

WHAT WE HEARD

Mackenzie Valley Park
Primary Off-leash Dog Area

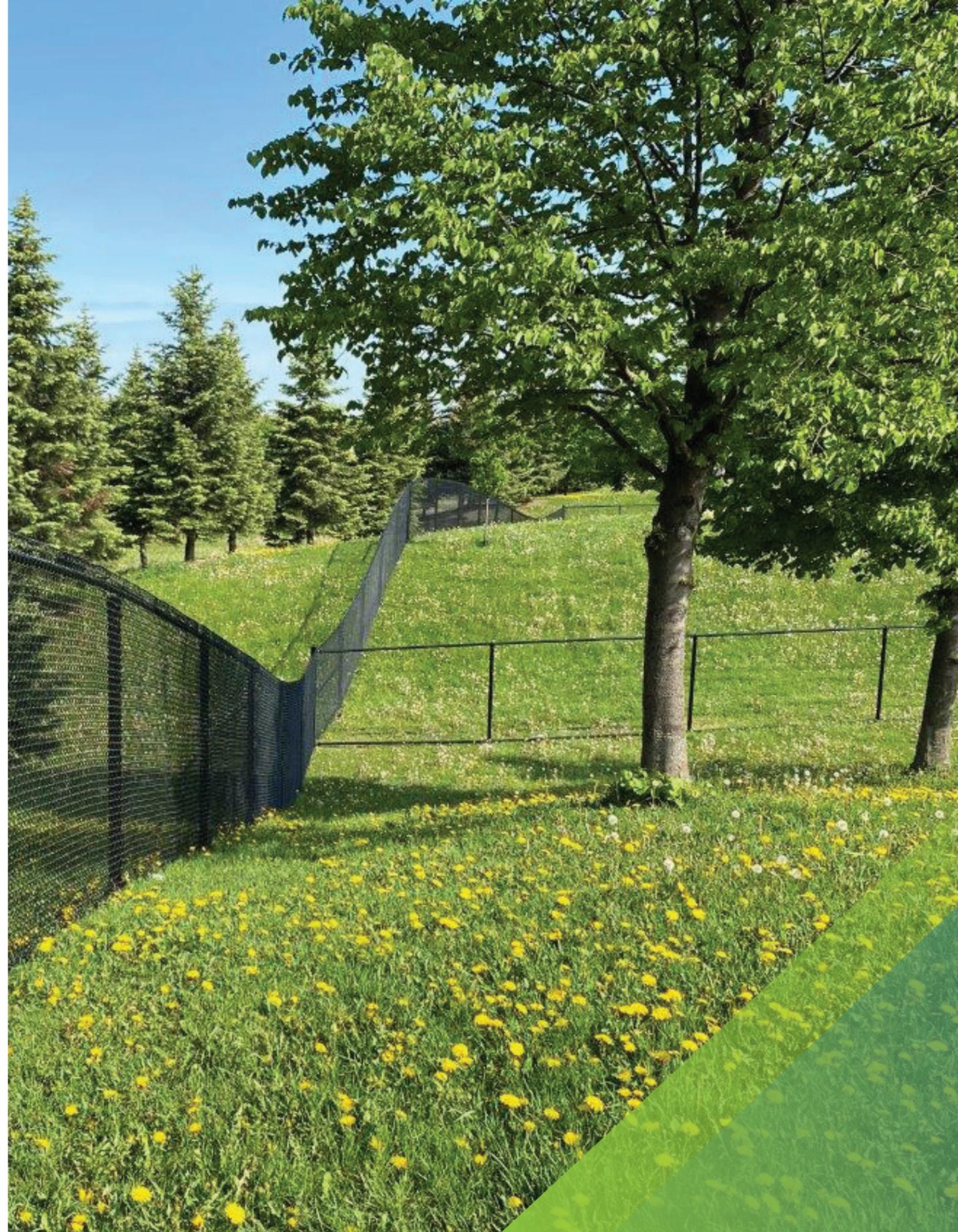
ENGAGEMENT REPORT



Summer 2023

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Project overview

About this report

This report summarizes what the City of Vaughan heard through community engagement on the proposed location and preliminary design of a new primary off-leash dog area in Mackenzie Valley Park (5851 Major Mackenzie Dr.).

In winter 2023, the City shared the preliminary design for the proposed new primary off-leash dog area and invited the community to submit questions and comments through an online form.

In total, 27 people provided feedback. An overwhelming majority (85 per cent) of comments expressed support and excitement for the new primary off-leash dog area at Mackenzie Valley Park. Of the remaining comments, only one disagreed with the location chosen, and the rest were neutral, offering suggestions for the design of the off-leash area.

The City will be moving forward with plans to build this new, fenced-in primary off-leash dog area at the future Mackenzie Valley Park to serve the community west of Highway 400. This space will be approximately one hectare (2.5 acres) and include a designated, fenced-in area for large and small dogs, a parking lot with approximately 35 spaces, shade structures, lighting and seating.

What's a primary off-leash dog area?

Primary off-leash dog areas are larger (up to one hectare) and offer additional amenities like a notice board, lighting and shade. Due to their size, they are likely to be located in district or regional parks, or locations that can offer dedicated parking and are expected to serve many residents. For this reason, they are more often accessed by personal vehicle than by foot.

Local off-leash areas, in contrast, are situated in neighbourhoods and are typically smaller (up to 0.25 hectares) with fewer amenities. They are expected to serve the residents who live in the neighbourhood and are more easily accessed by foot.

About off-leash dog areas in Vaughan

Off-leash dog areas are secure, fenced-in spaces for pets to safely exercise, socialize and roam free.

The City recognizes the value off-leash dog areas bring to dogs and their families. In 2016, Council endorsed the [Primary Off-leash Dog Area West of Highway 400 Study](#) (PDF), and in 2021 Council endorsed the [Local Off-leash Dog Area Strategy](#) (PDF), both of which identified locations across the community for pets to safely roam free.

The location at Major Mackenzie Drive and Highway 27 (5851 Major Mackenzie Dr.), officially named Mackenzie Valley Park, was one of the options identified in the 2016 study for a new primary off-leash dog area to serve communities west of Highway 400 and complement the first primary off-leash location built in Concord/Thornhill Regional Park (299 Racco Pkwy.).



How we engaged

From Feb. 14 to March 7, 2023, the City shared the preliminary design for the proposed new primary off-leash dog area (Figure 1) and invited the community to submit questions and comments through an online form.

The form provided space for open-ended comments and included a few questions such as if and how many dogs the participant owned, the size of their dog(s), their postal code and how they learned about this project.

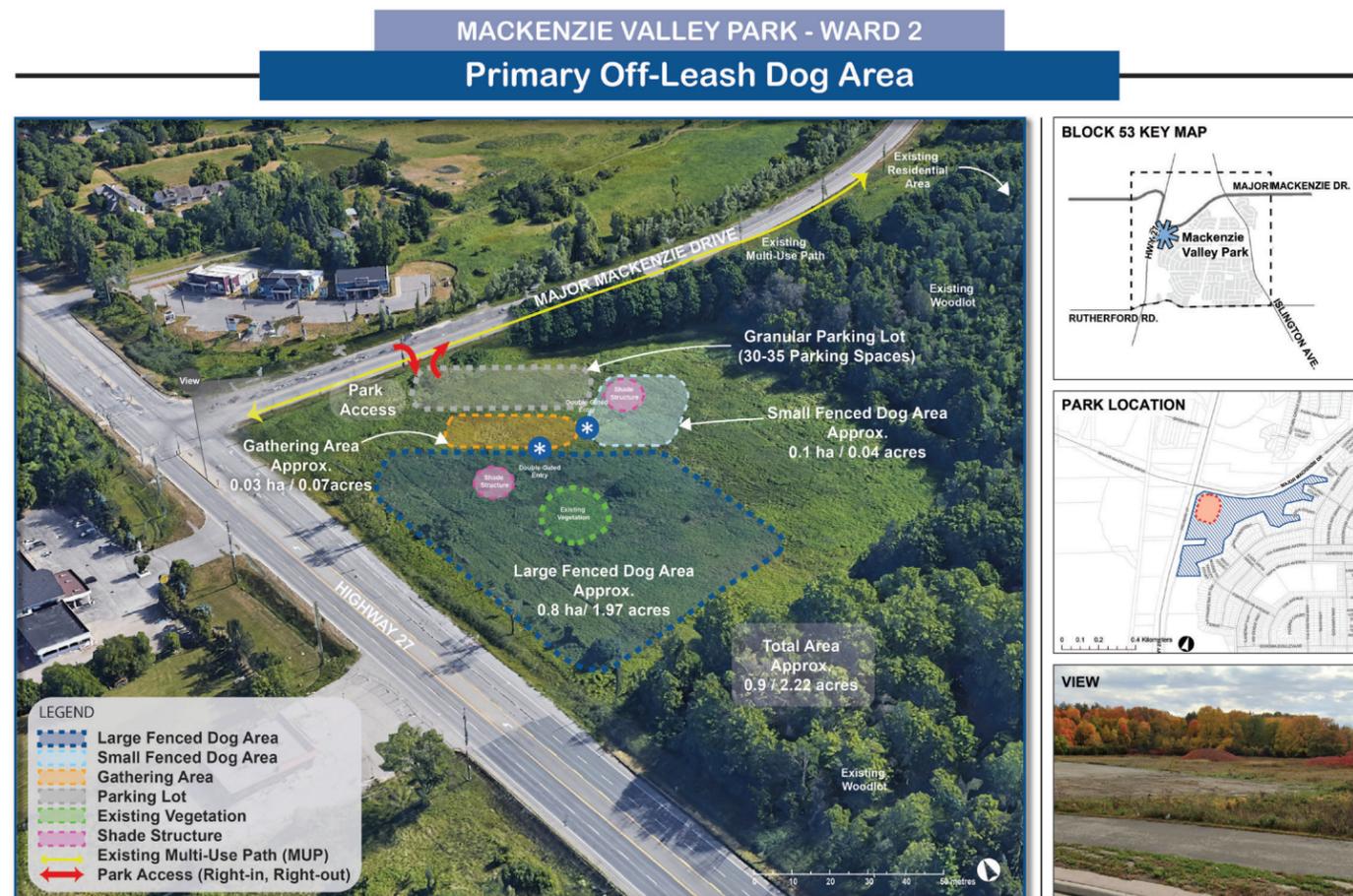


Figure 1. Preliminary design of the proposed primary off-leash dog area in Mackenzie Valley Park

How we reached the community

The City employed all of its corporate channels to promote awareness of the proposed new primary off-leash dog area. Communications included:

- a project notice sent to all homes within a 500-metre radius of Mackenzie Valley Park (Figure 3).
- promotion across the City's Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn channels.
- a public service announcement issued to local, GTA, national and cultural media outlets and published to vaughan.ca.
- promotion across the City's digital signage network.
- five lawn signs posted within the park and local neighbourhood.
- roadside signs located near the park and within the neighbourhood.
- articles in the Councillor eNewsletters.
- promotion to over 24,000 subscribers via the Vaughan News eNewsletter.
- promotion through the Vaughan Engagement eNewsletter.
- an email sent to 181 residents who had previously expressed an interest in receiving information about primary off-leash dog areas west of Highway 400.
- an email sent to the Carrying Place/Sonoma Ratepayers' Association, Greater Woodbridge Ratepayers' Association and the Kleinburg and Area Ratepayers' Association.



Figure 2. Advertisement featured on televisions in community centres

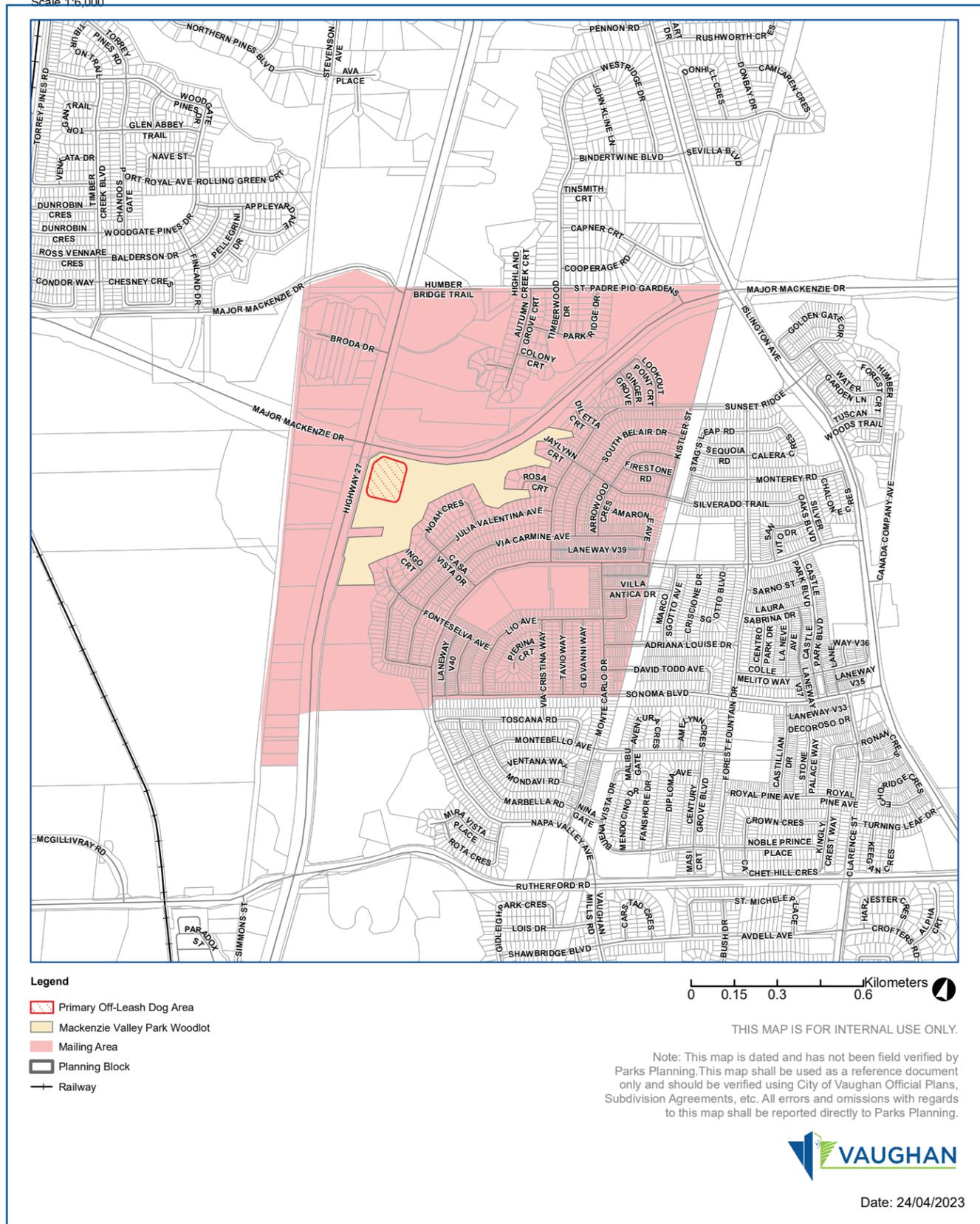


Figure 3: Map of residents who received a direct mail notice

What we heard

An overwhelming majority of the comments received (85 per cent) expressed their support and excitement for the new primary off-leash dog area at Mackenzie Valley Park. Only one comment voiced disagreement with the proposed location. The remaining comments and questions were neutral, with many respondents offering suggestions to shape the design of the off-leash enclosure and surrounding area.

Some suggestions offered by participants included:

- using woodchips, stones or artificial turf within the off-leash enclosure to mitigate the potential for muddy conditions.
- installing water fountains to keep dogs and owners hydrated.
- providing places for owners to rest, including benches, picnic tables, a pavilion or seating area.
- planting trees and shrubs within the enclosure to provide shade for dogs and owners.
- including additional features within the enclosure like an obstacle course, pathways or varied grading.
- providing improved access to the surrounding neighbourhood through trails and pathways.
- reconsidering access off of Major Mackenzie Drive and/or adding a second access point off of Highway 27 to make it easier for people travelling westbound to access the park.
- providing other amenities like multiple waste bins, bags for pet waste, washrooms and bright lighting.



Figure 4: Map of comments received by postal code

Awesome idea! Finally we will have a dog park in the hwy 27 area.

Very happy to hear about the new dog park. I guess sometime in the future it would also be nice to have washrooms available. Also, for future planning - is to have a pathway that circles the inside of each dog park - with benches placed along the pathway.

As a dog owner, I think this is a great idea and a very welcomed addition to the neighbourhood. The only thing I'd say is to make sure there are plenty of garbage cans around the park, and if possible, a water fountain for the dogs would be great as well.

This should be part of a neighbourhood and a trail system to encourage people to go walking and build a sense of community. This just encourages everyone to drive.

I am thinking that a better access point would be off Hwy 27. Accessing from Major Major Mackenzie on the slope is more dangerous especially in the winter. Access from Hwy 27 is on the flat. There is less traffic now on Hwy 27 than on the 6 lane Major Mackenzie that is connected to Hwy 427 just west of this area.

What the City will be implementing

The design of primary off-leash dog areas is standardized and follows guidelines, or "Levels of Service," set out in the 2016 Primary Off-Leash Dog Area West of Highway 400 Study. These guidelines ensure all off-leash dog areas are designed and constructed equitably. Based on these standards, the City will be providing the following:

- a combination of woodchip and/or natural turf surfacing.
- seating that pet owners may use to rest.
- shade via trees and/or the construction of a shade structure.
- LED lighting.
- site furnishings such as waste and recycling bins and waste bag dispensers.
- a notice board or kiosk that City staff and community members may use to post and share information.
- separate enclosures and entrances for small dogs and large dogs.
- educational signage on proper dog park etiquette.
- large- and small-dog area entry and exit area signs.
- a parking area with approximately 35 spaces.
- 1.5-metre high perimeter fencing and double-entry gates.

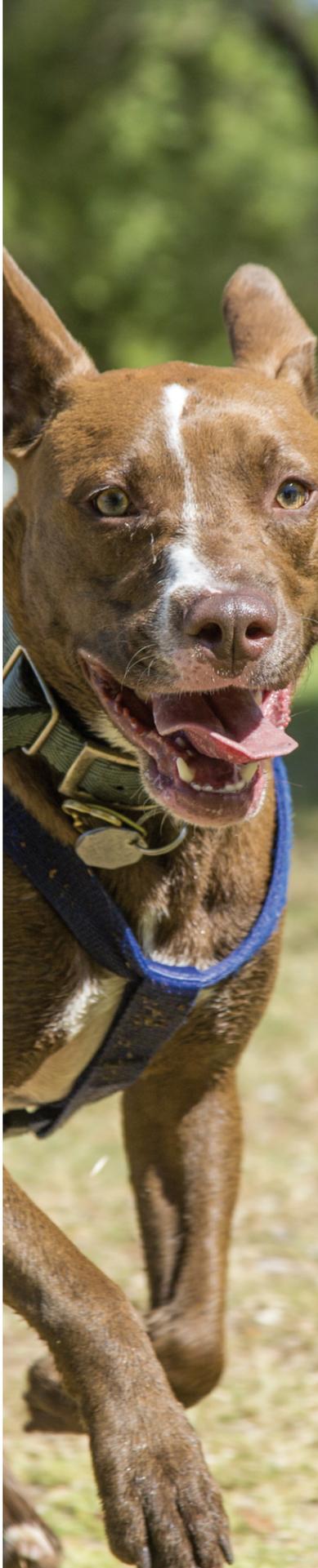
While we heard a great deal of interest in a water fountain and washroom facilities, there is currently no water service to the site and providing a water connection would be very costly. Similarly, other requested amenities, such as agility equipment, will not be considered at this time as they are not included in the standard level of service offered by the City. These items may be considered in the future through sponsorship or donations from an affiliated organization or off-leash dog group or through special funding or grants. You may contact the project team at dogpark@vaughan.ca if you're interested in fundraising, donating or providing other contributions.

The suggestion to consider a trail connection from Noah Crescent along the old driveway will be considered as part of future trail projects in the area, subject to budget approvals.

Next steps

Thank you to all who provided thoughtful suggestions and feedback! All comments will be taken into consideration while moving into the next phase of the project, which includes detailed design and construction.

For updates on this project and information on off-leash dog areas in Vaughan, please visit vaughan.ca/DogPark.



A photograph of two dogs, likely Weimaraners, lying on a grassy field. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The dog on the left is looking towards the left, and the dog on the right is looking towards the left. Both dogs are wearing collars.

**Parks and Open Space Planning
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