

March 29, 2016

To: His Worship the Mayor
and Members of City Council

Re: Off-Leash Dog Park

**RECOMMENDATION OF THE COMMUNITY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES
COMMITTEE - MARCH 14, 2016**

That Council approve the Administration's proposed approach with respect to the development of off-leash dog parks and areas as set out in Option #2 of this report.

COMMUNITY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE – MARCH 14, 2016

The Committee adopted a resolution to concur in the recommendation contained in the report. Recommendation #2 does not require City Council approval.

Councillors: Bob Hawkins (Chair), John Findura, Shawn Fraser and Mike O'Donnell were present during consideration of this report by the Community and Protective Services Committee.

The Community and Protective Services Committee, at its meeting held on March 14, 2016, considered the following report from the Regina Planning Commission:

**RECOMMENDATION OF THE REGINA PLANNING COMMISSION
– MARCH 9, 2016**

1. That Council approve the Administration's proposed approach with respect to the development of off-leash dog parks and areas as set out in Option #2 of this report.
2. That the report be forwarded to the March 29, 2016 meeting of City Council for approval.

REGINA PLANNING COMMISSION – MARCH 9, 2016

The Commission adopted a resolution to concur in the recommendation contained in the report after amending Recommendation #2 to read:

2. That this report be forwarded to the March 14, 2016 Community & Protective Services Committee Meeting for consideration.

Recommendation #2 does not require City Council approval.

Councillors: Mike O'Donnell (Chairperson) and Barbara Young; Commissioners: Phil Evans, Simon Kostic, Adrienne Hagen Lyster, Ron Okumura, Daryl Posehn, Laureen Snook and Kathleen Spatt were present during consideration of this report by the Regina Planning Commission.

The Regina Planning Commission, at its meeting held on March 9, 2016, considered the following report from the Administration:

RECOMMENDATION

1. That Council approve the Administration's proposed approach with respect to the development of off-leash dog parks and areas as set out in Option #2 of this report.
2. That this report be forwarded to the March 16, 2016 Community & Protective Services Committee Meeting for consideration.
3. That the report be forwarded to the March 29, 2016 City Council for approval.

CONCLUSION

The Administration has conducted leading practice research, along with a statistically valid survey (telephone survey of 600 Regina citizens), to solicit opinions about off-leash dog parks for planning purposes. Based on this feedback, as well as requests received from current park users, the Administration is proposing an approach that better serves the community with three additional fenced off-leash parks located in the south, east and north/northwest ends of Regina as development occurs. In addition the Administration will continue to work with stakeholders to develop a plan to begin to pilot up to three un-fenced off-leash areas in 2017.

BACKGROUND

Off-leash dog parks and areas play an important role in providing spaces for pet owners to exercise their dogs. They often serve as a space for community interaction among pet owners, particularly when situated in neighbourhood settings. Regina currently has one partially fenced off-leash dog park, the Cathy Lauritsen Memorial Off-Leash Dog Park and five seasonal off-leash areas that are contained within boarded rinks at the following locations: Leslie Park (central), Mike Badham Park (south), Glencairn Park (east), M.J. Coldwell Park (north), and Rosemont School Park (west).

Across Canada, municipalities are adding to their inventory of off-leash dog parks and areas. Many Regina citizens have responded to this trend, by voicing interest in additional off-leash dog parks and areas in Regina when participating in community consultation processes related to recreation facilities. Regina's current Recreation Facility Plan, which was approved by Council in 2010, recommended that the Administration prepare a dog park plan for Regina. Subsequently, in January, 2014, Council passed a motion directing the Administration to "prepare a report through the Regina Planning Commission that outlines the City's ability to require an off-leash dog park in each new development that has a population of 5,000."

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the research that has been done to address this motion in the context of the Recreation Facility Plan.

DISCUSSION

The Administration has conducted leading practice research as well as a survey of citizens and a review of applicable planning policies and practices to provide information from which to develop a plan. As part of this research, the Administration has also explored the option of requiring an off-leash dog park for every new development with 5,000 residents. The results of this research are provided below.

Off-leash Dog Park Planning in Municipalities across Canada

The Administration conducted research with municipalities across Canada to develop a better understanding of how other municipalities are addressing the growing demand for off-leash spaces. Research conducted through discussions with Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Hamilton, Toronto, Surrey, Vancouver and Kamloops indicates that there are two primary approaches to establishing new off-leash dog parks and areas:

1. The first approach is driven by community leadership. For example, in Calgary and Saskatoon, an off-leash dog park is developed when a group of citizens works through the municipality to apply for designation of a space in the built environment.
2. The second approach is City-led, but still involves community participation. Municipalities such as Edmonton and Surrey have developed criteria for off-leash dog parks and areas and based on the criteria identified specific sites that are eligible to be designated as an off-leash site. In Edmonton citizens then apply to have the spaces brought on line and in Surrey, bringing the spaces online is led by the municipality.

Through the research, the Administration was not able to identify a city with a population-based ratio for triggering the creation of an off-leash dog park. However, if ratios are calculated based on what currently exists, the ratios vary significantly. Kamloops which only provides unfenced off-leash areas, has one space per every 5,000 residents, whereas Toronto provides a combination of fenced dog parks and un-fenced areas at a ratio of one for every 106,000 residents. The research also showed that all cities but one (Saskatoon) were not focused on providing off-leash areas in relation to new development taking place within their municipalities.

	Number			Population ¹	Ratio
	Fenced	Partially Fenced	Unfenced		
Regina ²	0	1	0	237,800	1:237,800
Saskatoon	8	0	0	300,600	1:37,575
Kamloops	0	0	18	87,000	1:4,833
Surrey	9	0	0	468,300	1:52,033
Vancouver	6	0	30	2,470,300	1:68,619
Winnipeg	0	11	0	782,600	1:71,145
Calgary	4	0	146	1,406,700	1:9,378
Edmonton	0	0	40	1,328,000	1:33,200
Toronto	37	1	19	6,055,700	1:106,240
Hamilton	5	0	4	765,200	1:85,022

Research further shows that the type of off-leash dog parks and areas provided in the eight cities ranges greatly. While some cities provide all fully fenced dog parks, others provide only unfenced areas. Vancouver also provides unfenced off-leash areas within existing parks during limited hours to try and ensure spaces are multi-functional. It should be noted that some municipalities have or are moving away from providing unfenced off-leash areas. These are proving to be difficult to monitor, as municipalities do not typically build staff capacity to ensure appropriate use of the parks.

¹ For the purposes of this report population is reported using census metropolitan areas from Statistics Canada.

² For the purposes of off-leash dog park calculations the seasonal boarded rink sites used in Regina are not included, as they are not available year round.

Planning Context

The designation of park spaces is addressed in *The Planning and Development Act, 2007*(Act). The Act provides direction with respect to the dedication of municipal reserve (MR) within the development context. Currently, the Act requires that MR is dedicated at the following rates:

- 5 per cent of the total industrial/commercial lands developed; and
- 10 per cent of the total residential lands developed.

One of the typical uses for lands dedicated as MR is neighbourhood park space to serve the needs of the new development, however in accordance with the Act MR can also be used for other requirements, such as natural areas, school purposes, agricultural use or for public buildings or facilities. The Community Services Department works with the Planning Department to provide input into plans, regarding the recreation elements required for inclusion within the neighbourhood to meet future community and program needs. Once the plan is approved, detailed site design and programming is refined.

Due to the range of recreation amenities often proposed to ensure complete neighbourhoods, along with the inclusion of school sites as part of MR dedication and more dense development, it is becoming challenging to meet needs for developing communities. It should also be noted that municipalities do not typically include off-leash dog parks as part of active recreation spaces as the two uses are not compatible.

Off-Leash Dog Park Public Feedback

Over the past several years, the City has heard mixed feedback from citizens with respect to off-leash dog parks and areas. While many citizens have expressed an interest in adding off-leash dog parks and areas throughout the city, others have expressed concern over having new locations in close proximity to their homes or concern regarding the priority of off-leash dog park development compared to other recreational amenities. As a result, the Administration contracted Ipsos Reid to conduct a statistically valid survey in June 2015, in an effort to collect public opinion with respect to off-leash dog parks and areas in Regina. The summary report is provided in Appendix A. Highlights are provided below.

A total of 600 telephone surveys were conducted with a randomly selected sample of Regina residents aged 18 years and older. As the survey was intended to solicit broad public opinion, both dog owners and non-owners were interviewed. Interviews were conducted between June 11 and 29, 2015. Sixty-four per cent of households interviewed did not own a dog; 36 per cent did.

When assessing attitudes about off-leash dog parks and areas, the majority (82 per cent) believe that “off-leash parks and areas are important for a city like Regina”. Eighty-two per cent also believe that “providing designated and FENCED off-leash dog parks is important to overall community safety”. Eighty-two per cent also agreed that they “support the idea of off-leash dog parks throughout the city”.

Although 59 per cent of respondents said they were satisfied with the current level of service, it is important to note that Ipsos believes this number reflects the fact that respondents perceive there to be unfenced off-leash areas designated within the city, which is not currently the case. Despite the fact that a number of respondents were satisfied with the current service level for off-leash dog parks, there was also widespread support from the respondents for increasing the

number of off-leash dog parks and areas in Regina. Seventy two per cent support increasing the number of off-leash dog parks and areas, while 20 per cent opposed a proposed increase. More specifically:

- 53 per cent of respondents support increasing designated fenced off-leash dog parks
- 37 per cent support increasing both designated fenced off-leash dog parks and unfenced off-leash areas

When asked why they support an increase, residents typically mentioned that there are currently not enough, there would be positive benefits for dogs and access would be more convenient for users.

Despite this support for an increased number of off-leash dog parks and areas, survey respondents were cautious about trade-offs. The majority of respondents (87 per cent) expressed that they would like the City of Regina to focus on other priorities rather than off-leash dog parks and areas. Ipsos Reid indicated that if respondents felt that moving forward with the implementation of off-leash dog parks meant that other services they considered to be a higher priority would be unlikely to move forward, their response to supporting development of off-leash dog parks and areas would change.

Options for Moving Forward

Option #1: Status Quo

As noted, Regina currently has one off-leash dog park. Research shows that Regina's current service level is not comparable to the service level for the provision of off-leash dog parks in other municipalities. Through the Recreation Facility Plan consultations conducted in 2008/2009 as well as the survey conducted, the Administration has also heard from citizens that they believe a city of Regina's size should have better access to off-leash dog parks and areas. It is for these reasons the Administration does not recommend the option of remaining status-quo.

Option #2: Three fenced off-leash parks in new developments in the north/northwest, south and east areas of the city; develop criteria to identify and pilot two to three unfenced areas in the built environment

This option proposes that the City move forward by establishing a target of developing an additional three additional fenced off-leash dog parks, one in the south, east and north/northwest areas of Regina. This approach is an alternative to using a population-based trigger such as one off-leash dog park per every 5,000 residents. The Administration would continue to work with the Planning Department and developers to add fenced off-leash dog parks, with appropriate amenities, in the north/northwest, east and south zones to augment the Cathy Lauritsen Memorial Off-Leash Park, which is currently located in the central zone.

Discussions have already begun with developers, with respect to these additions and policy directions related to off-leash dog parks have been included in the Tower Crossing Neighbourhood Plan. Furthermore, in recognition of the fact that the rate of development can be challenging to predict and so it may take years to reach this target, the Administration has moved forward with the fencing of a utility parcel in the East Industrial Area. This space, although not the ideal solution for the addition of an off-leash dog park from a

neighbourhood planning perspective, will provide another interim option for people who want to run their dog's off-leash. The space will be a fully fenced, coarse grass area with a safety gate and on-street parking.

In addition to the three new proposed fenced off-leash dog parks, the Administration would develop a plan in conjunction with partners like the Regina Humane Society (RHS) and the Regina Off-Leash Association (ROLA) to pilot two to three locations for unfenced off-leash areas within the current built environment. This would involve the development of criteria for the selection of spaces to ensure all necessary factors, such as compatibility with park amenities, are considered through the site selection process. The plan with criteria and selected locations would then be brought to Council in 2017. The test sites would be established, with follow-up information being shared with Committee and Council.

This plan for the addition of fenced and un-fenced spaces has been shared with the RHS, who is supportive of moving forward. RHS feels that providing more options for residents to run their dogs in designated off-leash spaces may reduce some of the off-leash activity in parks that are currently not designated.

Option #3: Establish off-leash dog parks in new developments based on population

Currently when a new subdivision is constructed, *The Planning and Development Act, 2007*, requires a developer to dedicate the following as Municipal Reserve (MR):

- 10 per cent of the total lands developed for residential purposes; and
- 5 per cent of the total lands developed for commercial/industrial purposes.

Parks, storm water management, school and sport and recreation requirements all must be accommodated through this MR. In a community housing 5,000 residents, typical requirements in the MR include items such as:

- A school site with park space to accommodate the school yard;
- One soccer pitch for every 2,500 residents;
- One playground within 800 m walking distance of most residences;
- Walking paths and bikeway connections;
- Other outdoor recreation amenities, such as basketball courts, skateboard pods, outdoor fitness equipment, and;
- Depressed areas for storm water detention, as determined through engineering analysis.

As communities become denser, it is becoming increasingly challenging to meet all of the programmed and spontaneous recreation needs, storm water utility requirements and school requirements within the current 10 per cent MR dedication. It also makes it challenging to add off-leash dog parks on a population basis of 5,000 residents. It is for this reason the Administration does not recommend moving forward with a population based target for the addition of off-leash dog parks in Regina.

Given this analysis, the Administration is recommending Option #2, which includes a total of three new fenced off-leash parks in new developments in the north/northwest, south and east areas of the city and up to three unfenced areas in the built environment.

RECOMMENDATION IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

Currently there are placeholders in the Servicing Agreement Model for the development of future dog parks. As developers are currently responsible to develop parks at a neighbourhood level, the costs reflected in the model are capital funds required to contribute additional funds to enhance selected neighbourhood level dog parks as city-wide parks. These costs are estimated at \$160,000 (for a park approx. 2.5 Ha.), with 70 per cent of those costs being funded by the municipality and 30 per cent being funded through Servicing Agreement Fees. Funds would be used to fence the park and install parking and safety gates, which are currently not required as part of the standard neighbourhood park development. Operating costs associated with maintaining a park of this size are estimated at \$3,500. Required funding will be reviewed when developments reach the concept plan stage, as sizes for parks will vary based on the plan for the overall community. Once costs and Servicing Agreement amounts have been confirmed, funding requests will be forwarded through the annual budget process.

The Administration has also discussed the service level contract with the RHS. At this time the service level contract with the RHS does not require adjustment. As the City grows and as additional off-leash locations are brought on-line a review of the service level contract in conjunction with *The Regina Animal Bylaw No, 2009-44*, No. 2009-44 may be required.

Environmental Implications

There are no environmental implications associated with this report.

Policy and/or Strategic Implications

The development of off-leash parks and areas supports the community priority to develop complete neighbourhoods, as identified in the City's Official Community Plan, *Design Regina*. They serve as a place not only for dogs to socialize, but also for people with common interests to meet and enjoy the amenities that the city has to offer. The addition of off-leash parks and areas is also supported by the Council approved Recreation Facility Plan.

Other Implications

There are no other implications related to this report.

Accessibility Implications

Site accessibility would be included as part of the criteria that would be adhered to for the development of any future fenced off-leash dog parks or unfenced off-leash areas.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Community Services Department will work in collaboration with the Communications Department and the Regina Off-leash Association (ROLA) to communicate the development and opening of future off-leash dog parks and areas to the public as they are brought online.

The Administration will also ensure development of a consultation and communication plan as part of pilot project for unfenced off-leash areas. This will include engaging with residents regarding potential locations as well as development of an educational communications plan for both fenced and unfenced off-leash spaces.

DELEGATED AUTHORITY

The recommendations contained in this report require City Council approval.

Respectfully submitted,

COMMUNITY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE



Ashley Thompson, Secretary