

Off-Leash Dog Park/Area Project Proposal

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Prepared for :

City of Greater Sudbury

Prepared by :

Dogs Off-Leash in Greater Sudbury (D.O.G.S.) Committee
Minnow Lake Community Action Network

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SECTION 1: Existing Framework and Background Information about Off-Leash Dog Parks/Areas

1. Acknowledgement

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Special thanks goes to Julie Vaillancourt who took the lead on the research of the Off-Leash Dog Park Survey and Carmen Birtwistle who compiled the paper surveys we received. Thanks also to Peter Seto for his continual participation at our regular meetings. A final thanks to the Sudbury Catholic School Board for permitting the Minnow Lake Community Consultation meeting to be held at the Pius XII Elementary School.

2. Introduction

In the 2004 *Parks, Open Space & Leisure Master Plan of the City of Greater Sudbury* it was identified that “[...] *In addition, park sites suitable for “off leash” or “leash free” dog play are needed within the urban areas of the City.*”^[1]

The members of the Dogs Off-Leash in Greater Sudbury (D.O.G.S.) Sub-Committee of the Minnow Lake Community Action Network appear before the City of Greater Sudbury Council to ask them for their support in the creation of the City’s first Off-Leash Dog Park.

In support of the proposal for an Off-Leash Dog Park the D.O.G.S Committee has done its homework with the assistance of City Staff and prepared this report

based on various sources of information and the proposed site of land located at the corner of Donna Drive and Second Avenue – North.

3. Research Source

Sources of information used to complete this report by the D.O.G.S. Committee included:

- Internet-based search of Canadian and United States Websites;
- Discussion with City Staff at various municipalities across Ontario;
- Review of legislation and by-laws related to dog ownership;
- Research of Statistics Canada Website;
- Review of National and International Veterinarian Websites;
- Input was solicited from other City staff having an interest in this issue;
- An online survey conducted between May 12 to May 29, 2010 to approx. 7000 household in Minnow Lake – Ward 11;
- A paper survey, version of same, was also available for Minnow Lake Residents that do not have access or feel uncomfortable with online technology;
- Input was received via email directly from concerned Minnow Lake Residents.

4. Background

Currently, the City of Greater Sudbury has no location where dogs can run off-leash legally as evidenced by the *2002-285 By-law to Regulate the Keeping of Animals and the Registration of Dogs and Cats*.^[2]

According to Statistics Canada (2002) there are approximately 27,011 dogs in the City of Greater Sudbury and of those, approximately 3,765 dogs in Minnow Lake (Ward 11)^[3]. And of the 27,011 dogs in the City of Greater Sudbury, only 5,888 (21.8%) are licensed and in compliance with the City's By-law in 2009. The sale of dog tags (i.e. license) in 2009 represented \$88,320 for the City coffers.^[4]

WHAT IS AN OFF-LEASH DOG PARK?

A dog park or 'off-leash' dog park is a facility set aside for dogs to exercise and play off-leash in a controlled environment under the supervision of their owners. Parks vary in accoutrements, although a typical dog park offers a 4' to 6' fence; separate, double-gated entry and exit points; adequate drainage; benches for humans; shade for hot days; parking close to the site; water; tools to pick up and dispose of animal waste in covered trash cans; and regular maintenance and cleaning of the grounds.

Dog parks may also feature wheel-chair access, a pond for swimming; and a separate enclosure for small dogs. In North America, the first official dog park

opened in 1979 in Berkeley, California's Ohlone Park, U.S. Today, more than 600 city or county sanctioned off leash areas in the U.S exist, and more than 1,100 exist in the U.S. and Canada combined. In Australia, dog parks feature water taps rather than hydrants, garden benches, and mature trees for shade. Some have solar lamp posts for after dark use (e.g. Pymble, New South Wales).^[5]

TYPES OF OFF-LEASH DOG PARKS

Our internet research confirmed that in Canada there are two basic types of off-leash facilities. In some jurisdictions entire municipal parks or other tracts of public land are designated as authorized off leash zones (i.e. York Regional Forest, some City of Toronto parks, one in Elliot Lake); and, more commonly, a second type of off-leash areas has been established within municipal parks or public open spaces by partitioning off (i.e., using a fence) a designated area from the remainder of the site to ensure minimal impacts to existing recreational uses.

This first type of municipal off-leash facility (i.e., a fenced area on a tract of public land) would be successful at the proposed location situated on the corner of Donna Drive and Second Avenue – North in Minnow Lake and is therefore the focus of this presentation.

BENEFITS OF AN OFF-LEASH DOG PARK

A dog park has many unknown benefits – for the dog owners, the community and for dogs.

Benefits for Dog Owners:^[6]

- Elderly and disabled citizens need easy access within their community to exercise their companion and working dogs;
- An off-leash dog park will finally open park recreation spaces for taxpayers who were previously excluded from using park areas with their dogs;
- People who exercise their dogs add to their own levels of physical health and decrease their levels of stress;
- Research has shown that dogs improve people's health by lowering their blood pressure and increase resistance to disease by giving people unconditional love and companionship;
- Helps in the reduction of anxiety and depression, stimulate people to exercise, connect people with others and help redevelop a sense of purpose
- Off-Leash parks provide a place for busy people to gather and establish friendships with others. These spaces can quickly become the nub of a community;
- A well adjusted, less aggressive dog is more enjoyable and easier to handle for the owner;
- Dog Parks provide a vital public space allowing people to meet and form the bonds of community;
- Contributes to the overall physical fitness of people by encouraging them to exercise with their dogs;

- Provides an opportunity for dog owners to enjoy the outdoors;
- Due to high density of rental properties and high population of dog ownership, would provide a legal and safe place to provide exercise.

Benefits for the Community: ^[7]

- A dog park promotes responsible dog ownership through mandatory registration and regular shots;
- The mere presence of dog owners, and their dogs, help deter crime, and frequently act as the eyes and ears of a community;
- Enclosed play areas prevent off-leash dogs from infringing on the rights of other community residents and park users such as joggers, small children, and those who may be fearful of dogs;
- Dogs who get enough exercise are less likely to create a nuisance, bark excessively, destroy property or jump up;
- Dogs often help people break the ice, allowing people who share interests to socialize while exercising their dogs;
- Helps neighbours to get to know each other and to build a sense of community;
- Giving dog owners somewhere to take their dogs shows the community is concerned, not only for the dog owners, but for the residents who complain of dogs on their lawns, sidewalks and parks; ^[8]
- An increase in revenue for the City from the sale of dog licenses from responsible dog owners willing to use the dog park.

Benefits for Dogs:

- Dogs that exercise and are allowed to run freely are not as aggressive towards people and other dogs;
- After exercising and socializing a dog s/he is less agitated, more relaxed and in general nicer to be around;
- Dogs will have a safe enclosed place to play;
- Dog Parks improve the mental state of dogs;
- From a Veterinarian's Perspective, physical activity is essential for treating and preventing obesity, anxiety and depression in dogs. ^[9]

MYTHS ABOUT DOG PARKS

Off-leash areas have been successfully implemented and maintained throughout North America. Often people oppose these areas due to the common myths and misconceptions about off-leash areas. In reality, these areas provide great benefits not only to dogs, but also to the community at large. After considerable research of other cities that have successful off-leash programs we have learned the following:

MYTH: Dog left alone in the back yard get plenty of exercise. ^[10]

- ✓ Untrue. If you have ever paid close attention to a dog, most of the time 'Rover' will initially occupy himself for a few minutes when first let out and then lay down usually in complete boredom. He can be outside for hours but he will get very little exercise when there is no stimulation. Stimulation

can come from a variety of sources (prey drive – if he sees fast moving animals such as squirrels – and tries to chase them, or from the handler throwing a ball or other toy in a game of fetch or even from playing with another dog in his pack). Usually dogs that are left outside with no stimulation eventually lay down and sleep all day out of boredom.

MYTH: Dog owners want to make all parks off-leash. ^[11]

- ✓ Untrue. Most parks in the urban areas should be primarily on-leash and most dog owners agree with this. Dog owners are simply asking for adequate shared or dedicated space on trails and in parks for off-leash exercise.

MYTH: We don't have any room in the city for dogs and dog owners. ^[11]

- ✓ Untrue. With a little creativity, trails and existing parks can be shared by many types of users. The City of Greater Toronto has successful multi-user parks allowing dogs either on or off leash or has dedicated dog parks. Dogs just need a place where they can romp; dog owners need a place to be legal.

MYTH: Dogs are dangerous! We need a comprehensive leash law on all city land.

- ✓ Untrue. According to the *1996 Injury Report which was obtained from the database of the Canadian Hospitals Injury Reporting and Prevention Program (CHIRPP), Public Health Agency of Canada*, ^[12] most injuries occurred at the victim's own home (34.2%), or other home (30.3%). These triggers are not present when a dog is in the neutral territory of a dog park or public park. In fact, dog bites occurring in Public Park account for only 3.1% of all dog bites in Canada.

MYTH: Hordes of loose dogs will over-run the city. ^[13]

- ✓ Untrue. Generally off-leash dog park/areas are fenced and have a double gated entry system. Once dogs are inside they are too busy playing with each other to try to jump the fence or escape. The signage at the entrance alerts the public that this area is for off-leash enjoyment and leash laws will be in effect everywhere else in the city.

MYTH: My child or dog will be viciously attacked. ^[13]

- ✓ Untrue. That is why most dog parks do not allow children under a certain age to be in the dog park. Some rules state 16 years old, others say 12 years old, sometimes younger.

Off-leash areas are neutral territories for visiting dogs, so it is highly unlikely that they will try to protect their turf. Dogs prefer to work things out in their groups peacefully, much as humans do. Plus, animal behaviourists have known for years that dogs are less likely to be

aggressive with each other when off-leash than when they are on leash!
Dogs known to be aggressive would not be allowed to use the dog park.

According to a recent California Dog Park Study, aggression was not a major problem. The study did reveal negative issues with jumping up and pushy behaviour, as well as with fearful dogs.

MYTH: The noise and stench will be overwhelming. ^[14]

- ✓ Untrue. Well exercised and well socialized dogs are much quieter in public areas and at home. So the more running and playing a dog does, the less likely that s/he will play-bark or engage in nuisance barking. When dogs are playing together there is less barking than left alone in a back yard. Of the cities that have off-leash or dog parks, there are no reports of nuisance barking.

Dog owners are more inclined to pick up after their own dog plus after other peoples dogs and garbage in a park that they are proud of. Some off-leash dog parks have establish dog feces composting programs on site which is odourless and environmentally friendly and removes tones of dog feces going to waste disposal sites.

According to a California Dog Park Study, noise and sanitation were not major problems.

MYTH: It's too expensive. ^[14]

- ✓ Untrue. Aside from initial start-up costs to pay for fencing, signage and amenities such as trash cans, it costs very little to maintain the areas. Unlike softball fields or hockey rinks, off-leash areas require very little maintenance beyond trash removal, occasional mowing which is presently done at the proposed site. In some cities it has been proposed that a modest increase in dog licensing fees would pay for any maintenance costs. In fact, making off-leash areas a benefit of dog registration would lead to more dog registrations and increase revenue for the city.

MYTH: Owners who use the park won't be responsible enough to pick up their dogs feces. ^[14]

- ✓ Of course that happens, but from the research we've done, 9 times out of 10 the owners pick up after their animals because they are responsible pet owners. Sure there are going to be instances where people don't pick up but it's been shown that others will step in and help keep the park clean.

MYTH: Park Maintenance staff will be required to keep the park clean. ^[14]

- ✓ Untrue. Just like any other park, a group of users will form a dog park association. It's members watch out for others, help keep the park clean and usable. Regular users make sure new users know the rules and follow them. It is a friendly atmosphere. Everyone who uses the park will want it to be a successful one.

MYTH: Dog owners will just drop off their dog and leave. ^[14]

- ✓ Untrue. There seems to be a misconception that people plop their dogs into the park and then go on about their business. That is not the way the park works. When an owner brings their animal to a dog park, the owner **MUST** be ever vigilant with their animal. An owner doesn't just bring their dog in, let it loose and then go off to a table with other people. The owner must be inside with their animal, watching him/her and making sure their dog is a good dog park citizen.

Dog Parks are not for every dog or their owner. Often dog owners will seek the advice of veterinarians which can educate clients about how to handle off-leash dogs at parks, and about weather particular dogs should visit dog parks at all.

5. Municipal Benchmarking Summary

Residents visit municipal parks for the purpose of exercising their dogs. Therefore it is understandable that passionate pet owners seeking space in which to run their dog off-leash have looked to municipal parkland as the logical place to find this space.

As citizens and taxpayers, dog owners have successfully lobbied municipal governments in southern Ontario for the establishment of off-leash facilities since the 1990's. Dog owners are looking to be treated fairly, equitably and respected as users of city parklands.

The resulting off-leash facilities have generally taken on two forms:

1. Off-Leash Parks – entire parks in which dogs may be exercised off-leash. The park may be available for authorized off-leash activity at all times or during designated periods.
2. Off-Leash Areas – one to two hectare fenced areas with a double-gated entrance, where dogs may be exercised off-leash. They tend to be located within municipal parks and open spaces, but are sometimes sited on lands owned by other public agencies (e.g., conservation authority lands, hydro utility lands, etc.) and are operated typically on the basis of arrangements between the public agency and the municipality. ^[15]

125 Off-Leash dog facilities exist in over 35 Ontario municipalities. Here are the provisions and design features of some of the existing off-leash dog facilities: ^[16]

Jurisdiction	# off-leash areas	Size ha (acres)	Rules of Operation	Design Features
Elliot Lake	1	1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clean up after dogs ▪ Must have current vaccinations 	Fencing
Aurora	1	1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clean up after dogs ▪ Remove any halters, choke chains or link collars ▪ Dogs must have current shots ▪ Unruly dogs must be leashed or must leave the park 	Fencing
Markham	9	2 - 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Children must be supervised ▪ Users must respect all rules ▪ Dogs must be licensed & vaccinated 	Fencing, Waste dispenser, Small Dog area, Agility Equipment, Open 24 hours
Ajax	2	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Respect the rights of others ▪ Mandatory stoop and scoop ▪ Users must be familiar with Dog Owners Liability Act ▪ Owners to have leash in hand at all times 	Partly fenced, Small Dog Area, Open 24 hours
Oshawa	1	10.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Respect the rights of park users ▪ Mandatory stoop & scoop ▪ Children must be supervised ▪ Dogs should be in view of their owners at all times and under voice control 	Fencing, Parking, Dog Waste Bags
Brampton	3	0.8 – 1.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mandatory stoop & scoop ▪ Each dog must be vaccinated and licensed ▪ No dog shall be left unattended ▪ Children under 10 are prohibited 	Fencing, Benches, Waste Dispenser, Agility Equipment, Small Dog Area, Open 24 hours
Caledon – Bolton	2	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use at own risk ▪ Dogs must be neutered/spayed and in good health ▪ Dogs must be licensed ▪ Mandatory stoop & scoop 	Fencing, Dog Waste Bags, Agility Equipment, Small Dog Area
Mississauga	7	1.6 – 8.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Responsibility for maintenance and adherence to rules assigned to users ▪ No sick dogs ▪ No aggressive dogs or dogs subject to the Dog Owners Liability Act ▪ Owners must pay membership fees 	Fencing, Benches, Waste Dispenser, Agility Equipment, Small Dog Area

Toronto	35	0.5 – 5.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Responsibility for maintenance and adherence to rules assigned to users ▪ No sick dogs ▪ No aggressive dogs or dogs subject to the Dog Owners Liability Act 	Fencing, Benches, Waste Dispenser, Agility Equipment, Small Dog Area
Hamilton	5	1.0 – 5.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dogs are kept on leash until entering the park ▪ Mandatory stoop & scoop ▪ Dogs must be under control of owner at all times ▪ Female dogs in heat and sick dogs are to be kept out of area 	Fencing, Benches, Waste Dispenser, Agility Equipment, Small Dog Area
Belleville	1	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Children are to be supervised when in park 	Open from Dawn to Dusk, Year Round, Benches, Water, Fencing, Small Dog Area
Other Jurisdictions with similar Off-Leash Dog Parks	Barrie, Acton, Brantford, Burlington, Cambridge, Collingwood, Enfield, Guelph, Kitchener, Kleinburg, London, Oakville, Ottawa, Port Elgin, Samia, Scarborough, St. Catherines, Stratford, Pickering, Trenton, Wasaga Beach, Waterloo, Windsor, Woodstock			Fencing, Benches, Tables, Waste Dispensers, Restrooms, Open Dawn to Dusk

6. Suggested Rules Posted at Dog Parks ^[17]

The following is a summary of the most commonly posted rules at Dog Parks including 'off-leash' dog parks from cities across North America. This could be used as a topic of discussion in the development of rules for an Off-Leash Dog Park in Minnow Lake and throughout the City of Greater Sudbury.

- Handlers enter off-leash area at their own risk.
- Owners are responsible legally and financially for the actions of their dogs as per the Dog Owners' Liability Act (DOLA).
- Pit Bulls and Staffordshire Terriers must be muzzled when in off-leash area as per DOLA.
- Handlers must clean up after their dogs and dispose of all trash.
- Dogs may never be left unattended and must be under voice control at all times. Dogs that can not be controlled must be on a leash at all times.
- There is a maximum of two (2) dogs per adult handler.
- Aggressive dogs should not be brought into the area, and any dog must be removed immediately if aggressive behavior is noted.
- Dogs must be healthy and free of parasites and properly vaccinated.
- No female dogs in heat.
- No intact male dogs allowed.
- No puppies under four months old are allowed.
- Children 15 years and under are not allowed in the off-leash dog area; An adult handler is considered anyone over 16 years of age.

- Dogs must be leashed when outside of the fenced area at all times. Handler should have the leash in hand when inside of the area.
- No human food is permitted in the fenced/off-leash area. Handlers using dog treats must assume the risk of safe handling.
- Prong, choke and spike collars must be removed for safety reasons.
- Handlers are subject to all applicable city ordinances.
- Grooming of dogs at the park is prohibited.
- No animals other than dogs shall be permitted in the area.
- Keep gates closed at all times.
- Failure to abide by the park rules may result in loss of privileges or owners may be ticketed.
- All dogs must be legally licensed and vaccinated, and shall wear a current dog license and vaccination tags.
- Hours: sunrise to sunset

7. Relationship to the Master Plan

An Off-Leash Dog Park/Area proposed at the Second Avenue North which was a former gravel pit is a perfect location for an Off-Leash Dog Park/Area as supported by the *Parks, Open Space & Leisure Master Plan of the City of Greater Sudbury* as identified in the excerpt of Section 2.2.2 Principles – City / Corporate (p. 10):

Mission: We provide **excellent access to quality municipal services and leadership in the social, environmental and economic development of the City of Greater Sudbury.**

Of particular importance to this Plan, the City has adopted the following strategic goals:

- **To promote the well-being of our citizens in a healthy, safe and stimulating community.**
- **To ensure our community is attractive to young adults as a place to build careers and raise families.**

We believe that the Off-Leash Dog Park/Area to be located in the Minnow Lake Ward 11, will support the City's Citizen and Leisure Services department's mission and commitments which are:

Mission: To support a **physically, intellectually, socially and ecologically healthy community that nurtures local values, volunteers and community partnerships.**

In fulfilling its roles, the Citizen and Leisure Services Department is committed to:

- **Providing exemplary services with a citizen focus by treating all citizens fairly, equitably and with sensitivity in order to respect each citizen's uniqueness.**

- **Building a physically, intellectually, socially and ecologically healthy community that nurtures local values and community partnerships and supports an excellent quality of life.**
- Identifying and removing barriers so as to ensure easy and open access to Citizen and Leisure Services while recognizing the large geographical area of the City of Greater Sudbury.
- Managing the resources in our trust efficiently, responsibly and effectively so as to ensure the delivery of high quality and affordable services and programs.

Excerpt: Section 2.2.2 Principles – City / Corporate (page 10)

Furthermore the creation of an Off-Leash Dog Park is supported by the City's Master Plan as demonstrated by this excerpt of Section 7.1.3 (p. 113) of the Master Plan:

"[...] In addition, park sites suitable for "off leash" or "leash free" dog play are needed within the urban areas of the City. "Off leash zones" are parks or areas within parks where dog owners can run their dogs off of their leashes. For such parks to be successful there must be significant involvement by a community group in both the creation of the park and the ongoing maintenance of the park.

The establishment of at least one such park as a test case should be undertaken. Sites that are not appropriate include lands that are considered environmentally sensitive, parks that attract a large number of users, or back on to residential lots. The portion of a park established for the leash free area must also be clearly delineated by either natural or manmade barriers and be well signed.

The area must also be associated with an affiliated group who will assume responsibility for the added maintenance.

- Determine if a park exists that would be suitable as a leash free park or acquire suitable lands.
- Work with a community group to establish rules and maintenance schedules for the park.

8. Policy and Regulation

At the present time, dogs and their owners are affected by the City of Greater Sudbury's By-law 2002-285 (to Regulate the Keeping of Animals and the Registration of Dogs and Cats).

Section 13 requires that all dogs in the City of Greater Sudbury be on a leash and under the control of a responsible person when not on their owner's property. Section 14 additionally requires that all pet dogs in the City of Greater Sudbury be licensed and that all dogs must be on a leash with a maximum length of two metres when in public area.

Use of an off-leash area by pit bull and Staffordshire terrier dog breeds is impacted by the *Dog Owners' Liability Act, R.S.O. 1990 (DOLA)*, and the *Public Safety Related to Dogs Statute Law Amendment Act, 2005*, which specifically require that pit bulls and Staffordshire terriers be muzzled when in a public environment including a designated off leash area. Additionally, the provincial legislation affects all dog owners using an off leash area explicitly making them liable for damages resulting from a bite or attack by their pet on another person or animal.

Approval and creation of an Off-Leash Dog Park/Area is perceived amongst municipal staff as a positive start for a new off leash area. In particular, the City of Elliot Lake, the City of Greater Toronto – which has extensive dog park experience, and the City of Calgary which is recognized as a leader in municipal promotion of responsible dog ownership

SECTION 2: Communities Voice their Support for an Off-Leash Dog Park in the City of Greater Sudbury

1. Introduction:

In the past several years many residents throughout the City of Greater Sudbury have expressed their interest and support for the creation of dog parks. The earliest demonstration of this support is evidenced by the Seventh Meeting of the Finance Committee of the City of Greater Sudbury in March 2007 where members were considering providing funding for the creation of a dog park.

In June of 2007 a petition to help with the establishment of a dog park in Greater Sudbury was created on Facebook and received over 138 respondents in favour of the creation of a dog park. Just recently a local community radio station organized a morning poll about the creation of a dog park in the City of Greater Sudbury. It received 908 calls with 71% in support of the creation of a dog park.

At its January 2010 meeting the Minnow Lake Community Action Network invited interested residents to create a sub-committee to study the need and support of the community for such a project. The initial proposed location for the off-leash dog park was the parcel of property at the corner of Donna Drive and Second Avenue – North.

2. Advantages to the location

Residents of Minnow Lake and of the City of Greater Sudbury have identified several advantages for converting the existing parcel of land on the corner of Donna Drive and Second Avenue – North into an Off-Leash Dog Park/Area.

The Advantages are:

- The proposed area would not pose any environmental concerns as no wetlands or environmentally sensitive areas are present;
- It would improve and make an aesthetically pleasing use of a current eye sore for the community;
- The current plot of land is unsuitable for residential or commercial construction and would be attractive to a number of residents due to its central location for Minnow Lake and New Sudbury residents;
- The current land doesn't back on to residential lots; and is surrounded by commercial properties on the West side and Second Avenue from the North and East sides;
- It would reduce the presence of dogs in other local parks and recreational areas (e.g. Soccer fields, Hockey rinks and Children's playground, etc.);
- Its centrally located and would enhance local tourism by being attractive to tourist who travel with their dogs;
- The area is clearly delineated by natural and man-made barriers such as fencing at the South End, Burms to the East and a Hill on the South West end of the property;
- The location would make it accessible for the elderly and persons with disabilities and would attract young adults and families to the area;
- It would create a legal and safe place to provide exercise for both dogs and their owners due to high density of rental properties and high population of dog ownership in the Minnow Lake area.

The benefits of increased opportunity for social interaction, sense of community, increased park activity and improved park safety appear to weigh in favour of establishing an off leash area in Minnow Lake. Though concerns associated with such facilities are legitimate, experiences in other jurisdictions demonstrate that the risk of potential issues arising can be significantly mitigated through appropriate choice of site, good facility design, and posting of well defined rules of use.

3. Public Consultation of Minnow Lake Residents

CITY NEEDS A DOG PARK

'79.5% of survey respondents strongly agreed that the City of Greater Sudbury needs dog parks'

As urban areas become more developed and people become more isolated, it is important for municipalities to nurture a sense of community. Many dog owners use public parks to exercise their dogs. Present city by-law does not allow dog's off-leash on public land within the City of Greater Sudbury. Residents of Minnow Lake however, need a clean and safe place to exercise, play and socialize their dogs without endangering or annoy people and property. For some dog owners, specifically the elderly and disabled, a dog park would allow the only opportunity for them and their dogs to play and socialize with other people and other dogs. An off-leash dog park fosters a sense of belonging and of community.

SUPPORT OF WARD 11 RESIDENTS

'70.0% of Minnow Lake Residents say that a dog park at the proposed location would improve the Minnow Lake area and benefit the city'

Survey invitation postcards (Appendix A) were sent to over 6,600 households in Minnow Lake (Ward 11) via Canada Post on Wednesday May 12th. Residents were invited to go online to complete a short survey about the proposed dog park, or to call a telephone number to obtain a paper copy of the survey.

A reminder postcard was sent to the same households on Tuesday May 25th reminding residents of the survey completion deadline. Both postcards also informed residents of a community meeting which was to be held on May 26th at the Pius Elementary School in Minnow Lake.

A total of 358 online survey responses were received, in addition to 9 paper surveys for a grand total of 367 surveys. This represents a response rate of 5%. The survey has a margin of error of plus or minus 4 percent at a 95 percent level of confidence.

Residents were asked to indicate their agreement with a number of statements concerning the proposed dog park. The responses to this question are presented in Table 1 (see Appendix A).

Overall, 79.5% of survey respondents strongly agreed that the City of Greater Sudbury needs dog parks. The majority of residents reported that building (67.9%) a dog park and maintaining (66.7%) a dog park were appropriate uses of

municipal funds. The majority of respondents also indicated that a dog park in Minnow Lake would improve the area (69.9%) and that a dog park in Minnow Lake would benefit the city (70.2%).

COMMONLY PERCEIVED PROBLEMS

Residents were also asked to rate their level of concern with a number of commonly perceived problems with dog parks. The three most common concerns where:

- 41.6% animal vaccinations / disease
- 37.5% maintenance / sanitation
- 37.4% aggressive dogs

In regards to the last concern, according to the Veterinarian Associations conflicts between dogs are not uncommon in the presence or absence of off leash areas. It's identified that Veterinarians see evidence of dog confrontations about once per month, but that the majority of these confrontations seem to occur at the pet's home. ^[18]

LICENSED DOGS – VALUE FOR MONEY

‘No Service in Return’ was indicated as the primary reason why some Dog Owners currently don’t purchase licenses for their dogs’

Dog Owners were asked whether or not their animals are licensed with the City of Greater Sudbury. Although the majority 71.9% indicated that their dogs were licensed, a considerable proportion of dog owners (26.3%) reported their dogs were not licensed with the City.

60.3% of those dog owners that indicated that their dogs were not licensed indicated that there was ‘No Service in Return’ as the most common reason why their dogs were not licensed with the City.

If a dog license were required to use the off-leash dog area 71.1% of respondents indicated very/somewhat likely to license their dog. This would represent an important increase in revenue for the City of Greater Sudbury that could offset the cost of the initial creation of the dog park/area.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

‘22.7% of Dog Owners said they would be very likely to volunteer for clean-up and 26.9% enforcement of the rules at the off-leash dog park’

Overall, the Minnow Lake Dog Owners are committed to assisting the city in the maintenance and the sanitation of the Off-Leash Dog Park/Area. This could be

done with the assistance of an organized group of citizens in a Dog Owners Association.

DOG PARK FEATURES

'90.5% of respondents indicated that waste bags and trash cans were the most important feature at a dog park'

The second and third most popular feature to have at an off-leash dog park was fencing (89.1%) and followed by a water feature for dogs (63.7%).

4. Next Steps for the D.O.G.S Committee

The Dogs Off-Leash in Greater Sudbury (DOGS) Committee wishes to note that we do not see our function ending with Council's support for the implementation of an off-leash dog park for the Minnow Lake and the City of Greater Sudbury.

We look forward to providing input and partnering with the City of Greater Sudbury for the off-leash dog park related rules and by-laws that would permit the creation of Sudbury's first dog park.

We are committed to seeing this project to its conclusion with the establishment, Sudbury's first Off-Leash Dog Park located in Minnow Lake.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

In conclusion and in keeping with the city's master plan, supported by the research and the survey of Minnow Lake Residents, the Dogs Off-Leash in Greater Sudbury Committee of the Minnow Lake Community Action Network recommend the following:

THAT the City of Greater Sudbury establishes at least one off-leash dog park as a test case;

FURTHERMORE, THAT the City of Greater Sudbury supports the establishment of an off-leash dog park on the parcel of land at the corner of Donna Drive and Second Avenue – North.

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