

Whyte Ridge Community Centre: Off-Leash Dog Area

Public Engagement Summary



Background

We are planning a new off-leash dog area at Whyte Ridge Community Centre (145 Cloverwood Rd.). We have chosen a small section of green space (approximately a half-acre). It will be separated from the rest of the open space by a fence. The dog area will be about half the size of a community baseball diamond. This will be a neighbourhood off-leash area. This type of dog park provides recreation space to residents and dogs living within a 15-minute walk. The area would only be used by people with dogs.

Engagement

We received a landowner/adjoining land-use petition in 2024 in support of the project.

Public feedback collected through an online survey available from November 12 – December 8, 2023 helped us ensure the off-leash area meets the needs of the community.

Promotion

Public engagement opportunities were promoted using the following methods:

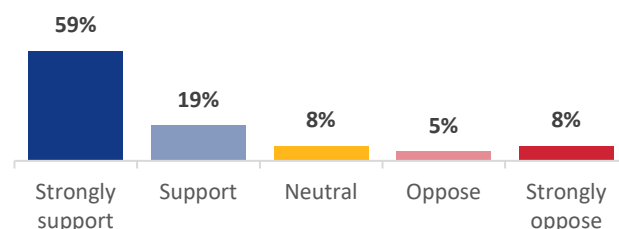
- Project webpage – launched November 12, 2024 and received 668 unique visitors
- Postcards hand-delivered to residents within 100m meter radius of the proposed design area – November 18, 2024
- On-site signage
- City of Winnipeg public engagement newsletter with over 5,600 recipients – November 21, 2024

Key findings

The survey recorded strong desire for an off-leash dog park in this area. Of the 274 survey respondents 78 percent either strongly support or support (214 of 274), eight percent are neutral (24 of 274) and 13 percent either oppose or strongly oppose (37 of 274). See Figure 1.

Figure 1: How much do you support or oppose the design?

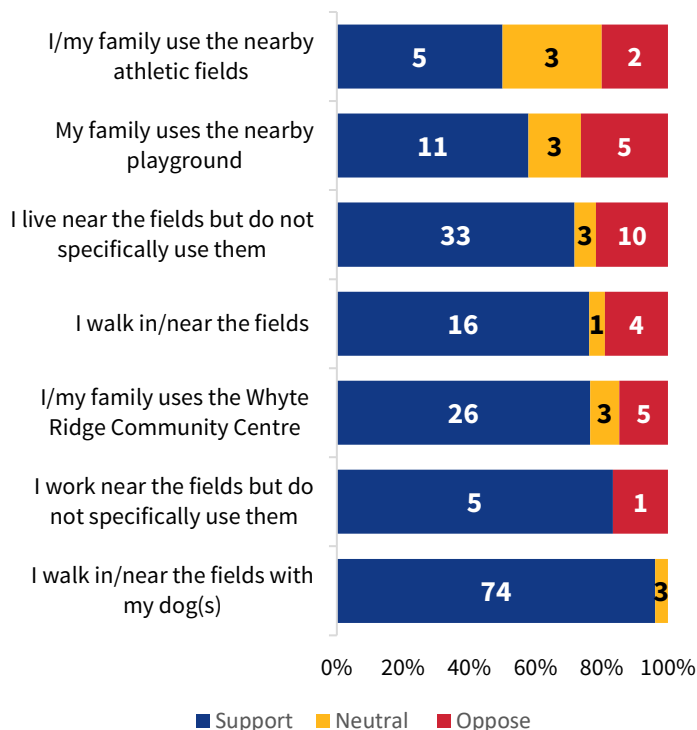
274 responses



Park users who currently use the fields to walk dogs were the most likely to support the proposed design. Nearby athletic field users were the least likely to support it. However, the sample size of this group was small with just 10 respondents. See Figure 2.

Figure 2: Support by connection to the project

213 responses



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Only 32 respondents who don't own a dog completed the survey. Almost half of this group supported the design.

Figure 3: Views of respondents who do not have dogs.

	# of responses	Percentage
Support	15	47%
Neutral	5	16%
Oppose	12	37%

It's important to understand why some respondents indicated the off-leash area would negatively impact how they use the site. The top concerns were about off-leash users not following the rules (24 respondents), poor waste management (24 respondents), added vehicle traffic on residential streets (14 respondents) and concern about the dogs' safety (14 respondents).

What's missing from the design?

We asked respondents if anything was missing from the proposed design. First, they were asked if there is anything that could impact the safe use of the off-leash area. See Figure 3.

Respondents were also asked if there were any further elements they'd appreciate seeing in the design. The safety themes in Figure 3 appeared most commonly, followed by requests for a waste bag dispenser (11 comments), more garbage cans (9 comments), agility equipment (5 comments), more trees/shade (5 comments) and clean-up crews (4 comments).

Figure 3: Top themes for safety needs

#1	Separation of small and large dogs (21 comments)		Need separate areas for small and large dogs to prevent conflicts.
#2	Off-leash area too small (15 comments)		The site needs more space to accommodate all dogs.
#3	Water source (10 comments)		Drinking water source for dogs.
#4	Lighting (6 comments)		Lighting for safety, particularly in winter when the days are shorter.

Table 1: What we heard and how it was considered

What we heard	How it was considered
Separation of small and large dogs: Some respondents expressed concerns about not separating small and large dogs. They emphasized the need for a sectioned-off area for small dogs to ensure safety, prevent potential conflicts, and encourage usage by dog owners who might otherwise feel hesitant to use the space. Survey quote: “A small dog area would be ideal! I have had close calls with large dogs nearly injuring my little ones :(Safety for our little dogs would be light years ahead of the other off leash dog parks- especially for my senior neighbours who all have small dogs!!”	Space limits our ability to separate fenced areas. Ultimately, dog owners are responsible for both their choice to use the park and controlling their dogs. They must decide if this off-leash area is a good fit for their dog based on their pet’s behavior and comfort around other dogs (also see unruly behavior considerations). There are larger off-leash areas in other parts of Winnipeg that offer more space and separation of small and large dogs.
Expanding the size of the off-leash area: To accommodate mixed-sized breed and the needs of larger dogs, the current design was seen by some as too small. Increasing the size was also viewed as a way to preserve the grass. Survey quote: “This overall is good for the community, however it would have been better to have a larger area provided. This will not be significantly different in size to the existing rink off leash area, which does not see much use.”	We chose this size to allow the off-leash area to coexist with existing park amenities. The off-leash area must be a good distance away from the soccer field, playground, and nearby homes. We must also avoid low spots and drainage areas to prevent flooding and mud. The new fenced area will be much larger than the hockey rinks that were used as an off-leash area before. It will be just over half an acre, which is almost twice the size of the old space. We will preserve grass in busy areas like the entrance through the use of gravel.

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What we heard	How it was considered
Adding a clean water source: A tap or fountain is highly desired for the proposed off-leash area so dogs can cool off in the summer months. Survey quote: “I know it is a small area and there’s only so much funding but a clean/safe drinking system provided would be amazing! I don’t know any dog park that has that and my dog has contracted many illnesses from dog parks water bowls (for obvious reasons- i try to bring my own waterbottle (sic) with a bowl for him). I understand if it isn’t possible but i know it would definitely make this area a lot more popular.”	Adding a water source is very expensive. Because we have a limited budget on this project, we’ve not added it to the design. We understand why this would be helpful, especially on hot days. To help with this, the design will include a gravel area for people to place their own water dishes. This gives dogs a clean spot to drink without creating muddy or wet conditions.
Unruly behaviour: While there is general optimism for the park, there are some who fear rules will not be enforced and an increase in off-leash dogs outside the designated area. Survey quote: “...if implemented ensure there is strong enforcement to monitor the area. Dogs all too often end up running rampant with no regards for people in the vicinity, this is incredibly dangerous.”	We will post signs that clearly show the rules for the off-leash area. Animal Services bylaw officers visit off-leash areas from time to time to make sure people are following the rules. This off-leash area is designed to give dogs a safe and proper space to run and play, which should help reduce the number of dogs off-leash in other parts of the park. If anyone sees unsafe or inappropriate behavior, they can call 311 to report it.
Additional lighting: Lighting would improve safety and allow the off-leash area to be used during winter evenings. Survey quote: “Pole lighting would be beneficial for dog walking during winter when in late afternoon when people come off work, there is no daylight left.”	The Parks Strategy outlines typical features for a neighbourhood-level off-leash dog park. Considering these guidelines and limited funding, additional lighting is not part of this design. We expect the area to feel safer as more people use it because there will be more “eyes on the park.”

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What we heard	How it was considered
Waste management: Some questioned how often the park would be cleaned. Suggestions include more garbage cans because existing bins often fill up quickly. Additionally, the introduction of waste bag dispensers was recommended to help keep the area cleaner, which would also reduce the labor costs associated with cleaning. Survey quote: “The nearby parking lot needs more waste containers anyways. Ensure budget for ongoing maintenance and care.”	In response, the design includes multiple garbage bins throughout the off-leash area. The City will also monitor the bins to make sure they are emptied often enough. The waste bag dispensers could be considered as a community initiative.

Next steps

The findings from the online survey helped the project team update and confirm the design to fit with community wants and needs.

The Chief Administrative Officer for the City of Winnipeg approved the construction of an off-leash dog area as designed for the Whyte Ridge Community Centre on April 15, 2025.

\$80,000 in funding has been approved from the Land Dedication Reserve Fund. Construction will start in the spring or summer of 2025.

The new off-leash area will be monitored by Parks and Open Space Division staff to determine if it is functioning as intended for the neighborhood.

Appendices

Appendix A – Neighbourhood petition

Appendix B – Postcard notification

Appendix C – On-site signage

Appendix D – Survey results