

COMMISSION REPORT

TO: CHAIR AND MEMBERS
PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURE
COMMISSION

DATE: 2019 March 05

FROM: DIRECTOR - PARKS, RECREATION &
CULTURAL SERVICES

FILE: 61000-02

SUBJECT: OFF-LEASH DOG FACILITIES

PURPOSE: To provide information regarding development of dog off-leash facilities.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. **THAT** this report be received as information.

REPORT**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

At the Commission's meeting of 2019 February 12, Commissioner Preston inquired if all dog parks could be enclosed with fencing. The following report outlines a brief summary of the approach for facility design that has guided the creation and development of the variety of dog off leash facilities in Burnaby.

2.0 POLICY SECTION

The provision of facilities for dogs off-leash is aligned with the City of Burnaby's Corporate Strategic Plan by supporting the following goals and sub-goals of the plan.

Goal

- A Safe Community
 - Transportation safety
 - Community amenity safety

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- A Connected Community
 - Social connection
 - Geographic connection
- An Inclusive Community
 - Serve a diverse community
 - Create a sense of community
- A Healthy Community
 - Healthy life
 - Healthy environment
 - Community involvement
- A Dynamic Community
 - City facilities and infrastructure

3.0 BACKGROUND

In 1984, the Burnaby Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission began exploring and testing facility models that would permit dog walking, both on and off-leash in designated Burnaby parks, or within designated areas in certain parks. The first comprehensive facility master plan for off-leash dog walking was prepared in 1997 through a city wide public consultation process. The Commission adopted a master plan that provided for one facility in each of the four quadrants of the City; at Barnet Marine Park, Burnaby Fraser Foreshore Park, Confederation Park and Robert Burnaby Park. These four facilities proved to be popular with users, but did not fully address the matter of unauthorized off-leash dog activity in other city parks.

In an effort to better manage unauthorized off-leash dog activity, the facility master plan was revisited in 2007. Site selection criteria were reviewed and revised (Attachment #1) to reflect current environmental policies, user safety and operational considerations and the criteria were used to aid in the identification of additional sites throughout the city.

The 2007 Strategy for Off-leash Dog Walking included a plan for expansion and/or improvements at the four existing sites, and introduction of new facilities. The sites were vetted through Commission and a comprehensive public consultation process. Additional off-leash facilities were installed at:

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David Gray Park (built 2007, enclosed)
Taylor Park (built 2007, enclosed).
Malvern Park (designated 2007, open area and trail);
Warner Loat Park (built 2008, enclosed);
Confederation Park (built 2009, enclosed);
Confederation/ Penzance (designated 2007, open trail)
Burnaby Heights Park (built 2012, enclosed);
Burnaby Fraser Foreshore Park (built 2010, open trail)
Barnet Marine Park (designated 2007, open trail)
Robert Burnaby Park (designated 2007, open area);

To date, the established facilities have been well used by the public.

4.0 OFF-LEASH ENCLOSURES

Off-leash enclosures have both benefits and costs relative to other types of off-leash areas. The predominant benefit of an enclosed area is that it physically separates off-leash dog use from other park uses, thereby minimizing the opportunity for conflicts with other park users. Off-leash enclosures also tend to allow for easier security, surveillance, and enforcement due to their confined nature.

Conversely, off-leash enclosures tend to have higher capital and operating costs than do open off-leash areas and off-leash trails. Enclosed areas can also exacerbate the effects of dog waste concentrated in a smaller area, resulting in degradation of land, water, and soil. Overcrowding, land degradation due to overuse, and possible dogfights are also potential problems associated with off-leash enclosures. Dog enclosures may promote a false sense of security.

In general, enclosing large open areas and off-leash trails would have an adverse effect on general wildlife movement through open spaces and would negate the efforts of creating contiguous open space for habitat of many other wildlife species.

5.0 SUMMARY

The use of off-leash enclosures is supported as one of several methods of addressing the demands of the dog owning public. The City designs facilities that work within the context of the larger park surroundings. Each site is vetted through a public consultation process. By developing a variety of facility types, including enclosures, the widest number of dog and dog owner needs have been met.

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Burnaby's dog owners are currently well-served as the Commission has made an effort to provide some form of off-leash facility in each quadrant of the City.

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

Dave Ellenwood
DIRECTOR - PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURAL SERVICES

HE:tc
Attachment
Off-Leash Dog Facilities

Criteria and Indicators for Off-leash Areas in the City of Burnaby

CRITERION 1: OFF LEASH AREAS MUST BE OF A SUITABLE SIZE

Indicators

- Minimum size should be 0.5 ha. (1.23 acres) of passive use space or 300 m. of trail for area for parks greater than 5 ha.
- Minimum size should be 0.25 ha. (0.61 acres) for neighbourhood parks.
- Minimum size should be 0.5 ha. (1.23 acres) for fenced enclosures.
- Minimum size should be 0.25 ha. (0.61 acres) for designated open areas.

CRITERION 2: SAFETY FOR OTHER PARK PATRONS

Indicators

- Perimeter of off-leash areas must be greater than 15 m. radius from playgrounds, wading pools, group picnic sites, turf fields, skate parks and specifically allotted special park sites (i.e. summer recreation programs).
- Passive low use open areas are appropriate and older sports fields can be considered with caution to intensity of use.
- Perimeter of off-leash areas should not be directly adjacent to major trails without natural or man-made barriers to define the boundary (i.e. rocks, split rail).
- Off leash areas shall not be located on a park/school site.
- Off leash areas shall not be located on contaminated sites.
- Off leash areas must be clearly visible.

CRITERION 3: STREAMS BANKS AND WATER WAYS SHOULD BE PROTECTED

Indicators

- Dog off-leash areas should be located 30 m. away from top of bank of lakes, watercourses, and wetlands to prevent dogs from entering streams, causing erosion and disturbance to fish habitat, and disturbing aquatic birds and wildlife.
- If any part of the off-leash area is closer than 30 m., mitigating measures should be used (e.g. formal fencing, live barrier planting, etc.).
- Wherever possible the route from parking areas to dog off-leash areas should avoid watercourses. Mitigating measures must be used to prevent dog access into the stream (e.g. fencing, extended bridge railings).
- Dog off-leash areas should avoid coastal bays and estuaries during over winter period for ducks, geese and swans.
- Dog off-leash areas should avoid beaches and mudflats, stream estuaries, and eelgrass beds during spring and fall migrations for shorebirds.

CRITERION 4: WILDLIFE HABITAT SHOULD NOT BE DISTURBED

Indicators

- Off-leash areas shall not be within 50 m. from the perimeter of conservation areas or ecological reserves.
- Dog off-leash areas should avoid high-use bird nesting and feeding habitat (e.g. meadows, wetlands, marshes).

CRITERION 5: HIGH MAINTENANCE AREAS SHOULD BE AVOIDED

Indicators

- Open area off-leash perimeter must be greater than 15 m. radius from sand based fields, turf fields, and flowerbeds.

CRITERION 6: OFF LEASH AREAS MUST BE IN A SUITABLE LOCATION TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF OWNERS AND THEIR DOGS

Indicators

- Off-leash areas should not be adjacent to primary or secondary roads without a hard natural barrier or man-made barrier.
- The off-leash areas should be on suitable ground to minimize injury (i.e. not on cement or in heavy industrial areas that have not been modified).
- Area will have adequate places for signs explaining boundaries, etiquette, and operation times accessible to all users of the site.
- Area is currently used by dog owners.