

From: David Lai
Sent: Wednesday, December 21, 2022 3:57 PM
To: parkboard <parkboard@bellevuewa.gov>
Subject: Dedicated Pickleball Courts in Airfield Park

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Dear Parks Board,

Attached is a report that we have prepared for the Board describing the rationale and our vision for 16 dedicated pickleball courts in the Bellevue Airfield Park.

I hope you have a chance to read it before the Board meeting on 1/10/2023. Our committee members plan to attend this meeting in person. We look forward to discussing questions/comments with you at the end of the meeting.

Regards,
David Lai

Outdoor Dedicated Pickleball Court Facility in Bellevue Airfield Park

December 2022

Report Outline

- Background
- Rationale for 16 outdoor dedicated pickleball courts in Airfield Park
- Our vision for the 16 pickleball courts
- An option for a roof for the pickleball courts

Background

- Bellevue Airfield Park Master Plan is being updated
- We thank the Parks and Advisory Board for including pickleball courts in the Plan Update
- Only 4 outdoor dedicated pickleball courts were proposed in the development options presented in public engagement meeting #2 (9/22/2022)
- The small number of courts allocated
 - Does not reflect the public support for more courts in the Park
 - Does not satisfy the current and future need for pickleball
 - Does not reflect the available space for PB courts in the Park
- On behalf of the pickleball community, we urge the Parks and Advisory Board to support having 16 outdoor dedicated pickleball courts in the Airfield Park

Rationale for 16 Dedicated Pickleball Courts

(1 of 5)

- Pickleball courts are an efficient use of real estate
 - 16 courts occupy an area less than 1 acre while serving 64 players at a time
- The small footprint of 16 courts has minimal impact, if any, on the development of the regional aquatic center
 - 16 courts occupy about 4 to 5% of the 14+ acres available for active-use development in the Park

Rationale for 16 Dedicated Pickleball Courts

(2 of 5)

- Having 16 dedicated pickleball courts would catapult Bellevue into the leadership position for pickleball sport in the region
- The 16 courts would allow holding of large region-recognized tournaments* that would bring economic benefits to the City
- A future “Bellevue, City in a Park Pickleball Tournament” in the Airfield Park would enhance prestige and recognition to the City

* A large number of courts is needed for recreational (non-professional) tournaments because competition events are divided according to age and skill levels

Rationale for 16 Dedicated Pickleball Courts

(3 of 5)

- These courts would also provide opportunities for smaller, local and family oriented tournaments that encourage physical exercise, fun and games, building of communities, interaction among different communities, and fundraising events for various causes
- Because of the high property value and scarcity of land, Airfield Park is likely the only chance to build a region-leading pickleball facility in Bellevue for many years to come
 - An extraordinary opportunity to “Go Big”, like the planned aquatic center

Rationale for 16 Dedicated Pickleball Courts

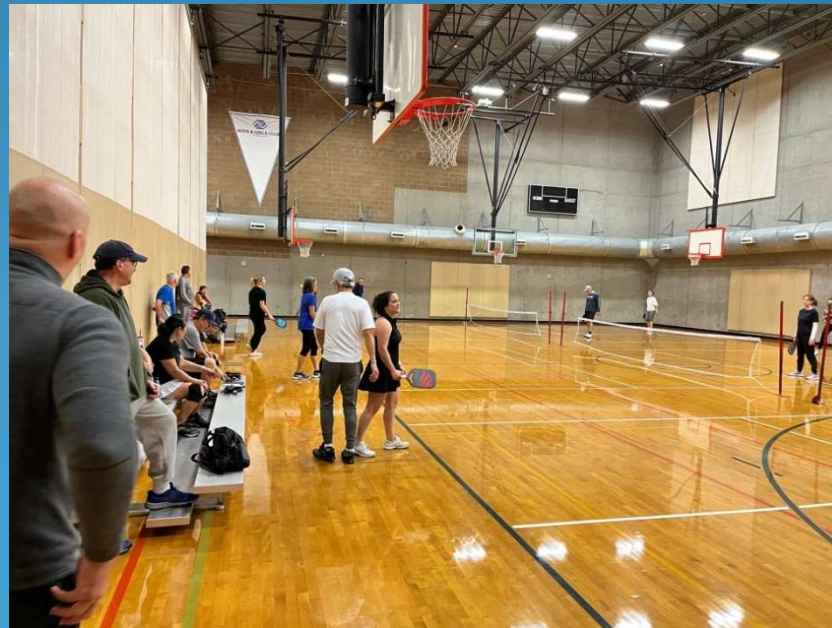
(4 of 5)

- Currently there is an acute shortage of pickleball courts in Bellevue
- The average annual growth rate for pickleball in the past 5 years is 12%
 - The sport will double in 5-6 years
- The future 16 courts are needed to alleviate the current shortage and accommodate the rapid growth of the official Washington state sport

Rationale for 16 Dedicated Pickleball Courts

(5 of 5)

- Indoor courts in community centers are insufficient
 - These courts have limited availability since the space is shared with other activities
 - Long wait-times are common
 - In some centers, number of players are capped resulting in frequent turning people away at the door



Our Vision for Airfield Park Pickleball Facility

(1 of 3)

- The 16 courts would be a basic pickleball facility
 - Onsite amenities such as food concessions are not expected, as they are not common in most public pickleball facilities around the country
 - Amenities in the planned aquatic center would serve both the swimming and pickleball communities
- The 16 courts would be concentrated at one location
 - Scattering pickleball courts to different locations in the Park is not conducive to the group-play nature of pickleball

Our Vision for Airfield Park Pickleball Facility

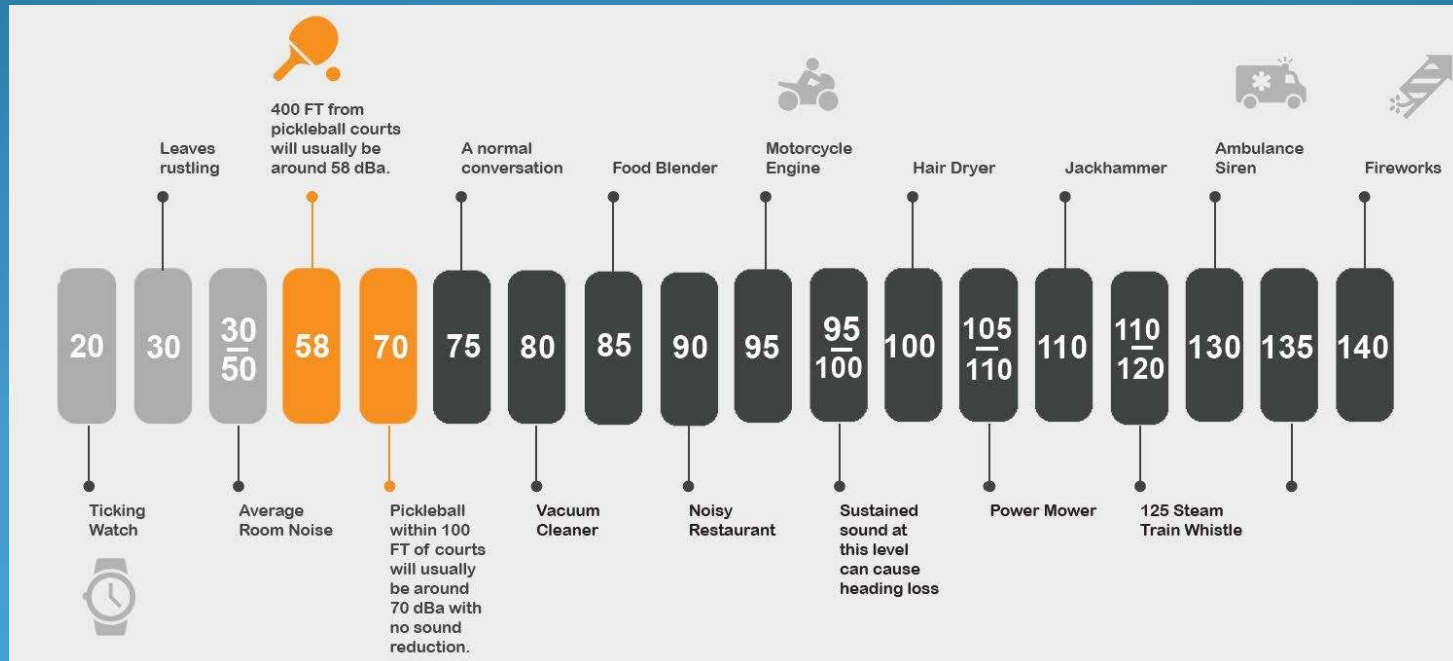
(2 of 3)

- The facility would share restrooms planned for the Airfield Park
- The facility would share parking spaces planned for the Airfield Park
 - About 300 parking spaces are planned
 - Additional parking spaces would be available in adjacent commercial properties

Our Vision for Airfield Park Pickleball Facility

(3 of 3)

- Noise from these pickleball courts will not be an issue
 - The nearest residential house is more than 500 feet from the potential location of pickleball courts in the Park
 - At 500 feet away, the noise from pickleball courts is about 50 decibels, the average room noise level (see figure below from an extensive pickleball noise study by the city of Durango, CO)



Pickleball Tournaments

- We envision large region-recognized tournaments to be held once (maximum twice) a year
- Competition events (and therefore the participants) would be spread out over several days
- It is common practice to bring in food trucks and portable toilets for pickleball tournaments
- We envision close coordination with the aquatic center to ensure tournaments and swim meets do not happen on the same days

A Roof Option for Pickleball Facility (1 of 5)

- An option for a roof over the pickleball courts is presented
- We envision a covered facility in the Airfield Park similar to the Blackburn Pavilion in Mount Vernon, WA (photo)



A Roof Option for Pickleball Facility (2 of 5)

- A pavilion is an outdoor pickleball facility
 - The courts are exposed to outside air
 - Nettings are installed to provide wind screens on the sides
 - There are no solid side-walls
- Lights are necessary in the pavilion during the dim cloudy winter, even in the daytime
- Lights are installed under the roof (see photo)
 - This setup does not have light pollution that affect neighboring residential areas, unlike the regular outdoor lighting in ball parks

A Roof Option for Pickleball Facility (3 of 5)

- A covered pavilion in Airfield Park would greatly increase the usage of the pickleball facility
 - While uncovered outdoor courts are being used year-round (weather permitting), a roof over the courts would make them a truly all-weather, year-round facility
 - Lights would allow working people using the courts in after-work hours
- A roof would extend the lifespan of the court surfaces by sheltering them from extreme heat and cold conditions

A Roof Option for Pickleball Facility (4 of 5)

- Cost for a roof is estimated to be 75% to 100% of the cost for courts without a roof
 - The estimates were obtained by talking to contractors, and the former president of the Skagit Valley Pickleball Club who was closely involved in the design of the Blackburn Pavilion
- A roof is a cost-effective way to make this Bellevue Parks facility more accessible to the community
 - A one-fold increase in cost results in several folds increase in usage

A Roof Option for Pickleball Facility (5 of 5)

- It is possible to add a roof to the courts after they are constructed
- For efficient and cost-effective roof retrofit, stronger foundations for the roof posts should be included during the initial construction of the courts
- Another option is to have a roof over some of the courts and leave the others uncovered

Summary

- Bellevue Airfield Park presents a rare opportunity for building a regional aquatic center and pickleball facility
- The 16-court facility would put Bellevue on the pickleball map and create a legacy that Bellevue, City in a Park would be proud of

Contact Information

This ad hoc committee is supported by the pickleball community on the Eastside and Seattle

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