

Date: 2020-11-06

Subject: **Leash Free Areas in Brampton – People, Dogs and Parks Study**

Contact: Steve Bodrug, Sr. Manager, Park Planning & Development
Parks Maintenance & Forestry Division, Community Services
(905) 874-2363

Report Number: Community Services-2020-386

Recommendations:

1. That the report titled: **Leash Free Areas in Brampton – People, Dogs and Parks Study** to the Committee of Council Meeting of December 2, 2020, be received; and
2. That Council endorse the Leash Free Areas in Brampton (LFAs) guidelines referenced in Appendix A of the report.

Overview:

- This report provides an update to the November 2011, Committee of Council report (C236-2011) regarding Leash Free Areas in Brampton.
- A team from Park Planning, Animal Services, and Parks Operations have revisited the 2011 report, investigated current trends in the City regarding dog ownership and the demand for leash free areas in the City and have bench marked with other municipalities.
- Appendix A to the report, Leash Free Areas in Brampton - People, Dogs and Parks Study (2020), analyzes current supply and future opportunities for new Leash Free Areas, including amenity siting criteria and recommended design guidelines. Staff are requesting Council endorse the Study as a resource that should be referenced in future decision making regarding Leash Free Areas.

Background:

In November of 2011, Committee of Council received a report from Animal Services after Council requested staff to consider additional Leash Free Areas (LFAs) in Brampton. The report contained criteria to be applied when evaluating the suitability of potential future sites and included recommendations for possible locations, design, amenities, and governing standards.

The following Committee of Council recommendation was approved by Council on November 9, 2011 pursuant to **Resolution C236-2011**:

- 1. That the report from K. Duncan, Manager of Animal Services, Community Services, dated July 7, 2011, to the Committee of Council Meeting of November 2, 2011, re: Off Leash Parks (File S00) be received; and,*
- 2. That the new Off Leash Parks for the North East, South West, North West and Central Areas of Brampton be approved, and include Duggan Park for Central Brampton, Sesquicentennial Park, and Bram East in the North East, and the Siemens Property in the North West; and,*
- 3. That staff work with the community and organizations/agencies with respect to the proposed parks in order to establish Off Leash centric community groups; and,*
- 4. That the design criteria, as outlined in the subject report, be approved for implementation.*

Brampton's most recently established LFA opened in 2013, at Duggan Park (Ward 1) totaling four Areas in the City of Brampton, including Chris Gibson Park, White Spruce Park, and Bramalea Ltd. Community Park.

Since 2013, the total number of LFAs has remained unchanged, meanwhile the number of residents and dogs have increased. While still pursuing opportunities for the three additional LFA sites identified in the 2011 report, and based on a growing number of requests from residents; staff have revisited and are proposing new criteria and recommendations for future LFAs across the City.

As staff were developing the revised criteria and recommendations for future LFAs in Brampton, the opportunity arose to create an additional LFA. In 2019, the standalone cricket facility at Camden Park in Ward 2 (Sandalwood Pkwy E / Hurontario St.) was relocated to a more suitable location, leaving a sizeable parcel of open valleyland within the well-established community. Located near Jim Archdekin Recreation Centre, it was determined that the vacated valleyland at Camden would be best suited for a passive recreation opportunity, considering that it is in the Etobicoke Creek valley and its proximity to other active facilities and residents.

Current Situation:

It is estimated that there are over 94,700 dogs owned in the City of Brampton. Since reporting in 2011, Park Planning and Animal Services have received numerous resident requests for additional LFAs and have continuously sought to evaluate opportunities. Each of the three remaining unconstructed sites identified in the 2011 report are still identified as potential candidates, held for future consideration. Staff acknowledge it has been difficult to allocate land and budget for new LFAs given the competing interests and needs for active recreation facilities. This is particularly evident in rapidly developing areas where play facilities and sport fields are of a high demand and priority.

Appendix A (*People, Dogs and Parks Study – Leash Free Areas in Brampton*) serves as an internal guiding document, outlining supply deficits, areas for future prioritization, and best practices in evaluating potential sites, including recommended design elements, and implementation strategies. The conclusions identified within Appendix A identify clear deficits within the City. **Figures 2 – 6** show considerations based on information such as dog licensing density, locations of 3-1-1 calls related to dogs, population density, recorded LFA requests, and geographic distribution. This information will aid in guiding staff in assessing needs, determining future LFA locations, and rationale to support decisions of replacement or removal of existing amenities.

Appendix B shows a rendering of the LFA at Camden Park which is currently under construction in conjunction with the Valleys and Parks Naturalization Planting program (Phase 16). Through supply analysis described by the *People, Dogs and Parks Study* (Appendix A), staff determined that the addition of a LFA at Camden Park would provide substantial service, and alleviate some of the supply demands for LFAs in the north-central area of the City. The area required for the LFA at Camden Park became available when a former cricket pitch was vacated and moved.

Accessibility is a key component of the LFA at Camden, with several considerations and accessible design at the forefront. This includes accessible parking at Jim Archdekin Recreation Centre, and hardscaping pathways to the LFA, including accessible entry gates and seating opportunities nearby to supervise dogs in the LFA.

Corporate Implications:

Financial Implications:

None.

Term of Council Priorities:

1. Brampton is a Green City

Building on Brampton's commitment to sustainability by improving transit and active transportation opportunities, focusing on energy efficiency, and revitalizing natural spaces and the urban tree canopy.

Implement a Green Framework

- *Implement the Natural Heritage Restoration Program to integrate and enhance natural heritage within our communities.*
- *Coordinate with Regional and Provincial governments on efforts to address climate change.*

LFAs in Brampton provide a natural greenspace accessible to both human and canine community members, including added ecological benefit through additional greenspace securement. As a result of naturalization work completed through the Brampton Valleys and Parks Naturalization Program and funding partnership, the future Camden Park LFA will become a community focal point, with a more diverse tree canopy, providing increased ecological function, with new flora and fauna present amongst a thriving ecosystem.

2. Health and Safe

Focusing on community safety, improving mental health support, and encouraging active and healthy lifestyles.

Local Health Support

- *Continue to support the Healthy Communities Initiative by enhancing recreational programs and facilities for our residents to participate in physical activities*

Healthy Citizens

- *Enhance recreation and sports facilities to increase access to programs for residents.*

LFAs are places where dog owners and their companions may partake in passive recreation in dedicated, safe and controlled environment where human to-human and pet-to-human interaction flourishes. LFAs provide a multi-faceted list of benefits, including; mental health benefit through presence of nature and socialization with other owners, and physical activity benefits for both humans and pets.

3. Brampton is a Mosaic

Celebrating Brampton's diversity by more effectively engaging and communicating with diverse groups, supporting cultural events, and developing a holistic framework to embed diversity across the city.

Inclusive and Flexible Community Spaces

- *Utilize and implement elements of universal design strategies in tandem with the City's Accessibility Technical Standards to ensure all facility renovations and new construction projects identify opportunities to increase accessibility and a sense of belonging for all.*

Creating dedicated amenities to the many dog owners in Brampton ensures that a large cohort of the community have a meaningful opportunity to enjoy Brampton parks with their pet. The accessible design configuration of Camden Park LFA is likely the most significant benefit of the future facility, providing a safe and accessible space within an existing community for pet owners with accessibility needs.

Conclusion:

The People, Dogs and Parks Study provides guidance for future amenities and assists in providing a much-needed resource to the local community in seamless alignment with Term of Council Priorities. This study will provide an easy to use resource, which should be referenced in future decision making regarding LFAs, ensuring that cost versus output is beneficial to the City but most importantly to the communities of Brampton. Staff will continue to evaluate opportunities for future LFA consideration utilizing these guidelines.

Authored by:

Reviewed by:

Matthew Volpintesta
Special Project Coordinator, Park Planning

Ed Fagan
Acting Director, Parks Maintenance & Forestry

Approved by:

Submitted by:

Derek Boyce, M. A.
Acting Commissioner, Community Services

David Barrick
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachments:

Appendix A: People, Dogs and Parks Study – Leash Free Areas in Brampton (2020)
Appendix B: Camden Park Leash Free Area Pilot Design Rendering