



STAFF REPORT

To: Parks and Recreation Commission

Date: January 15, 2026

From: Molly Crossfield, Recreation Supervisor – (650) 558-7317

Subject: Approval of Tennis Ball Collection Bin Installation at Washington Park Tennis Courts

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommend that the Parks and Recreation Commission approve the installation of a tennis ball recycling collection bin at the Washington Park Courts.

BACKGROUND

Lucas Mo, a fifth grader from Burlingame, is an avid tennis player who spends significant time at the Washington Park Tennis Courts. Through his regular participation in practices and tournaments, Lucas observed that many tennis balls are routinely discarded, often after only one or two playing sessions. Curious about the environmental impact, he researched what happens to used tennis balls and learned that most are sent to landfills due to limited recycling options.

An estimated 125 million tennis balls are discarded each year in the United States. Tennis balls take approximately 400 years to decompose and contribute an estimated 20,000 metric tons of methane emissions annually as they break down in landfills. Because tennis balls are made of rubber and felt bonded with adhesives, they cannot be processed through standard recycling facilities.

Washington Park has three tennis courts that are heavily used throughout the week for lessons, practices, and recreational play, making it a suitable location for a tennis ball recycling collection bin.

Washington Park Courts currently has a successful, well-received pickleball recycling collection bin.

Motivated to reduce waste and improve the courts, Lucas created a youth-led initiative, Second Serve, to collect used tennis balls before they enter the waste stream and redirect them for recycling and reuse.

DISCUSSION

Lucas proposes installing a tennis ball recycling bin at the Washington Park tennis courts. Lucas plans to empty the collection bin weekly, typically on weekends or after school hours. Once collected, the used tennis balls will be shipped to recycleballs.org, a nonprofit organization that repurposes discarded tennis balls into environmentally friendly products such as tennis court cushion layers, natural rubber mulch for gardens, and ground cover for playgrounds.

By supporting this youth-led initiative, the City has the opportunity to invest in the next generation of environmentally conscious leaders. This program not only reduces landfill waste but also fosters public awareness and engagement in sustainability efforts.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact to the City of Burlingame. Lucas will finance the tennis ball recycling collection bin and all associated costs.

EXHIBITS

- A. [Tennis Ball Recycle Poster](#)
- B. [Tennis Ball Recycle Flier](#)

The Problem

Used tennis balls are an environmental disaster!

- Tennis balls take **400** years to decompose
- Tennis balls cause about **20,000** metric tons of methane
- Nationwide, ~ **125M** used tennis balls

Wind up in America's landfill each year.

- A new ball lasts **1-2** sessions.

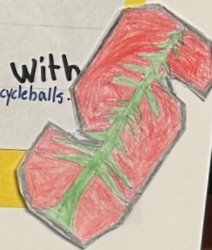


The Facts

Many tennis are trashed in Burlingame

- **8** tennis courts in city, **7** in BHS
- Est: **5** trashed balls/court/day, in **1** month
 - city: **1200** trashed balls
 - BHS: **1050** trashed balls

- Give the used tennis a **2nd** life with recycle balls.
 - "No trash" dog balls
 - Laykold tennis court surface



2nd Serve

The Ask

* My tennis ball recycle box is made of used cardboard and coated with wax to make it waterproof

- * Place the box in
 - Washington park
 - Evolution club

I want to test out my design on the court that is shared with pickle ball and tennis to make sure players understand the usage.

The Potential

- ▲ Based on 5 trashed balls/court/day, in 1 month
 - $(4+7) \times 5 \times 30 = 1650$
- ▲ In 1 year: there will be **19800**
- ▲ That can make **2** whole tennis court cushion layers!

HELP US "ACE" RECYCLING!

Don't trash it. Recycle it.

  WHAT IS "**2ND SERVE**"?  

Did you know that millions of tennis balls end up in landfills every year?

"2nd Serve" is a student-led project to change that!

I collect used tennis balls and send them to RecycleBalls (recycleballs.org), where they get ground up and turned into tennis court surfaces and other green products.

HOW TO USE THIS BOX:

1. CHECK YOUR GEAR

- Are your tennis balls flat? Done for the day?
- If they can't be played, they can be recycled!

2. DROP THEM IN!

- Place your used tennis balls into this box.

 **IMPORTANT:**

NO CANS. NO TRASH. JUST BALLS.

3. WE DO THE REST

- We box them up and ship them to the recycling center!



Thank YOU

for keeping our courts (and planet) green!

Lucas Mo, ***a local 5th grader and a tennis player***

Please email lucas.2ndserve@gmail.com if you have any suggestion, I love to hear from you!