



City of Port Moody

Report/Recommendation to Council

Date: July 25, 2023
Submitted by: Community Development Department – Building, Bylaw, and Licensing Division
Subject: Off-Leash Dog Area within the City Hall Precinct

Purpose

To report back to Council on the implementation approach for an off-leash area in the vicinity of City Hall.

Recommended Resolution(s)

THAT if Council would like to proceed with a designated dog park, the recommended location is the amphitheatre and the recommended timeline for the pilot is from mid-September 2023, through early May 2024 as recommended in the report dated July 25, 2023, from the Community Development Department – Building, Bylaw, and Licensing Division regarding Off-Leash Dog Area within the City Hall Precinct;

AND THAT the implementation of the pilot include costs for installing temporary fencing, signage, waste receptacle, and other miscellaneous expenses;

AND THAT a budget of up to \$20,000 be approved and funded from Council Contingency.

Background

At the May 9, 2023, Regular Council Meeting, the following resolution was passed:

RC23/108-109

THAT staff report back on recommendations to facilitate the creation of an off-leash dog amenity in the City Hall precinct.

In a coordinated review, staff from the Bylaw Enforcement, Environment, Parks, Procurement and Risk Management, and Cultural Services divisions identified potential sites for an off-leash dog area within the City Hall precinct. In **Attachment 1** there is a map identifying each potential location by number.

Staff identified five potential sites directly adjacent to City Hall for consideration:

Site 1 – Amphitheatre, behind the Inlet Theatre

Site 2 – Grassy strip West of the Fire Hall

Site 3 – The grassy wedge East of the Library

Site 4 – The grassy area North of the Library

Site 5 – The grassy strip behind the tennis courts

The following divisions were consulted and have provided information and feedback on each site:

- Environmental Division – Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA), wildlife concerns.
- Parks Division – Drainage, erosion, soil compaction, grass maintenance
- Cultural Services Division - Outdoor and indoor events
- Municipal Insurance Association of B.C. (MIA) – Safety and risk

In reviewing each area, key considerations included safety to the public, safety of the amenity users and their pets, impact to wildlife, impact to Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA's), impact to soil and vegetation, noise, accessibility, and impact to other user groups including recreation and library programming. Choosing a location that requires the least amount of mitigation to reduce the impact a dog park will assist in ensuring the success of this pilot project.

Discussion

Impact to Wildlife and ESA

As shown on the attached map (**Attachment 1**) there is an ESA adjacent to sites 1, 2, and 5. Environment staff have identified site 5 as snake habitat and have deemed it as a “No-mow” area. Wildlife such as coyotes and bears use areas 1 and 2 as a travel corridor. A bear is frequently seen in the vicinity of City Hall during the spring and summers months. Staff recommend fencing for all potential sites to mitigate any dog, human and wildlife interactions and to keep off-leash dogs out of the ESA.

Impact to Vegetation

Parks staff will be unable to maintain the existing grass that currently grows in all identified locations. The condition of the grass and soil will deteriorate as a result of a dog park use. Generally, soil becomes compacted, and vegetation growth is stunted in these conditions. Dogs often dig holes in the ground as well. The area used would require remediation to bring it back to its original state in order to return it to an amphitheatre use. Even with a season end in early May it is doubtful the grass fully would return in time for general public use over the summer.

Impact for Events and Programing

The open areas around City Hall are very well used by the public. Use increases during the nicer weather as people enjoy the spaces in a variety of ways including events, friends gathering, picnicking, and allowing children to play. The amphitheatre and grass area behind city hall offices are also used by nearby daycare groups, recreation day camps, and library programing when weather permits. The area south of the theatre is frequently used by Inlet Theatre rental clients such as weddings. The visual impact of the dog park should be minimized so the aesthetic of this area is maintained for these rental bookings to minimize the potential loss of revenue due to fewer event bookings. Sites 1 and 4 may conflict with the Port Moody Farmers Market that occurs in the adjacent parking lot. Staff suggest an important step in mitigating this type of conflict is to install a barrier between these uses.

Liability Considerations

A Risk Management Advisor from MIA recommends some form of space delineation for an off-leash dog area. The preferable form of delineation would be a fence, but natural substitutes such as a hedge, boulders or logs could also be considered. The importance of this delineation is to alert users who may not want any interaction with a dog that they are approaching or entering an off-leash dog area. A fence would accomplish both the delineation of space as well as separation between conflicting uses. Staff recommends the fence approach. A review of costs found minimal difference between installing a fence and installing other natural features.

MIA also recommended clear signage and waste receptacles be installed. Staff recommends a dog waste receptacle to ensure that there is not an overabundance of dog waste placed in garbage bins at the entries to Port Moody public buildings or outdoor eating areas.

Final comments from MIA included comments around vehicular exposure at sites 3 and 4 are high therefore thus should be considered. Sites 1-4 have exits that will need to be kept clear for emergency evacuation purposes. Staff recommends the fencing also be installed to minimize the potential for vehicular exposure.

Bylaw Enforcement Considerations

The Bylaw Division receives a significant number of complaints every year regarding off-leash dogs around City Hall. Some of these incidents include dog bites. From a bylaw enforcement perspective, an off-leash dog park in this area without proper fencing and signage would have a high probability of increasing conflicts and complaints that they would need to follow up on and mitigate.

The nature of a dog's play is to run, chase and boisterously engage with each other. Even dogs with perfect recall take a second to respond (especially if playing) and this second could have negative results such as being hit by a car, causing a vehicular accident, obstructing bicycles, approaching an on-leash reactive dog, dog bite incidents, or generally creating a nuisance for people who do not want to be approached by a dog. For all user groups to continue to safely enjoy the surrounding areas an off-leash dog area should have a clear physical separation.

Summary

Designating an off-leash dog amenity within walking distance of thousands of dog owners living in Newport Village, Suter Brook Village and the Klahanie community will be very popular. Good practices identified in a recent PAWS report received by the City include fencing for separation of users, vehicular traffic, wildlife and ESA.

Based on the in-depth analysis of potential sites within the City Hall precinct, staff recommend a pilot "pup-up" off-leash and fenced dog park be erected at site 1 – the amphitheatre, outside of the highest public use season. The recommended dates for the pilot project are mid-September 2023 (targeting September 13) to early-May 2024 (targeting May 8). This timing will ensure existing rental contracts and programming for the summer will not be affected. Staff will report back to Council on the success and opportunities in Q1 2024.

If this project proceeds, Capital Project PK23041 Civic Centre Amphitheatre – Retaining Wall and Site Restoration of \$50,000 will be delayed until the City Hall precinct off-leash dog amenity outcomes have been determined.

Other Option(s)

Recognizing a designated dog park has several variables to consider as part of the implementation, alternatively staff recommend that off-leash dog management in the City Hall Precinct be enforced on a complaint basis only. This approach would allow dog owners to act with discretion when walking in the City Hall Precinct.

The alternative recommendation is:

THAT the report dated July 25, 2023, from the Community Development Department – Building, Bylaw, and Licensing Division regarding Off-Leash Dog Area in the City Hall Precinct be received for information;

AND THAT staff be directed to continue to enforce the Animal Control Bylaw around the City Hall Precinct on a complaint basis only.

Financial Implications

Staff recognize that the intent of the original motion of Council was to not have any capital costs such as fencing associated with this proposal. However, based on the analysis above staff does recommend a budget allocation be applied to this project. Installation of a temporary fence is estimated at \$16,000. An additional \$4,000 is estimated for signage, waste receptacles and other miscellaneous costs to implement the pilot project. Staff recommend that up to \$20,000 be allocated to this project from Council's contingency. The costs associated with the rehabilitation of any of the potential sites is unknown at this time.

Communications and Civic Engagement Initiatives

No civic engagement formed part of this report. Communication associated with approved recommendations in this report will be developed with the Communications team and posted on the City's website and social media.

Council Strategic Plan Objectives

The recommendations associated with this report align with Council's Strategic Plan by increasing and expanding urban parks while protecting our natural assets.

Attachment(s)

1. Map of potential off-leash sites with ESA

Report Author

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Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Off-Leash Dog Area within the City Hall Precinct.docx
Attachments:	- Attachment 1 - Map of potential off-leash sites with ESA.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Jul 14, 2023

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Kate Zanon, General Manager of Community Development - Jul 14, 2023 - 10:13 AM

Stephanie Lam, City Clerk and Manager of Legislative Services - Jul 14, 2023 - 1:31 PM

Lindsay Todd, Manager of Communications and Engagement - Jul 14, 2023 - 2:17 PM

Paul Rockwood, General Manager of Finance and Technology - Jul 14, 2023 - 2:19 PM

Kate Zanon, General Manager of Community Development, for Tim Savoie, City Manager -
Jul 14, 2023 - 6:09 PM