



PICKLEBALL IN FAIRFAX COUNTY

DRAFT — September 2021



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report on the Park Authority’s Pickleball Study presents findings and recommendations on how to strategically respond to increasing demand for the sport. While these recommendations will need to be updated as courts are added and popularity of the sport changes, they provide a framework on which to base the Park Authority’s decision-making.

The study finds that the Park Authority’s approach to providing pickleball facilities is comparable to similar jurisdictions, although other providers have employed different strategies in response to the demand. Current shared-use courts can satisfy most players with relatively minor improvements, yet opportunities exist to leverage the growing interest in the sport. These include creating more options for pickleball-only courts, providing pickleball-only and shared-use courts in groups (minimum 4) to facilitate drop-in play and larger group gatherings, and establishing standardized design and construction guidelines to maintain consistent standards across the park system.

Opportunities to provide new pickleball courts or modify existing tennis or basketball courts exist and should be explored using one of three strategies:

- Use the County’s existing public court inventory to create pickleball opportunities (page 34) as part of the Park Authority’s ongoing maintenance efforts
- Construct planned-but-unbuilt courts to provide pickleball-only courts (page 35)
- Plan for pickleball in new locations through the park master planning process.

This report’s recommendations should be considered alongside the need for ongoing community engagement with court users, park neighbors, and other interested stakeholders. The Park Authority has valued the contributions of the community of players and remains committed to ongoing dialog as these recommendations are implemented and as new opportunities emerge to address growing demand.

STUDY BACKGROUND

Introduction

Pickleball has grown in popularity in recent years. To address the pickleball community’s desire for more courts in Fairfax County, the Fairfax County Park Authority (“Park Authority” or “FCPA”) undertook this study to address pickleball as part of the county’s existing suite of recreational opportunities. The scope of the study was threefold:

- Provide analysis and recommendations to enable the Park Authority to strategically respond to community requests for pickleball courts.
- Guide Park Authority decisionmakers in identifying, evaluating, and designing suitable pickleball locations and facilities; and
- Recommend geographic locations for future pickleball courts to serve the county’s residents.

While this study is comprehensive, it is not intended to serve as the sole source of information regarding pickleball and its implementation/management. It is the intent that the study’s recommendations would be implemented collaboratively through the Park Authority’s Planning & Development, Park Operations, Park Services, and Resource Management Divisions.

What is Pickleball?

Pickleball is a racquet-based sport that combines elements of tennis, badminton, and ping pong. It may be played outdoors or indoors and is suitable for both singles and doubles play. The play experience varies, with some players focusing on the social atmosphere of a casual game and others preferring the fast pace of tournament-style competition. Pickleball courts and nets are smaller than their tennis counterparts. Historically, pickleball first found popularity among active adults and retirees as a less physically demanding alternative to tennis; today the sport is enjoyed by all ages and skill levels.

An important aspect of pickleball is its social and community-based style of play. Also referred to as Drop-In play, a single or group of pickleball courts may draw as few as four – and in some cases up to 40 players at a time, some actively playing on the courts, while others are gathered nearby waiting for their turn. These sessions of drop-in play generally last between one and four hours. The ability to support Drop-In play is a significant preference voiced by Fairfax County’s pickleball community.

What is Drop-In Play?

Where players “drop in” without advance reservation* to play with other drop-in players. Play follows a rotation system for those players waiting for court space.

Example Formats:

- **2-3 hours reserved each morning, on all courts, for all players.**
- **A 2-hour block of time reserved on selected days, on selected courts, for Drop-In players of specific skill levels.**

** Courts may need to be reserved by a group or scheduled for drop-in play during specific times; the number of individual players attending a drop-in event varies.*

Information from Fairfax County Advocates for Pickleball, July 2021.

In terms of overall activity, required support infrastructure, playing time, and potential for conflicts with other sports, *“Drop-In” pickleball resembles field-based sport more than it does other court sports, as participants include both players and spectators using a facility over a block of time.*

On a national level, USA Pickleball (formerly the U.S.A. Pickleball Association) promotes the growth and development of the sport by promulgating rules, regulations, tournament guidelines, and sponsorship opportunities. USA Pickleball has an organized network of regional and local ambassadors that advocate for the sport and assist recreational providers in developing the sport.

Definitions of Court Configurations

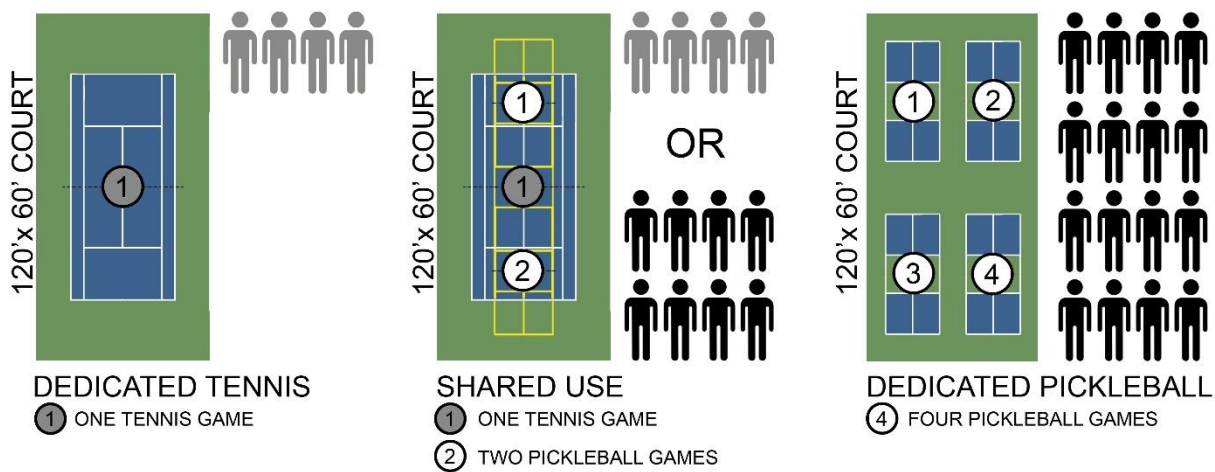
This report often references various court configurations for tennis and pickleball. For clarity, the following definitions may be used. Figure 1 illustrates each configuration and the varying numbers of simultaneous games and players (see also the full layout recommendations on page 37) and highlights the need to provide amenities such as parking to support the number of users.

- **Tennis-Only or Dedicated Tennis Courts:** Court and net dimensions are intended solely for tennis use.
- **Shared-Use Courts:** Tennis or basketball courts that also provide for pickleball. These courts typically have a fixed central tennis net and employ portable pickleball nets. As described in the study’s recommendations, a layout of two pickleball courts per tennis court is preferred. The Park Authority also provides shared-use courts as one pickleball court per tennis court, with

both sports sharing the tennis net; however, this is not an ideal layout as it accommodates fewer pickleball games and relies on the tennis net, which is taller than a regulation-sized pickleball net.

- **Pickleball-Only or Dedicated Pickleball Courts:** specialty regulation-sized pickleball courts and nets are constructed solely to provide for pickleball. The courts are used for no other sport. For reference to layout and sizing, four pickleball courts occupy an area similar to one tennis court.

FIGURE 1: EXAMPLES OF DEDICATED AND SHARED-USE COURT LAYOUTS



Methodology

The pickleball study employed various methods of data collection and analysis. This study presents a holistic approach and is the result of collaboration through a cross-agency project team consisting of park planners, landscape architects, park operations, maintenance, and construction staff, Neighborhood and Community Services (NCS) community center staff, Park Authority RECenter operators, and NCS court scheduling and programming specialists.

Research methods included:

- literature review;
- industry best practices as well as practices of comparable recreational providers
- outreach to identified stakeholders;
- public community survey on pickleball play and preferences
- geospatial analysis;
- demand forecasting; and
- similar park planning methods courts, for all players.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section outlines the study's key findings and recommendations to provide pickleball courts in the county. These findings and recommendations are discussed in more detail in the body of this report.

Key Findings

- In general, use of the Park Authority's outdoor courts is on the rise. Like other recreational amenities, parks have enjoyed increased popularity during the COVID-19 pandemic due to the role they play in public health, physical and mental wellness, and how they provide outdoor recreational and social opportunities during this unique time. Local trends mirror those at the regional and national levels.
- The Park Authority's pickleball offerings are similar to comparably sized jurisdictions (i.e., serving similar land areas and number of residents), and generally on par with neighboring parks and recreation providers regarding the number of courts available on a per capita basis.
- As of late Fall 2021, the Park Authority will have 50 outdoor pickleball courts on shared tennis courts, and two pickleball-only courts at Wakefield Park. In the 18 months prior to this report, 19 pickleball courts were added to existing tennis courts and the two pickleball-only courts were constructed, representing a 68 percent net increase in the number of pickleball courts.
- Of survey respondents, 62 percent indicated that they are willing to drive up to 20 minutes to access a court. As of late Fall 2021, 99.8 percent of county residents will be within a 20-minute drive of a Park Authority or NCS pickleball venue. Additionally, 77.3 percent of County residents are within a ten-minute drive of a Park Authority or NCS pickleball court.
- Current court configurations generally suit small groups (65 percent of those surveyed) and casual use. Options are limited for the 35% of those surveyed who prefer Drop-In group play (as described on page 7), tournaments, and pickleball-only courts not shared with other sports.
- Provision of pickleball-only facilities, either through conversion of existing courts or construction of new courts, will require planning and funding for the courts as well as any necessary supporting infrastructure, such as Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant access, parking, court lighting, fencing, and ongoing maintenance

Study Recommendations

1. **Adopt site selection criteria** (see guidance starting on page 30) to provide a standardized evaluation method to determine whether introduction of pickleball at a park or site is appropriate and under what conditions.
2. **Adopt court layout and design specifications** (page 37) to guide the construction and maintenance of shared use and pickleball-only courts. The specifications detail court dimensions and standards, both for individual courts and groups of pickleball-only courts at given locations.
3. **Starting in Fiscal Year 2022, include pickleball in the Park Authority's existing court maintenance and renovation efforts.** Prior to scheduled maintenance, a court's potential for shared use or conversion to pickleball-only should be assessed using a defined process (see Using the Existing Court Inventory: on page 34). If introducing shared use, two pickleball courts per tennis court should be considered. If converting from tennis-only to pickleball-only courts, consider four pickleball courts per tennis court area (see Design Best Practices and Standards on page 37).
4. **Using the 2024 Park Bond and other funding sources, consider the design and construction of at least one pickleball-only facility suitable for large group Drop-In play and tournaments.** The facility should provide a minimum of six lighted pickleball courts. Recommended areas of the county, based on the Park Authority's master planned-but-unbuilt capacity, are shown on page 35. The Park Authority Board should determine how many facilities to fund based on county-wide needs.
5. **In the 2026 Needs Assessment, consider whether a standalone countywide service level standard for pickleball courts is justified.** Any recommended standard should be based on an assessment of assets, grounded in a statistically valid public survey conducted as part of the Needs Assessment process, to identify existing and projected service gaps per the standards of the *Commission for the Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA)*.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Targeted stakeholder engagement has been critical in informing the Park Authority of local and regional trends, preferences, and court usage of pickleball, tennis, and other racquet-based sports competing for limited physical resources. The following stakeholders provided input and subject matter expertise outside of the public survey:

- U.S. Tennis Association (USTA)
- USA Pickleball Ambassadors Program
- Fairfax County Advocates for Pickleball (FCAP)
- Northern Virginia Tennis League
- Fairfax County Athletic Council
- Fairfax Area Commission on Aging
- Individual county tennis players' groups
- Regional parks and recreation staff members
- Various homeowner and community associations

Community meetings with stakeholder groups allowed for dialogue early in the study and helped the team to better understand the desire for pickleball, its unique play experience, and the potential impacts on other racquet sports and park activities. Staff held meetings via phone and videoconferencing software due to the restrictions on in-person interaction during the COVID-19 pandemic. Multiple calls, meetings, presentations, and extended email exchanges were conducted over the course of the study. In addition to the above organizations, staff routinely met with members of the Board of Supervisors and their staff, Park Authority Board members, and other County officials.

Public Survey Highlights

The public was invited to participate in a survey from December 2020 to January 2021. The Park Authority's Pickleball Study webpage hosted the study using Publicinput.com, a public engagement platform and survey software tool. Information about the survey helped FCPA better understand pickleball use, preferences, and concerns. Over 1,800 responses to the survey were received.

The results of the survey, considered along with other analysis and stakeholder input, helped inform the recommendations in this report. The following figures are derived from the survey results and provide a general understanding of pickleball use within Fairfax County. Approximately 78 percent of respondents indicated they have played pickleball within the last year. These survey results are used as a planning resource for future pickleball opportunities throughout this report.

This section presents highlights from the survey results; the complete survey results, as provided by PublicInput.com, are provided in Appendix A.

FIGURE 2: SURVEY RESULTS: LENGTH OF VISIT

How long is your typical visit?

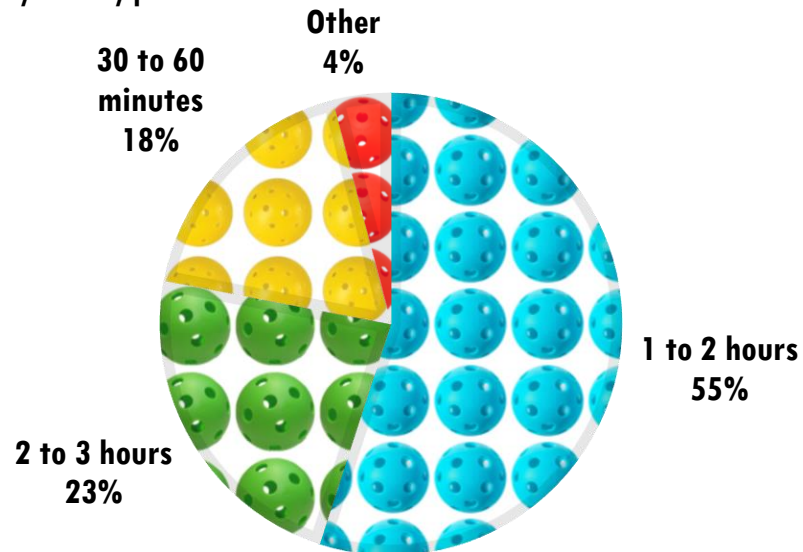


FIGURE 3: SURVEY RESULTS: FREQUENCY OF PLAY

How often do you play?

1,395 respondents

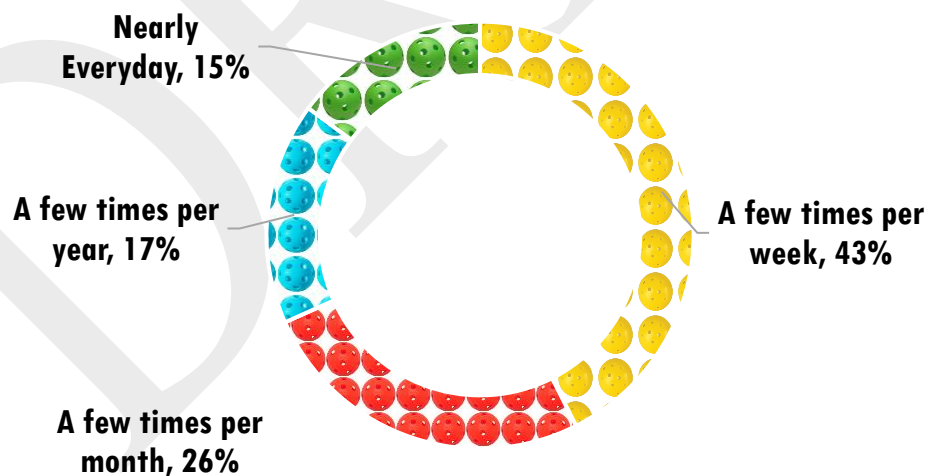


FIGURE 4: SURVEY RESULTS: WALKING VS. DRIVING TO PLAY

Do you typically walk or drive?

1,323 respondents

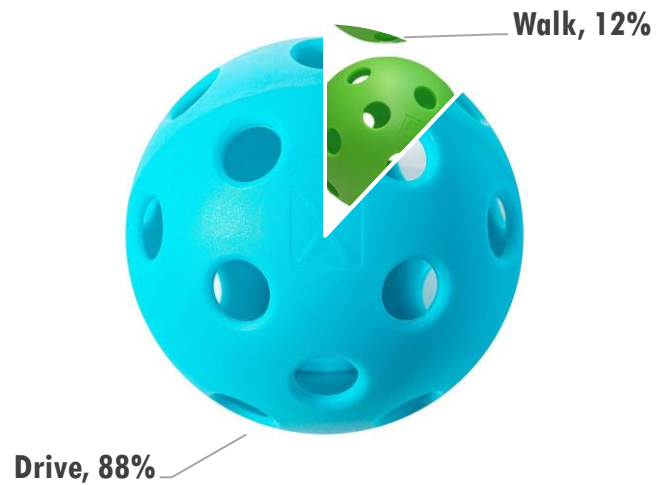


FIGURE 5: SURVEY RESULTS: HOW FAR PLAYERS ARE WILLING TO DRIVE

We're willing to drive...

1,325 respondents

Up to 10 minutes 14%

Up to 15 minutes 21%

Up to 20 minutes 38%

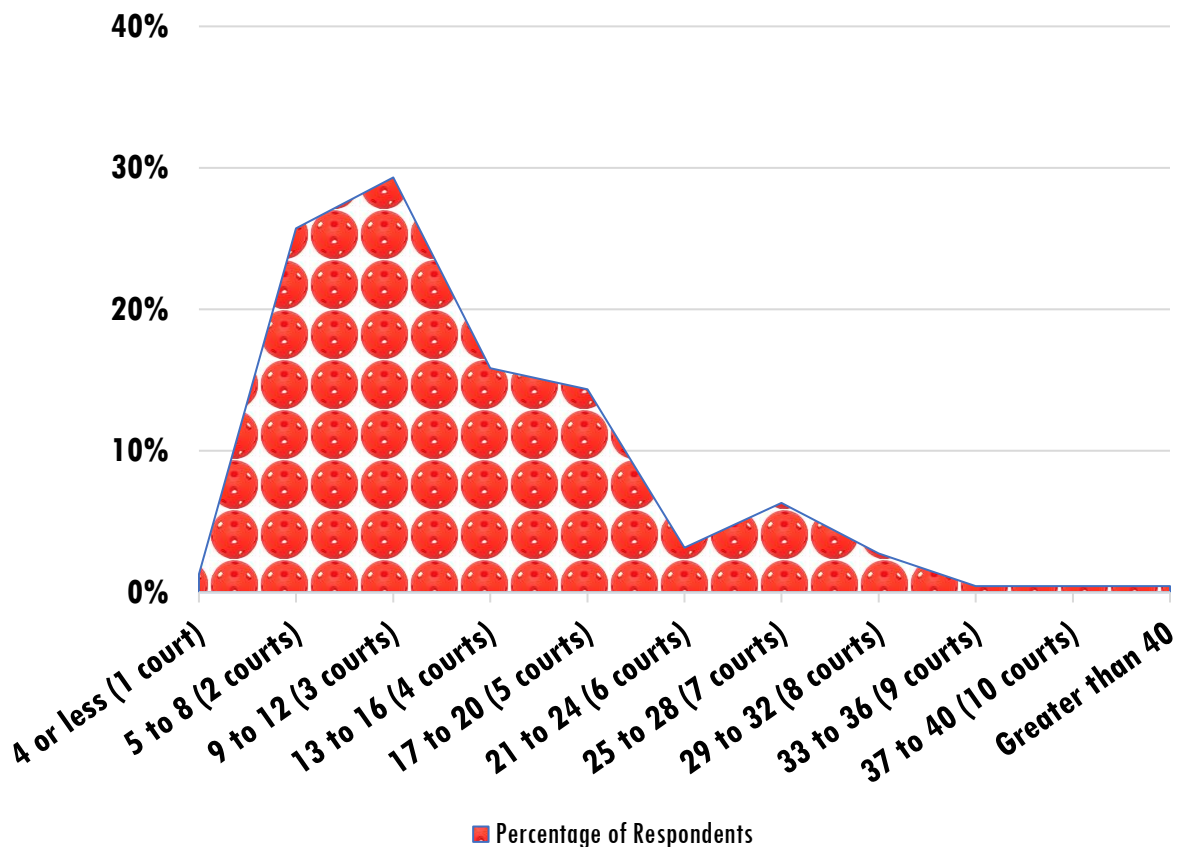
More than 20 minutes 24%

Other times 3%

The survey yielded a key finding about driving access to pickleball courts. Of respondents, 88 percent indicated that they drove to play pickleball, and 62 percent would be willing to drive at least 20 minutes. Accordingly, drive time to a court is a primary factor considered when recommending the construction of dedicated pickleball courts. Given the high percentage of drivers, parking is necessary to accommodate the park's current and planned uses, plus any additional spaces required for pickleball players. Driving access to the county's current facilities is discussed in Proximity and Access on page 19.

FIGURE 6: DROP-IN PLAY GROUP SIZES

When you play pickleball as part of a group, how many players are at a typical gathering?



The survey also sought to determine how many players attend a typical group or Drop-In session. As shown in Figure 6, 72 percent of respondents indicated that they typically play with 16 or fewer players when playing as part of an organized or social group. This would equate to four courts needed to accommodate simultaneous play. Input also suggested that four or more courts allow for players to divide games by skill levels, allowing for greater participation.

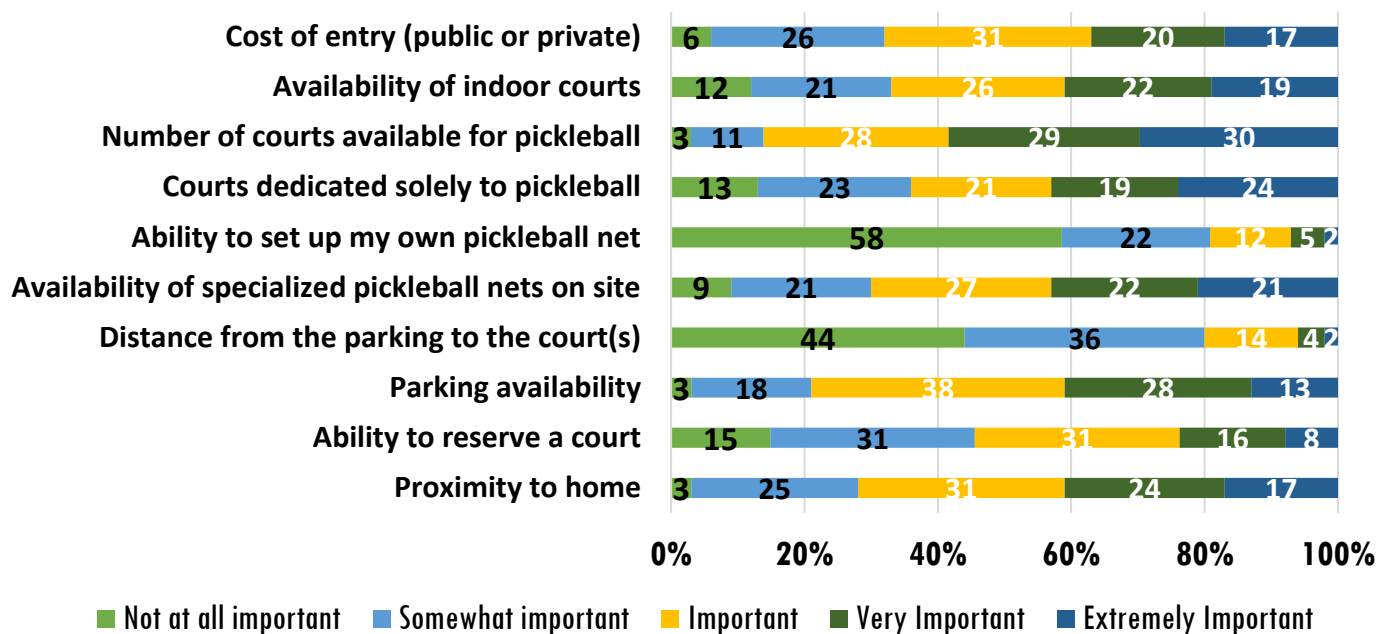
Survey participants were asked whether certain characteristics or support amenities were important to them, shown in Figure 7. Factors ranking most important included:

- the number of pickleball courts available for play;
- having specialized nets on site (versus utilizing a shared tennis net or bring-your-own portable net);
- availability of parking;
- availability of indoor courts; and
- availability of courts dedicated solely for pickleball.

Similarly, respondents indicated that while available parking was important, the distance from the parking lot to the courts was not; the ability to bring one's own net did not rank as particularly important (that is, players prefer nets provided on site over bringing one's own), nor did the opportunity to reserve court times in advance.

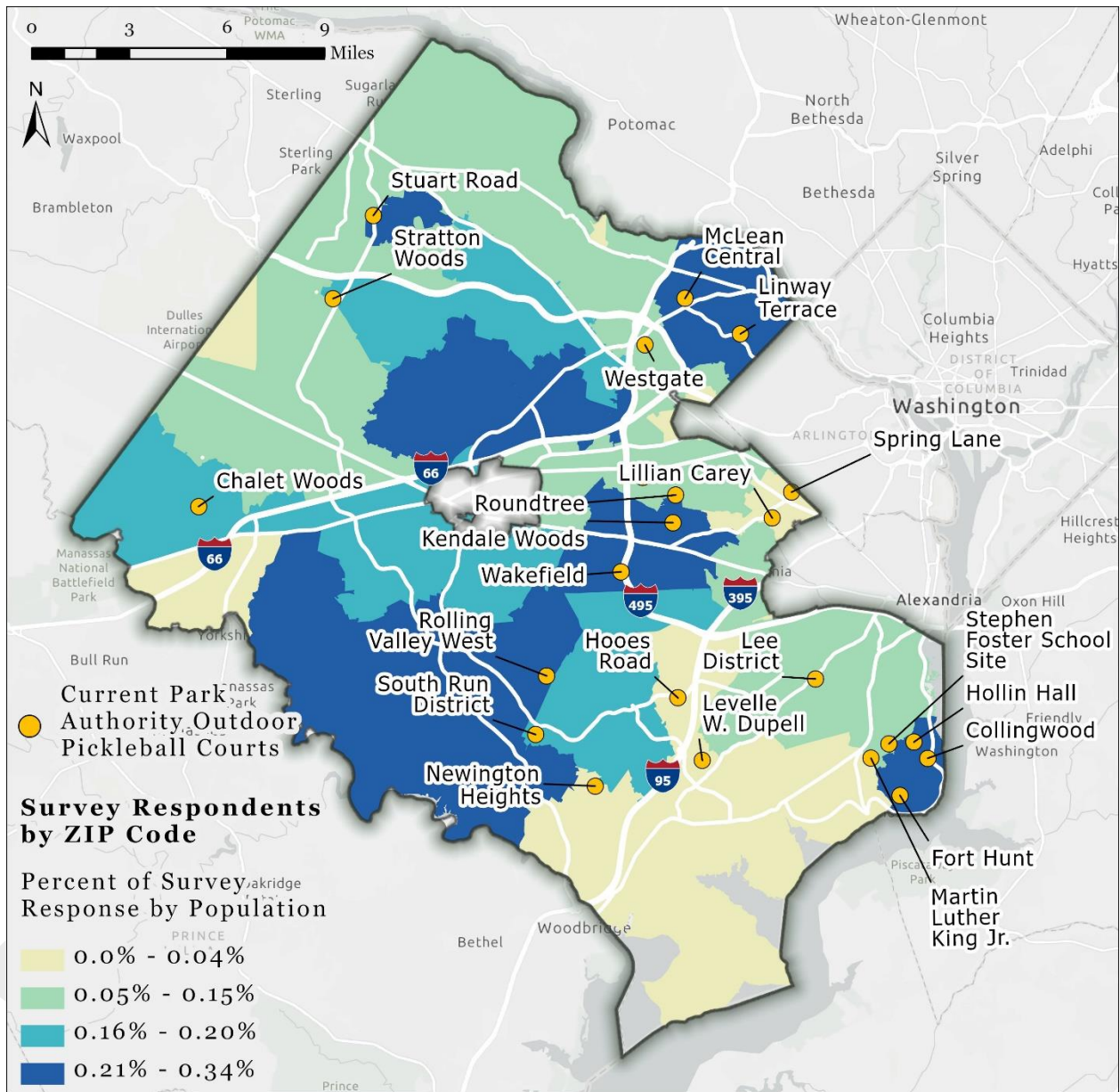
FIGURE 7: FEATURES OF IMPORTANCE TO PLAYERS

How important are each of these factors in your decision of where to play pickleball?



Further, respondents were asked to provide their home ZIP code, and 87 percent responded. Mapping this data provided a general indicator of where interest in the survey was greatest. Figure 8 illustrates respondents per ZIP code provided, as a function of the total population of that ZIP code. For example, in the 22015 ZIP code, the total population is 44,250 and there were 90 survey responses. Thus, survey respondents represented 0.2 percent of the ZIP code's total population. The level of participation shown in Figure 8 ranges from 0 to 0.34 percent.

FIGURE 8: SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY ZIP CODE AND PARK AUTHORITY OUTDOOR PICKLEBALL COURTS



The number of survey responses per ZIP Code range from 0 responses to 117 responses, for a total of 1,595 responses across the county. "Percent of Survey Response by Population" was calculated by dividing the total number of survey responses by the total population in that ZIP Code. Population data is the 2019 Integrated Parcel Lifecycle System (IPLS) data produced by the Fairfax County Department of Management and Budget.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Existing Park Authority Outdoor Pickleball Courts

As of late Fall 2021, the Park Authority will offer two pickleball-only courts at Wakefield Park and 48 pickleball shared-use courts with tennis or basketball at sites throughout the county. These facilities are identified in Table 1. All these courts provide one pickleball court per tennis court with a shared central net except for Collingwood Park, Fort Hunt Park, Rolling Valley West Park, Round Tree Park, Stephen Foster School Site (Walt Whitman), and Wakefield Park, which each have two pickleball courts overlaid per tennis court. It should be noted that the number of pickleball games accommodated could be increased if all existing shared-use courts were restriped to accommodate two pickleball courts per tennis court as diagrammed in the *Shared Use Tennis/Pickleball Courts* section of this report on Page 38.

TABLE 1: PARK AUTHORITY OUTDOOR PICKLEBALL COURTS

PARK	# OF PICKLEBALL COURTS	NOTES
<i>Chalet Woods</i>	3	Tennis Courts have 1 PB Court Each
<i>Collingwood</i>	4	Tennis Courts have 2 PB Courts Each
<i>Fort Hunt</i>	4	Tennis Courts have 2 PB Courts Each
<i>Hollin Hall</i>	2	BOS Owned. Tennis Courts have 1 PB Court Each
<i>Hooes Road</i>	2	Tennis Courts have 1 PB Court Each
<i>Kendale Woods</i>	2	Tennis Courts have 1 PB Court Each
<i>Lee District</i>	1	Tennis Courts have 1 PB Court Each
<i>Lillian Carey</i>	2	Tennis Courts have 1 PB Court Each
<i>Linway Terrace</i>	2	Tennis Courts have 1 PB Court Each
<i>Levelle W. Dupell</i>	1	Tennis Courts have 1 PB Court Each
<i>Martin Luther King Jr.</i>	2	Tennis Courts have 1 PB Court Each
<i>McLean Central</i>	2	Tennis Courts have 1 PB Court Each
<i>Newington Heights</i>	2	Tennis Courts have 1 PB Court Each
<i>Providence RECenter (Outdoor)</i>	1	Half Basketball Court has 1 PB Court
<i>Rolling Valley West</i>	2	Tennis Court has 2 PB Courts
<i>Roundtree</i>	2	Tennis Court has 2 PB Courts
<i>South Run District</i>	2	Tennis Courts have 1 PB Court Each
<i>Spring Lane</i>	1	Tennis Courts have 1 PB Court Each
<i>Stephen Foster School Site (Walt Whitman)</i>	2	One tennis court lined for 2 PB Courts
<i>Stratton Woods</i>	2	Tennis Courts have 1 PB Court Each
<i>Stuart Road</i>	1	Tennis Courts have 1 PB Court Each
<i>Wakefield</i>	6	Two Pickleball-Only Courts Two Tennis Courts with 2 PB Courts each
<i>Westgate</i>	2	Tennis Courts have 1 PB Court Each
TOTAL	50	2 Pickleball-Only/48 Shared-Use Courts

Offerings at RECenters

In addition to the existing 50 pickleball courts offered at parks, the Park Authority offers six indoor pickleball courts through RECenters as shown in Table 2. These offerings are dependent upon operating hours, scheduling, and the demand for other court-based sports.

TABLE 2: PICKLEBALL OFFERINGS AT PARK AUTHORITY RECENTERS

	# OF PICKLEBALL COURTS	SCHEDULING	NOTES
<i>Lee District</i>	2	Classes only. Reservations planned for future.	Striping taped on floor. Could accommodate more for events.
<i>Providence</i>	Varies (Taped Lines)	Varies	Programming and Classes
<i>Spring Hill</i>	4	Classes only. Reservations planned for future.	Striping taped on floor

Offerings through Fairfax County Neighborhood and Community Services (NCS)

While the Park Authority owns and maintains a system of public parks, RECenters, and other facilities, the Fairfax County Department of Neighborhood and Community Services (NCS) operates its own network of Community Centers (CC), Teen Centers, Senior Centers, and Neighborhood and Family Resource Centers. Both agencies provide recreational opportunities to the community. While NCS centrally schedules the County's athletic fields and gyms at public parks and schools, the scheduling of tennis, pickleball, and multiuse courts is the responsibility of the individual sites. Table 3 details the current pickleball offerings available through NCS.

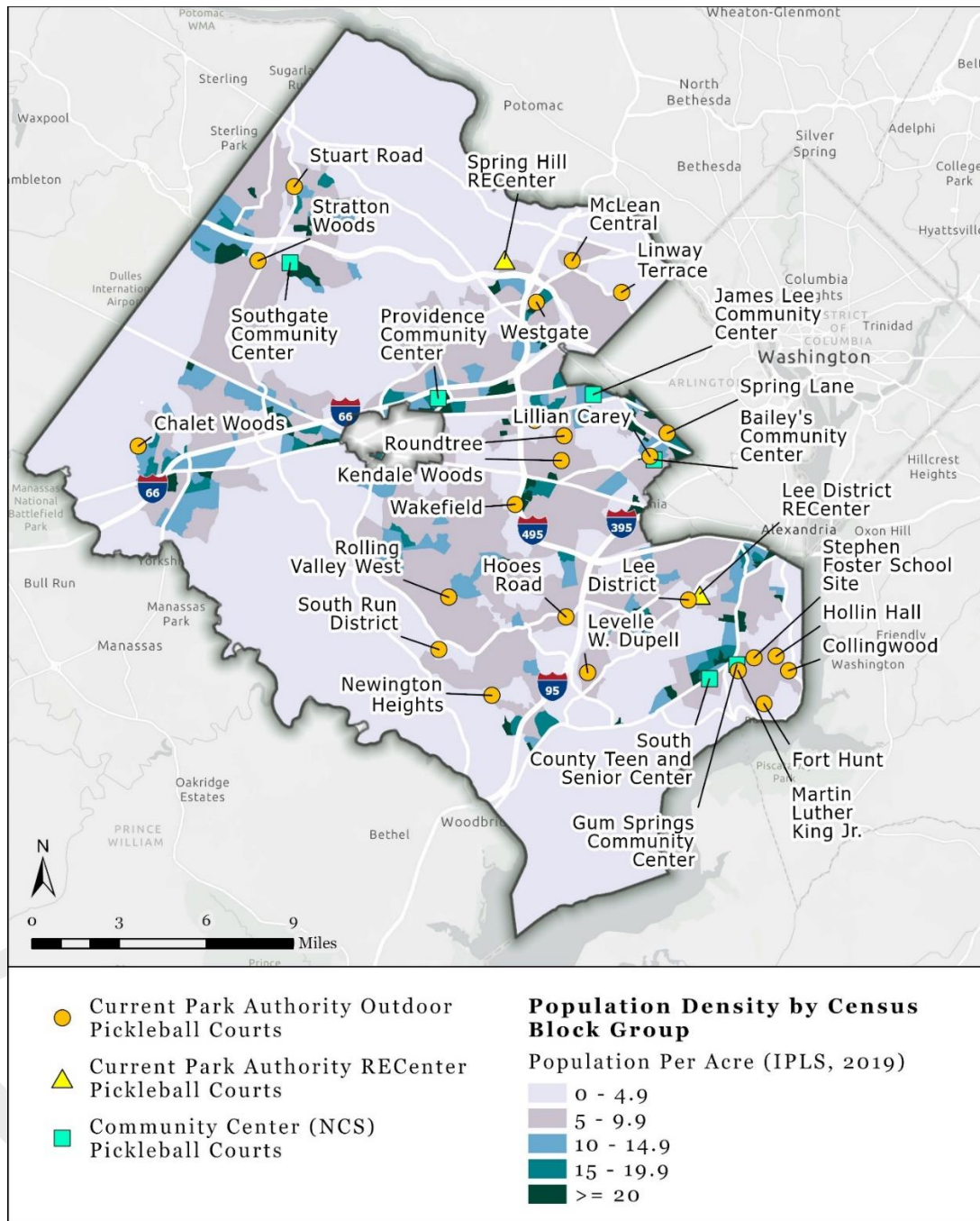
TABLE 3: NCS PICKLEBALL OFFERINGS

	# OF PICKLEBALL COURTS	SCHEDULING	NOTES
<i>Bailey's CC</i>	2 to 4	By appointment. Open play and classes planned	
<i>Gum Springs CC</i>	2	By appointment. Open play and classes planned	
<i>James Lee CC</i>	2	By appointment, no open play	Taped lines
<i>South County Teen and Senior Center</i>	3		No taped lines
<i>Providence CC</i>	2	By appointment, no open play	Taped Lines
<i>Southgate CC</i>	2	By appointment, no open play	Taped Lines

Pickleball Facilities and Population: Proximity and Access

Figure 9 maps the locations of Park Authority and NCS pickleball offerings against the county's population density. In planning for parks, recreation, and other facilities, population density is often considered; locating facilities near population centers allows for a greater number of residents to easily access the service. Additionally, this population-based approach can be used to broadly determine any gaps in service based on proximity.

FIGURE 9: POPULATION DENSITY AND PARK AUTHORITY/NCS PICKLEBALL LOCATIONS



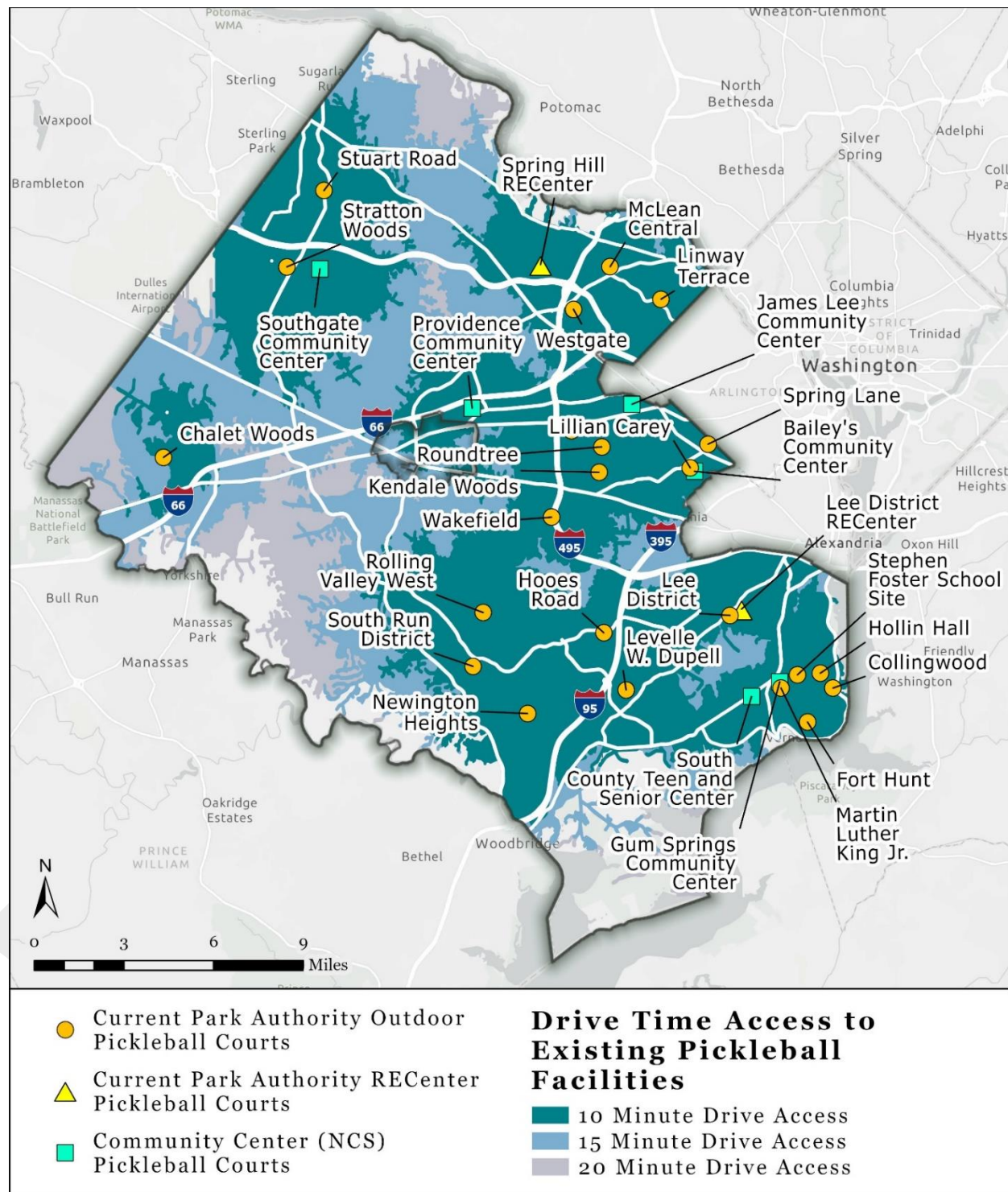
In the public survey, 88 percent of respondents indicated that they drive to their pickleball venue, many were willing to drive 20 minutes or more to a venue that meets their needs, and high importance was placed on the availability of parking at a given location. Accordingly, drive access is an appropriate metric by which to analyze existing and potential pickleball locations. This does not discount the consideration of pickleball in parks accessible by walking or other means; however, it is anticipated that

pickleball opportunities will continue to serve residents on a countywide or regional basis and that driving access should be planned for accordingly.

Figure 10 shows Fairfax County's existing public pickleball courts and the approximate drive time to a facility from within the County. An overwhelming 99.8 percent of County residents are within 20 minutes of a pickleball court, 96.5 percent are within 15 minutes, and 77.3 percent are within a 10-minute drive of an FCPA or NCS pickleball venue.

However, this near-ubiquitous coverage of the county's population does not account for whether the courts provide an optimal play experience for all players. Current court configurations generally suit small groups (65 percent of surveyed players) and casual use. Conversely, 35 percent of surveyed players indicated that they prefer groups of four or more, with group sizes ranging from 4 to 60. Of these, 72 percent play in groups of 16 or fewer. This indicates a need for more pickleball courts grouped in each location to support group and Drop-In play.

FIGURE 10: DRIVE TIME ACCESS TO EXISTING PICKLEBALL FACILITIES



Pickleball through other Organizations

Other pickleball providers, such as the Reston Association and private clubs, provide access to opportunities that are not included in this study as they are not available to the public without fees or membership.

Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) is a public provider of tennis and basketball courts in the county. FCPS courts maintained by the Park Authority were considered in this study. As with other public providers of recreational facilities, FCPS's courts and pickleball offerings may help meet community interest in the sport, and coordination with FCPS is appropriate to increase pickleball offerings.

INDUSTRY TRENDS AND COMPARISON TO OTHER PROVIDERS

As part of this study, staff sought to benchmark nationwide trends and other jurisdictions' pickleball offerings to understand how Fairfax County's offerings align. This is a typical component of park planning studies and provides decision makers with additional context into how the industry is changing to address shifting recreational preferences and demographics.

Trends in Tennis and Pickleball

As pickleball grows in popularity, many public parks and recreation providers have begun to provide pickleball offerings as an addition to tennis and other racquet sports. Where pickleball has been introduced, the courts have been provided as either shared-use or dedicated courts as described on page 7.

Tennis and pickleball trends are compared as part of this report since there are similarities between the sports and they often share court space within the County.

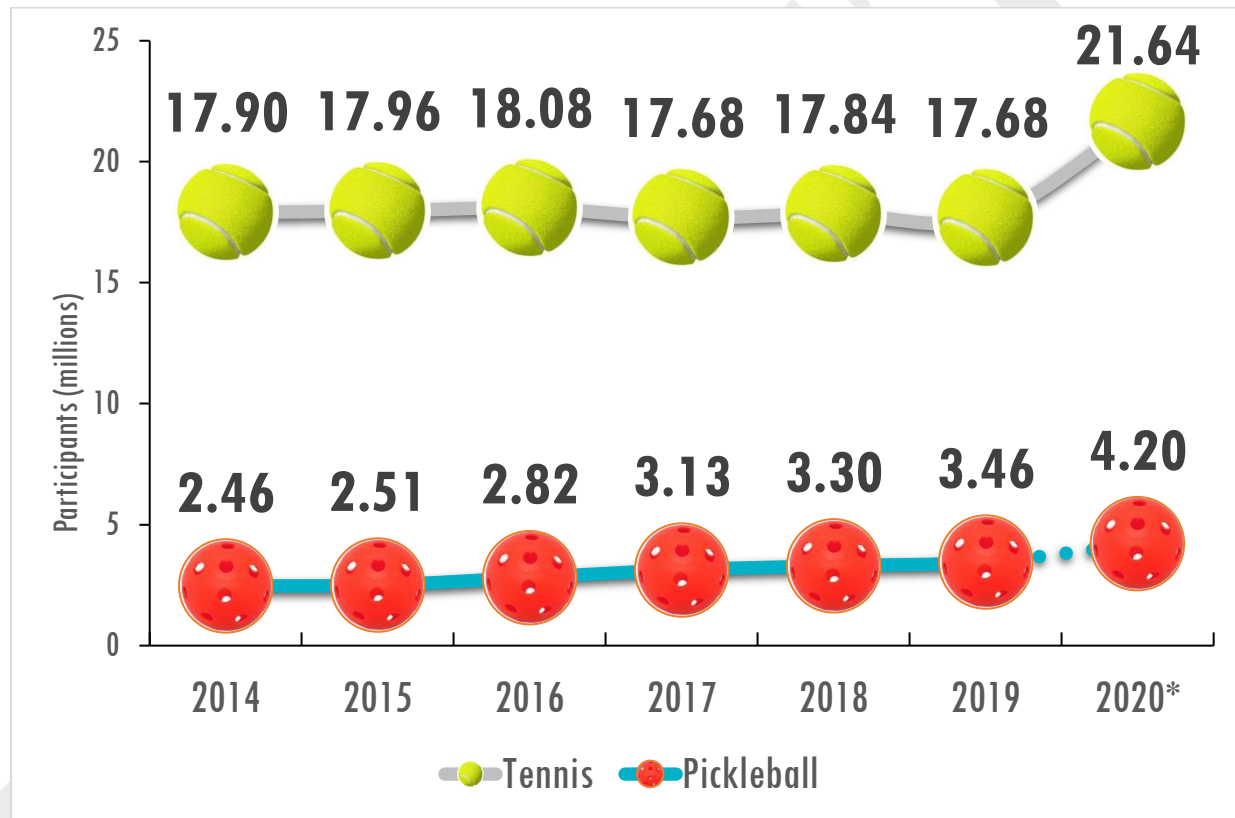
According to the Sports and Fitness Industry Association (SFIA), the sport of pickleball has 4.2 million participants nationally, representing a 1.1 percent participation rate in the United States (2019-2020). 63 percent of players are casual (1 to 12 times per year), while 37 percent are core players (13 times or more per year). Total participation has grown an average 7.1 percent over the past five years; 2020 saw a growth rate of 21.3 percent, attributed to overall increased parks and recreation using during the SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) pandemic. ¹

¹ Sports & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA), Sports, Fitness and Leisure, Topline Participation Report, 2020. Data for pickleball in Calendar Year 2020 is provided by U.S. Pickleball, citing the 2021 SFIA Topline Participation Report which, as of this writing, has not been formally released. This study's authors relied on this data to estimate the change in participation in 2020 due to the SARS CoV-2 (COVID-19) pandemic. According to weekly park use surveys conducted by the National Recreation and Parks Association (2020), parks agencies saw increases in visitor numbers as public outdoor spaces played a heightened role in the public's physical and mental health and wellbeing in 2020.

Comparatively, the sport of tennis had 21.64 million participants, representing a 7.1 percent participation rate in the United States. Participation in the sport has increased 22 percent from 2019 to 2020.² This increase can also be attributed to COVID-19 activities; participation remained relatively steady at 17.68-18.02 million players in 2014-2020. While longer term tennis trends show declining or stable participation, the sheer number of participants demands the continued support of this sport.³

Figure 11 illustrates the estimated participation figures for both sports.

FIGURE 11: NATIONAL PARTICIPATION RATES OF TENNIS AND PICKLEBALL SINCE 2014



7.1%

Tennis Participation Rate, 2020

1.1%

Pickleball Participation Rate, 2020*

² Sports & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA), Sports, Fitness and Leisure Topline Participation Report, 2019.

³ Fairfax County Park Authority Needs Assessment (2016), p. 104.

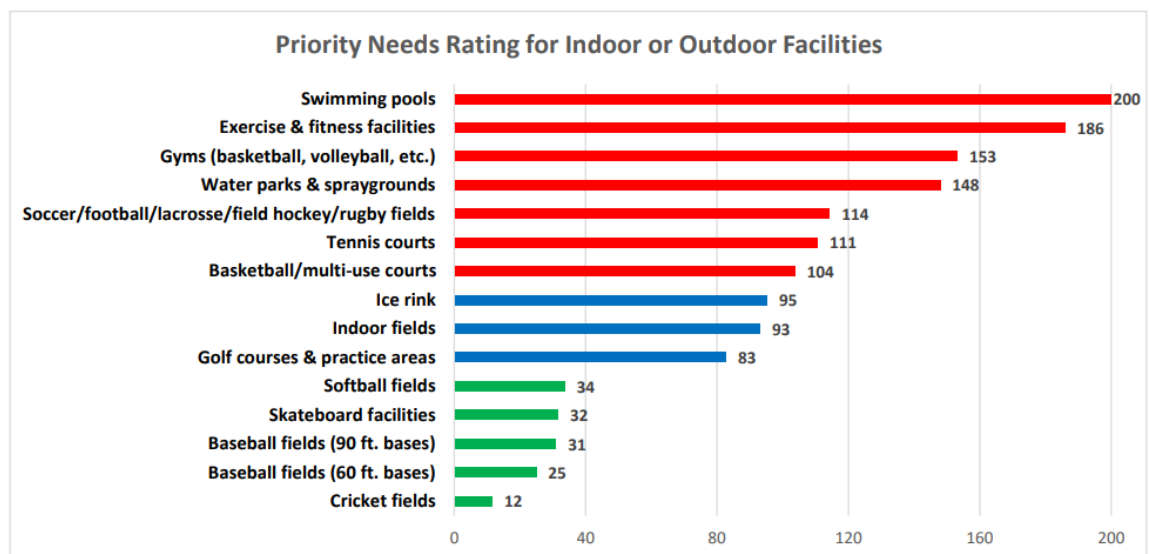
Applying national participation trends to Fairfax County (population 1.171 million⁴) allows estimation of the potential number of players for each sport. Not accounting for potential increases or decreases in play related to COVID-19, the County may have 12,881 pickleball players (1.1 percent), and 83,141 tennis players (7.1 percent).

Findings from the Park Authority's 2016 Needs Assessment

The Park Authority conducted a statistically-valid survey of county residents as part of its 2016 Needs Assessment. 38 percent of respondents (146,860 households) expressed a need for more indoor and outdoor tennis courts. As shown in Figure 12, tennis courts ranked as the #6 priority need in the county, between rectangle fields (#5) and basketball/multiuse courts (#7). The top priority need (#1) was identified as swimming pools. The Needs Assessment found a greater need for tennis courts in Fairfax County in 2015 (38 percent of households) than the national average (26 percent of households).⁵ Further, the Needs Assessment found a higher than average local market potential for tennis instruction and classes, when compared to national averages.⁶

FIGURE 12: 2016 NEEDS ASSESSMENT (EXCERPT), PRIORITY NEEDS RANKINGS OF INDOOR OR OUTDOOR FACILITIES

1.8.2 INDOOR OR OUTDOOR FACILITIES NEEDS ANALYSIS



⁴ Fairfax County Office of Management and Budget, Demographic Reports, 2020.

⁵ ETC Institute, Findings Report for a Statistically Valid Community Interest and Opinion Survey submitted to the Fairfax County Park Authority (2015), p. 24.

⁶ Fairfax County Park Authority Needs Assessment (2016), pp. 6, 27, 84, 163.

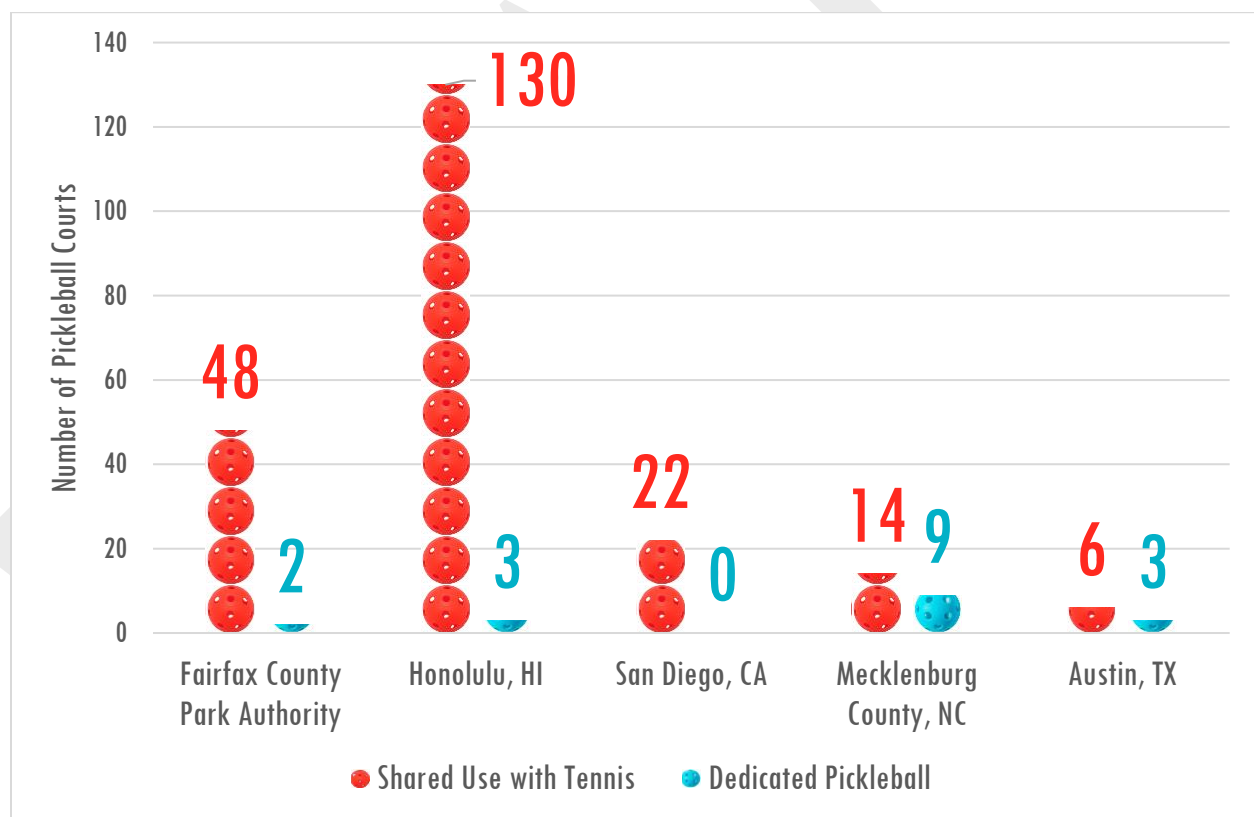
As an emerging sport in 2016, pickleball was not specifically polled and analyzed in the Needs Assessment; however, respondents voiced support for the sport and the Needs Assessment recommended adapting courts for pickleball in its service delivery strategies.⁷

The Park Authority conducts its Needs Assessments on a 10-year cycle, with the next scheduled for 2026. The Needs Assessment provides the basis for the Park Authority’s adopted population-based service level standards and those reflected in the Parks and Recreation Policy element of the County’s Comprehensive Plan. As part of the 2026 Needs Assessment, there may be an opportunity to evaluate pickleball, potentially recommending a needs-based service level standard, like other recreational amenities, if warranted. Like the adopted standards, any recommended standard for pickleball should be based on an assessment of assets and needs to identify existing and projected service gaps per the standards of the *Commission for the Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA)*.⁸

Benchmarking against Peer Jurisdictions

Fairfax County’s current inventory of pickleball courts was compared with parks and recreation agencies serving similar land areas and number of residents.

FIGURE 13: PICKLEBALL COURTS IN PEER JURISDICTIONS* (935,000 - 1.5 MILLION PEOPLE)



Source: USAPA, Places2play.org, respective jurisdictions.

⁷ Fairfax County Park Authority Needs Assessment (2016), p. 84.

Figure 13 includes permanent public outdoor pickleball courts in municipalities with population served between 935,000 and 1.5 million. Also researched and not displayed are Dallas, TX, which offers indoor courts at 6 community centers, and Indianapolis, IN, where no information on public courts could be found.

Benchmarking Locally

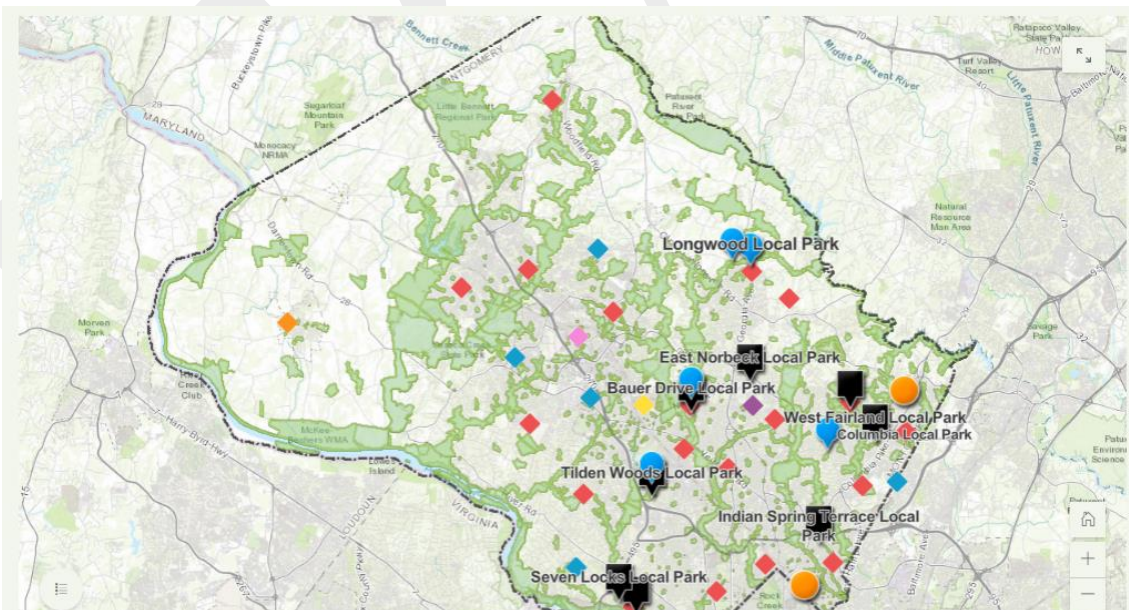
Public comments collected during the study expressed concern that Fairfax County may not be providing courts and facilities in a manner consistent with nearby jurisdictions. Accordingly, the study compared Fairfax County with other public parks and recreation providers in the region.

Like Fairfax County, other nearby jurisdictions acknowledge pickleball as a growing sport in needs assessments and planning documents. Montgomery Parks (Montgomery County, Maryland Department of Parks) completed its own study of pickleball need in 2019. That study investigated service needs and gaps, player preferences on location and design, and service delivery strategies. As of this study's publication, the Montgomery Parks Pickleball Study is publicly available as an ArcGIS StoryMap, an example of which is shown in Figure 14:

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/1e5b9f424a714409b5ad3d2309de5829>

The study team regards Montgomery Parks adopted phased approach for determining locations for dual striping or conversion to dedicated pickleball use as a best practice, and one that has demonstrated success in the Washington, DC metro region. This study finds that a similar approach may be appropriate for Fairfax County.

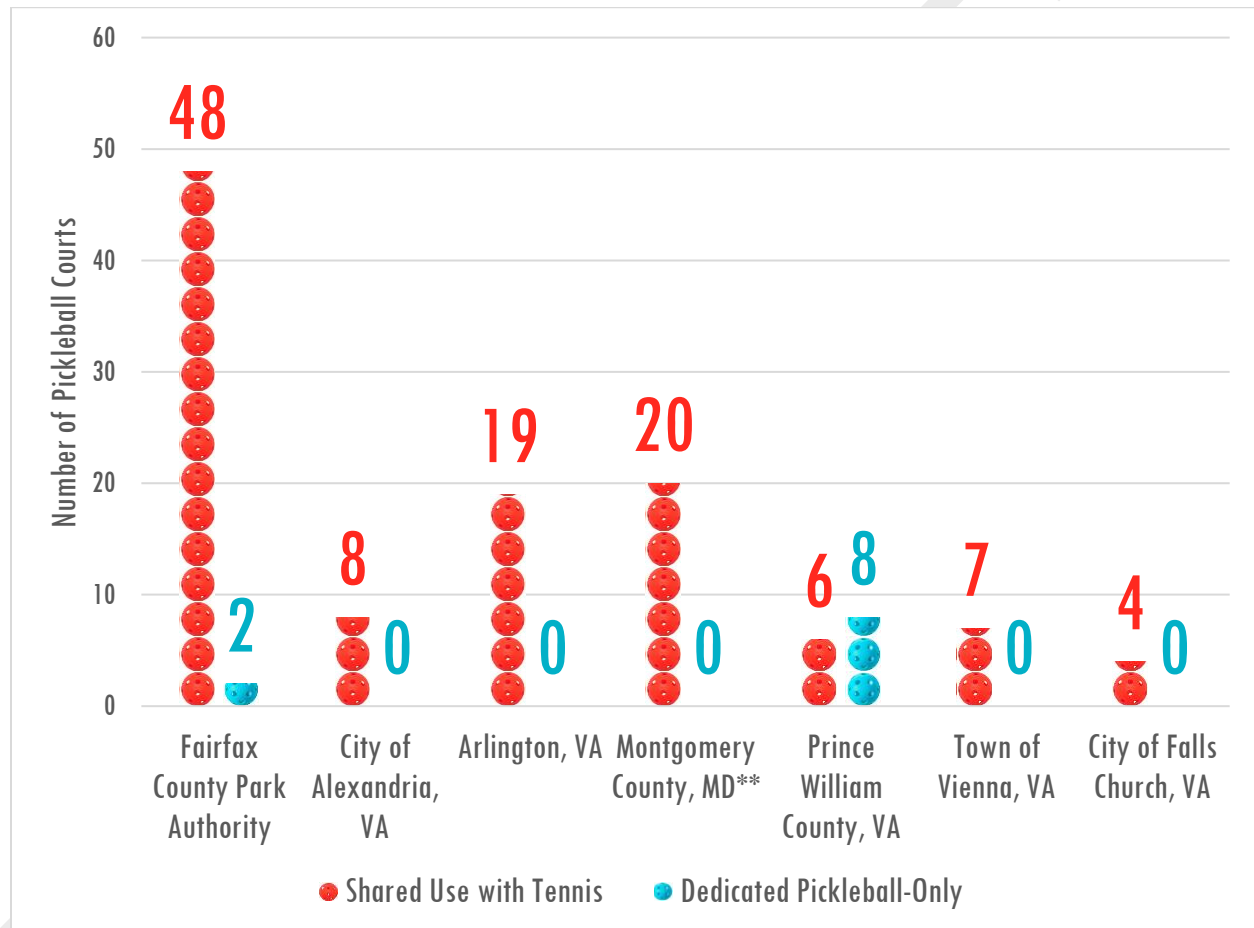
FIGURE 14: EXAMPLE: MONTGOMERY PARKS' PICKLEBALL STUDY, PROPOSED LOCATIONS



Source: Montgomery Parks, credit: Shubha Punase

By the numbers, the Park Authority’s 50 outdoor courts exceed that of other jurisdictions as shown in Figure 15, although there are many factors to consider when examining the actual capacity, demand, and service delivery.

FIGURE 15: NUMBER OF EXISTING OUTDOOR COURTS IN THE METRO WASHINGTON, DC REGION – JULY 2021



Source: USAPA, Places2play.org, respective jurisdictions.

Many of the Park Authority’s outdoor pickleball courts are shared with tennis: one pickleball court per tennis court sharing the tennis net. A second shared use striping scheme has been used to provide two pickleball courts per one tennis court, allowing for portable pickleball nets to be provided by players or park personnel at 13 courts systemwide. Shared use – with or without portable nets – is the industry’s predominant strategy for accommodating pickleball. Of area jurisdictions, only Prince William County has, to date, provided purpose-built, dedicated pickleball courts. This eight-court facility was often cited in the public survey as players’ preferred venue. Montgomery Parks is currently converting its tennis courts at Bauer Lane Local Park to six pickleball-only courts with lighting.

The number of courts in the region may also be expressed by population or per capita. This approach is often useful when comparing population-based service levels against adopted standards and is illustrated in Figure 16.

FIGURE 16: REGIONAL NUMBER OF TOTAL PICKLEBALL COURTS PER CAPITA, 2019

Arlington	1 per 12,465
Alexandria (City)	1 per 19,928
<u>Fairfax County Park Authority</u>	<u>1 per 24,700</u>
Prince William	1 per 33,595
Montgomery (MD)	1 per 37,536

Smaller Jurisdictions:

Town of Vienna	1 per 2,355
Falls Church	1 per 3,654
Fairfax (City)	1 per 4,003

Another consideration is how the Park Authority and other providers have approached the grouping of pickleball courts at a single location. Using the survey results as a guide, groupings of four pickleball courts would meet the playing preferences of 72 percent of respondents. The remainder tend to prefer larger group, Drop-In play. Stakeholders have advised that groupings of six or more pickleball courts would facilitate these gatherings. At present, the Park Authority offers a maximum of four collocated courts (at Collingwood, Fort Hunt, and Wakefield⁸ Parks); two to four grouped pickleball courts are typical within the region, the more notable exceptions being the eight dedicated courts in Prince William, nine shared pickleball courts at Walter Reed Park in Arlington, and six shared pickleball courts at Olney Mill Neighborhood Park in Montgomery County.

⁸ Wakefield Park may offer six grouped courts if the shared-use Courts #9 and #10 are used in tandem with the pickleball-only Courts #12 and #13; the study acknowledges that the courts are not ideally positioned to fully accommodate Drop-In play at all six pickleball courts (Ideally, a six-court grouping would be sited within the same footprint).

PLANNING FOR PICKLEBALL

When an emerging or new use is introduced into the park system, sites must be carefully planned to ensure the new activity's success, balance existing activities within the park system to provide an equitable experience for all park visitors, minimize any negative impacts on surrounding communities, and maximize the investment of the Park Authority's limited financial and staff resources.

Using the prior findings and information in this report, this section introduces site selection criteria to aid decision makers in identifying park sites most appropriate for pickleball. Opportunities to implement and provide additional pickleball courts follow three approaches:

1. **Using the Existing Court Inventory (page 34):** This involves a phased approach to introducing pickleball at an existing court location. Existing tennis-only and basketball-only courts should be evaluated using the site selection criteria. As appropriate, courts should be considered for shared-use with pickleball or conversion to pickleball-only. Under this option, court utilization should be evaluated, and courts repurposed only if conflicts with other sports can be minimized. This approach does not intend to convert every court to shared use and seeks to minimize cases where courts may go unused and are therefore not functioning at their full capacity. Regarding the existing pickleball inventory, shared-use courts should be periodically evaluated to determine whether additional courts can be added (for example, adding additional pickleball courts to a tennis court as shown in Figure 18 on page 37) or whether a conversion from one shared-use court to four pickleball-only courts (Figure 20 on page 39) is viable.
2. **Using the Park Authority's Unbuilt Court Capacity (page 35):** The Park Authority's approved park master plans include many facilities that have not yet been constructed. The reason for this includes lack of available funding, site conditions, or changing community preferences. The study included an analysis of planned-but-unbuilt courts recommended in park master plans and whether such courts could be adapted for dedicated pickleball-only facilities of six or more courts according to the site selection criteria. Constructing these new facilities would provide greater opportunities for tournaments and Drop-In play without the time and resources required to amend a park master plan.
3. **Plan for Shared Use and Pickleball-Only Courts:** Using the park master planning process as a vehicle, pickleball should be considered on an individual park basis, particularly in areas of the county that lack existing dedicated courts or feasible opportunities to leverage the Park Authority's unbuilt court capacity.

Although a master plan revision may not be required to introduce pickleball at a park, it may be appropriate to engage the community and solicit public feedback prior to construction, as is done during the master planning process.

The site selection criteria detailed below should be used to evaluate the Park Authority's court inventory for pickleball suitability, as well as planned courts that have not yet been constructed. The resulting recommendations reflect those opportunities most aligned with the site selection criteria. Additional site-specific analysis, design, or engineering may be required to determine the feasibility and layout of a given location.

Site Selection Criteria

Industry research and user preferences determined through the online survey led to the following recommended criteria for suitable pickleball court locations.

Geography and Access Considerations



The pickleball survey indicated that over 50 percent of survey respondents are willing to drive up to 20 minutes to play pickleball. Future pickleball court planning should consider (a) the distance from existing pickleball courts, and (b) areas of the county that have fewer existing courts and/or higher population densities should be prioritized. In particular, the northern and western reaches of the county have fewer existing pickleball courts as shown on the Existing Pickleball Facilities Map (Figure 9).

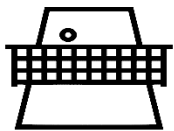
Building additional courts in these areas of the county will reduce the drive time required to access a court countywide.

Tennis Use and Court Demand



A key finding of the study was that the potential for conflict between sport courts exists when providing shared-use courts or repurposing courts to sports for which they were not initially constructed, such as tennis or basketball. In the study's stakeholder outreach and public survey, court users were generally supportive of multi-sport courts, yet expressed concern over the impact sharing facilities can have on the quality of play. Prior to the introduction of pickleball at a court, or prior to the removal of non-pickleball play at a court, decision makers should evaluate a facility's current utilization, area service levels, and potential reasons for under-utilization such as demand, location, access, or maintenance. It is inappropriate to change the use of a court if such a change would result in a significant reduction of adopted service levels or conflicts between sports that cannot be minimized or mitigated.

Layout/Spatial Considerations



Of survey respondents, 11 percent play singles (two players), and 55 percent play doubles (four players). Additionally, 35 percent of players are part of an organized group. Out of the respondents that play as part of an organized group, 72 percent indicated that they typically play with 16 or fewer players when playing. Thus, when planning for courts, providing courts in groups of four will accommodate most players.

As recommended in this report's design specifications, a grouping of four pickleball courts accommodates 16 players at a time (four players per court). Accordingly, many larger groups of players could be accommodated through groupings of four to six pickleball-only courts, or a group of three or four tennis courts in a shared-use configuration with pickleball (of two pickleball courts per tennis court).

Most Park Authority tennis courts are provided in groups of one or two; groupings of three or more courts are generally limited to select district-serving parks such as Wakefield, Nottoway, and Jefferson and Lee District Parks. This is due in part to how the Park Authority's court system has evolved to meet the demand for tennis, basketball, and other court sports; many courts that now include pickleball were originally planned and constructed to serve smaller groups of players in local, neighborhood-serving

parks, in groupings of one or two tennis courts. Unfortunately, this limits options to provide for larger pickleball groups; smaller groups of players can more easily be accommodated on one or two tennis courts, provided the park has the necessary conditions to support shared use of the courts. These conditions are detailed in the recommended pickleball site selection criteria.

Availability of Parking



As indicated in the survey, the majority of pickleball players drive to the courts. Each pickleball court supports up to four players in a game and parking should be sufficient for one space per pickleball player. For parks that have two pickleball courts this equates to a minimum of eight spaces, with the amount increasing with the number of courts.⁹

When planning for future pickleball court locations, parking demands of adjacent facilities, such as athletic fields, should be considered. It should be noted that conversion of tennis courts to shared-use pickleball courts can double the amount of parking needed if the court is striped to accommodate two pickleball games. The location of parking should be within reasonable proximity to the courts to support accessibility and ease of play.

ADA Accessibility and Connectivity



People of all ages and abilities play pickleball. New pickleball courts must comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to be fully ADA accessible and reasonable efforts should be made to make existing courts accessible when restriping for shared-use or pickleball-only courts. A continuous accessible path of travel must connect the pickleball court(s) from public access ways and/or accessible parking spaces if parking is available at the site. The number of accessible parking spaces should comply with current county and ADA regulations.

The pickleball survey indicated that only 12 percent of respondents walk to play pickleball. Future sites for pickleball should consider proximity to urban areas, higher density housing, and public transportation connections. Targeting pickleball courts within these areas will help remove the barriers to the sport for individuals that may not own a vehicle or be able to walk or bike to a court.

Court Lighting



Lighting increases the availability of courts by extending the hours of use. Survey results indicate that pickleball play is not concentrated during any particular time of the day or part of the week; therefore, the addition of lighting could accommodate one to three more playing sessions daily with sessions averaging two hours depending upon the time of year.¹⁰

⁹ While not adopted as an official standard for regulatory purposes, the recommendation of approximately 8 spaces per pickleball court was identified by Montgomery Parks. Similar conditions are expected in Fairfax County, where most players drive to play pickleball.

¹⁰ Based on example Drop-In play scenarios provided on page 6.

Lighting courts will help support a greater number of games for both pickleball and tennis; and lighting courts should be prioritized for any courts that are shared-use for pickleball and tennis use. Lighting can also be considered for dedicated pickleball-only courts in groups of six or more to support evening tournament and Drop-In play. The potential for court lighting should be considered in the park master planning process.

The hours of park operation and adjacency of neighbors should be considered when planning for court lighting. Lighting should be high-efficiency LED and full-cutoff to reduce light pollution into surrounding neighborhoods and natural areas.

Environmental Considerations



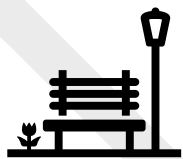
New dedicated pickleball-only or shared-use courts should not be placed in locations where there is abundant native vegetation, nor within Resource Protection Areas (RPAs), Floodplains, Environmental Quality Corridors (ECQs), or within prohibitive easements. Additionally, new court construction should consider low impact design (LID) stormwater best practices to accommodate the added impervious surface area within the park or mitigate any loss to natural resources from construction.

Neighborhood Considerations



Pickleball is a social sport that can generate a moderate amount of noise and locations for play should consider the proximity to nearby residences. When siting a court near a residential area, screening (e.g., engineered barrier, vegetation) should be considered. The survey results and input from other jurisdictions found that pickleball tends to generate more noise than other court sports due to its larger group sizes and paddle and ball materials.¹¹

Adjacency/Co-location Compatibility



New courts should not conflict with or displace other activities in the park. The location of dedicated or shared use courts should work in harmony with the overall park design and adjacent facilities. As pickleball is a social sport, planning pickleball courts in concert with other park facilities, such as shade structures or seating areas, adds to the overall character of the park.

¹¹ Noise potential and mitigation measures are considered when planning for new recreational facilities, and specifically were included in Montgomery County's site feasibility criteria.

Pickleball Courts Planned for Development

These are planned dedicated or shared-use courts that are in different phases of development and approvals. These courts were planned for pickleball prior to the completion of this study. Future court development of additional sites should follow the recommendations for shared-use and dedicated courts in this section.

PARK	# OF PICKLEBALL COURTS	TYPE	NOTES
Boyd A. & Charlotte M. Hogge	2	Dedicated	Undergoing Permit Approval
North Hill	2	Dedicated	Planned for construction with other park amenities.
TOTAL	4		

Using the Existing Court Inventory: Implementing Shared-Use or Dedicated Pickleball at Existing Courts

A key finding of this study is the public concern that pickleball would replace opportunities for tennis and other sport courts. Impacts to existing and established sport courts should be minimized as it is not the intent to displace existing user groups. Accordingly, prior to a tennis-only or basketball-only court being considered for permanent shared use or conversion to dedicated pickleball, its use patterns should be evaluated, and the current players consulted.

A phased approach is recommended for implementing the restriping to ensure that tennis and pickleball use conflicts are observed prior to permanently restriping courts. This phasing was identified as a best practice in Montgomery County's Pickleball Study, and the Park Authority recommends a similar approach to its facilities.

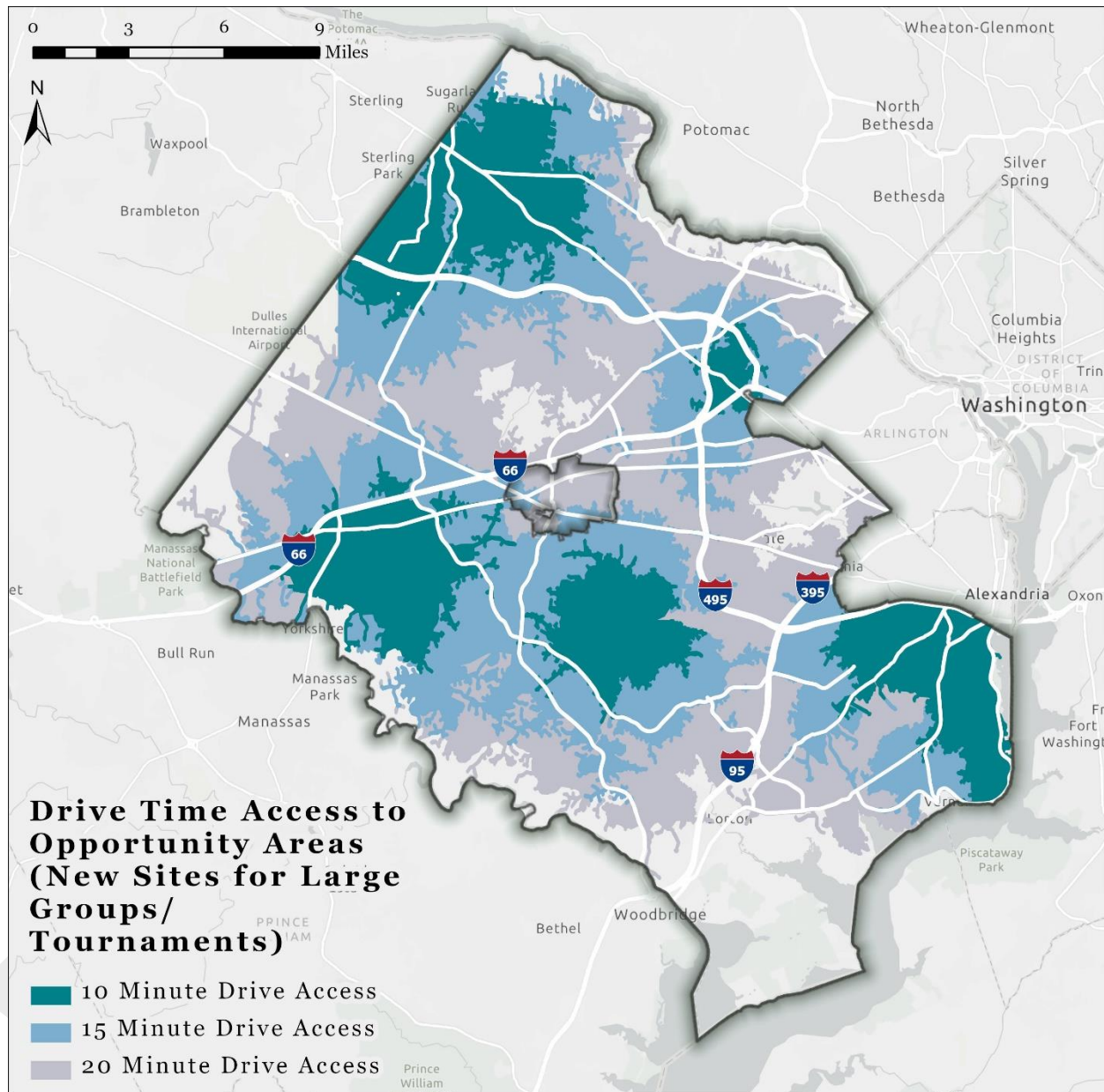
- **Phase 1** - Install temporary striping to demarcate the pickleball court lines.
- **Phase 2** - Observe court use over a period of two to four weeks and make note of any use conflicts or reported issues. A temporary sign should be posted at the court with an email and/or phone number for users to report use or any conflicts. Monitoring efforts should be employed to accurately evaluate court use between competing sports. Unlike centrally scheduled athletic fields, the Park Authority does not have a consistent way to measure the usage of its courts. Existing measurements include permitting, which covers only a small portion of the inventory, or in-person observation by staff. Accordingly, reliable data on court utilization is not yet available. Technology solutions such as PublicInput.com may be employed to track how players and how many players are using the courts. Public outreach to the player community and surrounding neighbors should also be considered during this phase to determine the public's support for a permanent change in court use.

- **Phase 3** - If no conflicts have been observed during Phase 2, the court(s) may be permanently restriped for shared use per the guidelines in this report. If significant conflicts are reported or observed, removing the temporary court striping should be considered, thus retaining the existing permanent use.
- **Phase 4** - Reassess the shared-use courts over time and if determined that the courts are primarily used for pickleball, consider converting the court into 4 dedicated pickleball courts.

Using the Park Authority's Unbuilt Court Capacity: Potential Opportunities to Construct New Pickleball-Only Courts

Beyond repurposing its existing court inventory, the Park Authority may leverage the planned-but-unbuilt court capacity in approved master plans. The study evaluated adopted master plans for unbuilt courts that would be good candidates for pickleball-only facilities of six or more courts to facilitate tournament and Drop-In play. Figure 17 shows a 10–20-minute drive time scenario based upon parks that have unbuilt capacity and meet the site selection criteria. When constructing new courts, additional supporting facilities beyond the courts themselves, such as lighting, additional parking, ADA access, and restrooms may be needed for a park to fully align with the site selection criteria. Such new facilities would better meet the playing preferences of those that prefer multiple-court Drop-In play and tournament options. When considering where to locate such facilities, Figure 17 can serve as a starting point for site selection. Areas within a 10-minute drive time contain one or more parks that could potentially support these larger scale facilities within existing approved master plans.

FIGURE 17: POTENTIAL DRIVE TIME ACCESS TO NEW PICKLEBALL-ONLY FACILITIES (6+ COURTS) BASED ON APPROVED PARK MASTER PLANS

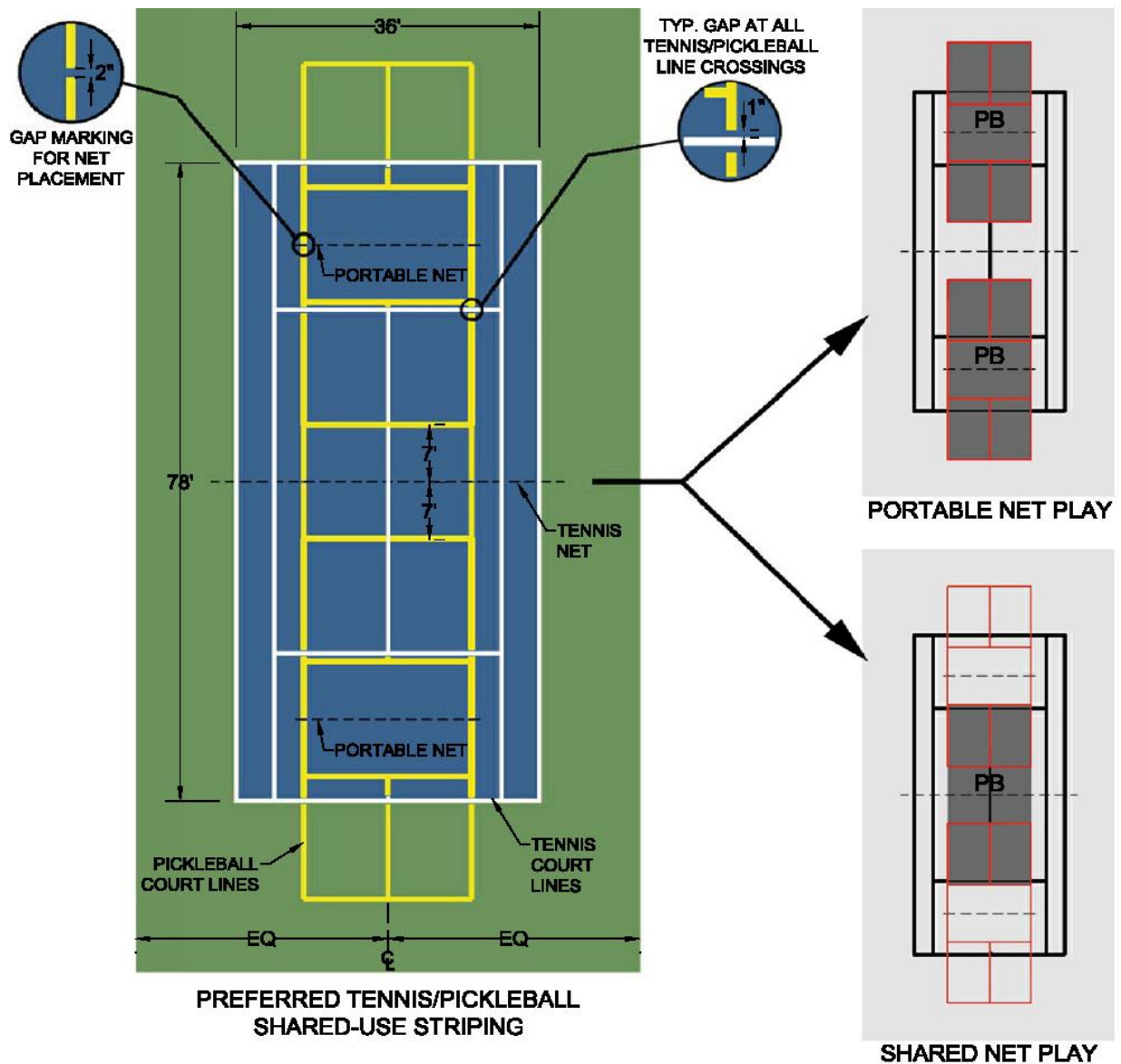


DESIGN BEST PRACTICES & STANDARDS

Equally important as the site selection criteria are the design of shared use and dedicated pickleball courts. The following recommended standards conform to U.S. Pickleball specifications and can be used for shared-use or dedicated pickleball courts.

Shared Use Tennis/Pickleball Courts

FIGURE 18: PREFERRED LAYOUT FOR SHARED USE TENNIS AND PICKLEBALL

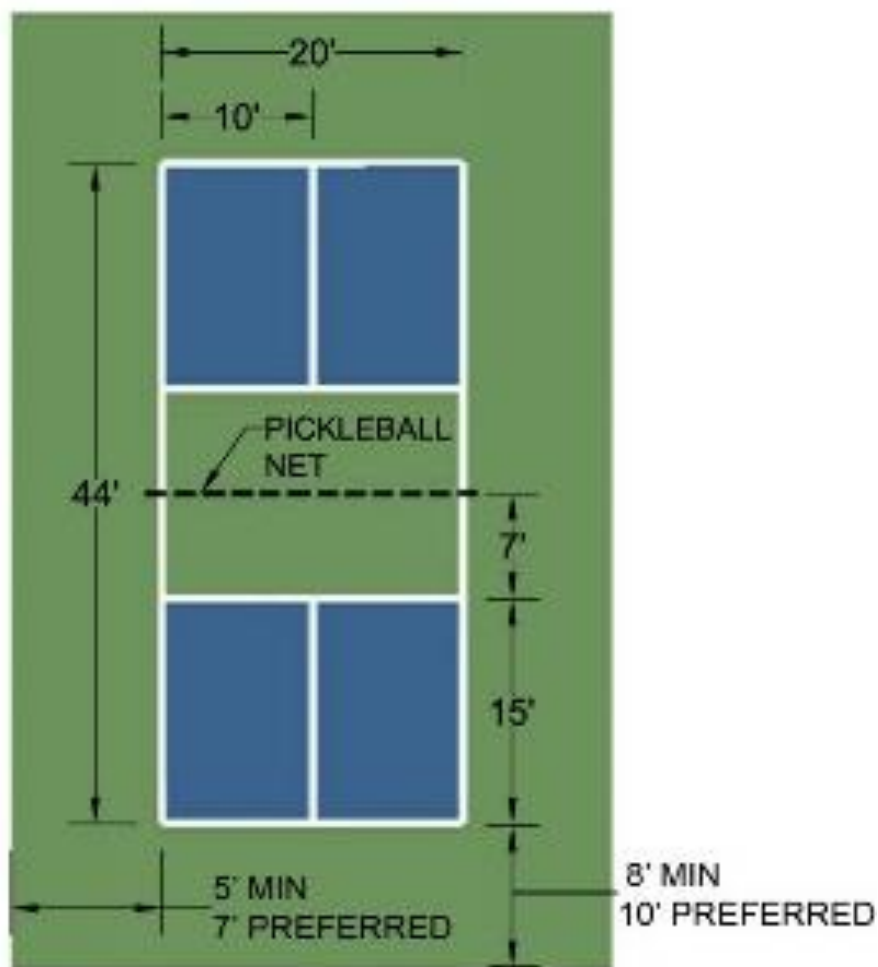


Shared Use Pickleball Court Layout (Figure 18 above):

- Dimensions for striping are to the outside of the lines, except for the center line.
- The preferred dual-use layout enables pickleball play via portable nets or a shared tennis net. Portable pickleball nets may be stored on-site or provided by users.
- Shared-use pickleball striping shall be 2" wide light blue or bright yellow, as determined by the project manager and Park Operations Division representative. Shared-use tennis striping shall be 2" white.
- Court colors shall be U.S. Open green and blue per United States Tennis Association (USTA) unless otherwise specified.

Dedicated Pickleball-Only Court Layout

FIGURE 19: PREFERRED DEDICATED PICKLEBALL-ONLY COURT LAYOUT



Dedicated Pickleball-Only Court Layout (Figure 19 above):

- *Dedicated pickleball striping shall be 2" white painted lines*
- *The dedicated pickleball net is to extend 1' past the center of the boundary stripe.*
- *Court colors shall be U.S. Open green and blue per Park Authority standards unless otherwise specified.*

The dimensions for a standard pickleball court are 20' wide and 44' long for both singles and doubles. A total playing area 30' wide and 60' long is the minimum size recommended with 34' wide and 64' long to allow for the preferred surrounding clear margin area. Pickleball courts should be oriented in a general north-south orientation, such that the sun is perpendicular to the courts whenever feasible.

Pickleball-Only Court Groupings

FIGURE 20: RECOMMENDED GROUPINGS OF DEDICATED PICKLEBALL-ONLY COURTS (4 AND 6-COURTS)

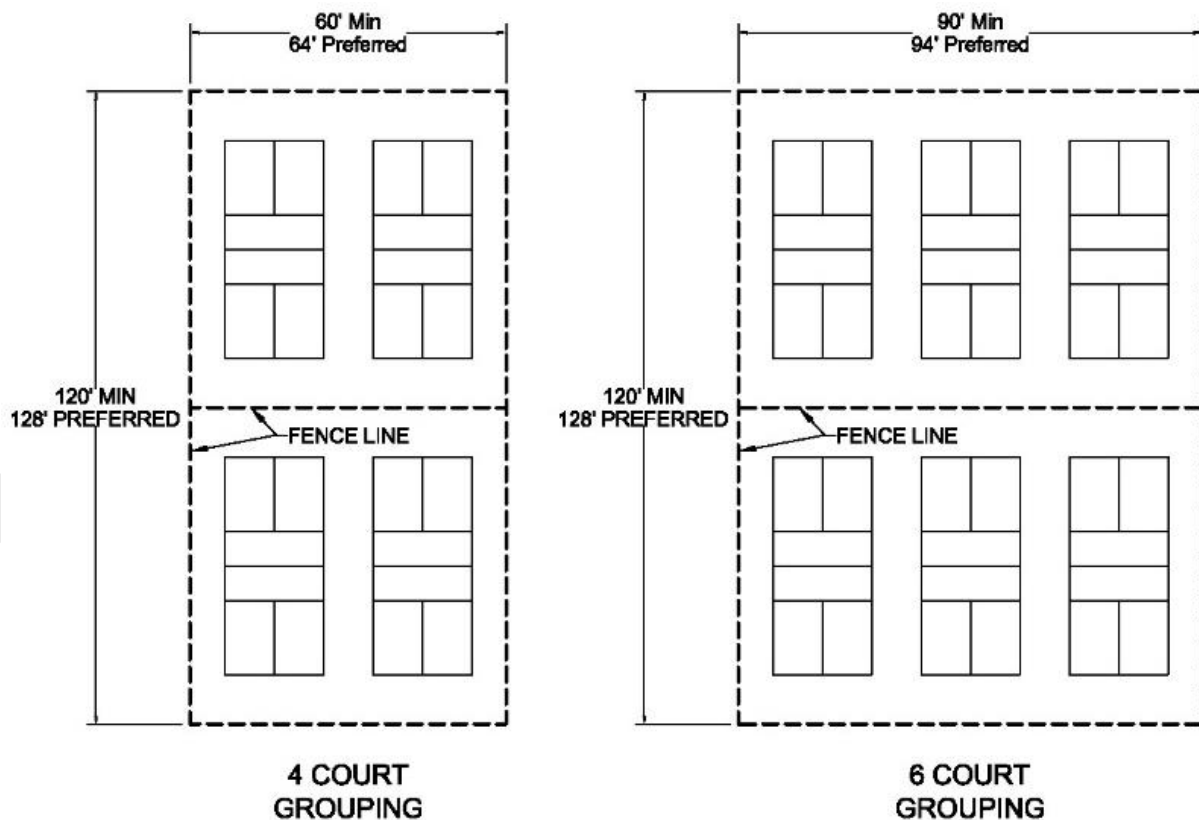
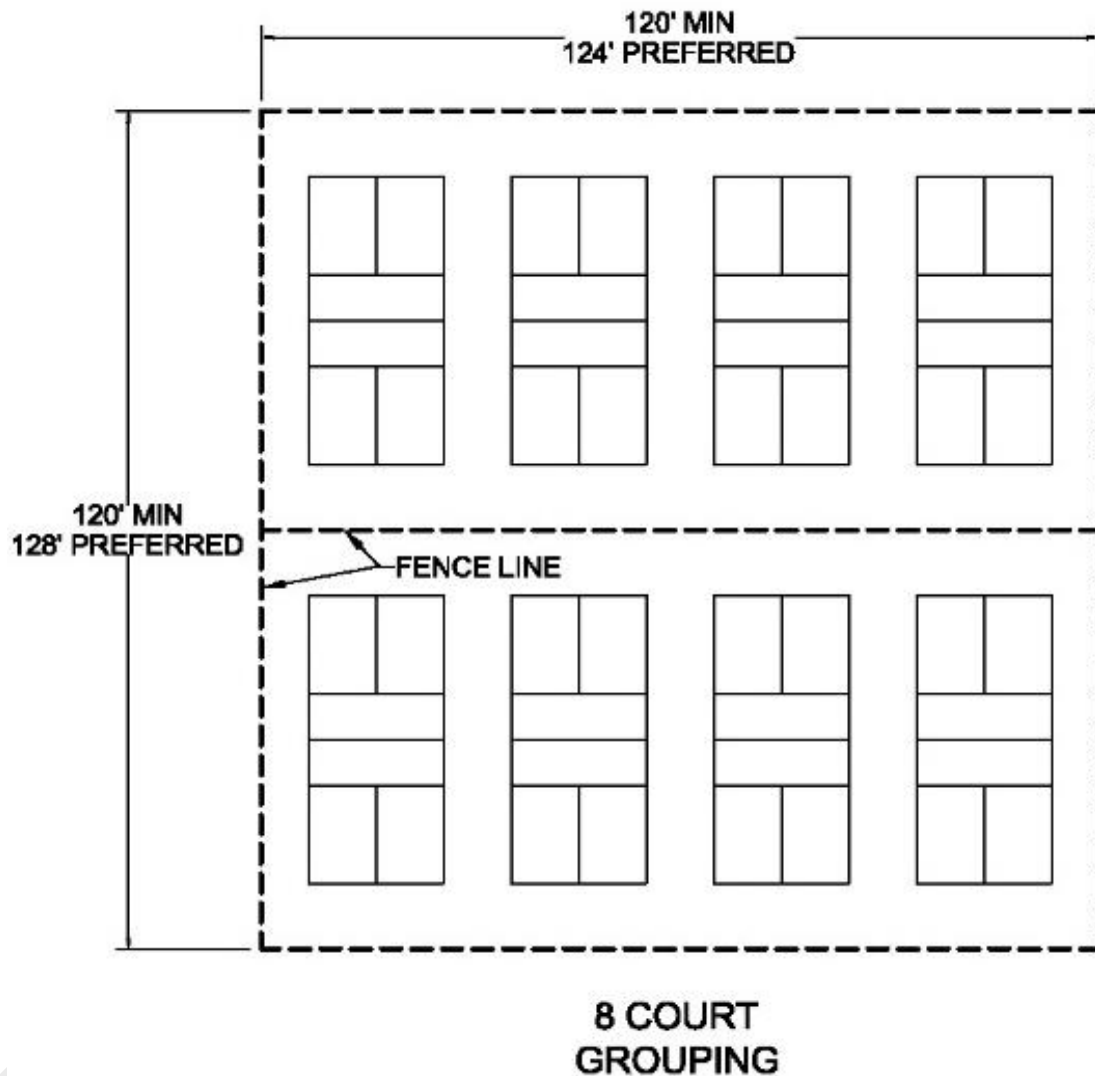


FIGURE 21: RECOMMENDED GROUPING OF DEDICATED PICKLEBALL-ONLY COURTS (8 COURTS)



Whenever feasible, dedicated pickleball courts should be built in groups of a minimum of four courts; however, groups of six or eight courts would better facilitate group play and to allow for the most efficient layout. Four pickleball courts fit within a 120' x 60' paved area, or the size of one tennis court if the surrounding clear areas are provided at the minimum requirement. The eight-court layout in Figure 21 is recommended but should be selected according to the specific site conditions. Groupings of four or six courts, while not providing the same capacity as the eight-court configuration, may be more feasible given the site conditions, anticipated impacts, or overall project cost.

Design Specifications

Permanent Nets for Dedicated Pickleball Courts

Pickleball net length should be at least 21'-9" extended between two posts. Net posts should be 22'-0" from the inside of the posts and the maximum diameter of the net post should be 3." The net height from the bottom edge of the net to the top should be at least 30." A center strap is recommended for a permanent net and must be placed at the center of the net to enable easy adjustment to the 34" requirement at the center. The top edge of the net should be covered with a 2" white tape binding over a cord or cable running through the binding. The net may be made of any mesh fabric that will not allow the ball to pass through. These specifications are for dedicated pickleball court nets and do not apply to central nets for shared-use tennis/pickleball courts.

Movable Nets for Shared Use Tennis/Pickleball Courts

Shared-use tennis/pickleball courts can support one pickleball game if the central shared tennis court net is utilized. It should be noted that the shared central tennis court net does not meet official pickleball regulations as the height is slightly taller than a pickleball net.

Two pickleball games can be supported per shared-use court if movable nets are used. Movable nets can be portable nets brought by the players or can be an on court/off court rolling net that is put into place for pickleball games. These types of nets can be placed along the perimeter fencing when not being used or stored in an equipment locker. The type of movable nets at each site should be determined by park operations staff and are specific to the site and usage.

Fencing & Gates

Dedicated pickleball or shared-use courts should be surrounded by a galvanized or vinyl coated chain-link fence that is a minimum of 10 feet in height from the playing surface. The mesh size should be small enough (45 mm to 50 mm) to not allow the ball to pass through the openings. Fencing of 10-foot height can be considered for separating multiple pickleball courts within a cluster of courts. Fencing separating groups of two pickleball courts is recommended to reduce ball migration.

Gates should be placed at both ends of the court/s whenever possible and should be designed to meet ADA requirements to enable easy use of individuals of all abilities. Small maintenance gates that open vertically can be considered in portions of the court to allow for easy removal of leaves and other debris on the courts by operational staff or volunteers.

Court Surfacing and Line Striping

Court surfacing should be a textured acrylic coating over an asphalt or concrete base as standard for Park Authority tennis courts. Court and line striping colors should be as specified in the layout diagrams within this report.

Lighting

Should it be determined that the courts can support extended hours of use and is compliant with the master plan, high efficiency LED lighting should be considered. Lighting should be full-cutoff fixtures and placed to minimize light spillover into adjacent areas.

Site Furniture and Amenities

Benches should be considered within courts outside areas of play to provide seating for players that are waiting for matches. Benches and other types of seating can also be considered outside of the courts if possible. If seating areas are provided outside of the courts, shade should be considered using trees or a shade structure.

Accessible portable or permanent restrooms should be considered for clusters of 6 or more pickleball courts to accommodate the larger groups of players. Drinking fountains should also be considered if a water line is accessible and there is funding to support construction and ongoing maintenance needs.

Maintenance and Operational Considerations

Scheduling/Hours of Operation

The hours of operation of pickleball courts will be subject to the operating hours of the individual park or RECenter. Dedicated and shared-use pickleball courts are typically made available on a first-come-first-serve basis. Dedicated and shared-use pickleball courts could be made available to reserve on an hourly basis per the terms and conditions of a park use permit with scheduling information and fees listed on the Park Authority's Park Use Permit Webpage.

Alternatively, the Park Authority may opt to reserve times for pickleball on specific courts to deconflict user groups. Given that the Park Authority's courts are not included in the county's centralized scheduling system as are its athletic fields, a similar solution may be considered to measure utilization, demand, and minimize competition for limited court space. An implementation plan may be developed and funding identified for such an effort.

General Maintenance Needs

Proper and regular maintenance of pickleball courts is critical for the usability and overall experience of the players. All outdoor Park Authority pickleball and shared -use courts are a textured acrylic coating over an asphalt or concrete base. This type of surfacing generally has a low maintenance requirement, but over time the colors fade, cracks appear on the surface and uneven areas begin to develop.

Courts should be resurfaced every five to eight years on average if the court is showing signs of stress. The resurfacing process includes surveying the court for damage and signs of wear, filling cracks, applying a coat of acrylic, and finally a coat of paint with new play lines.

Cost Considerations

Dedicated and dual-use courts require funding for development, on-going maintenance, and operation. The development of newly dedicated pickleball courts will require funding to build the pickleball courts, and any park improvements to support the courts including but not limited to earthwork, parking, accessible walkways, signage, stormwater management, lighting, seating, and landscaping.

Prior to development of the courts, costs should be considered for reoccurring operations and maintenance needed after construction. This includes cleaning, resurfacing, restriping, net replacements, and labor performed by maintenance staff. Courts generally need to be completely

replaced or renovated every 25 years which should be considered when fiscal planning. Table 4 outlines general costs associated with the development and maintenance of courts for planning purposes. Although revenue may be used to offset a portion of these costs, specific revenue projections are not included in this report and should be evaluated if appropriate.

Funding should be explored from a variety of available sources such as park bonds for capital improvements, voluntary development proffers intended for park improvements, Park Foundation donations and matching grants, as well as community partnerships.

TABLE 4: ESTIMATED DEVELOPMENT, OPERATIONS, AND MAINTENANCE COSTS OF PICKLEBALL COURTS (2021)

New Pickleball Court	Averages \$15,000 to \$25,000 per pickleball court
Supporting Amenities	Cost varies based on site conditions. Includes development of non-court facilities such as parking, ADA accessibility, lighting, buffering, earthwork, access roads, stormwater management, and other work necessary for a site to meet the pickleball site selection criteria.
Resurfacing/Restriping	Averages \$1,000 to \$1,500 per court, including acrylic resurfacing, color coat, and striping
Complete Renovations	Averages \$10,000 to \$15,000 per court, including asphalt milling, paving, surfacing, fencing replacement, and new net
Cost of Permanent or Portable Pickleball Net	Averages \$200 to \$300 for permanent nets, \$500 to \$1,500 for portable nets
Annual maintenance costs, to include net replacement and other routine tasks	Varies
Insurance/Theft	Varies
Staff Time needed to administer purchasing of equipment, scheduling/permitting of courts, and other tasks	Varies

SUMMARY

This report on the Park Authority's Pickleball Study presents findings and recommendations on how to strategically respond to increasing demand for the sport. While these recommendations will need to be updated as courts are added and popularity of the sport changes, they provide a framework on which to base the Park Authority's decision-making.

The study finds that the Park Authority's approach to providing pickleball facilities is comparable to similar jurisdictions, although other providers have employed different strategies in response to the demand. Current shared-use courts can satisfy most players with relatively minor improvements, yet opportunities exist to leverage the growing interest in the sport. These include creating more options for pickleball-only courts, providing pickleball-only and shared-use courts in groups (minimum 4) to facilitate drop-in play and larger group gatherings, and establishing standardized design and construction guidelines to maintain consistent standards across the park system.

Opportunities to provide new pickleball courts or modify existing tennis or basketball courts exist and should be explored using one of three strategies:

- Use the County's existing public court inventory to create pickleball opportunities (page 34) as part of the Park Authority's ongoing maintenance efforts
- Construct planned-but-unbuilt courts to provide pickleball-only courts (page 35)
- Plan for pickleball in new locations through the park master planning process.

This report's recommendations should be considered alongside the need for ongoing community engagement with court users, park neighbors, and other interested stakeholders. The Park Authority has valued the contributions of the community of players and remains committed to ongoing dialog as these recommendations are implemented and as new opportunities emerge to address growing demand.