

2017 Platform Tennis Project

Has the Board already approved the construction of 2 additional platform tennis courts?

Yes. Discussions about the construction of 2 additional platform tennis courts began in April, 2015. The Board held public hearings concerning the addition of 2 platform courts and the loss of 1 lighted public tennis court at its November, 2015 regular meeting and at a December, 2015 special meeting. Based on the nearly unanimous public support for the additional paddle courts and the lack of opposition to the loss of a lighted public tennis court, at its December, 2015 regular meeting, the Board approved moving forward with the process.

Late in 2015 and during the first quarter of 2016, the Board sought and considered architecture bids, interviewed several architects, and selected one for the project. The architect presented several plans at the Board's June, 2016 regular meeting, including a proposal for the new courts oriented north-south with a hut. The Board discussed the proposals, as well as court orientation and a hut at its June, July, and August, 2016 regular meetings. At its August, 2016 regular meeting, the Board unanimously agreed to collect additional information and further consider only the proposed plan to construct the 2 new platform courts oriented north-south and forgo construction of a hut. There were no public comments.

At its September, 2016 meeting, the Board unanimously approved the plan to construct the 2 new paddle courts oriented north-south with no hut. There were again no public comments. Because the process had taken so long, however, the Board also determined that it was in the public interest to hold another public hearing concerning the addition of 2 platform tennis courts and the loss of 1 lighted public tennis court.

Public hearing was held at the Board's October, 2016 regular meeting. There were 5 public comments, all in support of the proposal. The Board unanimously approved the construction of the 2 additional platform courts oriented north-south with no hut and to draft bid documents, subject to the Village's approval of the required minor amendment to the Keystone Planned Development Use permit allowing for construction of the 2 new platform courts. The Village approved the amendment at its November 7, 2016 meeting.

Why is the Board still considering court orientation?

At the Board's November 14, 2016 regular meeting, several members of the platform tennis community requested that the Board reconsider the issue of court orientation, both as it affects play and for the purpose of dedicating space for a future hut. Notwithstanding the fact that the project and the required minor development amendment were already approved at its December 2016 regular meeting, the Board scheduled a public hearing on January 23, 2017, concerning the loss of 1 additional lighted public tennis court required by orienting the 2 new platform courts east-west.

What are the membership numbers for platform tennis?

	Total	Resident	Non-Resident
2011-2012	69	55	14
2012-2013	127	89	38
2013-2014	124	87	37
2014-2015	161	103	58

<u>Summer</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Total	170	107	63
2015-2016	168	108	60
<u>Summer</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>7</u>
Total	184	117	67
2016-2017	168	109	59

How is the platform tennis facility financed?

In 2010 when the Board approved the first 2 platform tennis courts, they also approved that the facility be operated as an Enterprise Facility. As an Enterprise Facility, revenues generated from the operation of the facility should cover its capital and operating costs. The cost to construct the first 2 platform tennis courts was \$277,800, and this cost was depreciated over a 20-year period, so the facility pays back \$14,000 annually to cover this expense. The capital expense on the renovation to Keystone Center was not counted toward platform tennis, because it is also used as a summer camp site and for recreation programming. However, any maintenance costs to Keystone Center directly related to platform tennis are charged to platform tennis.

For the platform tennis facility to be financially viable, each court should be supported by 60 members. As the Park District has 2 courts, the goal is to reach and maintain 120 members. Membership fees were set in line with the fees charged at the Village of Hinsdale’s and the Glen Ellyn Park District’s platform facilities. The Park District’s financial strategy was to build a solid membership base first and then adjust membership fees to cover the operation expenses, any budget shortage, and any future expansion.

As of April 30, 2016, the platform tennis facility budget was \$3,000 in deficit. In the year-end 2016, 2015, and 2014 budgets, the Park District deferred the \$3000 line item maintenance staff expense to help keep membership fees down, with the hope of charging these expenses as the budget moves out of the deficit.

[Click here](#) to view the Platform Tennis Facility’s Financial History.

How much will the 2 new platform tennis courts cost?

If the 2 new platform tennis courts are constructed in a north-south orientation with a 6’ deck between the courts, the project is estimated to cost \$340,000. Costs are higher than the they were for the existing courts due to factors such as inflation and the cost of concrete. To cover this cost, membership rates will increase approximately \$15R/\$19NR annually to \$198R/\$248NR under the assumption that membership numbers can increase to 240. Based on participation at other platform tennis facilities, the Park District projects the 240 membership number is probable with a membership rate around \$200R/\$250NR.

If the 2 new platform tennis courts are constructed in an east-west orientation with a viewing deck, the project is estimated to cost \$477,400. The increased cost is due to an increase in viewing deck size, additional utilities and maintenance to service the additional viewing deck, and the removal of the second tennis court. To cover this cost, membership rates would increase approximately \$48R/\$60NR annually to \$231R/\$289NR under the same assumption that membership numbers can increase to 240.

Are there plans for a paddle hut?

When the Board approved the existing platform tennis courts in 2010, they also approved the renovation of Keystone Center to serve as a paddle hut for the platform tennis facility. To maximize use of the building, the Park District utilizes the space daytime during the weekdays for recreation programming and during the summer for summer camps, and platform tennis utilizes the space weekday evenings and weekends during the platform tennis season.

Paddle huts are typically built at court level, and this is not possible with the use of Keystone Center. The estimated cost to build a court-level paddle hut is approximately \$800,000. At this time, there is not a financial plan to fund the construction of a hut, and therefore, there are no current plans for a hut.

What is the best orientation for the platform tennis courts?

Platform tennis courts have traditionally been oriented east-west. This is largely because platform tennis started as a travel league program on the east coast, with tournament play happening daytime on the weekends. Therefore, courts were oriented east-west to avoid looking into the midday sun. Over the years, lights were added to courts and programming was expanded to include house-league and recreational play. As a result, primetime play has predominantly shifted to nights, early morning, and early evening.

While some courts are still being built oriented east-west, some are being built oriented north-south. Total Platform Tennis, one of the few platform tennis contractors in the country and the builder of the Park District's existing platform tennis courts, recommends the north-south orientation due to the change in play and space constraints. The President of the Chicago Platform Tennis Association states that orientation of platform tennis courts is no longer the issue that it was in the past and is now primarily an individual preference.

Why were the existing 2 courts installed in a north-south orientation?

When a group of residents first presented the idea of building platform tennis courts to the Park District, the Board was receptive to the idea, but needed to address several concerns in order to implement the proposal. Those concerns included not overbuilding a facility without being sure of membership support, selecting a location that would allow the facility to expand to 4 courts if needed, selecting a location that would not face resident opposition due to lights, and providing a warming facility. The Board ultimately approved the removal of one of the lighted tennis courts at Keystone Park and renovating the adjacent Keystone Center to serve as the paddle hut. The width of the removed lighted tennis court was only 45', leaving the only option to install the 2 existing platform tennis courts in a north-south orientation.

How many tennis courts are needed in the Village?

The National Parks and Recreation Association 1995 Standards recommends 1 public tennis court per 2,000 residents. In 2013, it published benchmarking data showing 1 public tennis court per 4,375 residents. The United States Tennis Association guidelines recommend 15 combined public and private courts for a population the size of River Forest. These statistics are national minimum standards.

River Forest's population is 11,200. The reduction of 1 tennis court as per the currently approved plan

will leave 7 public tennis courts (1 court per 1,600 residents), and the reduction of 2 tennis courts would leave 6 public tennis courts (1 court per 1,900 residents)

The number of outdoor public tennis courts in comparable communities are:

1. Glenview: 38 (1 court to 1,100 residents)
2. Hinsdale: 16 (1 court per 1,100 residents)
3. Lake Forest: 22 (1 court per 900 residents)
4. Oakbrook 14 (1 court per 600 residents)
5. Wilmette 20 (1 court per 1,400 residents)
6. Winnetka: 12 (1 court per 1,000 residents)

How often are the Keystone Park tennis courts used?

The Park District has never done a formal study on the use of the Keystone Park tennis courts. However, as part of the Board's consideration of the addition of 2 platform courts, for a 6-week period in July and August, 2015, the Park District informally monitored tennis court usage at Keystone Park when opening and closing the Keystone Center bathrooms at 8:30 AM and 8:30 PM. Staff noted that no more than half the tennis courts were in use during these time periods. The Park District utilizes 3 courts on Tuesdays and Thursdays May-October for 4 hours per night for its tennis lesson programs. Trinity HS uses 5 tennis courts weekdays in the fall for IHSA Fall Tennis, and OPRFHS uses all 6 of the tennis courts for IHSA state meets and tournaments.

Can the Park District restrict use of the Keystone tennis courts to only residents?

All parks in River Forest are open to both residents and nonresidents, but some usage can be restricted through permits or fees. RFYBS, RFYS, and Chicago Edge have affiliate agreements with the Park District through which these groups reserve use of athletic fields and the batting cages in return for a user fee. Use of the platform tennis courts is restricted through membership fees. A suggestion has been made for the Park District to create some type of reservation system for the tennis courts allowing residents priority use. The Park District will be researching this suggestion to determine if this idea can be implemented and managed.

Can more tennis courts be built at Washington Square?

The Park District manages 28 acres of parkland at 10 sites. Development at any site is a difficult task due to park size, parking, and impact on the neighborhood. If lighting is included, the difficulty of development increases significantly. Washington Square is a Park District park designed by Jen Jensen. Several years ago, the Park District discussed moving the tennis courts at Washington Square a few feet to the north, and this was met with strong opposition from the residents in the neighborhood, as well as a group who wished to preserve the park as designed by Jen Jensen. Thus, any redevelopment at Washington Square is difficult.

When will pickleball courts be available in River Forest?

The Park District plans to line 2 pickleball courts over the Washington Square tennis courts as part of the Washington Square tennis court resurfacing project. The project will include the grinding of the existing court and installation of a new asphalt surface. The project is expected to take 10 weeks to complete.

The pickleball courts will utilize the existing tennis nets, and paddles and balls will be available through the Park District.