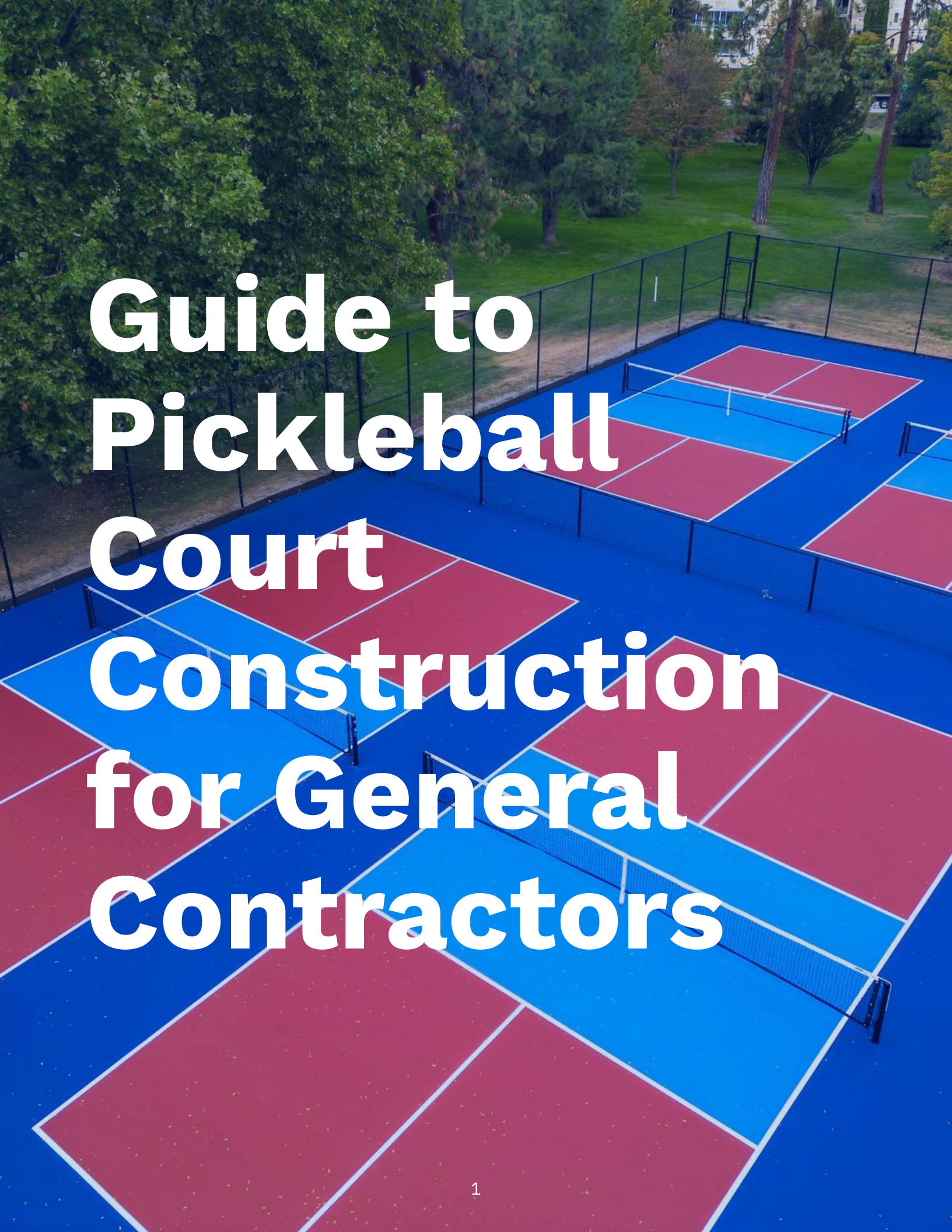


Guide to Pickleball Court Construction for General Contractors

Table of contents

Table of Contents

Introduction

Guide to Pickleball Court Construction for General Contractors — A high-level, overview for GCs delivering pickleball courts in residential and multifamily projects.

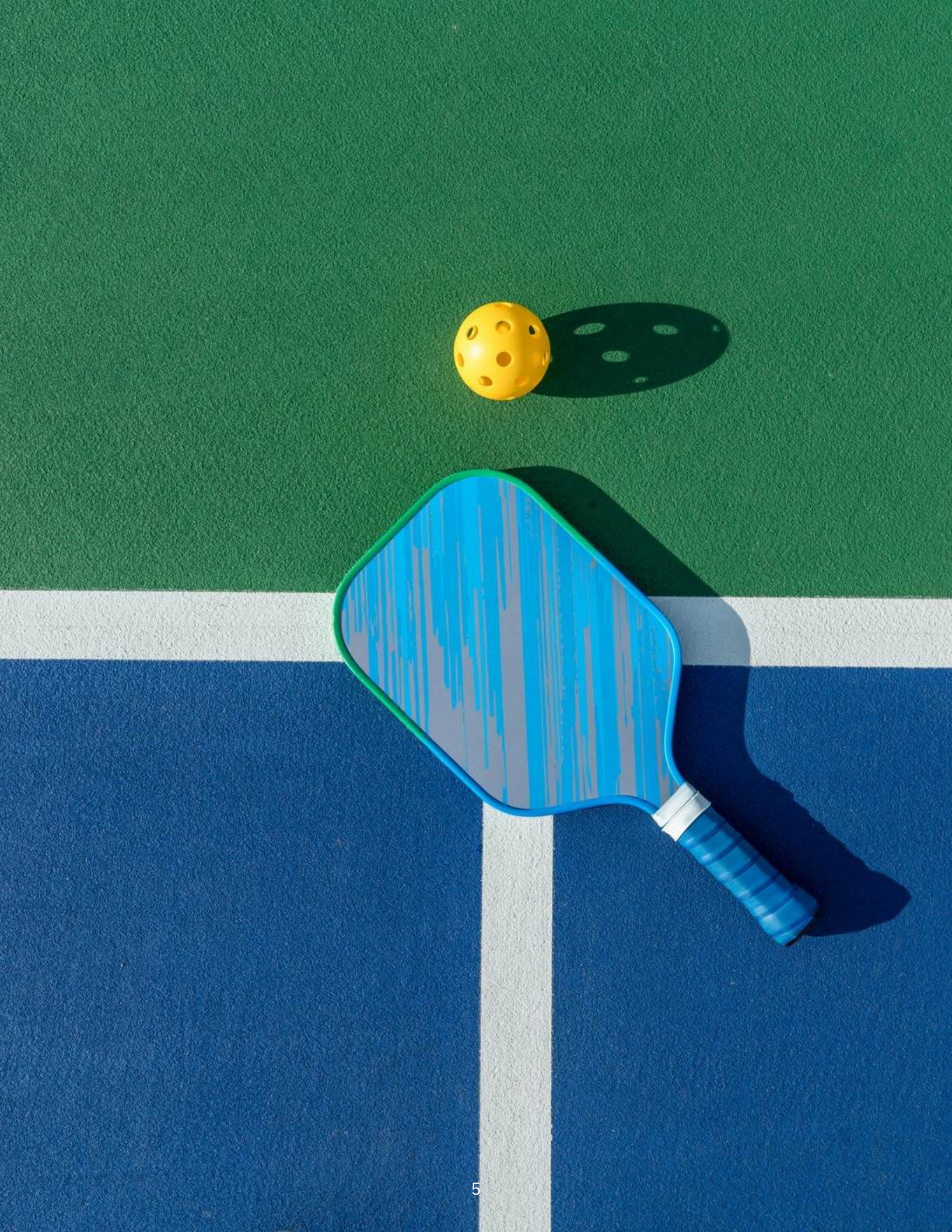
Who This Guide Is From

This guide was developed by Pro Court Surfaces, a specialty contractor focused on the construction and surfacing of outdoor pickleball and multi-sport courts. The content reflects field experience working alongside general contractors on residential, multifamily, and amenity projects. Contact information is included at the end of the guide for those who want to continue the conversation.

Patrick Johnson (512) 893 0466

Purpose of This Guide

This guide is written for general contractors who are increasingly asked to include pickleball courts in custom residential projects, multifamily and amenity centers, and HOA and community developments. The intent is educational, not promotional. Pickleball courts are simple in appearance but unforgiving in execution. This guide focuses on fundamentals, common expectations, and coordination points so GCs can confidently deliver quality results while protecting their reputation.



Chapter 1: Why Pickleball?

Pickleball courts did not become common by accident. Over the last decade, pickleball has grown from a niche recreational game into one of the most requested outdoor amenities in residential and multifamily projects. What started in parks and retirement communities is now showing up in custom homes, HOA developments, and Class A apartment complexes. For general contractors, that means pickleball courts are no longer a specialty add-on. They are increasingly treated as a standard site feature.

Why the Demand Keeps Growing

There are a few reasons pickleball has been adopted faster than other recreational amenities. First, the game is easy to learn. New players can rally within minutes, which lowers the barrier to entry compared to tennis or basketball. That makes courts usable by a wide range of ages and skill levels. Second, pickleball is social by design. Most games are played two on two, which encourages longer play sessions and group use. From an owner or developer perspective, that translates into higher engagement per square foot. Third, pickleball requires less space than many traditional sports. A full in-bounds court is only **44 feet by 20 feet**, making it possible to add courts in areas that would never accommodate tennis.

Why Owners and Developers Ask for Courts

From a project standpoint, pickleball checks several boxes at once. For homeowners, it offers a recreational feature that can be used by family members and guests without formal training. For multifamily developers, it functions as a visible, active amenity that photographs well and sees regular use. Importantly, pickleball courts are now expected to perform, not just exist. Owners assume the surface will drain properly, the court will play consistently, and the court will hold up over time. Those expectations fall back on the GC, even when the court itself is only one part of a larger project.

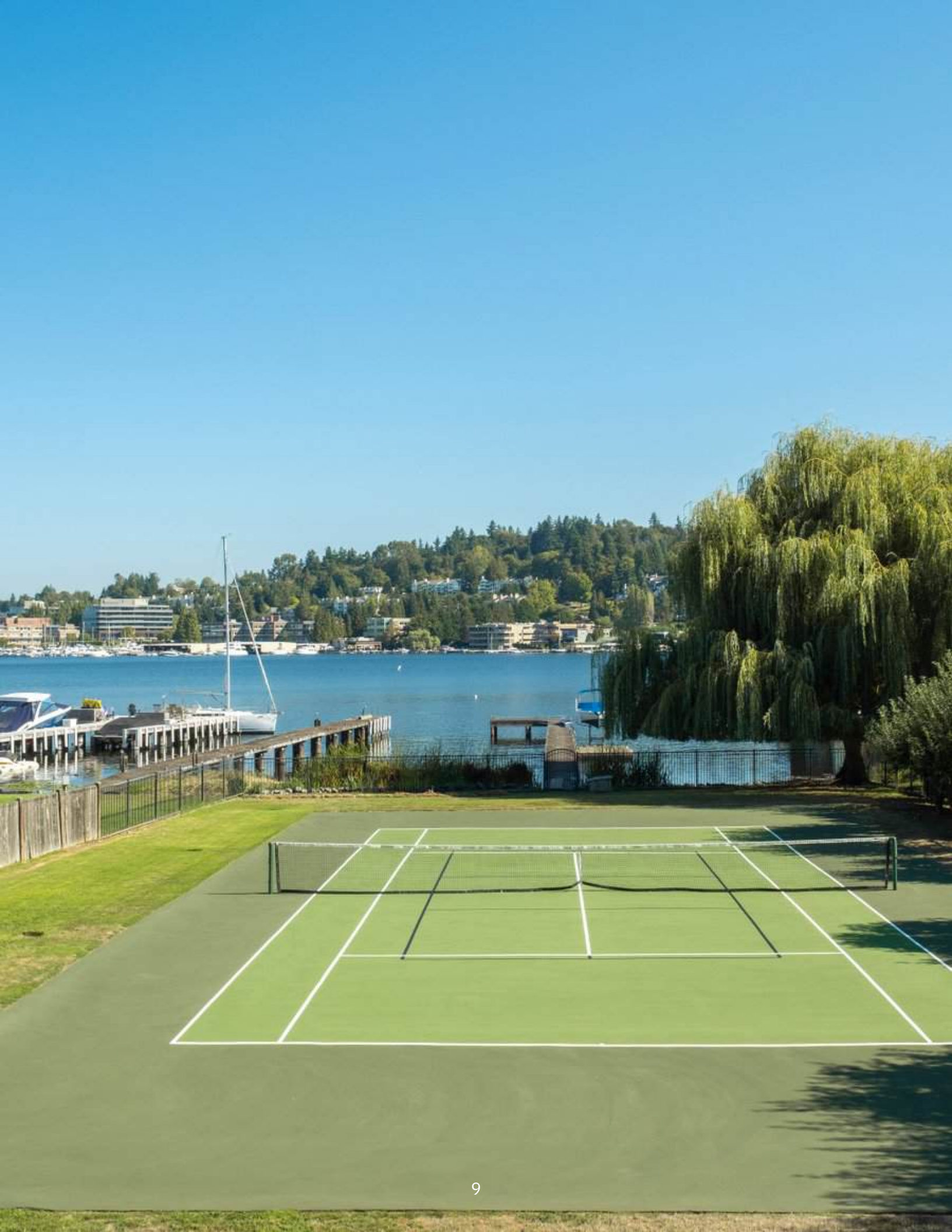
A Simple Court With Real Consequences

Pickleball courts look simple. That is where many projects go wrong. Because the court appears straightforward, it is often treated like decorative concrete or standard flatwork. In reality, courts have **performance requirements that are much less forgiving than sidewalks or driveways**. Small errors in slope, flatness, or joint placement may not be visible on day one, but they show up quickly once the court is in use. When that happens, the issue is rarely blamed on the court. It is associated with the overall project.

Why This Matters to GCs

As pickleball continues to spread, GCs are being asked to deliver courts more frequently, often under tight timelines and fixed budgets. Understanding the fundamentals upfront helps avoid costly rework, owner dissatisfaction, warranty disputes, and reputation damage on otherwise successful projects. This guide is intended to provide a high level framework, not a specification manual. The goal is to help general contractors recognize where attention matters most and how early decisions affect long-term results. This perspective is informed by real-world court projects delivered alongside general contractors through Pro Court Surfaces, where small planning decisions consistently make the difference between courts that simply look complete and courts that perform well over time.

This guide reflects field experience from projects delivered alongside general contractors across residential and multifamily environments. Contact information is included at the end of the guide for those who want to continue the conversation. Key takeaway: Pickleball courts may be simple in appearance, but they carry real performance expectations, and those expectations start with informed planning.



Chapter 2: Pickleball Court Basics

Before a pickleball court can be built correctly, everyone involved needs to be speaking the same language. This chapter covers the fundamental elements of a standard pickleball court, including dimensions, net requirements, and basic gameplay. While these details may seem simple, misunderstandings at this level often lead to layout errors, misplaced hardware, or incorrect assumptions during construction. The goal here is not to turn a GC into a player, but to ensure the court is built around how the game is actually played.

Core Court Dimensions

- In-bounds court size is **44 feet long by 20** feet wide
- This measurement does not include out-of-bounds safety or run-off space 5 feet on the sides and 8 on ends are recommended for a **total area of 30 feet by 60 feet** (more in chapter 3)
- All playing lines fall within this rectangle

Net Requirements

- Net width is 22 feet
- Net height is 36 inches at the sidelines
- Net height is 34 inches at the center

Unlike tennis, the pickleball net intentionally dips at center. Posts that are set too high, too low, or too far apart will affect play and are immediately noticeable to users.

Key Playing Zones

- The non-volley zone, commonly called the kitchen, extends 7 feet from the net on each side
- Players may not volley the ball while standing in this zone
- Baseline and sideline positioning affects serve legality and rally flow

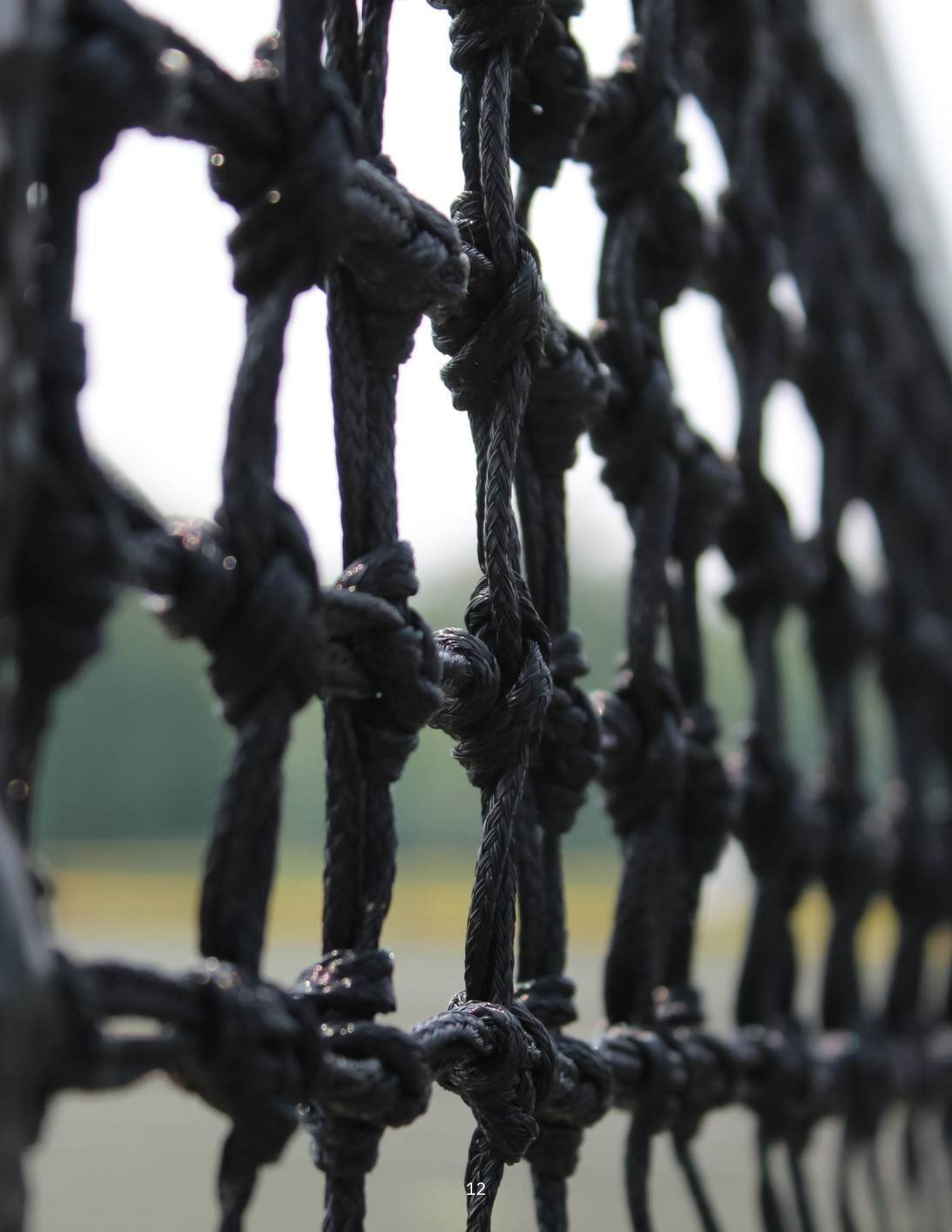
How the Game Is Played

- The serve is made diagonally across the court
- The serve must clear the non-volley zone
- Most games are played doubles, two players per side
- Rallies tend to be frequent and fast, with players moving laterally more than sprinting forward
- The ball is a lightweight perforated plastic ball

Because players spend much of the game near the non-volley zone line, flatness, slope consistency, and surface texture in this area are especially important.

Why Accuracy Matters

Pickleball courts are often judged within the first few games played. Minor layout or installation mistakes that might go unnoticed on decorative concrete stand out immediately on a sport court. Nets that are off center, lines that feel tight, or surfaces that drain unevenly affect play and are quickly called out by users. For general contractors, this means accuracy at the basics protects the entire project. When the fundamentals are right, the court feels intuitive to play on and fades into the background of a successful job. Key takeaway: Setting expectations early and selecting the right foundation is critical to a pickleball court’s long-term performance and longevity.



Chapter 3: Selecting the Proper Court Size

Court size is where most pickleball projects succeed or quietly fail. While the in-bounds playing area is fixed, the total footprint of a pickleball court is flexible. How much space is allocated beyond the lines directly affects safety, playability, and long-term satisfaction. This chapter helps general contractors guide owners toward realistic decisions early, before concrete is poured.

In-Bounds Versus Total Footprint

- In-bounds play area: 44 feet by 20 feet
- Recommended minimum total footprint: **30 feet by 60 feet**
- Ideal or tournament style footprint: **34 feet by 64 feet**

The additional space allows players to move safely, track the ball, and complete points without stepping off the slab. Fence placement should also be considered at this stage. A fence installed inside the concrete footprint can effectively reduce the usable court size by 1 to 2 feet on each side, depending on post offset and panel thickness. This reduction is often overlooked during layout planning.

Minimum Size Courts

USA Pickleball recognizes 30 feet by 60 feet as the minimum recommended overall court size. Minimum size courts are common in residential projects where space is constrained. They can function well when expectations are clearly set: reduced run-off behind baselines, tighter lateral movement near sidelines, and increased importance of flatness and slope control. These courts are playable, but they feel tighter and less forgiving, especially for experienced players.

Ideal and Tournament Size Courts

A 34 foot by 64 foot footprint provides a noticeably better playing experience with improved safety and reduced fall risk, more natural movement patterns, better accommodation of competitive or repeat players, and greater flexibility for future striping or sport conversions. For multifamily, HOA, and amenity-focused projects, this size is often the right long-term decision.

Clearance and Overhead Considerations

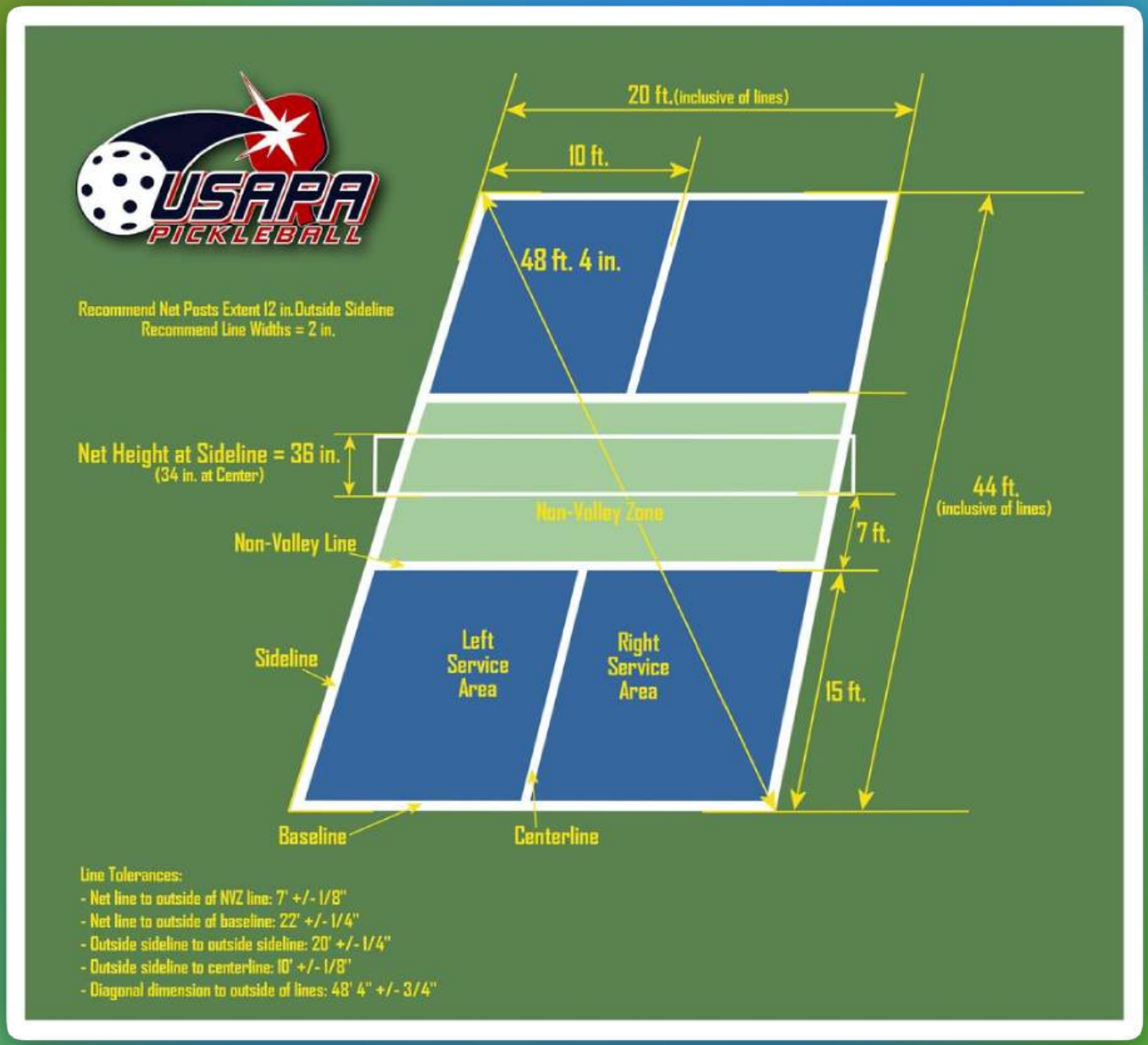
Horizontal space is only part of the equation. Overhead clearance should be sufficient to allow high lobs without obstruction. Light poles, tree limbs, and architectural features should be considered early. Fencing placement affects usable space even when total dimensions are met. Ignoring overhead and perimeter obstructions can make an otherwise compliant court feel compromised.

Communicating Tradeoffs to Owners

Owners often focus on fitting a court into available space, not on how it will play. General contractors play a key role in setting expectations by explaining the difference between minimum and ideal footprints, clarifying how extra space improves safety and enjoyment, identifying where compromises will be felt during play, and confirming whether the court is intended for casual use or frequent play. When these discussions happen early, owners are far less likely to be disappointed later.

Planning for the Future

Court size decisions are difficult to change once concrete is poured. Allowing for minor increases in width or length supports future basketball striping, relocated net systems, multi-sport use, and higher resale or amenity value. Building slightly larger than the minimum is often the most cost-effective upgrade a project can make. Key takeaway: Selecting the proper court size is not about meeting the minimum dimensions. It is about balancing space, expectations, and long-term use before construction begins.


USAPA
PICKLEBALL
Recommend Net Posts Extent 12 in. Outside Sideline
Recommend Line Widths = 2 in.
20 ft. (inclusive of lines)
10 ft.
48 ft. 4 in.
Net Height at Sideline = 36 in.
(34 in. at Center)
Non-Volley Zone
Non-Volley Line
7 ft.
44 ft.
(inclusive of lines)
Sideline
Left Service Area
Right Service Area
15 ft.
Baseline
Centerline
Line Tolerances:
- Net line to outside of NVZ line: 7' +/- 1/8"
- Net line to outside of baseline: 22' +/- 1/4"
- Outside sideline to outside sideline: 20' +/- 1/4"
- Outside sideline to centerline: 10' +/- 1/8"
- Diagonal dimension to outside of lines: 48' 4" +/- 3/4"

Chapter 4: Turning a Pickleball Court Into a Multi-Sport Court

With a few well planned decisions, a pickleball court can easily serve multiple sports without sacrificing playability. One of the advantages of pickleball is its compact footprint. When space is planned correctly, the same slab can often support basketball, volleyball, or badminton with minimal additional cost. This chapter outlines how general contractors can help owners achieve flexibility through smart layout choices made early in the project.

Why Multi-Sport Planning Matters

- Greater long-term value from the same slab
- Increased daily use of the space
- Reduced need for future demolition or expansion
- Better return on investment for owners and developers

Basketball Integration

- A full-size half basketball court measures approximately 47 feet by 50 feet
- **Compromised half courts are common in residential settings and still provide meaningful play**
- The full width of a three-point line is 39.5 feet
- The three-point arc is based on a 19.75 foot radius from the rim

Hoop placement has a significant impact on how the court plays. Mounting the hoop on the center of the longer side of the slab generally provides the best experience for serious players. Short side hoop placement can work when space is limited but restricts ball movement and shooting angles. In many cases, widening a pickleball court footprint from 34 feet to 40 feet creates enough space to comfortably support basketball without affecting pickleball play.

Volleyball and Badminton Considerations

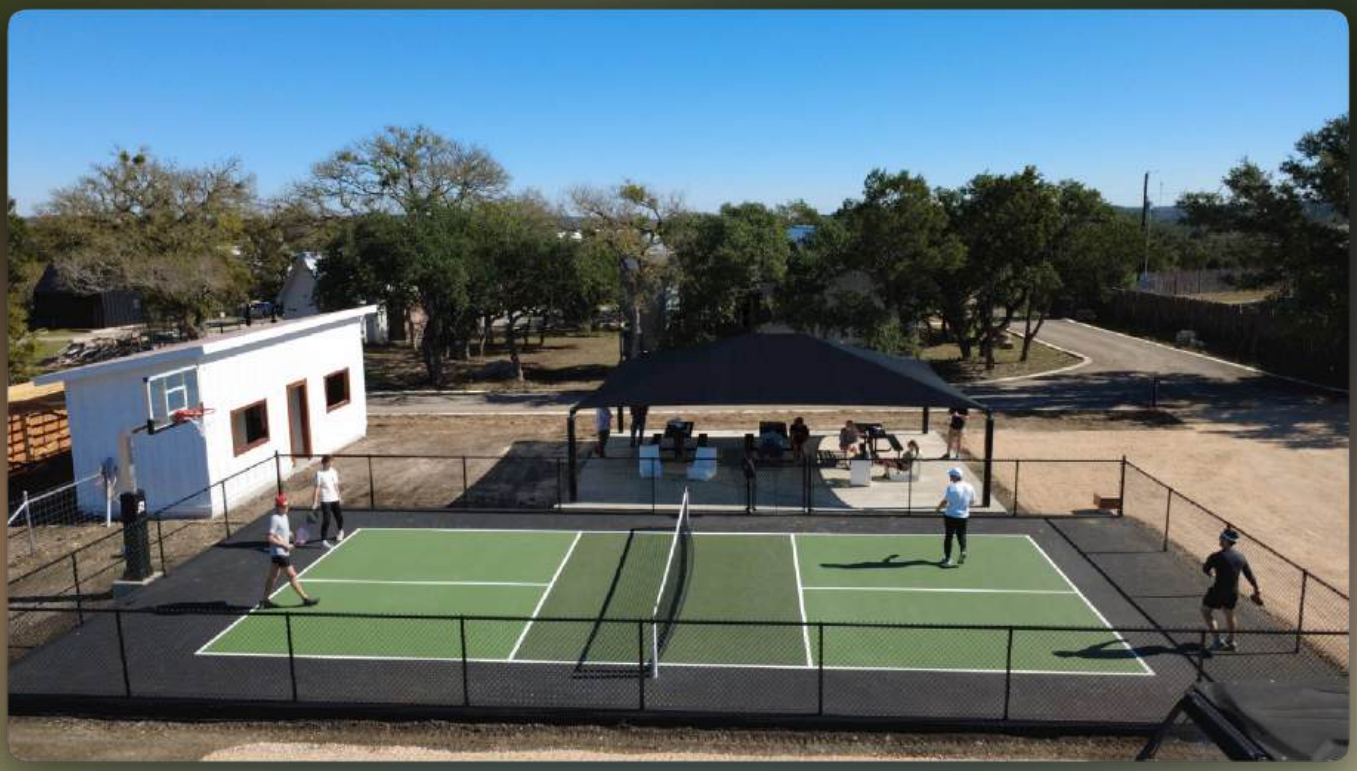
- A standard volleyball court measures 59 feet by 29.5 feet
- A badminton court measures 44 feet by 20 feet, which matches the pickleball in-bounds area
- Sand mixed acrylic surfacing systems work well outdoors for these sports

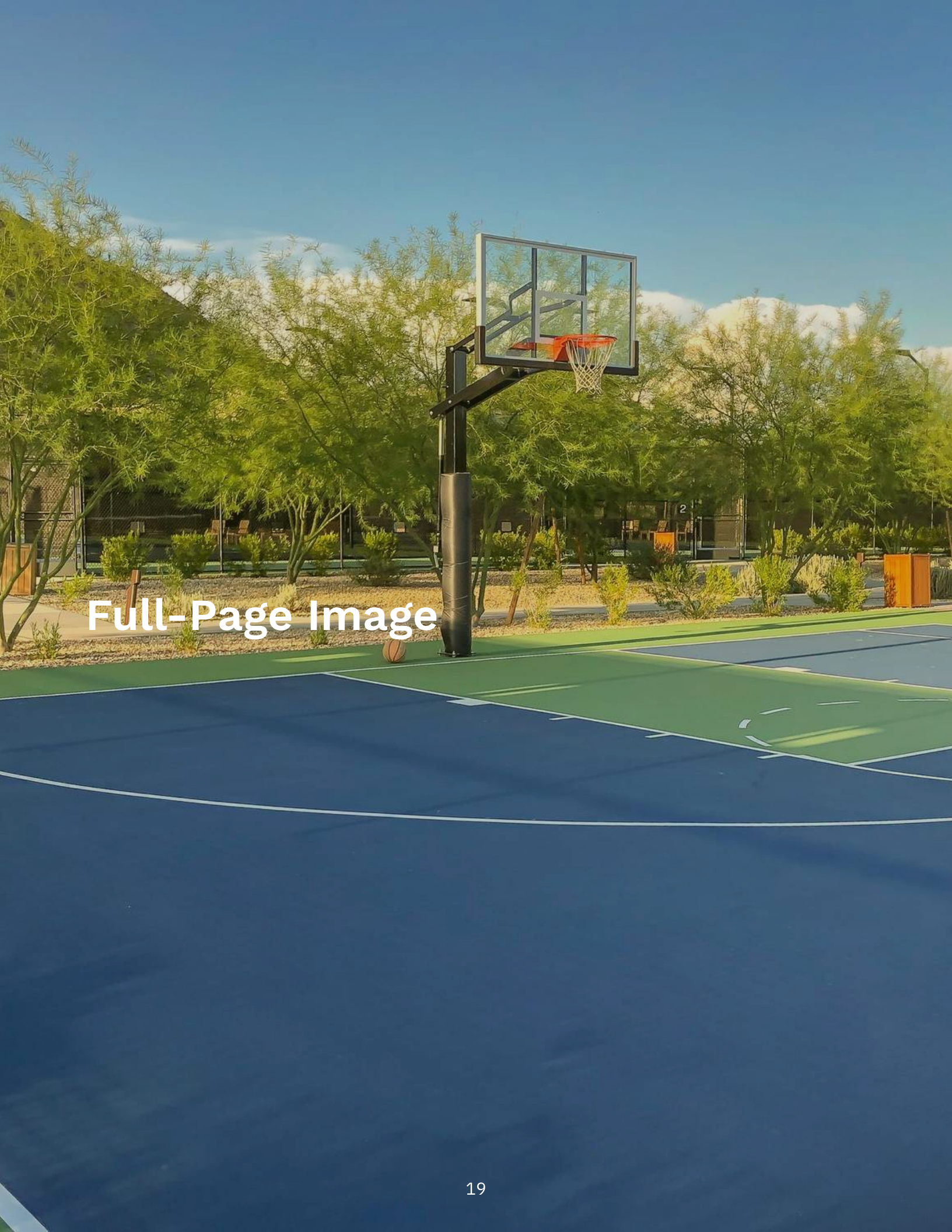
Striping and Visual Organization

- Primary pickleball lines should remain the most visible
- Gray or black secondary lines are recommended to reduce visual clutter and confusion
- A restrained striping plan helps the court feel intentional rather than overcrowded

Keeping It Simple

Multi-sport courts do not require major design changes. Slightly increasing slab width or length, thoughtful hoop and net placement, and coordinated striping plans are easiest and least expensive when made before construction begins. Key takeaway: Turning a pickleball court into a multi-sport court usually requires only a few intentional layout decisions, not major compromises or added complexity.




Full-Page Image

Chapter 5: What Is the Foundation of a Pickleball Court?

The foundation determines how a pickleball court performs years after the project is complete. While surfacing and striping are the most visible parts of a court, long-term performance is driven almost entirely by what sits underneath. For years asphalt was to go court foundation; although acceptable **concrete has taken over as the de-facto go to foundation. (although** asphalt **is still** acceptable **depending on region, climate, cracking expectations)**

Why the Foundation Matters

- Pickleballs bounce in a few critical areas more often than not
- Repetitive foot traffic concentrates wear in specific zones
- Small variations in slope or settlement are noticeable during play

Because of this, courts are far less forgiving of movement, cracking, or drainage issues. When problems occur, they are often attributed to the surface even when the root cause is structural.

Concrete as the Preferred Foundation

- Long-term dimensional stability
- Better control of slope and flatness
- Compatibility with acrylic surfacing systems
- Predictable performance across temperature swings

Post-Tension Versus Reinforced Rebar Slabs

Two concrete reinforcement approaches are commonly used. Post-tension slabs are designed to reduce cracking by placing the concrete under compression. They are often favored in expansive soil conditions and in regions where soil movement is a concern. Reinforced rebar-reinforced slabs rely on steel reinforcement to control cracking rather than eliminate it. When designed and installed correctly, they can perform well, particularly in stable soil conditions. Key considerations when selecting between the two include local soil characteristics, project budget and sequencing, availability of experienced installers, and owner expectations regarding cracking tolerance. Either system can succeed when properly designed for the site.

Asphalt as an Alternative Base

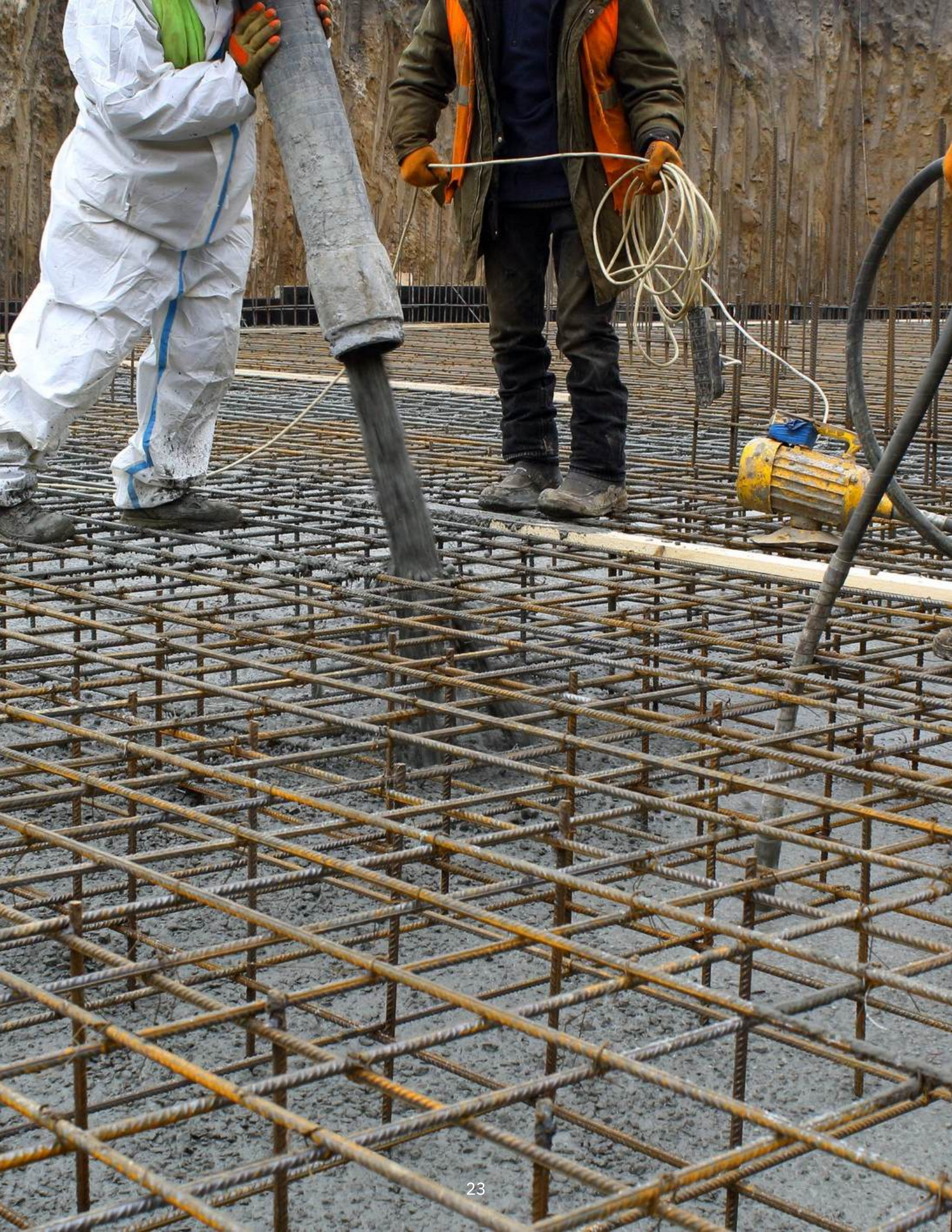
Asphalt courts are less common today but still exist in certain applications. In regions like Texas, asphalt has fallen out of favor due to heat sensitivity and long-term movement. However, asphalt can still be feasible when the base is properly engineered, drainage is well managed, and the owner understands maintenance expectations. Asphalt foundations typically require more frequent resurfacing and closer monitoring over time.

Regional and Site Considerations

- Soil type and expansion potential
- Drainage patterns and water table
- Tree roots and surrounding structures
- Local climate and temperature extremes

Aligning Expectations Early

Many foundation-related issues begin with misaligned expectations rather than poor workmanship. General contractors play a critical role in clarifying what level of cracking is acceptable, how drainage will be handled, what maintenance may be required over time, and how the foundation choice affects warranties. When these conversations happen before construction begins, owners are far more satisfied with the finished court. Key takeaway: Setting expectations early and selecting the right foundation is critical to a pickleball court’s long-term performance and longevity.



Chapter 6: What to Know When Building the Slab

GC TLDR for Slab Work

- Finished slab slope of 0.75 percent to 1 percent
- 4000 PSI concrete
- Medium broom finish
- Vapor barrier required beneath the slab; without a vapor barrier, most paint and surfacing manufacturers will not honor their warranty

Choosing the Right Concrete Contractor

Not all flatwork crews are suited for sport courts. Pickleball slabs require tighter tolerances than sidewalks, patios, or driveways. A concrete contractor with experience in sport courts or high precision flatwork is far more likely to deliver a slab that performs well. Key traits to look for include demonstrated attention to elevation control, willingness to check grades repeatedly during form and pour, and comfort working to tighter slope tolerances.

Slab Thickness and Perimeter Support

Most pickleball courts are built with a slab thickness between 4 and 5 inches. The slab should be finished with a medium broom finish, which provides the right balance of texture for adhesion and long-term performance without creating excessive surface roughness. In many residential and amenity applications, a perimeter beam is also used to provide additional structural support. This beam is typically 1 foot wide and 1 foot deep, placed subterranean around the slab perimeter, and helps manage edge loading and long-term movement. The exact depth and design should respond to soil conditions and engineering requirements rather than a one size fits all approach.

Subgrade Preparation and Compaction

Compaction is one of the most critical and most overlooked steps in court construction. Whether the site is prepared using cut and fill or imported base material, the subgrade must be properly compacted to reduce settlement. Important considerations include removing organic material and unsuitable soils, using appropriate road base or aggregate where required, and compacting in lifts rather than in a single pass. No surface system can compensate for poor subgrade preparation.

Drainage and Slope Control

Pickleball courts require positive drainage without feeling sloped during play. A slope in the range of approximately 0.75 percent to 1 percent is commonly used, ideally following the natural terrain. This allows water to shed without creating low spots or birdbaths. Over-sloping the slab to solve drainage issues often creates new problems by affecting ball behavior and player comfort.

Vapor Barriers and Moisture Management

Moisture migration through the slab is a frequent cause of surfacing failures. Many court surfacing manufacturers require a vapor barrier beneath the slab as a condition of their warranty. Installing one helps reduce moisture-related blistering, delamination, and discoloration over time. This detail should be confirmed early so it is not value engineered out late in the project.

Concrete Mix Considerations

Concrete strength and mix design influence long-term performance. A compressive strength of approximately 4000 PSI is commonly specified for sport courts. In some regions, newer mix designs such as 3L concrete are increasingly used to improve workability and durability. The exact mix should be coordinated with the concrete supplier and surfacing system requirements.

Curing Time and Scheduling

Rushing the slab is one of the most common causes of long-term court issues. A minimum curing period of 30 days is generally recommended before applying acrylic surfacing systems. This allows excess moisture to escape and the concrete to stabilize. Scheduling surfacing too early often leads to adhesion problems that show up months later.

Setting Expectations With Owners

General contractors play a critical role in explaining why slab details matter. Clear communication around cure time, sequencing, and tolerances helps owners understand why certain steps cannot be rushed without consequences. When the slab is built correctly, the rest of the court system has a chance to perform as intended. Key takeaway: Careful slab construction, proper preparation, and patience during curing are essential to delivering a pickleball court that performs well long after the pour is complete.

Chapter 7: Post-Tension vs. Rebar and Jointing

Concrete will crack. The goal on a pickleball court is to decide where and how that cracking is managed. This chapter builds on the slab fundamentals covered previously and focuses specifically on reinforcement and crack control strategies. The intent is not to eliminate cracking, which is unrealistic, but to manage it in a way that protects playability, appearance, and long-term performance.

Reinforcement Systems: Post-Tension Vs Rebar

Pickleball courts are most commonly built using either post tension slabs or reinforced rebar-reinforced slabs. Both approaches can succeed, but they behave differently over time. Post-tension systems place the slab under compression using steel tendons that are fully tensioned approximately 10 to 14 days after the pour. This compression helps prevent small cracks from opening and spreading. When post tension systems perform as intended, cracks are typically limited to hairline width and are often difficult to detect during play. Rebar reinforced slabs do not place the concrete under compression. Instead, the steel reinforcement holds cracks together after they form. Because there is no active mechanism preventing movement, cracks in rebar-reinforced slabs are more susceptible to widening over time as the ground moves and temperatures fluctuate. This does not mean rebar-reinforced slabs fail, but it does mean crack visibility and growth should be expected. Understanding these differences helps set realistic expectations with owners and informs jointing decisions.

Joints and Crack Control Strategy

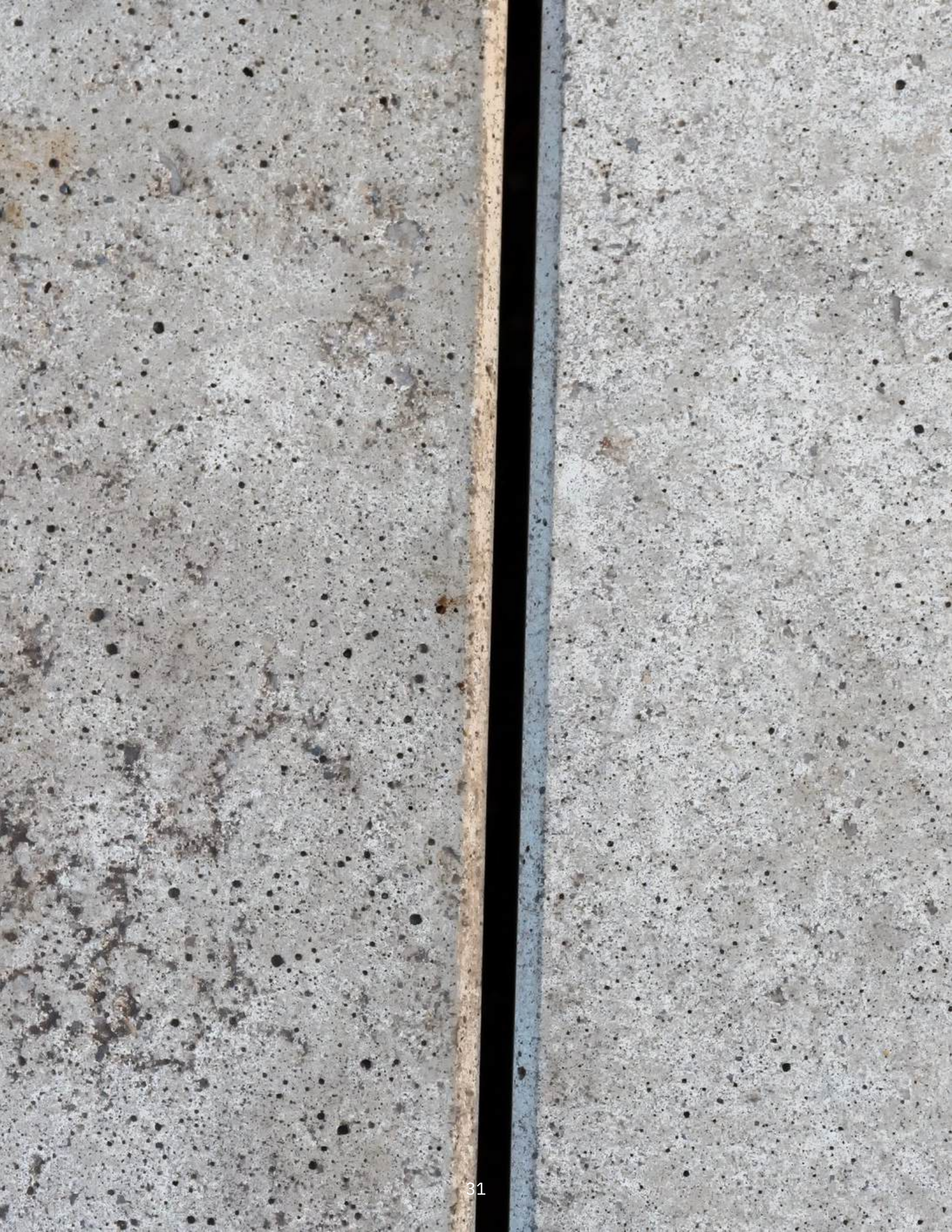
On pickleball courts, joints are not about preventing cracks. They are about telling the concrete where to crack. Control joints are used to encourage cracking to occur in planned locations rather than randomly across the slab. Expansion joints that allow slabs to move independently are typically avoided within the active playing area. The preferred and often best location for a control joint on a pickleball court is directly under the net. Cracks that form under the net have minimal impact on ball behavior and player movement and are far less noticeable during play. In many designs, a single control joint under the net is sufficient for the entire playing area. Joints should generally be avoided through baselines, non-volley zone lines, or other high traffic areas, where even small separations become apparent during play.

Timing and Execution

If control joints are used, timing and execution matter. Saw cuts made too late increase the likelihood of uncontrolled cracking. Cuts made too early can damage the slab surface. Proper depth, straightness, and coordination with the concrete contractor are essential so jointing is intentional rather than improvised.

Setting Expectations

All concrete cracks. Sport courts are no exception. What matters is how cracking affects performance, safety, and long-term maintenance. Explaining the differences between post tension and rebar behavior, and why joints are placed under the net, helps owners understand that crack control is a design decision, not a defect. Key takeaway: Crack control on pickleball courts is about management, not elimination. Matching the reinforcement system to site conditions and directing cracks to the least disruptive location protects playability and long-term performance.



Chapter 8: Designing for Accessories

Accessories work best when they are planned before concrete is poured, not added afterward. Net systems, fencing, and lighting are often treated as secondary decisions, but they have a direct impact on play quality, coordination, and long-term satisfaction. This chapter outlines common accessory options and how early planning helps general contractors avoid rework and compromises.

Net Systems and Post Sleeves

There are two common approaches to pickleball net systems. Permanent in-ground nets use post sleeves embedded in the slab. These sleeves are typically 3 inch PVC pipes installed approximately 2 feet below the finished pad. This approach provides a clean, permanent setup and is widely used on dedicated pickleball courts. Semi-portable net systems are an alternative option. While they are more expensive, they offer excellent play quality and flexibility. These systems do not require cutting holes in the slab, which can be appealing on multi-sport courts or projects where future layout changes are anticipated. Selecting the net system early ensures sleeves, anchors, or mounting details are coordinated before the pour.

Fencing Considerations

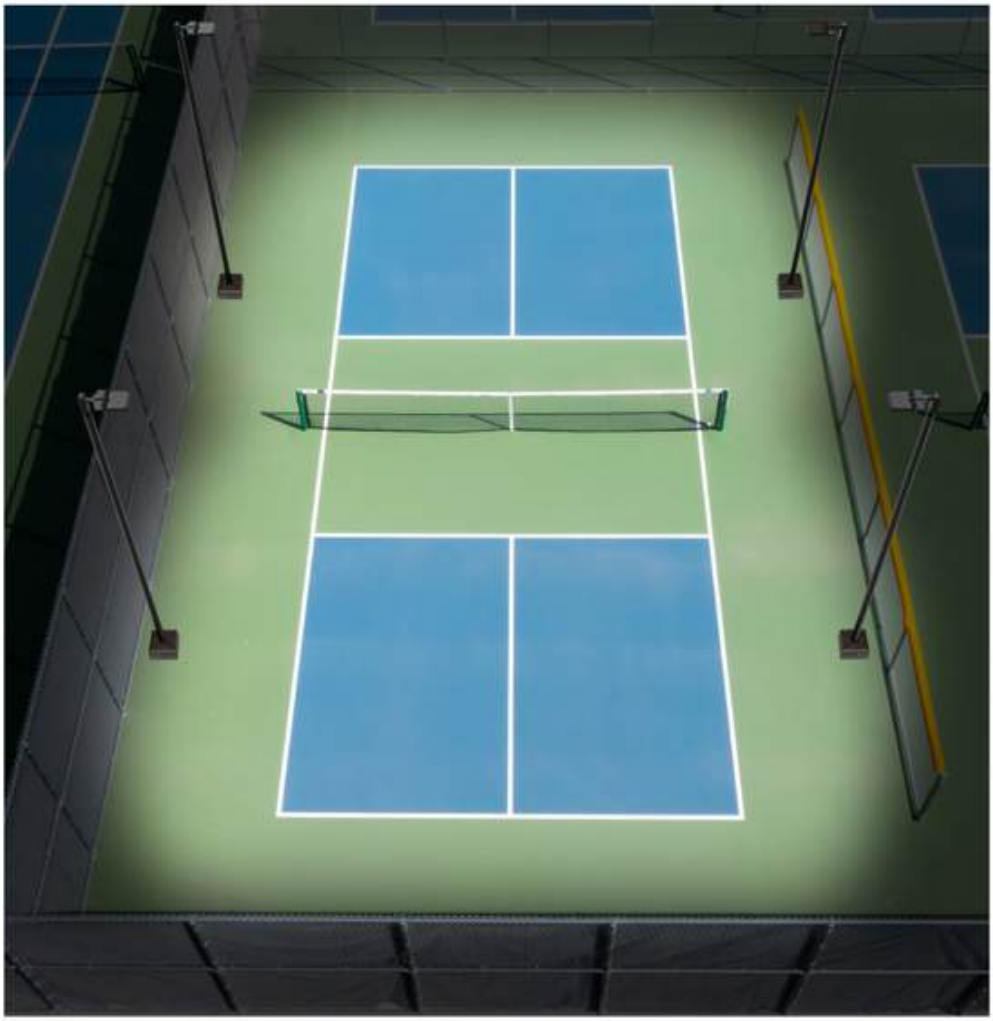
Fencing defines the court and improves safety and play flow. Chain link fencing remains the standard choice for most pickleball courts. It is durable, cost effective, and familiar to players. On higher end projects where aesthetics and sound control matter, glass fencing is becoming more common. PickleTile is emerging as a market leader in glass fence systems designed specifically for pickleball environments, offering improved noise performance and a premium appearance. Fence placement should be coordinated with court size decisions. Posts set inside the slab reduce usable court dimensions, while perimeter mounted fencing preserves more playing space.

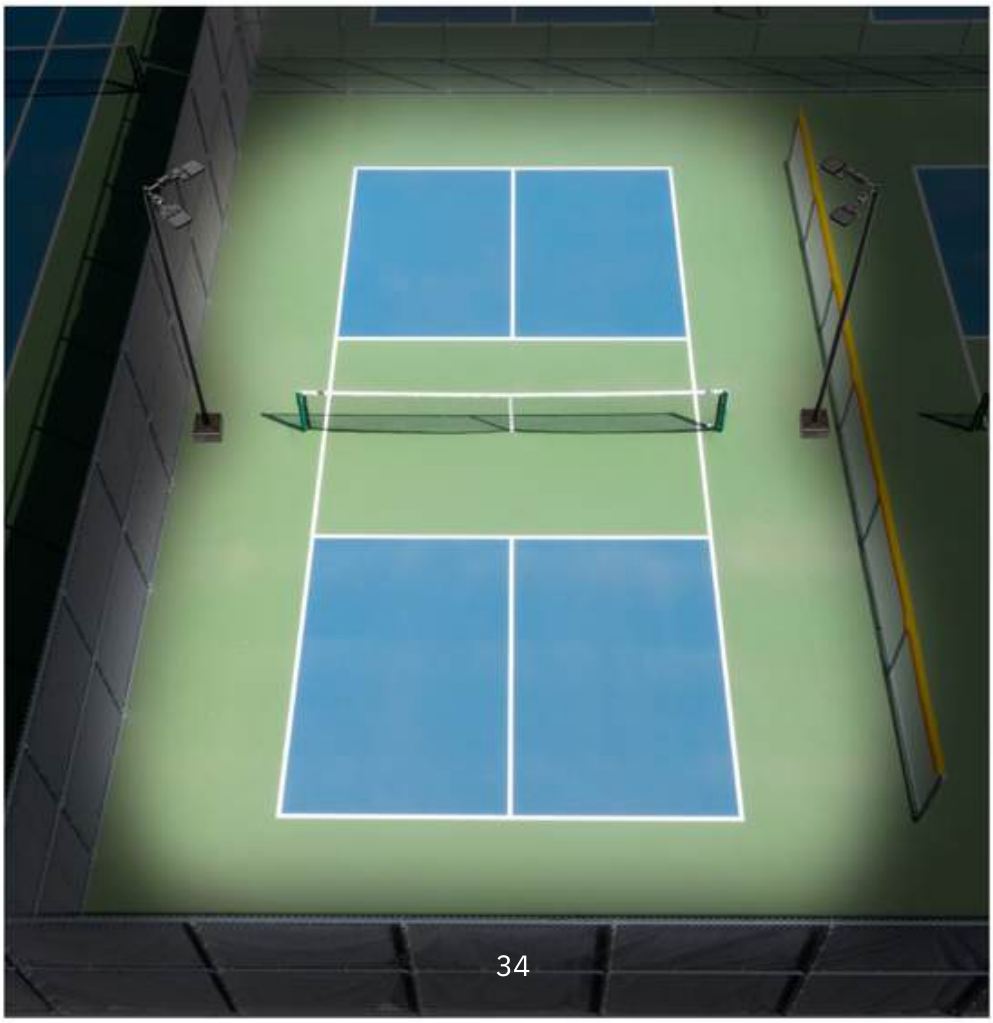
Lighting Layouts

Lighting quality has a significant impact on usability, especially for evening play. A professional style setup typically uses four individual light fixtures positioned along the long sides of the court at approximately the one third and two thirds marks. This arrangement provides even coverage and minimizes glare. For standard residential projects, a single light pole with a double bull horn fixture is often sufficient. While simpler, this setup still allows for functional nighttime play when properly aimed. Electrical conduit, pole bases, and fixture locations should be planned alongside slab layout to avoid cutting or patching later.

Coordination Matters

Accessory coordination is about sequencing, not complexity. Early decisions around nets, fencing, and lighting help preserve court dimensions, reduce rework, improve final play quality, and deliver a more polished finished product. When accessories are planned as part of the court system rather than afterthoughts, the entire project benefits. Key takeaway: Thoughtful accessory planning before construction begins improves playability, aesthetics, and long-term satisfaction without adding unnecessary complexity.





Chapter 9: Concrete Preparation Prior to Surfacing

Good surfacing starts long before the first coat is applied. Concrete preparation is one of the most common points of failure on pickleball courts, not because it is complicated, but because it is often rushed or underestimated. This chapter explains why proper prep matters and how coordination at this stage protects both performance and warranties. **A good surfacing contractor should step into handle concrete prep.**

Preparation Methods and Mechanical Bond

- Grinding, shot blasting, or using a floor sander to achieve proper surface profile
- Removing the top film of concrete that can be problematic for acrylic adhesion
- Confirming the surface allows for a proper mechanical bond

These steps are critical because acrylic systems rely on physically bonding to the concrete surface. If the slab is too smooth or sealed by surface laitance, adhesion issues are far more likely.

Chemical Bond and Acid Etching

In addition to mechanical preparation, chemical bonding is often addressed through acid etching. Concrete is inherently alkaline. Acid etching helps neutralize the surface, bringing the pH closer to neutral and allowing coatings to bond more effectively. When done correctly, this process prepares the surface at a chemical level, complementing mechanical preparation.

Cure Time and Environmental Conditions

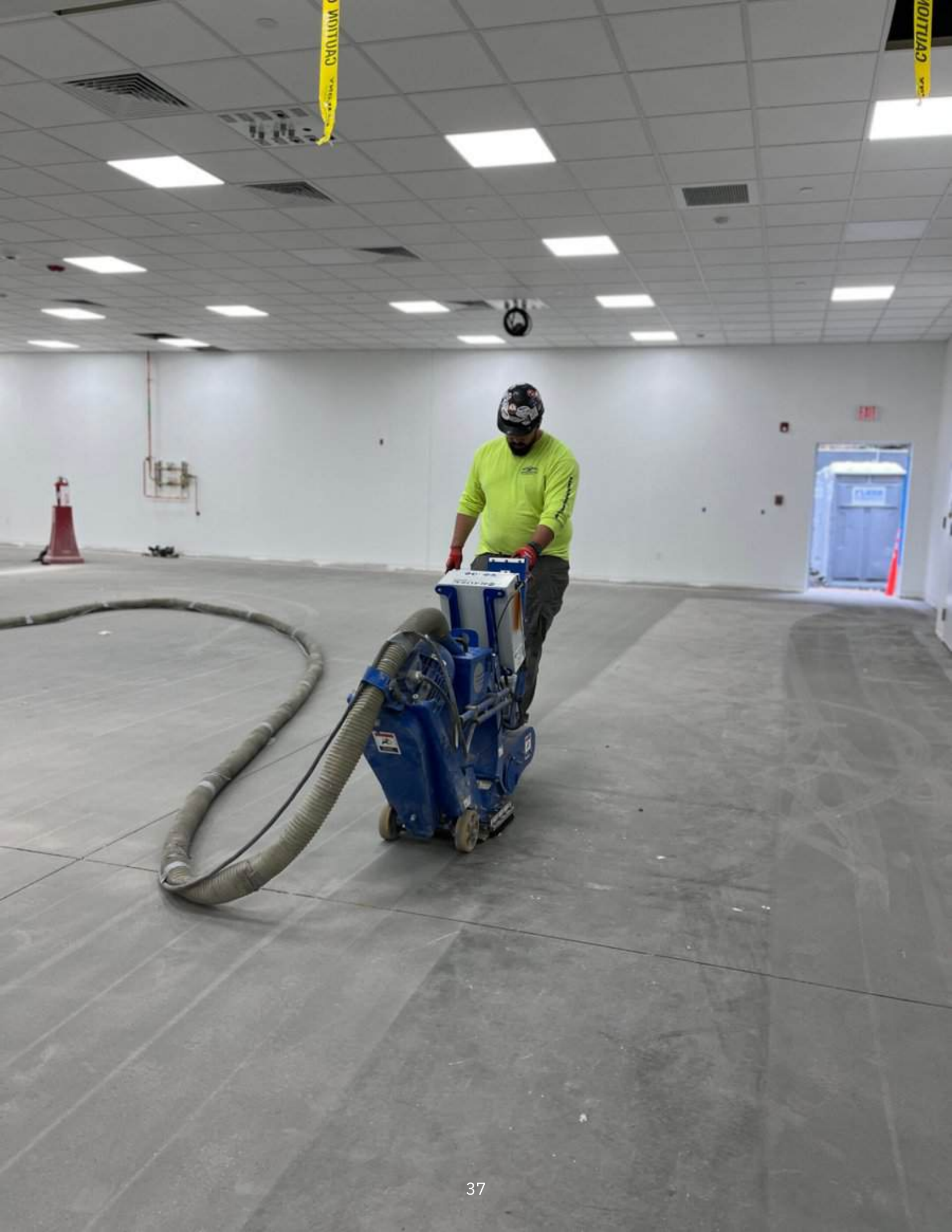
A minimum concrete cure time of 30 days is generally required before surfacing begins. Longer cure times may be necessary when conditions are colder, typically below 50 degrees Fahrenheit, or when the slab has been exposed to prolonged moisture. Rushing this step increases the risk of adhesion failure and moisture-related issues. I could go into significantly more detail on concrete preparation, but the key point is that shortcuts at this stage almost always show up later.

1L Concrete and Emerging Mix Designs

More environmentally friendly concrete mixes, including 1L concrete, are becoming more common, particularly in Central Texas. These mixes present new challenges for court surfacing systems, including higher pH levels, increased limestone content, and finer pore structure. As these mixes become more widely used, surfacing manufacturers continue adapting their systems to address these characteristics. You should communicate what type of concrete mix was used. This information is important for proper prep selection, product compatibility, and warranty compliance, and it should be part of the handoff between the GC and the court contractor.

Planning the Handoff

Concrete preparation represents the transition from structural work to performance surfacing. Clear communication around slab condition, cure time, moisture management, and concrete mix type ensures this handoff happens smoothly. Key takeaway: Proper concrete preparation requires both mechanical and chemical considerations. When prep is planned, communicated, and coordinated, the surfacing system has the best chance to perform as intended over time.



Chapter 10: Court Surfacing Systems — A GC-Level Overview

Court surfacing is not paint. It is a layered performance system.

For outdoor pickleball courts, the industry standard surfacing approach is a **sand-mixed acrylic system**. From a GC perspective, the goal is not to select brands or dial in mix ratios, but to understand how the system functions as a whole and why each layer matters.

A sand-mixed acrylic court is designed to do three things at once:

- Provide consistent ball response
- Deliver predictable traction for lateral movement
- Protect the concrete slab beneath from wear and moisture intrusion

Each layer in the system plays a specific role, and skipping or rushing steps increases the likelihood of premature failure

How the System Works (High-Level)

Sand-mixed acrylic systems rely on both **mechanical bond** and **chemical compatibility** with the concrete slab. The system builds from the slab upward, correcting minor imperfections, controlling texture, and creating a uniform playing surface.

Rather than a single coating, the court surface functions as a composite assembly. Performance depends far more on slab quality, preparation, and installation sequence than on brand selection. The products are applied with a squeegee with the exception of adhesion promoter. Common manufactures include Sportmaster, Acrytech and Laykold

Typical Application Sequence

While exact assemblies vary slightly by manufacturer, sand-mixed acrylic systems are generally installed in the following order:

- Fill low spots and cracks using a patch binder mixed with Portland cement and sand
- Apply an adhesion promoter when coating new or very smooth concrete
- Install an acrylic resurfacer, typically black and sand-mixed, to create a uniform base
- Apply two coats of sand-mixed acrylic color system to achieve final texture, color, and play characteristics

Each step builds on the one before it. Patch materials correct surface irregularities, resurfacers unify the slab, and color coats establish the final play characteristics.

Cushioned Versus Non-Cushioned Systems

Some courts incorporate cushioned layers beneath the acrylic surface. Cushioned systems can reduce joint stress and improve comfort for frequent players, but they add cost and complexity. Non-cushioned systems are more common and perform well for most residential and amenity applications. The decision to use a cushioned system should align with budget, expected usage, and maintenance expectations.

Modular Tile Systems

Modular tile systems are sometimes marketed as a quick solution for pickleball courts. While these systems can work for recreational use, they are generally not accepted by the competitive pickleball community. Ball response, noise, and movement can differ significantly from traditional acrylic surfaces. For families or casual play, tile systems may be acceptable. For dedicated pickleball use, acrylic systems remain the standard.

Color, Texture, and Striping

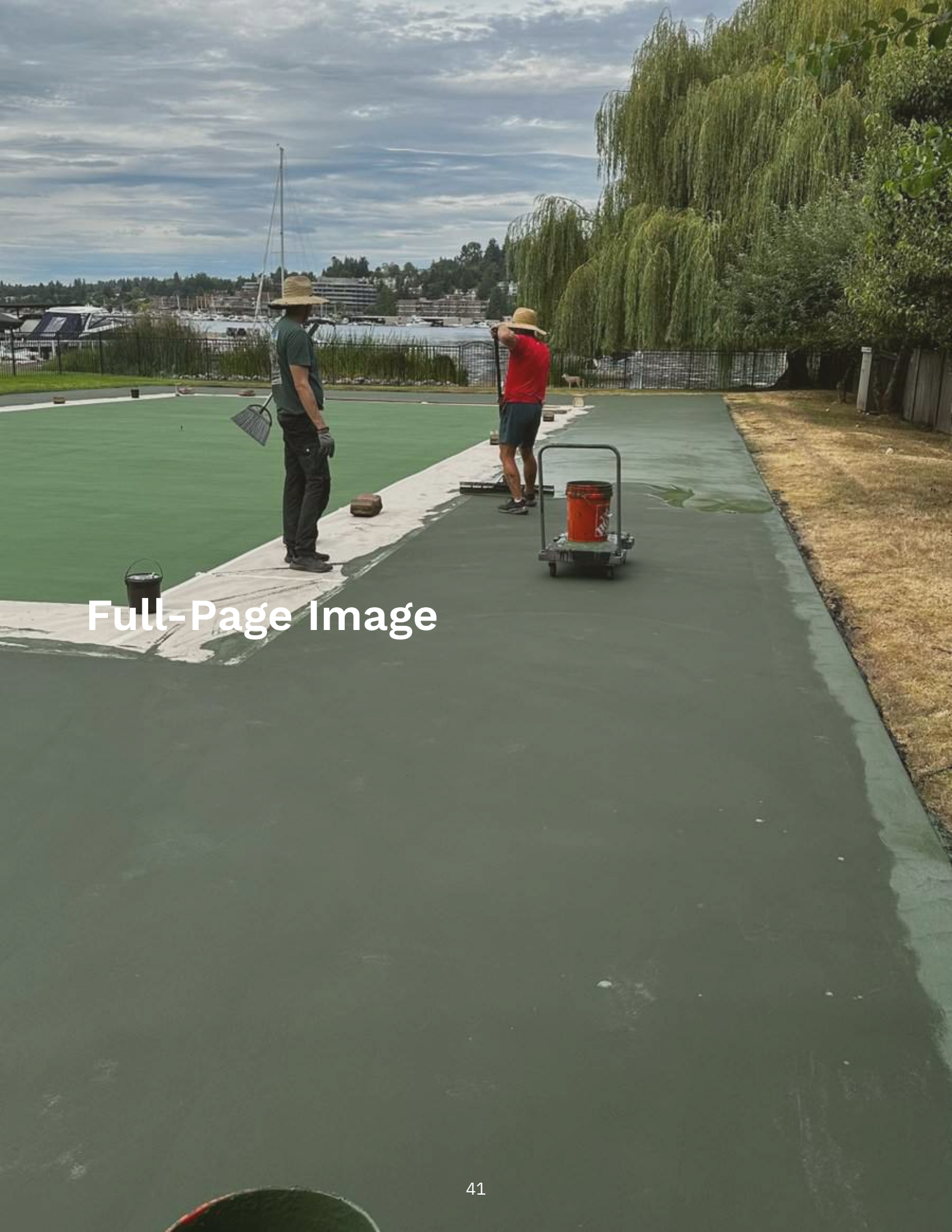
- Darker colors retain more heat
- Lighter colors improve visibility
- Texture levels influence traction and joint comfort

Maintenance and Longevity

All surfacing systems require maintenance over time. Acrylic courts typically need periodic cleaning and resurfacing as wear occurs. Proper preparation, compatible materials, and realistic expectations extend service life and reduce long-term costs.

Understanding the Role of the GC

The GC does not need to select the surfacing product. The GC needs to understand the system. Knowing how surfacing interacts with the slab, joints, and accessories helps ensure the court performs as intended and reduces finger pointing later. Key takeaway: Court surfacing systems are performance layers, not finishes. Understanding the basics helps GCs coordinate better, protect warranties, and deliver courts that play the way owners expect.


Full-Page Image

Chapter 11: When to Bring in a Court Specialist

The best pickleball courts are the result of clear roles, not blurred responsibilities. As pickleball courts become more common, general contractors are often faced with a decision: self perform portions of the work, or bring in a specialized court contractor. There is no single right answer. This chapter outlines when self performance makes sense, when a specialist adds value, and how collaboration protects both the project and the GC's reputation.

When a GC Can Self Perform

- The slab meets all flatness, slope, curing, and moisture requirements
- The crew has prior experience with sport court surfacing or similar systems
- The project is a simple, single-use court with minimal accessories
- Manufacturer requirements and warranty implications are fully understood

When these conditions are met, self performing can reduce scheduling complexity and keep scope consolidated. The key is honest assessment of experience and tolerance for risk.

Where Specialists Add the Most Value

- Courts include multiple sports or complex striping layouts
- Surface tolerances are tight and play quality is a priority
- Site conditions increase risk, such as expansive soils or moisture concerns
- Owners expect long-term warranties and predictable performance

Coordination Over Correction

The goal is not to fix mistakes. The goal is to avoid them. Early involvement of a court specialist allows review of slab design and joint placement, input on prep and curing timelines, coordination of accessories that affect surfacing, and clear handoff between trades. This approach reduces rework, avoids schedule delays, and leads to better finished courts.

Protecting the GC’s Reputation

From the owner’s perspective, the court is part of the overall project. If the court underperforms, the issue reflects on the GC regardless of who installed the surface. Bringing in the right expertise at the right time helps protect relationships, margins, and long-term credibility.

A Collaborative Model

The most successful pickleball projects treat court construction as a system. General contractors manage site work, coordination, and sequencing. Court specialists focus on performance surfaces and play quality. When responsibilities are clearly defined, projects move faster and outcomes improve. Key takeaway: General contractors can self perform certain aspects of pickleball courts when experience and conditions allow. Knowing when to involve a court specialist is not a weakness. It is a professional decision that protects the project and delivers better long-term results.

Contact: About the Author

This guide was written by Patrick founder of Pro Court Surfaces, a specialty contractor focused on the construction, surfacing, and long-term performance of outdoor pickleball and multi-sport courts. We work alongside general contractors, developers, and homeowners to deliver courts that are built correctly the first time and hold up under real-world use. Our role is often to complement GC-led projects by focusing on playability, surfacing systems, and performance details that protect the overall build. If you have questions about court planning, slab coordination, surfacing systems, or project sequencing, we are always open to a conversation.

Pro Court Surfaces
Website: www.procourtsurfaces.com
Email: patrick@procourtsurfaces.com
Phone: 512 893 0466

This guide may be shared freely with project teams, owners, and consultants as an educational resource.