

# Fernie Railyard Dog Park Annual Report and Project Plan

February 2023



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## **1. Introduction**

The Fernie Pets Society (the Society) is a volunteer-run charity organization. The Society has designed and built the Railyard Dog Park (the Park) on a parcel of Fernie municipal property adjacent to the CP rail right-of-way.

The park currently sees approximately 7000 visitors a month, averaging over 200 visitors daily. On peak days there are up to 300 visitors.

The Society has a 5-year Service Provider Agreement with the City of Fernie (the City) to maintain and enhance the Railyard Dog Park.

This report outlines the current state of the Park, its existing facilities and the Society's work plan for 2023, including:

- Management issues;
- Maintenance work;
- Activities and projects over the year;
- Future improvements and projects.

The Society's expenses in 2022 for the dog park were \$42,200.

The total expenses for the dog park between 2011-2022 were \$321,409.

# **1 Activities & Projects (2022)**

## ***1.1 Management Issues***

### **1.1.1 Dog waste not being picked-up**

The Park has multiple waste stations with free bags, and numerous garbage cans throughout, yet dog waste remains a problem, particularly in the winter when people may be more reluctant to venture off the trail to pick up waste. This leaves an unsanitary mess when the snow begins to melt and the Park may need to be closed temporarily in springtime for cleanup.

### **1.1.2 Theft and vandalism**

The Society has a large amount of maintenance equipment, tools and supplies with no secure place to store it on-site. Garden tractors left in the Park have been vandalized and several pieces of equipment have gone missing.

### **1.1.3 Operation funding**

The Society relies on donations for the ongoing operational costs since most grants do not cover these types of expenses. There is currently no operational funding from the City. Expenses include purchasing dog waste bags, waste removal service fees, snow clearing service fees, equipment maintenance and repair, fuel costs, etc.

### **1.1.4 Volunteer management**

There's no effective means of tracking volunteer work hours. Most volunteer work is unsupervised and requires that volunteers self-report their time. This is unreliable as most people don't bother to record their ad-hoc volunteer work.

## ***1.2 Park Maintenance***

### **1.2.1 Waste Management**

The eight waste stations are maintained regularly by volunteers who refill the bag dispensers and empty the garbage cans. The waste is deposited in the commercial bin located in the parking area.

The waste bin is serviced regularly by GFL Waste Management.

The waste bag purchase expense is about \$3,000 annually. Waste disposal fees are roughly \$500 annually.

There is an issue with bears sometimes being attracted to food and beverage waste, as not all receptacles are bearproof. Due to the large volume of waste materials, we have had to provide metal garbage containers adjacent to each of the waste stations.

Two large underground waste bins were installed at opposite ends of the park and are serviced by City staff.

### **1.2.2 Lawn Maintenance and Landscaping**

Park areas with seeded grass are mowed regularly by volunteers using a John Deere lawn tractor with 42-inch blade. During the months of May and June the grass must be mowed weekly, however the maintenance frequency declines with the warmer weather in July and August.

The Society also owns a 24-inch rough cut mower that is used to mow areas with heavy vegetation or areas where the lawn tractor cannot reach.

We rely on a single lawn tractor for lawn maintenance, and if it is out of service for repair then the grass is not cut and it can quickly become unmanageable. The lawn tractor has been in use since 2018 and will need to be replaced at some point in the future.

There are several areas that will require fill and reseeding in 2023.

Volunteers remove dead branches that fall frequently from the large trees. Low branches may be removed to allow for mowing around the base.

High traffic areas such as park gates and waste stations should be covered with gravel to improve drainage and prevent mud formation.

### **1.2.3 Park Benches**

The three existing benches were dismantled and refinished in August. Two new park benches were added, bringing the total to five.

### **1.2.4 Fencing and Gates**

The fence gates required regular maintenance to keep the latching mechanisms aligned. Gates also need to be height adjusted to allow proper snow clearance in winter, while not allowing small dogs to escape underneath in the summer months.

The section of fencing adjacent to the parking lot was disassembled to allow for excavation of the water line. The fence was re-assembled 2m from its original position to provide more space for the paved parking lot expansion project.

Some of the fence sections are too low, and more rails need to be added to help prevent dogs from jumping over.

### **1.2.5 Snow Clearing**

The paved trails were outlined with over 100 reflective markers in November. The trails are plowed by Mow & Snow on an as-needed basis during winter months. Trails are normally cleared on the first or second day following a major snowfall.

The gate entrance/exit areas are cleared with snow shovels and ice picks by volunteers.

The parking lot and roadway entrance are plowed by City staff. The parking lot is occasionally difficult to access due to the windrow at the Ridgemont Ave. entrance.

## **1.3 Park Projects (2022)**

### **1.3.1 Water Service**

A 2-inch main water line was installed at a depth of 2.5 meters. The water line services two yard hydrants and a planned drinking fountain. Each fixture has a separate underground shutoff valve, and there is a main curb-stop valve at the municipal connection.

A 4-foot square concrete pad was poured to support the drinking water fountain. There are 2 meters of drain rock below the concrete pad to handle water runoff from the drinking fountain.

### **1.3.2 Parking Lot Paving**

The parking lot was expanded and paved to accommodate 45 vehicles, including 2 handicapped spaces.

Funding was provided from a Canada Community Revitalization Grant, and the project was part of Fernie's Downtown Parking Revitalization Project.



### **1.3.3 Park Signs**

Multiple information signs were installed on park kiosks and at entrance gates. The signs include park rules and directional information.

### **1.3.4 Electrical Service**

The Society has received funding through the Columbia Basin Trust (CBT) 2022 Community Initiatives Program (CIP) to cover the cost of the BC Hydro design fees and installing the electrical infrastructure. The electrical service is necessary to support the EV charging station planned for the parking lot, as well as lighting and other future park amenities. The terms of the CBT grant require that the project be completed by May 2023.

The initial plan was to connect the service from a Hydro line along 13th Ave (Ridgemont Drive), near the intersection with Railway Ave. The closest pole was determined by BC Hydro to be unsuitable, and the alternative pole was considered too distant to reasonably accommodate the EV charging station location.

In September it was agreed that an alternative placement of the EV Charging station and power line pole at the far end of the parking lot was preferred. The new pole location would be on City land and can be placed within the 30m distance limit of the existing BC Hydro pole servicing the adjacent Fernie Rentals business. The new pole and EV Charger placement would require a shorter distance for underground conduit to the EV Charger and would not require removal of any asphalt to bury the electrical cables. In addition, the new pole and meter would be away from vehicle traffic in the parking lot, and be better placed to service any future park infrastructure such as a storage shed or parking lot lighting.



In order to proceed with the project, the City has requested that BC Hydro remove an encroaching transmission line from within the Park and reroute the power line from 13<sup>th</sup> Ave along the property boundary. The project is currently on hold until BC Hydro can relocate their transmission line.

### 1.4 2022 Income and Expenses

<b>DOG PARK INCOME&amp; EXPENSE (2022)</b>		
Dog Park Reserve (Jan 2022)		\$ 10,473
<b>DOG PARK INCOME</b>		
Corporate Donations	\$ 22,667	
Public Donations	\$ 6,400	
Grants	\$ 12,000	
Fundraising Events	\$ 2,915	
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>\$ 43,982</b>
<b>DOG PARK EXPENSES</b>		
Maintenance Contractors (snow, waste removal)	\$ 3,685	
Construction Contractors (excavation, paving, landscaping)	\$ 23,470	
<b>Total Contractor expense</b>		<b>\$ 27,155</b>
Park Equipment (waste stations, benches, drinking fountain)	\$ 8,962	
Park Supplies (waste bags, fuel, tools)	\$ 3,993	
Fence Materials	\$ 763	
<b>Total Equipment &amp; Supplies Expense</b>		<b>\$ 13,718</b>
Society expenses (insurance, software, fundraising)		\$ 1,327
<b>Total Expenses</b>		<b>\$ 42,200</b>
<b>Dog Park Reserve (Jan 2023)</b>		<b>\$ 12,255</b>

## 2 Planned Projects in 2023

### 2.1 Hazard Removal

As mentioned in Appendix A, most of the waste material on the surface has been removed and disposed. However, a lot of this material has been buried and we continue to find partially exposed hazards. Many of these items are large metal objects that can only be removed by excavation.

Our priority in the spring will be to identify remaining hazards and have them removed, or restrict access to the location by fencing off these areas.

### 2.2 Park Entrance

We should have a park identification sign along the roadway at the parking lot entrance.

Boulders should be placed along the periphery of the lawn adjacent to the parking area to prevent vehicles from driving on and damaging the grass.

At least one bicycle rack should be installed at the main entrance.

Some additional directional signage along the highway and downtown would help to direct out-of-town guests to the dog park.

Signs in the parking lot area should indicate the handicap parking zone and no overnight parking.

Additional information signs can be added to the four kiosks within the Park:

- Dog Park rules and etiquette
- Park and City maps
- Bylaw and Society contact information
- Corporate donors and sponsors
- Donation information



### 2.3 Park Landscaping

Several sections of lawn have deep ruts from vehicles that make it difficult to mow the lawn in those areas. These sections should be leveled and reseeded.

Gravel or crushed stone may be placed around the two yard hydrants to reduce the amount of mud in the vicinity.

Flowers or trees may be planted at select locations to enhance the park appearance.

Some trees and shrubs may require pruning, especially when they encroach along the trails.



## **2.4 Trail and Vehicle Counters**

There are currently two TRAFX trail counters installed in the park. A third trail counter will be installed in 2023 at another location to be determined.

A TRAFX vehicle counter was purchased and will be installed in 2023 at the entrance to the parking area, to count the number of vehicles entering and exiting the parking lot.

## **2.5 Drinking Water**



The water fountain was purchased in 2022, but the Society was unable to find a plumber to install it before the fall cold weather. It will be installed in the spring once the risk of frost has passed.

The unit is equipped with two drinking fountains, a bottle filling station and a specially-designed, pet-friendly fountain. It delivers fresh, easily accessible water with the push of a button, and no electrical power is required.

The fountain is rated for inlet water pressure of 20-105 PSI.

## **2.6 Wading Pool**

Two small plastic wading pools were provided in 2022 and proved to be very popular with park users. Unfortunately, they were not very durable and the liner in one was damaged beyond repair.

We would like to purchase a larger, sturdier metal pool that can be partially buried inground and surrounded by drain rock. These metal pools are available in various sizes and depths from farm supply stores.



## **2.7 Electrical Service**

The Society received a CBT grant to install electrical service in the parking lot area. An electrical service panel and meter will be installed at the back end of the parking lot. The electrical panel should have the

capacity for two EV charging stations, and support future projects such as lighting, automatic gates, security cameras, or other amenities requiring electric power.

The BC Hydro design process was initiated in 2022 and Martech Electrical was hired to oversee the electrical panel installation. The project is awaiting resolution of a request for BC Hydro to relocate a transmission line from within the Park.

CBT funding for this project will expire in May 2023 unless an extension is given due to the delays in the design process.

## **2.8 EV Charging Station**

In 2021, the Fernie Pets Society was awarded a grant from the Kootenay Rockies Tourism (KRT) association to install a Level 2 electric vehicle charging station at the Railyard Dog Park:

*Kootenay Rockies Tourism (KRT) was recently awarded funding through the StrongerBC Plan Targeted Regional Tourism Initiative (TRTI) to support a variety of projects, including the expansion of Destination Level 2 charging infrastructure. KRT has partnered with Community Energy Association (CEA), Fernie office, to support the initiative. CEA has managed the deployment of over 70 Level 2 chargers and 32 DC Fast Chargers in Western Canada.*

*Building off the existing EV Road Trip itineraries, this project seeks to grow the network of EV charging infrastructure through the installation of charging stations at key tourism assets that are municipally, Indigenous or non-profit owned. Strengthening the network will provide an opportunity for the up-and-coming EV consumer market to tour the region and access the many signature experiences including hot springs, golf courses, Nordic clubs, museums and campgrounds. This project will contribute to market diversification, namely attracting the drivable tourism market from BC, Alberta and the Pacific Northwest, which will support the tourism region's COVID recovery.*

The project was due to be completed in 2022, but because of the delay involved in obtaining the necessary BC Hydro service the project deadline was extended to May 2023. It's not known if a further extension would be possible beyond this date.



### 3 Future Projects

This section lists projects that could be undertaken if approved by the City and funding becomes available. We will undertake an online survey of park users to determine which future projects should be prioritized.

#### 3.1 Paved Trails

There are two remaining sections of the park that should have a paved trail:

- The special use area trail will run from the main entrance to the other end of the area, and then connect to the existing trail network near waste station B.
- The entrance gate at the back of the parking lot will have a trail that extends to the existing trail at waste station C.



#### 3.2 Pit toilet



The park is heavily used year round by residents and visitors to Fernie. A toilet facility would be a welcome addition to the dog park and would benefit not only park visitors, but also people using the parking lot as a staging area for the nearby bike trails.

#### 3.3 Storage Shed

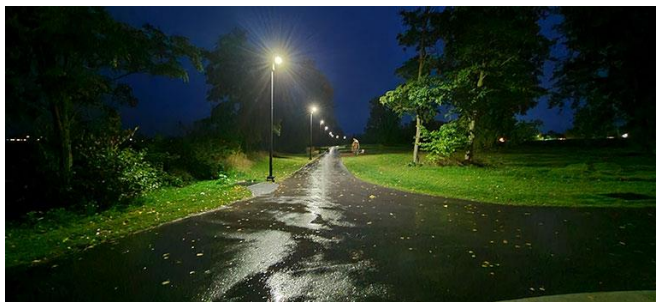
A secure on-site storage facility is needed for the maintenance equipment, tools and supplies used by the Society. It should be large enough to accommodate lawn tractors, mowers, garden tools, supplies and spare parts for park amenities.



### **3.4 Trail Lighting**

Many Canadian municipalities now light their dog parks with intelligent solar lighting fixtures to allow residents and guests to fully enjoy their dog parks, particularly during the winter months when daylight is short and darkness comes early. These lighting units are self-contained, solar-powered and motion sensor activated.

Light stands can be located at each waste station, and at midpoints between the stations. The units shown here are from [Solar Vision Canada](http://www.solarvisioncanada.com)



### **3.5 Automatic Gate**

There are currently several elderly or handicapped residents who visit the park regularly.

A mechanism to open and close the large gate automatically can be installed at the main entrance to improve accessibility.



### **3.6 Pavillion**

A pavilion can provide a shaded rest area where people can sit and socialize while watching their dogs play. It can also serve as a refuge during sudden thunderstorms.

The structure depicted here is from the Whitefish Montana dog park.





### 3.7 Play & Agility Structures



Park equipment should encourage dogs to try things they can't do at home. A dog teeter-totter encourages pets to test their balance, and hoop jumps get pups to leap through the air for fun.

An agility course can also encourage people to interact with their pet, so everyone gets involved in the play.

Structures can be either custom built on site or purchased. Items such as large truck tires or old concrete culverts can be repurposed as dog park features.

### 3.8 Budget

ITEM	income	EXPENSE
Reserve	\$ 12,000	
Grants	\$ 10,000	
Corporate donations	\$ 5,000	
Public donations	\$ 3,000	
Fundraising events	\$ 3,000	
Equipment and supplies		\$ 4,000
Maintenance contractors		\$ 4,000
Electric connection		\$ 5,000
EV charger install		\$ 3,000
Water fountain install		\$ 1,000
Other (wading pool?)		\$ 15,000
total	\$ 33,000	\$ 32,000

## Appendix A. Park Development Background

### A.1 Project Location

The Railyard Dog Park is located between Maintown and the Ridgemont subdivision. The main entrance and parking lot is located at 99 Ridgemont Ave



The park is approximately 10 acres (4 ha) with a perimeter of approximately 4000 feet (1200m).

- The north boundary is 13th St / Ridgemont Ave.
- The south boundary is roughly in line with 9th St.
- The east boundary follows along the base of Ridgemont hill
- The west is bounded CP rail property and a snow dump.

### A.2 Project Planning

The Fernie Pets Society identified the need for a fenced off-leash dog park in 2011. At the time, there were two designated off-leash areas within the city, adjacent to the Aquatic center and to Annex Park. Both off-leash areas were small open spaces without amenities or any defined boundaries. The Society began a search for a suitable location within the city for a fully fenced park. Beargrass Landscape



Architect was hired to help plan and design a new facility. These design criteria were considered for successful dog parks:

**Key features for the dogs**

- One acre or more of space for dogs to run and play.
- Four- to six-foot fencing around the park.
- Double gate system to keep pets safe as they go in and out of the park off-leash.
- Separate large and small dog areas.
- Hydration station(s) for dogs.
- A suitable surface for running dogs.
- Exercise equipment and obstacles for dogs to climb.
- A water feature for dogs to play in.
- Shade for both dogs and owners.

**Key features for dog owners**

- Clear signage about rules and expectations for use of the park.
- Waste station for owners to pick up after dogs.
- Shade for both dogs and owners.
- Benches or seating for dog owners.

The Railyard site was the preferred location for a new dog park because of its large size and proximity to residential areas. It was zoned as municipal park land and at the time (2011-2012) it was being used for industrial waste storage and disposal and a portion is designated as a snow dump. A large section of the site is reserved as a BC Hydro right-of-way for high-voltage power lines.

Following consultations with stakeholders, Fernie's Leisure Services Master Plan (2013) recommended that the Railyard site be developed as a dog park.

In 2015 BC Hydro approved the Society's request for development of trails and fencing within its right of way. A formal Land Use Permit agreement between the City of Fernie and the Society was approved in July 2016, allowing the Society to proceed with development of the dog park.

### ***A.3 Park Development***

Although the site was zoned as municipal park land, it had been used for industrial waste disposal for many years. The Coal Discovery trail, a municipal walking/cycling path, runs adjacent to the site.

The following photos from 2011 depict the original condition of the site prior to development of the dog park. It was strewn with junk, discarded machinery, and vehicles. Much of the waste was partially or completely buried.



While seeking funding to develop the dog park, the Society began preparation work in 2013-2014. Brush and dead trees were cleared out and tall grass was mowed to expose the waste material. Hazardous materials were marked for future removal.

Over the following two years (2015-2017) most of the industrial waste material was removed by volunteers, and a contractor was hired to remove large items. While most visible waste has now been cleaned up, there is a lot of waste material that remains buried underground to this day. We continue to find and remove glass and metal objects.

The section of land adjacent to Ridgmont Ave was overgrown with thick weeds and shrubs. This area was cleared and graded in 2017 to level out the surface. Care was taken to preserve the large trees. The area was then hydroseeded with a mixture of grass and clover seed.



The 12-car parking area was built in 2017. That same year, at the request of the Society, BC Hydro created a new cycling trail route that would bypass the fenced dog park.



The walking trails in the park were paved in 2018-2019 thanks to a grant from the Columbia Basin Trust.

Dog waste stations and park benches were installed between 2018 and 2020.

Fencing and gates were installed in 2020 with the help of volunteers and three student workers.

## A.4 Project Funding and Expenditures

The Railyard Dog Park has been funded entirely through grants, corporate donations, individual donors, and fundraising events. Many companies and individuals have donated their time to help with cleanup, construction, and maintenance.

<b>DOG PARK INCOME&amp; EXPENSE (2012-2022)</b>		
<b>DOG PARK INCOME</b>		
Corporate Donations	\$41,649	
Public Donations	\$29,257	
Grants	\$234,259	
Fundraising Events	\$28,498	
Total Income		\$333,663
<b>DOG PARK EXPENSES</b>		
Professional Fees (accounting, architect)	\$14,945	
Maintenance Contractors (snow, waste removal)	\$6,343	
Construction Contractors (excavation, paving, landscaping)	\$193,627	
Total Contractor expense		\$214,915
Park Equipment (waste stations, benches, kiosks)	\$35,608	
Park Supplies (waste bags, fuel, tools)	\$14,835	
Fence Materials & Labour	\$42,575	
Total Equipment & Supplies Expense		\$93,018
Society expenses (insurance, software, fundraising)		\$13,475
Total Expenses		\$321,409
Dog Park Reserve (Jan 2023)		\$12,255



## Appendix B. Grant Opportunities

[Resident Directed Grants](#), formerly known as the Community Initiatives and Affected Areas programs, support projects that benefit the broad community and public good through community-based decision-making and ensuring an opportunity for resident input on projects. The deadline to submit proposals for the 2023/2024 Program year is 4:00 pm on Wednesday, February 15, 2023.

[CleanBC Go Electric Public Charger Program](#) aims to fill current gaps in the public DCFast Charger network in BC such as Indigenous communities, rural and northern areas, and city centers experiencing low vehicle density. For Elkford, Sparwood, Fernie, and Cranbrook.

[Community Foundation of the Kootenay Rockies](#) (CFKR)'s 2023 Grant Application Process opens January 1, 2023 and closes February 15, 2023. Eligible projects will directly benefit the community and will effectively utilize a grant ranging from a few hundred dollars up to \$2,000.

[BC Rehab Project Grant](#) program is to create opportunities for the full participation of people with physical disabilities. Project grants are intended to support initiatives and projects designed to benefit people with disabilities. Friday, February 17th, 2023 deadline with a March 18th decision.

[The Co-op Community Spaces Program](#) was established to improve community health and well-being by building places for Western Canadians to come together, build social connections and enable community development. Projects can apply for between \$25,000 and \$150,000 in capital funding. The 2023 application period will be open until March 1, 2023.

[The B.C. Active Transportation Infrastructure Grants Program](#) 2023/24 intake will open September 1, 2023 for local governments. Active transportation relates to human-powered forms of commuting to work, school, recreation, socializing or running errands. The B.C. Active Transportation Infrastructure Grants Program provides guidance and cost-sharing for B.C. communities to make it easier and safer for people to walk, ride or roll using active transportation modes.