of Mississauga residents at 79%. They have been an active stakeholder in the development of City initiatives including providing input to the 2019 Future Directions Master Plan and ongoing feedback to staff as City-delivered programming continues to grow. A deputation was received by Council on October 13, 2021 by PMA that identified a number of items that they would like to see implemented by the City to accelerate and improve the provision of pickleball.

Recently, PMA has notified the City of their plan for a voluntary dissolution of the organization. A new entity, Mississauga Pickleball, is in development with a goal to establish a membership and resource base to operate as a community pickleball club in alignment with the City's Outdoor Tennis and Pickleball Policy (08-03-04).

Additionally, for community engagement purposes, the City will establish a Pickleball User Network including representatives from Mississauga Pickleball, community clubs offering pickleball, and other stakeholders and conduct regular engagement opportunities to support information sharing and inform decision making about City of Mississauga pickleball facilities, programs and services.

Engagement and Consultation

The City is committed to meaningful engagement with residents and stakeholders to guide planning, implementation and continuous improvement to support the growth of Pickleball.

As outlined throughout the report, PMA and other stakeholders have been engaged on key initiatives including the development of the Future Directions Master Plan, implementation of events and programming opportunities for residents, and to inform programming decisions. PMA has been a valued collaborator because of their expertise related to the technical aspects of the sport, for having a pulse on where the sport is going from the grassroots to the national level and for their leadership and support to engage residents and grow the sport in Mississauga. It is anticipated this type of proactive community engagement can continue through the proposed Pickleball User Network.

Financial Impact

There are no financial implications as a result of this report. Recommendations proposed can be accommodated within 2022 budgets.

Conclusion

The City strives to engage more people, more often, through programs and services that reflect our communities' need. The City continues to make good progress to advance the recommendations outlined in the Future Directions Master Plans to advance this vision. Relationships and collaboration with community organizations including Pickleball Mississauga Association is essential to continued progress and to inform continuous improvement and longer term planning for the City's parks and recreation facilities, programs and services.

Attachments

Appendix 1: Tennis and Pickleball Map

Appendix 2: Court Signage

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jodi Robillos", is written over a horizontal line.

Jodi Robillos, Commissioner of Community Services

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