



District of Saanich
People, Pets and Parks Strategy

Round 2 Engagement Summary

Fall 2022 - Winter 2023

LEES
ASSOCIATES

 MODUS


MUSTEL GROUP

 LADR LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The District of Saanich is developing the People, Pets and Parks Strategy to provide a framework to help manage the District's parks and open spaces and achieve positive relationships between people, pets and the environment.

The Strategy is needed because:

- Saanich has more pets and people than ever before.
- Saanich has more people and pets per hectare of parkland than ever before, especially where compact development is happening.
- The population of people and pets is projected to continue increasing.
- There is concern about the cumulative impacts of people and pets on the environment.
- There is an increasing diversity of park users in Saanich parks and some people avoid using parks because of off-leash dogs.
- There are current best practices for managing pets in parks that can help reduce conflict and make the parks more welcoming to everyone.

The project team has completed Round 1 and Round 2 of public and stakeholder engagement. A summary of Round 1 engagement is available on the [project website](#).

This report provides an overview of what we heard through engagement activities in Round 2. Although those engaged were not a representative sample of Saanich, feedback will help decision makers understand the range of aspirations, concerns and values to consider in the Strategy and better meet the needs of our diverse community.

This feedback will inform the Draft Strategy, which will be shared later this Spring.



WHAT WE DID

The second round of engagement for the People, Pets, Parks Strategy took place between November 2022 and February 2023. The project team conducted stakeholder workshops, a public questionnaire, and a public open house where participants contributed feedback in individual workbooks. For detailed summaries of each activity, see Appendices A - C.



Stakeholder Workshops: The project team hosted a series of three stakeholder workshops which were small-scale ‘virtual’ conversations with invited representatives from various groups and organizations. Stakeholders were grouped separately to provide participants an opportunity to help the team understand considerations pertaining to their specific interests and expertise before finalizing information for the upcoming public open house. The three meetings included:

- dog owner interest and advocacy groups, trainers, and professional dog walkers (Saanich-based)
- intergovernmental agencies
- environmental and stewardship groups



Public Questionnaire: The questionnaire was available from February 1st to the 22nd on the project website and in paper copies. This questionnaire asked for input on the draft vision, principles, and goals as well as elements of various regulatory approaches that may inform the draft Strategy. Information collected is not statistically valid nor a representative sample of Saanich, but is a collection of thoughts and ideas from community members who are interested and actively engaged in the project.

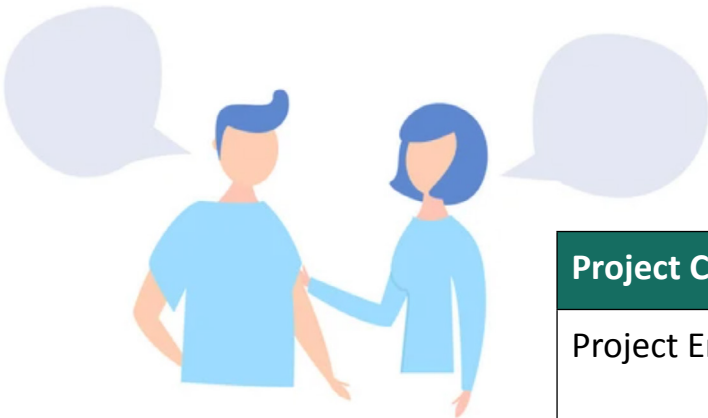


Public Open House: The February 1st Open House gave participants an opportunity to learn about the work completed to date and provide feedback on Strategy directions. Participants recorded their comments and ideas on each topic in individual workbooks. The Open House panels can be accessed through the [project website](#).

WHAT WE DID

Engagement Activities	Date	Participation
Stakeholder Workshops (3)	November 24th & 29th, 2022 December 1st, 2022	37
Public Questionnaire	February 1st - 22nd, 2023	2,241
Public Open House	February 1st	293

Total
Engaged:
2,571



Project Correspondence

Project Emails (59 total)

For a high level summary of project correspondence, see Appendix D.

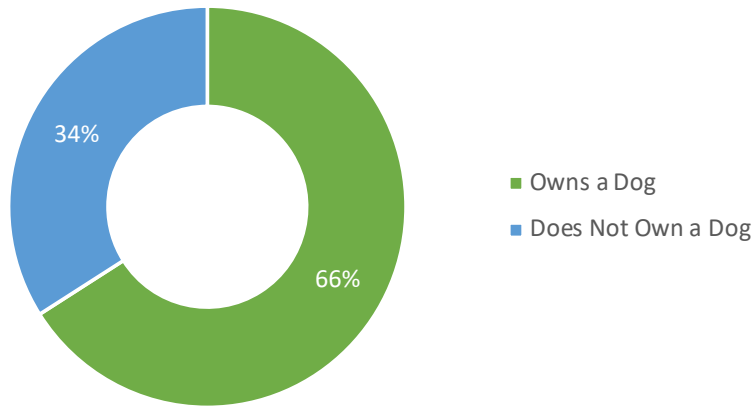
The project team received a number of emails throughout Round 2 which included:

- feedback on the Strategy process
- information sharing of relevant resources and documentation of conflicts in parks and environmentally sensitive areas
- comments, suggestions and concerns to inform Draft Strategy

WHO WE HEARD FROM

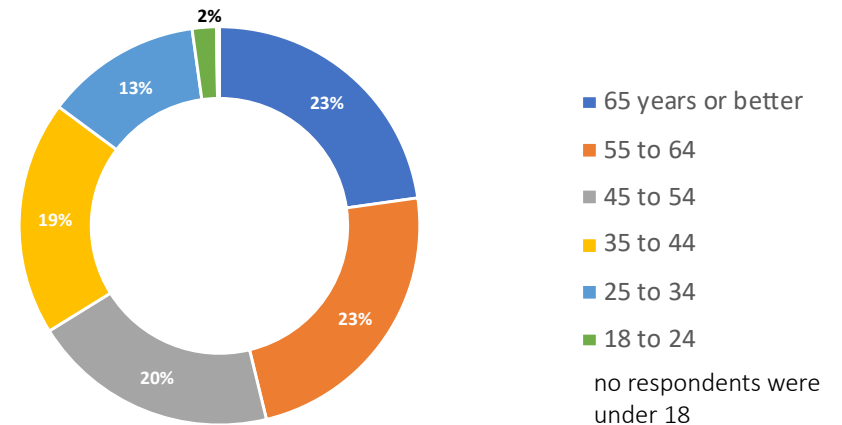
Information in this section was collected from the public questionnaire and was optional for participants to fill out.

Dog Ownership (in Household)



Most (66%) questionnaire respondents live with at least one dog in their household.

Age Distribution



The largest demographic we heard from (46%) were 55 years or older.

District-Wide Comparison

32-45% of Saanich residents are estimated to live with a dog.

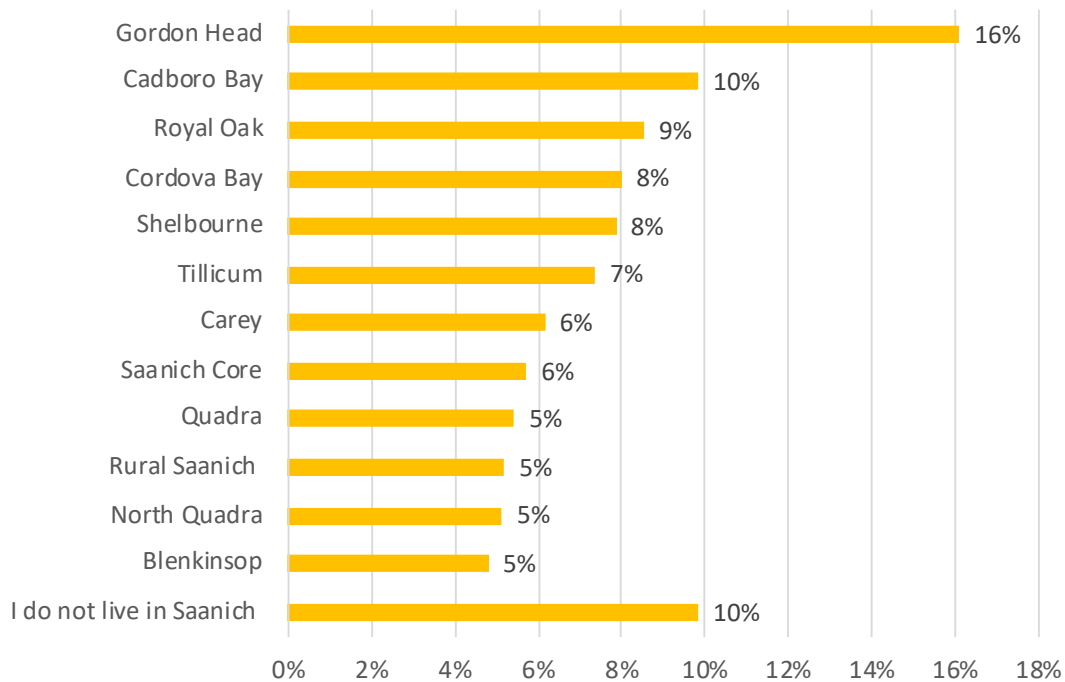
This range was calculated with the following data sources: Statistically Valid Phone Questionnaire, conducted in Round 1 (2022), estimates there to be 15,740- 22,315 dogs in Saanich; the total population in Saanich is estimated to be 117,735 people and the average number of people per household is 2.4 (Statistics Canada, 2021).

District-Wide Comparison

Saanich residents 55 years or older account for an estimated 34% of the total population (Statistics Canada, 2021).

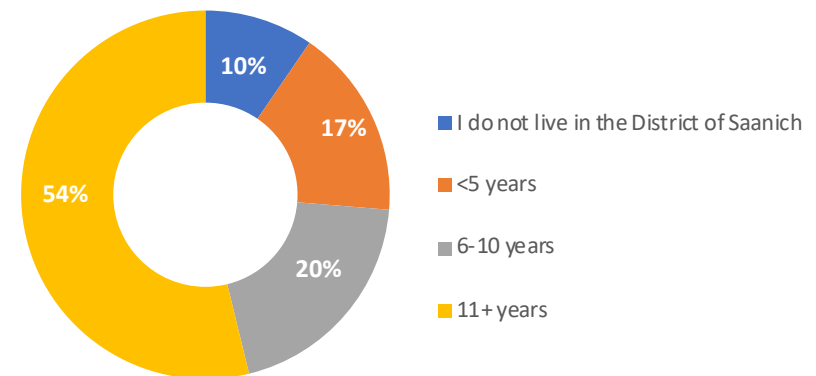
WHO WE HEARD FROM

Neighbourhood Distribution



We heard mostly (90%) from Saanich residents in the public questionnaire.

Length of Residence



Most (75%) questionnaire respondents have lived in the Saanich for over 5 years.



WHAT WE HEARD

Draft Vision

61%

of questionnaire respondents are somewhat or very supportive of the draft vision statement below:

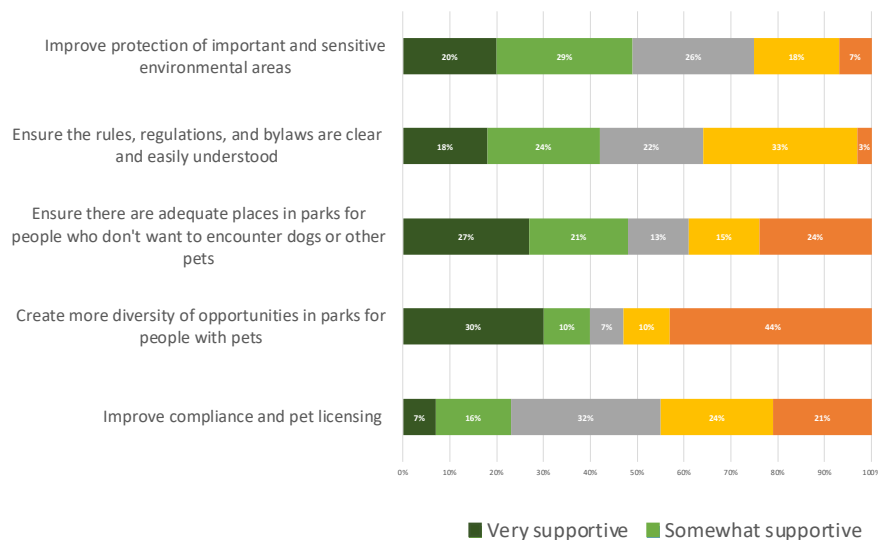
Saanich parks are safe, accessible, and enjoyable for all park users and provide a variety of experiences that balance the different needs of people and pets while protecting environmental integrity.

What's Missing?

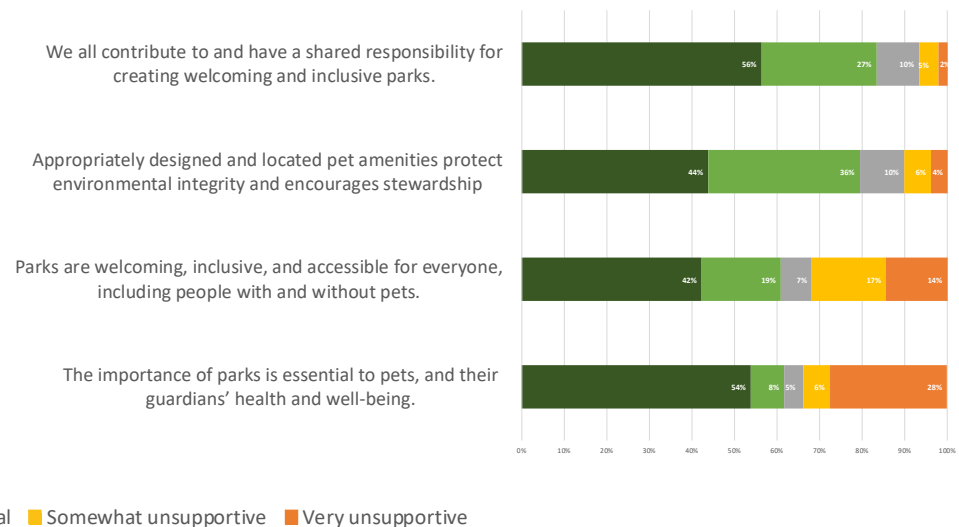
- Better balance of diverse park user needs (i.e., over-representation of pet needs or human needs)
- More emphasis on environmental protection
- Clarity and language
- Implementation

Level of Support for Draft Goals & Principles

Draft Goals



Draft Principles



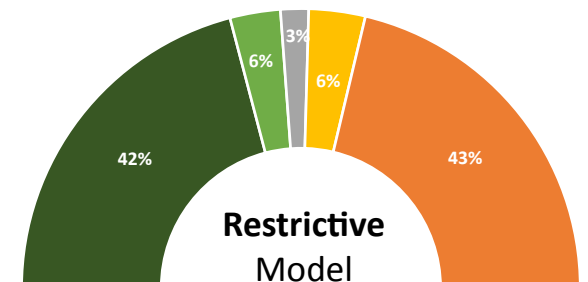
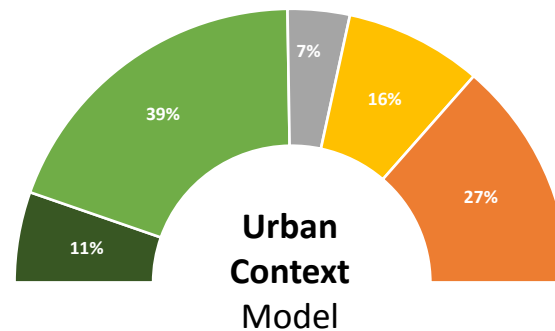
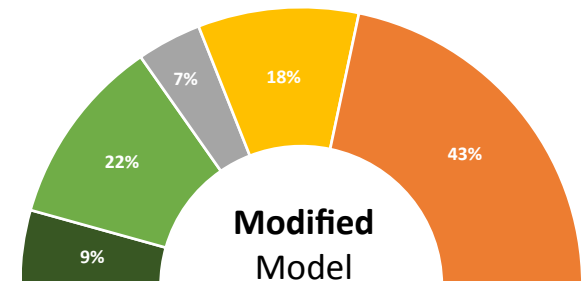
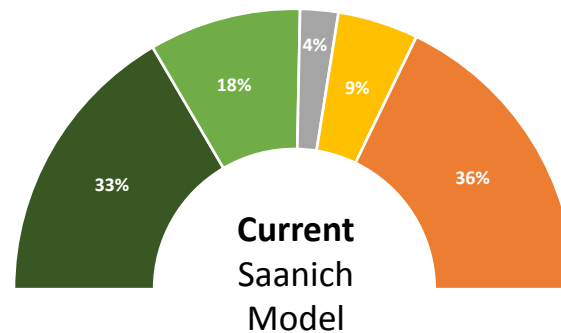
WHAT WE HEARD

Options for Consideration : Level of Support

To help determine key elements that should be prioritized in the draft Strategy, we presented four different options of pet regulation models. For details on each option, see [the Open House panels](#).

The level of support for each option model is shown below. Feedback is from the public questionnaire.

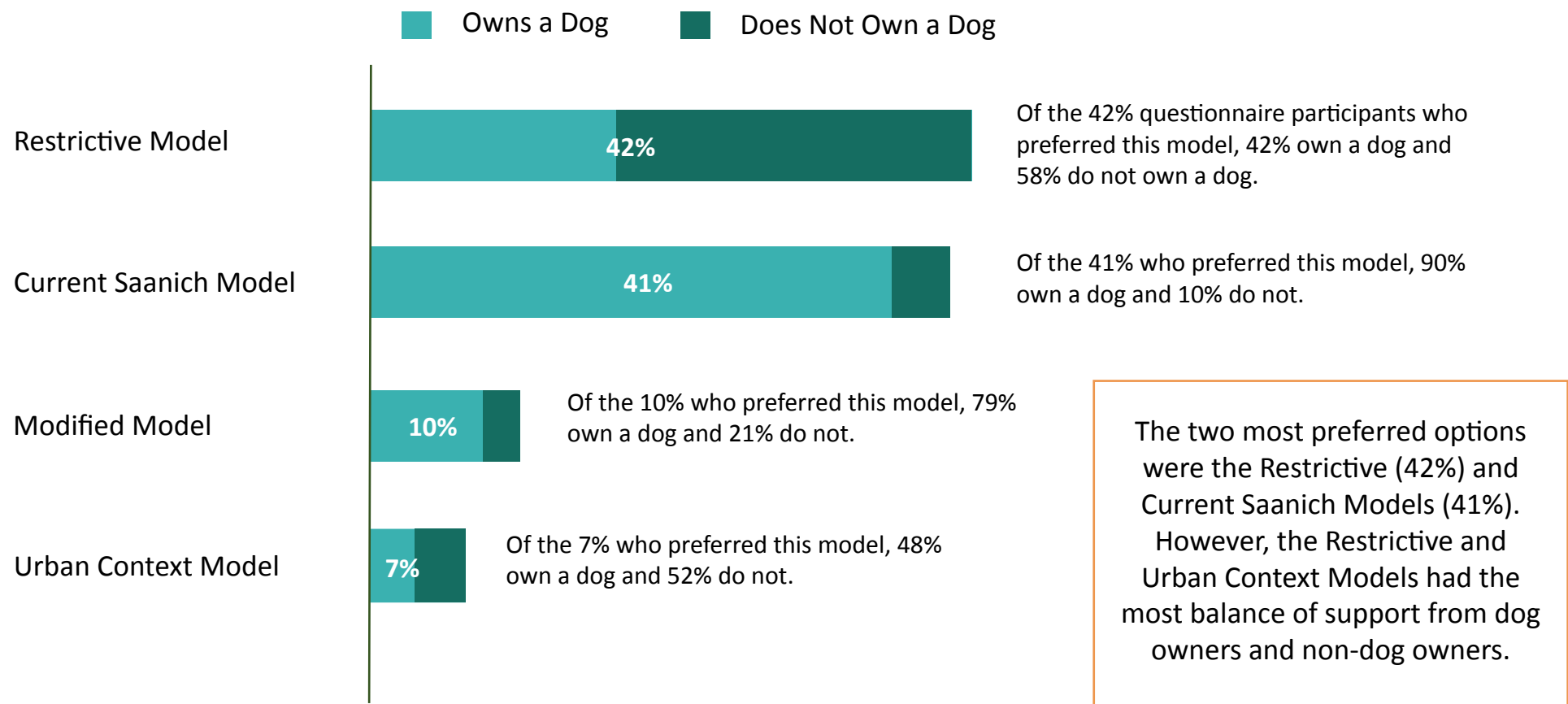
- Very supportive
- Somewhat supportive
- Neutral
- Somewhat unsupportive
- Very unsupportive



WHAT WE HEARD

Options for Consideration : Preferred Model

We asked questionnaire participants to select the model that best reflects their vision for Saanich parks. Options are listed in order from most to least preferred.



WHAT WE HEARD

Options for Consideration : Preferred Model

The following key themes were summarized from comments received at the Open House.

Restrictive Model

- General opposition to level of restriction
- Best option for environmental protection
- Support for regulation enforcement

Current Saanich Model

- General support
- Importance of dogs off-leash
- Emphasis on responsible dog ownership, signage & education

Modified Model

- Support for designated off-leash areas
- Does not adequately protect sensitive ecosystems or balance park user needs equitably

Urban Context Model

- Does not fit Saanich context
- Need for park specific strategies
- Support for default leash requirement

WHAT WE HEARD

Dogs in Saanich Parks

Questionnaire participants value the following features most when exercising or walking their dogs off-leash:

Large/open
space for dogs
to exercise

21% selected
this in the public
questionnaire

Trails

20% selected
this in the public
questionnaire

Fenced areas

19% selected
this in the public
questionnaire

When asked which park or beach dog owners like to bring an off-leash dog most often, questionnaire respondents answered:

- PKOLS (26%)
- Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park (21%)*
- Respondents don't allow their dog off-leash in parks (16%)

*Park is not managed by District of Saanich



WHAT WE HEARD

Sharing Our Parks

With Active Recreation

Questionnaire participants shared what is important to consider when sharing parks with active recreation uses (such as bicycle trails, sports fields, sports courts, playgrounds). Key themes included:

restricting pet access

comments that pets should be in designated areas of the parks and/or away from programmed recreational spaces (*472 comments*).

Sport user groups expressed issues with compliance of existing regulation (i.e., sports as priority use) and suggested additional fenced infields and signage.

enhanced safety

safety particularly on shared pathways with cyclists and from dogs who are not controlled (*173 comments*)

respectful shared use

general comments that park spaces should be shared respectfully by all users (*418 comments*).

Participants at stakeholder workshops emphasized education-first approaches such as programs, trainings, and regional partnerships to promote respectful shared use of parks.

signage and communication

increased signage to clearly specify the “dos and dont’s” in park spaces (*107 comments*)

Sharing Our Parks

With Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Important considerations for how we might share parks with environmentally sensitive areas (ESAs) such as Garry Oak ecosystems, wetlands, areas with known species at risks include:

restricting pet access

for pets (*358 comments*) and/or for all park users (*94 comments*) to prevent destruction of ESAs.

education and responsibility

more education about ESAs, wildlife, etc. and communication on responsible dog ownership (*211 comments*)

Stakeholder groups suggested utilizing existing stewardship groups and co-management in the way we protect sensitive areas and green spaces.

leashing regulation

suggestions for on-leash requirements generally in parks (*302 comments*) and some preferred only in designated areas such as ESAs (*50 comments*)

environmental protection

additional fencing or physical barriers are needed around ESAs to protect natural areas (*282 comments*)

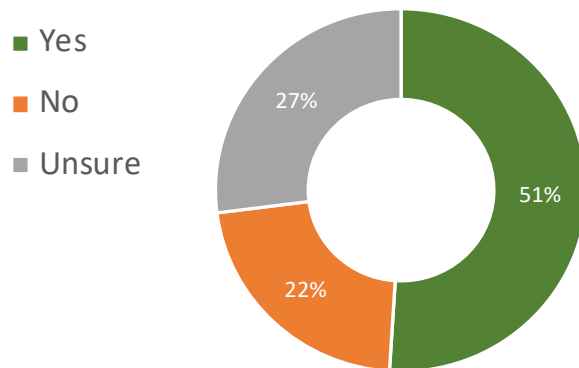


WHAT WE HEARD

Pilot Pop-Up Dog Parks

The Summer Pop-Up Dog Park Pilot Project provided fenced-in, off-leash areas in 9 different parks during the summer of 2022. Locations included Beckwith Park, Vantreight Park, Blair Park, Copley East Park, Horner Park, Fowler Park, Hyacinth Park, Gorge Park and Rudd Park.

In both the questionnaire and Open House, participants were asked what worked well and didn't work well about the pilot project. When asked whether they considered the pilot pop-up parks to be beneficial, about half (51%) of questionnaire respondents answered 'Yes'.



Feedback from stakeholder workshops suggested that off leash dog parks should be prioritized in higher density areas. Other suggested criteria included consideration for adjacent land uses, noise levels, and community support / engagement.

What Worked Well

- General support for designated space for dogs and opportunity to socialize
- Safety for dogs and other park users
- Locations were well located and central

What Did Not Work Well

- General opposition (no need for off-leash dog parks; inadequate space for exercise)
- Size was too small (can lead to conflict)
- Lack of permanence made it difficult to fully adopt as routine
- Unaware of locations or timing

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Engagement in this round will inform the Draft Strategy. Based on what we have heard, the following takeaways are being considered.

Draft Vision, Principles, Goals

- Participants were generally supportive of the draft vision, principles and goals.
- Defining key terms could help with clarity and public understanding (e.g., “park users” and “environmental integrity”).
- Implementation could be more explicit within the goals.

Options for Consideration

- Participants were divided on their preferred model, with 42% in support of the Restrictive Model and 41% in support of the Current Saanich Model.
- There is more middle ground within the Modified and Urban Context Model, both with higher percentages of participants who are ‘somewhat supportive’ or ‘somewhat unsupportive’, which suggests more room for consensus and compromise among participants.
- Across all options, environmental protection, enforcement, education on responsible dog ownership and signage were all important elements to emphasize.
- Further information for specific parks of interest, PKOLS in particular, may help to better understand regulatory needs and programming opportunities for individual parks.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Dogs in Saanich

- It is important that dogs have access to a diversity of green spaces, including large and open spaces for exercise, trails, and fenced areas.
- PKOLS and Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park are the most loved parks to take dogs off-leash.
- There was a significant portion of respondents (16%) who currently don't allow their dogs off-leash in any Saanich park.

Sharing Our Parks

Key themes that came up around sharing parks with both active recreation uses and environmentally sensitive areas include:

- need for designated spaces for pets
- enhanced safety (accessible pathways, cycling speed limits, from other dogs, etc.)
- additional fencing or barriers around ESAs
- improved signage
- education and communication for pet owners
- waste management

Pilot Pop-Up Dog Parks

- There was general support for designated off-leash areas in parks as it created a sense of safety for dog owners knowing their dogs could not run away.
- Locations of pilot pop-up dog parks were supported.
- Concerns included the small size of the pop-up parks and not enough communication on the pop-up locations.
- It will be important to provide a variety of spaces for dogs ranging from off-leash dog parks to trails and open space for dogs (and their owners) who desire more exercise.

APPENDICES

The following appendices are included in this report in the order that the activities were conducted.

Appendix A: Stakeholder Workshops Summary

Appendix B: Round 2 Public Questionnaire Results

Appendix C: Open House Workbook Results

Appendix D: Project Correspondence Overview (by email)

Stay tuned for project updates and future engagement opportunities on the [project webpage](#).

