



## The Pickleball Center Design Process and other FAQs

The extraordinarily high click-through rate to last week's article "Why A New Pickleball Center is Good For Tennis" tells us that there's a lot of interest in this project and that there is a thirst for more information. This week's article by Court Sports 4 Life (CS4L) board chair Steve "Moz" Modzelewski will focus on the design process – what the design goals are, who's involved, and where we are in the process. As always, we want to hear your questions and comments, so please continue to send them to [info@courtsports4life.org](mailto:info@courtsports4life.org), which forwards to both Loretta and CS4L staffer Debbie Modzelewski.

Let's start with the follow-up questions we received after last week's article –

- **What are the numbers behind the statement "tennis court rentals, on the other hand, actually declined a little from 2018 to 2019"?**  
The Tennis & Pickleball Center's Business Plan, written before the pandemic, has a ton of data so here's the [link](#) to it on the [courtsports4life.org](http://courtsports4life.org) website. In Appendix C, you'll see that tennis court rentals were \$120,921 in 2018 and \$115,668 in 2019, which includes rental of indoor tennis courts for pickleball use. That's projected to decrease further to \$92,890 when pickleball moves to the new indoor building.
- **If indoor tennis court rentals are currently only at 38%, do we really need more indoor courts available?**  
Please note that 38% was a June 2020 number when outdoor courts were available and more importantly, coronavirus concerns motivated many to play outdoors instead. A more revealing statistic to address this question is the winter usage of the indoor courts, which averaged 54% in the last two years. As you would expect, there are natural peak and slow times during a day, although even the off periods are getting shorter as the Conways add more drills and programs such as homeschool and Learn & Play. If all six courts are available during the peak periods of morning, after school and evening, fewer players would have to be turned away!
- **Giving up two outdoor clay tennis courts is a concern to some. Are the June 2020 usage numbers for courts #7 and #8 of 7% and 3% an accurate indicator given these unusual times?**  
The Swiggart court is generally the first clay court to be booked and its June 2020 usage rate was higher at 15%, resulting in an average for the three courts of 8%. This is actually consistent with the usage of the last two years of 8-10% for the three clay courts combined.

- **How much would fixing the clay court watering system cost?**

The 30-year old underground watering baffles are failing and will be very expensive to fix, costing as much to repair as building new clay courts. Bill and Loretta contacted their court construction contractor and were told that, taking into account high Steamboat construction costs, it would cost roughly \$80,000 per clay court with a maintenance cost (without including the water bill) of about \$4,000 per year. For comparison, a cushioned gel court would cost about \$42,000 to build with hardly any upkeep. Given the low court usage, the ROI for redoing clay courts is dismal and doesn't make good business sense.

- **How does changing the organizational structure change or improve the funding of maintenance or capital improvements to the Tennis Center?**

Currently, the City owns the land, contracts with a concessionaire, uses the storage shed at the northern end of the building, and takes care of snow removal and lawn mowing. However, there is exactly \$0 budgeted this year or in any future year for capital improvements and maintenance, even though the concessionaire contract says that the City will keep the facilities in good working order. You can read the 2019 PROSTR (Parks, Recreation, Open Space, Trails and River) Master Plan [here](#), and on page 72 you can see that the Tennis Center didn't make it onto either the High Priority or Lower Priority Capital Projects lists. And that was before the pandemic affected the City's revenues.

In short, there is no plan for funding the \$500,000 replacement of the "skin" when needed in 5-10 years. In fact, the City rescinded this year's long-promised resurfacing of outdoor courts #9, 10, 11 and 12 due to pandemic-related budget cuts, so the essential crack-only repair earlier this summer ended up being funded by CS4L (with proceeds from the June Community Treasures Sale), private donations, the Tennis & Pickleball Maintenance Endowment, and the Steamboat Springs Pickleball Association. Yes, in a show of support, the SSPA helped fund tennis court repair!

CS4L's comprehensive capital campaign (as noted in the first FAQs & Figures article) isn't just for a new Pickleball Center but also includes goals of raising \$1 million specifically for Tennis Center capital improvement projects (for the skin and renovating the front of house/locker room areas) and reaching \$1 million in the Tennis & Pickleball Center Maintenance Endowment Fund. Donors to the Capital Campaign may choose to direct their funds to any combination of the three initiatives. As a result, even if only partially successful, CS4L's fundraising for improvements and maintenance will certainly provide more funding than the City's budget of \$0.

- **What assurances are provided by the city that prevents them from selling or repurposing the land? How long would the lease be?**

All good questions, but since CS4L's contract with the City is in the final stages of negotiation, we need to wait until the terms are finalized before providing the details, hopefully in the next few weeks. The contract will then have two readings at City Council meetings and of course we'll let you know when those are!

So now let's talk about the design process for the new Pickleball Center –

- **What are the design goals?**

Under the stewardship of the Steamboat Springs Pickleball Association (SSPA) Board, preliminary plans and drawings were made in 2019 with these primary design goals –

- Offer 12 indoor and at least 6 outdoor courts, ideally with social and spectating areas
- Lose no more than 2 tennis courts
- Provide an outdoor social gathering area available to both the tennis and pickleball communities
- Minimize maintenance expenses, including heating, electricity, and snow removal
- Increase the number of parking spaces with safe traffic flow

With the help of the local award-winning design firm Vertical Arts (and pickleball-playing principal Brandt Vanderbosch), conceptual drawings like these were created as a starting point for discussion –



- **Where are we now with the design?**

When Court Sports 4 Life was created late last Fall and became responsible for the Pickleball Center project, a Building Committee was formed to research similar facilities, initiate engineering studies, work with the City on zoning and infrastructure needs, investigate ADA and other accessibility requirements, and explore different materials and new technologies (e.g., insulation, lighting, heating and cooling, court surface). This board committee is chaired by Jeff Temple (entrepreneur and land developer) and includes Igort del Haya (businessman and commercial property developer), Loretta Conway, and myself as CS4L board chair. (Click [here](#) to see a complete list of CS4L board members.)

In a nutshell, Jeff and Igort identified the new Parker Racquet Club in Denver as an ideal construction model and retained its owner as a consultant to provide us with construction plans/costs/advice; hired Barry Sherman, a professional “owner’s rep”, to shepherd the entire process; conducted geotechnical testing; and created an Advisory Team of top local players, including teaching pro Sean Pummill, to advise on pickleball-specific issues such as lighting, court surface, spacing, netting/dividers, and spectator areas. As all these pieces were put into motion and new information (and challenges) uncovered, the building design has undergone many changes, large and small!

But before significant time and expense is put into creating new drawings and renderings, we as a group are taking one last look at “outside the box” options on how to situate the new Pickleball Center. Just this past week, Vertical Arts provided two new options that the Building Committee will meet on to consider, with input from STA liaison Wade Wykert and SSPA liaison (and CS4L board member) Randy Wert. Once the siting is finalized and the City contract ratified, Vertical Arts will be authorized to begin their work in earnest.

- **How can you be fundraising when the design isn’t final?**

This is a chicken-and-the-egg situation and realistically, both efforts must take place concurrently for this project to move forward. We hope that you, as tennis and pickleball players as well as potential donors, are comfortable knowing that the overarching design goals will be achieved in as functional yet flexible, attractive yet cost-effective, and creative yet sensible a manner as we can.

Please contact us at [info@courtsports4life.org](mailto:info@courtsports4life.org) if you have questions not addressed here or on the Court Sports 4 Life website ([courtsports4life.org](http://courtsports4life.org)). Thanks for making it through this long article and see you on the tennis and pickleball courts!

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