



STAFF REPORT

To: Parks and Recreation Commission

Date: May 15, 2025

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

Subject: Approving Pickleball Recycling Collection Bin at Washington Park Court 1

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommend that the Parks and Recreation Commission review the presentation and approve the installation of a pickleball recycling collection bin at Washington Park Court 1.

BACKGROUND

An estimated 500 million pickleballs are produced annually. Pickleballs are made with a thermoplastic molded resin, different types of plastics, and rubber components. Many of the plastics used cannot be processed by standard recycling facilities.

Emily Ma is a sophomore at Aragon High School with a passion for environmental science and conservation. Emily Ma has launched a pickleball recycling program at Leo J. Ryan Park in Foster City and Red Morton Park in Redwood City to collect and repurpose broken pickleballs, which are otherwise difficult to recycle and often end up in landfills. To date, over 2,000 broken pickleballs have been collected.

Washington Park Courts have 8 pickleball courts; 4 designated pickleball-only courts and 4 joint tennis and pickleball courts. These courts are frequently used.

DISCUSSION

Emily Ma is proposing the installation of a pickleball recycling collection bin at the Washington Park Court 1. If approved, the bin will be placed above the existing trash bin on Court 1, with clear signage to inform players of its purpose (Exhibit B). Emily Ma will work with Recreation Supervisor Crossfield to determine the bin design, taking into consideration safety and aesthetics. Collection will occur approximately once a week, with flexibility to adjust based on usage and volume.

Once collected, lightly damaged pickleballs will be donated to local Little League teams for batting practice. Severely broken balls will be sent to Peninsula Precious Plastics, a local organization that recycles them into new items such as tangram puzzles. Emily is currently a sophomore at Aagron High School and in the process of creating a club called Precious Plastics. Once she graduates, her plan is to pass this project to one of her well-equipped peers. If there is no one to take over,

the bin will be removed. The removal will be uncomplicated, as the attachment to the fence utilizes zip ties.

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

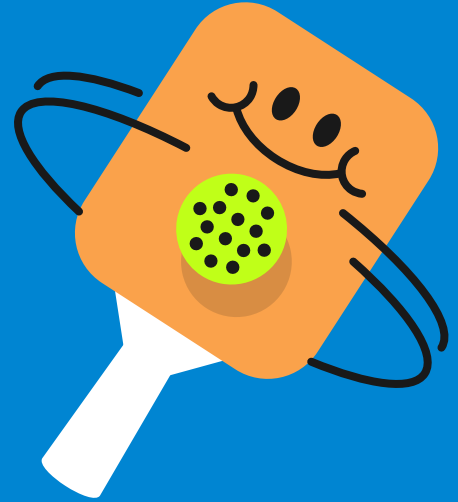
FISCAL IMPACT

Emily Ma will finance, install, maintain and remove the Pickleball Collection Bin, thereby placing no additional fiscal impact on the City of Burlingame.

EXHIBITS

- A. Emily Ma's Pickleball Recycling Program PowerPoint
- B. Photo of Proposed Bin Location

Pickleball Recycling Program



Pickle Puzzles – Emily Ma

The Problem

- Pickleballs break over time, but...

Most recycling facilities can't process pickleballs.

- Difficult to identify the type of plastic
- Mixtures of plastic types make them hard to sort
- Small size may jam machinery

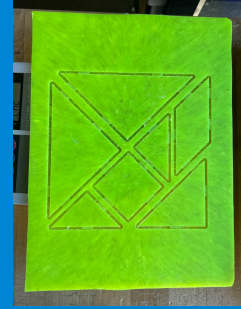


Our Solution

- Collect broken pickleballs
- Distribute slightly cracked balls to Little League teams
- Shred and melt severely broken balls into new items



Leo J. Ryan Park, Foster City
Red Morton Park, Redwood City



Impact



100 +

pounds of waste diverted

2,000 +

pickleballs collected



SMCOE Sustainable and Climate Ready Schools Award

Thanks for listening!

Any questions?

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