

City-Wide Study of Existing Dog Off-Leash Areas

Design, Operations, Maintenance & Best Practices
Project Update & Draft Recommendations

Stakeholder Workshop #4
September 2020

Presentation

1. Project Overview
2. What We've Heard Since October
3. Overview of Final Recommendations
4. Implementation

Project Overview

Study Goals

- improve existing OLAs through design, maintenance and operations
 - evaluate OLAs to provide healthy, safe, accessible and sustainable environments
 - adapt designs to meet operational pressures
 - develop design recommendations that can be applied across all 73 existing OLAs
 - improve community involvement and ongoing partnerships

Project Overview

Scope of Study

- ✓ explore common issues
- ✓ review global best practices
- ✓ select case study sites
- ✓ conduct stakeholder and public consultation to gain user feedback
- ✓ develop recommendations to improve existing OLAs
- ✓ provide guideline document to assist City staff, consultants and public to improve existing OLAs

Project Overview

Consultation Process

1. **Phase One *Spring/Summer 2019***- Building Understanding
 - ✓ present and seek feedback on common issues (both City and users)
2. **Phase Two *Summer/Fall 2019***- Testing Ideas
 - ✓ OLA Case Studies
 - ✓ preliminary design recommendations
3. **Phase Three *Fall 2020***- Finalizing Recommendations
 - ➔ present and seek feedback on preferred design recommendations
 - Target project completion Fall 2020

Project Overview

Study and Consultation Process

- stakeholder consultation increased from 3 to 4 meetings
- number of case study sites increased from 8 to 10
- spoken to various Parks Operations Staff and Supervisors within all districts
- interviewed DOA reps for each of the 10 sites
- survey #1
- 10 Pup-Ups
- survey #2 (draft design recommendations)

What We've Heard Since October

Highlights of SAC 3 Feedback

- The Preliminary Recommendations are on the right track. Participants were generally happy with the Preliminary Recommendations
- Winter maintenance and communication are key operations, maintenance, and administrative issues
- Support for recommendations that focused on more communication between the City, dog owners, Dog Owner Associations, and Commercial Dog Walkers
- Interest in how the City would be implementing the recommendations, including which recommendations were short-term, medium-term, and long-term

What We've Heard Since October

Highlights of Pup Up Feedback

- General support for the Preliminary Recommendations
- Enhanced and ongoing communication is essential
- Maintenance is crucial to the success of OLAs
- Surfacing materials should be dog and human friendly and promote good drainage
- Support for the study and consultation

What We've Heard Since October

Highlights of Operations Staff Interviews

- Regular maintenance for OLA's can be challenging given level of service required
- Gate and latch repair is the most common issue facing OLAs due to high use
- Providing shade and trees are considered important, however maintaining healthy trees in OLAs is challenging
- Prefer maintaining grass surface but can not be used on all OLAs, different types of surfacing are required depending on conditions and use

What We've Heard Since October

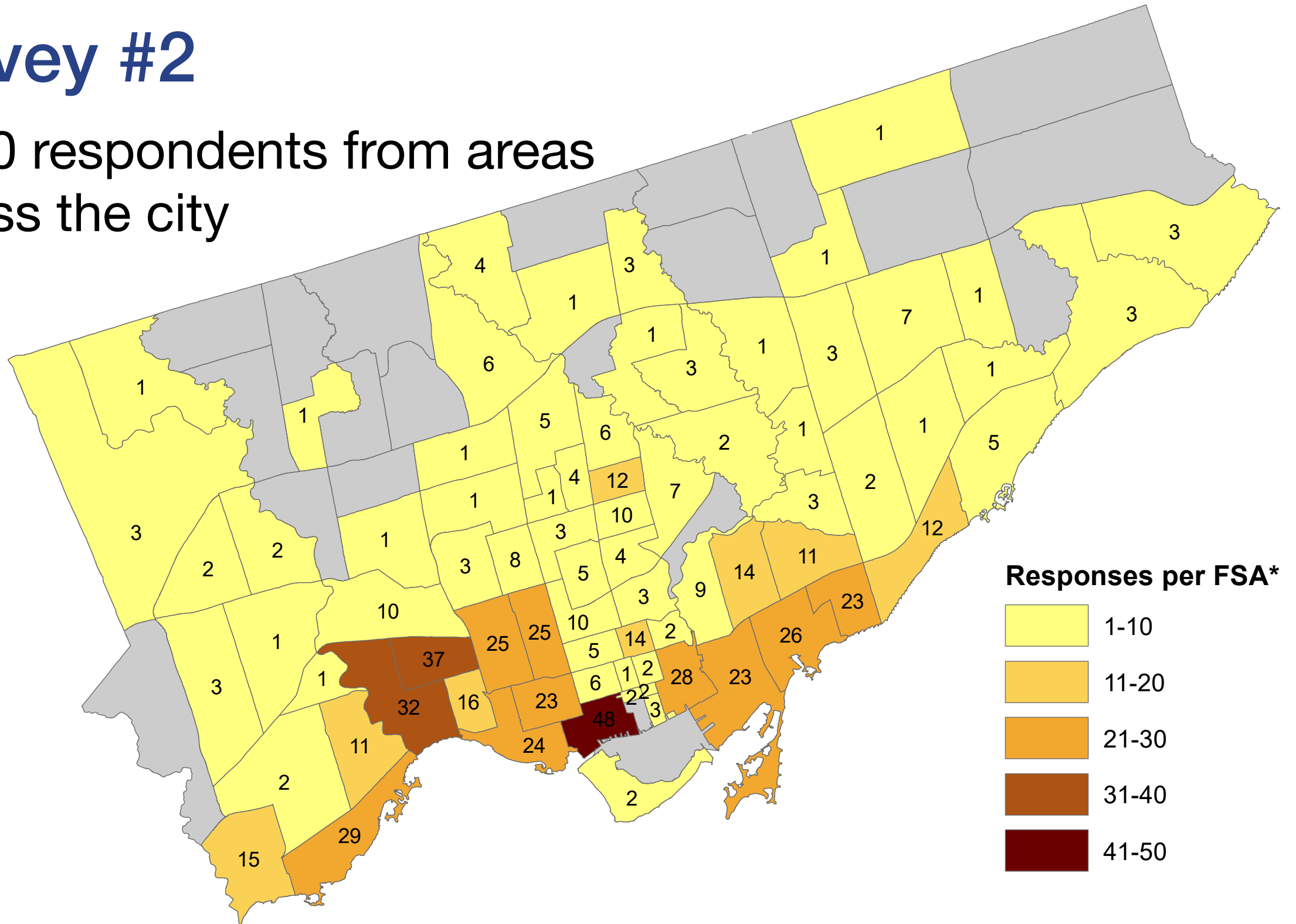
Highlights of Survey #2 Feedback

Survey of draft recommendations provided participants with:

- a brief overview on what the City has heard, what the recommendations are striving to achieve, and things considered in the development of the recommendations
- a high level explanation of the recommendations being proposed
- two questions under each topic:
 1. how effective respondents think the recommendations would be
 2. any additional comments/suggestions

Survey #2

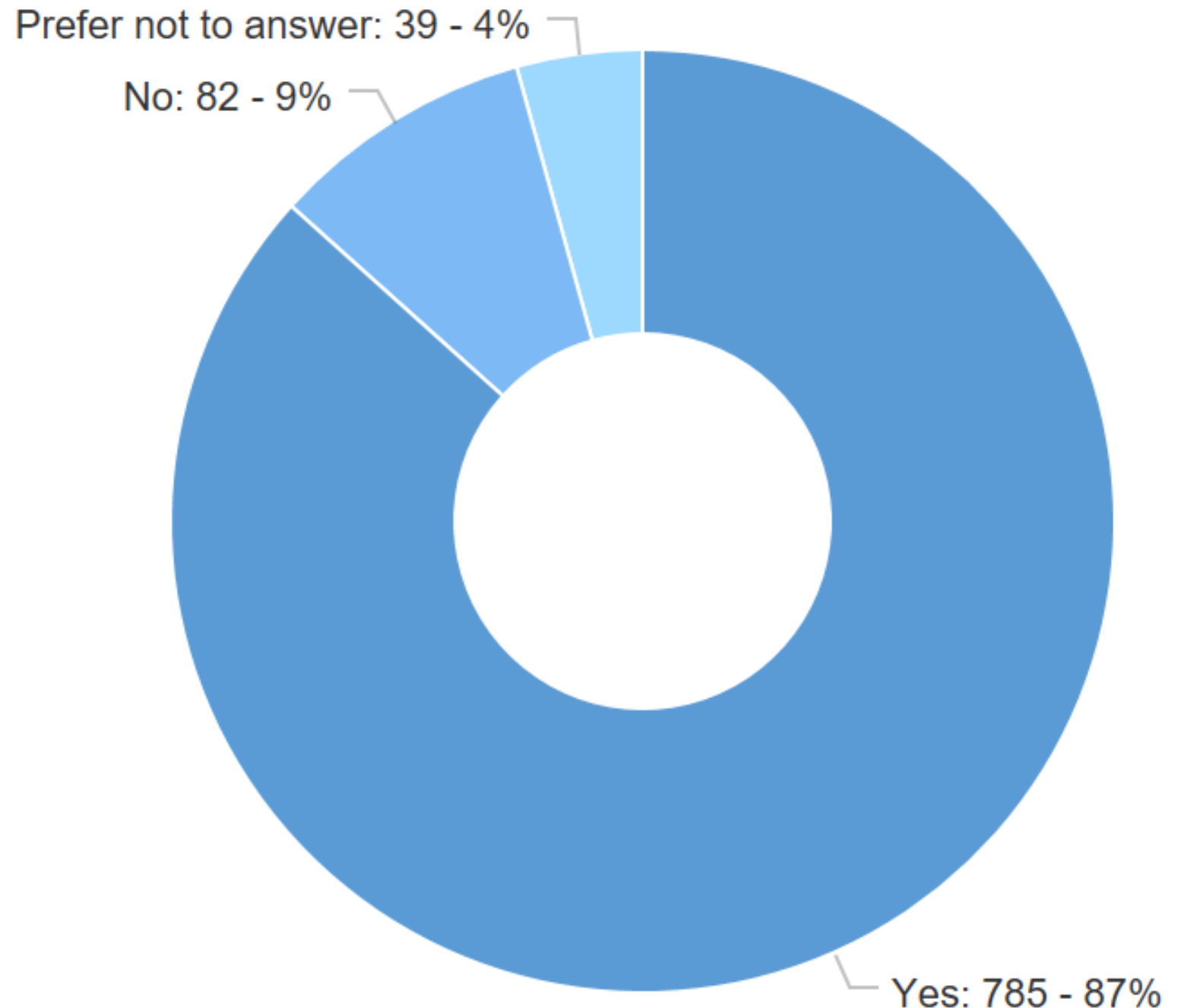
1,300 respondents from areas
across the city



*Forward Sortation Area (FSA) is the first 3 characters of the respondent's postal code. Note that this survey question was optional. 641 respondents answered the question, though only 633 provided a valid FSA in Toronto.

What We've Heard Since October Survey #2


Both dog owners and non-dog owners



What We've Heard Since October Survey #2

Eight (8) Questions:

1. Shade
2. Surfacing and Drainage
3. Fencing and Entrances
4. Amenities
5. Lighting
6. Water
7. Operations and Maintenance
8. Administration

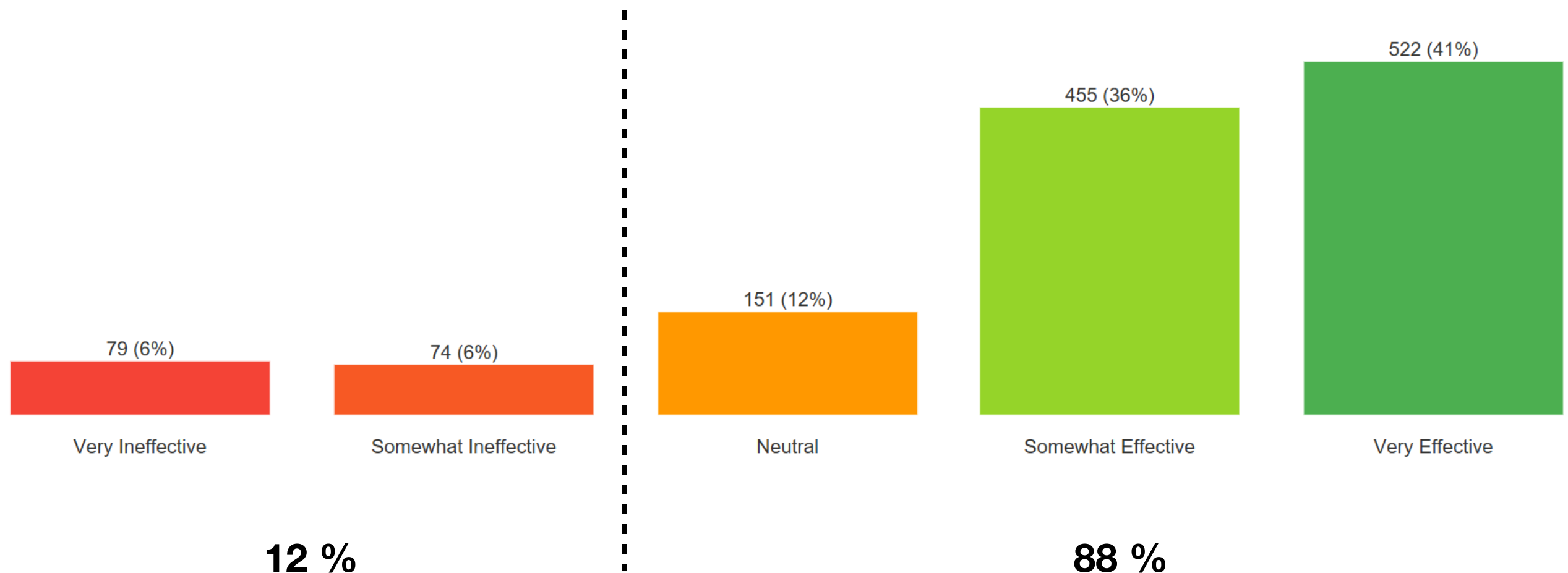


In the survey, further information was provided to help explain the recommendation by providing context and more details

- survey closed February 18th
- feedback provided used to refine recommendations

What We've Heard Since October Survey #2

- **Shade:** How effective do you think these recommendations would be in improving existing Off-

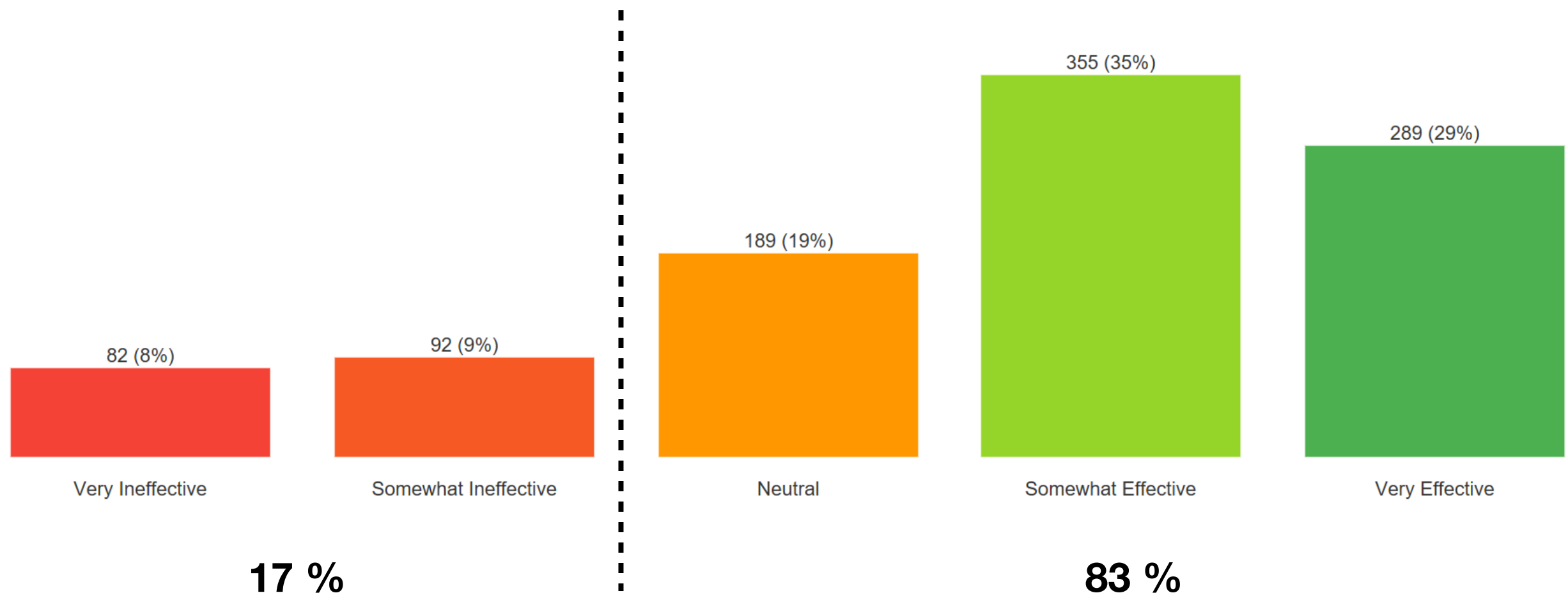


What We've Heard Since October Survey #2

- **Shade:** comments (205)
 - General support for shade recommendations and agreement that shade is an issue that needs addressing. A small portion of respondents (6%) said shade is not a big issue
 - Many prefer trees over shade structures (37%), though others (14%) prefer shade structures over trees. A few (2%) did not like raised planters

What We've Heard Since October Survey #2

- **Surfacing and Drainage:** How effective do you think these recommendations would be in improving existing Off-Leash Areas?



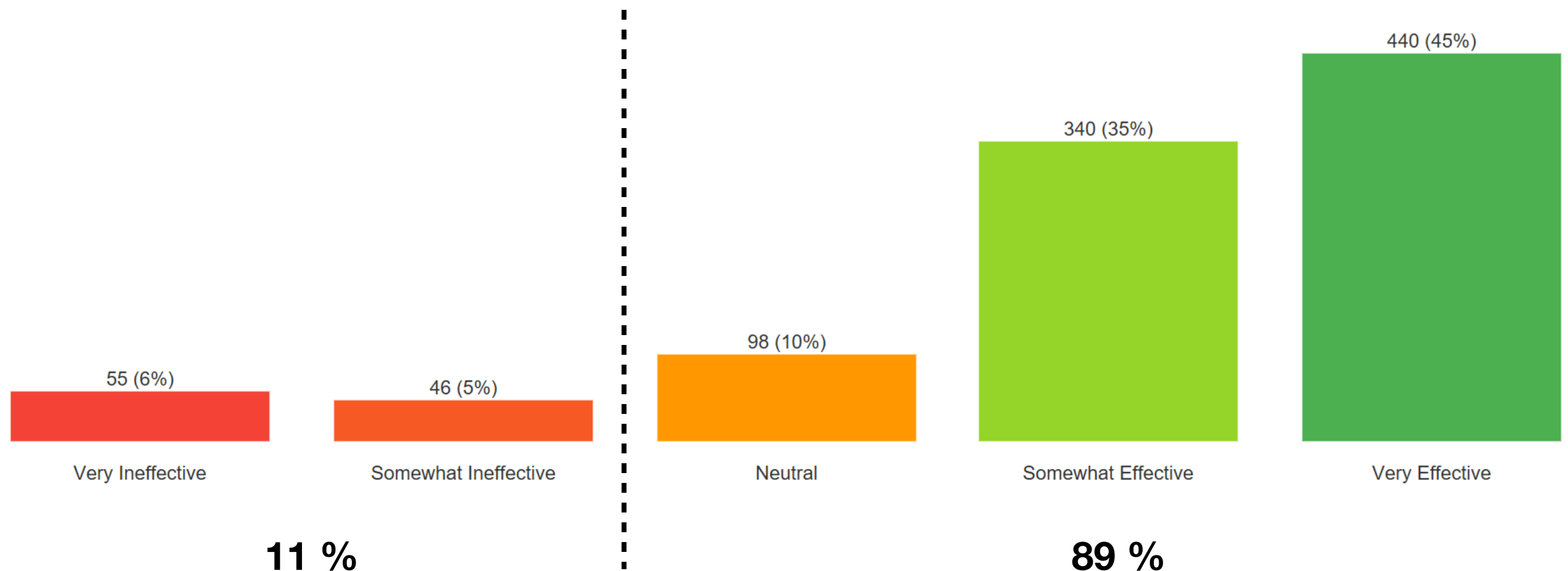
What We've Heard Since October Survey #2

- Surfacing and Drainage:

- 368 comments received, however most are about surface preference, not the application of the recommendations
- More clarity is required regarding the application of the matrix and the various surfacing types in the plan
- With the exception of grass as a preferred surface, comments further reinforce fact that one surface type will not satisfy everyone

What We've Heard Since October Survey #2

- **Fencing and Entrances:** How effective do you think these recommendations would be in improving existing Off-Leash Areas?

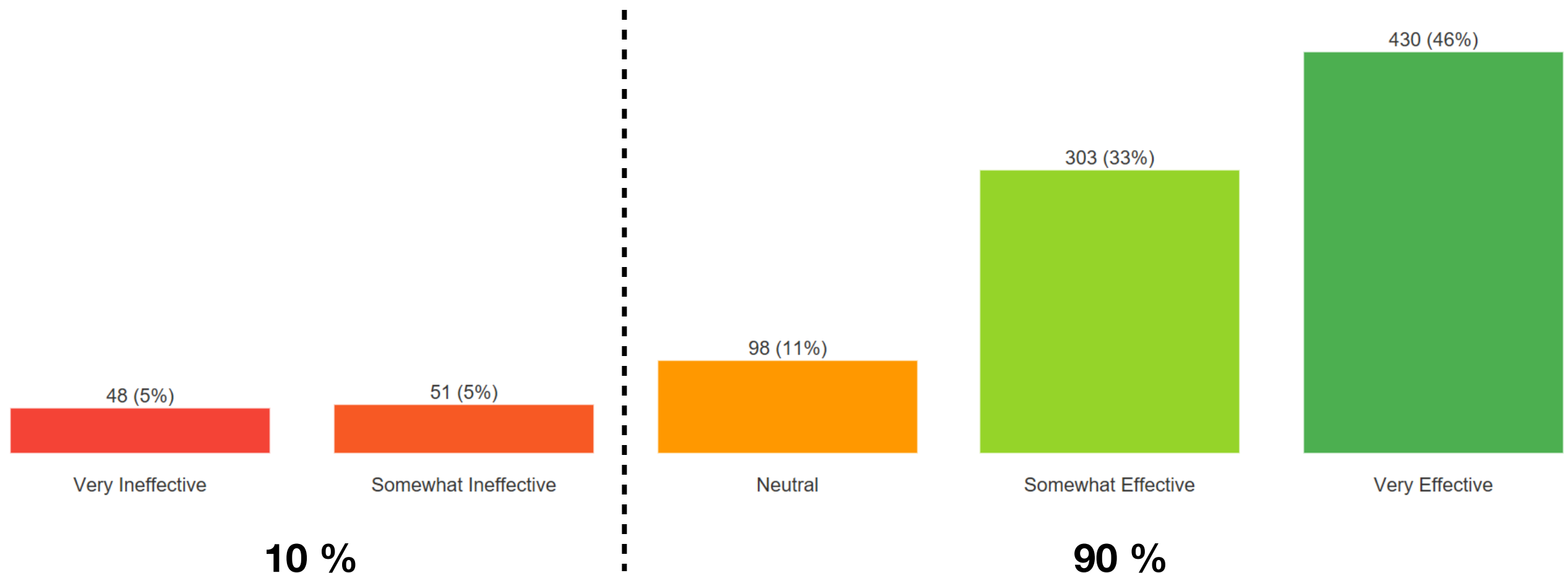


What We've Heard Since October Survey #2

- **Fencing and Entrances:** comments (84)
 - More than half of respondents (61 %) had stressed comments/issues on fence heights (no consensus)
 - A fair portion preferred fencing (29%), though a small percentage of others (5%) prefer unfenced

What We've Heard Since October Survey #2

- **Amenities:** How effective do you think these recommendations would be in improving existing Off-Leash Areas?

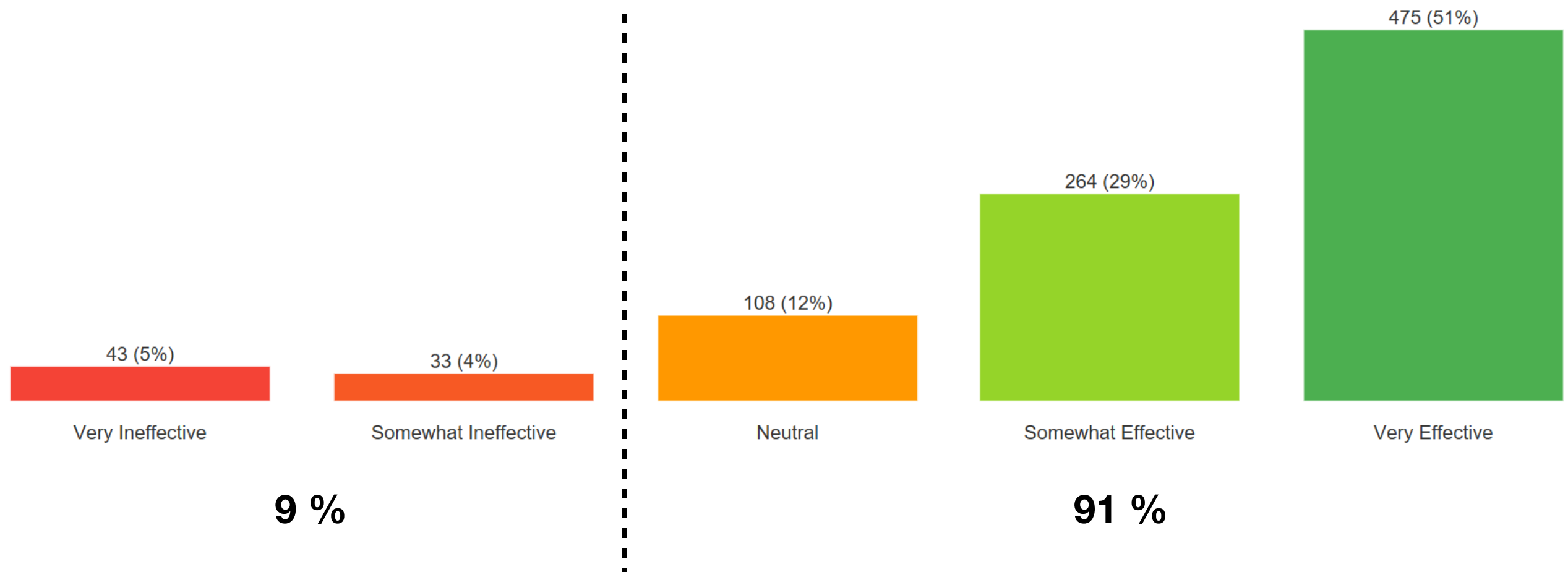


What We've Heard Since October Survey #2

- **Amenities:** comments (68)
 - There were a few general comments (3%) for amenities recommendations and (6%) commented no changes are required
 - Almost half responded to be against agility equipment (49%), though others (41%) preferred agility equipment

What We've Heard Since October Survey #2

- **Lighting:** How effective do you think these recommendations would be in improving existing Off-Leash Areas?



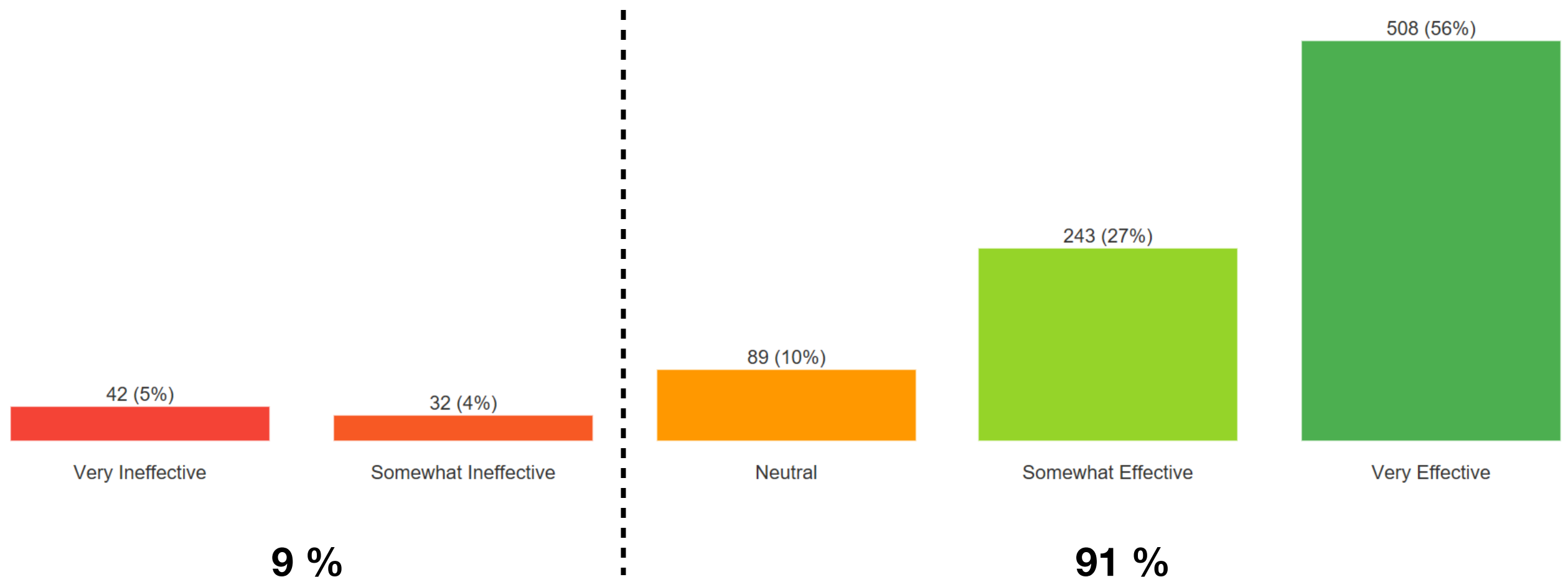
What We've Heard Since October Survey #2

- **Lighting:** comments (122)
 - Many (84%) had a preference for lighting while fewer (16%) preferred no lighting

- * Concerns related to lighting primarily raised issues pertaining to cost, impacting wildlife/natural areas, noise and illicit activities at night

What We've Heard Since October Survey #2

- **Water:** How effective do you think these recommendations would be in improving existing Off-Leash Areas?

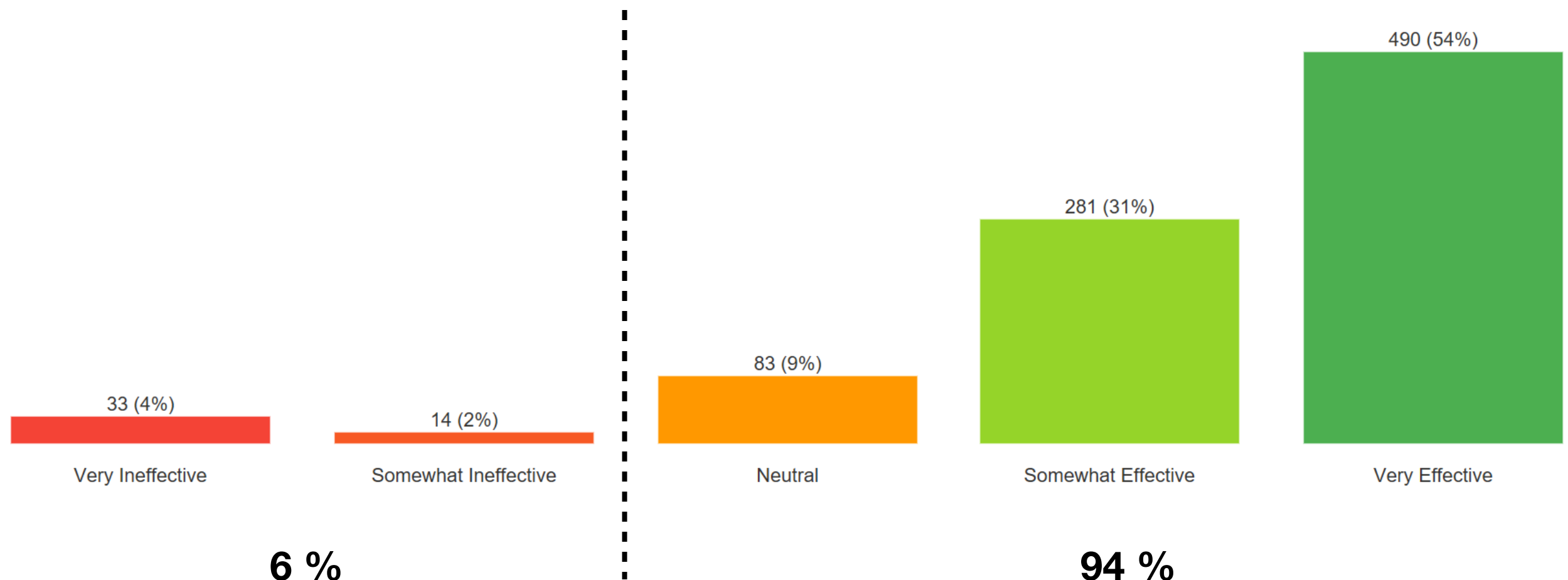


What We've Heard Since October Survey #2

- **Water:** comments (151)
 - Some (28%) of respondents commented no water/play features are necessary while (6%) had comments regarding irrigation
 - More than half (55%) preferred water access, fountains and hoses. Others (11%) had a preference specifically for water play features

What We've Heard Since October Survey #2

- **Operations and Maintenance:** How effective do you think these recommendations would be in improving existing Off-Leash Areas?

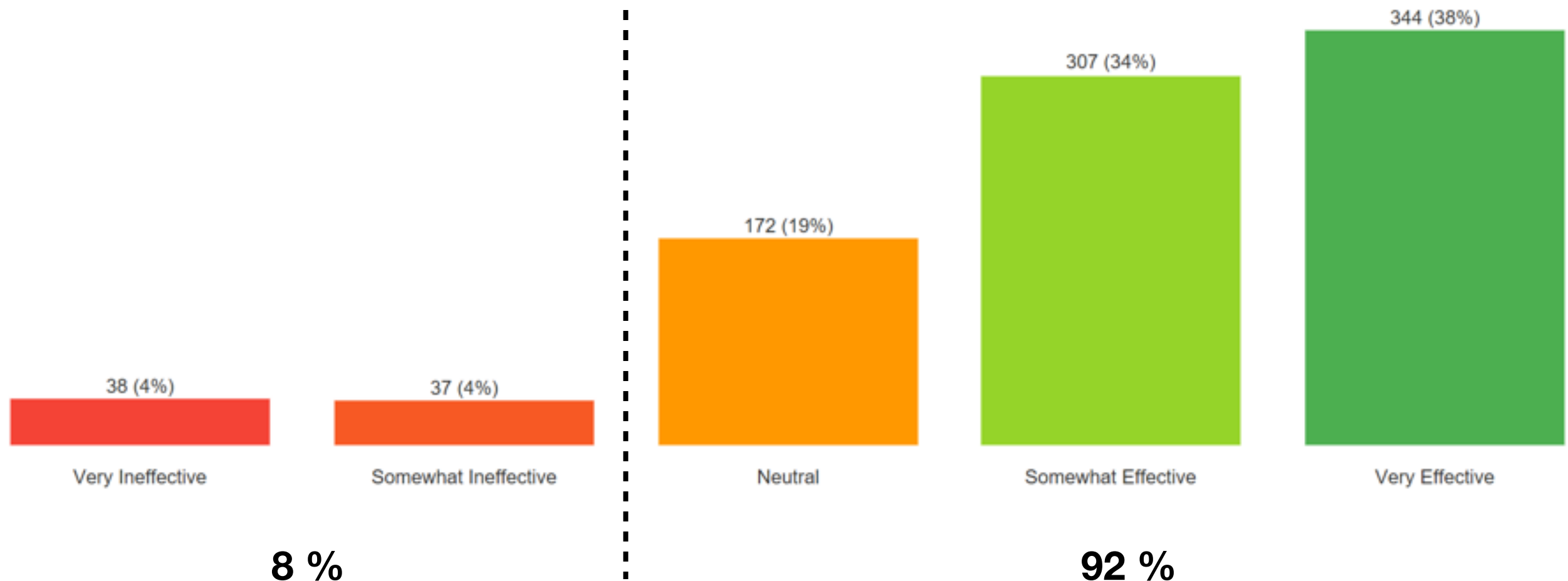


What We've Heard Since October Survey #2

- **Operations and maintenance:** comments (11)
 - Both policy and general comments provided (27%) while a fair number (45%) commented that no changes were required

What We've Heard Since October Survey #2

- **Administration:** How effective do you think these recommendations would be in improving existing Off-Leash Areas?



What We've Heard Since October Survey #2

- **Administration:** comments (95)
 - 32% had a preference for education and signage
 - 28% commented that more enforcement is needed
 - 17% of respondents commented on policy
 - 13% disagreed with time restrictions
 - 5% commented on introducing rules regarding spayed/neutered dogs in OLAs
 - 5% felt more restrictions should be placed on professional dog walkers

Natural Environment Considerations

- A separate set of recommendations will apply to improving existing OLAs in or adjacent to protected areas
- Improvements to existing OLAs in or adjacent to ESA's will comply with existing ESA, ANSI, and other protection by-laws and policies

Natural Environment Considerations

- Specific recommendations developed with environmental considerations in mind include:
 - ▶ Standard fence-height of 5 feet to protect ESA's
 - ▶ LED and dark sky compliant lighting to protect wildlife and their habitat
 - ▶ Improved signage to educate the public and park users about the space they are using
 - ▶ Improved education about ESA's through an outreach and a communications plan

Final Recommendations

- All recommendations generally well received
- Feedback has confirmed that there is no one design solution for all OLAs
- When improving OLAs City staff, landscape architects (consultants) and the community need to work together to determine the appropriate solution for their OLA
- More context and direction will be added to each recommendation to ensure informed decision making on when to apply certain enhancements and changes

Final Recommendations

COVID-19/Pandemic Considerations

- Recommendations have been reviewed in light of COVID-19
- Many recommendations already make sense and address COVID health recommendations in regards to social distancing (e.g. design of entrances and seating placement)
- Ongoing budget considerations could be impacted due to recent COVID-19 responses and will be continually reviewed

Final Recommendations

Shade

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

* *Please note all recommendations are to be read in conjunction with the final report*

Final Recommendations

Shade

Points to highlight:

- ▶ Preference for trees over structures whenever possible
- ▶ Placement of structure to be separate from entrance to minimize people congregating
- ▶ Focus on tree planting around perimeter of OLA to improve tree health

Final Recommendations

Surfacing and Drainage

D2.1	Areas that do not currently achieve positive drainage to be regraded to encourage positive drainage (min. 2%)
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D2.2	Install multi-surfacing types
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D2.3	Install 300mm min. wood chips
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D2.4	Install 300mm min. Engineered Wood Fibre (EWF)
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D2.5	Install 300mm min. of crushed granite
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D2.6	Install synthetic turf
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D2.7	Install 200mm min. gravel
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D2.8	Install grass seed mix (fescue mix)
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* Please note all recommendations are to be read in conjunction with the final report

Final Recommendations

Surfacing and Drainage

Size <i>Topography</i>	Extra Small OLA (under 1,000 sq m)		Small OLA (1,000 to 2,000 sq m)		Medium OLA (2,000 to 5,000 sq m)		Large OLA (over 5,000 sq m)	
	<i>less than 2% slope</i>	<i>greater than 2% slope</i>	<i>less than 2% slope</i>	<i>greater than 2% slope</i>	<i>less than 2% slope</i>	<i>greater than 2% slope</i>	<i>less than 2% slope</i>	<i>greater than 2% slope</i>
Low Use	Multi surfacing: fescue mix with wood chips for pooling	Multi surfacing: wood chips in heavy use areas and fescue mix in low use areas	Multi surfacing: fescue mix with wood chips for pooling	Fescue mix	Multi surfacing: fescue mix with wood chips for pooling	Fescue mix	Multi surfacing: fescue mix with wood chips for pooling	Fescue mix
Medium Use	Gravel	Wood chips/EFW	Wood chips/EFW	Multi surfacing: wood chips in flatter area, fescue mix in sloped areas	Multi surfacing: wood chips in flatter area, fescue mix in sloped areas	Multi surfacing: wood chips heavy use areas and fescue mix in low use areas	Multi surfacing: wood chips in flatter area, fescue mix in sloped areas	Fescue mix
High Use	<i>With water line:</i> Artificial Turf <i>With no water line:</i> Gravel	<i>With water line:</i> Artificial Turf <i>With no water line:</i> Gravel	<i>With water line:</i> Crushed granite <i>With no water line:</i> Multi surfacing: gravel with wood chips/EFW	Wood chips/EFW	<i>With water line:</i> Crushed granite <i>With no water line:</i> Multi surfacing: gravel with wood chips/EFW	Wood chips/EFW	Multi surfacing: wood chips in flatter area, fescue mix in sloped areas	Multi surfacing: wood chips heavy use areas and fescue mix in low use areas

Final Recommendations

Surfacing and Drainage

Points to highlight:

- ▶ Reinforce pros and cons of each surface type based on level of use and site conditions
- ▶ Emphasize need to incorporate multiple surfaces whenever possible (D2.2)
- ▶ Use table as a tool to determine the appropriate surface based on user patterns, site conditions and community preferences

Final Recommendations

Fencing and Entrances

D3.1	Replace existing latches with upgraded latch
D3.2	Replace 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

* *Please note all recommendations are to be read in conjunction with the final report*

Final Recommendations

Fencing and Entrances

Points to highlight:

- ▶ Reinforce pros and cons of different fence types and heights
- ▶ There is no consensus on fence type however 1.5 m (5 feet) appears to address most conditions
- ▶ Fence type (steel vs post and paddle) to be based on environment/context

Final Recommendations

Amenities

D4.1	Consider installing 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 accessible seating
D4.6	Install City signage within OLA and prior to entry
D4.7	Provide community boards at main entry/exit
D4.8	Install educational and interpretive panels at main entry/exit

* *Please note all recommendations are to be read in conjunction with the final report*

Final Recommendations

Amenities

Points to highlight:

- ▶ Agility equipment to be considered if community requests, there is sufficient space, and sufficient funding to install and maintain
- ▶ Change small dog area (D4.2) to include shy or older dogs to accommodate all dogs that may be intimidated by the larger area
- ▶ Seating should be dispersed throughout and not consolidated at entrances

Final Recommendations

Lighting

D5.1	Install sensor lighting at main entrance
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D5.2	Install user activated lights at entrance(s)
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D5.3	Install sensor solar lighting
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D5.4	Install sensor lighting along paved pathway within OLA
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D5.5	Replace existing lights with LED sensor lighting
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* *Please note all recommendations are to be read in conjunction with the final report*

Final Recommendations

Lighting

Points to highlight:

- ▶ Reinforce in recommendations consideration for minimizing impact of lighting on adjacent homes
- ▶ Lighting to be discouraged in or adjacent to environmentally significant areas to avoid impacts on wildlife
- ▶ All lighting to be motion activated or photocell

Final Recommendations

Water (existing water source)

D6.1	Provide accessible multi-tier drinking fountain
D6.2	Install spray feature as part of multi-tier drinking fountain
D6.3	Install irrigation

* *Please note all recommendations are to be read in conjunction with the final report*

Final Recommendations

Water

Points to highlight:

- ▶ Requires existing water source
- ▶ The introduction of water play to be considered based on community interest and feedback during the design process
- ▶ If provided, water play needs to be appropriately located to not interfere with other park users

Final Recommendations

Operations and Maintenance

O&M1	Set maintenance and facility upkeep standards for all OLAs
O&M2	Perform weekly 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 pathway to OLA is clear of ice + 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

* Please note all recommendations are to be read in conjunction with the final report

Final Recommendations

Operations and Maintenance

Points to highlight:

- ▶ The success of many recommendations will be contingent on maintenance
- ▶ Low maintenance design options are preferred
- ▶ Maintenance expectations should be considered in consultation with Parks Staff and Forestry Staff during the design process

Final Recommendations

Administration

A1	Implement improvements to City Website
A2	Create classification of OLAs that reflects the City's new Parkland Strategy park classifications (2019)
A3	Post Code of Conduct and by-law in every OLA
A4	Introduce time restrictions if none currently exist
A5	Create educational resources
A6	Scheduled lighting

* *Please note all recommendations are to be read in conjunction with the final report*

Final Recommendations

Administration

A7	Promote volunteer and stewardship opportunities
A8	Gather accurate and current usage data
A9	Perform an Environmental Impact Assessment
A10	Make improvements to Dog Owner's Association Program
A11	Increase by-law enforcement
A12	Re-allocation of Commercial Dog Walkers Permit Fee

* *Please note all recommendations are to be read in conjunction with the final report*

Final Recommendations

Administration

Points to highlight:

- ▶ Investigate potential to require all off-leash dogs to be spayed/neutered
- ▶ Time restrictions to be considered in consultation with the community on a park by park basis
- ▶ Introduce on-leash signage in parks where off-leash dogs outside of an OLA is an issue
- ▶ A6 Scheduled Lighting to be removed

Implementation

- Improvements to OLAs to be undertaken in conjunction with park capital improvement projects
 - Parks selected as part of Parks, Forestry and Recreation's Capital Project's park improvement program
 - Project's are assigned/allotted budget from Park's capital improvement budget
 - Projects undergo a design and construction implementation process of typically 1-2 years

Implementation

- Specific improvements to OLAs will be developed in consultation with City stakeholders, community and design consultants
 - OLA improvements will be considered as part of the larger park revitalization project
 - Scope of work / extent of improvements will be determined as part of the larger park improvement requirements
 - Community consultation during the design process will be a key factor in determining what improvements are made to the OLA

Implementation

- There is no one size fits all solutions for Toronto's OLAs. Each project is unique and must consider the site, community's needs and desires, and budget
 - Shade - trees vs structure
 - Surfacing type - this study provides a recommendation only
 - Amenities - community interest
 - Lighting - context specific (proximity of homes, ESA, Ravine and Nature Feature Protection approval, dark sky compliant, etc.)
 - Water - availability and community preference

Implementation

- A portion of the budget assigned to general park improvements would be allocated towards OLA improvements
 - Extent of improvements will need to be considered in the context of all other park needs

thank you