

City Council Meeting Agenda

Monday, February 24, 2020, 6:30 p.m.

Council Chambers, Guelph City Hall, 1 Carden Street

Changes to the original agenda are noted with an asterisk "*".

	Pages
1. Call to Order	
2. Open Meeting	
2.1 O Canada	
2.2 Silent Reflection	
2.3 First Nations Acknowledgement	
2.4 Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest and General Nature Thereof	
3. Confirmation of Open Minutes	6
Recommendation: That the minutes of the open Council Meetings held January 27, 2020 and Committee of the Whole meeting dated January 13, 2020 confirmed as recorded and without being read.	
4. Committee of the Whole Consent Report	
The following resolutions have been prepared to facilitate Council's consideration of various matters and are suggested for consideration. If Council wishes to address a specific report in isolation of the Committee of the Whole Consent Report, please identify the item. It will be extracted and dealt with separately as part of the Items for Discussion.	
4.1 CS-2020-02 Debt Management Policy Update	22
Staff Memo	
Recommendation: That the Debt Management Policy as recommended through report titled 2020 Debt Management Policy Update dated February 3, 2020 and numbered CS-2020-02 be approved, as amended.	

4.2 CS-2019-103 Development Fee Exemptions or Waivers 75

Recommendation:

1. That staff be directed to explore the creation of a program and/or framework to support the exemption of development charges for non-profit organizations.
2. That this report identify a budget source, parameters and a process to facilitate such requests from the non-profit community.
3. That this report return to council after all information regarding Bill 108 is resolved and for further consideration by Council during the 2021 budget deliberations.
4. That this future policy be aligned with the City Strategic Plan principles and priorities.

4.3 CS-2020-23 Development Charge Interest Policy 79

Recommendation:

That the Development Charge Interest Policy as recommended through report titled Development Charge Interest Policy dated February 3, 2020 and numbered CS-2020-23 be approved.

4.4 CS-2020-04 2019 Financial Condition Assessment and Proposed Long-term Financial Framework 88

Recommendation:

1. That the 2019 Financial Condition Assessment attached to report CS-2020-04 and dated February 3, 2020 be received.
2. That the Long-term Financial Framework included as Attachment-2 to report CS-2020-04, be approved.

4.5 PS-2020-01 238 Willow Road Application 149

Recommendation:

That the matter be deferred to the April 6, 2020 Committee of the Whole meeting or sooner.

5. Items for Discussion

The following items have been extracted from the Committee of the Whole Consent Report and the Council Consent Agenda and will be considered separately. These items have been extracted either at the request of a member of Council or because they include a presentation and/or delegations.

Delegates:

Jack Runge

Erin Manley

Maureen Hosie

Katherine Kolppanen

Duncan Hill

Kelly Hughes

Sherry Cox

Correspondence:

Stephany Reeves, Kaileigh Hilpert, Cheryl Davidson, Betty McEvoy, Bob Herron, Uta Matthes, Kayla Robinson, Jack Runge, Ross Kirkconnell, Michael Stultz, Megan Neely, Christianne Gregory, Elona Love, Olivia Gemin, Farrah Trahan, Melissa Luna, Terryanne Cassar, Peter Love, Dawn Pederson, Kyle Poland, Lyss Clarke, Jennifer Hannah, Brian Carwana, Christa Massey, Patrick P., Fiora Di Giannantonio, Ben Kidd, Natalie Iacono and Chris Roach, Leslie Stewart, David Schwan, Amy Schut, Katrina McLean, Avery Navikevicius, Taylor Brand, Lindsay Marie, Carrie Manson, Andrea Nichols, Lisa Zebedee, Dana MacDonald, Brian Gordon, Jessie McKay, Erica Gibson, Steve Franklin, Drew Thompson, Alex Derma, Denese Renaud, Eileen Sheridan, Tyler Garrard, Lisa Gray, Laura Hill, Egle Boudreau, Jackie Merkley, Laurel Borthwick, Tonya Redwood, Sarah Hollands, Melissa Schuurman, Patrick Laing, Stephanie Thomson, Jordan Legate, Lisa Christie, Shauna Brown, Lynn Hamilton, Michael Peace, Caleah Campbell, Kyle Anderson, Vicki Maybanks, Kathy Free, Allison Dowling, Kathryn Neale, Alexandra Stoneham, Melanei Parlette-Stewart, Linda Bryant, Tara MacLeod-Tucker, James Highet, Angi Roberts, Tracey Rowe, Dougie, Barbara Anderson, Theresa Finamore, Thoreau Colucci, Chelsea Woolley, Darryl Gemin, Michael Stultz, Kelly Bolton, Lori White, Colleen deVries, Kathy Stephens, Mike Timmerman, Alison and Janet Dunkley, Nicole Moniz, Donna Armstrong, Len Fowler, Mike Kennedy, Kayleigh Kennedy, Craig Powers, Marnie Blackwood, Justine Kraemer, Jack Runge, Sarah Duncan, Lana Katz, Margaret Williams, Kaleigh O'Driscoll, James Walke, Merryn Nadalin, Nancy MacKenzie, Shirley D., David Cameron, Sydney Macdonald, Tim and Susan Runge, Melissa Van Roie, Karen Campbell, Hailey MacDonald, Steve Dow, Carrie Harris, Victoria MacDonald, Paul Bahry, Rick Hanlon, Kim Kilpatrick, Alim Nathoo, Katie Trottier, Cobi Demmers, Lynn Tyler, Michael Wilkins,

Michelle Farrow, Leigh Hardcastle, Kayla Robinson, Chad Hagan, Frances Vanover, Cameron Lawrie, Tricia Glassco, Penny Millar, Nathan Bassutti, Angelica S., Jessica Reeves, Andy Timmerman, Amy Moffat, Tara Burton, Paula Zimmermann, Desiree Kendrick, Fabio Enriquez, Alison LeDrew, Rebecca Hest, Erica Dunsmoor, Melissa Goetz, Brittany Hulme, Christina Tourangeau, Amy, Katie Holmes, Amy Vowels, Cassidy Chambers, Barbara Harcourt, Dave Strobl, Tom Post, Darija Nelson, Shawn Killeleagh, Barbara Miller, Nicole Ross, Maggie Horst, Kiara Tennis, Erin Tusa, Peter Traplin, Janine Finlay, Doug Watson, Andrew Pedersen, Jaime Drohan-Luttmann, Nicole Visentin, Keely Patterson, Dana Vadala, Alison Hunter Stewart, Dawn Burnett, Amanda Scott, Jessie Baynham, Tara McIntyre Herne, Taylor Sugden, Ryan Bannon, Sammy Ageil, Caleigh Sprague, Roxane Bernhard, Sandra Macdonald, Barbara Wilkinson, Robert Nicol, Greg Roth, Mariah Crevier, Morgann Rollin, Kristy Holdaway, Jennifer St-Pierre, Sarah Bonin, Suzanne Symons, Jenny Fraser, Laurie Grist, Laura McPhie, Susan Carey, Carleigh Cathcart, Anne Holman, Ans Bader, Susan Bowman, Rachael deVries, Mary OKane, Andrea Bevilacqua, Maddie Shipsides, Todd Pyke, Laurie Trace, Caroline Fontaine, Joe o' Kane, Stephanie Varcoe, Kelly Hughes, Nicole DeBeyer, Kayley Teal, Pauline Wilcox, Lisa Barrie, Robin Smart, Stephen Trace, Brian Holden, Joy Walker, Ujjwal Verma, Alana Mac, Jeanne Castellanos, Janet Williams, Kaitlin Kirkup, Brandi Grose, Brandy Nomad

Recommendation:

1. That the Leash Free implementation plan as approved by Council on June 24, 2019 be amended to remove the proposed fenced leash free facility at Lee Street Park and Bristol Street Park.
2. That staff be directed to explore the feasibility of a fenced dog park located in a non-residential area, with the report coming to Council for consideration in the 2021 budget.
3. That the leash free dog area at Peter Misersky Park be closed and the infrastructure removed.

6. By-laws

Resolution to adopt the By-laws. (Councillor Piper)

7. Mayor's Announcements

Please provide any announcements, to the Mayor in writing, by 12 noon on the day of the Council meeting.

8. Adjournment



Minutes of Guelph City Council

January 27, 2020, 5:30 p.m.

Council Chambers, Guelph City Hall, 1 Carden Street

Council:	Mayor C. Guthrie Councillor P. Allt Councillor B. Bell Councillor C. Billings Councillor C. Downer Councillor R. Goller Councillor J. Gordon Councillor M. MacKinnon Councillor D. O'Rourke Councillor L. Piper Councillor M. Salisbury
Absent:	Councillor D. Gibson Councillor J. Hofland
Staff:	S. Stewart, Chief Administrative Officer C. Clack, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, Public Services K. Dedman, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, Infrastructure, Development and Enterprise Services T. Lee, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, Corporate Services T. Baker, General Manager, Finance/City Treasurer C. Cooper, General Manager, Legal Realty and Court Services/City Solicitor S. O'Brien, General Manager, City Clerk's Office/City Clerk D. Tremblay, Council and Committee Coordinator

1. Call to Order

Mayor Guthrie called the meeting to order. (5:30 p.m.)

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest and General Nature Thereof

There were no disclosures.

3. Authority to move into closed meeting

Moved By Councillor Billings

Seconded By Councillor Gordon

That the Council of the City of Guelph now hold a meeting that is closed to the public, pursuant to Section 239 2 (b), (e) and (f) of the Municipal Act, to consider:

January 2020 Public Appointments to the Elliott Community Board of Trustees

Section 239(2)(b) of the Municipal Act, related to personal matters about an identifiable individual, including municipal or local board employees.

CS-2020-21 Litigation Update

Section 239(2)(e) and (f) of the Municipal Act, related to litigation or potential litigation, including matters before administrative tribunals, affecting the municipality or local board; and advice that is subject to solicitor-client privilege, including communications necessary for that purpose.

Voting in Favour: (11): Mayor Guthrie, Councillor Allt, Councillor Bell, Councillor Billings, Councillor Downer, Councillor Goller, Councillor Gordon, Councillor MacKinnon, Councillor O'Rourke, Councillor Piper, and Councillor Salisbury

Carried (11 to 0)

4. Open Meeting

Mayor Guthrie called the meeting to order. (6:01 p.m.)

5. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest and General Nature Thereof

There were no disclosures.

6. Closed Meeting Summary

Mayor Guthrie spoke regarding the matters addressed in closed and identified the following:

Minutes – Confirmation of Closed Minutes

These minutes were adopted by Council.

January 2020 Public Appointments to the Elliott Community Board of Trustees.

Information was received and a Special Resolution with respect to this item will be presented.

CS-2020-21 Litigation Update

Information was received and staff were given direction on this matter.

7. Special Resolutions

1. January 2020 Public Appointments to the Elliott Community Board of Trustees

Moved By Councillor O'Rourke

Seconded By Councillor Goller

That Peter Barrow and Greg Sayer be appointed to the Elliott Community Board of Trustees for a three year term ending November, 2023.

Voting in Favour: (11): Mayor Guthrie, Councillor Allt, Councillor Bell, Councillor Billings, Councillor Downer, Councillor Goller, Councillor Gordon, Councillor MacKinnon, Councillor O'Rourke, Councillor Piper, and Councillor Salisbury

Carried (11 to 0)

8. Confirmation of Open Minutes

Moved By Councillor Allt

Seconded By Councillor Gordon

That the minutes of the open Council Meetings held November 25, December 3, 9 and 11, 2019, and the minutes of the open Committee of the Whole meeting held December 2, 2019, be confirmed as recorded and without being read.

Voting in Favour: (11): Mayor Guthrie, Councillor Allt, Councillor Bell, Councillor Billings, Councillor Downer, Councillor Goller, Councillor Gordon, Councillor MacKinnon, Councillor O'Rourke, Councillor Piper, and Councillor Salisbury

Carried (11 to 0)

9. Committee of the Whole Consent Report

1. Future-proofing Our Building Through Energy Efficiency Retrofits: Report to Guelph's City Council In January 2020

Moved By Councillor O'Rourke

Seconded By Councillor Goller

1. That staff be directed to report back to Council with a recommendation regarding the City's role in the proposed PACE program.
2. That the City's role in the PACE program be considered as part of the action plan development of the Sustaining Our Future pillar of the City's Strategic Plan.

Voting in Favour: (11): Mayor Guthrie, Councillor Allt, Councillor Bell, Councillor Billings, Councillor Downer, Councillor Goller, Councillor Gordon, Councillor MacKinnon, Councillor O'Rourke, Councillor Piper, and Councillor Salisbury

Carried (11 to 0)

2. IDE-2020-03 Non-decorative LED Streetlight Upgrade Project Update

Moved By Councillor Goller

Seconded By Councillor Allt

1. That Council authorize an increase in the approved project funding to be drawn from the Wastewater Capital Reserve Fund for the non-decorative LED streetlight upgrade project from \$8 million to \$9 million to ensure adequate contingency is available to address the observed high rate of existing inadequate electrical infrastructure to be rectified.
2. That Council direct Staff to provide Wastewater Capital Reserve Fund repayment details prior to completion of the 2021 budget.

Voting in Favour: (11): Mayor Guthrie, Councillor Allt, Councillor Bell, Councillor Billings, Councillor Downer, Councillor Goller, Councillor Gordon, Councillor MacKinnon, Councillor O'Rourke, Councillor Piper, and Councillor Salisbury

Carried (11 to 0)

10. Items for Discussion

1. Motion of Support for Carbon Tax Appeal

Councillor Piper provided information regarding the motion of support for carbon tax appeal.

Moved By Councillor Piper

Seconded By Councillor Allt

1. That Guelph City Council supports the action taken by the coalition of six BC municipalities to act as an intervenor in the Supreme Court of Canada challenge to the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act.
2. That the Motion of Support be circulated to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Association of Municipalities of Ontario, MP Lloyd Longfield, MPP Mike Schreiner, the Office of the Premier of Ontario, and to the Mayors of Vancouver, Victoria, Squamish, Nelson, Richmond and Rossland.

Voting in Favour: (7): Councillor Allt, Councillor Bell, Councillor Downer, Councillor Goller, Councillor Gordon, Councillor Piper, and Councillor Salisbury

Voting Against: (4): Mayor Guthrie, Councillor Billings, Councillor MacKinnon, and Councillor O'Rourke

Carried (7 to 4)

11. By-laws

Moved By Councillor Piper

Seconded By Councillor Downer

That By-law Numbers (2020)-20472 and (2020)-20474 are hereby passed.

Voting in Favour: (11): Mayor Guthrie, Councillor Allt, Councillor Bell, Councillor Billings, Councillor Downer, Councillor Goller, Councillor Gordon, Councillor MacKinnon, Councillor O'Rourke, Councillor Piper, and Councillor Salisbury

Carried (11 to 0)

13. Adjournment

Moved By Councillor Allt

Seconded By Councillor Piper

That Council adjourn at 6:29 p.m.

Voting in Favour: (11): Mayor Guthrie, Councillor Allt, Councillor Bell, Councillor Billings, Councillor Downer, Councillor Goller, Councillor Gordon, Councillor MacKinnon, Councillor O'Rourke, Councillor Piper, and Councillor Salisbury

Carried (11 to 0)

Mayor Guthrie

Stephen O'Brien - City Clerk



Minutes of Guelph City Council

January 27, 2020, 6:30 p.m.

Council Chambers, Guelph City Hall, 1 Carden Street

Council:	Mayor C. Guthrie Councillor P. Allt Councillor B. Bell Councillor C. Billings Councillor C. Downer Councillor R. Goller Councillor J. Gordon Councillor M. Salisbury Councillor L. Piper Councillor M. MacKinnon Councillor D. O'Rourke
Absent:	Councillor D. Gibson Councillor J. Hofland
Staff:	K. Dedman, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, Infrastructure, Development and Enterprise Services M. Aldunate, Manager, Policy Planning Urban Design K. Nasswetter, Senior Development Planner M. Witmer, Senior Development Planner S. O'Brien, General Manager, City Clerk's Office/City Clerk D. Tremblay, Council and Committee Coordinator

1. Open Meeting

Mayor Guthrie called the meeting to order. (6:31 p.m.)

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest and General Nature Thereof

There were no disclosures.

3. Presentation

The Mayor congratulated Nico Daws, on a gold medal win at the 2020 International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) World Juniors Championship and presented him with City of Guelph medals.

4. Council Consent Agenda

Moved By Councillor Billings

Seconded By Councillor Allt

That the January 27, 2020 Council Planning Consent Agenda as identified below, be adopted:

Voting in Favour: (11): Mayor Guthrie, Councillor Allt, Councillor Bell, Councillor Billings, Councillor Downer, Councillor Goller, Councillor Gordon, Councillor Salisbury, Councillor Piper, Councillor MacKinnon, and Councillor O'Rourke

Carried (11 to 0)

1. IDE-2020-05 Sign By-law Variance - 10 Woodlawn Road East

That the request for variance from Table 1, Row 1 of Sign By-law Number (1996)-15245, as amended, to permit one (1) non-illuminated building sign with an area of 1.76m² to be located 2.08m above the ground surface at the property of 10 Woodlawn Road East, be approved. (Sign B)

2. IDE-2020-06 Sign By-law Variance - 435 Stone Road West

1. That the request for a variance from Table 2, Row 13 of Sign By-law Number (1996)-15245, as amended, to permit one (1) illuminated menu board/order board with a height of 3.13m above the adjacent roadway, at the property of 435 Stone Road West, be approved. (Sign 1)
2. That the request for a variance from Table 2, Row 13 of Sign By-law Number (1996)-15245, as amended, to permit one (1) illuminated pre-sell menu board with a height of 1.81m above the adjacent roadway at the property of 435 Stone Road West, be approved. (Sign 2)

3. IDE-2020-09 17 Mary Street - Heritage Permit Application (HP19-0021)

That heritage permit application HP19-0021 be approved to allow the demolition of the existing dwelling at 17 Mary Street and the construction of a new dwelling as described in Report IDE-2020-009.

5. Public Meeting to Hear Applications Under Sections 17, 34 and 51 of The Planning Act

1. IDE-2020-07 Statutory Public Meeting Report - 68-76 Wyndham Street South - Proposed Official Plan Amendment and Zoning By-Law Amendment File: OZS-19-013 - Ward 1

M. Witmer, Senior Development Planner provided a summary of the application including proposed official plan and zoning by-law amendments and site specific zoning requests.

John Cox, JL Cox Planning Consultants Inc. appeared on behalf of the owners and provided a summary of the property, details regarding number of units and tenants. He summarized the requests for official plan and zoning by-law amendments including parking and proposed set backs.

Brian McCulloch, James Fryet Architect Inc, appeared on behalf of the owners to provided details regarding the design of proposed building.

Scott Frederick, an area resident expressed concerns regarding the use of the property for student rental housing, loss of trees, proposed set backs and parking requirements.

Robin Angel, an area resident, expressed concerns regarding the use of the property for student rental housing, the density of the proposed application and variances.

Lisa Gray, an area resident, expressed concerns regarding the proposed design of the building.

Jack Anderson, a resident, expressed concerns regarding the proposed set backs, parking and traffic volume.

Moved By Councillor MacKinnon
Seconded By Councillor Billings

That Report IDE-2020-07 regarding proposed Official Plan Amendment and Zoning By-law Amendment applications (File: OZS19-013) by JL Cox Planning Consultants Inc., on behalf of the owner, M. Flaman Productions Ltd., to permit the development of a four storey apartment building with nine units and a duplex on the property municipally known as 68-76 Wyndham Street South and legally described as Part of Lots 7 & 8, Registered Plan 306, City of Guelph from Infrastructure, Development and Enterprise dated January 27, 2020, be received.

Voting in Favour: (11): Mayor Guthrie, Councillor Allt, Councillor Bell, Councillor Billings, Councillor Downer, Councillor Goller, Councillor Gordon, Councillor Salisbury, Councillor Piper, Councillor MacKinnon, and Councillor O'Rourke

Carried (11 to 0)

**2. IDE-2020-08 Statutory Public Meeting Report - 47-75
Willow Road Proposed Zoning By-Law Amendment
File: OZS19-014 - Ward 3**

Katie Nasswetter, Senior Development Planner, provided a summary of the application and proposed zoning by-law amendments.

Nancy Shoemaker, Black, Shoemaker, Robinson and Donaldson, Limited, appeared on behalf of the owner, and provided a summary of current surrounding land uses, historical property uses. She also provided information regarding current commercial tenants, parking and affordability of units.

James Gollinger, appearing on behalf of Shelldale Family Gateway and an area resident expressed concerns regarding the size and affordability of the proposed units and suggested that the proposal consider units which would accommodate growing and larger families.

Dana Nuttley, appearing on behalf of Onward Willow Community and a long time area resident, expressed concerns regarding

retaining the existing services at the plaza and suggested that community engagement take place to ensure that existing services are maintained.

Moved By Councillor Billings

Seconded By Councillor MacKinnon

That Report IDE-2020-008 regarding proposed Zoning By-law Amendment application (File: OZS19-014) by Black, Shoemaker, Robinson & Donaldson Ltd., on behalf of the owner, Willow Court Ltd., to permit the development of two, six storey mixed use buildings with ground floor commercial units and a total of 130 apartment units on the property municipally known as 47-75 Willow Road and legally described as Lots 6 & 7 and Part Lot 8, Registered Plan 593, City of Guelph from Infrastructure, Development and Enterprise dated January 27, 2020, be received.

Voting in Favour: (11): Mayor Guthrie, Councillor Allt, Councillor Bell, Councillor Billings, Councillor Downer, Councillor Goller, Councillor Gordon, Councillor Salisbury, Councillor Piper, Councillor MacKinnon, and Councillor O'Rourke

Carried (11 to 0)

6. Items for Discussion

1. IDE-2020-04 Decision Report - Official Plan Amendment No. 69 Commercial Policy Review

Jennifer Meader, legal counsel for Starlight Investments, expressed concerns regarding section 9.4.3.4.7 of the proposed policy and suggested that the alternate proposal contained in correspondence submitted by Astrid Clos be considered and that Council defer approval of the Official Plan Amendment No. 69 until regulations under Bill 108 have been established.

Moved By Councillor MacKinnon

Seconded By Councillor Downer

That Official Plan Amendment No. 69, initiated by the City of Guelph, be approved in accordance with Attachment 1 to Report IDE-2020-04 dated January 27, 2020.

Voting in Favour: (11): Mayor Guthrie, Councillor Allt, Councillor Bell, Councillor Billings, Councillor Downer, Councillor Goller, Councillor Gordon, Councillor Salisbury, Councillor Piper, Councillor MacKinnon, and Councillor O'Rourke

Carried (11 to 0)

7. By-laws

Moved By Councillor MacKinnon

Seconded By Councillor O'Rourke

That By-Law Numbers (2020)-20473 and (2020)-20475 are hereby passed.

Voting in Favour: (11): Mayor Guthrie, Councillor Allt, Councillor Bell, Councillor Billings, Councillor Downer, Councillor Goller, Councillor Gordon, Councillor Salisbury, Councillor Piper, Councillor MacKinnon, and Councillor O'Rourke

Carried (11 to 0)

9. Adjournment

Moved By Councillor Billings

Seconded By Councillor Allt

That Council adjourn at 8:54 p.m.

Mayor Guthrie

Stephen O'Brien- City Clerk



Minutes of Committee of the Whole Meeting

January 13, 2020, 2:00 p.m.

Council Chambers, Guelph City Hall, 1 Carden Street

Council:	Mayor C. Guthrie Councillor P. Allt Councillor B. Bell Councillor Billings Councillor D. Gibson Councillor R. Goller Councillor J. Gordon Councillor J. Hofland Councillor L. Piper Councillor M. MacKinnon Councillor D. O'Rourke
Absent:	Councillor C. Downer Councillor M. Salisbury
Staff:	D. McMahon, Manager, Legislative Services / Deputy City Clerk L. Cline, Council and Committee Coordinator C. Clack, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, Public Services K. Dedman, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, Infrastructure, Development and Enterprise Services T. Lee, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, Corporate Services S. Stewart, Chief Administrative Officer

1. Call to Order

Councillor Gibson called the meeting to order (2:06 p.m).

1.1 Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest

There were no disclosures.

2. Presentations

2.1 Future-proofing Our Buildings Through Energy Efficiency Retrofits: Report to Guelph City Council in January 2020

Kirby Calvert, Chair, Our Energy Guelph Board of Directors, and Alex Chapman, Executive Director, Our Energy Guelph provided a status update on Our Energy Guelph and outlined the PACE (Property Assessed Clean Energy) program for energy efficiency retrofits.

New Motion:

Moved By Councillor Goller

Seconded By Councillor Gordon

1. That staff be directed to report back to Council with a recommendation regarding the City's role in the proposed PACE program.
2. That the City's role in the PACE program be considered and prioritized as part of the action plan development of the Sustaining Our Future pillar of the City's Strategic Plan.

Amendment:

Moved By Mayor Guthrie

Seconded By Councillor Hofland

1. That staff be directed to report back to Council with a recommendation regarding the City's role in the proposed PACE program.
2. That the City's role in the PACE program be considered as part of the action plan development of the Sustaining Our Future pillar of the City's Strategic Plan.

Voting in Favour: (9): Mayor Guthrie, Councillor Allt, Councillor Bell, Councillor Billings, Councillor Gibson, Councillor Gordon, Councillor Hofland, Councillor Piper, and Councillor O'Rourke

Voting Against: (2): Councillor Goller, and Councillor MacKinnon

Carried (9 to 2)

Motion as Amended:

Moved By Councillor Goller

Seconded By Councillor Gordon

1. That staff be directed to report back to Council with a recommendation regarding the City's role in the proposed PACE program.
2. That the City's role in the PACE program be considered as part of the action plan development of the Sustaining Our Future pillar of the City's Strategic Plan.

Voting in Favour: (11): Mayor Guthrie, Councillor Allt, Councillor Bell, Councillor Billings, Councillor Gibson, Councillor Goller, Councillor Gordon, Councillor Hofland, Councillor Piper, Councillor MacKinnon, and Councillor O'Rourke

Carried (11 to 0)

3. Consent Agenda - Infrastructure, Development and Enterprise Services

3.1 IDE-2020-03 Non-decorative LED Streetlight Upgrade Project Update

Moved By Mayor Guthrie

Seconded By Councillor Billings

1. That Council authorize an increase in the approved project funding to be drawn from the Wastewater Capital Reserve Fund for the non-decorative LED streetlight upgrade project from \$8 million to \$9 million to ensure adequate contingency is available to address the observed high rate of existing inadequate electrical infrastructure to be rectified.
2. That Council direct Staff to provide Wastewater Capital Reserve Fund repayment details prior to completion of the 2021 budget.

Voting in Favour: (11): Mayor Guthrie, Councillor Allt, Councillor Bell, Councillor Billings, Councillor Gibson, Councillor Goller, Councillor Gordon, Councillor Hofland, Councillor Piper, Councillor MacKinnon, and Councillor O'Rourke

Carried (11 to 0)

6. Adjournment

Moved By Mayor Guthrie

Seconded By Councillor Hofland

That the meeting be adjourned (3:30 p.m.).

Voting in Favour: (11): Mayor Guthrie, Councillor Allt, Councillor Bell, Councillor Billings, Councillor Gibson, Councillor Goller, Councillor Gordon, Councillor Hofland, Councillor Piper, Councillor MacKinnon, and Councillor O'Rourke

Carried (11 to 0)

Mayor Guthrie

Dylan McMahon – Deputy City Clerk

Staff Report



To	Committee of the Whole
Service Area	Corporate Services
Date	Monday, February 3, 2020
Subject	2020 Debt Management Policy Update
Report Number	CS-2020-02

Recommendation

That the Debt Management Policy as recommended through report titled 2020 Debt Management Policy Update dated February 3, 2020 and numbered CS-2020-02 be approved.

Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

This report covers the results of an in-depth policy review focused on updating the City's Debt Management Policy. A policy is required to establish criteria for the use of debt within the City's overall financial framework. This policy demonstrates to investors that the City has strong financial management principles and it ensures continuity and consistency is applied to financial decision-making. Debt policies should be reviewed periodically to ensure continued appropriateness given changing market conditions and industry standards. The key policy items under review were:

- The appropriate ratios to measure debt and acceptable debt limits
- Criteria for debt funded projects
- The effectiveness of internal lending
- Frequency of debt issuance
- Reporting on debt to Council

Key Findings

The City has a strong Debt Management Policy that has supported the City's capital plan and helped maintain the strong AA+ credit rating for the past seven years. The current policy is in many ways aligned with the debt policies used by other municipalities in Ontario, however an update is required to ensure the policy reflects the City's Strategic Plan and today's economic environment.

The following changes to the Debt Management Policy are recommended in order to improve financial flexibility, reduce financial vulnerability and ensure the objectives of the Council-approved Strategic Plan are achievable in a financially sustainable manner:

- Increased utilization of internal lending
- Improved debt reporting
- Expand project eligibility to include infrastructure renewal projects

- Comprehensive set of ratios and caps to indicate the appropriate level of indebtedness

Financial Implications

Adopting the recommendations of this report will allow the City to balance existing fiscal strategies with new methods of measuring and adapting to changing markets. These recommendations ensure that the City's financial health will remain strong while also addressing the challenge of maintaining service levels, accommodating growth and adapting to changing legislation in an equitable and sustainable manner.

Report

Project Approach

This policy review followed a ten-step process:

1. Review current policy to determine how it aligns with economic conditions and corporate strategic goals.
2. Review legislation as it relates to municipal debt management in Ontario
3. Research academic and media reports on municipal debt management both in Canada and abroad
4. Distil goals and source of concern associated with current policy into questions for comparator municipalities
5. Survey comparator municipalities on their debt management policies and practices
6. Consolidate data from survey into key points, addressing both changes that the City can make and instances where Guelph was aligned with the current standard practice
7. Compare the compiled data with the goals and objectives found in the Strategic Plan
8. Synthesize the results of this research into a recommendation for policy change
9. Ensure policy aligns with the goals of the Long-term Financial Framework

Current Policy and Key Issues

The current policy is ten years old, having been established on October 26, 2009. Although this policy has generally served the City well, there is room to improve on certain key points. This policy emphasizes several sets of controls, and prioritizes the improvement of the City's credit rating, which has indeed gone from AA to AA+ in the intervening time.

The current policy contains several hard limits and sets of criteria for debt and debt issuance, including a list of factors, which a project must meet before debt can be considered, and several limits on overall debt, measured in different manners.

The policy is very comprehensive and lays out the different borrowing methods used for long-term, medium, and short-term debt, as well as many helpful 'structural features' such as debt denomination and repayment terms in section 7.

The challenges with the current Debt Management Policy relate to the rigidity of the guidelines that make compliance difficult given today's financial planning environment. In particular, the direct debt to reserve ratio target of 1:1 is difficult to maintain and is not a meaningful measure of financial health or creditworthiness. The Development Charge (DC) debt servicing to collections ratio does not align with the DC charge calculation methodology, so keeping within the targets identified is counterproductive.

One of the goals of the Debt Management Policy review is to evaluate the limits identified in the policy to ensure that the most appropriate ratios are being used to control the level of indebtedness and that the limits imposed are meaningful measures that balance financial flexibility and financial sustainability.

Attachment-3 reflects the current Debt Management Policy (2009) as approved in report FIN-09-35.

Legislated Framework

Legislative constraints are key when crafting financial policy in Ontario, as municipalities are under stringent controls and regulations. The purpose of this report is not to perform a legislative review, but the important restrictions have been listed here:

- Municipalities can incur debt for municipal purposes, including¹
 - If authorized by another act to provide services jointly then municipalities can issue joint debt
 - For the purpose of a school board that falls within municipal borders, so long as the municipality is acting in accordance with the Education Act
- Municipalities can finance 'a work' in whole or in part by debentures so long as it has approved the issuance of debentures for the work.² These funds must be used for the work they were issued for³
- The municipality may authorize temporary borrowing at any time during the year, until taxes are collected, for any expense that they consider necessary to meet the needs of the municipality for that year
 - Between January 1 and September 30 this debt cannot exceed 50 per cent of the total estimated revenues of the municipality as set out in the budget.
 - Between October 1 and December 31 it cannot exceed 25 per cent of the total estimated revenue of the municipality.⁴
- Debentures can only be issued for long-term borrowing so long as they are providing financing for a capital work.⁵ They also shall not exceed the useful life of the capital work and under no circumstances shall they exceed 40 years.⁶
- Municipal debt is limited by the annual repayment limit (ARL), which is the maximum that a municipality can pay in principal and interest payments in one

¹ *Municipal Act, 2001* S.O. 2001 c.25 s. 401(1) (Ontario)

² *Municipal Act, 2001* S.O. 2001 c.25 s. 405(1)(a) (Ontario) – as municipal actions must be authorized by bylaw this is no exception, council must pass bylaws to approve each issuance of debt for a work

³ *Municipal Act, 2001* S.O. 2001 c.25 s. 405 (2) and s.413 (Ontario)

⁴ *Municipal Act, 2001* S.O. 2001 c.25 s. 407(2)(a)(b) (Ontario)

⁵ *Municipal Act, 2001* S.O. 2001 c.25 s. 408(2.1) (Ontario)

⁶ *Municipal Act, 2001* S.O. 2001 c.25 s. 408(3) (Ontario)

year; this is determined by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) for each municipality in Ontario.⁷ Typically, the ARL for most municipalities is 25% of the municipality's annual own source revenues, less their annual long-term debt servicing costs and annual payments for other long-term financial obligations⁸

Survey Results

The municipalities contacted during this survey were:

Group 1	Group 2
London	Pickering
Brantford	Orillia
Kingston	Peterborough
Ottawa	York Region
Windsor	Kitchener
Thunder Bay	Ottawa
Chatham-Kent	
Barrie	
Hamilton	

These municipalities fall into two categories, Group 1 which are municipalities similar to the City of Guelph, based on a balance of factors including population, location, and corporate structure, while Group 2 are municipalities with unique perspectives on issues affecting municipal debt.

Performing interviews led to an abundance of data that both confirmed some of the City's current practices and gave insight on where the City can improve.

Many of the common practices around the province, such as having an official debt management policy, are consistent with our existing practices. Additionally, in constructing this survey, we sought to find ways that other municipalities surpass our practices so that we could implement these measurements, metrics and caps. The questions asked in this survey focused on:

- Whether or not municipalities maintain an official debt policy
- Their reserve lending practices
- Criteria applied to determine whether projects can be debt funded
- What types of debt the municipality uses
- Debt limits and ratios used by the municipality to maintain financial health

⁷ *Municipal Act, 2001* S.O. 2001 c.25 (Ontario)

⁸ Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. "Understanding Municipal Debt." *Ontario.ca*, 23 Sept. 2019, www.ontario.ca/document/tools-municipal-budgeting-and-long-term-financial-planning/understanding-municipal-debt.

- Whether they have restrictions on the amortization periods they find acceptable
- The frequency with which debt is issued
- DC debt practices and ratios that are used specifically for DC debt
- Methods of reporting debt to Council

In many ways, the survey results emphasized that Guelph has excellent financial management practices. However, there are also opportunities for improving the status quo.

Through discussions with representatives of each of these municipalities, and reviewing their debt management policies provided a clear picture of the current industry standard in Ontario that has emerged. Ontario municipalities tend to behave in a manner similar to the City, which values flexibility and responsiveness in their financial policies, but balances this with prioritizing the requirements of credit rating agencies such as Standard & Poor's (S&P) or Moody's.

Some of the consistent findings across Ontario municipalities are:

- Typically most municipalities have a codified debt management policy
- Most Ontario municipalities engage in internal financing, typically they charge themselves interest at market or a rate equivalent to Infrastructure Ontario
- Most Ontario municipalities do not institute hard criteria for which type of projects can be debt funded, most prefer a flexible case-by-case approach where staff and Council can judge each project on its merits
- About half of the municipalities surveyed have a self-imposed debt limitation that is lower than the provincial requirements, however, the caps themselves vary a great deal and there appears to be no standard limit
- Although many municipalities monitor their debt-to-reserve ratio most do not have a stated goal. Those that do use the industry standard of 1:1
- Most municipalities determine the amortization period of their loans based on provincial regulations rather than setting their own internal limits
- Municipalities typically issue debt annually, sometimes skipping a year if it is not necessary
- Most municipalities report debt to Council using the annual budget process

Although many of these practices are consistent with the City's current policy, it has helped to inform staff of where the City can improve their current financial management strategy.

Academic Results

This review involved extensive research on academic and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)⁹ advice for municipalities and local governments managing their debt. While it is difficult to find a set of cohesive recommendations from this research, as it spanned many countries and regulatory frameworks, some common themes emerged. It is a commonly held truth that particularly in the face of increased downloading of services to local governments, debt is necessary and healthy for a municipality trying to meet their growing needs and address the infrastructure gap. Almost unanimously the advice leans towards creating a set of indicators and ratios that allow the local government to control debt in a way that is

⁹ This includes organizations such as the Government Finance Officers Association, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank

prudent for their situation without unnecessarily constraining government action. Additionally, most sources agree that local governments who choose to rely on debt should prioritize protecting their credit rating. The prevailing advice is to set constraints and indicators that will keep the municipality from overspending and taking out excessive debt during growth periods, while also maintaining flexibility so they can appropriately respond to crisis.

This is a brief summary of the findings; however, the full findings can be obtained from staff.

Findings and Recommendations

Internal Lending

Current Policy

The City's policy on internal lending is in line with the industry standard in Ontario. It allows for internal lending from one reserve fund to another so long as it will not adversely affect the intended purpose of the lending reserve fund.

The City's current policy comprehensively lays out the benefits of this practice, including increased flexibility of being able to set its own loan terms, lower costs of interest (as all interest is returned to the City rather than being paid to a third party lender), and savings in legal and fiscal agent fees. Despite this, the City has not taken advantage of the internal lending option to the extent that it could; having only internal borrowed once in 2014. The City does informally lend between reserves and reserve funds in that "like" reserve and reserve funds are managed in total and any negative balances are required to provide interest at the City's actual annual investment rate of return.

This use of internal debt in 2014 was a good learning experience and was approved to temporarily bridge an external debenture by borrowing from the Water and Wastewater Capital Reserve Funds for the Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health facilities, Baker Street land acquisition, Solid Waste carts and the Hanlon/Laird interchange. The term of the internal loan was two years and paid a rate of return of 2.3% (based on the expected rate of return on the City's investment portfolio for that period). External debentures in that same timeframe were costed at 2.75%, representing a \$148 thousand savings in interest payments over the term of the loan.

Legislation

The Provincial legislation mandates the City to maintain certain reserves and reserve funds, however there are no restrictions in place relating to internal reserve lending.

Academic and Survey Results

Internal lending has not attracted a great deal of interest from academics or credit rating agencies. However, in speaking to other Ontario municipalities it is clear that internal lending is widely practiced. Almost all municipalities who engage in this practice charge themselves interest on these internal loans to compensate the lending reserve fund for the lost interest revenue they would have otherwise received.

Most municipalities do not have policies that limit the use or term of the internal lending, however, survey respondents indicated it is typically used for short-term borrowing only.

Internal lending is in-line with one of the recommendations that the World Bank makes for local governments in their 2017 book *Municipal Finance: a Handbook for Local Governments*, which recommends municipalities pursue creative alternatives to debt when seeking to maintain good financial health.¹⁰

Municipalities typically do not have additional accounting methods of addressing the complications that come with internal borrowing. It can present difficulties, as it does not show up on a balance sheet the same way a regular loan does. It is recommended by representatives from Pickering and Orillia, that all internal loans be accompanied by a promissory note signed by the Treasurer which lays out the terms of the loan. Although these notes are somewhat duplicative of the authorization by-laws passed by Council, they can assist with accounting principles and with keeping the terms of the loan in a concrete and accessible form that is easy for everyone to view.

Unanimously, municipalities who engage in this practice stated that it had not had an effect on their credit rating. Despite the fact that this practice does not have academic or rating agency data backing it up, it appears to be a new standard practice. These short-term loans can be used when cash flow is sufficient and to prevent the issuance of small debentures, which may not be optimal for marketing.

Recommendation

While the current policy allows for the use of internal lending, there has only been one formal lending arrangement in the last ten years. Municipal survey results have revealed that internal lending is becoming increasingly more common due to the benefits relating to: savings in debt servicing costs, added flexibility, and funding solutions for short-term funding needs. It would be advisable to employ internal lending more frequently in the capital planning process, using improved authorization guidelines to improve consistency and continuity. When the amount being loaned exceeds \$1 million the formal process should be followed, for lesser amounts the section regarding interest rate applicable will still apply.

Frequency of Issuance

Current Policy

The current Debt Management Policy does not set out a specific time frame for the frequency of issuing debt. However, the City's current practice is to issue debt as needed, in accordance with the debt continuity schedule that forecasts debt-funded projects and debt needs over the long-term.

Legislation

There are no regulations or legislation to dictate how frequently municipalities can or should issue debt.

¹⁰ D. Farvacque-Vitkovic, Catherine, and Mihaly Kopanyi. *Municipal Finances: A Handbook for Local Governments*. World Bank Publications, 2014.

Academic and Survey Results

Most municipalities report that they issue debt as needed or issue it annually. Issuing annually allows municipalities to isolate themselves from economic fluctuations and avoid being forced to issue debt in an unfavourable market.

The frequency that a municipality issues debt is not a measurement that S&P uses to gauge municipality's financial health, as long as the issuance was planned and within the corporate thresholds, it will not have an impact on the credit score.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the City maintain the current approach to issuing debt as needed and planned through the capital budget forecast. Increasing the utilization of internal borrowing may extend the timeframes required for issuing external debt as well.

Council Debt Reporting

Current Policy

The current policy does not specifically address the way that debt is reported to Council. Debt is typically addressed through the budget process or when Council authorizes each individual debt issuance. Further, there is annual debt reporting through the audited financial statement presentations to Council. Debt plays a key role in the achievement of Council-directed strategic goals and is an important indicator of financial health. Improved debt reporting to Council and stakeholders will provide greater context to the capital budget discussion and contribute to more informed decision-making.

Legislation

There is no legislation or regulation that dictates how debt is communicated to Council. However, under provincial legislation all municipal actions must be taken by way of a by-law, including each instance of debt issuance.

Academic and Survey Results

Most municipalities in Ontario take a similar tactic as the City, debt is presented through the budgeting process or through the individual by-laws that Council passes. However, several municipalities employ additional communication tools to assist staff and Council in remaining consistent in their interpretation about debt and financial practices. Two of the surveyed municipalities engage in a 'bird's eye view' presentation of the municipality's finances about a month before the budget is prepared, including a section on debt. Additionally, one municipality employs a 'debt fact sheet' that is also distributed prior to preparing the budget in order to ensure that staff and Council are aware of the current state of the municipality's finances. Please find as Attachment-2 - Municipality of Chatham-Kent – Debt Fact Sheet the annual debt fact sheet used by the Municipality of Chatham-Kent.

Recommendation

Although the current approach is adequate, there are several alternate methods that municipalities engage in which could be used to further Council's understanding of the City's debt situation. The recommended options include:

- A debt management fact sheet that lays out the current state of the City's finances, as part of the Annual Financial Statements

- A bird's eye view of the City's finances presented to Council just prior to budget season every July
- A dedicated finance presentation to Council with several slides dedicated to debt, as part of the annual budget presentation

Criteria for Debt Funded Projects

Current Policy

The City currently has an extensive list of criteria that a project must meet before it is eligible to be funded by debt:

- the individual project value exceeds \$500,000
- the estimated useful life of the asset is greater than 10 years
- the project has been approved by Council as part of the annual capital budget and has been clearly identified as being funded by debt
- it is an appropriate means to achieve a fair allocation of costs between current and future beneficiaries or users
- the project is supported by a comprehensive business case including
 - total cost of the project
 - cash flow of the project including debt issuance
 - operating costs after completion of the project
 - benefits to the community
- funding cannot be accommodated within the tax or rate supported capital budget, and other internal sources (such as borrowing from reserve funds) and external sources (such as senior government grants and subsidies, private / public partnerships, or user-pay systems) have been thoroughly investigated
- the issuance cannot be used to fund current operations

It is the City's current policy to only use debt funding for growth-related projects and City building projects. All infrastructure renewal projects are to be funded on a pay-as-you-go approach. This is a challenge as the City's infrastructure is aging and replacement needs put significant pressure on the tax and rate supported reserve funds. More flexibility is needed to accommodate projects that need to be moved forward.

Legislation

Municipalities are permitted to take on short-term debt of under one year in order to finance operating costs; the exact amounts they are permitted to finance using this type of debt is dependent on the point in time in the fiscal year.¹¹

Academic and Survey Results

Of the municipalities surveyed for this report, most did not use a set of specific criteria to determine which projects were permitted to take on debt, with the exception of not allowing debt for operational costs, which is a universal practice. Throughout the survey, this held true for both: what portion of the project needed to be funded before considering debt, and criteria for individual projects and restrictions of debt by asset class. One of the municipalities surveyed currently has a minimum threshold for internal funding which a project must meet before debt can be used. However, they are finding this practice unnecessary and are seeking

¹¹ *Municipal Act, 2001* S.O. 2001 c.25 s. 407(2)(a)(b) (Ontario)

to reconsider it shortly. The policy is unnecessarily restrictive and does not serve the intended purpose, as those surveyed observed that there is no functional difference between having three projects that are 30% debt-funded and one project that is 100% debt-funded. None of these measures for restricting debt to only certain projects are popular in Ontario. Most municipalities take a project-by-project based approach where the appropriateness of debt can be determined between Council and staff. This flexible option allows staff and Council the freedom to judge each debt issuance on its individual merits and weight it against the City's current financial situation and strategic goals, which may have changed a great deal after the initial policy decisions were made.

Many of the municipalities surveyed do make a habit of waiting until a substantial portion of work has been started, or even completed before issuing debt. This is not typically codified in their policies but most feel it is a more prudent strategy to fund projects through reserve funds and then reimburse the reserve funds using debt.

Recommendation

The criteria in the new policy should be updated to reflect the following changes:

- Allow debt to be used for significant infrastructure renewal projects to improve the City's ability to respond to replacement needs as they arise.
- The threshold requirements should be increased to \$5,000,000 per project, and the useful life of the asset should not be less than 20 years.
- Special circumstances may require issuance of shorter life assets where the quantity or value dictates, these will be identified as approved.

Appropriate Debt Ratios and Limitations

Current Policy

The City's current policy has four limitations:

1. Direct debt as a percentage of operating revenue not to exceed 55%
2. Debt servicing costs should not exceed 10% of operating revenues
3. DC debt servicing should not exceed 20% of the average revenue forecast from the DC Background Study for non-discounted services and should not exceed 10% for all other DC reserve funds
4. 1:1 direct debt to reserve ratio

Legislation

Legislated limitations prohibit municipalities from running a deficit and over-leveraging their financial position. Municipalities may not borrow to fund operating costs, beyond the end of their fiscal year. Additionally, municipalities are obligated to keep their borrowing under the ARL. This debt limit is set by the province for each municipality and sets the maximum amount that a municipality can pay in principal and interest that year. This limitation is 25% of the municipality's own source revenue.

The legislation states that the amortization period for debt is limited to the expected life of the asset and absolutely limited at 40 years.¹²

¹² *Municipal Act, 2001* S.O. 2001 c.25 s. 408(3) (Ontario)

The MMAH recommends that municipalities use the following for monitoring their own debt:

- Debt charges per capita
- Debt charges as a percentage of revenue
- Debt charges as a percentage of municipal levy

The MMAH advises that these ratios can be monitored using data taken from the annual Financial Information Return (FIR) reports to compare these ratios with others around the province.

Academic and Survey Results

Most municipalities surveyed do not have limitations on debt other than the ARL. However, it is likely prudent to have one, as it is a metric looked at by credit rating agencies and there are no adverse effects reported by the municipalities that do have them.¹³

In the 2017 book “Financial Policies”¹⁴ published by the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) it is recommended that when determining appropriate debt ratios, the first step is to consider the indicators that will be used. The two main types are (1) ratios that measure the budgetary impact of debt and (2) the ratios that measure the community’s ability to support debt. Once the measurements have been chosen, then the appropriate level can be determined by balancing financial health with organizational goals.

One of the key indicators that was reassessed during this survey was the use of the 1:1 debt to reserve ratio. This is the ratio that the City currently uses to measure the amount that should be held in reserve. Many of the municipalities surveyed used a variation of this measurement. The International Monetary Fund similarly endorses it¹⁵ for use by national and regional governments. However, the manner in which it has been applied by the City does not align with the way it is employed by credit rating agencies and other municipalities. A more robust financial picture emerges when looking at other similar indicators, which help determine the amount that should be held in reserve.

The City’s credit rating agency, S&P, evaluates credit worthiness through a weighted assessment of six factors; institutional framework, economy, financial management, budgetary performance, liquidity, debt burden (see Table A: Breakdown of City’s Credit Rating Score). Total debt-to-operating revenues and debt servicing-to-operating revenues are the key indicators to determine the ‘score’ for debt.

¹³ Some municipalities have noted that they find it difficult to comply with their debt caps. These caps are typically in the 7-15% range, suggesting that a higher limitation is more appropriate

¹⁴ Kavanagh, Shayne, and Government Finance Officers Association. *Financial Policies*. Government Finance Officers Association, 2012.

¹⁵ Standard and Poors Financial Services LLC. “Methodology for Rating Local and Regional Governments Outside of the U.S.” *S&P Global Ratings*, 2019, pp. 1–18.

Table A: Breakdown of City's credit rating score

Key Rating Factors	City's score 2019 (1 is highest, 6 is the weakest)
Institutional Framework	2
Economy	1
Financial Management	2
Budgetary Performance	2
Liquidity	1
Debt Burden	1

The City's direct debt-to-operating revenue ratio is 22.6% in 2018 and the debt servicing-to-operating revenue ratio is 4%. Based on the criteria above, S&P determined that the City's credit score is an AA+. The review board cautioned that the rating could be downgraded if the City were to pursue an aggressive capital plan absent of operating revenue growth sufficient to prevent a material erosion of operating balances, large after-capital deficits and a tax-supported debt burden greater than 30%. Table B: Assessment of a Local and Regional Government's Debt Burden illustrates how the debt indicators (total debt-to-operating revenue and debt servicing-to-operating revenue indicators) inform the score for debt burden. It is important to note that there is not just one debt ratio considered in isolation when determining the credit rating score. The credit rating metric evaluates debt-related indicators in combination with liquidity levels, operating revenues and capital expenditures.

Table B: Assessment of a Local and Regional Government's Debt Burden

Interest as a % of Operating Revenue	Tax-supported debt as a percentage of operating revenue <30%	Tax-supported debt as a percentage of operating revenue 30<60%	Tax-supported debt as a percentage of operating revenue 60<120%	Tax-supported debt as a percentage of operating revenue 120<240%	Tax-supported debt as a percentage of operating revenue 240% and above
<5%	1	2	3	4	5
5%-10%	2	3	4	4	5
>10%	3	4	5	5	5

If the City were to exceed the 30% total debt-to-operating revenue ratio, the score would shift from '1' to '2' which would have a negative impact on the overall rating, *ceteris paribus*.

Recommendations

1. Debt servicing costs should not exceed 10% of operating revenues

Debt servicing as a percentage of operating revenue measures the relative cost of debt to the City's budget and inversely indicates the level of funding available to provide programs and services. Maintaining a cost of less than 10% will ensure a strong credit rating score and an appropriate allocation of resources to the provision of programs and services.

2. Direct debt as a percentage of operating revenue not to exceed 55%

The credit rating review agencies consider the total debt to consolidated operating revenues as the most appropriate measure for international comparisons. Staff are recommending that this be set as a hard limit of 55%.

3. DC debt servicing not have prescribed limit, instead DC debt be limited as part of the overall the total debt to operating revenue ratios.

In the previous Debt Policy, DC debt servicing was limited to not exceed 20% of the average revenue forecast from the DC Background Study for non-discounted services and 10% for all other DC reserve funds. This was put in place because DC cash flows are considered to be higher risk due to the reliance on external factors to generate the revenues. The City's Debt Management Policy should aim to protect the City from undue risk associated with fluctuations to the development industry and changes to the DC legislation, while providing the flexibility to achieve the growth-related goals of the City. To this end, staff are recommending managing the use of debt for DC projects on a service-by-service basis, ensuring that the expectations regarding level and rate of growth are appropriate for the level of debt required for asset financing. There are several major debt-funded projects identified in the 2018 DC Background Study, these have been reviewed and are deemed to fit this criteria. To support and compliment the DC Background Study the City is working to develop a Growth Costing Policy which will assist in establishing appropriate levels of debt related to growth including DC debt.

4. 1:1 outstanding debt to reserve and reserve fund balance ratio

Total debt to reserves and reserve funds is an indicator measured and reported by most municipalities, even if they do not officially enforce a limit.

The International Monetary Fund has stated that the benchmark of 1:1 for general government debt, not specifically municipalities, is useful but limited. They recommend that it should be supplemented with location specific indicators that can more clearly indicate the government's liquidity, income streams and ability to manage in crisis.¹⁶

The current policy recommends a ratio of 1:1; however, this rigid standard may not be appropriate given the capital forecast and the long-term funding strategy over the next 20 years.

¹⁶ International Monetary Fund. "Debt and Reserve Related Indicators of External Vulnerability." *IMF.Org*, Mar. 2000, www.imf.org/external/np/pdr/debtres.

5. Debt servicing costs to reserve and reserve fund balance ratio of 14:1 (minimum)

When measuring financial health and creditworthiness, S&P evaluates the level of liquidity against expenses and debt servicing costs in particular. It is recommended that 12 months of debt servicing costs be available in the discretionary reserves and reserve funds. This is a best practice supported by the World Bank's recommendation to have on hand the funds to service several months of debt.¹⁷

It is recommended that the Debt Management Policy use the discretionary reserve and reserve funds to debt servicing costs ratio to indicate how many years the City could pay for debt serving obligations in the absence of new revenue. The City's current ratio is 16:1 before commitments, which supports the highest possible score for liquidity in the S&P credit rating evaluation.

6. Debt per capita and Debt per Assessment Value

The measure of the community's ability to support debt is important for the broader financial condition for the City. Both the Debt per capita and Debt per Assessed Value are good indicators of the community's ability to meet debt obligations and will be calculated and reported to Council on an annual basis.

Financial Implications

Adopting the recommendations of this report will allow the City to balance fiscal strategies with new methods of measuring and adapting to changing markets. These recommendations ensure that the City's financial health will remain strong while also rising to the challenge of maintaining service levels, accommodating growth and changing legislation in an equitable and sustainable manner.

Long-term Financial Framework alignment

This policy aligns with the three pillars of the Long-term Financial Framework as per the below items, these ensure that this policy will guide strategic decision making that is aligned with the City's long-term financial strategy.

Sustainability – Targeted percentage of revenue

Vulnerability – Maximum percentage leveraged

Flexibility – Prescribed purposes and types

Consultations

Survey of comparator municipalities

Strategic Plan Alignment

The policy statement in the Debt Management Policy has been updated to reflect the priorities of the new Strategic Plan.

"Ensure adequate infrastructure, services and resources to support existing and growing communities", aligns with the Building Our Future priority and,

¹⁷ D. Farvacque-Vitkovic, Catherine, and Mihaly Kopanyi. *Municipal Finances: A Handbook for Local Governments*. World Bank Publications, 2014.

"That new debt be planned at a level which will optimize borrowing costs and not impair the financial position of the City" aligns with Working Together For Our Future priority.

Attachments

Attachment-1 – 2020 Debt Management Policy

Attachment-2 - Municipality of Chatham Kent – Debt Fact Sheet

Attachment-3 – 2009 Debt Management Policy

Departmental Approval

Christel Gregson, CPA, CMA Senior Corporate Analyst

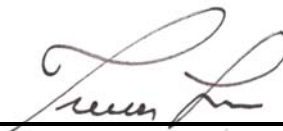
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Corporate Policy and Procedure



Policy	Debt Management Policy
Category	Finance
Authority	Council
Related Policies	General Reserve and Reserve Fund Policy, Investment Policy
Approved By	Council
Effective Date	Sunday, March-01-2020
Revision Date	Each term of Council

1. Policy Statement

It is the policy of the City of Guelph to

- Ensure adequate infrastructure, services and resources to support existing and growing communities
- Ensure new debt be planned at a level which will optimize borrowing costs and not impair the financial position of the City
- Ensure debt is structured in a way that is fair and equitable to those who pay for and benefit from the underlying assets over time

2. Purpose

The purpose of this debt management policy is to

- Establish financial guidelines and appropriate benchmarks for the issuance and use of debt in the City of Guelph
 - Ensure long-term financial flexibility and sustainability
 - Limit financial vulnerability
 - Integrate with other long-term planning, financial and management objectives of the City
 - Assist with ensuring that the municipality maintains a sound financial position and that the worthiness of the City's credit rating is protected
 - Ensure that the City's financial practices comply with statutory requirements
-

3. Definitions

Annual Repayment Limit

Under Regulation 403 /02: Debt and Financial Obligation Limits, this limit represents the maximum amount which the municipality has available to commit to payments relating to debt and financial obligations without seeking the approval of the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB). This limit is provided annually to a municipality by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH), additionally this limit must be updated by the City Treasurer prior to Council authorizing any increase in debt-financing for capital expenditures.

Business Case

An analysis that demonstrates the necessity for and viability of a new project. A business case will include a financial analysis and a financial plan that identifies and confirms sources of funding to provide for the financial plan that identifies and confirms sources of funding to provide for the financing of the capital and operating costs of a new project.

Capital Expenditure

An expenditure incurred to acquire develop renovate or replace capital assets as defined by the Public Sector Accounting Board (PSAB), section 3150.

Debenture

A formal written obligation to pay specific sums on certain dates. In the case of a municipality, debentures are typically unsecured i.e. backed by general credit rather than by specified assets.

Debt

Any obligation for the payment of money. For Ontario municipalities, debt would typically consist of debentures as well as either notes or cash loans from financial institutions. Could also include loans from reserves or reserve funds. Debentures issued to Infrastructure Ontario are also considered debt.

Debt Service Costs

Debt repayments, including interest and principal (per FIR 74-3099).

Development Charge (DC) Collections

Charges collected from new development, at building permit issuance to help fund the cost of infrastructure required to accommodate growth.

Development Charge (DC) Debt

Debt issued for Council-approved growth related infrastructure, identified in the Development Charge (DC) Background Study, to be repaid exclusively with DC collections.

Direct Debt

Means the total debt burden of the City (per FIR 74-9910). It includes all debt issued by the City and consolidated entities less all debt assumed by others.

Flexibility

The ability of the City to issue new debt in response to emerging financing needs.

Financial Information Return (FIR)

Data collection reports providing statistical information on municipalities, as provided by the MMAH.

Infrastructure

Large-scale public systems, services, and facilities of the City that are necessary for economic activity in the community, including water and wastewater systems, roads, and buildings / facilities.

Internal Funding

Funding provided from one City reserve fund to another, to fund specific short-term projects. These funds will be repaid from the receiving fund to the lending fund in accordance with a promissory note.

Non-tax Supported Debt

Debt issued for capital expenditures related to non-tax supported operations. This debt is repaid using net revenue fund revenues.

Non-tax Supported Operations

Municipal services that are funded through water, wastewater and stormwater rate revenues.

Operating Revenue

Total revenue fund revenue per line 9910 of FIR schedule 10 less other revenue (10-1899), less grants received (10-0699 and 10-0899), less revenue from other municipalities (10-1099).

Own-Source Revenue

Revenue for a fiscal year, excluding:

- a) grants from the Government of Ontario or Canada or from another municipality;
- b) proceeds from the sale of real property;
- c) contributions or net transfers from a Reserve Fund or reserve;
- d) Government of Ontario revenues received for the purpose of repaying the principal and interest of long-term debt, toward meeting financial obligations of the municipality; and
- e) other municipality or school board receipts for the purposes of repayment of the principal and interest on long-term debt of the municipality borrowed for the exclusive purpose of the other municipality or school board.

Promissory Note

To enable the use of internal funding Council will authorize a promissory note which will lay out the terms of the loan, including amount, length of time, and rate of interest.

Sustainable

Meeting present needs without compromising the ability to meet future needs.

Statutory Annual Debt Repayment Limit

The annual debt and financial obligation limit for municipalities as described under Ontario Regulation 403/02. The regulation provides a formula which limits annual debt service costs to an amount equal to 25% of operating revenue.

Tax Supported Debt

Debt issued for capital expenditures related to tax supported operations. This debt is repaid using net revenue fund revenues.

Tax Supported Operations

Civic programs that are funded through net revenue fund revenues, such as roads, transit, and parks.

Term Loan

A short-term loan which is repaid in regular instalments over a set period of time, as laid out in the enabling documents.

4. Statutory Requirements

Capital financing may only be undertaken if and when it is in compliance with the relevant sections of the Municipal Act, the Local Improvement Act, or the Tile Drainage Act, and their related regulations. These requirements include, but are not limited to:

- The term of temporary or short-term debt for operating purposes will not exceed the current fiscal year;
- The term of capital financing will not exceed the lesser of 40 years or the useful life of the underlying asset;
- Long-term debt will only be issued for capital projects;
- The total annual financing charges cannot exceed the Annual Repayment Limit (ARL), as applicable, unless approved by the OMB;
- Prior to entering into a lease financing agreement, an analysis will be prepared that assesses the costs as well as the financial and other risks associated with the proposed lease with other methods of financing;
- Prior to passing a debenture by-law which provides that installments of principal or interest, or both, are not payable during the period of construction of an undertaking, Council will have considered all financial and other risks related to the proposed construction financing.

5. Purposes for Which Debt May Be Issued

The City may borrow by debenture, mortgage or other acceptable debt instrument to finance capital expenditures that support corporate priorities and approved strategic plan, while using the following guidelines to determine on a case-by-case basis whether the use of debt is appropriate:

- Whether the individual project value exceeds \$5,000,000
- Whether the estimated useful life of the asset is greater than 20 years
- Whether the project has been approved by Council as part of the annual capital budget and has been clearly identified as being funded by debt
- Whether it is an appropriate means to achieve a fair allocation of costs between current and future beneficiaries or users
- Whether the project is supported by a comprehensive business case
- The total cost of the project
- The cash flow of the project including debt issuance

- The operating costs after completion of the project
- Funding of the capital expenditure cannot be accommodated within the tax supported capital budgets, rate supported capital budgets, development charge capital budgets, and other internal sources (such as borrowing from reserve funds) and external sources (such as senior government grants and subsidies, private / public partnerships, or user-pay systems) have been thoroughly investigated
- A sustainable funding source has been identified

The City will not use long-term debt to fund current operations.

6. Limitations on Indebtedness

6.1 Statutory Limitations –ARL

The 2020 ARL is based on the City's 2018 FIR. The City is not allowed under Provincial regulation to issue debt which would result in the annual repayment limit being exceeded without OMB approval.

6.2 Self Imposed Limitations

Notwithstanding the limits prescribed in the regulations, prudent financial management calls for more stringent criteria to limit debt. These criteria will assist in preserving borrowing capacity for future capital assets while maintaining maximum flexibility for current operating funds. See Attachment A for details of calculations.

6.2.1 Direct Debt to Operating Revenue

This measure identifies the percentage of annual operating revenues that would be required to retire the City's net debt. It is also the prime measure used by Standard and Poor's when assessing the debt burden of the municipality. A target rate of less than 55% should be maintained.

6.2.2 Debt Service Cost to net Revenue Fund Revenue

This ratio is a measure of the principal and interest payable annually as a proportion of revenue fund revenues. It should not exceed a target of 10%.

6.2.3 Debt Servicing to Discretionary Reserve Ratio

This ratio is used to determine how many years the City could pay for debt servicing obligations in the absence of new revenue. A target of 14:1 should be maintained.

6.2.4 Development Charge (DC) debt assessment

This assessment will be used to ensure that each approved DC service that requires debt is able to provide sustainable cash flows and the ability to collect sufficient funds to retire the debt.

7. Types of Debt

7.1 Short-term (Under One Year)

Interim financing for capital assets pending long-term capital financing, may be accommodated through internal funding (see section 8.2 and 11.3)

7.2 Medium-term (One – Four Years)

Medium-term financing requirements, for periods greater than one year but less than five years will be financing through any one or combination of the following. The financial commitments for existing and anticipated leases for the current fiscal year are to be included in the calculation of the City's financial debt and obligation limit.

- Internal funding
- Term loan

7.3 Long-term

Long-term debt consists of debentures or other form of debt issued to the City to finance assets over a period of not less than five years and not more than 40 years. Options include:

- Municipal serial or amortized debentures
- Long-term bank loans if deemed cost effective. These loans may be fixed or variable interest rate loans as determined by the Treasurer

8. Methods of Marketing/Selling Debenture Issues

8.1 External Debenture securities may be sold by the following means:

- a) Debt issuance syndicate. The use of a debt issuance syndicate will be the normal method by which debentures will be sold by the City; or
- b) Tender. A tender process may be used when and if significant savings could be expected when compared to issuing through a debt issuance syndicate.

8.2 Internal Funding

The City has the general power pursuant to section 417 of the Municipal Act, 2001, SO 2001, c. 25 to apply reserve funds to a purpose other than that for which the fund was established. This includes the making of an internal loan from reserve funds in order to finance capital projects of the City. When the value of internal loan

exceeds \$1 million a formal process is required as prescribed here. In all other cases the rate of interest payable is to be calculated the same as prescribed here.

The municipality may elect to borrow from internal sources using reserve funds, provided that excess funds are available and the use of these funds will not impact the reserve funds current operations. Internal reserve borrowings will pay a variable interest rate to the lending reserve/reserve fund, based on the annual average rate of return on investments and will be evidenced by documentation as required by legal services, including repayment schedule.

When an analysis of the reserve or reserve fund has determined that excess funds are available and that the use of these funds will not adversely affect the intended purpose of the reserve or reserve fund, the City's reserve funds may be used as a source of financing for short to long-term purposes. The reserves will be repaid with interest at a rate based on the actual annual average balance of the reserve fund and the City's rate of return on investments.

9. Structural Features

9.1 Debt Denomination

The City shall issue debt denominated in Canadian dollars only.

9.2 Fixed Interest

The City shall issue general obligation debt with a fixed rate of interest. Interest rate swap agreements may be used to exchange floating-rate interest payments for fixed-rate interest payments.

9.3 Repayment Terms

The repayment term will be dependent on the useful life of the asset being acquired by the City, and should not exceed 40 years.

9.4 Debt Structure

9.4.1 Debt shall be structured in a manner that provides a fair allocation of costs to current and future users.

9.4.2 Debt shall be structured to achieve the lowest possible net cost to the City given market conditions, the type of debt being issued, and the nature and type of the repayment source.

9.5 Repayment

9.5.1 Unless otherwise justified and deemed necessary, the repayment schedule should be structured on a level or declining payments basis.

9.5.2 Early repayment of debt may be considered if it is financially beneficial to do so.

10. Credit Objectives

10.1 Credit Rating

The capital financing program will be managed in a manner to maintain an adequate credit rating by a credit rating agency used by the City (e.g. Standard and Poor's, "AA+" rating).

A key element of maintaining an adequate credit rating will be to ensure that the timing, amount and type of capital financing will be assessed as being appropriate to the long-term needs of the City as well as being seen as balanced against other forms of financing.

Particular attention shall be paid to the key indicators used by credit rating agencies as part of the debt management process in order to maintain the City's credit worthiness, including:

- Debt to operating revenues
- Debt servicing costs as a percentage of own source revenues
- Liquidity
- After capital balances
- Other long-term liabilities

11. Authorization

11.1 Approval Funding for Capital Projects

The approval to fund an eligible capital project by debenture will generally be sought through the annual capital budget process. The funding of emerging strategic priorities outside of the traditional budget process shall be approved by specific by-law.

11.2 Debenture Issue

Each debenture issue shall be approved by specific by-law of Council including the term, rates of interest, debt servicing obligation, and general terms of issue.

11.3 Internal Borrow

Each such loan is to be authorized by a specific by-law passed by Council and set out the amount, interest, term of the loan, and the specific reserve or reserve fund from which the loan is made. Borrowing in this manner offers several advantages over traditional debenture financing including the following:

- Increased flexibility in setting loan terms,
- Lower interest cost, and
- Avoidance of legal and fiscal agent fees.

For the approval of each internal loan the specific details must, at a minimum, include the following:

- Start date
- Loan type
- Loan amount
- Loan period
- Loan rate
- The loan rate will reflect the City's all-in cost of funding for a similar term and structure at the time of the actual loan, as determined by the Treasurer
- Repayment frequency
- Legal Documentation

Upon full approval, legal services must be consulted to determine the appropriate legal documentation required between the lender and the borrower.

The legal documentation must include:

- The resolution number and date of the associated Council report
- The specific details of the internal loan as agreed to by the Treasurer
- The Deputy Chief Administrative Officer of the requesting department must provide sign-off of the loan request

11.4 Calculation of Debt Limitation Ratios

The Treasurer shall have authority to modify the calculation of the prescribed debt limit ratios as set out in Appendix A via notification to Council, in so far as changes in the FIR or other related schedules and statements is required.

12. Administration

12.1 When Borrowing Will Occur

The borrowing to finance capital projects will normally occur once the projects are essentially completed.

12.2 Issuance Costs

When feasible, debt issuances will be pooled to minimize issuance costs.

13. Reporting Requirements

13.1 Reports to Council

The Treasurer shall submit to Council, at a minimum annually, a report that provides:

- Total debt outstanding
- Annual principal and interest payments
- Report debt ratios as prescribed in section 6 above, forecasted over 25 years
- Forecasted debt issuance over the 10 year horizon
- Debt per Capita ratio

- Debt per Assessment Value

14. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed with each new term of Council.

Appendix A – Method of calculation of self-imposed limitations

For ratios calculate using the FIR, the number shown is the schedule –line combination, e.g. 10-9910,1 is Schedule 10 line 9910 column 1

6.2.1 Direct Debt to Operating Revenue

Calculated using the annual FIR as Debt Outstanding/Net Operating Revenue

FIR Cell	Description	Amount
70-2010,1	Temporary Loans	-
74A-0299,1	Total Outstanding Debt	92,963,691
74A-0499,1	Debt Assumed from Others	3,467,985
Less:	N/A	N/A
74A-0899,1	Debt Retirement Funds	
74A-1099,1	Sinking Fund Balances	0
74A-0610,1	Ontario assumed debt	0
74A-0620,1	School board assumed debt	0
Total	Debt Outstanding	96,431,676
10-0991,1	Total Revenues	484,508,861
Less:	N/A	N/A
10-0815,1	Ontario TCA Grants	521,713
10-0825,1	Canada TCA Grants	841,251
10-0830,1	Deferred revenue (Prov Gas)	710,045
10-0831,1	Deferred revenue (Fed Gas)	10,697,580
10-1098,1	Revenue from other municipalities TCA	590,620
10-1811,1	Gain/loss on sale of assets	277,886
10-1813,1	Deferred revenue (Cash-in-Lieu)	1,542,524

FIR Cell	Description	Amount
10-1814,1	Other deferred revenue	0
10-1830,1	Donations	395,177
10-1831,1	Donated TCA	9,560
10-1865,1	Other revenue from gov Business	0
10-1890,1	Direct developer charges	277,551
10-1891,1	Partner contributions	661,954
10-1905,1	Increase/decrease in gov business equity	6,703,552
12-1210,1	General assistance (Provincial)	9,167,113
60-1025,1	Development Charges (TCA)	17,754,370
76-1020,1	Dividends Paid gov business	2,000,000
Total	Net Operating Revenue	432,357,965
Ratio	2018 Year End	22%

6.2.2 Debt Service Cost to Net Operating Revenue

Calculated using the annual FIR as total debt charges/net operating revenue

FIR Cell	Description	Amount
74C-3099,1	Debt Charges – Principal	14,831,000
74C-3099,2	Debt Charges- Interest	3,324,381
Total	Total Debt Charges	18,155,381
Total	Net Operating Revenue (from 6.2.1)	432,357,965
Ratio	2018 Year End	4.2%

6.2.2 Debt Servicing to Discretionary Reserve Ratio

Calculated using the annual FIR as total debt charges/discretionary reserve and reserve fund balance

FIR Cell	Description	Amount
Total	Total Debt Charges (from 6.2.2)	18,155,381
60-2099,2	Balance year end, Discretionary Reserve Funds	174,955,612

FIR Cell	Description	Amount
60-2099,3	Balance year end, Discretionary Reserves	42,722,721
Total	Balance year end	217,678,333
Ratio	2018 Year End	12:1

6.2.2 Development Charge (DC) debt assessment

As each situation with regards to debt requirements for DC funded projects is unique there is no single calculation. The process will involve evaluating the overall level of debt compared to potential revenues under a variety of assumptions. The minimum requirement is that both the rate of growth and the total amount of growth must be reviewed to ensure that any change in these critical variable will not leave the City at financial risk.

FACT SHEET ON MUNICIPAL DEBT

January 2018

This document discusses some common questions asked about Chatham-Kent's use of debt to finance various projects.

1. Why does Chatham-Kent need to borrow?

Borrowing is a way to finance capital projects and maintain major infrastructure over the longer term. Like most businesses, municipalities may borrow a portion of their capital requirements and pay it back over the life of the project being financed. Municipalities do not borrow for day-to-day operations.

2. Are there any alternatives to borrowing?

When faced with the decision to build a major capital structure, Council has to make a decision on how to finance the project. It could either raise taxes that year to pay for it, reduce spending on other capital projects to make room in the current capital budget, use money saved up in reserves, or borrow the funds and repay the debt using tax revenue over a period of time. Chatham-Kent has adopted a pay-as-you-go philosophy on most lifecycle projects. It considers debt financing when a new or one-time type of project comes along, and occasionally when major reconstruction is needed on large expensive assets.

3. Who does Chatham-Kent borrow from and can residents purchase municipal debentures as investments?

The majority of borrowing is through Infrastructure Ontario (a crown corporation of the Province of Ontario) as rates are more competitive than local lending institutions or private debenture issues, thus lowering costs to taxpayers of Chatham-Kent. There is no direct way for local residents to invest other than by purchasing Infrastructure Renewal Bonds from the Province.

4. How much debt does Chatham-Kent currently have?

The details below demonstrate Chatham-Kent's current \$86.4 million of debt broken down into three major categories as of December 31, 2017

Category	December 31, 2017 Debt Outstanding
Debt paid by all Property taxpayers	\$17.0 Million
Debt paid by Water and Sewer ratepayers	\$48.8 Million
Debt paid by other sources of revenue (not paid from Property tax or Water and Sewer rates)	\$20.6 Million
TOTAL	\$86.4 Million

The \$20.6 million of other source revenue debt is funded by industrial park land purchasers and by the Province on subsidized services such as a portion of Riverview Gardens Long Term Care facility and Social Housing projects.

5. How much principal does Chatham-Kent pay off annually?

In 2017 Chatham-Kent paid out \$9.3 million of principal and \$3.8 million of interest payments.

6. Will Chatham-Kent be borrowing in the near future?

There are no projects approved for borrowing by Council at this time.

7. Does Chatham-Kent have a significant amount of debt?

It may seem too many that \$86 million of debt is a lot. To put it in perspective Chatham-Kent has annual taxation revenues of \$145 million and tax funded debt payments of \$2 million or approximately 1.4% of tax income, which is a very manageable level.

The Province monitors municipal debt levels and annually calculates Chatham-Kent's debt capacity and ability to repay the debt. Council is restricted by the Ministry of Finance to approve any debt that will result in total annual debt payments that will be more than 25% of Chatham-Kent's own source annual revenues. For

2018, the limit for Chatham-Kent would be \$56 million in payments. To reach this limit at current interest rates, Chatham-Kent is allowed to borrow \$580+ million of additional debt and repay it over 20 years. Of course that is not desirable, but merely illustrates that the current debt levels are not a concern to the Province.

Chatham-Kent has reduced its debt levels from a high of \$162 million in 2010. If Council does not approve the use of debt for any new projects the debt level will fall to \$38 million in 5 years.

8. Could Chatham-Kent raise taxes or use reserves to pay off the current debt early?

Chatham-Kent has taken advantage of several Provincial and Federal programs that provided subsidized interest rates. 36% of the outstanding debt is at interest rate below 3%. To obtain such historically low rates there are no options for early repayment offered by the issuing agencies.

9. How do other municipalities view and use debt?

Chatham-Kent is not unique in its use of debt. Infrastructure deficits exist in most, if not all municipalities and the Provincial and Federal governments as well. Most municipalities are also choosing to borrow a portion of their capital construction needs to finance long term assets and pay for them over the lifespan of the asset.

In conclusion, there is a need for the Municipality of Chatham-Kent to strategically use debt to invest in new assets that improve the community. It is only used on significant assets where annual lifecycle funding is not fully in place and significant tax increases would otherwise be required. As funding to shrink the infrastructure deficit increases, there will be less need for future debt issuances. If no new debt is issued, Chatham-Kent plans on paying off \$48 million of debt over the next 5 years.

For further information please contact:

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CORPORATE POLICY AND PROCEDURE



POLICY	Debt Management Policy
CATEGORY	Finance
AUTHORITY	Council
RELATED POLICES	General Reserve and Reserve Fund Policy Investment Policy
APPROVED BY	Council
EFFECTIVE DATE	26 October 2009
REVIEW DATE	Within one year of adoption (on or before October 26, 2010)

1. POLICY STATEMENT

It is the policy of the City of Guelph

- to minimize both debt servicing costs and significant annual budget impacts
- that new debt be planned at a level which will optimize borrowing costs and not impair the financial position of the City, and
- to maintain or improve the City's credit rating.

2. PURPOSE OF POLICY

The purpose of this debt management policy is to

- Enhance the quality of decisions by promoting consistency;
- Establish the parameters regarding the purposes for which debt may be issued, the types and amounts of permissible debt, the timing of issuance and method of sale that may be used, and the procedures for managing outstanding debt;
- Integrate with other long-term planning, financial and management objectives of the City; and
- Assist with ensuring that the municipality maintains a sound financial position and that the worthiness of the City's credit rating is protected.

3. DEFINITIONS

Business Case – means an analysis that demonstrates the necessity for and viability of a new project. A business case will include a financial analysis and a financial plan that identifies and confirms sources of funding to provide for the financing of the capital and operating costs of a new project.

Capital Expenditures – means expenditures incurred to acquire, develop, renovate, or replace capital assets as defined by the Public Sector Accounting Board, section 3150.

Debt Service Cost – means debt repayments, including interest and principal (per FIR 74-3099).

Direct Debt – means the total debt burden of the City (per FIR 74-9910). It includes all debt issued by the City and consolidated entities less all debt assumed by others

Flexibility – is the ability of the City to issue new debt in response to emerging financing needs.

Net Revenue Fund Revenues – means total revenue fund revenue per line 9910 of FIR schedule 10 less grants received (10-0699 and 10-0899), less revenue from other municipalities (10-1099).

Infrastructure – large-scale public systems, services, and facilities of the City that are necessary for economic activity in the community, including water and wastewater systems, roads, and buildings / facilities.

Operating Revenue – means total revenue fund revenue per line 9910 of FIR schedule 10 less other revenue (10-1899), less grants received (10-0699 and 10-0899), less revenue from other municipalities (10-1099).

Sustainable – means meeting present needs without compromising the ability to meet future needs.

Statutory Annual Debt Repayment Limit – means the annual debt and financial obligation limit for municipalities as described under Ontario Regulation 403/02. The regulation provides a formula which limits annual debt service costs to an amount equal to 25% of operating revenue.

Tax-Supported Debt - means debt issued for capital expenditures related to tax-supported operations. This debt is repaid using net revenue fund revenues.

Tax-Supported Operations - means civic programs that are funded through net revenue fund revenues, such as roads, transit, and parks.

4. PURPOSES FOR WHICH DEBT MAY BE ISSUED

4.1 Tax-supported Debt

The City may borrow by debenture, mortgage or other acceptable debt instrument to finance the City portion of growth-related infrastructure, and emerging capital needs to support corporate priorities and approved strategic plans under the following conditions:

- the individual project value exceeds \$500,000
- the estimated useful life of the asset is greater than ten years

-
- the project has been approved by Council as part of the annual capital budget and has been clearly identified as being funded by debt
 - it is an appropriate means to achieve a fair allocation of costs between current and future beneficiaries or users
 - the project is supported by a comprehensive business case including
 - total cost of the project
 - cash flow of the project including debt issuance
 - operating costs after completion of the project
 - benefits to the community
 - funding cannot be accommodated within the tax-supported capital budget, and other internal sources (such as borrowing from reserve funds) and external sources (such as senior government grants and subsidies, private / public partnerships, or user-pay systems) have been thoroughly investigated

The City will not use long-term debt to fund current operations.

The City will not use long-term debt to fund the ongoing rehabilitation of existing infrastructure. This will be funded by reserves.

4.2 Reserve and Reserve Fund Debt

Debt servicing costs are not normally funded by reserves or reserve funds. Instead, debt shall be incurred and repaid through the operating fund with corresponding transfers to and from reserves. Any funding of debt costs shall be identified in the City's annual operating budgets. However, in accordance with the General Reserve and Reserve Fund Policy, there remains only one exception to this rule:

- Development Charge Reserve Funds – Under the Development Charges Act, debt may be included as a capital cost to leverage development charge revenue while waiting for DC collections to catch up to growth-related spending.

For the 5% Cash in Lieu of Parkland Reserve Fund and Industrial Land Reserve Fund, historically, debt has been permitted for the purchase of parkland, land or the servicing of City-owned land in anticipation of future Parkland Cash in Lieu or land sale revenues. This practice is no longer recommended in order to avoid the risk associated with uncertain revenue streams. Any new capital financing required for these purposes will be repaid through the operating fund.

5. LIMITATIONS ON INDEBTEDNESS

Debt limits will preserve borrowing capacity for future capital assets while maintaining maximum flexibility of current operating funds.

5.1 Statutory Limitations – Annual Repayment Limit (ARL)

The 2010 ARL is based on the City's 2008 Financial Information Return (FIR). The City is not allowed under Provincial regulation to issue debt which would result in the annual repayment limit being exceeded without OMB approval. In fiscal year 2008, principal and interest repayments totaled approximately 27% of the available legislated capacity.

5.2 Self Imposed Limitations

Notwithstanding the limits prescribed in the regulations, prudent financial management calls for more stringent criteria to limit debt. These criteria will assist in preserving borrowing capacity for future capital assets while maintaining maximum flexibility for current operating funds.

5.2.1 Direct Debt to Operating Revenue

This measure identifies the percentage of annual operating revenues that would be required to retire the City's net debt. It is also the prime measure used by Standard and Poor's when assessing the debt burden of the municipality. A target rate of **less than 55%** should be maintained.

5.2.2 Debt Service Cost to Net Revenue Fund Revenue

This ratio is a measure of the principal and interest payable annually as a proportion of revenue fund revenues. It should not exceed a target of **10%**.

5.2.3 Development Charge Debt Servicing Ratio

This ratio is a measure of the debt service cost of the debt issued to support the DC reserve funds as a percentage of the average revenue forecast as identified in the DC background study. It should not exceed a target of **20%** for hard services (Roads, Storm water, Water works, Waste water) and **10%** for all other Development Charge reserve funds. Note: additional capacity has been provided for the hard DC services in recognition of the substantial front end financing required.

5.2.4 Direct Debt to Reserve Ratio

This ratio compares direct debt to the total of all reserves and reserve funds. A generally accepted target ratio for municipalities is considered to be **1:1** and this level should be achieved within the next five years and maintained thereafter.

6. TYPES OF DEBT

6.1 Short-term Debt (under one year)

The City may use either of the following sources to fund short-term operational needs:

- Reserve and reserve fund loans
- Bank line of credit

6.2 Medium-term Debt (one to four years)

The City may use any of the following sources to fund medium-term needs:

- Reserve and reserve fund loans
- Operating and capital leases
- Term loans
- Promissory notes

6.3 Long-term Debt (five years or greater)

The City may use any of the following sources to fund long-term needs:

- Municipal serial or amortized debentures
- Term loans / mortgages with any Canadian bank
- Capital leases
- Reserve and reserve fund loans

6.4 Internal Borrowing from City Reserves and Reserve Funds

When an analysis of the reserve or reserve fund has determined that excess funds are available and that the use of these funds will not adversely affect the intended purpose of the reserve or reserve fund, the City's reserve funds may be used as a source of financing for short to long term purposes. The reserves will be repaid with interest at a rate based on the actual annual average balance of the reserve fund and the Royal Bank Prime rate minus 1.75% (which is the interest rate received on City accounts) as specified in the City's reserve policy.

Each such loan is to be authorized by a specific by-law passed by Council and set out the amount, interest, term of the loan, and the specific reserve or reserve fund from which the loan is made. Borrowing in this manner offers several advantages over traditional debenture financing including the following:

- Increased flexibility in setting loan terms,
- Lower interest cost, and
- Avoidance of legal and fiscal agent fees.

7. STRUCTURAL FEATURES

7.1 Debt Denomination

The City shall issue debt denominated in Canadian dollars only.

7.2 Fixed Interest

The City shall issue general obligation debt with a fixed rate of interest. Interest rate swap agreements may be used to exchange floating-rate interest payments for fixed-rate interest payments.

7.3 Repayment Terms

The repayment term will be dependent on the useful life of the asset being acquired by the City, but should not exceed ten years except for major capital construction of public facilities. In no case shall the amortization period exceed 25 years.

7.4 Debt Structure

7.4.1 Debt shall be structured for the shortest period consistent with a fair allocation of costs to current and future users.

7.4.2 Debt shall be structured to achieve the lowest possible net cost to the City given market conditions, the type of debt being issued, and the nature and type of the repayment source.

7.5 Repayment

7.5.1 Unless otherwise justified and deemed necessary by the City's Fiscal Agent, the repayment schedule should be structured on a level or declining payments basis.

7.5.2 Early repayment of debt may be considered if it is financially beneficial to do so.

8. CREDIT OBJECTIVES

8.1 Credit Rating

The City will continually strive to maintain or improve its current AA stable credit rating by adhering to sound financial management practices. This practice will ensure the long-term financial health of the City so that its borrowing costs are minimized and its access to credit is preserved. Standard and Poor's (S&P) is the City's debt rating agency. City staff carry out a review with S&P officials to provide updates on information affecting the City's financial position.

9. USE OF FINANCIAL ADVISORS

9.1 Fiscal Agent

The City will engage the services of a Fiscal Agent to develop the debt issuance strategy, determine the interest rate and method of calculating the interest rate, and to market bonds to investors.

9.2 Syndicate of Investment Dealers

The City will use the services of the syndicate of investment dealers principally managed by National Bank Financial (NBF) because of their substantial presence in the Canadian municipal market.

9.3 Formal Review of Financial Advisors

The Director of Finance will undertake a formal review of the Fiscal Agent or Syndicate as warranted. The formal review process may include establishing a set of criteria (including fee structures), presence in the capital markets, placement of bonds in volume, dollar terms, etc., and any other criteria that may be deemed to provide value to the City through the review process.

9.4 Notwithstanding Section 8.3, the City retains the ability to enter into a private placement for the sale of debentures or any other permitted debt financing product without the services of a Fiscal Agent or Syndicate should it be determined that this is in the City's best interests both from a cost and an administrative viewpoint.

9.5 External Legal Counsel

For all debt issues, the City will retain external legal counsel who will assist with the drafting and reviewing of the debt issue bylaw and related schedules.

10. COUNCIL AUTHORIZATION FOR DEBENTURE ISSUE

10.1 Approval of Funding for Capital Projects

The approval to fund an eligible capital project by debenture will generally be sought through the annual capital budget process. The funding of emerging strategic priorities outside of the traditional budget process shall be approved by specific by-law.

10.2 Debenture Issue

Each debenture issue shall be approved by specific by-law of Council including the term, rates of interest, debt servicing obligation, and general terms of issue.

11. ADMINISTRATION

11.1 The borrowing to finance capital projects will normally occur once the projects are essentially completed.

11.2 When feasible, debt issuances will be pooled to minimize issuance costs.

12. POLICY REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed within one year of adoption.

Council Memo



Date February 24, 2020
To City Council
From Greg Clark, Manager of Financial Strategy and Long-term Planning
Service Area Corporate Services
Department Finance
Subject Debt Management Policy

During the discussion of staff report CS-20-2020 Debt Management Policy Update on February 3, 2020, items were identified in the accompanying policy that required staff to make minor changes.

The changes which have been made do not materially impact the policy, however they correct or clarify items that were identified by Council, as follows:

- Debt Servicing Cost to Discretionary Reserve ratio was incorrectly identified as a target of 14:1, the proper ratio is 1:14 is now shown in section 6.2.3.
- The use of internal borrowing is intended for short to medium-term borrowing as required between external debenture issuance; the language in section 8.2 has been adjusted accordingly.
- The term adequate was not clearly defined, and section 10.1 now more clearly articulates that the City's goal is maintain or potentially improve our current AA+ rating by Standard and Poor's.

The policy as attached will be used to manage the City's debt once approved by Council.

Approved By

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Treasurer
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Corporate Policy and Procedure



Policy	Debt Management Policy
Category	Finance
Authority	Council
Related Policies	General Reserve and Reserve Fund Policy, Investment Policy
Approved By	Council
Effective Date	Sunday, March-01-2020
Revision Date	Each term of Council

1. Policy Statement

It is the policy of the City of Guelph to

- Ensure adequate infrastructure, services and resources to support existing and growing communities
- Ensure new debt be planned at a level which will optimize borrowing costs and not impair the financial position of the City
- Ensure debt is structured in a way that is fair and equitable to those who pay for and benefit from the underlying assets over time

2. Purpose

The purpose of this debt management policy is to

- Establish financial guidelines and appropriate benchmarks for the issuance and use of debt in the City of Guelph
 - Ensure long-term financial flexibility and sustainability
 - Limit financial vulnerability
 - Integrate with other long-term planning, financial and management objectives of the City
 - Assist with ensuring that the municipality maintains a sound financial position and that the worthiness of the City's credit rating is protected
 - Ensure that the City's financial practices comply with statutory requirements
-

3. Definitions

Annual Repayment Limit

Under Regulation 403 /02: Debt and Financial Obligation Limits, this limit represents the maximum amount which the municipality has available to commit to payments relating to debt and financial obligations without seeking the approval of the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB). This limit is provided annually to a municipality by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH), additionally this limit must be updated by the City Treasurer prior to Council authorizing any increase in debt-financing for capital expenditures.

Business Case

An analysis that demonstrates the necessity for and viability of a new project. A business case will include a financial analysis and a financial plan that identifies and confirms sources of funding to provide for the financial plan that identifies and confirms sources of funding to provide for the financing of the capital and operating costs of a new project.

Capital Expenditure

An expenditure incurred to acquire develop renovate or replace capital assets as defined by the Public Sector Accounting Board (PSAB), section 3150.

Debenture

A formal written obligation to pay specific sums on certain dates. In the case of a municipality, debentures are typically unsecured i.e. backed by general credit rather than by specified assets.

Debt

Any obligation for the payment of money. For Ontario municipalities, debt would typically consist of debentures as well as either notes or cash loans from financial institutions. Could also include loans from reserves or reserve funds. Debentures issued to Infrastructure Ontario are also considered debt.

Debt Service Costs

Debt repayments, including interest and principal (per FIR 74-3099).

Development Charge (DC) Collections

Charges collected from new development, at building permit issuance to help fund the cost of infrastructure required to accommodate growth.

Development Charge (DC) Debt

Debt issued for Council-approved growth related infrastructure, identified in the Development Charge (DC) Background Study, to be repaid exclusively with DC collections.

Direct Debt

Means the total debt burden of the City (per FIR 74-9910). It includes all debt issued by the City and consolidated entities less all debt assumed by others.

Flexibility

The ability of the City to issue new debt in response to emerging financing needs.

Financial Information Return (FIR)

Data collection reports providing statistical information on municipalities, as provided by the MMAH.

Infrastructure

Large-scale public systems, services, and facilities of the City that are necessary for economic activity in the community, including water and wastewater systems, roads, and buildings / facilities.

Internal Funding

Funding provided from one City reserve fund to another, to fund specific short-term projects. These funds will be repaid from the receiving fund to the lending fund in accordance with a promissory note.

Non-tax Supported Debt

Debt issued for capital expenditures related to non-tax supported operations. This debt is repaid using net revenue fund revenues.

Non-tax Supported Operations

Municipal services that are funded through water, wastewater and stormwater rate revenues.

Operating Revenue

Total revenue fund revenue per line 9910 of FIR schedule 10 less other revenue (10-1899), less grants received (10-0699 and 10-0899), less revenue from other municipalities (10-1099).

Own-Source Revenue

Revenue for a fiscal year, excluding:

- a) grants from the Government of Ontario or Canada or from another municipality;
- b) proceeds from the sale of real property;
- c) contributions or net transfers from a Reserve Fund or reserve;
- d) Government of Ontario revenues received for the purpose of repaying the principal and interest of long-term debt, toward meeting financial obligations of the municipality; and
- e) other municipality or school board receipts for the purposes of repayment of the principal and interest on long-term debt of the municipality borrowed for the exclusive purpose of the other municipality or school board.

Promissory Note

To enable the use of internal funding Council will authorize a promissory note which will lay out the terms of the loan, including amount, length of time, and rate of interest.

Sustainable

Meeting present needs without compromising the ability to meet future needs.

Statutory Annual Debt Repayment Limit

The annual debt and financial obligation limit for municipalities as described under Ontario Regulation 403/02. The regulation provides a formula which limits annual debt service costs to an amount equal to 25% of operating revenue.

Tax Supported Debt

Debt issued for capital expenditures related to tax supported operations. This debt is repaid using net revenue fund revenues.

Tax Supported Operations

Civic programs that are funded through net revenue fund revenues, such as roads, transit, and parks.

Term Loan

A short-term loan which is repaid in regular instalments over a set period of time, as laid out in the enabling documents.

4. Statutory Requirements

Capital financing may only be undertaken if and when it is in compliance with the relevant sections of the Municipal Act, the Local Improvement Act, or the Tile Drainage Act, and their related regulations. These requirements include, but are not limited to:

- The term of temporary or short-term debt for operating purposes will not exceed the current fiscal year;
- The term of capital financing will not exceed the lesser of 40 years or the useful life of the underlying asset;
- Long-term debt will only be issued for capital projects;
- The total annual financing charges cannot exceed the Annual Repayment Limit (ARL), as applicable, unless approved by the OMB;
- Prior to entering into a lease financing agreement, an analysis will be prepared that assesses the costs as well as the financial and other risks associated with the proposed lease with other methods of financing;
- Prior to passing a debenture by-law which provides that installments of principal or interest, or both, are not payable during the period of construction of an undertaking, Council will have considered all financial and other risks related to the proposed construction financing.

5. Purposes for Which Debt May Be Issued

The City may borrow by debenture, mortgage or other acceptable debt instrument to finance capital expenditures that support corporate priorities and approved strategic plan, while using the following guidelines to determine on a case-by-case basis whether the use of debt is appropriate:

- Whether the individual project value exceeds \$5,000,000
- Whether the estimated useful life of the asset is greater than 20 years
- Whether the project has been approved by Council as part of the annual capital budget and has been clearly identified as being funded by debt
- Whether it is an appropriate means to achieve a fair allocation of costs between current and future beneficiaries or users
- Whether the project is supported by a comprehensive business case
- The total cost of the project
- The cash flow of the project including debt issuance

- The operating costs after completion of the project
- Funding of the capital expenditure cannot be accommodated within the tax supported capital budgets, rate supported capital budgets, development charge capital budgets, and other internal sources (such as borrowing from reserve funds) and external sources (such as senior government grants and subsidies, private / public partnerships, or user-pay systems) have been thoroughly investigated
- A sustainable funding source has been identified

The City will not use long-term debt to fund current operations.

6. Limitations on Indebtedness

6.1 Statutory Limitations –ARL

The 2020 ARL is based on the City's 2018 FIR. The City is not allowed under Provincial regulation to issue debt which would result in the annual repayment limit being exceeded without OMB approval.

6.2 Self Imposed Limitations

Notwithstanding the limits prescribed in the regulations, prudent financial management calls for more stringent criteria to limit debt. These criteria will assist in preserving borrowing capacity for future capital assets while maintaining maximum flexibility for current operating funds. See Attachment A for details of calculations.

6.2.1 Direct Debt to Operating Revenue

This measure identifies the percentage of annual operating revenues that would be required to retire the City's net debt. It is also the prime measure used by Standard and Poor's when assessing the debt burden of the municipality. A target rate of less than 55% should be maintained.

6.2.2 Debt Service Cost to net Revenue Fund Revenue

This ratio is a measure of the principal and interest payable annually as a proportion of revenue fund revenues. It should not exceed a target of 10%.

6.2.3 Debt Servicing to Discretionary Reserve Ratio

This ratio is used to determine how many years the City could pay for debt servicing obligations in the absence of new revenue. A target of 14:14 should be maintained.

6.2.4 Development Charge (DC) debt assessment

This assessment will be used to ensure that each approved DC service that requires debt is able to provide sustainable cash flows and the ability to collect sufficient funds to retire the debt.

7. Types of Debt

7.1 Short-term (Under One Year)

Interim financing for capital assets pending long-term capital financing, may be accommodated through internal funding (see section 8.2 and 11.3)

7.2 Medium-term (One – Four Years)

Medium-term financing requirements, for periods greater than one year but less than five years will be financing through any one or combination of the following. The financial commitments for existing and anticipated leases for the current fiscal year are to be included in the calculation of the City's financial debt and obligation limit.

- Internal funding
- Term loan

7.3 Long-term

Long-term debt consists of debentures or other form of debt issued to the City to finance assets over a period of not less than five years and not more than 40 years. Options include:

- Municipal serial or amortized debentures
- Long-term bank loans if deemed cost effective. These loans may be fixed or variable interest rate loans as determined by the Treasurer

8. Methods of Marketing/Selling Debenture Issues

8.1 External Debenture securities may be sold by the following means:

- a) Debt issuance syndicate. The use of a debt issuance syndicate will be the normal method by which debentures will be sold by the City; or
- b) Tender. A tender process may be used when and if significant savings could be expected when compared to issuing through a debt issuance syndicate.

8.2 Internal Funding

The City has the general power pursuant to section 417 of the Municipal Act, 2001, SO 2001, c. 25 to apply reserve funds to a purpose other than that for which the fund was established. This includes the making of an internal loan from reserve funds in order to finance capital projects of the City. When the value of internal loan

exceeds \$1 million a formal process is required as prescribed here. In all other cases the rate of interest payable is to be calculated the same as prescribed here.

The municipality may elect to borrow from internal sources using reserve funds, provided that excess funds are available and the use of these funds will not impact the reserve funds current operations. Internal reserve borrowings will pay a variable interest rate to the lending reserve/reserve fund, based on the annual average rate of return on investments and will be evidenced by documentation as required by legal services, including repayment schedule.

When an analysis of the reserve or reserve fund has determined that excess funds are available and that the use of these funds will not adversely affect the intended purpose of the reserve or reserve fund, the City's reserve funds may be used as a source of financing for ~~short to long~~medium-term purposes. The reserves will be repaid with interest at a rate based on the actual annual average balance of the reserve fund and the City's rate of return on investments.

9. Structural Features

9.1 Debt Denomination

The City shall issue debt denominated in Canadian dollars only.

9.2 Fixed Interest

The City shall issue general obligation debt with a fixed rate of interest. Interest rate swap agreements may be used to exchange floating-rate interest payments for fixed-rate interest payments.

9.3 Repayment Terms

The repayment term will be dependent on the useful life of the asset being acquired by the City, and should not exceed 40 years.

9.4 Debt Structure

9.4.1 Debt shall be structured in a manner that provides a fair allocation of costs to current and future users.

9.4.2 Debt shall be structured to achieve the lowest possible net cost to the City given market conditions, the type of debt being issued, and the nature and type of the repayment source.

9.5 Repayment

9.5.1 Unless otherwise justified and deemed necessary, the repayment schedule should be structured on a level or declining payments basis.

9.5.2 Early repayment of debt may be considered if it is financially beneficial to do so.

10. Credit Objectives

10.1 Credit Rating

The capital financing program will be managed in a manner to maintain an adequate credit rating (minimum of AA+ as rated by Standard and Poor's) to enable efficient access to debt and favourable terms of repayment.

A key element of maintaining an adequate credit rating will be to ensure that the timing, amount and type of capital financing will be assessed as being appropriate to the long-term needs of the City as well as being seen as balanced against other forms of financing.

Particular attention shall be paid to the key indicators used by credit rating agencies as part of the debt management process in order to maintain the City's credit worthiness, including:

- Debt to operating revenues
- Debt servicing costs as a percentage of own source revenues
- Liquidity
- After capital balances
- Other long-term liabilities

11. Authorization

11.1 Approval Funding for Capital Projects

The approval to fund an eligible capital project by debenture will generally be sought through the annual capital budget process. The funding of emerging strategic priorities outside of the traditional budget process shall be approved by specific by-law.

11.2 Debenture Issue

Each debenture issue shall be approved by specific by-law of Council including the term, rates of interest, debt servicing obligation, and general terms of issue.

11.3 Internal Borrow

Each such loan is to be authorized by a specific by-law passed by Council and set out the amount, interest, term of the loan, and the specific reserve or reserve fund from which the loan is made. Borrowing in this manner offers several advantages over traditional debenture financing including the following:

- Increased flexibility in setting loan terms,
- Lower interest cost, and
- Avoidance of legal and fiscal agent fees.

For the approval of each internal loan the specific details must, at a minimum, include the following:

- Start date
- Loan type
- Loan amount
- Loan period
- Loan rate
- The loan rate will reflect the City's all-in cost of funding for a similar term and structure at the time of the actual loan, as determined by the Treasurer
- Repayment frequency
- Legal Documentation

Upon full approval, legal services must be consulted to determine the appropriate legal documentation required between the lender and the borrower.

The legal documentation must include:

- The resolution number and date of the associated Council report
- The specific details of the internal loan as agreed to by the Treasurer
- The Deputy Chief Administrative Officer of the requesting department must provide sign-off of the loan request

11.4 Calculation of Debt Limitation Ratios

The Treasurer shall have authority to modify the calculation of the prescribed debt limit ratios as set out in Appendix A via notification to Council, in so far as changes in the FIR or other related schedules and statements is required.

12. Administration

12.1 When Borrowing Will Occur

The borrowing to finance capital projects will normally occur once the projects are essentially completed.

12.2 Issuance Costs

When feasible, debt issuances will be pooled to minimize issuance costs.

13. Reporting Requirements

13.1 Reports to Council

The Treasurer shall submit to Council, at a minimum annually, a report that provides:

- Total debt outstanding
- Annual principal and interest payments
- Report debt ratios as prescribed in section 6 above, forecasted over 25 years
- Forecasted debt issuance over the 10 year horizon
- Debt per Capita ratio

- Debt per Assessment Value

14. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed with each new term of Council.

Appendix A – Method of calculation of self-imposed limitations

For ratios calculate using the FIR, the number shown is the schedule –line combination, e.g. 10-9910,1 is Schedule 10 line 9910 column 1

6.2.1 Direct Debt to Operating Revenue

Calculated using the annual FIR as Debt Outstanding/Net Operating Revenue

FIR Cell	Description	Amount
70-2010,1	Temporary Loans	-
74A-0299,1	Total Outstanding Debt	92,963,691
74A-0499,1	Debt Assumed from Others	3,467,985
Less:	N/A	N/A
74A-0899,1	Debt Retirement Funds	
74A-1099,1	Sinking Fund Balances	0
74A-0610,1	Ontario assumed debt	0
74A-0620,1	School board assumed debt	0
Total	Debt Outstanding	96,431,676
10-0991,1	Total Revenues	484,508,861
Less:	N/A	N/A
10-0815,1	Ontario TCA Grants	521,713
10-0825,1	Canada TCA Grants	841,251
10-0830,1	Deferred revenue (Prov Gas)	710,045
10-0831,1	Deferred revenue (Fed Gas)	10,697,580
10-1098,1	Revenue from other municipalities TCA	590,620
10-1811,1	Gain/loss on sale of assets	277,886
10-1813,1	Deferred revenue (Cash-in-Lieu)	1,542,524
10-1814,1	Other deferred revenue	0
10-1830,1	Donations	395,177
10-1831,1	Donated TCA	9,560

FIR Cell	Description	Amount
10-1865,1	Other revenue from gov Business	0
10-1890,1	Direct developer charges	277,551
10-1891,1	Partner contributions	661,954
10-1905,1	Increase/decrease in gov business equity	6,703,552
12-1210,1	General assistance (Provincial)	9,167,113
60-1025,1	Development Charges (TCA)	17,754,370
76-1020,1	Dividends Paid gov business	2,000,000
Total	Net Operating Revenue	432,357,965
Ratio	2018 Year End	22%

6.2.2 Debt Service Cost to Net Operating Revenue

Calculated using the annual FIR as total debt charges/net operating revenue

FIR Cell	Description	Amount
74C-3099,1	Debt Charges – Principal	14,831,000
74C-3099,2	Debt Charges- Interest	3,324,381
Total	Total Debt Charges	18,155,381
Total	Net Operating Revenue (from 6.2.1)	432,357,965
Ratio	2018 Year End	4.2%

6.2.2 Debt Servicing to Discretionary Reserve Ratio

Calculated using the annual FIR as total debt charges/discretionary reserve and reserve fund balance

FIR Cell	Description	Amount
Total	Total Debt Charges (from 6.2.2)	18,155,381
60-2099,2	Balance year end, Discretionary Reserve Funds	174,955,612
60-2099,3	Balance year end, Discretionary Reserves	42,722,721
Total	Balance year end	217,678,333
Ratio	2018 Year End	12:12

6.2.2 Development Charge (DC) debt assessment

As each situation with regards to debt requirements for DC funded projects is unique there is no single calculation. The process will involve evaluating the overall level of debt compared to potential revenues under a variety of assumptions. The minimum requirement is that both the rate of growth and the total amount of growth must be reviewed to ensure that any change in these critical variable will not leave the City at financial risk.

Information Report



Service Area	Corporate Services
Date	Friday, December 13, 2019
Subject	Development Fee Exemptions or Waivers
Report Number	CS-2019-103

Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with information regarding the process used by City staff to assess and respond to requests for Development Charge (DC) or other development fee exemptions or waivers.

Key Findings

The City's DC By-law (2019-20372) does not provide for DC exemptions for not-for-profit organizations.

The City's DC Exemption Policy requires that all statutory and Council-approved DC exemptions be budgeted and funded from tax and rate supported funding sources. The waiver of other development-related fees would mean that the City is providing services using tax supported funds instead of user fee revenues that are meant to recover the cost of those services.

In order to provide Council and staff with a framework to assess community requests for grants, waiver of fees or any other financial contribution, a program to guide the decision-making criterion should be in place. Financial contributions should be linked clearly to Council priorities and intended outcomes. Staff only consider financial contribution requests from the community if there is a program in place to which the request would qualify within the approved parameters. This process also ensures that funding is available and budgeted to support the request being considered. In the absence of a Council-directed program and funding source, staff will continue to turn down requests received for waiving of development fees for not-for-profit organizations.

If there is no qualifying program for a community request to waive development fees, and Council believes it to be a priority, then Council should identify a budget source and direct staff to develop this program. Without a program, there is no decision framework. A program would provide delivery accountability on the outcomes achieved by the City's investment. Examples of current city programs include the Affordable Housing Financial Incentive Program, the Community Investment Strategy and the Brownfield Community Improvement Plan.

Financial Implications

Waiver or exemption of any development-related fees means Council is choosing to have the tax and rate base pay for the cost of new growth/development.

DCs are fees levied on new development to help offset the cost of providing growth-related infrastructure. The DC fee is based on the anticipated growth over a particular period. If the City exempts a developer/organization from paying DCs, the lost revenue must be made up with tax and rate supported funding resources. Current statutory and Council-approved DC exemptions have cost on average, an annual \$4.5 million over the last two years.

The City also charges user fees on other development-related services including development application reviews and building permit issuance. These are charged with an outcome of cost-recovery (growth paying for growth) and choosing to waive or exempt these fees means that the property tax base would result in paying for the cost of delivering these services.

Report

Details

The City's DC By-law (2019-20372) does not permit for the exemption of DCs to not-for-profit organizations.

The DC By-law and DC Background Study were completed in 2018 and approved in 2019 and involved extensive consultation with Council, staff, the development community and members of the public. The Development Charges Act, 1997 prescribes a list of legislated exemptions including:

- Industrial building additions of up to and including 50 per cent of the existing gross floor area
- Buildings or structures owned by and used for the purposes of any municipality, local board or Board of Education
- Other levels of government including colleges
- Residential development that results only in the enlargement of an existing dwelling unit, or that results in the creation of up to two additional dwelling units

Decisions made through the 2018 DC Background Study process resulted in the following list of discretionary exemptions:

- Land, buildings or structures
- Used or to be used for a Place of Worship or for the purposes of cemetery or burial ground exempt from taxation under the Assessment Act
- A public hospital receiving aid under the Public Hospitals Act
- Exemption for University-related purposes
- Private parking structures

The cost of these exemptions are budgeted annually through the Growth Funding Strategy to ensure the DC reserve funds have sufficient funding to provide the growth-related infrastructure needed to accommodate new population.

The preferred approach to incentivizing a particular type of development is to create a grant/incentive program based on Council priorities. These programs are

then funded through the budget and there is a framework and criterion that can be applied to the request in an open and fair process. The amount of the grant awarded may be proportional or equal to the cost of development-related fees, such as DCs or building permit fees depending on the framework approved by Council

This approach has several benefits including:

- Grants are awarded to projects that align with Council-approved priorities, through a framework that has pre-established criterion, and ensures outcomes of the development will further the community goals.
- The cost of the incentives awarded are contained within an annual budget amount to manage the impact to existing tax and rate payers.
- The cost of the grants are tracked and reported on annually so that Council can see the link from this investment to the outcomes (example increased affordable housing supply or redeveloped brownfield sites to productive use).

If there is no qualifying program for a community request to waive development fees, and Council believes it to be a priority, then Council should identify a budget source and direct staff to develop this program. Examples of current city programs include the Affordable Housing Financial Incentive Program, the Community Investment Strategy and the Brownfield Community Improvement Plan.

Changing legislation

Bill 108 introduced policy that will require the City to permit a DC deferral for institutions, not-for-profit housing and rental housing over a period of six years (21 years for not-for-profit housing). Further, the first draft of the Community Benefit Charge (CBC) regulations indicate a full exemption for these fees for long-term care homes, colleges and universities, memorial homes, not-for-profit housing, retirement homes and hospices.

The effective date for the statutory DC deferrals will be the date of proclamation of Bill 108 which has yet to be announced by the province but could be early in 2020. The effective date of the CBC exemptions will not be until the new CBC by-law is passed or January 1, 2021, whichever is earlier.

Financial Implications

DC are fees levied on new development to help offset the cost of providing growth-related infrastructure. The DC fee is based on the anticipated growth over a particular period. If the City exempts a developer from paying DCs, the lost revenue must be made up with tax and rate supported resources. Current statutory and Council-approved exemptions have cost on average \$4.5 million per year, over the last two years.

The waiver of other development-related fees would mean that the City is providing services using tax supported funds instead of user fee revenues that are meant to recover the cost of those services.

Consultations

None

Strategic Plan Alignment

The opinions in this report support the **Working together for our future** pillar. The preferred approach to considering development fee waivers will ensure transparency and fairness which will lead to increased public trust and validation of the reasoning for why Council would invest in that development. Fulsome budgeting for DC and other fee exemptions will contribute to the City's goal of managing growth to support long-term financial sustainability.

Departmental Approval

Greg Clark, CPA, CMA, Manager of Financial Strategy and Long-term Planning

Report Author

Christel Gregson, CPA, CMA, Senior Corporate Analyst – Development Charges



Approved By

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Recommended By

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Staff Report



To	Committee of the Whole
Service Area	Corporate Services
Date	Monday, February 3, 2020
Subject	Development Charge Interest Policy
Report Number	CS-2020-23

Recommendation

That the Development Charge Interest Policy as recommended through report titled Development Charge Interest Policy dated February 3, 2020 and numbered CS-2020-23 be approved.

Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

To approve the Development Charge (DC) Interest Policy as included in Attachment-1, as required with the recent changes to the Development Charges Act, 1997 (DCA) through proclamation of Schedule 3 changes of Bill 108 More Homes More Choice Act, 2019 (Bill 108).

Key Findings

DCs are fees levied on new development to fund the cost of infrastructure needed to accommodate growth.

Recent changes made to the DCA through the proclamation of Ontario Regulation 454/19 (OReg 454/19) on December 10, 2019, as well as legislative changes from Schedule 3 of Bill 108 amended the timing of determination of the DC rate payable and when payment of DCs are due and also introduced DC payment deferrals for some types of development. These changes went into effect on January 1, 2020.

These changes have been proclaimed in advance of the first release of the regulations for the Community Benefit Charge, which were expected in the fall of 2019. These are now expected early in 2020 and will come into effect on January 1, 2021 unless the province extends this deadline given the deferral in the regulations.

The OReg 454/19 changes allow the freeze of a lower DC rate earlier in the development process and deferring the payment to a later date than previously in place. Table 1 summarizes the changes from an operational perspective and illustrates the much more complex and administratively burdensome process that staff will be required to manage. These changes have the potential to have a negative impact on DC revenues and the City's ability to fund growth capital projects.

Table 1: Summary of DC changes

	Previous DCA Rules	DCA as of January 1, 2020
DC Calculation	All development – Building Permit	<p>Site Plan application – two year freeze, then reverts to rate in effect at Building Permit</p> <p>Zoning by-law application – two year freeze then reverts to rate in effect at Building Permit</p> <p>Other development – Building Permit</p>
DC Payment	All development – Building Permit	<p>Development eligible for deferral – Occupancy Permit with five to 20 year payment plan</p> <p>All other development – Occupancy Permit</p>

The DCA also now allows municipalities to charge and collect interest in these situations, and to that end, a DC Interest Policy has been developed for Council approval. Interest will mitigate the negative financial impacts that are expected to occur during the freeze and deferral periods.

Early Payment Agreements will be offered if the owner of a development would prefer to pay the full DC owing at time of occupancy.

Financial Implications

Charging interest on DCs owing will offset some of the negative financial impacts expected from these changes to the DCA and will help to provide sufficient funding to meet the capital commitments prescribed by the Council-approved DC Background Study.

In addition to the lost revenue as a result of the changes in DC calculation timing and collection, there is also added staff time as most of these changes will require manual tracking as there is no standardization to the new formulas that are easily translated into the financial system. User fee increases to compensate for the increased cost to the development process will be considered in future budgets.

The fiscal impact from these changes is difficult to quantify as it will depend upon the specific timing and type and quantum of development activity.

Report

DCs are fees levied on new development to fund the cost of infrastructure needed to accommodate that growth. The specific DC rate for various types of development

are determined through a DC Background Study that identifies the required capital investment over a specific period of time to accommodate a targeted level of growth. The DC rate is indexed annually using the non-residential construction price index to ensure the rate collected keeps pace with the increasing cost of construction.

Since its initial implementation in 1997, the DCA has been modified a number of times, the most recent being the Bill 108 released in May of 2019. This legislation introduced a number of changes, including the elimination of soft service DCs to be replaced by a Community Benefit Charge, the timing of when DCs were determined from building permit to Site Plan or Zoning By-law amendment and the timing of DC collection from building permit to occupancy and for some development, over a period of five to 20 years. Regulations regarding the Community Benefit Charge are expected early this year and will come into effect on January 1, 2021. Regulations related to timing of calculation and payment were approved via Royal Assent on December 10, 2019 and came into effect January 1, 2020.

This change in timing will lead to a misalignment between the DC rate collected and the cost of the capital infrastructure required. Given the short time between announcement and implementation staff have worked diligently to access ways that the City is able to mitigate these impacts, both financially and administratively. Staff are working to address the operational impacts, notice has been posted on the City's website and a cross-functional team continues to work to map out the new process while continuing to ensure uninterrupted service delivery by the City's Planning and Building departments.

To minimize the impact of the potential lost revenue, Subsection 26.2 (3) of the DCA has been revised to permit a municipality to charge interest on a DC from the date the DC is calculated to the date the DC is payable and Subsection 26.1 (7) of the DCA permits a municipality to charge interest on the instalments required by subsection (3) from the date the DC would have been payable in accordance with section 26 to the date the instalment is paid.

DC Freeze

The new subsection 26.2 (1) of the DCA provides that DCs are to be calculated on:

- a. the day an application for an approval of development in a site plan control area under subsection 41 (4) of the Planning Act was made in respect of development that is the subject of the DC,
- b. if clause (a) above does not apply, the day an application for an amendment to a by-law passed under section 34 of the Planning Act was made in respect of the development that is the subject of the DC;
- c. if neither clause (a) nor clause (b) applies,
 - i. in the case of a DC in respect of a development to which section 26.1 applies, the day the DC would be payable in accordance with section 26 if section 26.1 did not apply, or
 - ii. in the case of a DC in respect of a development to which section 26.1 does not apply, the day the DC is payable in accordance with section 26.

Section 26 requires that the DC payable is due at occupancy. If the period between building permit and occupancy is greater than one month, interest will be charged, as prescribed below:

Where security is provided, the interest rate to be applied to the DC balance owing will be the non-residential consumer price index. The interest owing will be calculated on a monthly basis.

Where no security is provided, the interest rate to be applied to the DC balance owing will be the non-residential consumer price index, plus two percent. The interest owing will be calculated on a monthly basis.

The City has a Council-approved Letter of Credit Policy that outlines acceptable forms of security.

DC Deferral

Subsection 26.1 (1) of the DCA states that, despite section 26, a DC in respect of any part of a development that consists of a type of development set out in subsection (2) is payable in accordance with section 26.1.

Subsection 26.1 (2) identifies the following development types eligible for a DC deferral:

- rental housing development that is not non-profit housing development (five years)
- institutional development (including long-term care homes, retirement homes, universities and colleges, memorial homes, clubhouses or athletic grounds of the Royal Canadian Legion and hospices) (five years)
- non-profit housing development (20 years).

The DC shall be paid in equal annual instalments beginning on the earlier of the date of the issuance of a permit under the Building Code Act, 1992 authorizing occupation of the building and the date the building is first occupied, and continuing on,

- a. the following five anniversaries of that date, in the case of a DC in respect to rental housing development that is not non-profit housing development, and institutional development; or
- b. the following 20 anniversaries of that date, in the case of a DC in respect of non-profit housing development.

There is a lack of definition in the regulations for these types of development and staff will use the following criterion to determine if a deferral arrangement is eligible. These definitions will be included in the next DC By-law update.

Institutional Development means development of a building or structure intended for use,

- a. as a long-term care home within the meaning of subsection 2 (1) of the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007;
- b. as a retirement home within the meaning of subsection 2 (1) of the Retirement Homes Act, 2010;
- c. by any of the following post-secondary institutions for the objects of the institution:

- i. a university or college in Ontario that receives direct, regular and ongoing operating funding from the Government of Ontario,
- ii. a college or university federated or affiliated with a university described in subclause (i), or
- iii. an Indigenous Institute prescribed for the purposes of section 6 of the Indigenous Institutes Act, 2017;
- d. as a memorial home, clubhouse or athletic grounds by an Ontario branch of the Royal Canadian Legion; or
- e. as a hospice to provide end of life care.

Non-Profit Housing means a building or structure intended for use as residential premises by,

- a. a corporation without share capital to which the Corporations Act applies, that is in good standing under that Act and whose primary object is to provide housing;
- b. a corporation without share capital to which the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act applies, that is in good standing under that Act and whose primary object is to provide housing; or
- c. a non-profit housing co-operative that is in good standing under the Co-operative Corporations Act.

Rental Housing means a building with four or more dwelling units all of which are intended for use as rented residential premises.

To compensate the City for the revenue loss associated with time value of money, interest shall be charged on the outstanding balance as at each anniversary date, until the DCs receivable are paid in full. The interest will be calculated and charged as follows:

Where security is provided, the interest rate to be applied to the DC balance owing will be the non-residential consumer price index. The interest owing will be calculated on a monthly basis.

Where security is not provided, the interest rate to be applied to the DC balance owing will be the non-residential consumer price index, plus two percent. The interest owing will be calculated on a monthly basis.

Early Payment Agreements will be offered if the owner of a development would prefer to pay the full DC owing at occupancy.

Financial Implications

The fiscal impact of this change is difficult to estimate in advance as it is dependent on the level and timing of development. Staff are continuing to work on ways to capture and quantify the impacts. In addition to the lost revenue as a result of the changes in DC calculation timing and collection, there is also added staff time as most of these changes will require manual tracking as there is no standardization to the new formulas that are easily translated into the financial system. User fee increases to compensate for the increased cost to the development process will be considered in future budgets.

Charging interest on DCs owing will offset some of the negative impacts to the DC reserve funds, however it is likely that it will not provide sufficient funding to account for the difference entirely. This may create situations where the City is not

able to meet the capital commitments prescribed by the Council approved DC Background Study from DC revenue alone.

Consultations

Legal, Realty and Court Services

Strategy, Innovation and Intergovernmental Services

Planning and Building Services

Information Technology

Strategic Plan Alignment

This Development Charge Interest Policy aims to ensure that the City is able to fund the new cost of capital required to maintain the delivery of our services to new members of the community. DCs are the main source of funding for infrastructure required to accommodate growth and without mitigation of the anticipated funding shortfall through the application of interest on amounts owing, the tax and rate payers would make up this difference. The City's goal is for growth to pay for growth as much as the DCA allows. This report aligns with the Working Together for Our Future pillar to run an effective and fiscally responsible government; looking for new funding options to ease taxes for residents and business.

Attachments

Attachment-1 Development Charge Interest Policy

Departmental Approval

Greg Clark, CPA, CMA, Manager Financial Strategy and Long-term Planning

Report Author

Christel Gregson, CPA, CMA, Senior Corporate Analyst Long-term Planning



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Corporate Policy and Procedure



Policy	Development Charge Interest Policy
Category	Corporate
Authority	Finance
Related Policies	Development Charge By-law, General Reserve and Reserve Fund Policy, Letter of Credit Policy, Investment Policy
Approved By	Council
Effective Date	Wednesday, January-01-2020
Revision Date	Upon each Development Charge By-law update

Policy Statement

The fundamental principle of funding growth-related capital costs is that 'Growth should pay for Growth'. This policy serves to ensure that there is compensating interest income to fund the lost development charges (DCs) that will result from the DC rate freeze and deferred payment requirements.

Purpose

This DC Interest Policy aims to ensure that the City is able to fund the new cost of capital required to maintain the delivery of our services to new populations and businesses in the community. DCs are the main source of funding for infrastructure required to accommodate growth and without mitigation of the funding shortfall expected, the tax and rate payers would make up this difference. The City's goal is for growth to pay for growth as much as the Development Charge Act (DCA) allows. The interest earned from this policy will fund the lost DC revenue resulting from the two-year DC rate freeze as well as the lost DC revenue on the time lapse between date of calculation and ultimate payment of the DCs to the City.

Subsection 26.2 (3) of the DCA permits a municipality to charge interest from the date the DC is calculated to the date the DC is paid in full.

Subsection 26.1 (7) of the DCA permits a municipality to charge interest on the instalments required by subsection (3) from the date the DC would have been payable in accordance with section 26 to the date the instalment is paid.

Definitions

Early Payment Agreement means an agreement with a person or business who is required to pay a DC providing for all or any part of the DC to be paid before it would otherwise be payable.

Interest Rate means the non-residential construction price index year-over-year change as of September 30th of the prior year.

Occupancy means the earliest of either (1) the date on which an Occupancy Permit or a Partial Occupancy Permit is issued by the City of Guelph, or (2) the earliest date on which the use or intended use of a building or part of a building for the shelter or support of persons, animals or property commences.

Security means an agreed upon asset or assurance provided in anticipation of later payment in full of DCs.

Guidelines

Rate Freeze

The new subsection 26.2 (1) of the DCA provides that DCs are to be calculated on:

- a) the day an application for an approval of development in a site plan control area under subsection 41 (4) of the Planning Act was made in respect of development that is the subject of the DC,
- b) if clause (a) above does not apply, the day an application for an amendment to a by-law passed under section 34 of the Planning Act was made in respect of the development that is the subject of the DC;
- c) if neither clause (a) nor clause (b) applies,
 - i. in the case of a DC in respect of a development to which section 26.1 applies, the day the DC would be payable in accordance with section 26 if section 26.1 did not apply, or
 - ii. in the case of a DC in respect of a development to which section 26.1 does not apply, the day the DC is payable in accordance with section 26.

Section 26 requires that the DC balance owing is due at Occupancy. If the period between DC calculation and Occupancy is greater than one month, interest will be charged, as prescribed below:

Where Security is provided, the Interest Rate in effect at the date of DC calculation will be applied annually to the DC balance owing beginning on the first day of the month succeeding the date of DC calculation. The Interest Rate will be accrued on a monthly basis.

Where Security is not provided, the Interest Rate in effect at the date of DC calculation plus 2% will be applied annually to the DC balance owing beginning on

the first day of the month succeeding the date of the DC calculation. The Interest Rate will be accrued on a monthly basis.

DC Deferral

Subsection 26.1 (1) of the DCA states that, despite section 26, a DC in respect of any part of a development that consists of a type of development set out in subsection (2) is payable in accordance with section 26.1.

Subsection 26.1 (2) identifies the following development types eligible for a DC deferral

- rental housing development that is not non-profit housing development (five years)
- institutional development (including long-term care homes, retirement homes, universities and colleges, memorial homes, clubhouses or athletic grounds of the Royal Canadian Legion and hospices) (five years)
- non-profit housing development (20 years).

The DC shall be paid in equal annual instalments beginning on the earlier of the date of the issuance of a permit under the Building Code Act, 1992 authorizing occupation of the building and the date the building is first occupied, and continuing on,

- a) the following five anniversaries of that date, in the case of a DC in respect to rental housing development that is not non-profit housing development, and institutional development; or
- b) the following 20 anniversaries of that date, in the case of a DC in respect of non-profit housing development.

The Interest Rate shall be charged on the outstanding balance as at each anniversary date, until the DCs owing are paid in full. The interest will be calculated and charged as follows:

Where Security is provided, the Interest Rate will be applied to the DC balance owing and will be payable on each anniversary date.

Where Security is not provided, the Interest Rate plus 2% will be applied to the DC balance owing and will be payable on each anniversary date.

Early Payment Agreements will be offered if the owner of a development would prefer to pay the full DC owing at Occupancy.

Staff Report



To	Committee of the Whole
Service Area	Corporate Services
Date	Monday, February 3, 2020
Subject	2019 Financial Condition Assessment and Proposed Long-term Financial Framework
Report Number	CS-2020-04

Recommendation

1. That the 2019 Financial Condition Assessment attached to report CS-2020-04 and dated February 3, 2020 be received.
 2. That the Long-term Financial Framework included as Attachment-2 to report CS-2020-04, be approved.
-

Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

To provide a summary of the 2019 Financial Condition Assessment findings and to outline the Long-term Financial Framework (LTFF) that will improve the City's financial sustainability, flexibility and vulnerability.

Key Findings

The overall financial condition of the City has improved since 2015, indicated by increased reserve and reserve fund balances, a continued solid credit rating score and a bettered financial position. One of the key drivers of this was the updated Reserve and Reserve Fund Policy completed in 2017. Staff committed to undertaking an external financial condition assessment with each term of Council and the results of the BMA Consulting (BMA) assessment can be found in Attachment 1 to this report.

The financial health of a municipality can be evaluated based on three measures, as per BMA:

- Sustainability – the ability to maintain services over an extended period of time
- Vulnerability – the level of resiliency to mitigate unexpected negative factors
- Flexibility – the ability to adapt to changing opportunities

The City's proposed LTFF will use these measures as the foundation needed to balance the maintenance of service levels and the City's financial health over the long-term. The LTFF will be used to inform policies and guide decision making. The situational analysis provided by the BMA assessment will be used to determine which policies and services need to be updated and aligned to mitigate against the risk of potential threats, capitalize on opportunities and resolve operational weaknesses.

The LTFF as proposed provides the foundation on which metrics and key performance indicators (KPIs) will be developed for the City's businesses and strategies.

Current challenges impacting the three LTFF measures relate to the following:

- aging infrastructure
- sufficiency of Reserve and Reserve Funds
- managing the cost of growth
- changing service and program demands (aging and growing population)
- impacts from changing revenue assumptions

In 2020 the focus of policy review and development will be on the following:

- Debt Management Policy – update
- Multi-year Budget Policy – new
- Revenue Policy – new
- Growth Cost Management Policy – new

Attachment-2 provides the policy to establish the LTFF, with Appendix A to it demonstrating the beginning of this process, the items shown are not exhaustive and in many cases are only in the preliminary stages of development. Staff's intention with bringing this to Council is to obtain approval to continue to develop the policies and measurements required to complete a robust LTFF.

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications from this report. BMA identified key challenges and opportunities that may have significant financial implications in the future. It is important that the City develop a LTFF to guide development of strategies to manage through the known risks, seize opportunities, and provide the foundation needed to achieve the goals and deliverables of the City's Strategic Plan.

Report

The City engaged BMA to undertake a financial condition assessment that evaluated the change in financial condition since the last assessment in 2015. At that time, staff committed to updating this assessment with each term of Council. The full report can be found in Attachment-1 to this report.

BMA uses trend analysis, comparator data and established best practices to measure results in three areas:

- growth and socio-economic indicators
- municipal levy, property taxes and affordability
- financial position

The following section provides the findings of BMA's situational analysis in four groups: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Strengths and weaknesses relate to internal factors while opportunities, and threats relate to external items. An item can be identified as a strength, weakness, opportunity, and threat; in cases where this occurs they will be identified under each section, and in policy development addressed holistically.

Based on BMA results, staff have developed a list of recommendations and a plan of implementation that will leverage the City's strengths to seize opportunities, mitigate against potential threats, and improve weaknesses.

Situational Analysis

Strengths

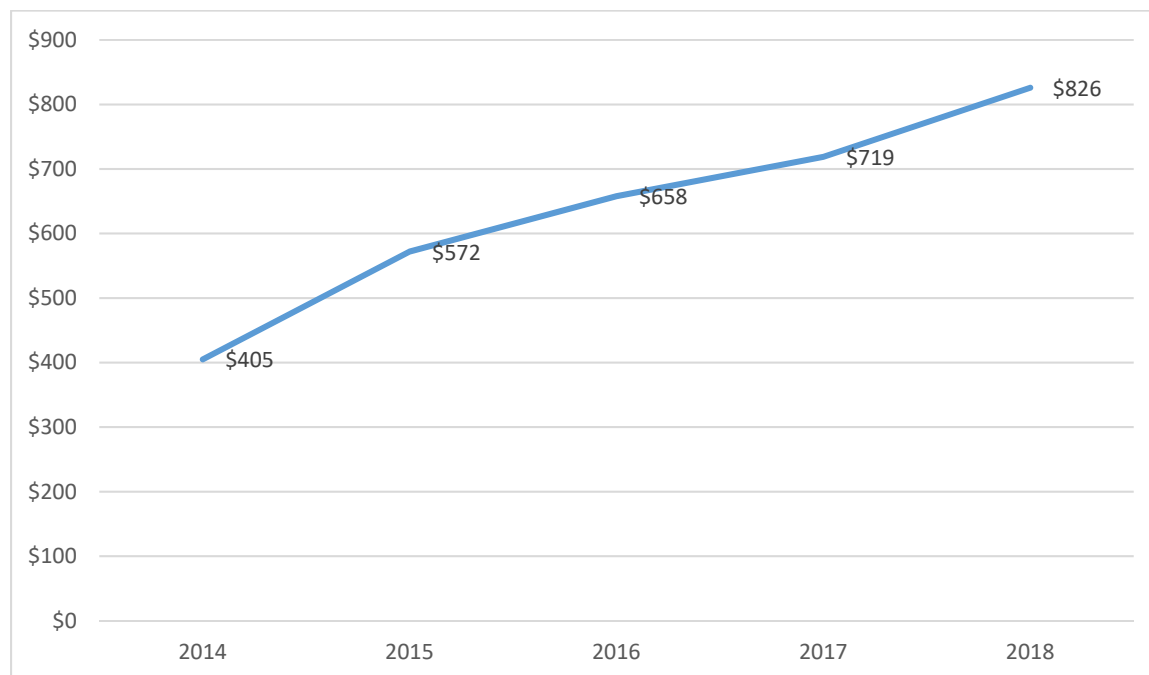
The City has a strong financial foundation based on sound financial policies that guide reserves, debt, and liquidity management aimed at improving its financial position.

Since the last BMA assessment, there has been a commitment to improve reserve and reserve fund balances through surplus allocations and contributions from the operating budget that has brought balances closer to target levels which is critical to the long-term financial stability of the City.

The 2019 credit rating score of AA+ reflects sound financial management, budget performance, healthy economy, low debt levels and a strong level of liquidity. A strong credit rating demonstrates that the City is well managed, financially healthy and able to meet all debt obligations. The rating influences the terms of future debt; such as the type of debt, the amortization period and the interest rate.

Financial position, as measured by financial assets less financial liabilities, is strong and has been steadily increasing since 2014 as reflected in Figure 1 below. The improvement is related to consistent increases in reserves and receivables and is above the median of the City's comparator municipalities. A positive balance indicates that the City's long-term funding strategies are ensuring that revenues are appropriately being maintained to fund expenditures and liabilities.

Figure 1 – Financial Position per Capita

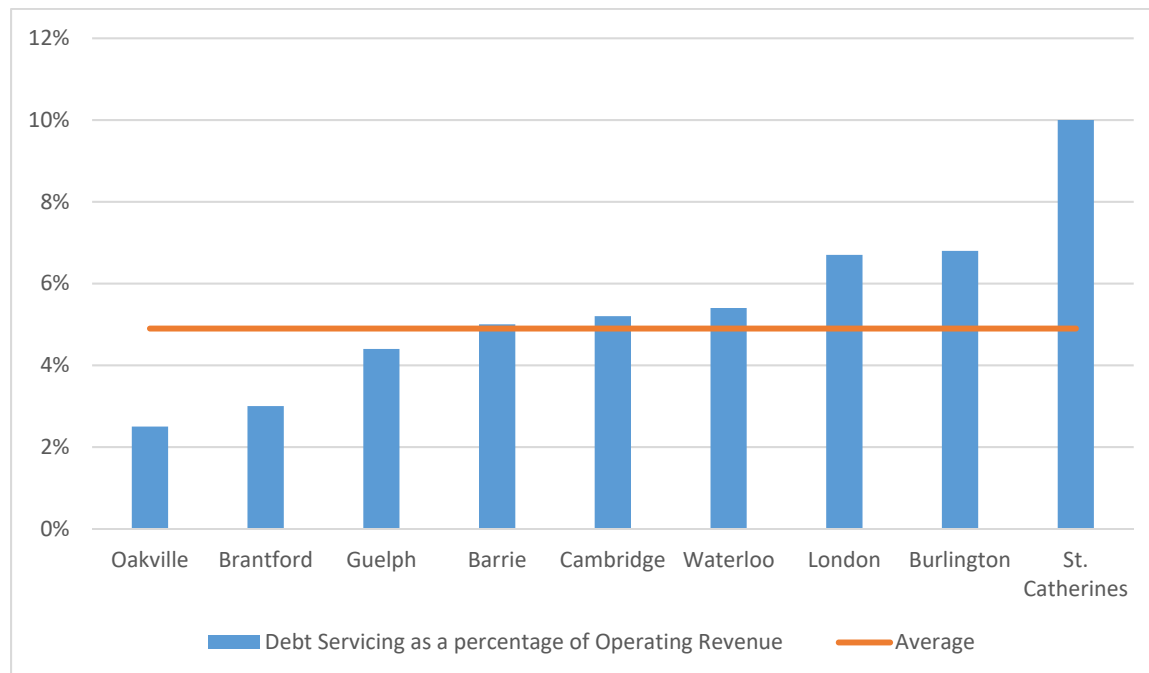


The City's tax base is very stable as represented by the low taxes receivable as a percentage of total taxes levied of 1.7 per cent, which is well below the comparator average of between two to five per cent.

The water and wastewater reserves and reserve funds are in good condition and continued investment in infrastructure renewal funding will ensure these reserve funds are sufficient to address asset management needs over the long-term.

Debt levels are below the comparator average and within industry best practices. The Municipal Act prescribes the maximum amount of debt a municipality can incur by the Annual Repayment Limit (ARL). The ARL limits total debt-servicing costs to 25 per cent of operating revenue. The City is well within this limit as well as the City's internal Debt Management Policy limits currently; the long-term capital plan will see future debt forecasts more fully leverage these allowances. Figure 2 below illustrates the total tax debt servicing charges as a per cent of own source revenues including the City's comparator group and shows that Guelph is currently managing tax supported debt within an acceptable range.

Figure 2 – Tax Debt-Servicing as a Percentage of Operating Revenue

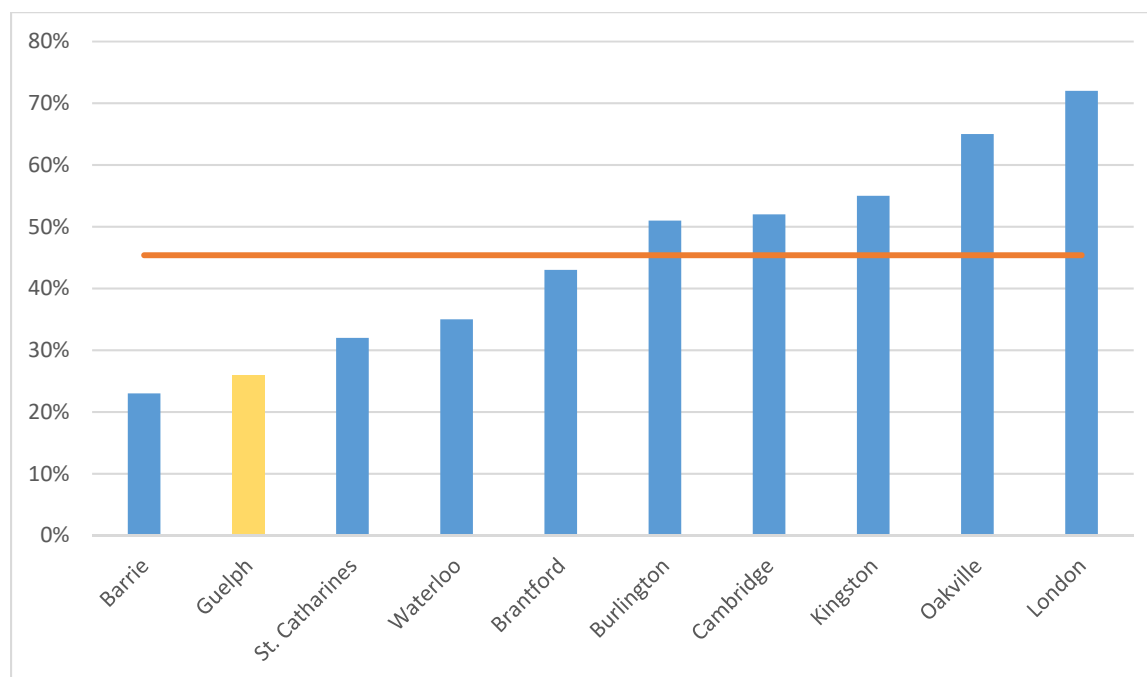


Weaknesses

The asset consumption ratio highlights the relative age of the City's assets and potential timing of asset replacement. It is the percentage of the written down value of tangible assets to their historical costs. The City's asset consumption ratios are higher than the comparator average and median; reflecting potentially greater replacement needs in the short to mid-term timeframe as compared to other municipalities.

Also consistent with annual reporting by staff, the collective tax supported discretionary reserves as a percentage of taxation is below the City's policy prescribed target and the comparator survey average as illustrated in Figure 3 below. While transfers have increased by eight per cent to these reserves since the previous assessment, the reserve balances as a per cent of taxation has remained stable, which indicates that spending has also increased. Without improvement in this ratio, the City's financial flexibility will be limited for responding to unforeseen expenditures and shortfalls in revenues.

Figure 3 – 2018 Tax Reserves as a Percentage of Own Source Revenues



The City's tax supported capital reserve funds are below recommended levels for managing aging infrastructure needs. The General Reserve and Reserve Fund Policy establishes targets for each of the capital reserve funds and currently they collectively are below target. Without sufficient capital reserve balances, the City is forced to rely on debt financing for major infrastructure renewal projects and has limited ability to respond to emergencies, unexpected policy changes from other levels of government or to take advantage of business opportunities. This puts the City at a risk when previously it was noted that its infrastructure is also more aged than our comparators.

Growth currently represents two areas of concern for the City: Development Charge (DC) debt capacity and the cost of growth not recoverable from DCs. The projected DC debt requirements, as identified in the 2018 DC Background Study exceed current limits set out in the City's Debt Management Policy. Staff have addressed this concern as part of the update to the Debt Management Policy. Changes in metrics for DC debt better align with the way in which DCs are calculated and collected, allowing for improved planning.

The City is required to plan to meet the growth targets as prescribed by the Province, however, the capital infrastructure needed to accommodate growth, and the front-ended timing of these projects creates significant financial challenges. Staff have identified this as a priority to examine in greater detail in 2020.

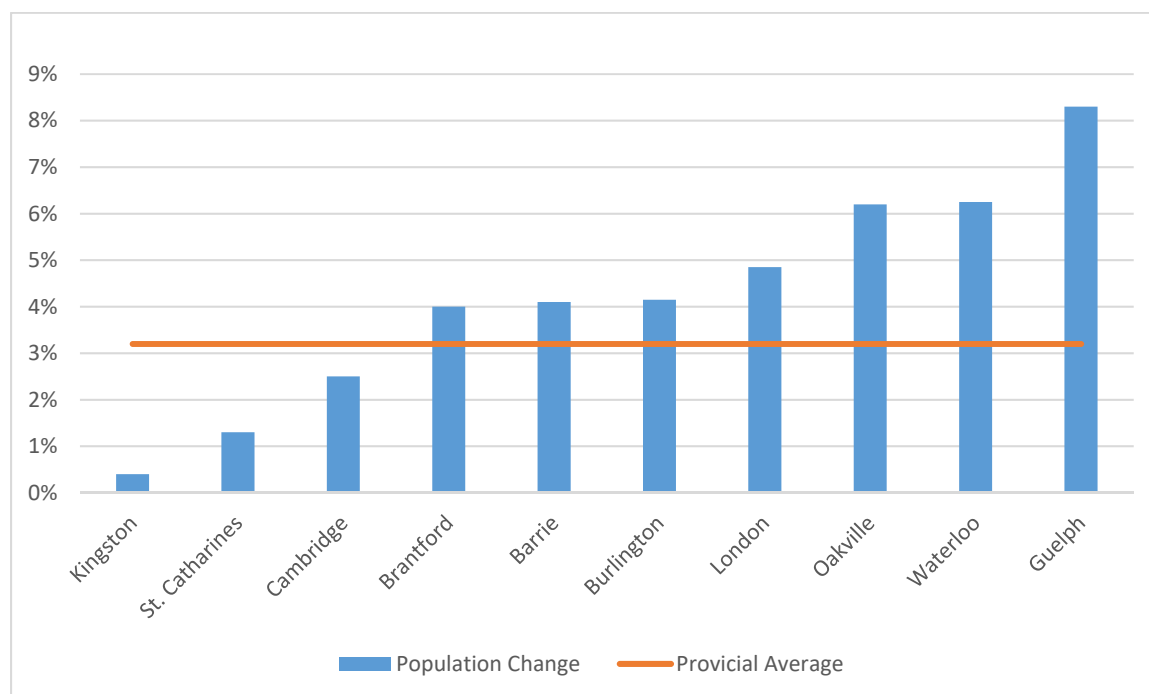
Property taxation affordability is a concern. The municipal property tax levy on a per capita basis is slightly above the comparator group average whereas the levy per \$100,000 of weighted assessment is just at the group average. This indicates that assessment value in Guelph is slightly higher than comparator municipalities. In terms of affordability, collectively including property taxes and user fees as a percentage of average income, Guelph is rated at 5.0% compared to the average of 4.7% which can be an indication of an uncompetitive municipal service cost as a percentage of income.

Finally, the City's non-residential tax ratios are higher than comparator municipalities, resulting in the property taxes per square foot for commercial and industrial properties just over the comparator group average. From a position of attracting businesses and jobs, a priority identified in the Strategic Plan, this could be viewed as a barrier to economic development, however, Guelph's results are fairly close to average.

Opportunities

The City is growing and intensifying. Strong population growth drives the economic health of a municipality and creates an environment that supports business. The City's population has grown 8.3 per cent between 2011 and 2016, as illustrated in Figure 4, which is 144 per cent faster than the Ontario average for that same period. A growing population results in an increased tax base and a greater ability to pay for public services and programs. However, accommodating the growing population through expansion of services and investment in infrastructure has created financial challenges as previously discussed and long-term financial planning should focus on addressing this risk.

Figure 4 – Population Growth 2011 to 2016



A significant portion of the City's growth has been through intensification of the built-up areas. Intensification has a number of benefits, including, reducing carbon footprint, improving access to public transit, using resources such as land, building and infrastructure effectively, enhancing community identity and creating active streets that promote healthier patterns of activity.

The City's assessment base is strong relative to comparator municipalities in terms of both value and diversification. A strong assessment base provides a stable revenue source and flexibility to raise revenues to meet service and program demands.

The composition of the weighted assessment base is 73 per cent residential and 27 non-residential. This favourable composition reflects the City’s strong non-residential sector and provides the ability to allocate municipal costs to both residents and employers. It also helps with resiliency through economic downturns and changing employment/business patterns. A current study supported by the Region of Peel, has indicated that changing employment patterns in terms of work-from-home and the sharing economy are poised to create significant challenges for the realty property tax regime and possibly even income tax regimes. While the City’s non-residential base is a significant benefit today, it will be important that financial strategies address this risk of shifting tax classes and the impacts it could have on the City.

Household income within the City is high relative to the municipal survey, indicating a reliable revenue stream and a strong ability to raise revenues to meet service and program demands.

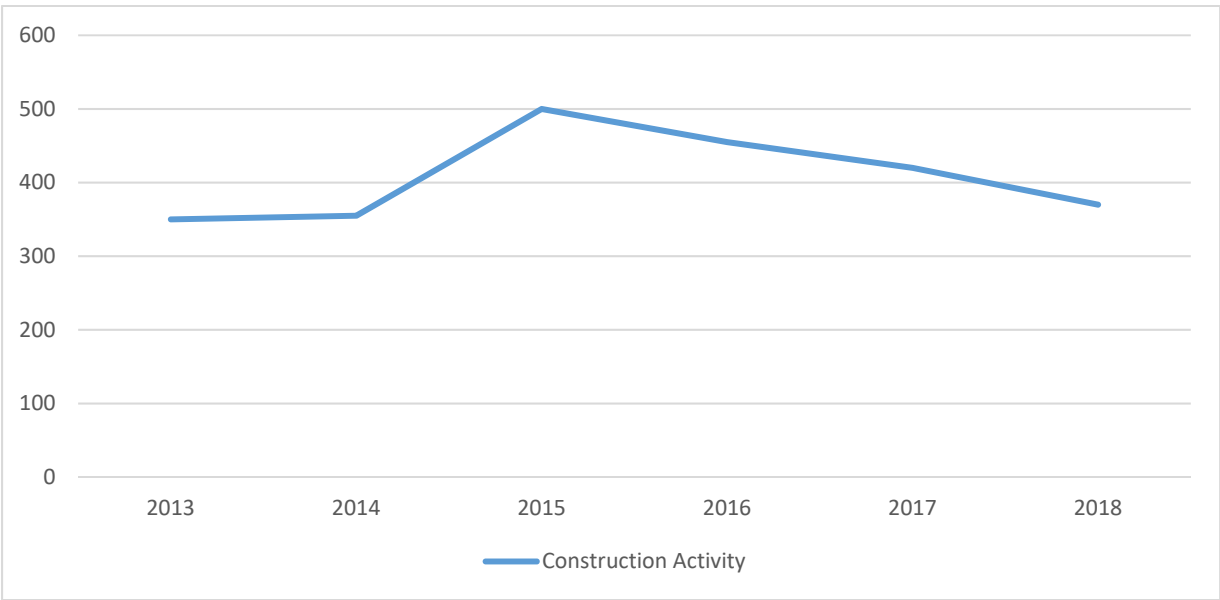
Threats

Guelph’s population is aging. It is anticipated that by 2031, 30 per cent of the population will be above the age of 55 (as of 2016, 21.4% of Guelph’s population is over the age of 65). This demographic shift will increasingly create pressure to change the design and delivery of municipal services and programs.

Legislation impacting how municipalities receive funding and deliver services has experiencing change. These changes from other levels of government create uncertainty and broader impacts as decisions must be made in order to continue service delivery without full information or sufficient time.

Construction activity in the City has been declining over the past five years as shown in Figure 5 below. It is still higher than comparators on a \$ value per assessment basis, however, this may signal the start of an economic decline which could negatively impact revenues and economic vitality.

Figure 5: Construction Activity



Strategic Recommendations

The financial health of a municipality can be evaluated based on three measures, as per BMA:

- Sustainability – the ability to maintain services over an extended period of time
- Vulnerability – the level of resiliency to mitigate unexpected negative factors
- Flexibility – the ability to adapt to changing opportunities

The City's proposed LTFF will use these measures as the foundation needed to balance the maintenance of service levels and the City's financial health over the long-term. The LTFF will be used to inform policies and guide decision-making. The situational analysis provided by the BMA assessment will be used to determine which policies and services need to be updated and aligned to mitigate against the risk of potential threats, capitalize on opportunities and resolve operational weaknesses.

Policies provide a framework to develop specific strategies, by defining how outcomes and inputs will be measured we are able to determine the value created. Without policies, the variables are difficult to measure in terms that are relatable to taxpayers, Council, and staff. The end goal is to have a framework built on robust and mature policies which allows for strategy development, that maximizes value. Citizen value is maximized when the expected level of service is delivered from the appropriate assets at the minimum long-term operating and capital costs.

In order to ensure these outcomes, the City needs to put in place policies that help achieve this goal. Measuring progress in applying the policies and achieving the goal on a periodic basis is also required. Attachment-2 provides the policy to establish the LTFF, with Appendix A to it demonstrating the beginning of this process, the items shown are not exhaustive and in many cases are only in the preliminary stages of development. Staff's intention with bringing this to Council is to obtain approval to continue to develop the policies and measurements required to complete a robust LTFF.

The Debt Management Policy update provided to Council is the most recent development of this LTFF. The policy has been updated to better reflect the uses and requirements of borrowing in the municipal environment, supported by a robust review of external data from comparators and academia. It also includes adjusted performance metrics that more closely align with the risks and benefits of borrowing to fund long-term investments in capital infrastructure.

Staff are proposing to bring annual updates on progress towards the overall LTFF with specific focus on the items identified in the BMA assessment and aligned with the City's Strategic Plan. The items that follow will be the focus of work throughout 2020 and will involve staff from all areas of the corporation.

Aging infrastructure

In order to bring the condition of the City's assets to an acceptable level, the LTFF will focus on capital plan development policies to ensure that available funding is being used optimally. Also, service level policy integration into capital renewal decisions will be enhanced to provide a clearer picture of value being derived from investment in the various capital renewal activities.

Sufficiency of Reserves and Reserve Funds

The General Reserve and Reserve Fund Policy will continue to establish appropriate targets and uses for discretionary reserves to determine potential funding shortfalls. Staff will work to deliver enhanced reporting and guidance to Council to assist in decision-making processes at year-end and budget approval. The Budget Policy and Surplus Allocation Policy need to be updated to ensure provisions for discretionary reserve balances are made when required, and there is a continued investment in capital infrastructure renewal to reach sustainable funding.

Managing the cost of growth

A Growth Management Policy will be developed to guide decision-making to assist in ensuring growth materializes in an affordable manner that minimizes the impact on the existing tax and rate payers, while maintaining compliance with provincially-mandated growth targets and without hindering economic growth.

Changing service and program demands

The changing demographic composition of the City's expanding population will result in changing demands on services and programs. The first step to proactively address this risk is to establish a Service Level Policy which will identify the metrics to measure current level of service and enable decisions relating to service changes can be supported with strong empirical evidence. Servicing population growth will also require a strong understanding of the current level of service provided to existing residents.

Impacts from changes in revenue assumptions

In order to fully understand the various sources of funding the City uses to deliver services, a comprehensive set of revenue policies is required. This group of policies will assist business areas in developing individual strategies for addressing their specific revenue sources. It will cover items such as external funding, both one-time and ongoing, fee development and recovery rate target establishment, and revenue budget development. Of particular concern for this policy are the following:

- changes due to decisions by other levels of government
- competitiveness of fees and rates, including taxation and user-fees
- assessment growth use and reliance on in annual budget development

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications from the BMA assessment. BMA identified key challenges and opportunities that may have significant financial implications. It is important that the City develop a LTFF to manage through the known risks and opportunities, providing the foundation needed to achieve the goals and deliverables from the City's Strategic Plan.

Consultations

Capital Planning Steering Committee

Strategic Plan Alignment

The BMA assessment provides an important perspective that balances service levels with financial sustainability, which will strengthen all five pillars within the City's Strategic Plan.

The proposed LTFF is a specific deliverable of the Working Together for Our Future pillar.

Attachments

Attachment-1: 2019 BMA Financial Condition Assessment

Attachment-2: Long-term Financial Framework Policy

Departmental Approval

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Report Author

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Financial Condition Assessment

November

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Executive Summary

The Financial Condition Assessment Report includes:

**Multiple Financial,
Affordability Socio-Economic
Indicators**

Trends

Peer Comparisons



**Financial Policies and
Strategies**

The City of Guelph completed a Financial Condition Assessment in 2015. This update report shows how the City’s socio-economic and financial performance over the last 5 years has changed and also identifies future challenges and opportunities. A municipality’s financial health can vary significantly based on a number of factors including growth, age of infrastructure, policy decisions and how programs and services are delivered. The following provides a brief introduction to the Financial Condition Assessment:

- It is easy to draw erroneous conclusions by looking at indicators in isolation. As such, the Financial Condition Assessment includes multiple indicators which should be evaluated within the context of the “big picture”.
- It is important to consider trends, rather than evaluating one point in time, as an indicator can be impacted by one-time events. Therefore, trends were used to help provide interpretive context.
- To put the City’s financial condition into perspective. Additional context has been included in the report by providing comparisons of indicators to peer municipalities has also been included.

Socio-Economic Indicators

Socio-economic indicators provide information regarding a municipality's ability to generate revenue and also economic and demographic characteristics that affect service demands.

Guelph has a number of positive socio-economic indicators reflecting a strong local economy.

As a cautionary note, in terms of demographics, Guelph, consistent with trends across Ontario, has an aging population. This trend is expected to continue and should be monitored as it may require a need to shift municipal service priorities.



Summary of Findings

- ✓ *Guelph has grown in population from 2011-2016 by 8.3% (1.7% annually)*
- ✓ *Increasing density with increased intensification in urban settlement areas*
- ✓ *While the 65+ is the fastest growing cohort, similar to Ontario, the City has a strong working age population that is growing faster than Ontario population*
- ✓ *Relatively low unemployment rate and high employment rate*
- ✓ *Construction activity has been trending down over the last 3 years but on per capita basis is higher than the peer municipalities. Assessment on a per capita basis is above the average of peer municipal corporations*
- ✓ *Average household incomes are above the peer median*

Levy and Affordability

Property taxes were reviewed in relation to levy per capita, per \$100,000 of assessment and in relation to household income to provide an indication of affordability of services in the City of Guelph.

Water and wastewater costs were also compared against peer municipalities



Summary of Findings

- ✓ *In comparison to its peer group, Guelph's municipal levy on a per capita basis is slightly above average however the levy per \$100,000 of assessment is below the peer average reflecting a strong assessment base upon to raise taxes*
- ✓ *Guelph's property taxes in relation to average household income is slightly above the peer average and peer median*
- ✓ *Water/WW costs are at the peer average but slightly below the peer median*
- *Non-residential tax ratios are higher than the peer average.*
- *Tax Ratios should be reviewed annually to help ensure competitive tax positioning.*

Financial Indicators

Summary of Findings

Reserves and Reserve Funds will be a critical component of the City's sustainable long term financial plan which is currently being developed.

- *Overall, Guelph's Tax Discretionary Reserves as a percentage of taxation and own source revenues are lower than the peer average. Over the past five years, Guelph's ratio of reserves as a percentage of taxation has been stable.*
- *Corporate Contingency Reserves - City should have sufficient stabilization reserves to manage the impact of unusual or unplanned cost increases or reserve reductions. These reserves increased 66% in the past 5 years and many of the policy targets are being met. In cases where they are not, strategies have been put in place to move toward the target levels.*
- *Program Specific Reserves – Targets have been established for sick leave, WSIB and paramedic retirements. These reserves are largely meeting target levels and on a consolidated basis have increased 41% over the past 5 years.*
- *Capital Reserves/Reserve Funds—Capital reserves form an important component of any capital financing plan. A legislated requirement is to prepare comprehensive asset management plans which the City has completed. Strategies have been put in place to increase the contributions to the capital program to fund the replacement of capital assets and support financial sustainability.*
- *Non-Tax Supported Capital Reserves - The water and wastewater reserves are in strong position which is important for future financial sustainability as the asset age of these assets in Guelph are higher than peer municipalities reflecting a greater need to replace capital assets. Stormwater Capital Reserves are well below the target level and is an area that will require additional financial contributions.*



Financial Indicators Continued

Debt Management

- The City has established debt policy limits to help ensure the City has the appropriate financial flexibility to service debt without jeopardizing services or causing large spikes in tax rates. Tax-related debt levels are below the City's target maximum. The development charge debt charges represent approximately 19% of revenues collected. DC funded debt is exceeding existing policy limits. The debt management policy should be updated so that the ratios used to limit DC debt are more aligned with the development charge revenues.

Financial Position

- The financial position trend is important to monitor. A negative trend would indicate that capital and operating expenditures are exceeding reserves. The City's net financial position (Financial Assets-Financial Liabilities) is in a positive position, and has been trending upward over the past 5 years. The City of Guelph's net financial position per capita is above the median of the peer municipalities.

Tax Receivables

- Monitoring taxes receivable provides an indication of the strength of the local economy. Taxes receivable as a percentage of taxes levied is at approximately 1.7%, amongst the lowest of the peer comparator group.

- ✓ Debt levels are well below the City's policy limits as well as Provincial limits



- ✓ Financial position is positive and trending upward



- ✓ Taxes receivable are very low reflecting a strong local economy

Summary

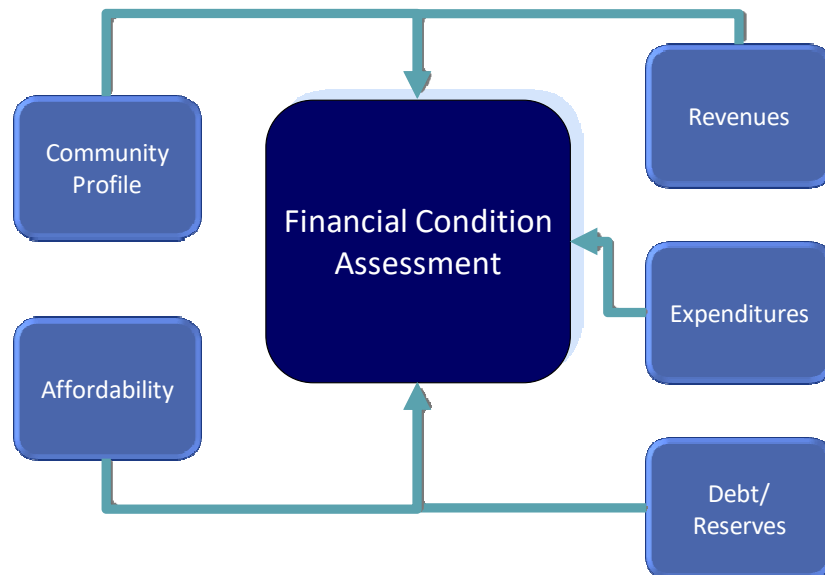
In summary, the City of Guelph's financial condition has been improving and is reflective of strong financial policies. Consistent with other Ontario municipalities, the City is facing a number of challenges to provide services and replace infrastructure given increased demands and limited resources. This will require a long-range financial plan to ensure the City continues to operate in a fiscally sustainable manner.

Introduction

The intent of a Financial Condition Assessment is to evaluate, through trend analysis, assessments, performance indicators, benchmarking, the City's past performance, financial outlook, and to identify key areas of focus.

Regular and timely financial condition assessments can provide an early warning of potential fiscal problems and provide information necessary for timely corrective action. To this end, BMA Management Consulting Inc. (BMA) was engaged by the City of Guelph to undertake a financial condition assessment in 2010 and 2015. BMA was engaged in 2019 to provide an update on the results.

As described by CPA Canada, an evaluation of a municipality's financial condition considers an evaluation of the following elements of resiliency:



Financial Condition

Sustainability

The ability to provide and maintain existing programs without resorting to unplanned tax rate increases or cuts to services.

Flexibility

The ability to issue debt responsibly without impacting the credit rating. Also, the ability to generate required revenues.

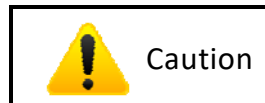
Vulnerability

Focuses on minimizing the level of risk that could impact its ability to meet financial obligations and commitments including the delivery of services.

At the conclusion of each section, a performance dashboard has been included to summarize the results of the key metrics. This provides the 2015 ratings as well as the 2019 ratings to provide perspective on how the City has performed over time.

The following provides the legend that was used to summarize the results.

Legend



City of Guelph's Commitment to Long Range Financial Planning

The following provides highlights that reflect the City's strong commitment to financial sustainability and the provision of services in the most efficient and effective way.

AA+ Credit Rating Affirmed—August 2019



"We expect the City of Guelph to continue generating robust operating margins, although we believe that elevated capital spending will pressure its budgetary performance in the next two years.

- We expect that the city will finance its capital plan without material borrowing in the next two years, and that robust cash generation will allow it to maintain an extremely strong liquidity position.*
- We are affirming our 'AA+' long-term issuer credit and senior unsecured debt ratings on Guelph and maintaining our stable outlook.*
- The stable outlook reflects our expectation that, in the next two years, Guelph's after-capital balances will erode but remain in surplus on average. We also expect the city will maintain tax-supported debt well below 30% of operating revenues through 2021 while preserving a very healthy liquidity position.*
- The civil service is experienced and qualified to effectively enact fiscal policies.*
- S&P recommends that the City should move toward a multi-year budget.*

Positive Financial Trends and Prudent Financial Policies

Guelph has developed solid financial policies that guide corporate decisions, including the development of the annual budget. This work has consistently been recognized and is reflected in the City's credit rating. Analysis of trends over the past five years reflects **improvements on the majority of financial indicators**. Further, the City has continued to fine tune financial policies and targets and to track performance and incorporate new strategies into the budget.



Strategic Plan Priorities

- Powering Our Future**—Contribute to a sustainable, creative and smart local economy that is connected to regional and global markets and supports shared prosperity for us all.
- Sustaining Our Future**—Care for our environment, respond to climate change and prepare our community for a net-zero-carbon future.
- Navigating Our Future**—Foster easy, accessible movement through trails, paths, roads and corridors to tie our community together and connect our economy with other regions.
- Working Together For Our Future**—Run an effective, fiscally responsible and trusted local government with engaged, skilled and collaborative employees.
- Building Our Future**—Make strategic investments that nurture social well-being, provide landmark beauty and offer a safe place where everyone belongs.

Trend Analysis

The problems that create fiscal challenges seldom emerge overnight, rather they develop slowly, thus making potential problems less obvious. Analyzing the trends of the City's key financial performance and socio-economic indicators offers several benefits including:

- Information on changes in the City's financial health, revealing the most current trends;
- How quickly a trend is changing;
- Forms the basis for future forecasting; and
- Builds awareness and helps identify the potential need to modify existing policies or develop new strategies.

Financial Indicators must be continually monitored and regularly evaluated to help ensure decisions are fully informed and financially responsible.

Better Information = Better Decisions



Peer Analysis

Peer analysis has also been included to gain perspective on the City's financial health in relation to other municipalities. Figure 1 summarizes the peer municipalities selected.

Figure 1—Peer Municipal Comparator Group

Municipality	Estimate 2019 Population	Land Area (sq. km.)	Density per sq. km.
Barrie	150,638	99	1,521
Brantford	103,952	72	1,435
Burlington	195,621	186	1,054
Cambridge	137,213	113	1,214
Kingston	129,093	415	311
London	410,966	420	978
Oakville	209,187	139	1,506
St. Catharines	139,578	96	1,452
Waterloo	113,347	64	1,770
Average	176,622	178	1,249
Median	139,578	113	1,435
Guelph	143,912	87	1,650

Source: Population—Manifold Data Mining, Land Area—Stats Canada



Financial Condition Assessment—Key Indicators

The Financial Condition Assessment includes the following:

Growth and Socio-Economic Indicators

These indicators are largely external to the City’s control but important to understand from a planning and financial forecasting perspective.

Population
Employment Statistics
Building Construction Activity
Property Assessment
Household Income

Municipal Levy, Property Taxes & Affordability Indicators

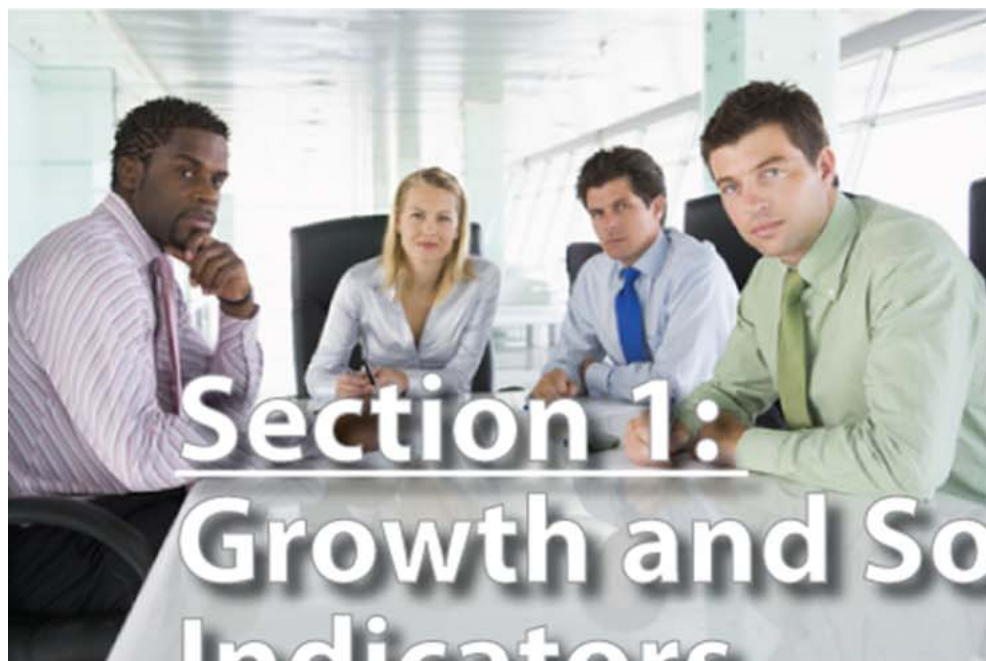
These indicators include an evaluation of the cost of municipal programs and services and how these costs translate into municipal property taxes to gain perspective on whether there are any affordability concerns.

Municipal Levy
Comparison of Relative Taxes
Municipal Property Taxes as a % of Income
Water/WW Costs as a % of Income
Non-Residential Taxes
Tax Ratios

Financial Position Indicators

This includes an evaluation of the City’s financial framework upon which the City operates. These indicators help determine if modifications are needed to the City’s existing financial policies and strategies as part of the development of the long range financial plan.

Reserves & Reserve Funds
Debt
Municipal Financial Position
Taxes Receivable



Section 1: Growth and Socio-Economic Indicators

Growth and Socio-Economic Indicators

Growth and socio-economic indicators provide insight into the community's collective ability to generate revenue relative to the community's demand for public services. As noted by Standard & Poor's bond rating agency, "demographic characteristics factor heavily into economic analysis".

An examination of economic and demographic characteristics can identify, for example, the following types of situations:

- An increasing tax base and correspondingly, the community's ability to pay for public services;
- A need to shift public service priorities because of demographic changes in the community; and
- A need to shift public policies because of changes in economic and legislative conditions.



Growth and Socio-Economic Indicators

Growth and socio-economic indicators are closely inter-related and affect each other in a continuous cycle of cause and effect. Many of these indicators are largely uncontrollable by the municipality. Also important are the City's plans and potential for future development.

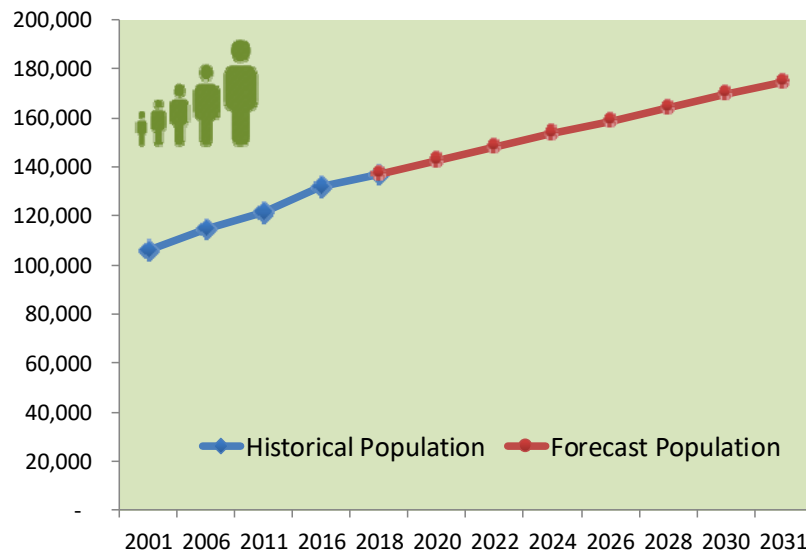


Population Changes

Strong population growth drives the economic health of a municipality and creates an environment that supports business. Also, it provides an evolving and vibrant labour force that the business community relies on to produce goods and services. Changes in population directly impact both revenues (assessment base) and expenditures (service demand). The following summarizes key findings related to the City's current and projected population growth:

- Guelph has grown from a population of 121,688 in 2011 to over 131,794 in 2016 (8.3% increase), an annual increase of approximately 1.7%
- Population is forecast to grow to 175,000 in 2031.

Figure 2—City of Guelph—Population Changes



Source: Stats Canada (Historical), Ontario Ministry of Finance forecast

Excerpts—City of Guelph Official Plan

The City will accommodate growth by:

- Planning for a population forecast of 175,000 people by the year 2031;
- Promoting a steady rate of growth equivalent to an average population growth rate of 1.5% annually, which will allow growth to keep pace with the planning of future physical infrastructure and community infrastructure; and
- Ensuring the employment growth in the City is planned to keep pace with population growth by planning for a minimum of 92,000 jobs by the year 2031.

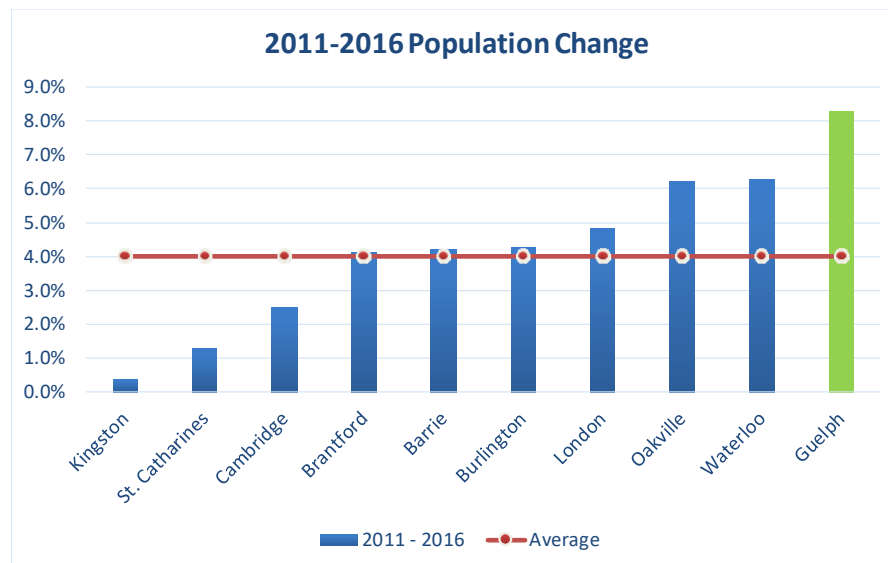


- The cost of growth not recoverable from DC's is \$78.5 million over the next 10 years. This includes 10% deduction, ineligible services, and forecasted exemptions. Funding new infrastructure and increased operating expenditures to maintain the expanded system while at the same time replacing existing infrastructure places additional pressure on the tax base and utility rates.

Peer Municipal Comparisons—Population Growth

- From 2011-2016, Guelph's population increased 8.3%, highest in the peer survey.
- Over the same period, the Ontario average grew by 3.2%. Guelph is one of the fastest growing municipality in the Province.

Figure 3—Population Changes—Peer Municipalities



Source: Stats Canada

Excerpts—MoneySense 2019

Guelph, Ont., June 10, 2019—MoneySense has ranked Guelph as the **second best city to buy real estate in Canada**. Guelph has been among MoneySense's top five places to buy real estate since 2017. MoneySense ranks cities based on three criteria:

- Value:** how affordable the community is compared to the surrounding area and the region overall.
- Momentum:** how quickly prices are appreciating in a community with an emphasis on long-term appreciation.
- Expert insight:** grading of communities as desirable by an extensive panel of real estate agents.

MoneySense

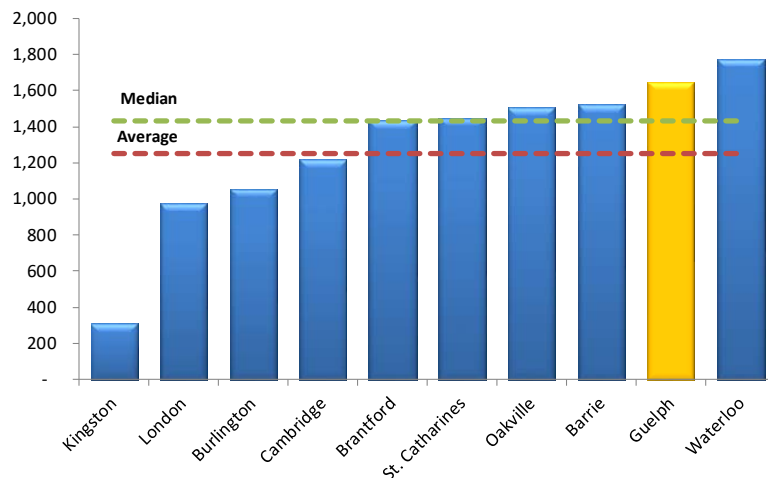


Population Density

Population density indicates the number of residents living in an area (usually measured per square kilometre). Density readings can lend insight into the age of a city, growth patterns, zoning practices, new development opportunities and the level of multi-family unit housing. As illustrated in Figure 4, Guelph has the second highest population density per km².

Intensification is the development of a municipal area at a higher density than currently exists, through development, redevelopment, infill and expansion or conversion of existing buildings. Intensification has a number of benefits, including, reducing carbon footprint, improving access to public transit, using resources such as land, buildings and infrastructure effectively, enhancing community identity and creating active streets that promote healthier patterns of activity.

Figure 4—Population Density per km² —Peer Municipalities



Excerpts—Corporate Asset Management Plan, 2017

According to Places to Grow and the related Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, Guelph is targeted to increase its population to 175,000, including 30,000 more jobs, by 2031. The Provincial legislation established that 40 per cent of that growth must occur in “established areas”. This means putting denser, mixed use developments into existing built-up areas of the city, and improving existing infrastructure to support this development.

Excerpts—City of Guelph Official Plan Settlement Area Boundary

The City will meet the forecasted growth within the settlement area through:

- i) promoting compact urban form;
- ii) intensifying generally within the built-up area, with higher densities within Downtown, the community mixed-use nodes and within the identified intensification corridors; and
- iii) planning for a minimum density of 50 residents and jobs per hectare in the greenfield area.

To achieve the intensification targets of this Plan, significant portions of new residential and employment growth will be accommodated within the built-up area through intensification.

Age Demographics

The age profile of a population has an impact on spending plans, especially around the type and level of service required. The needs of residents shift over the course of their lives.

An analysis was undertaken of the 5 year trend in Guelph in relation to the Ontario average.

- The fastest growing cohort is residents aged 65+, reflecting the entry of many “baby boomers” into those years. In the City of Guelph, the number of residents that are age 65+ has increased 21.4% over the 5 year period, compared with the Ontario average increase of 18.3% but overall this age cohort is still lower than the Provincial average.
- The number of residents age 0-19 has increased by 4.0% compared with a reduction of 2.2% across Ontario. The City benefits from a young and growing population and working age population 20-64 which has increased greater than the Provincial average.

Figure 5—Age Profile Trend

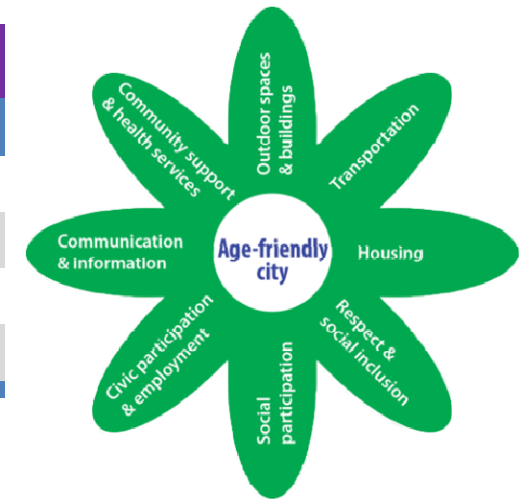
Age Profile	Guelph			Ontario		
	2011	2016	% change	2011	2016	% change
Age 0-19	29,535	30,721	4.0%	3,167,813	3,096,780	-2.2%
Age 20-44	44,085	47,066	6.8%	4,410,879	4,458,936	1.1%
Age 45-64	32,230	34,786	7.9%	3,836,128	3,927,160	2.4%
Age 65+	15,838	19,221	21.4%	1,951,480	2,309,176	18.3%
Total	121,688	131,794	8.3%	13,366,300	13,792,052	3.2%

Source: Stats Canada

Figure 6—Age Profile Comparison

Age Profile	Guelph	Ontario
	2016	2016
Age 0-19	23.3%	22.5%
Age 20-44	35.7%	32.3%
Age 45-64	26.4%	28.5%
Age 65+	14.6%	16.7%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Stats Canada



- These demographic changes may put pressure on the City to provide services that reflect the changing demographic needs while still keeping taxes affordable.

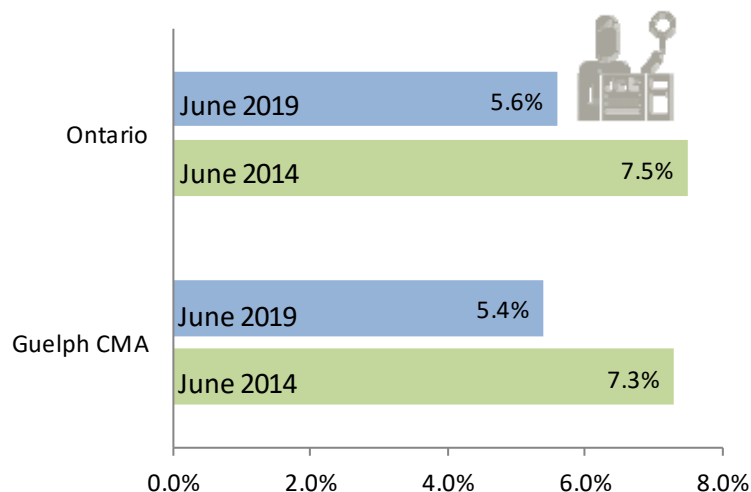
Excerpts—Older Adult Strategy

“It is projected that by 2031, Guelph will have almost 53,000 adults aged 55 years of age or older representing 30% of all residents. The impact of this demographic shift on the design and delivery of municipal services presents both opportunities and challenges.”

Employment and Labour Force Indicators

Labour force statistics are an important measure of the economy's potential.

Figure 7—Unemployment Rates—June 2019



Source: Stats Canada

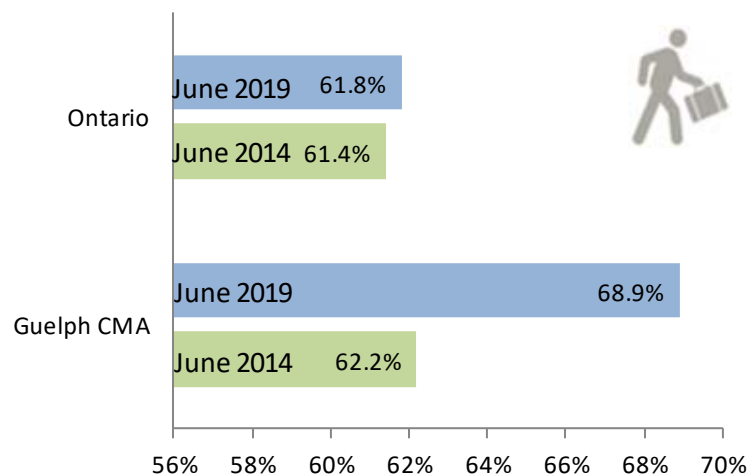
- The **unemployment rate** in Guelph CMA is estimated to be approximately 5.4% (June 2019), lower than the Ontario average. The unemployment rate in Guelph also declined from 2014 to 2019.

Excerpts—Labour Force Survey

"Guelph's economy and labour force continue to outperform not only neighbouring communities, but also communities across Canada. Guelph is a resilient community built for success as evidenced by having the highest employment rate in Canada."

- The **employment rate** is the percentage of total number of working-age people (includes working age people not actively seeking employment) who have jobs. The employment rate shows a community's ability to put its population to work and thereby generate income to its citizens.
- The rate of employment is a measure of and an influence on the community's ability to support its local business sector.
- Municipalities with higher employment rates are likely to have higher standards of living, other things being equal.
- As shown in figure 8, the employment rate in the Guelph CMA increased from 2014-2019 and is higher than the Ontario average over the last 5 years.

Figure 8—Employment Rates—June 2019

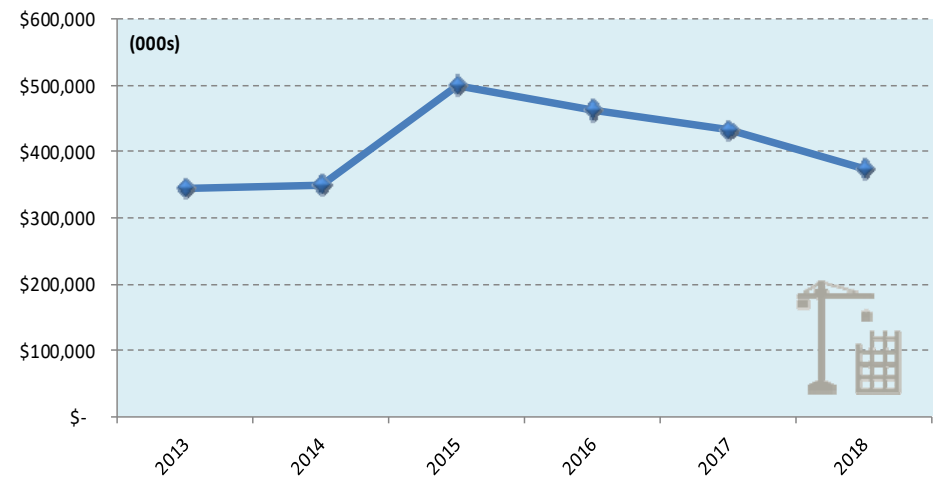


Source: Stats Canada

Construction Activity

- Another growth related indicator is the construction activity within a municipality which provides information on both residential and non-residential development. Changes in building activity impact other factors such as the employment base, income and property values.
- It is important to look at building cycles over a relatively long period of time to identify trends in construction activity.
- Figure 9 provides the trends in building permit activity experienced in the City of Guelph for the past 6 years.
- Construction activity has been trending down from 2015 to 2018.

Figure 9—Total Construction Activity—City of Guelph (000's)

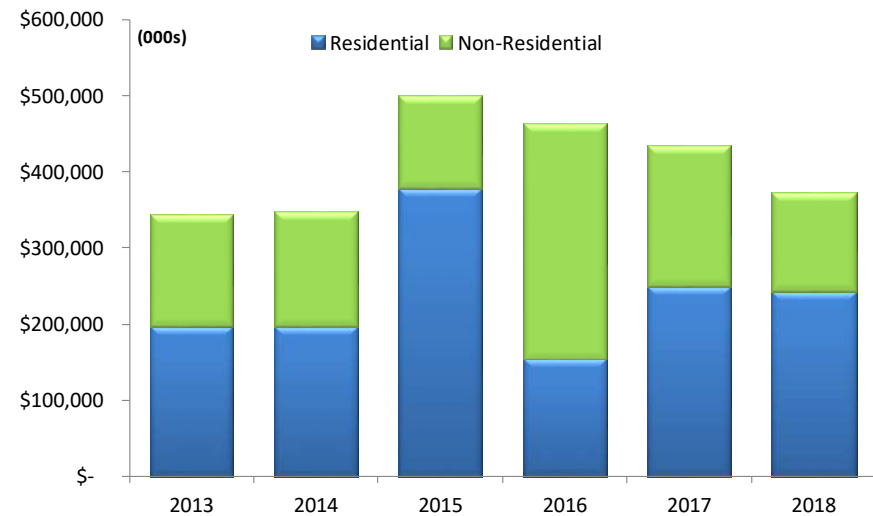


Source: Year End Building Reports and FIR



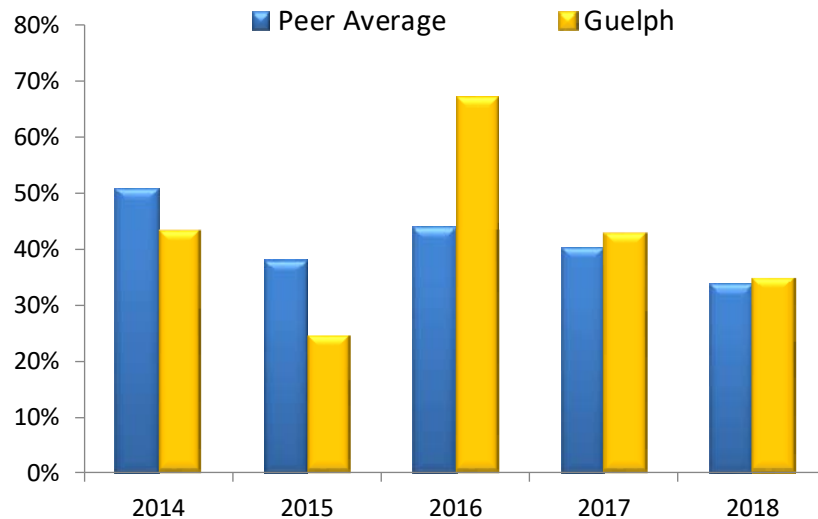
- It is also important to look at the type of construction being undertaken.
- Generally, a municipality's net operating costs (expenditure increase net of the associated growth in assessment) to service residential development is higher than the net operating cost of servicing commercial or industrial development because many services such as recreation, libraries and parks are provided mainly for use by residents.
- The ideal condition is to have sufficient commercial and industrial development to offset the net increase in operating costs associated with residential development. Non-residential development is desirable in terms of developing a strong assessment base upon which to raise taxes and in providing employment opportunities.
- Over the past 6 years, residential/non-residential construction activity (on a \$ of construction) is a 58/42 split in the City of Guelph, representing a good balance between residential and non-residential development.

Figure 10—Residential and Non-Residential Construction Activity



Source: Building year end reports

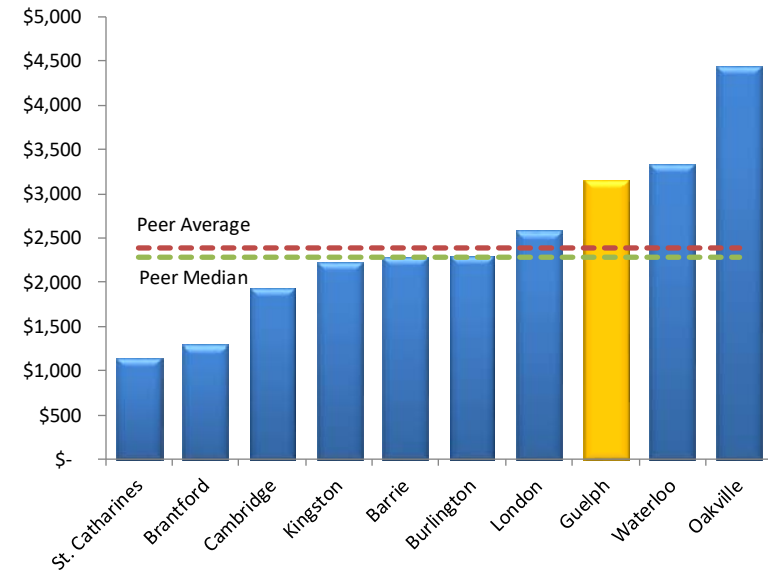
Figure 11—% Non-Residential Construction Activity—Peer Municipal Comparators



Source: BMA Municipal Studies

- A comparison was undertaken of the type of construction across the peer municipalities and over the last five years.
- As shown in figure 11, Guelph's proportion of non-residential construction activity was higher in 2016-2018.

Figure 12—Construction Activity Per Capita—Peer Municipal Comparators—5 Year Average



Source: City year end construction reports

- Building permit value per capita is used as an indicator of the relative construction activity within each peer municipality.
- As shown in figure 12, the five year average building permit value per capita from 2014 to 2018 in Guelph was the third highest in the survey of peer municipalities.
- The trend above is consistent with the trends experienced in the study in 2015.

Assessment

Monitoring assessment is important because taxation is the largest source of revenues to support City programs, services and the replacement of assets. A strong assessment base provides a stable long-term funding source. There are three aspects that should be monitored when reviewing assessment, which are important indicators of fiscal strength:

1. **Residential/ Non-Residential Composition:** As previously mentioned, it is more desirable to have a larger share of non-residential assessment as the municipal cost of service is generally lower than residential. In comparison to the peer municipalities, Guelph has a slightly higher proportion of non-residential assessment. As shown in figure 13, the weighted combined assessment in the non-residential sector is 27% in Guelph as compared with the peer average of 26%.
2. **Growth in Assessment:** Assessment increases include changes in assessment related to growth as well as changes in market value of existing properties (which does not generate additional revenues). As shown in figure 14, from 2014-2019, the assessment increase in Guelph was higher than the peer average and except for 2015-2016.

Figure 13—2019 Assessment Composition

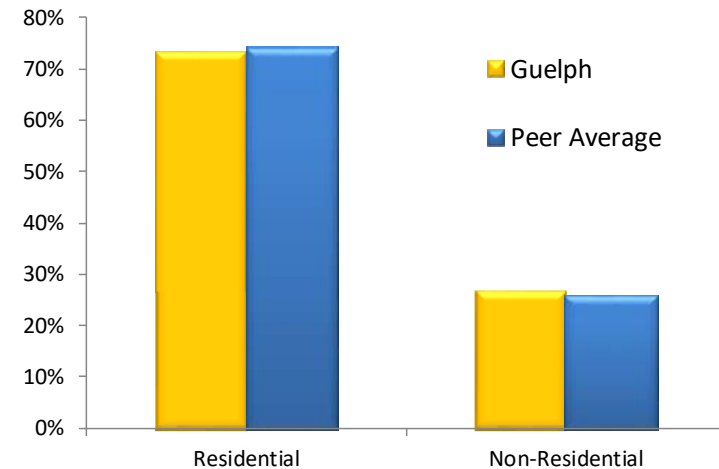
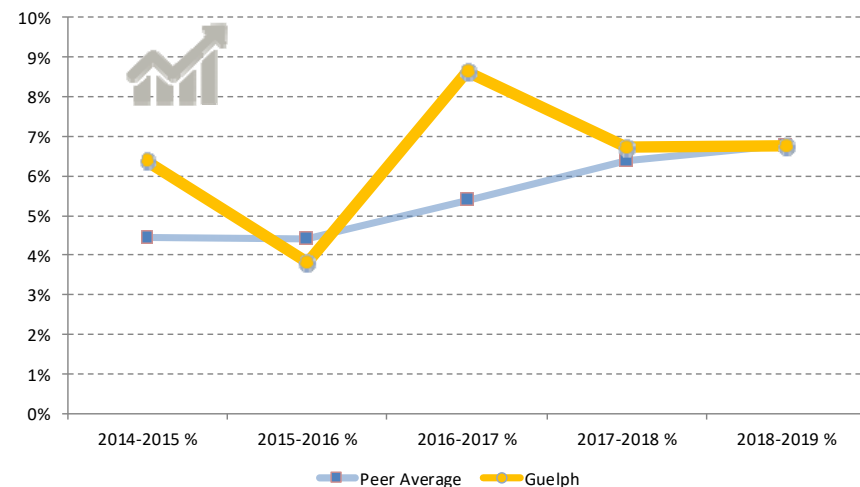


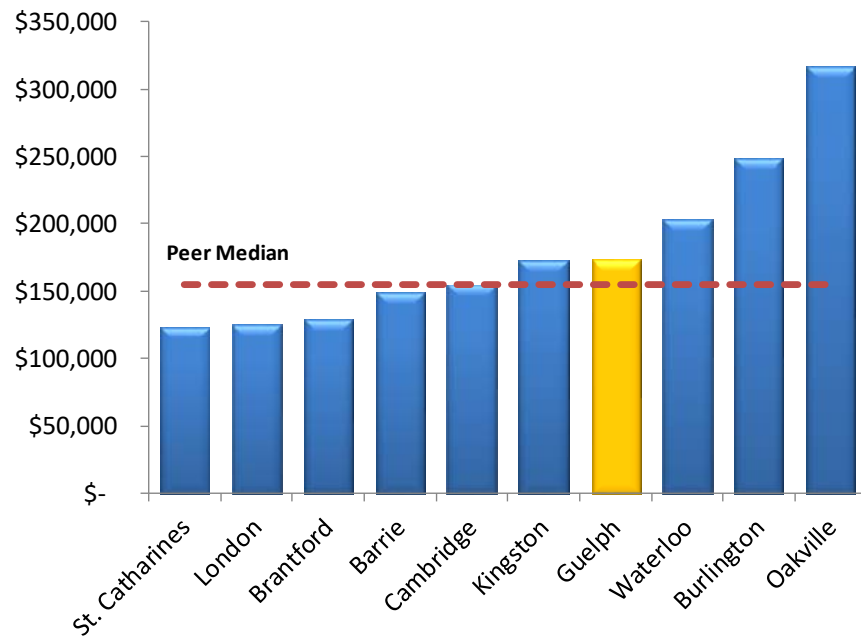
Figure 14—Changes in Unweighted Assessment



Source: for figure 13 and 14 BMA Municipal Studies using Assessment By-laws

3. **Richness of Assessment Base:** Assessment on a per capita has been used to compare the “richness” of the assessment base. A strong assessment base is critical to a municipality’s ability to raise revenues. Weighted assessment reflects the basis upon which property taxes are levied after applying the tax ratios to the unweighted assessment. As shown in figure 15, Guelph’s weighted assessment per capita is above the median of the peer municipal comparison, reflecting a higher base upon which to raise taxes.

Figure 15—2019 Weighted Assessment Per Capita



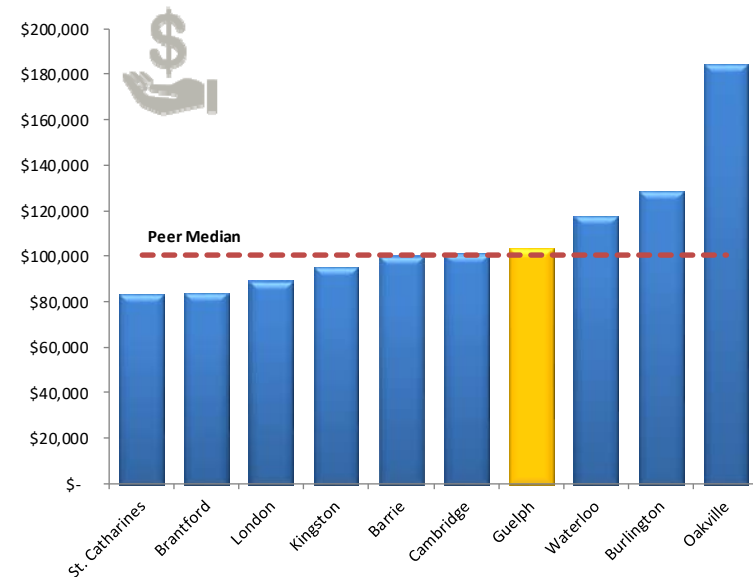
Source: BMA Municipal Studies using CVA

Household Income

Household income is one measure of a community’s ability to pay and is an indicator of the financial well-being of residents. Credit rating agencies use household income as an important measure of a municipality’s ability to repay debt. This indicator is also important to the economic health of businesses operating in Guelph.

- As shown in figure 16, in 2019, average household income in the City of Guelph is estimated at \$103,289 which was higher than the peer municipal median (\$100,178).
- A lower household income creates potential affordability challenges. Median was used to avoid skewing the average as a result of Oakville.

Figure 16—2019 Average Household Income



Source: Manifold Data Mining

Summary—Growth and Socio-Economic Indicators

- **Population** from 2011 to 2016 grew by 8.3%, highest in the survey of peer municipalities. Population is forecasted to exceed 175,000 by 2031, reflecting growth of approximately 2% annually. The City was ranked second best to buy real estate in Canada (June 2019 MoneySense)
- **Population density** is second highest in the survey which is reflective of a faster growth in population since over the past 5 years than peer municipalities and increased density in urban areas.
- **Demographics**—The number of residents that are ages 65+ has increased by a greater extent than the Ontario population over the last 5 years. The City benefits from a young and growing population and working age population 20-44 which is higher than the Provincial average.
- The **unemployment rate** is estimated at 5.4% which is lower than the Ontario average of 5.9% in June 2019 and has decreased from 2014.
- **Construction activity** has been trending down since 2015, however is above the peer average and reflects a good balance of residential and non-residential construction.
- The City's **property assessment** base is well diversified which helps provide a stable revenue source. The assessment base is above the peer median, reflecting a higher base upon which to raise taxes.
- Average **household incomes** in Guelph are above the peer median.

	Socio-Economic Indicator	2015 Rating	2019 Rating
	Population Growth	✓	✓
	Population Density	⊖	✓
	Age Demographics	⚠	⊖
	Unemployment and Employment Rates	✓	✓
	Construction Activity	✓	⊖
	Assessment Composition	⊖	✓
	Richness of the Assessment Base	✓	✓
	Assessment Growth	✓	✓
	Household Income	✓	✓



Section 2: Municipal Levy, Property Taxes and Affordability

Municipal Levy, Property Taxes and Affordability

This section of the Financial Condition Assessment provides an overview of the cost of municipal services in the City of Guelph and in relation to peer municipalities. In addition, property taxes are reviewed in relation to household income to provide an indication of the affordability of services in Guelph in comparison to other municipalities. Finally, this section of the report compares the competitiveness of non-residential property taxes and water and sewer costs.

Tax supported operating strategy

2019 approved operating budget

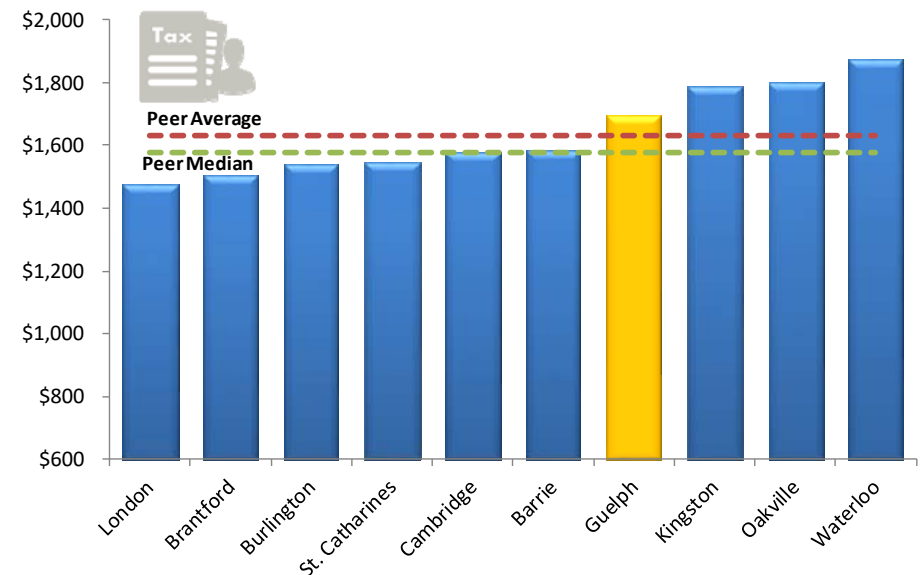


Municipal Levy Per Capita and Per \$100,000 of Assessment Comparison

In order to better understand the relative municipal tax position for the City, a comparison of net municipal levies was calculated based on a per \$100,000 of assessment as well as on a per capita levy basis. This analysis does not indicate value for money or the effectiveness in meeting community objectives as net municipal expenditures may vary as a result of:

- Different service levels;
- Variations in the types of services;
- Different methods of providing services;
- Different residential/non-residential assessment composition;
- Varying demand for services;
- Locational factors;
- Demographic differences;
- Socio-economic differences;
- Urban/rural composition differences;
- User fee policies;
- Age of infrastructure; and
- Use of reserves.

Figure 17—2019 Levy Per Capita Analysis



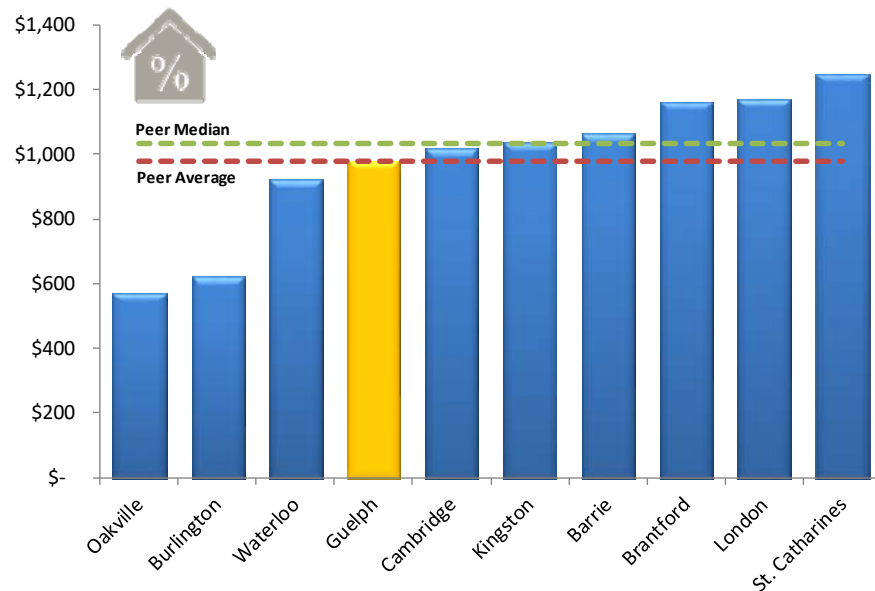
Source: BMA Municipal Study using 2019 Levy By-laws for each municipality

- The City of Guelph has a slightly higher than average municipal spending on a per capita basis.

Excerpts—2019 Operating Budget

The approved 2019 tax supported operating budget is the City of Guelph's realistic plan to build a stable financial foundation for the City. The tax supported operating budget was prepared in accordance with the Council approved Budget, Debt Management, and General Reserve and Reserve Fund policies.

Figure 18—2019 Levy Per \$100,000 of Weighted Assessment



Source: BMA Municipal Study using 2019 Levy By-laws for each municipality

- A comparison of the 2019 levy per \$100,000 of weighted assessment provides an indication of the levy in relation to the assessment base upon which taxes are raised.
- As shown in figure 18, the City of Guelph's levy per weighted assessment is below the median and at the average in relation to peer municipalities.



Excerpt—2019 Operating Budget

The approved 2019 budget reflects an increased net levy requirement of 2.69%. The approved budget takes into consideration inflationary cost pressures such as compensation, hydro and natural gas, fuel and diesel, software maintenance costs and other contractual increases. Further to this, the budget includes estimated increases for outstanding labour contract negotiations, impacts of previous Council decisions, operating impacts from capital approved during the 2018 budget deliberations, and the one per cent dedicated infrastructure levy.

Affordability

The following table compares total property taxes based on an average valued house in each of the municipalities using the MPAC database as well as the average household income to get an appreciation of the tax burden on a typical home in each municipality. In addition, this includes the water and wastewater cost of service also in relation to average household income.

Figure 19—Affordability Comparisons

Municipality	2019 Median Value of Dwelling	2019 Total Taxes on an Average Dwelling Value	2019 Average Household Income	Property Taxes as a % of Income	2019 Water/ Sewer Cost	W/WW % of Income	Combined Affordability Metric
Oakville	\$ 777,644	\$ 5,711	\$ 184,178	3.1%	\$ 873	0.5%	3.6%
Burlington	\$ 539,870	\$ 4,231	\$ 128,863	3.3%	\$ 873	0.7%	4.0%
Waterloo	\$ 385,348	\$ 4,191	\$ 117,592	3.6%	\$ 908	0.8%	4.3%
London	\$ 236,289	\$ 3,167	\$ 88,713	3.6%	\$ 887	1.0%	4.6%
Cambridge	\$ 322,812	\$ 3,823	\$ 100,582	3.8%	\$ 1,132	1.1%	4.9%
Brantford	\$ 258,594	\$ 3,439	\$ 83,802	4.1%	\$ 867	1.0%	5.1%
Barrie	\$ 335,300	\$ 4,132	\$ 100,178	4.1%	\$ 931	0.9%	5.1%
St. Catharines	\$ 247,660	\$ 3,520	\$ 82,730	4.3%	\$ 920	1.1%	5.4%
Kingston	\$ 311,765	\$ 4,229	\$ 94,838	4.5%	\$ 1,149	1.2%	5.7%
Peer Average	\$ 379,476	\$ 4,049	\$ 109,053	3.8%	\$ 949	0.9%	4.7%
Median	\$ 322,812	\$ 4,132	\$ 100,178	3.8%	\$ 908	1.0%	4.9%
Guelph	\$ 370,153	\$ 4,222	\$ 103,289	4.1%	\$ 929	0.9%	5.0%

Source: MPAC (dwelling value), BMA Municipal Study (Property Taxes)

- The median dwelling value in the City of Guelph is below the average of peer municipalities but above the median.
- Property taxes on a typical dwelling in Guelph are higher than the peer average and median.
- Property taxes as a percentage of household income in Guelph is slightly above survey average.
- Water and wastewater costs in Guelph are below the peer median and at the peer average in relation to household income.



Municipal Tax Ratios

- Tax ratios define each property classes' rate of taxation in relation to the rate of the residential property class.
- The tax ratio for the residential class is set by the province at 1.00. The different relative burdens are reflected in the tax ratios. These relative burdens are used to calculate the municipal tax rate of each property class in relation to the residential class.
- As shown in figure 20, the tax ratios in the City of Guelph are above the average for peer municipalities but lower than the median in Multi-residential and Industrial properties.
- All else being equal, higher than average tax ratios will increase the burden on non-residential properties.
- A low commercial and industrial ratio supports economic development by providing a low property tax environment for non-residential properties.

Figure 20—2019 Tax Ratios

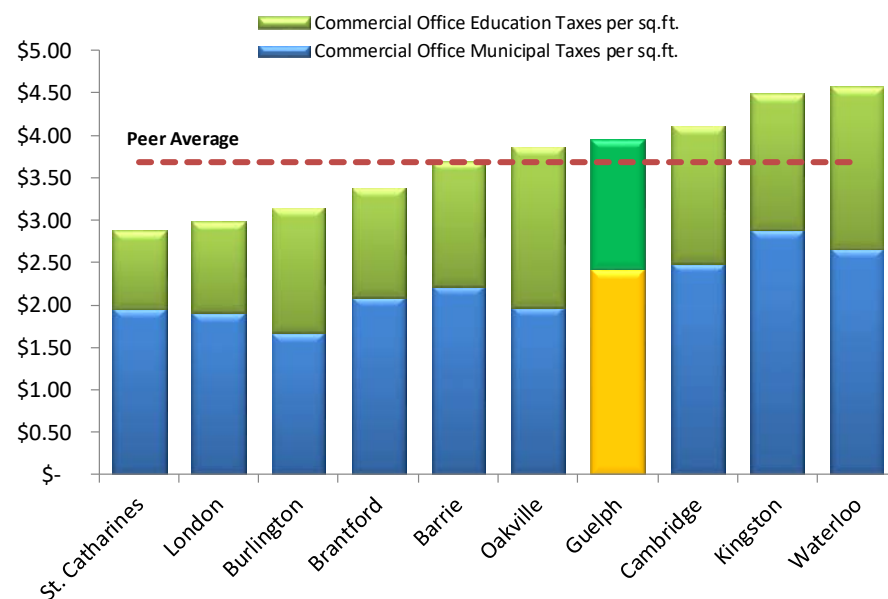
Municipality	Multi-Residential	Commercial	Industrial
Barrie	1.00	1.43	1.52
Brantford	1.88	1.79	2.27
Halton	2.00	1.46	2.36
Waterloo	1.95	1.95	1.95
Kingston	1.80	1.98	2.63
London	1.75	1.92	1.92
Niagara	1.97	1.73	2.63
Peer Average	1.76	1.75	2.18
Median	1.88	1.79	2.27
Guelph	1.83	1.84	2.20

Source: 2019 BMA Municipal Study using Tax by-laws

Non-Residential Municipal and Education Taxes Commercial Office

A comparison was made of the non-residential municipal property taxes on a per square foot basis for commercial office properties across the peer comparative municipalities to gain perspective on the municipal taxes paid. This takes into consideration the tax ratios, municipal and education taxes and the current value assessments.

Figure 21—2019 Property Taxes per Square Foot



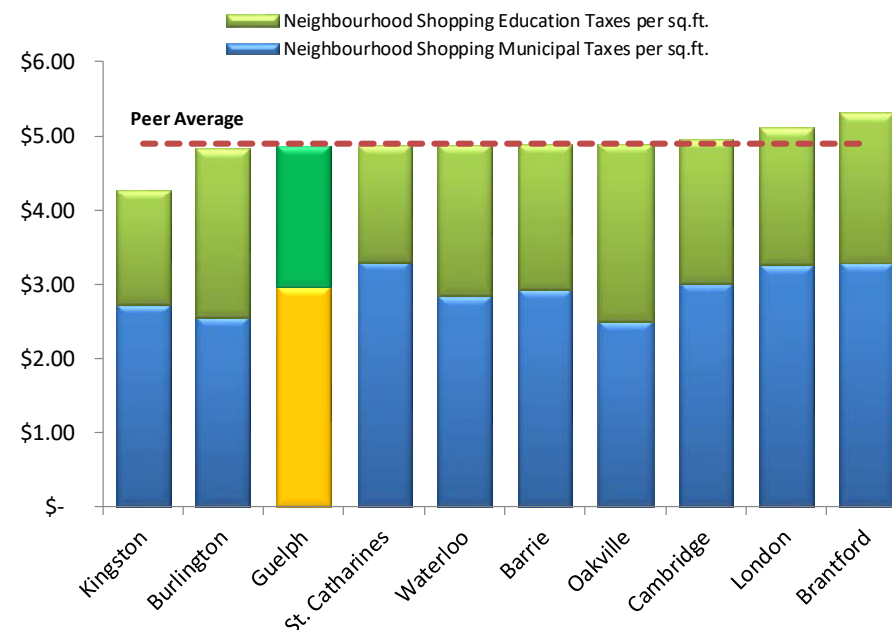
Source: BMA Municipal Study

- The non-residential municipal property taxes per square foot is slightly above the average of the comparator municipalities for office properties.

Non-Residential Municipal and Education Taxes Neighbourhood Shopping

A comparison was made of the non-residential municipal property taxes on a per square foot basis for neighbourhood shopping properties across the peer comparative municipalities to gain perspective on the municipal taxes paid. This takes into consideration the tax ratios, municipal and education taxes and the current value assessments.

Figure 22—2019 Property Taxes per Square Foot



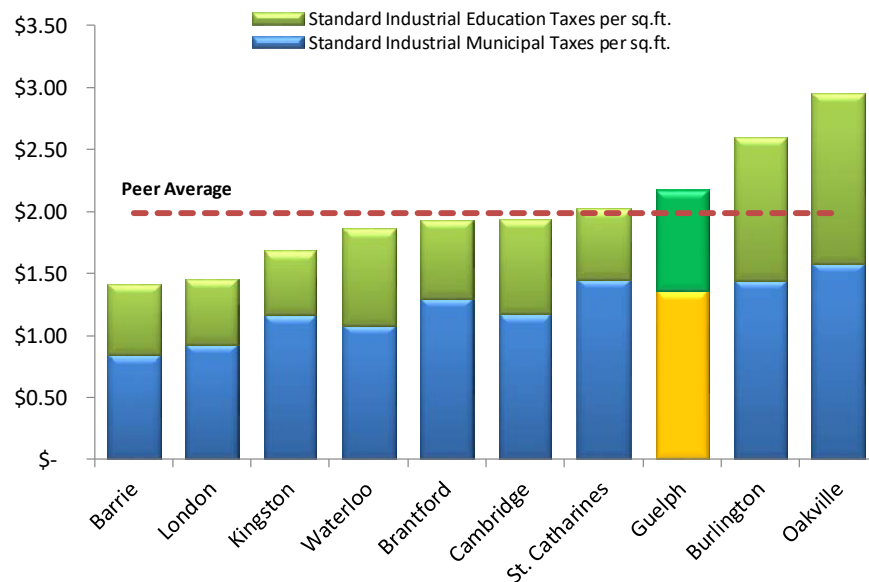
Source: BMA Municipal Study

The non-residential municipal property taxes per square foot is below the average of the comparator municipalities for neighbourhood shopping properties.

Non-Residential Municipal and Education Taxes Standard Industrial

A comparison was made of the non-residential municipal property taxes on a per square foot basis for industrial properties across the peer comparative municipalities to gain perspective on the municipal taxes paid. This takes into consideration the tax ratios, municipal and education taxes and the current value assessments.

Figure 23—2019 Property Taxes per Square Foot





















Source: BMA Municipal Study

- The non-residential municipal property taxes per square foot is above the average of the comparator municipalities for industrial properties.

Summary—Municipal Levy, Property Taxes and Affordability

- **Municipal levies** in relation to the assessment base reflects positively for the City of Guelph, however is higher than average compared on a per capita basis. This reflects that with a relatively high assessment base upon which to raise taxes, the City's spending is below average. Note this analysis does not compare service levels.
- The average **municipal property taxes** paid in relation to average household income in Guelph are slightly above the peer average and also above the survey average in relation to household incomes.
- The City's non-residential **tax ratios** are higher than peer municipalities which increases the relative amount of taxes that are recovered from these classes. This is a cautionary indicator in terms of competitive tax positioning for non-residential properties.
- Non-residential property taxes per square foot in the office **commercial sector** in Guelph are above the peer average and slightly lower than the peer average in the neighbourhood shopping category.
- Non-residential property taxes per square foot in the **industrial sector** in Guelph is above the peer average.

	Indicator	2015 Rating	2019 Rating
	Municipal Levy Per Capita		
	Municipal Levy Per \$100,000 of Weighted Assessment		
	Residential Affordability		
	Non-Residential Tax Ratio		
	Non-Residential Property Taxes per Square Foot - Commercial		
	Non-Residential Property Taxes per Square Foot - Standard Industrial		



Section 3: Financial Position

Guelph's Financial Position

Industry recognized indicators that are used by credit rating agencies and/or recommended by Government Finance Officer's Association (GFOA) and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing Canadian Institute of Chartered Accounts (CICA) defined financial condition of a municipality's financial health as:



Sustainability

- **Financial Position per Capita** of a municipality is important to consider as this takes into consideration the municipality's total financial assets and liabilities.
- **Asset Consumption Ratio** highlights the relative age of the assets and the potential timing of asset replacements.

Vulnerability

- **Taxes Receivable as a percentage of Taxes Levied** is an indicator of the economic health of the community.

Flexibility

- **Reserves/Reserve Funds** are established by Council to assist with long term financial stability and financial planning. Credit rating agencies consider municipalities with higher reserves more advanced in their financial planning.
- **Debt** is an important indicator of the municipality's financial health. Debt is an important indicator of the municipality's financial health. Debt is an appropriate way of cashflowing longer life items, however when debt levels get too high, it compromises the municipality's flexibility to fund programs and services.

Introduction to Reserves and Reserve Funds

Maintaining sufficient reserves and reserve funds are a critical component of a long-term financial plan. The purposes for maintaining reserves are:

- To provide **stabilization** in the face of variable and uncontrollable factors (growth, interest rates, changes in subsidies) and to ensure adequate and **sustainable cash flows**;
- To provide financing for **one-time** or short term requirements without permanently impacting the tax rates thereby reducing reliance on long-term debt;
- To make provisions for **replacement of capital assets** to sustain infrastructure;
- To provide **flexibility** to manage debt levels and protect the City's financial position; and
- To provide for **future liabilities** incurred in the current year, but paid for in the future.

In accordance with leading practice, each year the City provides an update to the balances of reserves and how they compare to the targeted funding balances and a recommended plan to achieve **target balances**.

Obligatory Reserve Funds are created whenever a statute requires revenue received for special purposes to be segregated from the general revenues of the municipality. Obligatory reserve funds can only be used for their prescribed purpose. Examples include Development Charges Reserve Funds, Lot Levies, Building Stabilization Reserve Fund.

Discretionary Reserve Funds are established, based on Council direction, to finance future expenditures for which the City has the authority to spend money or to provide for a specific contingent liability.



Reserves/Reserve Funds as a % of Taxation

- The discretionary reserves/reserve funds as a percentage of taxation was evaluated, both the trends, as well as in relation to other peer municipalities. Note that this analysis excludes obligatory reserve funds (e.g. Development Charges).
- For benchmarking purposes Financial Information Returns (FIRs) were used to compare discretionary reserves as a percentage of taxation.
- As shown in figure 24, the City of Guelph's discretionary reserves as a percentage of taxation are below the group survey average and have remained stable over the 5 year period.

Figure 24—Tax Reserves/Reserve Funds as a % of Taxation

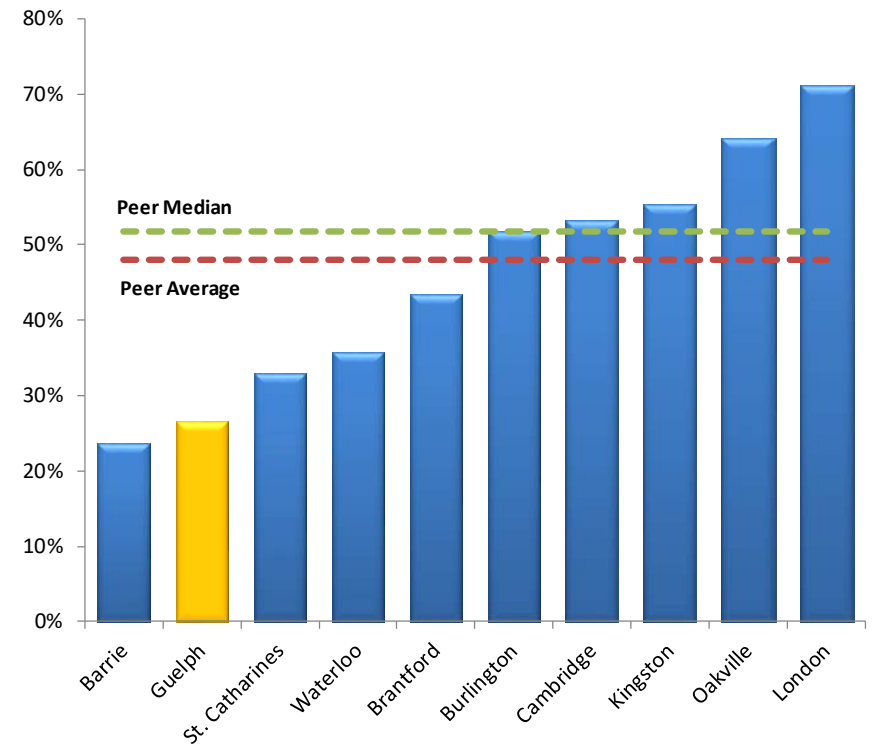
Municipality	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Trend
Barrie	30%	31%	31%	30%	29%	Stable
St. Catharines	53%	41%	43%	45%	47%	Decreasing
Waterloo	88%	76%	55%	54%	56%	Decreasing
Brantford			42%	36%	60%	Increasing
Cambridge	56%	64%	64%	63%	71%	Increasing
Burlington	78%	80%	84%	84%	74%	Decreasing
Kingston	73%	80%	80%	86%	83%	Increasing
Oakville	132%	113%	112%	104%	91%	Decreasing
London	76%	78%	81%	88%	94%	Increasing
Average	73%	70%	66%	66%	67%	
Median	74%	77%	64%	63%	71%	
Guelph	36%	33%	36%	30%	35%	Stable

Source: FIRs

Reserves as a % of Own Source Revenues

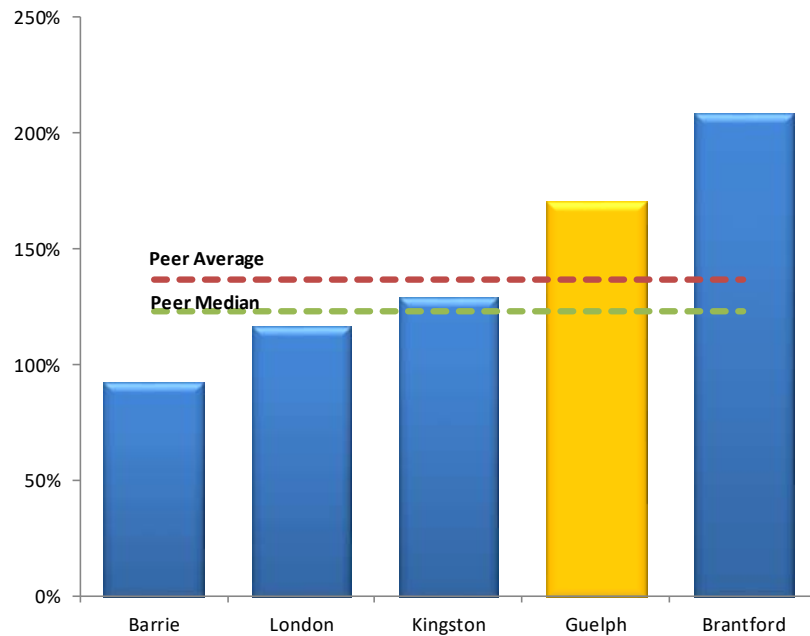
- As shown in figure 25, the tax reserves as a % of own source revenues for Guelph is below the peer average and median and the second lowest in the group of peer municipalities surveyed.
- As will be discussed later in the report, the City has implemented a number of financial policies to support reserves.

Figure 25—2018 Tax Reserves as a % of Own Source Revenues



Source: FIRs

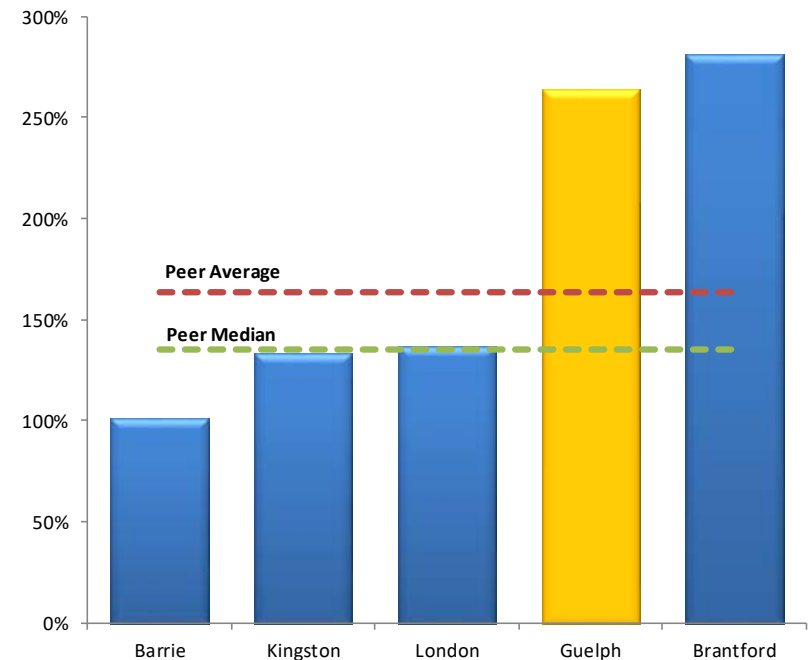
Figure 26—2018 Water Reserves as a % of Own Source Revenues



Source: FIRs

- As shown in figure 26, the water reserves as a % of own source revenues for Guelph are above the peer average and the second highest percentage in the group. Note that this indicator only includes one tier municipalities as two tier municipalities have treatment services provided at the Regional level.
- Note on the next page of the report, the City's asset consumption ratio for water in Guelph is the highest in the survey which indicates a need for strong capital replacement reserve balances.

Figure 27—2018 WW Reserves as a % of Own Source Revenues



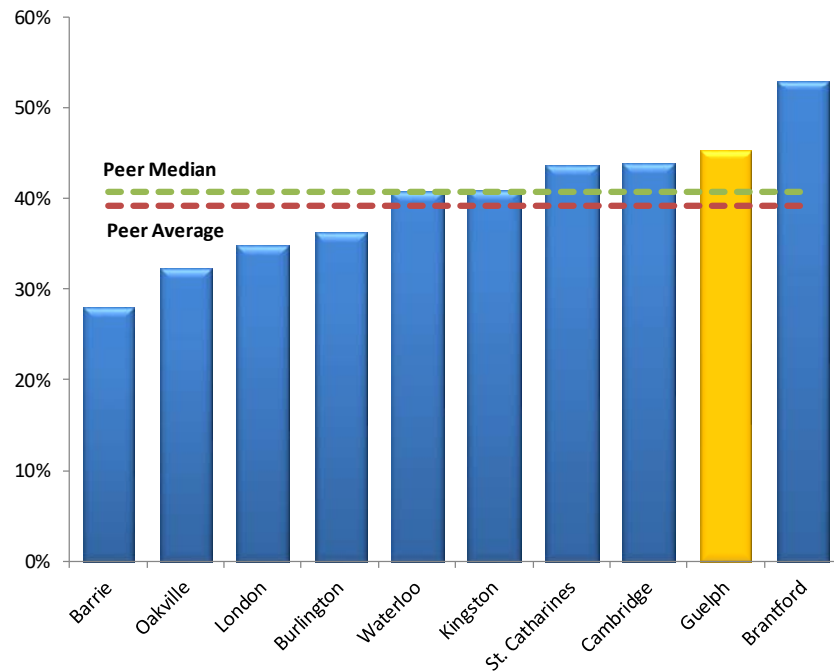
Source: FIRs

- As shown in figure 27, the wastewater reserves as a % of own source revenues for Guelph are above the peer average and the second highest percentage in the group. Note that this indicator only includes one tier municipalities as two tier municipalities have treatment services provided at the Regional level.
- Similar to the situation in water, the City's asset consumption ratio for wastewater in Guelph is the highest in the survey which indicates a need for strong capital replacement reserve balances.

Asset Consumption Ratios

- The asset consumption ratio shows the written down value of the tangible capital assets relative to their historical costs. This ratio highlights the relative age of the assets and the potential timing of asset replacements.
- As shown below, the City's asset consumption ratios are higher than the peer average and median, reflecting potentially greater replacement needs in the short to mid term than other municipalities. This reflects the need to continue to investment in infrastructure renewal and funding the asset management plan.

Figure 28—Tax Asset Consumption Ratio



Source: FIRs

Figure 29—Water Asset Consumption Ratio

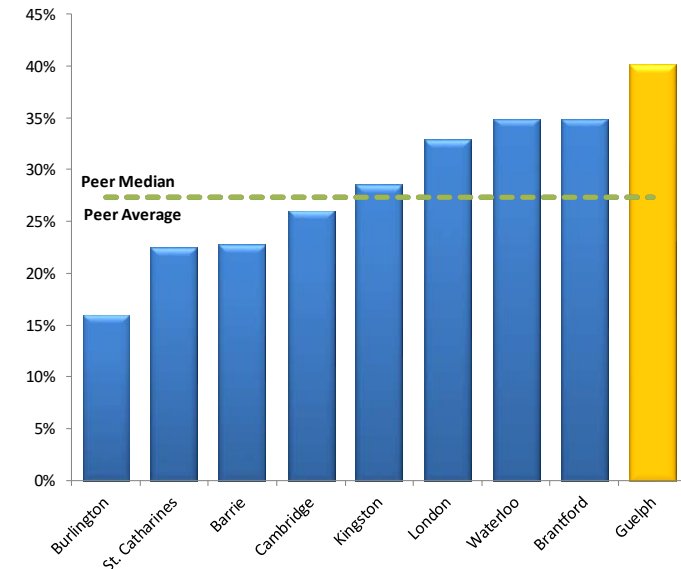
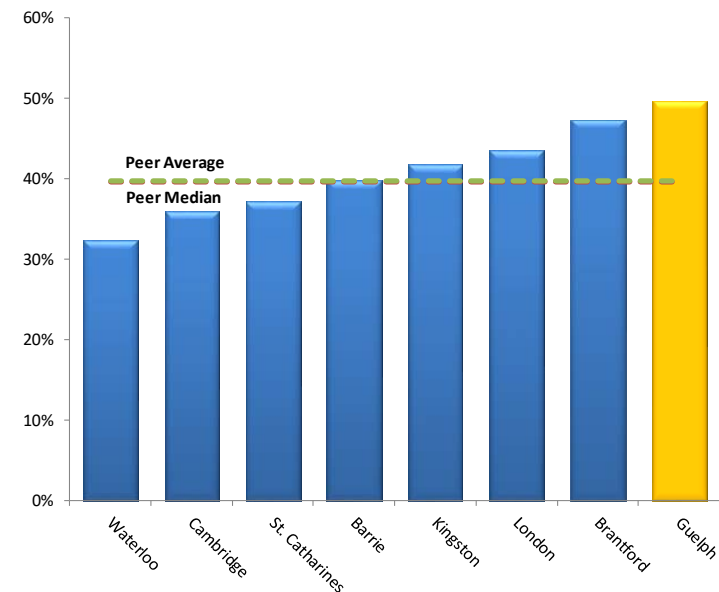


Figure 30—Wastewater Asset Consumption Ratio



Summary of Reserves and Reserve Funds 2013-2018
Figure 31—Reserves/Reserve Funds 2013-2018 Balances—Major Classifications

Reserve and Reserve Funds (000's)							
Reserve & Reserve Fund Balances	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	5 Year Change %	2018 Uncommitted Balance
Corporate Contingency Reserves	\$ 12,403	\$ 12,545	\$ 19,601	\$ 19,249	\$ 20,630	66%	\$ 19,903
Program Specific Reserves	\$ 10,901	\$ 11,901	\$ 12,131	\$ 13,689	\$ 15,324	41%	\$ 15,324
Strategic Reserves	\$ 6,010	\$ (601)	\$ (327)	\$ (7,117)	\$ (3,667)	--- 100%	\$ (13,455)
Program Specific Reserve Funds - Operating	\$ 910	\$ 754	\$ 826	\$ 825	\$ 1,460	60%	\$ 1,432
Program Specific Reserve Funds - Capital	\$ 4,847	\$ 3,909	\$ 5,180	\$ 5,905	\$ 4,396	-9%	\$ 1,785
Program Specific Reserve Funds - Corporate	\$ 33,501	\$ 36,349	\$ 38,471	\$ 30,160	\$ 35,842	7%	\$ 9,116
Tax Supported TOTAL	\$ 68,572	\$ 64,858	\$ 75,882	\$ 62,710	\$ 73,984	8%	\$ 34,105
Program Specific Reserve	\$ 5,055	\$ 7,339	\$ 9,099	\$ 9,537	\$ 9,626	90%	\$ 9,626
Program Specific Reserve Funds	\$ 67,651	\$ 80,726	\$ 108,518	\$ 121,952	\$ 131,448	94%	\$ 74,648
Non-Tax Supported TOTAL	\$ 72,705	\$ 88,065	\$ 117,617	\$ 131,489	\$ 141,074	94%	\$ 84,274
Corporate	\$ 19,179	\$ 16,686	\$ 14,246	\$ 18,992	\$ 18,012	-6%	\$ 7,706
Development Charges	\$ 56,415	\$ 44,870	\$ 39,705	\$ 46,661	\$ 46,372	-18%	\$ 1,772
Obligatory TOTAL	\$ 75,594	\$ 61,556	\$ 53,951	\$ 65,653	\$ 64,385	-15%	\$ 9,478
GRAND TOTAL	\$ 216,872	\$ 214,479	\$ 247,450	\$ 259,852	\$ 279,443	29%	\$ 127,857

As shown in figure 31, the City's total reserves/reserve funds increased 29% since 2014. The last column reflects the uncommitted 2018 year end balances.

- **Tax Supported Reserves** have increased 8% since 2014.
- **Non-Tax Supported Reserves** have increased over 94% since 2014.
- **Obligatory Reserves** have decreased 15% since 2014.

Debt Management

Municipalities have limited options with respect to raising funds to support municipal programs and services. Debt used strategically is a useful way to cashflow funding for capital expenditures. The City of Guelph is not unique, as virtually all municipalities across Ontario are facing increasing infrastructure backlogs, funding gaps, and increasing financial pressures in infrastructure management.

Debt is frequently issued and considered a standard practice in municipalities for new capital projects that are long-term in nature that benefit future taxpayers, thereby spreading the costs across future years. Under the most favourable circumstances, the City's debt should be proportionate in size and growth to the City's tax base; should not extend past the useful life of the facilities which it finances; should not be used to balance the operating budget; should not require repayment schedules that put excessive burdens on operating expenditures and should not be so high as to jeopardize credit ratings. A debt management policy is an important element in the establishment of a sustainable long term program that supports financial discipline and stability.

Excerpts—2019-2028 Proposed Capital Budget and Forecast

- Debt is an important part of the City's strategy for investment in assets that have a long standing useful life.
- Debt is a way to match the cost of construction with those that will use the service and minimize variation in the tax and non-tax rates for significant projects.

Excerpts—Debt Management Policy—City of Guelph

Debt Service Cost to Net Revenue Fund Revenue

- This ratio is a measure of the principal and interest payable annually as a proportion of revenue fund revenues. It should not exceed a target of 10%.

Direct Debt to Operating Revenue

- This measure identifies the percentage of annual operating revenues that would be required to retire the City's net debt. It is also the prime measure used by Standard and Poor's when assessing the debt burden of the municipality. A target rate of less than 55% should be maintained.

Development Charge Debt Servicing Ratio

- This ratio is a measure of the debt service cost of the debt issued to support the DC reserve funds as a percentage of the average revenue forecast as identified in the DC background study. It should not exceed a target of 20% for hard services (Roads, Storm water, Water works, Waste water) and 10% for all other Development Charge reserve funds.

Figure 32—Total Debt Outstanding (000's)

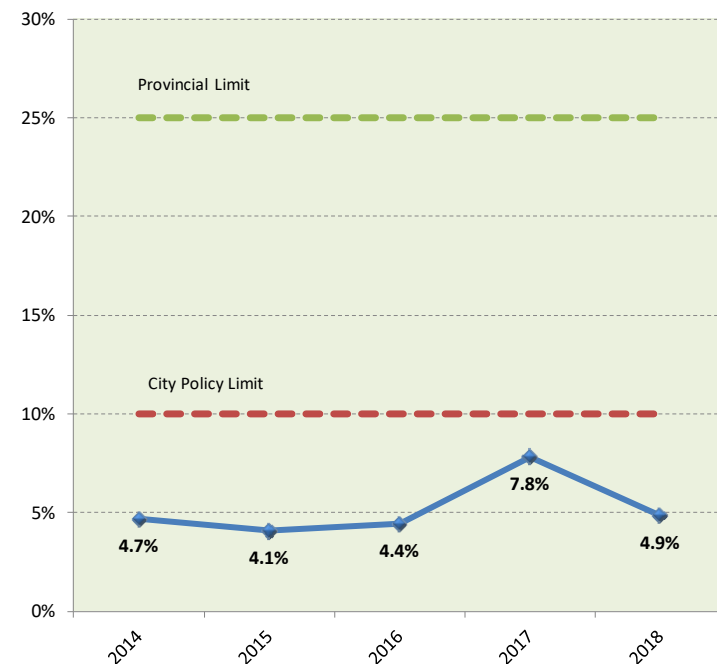
	2018 Debt Outstanding (000's)
Tax Debt	\$ 53,753
DC Debt	\$ 28,921
Elliott	\$ 4,229
Sleeman Centre	\$ 5,305
Stormwater	\$ 513
POA	\$ 3,710
Water	\$ -
Wastewater	\$ -
Total	\$ 96,432

- As shown in figure 32, the City of Guelph at the end of 2018, the City has \$96.4 million of outstanding debt, with an additional \$33 million approved for debt issuance in 2019.
- Tax supported debt is \$53.8 million and is related to a number of services including waste management, roads, fire, police and transit.
- The Elliott is funded from the operating budget and the City collects revenues to repay this debt.
- POA debt is Enterprise related and does not impact the tax levy.
- Development Charge Debt has a current outstanding balance of \$28.9 million which will be repaid through development charge revenues. This includes \$1.4 million in outstanding debt for water/wastewater (non-tax DC).

Debt Service Cost to Net Revenue Fund Revenue

The Province regulates the amount of debt that municipalities issue by setting an annual repayment limit for each municipality. This is the maximum amount by which a municipality may increase its debt. The repayment limit is set at 25% of a municipality's own source revenues. This is the upper limit. If the City were to reach the limit, future operating budgets would be severely constrained or tax and other revenues would have to increase significantly.

Figure 33—Total Debt Charges as a % of Own Source Revenues

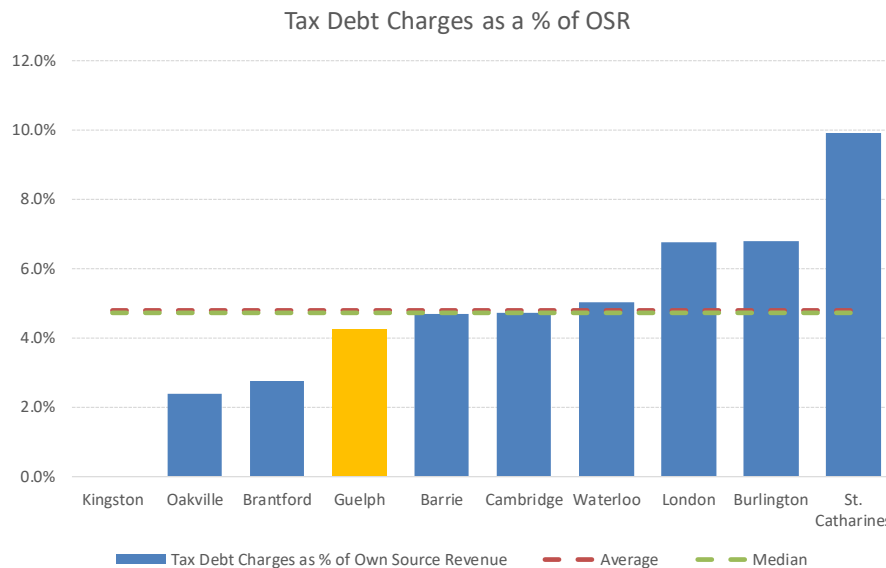


- As shown in figure 33, the City's debt levels are well below the Provincial limit which is set at 25% and the City's policy of targeting less than 10% of own source revenues.

Tax Debt Charges as a % of Own Source Revenues

- Figure 34 provides a comparison of tax debt charges as a percentage of own source revenues in 2018 against peer municipalities.

Figure 34—Tax Debt Charges as a % of Own Source Revenues



Source: FIRs

- As shown above, the City's tax debt charges as a percentage of own source revenues are below the survey average and median.

Direct Debt to Operating Revenue

- As described earlier, the City has a debt policy that measures the percentage of annual operating revenues that would be required to retire the City's net debt, with a target rate of less than 55% should be maintained. As of December 31, 2018, the City's direct debt to operating revenue was 26%, well below the maximum.

Development Charge Debt Servicing Ratio

- DC debt requirements as identified in the 2018 DC Background Study exceed current limits set out in the debt policy, thereby making it difficult to execute on the growth related capital budget within current policy thresholds. The debt management policy is currently being revised *to limit dc supported debt with more appropriate ratios and limits*. This will help ensure adequate funds are available to support the City's growth plans and to repay the debt issued for growth-related development.

Financial Position

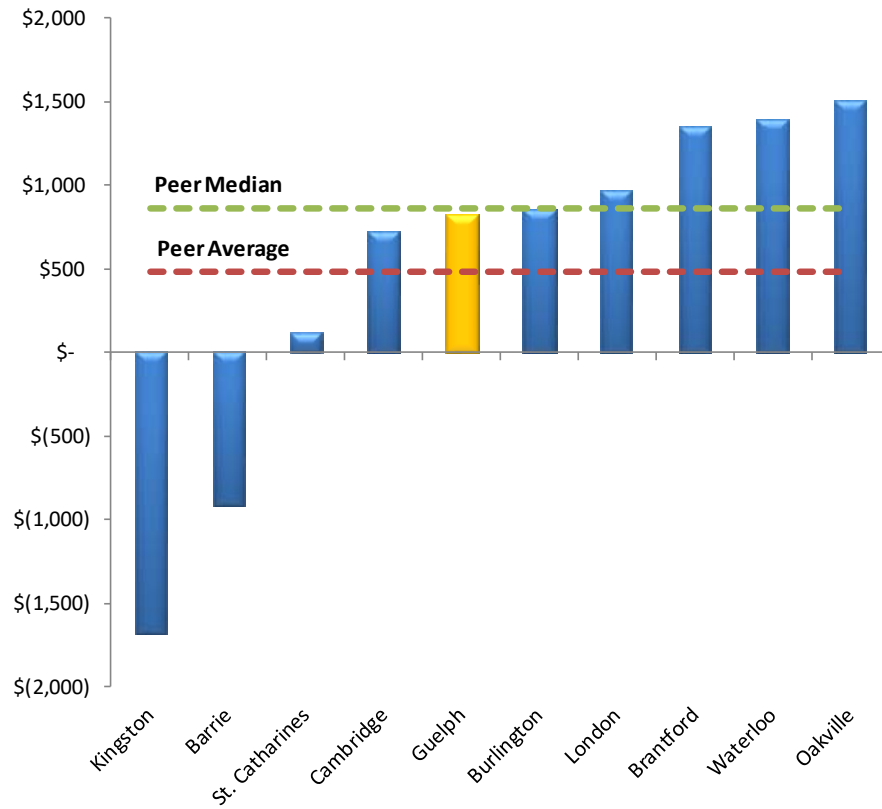
A municipality's financial position is defined as the total fund balances including equity in business government enterprises less the amount to be recovered in future years associated with long term liabilities. A comparison was made of the City's overall financial position (financial assets less liabilities) from 2014 to 2018.

- Guelph's financial position has trended upward since 2014.
- From 2014 to 2018, the City's reserves, investments and receivable revenues increased, resulting in an improvement in the overall financial position, as shown in figure 34.
- Figure 35 helps to explain the City's change in financial position from 2014-2018.
- The City's financial assets increased by \$66.6 million from 2014-2018, primarily in cash and investment.
- Debt which includes water and wastewater increased by \$32.6 million (which includes liability for contaminated sites) and post employment benefits increased by approximately \$6.5 million.
- It is important that a municipality understands what is driving this indicator and monitor its trend.

Figure 35– City of Guelph—Financial Position

Financial Position (000's)					
(000's)	2014		2018		% change
Assets					
Cash & Investments	\$	299,531,436	\$	410,833,694	37.2%
Receivables	\$	27,967,377	\$	34,620,798	23.8%
Other	\$	1,332,976	\$	2,644,698	98.4%
Total Assets	\$	328,831,789	\$	448,099,190	36.3%
Liabilities					
Accounts payable	\$	48,600,941	\$	70,382,306	44.8%
Deferred Revenue	\$	95,820,506	\$	88,170,491	-8.0%
Temporary loans	\$	970,000	\$	-	-100.0%
Long Term Liabilities	\$	90,762,624	\$	96,431,676	6.2%
Solid Waste Management Facility Liabilities	\$	4,164,000	\$	4,435,000	6.5%
Post Employment Benefits	\$	36,239,773	\$	42,755,816	18.0%
Liability for contaminated sites	\$	-	\$	27,000,000	0.0%
Total Liabilities	\$	276,557,844	\$	329,175,289	19.0%
Net Financial Position	\$	52,273,945	\$	118,923,901	127.5%

Figure 36-Financial Position Per Capita



Source: 2018 FIRs

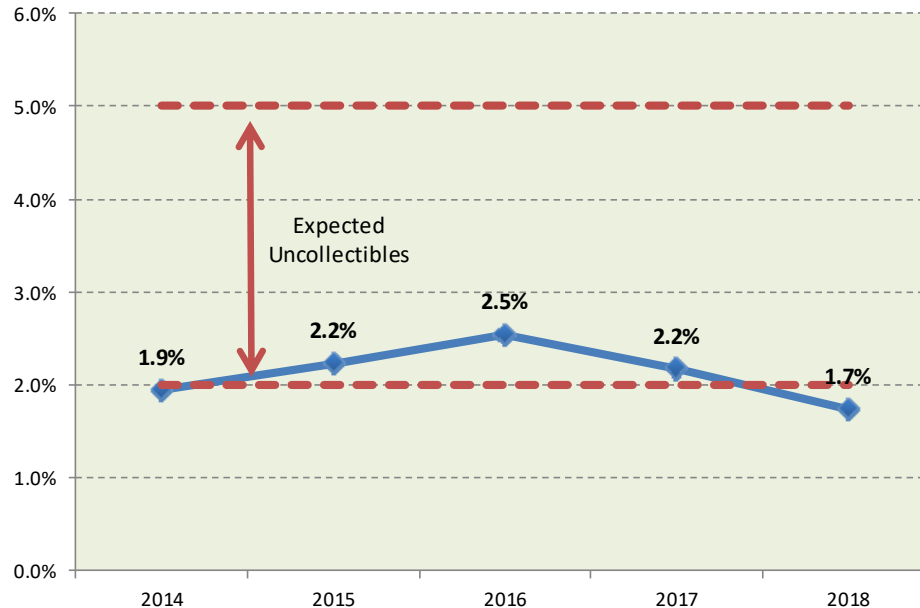
- To provide a comparison with other municipality's financial position, a per capita analysis was undertaken. As shown in figure 36, the City of Guelph's financial position per capita exceeds the peer average.

Taxes Receivable

Every year, a percentage of property owners are unable to pay property taxes. If this percentage increases over time, it may indicate an overall decline in the municipality's economic health. Credit rating agencies assume that municipalities normally will be unable to collect 2 - 5% of its property taxes within the year that taxes are due. If uncollected property taxes rise to more than 8%, credit rating firms consider this a negative factor because it may signal potential instability in the property tax base. The City of Guelph is within the range considered to be acceptable.

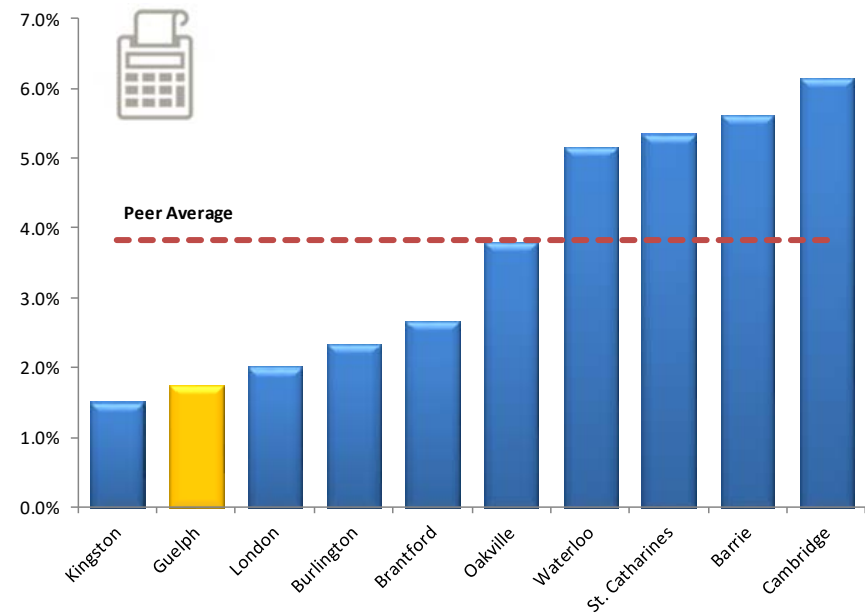
- Guelph's ratio has remained within the credit rating limit in every year.

Figure 37—Taxes Receivable as a % of Taxes Levied



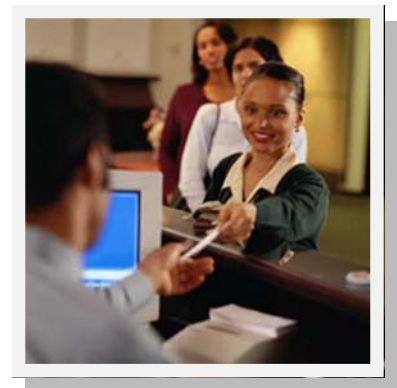
Source: FIRs

Figure 38—2018 Taxes Receivable as a % of Taxes Levied



Source: 2018 FIRs

- In comparison to other municipalities surveyed, taxes receivable in Guelph was below the survey average.



Summary—Financial Position

- **Reserves/Reserve Funds** assist with long term financial stability and financial planning.
 - The City of Guelph's discretionary reserves as a percentage of taxation are below the peer survey average.
 - Guelph has established a number of targets and policies for their reserves, the majority of which have been met and where they have not been met, strategies have been established to move to target balances.
- The City's **asset consumption** ratio reflects older infrastructure in relation to the peer average. In the case of water/ww operations, this is supported by strong reserve positions. It is recommended that the City continue its investment to the capital reserves to support a timely replacement of assets.
- **Debt** is an important indicator of the City's financial health and is an appropriate way of financing longer life capital infrastructure. The debt levels are below peer averages and within industry leading practice standards.
- **Financial Position** of the City is important to consider as this takes into consideration the City's total assets and liabilities. Guelph's financial position has been trending up since 2014. The City's financial position is higher than the peer average.
- **Taxes Receivable** are below the peer average and below the expected level of receivables.

Indicator	2015 Rating	2019 Rating
Discretionary Reserves as a % of Taxation		
Tax Reserves as a % of Own Source Revenues		
Water Reserves as a % of Own Source Revenues		
WW Reserves as a % of Own Source Revenues		
Tax Asset Consumption Ratios		
Water Asset Consumption Ratio		
WW Asset Consumption Ratio		
Tax Supported Reserves/Reserve Funds - Corporate Contingency		
Tax Supported Reserves - Program Specific		
Tax Supported Reserves - Strategic		
Tax Supported Reserves Funds - Operating		
Tax Supported Reserves Funds - Capital		
Non-Tax Supported Reserve/Reserve Funds - Program Specific (Contingency)		
Debt Management		
Financial Position		
Taxes Receivable		

Corporate Policy and Procedure



Policy	Long term Financial Framework
Category	Corporate
Authority	Finance
Related Policies	Debt Management Policy General Reserve and Reserve Fund Policy General Operating and Capital Budget Policy Investment Policy
Approved By	Council February 24, 2020
Effective Date	Monday, February-24-2020
Revision Date	Sunday, January 01, 2023

Policy Statement

That all policy documents developed by the City of Guelph adhere to the measures outlined in the Long-term Financial Framework (LTFF) of; Sustainability, Vulnerability and Flexibility.

Purpose

The LTFF will guide decision-making as it relates to policy development. The policies together will provide the basis for metric and key performance indicator (KPI) development within the City strategies, master plans and operational business plans (plans).

Definitions

Flexibility

The ability of the organization to adapt to changing environment to both capitalize on opportunities and avoid threats.

Sustainability

The ability to maintain services over an extended period of time, providing continuous service at the expected level to all intended customers.

Vulnerability

The level of resiliency within the organization to mitigate unexpected negative factors while maintaining financial and service commitments.

Application

The LTFF will be used to assemble all relevant policies applicable to strategy and plan development in a concise and consistent manner.

Review and development of policies will require the evaluation of each using the three measurers identified above.

Use of the various policies during development of city plans is required. Service areas are required to demonstrate within their plan how they have aligned with the applicable policies. Specific metrics and KPIs are required that will demonstrate achievement of the stated goals relative to the applicable policies.

Any subsequent updates regarding the plan require the established metrics or KPIs to be updated and reported.

Reporting

The City Treasurer will be responsible for providing an annual update of appendix A to Council at each fiscal year end.

Reporting will include a revised appendix A, including current updates to the policies and metrics included.

As new policies are added to the LTFF reporting to Council of their inclusion will occur at the next annual update.

Authority

The Treasurer has authority to adjust metrics and format of the LTFF, as required, due to changes in City policies.

Policy Review

This policy will be revised at the beginning of each term of Council.

Appendix A Long-term Financial Framework

Policy	Last or Planned update	Sustainability	Vulnerability	Flexibility
General Reserve and Reserve Fund	2017	Achieving target balances	Dependable inflows	Appropriate and allowable uses, support the Strategic Plan priorities
Procurement	2018	Focus on full cost of purchasing	Proper internal controls and guidelines	Innovative options for new ideas
Debt Management	2020	Target % of revenue	Maximum % leveraged	Prescribed purposes and types
Revenue	2020 (planned)	Cost recovery targets and reliability	Expanded sources	Relative to peers
Multi-year Budget	2020 (planned)	Robust guidelines	Identification of risk factors	Options for adjustment
Capital Plan	2021 (planned)	Funded, structured and current	Linkage to Asset Management principles	Opportunities to adjust
Asset Management and Service Level	2020/21 (planned)	Corporate mandate and implementation	Data driven and supported	Innovative and responsive
Growth	2021 (planned)	to be determined	to be determined	to be determined
100RE	2020 (planned)	to be determined	to be determined	to be determined
Internal Controls	2022 (planned)	to be determined	to be determined	to be determined

Staff Report



To	Committee of the Whole
Service Area	Public Services
Date	Monday, February 3, 2020
Subject	238 Willow Road Application
Report Number	PS-2020-01

Recommendation

That the Cash-in-Lieu of parkland dedication requirement with respect to Building Permit Number 19 005894 pursuant to Bylaw (2019)-20366 be calculated based on the addition of the two new units being developed as part of that permit application.

Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

This report provides Council with information to support a decision to calculate the cash-in-lieu of parkland dedication requirement (CIL) with respect to Building Permit Number 19 005894 (the Building Permit) based on the addition of the two new units being developed as part of that permit application and using their discretion as set out in subsection 33(i) of Bylaw (2019)-20366 (the Parkland Dedication Bylaw). Council should direct that calculation of CIL is to reflect only the increase in density of the new units being proposed for the affordable housing Building Permit application submitted for 238 Willow Road by Guelph Independent Living. The Building Permit proposes that an existing residential recreation room be converted into two residential dwelling units.

Key Findings

The City is supportive of providing affordable housing opportunities as a community benefit. Subsection 33(i) of the Parkland Dedication Bylaw allows Council to apply discretion in the application of the CIL requirement where it is deemed to be desirable by Council. Guelph Independent Living is a non-profit agency seeking to increase affordable housing opportunities for the citizens of Guelph. Ensuring that CIL requirements reflect the increase in density of the proposed development will help ensure these residential units can be built without being burdened by fees that are typically associated with commercial enterprises and for profit housing inventory. Applying the fees to the increase in density only and not the entirety of the property will help ensure that these housing units can proceed and will still contribute to the parkland acquisition fund in an appropriate manner.

Financial Implications

CIL will be collected for the two residential units being proposed for development and not retroactively for the entirety of the developed property. This will reduce the

potential CIL that could be collected on this redevelopment pursuant to the strict reading of the Parkland Dedication Bylaw, however, it retains the City's right to collect CIL in the future if more development were to occur on this site. The CIL amount will be calculated based on an appraisal submitted by the applicant and will reflect the actual increase in density proposed by the redevelopment.

Report

On August 27, 2019 the Building Permit application was submitted on behalf of Guelph Independent Living for the address 238 Willow Road. The Building Permit application was submitted to convert a residential recreation room to two residential dwelling units within an existing 83 unit building. The Building Permit proposes the addition of one or more residential dwelling units; therefore, parkland dedication is required in accordance with the Parkland Dedication Bylaw.

The location of the redevelopment is already constructed; therefore, land cannot be conveyed to the City in satisfaction of the parkland dedication requirement. The building currently exists, and there is no evidence that parkland dedication was taken by the City when previous development applications were submitted for this site. The Parkland Dedication Bylaw requires that CIL be calculated based on the total assessed value of the entire 83 unit site and is not limited to the increase in density created by the conversion of a recreation room into two residential dwelling units.

In this case, Council can use their discretion set out in subsection 33(i) of the Parkland Dedication Bylaw to reduce the CIL requirement for this site to reflect the increase in density proposed by the permit only. Applying Council's discretion in this manner will ensure that this development is contributing to the City's CIL fund while reflecting the anticipated increase in park needs caused by the increase in density of the development. This will reduce the financial burden on a publicly funded non-profit social housing development with fees that are typically associated with commercial and for profit development applications.

Financial Implications

CIL will be collected for the two residential units being proposed for development and not retroactively for the entirety of the developed property. This will reduce the potential CIL that could be collected on this redevelopment pursuant to the strict reading of the Parkland Dedication Bylaw; however, it retains the City's right to collect CIL in the future if more development were to occur on this site. The CIL amount will be calculated based on an appraisal submitted by the applicant, and will reflect the actual increase in density proposed by the redevelopment.

Consultations

Staff received correspondence from Guelph Independent Living on November 12, 2019 formally requesting an exemption or reduction in the CIL requirement set out in the Parkland Dedication Bylaw. Wellington County staff were copied on the letter.

Building Services

Finance

Legal, Realty and Court Services

Strategic Plan Alignment

Building our future – help increase the availability of housing that meets community needs.

Attachments

None

Departmental Approval

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Staff Report



To	Committee of the Whole
Service Area	Public Services
Date	Monday, February 3, 2020
Subject	Leash Free Implementation Plan
Report Number	PS-2020-02

Recommendation

That the Leash Free implementation plan as approved by Council on June 24, 2019 be amended to remove the proposed fenced leash free facility at Lee Street Park.

Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

To update the previously approved implementation plan of the Leash Free Policy with respect to Lee Street Park and to provide an update on operational mitigation strategies to address resident concerns at Peter Misersky Park and Bristol Street Park fenced leash free facilities.

Key Findings

This report recommends not fencing the leash free area at Lee Street Park.

On June 24, 2019 Council approved two locations for fenced leash free areas at Peter Misersky and Bristol Street Park. These locations would continue as fenced leash free locations as outlined in the [original Council decision](#). City staff will work on mitigation measures to improve issues with noise, traffic, behaviour, sightlines, bylaw enforcement and education. The leash free area at Peter Misersky Park is complete and will be modified to accommodate these changes. Mitigation measures will be integrated into the work at Bristol Street Park when construction resumes.

The Leash Free Policy was enacted on July 1, 2019. The fenced leash free facility at Peter Misersky Park has been in full service since September 19, 2019. Many residents have voiced their concerns over the leash free facilities and the City's transparency related to the process for selecting the sites for development. As a result, the construction of the leash free facility at Bristol Street Park is currently on hold until spring 2020.

Staff provided opportunities for concerned residents to be heard and to provide input. On November 13, 2019 a meeting was held at Victoria Road Recreation Centre for concerned residents living near Peter Misersky Park. On November 20, 2019 a public open house was held at City Hall regarding the fenced leash free facility at Bristol Street Park.

Staff have prepared responses to all questions and concerns. The responses were posted online and provided directly through email on December 19, 2019. Identified

operational issues will be addressed in 2020. The original report to Council stated that staff would monitor fenced leash free facilities once opened and mitigate operational issues as needed.

Financial Implications

As part of new development along the southeast entrance of Lee Street Park, capital budget has been approved to finalize the park. This work will proceed without including a fenced leash free facility. Any mitigation to Peter Misersky Park and Bristol Street Park will be captured in existing capital or operating budgets.

Report

In 2018, budget was approved and staff were tasked with developing a Leash Free Policy and the implementation of a fenced leash free facility. This was to address the input received by residents as part of the Animal Control Bylaw update that was completed in 2016. As part of that project, over 2,600 residents provided input and fenced leash free areas were identified as a community priority.

The scope of the work was to identify how people currently use leash free area sites, how they should use the current and future sites, and determine how best to develop future fenced facilities. From there, staff reviewed the existing inventory of leash free areas, which at the time included eight unfenced leash free areas and all unoccupied sports fields across the city.

The full report, background research and policy can be reviewed at the link here: [City of Guelph Leash Free Policy](#).

Staff established important criteria for future leash free site consideration as part of this work. The criteria includes: park classification, overall park size, environmentally significant lands, Grand River Conservation Authority owned lands, existing parking facilities, adjacent to school lands, impacts to or overlap with other existing park facilities, and accessibility and maintenance.

The City used this criteria, knowledge and inventory of parks and open spaces, along with consultation from our Leash Free Policy to inform site selection. Site selection for these amenities is ultimately determined by evaluating sites within the current park inventory, and six sites were identified as viable. Each site had concerns and staff evaluated each site to determine which were appropriate and which were not.

Peter Misersky Park and Bristol Street Park are the best suited sites for fenced leash free facilities while remaining within the City's implementation budget, timeline, and feasibility for construction. Lee Street Park was the third facility listed in the implementation plan.

Additional locations at Riverside Park, Eastview Community Park, and Margaret Greene Park met sufficient criteria and were further explored for suitability for a fenced leash free facility but eliminated based on the following:

Riverside Park

The available location resides in a Natural Heritage System and could negatively impact the natural environment designated as environmentally significant. The park is a premier event space, hosts large tournaments and events annually, and

contains many unique recreational opportunities. The park currently contains three designated unoccupied sports fields as leash free areas.

Eastview Community Park

Eastview Community Park has an approved master plan that does not include a leash free area. The potential available space within Eastview Community Park creates site access concerns and high maintenance costs including issues with waste management access and winter maintenance. Significant grading and drainage concerns would have exceeded project timelines and budget to address.

A fenced leash free facility does not fit the programming of the park as a premier sports complex. Approximately \$6,164,000 has been spent on the development of Eastview Community Park. All sports fields are designated premier playing fields including a new playground and change facility, four (4) mini soccer fields, beach volleyball courts, a future splash pad, and a future bike skills facility. From a design, safety and functionality perspective, the location is high risk for potential user conflicts with leash free use.

Margaret Greene Park

The available location within Margaret Greene Park has access concerns from the existing parking facility. Users would be required to travel through the playground area in order to gain access to the location. This area has also been identified as a site for a future splash pad which could create further access conflict risks.

Significant grading and access concerns would have exceeded project timelines and budget to address. As well, there are operational issues with limited access and risk to existing amenities for day-to-day access. The fenced area contains approximately 30 mature trees. Implementation, grading and general use as a leash free site will negatively impact the long term health of these trees.

Lee Street Park

Lee Street Park has an unfenced leash free area that existed prior to the adoption of the Leash Free Policy. Leash free areas that are not fenced can be problematic for users. As part of new development along the southeast entrance of the park, budget had been identified to finalize the park. Staff recommended fencing the existing leash free area to coincide with the last phase of park development. This was not a change of use for the space, and the final phase of development was an opportune time to fence the leash free area.

Due to the input received as a result of construction of the leash free facility at Peter Misersky Park, staff are recommending to not proceed with fencing this area. Unfenced leash free areas have no clearly defined limits on site and no criteria for identifying priority use over the space. The intention of the original report was to continue to allow the use of the unfenced leash free areas, evaluate their ongoing use and review the entire inventory as part of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Since the opening of Peter Misersky Park, there has been concerns from members of the community regarding the fenced leash free facility and concerns about the future facility at Bristol Street Park. Concerns are primarily from residents within close proximity to the selected sites. Key concerns include lack of information that

the fenced leash free facilities were going to be built, and that these facilities should not be built in parks that abut residential areas.

In light of concerns from the community at both Peter Misersky Park and Bristol Street Park, staff placed construction on hold at Bristol Street Park to provide opportunities for residents to be heard and to provide input. On November 13, 2019, a meeting was held at Victoria Road Recreation Centre for residents living adjacent to Peter Misersky Park. On November 20, 2019, a public open house was held at City Hall regarding Bristol Street Park. Both engagement summaries and responses to received questions was sent by email directly all leash free engagement participants that provided their contact information and posted online December 19, 2020, and can be read at the link here: [City of Guelph Leash Free Engagement](#).

In addition to the two meetings, the City conducted a telephone survey in order to ensure that the City and Council had a statistically-valid response about sites specifically from Guelph residents, and to understand that Peter Misersky Park and Bristol Street Park are the right choices for a fenced leash free facility when considering community input, budget, environmental considerations, and all other site selection criteria as noted in section 4.0 of the Leash Free Policy.

From December 11 to December 16, 2019, a telephone survey was conducted that captured input from 600 respondents. The results show a distinct conclusion that residents are divided when it comes to leash free facilities and where they should be located. This reinforces what the City has heard in relation to previous leash free community engagement.

The telephone survey results, included as ATT-1, asked respondents if leash free areas should be located in parks throughout the city and within residential areas so they are accessible and walkable. Of the 600 respondents, 47 per cent said yes, 43 per cent said no, and 10 per cent were unsure. Another question asked if they would want to have a fenced leash free facility in their local park, to which 43 per cent said yes, 49 per cent said no, and eight per cent were unsure. It is also important to note that out of the 600 respondents, 63 per cent identified as non dog owners.

The issues of both engagement sessions for Peter Misersky Park and Bristol Street Park can be grouped into broad themes: noise from dogs barking and dog owners using the site, increased traffic, site waste and hygiene, misuse of the site, site proximity to adjacent residences, perceived impacts to adjacent property values, concerns with best practices for fenced leash free facilities, size of the facility, impacts to the existing park green space, and consideration for other sites.

Staff identified in the original report that fenced sites would be monitored after construction to see if there could be improvements, and much of this work would be congruent with that vision. Mitigation tactics for each theme at both locations have been determined and will be implemented as follows:

Noise

Staff have heard that local residents are concerned with noise related to dogs barking and overall use of the site at Peter Misersky Park and the future site at Bristol Street Park. While dogs cannot be stopped from barking, staff can provide additional information on site and online that outlines common etiquette, general

expectations around the use of the site, and reminders to users of the facilities to be respectful of the park's neighbours. As a result, the rules and regulations sign for fenced leash free facilities will be modified to incorporate that information. Staff will evaluate how to best display this information on site and online to ensure it is most effective. Additional staff resources will also be provided through increased patrol of bylaw officers and parks staff.

Traffic

The entrance to Peter Misersky Park is owned by the City. Through an easement, the nearby condominium corporation has secured primary access to the condominium parking area on the City owned park access road. As a result, the condominium and the City effectively share this access road. Residents have cited concerns with the increased traffic resulting from visitors to the leash free facility. Concerns noted over traffic will be monitored by staff, and traffic mitigation can be put in place if they continue.

Waste and Hygiene

Staff have heard concerns with waste and overall hygiene of the site. There were issues when the site at Peter Misersky Park initially opened. Staff have made efforts to educate users, both on site and online to address these issues. Additional waste receptacles have been added to the site, and the contractor responsible for waste management has been advised to ensure an appropriate management schedule is maintained. These principles will be applied to Bristol Street Park as well.

The City relies on users of these facilities to use them in a responsible manner, which includes fully complying with the Stoop and Scoop Bylaw. Staff will monitor the sites and provide educational opportunities and reminders online and in person when needed.

Staff heard concerns related to the expense of dog waste management. The City has sustainable waste management goals and has adopted innovative practices for collecting and disposing of dog waste. Sustainable waste management is a pillar in [Guelph's Strategic Plan](#): To design an increasingly sustainable city as Guelph grows.

Site Misuse

Users are expected to follow the rules and to conduct themselves in a manner that is appropriate and safe for a public facility. The rules and regulations posted on the site are clear and accessible. Residents and dogs that are not able to follow the rules and regulations should not use the site. The City will track the data collected from complaints to assess where staff education on the rules can be identified and improved. Further, a security camera will be installed to help document issues on site.

Staff have heard that residents are concerned with the open and closure times of the facility. Park facilities across the city are typically open from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. Staff will reduce times that fenced leash free facilities are open to the public from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. Misuse around the permitted hours of use will continue to be monitored by staff. If necessary, all gates will be locked upon closure to ensure that users are following the permitted hours of use. The rules and regulations signs will be updated to reflect these changes.

Proximity to Residential Areas

The fence at Peter Misersky Park is approximately 22 metres away from the nearest residential unit, separated by a park access road, parking and trees. Staff will now use a minimum 25 metre setback for future sites; therefore, the fence located at Peter Misersky Park will be shifted to increase the setback to 25 metres from the front of the nearest residential unit. This will decrease the overall size of the leash free facility from 2,430 square metres to 2,325 square metres, and the separately fenced small dog area from 491 square metres to 396 square metres. Trees and vegetation will be planted in this area to improve buffering.

At Bristol Street Park, a 30-metre setback from the front of residences along Bristol Street has already been incorporated into the design of the fenced leash free facility. Trees will be planted within the area between the fence and the Bristol Street right-of-way to improve buffering between residences on the north side of Bristol Street and the fenced area on the south side.

Staff heard that these sites should be located in industrial areas or located at the perimeter of the city. A review of the park inventory showed that there are limited sites that are appropriate for this amenity. A new capital budget request to acquire a new site or improve an existing alternative site to add parking, vehicular access etc., would be required. Additionally, having a centrally located, accessible site was identified as important to the overall community. As a result, Bristol Street Park and Peter Misersky Park were identified as opportunities for these locations.

Impacts to Property Values

Staff have heard that some residents believe that having a leash free facility close to their home will lower their property value. Licensed real estate appraisers were asked to provide opinion on this topic without looking at specific properties; however, vendors felt this was too broad to provide opinion and declined to examine. Based on staff findings, there is no conclusive evidence to support a decrease in value due to recreational functions within an adjacent park.

Best Practices

Staff have heard from residents that best practices were not followed as part of the leash free project. The City reviewed the following information to identify the program for leash free areas: community feedback, best practices from other municipalities, best practices from community agencies like the Guelph Humane Society, stakeholder input, an inventory the City's own unique park and open space system, available budget, City policies and bylaws, and the professional opinions of qualified staff.

Best practices incorporated are as follows: rules and regulations for leash free facilities posted on site and online, separate area(s) for small dogs and large dogs, double-gate entry system, sustainable dog waste management system, black vinyl-coated chain-link fencing, associated parking facilities, and consideration for accessibility.

Facility Sizing

Staff heard that some residents feel that the size of the facilities are too small. Fenced facilities are intended to provide a recreation function to people that lacked access to this facility in the past. There are 50 additional sites that the City has made available for leash free use. Not all facilities are the same size and shape, but together they are intended to serve the entire community.

The fenced areas are sized to provide as large a space as possible, and minimize impacts to adjacent amenities while still providing a functional space. The spaces reflect a balance between providing useable space and minimizing adjacent impacts. Increasing the size of these facilities will increase many of the adjacent impacts that residents have identified as problematic.

Greenspace Impacts

The proposed leash free areas are proportionately developed based on the size of the park where they are located. Staff have endeavoured to ensure that fenced areas minimize impacts to other amenities in the park. Despite that there is no loss in park space, adding fences and changing uses of the sites can create barriers to some users. Placing leash free areas and facilities in larger parks helps reduce the real or perceived loss of greenspace.

Despite the fact that Bristol Street Park is slightly less than 2.00 hectares, the central location, large parking area, adjacency to other green space, and access to major roads and trails make it an ideal site for this type of amenity.

Financial Implications

As part of new development along the southeast entrance of Lee Street Park, a capital budget has been approved to finalize the park. This work will proceed without including a fenced leash free facility. Any mitigation to Peter Misersky Park and Bristol Street Park fenced facilities outlined will be captured in existing capital or operating budgets.

Consultations

November 13, 2019: Public meeting at Victoria Road Recreation Centre.

November 20, 2019: Public open house at Guelph City Hall.

December 11 to 16, 2019: Telephone survey was conducted. Data was collected from 600 respondents.

December 19, 2019: Engagement summaries and question and answer documents were posted online.

Strategic Plan Alignment

Building our future: continue to build strong, vibrant, safe and healthy communities that foster resilience in the people who live here; maintain existing community assets and secure new ones.

Attachments

ATT-1 Telephone Survey Report

ATT-2 Leash Free Study

Departmental Approval

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December 2019

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Methodology & Logistics

Background & Overview

The following represents the findings from an October 2019 telephone survey of N=600 City of Guelph residents (18 years of age or older) conducted by Oraclepoll Research Limited for The City of Guelph. The purpose of the research was to gather opinions from residents on issues related to proposed changes to the current Leash Free Policy.

Study Sample

A dual frame random database (RDD) was used for the sample. It was inclusive of landline and cellular telephone numbers. The sample was stratified to ensure that there was an equal distribution across the community and N=100 surveys were conducted in each Ward. The survey screened to ensure respondents were 18 years of age or older and were residents of each Ward. Gender and age samples were also monitored to ensure they reflected the demographic characteristics of the community.



Survey Method

All surveys were conducted by telephone using live operators at the Oraclepoll call center facility. A total of 20% of all interviews were monitored and the management of Oraclepoll Research Limited supervised 100%. The survey was conducted using computer-assisted techniques of telephone interviewing (CATI) and random number selection (RDD).

Logistics

Surveys were conducted by telephone at the Oraclepoll call center using person to person live operators from the days of December 11 to December 16, 2019.

Initial calls were made between the hours of 6:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. Subsequent call-backs of no-answers and busy numbers were made on a (staggered) daily rotating basis up to 5 times (from 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.) until contact was made. In addition, telephone interview appointments were attempted with those respondents unable to complete the survey at the time of contact. If no contact was made at a number after the fifth attempt, the number was discarded and a new one supplanted it.

Confidence

The margin of error for the total N=600 sample is $\pm 4.0\%$ at the 95% confidence interval.

Preamble

After being screened to ensure they were residents of the City of Guelph, 18 years of age or older, all N=600 respondents were read the following introductory statement. The preamble set the context for the questions to be asked by providing background information about the current Smoking Bylaw.

“There are approximately 7,200 registered dogs in the City of Guelph and in 2019, the City developed a Leash-free policy and is building or has built fenced dog parks at Peter Misersky Park and Bristol Street Park. City policy currently has three different types of areas where dogs are permitted off leash: fenced leash-free facilities, designated sport fields that are not being used and eight unfenced leash-free areas close to or in parks, natural areas or trails. Overall there are 51 separate sites that can be used as leash-free areas throughout the city.”

After the introductory script was read, respondents were asked the questionnaire.

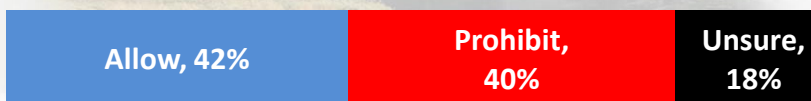
Allowing or Prohibiting – Public Spaces

As part of the first group of questions, residents were read the following statement after which they were asked if the City should prohibit or continue to allow leash free areas in eight public spaces.

“There are eight existing unfenced leash free areas in Guelph, most of which are located within or beside the protected natural areas that are part of the City’s Natural Heritage System. There is scientific evidence that the presence of dogs negatively impacts wildlife, natural vegetation and water quality.”

“With this in mind, should the City allow or prohibit leash free areas in the following public spaces?”

Q1. Eramosa River Park (park located along the Royal Recreational Trail)



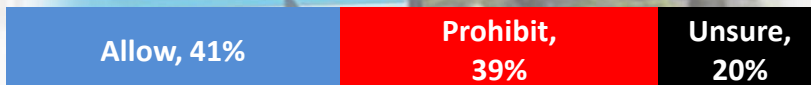
There was a near split with 42% saying leash free areas should be allowed and 40% prohibited, while a significant number were undecided. More males (50% versus 35% female), dog owners (75% compared to 23% non-owners) as well as 18-24 (52%) and 25-34-year olds (48%) were supporters.

Q2. Riverside Park (GRCA lands west of the Speed River, north of Woodlawn Road)



Opposition or prohibiting leash free areas was highest (among the eight areas rated) for Riverside Park at 55%, compared to 37% in support (allow), with 8% unsure. Those most wanting it prohibited were Ward 2 residents (67%), 55-64 (62%) and 65+ year olds (77%).

Q3. Norm Jary Park (woodlot area of park located on west side)



Residents were divided with 41% saying they would allow and 39% prohibit having a leash free area at Norm Jary Park. Two in ten were unsure or undecided.

Q4. Margaret Greene Park (park located along the Royal Recreational Trail)



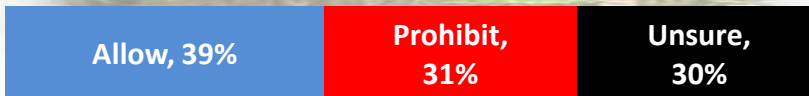
There is a slim majority that would allow leash free areas in Margaret Greene Park. Slightly more than five in ten or 51% answered allow, compared to 37% that want it prohibited, while 12% did not know. Dog owners are most in support (82% versus 33% non-owners) as are those 18-24 (74%) and 25-34 years of age (65%).

Q5. Centennial Park (area beside the tennis dome on Municipal Street)



The strongest support registered in terms of allow responses among the eight public spaces was for Centennial Park at 56%. There were 36% that want a leash free area in the Park prohibited and 8% answered do not know. While results were more consistent among age cohorts more males (60 versus 52 female) and dog owners (83% compared to non-owners (40%) said allow.

Q6. Crane Park (woodlot area)



While there were more residents that answered allow in relation to prohibit, the number was less than four in ten (39%). There were also a high number of residents that are undecided, and this public space recorded the highest percentage of unsure responses.

Q7. John Gamble Park (Hydro corridor trail that is part of the City's Active Transportation Network)



Close to half or 49% said they would allow off-leash areas at John Gamble Park, while opposition or those wanting to prohibit it stands at 34%. Seventeen percent were unsure. This was the third highest rated in terms of the percentage that answered allow.

Q8. Lee Street Park (the area at the back of the park)



With half answering allow, Lee Street Park was scored second highest after Centennial Park. As well, the 30% prohibit response was the lowest of the eight areas rated. There were still two in ten that were unsure or did not know. Dog owners most replied allow (88% compared to 28% non-owners).

Options

Next, six options related to off-leash areas the City is considering building were read to respondents. They were then asked which one they preferred, with one answer being accepted.

Q9. "I am now going to read a list of options related to off leash areas the City is considering building. Which one would be your preferred option?"

(READ / ROTATE LIST / ACCEPT ONE RESPONSE)

New fenced facilities in existing parks	11%
New fenced facilities close to existing natural areas	9%
New fenced trails	2%
Fence some of the existing unfenced leash free areas	10%
Land purchased or rented by the City specifically to build a new fenced dog park	9%
Pay per use fenced facilities operated by a third party	4%
No new sites. I am happy with the unfenced dog parks and unoccupied sport fields already allowed	17%
THERE SHOULD BE NONE, Parks and open spaces are for people and dogs should be leashed	12%
Unsure	26%

There were more than one-quarter or 26% of residents unsure of a preferred option, while 17% want no new sites as they are satisfied with the current arrangement and 12% feel there should be no off-leash areas – primarily non-dog owners (20%) and older residents 65+ (22%).

Among those that selected one of the six choices presented (45% of the survey sample), there was no clear option that was favoured. Results were spread among new fenced facilities in existing parks (11%), fencing existing unfenced leash free areas (10%), new fenced facilities close to existing natural areas (9%) and purchasing or renting land to specifically build a new park (9%). The least favoured options were pay per use facilities operated by a third party (4%) and new fenced trails (2%).

In an open-ended or unaided question allowing for one response, residents were asked for comments or suggestions related to leash free areas.

Q10. "Do you have any comments or suggestions related to leash free areas in the City of Guelph?"



SUGGESTIONS		
<i>Don't know / None</i>	N=348	58%
<i>Support having dog parks</i>	N=43	7%
<i>Should have no leash free parks in residential areas</i>	N=40	7%
<i>Make sure rules are followed</i>	N=37	6%
<i>Should be fenced in</i>	N=35	6%
<i>Don't agree with more off leash dog parks</i>	N=19	3%
<i>Not safe to have unleashed dogs</i>	N=18	3%
<i>Taxpayers should not fund</i>	N=15	3%
<i>Opposed to dog parks</i>	N=13	2%
<i>Should be none around school areas</i>	N=13	2%
<i>I am / some people are afraid of dogs</i>	N=11	2%
<i>Happy with current arrangement (Peter Misersky Park)</i>	N=6	1%
<i>Make sure poop is cleaned / need bins for dog waste</i>	N=2	<1%

While most or 58% had no comment, results from those with opinions were mixed. While 7% of comments voiced outright support, 13% related to disapproval including not agreeing with new dog parks, safety concerns, tax dollars spent, straight opposition and fear of dogs. The other replies or 22% were neutral and related to wanting restrictions in place such as location (no residential or school areas), ensuring rules are followed such as the cleaning of poop, having the areas fenced in, as well as being happy with the current park arrangement.

Areas to be Located

All N=600 respondents were read four areas where the City may build new fenced dog parks. They were then asked if they felt new dog parks should be situated in each location. This question elicited support or opposition to the areas regardless of whether or not respondents were overall in favour of dog parks.

Q11. "If the City were to build new fenced dog parks, in which of the following areas do you think they should be located?"

(READ / ROTATE LIST / ACCEPT RESPONSES OF YES, NO, UNSURE FOR EACH)

Q11a. In parks throughout the city and within residential areas so they are accessible and walkable.

Yes	47%
No	43%
Unsure	10%

Q11b. In parks on the outside of the City as destination spaces that may require a vehicle to access.

Yes	66%
No	26%
Unsure	8%

Q11c. Fenced areas or fenced trails beside natural areas.

Yes	55%
No	39%
Unsure	6%

Q11d. In non-traditional areas like hydro corridors which may require agreements from third parties or the purchase of land.

Yes	60%
No	34%
Unsure	6%

The location where support was highest for new dog parks was on the outside of the City, or a destination space that may require a vehicle to access (66%).

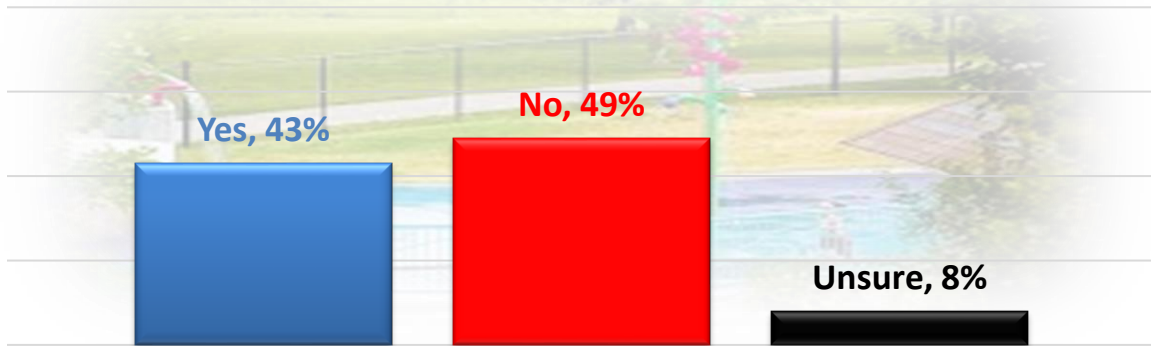
The next most named areas were non-traditional spaces such as hydro corridors that may require third party arrangements or a land purchase (60%).

Lower results were provided at 55% for fenced in areas beside natural areas.

The lowest support at 47% and strongest opposition at 43% was for having dog parks within the City located in residential areas .

All respondents (N=600) were then specifically probed if they would want to have a fenced off leash free dog park in their neighbourhood park.

Q12. "Would you want to have a fenced off leash free dog park in your neighbourhood park?"



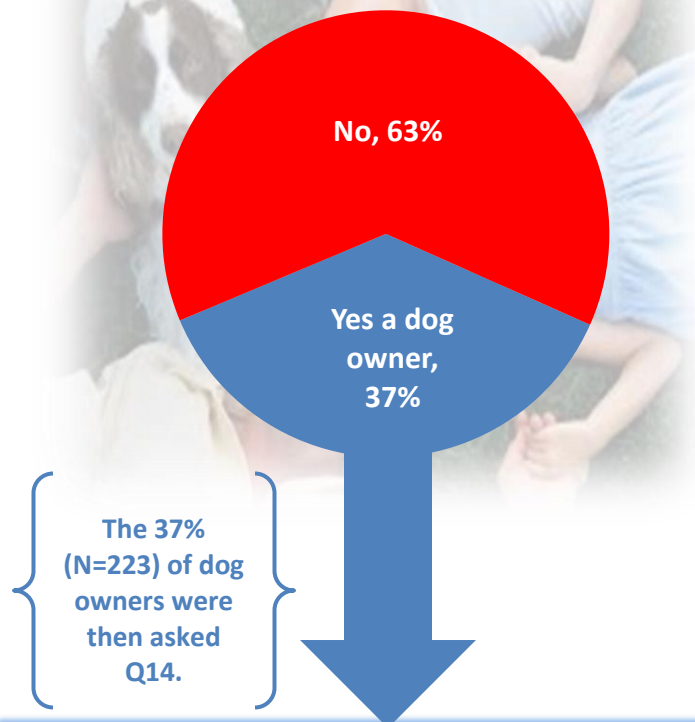
Forty-three percent of residents said they would be willing to have a fenced off leash free dog park in their neighbourhood park, compared to almost half or 49% that do not want one, while 8% were unsure.

Support was very strong among dog owners at 97%, compared to only 10% for those without a dog – 78% of non-owners were opposed and 12% were undecided. Younger residents 18-24 (52%) were most likely to say yes in relation to older 55-64 (39%) and 65 + (27%) year olds. There were also more males (45%) compared to females (40%) that said they would want a dog park in their area.

Dog Owners

Residents were questioned if they were a dog owner. If they answered “yes” they were a dog owner, they were then asked Q14 about their willingness to travel to go to a fenced off park.

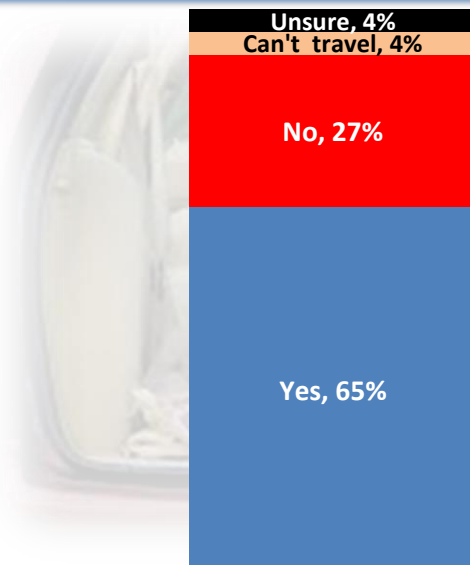
Q13. "Are you a dog owner?"



Thirty-seven percent of respondents to the survey stated that they are a dog owner. This regardless of whether the dogs are registered or not.

Owners tended to fall into the 45-54 (44%), 35-44 (40%) and 25-34 (39%) cohorts, followed by 18-24 (30%) and then 65+ (25%).

Q14. "Would you be willing to travel outside of your neighbourhood to use a fenced off leash free dog park?"



Sixty-five percent of dog-owners would be willing to travel to use a fenced off leash park, compared to 27% that would not. There were 4% unsure and 4% that said they have issues with travelling.

More male dog owners (70%) are willing to travel than females (60%), as are those aged 25-34 (79%), 35-44 (76%), 45-54 (75%) and 18-24 (67%) in relation to the oldest 55-64 (38%) and 65+ (12%).

Leash Free Study



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Executive Summary

The following study reviews the City of Guelph's current approach to leash free areas. The purpose of the study is to understand the City's current delivery model and make recommendations to help form a Leash Free Policy.

From the background review and community engagement, Staff make the following observations and recommendations:

1. The City should define areas where dogs are permitted to be off leash and develop clear rules and regulations for these areas through a Leash Free Program Policy.
2. Many other municipalities have leash free areas that are fenced (also called dog parks or leash free facilities). The City of Guelph currently does not offer any fenced leash free facilities. Fenced leash free areas can help create a safer environment for park users and the City should develop a plan to provide fenced leash free facilities. As part of any policy there should be criteria for locating the facilities and design guidelines.
3. Currently City of Guelph sport fields are permitted to be used as off leash areas. This current practice causes damage to sport fields and conflict between sport field users and dog owners or keepers. A strategy should be developed around the use of sport fields as leash free areas.

The following Leash Free Study reviews the provision of leash free areas and confirms facility standards, service levels, and operating regulations to guide their development and operation. The policy provides a framework for enforcing, managing, operating, planning, designing and construction of leash free areas.

Introduction

At present, there are eight (8) leash free areas in operation within the City of Guelph. These leash free areas are not currently governed by a uniform set of guidelines and regulations, or delineated on sites with separation. The City has received numerous complaints and concerns from the public regarding safety of leash free areas in parks and conflicts between users. By developing a Leash Free Program Policy, criteria will be established outlining strategies and guidelines in order to aid the City in the design, safety and implementation of facilities and services for leash free areas.

For this study, staff reviewed the current structure of leash free areas to determine what was working and what was not. The review was broken into 4 steps:

- Background research analysis;
- Community engagement;
- Recommendations and policy development; and
- Implementation plan.

Through the background review and extensive community engagement a set of recommendations and alternatives has been established to form part of the criteria making up the Leash Free Program Policy. These recommendations and alternatives

reflect the needs of all park users, improves the City's ability to enforce rules and regulations and to provide guidance for leash free areas moving forward. Safety was considered the most important factor and is presented as such in the policy as well as the recommendations and implementation plan.

Definitions

For the purposes of this report, the following definitions should be understood:

Leash Free Area: shall mean an area of land designated for dogs to run at large or without a leash.

Leash Free Facility: shall mean an area of land enclosed by a physical barrier (fence, hedge, etc.) that is designated for dogs to run at large or without a leash. Also called a 'Dog Park.'

For the purposes of this document, all policies or recommendations relating to leash free areas will apply to leash free facilities unless otherwise stated.

Background Research Analysis

As part of the background review, Staff conducted an analysis of existing policies and conducted a benchmark analysis of comparator municipalities' policies and facilities.

Current City Policies

Current Leash Free Policy

The City currently does not have a cohesive policy relating to leash free areas. Existing leash free areas are defined on the City's website. There are no rules and regulations associated with them. Enforcement of leash free areas is through the Animal Control By-law.

Current City By-laws

There are three relevant by-laws relating to dogs in the City of Guelph:

- The [Animal Control By-law](#) provides for the licensing and regulating of dogs and for prohibiting or regulating the running at large of dogs in the City.
- The [Stoop-and-Scoop By-law](#) provides for the removal and sanitary disposition of excrement for any animal. With some exceptions, this by-law applies to any person who owns, harbours, possesses or is in control of any animal.
- The [Noise Control By-law \(1998\)-15760](#) prohibits the persistent barking of domestic animals at all times.

Dog Owner's Liability Act, R.S.O 1990

In addition to City By-laws there is also the provincial Dog Owner's Liability Act. In Ontario, the Dog Owner's Liability Act governs who is at fault when a dog bites someone.

The act states that an owner of a dog is liable for damages resulting from a bite or attack by the dog on another person or domestic animal.

Benchmark Analysis

A benchmark analysis of five (5) comparable municipalities was conducted in order to identify, understand and compare:

- Strategies, guidelines and principles in the design of leash free areas;
- Leash free area service models;
- Service levels for leash free areas; and
- Overall safety requirements of leash free areas.

Within each of the municipalities looked at, one high profile leash free facility was selected for thorough review and analysis. This review is summarized in Figures 1-3 below. These five locations, and their subject municipalities have been studied to compare the following criteria:

- Fully fenced areas;
- Natural barriers (in place of fencing);
- Separate areas for small and large dogs;
- Dog waste specific disposal;
- Appropriate level of information signage (rules, regulations and enforcement);
- Appropriate amount of signage;
- Clear boundaries for Leash Free Zones;
- Lighting and water services;
- Parking facilities provided;
- Permitted hours of use;
- Unoccupied sports field use;
- Proximity to other facilities;
- Functionality of the park;
- Compatibility of the park;
- Proportion of the leash free facility in comparison to the overall park size; and
- Size of the leash free facility.

The five subject municipalities and high profile leash free facilities analyzed in this report include the following:

- City of Kitchener, McLennan Park
- Township of Centre Wellington, Fergus Dog Park
- City of Hamilton, Cathedral Park
- City of Burlington, Bayview Park
- Town of Oakville, Shell Park

The municipalities outlined above were chosen as direct comparators based on proximity and population in relation to the City of Guelph. The leash free facilities analyzed were chosen as they are a considered typical facilities within each of the comparator municipalities.

Through analysis, it has also been determined that the five subject municipalities define leash free areas as “Leash Free Areas” and “Dog Parks.” The following definitions apply:

Leash Free Area: A designated free-run area (not fenced) within a park where dogs can be leash free.

Dog Park (a): A designated fully fenced facility within a park where dogs can be leash free.

Dog Park (b): A designated park where dogs can be leash free and where no other use within the park shall be permitted.

Designated Leash Free Areas or Dog Parks per Municipality

City of Kitchener:

- Bechtel Park contains a designated Dog Park (a)
- Kiwanis Park contains a designated Dog Park (a)
- McLennan Park contains a designated Dog Park (a)

The City of Kitchener only permits fully fenced dog parks. It does not permit leash free dogs on any other lands including sports fields. Dogs are not permitted on sports fields at any time under any circumstances whether leashed or leash free.

Township of Centre Wellington:

- Fergus Dog Park contains a designated Dog Park (b)

The Township of Centre Wellington does not permit leash free dogs on any other lands including sports fields. Dogs are not permitted on sports fields at any time under any circumstances whether leashed or leash free.

City of Hamilton:

- Hamilton SPCA Park contains a section designated Dog Park (a)
- Heritage Green Park contains a designated Dog Park (a)
- Hill Street Park contains a designated Dog Park (a)
- Birch Avenue Park contains a designated Dog Park (a)
- Borer’s Falls contains a designated Dog Park (a)
- Cathedral Park contains a designated Dog Park (a)
- Globe Park contains a designated Dog Park (a)
- Rail Trail contains a designated Dog Park (a)
- Chegwin Park contains a Leash Free Area (unfenced)
- Corporal Nathan Cirillo Park contains a Leash Free Area (unfenced)
- Hamilton SPCA Park contains a section Leash Free Area (unfenced)
- Strachan Street Open Space contains a Leash Free Area (unfenced)

The City of Hamilton does not permit leash free dogs on any other lands including sports fields. Dogs are not permitted on sports fields at any time under any circumstances whether leashed or leash free.

City of Burlington:

- Bayview Park contains a designated Dog Park (a)
- Norton Park contains a designated Dog Park (a)
- Roly Bird Park contains a designated Dog Park (a)

The City of Burlington only permits fully fenced dog parks. It does not permit leash free dogs on any other lands including sports fields. Dogs are not permitted on sports fields at any time under any circumstances whether leashed or leash free.

Town of Oakville:

- Palermo Park contains a designated Dog Park (a)
- North Park contains a designated Dog Park (a)
- Memorial Park contains a designated Dog Park (a)
- Glenashton Park contains a designated Dog Park (a)
- Kingsford Gardens contains a designated Dog Park (a)
- Post Park contains a designated Dog Park (a)
- Shell Park contains a designated Dog Park (a)

The Town of Oakville only permits fully fenced dog parks. It does not permit leash free dogs on any other lands including sports fields. Dogs are not permitted on sports fields at any time under any circumstances whether leashed or leash free.

Analysis of Leash Free Areas

Figure 1: Comparison of leash free areas, facilities and service levels

Municipality	Number of Dog Parks (a)	Number of Dog Parks (b)	Number of Leash Free Areas	Fully Fenced Facilities	Unfenced Facilities	Separate Areas for Small and Large Dogs	Lighting	Water Stations/ Access	Parking	Permitted Hours of Use	Dog Waste Specific Disposal	Dog Waste Bags Supplied	Signage Indicating Rules, Regulations and Expectations	Dogs Permitted on Sports Fields	Leash Free Areas Per 1,000 Population (Service Level)
City of Burlington	3	0	0	3	0	2	1	0	3	YES	0	3	YES	NO	0.02
Township of Centre Wellington	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	YES	0	1	YES	NO	0.04
City of Hamilton	7	1	4	8	4	0	1	3	7	YES	9	9	YES	NO	0.02
City of Kitchener	3	0	0	3	0	0	1	0	3	YES	3	3	YES	NO	0.01
Town of Oakville	7	0	0	7	0	2	0	2	7	YES	7	7	YES	NO	0.04
City of Guelph	0	0	8	0	8	0	0	0	7	YES	0	0	NO	YES	0.06

Figure 1 illustrates the differences in leash free areas and facility styles and service levels between the studied municipalities and compared to areas and service levels in the City of Guelph.

Figure 2: Comparison of the five studied leash free facilities

Leash Free Location	Park Classification	Fully Fenced Facility	Unfenced Facility	Separate Areas for Small and Large Dogs	Lighting	Water Stations/ Access	Parking	Designated Leash Free Area Size (Hectares)	Overall Park Size (Hectares)	Permitted Hours of Use	Dog Waste Specific Disposal	Dog Waste Bags Supplied	Signage Indicating Rules, Regulations and Expectations
Bayview Park, Burlington Leash Free Type: Dog Park (a)	CP	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	1.5	12.5	✓	✗	✗	✓
Cathedral Park, Hamilton Leash Free Type: Dog Park (b)	DP	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	0.8	1.2	✓	✓	✓	✓
Fergus Dog Park, Centre Wellington Leash Free Type: Leash Free Area	DP	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	2.0	2.0	✓	✗	✓	✓
McLennan Park, Kitchener Leash Free Type: Dog Park (a)	CP	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	1.0	38.0	✓	✓	✓	✓
Shell Park, Oakville Leash Free Type: Dog Park (a)	CP	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	0.8	20.0	✓	✓	✓	✓
Legend:	CP =	Community Park											
	DP =	Dog Park ONLY											

Figure 2 analyzes the characteristics and service levels between each of the five studied leash free facilities. Even though the facility characteristics between the leash free types are different, there are consistencies with service levels across the board.

Figure 3: Comparison of existing leash free areas in the City of Guelph

Leash Free Location	Park Classification	Fully Fenced Facility	Unfenced Facility	Separate Areas for Small and Large Dogs	Lighting	Water Stations/ Access	Parking	Designated Leash Free Area Size (Hectares)	Overall Park Size (Hectares)	Permitted Hours of Use	Dog Waste Specific Disposal	Dog Waste Bags Supplied	Signage Indicating Rules, Regulations and Expectations
Centennial Park Leash Free Type: Leash Free Area	RP	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	0.2	19.0	✓	✗	✗	✗
Crane Park Leash Free Type: Leash Free Area	CL	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	18.0	18.0	✓	✗	✗	✗
Eramosa River Park Leash Free Type: Leash Free Area	CP	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	1.0	15.0	✓	✗	✗	✗
John Gamble Park (Hydro Corridor) Leash Free Type: Leash Free Area	NP	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	4.0	1.6	✓	✗	✗	✗
Lee Street Park Leash Free Type: Leash Free Area	NP	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	0.5	1.8	✓	✗	✗	✗
Margaret Green Park Leash Free Type: Leash Free Area	RP	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	2.0	17.0	✓	✗	✗	✗
Norm Jary Park Leash Free Type: Leash Free Area	CP	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	2.0	8.0	✓	✗	✗	✗
Riverside Park Leash Free Type: Leash Free Area	RP	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	2.0	31.0	✓	✗	✗	✗
Legend:	CL =	Conservation Lands											
	CP =	Community Park											
	NP =	Neighbourhood Park											
	RP =	Regional Park											

Figure 3 shows that service levels are consistent but below average when compared to leash free facilities in Figure 2. The Characteristics of these areas vary across the board especially when looking at 'Park Classification' and 'Designated Leash Free Area Size'.

Summary of Background Research

Based on the five high profile leash free facilities studied and analyzed, there are several consistent and distinct conclusions for leash free facility service levels, standards, characteristics and criteria as follows:

- Fencing is considered a high priority when establishing leash free facilities;
- All leash free facilities were developed in a community level park classification as an independent dog park;

- All community parks containing leash free facilities range in size from 12.5 to 38 hectares ;
- Available parking is considered a high priority when designing leash free facilities;
- The average size of the leash free areas are between 1 and 2 hectares;
- Dog waste specific disposal at leash free facilities is considered a high priority when developing leash free facilities;
- Signage outlining the rules, regulations and expectations for each leash free facility are present in abundance at each location and considered a high priority in the design for safety of leash free facilities;
- None of the studied municipalities permit leash free dogs on any other lands including sports fields. Dogs are not permitted on sports fields at any time under any circumstances whether leashed or leash free.

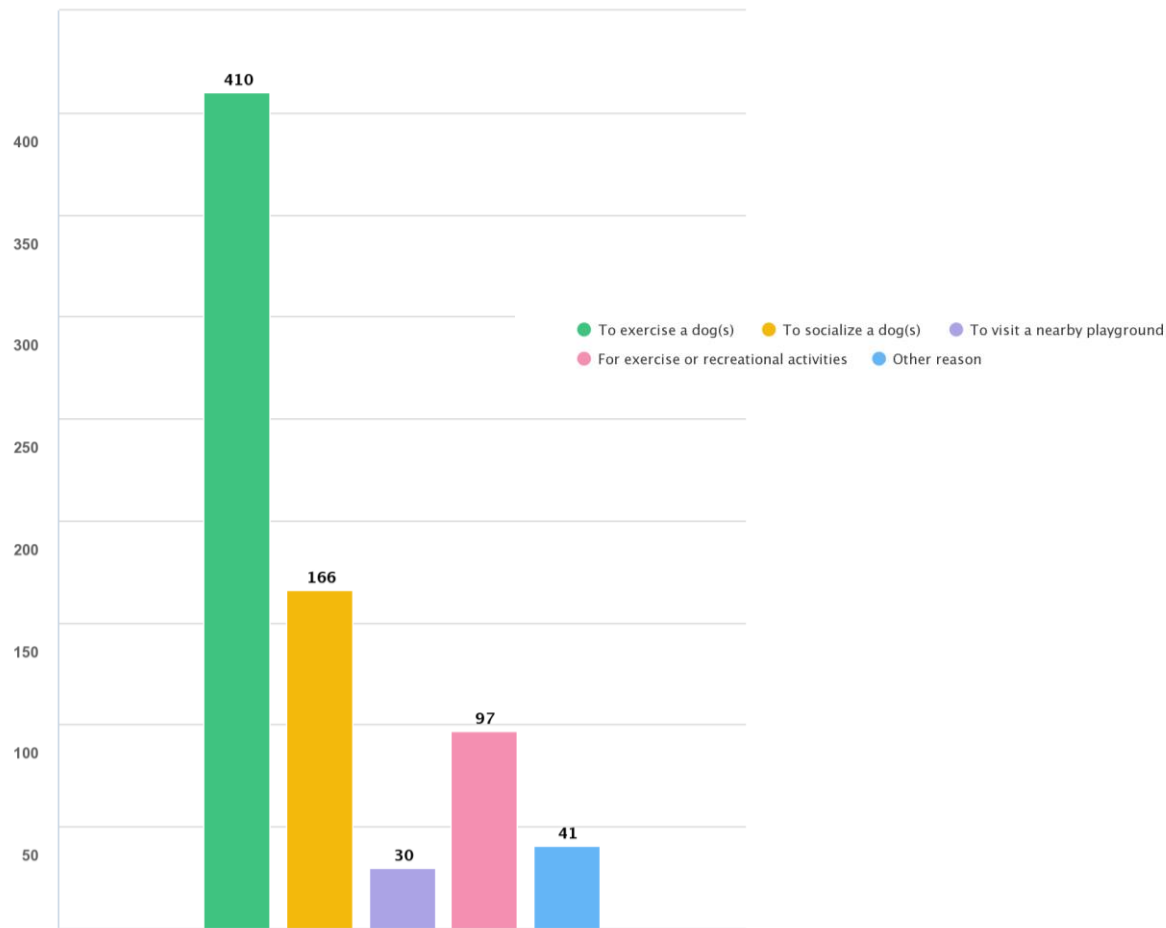
Generally, the standards and characteristics that define the studied leash free facilities exceed those within the City of Guelph. The City of Guelph should consider the above priorities when establishing leash free areas and facilities and it should be reflected within the Leash Free Program Policy.

Community Engagement

Results

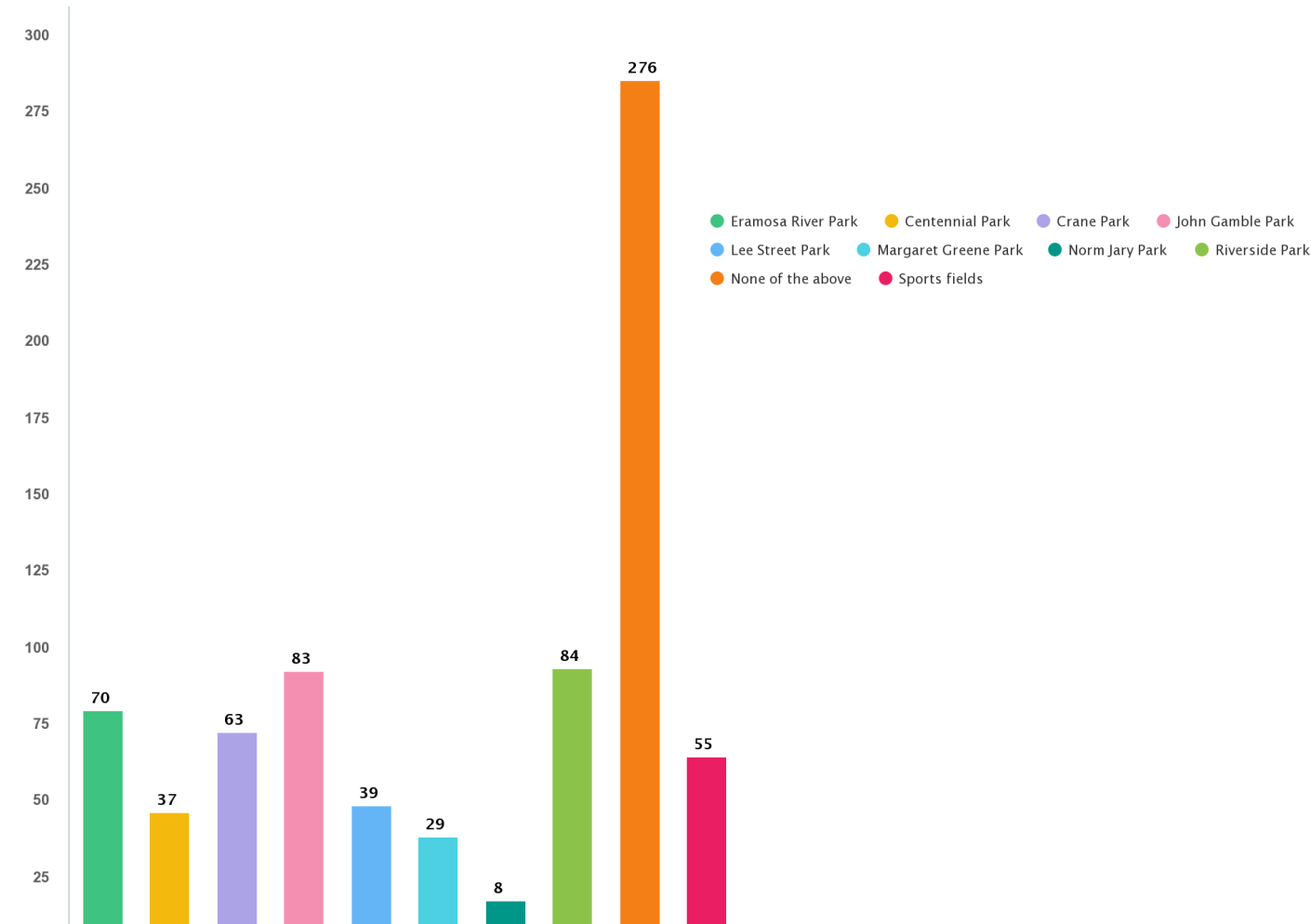
The City of Guelph conducted a survey to understand community opinion and use of leash free areas. The survey began July 27, 2018 and closed on August 27, 2018. Out of the 2,384 community members that visited the site online, 744 completed surveys were submitted. The results of the community engagement survey are outlined below.

Figure 4 – Question 1: Why do you visit City of Guelph parks with a leash free area? Please choose your main reason.



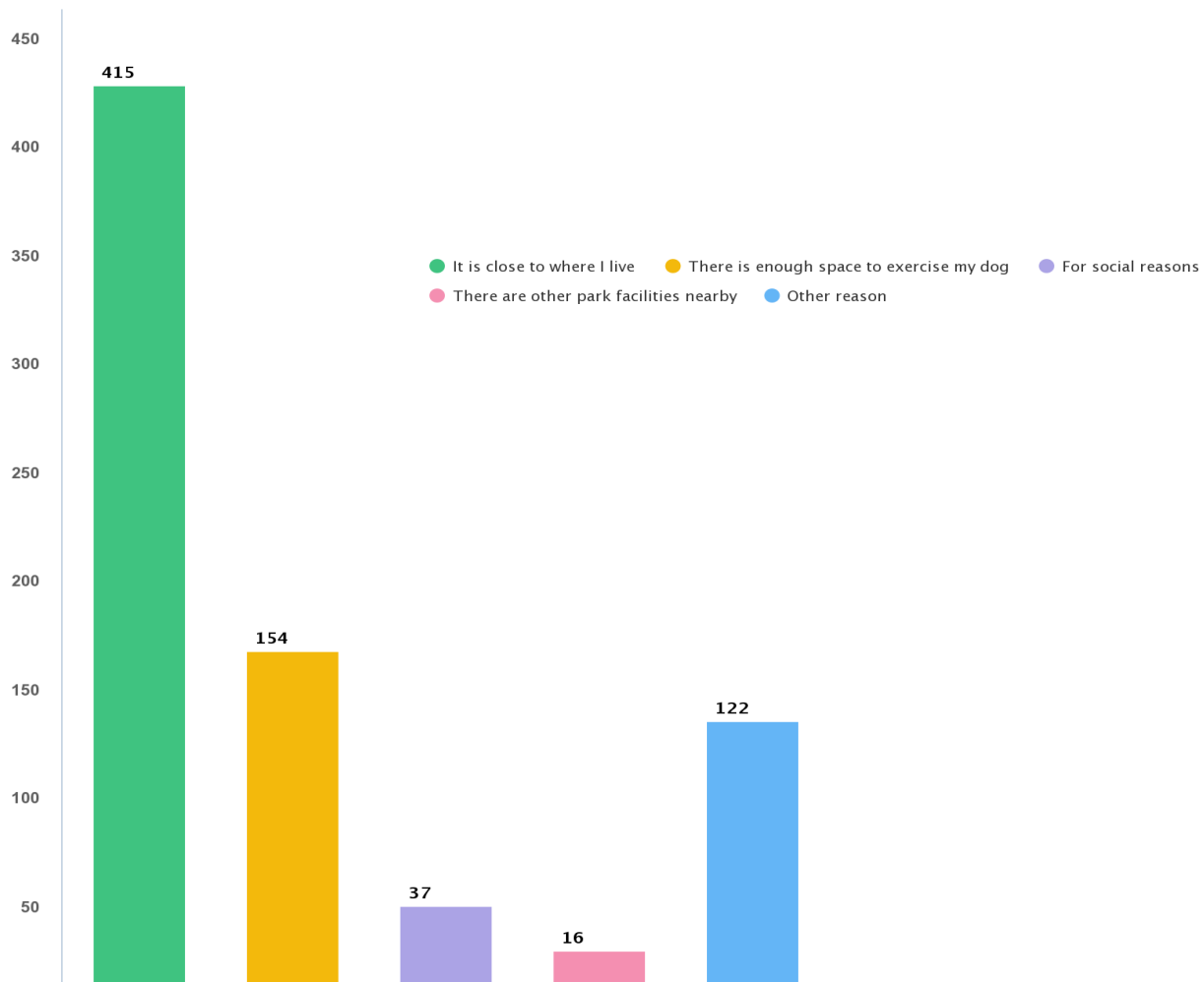
Based on Figure 4, 55% of those that responded selected 'To exercise a dog(s)'. As a priority noted amongst community members that participated in the survey, this factor should be considered when designing leash free facilities and be large enough to accommodate for an appropriate amount of exercise for all dogs of all sizes.

Figure 5- Question 2: Which park with a leash free area do you visit most? Please choose one.



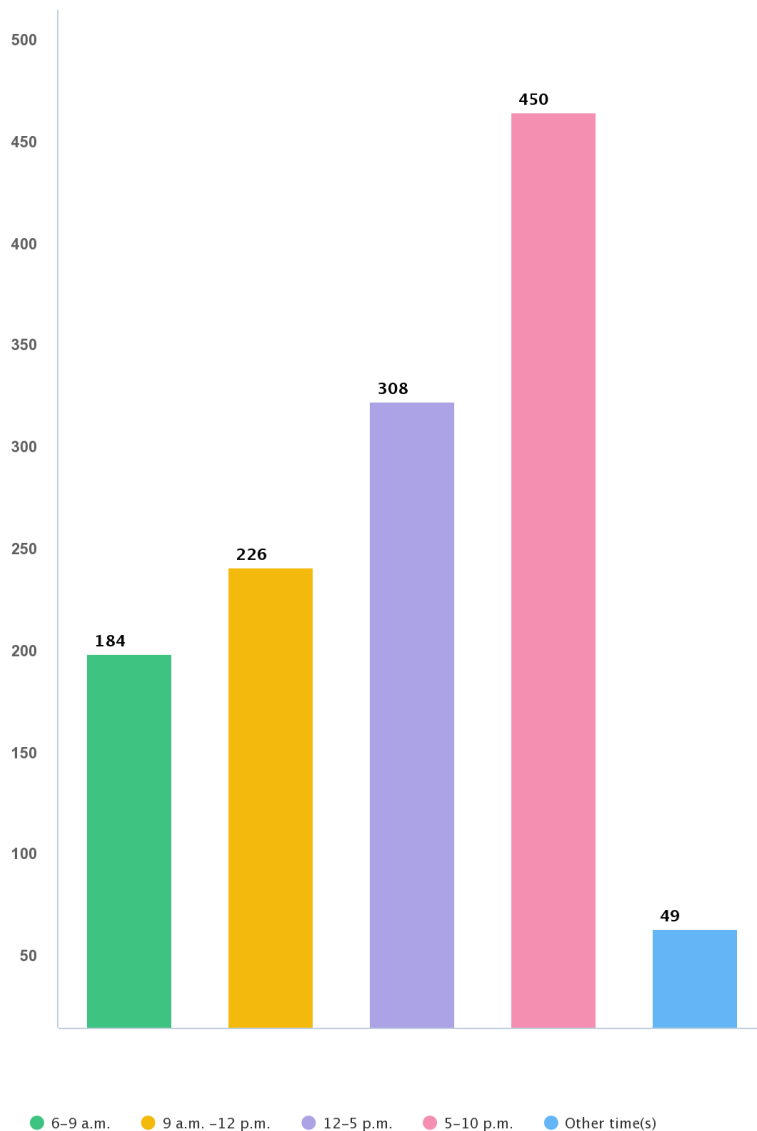
Based on the results shown in Figure 5, 56% of the 744 participants are currently using the various leash free areas located throughout the City of Guelph while 7% are using several unoccupied sports fields. Out of the 55 participants using unoccupied sports fields 33 of them chose Exhibition Park as their main location. The remaining 37% of those that participated are not currently using any of the current leash free areas or unoccupied sports fields within parks. Instead, these participants have chosen not to use leash free areas based on the following themes provided through their responses: Leash free facilities are not fenced, safety concerns regarding dogs and others, not enough bylaw enforcement.

Figure 6 Question 3: Why do you visit this location the most? Please choose your main reason.



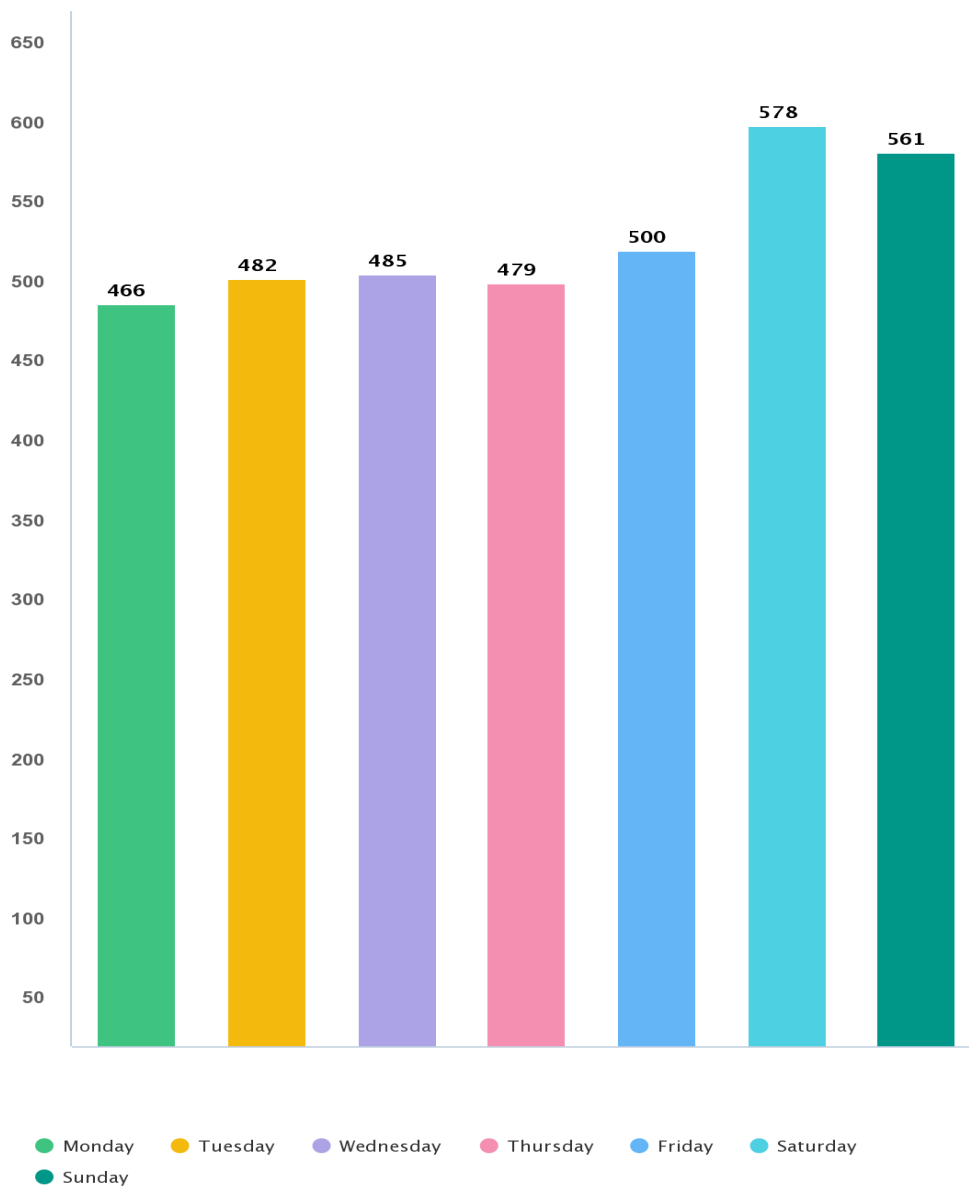
Out of the 744 participants that selected their most visited leash free area from question two, 56% of them chose their specific location based on where they live. For the 122 participants that selected 'other reason', their answers followed the same themes provided in question two: Leash free facilities are not fenced, safety concerns regarding dogs and others, not enough bylaw enforcement.

Figure 7 - Question 4: What time(s) of the day do you usually visit this location? Please choose all that apply.



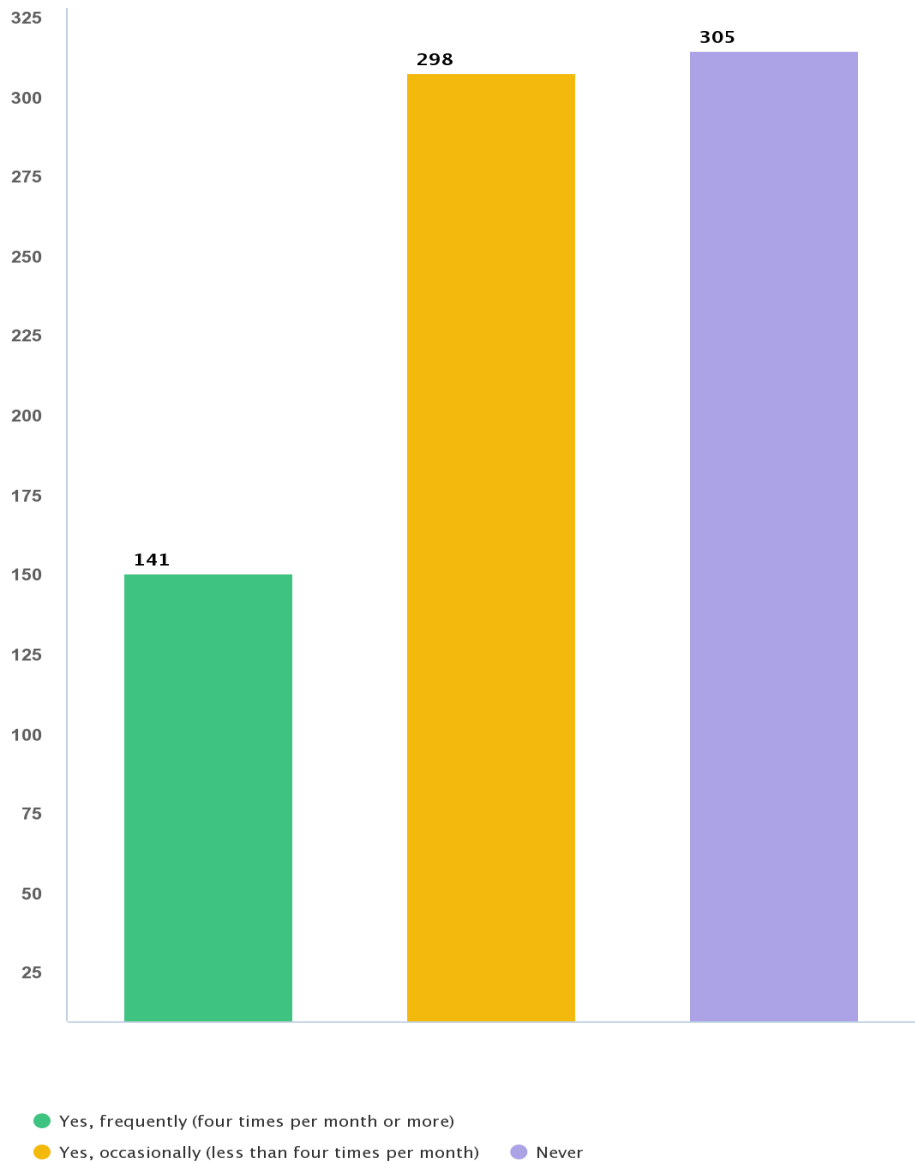
Based on the results shown in Figure 7, 60% of those that participated are using their specified leash free locations between the hours of 5:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. Further, 93% of all responses show that leash free areas are being used between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. Only 7% of participants are using leash free areas outside of the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m.

Figure 8 - Question 5: Which day(s) of the week do you mostly visit this location? Please choose all that apply.



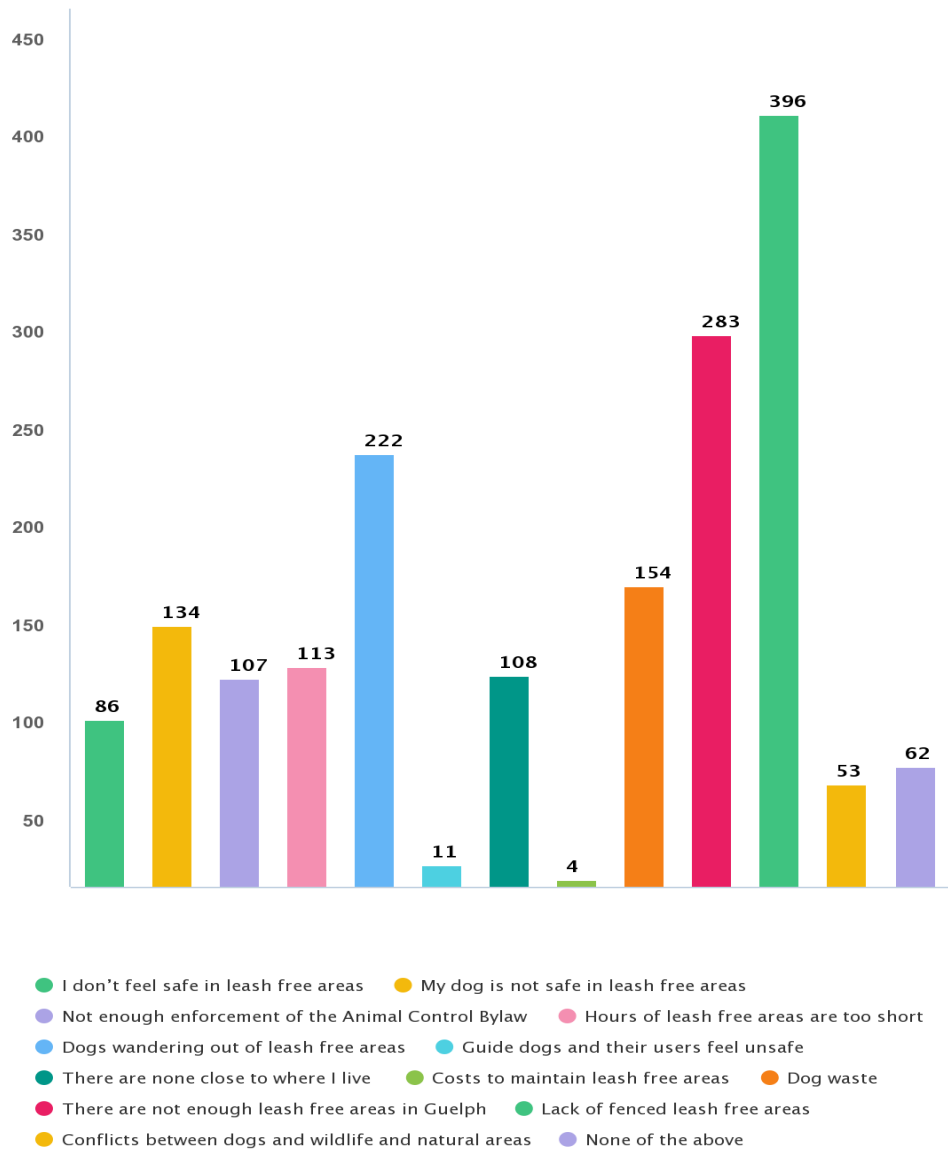
As illustrated in Figure 8, the specified leash free areas chosen by the participants are all very well attended throughout the week. There is a slight increase of use from Friday through to Saturday and Sunday.

Figure 9 - Question 6: Do you use other leash free areas outside the City of Guelph?



Based on the results shown in Figure 9: Question Six, 59% of participants visit leash free areas outside of the City of Guelph either frequently or occasionally. Main reasons provided for visiting leash free areas outside of the city are based on service levels provided at the other leash free areas that included: Fully fenced facilities; Better waste disposal system provided; Separate areas for small and large dogs; Access to a water supply for dogs.

Figure 10 - Question 7: What are your most important concerns with parks that have leash free areas in the City of Guelph? Please choose your top three.



As shown in Figure 10, 53% of all participants have selected 'lack of fenced leash free areas' as their number one concerns with current leash free areas in parks. An additional 30% selected 'dogs wandering out of leash free areas' as their top concern which can also be attributed to a lack of fenced leash free areas.

Summary of Community Engagement

Based on the results of the survey conducted over the summer, there are several consistent and distinct conclusions drawn. These conclusions include mainly a theme of safety as well as general use and expectations for leash free facilities in the City of

Guelph. The themes exposed from the survey results are ranked in terms of priority as follows:

1. The lack of fenced leash free areas within the City of Guelph.
2. Safety concerns regarding dogs and others at parks containing leash free areas.
3. Not enough enforcement of the applicable bylaws at leash free areas.
4. Proximity is an important factor for visiting leash free areas in the City.
5. The main reason for visiting leash free areas is to exercise dogs.
6. The leash free areas are mostly used during the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. throughout the week.

The priorities outlined from the community engagement survey should be drawn in comparison with the priorities and characteristics based on the five municipalities studied along with the five high profile leash free facilities analyzed in this report and considered in the development and implementation of existing and future leash free facilities in the City of Guelph.

Inventory and Analysis of Existing Leash Free Areas

Currently, there are eight existing leash free areas located at:

- Centennial Park
- Crane Park
- Eramosa River Park
- John Gamble Park (Hydro Corridor)
- Lee Street Park
- Margaret Greene Park
- Norm Jary Park
- Riverside Park (GRCA Lands)

All Leash Free Areas are located within the park boundaries at each site except for the Leash Free Zones at John Gamble Park (Hydro Corridor) and Riverside Park (GRCA Lands).

Through individual site investigations, the Leash Free Areas listed above DO NOT contain the following services:

- Fully fenced areas
- Separate areas for small and large dogs
- Dog waste specific disposal
- Appropriate level of information signage (rules, regulations and enforcement)
- Appropriate amount of signage
- Clear boundaries for Leash Free Zones

In addition to the above Leash Free Areas, unoccupied sports fields may also be used as Leash Free Areas during the hours of 8:00 p.m. – 8:00 a.m. from May 1 – September 14, and 5:00 p.m. – 8:00 a.m. from September 15 – April 30.

Staff have documented ongoing issues with the use of sport fields as leash free facilities. There is conflict between users, ongoing maintenance issues due to dog damage and no posted rules and regulations for these areas.

There are currently no guiding principles for the design, implementation, monitoring and maintenance of these Leash Free Areas or Facilities.

Target Service Level

Currently the City of Guelph offers eight (8) leash free areas within City parks. Research and analysis was conducted on five (5) leash free facilities from five (5) comparator municipalities. Based on the results, the City of Guelph exceeds the services levels for leash free areas per population when compared to the other five (5) studied municipalities. However, it should be noted that the majority of comparator leash free areas are fully fenced facilities. The City should look to improve the service level by building fenced leash free facilities. Once the three (3) proposed leash free areas become fenced, Guelph will have significantly improved the service level and in some cases exceed municipal comparators in the amount of fenced leash free areas provided per population.

Recommendations

General Recommendations

Based on the results of community engagement, citizens would like to see leash free areas defined by a fenced boundary and in close proximity to where they reside. As a result, it is recommended that:

- The City develop a policy that defines where dogs are permitted to be off-leash, including rules and regulations for these areas;
- The City design and implement fenced leash free facilities;
- The City monitor the existing leash free areas as fenced leash free facilities are implemented and document issues that arise;
- The City allow the use of unoccupied sports fields as leash free areas outlined in Appendix B and develop rules and regulations for these areas;
- That Staff consider opportunities for new leash free areas and facilities through the City's Park and Recreation Master Plan, the City's capital budget process and/or through the redevelopment of existing parks or the development of new parks.

General Recommendations for the Design and Safety of Leash Free Facilities

From extensive research and analysis in conjunction with the results of the community engagement survey, the Leash Free Program Policy should recommend the following criteria for the design and safety of leash free facilities:

- Fencing or physical delineation compatible with the site is required around ALL designated leash free areas;
- Sustainable and safe disposal of dog waste is to be required at ALL designated leash free areas with the exception of designated unoccupied sports fields. The City will look at methods for achieving safe removal and disposal of dog specific waste at each site and;

- Signage containing information on site applicable bylaws, general rules and regulations and permitted hours of use must be appropriately and sufficiently applied at ALL designated leash free areas.

Recommended Fencing Requirements for Leash Free Areas

- All leash free areas to be fenced should contain separate fenced areas for small dogs and large dogs;
- All leash free areas to be fenced should contain a dual-gate entry and exit system. A dual gate zone allows for a dog owner to bring a dog into a confined space where the dog can be safely and properly unleashed before entry to the leash free area;
- All leash free areas to be fenced should be fenced with black vinyl coated chain link and be a minimum height of 1200mm (4.0 feet);
- Leash free areas to be located within the vicinity of the identified exclusions below MUST be fenced

The recommended set of exclusions are as follows:

- Premiere sports fields and stadiums
- Playgrounds and splash pads
- Skateboard parks and bicycle parks
- Tennis courts, basketball courts and other sports pads
- Parks adjacent or in close proximity to school lands
- Sports fields under shared-use agreements with schools
- Natural ice rinks
- Horticultural display areas and ornamental garden areas
- Community gardens or orchards
- Cemeteries
- Designated heritage, memorial, commemorative and ceremonial areas

Recommended Criteria for the Development of New Leash Free Areas

Staff should consider opportunities for new leash free areas and facilities through the City's Park and Recreation Master Plan, the City's capital budget process and/or through the redevelopment of existing parks or the development of new parks.

Location criteria for new suitable leash free areas should be based on design principles of: functionality; compatibility; proximity; proportion; neighbourhood characteristics; in conjunction with various City policies, plans and initiatives.

Implementation Plan for Current & Future Leash Free Areas

The following implementation plan is made up of recommendations drawn from the conclusions found in the community engagement program in conjunction with the research and analysis performed on leash free areas within other local municipalities.

There are constraints for the development of future leash free facilities and/ or refinement of existing leash free areas in the City. The City's first approach towards the development of the implementation plan was to formalize existing leash free areas. However many of

the existing leash free areas are constricted in parks that are fully programmed spaces or smaller parks where fencing the boundaries of the limits of the leash free area would create issues. This factor would cause conflicts between user groups and issues around safety and enforcement.

These issues created concerns around fencing some of the existing facilities without more in depth analysis.

As a result, the following recommendations are listed sequentially based on timing for development through implementation based on best fit for the residents of Guelph.

It should be noted that the existing leash free areas, with the exception of the identified designated unoccupied sports fields outlined in Appendix B, will remain unchanged during the course of the implementation plan. Designated unoccupied sports fields will be evaluated in an ongoing basis to ensure they still function and do not create issues for users. Once the implementation plan is complete, staff will determine if the ongoing use of sports fields as leash free areas remains in the best interest of residents.

Existing Leash Free Areas

See Appendix A for site map locations.

Staff will consider opportunities for new leash free areas and facilities through the City's Park and Recreation Master Plan, the City's capital budget process and/or through the redevelopment of existing parks or the development of new parks. New leash free areas will be considered using the guidelines outlined in Section 4 of the policy.

Existing leash free areas at: Centennial Park; Crane Park; Eramosa River Park; John Gamble Park (Hydro Corridor); Norm Jary Park; and Riverside Park (GRCA Lands) will be examined once the three (3) priority leash free sites are established in order to determine next steps. Analysis and recommendations will also be brought forth through the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Future sites will be considered in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and evaluated based on needs and community engagement as outlined in the policy.

Unoccupied Sports Fields as Leash Free Areas

See Appendix B for list of recommended sports field sites approved and not approved for the use by dogs.

The City currently allows sports fields to be used as leash free areas when not in use. Based on the results of the research analysis and safety concerns retrieved from the community engagement survey, it is recommended that the City allows only designated sports fields to be used as leash free areas when not in use while it transitions to fenced leash free facilities as outlined in the implementation plan. This means that only sports fields signed as designated leash free areas can be used as a leash free area. All other sports fields will be signed prohibiting use by dogs at all times unless posted otherwise.

Public safety is a top priority of the City. It will be important to make clear to members of the community which sports fields may be used as leash free and which ones cannot be

used by dogs. Premiere sports fields (defined as Category 'A' or 'AA' fields), along with others outlined by the City, outlined in Appendix A, should not be used by dogs for a number of reasons:

1. Public Safety

Children, youth and adults use these sports fields for recreational pursuits and should not be exposed to sports fields with poor hygiene due to dog waste that is left behind. It is also known, based on community engagement feedback, that conflicts between dog owners and sports groups occur during the times where the field that was once unoccupied has become occupied. These conflicts should be avoided at all times.

2. Priority

Given that the City advertises these facilities as high profile sports fields, they should be used for no other recreational pursuit other than the intent in which the sports field was built for i.e., premiere soccer fields should only be used for soccer related events etc. In addition, sports fields require booking and payment to be secured for sporting events. These sporting groups should therefore have priority in the use of such sports fields.

3. Maintenance and Operations

The City invests resources into the maintenance and operations of premiere sports fields in order to ensure that they are fully safe and that the fields are up to a standard that is acceptable for the level of play. In order to keep these fields up to standards that sports field users expect, the City should not allow dogs to use these amenities.

Based on the results of the community engagement survey, sports fields at Exhibition Park and Guelph Lake were most frequently used. Due to the number of residents that use unoccupied sports fields at both locations, the City may look at developing future independent leash free areas in order to accommodate leash free users while eliminating sports fields from the leash free inventory.

The prohibited use of designated sports fields will take effect immediately as outlined in Appendix B. The remaining permitted sports fields will be evaluated once the implementation plan is complete where the City may move to a model for leash free similar to other comparator municipalities as outlined in this study.

New Leash Free Areas

Site 1 – Bristol Street Park:

See Appendix C for site map. Note that the exact layout of the proposed future leash free area within the red shaded area will be determined through a formal design process as outlined by the policy.

Out of all the existing parks within the City of Guelph, none present a better opportunity for the development of an immediate fully fenced leash free facility as per the criteria set out in the policy. Bristol Street Park offers an accessible central location large enough for the development of a fully fenced leash free facility. The location would become the City's premiere leash free facility. The 1.94 hectare site contains a parking facility and meets

the criteria outlined in the policy for the development of a leash free area. The existing four (4) mini soccer fields would be relocated and developed at Eastview Community Park leaving Bristol Street Park with no programmed facilities except for an all exclusive leash free facility.

Based on the results from the community engagement, the City heard that:

- The community prefers fenced leash free facilities
- The community considers safety and enforcement of leash free areas a top priority
- The community considers an accessible, central and visible site important

Given the proposed locations proximity to Wellington Street and Bristol Street, the leash free area will be fully fenced and contain the following amenities:

- Dog specific waste disposal system
- Separate fenced areas for small dogs and large dogs
- Sufficient signage containing information on site applicable bylaws, general rules and regulations and permitted hours of use

Highlights for the leash free facility development at Bristol Street Park include:

- The location is central to the City
- The location is accessible by the Active Transportation Network (ATN), pedestrian crosswalk at Wellington Street and is on a scheduled bus route
- The location is highly visible and easy to get to by Wellington Road and HWY#6
- The location contains an existing parking facility
- The location contains mature trees for shade in the summer and noise reduction
- The location already contains a section of fencing reducing cost to construct a leash free facility
- The location contains access to water service for future consideration
- Programmed facilities such as the skate park on the other side of Wellington Street connected by the ATN creates a more complete programmed setting
- By moving four (4) mini soccer fields and building them at Eastview Community Park, it will leave a singular use at Bristol Street Park making it an all exclusive and premiere leash free facility for the City of Guelph

Staff will assess construction costs and propose a leash free area size accordingly to be built in 2019.

Site 2 – Lee Street Park:

See Appendix C for site map. Note that the exact layout of the proposed future leash free area within the red shaded area will be determined through a formal design process as outlined by the policy.

While Lee Street Park is a small park, it is recommended that the new fenced leash free facility remain in the current leash free location. In 2020, the final phase of development will commence creating an opportunity to improve the existing leash free area. The existing leash free area within the park contains site characteristics making it a good venue for a small leash free area. The only downfall to this location is a lack of a parking facility. However on-street parking is available close by. Given the proximity to shared-

use trails, basketball court, playground and adjacent William C. Winegard Public School the leash free area will be fully fenced and retrofitted to contain the following amenities:

- Dog specific waste disposal system
- Sufficient signage containing information on site applicable bylaws, general rules and regulations and permitted hours of use

Staff will assess construction costs and propose a leash free area size accordingly to be built in 2020.

Site 3 – Margaret Greene Park:

See Appendix C for site map. Note that the exact layout of the proposed future leash free area within the red shaded area will be determined through a formal design process as outlined by the policy.

Margaret Greene Park offers a location large enough for the development of a fully fenced leash free facility. The 17.74 hectare site contains a multiple parking facilities and meets the criteria outlined in the policy for the development of a leash free area. While Margaret Greene Park is heavily programmed, the area outlined on the map for a fenced leash free facility represents an opportunity to service dogs and their owners living in west Guelph. Given the proposed locations proximity to Westwood Road, existing soccer fields, existing playground and Stonehenge Therapeutic Community, the leash free area will be fully fenced and contain the following amenities:

- Dog specific waste disposal system
- Separate fenced areas for small dogs and large dogs
- Sufficient signage containing information on site applicable bylaws, general rules and regulations and permitted hours of use

Staff will assess construction costs and propose a leash free area size accordingly to be built in 2021.

Signage Plan

See Appendix D for signage types and design.

Once the Leash Free Program Policy comes into effect, signage types will be implemented throughout the course of 2019 at the following locations:

- General Leash Free Rules Sign at all new leash free locations
- Dogs Permitted Sports Field Signs at all designated sports field locations
- Dogs Prohibited Sports Field Signs at all proscribed sports field locations
- Stoop and Scoop Signs at all parks throughout the City

Possible Future Sites

Eastview Community Park:

Eastview Community Park presents a possible future opportunity for the development of a fully fenced leash free facility as per the criteria set out in the policy. While Eastview

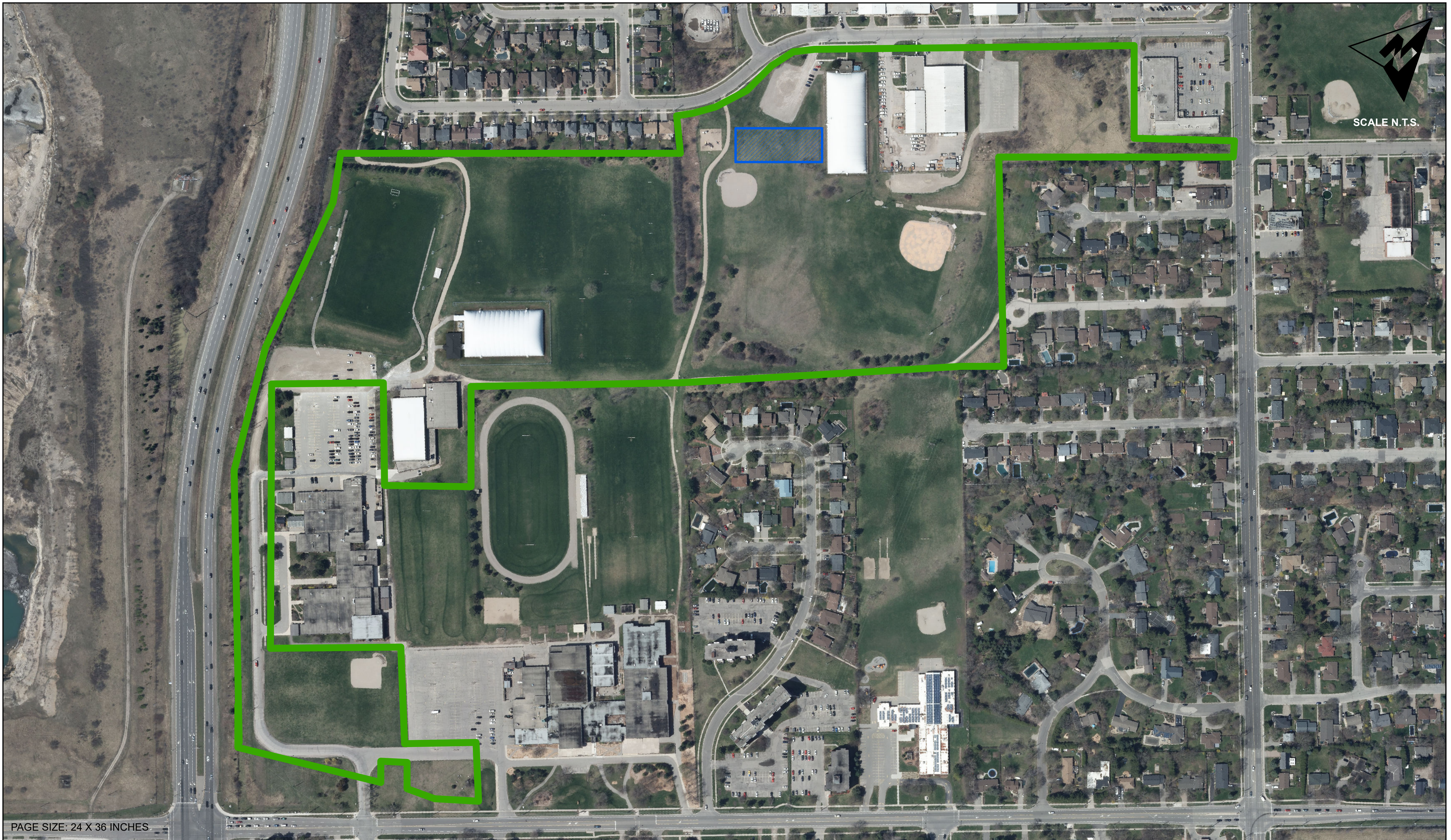
Community Park is 25.00 ha, it contains programmed facilities which would fall under the list of exclusions for a leash free area as outlined in the policy. However, by following the policy criteria, it means that a leash free area within the park would require fencing in order for it to be safe and function properly. If considered, a design process would be initiated in order to determine if a leash free area can be accommodated in the programming of the park. The advantage of Eastview Community Park is size, not only in the overall park but in the size of the potential leash free area. In addition, there is ample parking as well as an amenity building, and there is an established culture of heavy use as a leash free area.

Once the implementation plan is complete, the City may explore how a leash free facility would impact the master plan, current programming and future planned programming of the site and determine if a leash free facility would be potentially appropriate.

Conclusion

This study was developed based on information received from the community engagement in conjunction with the research and analysis conducted on leash free areas within comparable municipalities. The recommendations brought forth are thorough, realistic, and require carefully planned capital investment to complete. The recommendations presented in this study were formed in part by the guiding principles and standards that have been outlined in the Leash Free Program Policy. The Leash Free Program Policy will be used as a tool to assist in guiding the current and future of leash free facilities in the City of Guelph.

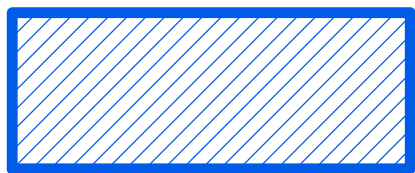
Appendix A Existing Leash Free Areas



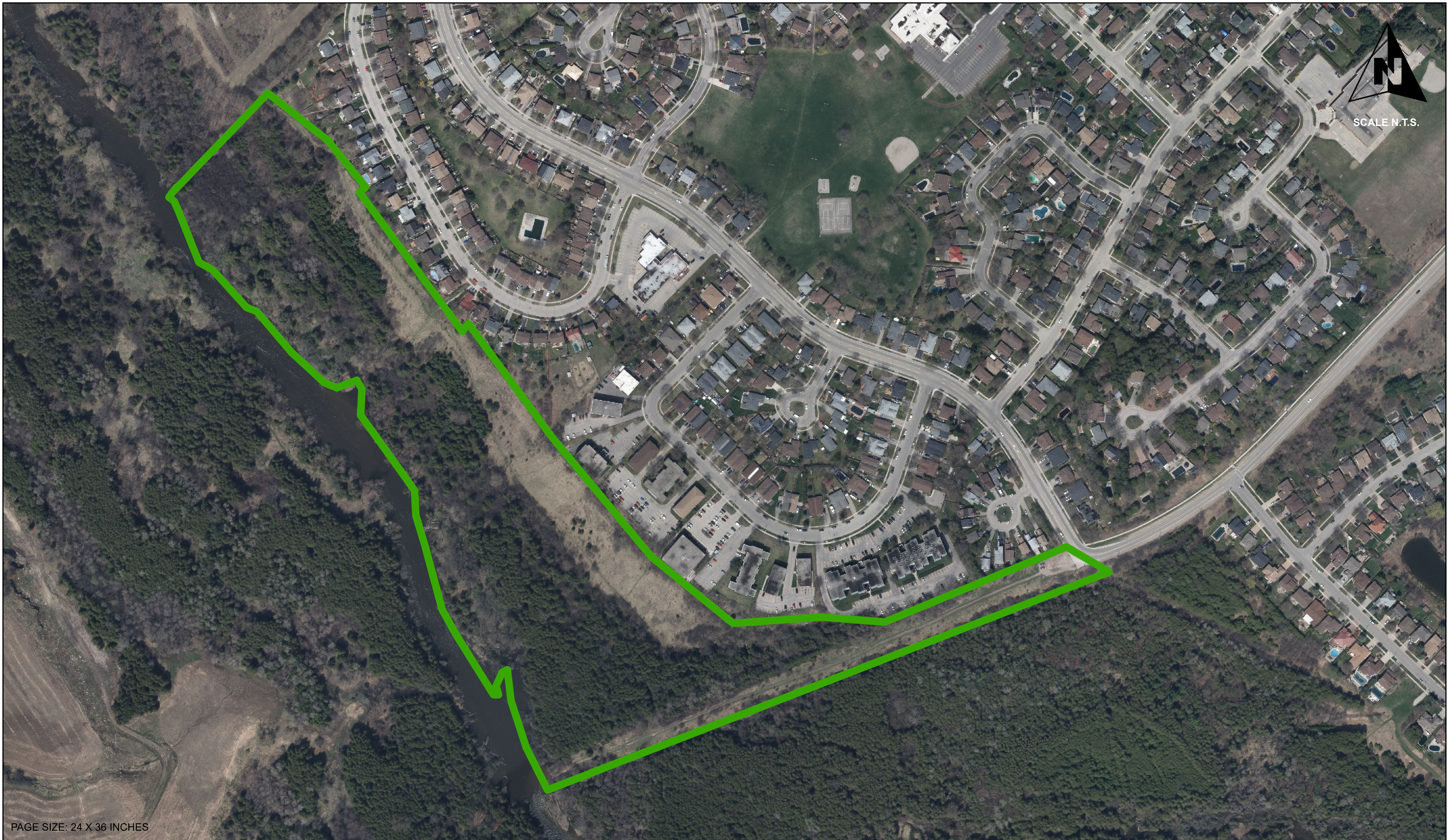
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CENTENNIAL PARK

373/377 College Avenue West. P4 Regional Park.



Existing Leash Free Area



SCALE N.T.S.

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CRANE PARK

96 Dovercliffe Road. P1 Conservation Land.

NOTE: Entire Park is Leash Free (Currently)

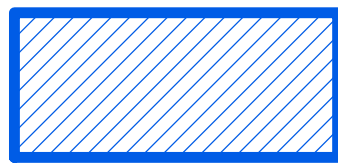




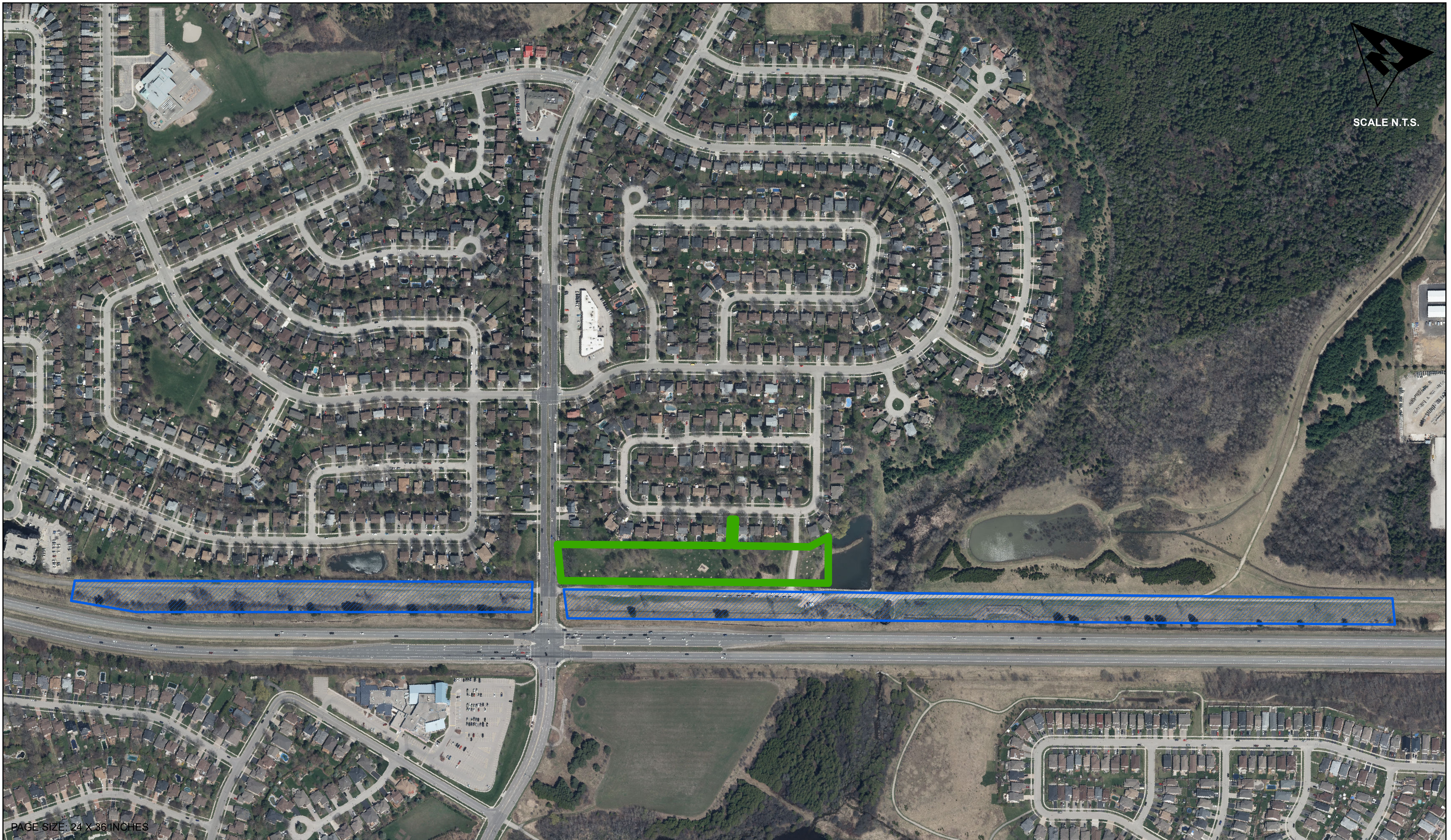
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ERAMOSA RIVER PARK

259 Victoria Road South. P3 Community Park.



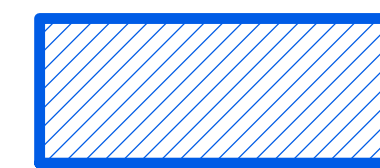
Existing Lease Free Area



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JOHN GAMBLE PARK (Hydro Corridor)

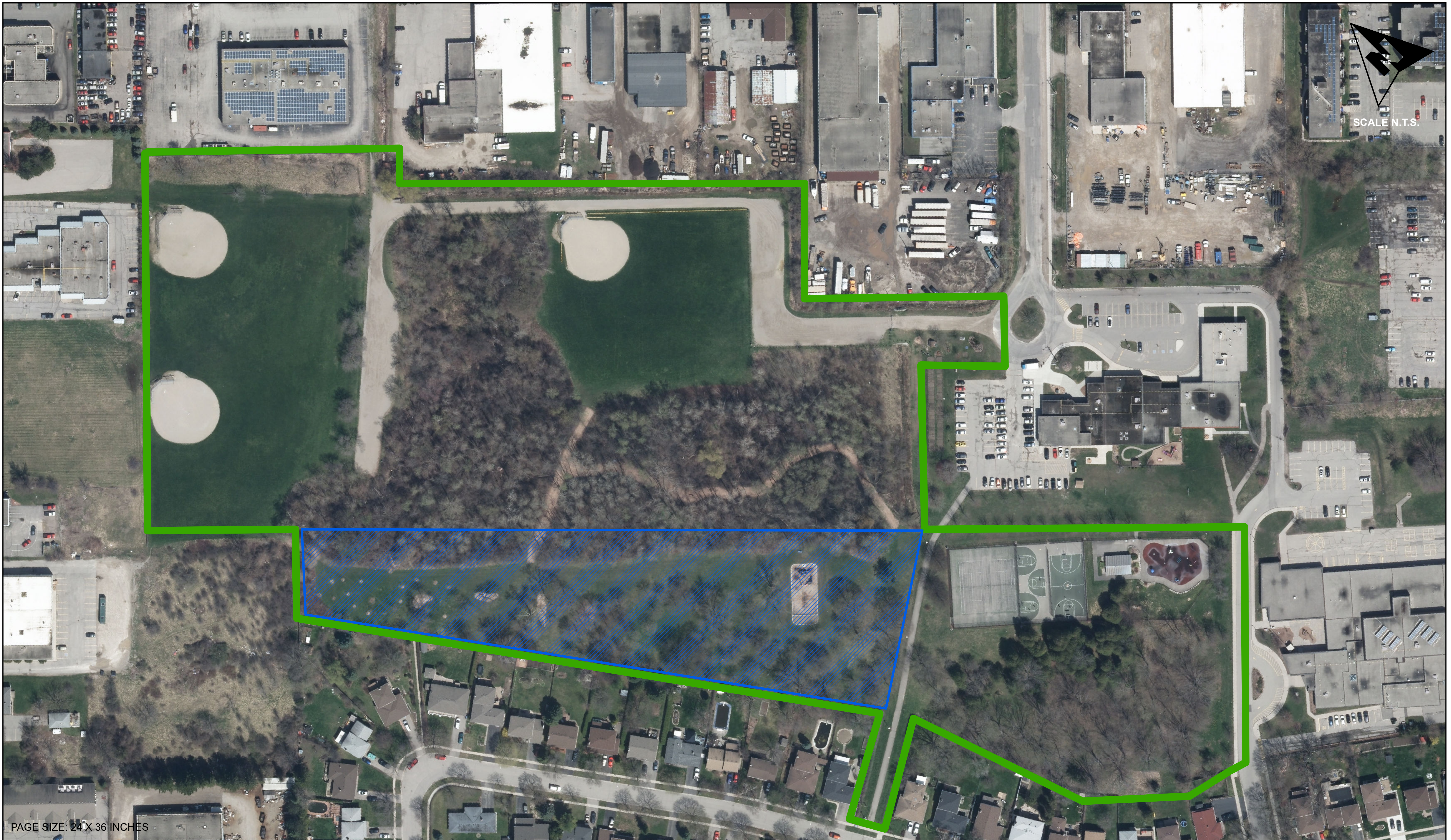
594 Kortright Road West. P2 Neighbourhood Park.



Existing Lease Free Area



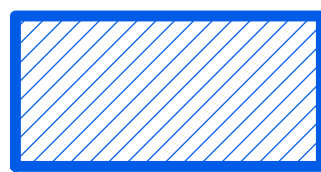
John Gamble Park Boundary



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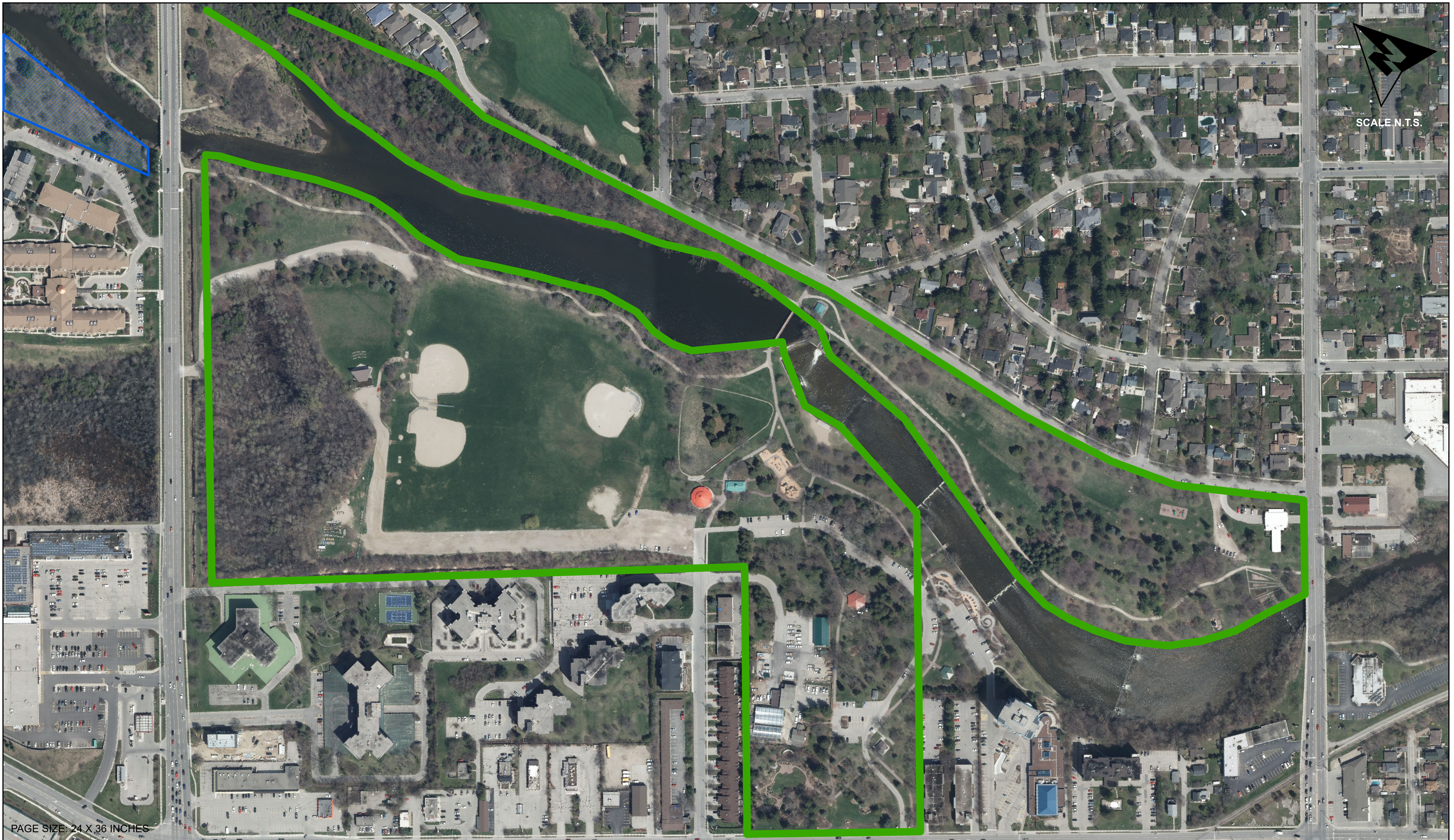
NORM JARY PARK

22 Shelldale Crescent. P3 Community Park.



Existing Leash Free Area

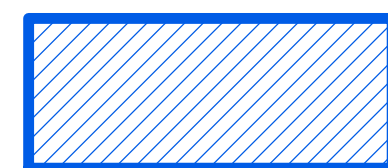




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RIVERSIDE PARK (GRCA Lands)

709 Woolwich Street. P4 Regional Park.



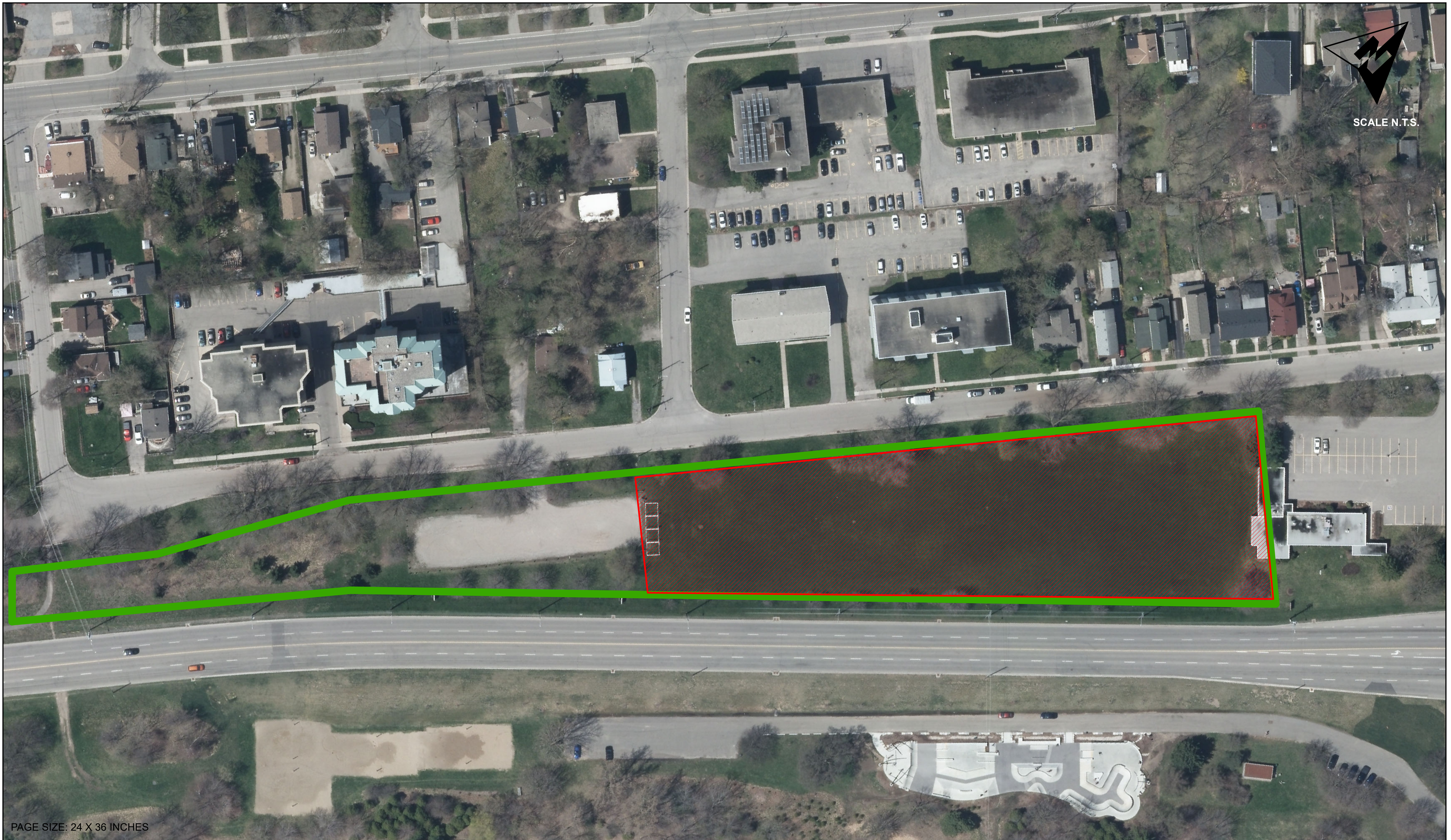
Existing Leash Free Area

Appendix B Leash Free Recommendations for Sports Fields

Unoccupied Sports Fields Permitted as Leash Free Areas		
Sports Field Name/ Location	Leash Free (Y/N) Y=Yes, N=No	Reason
Bailey Park Multi-use 1	Y	
Bailey Park Softball 2	Y	
Bishop MacDonell Multi-use 4	N	School
Bishop MacDonell Mini-Soccer 1	N	School
Bishop MacDonell Mini-Soccer 2	N	School
Bishop MacDonell Mini-Soccer 3	N	School
Bristol St. Park Mini-Soccer 1	Y	
Bristol St. Park Mini-Soccer 2	Y	
Bristol St. Park Mini-Soccer 3	Y	
Bristol St. Park Mini-Soccer 4	Y	
Castlebury Park Soccer 1	N	Category A
Castlebury Park Soccer 2	N	Category A
Centennial Park - Joe Kaine Hardball 8	N	Category A
Centennial Park Mini-Soccer 1	N	School
Centennial Park Mini-Soccer 4	N	School
Centennial Park Mini-Soccer 5	N	School
Centennial Park Soccer 2	N	School
Centennial Park Soccer 3	N	School
Centennial Park Soccer 6	N	School
Centennial Park Soccer 7	N	School
Centennial Park Soccer Enclosure	N	Category A
Centennial Park Softball 10	N	School
Centennial Park/Joe Kaine Softball 9	Y	
Colonial Drive Park Softball 1	Y	
Curling Club Mini-Soccer 3	Y	
Curling Club Mini-Soccer 4	Y	
Curling Club Softball 1	Y	
Curling Club Softball 2	Y	
Deerpath Soccer 1	Y	
Dovercliffe Park Mini-Soccer 1	Y	
Dovercliffe Park Mini-Soccer 2	Y	
Earl Brimblecrobe Softball 1	N	School
Earl Brimblecrobe Softball 2	N	School
Eastview Park Football 1	N	Category A
Eastview Park Football 2	N	Category A
Eastview Park Soccer 3	N	Category A
Eastview Park Soccer 4	N	Category A
Eramosa River Park Baseball 1	Y	
Eramosa River Park Baseball 2	Y	
Eramosa River Park Sand Volleyball 3	Y	
Eramose River Park Sand Volleyball 4	Y	
Hastings Stadium	N	Category A
Exhibition Park Football 3	Y	
Exhibition Park Softball 1	N	Category A
Exhibition Park Softball 2	Y	
Franchetto Park Multi-use 1	Y	
Grange Road Park Soccer 1	Y	
Green Meadows Park Soccer 1	Y	
Greenmeadows Park Softball 2	Y	
Guelph Lake Combo Field 1	Y	
Guelph Lake Combo Field 2	Y	
Guelph Lake Combo Field 3	Y	
Guelph Lake Softball 4	Y	
Guelph Lake Softball 5	Y	
Guelph Lake Softball 6	Y	
Guelph Lake Softball 7	Y	
Hanlon Creek Park Soccer 1	Y	
Howden Cresc. Park Mini Soccer 1	N	School
Howden Cresc. Park Mini Soccer 2	N	School
Howitt Park Baseball 1	Y	
Hugh Guthrie Park Softball 1	Y	
Legion Mini-Soccer W1	N	Private
Lourdes Soccer	N	School
Lyon Park Softball 1	N	Category A
Lyon Park Softball 2	N	Category A
Margaret Greene Park Soccer 1	N	Category A
Margaret Greene Park Soccer 2	N	Category A
Margaret Greene Park Mini Soccer 6	N	School
Margaret Greene Softball 3 (CRICKET)	Y	
Margaret Greene Softball 4	Y	

Margaret Greene Softball 5	N	School
McCallister 1	Y	
Mollison Park Softball 2	Y	
Norm Jary Park Softball 1	Y	
Norm Jary Park Softball 2	Y	
Norm Jary Park Softball 3	Y	
O'Connor Lane Park Soccer 1	N	School
O'Connor Lane Park Soccer 2	N	School
Orin Reid Park Mini-Soccer 1	Y	
Orin Reid Park Mini-Soccer 2	Y	
Peter Misersky Park Soccer 1	Y	
Pineridge Park Softball 1	Y	
Rickson Park Soccer 1	N	School
Rickson Park Softall 2	Y	
Riverside Park 1	Y	
Riverside Park 2	Y	
Riverside Park Softball 3	Y	
Royal City Park Softall 1	Y	
Silvercreek Park Soccer 1	N	Category A
Silvercreek Park Soccer 2	N	Category A
Skov Park Softball 1	Y	
Sleeman Park Softball 1	Y	
Larry Pearson Baseball Diamond 1	N	Category A
Larry Pearson Baseball Diamond 2	N	Category A
Larry Pearson Baseball Diamond 3	N	Category A
Springdale Park Mini-Soccer 1	N	School
Springdale Park Mini-Soccer 2	N	School
St. Francis Soccer	N	School
St. James Baseball Diamond	N	School
St. James Soccer	N	School
St. John's Soccer	N	School
St. John's Sofball	N	School
St. James Track	N	School
University Village Park Baseball 1	Y	
Waverley Park Mini Soccer 1	N	School
Waverley Park Mini Soccer 2	N	School
St. Rene Goupil Soccer 3	N	School
WE Hamilton Park Softball 1	Y	
Westminster Woods Baseball 2	N	School
Westminster Woods Soccer 1	N	School
Wilson Farm Mini Soccer 1	Y	
Woodland Glen Softball 1	Y	
York Road park Baseball 1	Y	
York Road Park Soccer 2	Y	
York Road Park Softball 1	Y	

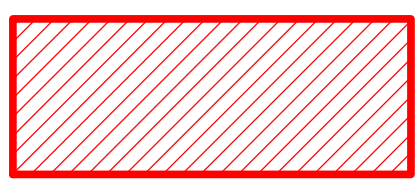
Appendix C Proposed New Leash Free Areas



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SITE 1: BRISTOL STREET PARK

220 Bristol Street East. P3 Community Park.



Proposed New Fenced Leash Free Area
(Approximate location TBD within the red shaded area)

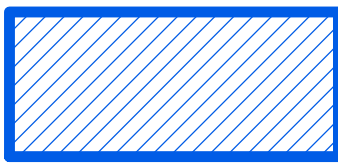




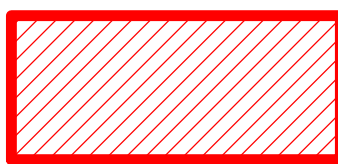
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SITE 2: LEE STREET PARK

71 Lee Street. P2 Neighbourhood Park.



Existing Leash Free Area

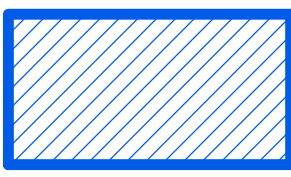


Approximate Proposed New Fenced Leash Free Area

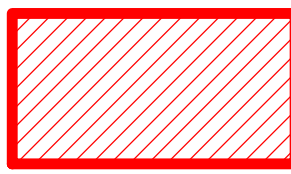


SITE 3: MARGARET GREENE PARK

80 Westwood Road. P4 Regional Park.



Existing Leash Free Area



Approximate Proposed New Fenced Leash Free Area

Appendix D Leash Free Areas Sign Typology

You are entering an off leash area

Help us keep off leash areas safe for everyone:

1. This leash free area may only be used from dawn to dusk daily.
2. Dogs must be under supervision at all times by an owner or keeper that is 18 years of age or older.
3. Dogs are the only animal permitted in this leash free area.
4. Aggressive dogs, including those that have injured another person or dog, must be kept out of the leash free area at all times. If a dog becomes aggressive towards others it must be leashed immediately and removed from the site.
5. Dogs must be kept leashed until they enter the leash free area. If the leash free area is fenced, then the dog must remain on a leash until the gate has been securely closed.
6. Dogs must not be allowed to destroy or dig up turf, bushes or trees.
7. All dogs must wear up to date rabies and dog license tags at all times.
8. Dogs wearing pinch (prong) and spike collars are not permitted in the leash free area.
9. Stoop and scoop is mandatory. Please place dog waste in the designated waste containers.
10. Food, whether animal or human, are not permitted within the leash free area.
11. Children younger than six must not enter the leash free area. Children aged six to 12 must be supervised by an adult at all times.
12. Dogs in heat, puppies under 12 weeks old, dogs that are sick with an infectious disease and dogs that have a medical condition are not permitted.
13. Designated dogs under the Dog Owners Liability Act must comply with all the terms of their designation including leashing or muzzling requirements at all times even when using the leash free area.



Questions or concerns?

To report a concern, please call City bylaw at 519-837-2529.

Off leash areas should be used at your own risk. The City of Guelph accepts no liability for injuries, loss or damage claimed or suffered by any person or animal related to the access and use of this area, howsoever caused.

Animal Control Bylaw (2016)-20122
guelph.ca/dogs



Accessibility format
519-822-5626 or
TTY 519-826-9771



Small dogs only

Up to 30 pounds



Stoop and scoop bylaw in effect



guelph.ca/dogs

Stoop and Scoop By-law
(2004)-17568

Dogs allowed on this sports field



guelph.ca/dogs



•

No dogs allowed on this sports field



guelph.ca/dogs



General Correspondence
PS-2020-02 Lease Free Implementation Plan

I cannot tell you how angry and disappointed I am this is happening, all because of a few whiners who bent ears and got their way.

Expect outrage from all the people who frequent this park. I've met so many people in my community, I never would have if it weren't for this park. Good job ruining a positive community place when this city is being destroyed by drugs and crime. this city is going down the tubes, fast.

Also wasting \$100,000, and more to dismantle it. Another waste alongside an inflated \$67 million useless library.

I usually dont get so political, but Council appears to be incompetent. Next election, I know who I WONT vote for.

Signed,

Stephany Reeves
Very Disappointed.

Hello there,

I'd like to start this off by saying I am a dog walker. I was 3 dogs Monday-Friday. Once a week I load the "Bromance Trio" up into my Escape and take them to Peter Miserskey Dog Park to run around for over an hour possibly even 2 hours. Did you know the closest "fully fenced in" dog park is in Acton? Or even Ancaster? Do not close this park. I park my vehicle on Watt St and walk over to the park with my trio. If parking is an issue put no parking signs up. I'm sure there won't be an issue with that. If it's the barking we'll too bad. I'm sorry dogs bark when they're excited same way children scream with filled with excitement when going to the park. I have attached a video of my "Bromance Trio" waiting to be taken out of my vehicle to go to the park. You have not only upset me the dog walker you've also upset Bruce the Labrador, Joey the German Shepherd mix, and Myles the Husky mix. Please reconsider the closure.

Sincerely,
Kaileigh Hilpert, Dog Walker

Hello,

I am writing in support of the dog park. I use the park pretty much every day and sometimes twice a day. My dog loves the park and we have met many many other wonderful pups and owners.

Do dogs bark, yes, of course they do! Do people park in a parking lot....again, yes, they do! All things that go along with living by a park. I live by a school and there

are some very loud kids, that yell and scream and even throw garbage in my yard. That is all part and parcel for living by a school.

I can't begin to voice how disappointed I am that the council not only gave in to a couple of habitual whiners, but to remove the park, leaving Guelph with NOTHING in its place, and the waste of taxpayer money is irresponsible and totally unacceptable.

Please reconsider and leave the park as it was built and as it's loved and very well used!

Sincerely

Cheryl Davidson and my dog Dexter.

* * *

Hello,

I am writing in regards to the fenced in dog park at Peter Misersky park.

I don't think it would be in the best interest for the city of Guelph to not have a dog park. This is near and dear to me as I have a five year old border collie/ German Shepherd cross. He is a very fast and active dog who loves his ball and loves playing with other dogs. For four years I was putting my furfriend into the car and travelling to Acton to let him run off the high energy he has. The downfall of this is my dog is not a fan of car rides. He gets high anxiety, drools constantly, and gets car sick.

I spoke with Mayor Cam Guthrie for the past few years as a citizen, and through friendly chatter about the possibility of Guelph having a fenced in dog park. Then after years of these conversations the announcement was made. I was so happy to hear Guelph was finally recognizing the needs of the furry citizens of this great town. I was elated to hear the first park was to open in the East end as that is the area in which I reside.

I waited with anticipation as the building of the fence started, took my furfriend for many walks to check the status of the park, and when it finally opened, we were there opening day and have been there every other day weather permitted. The amount of community who have brought their friends there felt incredible. Meeting other animal lovers-and human lovers, made me feel as if I was becoming more part of the community and getting to know my neighbors. Whether these people walked up from their homes, or drove from other parts of town, we all had the same reason to be there. A safe place for our beloved four legged family members.

I do understand that it was unfair to not get the opinions of the residents in that area, and I do sympathize with them. I myself as a very big dog lover enjoy seeing all the dogs walk by my house excited to get to the park, or Tuckered out from their play Tim, but it is much bigger than the residents that surround the park itself. I don't think closing the park outright is not in the best interest for this city. If need be keep this one open until you can find a relocated area. Perhaps the

eastview park as it has lots of fields and a beautiful trail to walk was well, and in all honesty is not very well known.

I think the money and resources that went into building the park, only to be closed 8 months after opening date is a huge waste of time and money and is not fair to the citizens who enjoyed it, whose taxes paid for it, and for the builders who worked very hard to complete it.

Please reconsider. With the amount of residential areas being built, is there ever going to be an accessible dog park realistically? Some where there is parking, not close to busy roads, and not upsetting neighbors?

I hope you guys reconsider and not just put into accounts of the negative in this, because unfortunately we live in a world now where negativity is listened to more than positivity.

Thank you very much,
Betty McEvoy and JD (aka the bow tie puppy)

* * *

I was floored to see tonight's vote to close the dog parks. No public input nor was this put out to the public. I was ok with the proposed mods but closing it wasting a ton of money and removing a great place for human and dog socialization is absurd. This was railroaded through so supporters could not voice their opinion.

Time to step back and respect all parties not just the 4 people who hate dogs.

Thank you.
Bob Herron

* * *

As a Guelph taxpayer, I am outraged by council's decision to close/cancel the fenced in dog parks after receiving complaints from a small handful of very vocal residents.

Guelph is far behind every other city in southern Ontario with respect to facilities for dog owners. Every other user group gets catered to, but dog owners are screwed over again and again. Most of the unfenced leash free areas are a joke and totally unsuitable.

I demand that council reconsider this unfortunate decision that was arrived at without any input from dog owners.

Uta Matthes

* * *

Hello

I sincerely hope you reconsider closing the dog park! One person causing an uproar Full of lies and total BS wins because he made enough noise? That's park isn't that loud ever when I have been there! It's a fantastic place for people to go and some energy out in a safe and controlled space! I am very disappointed that this is even being considered!

The only way I can get my Boston X Frenchies energy out is the fenced in park where he can run and play with other dogs! That park is NEVER that loud, one obnoxious person and that's it the dogs get punished and suffer because of a bunch of lies one person decided to spread around! I am seriously unimpressed with this vote!

Concerned dog Mom
Kayla Robinson

* * *

This is so short sighted

We need ti find a solution so our pets have a place to run Why waste the \$\$\$ At least leave open until new sites can be found !

Not happy at all that we are not opening the other planned dog run area

Michael Stultz
* * *

Hello,

As a member of the Guelph community, dog owner, and resident of 35 Mountford dr, by Peter Misersky park, I urge you to not close the dog park. I attend every day often twice a day with my dog. The people that attend are courteous and abide by the new rules that have been imposed. Dogs are not in the park before dawn or after dusk. As a resident of the condo complex by the park I have no concerns about the dog park or the noise/traffic.

Thank you,
Megan Neely

* * *

I am concerned about Council's decision to cancel the dog parks and would like to share my perspective as executive director of the Guelph Family Health Team.

As a health care leader in this community, I see dog parks as places that promote active living and community connectivity, both of which enhance both physical and mental health. I find it difficult to understand decisions that do not seriously consider these factors given the clear priorities in Guelph's city plan.

I urge reconsideration of this decision and would be very happy to discuss.

Ross Kirkconnell

* * *

Hello,

I am a new resident of Guelph. I moved from Milton, where I had access to three dog parks within 20 minutes of my home. When we moved to Guelph, we were sad to find the only parks available were UNFENCED.

A few months after we arrived, the dog park at Peter Misersky opened. It has been wonderful to enjoy the open space with our yellow lab, who is very high energy and needs the social time with other friendly dogs.

\$100k of our community tax money was used to build this park. I agree the location is poor and that it may bother homeowners - however the decision to close immediately is not acceptable. The park should remain open until a new location is found and opened. Dogs are a big part of residents lives in Guelph.

Please consider my request.

Respectfully,
Christianne Gregory

* * *

Hello!

I've just read online that the only fenced in dog park in Guelph where we have been taking our dog every night since it opened is closing down. While that in itself is understandable (I know the residents weren't happy about it) the fact that all 3 planned dog parks are now being scrapped seems a little over the top. As a dog owner in a wonderful city like Guelph, I always respect leash laws, but I have a very energetic dog who needs to run free, and in a safe environment.

The fact that the only "off leash" dog park in Guelph is also beside a very busy highway is extremely unsafe, and while I am proud of my dogs training, she loves to run. In fact, she loves to run so much that she has taken off and actually run ACROSS the Hanlon, which I'm sure you can imagine was terrifying. Ive also helped other dog owners whose pups go off running into the forest by the "off leash" area and getting lost for hours in there. So while it's great that there is 1 off leash section in the entire city, taking away dogs opportunity to run off leash safely within our city is so disheartening.

I would politely, and with all friendliness but firmness in my heart, ask the city to reconsider their decision to take away all 3 planned dog parks.

Thank you so much!
Elona Love

* * *

To whom it may concern,

To spend \$100,000 on a fenced in dog park and then proceed to shut it down in less than 6 months of opening is irresponsible, impulsive, and causes us to stray farther away from the goal of a fenced in dog park in the city. Unfortunately not all of us have the ability to drive outside the city, we need a fenced in dog park in the city and unfortunately there's always going to be people saying "not in my backyard", this is similar for any big development. However, if not in your backyard then whose?

Citizens in Guelph need a fenced in dog park, it creates a safe space for the dogs and for the dog community (arguably safer then a non-fenced in dog friendly area). It's important for safely socializing and training to better our dogs.

My nonna lives down the road from the dog park (Corner of Cassino Ave and Hadati Rd) and has never complained about it, and as an old italian lady that does not see dogs as family members and wants nothing to do with them, that should say a lot. Don't let one or two grumpy locals ruin this for the whole dog community within the city. At least consider keeping this park open until another one in a more "suitable" location is opened.

Sincerely,
Olivia Gemin

* * *

Dear City Council,

As a neighbour of the park, 35 Mountford Drive, and a non dog owner I have no issues with the park. I've never had issues with parking and no complaints about the noise. Please don't listen to the few loud voices who are just bitter because they have to use their own parking space rather than have the convenience of city parking in front of their place. During the over five years I've lived in the condo development the only people I've seen use the city owned parking in front of the dog park are residence of the condo and their guests. Just because these people have had this convenience for years does not make them entitled to them indefinitely. While watching my children in the park I've enjoyed watching the dogs having fun. There are always going to be people complain, you can't please everyone. Change is hard, don't give up, stay strong and give the dogs a chance.

Farrah Trahan
Mountford condo resident for the dogs.

* * *

Hi there,

I recently found out that the Peter Misersky Dog Park will be closing. As I'm sure many others have pointed out, a fenced in dog park in the city is essential for our dogs to not only socialize but also get some exercise, in addition to the sense of community many owners have developed over the four short months the park has been open. I find it to be extremely irresponsible for council to cancel this project and others as a result of what appears to be misinformation and pressure from people who clearly just hate dogs. This decision has been extremely disappointing and I hope council reconsiders.

Regards,
Melissa Luna

* * *

I am very disturbed at cancellation of the plans for fenced in dog parks in the City of Guelph.

Please consider reversing this decision.

I am an owner of 2 dogs and there are not adequate facilities in the City for leash free opportunities.

What message are we sending if amenities like these are not provided to citizens? Do we want to become like Brampton? One can be in that cold and impersonal city for weeks with nary a dog in sight.

Thanks for your consideration
Terryanne Cassar

* * *

As a dog owner here in Guelph I am very disappointed by the recent decision to remove the fenced in dog park at Peter Misersky park and cancel the upcoming 2 other parks.

I regularly used the park (at least once a week, often 3 times) and my time there was likely the most time I spend outside on a regular basis. My dog thoroughly enjoys being off leash but I unfortunately do not have perfect recall with her which means I'm not willing to risk her running across a road as is a possibility at the other off leash facilities and areas in Guelph.

I will need to start driving to Cambridge to use their off leash fenced in parks again. The decision to have off leash parks in the city was a factor in my happiness to start roots here. My pup is a big part of my life and so although I will drive to another city to use their facilities this is unfair to their residents there as they pay for my recreational area, also bad for the environment as it is over a 1hr roundtrip drive and also a disappointment that instead of keeping the park open while other alternatives are found you have decided to cancel outright. The proposed size

reduction and hour reductions at the park seemed a reasonable compromise while other options were considered so I am perplexed why the council decided to go the route they did.

I did always believe that when the other 2 parks opened the amount of traffic at the one off leash fenced in park in Guelph would decrease which I believed would decrease the overall noise which as I understand it was a big part of the issues. I recognize that residents around the park were unhappy. Additionally I know myself and other dog owners were aware of the complaints and were actively trying to teach others that 'just letting your dog bark' was unacceptable which I believe was reducing the noise amounts slowly but effectively.

I truly hope you will focus efforts to either reconsider your decisions or at the very minimum learn from this experience and pick a new location for a fenced in park that can be transitioned quickly. Perhaps in a mostly industrial area where noise and conflict of space use would not be a factor as it turned out to be with the PM park.

Thanks for your consideration,
Peter Love
Disappointed Resident, Tax Payer & Voter

Guelph needs more dog parks, I can't stress this enough. As home of one of the world's top Veterinary Schools, you'd think Guelph would be pet friendly and make every effort for people and their pets to happily co exist. I know a few people have complained about Misersky park but it would be such a waste of money to tear it down!!! There has to be a happy medium without wasting money or ruining a great thing for people and their dogs.

Dawn Pederson

Hi there,

I, like many other pet owners, am astounded that the only fenced dog park in the area is going to be closed. Clearly the general public was not consulted on this and council only bothered to hear the opinion of those who do not want the park.

It is hard enough to own a dog in this city having only the one fully fenced area. People like me who have newly adopted rescue dogs/puppies rely on this park to train and exercise our dogs. Young dogs and rescue dogs need a place where they can safely run and be trained off-leash before they can be taken to an off leash park. These off leash parks are close to roads, sports fields, and have no fences. Dogs cannot be brought here to train because theres nothing to stop them from running away, running into traffic, or running and jumping on a pedestrian.

All dog owners want is a safe place for dogs to play and be trained to be well-behaved in public and council has voted to take that away. This vote is punishing responsible dog owners.

It is absolutely insane.

I speak for every dog owner in the city when I say that this was a horrible decision.

Do the responsible thing and reverse your decision.

Thank you,
Kyle Poland, a concerned and infuriated citizen

* * *

All 4 of us in my household want the dog park to stay open!!!!!!

Lyss Clarke

* * *

To whom it may concern,

I'm writing regarding the closing of Peter Misersky Dog Park.

I am shocked and saddened to hear this park will be closing and other fenced parks have been cancelled. I live in the Peter Misersky Park area and use that park almost daily along with so many other folks.

It's not just a dog park, it is a community hub where like minded folks can get together with their dogs and make friends and enjoy the outdoors together. It's a place where puppies learn socialization and off leash training. Without a fenced park how do we teach our new dogs to come when called and how to not run away in off leash parks? I am a dog mom to two rescues who I had to drive all the way to the much smaller town of Acton on a daily basis to train in a fenced in park because Guelph didn't offer one. Finally we get one and it is always well used. Dogs and dog parents are happily socializing. All dog related topics are discussed and debated. It's a great time for everyone. Now the city wants it shut down because a few people lied repeatedly to council.

The main issues were 1. parking which would have calmed down once the other parks opened, currently the entire city is driving to Peter Misersky Park. 2. Noise - occasionally there will be a dog who barks too much but since September I've experienced that only a 3 or 4 times, generally it is quiet. The children playing in the nearby playground or the soccer or baseball teams that use that park are much louder. 3. Smell- the dog poop reseptical is underground, unless you stick your nose right in it, there is zero smell. 4. Cost-. The money has been spent, the park is already built and used constantly. Is the city really prepared to throw all that money away? We as taxpayers are already taxed to much in this city, especially us

East Enders who still have next to no amenities, now you are just planning to flush our hard earned money down the toilet and take away one of the only things we have on the East side? It's disgraceful. To even consider removing this park now makes me think this entire council has lost it's mind. Something we will all remember come election time.

Please for the sake of the dogs, the pet parents and the tax payers, I beg you to keep Peter Misersky Dog Park open and plan better in the future.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Hannah
Potato and Benny🐾🐾

* * *

Dog parks need to be walkable with trees and wooded areas. A squared fenced in area has several shortcomings:

- 1) there is nothing for the dogs to do but travel in packs and harass one another;
- 2) it terrifies the smaller dogs as a result;
- 3) there's excrement everywhere.

We take our dog to Margaret Greene - it's awesome. As a walkable path, we the owners get a walk in. The dogs frolic along the trails and into the bush - there's tons to smell and investigate. And there's no ganging up - they're not all just sitting in a cage staring at one another, wondering who to jump on.

Square fenced in grassed areas are super dumb. Do you have a dog? Come walk Margaret Greene and see for yourself.

Thanks
Brian Carwana

* * *

As a citizen with 2 dogs who frequent the park daily we vote to have the park remain open.

There is no where in this city for dogs to run free and play.

For all pet owners they are an extension of our families.

Closing parks for them is like taking parks from children because they are too loud.

Ridiculous.

Shame on council for even considering this!

Christa Massey

* * *

I'd like to voice my concerns over the proposed closure of Misersky Dog Park.

First off, this is disappointing at this dog park has been a resource we use several times a week. I know there was concerns of noise, especially after sunset. Ourselves and our neighbors have always been mindful of avoiding the park during late or dark hours and take care to always clean up after our dogs and dispose of their waste properly. Concerns such as waste being left or an overflowing waste bin were either one-offs, total exaggerations, or growing pains which are to be expected.

Secondly, to close the park only months after opening is truly an embarrassment. To apparently spend 100k developing the park which is now beloved by so many (humans and pups) and of course to spend even more on the tear down. What a colossal waste of our money.

This brings me to my final point. I really can appreciate neighboring residents concerns over noise. It seems all other concerns are just 'add ins'. The fact that this location was approved without any apparent thought as to the effect on the residents is bewildering. To hear Bob Bell quoted saying the effects on the residents 'never entered his mind' makes me wonder how much discussion was actually had for the initial proposal of this park and location. It makes me wonder if the councillors have never before met a dog, let alone considered what happens when you put 2-20+ together to play.

While this park may not be the absolute best location for the neighboring residents it should remain open until a suitable replacement is developed. The councillors may have made a mistake on this park but this is not the solution. Furthermore these councillors need to take their job a little more seriously and begin considering all possible factors when approving these items and spending hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars.

Thank you
Patrick P.

Hello, I have just come across information that the dog park that was literally just opened at the end of the summer is now being closed permanently??? As far as consulting residents that failed miserably but now to waste tax payers dollars by closing what cost over \$100,000 to build as well as the labour costs is ridiculous and it is the only off leash fenced dog park in all of Guelph where I can bring my small pug who is terrified of being around bigger dogs and loves to run openly which I cannot do at non fenced sports fields as there is always large dogs or people playing on the fields. How is closing the park going to solve any problems? Where is there going to be a new one to replace it? Sorry for the rant but I'm getting fed up with the lack of communication and services in general in this city. It's bad enough our street gets overlooked frequently for road maintenance especially in the winter but now this and the increase to the property taxes on top of this is making me want to move out of this city altogether.

Regards,
Fiora Di Giannantonio
Concerned Grange Hill East resident

* * *

I believe it is outrageous in today's society to have a city our size with no where to run your dog if you don't feel comfortable in an I fenced approved area such as an approved sports field. I k ow many that feel the need to drive to Cambridge or Kitchener to use the fenced in facilities. But once again this Cory bends to the will of the few loud voices whom are somehow inconvenienced and will be by anything we do. It's time to develop a solution to enjoy the outdoors with our furry family members. If this park is to close it should do so AT A TIME ANOTHER suitable fenced in park is opened. Not before leaving those who have enjoyed it yet again without a space!

Ben Kidd

* * *

Good Evening,

We would just like to send this e-mail in support of KEEPING the dog park at Peter Misersky Park. We have been going there since the day it opened and absolutely love it. It was a wonderful and much needed addition to our neighborhood. Everyone we met and interacted with was kind and happy to be there. It provides a much needed safe space for dogs. Everyone helped take care of the park, by keeping it clean or picking up after others. It was our space, so of course we will help keep it clean!

We hope that the city can give it a chance. If they take it away we are left with some off leash trails (which some people don't feel comfortable using) or sports fields, where we often get yelled at to take our dogs off the field.

So hear our plea to keep the park, for us and our furfriends.

Thank you,
Natalie Iacono, Chris Roach, and Winston the Cavapoo

* * *

Good evening,

I was browsing through Facebook when I saw a grim story on the Dogs of Guelph page.

My family and I waited a very long time for Peter Misersky dog park and it's a real shame that you're going to shut it down.

I was deeply saddened by the article. Losing the dog park would mean losing a loving, supportive community of dog owners who finally have a safe place to socialize their pups and let them get some much needed exercise.

I hope that you're not basing your decision off of the 'squeakiest wheel' - Mr. Farley. From the opening of the dog park, it was clear that Mr. Farley was desperate to get the park shut down at all costs. It seems that his MO is to wring his hands like a cartoon supervillain and mutter about how much he hates change in the neighborhood.

He is the real nuisance, if you ask me. I love to treat my pup to some fun in the park, but I am frequently deterred by the idea that the angry fool will be lurking in the wings. I've had nothing but lovely experiences in the dog park with the other visitors. I am always sure to clean up after my dog and if he gets overstimulated, I leash him and remove him from the park. Easy! Proper communication and/or bylaw enforcement could minimize the negative effects of the dog park in the neighbourhood, but let me tell you...

You can't stop unwanted noise in a neighbourhood. If I popped my head out of my front door right now, I'd probably hear signs of life. Maybe a neighbour is shovelling their driveway. Maybe some kids are playing on a homemade ice rink. Maybe - gasp! - a dog is barking in his yard.

I understand Mr. Farley may not be good with change, but that's the world we're living in. I hate the new stoplight on Eramosa that's about 100 steps away from another stoplight, but you don't see me flaring my nostrils about it to everyone who tries to cross there and making people feel unsafe about it.

I am deeply troubled by the comments made by council on the Guelph Today article. Comments indicate a lack of forethought. It is a true cop-out to say 'yes, well, we know better now' after you've made a \$100,000 investment. Surely you must be more careful with our tax dollars... right? Surely you aren't going around making 'spur of the moment' decisions?

It would be a waste to shut down such a lovely park that means so much to so many.

I hope you strongly consider leaving Peter Misersky Park open to all of the dog lovers of the city of Guelph.

but... you can take that stoplight away from Eramosa if you like. ;)

Thank you for reading my concerns.

Leslie Stewart

Hello there,

My name is David Schwan, and I am a lifetime resident of Guelph, Ontario. I saw Mayor Guthrie's tweet inviting the opinions of those who wish to share their's about the closure of the Peter Misersky dog park. I would like to begin by thanking Mayor Guthrie's invitation and the willingness for the council to listen to other opinions that rivals their own.

With this email, I'm hoping to present a counter-argument to the argument of the removal of the dog park at Peter Misersky Memorial Park. I will also be addressing the arguments that I've been provided with as to why the dog park is a problem, and to counter them, in the hopes that those whose decisions mean more than my own, who took these arguments seriously either choose to change their mind.

I noticed that a common individual in Mr. Saxon's articles on the subject was a man who resides in the condos, Mr. Farley.

I get that he was involved in the planning procedures and selling some of the homes, but what I wish that there was more understanding of the man's behaviour other than what he's done for the housing complex.

I will also add that these are arguments that I've been provided with and are my own experience. Obviously I am not part of the council that made the decision to abolish the dog park so I definitely will not rule out that he may have provided better ones to other parties.

I'll start with his original arguments. All four of which are factually incorrect and strike me as ones formulated out of desperation.

One of his initial arguments was that he lost his parking spot. Interestingly, the spot he was referring to was a public parking spot for people visiting the park. It was never "his spot", so he never lost a parking spot. There is a parking spot assigned to every individual housing unit in the complex. His just happens to be behind his front door, and he would rather park closer to his front door. Laziness shouldn't be a contributing factor towards city planning, or his argument.

Another argument he presented was that the property value shot down significantly with the addition of the park. I would counter that argument by saying that properties in Guelph have constantly been on the rise over the past few years. If his property value were to drop significantly, I would argue further that it would have much more to do with the housing market rather than an addition to a park.

If he's worried that his property value is on the decline or that it will be on the decline, why not sell high now? He wouldn't have to worry about losing money on it, and he certainly wouldn't have to worry about a dog park that he provides poor-constructed arguments against.

I'll admit that I don't know what Mr. Farley does for a living, but I will certainly argue that his argument that he wasn't consulted about the potential addition of a dog park also makes no sense. I don't have the Masters in Planning that he has, but I know that the city isn't obliged to consult the public about decisions such as a dog park. Just because he helped plan the condos/some other things, doesn't mean that he's the one that must be asked. To suggest otherwise screams a high level of arrogance.

And now my favourite argument. The noise complaint. What I don't buy into this is that we all chose to live next to a park. Kids play in parks. People bring their dogs to parks. Parks are for people to be outside. Noise happens outside.

I think that if he has a problem with the dogs making noise, then he also has to have a problem with the kids in the park, the soccer/ultimate frisbee players in the summer, and anyone else using the park. We may as well get rid of the park in general because of that if we're going with his logic about noise.

Arguments such as these tell me he doesn't have an actual argument. The fact that the city council took these terrible arguments seriously is vastly disappointing. Could it be that they're just annoyed at the headache that Mr. Farley has caused them since the opening of the park? I mean I don't blame you if that's part of it, but I would hope that my responses to incorrect arguments that HE PROVIDED help you guys realize that he's just giving nonsense reasons to abolish what many thought was a fantastic idea.

To add on to my critiques, I'll fill you guys in on more happenings due to Mr. Farley's irrational behaviour.

Furthermore, I've had multiple people tell me that this same man was following them around, swearing at them, and threatening them to not use the dog park. I'll list some examples off the top of my head.

Numerous occurrences of him going into the dog park and starting serious arguments with the people using the park, many of which I have seen, but not engaged in. I am one who's always up for a discussion or debate, but I find that the people he's started an argument with (at least during the times I've seen him) stand their ground well in a heated argument that they didn't even start. In the several that I've seen, Mr. Farley was actually the only one swearing, interestingly enough.

One woman said he was taking pictures of her and her friend in the dog park. Another mentioned that he followed her all the way to her home on Auden. She threatened to call the police if he didn't leave and under no circumstance should anyone be put in a situation like that. My colleague from work walks his dog at night and he claimed that a guy at the corner of the complex (Mr. Farley's unit) was out on his porch as he walked past and just started swearing at him and threatening him to not he entered the dog park. Why is this okay again? If someone could please enlighten me with a reason, aside from heated passion about

a topic that shouldn't be so heated, it'd be greatly appreciated. Even just a reason (because there isn't a good one) would suffice. Thanks in advance.

So with all that said, I'm sure you're tired of me going off about Mr. Farley and his behavior. About as tired as we are of his constant complaining I would imagine. I would hope that the information provided shines a light on the situation from a dog park user's standpoint when it has come to dealing with those against the dog park.

I'll spend the rest of this email explaining why I feel that removing that dog park isn't a good idea at all from a standpoint that isn't one looking at it from an-already negative point of view.

I mentioned above that I've been a lifetime resident of Guelph. I've always lived within a kilometre of Peter Misersky. I happen to know that it used to be a big spot for drug use, as for many years there was a picnic table in the middle of some shrubbery that hosted low-key bush party-esque gatherings, countless used needles, abandoned dirty underwear, the whole works.

I'll also never forget the day some high schoolers found a body hanging from one of the trees in the park. This park has seen some dark times, not to mention within the last year some hooligans burned down part of the brand new play structure. It's not as if this park is some haven that has absolutely zero negative behaviour happening in it. It's a park that (obviously not deliberately) can invite undesirable behaviour because it's so spacious. Dozens of nights I've looked out my window to see police cruisers driving through the park. What they were looking for I'm not sure, but I can't imagine it was a good thing.

The dog park is a way to bring activity to the park. It has brought members of the community together, and created friendships amongst people and dogs! Furthermore it has used space in a way that brings more people to the park, thus creating lesser space and capability for troubled individuals to use it as a place for inappropriate and/or illegal behaviour. And as mentioned above, it's easier to do that in a space encompassing a large area.

This park has a very sketchy history and there is indeed a stigma correlated with it. Whether that stigma is fair and/or outdated is certainly up for discussion, but abolishing something that hundreds of people have used since opening the gates in favour of much fewer individuals' preference is, in my eyes, counter-productive, and a poor way to show the community that the city is trying to implement stronger community ties. Peter Misersky Memorial Park needs this dog park, just as much as dogs and people need it.

I hope this email finds the right eyes and the appropriate measures are taken. Thank you for taking the time to read this, and I hope that minds are changed based on the arguments I've provided.

If anyone has any further questions about anything I presented, whether it be about the park, dogs or someone's behaviour, please do not hesitate to ask me via

email. This is a subject I'm ridiculously passionate about, as I would hope was made obvious by the length of my email.

Best Regards,
David Schwan

* * *

Hello,

I am a concerned citizen writing in regards to the potential closing of the dog parks. Guelph is a forward thinking city, with wonderful bylaws allowing many owners places at which to take their dogs. The fact that the currently wildly popular Peter Misersky park may be shut down and the future of the upcoming Bristol street park is in jeopardy is very disheartening.

I understand there has been uproar from the surrounding neighbourhoods in regards to traffic and noise. Unfortunately, this is what happens in a growing city. The high volume of attendees at this park on a daily basis shows the demand for such a place for dog owners to take their dogs for exercise and socialization. I can only imagine these high volumes will be reduced and spread out among the opening of more leash free parks throughout the city.

Although Guelph does have wonderful bylaws regarding dogs, I feel this can continue to be improved. Nearly half of households have a pet, and many would consider them part of the family. Guelph is known for the OVC and overall veterinary community, which is inherently made up of dog enthusiasts. Seeing what an important and crucial role dogs play in many families in this city, I think it is only right to keep expanding the places in which we can safely and legally take our canine companions to run free.

I can't imagine a dog park being louder than a group of children playing and screaming on a playground, and I think I speak for many by saying that a complaint about the noise of this excitement and exercise would be quite absurd. How is this much different than letting our dogs run and play after a long day of waiting for us to return home?

I urge council to reconsider the closing of the dog park and cancelling plans for further parks. A significant amount of taxpayer dollars went into the construction of the park and based on its popularity it has been WELL received in the dog owning community. Please do not limit where we can safely take our dogs to run and play due to complaints that are easily manageable. Instead, push forward and continue opening more to spread out the visitor burden and improve the lives of ourselves and our canine companions.

Thank you,
Amy Schut
Citizen of Guelph & Dog Owner

* * *

The dog park must stay open! With the growing city we need at least one! Its an important part of a city and great excersize for the dogs.

Katrina McLean

* * *

Hi there!

I hope you are doing well!

I just read an article about closing Guelph's fenced in dog park, without another one opening for a year or more after the closure. I have many concerns with this decision.

1. Having an allocated spot for dogs to run freely is much safer. If there isn't a suitable spot, owners will make their own. Ie childrens parks (and not all children know how to properly approach dogs).
2. The park has not been open long enough to really see the pros and cons. The unhappy and those that dislike change always yell the loudest, and first. Has there been any surveying on locals to get a better understanding of the true affects?
3. Are we not able to turn a portion of the park into parking?
4. Why can't we leave this open until a more suitable spot becomes available?
5. How does this affect city funds to open a park only to close months later? Do we really not have better things to invest in? For example - a daycare program for when teachers strike! More funding for police to look into things like the increase in car break ins around Kortright. Thats just two right off the top of my head.
6. Can we not turn the negatives into postives? Ie student summer jobs created by needing landscaping work done, open a cafe with dog treats, have paid parking where the proceeds are donated to the humane society, create a cat corner for outdoor/indoor cats to enjoy the park too, start a summer/school breaks program to properly teach families how to approach unknown animals safely. Again.. just the top of my head.
7. What does Guelph plan on doing with the property post closure? Is it going to just sit there and become an eye sore? Will it turn into a plaza (aka another local attraction that will not fix the parking situation)

I feel like this is an amazing opportunity to learn and grow for Guelph that has been turned into a lunchbag letdown. There needs to be a better compromise somewhere.

I hope talks about city issue dig deep into real issues and concerns instead of just giving up at the first complaint. I hate to see tax dollars and good green, environmentally friendly spaces going to waste because of a few naysayers.

Thanks for reading!
Avery Navikevicius

* * *

Hello,

My name is Taylor Brand ! I have lived in Guelph my whole life, I am a 23 year old dog owner. I enjoy using the dog park beside the Hanlon tho it is not fenced in... my dog also has amazing re call unlike many others. Going to a dog park has given her the opportunity to be in a area without losing me! Where she gets to interact with MANY other dogs , instead of hoping to do to the Hanlon and No one being there. The park at Peter misterski is maybe a issue to residents but I also think is makes that park more family oriented . There is a park close by so young children can play and so can our fur babies. Peter misteraki is also located in a area of Guelph where there is lots of high schools.. where there is a lot of drug activity. Peter misterski is not or was not a safe park when I used to go there. Always alcohol teenagers and drugs , now that there is a dog park it may help eliminate those issues. Also the dog park is ran on certain hours so wtf are ppl complaining about I have gone 2 times this week and no one has been there at all so I'm not sure where all the barking is coming from ... Also by the time most people are able to go after work you're not allowed to go anyways As it is after dark.

If we are going to start shutting down dog parks because of noise then why don't people start complaining about kids yelling and screaming at nearby parks because I am a dog person not a child person and people and children annoy me a hell of a lot more than dogs do. Should this mean children aare not aloud in malls considering that's not a place for children as when I'm trying to shop and get supplies I am not trying to run into everyone's Child.

Maybe if we decide as a city to keep these parks as a city we need to have people responsible as of opening and closing them I know many pet owners including myself would have no problem going over to places that have fenced in dog park cleaning them up cleaning up the dog Pooh and ensuring the rules are being followed. Also all the protesting that is going on is made out for all the people who do not want a dog park for all the people that do want one we have never been told to come to meetings to write letters or emails and two right now as this is why I am writing one.

Shutting down the current location of dog park is an option but you definitely need to have a plan in place for new ones before shutting this one down as the city is going to be extremely angry we finally got what we were asking for which was fenced in dog park and a year later you guys are going to shut it down that's ridiculous. Maybe a solution would be building a fenced in dog park with in the dog

park on the Hanlon? Or there is many trails up behind the Manor near Silver Creek that could be utilized.

There are various parks also up behind the YMCA that are not close to residential areas we need to be utilizing areas like this to create dog parks there aren't even many areas around Silver Creek and Willow that could be utilized for dog park as a city we need to brainstorm and come up with better locations instead of demolishing the whole idea together.

I really hope somebody takes the time to read my email as well as everybody else is in the community. As if we remove all dog parks my dogs happiness will be taken with it.

Hopefully we can keep dog parks

Taylor Brand

* * *

I'm writing this to put in my two cents about the dog parks. Please don't take them away from us. I and a lot of others use this every single day for hours on end to help socialize our pups. Since the park has opened it has been packed with great people and dogs! Very sad to see this go. As many others as well. I have socialized my 6 month old shepherd here since the day I got her she LOVES this place. I've met some great ppl here. Please re consider for all of us dog lovers and furry friends 🐾

We have nothing for our fur babies to just find friends and play where we don't have to worry about them 😊

Thanks.
Lindsay Marie

* * *

To whom it may concern,

As a dog owner, I would like to have a safe place to bring my dog to, so she can release energy and make friends with other dogs in the community. Since the opening of Peter Miserky Park, we have both dog & human created friendships with others in the community. Please don't abort plans. Guelph needs to offer this to its residents like many other cities do. Please keep plans to offer Guelph residents a place to build a sense of community with each other through local dog parks.

Sincerely,
Carrie Manson

* * *

To City Council

Removing the dog park at Mistersky park is not fixing a situation its caving in to a few neighbours in the area.

Guelph residents (majority) are usually responsible enough to pick up after there dogs, be alert when there is small children around, dog barking etc . What these people are complaining about is insane.

What if we were to take away kids playgrounds and ban them from backyards because night shift workers, or not allow any outdoor activity for their children because a few neighbours work afternoon or night shift and need their sleep. How would they like it?

This has been a long time coming for Guelph we get it then loose it? Clearly these residents had the chance to vote against it when the survey was out, at first reading at council they couldve voiced an opinion then.

How about relocating this particular 1 leave the one that is open now, open. Put some restrictions in place like dawn to dusk or something.

I personally did this survey and suggested we have 4 of them 1 in each end of town.

Now we have 1 and 2nd one is being closed before it even opens.

That really is a sad day in Guelph when some people who classify their dogs as children and their children are not aloud to play freely.

Andrea Nichols

* * *

Please reconsider keeping the dog park! So many dogs like my own love to run off leash but dont know their boundaries and just run and run putting themselves in danger. A fenced in dog park is the answer to that problem and by taking that away how is he supposed to fulfill his need to run like a lunatic.

Lisa Zebedee

* * *

Hi clerks,

Please keep the dog park and open the one on Bristol st. Thank you.

Sincerely, Dana MacDonald

* * *

* * *

You people need to give your heads a shake closing the existing facility at Peter Misersky Park and cancelling the Bristol St one. We need places to take out dogs to let them run free. You people have no clue what to do when it comes to spending our tax dollars, if you spend your own money like you spend ours your in big trouble. We need 60 million to go towards a new Hospital not a stupid Library, even a small town like Fergus is building one but nope not Guelph????

Brian Gordon

* * *

I would just like write to say that I am in favour of keeping the Peter misersky dog park open. We back onto the park and love the space for our dogs to run. We definitely need more fenced in dog parks in the city!

Thanks,
Jessie McKay

* * *

Hi there,
I am a local veterinary student at the OVC in Guelph, and I train service dogs for National Service Dogs. I think it would be a shame for the only off leash dog park to be shut down, especially after all the money that went into it. That being said, there definitely are some issues with poop bags/ noise/ it being used for dogs that owners can't control.. which is when it becomes messy, but these parks are in almost every city, so of all places, Guelph should be able to make it work.

I truly believe that If the possibility of shutting the park down is not there, the complaints will stop, and people who disagree, will just have to deal with it.

In regards to location, everyone will always say not in my back yard. I have heard many students say they wish they lived in those townhouses for convenience with the dog park. So there will be many people who may not want to be there, but probably many others who would want to be there.

Guelph is such a community and there are a lot of rescues/ adoptions/ friendly people who enjoy the outdoors and making friends through their dogs. I have used this park at least 25 times with my most recent service dog who just graduated from the autism program.

Maybe put the breaks on a new dog park for now, but please consider keeping the one in Peter Misersky park and maybe put whatever money from Bristol into that one to add more trees/ shelter for the dogs.

Thank you for taking the time to read this email, I hope it finds you well!

Erica Gibson

* * *

I'd like to add my name to the list of disappointed residents in the wake of your irresponsible decision to reverse course on the fenced in dog parks. Peter Misersky's park could certainly have been planned and placed better but we still need more spaces for dogs to play safely. The neighbors who complain about noise (from a park of all places) or extra parking will just find something else to complain about and would have been "relieved" of these burdens once the city got their behinds in gear and built them! It's no wonder so many born and raised Guelphites are leaving, this city counsel is not for our interests anymore.

Be better, Guelph
Steve Franklin

* * *

Greetings City Staff,

I am emailing you over my concerns about the possible cancellation of the Bristol St. Dog Park. We are a dog family and we also feel a strong connection to our community. We were over-joyed when these dog parks were announced as we were tired of driving to surrounding cities to use their leash free fenced parks. Frankly, it was embarrassing that Guelph did not have this amenity by 2019.

We have been to the Misersky Fenced Dog Park a number of times and were even more excited when the Bristol St. Park began moving forward. We went to meetings about the proposal for Bristol St. and it was quite appalling that people opposed to the Misersky Park were actively commandeering a meeting that was about an entirely different Dog park site. I feel as though the negative impacts of the Misersky Park have poisoned the Bristol Park. I want to be able to walk to the dog park in my community to exercise my dog. I want to be able to interact with my neighbours at this park. I don't want to face driving to the edge of town to exercise my dog. I read that noise cancelling green cover would be added to the Bristol Park. I feel as though accommodations are being considered for Bristol St. that would make it an improvement over some of the oversights of the Misersky Park.

In spite of the differences of the parks locations within the city and new accommodations we seem to be wasting more money and while losing the battle to keep the advancing dog parks for all of Guelph's residents who have dogs. I fully support the Bristol St. Fenced Off-Leash Dog Park. I would like to know your thoughts on this matter. How much money has been spent so far on the parks and how much will tearing down what has already been cost the taxpayers? What more can I do as a concerned citizen and dog owner?

Thank you for your time,
Drew Thompson

* * *

I am incredibly disappointed as a resident of Guelph for 35 years. I just got my first dog in the last two years and his best experiences have been at the dog park in Guelph. It is easily the best way to socialize a dog and help train them to be kind to other dogs and people. I think it is incredible wrong for this city to pass, build (with tax payers money) and in turn close a dog park because some people are whining about it. Did the city not do its research when building this initially?? Please reconsider. We do not have any sort of dog park. One can not be that bad since it is already built!!!

Alex Derma

* * *

Greetings City Staff,

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Thank you for your time,

Drew Thompson

* * *

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing in respect to the idea of closing the dog park at Peter Misersky park. Instead of doing such a radical move by closing it, how about moving it a bit out of

the way so that the neighbours are not subject to the noise of the dogs. The city has made the investment of the fence anyway, why not re-use it. elsewhere. Also, there seems to be a great demand for dog parks in the city as proven by the number of people using just the one space that perhaps the city could rethink the possibility of keeping the Bristol street park a go. Maybe with more options for dogs to play, the dogs would not be all confined to one area and creating havoc on one particular neighbourhood. Ripping this park out is not the solution, put your thinking caps on and work on a solution.

Denese Renaud

* * *

I was just reading that the off leash dog parks that are in the works are going to be cancelled and that the gorgeous one already built will be padlocked. Please don't let this happen. It is very few against these amazing spaces and many who support them. I understand taking a step back and reflecting on the ones not yet built but please don't waste all the resources that have been poured into the already built one. It is a great space and I am sure that with a little instruction and direction the dogs, human guests and neighbours can get along. It is important to have spaces like these for people to give their pets spaces to play and for owners to interact. It is nice that it is walking distance for some and for those who have to drive it isn't too far. Perhaps some monitoring and enforcement of quiet hours would help. Along with some more discussion about respecting one another, being patient and compassionate to one another. I truly wish we could get along especially in wide open spaces like these.

Thanks for your consideration and please let the doggies play!

Eileen Sheridan

* * *

To whom this may concern,

Closing Misersky is a huge disappointment. My friends and I walk over from Vancouver drive with our dogs, they have a great time, we have a great time. Everyone at the park is always so happy and talkative. Not only is this being taken away from us, it's been a massive waste of tax dollars. Who's footing the bill for this? How much is the removal going to cost? What will be put in place of this dog park? So many questions...

Extremely disappointed tax payer,

Tyler Garrard

* * *

This park is a great place with a great environment filled with very respectable dog owners. Please don't take away the park. It is also very critical for seniors and

others with mobility issues to ensure they are able to give their pets the exercise they need and the socialization skills. Take down a child's park in my neighborhood that lays empty every day and put one in my neighborhood.

Lisa Gray

* * *

Hi there

I'm emailing to be sure you are aware about the hundreds or thousands of us in Guelph that are devastated about the closing of the only dog park Guelph has ever had. Because of a few white male residents who complained about the dog park (and harassed dog owners which the city did nothing about) tax payers are out 100k? I cannot express enough how if the other two dog parks had been built on schedule the amount of dogs at Peter Miserky would have decreased by a third and the problems residents are having would be gone. Guelph is the only city of this size that didn't already have a dog park. And now we are going to have to wait years to have one again and that is ridiculous.

Please reconsider such a wasteful decision to remove an already built park.

Laura Hill

* * *

Dear City of Guelph

I request you reconsider your discussion on the dog park. We all know and it is scientifically documented that dog parks are beneficial for not only the animal but for the community. Yes there are problems that can be looked at to help reduce the smell. Install underground poop containers. Have shovels or poop scoopers available for those who have difficulty picking up.

If you are considering other sites why wait? Why not keep the only one at the moment open until you have found another suitable area.

Dog parks bring communities together for those who do not get out often other than for their fur Babies.

Why not look at solutions to help instead of cutting off the one source of activity for the dogs and community.

Dog parks are beneficial

Gives dogs a safe space to exercise and roam around freely (60 percent)

- Allows dogs to socialize with other dogs (39 percent)
- Allows owners a chance to be physically active with their pet (36 percent)

I hope you will reconsider your decision on this matter

Egle Boudreau

* * *

Hello,

I'm writing with the encouragement of Cam Guthrie for voices to be heard "Please, I cannot stress this enough, if you want to build the proposed second dog park at Bristol Street and keep the Misersky one open, email: clerks@guelph.ca so that your comments go to all of council before they make the final decision on this at the end of February.

Guelph has a clear need for a off leash dog park, it shows with the use of the one opened. There may be a few people speaking louder at the moment with an issue but you tend to here more from people who are angry than content. There was much planning that went into these parks and community outreach, there was a point that they could have given suggestions. Not too mention time and money that went into planning and building. I'm sure there is a way that everyone can come to an agreement, don't give up and scrap the whole idea when it is needed. Look to other communities who have successful dog parks if there is help needed in planning or modification. Look how full Hanlon creek gets, or exhibition park, there is a definite need, need not want. Hopefully counsel reconsiders scrapping the ideas and the money put in.

Sincerely,
Jackie Merkley

* * *

To Whom it May Concern,

I am emailing to put my voice forward in support of the new and proposed off leash dog parks in Guelph.

Thanks,
Laurel Borthwick

* * *

Hello!

Please keep the dog park in Guelph open and continue to build the new one! Dog parks are a place my dog and I are so happy and I believe in Guelph's ability to run them successfully.

Thank you!
Tonya Redwood

* * *

To whom it may concern,

First off, I want to thank you for all of the work you do! All of you at City Hall, you rock!

Secondly, I want to express my deep concern and disappointment over the decision to close our valuable fenced in dog park and not build the one on Bristol street. Honestly, I wasn't aware that this was still an issue until I saw the Guelph Today article last night. If I had known, I would have been there, fighting to keep this space open. I am begging you, please keep the current fenced in park open until there is a more suitable space made. I understand that the residents near the current park are not happy with it, but as dog owners in the City, we need a safe space to socialize our dogs, without fear of them running off. We love the current park, especially since our small dogs have their own space without the big dogs! This park is a huge asset to our community, and I understand that the current location may not be ideal. But please don't take it away from our pups!

I live downtown and was really excited for the Bristol street park as we have been driving to the east end multiple times a week to play at the current park.

I'm not asking for the Bristol street park to continue to be built, just please don't take away the current park until there is another place to take our dogs.

I want to emphasize the positive impact that this park has made in the dog community. My two girls are rescues, former puppy mill moms, they are nervous around people and other dogs. Since going to the park, both girls have been learning to be more comfortable around other people, and become more comfortable around other dogs. Not only is this a space for dogs to burn off their energy, but it is a space for dogs to learn with each other and work on valuable social and training skills.

Please, please, please don't take away the fenced in dog park without another one built.

If there is anything I can do to help you understand this further, please let me know.

Or if anyone just wants to meet my dogs and give them a nice snuggle and have a therapy session, just let me know. I would be happy to bring them down to City Hall!

Thank you for your time,
Sarah Hollands + Maybelline and Violet

* * *

I am writing to express my concern for the council to close the current dog park and cancel the future Bristol Street Park.

Please don't take these parks away!
The park location is actually great for us. As a single mom I can let my kids play and run my puppy in the park at the same time.

This city will complain about anything! The ones who USE it need a voice in this city too.

Nothing seems to ever be good enough for people and they seem to just need something to complain about (like how the plows aren't plowing fast enough so let's blow up social media)
These are the people council is letting voice for the rest of us?

At minimum if it was to be moved. have a New one ready to go BEFORE shutting it down!

One concerned puppy momma
Melissa Schuurman

* * *

To whom it may concern,

The fenced in dog parks are a fantastic extension of Guelph. I have been countless times with all ages of dogs and always been greeted with kindness. Yes there are some dogs with different temperaments than others but in my experience the vast majority of the time the owners of said dogs are aware and good with containing their pet.

Keep me open, open 3 more, just don't take away the most fun the furry guys can have.

Patrick Laing

* * *

Good morning,

My family and I wanted to show support of the fenced in dog park. We've had no issues and use it quite often. Our dog loves it and we have found owners and their dogs to be respectful. It's also creates a great sense of community among dog owners. Likely part of the problem is that it's the only fenced in dog park in Guelph and therefore it's being used far more than if there were other options for folks around the city.

Stephanie Thomson

* * *

Please don't close the Guelph dog parks! We have been waiting for the Misersky Dog park to open for such a long time and I am so saddened to hear it may be closing. This is my only outlet for my dogs. They burn so much energy there, get wonderful socialization, and the folks that use the park are wonderful. Every single time I've gone there have been only 4 MAX cars parked, and not a single poop bag left behind. Because of the uproar the residents have caused I feel people using the park are trying so hard to follow every single rule and be as considerate as possible. Ive even heard folks say they wait to go until after kids are in school to avoid disturbing the residents. Please don't close this park. Guelph needs a fenced dog park so badly.

Sincerely,

Jordan Legate

Dog owner of Guelph

* * *

We enjoy safely, we enjoy friendship. Our dogs can run free from cars and wild animals. We pick up after them, we are courteous about not making too much noise.

If your looking for new ground, why not develop the old white rose property on Edinburgh? Lots of room and parking, commercial zoning... there are apartments but there is a pretty big buffer with the train tracks there.

Or if you relocated the one ball diamond at norman jay park, you would have that great big field ready to go, no residents, just commercial around, parking, maintenance shouldn't be too much of a problem, there is a road already...?

Just ideas...? I think a fenced leash free park is a big asset to the city. Are we the only ones who dont have one?

Thanks for listening!

Lisa Christie

* * *

Dear Guelph Council

I am writing to ask no plead with you to not close The new fenced in dog park. No matter where you put something new there will be people that will complain that seems to be the way of the world. The saying you can't please everyone but I can tell you from experience this pleases the dogs. I foster rescue dogs who have no training so the dog park is amazing for me to socialize and allow the dogs to safely play off leash. My last dog flourished because of the park. I am so thankful for the friends he made and the confidence he got from those interactions. Leo asks you not to take away his favorite place and friends meeting place.

More photos are available of the joy the park brings the dogs and owners.

Thank you for your time
Shauna Brown

* * *

I (along with many others) are VERY upset about council's last minute punch in the gut by voting to close Misersky park and not build Bristol or Lee parks. That option wasn't even mentioned in the report that I saw! What the h-ll \$&\$!!

These parks are needed and need to be accessible for EVERYONE! How is anyone going to get to Eastview or some place out in an industrial area if they don't drive? Can't take your dog on the bus can you.

I don't even use the park as my dog gets a bit reactive but I think it is a great place for people to exercise their dogs and socialize And keep their dogs safe while training them. So just because a very few don't want it the majority must suffer?

This council is a joke and definitely does whatever they feel like no matter what the people want. I hope they realize that they have just shot themselves in the foot and should be concerned about the next election!

That's my rant.

Lynn Hamilton

* * *

I'm writing as a resident of Guelph to express extreme disappointment to the decision to close the existing dog park without having any options for a replacement in the near future.

Is there a good reason why Guelph can't provide a service that is available in Kitchener, Waterloo, Hamilton and other city's?

This does not include the frustration as a tax payer for the \$100,000+ wasted by poor city planning.

I would like to know the city's plan to provide this service to residents that own dogs the same way it offers parks to those with children, tennis courts and skateboard parks?

Michael Peace

* * *

Good Evening Mr Mayor, and Ward 1 Councillors.

I was very disappointed to learn of the recommendations to close the Peter Misersky park and to "reconsider it in the 2021 budget". Removing this community resource without an alternative is completely unacceptable. The cost alone to build it initially makes removing it without even attempting the previously recommended remediation efforts fiscally irresponsible. The fact that it will be reconsidered for 2021 without a firm commitment is also unacceptable. There is a large community of people who have come to use and love the park on a daily basis.

If council were to implement the remediation steps (move the fence back, add shrubs etc. as sound barriers) this could certainly help and then more feedback could be gathered - it is always better to it If council were even to move it altogether I could also understand this but to close the park without providing an alternative at the same time it is being closed is unfair and pandering to the loudest voice in the room. I also understand why you are hesitant to open the others after the outcry around peter misersky but closing the one park we do have is not the answer, even if "those councillors felt it made more sense to close Peter Misersky rather than keep one park open and deal with the issues it is causing." (source: Guelph Today article).

I am deeply disappointed in the council's likely decision and will rally my fellow dog owners to reach out to their councillors, the mayor and if possible form a delegation for the next council meeting where this will be definitively decided. I urge you and your other council members to re-consider. Consider promising to remove the park after another suitable location has been completed. These are the types of resources that make people want to move to Guelph, for people to invest in Guelph, to open new companies and to stay here. As your early study showed we are very far behind other cities in terms of this type of amenity.

Caleah Campbell

* * *

To whom it may concern,

I recently saw Cam Guthrie's tweet about how no one has responded to requests for support for the dog parks in the community.

I personally use the dog park at Peter Mzerski park. I find it to be an asset to the community..

Thanks
Kyle Anderson

Hello,

I am sending in my support to keep the off leash dog parks. I have a small dog that I can not take the off leash area on the Hanlon as I do not find it a safe location for my dog. I hope the council will reconsider closing any of these dog parks and maybe open some others in the vacant lots we have sitting around Guelph.

Thank you in advance
Vicki Maybanks

I am very disappointed that this park is scheduled to be closed. I am a new dog owner of a Cocker Spaniel that has an abundance of energy that regular walks just don't drain. I have brought him to the dog park it has helped with his behavioural issues because of too much energy as well as great socialization with other dogs. Please consider A) keeping the dog park open or B) keeping the dog park open until a better park can be erected. This will make Dog Owners happy as well as the "whiners"

Thank you for taking the dog owners into consideration.

Sincerely
Kathy Free and my puppy Bundy

Hello,

My family and I have been living in Guelph for the past 2.5 years and I absolutely love this city! We have recently discovered the Peter Misersky dog park and are very disappointed it will be closing. We have met so many great people and enjoy going as much as the dogs do! There are people that come from the south and west ends and drive 15 min or more to come to the park because it's so great. I have recommended to all my neighbours to bring their dogs there because it's such a nice place to be as a dog owner. Everyone is so friendly and you can get a good

laugh in watching the dogs run around. I really hope that there is another place you can put up a dog park.

A little suggestion would be to put up those tall skinny cedar trees all along the front of the dog park.....less noise and smell for the residents maybe? And not as expensive as ripping out all that fencing and putting in a new park?

What about a subscription to use the park? Or a metal change box you could throw a toonie in every time you went to pay for the trees?

Thank you,

Allison Dowling
(And Lennon the retriever)

* * *

I understand that some aren't happy with the extra traffic at the dog park but for those of us with dogs that can't be off leash without running away need a place to let them run. Please don't close the park.

Kathryn Neale

* * *

I was told recently by a coworker that the city plans to close the fenced dog park that was recently built and opened - what an incredible waste of time and resources. This would be an irresponsible decision by the city.

This park is obviously an excellent resource for dog owners who want safety for their dogs AND children. Why would the city seek to close this?

I am told based on comments on reddit and elsewhere that it is based on one vocal man living in the area. He needs to be told that his opinion is not the only one that matters and the entire city needs resources for their families and happiness like this one.

Keep this park open.

Alexandra Stoneham

* * *

Hi,

I'm extremely disappointed in the closure of the dog park. This seems absolutely backwards. It doesn't seem to make any sense that every other city this size (and much smaller!) have multiple dog parks. The city needs to figure out a way for this to happen. I have long wanted a place where I could take my dog off-leash and allow him to play with other dogs. I don't feel comfortable doing this a regular

parks or sports fields. We live in an old neighbourhood and do not have a suitable backyard for him to play in.

I'm so disappointed in my city. I thought that they were finally going to make this happen.

Melanei Parlette-Stewart

* * *

From my experience the dog owners using the park are responsible. Any mess is picked up and I did not detect any smell.

The park is so good for dogs to play together. Owners who have been at work all day have a place to take their pets to get some much needed exercise in a safe space.

You are doing a disservice to the citizens of Guelph should you consider closing this space. Time and money - \$100,000 has been cited - has been spent.

Please give this your utmost consideration. From my visits there, I have only witnessed responsible behaviour by the dog owners using this space.

Respectfully yours

Linda Bryant

* * *

To whom it may concern,

Please don't close any of the off leash dog parks in our city!! Especially the fenced in park in the east end. Dogs and their people love and enjoy these areas! Don't let a few loud-mouth whiney constituents ruin it for everyone, that's not fair!

Sincerely,

Tara MacLeod-Tucker.

* * *

I'm writing in response to the potential closure of the new dog park and cancellation of the other 2 proposed parks.

First, what a waste of money to open a park to turn around and close it less than a year later. Dog parks don't add noise to a neighbourhood- I should know seeing as I had one basically in my yard in mississauga. It brought neighbours together, made people and dogs more active & formed a greater sense of community.

This shouldn't be up to staff to decide this. If any changes are to be made it should be a public vote instead of having the city waste the cities money on opening and closing parks at will.

All the people want is a fenced in area for dogs to play. Why is this so hard to understand? It's not rocket science. The one park is already built, leave it alone. If you want to adjust plans for the unbuilt parks, fine but we need more dog parks. Thank you for your time.

James Highet

* * *

Sooo disappointed to hear about the closure and cancellation of current and upcoming leash-free dog parks! A few loud voices and all the work and planning you've done goes out the window?

Maybe not everyone is a dog person, I get it. But having areas dedicated to parks highlights our city as a caring, proactive community who fosters health lifestyles (physically, through being outside and mentally, by having a companion and from being outside!

Please bring back the dog park!!

Angi Roberts

* * *

I can't begin to tell you how disappointed I was to hear that the fenced in dog parks are being closed. Every time I was there there was no issue with noise or any problems. Perhaps when more locations open the PM park would have less traffic.

You should have had more patience. You reacted based on one or two people who complained and campaigned very hard against them.

Please reconsider

Tracey Rowe

* * *

I see on facebook our mayor is rallying the masses to flood you with email in support of the dog park at Peter m park and others. Well I am AGAINST said park. Thank you. Also the library is also not needed at that price point.

Thanks.

Dougie

* * *

I'm writing in support of keeping the dog park open!

I certainly hope they keep the Bristol street location as an option!

Barbara Anderson

* * *

How dare this city spend \$100.000 on a much needed and well used dog park and then close it because of a loud mouth bully who harassed and scared women because he lost his extra two parking spots This is the man who bought a house there and then complained about children making noise playing

Now you are appeasing him and it's going to cost more to disband

Shame on you So much wasted dollars

Theresa Finamore

* * *

I am absolutely disgusted to find out the well used and loved dog park is to be closed

This was a sneaky decision to appease the man who was bullying and harassing women

The heart of the matter is that he wanted what he assumes is his extra two parking spots back

He has even complained about children playing in the park

This is a horrendous waste of taxpayers money

Shame on council

The names of those who voted to do this will not be forgotten at election time

Theresa Finamore

* * *

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Thoreau Colucci and I am a student at the University and a resident of Guelph. I am emailing you today regarding going the recent decision to close the Misersky dog park and cancel the 2 other projects.

With the number of dogs per household continuing to rise, having designated fenced-in off leash areas is critical for any city, especially one such as Guelph. By terminating these projects, all stakeholders are going to suffer and some may be put in danger.

Firstly, for many dogs they require frequent and lasting socializing with other dogs in order to properly stimulate and train them. Fenced-in off leash areas provide this opportunity unlikely any other setting. As a dog owner, I know that if there are not designated areas to fulfil this, it is guaranteed that non-designated areas will be used instead, to the detriment of everybody involved.

Secondly, the designated fenced-in off lease areas offer a place for dogs to learn and play without the risk of them endangering themselves (by traffic, running away, etc.) as well as endangering others, such as children and families.

I implore you to reconsider the decision to close the Misersky Park, and to continue to implement the remaining 2 projects. As evidenced in countless other cities - Toronto, for example - the presence of these parks has undeniable benefits to the entire community.

Sincerely,
Thoreau Colucci

* * *

Good morning,

I was very disappointed to hear of the cancellation of the construction of the new Bristol Street dog park, and the closure of the Misersky dog park. As a Guelph resident with a dog, having access to designated space that's safe for dogs (and the community) within town limits is critical.

Community members are right that there needs to be safe and designated areas for children/families, and space for dogs where we live, so these parks need to remain open. By closing the Misersky park and canceling the construction of the new Bristol Street park, you are removing those safe spaces for dogs and their owners in town.

Responsible dog owners deserve to have a safe space to care for their pets, just like responsible community members deserve to have a safe space for their children to play; one does not deserve the other more. We pay to license our dog and we pay taxes to the City of Guelph.

Please reconsider and think of us responsible dog owners, who wants a space in our City that is safe for our dogs.

Thank you,

Chelsea Woolley

* * *

Guelph dog park should stay no one stays after dark no laws are being broken. Provide real evidence that you can hear large amounts of noise after dark.

Darryl Gemin

* * *

This is so short sighted

We need to find a solution so our pets have a place to run Why waste the \$\$\$ At least leave open until new sites can be found!

Not happy at all that we are not opening the other planned dog run area

Michael Stultz

* * *

I am frustrated that council would try and sneak voting on closing dog parks especially when they have just been opened. A smart person would realize once more parks are opened traffic at the 1 will go down drastically, you have allowed people to bully you into wasting more tax payers money by shutting these down.

The right thing to do would be ask the people of Guelph as you are to bring their concerns to the council not speak and do what you think the people of Guelph want.

Kelly Bolton

* * *

Hello, sending my vote and support for a fenced dog park.

There must be a way to satisfy BOTH sides, not just take away all three that were promised. That is absolutely unacceptable.

Lori White

* * *

Please, please please leave the current fenced in dog park open until a new one in a better suited location is built and useable. In a city the size and quality of Guelph, this is a much needed, overlooked asset. Please vote to keep the park open, thank you.

Colleen deVries

* * *

Hi.

We live at XXX Guelph.

I do not have dog. I have a cat which I am not allowed to let outside. That's ok. I am opposed to having these dog parks so close to residential areas due to smell, noise, and spoiling parkland(mud and worn and messy areas as per photos I have seen).

The City has spent \$100,000 on Misterski dog park and another large amount on starting Bristol. This really concerns me as taxpayer if 44 years!

I understand we already have a 54 acre leash free park in Guelph. It is not in a residential area. That's great!

I am greatly disappointed in your response to this, Mayor Guthrie. People vote and people come first, not dogs. Let people in the city walk their dogs on a leash. Otherwise go to the 54 acres or another park that is not so close to residential areas.

I voted for you and now I am extremely disappointed I your lack of insight. I have been supportive of you until now.

My sons played their first soccer in Bristol park. Now part of those fields Have disappeared in favour of starting construction of Bristol dog park. Cam Guthrie, if you played soccer in Guelph, that park is where it started. The children playing soccer there are 4-5 years old. We have been fortunate to have that soccer field for little ones. If this park goes through those kids playing in the fields left, will experience dog noise and smells from their waste.

This is unhealthy to both soccer players, families and all residents in the area. Children are our future. Please think about this...

I have contacted our Councillor, James Gordon. He listened to my concerns. Council, please vote in favour of this latest proposal which will end residential leash free dog parks in Guelph. Remember, Bristol is less than the standard regulation size for a park like this.

This is an extremely contentious issue. I assure you that the outcome of this issue will dictate the outcome many other decisions Council will face in future, including elections. Think, please, and act responsibly in your vote.

The vote allowing these parks to proceed was passed with counsellors being unprepared and uninformed with little public consultation or consideration. Now you

have information and can appropriately vote, based on public, city staff and Council's input.

Thank you.
Kathy Stephens

* * *

Hello,

I am a ward 1 resident. I live at 74 Creighton Avenue. I've been silent thus far (because the status quo was fine with me)... but in light of the decisions by the council last night, I feel I need to speak up.

I find the decision to close the Peter Misersky Dog Park with no viable alternative to be extremely disappointing.

I understand that some of the residents next to the park want it removed. The park is not ideally placed and the residents were not consulted before it was built. As a daily user of the dog park, I don't agree with many of the claims I've heard from the residents... however I do understand and sympathize with their concerns and I support the idea of removing the park.

That said, the park provides an incredible, safe, off-leash area for a lot of dog owners. For many owners, a reliable recall isn't an option (or is not yet trained) and letting the dogs run in an un-fenced area is a risk both to the dog and to the general public. Walking my puppy for an hour doesn't get out nearly as much energy as she does in 20 minutes of running around the dog park.

I would like to see a second dog park (an alternative) built before this one is closed. The money has already been spent on this park and while it inconveniences a few residents right now, it is benefiting many, many more who will have no backup option if it is closed immediately.

With regards to sites, like many have suggested, I think it would make a lot of sense to build a park at the Eastview/Watson site... if some part of that park's plan (eg. the splash pad) needs to be replaced with a dog park, perhaps the thing being removed from the Eastview park plan could instead be built in Peter Miserky (once the new dog park is open and this one is removed).

There also seems to be a lot of land away from residences down at the Dragonfly park. Perhaps that would be reasonable site as well?

I hope that the city takes the long view on this and keeps the existing park open until a new site is chosen and constructed. If closing this one is considered urgent, please make the construction of a different site even more urgent.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Mike Timmerman

* * *

To All Members of Guelph City Council,

We are writing to you to express our concern and dismay regarding the ongoing dispute over the fenced-in dog parks. I suggest a vote, in the same way that Council makes decisions, to decide what is to be done. Let the people who pay taxes and who this decision will affect the most decide.

I honestly cannot understand why you would even consider closing the one at Peter Misersky Park. I have been there many times, at different hours of the day, and not once has the parking lot been filled, nor have I smelled any offensive odors coming from or even around this park. I have heard a few barks and woofs, but certainly not anything that could be considered a disturbance. I could understand there being cause for complaint if the barking was excessive. Dogs bark to communicate. This is completely normal.

This park cost a lot of money, and I don't believe it has been given a fair chance. It is far safer than a leash-free, un-fenced park. Because the dogs are contained, there is no chance of any of them running up to "say hello" to a passer-by, or jumping up at anyone in an exuberant quest for attention. Small children are not permitted in the fenced-in park, whereas in a regular leash-free park we have very little control over who approaches our dogs. Not all dogs are good at recall, so being contained in a fenced-in park keeps them safe.

There are many more people who are upset about the possibility of this park closing, than there are those who don't want it there. We all pay taxes. Don't our wants and needs count too? The residents who complained say that they were not notified about the building of this park. Yet the park took some time to build, not to mention the presence of large construction vehicles and workers. If I lived across from this sort of action, I would have asked questions right from the start. I don't live in the immediate area, yet I knew that the park was going to be put in well in advance. How could the residents not know? I am not trying to invalidate their concerns, but surely there is some sort of compromise that can be reached so that everyone's needs are considered. What about the proposal to move the fence back a bit, and to put in trees and bushes to help "camouflage" it and help with the so-called noise? This made a lot of sense to me.

We look forward to your reply on this matter.

Regards,
Alison and Janet Dunkley (and Scruffy, the dog)

* * *

To whom it may concern,

The closing of this dog park has outraged a ton of you Guelph citizens, surely more than the five people who complained. The dog park was not put in the best, most reasonable spot, but a fully fenced dog park is needed. There is not a day that goes by where there are not people at that park with their dogs. That shows how much this park is needed. It will be completely irresponsible of you to close it down and not move it at least. This was one of the places that gave Guelph citizens something to do with their dogs and socialize with other dog people and have their dogs socialize and learn how to play with other dogs. This was the only place my puppy would go to play with other dogs and he absolutely loves it. He whines whenever we are close because he is so excited. If you care about your citizens the way you say then stop listening to the bad apples that will complain about something else next and listen to the majority that you have made very happy.
DON'T CLOSE THE PARK DOWN

Thank you for your time

Nicole Moniz

* * *

Good morning,

I'm adding my name to keep the dog park at Peter Misersky park pls.
Thank you.

Donna Armstrong

* * *

Just read about council's shortsighted decision to shut down the new fenced dog park and stop progress on the other ones.

I'm one of many thousands of residents that are quite disheartened by this. Please tell council to reconsider this decision.

Len Fowler

* * *

Please do shut down the Miserski dog park...thanks

Mike Kennedy

* * *

Hello,

It was recently brought to my attention that the city is closing the only fenced dog park and will be scraping the plans they had for the 3 others. As a dog owner, I find

this very upsetting. Could you please explain to me the rationale behind these closures. Please reconsider, there are many people who would love the parks and respect the rules too.

Sincerely,
Kayleigh Kennedy

* * *

To whom it may concern,

I believe that this decision is an absolute knee-jerk reaction designed to appease a small number of residents who complain even when Ultimate Frisbee games are played at that park (I know from listening to the disgruntled bunch yelling from their balconies while we've played), let alone a fenced dog park (something we otherwise have not had in Guelph)... and yet, in a act of utter "spineless-ness" city council has now voted to waste a great deal more of public funds in order to cater to this miserable bunch of people.

These types of actions (knee-jerk/ rife with poor judgment/ costly) are why no one trusts their governments and you're viewed so commonly as crooks. You've raised my taxes and then pissed away city money, for what? All in a learning effort? That's how we're justifying this irresponsible use of city money? Meanwhile, the thousands of residents who have yearned for a properly fenced in dog park, are now back waiting (with higher taxes than last year) and not only nothing to show for it; it is in fact as if we've been provided less than nothing and abandoned in an effort to cater to disgruntled residents...

By the way – we have multiple crime related epidemics in our city – we have rampant B & E's, downtown is in a disgusting state due to the lack of demonstrated concern for hypodermic needles, fentanyl is everywhere but hey, let's waste more money concerning with real problems like the first fenced in dog park in Guelph.

Had little to no interest in municipal politics in this city but my interest has been gained and I'll be making sure to look into representatives in our next government who are inclined to trim fat and reduce horrendously inefficient spending as is being demonstrated currently and effectively using funds to properly address problems in our city. You've done a piss poor job in this case and this is a pathetic misuse of city funds and city resources...

Do better...

Craig Powers

* * *

Hi Cam.

Just read the article about closing the Dog park in Guelph.....too bad.

I realize that some people are just not "dog people" and I respect that. As one who uses the park, I wondered how many on the Council who voted to close the park have actually been there, and watched the activities. I think it is necessary before a final unbiased decision is made. The park is not noisy, except for the occasional bark, but amazingly, it is quite quiet. There are always parking spots free and not all the parking spots are used by dog owners. There are children in the park and others going into the condos.

I just think that before closing such a great spot, the council should experience it.

Marnie Blackwood

* * *

Dear Cam Guthrie and Council

I previously sent a short email regarding the closing of the Misersky Dog Park, but I feel it necessary to further express my concerns.

We discovered this park in the fall and what a great find! We take our dog a few times a week, and it is a perfect place to go. All the dogs are fenced in. All the dog waste is picked up and there is a container available for the compostable waste. I read a letter that one of the concerns was dog waste left behind...where is it left? The people complaining are obviously not in with the dogs and if it is in the compostable waste container...good for us! There is always parking, and everyone is happy. There is even a fenced area for little dogs.....great idea. I understand that many people are not "dog people" and have no interest in this park or others, and I respect that. Having said that, those involved in making the decision to close the park must do so after investigating thoroughly and without prejudice, a decision based on fact.

My questions to you are as follows:

Who is complaining about the park? Is it the people living across from the park or people from the general public? Those who do not live in the area would be unaffected by the dog park and probably have not been anywhere near it, so really know nothing about it. Nor is it their issue.

What is the noise complaint about? I read one of the complaints was noise. The dogs play but rarely is there a lot of barking..the only barking we encounter is our dog, in the car, as soon as we approach the park. It certainly is not the owners who make noise. The dogs play. Occasionally, they bark. Just like children in the other parks, who are laughing and running and making noise, they are having fun....and deserve to have fun. I think that only someone who loves dogs can appreciate this, and I know there are many people in Guelph who love dogs.

Are the parking spaces at the park for the public or for the condo owners? If they are for the public, would there be complaints if someone parked there and took

their children to the adjoining park? This has happened when we were there. If they are public, anyone should be able to park there.

We live downtown. Five days a week, the parking spots on our street are all filled by 8:00 a.m. We don't complain. We chose to live in the city.

If the condo owners, through their fees have rights to those spots, then we, as dogs owners, find another place to park.

Have the council members actually been to the park, spent some time there and experienced the genuine fun? Or, has the decision been based on letters and emails from people who have no love for, or understanding of the needs of dogs and their owners. We live in a city...a great city....and cities have dogs...lots of them. Please be sure that your decisions are not based on the opinions some have about dogs in general, but are based on factual evidence gathered by experiencing the park in question.

One of the complaints expressed in a letter I read, indicated more traffic in the area. There is another park at the end of the street..of course there will be cars. They are on the street and should not have any effect on those inside. The only concern with traffic would be if the cars were speeding or driving carelessly....not happening. Saying the traffic is a problem is looking for something to kindle the complaint.

In conclusion, what is the rush to close this park? Give it time. If, after a fair and unbiased investigation has taken place and there is need to close the park, so be it.

The dog park is a great addition to our city. We, as dog owners, can be flexible, with regard to issues of concern. Please do not close this park or stop completion of others until you have really looked at the apparent problems and the sources of complaint.

Thank you for your time,
Marnie Blackwood

* * *

Hello,

My name is Justine Kraemer and I have been a resident of Guelph for the last five years. I was so excited when it was first announced that fenced in dog parks were being planned through the city of Guelph. When my family dog, Chip, an 11 Year old Shitsu-Bischo mix, comes to visit me from Mount Forest (which is quite frequent especially in the spring and summer months), my family finds it difficult to travel around the city with him. He is a very social dog, and when he is on a leash he often pulls himself too hard to initiate play with other dogs that we encounter and their respective people. Having a fenced in area that is for dogs would not only allow us to spend time outside with him in Guelph, but would give him a chance to be off his leash and socialize with other dogs. I do hope that City council re-considers developing a space where dogs can be out in public and run free without leashes. Chip was really looking forward to this.

Thank you in advance for your consideration,

Justine Kraemer

* * *

Dear Ward Councillors, Clerk Office, Parks and Recreation Department, and Mayor,

I am writing to express my extreme frustration and disappointment with the City of Guelph's decision to close the fenced in dog area at Peter Misersky park.

I am a relatively new dog owner who just recently discovered the dog park and the robust community surrounding it. My girlfriend and I are frequent visitors to the park and have made friends with other people similarly attracted to the wonderful space. It is the only fenced in park in the city, is a clean and large space, has plenty of parking, and is in a great location. And most importantly our dog loves it and it provides a safe and large space for him to get exercise and interact safely with other animals.

Not once have we experienced any of the alleged complaints about the park but instead witnessed:

- owners being courteous of their animal and and its behaviour toward other visitors and their dogs, instantly separating them if aggressive and always leaving immediately if there are any problems
- people cleaning up after their animal almost instantly and others even stepping in to pick up anything accidentally missed by someone else
- owners being respectful of the hours of operation and showing up during the normal hours and leaving when appropriate
- everyone having a great time and loving that the city they live in has used their tax dollars to build something as great as this fenced in dog park that they can use in a positive and effective way

On the contrary, the only negative we have heard about is harassment stemming from one nearby homeowner who has accosted members of the public for simply bringing their animals to the park and using it for its intended purpose, which is the entire point of the space.

It was also extremely frustrating to hear that the recent discussion regarding the fate of the park took place at 2:00 PM on a weekday when the vast majority of people are working and otherwise preoccupied. This leaves the floor open to certain people who not only have an intense grudge against the dog park, but also an overabundance of free time to invest into showing up in the middle of the work day to try and shut down a popular and important feature of the city.

I urge everyone involved to reconsider this decision. To be blunt, I consider this a electoral deal-breaker and any vote cast to close the park completely unacceptable, especially without an immediate and better solution. Passing the buck until 2021 is

lazy and disrespectful. I also consider the suggestion that the park be ripped up or padlocked to be insulting and fiscally irresponsible from the perspective of a taxpayer and long-time resident of Guelph. Removing or obstructing access to popular, functional, and low-maintenance infrastructure for the sake of appeasing an extremely small and vocal minority makes no sense.

I have let all my friends, family and co-workers know about what is going on and will keep them informed as this progresses. They are all residents of Guelph who own animals as well, and are not happy to hear that spaces they use are being thrown away, as well as their tax-dollars, all because a couple of people are unhappy.

I will be at the meeting on Feb 24 at 5:30 PM. Please mark me down as a delegate and confirm what is required.

Thank you and I hope everyone has a pleasant day,

Jack Runge

* * *

Hi there,

Please do not remove the Peter Misersky dog park! As someone who uses this park regularly, and who has lived with my house backing onto this park for 25 years, it would be very upsetting if it was removed. Before this dog park, many people would have their dogs off leash in the football field and old baseball diamonds which resulted in a lot of dogs running away, being lost ect. This dog park has really brought people together as they can relax knowing that their dogs can't run away, all the while getting to know others in the community. Especially those who travel from opposite ends of town just to bring their dogs here.

Having a dog park where people have to pack up their dog and drive to, defeats the purpose in my opinion! It's not always easy packing up your animals, driving, finding parking, and doing the same thing to come home. I can now walk around the corner, have my pups play and run, and be home in 25 minutes. Whereas having to drive out of town just for an off leash park takes almost 1.5/2 hours, depending on how long your dog likes to enjoy the outdoors.

I do understand those who do not follow rules, pick up after their dogs, ect. But just like any other rules and/or "laws" within the city, those people should have consequences accordingly just like with anything else.

Thank you for listening,

Sarah Duncan

* * *

To whom it may concern,

I am extremely disappointed to hear that Guelph will be without fenced off-leash dog parks in the near future. I am moving from Ottawa, which has plenty of safe off-leash locations, to Guelph with my dog in the coming months. Many dogs, like mine, have high prey drives that cannot be overcome with any amount of training and therefore cannot be allowed off-leash in non-fenced areas too close to roads. However, I believe that off-leash exercise and playtime opportunities are absolutely integral to dogs' well-beings and mental health. You will be taking away this component of my dog's happiness, and many others', in the process of removing all fenced dog parks in Guelph. I strongly urge you to reconsider this decision, or to find a solution that appeases dog owners as well as nearby homeowners.

Regards,

Lana Katz

* * *

Please keep the dog parks.

Thank you

Margaret William's

* * *

To Whom it May Concern,

I feel it is important that I as a citizen of Guelph have an opportunity to voice my opinion about the recent vote to cancel construction on new dog parks and close the existing one. I have been using the park since it opened and my dog and I love it. I think the large number of people that use the park is a strong indication that this was something that was needed, and we need more. Opening the remaining dog parks will help to reduce the problems being experienced at Peter Misersky. Please reconsider this decision and instead focus that time and money on improving the existing park and building more. We can't wait another year.

Thank you

Kaleigh O'Driscoll

* * *

I don't think the fenced in dog park in Myserskie Park should be removed. I would also like to see the one on Bristol Street built.

James Walke

* * *

I firmly support the dog park staying where it is at Peter Misersky Park. I live 5 minutes (walking) from the park and my dogs exercise there every day for a good hour usually. Every day when I take them out in the morning, they get so excited because they know exactly where we are going. They could walk there by themselves, I'm sure of it! Having that space available, especially in the winter due to icy sidewalks, is so important to me and my dogs as well as other dog owners who we've met through using the park. In fact, as someone who works from home, it is the only real daily social interaction I get, let alone my dogs. I have made quite a few friends there. I know I am not alone on this. I was born and raised in Guelph and have lived here most of my life, and this is the first time I've felt a sense of community coming together. If the Bristol Street park were completed, as well as the Lee Street park, then I'm sure there would not be as many people at Misersky and the noise/parking complaints would not be such a big deal and the area would settle down. The fact that so many people are using the park should be reason enough to complete the other parks. There is definitely a need for enclosed dog park areas in the city. Off-leash is not the answer because people want a safe area they can let their dogs run free, knowing that they cannot get out. Not everyone's dog(s) are great at recall.

Also, from someone who lives very close to the park, I can honestly say that I have never heard any bothersome barking; in fact, I hear more noise coming from dogs on my street or from dogs whose backyards back onto the park, than I do from the dogs at the dog park.

Please reconsider letting the Peter Misersky dog park stay. It is a valuable resource for so many people on a daily basis and I would hate to see it demolished due to a few squeaky wheels.

Sincerely,
Merryn Nadalin

* * *

As a dog owner in Guelph, I IMPLY you to not let the voices of a loud few ruin a wonderful community element in Guelph. There were public meetings held on this issue and decisions were made after research was done. MOST growing cities have enclosed leash parks. Why can't Guelph? It feels like whenever there is some evolution to this city, a small group of people shut it down. PLEASE don't let this be the case here. Keep the dog park open!!
Thank you.

Nancy MacKenzie

* * *

Hello,

Fenced dog parks are much needed in Guelph because our dogs deserve to play and hang out with their friends in a safe environment!
Please DO NOT close the current dog park and open the one at Bristol Street too!

Thank you!!!!

Shirley D.

* * *

Hi everyone,

In anticipation of the upcoming meeting, I just want to submit a couple of recent academic articles that explore the effects of dog parks on the well-being of communities and people.

Please find attached, "Between a dog and a green space: applying ecosystem services theory to explore the human benefits of off-the-leash dog parks" by Isaac Middle (2020, Landscape Research, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01426397.2019.1580353>) and "On the Fence: Dog Parks in the (Un)Leashing of Community and Social Capital" by University of Waterloo Professors Taryn Graham and Troy Glover (2014, Leisure Studies,

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01490400.2014.888020>). Perhaps these studies may have already passed your desks.

Both studies underscore the important social benefits of such parks. They act as gathering places, create engaging spaces, and allow for positive interactions between dogs and people. Re: policy planning, Graham and Glover list several recommendations, including the establishment of Dog Park Committees. I would share this recommendation and suggest that Guelph might consider the benefit from such community input in a more formal, and ongoing sense.

I've had dogs my entire life, and am a strong advocate for responsible interactions between dogs and people. Daily walks allow us to get to know our neighbours – dog owners and not – and make for a nicer sense of community. An awful lot of people in Guelph have dogs and it would be nice to have the opportunity to allow our dogs to run off leash every now and then - it's good for them and makes them more social and friendly. Most dogs and dog owners are great, some are not so great, and perhaps it's a bit unfair to judge all of us based on a select (less than stellar) few. In hindsight, it appears that the roll out of the Peter Misersky Dog Park might possibly have been handled better. Neighbours have now raised valid concerns about noise and parking but I do hope there is still room for folks to coexist. Many are suggesting use of Eastview Park and the creation of a fenced area for off leash dogs – and I think this is a great idea. It's a beautiful park that our family has taken our dogs to for years. But I would hesitate to exclusively make use of these more remote spaces, away from houses, because they ghettoize the activity of dog play, and more importantly, they are hard for many folks in Guelph to get to without a car. I think it's so much better to have local neighborhood spaces within walking distance of most people. Like tennis courts, some patrons stay too late and create a ruckus. But rather than shutting down these valuable spaces for everyone because of a few, let's take a breath, and try for a more cooperative approach that helps educate everyone from all perspectives. It would be a shame to shut down the Peter Misersky Dog Park without having alternatives already in place.

Thanks for this opportunity to provide some input.

Best,
David Cameron

100,000\$ later, to close the park?

Guelph citizens rely on this park as an amazing outlook for their pets.

I know so many people that bring there dogs to the park, and it relieves there own stress and anxiety getting to see there dog have fun.

Talking with other parents, and buiding a community.

No one even goes to the park early, nor do they stay late enough (since it gets dark at 5pm) to disrupt anyones sleep.

Also, majority of the time im there, there is barely any barking.

Close it, and remind the people who wanted it closed that its more of their tax dollars.

Sydney MacDonald

* * *

Dear Ward Councillors, Clerk Office, Parks and Recreation Department, and Mayor,

I am writing to express my extreme frustration and disappointment with the City of Guelph's decision to close the fenced in dog area at Peter Misersky park.

It is the only fenced in park in the city, is a clean and large space, has plenty of parking, and is in a great location.

I have been at the park with my son and his dog and have enjoyed the time we spend there.

Everyone was respectful, responsible and courteous.

It was extremely frustrating to hear that the recent discussion regarding the fate of the park took place at 2:00 PM on a weekday when the vast majority of people are working and otherwise preoccupied. This leaves the floor open to certain people who not only have an intense grudge against the dog park, but also an overabundance of free time to invest into showing up in the middle of the work day to try and shut down a popular and important feature of the city.

I would ask everyone involved to reconsider this decision. Certainly keeping this open until you find another solution is the only answer.

Tim, Susan Runge

* * *

Hello,

Please don't close this park. You have no idea how happy the dogs are. The park only bothers a handful of people who live near it and benefits SO many dogs. They need this socialization and exercise in a place that allows them to be offleash. It is much better to compromise than to give in to one side. The idea to move the park 3 meters in and plant trees to help sound proof are great ideas. We are all apart of this city. It should be a win-win for everyone.

Best regards,
Melissa Van Roie

* * *

I believe there is a need for fenced in dog parks. The one built was too close to people's houses so I understand their frustration.

In mississauga there is the best fenced dog park ever. It is at Jack darling park and is built around the water treatment plant. It is the largest dog park in Ontario I think.

Study it and replicate it.
It is best of breed for dog parks

Karen Campbell

* * *

To whomever this may concern,

I am contacting you over the recent decision to close down Peter Misersky Park. It is very disappointing that this decision has been made as it is such a positive park for both people and dogs. I bring my dog to this park 4-5 times a week as it helps him to socialize with other dogs and burn energy as just walking him is not enough. It is unfortunate that the park was built in this location in the first place but that was not the fault of the dog owners and their dogs, it was the cities. You are punishing us for utilizing such a positive component of this community as it helps to build inclusivity and friendships.

Additionally, this decision has been made without an additional plan to build a new dog park. The tax payers spent 100,000 dollars (which by the way, is more than it should have cost), to build this dog park, and now is to be removed, costing tax payers more money. You should at the very least keep the dog park open until a new one is constructed, which I believe is the ultimate compromise in this situation.

Thank you for taking time to read this email as I believe this dog park is one of the things that makes Guelph a great city to live in.

Thank you,
Hailey MacDonald

* * *

Hello,

As someone who lives in the 35 Mountford condominium property, I have absolutely no problem with the dog park being left open. I am saddened to hear that it is closing as I think it is a great use of green space. I am a supporter of the initiative, even though I don't have a dog. I am a cat person myself. I do think it's great for those in the area to have somewhere to allow their dogs to socialize. Please feel free to use my name as a supporter of the dog park whenever needed.

Thanks,
Steve Dow

* * *

I would like to see Misersky park because it brings the community together...even if you don't own a dog you see people around watching all the time.

We have nothing on the East End of Guelph for dogs to play and run together.

Our tax payer's money already spent \$100,000 for the development of the property...how will we get that back?

The only time I have had a negative interaction while being at the park was by one neighbour who just can't seem to mind his business and rally's up other people.

I personally think it's ridiculous to rip out a park that has had such a positive impact.

If this gets voted out it's a waste of so many people's time and taxpayers money.

Carrie Harris

* * *

I am messaging you regarding the decision to close and remove the Fenced In Dog Park at Misersky Park at the end of the month.

I bring my dog to this park regularly to get social with other dogs, it allows me to socialize with people in the community in a safe environment off of the streets. The town has needed this for a long time and it is unfortunate that in hindsight council now sees that having it built so close to residential houses is an issue. I have not witnessed dog poop being left behind to make any kind of a smell that some complainants have claimed. I hope that the town changes its mind about removing it since \$100K has already been spent. I would love to know how fencing costs \$100K. There is no real seating or any extras to add to that bill. IF they do decide to proceed with closing it then I would hope you would do it on the concession that it wouldn't be done until an alternate has been established. Don't leave us out in the lurch.

Victoria MacDonald

* * *

I understand a vote has been made, but that it is still pending final decision. I'd very much like to speak in favor of keeping the fenced-in dog park as-is and operating.

I have lived in the immediate area for 36 years now, and my aging mother in the same neighborhood as well. In fact, she recently got a dog since the park opened in great part because it was so convenient for her to simply walk there in a few minutes; getting outside, socializing, all while the newest four-legged member of her family does the same, and enjoys his new freedom (he was a rescue animal). To hear of this closing is absolutely heart breaking. My wife and I have a dog who loves the park though he's very small and can't enjoy it on the coldest days of winter, he does absolutely love it. Having moved to the neighborhood with my wife when she and I got married from a small apartment in downtown Toronto was a big

shock to him, but boy does his little tail get wagging something incredible when he hears the word "park".

I've personally gone there just to socialize with people and enjoy the animals running around having a great time - without a pet in tow. I'm absolutely devastated that all the time and money that went into it, is expected to simply be wasted and forgotten over the complaints of a select few. There are literally hundreds of people that come from all around the city to use this park (which I realize is part of the complaint, but more clearly illustrates how desired such a park is, and why more should open, rather than the one we have being closed), and hundreds of dogs love it and enjoy it.

My parents bought the house my mother now resides in forty years ago, with promises from the city that that empty field at the top of the hill was going to have a school built within the next five years. The very school they had intended for me to go to once I was off to kindergarten. That obviously never happened. Ultimately a small park was opened, and a bunch of townhouses were built. Only after I had grown to adulthood did the park get any actual amenities. Unfortunately, nothing in all those years really did my parents and their new family any good. But last year, a dog park has opened. And that has done good for me, still living in the immediate vicinity, and my mother, also in the same neighborhood a great deal of good. My new wife (only three months married now) haven't got a family of our own (yet!), but we do have our little dog. My elderly mother's family has long grown up and moved away (though for me, not far), and she now has a dog. There are five lives that really, truly enjoy the leash-free zone in this park. And five hearts to be crushed to see it closed down.

I would very much like to add my voice and beg our Councillors to reconsider closing the leash-free zone. There may be a few people complaining and doing so in a well-organized fashion, but far, far more people are impacted for the positive by this park's existence, I can assure you. It's one of the few things in the immediate vicinity that regularly draws me out of the house, on foot; and into the community; and we used to need to drive to Cambridge to do it.

Paul Bahry

To whomever it may concern.

I live within a 3 minute walk of this fog park and inhaveto say it's been amazing to have. Not only is my dog Maxx very happy to go there but so are every other dog that frequents.

I have a hard time understanding why ita being closed as so many people use it. As well as an additional waste of tax payers money to have built athen to have to pay again to remove such an appreciated place.

Removing this dog park will not stop people from using the park for walking and running their dog including myself, I hope the people that want it torn down realize this.

My dog is 10 years old and we've been using this park for 8 years of it.. nothing will change.

Rick Hanlon

* * *

Good day,

Thank you for taking the time to read this email.

I am writing to you about the current and planned fenced dog parks in Guelph. In short, we love them so much, and are very excited for the one close to our home to finish being built.

It has been so lovely the past few months to be able to take my dog to the fenced dog park at Peter Mesersky. My pup loves to zoom around and roam freely within the safe confines for the fenced area. She has really come out of shell after meeting so many different dogs and people there. It's fantastic to see her happily wagging tail every time we get close to the park. She clearly loves it there.

For myself, I really appreciate being able to come together with other people, and their pups, and enjoy time together outdoors. I've made new friends, had wonderful conversations, and I always feel very welcome and safe at the dog park.

In speaking to other folks at the fenced dog park at Peter Mesersky, many of us are looking forward to other fenced dog parks being built around town, so we won't have to drive across town to use the one fenced dog park. Once another (or a few!) more fenced parks are up and running, more people will be able to access them too, and the high usage of Peter Mesersky will be spread between it and the other locations.

I really appreciate the efforts the city has made over the past few years to set all of this up, and make this happen, connecting with and asking for input from three citizens. It's really a step in the right direction for Guelph, to increase the usage options of the green spaces, to appeal to more of the Guelph population, and add another way for people to come together. Free access to green space, for recreation, exercise, and social interaction is so important for healthy communities and happy citizens, and that's saying nothing of the happy pups!

I am looking forward to more fenced dog parks in Guelph, and other green initiatives to improve the quality of life of the citizens of Guelph.

Again, thank you for your time and consideration on this matter.

Cheers,
Kim Kilpatrick

* * *

Hi,

I am writing my disappointment in the closure of Miskery dog park.

This is a park that families use and citizens rather keep both parks which is why I am writing this email.

Thanks,
Alim Nathoo

* * *

Hello,

Just passing along my views on the leash free fenced dog park; PLEASE keep it open! I would highly suggest implementing a second leash free fenced dog park, that is bigger and away from residential areas IN ADDITION to Peter Misersky. This should drastically reduce foot traffic at the Peter Misersky park and alleviate some of the issues that presenting. Dog owners NEED a safe place to let dogs run off leash for several reasons. Proper socialization is probably the most crucial element, especially for young dogs that are still in their formative development stages and may not have a good recall yet. This safe socializing environment helps dogs to become good canine neighbours that enhance people's lives and are safe, reliable pets. This benefits the community as a whole, not just the individual owner. Closing the current dog park will also be a huge waste of taxpayer money.

My suggestion: keep Peter Misersky open. Build a better, bigger dog park AWAY from residential areas in summer 2020 which will remove the pressure from the current park. These issues only exist because the demand for this space is so great. At the very least, keep the PM park open until another park can be built.

Thank you for reading.
Katie Trottier

* * *

Hi,

I'm writing to ask you to please keep the Miserski dog park. We don't have enough places where our dogs can run free in Guelph.

My dog is too old to join in the fun but it's truly a joy to watch all the dogs playing and running free.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Cobi Demmers

* * *

Please add my name to those that enjoyed the fenced in area for dogs. I have a small dog that normally doesn't get to play and run with smaller dogs. This was a great opportunity for him to make friends and socialize. I made new friends as well.

I really can't chance taking him to an off leash trail because bigger dogs see him and sometimes think RABBIT. Not good. The fenced in area for small dogs is great

Please don't close PM park until you find another suitable location.

Regards,
Lynn Tyler

* * *

To Whom it may concern,

I am a very heavy user of the dog park. I use it everyday if i can depending on weather and if i can get off work in time. My dogs would be crushed to if this park was to close. It would basically be like teasing them, saying look fun and then ripping it away from them and you would not do that to a child so why would you do that to a dog. This is very disheartening that the city would take this away from dogs and dog owners especially after spending upwards of \$100,000. Where is that money going to go now? Down the drain it sounds like if the park gets locked up and the fencing removed. I urge the city to not make a decision that they will come to regret.

Something to keep in mind, if you close this park and the next park comes in 2021, where would it go? there is nowhere not near residential inside the city so it would be on the outskirts of the city which Dog owners will then complain about so its a lose lose situation here. If people are abusing the park like Residents nearby say then lets station a Bylaw officer there occasionally and hand out tickets to owners without dog registration, or that are abusing the rules rather than closing the park.

Thank you,
Michael Wilkins

* * *

Please open the dog park on Bristol Street in Guelph. I need a need a fenced in dog park that I can walk my dog to. I don't drive and really need a close place so he can run free with other dogs and I don't have to worry about him running away or getting lost in the city. This is so very important to have in our fine city. Please save the dog parks and open new ones!!

Michelle Farrow

* * *

Hello,

I am writing to express my support on keeping the Peter Misersky park open. I am a regular visitor of the dog park with my dog. It is a great, safe space for her to run and be socialized with other dogs. I have only met responsible pet owners who are there for the right reasons. They pick up after their dogs, and I've only ever noticed minimal barking. The space appears to be respected and is a great place for community to be brought together. It would be doing a disservice to the city of Guelph to remove the dog park, along with it being a waste of money for it not to exist. I hope you consider this feedback.

Thank you,
Leigh Hardcastle

* * *

Hello

I just wanted to make sure that you are aware the impact closing the dog park and cancelling the other planned parks will have. I have two dogs one is older with a tumor in her nose and the other one is only two. They both love going to the park and getting some socializing and exercise in! The older one (Dakota) likes to socialize with the humans more than other dogs but loves the time there and being off leash and free to roam. The younger one (Nico) loves to socialize with other dogs and to run free. The dog park gives us the chance to make new friends and get out some of his insane amounts energy! The only way he tires out is if he can run! He can outrun almost any dog at the park which means if we try to get his energy out even if we ran with him we wouldn't be able to run fast enough or long enough to wear out his energy. Closing this park will negatively impact us in so many ways. I understand that some people have made very vocal complaints but I don't find they are fully honest. Any time we have been to the park people pick up after their dogs and do their best to keep them decently quiet. The money has already been spent and the park is up I feel that it would be extremely unfair and negatively impact all the dogs and their owners. Please don't close this safe enclosed space for our dogs they deserve a space to run and play with their friends as much as the human children deserve parks and safe areas to enjoy with their friends.

Kayla Robinson

* * *

Mayor Guthrie,

Thank you for reaching out to the dog owners of Guelph. I have been a dog owner in the city since 2014. My biggest complaint about the city was it's lack of leash free fenced dog parks. I would travel to Kitchener, Waterloo, and Cambridge to use theirs when my first dog was young. I used to use the Lee Street park, once he was older. Due to the lack of fencing once a week regular park users would suffer a negative experience, when a group of dogs would run into the kids park, or they would run into someone's backyard. I have used the new park once to three times a day since Peter Misersky opened. I have not seen a dog have a negative experience with a regular park user once. Peter Misersky is used a lot because it is the only one in Guelph. I am not someone who drives across town to use it. I live in the condominium on Mountford Drive. I have lived here since 2011. In 4 months I have met more residents of the condominium because of the dog park, then I had in the previous 9 years. Because of the dog park I have met and made friends with people from all over the city I would never have met. I attended the meeting at the Victoria Road Rec Plex in the fall, but I wasn't aware of a council meeting on the dog park. I hope this affects council's vote at the end of the month. This vote will affect my vote in Oct 2022. Mayor Guthrie, thank you for your support of Guelph's dog owners.

Chad Hagan

Guelph Councillors

Can someone stop this insanity please.

The dog park is no different to facilities provided in other communities. I have personally used one in a small community (Essex) similarly positioned across the road from homes.

It is appreciated and well used.

We have a few people facing the park, likely not dog owners who object to facing the dog park. I understand the owners object to the cars in and out of the provided parking. However, I have used the park many times and observe many people using the parking to enter or visit the homes.

Families that own dogs think of them as family and I have not met one dog owner who does not appreciate a place to let their pet go leash free and enjoy learning some dog social skills.

I can't believe that the money spent to create this space will be wasted and additional expense to dismantle and restore the park to its original situation is even being considered. When there are other dog parks made available around Guelph -

as there are many dog families, things will settle down. There is a need and it must be addressed. So sorry that a few have the power to ruin things for many when there is a real need.

I suggest if these people force a close, make them wait until a new facility can be provided in a "more suitable" space that only drivers can access and won't offend the locals.

Frances Vanover

* * *

Please consider this my vote to keep these valuable and necessary facilities in city parks in Guelph and future neighbourhood plans!

It give owners a place to lawfully let their pets off leash so they aren't a nuisance and hazard elsewhere in the neighborhood

Thank you
Cameron Lawrie

* * *

Good afternoon.

I just heard that Council has voted to remove the Peter Misersky Dog Park, and I am incredibly saddened. When I moved to Guelph 8 years ago, I was astounded that this small, friendly, apparently 'green' and outdoorsy community did not have a fenced in dog park when so many surrounding communities had them open for years.

At first the lack of a fenced in park didn't bother me too much, because I didn't have a dog myself (yet!). But fast forward a few years, and suddenly the most adorable little rescue dog from the Guelph Humane Society came into my life. A little wiener/pug named Faroe saved me, and my son, at a time when we desperately needed companionship, loyalty, silliness and love. Faroe is a social butterfly, and she loves to meet, play, and chase all-the-dogs, in addition to touching the hearts of all the Dog Moms and Dads along the way.

When the Peter Misersky park was finally opened, I was ecstatic that I could finally give my best friend the social time she deserved, and in a safe environment within the city of Guelph. She could finally check all the pee-mail messages that have been inaccessible for so long! She could finally meet all her doggie friends in a safe and leash-free environment. She didn't feel threatened because of the constraints of her leash, which meant that her behaviour was so different at the park. She was relaxed and care-free. Isn't that what every dog deserves?

The total bonus part of the fenced in dog park is the sense of community I feel when I am there. I love to meet all Dog Moms and Dads. I love to hear their

stories and share in our love and admiration for Man's (and Woman's!) best friend. Do you know how many dog rescuers, dog walkers, dog sitters, dog trainers, dog lovers, and doggie doggers there are in Guelph? So many! Guelph is filled with dog people. I love that I can share my ridiculous obsession with dogs with so many like minded people.

Please keep the park! I understand that it isn't perfect. Perfection is the enemy of progress. Just because it isn't perfect doesn't mean that all progress should be abandoned. I've always been taught to learn from my mistakes, not abandon something because it isn't perfect. There are ways to turn mistakes into valuable lessons. That is how we learn. Take the time to make a plan for the next park(s). Set defined stipulations and parameters for the new parks that will only help you succeed, and move forward knowing what you know now. But please DO NOT remove the progress that has been made, because there are far more people in favour of it than there are against it. Guaranteed!

My dog Faroe thanks you all for reading this long message. She told me she'd give me extra kisses and cuddles if she could continue to play at Peter Misersky for longer, until all of you at city hall have figured out the other options. She would even love to come and visit you at city hall if you want a break from the daily grind.

Kind regards,

Tricia Glassco
(mom to the best wiener-pug DAUG on this planet, Faroe)

I think this dog park should remain open for all the many dog owners in Guelph. Dogs need an area to run since there is a dog leash law in Guelph. There will always be neighbours to complain and you can't please everyone. They will get over it.

Penny Millar

Good evening,

This is in regards to the dog park located by the condominiums at Mountford dr.

Im saddened to hear about the possible closure of this park. I am a resident in the adjacent condominiums and am a dog owner myself. I love taking my dog here to play with friends, gain new friendships in the community and I'm saddened to know that this issue all steamed from a local resident in my complex who has an issue with this park. This resident has harassed dog owners by blocking off parking spots that aren't his with pylons, shinning a very bright light into dog owners eyes to deter them away. Yelled and swore at locals just trying to enjoy this park in peace.

This park has brought the community together, dogs together and I'm ashamed of how a fellow neighbour has not been very welcoming in this matter. This person has made the complaint that he bought the house knowing it was on a quiet end of the street to be peaceful, but the city owned park in front of his house was here before the house was built. He knew going into this house ownership that there is a chance of people "enjoying" the green space. All the media attention this person has created, has people even who don't live near the park asking for it to be closed.

I know this person is going to be at this meeting while this is being read, and I surely hope you understand what this has caused in your community among fellow neighbours and dog owners. Sad you have to ruin the enjoyment of others. If you want the peace and quiet away from civil life, there are plenty of houses for sale outside of city limits where you can enjoy that.

Next I think I won't be allowed to let my kids play in the park next to you, might be laughing too loud and too many friendships being made.

Nathan Bassutti

* * *

Hi there,

I'd just like to tell you how cruel and unfair closing and cancelling the dog parks in Guelph is—especially to people who may be in a position similar to me.

You see, I have severe PTSD and acute agoraphobia has manifested as a symptom of the trauma. Trying to get my dogs out to the dog park in Cambridge/Kitchener had become nearly impossible as I let my condition go undiagnosed and untreated (by the way, you guys need to really work on mental health access, too. It probably shouldn't take four and a half years to find even one therapist that one feels comfortable with and who is capable of treating severe diagnoses, but I'm getting off topic with that)

Since I found out about the Misersky Park dog park, I was elated and surprised at how often I was able to go. Not very often compared to a healthy individual, but night and day compared to Maple Grove.

It is a lot easier to get in the car and drive 5 minutes to the park than it is to do so for a twenty minute drive. The prospect of having to make that drive is what defeats me almost all of the time.

While I was disappointed that the planners behind Misersky weren't smart enough to install artificial turf designed specifically for use in high pet traffic areas, or to put waste disposal INSIDE the park's perimeter, and while the lack of benches made it extremely hard with physical injuries hampering my ability to even just stand and watch the dogs, I was still so grateful to have a dog park so close to help both me and my dogs.

The park wasn't perfect, but it was more than good enough to bring my dogs to. I feel like I am being punished by your decision all because I have to struggle with a physically debilitating and emotionally exhausting mental illness.

Why are you punishing me?

Angelica S.

* * *

Good evening,

I am sending this email in regards to recent talk of shutting down the dog park due to complaints. The dog park was a great addition to the community and gives dogs and owners the opportunity to socialize and enjoy the outdoors. Taking it away would be a great loss for everyone. The other off-leash walking areas that are not fences are less safe for dogs who want to run but may not be fully trained or anxious. The Hanlon off-leash park has been implicated in a number of cases of dogs getting drug toxicity from joints being left on the ground.

The time to raise concerns over the addition of a dog park was before it was built and the idea was first proposed. Taking it away now would be costing the city extra money and ruining a good thing.

I hope you take the time to consider our side of things before shutting it down. Or at least consider relocation.

Thank you,
Jessica Reeves

* * *

Good evening,

I am a Ward 1 resident and my pup and I use the fenced dog park at Peter Misersky almost daily. It has been such a wonderful space for her to socialize with other dogs and to get out lots of puppy energy in a safe, enclosed space.

I am incredibly disappointed to hear that the very vocal complaints of a few have led to city council to vote to close down the park and stop all construction or plans for future dog parks. I understand the frustration of the residents who live beside the park - it is truly unfortunate that they were not consulted before the park was built. But I do not feel that they have portrayed the park fairly at all. Yes, it does get loud sometimes. But any barking is never constant and is during daylight hours. The children in the adjacent playground as well as all of the school announcements from the high school down the hill are also sporadically noisy. If people were actually using the dog park after hours as is being claimed, those of us who

regularly use the dog park would be up in arms about this! I would be very interested to know what by-law has said about any calls that have come in from residents beside the park, what time the calls came in, what by-law officers actually found when investigating. It is very possible as well that dog noise could have come from someone simply walking their dog through the area, rather than using the dog park late at night. Or the noise could have been from the numerous dogs who live at the homes that back on to the park - most mornings when the dog park is quiet, there is a lot of barking from those backyards. I am also perplexed at complaints about the smell of the park - if there was a concern about smell, believe me, park users would be complaining about it too. The vast majority of dog owners who frequent the dog park are respectful of the space, and it is an incredible shame to let a few (if truthfully any) bad experiences as well as the loud opinions of adjacent residents ruin this entire project for the many, many people who love the park.

If it were possible to keep the existing park, perhaps it would be worth considering putting in a line of cedar trees to buffer some of the sound? (The proposal to move the edge of the park further from the parking lot will do very little for sound - like I said, the sound can travel, to the point that park users in the parking lot can clearly hear the morning announcements from the catholic high school on Victoria Road). Putting down either wood chips or gravel in the park to cut down on the mud when the ground is wet would also be a great idea come spring (grass really can't survive with the level of use the park currently gets).

If moving the park is the only option, please consider keeping Peter Misersky open until the other park(s) are built. Plus the more parks Guelph could have, the less busy each park will be. Of course Peter Misersky is so busy right now - it's the only option! Residents come from all areas of Guelph to access it - I've met people from literally all parts of the city. I have also heard that Eastview Park was considered as an option for a fenced dog park. This would be a great location, far enough away from residential area, lots of parking etc. but that the plans are already set and a dog park could not go in without something else being scrapped. Well, consider the use that a dog park will get. Every day of the year. Then consider some of the other things going in at the park. Now, I realize that splash pads can only be used in the summer, but they are also incredibly popular (as I'm sure city council is aware) - I don't think that the plans for that should be cut. But what about reconsidering the beach volleyball area? Again, this is an area that can only be used in the summer, and I am certain that it would get far less use than a splash pad or a dog park. It would be nice to have it all, but if something had to go, that would be my vote.

So many dog owners have come to rely on Peter Misersky park for their dogs, and really it has become a great little community. I look forward to seeing many of the same dogs and owners each morning when we arrive. I have not personally witnessed any poor behaviour by any park users, and like I said, I'm there almost everyday (sometimes twice a day). If someone was misusing the park, you can bet the other dog park users would be saying something - we all love this space and do not want to see it destroyed. Guelph is such an amazing city for green space and outdoor-friendly activities - it is hard to believe that there is at present only a single fenced park for dogs, and that it is now in jeopardy.

I would truly appreciate these views, as well as the views of other dog park users who love the space, to be heard as loudly as the critics of the park.

Thank you for your consideration,
Andy Timmerman

* * *

Good Evening,

I would like to submit my support for fenced in dog parks to city council.

We have been driving from the west end to Peter Misersky park because it has added such great value to our dog's life - our Husky now has a safe space to run and socialize. We have been there at least a dozen times and have witnessed nothing but good etiquette and respect for neighbours. For most of our visits there have been fewer than 6 dogs using the space.

As far as noise, I live in a house that backs onto Deerpath park and the basketball courts bring plenty of noise until after midnight most nights. But I would never consider complaining as I see it as part of living in an urban community space, and I get much enjoyment and use out of the park's amenities. The benefits far outweigh any negatives, and I am glad the kids are keeping busy and active playing basketball.

I sincerely hope you will keep the current dog park, and build the next one planned for the west end.

Many thanks,
Amy Moffat

* * *

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to plead with the City of Guelph to please keep the Peter Misersky dog park open! I will understand the need to close it once the new one is built in 2021, but until it is our dogs need a place to run and play and socialize safely.

Your consideration is appreciated.

Sincerely,
Tara Burton
Dog Lover and Resident of Guelph

* * *

Good evening,

I am writing to you today as a very disappointed Guelph resident and dog owner. I have been reading articles across several news outlet and I am shocked to hear of the possible closure of Peter Misersky Park. I have recently begun training/fostering a dog that will hopefully one day go on to become an Autism Service Dog for a child. Myself, and several other trainers within my company, utilize this dog park almost daily for crucial training, exercise, and socialization of the dogs. These activities are only 100% safe within a fenced in area, and are not allowed to occur off-leash in an unfenced area (as per our contract). As previously mentioned, I utilize this facility daily and without a fenced in backyard myself I have no where to turn to for proper off-leash exercise and training.

I believe it is a disservice to the community to remove the only fenced in dog park within Guelph. Without a doubt the decision to close the dog park is an extreme waste of taxpayer money, resources, and time, especially without near future plans of a new facility. I completely understand that the location of the dog park is not ideal, given it is in a residential area. However, simply closing the dog park and leaving dog owners without any other option is absolutely unacceptable. I am hoping you can understand that allowing the dog park to remain open until a new location has been determined is the only viable option. Additionally, council should understand that it is their wrongdoing in terms of the dog parks current location, therefore it is unfair to punish dog owners by outright removing the park completely.

I genuinely hope that Peter Misersky dog park remains open for myself, and the hundreds of other dog owners and their dogs in the city who genuinely need this facility. I hope council takes the above considerations into their decision making process.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration,
Paula Zimmermann

Not having available/accessible fenced spaces for owners to take their dogs to safely run around and exercise and interact is an important service greatly lacking in this city. If you vote to close the Misersky dog park and stop all plans for future dog parks that would be an absolute waste of time, money and a much need service for many residents of this city.

Please find a way to responsibly move forward.

Desiree Kendrick

Good morning,

I'm emailing in regards to the recent decision to close the east end fenced in dog park and cancel the others.

As a responsible dog owner, I can't tell you how disappointing this is. There is an enormous community of dog owners in this City and this is an amenity that is needed.

I strongly feel that opening the other two planned locations would ease a lot of pressure on the east end dog park and resolve a lot of the issues (parking/noise).

Dog owners in this city need a safe place to let their dogs socialize and exercise.

I implore you not to let a few disgruntled citizens, mainly Mr. Farley, ruin this for thousands of responsible dog owners and reconsider your decision.

Kind regards,
Fabio Enriquez

* * *

I vote to keep the dog park open and keep the one on Bristol street coming!
Thank you.

Alison LeDrew

* * *

Hello,

This email is in regards to the potential closure of the Bristol St Dog Park and I would like to voice against that. I have already voted against it but would like to express the need for a fully-fenced dog park in the area. Although a few residents are upset with the location there are many more residents of Guelph with dogs who would be very happy with a fully-fenced dog park. Having a park in a residential area is beneficial to those using it for it's accessibility. I personally do not drive and it is difficult to get my dog to a dog park within walking distance. Many other dog owners feel the same and wish to see this park stay open.

Thank you,
Rebecca Hest

* * *

Hi there,

I'm a border collie momma who loves her dog as if it was her own child. After having my dog attacked while at a pet store I've been so cautious as to where I bring my baby.

I've worked at campus estates animal hospital, and I've seen dog attacks from being on leash on the street.

This park is designated for owners whom know they're dogs behaviour and that off leash activities with supervision is perfect to allow their dogs to get the exercise and socialization they desperately need to become well adjusted dogs.

This park has been my saving grace. We go every Saturday and Sunday afternoon, never have I ever witness any misconduct from owners or animals. People are all pet loving, and friendly, dogs get to run around and be dogs!!

With the news worthy coyote spottings at the Hanlon off leash dog spot, owners haven't been bringing their babies there is fear.

We need this park.

We don't disgrace this park, all owners pick up after their dogs. There is no yelling, if anything the kids at the park make way more noise than the humans and animals in the fenced in area!!

Spending as much as you did for this spot for your Guelph dog owners, and to threaten to rid of it due to the people living in the area wanting more parking space is OUTRAGEOUS. I live downtown and have no parking. So I park my car 3 blocks away and walk to my home! Don't see me complaining!

Please reconsider for us. I beg of you.

Thank you
Erica Dunsmoor

Hello,

I am a concerned resident of Guelph, writing to you to express my desire for the Peter Misersky Dog Park to remain open. Guelph needs at least one fenced in dog park, (preferably more!!) in a city of this size. This one needs to remain open and the other two need to go forward with construction.

The decision to close this park, and stop plans for the other two that have been proposed, would be extremely foolish.

Melissa Goetz

Good evening,

I am emailing in regards to the full fenced dog park. I just wanted to express how thankful I am that Guelph finally opened a fully enclosed park where I can allow my dogs to run off leash. I know there has been talks of closing them and I think this is

a terrible idea as there is a need and want for enclosed dog parks in Guelph, which the current dog park along the Hanlon express way is not satisfying.

I'm asking to please reconsider your decision and to allow some more time. It's an established neighborhood and I understand the resistance to change, so all I'm asking is for council to allow more time to work through the growing pains rather than jumping straight to closure.

Thank you for your time
Brittany Hulme

* * *

I believe this dog park should be removed and the entire process deserves more consultation and thought. A shame so much money was expended with such a poor outcome.

Christina Tourangeau

* * *

Hello.

I'm One small voice. I am an animal lover and have lived in many cities in Ontario. I have travelled abroad extensively. Nowhere else have I had the negative experiences with dogs that I've unfortunately experienced in Guelph over the past 10 yrs I've lived here. I've been chased by so many dogs while walking or jogging; dog owners that don't leash properly or control their dogs safely is a dangerous issue.

I realize I am one small voice but thought I would advocate for not only no more dog parks but a greater education campaign about the need to safely walk and leash your dog so that all the citizens of Guelph can feel safe.
Thank you for your time.

Sincerely
Amy

* * *

I recently have become aware that the Peter Misersky dog park is being closed. I am a local resident, a street over from this park. I have been taking my dog to this park since November and have never once witnessed a complaint, smelled anything overwhelming or any litter around the fence line. It's obvious that there is going to be some opposed to closure and those for. I want to express why it should stay.

My dog loves to run, she is a breed that runs fast and loves to socialize. This park gave her that opportunity. She doesn't have the best recall when distracted by other dogs but it's also about her safety. Areas that are unfenced are never going

to be safe especially when traffic is so close by. There are ways to make both parties happy. This gets me out and makes my girl happy.

Why not move the fence line and add trees? (As proposed before in the tribune) Dogs bark so that can't be helped but dogs also bark in backyards, many of them on Leacock. Most of the noise is from them seeing dogs in the park. If it's about parking, post signs where people can and can't park, post time limits? So add a bushy tree line for dogs to be out of sight?

There has to be compromise, closing isn't compromise!

Thanks
Katie Holmes

* * *

I am voting to keep this beautiful feature open. I have been over there multiple times as a bystander (not with dogs) and never noticed any loud noise or parking issues. I was there on all days of the week too and it was always the same.

I also live near lee st and would love to see the dog park continued there.

Thank you
Amy Vowels

* * *

My friend and myself created the Facebook group Dogs of Guelph which has grown exponentially over the last two years. It's a wonderful place for everyone to come together for just about anything in our dog community. There has been a lot of positive feedback. Please for the sanity of hundreds of us, we are so tired of hearing all the back and forth on this topic. We deserve the park and so do our dogs. All the time and money that has already gone into this is crazy. So, please, keep the park up and move forward with this project.

Cassidy Chambers

* * *

Please don't close the current fenced in dog park until you build a new one. It's not fair to be punishing dogs and dog owners. We are all tax payers and the dog owner community is being treated unfairly. We should not pay for the mistake that the city made by not consulting the residence of Peter Misersky Park.

Thank you,
Barbara Harcourt

* * *

To whom it may concern,

I would really hope some common sense could prevail in this issue and rethink the knee-jerk reaction to a select portion of the population. If you do this what is next? Preventing kids from playing on swings as laughter is too loud. Exiling families from having picnics because their lunch creates garbage in trash bins. Eliminating sports from all playgrounds due to cheering parents and the noise of a ball going through the air and what about Guelph being a green community? The plan is to look at putting these parks in non-residential areas, does that not mean users of these facilities will now have to load their dogs into a vehicle and drive to a park. Then parking lots will need to be developed and paid for!

Let's try and be smart and look for an agreeable option. Parks are for everyone not the select few that live beside them! For the record, I am a dog owner that does not use the parks but understands the value these have.

Dave Strobl

Caving under pressure is not the answer. Was excited for the one to open by the skate park. Why cancel them all??

Tom Post

I am sending this email to express my sadness and disgust to councils potential decision to close this dog park and not build the other two at Bristol and Lee parks.

These parks are needed in these communities which is clear considering the uproar from other citizens. The fact that the proposed changes that were supposed to be discussed February 3rd by council were not and this knee-jerk response by June Hofland just to silence one arrogant man is ridiculous.

Please do not waste anymore taxpayer money on this and proceed with the changes outlined in the proposal as those make sense.

You can count on it that many dog owners will be present on February 24th at city hall.

Sincerely,

Darija Nelson
Dog owner and resident of Ward 3

As former president of a dog park association, I thank you for the recent closing/canceling the off leash areas. They are a magnet for untrained and unsocialized animals. I have seen normal play time ruined by the arrival of just 1 dog. You can usually tell when that type of dog is coming near the park, but you

will never get the owner to acknowledge the issue. I have seen everything from squabbles, and fights to deaths caused by poor owners. It is bad enough walking a dog on leash here in Guelph, thank you for eliminating some of these places.

Shawn Killeleagh

* * *

Hello Clerks:

I was quite dismayed to hear that Peter Misersky Fenced Leash Free might be closed. So many want these facilities; very few do not. Perhaps there were some measurements misaligned for the Peter Misersky Park but to cancel it entirely including the future proposed Fenced Leash Free is a case of "throwing the baby out with the bathwater" and expensive.

Guelph is a special city. I retired here absolutely on purpose. Having a Fenced Leash Free was the "cherry on the cake" for the great reasons for living here. Why such a progressive City would cancel another great idea to accommodate their citizens is beyond my understanding.

I can list all the good reasons for keeping the Fenced Leash Free but I would be just reiterating the same points I made in the first survey. I think you know all the reasons.

Please reconsider and keep the Peter Misersky Fenced Leash Free and build more for the citizens of Guelph.

Thanks you.

Barbara Miller

* * *

Hello,

Just wanted to show support for the fenced in dog park in Guelph (Peter Misersky) it really helps for socializing dogs that are unable to run on their own, including my own pup. If it ends up closing I hope there will be another opening up.

Thanks,
Nicole Ross

* * *

Don't close the dog park please!
I don't have a car and it's the only place I can let my dog off leash!

Maggie Horst

* * *

Good Morning,

I am emailing you to voice my opinion on the closing of the Dog Park. I firmly believe in keeping it open. I am a new dog owner and CAN NOT stress enough how much we need a dog park and more then one. I have meet so many other dog owners and have had the opportunity to play and get to know their dogs as well. I was very afraid of letting my dog in a confined area at first. All these thoughts went through my head of dogs could be aggressive, but it had turned out to be a great experience and was so happy that they opened a dog park. Even we have encountered that a dog doesn't really get along with my dog and barks at him. We have worked together to have the dogs get along. It is a work in progress as we are not always there at the same time. But when we do end up there at the same time we alternate letting the dogs get their play time in. My Koda has grown up so much and has learnt so many good things with his visits at the park. All the dog owners are very respectful of the rules and watch their dogs. It is a great place for dogs to get their energy out not to mention it a great place for people who have limited time or ability to always walk their dog. Here you know you are safe environment not only for yourself but your dog as well. As I could never take my dog to an off leash as he would just go to whatever grabs his attention be it people, rabbits or other dogs. This is a safe place for him and CAN NOT stress enough how important it is to have these parks. I was shocked that there was no posting at the dog park for any meeting or that there was no discussion about the dog park. I believe we need more then one park as I have met people from all parts of the city having to go to that one. I even met one lady that was visiting and she was thrilled that she could take her little corgi to a park to play. With more then one park open it would take the stress off of everyone migrating to the one park. There is a great need for these parks. I often ask is it fair to close down the park. Would we close down a play structure because kids are loud and screaming having fun or if their space was a hang out for drugs or other activities. No we would all pull together to make it a safe environment so why shouldn't we give that to our dogs. I live across from a park and I can tell you the language from some of the other kids while playing basketball isn't acceptable behaviour but I know the need for kids to expel their energy and be kids while they can. I VOTE FOR THE DOG PARK TO STAY OPEN and open another one or two. I have also made my co workers aware of the shutting down and they will be responding as well.

Thank you for giving us the chance to be heard.
Kiara Tennis

* * * *

Hi there,

I am emailing to petition the closing of the Peter misersky dog park off of mountford. My dog loves it there and we abide by all the rules. If we could not close it that would be great!!

If there's anything else you need please let me know.

Best,
Erin Tusa

* * *

Hello,

I would like to express my concerns about closing the dog park. First off, \$100,000 of tax payer money will be wasted. The park has already been built. Please don't waste our hard earned money. This is a great location for a park because there are many dogs in the neighborhood. Secondly, the city should find a way to make the situation better because there are more people that like the park than the handful it negatively impacts. Thirdly, the dogs need a place to play and socialize with the safety of a fenced in area that is easy to get to. There are already limited places that dogs can go. Puppies can learn to socialize in the park. Some dogs run away but that doesn't mean they don't deserve somewhere to go. Lastly, people with physical challenges whom own dogs need a place for their dogs to go to. I've personally seen a man that regularly goes to the park that has a tough time walking his dog. He and others who have a physical challenges deserve this space.

Above all the dogs LOVE the park. If you watched the dogs play, I hope you'd see how happy they are and change your mind about closing the park.

Thank you for taking the time to read my email.

Sincerely,
Peter Traplin

* * *

Hi there,

Just sending an email to voice how good the fenced in dog parks are-- i heard word that they may be removed in Guelph and it made me pretty upset! please don't take them away from our furry babies.

Thanks so much for all you do,

Janine Finlay

* * *

I wish give my support fenced in dog parks we need more not less.

Doug Watson

* * *

Hello,

Just yesterday I heard that the city plans to possibly shut down the Peter Misersky dog park and I think that is a horrible idea. I use this park quite frequently as my pup loves to go there to play with other dogs and it's great exercise. He gets to run around off leash in a contained area and have fun and exert his energy there rather than in my house. It's great place for both dogs and humans to be able to meet each other and become more of a community. Anytime I have been there people are respectful and we even let each other know if their dog has gone to the washroom without them seeing (we hate abandoned poop to). Just yesterday I was talking to another dog owner who happens to live in the complex across the road where people or a person is complaining. He goes for a walk every night and has never seen people there late at night playing with their dog. I for one think that is the most ridiculous complaint, who does that, seriously? And as for the noise, I have hardly heard a dog bark there. And if they do it's not for long. Do these people also complain about the kids screaming having fun tobogganing? If they do that's pretty pathetic of them. I know there's another park beside highway 6. That park has no fences, there are coyotes around, and drug users go there to do their thing a leave the paraphernalia when they're done. It being an "off leash" park with no fences and trees everywhere with long grass it's hard to see what your pup is getting into all the time. Just let week a few dogs were admitted to the vet because they found the drug paraphernalia and some how consumed it. If you're going to take this park down the city better take better care and make sure that the only off leash dog park isn't going to harm our dogs. I'm quite upset the city has decided to shut this park down. Has the city actually done a survey on the people in that complex to see how many are upset about this park? Spend more of the tax payers money to take down the 100,000 dollar fence the city just put up around the park. Just put trees up or something at the front of the park, so the grumpy people that don't want to have fun can sit in their home and look at the trees rather than complain about people having fun and ruining it for everyone.

Thanks
Andrew Pedersen

* * *

Good afternoon,

I am writing to provide my support for the construction of new, and management of current, fenced in dog parks in the Guelph community.

Dog parks are an excellent place to socialize your dog with other dogs of all ages, breeds and sizes, as well as people! Adequate socialization is very important for dogs, and prevents them from growing up afraid to approach other dogs, people, and/or approaching them with aggression. Sure, there are designated fields we can use to socialize on in 'off-hours/seasons' but they are not fenced in. This is a huge

concern when following lost-dog prevention processes. Additionally, passerbyers without dogs, do not always appreciate off-leash dogs in their community parks.

Dog parks provide a wonderful opportunity for mental and physical stimulation. I personally, have a very active, high-energy dog that requires a lot of exercise daily. It just isn't possible to give him the kind of exercise he needs, without allowing him to run off-leash; even better if other dogs are around to play. 3 long walks a day, will never compare to the opportunity an off-leash dog park provides to run around.

Lastly, dog parks provide an extra level of safety in the community. A space away from people walking by, cars/motor vehicles driving by, bikes, etc.that provide both dog owners and community members a sense of security. People are less likely to have their dogs off-leash in prohibited areas, if they have safe spaces in their local community to make use of.

I do however, suggest the 'rules' of the dog park be updated to match surrounding municipalities. For example, prohibiting dogs that are not spayed/neutered, is very important to dog park safety. Having in-tact dogs at the park, causes fights. This very simple update in the rules, will increase safety tenfold, and is enforced at almost all dog parks in surrounding communities. People with dogs that do not like other dogs, rescues that haven't been socially tested, etc. should obviously not use the park. There are many responsible dog owners with friendly dogs that use the parks daily, and you will be hurting this entire community of people AND their dogs.

I understand there has been some controversy regarding the placement of the dog parks in the community. You will never make everyone happy, never. Sure, taking them away would make some community members happy, but all the while making another large group of people unhappy. It will also encourage people to use other spaces to let their dogs run off-leash, causing the concerns that fenced-in dog parks are addressing. Cancelling the project is not the answer, not to mention a huge waste of taxpayer money. Please, be sensible, and do not let a man that wrongfully harassed people day-in and day-out for using a park for its intended purpose, that taxpayer money funded and the city planned, be the catalyst of this project. Dogs are a huge part of the Guelph community, and having safe spaces that are locally accessible, is very important.

Please feel free to reach out if you have any further questions.

Thank you for your time and understanding,
Jaime Drohan-Luttmann

* * *

The closing of the one and only fenced dog park in the city is absolutely ridiculous. The nearby residents had plenty of time to voice concerns and complaints before and during construction and if they didn't receive action then, then they should not be able to now. The city made its decision and spent tax dollars on this park and it would be a waste of everyone's time and money to close it.

I understand the residents have raised concerns about parking and noise, however the parking was never intended for the residents use, it was always intended for the pre-existing park.

The noise is another issue that is essentially non-existent. Yes, dogs bark, but the park is only open during daylight hours - hours that do not carry heavy noise restrictions - and the decibel levels within the nearby homes are likely not exceeding the excessive noise level. Has the city done any testing within the nearby homes to prove otherwise?

To shut down the park would not only be a massive waste of funds, but it would say that the City of Guelph does not care about the dogs or their owners who rely on the space to exercise their pets.

Caving to resident protests after the money has been spent and the park opened, is an admission of council's total disregard for responsible city spending.

Nicole Visentin

* * *

Dear whomever it may concern,

I believe you should keep the leash-free park for dogs as there are few places owners can let their dogs free (in a safely fenced area). It's for the community and the users of the park enjoy it, isn't that what it is for? Other cities and towns have many fenced in parks and people learn the rules and use the park appropriately. People who don't like it just don't need to use it.

I foster a lot of dogs so I don't like to let them off leash in places I know they can just run away if scared and the fences in park lets them express themselves in a social environment without being able to run into dangerous situations out of my reach.

Please keep the park
Keely Patterson

* * *

Hello,

I have heard news that there are now plans to close Peter Misersky park and halt other off-leash areas around Guelph.

This is why I'm submitting my opinion on the matter. Guelph needs areas for dogs to run OFF-LEASH. My dog, and I'm sure many others, will not have sufficient quality of life by walking them on a 5 foot leash at all times.

If you permanently close these parks, alternative options should be made. Open some trails to off leash areas or something equivalent, especially in the north end. At least the south end has the Hanlon park, however this is so inconvenient for those of us in the north.

But, truly, these parks should just remain open. I have a bus stop right beside my house. Children yell and scream every morning and I haven't complained because children in cities and subdivisions is a fact of life. Dogs are the same and why are dog owners at so much more of a disadvantage in this town? We have to beg for areas to play and then a few bitter home owners can just take that away?

There is a survey on thatguelph.ca that already has over 400 votes to keep this park open:



Please reconsider and give this city the resources it needs for ALL COMMUNITY MEMBERS.

Thanks for listening,
Dana Vadala

* * *

To the Guelph City Council,

I am writing to express my displeasure with the decision to close Misersky Dog park and halt construction on two other dog parks within the city limits.

My family moved to Guelph five years ago with our elderly dog. We didn't seek out dog parks at that time as she wasn't particularly keen on them, and she didn't need a lot of high-energy exercise in the last years of her life.

After she passed away, we adopted a bonded pair of dogs, both one year old. It did not even occur to us that the same city that housed OVC would not have even one fully fenced off leash park.

As we got to know the dogs, we knew didn't want to take them to the Hanlon park, as it is not fully fenced and directly beside a busy parkway. Further searches for Guelph fenced off leash dog parks turned up nothing. We ended up driving to Kitchener whenever we wanted to visit a fenced dog park, which is ridiculous.

Please do not close the fenced dog park until you have actually opened an alternative for people who are in the position that I was two years ago. I know now that my dogs will not run off, so I can avail myself of the tiny strip of grass that is designated as "off leash" at Mole Hill park (directly adjacent to an open play area for toddlers and a busy parking lot.) My dogs can wander back and forth while joggers who don't realize that this little patch of land is designated as off leash yell at me for letting my dogs run freely.

Sincerely,
Alison Hunter Stewart

* * *

I read on CTV News this morning that the Committee has recently voted to close the Peter Misersky dog park but that the final decision will be made February 24. I want to express my concern to Council.

While I agree that there should have been public consultation prior to opening the dog park, now that it is there (and being actively used) a few people's complaints should not cause its closure without first having public consultation or at minimum an attempt to mitigate the cause of the complaints/concerns of the neighbours. The report did not specify what those complaints are but I am certain there are likely solutions.

IMHO fenced in Dog Parks are a great thing for a neighbourhood. It provides a healthy environment for dogs to get exercise and encourages human social interaction; which is sorely needed in our world these days. My experience at dog parks has been wonderful. Unwinding while chatting with like minded animal lovers with a built in icebreaker (eg. "oh what a cute dog, what breed is he?) has been a great way to overcome social anxiety, reduce stress and spend time outdoors.

Though I do not live near there, I know from experience being able to walk to a dog park is a wonderful thing. Having to drive to a park is discouraging to many people - and dogs who don't like car rides.

I hope Council will reconsider this closure. Thank you.

Dawn Burnett

* * *

Mayor and Council Members,

I am writing in support of the removal of the dog park in Peter Misersky Park. I live within site of the dog park.

Parking is a large issue of why I support the removal of this park. There are only a limited amount of spaces and they aren't just for the dog park, they're also for the kids park, soccer field, skating rink, community garden etc.

This also causes congestion on the access Hadati Road. People are parking on both sides of the curve at the bottom of the hill creating a hazard on the street.

(See attached video, car almost getting hit trying to back out of driveway).

Off Leash; people let their dogs off the leash as soon as they come into close area to the park, on the sidewalk and into walking up the hill. Just this morning at first glance out the window a lady walking her dog off leash into the park, its not just sometimes.

Dogs go running off, and with the kids area close by its just a matter of time before we see more incidents with dog/children.

Tobogganing Hill:

For years this had been the ONLY tobogganing hill anywhere close to the neighbourhood. Many days after school and weekends with kids playing and having fun is no longer happening. My daughter is heartbroken. You can't toboggan into a fence...

Community Input:

There was a total lack of support from the community and neighbouring community where you have placed this dog park. It went up quickly and not alot of feedback.

Dog howling:

The dogs are going crazy, the noise is so loud, getting the neighbourhood dogs into a day long bark fest is really hard for my husband who has to sleep during the days.

The smell:

Oh man what is that smell? When the wind is blowing down the hill, it comes right into our home, wet dog, urine poopy smell. I can't even enjoy open windows in the spring now as I couldn't this fall.

I fully support the closure of this park.

Thank you for your time,
Amanda Scott

* * *

Please let there be designated dog parks! In a city of this size, with so many dogs, we really need them!

Jessie Baynham

* * *

I am writing to ask that you consider keeping the dog park at Misersky park open, and continue with plans to build more dog parks (particularly the Bristol st park).

With the opening of new parks, there will be less users at the current park. This will lead to less traffic, noise and mess.

Our city is in desperate need of fenced dog parks.

Thank you,
Tara McIntyre Herne

* * *

To whom it may concern,

I'm writing today in support of keeping the PM park open and finishing the construction of the Bristol park location. I live in the apartment complex across from Bristol park and we were very excited for the park to go in. Our dog is a hound who doesn't have recall so the only time he can be off leash is in enclosed areas. These fenced parks are the only way he can get the freedom to socialize and play with other dogs off leash. I know a lot of complaints from residents near the PM park location had to do with the increase of traffic to that area, having a second park location would deal with that issue completely. I've spoken with several dog owners in my area that currently drive to PM park to use that facility while waiting for the Bristol location to be finished. PM park showed how much facilities like this are needed for this city so please take this into consideration when making your decision at the end of the month.

Regards

Taylor Sugden

* * *

While I am sympathetic and understand that there has been issues with the dog park at Peter Miserky Park.

I do not believe this should cause the immediate closure of the dog park.
I feel like increased enforcement of the rules and strict hours of use would be the more appropriate way to deal with the issues that have come about.

Furthermore would not adding more dog parks not itself alleviate some of the issues at Peter Miserky?

To fully stop the construction of other sites seems harsh.

Increased consultation sure but completely stopping seems wrong.

Thank you for the opportunity,

Ryan Bannon

* * *

Good Afternoon,

I am writing you to voice my opinion on the closing of the DOG PARK. I feel it is extremely important to have the dog park remain open. I am a new dog owner and it has been a wonderful outlet for our family dog. He has had so much fun meeting new dogs. It has also been beneficial to him for socializing and behaviour improvement. He gets excited that he is literally pulling us across the field to get to play with the other dogs. It is a safe place for dogs to interact with each other. I do understand why the location isn't the best place but you should of opened more than one for starters at the same time, so people wouldn't migrate from all parts of the city to enjoy. That would surely alleviate some concerns. But if you proceed to close it, in my opinion it was a waste of money and time. As you can see even in rain or shine or snow that dog park is extremely important and needed. It helps everyone. It get used. Build another before considering closing the best thing that has made the dogs really happy.

Sincerely,
Sammy Ageil

* * *

Hello,

My name is Caleigh Sprague and am a citizen of Guelph, I work here with homeless youth.

I am beyond saddened, upset and disappointed to hear the plan to close the existing dog park and not follow through with the other 2.

My partner and I moved to Guelph 2 1/2 years ago from Toronto for work. When we first moved we were sad to see there was no fenced dog park. Living in Toronto and having a beagle boxer mix dog, dog parks made having a high energy dog possible. We ended up renting a house to get a yard. We struggled financially, tried

to get roommates but in the end realized we were stretched too thin, we thought we might have to leave Guelph.

What a massive relief it was to find out a fenced dog park was open and two more coming. For a dog like ours it is SO important he gets an area to run and play. Walks simply are not enough. Being a beagle he could run off in a large area like the Hanlon, fenced parks are a must.

We specifically looked for apartments near the dog parks since we share between two of us and needed to be able to walk to these parks. We found a place a 5min walk from the Bristol site (at the time we thought, what luck!) We would only have to get through a month with no proper outdoor space...

And now here we are 4 months later. I feel broken. We planned our living situation based on promises YOU made. I am signed into a year lease in an apartment we rented specifically because of it being near a dog park. How can you do this to people, how can you do this to their animals? Do you think because it's a pet I should just "get rid of him"?

I never understood why people distrusted politicians and government before ... now I do.

When our lease is up we may just look outside of Guelph. You have shown us how little dog owners matter in Guelph. If it was a child's playground, with noise and parking issues, you would have never closed it... but who cares if it just effects dogs and pet owners right?

It is also simple math. If you only have one dog park for an entire city, it will be over crowded with too much noise and too many cars. Guess what would have happened if you kept your promises to open the other 2 parks? You would have had 2/3 less traffic at the first park because now there are 3 to divide the load.

You made me lose faith in anything this municipality has promised. I've never felt like my local government cared less about me then I do now. Shame on you.

Ashamed to live in Guelph,
Caleigh Sprague

* * *

To whom it may concern,

I am saddened to hear about the closure of the dog park. I feel the majority of people using the facility have been responsible and respectful of the neighbourhood. I have used the dog regularly despite living a 2 min walk from an off leash area.

Often the off leash area works well for our family but we worry in winter during certain conditions of our dog going on the water and falling thru the ice.

The dog part has been a great way to socialize our younger dog and reinforce positive behaviour.

I feel many of the usage pressures of noise traffic and wear and tear on the current facility would have been lessened with moving forward with the additional proposed sites.

Thank you
Roxane Bernhard

* * *

Hello there,

As a citizen of Guelph for over 20 years I feel the need to weigh in on the proposed closing of the fenced in dog park at Peter Mizersky park. I think it's a great thing to have in Guelph and should have in Guelph but maybe it's just been put in the wrong place. I feel that Guelph should have it in such a place where barking dogs and increased traffic wouldn't bother nearby residents. It needs to be someplace a little more rural, a little more industrial maybe?? Please keep the park as is and look for a better place. I'm not sure where the other fenced in parks are proposed for but I think if they are close to residential that you will find the same problems. Thank you for your time.

Sandra Macdonald

* * *

Come on folks. Is Guelph going to be the only city in Ontario, in Canada, to lag behind on this? Councillors do your research and see what is out there. Don't listen to your constituents. Go visit a few off leash parks. London Kitchener Waterloo Vancouver Toronto look at the map. Yes the Peter Misersky Park was not well thought out, but because of one VERY LOUD voice, we are going to capsize and give up??

This is ridiculous to the point of embarrassing. Get going and build some dog parks. Keep our critters safe and happy and socializing.

I lived in Europe for many years (20) and loved taking my dogs, yes dogs, into restaurants where they were mostly greeted with a water bowl, a bone and a place under the table to rest. And this city cannot even provide a park or three???

This is a sham and a shame.

Feel free to contact me below and thanks for your attention- make this city sane and safe.

Barbara and the fur kids

Don't ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive and go do it.

Because what the world needs is people who have come alive. H Thurman

Barbara Wilkinson

* * *

I believe the closure of the Peter Misersky dog park is a mistake. I was so proud of Guelph city council , deciding on a leash free park in the first place.

At first , it seemed to me , that Guelph was starting to take a more caring approach to the little things like other cities , such as Kitchener have done.

Forcing a closing of this park after a mere 5 months, and after spending \$100,000 building the park , is yet another bad, no wait "STUPID" decision made by this city.

If we are to relocate the park ? , " WHICH I DON'T BELIEVE WILL HAPPEN "then at least leave the current location open , till a relocation site is available.

The cancellation of Lee and Bristol Parks , makes me not believe anything good will come from this.

This is not right. Although there have been some complaints , it should not cause such a closure without first finding a new location.

Anytime anything good happens here In Guelph , Naysayers and complainers wreck it for everyone else.

How is it that this city continues to constantly make the wrong decisions?

These people whose grievances , although exaggerated in numbers, as well as complaints, win yet again....

Well done winners..I for one am not surprised!

I have lost any respect for this city.

Do the right thing for once..

Shame on you city council...

Robert Nicol

* * *

To whom it may concern,

I've lived in Guelph since 2006. 2 years ago we adopted a rescue dog & about a year ago we adopted a second. Both dogs are well behaved & get along with other dogs, but having adopted both as adults (who were both street dogs) I'm not convinced either will return 100% of the time I call them if they were to see a squirrel or something at a non fenced off leash park.

I did try the off leash park on Lee Street with limited success when we got our first rescue. Not only did my dog sometimes ignore my calls, so did everyone else's. The dogs would run into the trees or people's back yards at the edge of the park. So I don't take them to those parks anymore.

Before we had a fenced park they had either the back yard or walks, but neither really provide the needed exercise. When the fenced park was put in last year it proved to be very good for them. Both dogs got a lot more exercise & our newest rescue who had been somewhat timid gained a lot of confidence there which translated to a happier & more relaxed dog at home.

I doubt any amount of years or training will 100% stop them from chasing squirrels, so for their safety I will never take them to an unfenced park.

As far where a park should be, that's a tough one. If it's too remote it's of little value to most. Taking the dog to the park shouldn't be "an excursion".

The very same complaints residents have of the current park could be said & used for basically anything new anywhere. At some point all those houses had a large green space & having added a row of townhouses would be considered displeasing to the previous residents while increasing traffic to the area & impacting available parking.

The same complaints could said for new schools as well. Increased traffic, increased noise, increased litter.

I assume the smell refers to the dog waste receptacle in front of the park which not only is a terrible design but also in what I would consider a lazy & inconsiderate location. It would need to be actually in (or at the edge of) the park for dog owners to want to use it properly as they don't want to leave their dogs unattended to leave the park to use the receptacle. Having it right by the parking lot is easy for a city worker to get to it but means everyone using the parking lot has to smell it.

Basically, when you buy into city living you essentially accept that your living environment will evolve as needed for the general population. You have to live on a large piece of land far away from the city to not be impacted by other people (as much).

As a life long dog owner I personally don't think there should be any unfenced off leash dog parks. I know that no amount of training can 100% overpower a dog's instinct.

Sooooo, simply add a fence to existing off leash parks.

Greg Roth

* * *

Hello there,

This email is in regard to the discussion of closure for the Misersky Dog Park. For all of the dog owners in Guelph that love this park, including myself, PLEASE keep this park open. We've read the articles, we never knew about the meeting this past Monday that was held (no one told ANY of the dog owners, how fitting), and there is bias in some articles that I've read. If you have a dog, bring it to the park and see for yourself. I have a young hyper lab pup, who loves other dogs. Since it has started getting dark earlier, I can say that 9/10 of the times I am the LAST one leaving that park no later than 6:30pm because it is dark. And I stay to play fetch with my dog when everyone is gone. He does not bark, not even at home! And the ODD time there is that one dog that comes and barks for maybe 2min till they get settled. Are you really going to take the dog park away for the 2min of barking of a nervous dog? Also the concern about the poop bags- I've maybe seen the green poop disposal overfilled once and if anything that is not a dogs owners problems that has happened, it must've missed a pickup. Honestly, just come and see the park itself in action. Come on a weekday evening around 4:30, come on a Saturday afternoon and see for yourself. A lot of dogs need, love, and can't wait till their owners get home to go to this park. When I turn on the street my dog knows where we are going, we're going to see his friends. Don't take the only fenced dog park away from all the dogs who are waiting by the door to go there. I could go on longer about how this park is needed, like how some dogs need to run and not just be walked on a leash for their health, how some dog breeds need to be fenced because they are deaf, blind, or simply love squirrels and will chase them when they are seen, or how dogs can have anxiety and just need a couple minutes to realize the dogs are welcoming her to the park when they all run to her. THE 2mins OF BARKING IS NOT WORTH THE LOSS OF THIS PARK. Enough said. Just come see it for yourself, you can't vote for something that you haven't seen in action. And if you're a dog owner, bring your dog. Let the dogs decide.

Mariah Crevier

To whom it may concern,

Please keep the Peter Misersky park open for all our furry kids. Guelph does not have any other fenced in designated dog parks. My dog truly enjoys being able to run around with his friends and taking this away from him would break my heart.

Thank you,
Morgann Rollin

Dear Mr. Mayor and Council

This letter is written in disappointment that you would even consider taking away the fenced dog park that is already built and scrapping the other two.

I was so excited when you announced the fenced in dog parks. Finally somewhere for the dogs to run and play. Every City around us has them. But..... a few neighbours complain and you back down. Why is their voice more important than the thousands of people who have dogs and use the park.

You picked the location at Misersky Park, yes I do agree, not the best location.....but it's there now and it works. No matter what time of day, it is always packed with dogs. As for the noise complaint of barking.....that is nonsense, some days you may here the odd dog bark but most days nothing. As for the complaint of parking..... I have never been when I couldn't find a spot.....the residents shouldn't be in those spots anyways, they have driveways. Why is it my fault that they have more cars than their driveway holds.....why are they entitled to extra parking privileges? I'm sorry but this makes me very angry.

I live in the West end and drive 20 mins across town on a regular basis. It is worth it to see my dog's face light up and tail wagging as soon as we turn on to the street...he knows he gets to run and play and see his friends.

The City has put up so many new playgrounds in the past years..... are you going to tear them down if neighbors complain the kids are to loud. What about the skating rinks in winter.....better shut those down too if we are being fair.

Our City is by-lawed to death for every little thing....we can do nothing in this City.

Let us have a dog park.....in the least COMPROMISE. Let us keep the dog park that is already built, the money has been spent. How do you justify spending \$100,000 to build a park then just throw it away....that is insane. Those are my tax dollars you are throwing away. This council has no concept of financial responsibility....lets spend, just raise taxes...68 million for a library no one will use.... yeah lets do it.....do we have the money....NO....but who cares, do it anyways..... what's a 100 grand compared to that..... well to me that is a hell of alot of money. If the City has money to throw away, I will gladly accept a cheque.

Do the right thing.....show us that our voices matter...show us that dogs matter!!!

Kristy Holdaway

* * *

Hello,

My name is Jennifer St-Pierre, and I live with my family in Guelph. I wanted to provide my thoughts on the recent announcement that Guelph will close its only enclosed dog park, and plans to halt development of the two other fenced in dog areas. I have never had a dog, until October 2019. I would therefore not classify myself as a 'dog person', per se. However, my daughter has autism, and just

received an Autism Assistance Dog Guide from the Lions Foundation of Canada – 'Thea' joined our family on October 3rd, to support my daughter.

Thea is a wonderful, exceptionally well trained dog. As the beneficiary of such a dog guide, we have a suite of requirements we need to uphold for her care – for example, vet visits every 6 months, daily grooming and teeth brushing, nail trimming, exercising and socializing. When a dog guide (or any dog, for that matter) does not have the opportunity to socialize with other dogs, they increasingly get distracted when they DO randomly meet another dog in public. Therefore regular socialization is a critical component of her care – such that she can do her job.

The fenced dog park provided the perfect opportunity for her to be a 'dog' with other dogs, meeting this socialization requirement. You see, we are actually not allowed to have Thea off-leash unless it IS within a fully fenced enclosure. There are at least 8 dog guides in the Guelph area, just through the Lions foundation alone – likely more (probably you have this information, as we had to register her with the city and provided proof she was a dog guide).

So all I would like to say is – there are many people, for many reasons, who need to use a fenced in dog area. It is safer for the dogs (no risk of running off, or running up to a person not prepared or wanting to greet a dog) and the people. As I was historically not a dog person, I can also understand the residential concerns of a few, who did not want the dog park there. But there must be a better compromise which can be reached, other than fully abandoning plans for off-leash dog areas?

Happy to chat further,
Jennifer St-Pierre

Hi,

I'm contacting you regarding the potential closure of the new Peter Misersky fenced-in dog park (as well as the cancellation of the others that have been planned). I am not in favour of this decision, especially since the laws regarding letting dogs off leash in other areas of the city have changed. Until an appropriate alternative is available, I would be extremely disappointed if the park were closed.

This type of facility is something dog owners desperately need, and other places that I've lived have been far ahead of Guelph in terms of having these areas available. We pay fairly high property taxes in Guelph, relative to other cities, and to see that money wasted on planning and development only to have the park closed after less than a year is irritating.

If the location of the current park (and planned parks) is unsuitable, a new location needs to be found, planned and developed before closing this park. I would urge

you to do a better job of surveying the locations in the future, this type of waste of taxpayer funds is unacceptable.

Please ensure that my concerns are forwarded on to the appropriate individual(s).

Sarah Bonin

* * *

City of Guelph,

Thank you for building the fenced dog park for our community. Peter Misersky Park is a great year-round-use city owned facility in the heart of the Grange Hill E. Neighbourhood. The park supports users with an Ultimate frisbee field, tobogganing hill, children's play structure area, community garden, fenced dog park, an open non structured area and ice skating, when mother nature cooperates.

The fenced dog park has been open for 4 months, and that is a very small sample size to justify making a decision to close it. Given time it is likely that the novelty users will decrease and as the media attention decreases so will new spectators. 1,370+ responses were received by city staff via the online survey, phone survey and meetings. Only 28/160 stakeholders attended the local meeting to discuss the early days of the Peter Misersky fenced dog park. Many of the -ve comments, both spoken and written, during that meeting were no more than political bashing and were not specifically relevant to the day to day experiences at the dog park located at Peter Misersky Park.

I believe the 22 meter setback for the fence, on city property, from the Condominium property is significantly more than most single family residences have with back yards and barking dog issues.

I suggest the following opportunities for improvements can be successfully implemented:

- •Reduction of dog park users – One suggestion is for the installation of an entrance key swipe card/fob system administered by the Guelph Humane Society. Cards/fobs would be issued with proof of licensing in the city of Guelph and current vaccination & health check records, for a donation to the Guelph Humane Society. This would reduce the numbers of users from other centers as well as non-compliant Guelph dog owners.
 - Intro dog training/socialization sessions held at the Guelph Humane Society promoting benefits of professional obedience and barking training. Perhaps local qualified professionals would support this initiative.
 - I am confident responsible users will continue to share best practices when using the fenced dog park. I suggest 4 months is too short for self-supervision to be successful, especially during the initial learning

curve. There are still users who need to understand this facility may not be the best fit for their dog.

- Noise issues for the closest residents is a real concern, especially for those who are home during the day. There are 124 homes in the condo development in addition to residents who live along Mountford Dr., Hadati Rd., Leacock Ave and Auden Road. The comments and concerns identified during written and TV news reports, in my opinion, are repetitive, overstated, some resolved, and delivered for their sensation factor. A real estate agent has indicated to owners in the condo development that the dog park would not decrease property values and in fact could be a draw for purchasers.
- I suggest traffic congestion at the entrance will decrease as numbers of users, over time, will naturally drop off. A speed bump and yield sign will help manage drivers. There are 24 city owned parking spots with 2 that are designated handicapped, along the easement. None of the parking spots located along the easement are designated for local home owners. The condo provides adequate resident and visitor parking.
- Many responsible people currently using the park have voiced solutions for the tendency of owners and dogs to collect in a group near the entrance. This occurrence could also be improved with the placement of benches along the back fence which I believe would draw the people and dogs further away from the residential easement side of the park. Continued self-supervision by responsible users will educate people on the benefits of moving while inside the fenced area.

This past Sunday my dog Pepper and I enjoyed our time in the fenced dog park with several others from our community. Pepper is a City of Guelph licensed, vaccinated, obedience trained quiet 6 year old boxer. Her prey instinct still sometimes overrides my wishes when a squirrel makes an appearance. We still walk the neighborhood to maintain and reinforce her on leash manners. While we were at the park children were building snowmen near the newly updated play area and other neighbors were tobogganing on the hill near the Auden Road entrance. Unfortunately the ice skating rink has been a tough accomplishment this year.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts,

Sincerely,

Suzanne Symons

* * *

Hi,

If the idea is to close a dog park is because of a few complaints, then would it remain open if there were more complaints not to close it?

Dogs unfortunately can't be dogs if they are constantly walked on leash. This was the only way they can run and just enjoy the life they deserve. It was about time that this city finally put a leash free dog park but now are considering closing. All because of complaints, dogs don't complain, think of the dogs. These same people once they get their way will then move on to something else to complain about. It will never end. You can end it now by telling the complainers to move along.

Jenny Fraser

* * *

To whom it may concern,

Please consider keeping this park open, even if it means to relocate it to a different area.

Some people can not be as physically active as their dogs need, also it is a safe area to have dogs off the leash and helps to prevent it where it is not allowed.

Perhaps giving it another chance to dog owners so they consider this a privilege and respect it more.

Initially there may have been a bit more barking because of it's high use when it was new which seems to be the biggest complaint from neighbors.

Please consider keeping it open.

Thank you
Laurie Grist

* * *

Thank you,

That week is one that I am unable to work remotely in Guelph so below is a statement I would like read:

I have been a long time resident on the Auden Rd area of Guelph. Currently I split my time between Guelph and Toronto to take care of both work and aging parents. For the last 15 years we have all walked our dogs off leash at the Guelph Jail which has functioned as a unofficial dog park for years. There is a lovely community of dog walkers there and we know everyones name and their dogs name. For my parents, the area is seen as 'safe' for them to walk inside the city. In Toronto, I get a similar experience with the six fenced in dog parks all within walking distance from my house. No matter where you live in Toronto, it is basically guaranteed that you are within a short walk or drive to one. The communities that form around these spaces are beautiful and many folks use it as their social space, especially aging dog owners.

Over that last 5 years the prison has slowly become less and less accessible. Parking shutting down, access bridges being taken down, etc. It has brought up a discussion with my parents of where they are able to have safe outdoor activities. When the dog park opened close enough to walk to on city paths, we were really excited. For them, it is a way to continue to be active while interacting with their dog in a legal space. I tell them the 'tails' of respectful walking fenced in dog areas that so many other cities have figured out - near my second place in Mimico we have fenced in hiking spaces like High Park and Etobicoke Creek, but we also have various smaller sizes of dog parks like Humber Bay.

Ultimately these spaces are not just for dogs but smart city planning for community and an aging population. I have "walked my parents" as they walk their dog every morning I can. They have bonded with all types of Guelph citizens, shared their stories and successes with their neighbours, and helped people grieve as they lost furred family members. Guelph is not just a bedroom city for Toronto that people are passing through, it is a living space where people want to retire and continue to be active outside their houses. Animals and dogs have been proven to be incredibly impactful for physical and mental health and wellbeing. Guelph is behind in how they plan for our aging population and create smart neighbourhood design but I hope that the solution is not to give up on trying to create access to safe legal spaces for folks and their furred companions.

I want to close up with a story (my family is Algonquin and it is our way). This morning I was at a park on the east side of Toronto prior to work. I ran into a group that only knows each other through the park. One older woman gets picked up and driven with her doggo every morning by someone who used to be a stranger. They are the normal '7:30am' crowd and I am just a guest. They asked me to help sing a birthday song for a young woman who was turning 16. None of them were related to her, but they have watched her grow up. Her house is near enough to walk to the park alone. After about 30 minutes this group drifted out as the waves of community turned over. Everyone knows each others dogs names and were so excited to meet my Luci. This isn't unique here, it is every park across the city I go to. It is the only place I get this sort of interaction and a primary reason I chose to get a dog. Guelph is new to this sort of community building, but it is a path I highly encourage they continue on. My hope is to someday be able to live full time in Guelph again, and I want it to be a place my whole family can feel welcomed and connected to.

Laura McPhie

Please add my voice to those resisting the closure of the existing fenced in dog park, and termination of plans to build a second.

Amenities like dog parks need to be neighbourhood-based and walkable. Moving them to the outskirts of town, or closing them entirely, is poor planning.

Once the city has multiple dog parks, usage will be spread amongst them and the demand currently seen at Misersky will lessen notably.

All urban dwellers need to cope with the inconveniences of living near others in a dense, active environment. Different issues impact various residential sites: traffic, schoolyard noise, construction, sports fields, special events, parking, snow clearance, etc.. No residences should be able to claim a right to freedom from a normal urban occurrence stemming from the actions of typical lifestyles.

Thanks for considering all views.
Susan Carey

* * *

I am writing to the city of Guelph to express my strong support for the continual (preferably increased) presence of fenced-in dog parks in our city.

I am a 9-year resident of this city, first as an undergraduate student studying animal biology, and currently as a veterinary student at the Ontario Veterinary College. I am heavily involved in the animal care and rescue world, not only through my education but also through my experience with canine rescues, humane societies, farm sanctuaries, and welfare focus studies.

Not everyone loves dog parks, but they are a necessity and a provision that belongs as much as arenas, pools, etc. Parks are crucial for canine socialization, resident health (physical and mental), sense of community, and overall wellness.

The city should be ashamed of its total waste of "consultations" prior to the opening of Peter Misersky park, considering the rapid turnaround of an apparent closure announcement. \$100 is a lot of money in relativity, and the reversal of its spending after a mere few months is unacceptable.

I believe the city will find itself inundated with dog owners expressing their support for dog parks, as well as outrage towards the gross mishandling of this whole issue. If resident objections were an issue at this location, it should have been addressed long before installation.

Whatever the next steps in this process, the city must not be left without a fenced in dog park.

Carleigh Cathcart

* * *

I firmly believe that parks in the City are for people-and people walking their dogs. I do not agree with the City spending taxpayer dollars to establish leash free dog parks- people who wish their dogs to be leash free should go outside the City to

areas such as Guelph Lake. This way all people can visit all parks with families without worry of dog attacks and knowing that their park tax dollars are well spent. Our family has had dogs for over 40 years and have never had need of a "leash free" park.

Anne Holman

* * *

We need to get this proposal going ! No dog park in an established .Neighbourhood.

Ans Bader

* * *

I am a dog owner and was thrilled to have a safe place to take my dog where he could socialize and run with other dogs. I was looking forward to Bristol street opening as it is closer to where I live.

While I understand the frustration of the near by homes, I don't think a complete closure is the answer. A lot of money was spent on this, so why not find a compromise?

Maybe move the fenced area closer to the middle of the park? Maybe plant some trees to cut down on noise. Definitely have it closed by 6pm nightly. Maybe have people pay for keys to control who uses it, and to make sure their animals have had all vaccinations. I have heard this works in other municipalities.

Susan Bowman

* * *

Good afternoon,

I wanted to reach out regarding the upcoming vote at the end of this month, to make sure my voice is heard.

Specifically regarding the Peter misersky park, I think we can all agree it's close to the houses and truthfully, I wouldn't love it either. I think it could have at least been placed elsewhere in the same vicinity. But ultimately, the city did research, decided to put it there, and it wasn't a secret. There was media coverage before ground was broken, and the detailed plans on the city website well in advance of the site being built.

Also, its already been paid for, and will cost even more tax dollars to remove. Considering that guelph has some of the highest municipal tax rates per household in the country, that's really not a responsible or reasonable use of those tax dollars.

Also, the staff report to counsel (that was based on the results of online and telephone surveys, drop in discussion dates and research prior to construction, as

well as the subsequent Q&A sessions held specifically to hear and address resident concerns) actually recommended to instead move the entrance back several feet and plant some trees and bushes for visual and noise buffers, as well as bump the Bristol location back further than the planned location and i believe also plant blocker trees, and cancel the Lee street location. I feel this is a fair compromise, so I'm really not sure how city council moved from unanimously voting in favour of the parks and their original locations in summer of 2019 to now a complete scrapping of the entire project.. resulting in a sizable financial hit to city taxpayers (and honestly kind of a slap in the face to those who faithfully pay their annual pet license fees) who must now again travel outside of the city to use alternate facilities.

All because of a very vocal minority launching a series of complaints (many of which are categorically false, and many of which come from one individual who has been harassing lawful users of public space for it's intended purpose, manipulating users by lying about by laws and park rules, threatening to call police for the lawful use of the space, impersonating city officials by placing pylons in public parking in an attempt to discourage park usage, but that is neither here nor there) from people regarding the use of land ... that doesnt belong to them. Perhaps the condo corp should not have built homes butting up directly to public space. Or perhaps the owners should try to remember that generally, you need to purchase land if you want to control the space.

Unfortunately I think it doesnt mstter where the city puts the parks, some people are going to be selfish and feel entitled to space that isnt theirs. I think its best to employ some sort if reasonable compromise that wouldn't break the budget or set a precedent that neighbouring homeowners have the ultimate say on what happens to adjacent land, while meeting a long standing demand of the overall community, even if it was met many years after neighbouring cities found the time and space for theirs. Perhaps if guelph hadn't been so resistant back then when there was a lot more land available, it wouldn't be in this position now.

As a guelph resident, tax payer, home owner and dog owner, I implore the Guelph city council to revisit this issue. Please consider the overall need to the overall community, rather than capitulate to an aggressive vocal minority.

Thank you,
Rachael deVries

* * *

I am an 81 years old woman my legs are a bit unsteady. Like a lot of other senior citizen I like to walk on Bristol but if they put a dog park here we will not be able to get any exercise with the amount of cars coming and going as our part of the road has no side walk. Please rethink the dog park

Mary OKane

* * *

Hello,

I'm writing to express my support in keeping the dog park open at Peter Misersky Park. Not only does my dog love the park but it really brings the community of dog owners together.

It is a real asset to the neighbourhood and it would be a terrible waste of resources to close down this park.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Andrea Bevilacqua

* * *

To whom it may concern,

While I may not be someone who uses the Peter Misersky park daily, I needed to voice my absolute displeasure over hearing the councillors decision to close the park at the end of the month.

I frequent this park with my family and friends and love to bring my dog there. I was overjoyed when I heard about the park opening FOUR MONTHS AGO.. sadly I've only been able to use it a few times before I found out the city let some bully tell them to close it down. The few times that I have been there; it's been quiet, one or two other dogs - stoop and scoop!

Since when has our city ever stood for this? It's disheartening as a young person to see an entire council get pushed into making such a fiscally irresponsible decision as this one. Where is the Justice in that? The democracy?

Well, the city invested their (citizens) money and their (citizens) hearts into this park - we trusted and believed that the city and its councillors would find a way to make this work.

I still trust that the city will make this right, without needing to close the park.

Those of us who don't feel comfortable at Hanlon Creek or an unfenced sports field deserve the opportunity to work on training our dogs in a setting as perfect as the Peter Misersky Park. Its a great location and accessible for my whole family - including Grandma, and my nephews. This is also, bearing in mind that the coyote problem is only getting worse and we need safe places to play with our dogs, apparently. Moving the parks farther into the country only puts the dogs further at risk, and adds a layer of inaccessibility that I'm sure you'll hear about. One of the best parts of Peter Misersky park is that I can walk there with my dog - not drive.

Imagine building ANOTHER set of dog parks only for nobody to use them? Lord, fix one problem before starting another!

Please no more empty promises of "the future"... we've waited long enough.

Do The Dogs Proud!
Maddie Shipsides

* * *

Really leave it open. How many complainers are there 2 or 3? This is a knee jerk reaction to too few people seeing too many dogs and people enjoying our park. Wow where does it stop too many kids playing?

Todd Pyke

* * *

Please don't close the dog park! This has been a special place for my family. We have recently had a death in the family and have found the dog park to be a place of community and healing. As I'm sure you know, dogs are so therapeutic and it has been part of our healing process to sit at the dark park and be around all the happy dogs and chat with others over our love for our animals. Our pup is super friendly and loves to socialize with other dogs and people. He is a runner, so if ever gets off leash he will run away to greet every person and animal he can find. The dark park has offered him the freedom to run and meet everyone off leash and learn to come back to me. Without the dog park his urge to follow a scent and curiosity results in him dashing out the front door and a crazy chase ensues across the city. Since the dog park, I can allow him to go free and get that pent up energy out. Since the dog park, he has not run away. We live our lives siloed from each other, and the dog park was a refreshing way to connect with other people. Especially during our grief. I think it is a huge mistake to close the park. It is my favourite spot to go on my day off, and as a social worker at a busy hospital, I find it has become a part of my self care. I understand the complaints from the residents that live nearby the Peter Misersky dog park, but I beg you to leave the dog park open, at least until a new one is built. Please don't leave us dog owners high and dry.

Thank you!
Laurie Trace

* * *

Good morning,

I am absolutely devastated at the news that the fenced-in dog parks in Guelph might be closed down. This is heartbreaking.

Pets help people and cities thrive.
Pets give unconditional love, companionship and purpose.

Pets get people outside for exercise and social contact.
Pet owners have less depression, anxiety and loneliness.
Countless other places in the world are making their cities a better place for pets.
Why is Guelph failing in this regard? Why are pet owners' voices not being heard?

Please do not shut down the fenced-in dog park until something else is completely built elsewhere. We have been waiting for these amenities for years, and now you're taking them away from us?

I ask you to please reconsider your decision. Please take the time to look at this website to help encourage you to make Guelph a better city for our pets, and in turn for our citizens:

<https://www.bettercitiesforpets.com>

Pets do much more for people than you realize. Pets should be one of the top priorities of the city. Make the right choice for us.

Thank you for your time,
Caroline Fontaine

Dear Lordmayor and councillors,

My name is Joseph o' Kane I'm 83 years old I worked at the Guelph correctional centre for 26years, I bought this Condo at Bristol st because it had a nice small park on front of our Condo, I've been living there for 10 years now, I watched the Kids play soccer from my balcony, all summer, and you took that away, without giving us any notice, Please don't put a doggie park in Bristol st it will effect our seniors who walk up and down this narrow road some with walkers, also the car park is facing our two Condos, This will be noisy with dogs barking and doors slamming, This is a Senior living area and we don't need this at our ages,

Thank you,
Joe o' Kane

Hello

I am writing to express my concerns related to the closing of an already established dog park at Peter Misersky Park in Guelph. I take my dog to this park on a regular basis-it creates a safe place for my dog and dog owners to gather and socialize their dogs. This is city owned property whether it's for dogs or children there is always the possibility of noise-the home owners knew this when they purchased the property. I pay property taxes that are increasingly steadily.....why not use Franchetto Park as a dog park and move the sports field? This way insuring an east

end dog park. I wanted to share my concerns and ideas. Thank you from a concerned east end dog loving and owning resident.

Stephanie Varcoe

Good morning,

As a resident of the Junction area of Guelph, and owner of two dogs, I was beyond excited to hear that an off-leash park was planned for Bristol Park. Now those plans are in jeopardy, due to the I believe mostly unfounded concerns by a few people in regard to the Misersky Park. I certainly hope council will not throw the baby out with the bath water and cancel all plans for future dog parks as a result.

As a resident of Waterloo Avenue for the past 12 years, I have watched the neighbourhood go from crackhouses and numerous incidents including violence and petty thefts to a community that has really begun to thrive. An off-leash area at Bristol Park is a natural extension of the changes to the neighbourhood. The deserted park would now be a hub for dog lovers and neighbours and a positive step for our neighbourhood. Living here has not always been easy. Now with Fixed Gear open up the street, the new shared space at Edinburgh and Crimea, and the proposed dog park, people are getting out into the neighbourhood and we are seeing positive change and growth. Let's keep this going!

I wish to register to have my concerns heard at the planned council meeting on February 24th.

Thank you,
Kelly Hughes

Dear Mr. Guthrie

I am writing to voice my displeasure at the announcement to close the Peter Misersky dog park. As the one fenced dog park in the city of Guelph, it really is the only safe space to allow dogs to socialize in a controlled, off-leash environment. Socialization has been beneficial to my 10-month-old Labradoodle Honey. The park has allowed us to practice many of the skills taught in puppy class, most importantly learning to come with distractions. This, in turn, has led to an increase in her safety level as I know that she is able to come on command in any given situation. Honey's confidence level has increased since coming to the park regularly as she is able to interact with a variety of dogs and their owners. Once a timid dog, she now happily seeks out other dogs to play with. For the most part, I have found owners to be responsible for their pets and respectful of the park and its' neighbours.

I would ask that you reconsider your decision to close down this valuable asset in our community. The dogs of Guelph deserve to grow, play and prosper in the royal city.

Sincere Regards,

Nicole DeBeyer

* * *

To whom it may concern,

I am emailing you today to plead that Peter Misersky Dog Park should not be closed.

While I understand the distress this dog park may have on the few local residents, the city should also acknowledge the effect this will have on the hundreds of locals who use that dog park everyday, myself being one of them.

Having that park in place has done wonders for myself and my dog. He is finally able to run free in a city where he has never been able to before. Due to the extreme costs of single family homes with fenced backyards, all my poor dog has access to is a 10x10 partially fenced townhouse yard, and without the dog park, that is what he will be left with. Yes there are other 'off leash' dog parks in Guelph, but NONE of these are safe due to their close proximity to major roadways and the fact that they are not fenced. There are many other solutions that can be made instead of this, but the city seems to be deciding to take the easy way out and caving instead of coming up with a productive plan that benefits all, for example; 1. Keep the park open until construction on a new one has finished (perhaps fence in one of Guelph's already leash free dog parks) 2. Until this time, post signs indicating that the dog park may not be used from 8pm-8am and allow it to be reported to by law.

**Little advice, the next dog park to be made, should really consider turf, as the climate and the amount of rain Guelph receives will destroy the park as it did this Fall.

Thank you,
Kayley Teal

* * *

It has been my pleasure and my little dogs to visit and use and enjoy the company of the other dogs and their owners. The socializing aspect is very important and also the exercise that my dog gets is huge. Both contributing to her good health and happiness. I'm writing to ask the council to re-consider closing this off leash dog park until a suitable replacement can be found and installed. I was there on Saturday afternoon when quite a few dogs of all sizes were there frolicking about

and playing and running and chasing each other with lots of delight and on the hill beside the dog park young children were playing on their toboggans screaming and laughing and having fun. A really pleasant way to spend a while.
I ask sincerely for council to vote to keep the park until a suitable replacement is found and built.

Regards,
Pauline Wilcox

* * *

To Whom it may concern,

I've been informed that the Misersky's dog park along with a few others are under consideration for closing. As someone with a large dog that needs room to run and the inability to provide him with a fenced backyard, I rely on dog parks for him to get proper exercise. We have very few fenced dog parks in Guelph and it would be unfortunate if they were to close down. On behalf of myself and my dog, along with many others, please do not close down these parks. I hope that you reconsider your views.

Thank you for your time,
Lisa Barrie

* * *

If you guys decide to close it I think it be a great idea to open one that's not near residential. I'm all in for the dog park and I do get that it's too close to houses. Please have a dog park. I don't care where but so have one. Thanks

Van

* * *

Good afternoon,

I'm reaching out to make a suggestion on the Mistersky dog park issue.

I do not use the park very often but have been there a few times. I have never experienced anything negative while at the park and have observed that users were very friendly and conscientious about picking up after their dogs. However, by this fall, the play area for large dogs had become quite torn up and muddy. I think that this is a testament to how badly the city needs fenced in areas for dogs to run.

As for the location of the park, it's in a built up area but it's very accessible and lends itself well to accommodating dog owners with special needs. Given the increasing trend in therapy dog demand, I would expect that more accessible dog

parks will be needed. The reality of this is that these parks will be needed in other built up areas.

I have heard many complaints about parking. Perhaps one solution for the Mistersky park would be to add or move parking and add another set of gates?

While I do sympathize with people who don't support or want the park in their neighbourhood, I think that there is a need for accommodation and inclusivity. To date, Mistersky is the only fenced in public park in Guelph that will do this.

In terms of future parks, I suggest that council reevaluate those plans to incorporate lessons learned from the Mistersky issue and to take into consideration the needs of current dog owners and potential future owners.

Many thanks,
Robin Smart

* * *

Please do not close the dog park as we really enjoy it for our dog who likes to run!

At least find an alternative!

Stephen Trace

* * *

I am writing regarding the misguided decision made at the February 3 Committee of the Whole Meeting. In the revised agenda, there was the following planned topic:

*8.2 PS-2020-02 Leash Free Implementation Plan 140

With the recommendation: That the Leash Free implementation plan as approved by Council on June 24, 2019 be amended to remove the proposed fenced leash free facility at Lee Street Park.

I am unsure how a simple recommendation to remove a planned but non built fenced dog park can result in the removal of an approved plan and existing fenced in dog park. This decision is exaggerated by a minority of not in my backyard (NIMBY) homeowners that have manipulated media and responses to get the Peter Misersky Park shut down. This is a disgrace and the fact that hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars are proposed to be wasted is unacceptable.

As an owner of two dogs, we have visited this park and used it to help with the socialization of our puppy when it first opened. I acknowledge that there has been a learning curve with some dog owners and time of use based on conversations with the other park users. But this park is a positive feature and it is fantastic seeing a public space used by Guelph citizens regularly, This is a success story.

I was approached by some of the angry nearby residents that were unhappy with the park and verbally abused on numerous occasions. These are the individuals playing victim to the media and this council. There has been no change to property values, and if the same situation was occurring with screaming happy children in the adjacent playground, I doubt their concerns would be heard. The City did it's due diligence with posting notices and consultation, it was not until after the fences installed and the park used that these citizens "noticed" the dog park. I find this very hard to believe.

Please do not remove the leashed in park at Peter Misersky, or the other planned ones. They will be used more than the existing playgrounds in the City and on a more frequent basis. I want my taxpayer money to go towards features being used, like this park is. I want to continue to use this park for years to come.

On a side note, please remove phone surveys as a form of public communication and consultation. The home phone is no longer a common feature in residences and is not representative of Guelph citizens when used. I know the Guelph Public Consultation team is aware of this, and should use other means to communicate with citizens.

Thank you

Brian Holden

* * *

Dear City of Guelph Clerks

I have been using the Peter Misersky Dog Park for the past three months and favour the continued provision of this dog park. I take my dog about five times a week. I have seen countless dog owners and their dogs enjoying the use of the park. Each owner supervises his or her dog, but usually the dogs play freely and most get a good run.

Twice I entered the dog park around the noon hour and my dog and I were the only ones in the park. Soon others came to join us, so I told them "Welcome to my dog park" as I take pride in its existence, and it benefits both owners and dogs alike.

I understand that some dog owners have not been courteous or followed the rules for hours of the dog park. I am surprised at these reports, and that apparently nothing has been done to correct infractions and ensure that they do not happen again. Yet, I usually go in late afternoon and have not seen anyone abusing the park.

I suppose that there must have been hundreds of dog owners using the Peter Misersky Dog Park. Closing it will definitely be a public relations blunder. It's good that this facility was offered, but closing it will leave a black mark against our fair city. I was born in Guelph and am now a senior citizen. I recall the friendliness of

the earlier days of Guelph. I hope that this feeling and treatment of people will continue in this instance.

As the Peter Misersky Dog Park was not investigated fully enough, I guess, we should not compound this with another error. At the very least, we need to keep the dog park open, and try to correct any ongoing problems, and then close it once a new site is open. Leaving dog owners hanging and waiting for another location to open is not a helpful option.

I often get people asking me if I was a candidate in this past federal election, and yes I was. It seems that I was in a tie for the most number of election signs put up. I represent the interests of many other people. Thanks so much for your help.

Yours truly
Gordon Truscott

* * *

Good morning Ms. Clack:
Please add this item to the next meeting agenda, which I believe is on February 24th. Let me know if you have any questions.

I've been advocating for a fenced dog park in Guelph for about 5+ years. I had been regularly in touch with the city, through my councillors (Ward 1), as well as Heather Flaherty more recently, and Stephan Ilic. Because of my extensive experience using dog parks across the country, I offered to volunteer &/or fundraise for the planning and development of this initiative in Guelph. Every time I contacted anyone listed above, I was assured that staff had this project well in hand.

When I saw the survey, I was immediately concerned about the quality of the questionnaire. The questions did not address any of the issues I had been led to believe were being considered - particularly, a fenced dog park. I was told to add comments at the end, which I did - extensively. I also included links to dog park planning resources easily found on the internet. The main points that I added were as follows:

1. The City of Guelph needs large, fully-fenced dog parks with double-gated entrances. For comparators, I recommend using the dog parks in Bechtel Park & Kiwanis Park in Waterloo. Both of these parks provide enough acreage to ensure dogs have space to run, play, and move away from other dogs if desired. They also provide trees for shade in the hot summer months, as well as a varied topography that dogs find interesting.
2. These parks should have trails to keep dogs & owners moving to prevent dogs becoming territorial. Large signs to encourage "Keep Moving" and a board outside to educate users why this is so important. Because movement of users is essential, no picnic tables or benches should be inside the fenced area.
3. These are the rules I recommend:
 - o don't bring treats or toys (they can encourage aggression)
 - o don't bring puppies (under four months), aggressive dogs, or dogs in heat

- o dogs older than seven months must be spayed or neutered
- o kids under the age of 12 must come with an adult
- o pick up dog waste and dispose in the designated receptacle
- o dogs must have proper licenses and vaccinations
- o stay in close control of your dog at all times

Months later, when I saw the draft policy that was posted on-line, I voiced my concerns again with the following message:

This policy is a good start but my years of experience with these facilities make me concerned with the following:

- the comparators used in your review were small, for example, KW has 2 large fenced parks but the City of Guelph used the much smaller McLennan park; the proposed 3 facilities are quite small with no trails to encourage movement of owners to prevent territorial behaviour in their dogs, - the proposed rules cover many items that will help reduce potential conflict between dogs but you missed a couple of important issues; you exclude rawhide & food, which is great, but these parks should also exclude all toys, including balls because they often create conflict between dogs & some dogs eat them which creates a whole different problem for dog owners; dogs can get exercise without toys if the owners move through a trail system in a park,
- lastly, intact dog's shouldn't be allowed; while not inherently aggressive, they release scents that threaten other dogs, often resulting in altercations. I was surprised you missed this.

From my understanding, none of the above recommendations were considered. I really don't understand how decisions about location & rules were made but it appears to me that the problem started with a poor consultant resulting in an inferior product. It's easy to get opinions from people but I don't see anywhere in the process where dog park best practices were considered. If they were, they were ignored. One thing that Heather Flaherty said to me more than once, that I found condescending, is that "there's more to it than putting up a fence"; however, it appears to me that that is exactly what happened at Misersky.

I'm terribly disappointed with the decision to close the only fenced park in Guelph & the cancellation of the others planned, especially Bristol. Staff & councillors have admitted making mistakes in this process. I am asking that the only park remain open until other suitable locations are created. I've been to this park several times in the past 5 weeks and have not experienced the problems that have created the complaints: noise, no parking, garbage, people not following by-laws. I'm often the only user and it's quiet. I encourage all decision-makers to join me mornings around 8am. I believe complaints have been blown out of proportion and that the initial "novelty" of the dog park has subsided. The Bristol location would further decrease use at Misersky.

Please reconsider your decision to close this park. Dog owners have waited long enough.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Joy Walker

Hello

I am extremely disappointed in your vote to cancel the planned fenced dog parks. I am a frequent visitor at the Lee street dog park along with many others in the neighbourhood. I am going to keep this short and just point out why:

1. You have mentioned that your focus is traffic calming in the city. We also need people to drive less to ease traffic. How do you expect to achieve that when you propose to make people drive to a dog park outside the residential areas. Currently most people walk to these dog parks.

2. Lee street park is already a very successful leash free park. We did established previously that there is a need for fenced dog parks in Guelph and that is the reason we have been having these discussions over past few months. Fenced Dog parks would have just made it better for residents around, as dogs would not enter their backyards and dog are kept contained.

3. We as a city have to change the NIMBY mindset and build a more inclusive community. Where people can walk to places, weather it is kids park (also noisy), a dog park or a grocery store in the east end.

Would you be opposed to a grocery store in east end because the some residents around think it would increase traffic noise and parking issues? Are we going to start moving schools out of the city because they bring noise and traffic?

I hope you reconsider your decision. Fenced parks near residential areas are a need, not a want.

Thanks
Ujjwal Verma

I love dogs very much but I do not have a dog because I do not want to put up with the smell clean up after them (esp in the winter when you cant find the droppings until the snow melts) nor do I like listening to their barking ... esp smaller dogs

I used to take my kids to the park there and go for picnics when my kids were small ..
there also use to be a small playground there 20 yrs ago ... not sure if it is still there it was a lovely park. I could never take small kids there now ...

I also would NEVER buy a home in that area because I would not want the problems like smell, barking (after working a night shift) or parking getting into my drive because most of the houses in that area are on smaller lots and with people driving to get there ..

I believe the ones who should have the greatest say are the people who live in the immediate area as they are the ones most affected by it ... not the ones who worry whether or not they can take their dog there ...

I personally think that parks should be planned in advance so that people can decide if they wish to have a dog park in their backyard or have a child park in their backyard IN ADVANCE of moving to a neighborhood...

there are many other areas of Guelph where a LOT fewer neighbors and tax paying citizens would be affected what about just outside of Guelph ... or an industrial areaput a fence around a the space.... where there are few neighbors ... and build a lot for people to park there ...

it should be a small amount pay per use.... like the bus system where riders contribute toward the ride ... but not the full cost why should all taxpayers pay for a park that only the dog owners would use . maybe like a toonie to enter the park... it could also pay for someone to clean up after lazy owners who cant find their dog poop way across the field when their beloved goes ...

it really isn't fair to the taxpayers surrounding the park to have an equal vote with those who like myself who are largely unaffected by their very real problems ... this benefits most dog owners ... and not necessarily all property owners

thanks to all council for consideration

Alana Mac

Hello,

I am a fairly new user of the off leash enclosure at Peter Misersky Park. I am thrilled to have a place where my dog can run with similar sized dogs. I have some knee problems, so I can't walk him very far and so this park has given us a wonderful opportunity for my dog to get some exercise.

Unfortunately, I have heard there has been one complaint and now money spent on building this space is now being considered for removal. Why is it such an issue to have the park here? Everyone who uses it appreciates the space, and it would be fiscally irresponsible to spend tax payers money on park improvements, only to have it torn out within months of completion. Please let me know what steps users can take to let us keep our park.

Kind regards,

Jeanne Castellanos

* * *

Dear City Clerk,

You may be already experiencing dog park fatigue but I thought I should still let you know that yet another of your citizens is affected by the sudden decision to close the park.

Our new dog, Maita, came from Iran and like many rescued dogs needs a fenced area to socialize safely. Well-socialized dogs behave better and are easier to train. Puppies all need a fenced area until they are trained.

The anti-dog park campaign has been led by a man I have up until now considered a friend. The consensus is that he resents the fact that there isn't a free parking spot in front of his house whenever he wants. People report having seen him use orange cones to prevent park users from parking in that spot - a spot that is not legally his but there for park users - he has an assigned parking spot as a home owner behind his house.

This is therefore a personal vendetta that has little to do with dogs - but he has used his persistent personality to amp up his neighbours against the park.

The city opened this dog park without consulting the neighbourhood or dog owners and perhaps its choice of location was not the best - but that is not the dog owner's or the dog's fault - why are we being punished? And why cancel the other slated parks? to cover the losses on the park already built? Did it really cost \$100,000.00? That seems excessive - but as my taxes paid for it as well as John Farley's this should not be a one-sided decision.

The meeting where you voted to close the park was ill-attended by dog owners because we had heard that the matter had been settled with a plan to move the fence and plant trees.

Finally, I live in Exhibition Park area and can hear Royals games being announced all summer, as well as other events in the park. I have strangers park on my street all the time. I have kids playing outside my door. I do not complain because that is what living in a city means. If you close the dog park is it going to mean that a large area of a public park paid for by public money sits unused or will it be removed so that kids can play soccer there and oh yeah - people can walk their dogs there.

In other words - nothing will change - Farley still won't have his personal parking spot and people and dogs will still use the park. Or a \$100,000.00 field will sit unused and that will become the issue.

People get crazy on both sides of any issue related to dogs - but this isn't about dogs - this is about people who think they have rights that they do not have - they

live in a city - there will be noise and inconveniences related to that. I can't always park on my street either, but I neither think I have the right to do so, nor that people who park on my street so they can walk their dogs in Ex Park should not be allowed to do so.

Thanks,
Janet Williams

* * *

Good morning,

I would like to express my concerns about the talk of closing the dog park and tell you why I think it should be kept.

I am not sure of everyone's concerns, but I have heard that there are concerns of noise. I have also heard concerns of some residents nearby that were not aware that the park would be in a residential area or so close to houses. In regards to that I think that there is always potential for noise in a park. When living in a city such things are to be expected.

In regards to the dog park being placed in Peter Misersky Park, I think it's a great location because it is accessible to many different community members. I think it's a great thing to have a fenced area for dogs to play safely. In my experience the dog park has been used responsibly. I have met dog owners who care deeply about dogs and their well being. Owners are close by watching their dogs behaviour and managing them when needed.

This dog park has become a positive community of dog lovers who are also very respectful to the people of the park.

I also think that the plans for the other two enclosures in Lee Street Park and Bristol Park should proceed. I think this will make these types of parks more accessible for everyone in the city and alleviate possible crowding of Peter Misersky, therefore resulting in happier community members across the board.

I really hope our voices will be heard and that this wonderful place that we visit every day will remain for the community members to enjoy.

Thank you for your time,
Kaitlin Kirkup

* * *

Hello,

I would like to voice my opinion that the dog park is a positive thing in the community. These parks create safe places for people to bring their dog to play, it is a public place where vulnerable people feel safer being out alone with their dog as it is a public area and less likely to be assaulted, harassed, followed etc instead of on a street. As a single female in Guelph, it is an area that I do not feel

uncomfortable going alone with my dog while walking on city streets feels much more uncomfortable and gives rise to some anxieties.

There needs to be an area for dogs to socialize with one another to create safe dog-to-dog interactions. If they are not allowed to have an area fenced off, many dogs who cannot handle the fence free parks without causing harm to themselves (or nearby properties) or getting lost absolutely need the fenced dog park to be socialized to ensure safety of public and other dogs when encounters occur. Everyone considers their dogs as part of their family, a children's play place wouldn't be closed if nearby residents complained about screaming kids, so it is unfair that the dog park is receiving the same critique.

Lastly, dogs also need socialization for the means of health. Dogs are subject to anxieties and depression, many of which stem from loneliness and/or isolation from other dogs. These parks allow owners to socialize their dogs for healthier animals mentally and less reactive dogs overall.

Thanks,
Brandi Grose

* * *

Hello,

My name is Brandy Nomad. I reside at XX Mountford Drive, Unit XXX, directly across from the off leash dog park.

Unfortunately I do not have my own puppy yet, but I will say that the parking spots in front are for the park, our complex tenants each have their own designated parking spot in the back. I have also never seen 50 to 100 dogs and really do not notice barking?

I reside with my mom and younger brother and although they're a bit nervous around dogs, these past 5 months they've begun to sit out on our porch and watch the dogs interact. I understand if the location is not ideal, but please if its possible, to keep it open until the new park has been completed?

It wouldn't seem like such a waste of the taxpayers money if we could at least continue to use it until the next one is ready.

Unfortunately I know the gentleman who is posted in the article, as he lives X houses down from us, and he seems to have an issue with ANY change. Even when the walking path track was put in, he has tried to make a fuss.

Anyway, this is just my two cents,

Best regards,
Brandy Nomad

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