



Pets in Kiwanis Memorial Park

Final Comprehensive Engagement Report
October 4, 2021



Engagement Summary

Kiwanis Memorial Park is currently one of four areas in Saskatoon that prohibits pets both on-leash and off-leash. Due to feedback received from residents and the local business community in 2010, the City of Saskatoon conducted a review of the 1999 Animal Control Bylaw (Bylaw 7860) which provided numerous reasons for retaining the prohibition of pets in some parks, including potential safety concerns, park cleanliness and related maintenance costs, and other access options for pet owners across Saskatoon. However, the review also identified that allowing pets in Kiwanis Memorial Park could provide the opportunity for downtown residents to access their neighbourhood green space, attract people with pets to live downtown, and improve the quality of life for residents who own pets.

In 2019, City Council heard from residents and the business community that there was support to amend the current bylaw prohibiting pets in Kiwanis Memorial Park. Therefore, City Council directed Administration to report on the current feasibility of allowing pets on leashes in all riverbank parks along the Meewasin Trail including the possible impacts, both positive and negative, of amending the Animal Control Bylaw. For these and other reasons, City Administration engaged internal and external stakeholders as well as the community from August – September 2021 on whether on-leash pets should be allowed in Kiwanis Memorial Park. Engagement feedback, along with best practice research and internal City considerations, will be provided to City Council in Fall 2021.

A total of 2,244 respondents participated in a community survey, which focused on whether the community supported changing the bylaw to allow pets in Kiwanis Memorial Park and identifying the associated opportunities and barriers for doing so. Preferences that emerged from the engagement activities are discussed in this report.

Park Use

87% of respondents stated they regularly use or visit Kiwanis Memorial Park, with visitation being the highest and most frequent in the summer season. Out of the types of activities provided, respondents stated their primary use of the site is for walking/running/cycling (91%), public events/festivals (82%), and viewing nature (59%).

When asked whether respondents were aware that Kiwanis Memorial Park is currently pet prohibited, 77% stated they were aware while 23% were not.

Allowing Pets in Kiwanis Memorial Park

The majority of respondents stated they strongly supported (71%) allowing on-leash pets full access to the park at all times, which was followed by those strongly not supporting (13%). Since the majority of responses occurred in either of the extreme categories, it is clear that the majority of respondents feel “strongly” about the outcome of the project.

Due to the greater amount of pet owners (83%) participating in the survey, results were further explored to determine differences in preferences between pet owners and non-pet owners. The difference in preference between residents who own pets and those who do not is evident in the results which are summarized in the table below.

Table 1: Level of support for allowing pets in the park separated into those that own pets that those that do not

Level of Support	Total (n = 2244)	Own Pets (n = 1820)	Do Not Own Pets (n = 366)
Supportive of bylaw change to allow pets in park	1767 (79%)	1641 (73%)	126 (6%)
Not supportive of bylaw change to allow pets in park	381 (17%)	165 (7%)	216 (10%)
Unsure	96 (4%)	14 (1%)	24 (1%)

*All percentages take into account the total number of participants (n = 2244)

Respondents provided their suggestions for other solutions that could be explored, including allowing pets on trails only, not allowing pets or having temporary restrictions during large summer events, and providing waste bags and making deposit containers more accessible in the park.

Benefits and Concerns

Out of the suggested benefits in allowing pets in Kiwanis Memorial Park respondents identified the following hierarchy:



1. Supports including pets in family outings
2. Improves the quality of life for downtown residents and visitors who are pet owners
3. Connects the trails so that users can continue along the Meewasin trail
4. Encourages park activities
5. Creates more opportunities for downtown residents who are pet owners to access their neighbourhood green space

Out of the suggested concerns in allowing pets in Kiwanis Memorial Park, respondents identified the following hierarchy:



1. Cleanliness of the site and owners not picking up their pet's waste
2. I have no concerns for allowing pets in the park
3. Concerns for nuisance/dangerous pets
4. Mixed use challenges with others using the park (e.g., walkers, bikers, etc.)
5. The site is already busy enough with events and activities

Common Themes

Respondents provided numerous comments and considerations for allowing pets in Kiwanis Memorial Park, which included the following main themes:

Access to other pet areas: many respondents felt that there are enough spaces and opportunities for pets to be outside within Saskatoon already; these spaces are already used frequently and managed by the City to ensure they remain accessible and beneficial to both pet owners and pets

Discomfort with pets: some people are uncomfortable and do not feel safe around dogs, which is why there are many dog parks throughout the city already

Enforcement: many respondents support strict enforcement of the bylaw if pets are allowed in the park with a zero-tolerance policy for violations; it was suggested that the City needs to be prepared to enforce the bylaw to ensure its compliance

Events: some felt that they should be able to go to public events in a beautiful park without having animals being involved; many respondents commented on the need to temporarily restrict pets from special events and large gatherings in the park, especially Taste of Saskatchewan and the SaskJazz Festival

Greater support and opportunities for pets: if the park allows pets to be onsite then more amenities, such as waste receptacles and waste bags, should be provided like in other cities; people are more likely to follow the bylaw if they see the City supporting their needs

Limited space for non-pet owners: many respondents suggested there are few areas where people can go to relax and enjoy the views of the city without being hindered by pets; Kiwanis Memorial Park is viewed as one of the most beautiful spaces within Saskatoon and any degradation to the site would be discouraging; limiting access for pets to certain areas of the park was viewed as a middle ground for many respondents

Responsibility of owners: respondents identified that although most pet owners are responsible there will always be a few that are not, but all pet owners should not necessarily be penalized because of this

Support: many pet owners are excited about the opportunity to explore this green space with their pets and encouraged the City to continue making Saskatoon an inviting place for their pets

Waste and cleanliness: the most commented on theme; many respondents, both pet owners and not, are worried about the potential for greater pet waste and littering within the park; as long as owners responsibly pick up their pet's waste and it is enforced, then more individuals would support pets being allowed in the park

Consideration of Results

Although our sample size for the community survey was high, the sample size of non-pet owners (n = 366 or 17%) potentially limits the validity of the results in terms of providing a full representation of the population under consideration. Similar to the engagement that was conducted in 2010, the majority of respondents were pet owners (83%), which could potentially have skewed the results in favour of amending the bylaw. Furthermore, some respondents suggested that the results from the community survey would inherently be skewed in favour of amending the bylaw since pet owners would inherently be more passionate about providing their feedback than non-pet owners who may either be unaware of the project or not have a strong opinion in general. Overall, we feel that the results provide the best available indication of how the community perceives allowing pets in Kiwanis Memorial Park given the current conditions and limitations.

Next Steps

The best practise research, engagement feedback, and proposed options will be presented to City Council for their decision in Fall 2021.

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1 Background

Kiwanis Memorial Park is currently one of four areas in Saskatoon that prohibits pets both on-leash and off-leash. It is also the only riverbank park where pets are not permitted. Due to feedback received from residents and the local business community, the City of Saskatoon is proposing to allow on-leash pets in Kiwanis Memorial Park. Allowing pets in Kiwanis Memorial Park could provide the opportunity for downtown residents who own pets to access their neighbourhood green space, attract people with pets to live downtown, and improve the quality of life for residents who own pets.

Kiwanis Memorial Park has been designed and maintained as a pet-prohibited park for more than 30 years and is the only remaining riverbank park or park on the Meewasin Trail where pets are prohibited. The prohibition of pets in pet prohibited parks, including Kiwanis Memorial Park, was reviewed in 1999 with the creation of the Animal Control Bylaw (Bylaw 7860). The report provided the following reasons for retaining the prohibition of pets in these parks:

1. Potential safety concerns – especially for community events and the risk of collision with trail users
2. Park cleanliness and related maintenance costs – maintenance would be required to deal with the accumulation of pet waste
3. Other access options – there are approximately 200 neighbourhood parks as well as open areas and off-leash recreation areas for pet owners to access

In 2010, pet prohibited parks, specifically along the riverbank, were reviewed and a report was developed for City Council. Of the 142 residents engaged, 68% were supportive of changing the bylaw to allow pets in downtown parks; however, 70% of those residents were pet owners. In 2019, City Council heard from residents and the business community that there was support to amend the current bylaw prohibiting pets in Kiwanis Memorial Park. Therefore, City Council directed Administration to report on the current feasibility of allowing pets on leashes in all riverbank parks along the Meewasin Trail including the possible impacts, both positive and negative, of amending the Animal Control Bylaw.

For these and other reasons, City Administration engaged internal and external stakeholders as well as the community from August – September 2021 on whether on-leash pets should be allowed in Kiwanis Memorial Park. Engagement feedback, along with best practice research and internal City considerations, will be provided to City Council in Fall 2021.

1.1 Strategic Goals

This project supports the Strategic Goal of Quality of Life, specifically around accessible parks and recreation facilities.

1.2 City Project Team

- Melissa Meacham, Open Space Consultant, Recreation and Community Development
- Brad Babyak, Recreation Services Manager, Recreation and Community Development
- Kenton Lysak, Engagement Consultant, Communications & Public Engagement
- Tracey Lewis, Marketing Consultant, Communications & Public Engagement

1.3 Spokesperson(s)

- Brad Babyak, Recreation Services Manager, Recreation and Community Development

2 Summary of Engagement Strategy

The following engagement goals were identified to help inform the outcomes of the project:

- Options Identification
 - Determine options for allowing pets in Kiwanis Memorial Park or not
 - Receive community feedback on the proposed options and potential opportunities and barriers

2.1 Stakeholder Groups

Two stakeholder groups were identified with the potential to be impacted by the project. These groups include:

2.1.1 Internal Stakeholders

- Internal stakeholders with associated knowledge, including:
 - City Solicitors
 - Communications and Marketing
 - Open Space Consultants
 - Parks

2.1.2 Key Stakeholders

- Key Stakeholders are those who have potential to be disproportionately impacted (either positively or negatively) by the changes to the bylaw, including:
 - Animal Control
 - Downtown Business Improvement District
 - Downtown businesses
 - Downtown YXE
 - Hospitality industry and hotels
 - Downtown residents
 - Pet owners
 - Non-pet owners
 - Surrounding community associations
 - Environmental and heritage groups
 - Saskatoon Heritage Society
 - Saskatoon Nature Society
 - Event planners/organizers
 - Pets in the Park
 - SaskJazz Festival
 - Taste of Saskatchewan
 - Ukrainian Day
 - Kiwanis Club
 - Meewasin
 - Park users (non-downtown residents)
 - Cycling groups
 - Low-income groups
 - Walking/running groups
 - Saskatoon Kennel and Obedience Club

- Tourism Saskatoon

A summary of stakeholder groups, level of engagement, engagement objectives, engagement goals and engagement activities completed are provided below.

Table 1: Summary of Engagement Strategy

Phase	Stakeholder	Level of Influence	Objective	Engagement Goal	Potential Engagement Activities
1	Internal Stakeholders	Collaborate	Review best practise research and identify options	Options Identification	Emails Meetings Phone Calls
	Internal Stakeholders Key Stakeholders	Involve	Review options with a wider stakeholder base to refine new program elements and identify red flags	Options Identification	Emails Meetings Phone Calls Survey

3 Engagement Activities

Stakeholders and the community were able to provide their feedback on the proposed options through an online survey or by contacting the project team directly via email, mail, or telephone.

3.1 Community Survey

A community survey was held from August 4th to August 27th, 2021 to collect feedback on whether pets should be allowed in Kiwanis Memorial Park and the potential impacts. The survey comprised a total of 16 closed- and open-ended questions. Respondents were able to write-in an “other” preference for numerous questions and provide explanations for their preferences.

3.1.1 Intended Audience

The survey was intended for the community and all stakeholder groups.

3.1.2 Marketing Techniques

Since the survey was provided directly to stakeholders, the following marketing techniques were employed:

1. City Website
 - a. Updates to the Engage Page were made to encourage participation in the online survey.
 - b. Homepage announcement on saskatoon.ca with direct link to Engage Page
 - c. Information posted on Animal Services webpages with links to Engage Page
2. E-invites
 - a. Personalized emails were sent to stakeholders asking them to participate and share the survey
 - b. Numerous associations included the e-invite within newsletters and internal outreach methods
3. Social Media
 - a. Organic and paid social media campaign, which ran from August 4th to August 27th, included Facebook, Instagram and Twitter advertisements and informational posts promoting the survey. All paid social media ads used targeting optimization in an effort to reach our audience most effectively.
4. Posters
 - a. An 8.5/11 colour poster was printed and posted within/around Kiwanis Memorial Park and surrounding public information boards.
 - b. An 11/17 colour poster was printed and posted at each City of Saskatoon Leisure Centre and Outdoor Pool

3.1.3 Analysis

The results were analyzed for the following indicators:

- Most popular options and recommendations (count)
- Thematic analysis of reasoning offered for inclusion of certain options over others
- Look for options that might improve or reduce accessibility and uptake

Mixed methods were used to analyze the data. Qualitative methods included the thematic analysis and open coding of responses.

3.1.4 What We Heard

Demographics

A total of 2,244 individuals participated in the community survey, with 83% of respondents being pet owners. The majority of respondents identified as residents of Saskatoon (98%); however, business owners (10%), property managers (4%), those involved in the tourism or hospitality industry (4%), and event organizers (3%) also participated.

Downtown residents made up 9% of the responses; however, 32% of respondents identified themselves as working downtown. All of Saskatoon’s neighbourhoods were represented, with the greatest number of responses coming from the Nutana, City Park, Stonebridge and Downtown neighbourhoods.

All age groups from 18-65+ participated in the survey, with the greatest responses being received from the 25-34 (33%) and 45-54 (23%) age categories.

Park Use

87% of respondents stated they regularly use or visit Kiwanis Memorial Park, with visitation being the highest and most frequent in the summer season, followed in succession by the fall, spring, and winter seasons. Out of the types of activities provided, respondents stated their primary use of the site is for walking/running/cycling (91%), public events/festivals (82%), and viewing nature (59%).

Table 2: Activities in Kiwanis Memorial Park.

Activity	% of Respondents
Walking/running/cycling	91
Public events and festivals	82
Viewing nature	59
Quiet/reflection time	52
Private events (e.g., picnics, family-group events, etc.)	28
Recreational activities (e.g., sports, skating, games, etc.)	23

Other activities suggested by respondents included the following:

- Community events – rallies, fundraisers, etc.
- Commuting
- Eating lunch in the park space
- Fitness classes
- Geocaching
- Photography
- Religious events
- Water access for kayaking, canoeing, and boating

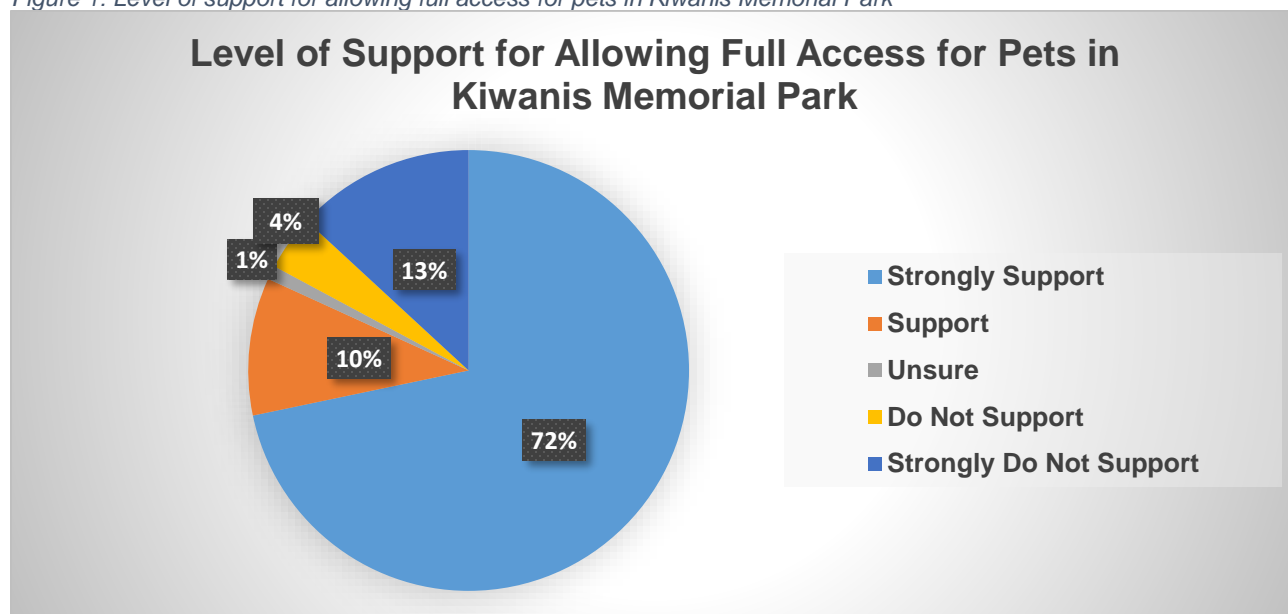
When asked whether respondents were aware that Kiwanis Memorial Park is currently a pet prohibited park, 77% stated they were aware while 23% were not. Some respondents identified that they already regularly use the site for walking their on-leash pets.

Support for Allowing Pets in Kiwanis Memorial Park

The majority of respondents stated they strongly supported (72%) allowing on-leash pets full access to the park at all times (including all trails and green spaces), which was followed by those strongly not supporting (13%). Further analysis of downtown residents and event organizers showed similar

results. Since the majority of responses occurred in either of the extreme categories, it is clear that the majority of respondents feel “strongly” about the outcome of the project.

Figure 1: Level of support for allowing full access for pets in Kiwanis Memorial Park



Due to the greater amount of pet owners participating in the survey, results were further explored to determine differences in preferences between pet owners and non-pet owners. The difference in preference between residents who own pets and those who do not is evident in the results which are summarized in the table below.

Table 3: Level of support for allowing pets in the park separated into those that own pets that those that do not

Level of Support	Total (n = 2244)	Own Pets (n = 1820)	Do Not Own Pets (n = 366)
Supportive of bylaw change to allow pets in park	1767 (79%)	1641 (73%)	126 (6%)
Not supportive of bylaw change to allow pets in park	381 (17%)	165 (7%)	216 (10%)
Unsure	96 (4%)	14 (1%)	24 (1%)

*All percentages take into account the total number of participants (n = 2244)

Numerous respondents provided their suggestions for other solutions that could be explored. The following suggestions were provided and ranked:

Table 4: Suggestions for other solutions that could be explored

Suggestion	% of Respondents
Allowing pets on trails only	21
Not allowing pets/temporary restrictions for large summer events	19
Providing waste bags and making deposit containers more accessible	14
Fines for not cleaning up waste and not leashing	13
Allowing during set times or dates	7
Provide education/signage for leash/muzzle use and how to use the space	7
Create a small off-leash dog park in the downtown area	6
Greater enforcement and bylaw officers	4
Pet-free areas to protect the park from overuse/damage	3
Allowing pets on green spaces only	1

Temporary restrictions during geese hatchling season	1
Explore a trial period prior to finalizing any changes to the bylaw	1
Allowing pets during summer events only	1
Create a separate trail network for pets	1
Include considerations for medically required support dogs	1

Benefits and Concerns

Out of the suggested benefits for allowing pets in Kiwanis Memorial Park respondents identified the following hierarchy:



1. Supports including pets in family outings (79%)
2. Improves the quality of life for downtown residents and visitors who own pets (73%)
3. Connects the trails so that users can continue along the Meewasin trail (72%)
4. Encourages park activities (71%)
5. Creates more opportunities for downtown residents who are pet owners to access their neighbourhood green space (70%)
6. Supports infill and growth for the downtown community (41%)
7. There are no benefits, pets should not be allowed in the park (15%)

Some respondents provided additional suggestions for benefits, which included:

- Encourages physical activity for residents who own pets
- Improves consistency of public access/bylaws for all parks
- Improves mental/emotional wellness for both the owner and the pet
- Improves the public perception of pets within the city
- Increases accessibility for those with medically required support animals
- Increases downtown visitation and support for businesses by pet owners
- Promotes the use of the trails along our river valley by pet owners
- Reduces bylaw infractions for the City
- Reducing the impacts to vehicular traffic in the area
- Safety of walkers and downtown residents
- Supports tourists and visitors that own pets in accessing downtown green spaces
- The site is already being used by pet owners illegally

Out of the suggested concerns in allowing pets in Kiwanis Memorial Park, respondents identified the following hierarchy:



1. Cleanliness of the site and owners not picking up their pet's waste (55%)
2. I have no concerns for allowing pets in the park (42%)
3. Concerns for nuisance/dangerous pets (32%)
4. Mixed use challenges with others using the park (21%)
5. The site is already busy enough with events and activities (15%)
6. Impacts to local plants and animals (13%)
7. Additional wear on the site, such as grass (11%)

Some respondents provided additional suggestions for concerns, which included:

- Added noise and disturbance
- All pets must be leashed with strict enforcement

- Considerations for accessibility groups who use the trails
- Considerations for those who are fearful and have anxiety towards pets of any size
- Considerations for those who have severe allergies to animals, especially dogs
- Different forms of recreational activities can excite some pets (e.g., cycling)
- Disease transmission if proof of vaccinations are not required
- Enforcement and monitoring will be difficult and costly
- Extra City administration and costs required to clean and maintain the site
- Garbage and glass that can be harmful to pets
- Greater interaction and potential hostility between pets and wildlife (e.g., geese)
- Off-leashed pets and their interaction with the public as well as other pets
- People will inevitably not follow the rules
- Poorly trained pets and keeping animals under control
- Retractable leashes can often be an issue in allowing pets to roam ahead of their owners
- Signage must be used to educate and emphasize the rules
- Surrounding residents could potentially start using the site for pet waste
- The site is viewed as a safe space that families/children can avoid being around pets
- The Vimy Memorial bandstand and surrounding elm trees have been given heritage status
- Water fountains that include a low spout and their accessibility for pets

Final Comments and Considerations

Respondents provided numerous comments and considerations for allowing pets in Kiwanis Memorial Park, which are summarized into the following themes:

Access to other pet areas: many respondents that provided comments felt that there are enough spaces and opportunities for pets to be outside within Saskatoon already; these spaces are already used frequently and managed by the City to ensure they remain accessible and beneficial to both pet owners and pets

“There are many off leash dog parks and other places dogs are allowed, it would be nice to keep Kiwanis Memorial Park a place that is peaceful and dog free so one does not have to worry about being approached by “good dogs” who are excited and unpredictable.”

“There are many dog friendly spaces in Saskatoon. Not every public space needs to allow animals. Unfortunately, they always bring issues with unscooped feces, owners that let them off leash, or noise / disturbance from barking, fighting, or chasing animals / birds. It's just not the right vibe for Kiwanis Park. I have had dogs and like dogs, but I just think there's lots of other places they can go.”

Allergies: some respondents identified as having extreme allergies to pets and Kiwanis Memorial Park is a safe space downtown to be safe outside in nature; those who have severe allergies can be impacted greatly, even when encountering a pet outside

Banning specific breeds: although some respondents suggested banning certain breeds, especially large dogs, from the site a greater number of respondents disagreed, suggesting the breed does not dictate a dog's behaviours/personality

Being used already: some respondents indicated that Kiwanis Memorial Park is already being used by pet owners without any issues; many respondents were surprised to learn about existence of the bylaw and expressed their confusion as to why it existed in the first place

Consider cats as well: some respondents suggested not just exploring the opportunities for dogs, but cats as well; the interactions between cats and dogs needs to also be considered if they are to share the space

"I would love an area where cats are welcome. They are social animals but they too can be on leashes and enjoy the outdoors. I do walk my cat and he doesn't care for other dogs or humans."

Discomfort with pets: one of the most commented themes; many people are uncomfortable and do not feel safe around dogs, which is why there are many dog parks throughout the city already; this is especially important for children and young families who may have anxiety towards pets

"Many people (including some small children) are uncomfortable with dogs. They should not have to be scared or nervous at the park. Dog owners can go literally anywhere else along the river."

"The original concept for the valley was to make it accessible for all. this small section of park is a haven for those who do not want to have to deal with animals, even on leash, barking, or intruding on spaces. There are many well-meaning owners who have no control over their pets on leash. Allow those who live and work downtown to have this small sanctuary."

"I think it's important to consider the fact that not everyone loves having dogs around. They can be loud and intimidating and this park area is already busy and crowded."

Education needed: posting educational signs to raise awareness about the "do's and don'ts" of the site and associated repercussions was suggested by many respondents; if owners are more aware of the bylaw then they will follow the rules of the site; it was suggested that an awareness campaign similar to traffic upgrades/maintenance would make the changes more approachable

"I would like to see more education regarding park use for all people. This would include pet owners cleaning up after their pets, people cleaning up their garbage and bike riders following rules regarding sharing trails with pedestrians."

Enforcement: many respondents support strict enforcement of the bylaw if pets are allowed in the park with a zero-tolerance policy for violations; it was suggested that the City needs to be prepared to enforce the bylaw to ensure its compliance; implementing fines for those that do not follow the bylaw or do not clean their pet's waste were strongly supported in the comments; enforcement is viewed as critical for the site as well as many other pet and green spaces

"Even if you make it on leash there are people that do not Follow those rules."

"the enforcement of on-leash policy is clearly lacking throughout the city. For conscientious pet owners who keep their pets leashed, this will be a good thing and create more equitable use of space downtown."

"As for other policies, once implemented, they MUST be carried out instead of just LIP SERVICES. Otherwise, less people will be willing to go to the park because of the intimidating barking and the dirty and unhealthy environment."

Equity: it was suggested that the community deserves to have equal access to City parks with or without pets

"I visit Vancouver often and it's so refreshing how such a large and diverse city all Works together. Not saskatoon we are divided into groups constantly."

"I strongly believe that individuals walking their dog have just as much right to use the park and trail as do joggers and bikers."

Events: some felt that they should be able to go to public events in a beautiful park without having animals being involved; many respondents commented on the need to temporarily restrict pets from special events and large gatherings in the park, especially Taste of Saskatchewan and the SaskJazz Festival; some pet owners suggested not allowing pets during large gatherings due to the potential for altercations over food served at the event

"When there are events like the Jazz Festival, Children's Festival, and Taste of Saskatchewan there can be a temporary ban on allowing pets in the park, except for service pets. There needs to be a balance for people to enjoy the park with their pets and for people to enjoy a concert or festival pet-free."

Greater support and opportunities for pets: if the park allows pets to be onsite then more amenities, such as waste receptacles and waste bags, should be provided like in other cities; people are more likely to follow the bylaw if they see the City supporting their needs; the City should explore creating a downtown off-leash dog park

"Saskatoon needs more off leash dog parks. They don't have to be huge like Hyde Park. There just needs to be more of them throughout the city. Not everyone has a vehicle to drive to one of the dog parks."

"Saskatoon is not very dog friendly yet many families own dogs. We need more opportunities for citizens who own dogs to be able to access green space and outdoor activities."

Impedes movement: some respondents identified that the site is one of the only areas of the Meewasin Trail that is pet prohibited and it forces pet owners to have to reroute further downtown to continue along the trail; others identified that more pets on long leashes would greatly impact cyclists and commuters; the interaction between commuters and pets was viewed as a potential issue

"I walk my dog on the Meewasin Trail all the time and had NO idea she wasn't allowed on the trail. I thought the sign meant in the park. How ridiculous that we would have to leave the trail to pass by the Bessborough and then return to the trail when out for a walk by the river. A compromise would be to allow people to walk their dogs on leash on the trail but not allow them in the park...if you have to make a compromise."

Isolating pet owners: some pet owners feel that limiting access to the park isolates them from participating in the space and in the downtown area; many respondents consider their pets as part of their families and want to share their downtown experiences with their pets

"During the pandemic it became very clear that pets are family members. It has always seemed sad to me that leashed dogs were unwelcome in one of the nicest community park areas for picnics etc."

"As a progressive City, we need to be inclusive and supportive of all family units. In 2021, family units often include animals as the "standard" definition of a family is evolving. Saskatoon, in affirming their inclusivity, needs to revisit this outdated bylaw."

"Prohibiting dogs is prohibiting humans, you can't have a public park "open to all" and prohibit a huge part of many residents lives."

Limited space for non-pet owners: one of the most commented themes; many respondents suggested there are few areas where people can go to relax and enjoy the views of the city without being hindered by pets; Kiwanis Memorial Park is viewed as one of the most beautiful spaces within Saskatoon and any degradation to the site would be discouraging; limiting access for pets to certain areas of the park was viewed as a middle ground for many respondents

“Give people without dog somewhere in the city where they can relax without them. There are numerous spots throughout the city they can go. Leave at least one place sacred.”

“Many cities have pet-free spaces for reasons of disturbance and cleanliness... There are many dog parks and dog friendly areas in the city where people can be. Not every place needs to allow pets.”

“This is one of the last green spaces where a person can go and know they will not encounter someone else’s pet. There are off leash parks available as well as many other parks and areas along the path that allow animals.”

“People can continue using the sidewalk to walk pets so people who don’t like pets have a park they can use without worrying about other people’s animals.”

Protecting wildlife and heritage: wildlife (i.e., rabbits, beavers, geese, etc.) use the green space as habitat and the potential interactions with other pets will further limit their access; the Vimy Memorial bandstand and surrounding trees are part of our heritage and protected; it was suggested that even a well-trained dog can get excited in large crowds or around wildlife

“This is a good thing and should be protected, especially considering the fact that the Vimy Ridge War Memorial is there, which will become damaged from gradual wear and tear from increased usage from animals. The Canada Geese that call that park home will all but vanish if dogs are brought in with their playfulness as well as viciousness.”

“I love the natural wildlife and I feel having “pets” would disrupt that! I’m a dog lover but unfortunately I feel they do not belong downtown!”

“There is lots of wildlife using the park. Geese often congregate with young in spring. Lots of chipmunks and rabbits. Foxes occasionally. I strongly believe less wildlife will be around/visible if dogs are allowed in higher quantity.”

Responsibility of owners: many respondents suggested the ability to bring a pet into a public space is contingent on their responsible care, such as the pet being under control at all times and the owner cleaning up any waste; many respondents identified that although most pet owners are responsible there will always be a few that are not, but all pet owners should not necessarily be penalized because of this

“Having a bylaw prohibiting pets only hurts the responsible pet owners who would like to bring their pets to the park with them. The rule breakers will always break the rules.”

“As long as pet owners are being responsible it should not be an issue.”

“Personal responsibility is more important than policing a specific way of life. Dangerous dogs aren’t the dogs which go to public spaces, and if they are dangerous the City has no liability or requirement to protect its citizens from privately owned and uncontrolled animals. It’s a public space. Not allowing dogs is over-reaching and an unnecessary punishment for responsible dog owners.”

Safety: some respondents suggested that the more people downtown the safer the area will be for all residents; some respondents stated they do not feel safe walking downtown without their pet; others noted many are fearful of dogs and are uncertain as to how they will behave around them

“I actually don’t feel safe walking through that area at night without my dog.”

“Unknown dogs in public spaces can be unpredictable and dangerous.”

Support: many pet owners are excited about the opportunity to explore this green space with their pets and encouraged the City to continue making Saskatoon a inviting place for their pets to live in

Support animals: considerations must be made and extended to support animals that are medically required by individuals

“Emotional support dogs and service dogs are protected by charter of Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission - but others may see these being walked in this space and either complain, cause a disturbance or danger to animals owners if they protest their being there.”

Waste and cleanliness: the most commented on theme; many respondents, both pet owners and not, are worried about the potential for greater pet waste and littering within the park; as long as owners responsibly pick up their pet’s waste and it is enforced, then more individuals would support pets being allowed in the park; many respondents identified the need for more waste receptacles and dog waste bags onsite; some respondents identified that people do not seem to be bothered by the large amount of goose waste currently in the park

“I have children that like to run and play on the grass. I would not be happy having animals there using the park as a bathroom.”

“I live in a core neighbourhood very close to downtown parks. A large amount of dog owners do not clean up their dog’s waste from my lawn or sidewalks. I have to pick up dog waste multiple times a day. This would be the same problem in a major downtown park.”

“Park cleanliness could be mitigated by providing a sufficient number of adequately spaced trash bins, as well as dog waste bag stations similar to the ones provided in the off-leash parks.”

Questions to Consider

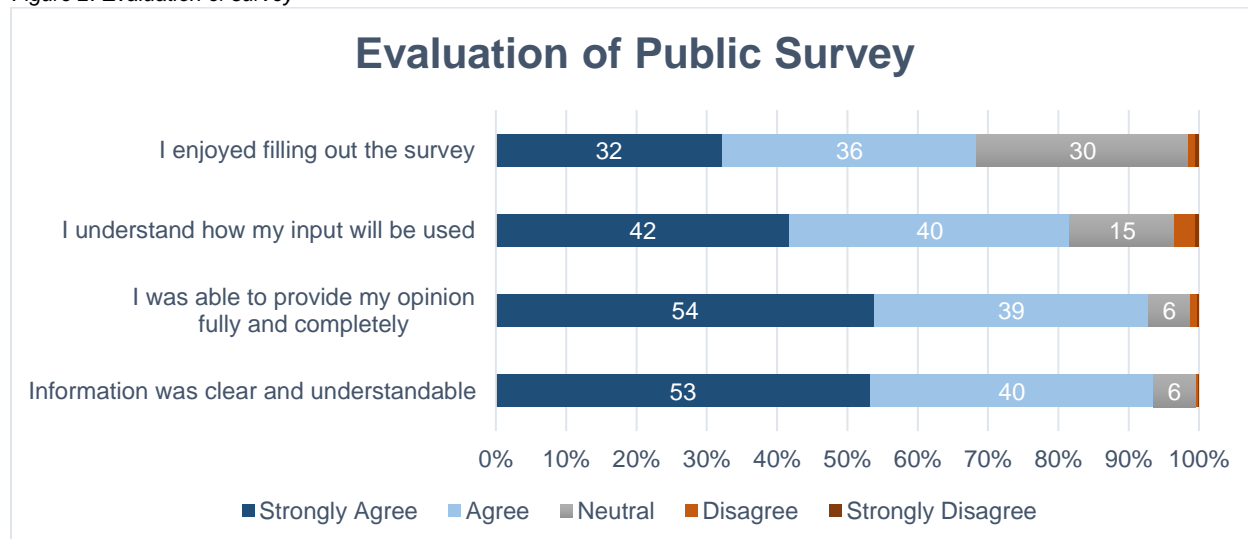
Numerous follow-up questions were provided by respondents, including the following:

- Can a trial period be implemented to see how a change to the bylaw will affect the site?
- How will the City fund enforcement of the bylaw, especially for owners picking up their dog’s waste or being off leash?
- How will enforcement prevent attacks from an aggressive or poorly trained dog?
- How many pets will be too many for the site?
- Why not make all parks, such as Kinsmen Park, accessible to on-leash pets?
- Will the City enforce a noise/barking bylaw at the park?

3.2 Evaluation

Participant evaluation for the survey indicated support for both the level of engagement conducted and the opportunities provided. 91% of participants agreed or strongly agreed with the information that was provided being clear and understandable, with 94% feeling they were able to provide their opinions fully throughout the process.

Figure 2: Evaluation of survey



Comments provided by participants were supportive of the process:

“Thank you for collecting input from citizens of Saskatoon on these topics that impact our daily lives!”

“It would be so nice if EVERY decision-making process would include a FULLY-PUBLICIZED survey. Let your citizens and taxpayers decide on the use of our tax \$\$\$\$\$ and the use of resources. Thanks!!”

“Great survey. I feel that the choices were effective and able to grasp a variety of ideas”

Some respondents questioned the validity of the survey, the potential for bias, and whether the results would be considered in the decision-making process:

“To be honest I think the city has already decided what they are going to do and the survey will be used to justify that action and they will ignore comments.”

“While I am for pets in the park, the questions seemed bias, not providing enough options for those to express opinions against the idea. It will skew the data.”

“Does the survey collect feedback from a good cross section of the population?”

Respondents also provided some suggestions and complaints regarding the marketing of the survey and its promotion:

“When posting the topic on Facebook the link should go right to the survey. Goes to one page where you have to find a link to another page to take the survey. Almost like you didn’t want to hear from us.”

“Needs improved promotion. Posters at the park is not all that helpful when people with dogs use it so infrequently because they can’t take their dog.”

“The link from the Instagram page was not easily accessible nor was it as described in the caption. Social media engagement could be improved for accessibility.”

3.3 Data Limitations

Due to the public health orders (i.e., social distancing measures) and considerations related to the COVID-19 pandemic, engagement activities were restricted to being conducted through virtual means. Virtual engagement inherently has its limitations, primarily with further limiting the accessibility for those without internet access or with limited computer literacy, targeting residents who have a more active online/social media presence, and in accessing those who are structurally excluded or experiencing income inequality. Although the project team used a variety of marketing tools to raise awareness about the project and corresponding engagement opportunities, including targeted social media posts and printed posters posted throughout Kiwanis Memorial Park, we recognize that this means of engagement would exclude some demographic groups from being able to provide their feedback.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also shifted the priorities for many people, resulting in numerous stakeholders and residents being unable to participate in our engagement process due to experiencing more pressing concerns, such as their mental and physical health. During our engagement process, some respondents and stakeholders commented on feeling “burned out” or “exhausted” from the social, political, and economic conditions they were experiencing during the pandemic; therefore, we recognize that some residents and stakeholder groups are unable to fully participate in the engagement activities conducted throughout this project. In connection with the paragraph above, it is recommended that any further engagement on this project will provide more opportunities to include residents and stakeholder groups that were unable to participate.

The goal of this phase was to identify a range of perspectives, needs, and concerns within the community to explore allowing pets in Kiwanis Memorial Park. Although our sample size for the community survey was high, the sample size of non-pet owners ($n = 366$ or 17%) potentially limits the validity of the results in terms of providing a full representation of the population under consideration. Similar to the engagement that was conducted in 2010, the majority of respondents were pet owners (83%), which could potentially have skewed the results in favour of amending the bylaw. This was even noted in some of the comments provided by respondents:

“Please do not interpret a survey such as this as statistically valid. There is a large “dog owner” movement who will take over input vehicle.”

However, numerous pet owners supported pets not being allowed in Kiwanis Memorial Park within the results (43% of those that did not support the change to the bylaw) and feedback provided.

“As a pet owner, I recognize the need to have a space that is also free of pets. Keeping it pet free allows for a balance especially with so many festivals that happen in this area.”

Furthermore, some respondents suggested that the results from the community survey would inherently be skewed in favour of amending the bylaw since pet owners would inherently be more passionate about providing their feedback than non-pet owners who may either be unaware of the project or not have a strong opinion in general. Overall, we feel that the results provide the best available indication of how the community perceives allowing pets in Kiwanis Memorial Park given the current conditions and limitations.

4 Next Steps

The next steps for the Pets in Kiwanis Memorial Park project are described below:

- Options Identification
 - Determine options for allowing pets in Kiwanis Memorial Park or not
 - Receive community feedback on the proposed options and potential opportunities and barriers
- Present Options to City Council
 - Share best practise research, engagement feedback, and proposed options to City Council for their decision

We Are Here