

WHAT TO DO NOW: Action Items

This document provides practical steps that local tennis groups should take to preempt conflicts over courts or to protect courts where conflicts are currently occurring. To help actively promote the growth and benefits of tennis, the document focuses on building relationships, mobilizing support, leveraging information, utilizing media, engaging in effective communication, as well as understanding business development and funding. Keep in mind these recommendations are generic, so you will need to tailor them to your local situation. In addition, they are not prioritized because each of them is crucial to successful tennis advocacy.

I. RELATIONSHIPS MATTER

- ➔ **Cultivate relationships with decision-makers.** Advocacy is relationship driven. If you do not already know the key decision-makers in your area, for example, County commissioners, City Council members, Parks & Recreation directors, as well as Mayor and senior government staff, then meet them and, if possible, invite them to tennis events. Most governmental groups are open to meetings and presentations, so create a slide presentation (or video) about tennis and what it does for the community, and then look for opportunities to use it. For guidance on how to cultivate relationships with decision-makers, refer to the *USTA Community Advocacy Handbook* – “Gaining Support for Your Project” (pp. 13-16). And for guidance on developing a slide presentation refer to, *What to Present Now: Working Template*.
- ➔ **Develop community partnerships.** Begin to build a coalition of tennis organizations and enthusiasts, youth advocates, health and fitness professionals and organizations, and others you work with closely. In local politics, numbers are powerful. For guidance on community partnerships, developing your project, and gaining support, refer to the *USTA Community Advocacy Handbook* – “Developing Your Advocacy Project” (pp. 11-12) and “Gaining Support for Your Project” (pp. 13-16). To promote why citizens should engage in tennis advocacy refer to, *What to Use Now: Essential Resources* – “USTA Advantage Tennis Advocacy” flyer and buck slip, “USTA Tennis is Boooooooming” graphic, “USTA Smashing Benefits of Tennis” flyer, “USTA Long Live Tennis” flyer, and “USTA Top 10 Reasons to Play Tennis” flyer (from the *USTA Community Advocacy Handbook*, p. 6).
- ➔ **Form an Advocacy Committee.** The core of your alliance should be an Advocacy Committee that includes key members of the tennis community and people who represent organizations with similar interests. This group must include people who understand advocacy, know the community, and can organize and steer a major influence campaign. For guidance on how to form an Advocacy Committee, including an overview of the process and things to consider, refer to *What to Use Now: Essential Resources* – “USTA Advocacy in Motion Worksheet” (pdf), from the *USTA Community Advocacy Handbook* (pp. 50-52.). For guidance on developing your project and gaining support refer to the *USTA Community Advocacy Handbook* – “Developing Your Advocacy Project” (pp. 11-12) and “Gaining Support for Your Project” (pp. 13-16).
- ➔ **Engage with media outlets.** If you are not working closely with them, engage the key people in local media: editors, sports writers, and radio and TV reporters and personalities. Try to place articles about your activities and the benefits of tennis in print media, and arrange guest appearances on community and sports talk radio. At the same

time, make friends in other organizations with good media ties, like the Chamber of Commerce or the Visitors Bureau. For guidance on how to engage with media outlets, refer to the *USTA Community Advocacy Handbook* – “Working with the Media” (pp. 20-25). To promote the growth and benefits of tennis to media outlets, refer to *What to Use Now: Essential Resources* – “USTA Advantage Tennis Advocacy” flyer, “USTA Tennis is Boooooooming” graphic, “USTA Smashing Benefits of Tennis” flyer, “USTA Long Live Tennis” flyer, and “USTA Top 10 Reasons to Play Tennis” flyer, and also refer to the two news articles, “U.S. tennis participation grew...” and “Surge in tennis participation...”.

II. KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

- ➔ ***Investigate city planning and development.*** Study your local government’s parks and recreation master plan to determine where tennis fits into the bigger picture. Your advocacy may need to focus on changing the planning parameters rather than a specific court issue. Another governmental item to consider is any unused bond funds or discretionary money, and how it might be leveraged to serve the community through tennis. For guidance on how to consider city planning and development while developing your project, gaining support, and considering funding, refer to the *USTA Community Advocacy Handbook* – “Developing Your Advocacy Project” (pp. 10-11), “Gaining Support for Your Project” (pp. 13-16), “Funding Your Project” (pp. 17-19), and “Business Development” (pp. 33-38). Also refer to, *What to Use Now: Essential Resources* – “2023 Guide to USTA Venue Services” flyer, “USTA Venue Services” webpage, “USTA Statement of Guidance – Update”, and “USTA Southern Lines Policy” webpage.
- ➔ ***Determine tennis activity and court use.*** Generate tennis participation and court utilization statistics to demonstrate how many people play regularly and occasionally. These are things you can determine by looking at local program participation and court use at private tennis facilities, school facilities, and parks & recreation facilities for leagues, clinics and camps, high school practice and competition, tournaments, and estimated non-USTA recreational play. For guidance on how to determine local tennis activity and court use, contact your Community Tennis Association, USTA district office (state), and USTA section office (USTA Southern).
- ➔ ***Discover the service impact of tennis.*** Evaluate your local tennis programs to determine their community service impact. Look at youth and adult leagues, beginner programs, Junior Team Tennis (JTT), National Junior Tennis and Learning (NJTL) chapters, Cardio Tennis, adaptive and wheelchair tennis, participation in community events, charity tournaments, use of local vendors, support for area pros and school teams, as well as other community service impacts. For guidance on how to discover the service impact of tennis, contact your Community Tennis Association, USTA district office (state), and USTA section office (USTA Southern).
- ➔ ***Establish the economic impact of tennis.*** Find the formula your local jurisdiction uses to determine tourism revenues and calculate the amount of funding your events bring into the community each year. For guidance on establishing the economic impact of tennis refer to, *What do Use Now: Essential Resources* – “Tennis Center Feasibility Study, Final Draft Report, April 2022 (Flower Mound, Texas) – Appendix B: Economic Impact Analysis” (pp. 69-76)”.

III. COMMUNICATION IS KEY

- ➔ **Attend, be visible, and be noticed.** Ask your supporters to be visible at every opportunity. Asking people to wear tennis clothing with a specific logo or theme can make a big impact. At crucial times, consider packing council meetings, workshops, etc., with concerned citizens, who are voters. If you do this, be respectful and provide a heads-up to avoid the appearance of an ambush. For guidance on how to engage with media outlets, refer to the *USTA Community Advocacy Handbook* – “Gaining Support for Your Project” (pp. 13-16) and “Working with the Media” (pp. 20-25).
- ➔ **Emphasize the growth and benefits of tennis.** Ensure everyone has key information and updated handouts on the growth and benefits of tennis. Rather than focusing on the negatives of competing sports, stress the importance of promoting the financial, health, and wellness benefits of tennis. For guidance on how to emphasize the benefits of tennis, refer to the *USTA Community Advocacy Handbook* – “The Case for Tennis” (pp. 4-6) and “The Ideal Sport for Youth Development and Education” (pp. 7-9). Also refer to *What to Use Now: Essential Resources* – “USTA Advantage Tennis Advocacy” flyer, “USTA Tennis is Boooooooming” graphic, “USTA Smashing Benefits of Tennis” flyer, “USTA Long Live Tennis” flyer, and “USTA Top 10 Reasons to Play Tennis” flyer (from the *USTA Community Advocacy Handbook*, p. 6), and also refer to the two news articles, “U.S. tennis participation grew...” and “Surge in tennis participation...”.
- ➔ **Build positive momentum.** Start building a favorable environment by putting positive talking points about tennis into everything you send out, including media releases, social media, and player information. Look for opportunities to present the case for tennis to decision-makers, civic organizations, and the public. For guidance on building positive momentum, refer to the *USTA Community Advocacy Handbook* – “The Case for Tennis” (pp. 4-6) and *What to Use Now: Essential Resources* – “USTA Advantage Tennis Advocacy” flyer and buck slip, “USTA Tennis is Boooooooming” graphic, “USTA Smashing Benefits of Tennis” flyer, “USTA Long Live Tennis” flyer, and “USTA Top 10 Reasons to Play Tennis” flyer (from the *USTA Community Advocacy Handbook*, p. 6), and also refer to the two news articles, “U.S. tennis participation grew...” and “Surge in tennis participation...”.
- ➔ **Encourage separate courts.** As you form alliances, be aware that some facility directors and teaching pros may favor converting courts to pickleball, or putting down dual lines in order to reduce pressure from pickleball enthusiasts or to make more money from the same space. If you suspect this is happening in your area, then try to ensure they are educated and motivated to push for separate courts, communicating why this is important to the growth of both sports. For guidance on how to encourage separate courts refer to, *What to Use Now: Essential Resources* – “USTA Statement of Guidance – Update”, “USTA Venue Services” webpage, and “USTA Southern Lines Policy” webpage.
- ➔ **Promote USTA-recommended solutions.** When court construction and utilization decisions are to be made, be ready to press for the USTA’s preferred solution of separate facilities and present ideas about alternate sites that can be made into pickleball courts quickly and cheaply. For guidance on USTA-recommended solutions refer to, *What to Use Now: Essential Resources* – “USTA Statement of Guidance – Update”, “2023 Guide to USTA Venue Services” flyer, “USTA Venue Services” webpage, and “USTA Southern Lines Policy” webpage.