



City of Kingston
 Policies and Procedures
 Recreation and Leisure Services

Off-Leash Dog Area - Parks

Effective Date June 1, 2009
 Revision Date N/A
 Revision No. N/A
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1.0 PURPOSE

This policy is in addition to the By-Law to Provide for the Regulation Use of Parks and Recreation Facilities of the Corporation of the City of Kingston - By-Law No. 99-91

The City of Kingston recognizes the benefits of designated off-leash dog areas that provide safe areas for owners to exercise and socialize their dogs. The City also recognizes the requirement for responsible pet ownership within the parkland system.

This policy pertains to permanent off-leash dog areas in City owned and operated parks, green spaces, waterfront areas and alternative sites.

This policy does not grandfather pilot off-leash dog areas.

2.0 REVISION HISTORY

Date	Rev. No.	Change	Ref. Section
	1.0	New document	Not applicable

3.0 DEFINITIONS

In this policy, these terms have the following meanings.

- a. **"Amenities"** shall be defined as site furnishings such as park benches, picnic tables, garbage receptacles, light standards, parking facilities, etc.
- b. **"City"** shall be defined as the Corporation of the City of Kingston.
- c. **"Committee"** shall be defined as a body comprised of up to five (5) Kingston residents who will provide input to City staff regarding the implementation and use of off-leash dog areas.
- d. **"Horticultural"** shall be defined as the cultivation of plants.
- e. **"Off-leash dog area"** shall be defined as fenced facilities where residents have the opportunity to exercise and socialize their dogs off leash within a controlled environment.
- f. **"Sport facilities"** shall be defined as all outdoor athletic fields including, but not limited to baseball, soccer, football and tracks.

4.0 SITE SELECTION CRITERIA

The following criteria will be considered in determining where off-leash dog areas shall be located:

- Areas including neighbourhood and community parks as well as alternative sites that may accommodate an off-leash dog area of a minimum of one and half (1.5) acres in size but no more than four (4) acres will be considered;
- Sites considered must be at least fifteen (15) meters away from playgrounds, splash pads or wading pools, artificial or natural ice or toboggan hills, skateboard bowls or parks, tennis courts or other sport facilities and horticultural displays.

Exclusions to off-leash dog areas - Areas that will not be considered for off-leash dog area use include:

- Natural or environmentally sensitive areas including designated ravines, wooded areas, sites of natural interest, areas which have undergone significant habitat restoration, wetlands or their buffer zones;
- Designated beaches;
- Playgrounds, splash pads and wading pools;
- Horticultural display areas or ornamental gardens;
- Sportsfields and stadiums;
- Skateboard bowls, tennis courts and other sports pads;
- Artificial or natural ice rinks, toboggan hills;
- Campgrounds;
- Regional and highly tourist areas or parks (area/park that holds number of special/cultural events and which attracts residents and tourists);
- Next to hospitals, schools and nursing homes;
- Next to high density residential area.

5.0 PRIORITY SITE SELECTION

Sites that have met basic site selection criteria will be prioritized based on an evaluation of the following elements:

- a. Proximity and impact on adjacent land uses;
- b. Soil characteristics (i.e. drainage);
- c. Impact of natural habitat;
- d. Distribution across the City.

6.0 ALTERNATIVE SITES

The following alternative sites may be considered to establish off-leash areas where neighbourhood and community parks do not meet criteria established and where a need for an off-leash area has been established.

- a. Reservoir properties
- b. Vacant properties or lots
- c. Hydro corridors

Recreation and Leisure Services staff shall negotiate the use of alternative sites with owners where it is deemed necessary or desirable to do so. Any agreement for use of an alternative site

is subject to approval by City Council.

7.0 AMENITIES IN OFF LEASH DOG AREAS

Designated off-leash dog areas will be clearly signed throughout City parks. Hours of operations will be posted at each location. Hours of operation for off-leash areas are from 7 a.m. until 10:00 p.m. every day of the week unless otherwise posted.

The following amenities shall at a **minimum** be included in off-leash dog areas:

- Completely fenced area (fence shall be four (4) feet high with double gate entry);
- Parking (this may be on site or a combination of on site and on street depending on the site);
- Regulatory signage posted outside the entry gate;
- Garbage receptacles.

The following amenities are **optional** and may be provided at some sites but not at all sites.

- Fresh water;
- Separate areas for small and large dogs;
- Shaded areas or shelters;
- Wood chips/pea gravel;
- Plastic bags;
- Lights;
- Washrooms;
- Notice board

8.0 PROCESS TO ESTABLISH AN OFF LEASH DOG AREA

Initial permanent off-leash areas will be recommended by City staff. Residents can submit written requests for the establishment of a new and/or additional off-leash dog area to the Recreation and Leisure Services department. Staff will review the written request and will consult other City departments as required. If the proposed site does not meet the criteria, staff will advise the proponents of the deficiencies. Staff will also inform the district Councillor of the request and the results of the review.

Staff will hold a public meeting with neighbourhood residents and affected stakeholders for sites which meet the criteria. Final recommendations with budgetary impacts will be submitted to the Arts, Recreation and Community Policy Committee for consideration.

9.0 RULES AND REGULATIONS

The intent of the rules and regulations are to provide clear guidelines for off-leash dog areas users. **Rules and regulations do not include off-leash areas etiquette which shall be developed in collaboration with the Committee and promoted with the users of off-leash areas.** Rules and regulations signage with hours of operations and emergency contact numbers shall be posted at the entrance of each off-leash area:

- a. Poop n' scoop is mandatory;
- b. Dogs must be kept on-leash until inside the double gated area;
- c. Dog owners and handlers are subject to Ontario Dog Owner's Liability Act and the City of Kingston Animal Control Bylaw;
- d. Park users and dog owners assume all risks related to off-leash dog area usage;

- e. Owners must have dog tags indicating that their dog has been vaccinated and the dog is currently licensed;
- f. Dogs must be removed by owner or handler from the off-leash dog area if dogs are in heat (female), sick or aggressive;
- g. No more than two dogs may be brought into the off-leash dog area by an individual at the same time;
- h. All children under 12 years of age must be supervised by an adult attendant while inside the off-leash dog area;
- i. No food (this applies to both the human and canine variety), is permitted in the off-leash dog area;
- j. Off-leash areas are smoke free areas;
- k. Choke, spike, chain or pinch collars are not allowed in off-leash area;
- l. Dogs must be under control;
- m. Professional dog trainers are not permitted to use the off-leash areas to conduct their business;
- n. All pit bulls must be muzzled.

10.0 IMPROVEMENT OF OFF-LEASH AREAS

City staff, designated by the Director, and the Committee will meet four (4) times per year to review needs and requirements for off-leash areas. This review may include but not be limited to consideration of amenities, maintenance, operations and awareness. The Committee will establish park etiquette guidelines which will be posted in each off-leash dog area.

Committee members will provide suggestions for new initiatives and improvements to off-leash dog areas. Committee members will also be involved with awareness and promotion initiatives.

Committee members may choose to establish sub committees to undertake fundraising initiatives for a specific off-leash area. Funds raised can be reinvested in off-leash area as recommended by the Committee and approved by the City. No amenities shall be added to an off-leash area without the prior consent of the City.

11.0 ASSESSMENT OF OFF-LEASH AREAS

City staff, as designated by the Director, shall evaluate the performance of the off-leash dog areas once per year for the first year of operation and once every second year for the following years. In the evaluation process, staff will review comments received from off-leash park users and the general public and will also consider the following:

- A) public health concerns;
- B) number and severity of complaints;
- C) risk management issues;
- D) impact on turf and shrub;
- E) non-compliance with municipal by-laws.

Where one or more indicators have been identified as areas of concerns which could have an impact on public safety or quality of life, staff and the district Councillor will determine if further actions are required to eliminate the concerns or if the off-leash area for a particular site should be removed. Where site removal is preferred, a recommendation shall be submitted to the ARCP

Committee. Off-leash area closures are at the discretion of council.

12.0 FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION

Dog tags will be sold on an annual basis to individuals who intend to use off-leash dog areas. These dog tags will be sold at the same price as regular dog tags and \$2 from the sale of each tag will be reallocated to help finance operational and maintenance costs which include grass cutting, snow removal and garbage disposal.