

City of Markham

Off-Leash Dog Area Background Study

March 2025

DRAFT





Prepared for the City of Markham, March 2025

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1.0 Project Overview

Markham's Off-Leash Dog Area Policy and Implementation Plan provides a clear framework for designing, identifying, evaluating, and implementing new leash-free facilities in Markham. The work plan involved a detailed review of the Markham context (current off-leash policy and facilities), a best practices review, an evaluation of Markham's pop-up off-leash dog area pilot program and an inclusive community and stakeholder engagement process.

The work plan is organized into four (4) phases:

1. Off-Leash Dog Area Background Study
2. Off-Leash Dog Area Guidelines
3. Off-Leash Dog Area Recommendations (Not included in this draft)
4. Off-Leash Dog Area Implementation Plan (Not included in this draft)

2.0 Markham Context

Understanding Markham's dog community and existing off-leash facilities will help guide future off-leash dog area policies and implementation. This section covers:

5. Dog population estimates and associations;
6. Established and pop-up off-leash dog area background; and,
7. Community and stakeholder insights.

2.1 Estimated Dog Population and Licensing

In Markham, it is mandatory to license your pets. A dog license costs \$32, being free for personal assistance dogs, and must be renewed annually. Dog licensing requirements serve public safety, disease control, responsible pet ownership and predict dog populations. However, many municipalities face a discrepancy between licensed and actual dog numbers due to three (3) main factors:

1. **Non-compliance:** Owners may avoid licensing due to lack of awareness, perceived inconvenience, and costs.
2. **Enforcement challenges:** Limited resources and inadequate tracking of dog licensing makes enforcement difficult, leading to low compliance rates.
3. **Transient populations:** Frequent movers can disrupt tracking and updating of licensing records.

Calculating Markham's Dog Population

Table 2.1 shows four (4) Canadian cities whose actual dog populations are estimated to be over double the population of their licensed dogs, with the average being 2.3:1. Using this average and the number of licensed dogs in Markham (6,421), it is estimated that Markham's actual dog population may be 14,043 dogs (Table 2.2).

Addressing the gap between actual and licensed dog populations can help the City obtain a more accurate estimate, leading to safer and more enjoyable off-leash dog areas. Strategies to consider include:

1. **Enhanced education and awareness:** Increase efforts to inform dog owners about licensing benefits to improve compliance and represent a more accurate dog population.
2. **Improved enforcement:** Strengthen measures such as patrolling and fines to ensure dogs are licensed and controlled.
3. **Partnerships to promote licensing:** Collaborate with local businesses and organizations to promote licensing through discounts or easier registration.

Table 2.1 - Average ratio between # of Dogs Licensed and # of Dogs (estimated) ¹

City	# Dogs Licensed	# Dogs (Estimated)	Ratio
Toronto	230,000	500,000	2.2:1
Hamilton	35,000	87,500	2.5:1
Vancouver	21,332	55,947	2.6:1
Winnipeg	54,585	112,145	2.1:1
			Average 2.3:1

Table 2.2 - Estimate of Dogs in Markham

City	# Dogs Licensed	# Dogs (Estimated)	Ratio
Markham	6,421	14,043	2.3:1

1 Data from the City-Wide Study for Existing City of Toronto Dogs Off-Leash Areas, May 2021, page 48-49

2.2 Dog Associations

The following associations/groups are an important part of the off-leash dog community in Markham.

Markham Dog Alliance

The Markham Dog Alliance, with over 2,500 members, advocates for off-leash dog areas and supports the local dog community. Initially a community group, it now hosts dog-friendly events and operates mainly through Facebook and Instagram, sharing updates and member photos. It also has Facebook and WhatsApp sub-groups for specific dog parks, where members plan visits and report issues. The group advocates to improve accessibility for dog owners with an off-leash dog area in every ward and is proactive in ensuring the well-being of the dogs and their owners at the off-leash dog areas.

Dogs of Cornell

Dogs of Cornell is an online, public group for dog owners in the Cornell community with 1,700 members. The group focuses on canine education, lost dogs, training, and shares recommendations of local dog businesses.



2.3 Established Off-Leash Dog Areas

Markham has four (4) established off-leash dog areas: Box-Grove Park, Cornell Woodlot Park, Huntington Park, and Miller Avenue, established before the September 2023 pilot program. Owners must follow regulations from the Animal Protection and Services By-Law 2018-91, the Dog Owners Liability Act, and the Animal Services Code of Conduct. An overview and map of these areas are provided in Table 2.3 and Figure 2.13.



Table 2.3 - Summary Table of Established Off-Leash Dog Area Attributes

Ward	Name	Area	Small Dog Area %	Amenities										
				Small Dog Area	Free Parking Lot	Street Parking	Waste Receptacle	Bag Dispensers	Benches/Chairs	Picnic Tables	Water Tap	Water Bowls	Shallow Pool	Lost and Found
Ward 1	Huntington Park Off-Leash Dog Area	Total: 7086 m ² (0.7 ha) Entrance(s): 191 m ² (0.02 ha)	N/A		x		x		x	x		x		
Ward 5	Cornell Woodlot Park Off-Leash Dog Area	Total: 3116 m ² (0.31 ha) Entrance: 130 m ² (0.01 ha) Small Dog Area: 665 m ² (0.06 ha) Large Dog Area: 2321 m ² (0.23 ha)	21%	x	x	x	x			x	x	x		x
Ward 7	Box-Grove Park Off-Leash Dog Area	Total: 2800 m ² (0.28 ha) Entrance: 120 m ² (0.01 ha) Small Dog Area: 748 m ² (0.07 ha) Large Dog Area: 1912 m ² (0.19 ha)	27%	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x		x
Ward 8	Miller Avenue Park Off-Leash Dog Area	Total: 4694 m ² (0.46 ha) Entrance: 31 m ² (0.003 ha) Small Dog Area: 675 m ² (0.06 ha) Large Dog Area: 3988 m ² (0.39 ha)	14%	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	

Huntington Park Off-Leash Dog Area

116 Huntington Park Drive (Ward 1)

Huntington Park Off-Leash Dog Area (Figure 2.1) is located in a 27-acre park within the hydro-corridor, south of Highway 407. Surroundings consist of transportation and utilities. Its immediate service area includes Thornlea and Aileen Willowbrook neighbourhoods. The design includes a 1.5-metre (5-foot) post and rail fence with wire mesh infill, two (2) double-gated access points side-by-side, wood chip and grass surfacing, and small trees within the enclosure.



Figure 2.1 - Huntington Park Off-Leash Dog Area (Ward 1)

Cornell Woodlot Park Off-Leash Dog Area

319 William Forster Road (Ward 5)

Cornell Woodlot Park Off-Leash Dog Area (Figure 2.2) is located on a 12-acre park. Surroundings include residential low-rise housing and greenways. Its immediate service area include most of Cornell neighbourhood. Opened in August 2022, it features a 1.5-metre (5-foot) black chain-link fence, wood chip surfacing, a concrete pad and benches within the double-gated entrance. A forested area is located immediately to the east, and a paved pathway on the west. Solar power lights have been provided by residents.



Figure 2.2 - Cornell Woodlot Park Off-Leash Dog Area (Ward 5)

Box-Grove Park Off-Leash Dog Area

6780 14th Avenue (Ward 7)

Box-Grove Park Off-Leash Dog Area (Figure 2.3) is located on a 25-acre park. Surroundings consist of residential low-rise housing. Its immediate service area includes Legacy, Rouge Fairways and Box-Grove neighbourhoods. The area features a 1.5-metre (5-foot) black chain link fence, wood chip surfacing, a concrete pad with benches inside the double-gated entry, and a paved pathway around the perimeter with benches.



Figure 2.3 - Box-Grove Park Off-Leash Dog Area (Ward 7)

Miller Avenue Park Off-Leash Dog Area

560 Miller Avenue (Ward 8)

Miller Avenue Off-Leash Dog Area (Figure 2.4) is located on a 4-acre park within the hydro corridor at Miller Avenue and Rodick Road. Its surroundings consist of transportation infrastructure and utilities. Its immediate service area includes Milliken Mills West neighbourhood. It features chain link fencing that varies in height between 1.2-metre (4-feet) and 1.8-metre (6-feet), a conventional latch and lock mechanism on the double gated entranceway, wood chip and grass surfacing, a storage shed and some smaller trees within the enclosure. A shade structure and agility equipment has been provided by residents.



Figure 2.4 - Miller Avenue Off-Leash Dog Area (Ward 8)

2.4 Pop-Up Off-Leash Dog Area Pilot Program 2023-2024

In September 2023, Markham launched a Pop-up Off-Leash Dog Area pilot program to investigate potential locations for permanent off-leash dog areas. These sites are temporary until approved for development to become permanent. Dog owners must follow the City of Markham's Off-Leash Dog Code of Conduct and the Dog Owners Liability Act which is posted at each areas entrance. Residents are encouraged to provide feedback through a survey, while the City's Parks Planning, Operations, Animal Services departments, and local Councillors monitor the program's effectiveness.

The program aims to provide Markham residents more access to off-leash dog areas. Each pop-up site is temporary and features temporary infrastructure including fencing (approximately 1.8-metres high), separate areas for small and large dogs, a double-gated entrance (18 m² in size), wayfinding signs, and waste receptacles. All sites are located on a mowed grass area except for one (Monarch Park) which has a wood chip surface.

The site selection criteria was developed by City of Markham staff based upon best practices to

assess the suitability of various locations. One pop-up off-leash dog area within each of the eight wards in Markham was provided.

The site selection criteria used considered:

1. Natural environment;
2. Site size;
3. Site setbacks;
4. Site access;
5. Surface condition;
6. Parking; and,
7. Potential for a permanent off-leash dog area.

The locations chosen for the pop-ups include:

1. Cricklewood Park (Ward 1)
2. Victoria Square Park (Ward 2)
3. Monarch Park (Ward 3)
4. Mintleaf Park (Ward 4)
5. Blodwen Davies Park (Ward 5)
6. Berczy Park South (Ward 6)
7. Aaniin Community Centre Park (Ward 7)
8. Ada Mackenzie Park (Ward 8)

Table 2.4 provides an overview of the pop-up off-leash dog areas, Figure 2.13 displays the location on a map, and Appendix A contains a detailed overview of the survey results.



Cricklewood Park Off-Leash Dog Area

7877 Yonge Street (Ward 1)

Cricklewood Park off-leash dog area (Figure 2.5) is located east of Yonge St. The site is located at the bottom of a slope, adjacent to a creek corridor. While it is well situated from a noise perspective and has acceptable setbacks from residences, there are accessibility challenges due to the significant slope.



Figure 2.5 - Cricklewood Park Off-Leash Dog Area (Ward 1)

Victoria Square Park Off-Leash Dog Area

2929 Elgin Mills Road East (Ward 2)

Victoria Square Park off-leash dog area (Figure 2.6) is located east of the Victoria Square playground and splash-pad. The facility is located at the southeast corner of the park and features lighting along an adjacent pathway which lights the off-leash dog area at night.



Figure 2.6 - Victoria Square Park Off-Leash Dog Area (Ward 2)

Monarch Park Off-Leash Dog Area

99 Waterbridge Lane (Ward 3)

Monarch Park off-leash dog area (Figure 2.7) is located north of the baseball diamond and soccer field. The site is located in a natural area and requires wood chips due to drainage concerns with no nearby parking. Observations indicate drainage issues as water pools in and around the off-leash dog area.



Figure 2.7 - Monarch Park Off-Leash Dog Area (Ward 3)

Mintleaf Park Off-Leash Dog Area

240 Fincham Avenue (Ward 4)

Mintleaf Park off-leash dog area (Figure 2.8) is located north of the playground east of St. Kateri Tekakwitha Catholic Elementary School. The park features a small parking lot an approximate 3-minute walk away from the site. After large amounts of rainfall, the site becomes wet and unusable, especially in the Spring. Currently the location lacks proper drainage, lighting, electrical and water infrastructure.



Figure 2.8 - Mintleaf Park Off-Leash Dog Area (Ward 4)

Blodwen Davies Park Off-Leash Dog Area

3351 Donald Cousens Parkway (Ward 5)

Blodwen Davies off-leash dog area (Figure 2.9) is located east of the playground and tennis courts and is intended to service residents of homes within walking distance. Minimal on street parking exists adjacent to the park entrance but requires a short walk to the off-leash area.



Figure 2.9 - Blodwen Davies Park Off-Leash Dog Area (Ward 5)

Aaniin Community Centre Off-Leash Dog Area

5757 14th Avenue (Ward 7)

Aaniin Community Centre off-leash dog area (Figure 2.11) is located east of the Aaniin Community Centre. The location is a flat open grass area with some trees around the perimeter of the park. Existing light standards along pathways provide some light for the off-leash dog area, with the opportunity to provide multiple entranceways to the facility from the adjacent pathways.



Figure 2.11 - Aaniin Community Centre Off-Leash Dog Area (Ward 7)

Berczy Park South Off-Leash Dog Area

432 Wilfred Murison Avenue (Ward 6)

Berczy Park South off-leash dog area (Figure 2.10) is located north of the park's gazebo and south of Bur Oak Ave. The park features parking on the north side of the park by the pickleball courts with a paved pathway along the western and eastern perimeter of the site. This off-leash dog area is the largest of all the pop-up areas.



Figure 2.10 - Berczy Park South Off-Leash Dog Area (Ward 6)

Ada Mackenzie Park Off-Leash Dog Area

185 South Park Road (Ward 8)

Ada Mackenzie off-leash dog area (Figure 2.12) is located east of the parking lot and south of the shade structure. There is a parking lot immediately adjacent to the facility. The adjacent parking lot features lighting which helps to light the off-leash dog area in the evening. Ada Mackenzie Park off-leash dog area is the smallest of the pop-up areas.



Figure 2.12 - Ada Mackenzie Park Off-Leash Dog Area (Ward 8)

Table 2.4 - Summary Table of Pilot Off-Leash Dog Area Attributes

Ward	Name	Area	Small Dog Area %	Amenities					Opening Date
				Small Dog Area	Parking Lot	Street Parking	Waste Receptacles	Benches/Chairs	
Ward 1	Cricklewood Park	Total: 1,034 m ² (0.1 ha) Small Dog Area: 320 m ² (0.03 ha) Large Dog Area: 710 m ² (0.07 ha)	31%	x					11-Sep-23
Ward 2	Victoria Square Park	Total: 679 m ² (0.06 ha) Small Dog Area: 247 m ² (0.02 ha) Large Dog Area: 414 m ² (0.04 ha)	36%	x		x	x	x	13-Sep-23
Ward 3	Monarch Park	Total: 1,720 m ² (0.17 ha) Small Dog Area: 505 m ² (0.05 ha) Large Dog Area: 1,197 m ² (0.11 ha)	29%	x		x	x	x	18-Sep-23
Ward 4	Mintleaf Park	Total: 2,000 m ² (0.2 ha) Small Dog Area: 705 m ² (0.07 ha) Large Dog Area: 1,277 m ² (0.12 ha)	35%	x	x		x		08-Sep-23
Ward 5	Blodwen Davies Park	Total: 1,050 m ² (0.1 ha) Small Dog Area: 433 m ² (0.04 ha) Large Dog Area: 599 m ² (0.06 ha)	41%	x			x	x	13-Sep-23
Ward 6	Berczy Park South	Total: 2,020 m ² (0.2 ha) Small Dog Area: 695 m ² (0.07 ha) Large Dog Area: 1,307 m ² (0.13 ha)	34%	x	x		x	x	18-Sep-23
Ward 7	Aaniin Community Centre	Total: 1,518 m ² (0.15 ha) Small Dog Area: 530 m ² (0.05 ha) Large Dog Area: 970 m ² (0.09 ha)	35%	x	x		x		08-Sep-23
Ward 8	Ada Mackenzie Park	Total: 1560 m ² (0.15 ha) Small Dog Area: 530 m ² (0.05 ha) Large Dog Area: 970 m ² (0.09 ha)	34%	x	x		x		15-Sep-23

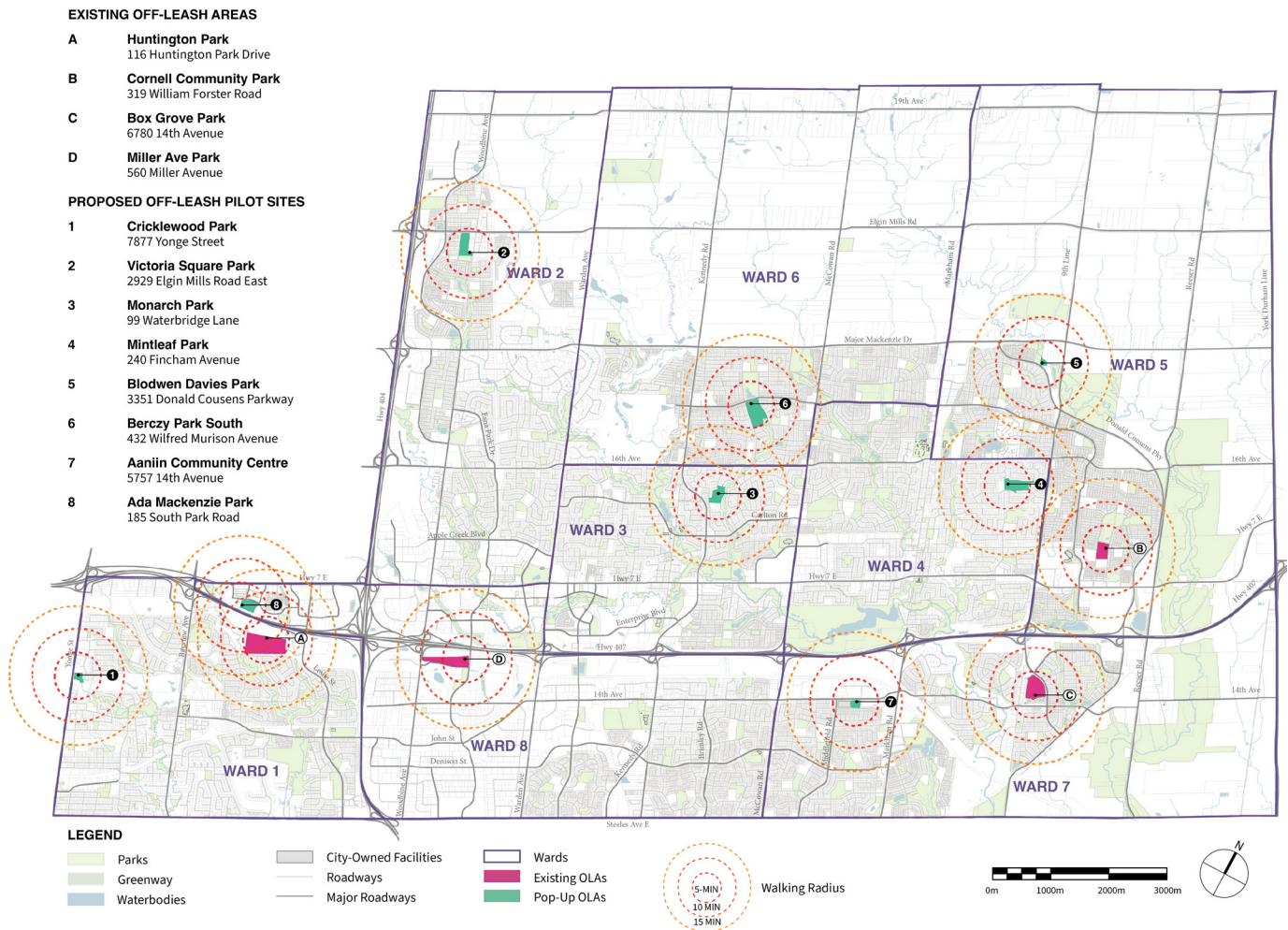


Figure 2.13 - Established and Pilot Project Off-Leash Dog Areas and their Walkable Service Area

2.5 Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Community and stakeholder engagement included:

1. Interviews with City staff
2. Interviews with City Councillors
3. Community Pop-Up Dog Park Consultations
4. Community Open House

Interviews with City Staff

The staff consultation interviews aimed to collect feedback on Markham's off-leash dog areas, including improvements, issues, and potential new locations. Conducted from February 9-15, 2024, these sessions followed a series of questions tailored to each group, including:

1. **Parks Planning and Operations Team:** Focused on operations and maintenance.
2. **Animal Services, By-law Enforcement, Risk Management, and Natural Heritage Team:** Discussed bylaws and enforcement.
3. **Parks Development Coordinators and Sponsorship Team:** Explored sponsorship opportunities and design.

The main concerns and issues raised at the sessions and those of high priority for this study include (see also Appendix B):

- Location and setbacks;
- Surfacing, topography, and drainage;
- Amenities including: lighting, parking, signage;
- Minimum size and amount of off-leash dog areas required;
- Standardized features, frameworks and design tiers;
- Maintenance resources, garbage/waste disposal and costs;
- User groups and city dog walkers;
- Statistical analysis for user numbers and comprehensive communication strategies;

- Tree planting, natural elements and wildlife; and,
- Non-compliance with policy and regulations.

A variety of topics were discussed at each session, key points are summarized below.

Parks Planning and Operations Team

- Time and resources regarding garbage/waste disposal, surfacing, and gate/fencing;
- Drainage/topography, parking, setbacks/noise, location when determining future sites; and,
- Impacts with additional off-leash dog areas such as funding, staffing, and collaborating with user groups.

Animal Service, By-law Enforcement, Risk Management, and Natural Heritage Team

- Park/other ambassador programs and user group responsibility policy, former advisory committee;
- Enforcement mechanisms including taking photographs, issuing by-law infraction, seizing and sending dogs to shelters, and calling police enforcement; and,
- Determining rules of conduct that address liability protection, control behaviour, and providing a safe environment.

Parks Development Coordinators and Sponsorship Team

- Sponsorship technicalities for funding and advertising;
- Design guidelines using a tier-based design, and natural elements and trees;
- Maintenance versus capital sponsorship roles in off-leash dog areas; and,
- Other guidelines including construction and maintenance.

Councillor Consultations Summary

The consultations with Markham’s Councillors aimed to gather an understanding of the community’s overall perspectives on off-leash dog areas. The process included conducting one-on-one interviews with members of council.

The following concerns and issues were discussed (see also Appendix C):

- Location considerations such as proximity to schools and playgrounds;
- Recommendations for increased enforcement compliance;
- Anticipated impacts on staff workload and city resources;
- Opinions on shared-use/unfenced off-leash areas during designated times in select public parks;
- Code of conduct issues and concerns;
- Enforcement issues including leash-free dogs in undesignated areas;
- Opposition from residents and community consultation;
- Aesthetics, size and design;
- Budget considerations; and,

- Additional resources for effective policy.

Feedback emphasizes the need for community safety, conflict resolution, clear guidelines, and better signage. Recommendations include effective programming, budget considerations, flexible standards, public education, and collaborative efforts to address these issues.

Drop-In Pop-Up Dog Park Consultations

Pop-Up Dog Park Consultations were held from April 8-16 to engage with the community and assess eight (8) of the twelve (12) pop-up and existing off-leash dog areas. Each two-hour session occurred at different times of day to accommodate all residents. Findings are summarized in Appendix D, with details on locations and times in Table 2.5.

At these consultations participants offered feedback concerning the particular location and usage patterns. The locations that received the most positive feedback included Victoria Square Park, Miller Avenue Park, Berczy Park South, and Cornell Community Park.

The following topics were discussed (see also Appendix B):

Table 2.5 - Pop-Up Dog Off-Leash Dog Area Consultation Schedule from April 8-16, 2024

Location	Consultation Date	Participants
Victoria Square Park (Ward 2)	Monday, April 8 from 5 to 7 PM	25
Monarch Park (Ward 3)	Tuesday, April 9 from 11 AM to 1 PM	4
Mintleaf Park (Ward 4)	Wednesday, April 10 from 5 to 7 PM	13
Aaniin Community Centre Park (Ward 7)	Saturday, April 13 from 9 to 11 AM	5
Ada MacKenzie Park (Ward 8)	Sunday, April 14 from 1 to 3 PM	15
Cornell Woodlot Park (Ward 5)	Monday, April 15 from 11 AM to 1 PM	14
Miller Avenue Park (Ward 8)	Monday, April 15 from 2 to 4 PM	9
Berczy Park South (Ward 6)	Tuesday, April 16 from 7 to 9 AM	11

- Non-compliance concerning leash enforcement and waste management;
- Increased amenities and amenity recommendations;
- Surfacing, ground condition and drainage issues;
- Community engagement and awareness and user groups;
- Alternate location considerations;
- Maintenance and security; and,
- Design, size and aesthetics.

Public Open House

The first public open house on May 22, 2024, aimed to gather community feedback on off-leash dog areas. Thirty-two (32) participants attended the two-hour event, engaging with nine (9) interactive panels. A summary of the feedback collected is provided below.

Which off-leash area(s) do you visit? What is your experience?

Participants were most critical of Monarch Park, citing issues with drainage, proximity to St Matthew Catholic Elementary School and homes, and potential wildlife impacts. They felt Berczy Park and Mintleaf need off-leash areas but require better maintenance and design due to poor drainage.

What is most important to you when choosing an off-leash dog area to visit?

- Most voted for health and safety (28 votes or 30%);
- Many for design elements including surfacing, fencing, entries/gates, etc. (23 votes or 24%);
- Many for amenities including benches, shade, water, etc. (20 votes or 22%);
- Some for proximity/accessibility (10 votes 12%);
- Few for the size of off-leash dog area (7 votes or 8%); and,

- Few for maintenance service level (5 votes or 5%).

Participants were asked to vote on surfacing preferences and fencing considerations.

- Grass was the top surfacing preference (17 votes), followed by wood chips (6 votes) and artificial turf (3 votes).
- For fencing, participants preferred a 1.5-metre (5-feet) chain link fence with a single entrance point.

How would you rank the following amenities?

- Small/shy dog areas: 5 votes to be mandatory, 9 votes to be unnecessary;
- Parking: 5 votes to be mandatory;
- Agility equipment: 6 votes to be optional;
- Seating: 6 votes to be optional;
- Shade/wind protection: 6 votes to be optional;
- Lighting: 7 votes to be unnecessary;
- Washrooms: 7 votes to be unnecessary;
- Circulation pathways: 5 votes to be, unnecessary; and,
- Water service: 4 votes to be unnecessary.

What factors should be considered most important when choosing locations for off-leash dog areas?

The top components include walkability (46 votes), choosing underserved areas of the city (38 votes), site conditions (29 votes), and accessibility (25 votes).

Opinions on a shared-use/unfenced off-leash dog area approach.

Participants agreed this approach is worth exploring and suitable to investigate.

Off-Leash Dog Area Guidelines Public Review Feedback

Residents provided feedback on a draft of the Off-Leash Dog Area Guidelines, emphasizing the need for better-located, well-equipped, and accessible spaces for the growing dog-owner community.

Key feedback themes include:

- There is not currently an Off-Leash area within an appropriate distance to Markham Centre;
- Miller Avenue Dog Park requires driving and is not walkable/public transportation;
- Residents have expressed interest in lighting, picnic tables, and shade structures as standard features. The existing water service is appreciated;
- Many residents are opposed to the Monarch Park location but strongly support locating an off-leash dog area in Millennium Park, Dragonfly Park, or Promenade Park;
- Mintleaf Park's drainage issues need to be addressed, and surface materials like artificial turf or wood chips could help reduce mud;
- Calls for better accessibility, signage, noise and visual buffers, and stricter separation from playgrounds;
- Many residents would like off-leash dog areas to be walkable or accessible by transit; and,
- Additional and clearer signage for responsibilities of pet owners, rules of the dog park, and maintenance of off-leash areas.

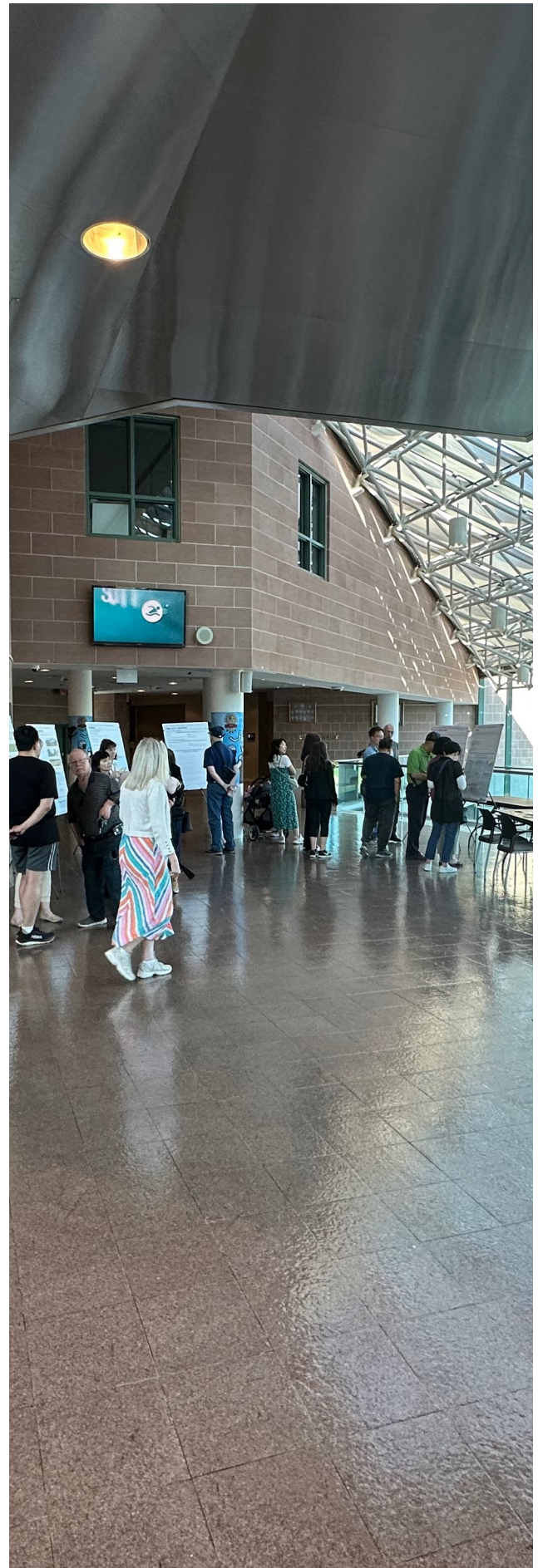


Figure 2.14 - Off-Leash Dog Area Public Open House #1

3.0 Policy Review

3.1 Guidelines for Permanent Dog Off-Leash Areas 2008

The City of Markham's 2008 Guidelines for Permanent Dog Off-Leash Areas outline rules for off-leash groups, location selection, rules of conduct, and establishment protocols. The guidelines call for a volunteer group, the Leash Free Markham Committee, to oversee all off-leash areas, with individual groups for each area. They also provide a five-step process for developing new off-leash dog areas including: initial proposal, review of proposal, community consultation, staff review of proposal and implementation, monitoring and enforcement.

3.2 Markham 2018 Policy Review and Comparators/Precedents

The draft 2018 policy reviews the City of Markham's 2008 off-leash policy, offering best practices from other areas, updated design standards, and service provisions for new off-leash dog areas. While not formally adopted, it aims to improve the policy to better serve residents. Much of this policy is used as the basis for creating the updated policy. Key aspects include:

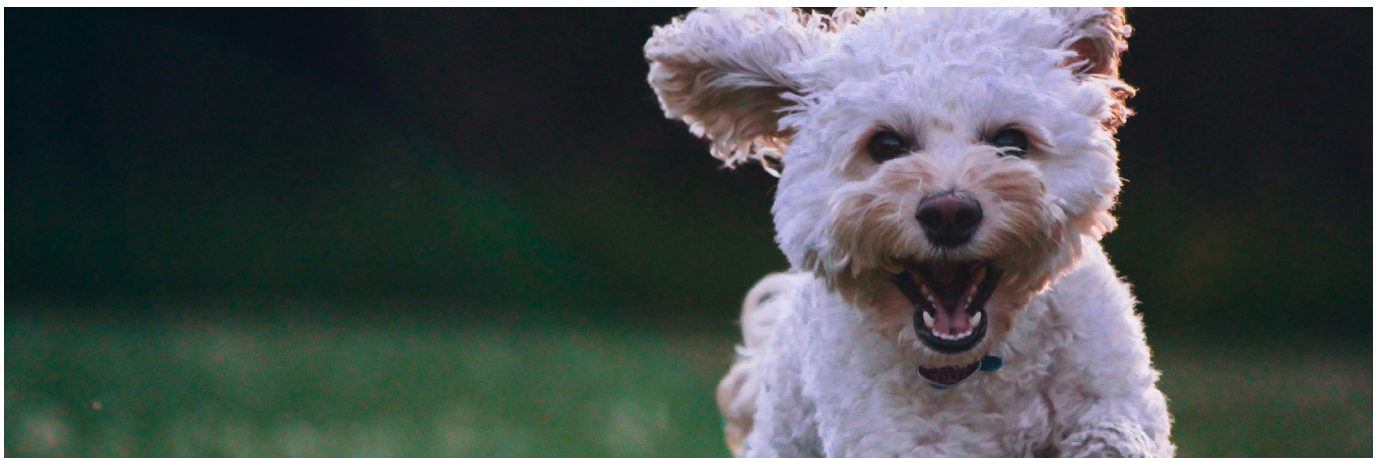
1. Off Leash Areas Design Components;
2. Levels of Service; and,
3. Trends Found Through Comparators/Precedents.

3.3 Existing Rules of Conduct and Animal Control By-Law

The City of Markham has outlined a Code of Conduct to ensure safe and respectful environments in off-leash dog areas. Along with the Code of Conduct, users of the off-leash dog area must comply with the Animal Protection and Services By-law (2018-91) and the Dog Owners' Liability Act (R.S.O) 1990, c. D.16.

Section 2 of the Animal Protection and Services By-law (2018-91) pertains to care of animals. This section of the by-law is intended to ensure the safety and wellbeing of animals are maintained by their owner.

Section 3 of By-law 2018-91 pertains specifically to dogs and provides policy regarding registration and licensing of dogs, dogs at large, impoundment, preventing dog attacks, biting dogs, dog waste disposal, dogs in parks, and number of dog restrictions. The predominant policies that are applicable to off-leash dog areas are preventing dog attacks, dog waste disposal, and dogs in parks.



4.0 Best Practices

This best practices review is based upon off-leash dog area standards, protocols and approaches utilized in larger urban centres throughout North America as well as Europe and Australia. The nineteen (19) municipalities studied include: Seattle, WA; Denver, CO; Oshawa, ON; Winnipeg, MB; Vancouver, BC; Edmonton, AB; Guelph, ON; Chicago, IL; Vaughan, ON; Portland, OR; Philadelphia, PA; Surrey, BC; Pt Adelaide Enfield, AU; Hamilton, ON; Calgary, AB; Toronto, ON; Richmond Hill, ON; New York, NY; Halifax, NS. The discussion is organized into the following ten (10) topics.



Site Selection Criteria



Off-Leash Dog Area Evaluation Process



Community Involvement



Funding



Size and Typology



Health, Safety and Enforcement



Natural Environment and Drainage



Accessibility



Amenities



Operations and Maintenance



4.1 Site Selection Criteria



Proper placement of off-leash dog areas is required to help minimize conflicts with other uses and users. Issues such as noise (excessive dog barking), smell (dog waste), potential for unwanted dog/people conflicts, safety, impact on wildlife, and maintenance must be carefully considered and balanced with user access and enjoyment of the space. Refer to Table 4.1 for a summary of site selection best practices.

Table 4.1 - Site Selection Criteria Best Practices

Topic	Criteria
Setbacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum setback distance of 15-metres (50-feet) from all property lines¹, 30-metres (100-feet) from playgrounds or children facilities², and 20 (65-feet) to 50-metres (165-feet) from residential areas³ Secure fencing and a minimum setback of 50 to 75-metres (165-250-feet) to mitigate incompatible park use adjacencies⁴ Mark off-leash dog area boundaries and setback distances for shared-use/unfenced areas
Land Types	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compatible land-use types: open space, transportation, infrastructure and utility rights-of-way, drainage lands, institutional, light industrial, passive park/open space, green space with low ecological/environmental sensitivity⁵ Compatible land-use adjacencies: commercial, municipal facilities, employment zones⁶ Incompatible adjacent land-uses: ecologically sensitive areas, major roads, multi-use trails, playgrounds, wading pools, splash pads, designated sports fields, community gardens, orchards, elementary schools, daycares, family picnic areas, skateboard parks, tennis courts, basketball courts, other sports pads, natural ice rinks, horticultural display areas and ornamental garden areas, cemeteries, designated heritage, memorial, commemorative and ceremonial areas⁷
Distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Off-leash dog area site distribution criteria:⁸ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Areas in the City without access to an off-leash dog area; Population density; Dog license density; Sites where off-leash areas can be developed sustainably; Suitable land availability (at least 400 m² or 0.04 ha in size, adequate drainage, buffers from hazards and incompatible uses, easily accessible by public service vehicles). Two classifications of off-leash dog areas to support equitable distribution:⁹ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neighbourhood (less than 12,000 m² or 1.2 ha) within 10 to 15-minute walk of most residents; Destination (minimum 12,000 m² or 1.2 ha) within a 35-minute walk or 15-minute drive.

- 1 Seattle, WA
- 2 Denver, CO
- 3 Oshawa, ON; Winnipeg, MB
- 4 Vancouver, BC
- 5 Edmonton, AB; Vancouver, BC; Winnipeg, MB
- 6 Edmonton, AB
- 7 Vancouver, BC; Winnipeg, MB; Guelph, ON
- 8 Winnipeg, MB
- 9 Vancouver, BC

4.2 Off-Leash Dog Area Evaluation Process



Selecting and evaluating sites is crucial for developing successful off-leash dog areas in a community. The evaluation process ensures only the most suitable sites are chosen, offering a safe and enjoyable experience for dog owners and their pets. When sites are deemed appropriate, the application will undergo multiple approvals to consider public opinion before implementing a new leash-free facility. Table 4.2 presents evaluation process best practices.

Table 4.2 - Off-Leash Dog Area Evaluation Process Best Practices

Topic	Criteria
Off-Leash Dog Area Proposal Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The criteria for evaluating new locations for off-leash dog areas is divided into two (2) steps.¹ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Tier 1 Criteria (basic requirements): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accessibility - Location - Design - Governance ◦ Tier 2 Criteria (complex requirements/understanding): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Online Self-Directed Workshop results - Three identified off-leash dog area stewards - Stakeholder and community input - Layout and availability of amenities - Cost - Potential for external funding • Proposal process for new off-leash dog area locations requested by the community:² <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Preliminary Application and Review - application is submitted by the community to determine if site meets the minimum criteria for consideration ◦ Formal Proposal - submitted once the preliminary review is passed, demonstrating project feasibility and community support ◦ Public Comment - proposed location and argument is sent out for public comment/consultation ◦ Review Committee - Parks Operations department will assess proposal and recommend it to the Park Board ◦ Park Board Public Hearing - reviews the proposal in a public hearing and makes recommendations ◦ Superintendents Decision - review the proposal, public comment and the issue and opportunities identified to approve, deny or tentatively approve new location

¹ Vaughan, ON

² Seattle, WA

4.3 Community Involvement



Partnering with community groups allows municipalities to enhance operations, maintenance, and enforcement of off-leash areas while fostering engagement, improving facilities, and promoting shared stewardship. Table 4.3 outlines best practices.

Table 4.3 - Community Involvement Best Practices

Topic	Best Practice
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cities can partner with and formalize the community's roles and responsibilities in the planning and management of the facility. Advantages include:¹ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More efficiency and reduced work for the Parks Operations Department Organized committees can easily request an off-leash dog area Enforcing rules through self-policing/peer pressure Disadvantages include:² <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More work is needed for elected officials and citizens to develop the public amenity Potential for two tiers of design depending on level of community involvement Designs may vary from upscale to rudimentary, causing further inequality Can produce committee members who have a proprietary attitude towards the facility
Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some community groups have a more involved role, while others have a minimal role to avoid liability issues:³ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chicago: Volunteer-led committees (minimum of five members) must submit a City-approved proposal, with formalized roles and responsibilities. Seattle: A non-profit advocacy group partners with the City to fundraise, provide amenities, and assist with maintenance but lacks full operational control. Portland: A structured stewardship group supports Portland Parks & Recreation (PP&R) with maintenance. Members apply and must meet criteria ensuring commitment, inclusivity, and geographic diversity. Vaughan: City-lead stewardship program that engages residents in managing off-leash dog areas. Assigns at least three (3) stewards per location to collaborate with staff. Responsibilities may include:⁴ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving the area - Identifying needed improvements and maintenance; Organizing social events; Planning of off-leash sites Resolving Conflicts - Report and/or help resolve conflicts; Assist Animal Control and Parks Operations with community conflicts; Draft Good Neighbour Agreements or outreach and monitoring plans; Education initiatives Events - Social and fundraising events, park clean-up days, social/community events Fundraising - Seeking local business sponsors; Grant funding; Raffles, dog-washes, treat sales, and other activities at group-sponsored events
Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> News or information boards; funding/advocating of specialty amenities

1 Chicago, IL

2 Chicago, IL

3 Chicago, IL; Seattle, WA; Portland, OR; Vaughan, ON

4 Seattle, WA; Portland, OR; Vaughan, ON; Oshawa, ON

4.4 Funding



Funding is essential for maintaining and developing off-leash dog areas. Effective strategies include using a mix of sources such as municipal budget, user fees, grants, sponsorships, and partnerships with private developers and community groups. Diversifying revenue streams ensures long-term sustainability and reduces reliance on a single source. Table 4.4 presents off-leash dog area funding best practices

Table 4.4 - Funding Best Practices

Type	Best Practice
Operational Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential funding solutions:¹ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Create a deferred fund for future off-leash enhancements and maintenance through sponsorships or fees. ◦ Introduce permit fees for private use of off-leash spaces for events and training ◦ Explore public grants and a city grant program for community groups to develop or enhance off-leash areas. • Funding sources for off-leash areas include parks, developers, community contributions, private funding, grants, municipal budgets, taxation and combinations²
Capital Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential funding solutions:³ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Develop a capital plan to upgrade existing off-leash areas and build new ones with necessary amenities. ◦ Increase dog licensing fees to fund improvements and engage the public. ◦ Create a sponsorship and donation strategy, including marketing, for funding off-leash dog area development. ◦ Consider agility equipment rentals, sponsorships, advertising, dedications, and fundraising.
Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships can help lower costs for off-leash areas. • Best-practices for partnerships include:⁴ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Public-private partnerships with local and regional off-leash dog area associations ◦ Private developers ◦ Universities, colleges, health care campuses, and ◦ Artisans and landscape architects

1 Edmonton, AB; Winnipeg, MB

2 Calgary, AB

3 Edmonton, AB; Winnipeg, MB

4 Winnipeg, MB

4.5 Size and Typology



Effective off-leash dog areas require careful consideration of size and type to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for dogs and their owners. Municipalities can adopt various approaches, including minimum size requirements, categorization by park type, and designations for single-use or shared-use spaces. By considering factors such as population density, urban environment, and residential density, cities can create off-leash dog areas that cater to different user needs and preferences. Table 4.5 presents best practices for off-leash dog areas sizing and typecasting and Table 4.6 presents comparisons between off-leash dog area size of nearby municipalities.

Table 4.5 - Size and Typology Best Practices

Type	Best Practice
Size and Type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum size requirement for an off-leash dog area is 400m² (0.04 ha)¹ Off-leash dog areas should only be considered for parks that are 20,000 m² (2 ha) or larger² A maximum size of no more than 3.5% of total park size, but must not exceed 15,000 m² (1.5 ha)³ Categorized off-leash dog area sizing:⁴ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Destination (>1.2 ha or 12,000 m²), Neighbourhood Park (0.4 – 1.2 ha or 4,000 - 12,000 m²), Neighbourhood Urban (0.04 – 0.4 ha or 400 - 4,000 m²), Neighbourhood Dog Run (0.04 or 400 m²) Categorized off-leash dog areas to determine sizing, design, location and amenities:⁵ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional (8+ ha or 80,000 m²) Community (0.5 – 8 ha or 5,000 - 80,000 m²) Neighbourhood (0.04 – 0.5 ha or 400 - 5,000 m²) Seasonal Adaptive
Single-Use Off-Leash Dog Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fenced areas strictly for dog owners, with non-dog owners/walkers forbidden Populous and dense urban environments tend to focus on implementing single-use off-leash dog areas
Shared-Use Off-Leash Dog Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Areas to be used as shared recreation spaces where dogs exercise off-leash alongside other park users May be unfenced/unenclosed with signs marking boundaries Many municipalities are transitioning to fenced, single-use off-leash dog areas moving forward

1 Chicago, IL; Seattle, WA; Denver, CO; Portland, OR; Philadelphia, PA; Surrey, BC
2 Guelph, ON
3 Chicago, IL
4 Vancouver, BC
5 Winnipeg, MB

Table 4.6 - Sizes of Off-Leash Dog Areas in Nearby Municipalities

City	Sizes
Oshawa, ON	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently has two (2) off-leash dog areas, sizes include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smallest size is a single-use/fenced off-leash dog area and 0.29 ha (2,900 m²) Largest size is a shared-use/unfenced off-leash dog area and 10 ha (100,000 m²)
Guelph, ON	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently has two (2) single-use/fenced off-leash dog areas, sizes include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0.5 ha (5,082 m²) at Bristol Street Park 0.3 ha (2,955 m²) at Peter Misersky Park
Vaughan, ON	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identified four (4) primary off-leash dog area sites in 2016, each being 1 ha (10,000 m²) in size Off-leash dog areas require available area ranging between 0.25 - 0.5 ha (2,500 - 5,000 m²)
Hamilton, ON	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sites must not be less than 0.4 ha (400 m²) in size for shared-use/unfenced off-leash areas¹ Sites must not be less than 0.8 ha (8,000 m²), but not more than 2 ha (20,000 m²) in size for single-use/fenced areas² Hamilton currently has ten (10) single-use/fenced off-leash dog areas listed on their website, sizes range from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0.1 ha - 0.4 ha (1,000 - 4,000 m²) (2) 0.4 ha - 0.7 ha (4,000 - 7,000 m²) (3) 0.7 ha - 1.0 ha (7,000 - 10,000 m²) (2) > 1.0 ha (10,000 m²) (2) Smallest size is 1,462 m² (0.15 ha) at Rail Trail Dog Park, and the largest size is 16,345 m² (1.6 ha) at Heritage Green
Toronto, ON	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Toronto has 72 off-leash dog areas, sizes range from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0.04 - 0.2 ha (400 - 2,000 m²) (28) 0.2 - 0.5 ha (2,000 - 5,000 m²) (28) 0.5 - 1.0 ha (5,000 - 10,000 m²) (5) > 1.0 ha (10,000 m²) (12)
Richmond Hill, ON	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently has two (2) off-leash dog areas, sizes include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.0 ha (10,000 m²) at Phyllis Rawlinson Park Off-Leash Dog Area 3.0/4.0 ha (30,000/40,000 m²) at Tower Hill Off-Leash Dog Area

1 City of Hamilton. 2003. Leash Free Parks Program Policy

2 City of Hamilton. 2003. Leash Free Parks Program Policy

4.6 Health, Safety and Enforcement



To ensure the health and safety of dog owners and their pets there are various design, operational, maintenance, and policy strategies that can be observed from other jurisdictions. Effective enforcement and etiquette are crucial components to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for all users. By adopting best practices in health, safety and enforcement off-leash dog areas can be transformed from potentially chaotic spaces into harmonious hubs that foster a sense of belonging and respect among all users. To see how Markham's existing off-leash dog area code of conduct compares to other municipalities in this study, refer to Table 4.7 and Table 4.8 for best practices.



Table 4.7 - Health, Safety and Enforcement Best Practices

Topic	Best Practice
Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principles of health and safety design:¹ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Walking paths and trails encourage dog owners to interact with their dogs rather than stand stagnant ◦ Area size should be based on expected number of users and large enough for dogs to run around with separate areas for large and small dogs ◦ Shade should be provided ◦ All surfaces must be dog-friendly and provide necessary sub-surface drainage to extend usable seasons ◦ Screening low-height sight lines and entrance ways can avoid potential for dog conflict ◦ Providing different zones through irregular (odd) shaped layouts and surfacing ◦ Plants should be non-toxic to dogs ◦ Boundaries should be secure and safe ◦ Site elements and amenities should be located away from the main entry gates to reduce congestion ◦ Agility dog equipment such as jumps, bridges with sloping sides and A-Frames should be avoided • Etiquette statements developed and publicly posted in all off-leash dog area sites
Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require voice or visual commands for owner to control their dog • Limit the number of dogs per person • Enforce rules for banning aggressive dogs, dogs with infectious diseases and dogs in heat • Ensure that city dog walkers have necessary licences and the number of dogs are limited • Dog park association to take an active role in self-policing² • City by-law officers, animal control officers to be available to enforce rules • Fines enforcing animal by-laws and off-leash dog area rules and regulations • Educational and enforcement efforts concerning rules and regulations
Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure good waste management strategies are in place and educate users about health risks associated with dog waste • 3-colour card scheme for dog feces removal compliance:³ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Green card provided when staff deem off-leash dog area as clean ◦ Yellow card issued by staff when an off-leash dog area requires cleaning ◦ Red card issued when staff believes the park must be closed until waste is addressed by its users • Test off-leash areas for giardia if notified by a dog owner with the infection⁴
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandate dog licensing and vaccination by combining the protocols to be sold at local veterinary clinics in order for users to access off-leash dog areas⁵ • Prohibit dogs in certain areas such as playgrounds, schools, sports fields, and beaches • Rules and regulations for off-leash dog areas involving etiquette, including requirements for dog control, noise control and waste pickup

1 Pt Adelaide Enfield, AU

2 Surrey, BC; Pt Adelaide Enfield, AU

3 Denver, CO

4 Portland, OR

5 Chicago, IL

Table 4.8 - Off-Leash Dog Area Code of Conduct Comparison Between Municipalities in this Study

Code of Conduct Rule	Markham	Portland	Seattle	Vancouver	Calgary	Denver	Winnipeg	Chicago	Guelph	Hamilton	Toronto	Vaughan	Richmond Hill	Oshawa	Philadelphia	New York	Halifax	Total
Keep dog(s) in sight	x	x		x		x	x	x					x	x	x	x	x	11
Keep dog(s) under (voice) control/ trained	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x			x	x	x	x	14
Owner is liable/responsible for dog's acts/use of OLA		x	x	x		x		x					x	x	x	x	x	10
Pick up feces and dispose properly	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	17
On leash except in OLA	x	x	x		x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	13
Keep leash ready in OLA		x	x			x	x					x		x			x	7
Must be licensed (visibly)	x	x	x	x			x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	14
Must be vaccinated (against rabies)/ healthy	x	x	x					x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		12
Fill in holes/fix damage/no digging		x		x		x	x		x	x	x			x				8
Female dogs in heat prohibited			x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	11
Dangerous/restricted dogs prohibited (incl. pit bulls)	x						x	x	x		x	x	x					7
Puppies younger than specific age prohibited	x		x			x		x	x			x		x			x	9
Aggressive dogs leashed and removed/ prohibited	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	15
Don't leave dogs unattended	x	x	x				x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x		12
Follow all signs/boundaries					x	x					x			x	x			5
Children (of various ages) must be with adult/watched	x		x	x				x	x	x				x				7
Human/dog food prohibited/at own risk	x	x	x	x		x		x	x									7
Maximum # of dogs per person	x	x		x		x		x		x		x	x	x				9
Remove any pinch or choke collars upon entry		x	x						x	x				x				5
Not other pets permitted except dogs						x			x									2
Minimum age to enter/bring dog	x					x			x				x					4
Professional trainers prohibited from using for business										x	x							2
List of prohibited items (glass, rawhide, toys, etc.)	x									x			x	x				4
Pet must be spayed or neutered												x	x					2

4.7 Natural Environment and Drainage



To mitigate the negative environmental impacts of dogs, municipalities and designers must adopt best practices that prioritize protection of the natural environment. This includes selecting sites with minimal environmental sensitivity, incorporating features that reduce erosion and promote proper drainage, and implementing strategies to protect vegetation and wildlife habitat. By following best practices (Table 4.9), off-leash dog areas can provide a safe and enjoyable experience for dogs and their owners while minimizing harm to the surrounding ecosystem and enhancing use through the variable shoulder seasons.

Table 4.9 - Natural Environment and Drainage Best Practices

Topic	Best Practice
Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use durable, low plantings and native vegetation for seasonal interest, biodiversity and to break-up low sightlines to prevent conflict between dogs. • Protect existing vegetation with protective edging, thick layer of wood chips (75 mm), and signage¹ • Locate off-leash dog areas away from sensitive areas including natural areas, wildlife corridors, and ecologically sensitive areas • Avoid affecting fish and wildlife habitats, risk to water quality, and heavy vegetation through strategic location and regard to treatment of wastewater (LID's) prior to entering municipal or natural systems • Locate on relatively flat topography to avoid erosion but ensure good drainage • Avoid toxic plants, use non-irritating and non-toxic plants, and provide various textures for dogs • Avoid soils that are poorly-drained or potentially toxic • Consider protected or perimeter tree planting for shade • Ensure off-leash dog areas do not adversely affect the park's topography, hydrology, vegetation, and property configuration
Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetation and environmental health is of higher priority than off-leash dog area • Manage dog waste and drainage to reduce negative impacts • Provide buffers to mitigate noise and reduce wildlife disturbance • Work with environmental organizations to maintain vegetative health² • Employ mitigation measures such as buffer zones, seasonal and/or time restriction, and water drainage management

¹ Vancouver, BC

² Philadelphia, PA

4.8 Accessibility



Ensuring off-leash dog areas are accessible to all individuals, regardless of age, size, ability, or disability, is crucial for promoting inclusivity and social equity. Universal design principles can be applied to create off-leash dog areas that are welcoming and usable by people of all abilities. By prioritizing accessibility, off-leash dog areas can be transformed from isolated spaces to inclusive community hubs that foster a sense of belonging for all users. Refer to Table 4.10 for accessibility best practices.

Table 4.10 - Accessibility Best Practices

Topic	Best Practice
Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure accessible design with specific considerations for accessible routes, seating, gates, fountains, parking, and braille¹• Neighbourhood off-leash dog areas should be located along walking, biking, and transit routes to improve access²• Off-leash dog areas should be within walking distance of residential areas and have connections to existing pedestrian paths and trails, promoting easier access³• Choose a surfacing material informed by ease of maintenance, well-drained and easy to clean⁴• Ensure walkway and maintenance access gate widths can accommodate maintenance vehicles⁵
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Compliance with Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and Municipal Accessibility Standards (i.e. Markham’s Accessibility and Age Friendly Design Guidelines)⁶

1 Vancouver, BC
2 Edmonton, AB
3 Edmonton, AB
4 Surrey, BC
5 Surrey, BC
6 Winnipeg, MB; Guelph, ON; Chicago, IL; Denver, CO

4.9 Amenities



When it comes to amenities associated with off-leash dog areas, several key considerations come into play. Some amenities may be considered mandatory, while others may be optional based upon the type of off-leash dog area implemented, the size and if certain criteria are met.

By incorporating these amenities into off-leash dog area design and funding model, municipalities can create spaces that are both enjoyable and functional for dog owners and their pets.

Amenities include:

1. Fencing/Gates;
2. Surfacing;
3. Signage;
4. Parking;
5. Lighting;
6. Seating;
7. Water;
8. Agility Equipment;
9. Wind/Rain Coverage; and,
10. Small/Shy Dog Areas.

Refer to Table 4.11 and Table 4.12 for best practices concerning off-leash dog area amenities.



Table 4.11 - Mandatory Amenities Best Practices

Amenity	Best Practice
Fencing/ Gates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared-use off-leash dog areas vary from partial fencing to no fencing • Single-use off-leash dog areas require complete enclosure • Black vinyl chain link is the most referenced fencing material • Fence heights vary from a minimum of 1.2-metres (4-feet)¹ to 1.5-metres (5-feet)², and maximum 1.7 to 1.8-metres (5.5 to 6-feet)³ • Double gates deemed a standard amenity, used to reduce likelihood of dog escaping • Multiple entrances to reduce congestion and enhance safety are becoming more common
Surfacing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surface materials guided by intensity of use, site drainage, maintenance demands, capital costs, universal accessibility, cleanliness, and topography • Asphalt is an undesirable surface material⁴ • A variety of surfaces should be used to separate 'play zones'⁵ • Planting to break up sightlines⁶ • Grass, wood chips, and sand are the most successful surface materials in terms of dog compatibility, maintenance, and cost - although sand is not an accessible material⁷
Signage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signage should be clear, concise and consistent • Photographs and icons to be used whenever possible • Should be visible from entrances, but located away and/or off to the side to avoid congestion

1 Edmonton, AB; Denver, CO; Seattle, WA; Hamilton, ON; Guelph, ON

2 Winnipeg, MB

3 Pt Adelaide Enfield, AU

4 Pt Adelaide Enfield, AU

5 Pt Adelaide Enfield, AU

6 Pt Adelaide Enfield, AU

7 Seattle, WA

Table 4.12 - Optional Amenities Best Practices

Amenity	Best Practice
Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing parking depends on type, size, location, urban density and amenities provided at off-leash dog areas and would need to be AODA compliant On-street parking may be deemed appropriate for smaller off-leash dog areas
Lighting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should be compatible with adjacent land uses, particularly in residential areas¹ Solar lighting² Important for Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) design protocols
Seating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep to a minimum and locate away from entry/exit gates³ Positioned to provide unobstructed views of the off-leash dog area⁴ Picnic tables should not be located within the off-leash dog area⁵
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drinking fountains more common than water play amenities Often externally funded by users or volunteer groups Irrigation used as a tool to clean surfaces and flush away dog waste
Agility Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often funded externally by users or volunteer groups Providing equipment for dogs to practice their natural skills can enhance their experience⁶ Crucial to ensure proper training Includes tires, logs, boulders, and tunnels Consider lifecycle, operations and maintenance when implementing
Wind/Rain Coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shade should be provided for dogs and their handlers to rest, cool, and protect themselves⁷ Trees are a typical shade amenity, but may need protection within the off-leash dog area Shade structures are also used, but often funded externally by users or volunteer groups⁸
Small/Shy Dog Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only some municipalities support small dog areas (SDA), even fewer implement them Prominent animal behaviourists believe large and small dogs should never mix and that small dog areas should be required⁹

1 Pt Adelaide Enfield, AU

2 Philadelphia, PA

3 Pt Adelaide Enfield, AU

4 Pt Adelaide Enfield, AU

5 Pt Adelaide Enfield, AU

6 Pt Adelaide Enfield, AU

7 Pt Adelaide Enfield, AU

8 Edmonton, AB

9 Pt Adelaide Enfield, AU

4.10 Operations and Maintenance



From waste management and surface maintenance to education and community engagement, a well-planned and well-executed maintenance strategy can ensure success and longevity of an off-leash dog area. Refer to Table 4.13 for best practices concerning operations and maintenance for a successful off-leash dog area.

Table 4.13 - Operations and Maintenance Best Practices

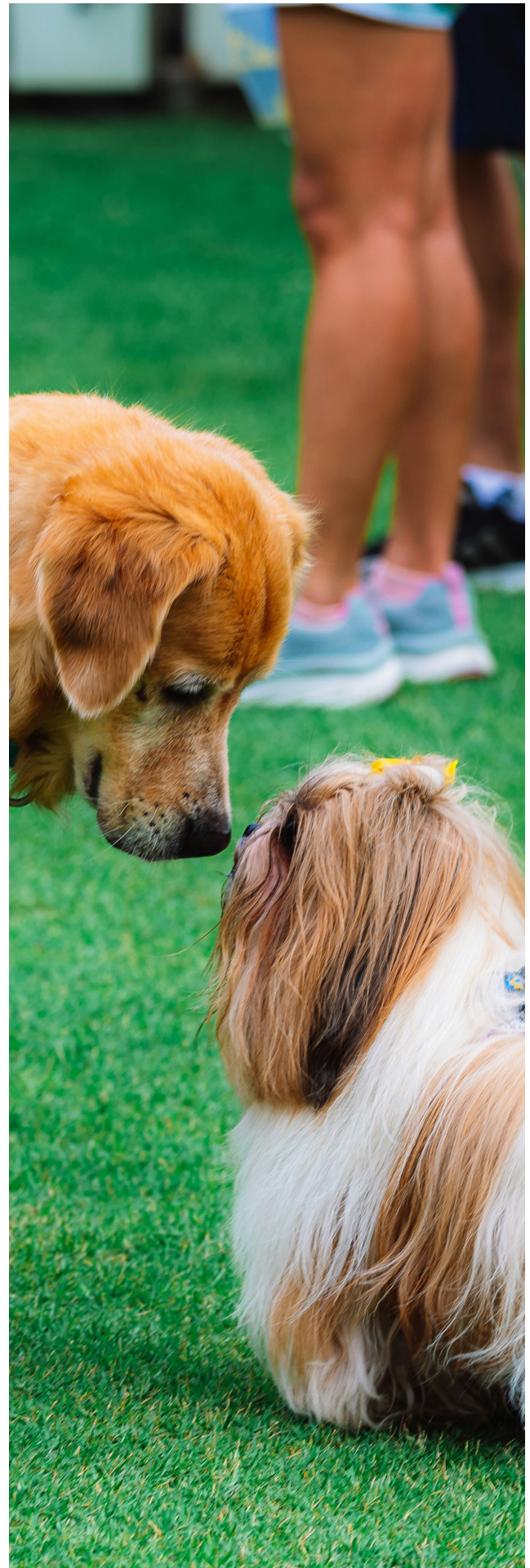
Topic	Best Practice
Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding and available labour determines the extent of design and amenities provided¹ Many municipalities rely on volunteer groups to finance and upkeep off-leash areas² Choose durable and low-maintenance materials and furnishings to minimize upkeep requirement³ Waste bins to be provided by the municipality
Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City manages garbage removal and transports dog waste to landfills Some municipalities depend upon volunteer groups to operate the site, duties including weekly maintenance, inspections, and education⁴
Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allocating a budget from maintenance costs and staff resources should be considered in the planning process Maintenance activities include: picking up dog waste, fixing broken or weathered amenities and facilities, and maintaining plants and surfaces (spread and top-ups)
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop off-leash dog area maintenance, monitoring, and evaluation guidelines and an electronic log of observations and reports⁵ Periodic inspections can identify signs of overuse, damaged or malfunctioning site elements, vandalism, etc.⁶

1 Surrey, BC
2 Seattle, WA; New York, NY; Portland, OR; Hamilton ,ON; Philadelphia, PA
3 Surrey, BC
4 Seattle, WA; New York, NY; Portland, OR; Hamilton ,ON; Philadelphia, PA
5 Vancouver, BC; Calgary, AB
6 Vancouver, BC; Calgary, AB

Off-Leash Dog Area Background Study provides a comprehensive overview of the necessary background information required to develop Markham's Off-Leash Dog Area Guidelines, Recommendations and Implementation Plan, including an analysis of the Markham context, relevant policies, and off-leash dog areas. The information presented encompasses:

1. Estimated dog populations;
2. Review of dog and off-leash dog area associations and groups;
3. Evaluation of existing and temporary off-leash areas of Markham;
4. Summary of preliminary staff consultations;
5. Examination of past and current off-leash dog area guidelines and policies in Markham; and,
6. Best practice analysis of off-leash areas in nineteen (19) cities both locally, nationally and internationally

This section of the report will serve as a valuable resource to be used in informing Markham's Off-Leash Dog Area Policy and Implementation Plan.



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Appendix A: Pop-Up Dog Park Survey Summary

Cricklewood Park Off-Leash Dog Area

Out of 17 responses, most users live within a 5-minute walk and all arrived on foot. Users found safety acceptable, cleanliness excellent, but access and parking poor.

Location likes include the close proximity to homes. Location concerns include coyotes, the small size, and steep slope causing wet and muddy conditions making the location inaccessible. Location suggestions for improvement include relocation, coyote protection, increasing size, and leveling the entrance slope. Suggestions for improvement that can be addressed through permanent design include the addition of signage, seating, and lighting.

Victoria Square Park Off-Leash Dog Area

Out of 61 responses, most users walked to the site (42) and lived within a 5-minute walk of the site (38). The majority rated safety, cleanliness, access, and parking as excellent.

Location likes include the park's large size, location, and ease of access. Suggestions for improvement that can be addressed through permanent design include the addition of lighting, better gate latches, closer garbage receptacles, parking access, water access, a shade structure, and wayfinding signs. Many want the location to become a permanent off-leash dog area.

Monarch Park Off-Leash Dog Area

Out of 34 responses, most users arrived on foot (25), though many did not live within a 5-minute walk of the site (19). Users rated safety and cleanliness as good and parking as acceptable,

with accessibility split between good and acceptable.

Location likes include the close proximity to residents, reducing the need to drive far for off-leash access. Concerns due to the temporary nature of the site that can be addressed through permanent design standards include dusty, uneven wood chip ground cover, lack of parking, and no shade. Suggestions for improvement that can be addressed through permanent design standards include replacing wood chips with sod, adding water access, seating, a shade shelter, and lighting.

Mintleaf Park Off-Leash Dog Area

Out of 105 responses, most users lived within a 5-minute walk of the site (61) and walked to the site (78). Users rated safety, cleanliness, access, and parking as excellent.

Location likes include its close proximity to residents, large size, and grass turf. Concerns due to the temporary nature of the site that can be addressed through permanent design standards include its temporary status, gate latch, fencing quality, lack of lighting and seating, and drainage issues. Suggested improvements were better drainage, seating, lights, a shade shelter, and a walkway extension from the parking lot, which can be addressed through the permanent design standard. The nearby school raised concerns about unleashed dogs, noise distracting students, and potential student-dog interactions.

Blodwen Davies Park Off-Leash Dog Area

The survey for this site had 23 responses, with the majority of respondents living within a 5-minute walk of the off-leash dog area (14), and walking to the site (18). The majority of

participants ranked safety, cleanliness, and access as excellent, with parking ranked as acceptable.

Location likes include the close proximity to residents. Concerns due to the temporary nature of the site that can be addressed through permanent design standards include the gate being installed too high, causing concern that pets could squeeze underneath. Suggested improvements included water access and improved accessibility, such as pathways to the off-leash dog area, which can be addressed through the permanent design standard.

Berczy Park South Off-Leash Dog Area

This park had the most survey responses (148). Most users arrived on foot (95), but many didn't live within a 5-minute walk of the site (85). Users rated safety, cleanliness, and access as excellent, and parking as good.

Location likes include the central location, grass turf, and easy access. Concerns due to the temporary nature of the site that can be addressed through permanent design standards include the gate latch, lack of seating and shade. Location concerns include crowding. Suggested improvements include increasing the size, better gate latch, water access, more seating and shade, closer garbage receptacles, bedding as ground cover, and lighting, which can be addressed through the permanent design standard.

Aaniin Community Centre Park Off-Leash Dog Area

The survey received 47 responses. Most users didn't live within a 5-minute walk of the site (27) and arrived by private vehicle (24). Users rated safety, cleanliness, access, and parking as excellent.

Location likes include the sites proximity to residents, parking availability, and grass turf. Concerns due to the temporary nature of the site that can be addressed through permanent design standards include temporary fencing,

distant garbage receptacles, and lack of lighting. Location concerns include close proximity to the road, excessive geese waste, and uneven terrain. Suggested improvements were more garbage receptacles, lights, leveled terrain, water access, wayfinding signs, seating, and shade, which can be addressed through the permanent design standard.

Ada Mackenzie Park Off-Leash Dog Area

The survey for this site received 43 responses. Most users lived within a 5-minute walk of the site (35) and walked to the site (35). Users rated safety, cleanliness, access, and parking as excellent.

Location likes include the site being located in a dog-friendly neighborhood and the separate areas for small and large dogs. Concerns due to the temporary nature of the site that can be addressed through permanent design standards include gate latch, lack of benches and shade, no water access, and a high entrance gate allowing small dogs to escape. Location concerns include proximity to the playground, and the small size. Location improvements include increasing the size, and moving the site away from the playground. Suggested improvements were addition of water access, seating, closer garbage receptacles, raising the gate latch, and eliminating the entrance gate gap, which can be addressed through the permanent design standard.

Appendix B: Interviews with City Staff Summary

COMMON CONCERNS/ISSUES

1. **Surfacing:** Turf becomes wet and muddy, especially after snow melt, while poor quality wood chips require frequent replacement and injure pets' paws.
2. **City Dog Walkers (CDW):** Off-leash dog areas in Markham attract users from other municipalities, with CDWs often bringing more than the allowed three (3) dogs per person.
3. **Garbage/Waste Disposal:** Garbage pickup is challenging for off-leash dog areas far from roadways, requiring long-distance transport of waste bins. Household dumping is a particular issue at Miller Ave Park.
4. **Non-Compliance with Policy and Regulations:** Users frequently disregard regulations, such as letting dogs off-leash outside the off-leash dog area, bringing food inside, and ignoring small dog area weight limits.
5. **Setbacks:** Complaints about being too close to playgrounds and schools, raising concerns about dogs escaping and potentially harming children.
6. **Coyotes:** Off-leash dog areas in areas with significant coyote populations pose risks, with Coyote Canada advising on locations to avoid contact.
7. **Difficult to Access:** Some pop-up sites lack wayfinding signages making them difficult to locate, with Cricklewood placed on uneven terrain and/or steep slope.
8. **Lost Programming Space:** Off-leash dog areas have taken over spaces previously used for programming and events, and can be eyesores near other park activities.

SITE SPECIFIC FEEDBACK

1. **Cricklewood:** Relocation recommended due to hazardous winter access, high coyote population, and no parking.
2. **Victoria Square Park:** Users need better wayfinding to locate this off-leash dog area.
3. **Monarch Park:** Complaints about proximity to homes, muddy conditions, and school parking lot use.
4. **Mintleaf Park:** Popular but faces issues with poor drainage, icy entrance, winter maintenance, and concerns from the nearby school.
5. **Blodwen Davies Park:** Installed in late September. Needs monitoring in spring and summer to determine potential competition with other park uses.
6. **Berczy Park South:** Most popular and least problematic; concerns about grass surface and maintenance.
7. **Aaniin:** Mainly used by local residents; concerns include loss of event space, high dog bite reports (2), and proximity to a roadway.
8. **Ada Mackenzie:** High visitor traffic; future construction may increase off-leash dog area use; issues with location affecting access to sports fields from parking, and lack of winter maintenance.

TOP THINGS TO ADDRESS IN PLAN PER FEEDBACK

Participants were asked what they feel constitutes the highest priority for this study:

1. **Drainage:** Critical to install the appropriate sub-surface drainage as poor drainage can increase maintenance costs and degrade sites.

2. **Lighting:** Should be provided for nighttime use while considering its impact on other park amenities and access routes. Align with the City's park lighting strategy.
3. **Additional or Less Off-Leash Dog Areas Required:** Assess whether to build new facilities or relocate existing ones to better sites.
4. **Standardized Features:** Establish a blueprint with standard amenities to simplify maintenance and operations.
5. **Standardized Frameworks:** Develop criteria for selecting, operating, and maintaining locations, including guidelines for closing a site.
6. **Standardized Design 'Tiers':** Create a list of design options by size, surfacing, and amenities to present to Council.
7. **Maintenance Resources:** Identify resources needed for upkeep.
8. **Parking:** Ensure adequate and winter-maintained parking is available.
9. **Size:** Define minimum and maximum sizes; larger sizes generally facilitate easier maintenance.
10. **User Groups:** Implement a policy outlining user group responsibilities.
11. **Signage:** Provide clear, concise signage, strategically located for ease of viewing and to inform of off-leash dog area rules and City of Markham recreational trails.
12. **Statistical Analysis for Numbers:** Develop indicators to measure usage for better maintenance, operation, and expansion planning.
13. **Costs:** Determine running costs, start-up expenses, potential sponsorships, and maintenance costs.
14. **Setbacks:** Address setbacks from residents, playgrounds, and roads, and re-evaluate distances from natural areas and schools.
15. **Comprehensive Communication Strategy:** Implement a strategy to effectively inform residents about new locations.

16. **Tree Planting and Natural Elements:** Include suitable planting and natural elements, ensuring they blend with the park's appearance and protect trees within the space.

Parks and Maintenance

The following topics were unique to the Parks and Maintenance stakeholder consultation session:

TIME AND RESOURCES

1. **Garbage/Waste Disposal:** Waste is collected weekly. Huntington, Miller Ave, Cornell and Box Grove have 25-gallon green carts for waste disposal; others require staff to transport for pickup. The City handles dog waste as organic material.
2. **Surfacing:** Wood chips need regular replacement and filling of holes around fencing.
3. **Gate/Fencing:** Gates require occasional repairs for latches and alignment.

LOCATING FUTURE SITES

1. **Drainage/Topography:** Avoid uneven terrain or slopes to prevent maintenance issues and hazardous conditions.
2. **Parking:** Ensure adequate parking to avoid conflicts with other park users, especially on weekends.
3. **Setbacks/Noise:** Consider residential setbacks to reduce noise complaints.
4. **Location:** Consider infrastructure lands or leased industrial property.

IMPACTS WITH ADDITIONAL OFF-LEASH DOG AREAS

5. **Funding:** Operations Parks has a funding model for permanent off-leash dog areas ; budget for operations and maintenance is available.

6. **Staffing:** Additional staff will be needed for monitoring and maintenance.
7. **User Groups:** Engaging volunteers for waste management poses liability risks. Coordinate with Animal Services, By-law Enforcement, and Risk Management.

SHARED-USE OFF-LEASH DOG AREAS

1. **Enforceability:** Avoid shared-use models due to enforcement challenges and potential user confusion.

Animal Service, By-law Enforcement, Risk Management, and Natural Heritage Team

The following topics were unique to the Animal Service, By-law Enforcement, Risk Management, and Natural Heritage stakeholder consultation session:

ENFORCEMENT MECHANISMS

1. **Taking Photographs:** Use to document violations.
2. **Issue By-law Infraction to Homes:** Issue tickets to non-compliant users.
3. **Seize Dog and Send to Shelter:** Off-leash dogs without collars can be seized and brought to a shelter.
4. **Call Police Enforcement**

DETERMINING RULES OF CONDUCT

1. **Liability Protection:** Rules help protect the municipality from legal issues.
2. **Control Behaviour:** Rules aim to minimize negative interactions and ensure safety.

PARK AMBASSADOR PROGRAMS/USER GROUPS

1. **Responsibility Policy:** Ambassadors might face conflicts over responsibilities.
2. **Former Leash Free Markham:** Previous committees were effective in community oversight.

3. **Maintenance:** Ambassadors could assist with waste disposal, and maintenance issues.

Parks Coordinator and Sponsorships

The following topics were unique to the Park Coordinator and Sponsorship stakeholder consultation session:

SPONSORSHIP TECHNICALITIES

1. **Funding:** Sponsors provide about \$30,000 annually for three years. Amounts over \$100,000 need council approval. Sponsors may or may not influence fund usage.
2. **Advertising:** Sponsors can advertise through naming rights or elements within the off-leash dog area, such as signs on fences.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

1. **Natural Elements:** Include trees and natural features for aesthetics and pet interaction.
2. **Tier-Based Design:** Implement a tier system for off-leash dog areas:
 - a. **Tier 1 (Basic):** Grass, fencing, signs.
 - b. **Tier 2 (Average):** Wood chips, additional benches.
 - c. **Tier 3 (Advanced):** Naturalized areas, enhanced amenities.

OTHER GUIDELINES

1. **Construction:** Address environmental factors like drainage and topography in construction guidelines.
2. **Maintenance:** Set standards for off-leash dog area care, noting which designs require more or less maintenance.

SPONSORSHIP ROLES

1. **Maintenance vs. Capital:** Sponsorship funds may cover maintenance or capital improvements. Sponsors prefer contributing to aesthetic and amenity enhancements rather than routine maintenance. Standard amenities should be used, avoiding custom features.

Appendix C: Councillor Consultations Summary

COMMON CONCERNS AND ISSUES

1. **Opposition from Residents:** Neighbours nearby raise concerns about noise, safety, and aesthetics.
2. **Enforcement Challenges:** Issues enforcing leash regulations and pet waste management are reported, particularly in Legacy and Box Grove neighbourhoods.
3. **Aesthetics:** Criticized for being unattractive, suggesting a need for improved landscaping.
4. **Proximity and Accessibility:** Concerns about pop-up off-leash dog areas being too close to schools, residential areas, and sports fields, and their lack of walkability.
5. **Size and Design:** Some areas are too small, lack water service, and have gates that children can open.
6. **Community Safety and Conflict Resolution:** Safety issues, including dog attacks and conflicts with residents, suggest limited operation hours to reduce issues.
7. **Environmental and Health Impacts:** Concerns about hygiene, waste management, and wildlife conflicts, such as with coyotes.
8. **Program Effectiveness and Expansion:** There's a push for permanent, well-equipped off-leash dog areas.
9. **Budget Considerations:** Budget constraints may limit amenities, but basic features should be included where feasible.
10. **Specific Location Concerns:** Issues with sites like Cricklewood, including terrain and underutilization, highlight the need for careful site selection and community input.

CODE OF CONDUCT ISSUES AND CONCERNS

1. **Signage Clarity and Conciseness:** Simplify signage to highlight key points and fines, as current signs are overloaded with information.
2. **Aggressive Dogs and Irresponsible Owners:** Persistent issues with aggressive dogs and irresponsible owners lead to safety concerns and complaints.
3. **Enforceable Rules:** Emphasize the need for enforceable rules and better enforcement with more by-law officer presence.
4. **Flexible Dog Area Sizes:** Allow flexibility in the size of areas to suit the needs of both large and small dogs.
5. **Clear Guidelines:** Provide clear guidelines on dog height and temperament to ensure appropriate use of designated areas.

LOCATION CONSIDERATIONS

1. **Walkability and Proximity to Residences:** Facilities should be within walking distance of residential areas.
2. **Environmental and Community Health:** Minimize noise disturbances and manage waste to protect community and environmental health.
3. **Utilizing Available Open Spaces:** Select open spaces that avoid encroaching on residential properties.
4. **Strategic Park Selection:** Choose parks with existing amenities and ensure sites blend with the surroundings.
5. **Accessibility and Aesthetics:** Ensure areas are accessible to all residents and visually appealing through landscaping.

6. **Population Density and Public Input:** Place areas based on population density and gather public input to guide location choices.
7. **Setbacks:** Setback from conflicting land uses.
8. **Improving the Location Selection Process:** Improve the selection process by involving community input early and ensuring locations meet effectiveness and acceptance criteria.

SHARED-USE OFF-LEASH AREAS

9. **Yes (4):** May improve accessibility with minimal budget impact, but requires careful site selection to avoid conflicts with schools and play areas. Public education and clear signage are crucial. Success depends on community support, effective enforcement, and protective measures.
10. **Maybe (3):** Feasible in some areas (densely populated southern regions) but requires careful timing, location, and safety measures. Success depends on resident approval, clear rules, and proper containment.
11. **No (3):** Lack of physical barriers increases risk of conflicts and safety concerns. Enforcement challenges and complaints about inconvenient times undermine effectiveness.

ENFORCEMENT COMPLIANCE

1. **Educational Initiatives:** Launch an ongoing campaign to educate the public about rules, potentially funded by increasing animal services presence in parks.
2. **Enforcement Enhancement:** Increase enforcement personnel to improve compliance, acknowledging the costs and limitations.
3. **Collaborative Policing:** Partner with community groups or dog alliances for better enforcement.
4. **Reporting Clarity:** Simplify reporting channels for complaints to streamline enforcement.

5. **Strategic Education:** Focus on education rather than penalties, using public service announcements and targeted outreach in high-dog-density areas.
6. **Signage Strategy:** Ensure clear and visible signage to effectively communicate rules and enforce compliance.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR EFFECTIVE POLICY

1. **Ward-Specific Approach:** Customize planning for off-leash dog areas based on each ward's dog population density and community preferences.
2. **Education Initiatives:** Enhance educational campaigns on responsible pet ownership and park etiquette.
3. **Communication Enhancement:** Use multiple channels like social media, email, and local postings to improve communication about etiquette, enforcement, and responsibilities.
4. **Population Tracking:** Monitor dog populations in specific areas to guide resource allocation and distribution.
5. **Collaboration with Advocacy Groups:** Work with advocacy groups for insights and feedback on dog owner needs and improvements.
6. **Feedback Mechanisms:** Create online platforms for ongoing feedback from dog owners to address issues promptly.
7. **Private Sector Sponsorship:** Seek private sector sponsorship to enhance resources and quality of amenities and supplement lifecycle/maintenance.

IMPACTS ON STAFF AND RESOURCES WITH MORE OFF-LEASH AREAS

1. **Cost Considerations:** Explore cost-reduction strategies, like involving community groups in maintenance.
2. **Staffing Needs:** Additional staff required for maintenance and enforcement, particularly during peak times.

3. **Resource Allocation:** Ensure adequate maintenance budgets and central maintenance facilities to optimize resources and reduce staff travel time.
4. **Tracking Fundamentals:** Monitor maintenance needs and workload impacts for informed decision-making and efficient resource allocation.

SENSE ON MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRS

1. **Effective Waste Management:** Ensure waste receptacles are emptied regularly and enforce dog waste cleanup to improve cleanliness.
2. **Regular Maintenance:** Implement daily cleaning, especially in high-traffic areas, to address waste buildup.
3. **Monitoring Systems:** Use cameras to track usage, document maintenance needs, and ensure timely cleaning and repairs.
4. **Utilization of Data:** Use existing maintenance data to optimize cleaning schedules and address maintenance needs efficiently.

TOP THINGS TO ADDRESS IN THE PLAN

1. **Addressing Walkability:** Ensure off-leash dog areas are within a 20-minute walk for all residents.
2. **Tailored Standardized Features:** Develop essential standardized amenities while allowing for site-specific adaptations.
3. **Strategic Installation:** Install in large, mature parks to utilize existing green spaces and minimize conflicts with surrounding land uses.
4. **Public Education and Consultation:** Gather feedback through surveys and community engagement to ensure support and awareness.
5. **Cost-Effectiveness:** Prioritize functional and cost-effective off-leash dog areas, focusing on accessibility rather than luxury.
6. **Ward-Based Planning:** Place at least one off-leash dog area per ward, based on dog population density.

7. **Enforcement and Responsibility:** Set clear consequences for non-compliance, educate dog owners, and increase patrolling and surveillance.
8. **Environmental Awareness:** Incorporate sustainable practices in waste management and consult with environmental teams.
9. **Community Compatibility:** Ensure off-leash dog areas fit well with their surroundings, promoting health, safety, and appropriate amenities.
10. **Flexible Tiered Approach:** Use a tiered system (Gold, Silver, Bronze) to address diverse needs.

ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS

1. **Community Condo Dog Areas:** Advocacy for the inclusion of off-leash dog areas within community towers to cater to residents' needs and promote pet-friendly living.

Appendix D: Pop-Up Dog Park Consultations Summary

Victoria Square Park

Monday, April 8th 2024 from 5 to 7 PM

Total Attendees: 25

1. **Location Feedback:** The park is well-utilized and popular, with many residents wishing for it to become permanent.
2. **Leash Enforcement:** Minimal issues with dogs being off-leash outside designated areas.
3. **Waste Management:** Improve signage and increase waste management efforts to address dog waste concerns.
4. **Lighting and Accessibility:** Enhance lighting to improve safety and extend park use into the evenings.
5. **Amenities:** Add water sources, benches, and shade structures or trees based on community requests.
6. **Surfacing and Ground Condition:** Address wet conditions by increasing maintenance and considering wood chips over sod.
7. **Community Engagement and Events:** Organize dog-related events and explore city-wide initiatives like discounted microchipping days to boost community involvement.

Monarch Park

Tuesday, April 9th from 11 AM to 1 PM

Total Attendees: 4

1. **Alternate Location Considerations:** Evaluate other potential sites, such as near Unionville, Parkview Public School, Carlton Park, and north of Too Good Pond by the dock.

2. Community Impact and Concerns:

Residents report noise, increased dog waste, and territorial behaviour at the current location, leading non-dog owners to avoid the area and reducing trail usage.

3. **Usage Patterns and Behaviour:** Dominance by a few dog owners, who bring chairs and contribute to territorial behaviour, discourages other users.

Mintleaf Park

Wednesday, April 10th from 5 to 7 PM

Total Attendees: 13

1. **Location Feedback:** Address water and flooding issues with additional catch basins or consider relocating to a higher slope.
2. **Surfacing Material:** Grass is preferred over wood chips.
3. **Safety:** There are instances of people leaving dogs unattended.
4. **Maintenance and Security:** Ensure regular waste collection and implement security measures for health and safety.
5. **Amenities:** Provide picnic tables, water jugs/taps, lights, benches, and shade.
6. **Alternate Location Considerations:** Cornell and Millennium Park are recommended due to high dog populations, shade, and proximity to families.

Aaniin Community Centre Park

Saturday, April 13th from 9 to 11 AM

Total Attendees: 5

1. **Location Feedback:** The current site is valued for amenities but has issues with wetness, unused space, road proximity, and accessibility.

2. **Terrain and Infrastructure:** Topographical challenges, such as storm drains and the need for grading, affect its suitability.
3. **Community Engagement and Awareness:** Increase awareness of off-leash dog area pop-ups and gather community input.
4. **Amenities:** Essential features include small dog areas, water access, seating, and potentially agility courses. Use Stouffville Park as a design reference.
5. **Quantity Over Quality:** Preference for more that are simple and cost-effective rather than fewer, high-quality ones.
6. **Alternate Location Considerations:** Consider expanding to Milliken Park and Unionville.

Ada MacKenzie Park

Sunday, April 14th from 1 to 3 PM

Total Attendees: 15

1. **Location Feedback:** Community supports making this location permanent but has concerns about size, unattended dogs, waste management, and child access.
2. **Facility Size:** Some support expanding the small dog area or combining segregated spaces into a larger pen to accommodate more dogs.
3. **Amenities:** Suggested improvements include adding seating, waste management signage, and more bins. Existing lighting is appreciated.
4. **Surfacing Materials:** Preference for soil or turf over wood chips due to odour and injury concerns.
5. **Future Safety and Management:** Consider adding training areas and informative signage for dog owners.
6. **Anticipated Population:** With six (6) new condo buildings planned, there will be an increase in population, necessitating more space.

7. **Alternate Location Considerations:** Suggested relocating west or considering locations like Bayview Fairway Park and German Mills Park to accommodate future growth.

Cornell Community Park

**Monday, April 15th from 11 AM to 1 PM
(rescheduled due to rain from Thursday,
April 11th from 2 to 4 PM)**

Total Attendees: 14

1. **Location Feedback:** Users are generally supportive with positive feedback and few complaints.
2. **Water Amenities:** Positive comments about water availability; suggestion to activate water earlier in spring.
3. **Enforcement and Safety:** Concerns about lack of enforcement, frequent dog attacks, and need for brighter lights for safety at night.
4. **Surfacing Condition and Materials:** Drainage issues can make the park unusable after rain. Wood chips could help with mud and flooding, despite concerns about dog paw safety.
5. **Self-Policing and Enforcement:** Suggest posting contact information for animal control for reporting issues.
6. **Cleanliness:** Users generally clean up after dogs, but unclaimed waste persists. Community bag dispensers could help.
7. **Fencing:** Has a gap under the gate that allows small/slim dogs to escape.
8. **Other Location Considerations:** Milne's Dam Park, Markhaven Park, and Hatter.

Miller Ave Park

Monday, April 15th from 2 to 4 PM

Total Attendees: 9

1. **Location Feedback:** Users enjoy the park and frequent it often. Concerns include children being brought into the off-leash dog area. Preference for this park over others due to positive experiences.

2. **Amenities:** Positive feedback on the agility course; request for more shade structures.
3. **Rules and Safety Concerns:** Inquiry about rules for unneutered male dogs and aggression issues. Some contest the restriction on puppies, suggesting vaccination instead.
4. **Dog Walker By-law:** Suggestion to establish a “Dog Walker By-law” for regulation.
5. **City Response and Maintenance:** Criticism of slow city maintenance response; call for improved care.
6. **Accessibility and Convenience:** Appreciation for the convenient nearby parking lot, enhancing accessibility.
7. **Surfacing Condition and Material:** Mixed views on wood chips due to slipperiness and splinter risks but acknowledgment of their benefits in preventing mud.
7. **Dog Population and Segregation:** Many large dogs observed; support for segregated areas.
8. **Amenities:** Suggestions for seating and multiple entrances for better accessibility.
9. **Alternate Location Considerations:** Suggestions to relocate to Clarence Chant Park or another spot within Berczy Park.

Berczy Park South

Tuesday, April 16th from 7 to 9 AM
(rescheduled due to rain from Friday, April 12th from 7 to 9 AM)

Total Attendees: 11

1. **Location Feedback:** Positive overall with high usage, especially in the evenings. The space is seen as a good way to utilize unused land.
2. **Surfacing Condition and Materials:** Improve drainage to address wet and muddy conditions; wood chips are suggested as a solution.
3. **Size Enhancement and Design:** Requests to increase park size and follow the design of Cornell’s off-leash dog area.
4. **Proximity to Community:** Concerns about the park’s proximity to residential areas.
5. **Wildlife Concerns:** Coyotes in the area raise safety issues.
6. **Impact on Children’s Visitation:** Decreased park visits from children due to increased dog presence.



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thinc design

Liberty Market Building

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