

City-Wide Study of Existing Dog Off-Leash Areas

Design, Operations, Maintenance & Best Practices

Stakeholder Workshop #1
June 20, 2019

Stakeholder Consultation

1. Welcome, Introductions, Agenda Review
2. Overview of existing OLAs in Toronto and findings from best practices
3. Review Draft Site Selection Criteria
4. Discussion: Best Practices and Selection Criteria
5. Overview of Public Survey
6. Discussion: Survey and Other Advice
7. Next Steps

Team

1. **City of Toronto**- Tara Coley, Brendan McKee, Nancy Aranha, Sue Wenzl
 - Client- City Parks Standards and Innovation
2. **thinc design**- Mike Tocher + Trish Clarke
 - Project Management, Design Lead, Landscape Architecture and Planning
3. **Swerhun Facilitation**- Matt Wheatley, Ian Malczewski, Alex Smiciklas
 - Public and Stakeholder Consultation/Engagement
4. **PLAN B Natural Heritage**- Brad Bricker + Jeremy Jackson
 - Ecology and Arboriculture
5. **Animal Behaviour Consultants**- Kerry Vinson
 - Animal Behaviour Specialist

Overview

- 73 OLA sites that are owned and/or managed by Toronto Parks Forestry and Recreation
- Largest number of fenced off-leash areas in Canada
- Multiple surface types, sizes and designs

Background

- Dogs in Parks Strategy- 2007
 - Policy based on public consultation approved by Council
- People Dogs and Parks- 2010
 - Council approved a revision to 2007 policy
 - guideline for the establishment of new off-leash areas
 - balancing park user needs
 - communication and public awareness
 - Dog Owners Association (DOA)

Financial Overview

- 2009 to 2016- 5 million dollars of dedicated capital funding invested in off-leash areas
- 2017 there is no more dedicated capital funding
- off-leash areas are now funded through the same process as all other park amenities
- on-going maintenance funding continues to be a challenge

Why Now?

- off-leash areas can be better
- changes to pet ownership in apartments and condominiums
- more dogs living in the City
- increased demand to accommodate dogs in public spaces
- user concerns

Scope of Study

- explore common issues
- review global best practices
- stakeholder and public consultation to gain user feedback
- design solutions to improve existing OLAs
- eight (8) case studies will be selected
 - ▶ variety of challenges and opportunities
 - ▶ OLAs of different size, context and character

Study Goals

- improve existing OLAs through design, maintenance and operations
- foster healthy relationships
- evaluate OLAs to provide healthy, safe, accessible and sustainable environments
- adapt OLA designs to meet operational pressures
- develop guidelines to ensure consistency
- develop design recommendations that can be replicated
- improve community involvement and ongoing partnerships

Study + Consultation Process

1. **Phase One** *Spring/Summer*- Building Understanding
 - present and seek feedback on common issues (both City and users)
2. **Phase Two** *Summer/Fall*- Testing Ideas
 - 8 OLA Case Studies
 - draft design recommendations
3. **Phase Three** *Fall/Winter*- Finalizing Recommendations
 - present and seek feedback on preferred design recommendations

Ways to Participate

- **Stakeholder Group Meetings**

- ▶ organizations that have an interest in OLAs
- ▶ discuss common issues, strategies and recommendations

- **‘Pup’-Ups**

- ▶ connect with dog owners and park users at each of 8 case study sites
- ▶ seek feedback and potential recommendations

- **Public Surveys**

- ▶ present and seek feedback from broader public

Connected Initiatives

- People, Dogs and Parks- Off-Leash Policy (2010)
 - procedures and location criteria for OLAs
- Responsible Dog Ownership Campaign (2015)
 - findings on dog bite incidents and best practices on public education, legislation and enforcement
- Parks & Recreation Facilities Master Plan (2017)
 - improve availability of and access to facilities for parks and recreation at-large

Connected Initiatives

- Parkland Strategy (2017)
 - guiding long term planning for new parks in the next 20 years
- Green Bin Pilot (2018)
 - pilot aimed to divert organic waste from landfill and reduce contamination in the recycling
- Pet-Friendly Design Guidelines for High Density Communities (2019/2020)
 - future report of guidelines to inform the design and planning of pet amenities in multi-unit, high density communities

City Considerations When Accommodating Dogs

- compatibility with park design, variety of users and features
- size and location of the OLA
- neighbourhood characteristics
- fencing requirements
- Dog Owner Association
- maintenance
- life cycle costs

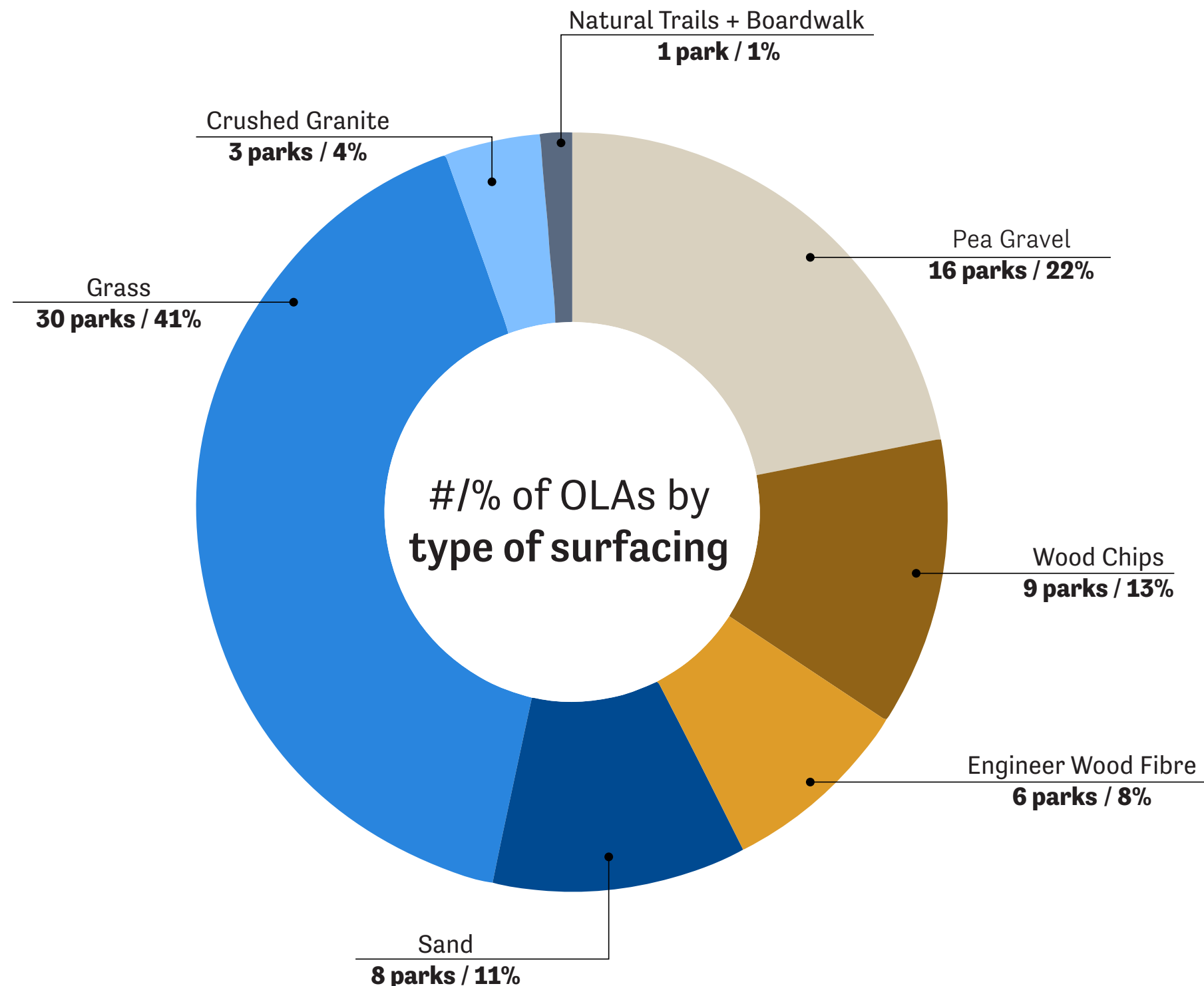
City's Thoughts on Accommodating Dogs

- safety, health and enjoyment
- harmonizing uses in parks and meeting a diversity of needs
- cost, including design, construction and maintenance
- environmental impacts
- accessibility
- feedback from park users

Existing OLAs in Toronto

- **73** different OLAs throughout Toronto
- **41%** or **30** are grass- most common surface
- **7** different types of surfacing options
 1. grass
 2. sand
 3. pea gravel
 4. engineered wood fibre mulch
 5. wood chips
 6. boardwalk/natural trails
 7. crushed granite
- **16%** or **12** are over a hectare
- **75%** or **55** are fenced

Existing OLAs in Toronto

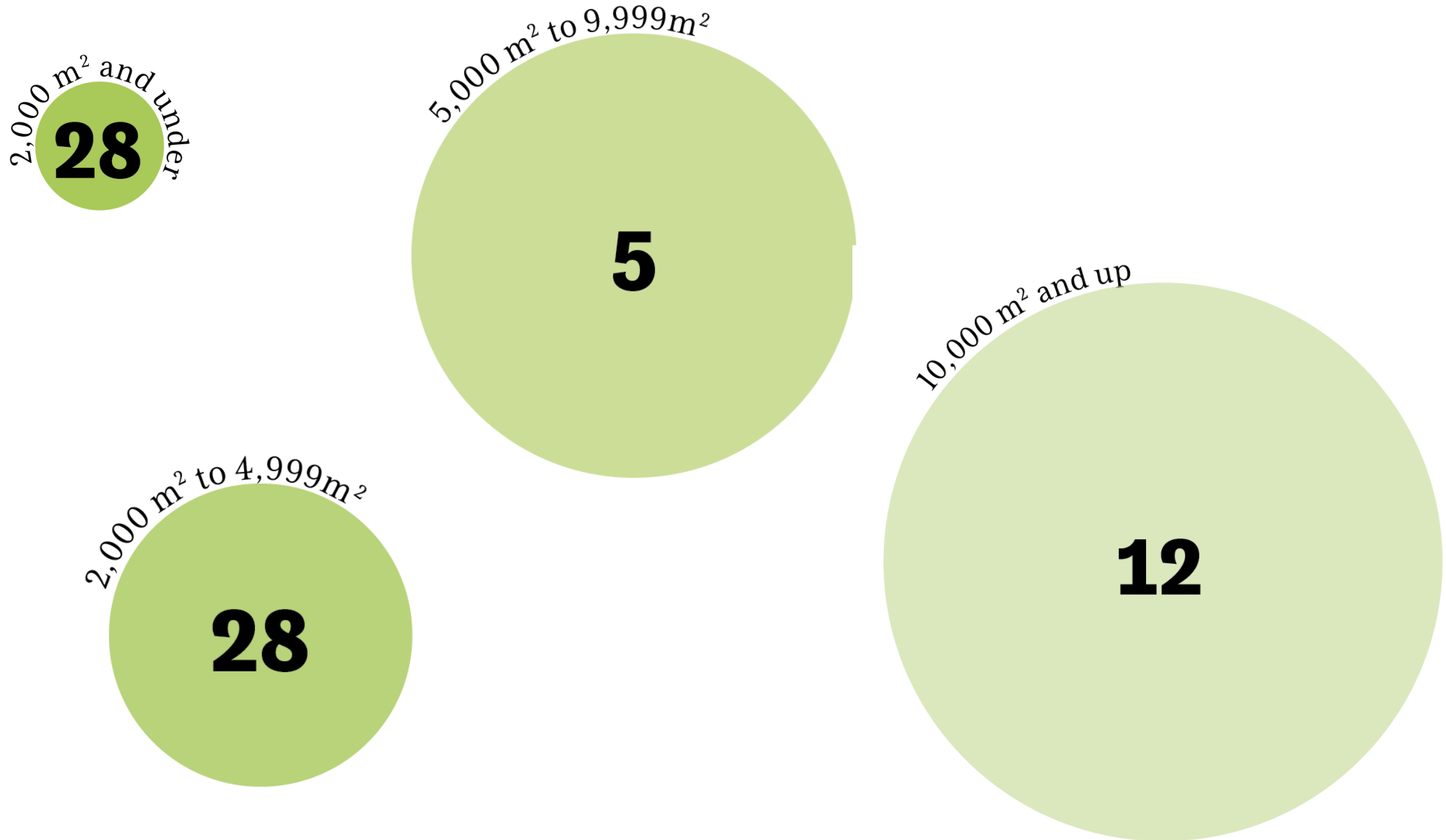


Existing OLAs in Toronto



largest vs smallest

Existing OLAs in Toronto







Bickford Park



Coronation Park



Silverbirch Beach





Stanley Park South

Best Practices

- local, national and global OLAs researched
- variety of elements were researched
 - ▶ accessibility
 - ▶ design
 - ▶ drainage
 - ▶ vegetation
 - ▶ surfacing
 - ▶ fencing
 - ▶ lighting
 - ▶ irrigation
 - ▶ site furnishings
 - ▶ operation and maintenance practices
 - ▶ volunteer groups
 - ▶ cost
 - ▶ environmental conditions
 - ▶ etc.

What We've Heard + Learned

- Accessibility for all users is important
- Surfacing choice impacts dog health and enjoyment of OLAs
- Different surfaces have different installation, maintenance and budgetary requirements
- No “one size fits all” solution
 - a range of options are needed to provide all users with a safe, healthy and enjoyable OLA experience
- Human experience in OLAs
- Residents and dog owners to take ownership

Case Study

Potential Selection Criteria

Parking

Irrigation

**Seating, Waste
Bins, Picnic Tables,
Community Boards,
etc.**

Accessibility

Drainage

Lighting

**Surfacing
Varieties**

Water Acces

Fencing Types

Small Dog Area

**Shade +
Vegetation**

**Environmentally
Sensitive**

Time Restrictions

**Urban vs
Suburban**

**Small / Medium /
Large**

**Fence vs No
Fence**

Case Study

Potential Selection Criteria

- Reflect a range of fencing types and surfacing types
- Include at least one OLA with a small dog area
- Reflect a broad range of environments (urban, suburban and environmentally-sensitive)
- Reflect a range of OLA sizes (small, medium and large)
- Include both accessible and less accessible
- Range of amenities (water access, seating, shade, parking, lighting, time restrictions, etc)

Discussion:

best practices + selection criteria

1. What are your thoughts on the preliminary best practices review? Are there any other topics or ideas you would like to see considered in this review?
2. What do you think about the draft case study site selection criteria? Are there any other criteria you would like to see considered?

Draft Discussion Guide

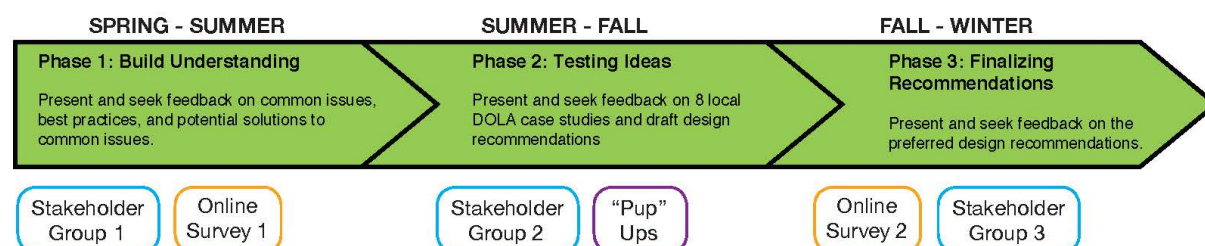
- 4 page booklet including text and graphics used as a tool to share with the public and Councillors
- Includes:
 - ▶ project background
 - ▶ purpose and key objectives of the planned Strategy
 - ▶ process to be followed
 - ▶ opportunities to get involved

Draft Discussion Guide

Get Involved! 🐾 🐾

Good decision-making needs good information. Your ideas, opinions, and local knowledge will help us improve the City's existing Dog Off-Leash Areas.

The Dogs Off-Leash Area (OLA) consultation process will happen in three phases and will involve City staff, park users, dog owners, and the general public city-wide.



There will be opportunities in-person and online to participate in the study, including:

Stakeholder Group Meetings

Purpose: Meet with organizations that have an interest in OLAs to present and discuss common issues, potential strategies to address issues, and draft recommendations.

"Pup" Ups – In 8 Sites

Purpose: Connect with dog-owners and park users through "in park events" in each of the eight case study sites to share and seek feedback on potential recommendations.

Public Surveys

Purpose: Present and seek feedback from the broader public on common issues, potential strategies to address issues, and draft recommendations.



For more information, contact:

dola@toronto.ca

<https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/animals-pets/pets-in-the-city/dog-off-leash-areas/>

DRAFT DISCUSSION GUIDE

City-Wide Study of Existing Dog Off-Leash Areas (OLAs) 🐾 🐾

Design, Operations, Maintenance and Best Practices

The City of Toronto's Parks Standards & Innovations Unit is leading an interdivisional study to examine how the City's existing Dog Off-Leash Areas (OLAs) can be reimaged to better harmonize with existing park uses, provide a satisfying user experience, and operate with optimum efficiency. This study is a result of the recommendation in the Parks & Recreation Facilities Master Plan (2017) to "develop criteria for improving existing dog off-leash areas."

This study will explore common issues, global best practices, and potential solutions in an effort to develop design solutions to help improve the City's existing OLAs. The City will select eight case study sites and examine the variety of challenges and opportunities in OLAs of different size, context, and character. Ultimately, the study will strive to address common issues, reflect consideration of a range of perspectives and needs, and propose site-specific recommendations that could apply to OLAs City-wide.

Consultation is an important part of the process - this Discussion Guide is intended to support public and stakeholder conversations about improving OLAs.



Did you Know?

The City now has over 70+ OLA sites that are owned and/or managed by Toronto Parks Forestry and Recreation.

Why Now?

The City has heard that OLAs could be better. Improving existing OLAs will help the City maintain a successful park amenity.

Toronto's population (human and dog) is increasing. With more pets and dogs living in the City there is an increased demand to accommodate them in public space like parks.

Existing OLAs need to work as well as possible. In 2010, the City's People Dogs and Parks – Off-Leash Policy led to a capital investment of over \$5 million dollars to create and improve OLAs. With that capital investment completed in 2016, the City is focusing on improving what it already has.



Study Goals

- ▶ Improve existing OLAs through effective design, maintenance, and operation
- ▶ Foster healthy relationships between dog owners and non-dog owners
- ▶ Elevate OLAs as spaces that provide a healthy, safe, accessible, and sustainable environment
- ▶ Adapt OLA designs to meet operational pressures, such as use and sustainability
- ▶ Develop guidelines to ensure consistent maintenance and operation across Toronto
- ▶ Develop design recommendations that can be applied to all existing OLAs
- ▶ Improve community involvement and develop future ongoing partnerships

Draft Discussion Guide



What does the City think about when it thinks about accommodating dogs?

Dog and human safety, health and enjoyment

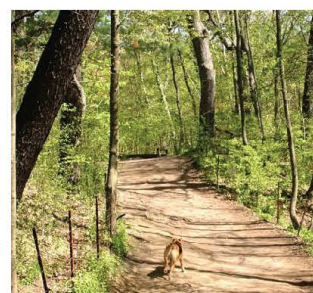
Harmonizing uses in parks and meeting a diversity of needs

Cost, including design, construction, and maintenance

Environmental impacts: foliage protection and surface erosion

Accessibility and feasibility

Feedback from park users



Where do OLAs fit into the City's approach to accommodating dogs?

OLAs are single-use spaces that are one of several options for dog owners and dogs. Other options are on-leash in public parks or sidewalks and off-leash in backyards and dog-friendly condo/apartment amenity spaces. Just like how the City provides a range of playgrounds for different children's age and ability levels, it also provides a range of OLAs so that dog owners can go to the one that is most appropriate for their dog.

Examples of different kinds of OLA amenities

Fenced Parks

- Woburn Park
- Regent Park
- Woolner Park
- L'Amoreaux
- And others

Small-Dog Areas

- Sunnybrook Park
- Allan Gardens
- Raymore Park
- Thomson Memorial Park
- And others

Commercial Dog Walkers

- Sherwood Park
- Cherry Beach
- Humber Bay Park West
- Botany Hill Park
- And others

Connected initiatives: the dog library

People, Dogs and Parks – Off-leash Policy (2010)

This policy outlines procedures and location criteria of OLAs in order to balance diverse community needs, and consider environmental impact.

Responsible Dog Ownership Campaign (2015)

Key findings on dog bite incidents and best practices on public education, legislation and enforcement in order to work towards increasing dog and human safety in the City.

Parks & Recreation Facilities Master Plan (2017)

Strategic directions to improve the availability of and access to facilities for parks & recreation at-large, with attention to balancing user needs, provision of OLAs as part of private development sites, and giving greater focus to improving existing OLAs.

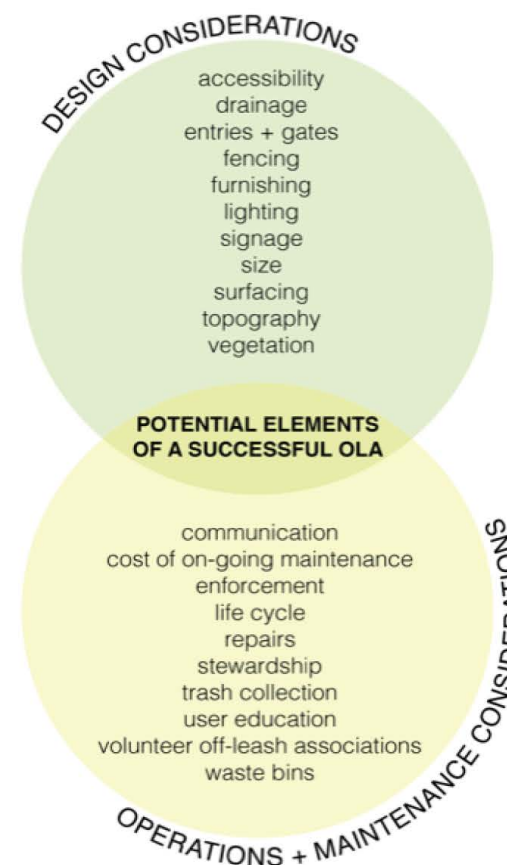
Green Bin Pilot (2018)

A successful pilot that aimed to divert organic waste from the landfill and reduce contamination in the recycling. Green bins are being installed now in all OLAs.

Pet-Friendly Design Guidelines for High Density Communities (2019/2020)

A future report of guidelines to inform the design and planning of pet amenities in multi-unit, high density communities with the goal of fostering more pet-friendly environments.

Design, Operations and Maintenance Considerations



This Study is looking at ways to improve the design, operations, and maintenance of existing off-leash areas. In order to provide a successful off-leash area, the overall goal for the design, operation and maintenance needs 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 and these can be included in Toronto's OLAs and tailored for each site. Some design elements to consider may include fencing, varying topography, variety of surfacing, shade, seating and water features.

With each design element comes different maintenance and operation requirements. Surfacing may require annual top ups (engineered wood fibre) or repairs (sod, artificial turf) and each site will require a different operation plan, as well as different installation and maintenance costs.

The consideration of design, operations and maintenance are interconnected. Throughout this process, the project team will work to understand the needs of the City, dogs, dog owners and the general public to ensure the design of OLAs satisfies the needs of the users while establishing a sustainable operation and maintenance program.

Did you Know?

Dogs must be licensed in order to use an off-leash area.

2019 OLA Surfaces

41% is grass	11% is sand
22% is pea gravel	4% is crushed granite
21% is EWF/wood	1% is boardwalk/natural trail



Public-Facing Survey

- to present and seek feedback from the broader public on:
 - ▶ common issues
 - ▶ potential strategies to address issues
 - ▶ draft recommendations
- survey to be available this summer

Discussion:

Survey, Discussion Guide + other advice

1. What do you think of the proposed approach to the public-facing survey and the Discussion Guide?
Given the focus and objectives of the study, are there any other themes/topics you'd like to see considered in the Survey or the Discussion Guide?
2. Do you have any other advice for the City?

Next Steps

1. Online Survey #1- Summer
2. Evaluate and Determine 8 sites- Summer
3. Stakeholder Consultation #2 and 'Pup'-Ups- Summer
4. Online Survey #2- Fall
5. Stakeholder Consultation #3- Fall
6. Final Report- end of 2019

thank you

