

Information Report



Service Area	Public Services
Date	Friday, October 30, 2020
Subject	Fenced Dog Park in Non-Residential Area

Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

On February 24, 2020 Council directed staff to explore the feasibility of a fenced dog park located in a non-residential area for consideration in the 2021 budget. This report provides Council with information regarding publicly owned lands in non-residential areas of the City that are potentially feasible for a fenced dog park.

Key Findings

Staff have researched publicly owned land outside of residential areas within the city of Guelph for the purpose of locating a fenced dog park. A thorough evaluation of potential sites has generated a list of 14 properties of interest that may be appropriate locations for a dog park. Of the 14 sites, four are City-owned and ten are owned by other public entities. This report provides information on the background, current use, and constraints for the development of a dog park on the City-owned sites. Non-City-owned sites that may suit are identified in this report; however, further investigation and consultation is required to confirm. The City's parks needs as a whole are being evaluated through the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, and through that exercise, park amenities, including potential future dog parks, will be evaluated based on community need.

For consistency with the language used in the above noted Council direction, this report refers to the subject facilities as dog parks, though they are identified as fenced leash free facilities in the Leash Free Policy.

Financial Implications

Each of the identified properties would have costs associated with the implementation of a dog park including earthwork, fencing, gates, signage, site furnishings, paving, and landscaping. For the purpose of this report, a price range of \$90,000 - \$100,000 is being used to assume the constructed cost of a fenced facility, inclusive of detailed design and analysis, staff time, and implementation. The price excludes any land use agreement, acquisition, grading, removal, or site remediation work that may be required depending on the site being considered. This amount is based on previously completed similar projects in Guelph.

In many cases where the land is currently undeveloped, the identified properties would incur significant additional design and construction costs for major site improvements including driveway access and parking facilities. These costs need to be evaluated on a case by case basis. Further, for non-City-owned properties, the

City would be required to enter into a purchase or lease agreement with land owners in order to construct and operate a dog park on these lands.

There is currently no funding identified in the capital budget for the planning, consultation, design, and construction of another dog park. Further analysis is required prior to identifying an implementation cost for each of the identified sites. Should the need for an additional fenced facility be identified, a line item in the capital budget will need to be added to the ten year forecast. This implementation cost would need to be assessed based on the site to ensure accuracy before it could be added to the budget forecast.

Report

Background

A formal Leash Free Policy was developed in 2019 to govern leash free activities in the city, and to confirm facility standards, service levels, and operating regulations. The City's Leash Free Policy was approved by Council and enacted in July 2019. In February 2020, staff authored a report to Council recommending that the Implementation Plan be amended to remove the proposed fenced dog park at Lee Street Park. Council received the report and directed staff to explore the feasibility of a fenced dog park located in a non-residential area, with a report going to Council for consideration in advance of the 2021 budget. The scope of this report is the result of Council's direction to staff.

Scope of Work

The overall goal of this task was to evaluate various types of open spaces in non-residential areas inside the city that could potentially accommodate a fenced dog park facility. This work differs from the previous site search and analysis performed as part of the Leash Free Implementation Plan in two significant ways:

1) Cost

The scope of the Implementation Plan was to identify sites that could be constructed with consideration for the City's Capital and Operating budgets. Therefore, the purchase of land and consideration of sites that did not have existing critical infrastructure, such as driveway access and parking, was considered out of scope. As a result, the previous site search and selection process considered only the City's existing park inventory.

2) Timing

Sites that would have required significant infrastructure, changes to City policy, land use agreements, development approvals, or amendments to previous Council decisions were not considered feasible at the time, as it would have significantly delayed the implementation timeline.

For this report, timing and the cost to acquire, design, and construct a dog park on the properties identified have not been evaluated in depth. The focus of this task is to review sites through a broader analysis of criteria, for the purpose of informing

Council of all of the publicly owned assets that could be considered feasible for a future dog park.

The scope of work for this report included the following:

- Background review of Leash Free Policy Implementation Plan site selection
- Development of site search criteria
- Development of site evaluation criteria
- Geographic Information System (GIS) query of publicly owned land within the city
- Desktop analysis of sites identified through GIS query
- Preliminary staff consultations
- Preparation of an Information Report to Council

Items considered out of scope for this report included the following:

- GIS Query of privately owned lands
- Consultations with landowners other than the City
- Community consultation
- On-site review of sites identified through GIS query
- In-depth inventory and analysis of sites
- Detailed analysis and consideration of land use planning requirements and implications including Official Plan conformity and zoning
- Estimation of land values
- Detailed budget estimation for the construction of a fenced dog park and associated infrastructure for each site
- Recommendation of a preferred site

Guelph Context

Due to the nature of parks, their purpose to serve surrounding communities, and the mechanisms used to acquire them through subdivision developments, the majority of Guelph's parks are located in residential areas. In accordance with Official Plan policies, many of Guelph's parks are also located adjacent to schools to enhance the City's open space network. Parkland inventory for use as a dog park is already constrained by the prohibition of dog parks adjacent to schools, due to compatibility concerns as identified in the Leash Free Policy. Therefore, further eliminating residential areas from the site search drastically limits options to provide dog parks within real estate inventory owned by the City.

There are a few larger community and regional parks in the City that are located outside of residential areas, however these sites are generally either fully programmed and constructed, or master planned to include other critical park amenities and infrastructure.

Therefore, the search for a dog park site in a non-residential area in Guelph requires that the scope of the search be expanded to include natural heritage, industrial, commercial, and institutional lands, where compatibility of land uses may conflict. Critical infrastructure such as road and driveway access as well as parking

is generally not present in vacant natural heritage, industrial, commercial, and institutional sites, which will significantly increase the cost to implement a dog park.

Two areas of the city that are not yet built-out – the Guelph Innovation District and Clair Maltby – will be home to future parkland which could potentially accommodate a dog park; however, for the purpose of this report, these lands are shelved until parkland becomes available through future development and the Parks and Recreation Master Plan is complete.

Methodology

Staff developed a shortlist of potential locations for a fenced dog park in a non-residential area. A two-stage approach was utilized to generate an expansive list of open spaces within the city, and to then narrow down the options through evaluation.

The first stage involved a query of the City's GIS database for potential sites using the following search criteria:

- Located within City of Guelph limits
- Minimum size of one hectare
- Owned by the City of Guelph
- Owned by other public entities, including but not limited to the Province of Ontario, the Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA), Hydro One, etc.
- Properties maintained by the City of Guelph

In addition to the search criteria results, GIS data was also collected for a number of sites that were specifically requested by stakeholders for consideration. These sites were:

- Eastview Park
- 606 Massey Road
- 341 Forestell Road
- 880 Victoria Road (Carter Farm)
- Flood control land east of Howitt Creek
- Land adjacent to Laura Bailey Memorial Trail, behind Grange Road Park

Privately owned lands were considered out of scope for this task and were not included in the search criteria. These sites were eliminated because they were considered to be likely candidates for future development and the City would be required to pay market rates for acquisition. Further, it is likely that these sites would require full infrastructure installation costs including driveway access and parking facilities. Based on these assumptions, it was determined that the cost of acquiring and converting privately held lands for use as a future dog park was out of scope for a feasible facility.

The stage one search generated 118 sites for staff to evaluate in stage two.

The second stage involved two rounds of evaluations to arrive at a list of properties of interest that warranted further investigation. Staff identified two conditions that would immediately eliminate sites for consideration. These conditions were:

- 1) Located within 200 unobstructed metres of residential areas; and

2) Located entirely within the Natural Heritage System (NHS).

These two conditions were used as elimination criteria for the first round of evaluation. After eliminating sites with these characteristics, 43 sites advanced to the second round of evaluation.

In the second round of evaluation, staff identified numerous assessment criteria to determine suitability of the remaining sites to accommodate a fenced dog park. This assessment criteria is qualitative and not necessarily eliminatory. Below is the assessment criteria used to evaluate the remaining sites.

Property Information

- Ownership
- Size
- Official Plan designation (identified but site specific analysis to ensure compliance or implications not completed)
- Zoning (identified but site specific analysis to ensure compliance or implications not completed)

Adjacency

- Adjacent to residential area
- Adjacent to school
- Adjacent to or within an existing leash free area, including unoccupied sports fields

Potential Impacts

- Located in NHS
- Impacts to existing facilities and amenities

Accessibility

- Site access
- AODA compliance from parking area to potential dog park location
- Maintenance access (waste disposal)

Property Attributes

- Existing parking
- Existing driveway access
- Natural/environmental factors (steep slopes, flooding, etc.)
- Views into and out of site for bylaw compliance and safety

Agreements for use of property

- Purchase or lease agreements required

The second round of evaluation generated a list of 14 properties of interest that may be appropriate for a dog park. Further investigation into each of the sites is required to determine full feasibility. The scope of work for this task consisted of the desktop review described above, however a thorough on-site analysis is required for all sites prior to staff recommending a location. Staff have not consulted owners of other non-City-owned sites as part of this exercise. In depth

discussions with owners for permission and design requirements are needed to determine suitability of these sites for a dog park.

Properties of Interest – Owned by City

Eastview Park – Location A

This location is approximately 0.8 hectares in size and is located along the east boundary of Eastview Park (see Attachment-1 – Eastview Park). The site is located in close proximity to existing parking and the land form is generally flat. No major infrastructure other than dog park components, such as fencing, would be required for implementation of a dog park.

Constraints: In November 2017, Council endorsed a staff recommendation that Eastview Community Park be the preferred location for a bicycle skills facility. In March 2019, this particular location in Eastview Park was identified in an Information Report to Council as the appropriate site for a future bike skills facility. Utilizing Location A disrupts that plan and jeopardizes the ability of staff to proceed with Council's intention for a future bicycle skills facility. In order for a dog park to be located here, staff will need to rescind previous documentation that identifies this as the location for the future bicycle skills facility. The bicycle skills facility could be considered elsewhere in Eastview Park (identified in this report as Eastview Park – Location B) as proximity to parking is not as critical for the bicycle skills facility as it is for a dog park. However, more analysis is needed to determine if the bicycle skills facility can be appropriately located at Eastview Park – Location B.

Eastview Park – Location B

This location is approximately 0.9 hectares in size and is located along the north boundary of Eastview Park (see Attachment-1 – Eastview Park). There is some vegetation and natural sloping of the land which facilitates the overland drainage of the existing facilities, which may present some challenges for implementing a dog park. These challenges are surmountable, however will require more detailed analysis, including the cost of maintaining this sloped space.

Constraints: This location is approximately 250 metres from the parking lot. An existing limestone screenings trail provides access to the site however the walking distance is longer than ideal. There is a history of misuse and vandalism on this site that this distance may exacerbate as users may prefer to continue to use the locked fields rather than travel this distance to arrive at the facility intended for off leash use. The distance from the paved vehicular area would impact the operating cost as waste collection would be more difficult and the trail would need to be winter maintained.

Additionally, given the existing slopes in this area, this site may be more appropriate for a bicycle skills facility than a dog park, however further analysis is needed to confirm.

Eastview Park – Location C

This location is approximately 45 hectares in size and is known as Pollinator Park. It is located in the south west of Eastview Park, over the former landfill (see Attachment-1 – Eastview Park). Although the site is vacant, it is entirely located within the NHS. It is identified in the Official Plan as a Restoration Area, with the

purpose of serving as a habitat for a variety of pollinators and birds, and is an area of City parkland not intended for active use. It is also a habitat for species protected under the Endangered Species Act and represents the only large protected meadow within the city. The ecological restoration achievements for this area are also due to the contributions of community stewards.

Constraints: Due to its location in the NHS, in order to locate a dog park (or any park infrastructure) here, Council would need to direct staff to prepare an Official Plan Amendment. This amendment would be subject to the preparation of an Environmental Impact Study (EIS), demonstrating that there are no negative impacts to ecological functions, to the satisfaction of the City's Planning staff. The preparation of an EIS does not guarantee achievement of no negative impacts to natural heritage features or their ecological functions.

606 Massey Road

This vacant site is located at the above noted address and is approximately 4.45 hectares in size. It is owned by the City and is currently identified as a stranded asset, where staff have identified the opportunity to create industrial lots. Staff are taking necessary steps to create formal road access to these lands, and to reconfigure the property to allow a future sale of any unused portions of the lands

Constraints: The site currently has no driveway or parking facility, which is critical to the success of a fenced dog park. Additionally, the site has significant grade change from Massey Road to the majority of the land. Significant infrastructure would be needed for parking, access, and AODA compliance between the parking area and a future dog park. Implementing a dog park at this site would require significant capital investment.

Properties of Interest – Owned by Others

An additional ten sites, which are owned by public entities other than the City, have been identified as potential locations for a dog park. Owners of these properties include Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA), the Ministry of Transportation (MTO), Hydro One, and the University of Guelph. Staff have not consulted with the property owners as this was considered outside of the scope of Council's ask. Significant staff time would be required to further evaluate all of these sites. Further evaluation would include facilitating conversations with the land owners, obtaining future plans for these lands, on-site analysis, policy analysis, including official plan and zoning analysis, identification of any other technical studies or requirements, and identification of the design requirements associated with existing facilities, such as hydro corridors. Further evaluation of these sites may result in a determination that they are not in fact suitable or feasible for a dog park. Refer to Attachment 2 – Evaluation Matrix for a list of non-City-owned properties of interest and how the identified evaluation criteria applies to each.

Constraints: There are a number of universal constraints associated with considering any of the non-City-owned sites. Primarily, the construction and operation of a dog park on these lands would require the City to enter into a legal agreement, such as a lease or purchase agreement, with the current land owners. This would take a considerable amount of time to develop. Also across the board for all of these sites, parking and driveway access would need to be implemented. This would require a significant amount of time and capital investment.

Temporary Use of Lands

The City currently owns four serviced industrial parcels in the Hanlon Creek Business Park, however they have not been considered candidates for a dog park, given their market viability, the current available inventory for industrial land in Guelph, and the potential for lost revenue from the sale of these lands. Market values range from \$600,000 to \$800,000 per acre for commercial lands in the City and \$350,000 to \$450,000 per acre for industrial lands. There are also policy and economic development concerns with using employment lands for recreational purposes.

As previously noted, privately-owned development lands are not feasible candidates for a dog park as the City would be required to pay market rates for acquisition. As an alternative to permanent use of City-owned employment lands or privately-owned development lands, Council could consider temporary use of a number of these properties for a dog park; however if sold, the dog park would need to be closed, and any investment in the construction of a dog park would be lost.

Financial Implications

Each of the identified properties would have costs associated with the implementation of a dog park including earthwork, fencing, gates, signage, site furnishings, paving, and landscaping. For the purpose of this report, a price range of \$90,000 - \$100,000 is being used to assume the constructed cost of a fenced facility, inclusive of detailed design and analysis, staff time, and implementation. The price excludes any land use agreement, acquisition, grading, removal, or site remediation work that may be required, depending on the site being considered. This amount is based on previously completed similar projects in the city of Guelph.

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Consultations

Open Space Planning staff informally consulted with internal staff to identify future plans, concerns, and constraints for many of the City-owned sites. Staff from Economic Development, Environmental Planning, Facilities, Solid Waste, and Parks Operations were consulted about a number of sites. Prior to selecting a site, further and more detailed consultation with internal staff and the community are required.

Attachments

Attachment-1: Eastview Park

Attachment-2: Evaluation Matrix

Departmental Approval

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