

# JOE BROWN PARK | DOG OFF-LEASH AREA

## Public Engagement Summary

Planning & Design



APRIL 2021

## Summary of What We Heard

### Background

The City of Surrey facilitated a public engagement process for Joe Brown Park, a 27.5-hectare (68 acres) community-level park located at 125A Street and 54 Ave in Newton's Panorama Ridge neighbourhood. The park includes forested areas with walking trails, open areas for equestrian activities and a softball field. A dog off-leash area is proposed at the inactive gravel pit, a semi-open clearing in a topographic depression in the western portion of the park. An environmental assessment was conducted which determined that a dog off-leash area in the proposed location poses a low impact to wildlife.

A dog off-leash area was identified in the 2009 Joe Brown Park masterplan. A stakeholder meeting was held in autumn 2020, followed by an online public consultation survey in winter 2020. 77% of all survey respondents said they are likely/very-likely to use a new dog off-leash area. Below is a summary of what we heard.

### STAKEHOLDER SITE MEETING

On September 11, 2020, staff from the City's Parks Division hosted a site meeting with stakeholders at Joe Brown Park to discuss the layout of the proposed dog off-leash area; eight representatives from West Panorama Ridge Ratepayer Association and Panorama Ridge Riding Club attended the meeting.

### Key Findings

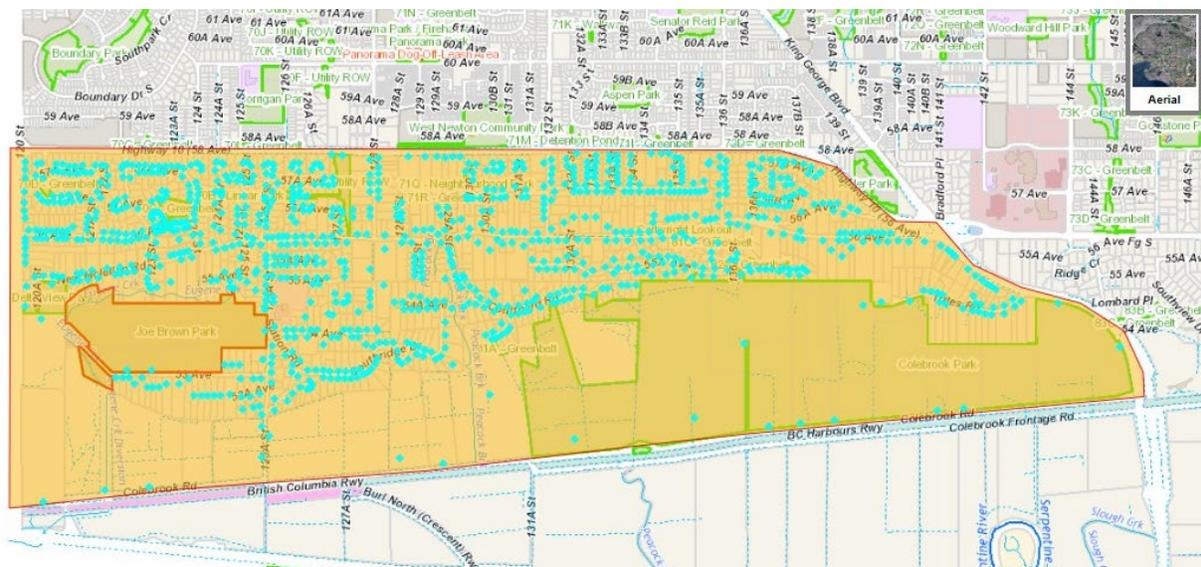
The consensus from the stakeholders was that Joe Brown Park needs dog owners to adhere to having their dogs on-leash when walking on trails and near horses. Opportunities for improvement include clearer sightlines to help avoid surprise interactions between dogs and equestrians, signage to distinguish between on-leash and off-leash areas, and a walkway around the periphery of the proposed dog off-leash area to maintain access to existing park users. There were some concerns about the distance from the 125A entrance to the dog off-leash area as well as the potential increase in parking demand.

### ONLINE CONSULTATION

Online consultation was key to reach residents during the COVID-19 gathering restrictions. The online consultation was promoted via posters at Joe Brown Park, a mailout to Panorama Ridge residents, and on the City's social media channels. A survey and information boards were available online to the public between November 20 and December 13, 2020 with CitySpeaks subscribers given early access on November 17.

A total of 1,154 complete and partial survey responses were received, including 115 responses from residents of the Panorama Ridge neighbourhood. The overall response rate was high due to the survey’s availability online. The local response turnout was also significant compared to past in-person attendance of public open houses at Joe Brown Park.

*Figure 1. The Panorama Ridge neighbourhood is defined by Highway 10 (58 Ave), Colebrook Road, 120 Street, and King George Boulevard.*



To holistically represent comments received, the following report represents responses collected from all respondents (“General”) and Panorama Ridge residents (“Ridge”).

- 1,154 General respondents with partial and full responses
  - Including 115 Ridge Residents
- 37 emails or phone calls
- 91 Social media posts

57% of General survey respondents self-identified themselves as residents of Newton or South Surrey. Localized data suggest there was confusion over South Surrey as a general area rather than the name of a neighbourhood as residents of Panorama Ridge (Newton) also self-identify themselves as residents of South Surrey. 80% of general respondents (77% Ridge respondents) own a dog. The following findings reflect the majority view of comments received through this consultation.

## KEY FINDINGS

### Current Use of the Park

The most popular activity in Joe Brown Park is dog walking (General 60%, Ridge 70%) followed closely by walking and running (General 52%, Ridge 68%). The park also serves as a popular meeting ground for family and friends, or for passive individual enjoyment. Noticeably, the park provides opportunity for cycling, horseback riding, and bird watching. Occasionally there are organized softball games and equestrian events in the east side of the park. Joe Brown Park is home to the Senior Slo-pitch League and the Panorama Riding club.

*Figure 2. Current usage of Joe Brown Park*

Q: How do you currently use Joe Brown Park? Select all that apply.

#### General

Total participants: 400



#### Ridge Specific

Total participants: 109

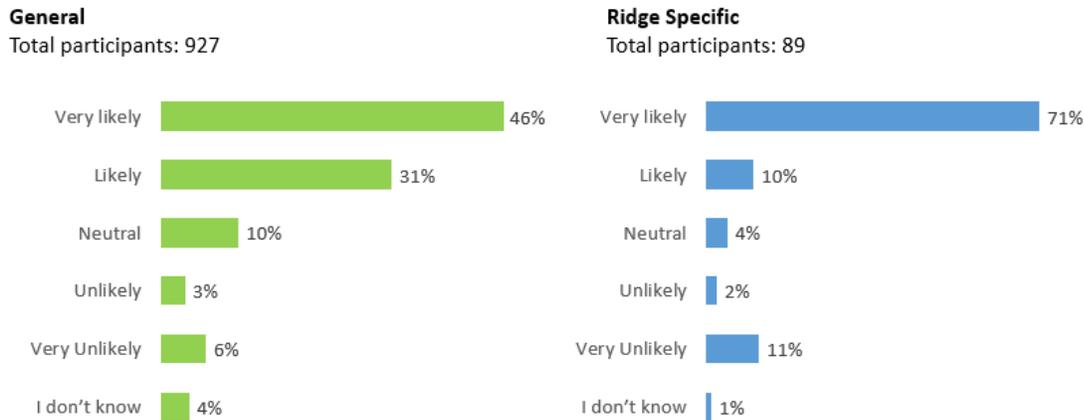


### Need for an Off-leash Area

The majority of survey respondents (General 77%, Ridge 81%) showed they are likely/very-likely to use the proposed off-leash area. 44% of Ridge dog owners currently do not visit another dog off-leash area which suggests Joe Brown park may be their only off-leash opportunity. When offered the potential opportunity for off-leash stewardship, a total of 146 respondents expressed interest in becoming members of a dog off-leash area community group at Joe Brown Park.

Figure 3. Likelihood of using new dog off-leash area

Q: How likely are you to use the new dog off-leash area planned for Joe Brown Park?

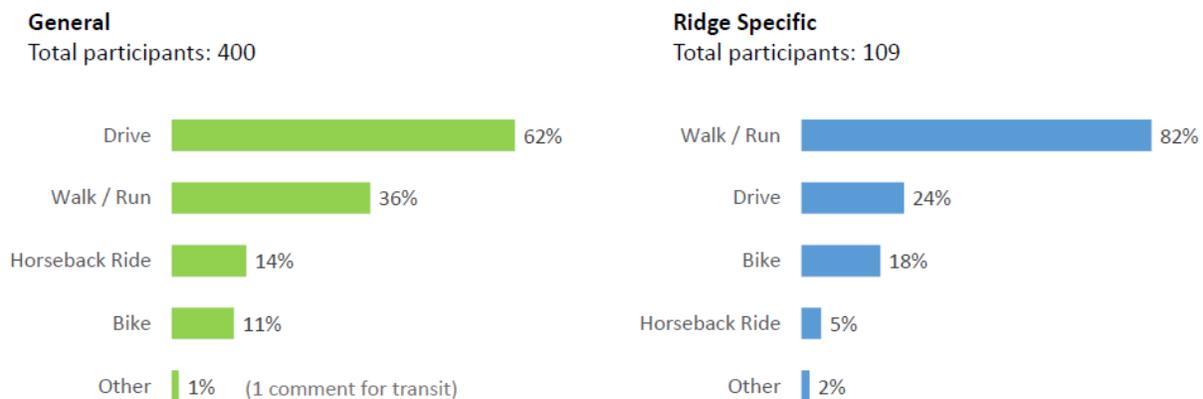


### Access to Off-leash Area

The majority of Ridge respondents (82%) walk or run to Joe Brown Park while the General respondents (62%) are more likely to drive to the park. Vehicular access for drivers is discussed in *Parking and Traffic*.

Figure 4. Means of travelling to Joe Brown Park

Q: How do you travel to Joe Brown Park? Select all that apply.



Most respondents use entrances A and H along 125A Street to access Joe Brown Park. This is second by Ridge respondents' use of entrance D via a pedestrian bridge off 123 Street and the General respondents enter the park from the Delta-South Surrey Regional Greenway at entrance E.

Figure 5. Map of Entrances to Joe Brown Park

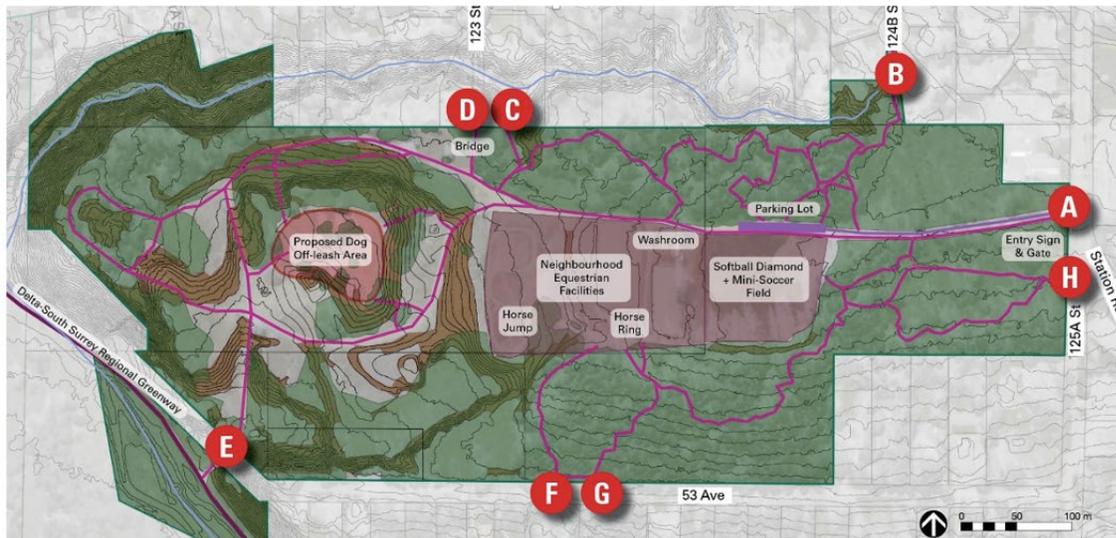
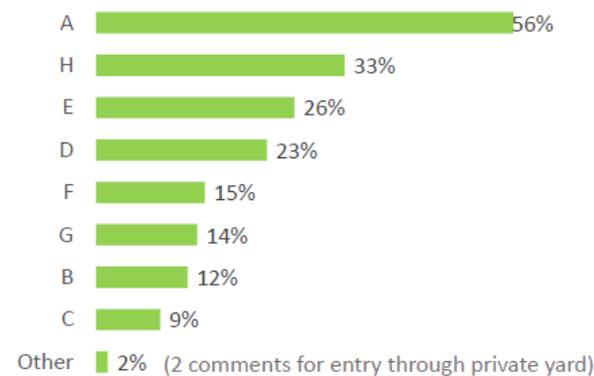


Figure 6. Current access to Joe Brown Park

Q: Where do you typically enter Joe Brown Park? Select all that apply.

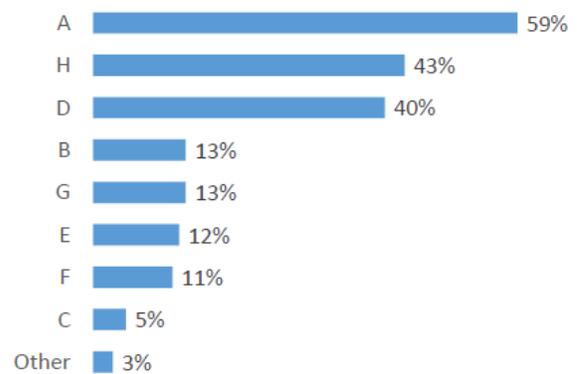
**General**

Total participants: 385



**Ridge Specific**

Total participants: 109



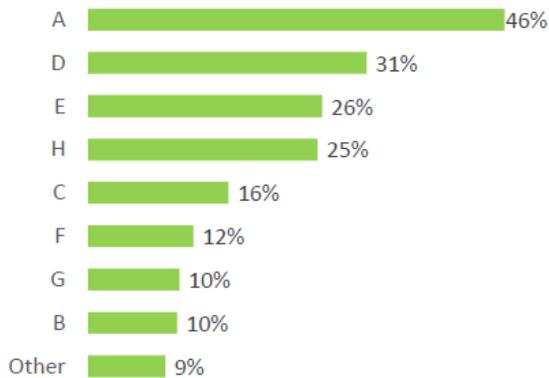
If an off-leash area is built at the proposed location, the majority of respondents prefer to enter at entrance A (General 46%, Ridge 58%), with second choice being entrance D (General 31%, Ridge 37%), and third choice entrance H or E. Neighbours next to entrance D expressed concerns about perceived parking increase, as well as noise and trespassing by dogs.

Figure 7. Likely entrance to access the off-leash area

Q: If a dog off-leash area is built at the proposed location, where would you likely enter the park? Select all that apply.

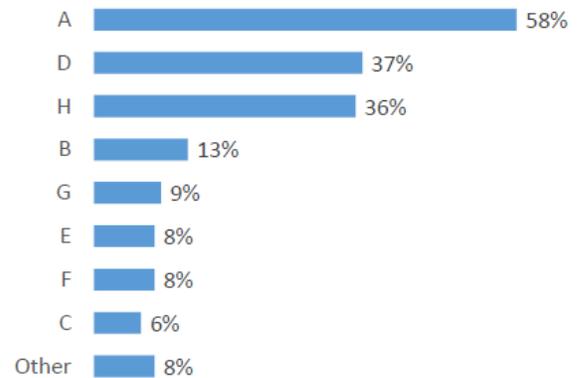
**General**

Total participants: 385



**Ridge Specific**

Total participants: 109



**Preferred Layout**

The proposed 1.3-acre dog off-leash area includes a fully fenced perimeter with a mixture of grass, trees, and topographic terrain. Respondents were asked to choose between one fenced area for all dogs or two separated fenced areas for big and small dogs. The results were close to an even split amongst General and Ridge respondents. Dog owners expressed a clearer preference for two separate areas (54%) contrasted to 44% for a single area. Some verbatim comments suggested that during the parks least used hours the small dog area could also be for dogs that do not socialize well with others. Also suggested was an area with dog agility features for owners to train their dog(s).

Figure 8. Preferred concept plan

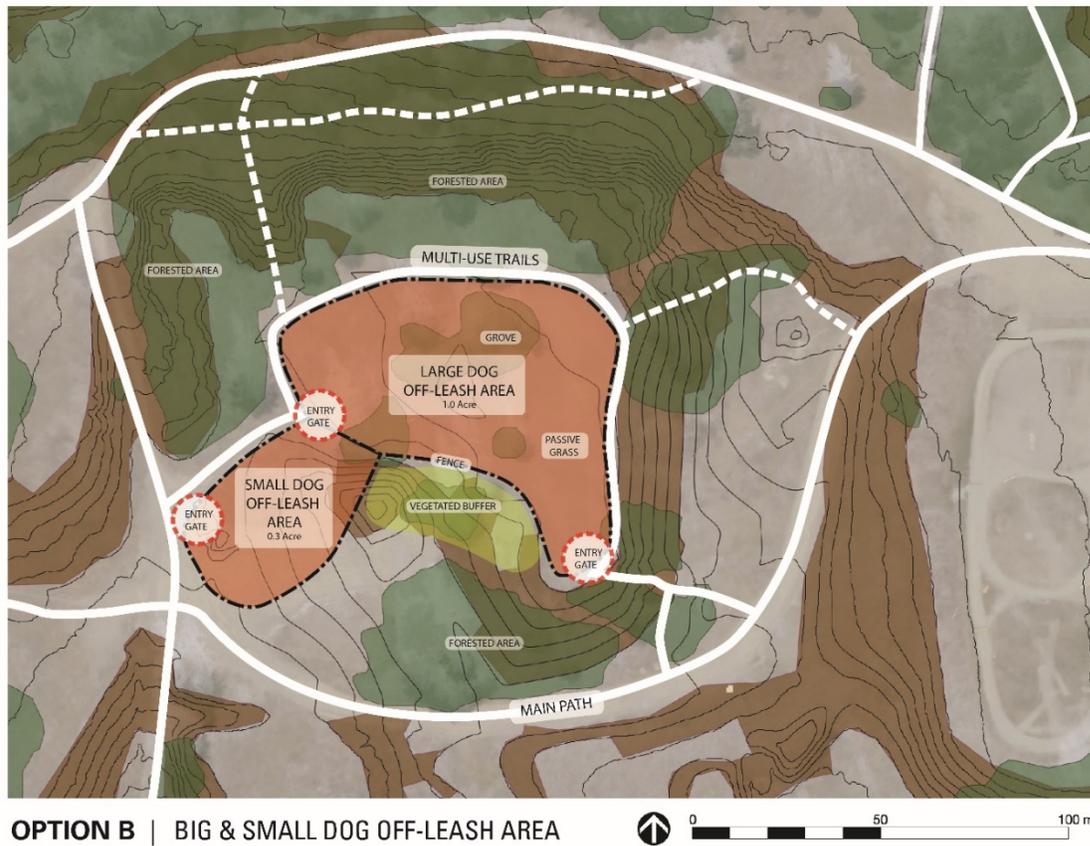
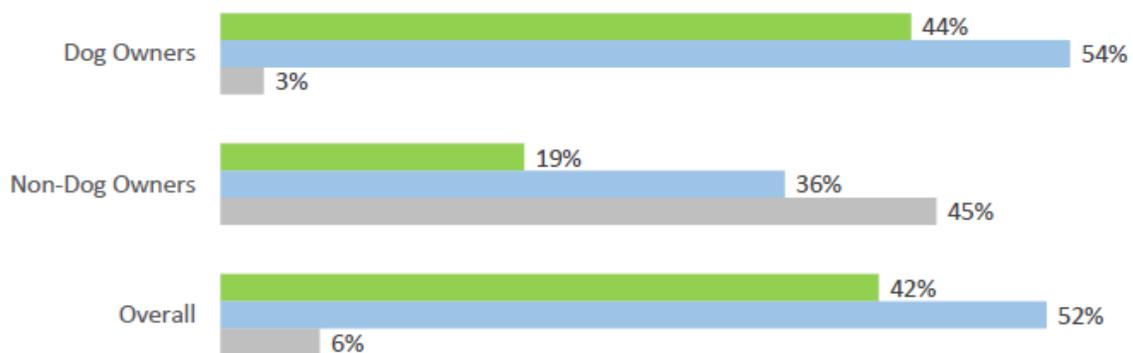


Figure 9. Options for Dog Park Design by Dog Ownership

- Option A: One larger fenced area for all dogs, providing more room for running and exercise.
- Option B: Two separated fenced areas for large and small dogs, to mediate potential conflicts but with less room in each area for running and exercise
- I have no opinion | I don't know



### Character by Importance

Respondents were asked to categorize which of the following traits are very important, important or not important to them in a dog off-leash area:

Very Important	Important	Not important
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Signage to promote responsible dog ownership</li> <li>• Large space for dog running</li> <li>• Natural surroundings</li> <li>• Clear distinction between on-leash and off-leash areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connectivity to trail network</li> <li>• Distance from park entrances</li> <li>• Variable topographic terrain inside off-leash area</li> <li>• Universal access to off-leash area</li> <li>• Sightlines into the off-leash area</li> <li>• Cover from rain</li> <li>• Seating area for dog owners to socialize</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flat topography inside the off-leash area</li> </ul>

### Amenities by Priority

Respondents were asked to prioritize which amenities they want in the dog off-leash area. The majority of respondents prioritized drinking water, open space, and elements to climb on. The secondary priorities included agility elements, all weather shelter, topographic mounds, seating, and an information kiosk.

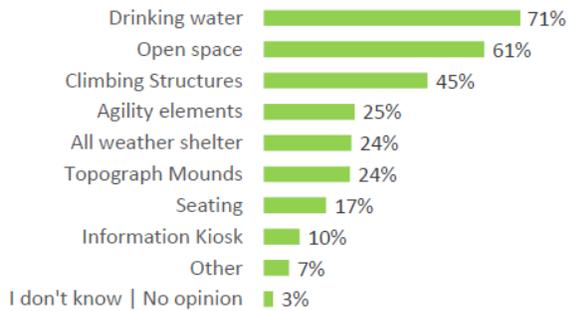
Verbatim comments suggested a waste bag dispenser and litter receptacles, an off-leash loop trail, and a dog rinse station. Some respondents suggested to expand the off-leash area, including trails in the forested areas to allow dogs/people an opportunity to disengage from unwanted situations. However, doing so would conflict with habitat protection objectives and encroach into forested areas that are appreciated by birdwatchers as well as equestrians and cyclists who enjoy riding into the bowl.

Figure 10. Dog park amenities by priority

Q: A list of proposed dog and people amenities is provided below. Select up to top 3 priority features that you would like to see added.

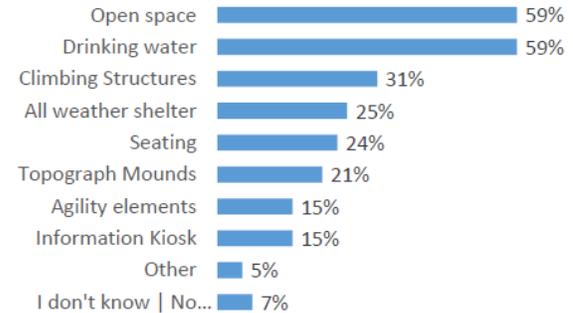
**General**

Total participants: 862



**Ridge Specific**

Total participants: 102



Verbatim responses under "Other"	Count
Waste bag dispenser and garbage receptable	20
Off-leash trails	13
Dog rinse station	12
Water play or swimming area	9
Trees within off-leash area	9
Separate area for individual reactive dogs, unnurtured dogs, or for focused training	8
Good drainage	8
Toilet for people	6
Signage	6
Bylaw enforcement	6
High fencing	3
Lighting	3
Double gates	2

Verbatim responses under "Other" (continued)	Count
Grass surfacing	2
Multiple point of access	2
No benches to discourage owners from socializing and focus supervising their dogs	2
Benches for handicap users	1
Shaded forest trails	1
Fallen log and boulders for dogs to jump on	1
Rule to limit presence of toddlers	1
Amenity for small dog area	1
Proximity to parking lot	1
Sand surfacing for digging dogs	1
Alternative to grass surface	1
Remove sharp rocks from off-leash area	1
Lost and found space for toys, leashes, collar, etc.	1

Concerns for an Off-leash Area

The main concerns expressed by specialized user groups were about impact to bird and wildlife habitat, and unsafe interaction between horses and dogs.

To follow up on concerns about environmental impact, the City engaged a third-party environmental consultant to complete an impact assessment. The environmental consultant considered that the proposed location of the dog off-leash area is on a previously disturbed site. The proposed dog off-leash area is also setback from the existing forest. By designating an area to meet growing dog off-leash demands, the proposal can better enable on-leash behaviours on the forest trails and limit habitat disturbance overall.

In response to concerns about unsafe interaction between horses and dogs, the proposed off-leash area is located away from the main equestrian facilities in the eastern portion of the park. Limited sightlines lead to surprised encounters and aggressive behaviours. It was strategized at the stakeholder meeting to regrade an existing mound of blackberry near the proposed dog off-leash area entrance and use see-through chain link fence to improve sightlines between different user groups (e.g. horses and dogs).

*Figure 11. Concerns received*

Concerns received	E-mail	Survey
Impact to bird and wildlife habitat	14	6
Unsafe interaction between horse / equestrian and dogs	2	13
Increase parking along residential streets	7	2
Concern gate being open would lead to undesirable activity	4	5
Increase vehicular traffic	6	
Worries of encounter with aggressive dogs	3	2
Not at this location		5
Disturbance from barking	1	2
Oppose without reason	1	2
Dog waste not being pickup	1	1
Conflict with existing user group	4	
Lack of funding		2
Dogs wandering into adjacent property		1
Lack of need for off-leash area	1	1
Dogs should not be allowed in park at all		1

## Parking and Traffic

Response from the General public suggest the off-leash area has potential to generate a moderate demand for parking. Although the park has an existing parking lot with entrance off 125A Street, the City has kept the vehicular gate locked since 2007. This was implemented at the request of the community to discourage incidents of loitering and vandalism. The parking lot is difficult to see from 125A Street because it is setback from the road and screened by the forest.

Limited access to the parking lot is provided for softball games, Panorama Riding club, and City maintenance vehicles. Ridge residents expressed concerns that opening the parking lot gate may invite vandalism and crime. Since 2007, the City had arranged for a live-in caretaker from Panorama Riding club at Joe Brown Park. This was perceived as an asset to improve the park's safety. Suggestions were also received about increasing bylaw monitoring at this park. At this time there is no proposed change to the gate access, but the City will continue to monitor and access the situation.

## SUMMARY

This engagement generated strong turnout from the public and the Panorama Ridge neighbourhood. Comments received from the survey found a 77% (81% Ridge residents) majority as likely/very-likely to use a new off-leash area. Some residents raised concerns that the proposed off-leash area may increase traffic and parking demand.

Dog owners generally preferred two separate areas for large and small dogs (or dogs with socialization issues, if no other dogs are in the small dog area). To achieve a successful dog off-leash area at Joe Brown Park, it should be setback from wildlife habitat, provide separation between dogs and horses, improve sightlines, increase bylaw reinforcement, and provide signage to promote responsible dog ownership.