

Pickleball Strategy

for Victoria,
Saanich, Oak Bay
and Esquimalt

February 2024

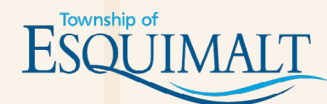


Table of Contents

1 Introduction	4	4 Designing Courts	31
1.1 Land Acknowledgment	4	4.1 Condition Considerations for Courts	31
1.2 Purpose	4	4.2 Considerations for Court Amenities	32
1.3 Process	4	4.3 Design Recommendations	33
1.4 Document Order	5		
2 Pickleball in Greater Victoria	6	5 Bookings, Allocation and Drop-in	37
2.1 Court Overview	7	5.1 Current Bookings & Drop-in Approaches	37
2.2 Pickleball in Surrounding Capital Regional District	9	5.2 Fees & Booking Platforms	40
2.3 Snapshot of Players in Greater Victoria	10	5.3 Engagement Feedback on Bookings, Drop-in and Club Block Booking	41
2.4 Challenges	12	5.4 Recommendations: Tiered Systems	44
3 Court Supply	13	6 Implementation	50
3.1 Supply & Demand Analysis	13	6.1 Funding	50
3.2 Addressing Noise through Supply	20	6.2 Conceptual Arrangements to Achieve Paths	51
3.3 Supply Recommendations	23		
3.4 Supply Options	30		

Executive Summary

The Pickleball Strategy for Victoria, Saanich, Oak Bay and Esquimalt provides guidance on managing the growth of the sport. This work is the outcome of collaboration between the City of Victoria and District of Saanich as major partners as well as the District of Oak Bay, and the Township of Esquimalt as contributing partners.

To inform the strategy, the project team undertook a public and stakeholder engagement, a supply and demand analysis, and reviewed examples from other cities. The objectives of the strategy are to meet the demand for pickleball players, to enhance play and resolve noise issues as well as to manage play times for bookings and drop-in which considers tennis and other park users.

The strategy also provides five conceptual paths illustrating different levels of service outcomes. The paths provide options to help future decision-making on building new courts, and decommissioning vs improving existing courts.

The Pickleball Strategy for Victoria, Saanich, Oak Bay and Esquimalt is intended to begin informing approaches in the 2024 season. Some actions are oriented towards the longer term.

A summary of recommendations is as follows:



A set of improvements to better manage play times between individual court booking, standing reservations for groups, and drop-in play.



A set of strategies to help municipalities add more courts to meet demand.



A set of recommended improvements to existing courts to enhance player experience.



A consistent approach to setback distances, and recommendations on what to do for existing courts that do not currently meet these setbacks.

1 Introduction

1.1 Land Acknowledgment

The Strategy acknowledges that the area under consideration is the territory of the Lək'wəŋən People, represented by the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations and the WSÁNEĆ peoples represented by the Tsartlip, Pauquachin, Tsawout, Tseycum and Malahat Nations.

1.2 Purpose

The Pickleball Strategy for Victoria, Saanich, Oak Bay and Esquimalt seeks to effectively manage the growth of the sport through the inventory of courts, their design and the allocation of playing times through bookings and drop-in. The inter-municipal approach to the strategy brings together the City of Victoria and District of Saanich as major partners as well as the District of Oak Bay, and the Township of Esquimalt as contributing partners to collaborate on solutions.

Pickleball's growth has been relatively recent and fast, which has made it challenging for municipalities to meet demand. With limited space, there are issues with sharing spaces with other sports (e.g., tennis on outdoor courts; badminton and other programming on indoor courts). There are also concerns about the noise from people living near outdoor courts.

The Pickleball Strategy for Victoria, Saanich, Oak Bay and Esquimalt provides a set of solutions that comprehensively address these challenges through consistency and structure that can evolve in the future. It is intended that the Strategy will be used as a reference resource by municipal staff and help to show how decisions fit within a larger coordinated effort.

Capital Regional District: The scope of this work does not extend to the entire Capital Regional District (CRD), which is the regional government for 13 municipalities and three electoral areas on southern Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands. It serves approximately 440,000 residents. For greater context, the Strategy notes the number of courts and the population of the CRD excluding the Southern Gulf Islands, Salt Spring Island, and Juan de Fuca.

1.3 Process

The Strategy is composed of the following elements:

- **Research and analysis:** the Strategy draws on best practices for building facilities and allocating play, recent studies and guidelines (e.g., acoustic analyses), and benchmarking inventories from other cities. The Strategy also analyses data provided by the Greater Victoria municipalities including booking data and information on courts. Below is a selected list of some of the documents used as references in the Strategy:
 - » Pickleball and Tennis: A Solution that Meets the Needs of Both Sports. Joint Statement from Pickleball BC and Tennis BC, 2021.
 - » Pickleball Noise Assessment. BC Recreation and Parks Association (BCRPA). February 2023.
 - » Finlayson Artificial Turf Field – Allocation Principles. City of Victoria.
 - » Saanich Guidelines for Distances and Mitigation Measures for Pickleball Courts.
 - » Whistler Pickleball Association. Master Plan for the Sea to Sky.
 - » Standards and Expectations for Pickleball Canada Regional Championships.
 - » Pickleball Court Standards. USA Pickleball.

- **Engagement:** From June to July 2023, the consultants and municipalities engaged stakeholders, players, adjacent residents to courts, and the general public to better understand issues and preferences. The engagement included an online survey (on a dedicated website), facilitated group discussions, and pop-in site visits (<https://regionalpickleballstrategy.com/>).

The process resulted in the following outcomes:

- » 1207 Online Survey Responses
- » 4530 Unique Visitors to the Website
- » 22 Online Stakeholder Session Attendees
- » 1 meeting with Victoria Regional Pickleball Association

Findings from the engagement are reported on throughout the strategy based on the topic. For a detailed account of the engagement, including responses to each question, refer to the Pickleball Strategy for Victoria, Saanich, Oak Bay and Esquimalt What We Heard Report, 2023.

- **Recommended Strategies & Actions:** The strategy identifies high level strategies to guide future decision-making as well as more specific actions that can be employed in the short to long term. Taken together, these recommendations enable a coordinated effort, where success can be tracked and assessed over time.

1.4 Document Order

The following sections of the Strategy are organized by topic.

- **Section 2: Pickleball in Greater Victoria** provides an overview of the sport, thereby setting the stage for informed recommendations later in the Strategy.
- **Section 3: Court Supply** deals with meeting demand through the number, type and considerations for the distribution of courts throughout the four municipalities.
- **Section 4: Court Design** focuses on features that enhance play (e.g., court layouts, lighting) as well as elements to address noise mitigation.
- **Section 5: Managing Playing Times** is about successfully employing a hybrid system of bookings and drop-in play.
- And lastly, **Section 6: Implementation** organizes the recommendations into an easy-to-reference format for use in budgetary and work planning.

2 Pickleball in Greater Victoria

Mirroring national trends, demand in pickleball has been increasing in Greater Victoria. Municipalities have been seeking to accommodate this demand over the last decade. This section is an assessment of the current state of courts and insight into the players based on engagement feedback.



Figure 1: Pickleball at Oaklands Park. (Image Source: O2)

2.1 Court Overview

There is a mix of indoor and outdoor courts collectively in Victoria, Saanich, Oak Bay and Esquimalt. A common approach has been to use existing tennis courts for outdoor and gymnasiums for indoor courts. The existing inventory is listed in the following table.

- Victoria
- Esquimalt
- Oak Bay
- Saanich

	Courts	Multi-Purpose Gyms
Esquimalt	6 courts	1 location
Oak Bay	5 courts	1 location
Saanich	23 courts	3 locations
Victoria	10 Courts	0 locations

Figure 2: Existing Pickleball Courts in Victoria, Saanich, Oak Bay and Esquimalt.

Court Name	Type	No. of Courts
Indoor		
● Cedar Hill Rec Centre	Multi-Purpose Gym	Pop-up, Temporary
● Esquimalt Rec Centre	Multi-Purpose Gym	Pop-up, Temporary
● Henderson Rec Centre	Multi-Purpose Gym	Pop-up, Temporary
● Pearkes Rec Centre	Indoor shared courts	8
● Saanich Commonwealth Place	Multi-Purpose Gym	Pop-up, Temporary
Outdoor		
● Barnard Park	Shared	2
● Beacon Hill Park	Dedicated	3
● Carnarvon Park	Dedicated	5
● Central Park	Shared	2
● Copley West Park	Shared	2
● Esquimalt High School	Shared	2
● Esquimalt Rec Centre	Dedicated	4
● Franklin Green	Dedicated	1
● Hampton Park	Shared	2
● Majestic Park	Shared	1
● McMinn Park	2 Shared/2 dedicated	4
● Oaklands Park	Shared	2
● Prospect Lake Park	Shared	2
● Rosedale Park	Shared	2
● Tolmie Park	Dedicated	2

Figure 3: Types of Pickleball Courts in Victoria, Saanich, Oak Bay and Esquimalt

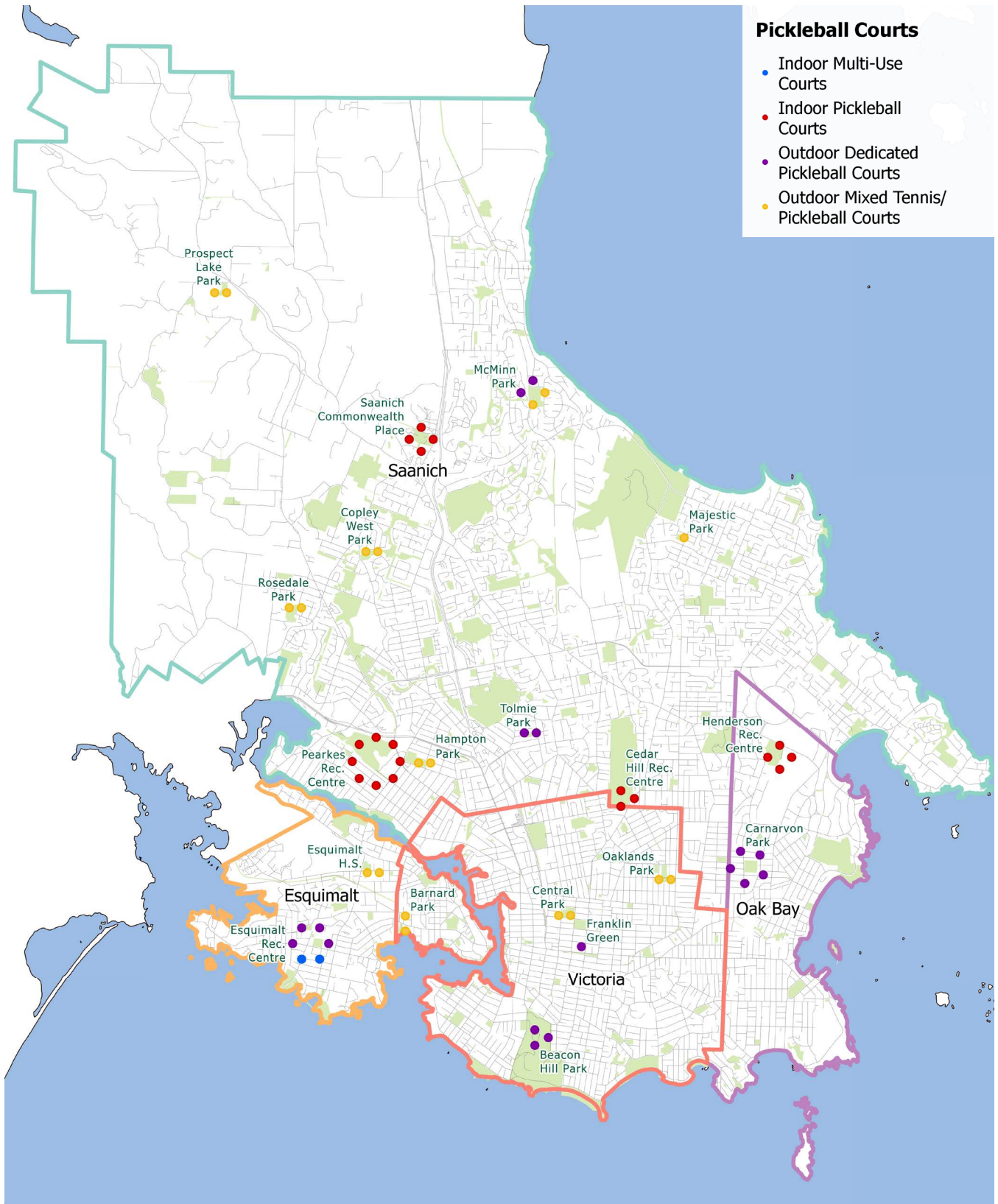


Figure 4: Map of Existing Pickleball Courts in Greater Victoria.

2.2 Pickleball in Surrounding Capital Regional District

As noted, the scope of this pickleball strategy does not include the entire Capital Regional District. It is recognized that residents travel between municipalities within the CRD to access recreation. To provide greater context to the analysis, courts within the surrounding CRD municipalities are identified. The Southern Gulf Islands, Salt Spring Island and Juan de Fuca are not included. The information is provided for comparative insight, but no assessment of demand and recommendations are within scope of the Strategy.

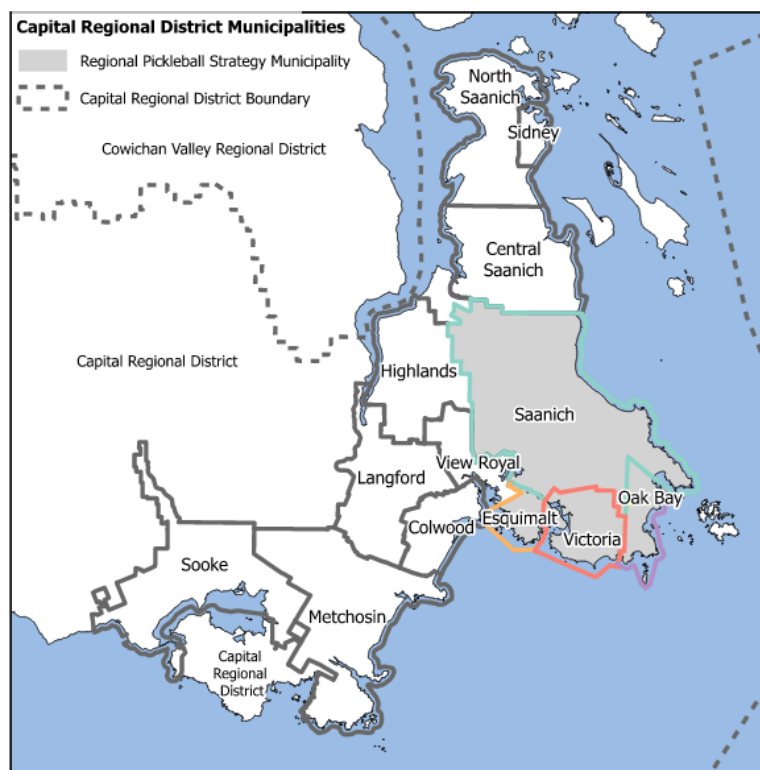


Figure 5: The Capital Regional District excluding the Southern Gulf Islands, Salt Spring Island, and Juan de Fuca.

	Outdoor	Indoor
Sooke	3 dedicated courts & 1 shared court	2 multiple purpose gyms
Metchosin	Share WSPR	Share WSPR
Langford	1 court + Share WSPR	1 court + Share WSPR
Highlands	Share WSPR	Share WSPR
Colwood	Share WSPR	Share WSPR
View Royal	Share WSPR	Share WSPR
Central Saanich	2 courts	Share PAN
North Saanich	4 courts	Share PAN
Sidney	2 shared courts	Share PAN

Jointly Owned Facilities	Outdoor	Indoor
West Shore Parks and Recreation (WSPR)	2 shared courts with plans for 6 dedicated courts	2 multiple purpose courts
Panorama Recreation (PAN)	0	1 multi-purpose gym

Figure 6: Existing Pickleball Courts in Surrounding Capital Regional District.

2.3 Snapshot of Players in Greater Victoria

During the engagement, respondents were asked a series of questions that help compose a picture of players and their playing preferences. This information in turn will help to inform recommendations.

When isolated to only survey respondents who note they play pickleball, the two major demographics are 25-64 year olds and 65 years or older. The majority of both groups played indoor and outside. However, the 25-64 demographic was more likely to prefer playing outside and the 65 years or older was more likely to prefer indoor courts.

It is possible that the demographic breakdown was skewed based on survey reach. Other studies undertaken on the demographics of pickleball suggest that 18 to 24 year olds are a significant share of players.¹

Aligned with the recent growth of the sport, most players started playing between the last 1 to 3 years.

The surveys also reveal playing habits, including the most common time to play in the mornings. Most players also play weekdays and weekends for sessions lasting between one and two hours.

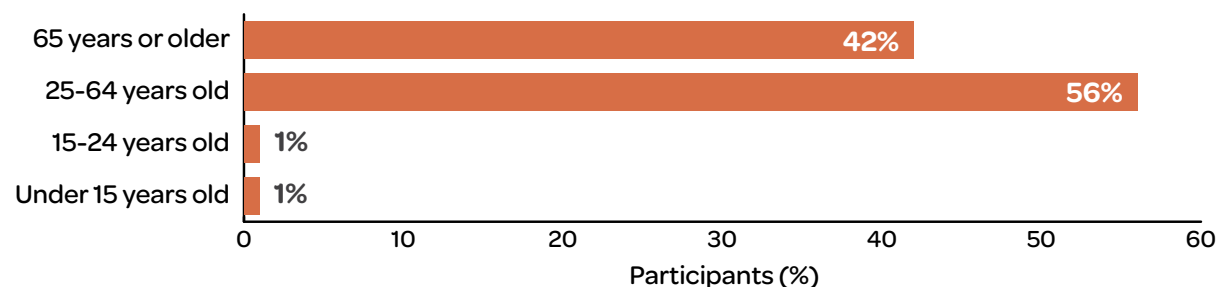


Figure 7: Age of Pickleball Players.

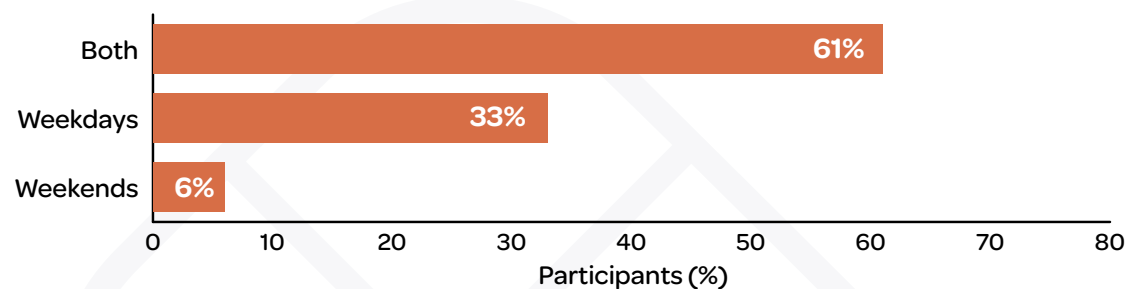


Figure 8: Weekly Preference for Playing.

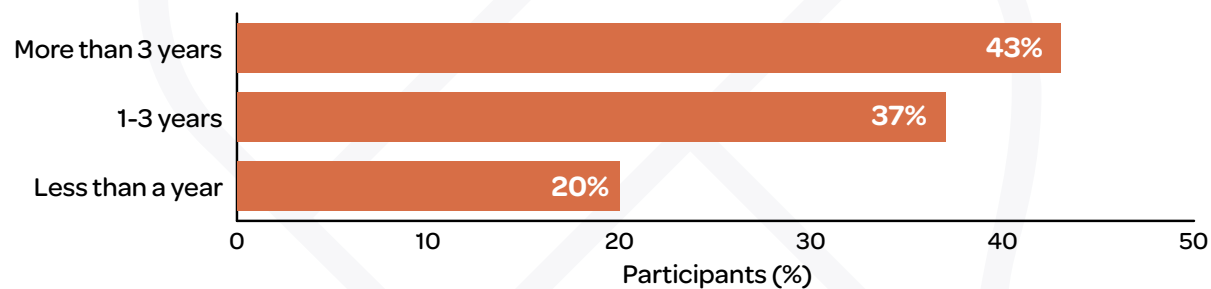


Figure 9: How long people have been playing pickleball.

¹ Accessed: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/2022/09/20/pickleball-growth-tennis/>

Player Crossover Between Tennis and Pickleball

The survey asked respondents whether they play pickleball or tennis. Nearly 20% of pickleball players said they also play tennis. In the American context, The American Sports and Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) estimates that 33% of pickleball players had also played tennis at least once in the last year. It is useful to consider these two values as representing a low to high end range for estimating current crossover between the two sports.

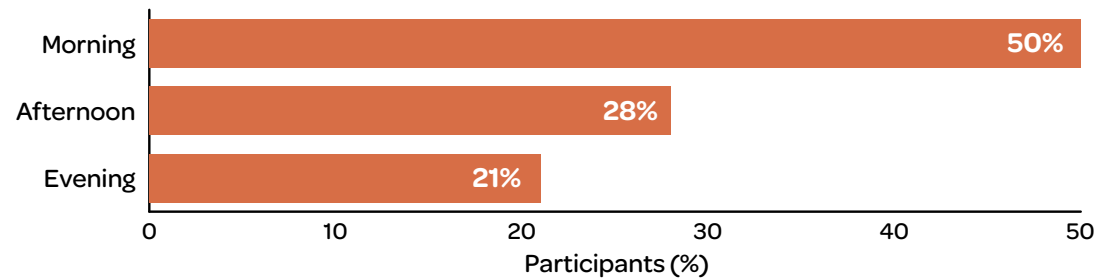


Figure 10: Usual times to play.

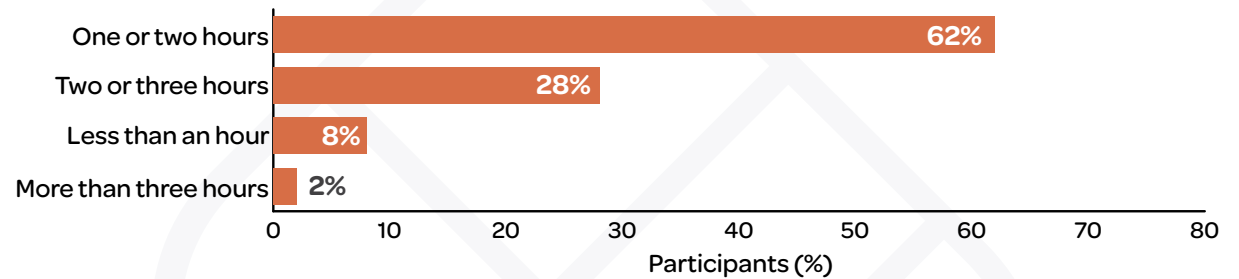


Figure 11: Typical duration of play.

2.4 Challenges

The Pickleball Strategy contends with four main challenges. The challenges represent the core obstacles to effectively managing the sport in the four municipalities. Direction throughout this report is aimed at addressing these challenges.

1. Demand Pressures (busyness/capacity)

There is a perception among players that there are not enough courts and times to play to accommodate the growing demand for the sport. Potential implications include player frustration, undermining participation in the sport, and tension with tennis players on shared courts. Section 3 Court Supply undertakes a supply and demand analysis to better understand the inventory relative to demand.

2. Noise Impacts

Victoria, Saanich, and Oak Bay have received sound complaints from neighbours living adjacent to some pickleball courts. Feedback from the engagement validated noise impacts as an issue among residents. Respondents noted that noise was negatively impacting their ability to relax at home. Section 3 Court Supply and Section 4 Court Design put forward an approach to address noise at courts.

3. Tension with Tennis

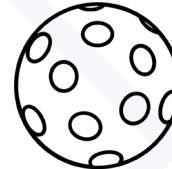
With several shared courts between tennis and pickleball, it can be challenging to accommodate both sports. Where courts are busy for one sport, players of the other sport may feel they are losing access to a facility. Shared courts also mean two sets of court lines. Section 3 Court Supply promotes steps that seek to address this tension.

4. Budget and Land Availability

Park systems and recreational indoor spaces enable a wide range of activities with a limited amount of space and investment. Urban intensification accentuates the challenge as these areas often experience higher land values and more residents living near green spaces. Locating hubs within these areas may not always be feasible.

Managing any expansion of pickleball must recognize that there are other interests. An inter-municipal approach is also an opportunity to look more broadly at where courts make the most sense. Section 3 Court Supply and Section 4 Court Design identify strategies to work within these competing interests.

Objectives for the Strategy



Meet demand for pickleball players



Resolve noise issues for adjacent neighbours



Consider tennis users (and other park users)

3 Court Supply

One way to align supply and demand for pickleball is to consider the number of courts available along with their usage. Appropriate alignment will help meet interest in the sport while supporting efficiency in using limited land and the latter’s operational requirements. Residents expect to use the park system for a variety of activities beyond pickleball, so this exercise must be pragmatic, well-informed, and creative.

3.1 Supply & Demand Analysis

To determine the relationship between existing supply and demand, the report uses 4 indicators. The findings from these indicators inform a set of recommendations that will seek to address supply to better align with demand.

Indicator #1: Urban Growth

Greater Victoria is set to absorb population growth over the next two decades. Victoria will grow by 16%, Saanich will grow by 12%, Esquimalt will grow by 10%, and Oak Bay will shrink by 2.5%. The resulting change in population will equate to 32,274 more people in the four municipalities in 2038.² In 2023, the Province of British Columbia established housing targets for these four municipalities under the Housing Supply Act. The targets may increase the growth estimates noted above.

The anticipated population growth may result in increased demand or interest in the sport given the larger pool of people that may be

² Accessed: [Capital Regional District 2019-2038 Population, Dwelling Units and Employment Projection Report](https://www.crd.bc.ca/docs/default-source/crd-document-library/bylaws/regionalgrowthstrategy/crd-2019-2038-population-dwelling-units-and-employment-projection-repor.pdf?sfvrsn=92ce43cc_2). BC Stats - April 2019. Accessed: https://www.crd.bc.ca/docs/default-source/crd-document-library/bylaws/regionalgrowthstrategy/crd-2019-2038-population-dwelling-units-and-employment-projection-repor.pdf?sfvrsn=92ce43cc_2

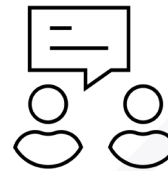
The Indicators



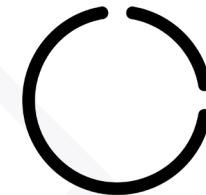
Population Growth



Trends in the Sport



Engagement



Usage



Inventory Comparison

interested in the sport. While greater interest is not inherently an issue, it may add pressure to keep pace on supply or strategies to increase the capacity of existing courts.

Indicator #2: Growth in Pickleball

In 2023, media organizations in the United States and Canada published articles on pickleball being the fastest-growing sport in the two countries.⁴ Pickleball Canada estimates a jump in players from 350,000 in 2021 to over 1 million in 2023. Part of what makes the growth more pronounced – and what helps in its chance for longevity – is in gaining players from a wider range of demographics. Young adults for instance are the fastest segment of new players.⁵

The Victoria Regional Pickleball Association shared data that also suggests Greater Victoria is experiencing the growth observed across Canada and the United States. In 2016, the VPRA had 33 members. As of 2023, this number of members has climbed to 615. This represents a growth of over 1700% in seven years. Not all players belong to the Victoria Regional Pickleball Association, so it is a true statistic for the growth of the sport. However, membership is a useful indicator to gauge a trendline.

It is difficult to determine with any certainty the future popularity of a sport. Cities are thus challenged to align facilities and programming with constantly shifting expectations and interests in the park system. However, during the engagement, 96% of existing pickleball players noted that they intended to keep playing. While this feedback does not solidify the future projection with any greater certainty, it is suggestive of a current sentiment for a sport beyond a momentary fad.

⁴ <https://www.cnn.com/2023/01/05/pickleball-popularity-explodes-with-more-than-36-million-playing.html>

⁵ <https://www.timesfreepress.com/news/2023/jun/01/pickleball-its-not-just-for-adults-young-players/#:~:text=Players%20age%2024%20and%20younger,a%20self%2Ddescribed%20pickleball%20fanatic.>

Indicator #3: Inventory Comparison

To support the demand analysis, court inventories from other comparable cities in British Columbia were compiled. This exercise is a chance to flag trends and specialties from cities with similar contexts. As such, the comparison uses a set of cities in British Columbia: Nanaimo, Burnaby, Vernon and the North Shore (West Vancouver, North Vancouver City and the District of North Vancouver).

It is difficult to create a fair comparison between inventories as cities have different types of courts. In an attempt for consistency, temporary programming at gymnasiums as well as pop-up courts were excluded. Courts that use tennis court nets, as well as courts with no net (with nets in storage boxes; or requiring players to bring them) were included. Dedicated courts were included.

The comparison highlights that relative to population, Victoria has the fewest court locations, while Saanich, Esquimalt and Oak Bay are around the mid-range. As a common entity, the four municipalities are under-but-close to the average of the comparable cities. Vernon has the most courts to its size.



Figure 12: Courts at Tolmie Park. (Image Source: O2)

The North Shore and Nanaimo highlight a stronger focus on providing dedicated outdoor courts. In comparison to all the municipalities within Greater Victoria, Vernon is an example of a city that has started to grow its supply of dedicated indoor courts (the result of a public/private partnership) as opposed to using multi-purpose gymnasiums.

The inventory comparison supports the pursuit of adding additional courts within Greater Victoria. In particular, the City of Victoria has a lower-than-average supply relative to its size. The comparison also supports focusing more on indoor and outdoor dedicated courts as opposed to additional shared-facilities.

Municipality	Current Population	Courts to Populations	Takeaway
Vernon, BC ¹	40,116	1:1,823	Leads in supply, especially with indoor
Kamloops, BC	90,280	1:2,202	Leads in outdoor dedicated courts
Burnaby, BC ²	249,197	1:2,769	Few dedicated; major supply of shared courts
Esquimalt, BC	17,553	1:2,922	Relative to its population, supply is high
Oak Bay, BC	17,990	1:3,598	Relative to its population, supply is high
Saanich, BC	124,375	1:5,408	Lower end of dedicated outdoor supply
North Shore, BC	193,870	1:5,875	More dedicated than shared approach
Nanaimo, BC	90,505	1:7,542	Lower end based on comparable cities outside Victoria
Victoria, BC	93,600	1:9,360	Currently on the lower end of supply

¹ Includes outdoor courts that require players to bring their own nets.

² Most of these courts are painted lines around tennis courts and require bringing nets.

Combinations of Municipalities	Current Population	Courts to Populations	Takeaway
Victoria, Saanich, Oak Bay and Esquimalt	253,518	1: 5,762	Fewer courts per population compared with the selected municipalities
Average of municipalities in table above excluding four partner municipalities	193,870	1: 3,686	This group represents roughly 2,000 people difference in service level compared to the four partner municipalities
Rest of CRD	134,686 ³	1:8,979	Currently a lower level of supply compared to the four partner municipalities

Figure 13: Number of Courts by Population. Note: the numbers in the table do not include temporary courts in community recreation gymnasiums.

³ The population total is from the CRD 2019-2038 Population, Dwelling Units and Employment Projection Report. It excludes the Southern Gulf Islands, Saltspring Island, and Juan de Fuca.

Indicator #4: Court Usage Insight

There is no formal tracking system to understand exactly how many people use each court. However, a compilation of existing data points helps compose a picture of trends. This picture can then in turn support the supply and demand analysis.

The first data point is from the engagement, which asked survey respondents at which courts they play. This insight provides a preliminary sense of which courts are busy and well-liked by players.

The distribution of reported usage demonstrates a wide variety between courts. Carnarvon Park for instance has roughly 22x the number of respondents to Esquimalt Recreation’s outdoor courts. While it should not be assumed that these values translate precisely to actual usage on the courts, the responses nonetheless generally indicate that some courts have concentrated usage while others are relatively quiet.

The findings also align with site visits undertaken by the consultant in the summer of 2023 at six outdoor courts that are on the higher end of visitations. The courts are Carnarvon Park, Oaklands Park, Central Park, McMinn Park, Tolmie Park, and Beacon Hill Park. Each court was in use at the time of visit, with extra players waiting at McMinn

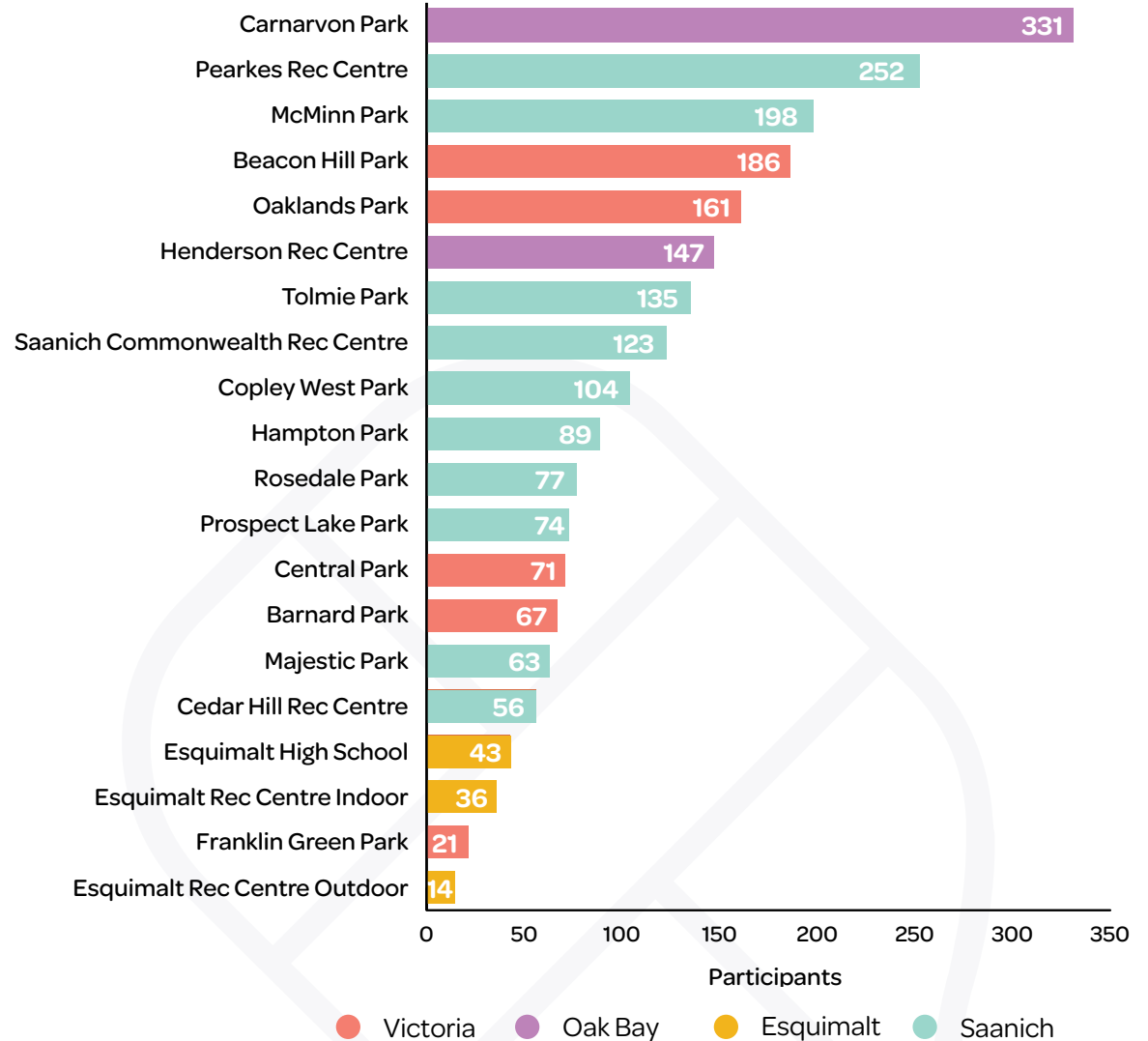


Figure 14: Courts measured by reported usage (e.g., where do you play?).

Park and Central Park. The site visits were not intended to provide a methodological study of use, but are included only as providing supporting anecdotal evidence.

Another data point to help determine usage is with permitting data. In the City of Victoria, pickleball clubs can apply for a block booking that reserves a court on a certain day and time. From 2018 to 2021, the total number of hours of permitted pickleball play grew from 191 to 3,403. In 2022, the hours decreased to 2,956.

While limited to only a few selected courts, the permitted data suggests pickleball use has been increasing over the last 5 years. The reason for the decrease in 2022 is unconfirmed, but the City of Victoria capped any new permits in 2022. Permitting data should continue to be tracked in the future to help the municipalities monitor the sport. The shift from Todd Park to Central Park is also the result of the City decommissioning pickleball usage at the former and shifting club use to the latter.

Overall, the data points for usage suggest pickleball demand is increasing and the usage varies by courts. The potential concentration at certain courts is relevant to the supply and demand analysis as the busier courts will likely face capacity issues. On the other hand, the least visited courts may be underutilized and not contributing significantly to addressing demand.

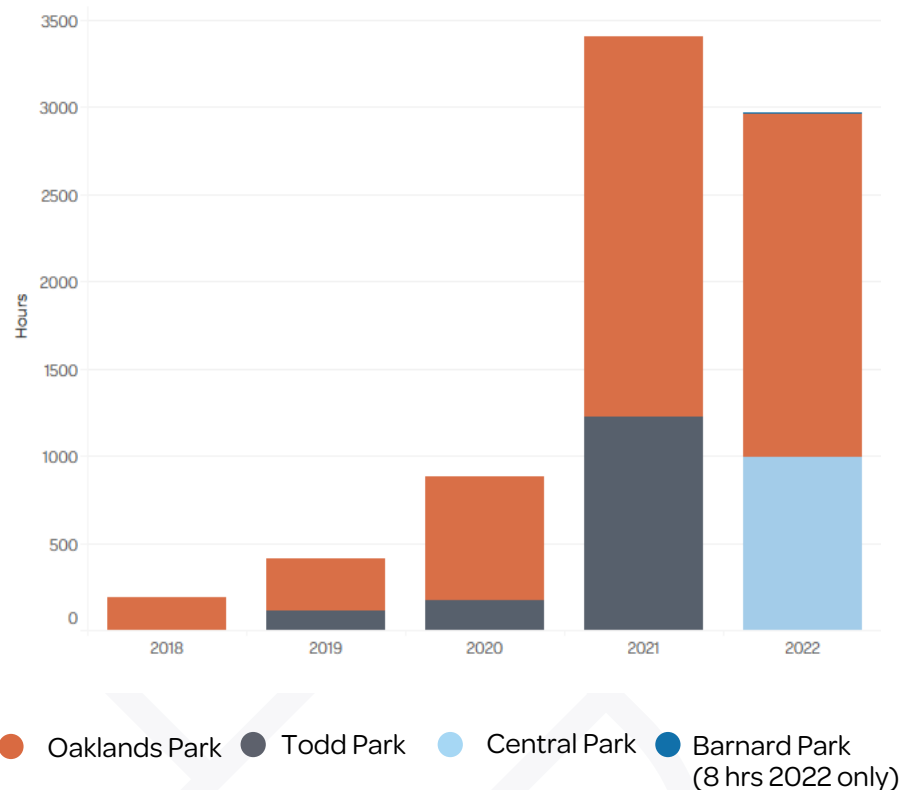


Figure 15: City of Victoria Annual Booked Hours by Court.

Indicator #5: Engagement Feedback on Demand

In addition to the engagement feedback on court usage, the survey and stakeholder interviews provide more insight on the relationship between supply and demand.

During stakeholder interviews with pickleball players and organizers, an emergent theme was demand for courts outstripped current supply in Victoria, Saanich, Oak Bay and Esquimalt. The survey responses further specify where more courts are most needed.

The largest response was to locate new courts in Victoria, followed by Saanich, Oak Bay and Esquimalt in descending order. The focus on Victoria also aligns with the benchmarking findings in Indicator #3 that showed City of Victoria had a smaller inventory of courts relative to its population.

The share of respondents who did not think more courts were needed was comparatively smaller.

Respondents also indicated a preference for dedicated courts over shared facilities with tennis. From responses elsewhere in the survey as well as input from stakeholders, the preference for dedicated courts is driven by the standard of design achieved (e.g., specific nets and line markings) and more compatibility in playing times and availability.

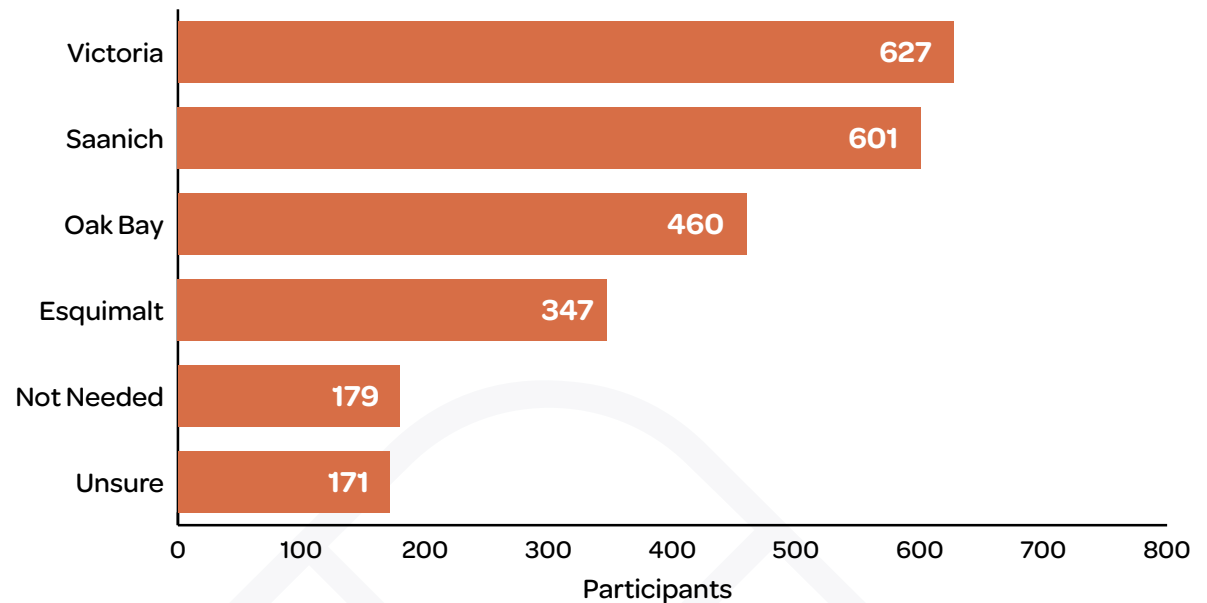


Figure 16: Survey Respondents on where more courts are needed.

The preference also aligns with a joint statement released by BC Tennis and BC Pickleball that promotes dedicated courts for each sport.³

There was fairly even demand between indoor and outdoor courts, with a small majority for more indoor courts. The split may be the result of Greater Victoria's seasons, with more indoor space being especially popular over winter and other days of inclement weather. Outdoor courts, on the other hand, appear to be popular during the warmer seasons when players can enjoy the benefits of the outside (e.g., sunshine, fresh air, exposure to surrounding natural features). Some survey respondents also suggested the construction of new covered courts that could potentially achieve the strengths of either court type.

One other aspect of demand from the engagement was a preference for courts to be built in a hub configuration rather than one or two courts broadly distributed throughout the cities. During stakeholder interviews, attendees listed benefits of the hub as enabling tournament play and additional programming, a high standard facility with supportive amenities (e.g., washrooms), and having a strong impact on addressing supply and capacity issues.

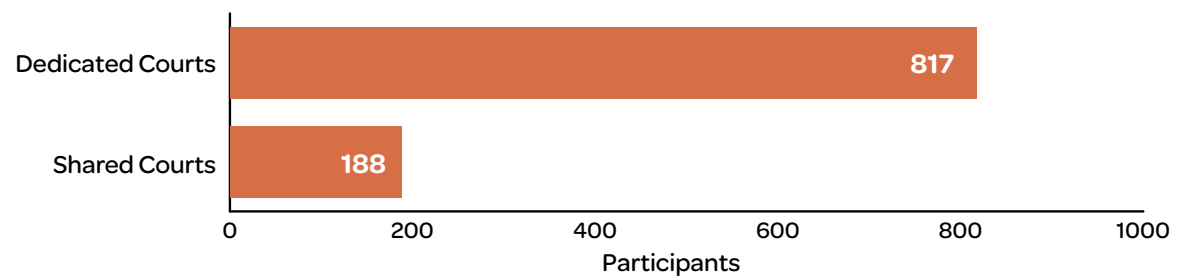


Figure 17: Survey respondents on preference for dedicated vs shared courts.

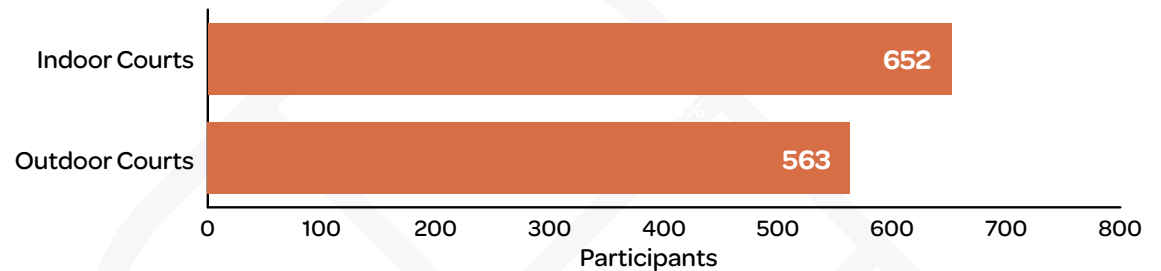


Figure 18: Survey respondents on preference for indoor vs outdoor courts.

³ <http://www.tennisbc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Joint-Recommendation-v8.1.pdf>

Supply Outcome

Based on the analysis, there is unmet demand for pickleball relative to the current supply of courts. Exploring strategies to either increase capacity of existing courts or adding additional courts has justification, particularly when looking towards projected population growth.

3.2 Addressing Noise through Supply

Sounds from pickleball courts can negatively impact adjacent residents. During the engagement, noise from pickleball was the most common negative issue from survey respondents living near courts.

Acoustic studies on pickleball generally suggest that the sport can create sound around 70dBA (measured from 30m). The BC Tennis/BC Pickleball Association's Acoustic Study recommends that impacts on adjacent residences should be at a target of 50dBA. This value is intentionally 5dBA lower than the City of Victoria's Noise Bylaw from Quiet Districts to account for the "impulsive character of pickleball noise." Cities can achieve this target through either one or a combination of sound mitigation strategies.

Setback Distances

The most certain way to achieve sound mitigation is to locate courts at a sufficient distance away from adjacent residences. An acoustic study from the BCRPA provides guidelines that range between 50m and 160m when no other sound mitigation is used. These distances are identified in Figures 19 and 20.

The study notes that the setback recommendation "does not apply to situations where the point of reception overlooks the court." It is therefore suggested that courts adjacent to taller residences are dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

# of Courts	Setback Distance required to meet 50dBA			
	Noise Mitigation		3m Noise Barrier	
	Hard Ground	Soft Ground	Hard Ground	Soft Ground
2 (1x2)	65	50	35	30
4 (2x2)	90	75	50	45
6 (2x3)	105	85	55	50
12 (3x4)	160	115	75	60

Figure 19: Recommended setbacks for courts.

# of Courts	Setback Distance required to meet 50dBA			
	Quiet Equipment, No Barrier		Quiet Equipment, 3m Barrier	
	Hard Ground	Soft Ground	Hard Ground	Soft Ground
2 (1x2)	35	30	20	15
4 (2x2)	50	45	25	20
6 (2x3)	55	50	30	25
12 (3x4)	75	60	40	35

Figure 20: Recommend setbacks for courts inclusive of quieter equipment.

2. Reflective & Absorptive Sound Barriers

These products are curtains that can be installed on perimeter fences (e.g., Acousti-fence). They work by mitigating the sound levels leaving the courts. Absorptive barriers have the potential to provide better acoustical performance and can be more expensive than some reflective products. However, the BCRPA acoustic study notes that the purpose of absorptive barriers is for cases with taller adjacent residences (i.e. mid-rise to tower buildings) to reduce reflected sound.

Anticipated sound impact: at least a 5dBA reduction

3. Berms and Landscaping

Natural features and landscapes can be used to dampen sound. Berms provide sound absorption but may require a substantial amount of land to accommodate slope integrity. Dense plantings can also provide sound mitigation, but in usual cases would require a sizable planting area to make a significant impact.

Anticipated sound impact of a 50m wide tree belt: 3-5 dBA



Figure 21: An example of a sound barrier.

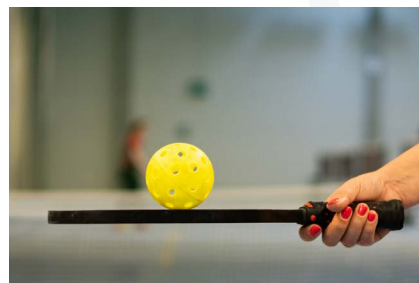


Figure 23: Specially-designed balls and paddles can lower the decibel level of play.

4. Special “quieter” equipment (e.g., paddles and balls)

The market place for quiet equipment is evolving as are approaches to standardize. As an example, In September 2023, USA Pickleball announced a quiet category to establish consistent guidelines and encourage further improvement to products.¹

A challenge today is some equipment may alter the performance of the sport (e.g., foam balls) and/or may be resisted by players. Likewise, municipalities may be challenged in seeking to enforce their use. Since the market is currently evolving, it is worthwhile to monitor improvements. If in the future, these products become the norm, a reconsideration of their use within the strategy is warranted.

Anticipated sound impact: up to a 5dBA reduction

¹ <https://usapickleball.org/news/usa-pickleball-announces-quiet-category-for-pickleball-products/>



Figure 22: Using landscaping to dampen sound.

Setback Distances

The existing inventory was assessed based on recommended setbacks.

● Victoria ● Esquimalt ● Oak Bay ● Saanich

Court name		Existing setback	Neighbourhood sound concerns	Existing sound mitigation	Criteria from Acoustic Study applied to courts		
					Can it achieve recommended sound acoustics?	Needed setback	
						Barrier	Barrier & Quieter Eqp.
●	Franklin Green Park	17m	No	No	No	35m	20m
●	Tolmie Park	17m	Yes	Acoustic Fence	No	30m	15-20m
●	Majestic Park	26m	No	No	With barriers and quieter eqp.	35m	20m
●	Oaklands Park	26m	No	No	With barriers and quieter eqp.	35m	20m
●	Esquimalt Rec Centre	29m	No	Lacrosse Board	With barriers and quieter eqp.	35m	20m
●	Hampton Park	30m	No	No	With barriers and quieter eqp.	35m	20m
●	Carnarvon Park	33m	Yes	Lacrosse/Acoustic	With barriers and quieter eqp.	45m	25m
●	Copley West Park	36m	Unknown	No	With barriers	35m	20m
●	Esquimalt High School	37m	No	No	With barriers	35m	20m
●	Barnard Park	38m	Yes	No	Courts are near taller buildings so appropriate setback is currently unknown		
●	Rosedale Park	43m	No	No	With barriers	35m	20m
●	Central Park	49m	Unknown	No	Courts are near taller buildings so appropriate setback is currently unknown		
●	McMinn Park	69m	Yes	Limited barriers	With barriers	50m	25m
●	Prospect Lake Park	130m	No	No	Yes	N/A	N/A
●	Beacon Hill Park	188m	No	No	Yes	N/A	N/A

Figure 24: Existing courts and setback distances.

Outcomes on Noise

As shown in Figure 25, sound has not been a concern in some locations, which should factor into decision making. However, there are several courts that currently do not meet the minimum recommended setback from the Acoustic Study. These can be grouped into courts that:

1. Cannot meet the sound target based on products considered in the Acoustic Study.
2. Meet the sound target with acoustic dampening barriers and regulating quieter equipment.
3. Meet the sound target with acoustic dampening barriers.
4. Are near taller buildings and should be treated with special consideration (Barnard Park and Central Park).
5. Already meet the sound target.

The strategy attempts to address sound measure consistently and effectively.

The proposed approach is to treat the five groupings separately. The first group is suggested for conversion to tennis-only or another use as there are few options to address noise as these locations. This action will have implications for the supply and demand of courts, so this aspect will be considered within this section's (Court Supply) recommendations.

The other grouping will be approached through design considerations that are explored in Section 4 Court Design.

3.3 Supply Recommendations

The supply and demand analysis suggests that there is merit in increasing the number of courts within Victoria, Saanich, Oak Bay and Esquimalt. Yet to address sound effectively, it is proposed to decommission some courts out of the inventory.

To support the municipalities in confronting this challenge, the following content is a suite of recommendations aiming to create a sufficient supply of courts to meet demand over the next decade in a way that does not create noise issues for neighbours. The supply also aims at supporting tennis users (and others) in their own desire for access to court space.

The section ends with five optional paths that municipalities may want to take to achieve their goals for supply.



Figure 25: Sounds barriers at Tolmie Park. (Image Source: O2)

Recommendation #1

Add more courts to existing locations, with a focus on Victoria and Saanich

Rationale

Some courts are already popular, have sufficient setbacks, and potential space to enable expansions. This recommendation follows where players already go.

Engagement feedback also revealed a preference for hubs. This approach allows for more people to drop-in to find a court and be a part of the social aspect of pickleball. It also provides enough capacity to justify more amenities that enhance play, such as practice walls and washrooms (see *Section 4: Designing Courts*).

The hubs approach can also reduce the chance of noise issues as a municipality can achieve the same number of courts with fewer locations. These locations can be focused on areas that have sufficient setbacks.

The number of courts at a Hub can vary, though any location with six or more will see the concentration of activity necessary to be a destination for players. Hubs from other cities range from six to twenty four. A city may also have one hub or several.

The following criteria is intended to help guide the number of courts at a hub:

- The city-wide objective for the number of courts.
- The amount of population within a reasonable distance.
- The number of courts the park site can fit (and consideration of other competing interests on site).
- The types and scale of amenities contemplated for the Hub (e.g., efficiencies and capacity).

Examples

- McMinn Park (Saanich)
- Prospect Lake Park (Saanich)
- Beacon Hill Park (Victoria)
- Copley West Park (Saanich)



Figure 26: Existing pickleball court. Some park locations have spaces that could potentially accommodate additional courts.

Recommendation #2

Build courts at new park locations and consider collaboration across municipalities

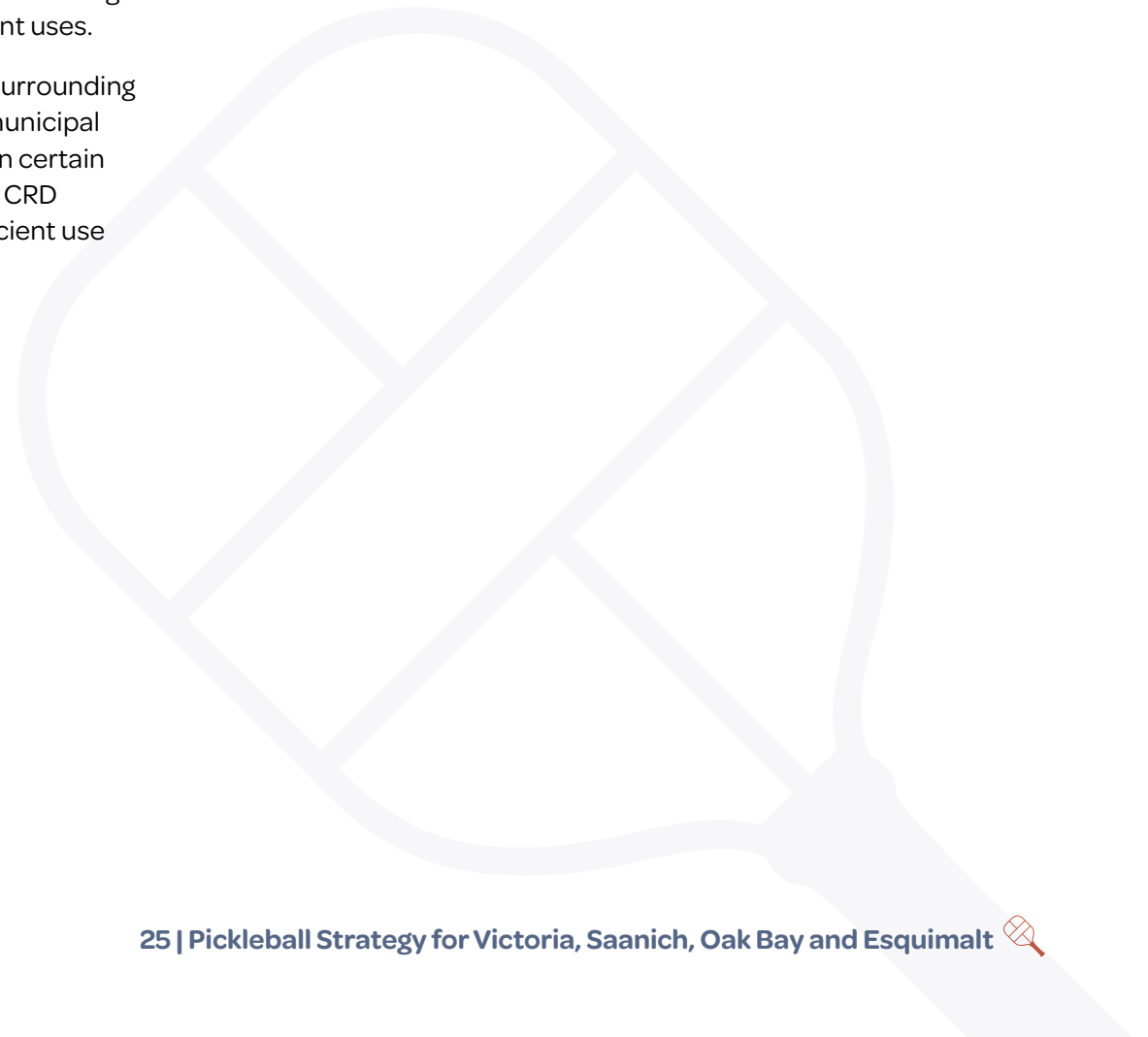
Rationale

There is an opportunity to create new court locations that have sufficient setbacks. The approach allows for greater freedom in siting a court, including the distance, layout and compatible adjacent uses.

Since players travel across the four municipalities and the surrounding CRD, new courts should be considered as part of an inter-municipal network. Meeting the demand for new hubs will be difficult in certain areas (ex. denser urban forms), so municipalities within the CRD should consider collaboration as a creative solution for efficient use of space.

Examples

- Topaz Park (Victoria)
- Fowler Park (Saanich)



Recommendation #3

Partner with a private group to develop an indoor dedicated facility

Rationale

There was strong support for playing pickleball indoors, roughly the same as the support for playing outdoors. Currently, Pearkes Recreation Centre in Saanich is the only indoor option that provides pickleball beyond temporary times in multi-purpose gyms.

It is challenging to find space for new activities in existing recreation centres, as they accommodate a range of interests. Yet, cities may also be challenged with funding a new dedicated indoor facility on its own. The recommended approach is to work with an interested private group to deliver and manage the facility. The City's role could range from funding support to owning the land.

Precedents

In 2023, Red Deer Pickleball Club began leasing space for indoor courts at Bower Place Mall within Red Deer. This represents a fully private venture. The Vernon Pickleball Association partnered with the City to deliver the Marshall Fields complex on city land.

Example

This recommendation would need to be pursued on a case-by-case basis where opportunities arise.



Figure 27: An indoor facility, Pickle and Chill, in Columbus, US. (Image Source: Cleveland Scene, 2023.)

Recommendation #4

Install pop-up or seasonal courts

Rationale

Given the cost and planning time to develop new courts, a nimble, cost-effective option carries benefits for a municipality. Some cities are installing a 'roll-out' surface with pop-up nets in temporary spaces such as plazas or malls.

The pop-up approach allows a city to test out locations, activate underutilized spaces, or coordinate programming with events (e.g., outdoor sport festivals).

The other potential use is in regard to park or recreation spaces not well used in particular seasons such as a skating rink. By adding a pop-up court, the City benefits from efficient use of space.

Examples

- Curling clubs
- Lacrosse boxes
- Plazas
- Events
- Parking Lots
- Conference Centres



Figure 28: Pop-up court in Philadelphia, US.
(Image Source: USA TopNewsMedia.com)

Recommendation #5

Convert courts to tennis only or a new use where recommended sounds levels cannot be achieved

Rationale

The BCRPA and Pickleball BC commissioned the Pickleball Noise Assessment, 2023, which establishes recommended setback distances. The objective is to reach 50dBA. As discussed earlier in the section, there are courts that cannot meet the suggested sound levels based on sounds barriers.

While some of these courts meet the setbacks when quieter equipment is implemented, it is recommended that this arrangement be avoided when other solutions are available. See recommendation #6.

Tennis BC and Pickleball BC also released a joint statement requesting that cities focus on dedicated courts for each sport where possible.

The municipalities should only consider removing pickleball if there are sound complaints from adjacent residences.

Examples

- Franklin Green Park
- Tolmie Park
- Hampton Park
- Majestic Park
- Oaklands Park
- Barnard Park (see sound testing recommendation #8)
- Central Park (see sound testing recommendation #8)



Figure 29: A dedicated tennis court.



Figure 30: An example of converting a court to a new use.

Recommendation #7

Undertake a utilization review of tennis courts with setbacks higher than 50m

Rationale

There are a limited number of tennis courts in the four partnering municipalities that have setbacks from residences beyond 50m. These courts have the potential to function well as dedicated pickleball courts instead.

The decision of whether to convert any tennis court should be based on a current review of utilization, which was out of scope of this pickleball strategy.

Since tennis is also a popular sport with a dedicated community of players, any conversion of tennis courts to dedicated pickleball courts may best go alongside a net replacement of tennis courts somewhere else in the area. This approach reduces risk of tennis players losing overall access unless it is determined that demand is no longer as high.

Examples

- Beacon Hill Park
- McMinn Park
- Lambrick Park
- Henderson
- Rosedale Park
- Hyacinth Park

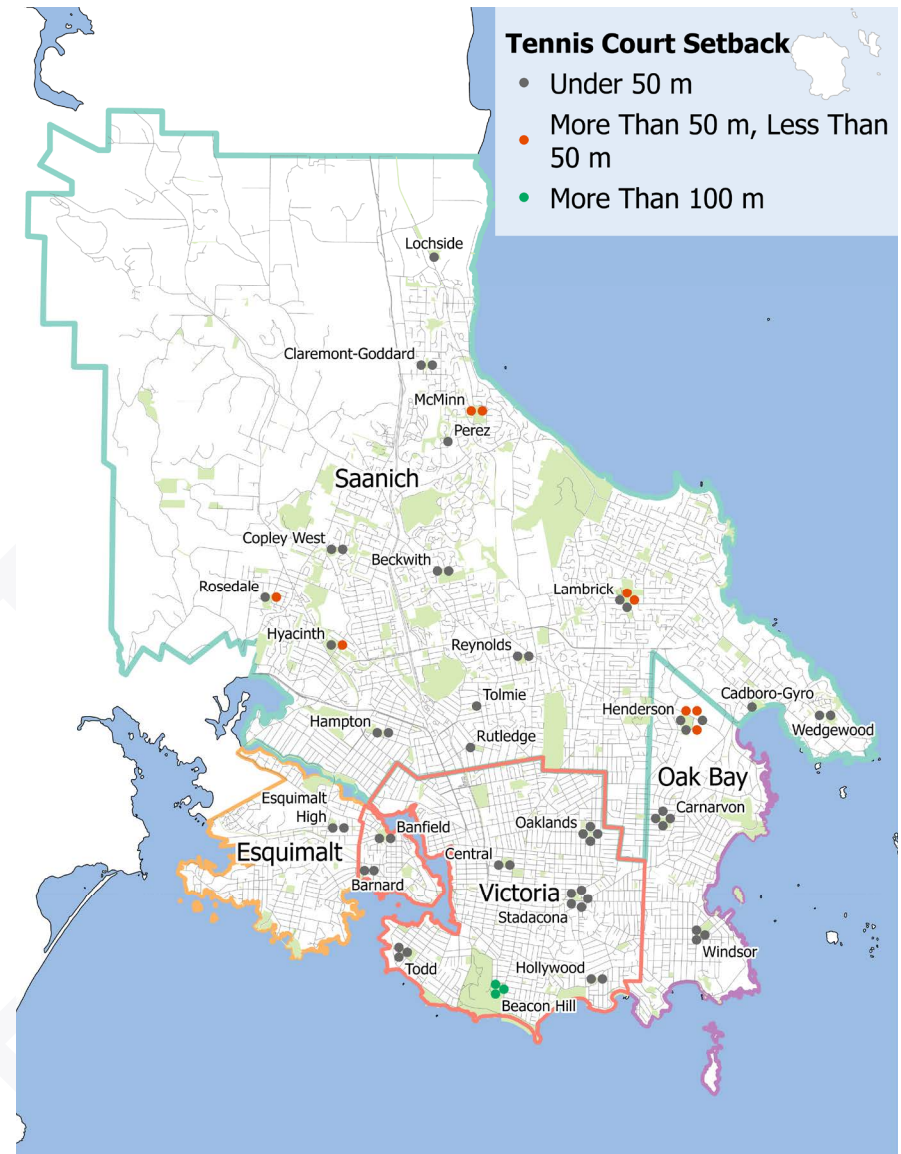


Figure 31: Tennis courts setback.

3.4 Supply Options

To help the municipalities in future decision making, this report outlines five paths in how to address unmet demand: (1) Maintaining the same number of courts, (2) Building new Hubs at Topaz Park and Fowler Park, (3) Keeping up with population growth, (4) a Moderate expansion and (5) Upper tier expansion. The chosen position will depend on each municipality's priorities -- and each municipality may choose different approaches.

To reiterate an observation from the inventory comparison, there was no identified standard for how many courts per population is appropriate. Instead, each path is about achieving a different goal.

The time horizon for these decisions is 2038 and includes population growth.

The Implementation Section at the end of the document provides a concept for how each of these paths could be achieved. This exercise is to support a sense of scale and effort needed, but not a finalized investment package.

Option	Levels of Service in 2038	Courts Needed
Option 1 Maintain same number of courts	1 court : 6,570 people	Maintain 44 courts
Option 2 Build new hubs at Topaz Park and Fowler Park	1 court : 5,900 people	49 courts (assumes 12 decommissioning)
Option 3 Keep up with population growth	1 court : 5,700 people	50 courts
Option 4 Undertake moderate expansion	1 court : 4,500 people	64 courts
Option 5 Upper tier expansion	1 court : 3,500 people	82 courts

Figure 32: Paths for municipalities.

4 Designing Courts

The design of courts impacts the level of play and enhances the overall experience. The report draws on industry standards as well as engagement feedback on detailing the features of courts.

4.1 Condition Considerations for Courts

Indoor courts offer a consistent all-weather space for playing. For Greater Victoria's climate, this space is especially helpful during rain or colder days over the winter.

Outdoor courts are also popular as they provide an opportunity to enjoy warmer weather, sunshine, fresh air, and be immersed in a park environment.

The two types of courts have overlapping considerations when it comes to their design. The following section lists the key elements.

Surfaces: it is common for gymnasiums in recreation centres (where most indoor pickleball is currently played) to have a hardwood surface. While some players may support this surface for pickleball, some respondents noted in the engagement that they found hardwood slippery or reflected too much glare from the lighting.

The current best practice for indoor and outdoor courts is a concrete or asphalt base following by an acrylic surface. Some courts in other cities have used clay and grass.

The engagement also raised the need for positive drainage to avoid puddles, consistent grading for even playing, and high-visibility painted lines.

Ceiling Heights: during the engagement, some respondents noted the importance of sufficient ceiling heights. For general play, a minimum of 18' is recommended, whereas 30' is recommended for tournament play.

Layout and Size: outdoor courts should be oriented north-to-south to avoid timing where a player has the sun directly in their view. For indoor courts, the orientation is not important.

The standard court is 44' (13.41m) x 20' (6.10m). The recommended spacing for out of bounds area differs for the play type. Pickleball Canada recommends a minimum of 60'x30' for the court (or an extra 8' and 5' for spacing) and appears to allow this for tournament play.¹

Nets and fencing: the engagement also raised players' preference to play on pickleball nets rather than tennis nets. And in the case of Beacon Hill Park, standard and permanent fencing was suggested.

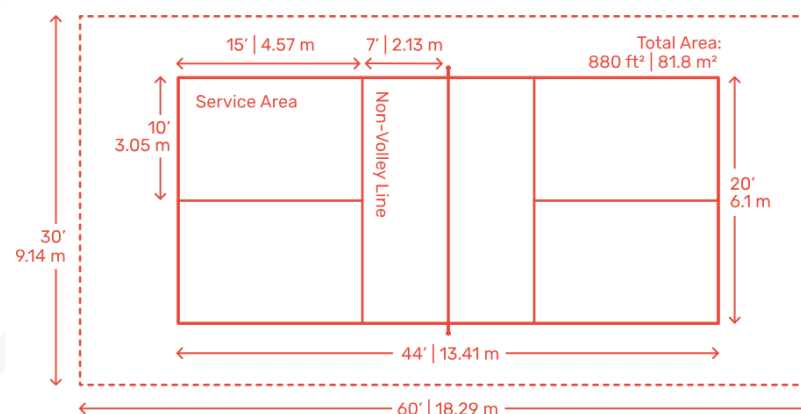


Figure 33: Standard Court Layout. (Image Source: dimensions.com)

¹ <https://pickleballcanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/1-PCO-IFP-2021-Pickleball-Rule-book-Canada.pdf>. And see <https://pickleballcanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/STAN-DARDS-and-EXPECTATIONS.pdf>

4.2 Considerations for Court Amenities

Amenities can enhance the experience of playing pickleball. They can offer convenience, enjoyment, and support a higher level of play. During the engagement respondents prioritized amenities. Providing washroom access received the highest share of “High priority” followed by garbage receptacles.

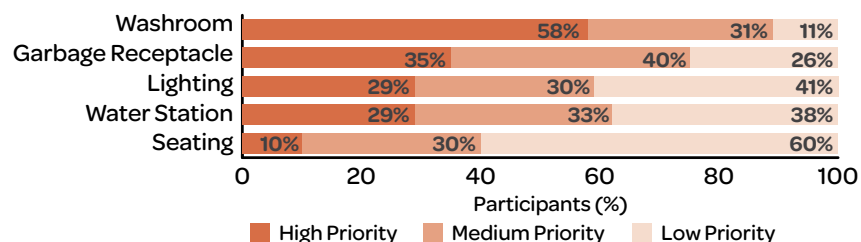


Figure 34: Pickleball amenities prioritized during the engagement

Respondents also raised suggested improvements through wind protection, court dividers, bike racks, and practice walls. A few respondents also suggested that simple cleaning equipment (e.g., broom) should be kept at the courts to allow players to remove debris themselves.

Installing all amenities at every court would be costly from a capital and ongoing operations perspective. And for some, such as lighting, not every court has the appropriate context for the feature.

It is important, therefore, for the municipalities to be strategic in where to focus efforts in making investments to amenities. The recommended approach to create two categories of courts: The Neighbourhood Court & the Hub Court. The former can be oriented towards casual play with lower usage while the latter can accommodate higher levels of play and crowds.

The direction to guide amenities between a Neighbourhood Court and a Hub Court is listed below. Amenities listed as “Potential” will need to be assessed on a court-by-court basis. The municipality may for example review whether the court location is appropriate for lighting based on adjacent residents or minimizing effects on wildlife corridors.

Amenity	Neighbourhood Court	Hub Court
Fencing	Yes	Yes
Pickleball Nets	Preferred but tennis nets possible	Yes
Lighting	No	Potential
Washroom Access	Not required	Potential
Garbage Receptacles	Yes	Yes
Water Fountains	Not required	Yes
Bike Racks	Yes	Yes
Cleaning Equipment	Potential	Potential
Practice Walls	Not required	Potential
Court Dividers	Not required	Potential
Wind Protection	Not required	Potential
Sound Mitigation	As needed	As needed

Figure 35: Suggested amenity direction for Neighbourhood Courts vs Hub Courts.

4.3 Design Recommendations

A focus on enhancing the experience at courts not only responds to suggestions raised from the engagement, but also supports using existing facilities to their highest potential. As park and recreation systems try to accommodate a wide range of shifting uses, this approach is particularly valuable.

A set of recommendations seek to address noise issues within the current inventory of courts and to support the creation of hubs.

Some of the decisions for amenities will occur at the court-specific scale, which is too fine a grain for the Strategy. However, the rest of this section identifies recommendations to guide the municipalities' approach.



Figure 36: Pickleball facility. (Image Source: SportFacilities.com and Tyler AdobeStock)

Recommendation #7

Add sound mitigation or adjust court layouts where doing so would make a meaningful impact

Rationale

The BCRPA and Pickleball BC commissioned the Pickleball Noise Assessment, 2023, which establishes recommended setback distances. The objective is to reach 50dBL. As discussed in Section 2 Court Supply, there are several courts that currently do not meet the recommended setback, but could with appropriate measures.

This action should address noise issues while maintaining pickleball play.

For the Carnarvon Park and Esquimalt Recreation Centre (outdoor), the solutions may require more involved effort, such as adjusting court layouts, moving one or all courts, or converting the courts to covered facilities.

Examples

1. Carnarvon Park (Oak Bay)
2. McMinn Park (Saanich)
3. Esquimalt Recreation Outdoor (Esquimalt)
4. Copley West Park (Saanich)
5. Rosedale Park (Saanich)

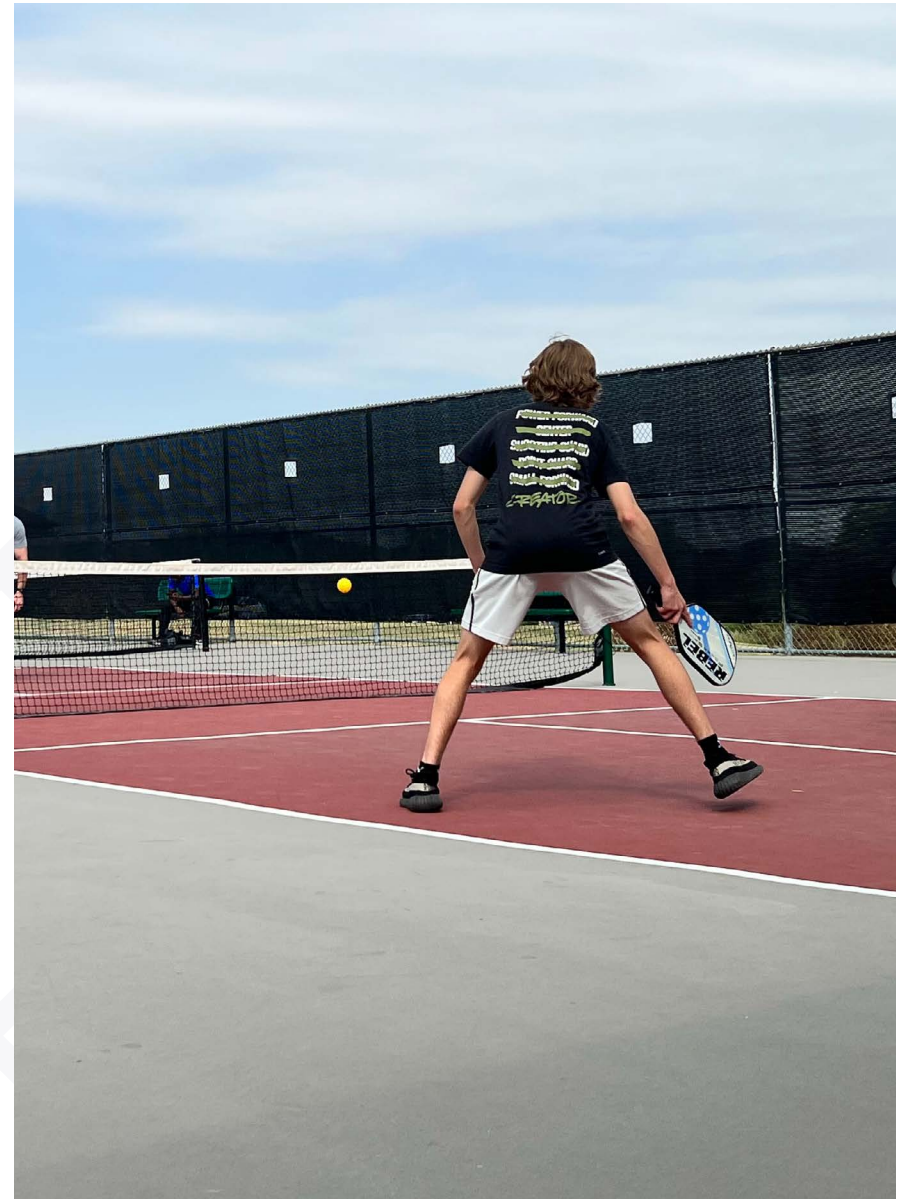


Figure 38: Pickleball court with sound mitigation.

Recommendation #8

Conduct sound testing at courts adjacent to taller buildings

Rationale

The BCRPA and Pickleball BC commissioned the Pickleball Noise Assessment, 2023, which establishes recommended setback distances. The objective is to reach 50dBL. The report notes that the prescribed setbacks do “not apply to situations where the point of reception overlooks the court.” Courts next to taller buildings appear to merit special considerations due to sound barriers either not dampening at the needed heights or reflecting sounds towards buildings.

Setbacks adjacent to taller buildings was not identified. Therefore, a follow up investigation is recommended where the selected courts are assessed by a sound measuring tool.

The results of the sounds testing should help inform the future vision for these courts. In the meantime, the courts are recommended to function only as tennis courts.

Examples

1. Barnard Park (Victoria)
2. Central Park (Victoria)



Figure 39: Pickleball courts next to taller residential buildings.
(Image Source: The Squamish Chief)

Recommendation #9

Make improvements relating to condition and amenity offerings at hub courts

Rationale

The engagement provided rich feedback on improvements players would like to see at courts. These investments are focused on getting the most out of existing courts, thereby reducing some of the need for new inventories.

The approach also supports efficient investments in enhancements where there is sufficient supply to draw larger numbers of players.

The relevant improvements are on a case-by-case basis and depend on the court location. The recommended features are described earlier in this section.

See Recommendation #1 on assessing the number of courts for creating Hub Court locations.

Examples

1. Carnarvon Park (Oak Bay)
2. Esquimalt Recreation Centre Outdoor (Esquimalt)
3. McMinn Park (Saanich)
4. Beacon Hill Park (Victoria)



Figure 40: Sunset Park in Las Vegas, US.

Precedents

There are many hubs throughout Canada and the United States to draw on insight. Sunset Park in Las Vegas, US offers one way of integrating lighting, washrooms, water fountains, court dividers, and garbage receptacles. Shade structures and landscaping also help to soften and increase comfort in what can be a relatively large amount of hardscaping.

5 Bookings, Allocation and Drop-in

5.1 Current Bookings & Drop-in Approaches

The four municipalities manage playing times in overlapping approaches that incorporate organized clubs, programmed drop-in, as well as spontaneous play. These approaches offer a variety of playing preferences and allow the municipalities levers to manage capacity and demand on courts.

The existing approaches to managing playing times are defined below as these definitions will be used throughout this section. The approaches are applied differently depending on the municipality and by individual court location.

- Block Booking for Clubs: groups apply to municipalities on an annual basis to reserve standing times (e.g., a weekly time slot) on a court.
- City Managed Drop-in: Some of the municipalities host pickleball programming where players sign up in advance. This approach is currently only undertaken at indoor courts.
- Self-regulating Drop-in: This refers to a system that does not require staff or volunteers to schedule or oversee. There are two current approaches in the four municipalities: the paddle-in System and Half Hour Play/One Set turnover.
- Individual Court Booking: Players would be able to reserve one-off time slots throughout the system.

While this mix serves different preferences of play, this section will explore improvements to increase capacity, convenience and consistency on the courts.



Figure 41: Drop-in McMinn Park. (Image Source: O2)

Individual Booking: The City of Victoria currently does not have a system for individuals to book courts. The District of Saanich and Township of Esquimalt permit individuals to book indoor courts throughout the winter season at specified time slots. The Township of Oak Bay allows individuals to book at the outdoor courts at Carnarvon Park.

Drop-in: All outdoor courts throughout Victoria, Saanich, Oak Bay and Esquimalt have a first-come-first/self-regulated drop-in approach. The District of Saanich and the Township of Esquimalt manage organized drop-in time slots at their indoor courts. The District of Oak Bay does not organize managed drop-in programming.

- Victoria
- Oak Bay
- Esquimalt
- Saanich

Court Name	Individual Booking	Reserved Drop-in	Informal Drop-in	Club Block Booking	Municipal Programming
Indoor					
● Cedar Hill Rec Cen.	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Unknown
● Esquimalt Rec. Centre	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
● Henderson Rec Cen.	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
● Pearkes Rec. Centre	No	Yes	No	No	Unknown
● Saan. Commonwealth Pl.	No	Yes	No	No	Unknown
Outdoor					
● Barnard Park	No	No	1st come	Yes	Unknown
● Beacon Hill Park	No	No	Paddle in	No	No
● Carnarvon Park	Yes	Yes	1st come	Yes	Yes
● Central Park	No	No	1st come	Yes	Yes
● Copley Park	No	No	1st come	No	Unknown
● Esquimalt High School	No	No	1st come	No	No
● Esquimalt Rec Cen.	No	Yes	1st come	No	Yes
● Franklin Green	No	No	1st come	No	Unknown
● Hampton Park	No	No	1st come	No	Unknown
● Majestic Park	No	No	1st come	No	Unknown
● McMinn Park	No	No	1st come	No	Unknown
● Oaklands Park	No	No	1st come	Yes	Unknown
● Prospect Lake Park	No	No	1st come	No	Unknown
● Rosedale Park	No	No	1st come	No	Unknown
● Tolmie Park	No	No	1st come	No	Unknown

Figure 42: Courts and Current Approaches to Manage Playing Times.

Club Block Booking: Every year, the City of Victoria and the District of Oak Bay allow groups of players to apply for standing court reservations. The municipalities try to accommodate each group's preference where possible while balancing other uses for courts (e.g., open drop-in). These groups benefit from weekly, predictable time slots where they do not have to worry about competing for courts.

In 2022, the City of Victoria stopped accepting new applications for block bookings, while still honoring historical permits. This pause allows the City to refine its allocation approach to meet growing demand.

The District of Saanich does not currently allow club booking at outdoor courts. However there are groups that are unofficially reserving outdoor courts without District of Saanich's permits. The situation has created some issues and disagreements between players.

The Township of Esquimalt does not currently offer block bookings for clubs.



5.2 Fees & Booking Platforms

The four municipalities manage booking, programming and fees through digital services. Victoria, Oak Bay and Esquimalt run on Perfect Mind and Saanich runs on Active Network.

Each municipality sets its own fees for bookings and admission to drop-in sessions. These fees are outlined on Figure 44. The table also details existing fees for access. While there is some variation, the approach is

to price drop-in fees around half of the fees to book a court. During the engagement, there were some responses noting concern about recent increases in fees at Pearkes Community Centre.

To help with comparisons, fees from other municipalities are listed below. The comparison reveals a relatively wide range between fees.

	Booking Platform	Fee to Book a Court	Fee for Drop-in
Victoria	Perfect Mind	\$2.67 per hour for minor organization, \$5.34 per hour for Adult/senior organization, \$8.01 per hour for Commercial rate, \$2.67 per hour for Clubs, \$26.59 per day for minor tournaments, \$53.18 per day for adult tournaments	N/A
Saanich	Active Network	Indoor only: \$20.00 at Cedar Hill Rec Centre, Pearkes and Commonwealth Place Rec Centres	\$7.25 at Saanich Commonwealth Place
Oak Bay	Perfect Mind	\$15.50 Indoor \$10.00 Outdoor. Clubs get 20 weeks for cost 17 weeks	\$7.00
Esquimalt	Perfect Mind	N/A	\$3.25-6.00
Vernon	Jegysoft	Fees administered by player association	
Nanaimo	Perfect Mind & Courtreserve	Indoor: \$44.60 Outdoor: \$6.83	\$0.00-7.00
North Shore	Perfect Mind	North Vancouver Indoor only: \$12:36	\$3.15
Kamloops	LoveOurClub App	Indoor: \$22.00-40.00 Outdoor: \$8.00 per hour	\$5.50-8.00
Surrey	City email	Outdoor: \$1.54-3.09, Club season: \$1,377.56 or \$1.63 per hour	\$6.00

Figure 43: Current Recreation Booking Systems and Fees.

5.3 Engagement Feedback on Bookings, Drop-in and Club Block Booking

Respondents from the engagement provided feedback on the existing approaches. They also offered suggestions for improvements. For a full overview of respondent feedback, refer to this pickleball strategy's What We Heard Report, 2023.

The Booking System

Feedback on booking systems are likely to include individual court bookings (e.g., Carnarvon Park) and drop-in play that is managed by the municipality (e.g., Pearkes Recreation Centre).

The majority of respondents noted that the systems they used are either "Good" or "Very Good". However this rating would not capture the lack of a booking system for many courts.



Figure 44: Onlookers to a tournament in Victoria. (Image Source: VPRA)

Aspects of the system that are working well

- » Ease of some uses on the web page.
- » Some ability to see schedule.
- » Option to pay online or by phone.
- » Being able to book in advance.

Suggested Improvements

- » A single consistent system for every municipality.
- » Allowing bookings at more courts.
- » Being able to see all availabilities across the four municipalities.
- » Additional features: "Find a partner", wait lists, cancellations, and view of existing reservations.
- » Some respondents think fees are too high. 53% of respondents also noted that they would be unwilling to pay more for a reservation.
- » Some issues raised with unofficial booking at outdoor courts in Saanich.

The Drop-in System

Feedback on the drop-in system likely includes self-managed approaches (e.g., paddle-in) as well as City-managed reserved programming at indoor recreation centres. The majority of respondents rated their experience dropping in at a court as either “Very Good” and “Good”.

Aspects of the system that are working well

- » Simplicity and flexibility.
- » Variety of skill levels.
- » Fair and quick turnover - support for paddle-in.
- » Welcoming, social and friendly.

Suggested Improvements

- » Separate times/courts based on skill level.
- » Signage with rules and process.
- » Extending a system like paddle-in beyond Beacon Hill Park.
- » Promote where and when drop-in exists.
- » Limit the number of people at busy indoor locations.



Figure 45: Sign at Beacon Hill Park, where all play is through open drop-in through the paddle-in system.

Club Block Bookings

Respondents reveal a mix level of support for club block booking. Some players noted that club bookings provided a predictable and organized way for a group of players to meet. On the other hand, other players thought club bookings made the courts less accessible. Below is a summary of the feedback received.

Aspects of the system that are working well

- » Predictable and organized approach.
- » Promotes a social environment.
- » Meets the needs of people who want to play the same core group, rotating in an out.

Suggested Improvements

- » Enhance equity through introducing or refining lottery for court allocation.
- » Balancing club bookings with open drop-in.
- » To no longer consider historical agreements.
- » Better way to confirm who has the court at a particular time.



Figure 46: Signs at a court highlighting club booked times. An app or web interface with a QR code placed on the court would be a weather resistant option.

5.4 Recommendations: Tiered Systems

The engagement reveals support for a mixed system of club court booking, drop-in, and individual booking. This mix of systems would effectively serve different preferences for playing and optimize the capacity of courts.

Each municipality can tailor the use of these systems, but some degree of consistency would benefit players through simplicity and predictability. The process is based on a tier system of priorities that allow balancing the use of courts, which also helps to spread out the over-use and under-use that can be seen across the current court system.

The proposed system is outlined in the recommendations on the following pages. It is recommended that the system is prioritized in the sequence below.

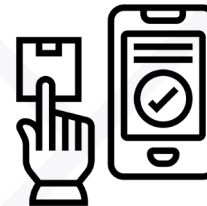
- » First preference should be given to municipal programs.
- » Next preference should be to reserve drop-in time slots.
- » Next preference should be for club block bookings. A recommendation later in this section promotes two categories within clubs to support prioritization.
- » Individual court booking through the season would be available for remaining time slots.



Manage Club Block Bookings



Reserve Self-Regulated Drop-in & City Drop-in Programming



Enable Individual Court Bookings

Recommendation #10

Enable individuals to book courts

Rationale

The engagement revealed support for individuals having the ability to reserve time slots for courts. As discussed earlier in this section, currently the only locations where individuals can book courts are Carnarvon Park (Oak Bay), Cedar Hill and Pearkes Rec Centres (Saanich), and Henderson Recreation (Oak Bay). These last two locations are in multi-purpose gymnasiums that only have pickleball for limited times.

Allowing individuals to book courts would provide a predictable option for players who do not want to wait at drop-in or for other players to finish playing.

Municipalities would need to adjust their own booking systems to enable this ability. The feature should be convenient and allow for seeing court availabilities across the four municipalities.

To ensure a mix of play, municipalities should reserve sufficient time slots for drop-in, clubs and other programming.

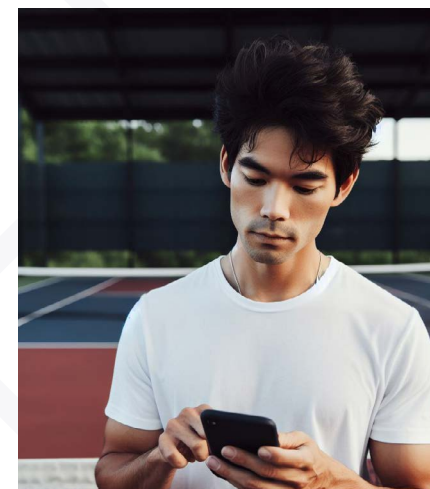


Figure 47: Top left: a City of Victoria poster advertising booking. Bottom left: pickleball players at Carnarvon. Bottom right: an example of someone booking a court using a cellphone.

Recommendation #11

Adopt a joint app/interface showing court availability across partnering municipalities linked to each municipality's existing system

Rationale

Currently, information on court availability is not well known. Particularly at indoor courts, players are able to consult schedules for when drop-in pickleball exists. At other courts, clubs have either posted their reserved time slots on the entrance or organized drop-in socials on social media. The result does not support convenient awareness for players, particularly new players trying to understand where and when they can play.

The other challenge with the status quo is with players disagreeing on who has the court booked or whether the booking is official.

Several respondents in the engagement recommended a single interface that shows court availability across the four municipalities. The interface would be open to the public and could be accessed on any digital device.

Since each municipality has its own booking system, the recommended approach is to use a common interface that draws on basic information from each system, such as whether a court is reserved. The user would then be able to see availabilities and be taken to the municipality's booking system to finalize the booking (through a link).

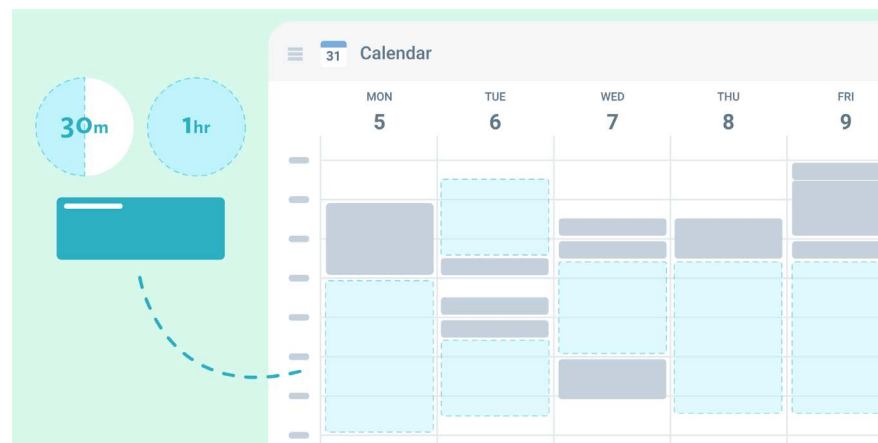


Figure 48: A conceptual calendar view of available time slots.

The most prudent first step would be to see if any of the existing web products currently on the market would be able to deliver this service (see Precedents). If not, a tailor-made solution may be best.

Precedents

An app or web interfacing showing availability across multiple municipalities was not identified. However, there are several services on the market that provide court bookings in an intuitive calendar layout. Some examples include Gametime, Court Reserve, and Pickleball Booker.

Recommendation #12

Initiate a fair system to allocate block booking times for groups

Rationale

Clubs (or collections of players) apply to reserve standing times through the season at certain courts. Given the limited number of courts and demand from clubs, municipalities are challenged to allocate time slots that best utilize capacity.

As discussed earlier, several cities have allocation policies and principles for sports fields and ice rinks. Allocation for courts is not as common, but approaches can be tailored to fit the sport. It is recommended that refinements to the process should be guided by the following:

- Applications for club bookings should distinguish between two categories: Clubs that are formal groups allowing for open membership and Play Groups that are more informal and intend on playing amongst themselves. Clubs should be prioritized above Play Groups. This priority could be accomplished through a lottery among Clubs and a second lottery among Play Groups.
- Historical permits year-to-year may be taken into consideration for Clubs. However, they should not drive allocation for Play Groups. This approach will allow municipalities more flexibility in managing times and group preferences.
- Municipalities should decide on a common or similar date to accept seasonal block bookings.

Precedents

In 2021, the Cowichan Valley Regional District's Kerry Park Recreation published allocation priorities using the following sequence: i) recreation programs ii) local minor/adult user groups and school groups iii) general free play users iv) sport tourism special events and v) out of area organizations.¹



Figure 49: Club players using Central Park. (Image Source: O2)

¹ <https://www.cvrld.ca/DocumentCenter/View/104202/KPRC---Outdoor-Pickleball-Complex---Court-Guidelines-2022-06-23>

Recommendation #13

Adopt paddle-in systems

Rationale

The engagement revealed a strong popularity for drop-in play, and particularly for the paddle-in system. In this system, players insert a paddle into a hold adjacent to courts to indicate that they would like to play next. Currently, this system only exists at Beacon Hill Park, but respondents during the engagement supported its adoption elsewhere.

Drop-in play provides a flexible and accessible option for players to spontaneously visit a court. It also supports a simple and efficient turnover at the courts.

The other benefit to a drop-in system is that it supports a more social setting among players. During the engagement, one respondent noted the larger numbers of players they had met through drop-in.



Figure 50: Paddle-in system at Beacon Hill Park.

Recommendation #14

Reserve drop-in time slots oriented to different skill levels

Rationale

A repeated theme from the engagement was that players preferred drop-in that suited their skill levels. With open drop-in, these respondents argued that some beginners may find the experience more intimidating and advanced players may not receive the level of play they are wanting.

To address this suggestion, municipalities can offer their own programming that splits up different skills. For other drop-in time slots, municipalities may simply choose to encourage clubs or other player-led drop-in to consider following this approach.

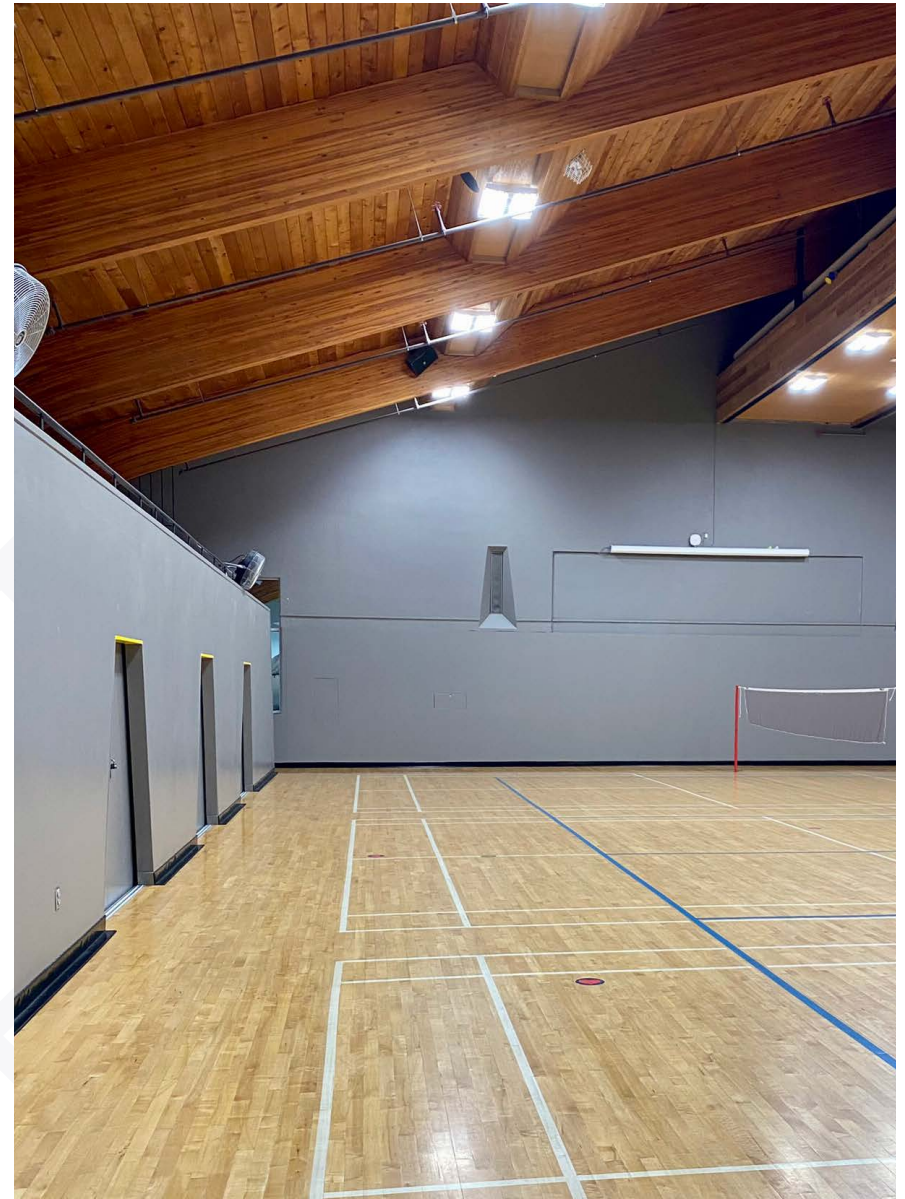


Figure 51: Cedar Hill Recreation. (Image Source: O2)

6 Implementation

6.1 Funding

Most of the recommendations listed below will require funding towards capital or operating needs. Each municipality would need to go through their own budgetary processes.

For recommendations that have a shared impact, municipalities should consider opportunities for collaborative funding between one another. The app/web interface showing court availability is the clearest

example of an action relevant to each municipality. The establishment of a new court hub (such as an indoor dedicated facility) also raises the potential for collaboration. Given land constraints and cross-movement of players, municipalities may decide that it is worth cost-sharing for a facility that does not reside in their own jurisdiction.

Recommendation	Time Horizon
Conduct sound testing at courts adjacent to taller buildings	Short term
Convert courts to tennis only or a new use where recommended sound levels cannot be achieved	Short term
Add sound mitigation or adjust court layouts where doing so would make a meaningful impact	Short term
Install pop-up or seasonal courts	Short term
Undertake a utilization review of tennis courts with setbacks higher than 50m	Short term
Adopt paddle-in systems at courts	Short term
Initiate a fair system to allocate block booking times for groups	Short term
Reserve drop-in time slots oriented to different skill levels	Short term
Enable individuals to book courts	Short term
Adopt a joint app/interface showing court availability across partner municipalities linked to each municipality's existing system	Short term
Add more courts to existing locations	Medium term
Build courts at new park locations	Medium term
Make improvements relating to condition and amenity offerings at existing hubs	Medium term
Partner with a private group to develop an indoor dedicated facility	Long term

6.2 Conceptual arrangements to achieve paths

To help provide a sense of how the different recommended strategies could translate into realizing one of the five paths, the tables provide examples.

Path	Description	Service Level Summary
Path 1: Maintain the same net number of courts	This concept is based on only replacing the decommissioning of some courts with additional courts in new locations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of Service in 2038: 1:6,570 Number of courts: 44 (12 replace)
Path 2: Only Build Hubs in Topaz Park & Fowler Park	The City of Victoria and the District of Saanich are considering the creation of new hubs at Topaz Park and Fowler Park. This path is based on completing these two hubs while decommissioning some existing courts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of Service in 2038: 1:5,900 Number of courts: 49 (12 replace; 5 new)
Path 3: Keep up with Population Growth	This concept is to add inventory in line with future population growth. It also assumes some courts will be decommissioned.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of Service in 2038: 1:5,780 Number of courts: 50 (12 replace; 6 new)
Path 4: Moderate Expansion	This path is oriented towards reducing the difference between the supply of courts compared with benchmarked municipalities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of Service in 2038: 1:4,520 Number of courts: 64 (12 replace; 20 new)
Path 5: Upper Tier Expansion	This path provides a concept for reaching slightly above the comparable average of municipalities reviewed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of Service in 2038: 1:3,530 Number of courts: 82 (12 replace; 38 new)

Table 1: Maintain the same net number of courts

This concept is based on only replacing the decommissioning of some courts.

Level of Service in 2038: 1:6,570

Number of courts: 44 (12 replace)

- Victoria
- Oak Bay
- Esquimalt
- Saanich

Disclaimer:

This exercise is intended to support a decision making, however a detailed site assessment on available space and suitability has not been undertaken. As such, recommendations on the table should only be considered as a concept to be assessed further.

	Court Name	Direction	Existing Courts	Future Courts
Decommission				
●	Franklin Green	Convert to tennis only or other use	1	0
●	Tolmie Park	Convert to tennis only or other use	2	0
●	Majestic Park	Convert to tennis only or other use	1	0
●	Oaklands Park	Convert to tennis only or other use	2	0
●	Hampton Park	Convert to tennis only or other use	2	0
●	Barnard Park	Tennis only and undertake acoustic study	2	0
●	Central Park	Tennis only and undertake acoustic study	2	0
Maintain				
●	Pearkes Indoor Rec	Consider improvements as Hub	8	8
●	Esquimalt High School	Improvements as Neighbourhood Court	2	2
●	Rosedale Park	Dedicate to pickleball only	2	2
●	Esquimalt Rec Outdoor	Consider options to move or cover courts	4	4
●	Carnarvon Park	Options to adjust layout or cover courts	5	5
●	Copley West Park	Consider improvements	2	2
●	McMinn Park	Consider improvements	4	4
●	Prospect Lake Park	Consider improvements	2	2
●	Beacon Hill Park	Consider improvements	3	3
Build More Courts				
●	Topaz Park (NEW)	Build a new 6-court hub	0	6
●	Fowler Park (NEW)	Build a new 6-court hub	0	6
Total			44	44

Table 2: Only Build Hubs in Topaz Park & Fowler Park

The City of Victoria and the District of Saanich are considering the creation of new hubs at Topaz Park and Fowler Park.

This concept looks at how these hubs would impact provisioning outcomes.

Level of Service in 2038: 1:5,900

Number of courts: 49 (12 replace; 5 new)

- Victoria
- Oak Bay
- Esquimalt
- Saanich

Disclaimer:

This exercise is intended to support a decision making, however a detailed site assessment on available space and suitability has not been undertaken. As such, recommendations on the table should only be considered as a concept to be assessed further.

	Court Name	Direction	Existing Courts	Future Courts
Decommission				
●	Franklin Green	Convert to tennis only or other use	1	0
●	Tolmie Park	Convert to tennis only or other use	2	0
●	Majestic Park	Convert to tennis only or other use	1	0
●	Oaklands Park	Convert to tennis only or other use	2	0
●	Hampton Park	Convert to tennis only or other use	2	0
●	Barnard Park	Tennis only and undertake acoustic study	2	0
●	Central Park	Tennis only and undertake acoustic study	2	0
Maintain				
●	Pearkes Indoor Rec	Consider improvements as Hub	8	8
●	Esquimalt High School	Improvements as Neighbourhood Court	2	2
●	Rosedale Park	Dedicate to pickleball only	2	2
●	Esquimalt Rec Outdoor	Consider options to move or cover courts	4	4
●	Carnarvon Park	Options to adjust layout or cover courts	5	5
●	Copley West Park	Consider improvements	2	2
●	McMinn Park	Consider improvements	4	4
●	Prospect Lake Park	Consider improvements	2	2
●	Beacon Hill Park	Consider improvements	3	3
Build More Courts				
●	Topaz Park (NEW)	Build a new 11-court hub	0	11
●	Fowler Park (NEW)	Build a new 6-court hub	0	6
Total			44	49

Table 3: Keep up with Population Growth

This concept is to add inventory in line with future population growth.

Level of Service in 2038: 1:5,782

Number of courts: 50 (12 replace; 6 additions)

- Victoria
- Oak Bay
- Esquimalt
- Saanich

Disclaimer:

This exercise is intended to support a decision making, however a detailed site assessment on available space and suitability has not been undertaken. As such, recommendations on the table should only be considered as a concept to be assessed further.

	Court Name	Direction	Existing Courts	Future Courts
Decommission				
●	Franklin Green	Convert to tennis only or other use	1	0
●	Tolmie Park	Convert to tennis only or other use	2	0
●	Majestic Park	Convert to tennis only or other use	1	0
●	Oaklands Park	Convert to tennis only or other use	2	0
●	Hampton Park	Convert to tennis only or other use	2	0
●	Barnard Park	Tennis only and undertake acoustic study	2	0
●	Central Park	Tennis only and undertake acoustic study	2	0
Maintain				
●	Pearkes Indoor Rec	Consider improvements as Hub	8	8
●	Esquimalt High School	Improvements as Neighbourhood Court	2	2
●	Rosedale Park	Dedicate to pickleball only	2	2
●	Esquimalt Rec Outdoor	Consider options to move or cover courts	4	4
●	Carnarvon Park	Options to adjust layout or cover courts	5	5
●	Copley West Park	Consider improvements	2	2
●	McMinn Park	Consider improvements	4	4
●	Prospect Lake Park	Consider improvements	2	2
Add Courts to Existing Locations				
●	Beacon Hill Park	Consider improvements & add 1 new court	3	4
Build More Courts				
●	Topaz Park (NEW)	Build a new 11-court hub	0	11
●	Fowler Park (NEW)	Build a new 6-court hub	0	6
Total			44	50

Table 4: Moderate Expansion

This path is oriented towards reducing the difference between the supply of courts compared with benchmarked municipalities.

Level of Service in 2038: 1:4,517

Number of courts: 64 (12 replace; 20 new)

- Victoria
- Oak Bay
- Esquimalt
- Saanich

Disclaimer:

This exercise is intended to support a decision making, however a detailed site assessment on available space and suitability has not been undertaken. As such, recommendations on the table should only be considered as a concept to be assessed further.

	Court Name	Direction	Existing Courts	Future Courts
Decommission				
●	Franklin Green	Convert to tennis only or other use	1	0
●	Tolmie Park	Convert to tennis only or other use	2	0
●	Majestic Park	Convert to tennis only or other use	1	0
●	Oaklands Park	Convert to tennis only or other use	2	0
●	Hampton Park	Convert to tennis only or other use	2	0
●	Barnard Park	Tennis only and undertake acoustic study	2	0
●	Central Park	Tennis only and undertake acoustic study	2	0
Maintain				
●	Pearkes Indoor Rec	Consider improvements as Hub	8	8
●	Esquimalt High School	Improvements as Neighbourhood Court	2	2
●	Rosedale Park	Dedicate to pickleball only	2	2
●	Esquimalt Rec Outdoor	Consider options to move or cover courts	4	4
●	Carnarvon Park	Consider adjusting layout or cover courts	5	5
●	Copley West Park	Consider improvements	2	2
Add More to Existing Locations				
●	Prospect Lake Park	Consider improvements & add 2 courts	2	4
●	McMinn Park	Consider improvements & add 6 courts	4	10
●	Beacon Hill Park	Consider improvements & add 7 courts	3	10
Build More Courts				
●	Topaz Park (NEW)	Build a new 11-court hub	0	11
●	Fowler Park (NEW)	Build a new 6-court hub	0	6
Total			44	64

Table 5: Upper Tier Expansion

This table provides a concept for reaching slightly above the comparable average of municipalities reviewed.

Level of Service in 2038: 1:3,525

Number of courts: 82 (12 replace; 38 additional court)

- Victoria ● Oak Bay
- Esquimalt ● Saanich

Disclaimer:

This exercise is intended to support a decision making, however a detailed site assessment on available space and suitability has not been undertaken. As such, recommendations on the table should only be considered as a concept to be assessed further.

¹ Location is left open for future opportunities. This could be an opportunity for a joint-venture between municipalities or with a private entity.

	Court Name	Direction	Existing Courts	Future Courts
Decommission				
●	Franklin Green	Convert to tennis only or other use	1	0
●	Tolmie Park	Convert to tennis only or other use	2	0
●	Majestic Park	Convert to tennis only or other use	1	0
●	Oaklands Park	Convert to tennis only or other use	2	0
●	Hampton Park	Convert to tennis only or other use	2	0
●	Barnard Park	Tennis only and undertake acoustic study	2	0
●	Central Park	Tennis only and undertake acoustic study	2	0
Maintain				
●	Pearkes Indoor Rec	Consider improvements as Hub	8	8
●	Esquimalt High School	Consider improvements as Neighbourhood Court	2	2
●	Rosedale Park	Dedicate to pickleball only	2	2
●	Esquimalt Rec Outdoor	Consider options to move or cover courts	4	4
●	Carnarvon Park	Consider options to adjust layout or cover courts	5	5
Add More to Existing Locations				
●	Copley West Park	Add 2 new courts (if possible on far side of field)	2	4
●	McMinn Park	Add 6 new courts	4	10
●	Prospect Lake Park	Add 4 new courts	2	6
●	Beacon Hill Park	Add 7 new courts	3	10
Build More Courts				
●	Topaz Park (NEW)	Build a new 11-court hub	0	11
●	Fowler Park (NEW)	Build a new 6-court hub	0	6
●	Indoor Facility Hub (NEW) ¹	Build a new 14-court hub	0	14
Total			44	82

