



Attachment - 4 Off-Leash Dog Area Community Engagement Summary

Off-Leash Dog Area Community Engagement Summary

Over the past twelve (12) months since September 2023, staff have been monitoring the Off-Leash Pop-up Pilot Program through various forms of stakeholder and public engagement including:

1. An online survey,
2. Resident inquiries,
3. City department interviews
4. Councillor interviews,
5. Drop-in consultations (April 8, 2024 to April 16, 2024), and
6. A formal in-person public open house (May 21, 2024).
7. An online survey for the Draft Policy/ Guidelines (January 29 – February 26, 2025)

Online Survey:

To gain an understanding of each Pop-Up Dog Pilot Area's usage and attendance, a Pop-Up Dog Parks Survey on Your Voice Markham (YVM) was developed to gather feedback from residents. A sign with QR code was installed on the entrance of all Pop-Up Dog Parks to encourage residents to quickly access information about the Pop-Up Dog Parks and complete a survey.

Since opening in September 2023, the YVM Pop-Up Pilot Program webpage has received a total of 7980 visits and 602 survey responses. The Pop-up Off-Leash Pilot Program has a resident engagement rate of 8.7 per cent on YVM which is significant considering the average engagement rate is 3.8 per cent.

Survey Feedback:

Based on the 602 responses collected, staff have identified the top 15 improvements suggested for the Off-Leash Pop-Up Dog Areas.

Resident requests and recommended improvements for Temporary Off-Leash Dog Areas	
1.	Enhanced lighting
2.	Water facilities / fountains



3. Additional garbage bins
4. Consideration for expanding into adjacent open fields
5. Desire for the pop-up dog parks to remain permanently
6. Pathways from parking lots to entrances
7. Larger area for large dogs
8. Permanent off-leash dog area in every neighborhood
9. Improved gate latches for safety
10. Improved fencing for large dogs
11. Addressing lack of shade and benches
12. Concerns about drainage and mud issues
13. Relocation closer to natural areas so that the park is larger
14. Opposition to permanent dog parks due to safety and accessibility
15. Requests for a permanent signs and general improved amenities
Based on feedback collected on YVM between September 2023 and December 2024.

Resident Inquiries:

Since September 2023, the City has received approximately 53 email and phone inquiries from residents providing feedback on the pop-up off-leash dog area program. The City has also received one petition in support of an off-leash area at Millennium Park (Ward 2) signed by approximately 213 residents. All inquiries were responded to within 24-48 hours. Some of the feedback received includes:

1. Ongoing maintenance issues including waste, dog waste, fencing and surface
2. Location issues and location requests

City Department Interviews:

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:

- 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.

COMMON CONCERNS/ISSUES

Surfacing: Turf becomes wet and muddy, especially after snow melt, while poor quality wood chips require frequent replacement and injure pets' paws.

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.

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.

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.

Setbacks: Complaints about being too close to playgrounds and schools, raising concerns about dogs escaping and potentially harming children.

Coyotes: Off-leash dog areas in areas with significant coyote populations pose risks, with Coyote Canada advising on locations to avoid contact.

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.

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



Cricklewood: Relocation recommended due to hazardous winter access, high coyote population, and no parking.

Victoria Square Park: Users need better wayfinding to locate this off-leash dog area.

Monarch Park: Complaints about proximity to homes, muddy conditions, and school parking lot use.

Mintleaf Park: Popular but faces issues with poor drainage, icy entrance, winter maintenance, and concerns from the nearby school.

Blodwen Davies Park: Installed in late September. Needs monitoring in spring and summer to determine potential competition with other park uses.

Berczy Park South: Most popular and least problematic; concerns about grass surface and maintenance.

Aaniin: Mainly used by local residents; concerns include loss of event space, high dog bite reports (2), and proximity to a roadway.

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:

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

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.

Additional or Less Off-Leash Dog Areas Required: Assess whether to build new facilities or relocate existing ones to better sites.

Standardized Features: Establish a blueprint with standard amenities to simplify maintenance and operations.

Standardized Frameworks: Develop criteria for selecting, operating, and maintaining locations, including guidelines for closing a site.

Standardized Design 'Tiers': Create a list of design options by size, surfacing, and amenities to present to Council.

Maintenance Resources: Identify resources needed for upkeep.



Parking: Ensure adequate and winter-maintained parking is available.

Size: Define minimum and maximum sizes; larger sizes generally facilitate easier maintenance.

User Groups: Implement a policy outlining user group responsibilities.

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.

Statistical Analysis for Numbers: Develop indicators to measure usage for better maintenance, operation, and expansion planning.

Costs: Determine running costs, start-up expenses, potential sponsorships, and maintenance costs.

Setbacks: Address setbacks from residents, playgrounds, and roads, and re-evaluate distances from natural areas and schools.

Comprehensive Communication Strategy: Implement a strategy to effectively inform residents about new locations.

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

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.

Surfacing: Wood chips need regular replacement and filling of holes around fencing.

Gate/Fencing: Gates require occasional repairs for latches and alignment.

LOCATING FUTURE SITES

Drainage/Topography: Avoid uneven terrain or slopes to prevent maintenance issues and hazardous conditions.

Parking: Ensure adequate parking to avoid conflicts with other park users, especially on weekends.

Setbacks/Noise: Consider residential setbacks to reduce noise complaints.



Location: Consider infrastructure lands or leased industrial property.

IMPACTS WITH ADDITIONAL OFF-LEASH DOG AREAS

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

Staffing: Additional staff will be needed for monitoring and maintenance.

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

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.
 3. b. **Tier 2 (Average):** Wood chips, additional benches.
 4. 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.

Councillor Interviews:

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.

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

1. **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.
2. **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.
3. **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.
1. **Resource Allocation:** Ensure adequate maintenance budgets and central maintenance facilities to optimize resources and reduce staff travel time.
2. **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.

Drop-in Consultations:

From April 8, 2024 until April 16, 2024, drop-in consultations occurred at various pop-up off-leash dog areas and permanent off-leash dog areas throughout Markham. The locations and drop-in times were determined through site usage and providing the community a variety of times to visit. The goal was to hear first-hand feedback from the residents who either use the off-leash dog area or the park.

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 locations and times were selected:

Drop-in Consultations					
Ward	Site	Permanent or Pilot	Date (2024)	Time	Participants
2	Victoria Square Park	Pilot	Monday, April 8	5-7 PM	25
3	Monarch Park	Pilot	Tuesday, April 9	11 AM - 1 PM	4
4	Mintleaf Park	Pilot	Wednesday, April 10	5-7 PM	13
7	Aaniin Community Centre Park	Pilot	Saturday, April 13	9-11 AM	5
8	Ada Mackenzie Park	Pilot	Sunday, April 14	1-3 PM	15



5	Cornell Community Park	Permanent	Monday, April 15	11 AM – 1 PM	14
8	Miller Avenue Park	Permanent	Monday, April 15	2-4 PM	9
6	Berczy Park South	Pilot	Tuesday, April 16	7-9 AM	11

Drop in Consultation Feedback:

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.

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.
1. **Terrain and Infrastructure:** Topographical challenges, such as storm drains and the need for grading, affect its suitability.
2. **Community Engagement and Awareness:** Increase awareness of off-leash dog area pop-ups and gather community input.
3. **Amenities:** Essential features include small dog areas, water access, seating, and potentially agility courses. Use Stouffville Park as a design reference.
4. **Quantity Over Quality:** Preference for more that are simple and cost-effective rather than fewer, high-quality ones.
5. **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 Woodlot 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.
1. **Amenities:** Positive feedback on the agility course; request for more shade structures.



2. **Rules and Safety Concerns:** Inquiry about rules for unneutered male dogs and aggression issues. Some contest the restriction on puppies, suggesting vaccination instead.
3. **Dog Walker By-law:** Suggestion to establish a “Dog Walker By-law” for regulation.
4. **City Response and Maintenance:** Criticism of slow city maintenance response; call for improved care.
5. **Accessibility and Convenience:** Appreciation for the convenient nearby parking lot, enhancing accessibility.
6. **Surfacing Condition and Material:** Mixed views on wood chips due to slipperiness and splinter risks but acknowledgment of their benefits in preventing mud.

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.
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.



In-Person Public Open House:

The first of two public open houses took place on Tuesday May 22nd, 2024 to gather feedback and suggestions from the community and off-leash dog area users. Approximately 32 participants attended within the two-hour event window to share their thoughts. The open house consisted of nine (9) interactive panels that included questions and prompts for participants to consider when providing feedback.

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?

1. Most voted for health and safety (28 votes or 30%);
2. Many for design elements including surfacing, fencing, entries/gates, etc. (23 votes or 24%);
3. Many for amenities including benches, shade, water, etc. (20 votes or 22%);
4. Some for proximity/accessibility (10 votes 12%);
5. Few for the size of off-leash dog area (7 votes or 8%); and
6. Few for maintenance service level (5 votes or 5%).

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

1. Grass was the top surfacing preference (17 votes), followed by wood chips (6 votes) and artificial turf (3 votes).
2. 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?

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

In-Person Public Open House Feedback:

Most feedback from participants were for Monarch Park, Mintleaf Park, and Berczy Park. Participants noted that Monarch Park has poor drainage, is located to close to a school and residential homes, and could negatively impact on wildlife habitat. Participants also noted that Berczy Park and Mintleaf are underserved areas but greater maintenance and/or planning must be done due to poor drainage.

In-Person Public Engagement Feedback
1. Walkability
2. Site Conditions
3. Accessibility
4. Located in underserved areas of the City
5. Health and safety
6. Design elements (surfacing, fencing, entrances, gates)



7. Amenities (benches, shade, water access)
8. Preference for turf
9. Preference for chain link fence

The open house panels also gathered insight on participants' opinions on a shared-use off-leash dog area approach. Based on feedback, participants generally agreed that this approach was worth exploring and would be an appropriate concept to pilot.

Online Survey – Draft Guidelines

The main comments received were:

1. There is not currently an Off-Leash area within an appropriate distance to Markham Centre
2. Miller Avenue Dog Park requires driving and is not walkable/public transportation
3. Residents would like lighting and picnic tables to be permitted
4. Residents would like shade structures to be a standard feature
5. Residents are happy about water service being provided
6. Many comments against the Monarch Park location
7. Many comments wanting an off-leash in Millennium Park
8. May comments wanting an off-leash in Dragonfly or Promenade Park
9. Many comments requesting the Mintleaf location fixes the drainage issue
10. Surface requests of artificial turf or wood chips to avoid mud
11. Improve on accessibility and signage
12. Include noise and visual buffers
13. Residents would like stricter buffers on proximity to playgrounds
14. May residents would like off-leash areas to be walkable or accessible by transit
15. Additional and more clear signage for responsibilities of pet owners, rules of the dog park, and maintenance of off-leash areas

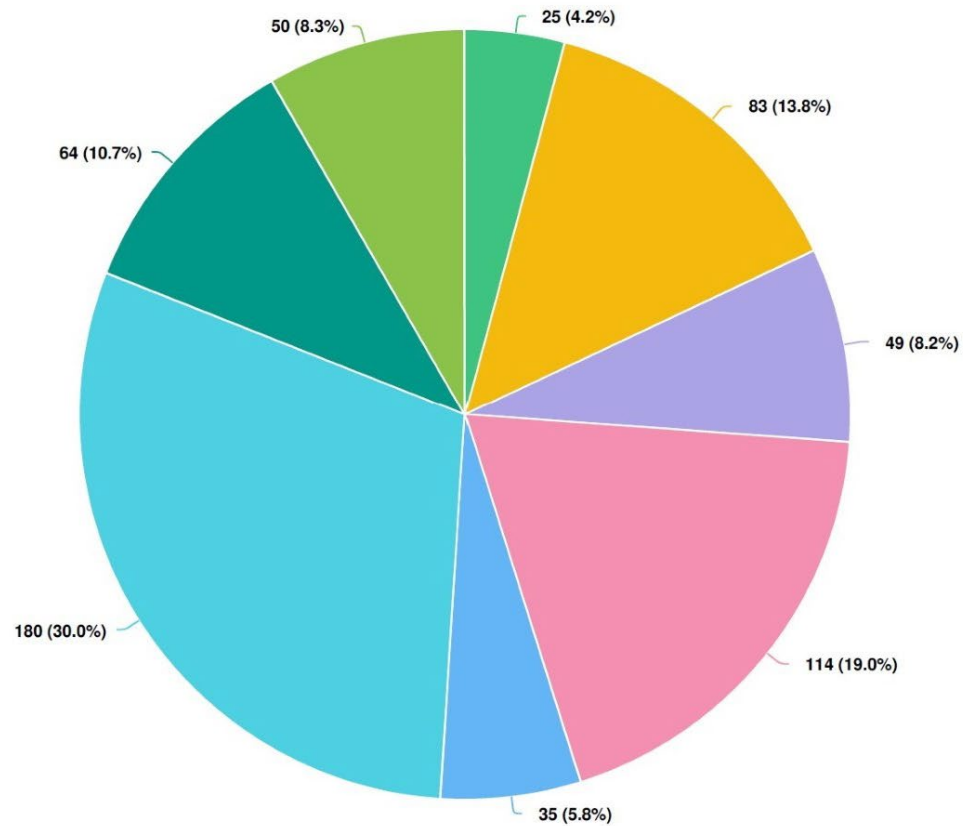


Appendix:

Online Survey Graphs and Charts



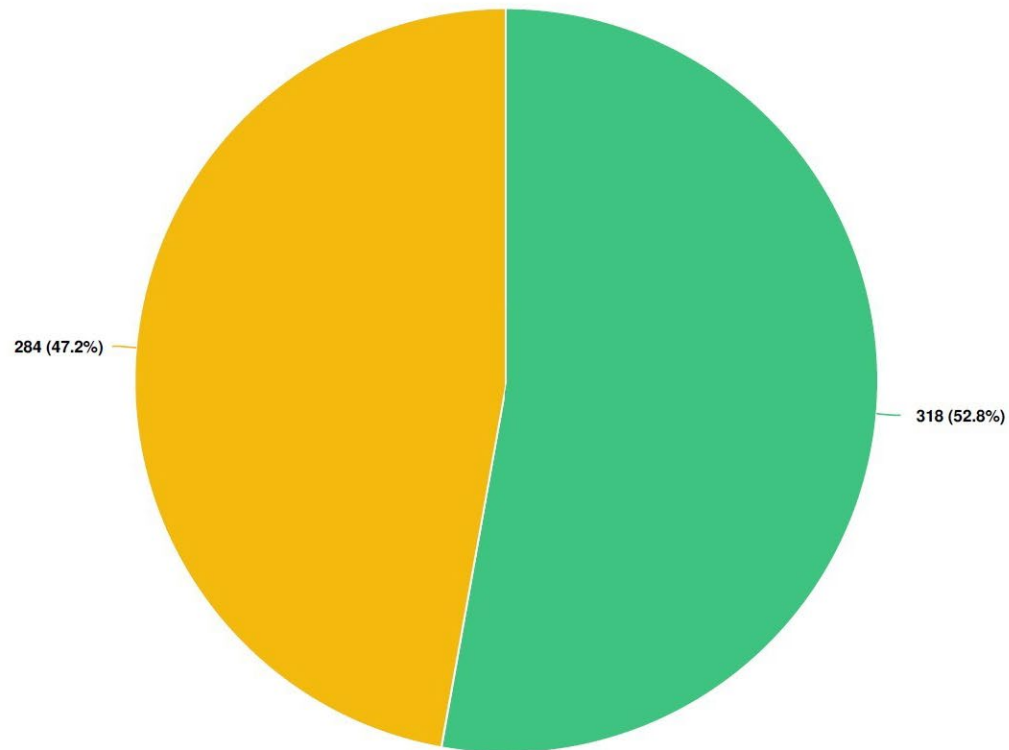
Q5 Which temporary off-leash dog area are you providing input for?



Question options

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

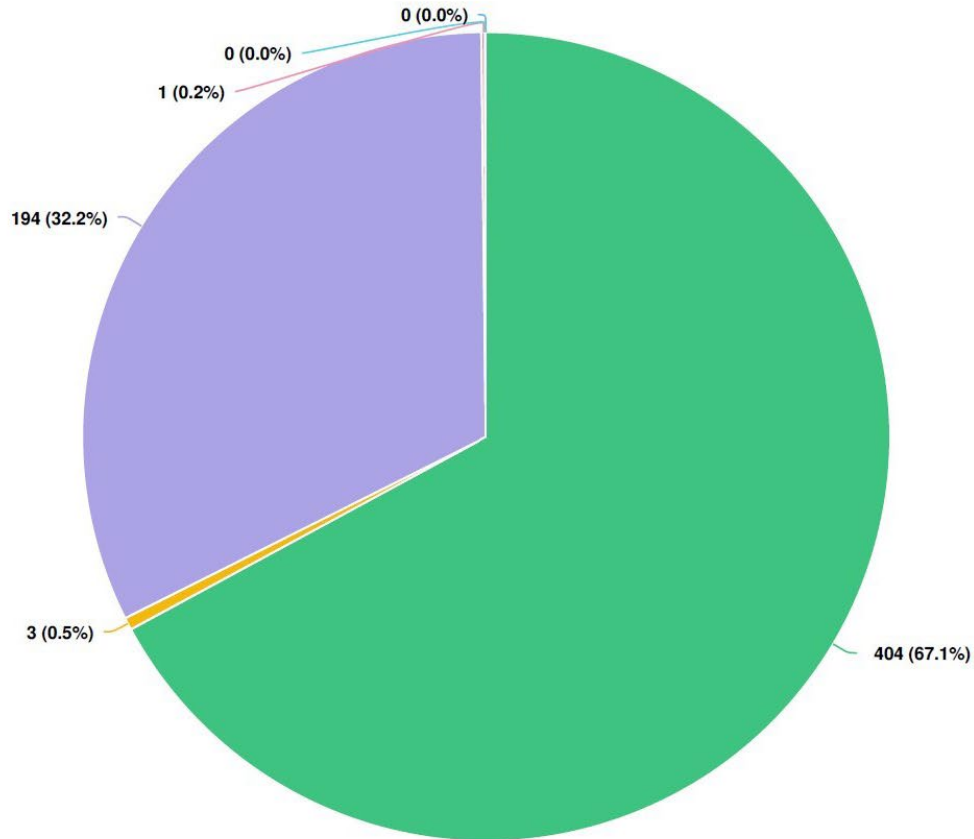
Q6 Do you live within a 5-minute walk of the temporary off-leash dog area?



Question options

Yes No

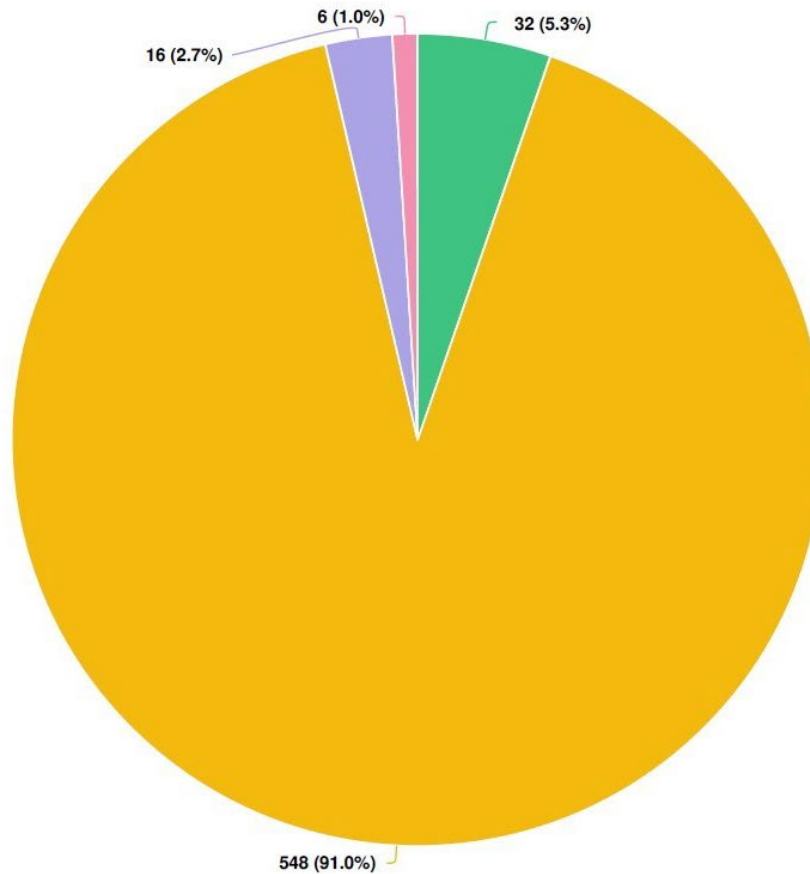
Q7 | How did you arrive at the temporary off-leash dog area?



Question options

- Walked ● Active transportation (bike, rollerblade, etc.) ● Private Vehicle ● Other (please specify)
● Public Transit ● Taxi or Rideshare

Q8 | How are you using the temporary off-leash dog area?



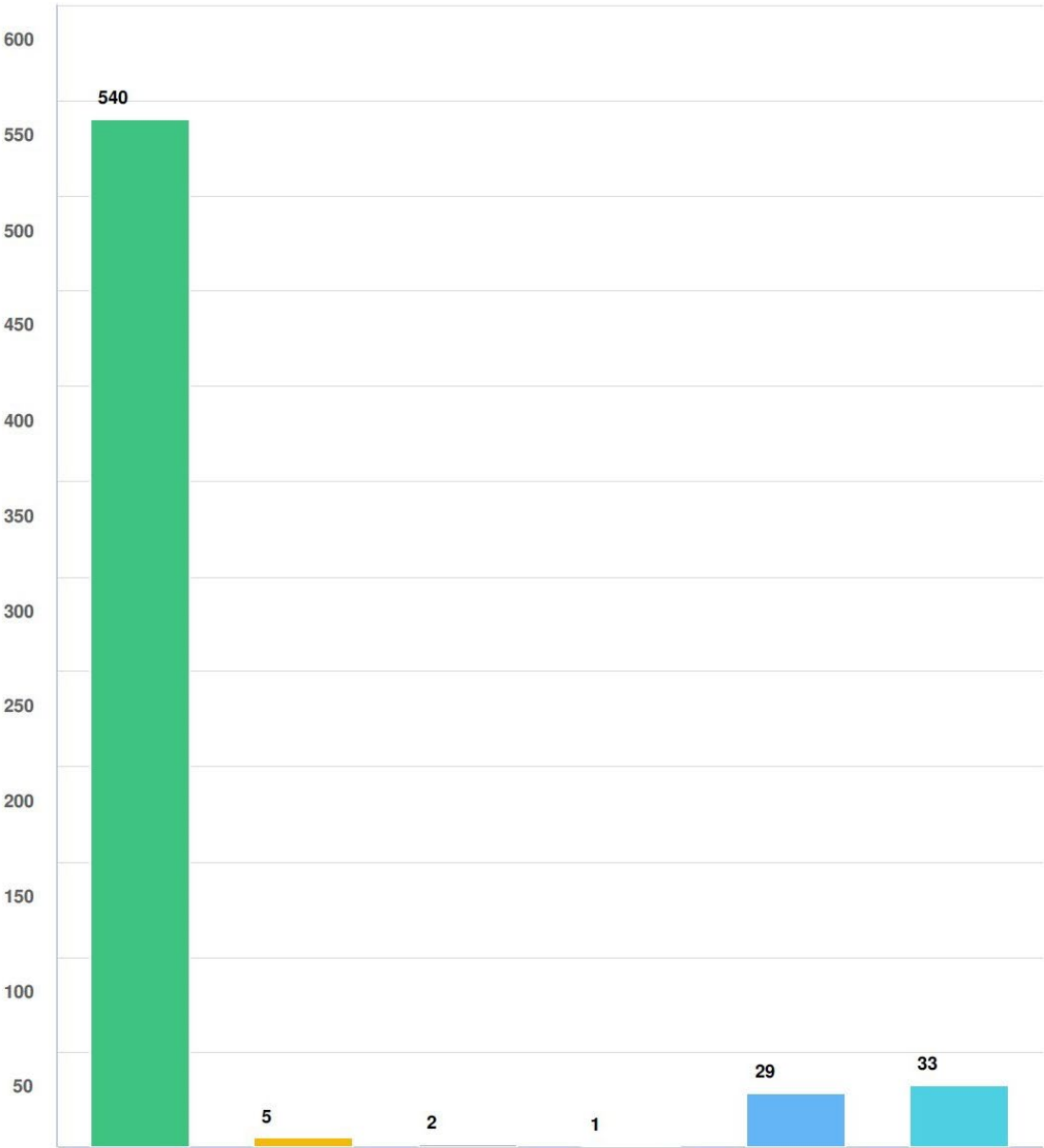
Question options

- Just passing by - Not using the off-leash dog area
- Entered the off-leash dog area with my pet
- Entered the Off-Leash Dog Area with someone else's pet
- Other (please specify)

Q9 How many dogs do you have with you at the off-leash dog area? Small dogs are under 20 pounds and are 12 inches or shorter at the shoulder. Large dogs are over 20 pounds and taller than 12 inches at the shoulder.



Q10 Did you notice any damage to the temporary off-leash dog area?



Question options

- Other (please specify) Damage to ground cover Damage to signage Damage to fence Damage to gate No damage

Q11 Related to the temporary off-leash dog area you are currently visiting, how important are the following items to you?



Q12 Related to the temporary off-leash dog area you are currently visiting, how would you rate following items?

