

City-Wide Study for Existing City of Toronto Dogs Off-Leash Areas

.....
Design, Operations, Maintenance, Administration and Best Practices





Document for the City of Toronto by

thinc design

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Executive Summary

The City of Toronto owns and manages 72 off-leash areas. General user satisfaction of Off-leash Areas (OLAs) vary, with some users approving of current City standards and practices, while other users question their efficacy.

The primary objective of this Study is to provide recommendations that improve existing OLAs, through effective design, maintenance and operations as well as promote OLAs as spaces that can foster healthy relations between dog owners and non dog owners.

The study process involved a variety of stakeholder and community engagement methods to identify key issues, establish the process, and receive feedback on draft recommendations. This includes four stakeholder meetings, interviews with City Staff, ten “Pup”-Ups at selected off-leash dog parks and two online surveys.

Themes of major concern with the current design, operations and maintenance of existing OLAs identified during the consultation process include:

- Communication between OLA Representatives, OLA users and City staff, as well as communication of OLA by-Laws and Dog owner accountability
- Surface Material and Maintenance
- Parks Operating and Budget
- Off-leash Space and Amenities
- Impact on the Environment
- Gates and Fencing
- Trees and Shade
- Lighting

To help inform the development of this plan’s recommendations, this study reviewed the design, operations and management practices for off-leash areas of 17 cities and over 80 off-leash areas throughout Canada, the United States, and overseas including the cities of London England, Paris France and Port Adelaide Enfield, Australia. These locations were surveyed extensively in an effort to learn from other jurisdictions and develop an understanding of best practices. A summary of these findings is provided in the main body of this document with more details provide in Appendix A.

Executive Summary

Through the engagement process, precedent research and testing of ideas using ten case study sites, 53 recommendations are provided organized under topics of design, operations and maintenance, and administration. These recommendations were then applied to ten case study sites to illustrate their application. The sites selection process was based on a long list of criteria to ensure the diverse range of off-leash areas in Toronto are represented. The ten sites include:

1. Allan Gardens
2. Bayview Arena Park
3. Beresford Park
4. Cherry Beach
5. High Park
6. L'Amoreaux Park
7. Merill Bridge Road Park
8. Sandy Bruce Park
9. Sunnybrook Park
10. Wychwood Car Barns Park

An implementation strategy is outlined at the end of this plan which identified how these recommendations should be implemented over the short, medium and long term. This includes identifying recommendations to be considered during Parks, Forestry and Recreation's Capital Projects park revitalization process, as well as the identification of Special Projects to be undertaken by staff.

Introduction



The City of Toronto owns and manages 72 off-leash areas that range in size from 140m² to 45,000m² that require tailored operations and maintenance schedules to address the varying amenities at each site. General user satisfaction of Off-leash Areas (OLAs) vary, with some users approving of current City standards and practices, while other users question their efficacy. The users that are dissatisfied include dog-owners, non-dog owners, as well as City staff, who oversee and undertake the day to day operation and maintenance of the OLAs.

The City acknowledges that consulting with local user groups and communities regarding existing OLAs will help identify what is and is not working well within these communities, and to determine ways in which they can improve existing OLAs.

The City's objectives for this Study include:

- Developing criteria to improve existing OLAs, through effective design, maintenance and operations.
- Promoting OLAs as spaces that can foster healthy relationships between dog owners and non-dog owners;
- Elevating OLAs as spaces that support and accommodate users in a healthy, safe, accessible and sustainable environment;
- Adapting existing OLA designs to meet operational realities and pressures, i.e. use and sustainability;
- Developing guidelines to ensure consistent maintenance and operating practices for all five City districts;
- Developing design options and recommendations that may be considered when improving existing OLAs;
- Developing a strategy that will facilitate an operating budget for maintaining and improving existing sites, and develop criteria to determine priority sites; and,
- Improving community and citizen involvement and develop future ongoing partnerships.

The study process involved a variety of stakeholder and community engagement methods to identify key issues, establish the process, and receive feedback on draft recommendations. This includes four stakeholder meetings, interviews with City Staff, ten "Pup"-Ups at selected off-leash dog parks and two online surveys.

Through the engagement process, precedent research and testing of ideas using ten case study sites, 53 recommendations are provided organized under topics of design, operations and maintenance, and administration. An implementation strategy is outlined at the end of this plan.

Study Context



Roles and Responsibilities

There are a number of branches within the City of Toronto and external agencies responsible for the planning, design, maintenance, administration and approval of the City’s 72 off-leash areas. The important role each of these groups plays in the Toronto’s OLAs was considered in the development of this plan’s design, operations and maintenance and administration recommendations. The table on the right identifies each group and their role.

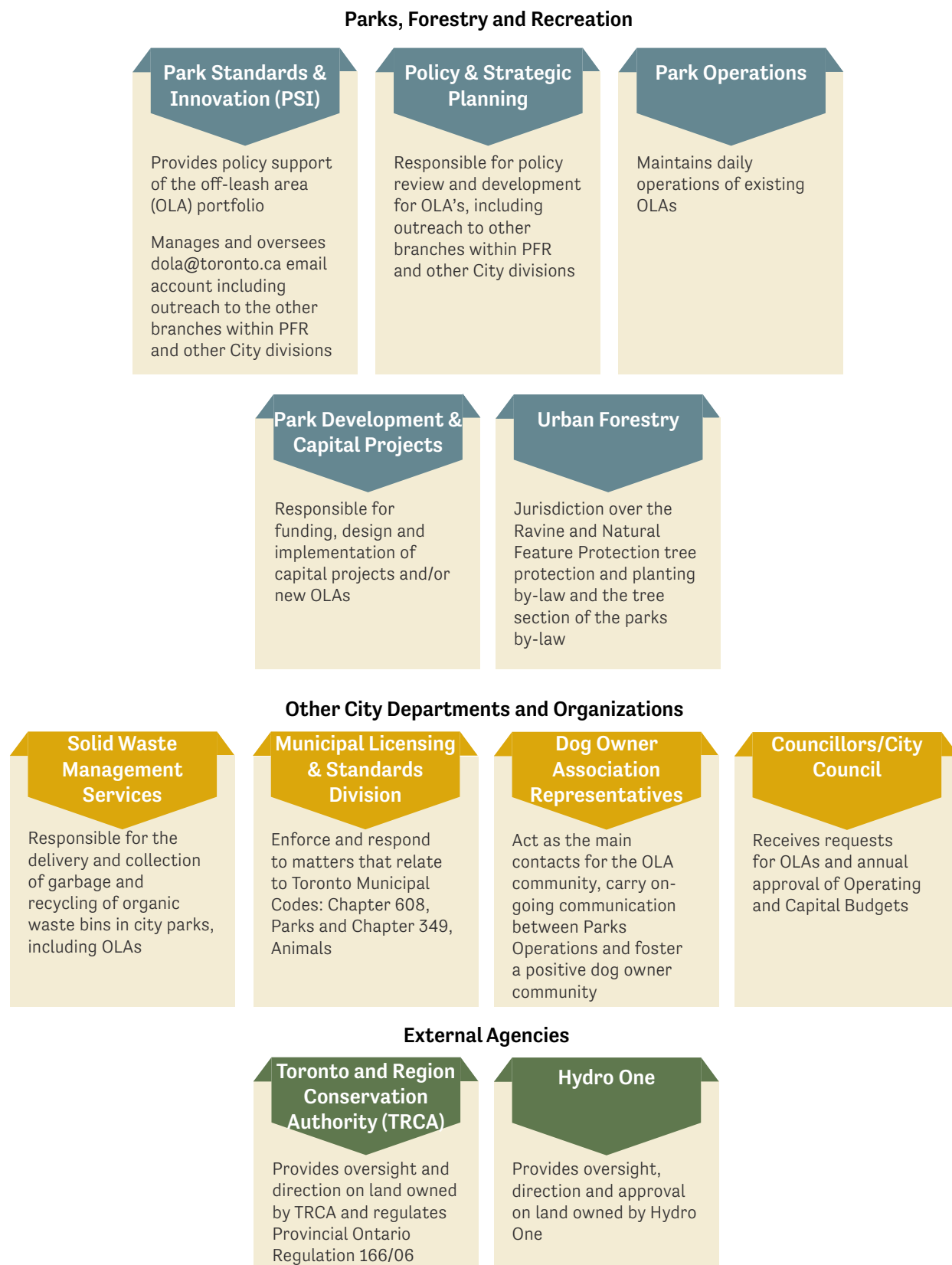


Figure 1-1: Roles and Responsibilities

Policies and Strategies

This section offers a high-level review of City documents relevant to dog off-leash areas, including:

- People, Dogs and Parks Strategy – Off-Leash Policy Review;
- Facilities Master Plan;
- Parkland Strategy; and,
- Pet Friendly Design Guidelines.

People, Dogs and Parks Strategy – Off-Leash Policy Review

Prior to 2007, the City of Toronto had 32 officially recognized off-leash zones within 1,500 parks, but did not have a formal dogs off-leash policy.

As population growth and development density increases throughout the City, there continues to be an extensive demand on our existing parks, green spaces and waterfront areas. Through the Council approved “Our Common Grounds Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan” in 2004, it was determined that the Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division were required to develop a strategy that was to provide an approach to managing off-leash areas within the parks system. The strategy was to take into consideration the interests of various park users, including dogs, in addition to protecting sensitive natural areas.

The formation of the Strategy lead to two policies, which were developed through collaboration with City staff, political representatives, community groups, professional dog walkers, subject experts and residents – including both those who own dogs and those who do not.

Following Council’s approval in July 2007, the City of Toronto implemented two new policies within the People Dogs and Parks Strategy that were to govern the use of Toronto parks, green spaces and waterfront areas by dog owners and commercial dog walkers:

- People, Dogs and Parks Strategy – Off-Leash Policy (2007)
- Commercial Dog Walker Permit Policy (2007)

Off-Leash Policy (2007)

In order to develop an effective and successful policy to govern the operation of off-leash areas, the document outlined specific challenges, concerns and issues faced by the City and park users.

Location, design features & operation protocols

Dogs on-leash are welcome throughout most of the city's parks system; however, not all parks, greenspaces and waterfront areas are suitable for a designated off-leash area. The Policy provided outlines to the exclusions, restrictions and requirements for these specific areas.

Community Involvement and Accountability

Community involvement and consultation was identified as a critical component of a successful policy. In order to develop future off-leash areas, the establishment of local dog-owner associations (DOA) are required to assist in organizing and sustaining off-leash areas.

By-law Enforcement

By-law enforcement is crucial in the success of an off-leash policy and requires an increase in enforcement. Enforcement is a shared responsibility between PF&R, By-law Enforcement Unit, Toronto Public Health and Animal Services.

Dog Waste

Dog waste is an ongoing concern in all City parks and many public spaces. All dog-owners and dog-walkers must pick-up after dogs under their care. The City began piloting a green bin program at the time this policy was written, which was being introduced in four parks. Since this policy was created, all off-leash areas in the City have green bins.

Education and Communication

The off-leash policy needs to be supported by an ongoing communication and public education plan. A variety of communication methods should be used to disseminate relevant information to residents and park users (e.g. a responsible dog ownership campaign).

Grand-parenting

Existing off-leash areas that were working well were to be grand-parented, even if they did not fit the location criteria laid out in the policy. Staff

worked with groups to ensure any adjustments were done to improve overall functionality. Some of these included fencing, seasonal adjustments, and alternate locations.

Financial Implications

The off-leash program is one component of many in the roster of PF&R responsibilities and services, and must be viewed in this context. Playground equipment, sports fields and facilities, recreation centres, washrooms and general park maintenance all work with the limited capital and operating funding, and the Division faces a large funding shortfall in state of good repair in many of these.

The initiation of this Policy lead to a capital investment of over \$5 million between 2009 and 2016. The money was intended to improve and create OLAs across Toronto. Based on these figures, it is clear the City of Toronto recognizes the importance of responsible pet ownership, and the potential of off-leash dog areas, when properly designed, to enhance social cohesion between various park users.

The objectives of the People, Dogs and Parks Policy (2007) were to;

- Help protect the safety and well-being of parks users, particularly children and seniors;
- Meet the needs of a wide variety of parks users;
- Improve social cohesion among park users;
- Clearly outline the expectations, rules and responsibilities pertaining to dog owners, and dog walkers in city parks
- Assist Parks, Forestry and Recreation staff in keeping park systems clean, safe and well maintained.

Commercial Dog Walker Permit Policy (2007)

The Commercial Dog Walker Permit Policy aims to manage the activities of commercial dog walkers to help ensure the safety and enjoyment of all park users and contribute to the overall success of the People, Dogs and Parks Strategy.

The goals of the Commercial Dog Walker Permit Policy are to enable City staff to better manage and monitor the activities of commercial dog walkers to ensure that the number of dogs under their control at any one time is manageable and their activities do not interfere with the safety and enjoyment of other park users. Additionally, the policy and revised Municipal Code requirements include enforcement mechanisms to ensure that all dogs being walked by commercial dog walkers are licensed and that these individuals and/or companies obtain and carry a visible Commercial Dog

Walker Permit when utilizing City Parks, green spaces and waterfront areas for their activities.

The Commercial Dog Walker Permit requires all individual dog walkers and companies who walk from four to six dogs at any one time to obtain a permit issued by Parks, Forestry and Recreation. An annual permit payment fee of \$200.00 was initially proposed for individual commercial dog walkers and an incremental fee range for larger dog walking companies. The permit revenue collected was to be allocated to Parks, Forestry and Recreation, and be evaluated at a later date to determine its effectiveness.

Financial Implications

Anticipated annual revenue from the sale of Commercial Dog Walker Permits was \$240,000.00, based on an annual fee of \$200.00 and an estimate of 1,200 Commercial Dog Walker Permits issued.

These revenues were anticipated to be used to partially offset anticipated annual divisional expenditures for the administration of the permit system, new signage and park maintenance (e.g., maintenance of leash-free zones and turf repair).

Current permit fees (March 2021) are as follows:

- \$294/one-year
- \$147/six-months
- \$73.50/three-months

Off-Leash Policy (2010)

The City revised the 2007 policy to include a number of refinements that would provide greater clarity to the assessment criteria, streamline the decision-making process and better link consideration of dogs off-leash requests to community need, overall park planning and development, and financial sustainability.

Procedure for new Off-Leash Areas

The addition of off-leash requests would work with parks planning, development and budget processes. Any new off-leash areas would be considered as part of the capital budget process for the redevelopment of existing parkland and development of new parkland that would follow the dogs off-leash policy criteria.

Location Criteria

As previously noted, it was recommended that the review of dogs off-leash area requests be linked much more closely with the overall parks planning, development and budgeting processes. The criteria that would be used in the review of suitability would include:

- Neighbourhood characteristics (adjacent land uses, population density, housing types, licensed dog population, proximity of existing and other potential off-leash areas located within a 15 minute walk or 1 kilometre)
- Compatibility with the park's design, size, established uses, features and components
- Potential impacts on the park's functionality, condition and natural environment

Off-Leash Area Exclusions

In addition to the excluded areas identified in the existing policy (e.g., playgrounds, sports fields, waterplay areas, ornamental gardens) that are not considered suitable for off-leash use, additional exclusions for Memorial, Heritage, Commemorative and Ceremonial areas were added.

The Policy was reworded to clarify excluded areas including ravines, natural features protection, Toronto and Regional Conservation Authority lands, Natural Environment designated areas, natural shorelines and areas containing species of concern.

"Alternative Sites" was removed from the policy. Only properties owned or managed by the City of Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division were to be considered for designated off-leash areas.

Off-Leash Area User Exclusions

Non-neutered male dogs were previously prohibited from entering off-leash areas under Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 608 - Parks. In the revised policy, staff proposed that these dogs not be excluded from off-leash areas, as this restriction is difficult to enforce and excluding them is too general. In addition, this section of the policy was revised to exclude any female dogs in heat from entering the off-leash area or any dogs that are required to be muzzled or leashed in accordance with an order issued under Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 349 - Animals or the Dog Owners' Liability Act ("DOLA"). It would be unsafe to expose a dog that is muzzled and leashed to unmuzzled and unleashed dogs.

Finally, the Policy was revised to include that Commercial Dog Walkers be prohibited from using certain off-leash areas that are deemed unsuitable, due to their limited size and/or proximity to residences.

Cancellation of Designated Off-Leash Area

The Policy outlines that the designated off-leash area may be canceled by the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation, under certain conditions, i.e., where the off-leash area is no longer being used on a regular basis, where extensive damage to the park or natural environment is occurring, where the park is no longer suitable for an off-leash area, conflicts between park users cannot be resolved or repeated, and/or ongoing non-compliance with the Code of Conduct and Toronto Municipal Code Chapters is occurring.

Facilities Master Plan (2019)

In November 2017, Toronto City Council adopted a 20-year Parks and Recreation Facilities Master to guide investment in parks and recreation facilities across the City of Toronto. The Implementation Strategy for the Facilities Master Plan includes a recommendation to develop a criteria for improving existing dog off-leash areas, which will require site specific analysis. The OLA Study is intended to help achieve this recommendation.

Dog Off-Leash Areas

The City provides 72 off-leash areas within its parks system. These off-leash areas provide a place for owners to exercise and socialize their dogs, as well as for dog owners to connect with their neighbours and community.

The Facilities Master Plan reviewed the People, Dogs and Parks Policy and compared various off-leash areas in Toronto. Through the Master Plan, it was determined that PFR is encouraged to revisit its OLA policy and work with City Planning to identify opportunities to work with others, such as developers and condominium corporations.

It is understood from the plan that the distribution of OLAs in higher density areas is effective, and that improvements to existing parks should be a higher priority.

From the plan, three strategic directions were identified:

1. A balanced approach in providing dog off-leash areas; considering needs of all park users

2. PFR, City Planning and the development community should work together to develop and evaluate solutions for the provision of dog off-leash areas as part of private development sites.
3. A greater focus should be placed on improvements to existing dog off-leash areas, rather than establishing new ones.

The facilities Master Plan also established two (2) key recommendations:

1. Develop criteria for improving existing dog off-leash areas. This will require site-specific analysis
2. Continue to use the City's People Dogs and Parks Off-Leash Policy to evaluate the establishment of new dog off-leash areas. The need for new dog off-leash areas requires neighbourhood and site-specific analysis, and should consider opportunities to work with the development community

These recommendations are currently being fulfilled through the City Wide Study of Existing Off-Leash Areas, as well as reviewing the existing People Dogs and Parks Off Lease Policy.

Throughout this study and the Facilities Master Plan, it is highlighted that the City needs to evaluate and analyze each of the 72 off-leash areas. Understanding the usage patterns are critical in developing the improvements for the existing off leash areas.

In October 2019, City Council was asked to approve the Implementation Strategy for the Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan 2019-2038. At this meeting, members of the off-leash community spoke about the lack of direction within the Master Plan. They urged the Executive Committee and Toronto City Council to direct PFR to conduct a formal international review of municipal off-leash area policies, practices and plans, report back, and initiate the creation of a new, separate master plan or strategy for off-leash areas that is on par with international best practices.

From this Council meeting, City Council requested that the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation to review the dogs off-leash policy, applying international best practices, and report back.

It is through this City Wide Study of Existing Off-Leash Areas that we have extensively reviewed international best practices, documented successful off-leash strategies and applied these to our recommendations. Our hope is that this document will assist in the improvement of the existing the 72 off-leash areas within Toronto.

Parkland Strategy

The Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division in partnership with the City Planning Division developed the Parkland Strategy 2019 to provide the City with a long-term vision and framework for the enhancement of Toronto's parks system. Though this document does not address dog off-leash areas specifically, the strategy notes that "parks are essential elements for a good quality of life, that support well-being, social connections, healthy living and ecological sustainability" (Parkland Strategy, 2019). Whether the parks are used by humans, wildlife or dogs, the experience for all types of users needs to be considered.

Similarly to the Facilities Master Plan, the Parkland Strategy encourages the City to work with all and any divisions who have a vested interest in Toronto's park network.

Pet Friendly Design Guidelines for High Density Communities

The City of Toronto's Pet Friendly Design Guidelines and Best Practices for New Multi-Unit Buildings (2019) encourage design that demonstrates a consideration for pets, as well as the impacts they have on the public realm, the people, and the communities in which they live. This document prepared by City Planning applies to privately owned lands and new multi-unit residential and mixed use buildings. It is intended to complement City initiatives to create quality pet amenities in the public realm, but is directed primarily on the creation and design of high quality pet friendly amenities in private developments, including the building, private internal and external open spaces, and in living spaces. The guidelines in this document focus on what developers can do to meet the needs of pets and their owners, and to create more compatible environments for all residents. In doing so, existing and new developments can play a major role in reducing the impact of pets on public parks and open spaces, and on the environment in general.

Existing Off-Leash Areas

The City of Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division owns and/or manages 72 off-leash areas. The following graphics help to illustrate the diversity of Toronto’s OLAs. This includes the range in size, features, and surfacing. This is followed by a map identifying the location of each OLA and a table indicating the size, surfacing, district, ward, commercial dog walkers allowance, fencing and occurrence of small dog areas.

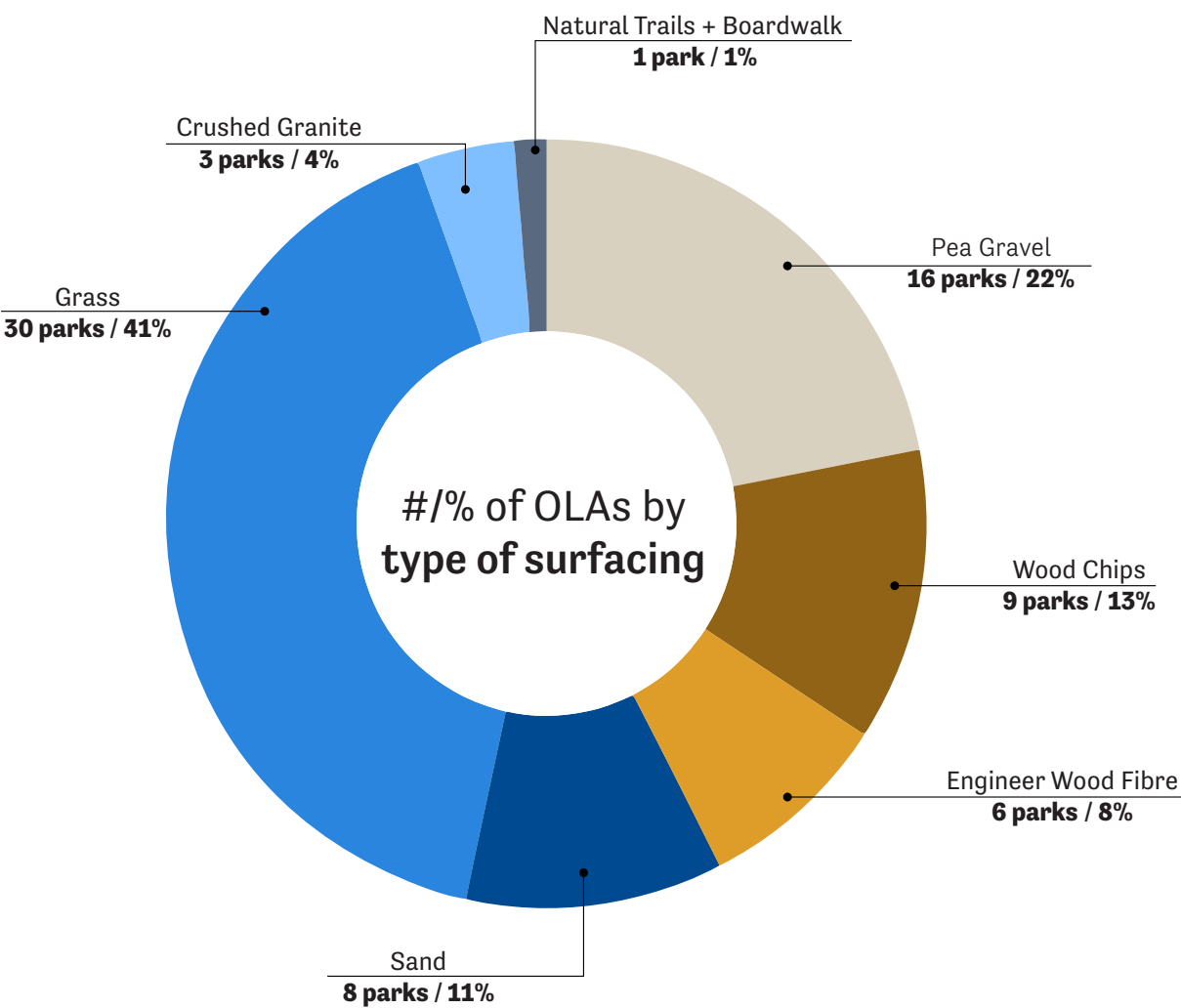


Figure 1-2: #/% of OLAs by Type of Surfacing

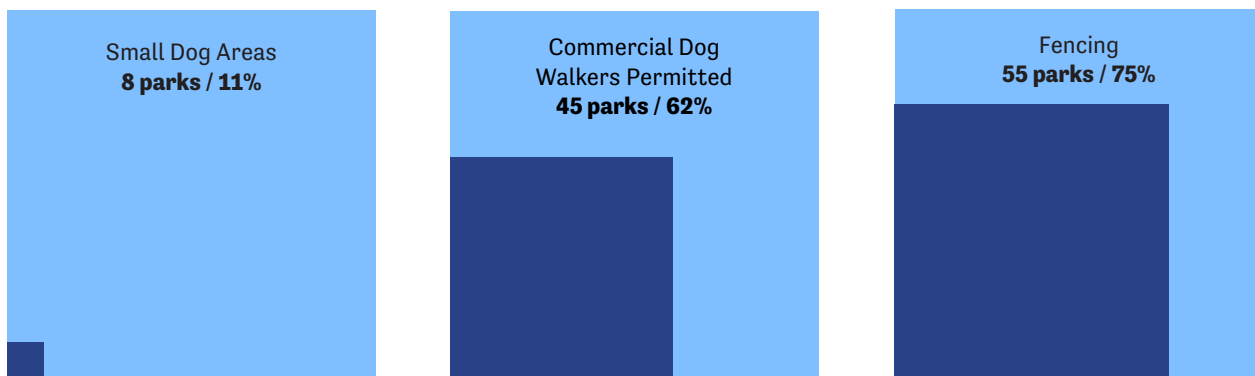


Figure 1-3: OLA Amenities to Number Comparison

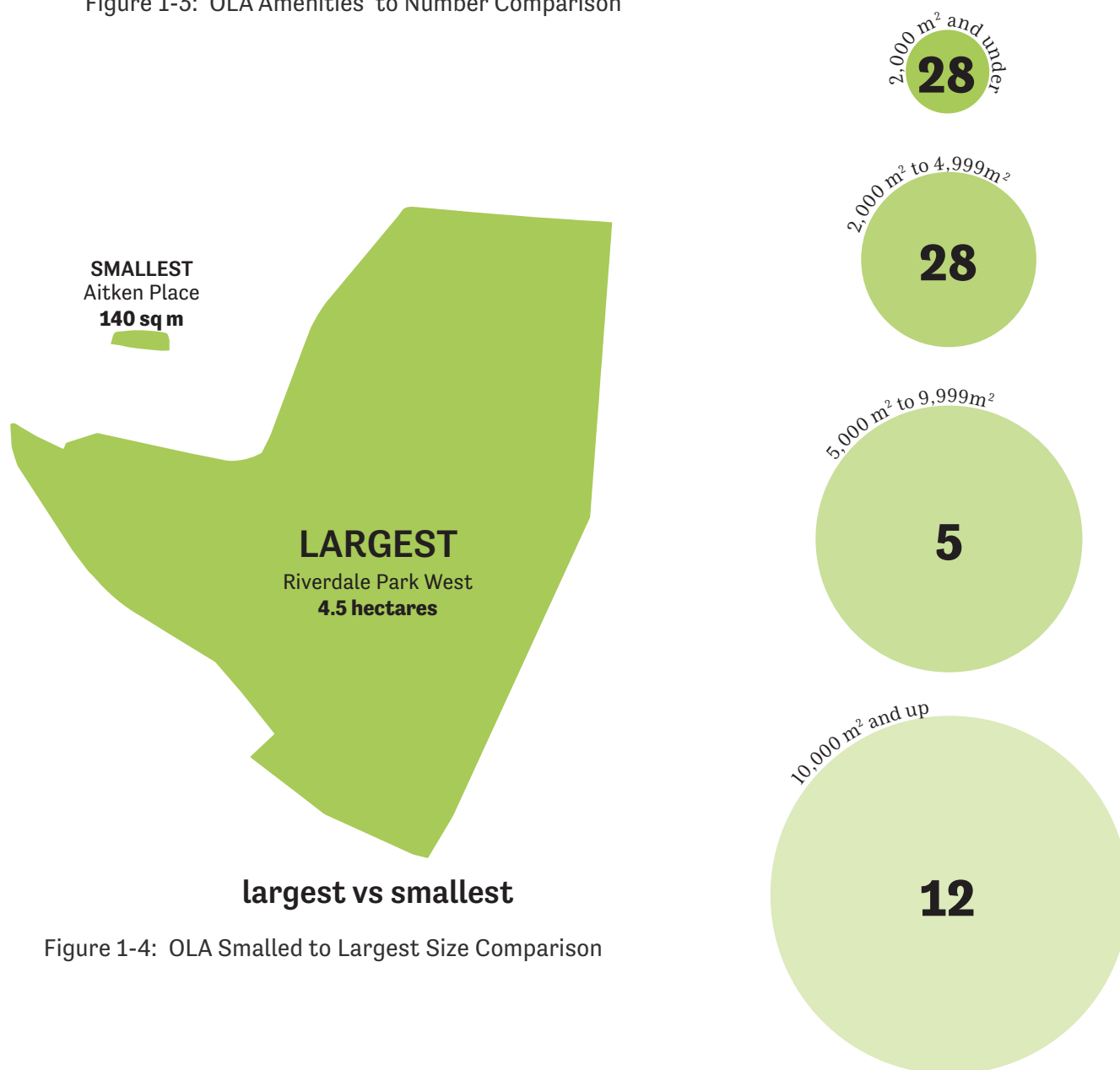


Figure 1-4: OLA Smallest to Largest Size Comparison

Figure 1-5: OLA Number to Size Comparison

City of Toronto Off-Leash Areas

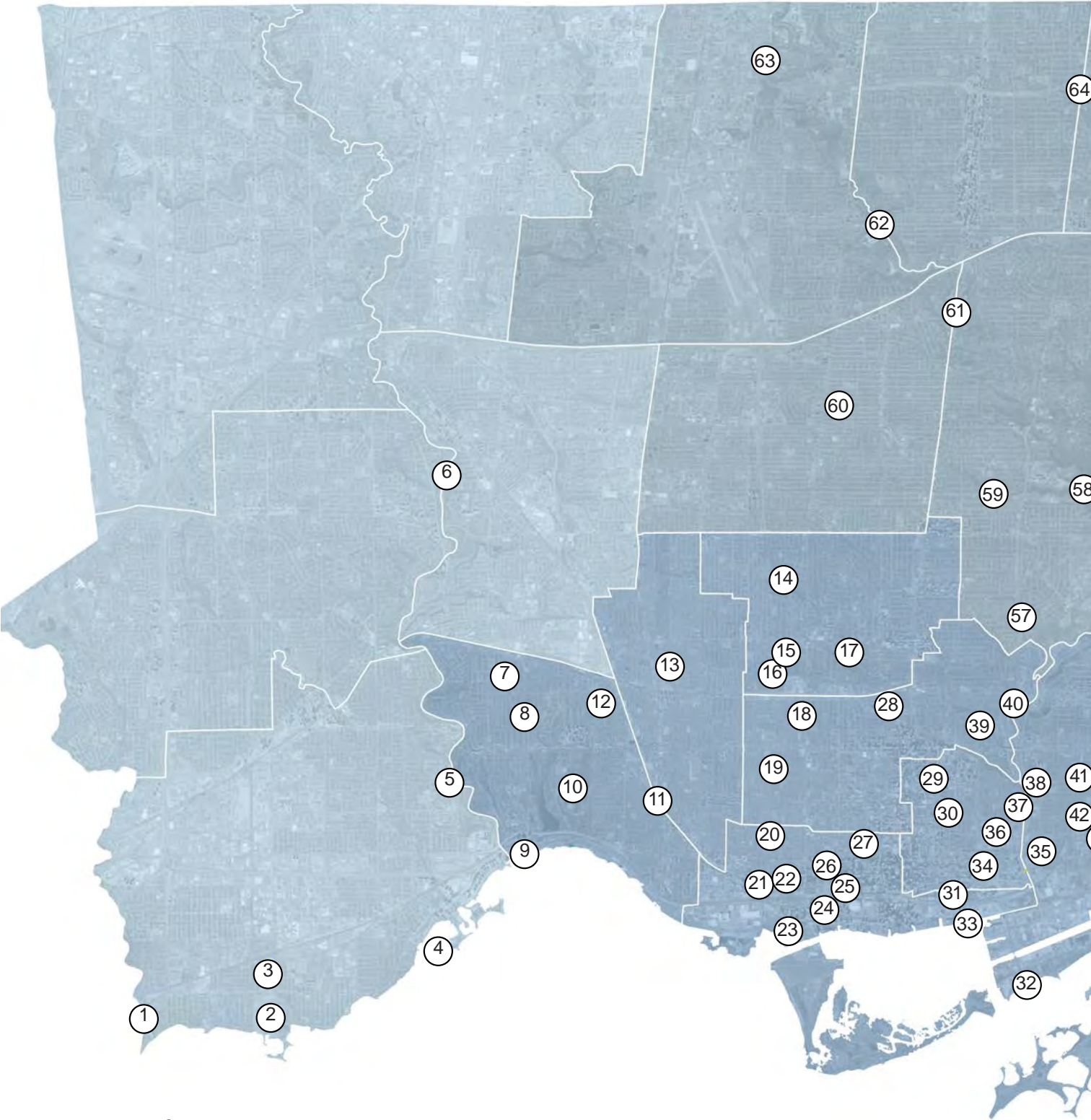
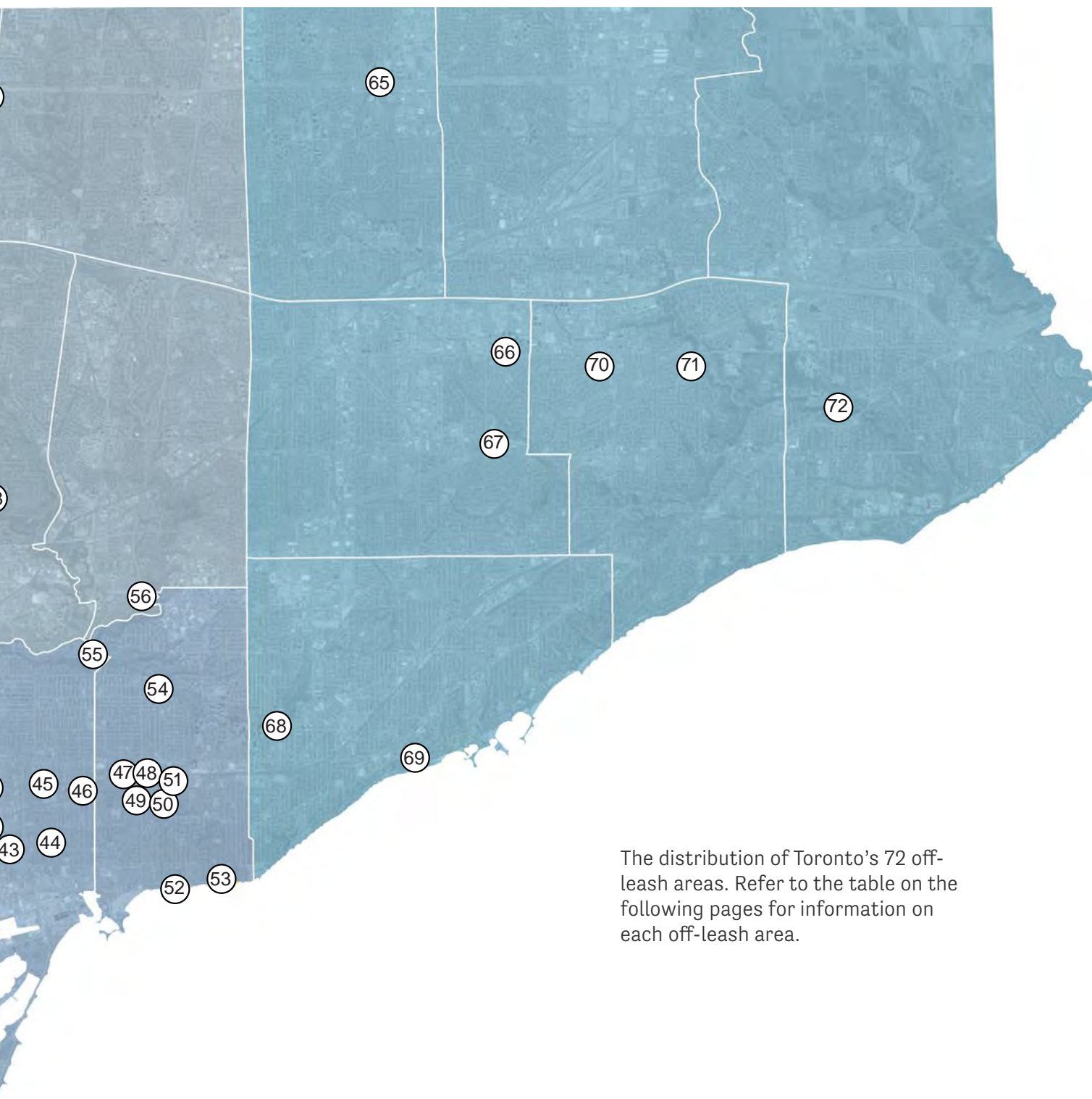


Figure 1-6: Map of OLAs Across Toronto



The distribution of Toronto's 72 off-leash areas. Refer to the table on the following pages for information on each off-leash area.

City of Toronto Off-Leash Areas

#	Park	District	Ward	CDW* Allowed	Fenced	Small Dog Area
1	Marie Curtis Park	Etobicoke York District	3	Yes	Yes	No
2	Colonel Sam Smith Park	Etobicoke York District	3	Yes	Yes	No
3	Don Russell Memorial Park	Etobicoke York District	3	Yes	No	No
4	Humber Bay Park West	Etobicoke York District	3	Yes	Yes	No
5	King's Mill Park	Etobicoke York District	3	Yes	No	No
6	Raymore Park	Etobicoke York District	2	Yes	Yes	Yes
7	Woolner Park	Etobicoke York District	5	No	Yes	No
8	Beresford Park	Etobicoke York District	4	No	No	No
9	Sir Casimir Gzowski Park	Etobicoke York District	4	Yes	Yes	No
10	High Park	Etobicoke York District	4	Yes	Yes	No
11	Sorauren Avenue Park	Toronto & East York	4	Yes	Yes	No
12	Baird Park	Toronto & East York	4	No	Yes	No
13	Earlscourt Park	Etobicoke York District	9	Yes	Yes	No
14	Cedarvale Park (Seasonal)	Toronto & East York	12	Yes	Yes	No
14	Cedarvale Park (Year-Round)	Toronto & East York	12	Yes	Yes	No
15	Wychwood Car Barns Park	Toronto & East York	12	No	Yes	No
16	Hillcrest Park	Toronto & East York	12	No	Yes	No
17	Sir Winston Churchill Park	Toronto & East York	12	Yes	Yes	No
18	Vermont Square	Toronto & East York	11	Yes	No	No
19	Bickford Park	Toronto & East York	11	Yes	Yes	No
20	Trinity Bellwoods Park	Toronto & East York	10	Yes	No	No
21	Bill Johnston Park	Toronto & East York	10	Yes	Yes	No
22	Stanley Park South	Toronto & East York	10	Yes	Yes	No
23	Coronation Park	Waterfront District	10	Yes	Yes	No
24	Canoe Landing (Temporary)	Toronto & East York	10		Yes	No
25	Clarence Square	Toronto & East York	10	No	Yes	No
26	St. Andrew's Playground	Toronto & East York	10	No	Yes	No
27	Grange Park	Toronto & East York	10	No	Yes	No

Table 1-1: List of OLAs Across Toronto

Parking	Seating	% Shade (est.)**	Size (m2)	Class	Surface Material	Irrigation
Parking Lot		0%	4,763.87	Parkette	Sand Choker- Eroded	
		0%	4,117.80	Parkette	Grass & Dirt	
		4%	16,510.15	Med. Park	Grass & Dirt	
Parking Lot		84%	6,227.09	Small Park	Grass & Dirt	
		96%	12,737.94	Small Park	Grass & Dirt	
Parking Lot	Benches	0%	3,780.91	Parkette	Pea Gravel- 3/8" Washed Granite	
Street	Benches	36%			Grass	
		41%	2,805.30	Parkette	Grass & Dirt	
Parking Lot		17%	1,678.02	Parkette	Pea Gravel	
Parking Lot		78%	32,345.98	Large Park	Sand	
Street		0%	1,622.95	Parkette	Crushed Granite	No
Street		43%	901.7	Parkette	Wood Chips	
Street & Lot		84%	1,785.35	Parkette	Wood Chips	No
Street & Lot		3%	4,837.93	Parkette	Grass	
Street & Lot	Both		4,389.81	Parkette	Wood Chips	No
Street		13%	1,230.58	Parkette	Crushed Granite	
Street		24%	1,887.70	Parkette	Grass & Dirt	
Street		0%	4,729.82	Parkette	Grass & Wood Chips	
		67%	1,240.48	Parkette	Grass	No
Street		23%	2,258.37	Parkette	Pea Gravel	
Street		50%	15,733.51	Med. Park	Grass & Dirt	
Street		9%	774.03	Parkette	Sand- Choker	Yes
Street	Both	43%	2,164.83	Parkette	Crushed Granite	
Parking Lot		92%	6,020.01	Small Park	Engineered Wood Fibre	Yes
Street		0%	532.01	Parkette	Wood Chips (Migrating) & Grass	
Street		74%	1,970.61	Parkette	Pea Gravel	
		73%	564.6	Parkette	Wood Chips	
Street		100%	624.37	Parkette	Wood Chips	

Notes:

* CDW = Commercial Dog Walker

** % Shade (EST.) based on calculated percentage of canopy area from Google Maps Aerial imagery (2020)

City of Toronto Off-Leash Areas

#	Park	District	Ward	CDW* Allowed	Fenced	Small Dog Area
28	Ramsden Park	Toronto & East York	11	Yes	No	Yes
29	Barbara Hall Park (formerly Cawthra Square)	Toronto & East York	13	No	Yes	No
30	Allan Gardens	Toronto & East York	13	Yes	Yes	Yes
31	David Crombie Park	Toronto & East York	10	No	No	No
32	Cherry Beach	Waterfront District	14	Yes	No	No
33	Aitken Place	Waterfront District	10	No	No	No
34	Orphan's Greenspace	Toronto & East York	13	Yes	Yes	No
35	Thompson Street Parkette	Toronto & East York	14	No	Yes	No
36	Regent Park	Toronto & East York	13	No	Yes	No
37	Riverdale Park West	Toronto & East York	13	Yes	No	No
38	Riverdale Park East	Toronto & East York	14	No	No	No
39	Craigleigh Gardens	Toronto & East York	11	No	No	No
40	Don Valley Brickworks	Toronto & East York	11	Yes	Yes	No
41	Withrow Park	Toronto & East York	14	Yes	Yes	No
42	Gerrard Carlaw Parkette	Toronto & East York	14	Yes	Yes	No
43	Hideaway Park	Toronto & East York	14	No	Yes	No
44	Greenwood Park	Toronto & East York	14	Yes	Yes	No
45	Greenwood TTC Yard DOLA (Grandparented)	Toronto & East York	14	No	No	No
46	Monarch Park	Toronto & East York	14	Yes	No	No
47	Merrill Bridge Road Park	Toronto & East York	19	No	No	No
48	Oakcrest Park	Toronto & East York	19	Yes	Yes	No
49	Wildwood Crescent Playground	Toronto & East York	19	No	Yes	No
50	Cassels Avenue Playground	Toronto & East York	19	Yes	No	No
51	Norwood Park	Toronto & East York	19	Yes	Yes	No

Table 1-2: List of OLAs Across Toronto (continued)

Parking	Seating	% Shade (est.)**	Size (m2)	Class	Surface Material	Irrigation
Street		51%	2,371.91	Parkette	Engineered Wood Fibre	
		84%	967.57	Parkette	Pea Gravel	
Parking Lot		62%	2,649.99	Parkette	Sand- Choker	
		25%	1,496.24	Parkette	Grass	
		71%	38,806.45	Large Park	Sand (Pea Gravel at Entrance)	
Street		0%	140.00	Small Park	Pea Gravel and Artificial Turf	Yes
Street	Benches	62%	1,694.85	Parkette	Wood Chips	
		64%	916.89	Parkette	Pea Gravel- 3/8" Washed Granite	
		21%	835.75	Parkette	Pea Gravel	
		0%	45,246.95	Large Park	Grass	
			4,416.57	Parkette	Grass	
		100%	6,015.24	Small Park	Grass	
Parking Lot		82%	4,187.02	Parkette	Grass & Dirt	
		52%	4,414.94	Parkette	Engineered Wood Fibre	
		89%	1,881.17	Parkette	Engineered Wood Fibre	
		95%	479.67	Parkette	Pea Gravel- 3/8" Washed Granite	
Street	Both	10%	2,647.61	Parkette	Pea Gravel- 3/8" Washed Granite	
Street		69%	10,356.87	Small Park	Grass	
		71%	12,334.86	Small Park	Grass	
		70%	5,004.87	Small Park	Engineered Wood Fibre & Grass	
Street		64%	1,329.98	Parkette	Grass	
		48%	1,485.94	Parkette	Engineered Wood Fibre	
		57%	6,128.60	Small Park	Grass	
		17%	1,653.60	Parkette	Sand	

Notes:

* CDW = Commercial Dog Walker

** % Shade (EST.) based on calculated percentage of canopy area from Google Maps Aerial imagery (2020)

City of Toronto Off-Leash Areas

#	Park	District	Ward	CDW* Allowed	Fenced	Small Dog Area
52	Kew Gardens (Beaches Park)	Waterfront District	19	Yes	Yes	Yes
53	Silverbirch Park (Balmy Beach)	Waterfront District	19	Yes	No	No
54	Stan Wadlow Park	Toronto & East York	19	No	Yes	No
55	Coxwell Ravine (Taylor Creek Park)	Toronto & East York	14	Yes	Yes	No
56	Linkwood Lane Park	North York	16	No	Yes	No
57	Sandy Bruce Park	North York	15	No	Yes	No
58	Sunnybrook Park	North York	15	Yes	Yes	Yes
59	Sherwood Park	North York	15	Yes	Yes	No
60	Woburn Park	North York	8	No	Yes	No
61	Yonge and York Mills	North York	8	Yes	Yes	No
62	Earl Bales Park	North York	6	Yes	Yes	No
63	G. Ross Lord Park	North York	6	No	Yes	No
64	Bayview (Finch Hydro Corridor) Arena Park	North York	18	Yes	Yes	Yes
65	L'Amoureux Park	Scarborough	22	No	Yes	No
66	Hand of God	Scarborough	21	Yes	Yes	Yes
67	Thomson Memorial Park	Scarborough	21		Yes	No
68	Warden Woods Park	Scarborough	20	Yes	Yes	No
69	Scarborough Heights Park	Scarborough	20	No	Yes	No
70	Confederation Park	Scarborough	24	Yes	Yes	Yes
71	Botany Hill Park	Scarborough	24	Yes	Yes	No
72	Colonel Danforth Park	Scarborough	25		Yes	No

Table 1-2: List of OLAs Across Toronto (continued)

Parking	Seating	% Shade (est.)**	Size (m2)	Class	Surface Material	Irrigation
Street		11%	22,774.12	Medium Park	Sand	No
Street	Benches	5%	13,844.34	Small Park	Sand	
Parking Lot	Both	0%	2,177.69	Parkette	Grass & Dirt	
Parking Lot	Benches	100%	1,037.69	Parkette	Pea Gravel- 3/8" Washed Granite	
		0%	2,226.11	Parkette	Grass	
		55%	2,392.44	Parkette	Wood Chips	
Parking Lot	Benches	27%	11,026.22	Small Park	Grass	No
		100%	4,475.08	Parkette	Natural Trail & Boardwalk	
Street	Benches	45%	532.32	Parkette	Pea Gravel	
Parking Lot	Benches	96%	1,824.48	Parkette	Wood Chips & Grass	
Parking Lot	Benches	14%	4,969.22	Parkette	Grass	
		6%	2,890.19	Parkette	Grass	
		8%	2,629.38	Parkette	Pea Gravel- 3/8" Washed Granite	
		5%	2,353.47	Parkette	Grass	
Street		57%	1,351.48	Parkette	Grass	
Parking Lot		18%	16,459.57	Med. Park	Grass	
	Benches	48%	1,595.22	Parkette	Pea Gravel	
		21%	2,528.36	Parkette	Grass & Dirt	
Parking Lot	Both	4%	3,651.85	Parkette	Pea Gravel- 3/8" Washed Granite	
		22%	2,593.93	Parkette	Grass	
Parking Lot	Benches	2%	2,475.78	Parkette	Pea Gravel- 3/8" Washed Granite	

Notes:

* CDW = Commercial Dog Walker

** % Shade (EST.) based on calculated percentage of canopy area from Google Maps Aerial imagery (2020)

Study Process



Study Timeline

The City-Wide Study of Existing City of Toronto Dogs Off-Leash Areas (OLAs) was developed as part of an inclusive, multidisciplinary approach. It involved various participants at every stage of the process including City Staff, City Councillors, City-wide and park stakeholders, site-specific stakeholders, and the general public.

Various engagement tactics were used to help encourage input at key points in the process including stakeholder interviews, workshops, “Pup “Ups and surveys.

To supplement the process, three supporting communications tactics were used: discussion guide, study microsite and online Survey promotion.

The City-Wide Study of Existing City of Toronto Dogs Off-Leash Areas (OLAs) was organized into three (3) phases of work starting in March 2019. While the study was originally scheduled to be completed within approximately one year, the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 delayed the final stakeholder meeting which resulted in the project’s completion being delayed until the Winter of 2020.

Phase One: Building Understanding

The goals of phase one included:

1. Updating the schedule to ensure timelines, deliverables and consultation activities were attainable and achievable
2. Reviewing and synthesizing any and all relevant background materials, including reviewing the existing 73 OLAs, City policies, strategies and any connected and aligned initiatives
3. An international best practices review, including background research on their successful design, operations, maintenance and administrative policies
4. A consultation strategy that would target members of the public and interested stakeholders to inform and provide feedback on process, recommendations and final report

Phase Two: Testing Ideas

The objective of phase two included:

1. Examination and evaluation of ten (10) selected case study sites
2. Identify needs and provide recommendations to improve each site

Phase Three: Finalize Recommendations

The goals of phase three included:

1. Draft and final report
2. Cost estimates and implementation Strategy

Project Team

Parks Forestry & Recreation's City Parks Standards & Innovations Unit lead the inter-divisional study of Dogs Off-Leash Areas in the City of Toronto. Parks, Forestry & Recreation retained a team of consultants to assist with the study including developing, managing and executing the consultation process which included interviews with stakeholders, public engagement, surveys, precedent research, review of case study sites, preparing recommendations, cost estimates, and formalizing an implementation strategy.

The consultant team was led by thinc design, in association with Swerhun Inc. (stakeholder and public consultation); and Plan B Natural Heritage (arboriculture & ecology). Animal Behaviour Consultants Kerry Vinson and Beverley McKee each provided a peer review of the draft recommendations from the perspective of how the draft recommendations may influence dog behaviour and enjoyment of the space.

Participants in the Process

The consultation strategy involved a number of key audiences, including internal stakeholders, City Councillors, City-wide off-leash area and park design stakeholders, Site specific stakeholders and the public.

Internal Stakeholders

The City's Park Standards & Innovations Unit and its consultant team engaged staff from a number of interested and impacted agencies and City divisions to seek input related to the Study. The City divisions consulted include Parks, Forestry & Recreation; City Planning; Solid Waste Management; Municipal Licensing and Standards; and Toronto & Region Conservation Authority.

City Councillors

Local Councillors are often the first point of contact to receive community feedback, concerns and questions. In an effort to help Councillors respond to feedback and/or concerns related to the Study, the City and its consultant team provided Councillors with a briefing on the relevant information on the Study.

City-wide OLA and Park Design Stakeholders

City-wide and park-specific groups with an interest in the design, operations, and maintenance of OLAs were invited to participate in a series of four (4) Stakeholder Workshops throughout all phases of the Study. The City and its consultant team also invited representatives from: City-wide dog advocacy groups & highly-engaged individuals; park specific OLA groups; city-wide park advocacy groups (e.g. Park People); and accessibility groups. Additional groups who were interested or impacted by the design, operations, and maintenance were also invited to attend the Stakeholder Workshops when they became known to the City and its consultant team.

Site-specific Stakeholders

The Dog Owners Association (DOA) representatives for the chosen ten (10) case study sites were engaged to identify site specific issues and opportunities for improvements. Site-specific issues were reviewed as it relates to City-wide concerns, and helped develop the recommendations.

The General Public

The City and its consultant team sought feedback from the general public who had an interest in the design, operations, maintenance and administration of OLAs. Public consultation helped inform the Study, including the design recommendations that were developed to alleviate issues in existing OLAs.

Engagement Tactics

The consultation program included a variety of in-person and online tactics that shared information and sought feedback at key points throughout the process. The specific strategies included:

Internal Stakeholder Interviews

The City Parks Standards & Innovations Unit and its consultant team held one-on-one and small group interviews with staff from relevant City divisions to seek input related to the Study. Interviews occurred in July and August 2019.

Stakeholder Workshops

There were four (4) Stakeholder Workshops over the course of the Study, one in each phase (see consultation schedule on the facing page). The Stakeholder Workshops constituted the primary face-to-face touch point where the City and its consultant team sought feedback on common issues in OLAs and potential design solutions. The first workshop was used to present and seek feedback on common issues, best practices, and potential solutions, and for selecting the case study sites. As a result of this meeting the originally planned eight sites was increased to ten based on stakeholder input. Workshop 2 was used to present and seek feedback on the ten local OLA case studies and draft design recommendations. At the third workshop, preferred design recommendations were presented for feedback.

The format of the workshops consisted of presentations, with facilitated, interactive discussions about common issues, design solutions, and the emerging strategy. The City and thinc delivered presentations and responded questions; Swerhun facilitated, took notes, and provided summaries of each workshop. Participants were typically given one week post meeting to share additional feedback, as well as an opportunity review the draft meeting summary before it was finalized.

Site-specific Interviews

Following the selection of the ten case study sites, the consulting team conducted interviews with site-specific stakeholder organizations from each site. The interviews will be used to discern opportunities for improvements, and key considerations for the development of design recommendations. In consultation with the City and the broader consultant team, the consulting team developed questions to help guide the interviews.

Project Schedule



Figure 2-1: Project Schedule

“Pup” Ups

To connect back to the local population after the completion of the case studies, the consulting team conducted park “Pup” Ups at each location to present and seek feedback on the draft design recommendations resulting from the research, case studies, and previous consultations. The Pup Ups consisted of members of the consultant and City team stationed in each of the ten sites with display and feedback materials.

Public Surveys

Two online surveys were conducted to share information and seek feedback from the public on the Study. The first survey took place in May and June 2019 to gather feedback and advice on common issues, best practices, and potential solutions. The second survey in early 2020 provided the opportunity for participants to review the draft design recommendations and provide input on how well the recommendations would help achieve desired outcomes.

Key messages

The focus of this study was to explore ways to improve existing off-leash areas (OLAs) in Toronto by establishing protocols focused on design, maintenance, and operations. Identifying opportunities or strategies to create new OLAs or other policies/mechanisms to manage dogs and people in the city were not part of this study. This distinction was clearly articulated throughout the engagement process.

The City of Toronto considers OLAs to be single use park assets, i.e. they are designed and maintained for the distinct purpose of providing dogs and dog owners with an off-leash area. This study is being done to maximize the potential and appeal of existing off-leash areas, to provide great places for dogs and their owners and to facilitate use to help reduce instances of unauthorized off-leash dogs across the City.

Finally, messaging ensured that stakeholders understood that the recommendations developed through this study must be both cost effective and achievable from an operations standpoint and that implementation of the recommendations would be undertaken in a variety of ways over a period of time as money and resources allow.

Supporting Communications Tactics

The City and consultant team relied on a number of targeted communications and outreach tactics at strategic points in the process. The objective of these communication tactics was to support a focused, constructive, engagement process by providing accessible, relatable materials that:

- increase civic literacy around key issues related to dogs in the City and the design, operations, and maintenance of OLAs
- reveal the range of issues the City has to consider when making decisions about OLAs and dogs in the City
- describe the benefits of this work (to both dog owners and others)
- highlight separate but aligned initiatives (and who to contact about different issues)
- raise awareness of the project, public surveys, and Pup Ups

Supporting communications tactics include:

Discussion Guide

To help convey the purpose and scope of the OLA Study, a four page Discussion Guide was prepared in the first phase of the Study. The Discussion Guide described the project background; purpose of the Study; ways to get involved; and the desired outcomes. The Discussion Guide was intended to be used in face-to-face engagement activities, including Stakeholder Group workshops and Pup Ups.

Study Microsite

The City developed and maintained an online project microsite that included key project information, including a narrative about the study background and purpose, presentations, summaries of engagement activities, and project reports. The microsite also included links to other relevant City dogs initiatives and online surveys.

Online Survey Promotion

The City promoted the survey via the microsite, emailed stakeholder communications and social media posts. This included a link to the survey and text with quick-facts and/or insights emerging from the process. A link to the survey was also distributed to the public through Councillor communications.

Issues and Concerns



Overview

The following summarizes the key issues and concerns raised during the background research and the consultation process. This includes interviews with internal City staff (Operations and Maintenance, Urban Forestry, Parks Development and Capital Projects, Standards and Innovation, Policy and Strategic Planning, etc.), external stakeholder groups (Dog Owner Association representatives, park advocacy groups), two public facing surveys and comments received on the draft study.

The issues discussed below are in no particular order and are consolidated under general themes based on the main issues and concerns raised throughout the consultation process. The final recommendations strive to address these and other issues based on our experience and research. Themes of major concern include:

- Communication between OLA Representatives, OLA users and City staff, as well as communication of OLA by-Laws and Dog owner accountability
- Surface Material and Maintenance
- Parks Operating and Budget
- Off-leash Space and Amenities
- Impact on the Environment
- Gates and Fencing
- Trees and Shade
- Lighting

Communication

Participants shared the desire for more communication between dog owners and the City. Each parks' Dog Owner Association (DOA) could play an important role in improving this communication, however, many people are not aware that there is a DOA, let alone who the contact may be. When participants learned of the DOA, many showed interest in learning more, or becoming involved in the DOA.

Increased signage was the primary means through which participants felt the City and the DOA, could improve communication with OLA users. Suggested informational signage included:

- DOA information: who is that park's ambassador, what their role is, how to contact them, and general updates
- City: Roles and responsibilities of relevant City divisions, and contact information for reporting maintenance issues

- Code of Conduct and By-law: clear explanatory signage that explains the rules, with reasoning
- Accountability: signs that explain how to report abuses of the code of conduct and by-law through 311, what the process is, and what will happen once a report is made.

Providing more information on signs (reasons for rules, process for reporting through 311) was thought by some to be helpful in increasing adherence to rules. Participants also suggested some method of ongoing communication to users would be helpful, either through the DOA or the City.

Surface Material and Maintenance

The type of surfacing at OLAs was the most persistent concern throughout the consultation process. Concerns centred around using a material that does not hurt dogs' paws, drains well, and can be maintained consistently.

During the community consultation process, turf was indicated as most people's favourite with very few complaints in regards to the impact on dog paws. However, it was recognized that grass needs to be a more durable than typical sod in order to withstand high use and urine. Another consideration with turf is that people (and dogs) often congregate in one area, killing the grass and compacting the soil. It was suggested to have pathways and areas for people to congregate amid the turf of a more durable surface. Additionally, it was recognized that turf in high use OLAs would need to be temporarily closed seasonally to allow seed to set.

Wood chips and engineered wood fibre (EWF) represent another option that may be suitable in some OLAs. The main concern with these surfaces is that they absorb urine and can result in an unpleasant odour. However, others noted wood chips and EWF also drain well keeping the OLA relatively clean. Some had concerns that wood chips may hurt dogs' paws, though this was not a consistent concern. The other main concern with wood chips and EWF is a perceived lack of maintenance. They need to be raked, have holes filled, and be topped up periodically (1-2 times per year). Many consulted felt these maintenance needs were not being met.

Pea gravel was the least preferred option, with many having concerns that it can be harmful to dogs' paws; it creates a lot of dust in the air; it can be difficult for dogs and people to walk in; and it becomes very hot in the summer. A few said pea gravel offers good drainage and is clean when it rains.

Feedback also included a preference for using multiple surface types in each OLA to balance the benefits and drawbacks of the various types.

Parks Operating and Budget

Participants in all consultations consistently said maintenance is a key issue needing improvement. Currently, OLA budgets are included within the overall parks budget. Consultations with staff aimed to determine how much time is spent on maintenance, so that appropriate budgets can be allocated to facilitate a higher standard of maintenance. Estimates of how much time was spent maintaining OLAs ranged from 1% of their time to 1/3 of their time. Typical maintenance duties include:

- turf: mowing, fertilization and aeration
- crushed granite, wood chips and pea gravel: sweeping and/or raking, material top ups.

Top ups of these materials typically only occur every other year. All OLAs get litter picked every one to two weeks. Repairs to fencing, gates and latches are also required frequently due to both vandalism and intense use.

It was suggested there needs to be a way to streamline the repair process. Currently OLA users will contact the Park Supervisor with an issue. Depending on the issue, either the Supervisor can coordinate a repair fairly quickly, or it will need to go through other branches which may result in a lengthy process.

Maintenance staff reported that many OLAs are difficult to access to perform maintenance duties with concerns regarding aggressive dogs and uncomfortable working conditions.

Off-leash Space and Amenities

Participants in consultations had varying opinions on the design, layout and amenities that should be offered in OLAs. The ideas provided are site-specific, and no one set of design/amenities would work for all OLAs. The following are the key features mentioned during consultations:

- **small dog areas (SDAs):** Specific suggestions related to SDAs included: ensuring fences around SDAs are high enough to keep large dogs (and in some cases coyotes) out, and; adding an external entrance/exit to SDAs so that small dogs and their owners don't have to go through the main OLA.
- **agility equipment:** Participants identified play equipment as an important design consideration to stimulate dogs and provide them with more interaction with the terrain, especially in smaller OLAs. Suggested play-supporting structures and landscaping features included logs, rocks, mounds, and obstacle courses.

- **fetching lane:** similar to a fast lane in swimming pool, only suitable for OLAs with adequate space.
- **water features:** users of OLAs were particularly enthusiastic about the option to install water features such as multi-tier water fountains and/or a hose with sprayer attachment. Some suggested adding bathing station, though others felt bathing dogs shouldn't be encouraged since people might bring in soap that could damage surrounding environments. Water features have obvious maintenance and operations implications, that will be discussed further in the recommendations section.

Impact on the Environment

Many vocal stakeholders have issues with how dogs impact the surrounding community and environment, particularly where OLAs are surrounded by Environmentally Significant Areas (ESAs). Some respondents were concerned that urine and feces from OLAs could contaminate waterways or the water table, that dog urine kills trees, dogs chase wildlife and trample vegetation, and that OLAs should not be established near ESAs. In addition, residents who live in close proximity to OLAs have complained about noise pollution from excessive barking.

Suggestions from the community included better signage regarding ESAs, educating on what they are, what the rules are, and why they should be followed. Current signage is not respected, so it was suggested to use a different, eye catching design, with strong but friendly wording.

Gates and Fencing

The primary issue reported with gates and fencing are that the latches are constantly breaking from weather and/or use. It was suggested the City investigate more durable options that will require fewer repairs. There was strong support to add double gates to all existing OLAs to help prevent dogs from accidentally leaving the fenced area.

Most participants agreed fence height should be increased to at least 5 feet to prevent dogs from jumping or climbing out, however some participants questioned this need, saying they had never experienced dogs jumping the fence and felt higher fences were unnecessary. Others had concerns about limiting visibility to other parts of the park, such as playgrounds, making them unable to supervise their children while in the OLA.

There was also much discussion regarding if all OLAs should be fenced, and/or have some type of physical barrier (e.g. shrubs or other landscape feature). Many felt that for safety, OLAs should be surrounded by some

type of barrier, where a few others felt this may cause dogs to act more aggressively. In at least one case, the OLA was designed without barriers in consultation with the community, therefore that was their preferred design. Participants also felt the type of fence should complement the greater surroundings aesthetically.

Trees and Shade

Across all consultations, most users agreed that more shade and shelter is needed. Specific suggestions included:

- ensure shade structures/trees are spread out so that people and dogs aren't forced to gather in one area of the OLA (i.e. the main entrance), which can cause conflicts.
- ensure shade structures are durable so they last a long time
- consider shade structures that can also provide shelter from other elements, e.g. rain, wind, snow, etc. Avoid porous structures.

While many people would prefer trees in the OLA, it is reportedly difficult to maintain the trees in good health due to damage from urine, soil compaction and physical damage. Where staff have placed fencing around the base of trees to protect them, it is difficult to maintain around the base of the tree (i.e cutting weeds). Also small dogs often get trapped within the tree protection fencing area.

Lighting

Users felt lighting is very important because it increases safety, and makes it easier for owners to pick-up after their dogs at night. While understanding of the difficulty of lighting an OLA where an electrical connection doesn't already exist, most users felt lighting was a necessity, not a luxury. Lighting would ideally be located near entrances, and be activated by motion, light or time sensors.

Concerns about lighting included light pollution for wildlife and for surrounding homes. Some felt having lights on at night would encourage activity after hours and may encourage unwanted or illicit activities.

Best Practices



Overview

Off-leash areas can be found in City’s throughout the world. While the design, maintenance and administration of off-leash areas (OLAs) in each City varies, there are many similarities in the challenges cities face, and important lessons to be learned.

For this study the team reviewed the design, operations and management practices of 17 cities and over 80 off-leash areas. This includes city’s in Canada, the United States, and overseas including the cities of London England, Paris France and Port Adelaide Enfield, Australia. From our literature review these locations were selected as providing progressive dog park environments utilizing best practices. These cities were surveyed extensively through online resources including other off-leash area plans in an effort to learn from other jurisdictions and inform this plan’s recommendations.

This section provides an overview of these findings, with more detail and data on each city and individual off-leash parks provided in Appendix A.

Methodology

Precedent location cities were selected based on geography (regional, national, continental, and international), size (population and area), density and perceived success. All current dog plans were considered if they existed, policies/bylaws were surveyed, and news and special interest material was reviewed.

Information was researched and collected based on a variety of topics of interest:

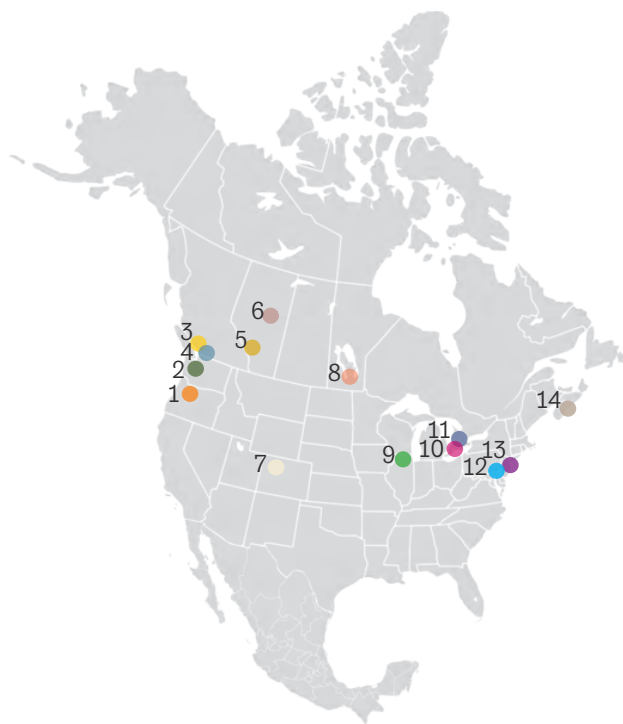
- health and safety
- environmental design
- accessibility
- etiquette
- enforcement
- parking
- waste disposal and bags
- signage
- buffer for visual/sound attenuation
- shade and wind protection
- drainage
- vegetative restoration
- general size of OLA
- small dog area
- surfacing
- entries and gates
- fencing
- lighting
- irrigation
- picnic tables and benches
- community notice boards
- water station (bottle/dog fountain)
- agility equipment or water play
- operations and maintenance

For the purpose of analysis and reporting, we have reorganized the above list into categories and subcategories as shown in the following sections.

The 17 cities researched included:

North America

- 1. Portland, OR
- 2. Seattle, WA
- 3. Vancouver, BC
- 4. Surrey, BC
- 5. Calgary, AB
- 6. Edmonton, AB
- 7. Denver, CO
- 8. Winnipeg, MB
- 9. Chicago, IL
- 10. Guelph, ON
- 11. Hamilton, ON
- 12. Philadelphia, PA
- 13. New York, NY
- 14. Halifax, NS



International

- 15. London, UK
- 16. Paris, FR
- 17. Port Adelaide Enfield, AU



Figure 4-1: Map of Researched Cities

Comparison of Cities Reviewed for OLA Best Practices

	City, Jurisdiction	Population	Area (sq km)	Density	Parkland (sq km)	Dogs Off Leash Areas (sq km)	% Parkland Off-Leash (fenced and unfenced)
1	Portland, OR	640,000	376	1702	47	N/A	N/A
2	Seattle, WA	704,000	369	1908	26	0.11	0.42%
3	Vancouver, BC	675,000	114	5921	13	0.69	5.31%
4	Surrey, BC	518,000	316	1639	67	0.225	0.34%
5	Calgary, AB	1,300,000	826	1574	81	11.02	13.60%
6	Edmonton, AB	981,000	700	1401	65	1.88	2.89%
7	Denver, CO	693,000	401	1728	25	0.06	0.24%
8	Winnipeg, MB	749,000	464	1614	35	1.0	2.84%
9	Chicago, IL	2,700,000	590	4576	36	0.028	0.08%
10	Guelph, ON	135,000	87	1552	13	N/A	N/A
11	Hamilton, ON	580,000	1138	510	27	0.175	0.65%
	Toronto, ON	2,900,000	630	4603	81	0.4	0.49%
12	Philadelphia, PA	1,600,000	370	4324	41	0.008	0.02%
13	New York, NY	8,500,000	1213	7007	121	47.7	39%
14	Halifax, NS	431,000	5490	79	53	8.92	16.83%
15	Pt Adelaide Enfield, AU	125,083	94	1,331	7.1	5.3	75%
16	London, UK	8,100,000	1569	5163	287*	N/A	N/A
17	Paris, FR	2,100,000	105	20000	23	0.010	0.04%

Table 4-1: Comparison of Researched Cities

# Dogs licensed	# of Dogs (estimated)	Rate of Dog Ownership by household (estimated)	Number of single-use OLAs	Single-Purpose Dog Parks Total Area (ha)	Average Single-Purpose Dog Park Size (ha)	Single-Use, Multi-Use or Both present and planned	Planning to Increase Single-Use
N/A	102,024	16.0%	N/A	N/A	N/A	Both present - Single planned	Yes
43,000	153,000	29.5%	14	11.3	0.81	Single present - Single planned	N/A
21,332	55,947	8%	6	1.4	0.23	Both present - Both planned	Yes
18,830	75,000	14.5%	15	12.76	0.85	Both present - Single planned	Yes
135,000	135,000	10.4%	10	44.15	4.42	Both present - Single planned	Yes
N/A	115,055	11.7%	4	13.31	3.33	Both present - Both planned	Yes
26,887	142,631	20.5%	13	6.4	0.49	Single present - Single planned	N/A
54,585	112,145	14.9%	2	1.12	0.56	Both present - Single planned	Yes
27,000	540,000	20.0%	32	2.8	0.13	Single present - Single planned	N/A
N/A	18,232	14%	0	0	0.00	Multi present - Both planned	Yes
35,000	87,500	15%	8	5.87	0.73	Both present - Both planned	No
230,000	500,000	7.9%	56	20.7	0.37	Both present - Single planned	Yes
N/A	350,000	8.4%	8	8.3	1.04	Single present - Single planned	N/A
345,727	600,000	7.1%	87	8.7	0.10	Both present - unknown planned	N/A
N/A	60,664	14%	1	0.67	0.67	Both present - Single planned	Yes
16,505	20,351	16%	3	17.5	5.83	Both present - Both planned	No
188,000	200,000	9%	N/A	N/A	N/A	Both present - unknown planned	N/A
200,000	200,000	9.5%	13	0.48	0.09	Single present - Single planned	N/A

Single-Use Versus Multiple-Use

There are two main attitudes guiding the use of city land for dog off-leash areas (OLAs): single-use and multiple-use.

Single Use OLAs

In the single-use approach, cities will allow dogs off leash only in specific, secured recreation spaces that are usually designed as dog parks and are not geared towards people without dogs. In some places, such as in New York City's dog runs, these spaces forbid non-dog handlers from entering entirely). The cities focusing on the single-use approach to dog parks are often populous and dense.

Multiple-Use OLAs

The multiple-use approach is taken by cities who allow dogs to exercise off-leash in specific marked recreation spaces that are intended to be shared with other users, such as general parklands. These cities tend towards being less populous and less dense.

Many cities embrace both of these approaches to differing degrees, with the sensitivity of the environment, amount of available space, and residential density/typology around a given site deciding which approach is taken, and whether time restrictions are necessary.

The strategy used for fencing or edge-making and the size of the land allotted for the dog off-leash space are the two design criteria that tend to differ depending on whether an off-leash space is meant as a shared-space or as single-use space. Cities that focus exclusively on shared-use spaces are more likely to have unfenced or unenclosed off-leash parks with signs marking boundaries. These are generally larger spaces designated for those who wish to exercise their dogs off leash alongside members of the public who do not mind sharing recreation space with dogs. A major drawback to the multi-use approach is the increased chance of conflict between dogs and other park users. There is also less control over the containment of dog waste. Cities that have used the multiple-use approach have found themselves first running educational campaigns and then, in some cases, increasing by law enforcement.

At least three cities researched, Portland, OR; Surrey, BC; and Winnipeg, MB; have changed their dog park policy within the last five years to indicate they intend to build only fenced, single-use off-leash parks going forward. Calgary, AB, which has the largest number of multiple-use off-leash areas in Canada (perhaps in North America), has accelerated the pace of building

fenced-in dog parks (12% of the OLAs introduced in the last 10 years were enclosed, whereas only 2% of the OLAs built in the 23 years prior were fenced).

Toronto's OLAs are primarily single-use and are correspondingly largely fenced (78% of all Toronto OLAs are fenced). Despite the results from this study's survey 1 results including comments showing that some people would prefer a more informal shared-use scheme in Toronto, the evidence from other cities of Toronto's size and geographic profile (New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Hamilton) is that fenced, purpose-built dog runs are the most successful at providing space for dogs to run off-leash during the most popular park hours, while allowing other park users to enjoy their recreation.

Health and Safety

Dog off-leash area health and safety precedents ranged from dog licensing policies that required proof of several vaccinations to design with an eye towards discouraging aggressive dog behaviour. Jurisdictions with above average health and safety practices in policy or design include: Chicago, IL; New York, NY; Denver, CO; Portland, OR; and Port Adelaide Enfield, Australia.

Policies

Chicago's dog licensing policy manages to tie the health of the dogs using the Dog Friendly Areas¹ (DFA) and dog registration together, though the result may be lower licensing compliance rates. There are two levels of process required before a dog can properly access a DFA. The simplest and broadest level of licensing is similar to that of New York City: it requires proof of rabies vaccination, is done online or at a City-owned location, and guarantees return of lost pets by virtue of distributed registration dog tags that attach to a collar/harness. Some other cities, most notably London, UK, require microchips instead of distributing dog tags. This licence must be renewed yearly (unless it is a microchip).

However, Chicago owners who have registered their dogs with the City and would like to visit a DFA require a separate, annual DFA permit (much like an on-street parking permit), which is sold at over 100 approved veterinary practices. The DFA permit (which comes in the form of another tag), requires proof that the dog has been examined within the past year for any communicable diseases, including internal parasites, and proof of current vaccination for/immunity to a number of relevant canine diseases. These requirements essentially add up to the equivalent of a thorough once-yearly veterinary checkup after a dog has reached 4 months of age. Dogs entering DFAs thus are 'healthy' and are less likely to be disease vectors, making at least some veterinarians more reassured about dogs using dog parks.

This process and policy relies heavily upon the volunteer-run and community-organized nature of DFAs in Chicago. Since volunteer committees must be formed prior to any new DFA request and must organize the funding for any DFA that is built, members of these committees feel a great deal of ownership over the resulting DFA. Some committee members therefore enforce DFA tags quite vigilantly. This is not always the best approach, since it can cause more conflict between members of the dog owner community. However, licensing compliance in Chicago as a whole

1 A Dog Friendly Area (DFA), is the equivalent to an Off-Leash Area in the City of Toronto.

is very low only around 5% according to City of Chicago (Vancouver 2017b: 42). It seems likely the effort and cost required to navigate this system for DFA tags contributes to lowering diversity of owners in the DFAs and does provide quite a barrier to what was at one time intended as a truly public-use space.

Maintenance

Another area where cities manage health and safety in their OLAs is through maintenance. Many parasites and illnesses for dogs and humans can be spread through an infected dog's feces, so it's very important that all feces be removed promptly by owners. In Denver, there is a 3-color card system (modelled after those used in sports) pertaining to dog feces cleanup compliance. If City maintenance workers are concerned about the level of feces remaining at an OLA, they put up a yellow card, warning owners using that DFA that it is not clean and requires cleanup by the owners. If that space's level of unattended feces worsens and does not get cleaned up, a red card will show that the OLA has closed entirely until owners clean it up properly. While this seems like a strategy that might work in jurisdictions with active community dog owners associations. The danger of this policy is that it will penalize neighbourhoods that do not have active dog owners associations and therefore do not have the preexisting community connections necessary to activate a group clean-up effort. It may also create more barriers for use in people with disabilities that mean they cannot pick up after their dog.

Portland, Oregon, has a policy where if a dog with *Giardia* (a parasite) has been at a particular dog park, the owner should notify the City and the City will test for *Giardia intestinalis* at that park. If *Giardia* tests are positive, the City closes the park and follows the recommendations of the State Public Health Veterinarian regarding closure (length of time, conditions, etc.) of the OLA (Vancouver 2017b: 59).

The Government of South Australia, which includes the city of Adelaide Port Enfield, suggests that:

“Dog parks are established on the concept that park users will police themselves and each other rather than be subject to law enforcement personnel. Therefore, investing re-sources into education sessions for park users on what constitutes good dog park etiquette and how to stay safe is important, and provides an opportunity to address issues in a more positive manner.” (Dog and Cat Management Board, Government of South Australia. 2013: 38)

Design

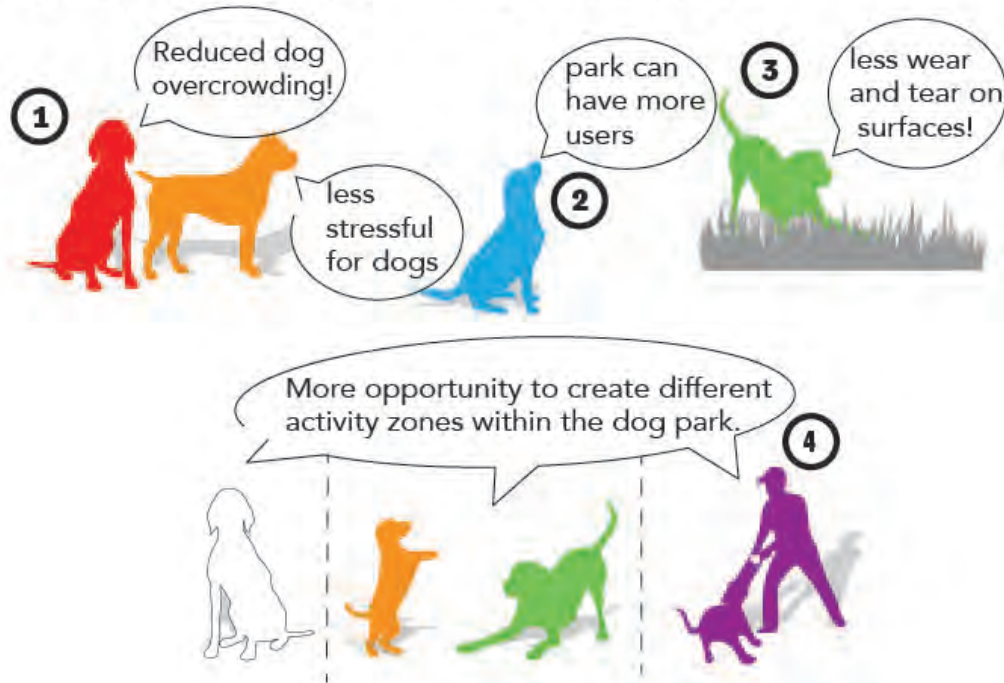
Well researched and sourced material on dog park design recommendations as a whole is somewhat difficult to find, let alone specific material addressing health & safety through the design of the park. The majority of the evidence-backed information for best practices in dog park health and safety is summarized by the Dog and Cat Management Board of the Government of South Australia. Their 2013 booklet “Unleashed: A Guide to Successful Dog Parks” compiles most of the background research available on dog park design in general, and health and safety design in particular. The principles below are derived from that guide:

- Break up (i.e. obstruct or screen) low-height sight-lines to keep dogs from getting aggressive or mobbing each other. This should especially be done around entry areas.
- “The area should be big enough for dogs to run around and space themselves out. If there’s not enough square footage available, a park can easily get crowded. Crowding can lead to tension among dogs and, as a result, fights can erupt” (American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, 2013).
- “A major consideration in determining an appropriate size is the expected number of users although this may be difficult to ascertain and may be influenced by the number of other off-leash parks in surrounding areas.” Size does matter, and generally, larger parks are better for user experience and dog health and safety.
- A prominent animal behaviourist (James C. Ha, Ph.D., CAAB) believes that large dogs and small dogs should never mix, making a strong argument for small dog areas. The underlying reason for this is likely owing to predatory drift, an instinctive behaviour that can lead to larger dogs seeing smaller ones as prey.
- Walking paths and/or trails within the park encourage dog owners to walk with their dogs rather than standing in one place. This helps reduce congestion and the concentration of dogs in one particular location and the potential for dogs to form into loose groups (Smith, 2007: 26).
- “Many older dogs are really not that interested in playing with other dogs but do love to run and explore. Paths that encourage owners and dogs to keep walking are best for enhancing the dog/owner relationship and preventing dog to dog conflict” (Larsen Bridge, 2007: n.p).
- Shade should be provided. Dogs will need it to rest, cool themselves, and protect themselves against the weather.

- Irregular (odd) shapes work better than rectangles for dog park plans because they provide more opportunities for spaces where dogs can “get out of the main flow of traffic... ways to take a break from or avoid high-energy body-slamming canines” (Smith, 2007: 26).
- A variety of spaces or activity zones should be created within the dog park. Activity zones can be created by using earth mounding or vegetation to create visual barriers within the park to interrupt dogs from running towards each other and body slamming each other (King and Long, 2004). They also provide a natural refuge where dogs can get away for ‘time out.’ It is not recommended to have fenced areas within the dog park for ‘time out’ zones.
- A combination of surface materials should be used to match the activity zones and corresponding intensity. All surface materials must be ‘dog friendly’. Asphalt is not considered a suitable option because it can get ‘too hot in summer for dogs to walk on and can possibly tear or burn the pads of their feet’ (Stecchi, n.d.:03-13). Surfaces should be selected to deter dogs from moving too fast and getting up too much speed in the park.
- There are many plants that are irritating or toxic to dogs, and these plants should not be used either inside or on the way to a dog park. There is a good database of toxic plants available on the ASPCA² website.
- If there is only one main entry/exit point, dogs tend to converge on the newcomer, which can be a potential source of conflict. Screening the entry gates from other dogs within the park can help avoid the potential for dog conflict when entering.
- Gates should be fitted with self-closing child-proof locks to prevent dogs escaping and unsupervised children entering the park.
- The fence should be around 1.7-1.8 m in height to discourage dogs jumping over it. Susyn Stecchi (n.d.) has audited over 100 dog parks in the United States and recommends the fence to be at least six feet (1.8 m). It is desirable to select a fencing material that provides good visibility so that park users can see activity inside and around the park.
- Seating should be located away from entry/exit gates to avoid congestion. Keep seating to the minimum needed for a park’s usage, as people tend to sit down, socialize, and do less interacting with their dog. It is better to encourage dog owners to keep moving through the park, interacting and staying connected with their dog

2 American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) www.aspc.org/Pet-care/poison-control/plant-list-dogs.aspx

ADVANTAGES of larger sized dog parks



DISADVANTAGES of larger sized dog parks

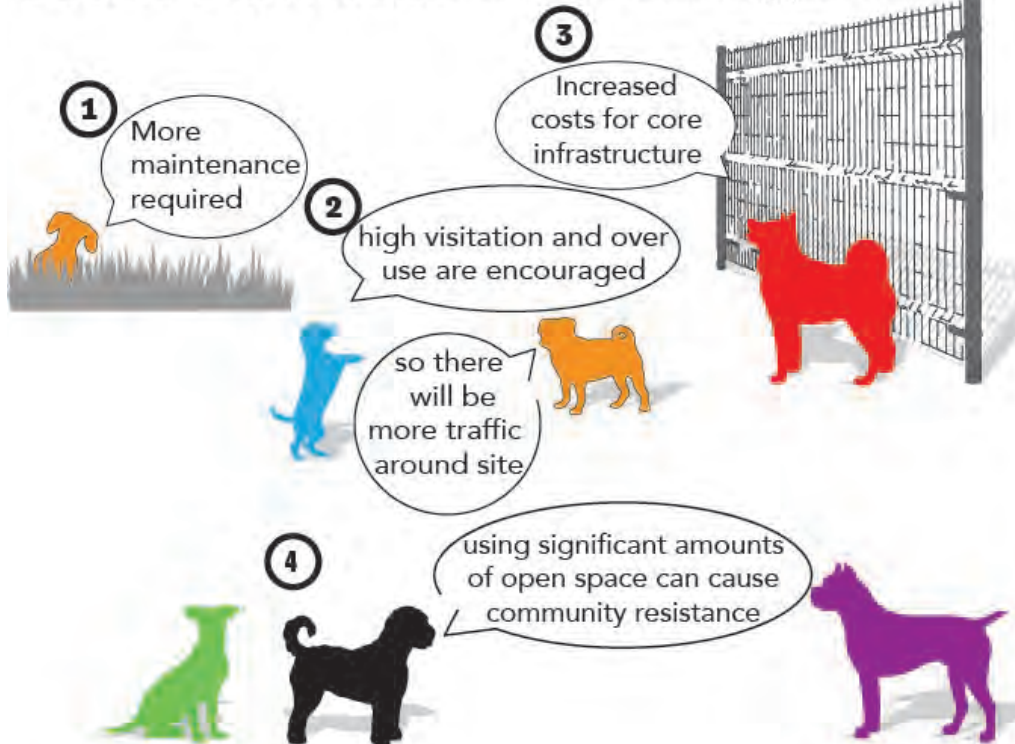


Figure 4-2: Large Sized Dog Parks Advantages & Disadvantages

ADVANTAGES of smaller sized dog parks



DISADVANTAGES of smaller sized dog parks



Figure 4-3: Small Sized Dog Parks Advantages & Disadvantages

(use circulation paths as part of this). Seating should be positioned to provide unobstructed views of the dog play areas. Benches that surround trees are a good choice because they help protect the trees from urine.

- Picnic tables should not be located inside the dog park as they encourage food in the park (a major behavioural trigger). These facilities must be accommodated outside the dog park, at a good distance from the dog park entry gates.
- Notice boards for public use should be located outside the park and away from the main entry gates. Park rules should be located in high visibility areas en route to the park at a distance from the main entry gates to avoid congestion, but not too far as that will discourage people from walking over to read them.
- Dog equipment such as jumps, bridges with sloping sides and A-Frames can present issues if dogs and their owners have not been trained in their proper use and may pose a safety problem to dogs (McArthur, 2006). However, providing equipment for dogs to practice their natural skills can be a bonus and this could include: tyres, logs, boulders, tunnels and other elements to enrich a dog's experience at the park, without using jumps or A-frames.
- Audits of over 160 dog parks in the United States found that agility equipment: Falls into rapid decay from non-use or misuse, is used by very few people for their dogs, is used by children as a playground, is a waste of space and money unless you have users who are committed to using them (Stecchi, n.d). It is recommended that puppies under 12 months of age do not use this equipment as puppies have soft bones and joints, which are easily injured (McArthur, 2006). If dog equipment is considered it should be located away from entry/exit points and high running areas (active zones).

Enforcement and Etiquette

The enforcement of dog-related bylaws and etiquette related to using dog parks is never complete in any city; however certain cities have taken steps and strategies that seem to use their resources in the most effective ways. Bylaws in all cities covered three broad topics:

- dog licensing, which sometimes included rabies vaccination requirements,
- the owner's obligation to pick up dog waste right away, and
- the owner's obligation to keep their dog on a leash everywhere but designated Off-Leash Areas and their own property.

Dog park etiquette and/or listed rules of use for all cities surveyed contained much in common, see Table 4-2 for further comparison.

Specific rules that were uncommon included Denver's ban on children under the age of 10 in OLAs, New York's instruction to not allow dog to drink from any park fountains excepting the ones that were for dogs, Seattle's rule that bicycles must be left outside of OLA, and Hamilton's extensive list of prohibited items (glass containers, rawhide chews, dog toys, animal and human food, pinch/prong/spike collars). some of which are also prohibited by Guelph.

Policy

Though some cities (such as New York) have increased their park-specific enforcement staff enough to dissuade many owners from breaking the city's bylaws (see Figure 4-4 for comparisons), the resources necessary to keep those enforcement staffing levels active is far out of the reach of most cities. As a result, cities such as Seattle, WA, have engaged in limited, targeted, increases in enforcement staffing in combination with a focus on education for owners and non-owners alike, in an effort to prevent violations in the first place. Portland, OR, created a thorough policy document laying out their public education strategy and planned special enforcement, and the successful implementation of targeted enforcement staffing.

Design

Clear signs stating rules are recommended in all reports and policies for cities. As listed in the Health and Safety Design best practices, South Australia recommends that "Park rules should be located in high visibility areas en route to the park at a distance from the main entry gates to avoid congestion, but not too far as that will discourage people from walking over

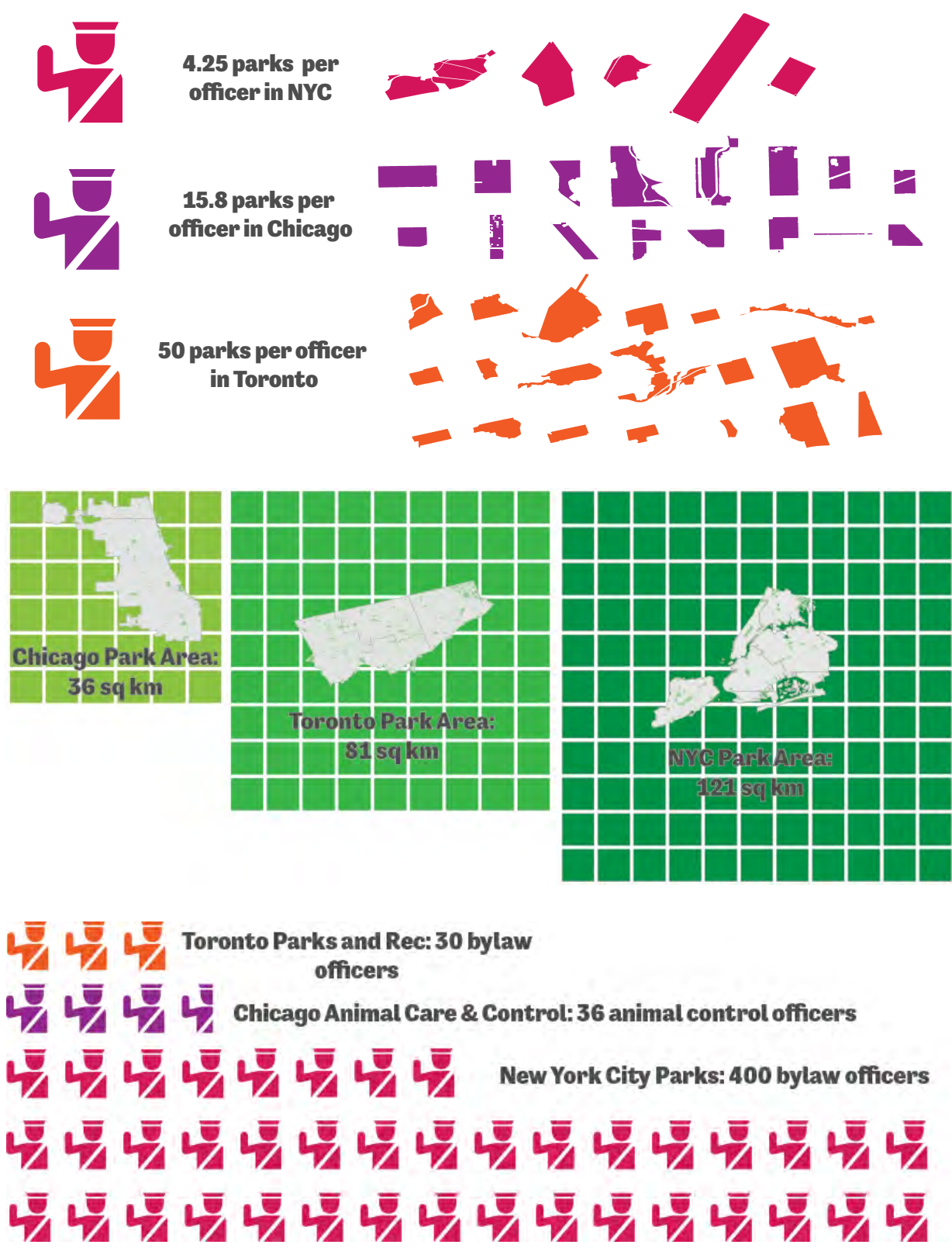


Figure 4-4: Enforcement Staff Comparison

to read them”. The design of signs is addressed by the Vancouver People Parks and Dogs Strategy with the suggestion of a design that includes as many icons or pictures as possible to enable people to quickly understand the rules, regardless of English literacy. In parks where the off-leash areas are unfenced, the Vancouver report recommends the inclusion of guidelines for people without dogs using the multi-use spaces, in addition to those for people with dogs: “Be prepared to encounter dogs off leash, supervise children closely, limit open food, do not approach a dog without owner permission.”

Comparing Municipal Off-leash Area Rules

	Portland	Seattle	Vancouver	Surrey	Calgary	Edmonton	Denver	Winnipeg	Chicago	Guelph	Hamilton	Toronto	Philadelphia	New York	Halifax	Port Adelaide Enfield
Keep dog(s) in sight	X		X			X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Keep dog(s) under (voice) control/trained	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Owner is liable/responsible for dog's acts/ use of OLA	X	X					X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Pick up feces and dispose properly	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
On leash except in OLA	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X		X	X	
Keep leash ready in OLA	X	X				X	X	X				X			X	
Must be licensed (visibly)	X		X	X		X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Must be vaccinated (against rabies)/healthy	X	X				X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Stay away from vegetation/grass										X	X		X	X		
Fill in holes/fix damage/ no digging	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X				
Prevent from chasing wildlife	X				X							X		X	X	

Table 4-2: Comparison of Municipal OLA Rules

	Portland	Seattle	Vancouver	Surrey	Calgary	Edmonton	Denver	Winnipeg	Chicago	Guelph	Hamilton	Toronto	Philadelphia	New York	Halifax	Port Adelaide Enfield
Female dogs in heat prohibited	X	X					X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X
Dangerous/restricted dogs prohibited (incl. pit bulls)						X		X	X	X		X				
Puppies younger than specific age prohibited	X	X					X		X	X	X					
Aggressive dogs leashed and removed/prohibited	X	X	X		X		X	X		X	X	X		X	X	
Don't leave dogs unattended	X	X						X	X		X	X		X		X
Follow all signs/boundaries					X		X					X	X		X	
List of no dog areas/ on leash areas/ circumstances	X				X					X			X	X	X	
No dogs in bodies of water (except when in OLA)	X			X									X	X		
Children (of various ages) must be with adult/ watched	X	X					X		X	X	X					X
Human food restricted/prohibited/at own risk	X	X					X		X	X	X					
Maximum # of dogs per person			X				X		X		X	X				

Community groups

Cities differ in how they envision the role of community groups in the siting, design, construction and maintenance of OLAs. American cities tend to partner with community groups as a matter of policy, though very few cities allow the groups to have a say in the design of the spaces. Canadian and international cities, with a few exceptions, tend to be much less volunteer/fundraising driven. Although in recent years many Canadian cities have made an effort to incorporate community group volunteers into the administration, maintenance, and even enforcement of their OLAs. The role for community interest groups is diverse from Chicago requiring significant private funding and a fully formed 10-person committee to Port Adelaide Enfield's municipally built and funded model with no volunteer elements.

Policy

Chicago's policy requires anyone wishing to get a Dog Friendly Area (DFA) needs to organize a DFA Committee of at least 5 people from like-minded volunteers. If their proposal is approved the committee must fundraise for the DFA's design and construction, then maintain (including sanitizing ground surfaces) the DFA. This system's advantages include:

- much less work for the Parks Department
- determined and organized committees are able to get a dog off leash area in a direct and collaborative way
- the Parks Department does not need to do feces maintenance inside DFA, and
- rules are largely enforced through self policing/peer pressure, though true enforcement has to come from the City.

Disadvantages stemming from this policy include:

- more work for the Alderman and citizens to get a public amenity developed.
- Resulted in a cluster of DFAs in only the north side of Chicago - greatly under serving people living on the south side of Chicago who are traditionally disadvantaged and racialized which has contributed to the understanding of dog parks as harbingers of gentrification.
- DFA designs run the gamut from extremely upscale to extremely rudimentary, causing further inequality.
- Model can produce committee members who have distinctly proprietary attitude towards DFA, making the DFA feel less like a public space and more like a private one – exclusionary atmospheres can develop.

Seattle has a very organized and dedicated advocacy body for dog off leash areas called Citizens for Off-Leash Areas (COLA). This group has developed into a not-for-profit that provides fundraising, new amenities, and some maintenance help to the City's Parks Department at the City's OLAs. It is mainly an advocacy group, but also creates advantages for Seattle Parks and Recreation by educating users about City requirements and dog safety.

Downsides to this policy stem from concerns regarding the erosion of the funding and mandate for the public realm resulting in less reliable services from bodies not accountable to elected officials. Seattle Parks and Recreation, for instance, seems to be receiving less funding because ostensibly the COLA non-profit does more of the maintenance work the City used to do. However, volunteers inherently have less commitment to tasks beyond what is enjoyable and fun or can be done in the times when they are off work, and do not necessarily have oversight, so services provided on a volunteer basis cannot entirely be relied upon.

In Surrey, BC, the 2012 Dog Off-Leash Master Plan recommended volunteer "self-policing" of dog parks and advocates the use of technology by volunteers and park visitors to help the City track and respond to infractions of the dog park code of conduct (Surrey, 2012: 108). This approach seems relatively extreme, and runs the risk of generating user conflicts that could devolve into physical confrontations. Not everyone from the public in Surrey has agreed to considering this enforcement valid, and therefore may cause more problems than it solves.

Calgary, Edmonton, Toronto, and other Canadian cities have lately encouraged community members to organize and educate other users so compliance with City policies can improve rather than enforcing those policies themselves. Calgary has the Off-Leash Ambassador Program, which calls for volunteers to:

- act as positive role models, promoting responsible pet ownership, positive pet interactions and safety in our off-leash parks and at community events
- answer questions about Calgary's bylaws in off-leash areas
- provide an avenue for citizens to share their concerns with City staff
- promote City services such as animal adoption and licensing

New volunteers receive an orientation and training program that includes a review of bylaws and an animal behaviour and safety session from a certified professional dog trainer. Rolling out a similar program including incentives may assist in improving participation in Toronto's Dog Owners Associations.

Design

News or information boards appear to be one of the best tools to facilitate the organization of a community around a OLA. Most cities have some form of these communication posts, and many community groups have also taken the majority of their communications online. For example the COLA in Seattle, South Loop Dog Park Action Cooperative in Chicago, and Tompkins Square Dog Run in NYC all have a significant online presence.

The volunteer group's role in some cities includes fundraising and advocating for premium amenities such as doggy water fountains or agility equipment (e.g. Chicago, Seattle). This seems to work best when the City has an open dialogue with the group (and the additional maintenance these new additions require is undertaken by the group or funded by the group). What remains unclear is whether all citizens from the cities that acquire these practices are welcome to come and use the amenities of the upgraded dog park if they wish, or whether the process of advocating for, fundraising, and maintaining the amenities causes groups to feel justified in limiting or screening access to what is still public space.

Operations and Maintenance

Ongoing maintenance is a challenge for all of the dog off-leash areas reviewed. The main challenge is the overwhelming amount of dog feces produced and the level of wear and tear that occurs to surfaces, amenities, and vegetation due to instinctive canine activities including chewing on objects, urinating (often in the same location), and scratching and digging at tree bark, plant roots, and the ground.

Policy

Vancouver's 2017 People, Parks & Dogs Strategy suggested the establishment of dog off-leash area maintenance, monitoring and evaluation guidelines. The report suggests these could inform maintenance needs and keep an electronic record of observations and reports from municipal employees in order to track information such as:

- Number and nature of by-law and etiquette infractions
- Number and severity of risk management safety issues
- Extent of wear / damage to turf, planting, natural areas, and amenities
- Number and nature of interactions with wildlife
- Number and nature of injuries to animals and people
- Number and nature of noise complaints
- Extent of uncollected dog waste
- General observations about user patterns

Identified site trends may call for changes to help to improve operations and maintenance protocols such as changes to bin size, site redesign, or education initiatives.

Design

Maintenance clearly interfaces directly with design in many ways. Like all landscape spaces, maintenance is a huge factor in the success or failure of a design for its purpose. The cost and required intensity of labour are significant influences on all municipalities' decisions about OLA design elements, and the choices regarding vegetation/shade, ground surfaces, infrastructure, electrical and amenities offered are directly linked to cost of maintenance. In cities that have implemented, for instance, K9 turf for some of their OLAs (Philadelphia, Chicago and NYC), one commonality is that their policies largely require that the community group be the maintenance body for the surface and the funder of any upgrades to the OLA.

Off-Leash Area Size

Average size for single-use Off Leash Areas in the cities studied ranged from 0.1 ha to 5.83 ha, with the median average being around 0.6 ha, and generally the trend has shown that the lower the density of the city, the larger the area of the average dog park size is. It is less possible to accurately analyze the sizing trend with the multiple-use areas because these were much less clearly marked and also tended to have time of day or time of year restrictions, making their comparison less accurate.

Policy

Most cities surveyed have a minimum area policy that they had broken with at least one OLA's approval, though for several of the cities it was clear that the minimum area policy had come from trial and error and could even have been invented after experiencing the issues with their smallest OLAs. The smallest mandated minimum area was 0.04 ha (0.1 acre). Average single use OLA areas can be seen in Table 4-1.

Design

According the American Kennel Club, the smallest a dog park should be is 0.4 ha (1 acre) while the Government of South Australia's Dog and Cat Management Board says only that larger parks are generally better. In all, 0.4 ha seems to be the standard minimum size in most researched master plans. However, very few of the cities with the population size and densities comparable to Toronto's have an average single-purpose OLA size close to 0.4 ha, although Toronto comes the closest. The cities with much better single-purpose OLA average sizes, were roughly a third of the density of Toronto, as illustrated in Table 4-1.

Generally, standard thinking is that the larger the OLA, the less chance for conflict between dogs, wear and tear on the surface material, and more encouragement for owners to walk and stay in contact with their dog. However, the challenge is increased maintenance costs and need for more parking to support regional use as opposed to local neighbourhood use.

Amenities

The amenities provided in dog off-leash areas are relatively consistent across most of the jurisdictions and parks reviewed. The primary amenities identified for most dog parks include:

- Fencing and gates (for fenced OLAs)
- Surfacing
- Signage
- Waste disposal

To a lesser extent, the following amenities were considered, and in some instances optional depending on the size and type of park:

- Parking
- Shade and wind protection
- Seating
- Drinking water
- Lighting
- Small dog areas

Fencing

As noted previously, the extent of fencing around OLAs varies from no fencing, to partial fencing and complete enclosure of a space specifically for dogs. A range of fence types are promoted with black vinyl chain link being the most reference fence material. Recommended heights vary from a minimum of 1.2 metres (Edmonton, Denver, Seattle, Hamilton, Guelph), to 1.5 metres (Winnipeg) up to 1.7 to 1.8 metres (Australia).

The requirement for double gates appears to be standard across most jurisdictions. However, the idea of multiple entrance points to help reduce congestion is less common with most of the dog parks reviewed (over 80% having just one entrance). In large urban centres at least a few dog parks typically have more than one entrance, but it is not appear to be standard practice. Parks built in the last few years often have more than one entrance suggesting this practice might change over time.

Surfacing

There is a direct link between surfacing type, drainage, frequency of use and maintenance. Grass and dirt appears to be the preferred choice with gravel and crushed granite common for smaller, more intense spaces. Artificial/ K9 turf is used on a few more smaller urban off-leash areas in Calgary, Philadelphia, Chicago and Winnipeg, but generally an uncommon surfacing

choice. Overall there is no consensus on best practices for surfacing with a wide range of types used depending on site specific conditions.

Signage

Signage is a standard amenity across all off-leash areas to provide information related to code of conduct/regulatory information, time restrictions, park etiquette, and educational information that is clear, concise and consistent. While many of the off-leash areas researched indicate the need for signage to be visible at entrances, as noted earlier signs need to be set back from entrances and/or off to the side of the pathway to avoid creating congestion. Providing signs at multiple locations will also help to avoid congestion and convey information to park users.

Waste Disposal

Waste bins to deposit dog feces is a standard amenity across all off-leash areas. While the provision of bags varies.

Some jurisdictions such as Calgary and Edmonton provide large in ground waste bins to help reduce collection frequency.

West Vancouver has dog waste only bins which are a distinctive red colour to avoid dog waste going into regular garbage receptacles. Guelph also appear to have efforts to avoid disposal of dog waste as part of regular garbage. While other jurisdictions have provided smaller bins to collect dog waste simply due to the weight of dog waste.

In Toronto, the “No Poo in the Blue” campaign coincided with the piloting of green bins in the City’s off-leash areas. It promoted the proper disposal of dog waste in the green bin and if necessary the black (garbage) bin, but never the blue (recycling) bin.

Parking

For some municipalities such as Calgary, Hamilton and Halifax, the availability or decision to provide parking is an important consideration in determining the location, size and features of a OLA since a neighbourhood based OLA will see a lot of foot traffic, while a park that is going to draw from a wider area/region will need to have parking. Halifax goes one step further by indicating that OLAs are not appropriate at the neighbourhood scale with the lack of parking being one of the reasons.

In some municipalities, on street parking is deemed appropriate for smaller OLAs. While for others, the mention of parking is only in the context of

accessibility and the need to provide an accessible and direct link between accessible parking stalls and the OLA.

Shade and Wind Protection

From the literature reviewed, providing shade and protection from the wind is not discussed. If raised, it is only mentioned that it should be provided although no further details are provided. However, many of the off-leash areas reviewed do have trees which provide shade. But there is no mention of how trees should be protected from dogs. Surrey and Seattle both mention that protecting trees from the impacts of dogs is a challenge, while Seattle indicates that new off-leash areas should not have significant vegetation or large trees. A few municipalities (Calgary, Edmonton, Denver and Chicago) mention structures as a potential approach for providing shade.

Seating

Seating appears to be a standard amenity for all of the off-leash areas reviewed. However, only the literature reviewed from South Australia provides details on how seating should be used. This includes keeping seating at a minimum, away from entry/exit points. Picnic tables are also discouraged as they can encourage food in the park.

Water

Providing access to water is not a standard item across all off-leash areas. While drinking fountains for dogs and humans are more typical, waterplay is less common. While some municipalities do note the value (Winnipeg and Edmonton), it is often not a City funded amenity and therefore needs external fundraising for it to be provided. Irrigation as a tool to flush feces is not explicitly discussed for any of the reviewed Cities.

Lighting

There is very little information available regarding lighting in dog parks. Many of the off-leash areas reviewed have lighting and are used after dusk. But information on approaches to lighting parks was not available.

Small Dog Areas

While there appears to be agreement that Small Dog Areas are important features for off-leash areas, only some municipalities endorse small dog areas with even fewer providing them. Off-leash strategies for Vancouver, Edmonton, Winnipeg and Surrey recommend small dog areas but only provide a few in each City. In Seattle 4 of their 14 OLAs have small dog/shy dog spaces. In New York and Philadelphia there are small dog areas in 4 of 87 OLAs and 2 out of 8 OLAs respectively.

Recommendations



Overview

This Study looked at ways to improve the design, operations, and maintenance and administration of existing off-leash areas. In order to provide a successful off-leash area, the overall goal for the design, operation and maintenance needed to be determined for each site individually.

All 70+ OLAs pose their own opportunities and challenges. However, a variety of design elements have proven successful through literature review and public and stakeholder input. Some of these elements have been incorporated into the proposed recommendations and will need to be tailored and applied for each individual site.

With each design element comes different maintenance and operation requirements, and therefore the consideration of design, operations and maintenance are interconnected. Throughout this study, the project team worked to understand the needs of the City, dogs, dog owners and the general public to ensure the recommendations for the existing OLAs satisfies the needs of the users while establishing a sustainable operation and maintenance program that is functional and implementable.

It was determined with support from the internal and external stakeholder groups that 10 case study sites would be chosen to best reflect the various elements found within the City's existing off-leash areas. The case study sites helped form the design, operations and maintenance, and administrative recommendations that have the ability to be applied to the remaining off-leash areas. The application of the following recommendations are provided in the next section of this report as well as in Appendix B.



Shade



Surfacing & Drainage



Fencing & Entrances



Amenities



Lighting



Water

Design

The design recommendations stem from three main characteristics: Environmentally Significant Areas (ESAs), size and usage patterns.

ESAs are the most important consideration when implementing design recommendations. As mentioned previously in this report, ESAs are important systems within the City that must be protected. Ensuring the proper measures are in place prior to implementing design changes for existing OLAs within or adjacent to ESAs is imperative to the sensitive environment.

Based on research of best practices and stakeholder input, many of the recommendations developed for OLAs in Toronto depend on if the area is “small”, “medium” or “large”, and whether the area is “low”, “medium” or “high” use.

For the purposes of this study and based on the range of sizes of the City’s existing OLAs small, medium and large is defined as follows:

Extra Small: Under 1,000 Sq. metres

Small: 1,000 to 2,000 Sq. metres

Medium: 2,000 to 5,000 Sq. metres

Large: 5,000 to 10,000 Sq. metres

Extra Large: Larger than 10,000 Sq. metres

Unfortunately, as of yet, there is no consensus on how to quantify level of use in terms of low, medium or high. Therefore, consideration of level of use will need to be evaluated on a case by case basis. As with all of the recommendations, community consultation needs to be undertaken prior to implementing changes as the needs and interests of each community will vary.

The proposed design recommendations are divided into six categories:

1. Shade
2. Surfacing & Drainage
3. Fencing & Entrances
4. Amenities
5. Lighting
6. Water

Figure 5-1: Iconography



Shade

The shade recommendations strive to provide shade in OLAs (for both dogs and humans) by way of trees and/or shade structures. A number of considerations inform the shade recommendations including: achieving a minimum shade coverage, environmental context, tree health/ protection, and accessibility. Shade recommendations will require further review and approval of Urban Forestry.

An Environmental Impact Assessment will be required on any OLA within or adjacent to forested or natural areas including those areas that fall within Municipal Code 658 (Ravine and Natural Features).

- D1.1 Aim to achieve 20% shade coverage within OLA**
- D1.2 Plant fenced trees within OLA**
- D1.3 Raised planting area for new trees within the OLA**
- D1.4 Install shade structure**

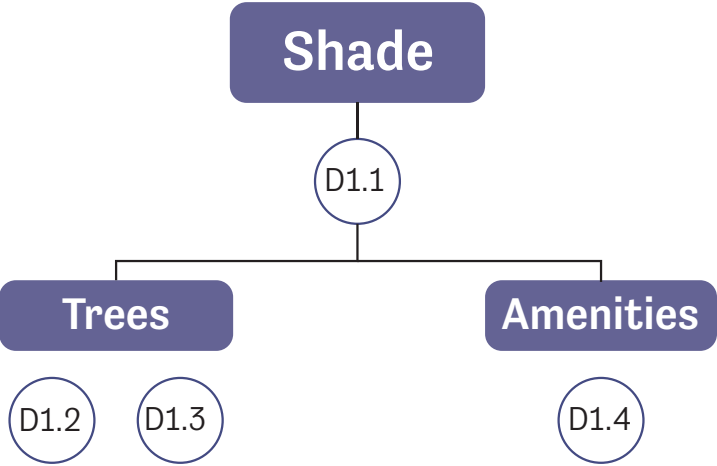


Figure 5-2: Shade Organization Diagram

D1.1 Aim to achieve 20% shade coverage within OLA

Ensuring a minimum 20% shade coverage within off-leash areas should be implemented regardless of their size and usage. Shaded areas provide relief for both dogs and their owners in the summer months. Shaded areas also reduce the heat of the surfacing used within the park. Wherever possible, trees should be planted around the outside perimeter of the off-leash area to provide shade within the OLA.

D1.2 Plant fenced trees within OLA

Where new trees are proposed, each tree or grove should be protected with fencing 5 to 6 metres from the trunk to protect the tree and its future growing space.

Other key considerations include:

- Any proposed or fencing of existing trees must be reviewed and approved by Urban Forestry
- Use of kennel grade welded steel wire mesh
- Bottom of fence/welded wire mesh to be installed at or below grade to prevent dogs from digging/removing surfacing and accessing the enclosed area
- Install with gator bags for minimum 2 years
- Install river-rocks/gravel around root flare to improve drainage
- Planting groundcover/shrubs to limit basal damage caused by urine
- Provide a gate for maintenance access
- Fencing requirements and placement will need to be reviewed yearly and may be adjusted periodically to accommodate tree growth and trunk diameter

D1.3 Raised planting area for new trees within OLA

In certain instances, where fencing is not feasible, a raised planter may provide the conditions needed to support trees in OLAs. A raised planting area (min. 0.9 to 1.2 m) would deter dogs from urinating at the base of the tree and would protect the tree from basal damage and root compaction.

D1.4 Install shade structure

Where tree planting is not feasible and budget is available, a shade structure should be installed to help achieve the 20% shade target. The shade structure would be open on all four sides to comply with Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) standards. Open sided shade structures are also a safe and effective solution to reduce potential dog crowding.

Shade structure should be located on the accessible pathway but away from entrances to prevent congestion of dogs and owners at OLA entrances/exits.



Surfacing & Drainage

The surfacing and drainage recommendations strive to address issues regarding health, safety, and sustainability. They reflect the different types of surfacing materials the City can install in an OLA, all of which vary in terms of: dog and human comfort, environmental impacts, accessibility, permeability, and cost (including cost of design, construction, and maintenance). To simplify the surfacing options, a matrix has been provided on the following page. There are eight Surfacing and Drainage recommendations:

- D2.1 Areas that do not currently achieve positive drainage are to be regraded to encourage positive drainage**
- D2.2 Install multiple surfacing types**
- D2.3 Install 300 mm min. wood chips**
- D2.4 Install 300 mm min. Engineered Wood Fibre (EWF)**
- D2.5 Install 300 mm min. of crushed granite**
- D2.6 Install synthetic turf**
- D2.7 Install 200 mm min. gravel**
- D2.8 Install grass seed mix (fescue mix)**

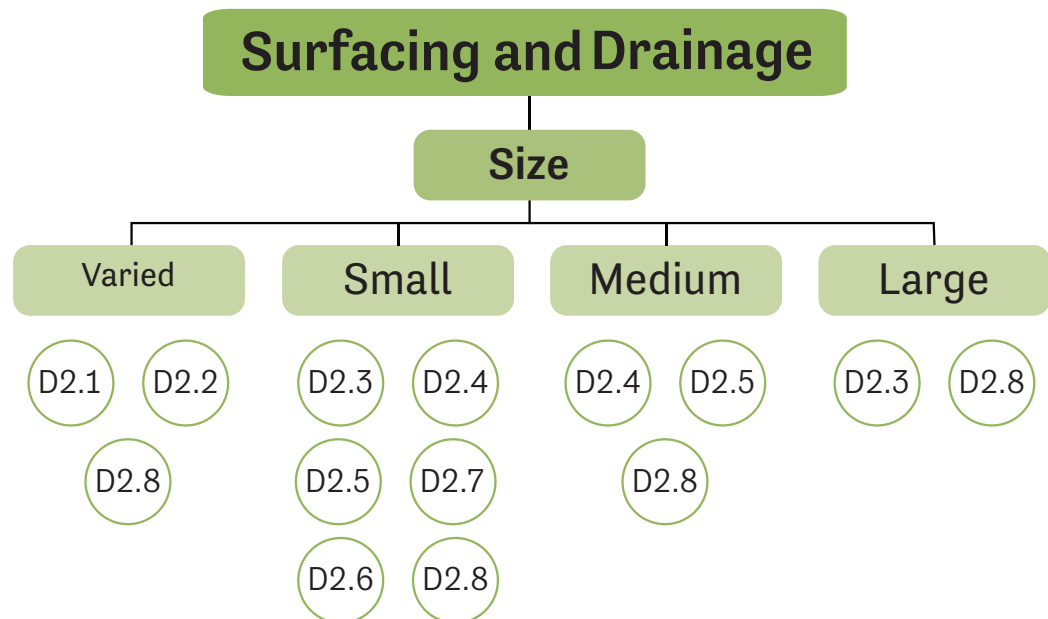


Figure 5-3: Surfacing and Drainage Organization Diagram

Recommendations

The Surfacing & Drainage recommendations identify when and where the six types of surfacing could apply, these include:

- wood chips
- engineered wood fibre (EWF)
- crushed granite
- synthetic turf
- gravel
- grass mix that includes native fescue.

In some OLAs, multiple surfacing approaches might apply.

A number of considerations inform which surfacing type is recommended for each type of OLA. This information is summarized in the matrix on the facing page. The two primary considerations are the size of the OLA and the intensity of use. Other factors influencing these recommendations include:

Topography

Given that not all OLAs have positive drainage, topography influences which kind of surfacing might be best applied.

Proximity to an Environmentally Significant Area (ESA).

Where an existing OLA is in or adjacent to an Environmentally Significant Areas (ESA), environmental guidelines, policies, and protections inform the recommended surfacing.

Presence of potable water line

Some surfacing types require access to a water line for maintenance. The presence or absence of a potable water line influences which type would apply.

Cost

There is a wide range in the cost to install various types of surfacing. This includes not only the cost of the surfacing, but associated costs as well such as site preparation work and other infrastructure (ie. drainage and irrigation).

Maintenance

The level and frequency of maintenance needs to be considered. Some materials require regular attention to keep them performing properly.

DOLA Size	Slope	Low Use	Medium Use	High Use
Extra Small OLA (under 1,000 sq m)	Less Than 2% Slope	Multi surfacing: fescue mix with wood chips for pooling	Gravel	With water line: Artificial Turf With no water: Gravel
	Greater than 2% Slope	Multi-surfacing: wood-chips in heavy use areas and fescue mix in low use areas	Wood chips/EWF	With water line: Artificial Turf With no water: Gravel
Small OLA (1,000 sq m - 2,000 sq m)	Less Than 2% Slope	Multi surfacing: fescue mix with wood chips for pooling	Wood chips/ EWF	With water line: Granite With no water: Multi-surfacing: gravel with wood chips/EWF
	Greater than 2% Slope	Fescue mix	Multi surfacing: wood chips in flatter area, fescue mix in sloped areas	Wood chips/EWF
Medium OLA (2,000 to 5,000 sq m)	Less Than 2% Slope	Multi-surfacing: fescue mix with wood chips for pooling	Multi surfacing: wood chips in flatter area, fescue mix in sloped areas	With water line: Crushed granite With no water line: Multi-surfacing: gravel with wood chips/EWF
	Greater than 2% Slope	Fescue Mix	Multi-surfacing: wood chips in heavy use areas and fescue mix in low use areas	Wood chips/EWF
Large OLA (over 5,000 sq m)	Less Than 2% Slope	Multi surfacing: fescue mix with wood chips for pooling	Multi surfacing: wood chips in flatter area, fescue mix in sloped areas	Multi surfacing: wood chips in flatter area, fescue mix in sloped areas
	Greater than 2% Slope	Fescue Mix	Fescue Mix	Multi-surfacing: wood chips in heavy use areas and fescue mix in low use areas

Table 5-1: OLA Surfacing Recommendations based on size

Accessibility

Some materials are better than others from an accessibility perspective. Harder, more compact surfaces such as crushed granite and synthetic turf are more accessible as compared to gravel. Engineered wood fibre is considered accessible, but is less accessible than gravel.

Permeability/Drainage

While stone provides excellent drainage, wood chips and engineered wood fibre is less permeable and can hold water. This is particularly problematic in locations that are not well drained or are in the shade.

Dog Comfort

Many dog owners report that some stone/granular materials commonly used in OLAs are hard on their dogs paws or can even cause injury.

Human Comfort

The surface can impact dog owner comfort as well. This includes ease of walking on the surface. Loose granular can be difficult to walk on for some, while the surface temperature can raise significantly with artificial turf and crushed stone surfaces.

Based on the above considerations, eight recommendations are provided regarding surfacing and drainage in OLAs.

D2.1 Areas that do not currently achieve positive drainage are to be regraded to encourage positive drainage

Often times when off-leash areas were created, no grading work was done prior to the fence being installed; therefore, many sites suffer from poor drainage and pooling water. Introducing positive drainage will help ensure water leaves the site effectively, reduce impacts of pooling and ice build up. Where it is not possible to regrade an OLA (for example due to tree protection zones), problematic areas should be targeted to remove standing water/wet areas. Using sub grade infrastructure may also be considered in special circumstances.

D2.2 Install multiple surfacing types

Certain surfacing materials are recommended depending on their size, usage and topography. Within large off leash areas, different types of surfacing should be considered to address a variety of conditions. The larger the OLA, the more spread-out use may be, and therefore less foot/paw traffic is being borne by any particular area. The introduction of multiple surfacing would ensure the right material is being used in the appropriate area of the OLA, and that users have options for their dogs.

D2.3 Install 300 mm min. wood chips

Wood chips can be a low cost option for off-leash areas. However they are not wheelchair accessible, can vary greatly in size and quality, and degrade overtime. In order for wood chips to be a successful surfacing option, the material needs to be carefully selected and top-ups are typically required on a bi-annual basis. They must be used in areas with adequate drainage and are most successful in locations with sun to prevent being perpetually wet. Wood chips are suitable for small and medium sized high use OLAs with a medium slope (approximately 2-5%). Wood chips are to be installed with no filter fabric to avoid the potential for dogs to dig it up.

D2.4 Install 300 mm min. Engineered Wood Fibre (EWF)

Engineered wood fibre (EWF) is different than standard wood chips. EWF is made from 100% virgin wood and free of bark, leaves and any other materials. EWF is often used as a safety surface for playgrounds, and meets accessibility standards. EWF is much more expensive and has a shorter lifespan than traditional wood chips. Where accessibility is a concern and the budget is available for the installation and maintenance, the recommendation is to install EWF. Similarly to wood chips, no filter fabric is to be used.

D2.5 Install 300 mm min. of crushed granite

Crushed granite is similar to gravel, however it is very fine and much more stable. Crushed granite is suitable for high use OLAs, is wheelchair accessible and provides proper drainage. Crushed granite is only recommended where there is an existing water line in order to provide irrigation. Irrigation will be scheduled throughout the day to reduce dust and rinse urine. In addition to irrigation, a vegetative buffer should be provided to help reduce migrating dust.

D2.6 Install synthetic turf

Synthetic turf used in an off-leash area would be antimicrobial and non-toxic, and would provide dogs and their owners with proper drainage, wheelchair accessibility and reduce the number of holes and digging. Due to the high cost and weekly rinsing, synthetic turf is only proposed within smaller sites of high use with poor drainage.

D2.7 Install 200 mm minimum gravel

Currently, gravel is used in 16 of the City's 72 off-leash areas and is the most disliked surfacing option by OLA users. Gravel is to be installed with coverage less than 750 sq m since anything larger will allow more active dogs to exercise, increasing the risk of harm to dogs' paws. Gravel will also be used:

1. In OLAs with poor drainage without the ability to regrade the surface and where crushed granite is not an option (e.g. no existing water line)
2. Surrounding multi-tier drinking fountains for mud and compaction prevention

D2.8 Install grass seed mix (fescue mix)

Grass is the most preferred surfacing option by OLA users in Toronto. However in most instances the current grass mix used is not hardy enough to sustain the level of use within dog parks. Therefore, a fescue seed mix blend of native grasses is proposed. This mix will provide a greater resiliency to wear and drought, and is salt-tolerant to counter the effects of dog urine. This seed mix is proposed in low use and/or high sloped OLAs. When used in combination with other surfacing materials, seed mix may be used in additional situations.



Fences & Entrances

The fencing and entrances recommendations strive to address issues regarding minimum height, style, access, human and dog safety/comfort, and ensuring state of good repair. The primary consideration that informs the recommendations is whether or not the existing OLA is fenced. The type of environment (i.e. urban and suburban or natural) also informs the type of fencing recommended.

- D3.1 Replace all existing latches with upgraded latch**
- D3.2 Replace all single gate systems with double gate system**
- D3.3 Install steel fencing**
- D3.4 Install post and paddle fencing (with welded wire mesh)**
- D3.5 Install vegetative boundary/buffer**
- D3.6 Install concrete pad at all access points**
- D3.7 Formalize main access point**
- D3.8 Install additional entry/exit(s) to ensure more than one access point**

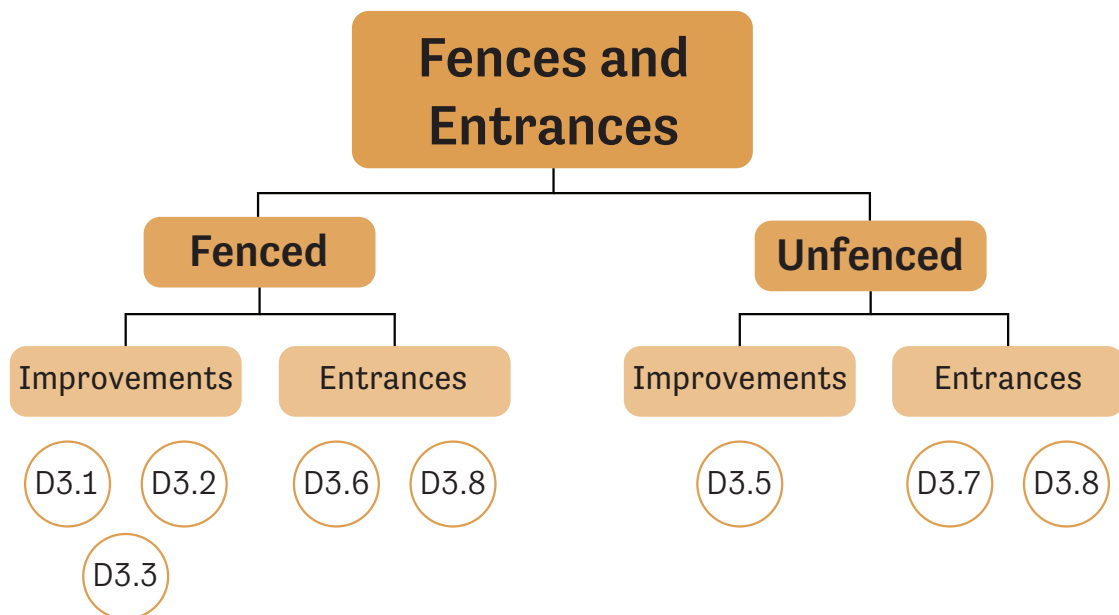


Figure 5-4: Fences and Entrances Organization Diagram

D3.1 Replace all existing latches with upgraded latch

The existing gate latch system in most OLAs require constant repairs due to heavy use and ice damage. A new, upgraded latch on OLA gates will reduce the amount of maintenance required and provide latches that operate effectively in all seasons. Spring latches are not recommended due to the potential for injury to dogs who might lag behind owners entering the park, or get stuck in a bottle neck entering or existing.



Figure 5-5: Recommended Gate Latch

D3.2 Replace all single gate systems with double gate system

Single gates within OLAs are challenging for dog owners since as soon as a gate is opened, dogs in the OLA are able to leave the fenced area. Double gated entrances and exits will help control barrier reactivity¹ and allow dogs time to become calm or gain confidence before entering parks.

1 Barrier reactivity is when a dog barks, growls, or rushes forward in response to a stimulus when they are behind a barrier.

D3.3 Install steel fencing

Steel fencing is to be installed in urban environments at a minimum 1.5 metres/5 feet high. This height provides a barrier that most dogs will not jump over and is not imposing to dog owners.

D3.4 Install post and paddle fencing (with welded wire mesh)

Post and paddle fencing with welded wire mesh is to be installed in natural environments at a minimum 5 feet high. The welded wire mesh ensures that the smaller dogs are unable to escape.

D3.5 Install vegetative boundary/buffer

Where fencing does not exist, installation of planted vegetative boundaries/buffers will help better demarcate the off-leash zone and create a sense of boundary for dogs within the OLA.

Whenever possible vegetation should also be used and limit dog sight lines to adjacent park amenities (sports fields, playgrounds, splash pads, etc.) which might encourage dogs to leave the OLA. However the selection and placement of vegetation needs to carefully consider the principles of CPTED by providing park users with an unobstructed view in to and out of the off-leash area.

D3.6 Install concrete pad at all access points

Double gated entrances should have a concrete pad to ensure a safe and accessible entrance. Drainage at these locations needs to be carefully considered to avoid ponding/pooling of water on the adjacent soft surfaces which may lead to mud or ice.

D3.7 Formalize main access point

Some off-leash areas in Toronto are unfenced. Where fencing and gates do not exist, main access points are to have proper signage and waste bins to ensure park users are aware that they are entering an off-leash area. The placement of signage and waste bins needs to be carefully designed to avoid creating congestion at the entrance which might lead to conflicts between dogs.

D3.8 Install additional entry/exit(s) to ensure more than one access point

When new dogs are entering the off-leash area, other dogs will often crowd the gate. Providing multiple entry/exit points will reduce congestion and reactivity/aggression around access point. All off-leash areas are to have at least two entries/exits. It is also important to provide multiple exits from a safety standpoint as per Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles.



Figure 5-6: Example of CPTED



Amenities

The amenities recommendations strive to improve accessibility and the experience for both dogs and their owners. These recommendations include park amenities including: agility, small/shy dog area, pathways, and furnishings. Some factors to consider prior to implementation may include: environmental impacts, policies, accessibility, dog comfort, cost, safety and demand.

- D4.1 Install dog agility equipment**
- D4.2 Redefine existing OLA boundary to accommodate Small Dog Area**
- D4.3 Provide accessible pathway within OLA**
- D4.4 Ensure recycling, garbage and green bins outside main entry/exit**
- D4.5 Provide seating**
- D4.6 Install City signage within OLA and prior to entry**
- D4.7 Provide community boards before main entry/exit**
- D4.8 Install educational and interpretive panels at main entry/exit**

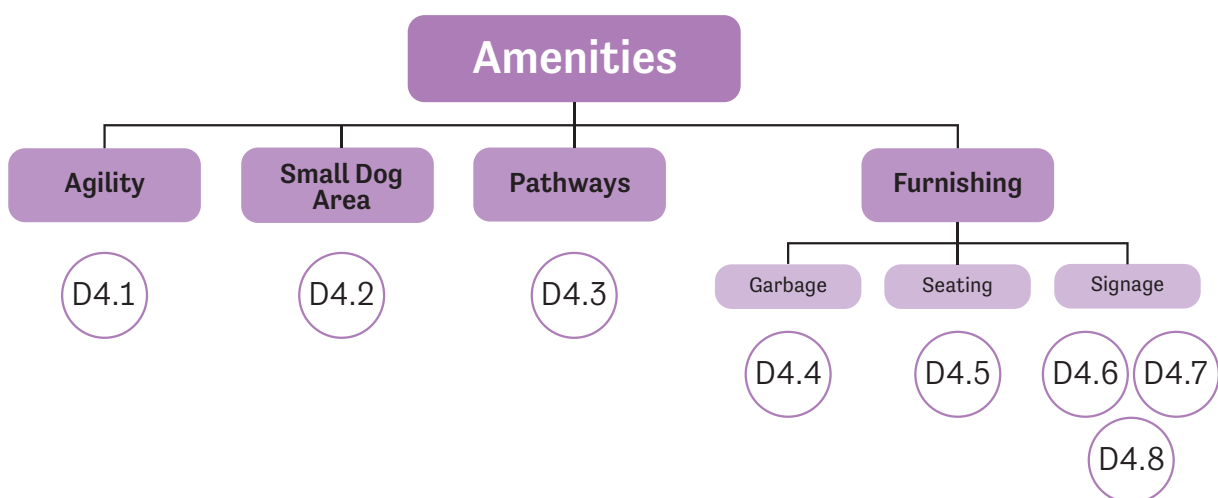


Figure 5-7: Amenities Organization Diagram

D4.1 Install dog agility equipment

The addition of enrichment such as agility equipment and pathways for walking help manage potential problem behavior by providing stimulation and promoting exercise beyond over aroused dog play. However, agility equipment may not be appropriate for all OLAs given the space it requires, cost/trade off for other OLA features (limited budget) and community interest. Therefore, whether agility equipment is installed should be based on community feedback during the design process.

It should be noted that dog sport and agility exercises can be high impact and require a certain amount of focus and foundations training and physical conditioning prior to “graduating” to a full agility course. In general, puppies and growing dogs should be introduced to high impact exercises only when physically mature and adequately trained in sports foundations to avoid injury. Agility equipment should be installed with this in mind and should be limited to beginner type or low impact obstacles.

Therefore, only low impact dog agility equipment should be considered where there is community desire, budget, space, and the level of use is anticipated to be high.

D4.2 Redefine existing OLA boundary to accommodate Small Dog Area

Small dog areas (SDA) with clearly defined weight restrictions are an important aspect to OLAs to prevent injury to small dogs due to boisterous play, bullying behavior or predatory behavior. Where possible, separate entrances/exits that do not require small dogs to cross through large dog play areas are ideal. If there is demand from users, OLAs should be partitioned if they are larger than 2,000 sq m into a small dog areas and an all dog areas. The small dog area must be a minimum of 600 sq meters or 30% of the total OLA size, whichever is larger.

Complimentary with the idea of a providing SDAs, the idea of allowing shy or older dogs access to Small Dog Areas is increasing. While there are different opinions on this approach given the challenges of determining/evaluating whether a dog is “shy” or intimidated by the main (large) dog area, allowing shy and older dogs access to Small Dog Areas is worth investigating further through a pilot project.

D4.3 Provide accessible pathway within OLA

To make OLAs as accessible as possible, it is important to install pathways that connect all entry points and key destinations between (seating, shade, etc). Depending on the size of the off-leash area, a looping pathway within the area, or a direct linear pathway will dictate the length of pathway proposed. All pathways should be AODA compliant.

D4.4 Ensure recycling, garbage and green bins outside main entry/exit

Recycling, garbage and green bins are not placed within the OLAs to avoid conflicts between waste collection personnel and dogs inside the off-leash area. It is recommended that providing a sufficient number of collection bins just outside all the main access points will encourage OLA users to use the bins.

D4.5 Provide seating

While seating is an important feature it should be noted that seating encourages lack of owner interaction with their dogs. However, users often spend 30 minutes at the off-leash area, and it is important to provide adequate seating. All proposed seating shall:

- be positioned along the paved pathway /accessible route
- be on concrete pads with space for a wheelchair or scooter on one side
- meet the City's Accessibility Design Guidelines in regards to percentage of accessible benches
- meet the City's Accessibility Design Guidelines in regards to bench design and placement
- be located so at least half (50%) of all benches provided, including half of all accessible benches, are in shade

D4.6 Install City signage within OLA and prior to entry

The Code of Conduct, hours of operation, OLA boundary and other relevant by-laws are to be posted prior to entry and separate from the entrance and exit area. This information should also be posted at various locations inside the OLA so users will be easily able to reference the rules.

D4.7 Provide community boards before main entry/exit

Community boards are a great communication tool between the Dog Owner Association representative, the City, and the OLA users. Dog Owner Association representative will have a key to access the boards, with the ability to post lost and found poster, local events or DOA Rep contact information (see A10). At every OLA, a community board is recommended before the main entry/exit so they are visible on route to the OLA but not in a location that will cause people and dogs to congregate at the entrance.

D4.8 Install educational and interpretive panels at main entry/exit

Educational/interpretive signage should be used to inform people about a range of topics including environmentally Significant Areas or dog behavior/dog education.

Environmentally Significant Areas (ESAs), and the negative impacts uncontrolled dogs can have on vulnerable ecosystems. Installing educational/interpretive signage about the OLA's surrounding ESAs is recommended to all access points, as well as located on pathways within the OLA.

Education of dog behaviour and inter-dog interactions are common at many off-leash areas in other municipalities. Providing similar signage at OLA entrances can help improve the user experience.



Lighting

Lighting increases safety and extends the hours when OLAs can be used in the winter. However, light pollution can negatively impact wildlife behaviour and human health in a neighbourhood. The lighting recommendations strive to address issues regarding access, safety, environmental impacts, and community concerns. They reflect the different types of lighting the City can install and the location of lighting, all of which are different in terms of dog and human comfort and safety, environmental impacts, accessibility, and cost (including cost of design, construction, and maintenance). All lighting recommendations (with the exception of user activated) include the installation of a sensor that will automatically turn on at dusk and off at dawn, and shall be dark sky compliant to reduce environmental impacts through light pollution. It should also be noted that no lighting is permitted within Ravine and Natural Feature regulated areas or environmentally significant areas.

- D5.1 Install sensor lighting at main entrance**
- D5.2 Install user activated lights at entrance(s)**
- D5.3 Install sensor solar lighting**
- D5.4 Install sensor lighting along paved pathway within OLA**
- D5.5 Replace existing lights with LED sensor lighting**

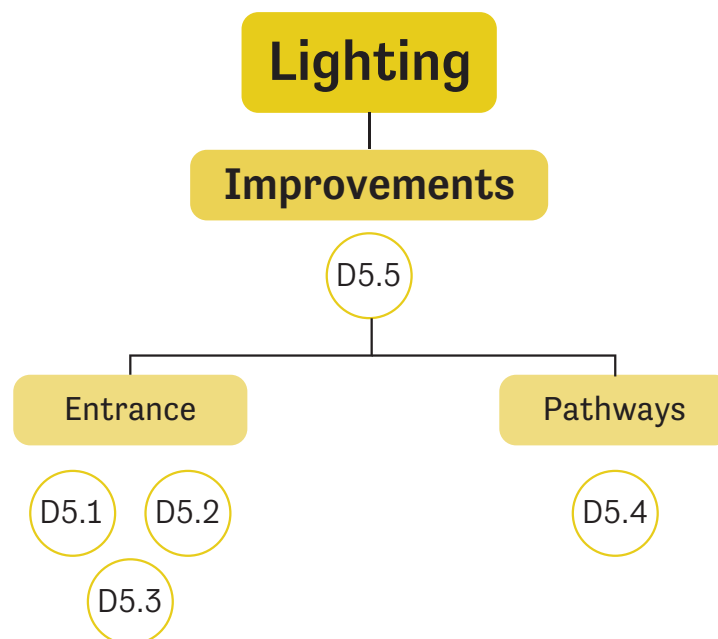


Figure 5-8: Lighting Organization Diagram

D5.1 Install sensor lighting at main entrance

Proper lighting is an important consideration for the safety within an off-leash area when the sun has set. For medium and high use off-leash areas where there is an electrical service that can be used, it is recommended that lighting is provided at all main entry/exit points.

D5.2 Install user activated lights at entrance(s)

Low-use OLAs may not need to be lit as consistently as some medium and high-use OLAs. Where there is an electrical service that can be used, it is recommended that user-activated lights be provided at the entrances/exits of all sizes of low-use OLAs and in some medium-use OLAs. User activated lights will limit the amount of time lights stay on while no one is using the OLA.

D5.3 Install sensor solar lighting at main entrance

Some off-leash areas do not have access to electrical service. Where no electrical line exists, it is recommended photocell activated solar lighting be provided at the main entrance.

D5.4 Install sensor lighting along paved pathway within OLA

Installing lighting with a photocell sensor along a paved pathway is recommended for off-leash areas that are larger in size and high use.

D5.5 Replace existing lights with LED sensor lighting

To conserve energy, all existing lighting should be upgraded to LEDs activated using a photocell sensor.



Water

The following recommendations strive to provide access to water (within or near existing OLAs) for: drinking (both dogs and humans); play for dogs; and irrigation. All the water recommendations rely on access to existing water lines and installation of gravel/concrete in 1.5 m radius from water fixture to prevent puddling and erosion. Other factors influencing the recommendations include:

- Usage of the OLA;
- Environmental impacts (water run-off, erosion, infiltration, etc.);
- Additional community consultation to review adjacent park amenities and demand; and,
- Surfacing type.

D6.1 Provide accessible multi-tier drinking fountain

D6.2 Install spray feature as part of multi-tier drinking fountain

D6.3 Install irrigation

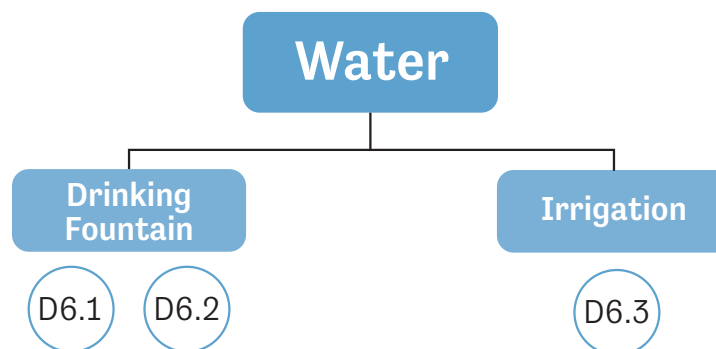


Figure 5-9: Water Organization Diagram

D6.1 Provide accessible multi-tier drinking fountain

All OLA sizes and usage levels have a need for drinking water. It is recommended that an accessible multi-tier (including wheelchair-level and dog level) drinking fountain be installed.

D6.2 Install spray feature as part of multi-tier drinking fountain

Some dogs love getting wet and may need a soak to cool down on hot summer days. Where a water line exists in a high-use OLA, a water spray fixture as part of the multi-tier drinking fountain is recommended.

D6.3 Install irrigation

Pop-up spray irrigation is only required for off-leash areas that have crushed granite or synthetic turf. It is required for these materials to rinse urine, and reduce the dust from crushed granite. Pop-up spray irrigation should not be used with woodchips or engineered wood fibre as these surfaces often retain water – especially in shaded areas – causing the surfacing to break down quicker requiring more frequent replacement.

Operations and Maintenance

The following recommendations address maintenance standards for off-leash areas, including regular inspections, surfacing material top-ups, temporary closures, and snow and ice clearing. Implementation of these recommendations will be dependent on the availability of funding.

O&M1 Set maintenance and facility upkeep standards for all OLAs

O&M2 Perform regular inspections to monitor and maintain state of good repair

O&M3 Protect and monitor vegetation health

O&M4 Implement temporary closures to support vegetative growth, when necessary

O&M5 Clear main pathway (if feasible) to OLA of ice and snow in winter months

O&M6 Work with Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division, TRCA, Hydro One, Waterfront Toronto, City Planning and other associated parties on any surrounding park development

O&M1 Set maintenance and facility upkeep standards for all OLAs

Maintenance and facility upkeep standards should be established for all off-leash areas for features such as signage, community boards, garbage collection, fencing, surfacing and seating. This includes developing a checklist for tracking inspections and maintenance requirements (daily, weekly, monthly and annually) which can record any reoccurring issues. This approach will help to standardize maintenance between districts and establish a base level of service across the City.

O&M2 Perform regular inspections to monitor and maintain state of good repair

Based on the maintenance and facility upkeep standards established under O&M1, regular inspections of OLAs is required to ensure each facility is safe and remains in a state of good repair. The frequency of these audits needs to be conducted on a similar frequency as other parks assists. Depending on the OLA and level of use this may include:

Weekly (or more frequent)

- dog waste pickup
- raking and top up of surfacing
- inspection of fencing, gate latches, drinking fountains, irrigation, lighting

Once a year

- Annual full surface top ups for crushed granite or granular

Twice a year

- Biannual full-surface top-ups for wood chips and/or engineered wood fiber

In addition surface bins should be installed at every OLA that has grass, woodchips or Engineered Wood Fibre surfacing so that owners can fill holes their dogs have dug or patch up areas where surfacing seems thin.

O&M3 Protect and monitor vegetation health

Vegetation within OLAs should be regularly inspected for health and condition of all trees and shrubs. This includes checking for damage (tree

trunks, roots and branches), condition of gator bags, and tree protection fencing. Parks staff are to communicate with Urban Forestry any and all tree related concerns including and/or opportunities to add tree planting to address shade requirements.

O&M4 Implement temporary closures to support vegetative growth, when necessary

For OLAs with grass surfacing, temporary closures should be used to allow turf to recover after intense periods or after wet periods to help prevent the OLA from becoming muddy. In larger OLAs a rotating system of closures may be employed to keep sections of the OLA open while other areas are closed to allow the turf to recover. A similar approach to managing OLAs through forest should be used to give vegetation adjacent to trails sufficient time to regenerate.

O&M5 Clear main pathway (if feasible) to OLA of ice and snow in winter months

The main pathway to an OLA should be cleared of ice and snow in winter months. Where winter maintenance is not possible and/or does not exist, pathways to OLA should have clear hazard signage so users know they can continue at their own risk. If deicing is required, only dog friendly deicing products should be used.

O&M6 Work with Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division, TRCA, Hydro One, Waterfront Toronto, City Planning and other associated parties on any surrounding park development

Improvements to OLAs needs to be coordinated with all affected agencies to ensure proper integration within its surrounding context.

Administration

The following administrative recommendations are to be applied to the current system and hope to address communications between OLA Reps, OLA Users and the City.

- A1 Implement improvements to City Website**
- A2 Create classification of OLAs that reflects the City's new Parkland Strategy park classifications (2019)**
- A3 Update signage and post Code of Conduct and by-law in every OLA**
- A4 Introduce time restrictions if none currently exist**
- A5 Create educational resources**
- A6 Promote volunteer and stewardship opportunities**
- A7 Gather accurate and current usage data**
- A8 Perform an Environmental Impact Assessment**
- A9 Make improvements to Dog Owner's Association Program**
- A10 Increase by-law enforcement**
- A11 Re-allocation of Commercial Dog Walkers Permit Fee**

A1 Implement improvements to City Website

The City's website should be improved to provide a one stop location for a full range of dog related information. This includes but is not necessarily limited to:

- Indicate how dog related issues or concern can be reported (eg. 311, Dog Owner Association Representative, etc.)
- Include roles and responsibilities of other governing bodies (Animal Services, By Law Enforcement, TRCA, Councillors, Hydro One, Solid Waste, etc.) with contact information
- List ways to license your pet, as well as why it's important
- Update list and mapping of all OLA locations with available amenities (drinking fountains, agility equipment, shade structures, etc)
- Include a key map of the OLA locations to main page
- Information for Commercial Dog Walkers - permitting fees, responsibilities, enforcement, etc.

A2 Create classification of OLAs that reflects the City's new Parkland Strategy park classifications (2019)

The City's Parkland Strategy (2019) outlines park classification system for the City's parks. A similar classification system for OLAs should be used which aligns with the parkland strategy to help establish a predicable level of service for OLAs within parks. The classifications should include:

- Parkette OLA,
- Small Park OLA,
- Medium Park OLA,
- Large Park OLA,
- City/Legacy Park OLA

A3 Update signage and post Code of Conduct and by-law in every OLA

The approach to the design and placement of signage at OLAs should be standardized across the City. While some parks have signage specific to their park, every OLA would benefit from having more user friendly signs. The signs should be graphic, highly visible and located at prominent locations to be effective in communicating information to users. This includes:

Recommendations

- At the main entrance, providing the code of conduct and by-law information in a clear and graphic format
- Providing a maps of the OLA boundary and hours of operation
- Information on the DOA representative contact information and how to report issues related to maintenance, vandalism or by-law enforcement
- Providing other education information specific to the DOLA (i.e. environmentally sensitive areas) to educate dog owners on the potential impact of their dogs and how they can help mitigate these impacts

In addition the code of conduct and by-law should be incorporated into these signs and posted at every entrance to an OLA as well as inside each OLA in a visible/effective/prominent location.

A4 Introduce time restrictions if none currently exist

Time restrictions for off-leash areas are determined on a park by park basis. Consultation with the local community should determine appropriate restrictions if none currently exist. Time restrictions are to be clearly posted at every entrance/exit to the OLA.

A5 Create educational resources

A range of educational resources should be developed and shared through a variety of means including online (website), digital (information for Dog Owner Association (DOA) Representatives) and print (information signs at OLAs, community notice boards). The information should include but not limited to:

- Importance of on-leash park use (i.e. Max campaign)
- Benefits of off-leash areas (geared towards non-dog owners)
- Dog behaviour/aggressive dogs/dog park etiquette
- Importance of watching and controlling your dog at all times
- Environmentally Significant Areas (importance, rare species, etc.)

A6 Promote volunteer and stewardship opportunities

There are a number of ways people can get involved in their local dog park or broader City wide initiatives related to dogs ownership in the City that should be promoted. This information should be posted on community notice

boards at OLAs as well as posted on the City’s website. Some examples include:

- on-leash and off-leash ambassadors
- community dog owners’ associations (DOA)
- work with OLA Dog Owners Associations (DOAs) to implement fundraising for OLA amenities and/or amenity upgrades, based on demand and DOA track-record
- Support OLA DOAs in initiating volunteer maintenance events/ crews, where demand exists

A7 Gather accurate and current usage data

There is a need for more information on current user data throughout the City’s 72 off-leash areas to gain a better understanding of the level of use. Opportunities to collect this data through a variety of means should be explored and considered in conjunction with park improvements and OLA specific improvement projects. Suggested methods include:

- Public life studies
- Counters
- Surveys

This information will especially be beneficial in providing some of the information needed to better understand the impact of user numbers as they relate to OLA maintenance and repairs, as well as need and demand for OLAs in the City.

A8 Perform an Environmental Impact Assessment

Perform an Environmental Impact Assessment on any OLA within or adjacent to any forested or natural areas including those that fall within Municipal Code 658 (Ravine and Natural Feature Protection). This assessment should be conducted as one of the first steps in the pre-design process when possible.

A9 Make improvements to Dog Owner’s Association Program

The Dog Owner’s Association Program (DOA) needs updating to help improve its effectiveness as a liaison between the City and OLA users. Key improvements to be considered in revamping the program include:

Recommendations

- Provide an introductory package with role description to all new DOA representatives
- Provide DOA an @toronto.ca email address for each OLA to make contacting representatives easier and to ensure continuity when representatives change E.g. highparkdoa@toronto.ca
- Promote on the City's OLA web page the DOA specific email as a resource for information specific to their OLA
- Provide each DOA representative access (key) to a community notice boards for post information including the DOA email address to email questions or concerns to the DOA rep
- For each OLA, improve and formalize communication between the DOA rep and park staff to report park maintenance, needed repairs and management issues which may be reported to the DOA representative by the public
- Engage/involve DOA representatives in environmental stewardship

A10 Increase by-law enforcement

Compared to other municipalities, 30 by-law officers for 1,500 parks, including the 72 OLAs is insufficient. Adding additional by-law officers needs to be explored to improve enforcement. In addition the City needs to explore funding agreements with TRCA for better enforcement of off-leash bylaws in the sites in Environmentally Significant Areas.

A11 Re-allocation of Commercial Dog Walkers Permit Fee

The Commercial Dog Walker (CDW) permit fee should be collected separately from other parks and recreation permits and the revenue should be put towards CDW parks to fund costs associated with improvements and maintenance. Online, and at CDW parks, the CDW program should be clearly defined as well as the fact that fees collected for the program are directly applied to the parks.

Case Studies



Selection Process

The selection of case study sites was undertaken in consultation with the project's stakeholders. While initially eight sites were planned, two sites were added at the request of the stakeholders. The site selection process included evaluating all the existing off-leash areas to determine ten sites that would accurately reflect the diverse range of off-leash areas found throughout the City. This included consideration of various opportunities and constraints of different sizes, contexts and character.

Once the ten case study sites were chosen, inventory and analysis were done to evaluate the area. The preliminary recommendations were applied to the case study sites in order to provide an understanding of how the recommendations would be applied.

When selecting the ten case study sites, numerous factors were reviewed in order to determine sites that best represented all 72 sites.

Surfacing

A variety of surfacing is used at the OLAs in Toronto. The chosen case studies represent each of the six (6) types of surfacing used.

1. Wood-chips/Engineered Wood Fibre
2. Crushed Granite
3. Natural Areas
4. Sand
5. Grass
6. Pea Gravel

Size

The size of off-leash areas vary from the smallest of 140 square metres, to the largest of 4.5 hectares. Design recommendations vary greatly between the various sizes. Our team divided the existing OLAs in to 4 different size categories.

1. Small
(under 1,999 sq m)
2. Medium
(between 2,000 and 4,999 sq m)
3. Large
(between 5,000 and 9,999 sq m)
4. Extra Large
(over 10,000 sq m)

District

Of the 72 OLAs in Toronto, 55% are located within Toronto & East York. Ensuring sites were selected across the entire City would highlight a variety of concerns.

1. Waterfront
2. North York
3. Toronto & East York
4. Scarborough
5. Etobicoke

Accessible Features

Through the consultation process, we learned of the concerns regarding the safety and accessibility of the existing OLAs. The case studies included sites that had accessible features to review the opportunities and constraints in the future accessible design considerations.

1. Seating
2. Drinking Station
3. Concrete Entrance
4. Pathways
5. Surfacing

Environmental Context

Design, operations and maintenance varies greatly with the number of users, neighbourhood context and population density.

1. Urban
2. Suburban
3. Environmentally Significant Areas

Commercial Dog Walkers

Commercial Dogs Walkers are currently only allowed in designated off-leash areas. By selecting sites that both allowed and do not allow access, we are able to review the effects the CDW have on OLAs.

Small Dog Areas

Small Dog Areas in Toronto are for dogs who weigh a maximum of 20lbs, with a maximum height of 12 inches at the shoulders. Many dog owners and best practices find benefits of having separate spaces for dogs of different

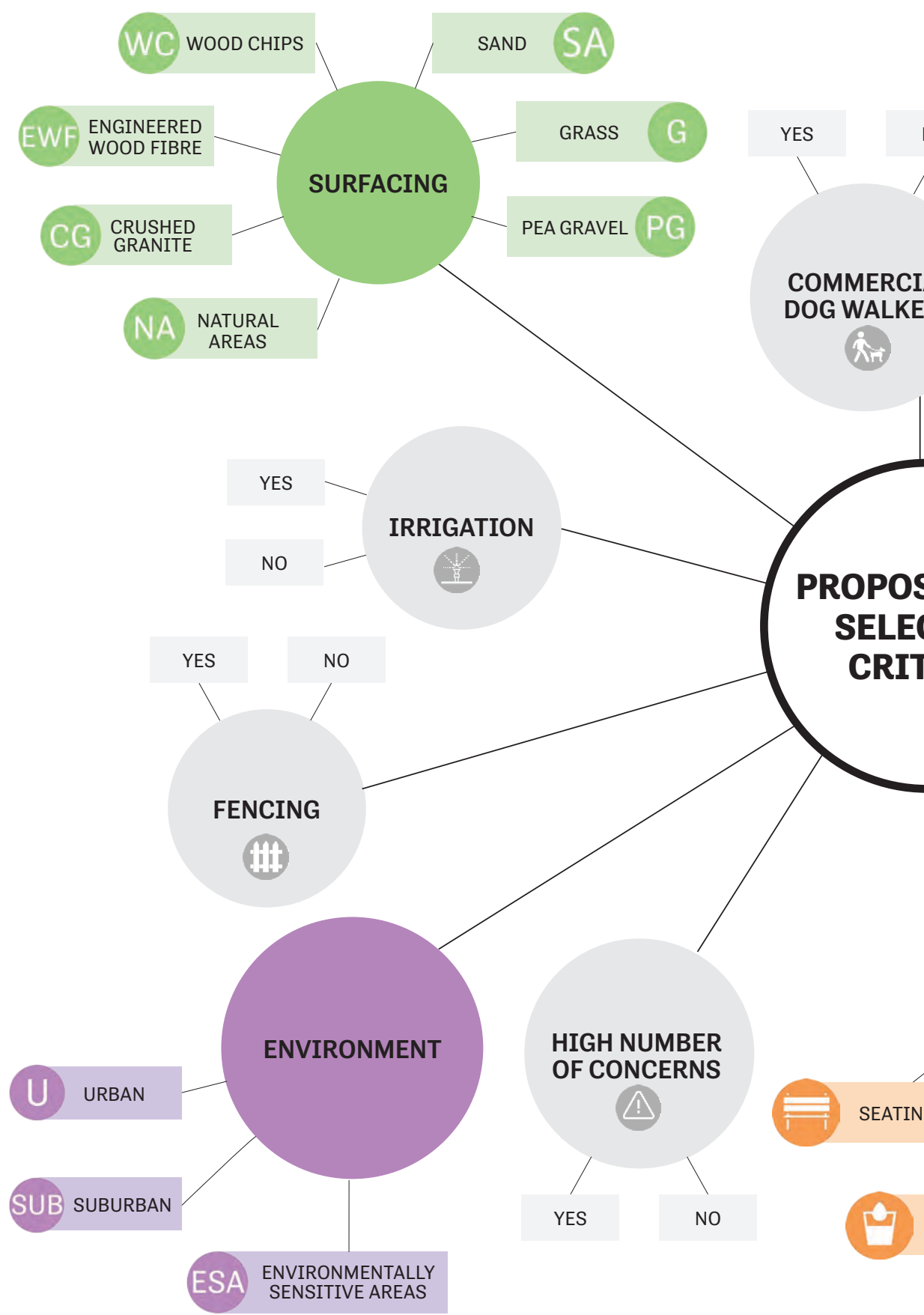
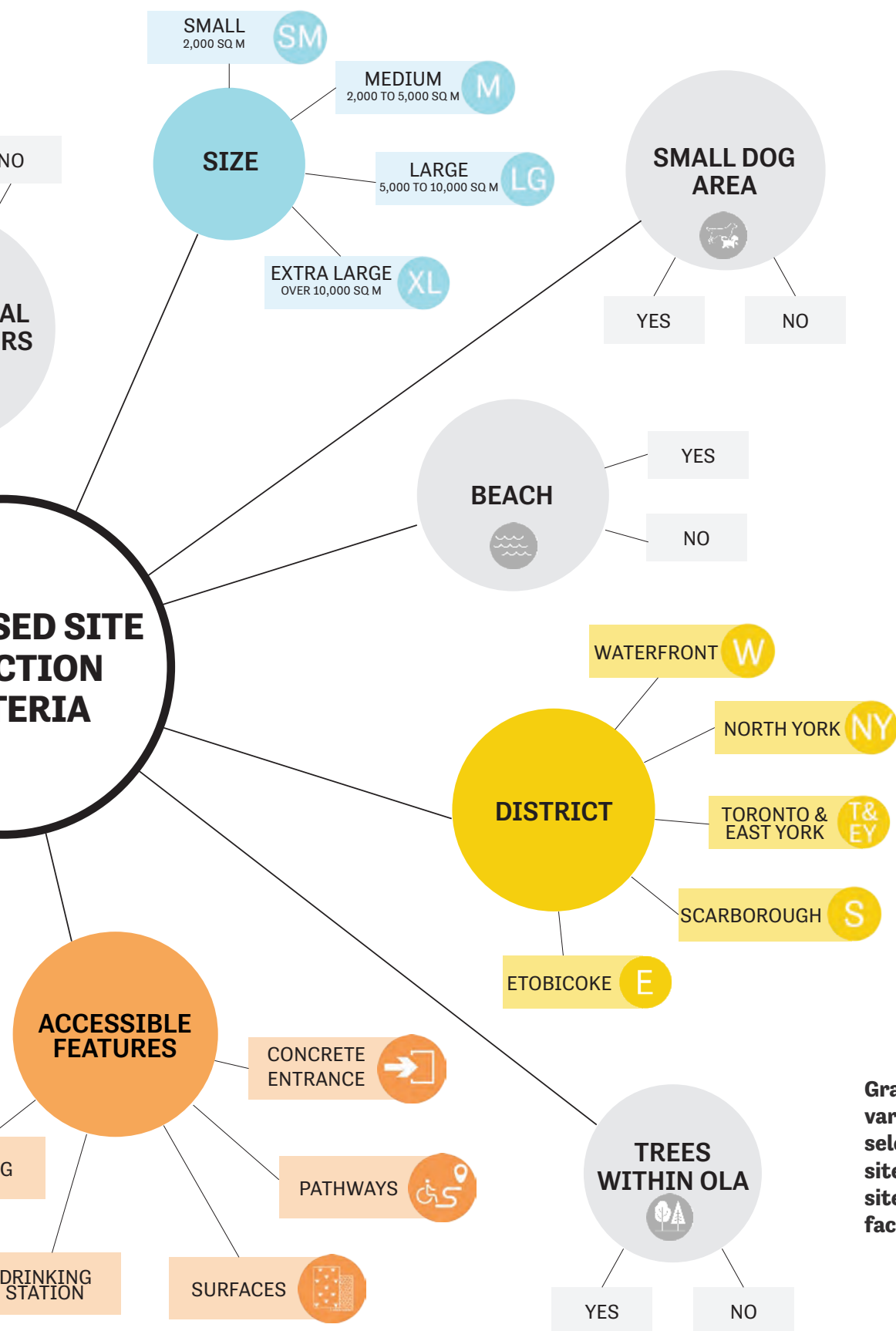


Figure 6-1: Proposed Site Selection Criteria



Graphic illustrating the various factors considered in selecting the 10 case study site to ensure at least one site includes each of these factors.

sizes. Reviewing OLAs with SDA and all-dog areas would show different satisfaction rates and would help determine the need and parameters for allocating spaces for small dogs.

Beach Access

There are a few off-leash areas in Toronto that have access to Lake Ontario, which are some of the most loved parks. By selecting a beach access site as a case study, we are able to understand the opportunities and successful features and how maintenance and design features can be applied to similar OLAs.

Trees within OLA

Trees within off-leash areas not only provide shade but are also aesthetically pleasing. Many of the off-leash areas in the city have trees, however it's important to take into consideration the tree health, as well as the amount of shade they provide.

Fencing

There are two main types of fencing used for off-leash areas: post and paddle and steel. In addition to including case study sites with both types of fencing, it's important to consider the success of off-leash areas without a fence.

Irrigation

Irrigation for off-leash areas helps to minimize dust and sanitize the surface material. Though some sites have irrigation it is not operational at all sites since pop-up irrigation heads in a granular surface can be a challenge to maintain.

Existing Concerns

Through the stakeholder interview process, a number of issues with regard to existing OLA sites were identified. The selected case study sites are to help investigate opportunities to address these concerns and seek design solutions. These issues/concerns include but are not limited to:

- Accessibility for all users
- Surfacing choice impacts dog health and enjoyment of OLAs

- Different surfaces have different installation, maintenance and budgetary requirements
- There is No “one size fits all” solution: a range of options are needed to provide all users with a safe, healthy and enjoyable OLA experience
- In addition to dogs, the human experience in OLAs needs to be considered

Sites Selected

Based on the identified selection criteria, the following table lists the ten sites with criteria and site features each one satisfies to ensure the selection of a wide cross section of OLAs by type, features and location.

	Allan Gardens	Bayview Arena Park	Beresford Park	Cherry Beach	High Park	L'Amoreaux Park	Merill Bridge Road Park	Sandy Bruce Park	Sunnybrook Park	Wychwood Car Barns Park
Surfacing										
1. Wood-chips/Engineered Wood Fibre										
2. Crushed Granite										
3. Natural Areas										
4. Sand										
5. Grass										
6. Pea Gravel										
Size										
1. Small (under 2,000 sq m)										
2. Medium (between 2,000 and 4,999 sq m)										
3. Large (between 5,000 and 9,999 sq m)										
4. Extra Large (over 10,000 sq m)										
District										
1. Waterfront										
2. North York										
3. Toronto & East York										
4. Scarborough										
5. Etobicoke										
Accessible Features										
1. Seating										
2. Drinking Station										
3. Concrete Entrance										
4. Pathways										
5. Surfacing										
Environmental Context										
1. Urban										
2. Suburban										
3. Environmentally Significant Areas										

Based on the identified selection criteria, the following table lists the ten sites with criteria and site features each one satisfies to ensure the selection of a wide cross section of OLAs by type, features and location.

	Allan Gardens	Bayview Arena Park	Beresford Park	Cherry Beach	High Park	L'Amoreaux Park	Merill Bridge Road Park	Sandy Bruce Park	Sunnybrook Park	Wychwood Car Barns Park
Commercial Dog Walkers										
Small Dog Areas										
Beach Access										
Trees within OLA										
Fencing										
1. Post and Paddle										
2. Steel										
3. Not Fenced										
Irrigation										
High Number of Existing Concerns										

Table 6-1: Site Criteria Comparison

Location of the Ten Sites

- | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Allan Gardens | 3. Beresford Park | 7. Merrill Bridge Road Park |
| 2. Bayview Arena Park | 4. Cherry Beach | 8. Sandy Bruce Park |
| | 5. High Park | 9. Sunnybrook Park |
| | 6. L'Amoreaux Park | 10. Wychwood Car Barns Park |

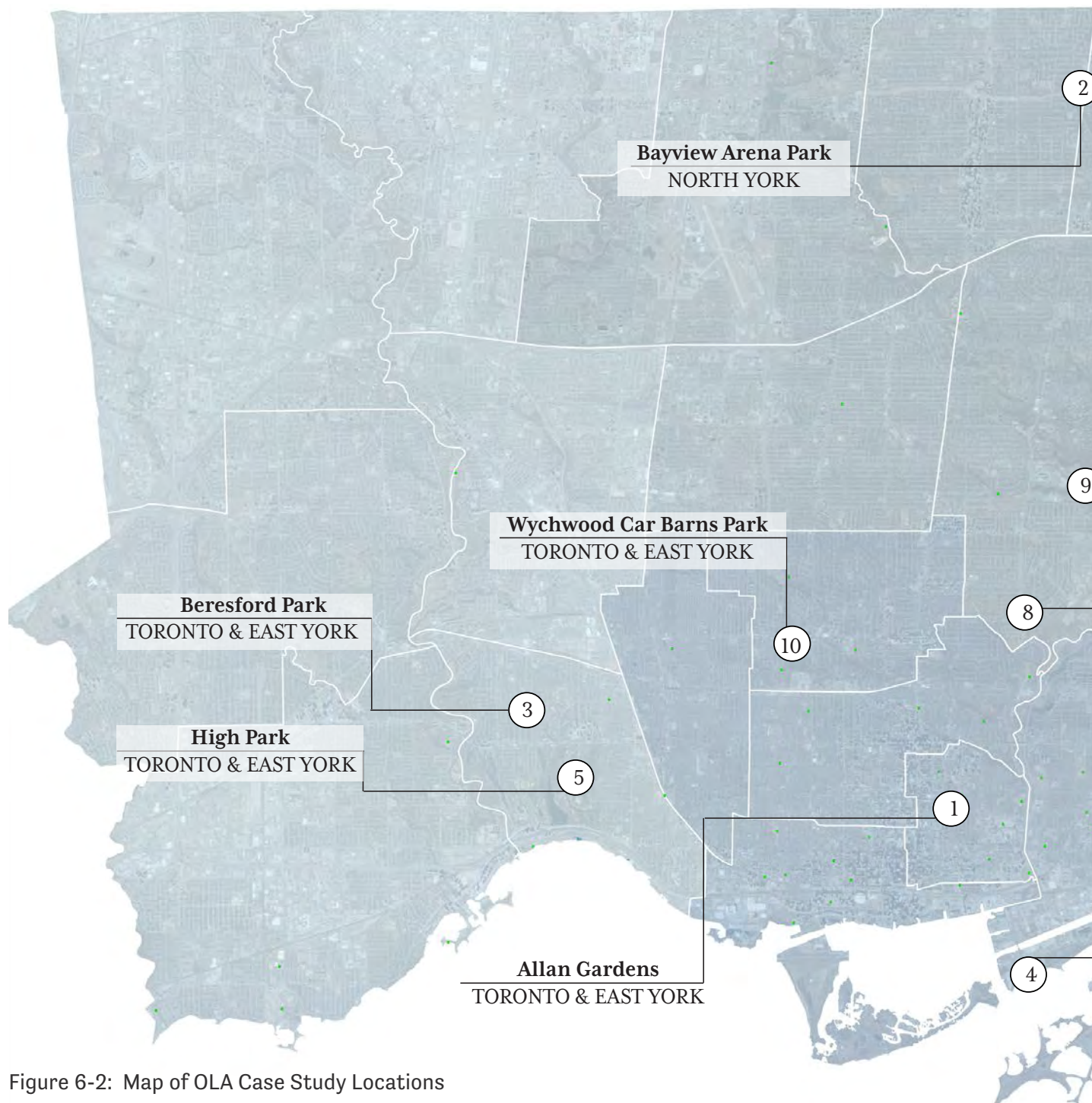
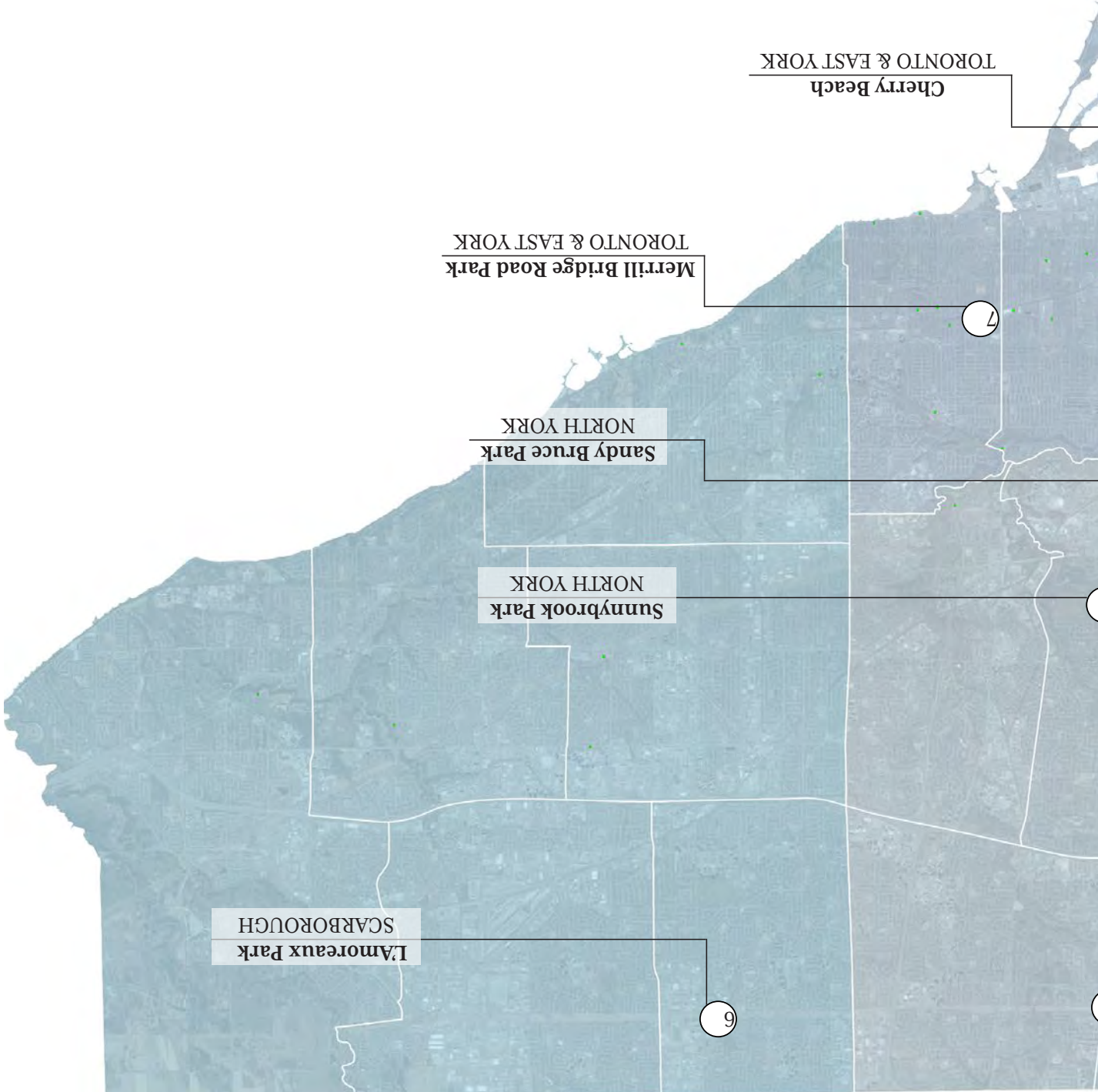


Figure 6-2: Map of OLA Case Study Locations



Case Study Recommendations

The following pages demonstrate the application of the inventory, analysis and application of identified recommendations for each of the 10 sites. It is important to note the recommendations plans prepared and associated list of key recommendations being applied to each OLA is provided as a demonstration only and should not be considered a final plan. While some public feedback was provided by those who attended the “Pup”-ups in October 2019, a more comprehensive community and stakeholder engagement process is required before any of the following plans should be implemented.

Design Recommendations for All 10 Sites

The following design recommendations have been applied to all 10 case study sites. In some cases the selected off-leash area is already following the recommendation. These recommendations include:

D1.1 Ensure 20% shade coverage within OLA

While many OLAs in Toronto meet or exceed this recommendation, providing a tree canopy or shade structure to provide a healthy and comfortable environment for both dogs and their owners should be provided and maintained.

D2.1 Areas that do not currently achieve positive drainage to be regraded to encourage positive drainage (min. 2%)

This OLA is flat and suffers from soil compaction, leading to poor drainage. Positive drainage will reduce pooling and puddling. If regrading is not feasible, sub-grade infrastructure may also be considered.

D3.1 Replace all existing latches with upgraded latch

Redesigned latches will make gates more accessible and resilient during winter use.

D3.6 Install concrete pad at all access points

Concrete pad will promote positive drainage to ensure entry/exits drains properly which will reduce water pooling and ice buildup.

D4.3 Provide accessible pathway within OLA

Providing accessible, paved pathways encourages directive exercise within the OLA, and allows a larger proportion of dog owners to make use of the OLA.

D4.4 Ensure recycling, garbage and green bins outside main entry/exit

OLA waste bins are required to be at the main entry point to give dog owners easy access to ensures owners are picking up and disposing waste effectively.

D4.5 Provide accessible seating

Providing accessible seating will allow for more comfort while spending time in the OLA.

D4.6 Install City signage within OLA and prior to entry

Signage prior to entry will allow non-OLA users to determine whether they are eligible to use OLA. Signage within OLA allows current users to reference by-laws or Codes of Conduct while using the OLA.

D4.7 Provide community boards before main entry/exit

Community boards provide a place where OLA users are able to post notices about community events, lost and found, and local news.

1. Allan Gardens

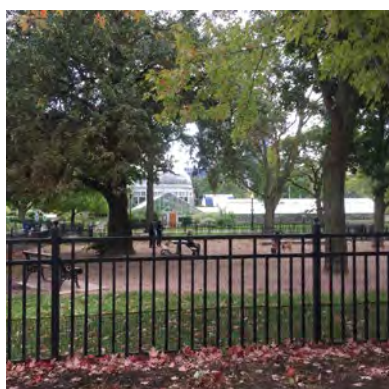
Figure 6-3: Allan Gardens Inventory Plan



OLA size: 2,651 m²

Figure 6-4: Allan Gardens Recommendations Plan





Allan Gardens Design Recommendations

D1.2 Plant fenced trees within OLA

This OLA contains mature deciduous trees in varying states of health. Additional fenced trees are proposed within General Area and SDA to reach 20% shade coverage.

D2.5 Install 300mm min. of crushed granite

This OLA is heavily used and requires a surfacing that can accommodate and support its usage. Recommendation to install crushed granite to encourage proper drainage and reduce muddiness.

D3.3 Install steel fencing (min. 1.5m)

Taller fences will prevent large dogs from jumping out and the mesh-like structure will prevent smaller dogs from escaping.

D4.1 Install dog agility equipment

This OLA is high use but small in size. Agility equipment could provide more opportunity for rigorous play within the OLA and promote exercise. Any and all agility equipment will need to go through a professional inspection process prior to installation and yearly during use.

D5.5 Replace existing lights with LED sensor lighting

Replace existing lights with sensor LEDs that would be triggered at dusk. LEDs provide brighter lights and better durability while providing a reduced impact on the environment.

D6.1 Provide accessible multi-tier drinking fountain

There is an existing informal drinking splash pad within the OLA, however a multi-tier drinking fountain would provide drinking water for all users.

Figure 6-5: Allan Gardens Site Photos

2. Bayview Arena Park

Figure 6-6: Bayview Arena Park Inventory Plan

OLA size: 2,630 m²

Figure 6-7: Bayview Arena Park Recommendations Plan

Bayview Arena Park Design Recommendations

D2.2 Install multi-surfacing types

Install grass seed mix (fescue mix) on west side of proposed path and west side of fence to SDA. Install wood chips within loop created by the proposed All Dogs Area (ADA) path. Install grass seed mix (fescue mix) in SDA. Both kinds of surfaces absorb less heat than gravel.

D3.4 Install post and paddle fencing (with welded wire mesh)

There is already post and paddle fencing around this OLA. We are proposing that the height of the fence be increased to 1.5m in order to adhere to best practices in dog park design. This height ensures that large dogs cannot jump the fence as easily.

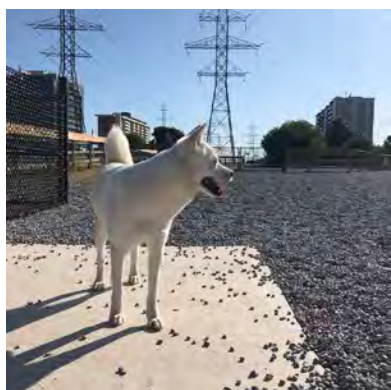
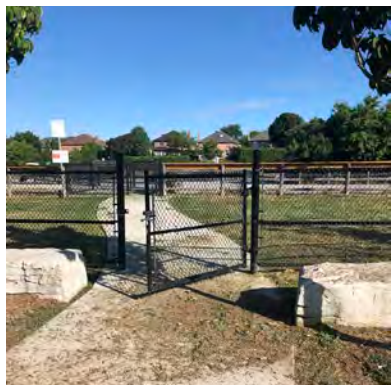
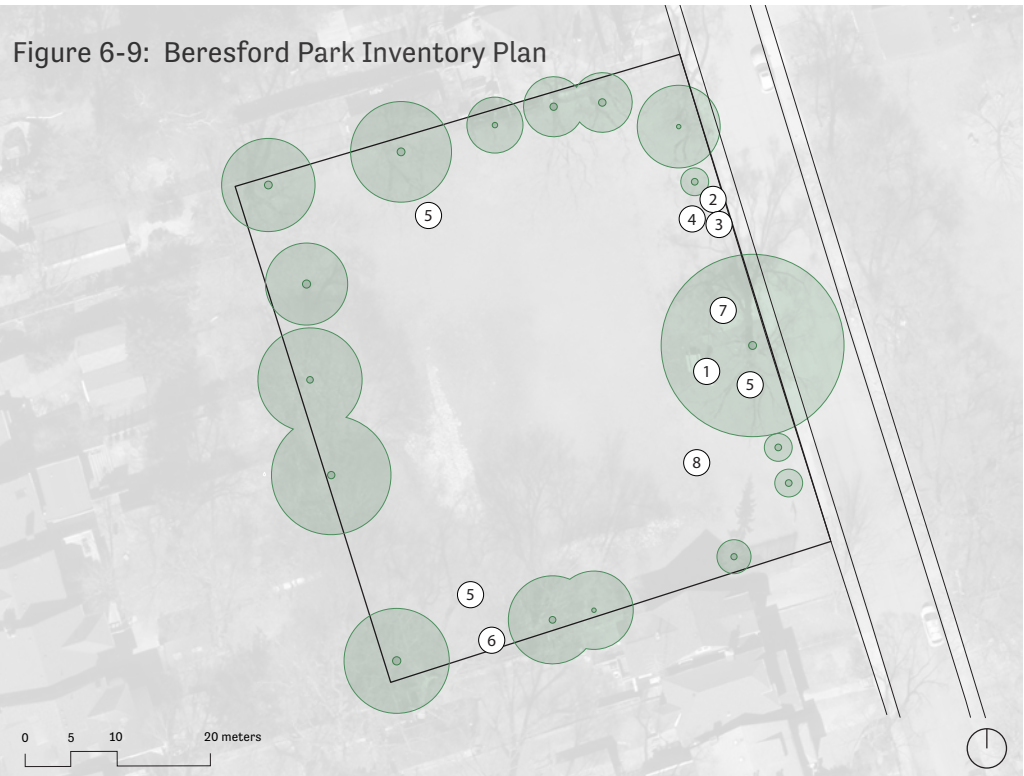


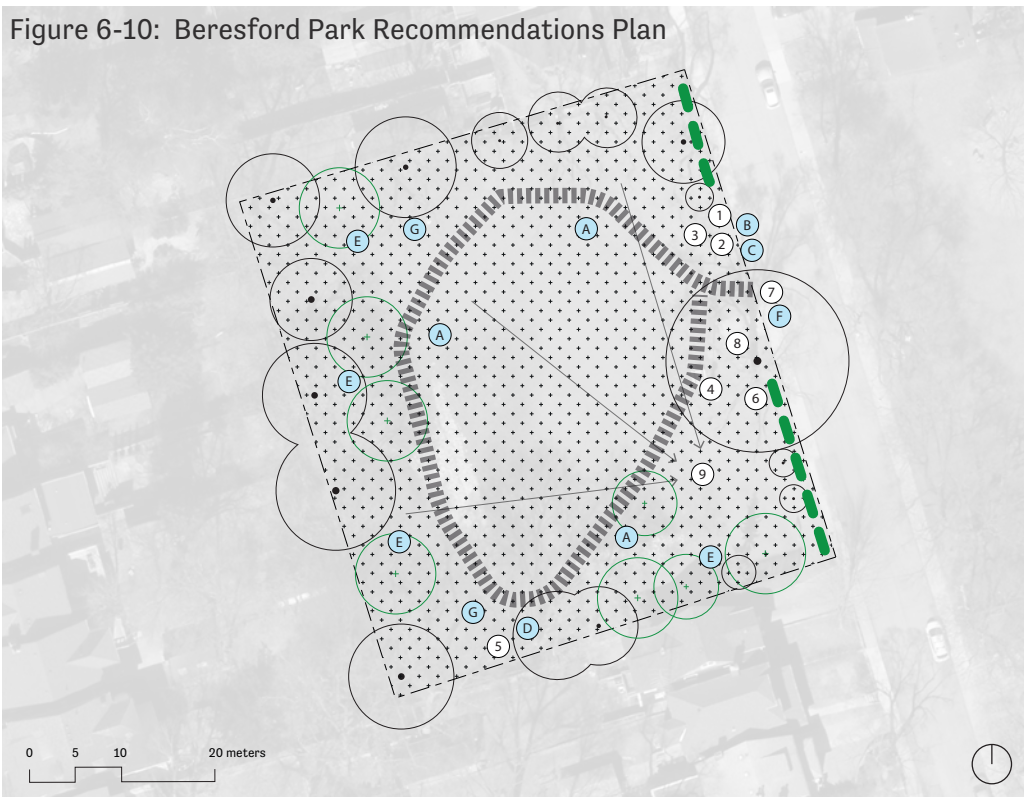
Figure 6-8: Bayview Arena Park Site Photos

3. Beresford Park



- Existing Features**
- ① Picnic Table
 - ② Recycling Bin
 - ③ Garbage Bin
 - ④ Green Bin
 - ⑤ Lighting
 - ⑥ Water
 - ⑦ Stairs
 - ⑧ Catch Basin

OLA size: 2,805 m²



- Existing Features**
- ① Recycling bin
 - ② Garbage bin
 - ③ Green bin
 - ④ Picnic Table
 - ⑤ Water
 - ⑥ Existing Lighting
 - ⑦ Non-Gated Access Point
 - ⑧ Steps
 - ⑨ Catch Basin
 - ⑩ Existing Tree
 - ⑪
- Recommended Features**
- A Accessible Seating
 - B Community Board
 - C City Signage
 - D Accessible Drinking Fountain
 - E New Tree Protection Fencing
 - F Proposed Main Access Point
 - G LED Lighting
 - Vegetative Boundary
 - Grass Seed Mix (Fescue Mix)
 - Accessible Pathway
 - Drainage
 - Proposed Tree



Beresford Park Design Recommendations

D1.2 Plant fenced trees within OLA

Beresford OLA contains young deciduous trees with gator bags along the perimeter of the area. Recommendation to plant additional protected trees, while ensuring the centre area remains clear to allow for the winter skating rink.

D2.8 Install grass seed mix (fescue mix)

Grass surfacing is favoured within this OLA. Recommendation is to retain the current surface material, but install a more durable seed mix with native grasses.

D3.5 Install vegetative boundary/buffer

There is a secure boundary along 3 sides to the OLA, however there are concerns with dogs running out into the road or adjacent playground. Installing a vegetative boarder will help to reduce dogs escaping the OLA, while keeping it free of gates and fencing.

D3.7 Formalize main access point

No formal access point exists for Beresford. Creating a formal entrance will ensure dog owners are aware when they are entering the area, and would have waste bins, signage and a community board.

D5.5 Replace existing lights with LED sensor lighting

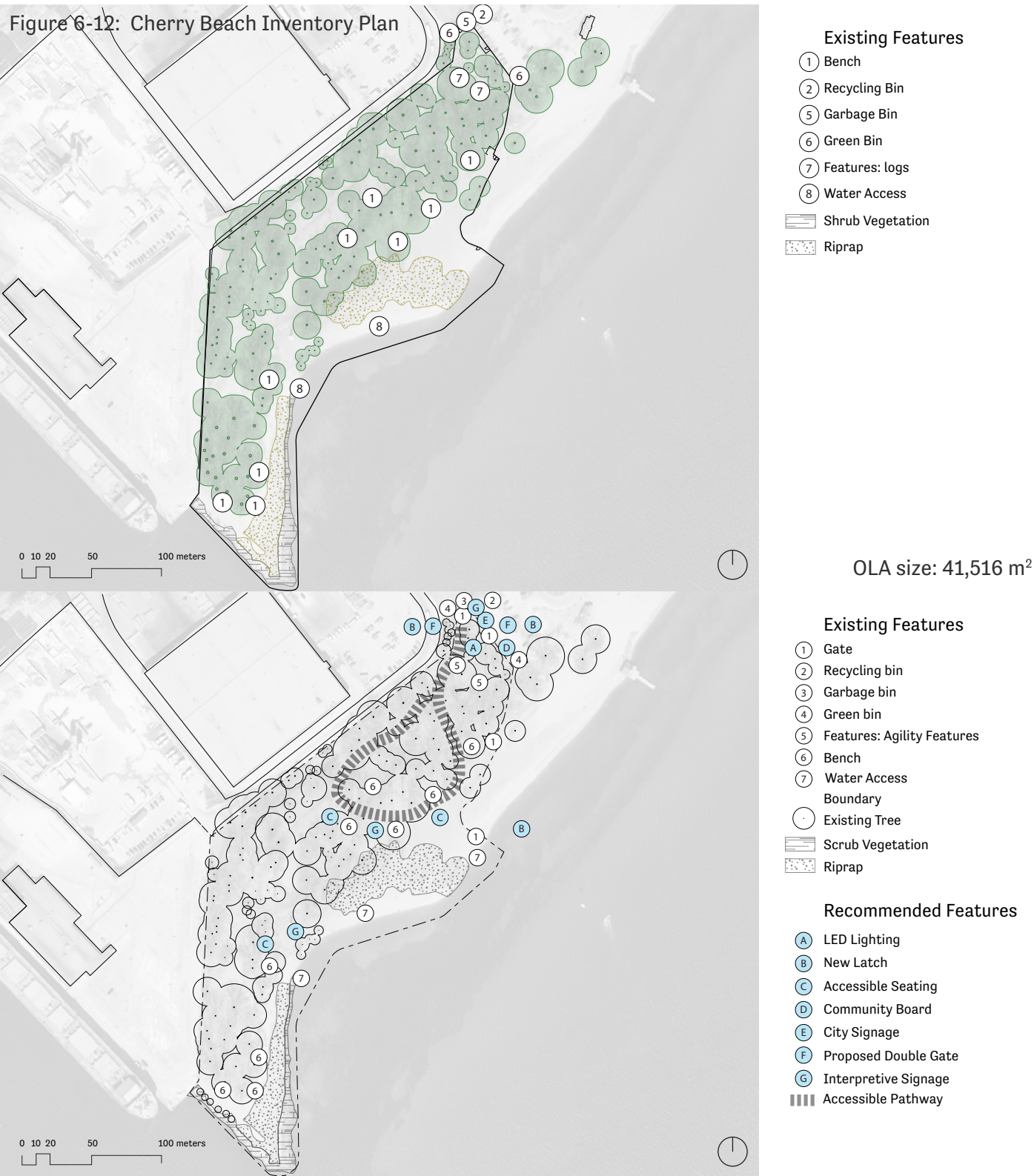
Replace existing lights with sensor LEDs that would be triggered at dusk. LEDs provide brighter lights and better durability while providing a reduced impact on the environment.

D6.1 Provide accessible multi-tier drinking fountain

There is an existing informal drinking tap within the OLA, however a multi-tier drinking fountain would provide drinking water for all users and would eliminate the need to bring water bowls.

Figure 6-11: Beresford Park Site Photos

4. Cherry Beach



Cherry Beach Design Recommendations

D4.8 Install educational and interpretive panels at main entry/exit

Cherry Beach is located within an Environmentally Significant Area (ESA) and certain measures and precautions need to take place within these areas. Signage will assist in supporting the important messaging and awareness of ESA sites.

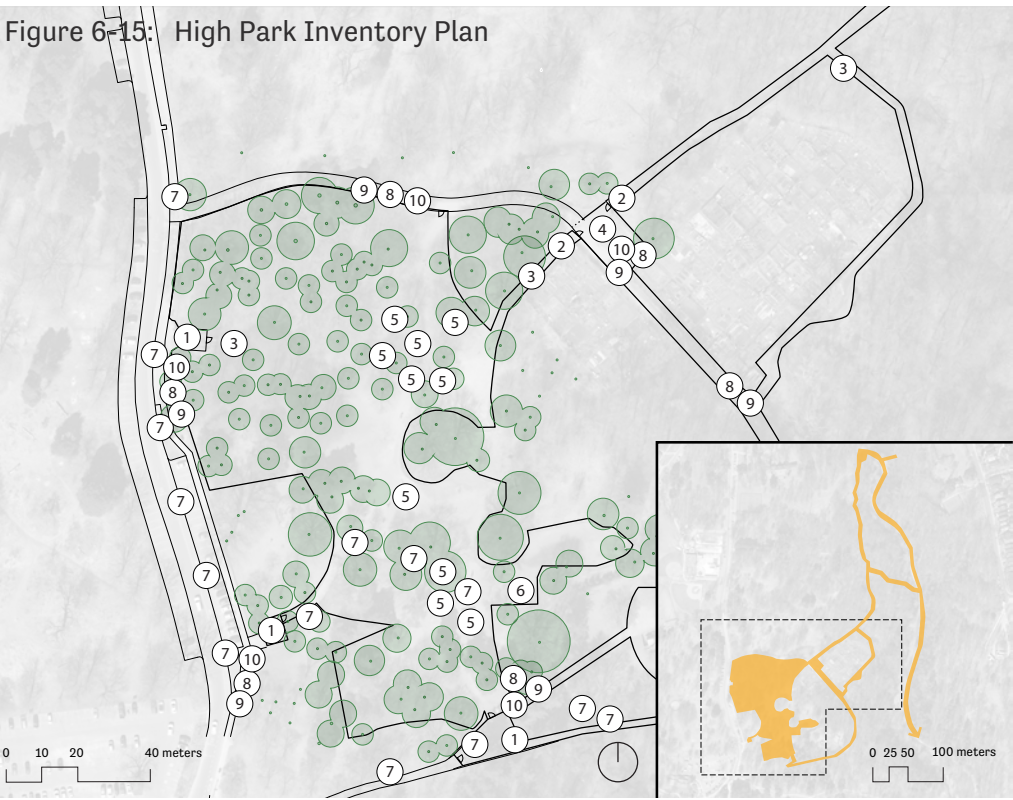
D5.1 Install sensor lighting at main entrance

Lighting currently exists in the parking lot adjacent to the OLA. Given the OLA is adjacent to the shoreline and is an ESA, lighting within the park is not recommended. Recommendation to provide lighting at the main entry/exit for gates, garbage and community boards.



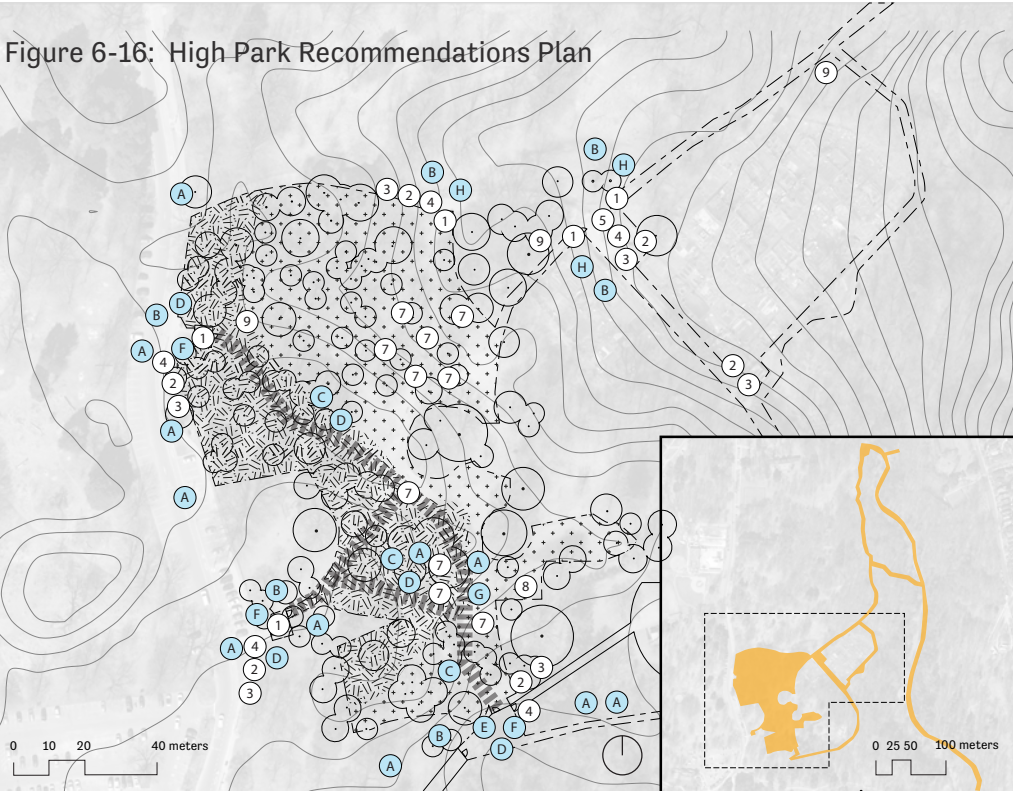
Figure 6-14: Cherry Beach Site Photos

5. High Park



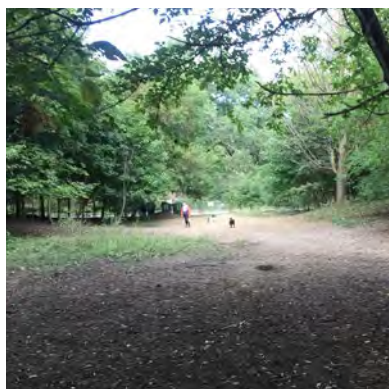
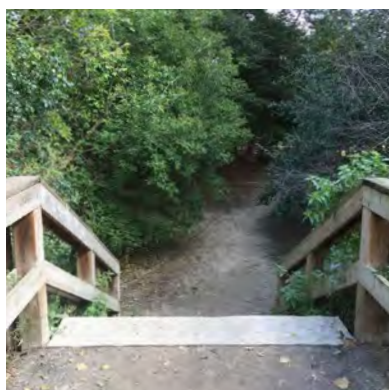
- Existing Features**
- ① Double-gated Entry/Exit
 - ② Single-gated Entry/Exit
 - ③ Stairs
 - ④ Bench
 - ⑤ Picnic Table
 - ⑥ Water
 - ⑦ Lighting
 - ⑧ Recycling Bin
 - ⑨ Garbage Bin
 - ⑩ Green Bin

OLA size: 19,150 m²



- Existing Features**
- ① Double-gated Entry/Exit
 - ② Recycling bin
 - ③ Garbage bin
 - ④ Green bin
 - ⑤ Bench
 - ⑦ Picnic Table
 - ⑧ Water
 - ⑨ Stairs
 - ⊙ Existing Tree

- Recommended Features**
- Ⓐ LED Lighting
 - Ⓑ New Latch
 - Ⓒ Accessible Seating
 - Ⓓ Interpretive Signage
 - Ⓔ Community Board
 - Ⓕ City Signage
 - Ⓖ Accessible Drinking Fountain
 - Ⓗ Proposed Double Gate
 - ▤ Accessible Pathway
 - ⋯ Grass
 - ▨ Wood chip



High Park Design Recommendations

D2.2 Install multi-surfacing types

Install grass seed mix (fescue mix) on east side of proposed path to help stabilize the slope and prevent further erosion. Install 200mm depth of wood chips on the west side of the proposed path within the flatter areas.

D3.2 Replace all single gate systems with double gate system

Most of the existing gates at High Park are double gate, however the connection at Spring Road are single gates. Proposed solution is to replace the single gate to double gate.

D3.4 Install post and paddle fencing (with welded wire mesh)

There is already fencing around this OLA. There are many holes that have required repairs. Fencing is inconsistent. The recommendations to increase the height of the fence to 1.5 metres within the vicinity of “Dog Hill” in order to adhere to best practices in dog park design. The extent of higher fencing needs to be considered in the context of wildlife and the natural area the dog park is situated within.

D4.8 Install educational and interpretive panels at main entry/exit

High Park is located within an ESA and is an Area of Natural Scientific Interest (ANSI). Therefore certain measures and precautions are required within these areas. Signage will assist in supporting the messaging and awareness of ESAs and ANSIs.

D5.5 Replace existing lights with LED sensor lighting

Replace existing lights with sensor LEDs that would be triggered at dusk. LEDs provide brighter lights and better durability while providing a reduced impact on the environment.

D6.1 Provide accessible multi-tier drinking fountain

There is an existing informal drinking splash pad within the OLA, however a multi-tier drinking fountain would provide drinking water for all users

Note: The recommendations provided as part of this case study for High Park pertain to the area known as “Dog Hill” only and exclude the larger off-leash trail network found throughout the park. Therefore, the entire network of trails needs to be considered before for a complete set of recommendations and associated costs can be established for High Park.

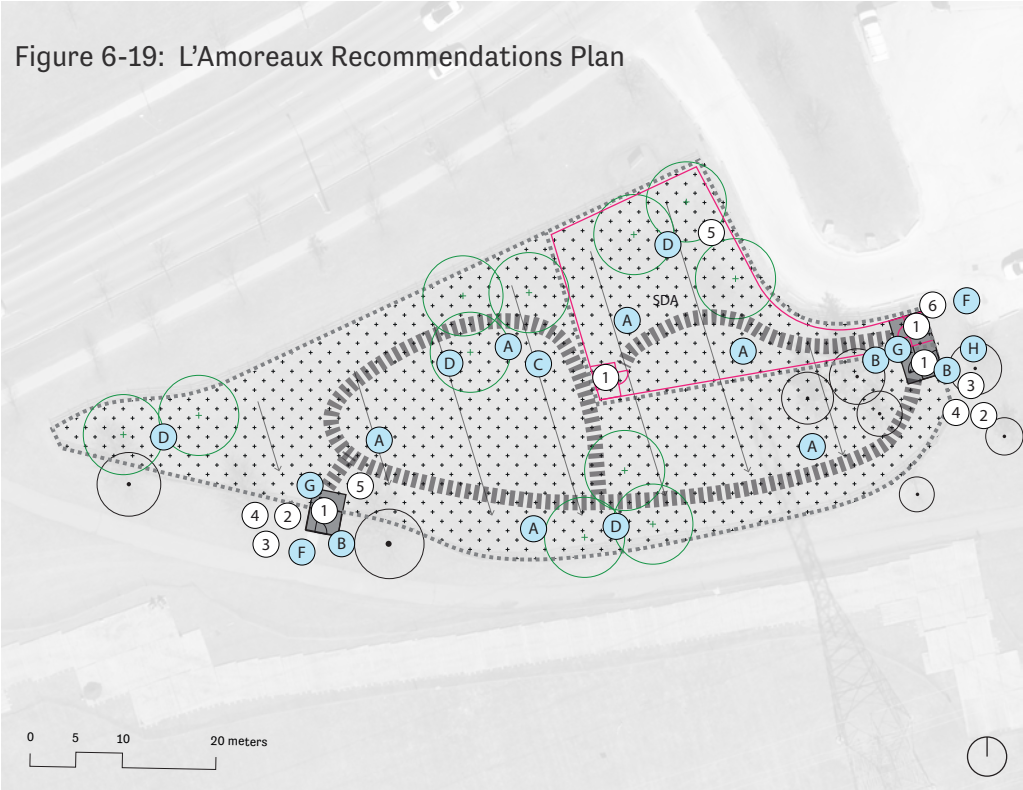
Figure 6-17: High Park Site Photos

6. L'Amoreaux Park

Figure 6-18: L'Amoreaux Inventory Plan

OLA size: 1,963 m²

Figure 6-19: L'Amoreaux Recommendations Plan



Existing Features

- 1 Double-gated Entry/Exit
- 2 Recycling bin
- 3 Garbage bin
- 4 Green bin
- 5 Bench
- 6 Existing Community Board
- Existing Tree

Recommended Features

- A Accessible Seating
- B City Signage
- C Accessible Drinking Fountain
- D New Tree Protection Fencing
- F New Latch
- G Concrete Pad
- H LED Lighting
- + Proposed Tree
- Proposed SDA
- * * * Grass Seed Mix (fescue mix)
- Accessible Pathway
- Steel Fencing
- Regrading



L'Amoreaux Park Design Recommendations

D1.2 Plant fenced trees within OLA

This OLA has a very limited amount of shade, and does not meet a minimum of 20%. Additional deciduous trees are recommended to increase shade and canopy cover. Fencing surrounding the tree will protect it from urine rings/basal damage.

D2.8 Install grass seed mix (fescue mix)

Grass surfacing is favoured within this OLA. Recommendation is to retain the current surface material, but install a more durable seed mix with native grasses.

D3.4 Install steel fencing

L'Amoreaux is located within the suburbs and steel fencing is recommended to reduce holes and damage. The height of the fence should be a minimum of 1.5m (5ft) high, as taller fences will prevent large dogs from jumping out of the OLA.

D4.2 Redefine existing OLA boundary to accommodate SDA

There is demand for a SDA within L'Amoreaux OLA, and the size of the park is sufficient that supplying a separate area for small dogs would not be an issue. Providing a SDA is a best practice in dog parks to allow for the comfort of both small and large dogs during play.

D6.1 Provide accessible multi-tier drinking fountain

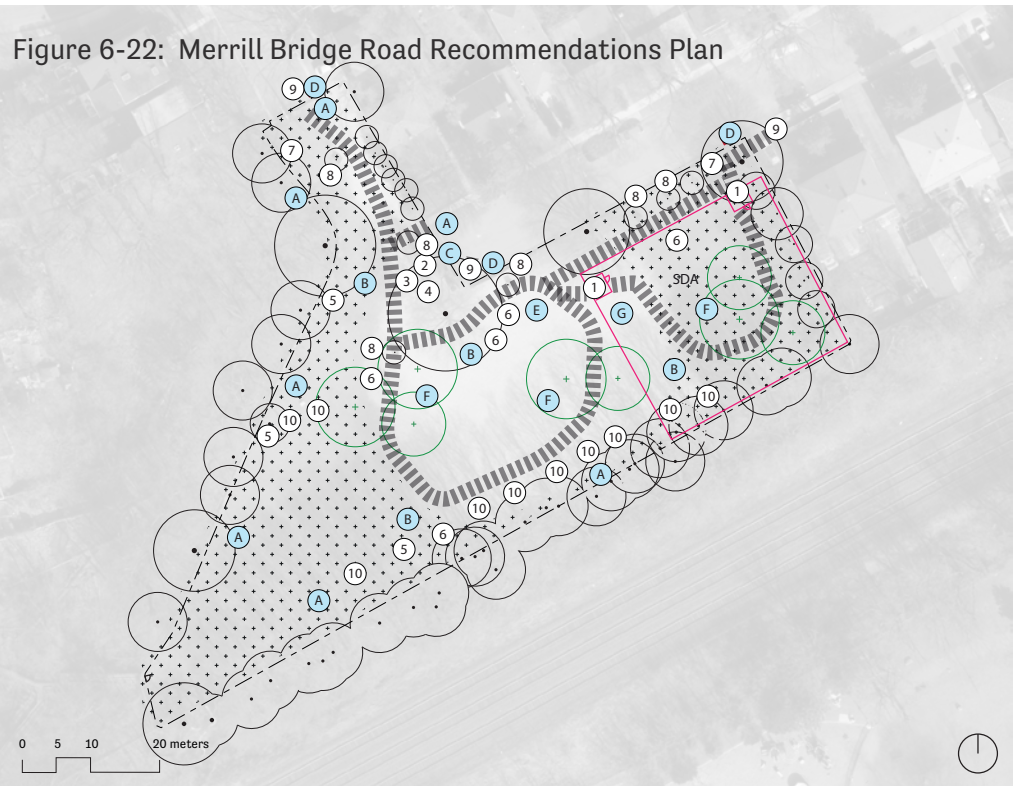
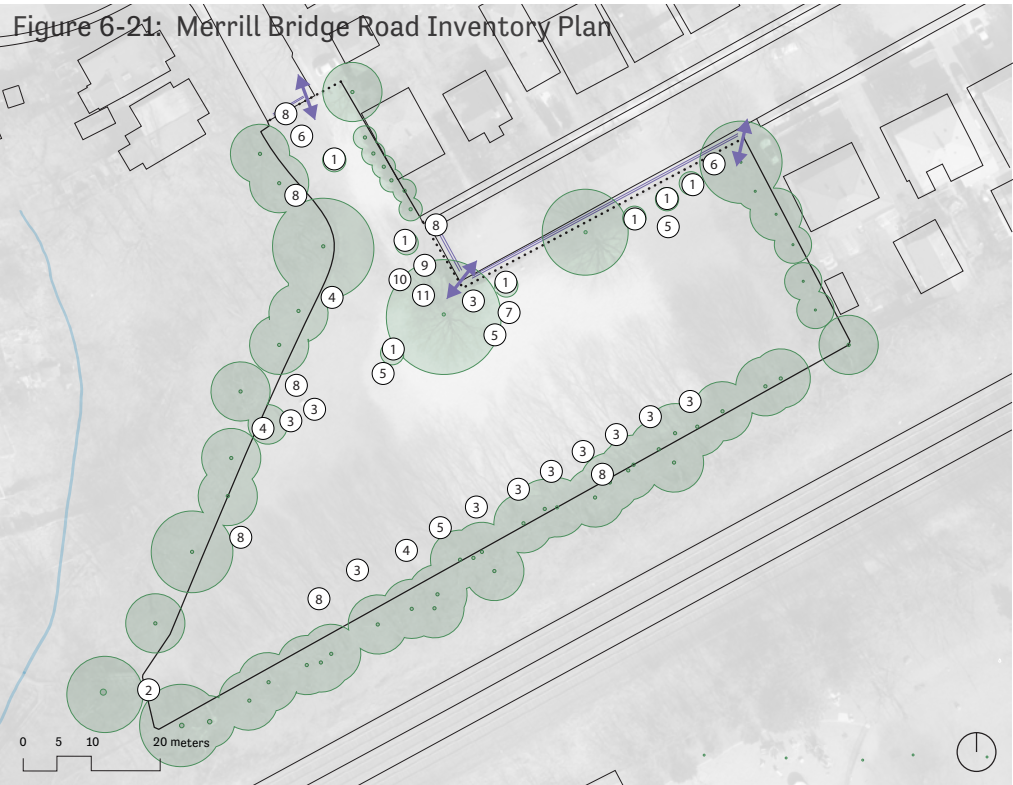
There is no existing water fountain within L'Amoreaux Park. Installing a multi-tier drinking fountain for all OLA users. Surrounding surfacing would include gravel or concrete to ensure proper drainage and limit pooling and puddles.

D5.1 Install sensor lighting at main entrance

Lighting currently exists in the parking lot adjacent to the OLA. Recommendation to provide lighting at the main entry/exit for gates, garbage and community boards.

Figure 6-20: L'Amoreaux Site Photos

7. Merrill Bridge Road Park





Merrill Bridge Road Park Design Recommendations

D1.2 Plant fenced trees within OLA

Merrill Bridge contains several protected trees, however the fencing used for protection needs to be updated to a City standard to ensure proper protection and maintenance.

D2.2 Install multi-surfacing types

Retain the current grass areas of the OLA, but install to a more durable seed mix. Similarly, top up 200mm depth of wood chips within area that already contains them, but the path (D4.3) will allow for more containment and separation of the surfaces.

D3.7 Formalize main access point

This OLA has several access points. The road barriers assist in designating areas to enter, however to ensure that all entries are supplied with appropriate signage and garbage bins, vegetation will be added to emphasize appropriate entries.

D4.2 Redefine existing OLA boundary to accommodate SDA

There is demand for a SDA within Merrill Bridge, and the size of the park is sufficient that supplying a separate area for small dogs would not be an issue. Providing a SDA will allow for the comfort of both small and large dogs during play.

D5.5 Replace existing lights with LED sensor lighting

Replace existing lights with sensor LEDs that would be triggered at dusk. LEDs provide brighter lights and better durability while providing a reduced impact on the environment.

D6.1 Provide accessible multi-tier drinking fountain

There is an existing drinking tap and hose within the OLA, however a multi-tier drinking fountain would provide drinking water for all users and would eliminate the need to bring water bowls.

Figure 6-23: Merrill Bridge Road Site Photos

8. Sandy Bruce Park

Figure 6-24: Sandy Bruce Park Inventory Plan

OLA size: 1,993 m²

Figure 6-25: Sandy Bruce Park Recommendations Plan

Sandy Bruce Park Design Recommendations

D2.2 Install multi-surfacing types

Sandy Bruce OLA currently has wood chips/EFW. As this is a medium to high use park, woodchips are recommended. However, since this park is sloped there is lots of material migration. A mix of grass seed (fescue mix) will be implemented to help stabilize and reduce erosion/migration.

D5.5 Replace existing lights with LED sensor lighting

Where lighting currently exists, replace lights with LEDs. LEDs provide brighter lights and better durability while providing a reduced impact on the environment.

D6.1 Provide accessible multi-tier drinking fountain

There is no existing water fountain within Sandy Bruce. Assuming there is an existing water line, the recommendations is to install a multi-tier drinking fountain for all OLA users. Surrounding surfacing would include gravel or concrete to ensure proper drainage and limit pooling and puddles.

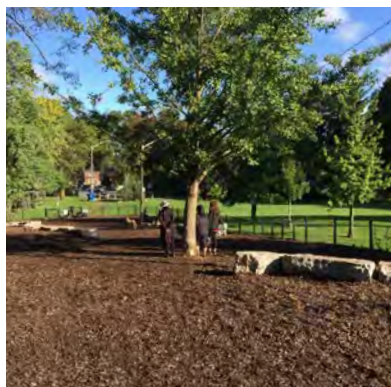
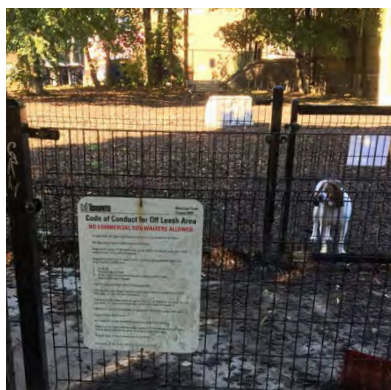
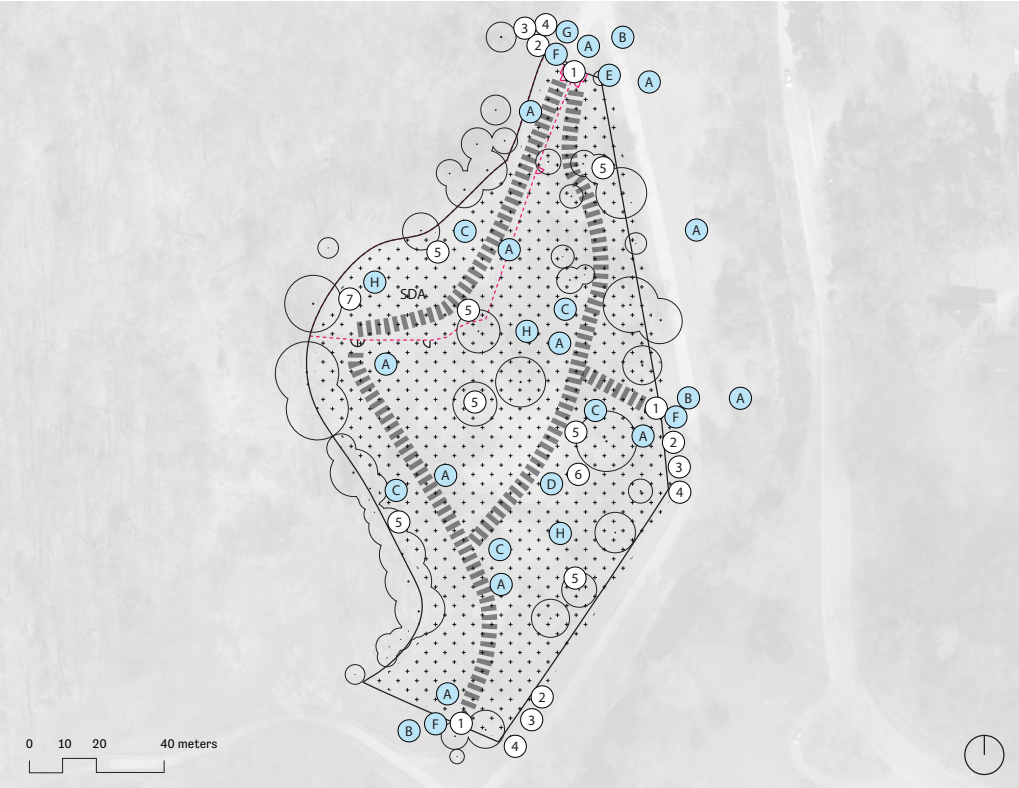


Figure 6-26: Sandy Bruce Park Site Photos

9. Sunnybrook Park

Figure 6-27: Sunnybrook Park Inventory Plan



OLA size: 12,447 m²

Existing Features

- ① Double-gated Entry/Exit
- ② Recycling bin
- ③ Garbage bin
- ④ Green bin
- ⑤ Bench
- ⑥ Water
- ⑦ Features: Agility Features
- Existing Tree

Recommended Features

- Ⓐ LED Lighting
- Ⓑ New Latch
- Ⓒ Accessible Seating
- Ⓓ Accessible Drinking Fountain
- Ⓔ Community Board
- Ⓕ City Signage
- Ⓖ Interpretive Signage
- Ⓗ New Agility Equipment
- ⋯ Grass Seed Mix (fescue mix)
- ▤ Accessible Pathway

Figure 6-28: Sunnybrook Park Recommendations Plan



Sunnybrook Park Design Recommendations

D2.8 Install grass seed mix (fescue mix)

Grass surfacing is favoured within this OLA. Recommendation is to retain the current surface material, but install a more durable seed mix with native grasses.

D3.2 Replace all single gate systems with double gate system

All gates to be double gated, including access to the SDA.

D3.4 Install post and paddle fencing (with welded wire mesh)

There is already fencing around this OLA, however there are holes that have required temporary repairs. The recommendations to increase the height of the fence to 1.5m.

D4.1 Install dog agility equipment

This OLA is high use and there is demand for interactive elements. Agility equipment could provide more opportunity for rigorous play within the OLA and promote exercise. Any and all agility equipment will need to go through a professional inspection process prior to installation and yearly during use.

D4.2 Redefine existing OLA boundary to accommodate SDA

Currently users have to walk through the ADA to access the SDA. Boundary to extend to the north to allow users direct access to the SDA.

D4.8 Install educational and interpretive panels at main entry/exit

Sunnybrook Park is located within an ESA and certain measures and precautions need to take place. Signage will assist in supporting the messaging and awareness of ESA sites.

D5.4 Install sensor lighting along paved pathway within OLA

D5.5 Replace existing lights with LED sensor lighting

Existing lighting within OLA to be upgraded to LEDs, and additional lighting should be installed along looping pathway and main entry/exit.

D6.1 Provide accessible multi-tier drinking fountain

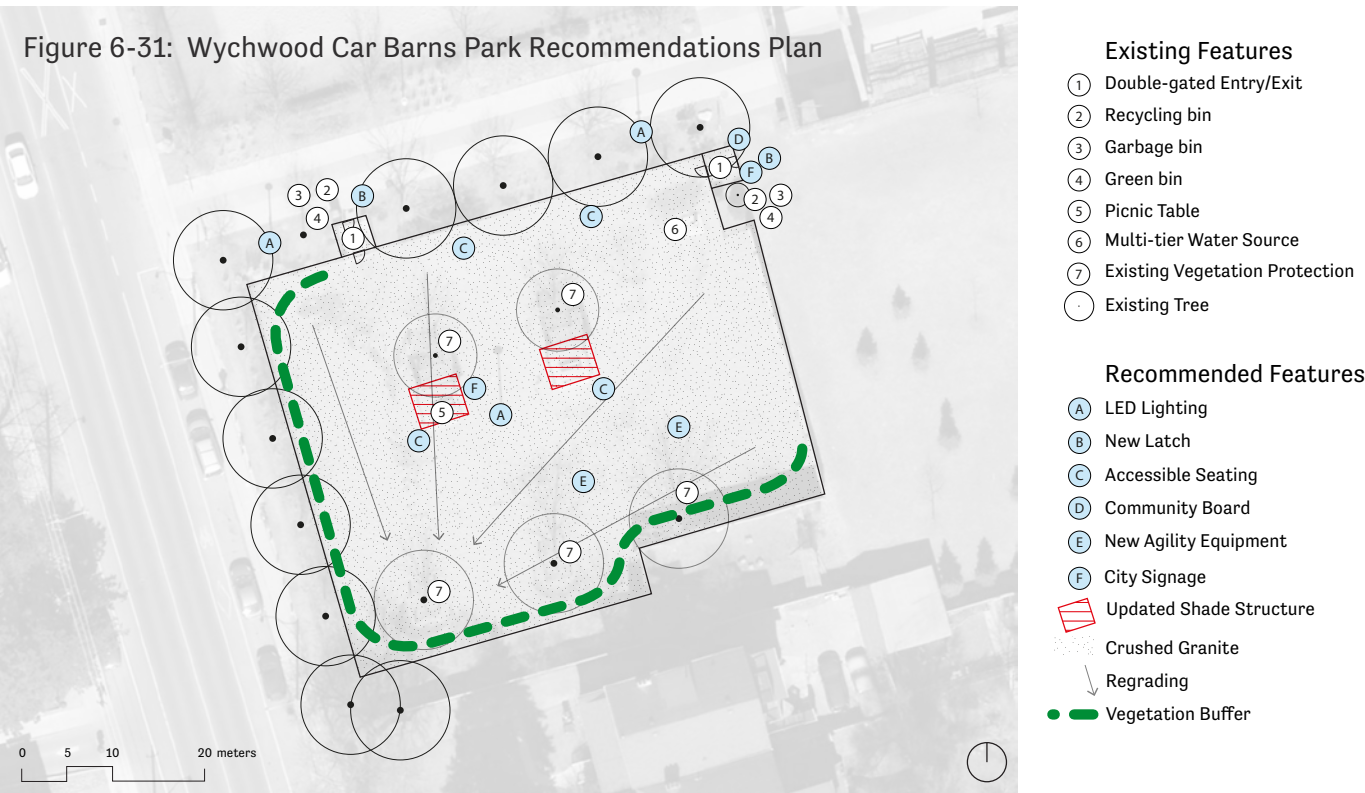
There is an existing multi-tier drinking fountain within the OLA, however the surrounding surfacing does not drain properly. Installing appropriate surfacing at the base of the drinking fountain will ensure proper drainage and reduce pooling.

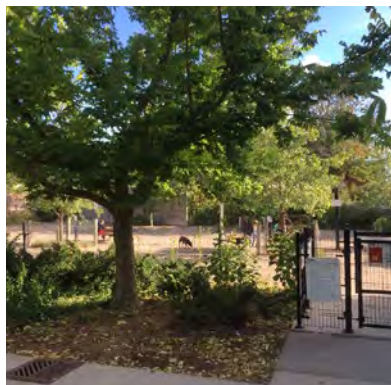
Figure 6-29: Sunnybrook Park Site Photos

10. Wychwood Car Barns Park

Figure 6-30: Wychwood Car Barns Park Inventory Plan

OLA size: 1,384 m²





Wychwood Car Barns Park Design Recommendations

D1.4 Install shade structure (size varies)

Wychwood current has trees planted within the OLA, as well as a shade trellis. The trellis and trees do not provide enough shade. Recommendation to replace the slotted trellis with a solid roof too ensure adequate shade coverage.

D2.5 Install 300mm min. of crushed granite

Majority of users have issues with the lack of top ups and drainage within the OLA. This OLA is heavily used and requires a surfacing that can accommodate and support it's usage. Recommendation to install crushed granite to 150mm depth and ensure proper drainage and top ups.

D3.5 Install vegetative boundary/buffer

OLA has numerous neighbours within close proximity and dogs barking has been an issue. Recommendation to install dense vegetation along residential side to provide a larger buffer and reduce dust migration.

D4.1 Install dog agility equipment

This OLA is high use but small in size. Agility equipment could provide more opportunity for rigorous play within the OLA and promote exercise. Any and all agility equipment will need to go through a professional inspection process prior to installation and yearly during use.

D5.5 Replace existing lights with LED sensor lighting

Where lighting currently exists, replace lights with LEDs. LEDs provide brighter lights and better durability while providing a reduced impact on the environment.

Figure 6-32: Wychwood Car Barns Park Site Photos

Implementation



Overview

As described in the previous section, there are 53 recommendations organized into three categories: Design, Operations and Maintenance, and Administration. This section describes how these recommendations should be implemented to improve Toronto's 72 existing dog off-leash areas.

The approach to implementation is organized into two types of projects:

1. Capital Improvements
2. Special Projects

Capital Improvement projects are those that will be undertaken as part of the City's capital projects for existing parks and playgrounds. Special projects are OLA specific projects initiated from this plan.

Implementing the Design Recommendations

Thirty six of the 53 design recommendations are design focused. They are organized into the following categories:

- Shade (4)
- Surfacing and Drainage (8)
- Fencing and Entrances (8)
- Amenities (8)
- Lighting (5)
- Water (3)

These 36 recommendations are to be considered on a park by park basis as part of Parks, Forestry & Recreation's capital improvement projects process when making improvements to existing parks and playgrounds within an existing off-leash area.

Off-leash areas are to be assessed as part of the planning, community consultation and design process with improvements to OLAs being just one of the parks amenities to be considered for improvements.

Design Process

As part of the design process for each park, a number of the Operations and Maintenance and Administration Recommendations should be considered. These include:

- O&M6 Work with Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division, TRCA, Hydro One, Waterfront Toronto, City Planning and other associated parties on any surrounding park development**
- A3 Update signage and post Code of Conduct and by-law in every OLA**
- A4 Introduce time restrictions if none currently exist**
- A5 Create educational resources**
- A7 Gather accurate and current usage data**
- A8 Perform an Environmental Impact Assessment**

The following outlines key considerations for each of these recommendations during the Capital Projects implementation process.

O&M6 Work with Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division, TRCA, Hydro One, Waterfront Toronto, City Planning and other associated parties on any surrounding park development

Working with OLA stakeholder agencies will be a key part of the consultation process for any park improvement project with an existing off-leash area. This will be particularly important for OLAs in or adjacent to ravines, environmentally sensitive areas, hydro corridors and on Toronto's waterfront. Key stakeholder agencies to be consulted includes but is not limited to:

- Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division
- Toronto Region Conservation Authority
- Hydro One
- Waterfront Toronto
- City Planning
- Animal Services
- Solid Waste

Consulting with these and other agencies (as required) should be identified as a component of the project.

A3 Update signage and post Code of Conduct and by-law in every OLA

While the development of updated signage (content and graphics) are to be undertaken as part of a separate Special Project, the costs associated with fabrication and installation of signage in the park should be included in the capital park improvement or Parks Operations budget.

A4 Introduce time restrictions if none currently exist

The community engagement process for park improvements is an opportunity to engage the community on what is working and not working in the park. This includes a discussion around use of the park's facilities including how well the OLA integrates with the community and adjacent neighbours. While there does not need to be specific questions raised regarding time of use during the community consultation process, the project should be seen as an opportunity to explore options should the issue be raised or if it becomes apparent that time of use for the OLA as it relates to the community's enjoyment of the park, needs to be evaluated.

A5 Create educational resources

While this recommendation is identified as a special project (see page 145), the introduction and installation of educational resources such as signage in parks should be a consideration during the design process with opportunities to incorporate education and interpretive signs being identified in the plans developed. While the development of the signs

(content and graphics) are to be undertaken as part of a separate Special Project, the costs associated with fabrication and installation of signage in the park should be included in the capital park improvement budget.

A7 Gather accurate and current usage data

The park inventory and analysis phase of the project is an opportunity to gather accurate and current user data on a park's off-leash areas. This may include undertaking a public life study, installing counters at the entrance to OLAs or conducting user surveys. The information gathered will be helpful to establish an understanding of level of use and potentially justifying how funds are being allocated towards OLA improvements.

A8 Perform an Environmental Impact Assessment

Off-leash areas within or adjacent to areas that fall within Municipal Code 658 (Ravine and Natural Feature Protection) should undergo an Environmental Impact Assessment as one of the first steps in the design process. This assessment should extend throughout the park to help ensure the proposed improvements for the OLA and the rest of the park consider the sensitive natural environment of the park and its surroundings.

Community Interest

In addition, community interest/input will be required in determining whether certain recommendations are appropriate for a park. This may include but is not limited to:

- Changes to surfacing
- Inclusion of agility equipment
- Introduction of a small dog area
- Lighting enhancements
- Water play

Each of these features may be appropriate for some OLAs, while not desired for others given limited space, financial resources, or interest. Through the community and stakeholder engagement process for the park improvements, the community's desire for these elements will need to be determined.

Budget for OLA Improvements

Capital Park improvements are assigned a budget on a park by park basis as part of the Parks, Forestry and Recreation's yearly budget process. The budget assigned to a park project is based on numerous factors with the potential for OLA improvements being just one consideration.

Implementation

The budget available for OLA improvements, and the specific improvements to be made, will be determined in conjunction with other park, playground, facility and programming needs. These needs are identified by staff, stakeholders and the community during the design and consultation process. Therefore, depending on the project's overall capital improvements budget, not all of the design recommendations outlined in this plan may be feasible in light of the need to also address other requests by the community. Ultimately, the community consultation process will determine the park improvements to be undertaken.

Special Projects

Ten special projects have been identified. These projects are not part of the Parks, Forestry and Recreation capital projects process. While some of these are related to design improvements, they are to be undertaken separately, and in many cases will inform future improvements at the City's OLAs.

The ten projects include:

O&M1 Set maintenance and facility upkeep standards for all OLAs

D3.1 Replace all existing latches with upgraded latch

A1 Implement improvements to City Website

A2 Create classification of OLAs that reflects the City's new Parkland Strategy park classifications (2019)

A3 Update signage and post Code of Conduct and by-law in every OLA

A5 Create educational resources

A6 Promote volunteer and stewardship opportunities

A9 Make improvements to Dog Owner's Association program

A10 Increase by-law enforcement

A11 Re-allocation of Commercial Dog Walkers Permit Fee

The following outlines key implementation considerations for each of these special projects. More information on the project itself, please refer to the recommendations section of the plan.

O&M1 Set maintenance and facility upkeep standards for all OLAs

To establish consistent standards across all of the City's off-leash areas will require working with each District to understand what works and what challenges need to be addressed. Once established, these standards will be used as a guide for the following Operations and Maintenance recommendations:

- O&M2 Perform regular inspections to monitor and maintain state of good repair
- O&M3 Protect and monitor vegetation health
- O&M4 Implement temporary closures to support vegetative growth, when necessary
- O&M5 Ensure main pathway to OLA is clear of ice and snow in winter months

D3.1 Replace all existing latches with upgraded latch

Through this study, a suitable replacement for the typical OLA latch was not identified. However, when speaking to City staff responsible for maintaining the City's off-leash areas, latch replacement and repair was one of the most common issues across the City. Therefore, finding a suitable alternative to the current gate latch should be a high priority. It is recommended that potential replacement products be identified and tested as a pilot project to confirm any proposed new latch performs better than the current approach. Once there is some consensus on a suitable alternative, the process of upgrading or replacing latches should occur.

A1 Implement improvements to City Website

The City's website needs to be updated and kept current as other recommendations from this study are implemented. This includes any material developed through the following recommendations:

- the creation of any educational resources related to dogs in City parks (A5)
- Detailed and expanded information on OLA volunteer and stewardship opportunities (A6)
- Information on the Dog Owners's Association Program including posting of DOA email and information on how to before a DOA representative (A9)
- Information on how the funds collected from CDW permits is used (A11)

A2 Create classification of OLAs that reflects the City's new Parkland Strategy park classifications (2019)

This will involve formalizing an OLA hierarchy to match the City's park classification system. Linking these two will assist with the capital park improvements process in managing expectations of the level of service each OLA is the provide the community. This work should be undertake in conjunction with Parks Planning Staff.

A3 Update signage and post Code of Conduct and by-law in every OLA

The updating of signage including information and graphic design should be undertaken as a stand alone initiative to help improve the messaging at each OLA.

The updated signage should be rolled out in conjunction with capital park improvements. A portion of the park's construction budget should be allocated to printing and installation of the signs. The number, location and configuration of the signs will be determined in consultation with the community and stakeholders during the design process.

A5 Create educational resources

Education resources related to dog ownership, off-leash areas, and the impact of dogs on environmentally significant areas should be undertaken as one initiative to have consistency and branding and messaging across all applications including signage (interpretive panels), print (brochures) and digital (website, social media, email). This work may also be undertaken in conjunction with the updating of the code of conduct signage (A3).

At off-leash areas, the introduction of these new educational resources should be implemented in conjunction with website updates (A1) and should be rolled out in conjunction with capital park improvements. As noted in A3, a portion of the park's construction budget should be allocated to printing and installation of the interpretive/educational signs. The number, location and configuration of the signs will be determined in consultation with the community and stakeholders during the design process.

A6 Promote volunteer and stewardship opportunities

The opportunities for volunteers and stewardship on OLAs should be formalized to assist with the implementation of many of the recommendations outlined in this plan. This initiative should be undertaken in association with improvements to the City's website (A1), improvements to the DOA program (A9) and in conjunction with Operations and Maintenance initiatives suitable for community involvement.

A9 Make improvements to Dog Owner's Association program

Improving the Dog Owner's Association (DOA) program is an important first step in improving dialogue between the City and dog owners in the City. It will provide a first point of contact for engaging with the community regarding the design, operations and maintenance of an off-leash area. As a short term initiative, improving the DOA program will improve the success of engaging the OLA community in volunteer and stewardship opportunities (A6), and the stakeholder engagement process associated with Capital improvement projects for OLAs.

A10 Increase by-law enforcement

A formal request to City By-law for increased enforcement at the City's OLAs should be made. While the challenges facing the City's by-law officers regarding enforcement of off-leash dogs is considerable given current staffing and ability to enforce tickets written to individuals in parks, the City should begin to look at options to address the need for improved by-law enforcement. This should be approached as a long term initiative requiring support and approval from a number of groups and individuals at the City with the goal of improving the park user experience.

A11 Re-allocation of Commercial Dog Walkers Permit Fee

The collection and allocation of commercial dog walkers (CDW) permit fees to parks which allow commercial dog walkers should be one of the top priorities coming out of this study. The money raised through the permit fees will help offset the costs associated with improvements to OLAs.

Implementation Summary

Recommendations		Timeline/Priority	Inter-related Recommendations/ initiatives
O&M1	Set maintenance and facility upkeep standards for all OLAs	Short Term	O&M2 O&M3 O&M4 O&M5
D3.1	Replace all existing latches with upgraded latch (pilot project)	Short Term	OLA capital improvements
A1	Implement improvements to City Website	Short Term	A3 A5
A9	Make improvements to Dog Owner's Association Program	Short Term	A1
A11	Re-allocation of Commercial Dog Walkers Permit Fee	Short Term	Funds collected to be diverted to help fund OLA capital park improvements
A2	Create classification of OLAs that reflects the City's new Parkland Strategy park classifications (2019)	Medium Term	OLA capital improvements
A3	Update signage and post Code of Conduct and by-law in every OLA	Design: Medium Term Implementation on a park by park basis	A1 A5 OLA capital improvements
A5	Create educational resources	Medium Term	A1 A3
A6	Promote volunteer and stewardship opportunities	Medium Term	A1
A10	Increase by-law enforcement	Long Term	
Design:		Implementation	O&M6
D1.1-1.2	Shade (4)	on a park by park basis based on	A4
D2.1-2.8	Surfacing & Drainage (8)	Parks, Forestry	A5
D3.1-3.8	Fencing & Entrances (8)	& Recreation's	A6
D4.1-4.8	Amenities (8)	capital improvement process	A7
D5.1-5.5	Lighting (5)		A8
D6.1-6.3	Water (3)		

Table 7-1: Implementation Summary

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City-Wide Study for Existing City of Toronto Dogs Off-Leash Areas

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Design, Operations, Maintenance, Administration and Best Practices

Appendix A: Best Practices



City of Toronto
May 2021



Document for the City of Toronto by

thinc design

Swerhun Facilitation

PLAN B Natural Heritage

Kerry Vinson, Animal Behaviour Consultants

Beverley McKee, Certified Fear Free Professional

Appendix A: Best Practices

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Overview

The design, operations and maintenance practices of dog off-leash areas in 13 Cities across North America and Australia were reviewed and summarized below. This information has been used to inform the recommendations contained in this study.

From these thirteen cities, key findings from researching 80 off-leash parks are provided.

The information gathered from this research has been organized into the following 24 topics, although information was not available on all topics. The topics include:

1. Health and Safety
2. Environmental Design
3. Accessibility
4. Etiquette
5. Enforcement
6. Parking
7. Waste Disposal & Bags
8. Signage
9. Shade and Wind Protection
10. Drainage
11. Vegetative Restoration
12. General Size of OLA
13. Small Dog Areas
14. Surfacing
15. Entries and Gates
16. Fencing
17. Lighting
18. Irrigation
19. Picnic Tables and Benches
20. Community News Boards
21. Water Station
22. Agility Equipment or Water Play
23. Operations, Maintenance and Community Groups
24. Other

From this research, it is evident that cities across North America face many of the same challenges as Toronto in the design, operations and maintenance of off-leash areas to ensure these spaces are enjoyed by all user (dogs and owners) and that these spaces can be properly operated and maintained within a municipal context.

The information summarized below is from a wide variety of sources including each city's municipal website and through online desktop research of individual off-leash areas (i.e. Google Earth).

After each city/municipality, a number of specific parks are highlighted and summarized.

1. Portland, OR

25 OLAs: 22 multiple use, 3 single use. 16 time or seasonal use restrictions.

Health and Safety

- dogs must display tags showing proof of current license and rabies vaccination
- dogs must be kept 25' (8m) away from playgrounds. Dogs are not permitted on sports fields, selected natural areas, selected park sites, and school grounds
- if the City is notified by a dog owner that their dog has giardia and has been at particular off-leash areas, the City will test the off-leash area for giardia. If giardia is found to be present, the City follows the recommendations of the State Public Health Veterinarian regarding closure (length of time, conditions, etc.)
- environmental health and safety/water quality protection is encoded in the criteria for siting OLAs

Environmental Design

- all OLAs have signage that indicates etiquette and rules. Selected sites have fencing, signage, and/or water
- posted criteria for OLA siting:
 - newest OLA criterion: Must be a minimum of 5,000 square feet (0.05 ha) – source website
 - avoid affecting fish and wildlife habitat
 - avoid risk to water quality
 - be relatively level
 - have minimal impact on adjacent residential areas
 - be away from playground

- be close to parking
- be distributed throughout the city (Note: PP&R is unable to provide an off-leash area in every park. In determining where new areas may be appropriate, staff assesses proximity of proposed site to existing off-leash areas)
- operational considerations:
 - slope and heavy tree canopy should be avoided wherever possible
 - areas should be dry and irrigated rather than wet
 - Playgrounds should be away from dogs
 - park's main circulation should be outside off-leash areas
 - avoid siting OLAs adjacent to streets with heavy traffic
 - consider areas with current high dog off-leash use
- Multnomah County Laws Re: dogs in Portland OR
 - "Dogs must be properly licensed and vaccinated. Dogs must be leashed at all times while on public property and in parks (except in designated off-leash areas), and owners must remove their dog's waste. These laws exist for the health and safety of dogs and people."

Accessibility

- nothing mentioned in the City’s website, but there are lots of mentions of accessible amenities outside of the OLAs. However since none of the OLAs have paved paths they are likely not accessible

Etiquette

- large frequently asked questions section regarding etiquette and rules on the City website
 - Eg. Question: “why does my well-behaved dog need to be on a leash?”
 - Answer: Portland’s parks, natural areas and trails are extensively used for all types of recreation, and off-leash dogs and dog waste have significant impacts on the health, safety, and enjoyability of park lands
- from City website: Obeying leash laws:
 - ensures the dog handler has control in every situation - there are many distractions in a park, from squirrels to runners to bicyclists to kids
 - keeps dogs safe from hazards that may injure or even kill them
 - protects the park environment and wildlife
 - respects other park visitors (and their leashed dogs) who may not want to meet your dog
 - keeps dogs close to their handlers, which makes it easier to spot and pick up dog waste
 - Enforcement
 - dogs on-leash only in selected natural areas.
 - Portland’s posted OLA rules of use:
 - dogs must demonstrate appropriate social interaction
 - dogs displaying aggressive behavior toward people or other dogs must be leashed and removed from the OLA immediately
 - owners and handlers must accept responsibility for any damage or injury caused by their dog
 - dogs must display tags showing proof of current license and rabies vaccination
 - bring no more than three dogs to the OLA at any time
 - owners and handlers must remain in the OLA to supervise pets and keep them within view and under verbal control at all times
 - to prevent injury, remove pinch or choke collars when playing off-leash
 - for health and safety reasons, do not bring a dog in heat to a Portland park
 - for health and safety reasons, do not bring a puppy without a complete cycle of vaccinations to a Portland park
 - children must be closely supervised
 - be considerate of park neighbors by playing quietly with dogs in the early morning and evening hours
 - comply with all other park rules
- Portland leash and scoop bylaw enforcement is Multnomah County Animal Control officers and PP&R Park Rangers
- 28 Park Rangers in 2014.
- “Though many dog owners are respectful park visitors, disregard for leash/scoop laws is an ongoing concern in many parks and natural areas. To increase compliance with leash and scoop laws, Portland Parks

& Recreation uses a variety of education and enforcement strategies, as well as providing off-leash areas for dog-owner recreation.”

- targeted educational campaigns have been used in the past. Currently rely on in-park signage and Park Rangers to patrol and educate on an as needed / call for service basis.
- efforts include:
 - permanent signs posted at entry points in parks and natural areas
 - rules of use posted at each off-leash area
 - use of temporary signs, including stake signs placed directly in areas with high illegal use (such as sports fields)
 - outreach by PP&R staff and Rangers including methods such as in-park presence, attendance at community meetings, partnerships with animal organizations, media releases, social media, and events
 - ranger patrols, particularly in parks with low compliance
 - citations of up to \$150 for leash/scoop violations”
 - citations of up to \$150 per incident may be issued for violation of leash/scoop laws

Parking

- overall, Portland appears have a fair amount of parking throughout its park system, and therefore the off leash areas are also well served with parking

Waste Disposal & Bags

- all disposed of dog waste goes to landfill

Signage

- required at all OLAs. Rules & Regs

Shade & Wind Protection

- not a city focus, beyond ensuring location for OLA does not have heavy canopy

Drainage

- a concern in the siting of parks owing to the rules that OLAs should:
 - avoid affecting fish and wildlife habitat
 - avoid risk to water quality
 - be relatively level

Vegetative Restoration

- Portland is very concerned about the environment and dogs’ negative effects on it. Siting criteria that state that OLA

General Size of DOLA

- minimum of 0.1 ac (0.04 ha), although there is a big range in the size of the parks

Small Dog Area

- some parks have big dog areas as well as small dog areas

Surfacing

- the City has experimented with sand, wood chips, decomposed granite, and pea gravel and has found that all materials have pros and cons – many of the sites have wood chips and some lawn areas

Entries & Gates

- of the 10 fenced parks, most have double gates, but only one entrance. Some of the newer OLAs have dual entries

Fencing

- unfenced sites are called SHARED sites (seasonal hours at reserved sites) and allow off-leash activity during seasonal hours in the early morning and early evening.
- seasonal hours appear to coincide with whether children are in school or not
- the city is moving towards fencing sites as much as possible to minimize conflicts
- unfenced off-leash areas are defined by “boundary markers “(wooden posts) and signage.
- fencing is a mix of vinyl-coated chain link or steel posts with wire mesh, and the City is trying to establish vines on the fence (likely to restrict line of sight and barking)

Lighting

- most parks have lighting and therefore most OLAs appear to be lit
- many parks have hours until midnight

Irrigation

- operations suggestion for new OLAs is that site be dry and irrigated rather than wet

Picnic Tables & Benches

- not mentioned

Community News Boards

- not mentioned

Water Station (Bottle/Dog Fountain)

- some have water – as per City’s listing of what is in a dog park

Agility Equipment or Water Play

- unclear if any areas allow water play
- it does not appear that any Portland parks have agility equipment. However some neighbouring City parks (Vancouver, Washington) appear to have agility equipment

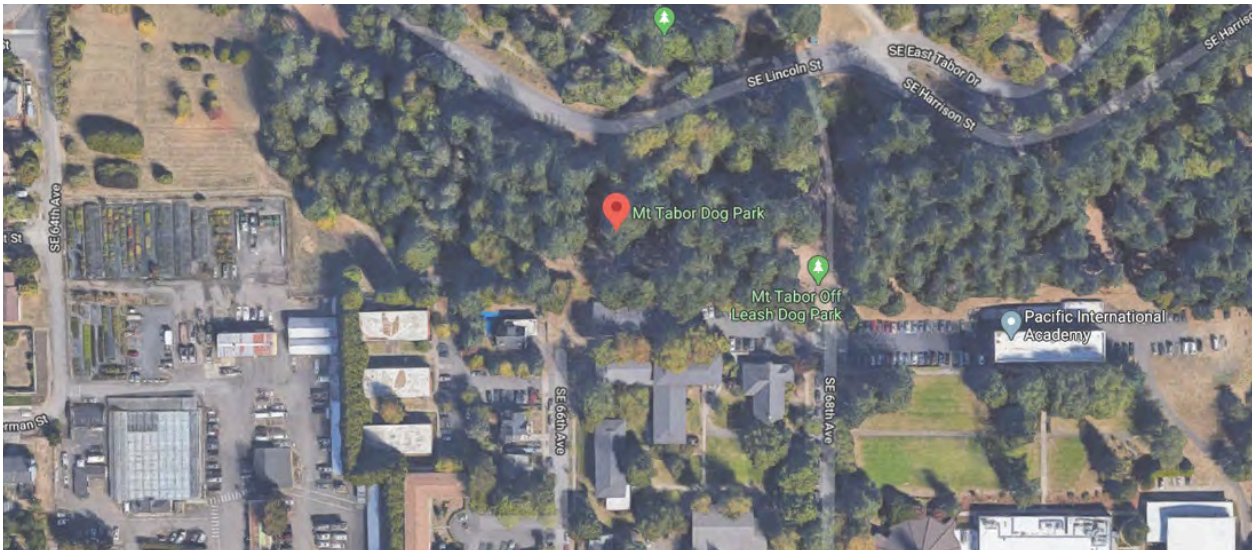
Operations, Maintenance and Community Groups

- sites are maintained by the parks operating budget – no dedicated revenue source or fees to pay for new sites
- City offers volunteer OLA stewardship groups with printing costs, lending tools, and other resources. No current (2016) volunteer groups
- design and construction costs vary depending on the location and size of the off-leash area, and whether the area is fenced or unfenced. Costs currently run around \$200,000 (USD) for a new off-leash area. Maintenance and operation costs also vary depending on factors like turf repair, bark chip replacement, fencing repairs, environmental mitigation efforts, and volume of site use

Mt. Tabor OLPD

Portland, OR
SE Salmon St & 60th Ave.

- 4 acre off leash area for dogs of all sizes
- nearby amenities: picnic area, accessible play area, restroom, basketball court, horseshoe pit, paved and unpaved paths, shelter, plaza with stage, tennis court, lighted, volleyball court, public art
- hours: 5am-midnight
- parking lot and street parking
- not entirely fenced in
- freshwater available, two dog water stations
- wooded area with trail loop



Chimney Park

Portland, OR
9360 N Columbia Blvd.

- 18.23 acres total in the park, 5.5 acres for the off-leash area
- fully fenced and encircled with wood chip walking path
- hours 5am-midnight
- once the site of the City's incinerator, the park acquired the name from the incinerator's chimney
- one of the oldest dog parks in Portland
- mature trees offer lots of shade
- picnic tables in a highly social park
- good drainage in the winter, all-seasons park
- water bowl and faucet, after community expressed need for running water
- double entry gates, connecting two large dog runs, one with mature trees with grass and dirt groundcover, the other with grass and a wood chip walkway surrounding it
- waste bin provided, and waste bags available
- parking lot

