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 opportunites. 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 functionallity 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 lease 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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Leash Free Policy Survey Report

oraclepoll RESEARCH

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 ±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."

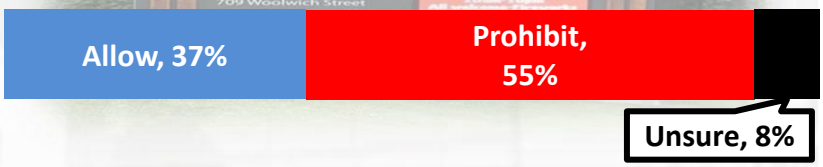
"With this in mind, should the City allow or prohibit leash free areas in the following public spaces?"

Q1. Eramosa River Park (park located along the Royal Recreational Trail)



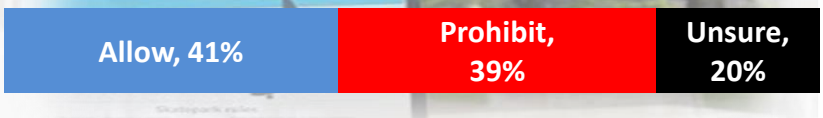
There was a near split with 42% saying leash free areas should be allowed and 40% prohibited, while a significant number were undecided. More males (50% versus 35% female), dog owners (75% compared to 23% non-owners) as well as 18-24 (52%) and 25-34-year old's (48%) were supporters.

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)

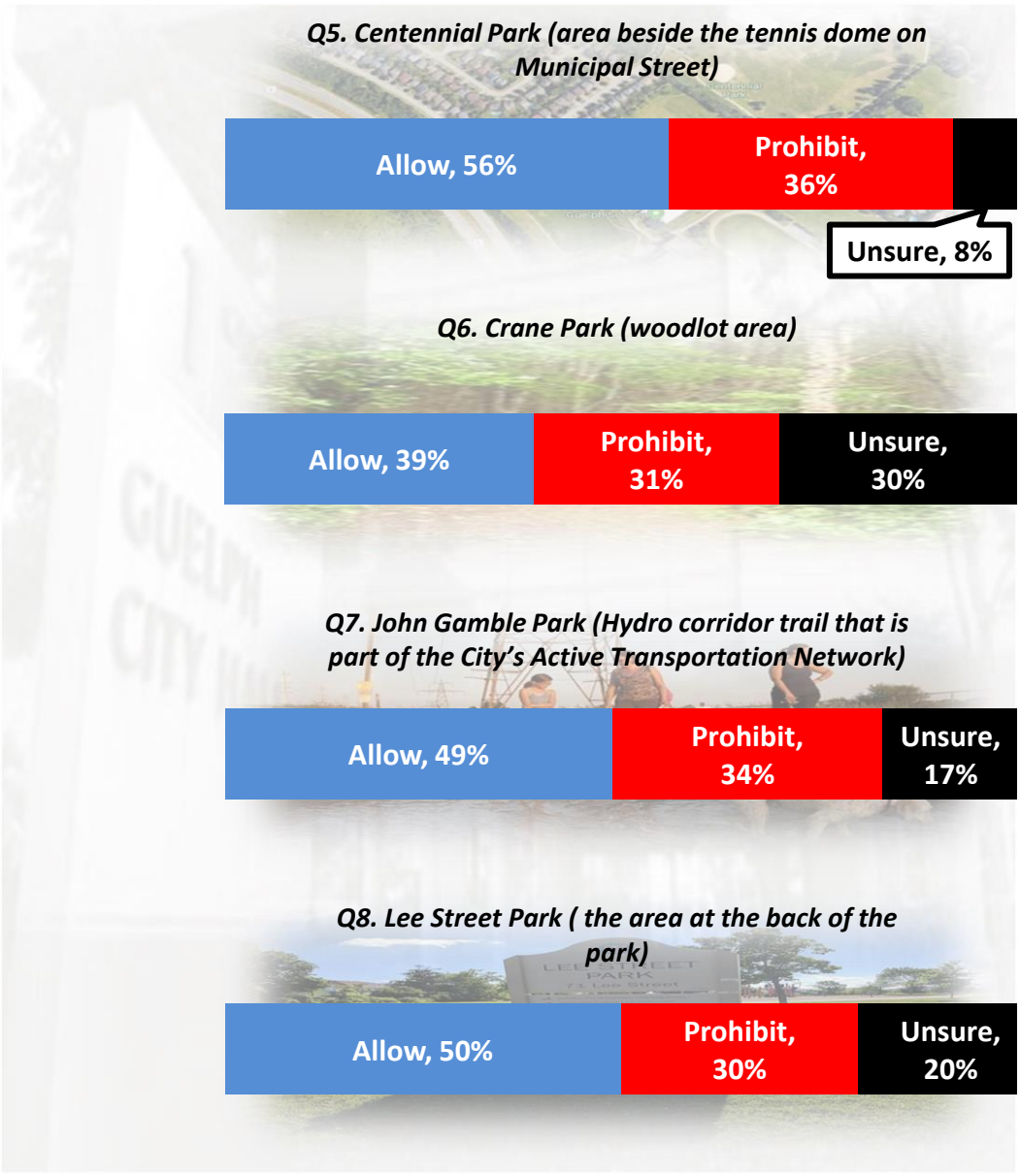


Residents were divided with 41% saying they would allow and 39% prohibit having a leash free area at Norm Jary Park. Two in ten were unsure or undecided.

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%).



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.

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.

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.

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?"



Don't know / None	*N=348*	*58%*
Support having dog parks	*N=43*	*7%*
Should have no leash free parks in residential areas	*N=40*	*7%*
Make sure rules are followed	*N=37*	*6%*
Should be fenced in	*N=35*	*6%*
Don't agree with more off leash dog parks	*N=19*	*3%*
Not safe to have unleashed dogs	*N=18*	*3%*
Taxpayers should not fund	*N=15*	*3%*
Opposed to dog parks	*N=13*	*2%*
Should be none around school areas	*N=13*	*2%*
I am / some people are afraid of dogs	*N=11*	*2%*
Happy with current arrangement (Peter Misersky Park)	*N=6*	*1%*
Make sure poop is cleaned / need bins for dog waste	*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%).

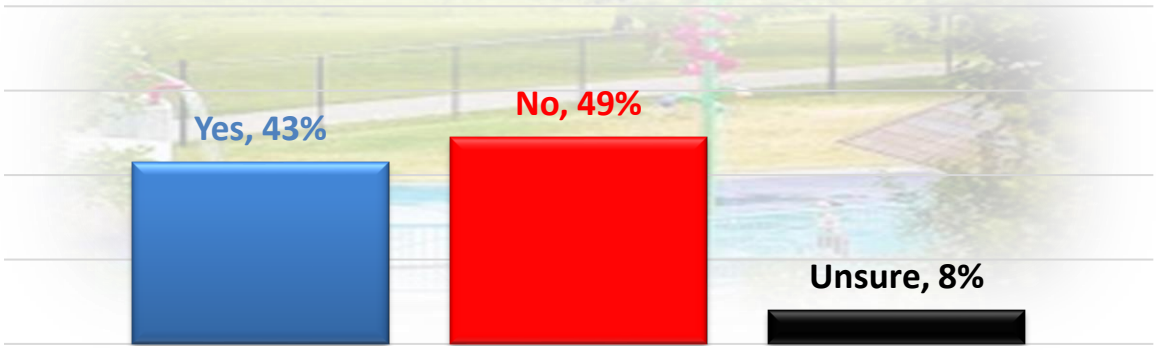
The next most named areas were non-traditional spaces such as hydro corridors that may require third party arrangements or a land purchase (60%).

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?"



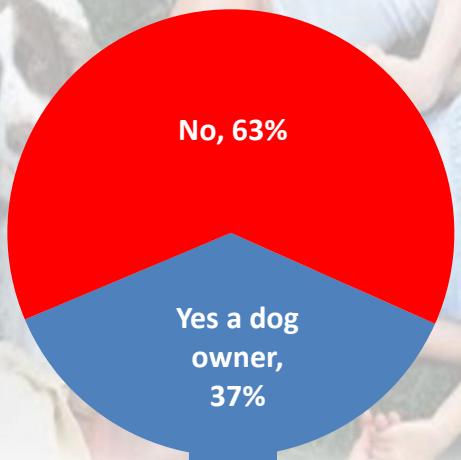
Forty-three percent of residents said they would be willing to have a fenced off leash free dog park in their neighbourhood park, compared to almost half or 49% that do not want one, while 8% were unsure.

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?"

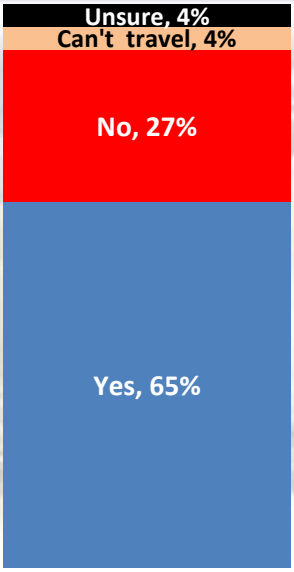


Thirty-seven percent of respondents to the survey stated that they are a dog owner. This regardless of whether the dogs are registered or not.

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%).

The 37% (N=223) of dog owners were then asked Q14.

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



CITY OF Guelph
Making a Difference

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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 polices 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, Regualtions 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, Regualtions 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, Regualtions 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.

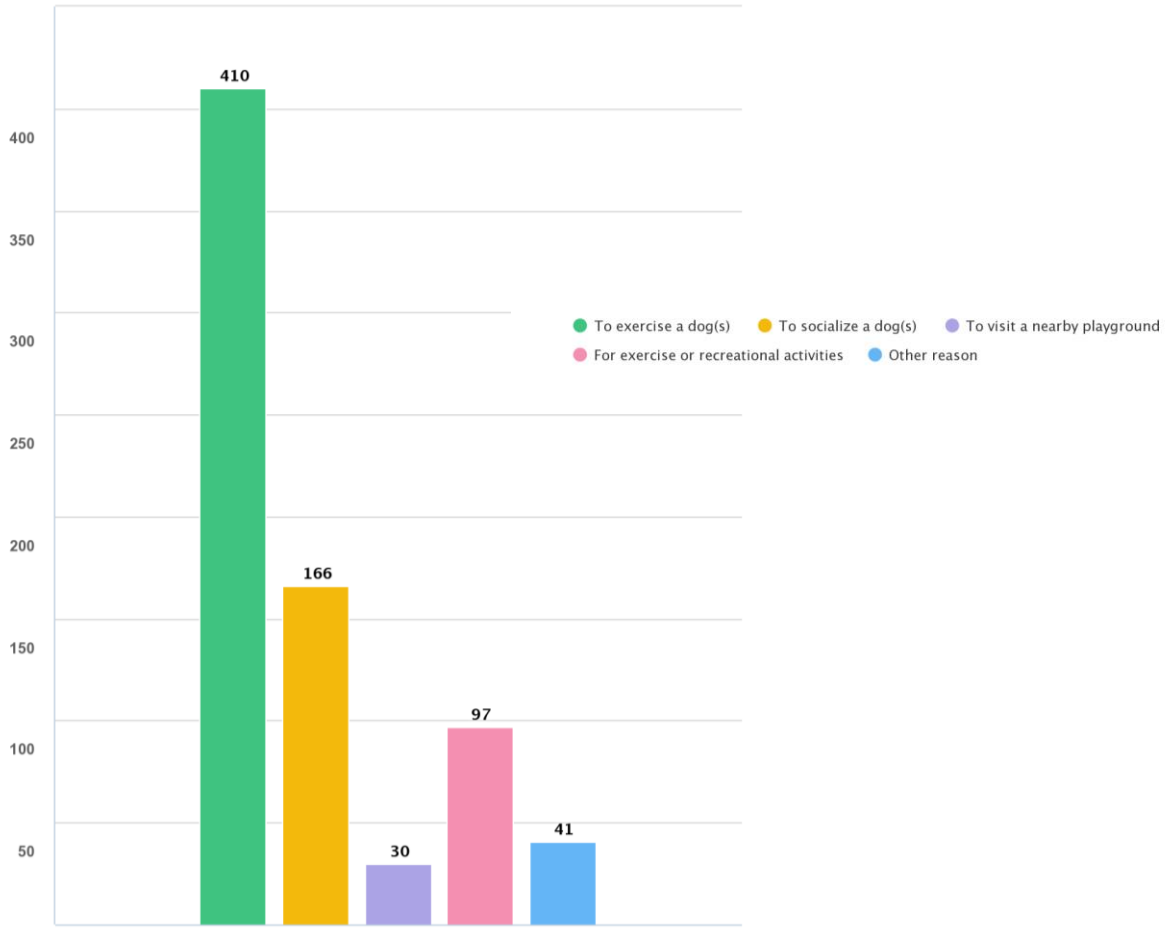
Generally, the standards and characteristics that define the studied leash free facilities exceed those within the City of Guelph. The City of Guelph should consider the above priorities when establishing leash free areas and facilities and it should be reflected within the Leash Free Program Policy.

Community Engagement

Results

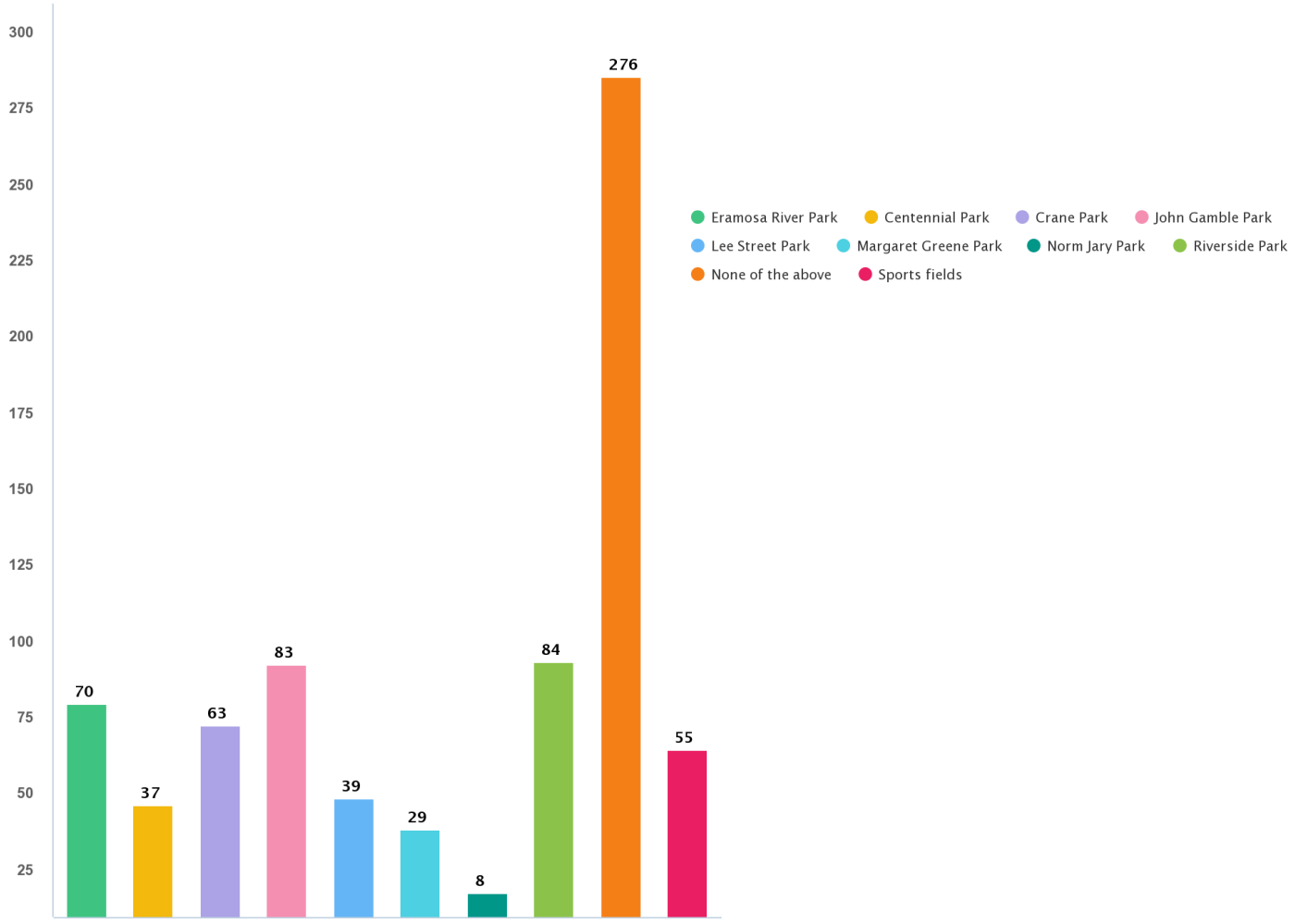
The City of Guelph conducted a survey to understand community opinion and use of leash free areas. The survey began July 27, 2018 and closed on August 27, 2018. Out of the 2,384 community members that visited the site online, 744 completed surveys were submitted. The results of the community engagement 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.



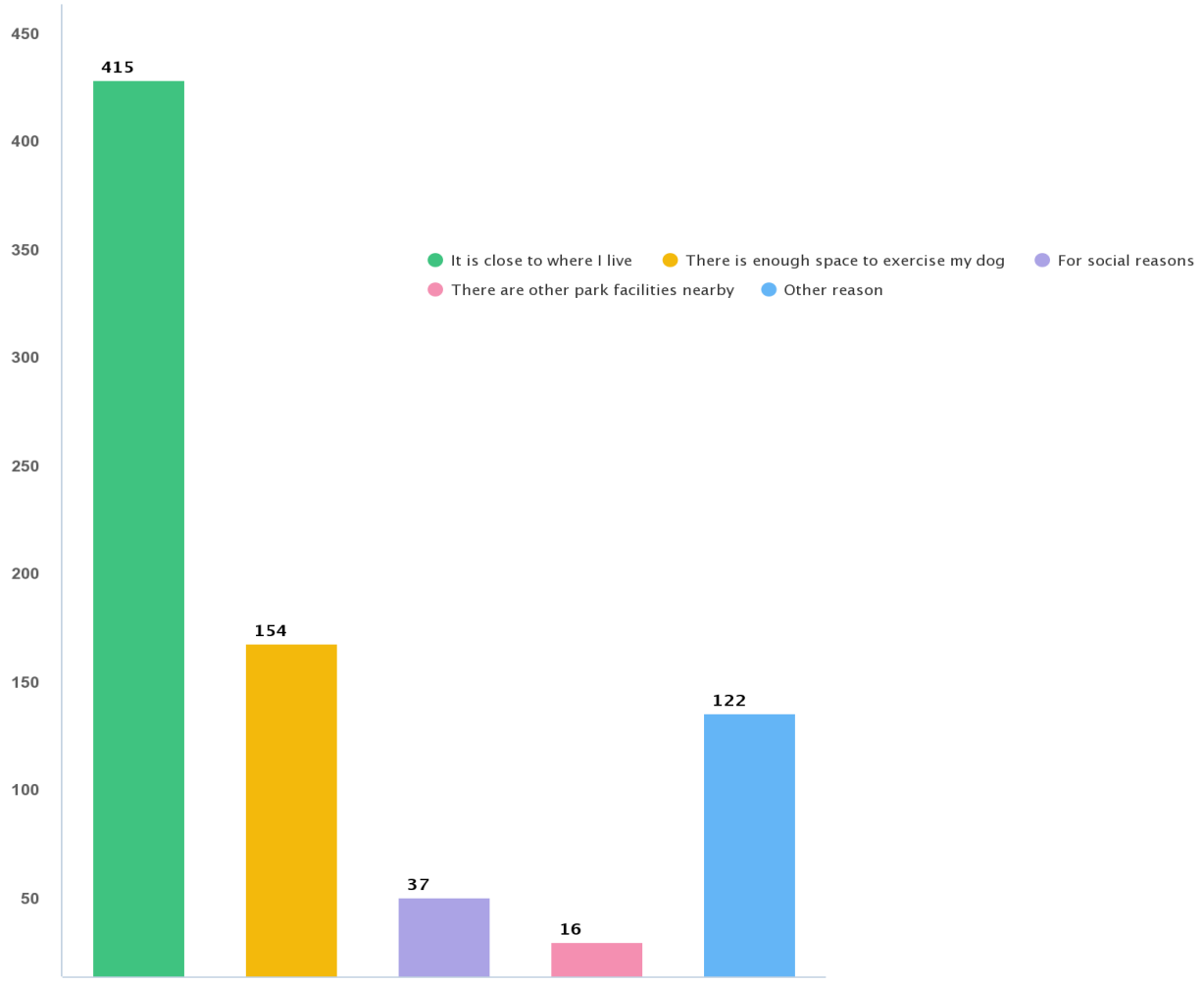
Based on Figure 4, 55% of those that responded selected 'To exercise a dog(s)'. As a priority noted amongst community members that participated in the survey, this factor should be considered when designing leash free facilities and be large enough to accommodate for an appropriate amount of exercise for all dogs of all sizes.

Figure 5- Question 2: Which park with a leash free area do you visit most? Please choose one.



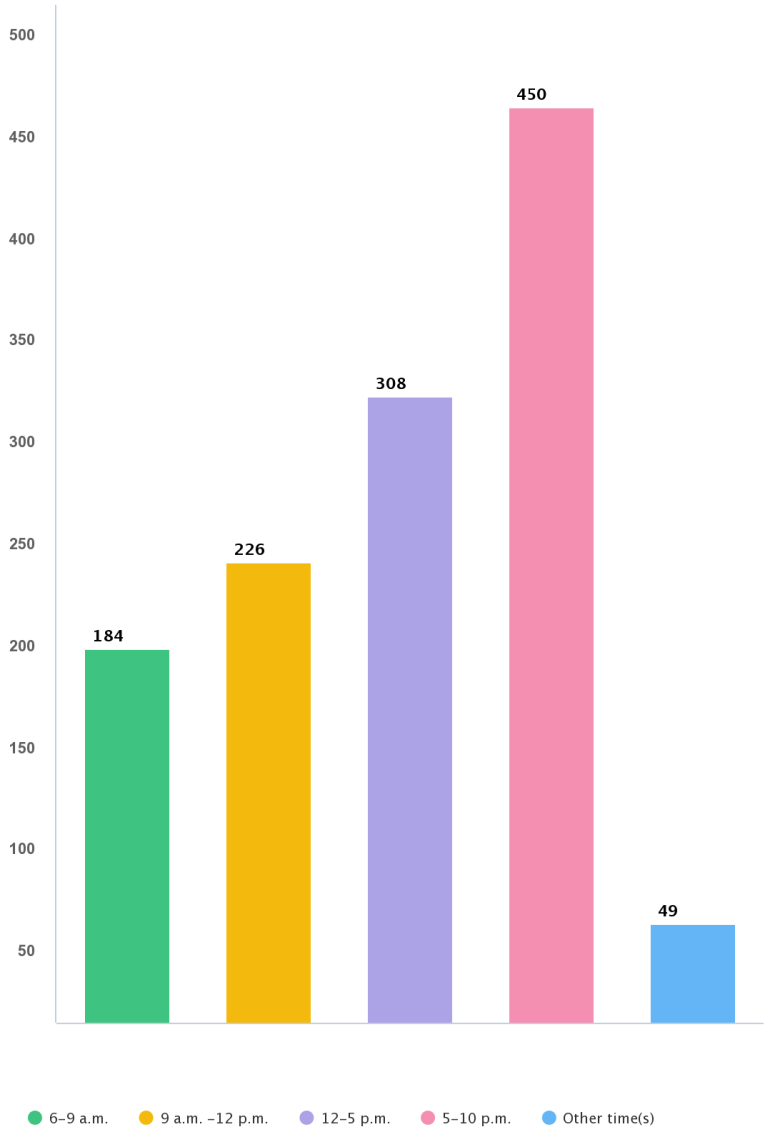
Based on the results shown in Figure 5, 56% of the 744 participants are currently using the various leash free areas located throughout the City of Guelph while 7% are using several unoccupied sports fields. Out of the 55 participants using unoccupied sports fields 33 of them chose Exhibition Park as 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.



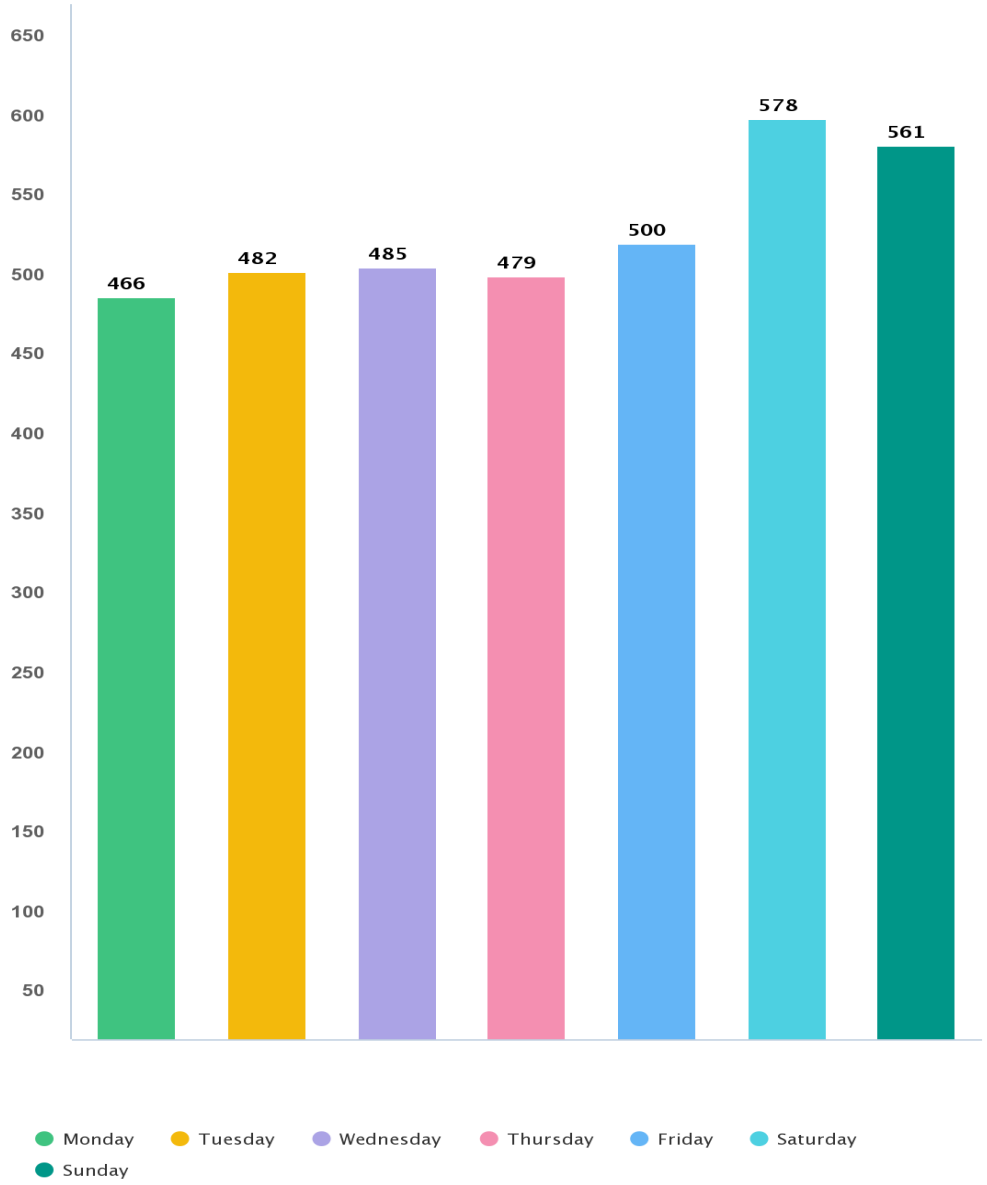
Out of the 744 participants that selected their most visited leash free area from question two, 56% of them chose their specific location based on where they live. For the 122 participants that selected 'other reason', their answers followed the same themes provided in question two: Leash free facilities 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.



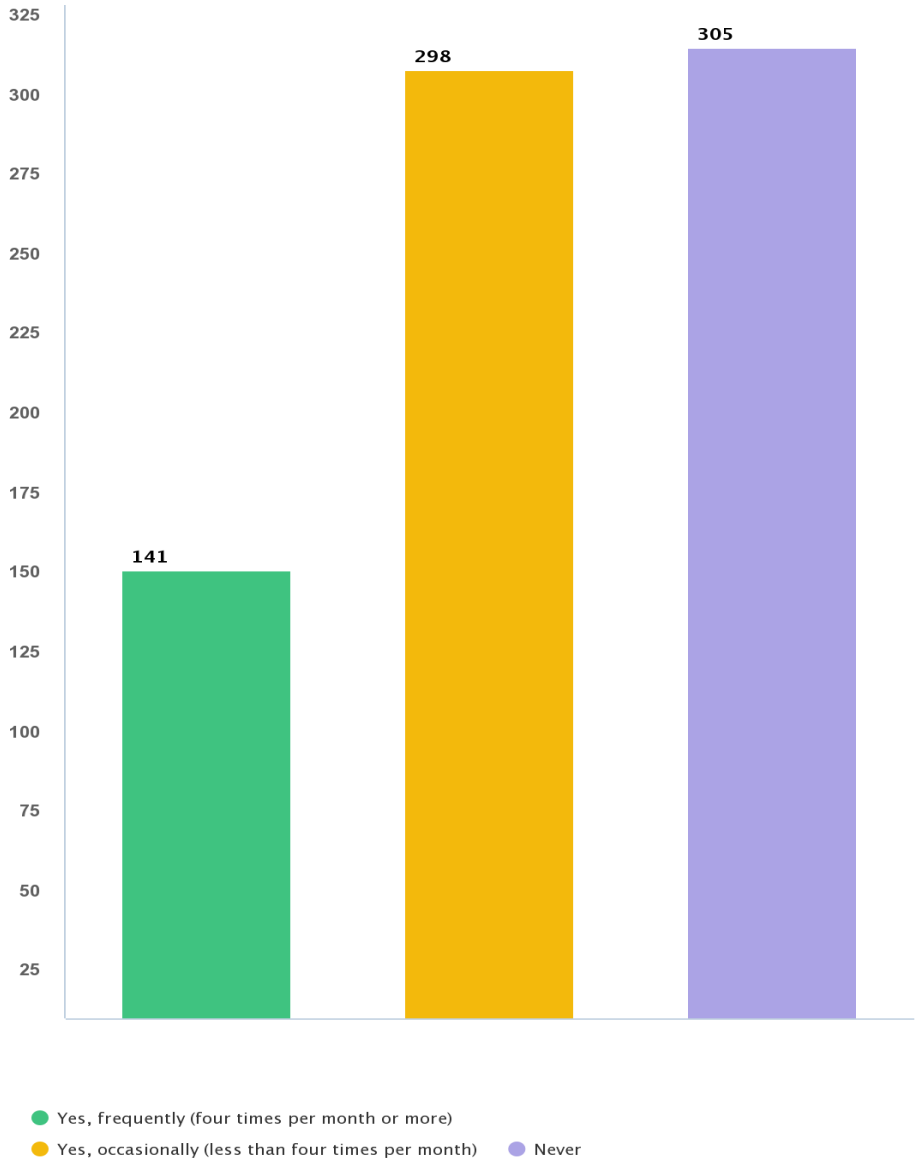
Based on the results shown in Figure 7, 60% of those that participated are using their specified leash free locations between the hours of 5:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. Further, 93% of all responses show that leash free areas are being used between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. Only 7% of participants 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.



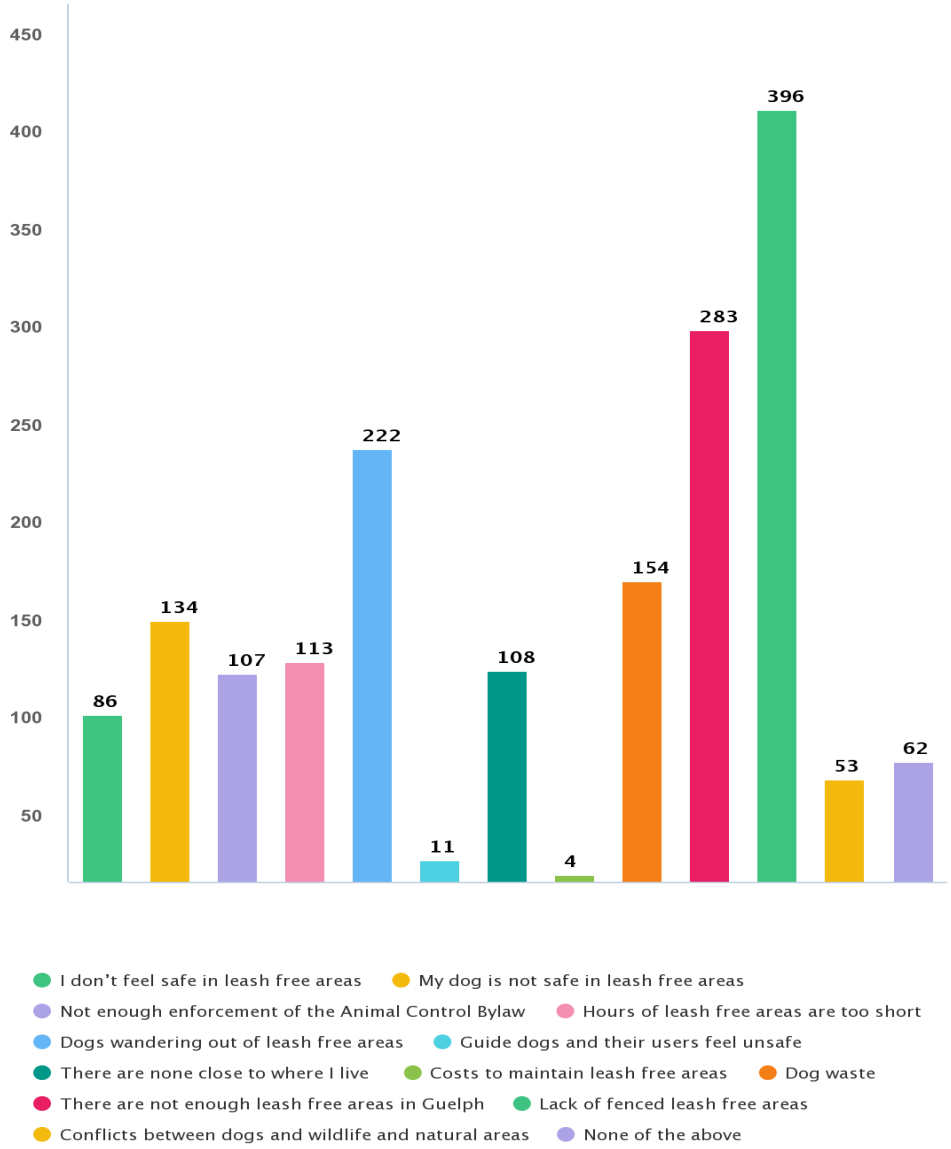
As illustrated in Figure 8, the specified leash free areas chosen by the participants are all very well attended throughout the week. There is a slight increase of use from Friday through to Saturday and Sunday.

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 <u>proposed</u> 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 <u>proposed</u> 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 conduction 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

SCALE N.T.S.

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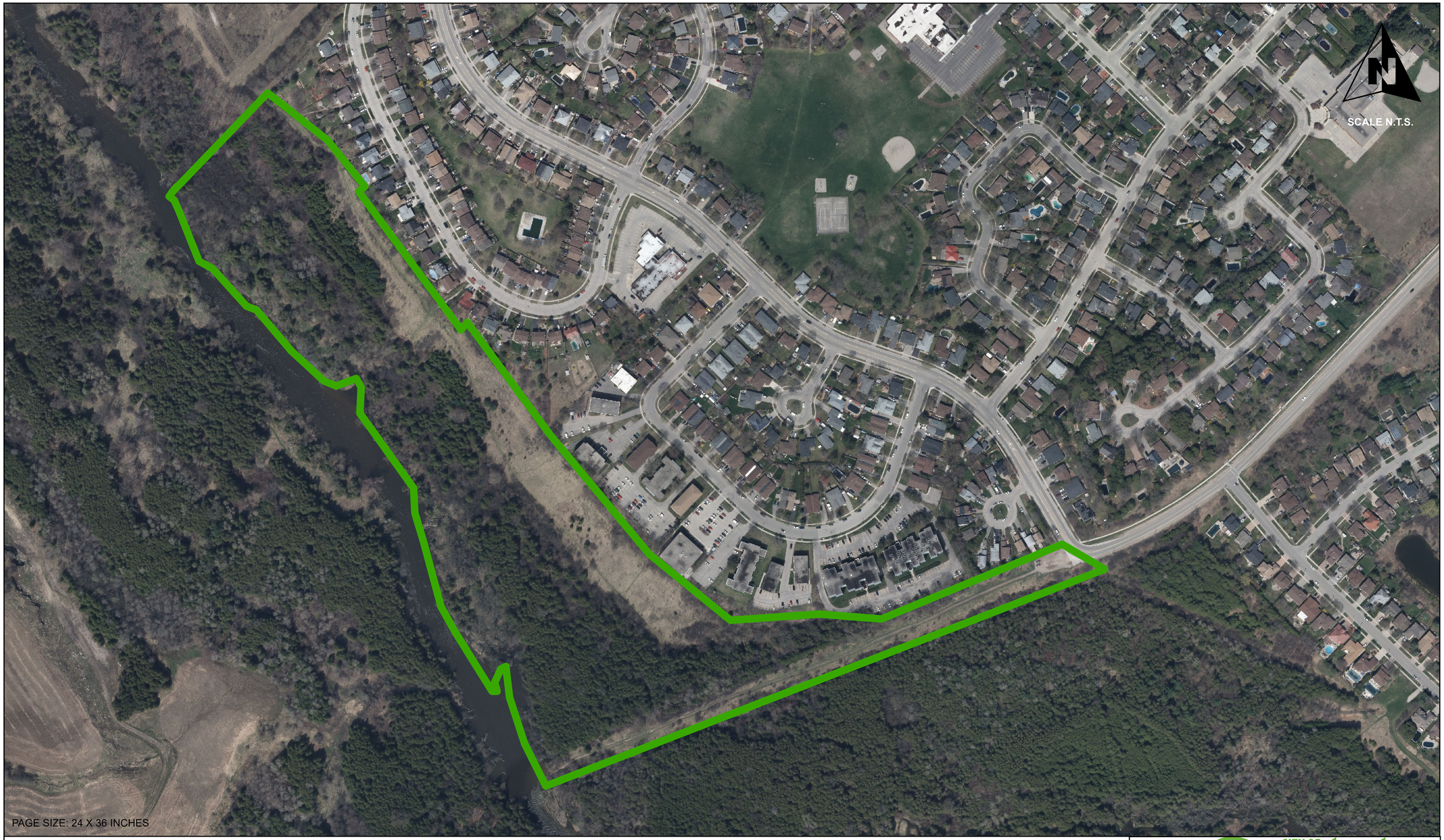
CENTENNIAL PARK

373/377 College Avenue West. P4 Regional Park.

Existing Leash Free Area

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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 Leash Free Area

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JOHN GAMBLE PARK (Hydro Corridor)

594 Kortright Road West. P2 Neighbourhood Park.

Existing Leash 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

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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 Brimblecmbe Softball 1	N	School
Earl Brimblecmbe 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

SCALE N.T.S.

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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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SCALE N.T.S.

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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

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PAGE SIZE: 24 X 36 INCHES

SITE 3: MARGARET GREENE PARK

80 Westwood Road. P4 Regional Park.

Existing Leash Free Area

Approximate Proposed New Fenced Leash Free Area

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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.

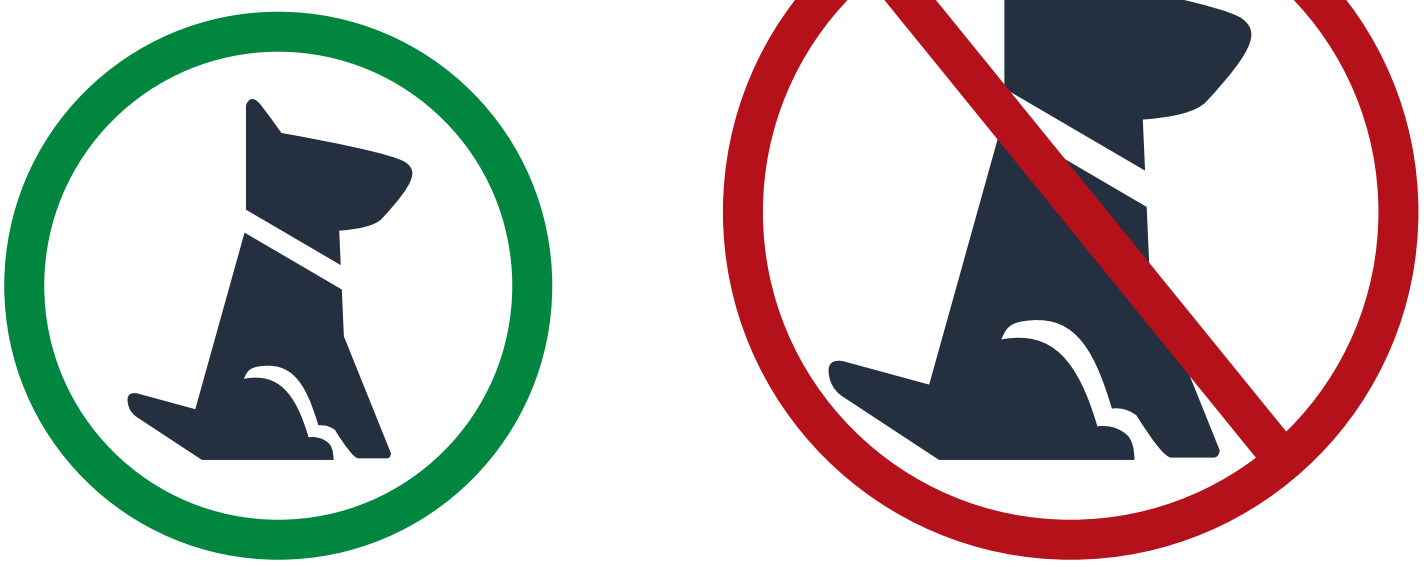
Animal Control Bylaw (2016)-20122
guelph.ca/dogs

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Accessibility format
519-822-5626 or
TTY 519-826-9771

Small dogs only

Up to 30 pounds



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Stoop and scoop bylaw in effect



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Stoop and Scoop By-law
(2004)-17568

Dogs allowed on this sports field



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No dogs allowed on this sports field



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