

Background

The City of Greater Sudbury (City) has two established off-leash dog parks located in Minnow Lake (Second Avenue) and Azilda (North End Playground). Both existing sites were developed in conjunction with community groups and realized through municipal funding (Healthy Community Initiative and capital funds) and community fundraising. Existing parks are governed by the City's Off-Leash Dog Park By-Law.

In 2017, the York K9 Club made application for HCI funding to develop an off-leash dog park at Riverdale Playground. The outdoor rink at Riverdale Playground had been previously used as an informal off-leash area for a number of years. The HCI application was recommended for approval as it was supported by the Parks, Open Space and Leisure Master Plan and community support was demonstrated (over 50 letters of support accompanied the application).

At the Council meeting of July 11, 2017, the York K9 Club HCI application in the amount of \$47,000 to establish a permanent off-leash dog park at the Riverdale Playground was approved. Construction of the Riverdale dog park commenced early December 2017 with majority of fence work completed in February 2018.

On February 8, 2018 an email was received from the abutting property owner (St. Peter's United Church) citing concerns about the project. Specific concerns expressed included the lack of consultation, noise during construction phase, impacts on shared parking lot, noise from the operation of the off-leash dog park and impacts on church activities.

Meetings were held with the abutting property owner at which the City acknowledged consultation processes were lacking. Due to the potential impacts on the shared parking lot and church activities, the City committed to exploring other locations in the south end for the off-leash dog park. HCI grant review processes have been updated to ensure that appropriate community consultation has taken place on projects which could have negative impacts on nearby residents.

On June 4, 2018 the City hosted a public input session to receive feedback on establishing an off-leash dog park in the area of the York Street Parking Lot (Bell Park). Feedback was also received via the City's Over To You online tool. There was mixed support for the York Street location with concerns expressed by neighbouring residents about the potential for noise, negative aesthetics and impact on Bell Park.

Through the consultation process, the following alternate sites were suggested by residents for potential off-leash dog park location in the south end:

- Bell Grove Beach
- Ida Street

No alternative location for the south end dog park has been identified to date. The fencing at the Riverdale Playground remains, but the area is closed for use and the

park has not been approved as an official off-leash area. A total of \$39,900 of the \$47,000 was spent with the dog park installation at Riverdale Playground.

At the June 12, 2018 City Council meeting, staff were directed to bring back a report with options for establishment of a dog park for the areas of the Donovan/Elm West and New Sudbury.

Parks, Open Space and Leisure Master Plan Considerations

The City's Parks, Open Space and Leisure Master Plan Review (2014) states that selecting appropriate sites that are supported by residents is often the most significant challenge in establishing leash free dog parks. The Master Plan also notes that dog parks can be polarizing in some communities. In Greater Sudbury, the online survey conducted as part of the Master Plan found low to moderate support for dog parks (47%), but also moderate opposition (23%, the highest of all facility types).

The Parks, Open Space and Leisure Master Plan recommends establishing criteria for evaluating sites for future dog parks, with consideration of the following factors (at a minimum):

- existing park locations, uses, and intensity
- potential environmental impacts (environmentally sensitive features should be avoided)
- sufficient land base (ideally a minimum of two hectares)
- availability of on-site parking
- ample buffers from adjacent land uses (particularly schools and residential areas)
- accessibility via pathways and/or trails and roads

The Master Plan gives priority to the larger urban areas including Sudbury (south/southwest), Rayside-Balfour and Valley East for future off leash dog park development.

Site Selection Criteria & Design Guidelines for Off-Leash Dog Parks

Given the challenges with identifying a suitable location for an off-leash dog park in the south end and as there has been a request to identify potential sites in Donovan/Elm West and New Sudbury, the need to establish site selection criteria prior to the development of additional parks is evident.

Research on site selection criteria included a review of best practices from other municipalities with established dog parks. Consultation on site selection criteria was conducted with existing dog park user groups, including the York K9 Club.

Suggested Site Selection Criteria for Off-Leash Dog Parks

- A minimum of 2 hectares is recommended.

- Where feasible, a 50m to 100m setback distance from residential uses to mitigate noise concerns. Changes in topography or landscaping can reduce the need for spatial separation.
- Where applicable a 50m to 100m setback distance from the following uses is recommended:
 - Playgrounds
 - Splash pads
 - Play fields, sports courts and other high-intensity park uses
 - Elementary schools
 - Day cares
 - Places of worship
- Area should be located on well-drained land with minimal slope
- Off-leash dog parks should not be located in environmentally sensitive areas
- Area surface should be durable and easily maintained. May include natural turf or hard surfacing.
- Sufficient on site, off road parking required.
- Proximity to arterial roads and proper site planning to prevent creation of traffic bottle necks and negative impacts on local neighbourhood.
- To ensure for safety and security, potential locations should be reviewed from a CPTED (Crime Prevention through Environmental Design) lens.
- Sites should be able to meet Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) requirements and best practices for outdoor spaces.

Suggested Design Guidelines for Off-Leash Dog Parks

- 4' chain link fencing except where proximity to arterial roads where 6' is required.
- Double gated entrance preferred.
- Separate entrances or free run spaces for large and small dogs is highly recommended.
- Depending on the existing terrain, natural ground cover, wood chips, crusher dust are options with consideration for an antimicrobial option to assist in the alleviation of the spread of disease (operating costs will be impacted depending on choice in each situation).
- Signage displaying dog park regulations and policies required.
- Sufficient waste receptacles.
- Benches, picnic tables and shade structures (if natural shade is not present) highly recommended.
- Potable water source for water stations/washing stations desirable pending funding availability and available servicing.
- Dog play equipment/agility equipment desirable pending funding availability.
- Mutt mitts/garbage bins outside of space desirable.

Community Involvement & Consultation

Research on best practices for off-leash dog park development demonstrates that these types are successful where affiliated organizations are involved who fulfill the role of park stewards. The City's Parks, Open Space and Leisure Master Plan states that local communities and organizations are to be involved in the planning, creation and

operation of any future off-leash dog park. It is recommended that prior to the City considering any new off-leash dog park, that there is evidence of community support in the form of an organized group of volunteers.

It is also important that when considering a potential location for an off-leash dog park, that local residents are engaged and consulted on site design. Public input sessions assist in educating residents about the operation of dog parks and allow for opportunities to address concerns about perceived noise and aesthetics. It is recommended that once a site is deemed suitable as per the recommended site selection criteria, a community input process be initiated to gather additional feedback. Residents living within an 800m radius of the proposed site will be targeted for consultation.

Site Selection for South End, New Sudbury, and Donovan Locations

South End

Using the recommended site selection criteria and working with the York K9 Club, staff explored potential alternate sites for a south end off-leash dog park. The sites suggested at previous community input sessions (Ida Street and Bell Grove Beach) were deemed not suitable as per the site selection criteria developed. Both sites have limited parking opportunities and are in environmental sensitive areas (the Ida Street location is Conservation Sudbury property while the Bell Grove location is on the shores of Ramsey Lake). Additionally the Ida Street location is at the end of a quiet residential street which would cause increased traffic in the area. The Bell Grove location fell well short of the 2 hectare recommended space.

After reviewing other existing parkland and City owned property in the south end, property west of the Gerry McCrory Countryside Sports Complex was deemed to be a viable potential location using the site selection criteria.

The property is approximately 2 hectares in size and there is natural opportunity for parking with the Gerry McCrory Countryside Sports Complex adjacent, as well as potential for new parking spaces if necessary. The site has very good sightlines from all vantage points from the perspective of safety as it is generally flat rolling terrain with some minor elevation. It appears to drain well, which is conducive to minimal standing water if any. Residents are approximately 75m away from the potential site, satisfying the recommended setback distance.

The York K9 Club is committed to a stewardship role with the Gerry McCrory Countryside Sports Complex site. The park would service the City's south end with an adequately sized park as per the Leisure Master Plan's recommendations. It is also within walking distance to many subdivisions (Countryside, Algonquin, Mallards Green) therefore it is anticipated that neighbours will enjoy walking to this off leash park.

A summary of the Gerry McCrory Countryside Sports Complex site, using the recommended site selection criteria follows:

| Analysis of Gerry McCrory Countryside Sports Complex Site | | |
|---|--------|---|
| Site Selection Criteria | Rating | Comments |
| Sufficient Area (2 hectares) | Green | |
| Set back from residents (50m to 100m) | Yellow | Closest resident approx. 75m |
| Set back from playgrounds, etc. (50m to 100m) | Green | While adjacent to arena, public using arena would be sufficiently away from dog park. |
| Site drainage | Green | High property with good drainage. |
| Environmental impacts | Green | No blasting or tree removal necessary. |
| Site surfacing | Yellow | Mix of turf and hard surfacing. |
| Parking availability | Green | |
| Traffic impacts, proximity to arterial roads | Green | |
| CPTED analysis | Yellow | To be confirmed with full CPTED analysis. |
| AODA compliance | Yellow | AODA compliance to be further investigated through site design. |
| Commitment of Community Organization | Green | York K9 Club is committed to site. |

Rating Descriptions:

Green = Meets/Exceeds site selection guidelines

Yellow = Minimally meets site selection guidelines, More analysis may be required.

Red = Does not meet site selection guidelines.

Donovan/Elm West

At the meeting of June 4, 2018, Council requested information on a potential dog park site for the Donovan/Elm West area. The Donovan Elm West Community Action Network has been interested in the creation of an off-leash dog park for approximately 4 years. Formal conversations began in mid-2018. After performing a review of available and suitable parkland in this area of Ward 4, initial conversations centered around the Elm West sports complex on White Street. While the group was in strong support of this location initially, the proximity of residences on White Street and the outdoor rink and playground locations preclude this site as a viable option through the site selection criteria.

Through further review, two pieces of parkland located directly at the intersection of Beatty and McNeil Streets were considered. There is a linear park on the east side that could accommodate larger dogs and a small sized park on the west side for smaller dogs. From a cursory review of the site selection criteria, it is anticipated that these two locations would score favorably on the proposed site selection criteria and design

guidelines. Further review is required and there are currently no municipal funds allocated towards this project.

New Sudbury

At the City Council of June 4, 2018, Council also requested staff to identify potential locations for off-leash dog parks in New Sudbury. Through a cursory review of municipal parkland in Ward 12, Cedar Park Playground and Lorraine Street linear park were considered. Cedar Park Playground would not meet the site selection criteria due to the proximity of residential homes as well as the playground and outdoor rink. Lorraine Playground location would likely score favorably on the proposed site selection criteria. There is currently no community group supporting this proposal nor are there any municipal funds currently allocated towards this project.

Next Steps

Upon approval of the site selection criteria and design guidelines presented, the City will utilize these standards to evaluate potential off-leash dog park sites moving forward.

The City will conduct community consultation on the establishment of an off-leash dog park at the Gerry McCrory Countryside Sports Complex site as it meets the site selection criteria recommended and is supported by the York K9 Club.

Subject to Council approving the site selection criteria and guidelines and hosting of community consultation process, the City would move the existing infrastructure (fencing) from the Riverdale Playground to create the off-leash area at Countryside in the summer of 2019. It has been confirmed that the fencing can be repurposed and installed at an alternate location at the estimated amount of \$26,000. Additional grounds work and leveling at Countryside is estimated at \$6,000. Restoration of the Riverdale Playground site (seeding, tree planting) is estimated at \$5,000. There is currently a project balance of \$7,100. Additional funding required will be funded through previous Leisure Services Capital accounts identified for park and playground development in the estimated amount of \$29,900.

References

By-Law 2012-145, A By-Law To Establish and Regulate the Use of Off-Leash Dog Parks
http://www.greatersudbury.ca/content/div_clerks/documents/By-law%202012-145.pdf

Healthy Community Initiative Fund Applications, City Council (July 11, 2017)
<http://agendasonline.greatersudbury.ca/index.cfm?pg=feed&action=file&agenda=report&itemid=26&id=1131>