

The Pitch for Municipal Paddle II

By Tom Dow
November, 2008

A few years ago I wrote an article (with help from Doug Pendry) for Platform Tennis Magazine that made the case for municipal facilities being a good way to grow the sport, and the fun. This is to report that Grosse Pointe, Michigan is turning out to be another success story.

Well, having written the earlier article, and having pushed the idea as a strategy for growth, I decided to put it to the test in my own backyard. The theory behind the idea goes something like this: that in long-time tennis communities, with mostly private platform tennis courts, a good way to grow is by adding public facilities that non clubbers can use (eg., like Doug Pendry and the folks in Winnetka, Illinois have done so successfully). Further, there were two key assumptions: one, that there is a need for more options during the colder months in many such communities, particularly for adults; and two, that these communities can often afford to shoulder the expense of adding platform tennis courts (think of the resources devoted to (warmer month) tennis courts, swimming pools, and playing fields in your community).

In 2004, a core group of paddle loving Grosse Pointers proposed building two new-used courts at an existing recreation area that's accessible to all five Grosse Pointe municipalities. After answering a City Council request for an operating plan that covered managing access and operational expenses, the proposal was approved and monies allocated. The courts (see below) were completed for the 2005 season.



New Public Courts in Grosse Pointe City's Neighborhood Club Park.

Since the new municipal courts were built, I'm happy to report that play has increased throughout the Pointes. In fact, last season it became necessary to be rather proactive when making reservations at many of the 16 courts in town. And to some, my name was actually mud, when they couldn't get a court on demand. That's when I knew we were successful. Better yet, after two years of the new public courts, another "Pointe" municipality, Grosse Pointe Farms, decided to build two courts and a warming hut of their own (see below), which were finished this September.



Grosse Pointe Farm's just completed "Pier Park" courts are immediately adjacent to beautiful Lake St. Clair.

There is also an effort afoot to add a joint tennis–platform tennis–recreation building at the first two new public courts (design below).





And there is talk of yet another Grosse Pointe municipality considering building courts at one of their parks. ...As one of my old bosses used to say, "success you can always deal with!"

If you are contemplating an effort to grow the sport and the fun, whether it's building a new facility, or upgrading an existing one, public or private, please remember there is a customizable presentation available for you to download from the A.P.T.A. website. As you can see, it worked in GP!