

What We Heard:

Marmot Crescent Off-Leash Dog Park

March 2025

Town of Banff

Summary

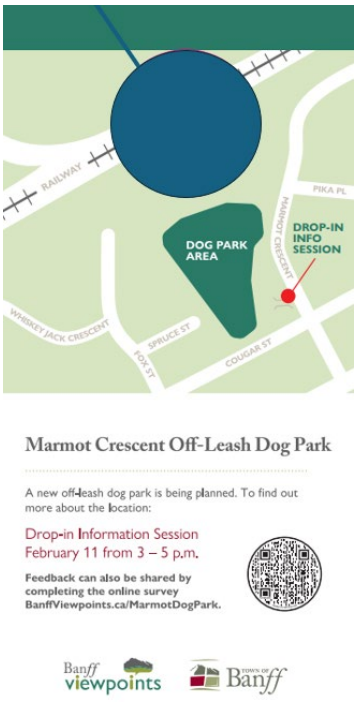
Overview

Following the Basic Impact Assessment Determination from Parks Canada and per the direction from council, administration engaged the public in an in-person information session about the proposed dog park in the Marmot Crescent area. The Town also hosted a five-question online survey. Below is a summary of the findings from the information session and online questionnaire.

The project is communicated through a dedicated webpage on the BanffViewpoints.ca/MarmotDogPark engagement website. The Town promoted the February 11 public information session between February 3 and 11 using these tactics:

- Notices delivered and posted to front doors of 250 dwellings in the vicinity of the proposed location for the new dog park
- 20 large signs at Zero Waste Stations on Cougar, Rabbit, and Marmot streets and in the Tatanga Ridge neighbourhood
- Signs displayed at Sundance Park Dog Park and Hawk Avenue Dog Park
- Large poster in the Bear Street Parkade Display
- Posters inside Tinu building
- 10 social media posts

The Town also promoted the associated online questionnaire about a second dog park and the proposed location. The *Rocky Mountain Outlook* newspaper covered the proposed dog park, the information session and online questionnaire in the February 6 edition.



Dog Park Information Session

February 11, 2025, from 3 to 5 p.m. at Marmot Crescent Dog Park Proposed Location

Town of Banff Employees in Attendance
Marie-Eve Jackson, Communications Specialist
Blake Hinchey, Recreation Development Coordinator
Amanda Arbuckle, Manager of Recreation
Michael Hay, Manager of Environment
Jason Darrah, Director of Communications

Estimated Number of Public Attendees: 50

Stated support for the dog park at the location from attendees:
Yes: 8
No: 28
Don't Know: 1

Resident concerns about the new dog park location included:

- A significantly larger number of people who attended said they were in opposition to a dog park at the location, several of whom said they live immediately adjacent to the site.
    - Many of these residents said they own dogs.
- Noise from barking dogs, including potential disruption to families/children's sleep patterns.
    - This included the hours of operation which is proposed as dawn-to-dusk. Residents noted dusk can be quite late in summer and inquired who/how would closure be enforced?
- Visual impacts from their homes. i.e. wildlife fencing will not screen their backyards or windows from those in the dog park and vice versa.
- The potential for dogs to get loose, causing safety issues for children and adults, other animals, the dogs themselves.
- Concern about odour from dog waste and urine.
- Some mentioned that they have reactive dogs and the space on the existing trails provides the ability to safely move around each other. The proposed fence area would have an impact on that.
- Disruption/changes/partial closure of a popular walking area for locals.
    - This included impacts to illegal shortcuts currently used to cross the train tracks to the industrial compound.
- Overflow and illegal parking issues in an area where there is already a feeling of problems.
    - This included concerns about how illegal parking would be managed and addressed.
    - Comments included concerns about the influx in visitors who drive to the site for off-leash dog exercise. Visitors passing through the national park and those stopping in town were reported to frequent the Hawk Ave dog park. One attendee said they are asked by visitors frequently for the location; visitors stop to ask at their office in the Industrial District.



- Another amenity when the impacts of the Rotary Park Redevelopment haven't yet been felt – i.e. cumulative impacts to the neighbourhood.
- Another attraction that would bring non-residents to the area.
- Concerns that this intensification will make the area less safe for children to play due to more dogs and visitors.
    - Specific comments were with respect to children's safety while engaging in current activities they do in the forest such as informal play, mountain biking, etc. The change of use might also require a change in the level of parental supervision.

  Some general comments that proximity to homes seems closure than other community's best practices.

General comments and concerns:

- Residents who get a dog in Banff should have done their research on what it means to have a pet in a national park.
- Comments that this is not an efficient use of tax dollars and criticism over the perceived inability and costs to resolve issues at Hawk Ave location.
    - This included concerns that the proposed location could have the same challenges.
- Comments that one dog park is enough for the number of dogs in the community.
- Comments from dog owners that they felt that a dog park is not needed to socialize dogs.
- Questions about why this site was being considered.
    - A specific location that was mentioned a few times was the Tatanga site that was previously considered for a housing complex, but discounted due to costs for servicing the site.
- Concern about the loss of an urban forest area that can provide mental health and physical activity benefits to the surrounding neighbourhoods.

Environmental comments and concerns:

- Residents noted presence of a barred owl that has nested in these woods for several years, and how its hooting has become part of their lives.
- Concerns about how the site is used by elk, bears, and coyotes, and that they will be pushed out of the area.
- Concerns that the area will eventually be used for housing, and that this dog park will make that much easier/justifiable for elected officials to do in the future.
    - Several questions about what other sites were considered – and why the dog park needs to be here.

Residents liked the new dog park location because:

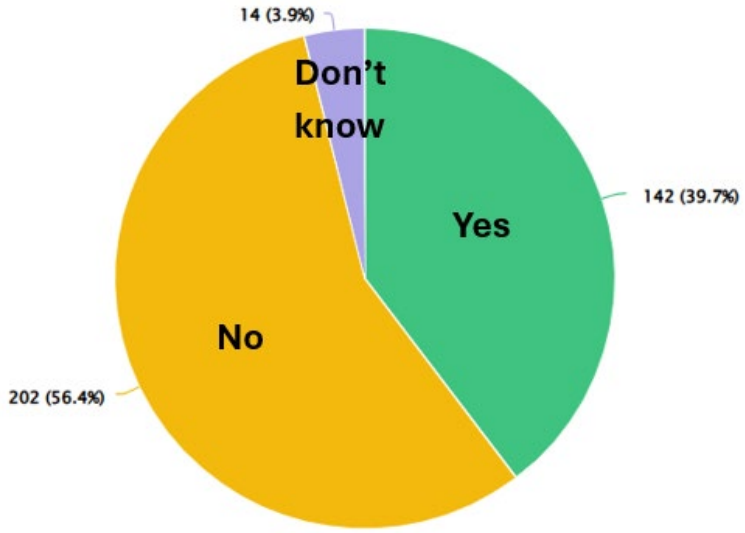
- A few residents said they support a Marmot dog park, some of whom said they lived nearby.

- Noted they liked the location and the ability to walk to it.
- Liked the size and wanted to know if agility (*natural) would be a part of the project.
- Liked the tree cover and shade, when compared to Sundance Park dog park.
- Liked not having to cross rail tracks to visit, when compared to Hawk Ave. dog park.

Marmot Dog Park Online Questionnaire

The Marmot Dog Park survey was available to the public from February 2 to February 23. The Town recorded a total of 359 survey completions. Below is summary of the responses to the questions in the survey.

Q1 Do you support the addition of a second year-round dog park in Banff?



Q2 What do you like about the new dog park location?

The top themes for those who were in support of a second year-round dog park at Marmot Cresent were (10 or more comments for each):

- Good Location (48)
- Nice to have a dog park on each side of the town (30)
- Like that the area is forested and would provide shade (25)
- Walkable for many surrounding residents and visitors (22)
- Close to existing dog owners homes (11)

The top themes for those who were not in support of a second year-round dog park at Marmot Cresent were who answered question 2 were (10 or more comments for each):

- Too close to homes (22)

- Impacts to the urban forest (19)
- Impacts to current uses including increase in visitors impacting safety (i.e. walking (including dog walking on leash), biking and playing) (15)
- Concerns for wildlife (11)

Q3 - What concerns do you have about the new dog park location on Marmot Crescent?

- Concerns about illegal parking, not enough parking or parking that is too far (78)
- Impacts to current uses including increase in visitors impacting safety (i.e. walking (including dog walking on leash), biking and playing). This also included impacts to space for people walking aggressive dogs. (75)
- Concerns for wildlife (66)
- Concerns over noise. This included noise from barking dogs and just the simple increase in users to the area. Comments were also heard about tree removals potential impact to screen sound from the nearby train (48)
- Impacts to the urban forest (40). Comments about the importance of urban greenspaces in a national park from an environmental perspective and for the purposes of supporting users' mental health (i.e. forest bathing).
- Too close to home (38)
- Increase in traffic congestion in the area especially in the summer months (23)
- Dog owners not picking up their dog's waste and generally just the potential smell from dog waste and urine (21)
- Feeling that Banff already has enough dog parks to support the current number of dog owners (17)
- Some respondents commented that they would prefer this space be used for housing rather than a dog park as it felt as a more emergent community need. (15)
- Concern over the costs to build a dog park and whether it is a good use of resources. Some comments also included the costs spent to date on dog park development in Banff and desire not to spend more. (11)

Q4 - Do you have any suggestions to make this dog park successful?

The top themes on how to make the dog park successful included:

- Ensure it has good amenities like dog bag dispenses, benches, water and waste receptacles. A few comments also included the request for agility elements. (25)
- Have a designated area for smaller dogs to keep it safer (13)
- Maintain as much of the greenery and tress as possible (11)
- Ensure there is adequate parking (including accessible parking) (10)
- Request for lighting (7)
- Enforcement for aggressive dogs and owners who do not pick up their dog's waste. This also includes ensuring there is signage with dog park etiquette posted (7)

Other comments heard for this question but not related to success of the dog park included:

- Do not build in this location (78)
- Don't build another dog park (46)

- Fix the Hawk Ave dog park site (18)
- Banff already has enough dog parks (7)

Q5 - What information (if any) would you like added to this project page about a dog park that is not available.

- Project timeline?
- Project cost
- When would it be open?
- Will dead trees be removed?
- What will the hours of operation be?
- Size of the dog park
- A map of the area
- What is this area zoned?
- Will there be parking? What if the parking is full?
- What housing development is planned for this area?
- Why is it not being considered for housing instead?
- Make the survey easier to find on the Town's webpage
- Will council members who have dogs excuse themselves from the vote?
- Modeling on traffic pattern and parking changes?
- Studies on noise, wildlife and dog owner behaviour impacts
- Where can the environmental impact studies be found?
- Where can safety studies be found? Related to school bus usage, street safety, parking concerns and environmental impacts?
- What are the benefits of dog parks? Are there issues with dog parks?
- Impacts to property values?
- How many tickets issued annually for off leash dogs? Will Bylaw enforce noise complaints?
- Why is Hawk Ave not being fixed? How much would it cost to fix it?
- Other sites considered?
    - Rotary Park
    - Fenland Rec Centre Meadow
    - Liricon Parking Lot
    - Tatanga II

Information Requested (Q5 of Questionnaire):

Below is summary of the responses to the commonly asked questions in Question 5 of the survey, followed by **answers from the project team.**

- Project timeline? When would it be open?
  The dog park could be constructed and opened by fall 2025.
- Project cost: **Up to $110,000**
- Will dead trees be removed? **Yes**
- What will the hours of operation be? **Proposed as dawn to dusk but could change with services to close and open.**
- Size of the dog park? **1.5 acres**
- A map of the area? **See web page**
- What is this area zoned? **Public Parkland**
- Will there be parking? **Parking will be available Rotary Park**
- What if the parking is full?
  The Town of Banff provides parking information for residents and visitors via www.banff.ca/parking. The Train Station parking lot is also in walking distance of the dog park.
- What housing development is planned for this area?
  Site was identified in a report to council as one of 5 possible locations for development of housing over the next 10 years. No year has been identified, as the current focus is on the location at 50 Wolf Street.
- Why is it not being considered for housing instead?
  A housing development could still be considered in the future if all other sites are used and there is still a significant housing shortage. Housing in this site would require a zoning change.
- Make the survey easier to find on the Town's webpage.
  All public engagement project web pages will be linked in future from the Banff.ca site, rather than just links to the BanffViewpoints.ca website. The survey was available through a link on the project webpage and was also shared via social media platforms. QR codes on signage throughout the community and door hangers also included the link to the survey.
- Will council members who have dogs excuse themselves from the vote?
  There is no scheduled vote for this matter; budget has been allocated. However, if council reconsiders this direction, all members of council represent all interests of the community, regardless of their personal involvement or interest in a topic. Under provincial law, council members cannot excuse themselves from voting if they are available, unless there is a personal pecuniary interest (they could financially gain from a decision of council).
- Modeling on traffic pattern and parking changes?
  Traffic and parking data is not collected for this area.

- Studies on noise, wildlife and dog owner behaviour impacts?
  The Parks Canada BIA Determination package is available on the project web page.

- Where can the environmental impact studies be found?
  The Parks Canada BIA Determination package is available on the project web page.
- Where can safety studies be found? Related to school bus usage, street safety, parking concerns and environmental impacts? **Studies specific to this dog park on safety, school buses and parking have not been conducted.**
- What are the benefits of dog parks?
  Dog parks have been implemented in Banff National Park to avoid potential human-wildlife conflicts. More information about this can be found by visiting: https://banff.ca/740/Human-Wildlife-Coexistence-in-the-Bow-Va
- Are there issues with dog parks? **Most municipalities across Canada support dog parks in their communities to provide safe spaces for dogs to exercise off-leash. There is ample evidence that dog parks also encourage physical activity (walking to the park) and community social connects. Proximity to residential neighbourhoods is the norm.**
- Impacts to property values? **There is no evidence that community dog parks have an impact on property values, either positive or negative.**
- How many tickets issued annually for off-leash dogs?
  Between 2021 and 2024, there were a total of 47 "dog at large" files managed by the Municipal Enforcement department (between 10 and 13 per year). The majority of these are managed through a warning to the dog owner, unless it's a repeated occurrence.
  In the same period, there were 29 "dog bite" files, 13 of which were dogs off leash, 13 dogs on leash, and 3 occurred on private property. The majority involved warnings.
- Will Bylaw enforce noise complaints?
  Section 40 in the Community Standards Bylaw addresses loud, unnecessary noise. The Municipal Enforcement department will continue to respond to and investigate bylaw complaints made to its department.
- Why is Hawk Ave not being fixed? How much would it cost to fix it?
  As stated in the February 26, 2024, report to council, the cost to remediate debris at the Hawk Ave dog park would be extremely high as compared to the construction of a new dog park elsewhere. A recent internal costing exercise conducted by the Town's engineering department estimated this remediation to be approximately 1.2 million which is a significant cost as compared to the $110,000 estimated to build a new park in an alternate location. Council directed Administration to consider other sites when it learned that remediation costs would be significant at the Hawk Avenue location.

- Were these other sites considered?
  - Rotary Park: **The site is deemed too small to support a dog park with the other newly constructed amenities just recently added by the Rotary Club.**

- Fenlands Rec Centre Meadow: **This area is used for other passive recreational purposes.**
- Liricon Parking Lot: **This is not public land and supports public parking initiatives.**
- Tatanga II: **The area of land that the Town leases would be too steep to support an accessible dog park. There is also no existing parking at the site.**

Complete verbatim responses from all online questionnaire submissions are available in the documents section at banffviewpoints.ca/marmotdogpark