



Recommendations

Retain off-leash use in most existing locations, but adjust the size and boundaries to avoid environmentally sensitive areas, accommodate naturalization initiatives and reduce user conflicts.

- > Retain off-leash areas in four locations: River Park, Lower Britannia Slopes (near Riverdale Avenue), Upper Britannia Slopes (along Britannia Drive SW), and Lower Reservoir.
- > Designate all on-site parking areas as on-leash, and continue to designate Riveredge and the playground as a “no dogs” areas.
- > Reduce the size of the off-leash area in River Park to exclude the northern end of the park (approximately 6 hectares) where off-leash use is lower, a new local pathway is recommended, and the potential for naturalized landscape is high.
- > Reduce the size of the off-leash area in Lower Britannia Slopes (near Riverdale Avenue) to eliminate environmental damage to riparian area, Balsam Poplar forest, native grassland and steep slopes, and to reduce conflicts with the regional pathway.
- > Eliminate off-leash areas in two locations: surrounding the trail from Lansdowne Avenue SW to Britannia Drive SW and Lansdowne Avenue near 6A Street SW that are poorly located and are within the service area of other off-leash areas within the park.

Provide the level of service as recommended in the Off-leash Area Management Plan

- > Provide “Base Services” to all off-leash areas.
- > Provide “Enhanced Services” at River Park.
- > Explore partnerships and sponsorships to provide “Enhanced Services”

Provide clear boundaries between off-leash and on-leash areas

- > Use living fences (low impact fencing hidden within shrubs) to delineate off-leash areas.
- > Provide designated river access points for dogs and use restoration barriers to protect adjacent streambanks.
- > Install signage at major entrances to the park and in all parking lots that include a map of off-leash and on-leash areas.

Improve the quality and sustainability of the landscape in the River Park off-leash area

- > Plant trees and shrubs in the form of living fences and clusters to allow for improved turf maintenance.
- > Protect new plantings with temporary fencing until the vegetation is well established.
- > Provide “marking / scratching posts” at entrances to off-leash areas to minimize damage to tree trunks.
- > Implement a turf restoration demonstration project in River Park.
- > Use temporary closures (close openings in the living fence) within the off-leash area to rest and restore turf as or if needed.

Key Features

- 1 Off-leash Areas at River Park, Britannia Slopes and Lower Reservoir – four separate areas
 - 2 Dog Access to Elbow River at Britannia Slopes and Lower Reservoir – two access points on existing gravel bars
 - 3 Cat Margetts Memorial – Restore the memorial and water fountains for people and dogs
 - 4 Living Fences – low-impact fencing hidden within shrubs to delineate off-leash areas, close off turf rotation areas when needed, and protect the lower slope of the Britannia escarpment
 - 5 Dog Waste Disposal – Screen with landscaping and provide additional containers near parking lots
- > Improved Signage – locate at key entry points into off-leash areas

See other display boards for additional recommendations related to People + Dogs.

Rationale

By far, the issue of off-leash dog use sparked the most discussion and debate among the public. Many voiced concerns about the environmental impacts of off-leash dogs or risks posed by uncontrolled off-leash dogs. A wide range of solutions were offered from “no change” to “significantly reduce” the size of off-leash areas. The Draft Plan proposes to balance these opposing views by locating off-leash areas to avoid impacts to the most sensitive natural areas-escarpments and riparian areas. However, recognizing that dog access to the river is a popular and desirable amenity, river access for dogs is accommodated within the riparian area at two locations. Environmental impacts are mitigated through the use of on-leash trails through the Balsam Poplar forest and the use of restoration barriers to protect streambanks adjacent to dog river access points. Designating a portion of River Park at the northern end as “on-leash” takes into consideration requests from some park users and park neighbors, existing natural features, patterns of current use, and Park’s policies. This designation change more specifically responds to

- > requests from some stakeholders for reduced off-leash area in River Park
- > requests for a paved pathway in the north end of the park that would conflict with off-leash use
- > the current light use of this area as off-leash, and the availability of an off-leash area within 800 metres
- > desire to improve water quality
- > the sloping, rolling topography and surface water flows make this area more environmentally sensitive than other areas of River Park
- > City policy (Urban Park Master Plan) designated this area as “natural parkland,” and Park’s current “naturalization initiative” support this change

