

OUTDOOR RACQUET SPORTS STRATEGY

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DRAFT

SECTION I: OVERVIEW

This strategy was produced by Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) in response to the growing popularity of pickleball and tennis and the need to balance the needs of both users in our park system. The recommendations were developed with community input and to equitably address the needs of court users and are produced herein in draft form for further engagement.

These topics included: analyzing dual use, designating additional hub locations, studying the incorporation of pickleball open play, clarifying communication protocols, and considering possible court expansion. This document is organized into sections for each of these topic areas.

Following the conclusion of engagement, SPR will compile feedback and make necessary adjustments to the strategy. Then the final strategy will begin implementation.

This strategy is:

1. Based on significant background data, engagement feedback, and planning documents collected by SPR over the past eight (8) years.
2. Developed to most equitably address the needs, wishes, and issues communicated by the community within our existing system and resources.
3. Created to guide the management and provision of racquet sport court assets only and does not set a precedent or standard for any other asset class.
4. Intended to provide guidance at a point in time for specific concerns and conditions. Recommendations are subject to alteration to align with available resources, changing conditions, new opportunities, park system priorities and legal requirements.

SECTION II: DUAL USE ANALYSIS

In April 2024 dual striping to include pickleball on dedicated tennis courts was paused pending analysis of the history, impact, and effectiveness of dual use within the City of Seattle. SPR staff were asked to make a recommendation on how to proceed with dual use.

The history of racquet sports in Seattle goes back over 100 years with the construction of the first tennis courts. Pickleball is a newer sport and has largely been introduced through adding pickleball striping to existing tennis courts. This is called “dual striping”. We refer to courts that have been dual striped as “dual use” locations. We began dual striping in 2017 resulting in the creation of 92 pickleball courts as of 2026 (5 dedicated solely to pickleball, the remaining dual striped with tennis).

Dual striping was an initial approach to meet the growing desire for including pickleball within the existing system. New courts require significant space and funding—for acquisition of land and/or development of facilities at existing parks. Furthermore, many of the existing parks currently without courts were purchased with grant funding that restricts active recreation and/or impervious coverage. Therefore, dual striping was an effective tool to add pickleball courts quickly and economically.

The dual use locations were received well initially, but as more were added, issues arose. Complaints received have increased in frequency in line with the increase in the number of dual-striped courts from both racquet sport users and the community at large.

Dual striping drives the largest number of concerns reported to SPR. The main issues are:

- Perceived or de facto dedication of a dual use location through large blocks of reservations, refusal to vacate courts for reservations, or large groups encroaching into adjacent areas to the courts they are using BETWEEN pickleball and tennis players.
- Perceived or de facto dedication of a dual use location through large blocks of reservations, refusal to vacate courts for reservations, or large groups encroaching into adjacent areas to the courts they are using BETWEEN different types of pickleball play (see Section IV).
- Unauthorized dual striping or the addition of temporary nets to dedicated tennis courts.

Given the size of the city and the number of courts within SPR’s system, there was an expectation that individuals would follow the rules prescribed by SPR to avoid the above challenges and facilitate dual use.

Based on the above, we recommend ending dual use and not dual striping any additional locations.

To end dual use, we will use a two-phased approach. The first phase would be completed within a month of this strategy being finalized utilizing signage and changes to the infrastructure available at the location. The second phase will occur as locations are due for resurfacing as part of major maintenance.

For Phase I, the existing dual use courts will be designated for the racquet sport listed below in Table 1. The racquet sport chosen was informed by the level of existing Seattle school use, pre- and post-dual use demand, and the site’s ability to best meet the needs of a particular racquet sport over the other.

It is recognized that this approach will immediately result in a loss in the total number of available pickleball courts. To see how we plan to address this, see Section VII.

Table 1. Proposed Dedicated Use Change	
Site	Use
Alki Playground	Tennis
Beacon Hill Playground	Pickleball
Bitter Lake Playfield^	Pickleball
Brighton Playfield	Tennis
Cal Anderson Park*	Pickleball
Dearborn Playfield^	Pickleball
Delridge Playfield	Pickleball
Discovery Park	Pickleball
Georgetown Playfield	Pickleball
Gilman Playground	Tennis
Kinnear Park	Pickleball
Miller Playfield^	Pickleball
Mt Baker Park	Pickleball
Observatory Courts**	Pickleball/Tennis

Rainier Beach Playfield	Tennis
Ravenna Park West	Pickleball*
Soundview Playfield	Tennis
Wallingford Playfield	Tennis
Walt Hundley Playfield	Tennis
W Magnolia Playfield	Tennis
^May still have school tennis use.	
*Proposed change of dedicated use.	
**Separated courts for each racquet sport.	

SECTION III: ADDITIONAL HUB LOCATIONS

In April of 2024, three locations were designated “hubs” meaning they were dedicated specifically to tennis or pickleball. These sites were Lower Woodland (tennis), Amy Yee (tennis) and Green Lake Park East (pickleball). These tennis hubs are important tournament, school, and youth sites for tennis use. Green Lake Park East has a large, active community of pickleball users. This designation recognized the user preference for pickleball outside of school reservations.

At the same time as these designations, we set out to identify additional hub locations in the city for both racquet sports.

Working within the framework that dual use is no longer recommended, ensuring courts from becoming dual use is not the driving factor for designating a location as a hub. These designations now reflect the dominant users, will support pickleball open play, and will guide long-term planning and decision making as it relates to outdoor racquet sports.

Based on the above criteria the sites listed in Table 2 are recommended to be designated hub locations in addition to the three already designated:

Table 2. Proposed Additional Hub Locations	
Site	Racquet Sport
Georgetown Playfield	Pickleball
Solstice Park	Tennis
Beacon Hill Playground	Pickleball
Madison Park	Tennis
Miller Playfield	Pickleball
Laurelhurst Playfield	Tennis
Magnuson Park (New)	Pickleball
Bitter Lake Playfield	Pickleball
Meadowbrook Playfield	Tennis
W Magnolia Playfield	Tennis
Discovery Park	Pickleball

Capital investments like lighting and court covering should be focused first on hub locations to have the greatest impact on the greatest number of users. When fully funded, they should be

implemented when other planned capital improvements occur to minimize overhead costs and the amount of time courts are offline.

A “Hub Advisory Group” will be established for each hub location. These advisory groups are intended to provide streamlined communication and organized coordination with SPR. Ideally, an advisory group will be formed for each hub by the end of 2026. Each Hub Advisory Group would send a representative to a quarterly meeting with SPR to discuss issues that cannot be resolved by the hub advisory groups themselves or through other channels, as well as collaborating on long-term planning.

SECTION IV: INCORPORATING OPEN PLAY

Open play is a style of organized pickleball play where individuals arrive and rotate into the queue of play with individuals already playing on the court. This is differentiated from **closed play** where typically only four or fewer pickleball players are playing on a single court where others cannot join. Both types of play are popular among Seattle pickleball players. Some locations have shown a higher demand for open play versus closed play.

These two types of play do not operate well at the same location. This is usually due to poor adherence to rules regarding reservations, high reservation utilization by one style over another, and the competition between the two styles of play between one another and tennis for time at dual use sites.

Because of the issues identified in Section I and within this section, we could not easily incorporate open play into our system if dual use were the primary mechanism for providing pickleball play. Therefore, the recommendations assume a framework where dual use has ended.

Currently, to ensure that a court at each location is available for drop-in play (meaning without a reservation ahead of time) we only allow locations with more than two courts (for either racquet sport) to be reserved. This often results in locations with one (or more) reservable court and one drop in court. However, because of the incompatibilities between the two types of play of pickleball, open play should have its own dedicated locations, especially those with three or more courts.

Given that open play is already popular at most of the proposed hub locations, we will be making these locations open play only. The open play locations will be paired with nearby drop-in/reservation only locations to provide better protected reservable access and support open play consistent with Table 3 below.

Open Play	Drop In & Reservation
Georgetown Playfield	Delridge Playfield
Beacon Hill Playground	Dearborn Park
Miller Playfield	Cal Anderson Park
Magnuson Park (New)	Ravenna Park West
Bitter Lake Playfield	Maple Leaf Reservoir
Green Lake Park East	Observatory Courts
Discovery Park	Kinnear Park

For the first year following the implementation of this strategy, at open play locations, reservations other than school use will not be allowed. The ease of implementing this approach and its impact on revenue will be assessed after the first year. Changes made to the provision of open play will be communicated in advanced.

The approach to tennis reservations and reservable tennis courts are not affected by this section.

SECTION V: COMMUNICATIONS PROTOCOLS

Communications work best when there are clear resources and processes for intake, distribution, and action. The department-wide “PKS Info” email is a great example where there is a single source with visibility into the entire department that receives a wide breadth of requests and ensures they are addressed in a timely manner by the most appropriate party.

To improve communications between racquet sport players, non-racquet sport players, and SPR, a more structured approach will be followed. To be successful, adherence from everyone is necessary to help improve and maintain constructive relationships.

- **Equipment or Site Issues:** Submit reports to the via the Find It, Fix It app. If the request is closed before the issue has been resolved or is not addressed within three weeks of the submission, the submitter should elevate the matter via pkinfo@seattle.gov.
- **Operational (Reservations/Use/Access) Issues:** Submit requests for information to the Amy Yee Tennis Center: [Outdoor Tennis Court Reservations and Costs - Parks | seattle.gov](https://www.seattle.gov/parks/outdoor-tennis-court-reservations-and-costs).
- **Noise Issues:** Submit requests for information to pkinfo@seattle.gov.
- **Hub Location Issues:** Issues not related to the above at racquet sport hubs should be sent to the assigned Hub Advisory Group contact that will be posted on the Outdoor Racquet Sports Online Engagement Hub. If a concern is related to the Hub Advisory Group itself or a member of a Hub Advisory Group, the submitter should utilize the Outdoor Racquet Sports Online Engagement Hub.
- **All Other Matters:** Submit questions or comments to the Outdoor Racquet Sports Online Engagement Hub.

SECTION VI: COURT EXPANSION

A comprehensive review of existing city- and SPS-owned property was conducted to see if there were any potential locations where new tennis and pickleball courts could be added.

Unless new sizeable property is acquired—with a new source of revenue other than what SPR typically relies on to acquire new property, adding new courts in a timely manner consistent with racquet sport demand is unachievable. In 2025, it costs between \$200K to \$300K to build a new tennis court on a level site with no complexities in permitting or construction.

The city’s current park system and all the assets contained within it have been developed over 100 years, largely through private donations of either land or financial endowment. When the

city's system could not meet the demand for a new or existing sport within this system, private facilities either served this purpose temporarily or in perpetuity. The addition of a new sport or use to a park takes considerable funding and time to consider, plan for, and implement. Therefore, the provision of new dedicated pickleball courts throughout the city will require time, funding, and reliance on private facilities to meet demand in the short and longterm.

In 2027, we will endeavor to:

- Study the feasibility of expanding Brighton Playfield, Froula Playground, and Magnuson Park for additional tennis courts.
- Determine alternative locations for pickleball courts on existing impervious surfaces near Alki Playground, Walt Hundley Playfield, Rainier Beach Playfield, and Gilman Playground within a reasonable proximity of the existing sites.
- Finalize the planning process for the number of pickleball courts that can be added to Georgetown Playfield and the new Magnuson Park pickleball courts.

The following courts also have the potential for added density when resurfaced:

- Beacon Hill Playground
- Bitter Lake Playfield
- Dearborn Park
- Delridge Playfield
- Discovery Park
- Kinneer Park
- Miller Playfield
- Mt Baker Park
- Maple Leaf Reservoir

SECTION VII: CONCLUSION

Racquet sports are one of many beloved ways people use parks, and we want them to work well for everyone. The recommendations herein are intended to achieve that goal. It is our hope that through this process we can agree on the principles that will guide us moving forward. We thank and recognize the many users and community members over the years who have contributed to the success of these sports within our system and have enabled a strong foundation for their future!