

Small Dog Off-Leash Dog Park Development and Amendment to the Animal Control Bylaw

ISSUE

The purpose of this report is to outline development of off-leash dog parks for small dogs in Saskatoon, specifically to address growing demand from residents with small dogs.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Standing Policy Committee on Planning, Development and Community Services recommend to City Council:

1. That subject to final design, a half acre north addition to Hyde Dog Park be designated as a small dog off-leash dog park;
2. That subject to final design, one acre be designated within Charlottetown Park as a small dog off-leash dog park; and
3. That the City Solicitor be requested to amend Bylaw No. 7860, the Animal Control Bylaw, 1999, to designate the corresponding spaces in Hyde Park and Charlottetown Park as official off-leash areas.

BACKGROUND

Over the past several years, Administration has received numerous requests for dedicated space for small dogs with concerns surrounding pet and owner safety being the predominant indicator for this need.

In October 2018, a survey was conducted on behalf of the City of Saskatoon (City) to better understand dog owner use and satisfaction with current dog parks throughout the city. In total, 606 Saskatoon dog owners completed the survey; 332 who use dog parks and 274 who do not. One common request stemming from this survey was for the City to consider designating off-leash areas specifically for small dogs with a view towards improving both animal and owner safety while using the dog parks.

Most respondents indicated that a small dog dedicated off-leash area was needed and they would be more likely to use such an area if one was available. Nearly 60% of non-park users stated they would be more likely to use a dog park if one was dedicated to small dogs.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

While the City's current dog parks provide an excellent venue for pets to exercise and burn off excess energy, it is important to understand that large and small dogs are different, both in size and in inherent behavioral traits. Even without intent, a large dog could cause injury to a small dog while engaging in exercise and physical play. Implementation of designated areas, or separation within existing dog parks, for small dogs could help prevent potential unnecessary conflict and improve park safety for owners and their pets.

Administration has explored a few different options for development of a small dog off-leash dog park and has identified two suitable locations: one location on the west side of Saskatoon and one on the east.

West Location – Charlottetown Park

Approximately one acre has been identified within Charlottetown Park for development of an off-leash dog park designated for small dogs (see Appendix 1). The park is located within the Confederation Suburban Centre and adjacent to the neighbourhood of Massey Place. The location was identified based on its proximity to both neighbouring communities, its access from main arterial roadways, parking, and absence of programming at the site.

East Location – Hyde Park

Approximately half an acre has been identified within the northern section of Hyde Park for development of a second off-leash dog park designated for small dogs (see Appendix 2). The proposed plan is an extension to the north of the existing dog park. Similar to the reasoning for Charlottetown Park, this location was identified based on proximity to neighbouring communities, access from main traffic corridors, parking, and the absence of programming at the site.

Site Management

In researching other municipalities that operate small dog off-leash areas as well as all City of Saskatoon dog parks, park signage and self-policing is the consistent method for rule enforcement and maintaining order within these types of spaces. Both proposed small dog off-leash areas in Charlottetown Park and Hyde Park will function similarly. Examples of site signage have been included (see Appendix 3).

In consultation with the City's Animal Services Working Group, a dog weighing 20 pounds or less and no taller than 16 inches from the shoulder will constitute a small dog for permitted entry, with the expectation that dog owners are respectful of these rules and other users while visiting the park. Administration will monitor the effectiveness of this process and will consider implementation of penalties and enforcement should the need arise.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Public engagement was held from March 23 through to April 25, 2022. Engagement included a city-wide social media campaign and online comment form posted on the City's Engage page, as well as an in-person engagement session for residents living proximal to Charlottetown Park. In-person engagement was not offered for Hyde Park as similar programming already exists at this location and residential housing does not directly back the park. Posters and information were provided on how to access the online comment form to solicit feedback for the proposed small dog parks.

In total, 698 respondents participated in the online comment form with a majority of respondents in favor of this development. A total of six people attended the in-person engagement event where overall comment and feedback was also positive. Feedback and design considerations received included appropriate gate/fence heights at the

bottom of the fencing to prevent dogs from escaping, clear signage indicating what constitutes a small dog, ample waste bags/receptacles and accessibility considerations for the dog park.

For a complete summary of the engagement campaign please refer to the Dog Parks for Small Dogs Engagement Summary (see Appendix 4).

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Funding for small dog off-leash dog park development was approved within Capital Project P.02528, Dog Park Development, in the 2022 Capital Budget. Projected capital cost for development of two small dog off-leash dog parks is estimated at \$95,000.

Annual operating cost of \$5,700 for operations and maintenance of small dog off-leash parks will be funded through the Animal Services Operating Budget.

SAFETY/CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN (CPTED)

Administration presented project plans and conceptual designs to the CPTED Review Committee on May 5, 2022. Any recommendations from this review will be incorporated into the design and construction of the small dog off-leash dog parks.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are no privacy, social or environmental implications identified.

NEXT STEPS

Should Council approve recommendations for development of two small dog off-leash parks as described in the report, Administration will then proceed with tender and construction of each park.

APPENDICES

1. Charlottetown Park Proposed Small Dog Off-Leash Dog Park Layout
2. Hyde Park Proposed Small Dog Off-Leash Dog Park Layout
3. Small Dog Off-Leash Dog Park Sample Signage Plan
4. Dog Parks for Small Dogs Engagement Summary

REPORT APPROVAL

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