

# **The Future of Tennis in Whistler:** *Securing the Next Century*



**Published by the  
Whistler Tennis  
Association**

September 2019

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**A CENTURY OF TENNIS IN WHISTLER** Alex and Myrtle Philip outside the Rainbow Lodge tennis courts in 1918

## Overview: A Public Awareness Report on the Future of Tennis in Whistler

The Whistler Tennis Association has produced this report\* to raise public awareness of the positive impacts that a vibrant, year-round tennis facility has on the local community in Whistler and the Sea to Sky corridor. The key facts and arguments that are presented in this report are as follows:

- ✓ Dating back over 100 years to when Myrtle Phillips built the first known court at the Rainbow Fishing Lodge, the sport of tennis has had a long and rich legacy in Whistler. The first organized tennis club, the Whistler Valley Tennis Club, was established at Nita Lake in 1979. Then, in 1988, the municipality of Whistler granted Park Georgia, a development company, the right to build 1200 bed units of tourist accommodation in exchange for a commitment to deliver ‘a world-class indoor tennis facility’ to the community on the same property.
- ✓ In 1993, Park Georgia built the existing Whistler Racquet Club (WRC) on Northlands Blvd. as a temporary facility to meet this obligation to the community until the land upon which it sits was fully developed. However, neither Park Georgia nor the Holborn Group, who purchased the land in 2002, ever fulfilled their respective development plans. Nor did either party invest in the replacement or upkeep of the existing tennis facility, leaving it today in a severe state of disrepair.
- ✓ In 2017, The Beedie Group purchased the property from Holborn with an intention to rezone the site for residential development. It also willingly assumed the outstanding community debt. This has sparked renewed hope that the promise to build a new tennis facility will finally be delivered.
- ✓ Despite the lack of investments in the facility or a marketing budget, the WRC continues to attract a large number of visitors every year, split equally between locals and tourists. The club is particularly popular for its programs, which connect visitors and members of the community together in an active, friendly, and weather-proofed environment. It is also very popular with children, boasting over 2000 participants in its annual summer camps and after school programs.
- ✓ Whistler has proven to be very attractive as a destination for tennis tournaments. The WRC typically hosts over 25 Tennis BC sanctioned events each year, the most of any facility in the province. This draws about 2000 tournament players to the facility during all months of the year and in all weather conditions. The annual economic impact of these events on the local economy is estimated to be at least \$3 million. The positive economic benefits of the WRC also include the employment of tennis pros, front desk staff, and maintenance services.
- ✓ The success of the WRC, despite the lack of financial support for facility upkeep and marketing, is a function of a dedicated staff who have created a friendly environment for all of the facility’s users, including tennis, pickleball and indoor soccer players. A strong historical connection between skiing and tennis plus a growing desire to “weather-proof” Whistler have also helped to sustain the club.
- ✓ These very positive factors aside, the most important part of the equation has arguably been the growing popularity of tennis worldwide and in Canada. According to a 2018 Tennis Canada survey, 6.5 million Canadians indicated that they had played tennis at least once in the past 12 months, up 32% from 2012. The same survey found that the number of “frequent players” in Canada totaled 2.9 mln in 2018, up 200% from 2010, with growth among children 12 and under particularly strong.
- ✓ In light of these trends, which are equally robust in other parts of the world—and in the wake of Bianca Andreescu’s historic win this fall at the U.S. Open, which will surely fuel even more interest in the sport among Canadians—the WTA feels that it is time to start seeing the WRC as an asset that can be grown and nurtured rather than a liability that is often met with indifference.

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\* Authored by WTA board member Ben Cherniavsky

## **Whistler's Tennis Community: Facing Break Point**

In the fall of 2018 the Whistler Tennis Association (WTA) sponsored a celebration of 100 Years of Tennis in Whistler. While this important milestone was designed to acknowledge the sport's long history in the community, it also served as a rallying cry for the future. With the Whistler Racquet Club (WRC) under new ownership, in severe disrepair, and—once again—facing rezoning changes, the WTA feels strongly that the next century of tennis in Whistler sits at a critical cross-roads: either a meaningful commitment is made by the municipality, the current owners, and others to support this sport in the region or it may slowly fade from the fabric of the community.

To avoid the latter scenario, this report will argue that Whistler requires the physical presence of a modern, sustainable, centrally-located multi-use tennis centre with strong programming and the court capacity to host events and sanctioned tournaments. A second intent of this report is to prove to all stakeholders that the benefits of a year-round tennis centre in Whistler extend well beyond its end users to include the owner/operator, the local economy, and the community at large. Finally, this report will also illustrate how the WTA's vision of a vibrant tennis centre in Whistler is aligned with the municipality's vision to create both a healthy, livable community for locals and a world-class year-round destination resort for tourists seeking fun, adventure, and an active lifestyle. As the popularity of tennis continues to expand in Canada and around the world, it is time to start seeing the WRC as an asset that can be grown and nurtured rather than a liability that is often met with indifference.

## **How Did We Get Here? A Quick Look Back at a Broken Promise**

As depicted in the photo on the first page of this report, the history of tennis in Whistler can be traced all the way back to Myrtle Phillips' first court at the storied Rainbow Fishing Lodge in 1918. However, it was not until 1979, when the Whistler Valley Tennis Club (WVTC) was established on the shores of Nita Lake, that the community had its first official club. Located on privately held land but run as a non-profit operation, the WVTC had 250 active members, five courts, one bubble in the winter months, a tennis pro, and often played host to tournaments, round robin matches, and many other social events. Unfortunately, when the land was sold for development in the mid 1990's no provisions were made to support tennis at that location and the community lost the club.

Perhaps one reason that the closure of the WVTC did not raise more concerns or generate more opposition was that, by this time, the WRC had already been established at its current location off of Lorimer Road. Moreover, in the mid 1990s, plans were still pending to expand this facility into a major world-class tennis club complete with a stadium court, four indoor courts, twelve outdoor courts, and the capacity to host televised professional tournaments (see Appendix 1). These ambitious plans dated back to 1988 when the municipality of Whistler granted Park Georgia, a development company, the right to build twelve hundred bed units of tourist accommodation in exchange for a commitment to construct and operate a world-class indoor tennis facility in the community.

This agreement was directly related to the municipality's vision of making Whistler a successful four season destination resort. In fact, under the auspices of the 1988 Official Community Plan guidelines, three such "beds for sporting infrastructure" agreements were made between the municipality and developers: (i) the aforementioned deal with Park Georgia to build a world-class tennis facility in exchange for a 1200 bed-unit hotel and spa; (ii) a deal with the Fairmont Hotels to build the Robert

Trent Jones golf course in exchange for the rights to construct the Chateau Whistler; and (iii) a deal with Kaleb Chan to build the Nicklaus North Golf Club in exchange for the rights to develop the neighborhood in that area.

Notably, the latter two commitments to the community were delivered and Whistler did achieve its goal of becoming a world-class resort known for activities and sports well beyond skiing. However, even though Park Georgia was allowed to develop and profit from the sale of the Montebello Townhouses (phases 1 & 2) on the property that was bound to the Community Plan agreement, the promise to build a world-class tennis facility on the scale originally envisioned was never kept.

To be fair, in 1993, Park Georgia did deliver to the community the current WRC, which included three indoor courts, seven outdoor courts, a small swimming pool and space for a dining facility (which the Wildwood Restaurant occupied for many years). However, this was designed as only a temporary facility and, as such, the original capital investments were relatively limited and the final product was a far cry from the “internationally-acclaimed Björn Borg Centre” that the developer’s own marketing literature cited as the future plan at the time. By 1998, Park Georgia was still making promises to expand the WRC to “world-class” standards as it moved forward with its plans to build the 1200 unit hotel/spa that was part of the initial deal, but that vision was derailed in 2002 when it sold the tennis club and the undeveloped portion of the land to the Holborn Group, an international company from Malaysia.

Although these new owners were aware that with the purchase of this property came a prevailing commitment to the resort and community, they ultimately showed little interest in honouring the promise for either a world class tennis facility or a 1200 unit hotel/spa. Instead, in May 2005, Holborn applied to rezone the property to a phase 1 mix of townhouses and condominiums, arguing that a hotel project was no longer viable because of the low occupancy rates at that time. This sparked great concern among the tennis community that a rezoning application would include a change in the provision for a year-round tennis facility on the property. In fact, in their original application, the Holborn Group did lobby to eliminate three outdoor courts to increase townhouse density. They also later argued that the obligation to build a year-round tennis facility on the property had already been met in the form of the present-day WRC.

Heated debates and tense negotiations followed between Holborn, the municipality, and tennis advocates in Whistler (see Appendix 2). Without rehashing all the details, an application to rezone the property did eventually pass a third reading in 2008 with the municipality. This application included a commitment by Holborn to build a permanent tennis club structure that included five indoor courts, seven outdoor courts, stadium seating, a large fitness area, a viewing lounge, a reception/pro shop, a restaurant with patio, a swimming pool, space for squash courts and underground parking (see Appendix 3). The developer had also agreed to transfer the ownership of the facility, which at the time was estimated to be worth \$18 to \$20 million, to the municipality.

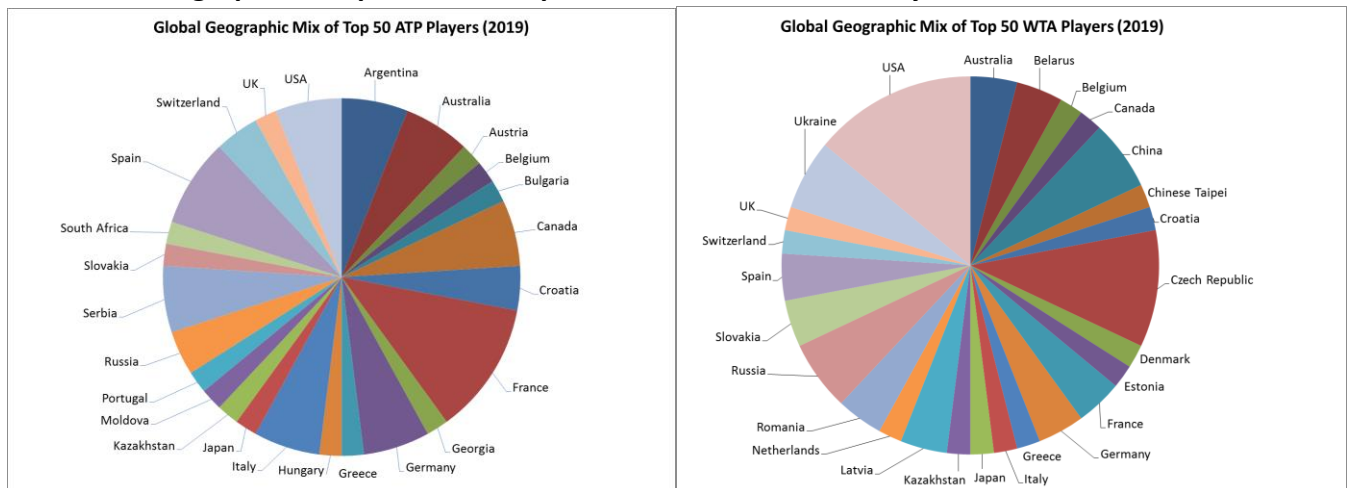
Of course, neither the construction of the tennis club nor the development of the adjacent land into condos and townhouses has since transpired, with Holborn subsequently arguing that both were uneconomic in the environment that followed the Great Financial Crisis of 2008. The prospects for this property have, however, been more recently revived with its ownership changing hands two years ago

and the demand for housing in Whistler back on firm ground. While it is the view of the WTA and many in the Whistler tennis community that Holborn had a covert plan to asphyxiate the WRC and thereby prove that tennis in Whistler was uneconomic (and the provision to operate a tennis facility on the property, by extension, unreasonable), there is a renewed hope shared by all that the new owners, the Beedie Development Group, will take the commitment to the community that it has assumed with the purchase of this land more seriously and deliver the facility that has been promised for over 30 years.

## The Global Growth of Tennis: Falling in “Love” with the Game!

To a hockey-mad country like Canada or a skiing and biking-centric community like Whistler, the idea that tennis is the fourth most popular sport in the world may seem rather implausible. However, that is in fact where tennis ranked according to a recent analysis by the website Total Sportek which used 13 different criteria to objectively determine the [25 World's Most Popular Sports](#). More simply, based exclusively on its annual viewership numbers of 1 bln people, [tennis similarly ranks number four among the most-watched sport in the world](#). The diverse geographic composition of the professional tennis players on the ATP and WTA tour tells the exact same story: tennis’ appeal has an incredibly wide and growing scope around the world (see Exhibit 1).

### Exhibit 1: Geographic Composition of Top 50 Professional Tennis Players



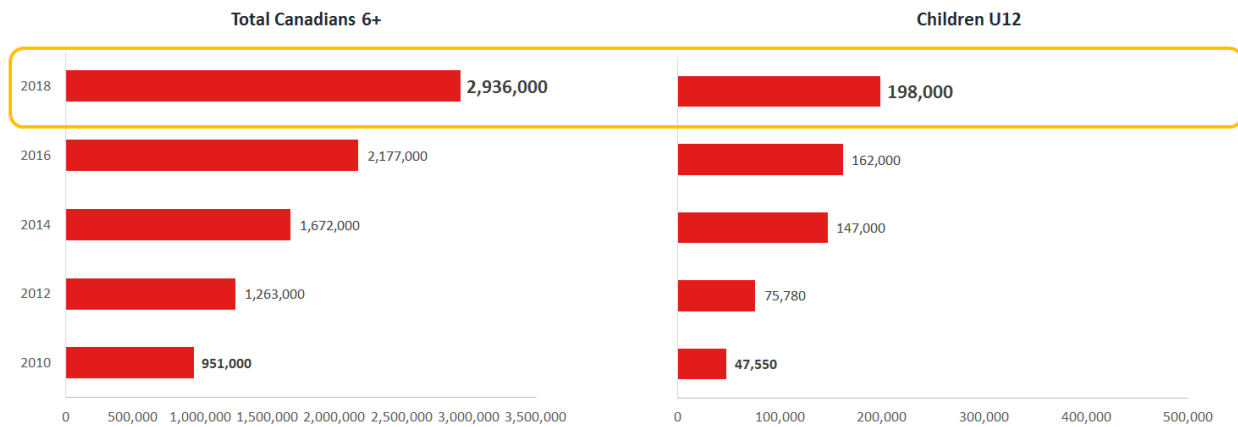
Source: ATP; WTA

Clearly, the stereotype of tennis being an elite sport reserved for country-clubs and white attire is misplaced. There is still a high correlation between participation rates and upper income brackets, but the demographics of tennis have changed radically over the past few decades. A major turning-point in the sport was the rise of the Williams sisters from the slums of L.A. to the global stage of tennis in the late 1990s. This shattered the conventional mold of what a tennis player looked like and where he/she came from. Uncoincidentally, as the Williams sisters and other exciting rising stars broadened the base of the sport, participation rates in the U.S. soared, rising 31% from 2000-2012. According to [a report by the country's Physical Activity Council](#), this outpaced the growth rate of all 12 other “traditional” sports surveyed in the study. In fact, only tennis and gymnastics, a “distant second” to tennis, registered an increase in participation over this time frame.

The popularity of tennis has registered similar growth in Canada, particularly over the past few years. An extensive [survey conducted by Tennis Canada](#) in 2018 found that 6.5 million Canadians indicated that they had played tennis at least once in the past 12 months, up 14% from 2015 and up 32% from 2012. The same survey also found that the number of “frequent players” in Canada (those who pick up a racquet at least once a week) totaled 2.9 mln in 2018, up 36% from just three years earlier and up 200% from 2010, with growth among children 12 and under particularly strong (see Exhibit 2).

## Exhibit 2: Number of “Frequent” Tennis Players in Canada

- The number of Frequent Players in Canada has increased significantly since 2010
- Of particular note, the number of Frequent Players under the age of 12 has grown from **47,550** in 2010 to **198,000** in 2018



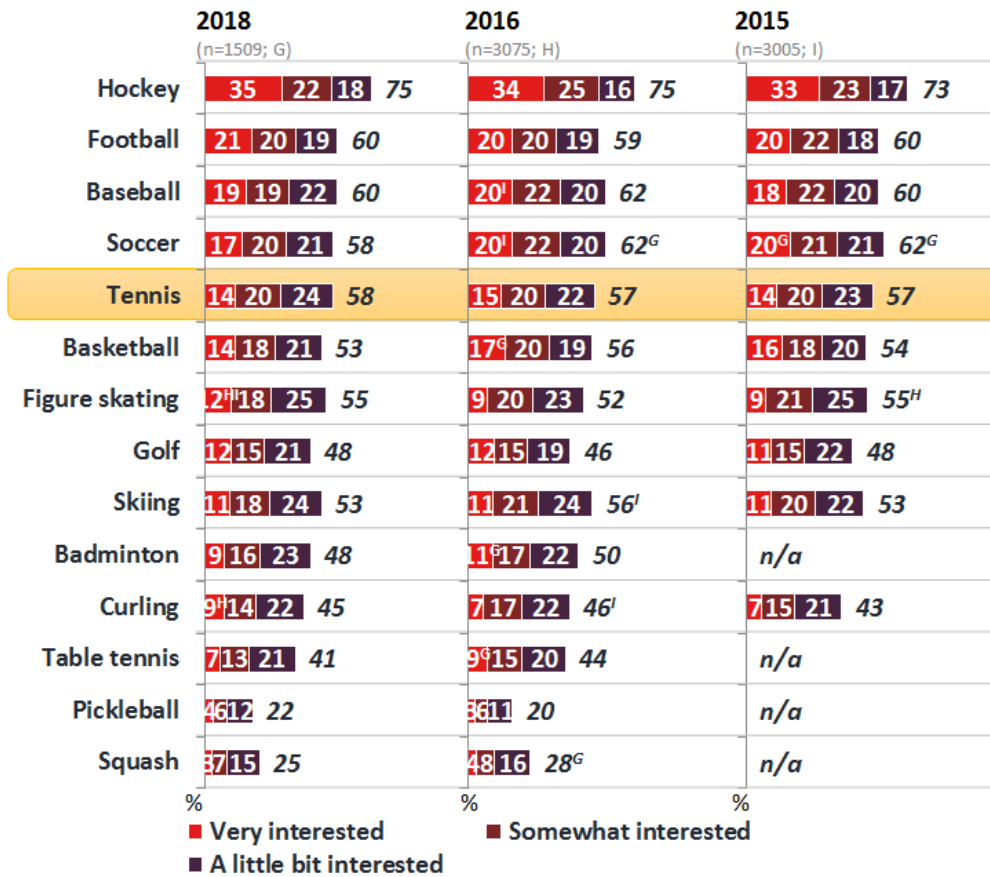
Source: Tennis Canada

Another key finding was that among all sports watched the overall level of interest in tennis ranked fifth amongst Canadians, right behind soccer and ahead of basketball, golf, and skiing (see Exhibit 3). Regionally, interest was second-highest in BC, behind Quebec but ahead of Ontario, the prairies and Atlantic Canada. In terms of overall participation, playing tennis ranked sixth among Canadians, right behind baseball and basketball and on par with skiing (see Exhibit 4).

The explosion of Canadian tennis superstars is certainly a factor behind these trends, with 37% of those surveyed indicating they follow tennis more closely with the success of Canadian athletes. Over the past five years, four Canadian men (Milos Raonic, Dennis Shapovalov, Felix Auger-Aliassime, and B.C.’s own Vasek Pospisil) and two women (Eugenie Bouchard and Bianca Andreescu) have all cracked the top 50 rankings of pro players on the tour. Three of those names have made it to Grand Slam finals with Andreescu mostly recently making history as the first Canadian to win a major at the 2019 U.S. Open.

But the growth of tennis in Canada and around the world is not just a function of celebrity athletes and national heroes. The sport’s popularity is intricately linked to its increasingly fast-paced athleticism, truly international profile, and unique, diabolical scoring system that turns every game into a mental chess-match. Other factors that have increased participation rates include tennis’: (i) relatively low injury rates, especially compared to contact sports; (ii) demanding physicality; (iii) affordability (a pair of shoes and a ~\$200 racquet); (iv) year-round accessibility; and (iv) easy portability (travelling with a racquet is far simpler than golf clubs, a bike, or skis). Finally, tennis is truly a sport for life that is popular among both men and women and young and old. Combined with the multiple formats in which it can be played (singles, doubles, mixed, etc.), all of this makes tennis very social and just plain fun!

### Exhibit 3: Tennis Canada Survey: How Interested are you in Each of the Following Sports?



Source: Tennis Canada

### Exhibit 4: Tennis Canada Survey: To What Extent do you Play Each of the Following Sports?

	Total	Male	Female	12-17	18-34	35-49	50+	BC	Prairies	ON	QC	Atlantic	Vancouver	Toronto	Montreal	Born Cdn	Est. Cdn	New Cdn
Base:	1509	741	768	137	434	392	546	192	283	573	355	106	104	259	179	1231	199	79
% Participate frequently		B	C	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	H	I	J
Hockey	9	14 <sup>C</sup>	5	15 <sup>J</sup>	14 <sup>J</sup>	11 <sup>J</sup>	3	13 <sup>L</sup>	7	10	9	9	14	10	8	10 <sup>J</sup>	7	4
Soccer	9	12 <sup>C</sup>	6	15 <sup>J</sup>	15 <sup>J</sup>	10 <sup>J</sup>	1	12 <sup>LN</sup>	5	9 <sup>L</sup>	7	11	11	11	8	8	10	11
Golf	8	10 <sup>C</sup>	5	7	9	6	7	11 <sup>N</sup>	6	8 <sup>N</sup>	5	9	9	9	5	8	6	-
Basketball	7	10 <sup>C</sup>	4	12 <sup>J</sup>	12 <sup>J</sup>	7 <sup>J</sup>	1	10 <sup>LN</sup>	5	8 <sup>N</sup>	3	8	12 <sup>R</sup>	10 <sup>R</sup>	3	6	8	15 <sup>H</sup>
Baseball	7	10 <sup>C</sup>	5	10 <sup>J</sup>	12 <sup>J</sup>	7 <sup>J</sup>	3	10 <sup>LN</sup>	4	9 <sup>LN</sup>	5	8	9 <sup>R</sup>	10 <sup>R</sup>	2	8 <sup>J</sup>	5	1
<b>Tennis</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>9<sup>J</sup></b>	<b>7<sup>J</sup></b>	<b>9<sup>J</sup></b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>8<sup>L</sup></b>	<b>6<sup>L</sup></b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>
Skiing	6	7	5	13 <sup>J</sup>	8 <sup>J</sup>	6 <sup>J</sup>	2	5	3	6 <sup>L</sup>	7 <sup>L</sup>	6	3	7	8 <sup>P</sup>	7 <sup>J</sup>	3	-
Football	5	7 <sup>C</sup>	3	8 <sup>J</sup>	8 <sup>J</sup>	5 <sup>J</sup>	2	6 <sup>N</sup>	3	7 <sup>LN</sup>	1	8 <sup>N</sup>	6	7 <sup>R</sup>	1	5	4	3
Badminton	5	5	5	9 <sup>J</sup>	8 <sup>J</sup>	5 <sup>J</sup>	1	5	4	7 <sup>O</sup>	4	3	4	8	4	5	5	8
Table tennis	4	5	3	7 <sup>J</sup>	5 <sup>J</sup>	5 <sup>J</sup>	1	4	2	5 <sup>LN</sup>	3	6	2	5 <sup>R</sup>	2	4	3	8
Curling	3	4 <sup>C</sup>	2	3	5 <sup>J</sup>	3	2	2	4	4 <sup>K</sup>	2	3	-	5	3	3	2	4
Figure skating	3	3	4	9 <sup>J</sup>	5 <sup>J</sup>	4 <sup>J</sup>	-	3	2	4 <sup>L</sup>	3	2	2	6	3	3	2	4
Squash	2	3	2	1	5 <sup>GU</sup>	2 <sup>J</sup>	-	2	1	3	2	4	-	3	2	2	1	5
Pickleball	2	3 <sup>C</sup>	1	1	4 <sup>GU</sup>	2	1	2	1	2	3	1	-	3	4	2	2	-

Source: Tennis Canada



## The Whistler Racquet Club: Serving Against the Wind

The WRC is currently configured with a main club house, pro shop, small work out room, vacant space for a restaurant, locker rooms, three indoor courts, and four outdoor courts, including a “show court” with some seating for tournament viewing. There are also three other outdoor courts that the previous owners made available to the community for the 2010 Whistler Olympics. An entrepreneur proposed to use them as a platform on which to construct temporary Olympic housing. He removed some fencing and brought in a crane, but that’s as far as the plan went. Unfortunately, the bond he posted was returned before making sure that the courts were repaired and they have since been unusable and abandoned (see Exhibit 5 and Appendix 4).

### Exhibit 5: Current State of the Three Abandoned “Satellite” Courts at the WRC

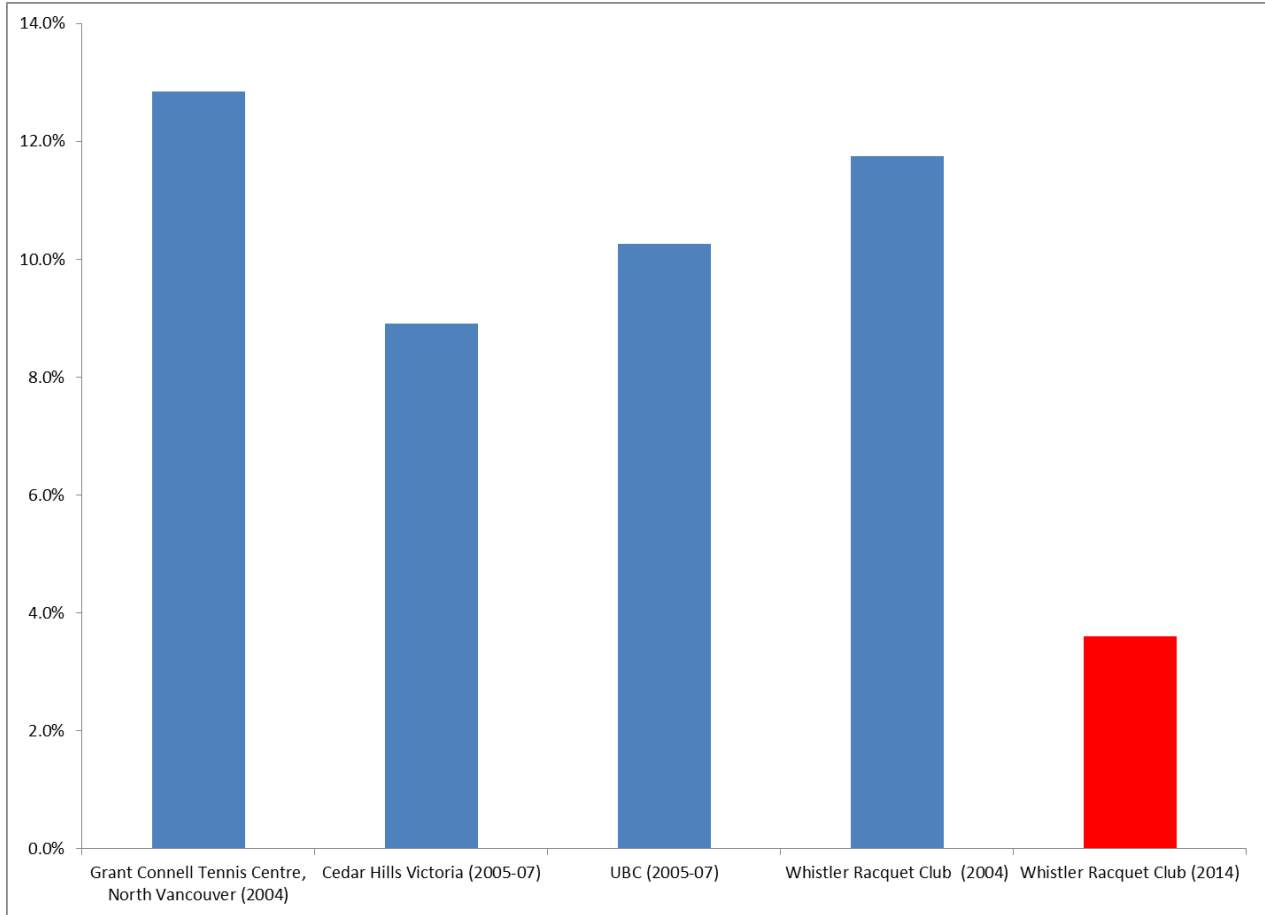


Source: WRC

As noted, the previous owners of the WRC, the Holborn Group, provided very little support to the club over the years. In 2004, shortly after the Group acquired the land, the annual expenditures on facilities and maintenance were \$47,000 on \$400,000 of annual revenues. This was roughly in-line with the level of reinvestment that other facilities were making at the time. Ten years later, however, Holborn was spending just \$18,000 on maintenance even though the club’s revenues had grown to nearly \$500,000. This declining ratio of investments (see Exhibit 6) contradicted—and, in fact, directly facilitated—the increasingly decrepit state of the centre’s infrastructure and the growing need for upgrades.

With nothing having changed in the past five years, all of the centre’s amenities are now in severe disrepair. Over 300 linear feet of cracks cover the courts (see Exhibit 7), which have not been resurfaced in 12 years. The pool has been neglected, sitting empty year-round since 2011, growing moss and collecting dirt. In the winter, the old heater struggles to get the indoor temperature above 15 degrees, while in the summer the lack of air-conditioning turns the bubble into an insufferably hot greenhouse. When it rains or snows, the roof leaks, dripping water directly on to the courts, which is both dangerous and disruptive to play. The work out room is largely unused because the equipment is old, sparse, and in many cases broken. Lights routinely burn-out, making it difficult to see the ball after dark. Finally, following the departure of the Wildwood Restaurant in 2015, the restaurant space now sits vacant. It is used routinely by community groups such as the bridge club, Tai Chi, and as a meeting place for some non-profits, but its unkempt manner generally adds to the barren, listless look of the club

**Exhibit 6: Total Facility Maintenance Expenses as % of Revenues**



Source: WRC; [Tennis Canada: Sweet Spot Facility Guide 2008](#)

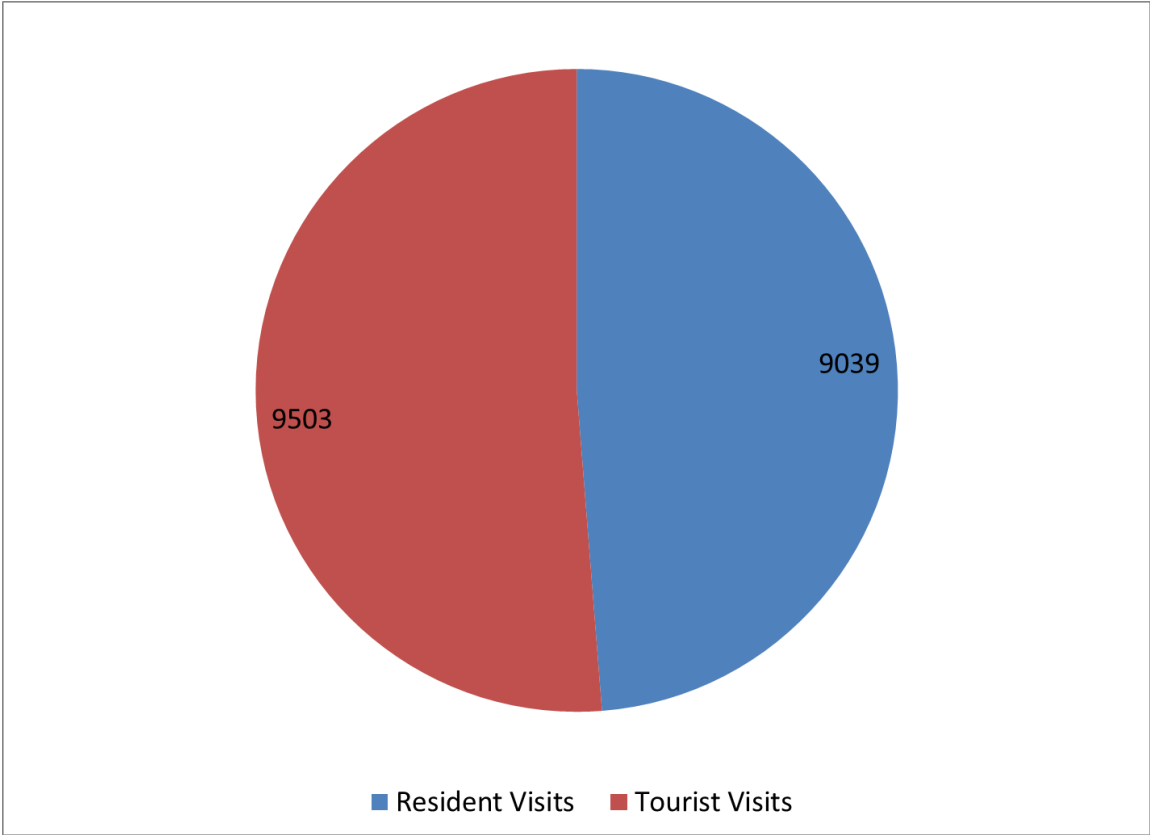
**Exhibit 7: Example of Cracks on the Tennis Courts at the WRC**



Source: WRC

Despite all of these facts—and thanks largely to the relentless efforts of the WRC’s dedicated staff—there remains a vibrant, committed and very friendly group of regular tennis players at the club who continue to support its presence. While Whistler’s transient nature and relatively small community of full-time residents—combined with the looming uncertainty of the WRC’s future and its increasingly dilapidated condition—have presented some unique member recruitment challenges to the club, the user statistics clearly illustrate the prevailing success and future potential of organized tennis in the community. Based on data collected for a presentation to Whistler’s Recreation and Leisure Committee two years ago, the WRC hosted 18,542 total visitors in 2016, equal to an average of over 50 visitors a day. Notably, the mix of local resident visitors vs. non-resident/tourist visitors was split almost exactly 50/50 (see Exhibit 8).

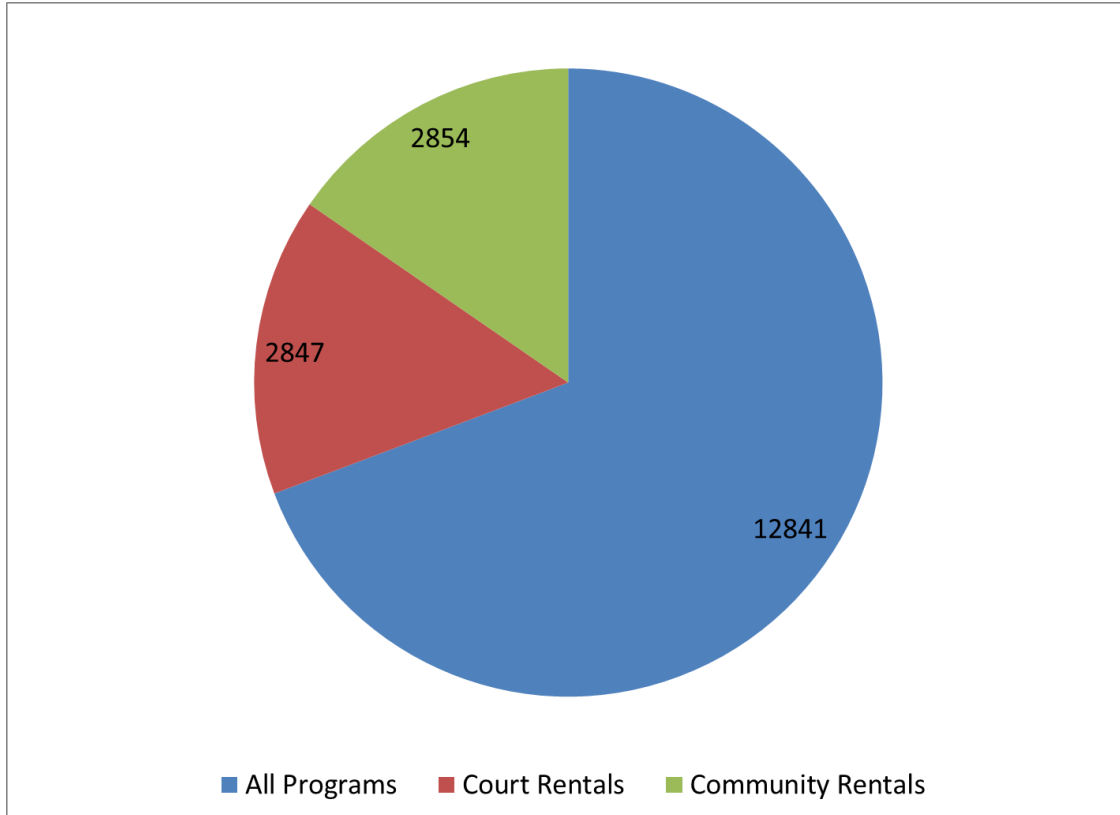
**Exhibit 8: Number Resident vs. Tourist Visits to the WRC in 2016**



Source: WRC

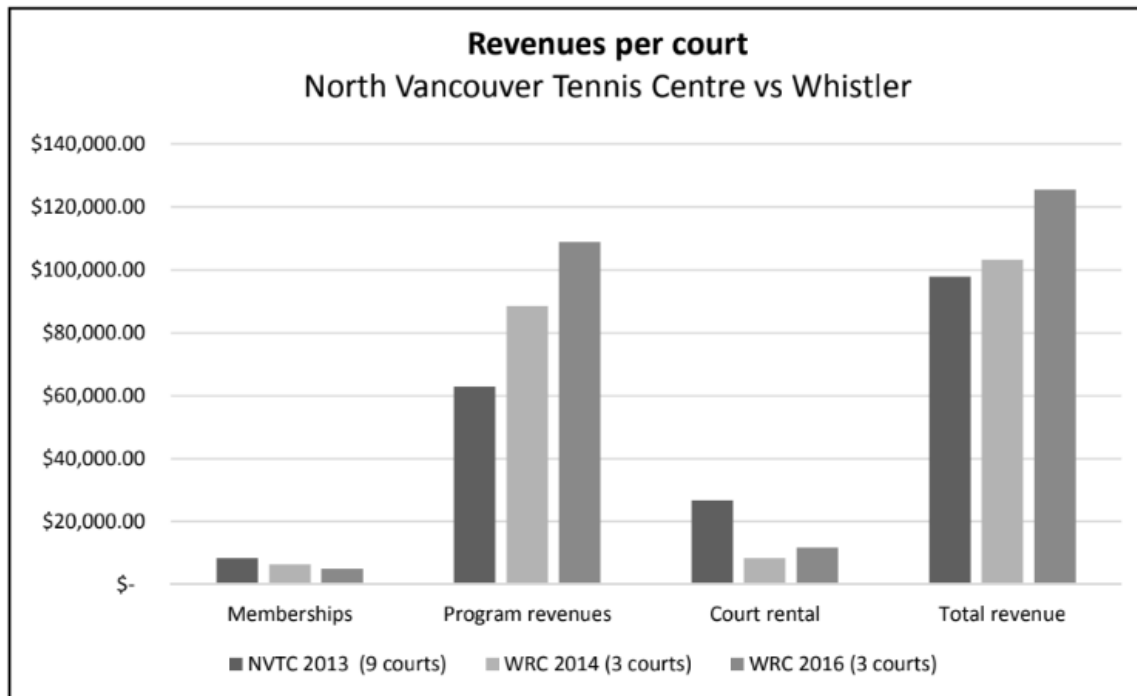
The particularly strong component of these numbers is how the club’s programs performed, with over two-thirds of 2016 visitors participating in organized drills, camps, match play, tournaments, etc. (see Exhibit 9). In terms of dollars, the WRC generated over \$300,000 of revenue from programming in 2016. Comparatively, the North Van Tennis Club (NVTC), a successful community-orientated facility that is running close to capacity, generated nearly \$600,000 of programming revenue in 2013 (both are most recent comparative data). However, it has nine indoor courts that are available year-round, compared to the WRC’s three indoor courts. Thus, when the revenue is adjusted on a per court basis, the WRC’s programming success stands out even more clearly (see Exhibit 10).

**Exhibit 9: Mix of Visitors to WRC in 2016 by Use**



Source: WRC

**Exhibit 10: Revenue Per Court Analysis of WRC with North Van Tennis Centre**



Source: WRC

One of the offsets to this programming success is the relatively low levels of the WRC’s membership revenue. Similarly, court rentals at the club compare relatively poorly to the NVTC. That said, rental revenue may simply be a victim of programming’s success: i.e. with so much programming scheduled every week, it is often difficult for interested players to book a court for a match. This is especially true in the winter and during bad weather in the summer when the capacity of the indoor facility is limited to just three courts. Similarly, the WRC’s limited court capacity may be impacting the membership numbers (who wants to join a club that when it is impossible to book a court at key times?). That said, it is much more likely that membership has recently suffered mostly because of the uncertainty that loomed over the club’s future and the poor condition of the facility.

It is critical to emphasize that the WRC’s success outlined above has been achieved with virtually no marketing budget, zero community signage (see Exhibit 11), minimal support from Tourism Whistler, and extremely limited facility investments from the prior owners. None of this is meant to lay blame or to victimize the WRC. Rather, it is simply presented as evidence of the club’s ability to survive in the face of tremendous headwinds and its potential to grow and succeed further with the proper support from all its stakeholders.

**Exhibit 11: Which Way to the WRC? Whistler Signage at Lorimer Road & Northlands Blvd.**



Source: WRC

## **Beyond Tennis: The “Advantage” of a Vibrant Centre for the Community**

The most obvious beneficiaries of a strong tennis centre are its end users—i.e. the tennis players. Unlike the various outdoor public courts that are scattered around Whistler Valley, a dedicated facility with indoor courts provides a venue for drills, coaching, match play, and tournaments that can be used year-round, at all times of the day, and under any weather conditions. More importantly, a good centre brings people together, creates a social hub, and provides a strong sense of a community (see Appendix 5). This, of course, benefits locals, many of whom—especially in Whistler—are seeking opportunities to connect with each other\*. But tourists and part-time residents also benefit from a centre’s ability to bring people together. Surveys reveal that visitors who find ways to “interact with the locals” will often say that their overall experience at the resort has been significantly enhanced. Tennis drop-in clinics, tournaments, and camps is a relatively easy way of facilitating this connection.

In addition to directly benefiting the tennis players, a dedicated tennis centre also positively impacts the local economy. The WRC currently employs six full-time equivalent staff in the winter months, including pros, receptionists, and admin support. This rises to 10 FTE employees in the summer when demand for camps increases. Additionally, in July and August, the WRC creates valuable volunteer and employment opportunities for local youth to be involved in the children’s programs as assistants to the pros. Maintenance of the facility (when it is actually done) stimulates demand for local cleaning, repair, painting, and other services. Finally, while nothing in Whistler matches the pull of the mountains, tennis does bring visitors to the resort for tournaments and camps. For example, in 2017 the WRC hosted 27 tournaments sanctioned by Tennis BC, drawing over 2000 participants, many of whom were juniors. This represents more tournaments than any other club hosted in the province that year. Assuming that each of these tournament players spends at least one night at a hotel, is joined by family members, and enjoys a meal or two out during his or her visit, the estimated economic impact from tournaments alone would be over \$3 million. Again, this is all being achieved with a small, dilapidated facility and virtually no marketing budget, suggesting that tennis’ potential financial contribution to the community could be multiples higher under more supportive circumstances.

Beyond the social and economic dividends that the WRC pays to the community, it is also important to consider the health and lifestyle benefits of a facility that encourages locals to stay fit and exercise. To be sure, there is no shortage of athletic opportunities in Whistler; however, the inclusion of a quality tennis facility enhances the resort’s reputation as a hub of athletics, strengthens the “cluster effect” of sports in the region, and complements the culture of active living in Whistler. This is particularly important for children and teens. As noted, tennis is a rapidly-growing sport among Canada’s youth, which raises the value of a year-round venue in Whistler. Programming at the WRC is already highly-g geared to this demographic: almost half of the club’s programming visitors in 2016 were juniors (see Exhibit 12). One of the most popular activities for kids are the WRC’s after-school tennis and multi-sport programs to which the club allocates nine court hours per week. In the summer, the centre is even more active with children as its weekday camps are incredibly popular, drawing roughly 2000 participants per year. At a rate of \$265 for 15 hours of lessons per week (9:00 to noon Monday to Friday) this represents both a great way to keep kids moving and a very affordable childcare option for parents.

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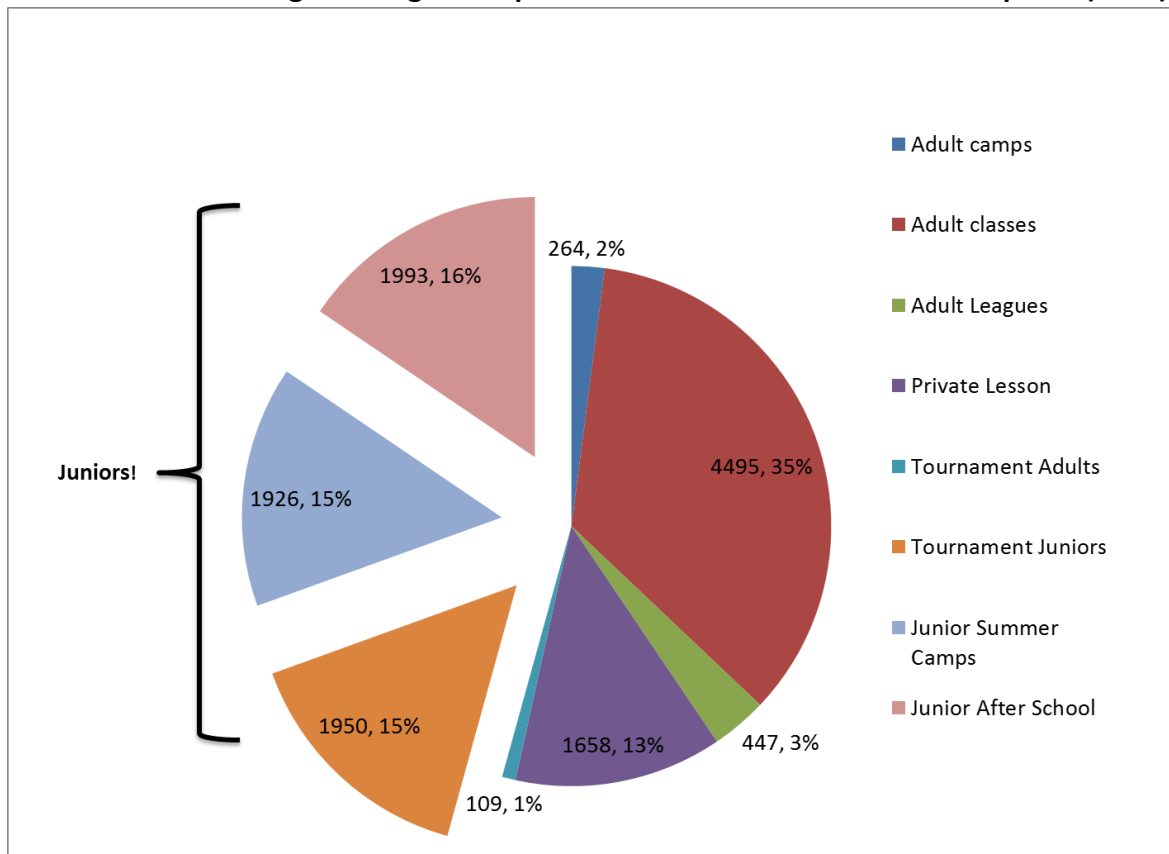
\* According to a recent study by Coastal Health, 71% of Whistler residents say that they have no other family in the Sea to Sky Corridor, forcing them to rely more heavily on community amenities to establish social contacts and support.



While the WTA is clearly lobbying for a full time tennis centre on the scale that was promised to the resort 30 years ago and proposed again in 2008, our broader vision is for a multi-use recreational facility that is centered on tennis but is capable of facilitating other complementary sports and activities that will benefit the community. Despite its very limited resources and physical footprint, the WRC is already fulfilling this vision to a certain degree. For example, as much as 14 court hours per week have been allocated to local soccer teams to practice indoors during the winter months. It also regularly converts the tennis courts to [pickleball](#) courts, which is another fast-growing global sport (see Appendix 6) that, like tennis, can offer visitors and locals an alternative to skiing and biking (this year, pickleball visits have exploded, totaling over 1400 as of June 30<sup>th</sup>). Designing some court space to double with basketball and/or baseball (batting/pitching cages) and including some multi-use squash courts could also be efficiently accommodated in the plans. Replacing the pool could revive the only outdoor public swimming pool in Whistler, while an upgrade to the gym and the revival of a restaurant/bar would be other welcome developments and natural fits for the facility.

A practical and economic assessment of the centre’s scope would obviously be required to determine the extent to which the WRC could double as a multi-sport facility. However, the point is that there is significant potential for the related benefits to extend far beyond the sport of tennis. In an ideal outcome, a new tennis centre would also become a community hub, possibly complementing Meadow Park but with a different sports profile (tennis vs. hockey), a more social atmosphere, and better accessibility for both visitors and residents.

**Exhibit 12: Junior Programming Participants at the WRC as a % of All Participants (2016)**



Source: WRC

## Whistler and Tennis: A “Match” Made in Heaven!

The Whistler municipal councilors of the late 1980s were arguably ahead of their time. Not only did they foresee the growing popularity of tennis in Canada and around the world, but they also understood the need to diversify the resort beyond skiing in order to attract visitors when the snow melted. Perhaps they were simply following other successful resorts around the world, many of which followed a similar template of using tennis as a means of “weather proofing” their economy and creating an all-season destination for tourists (see Exhibit 13). The fact that there is a strong historical correlation between skiers and tennis players was probably not lost on them either (both Head and Völkl, for example, manufacture skis and racquets). Regardless, even though the councilors’ vision for tennis in the community has not yet been realized, there is no doubt of Whistler’s success in drawing visitors to the resort year-round. Thirty years later, summer visitors now outnumber those who come in the winter.

New challenges, however, have since emerged. Instead of being concerned with making Whistler a more desirable place to visit, the community is now focused on making Whistler a more desirable place *to live*. Sustainability is also part of today’s equation, as is affordability. The WTA believes that a vibrant, modern, centrally-located tennis facility can address all of these issues: livability by creating a social hub through which residents can connect and establish a sense of community; affordability by providing an inexpensive sporting alternative to skiing, mountain biking, etc.; and sustainability by supporting the growth of a non-motorized activity and reducing commuting distance from the village to other sporting facilities and activities. Using the vernacular of the sport, this trifecta of mutually beneficial outcomes for all stakeholders is the equivalence of game, set, match!

### Exhibit 13: The Integration of Tennis Clubs and Skiing at Other Global Alpine Resorts


Ski Resort	Location	Tennis Club
Vail	Colorado	<a href="#">The Vail Racquet Club</a> <a href="#">The Vail Tennis Center</a>
Mont Tremblant	Quebec	<a href="#">Mont Tremblant International Tennis Academy</a>
Lake Tahoe	California	<a href="#">Lake Tahoe Tennis Academy</a>
Kitzbüheler	Austria	<a href="#">Kitzbüheler Tennis Club</a> *
Banff	Alberta	<a href="#">Banff Springs Tennis Club</a>
Stratton Mountain Resort	Vermont	<a href="#">Cliff Drysdale Tennis Center</a>
Jackson Hole	Wyoming	<a href="#">Jackson Hole Golf &amp; Tennis Club</a>
Zermatt	Switzerland	<a href="#">Tennishalle Zermatt</a>

Source: WTA

\*The Kitzbüheler Tennis Club hosts the annual Generali Open, a sanctioned ATP 250 event



**Appendix 1: Marketing Material for a USTA Challenger Series Professional Tournament to be Hosted at the Björn Borg Centre in Whistler in 1990**

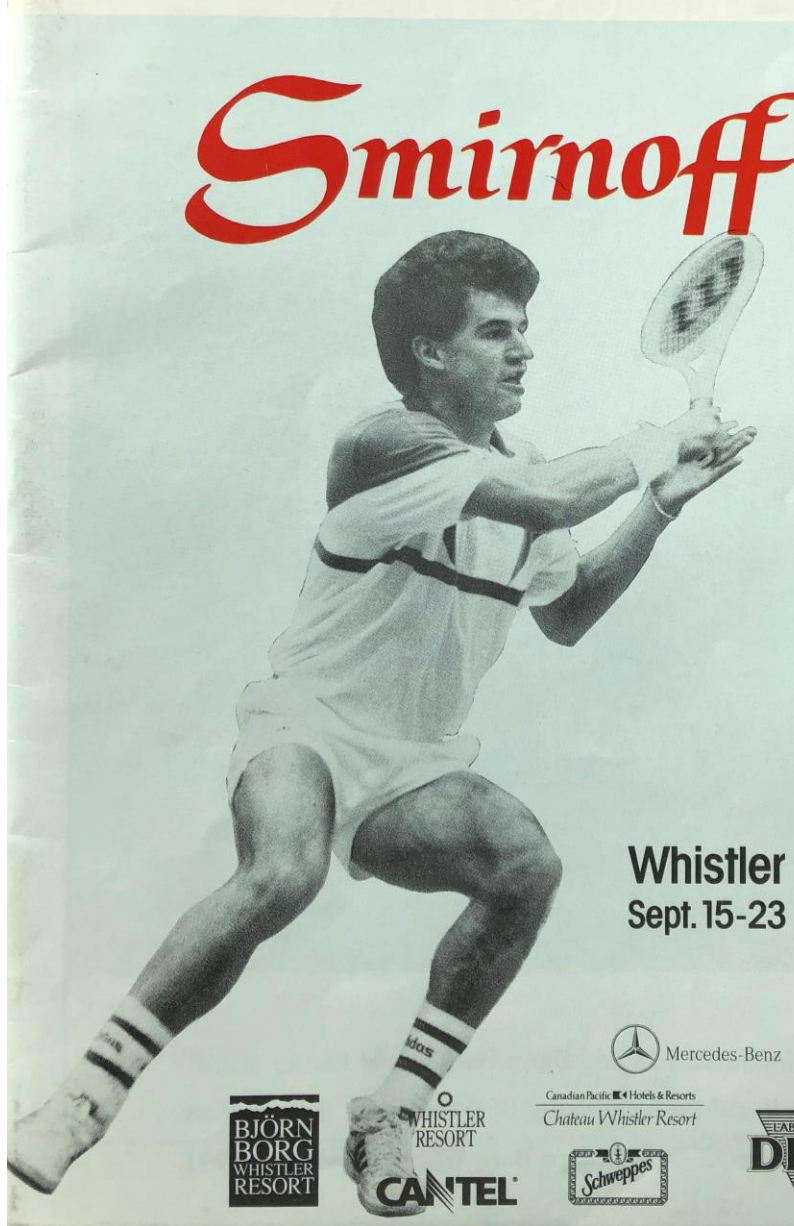


Price \$2.00

**Smirnoff**

**Whistler  
Sept. 15-23**

**Challenger '90**  
\$60,000 USTA



**BJÖRN BORG WHISTLER RESORT**

**WHISTLER RESORT**

**CANTEL**

**Schweppes**

**Mercedes-Benz**

Canadian Pacific Hotels & Resorts  
**Chateau Whistler Resort**

**SEABATS DRY**

Source: Whistler Museum

## Appendix 2: Pique Article on the 2005 Rezoning Process with Holborn Group

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### Tennis Players Knock Down Developer's Plans: Waiting for World Class Facility Promised in 1988

By Alison Taylor, May 20, 2005

An international developer met his match in Whistler this week in a showdown with some angry tennis club members. On Tuesday night Jimmy Yap of The Holborn Group presented club members with a proposal to revamp the Whistler Racquet Club as part of plans to develop townhouses and condos near the site. They in turn shot back with a resounding reply: it simply isn't good enough and it does not meet the promises that were made in 1988 for a world class tennis facility in the resort. "That's our expectation for a starting point," said club member Tim Regan. "We want to be shown some love and this ain't it."

Roughly 55 club members filled a room at the Coast Whistler Hotel to hear Holborn's plans. They didn't like what they saw or what they heard and what ensued was, at times an emotional rally of words, as the anger and frustration of 17 years spilled out.

The plans include a renovated tennis club, complete with four new indoor courts and an exercise facility 60 per cent bigger than the existing one. It would have a new members' lounge and court viewing area and the outdoor courts, which are starting to grow fungus and can be slippery at times, would be completely upgraded. It would cost several million dollars to complete the renovations. "What I'm going to build is better than what you have right now," said Yap.

While it's true Holborn's new proposal is a step above the current facilities, it's a far cry from what was proposed to the community all those years ago — namely a top-notch golf instruction facility, a luxury spa in a five star Hyatt hotel and a world class tennis facility called the Bjorn Borg Whistler Resort.

This proposal was approved as the municipality looked to expand its summer amenities and draw guests to the resort for activities other than skiing. A company called Park Georgia was to build it all. Instead, they built the Montebello town homes and a tennis club, which has fallen into disrepair over the years. Its members now want some answers.

At the heart of the issue are the promises that were made to the community all those years ago in exchange for the development rights on that land. Regan said there would have been no development rights on the land were it not for the amenities promised.

It still isn't clear who, if indeed anyone, is legally responsible for delivering those amenities. Yap told the group he does not have a legal obligation to meet those promises. In an interview with Pique Newsmagazine following Tuesday's meeting, Yap explained his position. When he bought the land from Park Georgia, he bought it with a development permit for a nine-storey, 450-unit hotel. "It (the development permit) does not say that I need to redo the tennis club," said Yap. "(But) there seems to be a moral obligation for the community, something that I inherited." He said he is willing to spend in excess of \$5 million to fulfill that moral obligation and upgrade the facilities.

Judging by Tuesday night's meeting, that is not a compromise some of these tennis players are willing to accept. And it still does not solve the problem of why these amenities were never delivered in the first place. "If you have no obligation then it's the municipality we should be going after," said one person at the meeting.

What makes the situation all the more interesting is that Holborn does not want to build a hotel on the site. Instead Yap wants to rezone the land for 95 condo units, 58 townhouses and a seniors housing building, a proposal arguably more profitable than a hotel, particularly in the current economic climate. A rezoning application, for all intents and purposes, puts this redevelopment in an entirely new ballgame. A rezoning of this scale and size could prompt the municipality to simply ask for amenities, just as they did with the Nita Lake Lodge rezoning. There, in exchange for the development rights of a hotel, the municipality got two employee housing projects.

It was clear from Tuesday's meeting, however, that there is a distinct feeling of mistrust from club members about the developer's future plans. "We don't feel as though we've been consulted," said club member Patrick McCurdy. Among other things, members are worried that Holborn will develop condos on the land, make money and disappear, leaving behind a tennis club with no one to look after it.

Garry Watson, a voice of reason at the meeting, offered a suggestion to form a committee of six to eight tennis club members who could work with the developer to arrive at a solution agreeable to all parties. The developer was amenable to that suggestion. "I'll be happy to work with them," said Yap the following day. "There's been a lot of miscommunication. Really, if I don't do anything things will just deteriorate."

## Appendix 3: Design Drawings for the New Whistler Racquet Club (2008)



Source: IBI Group, Holborn Site Rezoning Application

## Appendix 4: Pique Article on the WRC's Damaged Courts

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### Tennis Courts Damaged by Developer

By *Andrew Mitchell*, March 4, 2011

A bid to build temporary employee housing near the Whistler Racquet Club left three of the facility's outdoor courts damaged, the RMOW confirmed in an email this week.

The damage was the result of the installation of a crane before the Games, as developer Alvaro Ponce de Leon attempted to drum up support for the Whistler Workforce temporary housing project. The project would have included up to 420 beds for resort employees. The venture failed with a lack of interest on the part of local businesses, and the crane was removed before the start of the Games in February.

Ponce de Leon had to post a bond with the municipality to erect the crane on site, and that bond was returned without knowledge of the damage.

According to Bill Brown, acting manager of community life, "The bond was returned once all of Mr. Ponce de Leon's chattels were removed from the site. The RMOW was not aware of the damage until after the bond was returned."

The municipality is working with Holborn, which owns the site, on the issue. Pique asked what the extent of the damage was, how much it would cost to repair and what Ponce de Leon's responsibilities are to make restitution, but did not receive a reply by press time.

This is the second time the tennis club has been in the news recently. Members of the Whistler Tennis Association are upset that Holborn has cut hours of operation, raised prices and allowed the maintenance of the facility to slide. Holborn is currently responsible for operating the club as a community amenity after purchasing the property - and obligations - from the previous owner, Park Georgia. However, council admitted on Tuesday that they don't have the power to compel Holborn to operate the club to a higher standard.

The land was originally zoned as RR1, which would have allowed for the construction of a few homes, when Park Georgia put forward a proposal to build a world-class tennis facility on the site in exchange for bed units. At the time the RMOW was exchanging bed units for tourist amenities, opening the door for the Fairmont Chateau Whistler and Nicklaus North developments.

The Park Georgia proposal included a hotel that was never built. The current tennis facility with a heated bubble was only supposed to be a temporary facility until the development went ahead.

Holborn, which purchased the property for \$27 million, has gone as far as third reading to rezone the property as residential, with duplexes, townhomes and condos instead of a hotel, as well as seniors housing and an \$18 million tennis and fitness facility. With the economic crisis in 2008 curbing demand for real estate, Holborn never put the proposal forward for fourth reading - something that would have triggered deadlines for construction of the first phase of housing and the tennis/fitness facility.

A concerned member of the public brought it to the Pique's attention in January that the RMOW may have added bed units to the cap without going through the due process of a public hearing - an issue which is also related to the Holborn file.

Holborn's application to rezone the property would result in the company giving up some of the bed units that would have been included in the hotel once planned for the site - bed units that are now included in the cap.

The RMOW recently gave 174 of those bed units to First Nations for their Baxter Creek development above the Rainbow subdivision. As part of a pre-Olympic three-party deal with the Province and the Squamish/Lil'wat Nations, the RMOW received a land bank (including Cheakamus Crossing and the day skier lots), a significant boundary expansion and a double share of the hotel tax from the province to promote tourism in the resort. First Nations were also given land within the resort, including the parcel of land at Baxter Creek.

There were few bed units attached to Baxter Creek, but the Crown transferred over bed units on provincial land to the First Nations development. As well, some unused bed units were transferred from Cressey, which built Fitzsimmons Walk.

The issue is that Holborn's application has not gone through fourth reading. Therefore, if Holborn were to sell the land the new owner could opt to keep the current zoning in place and build a hotel. If that occurred -and it's unlikely given the occupancy issues facing the hotel industry - then the bed units given to Baxter would effectively increase the bed unit cap without any public discussion.

Bill Barratt, the chief administrative officer for the RMOW, said the decision was made with the consent of the previous council to give the bed units to Baxter Creek.

"In this particular case we worked to get (Baxter Creek) within the cap, and if (Holborn's) zoning goes through then bonus - everything is within the cap," he said. "If it doesn't then there are 174 bed units added to the overall cap, but from the perspective of what we got in return... The reality is that with the 300-acre land bank at Cheakamus, the day skier parking lots, the boundary expansions, we got our value.

"At the time, the council of the day knew there were risks."

Barratt said the resort would address the bed unit issue if it comes up, but "for the overall benefit to the community it was a good deal and we're quite happy with it."

The transfer of bed units was not a secret and should have been public knowledge at the time, Barratt said.

Barratt also pointed out that bed units are a development tool that have been valuable in guiding the development of the resort that are determined by zoning and the size of lots, but they are only a concept. He said he is confident that the Holborn development will go through as planned when the economic conditions improve, and the bed unit cap will remain unchanged.

## Appendix 5: Pique Article on the Local Popularity of the WRC

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### Racquet Club Sees Upswing in Participation

By *Dan Falloon*, March 4, 2011

Skiers and snowboarders have been causing quite a racket expressing their displeasure over the lack of snow on local mountains this year. Several others, though disappointed, have been grabbing a racquet instead.

Whistler Racquet Club manager, and director of tennis, Kirk Paterson explained the club has undergone a transition in recent years, moving away from being exclusively a member-based club to allowing more public programming to create a "hybrid."

"We always look at our schedule and try to add a few more programs," said Paterson, who has worked at the club since 2000 and became manager a decade later. "We're in between because Whistler's unique. We adapt to that, and we want to serve the community and have programs for all the different user groups, which could be locals, or visitors, or kids, or adults, or beginners or advanced (players).

"Some people want to learn and some people want to play."

Paterson explained on warmer days, some snow-lovers might end up doing both activities in a day. The goal is generally for the programs to be 75-per-cent full, but they've regularly been at capacity, he said, adding that the club isn't "cliqey" and regulars are used to new people showing up.

"This year has been a bit easier than normal because the weather has brought people here," he said. "Every weekend since October, we've been full, but we don't fill up until the day before, because people wait to see what the weather's like.

"If it was a weekend, they might go up in the morning or play here in the morning and wait for it to soften up."

The club is offering classic programming like Drill & Play, a combination of skill exercises and gameplay, and newer offerings like cardio tennis, where players perform drills but remain active even when not smacking balls.

"After you hit your balls, you have to go through a footwork circuit, so you're shuffling or going through ladders," he said. "We also throw on the music for that, so it motivates people to get moving."

Making the realization that a lot of kids follow an adult's lead when it comes to skiing or finding other activities, the club shifted to a drop-in format for youth programming as well. Paterson sees some talent in town, noting Whistler local John Chan has starred for the University of Waterloo's team.

There are some up-and-comers, as players like Ben Belanger, 11, have taken to the sport. Though he's only been playing for a year, Belanger has reached a point where he's able to volunteer as an assistant coach for younger kids before taking his own lesson. Belanger explains he primarily helps the players with their forehands, backhands and volleys.

He has been coaching for three months and has already seen his perspective on the game start to change as it slows the game down a bit for him.

"It helps me out to hit the ball slowly," he said. "I like teaching. It helps to calm me down.

"Before my lesson, it helps me make a better shot — a better forehand, better backhand."

For the first time, young players have Canadian role models on the world's largest stage, as Milos Raonic is currently ranked sixth and Eugenie Bouchard is ranked seventh. Belanger said he eventually hopes to make it to the professional ranks, and Paterson noted Raonic's and Bouchard's continued high profile has allowed kids to dream.

"It's huge," Paterson said. "Everyone is so excited with Raonic, sixth in the world now, an all-time high."



## Appendix 6: NBC News Digital on Growth of Pickleball

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### Pickleball: The Fastest Growing Sport You've Never Heard Of

By *Amanda Loudin*, April 21, 2019

One of the fastest growing sports in America involves a court and a net. And, no, it's not tennis or badminton, it's pickleball. Yes, that pickleball, the one your grandma plays, and the one you may consider beneath your athletic pay grade. Time to rethink that.

Pickleball has had a 650 percent increase in numbers over the last six years, according to USA Pickleball Association (USAPA). The biggest subset of that growth is not in the over-60 crowd, says Justin Maloof, executive director of USAPA, but the younger set. "When the sport first caught on in the sunbelt states around 2009, it was at 55-plus centers and RV communities," he says. "It snowballed from there. But these days, there are many municipalities and parks and rec departments that are setting up courts, making it accessible to a younger crowd."

That's how 49-year old Rocky Brown first learned of the sport. The Woodbine, Md., real estate professional gave the game a try through his local parks and recreation department and before he knew it, Brown was hooked. "I fell in love with it, found a league and soon was playing five days a week," he says. "I wanted to help it grow locally, so I became the league director." Now Brown oversees a league that plays on multiple days per week and offers beginner, intermediate and advanced levels. The Wednesday night, intermediate league now has 120 players, up from just 30 a couple of years ago.

#### What is pickleball exactly?

For the uninitiated, pickleball is something of a mix between tennis, racquetball and ping pong. Players use special paddles and a wiffle ball, and games take place on tennis courts with specific pickleball lines. Nets and court sizes are smaller than their tennis counterparts, and the most common game is doubles, although singles is also an option. It has its own set of quirky rules — for instance, try to stay out of the "kitchen" — but they're easy to learn.

Josh Jenkins, who is Brown's 30-year old partner and plays in professional tournaments around the country, says the game appeals for several reasons. "For one, it's very social," he says. "You'll see a big mix of demographics out there." Another factor Jenkins appreciates is its mental component. "You need to out-think your opponent," he says. "There's a lot of strategy that goes into playing."

The game is also quick, making it a convenient way to get in some exercise. Games in a typical league run only 15 minutes each — you can get in as little or as much as you want. Brown likes to go for broke. "I wear my fitness tracker when I play and after two hours, I've moved the equivalent of four miles of walking," he says.

#### Pickleball is inexpensive and requires minimal gear

Pickleball is also affordable, making it accessible to all. A beginner can pick up a basic wooden paddle and balls at retailers like Dick's Sporting Goods or on Amazon for around \$30, although prices for composite paddles can run into the hundreds of dollars. And league play is relatively cheap when compared to other racquet sports.

Because most pickleball games are played on retrofitted tennis courts, it's quick and easy for a parks and recreation department to get the game up and running, too. "You don't need dedicated courts, so with some tape and a portable net, you can be good to go within a half hour," says Maloof.

All of these factors are contributing to the rapid growth the sport is enjoying, but so too is a push from USAPA. "We've got over 1,800 ambassadors out there spreading the word," says Maloof. "We've also got a 'places to play' database all over the country, and the sport is getting a good deal of attention from media right now."

There's no shortage of information available for the beginner on up to the elite, from a dedicated YouTube channel, to a bi-monthly magazine, and even books on the topic. Jenkins, for his part, has co-authored a children's book on the sport called "Pickleball with Pop," aimed at drawing kids into the game. There's even the first pickleball-themed restaurant, Chicken N Pickle, a combo of indoor/outdoor courts, a chicken, beef and pork restaurant that also serves craft beers. The pickleball-playing owners launched the first location in Kansas City, have expanded to Wichita, and will soon open in San Antonio.