

CITY COUNCIL

Pickleball noise will be ‘noticeable’ from some homes near Bonnerworth Park: study

Cambium Inc., an engineering and consulting firm in Peterborough, completed a noise impact study earlier this month, in advance of a planned \$4.4-million, two-year redevelopment of the park.

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Residents carry placards during a pickleball development protest on Saturday, July 20.

Clifford Skarstedt Metroland

By Joelle Kovach Reporter

A few nearby residents will likely notice increased noise, coming from the 14 new pickleball courts at the redeveloped Bonnerworth Park, if windows are left open, states a new study.

However, the rise in volume is predicted to be no more than “noticeable,” from some homes’ open windows, the study authors write, since the increase is likely to be between three and five decibels louder than the current noise from traffic along Monaghan Road.

A predicted increase in noise is described as “significant” only when it reaches the range of six to 10 decibels louder than the current traffic noise — and that’s not expected to be the case here, states the report.

Cambium Inc., an engineering and consulting firm in Peterborough, completed a noise impact study earlier this month, in advance of a planned \$4.4-million, two-year redevelopment of Bonnerworth Park.

This fall, the city plans to build 14 pickleball courts in the park. Then in 2025, it's expected that the skateboarding area will be revamped, and a new bike track will be installed.

Many neighbours have said they are concerned about the steady noise likely to be generated by pickleball.

But Cambium predicts the increase in sound will be no more than five decibels louder than the traffic noise from Monaghan Road, "meaning that, while noticeable, no significant increase in sound levels is expected."

The report states that traffic noise from Monaghan Road can reach 56 decibels, during the day on a typical weekend.

With acoustic fences surrounding the pickleball courts on three sides, plus gardens and trees, Cambium expects that the staccato sound of pickleballs hitting paddles is likely to reach 59 decibels — meaning that pickleball noise will sometimes be heard above the traffic noise.

Meanwhile, the pickleball sounds are not predicted to pervade the entire neighbourhood. The study examined the potential for increased noise to be heard from about 45 residential addresses along McDonnell Street, Monaghan Road, Walnut Street, Bonaccord Street and Middleton Drive.

The report predicts that increased noise from pickleball courts will be "noticeable" from some windows (when left open) on the third floor of Marycrest at Inglewood, the seniors' apartment building across Monaghan Road.

That's because the third storey on the building will overlook a 12-foot noise barrier fence, facing Monaghan Road, that is recommended by Cambium. It's further recommended that the fence be lined with a specialized noise-absorbing membrane.

The two houses closest to the park along Middleton Drive (at the southwest corner of Monaghan Road and Middleton Drive) are also identified in the report as homes from which the pickleball noise is expected to be "noticeable," from open windows.

Cambium makes a series of recommendations in its report, for reducing noise.

Fencing

Twelve-foot fences are recommended, to the north and to the west sides of the courts. A 10-foot barrier is recommended on the south side, and it's recommended that the east side be left open (to avoid the sound bouncing off the fence and reaching the homes to the west, such as Marycrest at Inglewood).

Gardens

Gardens are recommended, with dense foliage, to absorb noise.

Time limits

It's recommended that the city consider time limits for pickleball and other park usage, so noise doesn't arise too early in the morning or late at night.

Quiet pickleball equipment

It's recommended that during tournaments, the city and pickleball organizers ask players to use pickleball paddles and balls specifically designed for noise reduction which dampen noise by five decibels, according to the report.

But that may be easier said than done.

Shelley Moloney, president of the Peterborough Pickleball Association, said pickleball players choose their equipment with care; she doesn't think they will want to switch paddles for tournament play.

Moloney likened it to asking golfers to use a specific type of club, as a condition of participation in a tournament.

"I don't think it would go too well, to be honest."



Joelle Kovach is the City Hall reporter for the Peterborough Examiner.

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