

PEOPLE PARKS & DOGS

A strategy for sharing
Vancouver's parks



Prepared for the Vancouver Park Board, October 2017

by space2place design inc.



in collaboration with:

Kirk & Co Consulting Ltd.

PUBLIC Architecture + Communication

MountainMath Software

Pet Welfare



Cover image: Michael Wheatley / Alamy Stock Photo

CONTENTS

PEOPLE, PARKS + DOGS STRATEGY REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A 10-Year Framework	2
Recommendations Overview	2

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Strategy	5
Process Overview	6

BACKGROUND

What's Working Well (and not)	8
Existing Dog Off-Leash Areas	11
Population and Licensing	11
Service Analysis	12
Analysis of 3-1-1 Calls	13

RECOMMENDATIONS

01 Access	16
02 Design	21
03 Stewardship	33
04 Enforcement	39
Considerations for Other Agencies	43

DELIVERY

Quick Starts	45
Renewal of Existing Dog Off-Leash Areas	46
New Dog Off-Leash Areas	47
Pilot Projects	49
Partnership Opportunities	49
Monitoring and Evaluation	51

COMPANION DOCUMENTS

Appendix	
Implementation Guide - Considerations for Delivery	
Round 1 Consultation Summary Report	
Round 2 Consultation Summary Report	

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As in many other major North American cities, the number of people and dogs in Vancouver is growing. With population growth and people living in smaller spaces, it's now more important than ever to balance different uses of parks and public spaces.



A 10-Year Framework

The Vancouver Park Board's *People, Parks & Dogs Strategy* provides a framework for the next ten years and beyond, to deliver well-planned and designed parks that accommodate park users with and without dogs and minimize conflict. Recommendations fall into four themes: Access, Design, Stewardship and Enforcement, each designed to promote the comfort and safety of all park users. These recommendations outline a variety of attractive and easy-to-access dog off-leash areas that reduce off-leash activity outside of designated areas, clarify the rules and etiquette for using dog off-leash areas, manage dog waste, protect the environment, promote responsible dog ownership, and foster the health and well-being of all park users:

Recommendations Overview

1.0 ACCESS

- 1.1 Establish two classifications of dog off-leash areas to support service level planning: Neighbourhood and Destination.
- 1.2 Provide access to Neighbourhood dog off-leash areas within an approximately 15 minute walk of most residents.
- 1.3 Provide access to Destination dog off-leash areas within an approximately 35 minute walk or short drive for most residents.
- 1.4 Add new dog off-leash areas and prioritize underserved and densely populated neighbourhoods.
- 1.5 Improve access to dog off-leash areas by removing time-of-use restrictions where possible.

2.0 DESIGN

- 2.1 Provide a variety of dog off-leash areas.
- 2.2 Provide space and amenities to make dog off-leash areas more appealing to use and universally accessible.
- 2.3 Design dog off-leash areas to be durable, with suitable surfacing.
- 2.4 Design dog off-leash areas to minimize environmental impacts.
- 2.5 Locate dog off-leash areas adjacent to more compatible land and park uses, and mitigate those that are less compatible.
- 2.6 Restrict dog activity from a greater range of park areas.
- 2.7 Clearly mark dog off-leash area boundaries and setback distances where needed.
- 2.8 Assess existing site features and adjacent uses to determine appropriate boundary tools.
- 2.9 Ensure dog off-leash area signage is concise, clear and consistent.
- 2.10 Expand the separated dog waste program and promote initiatives to effectively manage dog waste.



3.0 STEWARDSHIP

- 3.1 Formalize residents' role in dog off-leash area stewardship.
- 3.2 Engage local residents in establishing, changing, or eliminating dog off-leash areas.
- 3.3 Establish etiquette guidelines for all people and dogs using off-leash areas.
- 3.4 Consider developing dog off-leash area maintenance, monitoring, and evaluation guidelines.
- 3.5 Promote educational initiatives to improve the safety and success of dog off-leash areas.
- 3.6 Investigate potential partnership and funding opportunities to support dog off-leash areas.



4.0 ENFORCEMENT

- 4.1 Increase dog licensing compliance rates.
- 4.2 Ensure consistency, enforceability, and relevance of by-laws for dogs in parks.
- 4.3 Consider increasing resources and powers for enforcement.
- 4.4 Work with City of Vancouver staff to develop educational resources to increase public knowledge about licensing and by-laws.
- 4.5 Develop specific requirements for commercial dog walkers.

A robust multi-round public and stakeholder consultation process with more than 7,000 stakeholder and public interactions informed these recommendations. The process included a statistically-sound phone survey of 400 Vancouver residents and two online surveys with over 6,400 respondents, evenly represented by dog owners and non-dog owners.

Recommendations are also guided by an Advisory Committee, with members representing a broad range of interests including sports, the environment, animal health and behaviour, persons with disabilities, tourism, and others. Input from the public, stakeholders, Park Board and City staff and the Advisory Committee is complimented by mapping and analysis of existing dog off-leash areas and the distribution of people, licensed dogs and off-leash areas across the city. Additionally, field studies and intercept surveys from eight of Vancouver's off-leash areas, and precedent research also inform the recommendations.

The *People, Parks & Dogs Strategy* is an opportunity for the Vancouver Park Board and the City of Vancouver to lead the successful integration of dog off-leash areas into parks and public spaces. While ultimately dog owners are responsible for their dogs, and not the City of Vancouver or the Vancouver Park Board, working together, Park Board and City staff and residents can develop and support parks that are well-loved and effectively shared by a diverse community of park users.



Flickr CC: wjbutt

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Strategy

Process Overview

INTRODUCTION

With Vancouver's growing population, our parks are increasingly shared by many different users to socialize, exercise and play. Delivering well-planned and designed parks with dog off-leash areas is key for the comfort and safety of all park users.

Purpose of the Strategy

As in many other major North American cities, Vancouver's urban dog population is growing. Estimates suggest there are now more households in the United States with dogs than households with children: 2010 US Census data identified 38 million American households with children, and 43 million with dogs.¹ This growth is directly influencing park development. In US cities, dog off-leash areas are one of the fastest growing types of parks, with an estimated 34% increase in dog parks between 2005 and 2010, while urban parks had grown by 3% during that same period.²

In North American cities, as dog populations grow so does the demand to recreate with dogs off-leash in city parks and public spaces. Many municipalities across Canada, including Metro Vancouver Regional Parks, formally recognize that "Recreating with a dog is a legitimate park use", and are exploring opportunities to support the needs of people with and without dogs in our parks.

The development of dog off-leash areas presents benefits and challenges; these areas can foster community, healthy activity and social well-being. In addition, the provision of designated areas for off-leash activity can reduce unsanctioned off-leash activity in more sensitive sites. However, off-leash areas can contribute to conflict with other park uses and increase wear and tear on parks. Moreover, dog waste management is a key concern for people with and without dogs. Careful analysis and the development of effective strategies are necessary to guide the design and implementation of dog off-leash areas, in order to ensure their benefits outweigh their challenges.

1 2010 US Census data identifies 38 million American households with children, compared to 43 million households with dogs, as reported by USA Today, June 2, 2011.

2 Trust for Public Lands (personal communication, 2016.05.20)

Process Overview

This strategy is informed by precedent research, stakeholder workshops, field observations, and two rounds of public consultation and engagement, in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of current dog activity, existing dog off-leash areas in Vancouver parks, establish a clear vision for the integration of these spaces in Vancouver's parks, and develop strategies for successful implementation. The work informing this strategy is summarized below:



Workshops with Park Board and City of Vancouver staff, and an online staff survey:

Park Board staff and City of Vancouver staff participated in workshops and completed a survey clarifying their views on the challenges and opportunities associated with dog activity in Vancouver parks.



Advisory Committee meetings: The Park Board created a representative stakeholder group in June 2016 to elicit focused feedback on the consultation process and issues related to dogs in parks from a range of stakeholders. This Advisory Committee is a valuable resource for sharing information between the Park Board and stakeholder groups, and has shaped the *People, Parks & Dogs* strategy through feedback provided in the four committee meetings that were held through the planning process.



Surveys in dog off-leash areas: We conducted field surveys in selected dog off-leash areas to better understand how people and dogs use these spaces. Over 200 park users shared their opinions about dog activity in Vancouver parks through these surveys.



Learning from other cities: We conducted interviews with park staff from twelve key cities across North America to better understand what's working well and "lessons learned" by others regarding dogs in parks.



Mapping and analysis: We mapped the distribution of dog off-leash areas, licensed dogs and people across Vancouver to understand where there's demand for more off-leash areas now and in the future. We also compiled an inventory and maps of each of Vancouver's 36 existing dog off-leash areas.



Reviewing records of previous work: Community groups and individuals have made significant contributions over the years on topics related to people with and without dogs sharing parks. We reviewed this material, including work by the Vancouver Dog Strategy Task Force which supported the 2012 Dog Off-Leash Area Guidelines, and previous community-led petitions for new dog off-leash areas. These documents have helped inform this Strategy.



Round 1 consultation: Between September 8 and October 14, 2016, we asked stakeholders and the public to tell us about the successes and challenges related to people with and without dogs sharing park space. Participants were encouraged to participate by attending one of eight consultation meetings, filling out the survey or providing written feedback by email or mail. There were a total of 4,373 public and stakeholder interactions during this consultation period, with roughly equal representation from dog owners and non-dog owners.



Round 2 consultation: Between January 30 to March 10, 2017, we asked the public to provide feedback on the draft recommendations for the planning, design and management of Vancouver's dog off-leash areas. Participation options included attending one of seven consultation meetings, filling out the survey or providing written feedback by email or mail. There were a total of 2,684 public interactions during this consultation period, with roughly equal representation from dog owners and non-dog owners.



Phone survey: 400 Vancouver residents participated in a statistically-sound phone survey, which complemented the Round 1 consultation process and identified support for some preliminary recommendations.



BACKGROUND

What's Working Well (and not)
Existing Dog Off-Leash Areas
Population and Licensing
Service Analysis
Analysis of 3-1-1 Calls

BACKGROUND

A thorough understanding of Vancouver's existing dog off-leash areas provides a foundation to planning and design strategies for the future. Analysis includes public and stakeholder input, research, mapping and evaluating dog off-leash areas.

Vancouver's dog off-leash spaces are used intensively by people with and without dogs. In field studies, people without dogs outnumbered people with dogs at most off-leash areas, most of the time. 74% of Vancouver residents surveyed report having mostly positive or neutral interactions with off-leash dogs in parks (see Appendix F, Phone Survey).

What's working well (and not)

Reviewing successes and challenges in Vancouver's existing parks with dog off-leash areas helps identify what is working well, and where strategies are most needed to facilitate sharing limited park space and to minimize conflicts. The following is a summary of successes and challenges (see Appendix A, Analysis for more information).

What's working well in Vancouver's dog off-leash areas:



Building community: Off-leash areas play an important role in fostering a sense of community, serving as popular gathering places for people with and without dogs. Several sites in Vancouver have regular users that meet up daily to visit and socialize.



Clear boundaries: People with and without dogs share park space more effectively in dog off-leash areas with clearly marked boundaries, since people know where off-leash dogs are allowed and to be expected.



Providing fenced options: Many dog owners, such as those with dogs in training, like having the option to use fenced off-leash areas.



Grass surfacing in larger, less-intensively used areas: Public consultation results indicate a strong preference for natural turf. The quality of grass surfaces is generally in better condition in larger, less-intensively used sites.



Separated Dog Waste: Dog owners and non-dog owners are supportive of the separated dog waste collection pilot project currently being testing in three of Vancouver's parks: John Hendry Park, Charleson Park and Grimmet Park.



Open space: People with dogs value large areas for their dogs to run and play off-leash.



Water access: People with dogs appreciate having access to off-leash areas that provide opportunities for their dogs to swim.

Challenges in Vancouver's dog off-leash areas:



Managing dog waste: Dog waste is smelly, unpleasant to step on or look at, and has health risks if not cleaned up and disposed of properly. It is the number one challenge for dog off-leash areas, according to survey respondents.



Access: There is unequal distribution of off-leash areas across Vancouver, and some neighbourhoods do not meet local demand. Dog off-leash areas in downtown Vancouver struggle with limited park space, given the high populations of people and licensed dogs.



Lack of clarity: Park users have told us that confusing and inconsistent signage and a lack of clear-on-the-ground boundaries make it difficult for them to understand where off-leash activity is allowed and to be expected.



Off-leash activity in on-leash areas: Field observations and public consultation results indicate significant off-leash activity in on-leash areas, and a lack of compliance with time-of-use restrictions. The current low level of enforcement of dog off-leash activity is frustrating for people with and without dogs, and contributes to conflict.



Sharing limited park space: With a limited amount of park space available, people who do not use off-leash areas worry that off-leash areas leave less space for other park uses. Less compatible adjacencies, such as playgrounds, sports fields and multi-use trails, can also contribute to conflict.



Managing noise: The noise from dog off-leash areas, where many dogs and people meet, may disturb other park users or neighbourhood residents.



Lack of amenities: Some dog off-leash areas lack the amenities to support basic needs of site users, making these sites less appealing to use. There is demand for more separated small / shy dog areas to address owner concerns about dog safety.



Surfacing: Dog owners are concerned about gravel surfacing that can be difficult to walk on and may hurt dogs' paws, and dark-coloured surfacing that can get hot. Grass surfacing is in poor condition in smaller, intensively-used sites.



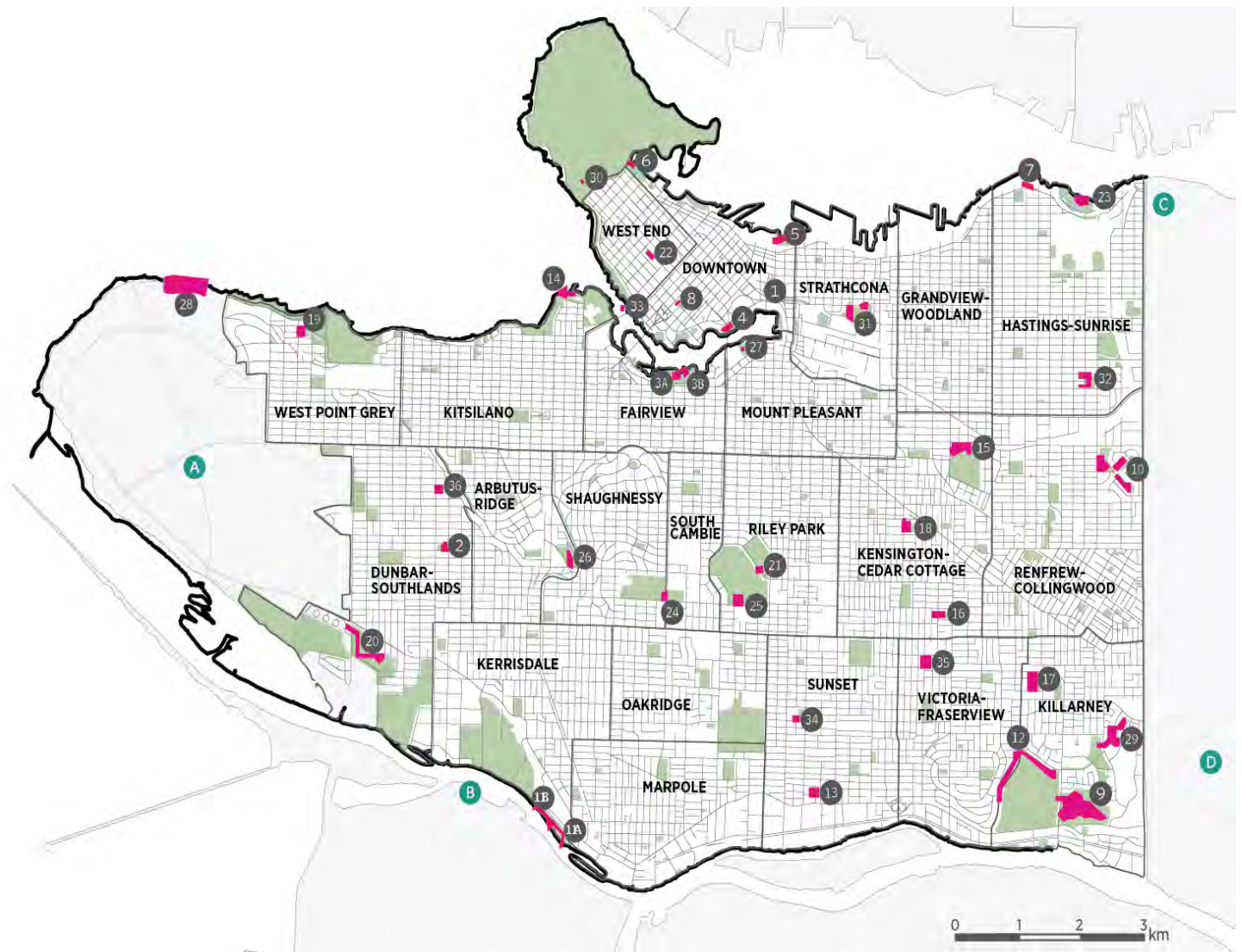
Safety concerns (people and dogs): Aggressive or poorly trained dogs in off-leash areas may scare or injure people or other dogs. Without play features or places to hide, small fenced dog off-leash areas can be intimidating for shy and small dogs, and may lead to conflicts between dogs.



Increased maintenance and enforcement costs: Concentrated areas of dogs off-leash can wear away turf and lead to more conflicts with other park users, leading to higher maintenance and enforcement costs.



Potential environmental impacts: Dogs, and dogs off-leash in particular, have the potential to disturb wildlife, damage sensitive habitat areas, and negatively impact water quality.



LEGEND:

■ Vancouver Park Board Off-Leash Areas

VANCOUVER PARK BOARD DOG OFF-LEASH AREAS:

- 1 Andy Livingstone Park
- 2 Balaclava Park
- 3A Charleston Park (west)
- 3B Charleston Park (east)
- 4 Coopers' Park
- 5 Crab Park at Portside
- 6 Devonian Harbour Park
- 7 Dusty Greenwell Park
- 8 Emery Barnes Park
- 9 Everett Crowley Park (trail only)
- 10 Falaise Park
- 11A Fraser River Park (east)
- 11B Fraser River Park (west)

- 12 Fraserview Park
- 13 George Park
- 14 Hadden Park
- 15 John Hendry (Trout Lake)
- 16 Jones Park
- 17 Killarney Park
- 18 Kingscrest Park
- 19 Locarno Park
- 20 Musqueam Park
- 21 Nat Bailey Stadium
- 22 Nelson Park
- 23 New Brighton Park
- 24 Oak Meadows Park
- 25 Queen Elizabeth Park

- 26 Quilchena Park
- 27 Southeast False Creek
- 28 Spanish Banks
- 29 Sparwood Park
- 30 Stanley Park
- 31 Strathcona Park
- 32 Sunrise Park
- 33 Sunset Beach
- 34 Sunset Park
- 35 Tecumseh Park
- 36 Valdez Park

LOCAL OFF-LEASH AREAS OUTSIDE OF VANCOUVER PARK BOARD JURISDICTION:

- A Pacific Spirit Regional Park (Metro Vancouver)
- B Macdonald Beach off-leash area (City of Richmond)
- C Burnaby Heights Park (City of Burnaby)
- D David Gray Park (City of Burnaby)

FIGURE 1 - VANCOUVER'S EXISTING DOG OFF-LEASH AREAS

5.9% of Vancouver's park land is dedicated to dog off-leash areas, the second highest percentage among the North American cities reviewed in our study. (see Appendix C)

Existing Dog Off-Leash Areas

Inventory

In Vancouver, there are 36 dog off-leash areas. Six sites are fenced and are typically only used by people with dogs. The remaining 30 sites are unfenced and the park space is shared with other users. Dog off-leash area sizes range from 0.04 hectares at Stanley Park to 2.5 km of off-leash trails at Everett Crowley Park. 18 of the dog off-leash areas have time or seasonal restrictions. An inventory in Appendix D identifies the size, location, adjacent uses and physical features of each dog off-leash area.

Field Study

In the summer of 2016 a field survey (see Appendix B) was conducted to better understand patterns of use at eight selected dog off-leash areas, including how sites were used by people with and without dogs, and to see how these patterns compared over the course of the day and between weekdays and weekends.

Time-of-use restrictions

There are daytime off-leash use restrictions for all or part of the year at 18 of Vancouver's off-leash areas (Appendix Figure A-1). Daytime off-leash use restrictions restrict dog activity to mornings and evenings (e.g. 5 to 10 am, 5 to 10 pm), which allows for other park uses during the day.

Five of these off-leash areas have daytime use restrictions during the summer months only, allowing all-day off-leash activity at park sites that are otherwise not well-used by the general public in the winter months. These sites are: Hadden Park, Charleson Park, New Brighton Park, Killarney Park, and Fraser River Park.

Population and Licensing

Data from the City of Vancouver Animal Services group shows a relatively steady increase in the number of licensed dogs over the last 12 years, with 21,332 licensed dogs in the City in 2016 (see Figure 2, below). The estimated dog population in Vancouver is between 32,390 and 55,947 which translates to a licensing compliance rate between approximately 38% and 66%. Increased licensing would lead to a better understanding of Vancouver's dog population, with information on the number of dogs in the city, their distribution and breed.

The estimated dog population is based on results from a statistically-sound phone survey of 400 Vancouver residents, conducted in 2016 (see Appendix F). Findings show that less than 15% of Vancouver households have dogs, and for those with dogs, there are an average of 1.1 dogs per household. Based on this estimate there is a total of 32,390 to 55,947 dogs in Vancouver (with a \pm 4.9% margin of error).

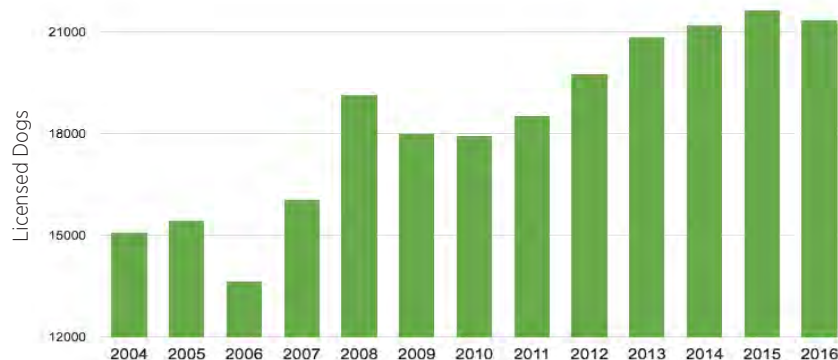


FIGURE 2 - LICENSED DOGS OVER TIME (DATA FROM CITY OF VANCOUVER ANIMAL SERVICES)

See Appendix A for more detailed information on the analysis of Vancouver's existing dog off-leash areas.

Service Analysis

The following assessments were conducted to evaluate existing dog off-leash areas relative to the number of people and licensed dogs in their target service area:

Neighbourhood Comparisons

The population, residential density, number of licensed dogs, and size of dog off-leash areas were compared on a neighbourhood basis. Mount Pleasant was identified as the most underserved neighbourhood according to this assessment (see Appendix A, Table A-1).

Willingness-to-Walk Distance

Identifying each city block's distance from a designated off-leash area. Note that distances shown are "as the crow flies" and not based on actual walking distance to the off-leash sites. Figure 3 (below) identifies areas of the city that are more than 1 km from a dog off-leash area, and therefore the areas shown in blue do not meet the target service level.

Dog Off-Leash Area Size and Time Restrictions

Assessing the distribution of dog off-leash areas across the city, the size of dog off-leash area and time-of-use restrictions. Many East Vancouver neighbourhoods have dog off-leash areas that are only accessible in mornings and evenings (see Appendix A, Figure A-4 and Section A 5.3).

Licensed Dog Population by Neighbourhood

Assessing the concentration of people and licensed dogs was done on a neighbourhood basis. Neighbourhoods with the highest densities of licensed dogs include the West End, Downtown, Kitsilano, Mount Pleasant, Fairview, and Grandview-Woodland (see Appendix A, Table A-2 and Section A 5.4).

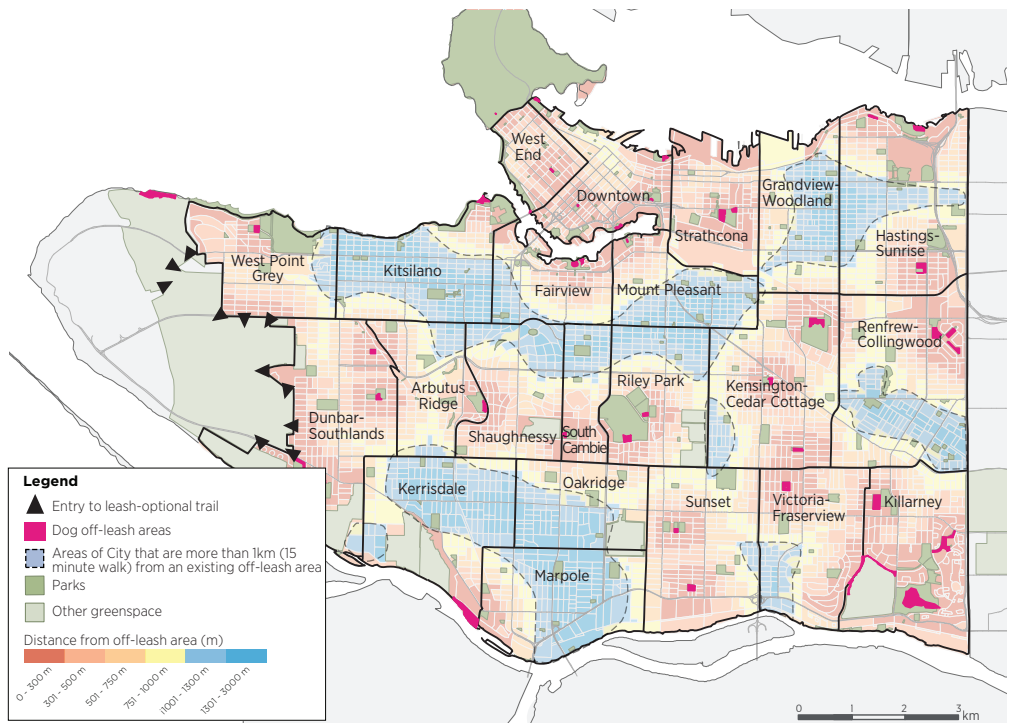


FIGURE 3 - DISTANCE FROM DOG OFF-LEASH AREAS

High density service area

Assessing the number of licensed dogs within a 1 km radius of existing dog off-leash areas helped identify sites that have the highest potential usage. Dog off-leash areas with the highest number of licensed dogs within a 1 km radius are:

- Nelson Park off-leash area
- Emery Barnes Park off-leash area
- Coopers' Park off-leash area
- Charleson Park off-leash area

(see Appendix A, Table A-2 and Section A 5.4)

Analysis of 3-1-1 Calls

Dog-related 3-1-1 calls received between January 2010 and 2015 were analyzed and mapped (see Figure 4, below) in order to better assess existing challenges. Calls included dog-related complaints, concerns and general inquiries. Areas shaded in orange correspond to the reported location of the incident.

Parks with dog off-leash areas that received more than 100 calls include:

- John Hendry Park
- Emery Barnes Park
- Hinge Park
- Hadden Park

Parks without dog off-leash areas that received more than 100 calls include:

- Kitsilano Beach Park
- Locarno Beach Park
- George Wainborn Park
- Area near Guelph Park and Mount Pleasant Elementary
- Area around Robson Park
- Area west of Granville Loop Park

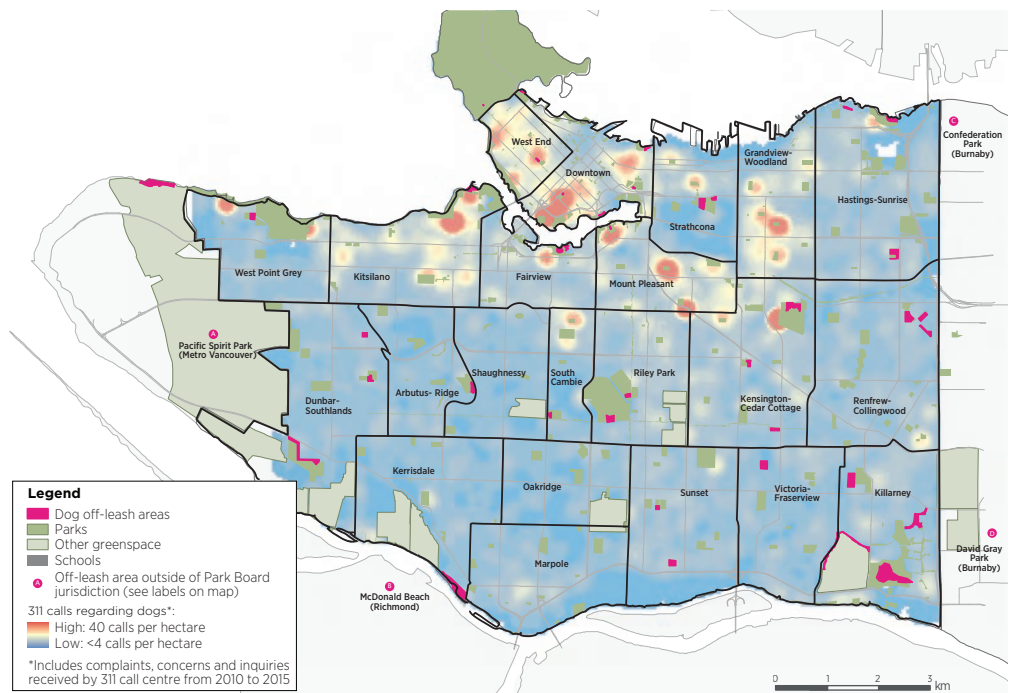


FIGURE 4 - DOG-RELATED CALLS TO 3-1-1 BETWEEN 2010 AND 2015, INCLUDING COMPLAINTS, CONCERNS AND INQUIRIES

See Appendix E for more detailed information on the geographic analysis of Vancouver's existing dog off-leash areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations fall into four themes: Access, Design, Stewardship, and Enforcement. Each recommendation is designed to promote the comfort and safety of all people and dogs using the park.

While ultimately dog owners are responsible for their dogs, and not the City of Vancouver or the Vancouver Park Board, working together, Park Board and City staff and residents can develop and support parks that are well-loved and effectively shared by a diverse community of park users.

The *People, Parks & Dogs* strategy provides a framework for the next ten years and beyond, to deliver well-planned and designed parks that accommodate park users with and without dogs and minimize conflict. The vision for this strategy is:

To promote the comfort and safety of all park users by fostering responsible dog ownership and clarifying rules, boundaries and etiquette for dog off-leash activity in parks, and to integrate a variety of appealing and safe dog off-leash spaces in our parks that are easily accessed by local residents who directly support their success.

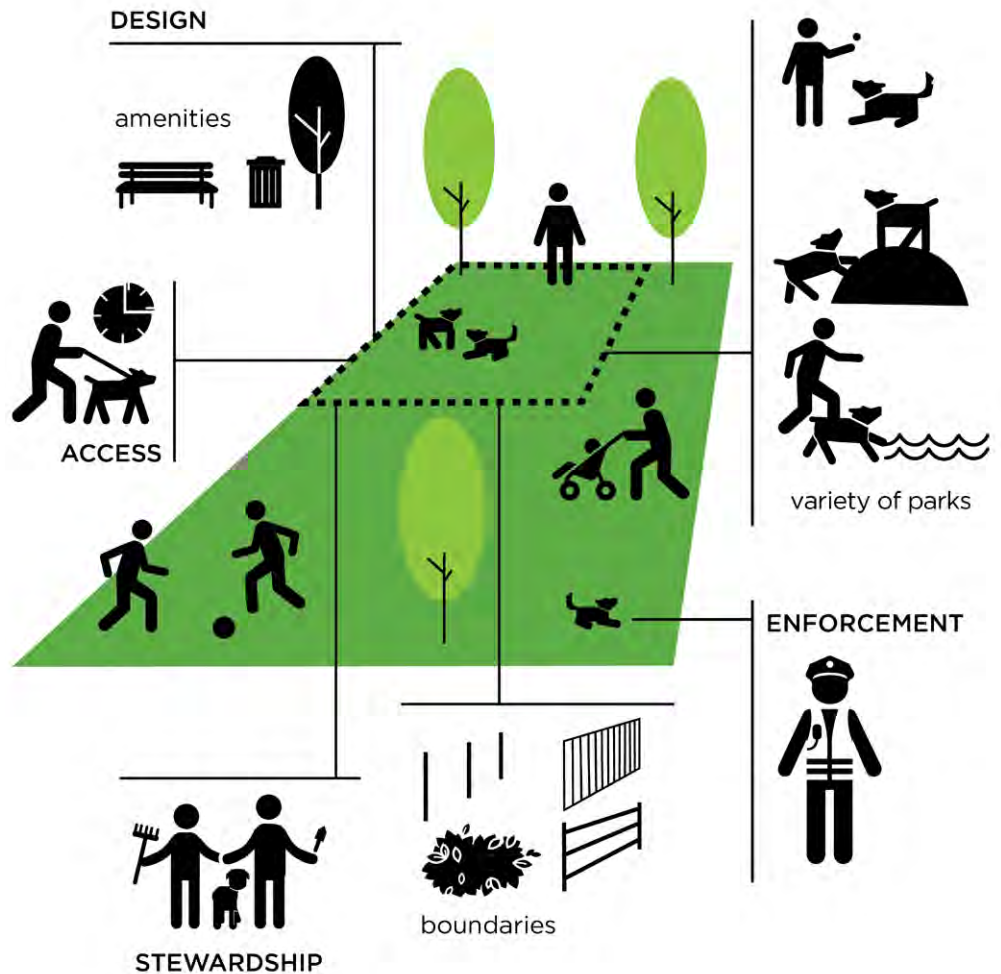


FIGURE 5 - THEMES OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS



Flickr CC: swong 96757

01 Access

Improve access to dog off-leash areas throughout the city.



Overview of Access Recommendations

- 1.1 Establish two classifications of dog off-leash areas to support service level planning: Neighbourhood and Destination.
- 1.2 Provide access to Neighbourhood dog off-leash areas within an approximately 15 minute walk of most residents.
- 1.3 Provide access to Destination dog off-leash areas within an approximately 35 minute walk or short drive for most residents.
- 1.4 Add new dog off-leash areas and prioritize underserved and densely populated neighbourhoods.
- 1.5 Improve access to existing off-leash areas by removing time-of-use restrictions where possible.

39% of survey respondents agree that Neighbourhood and Destination dog off-leash areas should be of equal priority.

61% of phone survey respondents support having a dog off-leash space in their immediate area.

1.1 Establish two classifications of dog off-leash areas to support service level planning: Neighbourhood and Destination.

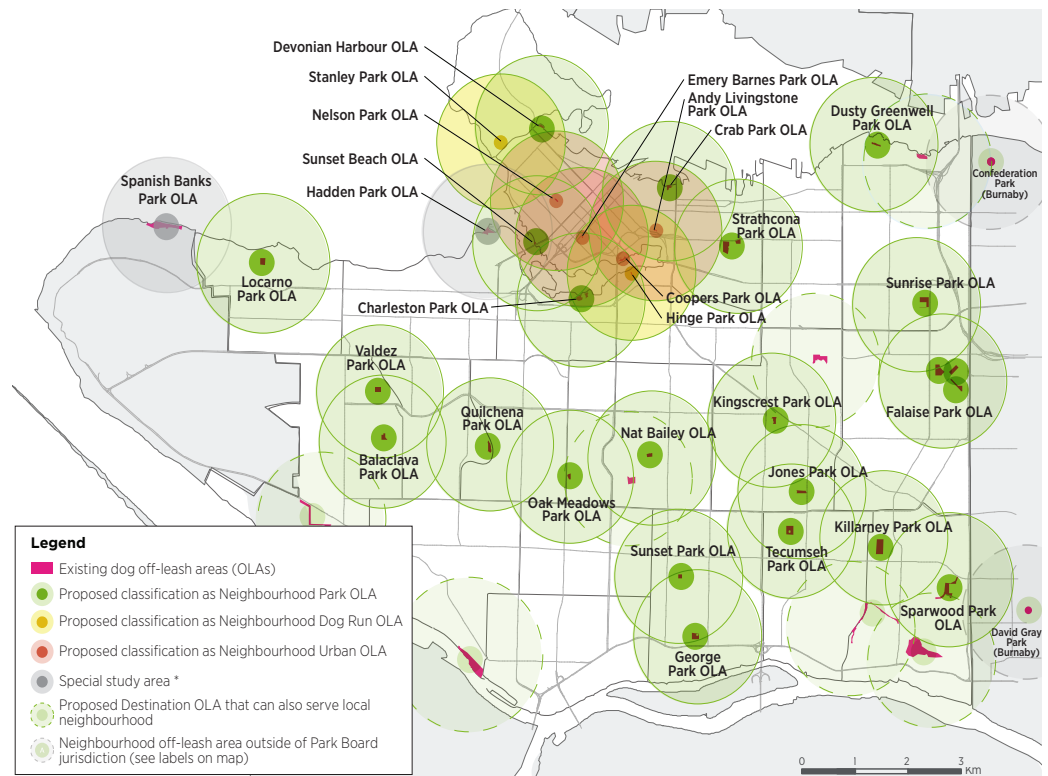
Establishing two classifications of dog off-leash areas will help distribute a variety of dog off-leash areas equitably across the city. Neighbourhood Classification: smaller dog off-leash areas (less than 1.2 ha or 3 acres), that are more widely available, and Destination Classification: larger dog off-leash areas (minimum 1.2 ha or 3 acres) and trails that offer off-leash opportunities in a more natural setting.

1.2 Provide access to Neighbourhood dog off-leash areas within an approximately 15 minute walk of most residents.

Survey respondents (44%) are willing to walk up to 10 minutes, and an additional 42% are willing to walk up to 20 minutes to access a dog off-leash area. We recommend providing Neighbourhood dog off-leash areas within an approximately 15 minute walk of most Vancouver residents. Figure 6, below, indicates in green shading a 1.2 km radius from each of Vancouver's existing dog off-leash areas, which translates to a 15 minute walk at an average speed of just under 5 km per hour.

Developing a service radius¹ for each Neighbourhood dog off-leash area helps assess distribution of dog off-leash areas across the city. However, walkability is also influenced by an individual's physical ability, the availability of sidewalks, crosswalks, street crossing signals, and topography (e.g. steep slopes). Neighbourhood composition (e.g. seniors, persons with disabilities etc.) is also important to consider when evaluating the service level of dog off-leash areas.

¹ Assessing a 1.2 km service radius for each dog off-leash area identifies general distribution patterns across the city. See 'Service Analysis' on page 12 for an evaluation of priority underserved neighbourhoods.



*These areas require further localized consultation and evaluation before making any recommendations about classification or future use. Hadden Park is unique due to the specific terms of the gift of the site to the City, and the location of Spanish Banks West Park creates a legal and jurisdictional situation that requires further research and consultation with other government agencies.

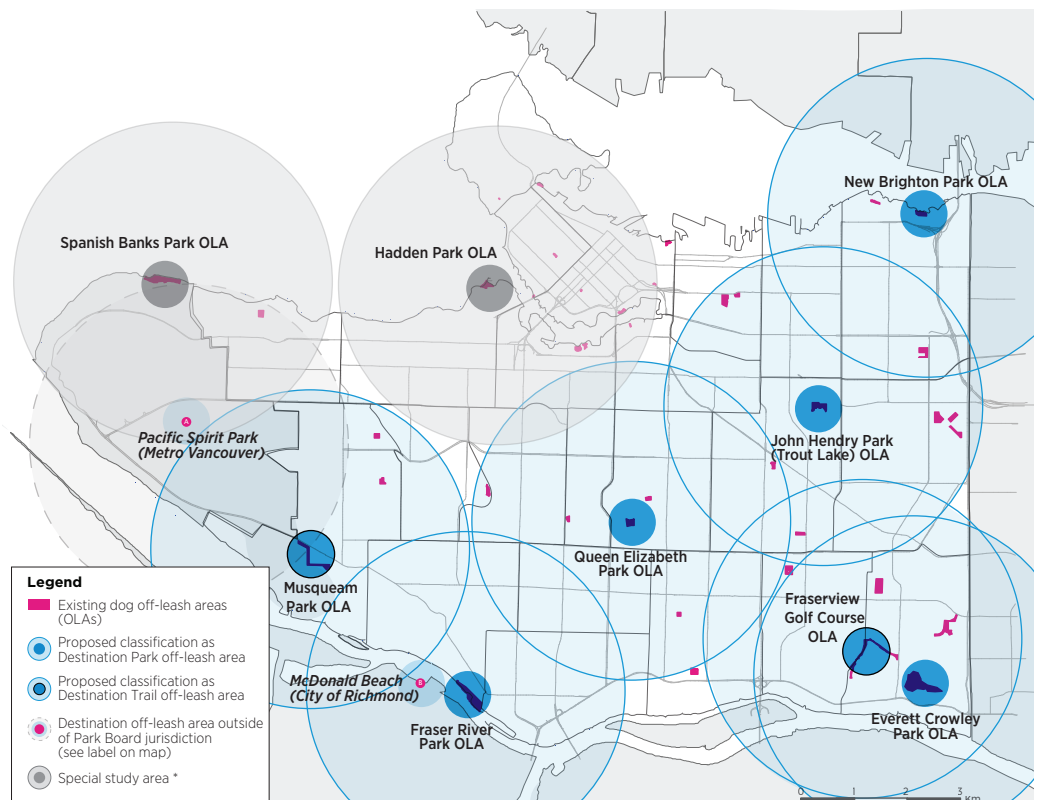
FIGURE 6 - EXISTING DOG OFF-LEASH AREAS RECOMMENDED FOR 'NEIGHBOURHOOD' CLASSIFICATION

56% of survey respondents are willing to drive 10 minutes or more to reach a dog off-leash area

1.3 Provide access to Destination dog off-leash areas within an approximately 35 minute walk or short drive for most residents.

There are several well-distributed, larger dog off-leash areas in Vancouver that could qualify as 'Destination dog off-leash areas' based on their size (>1.2 ha or >3 acres), parking availability, and special amenities (i.e. these sites either provide dog access to water for swimming, or have diverse conditions that help provide a range of off-leash experiences).

Blue shading in Figure 7, below, indicates a 3 km radius from existing dog off-leash areas that are recommended as Destination classification. The location and distribution of these sites shows that most Vancouver residents can access Destination dog off-leash areas within a 10 minute drive or approximately 35 minute walk (at an average walking speed of 5 km per hour, noting the restrictions to walking estimates identified in Recommendation 1.2).



*These areas require further localized consultation and evaluation before making any recommendations about classification or future use. Hadden Park is unique due to the specific terms of the gift of the site to the City, and the location of Spanish Banks West Park creates a legal and jurisdictional situation that requires further research and consultation with other government agencies.

FIGURE 7 - EXISTING DOG OFF-LEASH AREAS RECOMMENDED FOR 'DESTINATION' CLASSIFICATION

1.4 Add new dog off-leash areas and prioritize under-served and densely populated neighbourhoods.

Mapping and analysis identifies areas of the city that are more than 1 km or a ~15 minute walk from an existing dog off-leash area (see Figure 3). In order to provide more equitable access across the city, it is necessary to also assess which neighbourhoods have the greatest number of licensed dogs¹, the highest residential population density, and projected population growth.

Highest priority neighbourhoods for new or enhanced dog off-leash areas based on combined assessments, and ranked in order of priority by survey respondents:

- 47% Kitsilano
- 45% Mount Pleasant
- 35% Downtown
- 33% West End
- 32% Grandview-Woodland
- 19% Fairview

1 This methodology, while sound, is limited by low licensing compliance for dogs in Vancouver.

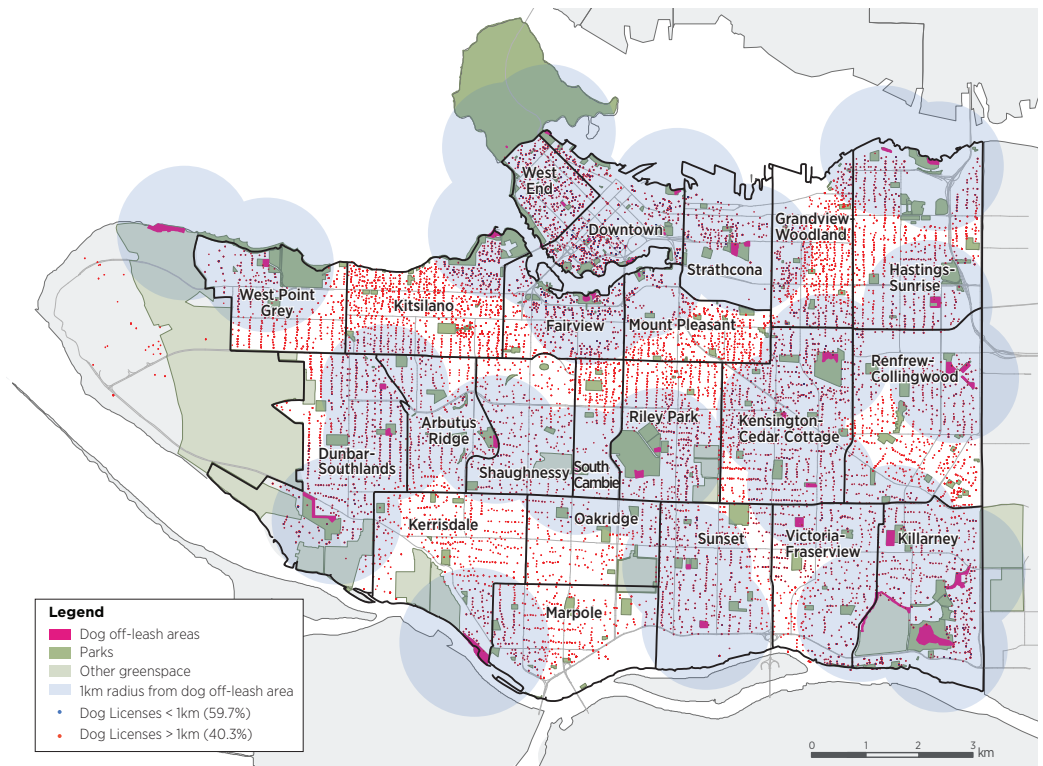


FIGURE 8 - LOCATION OF DOG LICENSES AND 1 KM BUFFER ZONE AROUND EXISTING DOG OFF-LEASH AREAS

80% of dog off-leash areas east of Main Street have time restrictions.

1.5 Improve access to existing off-leash areas by removing time-of-use restrictions where possible.

Eighteen of the city's 36 dog off-leash areas currently restrict dog off-leash activity to select morning and evening hours, and five of these restrict dog off-leash activity during summer months only (See Appendix, Figure A-1). Removing time-of-use restrictions will provide a higher and more reliable level of dog off-leash service across the city, reduce confusion among users, and make the City's enforcement resources available for other dog-related activity.

Hours of off-leash access should be standardized across most parks, from 6am - 10pm (night-time restrictions would still apply).

Removing time-of-use restrictions would require modifying the size of some dog off-leash areas. For example, where the existing dog off-leash area currently occupies the entire park, the Park Board would redesign the shared space to designate a portion of the park as a full-time dog off-leash area, in consultation with the surrounding neighbourhood. In addition, sites adjacent to schools or sites with other time-related constraints (e.g. wildlife activity) will require additional study to evaluate their suitability for allowing all-day access.



Tampa, Florida. Flickr CC: Eva Funderburgh

02 Design

Provide a variety of dog off-leash areas with clear and effective boundaries, and support the needs of people with and without dogs in parks with dog off-leash areas.



Overview of Design Recommendations

- 2.1 Provide a variety of dog off-leash areas.
- 2.2 Provide space and amenities to make dog off-leash areas more appealing to use and universally accessible.
- 2.3 Design dog off-leash areas to be durable, with suitable surfacing.
- 2.4 Design dog off-leash areas to minimize environmental impacts.
- 2.5 Locate dog off-leash areas adjacent to more compatible land and park uses, and mitigate those that are less compatible.
- 2.6 Restrict dog activity from a greater range of park areas.
- 2.7 Clearly mark dog off-leash area boundaries and setback distances where needed.
- 2.8 Assess existing site features and adjacent uses to determine appropriate boundary tools.
- 2.9 Ensure dog off-leash area signage is concise, clear and consistent.
- 2.10 Expand the separated dog waste program and promote initiatives to effectively manage dog waste.

2.1 Provide a variety of dog off-leash areas

The following five types of dog off-leash areas are recommended to provide a variety of off-leash opportunities. Recommendations are identified for the size, surface materials, amenities, boundary tools and circulation patterns for each of the five proposed types of dog off-leash area.

2.1.1 Destination Park dog off-leash area



Size: larger than 1.2 ha (>3 acres)



Boundaries: fencing (secure / non-secure), bollards, vegetation



Circulation: Separated off-leash looping paths



Surfacing: Grass and fine crushed gravel

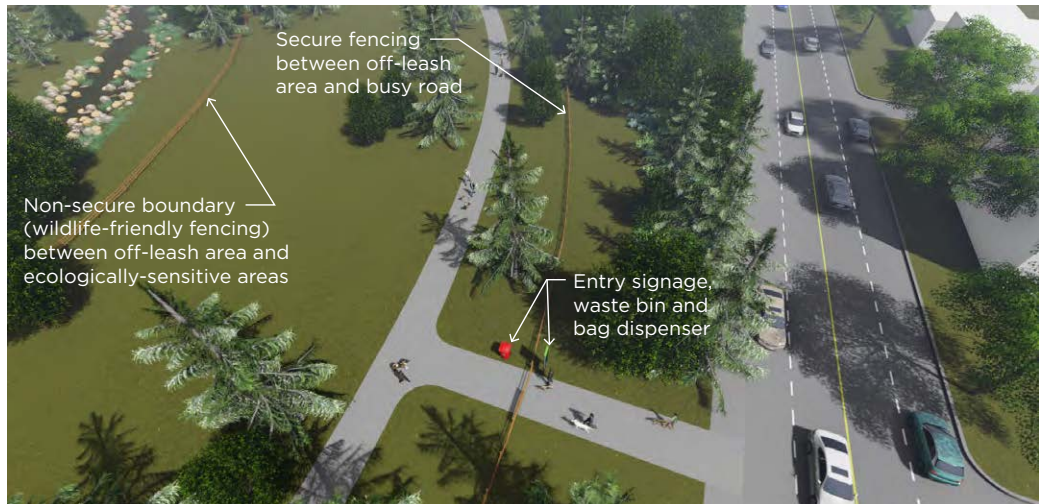


Adjacencies: Flexible



Standard amenities and special amenities such as washrooms, water access, drinking water, and parking

2.1.2 Destination Trail dog off-leash area



Size: No size target



Boundaries: fencing (secure / non-secure), bollards, vegetation



Circulation: Off-leash path



Surfacing: Gravel path, planting

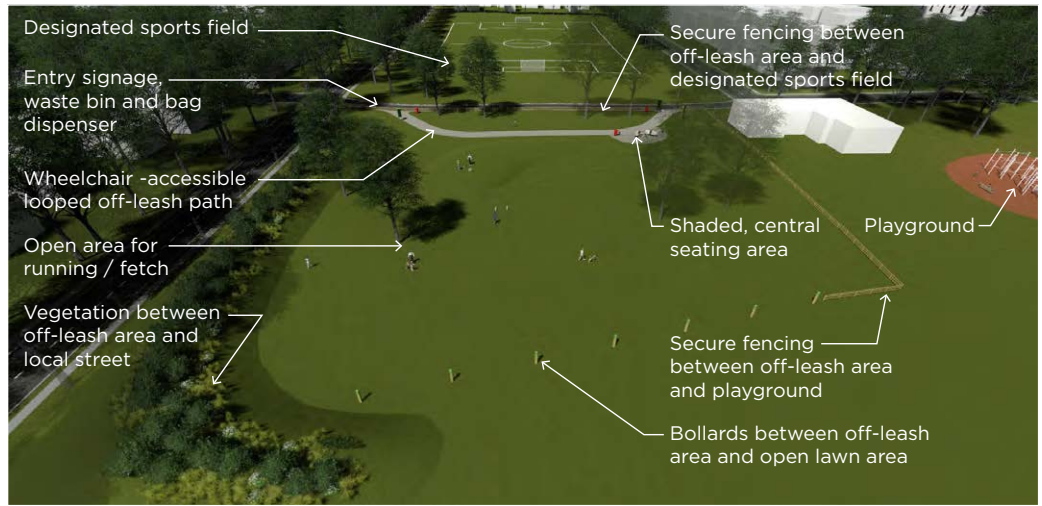








Adjacencies: Flexible



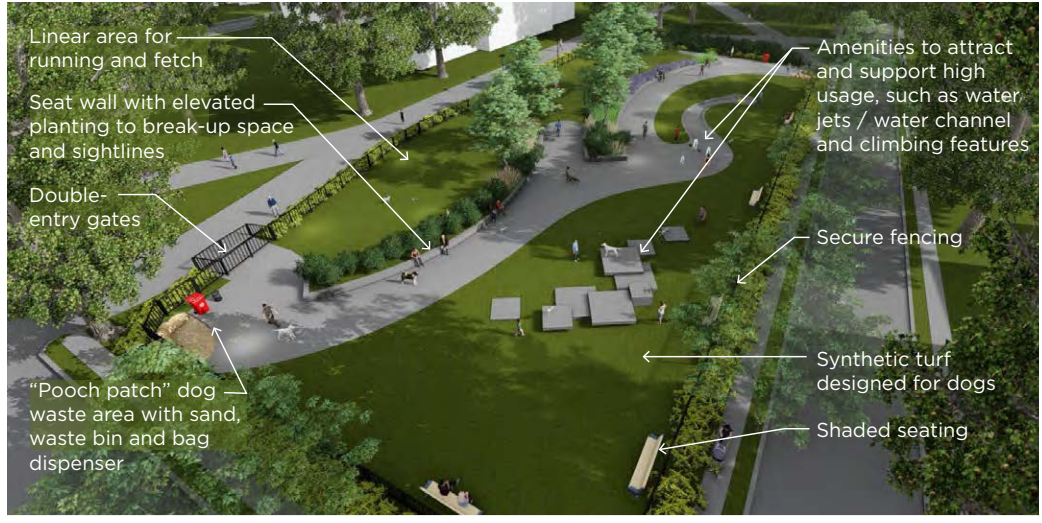
Standard amenities: waste bins, open space, shade, bag dispensers, seating.

2.1.3 Neighbourhood Park dog off-leash area



-  Size: From 0.4 to 1.2 ha (1-3 acres)
-  Boundaries: fencing (secure / non-secure), bollards, vegetation
-  Circulation: Separated off-leash looping path
-  Surfacing: Grass and fine crushed gravel
-  Adjacencies: More compatible adjacencies
-  Standard amenities: waste bins, open space, shade, bag dispensers, seating. Special amenities on case-by-case basis.

2.1.4 Neighbourhood Urban dog off-leash area



-  Size: From 0.04 to 0.4 ha (0.1 to 1 acre)
-  Boundaries: secure, high quality fencing
-  Circulation: Designed to reduce congestion
-  Surfacing: Durable, specialty surfacing
-  Adjacencies: More compatible adjacencies
-  Standard and special amenities to attract and support high use, such as water play and agility features

2.1.5 Neighbourhood Dog Run off-leash area



Size: From 0.04 to 0.4 ha (0.1 to 1 acre)



Boundaries: secure, standard fencing (e.g. chain link)



Circulation: Designed to reduce congestion



Surfacing: Durable standard surfacing, such as fine crushed gravel



Adjacencies: More compatible



Standard amenities: waste bins, open space, shade, bag dispensers, seating. Special amenities on case-by-case basis.

2.2 Provide space and amenities to make dog off-leash areas more appealing to use and universally accessible.

2.2.1 Size



When assessing the target size for a dog off-leash area, available land, adjacent park and neighbourhood uses, and the comfort and safety of all are to be considered. Ideally, the dog off-leash area will be large enough to meet demand without becoming degraded from overuse. It is important to recognize trade-offs between size, durability of surfacing, potential conflict amongst dogs, and budgeting constraints.



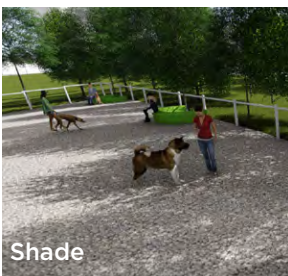
FIGURE 9 - SIZE TARGETS FOR DOG OFF-LEASH AREAS



Waste Bins



Open Space



Shade



Dog waste bag dispensers



Seating

FIGURE 11 A - STANDARD AMENITIES

Small, intensively used sites require more durable surfacing and design features to engage dogs in a variety of off-leash activities, helping stimulate dogs and mitigate conflict. At small off-leash areas dog owners tend to be more observant of their dog's behaviour, but there is potential for more conflict amongst dogs if the site is highly used. At large off-leash areas dog owners may be less observant of their dog's behaviour; this can lead to more uncollected dog waste and conflicts developing between dogs if owners or handlers are not paying close attention.

Whether dog handlers are using large or small off-leash areas with secure or permeable boundaries, they must always be in full control of their dog(s). The City of Vancouver and the Vancouver Park Board recognize they cannot control all park users, nor eliminate all risk to park users. It is impossible to fully secure all Vancouver parks and allow multiple park uses.

See 'Amenities' in the Implementation Guide for recommended sizes for each of the five proposed types of dog off-leash area. Provide a range of standard and special amenities at parks with dog off-leash areas to support and attract higher intensities of use. This helps keep dog off-leash activity out of on-leash areas. Locate seating and amenities away from entries to discourage people and dogs from congregating at entries.

2.2.2 Standard and Special Amenities



See the 'Amenities' section in the Implementation Guide for recommendations on standard and special amenities (shown in Figures 10 and 11) to be incorporated at all types of dog off-leash areas. Special amenities should be considered in selected types of dog off-leash areas or on a site-by-site basis depending on demand, available resources, and potential partnerships with community groups or private companies for sponsorship.

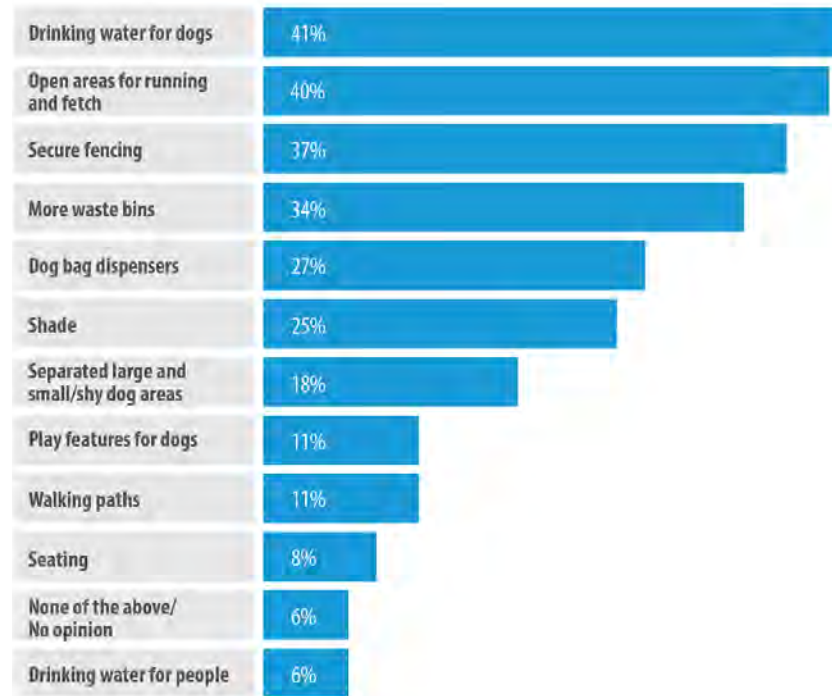


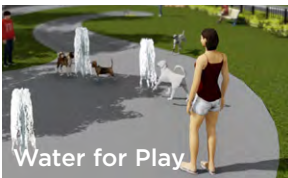
FIGURE 10 - SURVEY RESULTS: WHAT AMENITIES WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IN VANCOUVER'S OFF-LEASH AREAS?



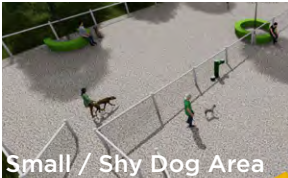
Looping Paths



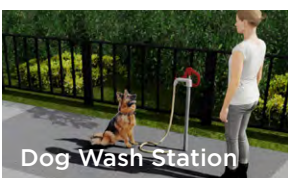
Drinking Fountains



Water for Play



Small / Shy Dog Area



Dog Wash Station



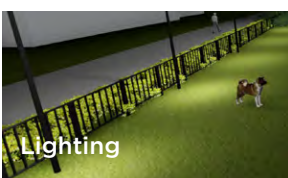
Agility Features



Washrooms



Mix of Park Conditions



Lighting



Parking

2.2.3 Site Circulation



Where possible, provide direct access into the dog off-leash area from the park boundary (e.g. parking lot or sidewalk) to reduce instances of dogs being off-leash between the park boundary and the designated dog off-leash area.

Paths encourage people to walk with dogs, thereby reducing congregation of dogs at entries and potentially reducing conflicts from developing. Provide looped dog off-leash paths within Destination Park and larger Neighbourhood Park dog off-leash areas. The majority of paths should be wheelchair accessible and designed in consideration of those with limited mobility.

2.2.4 Universal Access



Help meet the needs of persons with disabilities by integrating the following considerations throughout the design process:

- Wheelchair accessible routes to dog off-leash areas
- Accessible seating, including the route leading to it
- Accessible gates for fenced off-leash areas
- Accessible fountains, in consideration of dog-owners who use wheelchairs or other mobility devices
- Wheelchair accessible parking, particularly for 'Destination' classification dog off-leash areas. Provide lay-bys near dog off-leash areas, for drop off and pick up
- Universally accessible washrooms in parks with dog off-leash areas, particularly 'Destination' classification parks that are reached by vehicle.
- Consider adding braille to key in-park signs
- Consider lighting as a special amenity, to improve accessibility

See Recommendation 4.2.5 on clarifying exemptions for dog waste clean-up for people who have physical disabilities that prevent them from doing so.

2.2.5 Gates



New sites with secure fencing should have double-entry gates to reduce the chance of dog off-leash dogs escaping when new people or dogs arrive at the site. Provide multiple entries, including gated access for maintenance vehicles. Other considerations for securely-fenced sites include:

- Ensure gates are accessible for persons with disabilities
- Locate gates away from corners to reduce “pinch points” at entries
- Provide visual obstacles at entry to reduce wide open sightlines between dogs entering the site and dogs already within the site

2.2.6 Vegetation



Plants for dog off-leash areas should be durable and kept low for increased visibility for other park users, where appropriate. Use of native vegetation should be encouraged. Check the ASPCA database of poisonous plants to ensure vegetation in off-leash areas is not toxic to dogs. Negative impacts on existing vegetation by dogs may include digging, urinating, or trampling due to high intensity dog activity.

FIGURE 11 B - SPECIAL AMENITIES



Natural Turf



Fine-Crushed Gravel



Synthetic Turf



Concrete



Asphalt



Wood Chips



Sand

Strategies to protect new and existing vegetation in dog off-leash areas include:

- Use raised planters and/or protective edging (e.g. boulders, low post and wire mesh fence) to restrict dog access to planted areas
- Locate higher intensity use areas, such as seating areas and entries, away from existing vegetation
- Maintain a thick layer (~75mm) of wood mulch over any areas of exposed or sensitive root systems
- Use signage to remind owners to discourage dogs from digging in planted areas

Low plantings or areas of taller grasses at dog off-leash areas have several benefits:

- Breaks up low sightlines, helping reduce conflict among dogs
- Provides seasonal interest, textures and scents
- Enhances biodiversity
- Provides buffer zones between mown grass and adjacent natural area

Ensure dog off-leash areas are kept free of wild grasses with barbed seeds (e.g. 'spear grass') which can harm dogs.

2.3 Design dog off-leash areas to be durable, with suitable surfacing.

2.3.1 Surfacing Materials



The selection of surface materials should be informed by the usage intensity of the site, appeal to park users, comfort and safety for dogs, and cost. It is challenging to find surface materials that are both durable and attractive to users in Vancouver's wet climate; while grass areas are highly desired by park users, they do not withstand high intensity usage and can quickly become muddy. See 'Surfacing' in the Implementation Guide for surfacing recommendations.

2.3.2 Erosion

To reduce drainage and erosion issues, dog off-leash areas should ideally have the following characteristics:

- Have well-draining soil
- Be relatively flat or have gently rolling terrain
- Drain toward a suitable receiving area
- Receive moderate to high sun exposure

2.3.3 Drainage

The selection of surface materials is important to ensure good drainage and durability under wet conditions. Where drainage is poor, engineer the sub-surface to prevent ponding and maintain the quality of the surfacing. Water that is collected from dog off-leash areas should be infiltrated to the ground in a suitable location rather than going into storm sewer system where it can have negative impacts on water quality in receiving waters (e.g. False Creek, Burrard Inlet, Fraser River).

FIGURE 12 - OFF-LEASH AREA SURFACING

44% of survey respondents rank 'Designated ecologically-sensitive areas' as the most important area to add dog restrictions.

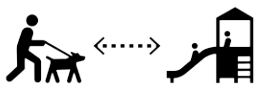
2.4 Design dog off-leash areas to minimize environmental impacts.

Dog off-leash areas should be located away from ecologically-sensitive areas, such as biodiversity hot spots, wildlife corridors, water bodies, and stream corridors. Areas that may primarily have seasonal sensitivity should also be protected, such as sites that attract and support migratory birds, or sites that have ground nesting birds in spring. Buffer zones and wildlife-friendly fencing should be used between dog off-leash areas and ecologically-sensitive areas. Minimum setback distances between dog off-leash areas and ecologically-sensitive areas should be determined with professional biologists.

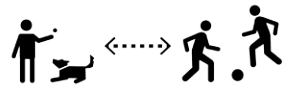
Educational signage should be incorporated into ecologically-sensitive areas to inform dog owners about the importance of keeping dogs out and preventing dogs from chasing wildlife. This should be done for all ecologically-sensitive areas within parks.

Proper dog waste management is important to reduce the transmission of pathogens to wildlife and to surface water, as well as to other dogs and people. Water runoff from dog off-leash areas or parks with high numbers of dogs should be directed to infiltrate in an appropriate location where it will not introduce excess nutrients and pathogens to surface water.

Ecologically-sensitive areas should be monitored for all types of dog activity (on-leash and off-leash) and additional mitigation measures implemented if required. Soils and vegetation at dog on-leash and off-leash areas should also be monitored and mitigation measures taken to minimize impacts.

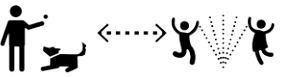


2.5 Locate dog off-leash areas adjacent to more compatible land and park uses, and mitigate those that are less compatible.

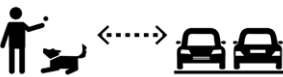


2.5.1 Optimal adjacencies

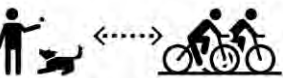
When assessing potential new locations for dog off-leash areas, a thorough review of the adjacent land and park uses is recommended to avoid or mitigate conflicts. Dog off-leash areas should be located where they reduce the potential conflict between dog activity and adjacent neighbourhood and park uses.



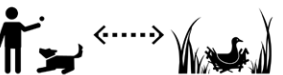
Compatible land uses located next to dog off-leash areas include:



- Commercial
- Municipal
- Institutional
- Light industrial



Compatible park adjacencies (i.e. park uses next to dog off-leash areas with permeable boundaries) include:



- Unstructured (non-programmed) open lawn space
- Other vegetated areas with low ecological sensitivity

FIGURE 13 - LESS COMPATIBLE ADJACENT LAND AND PARK USES FOR DOG AREAS

2.5.2 Mitigating less compatible adjacencies

Where adjacencies to less compatible land uses cannot be avoided, mitigation measures should be used to reduce chances of conflict. The following adjacencies have been identified through consultation feedback and site evaluations as less compatible with dog off-leash areas. The use of secure fencing or a minimum setback distance of 50 to 75 meters is recommended to separate these park uses from dog off-leash areas:

- Ecologically-sensitive areas
- Busy roads
- Multi-use trails
- Playgrounds, wading pools and splash pads
- Designated sports fields
- High-intensity park use areas
- Community Gardens

An assessment of site conditions should inform all mitigation measures. See the 'Mitigation Tools' section of the Implementation Guide for additional recommendations.

2.6 Restrict dog activity from a greater range of park areas.



FIGURE 14 - 'NO DOGS ALLOWED' SIGN

Dogs are currently prohibited from playgrounds and artificial turf fields. To help reduce conflicts in parks and to maintain the safety, health, and comfort of park users with and without dogs, we recommend that on-leash and off-leash dog activity be restricted from the following areas:

- Playgrounds
- Wading pools
- Splash pads
- Designated ecologically-sensitive areas
- Designated sports fields
- Community Gardens

2.7 Clearly mark dog off-leash area boundaries and setback distances where needed.

A lack of clear on-the-ground dog off-leash area boundaries contributes to dog off-leash activity in on-leash areas, and makes it hard for people to know where dog off-leash activity is allowed and expected. Clearly define dog off-leash area boundaries using a combination of secure and permeable tools depending on the adjacent park uses, land uses and existing site features.

It is recommended that proposed changes to any dog off-leash area boundaries are reviewed to identify potential conflicting adjacencies and potential mitigation measures (see Recommendations 2.5 and 2.6).

Use signage to clearly identify that dogs are restricted from setback zones that separate less compatible park adjacencies (see 2.5.2). For example, dogs are currently not allowed, whether on-leash or off-leash, in or within 15 meters of playgrounds. This setback distance occupies a significant amount of space, making it difficult for dogs on-leash to circulate through parks with playgrounds. It is recommended that this setback distance be reduced to five meters, with signage to clearly identify that dogs are prohibited within this buffer zone around the playground.

83% of survey respondents agree that dog off-leash areas should have clear boundaries.

2.8 Assess existing site features and adjacent uses to determine appropriate boundary tools.

It is recommended that dog off-leash area boundaries are clearly marked using a combination of tools, which can be grouped into secure boundaries and permeable boundaries:

Secure boundaries include different types of fencing that are designed to contain dogs, such as:

- Decorative Steel Fencing
- Chain Link Fencing
- Post and Rail (with wire mesh infill)

Permeable boundaries include tools that make boundaries visible and legible “on the ground,” but are more permeable. These boundaries allow people to move freely through a space, and do not securely contain dogs. Examples of permeable boundaries include:

- Post and Rail (without wire mesh infill)
- Bollards
- Vegetation

See 'Boundaries' in the Implementation Guide for more detailed information about the boundary tools listed above.

The selection of appropriate boundary tools should be based on an assessment of the potential for conflict with adjacent park and neighbourhood uses, existing site features, site circulation, and input from local park users. Securely fenced areas can reduce conflict and provide visitors with a safe enclosure to practice agility, obedience and recall training with their dog.

Site assessment should establish whether secure fencing is appropriate, as fenced areas dedicated to dog off-leash use often exclude other park uses, and fencing introduces physical and visual barriers that break up the park space. Consider the use of bollards and vegetation where a more permeable boundary is preferred.



FIGURE 15 - BOUNDARY TOOLS



FIGURE 16 - PROPOSED ENTRY SIGN

2.9 Ensure dog off-leash area signage is concise, clear and consistent.

The boundaries of all dog off-leash areas should be delineated with signage in addition to one or more of the other boundary tools referenced above. Signage content and placement should minimize visual clutter, while providing information for people with and without dogs to help manage expectations about park use. Messaging for in-park signage will vary depending on the type of sign and its purpose, such as identifying boundaries of dog off-leash areas, etiquette, by-laws or educational signage. Elements of successful signage include:

- Clear and concise messaging
- Simple, accessible language
- Graphic symbols in addition to text to increase its accessibility
- Consistent visual language at all sites so that dog off-leash areas are readily recognized from a distance and from site to site

2.9.1 Entry signs

Entry signage should include:

- Etiquette for using dog off-leash areas
- Map of dog off-leash area boundaries
- Cite relevant by-laws
- Contact information (i.e. for by-law enforcement, reporting damage or maintenance requirements, emergency contact information)
- Notice area for the Park Board and dog owners to share information about dog off-leash area events, training opportunities, services, etc.
- Notices when dog disease cases, including zoonotic diseases, have been identified in the area (e.g. parasites, bacterial infections, kennel cough, etc.)

2.9.2 Boundary signs

Boundary signs should be located regularly in unfenced dog off-leash areas, clearly identifying the extent of the designated off-leash area, and clarifying which side of the boundary marker is on-leash and which side is for dogs off-leash.

2.9.3 Educational signage

Signage can be a valuable tool to educate the public about health and safety concerns related to dogs in public spaces. See Recommendation 3.5 for potential strategies for educational signage in dog off-leash areas, as guided by animal behaviour professionals.

98% of survey respondents agree that dog waste management is the top challenge for dog off-leash areas.



FIGURE 17 - POOCH PATCH

2.10 Expand the separated dog waste program and promote initiatives to effectively manage dog waste.

The City's existing separated dog waste "red bin" pilot project initiated in 2016 has been well-received by dog owners and non dog owners alike, and it is recommended that this project be expanded to all dog off-leash areas. Advantages of the separated dog waste pilot project are that the red bin is highly visible, it reduces the amount of dog waste in regular park bins, and it allows dog waste to be properly treated rather than sent to landfill. An adequate number of dog waste bins (preferably chained to fences or poles) should be well-distributed throughout the park to encourage greater use in locations readily accessible by maintenance staff, such as at entrances.

In order to improve dog waste management, we suggest that Animal Control Services consider a new approach to uncollected dog waste (see Recommendation 4.2.6), in order to improve compliance.

Public input indicated support for providing dog waste bag dispensers in parks. We recommend that these be highly durable, integrated into entry signage, and stocked by park users. The Park Board may also consider partnering with a private contractor to stock bags in dispensers in exchange for sponsorship branding on bags.

We also recommend providing a "pooch patch" at smaller sites with high use, such as Neighbourhood Urban dog off-leash areas. A "pooch patch" is an area designed for dogs to relieve themselves upon arrival to a park or dog off-leash area. It consists of well-draining sand surfacing, a post to attract use, a dog waste bag dispenser, a dog waste bin, and signage. Encouraging dogs to use a "pooch patch" helps limit dog waste to designated areas that are easier to clean.

Education programs are also important for encouraging compliance with dog waste pick up. Many dog owners do not realize the risks that uncollected dog waste present to the public, particularly to young children, or to receiving water bodies. Educational campaigns should encourage dog owners to keep close supervision of their dogs at off-leash areas in order to ensure that they are aware of their dog's waste.



Nantwich Litter Group (www.nantwichtowncouncil.gov.uk)

03 Stewardship

Support the success of dog off-leash areas through effective management, communication and education.



Overview of Stewardship Recommendations

- 3.1 Formalize residents' role in dog off-leash area stewardship.
- 3.2 Engage local residents in establishing, changing, or eliminating dog off-leash areas.
- 3.3 Establish etiquette guidelines for all people and dogs using off-leash areas.
- 3.4 Consider developing dog off-leash area maintenance, monitoring, and evaluation guidelines.
- 3.5 Promote educational initiatives to improve the safety and success of dog off-leash areas.
- 3.6 Investigate potential partnership and funding opportunities to support dog off-leash areas.

3.1 Formalize residents' role in off-leash area stewardship.

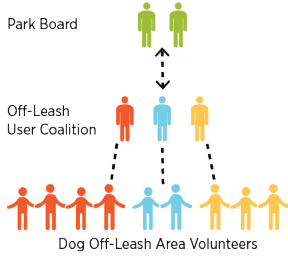


FIGURE 18 - PROPOSED ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE

People who use dog off-leash areas are interested in ensuring the long-term success of those spaces, "... [as] dog owners are community members who regularly visit parks and have a vested interest in keeping parks clean and safe."¹ The regular visitors to dog off-leash areas play an important role in fostering a sense of community in neighbourhoods. In addition, there is a lot of informal sharing of information and resources among dog off-leash area users.

There is an opportunity to formally recognize this valuable role played by residents by establishing a 'Off-Leash User Coalition' to work in formal partnership with the Park Board. In public consultation for this Strategy, participants supported a model of community stewardship that allows volunteer activity to develop organically, building on the personal investment people feel for their local or favourite dog off-leash area. As groups of volunteers develop at the neighbourhood level, or in association with a specific dog off-leash area, representatives from each of these groups could form a larger, city-wide 'Off-Leash User Coalition'. This Coalition Group could work in formal partnership with the Park Board with a mandate to foster responsible dog ownership through educational initiatives, and to care for Vancouver's dog off-leash areas by helping monitor and maintain these sites.

Having a Coalition Group helps provide long-term continuity, as volunteers from the different off-leash areas may change over time. Moreover, it allows the Park Board to develop a partnership agreement with a single group of representatives, rather than developing agreements for each dog off-leash area in the city.

Volunteer responsibilities could include:

- Peer education on topics such as etiquette, understanding dog behaviour, and responsible dog ownership and licensing.
- Monitoring and reporting on conditions at dog off-leash areas (e.g. damage, maintenance), and activities such as instances of noncompliance for people not following park etiquette. To avoid conflict, the intent should be to simply record noncompliance, not to "police" others' behaviour.
- Fundraising for off-leash area special amenities.
- Light maintenance work, such as picking up dog waste and filling in holes dug by dogs (conducted on a regular basis, and/or through organized work parties).
- Facilitating communications between the Park Board and the general public.

Park Board support for local stewardship could include:

- Establishing a simple and direct means of communication between volunteers, the Park Board and the public (e.g. to exchange information about maintenance concerns).
- Providing meeting space for Dog Off-Leash User Coalition.
- Providing materials and tools for light maintenance work, such as sand to fill in holes.
- Providing free access to dog-related educational seminars.
- Working with Animal Services to provide discounted dog license fees to Coalition members.
- Hosting in-park events such as "Doggie Days" to attract volunteers, build community, and strengthen relationships between Park Board staff and local residents.

¹ Parks Barks official off-leash hours policy, New York City Parks and Recreation, 2007.

3.2 Engage local residents in establishing, changing, or eliminating dog off-leash areas.

The Park Board should undertake a more detailed review of a dog off-leash site when monitoring and evaluation reveals a problem, when a park re-design or development triggers changes to an off-leash area, or when the approved guidelines for dog off-leash areas change. Effort should be made to understand the nature of the problem, and identify the options for resolving the issue.

Sites with problems should be given “probationary” status for a period of time in order to let users know about the issues and the timeline for review of the site.

Depending on the nature of the problem, possible options for addressing the issue may include:

- In-park education programs to ensure park users understand etiquette and relevant by-laws
- Revision to dog off-leash area boundaries
- Clearer delineation of dog off-leash area boundaries, with possible addition of secure fencing to separate dog off-leash activity from less compatible adjacencies
- Increased enforcement activity at the site
- Relocation of the dog off-leash area to another more suitable site nearby
- Site closure (decisions regarding closure of dog off-leash areas should be clearly communicated to all users.)

3.3 Establish etiquette guidelines for all people and dogs using off-leash areas.

A consistent dog off-leash area etiquette is recommended to set expectations for both dog owners and non-dog owners in dog off-leash areas. The etiquette will complement the Parks Control By-law and Animal Control By-law.

The proposed draft etiquette is as follows:

For people with dogs using dog off-leash areas:

- Pick up after your dog
- Keep dogs from being aggressive with people and other animals
- Keep dogs within sight and under voice control
- All dogs must be licensed
- No persistent barking
- No digging
- Maximum 3 dogs per handler
- Dogs must be on leash when entering and exiting off-leash area

For all people using dog off-leash areas:

- Be prepared to encounter dogs off-leash
- Supervise children closely
- Limit open food
- Do not approach a dog without owner permission

Proposed signage highlights the most important etiquette guidelines as identified in our survey.



FIGURE 19 - PROPOSED ETIQUETTE GUIDELINE SIGNAGE

3.4 Consider developing dog off-leash area maintenance, monitoring, and evaluation guidelines.

Regular monitoring and inspection of dog off-leash areas informs maintenance needs (e.g. capacity of garbage bins, presence of uncollected dog waste) while periodic inspections could identify signs of overuse, damaged or malfunctioning site elements (e.g. drinking fountains), vandalism, or other issues. Consider developing an electronic log of observations and reports for dog off-leash areas in order to track the following information on an ongoing basis:¹

- Number and nature of by-law and etiquette infractions
- Number and severity of risk management safety issues
- Extent of wear / damage to turf, planting, natural areas, and amenities
- Number and nature of interactions with wildlife
- Number and nature of injuries to animals and people
- Number and nature of noise complaints
- Extent of uncollected dog waste
- General observations about user patterns

Maintaining records can help track trends at individual dog off-leash areas over time and help identify persistent issues that could be addressed through site redesigns, upgrades, or education initiatives.

Park users and volunteers can play an important role in helping document and report observations. Users are currently encouraged to report incidents to 3-1-1, but can also use the City's "VanConnect" mobile app to report the following:

- General dog complaints
- Dogs dog off-leash in parks
- Noise complaints in parks
- Garbage in parks
- Park maintenance concerns
- Vegetation issues in parks
- Other park concerns

Consider expanding "VanConnect" to collect a broader range of input from park users, and offer expanded resources for people looking for information related to dogs in the city. The app could include maps of dog off-leash areas, so people can readily locate the nearest one. In addition, it could include links to educational resources related to dog behaviour, dog interactions with wildlife, dog-related by-laws etc. App users could report on activity in off-leash areas, including positive feedback (e.g. reporting that a park had no uncollected dog waste) as well as concerns (e.g. interactions between dogs and wildlife).

"VanConnect" could also be used as a means for the Park Board to communicate with volunteers associated with off-leash areas, such as the proposed Off-Leash User Coalition (see Recommendation 3.1). For example, app users could report when dog waste bag dispensers are empty, and the message could be relayed to local volunteers. App upgrades could help track volunteer activity associated with the off-leash areas, build momentum for continued community stewardship, and foster responsible dog ownership.

¹ Modeled after the City of Calgary's checklist for evaluating off-leash areas, City of Calgary 2011

91% of survey respondents agree that education of dog owners and dog training is important.

3.5 Promote educational initiatives to improve the safety and success of dog off-leash areas.

Educational in-park signage and online resources can play a valuable role in helping educate dog owners about dog behaviour, dog recall, minimizing impacts to wildlife and ecology, and other dog-related subjects. In-park educational signage and short video clips could be developed by the Park Board in consultation with animal behaviour experts, for educational messaging on a variety of topics, such as:

- Dog behaviour, such as understanding dog body language, recognizing stress responses, and responding to conflicts between dogs
- Managing aggression in dogs
- Dog training resources, such as formal courses and in-park educational sessions with professional trainers.
- Protection of wildlife (e.g. explain how dog activity and poor dog waste management can impact ecologically-sensitive areas)

Additional educational strategies should be considered for implementation in Vancouver parks and community centres to improve dog owners' and non-dog owners' understanding of dog behaviour, safe ways of interacting with dogs in public, and dog off-leash area etiquette, among other topics. Ideas for educational programs to consider include:

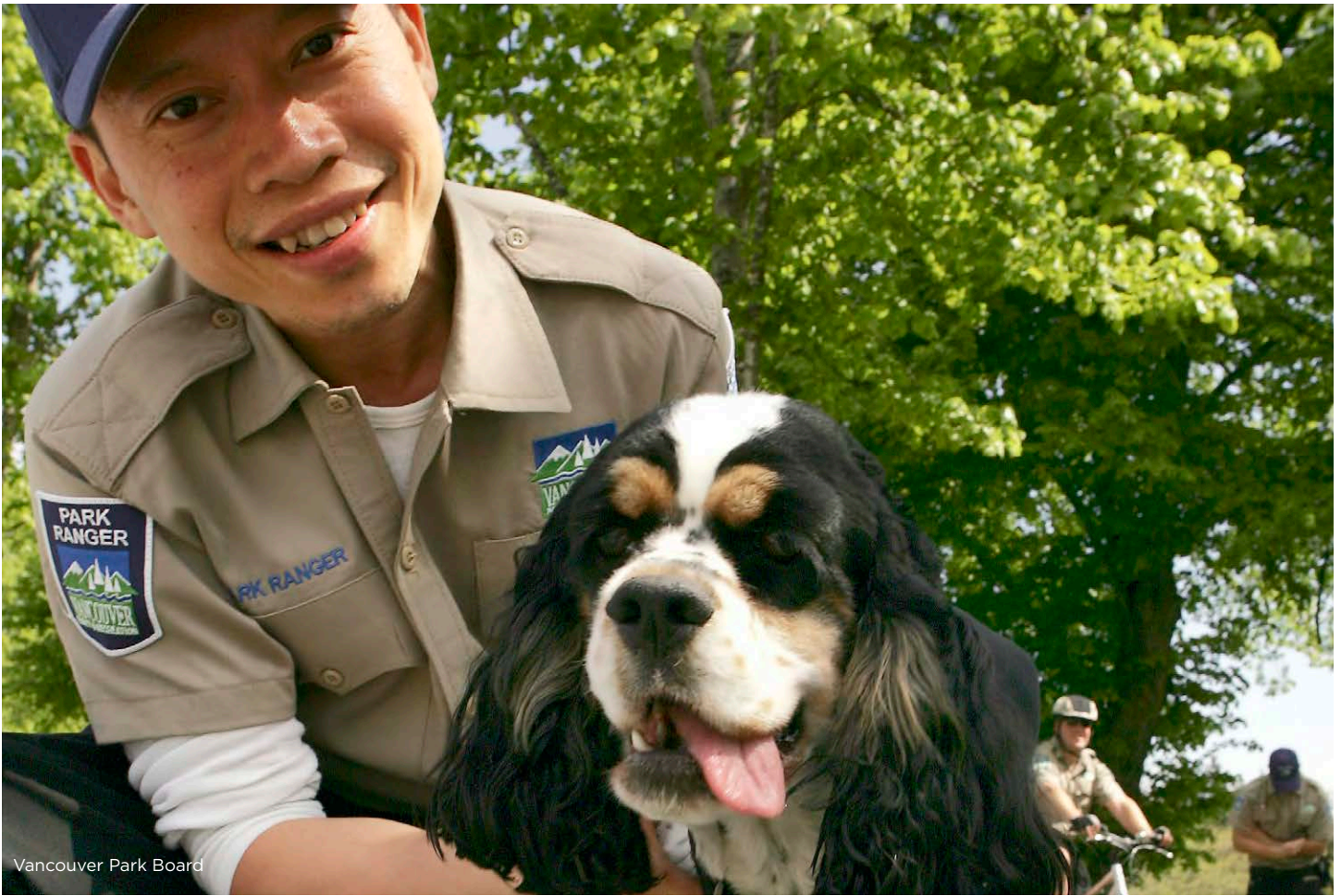
- Offering low-cost dog off-leash training courses through Park Board programming at community centres across the city.
- Offering low-cost or free dog training sessions in dog off-leash areas on topics that will help improve the functioning of dog off-leash areas for all users, such as recognizing and responding to signs of stress and aggression in dogs, dog obedience, and responding to conflict between dogs. Training could be offered in partnership with private training companies and/or non-profit organizations (e.g. BC SPCA).
- Developing a Vancouver Park Board "curriculum" for dog off-leash area usage, to be provided to private dog trainers to incorporate into dog training sessions.
- Encouraging the Park Board and the City to work together to develop a shared education strategy for dog owners across the city in order to increase compliance with by-laws and improve the relationship between park users and City and Park Board staff.
- Providing incentives for dog owners to participate in dog training sessions, such as by providing discounted annual license fees.
- Supporting the existing "Yellow Dog Project", promoting the use of a yellow ribbon or bandanna to provide a visual marker to communicate that the dog needs space, and may have special needs or considerations.

The City of Calgary Off-Leash Ambassador program offers free in-park training on dog recall.

3.6 Investigate potential partnership and funding opportunities to support dog off-leash areas.

Establishing new dog off-leash areas or renovating existing dog off-leash areas is currently funded through the Park Board capital budget. It is recommended that the Park Board explore additional funding tools and resources in order to implement the recommendations within this strategy. Potential funding sources include:

- Explore the feasibility of transferring a portion of license fees from the City to the Park Board for dog off-leash area improvements. This would provide greater incentives for dog licensing.
- Work with Off-Leash User Coalition to fundraise for special amenities or other upgrades at dog off-leash areas. (see Recommendation 3.1)
- Develop Corporate Sponsorship policies within the Park Board that can be used to guide the development of a private sponsorship program for dog off-leash areas.
- Explore funding mechanisms for an Off-Leash User Coalition. One possibility is to allocate a portion of dog license fees collected from licensing to the Coalition to support dog off-leash areas across the city.



Vancouver Park Board

04 Enforcement

Improve compliance and enforcement for dog-related by-laws.



Overview of Enforcement Recommendations

- 4.1 Increase dog licensing compliance rates.
- 4.2 Ensure consistency, enforceability, and relevance of by-laws for dogs in parks.
- 4.3 Consider increasing resources and powers for enforcement.
- 4.4 Work with City of Vancouver staff to develop educational resources to increase public knowledge about licensing and by-laws.
- 4.5 Develop specific requirements for commercial dog walkers.

The City of Vancouver receives over 30,000 calls every year to the city's 3-1-1 line regarding dogs.

Dog activity in Vancouver parks is currently regulated by both the Animal Control By-law and the Parks Control By-law. Enforcement activity is led by the City of Vancouver's Animal Services group in partnership with the Park Board.

Through consultation with park users, we have heard that the current level of compliance with existing Animal Control and Park Control By-laws is frustrating for people with and without dogs. Specific concerns focus on dog off-leash activity and dog waste left behind. Our surveys told us that a large number of residents feel there is not enough enforcement of dog activity in Vancouver parks, and that increased by-law enforcement is needed.

In order to support all park users, including people with and without dogs, everyone's compliance with by-laws is essential. The City of Vancouver's Animal Control By-law and the Park Board's Parks Control By-law regulate where dogs can and cannot be off-leash and require all dog handlers to manage their dog's behaviour. Opportunities for improving enforcement of by-laws are described below.

4.1 Increase dog licensing compliance rates.

Although it is required in the City of Vancouver to license dogs, many people do not. Dogs three months and older (including service dogs) must have a dog licence for identification. Beyond by-law requirements, there are many practical reasons for owners to license their dogs, including:

- Reuniting dogs with their owners if dogs go missing.
- Emergency protection: Licensed dogs are listed on the emergency pet registry so emergency responders know to look for them in an emergency.
- The cost of the licence (currently \$42 annually) is far less than the penalty for being caught without one (up to \$250).
- Dog facilities and the level of services (e.g. off-leash dog parks) are assessed and planned for using dog licensing statistics.

Many dog owners would like to see dog licensing revenues directly and transparently supporting dog activity in the city. They feel this would increase public support for licensing, and likely increase licensing compliance. Potential tools for increasing licensing compliance include:

- 4.1.1 Explore the feasibility of transferring a portion of licence fees to the Park Board for dog off-leash area improvements. This could provide greater incentives for dog licensing if a direct link between license fees and off-leash area improvements were clearly communicated to the public.
- 4.1.2 Encourage veterinarians to offer dog licensing in combination with annual vet checkups.
- 4.1.3 Develop a "rewards" program so that owners of licensed dogs can access discounts at participating pet stores, or access training resources.
- 4.1.4 Explore discounted licence fees for dog owners in need (possibly link to leisure access card program) and link fines or penalties to licensing fees for dogs deemed aggressive.
- 4.1.5 Provide auto-renewal options for licence fees.

4.2 Ensure consistency, enforceability, and relevance of by-laws for dogs in parks.

A number of updates are recommended to make the Vancouver Park Board Park Control By-law and City of Vancouver Animal Control By-law no. 9150 consistent and relevant to dog activity in parks. Ensure all requirements of the Park By-law and Animal Control By-law are clearly written, specific, and enforceable with the offence, value of the ticket, and dispute resolution process included in the by-law.

By-law Coordination

In the Park By-law and Animal Control By-law update and make consistent the following:

- 4.2.1 Determine maximum leash length: currently listed as 2.2m-long in the Park Control By-law and 2.5m-long in the Animal Control By-law.
- 4.2.2 Update and make consistent terminology regarding “vicious” and “aggressive” dogs.
- 4.2.3 Update and clarify the process for deeming a dog aggressive including process for appeal and impose restrictions such as prohibiting access to off-leash areas, higher licensing fees and maintaining a muzzling restriction.
- 4.2.4 Develop additional policy regarding dogs deemed aggressive in other municipalities.
- 4.2.5 Clarify exemptions for people with physical disabilities that prevent them from picking up dog waste.

Animal Control By-law

- 4.2.6 Evaluate options to improve enforceability of by-law requiring dog handlers to pick up and dispose of all dog waste.
- 4.2.7 Add a reference to the Parks Control By-law Schedule 1, to clarify between running ‘at large’ and being off-leash in a designated area. The by-law should explicitly stipulate that dogs must be kept on a leash, and that dogs are not permitted on bathing beaches or in the water (whether on or dog off-leash), unless otherwise designated by Schedule 1.
- 4.2.8 Clarify leash by-law that dogs must not be left unsupervised while in parks and/or in public areas.
- 4.2.9 Align the Animal Control by-law with any terms added to business licences for Commercial Dog Walkers.

Parks Control By-law

- 4.2.10 Update by-law to reflect Animal Control fines by-law 9636 where every offence in the by-law is a \$250 minimum and \$10,000 maximum fine.
- 4.2.11 Update ‘Schedule 1: Parks and Areas of Parks Where Dogs are Permitted to be Off-leash’ to update names and include all dog off-leash areas, including Andy Livingstone Park, Crab Park, Devonian Harbour Park, Emery Barnes Park, Everett Crowley Park, Oak Meadows Park, and Hinge Park.

Business Licence By-law

- 4.2.12 Add additional terms to business licence requirements for Commercial Dog Walkers (see Recommendation 4.5).

4.3 Consider increasing resources and powers for enforcement.

Investigate updating the Parks Control By-law to streamline Park Rangers' ability to issue tickets for dog activity in parks, and providing 'Peace Officer Status' for staff enforcing dog activity in parks. This status would give staff more authority to enforce laws relating to animals, and to require that people provide identification. It is a criminal offense for a person to fail to identify themselves to a by-law officer in lawful execution of his or her duty (Obstructing a Peace Officer, sec 129 Criminal Code of Canada).

Animal Services and the Park Board should work together to develop a multi-year enforcement strategy. Ideally the enforcement strategy would involve an initial focus on intensive park user education about the new strategy, etiquette, licensing and by-laws for park users and an expanded training program for by-law enforcement staff, followed by the launch of a coordinated and consistent approach to enforcement.

4.4 Work with City of Vancouver staff to develop educational resources to increase public knowledge about licensing and by-laws.

Animal Services, Park Board and other City of Vancouver departments should work together to develop a shared communication strategy for dog owners across Vancouver parks and more broadly across the City, to encourage compliance with by-laws and improve the relationship between park users, Park Rangers, and Animal Services. Options could include signs in parks, hard copy materials, and online resources including educational websites, videos, and links to in-person events and learning opportunities. For example, the government of South Australia has produced a "Dog Owners Handbook" with information on 'Obedience Training', 'Dog Park Etiquette', 'Your Dog and the Law' and several other topics that promote responsible pet ownership (see www.gooddogsa.com)

4.5 Develop specific requirements for commercial dog walkers.

Licensing, Animal Services and Park Board should work together to establish specific criteria to regulate commercial dog walker activity in the City of Vancouver. Consider adding specific terms to business licences issued to commercial dog walkers, such as:

- Maximum number of off-leash dogs under supervision of a handler at one time
- Minimum training requirements (if the allowed ratio of handler to number of dogs is higher than non-commercial dog walkers)
- Approved dog off-leash areas for commercial dogs walkers
- Maximum number of commercial dog walkers allowed in one dog off-leash area at one time.

Considerations for Other Agencies

Several strategies for supporting dog activity in Vancouver fall outside the Park Board's jurisdiction. The following is a summary of the strategies recommended for consideration:

Translink

Access to dog off-leash areas in our city would be significantly improved if dogs were allowed on public transit. Examples of other locations that allow dogs on transit include the United Kingdom, Prague (requiring dogs to be muzzled when using public transportation) and Berlin, where dogs are allowed on transit with the purchase of a special ticket.

In order to improve equitable access to dog off-leash areas across our city, it would be beneficial if Translink explores opportunities to allow greater access to dogs on public transit.

Vancouver School Board

Many of the open fields surrounding schools in Vancouver are often used for dog off-leash activity, on evenings and weekends when school is not in session. However, Vancouver School Board (VSB) policy is that dogs are only allowed on leash on school property for health and safety reasons, though signage does not make this clear.

In order to improve the management of dog activity on school grounds, it would be beneficial for the Vancouver School Board to consider the following:

- Clarify and clearly communicate policies regarding dogs on school property, including when and where dogs are allowed on-leash or not at all.
- Work with Animal Services to develop strategy for enforcement of dog off-leash activity on VSB grounds.

Province of British Columbia (Ministry of Environment)

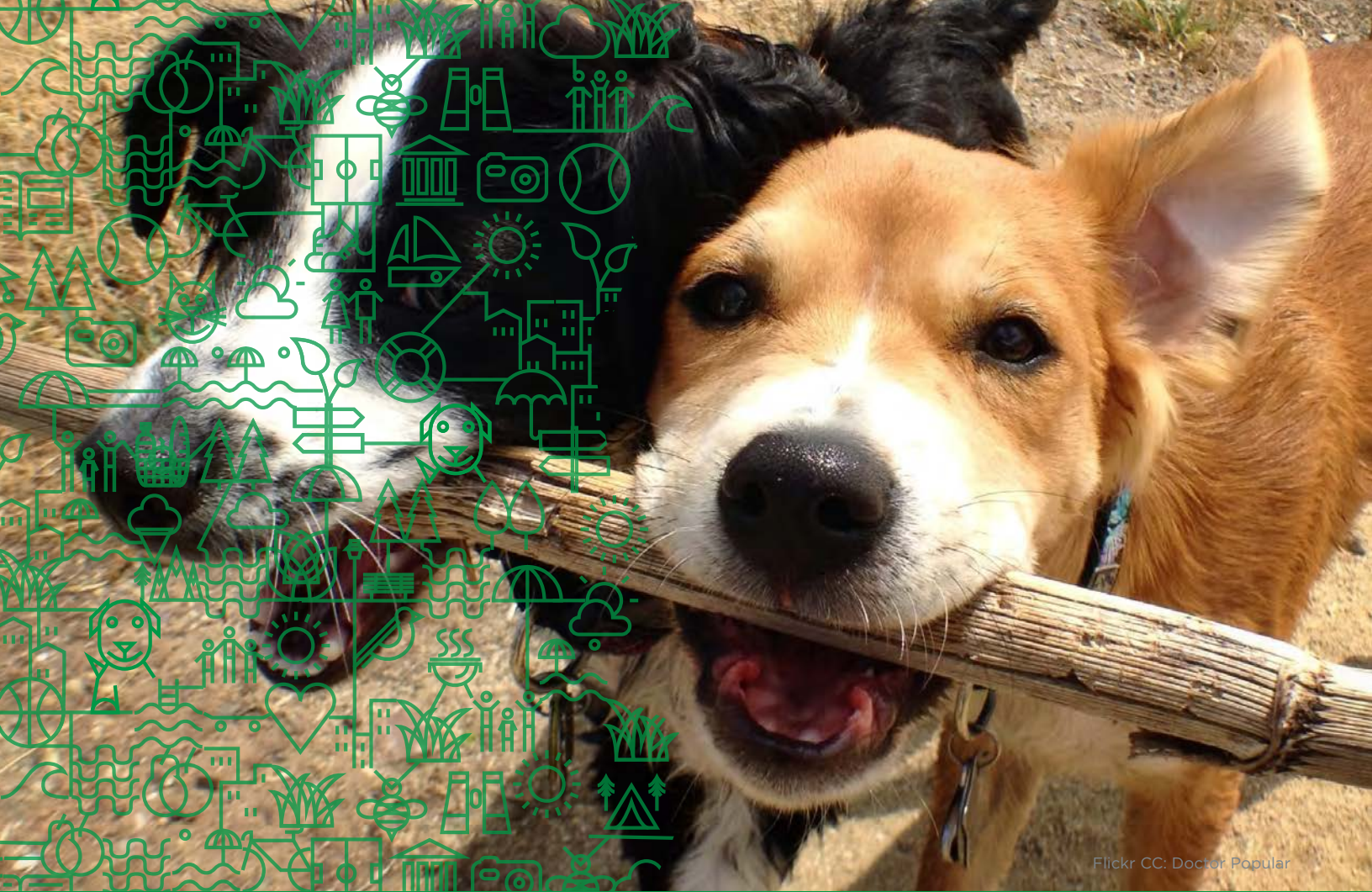
In coastal locations, the zone below the high tide mark is Crown Land, and under the jurisdiction of the Provincial government.

In order to improve the management of dog activity on beaches with nearby dog off-leash areas, it would be beneficial for the Provincial government to develop policy in coordination with municipalities, with regard to dog activity below the high tide mark. It would also be beneficial to have the beach and water area where dogs are allowed off-leash clearly marked.

Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability

Planning for neighbourhoods with higher than average density levels should include the provision of new dog off-leash areas, not only as part of public parks, but also as part of private developments.

In order to best manage Vancouver's growing dog population, it would be beneficial if the City of Vancouver Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability department encourages new dog off-leash areas through community amenity contributions, incentives for private developers to incorporate dog off-leash areas and dog relief stations (e.g. "pooch patches") into new developments, and consider the use of rooftop parkades as potential dog off-leash areas (see 'Partnership Opportunities' in the Delivery section of this report).



DELIVERY

Quick Starts

Renewal of Existing Dog Off-Leash Areas

New Dog Off-Leash Areas

Pilot Projects

Partnership Opportunities

Monitoring and Evaluation

DELIVERY

While there are clear opportunities for improving dog off-leash areas throughout the city, it is anticipated that the recommendations in this Strategy Report will be implemented over the course of many years, based on available resources.

The framework for implementing the *People, Parks & Dogs* strategy should include a review of priorities, budgets, phasing, and potential partnerships. Implementation should also be informed by pilot project outcomes, in combination with a robust monitoring and evaluation process to better assess successes and challenges.

Quick Starts

Opportunities for 'quick starts' or improvements that can be rapidly implemented fall into two categories. The first category are items that are able to be accommodated within existing resources and without further consultation. The second category are items that will require budget approval and/or coordination with organizations external to the Park Board.

Opportunities within existing resources

1. Upgrade the "VanConnect" mobile app to collect a broader range of input from park users, and offer expanded resources for people looking for information related to dogs in the city.

App upgrades could help track volunteer activity associated with the off-leash areas, build momentum for continued community stewardship, and foster responsible dog ownership. (see Recommendation 3.4)

2. Remove time-of-use restrictions at New Brighton Park dog off-leash enclosure.
3. Expand the 'red bin' separated dog waste program.

Opportunities requiring modest investment

1. Install new signage in existing dog off-leash areas, prioritizing sites where unclear boundaries repeatedly contribute to conflict.
2. Develop a new dog off-leash area at Renfrew Park.
3. Upgrade the dog off-leash area at Sunset Park.
4. Provide educational signage at popular dog off-leash areas to educate the public on recognizing signs of stress, aggression, and play in dogs. Recommended priority sites include John Hendry Park, Charleson Park, and Nelson Park. Support new signage with in-park animal behaviourist talks, and post videos of these talks online and on social media, with supporting videos to identify dog behaviour and what action to take to avoid conflicts. Park Board staff should engage animal behaviour professionals to develop educational signage content, using the signage templates developed for the *People, Parks & Dogs* strategy.



FIGURE 20 - DETAIL FROM PROPOSED EDUCATIONAL SIGNAGE ON DOG BEHAVIOUR.



FIGURE 21 - SIGNAGE RECOMMENDATIONS

5. Install environmental education signage and wildlife friendly fencing. Provide educational signage key sites such as Fraser River Park, regarding dogs' impact on foreshore habitat. Support educational initiatives with in-park ecologist talks, and videos of these talks on social media. Park Board staff should engage ecology professionals to develop educational signage content, using the signage templates developed for the *People, Parks & Dogs* strategy. At Fraser River Park and Musqueam Park, combine educational signage with wildlife friendly fencing to help protect ecologically-sensitive areas.
6. Foster community stewardship by hosting in-park events for volunteers to conduct light maintenance work in the dog off-leash area. Provide coffee and snacks, sand for filling holes and tools, in a format similar to community planting events. Use the event as an opportunity to invite community members to be formal stewards of the dog off-leash park. Once stewardship groups have established, provide them with resources to self-organize future work parties, and to help monitor dog off-leash areas using standardized inspection reports.

Renewal of Existing Dog Off-Leash Areas

Improvements to existing dog off-leash areas should prioritize parks with existing conflicts with adjacent park uses, sites that show excessive wear, and help meet the need for dog-off leash areas in underserved neighbourhoods (see Figure 3, and Appendix, Table A-3). The renewal of existing dog off-leash areas will happen over time, as budgets allow.

Identifying priority dog off-leash areas

Priorities for improvements can be best identified by assessing the current challenges with dog off-leash areas. These challenges may be highlighted based on the following sources of information:

- 3-1-1 calls related to dog incidents
- Formal complaints made to the City
- Health and safety incidents
- By-law infractions
- Site observations

Parks that receive a high number of incident reports should be evaluated to better assess the site's challenges and identify root causes that need to be addressed.

High conflict areas

Priority locations for improvements include the five parks with dog off-leash areas that received the highest number of dog-related 3-1-1 calls, as identified in 'Analysis of 3-1-1 calls' on page 13 of this report (see Appendix G for more information).

Strategies for reducing the number of incidents at these sites include installing new signage to clarify dog off-leash area boundaries and etiquette for all park users, and to remove time-of-use restrictions. In locations where a boundary change is required, the Park Board should host in-park events to present proposed boundary tools and solicit community input.

The 3-1-1 call analysis also identified areas that do not have dog off-leash areas yet received a high volume of dog-related calls. New signage should be installed in these locations to clarify on-leash requirements. Signage should identify the nearest dog off-leash area (or highlight a mobile app or website that can provide this information).

Decommissioning dog off-leash areas

There may be circumstances where it will be necessary to remove an off-leash area from an existing park (see Recommendation 3.2 'Engage local residents in establishing, changing, or eliminating dog off-leash areas'). While this may be a rare occurrence the following procedures should be followed, in accordance with an approved Communications Plan:

- Provide in-park and online notification of the proposed changes to the off-leash area.
- Distribute notification to all households within the service area of the proposed site.
- Clearly communicate the reasons for the removal of the off-leash area and if applicable identify how this service will be offset through other means within the vicinity of the site.

New Dog Off-Leash Areas

New dog off-leash areas¹ should improve service levels and provide more equitable access to dog off-leash spaces across the city, while providing a variety of dog off-leash experiences. The overall analysis of designated dog off-leash areas in Vancouver has identified a number of neighbourhoods that are currently underserved (see Figure 22, below). Establishment of new off-leash areas should be prioritized for these areas of the city and approved by the Park Board.

Triggers for providing new dog off-leash areas

The addition of a new off-leash area may be triggered by the following:

- Park Board identification of a neighbourhood as being underserved (based on target service levels).
- A proposal from Vancouver residents according to an established public application process to be developed by the Park Board (e.g. formation of an Off-Leash User Coalition, demonstration of support from surrounding neighbourhood residents, etc)
- Application for large new development or redevelopment

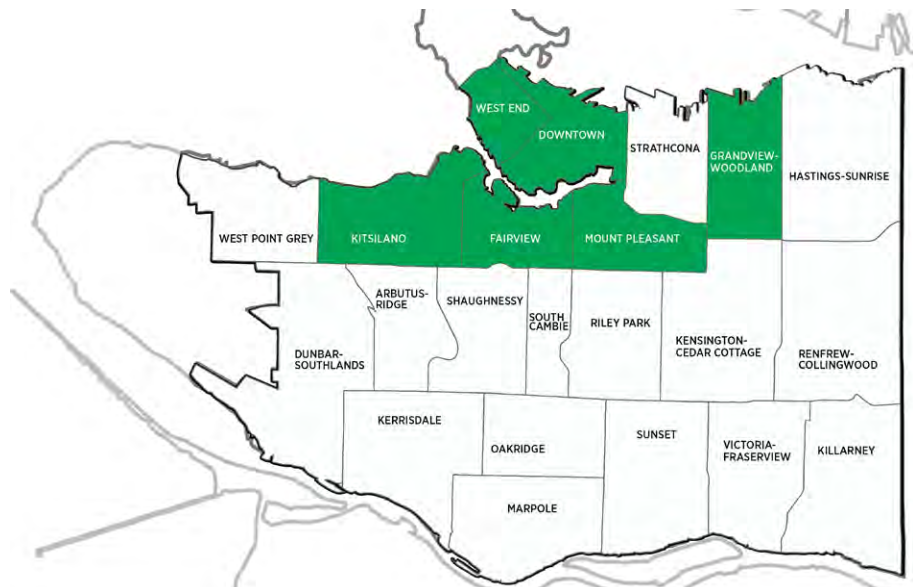


FIGURE 22 - UNDESERVED NEIGHBOURHOODS AS IDENTIFIED BY COMBINED EVALUATIONS (SEE 1.4)

1 This strategy report provides a framework for the delivery of dog off-leash areas in Vancouver over the next 10 years. As densities increase and evolve, the Park Board should conduct additional needs assessments to help ensure investments in public parks reflect the needs and priorities of the communities they serve.

Dog off-leash area Implementation Process

Once the Park Board identifies a neighbourhood for a service level improvement for dog off-leash areas, the following process is recommended:

- Generate a list of candidate sites at neighbourhood level.
- Assess underutilized spaces within parks for their potential as new or temporary dog off-leash areas.
- Encourage private developers to include dog off-leash areas through Community Amenity Contributions, or incentives (see 'Partnership Opportunities' on page 49 of this report).
- Identify the classification and type of dog off-leash area to best meet the recommended service level while providing a diversity of park types across the city
- Conduct a preliminary site assessment to evaluate the suitability of potential sites. If there are multiple suitable locations, engage residents at the neighbourhood level to help determine the preferred location.
- Conduct a more detailed site assessment if the preliminary assessment indicates suitability.
- Undertake a masterplan process for the park identified as a preferred location for an off-leash area. The purpose of this process will be to improve the spatial relationships within the park to make best use of the available park space. This will help to ensure that the full range of site opportunities potential are explored, and that non-dog owners also receive benefit from the park redevelopment for the off-leash area.
- Provide in-park and online notification of the proposed dog off-leash area pilot project. Distribute notification to all households within the service area of the proposed site.

Each new off leash area should be initiated as a pilot project for a one-year period, with regular monitoring and evaluation of the success of the site. After a 6 month evaluation period any problems that have been identified should be addressed, and after 12 months a decision made to approve or reject official off-leash designation. Clearly communicate the terms of the pilot project with the local community at the outset of the project.

65% of survey respondents agree with introducing a pilot project to add off-leash hours in selected downtown parks.

Pilot Projects

It is recommended that various strategies for improving dog off-leash spaces be tested through Pilot Projects, in order to evaluate their effectiveness prior to wider implementation. Details of the following recommended Pilot Projects are provided in the Implementation Guide.

Recommended Pilot Projects

- Introduce morning only hours of dog off-leash use at George Wainborn Park.
- Install a “pooch patch” where dogs can be encouraged to relieve themselves (described on page 32 of this report).
- Test various turfgrass species to identify the most durable seed mix for dog off-leash areas in our climate.
- Test alternate surface materials to determine their suitability for use in dog off-leash areas.

Recommended Implementation Process for Pilot Projects

The recommended duration for pilot projects is generally one year, with an interim assessment. Local residents should be engaged in evaluating their success, and that they are informed about how they can learn more about the project and to provide feedback. The objectives, process and timeline for each project should be clearly communicated to the community.

- Use in-park signage, social media and online resources to describe the pilot project, including its objectives, duration criteria for evaluating success. Ensure the public is provided with means to learn more about the project and to provide input.
- Solicit on-going community feedback via in-park community notice board and online resources. Engage a broad spectrum of park users in the evaluation process, including persons with disabilities. Consider making adjustments to the pilot project if clearly requested by public feedback to do so.
- Conduct regular site reviews to observe use, and record notes.
- Meet with Park Board Operations Staff and /or Animal Services (as appropriate) at 6 month intervals to gather interim feedback.
- At the end of the 12 month pilot project period, assess feedback to date and make recommendations to adopt / revise / reject.
- Use in-park signage, social media and online resources to communicate evaluation results and next steps to the public.

Partnership Opportunities

It is recommended that private partnership or sponsorship opportunities be explored for their potential to support activities and/or amenities within dog off-leash areas. All potential partnership opportunities must align with Park Board values including sustainability and healthy, active lifestyles, and be in compliance with Park Board’s practices regarding advertising in Vancouver’s public parks.

Individual Donations and Dedications

Dedicating a special amenity such as an agility feature or water fountain at a favourite dog off-leash area is another potential means of private sponsorship. In discussions with community members during our round two public engagement process, participants suggested that people might like to fund a specific piece of equipment or upgrade to a dog off-leash area in memory of a well-loved pet. This process could be managed similar to the Park Board's program to dedicate a park bench or picnic table, with the option to fund a ten-year dedication period, or a 'legacy dedication', which is funded through an endowment to provide for the continuous care of a dedicated amenity.

Advertising

Special amenities such as agility features, water fountains for dogs, and dog waste bags and/or dispensers could be privately sponsored, in exchange for limited advertising space. For example, private contractors could stock dog waste bags in dispensers in exchange for sponsorship branding on the bags.

Educational Resources

The Park Board could work in partnership with private training companies and/or non-profit organizations such as the BC SPCA to provide free dog training sessions in off-leash areas, and develop online resources and print material to foster responsible dog ownership. Topics would be selected with the aim to improve the functioning of dog off-leash areas for all users, such as recognizing and responding to signs of stress and aggression in dogs, best management practices for dog waste management, and minimizing dogs' impact on the environment.

Private Developers

Planning for neighbourhoods with increasing or existing high residential density (such as the West End or Downtown South) should include the provision of new dog off-leash areas and dog relief stations (e.g. "pooch patches"). These amenities should be part of private developments as well as public parks.

- Encourage incentives for private developers to incorporate small off-leash areas on rooftops or courtyards, and to incorporate small, durable "dog relief" stations at entries to reduce impacts on boulevard plantings and street trees.
- Incentivize the creation of indoor and outdoor off-leash areas on private land, possibly as an interim use of future development sites. Indoor facilities could include commercial dog parks, particularly in the downtown core.

Rooftop spaces on city-owned parkades

Rooftops of parkades typically have a low utilization rate. These rooftops often cannot accommodate structures or other uses due to seismic considerations, which limits their usability. However, such sites have potential to be converted to dog off-leash areas, particularly in the Downtown core. Managing the safe circulation of people with and without dogs within the parkade elevators and stairs will require further consideration. Rooftop off-leash areas will require a high level of design in order to successfully attract users. Recommended amenities include drinking water for people and dogs, a water element for helping keep dogs cool in summer, and shade structures. Ensure high, secure fencing is installed around the perimeter of any elevated dog off-leash area. Recycled artificial turf could be explored for use on these sites.

Fundraising

Consider working with volunteer groups, such as the proposed Off-Leash User Coalition (see Recommendation 3.1) to fundraise for special amenities or other upgrades at dog off-leash areas. Retail outlets and businesses that provide dog-related goods and services could be encouraged to provide customers with the opportunity to donate to a fund that enhances dog off-leash areas (for example, through the provision of special amenities).

This strategy is intended to be a living document, for City and Park Board staff to work with stakeholders and the public to measure progress and adapt policy and actions as needed.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Through the, the Park Board aims to help shape how people with and without dogs share parks in Vancouver. Monitoring and evaluation is key to providing ongoing feedback about how well the strategy is working. This feedback allows City and Park Board staff to adjust activities according to what is working well and what is not, responding to changing circumstances.

The performance indicators listed in the tables below are grouped under the four recommendation themes, although in many cases the measures are responsive to many different actions recommended in strategy. To gauge general satisfaction with how well people with dogs and without dogs are sharing parks, we suggest conducting a statistically-sound phone survey using the same methodology and questions identified in Appendix F of this Strategy Report. Responses relating to experiences with dogs off-leash in Vancouver parks could then be compared to the 2017 results from this strategy in order to evaluate progress.

ACCESS THEME RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 Establish two classifications of dog off-leash areas to support service level planning: Neighbourhood and Destination. (page 17)
- 1.2 Provide access to Neighbourhood dog off-leash areas within a ~15 minute walk of most residents. (page 17)
- 1.3 Provide access to Destination dog off-leash areas within a ~35 minute walk or short drive for most residents. (page 18)
- 1.4 Add new dog off-leash areas and prioritize underserved and densely populated neighbourhoods. (page 19)
- 1.5 Improve access to dog off-leash areas by removing time-of-use restrictions where possible. (page 20)

MONITORING AND EVALUATION MEASURES FOR IMPROVED ACCESS		
Recommendation Number	Measure	Data Source and Notes
1.1 to 1.4	Increase the number of licensed dogs in Vancouver, as a portion of the estimated total dog population.	This data helps support service level planning. Information will come from Vancouver Animal Services dog licence data, and results of statistically valid phone surveys conducted every two years.
1.2 to 1.5	Decrease the proportion of dog off-leash areas with time-of-use restrictions.	Update the 2016 <i>People, Parks & Dogs</i> off-leash area inventory data every two years.
1.2 to 1.4	Decrease the number of residential city blocks that are more than 1 km from dog off-leash areas.	Evaluate the service level of each dog off-leash area every two years using baseline GIS data.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION MEASURES FOR IMPROVED ACCESS (CONT.)		
Recommendation Number	Measure	Data Source and Notes
1.4	Identify and update the number of licensed dogs within 1km of each dog off-leash area.	Track the potential service level of each dog off-leash area. Compare with 2016 baseline results to identify trends in the potential service level of individual dog off-leash areas (update Table A-2 of the Appendix).
1.4 to 1.5	Identify and update the amount of parkland allowing dog off-leash use, as a percentage of the total park area, and evaluate against other cities.	Identify and update the amount of parkland allowing dog off-leash use, as a percentage of the total park area, and evaluate against other cities.

DESIGN THEME RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Provide a variety of dog off-leash areas. (page 22)
- 2.2 Provide space and amenities to make dog off-leash areas more appealing to use and universally accessible. (page 24)
- 2.3 Design dog off-leash areas to be durable, with suitable surfacing. (page 27)
- 2.4 Design dog off-leash areas to minimize environmental impacts. (page 28)
- 2.5 Locate dog off-leash areas adjacent to more compatible land and park uses, and mitigate those that are less compatible. (page 28)
- 2.6 Restrict dog activity from a greater range of park areas. (page 29)
- 2.7 Clearly mark dog off-leash area boundaries and setback distances where needed. (page 29)
- 2.8 Assess existing site features and adjacent uses to determine appropriate boundary tools. (page 30)
- 2.9 Ensure dog off-leash area signage is concise, clear and consistent. (page 31)
- 2.10 Expand the separated dog waste program and promote initiatives to effectively manage dog waste. (page 32)

MONITORING AND EVALUATION MEASURES FOR IMPROVED DESIGN		
Recommendation Number	Measure	Data Source and Notes
2.2, 2.5 to 2.9	Decrease the number of dog-related calls made to the City's 3-1-1 line.	Repeat data compilation and geographic analysis of 3-1-1 calls to identify the number of calls related to dogs, using the same parameters identified in Appendix E Geographic Analysis. Compare to Figure 6 in Appendix E to identify trends in dog-related 3-1-1 calls.
2.1 to 2.3	Increase the number of pilot projects implemented and evaluated.	Implement the recommended pilot projects outlined in the Implementation Guide and engage local residents, Operations Staff, and other representative park users such as persons with disabilities to evaluate outcomes.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION MEASURES FOR IMPROVED DESIGN (CONT.)		
Recommendation Number	Measure	Data Source and Notes
2.2	Increase amenities in dog off-leash areas.	Conduct an inventory of standard and special amenities in dog off-leash areas (listed in Section 1 'Amenities' of the Implementation Guide). Track data over time to identify trends.
2.2	Increase Universal Design features in dog off-leash areas.	Conduct an inventory of Universal Design features in dog off-leash areas, and track data over time to identify trends.
2.4	Minimize the amount of area designated for dogs off-leash within 30m of environmentally sensitive areas.	Track the area of designated dog off-leash space that is within 30m of environmentally sensitive areas.
2.7 to 2.8	Increase the number of dog off-leash areas with clearly marked boundaries.	Use data from Table D-1 of the 2017 Strategy Report Appendix, combined with an analysis of the maps of existing dog off-leash areas submitted to the Park Board as part of the study to identify the number of off-leash areas with clear boundaries marked with legible on-the-ground features. Compare this data to an updated inventory of off-leash areas with clear boundaries.
2.7 to 2.8	Decrease the number of dog off-leash areas with boundaries that overlap or non-secure areas are less than 50m away from less compatible park uses.	Generate an inventory of dog off-leash areas with boundaries that overlap less compatible park uses.
2.10	Increase the number of separated dog waste bins provided in parks.	Document the number of parks with separated dog waste bins provided.

STEWARDSHIP THEME RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Formalize residents' role in dog off-leash area stewardship. (page 34)
- 3.2 Engage local residents in establishing, changing, or eliminating dog off-leash areas. (page 35)
- 3.3 Establish etiquette guidelines for all people and dogs using off-leash areas. (page 35)
- 3.4 Consider developing dog off-leash area maintenance, monitoring, and evaluation guidelines. (page 36)
- 3.5 Promote educational initiatives to improve the safety and success of dog off-leash areas. (page 37)
- 3.6 Investigate potential partnership and funding opportunities to support dog off-leash areas. (page 38)

MONITORING AND EVALUATION MEASURES FOR IMPROVED STEWARDSHIP		
Recommendation Number	Measure	Data Source and Notes
3.1	Increase participation in formal dog off-leash area stewardship in collaboration with Vancouver Parks Board.	Track membership in dog off-leash area stewardship groups.
3.2	Increase public participation in decision-making around dog off-leash areas.	Track the number of residents who participate in engagement activities related to dog off-leash areas.
3.3	Increase the number of signs and hard copy materials guiding proper use of dog off-leash areas, available to park users.	Track the number of signs with etiquette guidelines, and the number of places providing hard-copy materials on dog off-leash area etiquette.
3.4	Increase the guidance materials available for in-park workers that aim to improve maintenance, monitoring, and evaluation.	Conduct an inventory of guidance materials in dog off-leash areas, and track data over time to identify trends.
3.5	Increase research into partnership and funding opportunities in support of dog off-leash areas.	Track the funding sources and partnership opportunities investigated by Park Board staff and partners.
3.6	Increase communication of events and resources aimed at helping people and dogs share park space better.	Track all Park Board communications around educational opportunities for people regarding dogs (e.g. posters, online ads, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter posts).

ENFORCEMENT THEME RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Increase dog licensing compliance rates. (page 40)
- 4.2 Ensure consistency, enforceability, and relevance of by-laws for dogs in parks. (page 41)
- 4.3 Consider increasing resources and powers for enforcement. (page 42)
- 4.4 Work with City of Vancouver staff to develop educational resources to increase public knowledge about licensing and by-laws. (page 42)
- 4.5 Develop specific requirements for commercial dog walkers. (page 42)

MONITORING AND EVALUATION MEASURES FOR IMPROVED ENFORCEMENT		
Recommendation Number	Measure	Data Source and Notes
4.1	Increase the number of dogs licensed in Vancouver.	Track dog licensing data from Vancouver Animal Services to identify trends.
4.1	Increase dog licensing compliance rates.	Conduct a statistically sound survey to estimate Vancouver's dog population, and use this information combined with dog licensing data from Animal Services to identify trends.
4.2	Align the Parks Control and the Animal Control By-laws with regard to dog activity in parks.	Review the Parks Control By-law and Animal Control By-law to identify the number of inconsistencies between them. Compare results to items listed in Recommendation 4.2 of the 2017 Strategy Report.
4.3	Increase Park Board and City staff hours with ticketing ability for dog-related infractions.	Track duties, powers and person hours of Animal Control Officers and Park Rangers for dog-related infractions.
4.4	Increase educational information and resources available on the City Website and on in-park signage, related to dog activity in parks and beaches.	Track the number of online and hard-copy educational resources provided by the City and Park Board, with information related to dog activity in parks and beaches, including dog licensing and dog-related by-laws.
4.5	Increase the rate of dog walking businesses with valid business licences. Include terms guiding appropriate use of park space for commercial dog walkers as part of the business licence.	Track the number of commercial dog walking business licences issued and identify additional terms added as licence requirements.

