

Public Facilities and Parks

The USTA, as your partner in play, provides tools and resources to help park and recreation departments develop and optimize their tennis programs. We have various services, programs, digital tools and educational opportunities to help you grow the game in public parks.

Nearly 70% of all tennis is played on public park tennis courts. Parks and recreation groups are vital to the health and growth of tennis. Legends such as Billie Jean King and Arthur Ashe grew up playing on public courts, as did Serena and Venus Williams and many other U.S. standouts.

For many years, the USTA has worked with parks and recreation organizations, including the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), to promote tennis in parks around the country. Many of these organizations also have state affiliates that collaborate with the USTA's Sections, Districts/States, and other tennis organizations to help grow the sport on the local level. Local tennis providers such as CTAs and NJTLs as well as adaptive and wheelchair tennis organizations often tie into their community's parks and recreation department to promote the game and help get more people of all ages on the court.

ADVOCACY FOR PUBLIC PARK TENNIS

There are both direct and indirect ways for the tennis community to advance public park tennis.

First, understand the broader issues with which a park and recreation system deals. That will provide insight into how a tennis advocate can effectively partner with a park and recreation department to achieve the common goal of increased participation.

Second, understand how the park and recreation system works in your community. The issues addressed by park and recreation agencies are diverse and reflect the expressed needs and interests of the community. The operative term here is "expressed." Because public policy and funding are involved, it is often the most well-organized and visible advocacy effort that benefits most directly.

One of the most important things you can do for your cause is to visit your local park and recreation department. Ask to be walked through your city/county's Park Master Plan. This plan shows where parks are located, where parks are planned, and which facilities are given priority. You can identify where tennis courts are planned and see where space exists to build more. If you are not satisfied with the number of courts in your area, you can help change this with a grassroots advocacy plan. Don't be shy—ask questions of your park and recreation staff.

Another important factor is attending public Park and Recreation Commission meetings (if your city has one). Get to know the people on public boards and committees who may eventually deal with your tennis requests. You may find like-minded individuals in the audience at these meetings who can help with your advocacy goals.

As your tennis project plans coalesce, bring allies to these public meetings. Nothing helps influence local boards more than seeing other citizens there to support projects. Also attend meetings of related commissions and boards. For instance, if a tennis project involves the Wetlands Commission or the Zoning Board, be sure to attend those meetings. At the public meetings, take the opportunity to speak up, on the record. Often, media may be covering the meeting, and they may become interested in your advocacy plan.

RESOURCES

[USTA Parks and Recreation](#)

[National Recreation and Park Association \(NRPA\) Advocacy](#)

[USTA Southern Advocacy Panel Discussion](#)

[USTA Southern Facility Toolkit- Working with Park & Recreation Department](#)

[USTA North Carolina Leadership Workshop- How to speak to your City Council](#)

CASE STUDY: TULSA 2.5 BEGINNER LEAGUE - NON-ADVANCING | Submitted by Michelle O'quin

Introduction

Tulsa has offered a non-advancing beginner 2.5 women's league for the second year. The impetus was that teaching pros believed that Tulsa needed a place for its newbies to compete outside of the regular 2.5 leagues.

LaFortune Park Tennis Center has several teaching pros who focus on new tennis players by offering beginner drills and lessons. These players are excited to be part of the USTA experience on a traditional team (and deemed "skirt worthy" by Melissa McCorkle, program director at LaFortune) but their skills are not strong enough to make them comfortable in playing traditional leagues.

The teams are captained by teaching pros or experienced players and the reins are handed off mid-season to a team member. The program offers pre-season events like "Love and Tiebreaks" where experienced players and pros teach scoring.

Goal

For brand-new players to enter USTA leagues as soon as they can keep score and serve, and to have immediate success that they would not experience in the regular 2.5 league.

- **Project Size:** In 2022, there were four teams of brand-new players, separate from the tennis center's regular 2.5 leagues
- **Location:** LaFortune Park Tennis Center, Tulsa, Oklahoma
- **Community Size:** LaFortune Tennis Center hosted approximately 225 USTA teams in 2022
- **Lead Advocate Organization:** LaFortune Tennis Center; empowering the effort were its teaching pros: Melissa McCorkle, Amanda Scroggs and Bob Kline
- **Length of Project:** Ongoing
- **Budget:** Zero-sum
- **Funding Source(s):** None
- **Partnership(s):** DLC and teaching pros

History

Michelle O'quin says, "We started the non-advancing woman's 2.5 beginner league in 2021 because ratings were not published at year end 2020 due to COVID. We had many ladies whose ratings were near 3.0 and 3.5 after playing the 2020 season but would remain in the 2.5 league for another year.

"We decided to form a new league so our true beginners would enjoy the fun of tennis against others at their skill level. They get the same great team experience as traditional leagues in a setting with less pressure to perform.

"Because it was such a positive experience, players begged to have the league again in 2022. The tennis center will have four teams (approximately 40 players) competing. The new-to-tennis women are so enthusiastic, and really enjoy buying matching skirts and being a part of the USTA league team experience. They are so happy to have a league of their own."

Tips from the Pros:

Practice scoring and the Coman Tiebreak before the first match at an event.

Lesson

Teams need an experienced captain or teaching pro to captain alongside the new player who will take over the team.

CASE STUDY: SHAMEL PARK YOUTH TENNIS | Submitted by Coach David

Introduction

Coach David says, “This project developed from a belief that youth tennis in this highly diverse community was limited to private clubs and affluent neighborhoods. When I approached the USPTA, I was essentially told that the USPTA primarily served private club directors of tennis. When I requested a mentor, I was assigned one who, although being very cordial, explained that USPTA does not really have a support program for the type of project I envisioned. So, I set out to expand youth tennis access with the help of a small business loan and personal funds.

Goal

To grow youth tennis participation.

- **Project Size:** 150-200 children
- **Location:** Riverside, California
- **Community Size:** 250,000
- **Lead Advocate Organization:** SoCal Junior Tennis Development Center
- **Length of Project:** Six months
- **Budget:** \$12,000
- **Funding Source(s):** SBA Grant
- **Partnership(s):** City of Riverside Parks and Recreation

History

“We obtained a contract to offer a program through the Riverside City Council after four years of promoting a grassroots initiative. In six months, we have registered over 250 children and established a year-round program. We also hired three additional instructors, as well as developed an instructor training system so that consistent high-level instruction can be offered. This is more youth participation in this program than in all five private club programs combined.”

Funding

\$10,000 small business loan

Other Support/Donations: \$2,000 in personal funds

Tips from the Pros

Be persistent and develop a program that is fun-based and children will come back! If (and only if) they have fun, they will be receptive to formal stroke instruction.

Lesson

Build it (and fund it and make it fun) and they will come