

White Rock Pickleball Community – Delegation Application

Introduction

According to the **CWR Parks and Recreation Master Plan 2017 (Master Plan)**, the Community Trends indicate a significantly older population in the City of White Rock compared with Metro Vancouver and recognize the special recreational needs of an aging population. The Master Plan concludes: “These demographic trends suggest that parks and recreational facilities and programs will need to adapt to serve a larger proportion of older adults.”

Pickleball is the fastest growing sport in North America, thanks in large part to its popularity with the 55+ age demographic. Pickleball has seen explosive growth in White Rock and has become a transition sport for former squash, tennis and other racquet sport players. Pickleball is in fact a great sport for all ages because it has a relatively simple learning curve and provides not only physical exercise, but also an opportunity for socializing and foundations for an active lifestyle. The objectives of the Master Plan are well aligned with pickleball.

White Rock Pickleball Community (WRPB)

WRPB represent the 300+ pickleball players who enjoy the sport at the Centennial Park courts which have become both a recreational and social hub for pickleball. The daily gatherings provide opportunities to connect with people in the community and facilitate participation in a supportive environment.

White Rock Pickleball Community is not an official club and for the time being, prefers to keep it this way. Our players “just want to play pickleball” and enjoy the sport without structure in an inclusive comfortable setting. All players are welcome and optional donations help to fund ball supplies, net purchases and repairs.

Analysis

Despite this popularity, recognized recreational and health benefits, and increased demand for court time, White Rock does not have any permanent pickleball courts. Currently, White Rock only provides limited pickleball play opportunity by sharing space on two tennis courts at Centennial Park. Previous pickleball expansion requests with the Recreation and Culture Department and City Council over the past several years have not been successful. With several other options previously considered, WRPB believes the best option for pickleball in White Rock is the construction of a new permanent pickleball home at Centennial Park.

Centennial Park has five public tennis courts with permanent tennis nets, and only the upper two provide shared space and time for pickleball with lines painted on top of the dominant tennis template. When pickleball players use these courts, temporary pickleball needs need to be set-up and later taken down in order to play. The time allocated for pickleball on these two courts is only 9 a.m. to noon daily. Since the portable nets are stored in locked boxes, access to play is restricted to individuals with access, and limited pickleball playing opportunities exist for the general public.

Each tennis court accommodates four pickleball courts. As pickleball is typically played as a doubles game, this means 16 pickleball players are able to use the space of just one tennis court. In other words, the return on recreational land assets with pickleball is enormous!

Unfortunately, the demand for court time far exceeds the available courts resulting in many players waiting, particularly during peak summer months. The limited 3-hour morning schedule for pickleball also contributes to the excessive crowding. It is common to have over 30 people in the queue during the mornings as happened in non-COVID times in the summer of 2019.

Request to Council

The White Rock Pickleball Community would like to have the upper west tennis court at Centennial Park designated only for pickleball. This would provide space for four permanent pickleball courts, with permanent nets, properly painted lines and appropriate signage.

The costs and transition plans require coordination and consultation. WRPB is prepared to commit resources and work with CWR to ensure a successful outcome for this important community initiative. WRPB is preparing a more detailed plan to present to Mayor and Council in our Delegation Presentation on June 14, 2021.