

February 1, 2026

Dear Councilmembers,

As CEO of the United States Tennis Association (USTA) Mid-Atlantic Foundation, I am writing to express concern regarding the proposed reduction in funding for tennis court maintenance within Montgomery County Parks and to offer data-informed alternatives that protect fiscal responsibility, public safety, and equitable access to recreation.

Tennis is not a declining or niche activity; it is at a modern participation high. **Nationally, tennis participation grew 8%** in 2024 to 25.7 million players and is now up 46% since 2019, reflecting sustained and long-term growth.

In 2023, approximately 1.3 million residents across the Mid-Atlantic region played tennis, representing an 8.4% participation rate. Montgomery County accounts for 103,229 of those players.

Equally important is where this demand is being met. In the Mid-Atlantic region, approximately **65% of tennis players rely solely on public park or school courts as their primary place to play**. In Montgomery County—where access to private clubs is limited by cost, geography, and availability—County-maintained public courts are the backbone of tennis participation. These courts serve youth, families, seniors, and diverse communities and are often fully utilized during peak hours, particularly in the spring and summer seasons.

At the County level, the implications of reducing maintenance funding are not merely programmatic—they are financial. Routine preventative maintenance, such as crack sealing and surface cleaning, typically costing between \$500 and \$2,000 annually per court, can extend a court's usable life to as much as 20 years. When maintenance is deferred, water intrusion and freeze-thaw damage accelerate deterioration and can escalate an approximately \$8,000 resurfacing project into a \$25,000–\$40,000 full reconstruction. From a capital planning and taxpayer perspective, **maintenance reductions today create significantly larger, less predictable liabilities in future CIP budgets**.

There are also safety and utilization considerations. Deteriorating courts introduce known trip hazards and increase liability exposure for the County. **Poor court conditions further lead to underutilization**, as residents bypass unsafe or unplayable courts in favor of facilities in neighboring jurisdictions. This results in underperforming public assets and diminishes the return on investment in Montgomery County's park infrastructure.

In the spirit of partnership, I would like to emphasize that there are constructive ways to mitigate budget pressure while preserving these high-demand facilities. The United States Tennis Association (USTA) can offer Montgomery County a **no-cost parks assessment to evaluate tennis infrastructure, programming, and management**, helping to prioritize courts based on condition, usage, and community demand. In addition, USTA staff can assist County teams in

identifying and applying for ***Tennis Venue Services (TVS) funding, which can offset resurfacing and improvement costs and reduce reliance on County operating dollars.***

A maintenance-first approach—supported by external expertise and supplemental funding—aligns with Montgomery County’s goals around fiscal stewardship, public safety, and equitable access to recreation. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss these options further or to coordinate an assessment at your convenience.

Thank you for your continued commitment to Montgomery County’s parks and to the residents who rely on them every day.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tara', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Tara Fitzpatrick-Navarro, CEO
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