



## Russell Park and Bull Park Tennis City of Atlantic Beach

*USTA Florida Assessment*

### OVERVIEW

Over the past several months, USTA Florida has engaged with various stakeholders to discuss the tennis operations at Russell Park and Bull Park. On March 12-13, 2025, we conducted site visits to observe court usage and tennis activity firsthand. The purpose of this document is to offer general recommendations and observations aimed at helping the City of Atlantic Beach enhance services at its tennis facilities. These recommendations are not intended as a proposal for management services.

It's important to note that this document reflects only the information we were able to gather during our assessment period. All assumptions and recommendations made in this document could change with additional information and analysis. USTA Florida is available to consult and discuss further at the City's request.

### AREAS ASSESSED

1. Tennis Market Assessment
2. Public Survey Sentiment
3. Membership Pricing and Types
4. Court Fees
5. Court Maintenance
6. Programs and Services
7. Staffing
8. Program Expansion Considerations
9. Recommendation Summary
10. Additional Observations

### TENNIS MARKET ASSESSMENT (2022-2023 Data)

Atlantic Beach is home to approximately 6,000 households, with average income levels above the Florida state average. The largest age demographic is 35–64, followed by those 65 and older. Life expectancy is typical for the state, and the local rate of physical inactivity is below average.

Approximately 950 adults reported playing tennis in the past year, with another 900 expressing an interest in tennis. Among youth aged 6–17, 192 reported playing, while 132 indicated interest in learning. Tennis has a strong local following, with around 1,700 residents identified as fans. Overall, the community's passion and enthusiasm for tennis is slightly higher than the Florida average.



## PUBLIC SURVEY SENTIMENT

Survey responses indicate a passionate and engaged tennis community that values:

- Open and free court access for residents
- Inclusive programming for all ages and skill levels
- Responsible, community-oriented coaching and instruction
- Improved oversight, maintenance and support from the City and tennis organizations

Residents also expressed a strong willingness to volunteer and actively contribute to creating a vibrant, sustainable tennis culture in Atlantic Beach.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON SURVEYS AND ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK PROVIDED**

Based on community input, we recommend the City consider the following:

1. Maintain first-come, first-serve court access, with optional structured signup during peak times or for special events.
2. Balance coaching schedules with public access and implement a permit system that preserves community access and benefits residents.
3. Expand youth and adult programming, in collaboration with USTA, teaching professionals and local volunteers.
4. Upgrade facility conditions, including lighting, restrooms, and court surfaces. Evaluate options to add courts to offset recent court conversions to other sports.
5. Engage residents in planning and volunteer opportunities to ensure alignment with community values.

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## Conclusion

The Atlantic Beach tennis community is eager to grow the sport while maintaining the open, welcoming nature of its public courts. With thoughtful investment in facilities, access, and inclusive programming, the City has an opportunity to strengthen its commitment to healthy, active living for all residents.



## MEMBERSHIP PRICING AND TYPES

Currently, the City does not offer annual or monthly memberships for individuals or families. While introducing a membership model—possibly with associated benefits—could be explored, many survey respondents expressed strong preference for the current free/open play format.

It is common practice for cities with open courts to charge fees only when the courts are reserved by non-residents or used for organized, revenue-generating activities such as leagues and tournaments. In these cases, a court fee and administrative fee are typically applied.

We recommend that the City:

- Consider a non-resident court fee to help offset operational costs.
- Consider adding league team usage fees and provider tournament fees.
- Explore an online reservation system that remains free for residents but includes a fee for non-resident users and other identified paid users.

## COURT FEES

The City currently does not charge court usage or reservation fees. Compared to similar public tennis parks in Florida, this is an outlier.

- City of Orlando: \$4/hour for non-members
- Seminole County: \$4–\$6/person/hour depending on time of day
- Fort Walton Beach Tennis Center: \$5 per 1.5-hour session per person

In most public facilities, court rates range from \$3 to \$7 per person, per hour for hard court use.

**Recommendation:** Evaluate fee structures in line with state norms to ensure sustainability, especially for non-resident or reservation-based use.

## COURT MAINTENANCE

Court maintenance should be regularly assessed. Key areas include:

- Inspecting court surfaces, nets, lighting, and wind screens
- Daily cleaning and maintenance (sweep or blow) of courts and surrounding areas
- Readily available squeegees and/or rollers for inclement weather recovery
- Clean, unlocked restrooms during operational hours

We also recommend adding a designated area (storage shed) for programming and maintenance equipment.



## PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

The City could expand its programming offerings by adding additional staff, Safe Play-approved contractors, community coaches, or volunteers—particularly if current providers are unable to meet growing demand.

Survey responses suggest:

- Adults would benefit from expanded social programming.
- Youth offerings are limited, particularly clinics and group activities after school and on weekends.
- All programming should be accessible and designed to encourage new participants.

Other lessons and programs are run by independent contractors, who:

- Set their own fees and schedules
- Operate throughout the day and evening on 3 of the 6 courts at Russell Park and intermittently at the court at Bull Park
- Have little to no marketing or community outreach; residents are expressing difficulties in joining classes
- Seem to focus more on adult instruction rather than youth development

While the City approved contractors appear to be Safe Play approved, it is unclear whether they meet all current Florida legal requirements, including fingerprinting and level 2 background checks. We recommend making this a mandatory contractual condition.

### **Contractor Requirements (Current Guidelines Provided):**

- \$225 quarterly registration fee
- Proof of professional membership and liability insurance
- Posted registration and signage at courts
- Hold-harmless agreements signed by instructors and students
- Usage time limits during peak demand
- Lessons allowed only on designated courts
- Registration does not guarantee availability; public access is prioritized

Currently, the City covers operational overhead (maintenance, administration, etc.) for these instructors.



## STAFFING

There are no dedicated tennis staff employed by the City. Staffing needs should be reassessed once a comprehensive tennis plan is developed.

Typical public tennis facilities include:

- A Head Tennis Professional to oversee all programs and play
- Part-time support staff (for desk, phone, scheduling)
- Hourly instructors delivering scheduled programs

The lack of a central park building makes this structure challenging. However, installing a passive monitoring system (cameras) could enhance oversight until staffing is resolved.

## STAFFING RECOMMENDATIONS

Currently, the City is providing a very valuable business asset for the teaching professionals who are contracted with them to use. Based on industry standards-the City may consider the following:

1. Reviewing the flat-fee model and aligning it with current industry standards; Consider increasing fees paid by the contractor tennis staff, as the quarterly fee is low, however it would allow them to utilize the storage shed and equipment for community offered programs.
2. Considering additional programming responsibilities for instructors.
3. Formalizing minimum service offerings that benefit the broader community.
4. Standardize and set rate schedules for program offerings that the city would want to run (i.e. junior class, adult program, summer camp) to prevent price gouging and to have a clear picture of revenue being generated by each contractor.
5. Require monthly attendance reports for program offerings that the city is requiring to be run.

## PROGRAM EXPANSION CONSIDERATIONS

**Note: USTA Florida Programming resources are available upon request.**

There is a significant lack of youth group clinic offerings and youth play opportunities in the afternoons and on the weekends. Since our youngest players are the future of our sport, we highly encourage all communities to invest in programming that will foster their love of the game. Since tennis is one of the few sports that are played throughout one's lifetime, an introduction to tennis in youth can benefit immediately, but also lead to a renewed passion later in life.

A youth summer camp option would also be a great addition to the community.



Our assessment of the current tennis programs and services reveals a strong foundation in adult private lessons and team clinics. As noted, the communication and accessibility of these offers is very limited. However, the addition of entry-level options such as "Learn to Play" and "Cardio Tennis" style group classes could help attract both new and returning players. Additionally, the current adult group clinics in the evenings appear to be open to any level player which we find is not conducive to beginner development. The limited availability of accessible public programming and activities on weekends represent key areas for growth and improved community engagement.

#### **CURRENT TENNIS INSTRUCTION (based on the teaching pros responses to our survey)**

- Multiple Day/Evening Adult Private Lessons
- Multiple Day Women's and Men's Team Clinics
- Multiple Day Women's Beginner Clinics
- Afternoon High School Team Clinics
- Evening Open Adult Clinics (multi-level, so not generally suitable for beginners)

#### **PROGRAM ADDITION RECOMMENDATIONS**

**ADAPTIVE TENNIS** USTA Florida promotes, develops and supports programs for individuals with differing physical and/or mental abilities and circumstances, and encourages tennis facilities to provide adaptive and wheelchair tennis opportunities for their communities. Our outreach includes adaptive and wheelchair program training as well as collaboration with organizations like ours who also serve special needs populations by offering participation at local and state events and support adaptive tennis programs through grants.

**YOUTH SUMMER CAMP PROGRAM** Summer tennis camps are a great way to allow kids to socialize, have fun, and experience tennis for the first time or to improve their skills!

**AFTERNOON & WEEKEND YOUTH CLINICS** Utilizing Red, Orange, Green and Yellow ball progression in a play-based group teaching environment.

**FAMILY TENNIS PROGRAM** Join your child in mastering basic beginner tennis skills in a large class setting! USTA curriculum is available. Parents are required to participate.

**EVENING & WEEKEND ADULT BEGINNER CLINICS** The perfect class for those new to tennis. Instruction should focus on crucial tennis techniques such as grip and basic stroke development. Each week skills will be revisited, and new skills introduced.

**EVENING & WEEKEND ADVANCED BEGINNER TENNIS CLINICS** For players beyond beginner level. Each session will work fine-tuning basic skills and strokes. Serve and footwork will be instructed. "Live Ball" rallying between players is introduced.

**CARDIO TENNIS** A group fitness experience using tennis to drive the aerobic and anaerobic benefit. This is a structured, games based, "High Intensity Tennis Training" experience that can be adapted for any level player.



## RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY

1. Develop and promote a full schedule of tennis services, including more youth, adult beginner, and adaptive clinics, lessons, and classes.
  - Adult programs typically run in mornings, evenings, and weekends
  - Youth programs often take place on weekday afternoons and weekends
  - Group clinics encourage social interaction and ongoing tennis engagement
  - Adaptive tennis should be offered to be inclusive of everyone in the community
2. Deliver programs either through city staff members or structured contracts, ensuring all providers:
  - Are adequately insured and have verified certification (RSPA, PTR, USTA) in good standing
  - Are Safe Play Approved and undergo a Level 2 background screening with fingerprinting
  - Offer more varied programming that benefits the entire community, not just private lessons
3. Consider capital budget development including a resurfacing schedule and larger court item replacement (windscreens, lights, etc.)
  - Establish a routine maintenance schedule, with equipment housed in a dedicated shed.
  - Evaluate the feasibility of new courts for residents, particularly to replace those recently converted from tennis to other racquet sports
  - Explore USTA facility grants to help offset costs

## ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS

- **Monitoring:**
  - Consider a court camera system and/or an online registration platform (with or without fees) to mitigate the risks associated with operating an open tennis facility with unknown occupants utilizing the facility
- **Facility Structure:**
  - The absence of a building limits options for camps or tournaments in the event of inclement weather
  - Explore converting existing racquetball courts or expanding the site to include indoor or more expansive covered space
- **USTA Grants:**
  - USTA offers several types of grants for public facilities and USTA Florida prioritizes projects that add public tennis courts with potential additional funding support
  - Any additional courts should include the addition of power on the courts to support future technology options
- **Community Events & Outreach:**
  - Consider hosting weekend events to promote play and build engagement
  - Adjusted to a full calendar of program offerings
  - Be sure to include easy signups for continuing regular play opportunities