

Leash Free Study



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Executive Summary

The following study reviews the City of Guelph's current approach to leash free areas. The purpose of the study is to understand the City's current delivery model and make recommendations to help form a Leash Free Policy.

From the background review and community engagement, Staff make the following observations and recommendations:

1. The City should define areas where dogs are permitted to be off leash and develop clear rules and regulations for these areas through a Leash Free Program Policy.
2. Many other municipalities have leash free areas that are fenced (also called dog parks or leash free facilities). The City of Guelph currently does not offer any fenced leash free facilities. Fenced leash free areas can help create a safer environment for park users and the City should develop a plan to provide fenced leash free facilities. As part of any policy there should be criteria for locating the facilities and design guidelines.
3. Currently City of Guelph sport fields are permitted to be used as off leash areas. This current practice causes damage to sport fields and conflict between sport field users and dog owners or keepers. The ongoing use of sports fields as off leash areas should be reviewed and evaluated to determine if it is appropriate.
1. 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 provide That Council approve the proposed Leash Free Program Policy included as ATT-1 to the report PS-2019-06.

s a framework for enforcing, managing, operating, planning, designing and construction of leash free areas.

Introduction

At present, there are eight (8) leash free areas in operation within the City of Guelph. These leash free areas are not currently governed by a uniform set of guidelines and regulations, or delineated on sites with separation. The City has received numerous complaints and concerns from the public regarding safety of leash free areas in parks and conflicts between users. By developing a Leash Free Program Policy, criteria will be established outlining strategies and guidelines in order to aid the City in the design, safety and implementation of facilities and services for leash free areas.

For this study, staff reviewed the current structure of leash free areas to determine what was working and what was not. The review was broken into 4 steps:

- Background research analysis;
- Community engagement;
- Recommendations and policy development; and
- Implementation plan.

Through the background review and extensive community engagement a set of recommendations and alternatives has been established to form part of the criteria making up the Leash Free Program Policy. These recommendations and alternatives reflect the needs of all park users, improves the City's ability to enforce rules and regulations and to provide guidance for leash free areas moving forward. Safety was considered the most important factor and is presented as such in the policy as well as the recommendations and implementation plan.

Definitions

For the purposes of this report, the following definitions should be understood:

Leash Free Area: shall mean an area of land designated for dogs to run at large or without a leash.

Leash Free Facility: shall mean an area of land enclosed by a physical barrier (fence, hedge, etc.) that is designated for dogs to run at large or without a leash. Also called a 'Dog Park.'

For the purposes of this document, all policies or recommendations relating to leash free areas will apply to leash free facilities unless otherwise stated.

Background Research Analysis

As part of the background review, Staff conducted an analysis of existing policies and conducted a benchmark analysis of comparator municipalities' policies and facilities.

Current City Policies

Current Leash Free Policy

The City currently does not have a cohesive policy relating to leash free areas. Existing leash free areas are defined on the City's website. There are no rules and regulations associated with them. Enforcement of leash free areas is through the Animal Control By-law.

Current City By-laws

There are three relevant by-laws relating to dogs in the City of Guelph:

- The [Animal Control By-law](#) provides for the licensing and regulating of dogs and for prohibiting or regulating the running at large of dogs in the City.
- The [Stoop-and-Scoop By-law](#) provides for the removal and sanitary disposition of excrement for any animal. With some exceptions, this by-law applies to any person who owns, harbours, possesses or is in control of any animal.
- The [Noise Control By-law \(1998\)-15760](#) prohibits the persistent barking of domestic animals at all times.

Dog Owner's Liability Act, R.S.O 1990

In addition to City By-laws there is also the provincial Dog Owner's Liability Act. In Ontario, the Dog Owner's Liability Act governs who is at fault when a dog bites someone. The act states that an owner of a dog is liable for damages resulting from a bite or attack by the dog on another person or domestic animal.

Benchmark Analysis

A benchmark analysis of five (5) comparable municipalities was conducted in order to identify, understand and compare:

- Strategies, guidelines and principles in the design of leash free areas;
- Leash free area service models;
- Service levels for leash free areas; and
- Overall safety requirements of leash free areas.

Within each of the municipalities looked at, one high profile leash free facility was selected for thorough review and analysis. This review is summarized in Figures 1-3 below. These five locations, and their subject municipalities have been studied to compare the following criteria:

- Fully fenced areas;
- Natural barriers (in place of fencing);
- Separate areas for small and large dogs;
- Dog waste specific disposal;
- Appropriate level of information signage (rules, regulations and enforcement);
- Appropriate amount of signage;
- Clear boundaries for Leash Free Zones;
- Lighting and water services;
- Parking facilities provided;
- Permitted hours of use;
- Unoccupied sports field use;
- Proximity to other facilities;
- Functionality of the park;
- Compatibility of the park;
- Proportion of the leash free facility in comparison to the overall park size; and
- Size of the leash free facility.

The five subject municipalities and high profile leash free facilities analyzed in this report include the following:

- City of Kitchener, McLennan Park
- Township of Centre Wellington, Fergus Dog Park
- City of Hamilton, Cathedral Park
- City of Burlington, Bayview Park
- Town of Oakville, Shell Park

The municipalities outlined above were chosen as direct comparators based on proximity and population in relation to the City of Guelph. The leash free facilities analyzed were

chosen as they are a considered typical facilities within each of the comparator municipalities.

Through analysis, it has also been determined that the five subject municipalities define leash free areas as "Leash Free Areas" and "Dog Parks." The following definitions apply:

Leash Free Area: A designated free-run area (not fenced) within a park where dogs can be leash free.

Dog Park (a): A designated fully fenced facility within a park where dogs can be leash free.

Dog Park (b): A designated park where dogs can be leash free and where no other use within the park shall be permitted.

Designated Leash Free Areas or Dog Parks per Municipality

City of Kitchener:

- Bechtel Park contains a designated Dog Park (a)
- Kiwanis Park contains a designated Dog Park (a)
- McLennan Park contains a designated Dog Park (a)

The City of Kitchener only permits fully fenced dog parks. It does not permit leash free dogs on any other lands including sports fields. Dogs are not permitted on sports fields at any time under any circumstances whether leashed or leash free.

Township of Centre Wellington:

- Fergus Dog Park contains a designated Dog Park (b)

The Township of Centre Wellington does not permit leash free dogs on any other lands including sports fields. Dogs are not permitted on sports fields at any time under any circumstances whether leashed or leash free.

City of Hamilton:

- Hamilton SPCA Park contains a section designated Dog Park (a)
- Heritage Green Park contains a designated Dog Park (a)
- Hill Street Park contains a designated Dog Park (a)
- Birch Avenue Park contains a designated Dog Park (a)
- Borer's Falls contains a designated Dog Park (a)
- Cathedral Park contains a designated Dog Park (a)
- Globe Park contains a designated Dog Park (a)
- Rail Trail contains a designated Dog Park (a)
- Chegwin Park contains a Leash Free Area (unfenced)
- Corporal Nathan Cirillo Park contains a Leash Free Area (unfenced)
- Hamilton SPCA Park contains a section Leash Free Area (unfenced)
- Strachan Street Open Space contains a Leash Free Area (unfenced)

The City of Hamilton does not permit leash free dogs on any other lands including sports fields. Dogs are not permitted on sports fields at any time under any circumstances whether leashed or leash free.

City of Burlington:

- Bayview Park contains a designated Dog Park (a)
- Norton Park contains a designated Dog Park (a)
- Roly Bird Park contains a designated Dog Park (a)

The City of Burlington only permits fully fenced dog parks. It does not permit leash free dogs on any other lands including sports fields. Dogs are not permitted on sports fields at any time under any circumstances whether leashed or leash free.

Town of Oakville:

- Palermo Park contains a designated Dog Park (a)
- North Park contains a designated Dog Park (a)
- Memorial Park contains a designated Dog Park (a)
- Glenashton Park contains a designated Dog Park (a)
- Kingsford Gardens contains a designated Dog Park (a)
- Post Park contains a designated Dog Park (a)
- Shell Park contains a designated Dog Park (a)

The Town of Oakville only permits fully fenced dog parks. It does not permit leash free dogs on any other lands including sports fields. Dogs are not permitted on sports fields at any time under any circumstances whether leashed or leash free.

Analysis of Leash Free Areas

Figure 1: Comparison of leash free areas, facilities and service levels

Municipality	Number of Dog Parks (a)	Number of Dog Parks (b)	Number of Leash Free Areas	Fully Fenced Facilities	Unfenced Facilities	Separate Areas for Small and Large Dogs	Lighting	Water Stations/ Access	Parking	Permitted Hours of Use	Dog Waste Specific Disposal	Dog Waste Bags Supplied	Signage Indicating Rules, Regulations and Expectations	Dogs Permitted on Sports Fields	Leash Free Areas Per 1,000 Population (Service Level)
City of Burlington	3	0	0	3	0	2	1	0	3	YES	0	3	YES	NO	0.02
Township of Centre Wellington	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	YES	0	1	YES	NO	0.04
City of Hamilton	7	1	4	8	4	0	1	3	7	YES	9	9	YES	NO	0.02
City of Kitchener	3	0	0	3	0	0	1	0	3	YES	3	3	YES	NO	0.01
Town of Oakville	7	0	0	7	0	2	0	2	7	YES	7	7	YES	NO	0.04
City of Guelph	0	0	8	0	8	0	0	0	7	YES	0	0	NO	YES	0.06

Figure 1 illustrates the differences in leash free areas and facility styles and service levels between the studied municipalities and compared to areas and service levels in the City of Guelph.

Figure 2: Comparison of the five studied leash free facilities

Leash Free Location	Park Classification	Fully Fenced Facility	Unfenced Facility	Separate Areas for Small and Large Dogs	Lighting	Water Stations/ Access	Parking	Designated Leash Free Area Size (Hectares)	Overall Park Size (Hectares)	Permitted Hours of Use	Dog Waste Specific Disposal	Dog Waste Bags Supplied	Signage Indicating Rules, Regulations and Expectations
Bayview Park, Burlington Leash Free Type: Dog Park (a)	CP	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	1.5	12.5	✓	✗	✗	✓
Cathedral Park, Hamilton Leash Free Type: Dog Park (b)	DP	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	0.8	1.2	✓	✓	✓	✓
Fergus Dog Park, Centre Wellington Leash Free Type: Leash Free Area	DP	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	2.0	2.0	✓	✗	✓	✓
McLennan Park, Kitchener Leash Free Type: Dog Park (a)	CP	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	1.0	38.0	✓	✓	✓	✓
Shell Park, Oakville Leash Free Type: Dog Park (a)	CP	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	0.8	20.0	✓	✓	✓	✓
Legend:	CP =	Community Park											
	DP =	Dog Park ONLY											

Figure 2 analyzes the characteristics and service levels between each of the five studied leash free facilities. Even though the facility characteristics between the leash free types are different, there are consistencies with service levels across the board.

Figure 3: Comparison of existing leash free areas in the City of Guelph

Leash Free Location	Park Classification	Fully Fenced Facility	Unfenced Facility	Separate Areas for Small and Large Dogs	Lighting	Water Stations/ Access	Parking	Designated Leash Free Area Size (Hectares)	Overall Park Size (Hectares)	Permitted Hours of Use	Dog Waste Specific Disposal	Dog Waste Bags Supplied	Signage Indicating Rules, Regulations and Expectations
Centennial Park Leash Free Type: Leash Free Area	RP	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	0.2	19.0	✓	✗	✗	✗
Crane Park Leash Free Type: Leash Free Area	CL	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	18.0	18.0	✓	✗	✗	✗
Eramosa River Park Leash Free Type: Leash Free Area	CP	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	1.0	15.0	✓	✗	✗	✗
John Gamble Park (Hydro Corridor) Leash Free Type: Leash Free Area	NP	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	4.0	1.6	✓	✗	✗	✗
Lee Street Park Leash Free Type: Leash Free Area	NP	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	0.5	1.8	✓	✗	✗	✗
Margaret Green Park Leash Free Type: Leash Free Area	RP	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	2.0	17.0	✓	✗	✗	✗
Norm Jary Park Leash Free Type: Leash Free Area	CP	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	2.0	8.0	✓	✗	✗	✗
Riverside Park Leash Free Type: Leash Free Area	RP	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	2.0	31.0	✓	✗	✗	✗
Legend:	CL =	Conservation Lands											
	CP =	Community Park											
	NP =	Neighbourhood Park											
	RP =	Regional Park											

Figure 3 shows that service levels are consistent but below average when compared to leash free facilities in Figure 2. The Characteristics of these areas vary across the board especially when looking at 'Park Classification' and 'Designated Leash Free Area Size'.

Summary of Background Research

Based on the five high profile leash free facilities studied and analyzed, there are several consistent and distinct conclusions for leash free facility service levels, standards, characteristics and criteria as follows:

- Fencing is considered a high priority when establishing leash free facilities;
- All leash free facilities were developed in a community level park classification as an independent dog park;

- All community parks containing leash free facilities range in size from 12.5 to 38 hectares ;
- Available parking is considered a high priority when designing leash free facilities;
- The average size of the leash free areas are between 1 and 2 hectares;
- Dog waste specific disposal at leash free facilities is considered a high priority when developing leash free facilities;
- Signage outlining the rules, regulations and expectations for each leash free facility are present in abundance at each location and considered a high priority in the design for safety of leash free facilities;
- None of the studied municipalities permit leash free dogs on any other lands including sports fields. Dogs are not permitted on sports fields at any time under any circumstances whether leashed or leash free.

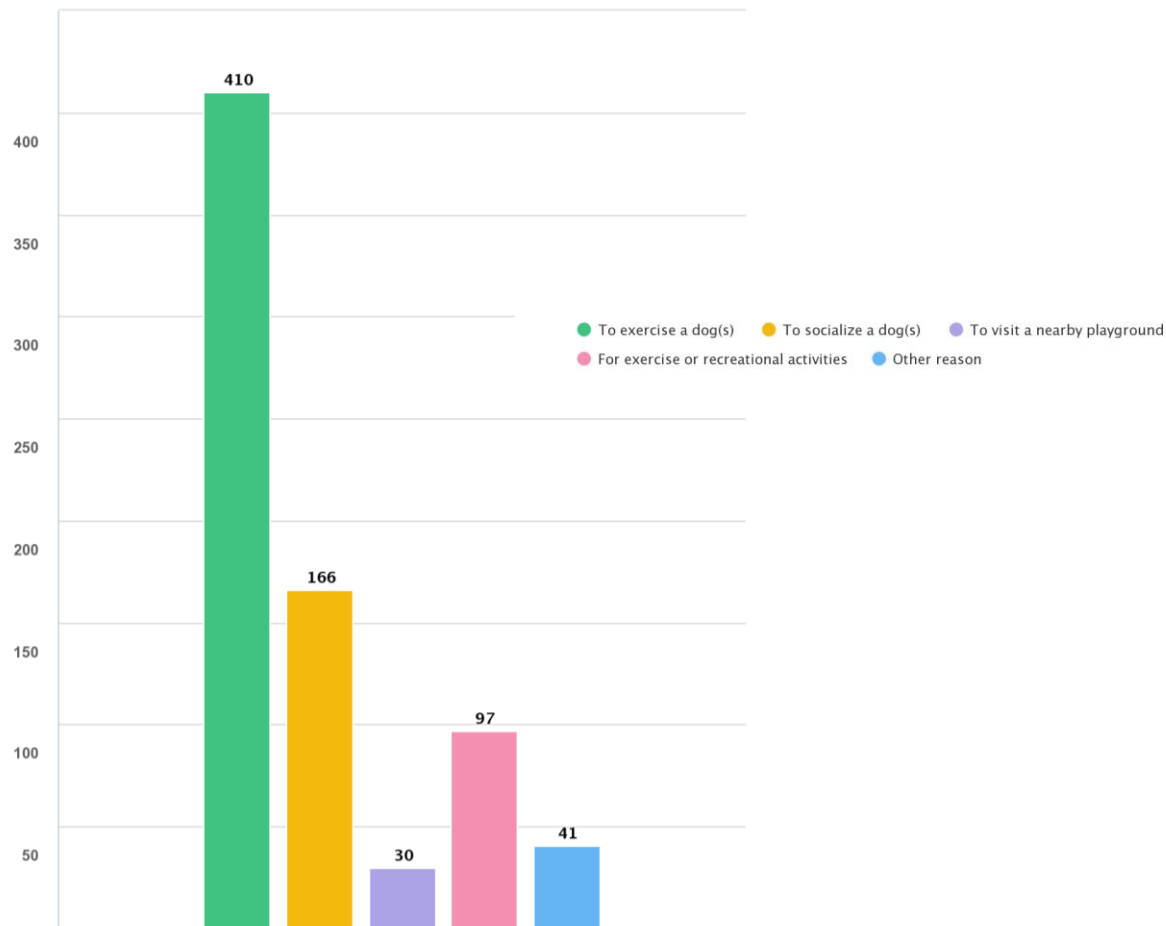
Generally, the standards and characteristics that define the studied leash free facilities exceed those within the City of Guelph. The City of Guelph should consider the above priorities when establishing leash free areas and facilities and it should be reflected within the Leash Free Program Policy.

Community Engagement

Results

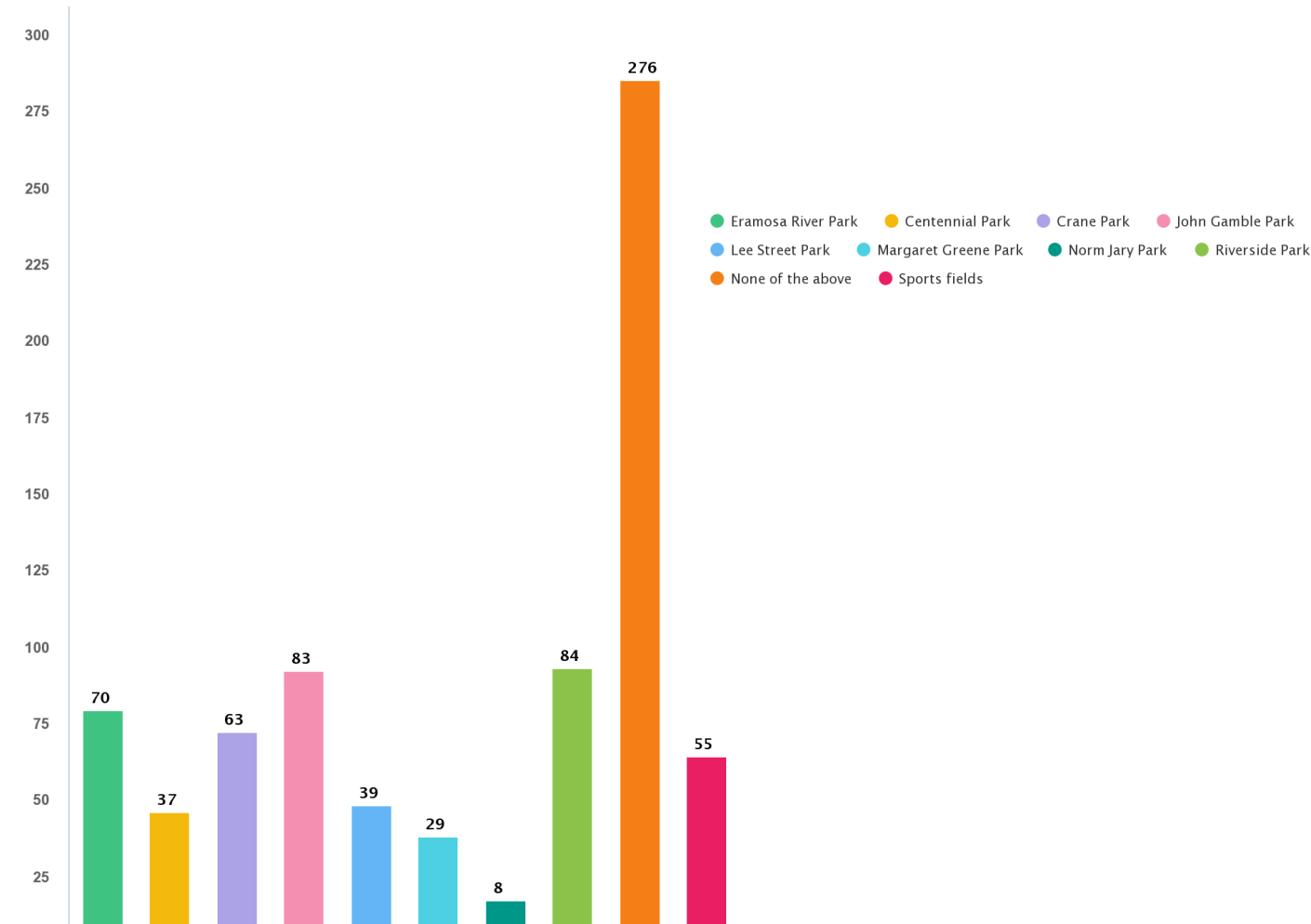
The City of Guelph conducted a survey to understand community opinion and use of leash free areas. The survey began July 27, 2018 and closed on August 27, 2018. Out of the 2,384 community members that visited the site online, 744 completed surveys were submitted. The results of the community engagement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

Figure 4 – Question 1: Why do you visit City of Guelph parks with a leash free area? Please choose your main reason.



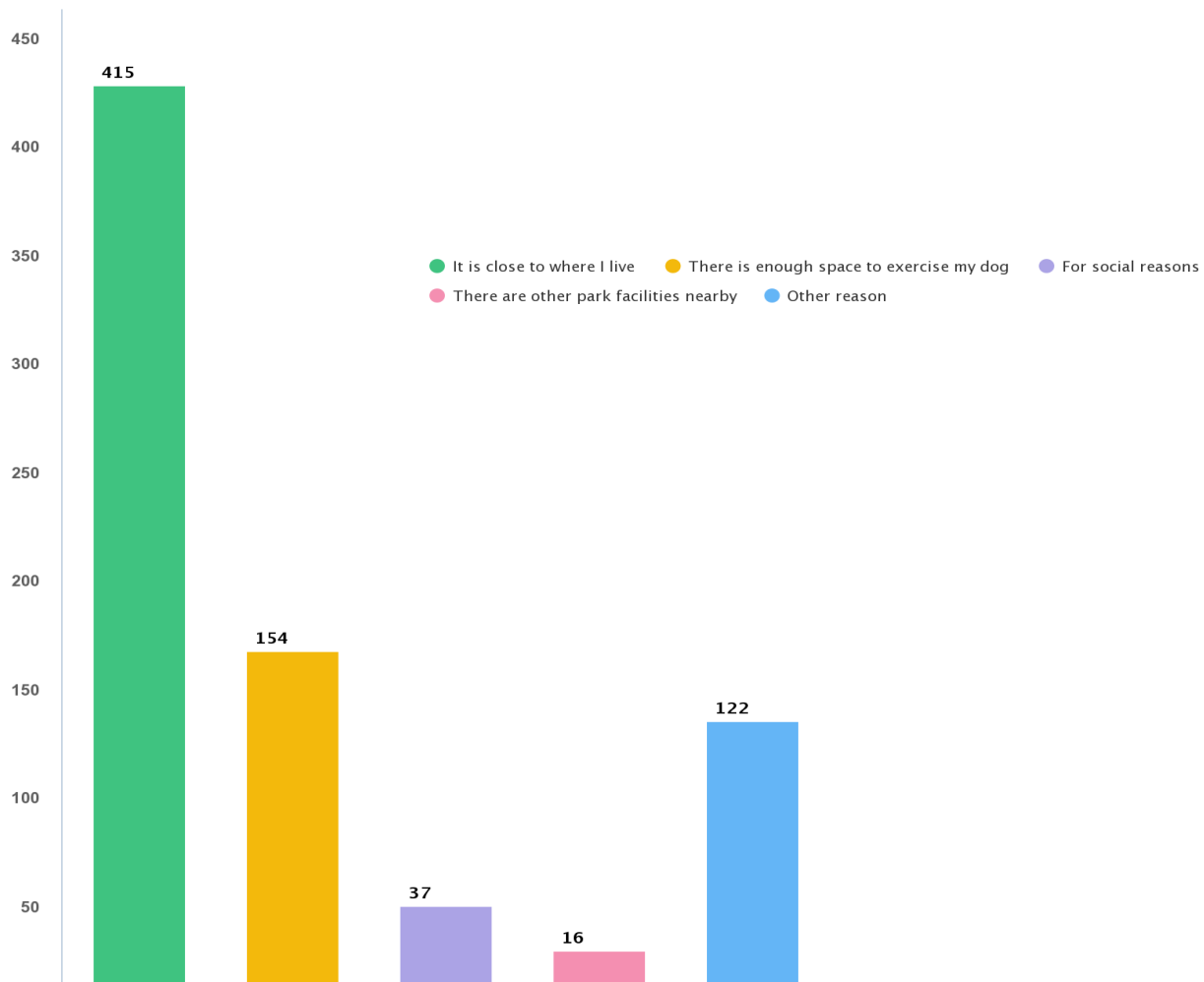
Based on Figure 4, 55% of those that responded selected 'To exercise a dog(s)'. As a priority noted amongst community members that participated in the survey, this factor should be considered when designing leash free facilities and be large enough to accommodate for an appropriate amount of exercise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

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



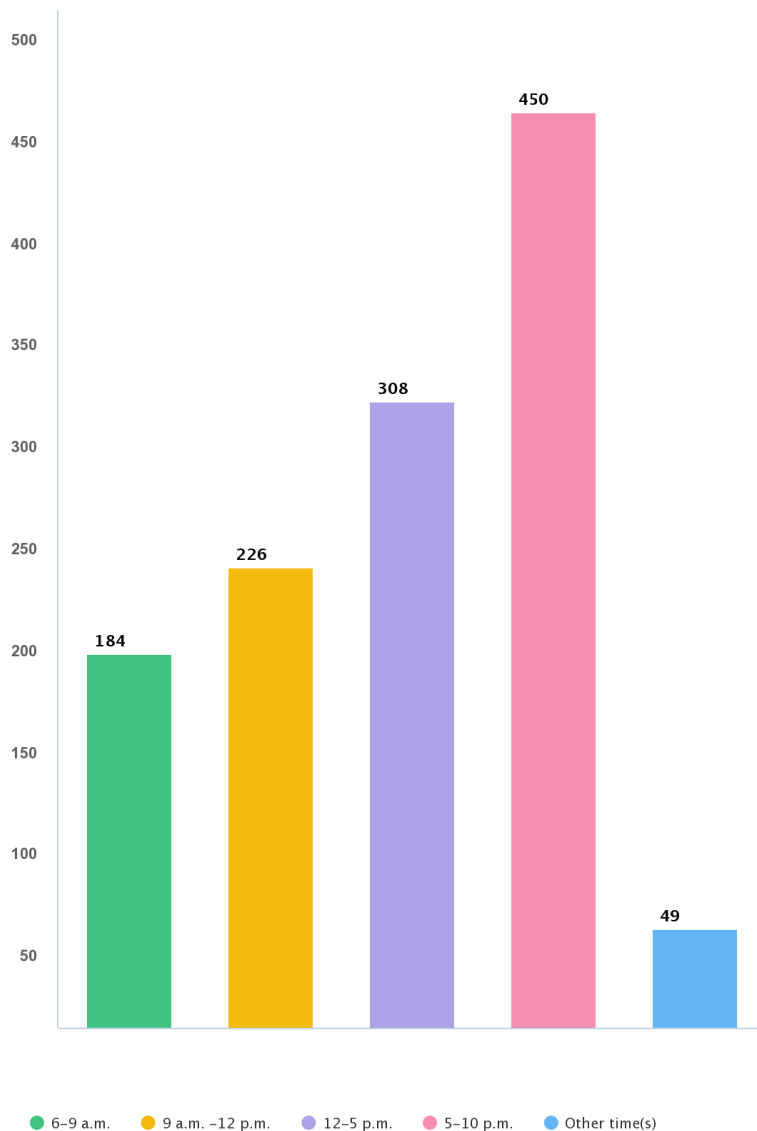
Based on the results shown in Figure 5, 56% of the 744 participants are currently using the various leash free areas located throughout the City of Guelph while 7% are using several unoccupied sports fields. Out of the 55 participants using unoccupied sports fields 33 of them chose Exhibition Park as their main location. The remaining 37% of those that participated are not currently using any of the current leash free areas or unoccupied sports fields within parks. Instead, these participants have chosen not to use leash free areas based on the following themes provided through their responses: Leash free facilities are not fenced, safety concerns regarding dogs and others, not enough bylaw enforcement.

Figure 6 Question 3: Why do you visit this location the most? Please choose your main reason.



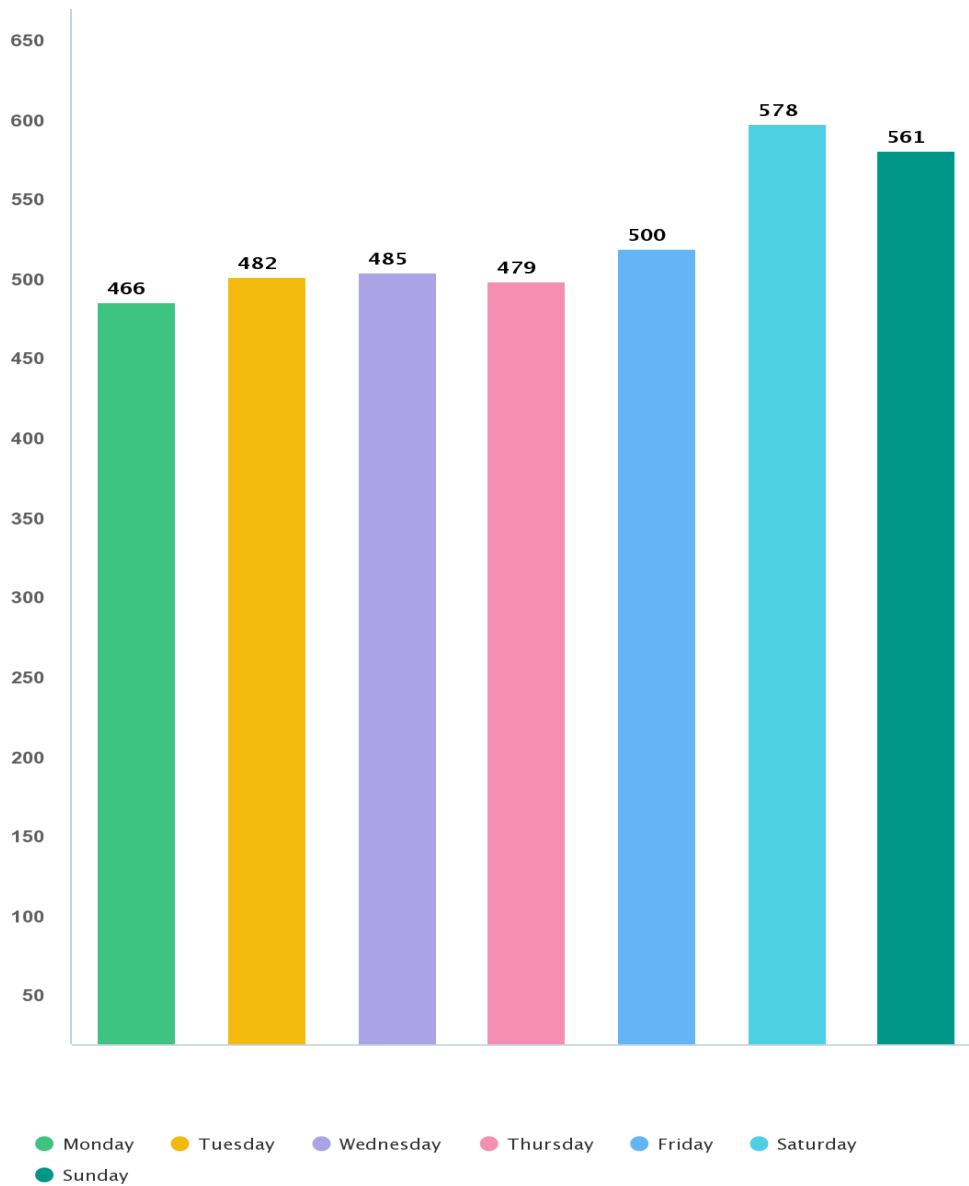
Out of the 744 participants that selected their most visited leash free area from question two, 56% of them chose their specific location based on where they live. For the 122 participants that selected 'other reason', their answers followed the same themes provided in question two: Leash free facilities are not fenced, safety concerns regarding dogs and others, not enough bylaw enforcement.

Figure 7 - Question 4: What time(s) of the day do you usually visit this location? Please choose all that apply.



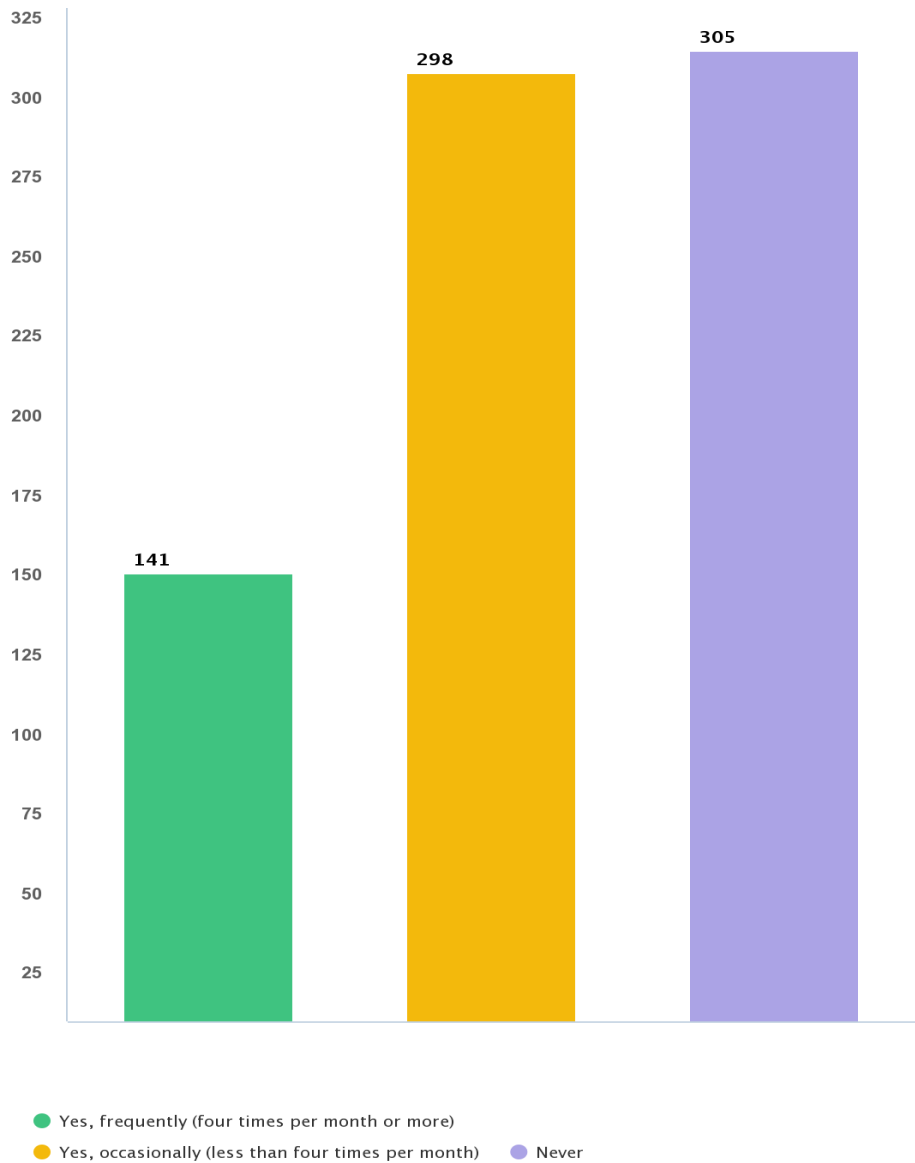
Based on the results shown in Figure 7, 60% of those that participated are using their specified leash free locations between the hours of 5:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. Further, 93% of all responses show that leash free areas are being used between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. Only 7% of participants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

Figure 8 - Question 5: Which day(s) of the week do you mostly visit this location? Please choose all that apply.



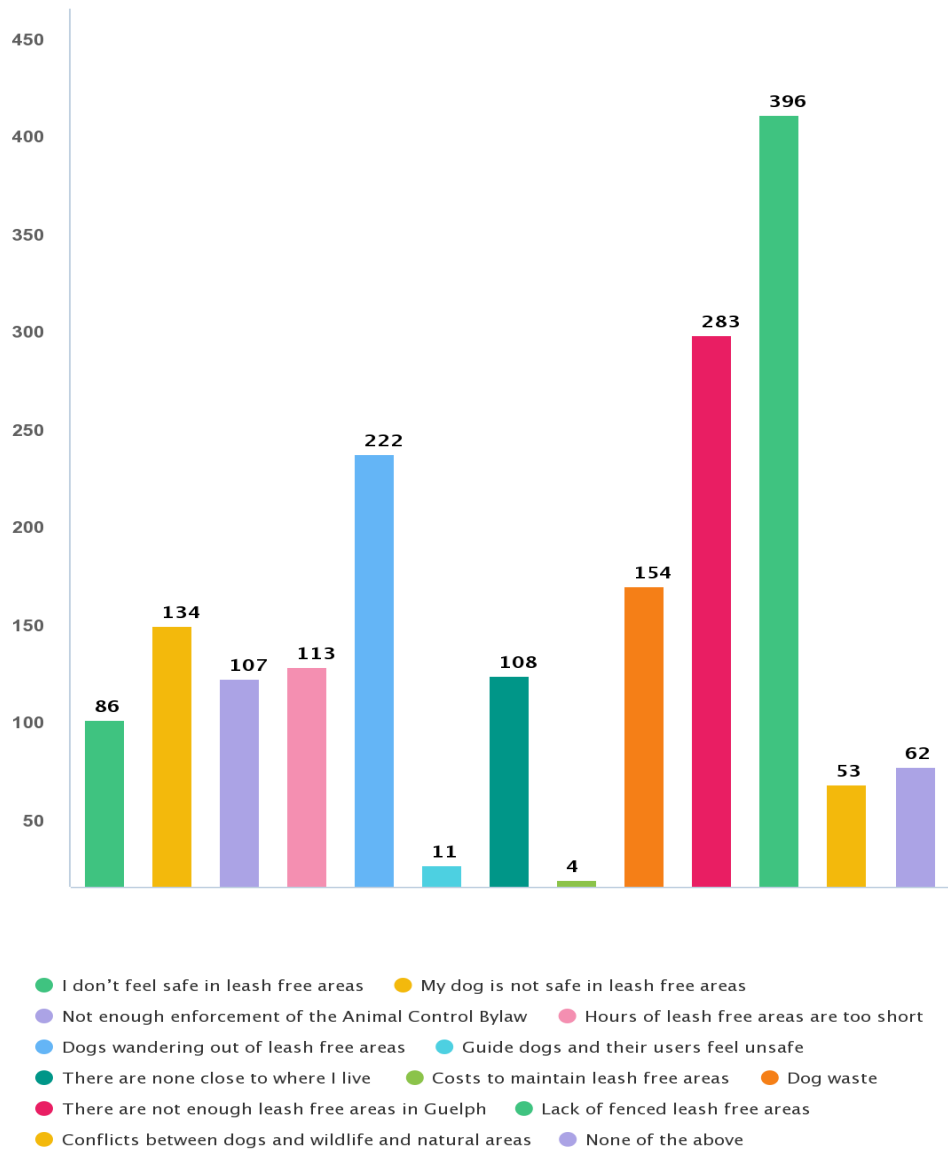
As illustrated in Figure 8, the specified leash free areas chosen by the participants are all very well attended throughout the week. There is a slight increase of use from Friday through to Saturday and Sunday.

Figure 9 - Question 6: Do you use other leash free areas outside the City of Guelph?



Based on the results shown in Figure 9: Question Six, 59% of participants visit leash free areas outside of the City of Guelph either frequently or occasionally. Main reasons provided for visiting leash free areas outside of the city are based on service levels provided at the other leash free areas that included: Fully fenced facilities; Better waste disposal system provided; Separate areas for small and large dogs; Access to a water supply for dogs.

Figure 10 - Question 7: What are your most important concerns with parks that have leash free areas in the City of Guelph? Please choose your top three.



As shown in Figure 10, 53% of all participants have selected 'lack of fenced leash free areas' as their number one concerns with current leash free areas in parks. An additional 30% selected 'dogs wandering out of leash free areas' as their top concern which can also be attributed to a lack of fenced leash free areas.

Summary of Community Engagement

Based on the results of the survey conducted over the summer, there are several consistent and distinct conclusions drawn. These conclusions include mainly a theme of safety as well as general use and expectations for leash free facilities in the City of

Guelph. The themes exposed from the survey results are ranked in terms of priority as follows:

2. The lack of fenced leash free areas within the City of Guelph.
3. Safety concerns regarding dogs and others at parks containing leash free areas.
4. Not enough enforcement of the applicable bylaws at leash free areas.
5. Proximity is an important factor for visiting leash free areas in the City.
6. The main reason for visiting leash free areas is to exercise dogs.
7. 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 discontinue the use of unoccupied sports fields as leash free areas. This should come into effect once some of the proposed fenced facilities are complete to allow residents a period of time to transition to the new policies.
- 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 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

- Leash free areas to be fenced should contain separate fenced areas for small dogs and large dogs;
- 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;
- Leash free areas to be fenced should be fenced, preferably 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:

- 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 unoccupied sports fields will remain unchanged. Existing off leash areas will remain functional and will only be impacted as the City moves towards a fully fenced off leash model.

Based on the findings of the community engagement work and evaluation of best practices from comparator municipalities, staff have concluded that ongoing use of unoccupied sports fields as leash free areas is not appropriate and will be removed from the leash free inventory once the policy comes into effect.

It is recommended that all sports fields cease being used as leash free areas upon completion of fenced leash free facilities fenced at Peter Misersky Park and Bristol Street Park as identified in the implementation plan by the end of 2019.

Staff acknowledge that this could have an impact on users who currently use sports fields as their main off leash area. As a result, staff are recommending that the policy to remove unoccupied sports fields from the leash free inventory come into effect only after the fenced facilities being proposed in Bristol Street Park and Peter Misersky Park are completed. Staff will seek further input on leash free areas as part of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan update. This will allow all park users to provide input on new fenced off leash facilities and how the City should plan for new off leash facilities.

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); Margaret Greene Park; 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

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 no longer allow the use of unoccupied sports fields as leash free areas. In acknowledgement of the existing practice, it is recommended that all sports fields be removed from the leash free inventory once the policy comes into effect after it transitions to fenced leash free facilities as outlined in the implementation plan.

Public safety is a top priority of the City. It will be important to make clear to members of the community sports fields cannot 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

The City advertises sport field facilities for recreational use. They should be available for use by residents for the recreational pursuit in which the sports field was built for. 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 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 sports fields will take effect once the policy comes into effect. Once the implementation plan is complete, the City will 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 B for site map. Note that the exact layout of the proposed future leash free area within the red shaded area will be determined through a formal design process as outlined by the policy.

Out of all the existing parks within the City of Guelph, none present a better opportunity for the development of an immediate fully fenced leash free facility as per the criteria set out in the policy. Bristol Street Park offers an accessible central location large enough for the development of a fully fenced leash free facility. The location would become the City's premiere leash free facility. The 1.94 hectare site contains a parking facility and meets the criteria outlined in the policy for the development of a leash free area. The existing four (4) mini soccer fields would be relocated and developed at Eastview Community Park leaving Bristol Street Park with no programmed facilities except for an all exclusive leash free facility.

Based on the results from the community engagement, the City heard that:

- The community prefers fenced leash free facilities
- The community considers safety and enforcement of leash free areas a top priority
- The community considers an accessible, central and visible site important

Given the proposed locations proximity to Wellington Street and Bristol Street, the leash free area will be fully fenced and contain the following amenities:

- Dog specific waste disposal system
- Separate fenced areas for small dogs and large dogs
- Sufficient signage containing information on site applicable bylaws, general rules and regulations and permitted hours of use

Highlights for the leash free facility development at Bristol Street Park include:

- The location is central to the City
- The location is accessible by the Active Transportation Network (ATN), pedestrian crosswalk at Wellington Street and is on a scheduled bus route
- The location is highly visible and easy to get to by Wellington Road and HWY#6
- The location contains an existing parking facility
- The location contains mature trees for shade in the summer and noise reduction
- The location already contains a section of fencing reducing cost to construct a leash free facility
- The location contains access to water service for future consideration
- Programmed facilities such as the skate park on the other side of Wellington Street connected by the ATN creates a more complete programmed setting
- By moving four (4) mini soccer fields and building them at Eastview Community Park, it will leave a singular use at Bristol Street Park making it an all exclusive and premiere leash free facility for the City of Guelph

Staff will assess construction costs and propose a leash free area size accordingly to be built in 2019.

Site 2 – Peter Misersky Park:

See Appendix B 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.

Peter Misersky Park offers a location large enough for the development of a fully fenced leash free facility. The 5.08 hectare site contains a parking facility and meets the criteria outlined in the policy for the development of a leash free area. While Peter Misersky 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 by redeveloping what was once a softball facility and giving the space a new purpose. Given the proposed locations proximity to the adjacent condo residence, existing soccer fields, existing playground and community garden, the leash free area will be fully fenced and 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 2019.

Site 3 – Lee Street Park:

See Appendix B for site map. Note that the exact layout of the proposed future leash free area within the red shaded area will be determined through a formal design process as outlined by the policy.

While Lee Street Park is a small park, it is recommended that the new fenced leash free facility remain in the current leash free location. In 2020, the final phase of development will commence creating an opportunity to improve the existing leash free area. The existing leash free area within the park contains site characteristics making it a good venue for a small leash free area. The only downfall to this location is a lack of a parking facility. However on-street parking is available close by. Given the proximity to shared-use trails, basketball court, playground and adjacent William C. Winegard Public School the leash free area will be fully fenced and retrofitted to contain the following amenities:

- Dog specific waste disposal system
- Sufficient signage containing information on site applicable bylaws, general rules and regulations and permitted hours of use

Staff will assess construction costs and propose a leash free area size accordingly to be built in 2020.

Signage Plan

See Appendix C for signage types and design.

As leash free areas are built, the following signage types will be implemented

- General Leash Free Rules Sign

- Stoop and Scoop Signs

Once the Leash Free Program Policy comes into effect, signage types will be implemented at the following locations:

- General Leash Free Rules Sign at all new leash free locations
- Dogs Prohibited Sports Field Signs at all sports field locations
- Stoop and Scoop Signs at all parks throughout the City

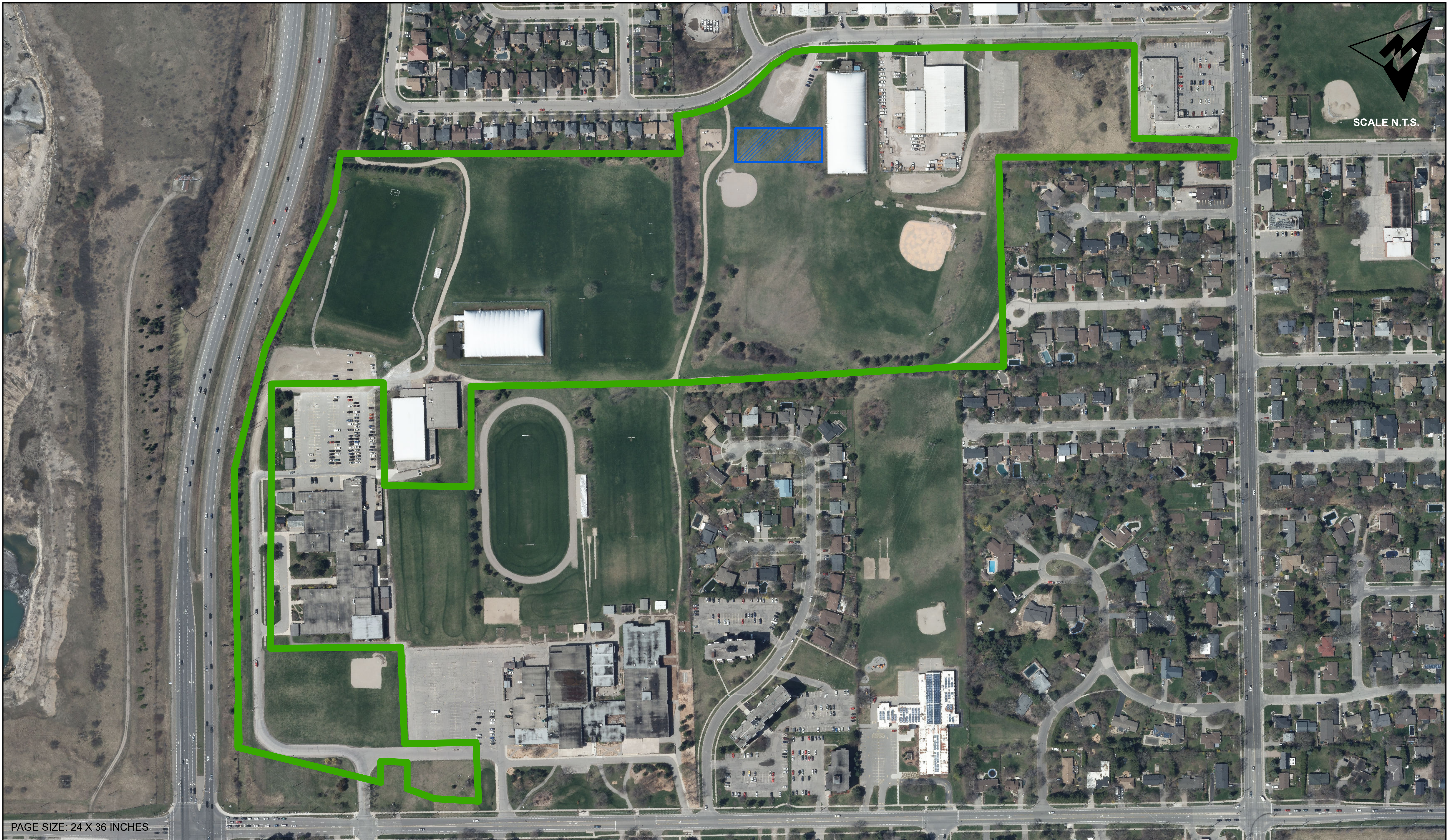
Future Leash Free Areas

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.

Conclusion

This study was developed based on information received from the community engagement in conjunction with the research and analysis conducted on leash free areas within comparable municipalities. The recommendations brought forth are thorough, realistic, and require carefully planned capital investment to complete. The recommendations presented in this study were formed in part by the guiding principles and standards that have been outlined in the Leash Free Program Policy. The Leash Free Program Policy will be used as a tool to assist in guiding the current and future of leash free facilities in the City of Guelph.

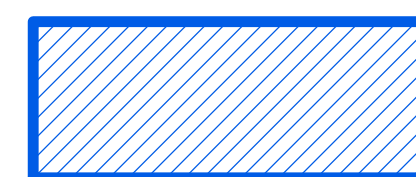
Appendix A Existing Leash Free Areas



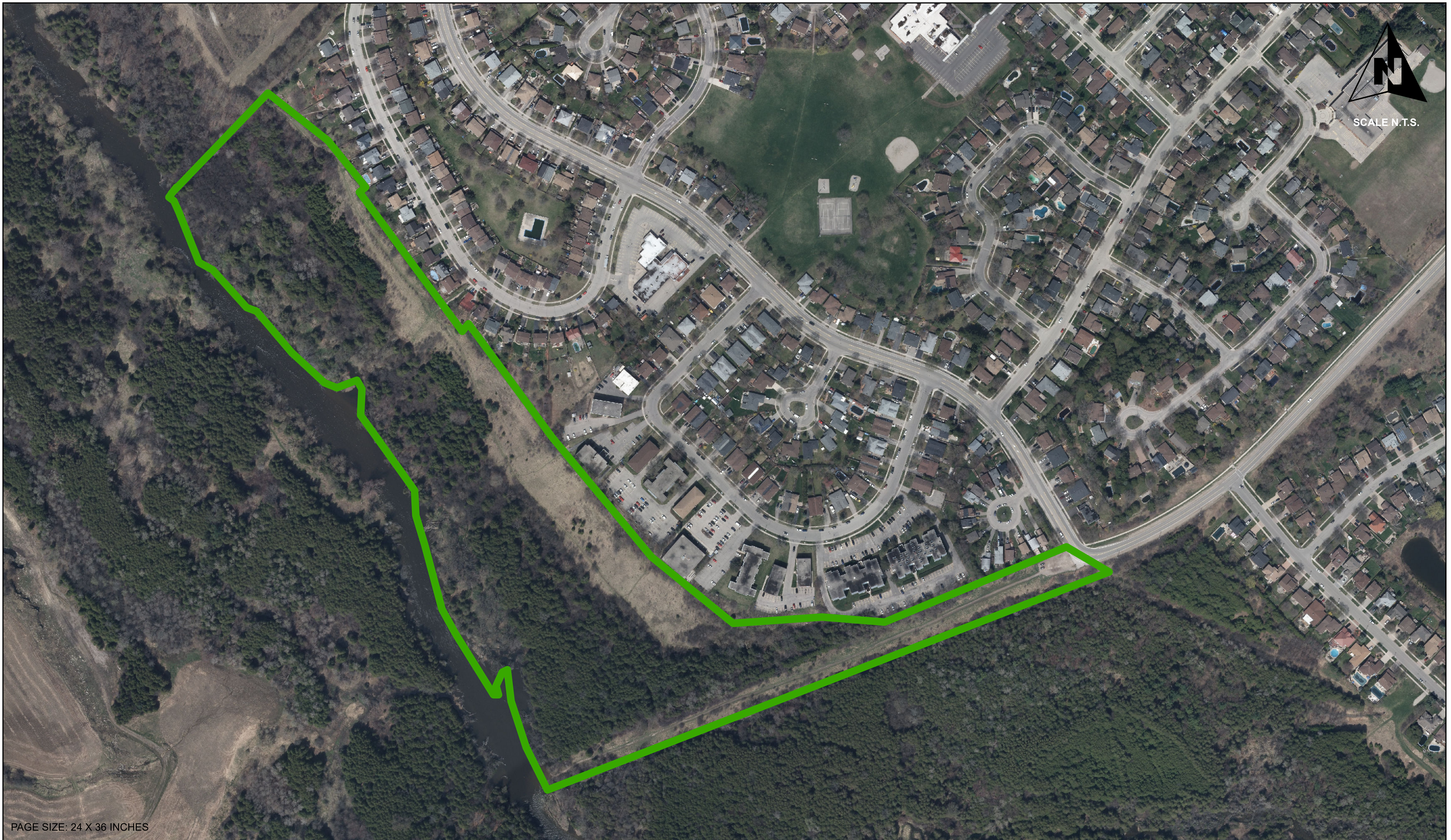
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CENTENNIAL PARK

373/377 College Avenue West. P4 Regional Park.



Existing Leash Free Area

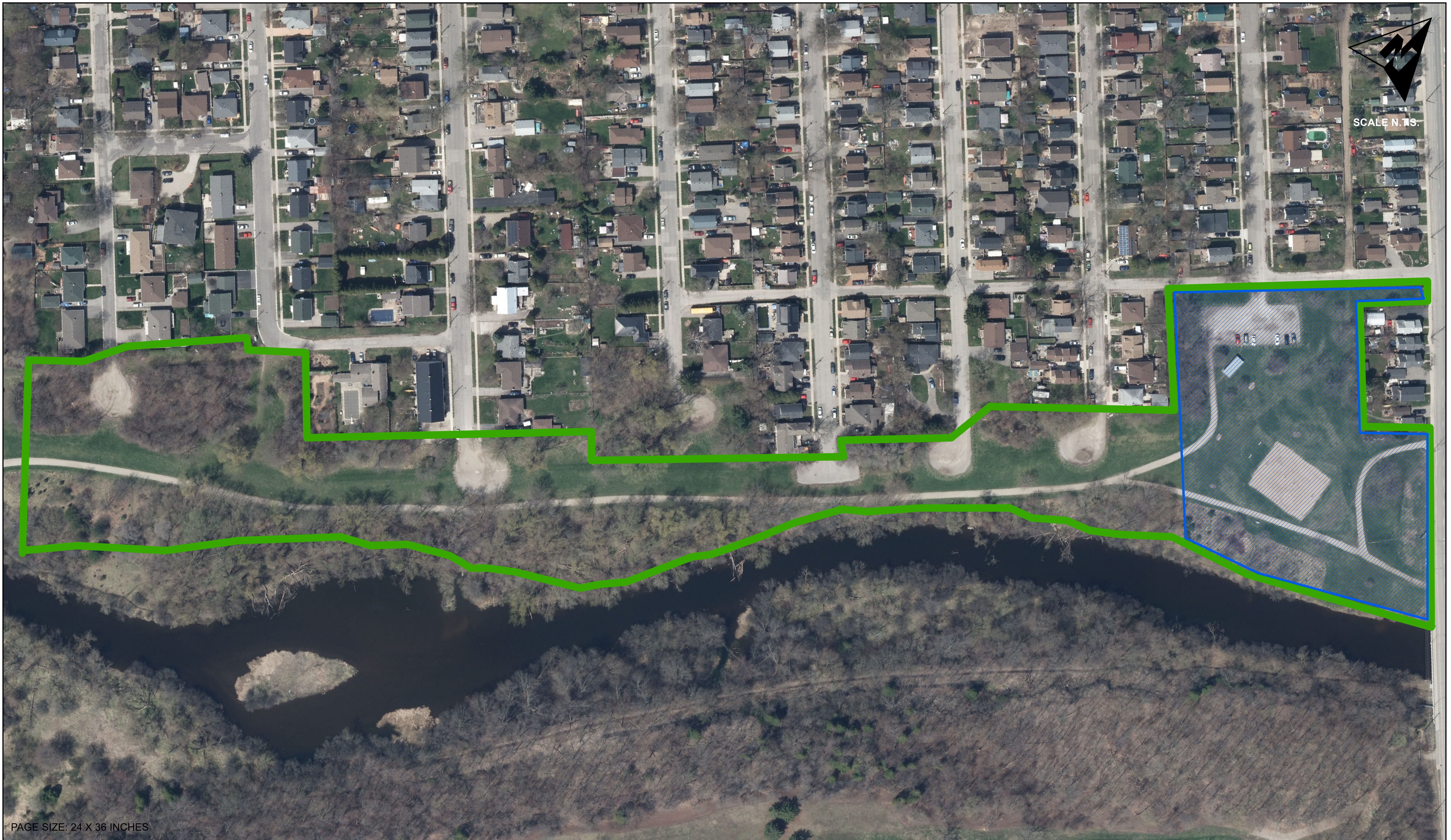


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CRANE PARK

96 Dovercliffe Road. P1 Conservation Land.

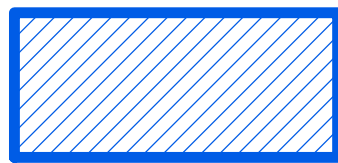
NOTE: Entire Park is Leash Free (Currently)



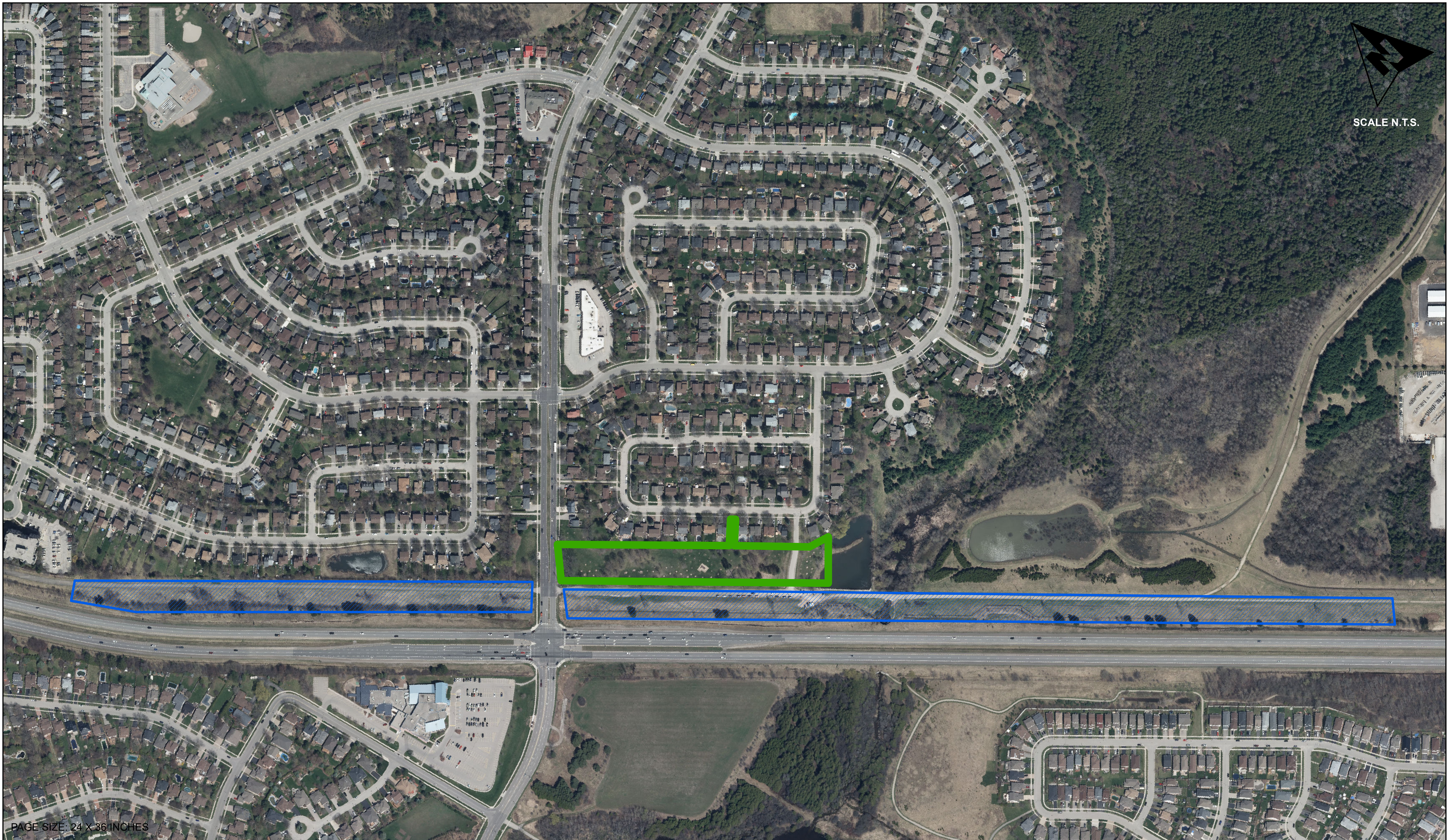
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ERAMOSA RIVER PARK

259 Victoria Road South. P3 Community Park.



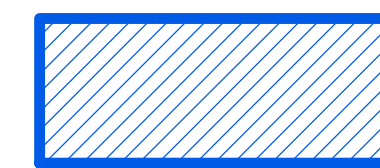
Existing Lease Free Area



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JOHN GAMBLE PARK (Hydro Corridor)

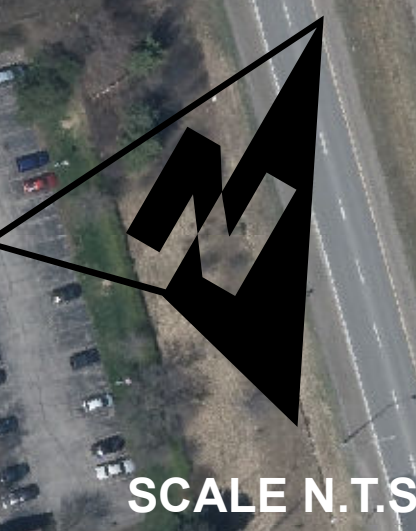
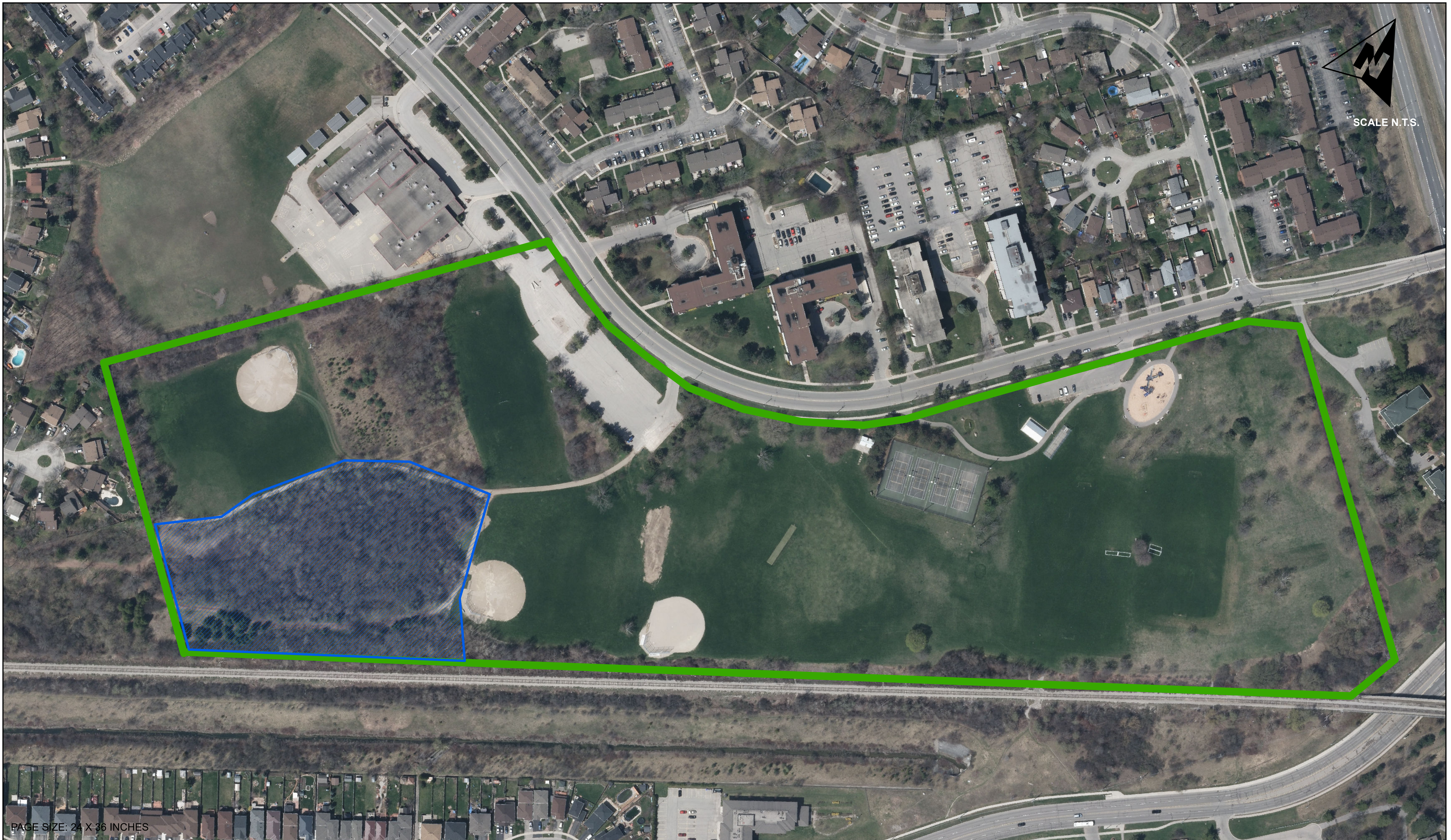
594 Kortright Road West. P2 Neighbourhood Park.



Existing Lease Free Area



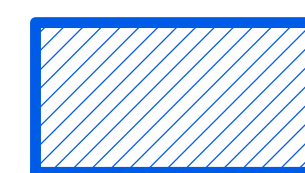
John Gamble Park Boundary



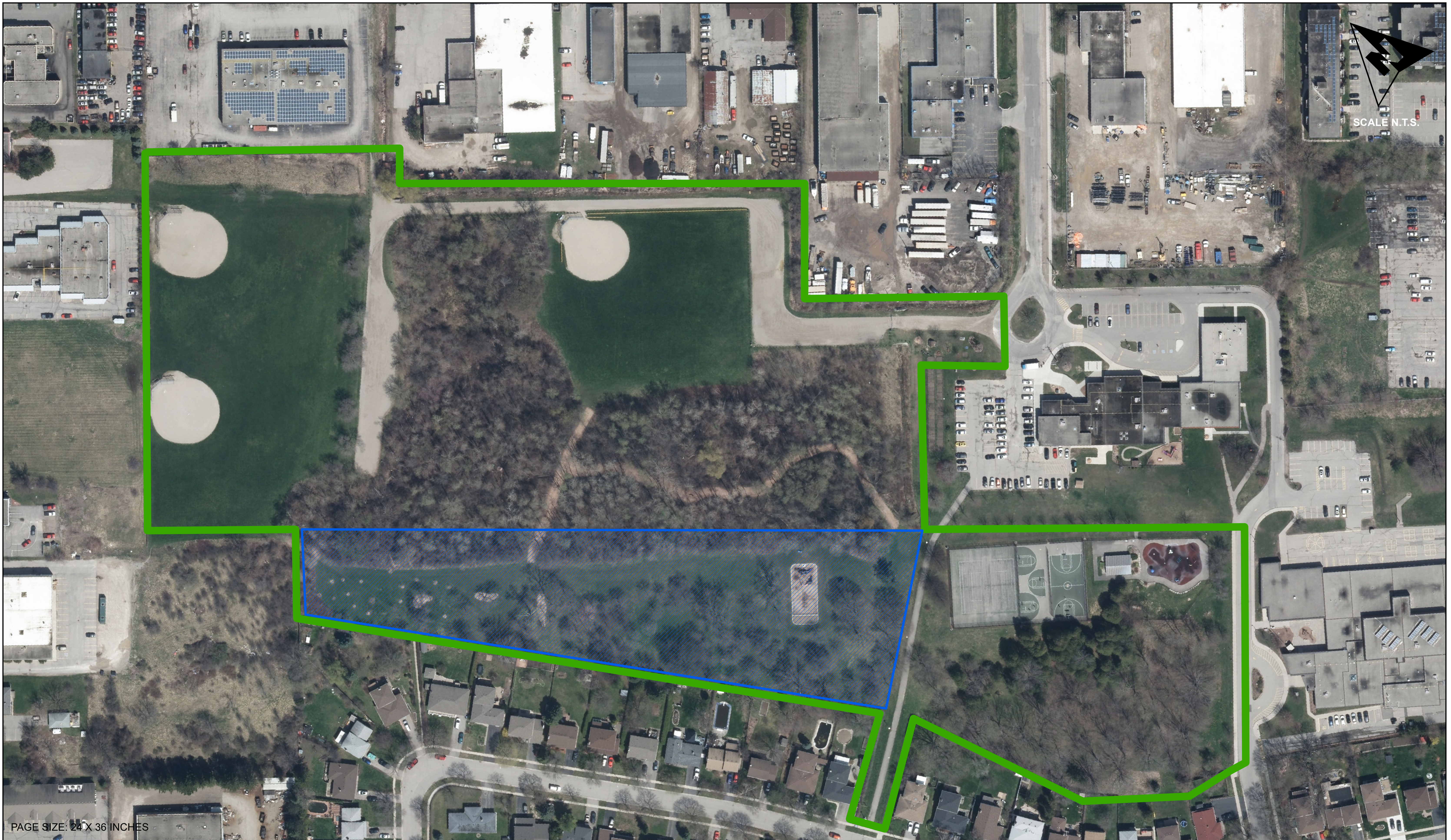
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MARGARET GREENE PARK

80 Westwood Road. P4 Regional Park.



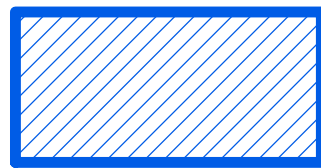
Existing Leash Free Area



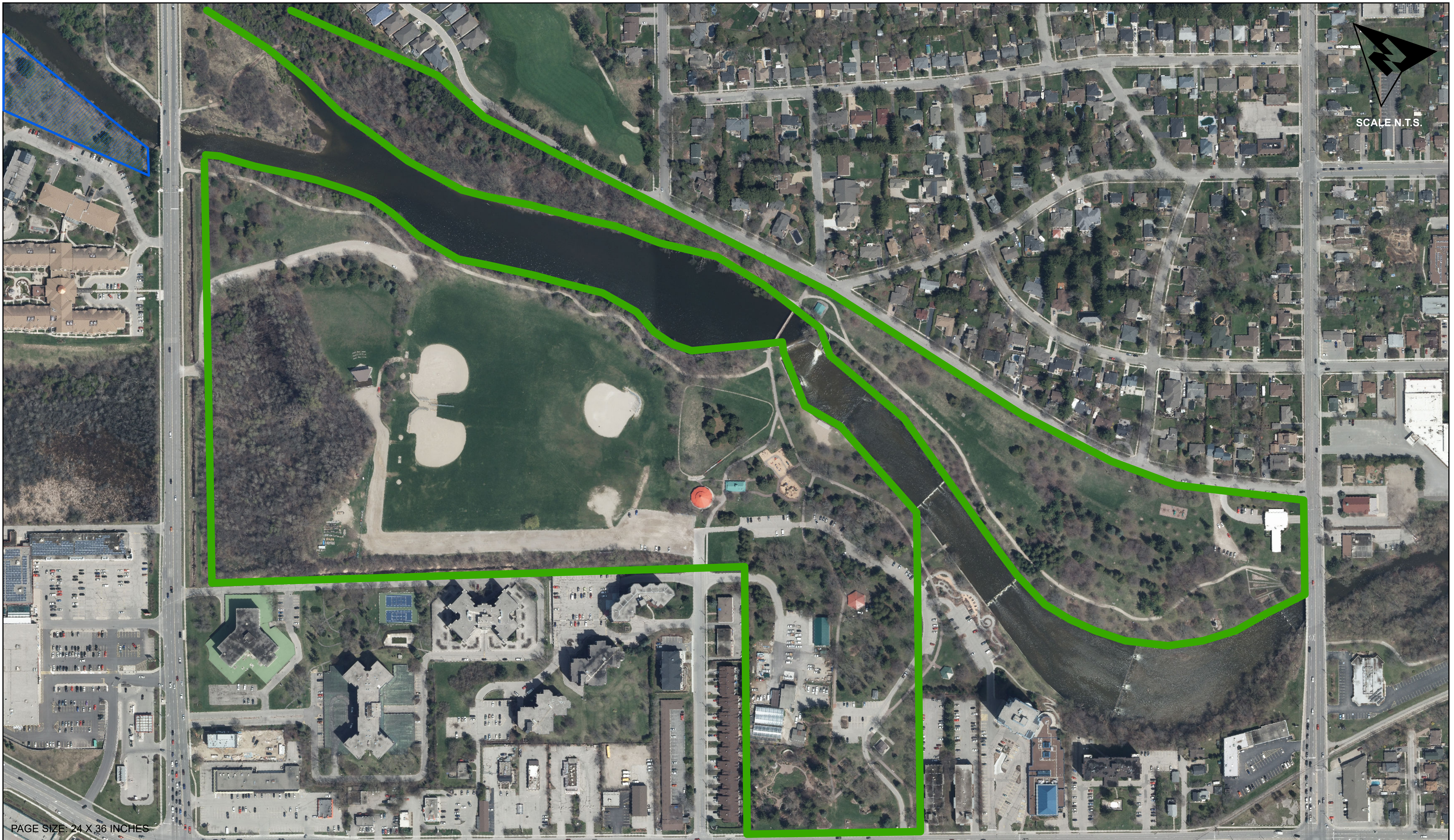
PAGE SIZE: 24 X 36 INCHES

NORM JARY PARK

22 Shelldale Crescent. P3 Community Park.



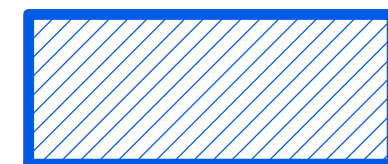
Existing Leash Free Area



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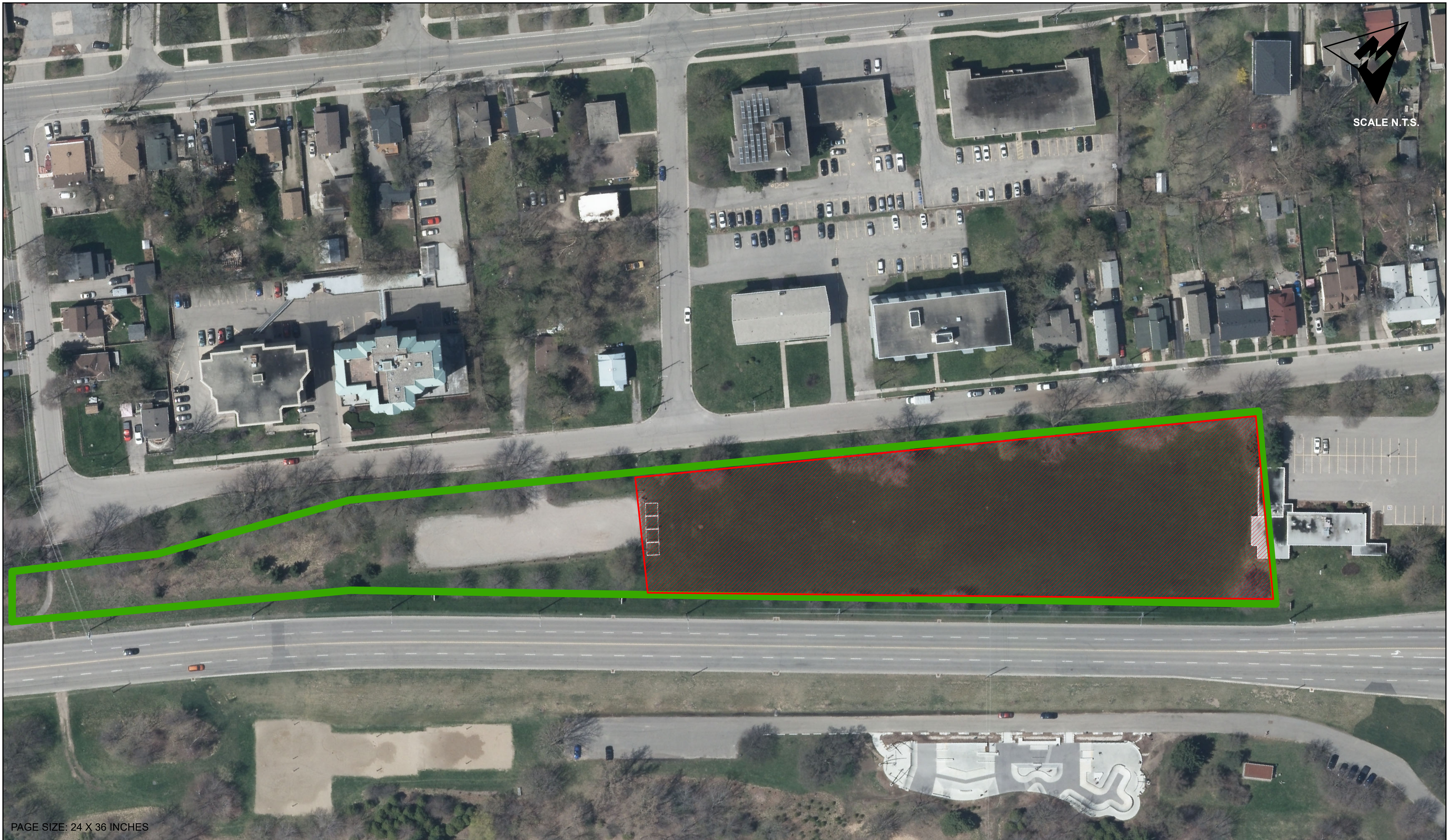
RIVERSIDE PARK (GRCA Lands)

709 Woolwich Street. P4 Regional Park.



Existing Leash Free Area

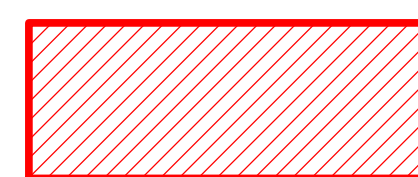
Appendix B Proposed New Leash Free Areas



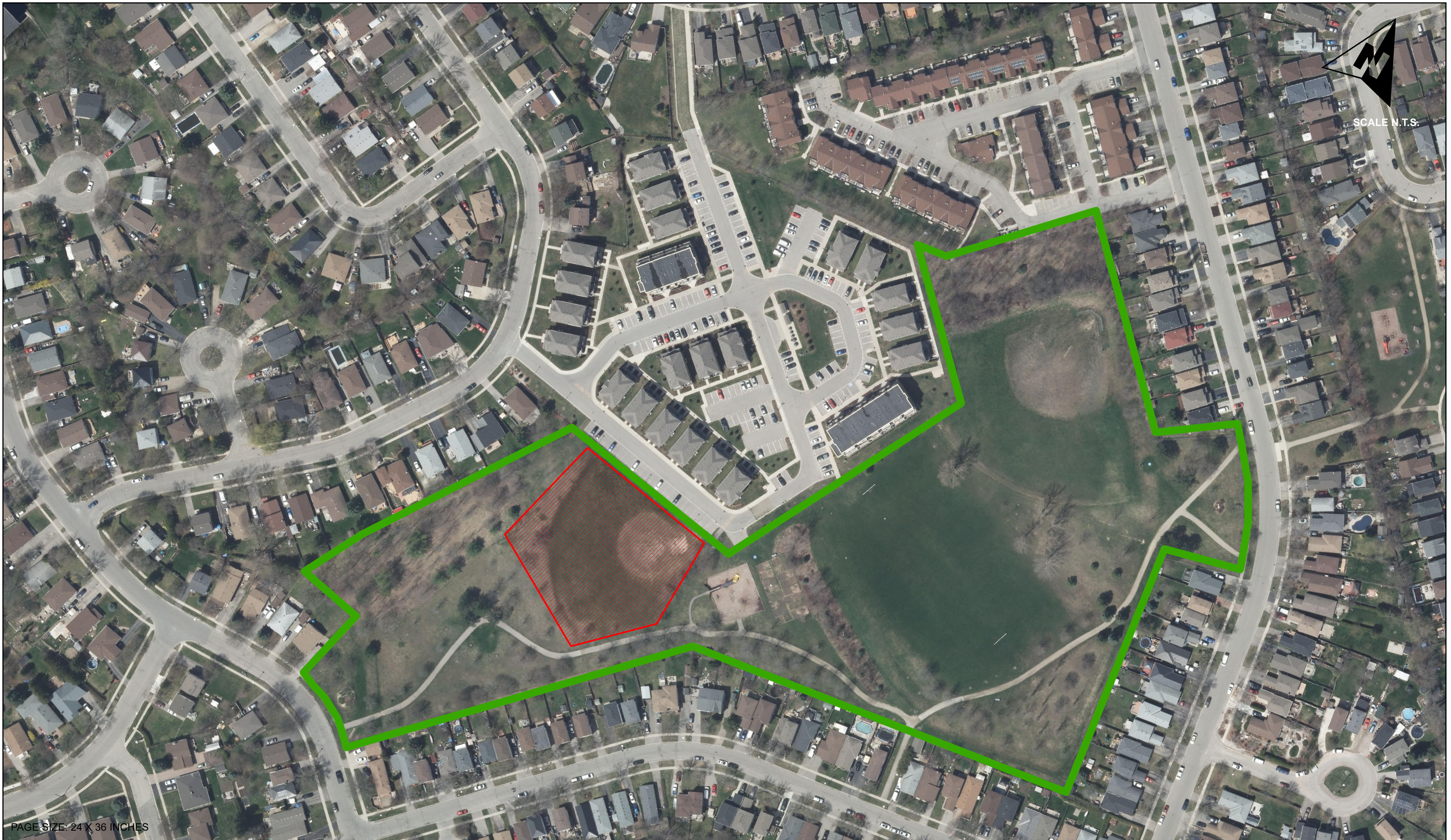
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SITE 1: BRISTOL STREET PARK

220 Bristol Street East. P3 Community Park.



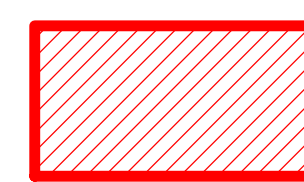
Proposed New Fenced Leash Free Area
(Approximate location TBD within the red shaded area)



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SITE 2: PETER MISERSKY PARK

122 Hadati Road. P3 Community Park.



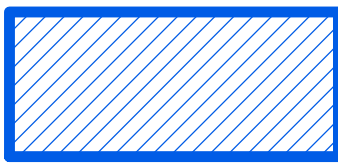
Approximate Proposed New
Fenced Leash Free Area



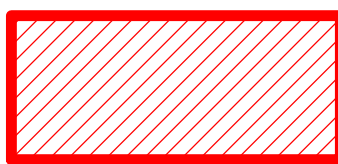
PAGE SIZE: 24 X 36 INCHES

SITE 3: LEE STREET PARK

71 Lee Street. P2 Neighbourhood Park.



Existing Leash Free Area



Approximate Proposed New Fenced Leash Free Area

Appendix C Leash Free Areas Sign Typology

You are entering an off leash area

Help us keep off leash areas safe for everyone:

1. This leash free area may only be used from dawn to dusk daily.
2. Dogs must be under supervision at all times by an owner or keeper that is 18 years of age or older.
3. Dogs are the only animal permitted in this leash free area.
4. Aggressive dogs, including those that have injured another person or dog, must be kept out of the leash free area at all times. If a dog becomes aggressive towards others it must be leashed immediately and removed from the site.
5. Dogs must be kept leashed until they enter the leash free area. If the leash free area is fenced, then the dog must remain on a leash until the gate has been securely closed.
6. Dogs must not be allowed to destroy or dig up turf, bushes or trees.
7. All dogs must wear up to date rabies and dog license tags at all times.
8. Dogs wearing pinch (prong) and spike collars are not permitted in the leash free area.
9. Stoop and scoop is mandatory. Please place dog waste in the designated waste containers.
10. Food, whether animal or human, are not permitted within the leash free area.
11. Children younger than six must not enter the leash free area. Children aged six to 12 must be supervised by an adult at all times.
12. Dogs in heat, puppies under 12 weeks old, dogs that are sick with an infectious disease and dogs that have a medical condition are not permitted.
13. Designated dogs under the Dog Owners Liability Act must comply with all the terms of their designation including leashing or muzzling requirements at all times even when using the leash free area.



Questions or concerns?

To report a concern, please call City bylaw at 519-837-2529.

Off leash areas should be used at your own risk. The City of Guelph accepts no liability for injuries, loss or damage claimed or suffered by any person or animal related to the access and use of this area, howsoever caused.

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



Accessibility format
519-837-5626 or
TTY 519-826-9771



Small dogs only

Up to 30 pounds



Stoop and scoop bylaw in effect



guelph.ca/dogs

Stoop and Scoop By-law
(2004)-17568

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**No dogs
allowed on this
sports field**



guelph.ca/dogs

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Guelph
Making a Difference