

CITY OF PALO ALTO

To: City of Palo Alto Parks and Recreation Commission

From: Adam Howard, Senior Community Services Manager and Field Usage Ad-Hoc Committee

Date: April 23rd, 2019

Re: Recommendation to City Council to Adopt a Park Improvement Ordinance for Pickleball Courts at Mitchell Park.

Action:

Staff is requesting that the Parks and Recreation Commission provide a recommendation to City Council to adopt a Park Improvement Ordinance (PIO) for pickleball courts at Mitchell Park.

Background: (Please reference attached map for Mitchell Park court layout)

The City of Palo Alto has seen an increase in the number of pickleball players and requests for pickleball space. The Palo Alto Pickleball Club (formally Silicon Valley Pickleball Club) has been very active in Palo Alto. The club began using Mitchell Park Tennis Courts 5, 6, 7 on a first-come first-serve basis, which was not supported by the City's court policy. Staff saw an increase in pickleball play and felt it was important to address the growing demand for pickleball space. On August 28th, 2018, staff presented recommended changes to the Court Use Policy to the Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC). These changes would allow pickleball to use Mitchell Park Courts 5,6,7 on a first come first serve basis as well as providing dedicated times in evenings and weekends. These policy recommendations were supported by the PRC and approved by City Council on October 15th,2018. The August 28th, 2018 PRC staff report and 10/15/18 City Council staff report can be found here:

<https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/civicax/filebank/blobdload.aspx?t=47888.16&BlobID=66491>

<https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/civicax/filebank/blobdload.aspx?t=59206.86&BlobID=67123>

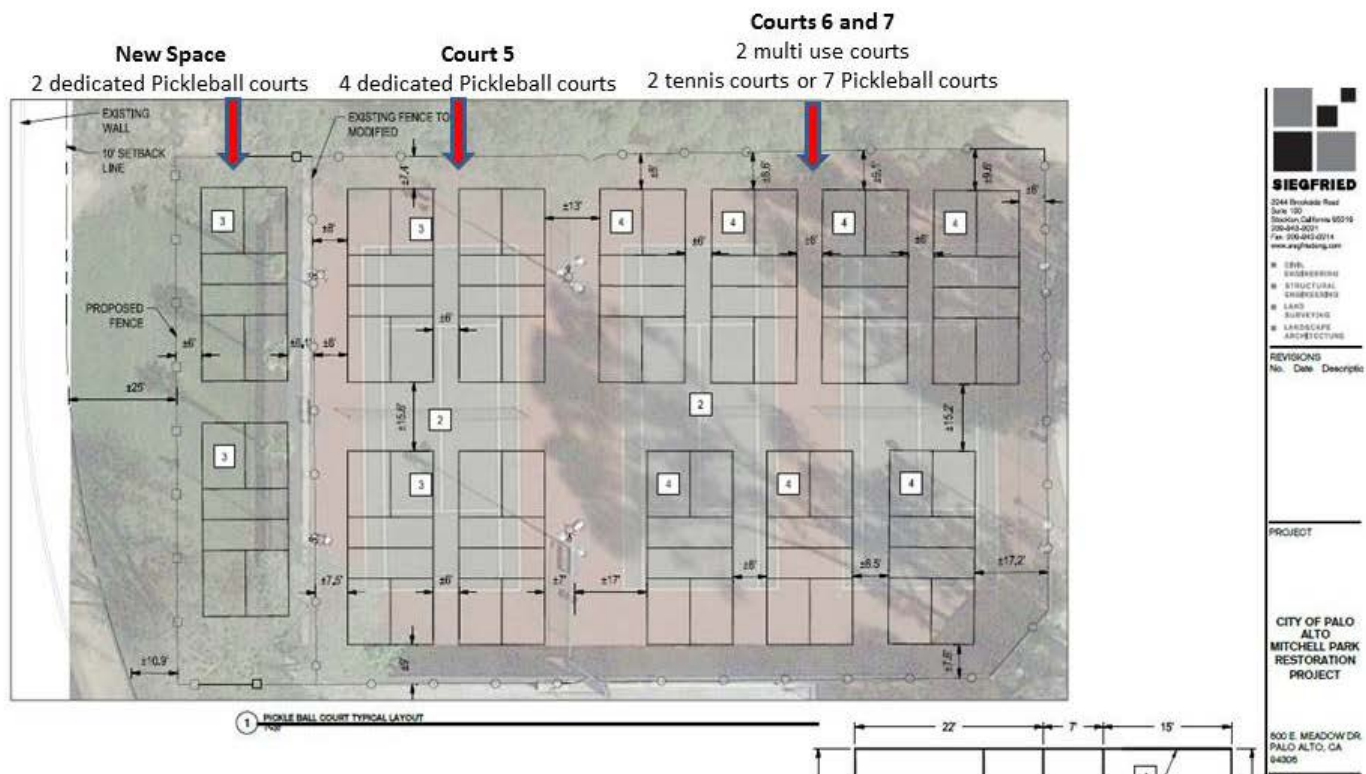
Staff has also redesigned and resurfaced the small paddleball courts in Mitchell Park that were underutilized and turned them into two dedicated Pickleball courts.

Discussion:

This policy change legitimized the use of courts by pickleball and provided dedicated times for pickleball play. However, the policy change still does not provide enough designated space to meet demand. When the pickleball community uses Mitchell Park courts 5, 6, 7 they must put together nets that they have purchased, set them up and take them down. With the continued growth of pickleball, staff feels it is important to provide additional, dedicated pickleball space for the Palo Alto community to use.

The Community Services Department and the Parks and Recreation Commission Ad Hoc Committee began looking into available space to provide designated pickleball courts. With high demand on Mitchell Park Tennis Courts 5, 6, 7 by pickleball, staff proposed converting those courts to permanent pickleball courts. The proposal was met with heavy resistance from the tennis community, specifically around the idea of losing lit courts and preferring a method that kept the courts available for joint use.

The proposal below is a design that minimizes the loss of lit tennis courts, provides enough dedicated pickleball space to handle evening play and keeps the use of joint space to provide expansion for high demand times.



- New area created outside of Mitchell Park court 5 becomes 2 more designated pickleball courts
- Mitchell Park tennis court 5 becomes 4 designated pickleball courts
- Mitchell Park Tennis Courts 6 and 7 remain multi-use courts with designated pickleball and tennis times. Pickleball would be given priority 8am-2:30pm seven days a week. Tennis would be given priority 3:00 pm-10pm seven days a week. If courts are not in use,

anyone can use the court but must vacate the space if the priority sport arrives and needs the space.

This plan would result in:

- 8 designated pickleball courts (including the 2 recently redesigned paddleball courts and 4 lit courts)
- 4 designated tennis courts (4 lit tennis courts)
- 2 multi use courts (2 tennis courts, 7 pickleball courts) (all lit)

Public Outreach

On Tuesday February 19th, staff held a public meeting to discuss the proposal to the users of the Mitchell Park Courts. There were roughly 60 people in attendance; a majority of the users were pickleball players with a smaller contingent of tennis players. A summary of feedback received at the meeting is below.

Pickleball feedback:

- Would like a seating area included in design
- Addition of water fountain would benefit all
- Likes the mix of dedicated hours for multi-use courts, split seems fair
- Trees are an ongoing issue

Tennis feedback:

- Keep all courts multi-use – why let a court sit empty
- Lit tennis courts are crucial for tennis
- Lots of young kids play tennis and need a place
- Tennis courts are not available on weekend mornings at Mitchell
- Grouping of tennis courts also important to tennis community

Park Improvement Plan and Ordinance

The Park Improvement plan (*see attached for full document*) covers the following:

1. Remove four trees, and follow City Arborist's replanting recommendation;
2. (2) Install two new pickleball courts and perimeter fencing in passive grass area adjacent to existing tennis courts;
3. Install concrete walkway along exterior of the two new pickleball courts;
4. Convert one (existing) tennis court into four dedicated pickleball courts;
5. Stripe the two (existing) tennis courts for tennis and pickleball use to allow for shared use; and
6. Install one drinking fountain adjacent to the tennis/pickleball courts.

Next Steps

1. Park Improvement Plan to City Council Consent Calendar - May 2019
2. Obtain Planning Department Permit - May 2019
3. Council contract approval –July 2019
4. Anticipated start of construction—August 2019
5. Anticipated completion of project—October 2019