



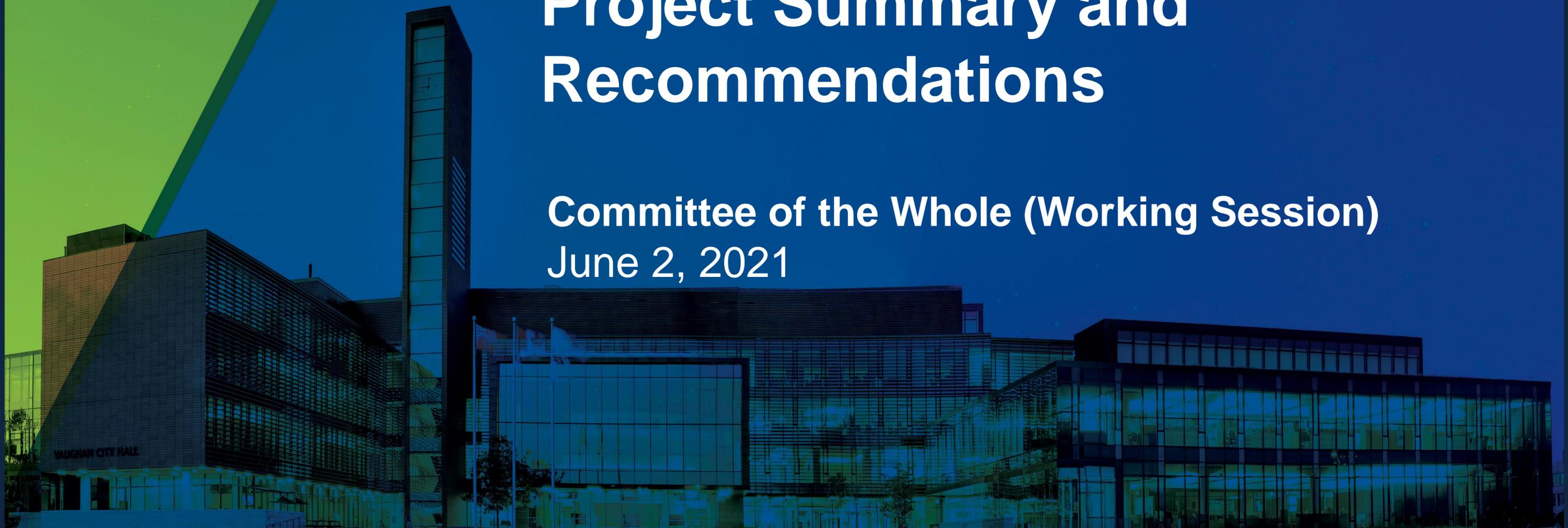
(Revised Copy - May 28, 2021)

C1
Communication
CW (WS) – June 2, 2021
Item(s) # - 3

Local Off-Leash Dog Areas Strategy

Project Summary and Recommendations

Committee of the Whole (Working Session)
June 2, 2021



Local Off-Leash Dog Areas – Background

2009: First primary off-leash dog area opened at Concord / Thornhill Regional Park

2013: Review and update to ATMP identified commitment for additional primary off-leash areas

2014: Petition and resolution by City Council to identify primary off-leash areas West of Hwy 400

2016: Completed Primary Off-Leash Area study and identified suitable sites West of Hwy 400

2018: Updated ATMP identify recommendations for a study to identify local off-leash dog areas

2019: Commenced City-wide study and implementation plan for local off-leash dog areas across the City

Primary vs. Local Off-Leash Dog Areas

- Primary off-leash dog parks would service a city-wide population and encompass a larger footprint (>1ha), ideally within larger parks. These facilities should offer multiple amenities such as parking lot, furniture, shade, lighting, enclosed spaces for small and large pets, etc..
- Local off-leash dog areas would be walk-to facilities located within Neighbourhoods and Intensification areas. These facilities are often within local parks, smaller in size (>0.5ha) and have fewer amenities.



Concord / Thornhill Regional Park Primary Dog Area

Local Off-Leash Dog Areas Strategy

In response to interest identified by the community, Vaughan started this study to define a process for developing local off-leash dog areas.

In September 2019, the City retained Wood to identify local Off-Leash Dog Areas across the City. Their work included:

- Reviewing available information from the City;
- Conducted a review of municipal best practices;
- Undertake community and stakeholder consultation including workshops, surveys and an online self-directed workshop (in place of a public open house);
- Provided recommendations on site selection criteria, evaluation conditions and assessment scoring;
- Identified priority areas and list of potential sites;
- Identified a short-list of recommended sites across the City



Local Off-Leash Dog Areas Public Engagement

Stakeholder and public engagement workshops included: 4 on-line surveys (1716 responses, including 222 citizens interested in becoming off-leash stewards), 10 pop-up events, and interviews with 7 ratepayer groups.



Engagement Task	Date	Participation
1 staff workshop	October 2019	5 staff
1 dog owner workshop	November 2019	12 residents
1 ratepayer group workshop	November 2019	2 ratepayer groups
MMOC interviews	November 2019	Interviewed Mayor and Regional and Ward Councilors
Online survey 10 pop-up events	December 3, 2019 to July 13, 2020	917 residents participated
Online Self-Directed Workshop to provide feedback on 8 short listed locations	July 23, 2020 to August 31, 2020	699 residents participated 5000 letters sent On site signage at all locations 222 respondents interested in becoming off-leash stewards
Ratepayer groups interviews	October 2020	7 groups interviewed
Off-leash stewards questionnaire	November 2020	91 confirmed their interest



Background Research

Research looked at **Canadian and International practices and innovations in developing and maintaining local off-leash dog areas.**

Governance

- **By-laws and policies** are critical to establishing operational parameters and enforcement.
- **Education** is important to communicate regulations, set expectations regarding etiquette and address misinformation.
- **Community involvement** through volunteer groups is essential to the identification of locations and long-term operation and management of facilities.
- **Well-being** of people and dogs must be considered through the lens of safety and security.

Location

- Clearly defining **setbacks** and **places of acceptable use** is important to manage expectations.
- “People with and without dogs share park space more effectively in dog off-leash areas with clearly marked boundaries, since people know where off-leash dogs are allowed and to be expected.” (Source: Vancouver Park Board, 2017)

Background Research ... continued

Accessibility

- A common issue with local off-leash dog areas is the ability for residents to access them. Most residents prefer local off-leash dog areas to be located within **walking distances** (max. 15-minute walk) to their homes or a short drive, which has become an increasing level of demand for municipalities.
- Connecting pathways to local off-leash dog areas (sidewalks and trails) are important considerations.

Design

- The design considerations that impact the use of local off-leash dog areas are size, microclimate, and drainage. The design of these facilities must be **inclusive**, considering a wide variety of factors and suitable for all dogs. Design must also consider the **carrying capacity** of a park in order to create an area that will adequately serve the community.



Background Research ... continued

Layout & Amenities

- The aspects of layout and amenities for local off-leash dog areas must consider fencing, gates, access, surface material, shade, site furnishing and waste management. Research indicates that users typically **socialize** while their dogs play at the park. Adequate seating is required; considering movable chairs that can create a more comfortable atmosphere.



Cost

- The cost of **developing, operating, maintain and enforcing** local off-leash dog areas is an important consideration. Some municipalities use the licensing fees of dogs to fund the maintenance of the park and the enforcement of policies, and others require volunteer groups to raise half the funds in advance or raise funds for any non-standard features.



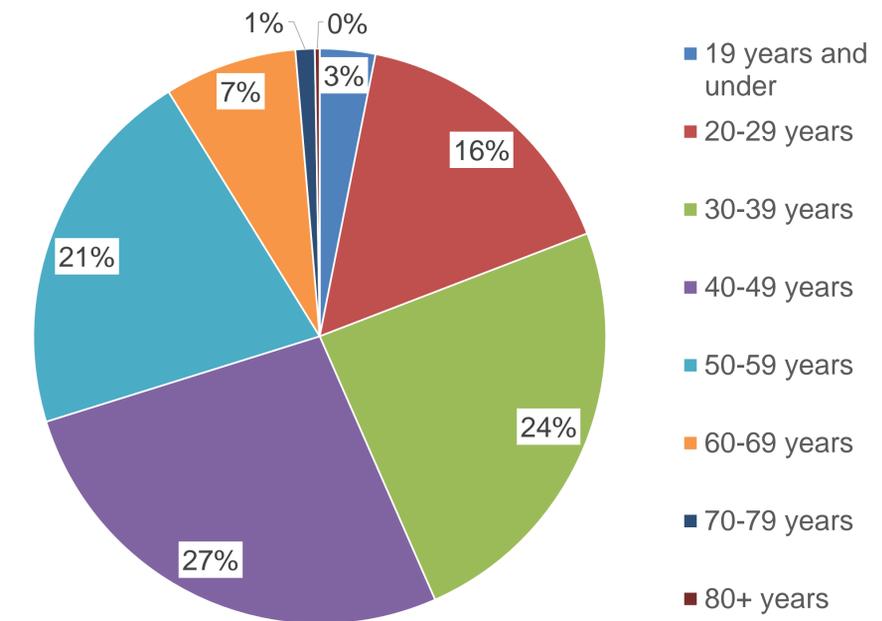
What the City Has Heard: Survey

Number of Survey Responses: **917** (July 14, 2020)

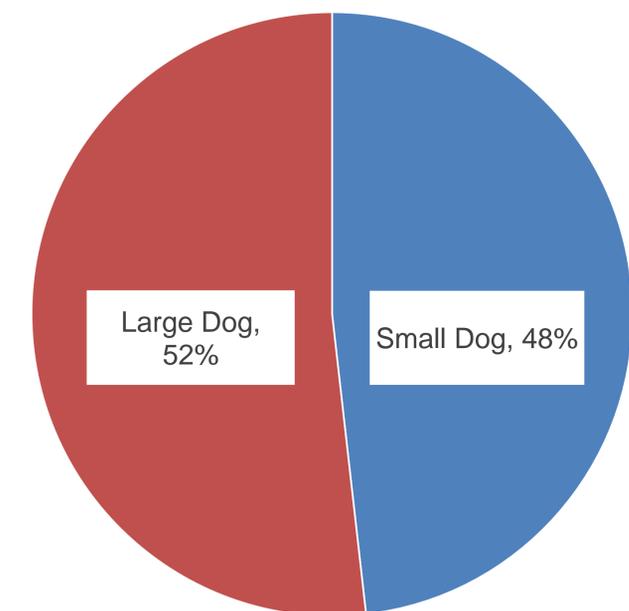
Key Feedback

- Dog owners like off-leash areas because they allow dogs to exercise, roam freely, and socialize with others within a safe confined space.
- Areas that are nearby (or within walking distance) to many potential users would be a benefit.
- Efficient by-law enforcement is required (i.e., aggressive dogs, inappropriate use, poop & scoop waste collection, etc.).
- Areas should be maintained, and “rules” of use enforced as much as possible.
- Beneficial to have separate areas for small and large dogs.
- Areas should be used year-round (weatherproof) and could be used during various weather conditions (i.e., rain, snow, sun, wind, etc.).
- The area should be located away from children’s playgrounds and provide amenities for visitors to use (i.e. water, waste bins, two-gated entry, etc.).
- Different types of local off-leash areas (i.e., located within open space, along trails, etc.) would be beneficial.

Age of Respondents



Size of Dogs Owned by Respondents

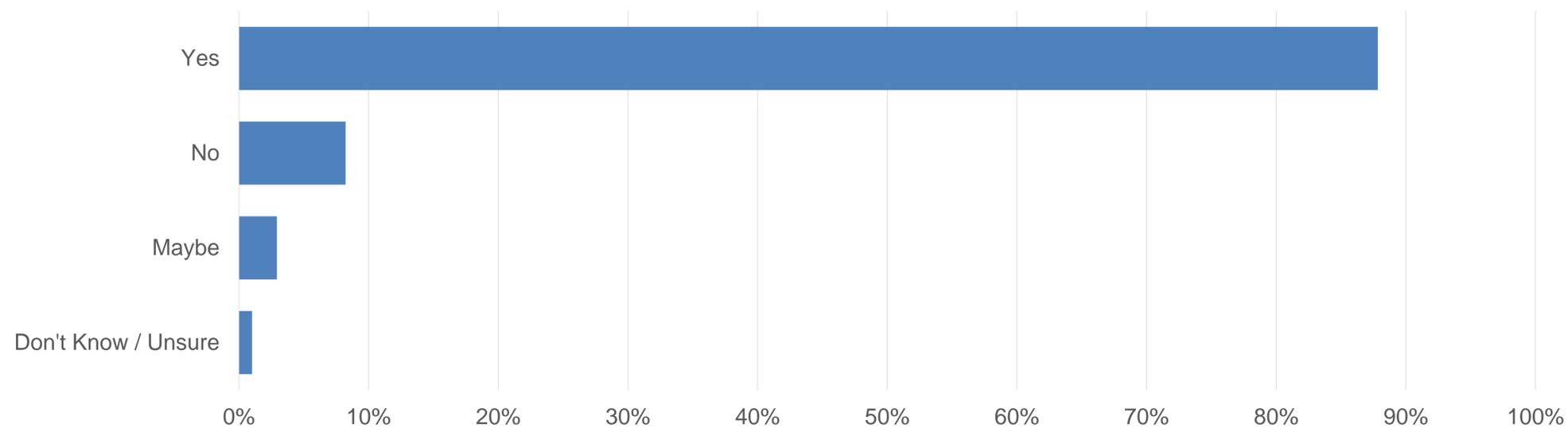


What the City Has Heard: Survey ... continued

Key Takeaway

Close to 90% of respondents support a local off-leash dog area within their neighbourhood.

Would you support a local off-leash dog area in your neighbourhood?

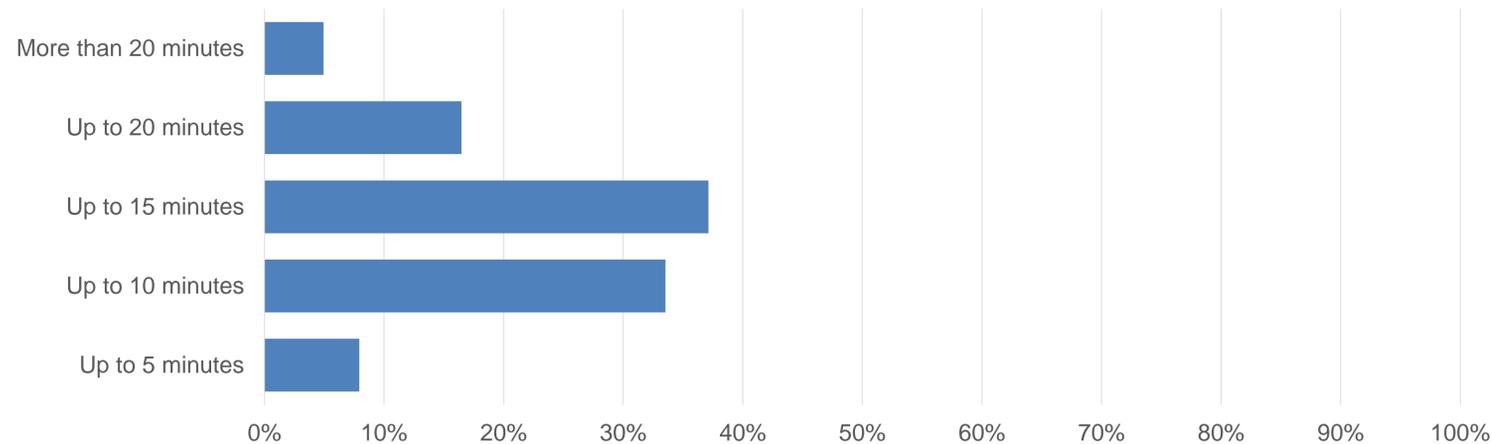


What the City Has Heard: Survey ... continued

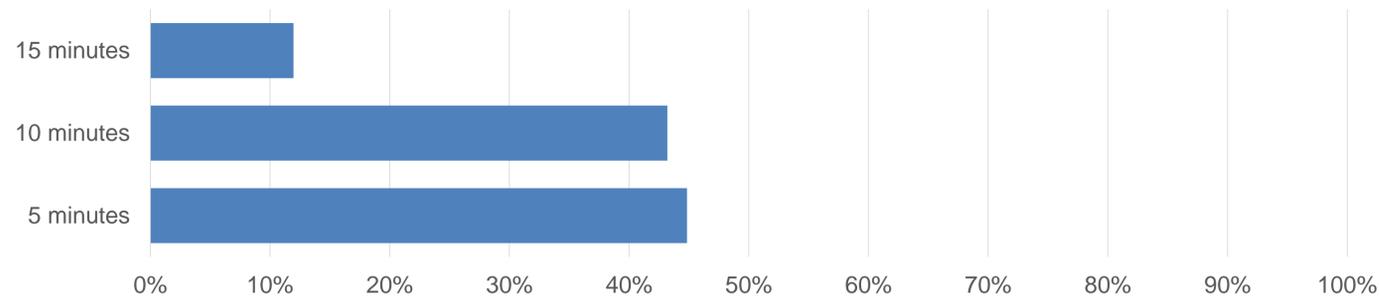
Key Takeaways

- Most people are willing to drive 5 to 10 minutes
- Most people are willing to walk up to 15 minutes
- Most people would visit in the later afternoon into the evening

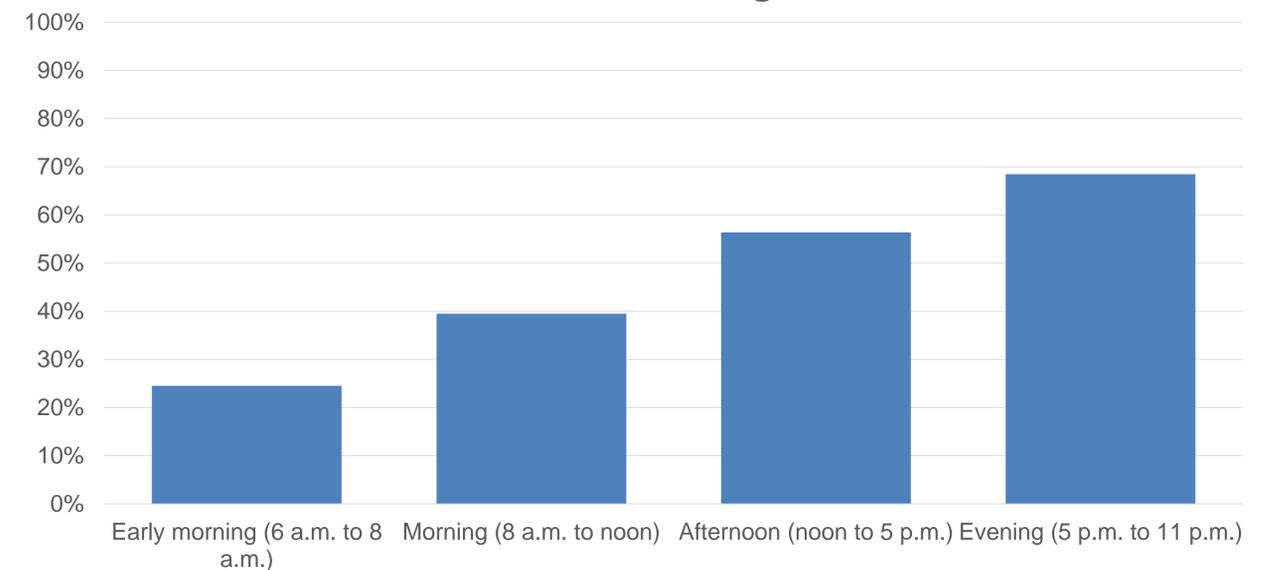
Time Respondents Would Spend Walking



Time Respondents Would Spend Driving



Time of Day Respondents are Most Likely to Visit a Local Off-Leash Dog Area

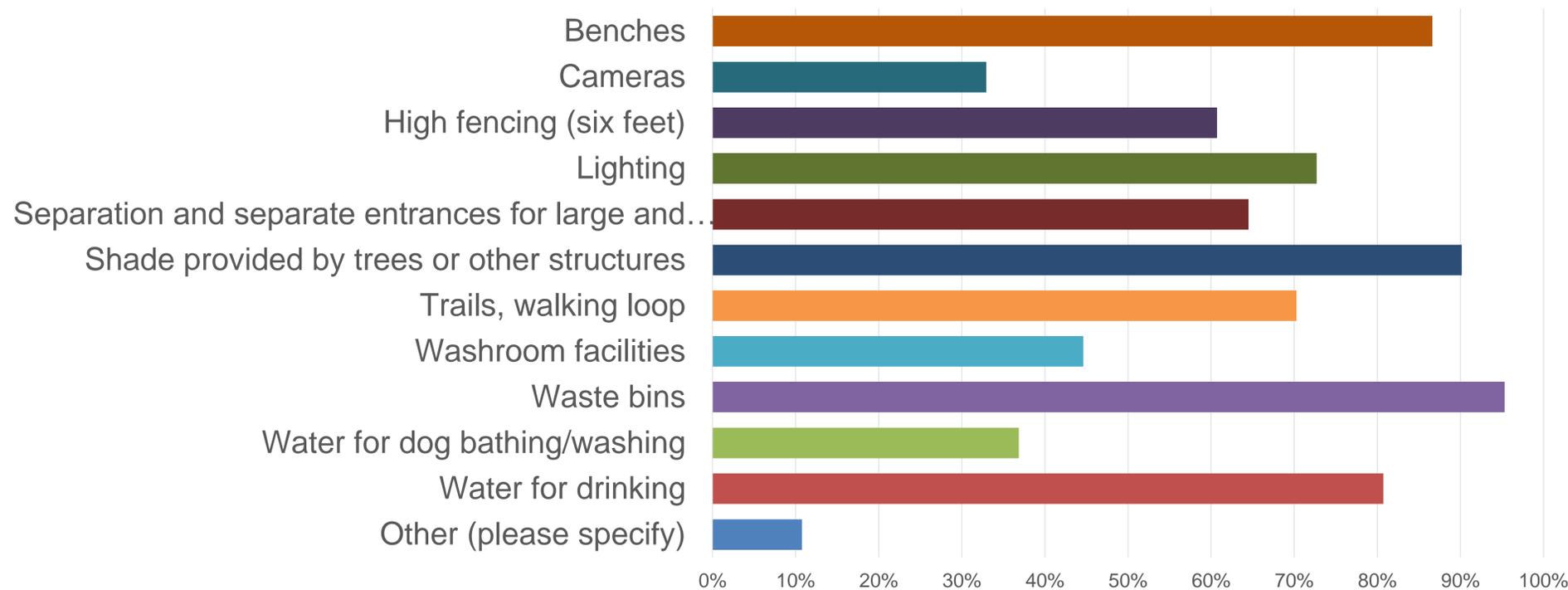


What the City Has Heard: Survey ... continued

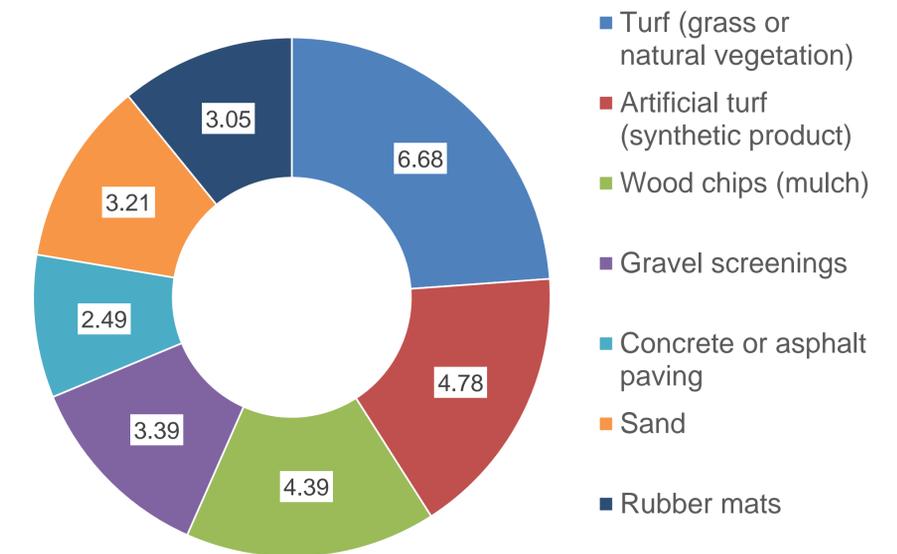
Identified Concerns

- Need for consistent and responsive maintenance
- Need for consistent by-law regulations & enforcement
- Safety of dogs of different sizes within the area and protection from outside threats (i.e., coyotes, harmful plant species, etc.)
- Ensure there is ample education on expected behaviour and rules of the area
- Need for area to be apart from playgrounds or sports fields
- Preference for surfaces of turf and artificial turf in local off-leash areas

Respondents Ratings of Amenities



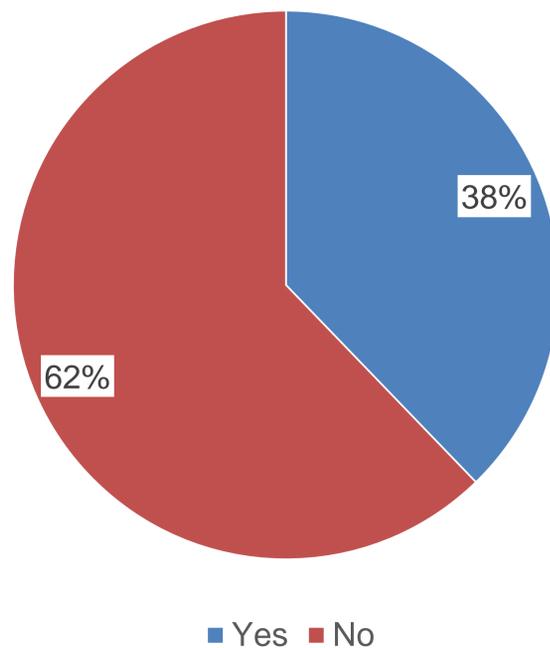
Respondents Rating of Surface Material



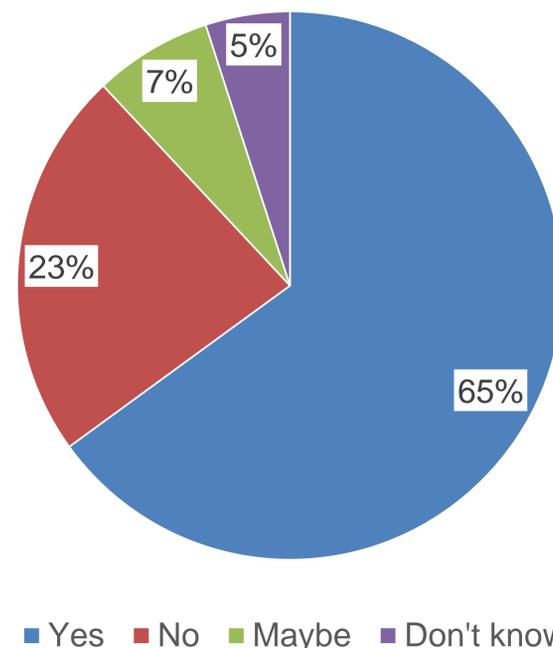
What the City Has Heard: Short Survey

Between March 9 and 22, 2020, 100 community members provided input through a short telephone-based survey through Access Vaughan.

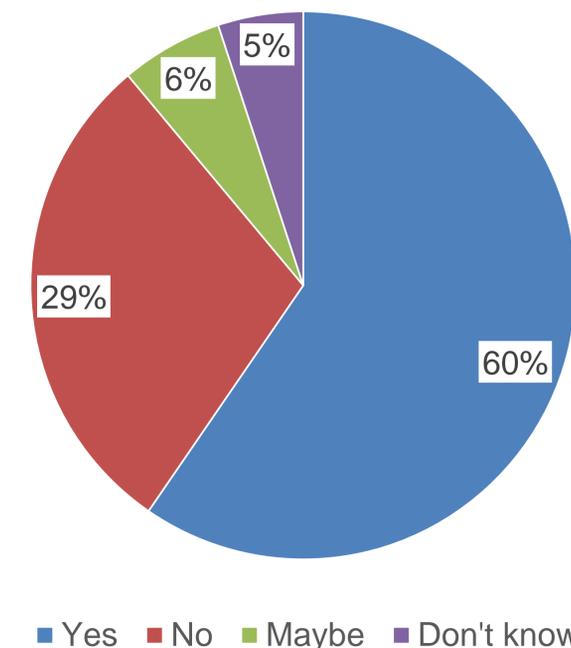
Identified as a Dog Owner



Identified Local Off-Leash Dog Areas as Beneficial



Support Off-Leash Dog Areas in Their Neighbourhood



What the City Has Heard: Community Workshops

Three workshops were conducted with City staff, dog-owners and ratepayers. The key findings include:

- Animal Services will need **additional funds to support enforcement.**
- Concerns regarding lack of owners with licensed dogs, not properly watching over their dog and their actions.
- Some parks are **'hot spots' of complaints** and concern that should not be considered for off-leash dog areas.
- Need to consider **amenities** such as water features, lighting, entrances etc. as well as area accessibility for intensifying neighbourhoods.
- **Education and communication** activities identified as being important to provide community-wide, include good dog care, responsibilities of dog-owners, and how dog owners care for their dogs when using local off-leash dog areas.



What the City Has Heard: Community Workshops ... continued

- The need for **lighting** to allow for evening use, microclimate features either natural or constructed shade and adequate drainage (after rain).
- A variety of **funding options** (creating a user fee or annual membership, encouraging increased dog licensing, and private sector sponsorship) and a variety of methods for governance (volunteers, dog-owners association collaborating with the City, etc.) exist.
- There are several **educational communication and outreach strategies** such as making use of the existing City communication channels, local posters in parks and community centers, local newspapers and engaging with schools and stakeholders.
- Additional features would be beneficial such as a **poster board** (information kiosk) area for residents who may have lost a dog, want to post information or share facility updates.



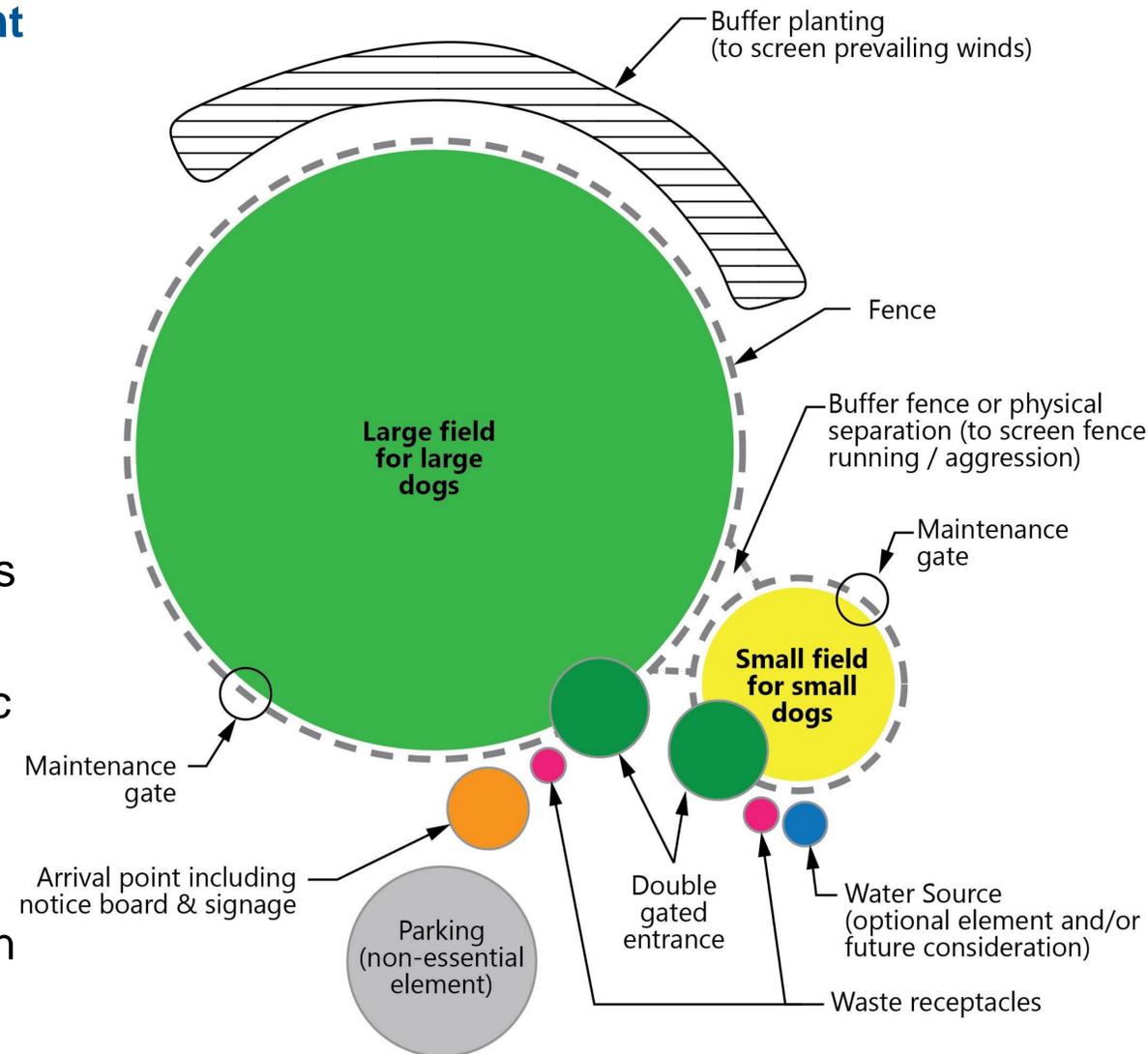
What Makes a 'Good' Local Off-Leash Dog Area?

Sound Planning and Management

- Governance / Stewardship
- Education and Awareness
- Effective Guidelines for Design, Operation, and Use
- Effective and Responsive Maintenance

Features and Facilities

- Separate enclosure for small dogs
- Shade trees and structures
- Outdoor furniture (benches, picnic tables)
- Perimeter fencing and double gates
- Surfaces that are easy to maintain
- Waste receptacles
- Clear signage
- Accessibility (transit, sidewalk, trails, parking option)



Note: Placement of off-leash infrastructure may vary depending on site-specific conditions.

Characteristics

- Appropriate size
- Close proximity to enable walking
- Access to transit and parking
- Safe, secure, and accessible
- Social space
- Part of the community
- Accessible to maintenance equipment
- Practical to monitor
- Screened to limit nuisance

Limitations for Local Scale

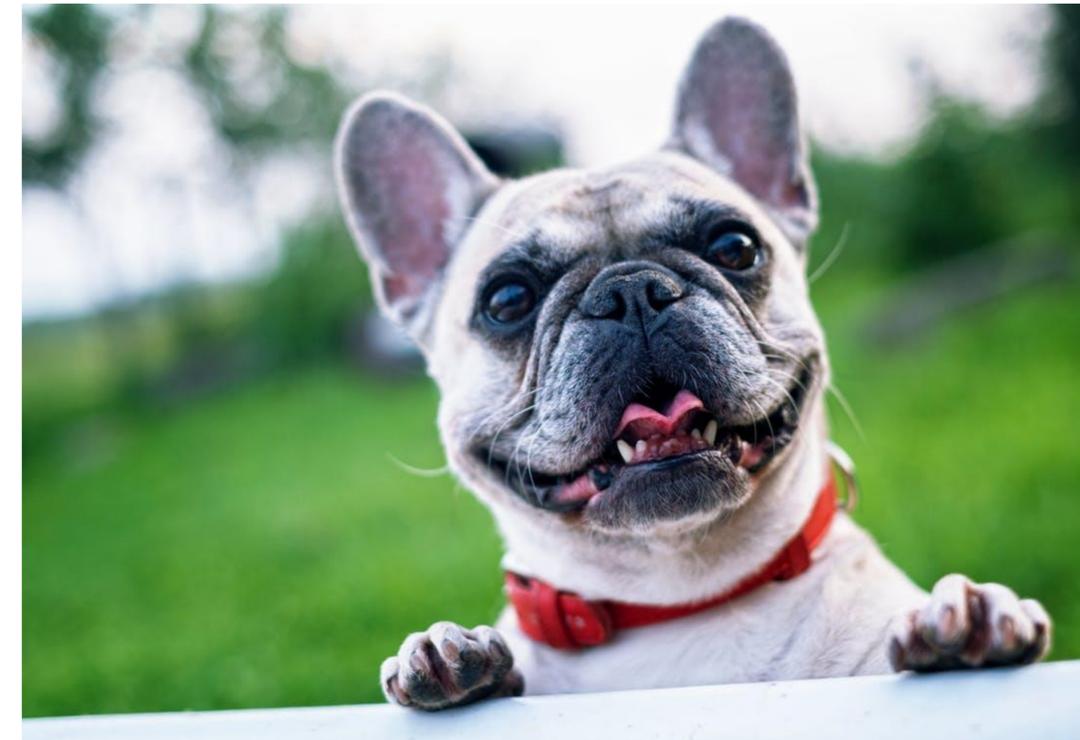
- Size
- Proximity to residential areas
- Proximity to school yards, play areas, athletic fields, and environmental areas
- Existing protection from the elements
- Available infrastructure (water, lighting, washrooms)

Local Off-Leash Dog Area Etiquette

Rules and Regulations (Animal By-Law 066-2020)

- Licensing of Dogs
 - All dogs are to be licensed with each dog having a valid tag and rabies certificate
 - Licenses are to be purchased when acquiring a dog, and must be renewed annually
 - All dogs must always wear a license (numbered metal tag)
- Running at Large (Unleashed)
 - Dogs must be leashed in public parks, if this is not the case then the animal may be impounded by Animal Control
 - Pet owners must not let their pet trespass on public or private property
- Animal Waste
 - Pet owners must always clean up and dispose of their pet's waste on public or private property
- Off-Leash Area Rules
 - No dog under the age of four months is permitted
 - Dogs must be spayed or neutered
 - Dogs must not be left unattended
 - Dog owners must carry a leash for each dog
 - Dog owners may bring up to three dogs per visit into an off-leash area
 - Dog owners must not bring any biting or menacing dog or pit bull

**Dog Owners are expected to:
Abide by Ontario's Dog Owners'
Liability Act (R.S.O. 1990) which
includes a list of offences, and
other regulations**



Local Off-Leash Dog Area Stewardship Program

Responsibility of Stewards

- Foster a positive social environment for dogs and people
- Educate others on off-leash dog area regulations and etiquette
- Communicate any safety concerns to City
- Share feedback about operations and maintenance
- Collaborate with City on sharing feedback on local off-leash areas (opportunities for improvement and enhancement)

Each site will require an annual review to determine if:

- The stewardship group has remained active
- There are no significant issues the City identified
- Costs fall within existing operating expenditures
- The site will be developed as a formal location

Each location considered must include

- Stewardship group (min. 3 volunteers)
- Evaluation of usage, complaints, operation and maintenance
- Consideration of all costs



Site Selection Process

- Potential locations reviewed by the City and filtered to potential locations.
- Assess potential locations against Tier 1 criteria to determine suitability, identify opportunities / advantages and challenges / disadvantages
- Advance those sites that meet the 75% threshold to the Tier 2 evaluation

- Prepare report of findings and final recommendations
- Submit report and present to Council



- Conduct research into Canadian, international and Ontario municipal best practices for establishment and operation of local off-leash dog parks
- Conduct workshops with City staff, ratepayers and dog-owners
- Develop a list of potential sites from community input (survey, open house, pop-up events, etc.)
- Develop list of evaluation criteria to assess the suitability of potential locations
- Develop and release a community survey

TIER 1 CRITERIA ASSESSMENT:

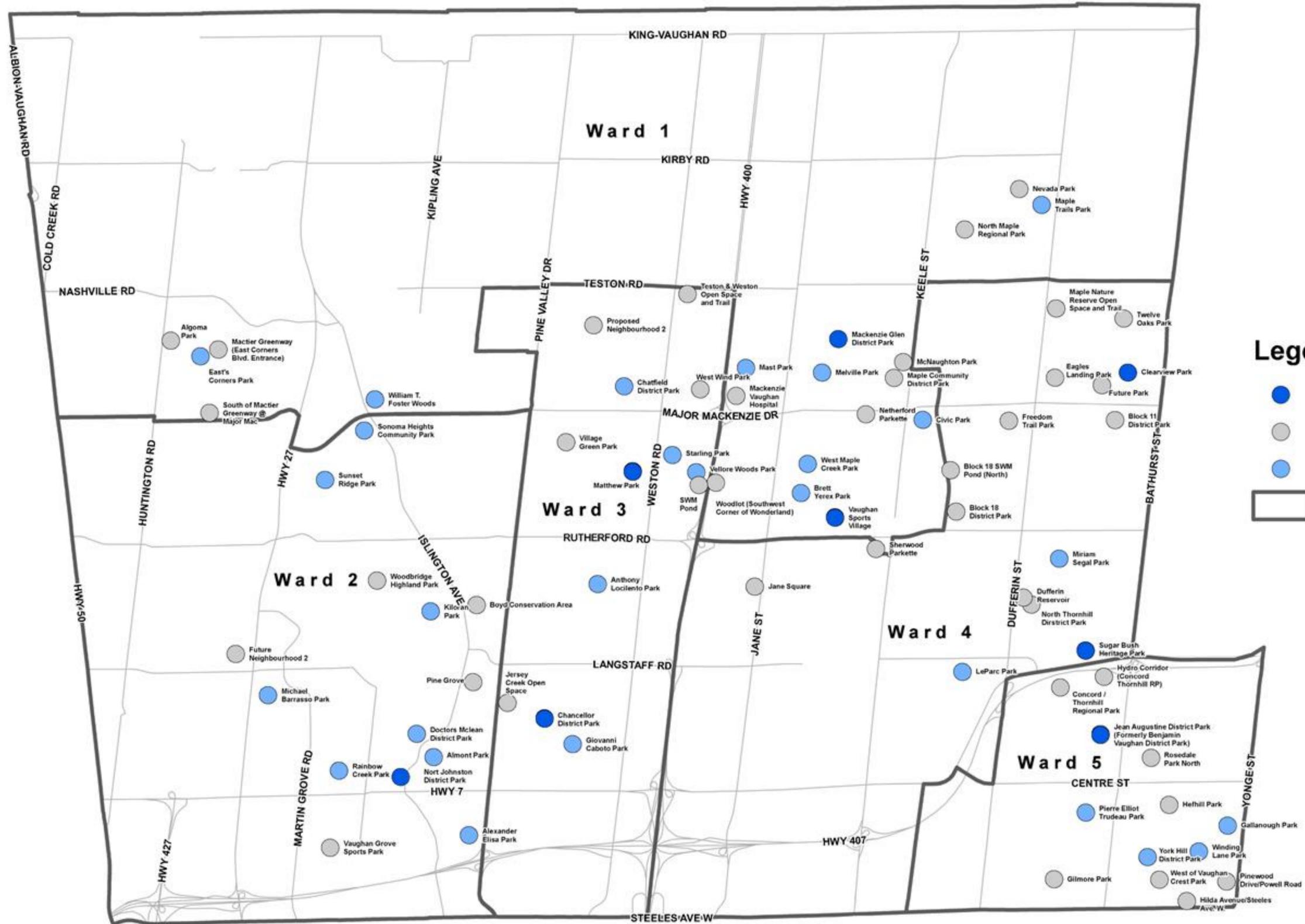
- Purpose
- Governance
- Location
- Accessibility
- Design

TIER 2 CRITERIA ASSESSMENT:

- Governance
- Accessibility
- Layout and amenities
- Cost
- Public input

- Assess short listed locations against Tier 2 criteria
- Conduct site visit to field verify evaluation
- Engage community on Recommended Local Off-Leash Dog Areas
- Update evaluation based on community input
- Identification of potential stewards
- Review of location based on development and operation checklist

Local Off-Leash Dog Areas: Potential Locations Reviewed by City



Legend

- Recommended Locations
- Identified Locations
- Potential Locations
- Ward Boundary

Selecting the Locations: Tier 1 Evaluation Matrix and Criteria

Criteria	Criteria Description	Criteria Scoring	Weighting
A. Purpose			
Purpose	Proposed location is intended to use existing City-owned, designated park areas as a local-scale off-leash dog area for socialization and exercising dogs within the City's by-laws and policies.	1: No 5: Yes	10
B. Governance			
By-laws, Policies & Regulations	Potential site would easily comply with existing by-laws, policies, and land regulators (i.e., TRCA, MNRF, etc..)	1: No, changes are required 5: Yes, no changes are required	10
Education	Potential site would require educational efforts for neighbouring residents and park users.	1: Yes 5: No	5
Park Stewardship	Proposed location has potential to foster stewardship amongst neighbouring residents and park users (Adopt-a-Park, ratepayers association, etc.)	1: Limited Potential, low probability of volunteers 3: Potential, moderate probability of volunteers 5: Good Potential, volunteers have been identified	5
Safety and Security	Potential site considers users and non-users safety and security (easily visible, electricity for lighting). CPTED principles to be applied.	1: Poor 3: Average 5: Good	10
Public Opinion	What is the general public opinion of the proposed location? Has the location been recommended by residents? (Workshop and pop-up events)	1: Opposition 3: Neutral 5: Supported	10
C. Location			
Ownership / Designated Park	Potential site must be City-owned, designated park.	1: Not City-owned, undesignated park 3: City-owned, undesignated park / Owned by others, designated park 5: City owned, designated	10
Proximity to residential areas	Potential site within residential area but distance away from residences (including visual, odour and noise buffers), with greater distance preference.	1: < 15 m (49 ft.) 3: 15 m to 30 m (59 ft. to 98 ft.) 5: > 30 m (98 ft.) (or if adjacent to high-rise residential)	10
Proximity to Play Areas and School Yards	Potential site considers proximity from fence to play areas and school yards with greater distance preferred.	1: < 15 m (49 ft.) 3: 15 m to 30 m (59 ft. to 98 ft.) 5: > 30 m (98 ft.)	10
Proximity to Athletic Fields or Courts	Potential site considers proximity from fence to athletic fields and courts with greater distance preferred.	1: < 15 m (49 ft.) 5: > 15 m (98 ft.)	5
Proximity to Environmental Areas	Potential site cannot result in negative environmental effects. Distance away from Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs) and Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI), with greater distance preferred. (Reference Natural Heritage Network Core)	1: < 5 m (16 ft.) 3: 5 m to 15 m (16ft. to 59 ft.) 5: > 15 m (59 ft.)	5
D. Accessibility			
Parking	Potential site has access to dedicated parking facilities.	3: No Dedicated Parking Facility (On-Street Only) 5: Dedicated Parking Facility	10
Service Area Catchment	Density of of residents within a 500-m service radius of the potential site.	0: No Residential 1: Low Density 3: Medium Density 5: High Density	10
Sidewalks (Including park walkways)	Potential site is accessible by sidewalks.	1: None 3: One 5: More than one	10
Trails	Potential site is accessible by trails (within 100m)	1: None 5: One or More	5
E. Design			
Size	Potential site must be large enough to accommodate required facility design.	1: < 0.25 ha (0.6 acres) 3: 0.25 - 0.5 ha (0.6 to 1.2 acres) 5: > 0.5 ha (1.2 acres)	15
Microclimate	Potential site considers exposure to the elements (sun, wind, snow, rain) and other environmental factors such as natural shade	1: Full exposure 3: Average exposure 5: Limited exposure/protected	5
General Grading	Potential site should be well drained. Max slope 10%	1: Poor, additional grading required 3: Average, minor additional grading may be required 5: Good, no additional grading required	10

Selecting the Locations: Tier 2 Criteria

Tier 2 Criteria

Engagement with Citizens

Feedback through Online Self-Directed Workshop

Input from ratepayer group

Input from Ward Councilor

Input from the broader community

Identification of Interested Stewards

A minimum of three stewards are required for a location to be recommended as a Local Off-Leash Dog Area

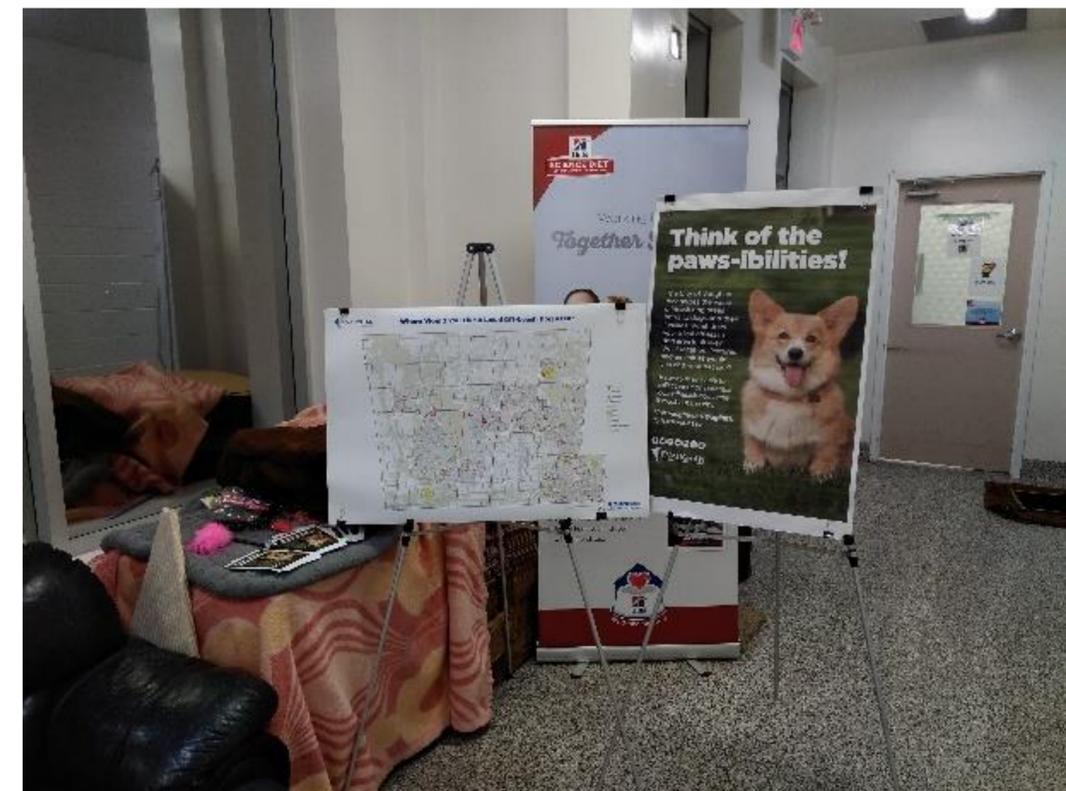
Checklist

Layout and Amenities

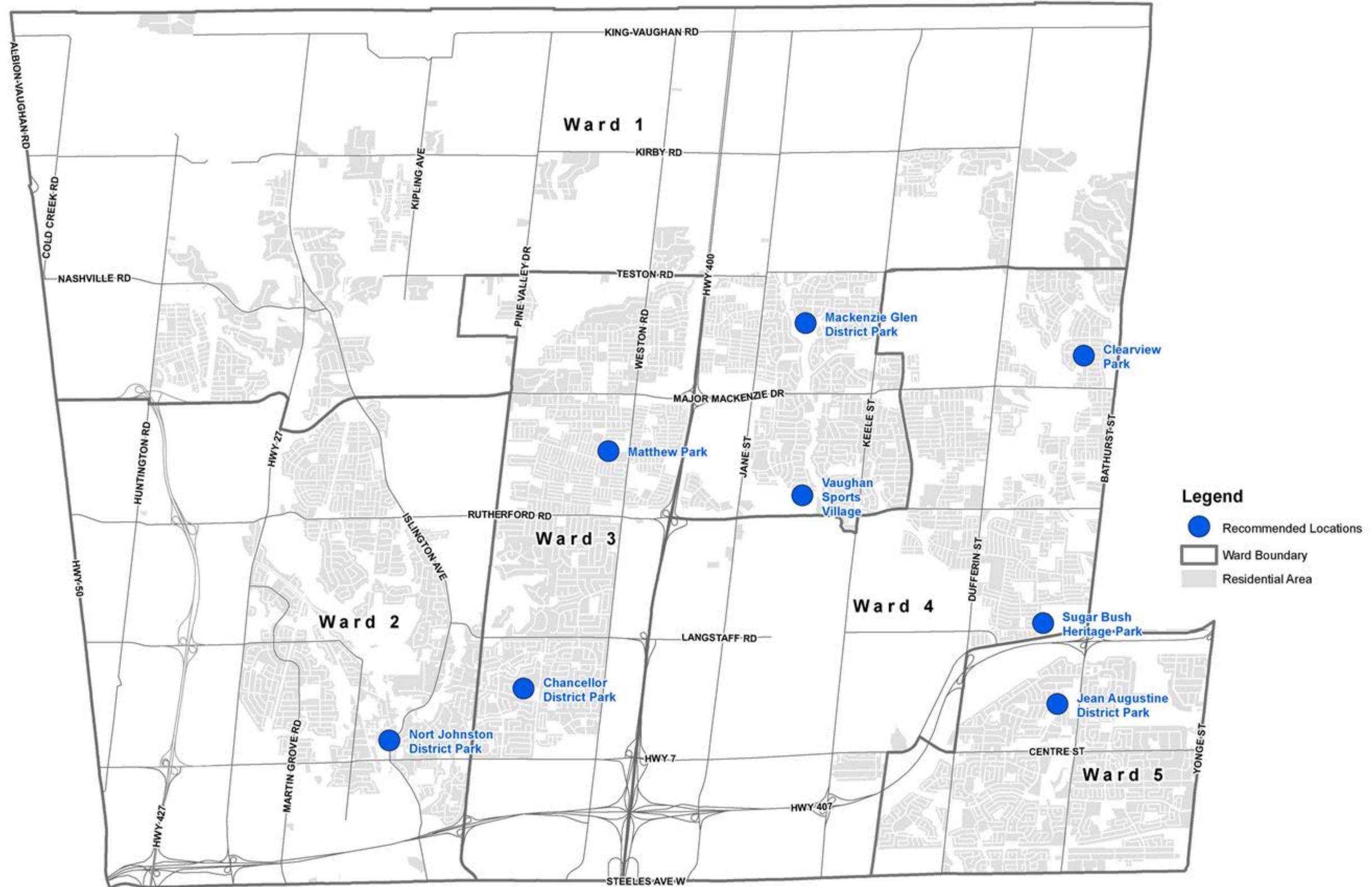
- Fencing
- Surface material
- Shade
- Waste management
- Benches
- Lighting (enhanced)
- Water (enhanced)

Costs

- Construction Cost
- O&M costs
- Governance and Enforcement
- External funding



8 Locations presented through the Online Self-Directed Workshop



Online Self-Directed Workshop

Online Self-Directed Workshop to provide feedback on 8 short listed locations

Workshop held from July 23, 2020 to August 31, 2020

699 residents participated

- Included an introductory video presentation (2:32 minute in length), survey and supporting background documentation.
- 5000 letters sent to addresses within approximately 250 meters of the eight short listed locations
- Notification Signage placed at all locations
- 222 respondents interested in becoming off-leash stewards
- Follow-up meetings with 7 ratepayer groups

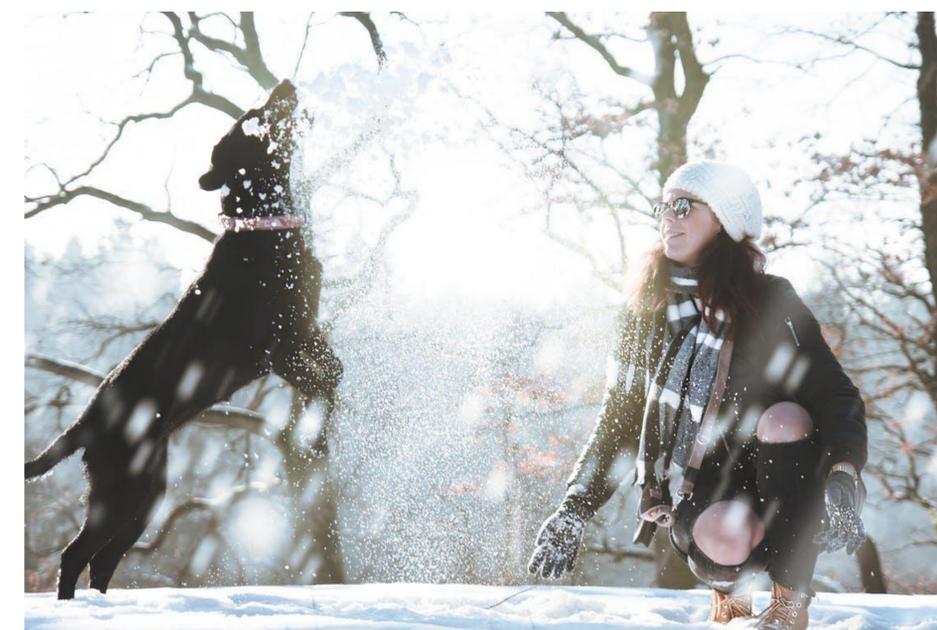


7 Site Identified Following Online Self-Directed Workshop Findings

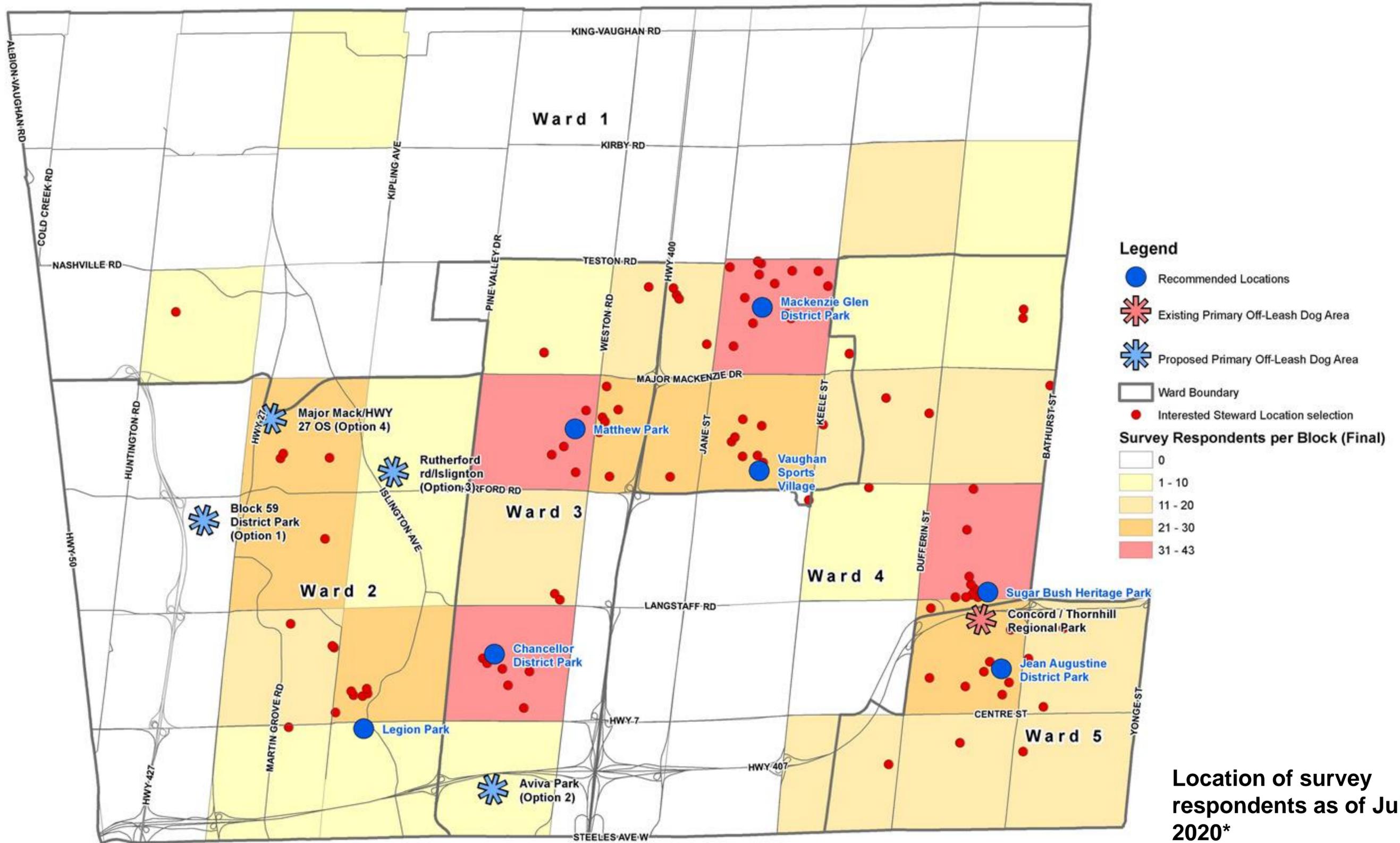
Location	Ward	Community	Tier 1 Score	Number of Confirmed stewards
Vaughan Sports Village District Park	Ward 1	Maple	98%	13
Mackenzie Glen District Park	Ward 1	Maple	90%	16
Legion Park¹	Ward 2	Woodbridge	77%	15
Chancellor District Park	Ward 3	Woodbridge	77%	8
Matthew District Park	Ward 3	Woodbridge	88%	13
Sugar Bush Heritage Park	Ward 4	Carrville	76%	13
Jean Augustine District Park²	Ward 5	Thornhill	77%	11
Total				89

Actions following Online Self-Directed Workshop

- 1 - Nort Johnson District Park was replaced with Legion Park as a preferred alternative site.
- 2 - Park was renamed, formerly Benjamin Vaughan District Park
- 3 - Clearview Park was dropped from the list due to the low interest from residents to become stewards.

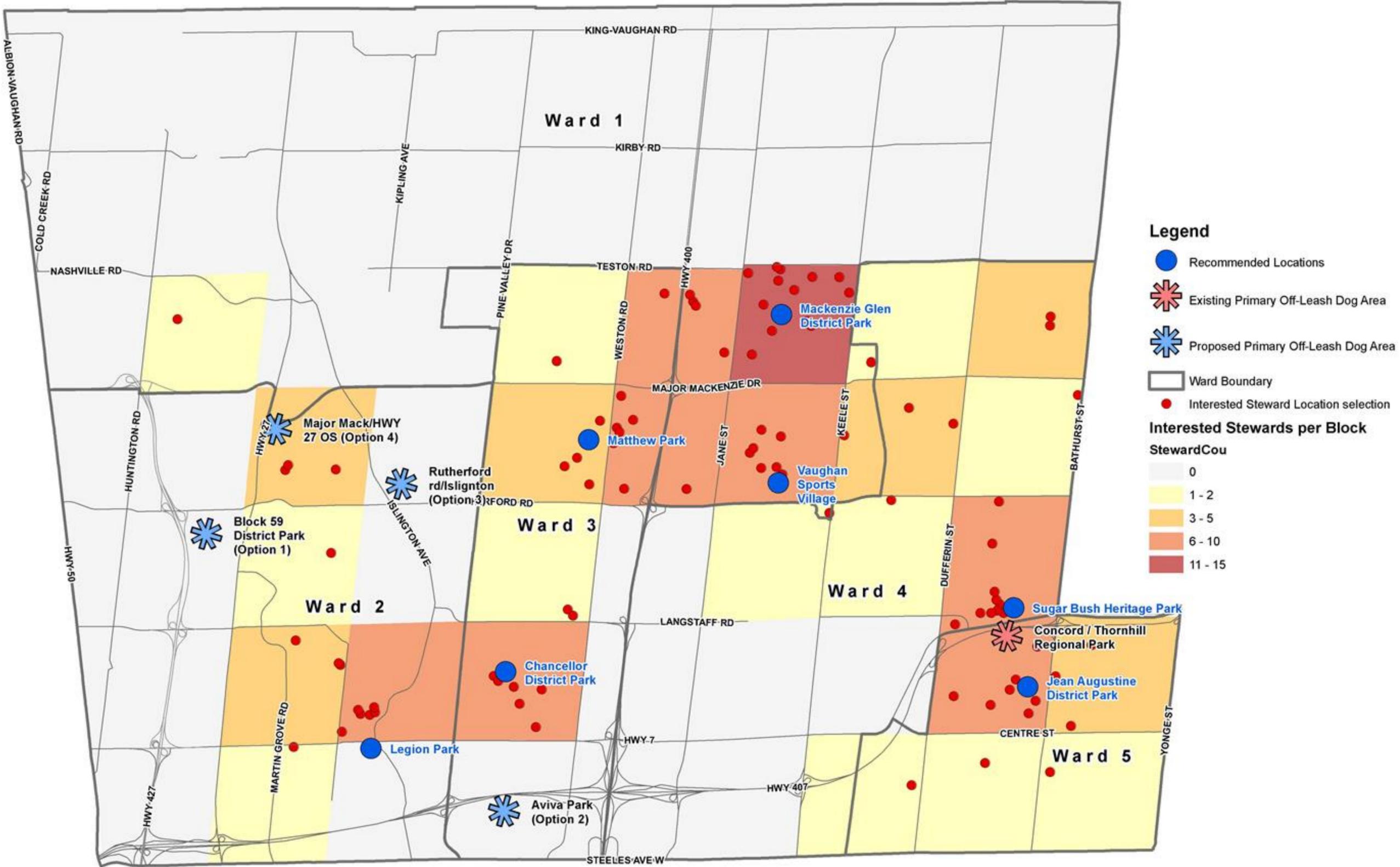


Recommended Locations & Survey Respondents Overlay

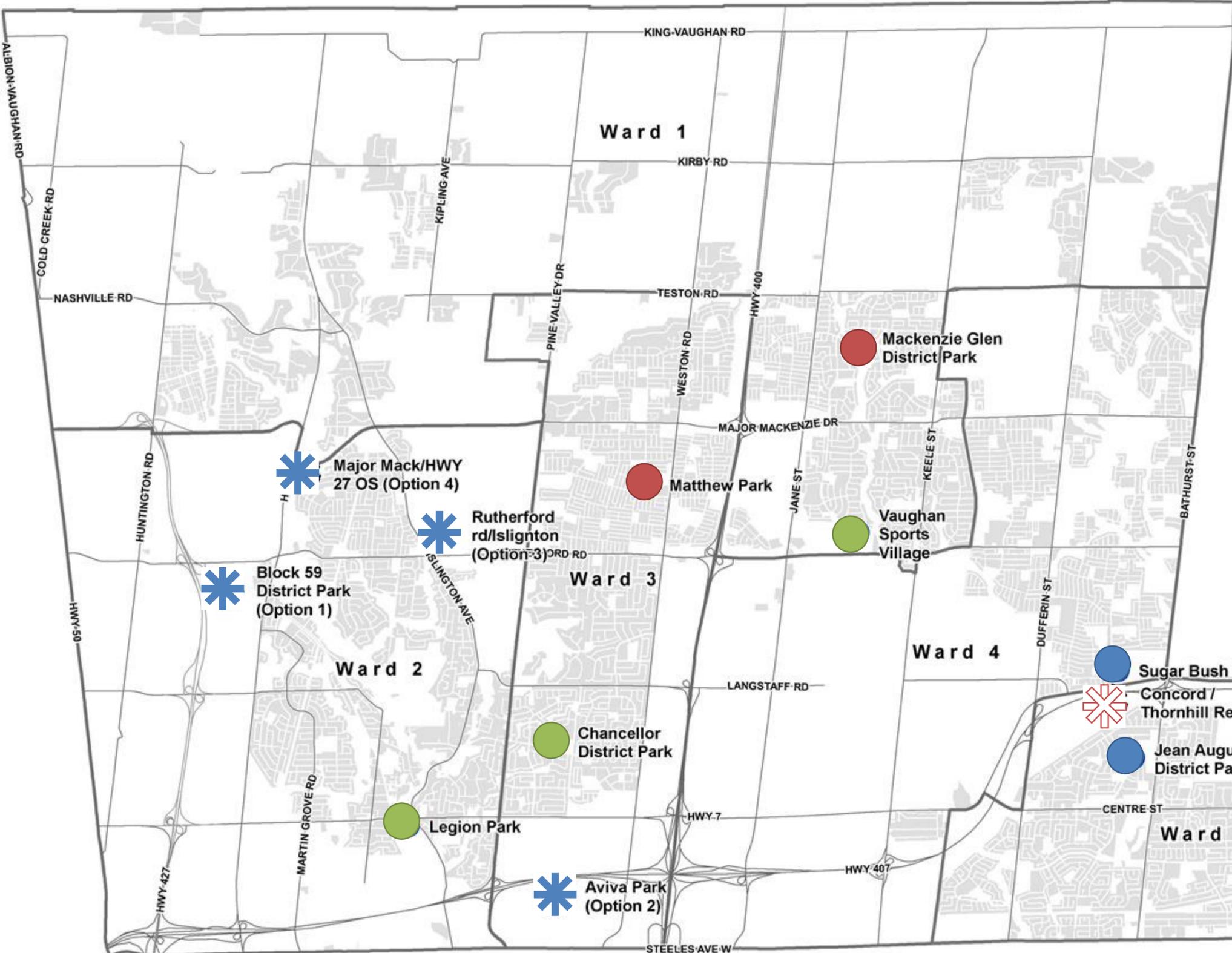


* Based on 513 respondents who shared valid Postal Codes with the City of Vaughan

Local Off-Leash Dog Areas: Confirmed Interested Stewards



Local Off-Leash Dog Areas: Recommended Roll Out Plan



Year	New Local Off-Leash Area	Upgrades to existing Primary Off-Leash	New Primary Off-Leash Dog Area
2021	●	✳	
2022	●		✳
2023	●		

Implementation Roll Out Plan

Year	#	Location	Ward	Estimated Capital Cost		Estimated Operating Cost (annualized)	
				Park Construction ¹	Animal Services Vehicles ²	Park Maintenance ³	Animal Services Enforcement ⁴
2021	1	Mackenzie Glen District Park	1	\$55,000	\$126,000	\$12,000	\$175,000 1 F/T ASO 1 P/T ASC
	2	Matthew District Park	3	\$55,000		\$7,000	
	3	Concord/Thornhill Regional Park	5	\$330,000		\$0	
2022	4	Primary Off-Leash Dog Park West of Hwy 400	2	\$580,000	\$126,000	\$23,000	\$185,000 1 F/T ASO 1 P/T ASO
	5	Sugar Bush Heritage Park	4	\$55,000		\$7,000	
	6	Jean Augustine District Park	5	\$55,000		\$7,000	
2023	7	Vaughan Sports Village District Park	1	\$55,000	\$126,000	\$7,000	\$65,000 1 P/T ASO
	8	Legion Park	2	\$55,000		\$7,000	
	9	Chancellor District Park	3	\$55,000		\$7,000	

TOTAL COST⁶	\$1,295,000	\$378,000	\$77,000	\$425,000
	\$1,673,000		\$502,000	

2021 Budget Required	2021	2021 & 2022	4 months in 2021	
	\$440,000	\$252,000	\$7,000	\$73,000
	\$692,000		\$80,000	

* 2021 capital budget required will be funded by available capital budget in existing projects to be transferred over.

* 2021 operating budget required will be temporarily supported within existing approved department budgets and positions, and/or labour gapping, until additional funding is requested through the 2022 annual budget process.

- Non-labour costs include non-recoverable HST. Capital costs also include labour recovery & 3% admin recovery fee
- Refer to report for notes 1, 2, 3, 4

Questions and Comments