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The Corporation of **THE CITY OF NORTH VANCOUVER**  
**ENGINEERING, PARKS AND ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT**

**REPORT**

To: Mayor Linda Buchanan and Members of Council  
From: Margaret Shipley, Parks Planner 1  
Subject: DOG FRIENDLY CITY: PHASE 1 ACTIONS  
Date: June 8, 2022 File No: 12-6120-01-0001/2022

*The following is a suggested recommendation only. Refer to Council Minutes for adopted resolution.*

## RECOMMENDATION

PURSUANT to the report of the Planner 1, dated June 8, 2022, entitled “Dog Friendly City: Phase 1 Actions”:

THAT the Dog Friendly City: Phase 1 Actions be endorsed;

AND THAT a scope of work and funding request for Phase 2 be included for consideration as part of the 2023-2032 Capital Plan.

## ATTACHMENTS

1. Dog Friendly City: Phase 1 Actions (CD#[2185297](#))
2. City GIS Map – Dog Licenses Issued 2021 (CD#[2184970](#))
3. People + Pups in the City: What We Heard (CD#[2188228](#))

## SUMMARY

This report seeks Council’s endorsement of the Dog Friendly City: Phase 1 Actions. The action items (Attachment 1), are based on a study of existing data, best practice research, findings from resident engagement, and an interdepartmental City staff workshop. The actions will guide the planning, design and maintenance of spaces shared by people and dogs.

## BACKGROUND

As the population of our City grows, so do the number of dogs. With an urban fabric of predominantly multi-family housing and people living in smaller, denser spaces, it is important to develop a citywide plan for integrating dogs into the community. Looking

beyond the limited areas of parks and opens spaces, a citywide approach will address matters of sharing public and private spaces responsibly, for people and dogs in order to meet the needs of all residents.

In winter 2021, a consultant team, Lees and Associates, was retained to assist City staff in developing the first phase of the plan. The purpose of Phase 1 was to gain an understanding of the existing challenges, successes and opportunities and develop a comprehensive set of recommendations. The recommendations provide a framework to guide the City of North Vancouver's decisions over the next ten years to improve facilities and services for people and dogs.

## **DISCUSSION**

The Dog Friendly City: Phase 1 Actions are a result of bringing together multiple sources of information including:

- Analysis of existing City services, facilities, programs and policies;
- An interdepartmental workshop and discussion with City staff; engagement with broad participation from the public;
- On site evaluations of dog amenities, streetscapes, and City parks with an animal behaviour and welfare scientist; and
- A review of policies and initiatives from other jurisdictions, and current best practice research.

### **Analysis of Existing Services and Facilities**

City staff developed maps of existing City services and facilities using the most recent City GIS data (including Attachment 2). Key findings are described below.

- There is a lack of dog-friendly public spaces in the Lower Lonsdale neighbourhood.
- The overall number of licensed dogs in the City is increasing, and Lower Lonsdale has the greatest density of licensed dogs.
- There are many parks and public spaces where dogs are currently prohibited.
- Dog complaints are highest in areas without off-leash areas.
- Dog waste diversion rates are increasing.

These key findings, in addition to site visits with an animal behaviour and welfare scientist, helped the project team to understand trends as well as the challenges and opportunities of people and dogs sharing spaces in the City of North Vancouver.

### **Public Engagement and Findings**

In order to gather community feedback, an online public engagement campaign, titled "People + Pups in the City" was initiated from February 9, 2022 to February 28, 2022. The intent was to reach a broad group of residents with and without dogs to gather comments on what is working well and what can be improved when sharing public spaces with dogs. While the COVID-19 pandemic prevented in-person engagement events, on-site information boards, postcards and posters were distributed in parks, plazas and on

trails throughout the City to maximize awareness and promote opportunities for people to provide input. A total of 1,366 digital surveys were completed with 72.2% identified as dog owners and 27.8% as non-dog owners. Attachment 3, titled "People + Pups in the City: What We Heard" provides a summary of the online campaign results.

### **What We Heard: Dog Owners and Non-Dog Owners**

The top challenges of dogs in open spaces was managing dog waste and keeping off-leash activity to designated off-leash (leash optional) areas. Safety concerns for humans was a top challenge for non-dog owners while dog owners expressed concerns for their pet's safety.

Both non-dog owners and dog owners strongly agreed that dogs are a welcome part of the community and that off-leash areas should be separated from other park activities with a clear boundary such as fencing. They agreed that dog off-leash areas help reduce conflicts between park visitors with and without dogs. Non-dog owners felt there should be more enforcement of dog activity while dog owners thought there should be more places for dogs to be off-leash. Participants also expressed a desire for more education and/or signage for dog owners.

### **What We Heard: Dog Owners**

Most dog owners are willing to walk 10-20 minutes to get to an off-leash dog area. The most important factors in deciding to use a designated dog off-leash include:

- Availability of open areas for dogs to run;
- Availability of dog waste bins and its proximity to their residence; and
- Area/size of the park.

The most important factors in deciding not to use a designated off-leash area were:

- Other dogs' behaviour;
- Park being too busy; and
- Areas not large enough for running and fetching.

When asked the reasons why owners let their dogs off-leash outside of designated off-leash areas, the top responses were that they needed more space for their dog to exercise, the existing off-leash areas are too crowded, and because it is more convenient.

It is important to note that over 50% of dog owner respondents live in multi-family residences with over 75% indicating there were no private dog-friendly amenities provided by the residential building exclusively for building occupants. As a result, these dogs are typically taken to City property, sidewalks, and trees to relieve themselves.

While almost 90% of owners responded that their dog is licensed, the top reasons for owners not having a license for their dogs was that they either did not know it was required or that they did not feel it was necessary.

## What We Heard: Non Dog Owners

When non-dog owners were asked which dog-friendly open spaces caused them the most concern, the top responses were the trails in Mosquito Creek, Lynnmouth and Mahon Park. When considering the rise in dog ownership, almost half of non-dog owners feel the City should increase investment in planning, designing, and maintaining spaces in the community for people and dogs to co-exist and enjoy. Enforcement was indicated as the top priority for investment.

## Phase 1: Action Item Framework

The results of the public engagement, staff workshop, research and analysis revealed challenges and opportunities for people and dogs. The priority ratings of the Dog Friendly City: Phase 1 Actions (Attachment 1) take into account these key findings and the Action Items are summarized into recommendations under four main themes:

- **People** covers the importance of communicating and educating the public on how people and dogs can share parks, trails, streets and open spaces. Under the two topics of expectations and involvement, the Actions recommend development of a comprehensive communication plan for dog related information including signage, responsible dog ownership expectations, and public feedback opportunities.
- **Management** covers the City's role in managing the safety of people and dogs in the City. Under the topics of regulations, enforcement, maintenance and mitigation, the Action Items cover major items including the bylaw enforcement, licensing compliance, 'Education First' approach, waste management, and the impact of dogs on wildlife and the environment.
- **Planning** covers how the City can best plan to meet the pressures of a growing urban dog population, together with other municipalities and organizations. Under the topics of access and connectivity, the Actions include providing new off-leash areas, dog amenities on private property and contribute to a North Shore network of dog friendly spaces including equal distribution of relief opportunities in high-density neighbourhoods.
- **Design** covers the elements and features of dog amenities for the safety of both people and dogs with and without dogs. The Actions cover major items including boulevard and off-leash area typologies, amenities and features, and accessibility considerations.

## NEXT STEPS

### Phase 2: Implementation

Phase 2 will build upon the Actions framework and further develop a plan for implementation to:

- Identify and action quick wins;

- Determine priority timelines and resources;
- Work together with the District of North Vancouver to look at a regional approach;
- Focused engagement with the public and stakeholders on the implementation of priority recommendations including:
  - Education campaigns to promote responsible dog ownership;
  - Identifying new opportunities for off-leash and/or dog relief zones in underserved areas;
  - Design typologies, management and access; and
- Compile phase 1 and phase 2 into the final Dog Friendly City plan for endorsement by Council. The plan will guide the City of North Vancouver's decisions over the next 10 years for developing safe and active spaces for people and dogs and improve facilities and services.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

As part of the City's COVID-19 Safe Restart Phase 2 grants, Council approved a \$50,000 budget to prepare the first phase of a Dog Friendly City plan. This budget was used to fund project consultant support, staff time, and engagement costs.

Should Council support the Dog Friendly City: Phase 1 Actions, staff will prepare a scope of work and funding request for phase 2 for consideration in the 2023-2032 Capital Plan.

### **INTER-DEPARTMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Dog Friendly City: Phase 1 Actions will have cross-organizational implications and future work may involve coordination with the District of North Vancouver. The proposed actions has been reviewed by the City's Policy and Projects Team and Leadership Team.

### **STRATEGIC PLAN, OCP OR POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

The Dog Friendly City: Phase 1 Actions are intended to support recommendations in the City's Parks Masterplan (2010) regarding off-leash dog areas and the City's Official Community Plan (2014) *Goal 5.1: Expand the integrated system of parks and greenways throughout the City as articulated in the Parks Master Plan*. These Action Items also support current work on the City's Community Wellbeing Strategy to "*connect people with each other and with day-to-day needs closer to where we live.*" and the Climate & Environment Strategy's goals to "*live in reciprocity with nature*" and "*We are influential and accountable together*".

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:



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Margaret Shipley  
Parks Planner 1