



City of Richmond

Report to Committee

To: Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services
Committee

Date: December 20, 2023

From: Todd Gross
Director, Parks Services

File: 06-2345-20-LSTE1/Vol
01

Re: London/Steveston Dog Off-Leash Area Update

Staff Recommendation

That Option 1, as outlined in the staff report titled "London/Steveston Dog Off-Leash Area Update", dated December 20, 2023, from the Director, Parks Services, be endorsed.

Todd Gross
Director, Parks Services
(604-247-4942)

Att. 5

REPORT CONCURRENCE		
ROUTED TO:	CONCURRENCE	CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER
Recreation & Sport Services Community Bylaws	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
SENIOR STAFF REPORT REVIEW	INITIALS: 	APPROVED BY CAO

Staff Report

Origin

In June 2023, construction began on the dog off-leash area at the north end of London/Steveston Neighbourhood School Park (London/Steveston Park). This site was identified as the preferred location for this amenity during public consultation for the London/Steveston Park Concept Plan (Concept Plan) that was approved by Council on May 25, 2015.

In July 2023, staff heard from neighbouring residents who expressed concerns about the dog off-leash area under construction. A delegation spoke to these concerns at the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Committee meeting on July 19, 2023, and staff received the following referral:

1. *That construction of the off-leash dog park in London/Steveston Park be paused except for essential infrastructure required for Park operations;*
2. *That staff consult with nearby residents of the off-leash dog park to review their concerns and explore options to address those concerns where possible; and*
3. *That staff provide an update at the next Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Committee meeting.*

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an overview of the results of the community engagement process that took place between September 25 and October 22, 2023, and recommend next steps.

This report supports Council's Strategic Plan 2022-2026 Focus Area #1 Proactive in Stakeholder and Civic Engagement:

Proactive stakeholder and civic engagement to foster understanding and involvement and advance Richmond's interests.

1.3 Increase the reach of communication and engagement efforts to connect with Richmond's diverse community.

1.4 Leverage a variety of approaches to make civic engagement and participation easy and accessible.

This report supports Council's Strategic Plan 2022-2026 Focus Area #6 A Vibrant, Resilient and Active Community:

Vibrant, resilient and active communities supported by a wide variety of opportunities to get involved, build relationships and access resources.

6.2 Enhance the City's network of parks, trails and open spaces.

Background

London/Steveston Concept Plan Implementation

Implementation of the Concept Plan (Attachment 1), which was approved by Council on May 25, 2015, has taken place over several years and phases. The dog off-leash area is one of the final components of the Concept Plan to be implemented before the Concept Plan is fully realized. Development of the Concept Plan was informed by a comprehensive three-phase community engagement process. Renewal of London/Steveston Park has taken place over the following phases:

- Phase 1 (2018) included new pathways to the north and south of Kingsley Estate, connecting the park to No. 2 Road;
- Phase 2 and 3 (2019–2020) included new pathways, rolling topography, tree planting and an updated playground;
- Phase 4 (2020–2021) included a multi-purpose plaza and basketball half-court;
- Phase 5 (2023–present) is to include construction of the dog off-leash area, which has been on hold since July 2023; and
- Phase 6 (2024–2025) is to include fitness equipment and interpretive signage.

London/Steveston Additional Dog Off-Leash Engagement

In response to the referrals from the July 19, 2023, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Committee meeting, staff led an additional targeted community engagement process to seek further input on the London/Steveston dog off-leash area. In keeping with the referrals from Council, the intent of this engagement was to answer two key questions:

1. Is there still support for a permanent dog off-leash area at London/Steveston Park?
2. If so, is there support for completing the project at the current site, as identified in the Council-approved London/Steveston Park Concept Plan?

The community engagement process consisted of a Let's Talk Richmond (LTR) survey (open from Monday, September 25 to Sunday, October 22, 2023) and on-site open houses on Saturday, October 14, 2023, from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m., and Wednesday, October 18, 2023, from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. These opportunities were promoted through a variety of means, including:

- An invitation to participate in the online survey and on-site open houses, delivered by mail to residents that live within approximately 500 metres or a 10-minute walk of London/Steveston Park;
- On-site signage; and
- Targeted social media ads throughout the survey period.

Hard copy surveys were made available at on-site open house events.

London/Steveston Dog Off-Leash Area Community Engagement Information Boards (Attachment 2) were posted on the LTR site, providing project background and context. Residents were invited to

complete an online survey to share input. Upon conclusion of the engagement period, 327 survey responses had been received.

Analysis

Community Engagement Results

A detailed summary of the community engagement results is provided in the London/Steveston Dog Off-Leash Area Survey Report (Attachment 3). Overall, 72.5 per cent of respondents indicated support for a permanent dog off-leash area at London/Steveston Park, 25.4 per cent indicated they did not support a permanent dog off-leash area and 2.1 per cent were undecided. From the 72.5 per cent of respondents who indicated support, 97.4 per cent also indicated support for completion of the dog off-leash area at its current location. The survey also provided respondents with the option to submit written comments. Of the comments received, 189 (69.7 per cent) were supportive of the current dog off-leash location, and 82 (30.2 per cent) were not.

For those who expressed support for a permanent dog off-leash area and completion at the current location, the following is a summary of comments received:

- A significant amount of money has been spent and work completed to date; it would be a waste of resources to cancel or relocate the project.
- The quality of work completed to date has been well received.
- There is already a lot of noise created from existing park uses, e.g., ball diamonds and sports fields, and a dog off-leash area is not anticipated to exceed these noise levels.
- The proposed location away from other park amenities accommodates visitors to the park who may be nervous around dogs.
- There are many dogs currently roaming off-leash in the park.
- There are no dog off-leash areas currently within walking distance; this would allow people to walk to an amenity that they are required to drive at present.
- The proposed location for the dog off-leash area is currently underutilized.
- The proposed dog off-leash area site is centrally located, and its proximity to the parking lot off Williams Road is beneficial.

For those who expressed a lack of support for the current location of the dog off-leash area, the following is a summary of comments received:

- The proposed dog off-leash area is too close to residential properties.
- The proposed dog off-leash area is too close to the playground.
- The proposed dog off-leash area will be noisy and adversely affect adjacent residents.
- The proposed dog off-leash area presents smell, hygiene and maintenance concerns.
- There are safety concerns about off-leash, aggressive dogs.
- The proposed location for the dog off-leash area has displaced previous uses of the space, e.g., grass volleyball, kite flying, etc.

Options for Completion of Dog Off-Leash Area

Based on feedback received during the fall 2023 London/Steveston dog off-leash area community engagement, staff reviewed the current dog off-leash area plan, previous Concept Plan engagement results and existing park amenities, and have developed four options as described below, for consideration by Council.

Option 1 – Adjust dog off-leash boundary and enhance buffer zone (recommended)

Option 1 is to adjust the dog off-leash boundary by moving the western fence line to the east by approximately seven metres; this would increase the distance from the dog park fence to residential property lines from approximately eight to 15 metres. This increased buffer zone will allow for additional measures to reduce visual and noise impacts on park users and adjacent residents by introducing a one-metre high berm and dense tree planting.

Within the enclosed dog off-leash areas, this option retains the same amount of available open space for dogs to run and play, however, shows a reduction in the perimeter mulch pathways and landscaped areas. Refer to the London/Steveston Dog Off-Leash Area – New Concept Plan that illustrates the proposed changes to the plan (Attachment 4).

In terms of cost, this option would require an increase in the project budget of up to 20 per cent or \$40K. This is due to the need to redo and shift portions of the sub-grade preparation work (e.g., excavation and drainage) that has already been completed. The additional funding could be made available from Parks General Development capital accounts, which have been previously approved by Council as part of the capital planning process.

Option 1 is recommended, as it will address local resident concerns related to proximity to residential properties and noise while meeting the needs of respondents who were supportive of the dog off-leash area and prospective site. While these adjustments will require some modifications to work completed to date, they do not significantly deviate from the original plan. With Council endorsement of the recommended option, work to complete the project will resume as weather allows, with completion anticipated in Q2 2024.

Option 2 – Status quo (not recommended)

Option 2 is to maintain the status quo and complete construction in accordance with the London/Steveston Dog Off-Leash Area – Original Concept Plan (Attachment 5). This option would fit within the original project budget of \$200K, which was approved by Council as part of the capital planning process (2020–2024). This option offers the most efficient and cost-effective path forward, allowing the City to leverage the scope of work that has been completed to date.

While feedback from the community engagement process indicates support for this approach, Option 2 is not recommended, as it would fail to address resident concerns related to proximity to residential properties and noise.

Option 3 – Cancel project and return site to its original condition (not recommended)

Option 3 is to cancel the project and utilize the remaining project funds (approximately \$100K) to return the site to its original condition. This option is not recommended, as it would fail to deliver a park amenity that residents identified as a priority during the community engagement period for development of the London/Steveston Park Final Concept Design (Attachment 1).

The results of the fall 2023 community engagement process also indicated strong support for a dog off-leash area in London/Steveston Park, in particular one within walking distance for local residents; cancellation of the project would fall short of meeting these expressed community desires. Capital funding secured for this project would be fully expended, and fail to provide a benefit to the community.

Option 4 – Relocate dog off-leash area to ‘Recreational Open Lawn’ within London/Steveston Park (not recommended)

Option 4 is to relocate the dog off-leash area to the ‘Recreational Open Lawn’ space within London/Steveston Park. Given the layout of existing sports fields within London/Steveston Park, the only feasible alternative location is inside the paved walking trail circuit in the southwest portion of the park.

During the London/Steveston Park Final Concept Design community engagement process, residents expressed strong support for an open flexible green space for multi-use activities, games and sports. The large open space – identified as ‘Recreational Open Lawn’ in the London/Steveston Park Final Concept Design (Attachment 1) – was kept largely free of trees to serve this function.

Introducing a dog off-leash area to the ‘Recreational Open Lawn’ would displace this flexible space and the multi-use informal recreational activities it accommodates. Relocating the dog off-leash area and returning the current site to its original condition would incur significant costs and require an additional capital funding request (estimated at \$300K depending on specific siting).

For these reasons, this option is not recommended. Should Council choose and approve this option, an additional funding of \$300K from the Parks DCC and Capital Reserve (Revolving Fund) is required, and the Consolidated Five Year Financial Plan (2024-2028) would need to be amended accordingly. This would result in the cancellation or postponement of other DCC funded park projects such as playground renewals and park amenity components from larger projects.

Financial Impact

Should Option 1 be supported, the additional associated costs of up to \$40K could be made available from Parks General Development capital accounts, which have been previously approved by Council as part of the capital planning process.

Conclusion

In July 2023, following direction from Council, staff put the London/Steveston Dog Off-Leash Area construction project on hold to conduct additional community engagement that focused specifically on the details of the dog off-leash area. From September 25 to October 22, 2023, local residents were engaged via a Let's Talk Richmond survey and two on-site open houses. A total of 327 survey responses were received, and results indicated strong support for both a permanent dog off-leash area in London/Steveston Park and completion of the project at its current location, as identified in the London/Steveston Park Final Concept plan.

Staff recommend proceeding with Option 1, which addresses resident concerns related to proximity to residential properties and noise while allowing the City to leverage work that has been completed to date and finish the project using existing capital funds. With Council endorsement, construction will resume as weather allows, with completion anticipated in Q2 2024.



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Kevin Fraser
Research Planner 2
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- Att. 1: London/Steveston Park Final Concept Design
2: London/Steveston Dog Off-Leash Area Community Engagement Information Boards
3: London/Steveston Dog Off-Leash Area Survey Report
4: London/Steveston Dog Off-Leash Area – New Concept Plan
5: London/Steveston Dog Off-Leash Area – Original Concept Plan



1 WHAT'S HAPPENING?

The City of Richmond is seeking residents' feedback to inform next steps for the dog off-leash area at London/Steveston Park!

In June 2023, construction began on a dog off-leash area near the north end of London/Steveston Park. The site was identified for this amenity in the London/Steveston Park Final Concept Design that was completed and endorsed by Council in 2015.

In July 2023, staff heard from neighbouring residents who expressed concerns about the dog off-leash area under construction. A delegation spoke to these concerns at the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Committee meeting on July 19, 2023. Following the Council meeting on July 24, 2023, staff were directed to pause construction and conduct further public consultation to review concerns and explore options to address them where possible.

Due to the period of time that has elapsed since the London/Steveston Park Final Concept Design was completed, staff are seeking input from nearby residents on the following topics:

- Your level of support for a dog off-leash area in London/Steveston Park
- Your level of support for the dog off-leash area site identified in the London/Steveston Park Final Concept Design
- Anything else you would like to tell us

Feedback will improve our understanding of community concerns, needs and desires, and help us deliver the best possible outcome for all park users and nearby residents.



Please provide your feedback by completing a survey by **11:59 PM on Sunday, October 22, 2023**. Scan the QR code to visit the Let's Talk Richmond project page which includes a link to the survey.



The current concept plan for the London/Steveston dog off-leash area

WE ARE HERE



2 PROJECT BACKGROUND



The Council-endorsed London/Steveston Park Final Concept Design with dog off-leash area highlighted

Why was the original site chosen?

In 2015, the London/Steveston Park Final Concept Design was completed and endorsed by Council. The plan was informed by a public engagement process - please refer to the below timeline noting key events related to planning for the overall park and dog off-leash area:

February 2015 - Two public open houses were held; they focused on learning what the community valued about the existing London/Steveston Park and wanted to see in the future

March 2015 - Two public open houses were held; the first to gather input on London/Steveston Park concept plan options, and the second to share the preferred concept plan with the community

April 2019 - A public open house was held to raise awareness of forthcoming London/Steveston Park enhancements, including grading and drainage, creation of a hill and introduction of stormwater detention ponds, a new trail circuit, playground renewal and expansion, a covered multi-purpose plaza, basketball half-court, tree planting, and flexible open space to accommodate informal park uses as the surrounding neighbourhood densified; the London/Steveston Park Final Concept Design, which showed the dog off-leash area at its current location, was included on display boards and signage posted in the park

April 2022 - A project description for the dog off-leash area at London/Steveston Park was featured in the City's 2022 Capital Project Highlights, which included a Let's Talk Richmond public engagement process

April 2023 - A project description and concept plan for the dog off-leash area at London/Steveston Park was featured in the City's 2023 Capital Project Highlights, which included a Let's Talk Richmond public engagement process and in-person open house event at City Hall

May 2023 - Signs including a concept plan and City contact information were installed at the future dog off-leash area to provide notice of upcoming construction; these were in place for approximately three weeks prior to the start of construction

June 2023 - Construction of the dog off-leash area commenced (Currently on hold for further public engagement)

London/Steveston Dog Off-Leash Area Public Engagement
September-October 2023



3 SITE MAP



London/Steveston Park

London/Steveston Park accommodates a number of existing uses and facilities, including ball diamonds, soccer fields, a basketball court, playground, passive recreation, and planting areas. Usage of some of these amenities is shared with Steveston-London Secondary School.

Park development has occurred in phases:

- Phase 1 (2018) included new pathways to the north and south of Kingsley Estate, connecting the park to No. 2 Rd.
- Phase 2 and 3 (2019-2020) included new pathways, rolling topography, tree planting, and an updated playground.
- Phase 4 (2020-2021) included a multi-purpose plaza and basketball half-court.

Construction of the dog off-leash area represents the final phase of park development.

Help us determine a path forward

London/Steveston Park attracts a wide range of users that are likely to have different priorities. The final outcome may not be a perfect solution for everyone, but City staff are seeking to provide an equitable solution that maximizes community benefits.

By sharing your input, you can help us to devise an approach that meets practical constraints and community needs. If you live in the area and are a park user, we want to hear from you!

Current Site Considerations

- Proximity to Williams Rd parking lot
- Cost effectiveness for existing project budget
- Ease of access for maintenance and servicing
- Follows Council-endorsed London/Steveston Final Design Concept
- Opportunities to modify existing design and/or footprint of off-leash area

LEGEND

LONDON/STEVESTON PARK
(CITY-OWNED PROPERTY)



CURRENT DOG OFF-LEASH AREA SITE



London/Steveston Dog Off-Leash Area Survey Report

SURVEY RESPONSE REPORT

23 September 2023 - 23 October 2023

PROJECT NAME:

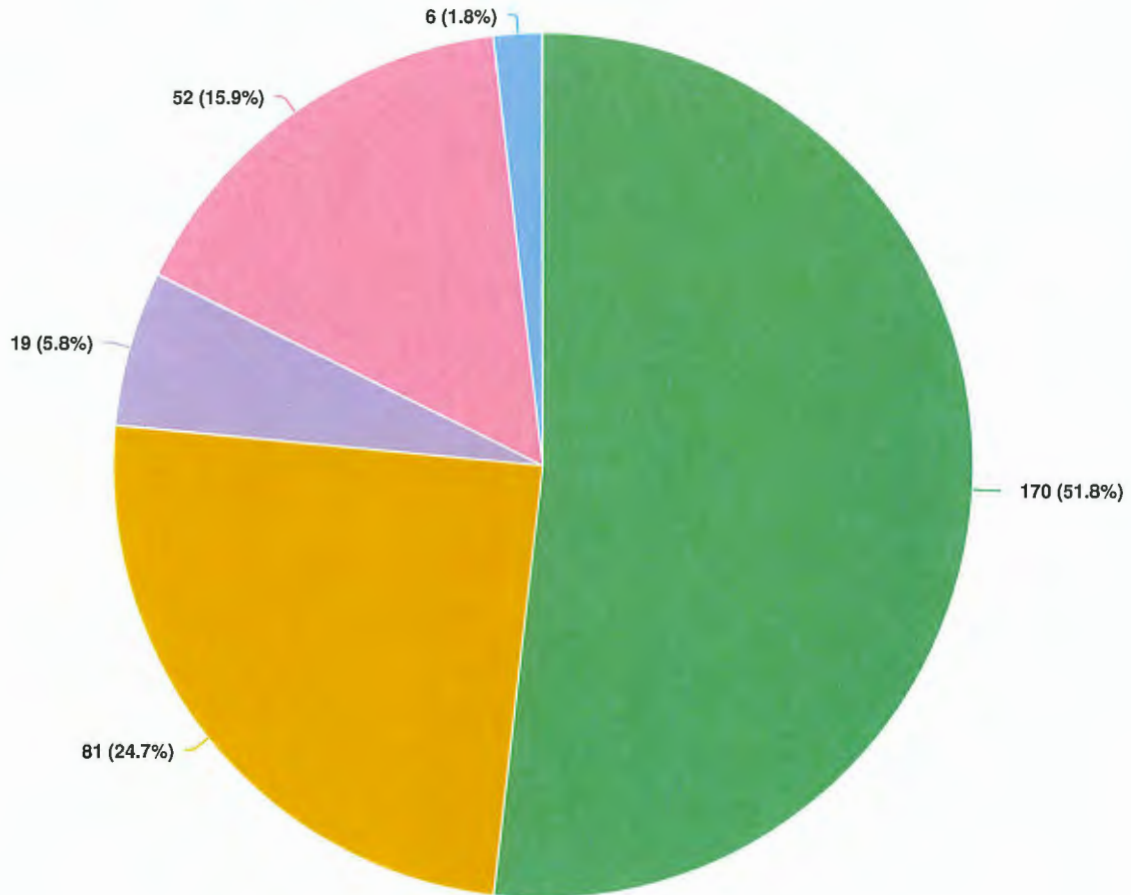
London/Steveston dog off-leash area





SURVEY QUESTIONS

Q1 The following statement best describes me. I visit London/Stevevoston park:

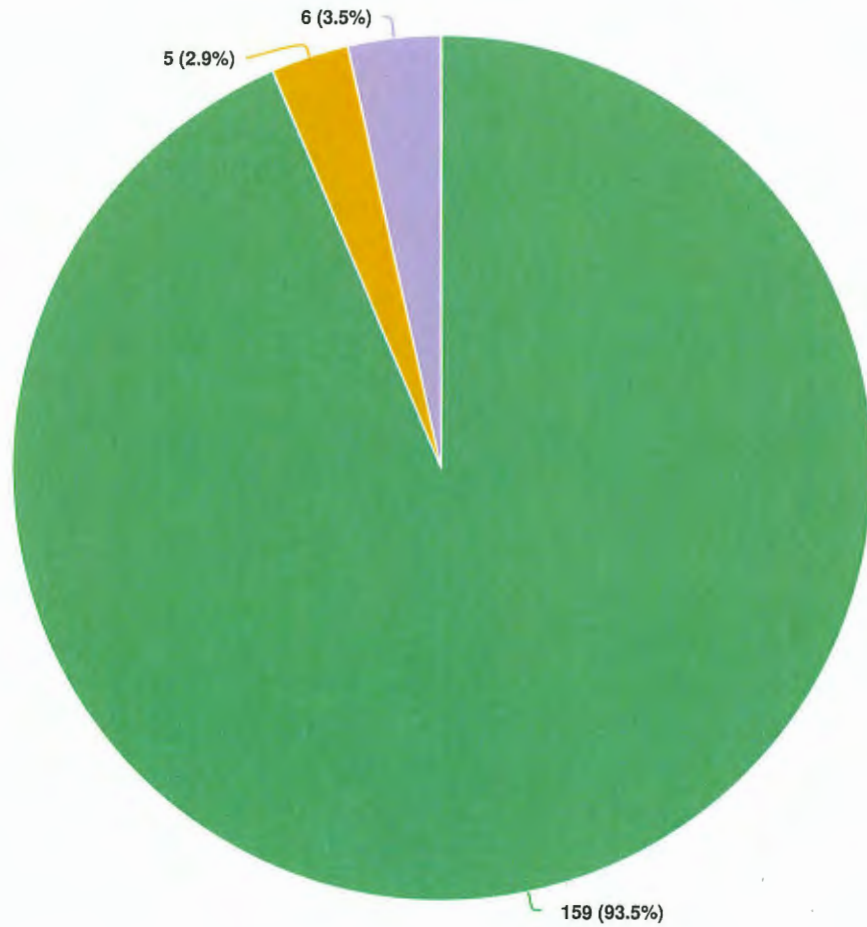


Question options

- Daily
- About once per week
- About once per month
- I don't currently visit London/Stevevoston Park regularly but would once a dog off-leash area is constructed
- I don't visit London/Stevevoston Park regularly and don't expect to in the future

*Optional question (328 response(s), 2 skipped)
Question type: Dropdown Question*

Q2 I typically visit London/Steveston Park by:

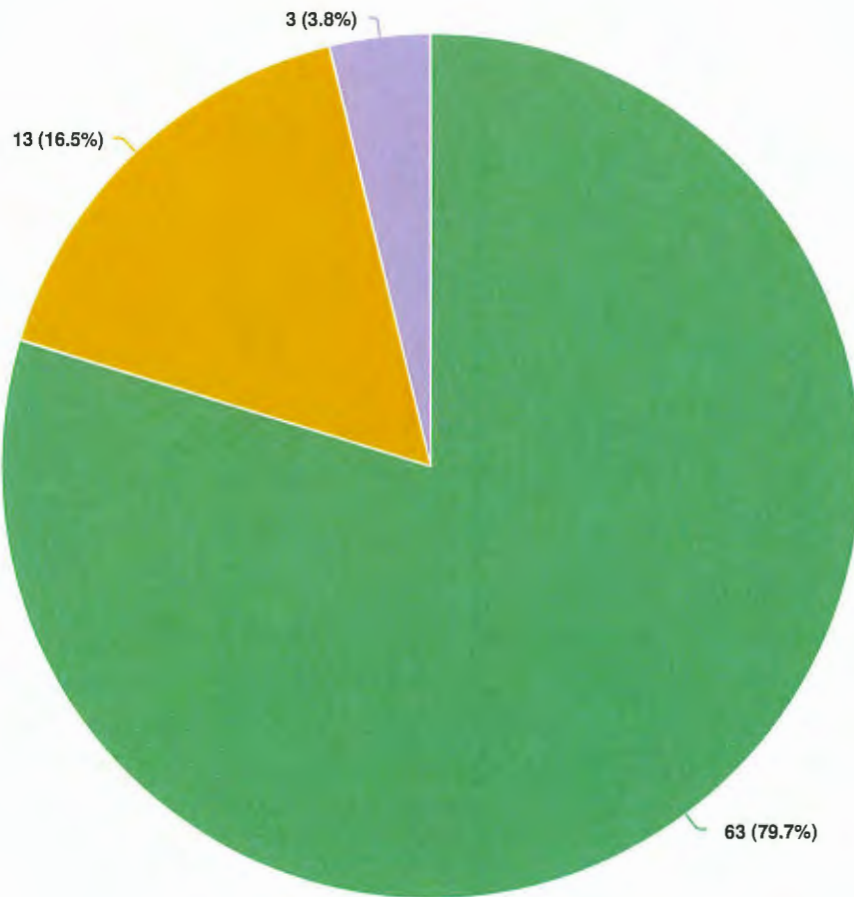


Question options

- Walking or rolling (e.g. by bicycle, scooter or assistive mobility device)
- Driving
- Other (please specify)

*Optional question (170 response(s), 160 skipped)
Question type: Dropdown Question*

Q3 The following statement best describes me:



Question options

● I am a dog owner

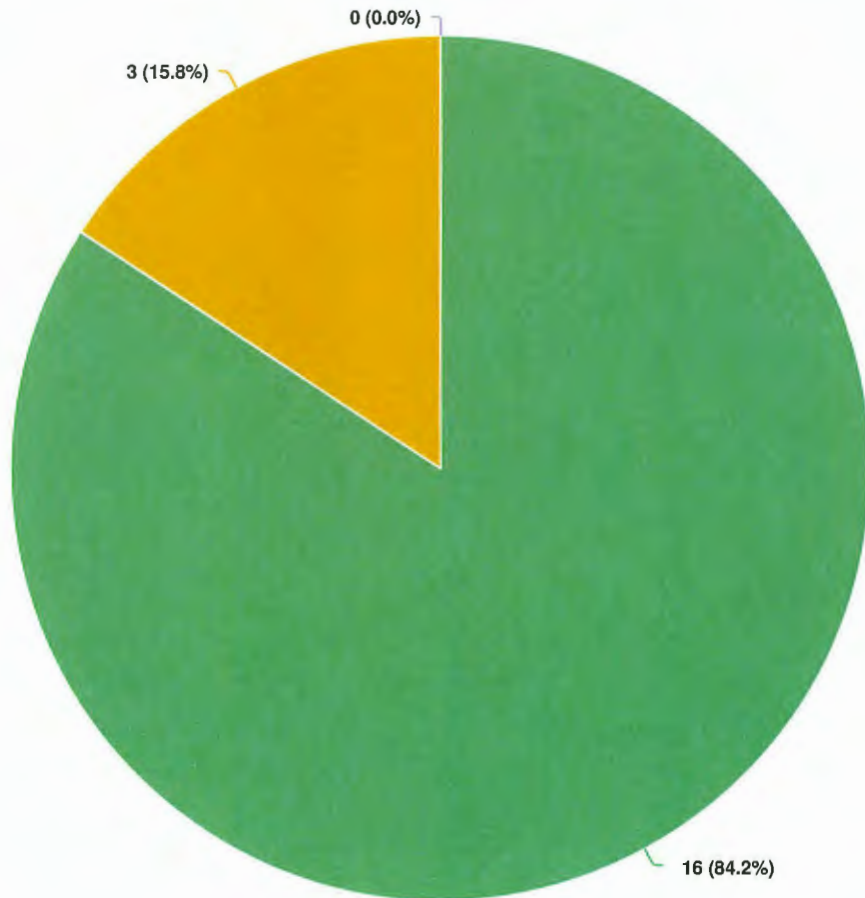
● I am not a dog owner

● I am not a dog owner but plan to be one in the future

Optional question (79 response(s), 251 skipped)

Question type: Dropdown Question

Q4 (If 'I am a dog owner' was selected) I regularly visit dog off-leash areas with my dog:

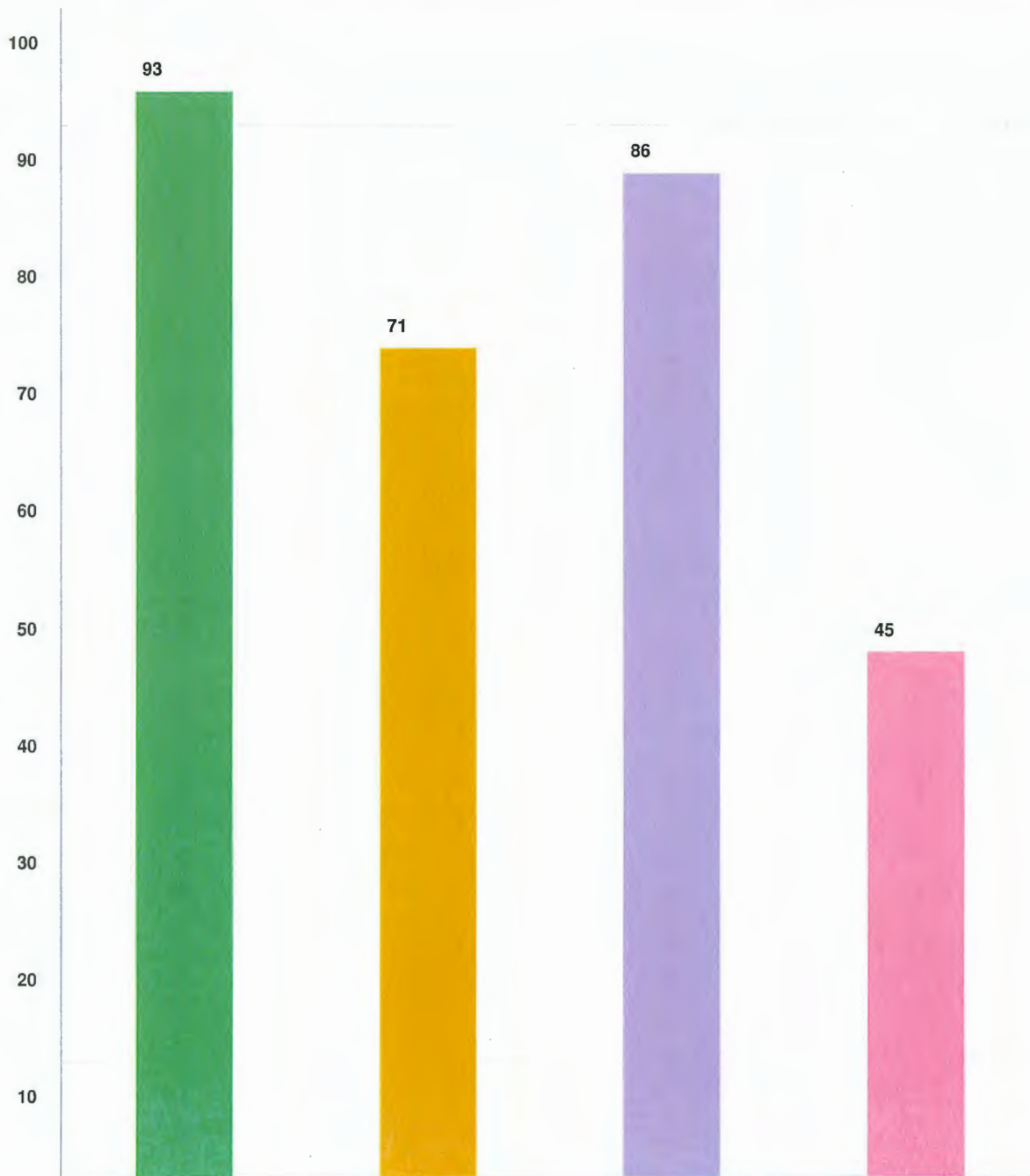


Question options

- Yes
- No

*Optional question (19 response(s), 311 skipped)
Question type: Dropdown Question*

Q5 (If 'yes' was selected) I regularly visit the following dog off-leash areas (check all that apply):

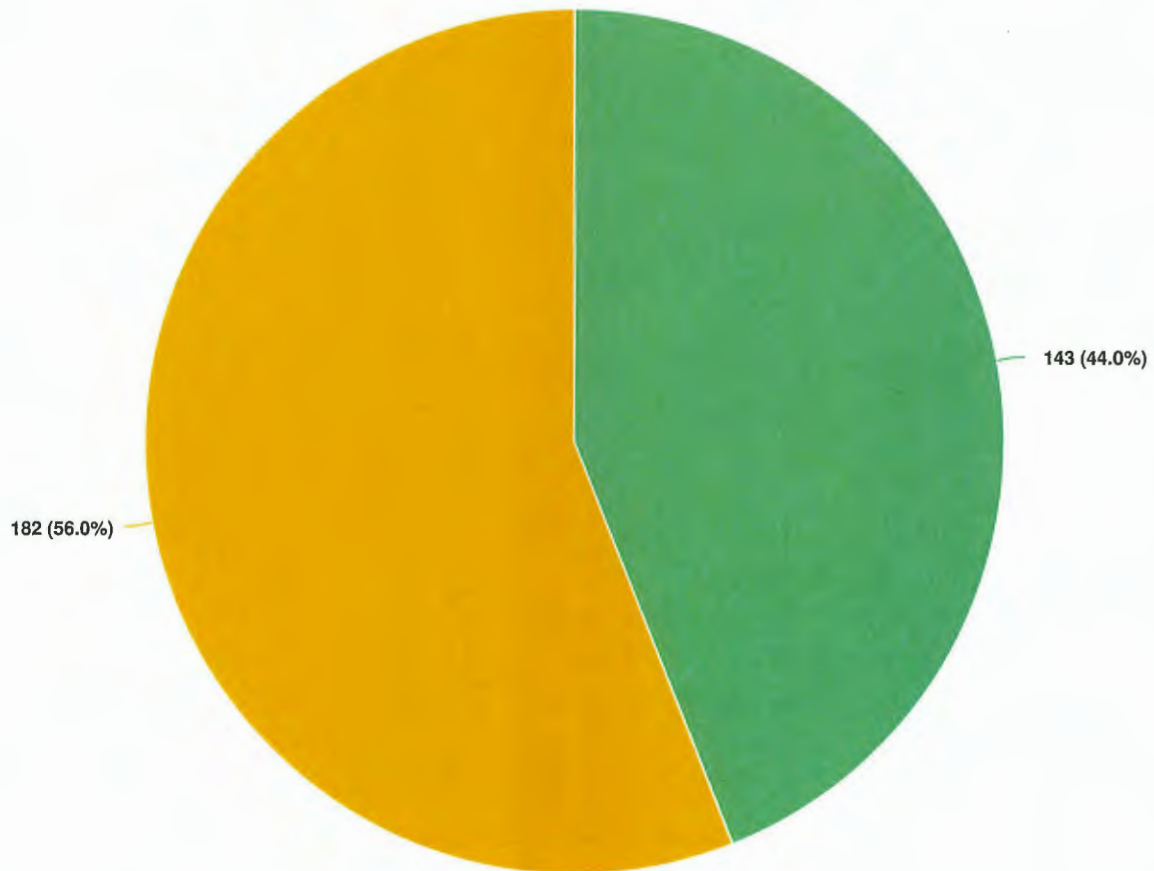


Question options

- Steveston Community Park
- South Arm Community Park
- No. 3 Road Bark Park
- Other (please specify)

Optional question (153 response(s), 177 skipped)
Question type: Checkbox Question

Q6 The availability of nearby parking opportunities would influence my ability to visit a dog off-leash area at London/Steveston Park:



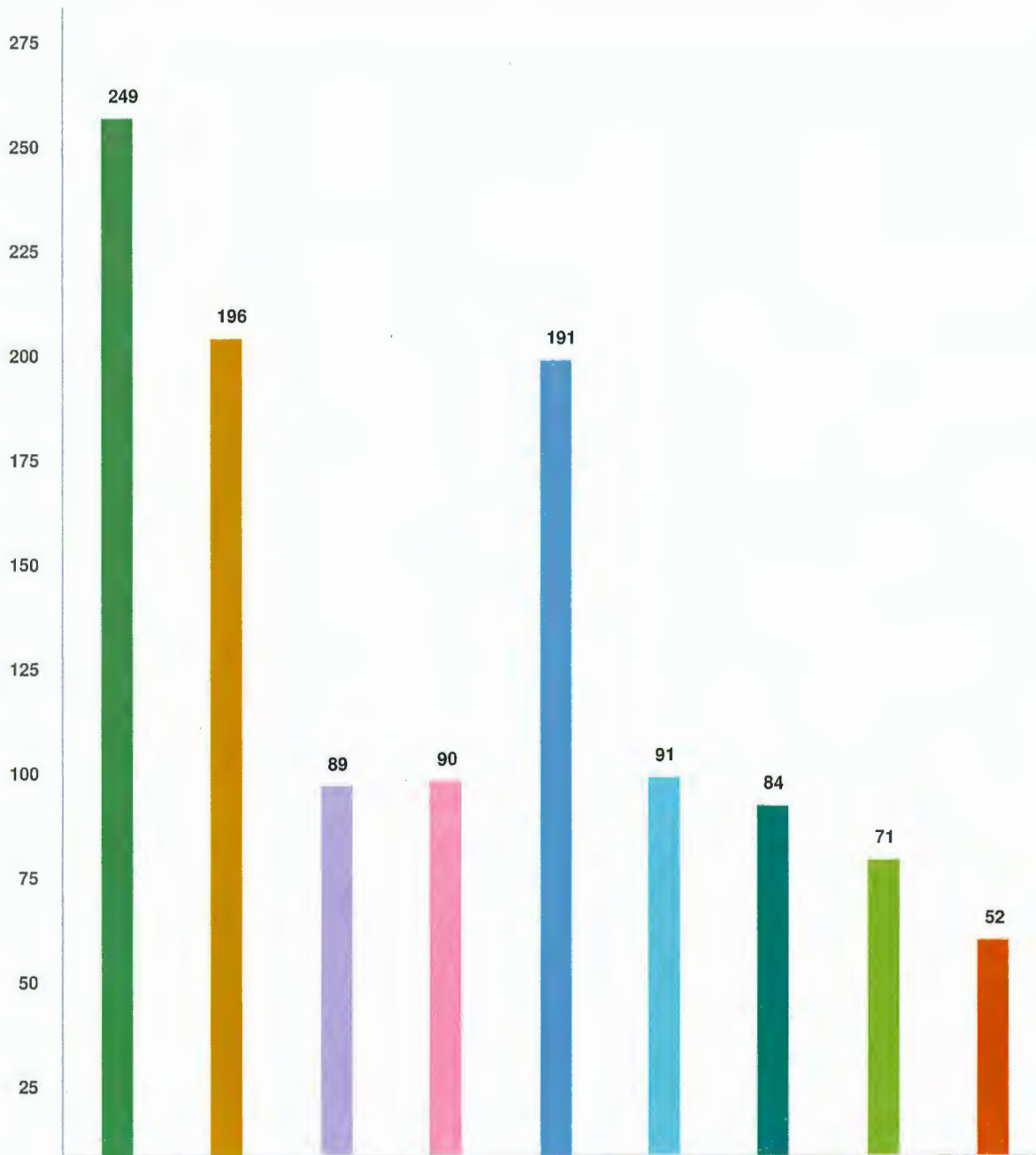
Question options

- Yes
- No

Optional question (325 response(s), 5 skipped)

Question type: Radio Button Question

Q7 I care about the following issues related to dog off-leash areas (select all that apply):



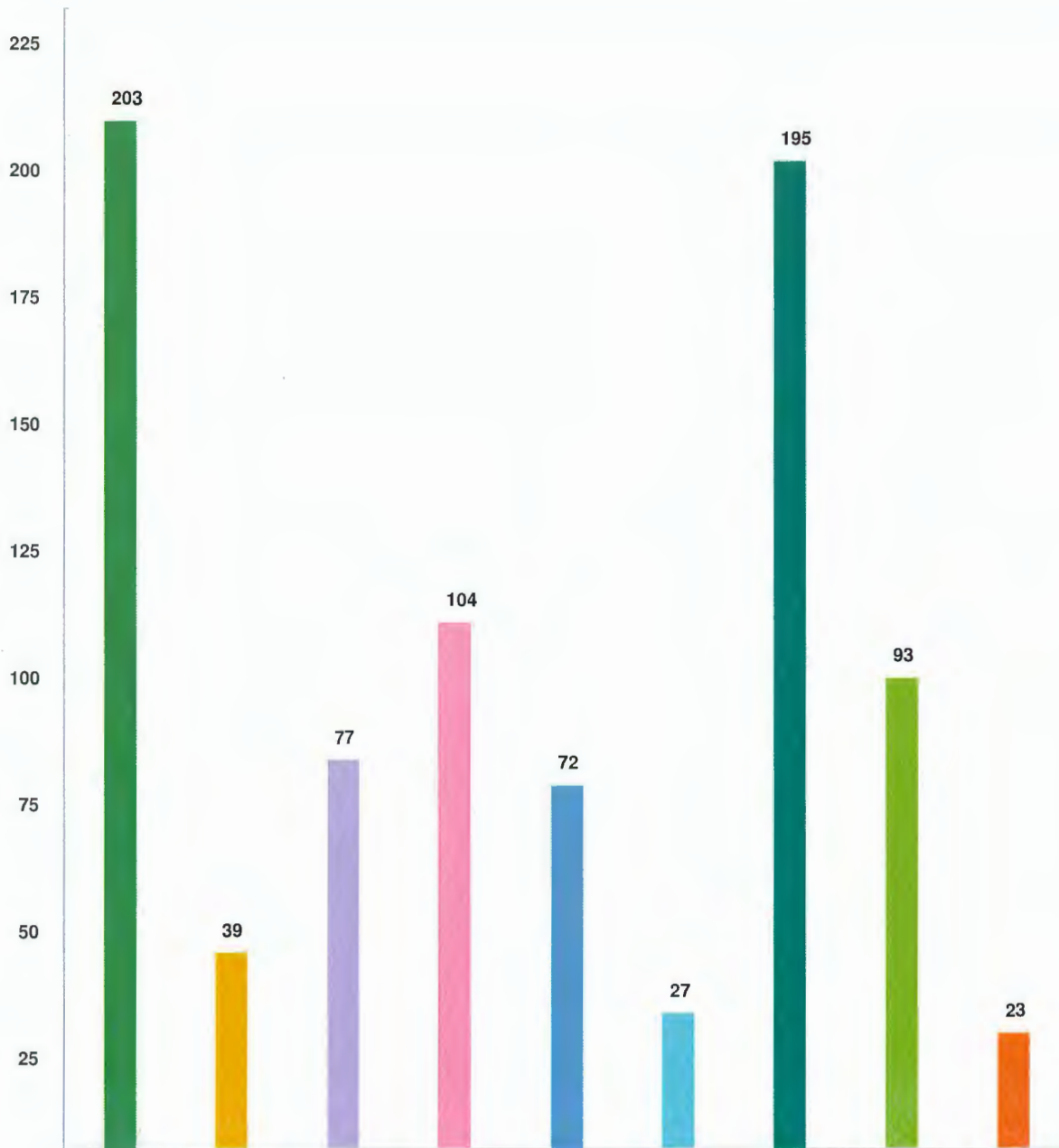
Question options

- Cleanliness
- Dog conflicts
- Proximity to residential properties
- Universal accessibility
- Maintenance
- Noise
- Parking availability
- Taking space from other park amenities
- None of the above

Optional question (327 response(s), 3 skipped)

Question type: Checkbox Question

Q8 I feel the following features are the most important for a successful dog off-leash area (select up to three):



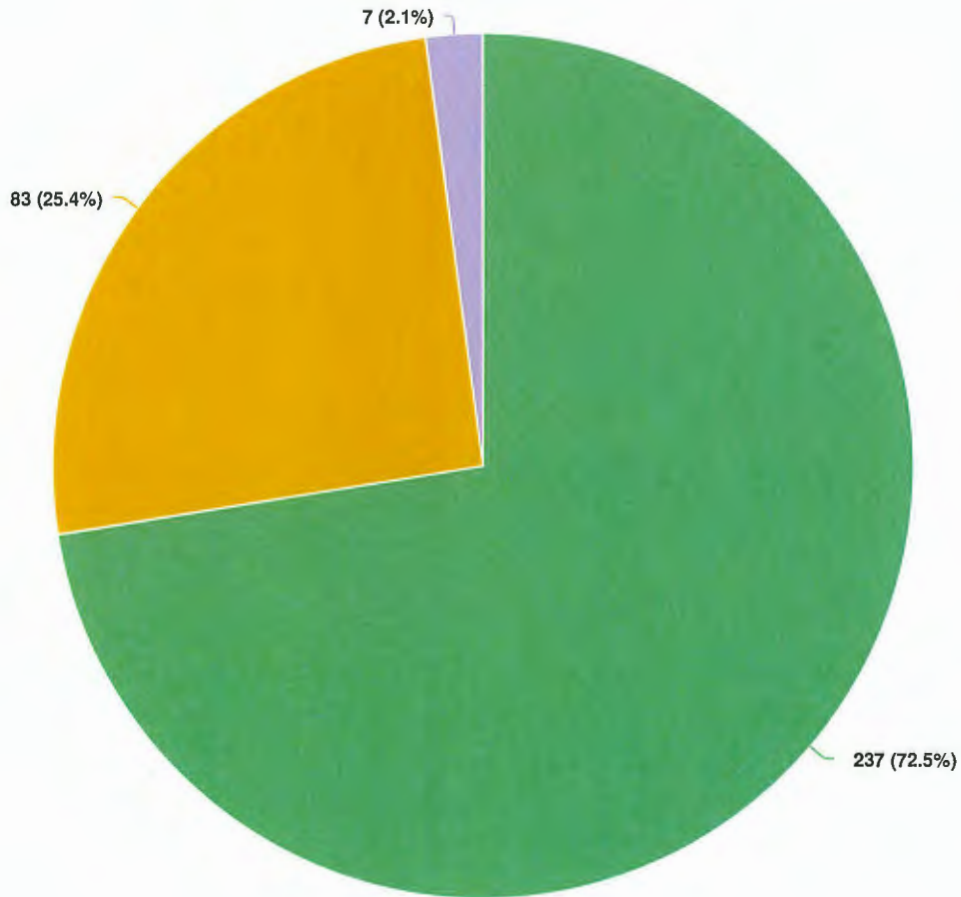
Question options

- Adequate size for exercise/play
- Seating
- Shade
- Drinking fountain
- Location away from residential properties
- Universal accessibility
- Enclosed fence
- Separate enclosure for small/shy dogs
- Nearby parking

Optional question (320 response(s), 10 skipped)

Question type: Checkbox Question

Q9 The following statement best describes me:

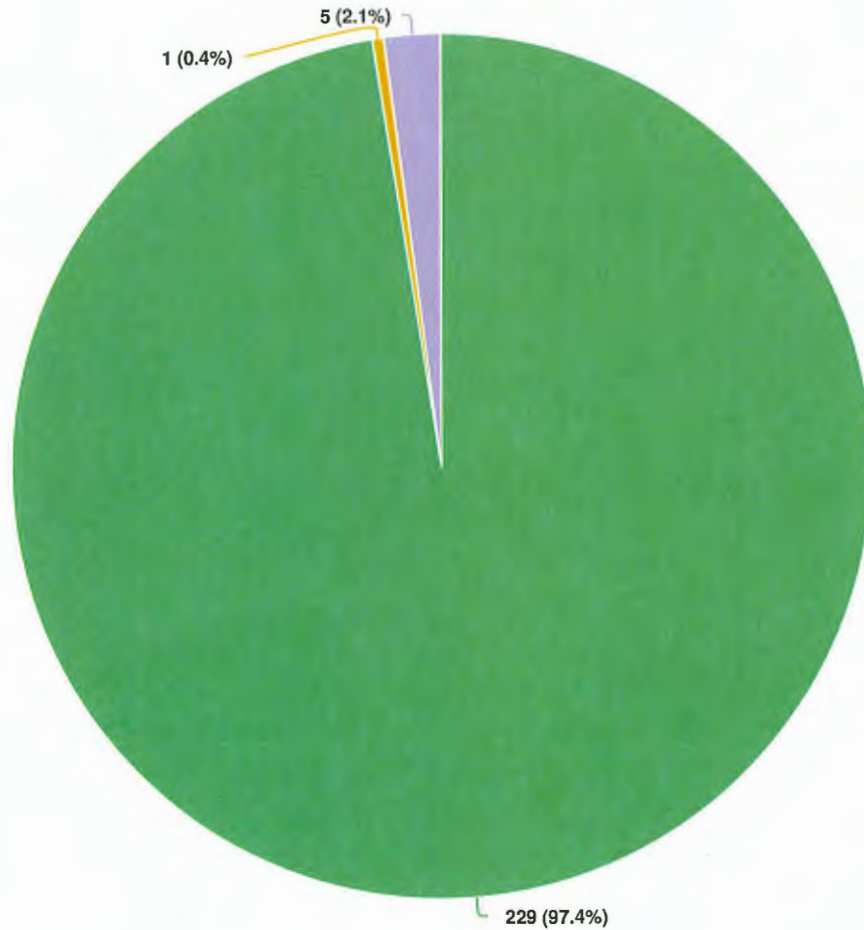


Question options

- I support the creation of a permanent dog off-leash area at London/Steveston Park
- I do not support the creation of a permanent dog off-leash area at London/Steveston Park
- I am undecided about the creation of a permanent dog off-leash area at London/Steveston Park

*Optional question (327 response(s), 3 skipped)
Question type: Dropdown Question*

Q10 The following statement best describes me:

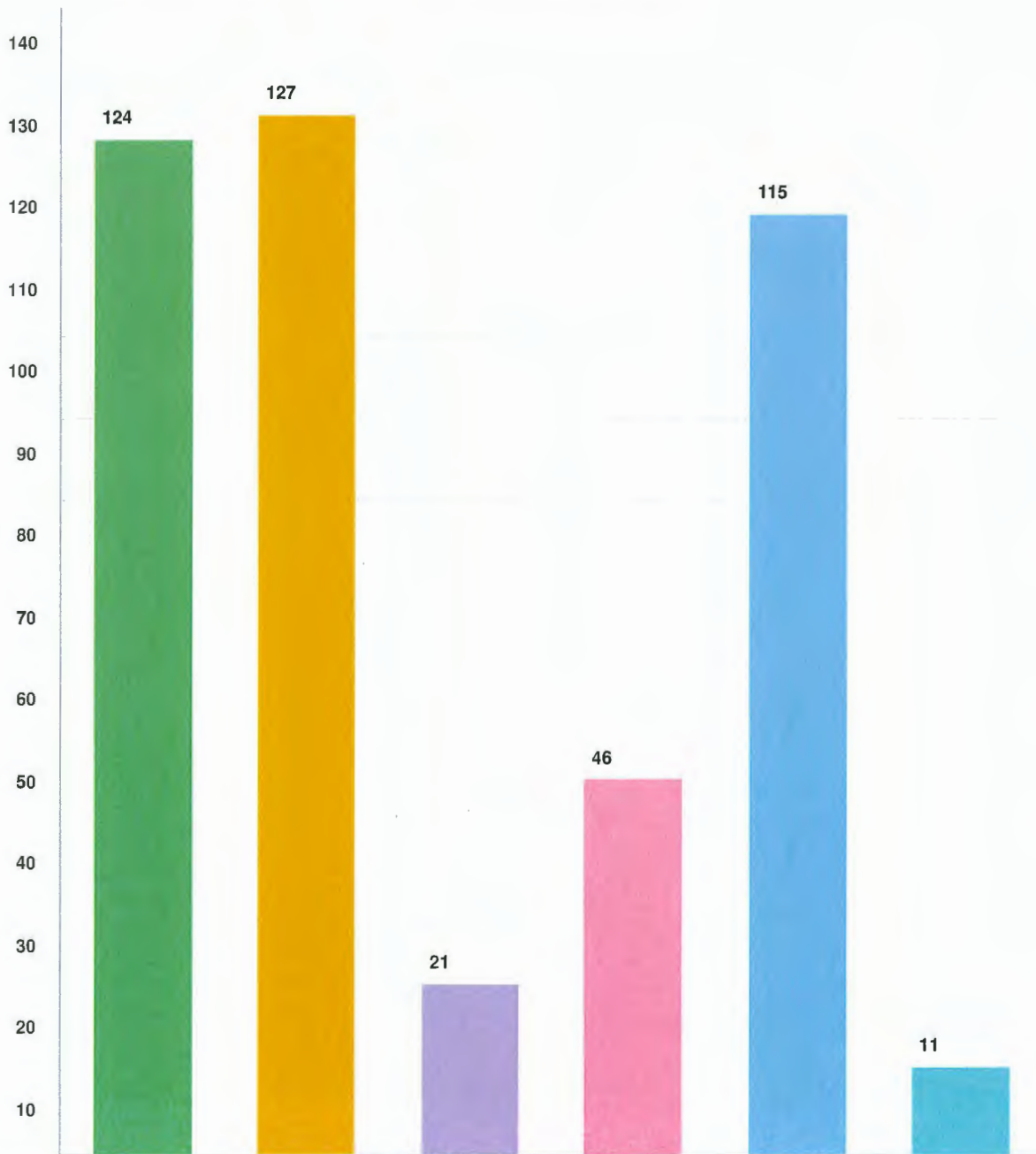


Question options

- I support completion of the dog off-leash area at its current location in London/Steveston Park (as identified in the London/Steveston Park Final Concept Design)
- I do not support the dog off-leash area being constructed at its current location
- I am undecided about my preferred location for the dog off-leash area

*Optional question (235 response(s), 95 skipped)
Question type: Dropdown Question*

Q11 I heard about this engagement via: (check all that apply)



Question options

- Postcard mailed to my residence
- Signs posted at London/Steveston Park
- On-site open house
- Social media ads
- Word of mouth
- Other (please specify)

Optional question (323 response(s), 7 skipped)
Question type: Checkbox Question

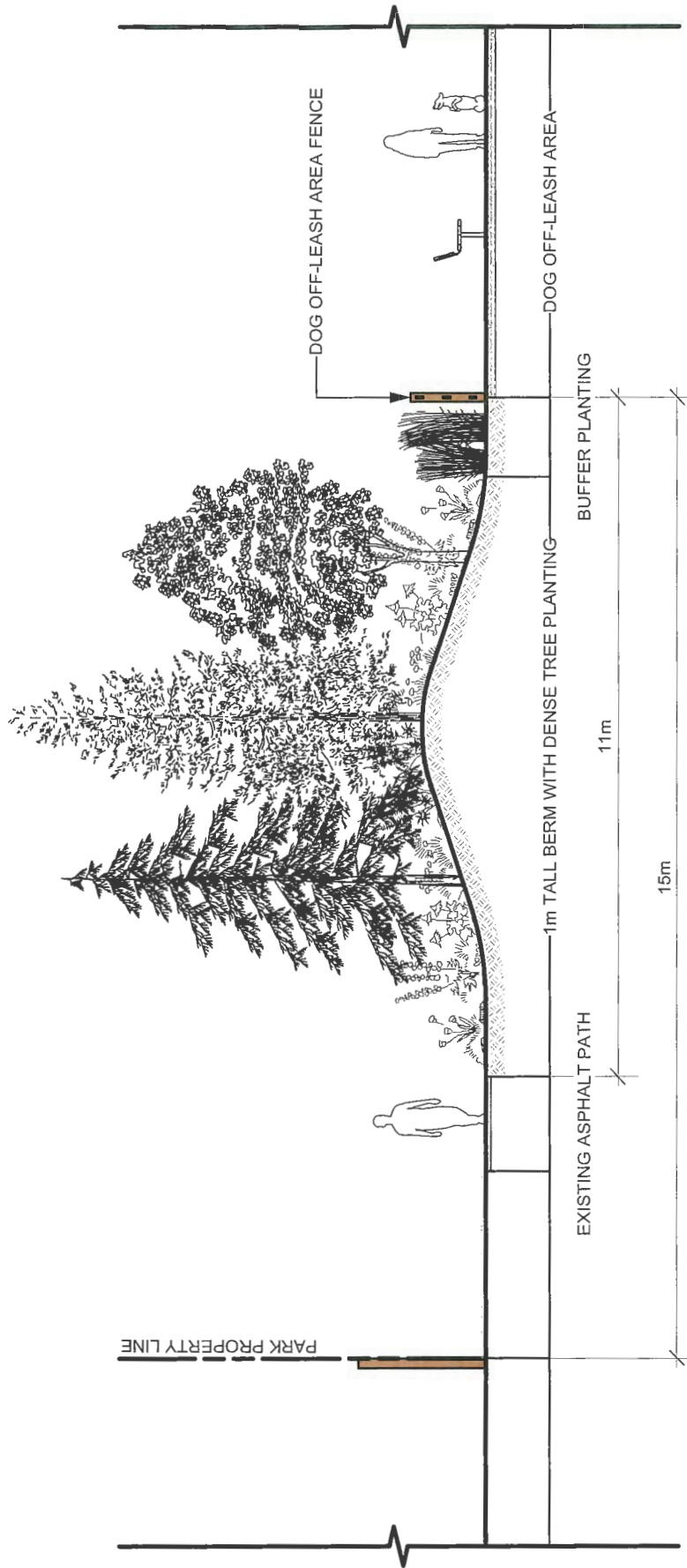
London/Steveston Dog Off-Leash Area - New Concept Plan



ALL DOGS ENCLOSURE: APPROX. 1,160 SQ M
 SMALL/SHY DOGS ENCLOSURE: APPROX. 780 SQ M

LEGEND

- ① Dog Run (Crushed Gravel) ⑦ Bench
- ② Perimeter Pathway (Wood Fibre) ⑧ Drinking Fountain
- ③ Planting Area (Shrubs and Trees) ⑨ Service Gate
- ④ Fenced Enclosure ⑩ 1m Tall Berm with Dense Tree Planting
- ⑤ Double-gated Entrance ⑪ 1.5m Wide Buffer Planting (Grasses)
- ⑥ Log/Boulder Edge Treatment



London/Steveston Dog Off-Leash Area - Original Concept Plan

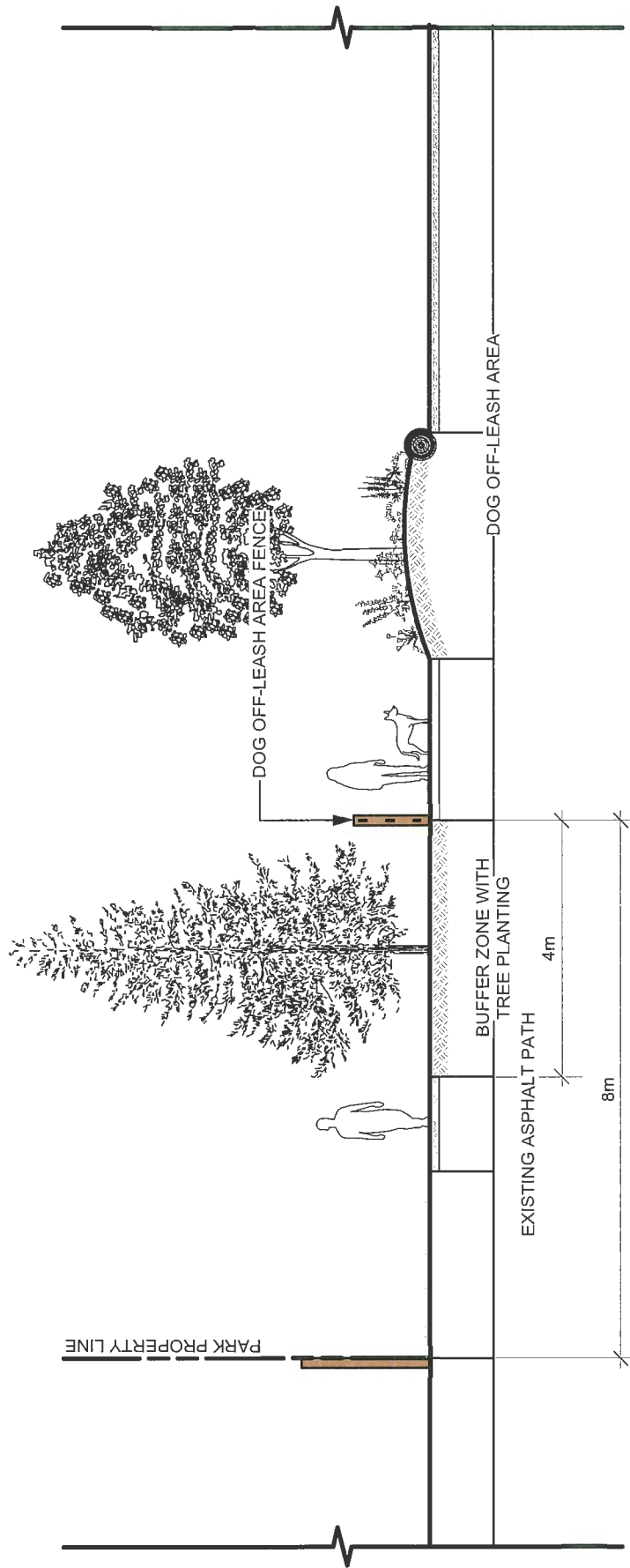


PRCS - 36

ALL DOGS ENCLOSURE: APPROX. 1,600 SQ M
 SMALL/SHY DOGS ENCLOSURE: APPROX. 1,000 SQ M

LEGEND

- 1 Dog Run (Crushed Gravel)
- 2 Perimeter Pathway (Wood Fibre)
- 3 Planting Area (Shrubs and Trees)
- 4 Fenced Enclosure
- 5 Double-gated Entrance
- 6 Log/Boulder Edge Treatment
- 7 Bench
- 8 Drinking Fountain
- 9 Service Gate



SECTION 'A'