



MUNICIPALITY OF
West Elgin

Staff Report

Report To: Council Meeting
From: Terri Towstiuc, Clerk
Date: 2024-03-28
Subject: Dog Park Survey Results

Recommendation:

That West Elgin Council hereby receives the report from Terri Towstiuc, Clerk Re: Off-Leash Dog Park Survey Results; And

Option 1: That Council direct Staff include the total cost in the 2024 Budget Deliberations

Option 2: That Council accepts the report as information only.

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an update regarding the “Off-Leash Dog Park” survey that was available to residents of West Elgin in early 2024.

Background:

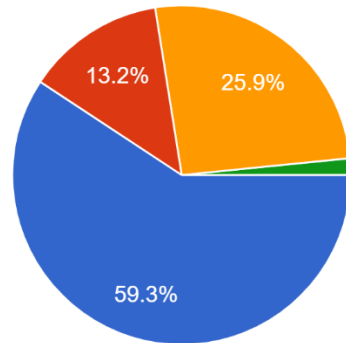
At the Regular Meeting of Council, December 21, 2024, Council directed staff to initiate an online survey available to all residents to gauge the appetite for an off-leash dogpark(s), within the municipality.

There is potential for use of the fence currently installed and located at the Rodney Fairgrounds. This *may* reduce the costs slightly, but would still require labour cost to tear-down and re-install at the off-leash dog park location.

The following data was collected through a “Google Forms” survey.

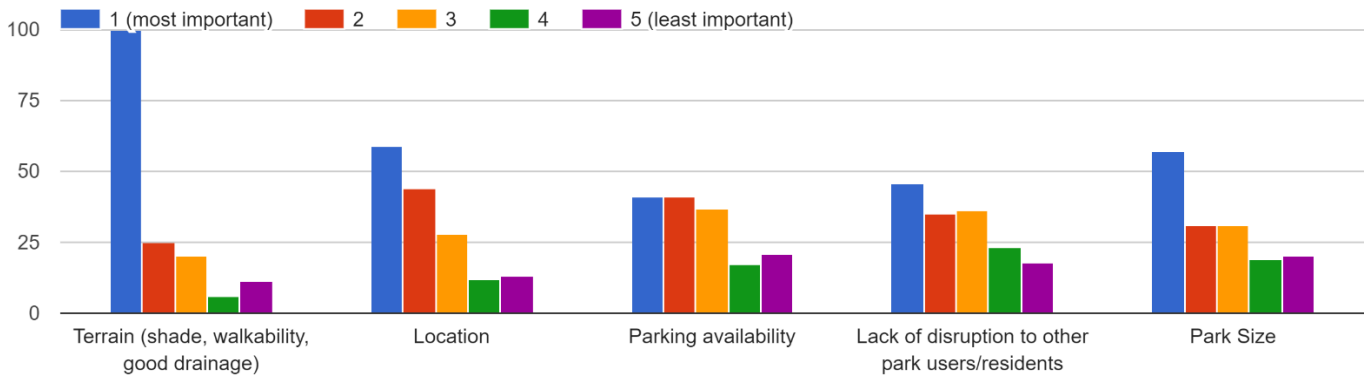
Which of the following statements represents your opinion?

189 responses



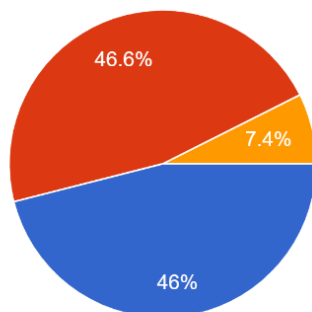
- I fully support an off-leash dog park, and I would be an avid user!
- An off-leash dog park is a good community asset, but doesn't impact/interest me
- I don't see the value in an off-leash dog park development for the Municipality of West Elgin
- None of the above

If you were to go to an off-leash dog park, please rank the following in order of importance (1 being most important, 5 being least important)



Which postal code is associated with your primary residence

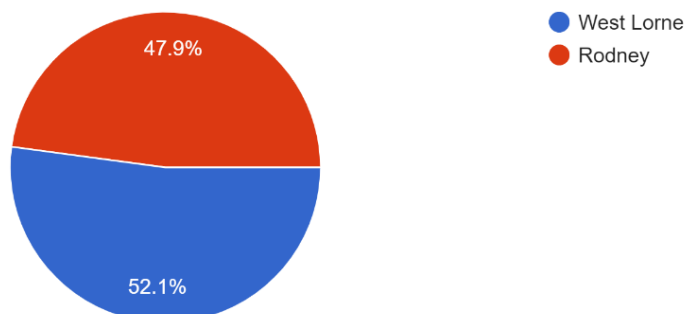
189 responses



- N0L 2C0
- N0L 2P0
- Other within West Elgin

Please provide your most preferred location

165 responses



Individual Comments Received on the Survey (73 Responses). (Items removed that could indicate the identity of the respondent, or included cursing or derogatory comments)

- *Amazing idea. This is needing to help grow community access needs.*
- *Multiple sections for large and small dogs or a training area would be great!*
- *Dogs must be friendly or muzzled if not!*
- *A lot of other places are doing divided dog parks for large and small dogs and I feel it'd be beneficial*
- *I have felt we need a dog park since I moved here 4 years ago.*
- *This would be a huge asset to our community & also bring people from other towns close by & possible business to our stores.*
- *On-site (non-smelling) compost or waste bins necessary for sure, proper gates (two gates with a dead spot in the middle for leashing/unleashing) would be good, and if possible, a water source nearby for drinking water and/or some level of cleaning before dogs leave the park.*
- *Wonderful thought. Dogs love to exercise and socialize. Does no harm to owners either. Location immaterial, West Lorne or Rodney, but parking area a need as am sure too far to walk for many in the area . As now stands, we go to Glencoe, St. Thomas, London or Strathroy. An acre or so is fine, nothing exotic, somewhere to run free and play. Although we are in West Lorne, would go to Rodney.*
- *Although I have always had dogs and enjoy spaces to run them off leash, I do not support these types of spaces. Not everyone has a well trained dog or has concern for others in the space. I have seen big dogs injure smaller.dogs, dog fights, etc. I would.never use the space unless it was empty.*
- *I like the idea but I don't think the expense is justified right now.*
- *Unsure of why there is a need for water. Cutting this out could save lots on the cost.*
- *Very excited for this opportunity for our area.*
- *This is needed in Rodney and there is a great area at our park at the track where this would be wonderful.*
- *Theres no point of an off leash park as most people can not control their dogs off leash, someone is going to end up hurt and there better things that the 50 000 can go towards like fixing roads and more community events*
- *I have been wanting a dog park since we got our dog 9 years ago! There are SO many dogs on my street alone, that I cannot even imagine this not happening. I would gladly pay a tax to help with the annual*

maintenance cost. I would also gladly donate if a fundraiser was held. I love that West Lorne has Miller Park, the splash pad, washrooms and the soccer fields, but my family doesn't use them any more. I'm not sure how much of the budget goes toward the maintenance of them, but I imagine some of my tax money is spent there. Taking dogs to the dog park is, in some ways, is like taking kids to the park. Morning noon or night routines often result in seeing familiar park visitors, and enjoying chats over coffee while the dogs get to play. I love that!! It's such a benefit to be able to feel a sense of connection to community. I know that is how soccer and hockey parents feel too. Also, having a dog park will bring visitors into our community. And perhaps result in them spending money at our businesses. I used to go to the Glencoe dog park, and have been to the parks in London and St. Thomas. There are people near us that would love this park too! Thanks for working on this!!

- *I would rather see a playground for children .*
- *Waste of taxpayers money*
- *Dog parks can enable the creation of community, a sense of belonging and improved mental health. I am fully in support of this opportunity.*
- *Perfect spot for dog park.. Back of park by Centre Street. Opening there to go in. Area is 3/4 fenced in. Need a fence beside the track to close it off. Remove fence behind the rec centre to close in a dog park? Lets keep Rodney happy...people will get to know one another - so many people have dogs!!! Thank you.*
- *Our country is financially broke. Don't we have bigger financial priorities than a dog park ?*
- *I think it's a great idea. Cost seems a tad high but I get it. I think you'll have a lot of people object but it would be very utilized*
- *Given the ongoing pattern of private recreational groups seeking and accessing public funds to support their private activities, I would not like to see further expenditure of public funds on recreational 'extras' that only benefit a relatively small component of the population. Given the current economic conditions, which have prompted the Municipality to raise user fees for existing infrastructure that is publicly owned, maintained, and used, it is hard to understand the Council's willingness to entertain even further capital and operating costs for recreation. Please focus on maintaining existing infrastructure that serves everyone and keeping it affordable rather than spreading the resources even thinner to appease small segments of the population. Also, this is less relevant to the question at hand, but I do not understand why dog owners are so eager to remove the leash from their pet in a public setting that they would be willing to accept potential levy increases and resources being diverted from other needs. Why can't they just take their leashed pet to our existing parks or let them run free at their own property if they simply cannot enjoy the outdoors while on a leash? Why should taxpayers fund someone's preference to unleash their dog? Why should canine recreational desires impact where my human tax dollars are allocated? What a time to be alive.*
- *A large dog and small dog section*
- *Finish hard surfacing roads like SilverClay line and then I might get excited about added extras*
- *Bring something like this to Rodney. We need more in Rodney!*
- *Impact on taxes matters*
- *It'd be great to have separate areas for big dogs and little dogs.*
- *Please do this. I am not a dog owner but frequently walk Joe's Bush and there are too many dogs being walked off leash. I've been attacked by 'friendly and well trained dogs'. Building a park will hopefully reduce the amount of entitled dog owners who walk their dog off leash on public trails with complete disregard towards other walkers.*

- *We are in desperate need of an upgraded park in Rodney. West Lorne has an amazing park and splash pad. Rodney needs the same! I know we're one municipality but families need a park in the village where they live. I realize the cost is more but let's use that money for the children in our community, not the dogs!!*
- *We need to fix the drainage problem in West Lorne before we look at things like this in the budget*
- *If this dog park is going to be built make it a pay to use facility so it doesn't impact us tax payers who won't use it. It's just like the West Lorne arena...not everyone uses it so make it pay to use as well so it's not funded by us tax payers. Raise user fees if more upgrades need to be done over and above the Kraft hockeyville prize. Taxpayers shouldn't have to subsidize things they don't use! Put the West Lorne revitalization money back where it belongs and get to work on fixing West Lorne up like Rodney got but keep the street width as it is now!*
- *I think that it's a great idea that council is considering the needs of our growing community by providing a variety of recreational activities for people and animals.*
- *Having locals create dog safe art installations could help boost community involvement. Old decorated fire hydrant, creative sculptures, weatherproof artwork.*
- *I don't believe we need an off leash dog park. Many dogs don't have recall, aren't trained properly and cause fights with other dogs. It's very hard to trust other owners and know their dog is properly trained. Dogs should be leashed at all times. I do not agree with an off leash park in any area.*
- *Two zones . One big dog yard and one small dog yard to keep everyone safe*
- *I have two dogs and am not opposed to a dog park but you do have to take in account residents around the park not being affected by barking and I would never take my dogs to an off leash dog park because yes the other dogs should be fully vaccinated but they won't be. You can't police that or other people's dogs who are not friendly with other dogs. When I lived in London I went by one and it was just a bunch of owners chasing their dogs around trying to control them. My dogs are very well behaved and wouldn't hurt a fly (literally they play with them ha). So for me to visit one it would have to be a good size to avoid other dogs there. Also if your idea in West Lorne is to put it where you tore down the old equipment by the arena I feel like that space is more suited for extending the parking lot so so many sent parking on the streets and running into traffic like I see so much. In summery a dog park would be nice for some residents but I feel like the budget can be spent in other areas. West Lorne and Rodney aren't cities we already have so many areas you can take dogs (bushes fields ect) thanks for reading and hope I gave council some other factors to put into consideration. The noise of the dogs barking will be the main factor as it is in London with them wanting to shut dog parks down because of the noise complaints.*
- *Can't see the value 56,000.00 wow!!! For a dog park. And maintenance 7,000.00 a year for maintenance.*
- *There are more important things for this municipality to spend money on if it wants to attract residents and/or tourism.*
- *More important things to worry about than a dog park*
- *This is the worst decision! The track area is a great place to walk the dogs. Too many dogs are off leash as it is roaming the streets. You will have people with dogs who won't be socialized with other dogs and people and something will end up happening. I do not support this idea what so ever.*
- *Instead worrying about a dog park .The municipality should put the money in at the townhall instead & make a small museum about the history of this town off Rodney*
- *Children's playground is more of a priority that affects me.*
- *Only the people who use the dog park should pay, not fair to the people who don't use it.*

- *There are many other items, services, programs that council should be allotting funds for. A dog park may be utilized by only a small number of people. I do not support this at all. I see it as a complete waste of money for this community!!*
- *I think we can find a better use for the initial investment and the annual costs associated with it. Living in a rural community I expect that there are lots of places to walk dogs safely.*
- *Plenty of spots not being used that already has some fencing and plenty of shade trees I've had the privilege of living in both Rodney and now West Lorne I've noticed more Dogs within the west Lorne community being walked thank you for considering a park for our Pets*
- *Tax dollars can be better spent*
- *Dog parks are not good. They are a cesspool for dogs getting sick, as well as cause unnessecary injuries and occasionally even death to dogs. Every single time I've gone to a dog park with someone (never my own dog) there has been fights and dogs getting hurt. Bad ideas.*
- *I personally wouldn't use the dog park with my own pup, as there are a lot of behavioural issues and risks with mixing dogs that are strangers to each other. I have tried many dog parks in the past and my dog experienced attacks every single time. We now walk late in evenings to avoid all dogs. I think this could be great for people who want to use a dog park and have dogs that are up to date on shots and have well-trained behaviour. I don't have kids, but I would prefer this dog park to be in West Lorne and have a focus on a new, accessibility-inclusive playground in the Rodney park for children.*
- *you need a fenced area for Littles, and one for large dogs, double gate entrance, water, poop bags, garbage pick up, shade, rules and regs. It can be set up as non for profit to obtain grants. Make it big enough to hold events rent out to dog shows and agility sports*
- *Will never use it. Too often owners with poorly controlled dogs result in fighting. often resulting in high vet bills.*
- *Most people just let their dogs off on the tracks , or the soccer fields , waste of tax payers money when lots more needs to be done in this area*
- *There are many dog owners in West lorne that I believe could benefit not only for a place to socialize their dogs but to create a community among pet owners.*
- *We've had such wonderful experiences with dog parks, and with us being new to the town I believe it would be a great way to get involved in the community*
- *This is so exciting! We'd love to meet other dogs & dog owners in West Lorne.*
- *Every dog deserves free time to run free. Grab a coffee, play with your dog. Have fun making memories with friends.*
- *It's always good to have an open area in our community for dogs to run free with other dogs to play*
- *I think as long as everyone who attends the dog park is respectful and responsible a dog park could be a great addition to the community. It's a great way to meet others in the community as well as get outside and away from the hustle and bustle of life alongside your furry friends.*
- *I believe funding could go to other more important things. We're a farming community. There's lots of space for dogs to play. Seems wasteful.*
- *West Lorne is the central town between all the other local ones & would make the most sense to have it there. Also there isn't one close at all for residents to use without having a long drive to take our animals which is not very convenient for most residents. Something similar to the Green Valley one off of Highbury in London would be awesome. It has a couple of trails & a wooded area for people & dogs to roam through.*

The one in St. Thomas sucks. No shade & boring for the animals. I know quite a few folks that would support this & definitely make good use of it.

- *There is adequate room within both municipalities to walk dogs, I do not feel we require an enclosed dog park to maintain with tax payers dollars. This is country living not the City. These funds should be put towards a bicycle/walking trail where owners of dogs and non dog owners can go safely without car traffic, ie old railroad tracks.*
- *West Lorne is centre location to near by towns that also use it*
- *Absolutely waste of taxpayer money. Taxes are so high already!*
- *It's not affordable*
- *I use Miller Park and the Rodney Park frequently. I find Miller Park is very wet and the proximity to the school playground makes it distracting.*
- *Biggest issues with the park in Glencoe is poop not being picked up, so it's unhygienic, and aggressive dogs. A big dog and small dog area might be worth looking at, as well as cameras to cover liability issues.*
- *Sections for large and small dogs maybe even a third pen for reactive dogs*
- *I feel that this park is not necessary in our area. There are many areas where dogs can be walked and let off leash. The upkeep of this area would be huge - dog feces would need to be picked up regularly and disposed of. What would the liability be for the municipality if someone got injured or bitten by a dog? I feel that this money could be used for better purposes and as a non dog owner, I do not want my taxes paying for this. Fixing the infrastructure for drainage would be a much better use of this money so that basements and streets are not flooded!!! There are also sidewalks in the village of West Lorne that are in very bad shape and need to be fixed.*
- *I believe that money should be spent on recreational resources that benefit more people. ie. Paved walking trails, playgrounds.*
- *Good idea to bring people together in real life. Better exercised dogs are less noisy, which benefits everyone. May also decrease the amount of dog poo being left on the sidewalks.*
- *This would be a great alternative to dogs running off leash in the park which can be disruptive to dogs on a leash.*
- *I have been to many many many off leash dog parks and they have always been a huge success. These successes include the exercising, socializing and training of the dogs that are taken there.*

Financial Implications:

Commercial Fencing \$36,073.46 (Used higher quote)

Capital Expense \$20,000.00

Annual Maintenance \$7,000.00

Total to Budget \$63,073.46

Policies/Legislation:

By-law 2023-80, Animal Control

Dog Owners Liability Act, R.S.O. 1990, as amended.

Alignment with Strategic Priorities:

Infrastructure Improvement	Recreation	Economic Development	Community Engagement
<input type="checkbox"/> To improve West Elgin's infrastructure to support long-term growth.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> To provide recreation and leisure activities to attract and retain residents.	<input type="checkbox"/> To ensure a strong economy that supports growth and maintains a lower cost of living.	<input type="checkbox"/> To enhance communication with residents.

Respectfully submitted by,

Terri Towstiu
Clerk