

CITY OF PITTSFIELD PICKLEBALL FACILITY SITING STUDY FINAL REPORT

November 2022



Committee Members:

Cliff Nilan, Chairman Pittsfield Parks Commission

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Staff Support

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STUDY BACKGROUND

Introduction

Pickleball has grown in popularity in recent years, both locally and nationally. To address the growing demand for a dedicated facility in Pittsfield, the Mayor appointed a site selection committee in the summer of 2022 to undertake a study to address the issue of identifying the most suitable location for a dedicated pickleball facility within City limits. The committee met multiple times to review sites in and out of the field. The scope of the study was two-fold:

Guide park commission decision makers in identifying and evaluating sites across the city for the siting of an eight-court pickleball facility, and suggest design criteria for such a facility.

Nearly 50 publicly owned sites were reviewed across the City, in park areas and within general city-owned lands. City staff from the Office of Community Development worked with a Pickleball Site Selection Committee to create a set of site criteria to evaluate potential new court locations. The criteria will consider factors such as distance from homes, traffic and parking, impacts to sensitive natural areas, and nearby land uses among others. These and other site criteria were reviewed against each site for site appropriateness, and the results of this evaluation can be found on the listing of sites. In addition, design criteria common to modern pickleball facilities were reviewed and advanced for consideration to be applied to the selected site. The thorough evaluation process has allowed the committee members to assess potential sites with an objective lens that balances community interests and concerns.

What is Pickleball?

Pickleball is a racquet-based sport that combines elements of tennis, badminton, and ping pong. It may be played outdoors or indoors and is suitable for both singles and doubles play. The play experience varies, with some players focusing on the social atmosphere of a casual game and others preferring the fast pace of tournament-style competition. Pickleball courts and nets are smaller than their tennis counterparts. Historically, pickleball first found popularity among active adults and retirees as a less physically demanding alternative to tennis; however, today the sport is enjoyed by all ages and skill levels. It is estimated that 4.8 million people now playing — almost double the number from just five years ago, according to the Sports and Fitness Industry Association.

Site Selection Criteria

Industry research and user preferences determined through personal communications led to the following recommended criteria for suitable pickleball court locations:

Neighborhood Considerations

Pickleball is a social sport that can generate a moderate amount of noise and locations for play should consider the proximity to nearby residences. When siting a court near a residential area, screening (e.g., engineered barrier, dense natural (or planted) vegetation, or both ideally) should be considered as essential. Research from other community's has revealed that pickleball tends to generate more noise than other court sports due to its larger group sizes and hard paddle and ball materials. Acoustic dampening sound barriers hung from court fencing is a proven mitigating measure as is engineered acoustic fencing at property boundaries. Noise potential and mitigation measures should be considered when planning for new recreational facilities.

Adjacency/Co-location Compatibility

New courts should not conflict with or displace other recreational activities within the site. The location of dedicated courts should work in harmony with and contribute to the overall park design and adjacent facilities and be as centrally located within the community as is feasible to maximize opportunities for use. As pickleball is a very social sport, planning pickleball courts in concert with other park facilities, such as shade structures or seating areas, adds to the overall character of the park and can enhance the experience for players and spectators.

Availability of Parking

It is accepted that the majority of pickleball players will drive to the courts. Each pickleball court supports up to four players in a game and, as a general rule of thumb, parking should be sufficient for one space per pickleball player. For parks that have two pickleball courts this would equate to a minimum of eight spaces, with the amount increasing with the number of courts. When planning for pickleball court locations, parking demands (or opportunities) of adjacent facilities, such as athletic fields, should be considered. The location of parking should be within reasonable proximity to the courts to support accessibility and ease of play. Parking facilities need not be paved, though the handicapped spaces must be paved and any stormwater drainage should be appropriately handled. Of course, an unimproved lot will need more regular maintenance.

Environmental Considerations

New dedicated pickleball-only or shared-use courts should not be placed in locations where there is abundant native vegetation which would need extensive clearing/grubbing, nor within Resource Protection Areas (RPAs), Floodplains, or within prohibitive easements. Additionally, new court construction should consider low impact design (LID) stormwater best practices to accommodate the added impervious surface area within the park or mitigate any loss to natural

resources from construction. Based on the size of the facility being considered (over 1 acre), a city stormwater permit would be required.

Facility Design Considerations

ADA Accessibility and Connectivity

People of all ages and abilities play pickleball. As with any new public or park facility, new pickleball courts must comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to be fully ADA accessible and reasonable efforts should be made to make existing courts accessible when restriping for shared-use or pickleball-only courts. A continuous accessible path of travel must connect the pickleball court(s) from public access ways and/or accessible parking spaces if parking is available at the site. The number of accessible parking spaces should comply with current state and ADA regulations. Sites for pickleball should consider proximity to urban areas, higher density housing, and – where possible – be sited near public transportation. Targeting pickleball courts within these areas will help remove the barriers to the sport for individuals that may not own a vehicle or be able to walk or bike to a court.

Accessible Portable or Permanent Restrooms

Restrooms should be considered for clusters of 6 or more pickleball courts to accommodate the larger groups of players. Drinking water fountains should also be considered if a water line is accessible and there is funding to support construction and ongoing maintenance needs.

Site Furniture and Amenities

Benches should be considered within a courts outside areas of play to provide seating for players that are waiting for matches. Benches and other types of seating can also be considered outside of the courts, where possible. If seating areas are provided either within or outside of the courts, shade must be considered using trees or a shade structure. Shade can make playing more enjoyable and protect players from overheating and sunburn. Shade structures for the courts blocks the harsh sun rays and lowers ambient temperatures, allowing players to cool off.

Court Lighting

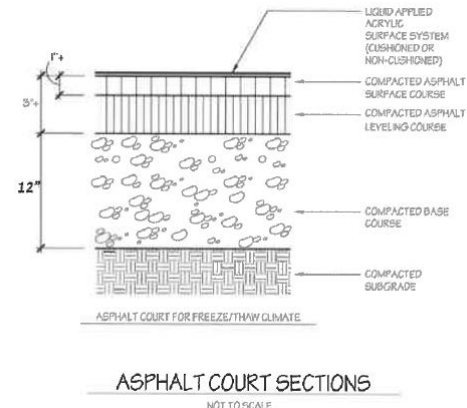
Lighting increases the availability of courts by extending the hours of use during the day. Informal survey results indicate that pickleball play is not concentrated during any particular time of the day or part of the week; therefore, the addition of lighting could accommodate one to three more playing sessions daily with sessions averaging two hours depending upon the time of year. The potential for court lighting should be carefully considered in the larger park master planning process, and the hours of park operation and adjacency of neighbors should be carefully considered. If lighting is pursued, it should be high-efficiency LED and full-cutoff to reduce light pollution into surrounding neighborhoods and natural areas. If the full cost of court lighting can't be achieved during the initial court construction, then the project should consider the running of wire-pull conduits during site work in anticipation of a future lighting project.

Fencing & Gates

Dedicated pickleball or shared-use courts should be surrounded by a galvanized or vinyl coated chain link fence that is a minimum of 10 feet in height from the playing surface. The mesh size should be small enough to not allow the ball to pass through the openings. Fencing of 10-foot height can be considered for separating multiple pickleball courts within a cluster of courts. Fencing separating groups of two pickleball courts is recommended to reduce ball migration. Gates should be placed at both ends of the court/s whenever possible and should be designed to meet ADA requirements to enable easy use of individuals of all abilities. Small maintenance gates that open vertically can be considered in portions of the court to allow for easy removal of leaves and other debris on the courts by operational staff or volunteers.

Court Surfacing and Line Striping

Court surfacing should be a textured acrylic coating over an asphalt base as is standard for tennis courts. Court and line striping colors can be any combination, but typically tend to be blue, with a green 'kitchen'.



Additional Outdoor Court Specifications

Outdoor courts have additional factors to consider. First, the orientation of the courts is important to avoid players having to look into the sun. Because the sun moves from east to west during the day, using a north-south orientation of the court will help ensure that the sun is not always in both players' eyes. In addition, fencing is important to contain the ball in the playing area. Wire type fencing is often used because it is affordable and allows people to look through it. Lastly, windbreaks may be attached to the fencing. These reduce the effects of wind on the ball. The mesh is very small but frequent enough to still allow a viewer to see through them to some extent. Acoustic dampening fence screens also can act as a windscreen.

General Maintenance Needs

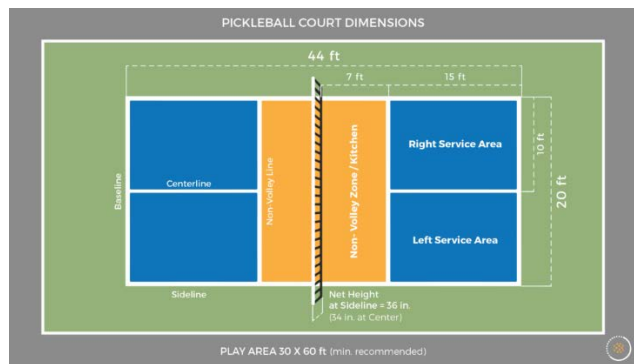
Proper and regular maintenance of pickleball courts is critical for the usability and overall experience of the players, and longevity of the facility itself. All outdoor courts (currently basketball and tennis) in Pittsfield are generally comprised of a textured acrylic coating over an asphalt base. This type of surfacing generally has a low maintenance requirement, but over time the colors fade, cracks appear on the surface and uneven areas begin to develop. All outdoor courts should be resurfaced every five to eight years on average if the court is showing signs of stress. The resurfacing process includes surveying the court for damage and signs of wear, filling cracks, applying a coat of acrylic, and finally a coat of paint with new play lines. In addition to annual inspections of surfacing and nets, players may desire that the court be swept of leaf and other debris carried by the wind.

Pickleball Court Dimensions

From one end all the way to the other, a pickleball court measures 44 feet in length.

Given this small court size, pickleball is a lot more space economical than a tennis court, as there are also less overruns required in pickleball as the speeds that a player may reach while running for a ball are far lower. The ball being significantly lighter and the technique that players use being a lot more compact also means that the fences around a pickleball court don't necessarily need to be as tall as a tennis court, meaning more pickleball courts can be erected in community areas such as parks and at playing fields.

Both singles and doubles are played on the same sized court in pickleball, whereas in other sports such as tennis and badminton, tramlines or doubles alleys are used to widen the court for the team version of the sport.

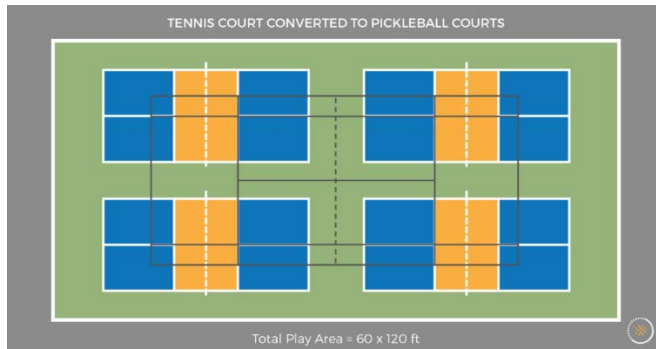


- The dimensions of a standard pickleball court are 20 feet wide and 44 feet long. The dimensions are the same for both singles and doubles play.
- The minimum recommended play area is 30 feet wide by 60 feet long. 34 feet by 64 feet is preferred to allow for the most athletic play. Minimum recommended indoor height clearance is 18 feet.
- Baseline is 22 feet from the net.
- Non-Volley Zone extends 7 feet on either side of the net.
- Left and Right Service Areas are both 10 feet wide and 15 feet long.
- Net posts should extend past the sidelines. Recommended distance is 1 foot.
- Net height is 36 inches at the sidelines and 34 inches at the center of the net.
- Court measurements are taken on the outside of the court lines.

Pickleball Court Size Compared to a Tennis Court

To get a better feel for the size of a pickleball court, it's helpful to compare it to the play area required for other sports. Below is a visual comparison of how a pickleball court stacks up with a regulation tennis court. The number of pickleball courts each play area can hold is based on the minimum recommended play area of 30 feet by 60 feet.

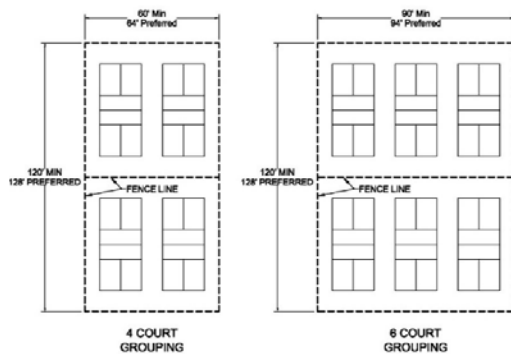
Tennis



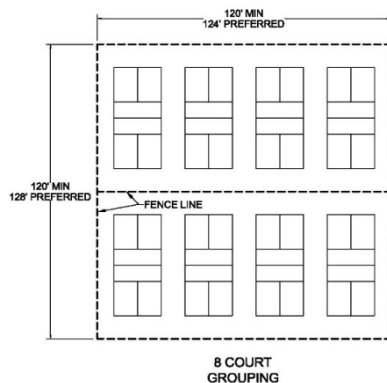
- Standard tennis court size: 36' x 78'
- Recommended total play area: 60' x 120'
- How many pickleball courts fit: 4

Pickleball Court Groupings

RECOMMENDED GROUPINGS OF DEDICATED PICKLEBALL-ONLY COURTS (4 AND 6 COURTS)



RECOMMENDED GROUPINGS OF DEDICATED PICKLEBALL-ONLY COURTS (8 COURTS)



Sites Reviewed

For the purposes of this study, the committee evaluated only city owned lands. No privately held parcels were considered.

Of the city owned sites, the committee reviewed all parkland and several general city sites (those not classified as parkland which are held under MGL Ch. 45). School properties were not considered, nor were conservation lands held by the Conservation Commission. Though there are several large conservation lands across the City, any change in use (in this case, from conservation to active sports) would require a petition to the state legislature for a change in use under Article 97 of the state constitution, as well as approval from the local conservation commission. Between school and conservation properties, 21 sites were immediately eliminated from consideration.

In all, 49 sites were entered into the matrix. Many of the sites (43) were discounted due to their small size, environmental constraints, or existing build out or annual scheduled activity. Sites considered for further investigation to evaluate project viability included:

Lebanon Park, Lebanon Avenue

Springside Park, Benedict Road

Lakewood Park, Newell Street

Burbank Park, Valentine Road

Marchisio Park, Dalton Division Road

East St Softball Complex, East Street

PICKLEBALL FACILITY SITING STUDY
 Sites Reviewed (green indicates the site is further described with the document)

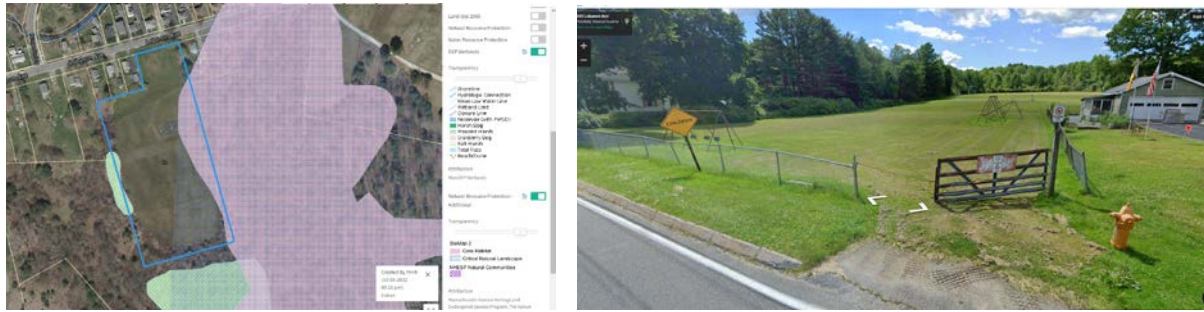
| Conservation Properties | Acres | Notes |
|-------------------------------|--------|--------------------------------|
| BARKERVILLE CONSERVATION AREA | 74.00 | Conservation |
| BRATTLEBROOK PARK | 138.00 | Conservation |
| DUNNS GROVE CONSERVATION AREA | 5.59 | Conservation |
| FRED GARNER RIVER PARK | 10.20 | Conservation |
| KIRVIN PARK | 227.00 | Conservation |
| ONOTA LAKE DAM | 1.00 | Conservation, No public access |
| TIERNEY CONSERVATION AREA | 48.04 | Conservation |
| WILD ACRES CONSERVATION AREA | 112.50 | Conservation |

| Park Properties | Acres | Notes |
|--------------------------|--------|--|
| ALLEN HEIGHTS PLAYGROUND | 2.30 | small, much of it wooded, rimmed by homes in dense neighborhood |
| BAK PLAYGROUND | 0.70 | Too small |
| BURBANK PARK | 188.00 | Possible site(s). See mapping. |
| CLAPP PARK | 33.00 | Site constarined by floodplain and existing field layouts |
| COOLIDGE PARK | 28.00 | Wet soils and Wetland buffer constrains site, very proximate to Conte and downslope from THS, not easily accessed through a dense neighborhood |
| CRANE PLAYGROUND | 1.90 | Too small |
| CROW PLAYGROUND | 0.90 | Too small |
| DEMING PARK | 9.60 | Site constarined by floodplain and existing field layouts |
| DOROTHY AMOS PLAYGROUND | 2.10 | Too small |
| DURANT PARK | 2.10 | Too small |
| LAKEWOOD PARK | 6.30 | Possible tennis court conversion, but floodplain, other environmental restrictions are limiting |
| LEBANON PARK | 6.00 | Outlier site, slope and wetland buffers / core habitat areas limiting |
| MARCHISIO PARK | 19.00 | Potential, but site fully in use for athletics now (volleyball, baseball, lacrosse), and it is an outlier site with wetland boundaries to consider |
| OSCEOLA PARK | 9.00 | Neighbors (master planning process) |
| PARK SQUARE | 0.70 | Nonstarter: Too small / historic park |
| PITTSFIELD SKATE PLAZA | 0.50 | Fully developed |
| PONTOOSUC LAKE PARK | 23.00 | Topography / close to lake |
| PORTER PARK | 2.30 | Too small |
| SOUTH ST. MEMORIAL PARK | 2.20 | Non starter |
| SPRINGSIDE PARK | 243.23 | Possible site(s). Doyle complex area by water tower areas most promising of the Springside sites |
| THE COMMON | 5.66 | Non starter |
| TUCKER PLAYGROUND | 1.34 | Too small |
| WAHCONAH PARK | 82.00 | Park St side would be only option, but it is all floodplain |
| WELLESLEY PARK | 2.01 | Non starter, neighborhood passive park |
| WEST MEM. PLAYGROUND | 4.00 | Small, outlier site, rimmed by homes |
| WESTSIDE RIVERWAY | 2.00 | Too small, Site fully constrained by river |

| Other City Owned Properties | Acres | Notes |
|--------------------------------|--------|--|
| BERKSHIRE CO. SOFTBALL COMPLEX | 20.9 | DEP post landfill requirements, will take min. 3 years to develop |
| WWTP PARCEL | 115.00 | No available buildable location as the only available option is earmarked for other city operations and/or plant expansion |

| School Properties | Acres | Notes |
|--------------------------|-------|----------------|
| ALLENDALE SCHOOL | 8.12 | Limited access |
| CAPELESS SCHOOL | 8.92 | Limited access |
| CONTE SCHOOL | 32.63 | Limited access |
| CROSBY SCHOOL | 30.94 | Limited access |
| EGREMONT SCHOOL | 9.72 | Limited access |
| HERBERG MIDDLE SCHOOL | 23.73 | Limited access |
| HIBBARD SCHOOL | 2.01 | Limited access |
| MORNINGSIDE COMM. SCHOOL | 6.06 | Limited access |
| PITTSFIELD H.S. | 8.75 | Limited access |
| REID MIDDLE SCHOOL | 27.00 | Limited access |
| STEARNS SCHOOL | 6.81 | Limited access |
| TACONIC HIGH SCHOOL | 67.09 | Limited access |
| WILLIAMS SCHOOL | 14.41 | Limited access |

Lebanon Park



In 2018, the city hired Berkshire Design Group (Northampton, MA) to evaluate several parks for feasibility of locating an eight-court facility. Lebanon Park, a 6-acre outlier park in the southwest corner of the city, was evaluated and a concept drawing was developed. Though, this site is constrained by Core Habitat and Critical Natural landscape designation (NHESP) as well as Riverfront resource area on the east side, and a wetland on the western property boundary, limiting the possible building envelope. The only possible envelope for development would be close to the roadway, proximate to numerous homes. This was the area shown in the 2018 concept plan (above). Due to environmental and potential neighborhood concerns, the site was discounted from consideration.

Springside Park



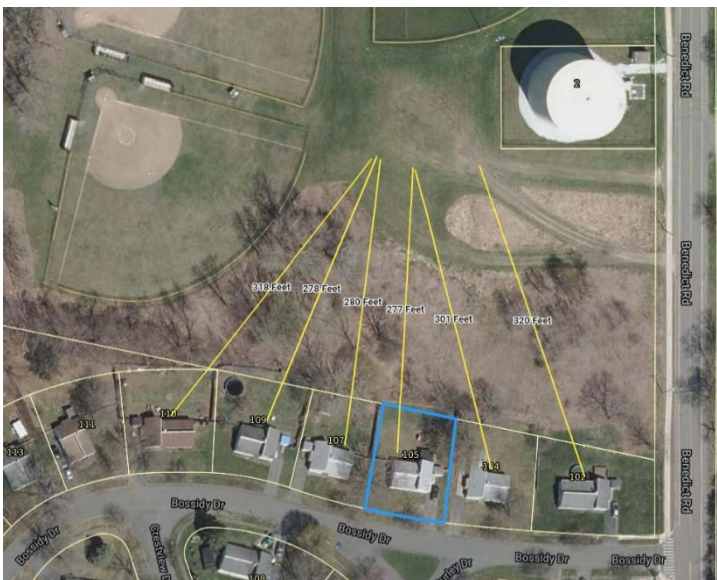
2018



2022

In 2018, the city hired Berkshire Design Group (Northampton, MA) to evaluate several parks for feasibility of locating an eight-court facility. Springside Park was reviewed, and a concept drawing was developed for a site at the portion of the park on Benedict Road, within the Doyle Softball Complex. The portion of the site that would appear most suitable for pickleball court development is to the west and south of the city water tank, in a flat open grassy area that has served as overflow parking during softball tournaments. This park area is already an active recreation area that hosts five softball fields, a large parking area, and has a building with concession kitchen and handicapped accessible restrooms which can be connected to the potential development area with an accessible pathway. There are no state regulated wetland areas on this site, and there is a large swath of undisturbed natural vegetation between the developable area and several homes on Bossidy Drive. Separating distances between a possible southerly fence line and adjacent homes is between 275 and 320 feet. The area is with the state's Environmental Justice designation for income.

This site is being recommended for the development of an eight court pickleball facility and necessary associated gravel parking with an accessible pathway to the existing restroom building. Acoustic dampening mats should be considered for the fencing (noise and wind considerations), and no disturbance to existing vegetation on the south side of the proposed site should occur (which will also serve to protect wildlife movement.) It would be appropriate to add an additional row of dense native vegetation as well in this area.



Lakewood Park



Lakewood Park was evaluated as a potential location for the siting of pickleball courts. There is an existing facility that hosts two tennis courts which need rehabilitation. An idea was explored in which one of the tennis courts would be preserved and rehabilitated while the second court would be rehabilitated and converted into two pickleball courts, while two more pickleball courts would be constructed adjacent for a total of four new pickleball courts, four less than the desired grouping. Though, further investigation revealed that the extent of state regulated floodplain and Riverfront Area would pose significant challenges to development at this site. Additionally, the site has an Environmental Restriction and Easement (ERE) on a portion of it stemming from clean-up work associated with the adjacent Housatonic River. The environmental challenges on this small park parcel are significant enough to warrant that the site not be considered for pickleball facility development.

The figure consists of two side-by-side screenshots of a web-based Geographic Information System (GIS) interface. Both screenshots show an aerial photograph of a rural or semi-rural area with roads, fields, and some buildings. On the left screenshot, there are several green hatched polygons overlaid on the map, primarily along a road labeled "Highway 60". A legend on the right side of the left screenshot lists various environmental features: "Wetland Protection Areas", "Stream Floodplain Protection Area", "Surface Water Protection Zones", "Setback Buffers", "Wildlife Corridors", "Cultural Resources", "Historic Resources", "Geological Features", "Soil Conservation Service", "Bioscience Resources", "Archaeological Resources", "Paleontological Resources", "Mineral Resource Protection", "Natural Resource Protection", "Historic Resource Protection", "Geological Features", "Soil Conservation Service", "Bioscience Resources", "Archaeological Resources", "Paleontological Resources", "Mineral Resource Protection", "Natural Resource Protection". The right screenshot shows a similar view but from a slightly different angle, focusing more on a building complex with solar panels. The legend on the right side of the right screenshot is partially visible and includes items like "Wetland Protection Areas", "Stream Floodplain Protection Area", "Surface Water Protection Zones", "Setback Buffers", "Wildlife Corridors", "Cultural Resources", "Historic Resources", "Geological Features", "Soil Conservation Service", "Bioscience Resources", "Archaeological Resources", "Paleontological Resources", "Mineral Resource Protection", "Natural Resource Protection".

Marchisio Park



Map showing the regulated environmental area within the park.



Marchisio Park is a 19-acre park on the extreme eastern boundary of the city, along Dalton Division Road. Much of the park is regulated wetland area, with approximately 9 acres of open mowed recreation area. The site hosts an active youth baseball field (Pittsfield Little League), a spring lacrosse program (Berkshire Lacrosse Club), and two active volleyball programs (Tuesday Volleyball Club and Advanced Volleyball Academy). The perennial river on the north side of the park boundary creates environmental constraints as does the wetland on the west side of the mowed field, limiting the available area for any development potential. The combination of environmental constraints and historically programmed youth and adult league field assignments, this site should not be considered for future pickleball court development.

East Street Softball Complex



| | | | | |
|---------------------------|---------------|--------|-----------|-----------------------------------|
| PITTSFIELD | WE 172848 | MSW | CLF | |
| PITTSFIELD SOUTH LANDFILL | | | 35.00 | |
| 1803 EAST ST | | | 55 tpd | |
| PITTSFIELD, MA 01201 | (413)499-9330 | | | Municipal CITY OF PITTSFIELD |
| Closed | 1945 | 1971 | 1992 | 70 ALLEN ST, PITTSFIELD, MA 01201 |
| | | Capped | Not Lined | WILLIAM FORESTELL, DPW DIR |
| | | | | (413)499-9330 |

The city-owned property at 1803 East St is the site of the former East St. Softball Complex. This 21-acre site is an inactive former landfill and is under a monitoring plan established by the state DEP. Landfills closed and capped in accordance with a MassDEP permit issued after 1990 may be good locations for the post-closure development of certain types of facilities, typically renewable energy generation. Massachusetts Solid Waste Regulations require that any type of development at a capped and closed landfill obtain a MassDEP Post-Closure Use permit (310 CMR 19.000, specifically section 19.143: Post-Closure Use of Landfills). Per DEP, for open-air courts this site would invariably require additional protective capping with soil as well as a detailed quantitative risk assessment work. If confined spaces are part of the projects (buildings), there would be a more detailed permitting pathway required. Permitting for any type of project at this site would require the assistance of a consultant and would include on-going monitoring.