

# WHAT TO SAY NOW: Talking Points

**These sample talking points have been effective with decision-makers and civic leaders in other communities. Select what suits your community and your audience. Add, delete, or modify the language to meet your needs, and then start getting your message out.**

## **Tennis is Booming.**

- ➔ More than 23.6 million people played tennis in 2022. There were 5.9 million new players since the start of 2020—an increase of 33 percent, with growth occurring across all age brackets.
- ➔ In our community, there are \_\_\_\_\_ active tennis players and at least \_\_\_\_\_ unaffiliated players.
- ➔ Last year, local play amounted to over \_\_\_\_\_ on-court hours. \_\_\_\_\_ players took part in \_\_\_\_\_ tournaments, \_\_\_\_\_ in adult league matches, \_\_\_\_\_ in youth programs, including \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ in adult and junior beginner programs.

## **Tennis is America's best recreational health booster.**

- ➔ Tennis adds 9.7 years to your life; tennis ranks highest among all sports, beating out soccer, cycling, swimming, and jogging. Participation in racquet sports, including tennis, reduces the risk of all-cause mortality by 47 percent.
- ➔ Playing tennis 3 hours a week reduces cardiovascular risk by 56 percent.
- ➔ Tennis improves coordination, agility, and balance. Regular play builds friendships and fitness that enhance well-being and promote mental health.

## **Youth tennis builds character and self-confidence and improves fitness and academic performance.**

- ➔ Unlike many youth sports, tennis emphasizes fair play, sportsmanship, and teamwork and actively discourages “in your face” behavior.
- ➔ Kids who play tennis are less likely to be overweight and less prone to risky behaviors like drinking and smoking.
- ➔ Young tennis players are more confident. They learn valuable social skills, get better grades, and are more likely to attend college.

## **Tennis is a community builder.**

- ➔ Nearly 80 percent of all US tennis is played on public courts, a figure that increases every year. Public park tennis creates links between ethnic groups, economic cohorts, and generations.
- ➔ Tennis is a social sport that produces strong and lasting networks of civic-minded individuals.
- ➔ Tennis strives to increase minority involvement in all of its programs. NJTL, for example, reaches out to under-served youth who often do not participate in local Parks and Recreation programs.
- ➔ Since 2020 tennis participation has increased 90% among Hispanic players, 46% among Black players and 37% among Asian players.
- ➔ Tennis tournaments and other activities can produce significant tourism revenues. Last year, it generated \_\_\_\_\_ for our \_\_\_\_\_.

- Tennis organizations actively support civic improvement and many host charity events. Last year, our CTA \_\_\_\_\_.

**The USTA and other tennis industry organizations want to work with pickleball enthusiasts to minimize friction and find mutually beneficial ways of resolving court utilization issues.**

- The USTA “Tennis and Pickleball Statement of Guidance,” developed in 2023 in cooperation with park professionals and court contractors, details ways public parks can most efficiently and effectively support the growth of both sports. It stipulates that (1) communities should have separate facilities for tennis and pickleball, (2) whenever possible, communities should build new courts on non-traditional spaces like unused parking lots or empty big box stores, and (3) only as a last resort, should courts be shared. The third option is recommended only for facilities with two or fewer courts.
- USTA Southern will work with local communities to resolve court issues in ways that benefit both sports. However, its position is that sanctioned play will be permitted only on courts with USTA-approved lines. This means that most USTA activities, including tournaments and adult league play, cannot be played on blended lines.
- The Racquet Sports Industry, including major construction organizations, equipment and apparel manufacturers, facility owners, and operators, has endorsed the USTA position.
- Equipment manufacturers have invested heavily in pickleball. New court construction is moving toward larger facilities with areas for both sports. Many commercial clubs have added pickleball courts and are offering both sports.
- Professional certification organizations, PTR and USPTA, are developing new ways of teaching both sports, often in tandem.
- In general, the industry wants to minimize friction between tennis and pickleball. PTA, for example, recommends that pros organize trust-building activities like inviting pickleball players for free beginner tennis clinics and vice-versa, holding combined classes, and staging fun tennis and pickleball socials.
- The above points suggest the need for Parks and Recreation officials and local tennis and pickleball enthusiasts to engage in shared problem solving. However, this cooperative spirit should not be allowed to mask the fact that tennis is growing rapidly and simply cannot afford to lose any more courts. In many places the sport has already outgrown its existing infrastructure and too many programs and players are competing for too little court time. Managing the steady growth of tennis and pickleball does suggest collaboration, but it suggests even more strongly the need for new construction.

**Tennis proponents bring a lot to the table, primarily through National, Sectional, and State facility grants.**

- In 2022, the USTA provided technical assistance to more than 100 facilities nationwide to build or refurbish courts at public parks and tennis facilities. More than \$750,000 was awarded to more than 45 projects, with \$285,000 going to new construction projects. These efforts represent more than 585 courts completed and an impact of more than \$50 million in tennis infrastructure. In many cases, USTA Sections and Districts also supported local projects. In our area \_\_\_\_\_.
- Grants for programming at public facilities are also available from numerous tennis entities. Locally, we have received \$\_\_\_\_\_ in grant funding for \_\_\_\_\_.

## NOTES

1. Local advocates should be aware of the best way to address conflicting information from facility directors and "primary tennis advocates." Facility directors may be selling their cities and/or Parks & Rec Directors on converting some courts to Pickleball.
2. This is especially true when their compensation is tied to facility income (more players in the same space). It can be an easy out for them and reduce the pressure that they get from the PB advocates. If the tennis pros and/or facility directors are going to decision-makers recommending this, we need to ensure they are educated/motivated as tennis advocates and not just assume that is the case.