

Controversial project could be future home of Bellarmine tennis, records show

Public records show the developer of a proposed tennis center at Joe Creason Park envisioned supporting Bellarmine University's tennis program with the project.

Kentucky Tennis & Pickleball Center Inc.

Plans show a proposed tennis facility could be the home of Bellarmine tennis.

The renderings show a row of dark-red tennis courts. In one sketch, designers marked where the Bellarmine tennis teams' lockers rooms and storage would be.

One slide indicated the facility would be the future "home" of Bellarmine tennis.

Together, records obtained by KyCIR show a proposed – and [controversial](#) – tennis and pickleball facility was designed, at least at one point, to directly support Bellarmine University's tennis programs.

The group behind the project – Kentucky Tennis & Pickleball Center, Inc., or KYTPC – wants to build the \$65 million complex on 25 acres of city-owned land at Joe Creason Park. The proposal is sparking [a wave of pushback from people](#) who live near the park.

KYTPC's CEO is Will Davis, head coach of Bellarmine's men's tennis program. The nonprofit says in an [online FAQ](#) that it "has no formal connection to Bellarmine," except for Davis' employment there.

The group told KyCIR in a statement that Bellarmine has not been involved in developing the facility, and a spokesman for the college said the same. But a Microsoft PowerPoint-style document for KYTPC lists Bellarmine University's president, Susan Donovan, and its director of athletics, Scott Wiegandt, as "advisors and ambassadors" for the project alongside Davis and several other people.

Longtime environmental attorney and project opponent Tom FitzGerald received the documents through an open records request with Louisville Metro Government and provided them to KyCIR.

The records include two PowerPoint-style presentations for KYTPC, one of which is dated August 2023, that list Bellarmine as an organization "committed to creating unique partnerships" with the planned tennis complex.

One of the presentations said the complex would elevate Bellarmine tennis to a "top" NCAA Division I program, enhance recruitment of student-athletes, and create "co-op learning" opportunities for the

university's physical therapy, sports administration and communications programs. All the while, it would free up "valuable flat-acreage near the center of Bellarmine's campus."

Kentucky Tennis & Pickleball Center Inc

Renderings show space for Bellarmine University's tennis teams.

The university currently has six red-colored tennis courts at the northern-edge of its campus in Louisville's Belknap neighborhood.

Public records KyCIR reviewed also include letters of support for the project, including a January 2023 letter from the [U.S. Tennis Association](#) and a March 2023 letter from the [Atlantic Sun Conference](#).

The tennis association said, in its letter addressed to Davis, that the organization "is pleased to support the tennis venue construction project at Bellarmine University."

In the other letter, the Atlantic Sun Conference's associate commissioner of championships expressed interest in potentially hosting a future championship at the proposed Louisville complex and thanked "Will Davis and Bellarmine University for apprising us of the plans for the innovative Kentucky Tennis Center."

In a statement to KYCIR, the nonprofit behind the planned tennis complex stood by its announcement, in its online FAQ, that Bellarmine has no “formal connection” to the project.

“Opponents of the KYTPC project have posted early drafts of a PowerPoint relating to the project online and have raised a question about any involvement in the project by Bellarmine University,” KYTPC said via email.

The nonprofit went on to say, in the email to KyCIR:

“Bellarmine personnel were informed of the project in the first stages, but Bellarmine has never had any control over the project or participated in funding it in any way. As previously stated, KYTPC believes that it would be helpful to the project to have a major college tenant, but no conversations have been had with Bellarmine or any other entity concerning lease terms. If such conversations evolve in the future, they will assuredly be at arm’s length.”

The nonprofit’s website does express interest in partnering with a college. But it leaves the question of what school open-ended, saying: “KYTPC believes that it would be advantageous to the new facility to have a major college tennis team as a tenant, and in the future, it hopes to reach an arm’s-length arrangement with a college.”

KyCIR also contacted Bellarmine University’s communications team Monday afternoon to ask about the public records and about the college’s possible involvement in the project.

School spokesman Jason Cissell said via email: “Bellarmine University is aware of a proposal for a tennis facility in Joe Creason Park. The university is not and has not been involved in the funding or

development of this facility. There have been no negotiations between Bellarmine and any of the parties involved with the project."

KyCIR asked if Bellarmine as an institution or university officials have been involved in conversations about or planning for the KYTPC project, and Cissell said they were not.