



January 31, 2020

MEMO TO : Park Board Commissioners

FROM : Malcolm Bromley
General Manager, Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation

SUBJECT : **People, Parks & Dogs Strategy and John Hendry Park Master Plan – Board Briefing Memo**

Dear Commissioners:

This memo provides an update on topical issues related to the [People, Parks & Dogs strategy](#) and implementation of the policy through the [John Hendry Park Master Plan](#). With the current heightened interest in dog off-leash areas, specifically at John Hendry (Trout Lake) Park, the following summary and attached info sheet provide the most current information on this subject.

People, Parks & Dogs Strategy

The People, Parks & Dogs (PPD) Strategy, [approved by the Board in October 2017](#), provides an evidence-based and data-driven policy to deliver well-planned and designed parks that accommodate park users with and without dogs for the next 10 years. The strategy includes policy for access, design, stewardship, and enforcement.

Public engagement

Following the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) best practices, the PPD strategy was informed by a robust 18-month engagement process. The process included more than 7,000 interactions with stakeholders and the public through two rounds of engagement, a comprehensive phone survey, stakeholder workshops, precedent research, field observations and input from a PPD advisory group comprised of over 20 people including both dog owners and non-dog owners. The phone survey identified that roughly 15% of Vancouver residents own one or more dogs, estimating the Vancouver dog population at 50 to 70 thousand. The final policy adopted by the Board received strong support from the public and the advisory group.

Responding to demand and safety concerns

The PPD strategy was developed to respond to the growing need for better quality and greater access to dog off-leash areas, as well as to address growing concerns around the comfort and safety of all park users and to reduce conflicts. Dogs and their owners are generally a positive healthy presence in parks, and dogs provide many benefits as they provide companionship and can encourage and promote social interaction. The presence of dogs in parks, however, is often a polarizing issue for park users, with some residents feeling very strongly about the amount and type of space appropriate for dogs. Many residents want fewer rules and wider accommodation for off-leash dogs in the city, while other residents hold the opposing view that dogs in Vancouver are not managed responsibly and cause significant negative impacts including uncollected dog waste and the degradation of wildlife and shared green space (including sports fields), and that they pose safety risks from collisions with dogs and dog bites.



Policy to mitigate conflicts

Off-leash area design considerations play a crucial role in mitigating park conflicts. The strategy development team carefully considered all park uses and known sources of injuries, concerns, and complaints when developing the policy and associated recommendations. The strategy identifies a set of key adjacencies as incompatible with off-leash dogs, requiring the use of secure fencing or a minimum setback distance of 50 to 75 metres to separate off-leash areas from the following:

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

The [PPD implementation plan \(attached as Appendix C of the Board report\)](#) identifies Vancouver's existing off-leash areas and outlines the timeline to upgrade each site to comply with this policy.

John Hendry Park Master Plan

The John Hendry Park Master Plan, initiated in 2013, was paused in 2015 because it became clear a policy around off-leash areas was needed in order to effectively advance the park master plan and align it with a city-wide approach. John Hendry Park is home to one of the largest off-leash areas in Vancouver (2.72 hectares/6.72 acres). Before the master plan was paused, 24 draft recommendations were proposed in the following categories:

- Features & Amenities
- Stormwater & Water Quality
- Circulation
- Natural Spaces
- Playing Fields

Current process and engagement to date

The master plan process was re-initiated in 2019 and involves incorporating current policy into the plan, including policy within the *People Parks and Dogs* strategy. During the first phase of public engagement, which took place from October 2019 to January 2020, the project team collected feedback from a variety of park users and stakeholder groups. This information will be used to update and refine relevant recommendations from 2015, and to develop a new set of recommendations and a draft concept plan for the park.

To date, the engagement process has included more than 1,600 stakeholder and public interactions via the following activities:

- 1 open house (250 participants);
- 1 workshop (50 participants); graphic developed with participant input (see Figure 1);

- 3 deep dive workshops:
 - Off-leash area (30 participants)
 - Fields (11 participants)
 - Farmer's Market and Community Garden (15 participants)
- 1 online survey (1,163 responses)
- 3 multi-day park planning events with grade 4, 5 and 6 classes from Laura Secord, Tyee and Lord Selkirk Elementary Schools (85 students)
- 1 park planning workshop with students in the John Hendry Community Centre Teen Leadership Group (29 participants)
- 4 meetings with stakeholders, including [Dog Lovers of Trout Lake](#), [Lu'Ma Medical Centre](#), [Trout Lake Community Centre Association](#), [Vines Arts Festival](#)
- 1 meeting with [Urban Indigenous Peoples Advisory Committee](#) (UIPAC)

Figure 1: John Hendry Park Master Plan Workshop Graphic – developed with participant input



Development of concept design

Project staff are currently developing a draft conceptual design and associated draft recommendations for the park that incorporate technical design considerations and public engagement input to date. The off-leash area conceptual design will adhere to the PPD policy and respond to the highest priorities identified by off-leash area users to date, including:

- Maintaining the general size and layout of the off-leash area;
- Preserving access to water at the north end of the lake;
- Providing easy access from parking.

The concept will also need to address fencing and separation between adjacent uses, which has been a contentious topic during public consultation to date. As indicated in the policy noted above, secure fencing is required between off-leash areas and multi-use trails and



playing fields. As both conditions exist at John Hendry Park, boundary adjustments and conditions (secure/not secure) in the area will largely respond to the design of primary circulation routes for cyclists and pedestrians to and around the park, as well as to the final size and location of adjacent sports fields.

Next Steps

Staff will be sharing the draft conceptual design with the public and initiating the second phase of the public engagement process in April 2020, which will include:

- a park tour and workshop;
- meetings with local Indigenous groups and advocates, the Community Centre Association, and the Vancouver Farmers Markets Association as needed;
- ongoing discussion with dog-owners as needed;
- a final public open house to present the draft Master Plan.

Feedback gathered through this process will inform final updates and revisions to the draft John Hendry Park Master Plan before staff present the final proposed Master Plan for consideration by the Board later this year.

In response to various questions and concerns raised regarding the People, Parks & Dogs Strategy and its policy implementation in the John Hendry Park Master Plan process, staff have prepared the attached info sheet that can be used as a resource should members of the public or stakeholders reach out to any of you directly. Staff will continue to expand on this information and respond to enquiries as they arise.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Malcolm Bromley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Malcolm Bromley
General Manager - Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation

/sw/ee/ag/clc

Copy to: PB Senior Leadership Team
PPD Implementation Team
PB Communications

Questions & Answers People, Parks & Dogs Strategy

1. What has been done since the strategy was adopted?

Since 2017, we have been working toward implementing the recommendations within the strategy. Our most notable accomplishments include:

- Upgrades to the Sunset Park off-leash area
- A new fenced off-leash area opened at Renfrew Community Park
- Beginning construction of an off-leash area at Pandora Park
- Expanding the dog waste collection (Red Bin) pilot program to eight parks
- Completing phase one of signage updates

2. In which areas/neighbourhoods will the Park Board be focusing its efforts?

The background research identified six neighbourhoods as underserved for dog off-leash areas:

- Kitsilano
- Mount Pleasant
- Downtown
- West End
- Grandview-Woodland
- Fairview

The goal is to provide access to neighbourhood dog off-leash areas within an approximately 15 minute walk of most residents.

3. What is considered in the design of off-leash areas?

A number of factors are considered when designing off-leash areas, such as the target size of the off-leash area, available land, adjacent park and neighbourhood uses, surfacing, comfort, and safety (including amenities and boundaries). Ideally, the space needs to be large enough to meet the demand without becoming degraded from overuse. Specific recommendations, such as recommendation 2.5 – *‘Locate dog off-leash areas adjacent to more compatible land and park uses, and mitigate those that are less compatible’*, identify park uses that are less compatible with dog off-leash areas. The adjacent uses that require a secure boundary are:

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



Feedback & Responses

People, Parks & Dogs Policy Implementation in John Hendry Park

1. Consider routing the bike path to the outer perimeter of the park, which would be better both for cyclists and park users

Circulation both within and around the park is a key piece to the Master Plan. At this time, we are not pursuing removing the parkway trail (bike path) completely from the park, but are working with City Engineering staff to identify an appropriate alignment that considers safety of cyclists (of all ages and abilities) and other park users, environmental implications, adjacencies to other park uses, and more. A balanced approach that seeks to minimize conflicts and considers the needs of all users is being sought through the process.

2. Install adequate signage and use education/enforcement before resorting to fencing or barriers of any kind

One recommendation to come out of the People, Parks & Dogs Strategy was to ensure dog off-leash signage is concise, clear, and consistent throughout the City. The Park Board has started to implement this direction in various parks and will do so at John Hendry Park once the Master Plan is complete. Installing signage does not replace the need to install secure boundaries where incompatible adjacencies exist.

3. If physical markers are necessary, use bollards

The People, Parks & Dogs Strategy provides direction to clearly define dog off-leash area boundaries using a combination of secure and permeable means depending on the adjacent park uses, land uses, and existing site features. The project team is currently working on a design that aligns with the policy direction provided in this strategy and that incorporates a mixture of boundaries that have a look and feel that fits John Hendry Park.

4. Do not reduce the overall size of the off-leash area; if anything it should be expanded as demand grows

All concepts shown to date, along with current working options and designs, endeavor to maintain the existing size of the off-leash area to reflect participant input on this topic. We have heard that a large size, along with access to the lake, are of utmost importance to users and we continue to work to deliver on this user identified priority.

5. Retain the existing off-leash area to the west of the walking path in the northwest corner of the park, before the row of large trees and playing field

We are looking at the existing circulation within the park and will develop a concept where the pedestrian path remains outside of the off-leash area. This could lead to some minor changes in configuration to the off-leash area and existing pathways, with the goal of maintaining the current size and function of the existing off-leash area.

