

## Staff recommending four leash-optional parks

(Penticton, BC – November 29, 2024) – After a successful pilot program, staff are recommending the continuation of leash-optional areas at four City parks.

"The recommendation to continue the leash-optional areas is based on overall public support, and the value these spaces provide to dog owners in a city with limited options for dedicated single-use facilities," says Scott Boyko, the City's public works manager. "These areas are not high-traffic or prime park locations, making them easier to avoid for those uncomfortable mixing with dogs."

The sites proposed are:

- Riverside Park – 187 Riverside Drive
- Skaha Lake Park – Main – 3661 Parkview Street
- Skaha Lake Park – East – 3895 Lakeside Road
- Water Treatment Plant Entrance – 1900 Penticton Ave

Okanagan Lake Park was part of the pilot project but staff are not recommending it continue as leash optional. Instead, staff is recommending the extension of the fenced dog beach area.

Boyko notes that Okanagan Lake Park is heavily utilized by park users and hosts numerous events throughout the year, resulting in significant strain on the turf.

"The increase in dog activity and year-round usage would likely exacerbate the stress on this grass area, particularly during the winter months, making it challenging to restore the turf to its previous health levels given the high tourist influx and frequent large events," he says.

The report also highlights improvements made to existing fenced dog parks within the community, which Council approved in conjunction with the leash-optional pilot project. Completed projects include Ellis Creek, Lakeside Road and Three Mile Beach. As well, staff are recommending holding off on more improvements to the Dartmouth park while a review of future City Yards space needs are considered.

Boyko notes the public engagement saw 1,200 respondents, with roughly 78% supporting the leash-optional areas, while also providing a variety of suggestions to enhance the areas and ensure safety issues were addressed.

"Staff will continue to work closely with Animal Control to maintain a visible presence, ensuring users adhere to rules and remain in control of their dogs. However, Animal Control staff noted that with the compliance that was observed through their regular proactive patrols, more monitoring was not

required at this time,” says Boyko. “Should Council support the recommendation to continue as outlined above, staff will continue to monitor the areas and make adjustments or bring forward improvements as needed to balance the needs of all park users.”

Council will receive the report and consider the recommendations at the December 3 meeting. The full report is available at [www.penticton.ca/agendas](http://www.penticton.ca/agendas)

-30-

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