

Southwood Community Association

Southwood Dog Park Committee

Southdale Off-Leash Dog Park

March 4, 2010.

Stephen Dawes (Chair Person)

Executive Summary

In 1987, The City of Calgary passed legislation allowing for off-leash dog parks in Calgary. The community of Southwood has a number of these parks. These parks do not have official names, and are referred to by geographical location by The City of Calgary.

The Southwood Dog Park Committee (SDPC) has been created to research the number of outstanding concerns with the Southdale Off-Leash dog park and to provide the Southwood Community Association with a viable solution.

The SDPC has identified several issues that are impacting the Southdale Off-Leash dog park. The SDPC focus is on making the Southdale Off-Leash dog park a better place and an improved community asset for all the residents of Southwood to enjoy. At this time the SDPC does not recommend a redesignation of the park. Since the SDPC recommendations require a limited time commitment and low cost, it is the hope of the SDPC that the recommendations of this report can be made immediately.

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Problem Identified

To make the Southwood Off-Leash dog park adjacent to Southdale Crescent a safe, environmentally friendly place that respects the residents surrounding the park; a place for all to enjoy.

Background

In 1987, The City of Calgary passed legislation allowing for off-leash dog parks in Calgary. As a result of this legislation, the then Parks and Recreation Department of The City of Calgary identified a number of potential off-leash dog parks. In the years following, these locations were shared with the respective Community Associations. The approach taken at the time was one of information only, and there was no provision for feedback from the Community Associations. When homes were located next to an off-leash dog park, the Parks and Recreation Department did not conduct any impact assessment studies. Furthermore, there were no official means provided by The City of Calgary to have an off-leash designation changed.

Southwood has a number of dog parks. These parks do not have official names, and are referred to by geographical location by The City of Calgary. The Southdale Off-Leash dog park was converted from a green space into an off-leash dog park in the mid 1990's.

In the spring of 2009, a petition was circulated to the homes immediately adjacent to the Southdale Off-Leash dog park with the intent of getting the Southwood Community Association to address the many problems stemming from the off-leash dog park. The petition read: "To change the designation of the off-leash dog park on Southdale Crescent back to a green space." It received 75 signatures. The Southwood Community Association responded by having an open house in September of 2009 to hear the concerns. It was quickly determined that a second meeting to discuss the issue was needed and subsequently held in October of 2009. Following the October community meeting, a committee was created, the Southwood Dog Park Committee (SDPC), to research the problem with the Southdale Off-Leash dog park and to provide the Southwood Community Association with a viable solution (Appendix A).

On December 1, 2009, at the Standing Policy Committee (SPC) On Community and Protective Services (CPS), the Southwood Community Association (SCA) received a commitment from the Director of Parks, Anne Charlton, and Alderman Diane Colley-Urquhart that the Parks department will work with the SCA in finding solutions to resolve the problems with the Southdale Off-Leash Dog Park.

Legislation

A challenge that the SDPC encountered while compiling this report is that the Off-leash dog park guidelines are under review by The City of Calgary. For this reason, the SDPC agreed to proceed with the report using existing legislation and recognized that some of the recommendations in this report will be made easier with proposed changes to the existing Bylaws.

There are three Municipal Bylaws that will influence the outcome and recommendations of this report (Appendix B). They are:

- Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw - 23M2006.
- Parks and Pathways Bylaw – 20M2003.
- Littering Bylaw - Bylaw 20M88.

Description

A number of key elements have been identified in the make up of this complex issue. In no particular order these are:

- A. Park designation
- B. Parking
- C. Park usage
- D. Park cleanliness
- E. Safety
- F. Impact on residences.
- G. Signage

Influences on these issues are:

- the growth that Calgary has experienced and the subsequent proportional increase in dogs since the Southdale Off-Leash Dog Park was created.
- the creation of new off-leash dog parks has not kept pace with Calgary's growth.

This report will outline each of these concerns and provide viable low cost and minimal time investment solutions.

Issues

This section will detail the issues to be resolved through the recommendations of this report. During the research of each of these points an element of overlap was discovered adding to the complexity of the problem.

A. Park Designation

There is some confusion as to the designation of the Southdale Off-Leash dog park. Is the park a regional or community park?

- I. Under current Bylaws, The City of Calgary does not make any distinction of its off-leash dog parks. For this reason, all off-leash dog parks are considered to be regional parks.

B. Parking

There are many visitors who drive to the Southdale Off-Leash dog park. This creates a parking problem for both the park and the residents immediately adjacent to the park.

I. Problems include:

- noise created by the slamming of vehicle doors at all hours of the day
- blocked driveways
- parking in front of homes
- significant vehicle traffic on a street not designed for such traffic

C. Park Usage

Although the Southdale Off-Leash dog park is used by dog owners, the park has a history of other uses, such as people out for a walk, children playing all year round, cyclists, and joggers.

- I. It is anticipated that park usage will increase as a result of the new pathway installed in the fall of 2009. The multi use of the Park has the potential for conflict between the various user groups.

D. Park Cleanliness

Everyone claims to clean-up after their dogs and other activities and yet the park is still a mess. A variety of hard to resolve reasons were put forward.

Some of the points discussed were:

- I. the number of garbage cans
- II. people littering
- III. people vandalizing
- IV. people not cleaning up after their dogs

E. Safety

Park safety extends beyond the boundaries of the park, to the streets leading into the park, and to the property of the homes adjacent to the Southdale Off-Leash dog park. Some of the key points related to safety are:

- I. increased vehicle traffic in the neighborhood
- II. people driving with undo care and attention
- III. dog(s) attacking children, adults, cyclists and other dogs
- IV. dogs running at large and out of control
- V. safety concerns will remain an issue with increased uses of the park.

F. Impact on residences.

A number of the Southdale Off-Leash dog park users have no consideration for the homes adjacent to the park. Activities such as:

- I. people having dogs off-leash outside of the park
- II. dogs running at large in the park
- III. not cleaning up if the dog leaves a mess (feces, hair, toys, etc)
- IV. littering (garbage, broken toys, etc)
- V. excessive noise (car doors/garbage lids slamming, yelling, etc)
- VI. threatening home owners and park users when the people are asked to comply with the bylaws / rules of the park.

G. Signage

The City of Calgary does not have any regulations on the location of signage in off-leash dog parks, to indicate the type of activity permitted in the park. Only one sign is needed to identify the park as an off-leash area for off-leash rules to be in effect.

- I. there are basic signs indicating that the Southdale Park is an off-leash dog park
- II. there are no signs indicating the rules for the usage of the park.

Recommendations

The recommendations of this report are prefaced with the fact that at no time did the Southwood Dog Park Committee consider requesting a redesignation of the Southdale Off-Leash dog park. The SDPC’s focus is on making the Southdale Off-Leash dog park a better place and an improved community asset for all the residents of Southwood to enjoy; therefore our recommendations to be implemented for each issue stated above are:

A. Park Designation

A request is made to have the Southdale Offleash Park designated as a community off-leash dog park.

- I. a consideration should be made as to the naming of the park, such as naming it after the rancher whose land Southwood was developed on.

B. Parking

A request should be made to The City to have parking controlled along Southdale Crescent

- I. For safety reasons, the two cul-de-sacs located at the park gateways on Southdale Crescent, should be designated as “No Parking” zones. With paved pathways leading to the street, these entry points need to be unobstructed for emergency vehicle access.
- II. Parking for park usage should be situated along the park side of Southdale Crescent and communicated to drivers; implying that the opposite side of the street is for the homeowners use only.

C. Park Usage

A means of communicating the diverse usage of the park needs to be created so that visitors to the park realize that the park is a multi use park and not just an off-leash dog park. This can be communicated via:

- I. signage
- II. newsletter
- III. The City of Calgary's Off Leash Website

D. Park Cleanliness

The SDPC recommends:

- I. The Southwood Community Association becomes involved with The City of Calgary's annual spring clean up. (Appendix C)
 - This is not limited to the Southdale Off-Leash Dog Park, but for all parks in the community. There is a potential for several community building activities and partnerships to come out of this recommendation.
- II. A third garbage bin to be added in the park. The location of the bin is to be agreed to by both the Community Association and the City. The SDPC recommends these locations be at the north and south pathways leading down to Southdale Crescent with the third bin to be located in the southwest corner of the park. (Appendix D)
 - All garbage bins should have a fitted plastic or rubber seal to reduce noise when closing.
- III. Pick up bags should also be made available for dog owners, in the event that they have not brought a pick up bag with them to the park.
 - A suggestion is to seek business sponsorship of the pick up bags. They will benefit from advertising on the bags.

E. Safety

- I. The SDPC recommends improving safety through increased and improved communication regarding the rules/bylaws of the park

F. Impact on residences.

It is believed that the SDPC will see an increase in respect for the surrounding neighbourhood by:

- I. increased awareness and park safety
- II. addressing of the parking issues
- III. improved park usage

G. Signage

During the course of development, the SDPC discovered signage is only one component of the communication surrounding the Southdale Off-Leash dog park. Therefore the SDPC have the following communication recommendations:

- I. Increased signage is needed to improve the current situation that the Southdale Off-Leash dog park finds itself in.
 - Signage defining the parks rules and penalties are required. Some of these types of signs already exist through The City of Calgary Parks Department, and additional signs may need to be developed by the Southwood Community Association (Appendix E)
 - Parking signage is required to communicate the “No-Parking Zone” at the parks two main entrances on Southdale Crescent
 - Parking signage to recommend where park users should park
- II. The SDPC recommends the Southwood Community Association requests The City identify to the users of the Southdale Off-Leash dog park, by means of The City of Calgary’s Web site, that parking for this Off-Leash park is very limited. This can be achieved by including a statement on the “Off Leash Dog Areas” Webpage, such as: “The Southdale Off Leash Park has very limited parking.”
- III. To add a Southwood Parks section in the Community Newsletter to increase communication and build community around the parks in Southwood. (Appendix F)

Additional Recommendations:

The SPCD has two additional recommendations that will assist in the implementation of those already listed:

- I. Investigate the possibility of the Southdale Off-Leash dog park becoming an Adopt-A-Park (Appendix G)
- II. Request that the recommendations of the SDPC be considered as a pilot project for managing community multi use parks in other areas of The City of Calgary.

Anticipated Sustainment Efforts
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The success of these recommendations depends on a long term commitment from the Southwood Community Association and The City of Calgary. Once the recommendations of this report are implemented, they need to be reviewed and updated on a regular basis. Otherwise the issues discussed in this report will return.

Risks

The major risks of the recommendations in this report not being implemented is a renewed breakdown in relationships between park users, impacted residents surrounding the park, and the Community Association. The eventual outcome could well see the continued designation of the park as an Off-Leash area, being challenged.

Cost and Funding Sources

There is very little cost anticipated to implement the recommendations of this report. It is recommended that this project be funded through a partnership between Southwood Community Association, The City of Calgary, and where appropriate, business sponsorship.

Timing of the Initiative

It is recommended that the Southwood Community Association start the implementation of the recommendations in this report immediately.

Through the implementation of this report's recommendations, the Southdale Off-Leash dog park will become a valuable asset to both the Community Association and the homes immediately surrounding the park.

Conclusion

The Southwood Dog Park Committee (SDPC) has identified several issues that are impacting the Southdale Off-Leash dog park. The SDPC's focus is on making the Southdale Off-Leash dog park a better place and an improved community asset for all the residents of Southwood to enjoy. At this time the SDPC does not recommend a redesignation of the park. The SDPC's major recommendations involve a limited time commitment and low costs, and recommend the following be implemented immediately.

- increased communication as to the proper use and expectations of the various user groups of the Southdale Off-Leash dog park, as well as the consequences of their actions.
- restricting parking along Southdale Crescent,
- improving garbage bin and pick up bags availability,
- increasing community involvement not only in Southdale Off-Leash dog park but in all of Southwood Parks through Clean Up and Adopt-A-Park programs
- provide an official name for the Southdale Off-Leash dog park
- approach The City to use the SDPC as a pilot project for other City Community multi use Parks.

The SDPC recognizes that some of the recommendations put forward in this report will be influenced by new legislation currently under review by The City of Calgary. Part of this new legislation does include provisions for the placement of new Off-Leash Dog Parks, which has the potential for reducing the visitor impact on the Southdale Off-Leash Dog Park in the community of Southwood.

Appendices

Appendix A: Southwood Dog Park Committee Members and important contacts

Southwood Dog Park Committee Members

Stephen Dawes – Committee Chair	Jean Wirth
Belinda Kjartanson	Marty Olson
Brian Buckley	Pamela Regehr
Chrissy Begus	Peter McKenzie
Howard Wirth	Sven Graber

All SDPC members are in possession of a current Southwood Community Membership.

Important Contacts

Southwood Community Association

Blaine Moen – President
Margaret Moen – Vice President

Alderman Ward 13

Diane Colley-Urquhart
Email: dcolley@calgary.ca
Phone: 403-268-1624
Fax: 403-268-8091

Aldermanic Assistant
Anthony Masleck
Email: Anthony.masleck@calgary.ca

City of Calgary Contacts

Director of Parks
Anne Charlton
Phone: 403-268-5204
Email: anne.charlton@calgary.ca

The Southwood Association has two primary contacts with The City of Calgary to address these recommendations:

Albert lamartino Parks Community Liaison West Division – Parks Albert.lamartino@calgary.ca Phone: 403-221-4563	Fax: 403-221-4581 Kate Daniel Community Recreation Coordinator
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Appendix B: Municipal Bylaws:

- Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw - 23M2006.
“BEING A BYLAW OF THE CITY OF CALGARY RESPECTING THE REGULATION, LICENSING AND CONTROL OF ANIMALS IN THE CITY OF CALGARY”
http://www.calgary.ca/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_0_104_0_0_35/http%3B/content.calgary.ca/CCA/City+Hall/Business+Units/Animal+and+Bylaw+Services/Bylaw+Services/Bylaws+of+Interest/Dogs.htm
- Parks and Pathways Bylaw – 20M2003.
“BEING A BYLAW OF THE CITY OF CALGARY TO REGULATE THE USE OF PARKS AND PATHWAYS AND TO REGULATE ACTIVITIES IN AND ON PARKS AND PATHWAYS”
http://www.calgary.ca/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_0_104_0_0_35/http%3B/content.calgary.ca/CCA/City+Hall/Business+Units/Animal+and+Bylaw+Services/Bylaw+Services/Bylaws+of+Interest/Parks+and+Pathways.htm
- Littering Bylaws.
Littering is regulated by the “Street Bylaw 20M88” in section 17, and the “Parks and Pathways Bylaw 20M2003” in section 27
http://www.calgary.ca/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_2_742220_0_0_18/Litter.htm

Appendix C: City of Calgary Clean Up Program

The City of Calgary supports clean up programs for their parks and pathways. The City provides the resources required and manages the volunteers. The schedule for this spring is:

- April 18: Scooby Doo Day
 - o Annual clean up program to remove feces
- May 2: 43rd Annual Parks and Pathways Clean Up program
 - o Clean up program to remove wastes
 - o Pancake breakfast can be provided
 - o Accepting new volunteer groups as of Feb 22/2010



Respect your park. – place litter in bins provided – leash pets (unless otherwise posted) – do not feed or disturb wildlife – preserve habitat; walk on designated pathways – please clean up after your pet

Appendix F: Southwood Community Parks Newsletter Addition

The Southwood Parks section in the newsletter can be used to provide history, updates, scheduled clean ups, and education regarding park use and bylaws to the Southwood Community. An example of several potential topics are:

- History of various parks
- Upcoming Events
- Adopt A Park/Park Ranger volunteer program

Appendix G: City of Calgary Community Involvement in Parks

The City of Calgary provides both an Adopt-A-Park program. The City provides the resources and manages this program. The responsibility for the Southwood Community Association would be to communicate this program to the community and provide assistance as required.

“The Community Adopt-a-Park is a year round volunteer program through which you can help maintain and care for the green spaces, parks or flower beds that are in your community. Adopt-a-Park volunteers:

- Make a visible difference in their neighbourhoods
- Feel a sense of accomplishment
- Help reduce vandalism
- Make their community a safer place
- Meet great people
- And, for those who garden, they get to enjoy a favourite hobby.”