

Summerland Off-Leash Dog Park - Community Consultation Phase 2

Work continues to find a suitable location for a year-round fenced off-leash dog park in Summerland. The first phase of the project resulted in a recommendation from Council (March 2020) to further explore five potential sites and collect feedback from community members and stakeholder groups. Two sites were removed from consideration at the request of the property owners. Phase 2 is expected to conclude in December 2020.

For more information:

- Backgrounder – [Proposed Off-Leash Sites](#)
- Backgrounder – [Impact and Mitigation Options](#)
- Website: <https://www.summerland.ca/parks-recreation/dog-park-project>
- E-mail: recreation@summerland.ca
- Phone: 250-494-0447



A dog park is a dog off-leash area that is fully enclosed or fenced.

It may include an open ball play area, natural rummaging environments or agility equipment. Dogs are permitted to run off-leash but only if they are under effective control of their owner/walker.

Why is a dog park an asset to a community?

The Summerland dog population is estimated to be around 2,000 based on the Canadian average of 41% of households owning at least one dog. However, this is a conservative estimate given the ongoing upward trend of dog ownership in Canada over the past 10 years.

There is evidence that pets provide health and wellbeing benefits to their owners. Dogs specifically contribute to the wellbeing of owners and their families by increasing physical activity and increasing social contact and conversation between walkers and their families and neighbours.

A fenced off-leash area is one element in creating a dog-friendly community. It provides a safe environment that encourages dog-to-dog socialization and vigorous exercise for dogs. It also improves enforcement of dog bylaws, ensures sensitive environments are protected from dogs and other park spaces remain free of dogs. It provides a safe accessible place for older people, people with disabilities, and people who live in apartments or small spaces to care for their dogs. Dog parks can also provide a focal point for community education and provide a necessary service for the travelling community.

Considerations for Dog Park Design

The size, location and management of a dog park is critical to its success. It must align with the culture of the community and other available supports for dog ownership (e.g. location and rules for on-leash areas, licensing and enforcement, commercial dog-walker rules, other available off-leash areas).

It must also fit with the category of open space that it is intended to serve:

Sub-district: groups of 2 or 3 neighbourhoods that may benefit from a dog park or an off-leash area

District-wide: dog park or off-leash area intended for the entire community

The size of the park is important to support vigorous play and good hygiene for dogs. Anything smaller than a city lot (0.3-0.5 of an acre) is not recommended, although it depends on usage. As a result, best practices do not generally support off-leash parks at the neighbourhood level.

There are several principles for open space design that can be used to guide the planning and design of dog parks: (See **Dog Park Elements**, pg. 4)

- Be pleasant to visit, with social amenities such as seating and shade
- Be safe and feel safe
- Be accessible, including a footpath and parking with appropriate surfaces
- Be high quality and well-integrated with other open space opportunities for residents
- Be well designed and maintained



Design example, North Bay, ON

District of Summerland Dog Friendly Planning

Summerland has taken steps in the past few years to strengthen community plans and bylaws for the benefit of the health and wellbeing of citizens and their dogs. These include:

- [Responsible Dog Owner Bylaw](#) (2017)
- [Parks and Recreation Master Plan](#) (2018)
- [Giants Head Park Trail Redevelopment Plan](#) (2018)
- [Trails Master Plan](#) (2019)

The benefit of dog parks noted in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan (pg. 62) include:

- Allow dogs to exercise and socialize safely
- Promote responsible dog ownership
- Provide an outlet for dog owners to socialize
- Make for a better community by promoting public health and safety

Current bylaws do not allow dogs to be in any park or beach, on-leash or off-leash, except for Peach Orchard Park in the off-season. However, Council recently reviewed several recommendations from a community consultation report (January 2020) which will be used to revise the bylaws. These include recommendations to:

- improve accessibility of the **existing** fenced off-leash water access park at Peach Orchard Beach Park
- allow for *off-leash* use of specific parks in the **off-season** (Peach Orchard Beach Park, Powell Beach Park, Giants Head Park, Conkle Mountain Park and Summerland Rodeo Grounds)
- allow *on-leash all year* in most of the larger parks and campgrounds, except on sports fields and beaches, near playgrounds and spray parks.

The Summerland area also has dog-friendly areas that are not under the jurisdiction of the District. These include 'natural off-leash areas' such as Sun-Oka Beach Provincial Park, and crown land that backs onto Conkle Mountain Park. The establishment of a fenced off-leash dog park that creates a safe and central location for both small and large dogs and their owners/walkers is an important part of a comprehensive dog-friendly community plan.

To Learn More About Dog Parks

- [Design, Planning and Management of Off-leash Dog Parks](#). (2017). Bob Holderness-Roddam, Australia.
- [Unleashed: a guide to successful dog parks](#) (2013). Dog and Cat Management Board, Government of South Australia.
- [Feasibility Study – Dog Parks in Hume City](#) (2011). Hume City, Australia.
- The Association of Professional Dog Trainers (2004). [Dog Parks: The good, the bad and the ugly](#).



Photo: North Vancouver, BC

Dog Park Elements

Guidelines from other jurisdictions (see reference links above) suggest the following elements for dog park design. Each element needs to be considered in the context of the specific site.

Element	Open Space Category		Comments	
	Sub-district	District		
x = May not have # = Optimal to have + = Should have				
Core Infrastructure				
Fencing (1.2 meters high)	+	+	No right-angled corners to minimize opportunities for dogs to be cornered	
Enclosure <ul style="list-style-type: none">Single areaSeparate small dog areaTime out area	+ # x	+ # +	As space allows. Small dog areas support older owners and owners with disabilities who have small dogs. Time out area allows for calming of overly excited dogs.	
Double gated entry/exit (x2 minimum)	#	+		Having 2 entries avoids congestion. Universal/disability accessible.
Maintenance access gateway	+	+		For Park staff
Rules/regulations signage	+	+	Locate away from entries to avoid congestion	
Pathways <ul style="list-style-type: none">ApproachInternalTextured	+ + x	+ + +	Sealed surfaces for universal/disability access. Textured/varied surfaces for dog development.	
Amenities				
Seating	+	+		Fully accessible
Water – for people	#	+	Fully accessible	
Shade structures	#	+	Locate away from entries to avoid congestion	
Off street car parking	#	+	Fully accessible	
Toilets	#	+	Fully accessible	
Activity Areas				
Rock scramble areas	x	+	Rummaging/play areas	
Sensory vegetation plantings	+	+	Rummaging/play areas. Non-toxic to dogs.	
Open ball play area	+	+	Play/run about areas	
Agility/educational equipment	x	#	For educational/obedience skill development	
Landscaping				
Natural shade/tree plantings	+	+	As water and environment allows	
Vegetation along approach fencing	+	+	To minimize eye contact between dogs in the park and approaching; also for noise management.	
Drainage	+	+	Depending on site condition and level of use.	
Dog Amenities				
Dog litter bag dispensers	+	+	To reinforce responsible pet ownership	
Dog litter bins	+	+	To reinforce responsible pet ownership	
Water – for dogs	+	+	Fully accessible	