

# CORPORATE POLICY AND PROCEDURE



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POLICY	Leash Free Program Policy
CATEGORY	Corporate
AUTHORITY	Parks & Recreation
RELATED	City of Guelph Animal Control Bylaw (2018)-20313 and Dog Owners' Liability Act, R.S.O. 1990
APPROVED BY	Guelph City Council
EFFECTIVE DATE	July 1 2019
REVISION DATE	-

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## Policy statement

The City of Guelph (the "City") recognizes the social benefits of dogs and their keepers having access to and being accommodated within the parks system.

This policy pertains to the provision of leash free areas for dogs in City owned or operated parks ("City Parks"). Consideration must be given to balancing the needs, interests and safety of the community, impact on the natural environment and sustainability of the leash free area, when identifying appropriate locations for leash free areas. The City further recognizes the requirement for responsible pet ownership within City Parks.

This policy outlines procedures, regulations, and maintenance approach and design requirements for leash free areas and does not displace the City of Guelph Animal Control Bylaw (2018)-20313. Enforcement of leash free areas shall be administered through the City of Guelph Animal Control Bylaw (2018)-20313.

## Purpose

The purpose of the policy is to:

1. Define areas that dogs are permitted and not permitted to be off-leash.
2. Provide regulations and rules for off-leash areas.
3. Outline a maintenance and inspection approach for off-leash areas.
4. Provide criteria for developing new off-leash areas and facilities.

## Definitions

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 fence that is designated for dogs to run at large or without a leash.

Keeper: as defined in the City of Guelph Animal Control Bylaw (2018)-20313.

Premier or category 'A' sports field: shall mean any full size sports field maintained to an elite standard based upon user demand.

For the purposes of this document, all polices relating to leash free areas will apply to leash free facilities.

## Procedures

### 1.0 Permitted Areas to be Off-Leash

#### 1.1 General

1. Dogs using parks, trails and linkages must be kept on a leash at all times unless posted otherwise.
2. The City defines specific areas where dogs are permitted to be leash free as identified in Schedule A.
3. The City defines specific sports fields where dogs are permitted to be leash free only when unoccupied as defined in Schedule B and keepers must follow the policy requirements as noted in Section 1.2.
4. Leash free areas identified in Schedule A and B are subject to review by Staff at any time. The policy requirements outlined in Section 1.4 will be used to determine if removal is warranted.
5. 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.

#### 1.2 Unoccupied Sports Fields as Leash Free Areas

The City allows only designated sports fields to be used as leash free areas when unoccupied. Only sports fields signed and identified in Schedule B as designated leash free areas can be used as a leash free area. All other sports fields are prohibited for use by dogs at all times.

User guidelines for unoccupied sports fields as leash free areas are as follows:

- Users: Sports fields are considered occupied during times when they are in use for any recreational purpose other than for leash free areas. Once the sports field becomes occupied the dog keeper shall be required to place the dog on a leash and remove the dog from the sports field immediately. When the sports field becomes unoccupied again, the field can resume as a leash free area
- Maintenance: Sports fields are considered occupied during periods of maintenance. Once the sports field becomes occupied for maintenance purposes, the keeper shall be required to place the dog on a leash and remove

the dog from the sports field immediately. When the sports field becomes unoccupied again, the field can resume as a leash free area

- Priority: The dog and its keeper shall always give priority to any and all park users that wish to use the sports field. Regardless of which group arrives at the site first, priority over the use of the sports fields shall always be given to its intended use as a sports field
- Safety: Unoccupied sports fields shall only be used as leash free areas when safe to do so. All park users, unless other leash free users, must be completely clear of the sports field boundaries prior to the sports field being considered unoccupied. Only then shall it be safe to be used as a leash free area. All dogs must be on a leash once removed from the sports field boundary

### 1.3 Dog Walking in Parks, Trails and Open Space

- Dogs using parks, trails and open space must be kept on a leash at all times unless posted otherwise.
- Dogs are not permitted on sports fields not designated as leash free areas when unoccupied at any time.
- Dogs and their keepers must stay to the right of such park trails and linkages at all times. Dogs shall not interfere with or obstruct other trail users nor approach within 1.0 metre of any other **person or any other person's** animal.
- Dogs must remain under control by their keeper at all times and respond to all voice commands.

### 1.4 Process for the Removal of Designated Leash Free Areas

City staff may at any point in time review the designation of a leash free area. Designated leash free areas may be removed where:

- The leash free area is no longer compatible within the park in which it resides;
- The leash free area is no longer functional resulting in damage to the park and/ or the natural environment;
- The leash free area is poorly attended on a regular basis;
- Conflicts between park users cannot be resolved;
- Repeated, ongoing non-compliance issues pertaining to the Rules and Regulations for use of leash free areas posted at each leash free area and other associated City of Guelph bylaws; and
- The space can be used for other purposes.

## 2.0 Regulations for Leash Free Areas

The following rules and regulations shall be appropriately posted at all leash free facilities. Failing to comply with any of the following regulations may result in a prosecution being commenced pursuant to the City of Guelph Animal Control Bylaw (2018)-20313 and/ or be banned from using the leash free area.

1. This leash free area may only be used from dawn to dusk daily.
2. No dog can be in the leash free area without a keeper present and supervising at all times. Keepers supervising dogs in a leash free area must be at least 18 years of age.

3. Only dogs and keepers are permitted to use this leash free area. No other animals are permitted.
4. Aggressive dogs are to be kept out of the leash free area at all times. If a dog becomes aggressive towards others (people or dogs) it must be leashed immediately and be removed from the site.
5. Dogs that have previously bitten or injured another person or dog are not permitted to use the leash free area at any time.
6. Dogs must be kept leashed at all times until the leash free area has been entered. If the leash free area is fenced, then the dog must remain on a leash until the gate has been securely closed.
7. Dogs must remain under control at all times in the leash free area. Dogs must remain close to its keeper (within sight and earshot) and respond to all voice commands at all times. Dogs must not be allowed to disturb or chase other dogs or people in an aggressive or unwelcomed manner. Dogs must also not be allowed to destroy or dig up turf, bushes or trees at any time.
8. All dogs must wear up to date rabies and dog license tags at all times
9. Dogs wearing pinch (prong) and spike collars are not permitted in the leash free area.
10. Stoop and scoop is mandatory. All keepers must clean up after their dogs and place fecal matter in the designated waste containers.
11. Rawhide chews and food (animal or human) are not permitted within the leash free area. They may cause guarding or territorial conflicts between dogs resulting in aggressive behaviour or injury.
12. Children younger than 6 years of age must not enter a fenced leash free area. Users under the age of 18 must be accompanied and supervised by an adult at all times in a fenced leash free area.
13. Dogs in heat, puppies under 12 weeks old, dogs with an infectious disease and dogs that have a medical condition that will impact their welfare and ability to safely interact with other dogs and people are to be kept out of the leash free area.

All persons using this Leash Free Area uses this Area at their own risk. The City of Guelph and the **City's provider for animal control enforcement** are not responsible for and accept no liability for any injuries, loss or damage claimed or suffered by any person or animal related to the access and use of this Area, howsoever caused.

All dogs and keepers will be banned from using leash free areas if repeated non-compliance with the regulations occur.

Information posted at all leash free areas shall include contact information for the City of Guelph Parks Operations and the **City's provider for animal control enforcement**.

## 2.1 Liability of Leash Free Areas

Dog keepers are legally responsible for their own dog(s) and any injuries or damage caused by their dog(s). Individuals who choose to use leash free areas do so at their own risk.

## 2.2 Ongoing Monitoring and Inspection of Leash Free Areas

Staff shall monitor and inspect leash free areas on an ongoing basis. During the inspection, issues with the facility (signage, fencing, garbage, vegetation, etc.) and any user conflicts will be documented. In addition, users can report issues and these will be documented through **the City's Service Request Process**. In an effort to resolve issues as effectively and as quickly as possible, staff shall discuss solutions to the issues with dog keepers, Bylaw Enforcement, **City's provider for animal control enforcement** and other park users.

## 2.3 Enforcement of Leash Free Areas

Dog keepers must comply with the City of Guelph Animal Control Bylaw (2018)-20313, the City of Guelph Stoop and Scoop Bylaw (2004)-17568, the City of Guelph Noise Control Bylaw (2000)-16366, the Dog Owners' Liability Act, R.S.O. 1990, and all other relevant laws, by-laws, policies, rules and regulations or be subject to their fines and/ or penalties. The **City's provider for animal control enforcement** has the authority to enforce such bylaws on behalf of the City.

[City of Guelph - Animal Control Bylaw](#)

[City of Guelph - Stoop and Scoop Bylaw](#)

[City of Guelph - Noise Control Bylaw](#)

[Dog Owner's Liability Act, R.S.O 1990](#)

## 2.4 Prohibited Users of Leash Free Areas

The following dogs are prohibited from using leash free areas:

1. Any dog that must be muzzled or leashed in accordance with a notice issued under the City of Guelph Animal Control Bylaw (2018)-20313, or the Dog Owners' Liability Act (DOLA) or an order issued under DOLA.
2. Any dog that has a tracked history of having bitten or injuring another dog or person. Any dog that bites or injures another dog or person will be banned from all leash free areas in the City.
3. Dogs with an infectious disease and dogs that have a medical condition that will impact their welfare and ability to safely interact with other dogs and people.
4. Female dogs in heat.

## 3.0 Maintenance of Leash Free Areas

Staff shall monitor and inspect leash free areas on an ongoing basis. Parks Operations will be required to conduct routine maintenance or periodically perform repairs to the area or facility as needed.

Leash free areas are to be closed during periods of maintenance. A notice shall be posted during periods of maintenance. Public access, including dogs, is prohibited during times of maintenance or repairs.

#### 4.0 Criteria for Developing New Leash Free Areas and Facilities

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.

Location criteria for suitable leash free areas and facilities shall be reviewed as follows:

- Functionality: The proposed leash free area shall have little-to-no impact to the condition of the park, it's functionality and natural environment
- Compatibility: The proposed leash free area shall be well-suited in design with current and future uses, features, components and overall park design
- Proximity: The proposed leash free area shall be developed within reasonable proximity to existing and/ or future residences, existing and/ or future leash free areas and leash free area exclusions
- Proportion: The proposed leash free area shall be proportionately developed according to the size of the park where it will reside. In general, a leash free area should only be considered on sites 2 hectares or greater to help minimize impacts on other amenities in the park and overall functionality.
- Neighbourhood Characteristics: The proposed leash free area location shall consider adjacent land uses, population density, housing types, licensed dog population, proximity of existing and other potential future leash free areas
- Policies and Plans: The proposed leash free area will have regard for other City policies, plans and initiatives such as the Official Plan, Natural Heritage Action Plan and Urban Forest Management Plan.

General exclusions for the development of leash free areas include the following:

- Development of future leash free areas shall not occur on lands not owned or managed under agreement by the City of Guelph;
- Development of future leash free areas shall not occur on Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA) owned lands unless approved by GRCA;
- Development of leash free areas should mitigate impacts to or not occur on lands designated as part of the Natural Heritage System (NHS) or on lands previously used for community naturalized planting or designated as *Naturalized Areas* where extensive tree/ shrub/ and/ or wildflower plantings have taken place or are planned to take place in the future

Leash free areas are prohibited in the following spaces:

- Premier or category 'A' sports fields and stadiums;
- Sports fields under shared-use agreement with privately owned lands;
- Playgrounds and splash pads;
- Skateboard parks and bicycle parks;
- Tennis courts, basketball courts and other sports pads;
- Parks adjacent to 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; and

- Designated heritage, memorial, commemorative and ceremonial areas.

#### 4.1 Design Requirements for Leash Free Areas and Facilities

- All leash free areas should contain a dog specific waste disposal system.
- All leash free areas should have signage containing information on site applicable bylaws, general rules and regulations and permitted hours of use.
- Leash free areas to be located within the vicinity of the identified exclusions must be fenced. If the location is not within the vicinity of the identified exclusions it may proceed as a leash free area unfenced.
- Fully fenced leash free areas should contain separate fenced areas for small dogs and large dogs if site conditions allow.
- Fully fenced leash free areas should be constructed with fencing of a minimum height of 1220mm (4.0 feet) and preferably black vinyl chain link fencing.
- Fully fenced leash free areas should contain a dual-gate entry system with separate exit area.

#### 4.2 Accessibility of Leash Free Areas

All designated leash free areas within City Parks should be fully accessible, where **feasible and practicable, in accordance with the City of Guelph's Facility Accessible Design Manual (FADM) and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).**

## Schedule A

### Designated Leash Free Areas and Facilities

Within the specified area of the park indicated from dawn to dusk:

#### Ward 1

- Eramosa River Park
- Lee Street Park
- Peter Misersky Park

#### Ward 2

- Riverside Park (GRCA lands west of the Speed River, north of Woodlawn Road)

#### Ward 3

- Norm Jary Park

#### Ward 4

- Margaret Greene Park

#### Ward 5

- Bristol Street Park
- Centennial Park
- Crane Park

## Ward 6

- John Gamble Park (Hydro corridor)

## Schedule B

Designated unoccupied sports fields permitted as leash free areas

Within the marked boundary of the sports field indicated from dawn to dusk only when unoccupied:

- Bailey Park Multi-Use 1
- Bailey Park Softball 2
- Centennial Park Softball 9
- Colonial Drive Park Softball 1
- Deerpath Drive Park Soccer 1
- Dovercliffe Park Mini-Soccer 1
- Dovercliffe Park Mini-Soccer 2
- Eramosa River Park Baseball 1
- Eramosa River Park Baseball 2
- Exhibition Park Softball 2
- Franchetto Park Multi-Use 1
- Grange Road Park Soccer 1
- Green Meadows Park Soccer 1
- Green Meadows Park Softball 2
- Hanlon Creek Park Soccer 1
- Howitt Park Baseball 1
- Hugh C. Guthrie Park Softball 1
- Margaret Greene Park Softball 3
- Margaret Greene Park Softball 4
- MacAlister Park Multi-Use 1
- Mollison Park Softball 2
- Norm Jary Park Softball 1
- Norm Jary Park Softball 2
- Norm Jary Park Softball 3
- Orin Reid Park Mini-Soccer 1
- Orin Reid Park Mini-Soccer 2
- Pineridge Park Softball 1
- Rickson Park Softball 2
- Riverside Park Multi-Use 1
- Riverside Park Multi-Use 2
- Riverside Park Softball 3
- Royal City Park Softball 1
- Skov Park Softball 1
- Sleeman Park Softball 1
- University Village Park Baseball 1
- W.E. Hamilton Park Softball 1
- Wilson Farm Park Mini-Soccer 1
- Woodland Glen Park Softball 1
- York Road Park Baseball 1
- York Road Park Soccer 2
- York Road Park Softball 3

Dogs are not permitted on the following sports fields at any time:

- Castlebury Park Soccer 1
- Castlebury Park Soccer 2
- Centennial Park Mini-Soccer 1
- Centennial Park Soccer 2
- Centennial Park Soccer 3
- Centennial Park Mini-Soccer 4
- Centennial Park Mini-Soccer 5
- Centennial Park Soccer 6
- Centennial Park Soccer 7
- Centennial Park Joe Kaine Hardball 8
- Centennial Park Softball 10
- Centennial Park Soccer Enclosure
- Earl Brimblecombe Park Softball 1
- Earl Brimblecombe Park Softball 2
- Eastview Community Park Football 1
- Eastview Community Park Football 2
- Eastview Community Park Soccer 3
- Eastview Community Park Soccer 4
- Exhibition Park Softball 1
- Exhibition Park Football 3
- Exhibition Park Hastings Stadium
- Guelph Lake Combo Field 1
- Guelph Lake Combo Field 2
- Guelph Lake Combo Field 3
- Guelph Lake Softball 4
- Guelph Lake Softball 5



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- Guelph Lake Softball 6
  - Guelph Lake Softball 7
  - Howden Crescent Park Mini-Soccer 1
  - Howden Crescent Park Mini-Soccer 2
  - Lyon Park Softball 1
  - Lyon Park Softball 2
  - Margaret Greene Park Soccer 1
  - Margaret Greene Park Soccer 2
  - Margaret Greene Park Softball 5
  - Margaret Greene Park Mini-Soccer 6
  - **O'Connor Lane Park Soccer 1**
  - **O'Connor Lane Park Soccer 2**
  - Peter Misersky Park Soccer 1
  - Rickson Park Soccer 1
  - Silvercreek Park Soccer 1
  - Silvercreek Park Soccer 2
  - South End Community Park Larry Pearson Baseball 1
  - South End Community Park Larry Pearson Baseball 2
  - South End Community Park Larry Pearson Baseball 3
  - South End Community Park Mini-Soccer 1
  - South End Community Park Mini-Soccer 2
  - South End Community Park Mini-Soccer 3
  - South End Community Park Multi-Use 4
  - Springdale Park Mini-Soccer 1
  - Springdale Park Mini-Soccer 2
  - Waverley Park Mini-Soccer 1
  - Waverley Park Mini-Soccer 2
  - Westminster Woods Park Soccer 1
  - Westminster Woods Park Baseball 2