

Background

Pickleball is a sport that was invented in the mid 1960's. The game combines elements of three sports (tennis, badminton, and table tennis), and can be less taxing physically, making it popular among older adults. Pickleball can develop into a quick, fast-paced competitive game for experienced players. Pickleball Canada promotes the sport as "A Game for All". The game is played with a paddle and a perforated slower-moving ball over a net on a badminton sized court. In 2015 an estimated 6,000 Canadians played the sport. In 2018 there are approximately 60,000 people playing the game, making pickleball one of Canada's fastest growing sports.

Locally, the City of Greater Sudbury (City) was initially approached by a small group of citizens in 2013 inquiring if pickleball lines could be added to a tennis court at the Lo-Allen Park Playground. YMCA Sudbury has also offered opportunities for indoor.

As part of the City's Parks, Open Space and Leisure Master Plan Review (2014), notable demand for pickleball was expressed at the public open houses. The master plan noted a sizable surplus of tennis courts in Greater Sudbury with overlaps in tennis court distribution as follows:

- James Jerome Sports Complex and Lockerby Playground
- O'Connor Playground and Sacre Coeur Soccer Fields
- Quinn & Logan and Delki Dozzi

The Parks, Open Space and Leisure Master Plan states the City should convert under-utilized tennis courts in over-supplied areas to other alternative uses (e.g., pickleball).

Recent Developments

Greater Sudbury Pickleball Association

In early 2017, the Greater Sudbury Pickleball Association formalized as a group with an executive and membership structure. The association has developed a master plan for the growth of pickleball locally. Their vision included six permanent pickleball courts at the O'Connor Playground site, consistent with the City's Parks, Open Space and Leisure Master Plan. The group has also requested to have pickleball lines added at existing tennis courts in Chelmsford and Valley East.

The Greater Sudbury Pickleball Association hosted a free clinic at Percy Playground in the fall of 2017 and has secured Collège Notre-Dame for indoor play during the 2017/2018 winter season. The group has developed a newsletter and website.

The Greater Sudbury Pickleball Association recently received Healthy Community Initiative funding in the amount of \$3,400. These funds will be used for clinics to promote and teach the sport of pickleball throughout Greater Sudbury, and the purchase of equipment. The City is also working with the group to have indoor clinics provided at the Falconbridge Wellness Centre and Capreol Millennium Centre.

Greater Sudbury Public Library Pickleball Equipment Lending

Beginning in August 2017, the Greater Sudbury Public Library has made pickleball equipment available for loan at the South End Library and Valley East Library & Citizen Service Centre locations. The kit includes four (4) paddles, two (2) balls, a portable net system and basic instructions about the game. The portable net system can be placed on existing city tennis courts or at the Lo-Ellen Playground location.

City of Greater Sudbury Age-Friendly Community Action Plan

As part of the City's efforts to obtain status as an age-friendly community, public input through forums and surveys was received in 2016 as part of the Age-Friendly Action Plan. Through this process there was great interest expressed in growing the sport of pickleball, which supports the pillars of age-friendly outdoor spaces and social participation.

New Horizons for Seniors Funding

In collaboration with the Greater Sudbury Pickleball Association, the City was successful with an application for New Horizons for Seniors Funding to establish a permanent pickleball facility in Greater Sudbury. Funding in the amount of \$24,000 was received to repurpose the O'Connor Playground tennis courts.

2018 Citizen & Leisure Services Capital Envelope

As part of the 2018 Citizen & Leisure Services Capital Envelope, \$50,000 was identified for outdoor sport court repairs or retrofits. These funds will be utilized to advance the Parks, Open Space and Leisure Plan action item to convert under-utilized tennis courts in over-supplied areas to other alternative uses. The Parks, Open Space and Leisure Master Plan recommendations with respect to service gaps and priority areas for outdoor sport courts will be used to determine prioritization of work.

The City will continue to collaborate with the Greater Sudbury Pickleball Association and other stakeholders regarding possible opportunities for pickleball in other areas. Opportunities identified for further enhancements include Delki Dozzi Sports Complex, Sixth Avenue Playground, Percy Playground, Capreol, Carmichael, Elmview Playground, Dowling Leisure Centre, Falconbridge and Chelmsford.

Next Steps

The City will continue to work with the Greater Sudbury Pickleball Association to identify opportunities for pickleball development throughout Greater Sudbury, utilizing the recommendations of the Parks, Open Space and Leisure Master Plan. Opportunities for indoor play with a focus on Affordable Access to Recreation will be included.

The O'Connor Playground pickleball courts are expected to be completed by August 2018.

References

Parks, Open Space and Leisure Master Plan Review (2014)

www.greatersudbury.ca/play/parks-and-playgrounds1/parks-open-space-and-leisure-master-plan-review-2014/

Pickleball Canada Organization
www.pickleballcanada.org

Pickleball Association of Ontario
pickleballontario.org/

Greater Sudbury Pickleball Association
www.facebook.com/GSPASudbury/

The History of Pickleball in Canada - by Chuck LeFave
<http://www.bcpickleball.com/history-of-pickleball-in-canada-by-chuck-lefaive/>