

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE – FEBRUARY 10, 2009

OFF LEASH AREA WORKING COMMITTEE: UPDATE REPORT

Recommendation

Councillor Tony Carella, on behalf of the Off Leash Area Working Committee, recommends that this report be received for information and approval:

- 1) That Council authorize the Off Leash Area Working Committee and City of Vaughan Parks Development staff to commence the design and implementation process for Vaughan's first Off Leash Area at the eastern most end of Concord Thornhill Regional Park (Site #3).

Economic Impact

Council, as part of the 2007 Budget process approved \$80,000 to fund the construction of an Off Leash Area. There will be a \$10,000 annual operating impact.

Communication Plan

The Off Leash Area Working Committee would liaise with Corporate Communications to provide information to the residents of Vaughan once the park is established.

Purpose

That Council consider and approve the above recommendation regarding the implementation of an Off Leash Area at the eastern most end of Concord Thornhill Regional Park (Site #3)

Background – Analysis and Options

The Off Leash Area Working Committee has been exploring the feasibility of implementing an Off Leash Area at the east end of Concord Thornhill Regional Park (site #3) as sites one and two on the approved list have previously been removed from further consideration. On June 26, 2008 the Off Leash Area Working Committee hosted an information session with ward 4 community leaders including Ward 4 Councillor Sandra Yeung Racco and the president of the Brownridge Ratepayers Association Mario Racco. This meeting provided an opportunity for input from community representatives on the 3 potential locations within ward 4.

On November 10, 2008 Council directed the Off Leash Area Working Committee to move forward with investigating Site #3 (The next in rank order) by arranging an open house for the community as soon as possible. Council also directed “that the distribution of the notices be expanded to the community including the entire residential sub-division of Beverley Glen and the relevant part of the neighbourhood to the east of Bathurst Street and to ensure there is a two-week notification period.”

Including the expanded distribution of Open House notices, the following methods were utilized to inform the community of the Off Leash Area Open House:

- 3200 + invitations were direct mailed to residents living within approximately 1 km of the proposed site. Invitations also went to all Ward 4 Ratepayers as well as the special interest groups as identified by the Ward 4 Councillor June of 2008.

- The notice for the Community Open House appeared three times in the Vaughan Citizen and Thornhill Liberal including on page 2 of Sunday, November 16 2008, and the City pages of Thursday, November 20 and 27, 2008 - total circulation of these papers according the publishers web site is 129,000.
- A mobile sign was installed on the west side of Dufferin Street, just north of Racco Parkway (the access road for Concord Thornhill Regional Park) for 2 weeks prior to the Open House
- In addition the invitation was posted on the City web site under Events - Public Meetings, from the drop down menu on the main page, as well as from the Parks Development page and the Off Leash Area Working Committee page. The information boards and comment sheets were later added for those who were unable to attend the meeting.

The Open House was held on Thursday, December 4, 2008, between 7 p.m. and 9 p.m., in the cafeteria of Westmount Collegiate Institute at the corner of Bathurst and Westminster Boulevard. The Context Plan (Attachment A) and other supporting graphics were on display at the Open House. Additionally, all attendees were provided with a comment sheet (Attachment B) and asked to return it prior to December 18, 2008 at 4:30 p.m. The comment sheet was also available on the City's web site. The official comment period ended on Thursday, December 18, 2008, two weeks after the Open House.

The Comments received prior to December 18, 2008 at 4:30 p.m. are summarized below:

- 76 total comments received including comment sheets and emails up to the deadline. An additional 4 were received after the deadline, on January 6, 2009.
- 69 in favour (including those emails to Council received prior to the meeting) Note that any duplication resulting from the receiving of both emails and comment sheets has been eliminated.
- 5 not in favour
- 2 did not state that they were in favour but provided comments as suggestions to how the Off Leash Area should be implemented and operated. - i.e. ensure secure fencing, no conflict with baseball, how proof of vaccination can be provided, security etc.

Positive Comments and Suggestions to consider:

- Please move forward/great idea/support/needed in Thornhill (39)
- It is a great place to exercise/socialize dogs/train (23)
- Designated area better than having them off leash in other areas/safer for dogs and people (17)
- Soon please/overdue/tax paying dog owners should be looked after too (14)
- Excellent site/underutilized location/safe for people (11)
- Want one in Vaughan so don't have to travel so far (10)
- A place responsible people will use/follow rules/pick up/police each other.(5)
- Interested in helping out with the park when it comes (2)
- There is no protection now from running dogs getting to playground- consider it as an improvement when fencing the off leash /consider adding fence to the south east as well.(2)

- Like the landscaping/berms will provide a buffer (2)
- Ensure there is a small dog area
- Needs to be open year round/provide shade/seating opportunities
- Can lead to more licensing of dogs- currently inconvenient-attend the park to sell.
- Volunteers can do a great job to look after
- Noise is minimal- at Miller hum of the Hydro lines is often louder than the dogs.
- Chose a good ground material and minimize ponding opportunities
- With Toronto having 30+ Dog parks it proves that Off Leash dog parks are a success with dog owners and the community at large.

Negative Comments/questions/concerns received from residents/Ratepayers including those received after the deadline of December 18th, 2008.

- Too noisy for residents to the south- think it violates the noise bylaw #96-2006 (4)
- Concerned that house would devalue / loose appeal if trying to sell (4)
- Will the site be monitored for safety / vandalism? (3)
- Parking too close to kids playground / young children (3)
- Put it in an industrial area (3)
- Who is going to ensure the rules are followed? (2)
- Bylaw violators can not be disciplined / no onsite enforcement/bylaws ignored (2)
- Put parking on opposite side of off leash park
- having such a facility close to these amenities will cause safety problems, especially when dogs start barking
- Concerned that people go to the park for nature walks, they are close to homes – barking dogs and the need for maintenance

The Off Leash Area Working Committee met on January 22, 2009 to review and discuss the comments and feed back resulting from the community Open House regarding Concord Thornhill Regional Park, Site #3.

After a thorough review and discussion of all the comments received, the Off Leash Area Working Committee believes that there is public support for an Off Leash Area at Concord Thornhill Regional Park and that any concerns can be mitigated, primarily through design and management.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2020/Strategic Plan

In consideration of the strategic priorities related to Vaughan Vision 2020, the project will provide:

- **STRATEGIC GOAL:**
Service Excellence - Providing service excellence to citizens.
- **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:**
Pursue Excellence in Service Delivery; and Enhance and Ensure Community Safety, Health and Wellness.

This report is consistent with the priorities previously set by Council and the necessary resources have been allocated and approved.

Regional Implications

N/A

Conclusion

By means of an objective process, the location at the eastern end of Concord Thornhill Regional Park has been reviewed, evaluated, investigated and taken to the community for input. It is now appropriate that Council authorize the Off Leash Area Working Committee and Parks Development staff to commence the design and implementation process for Vaughan's first Off Leash Area at the eastern most end of Concord Thornhill Regional Park (Site #3).

Attachments

- A) Concept plan shown at public Open House
- B) Comment sheet for the proposed Site #3

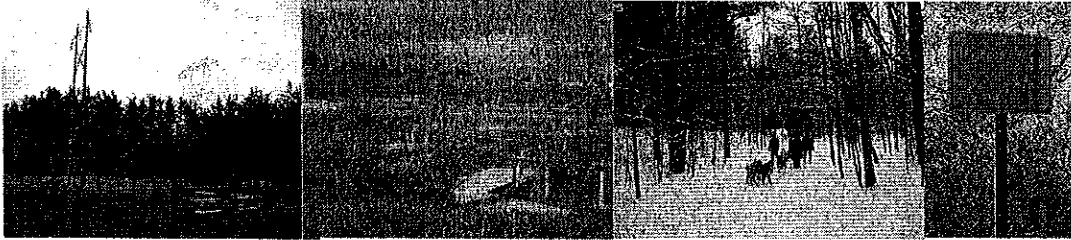
Report prepared by:

Melanie Morris, Landscape Architect, Ext. 3207
Paul Gardner, Director Parks Development, Ext. 3209

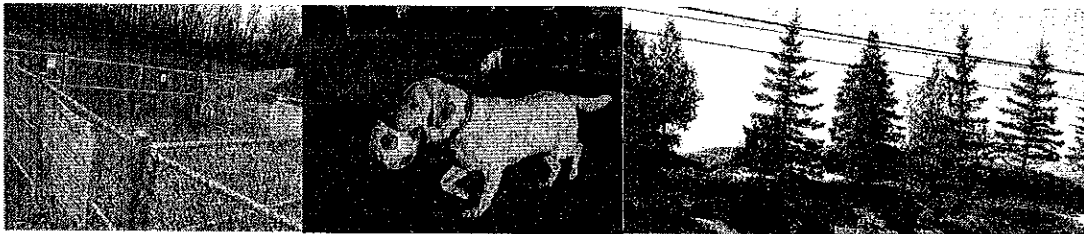
Respectfully submitted,

Tony Carella
Councillor – Ward 2

WHAT IS AN OFF LEASH AREA ?

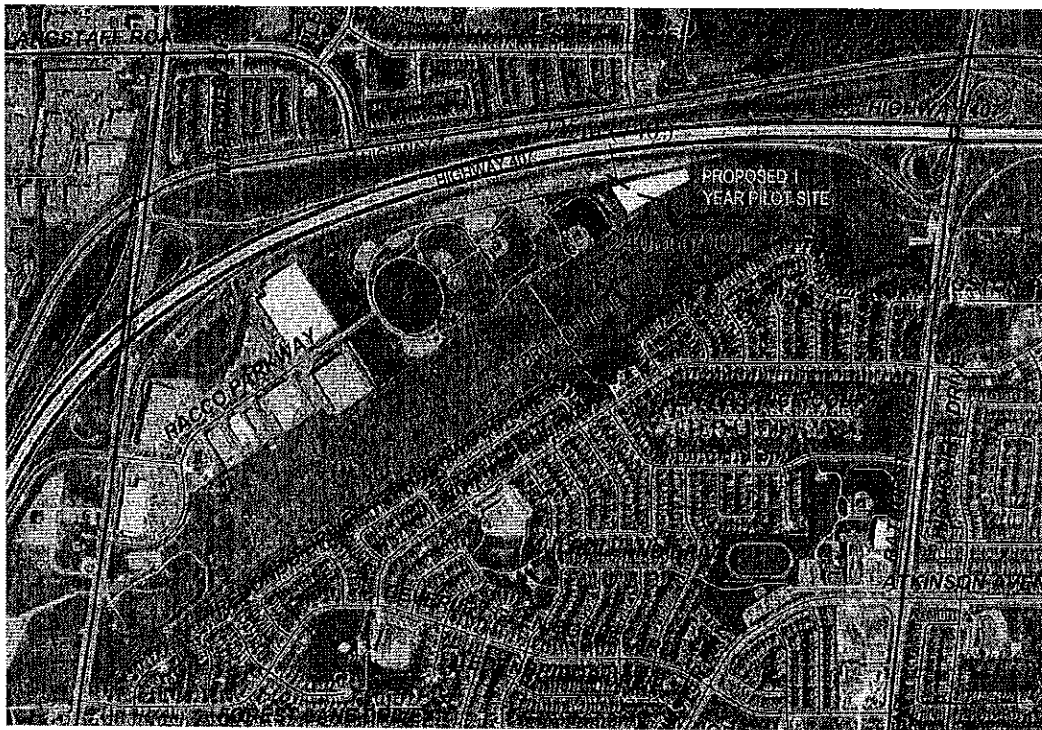


An enclosed area for dogs and owners to exercise and meet others. Signage



A secure double gate entry and 5' fence

Berms and or trees to screen



CONTEXT PLAN



PROPOSED OFF LEASH DOG AREA

Off Leash Working Committee

Vaughan
The City Above Toronto

