

Business Case – Swap Park Dog Exercise Area

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Project Title: **Swap Park Dog Exercise Area**

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1. Executive Summary

This business case for a dog exercise area at Swap Park has been prepared as part of the 'Your Voice, Your Vision' campaign. Four options for the location of a fenced dog exercise area at Swap Park are considered.

The recommended option is Option 2, which encloses an area of 5,200 m² of park that is currently under-used.

The anticipated capital cost to be contributed by Council for the recommended option is \$12K which is approximately one third of the total capital cost of \$30K. The Matamata Rotary would provide funding and labour for a fence with a value of \$20K.

Additional annual operational costs for the dog park are expected to be \$3,500 per year.

2. Strategic Context / Project Drivers

As part of its Long Term Plan development process, MPDC ran an online competition in July 2020 titled 'Your Voice, Your Vision' (YVYV). The competition encouraged members of the public to submit ideas for Council to consider as part of its Long Term Plan. Council agreed to commit to developing a business case for the three project proposals that received the most online votes. One of these was a proposal to create an off-leash dog exercise area at Swap Park. The proposal received 115 on-line votes.

The proposal received is as follows:

A Dog Park constructed of Chainlink Fencing to a height of between 1.500-2.100 high. Minimum square area Half Acre (2024m²). Provision for Dog Agility Exercise Classes. Double gated Corral Entry. Water and Rubbish Bin Facilities.

After holding discussions with key stakeholders Vets, a Dog Agility business, and various people in the community including Councillors it became clear there is a real need and support for an Enclosed Dog Park Facility. Swap Park is an ideal Location with wide open spaces creating a stress free environment for the Dogs of all sizes. Matamata has many Dog Owners in excess of 1,500 dogs within the town boundary. A Dog Park Enclosure would hugely benefit the community.

The current Dog Control Bylaw approves the following areas in Matamata for off-leash dog exercise:

- a) Centennial Drive from Tainui Street to Broadway.
- b) Tom Grant Drive from Rawhiti Avenue to Tawari Street.
- c) Furness Reserve.
- d) Founders Park.

These areas provide for dogs to be off-leash but are not fenced. A resolution by Council is required under the Dog Control Bylaw to create any additional off-leash areas. Council has traditionally consulted on changes to the Dog Bylaw.

Swap Park includes a large flat area to the north which is currently underused, although use of this area as sports fields by the Matamata Swifts AFC has been



considered for some time. To the south of the park, a narrower wedge of land includes the helicopter pad, the Matamata South Water Treatment Plant and the BMX track. This southern area does not adjoin housing areas, and is separated by the railway and Firth Street to the west, and Burwood Road to the west. While expected noise levels from dog parks are not great, reserve sensitivity issues are reduced where dog parks are located away from areas of housing.

Dog parks provide activity throughout the week and can activate under-used and potentially less useful areas of parks, and can be complementary to other park activities.

Enclosed dog parks provide an opportunity for dogs to roam freely within a contained area and are generally supported by dog trainers and veterinarians, and the proposal is supported by a local dog trainer (refer Appendix 2 below). Dog parks are becoming more common around the country as an option for dog exercise.

Dog parks need an accessible water supply for the amenity of dogs, and shade and seating for the amenity of dog-owners.

Swap Park is located within a 10-minute walk of most of southern Matamata and a 20-minute walk of most residential areas of Matamata, and is easily accessible by car.

The 2020 'Parks and Open Spaces Strategy Review' consultation to date has noted that 'Comments about dogs indicated a desire for better off leash dog exercise areas or expressed safety concerns about off lead dogs in parks'.

Dog exercise areas were a topic of focus in the 2020 'Parks and Open Spaces Survey Results'. The summary noted that 'Our first survey included several requests for off leash dog exercise areas. Our second survey asked for more information about the preferred type of area. The majority of those who answered the question (17/27) wanted a larger, wilder space where dogs could be off leash rather than a smaller park-like area. The majority of those who answered the question thought that dog exercise areas should be funded by rates'. This survey had a small sample size (27 out of 80 respondents answered the question about dog parks).

While Council has not received any opposition to this project from the 'Your Voice, Your Vision' process, comment from local residents and iwi may add to the understanding of this site and the suitability of the proposal.

3. Potential Options

The original community proposal was for a fenced dog exercise area located next to the helipad and water treatment plant with an area of approx. 2000 m², (Option 1). Ideally a dog exercise area has an area of around an acre / 4000 m² to provide sufficient room for larger dogs to run around freely¹, and for proposed agility equipment. Further to discussions, an amended proposal with an area of 5200 m² was received from the community, (Option 2).

¹ 'Establishing a Dog exercise area in your Community', American Kennel Club:
<https://images.akc.org/pdf/GLEG01.pdf>



The fenced area would need to include a dual gate entrance and a mower entrance, as well as a water supply and tap or drinking fountain suitable for dogs.

Option 1: Dog exercise area as originally proposed, located in an area of the park that is not well used, but is handy to other activities including organised sport and the pump track.

Option 2: Amended dog exercise area proposal extended to the north.

Option 3: Dog exercise area proposed been extended to the west to include an under-used area of park behind the water treatment plant. Part of this area has recently been densely planted in trees however these could be moved as part of the development process to other areas of the park. These trees have however been planted for commemorative purposes by the community and relocation of the trees may not be acceptable to the community.

Option 4: Alternative location to south of BMX track can accommodate an area of approximately 3000m². While this area is not optimal, it would provide a better level of service than Option 1. The dog exercise area would occupy an under-used area of Swap Park.

Additional options include constructing a dog exercise area another Council Park, or not constructing a fenced dog park.

4. Expected Benefits / Advantages

Dog parks provide an enclosed area for dogs to roam and play safely with other dogs. They allow for socialisation of dogs, which encourages less aggressive behaviour between dogs as well as socialisation of dog owners. Fencing allows for stress-free exercise when young dogs have more liveliness than training, and at times when owners are unable to keep up with the energy levels of their dog.

Dog parks are generally used throughout daylight hours and over all days of the week. Use of a dog exercise area improves the CPTED qualities and perceived safety of the surrounding park area.

A dog exercise area provides increased amenity for dog owners and their dogs, and also encourages dogs to be exercised in an area that is separated from others, and can help to meet the expectations of both dog owners and those who do not own dogs.

5. Expected Dis-benefits / Disadvantages

The potential negative outcomes are expected to be:

- Fencing an area for dog exercise removes other uses including informal park recreation
- Fencing in parks and reserves is generally not encouraged as it reduces access options and can reduce amenity



- Maintenance costs will increase as mowing will need to be done by smaller machinery, and extra weed-eating and / or spraying will be needed which will take more time.
- Funding is required for management of any new asset including maintenance and eventually replacement of the fence, water supply, and associated structures such as seating.

6. Timeframe

Once an area has been agreed, the project would require planning approval by a resource consent, as the proposal is not anticipated by a reserve management plan approved under the Reserves Act 1977. The preparation of an application and approval would take several months, however project planning could be done at the same time.

7. Expected Costs

Council's Planning staff have advised that a resource consent would be required for a dog exercise area as this was not anticipated in a reserve management plan under the Reserves Act.

Peter Vossen has offered on behalf of the Matamata Rotary Club to construct the fence to enclose the dog exercise area through grants and other funding covering materials, and volunteer labour. Seating could be contributed by the community.

In addition to on-going maintenance it is expected that Council would contribute a water supply and a drinking fountain for people and dogs and would fund a resource consent application and processing fee for the proposal. There is a water line on the north-western side of Burwood Road that is suitable for a new water connection.

Estimated costs for construction are as follows:

MPDC

Resource consent application and lodgement	\$5,000
Water supply	\$1,000
Drinking fountain and rubbish bin	\$6,000
Total	\$12,000 approx.

Matamata Rotary

260 -280 Im fence including fittings	\$15,000 value
Seating	\$900-2000 a seat
Agility equipment	to be confirmed
Total	\$20,000 approx.

Estimated additional costs for Annual Operational costs as follows:

MPDC

Additional mowing and rubbish collection costs	\$2,000
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Asset management costs	\$2,500
Total	\$4,500 approx.

8. Assumptions

Parking on the side of the road in the surrounding area is expected to be adequate any increase in demand. Swap Park is close to residential areas and some dog owners would walk their dog.

The fence could be removed or relocated in the future if the area was required for other uses in the future.

9. Investment Appraisal

The project would create an additional asset that would be maintained and eventually renewed or demolished by Council. Operating costs for mowing this area would be increased marginally.

10. Major Risks

Potential risks include:

- Dog exercise area is not supported and used by the community – this risk may be higher for a smaller area
- Dog exercise area is very well used and requires any muddy areas to be resurfaced
- Fences may need to be removed in future for alternative development
- Accidental archaeological discovery during excavation
- The standard of construction does not meet Council's asset requirements.

There may be community concerns about shifting recently planted trees if Option 3 is chosen.

11. Key Constraints

Anticipated constraints include competing future uses for the land. The reserve management plan allows for a car park to be located off Burwood Avenue of park if use increases significantly.

12. Key Dependencies

- The proposal will require resource consent. Preliminary advice from Council's Planning team is that a consent could be processed on a non-notified basis
- The park has other uses including informal recreation and organised sport
- A resolution would need to be made by Council for this area to be used for off-leash dog exercise.



13. Recommended Option

Four options have been proposed for the construction of a dog exercise area at Swap Park. Options 1, 2 and 4 cover areas of the park that are under-used and there are no proposals to use these areas further. Option 3 may cover an area useful for future development, particularly if the Matamata Swifts AFC increases use of the park.

Option 2 is the recommended option for the following reasons:

- It is the preferred option by the community
- It has sufficient area for exercising a wide range of dogs.

14. Images



View of proposed area for dog exercise from Burwood Road (Google maps 2019)

Attachments:

Appendix 1: Dog exercise area options at Swap Park

Appendix 2: Sceneonline article on dog park

Appendix 1: Dog Exercise Area Options At Swap Park

Not to scale





Appendix 2: Sceneonline 4 August 2020



Your vote could contribute to canine fun!

Dozens of votes have already been submitted but local builder, Rotarian and dog lover, Peter Vossen, is appealing for more! His submission to Matamata Piako District Council's "Your Voice, Your Vision" consultation, which is currently working towards the Long Term Plan for our district, is to establish an enclosed dog park facility and he needs your voice to help it happen.

"Happy, healthy dogs are exercised regularly" says Peter, "and I believe, along with community pet owners, that our Council has a part to play in this. What we are proposing is allocating around half an acre at Swap Park that can be fenced at a height of around 1.5 to 2m high to ensure all dogs have a safe and accessible area away from the road where they can run, play and socialise. Obviously access to water and a doggie bag station would be essential, but also in time, toilets and seating for those choosing to use the area would make a great addition."

After speaking with local dog trainer,



Peter Vossen and Anneliese England are pictured at Swap Park which, they believe, would be the perfect location for an enclosed public dog park. If you haven't voted, jump online now – submissions close this Friday! For enquiries about dog training, check out the Raise Your Paw Facebook page.

Anneliese England and representatives from Matamata Veterinary Services, Peter took the concept a step further and approached fellow Rotarians. "All were on-board with the idea and agreed there was definitely a need" he says. "Within our service group, we mooted a few ideas about how we could assist by taking the project on as a Rotary initiative in collaboration with Matamata Piako District Council."

Agreeing the concept would be a great way for community members and their pets to socialise, Anneliese England, owner of Raise Your Paw dog training, says a fit for purpose exercise area has worked very successfully in many other towns across the country. "Obviously the concept relies on the common sense of dog owners" she says, "but in my experience, there has been very little resistance to the idea. I would definitely be interested in helping people

understand how to properly introduce and socialise their dogs but also run professional classes throughout the year for those who might be having problems gaining more general control. This would contribute to a really enjoyable experience for both the dog and their owner."

With its wide open spaces, Peter and Anneliese believe Swap Park is the ideal environment in which to establish a gated park enclosure – particularly given there are in excess of 1,500 dogs currently registered with Matamata Piako District Council in our community alone. If you would like to offer your support, head to mpdc.govt.nz, click on the Your Voice, Your Vision tab and enter A Dog Park in Swap Park Matamata in the search bar. Submissions close this Friday so please show your support.

■ Caron Stewart.