

9. Discretionary Use Application – City of Saskatoon Animal Control Services
Passive Recreation – Off Leash Dog Park
NE & SE 1-36-6-W3 & SE 12-36-6-W3 – Division 2

BACKGROUND:

James Wilkie, representing the City of Saskatoon Animal Control Services, has made application to establish an on and off leash dog park as a passive recreational land use on the above noted parcels.

SUMMARY:

The property proposed for development is zoned D-Conservation 1 District (DCONS 1) within the Saskatoon Planning District Zoning Bylaw. Within this zoning district, passive recreational activities are considered discretionary uses of land, requiring Council approval.

As part of the discretionary use process, the applicant was required to notify local residents within a one mile radius of the proposed development to provide comments regarding the application. These comments are summarized in bold with the associated application details provided below, which provide a good framework for considering this proposal.

- **Residents expressed concern regarding the current levels of traffic as well as the potential increases in traffic associated with the proposed designation.**

There has been a substantial increase in traffic in this area over the past few years with the closure of the “power pole park” directly west of the Saskatoon Golf and Country Club, which has caused the displacement of a substantial population of dog walkers. These people have relocated to Chief Whitecap Park in response to this displacement. This increased traffic should be responded to and the provision of adequate parking facilities will relieve traffic congestion associated with vehicles parking along the roadway. There is no evident way to respond to the increased use of Saskatchewan Crescent.

The applicant has indicated the development of parking lots in the southern and northern corners of the property. The northern parking lot would be constructed south of the existing gate which currently is being utilized for pedestrian access to the site. The parking lot would be designed to accommodate up to 30 vehicles fully enclosed with page wire fencing and a gate located in the south west corner providing principal access to the park. The southern parking lot proposed would be designed to accommodate up to 20 vehicles and would be accessed from Grasswood Road. This parking lot would also incorporate page wire fencing and a single entrance to the park providing separation of canine activity from adjacent properties. The provision of two separate parking lots would allow users to choose the preferred means of accessing the property and may decrease congestion in the north end of the park.

The hours of operation of the park have been proposed as 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. It is unlikely that any dog walkers would be using the park much after dark, so that in winter months these hours of operation would effectively decrease. Signage would be posted within the parking area, indicating that vehicles located in the parking lot after these posted hours would be towed and fined \$ 500.00. By providing additional “no parking” signs to both sides of the roadway, after hours traffic is further restricted which would, in turn, discourage some late night parties and open fires along the riverbank areas of the park.

- **Concerns were expressed regarding the increasing instances of illegal activity taking place within the park after hours including partying, camping, fires and garbage dumping as well as criminal activity directed towards residential properties in the area.**

These activities are a direct result of convenient access to the property and the relative isolation of the property from the City of Saskatoon. Increased regulation of similar areas within the City of Saskatoon has displaced these activities to more isolated areas. With designation of the property, coupled with the proposed parking facilities and regulations, access to the property after hours becomes less convenient resulting in a decrease in the instances of illegal activities.

- **Concerns were raised regarding issues of safety for non-dog related uses in the park as well as for the proper separation of the park from adjacent private property.**

The eastern edge of the property has barbed wire fencing. The proposal includes an upgrading of approximately 600 m of the barbed wire fencing to a page wire, which is standard in similar parks within the city. This fencing will be extended north, to the top of the riverbank to separate the park from adjacent residences. In addition, signage will be placed along the pathways within the tree line leading out of the park onto private property to the north; indicating the end of the off leash area to limit unauthorized trespassing. An optional upgrade of the existing fence line along the southern property boundary of 3655 Saskatchewan Crescent has also been proposed to provide further security to the occupant. The balance of the property will retain its current fencing to allow for freedom of movement of wildlife in areas not used for dog activity.

Currently, users of the park are allowing their dogs to run unrestrained directly from their vehicles to the entrance of the park along the roadway, which provides increased opportunity for inadvertent entry onto private property. The incorporation of more substantial fencing adjacent to and within designated parking areas coupled with single entrances from these areas to the park, drastically reduces the probability of having these animals entering adjacent yards.

An example of the proposed signage to be located at each entrance to the property has been included for your reference. The City of Saskatoon has implemented a dangerous dog bylaw which prohibits dogs with a history of aggressive behaviour as well as female dogs in heat from using the park. The signage also clearly indicates who is to be contacted in instances where proper conduct within the park is not maintained.

An organized user group currently operates within the park to help inform the posted regulations and the applicant has suggested that Animal Control Officers will monitor the park 1-2 times per week to provide further support and to ensure that all dogs within the facility are properly licensed.

By locating the parking facilities further south of the existing gated entrance, local residents will maintain pedestrian access to the property without being in direct contact with the dog activity within the parking lot entrance.

- **Concern was expressed regarding the possible environmental impact of increased activity on the natural vegetation and wildlife populations within the park.**

The area proposed for development is zoned as a conservation district. As a conservation district, the Saskatoon Planning District Development Plan outlines policies and objectives for development. Policies relevant to this application are summarized below as follows:

Land Conservation Objectives & Policies	Application Details
<i>8.1.1. To ensure that conservation principles complement agricultural development and</i>	A portion of the park has been identified as an area to re-establish natural grasslands.

<p><i>activity.</i></p>	
<p><i>8.1.2. To acknowledge and protect natural and environmental features within the District especially those related to the South Saskatchewan River Valley.</i></p> <p><i>8.2.4. Only uses that are compatible with and complementary to the principle of river protection will be considered on lands within 0.4 km (0.25 mile) of the river bank.</i></p>	<p>Increased activity within this area over the past few years has necessitated the development of land use policies to protect the natural features of the area. This proposal identifies a need for the identification and closing of problematic trail systems and the upgrading of designated trails to minimize the effects of pedestrian and dog traffic on native vegetation. Those trails designated as primary routes will be upgraded to insure that all weather access is available to selected areas of the park by introducing a tiered system of stairing down the river bank and upgrading walking surfaces to minimize the effects of water drainage during spring run off. The proposal integrates refuse containers within the park including the provision of plastic bags to collect dog waste.</p>
<p><i>8.1.4. To preserve the natural character of conservation areas including critical wildlife habitat areas and tracts of significant natural vegetative growth.</i></p>	<p>The application identifies the introduction of interpretive signage along the primary trail at the bank of the river identifying natural characteristics of the area and providing for the education of users to promote the responsible use of the park.</p>
<p><i>8.1.6. To allow land uses that are compatible with and complementary to the natural character of the river valley within the District.</i></p> <p><i>8.2.2. All development shall have regard to the conservation of wildlife habitat and lands recognized as having unique natural features.</i></p>	<p>The limited structural improvements within the proposal insure that the use of this park compliments the natural features of the area and allows for multiple uses in the future if identified within the future studies associated with the Meewasin Master Plan for the park.</p>
<p><i>8.2.5. Any applicant submitting a development proposal in a Conservation District shall provide the following information:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a) the need for the proposed development in that particular area, including an indication of other areas that have been examined as potential sites;</i> <i>b) the relationship of the proposed development with the natural character of the area;</i> <i>c) measures to minimize impact on the conservation features in question;</i> <i>d) the potential impact on adjacent land uses, particularly other conservation land;</i> <i>e) intensity of development;</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The applicant hosted several public forums to quantify the demand for this type of facility. The area had been used as an unofficial off leash park for the past 40 years and with the recent closure of “power pole park” the demand for additional space substantially increased and was naturally diverted to this area due to its close proximity. ○ The application includes measures to maintain the natural features of the park including the improvement of designated trails and utilizing replanting to eliminate unwanted or hazardous trails. ○ The proposal provides a means of separating the primary users of the park from privately owned property directly adjacent through the construction and

<p>f) <i>servicing systems; and</i> g) <i>road requirements.</i></p>	<p>upgrade of fence systems along the eastern border of the park and within the parking lots.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Part of the long term planning for the property will include determining what requirements will be needed to maintain the quality of roadways in the area.
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From a land use perspective, designation of this area as an off leash park would result in the increased formal regulation of the site through signage, trash facilities, regular monitoring by Animal Control Officers and a user code of conduct which will in turn discourage illegal activities in the park. These initiatives decrease the sense of isolation associated with the park which in turn, decreases occurrences of vandalism and misuse, displacing these activities to more secluded areas. Provision of adequate access to the park during normal periods of operation through the construction of two parking areas on either end of the park will minimize traffic congestion on the roadways and limit the occurrence of unwanted dog traffic on private property.

The lack of open spaces within the City of Saskatoon, the demand for the use of this property by all types of uses has increased in recent years, including uses which are detrimental to the area residents. The designation of the property for off leash use will ultimately result in a decrease in unwanted activities. With the incorporation of minimal structural changes to the park, combined with the provision of a two year probationary period for this designation, the property remains flexible to accommodate development associated with any future initiatives resulting from further study of the property within the Meewasin Master Plan. The initiatives presented to upgrade trail systems and restore the natural beauty of the area are intended to benefit all current and future users of the park and aid in the protection of the natural character of the park.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the application of the City of Saskatoon Animal Control Services to establish an on and off leash dog park as a passive recreational land use on NE & SE 1-36-6-W3 & SE 12-36-6-W3 be APPROVED subject to:

- i) the approval being granted for a two year probationary period;
- ii) the provision of signage clearly identifying the hours of operation of the park, the code of conduct for users and the restriction of parking after hours;
- iii) the provision of signage prohibiting all parking along the roadway.