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Sports Business

## Greensboro makes pickleball push with purchase of portable courts, will host national qualifier in May



Image: Greensboro Area Convention and Visitors Bureau

One of the portable pickleball courts that will be part of a 40-court indoor facility at the coliseum complex in Greensboro.

GREENSBORO AREA CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU



By [Elizabeth 'Lilly' Egan](#) – Reporter, Triad Business Journal  
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Greensboro is making a push to become a player in the burgeoning world of competitive pickleball.

The Greensboro Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Greensboro Sports Foundation and the Oak View Group, which manages the First Horizon Coliseum complex, have partnered to purchase 40 portable pickleball courts that will be housed at the special events center at the coliseum complex to host pickleball tournaments year-round.

It will be one of the largest portable indoor pickleball facilities in the United States, according to the convention and visitors bureau. Henri Fourrier, president and CEO of the convention and visitors bureau, said the total cost of the courts is about \$450,000.

Fourrier said Greensboro is looking to capitalize on the growing popularity of the sport – play in the U.S. increased 223.5% in 2023, according to the Sports & Fitness Industry Association – similar to when Bryan Park was built when soccer was booming.

The Greensboro Convention And Visitors Bureau has already secured a major national qualifying event through USA Pickleball at the facility, which is scheduled for May. The Golden Ticket National Qualifier will be the only USA Pickleball qualifying tournament on the East Coast and is expected to have an economic impact of over \$2 million, according to the visitors bureau.

. "We look forward to showcasing the best talent and building a lasting partnership with this great sports city," Mike Neely, CEO of USA Pickleball, said in statement.

Fourrier said the investment in the courts will allow the city to recruit and host the largest and most prestigious pickleball tournaments in the country, adding that the indoor courts will set Greensboro apart from other cities that are limited by only having outdoor courts.

Six of the courts have already been delivered to Greensboro, and the rest are expected to arrive by early 2025, said Richard Beard, president of the Greensboro Sports Foundation.

Beard compared the purchase of the courts to when the convention and visitors bureau invested in wrestling mats and sport courts for volleyball and basketball, which has allowed Greensboro to regularly host AAU events. The advantage of the having portable courts is that they can be rolled up when they are not in use, he added.

Beard said that the opportunities for hosting pickleball events will not end with the Golden Ticket National Qualifier. He clarified that while the courts are not designed to be for public use, many pickleball events allow amateurs to enter.

"We plan to get a lot of attention," he said. "The fact that the city has invested in these courts will get a lot of interest from national governing bodies and folks that will want to have pickleball tournaments here – our challenge will be available dates."

Earlier this year, [the Sports Business Journal ranked Greensboro in Best Sports Business City for Attracting and Hosting Events without a Big 5 Team.](#)

[Private management firm Oak View Group took over operation of the coliseum and the Steven Tanger Center for the Performing Arts in July.](#) At the time, it said it's biggest goals

were to find a naming rights sponsor for the coliseum and to bring more professional sports to the complex.

The coliseum was re-named from the Greensboro Coliseum to the First Horizon Coliseum at the beginning of October, in the first naming rights agreement for the facility.

Later in October, Zawayer Sports and Entertainment Owner and CEO Andy Kaufman announced it will be bringing an ECHL minor-league hockey team to Greensboro.