



## Off-Leash Dog Park Program Update

<b>Date</b>	March 23, 2022
<b>To</b>	Executive Committee
<b>From</b>	City Planning & Community Development
<b>Service Area</b>	Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services
<b>Item No.</b>	EX22-40

### RECOMMENDATION

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The Executive Committee recommends City Council:

1. Approve the development of an off-leash dog park in A.E. Wilson Park.
2. Amend *The Regina Animal Bylaw, 2009* to include Horizon Station Park Off Leash Area.
3. Approve Litzenberger Park boarded rink as a seasonal off-leash area.
4. Instruct the City Solicitor to prepare an amendment to *The Regina Animal Bylaw, 2009*, to create the proposed off leash parks as further described in this report, to be brought forward to the meeting of City Council following approval of these recommendations by City Council.
5. Approve these recommendations at its meeting on March 30, 2022.

### ISSUE

Administration has been working to establish three new off-leash parks and is seeking Council approval as follows:

#### 1. A.E. Wilson Park Off-Leash Area

Administration has undertaken work to assess the potential to develop an off-leash area in A.E. Wilson Park. This report provides a summary of community engagement activities, along with a

concept plan (Appendix A) for the proposal. Administration is requesting approval to proceed with the development and to amend the Animal Bylaw 2009-44 to include the site in Schedule B, "Off-Leash Areas", effective October 1, 2022. This bylaw amendment enables residents to have their dogs off-leash in the space.

## **2. Horizon Station Park Off-Leash Area**

As part of the development of Horizon Station Park (Appendix B) in the Towns neighbourhood, the developer has included a small off-leash area in the park. The park is expected to be turned over to the City of Regina (City) in the spring/summer of 2022. To allow use of the off-leash facility once it has been turned over to the City, Administration seeks approval from Council to amend the Animal Bylaw 2009-44 to include the Horizon Station off-leash dog park in Schedule B, "Off-Leash Areas", effective July 1, 2022.

## **3. Litzenberger Park Seasonal Off-Leash Area**

Based on feedback from adjacent residences, Administration has also assessed the potential to designate the boarded rink in Litzenberger Park as a seasonal off-leash area and is now requesting Council approval for the designation. To do so, Administration seeks approval from Council to amend the Animal Bylaw 2009-44 to include the Litzenberger Park boarded rink as a seasonal off-leash dog park in Schedule B, "Off-Leash Areas", effective May 1, 2022.

## **IMPACTS**

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### **Strategic Implications**

The development of additional off-leash areas in the City is consistent with the *Recreation Master Plan* (RMP) which establishes a goal of one off-leash area per 45,000 residents in the City. Regina has an estimated dog population of 30,000. Providing additional off-leash areas provides recreation, exercise and socialization opportunities for these dogs and their owners. In addition, increasing the number of fenced off-leash facilities in Regina will help to balance the user impact on existing facilities. The development of fenced off-leash areas is also intended to reduce the number of dogs being illegally run off-leash in non designated areas, increasing compliance with the Animal Bylaw and improving the comfort level of park users in general.

### **Financial Implications**

Through the 2021 budget process Council allocated \$339,000 for the development of the A.E. Wilson Dog Park. During the first round of public engagement additional project elements were identified by the adjacent residents including trees, pathways and traffic calming in addition to the off-leash area. Funding for the following elements has been found in existing budgets from related program areas.

- Multi-use Pathway from 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the pedestrian bridge
  - Sustainable infrastructure: \$60,000
  - Roadways Preservation: \$70,000
- Traffic Calming in the Lane
  - Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design: \$25,000
- Tree Planting:
  - Forestry: \$20,000

There are no financial implications related to the designation of either the Horizon Station Off-Leash area, or the Litzenberger Seasonal Off-Leash Park.

### **Accessibility Implications**

Paved asphalt pathways will be included at the A.E. Wilson Park off leash area, making it Regina's first accessible off-leash area.

### **Environmental Impact**

Council set a goal for the City of achieving net-zero emissions and sourcing of net-zero renewable energy by 2050. In support of this goal, Council asked Administration to provide energy and greenhouse gas implications of recommendations for Council to evaluate the climate impact of its decisions. The construction of any new infrastructure or development contributes to additional greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Producing building materials and the construction process itself are both energy intensive and generate emissions.

## **OTHER OPTIONS**

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### **1. A.E. Wilson Park Off-Leash Area**

- a. Status Quo: Do not to develop an off-leash park in northwest Regina.
- b. Alternate Location: Direct Administration to continue to search for an alternate location in northwest Regina. Administration has conducted an extensive search for locations in northwest Regina and has not found an option that better meets the criteria for an off-leash area. Should Council choose this option, construction of a new off-leash area in northwest Regina will be delayed for a minimum of one year.

### **2. Horizon Station Park Off Leash Area**

- a. Status Quo: Do not designate the area in Horizon Station Park as an off-leash area in the Animal Bylaw. Council has already approved this use as part of the concept plan for the park and the facility is almost complete.

### **3. Litzenberger Park Seasonal Off-Leash Area**

- a. Status Quo: Do not designate the existing boarded rink in Litzenberger Park as a seasonal off-leash area. The site is already being used by some residents as an off-leash area, but the activity is not currently permitted by the bylaw. There has been only one service request expressing a concern regarding this activity.

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

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Over the course of the development of Regina's off-leash program, Administration has reached out to individual homeowners and to the wider community to seek their feedback on the program in general and individual parks specifically.

### **1. A.E. Wilson Off-Leash Area**

In May of 2021 Administration sent letters to 61 residences which are adjacent to the proposed location of the A.E. Wilson Off-Leash Park, along with the Councillor and the surrounding community associations. Residents provided feedback which was then used to modify the initial design.

A follow-up letter was then sent to the same residences in January of 2022 to provide an update on the project, an overview of the changes that were made based on their feedback and to invite these residents to provide additional responses through an online survey on the revised design. The on-line survey was live from January 25 to February 6. A total of 1,367 responses to the survey were received. A summary of the responses is provided in the discussion section below.

### **2. Litzenberger Park Seasonal Off-Leash Area**

In February 2022 residences adjacent to Litzenberger Park were sent a letter on behalf of the City and the Walsh Acres, Lakeridge/Garden Ridge Community Association seeking feedback on the designation of the existing boarded rink as a seasonal off-leash site. A summary of the responses is provided in the discussion section below.

## **DISCUSSION**

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In response to the recommendations of the RMP, CR19-99 established two levels of off-leash parks to be developed in Regina, Municipal and Neighbourhood.

Municipal level dog parks are characterized as larger, destination off-leash parks with parking, higher fences, and a service area of 45,000 residents. Regina currently has three such parks, Cathy Lauritsen in the west, Ross Industrial in the east, and Mount Pleasant in the north. The proposed A.E. Wilson off-leash area would be the fourth such park to be developed. CR19-99 provides a

target of five such parks, to provide coverage in each area of Regina. Administration is also working to secure a location in the east for a fifth municipal dog park.

Neighbourhood level dog parks are smaller parks that typically serve a user base who can walk to the park. As such, parking is not provided. A new neighbourhood off leash dog park at the former site of the Regent Par 3 is being opened this year. Horizon Station Park off-leash area is another such example.

### **A.E. Wilson Park**

In determining possible locations for off-leash areas throughout Regina, Administration reviewed all existing parks and open spaces along with suitable publicly owned lands for their appropriateness for development as an off-leash area. Each parcel was evaluated based on the following features:

1. Size – ability to accommodate the desired size of off-leash area
2. Location – ability to serve an area of the city that is not currently served by another off-leash area
3. Proximity to adjacent residences – with a desire to remain at least 20 metres from the closest residence
4. Proximity to schools – parks spaces immediately adjacent to schools were excluded from consideration
5. Proximity to major roadways and rail lines- portions of park spaces that were immediately adjacent to major roads and rail lines were excluded from consideration
6. Proximity to the multi-use pathway system – park spaces that included direct access to the multi-use pathway system were ranked higher to provide ease of access to the park
7. Existing site amenities, which can be deemed to be complementary to an off-leash area
8. Potential for development without displacing existing uses

Based on this analysis, the proposed location at A.E. Wilson Park ranked the highest of all locations in northwest Regina. In report CR 19-99, which provided a plan for increasing the number of dog parks in the city, Administration proposed this site as part of a broader plan and advised Council that it would undertake a community engagement process and report back to Council prior to construction. Funding for a park in the northwest was approved through the 2021 budget process.

If approved, the proposed off-leash dog park would be located immediately west of the Jack Hamilton Arena in A.E. Wilson Park in northwest Regina. The design, as depicted in Appendix A, includes the following features incorporated into the existing rolling landscape of the park:

1. 1.6 Hectare (4 acre) fully fenced (1.8m high) all-dog off-leash area.
2. Internal asphalt pathways
3. Benches
4. Trees
5. Asphalt pathway connection from 4th Avenue to the multi-use pathway

6. Irrigated and unirrigated turf
7. 22 parking stalls including two accessible stalls added to the Jack Hamilton parking lot
8. Traffic calming investments along the laneway adjacent to the park from 4th Avenue north to Oriole Place

As part of the design process, Administration sent a letter to 61 residences which back or front immediately onto A.E. Wilson Park to get their feedback. It should be noted, that the closest property line of only 11 of the 61 residences is within 180m (585 feet) of the proposed off-leash area, with the closest residential property line being 85m (276 feet) away. Nineteen residents responded to the City’s letter, with eight expressing support for the project and 11 expressing concerns and requesting design changes. The remaining 31 did not respond with feedback.

As is illustrated in Table 1 below, Administration used the feedback received from residents to revise the design of the park.

Table 1: Administration’s Response to Resident Feedback

<b>Park element</b>	<b>What we heard</b>	<b>How we responded</b>
Park size	The proposed park is too large	Reduced the park in size from 2.2 hectares to 1.6 hectares (27 per cent reduction)
Park location	The proposed park is too close to residences	Moved the eastern-most portion of the off-leash area 85m (275 feet) from the nearest property line
Fence	The fence around the park will interrupt views	Added 65 trees to be planted along the northern and eastern sides of the off-leash area to screen the fence
Parking lot	The access to the parking lot off of 4 <sup>th</sup> Avenue will create traffic safety issues in the laneway	Changed the parking lot access from 4 <sup>th</sup> Avenue to the western end of the parking lot on the south side of the Jack Hamilton Arena
Laneway	There are traffic safety issues in the laneway due to speeding	Added traffic calming measures to the laneway between 4 <sup>th</sup> Avenue and Oriole Place along with speed control signage and additional tree plantings to slow traffic and discourage short-cutting
Pedestrian Access	The former roadway from 4 <sup>th</sup> Avenue to the pedestrian bridge is an important neighbourhood connection to the multi-use pathway system which is cut off by the design	Added a paved multi-use pathway north of the off-leash area from 4 <sup>th</sup> Avenue to the pedestrian bridge

<b>Park element</b>	<b>What we heard</b>	<b>How we responded</b>
Accessibility	Crusher dust pathways are not always an accessible surface for users with mobility challenges	Changed the pathways and entry gate areas within the off-leash park from crusher dust to asphalt to improve accessibility
Soil contamination	There is glass on the surface in the area	Planned for removal of surface glass and addition of a new cover layer of topsoil wherever necessary within the off-leash area.
Small dog only area	Any small dog only area should be larger than the small dog only area at Mount Pleasant	Various options were explored to provide a larger small dog only area at this site. Administration has reserved land adjacent to the all-dog area for a future small-dog area, but deferred construction until funds are available, and the operation of the all-dog area has been demonstrated to not impact the adjacent residences. The estimated cost of a .3 hectare (.75 acre) small dog area is \$100,000.

The resulting revised design was then shared with the original 61 residences and on Be Heard Regina along with a community survey. A total of 1,367 responses were received to the survey (Appendix D) with support for the development coming from 83 per cent of the respondents.

Detailed responses to each question are below:

1. 89.7 per cent of respondents are dog owners; 10.3 per cent are not
2. 83 per cent of respondents agree that A.E. Wilson is an appropriate location for a dog park
3. 63 per cent of respondents would regularly use the park
4. 90 per cent of respondents agree that off-leash parks are important
5. 89 per cent believe it is important to have more fenced off-leash parks in Regina

The survey also included an open-ended question to allow respondents to provide comments. A total of 699 responses to this question were received. Common responses included:

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>
A small dog area should be added	97
An off-leash area should be added to south / southeast Regina	12
Ensure that the site is fully fenced	31

As was listed in Table 1 above, a small dog-only area was included in the original design. However, this element was deferred in order to reduce the overall size of the off-leash park in response to feedback from the adjacent residents as well as to increase the setback between the area and the nearest residences and to bring the project in on budget. Land has been reserved for development of this element in the future should funds become available and it can be demonstrated that there have been no negative impacts of the all-dog area on the adjacent residences. In the interim, the City currently has one small-dog area at the Mount Pleasant Off-Leash Park and will be opening a second in the spring of 2022 as part of the Regent Par 3 redevelopment project. The current plan is to also include a small-dog area in the future southeast Regina off-leash park.

### **Horizon Station Park Off-Leash Area**

As part of the development of Horizon Station Park (Appendix B) in the Towns neighbourhood, a small off-leash area has been included in the park. Features of this off-leash area include:

- .33 Hectare (.81 acre) fully fenced (1.2m high) all dog off-leash area.
- Benches
- Trees
- Agility and enhancement amenities
- Irrigated turf

As indicated above Horizon Station Park off-leash area is considered a neighbourhood off-leash park and is only intended to serve the immediate area surrounding the park due to its small size, low perimeter fence and lack of on-site parking. Council approval is now required to add it as a designated off-leash area in the Animal Bylaw.

### **Litzenberger Park Seasonal Off-Leash Area**

Seasonal off-leash parks in Regina are currently located in many outdoor boarded rinks throughout Regina. These rinks are not used for summer programming due to their crusher dust surfacing. Currently Regina has seven such sites which are designated in the Animal Bylaw as seasonal off-leash sites from May 1 to September 30 annually.

As depicted in Appendix C, the Litzenberger boarded rink is in Litzenberger Park in the Walsh Acres neighbourhood. It has come to Administration's attention that several residents in the area use the rink as an off-leash area. In response, in cooperation with the Walsh Acres, Lakeridge/Garden Ridge Community Association, Administration reached out to the neighbours who back the park to determine whether they were in support of a designation of this rink as a seasonal off-leash area.

Thirty-six letters were sent out. Only seven responses were received, five of which supported the designation and two of which had concerns. The concerns were regarding existing illegal parking in the laneway during pick-up and drop off at the schools and a fear that future illegal parking by users of the off-leash area would make the situation worse. As the boarded rink is adjacent to two

elementary schools, its hours of operation will be limited to 4 pm to 11 pm weekdays and 6 am to 11 pm weekends, from May 1 to September 30, meaning that its hours of operation will not coincide with school hours. The City has installed no-parking signs along the alley and enforcement will be undertaken as warranted.

The other concern raised by a resident was dog owners would not pick up after their pets leading to smells and unhygienic conditions in the off-leash area. Should Council approve this location, Administration will add garbage bins at the site for dog waste and will pick up the waste daily or as needed. Dog park rules signage will also be posted which include the requirement of owners to pick up after their pets.

Administration is recommending approval of the site as an off-leash area. There are no costs associated with such a recommendation and it is currently being used for this purpose regularly. Administration will monitor the site and, if problems arise, will work with the community to resolve the issues, or recommend closure of the site as an off-leash area at a later date.

## **DECISION HISTORY**

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In 2019, Administration presented CR19-99 to Council. This report recommended that the City establish a program of up to five municipal level off leash parks and up to 26 neighbourhood level off-leash parks.

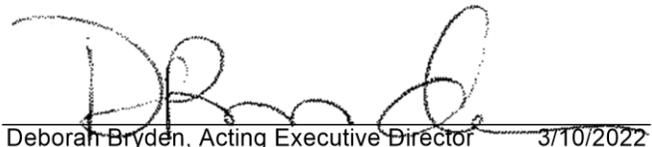
Respectfully submitted,

Respectfully submitted,



Laurie Shalley, Director, Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services

3/1/2022



Deborah Bryden, Acting Executive Director

3/10/2022

Prepared by: Chris Sale, Coordinator of Integration & Stakeholder Relations

## **ATTACHMENTS**

- Appendix A - AE Wilson Off Leash Area
- Appendix B - Horizon Station Off Leash Area
- Appendix C - Litzenberger Park Off Leash Area
- Appendix D - AE Wilson Survey Responses