



How Newmarket Became York Region's First Pickleball-Friendly Community

Chapter 1: Introduction

The rapid growth of pickleball across Canada has put municipalities under pressure to expand and adapt their recreational infrastructure. In York Region, few towns have met this challenge as effectively as the Town of Newmarket. Through strategic planning, public engagement, and proactive facility development, Newmarket has emerged as a model for how local government can support grassroots sports. This report by Pickleball Partners examines Newmarket's journey and recognizes its leadership with our first-ever **Pickleball-Friendly Community Distinction Award**.

Chapter 2: Background and Community Growth

Pickleball was still emerging in 2015 when Newmarket's Recreation Playbook acknowledged its potential. The Town began modestly by converting two tennis courts at Quaker Park into six dedicated pickleball courts — a visionary move at the time. Since then, the sport has exploded in popularity across all age groups.

Demand quickly outpaced supply. Newmarket responded by dual-lining additional courts at Joe Persicini Park and providing access to gymnasiums during the winter months. But these quick fixes could not keep up with exponential growth, prompting the Town to take a long-term, multi-pronged approach.

Chapter 3: Strategic Infrastructure Planning

In March 2023, staff presented a comprehensive report titled *"Supporting the Growth of Pickleball"* to the Council. This report recommended:

- Converting Lions Park Tennis Courts into a **12 to 14-court dedicated pickleball facility**.
- Designing the facility to support **future bubbling** for indoor winter play.
- Partnering with the newly formed **Newmarket Pickleball Club** to operate the facility.
- Resurfacing and relining courts across town to create a three-tier surfacing strategy.
- Establishing pickleball-only courts where needed and reserving dual-lined courts for recreational use.

The Lions Park location was selected for its lighting, central location, shared amenities, and long-term potential.

Chapter 4: Community Collaboration

A key element of Newmarket's success is its **willingness to work directly with its residents and user groups**. Unlike many municipalities that outsource consultation to expensive third-party firms, Newmarket seems to have relied on in-house expertise and public consultation/ engagement for its pickleball strategy. Feedback was collected via public meetings, surveys, and dedicated online engagement tools.

Equally important was the Town's decision to follow the **not-for-profit community model**, similar to the successful partnership with the Newmarket Tennis Club, a not-for-profit organization. The Town supported the Newmarket Pickleball Club and is actively working with them to use the new facility. This partnership ensures programming remains community-driven, accessible, and aligned with the Town's values.

Chapter 5: Addressing Location Challenges and Noise Concerns

Locating pickleball courts is not without its challenges. Newmarket, like many built-out communities, faces **land constraints** and the potential for **noise complaints** when courts are placed near residential areas. What makes Newmarket exceptional is its **strategic site selection** and its ability to quickly pivot, as they did in 2024 when they announced:

"At several council meetings through 2023 and 2024, Newmarket residents have shown their support for the growth of pickleball locally with the construction of a dedicated pickleball facility.

After a thorough site selection process, the Town is preparing for the construction of a new facility with 20 courts located at 175 Bayview Parkway, at the south end of George Richardson

Park. The design will include an inflatable bubble for year-round play. Provision will be made for a future clubhouse with change rooms and washroom facilities.

Several criteria were considered in selecting this location, including distance from residential housing, parking, potential displacement of other facilities, capacity to grow, as well as the location of existing facilities to ensure distribution of recreation access across the community.

Various noise mitigation strategies will be explored as part of the design of this facility.

Design is ongoing, and field investigations started in the fall of 2024. The Town is targeting to start construction in 2025."

- It leverages existing recreational infrastructure.
- It is not directly adjacent to residential backyards.
- It will be provisioned for a seasonal air support structure (bubble).

By planning proactively and choosing the right location, Newmarket is avoiding the costly backlash seen in other municipalities.

Chapter 6: Recognition and Impact

Pickleball Partners is proud to recognize the **Town of Newmarket as York Region's first Pickleball-Friendly Community.**

This distinction is based on:

- Rapid, strategic response to community demand
- Public engagement done effectively and affordably
- Willingness to empower not-for-profit community clubs
- Clear facility planning with long-term indoor/outdoor integration
- Thoughtful site selection to prevent conflict with residents

Newmarket listens, understands, acts — and most importantly, **gets Pickleball.**

Chapter 7: Conclusion

The Town of Newmarket has demonstrated that municipalities don't need to reinvent the wheel or spend millions on outside consultants to meet the needs of a fast-growing sport like pickleball. With capable staff, genuine community collaboration, and thoughtful long-term planning, they have set the standard not only for York Region but for Ontario at large.

Newmarket isn't just building courts — they're building community.

