

APPENDIX A**People, Dogs and Parks Study – Leash Free Areas in Brampton (LFAs)**

Update to 2011 Siting Guidelines and Design Elements – 2020

OVERVIEW

In 2020, Leash-free areas (LFAs) are common place in Ontario, driven by rising pet ownership rates, lack of private amenity space, desire for social interaction among pet owners, and a growing number of persons that may be unable to walk their pets a lengthy distance due to age or disability. As a result, there is a growing demand for facilities that meet the needs of these demographics, most notably in urbanized cities with high dog ownership rates¹.

In harmonization with the 2017 Parks and Recreation Master Plan (PRMP) – *Plan. Grow. Play Together* and as per Recommendation #11 identifying the need to develop diverse parks; and identifying that with increasing intensification of development and growth of population in Brampton, opportunities must be sought where people and dogs can coexist in City parks and public open spaces. This Study serves as an update to the Leash Free Parks report to council drafted July 7, 2011 and received November 2, 2011.

There are presently four LFAs in Brampton, with additional dog parks being evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Factors to be considered include; a) approaching a point when usage of existing dog parks exceed their respective capacities, b) where required to service a geographic gap (particularly to serve higher density residential areas), c) where dog-related 3-1-1 calls are the highest, and/or d) whether a qualified community organization expresses an interest in funding and/or operating a leash-free area.²

Park Planning and Development, in coordination with Parks Projects, Central Operations, and Animal Services, has recently undertaken a service level needs assessment, of Brampton’s existing four leash-free areas, coupled with an analysis of dog licensing and population density. Staff have also considered any overlap of 3-1-1 inquiries regarding leash-free enforcement and related service requests. As part of the study process, staff conducted a best practice review of North-American municipal policy for siting leash-free areas. The following report describes an update to current service levels, and recommended criteria for future Leash Free Area siting and design principles.

DEFINITIONS

“Leash Free Area” (LFA) means any designated area that has been set aside in a City of Brampton park, or property, for dogs (and people) to socialize and exercise off-leash in a controlled and regulated environment.

BEST PRACTICE REVIEW

¹ THE CANADIAN CITY PARKS REPORT (2019). *Parks People*. P. 3

² PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN – *Plan, Grow, Play, Together* (2017). P. 38.

The City of Brampton undertook a North American-wide best practice review of LFAs as part of this analysis. The following presents a summary of implementation strategies applied by various municipalities, determined through an analysis of target demographics and siting attributes.

The City of Winnipeg's *Off-Leash Dog Areas Master Plan (2018)* recognized the need for off-leash areas that enhance the health of residents and dogs within the City. The *Master Plan* states that the City operates 11 dog parks, with additional LFAs under construction. LFAs of varying sizes are classified as Regional (larger than 8 ha, 7.5 km service radius), Community (6 ha – 4 ha large, 3.75 km service radius), or Neighbourhood (smaller than 1 ha, 1 km service radius). Figure 8 of the *Master Plan*, which maps catchment areas of existing LFAs, shows most of the City located within the catchment area of a Regional LFA, which are the most popular LFA locations for dog owners. Overall, the distribution and sizing of existing LFAs are adequate for owners, however more Neighbourhood LFAs that are walkable and dispersed through residential neighbourhoods are desired³.

The City of Vancouver, in their *People, Parks & Dogs Strategy (2017)* outlined a 10-year framework designing parks that accommodate park users with and without dogs to minimize conflict. The *Strategy* proposed the implementation of two classification levels for existing and future parks: Neighbourhood (15 minute walking distance), and Destination (35 minute walking distance). There are a total of 36 LFAs in the City, of which only 6 LFAs are fenced. Figure 4 of the *Strategy*, which mapped dog-related 3-1-1 calls in the city, revealed a deficiency of adequate LFAs most notably in Downtown Vancouver. This area showed the highest rate of dog ownership in the City, in addition to the highest number of dog related 3-1-1 calls. As dog ownership rates increase, the *Strategy* recommends a variety of new fenced LFAs must be constructed to mitigate conflicts between dog owners and other park users⁴.

The City of Guelph conducted a *Leash Free Study (2019)* and established a *Leash Free Program Policy (2019)* to address the growing needs of dog owners in the city. The City operates 8 LFAs, sited and designed on a case-by-case basis. The *Study* showed that existing LFAs are not classified by size, are unfenced, and contain no signage indicating leash free versus regular park areas. As such, this lack of delineated space has caused concerns by the public regarding safety of LFAs in parks. As a result, the *Policy* aimed to establish strategies and guidelines in order to facilitate the design and implementation of safe, fenced LFAs⁵.

CURRENT SITUATION IN BRAMPTON

The City of Brampton currently has four LFAs, three of which have been in existence for over 10 years (Chris Gibson Park, White Spruce Park, and Bramalea Ltd Community Park) and one which had been added in the last 7 years (Duggan Park). As the City has grown in resident population, so too has the population of dog owning residents. As a result, staff continue to receive resident requests. With an estimated 94,723 dogs owned in the City, and a generalised idea of the distribution of the dog population we can identify areas as best suited for future LFA consideration through a series of analytic lenses as shown.

³ OFF-LEASH DOG AREAS MASTER PLAN (2018). City of Winnipeg. P. 13

⁴ PEOPLE PARKS & DOGS – A Strategy for Sharing Vancouver Parks (2017). Vancouver Park Board: City of Vancouver. P. 2,

⁵ LEASH FREE STUDY (2019). City of Guelph.

Figure 1 – Existing Leash Free Areas (Service Radii 2/5 km)

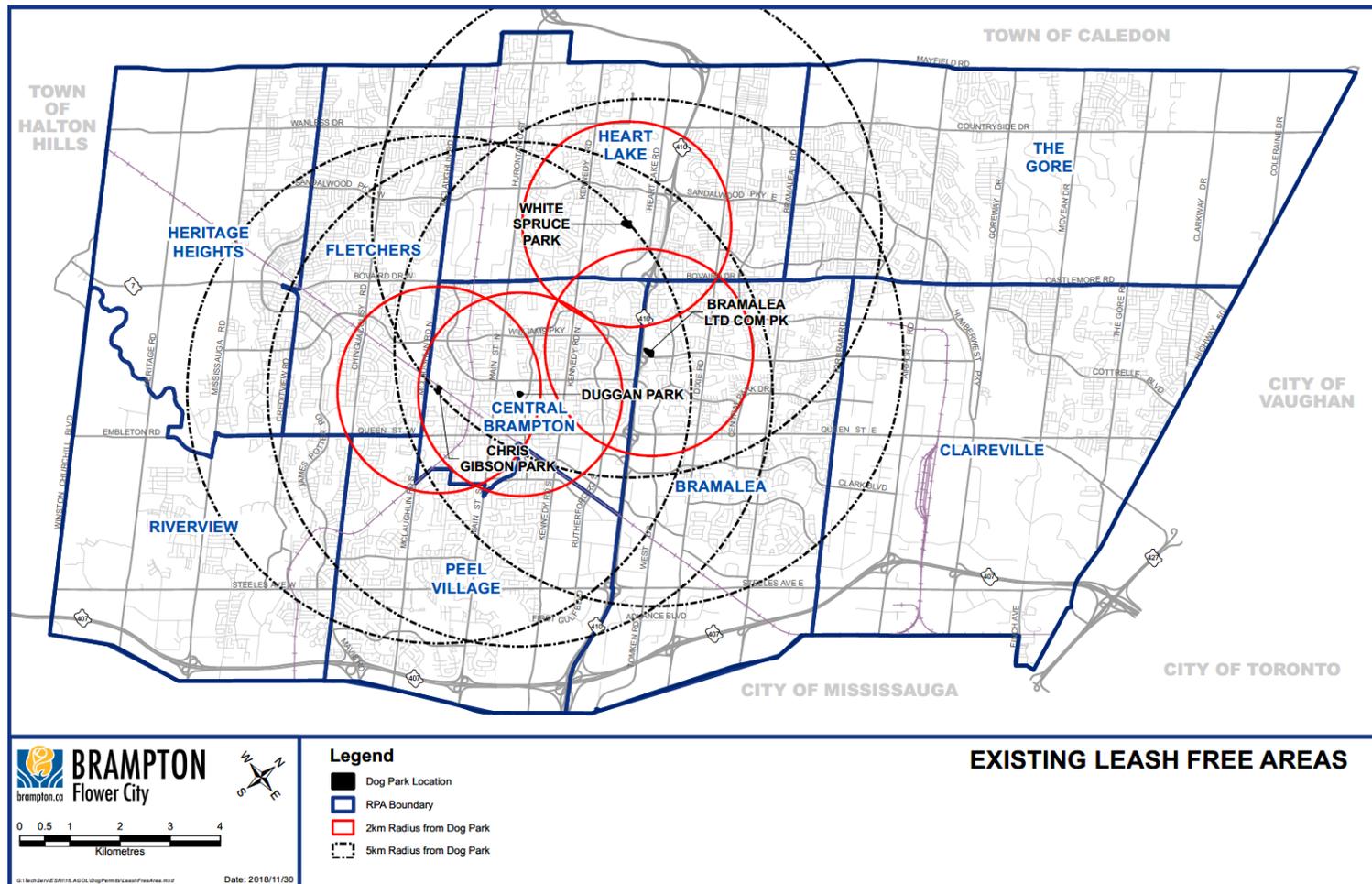


Figure 1 A concentration of LFAs located centrally in the City of Brampton. LFAs are located within 2 km of each other, with LFAs in Chris Gibson Park and Duggan Park located less than 1km from each other. The Gore (RPA “D”) and Claireville (RPA “I”) and have a noticeable lack of LFAs, most likely due to the presence of Employment lands and low population density (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 – Population Density & LFA Service Radii

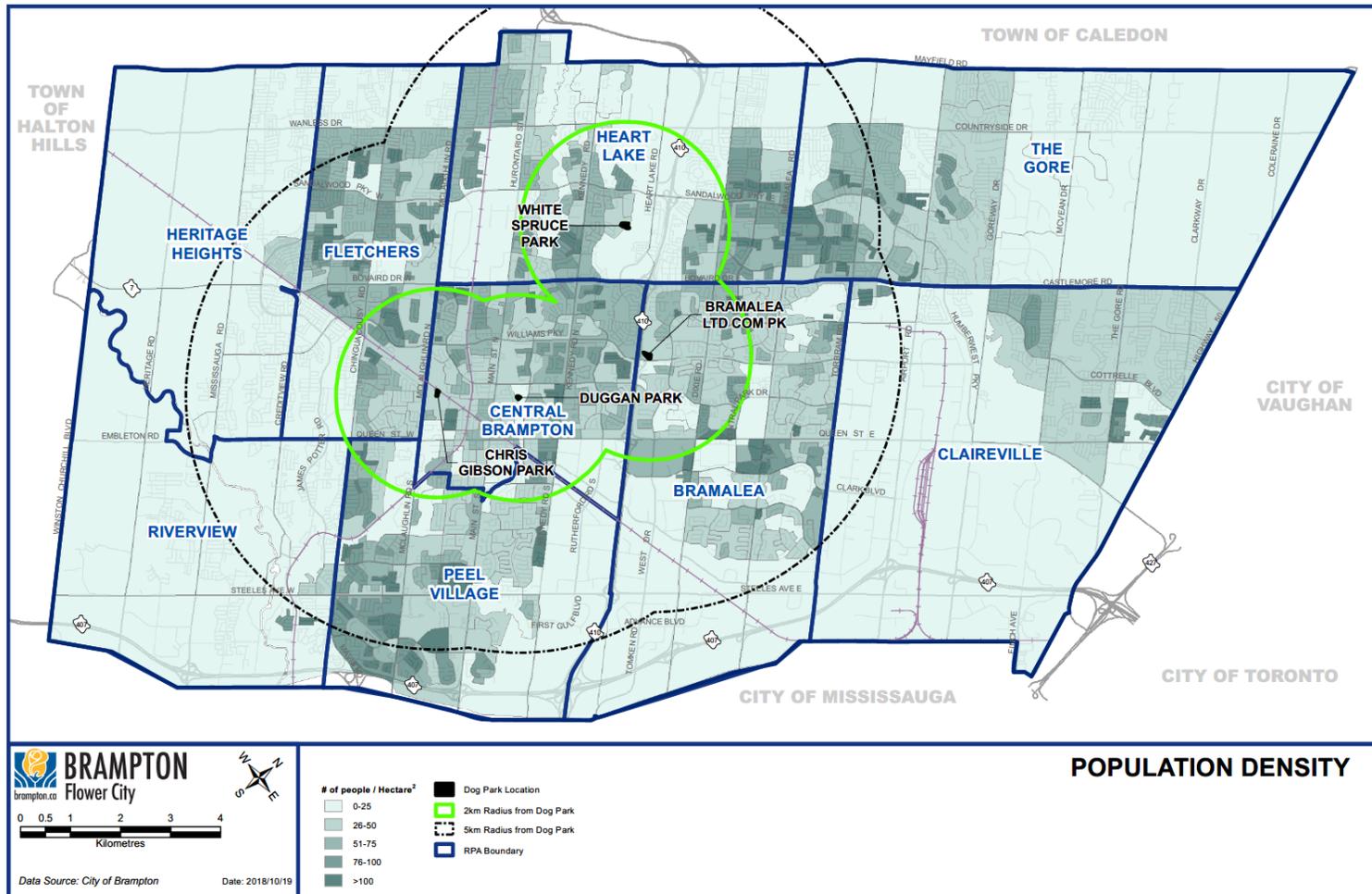


Figure 2 Existing LFAs are predominantly located in those areas with a high population density (>51 people/hectare²). High population density areas with a lack of LFAs include Fletcher's Meadow (RPA "B"), Peel Village ("H"), and between Heart Lake and The Gore (RPAs "C" and "D").

Figure 3 – Dog Licensing Density & LFA Service Radii

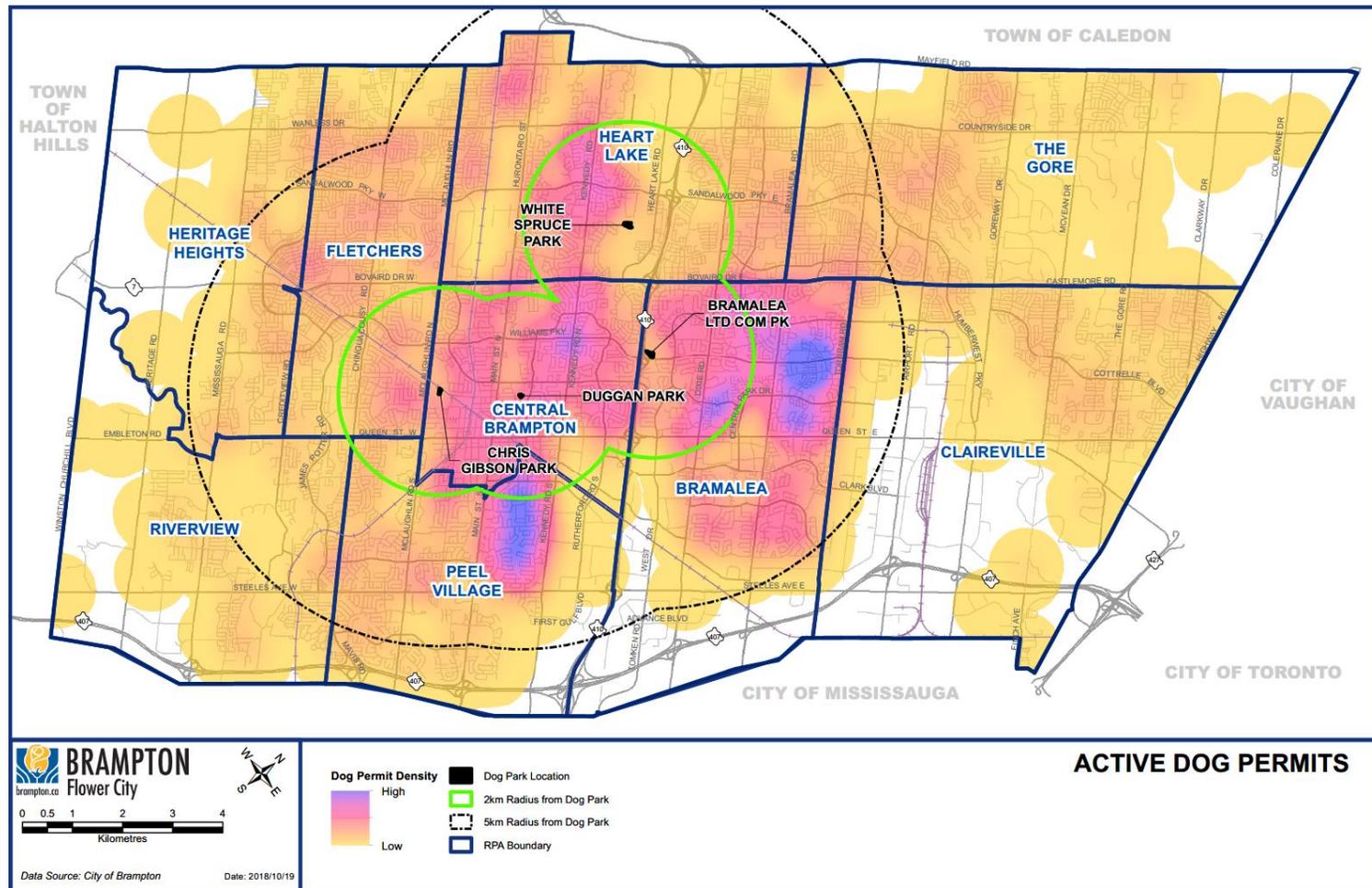


Figure 3 The average number of dog licenses issued, from low to high. A majority of licenses are located more than 2 km away from existing LFAs. In Peel Village (RPA “H”), the highest number of active permits are concentrated around Peel Village Park. In Bramalea (RPA “G”), the highest number of permits are concentrated around Jefferson Park, Jordan Park, and Greenbriar Recreation Centre.

Figure 4 – Dog Related Calls & LFA Service Radii

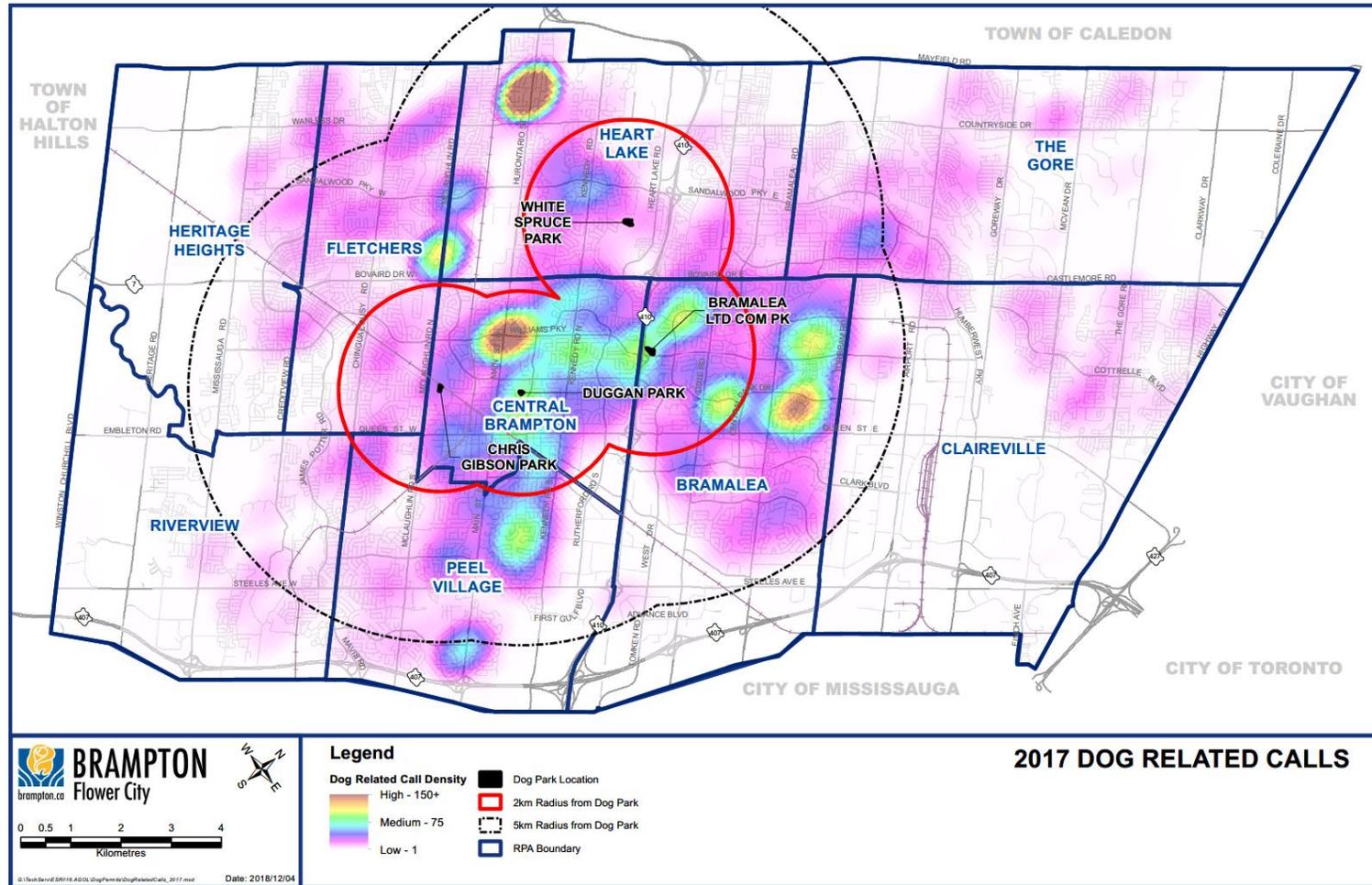


Figure 4 Dog related 3-1-1 calls are somewhat irregularly dispersed throughout Brampton. Areas with the highest call rate are located at Hurontario St. north of Wanless Dr., Main St. and Williams Pkwy., and Bramalea Rd. and Central Park Dr. These calls involve reports of dog-related nuisances such as excess noise, negligent clean-up practices by owners, off-leash dogs, and other related calls.

Figure 5 – Leash Free Area Requests 2015 – 2019

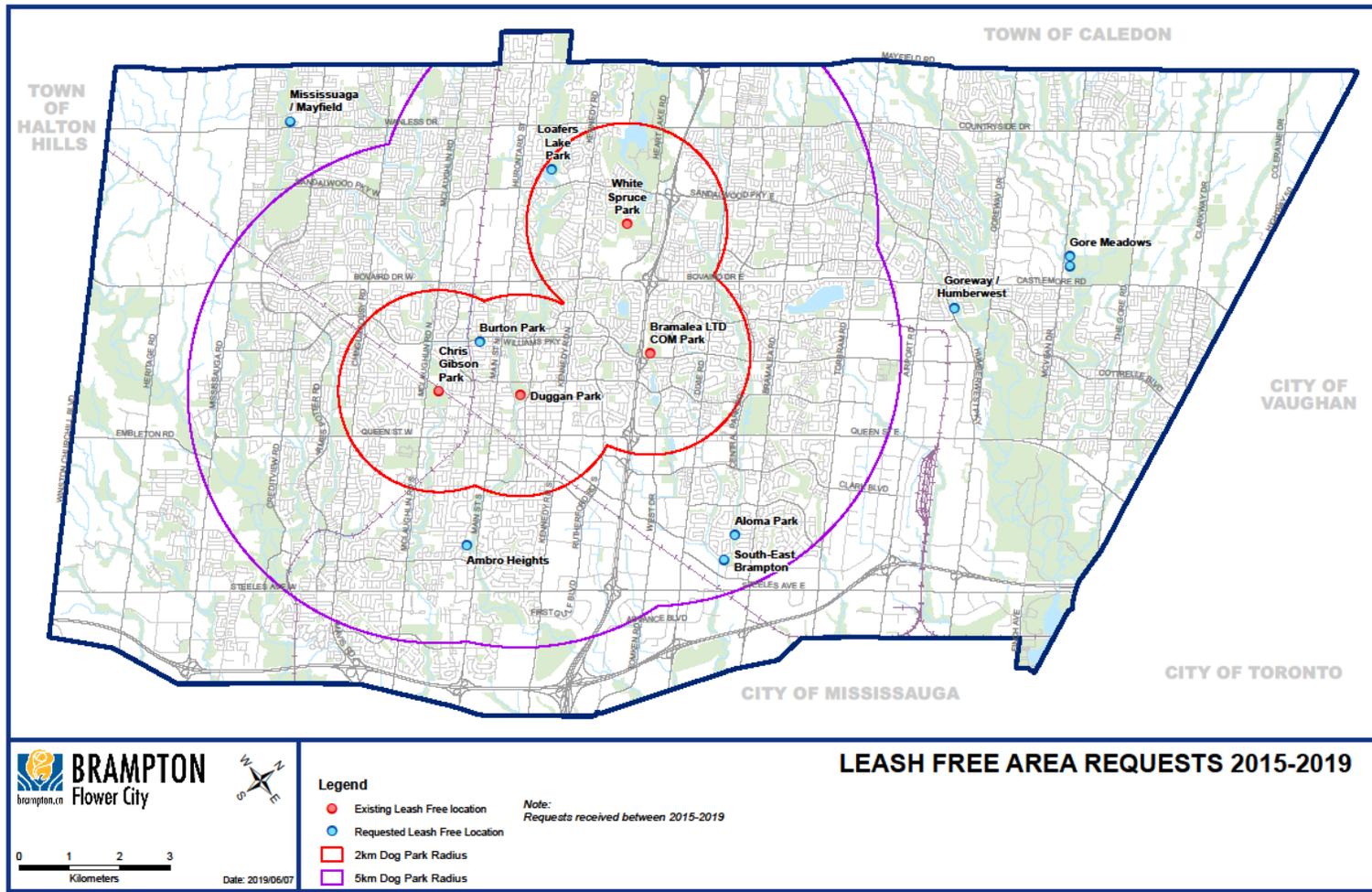


Figure 5 Nine LFA requests were submitted between 2015 and 2019, with a majority located more than 2 km away from an existing LFA. Notable LFA requests include two in The Gore and Bramalea (RPA “D” and RPA “G”) showing a clear deficiency of LFAs in these communities.

Figure 6 – Drive Times to LFA & LFA Service Radii

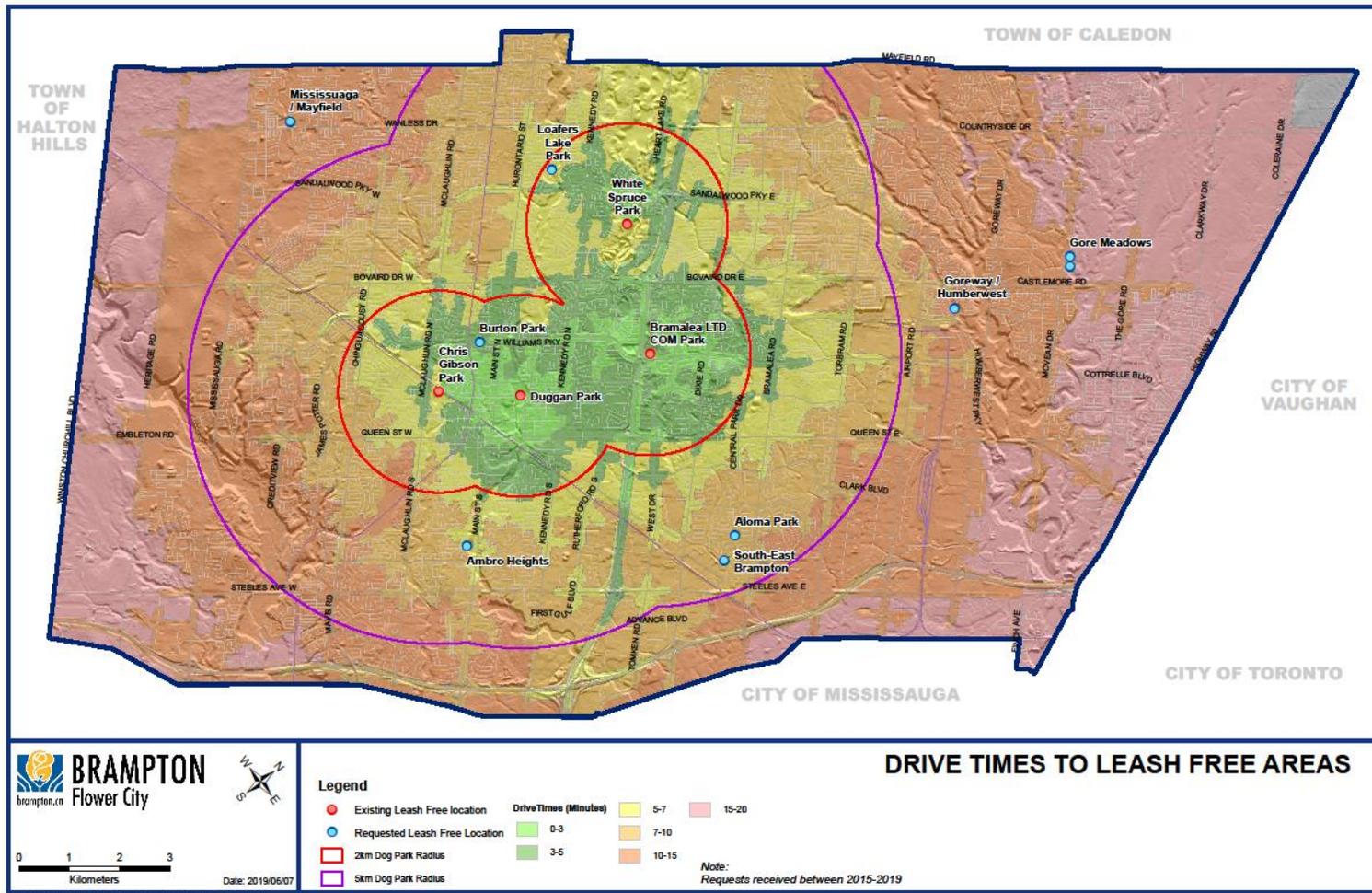


Figure 6 A majority of residents in the City are between a 7 – 15 minute drive, or within a 5 km distance from a LFA. The most underserved sites are located in The Gore (RPA “D”) and Claireville (RPA “I”) requiring a 10 – 20 minute drive to a LFA.

INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

The results of the analysis present several notable findings. Firstly, that existing dog parks within the city are somewhat centrally distributed in areas with some of the highest population density and moderate to high dog ownership density. Secondly, there is a clear demand for LFAs in Bramalea (RPA “G”) and Peel Village (RPA “H”). Figure 3 shows a majority of registered dogs are located more than 2 km away from existing LFAs. In Peel Village, the highest number of active permits are concentrated around Peel Village Park. In Bramalea, the highest number of permits are concentrated around Jefferson Park, Jordan Park, and Greenbriar Recreation Centre. In addition, areas that contain the highest population of registered dogs also report some of the highest dog related 3-1-1 calls, indicating a clear relationship between dog owners that lack adequate facilities and other residents of the community.

There is a demand for requested LFAs immediately north of Steeles Ave and within The Gore (RPA “D”). Drive times to existing LFAs, confirms a lack of adequate facilities in areas with high dog ownership in Bramalea and Peel Village. Dog owners in these areas are required to drive up to 10 minutes, or walk up to 1 hour to access a LFA. As such, providing future LFAs in Bramalea and Peel Village can help mitigate conflicts that arise from these areas of high dog ownership. As The Gore has a relatively low density of registered dogs and 3-1-1 calls, it is of lower priority for siting future LFAs.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the interpretation of results, the following general locations are recommended for siting future LFAs:

- **Bovaird Dr. /Bramalea Rd**
This general area is located in proximity to the city-wide Flower City Recreational Trail system, and is located centrally in an area of high residential, and moderate registered dog ownership density. This site is also between the borders of Heart Lake (RPA “C”), The Gore (“D”), and Bramalea (“G”), making it ideal for servicing multiple RPAs which contain a overall high number of registered dogs.
- **Main St. /Steeles Ave**
This general area is well situated to accommodate high dog ownership in Peel Village (RPA “H”) (Peel Village). The site is also well connected to an existing city-wide north-south trail network. Its catchment area will serve the entire population of Peel Village, including the concentration of registered dogs around Peel Village Park.
- **Goreway/Humberwest**
This general area is a requested LFA location. Although existing registered dog ownership populations are relatively low, the site is centrally located in an area of higher residential density within The Gore (RPA “D”). As such, providing an LFA on this site pre-emptively accommodates growing dog ownership trends and provides good access to dog owners in The Gore and Claireville (RPA “I”), particularly with expected population growth in these areas and planning development.

SITING GUIDELINES**Applicability:**

The following recommendations apply to new installations, or replacements. There are LFAs in the City that would not meet this criteria. Exceptions will be considered.

1.0 Location Attributes:

- 1.1. LFAs should only be permitted on City property, unless a qualified and dedicated community organization comes forward and a private partnership is deemed mutually beneficial by the city of Brampton.
- 1.2. Consideration should be given for natural drainage, with preference to tableland that is generally dry in spring and fall.
- 1.3. Consideration of Natural Heritage System (NHS) lands will be determined on a case by case basis.
- 1.4. There is no minimum or maximum size requirement.
- 1.5. Natural shading and tree canopy cover is preferred.

2.0 Proximity limitation zones:

- 2.1. LFAs adjacent to or within 50 meters of the following locations must have natural barriers or partial fencing as a minimum.
 - 2.1.1. Children's playgrounds or splash pads
 - 2.1.2. Athletic Fields/sports fields, including 'playout' buffers
 - 2.1.3. Sports courts
 - 2.1.4. In close proximity to schools
 - 2.1.5. Toboggan hills
 - 2.1.6. Ornamental gardens
- 2.2. LFAs should not be placed within 10 meters of Environmental Protection Areas, or associated buffers.

3.0 Site Design Attributes:

- 3.1. Where fencing is required, fence must be a minimum 4 feet in height, and up to 5 feet where deemed necessary.
- 3.2. When fencing is installed, a self-closing double gate is required.
- 3.3. Consideration should be given to location of required infrastructure for access to electrical, and water use.
- 3.4. Ease of access should be considered for maintenance, and emergency response.
- 3.5. Design should have consideration for accessibility and age-friendly design.
- 3.6. Natural buffers should be sought to serve as a replacement for fencing, where appropriate.
- 3.7. Privacy screening is recommended in locations adjacent to schools.

4.0 Setbacks:

- 4.1. Locating of a new LFA shall respect the following setbacks:
 - 4.1.1. Shall be no closer than 250m from a regional road ROW (without fencing); 50m with fencing.
 - 4.1.2. Shall be no closer than 50m from a local ROW (without fencing); 20m with fencing.
 - 4.1.3. Shall be at least 50m from residential properties unless separated by partial fencing.
 - 4.1.4. Shall be at least 100m from commercial properties.

Exceptions may be considered.

5.0 Amenities:

- 5.1. Compost receptacles for excrement should be provided and maintained.
- 5.2. Lighting should be considered.
- 5.3. Covered and uncovered seating nodes, including picnic tables, shall be considered.
- 5.4. Shade structures and screening for weather element protection shall be considered, including natural shade elements.
- 5.5. Natural turf or wood mulch are recommended surface types.
- 5.6. Water supply and paw-washing stations may be considered.
- 5.7. On-site parking is recommended for Destination LFAs

Site amenities are not standard, and are subject to consideration.

TYPES OF LEASH FREE AREAS

- **Neighbourhood Park Leash Free Area**
Neighbourhood LFAs are those situated within Neighbourhood Parks, with or without parking, and strong emphasis on pedestrian walkability and surrounding neighbourhood connectivity. Minimum standard amenity features expected. Full or partial fencing is recommended.
- **Destination Park Leash Free Area**
Destination Park LFAs are those situated within larger destination parks, with parking, and likelihood of additional amenity features, above the minimum standard. Fencing or natural barriers are recommended where adjacent to active recreation amenities.
- **Natural Heritage System Leash Free Area**
Natural Heritage System LFAs are situated within or abutting valley lands where appropriate to do so, and supported by Conservation Authorities, with minimum standard of amenities. Parking and fencing optional, based on site attributes. May also be incorporated as a designed trail, limiting use to walking, running, not multi-use.

RECOMMENDED DESIGN GUIDELINES

The following represent best practices and guidelines for design elements, planting materials, and general recommended requirements.

Fencing Style & Gate Closures

Fencing style should attempt to be permeable and translucent, with regard to safety and site aesthetics. Squared link fencing is the preferred recommendation as shown in Figure 5. Fencing should be a minimum 5 feet in height. Self locking double gate closures, are required for LFAs where fencing is required.

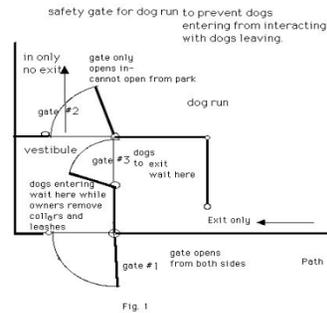


Figure 5 Miyuki Dog Park, San Jose, California (Left). Layout of a double gate enclosure (Right).

Prohibited Planting List

Although beneficial for providing shade and visual interest, certain trees, shrubs, and plants can be severely toxic to dogs if ingested. Staff recommend consulting toxic plant listings for any flora that shall be included in any LFA.

Materials

Material choice installed in LFAs can greatly impact user experience, longevity, and design of the park. The following presents a catalog of material options for ground cover and screening that may be installed in LFAs.

MATERIAL	PROS	CONS	LIFETIME COST
Artificial Turf	Does not discolour due to dog waste	May overheat under direct sunlight, damage paws	\$\$\$
	Can handle repeated traffic		
Grass	Low maintenance	High maintenance	\$
	Soft underfoot		
Kennel Tiles	Visually appealing	Easily damaged by heavy traffic	\$\$\$
	Low installation cost		
Mulch / Woodchips	May be used as dog run liner or in surrounding areas where surface is overused	Needs replenishment due to decomposition	\$\$\$
	Interlocking, flexible fit		
Decomposed Granite	Soft	Proper drainage required	\$\$\$
	Low maintenance and cost		
Decomposed Granite	Allows adequate drainage	May harbour bacteria from waste	\$\$\$
	Natural & recycled material		
Decomposed Granite	Sterile	May migrate downhill	\$\$\$
	Good for paths and areas with heavy foot traffic		
Decomposed Granite	Does not retain waste smell		

MATERIAL	PROS	CONS	LIFETIME COST
Shredded Rubber	Soft texture Does not attract weeds or insects	Higher cost Risk of ingestion	\$\$\$
Sand	Natural material Adequate drainage	Difficult to maintain and keep clean Not accessible for mobile devices May overheat under direct sunlight, damage paws	\$\$

FENCING & SCREENING			
MATERIAL	IMAGE	PROS	CONS
Woven wire		Easy to install Inexpensive Concrete ledge may be poured under the frame to prevent dogs from digging	May be fragile
Chain Link Fencing		Easy to install Inexpensive and durable	May be fragile / distorted over time

Minimum Standard Features

- Waste and excrement collection containers, and pick up bag dispensers
- Fencing and double-gate self latching closure, where required
- Signage

Additional Features for Consideration

- Dedicated 'small and shy dog' area
- Paw washing station
- Dog drinking fountain
- Lighting fixtures
- Dedicated parking
- Social seating spaces (Picnic tables, covered or uncovered seating)
- Shaded features, including dog-run area, also used for sudden inclement weather
- Agility training features

Selection of additional features is based on budget availability, Region of Peel water connection permits and appropriateness based on site attributes, and design.

Accessibility

The City of Brampton is committed to accessibility. The City's mission is to be a vibrant, safe and attractive city of opportunity where efficient services make it possible for families, individuals and the community to grow, prosper and enjoy a high quality of life. When designing and implementing new LFAs, consideration must be given to provide full access where possible.

Considerations for design criteria may include:

- Accessible parking
- Hard surfacing
- Depressed curbs
- Gradual grading and slope
- Accessible gated entrances and turn around space
- Edge protection (where slope and grade changes present, including railings)
- Rest areas along path of travel to LFA (where not in close proximity to parking)
- Viewing areas (inside and outside of fenced LFAs)
- Accessible transitions from pathways
- Accessible seating

Signage

Design should consider signage having specific regard for:

- Address information, name and hours
- Emergency and City contact information
- Leash Free Area Rules, and Dog Licensing By-Law
- Park Status signs
- Waste bin marker
- Obstruction markers
- Directional signage
- Education signage

LEASH FREE AREA RULES

City of Brampton Dog Licensing By-Law (250-2005)

In any off-leash area of each park listed in Subsection (c), the following provisions shall apply:

Every owner shall clean up after his or her dog.

No owner shall bring to the off-leash area any potentially dangerous dog, dangerous dog, pit bull, or any dog, which has a history of aggressive behaviour to other dogs or human beings.

Each dog must be vaccinated.

Every owner of a dog shall ensure the dog is wearing a collar and current City License at all times.

No puppy under four months of age is permitted.

Each dog shall be spayed or neutered.

No dog shall be left unattended.

Each owner shall carry a leash for each dog at all times.

There shall be a limit of 3 dogs per person per visit.

Children under ten years of age are prohibited.

Each dog shall be leashed when it enters or leaves the park.

Each owner assumes all risks by entering into the park.⁶

LEASH FREE USER GROUPS

LFAs in several municipalities, such as Mississauga, Oakville, Richmond Hill, Milton, and Halton Hills rely on dog advocacy user groups to site, fund, and maintain dog parks (Table 1). Leash-Free Mississauga, for example, is an affiliated volunteer group with the City of Mississauga.

⁶ City of Brampton Dog Licensing By-Law (250-2005)

Table 1. Membership rates for various dog owner groups

DOG OWNER GROUP	MEMBERSHIP COST	USE OF FUNDS
Leash-Free Mississauga	1 dog - \$15/year 2 – 4 dogs - \$20/year	Construction of new LFA, maintenance
W.O.O.F Oakville	\$20/year, plus \$2 for each additional dog (max 3)	Maintain and purchase park amenities (shelters, benches, waste bags, trees)
Richmond Hill K9 Klub	Free	N/A
Leash Free Milton	1 Dog - \$10/year 2 or more dogs - \$15/year	Maintain and purchase park amenities (gazebos, picnic tables, grass seed)
Leash Free Halton Hills	\$20/year \$35/2 years	Park improvements, implementation of new LFAs

No similar dog advocacy group exists in the City of Brampton. Establishing a similar advocacy group ensures not only adequate use and awareness of LFAs, and can help foster a sense of community among this demographic. As such, development of future LFAs should consider establishing LFAs that draw support from dog owner across the region.