



PROPOSED OFF LEASH STRATEGIES

Off Leash Advisory Committee

October 2011



CITY OF PRINCE GEORGE
Host city for the 2015 Canada Winter Games

Acknowledgments

We would like to extend our appreciation to the following:

Off Leash Advisory Committee

The members of the Off Leash Advisory Committee of Council would like to recognize our peers and acknowledge the time and support they have provided towards the development of Off Leash Strategies for Council's consideration:

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- Bylaw Services
- City Manager's Office
- Corporate Services
- Long Range Planning Division
- Parks and Solid Waste Division

Community of Prince George

The Off Leash Advisory Committee of Council is very grateful to the community of Prince George for providing input into off leash use and for supporting our efforts. Together, we can help create an Off Leash Program that works for our community so that we may all enjoy Off Leash Areas with our pets.

Contents

Acknowledgments	2
1.0 INTRODUCTION	5
1.1 Purpose	5
1.2 Background	5
2.0 OFF LEASH USE	6
2.1 Benefits	6
2.2 Challenges	7
2.3 myPG and Other Plans	7
2.4 Definitions	8
2.5 Existing Pilot Off Leash Areas	9
2.6 Community Comparison	10
3.0 PUBLIC CONSULTATION	11
3.1 Consultation Plan.....	11
3.2 Open Houses	11
3.3 Surveys.....	13
4.0 PROPOSED OFF LEASH PROGRAM.....	17
4.1 Principles.....	17
4.2 Policies	18
4.3 Development & Maintenance	19
4.4 Locational Criteria.....	20
4.5 Proposed Locations.....	20
4.6 Education & Enforcement	22
4.7 Stewardship.....	23
4.8 Funding	23
4.9 Marketing.....	23
4.10 Evaluation & Monitoring.....	23
5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS	24
6.0 CONCLUSION.....	25

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

This report outlines the proposed Off Leash Strategies that have been developed by the Off Leash Advisory Committee of Council. The recommendations in this report are formulated with the goal of supporting desirable and achievable off leash use that is balanced with other park uses, regulations and safe practices. The Committee will present this report to Council for potential adoption and implementation in the development of an Off Leash Program for Prince George.



1.2 Background

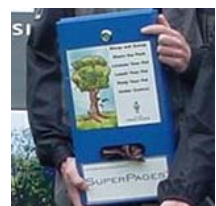
People Pets and Parks

Off Leash areas were first introduced in Prince George as pilot Off Leash/Under Control Areas through the People Pets and Parks (PPP) program. This program was developed to support the new pet regulations introduced in the revised Parks & Open Space Bylaw No. 7370 in 2002. The bylaw recognizes pets as legitimate users of parks and open spaces. Pets are also regulated in the City through the Animal Control Bylaw No. 7771. The PPP program includes guidelines to designate areas where pets are permitted under the condition that caregivers clean up & dispose of pet waste in the provided receptacles. The specific pet designation areas are as follows:



- **Leash Area** - Pets are allowed on a leash along most trails and in natural parks such as the Heritage River Trail, Forests for the World and Cottonwood Island Park.
- **No Pet Area** - Pets are not allowed in areas where safety, health, maintenance or habitat are of great concern, such as sports fields, playgrounds, floral beds and significant natural habitats.
- **Off Leash/Under Control Area** - Includes designated areas for pets to run and play under the pet caregiver's control. In 2002 & 2003, three (3) pilot Off Leash/Under Control Areas were introduced including Domano Boulevard, Ginter's Meadow and Moore's Meadow Park.

The PPP included a number of proactive measures to support the new pet regulations. This included educational brochures, installation of new signage and site reviews. Dog waste bag stations were also installed through the support received from corporate sponsors. Overall these efforts have helped to establish areas for people to recreate with their pets within the City's parks and open spaces.



Off Leash Advisory Committee

In response to a strong desire from the public for Off Leash Areas, City Council established an Off Leash Advisory Committee (OLAC) to develop an Off Leash Program for Prince George. The OLAC operates under a Terms of Reference (see Appendix A) with a six (6) member Committee and a limited duration format. The OLAC have been meeting monthly since May 2010 to pursue the mandate to develop Off Leash Strategies that include policies, physical site requirements, locations, expansion, costs, stewardship, education, partnerships, risk management and a monitoring program. The Committee was also required to host a public forum in order to get feedback from the community on draft recommendations for an Off Leash Program. Input from these recommendations was utilized in the development of Off Leash Strategies that are presented here to Council for potential adoption and implementation.



2.0 OFF LEASH USE

2.1 Benefits

The Proposed Off Leash Strategies recognize the numerous benefits of off leash areas, not only for the dogs, but also for the dog guardians and the community overall as follows:

- Provides a community setting in which people can gather and socialize; dogs are fabulous social ‘ice breakers’!
- Provides a place for dogs and their guardians to exercise safely.
- Allows dogs to socialize and exercise off leash; dogs that are highly socialized are healthier, happier, less aggressive and less destructive.
- Allows dogs to meet in neutral territory, which can reduce fear, territoriality and aggression in dogs.
- Promotes responsible pet-ownership and the voluntary enforcement of dog-control laws.
- Regular unleashed exercise in a protected environment often reduces barking and other control problems.
- Can offer elderly and disabled citizens a place to safely exercise their canine companions.
- Encourages pedestrian traffic with alert canines on leash through the surrounding neighbourhood; many communities have found a significant reduction in crime around such parks.
- Can lead to better compliance of leashing bylaws outside of off leash areas.

2.2 Challenges

While there are certainly a number of benefits to Off Leash Areas, there are a number of challenges that can hinder their development and ongoing operations. An Off Leash Area must carefully balance the off leash needs with other park uses, which can prove challenging within existing parks and open spaces. Effective use and management, particularly as it relates to dog waste, is an important consideration. The safety of people and their dogs is paramount and dog guardians have a great responsibility to control their pet while respecting other park users. Many Off Leash Areas are also shared use areas where other user groups must understand that off leash use will occur. Environmental impacts must also be minimized as natural habitats can be compromised severely by off leash use.

2.3 myPG and Other Plans

The Proposed Off Leash Strategies meet a number of objectives that are outlined in the myPG Integrated Community Sustainability Plan, the Draft 2011 Official Community Plan and the 2008 Parks and Open Space Master Plan as follows:

myPG

An Off Leash Program meets the following Society, Environment and Economic goals of myPG:

- *Clear Identity and Pride* – Off Leash Areas are often cherished spaces for the community to gather.
- *Equitable Community* – A diversity of Off Leash Areas can meet the needs for people of various ages and mobility levels.
- *Safe Community* – Well designed and operated Off Leash Areas provide safe off leash use and can also help reduce crime in underutilized parks and open spaces.
- *Healthy and Active* – Active recreational needs for pets and their guardians are often met in Off Leash Areas and can contribute significantly to their physical and mental well-being.
- *Supportive and Engaged* – Off Leash Areas are social spaces that are also enhanced by ongoing stewardship.
- *Green City Green Practices* – The management of dog waste, locating Off Leash Areas away from sensitive habitat and water quality control measures support a cleaner, healthier environment.
- *Fiscal Responsibility* – Off Leash Areas typically operate within limited budgets and rely on stewardship opportunities and fundraising efforts to effectively support their development and management.

Draft 2011 Official Community Plan

The Draft Official Community Plan (OCP) contemplates the pursuit of Fenced Dog Parks to meet the emerging trends for recreation and leisure facilities within parks and open spaces.

2008 Parks and Open Space Master Plan

The Parks and Open Space Master Plan includes a Recommendation (R21) that “*The existing Off Leash Program should be reviewed and enhanced with the establishment of additional single use Off Leash Areas*”.

2.4 Definitions

The Proposed Off Leash Strategies report includes a number of definitions that generally follow the Parks & Open Space Bylaw No. 7370 and the Animal Control Bylaw No. 7771, or are defined for the purposes of this report as follows:

Dog License – Means a license of dog ownership that has been issued by the City and paid for in the current licensing year between January 1st and December 31st inclusive.

Fenced Dog Park (FDP) – Means an Off Leash Area that is fully fenced and gated and is specifically designed for guardians to allow their dogs off leash while under control of their guardian and adhering to off leash policies and applicable bylaws.

Off Leash Area (OLA)¹ – Means a shared use area where dogs are allowed off leash under the control of their guardian, while respecting other user groups and adhering to off leash policies, applicable bylaws and shared use etiquette.

Guardian – Means any person who keeps a dog either by legal title, or has possession or custody either temporarily or permanently.

Park and Open Space – Means all land dedicated, owned or controlled or used by the City as public park, sports field, playground, recreational area, boulevard trail, trail or other City public open space.

Under Control – Means that a dog is near or at a distance from its Guardian and responds to the Guardian's voice, sound or sight commands; has not bitten, attacked, chased, threatened or done any act that injures a person or another animal; and has not caused damage to property.

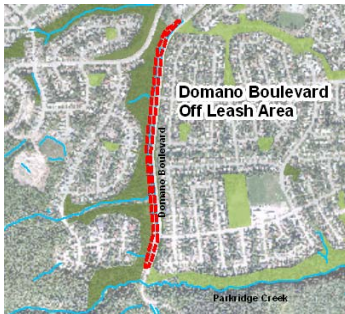


¹ For the purpose of this report, the term 'Off Leash Area' generally refers to off leash use at both Off Leash Areas and Fenced Dog Parks unless otherwise noted.

2.5 Existing Pilot Off Leash Areas

The three (3) pilot Off Leash/Under Control Areas that were introduced through the People Pets and Parks Program include Domano Boulevard, Ginter's Meadow and Moore's Meadow Park. A review of these areas determined the following:

Domano Boulevard (west side, south of the Knights of Columbus Hall)



The Domano Boulevard pilot Off Leash Area is located along the west side of the boulevard. The area is roughly 2 hectares (5 acres) includes a mix of young vegetation and mature trees within a narrow boulevard, with no formal trail or large open meadow. Traffic on this road is consistent and is often travelling at a fast speed. There is also no barrier to traffic and the area is popular for illegal motorized recreational vehicle use. As a result of these factors, this area is not well used by the general public for off leash.

Ginter's Meadow



Ginter's Meadow is a well used and well loved area for off leash use. This area is situated predominantly within a road right of way and is 12 hectares (29 acres). The area is shared with equestrians, cyclists & pedestrians or joggers who mainly use the Foothills Boulevard Trail that bisects the area. Motorized recreational vehicle use has been problematic. Signage is limited and there are three (3) dog waste stations located near Massey, Ferry Avenue and at the northwest end. The parking and vehicle route off Massey are rough throughout the year and are not maintained in the winter. The Massey entrance is a large social space, but it is poorly drained with large berms and not easily accessible.

Moore's Meadow



Moore's Meadow Park is a well used and well loved area for off leash use. The park is 59 hectares (146 acres) and shared use of the park and meadow occurs throughout with cyclists and pedestrians. There is a large lower meadow surrounded by a forested valley, in addition to a smaller meadow above near Zimmaro Park on 1st Avenue. There is only one (1) sign outlining that the area is a pilot Off Leash Area. Waste receptacles and dog waste bag dispensers are limited and off leash use occurs throughout the park as there is no delineation of off leash boundaries.

2.6 Community Comparison

Research was conducted on over 20 Canadian cities to confirm the best practices and precedents for successful Off Leash Programs (see Presentation Boards in Appendix B). This research confirmed that there are **no consistent best practices for off leash use** as most programs are in their infancy. However the research did conclude some commonalities as follows:

- Densely populated city centres typically have restricted time or seasonal use, and almost always consider the spaces as ‘shared use’ – single use, fenced dog parks are less common.
- Cities within prairie grassland environments often have a large number of off leash areas (i.e. Calgary, Kamloops).
- Most communities have public stewardship groups for their off leash areas.
- Most communities do not distinguish between fenced dog parks and free running/off leash areas.
- Most unfenced off leash areas are located within areas of open sight lines (i.e. not densely forested areas) for dog control and safety.
- Policies and facility design are very similar throughout the various communities, for example most fenced dog parks have a 1.2m (4’) high chain-link fence and contain a vestibule gated entry/exit area, as well as a separate fenced area that can be used by smaller or less active dogs, or as a refuge space.

3.0 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

3.1 Consultation Plan

The OLAC prepared a Consultation Plan to address the mandate for the Committee to host a public forum and ensure that the community would be engaged in a meaningful consultation process. The Consultation Plan identified a process where public consultation would occur through a series of Open House events and through the use of an Input Survey. The Consultation Plan also included details on the format, logistics and advertisement of the Open Houses and Input Survey. The Consultation Plan was approved in full by Council on May 2, 2011 and is included in Appendix B.

3.2 Open Houses

Upon approval of the Consultation Plan, the OLAC scheduled a series of Open house events. The events were scheduled during the month of June 2011 at five (5) locations throughout the community. The locations included two of the existing pilot Off Leash/Under Control Areas (Ginter's and Moore's Meadows) during peak-use hours, as well as at a number of central locations in the Hart, College Heights and east Bowl during the evening hours. The Open House events were coordinated by the OLAC members with assistance from City Administration. The Open House events were attended by over eighty (80) people in total, with the bulk of attendance observed at the events scheduled at the existing pilot Off Leash/Under Control Areas located at Ginter's Meadow and Moore's Meadow Park.



Advertising

The Open House events were advertised at various outlets to ensure that the community would be notified of their opportunity to review and comment on the proposed Off Leash Program. A description of the Open House events and schedule was sent to all the local media outlets through the use of a Media Release. The Open House information was disseminated at other locations including the City Matters column of the Prince George Citizen newspaper for a 4 week period, starting 2 consecutive weeks prior to the 1st Open House event, and the [City of Prince George](#) homepage and [People Pets and Parks](#) webpage. Open House Posters (Appendix B) were located at pilot Off Leash/Under Control Areas, Civic Facilities, Pet Care/Supply Companies, community/senior centres, coffee shops, various retailers and at the potential candidate off leash sites located in various City parks. The OLAC also worked with the City to create a video highlighting the Committee's work and the need for the community to participate in the off leash public consultation process. This video was featured on the City's [YouTube](#) site and also on the local Shaw Cable access channel.

Presentation Boards

The Open House events included large Presentation Boards outlining best practices in Off Leash Programs, along with recommendations for existing and proposed off leash use. The best practices research included Off Leash Programs from over 22 communities from across Canada. The specific content of the Presentation Boards included the following:

- Background - OLAC & People Pets and Parks Program
- Summary of the 2008 Dog Owner Survey
- Benefits of Off Leash Areas
- Overview of Off Leash Programs in Canada
- Proposed principles for Off Leash Areas
- Review & recommendations for the existing 3 pilot Off Leash/Under Control Areas (i.e. Ginter's Meadow, Moore's Meadow and Domano Boulevard)
- Proposed Off Leash Policies
- Proposed Design & Development Standards
- Proposed Implementation Strategies
- Map of Potential Candidate Off Leash Areas

Copies of these Presentation Boards were also made available in hard copy format for participants to bring home or to distribute to others. The Presentation Boards are included in Appendix B.

Comment Sheets & Dot Map Exercise

Feedback from the Open House events was captured through the use of Comment Sheets and through a Dot Map Exercise. The Comment Sheets provided an opportunity for people to provide any general comments relating to off leash use. The Dot Map Exercise allowed Open House attendees to place a dot sticker on a map to identify locations they would propose as Off Leash Areas. The Map of Potential Candidate Off Leash Areas was used for this exercise and included the 26 potential sites that the OLAC identified for consideration in the proposed Off Leash Program.

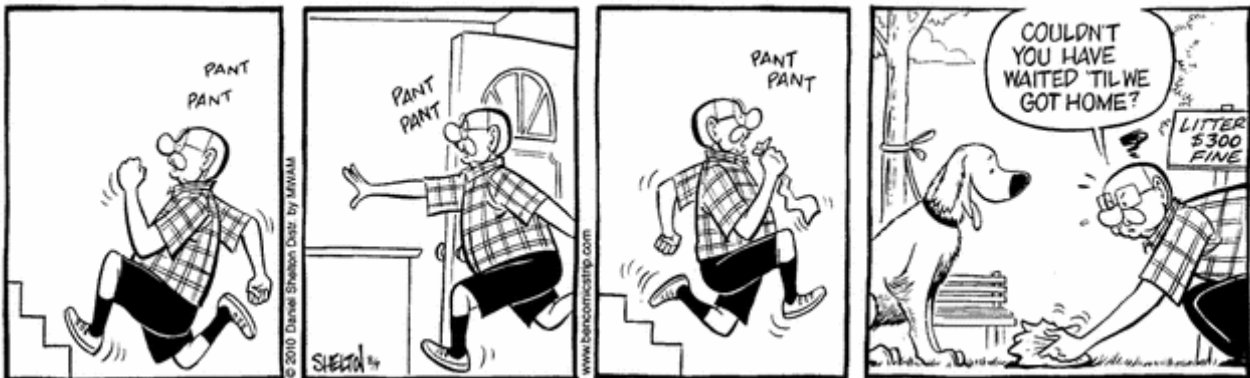
The results of the Comment Sheets and Dot Map Exercise confirmed general support for much of the draft Off Leash Program being presented, and it also identified a desire for off leash use in popular destination parks throughout the community. The detailed results from the Comment Sheets and Dot Map Exercise are included in Appendix B.

Feedback

The Open House events generated substantial feedback from the public regarding existing and proposed off leash use. Representatives of the OLAC were in attendance at the Open Houses to receive feedback and discuss the draft Off Leash Program. The Committee received input from the Open House attendees who expressed concerns and suggestions for Off Leash Areas. The main concerns expressed with Off Leash Areas included the need for respect amongst user groups, clean up of dog excrement by dog guardians, aggressive or out of control dogs, motorized recreational vehicle interference and limited bylaw enforcement. Suggestions were made for more waste receptacles, doggy bag dispensers, signage, park maintenance and bylaw enforcement. Overall, the Open House attendees were in favour of the draft Off Leash Program and expressed their appreciation that this work was underway.

Follow Up

The Presentation Boards and Off Leash Input Survey were also made available outside of the Open House events in order to provide a wide opportunity for comment. Those unable to attend the Open House events were able to access digital copies of the Presentation Boards and Input Survey through the City's website, or in hard copy format at City Hall and at various pet supply companies. The digital access terminals at City Hall and the Prince George Public Library were also suggested as locations to view the information and fill out the survey online. The Committee also engaged the public through booths at the Canada Day celebrations on July 1st in Fort George Park, at the Huble Homestead Dog Days on July 9th, and at the Prince George Farmer's Market on July 16th.



3.3 Surveys

Surveys of dog guardians were distributed by the City in 2000 and 2008 to better understand how the community and their pets use the City's parks and open spaces on or off leash. The OLAC reviewed all of these surveys for consideration in the preparation of the Proposed Off Leash Strategies. Through the aforementioned public consultation process in 2011, the OLAC also included an Off Leash Input Survey to supplement the surveys previously conducted by the City of Prince George. The input from this Survey supplemented previously collected information and confirmed strong support for many of the proposed Off Leash Areas and the associated Off Leash Program. The OLAC reviewed all of these surveys for consideration in the preparation the Proposed Off Leash Strategies. Details and key findings of these surveys are summarized below.

2000 Pet Owner Survey

In 2000, the City of Prince George distributed a Pet Owner Survey to all licensed dog owners through the dog license renewal mail out notices. The survey was developed to learn more about how dog guardians use parks and open spaces, and identified the community's level of support for proposed Off Leash Areas. Approximately 500 survey responses were received and support was indicated for many potential Off Leash Areas including the Cranbrook Hill Greenway, at Cottonwood Island, Ginter's Meadow, Foothills Boulevard and Moore's Meadow Park. The input from this survey was then used to delineate the three (3) pilot Off Leash/Under Control Areas introduced in 2002 and 2003 under the People Pets and Parks program.

2008 Dog Owner Survey

In 2008, a survey was provided to all licensed dog owners through the license renewal mail out notices. The survey was developed to learn more about how dog owners use existing Off Leash Areas, how they would like to see them improved and where they would suggest new ones. A total of 647 survey responses were received from over 3,500 licensed dog owners. The results of the survey are as follows:

Off Leash Areas

Pilot Off Leash Areas (e.g. Ginter's Meadow) are used multiple times per week by 55% of the respondents. City park or trail areas used most often to exercise dogs include Cottonwood Island Park (24%), Forests for the World (19%) and Moore's Meadow Park (18%). Other well used areas include neighbourhoods, Ginter's Meadow and the Forest Service Road south of Domano Boulevard.

Many respondents (52%) feel that the City needs more Off Leash Areas. Additional areas are strongly suggested throughout the City and particularly in the Hart. Suggested improvements for Off Leash Areas included fencing, dog waste stations (receptacles & bags), increased maintenance & enforcement, and the elimination of off road motorized vehicles.



Regulations

Most respondents (80%) feel that existing pet regulation signage is clear. Most respondents leash their dog in park or trail areas (75%) or on City streets (83%). Almost all respondents know that dog guardians are required by bylaw to clean up after their dog (97%) and almost all respondents indicated that they regularly clean up after their dog (96%). Many respondents use the dog waste stations (55%) and feel that we need more stations (70%). Some respondents indicated that guardians could and/or should bring their own bags (30%).

Conflicts

Some respondents indicated their dogs that have experienced conflicts with other dogs in a City park or trail (25%). In these conflicts, most of the offending dogs were not leashed as required by bylaw (85%). Some respondents themselves have experienced a personal conflict with another dog (16%). In these conflicts, almost all of the offending dogs were not leashed (92%). These conflicts often occurred at Cottonwood Island Park or in neighbourhoods where off leash use is prohibited.

Summary

The survey responses confirmed that improvements to pet regulations, enforcement, education and amenities are required in order to provide quality experiences. The establishment of clearly designated Off Leash Areas are required throughout the City to accommodate this use in a legitimate manner, thereby reducing conflicts in destination parks, neighbourhood parks and school areas that are frequently used by off leash dogs although prohibited.

2011 Off Leash Input Survey

An Off Leash Input Survey was utilized by the OLAC to collect feedback on the draft Off Leash Program. This Survey outlined a number of questions relating to potential off leash sites, policies, design and development standards, implementation strategies and recommendations for the existing pilot Off Leash/Under Control Areas. The Input Survey was introduced at the 1st Open House event on June 8th, 2011 and remained open for a one half month period until August 5th, 2011. The Input Survey and Presentation Boards were made available in hard copy format at various locations and also online through the City's website. A total of 169 completed surveys were received by the City. The following is a summary of the Survey findings. The detailed results of the Survey are available in Appendix C.

Potential Candidate Off Leash Areas

The survey respondents indicated strong support (>70%) for Off Leash Areas at a number of the pilot Off Leash Areas (see highlighted rows below), with general support at many other locations with the exception of many of the proposed neighbourhood park locations.

Location	Percentage of respondents		
	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree
1. Austin Road former elementary school	52	36	12
2. Carrie Jane Gray former snow dump	61	19	20
3. Diefenbaker	46	38	16
4. Exhibition Park (south of Ice Oval)	77	15	9
5. Freeman	56	26	18
6. Ginter's Meadow	91	4	5
7. Gladstone former elementary school	70	24	6
8. Glenview former ball diamond	56	35	10
9. Gordon Bryant	55	32	13
10. Harper	54	29	16
11. Heather Road west ball diamond	54	34	13
12. Hwy 16/97 Water Tower	58	26	16
13. Hudson Bay Slough old ball field	65	15	21
14. Ingledew	50	34	17
15. Jackpine	51	34	15
16. Jasper	47	36	17
17. Kelly	49	29	22
18. Lakewood	64	23	14
19. Lorne	52	29	18
20. Moore's Meadow	91	5	4
21. Nechako Riverside	78	14	8
22. Perry	53	31	16
23. University Way – north end	68	20	12
24. Vanier	59	25	16
25. Wilson Park south beach	82	11	7
26. Winnipeg – 15 th to Carney	61	25	14

Other suggested locations for Off Leash Areas

A number of locations were suggested throughout the City by the survey respondents. Popular destinations such as Cottonwood Island Park, Forests for the World, Fort George Park were commonly suggested. Riverside locations are also desired with the suggestion of formalizing off leash use at a popular dog swimming beach near the Grand Trunk Railway Bridge. A number of other locations were suggested, but mainly these were not located on City-owned lands.

Proposed Off Leash Policies

Support was indicated by the survey respondents for the overall proposed policies. The responses received on these policies indicated some common themes relating to:

- providing dog waste stations and ensuring dog guardians clean up after their pets,
- signage clearly stating the shared use rules for both dog guardians and other park users,
- allowing a caregiver to bring three (3) dogs rather than the suggested number of two (2),
- emphasizing the need for dog guardians to control their dogs, and
- keeping the rules concise and simple.

Ginter's Meadow & Moore's Meadow Recommendations

The survey respondents indicated strong support for the maintenance and upgrade recommendations for Off Leash Areas at Ginter's Meadow and Moore's Meadow Park. More dog waste stations were desired in both locations, with an emphasis on more waste receptacles at strategic locations in Ginter's Meadow. A number of responses for the Ginter's Meadow area supported the recommended improvements to the improve accessibility at the Massey entrance. Winter maintenance was also suggested for both locations, along with the need to find solutions for user group conflicts. Other suggestions were also made for a number of amenities and improvements to both locations.

Domano Boulevard Recommendation

Support was received from survey respondents for the recommendation to remove this site from the Off Leash Program. Many indicated that the location was unsafe or unusable as it is adjacent to a busy road. Those that do use this area for off leash use would require an alternate location if off leash use was no longer permitted.

Proposed Design & Development Standards

The survey respondents indicated their support for these proposed standards and mainly expressed a concern over how these standards would be funded. Fencing was supported, only with careful siting as a key consideration to facilitate off leash use. Winter maintenance, better signage and the provision of water were also suggested. Benches were desired by some, while others are concerned over their misuse. Some respondents also indicated a preference for larger Off Leash Areas and for areas exclusively for off leash use.

Proposed Implementation Strategies

The survey respondents indicated their support for the proposed implementation strategies. The respondents expressed the desire for stewardship opportunities in order to engage other users and support quality off leash use. Concerns over funding were also expressed, particularly if surcharges were placed upon off leash users. Many are also anxious to see Off Leash Areas implemented very soon in order to accommodate their immediate use.

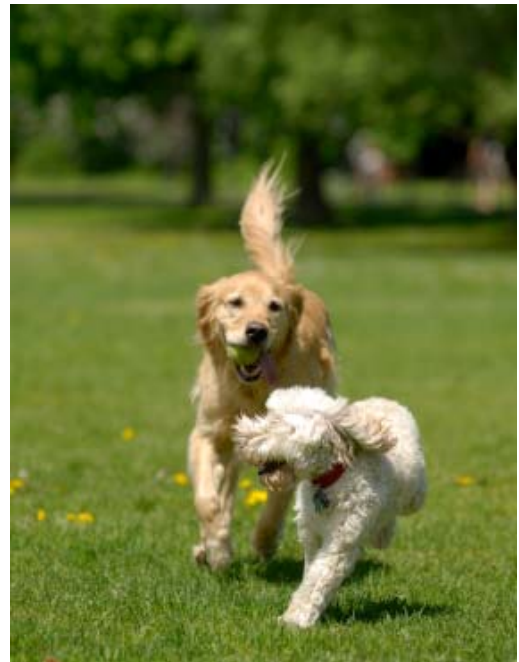
4.0 PROPOSED OFF LEASH PROGRAM

The Off Leash Program research that was conducted by the OLAC, along with the input received from the public consultation process, resulted in a great deal of information for the Committee's consideration. Many of the concerns and suggestions expressed by the community were also shared by the Committee, particularly the importance of not only establishing Off Leash Areas but also that the privilege of off leash use comes with a responsibility for dog guardians. The OLAC reviewed all of this information very carefully in order to develop off leash strategies that balance the various community needs and opportunities that are specific to Prince George.

4.1 Principles

Through the best practices research, a number of off leash principles were highlighted and are proposed for an Off Leash Program in Prince George as follows:

- Dogs are recognized as legitimate users of parks and open spaces.
- The **Privilege** to allow dogs off leash in parks and open spaces comes with the **Responsibility** for dog care providers to adhere to all off leash bylaws & rules.
- The need to accommodate dogs must be balanced with the needs of other park users.
- The health and safety of all park user groups and dogs takes precedence over off leash use.
- The protection of wildlife and their habitat takes precedence over off leash use.
- Potential user group conflict and safety concerns will be minimized through quality design, education and management.
- Individuals who choose to use off leash areas do so at their own risk.



4.3 Development & Maintenance

The implementation of an Off Leash Program would include considerations for the development of Fenced Dog Parks (FDP) and Off Leash Areas (OLA) as follows:

Amenity or Service	Fenced Dog Park (FDP)	Off Leash Area (OLA)
Size	Min. 0.4 hectares (1 acre) with preference for more than 0.8 – 1.2 hectares (2 – 3 acres)	Min. 0.8 hectares (2 acres) to more than 4.0 hectares (10 acres) preferred
Fencing/ Barriers	- Commercial grade chain-link fencing preferred at 4 - 6' height (1.2 – 1.8m) - Multiple entrances, each with a double-gated entry and exit system within a minimum 12' x 12' (3.6m x 3.6m) entrance area - Fencing to avoid right angles where possible to avoid dog cornering - Small fenced area directly adjacent to the larger fenced dog park as an optional space for small dogs or older, geriatric dogs	Barrier preferred such as topography, vegetation or a man-made barrier such as walls or fencing
Dog Waste Stations	Waste receptacle with dog bag dispenser at entrances with min. 1 per acre in larger areas	Waste receptacle with dog bag dispenser at entrances and evenly spaced where possible
Surfacing	Grass preferred with fine decomposed granular or other durable surface in high traffic areas	Naturalized grass preferred
Signage	Signage placed at entrances and clearly identifying the Off Leash Area, regulations and etiquette	Signage placed at entrances and clearly identifying the Off Leash Area, regulations and etiquette
Trees	Shade trees with 15 trees per acre preferred	Naturalized trees not impeding sight lines
Terrain	Preferably flat areas with gentle terrain	Varied terrain of rolling hills and natural features
Benches	Standard benches or donor benches with 3 per acre preferred	Naturalized seating such as logs and boulders only
Wheelchair Accessible	Universally accessible routes at entrances and along paths as appropriate	Preferably at entrance areas and some trails where feasible
Parking	Parking available directly adjacent off site	Parking available on-site where possible
Maintenance	- Weekly garbage removal in high use areas during peak seasonal use - Frequent mowing as required	- Weekly garbage removal in high use areas during peak seasonal use - Seasonal mowing of meadow
Enforcement	Animal control as required	Animal control and off road motorized vehicle control where feasible
Enhanced Services subject to funding or sponsorship		
Lighting	Lighting preferred for seasonal use	Not feasible in natural or more remote areas
Water	Dog/human water fountain where feasible	Not feasible in natural or more remote areas
Agility	Agility components where feasible	Not feasible in natural or more remote areas
Notice Board	Small notice board as feasible in high use areas	Larger notice board where feasible

To facilitate the development or fundraising of Off Leash Areas, cost estimates have been prepared for many of the amenities and services listed above. These cost estimates are available in Appendix D.

4.4 Locational Criteria

Off Leash Areas should be located in areas that meet all of the following criteria:

- Open areas that are safe for people and their dogs
- Areas with good sight lines and accessibility
- Unstructured play areas away from active play or high maintenance/intensive use areas such as sports facilities, playgrounds, water parks and floral beds
- Areas where sensitive wildlife habitat or water quality will not be compromised, such as many riparian areas
- Areas that are distributed throughout the community in neighbourhoods and at larger destinations
- Areas that are accessible from major transportation and transit routes
- Areas of high residential densities, but with a setback or buffer from adjacent residences
- Areas that may have a history of off leash use



4.5 Proposed Locations

The determination of potential Off Leash Areas included a review of the existing parks and open spaces in relation to the following:

- Ability to meet off leash standards
- Distribution of destination areas and neighbourhood locations throughout the community
- Compatibility with existing land uses
- Input from the public
- Anticipated lower expenses or impacts for site conversion and maintenance
- Accessibility within and to the area for safety, maintenance and enforcement

This review confirmed a number of areas that could be pursued for off leash use. These areas have been prioritized by the OLAC in order of areas with the highest need and/or demand. The list of proposed Off Leash Areas is certainly not exhaustive, as it would be subject to future land use changes and available opportunities. The prioritized list of proposed Off Leash Areas is provided below and maps of these areas can be found in Appendix E.

Proposed Off Leash Areas - High Priority Sites			
Park or Open Space	Class	Size	Site Recommendations
Duchess Park	FDP	1.0	Pursue Fenced Dog Park as recommended in the Duchess Park Plan
Freeman Park	FDP	2.6	- Create in naturalized areas at the south end of the park - Pursue fencing, signage and waste stations as required
Ginter's Meadow	OLA	29.0	- Adopt as an Off Leash Area - remove 'pilot' project status - Pursue upgrades including dog waste stations at the entrances/exits and signage outlining rules and guidelines - Increase seasonal mowing of the meadows - Upgrade Massey entrance social space with granular material - Increase enforcement of "No Motorized Vehicles" at the site - Pursue re-grading of the Massey vehicular entrance route and parking area
Gladstone former school	FDP	2.4	- Pursue agreement for use of some grounds at this closed school - Pursue fencing, signage and waste stations as required
Heather Rd. Park former ball park	FDP	1.0	- Remove former ball diamond buildings as required - Pursue signage and waste stations as required - Install gates at existing fence openings
Moore's Meadow Park	OLA	41.0	- Adopt meadow areas only as Off Leash Areas - remove 'pilot' project status - Pursue upgrades including dog waste stations at the entrances/exits and signage outlining rules and guidelines - Include fencing 50m from playground and hard surface court, to delineate the OLA from the play area - Increase seasonal mowing of the meadows
Wilson Park – south beach	OLA	1.5	- Pursue signage and waste stations as required - Widen access trail south and west of pumphouse

Proposed Off Leash Areas - Medium Priority Sites			
Park or Open Space	Class	Size	Site Recommendations
Carrie Jane Gray Park	OLA	5.0	Pursue signage and waste stations as required
Fraser River – GTRB beach	OLA	1.0	Pursue signage and waste stations as required
Glenview –former diamond	FDP	1.0	- Remove former ball diamond buildings as required - Install gates at existing fence openings - Pursue signage and waste stations as required
Lakewood	OLA	13.6	- Pursue signage and waste stations as required - Pursue fencing along 5th Avenue if required
Vanier Park	FDP	5.5	- Install fence between school, park and adjacent residences - Pursue fencing, signage and waste stations as required

Proposed Off Leash Areas - Low Priority Sites			
Park or Open Space	Class	Size	Site Recommendations
Diefenbaker	FDP	2.0	Pursue fencing, signage and waste stations as required
Exhibition Park – south	OLA	4.7	Pursue signage and waste stations as required
Hwy 16/97 Water Tower	OLA	9.0	Pursue signage and waste stations as required
Hudson Bay – old diamond	FDP	2.3	Pursue fencing, signage and waste stations as required
Ingledew Park	FDP	1.7	- Remove playground as required to facilitate off leash use - Pursue signage
Jasper Park	FDP	3.5	Pursue fencing, signage and waste stations as required
Nechako Riverside	OLA	3.4	Pursue signage and waste stations as required
Perry Park	FDP	2.5	Pursue fencing, signage and waste stations as required
University Way – north end	OLA	9.6	- Pursue agreement for Crown land portion - Pursue signage and waste stations as required
Winnipeg – 15 th to Carney	FDP	5.9	Pursue fencing, signage and waste stations as required

While this initial review identified a number of potential sites for off leash use, a more detailed study may be required prior to their implementation. The neighbourhood areas in the Millar Addition/South Fort George/VLA community area, Peden Hill, and Southwest/Upper College Heights will require further consideration to determine the best opportunities for off leash use. The review of these neighbourhoods and any others with greater residential densities and limited open space opportunities, should also consider the provision of timed use during certain hours, days or months as some parks and open spaces may provide opportunities for off leash use during lower use periods. The pursuit of any Off Leash Areas may also require further consultation with neighbourhoods to ensure that community needs have been considered. This consultation may take the form of on-site meetings at the proposed locations, notices provided directly to residents or public meetings.

4.6 Education & Enforcement

An effective Off Leash Program includes a number of education and enforcement initiatives in order to provide safe and comfortable use. A dog guardian's responsibility to comply with bylaws in Off Leash Areas, such as picking up and disposing of their dog's waste or controlling their pet, is often best approached through education. This education is often administered through the following methods:

- Clear signage that outlines regulations, etiquette and site boundaries, with signage placed at entrances in a back to back format where necessary in order to distinguish the various area regulations.
- Brochures, websites, workshops and Off Leash Area kiosks that help educate users on the regulations and their responsibilities as dog guardians.
- Off Leash Area users or stewards who share the rules with others and help foster responsible pet ownership.

Where enforcement is required, particularly in the case of controlling motorized recreational vehicles or aggressive dogs, support from enforcement agencies is required. Any aggressive dog behaviour would be subject to the City's bylaws, while motorized recreational vehicle would be subject to local and provincial regulations for motorized use.

4.7 Stewardship

The implementation and ongoing use of successful Off Leash Areas is proven in many communities to be the result of ongoing stewardship. This stewardship is often provided in the form of an Off Leash Committee that pursues fundraising or improvements of existing or future areas, as well as communicates directly with the City in regards to off leash concerns or suggestions. Stewardship is also well served in the formation of smaller stewardship groups for each of the Off Leash Areas, in order to educate users and assist with improvements and positive use of the areas.

4.8 Funding

The funding for Off Leash Areas can come from a variety of sources, most often as a result of partnerships between the City and various community sponsors. For many communities, the City will often fund the basic services or amenities such as signage, waste systems, surfacing and maintenance. Fencing may also be funded by City sources or through sponsorship opportunities. Other enhanced facilities or expanded Off Leash Areas are often sponsored by community donors. The City's Gifts and Legacies Program includes trees, benches and waste receptacles that could be sponsored in Off Leash Areas. Dog waste bag dispensers have also been sponsored in previous years by corporate sponsors. Where budgets fall short for the development and maintenance of Off Leash Areas, some communities have applied a surcharge for dog licenses or have secured funding through general tax levy.

4.9 Marketing

The marketing of Off Leash Areas is important to help inform both residents and visitors to the community of their off leash opportunities, and to help users comply with other pet regulations areas. Promotional information can be distributed through websites, brochures, maps, media outlets and at various public facilities and visitor's centres.

4.10 Evaluation & Monitoring

The development of a successful Off Leash Program would include a monitoring and evaluating program to ensure that the Off Leash Areas are functioning in a safe, comfortable and efficient manner. The implementation of an annual and semi-annual monitoring program is often pursued in new or pilot project Off Leash Areas. The monitoring of these areas can take the form of site reviews, input or surveys of user groups, before and after photos, and a review of operational costs. Some sites may also require intervention strategies where temporary closures are implemented in order to resolve any issues. Where the monitoring and evaluation confirms that the health and safety of the community is significantly compromised by off leash use at a site, or that off leash resources are proven to be insufficient, these areas may be converted to other uses which may include leash areas.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

There are a number of recommendations that have been generated from the Proposed Off Leash Strategies in order to effectively provide off leash use in Prince George as follows:

1. Pursue the development of an Off Leash Program for Prince George that follows the Proposed Off Leash Strategies.
2. Review and revise City bylaws as required to support off leash policies and use.
3. Pursue the immediate removal of the pilot status for the Off Leash/Under Control Areas at Ginter's Meadow and Moore's Meadow Park and formalize them within the Off Leash Program.
4. Pursue upgrades and service enhancements as appropriate at the Off Leash Areas in Ginter's Meadow and Moore's Meadow Park, given the intensive off leash use present at these destination sites.
5. Remove the pilot Off Leash/Under Control Area at Domano Boulevard from the Off Leash Program given the safety considerations at this site.
6. Pursue the proposed Off Leash Areas and Fenced Dog Parks in a prioritized sequence or as opportunities arise, pending the availability of resources.
7. Pursue the development of the Duchess Fenced Dog Park as the first Fenced Dog Park in Prince George and utilize the Proposed Off Leash Strategies in the development and operations of this site.
8. Review off leash opportunities in neighbourhood areas that are deficient in order to provide distributed Off Leash Areas throughout the community where possible.
9. Pursue the establishment of an Off Leash Committee of Council to act as a stewardship group and liaise with the City and any smaller Off Leash Area stewardship groups, while pursuing fundraising and stewardship opportunities as appropriate.
10. Review City funding sources to confirm what can be dedicated to the development, maintenance and enforcement of Off Leash Areas.
11. Pursue the marketing of Off Leash Areas through the People Pets and Parks program and other venues as appropriate.
12. Develop an Evaluation and Monitoring Program for Off Leash Areas in order to meet the various objectives for off leash use.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The Proposed Off Leash Strategies have been prepared by the Off Leash Advisory Committee of Council with the understanding that dog guardians require safe and secure areas to both exercise and socialize their pets, and that this use must also take into consideration other park uses and the availability of resources. A review of existing Off Leash Programs along with the input received on off leash use, confirmed a number of strategies for consideration in the development of an Off Leash Program for Prince George. Once an Off Leash Program is established, the implementation of Off Leash Areas can be pursued and enjoyed by the community.

“Walking a dog in public spaces within the city is a privilege that is dependent on controlling the dog, and if a dog walker cannot ensure that this is the case, it should be leashed.”

Off Leash Input Survey response

“The off-leash policy should clearly state that a person's right to feel safe is the first priority, not the pleasure of another person's dog. There should not be any doubt. Some people feel that their dog is innocent in all situations that other people might find threatening. If in doubt, the person's right to safety and well-being, including that of children, should clearly come first.”

Off Leash Input Survey response

