

Arlington Outdoor Courts Assessment Project

As Arlington's population continues to grow and sports trends change, the Department of Parks and Recreation reviews community interests and needs. The County recognizes there has been a shift in the use and demand for outdoor athletic courts.

The Public Spaces Master Plan includes an Action Step to establish a dedicated pickleball facility to meet the growing demand. View it [here](#) on page 65. This project is helping staff better understand how the community uses outdoor athletic courts, including the growing demand for pickleball.

About the Process

Last fall, our first community engagement helped the County learn more about outdoor court use in Arlington: where people play, what sports they play and the amenities they look for.

Based on earlier community feedback, we were able to create criteria to help us develop locations for multi-use courts that would include pickleball and a location for a dedicated pickleball facility. The factors considered when developing the criteria include community feedback on pickleball court preferences. The criteria are intended to identify existing tennis and basketball courts that are candidates for multi-use by adding pickleball lines. We will also use the criteria to identify suitable courts to convert to a dedicated single-use pickleball facility.

Earlier this summer we asked the community for their thoughts. We received input from close to 350 people. Most of the participants were white and between the ages of 31 and 70. Most of the comments came from pickleball players (84%), followed by tennis (35%) and basketball (15%).

What we Learned: Draft Criteria

Draft criteria to select pickleball placement is based on the order of importance we heard from the community:

1. Site has two or more courts located adjacent to each other
2. Access to off-street parking
3. Courts have lights
4. Access to permanent restrooms
5. Located in a high-density planning area
6. Located at least one mile from an existing pickleball court

Among all sports users, about the same number of people who thought the approach was balanced also thought that it missed the mark. And about the same percent, didn't feel strongly either way. We also explored a little deeper to see if there was a difference between sports groups. Across all court users, regardless of sport, about the same number of people who thought the approach was balanced also thought that it missed the mark. And about the same percent, didn't feel strongly either way.

What we Learned: Walter Reed Courts

Based on the draft criteria outlined above, Walter Reed has been identified as the future standalone pickleball facility. It was #1 court that met the pickleball criteria. We asked players what their top priority was for a standalone pickleball facility.

- Increase the number of courts to at least eight dedicated courts at Walter Reed
- There were also comments to convert the basketball court, at least partially, into a dedicated pickleball court
- All sports players to have clear roles and processes for use, times, order of play and reservations
- To improve the waiting and play experience, respondents also wanted the criteria to address:
 - Shaded waiting/seating
 - Space between courts
 - North-South orientation
 - Lighting
 - Rules Posted
 - Restrooms
 - Parking
 - Proper surfacing
 - Fencing
 - Dedicated use

Additional comments provided were focused on the same themes previously articulated, but in a slightly different order:

- The main message we heard was 'Help us hydrate' with access to water
- Improve the waiting and play experience with:
 - Shaded seating
 - Lighting
 - Parking
 - Sound mitigation
 - Post rules
 - Reservations
 - Post court availability
 - Space between courts
 - Practice wall
- There was continued interest from players for clear roles and processes for use, times, order of play and reservations

Next Steps

Walter Reed Standalone Pickleball Courts – Anticipated Timeline

- November 2022: Bond Referendum to secure funding
- Winter 2023: Community engagement to develop courts
- Spring – Fall 2023: Develop Construction Drawings and Permitting
- Fall 2023-- Summer 2024: Construction

Multi-Use Court Anticipated Timeline

- Fall 2022: Condition Assessment: Assess 4-6 tennis courts to create multi-use 8-12 pickleball courts
- November 2022: Bond Referendum to secure funding
- Winter 2023: Inform community as to which courts are selected to be restriped as multi-use courts
- Spring 2023: Construction, including resurfacing and restriping. Based on the court conditions and weather, the resurfacing and restriping will likely take 2-4 weeks.