

DOGS IN OPEN SPACES

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN



A 10 Year Implementation Plan to Guide the Planning,
Design and Management of Off-Leash Areas in Edmonton

Edmonton

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Introduction

The City of Edmonton's existing dog off-leash policy originated in the 1990s, and came about in response to public interest in creating Off-Leash Areas (OLAs). Edmonton's 40 existing OLAs have been established over time on an ad hoc basis, mostly in response to public requests.

With an increasing population of dogs in cities, and with more Canadian households having dogs (32%–41%¹) than children (29%²), there is growing demand for cities to accommodate residents and their dogs in public places. Many municipalities are recognizing OLAs as important uses of public parks with benefits to dog owners and to cities more broadly.

OLAs can foster healthy activity and social well-being, provide increased "eyes on the park" to deter crime, and can reduce unsanctioned off-leash activity in more sensitive sites. At the same time, problems with dog waste, noise, and conflicts with other park uses need to be mitigated at OLAs. Careful planning, design and management is critical to ensure that the benefits of Off-Leash Areas outweigh their drawbacks.

SMART PLANNING, DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT

In 2015, a consultant worked in collaboration with the City to develop the Dogs in Open Spaces Strategy to guide the planning, design and management of OLAs in Edmonton. The project included public engagement, a municipal practices review (dog off-leash program policies and practices), evaluation of the current City of Edmonton off-leash program, identification of areas of the city that are deficient in off-leash opportunities, and creation of a new strategy.

The Dogs in Open Spaces Implementation Plan furthers the Dogs in Open Spaces Strategy which was created when the City recognized the need to review and update Edmonton's current policies and practices for its Off-Leash Areas. The Strategy was endorsed by Edmonton City Council in March 2016. Together, the Strategy and Implementation Plan reflect best practices from select winter cities across North America and include recommendations tailored for Edmonton.

1. 1. Consumer Corner: Canadian Pet Market et Outlook, Alberta Agriculture and Forestry, 2014 and Latest Canadian Pet Population Figures, Canadian Animal Health Institute 2017

2. Census families by number of children at home, by province and territory, 2011 Statistics Canada Census

RELEVANT POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

A number of current City policies have been referenced and incorporated into the Dogs in Open Spaces Strategy, as well as considered in the development of this Implementation Plan including:

- Animal control and parkland bylaws,
- Natural area policies
- Breathe, Edmonton's Green Network Strategy
- The Ways plans
- Urban Parks Management Plan

The Dogs in Open Spaces Strategy recommended that the Implementation Plan align with Breathe: Edmonton's Green Network Strategy, which will be presented to City Council for approval in August 2017. Recommendations listed in Breathe that align with the Dogs in Open Spaces Strategy and Implementation Plan include:

4.4.3 e) Reduce conflicts among dogs and other open space users by separating off-leash areas from conflicting uses (e.g. recreational pathways, playgrounds) using fencing and site design, educating dog owners about applicable bylaws and etiquette, and providing adequate amenities (e.g. refuse bags, trash receptacles) to support responsible use.

4.5.4 b) Prioritize neighbourhoods currently underserved by dog Off-Leash Areas for acquisition/development of new or expanded parks, and provide dog walking amenities in high demand.

4.6.1h) Ensure that appropriate amenities (e.g. refuse containers, benches, dog litter containers, etc.) are provided alongside well-used trails and pathways.

4.7.2m) Evaluate areas where dog walking is not appropriate due to environmental impacts (e.g. erosion, water contamination, damage to sensitive vegetation) and conflict with wildlife populations. Establish access regulations for ecologically sensitive or natural areas, and implement signage/ communication campaigns to inform dog owners about appropriate locations for dog walking, managing waste, and appropriate behaviour during wildlife encounters.

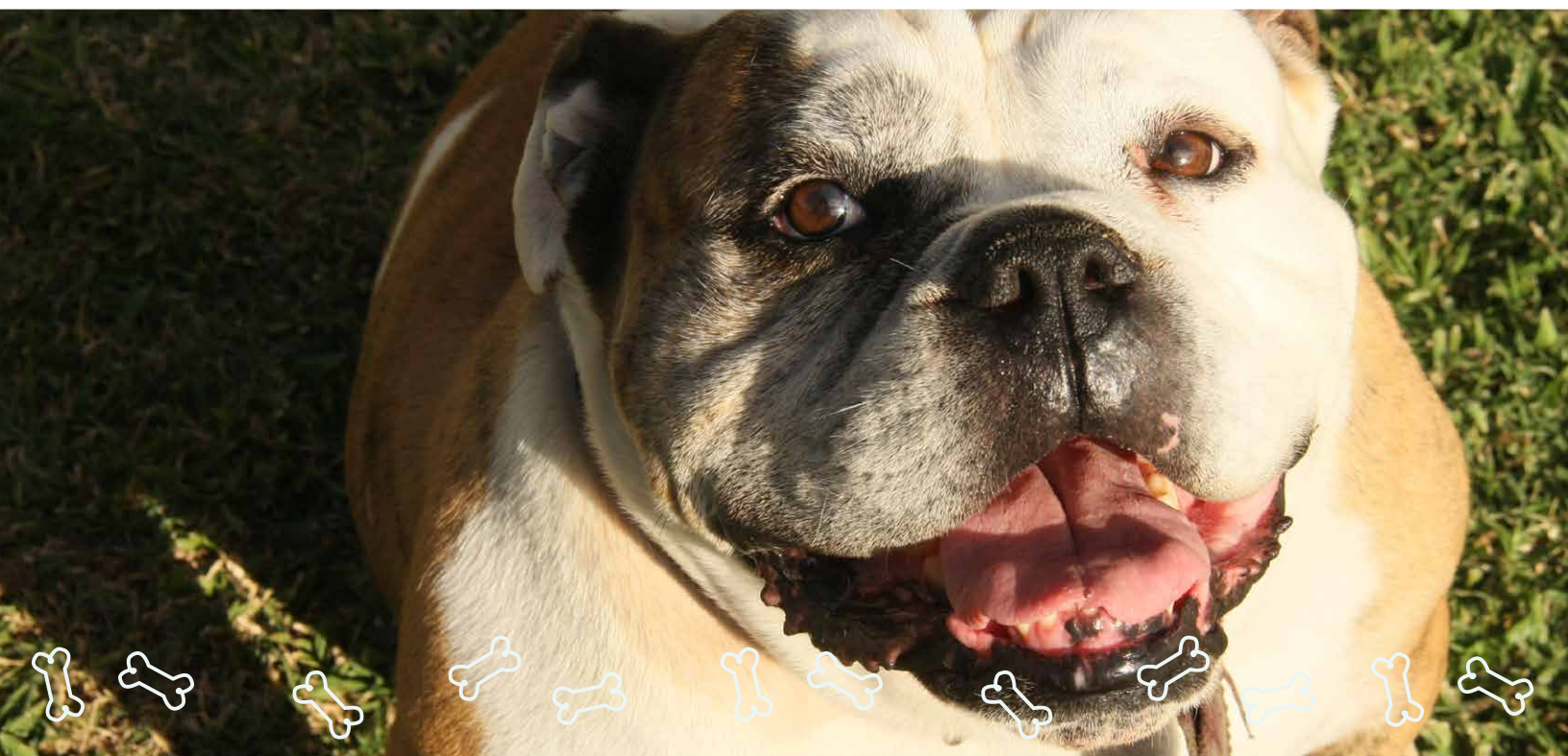
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Public engagement for the creation of the Dogs in Open Spaces Strategy included four interactive workshops with over 270 people in attendance, City staff workshops, and a stakeholder workshop with groups that expressed interest in OLAs in the City. Online surveys and Insight Community Surveys were implemented in conjunction with these workshops, and over 2,800 citizens from across Edmonton offered opinions and ideas about OLAs.

Feedback from these public engagement activities helped to inform the strategy recommendations. Some specific findings included:

- Dog Off-Leash Areas are frequently used (82% of survey respondents used an OLA in the last 12 months), and are supported by the majority of people surveyed (85%) as a legitimate use of public spaces.
- 90% of people surveyed support having OLAs in the city.
- The top five features people thought would make Edmonton's OLAs successful include: fencing or better boundaries; increased education, training and owner responsibility; increased enforcement; dog owners picking up their dog waste; and increased/better signage.
- The majority of people who reviewed the draft strategy were supportive of the recommendations for planning, design and management of OLAs.

The results and recommendations included in the Dogs in Open Spaces Strategy were used to inform and prioritize the recommended actions in the Dogs in Open Spaces 10 Year Implementation Plan. Since these recommendations were taken directly from the Strategy, no additional public engagement was implemented for the creation of the implementation plan. A multi-departmental project team reviewed the recommended actions, provided feedback as to what actions to prioritize, and investigated City processes that could be used to implement priority actions. Over the 10 years this implementation plan is delivered, further public engagement will be required in order to carry out changes in each OLA.



Goals, Actions and Priorities

Implementation of this plan will enhance Off-Leash Areas and provide safe and enjoyable experiences for park users, while fostering healthy outdoor activity and social well being for Edmonton's citizens. Recommendations in the Strategy support a number of key goals.

GOALS

- Smart planning, design and management of Off-Leash Areas that take into account user experience, safety, and environmental sensitivities.
- Better adoption of rules and bylaws by users through education and enforcement.
- Increased safety for people and dogs in off-leash and adjacent areas.
- Establishing new Off-Leash Areas in Edmonton where the need is identified.
- Creating processes for establishing and decommissioning Off-Leash Areas.
- Increasing educational opportunities in Off-Leash Areas, as well as enhancing the volunteer stewardship program that currently exists.
- Establishing a base level of amenities for Off-Leash Areas, and developing of cost-sharing models for community groups interested in enhancing Off-Leash Areas with additional amenities.

FOCUS AREAS

The Dogs in Open Spaces Strategy was divided into three main recommended Focus Areas. For this implementation plan, Action Categories and Actions have been assigned under each Focus Area. Actions have been prioritized based on feedback gathered during the public engagement for the Strategy, as well as documentation of day-to-day inquiries from citizens through the current Off-Leash Program. There are three Focus Areas, twenty three Action Categories and a number of Actions in this implementation plan.

Focus Area 1.0 Planning

Planning actions focus on access and parking, distribution, adjacent site uses, establishing and eliminating OLAs, funding, and categories of OLAs.

Focus Area 2.0 Design

Design actions focus on boundaries and edge conditions, amenities, environmental protection, vegetation, drainage and erosion control, surface materials (e.g. paths) and circulation (flow of users), signage (wayfinding, enforcement and educational), winter considerations, and public health and safety.

Focus Area 3.0 Management

Management actions focus on general maintenance, waste management, dog waste bag dispensers, vegetation management, education and communications, community stewardship and volunteerism, animal control enforcement, rules and code of conduct, and monitoring and evaluation of OLAs.

ACTION CATEGORIES

- Classification
- Site Uses and Adjacencies
- Strategy and Policy
- Government Land
- Land Ownership
- Establishing and Decommissioning
- Funding
- Establishing Temporary OLAs
- Evaluation of Current State
- Drainage and Erosion Control
- Enforcement
- Corporate Strategy Alignment
- Design Standards
- Boundaries
- Amenities
- Landscaping and Vegetation
- Public Health and Safety
- Signage
- Waste Management
- General Maintenance
- Communications and Education
- Community Stewardship
- Parking and Site Accessibility

PRIORITY ACTIONS

Based on feedback gathered through public engagement when creating the Strategy, as well as through day to day observations while managing the current Dogs Off-Leash Program, a number of priority actions have been identified and are listed below. Work has already begun on these priority actions.

- Develop processes for establishing, eliminating and enhancing Off-Leash Areas
- Develop guidelines for OLA boundaries and barriers
- Increase education and communications
- Increase enforcement
- Enhance stewardship and volunteerism opportunities

Processes for establishing, decommissioning and enhancing Off-Leash Areas

The Dogs in Open Spaces Strategy describes triggers for the identification of a new OLA, including the City's identification of an underserved or high demand area, application for new development or redevelopment, or a request from the public through an application process. A public involvement plan and evaluation period should be included in the development of new OLAs. Enhancing existing OLAs may be funded by the City or the community, depending on the type of amenity (base or special) being requested. Developers can also work with the City to explore the development of OLAs in existing or new neighbourhoods.

Existing OLAs may be closed and/or have their area reduced if they are located in an over-serviced area for OLAs, if there are safety or incompatible adjacent uses, or if there are significant issues with the site itself or the behaviour of site users that cannot be remedied after a trial period.

Direction from the Dogs in Open Spaces Strategy, learnings from 2017 projects such as Lauderdale Pilot Project and Alex Decoteau Neighbourhood Fenced Dog Park, as well as existing City processes are being taken into account while drafting a process for enhancing, establishing and decommissioning OLAs. The process will include options for City-lead, community-lead, and developer-lead OLAs. Further review is required of this draft process before it is made available for use.

Boundary and Barrier Guidelines

A priority action of this implementation plan is to develop guidelines for when OLAs should be fenced, where soft barriers should be used, and when barriers should be funded by the City. Guidelines are currently being drafted and will be made available for use once finalized.

Communications and Education

Enhanced communications and education associated with OLAs can result in increased awareness and compliance of etiquette, rules and bylaws, less conflict between park users, and increased visitation and positive animation of OLAs. Since the Strategy was approved, the following actions have been completed:

- The development of a communications plan for OLAs city-wide
- Developing a visual identity for the Dogs Off-Leash Program
- Creation of a display to use at events and tradeshow
- Attendance at or delivery of dog-focused events to promote dog OLAs (Pet Expo, Bark in the Park, Dog Poop Clean-up Events, Pets in the Park)
- An updated website and interactive online map of all OLAs
- An online information hub that displays information on current construction projects in OLAs
- A postcard that drives traffic to the website
- Creation of branded promotional and volunteer appreciation items that promote good behaviour in OLAs (poop bag dispensers, dog collar lights, clickers, and treats)

Future communications and education activities include increased promotional pieces (e.g. OLA park change notice template, temporary signage/poster templates, promotional videos, and social media assets), and a full education/engagement campaign including a marketing strategy and collateral. Financial impacts of implementing more comprehensive communications and education activities are listed in Table 1.



Stewardship and Volunteerism

The City's current Off-Leash Area Ambassador program is a valuable way for community members to work with the City to achieve mutually-beneficial goals. The Dogs in Open Spaces Strategy recommended that the City increase promotion of the OLA Ambassador program in order to recruit new volunteers.

The original Dogs Off-Leash Ambassador Program was launched in 2014 and modelled after the City of Calgary's volunteer program. The program had low success due to insufficient resources at the time for training and management of volunteers, resulting in negative interactions between volunteers and park users. In 2016 the volunteer program was re-assessed. In order to take time to align this program with other City of Edmonton volunteer programs, the existing volunteers were asked to discontinue volunteer activities until the review was complete. The Corporate Volunteer Resource Committee was consulted and a new screening measures were introduced including an online application form, references and a phone interview. Parks and Community Standards worked together to develop a more comprehensive training program before volunteers could begin their duties.

As of July 2017, the program had 22 active volunteer Ambassadors and 21 Canine Ambassadors. Off-Leash Area Ambassadors encourage dog owners to follow OLA etiquette, share information on safety and education, encourage dog owners to pick up dog waste, hand out information brochures, and assist at special events. Ambassadors and their dogs also participate in events that promote the Ambassador Program and OLAs, including the following 2017 events: Pet Expo, Pets in the Park, Spring Poop Scoop, Root for Trees Fest and Bark in the Park. Future actions include enhancing the volunteer program to support the creation of more Off-Leash Area Ambassador Groups. Financial Impacts of running the Dog Off-Leash Ambassador Program are included in Table 1.



Increased Enforcement

The regular presence of Animal Control Peace Officers at OLAs is recommended to provide an incentive for dog owners to follow the rules. Currently enforcement in OLAs is on an as-needed basis and averages 15 minutes of presence in the parks each week (city-wide).

It is recommended to create four new Peace Officer positions dedicated solely to OLAs and one truck for use of patrolling officers. With the addition of these resources, this team of officers would be dedicated to off-leash patrols and would attend Off-Leash Areas 6 hours per day, 7 days per week. They would rotate between each OLA city-wide and work with the Dogs Off-Leash Program Coordinator to identify areas that are most in need of enforcement presence.

Besides monitoring and enforcing rules and bylaws, Officers also have a large role to play in educating about responsible pet ownership, promoting positive interactions between park users in OLAs, and participating in educational events such as Pet Expo. The full financial Impacts of this recommendation are included in Table 1.



1.0 Planning Actions

ACTION CATEGORY	ACTION	STATUS	LEAD	SUGGESTED PARTNERS	RESOURCE STATUS	TIMEFRAME
1.1 Classification	1.1.1 Classify all OLAs according to categories described in the Strategy (Neighbourhood Off-Leash Area, Neighbourhood Fenced Dog Park, District Off-Leash Area, or River Valley/Ravine Off-Leash Area)	Future action	City Operations – Parks and Roads Services: Dogs Off-Leash Program	Sustainable Development	Existing Budget	2018
	1.1.2. Align classification of OLAs with new categories of parks and open spaces as described in the Breathe Strategy	Future action			Existing Budget	
1.2 Site Uses and Adjacencies	1.2.1 Determine more detailed planning recommendations and protocols as they relate to natural areas, wildlife corridors and environmentally-sensitive areas.	Future action	City Operations – Parks and Roads Services: Dogs Off-Leash Program	Sustainable Development – Urban Analysis Park and Roads Services and River Valley Operations	TBD	2019
	1.2.2 Comparing Existing OLAs to sensitive areas data.	Future action			Existing Budget	
	1.2.3 Potentially create evaluation criteria for determining appropriate Off-Leash Area use in environmentally sensitive areas.	Future action			TBD	
1.3 Strategy and Policy	1.3.1 Align the Dogs in Open Spaces Strategy and Implementation Plan with existing corporate strategies, policies, plans and standards.	In Progress	City Operations – Parks and Roads Services: Dogs Off-Leash Program Community Standards	Various City Departments	Existing Budget	2018–2019
	1.3.2 Identify specific sections of the Breathe strategy that align with the Dogs in Open Spaces Strategy.	Complete			Existing Budget	

ACTION CATEGORY	ACTION	STATUS	LEAD	SUGGESTED PARTNERS	RESOURCE STATUS	TIMEFRAME
1.4 Land Ownership	1.4.1 Investigate setting up a partnership with the Government of Alberta to consider areas in Anthony Henday Transportation Utility Corridor for new OLAs.	Future Action	City Operations - Parks and Roads Services: Dogs Off-Leash Program Sustainable Development: Development Services: Zoning Bylaw	City Operations - Parks and Roads Services: Business Integration Community Standards	Existing Budget	2020
	1.4.2 Review land types and zoning where current OLAs exist and document the type of use, development, and amenities that would be approved through agreements and zoning.	Future Action		Sustainable Development Building and Land Management Alberta Infrastructure	Existing Budget	2018
	1.4.3 Document required permits, agreements and processes for establishing and maintaining OLAs on utility right of way.	Future Action			Existing Budget	2018
1.5 Establishing and Decommissioning OLAs	1.5.1 Establish and document protocols for establishing new OLAs, including creating a site suitability checklist.	In Progress	City Operations - Parks and Roads Services: Dogs Off-Leash Program	Community Standards	Existing Budget	2017-2018: Establish Protocols
	1.5.2 Recommend a phased approach for new OLA establishment, identifying specific areas currently lacking OLAs.	Future Action		Sustainable Development: Network Coordination Integrated Infrastructure Services: Open Spaces Planning	Existing Budget	2018-2019
	1.5.3 Define approach for identifying and establishing the 4 Destination District Level OLAs.	Future Action		Citizen Services: Neighbourhoods Communications and Public Engagement	Existing Budget	2018-2019
	1.5.4 Establish reasoning and process for decommissioning OLAs, including a public engagement process.	In Progress		City Operations: Parks and Roads Services and Business Integration	Existing Budget	2018-2019
	1.5.5 Establish new OLAs, with all recommended amenities, in underserved areas using a phased approach.	Future Action		River Valley Operations Utility Companies Sustainable Development: Network Coordination	Existing Budget	2019-2028
	1.5.6 Decommission or change boundaries of OLAs of high priority (e.g. safety concerns or low usage)	Future Action			Capital and Operating	2019-2020

ACTION CATEGORY	ACTION	STATUS	LEAD	SUGGESTED PARTNERS	RESOURCE STATUS	TIMEFRAME
1.6 Funding	1.6.1 Create a capital profile for bringing existing OLAs up to standard with base amenities as well as creating new OLAs with all required amenities.	Future Action	City Operations - Parks and Roads Services and Business Integration	Development Services (vending) Legal Community Inclusion and Investment Finance Citizen Services Community Standards Animal Care and Control Centre River Valley Parks and Facilities	Capital	2018
	1.6.2 Increase dog licensing fees to allocate to OLA enhancements. Public engagement process required.	Future Action			One-time expense for public engagement	2018-2020
	1.6.3 Create sponsor and donor plan and guidelines, and associated marketing plan and materials, for sourcing funding for OLA development, amenity and activation.	Future Action			One-time expense	2018-2020
	1.6.4 Explore the creation of a deferred fund for future off-leash enhancements and maintenance (from sponsorship or fees).	Future Action			Existing Budget	2018-2020
	1.6.5 Introduce a permit fee for private individuals/groups to use off-leash spaces for training, education and events.	Future Action			Existing Budget	2018-2020
	1.6.6 Research and publish existing grant opportunities; explore the creation of a City delivered grant program for community groups to use for development or enhancement of OLAs.	Future Action			Existing Budget	2018-2020
1.7 Evaluation of Current State	1.7.1 Evaluation of all existing OLAs including usage surveys	Complete	City Operations - Parks and Roads Services: Dogs Off-Leash Program	Community Standards Sustainable Development Citizen Services Parks and River Valley Operations Existing Budget	Existing Budget	2016
1.8 Establishing Temporary OLAs	1.8.1 Develop process and pilot use of community ice rinks as temporary OLAs in summer, and fenced baseball diamonds and other sports fields in winter.	Future Action	Parks and Roads Services: Dogs Off-Leash Program Citizen Services	Community Standards Community Leagues	One-time cost for public engagement Operating - to maintain and provide enforcement for increased number of OLA sites seasonally	2019: Develop process; Public Consultation 2020: Pilot select sites and evaluation

ACTION CATEGORY	ACTION	STATUS	LEAD	SUGGESTED PARTNERS	RESOURCE STATUS	TIMEFRAME
1.9 Drainage and Erosion Control	1.9.1 Evaluate if drainage in new and current OLAs is functioning and/or if changes are required to prevent contamination of water bodies at affected sites (e.g. grading, landscaping, drainage enhancements)	Future Action	Drainage City Operations River Valley Parks and Facilities	Engineering Services Integrated Infrastructure Services Sustainable Development Dog Off-Leash and River Valley/Ravine Stewardship Groups	Operating (for public consultation and Communication) Capital -Realignment or erosion control/repair	2019–2028 (as OLAs are monitored, evaluated, upgraded or established)
	1.9.2 Determine which trails near rivers and streams need to be decommissioned or realigned due to erosion issues, and if measures can be taken to prevent future erosion issues.	Future Action				

2.0 Design Actions

ACTION CATEGORY	ACTION	STATUS	LEAD	SUGGESTED PARTNERS	RESOURCE STATUS	TIMEFRAME
2.1 Design Standards	2.1.1 Review Landscape Design and Construction Standards and identify areas where the Dogs in Open Spaces Strategy and Implementation Plan can be integrated.	Future Action	City Operations: Parks and Roads Services - Dogs Off-Leash Program	Sustainable Development Landscape Design and Construction Review Committee	Existing Budget	2018
	2.1.2 Submit design recommendations for OLAs to the Landscape Design and Construction Standards guide during the 2020 guide review. Include fencing and soft/green barriers, surfacing, trail design, landscaping and other relevant design criteria.	Future Action		Integrated Infrastructure Services: Infrastructure Planning and Design: Open Spaces Planning and Design		2020



ACTION CATEGORY	ACTION	STATUS	LEAD	SUGGESTED PARTNERS	RESOURCE STATUS	TIMEFRAME
	2.2.1 Pilot Program – Lauderdale (Grand Trunk) – Enhance an existing District OLA. Evaluate the process and funding needs required to provide fencing in a district level Off-Leash; evaluate effect of fencing on park use and behaviour while using the OLA.	In Progress	City Operations: Parks and Roads Services – Dogs Off-Leash Program	Integrated Infrastructure Services Community Standards Corporate Communications and Public Engagement	Capital and Operating	2016–2017
	2.2.2 Based off of evaluations of all OLAs completed in 2016, identify OLAs that have recommendations for barrier installation or boundary changes based on safety requirements and adjacent use.	Complete	City Operations: Parks and Roads Services – Dogs Off-Leash Program		Existing Budget	2016–2017
	2.2.3 Identify and prioritize boundary changes. Determine which maintained and unmaintained trails should be included within OLA boundaries.	Completed	City Operations: Parks and Roads Services River Valley Parks and Facilities	Dog Off-Leash Ambassador Groups	Existing Budget	2016–2017
2.2 Boundaries	2.2.4 Implement boundary changes where needed.	Future Action			One-time Expense for public engagement and signage updates	2018+
	2.2.5 Determine appropriate species list (trees and shrubs) for soft barrier additions to OLAs.	Future Action	City Operations: Parks and Roads Services – Dogs Off-Leash Program	City Operations: Forestry and Horticulture Landscape Design and Construction Standards Committee	Existing Budget	2018
	2.2.6 Add recommended species list for trees and shrubs that can be used as soft barriers to the Landscape Design and Construction Standards.	Future Action				2020
	2.2.7 Install hard or soft barriers in appropriate off-leash locations	Future Action	City Operations: Parks and Roads Services – Dogs Off-Leash Program River Valley Parks and Attractions Integrated Infrastructure Services	City Operations: Parks Operations Sustainable Development	Capital and Operating	2019–2028

ACTION CATEGORY	ACTION	STATUS	LEAD	SUGGESTED PARTNERS	RESOURCE STATUS	TIMEFRAME
2.3 Amenities	2.3.1 Prioritize OLAs lacking standard amenities for immediate enhancement using completed evaluations or each area	In Progress	City Operations: Parks and Roads Services – Dogs Off-Leash Program	Finance Dogs Off-Leash Ambassador Groups	Existing Budget	Prioritize sites in 2016–2017
	2.3.2 Move forward on enhancing those OLAs using a staged approach.	Future Action	Integrated Infrastructure Services	Community Leagues	Capital	Enhance priority sites (2019–2022) Enhance rest of sites (2023–2028)
	2.3.3 Establish protocols for which categories of OLA receive special amenities and how community groups can request, fund and install them. Include which types of special amenities will be accepted into the City's inventory to maintain, and when/where/how special amenities may be funded by the City.	In Progress	City Operations: Parks and Roads Services – Dogs Off-Leash Program	Citizen Services City Operations: Parks and Roads Services Integrated Infrastructure Services	Existing Budget	2017–2018
2.4 Landscaping and Vegetation	2.4.1 Work with City programs like Root for Trees and Commemorative Trees to encourage planting at off-leash sites.	Ongoing	City Operations: Parks and Roads Services Dogs Off-Leash Program	Root for Trees Program Urban Forestry and Forestry Operations	Existing Budget and Partner Funding	2018–2028
2.5 Public Health and Safety	2.5.1 Apply Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles to promote user safety and positive site activity for new or existing OLAs	Ongoing	City Operations: Parks and Roads Services	Integrated Infrastructure Services: Infrastructure Planning and Design Edmonton Police Service	Existing Budget	2018–2028
	2.5.2 Investigate if reduced speeds and traffic signage is necessary for OLAs near major roads	Future Action	City Operations: Parks and Roads Services Dogs Off-Leash Program Traffic Safety		TBD	2018–2028
2.6 Parking and Site Accessibility	2.6.1 Identify OLAs where snow clearing on paths would increase use and accessibility in the winter.	Future Action Ongoing	City Operations: Parks and Roads Services		Existing Budget	2018
	2.6.2 Implement increased snow clearing on paths in certain OLAs.				Operating	2018–2028

3.0 Management Actions

ACTION CATEGORY	ACTION	STATUS	LEAD	SUGGESTED PARTNERS	RESOURCE STATUS	TIMEFRAME
3.1 Signage	3.1.1 Creation of a signage plan for OLAs.	Future Action	City Operations Community Standards River Valley Parks and Facilities	Corporate Communications Integrated Infrastructure Services	Capital – one time cost	2017-2019
	3.1.2 Addition and replacement of all off-leash signage.	Future Action				
3.2 Waste Management	3.2.1 Determining feasibility and cost of replacing garbage drums with in-ground bins in all appropriate OLAs.	Future Action	City Operations	Edmonton Waste Management Centre	TBD	2021
	3.2.2 Research options for alternative waste collection and disposal methods in OLAs that are more environmentally friendly than the current practices	Future Action			TBD	2021
3.3 General Maintenance	3.3.1 Implement naturalization in select OLAs to identify any areas where natural buffers/barriers can be created, reduce maintenance costs, increase site interest for people and OLAs, create wind and snow buffers, and increase shade.	Ongoing	City Operations: Dogs Off-Leash and Naturalization Programs	City Operations: Forestry, Turf, Vegetation Management and Horticulture	Existing Budget	2018-2028
	3.3.2 Identify areas that can be used as snow dump sites to create natural barriers for permanent or temporary OLAs in the winter.	Future Action	City Operations		Existing Budget	2018+
	3.3.3 Implement regularly scheduled inspections, monitoring, and evaluation of OLAs; track data related to OLAs (e.g. 311 inquiries, complaints, commendations, conflicts)	Ongoing	City Operations: Dogs Off-Leash Program and Parks and Road Services Operational Teams Community Standards	Citizen Services	Operating	2019-2028

ACTION CATEGORY	ACTION	STATUS	LEAD	SUGGESTED PARTNERS	RESOURCE STATUS	TIMEFRAME
3.4 Communications and Education	3.4.1 Create and implement a communications plan for OLAs city-wide and the OLA Program.	Completed 2017. Renew annually.	City Operations: Dogs Off-Leash Program Citizen Services: Community Standards	Corporate Communications and Public Engagement	Operating	2018-2028
	3.4.2 Creating branding and promotional items for the Dogs Off-Leash Program	Completed branding and some materials in 2017.	City Operations	Corporate Communications and Public Engagement	One time cost and operating	2017-2019
	3.4.3 Create and implement a full education/engagement campaign including a communications/marketing strategy and collateral. Focus on etiquette, bylaws, and what experiences people can have in OLAs.	Future Action	City Operations Community Standards	Corporate Communications and Public Engagement	Operating	2019
3.5 Community Stewardship	3.5.1 Enhance the Off-Leash Area Ambassador Program including: Establish operational budget for permanent and seasonal staff to adequately resource the current program. Create an Off-Leash Ambassador Group program.	Future Action	City Operations - Parks and Roads Services: Dogs Off-Leash Program	Community Standards Citizen Services Alberta Stewardship Network Park People	Operating	2019-2020
3.6 Enforcement	3.6.1 Increase enforcement presence and resources at DOL Areas city-wide.		Community Standards		Operating	2019-2028
3.7 Parking and Site Accessibility	3.7.1 Assess parking availability, condition and issues at all OLAs.	Ongoing	City Operations Traffic Control Community Standards	Citizen Services Integrated Infrastructure Services	Existing Budget	2019-2028
	3.7.2 Establish or enhance additional parking where needed, apply parking recommendations from the Strategy as park projects, capital projects, community led construction and neighbourhood revitalization are implemented.	Ongoing	Transportation City Operations: Parks and Roads Services		Capital	

ACTION CATEGORY	ACTION	STATUS	LEAD	SUGGESTED PARTNERS	RESOURCE STATUS	TIMEFRAME
3.8 Landscaping and Vegetation	3.8.1 Examine protocols for weed management in OLAs and make recommendations for weed control or prevention of weed transfer by OLA users and dogs.	Future Action	City Operations: Vegetation Management; Dogs Off-Leash Program	Community Standards	Existing Budget	2023
	3.8.2 Create a process for temporary/seasonal closures, boundary changes or decommissioning OLAs where there is a significant noxious weed issue with risk of transport of seeds/burrs by dogs to other areas, or where significant noxious weed control is required.	Future Action			Existing Budget	2023



Financial Impacts

Implementation of this plan depends on existing operational funding, and approval of new operating funding including the establishment of a full-time, year round Dog Off-Leash Coordinator. A capital profile to bring current OLAs up to standard and for establishing new OLAs is recommended. Anticipated capital costs are different for each OLA and will include things such as installing signage, bringing OLAs up to base standard by installing amenities or fencing, or establishing new District Off-Leash Areas. Operating budget needs include maintaining OLAs, waste collection and disposal, maintaining dog bag dispensers, clearing snow on paths, maintaining fences and gates, delivering educational programs and communication campaigns, and ensuring bylaw enforcement.

In 2016, site evaluations and usage surveys were completed at all 40 existing OLAs in Edmonton. These evaluations documented site conditions and usage, and recommendations for additional amenities to bring each OLA up to standard. Some small OLAs in Edmonton may only require additional signage, dog bag dispensers, or waste containers in order to bring them to the standard recommended in the Strategy. Some sites require more significant changes. These evaluations contributed to the estimated financial impact to improve these sites.

An estimate for required operating costs required to enhance the existing condition of, and increase the number of OLAs city-wide is included in Table 1.

FUNDING MODELS ACROSS CANADA AND INTERNATIONALLY

To help inform funding strategies that could be used in Edmonton and research creative funding options used by other cities, Administration conducted a survey in early 2017 that focused on the funding and management of OLAs. The survey was offered to twenty-one Canadian and international municipalities. Representatives from nine Canadian cities and four international cities responded.

Canadian Cities

- Saskatoon, SK
- Mississauga, ON
- Toronto, ON
- Surrey, BC
- Ottawa, ON
- Montréal, QC
- Calgary, AB
- Vancouver, BC
- Winnipeg, MB

International Cities

- Stockholm, Sweden
- Los Angeles, CA, USA
- New York, NY, USA
- Chicago, IL, USA

Survey Results Summary

- The number of Off-Leash Areas or Off-Leash Parks in each municipality ranged from eight to 152, with the average number being 52.
- 10 of 13 (77%) cities have an off-leash strategy being developed or already in place.
- When asked if they have funding to support their plans, six cities identified capital funding, six operational funding, one other sources of funding, and one did not answer the question.
- Three cities identified that they have no other funding strategies while the other ten reported a variety of additional sources of funding.
- Three of 13 (23%) cities reported having funding for maintenance of Off-Leash Areas or Off-Leash Parks that is separately allocated from regular park maintenance budgets.
- In two of 13 (15%) cities, licensing fees support the enhancement or programming of Off-Leash Areas or Off-Leash Parks.
- Three of 13 (23%) cities offer grants for community groups to enhance Off-Leash Areas and Off-Leash Parks.
- Just less than half (46%), of the respondents offer education or programming in their Off-Leash Areas or Off-Leash Parks. Programming was funded a variety of ways including by municipalities or not-for-profit groups.

Based on survey results, and the financial impacts observed during the Lauderdale Pilot Project in Edmonton (\$355,000), establishing a new OLA or enhancing a current OLA can range from \$200,000 to \$500,000 or higher, depending on size, scope and design. A potential developer initiated and constructed Neighbourhood Fenced Dog Park destined for southwest Edmonton will cost around \$315,000. New York City dedicated \$1,240,000 to OLAs in 2017, and \$3,078,000 for OLAs in 2018. From 2009–2016 the City of Toronto invested \$5 million to improve and develop new OLAs across the City, associated with their People, Dogs & Parks Off-Leash Policy. Surrey and Vancouver have recently invested capital funding into creating or enhancing two OLAs per year in each City, at around \$200,000 per site.



OFF-LEASH AREA DISTRIBUTION

The Dogs in Open Spaces Strategy recommends that the target number of Neighbourhood OLAs should be determined based on population density and dog ownership numbers. It is estimated that 32% to 41% percent of Edmontonians have a dog in their household. The target number of Neighbourhood Fenced Dog Parks should be determined based on park planning objectives, land availability, and demand. There should be one District OLA per quadrant (e.g. northwest, northeast, southwest, southeast).

Calgary, with a population of 1.5 million, has 150 OLAs and Edmonton, with a population of 1.4 million, has 40 OLAs. Edmonton's population and current OLA distribution suggests that Edmonton has the need and space for more OLAs, but the City should also consider the ability to manage well-designed, well-used sites with adequate resources.

District and Neighbourhood OLAs are recommended to be within a 20 minute walk from people's homes. Population and dog ownership density was analyzed and compared to existing OLA locations. The data suggest that there may be growing demand for dog OLAs outside of the city core, such as in higher density areas that are experiencing population growth.

Over this 10 year plan, it is recommended that a sustainable number of new OLAs established would be up to two annually. This estimate is based on work observed in OLAs in 2017 in Edmonton, as well as results from the funding survey completed by other municipalities. It also takes into account managing the work involved in constructing and establishing these areas.

COST SHARING MODELS

Cost sharing models will be developed including partner funding for establishing and enhancing OLAs. Current park development processes used in Edmonton, including the Community Led Construction Process and Neighbourhood Park Development Program can also be used to develop or enhance OLAs. Methods such as increased pet licensing fees, donor and sponsor programs, commemorative programs and grants will all be investigated. Revenue generated from permit fees for businesses that wish to work in OLAs (e.g. agility courses, dog walkers, food trucks, dog washing stations and groomers) may also be considered. Developers funding, designing and installing new OLAs in existing or new neighbourhoods have the potential to attract home-buyers to these areas.

Table 1: Detailed Financial Impacts of Implementing the Dogs in Open Spaces Strategy.

ACTIONS	COST ESTIMATES	TYPE OF FUNDING
<p>Upgrade 40 existing Off-Leash Areas to base level with recommended amenities for each category of Off-Leash Area. This includes installing hard barriers (fencing) and soft barriers (e.g. trees, hedges, berms) in priority Off-Leash Areas.</p> <p>Replace all existing signage and add new signage at existing Off-Leash Areas</p> <p>Establish one District Off-Leash Area in each quadrant of the City (2 are already established – Jackie Parker Park and Lauderdale/Grand Trunk)</p> <p>Establish new Off-Leash Areas in areas of the city that are underserved</p>	<p>Capital Requests to be developed in the 2019–2022, 2023–2026 and 2027–2032 budget cycles. (estimated \$5M annually +/- 50%</p>	<p>Capital Profile: 2019–2028</p>
<p>Establish Operating Impacts associated with the above increases in capital infrastructure</p> <p>Deliver enhanced maintenance at Off-Leash Areas (considering upgrades, increased amenities, and addition of fencing in some areas)</p> <p>Increase snow clearing on paths in Off-Leash Areas</p>	<p>Operating Impacts of Capital</p> <p>2019–2022: \$100,000</p> <p>2023–2026: \$100,000</p> <p>2027–2028: \$40,000</p>	<p>Operating – ongoing</p>
<p>1.0 FTE for a full-time, year around, Dogs Off-Leash Program Coordinator (Recreation Officer I) to champion the Implementation Plan and Lead the Dogs Off-Leash Program</p>	<p>\$85,011</p>	<p>Operating – annual ongoing</p>
<p>1.0 FTE for a full-time Recreation Technician I to assist the Dogs Off-Leash Program Coordinator</p>	<p>\$49,590</p>	<p>Operating – annual ongoing</p>
<p>Deliver Off-Leash Area Program and Events, Ambassador Program and Stewardship Group Program</p>	<p>\$35,000</p>	<p>Operating – annual ongoing</p>
<p>Budget for part-time staff to support the Community Standards temporary enforcement signage program</p>	<p>\$30,000</p>	<p>Operating – annual ongoing</p>
<p>Create enhanced communications and education campaigns; increase promotional pieces (e.g. Off-Leash Area park- change notices, temporary signage/poster templates, promotional videos, and social media assets, a full education/engagement campaign including communications/marketing strategy and collateral.)</p>	<p>2019–2022: \$80,000</p> <p>2023–2026: \$80,000</p> <p>2027–2028: \$40,000</p>	<p>One-time cost</p>
<p>Update and deliver a communications plan annually; annual promotional materials; funding to support both Parks and Community Standards campaigns</p>	<p>\$60,000</p>	<p>Operating – annual ongoing</p>
<p>Increase enforcement with four new Animal Control Peace Officer Positions dedicated solely to the 40 existing Off-Leash Areas and one truck for use of patrolling officers.</p>	<p>Staffing = \$400,000</p> <p>Truck = \$50,000</p>	<p>Operating – annual ongoing</p>

Table 2: Summary of Financial Impacts

IN \$(000)	2019-2022	2023-2026	2027-2028	TOTAL FOR 10 YEARS
Operating funding:				
Impact of Capital - ongoing	100	200	240	540
Program Coordination, Education and Communication - ongoing, at \$260k annually	1,040	1,040	520	2,600
Enforcement - ongoing	1,800	1,800	900	4,500
Communications - one-time	80	80	80	200



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REPORT AUTHOR

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APPRECIATION IS EXTENDED TO:

Citizens of Edmonton

The City of Edmonton would like to thank all citizens, community groups and other stakeholders who provided input on the Dogs in Open Spaces Strategy between 2015 to 2016. Your input helped to inform the development of this 10 Year Implementation Plan.

City of Edmonton Contributing Areas

- City Operations, Parks and Roads Services
- Citizen Services, Community Standards and Neighbourhoods
- Sustainable Development, City Planning, Urban Analysis and Parks & Biodiversity Units
- Integrated Infrastructure Services, Facility and Landscape Infrastructure, Program and Project Development

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Consultation

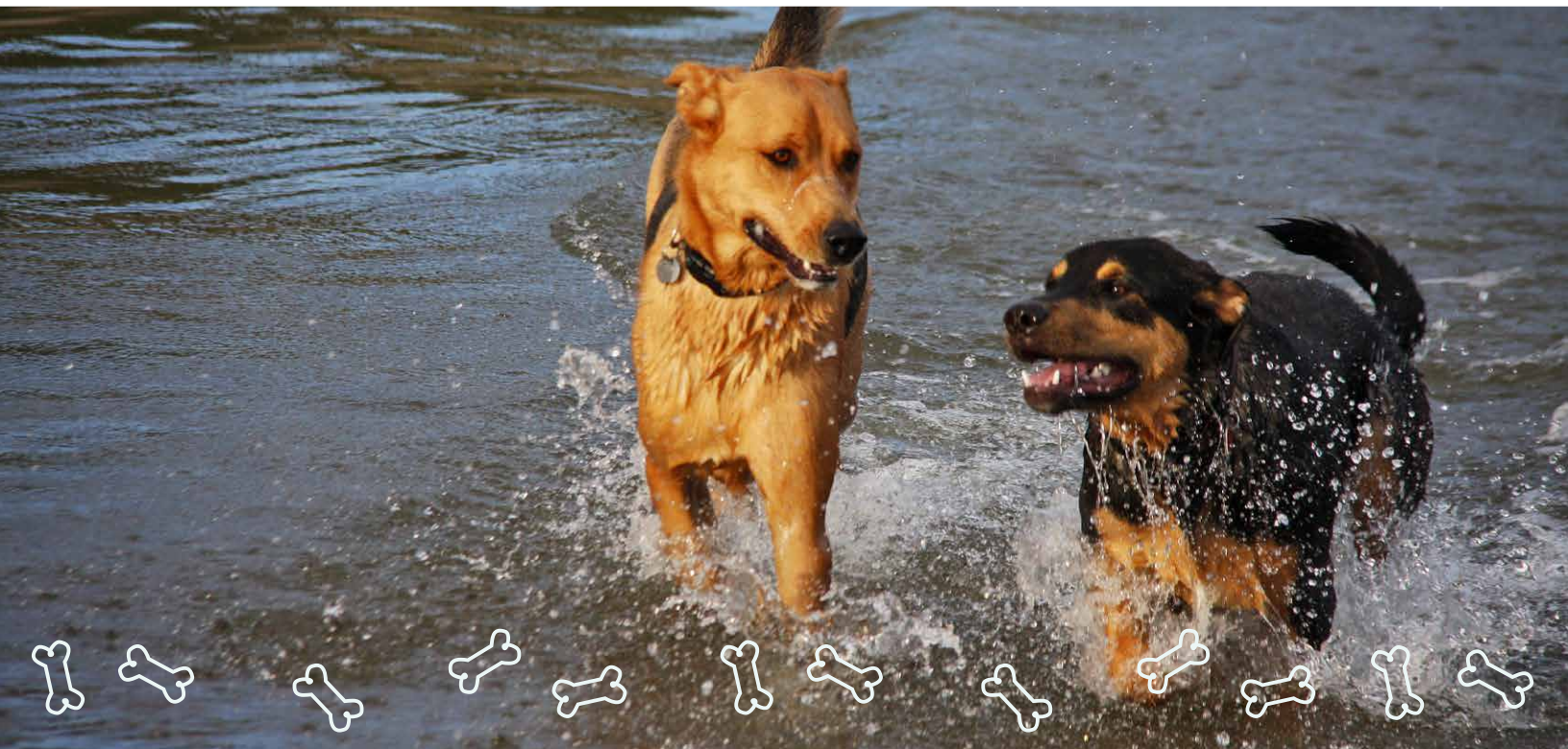
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City of Edmonton City Council

This document is being presented to City Council through the Community and Public Services Committee in September 2017.

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- Consumer Corner: Canada Pet Market Outlook, Alberta Agriculture and Forestry, 2014
- Latest Canadian Pet Population Figures, Canadian Animal Health Institute, 2017



DOGS IN OPEN SPACES

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The logo for the City of Edmonton, featuring a stylized 'E' icon to the left of the word 'Edmonton' in a sans-serif font, all contained within a white square border.

Edmonton