

the Horizon

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Building for the Pickleball Boom

Described by NBC News as the nation's fastest growing sport, pickleball was invented in Bainbridge Island, Washington in the summer of 1963 by politician Joel Pritchard and several family friends. They were attempting to play badminton but could not locate the equipment and instead started working on an alternative, which consisted of a plastic ball and paddles made from plywood. Pritchard's wife Joan, a competitive rower, later provided the inspiration for the sport's unusual name when she said that its play reminded her of the "pickle boat," or the slowest vessel in a rowing race.

Despite its humble origins as a family hobby, pickleball has acquired an avid worldwide following, the majority of whom have discovered it in recent years. The USA Pickleball Association estimates that as of 2012, over 100,000 people play nationwide, with another 5,000 in Canada. Its popularity is now growing in

many other countries, including Singapore, India, Mexico and the United Kingdom.

The sport itself is played on a 20-foot-by-44-foot court (a shortened tennis court of sorts) with a net hung in the middle. Also similar to tennis is the cross-court serving, volleying and boundary lines. One can play singles or doubles.

"Pickleball started out as a great sport for retired couples. Now kids, teens and young adults have gotten into the game. It is

relatively inexpensive to get into and just about anyone can play and learn the game quickly," said Tom Wheeler owner of

"If you are interested in getting involved in a sport that can include the entire family and is relatively easy to learn, check pickleball out. Be careful - you may get addicted."

—*St. George Health & Wellness Magazine*



Little Valley Pickleball Complex, St. George, Utah



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Shade Canopies at Little Valley Pickleball Complex

Pickleball Now, an online retailer. “It is the one sport you can play with your kids, teens, parents and grandparents at the same time – nobody is excluded. You can be a beginner or extreme athlete and still compete together. We see it as a sport... you can play your whole life.” Not only is pickleball good exercise, it’s a great way to socialize and meet people who share a common interest.

From Cheyenne, Wyoming to Buckeye, Arizona, western cities are embracing the pickleball boom, building courts and court complex facilities, organizing clinics and hosting tournaments. Last November, Buckeye, Arizona hosted the Nationals V Tournament and will host the Nationals VI Tournament again this fall. Most major tournaments have tripled their entries over the past few years. Last spring the Southern Utah Pickleball Shootout drew 256 players - a significantly higher number than the previous year’s 140.

The Utah State Pickleball Championships and the Huntsman Senior Games have been held for the last two years at the new Little

Valley Pickleball Complex in St. George, Utah. The first facility of its kind in Utah, these courts were built to meet the demand for tournament-grade facilities and to ease the overloaded existing courts in the St. George area.

With civil site design by Sunrise Engineering’s Washington office, the Complex consists of a twelve-court dedicated pickleball facility with a potential future phase that will bring the count up to 24 courts. Site features and amenities include post-tensioned concrete courts with vinyl coated chain link fence and wind screens.

Lighting for the courts is on photo cell and timer controls. Colorful umbrella-style shade canopies harmonize with the court colors and provide a comfortable setting



Mixed Doubles Tournament

for spectators and players to rest between matches. The restroom facility includes storage for City equipment and provides a utility room from which the Complex’s controls are operated and secured.

A “command center” consists of a centrally located pavilion where portable facilities are set up to manage frequent tournaments, but which provide a pleasant gathering place for families during off-tournament periods. Less obvious site details include outdoor electrical receptacles for powering maintenance equipment, water bottle fill valves and quick coupler irrigation valves for washing courts. Hardscape features include provisions for engraved donation brick pavers and landscaping that is consistent with the total park complex and appropriate for the desert climate.

Construction of the improvements was completed in sufficient time for the 2012 Huntsman World Senior Games, and the games saw a dramatic increase in the number of players in the tournament due

“Our local sporting goods store has completely sold out inventory twice since the courts have opened to the public.”

—Steve Garcia, Tournament Director
St. George City

to the availability of the new pickleball facility. Year 2013 was no different; the Senior Games closed online registrations for the pickleball tournament because it had reached its maximum 500 player capacity on March 12, 2013, and the games weren’t held until October. *(Continued on back.)*

Case Study: Collaboration Enhances the Design and Construction Process

Recognizing the demand for pickleball courts in St. George City, Utah, and seeing that the existing courts were overloaded, the City’s Leisure Services Department began in earnest to develop a new pickleball complex that would later be formally named the Little Valley Pickleball Complex. Preliminary concept plans were formulated in the

future phases of the project and surrounding park improvements.

Construction documents implementing the preferred alternative, including design drawings and project specifications, were assembled by Sunrise Engineering; the design documents generally included phasing, demolition, erosion control, site, grading, utility, and court

plans, with their associated details. City staff provided landscaping and irrigation plans. A third party architect, under contract with the City, provided building drawings for the restroom facility. Sunrise prepared bidding documents in accordance with City procurement requirements, and



Little Valley Pickleball Complex Phase I Site Plan

the project was ready for public bid by July, 2012. Quality Excavation of St. George was the low responsible bidder; construction of the Complex commenced before August and was substantially complete in time for the Huntsman Senior Games.

By all accounts, great communication and collaboration among involved parties contributed significantly to the success and timely completion of this first-rate facility.

Design meetings were coordinated in which various iterations of the complex layout were reviewed, discussed, and revised. A preferred alternative was selected based on the input of all parties including managers, engineers, players, and maintenance staff. The preferred alternative also considered

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—By Joe Phillips, P.E.
Sunrise Engineering
Washington, Utah



Sunrise Team

Sunrise Engineering’s Recreation Team has completed over 50 recreation projects in the past 15 years including sports field and court complexes, skate parks, equestrian facilities, campgrounds, trail systems, event pavilions and city parks.

Check out a few of their [projects](#)



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(continued)

Other tournaments have been played at the Little Valley Pickleball Complex as well, notably the Utah State Pickleball Championship in November of 2012, hosting 220 players. In 2013 six tournaments were held, two of which were USA Pickleball Association sanctioned tournaments. The 2014 season has seen an increase in the number of tournaments including the upcoming 2014 Utah State Pickleball Championships in November.

The Complex is truly a world-class facility; members of the local pickleball club, the Southern Utah Pickleball Association, have suggested that these are the premier courts in the United States. Sunrise Engineering takes pride in being a member of the team that developed this facility and the craftsmanship with which the courts were designed and constructed.



Pickleball Racquet and Ball

—By Joe Phillips, P.E. and Carol Kusterle, Sunrise Engineering with contributions from Alexa Verdugo Morgan, *St. George News* and *St George Health & Wellness Magazine*

YouTube Watch the National Men's Finals

Meadow Valley Wash Trail Hosts Nevada Community Event

The City Council in Caliente, Nevada recently supported, for the second year, a request to use the Meadow Valley Wash Shared Use Trail as one of twelve sites designated for the 8th annual “Walk in Memory – Walk for Hope” community suicide prevention awareness event. The event is sponsored by the Nevada Coalition for Suicide Prevention, whose mission is to partner and collaborate with local and state individuals and organizations for the development and implementation of suicide prevention programs in the State of Nevada.

The Meadow Valley Wash Shared Use Trail is a recreation facility improvement recently completed by the City through the SNPLMA funding program in the State of Nevada. It features 1.5 miles of concrete walking path along Clover Creek in the Meadow Valley Wash, a trailhead with parking facilities, and four pedestrian bridges spanning the creek. The trail enables connectivity among the City’s other parks, completes part of a 2.35 mile walking loop in the City, and offers a pleasant stroll in the riparian habitat of Clover Creek. Because the project was technically complex, the City partnered with Sunrise Engineering to find solutions for right-of-way acquisition, environmental permitting, flood mitigation, and all phases of the project from design through construction administration.

Use of the trail for the “Walk in Memory – Walk for Hope” event is a great example of how well-developed, well-maintained recreational facilities can be used for worthy causes in a community.



Meadow Valley Wash Shared Use Trail