

Appendix E

Community Conversations and
Kitchen Table Workbook Results

FEEDBACK FROM COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS & KITCHEN TABLE WORKBOOKS

The following summary is based on feedback heard during the two virtual Community Conversations and Kitchen Table Workbook submissions.

What user groups and interests should be considered as part of this Strategy?

From the community conversations and kitchen table workbooks, participants discussed the many park user groups that are important to acknowledge throughout this process. Some of the key groups mentioned include:

- First Nation communities
- Dog owners, particularly dogs with special needs, small dogs or service dogs and a diversity of demographics
- Cat owners
- Dog trainers and dog walkers
- People and dogs who use parks for mental and physical health (including those who do not feel safe alone in public spaces or who need calm/quiet spaces)
- Equestrian users
- Community events and programming attendees
- Recreational park users (e.g., sports groups, runners, mountain bikers, cyclists, bird watchers)
- Sensitive species and animal habitat (e.g., migratory birds, native trees, fish)
- Non-dog owners and those who do not currently use the park
- Volunteers and park stewards
- Scientists, researchers, and citizen scientists
- Commuters and people without cars
- People in densified areas
- New immigrant families and cultural group gatherings
- Parents, toddlers, and young children (including nature-based preschools)
- Women park and trail users
- Seniors and those with disabilities (i.e., who use mobility assistance devices)
- Vulnerable populations (e.g., unhoused people, drug-users)

Where do you see opportunities to accommodate various or multiple users? Are there any parks that you know that do a good job of this?

We heard there are opportunities to enhance community cooperation and foster a culture of responsibility. Participants suggested opportunities to enhance natural areas, including preserving and limiting use around ecologically sensitive areas and species at risk, and improving waste management.

We heard opportunities to provide spaces and programming for different park users and to offer variety within the park. Participants provided suggestions for clear physical boundaries, either with fencing or natural elements, as well as improved signage and public education (e.g., on eco-sensitive areas, playgrounds/fields, off-leash areas, and volunteer educators). At the same time, we also heard not every park may accommodate every use and to consider multiple parks for diverse needs. Some participants would like to see stronger limitations, including leash lengths and permits, as well as seasonal restrictions and bylaw enforcement, while others caution against a heavy-handed approach.

In addition, we heard the People, Pets, and Parks Strategy is an opportunity for cross-regional collaboration with other CRD municipalities and institutions such as University of Victoria. It can also act as an avenue to plan for climate action, community health, and regional population growth.

Examples of parks that accommodate multiple users well include:

- Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park
- Rutledge Park
- Thetis Lake Park
- Beckwith Park
- Rath Trevor Provincial Park
- Colquitz River Park
- Mount Douglas
- Uplands Park (Oak Bay)
- Playfair Park
- Swan Lake (note: no dogs are allowed in Swan Lake/Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary)
- Rithet's Bog
- East Sooke Regional Park
- Montague Park
- Windsor Park (Oak Bay)
- Cadboro Gyro Park (Cadboro Bay Beach)
- Baxter Park
- Benson Park
- Cordova Bay Beach
- Qualicum Beach
- Panama Flats Park (Colquitz River Trail)
- Lambrick Park
- Vancouver's Hadden Park (Kits Point)
- The Annex (Toronto)

What are some important considerations for pets in Saanich parks?

Some participants discussed opportunities to increase sharing of park space and maximizing user group access. Participants shared ideas for different use areas, including socializing, exercising, trails, and natural areas, and restricting areas with natural or artificial barriers. We heard support for restrictions of dog owners and commercial dog walkers, including leash lengths, licensing commercial services, and enforcing bylaws. Participants also expressed a need for more diversity of spaces throughout Saanich to meet a diversity of needs, to promote walkability to parks, and to provide equitable spatial distribution of amenities. We heard education about the different types of spaces should be considered.

Participants shared concerns for environmental health, including protecting ecological sensitive areas, limiting interactions with wildlife, removal of invasive species, and planting of non-toxic species. We also heard suggestions related to park amenities, including improved waste management, signage and education, agility equipment, shelters and shade for heat refuge, water features and access to natural water.

Through the Community Conversations and Kitchen Table Workbooks, there were many comments related to the planning process. Participants suggested understanding the timeframes of when different users are in the park, looking at seasonal differences and changes over time. We also heard a need for evidence-based research to guide policy making, along with community input and procedural fairness. Participants expressed that the diversity of dogs and dog owners should be accommodated (e.g., fenced spaces don't work for all dogs), as well as the cumulative impacts of changes across the Capital Regional District. Additional considerations include the lack of park space for cats, the health importance of off-leash dog areas, and planning for the safety and comfort of all park users.