



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

People, Dogs and Parks Strategy – Off –Leash Areas

Date:	June 19 , 2007
To:	Parks and Environment Committee
From:	Brenda Librecz, General Manger, Parks, Forestry and Recreation
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

Parks, Forestry and Recreation recently conducted a series of public consultation sessions to assist in the development of a comprehensive strategy to address the provision of off-leash areas for dogs in City parks, greenspaces and waterfront areas. Competing demands on the park system has created conflict amongst various user groups. How, when, where and under what circumstances off-leash areas are integrated into the equation of balancing the needs and finding common ground amongst all park users is a difficult issue and one that must be addressed.

Establishment of a comprehensive strategy will provide a consistent approach to the provision of off-leash areas within the parks system, taking into consideration the interests of dog owners, commercial dog walkers, other park users and the protection of our assets. Additional capital and operating funds will be required to fulfill the recommendations in this strategy.

As population growth and density of development increases across the City, the competing demands on existing parks, greenspaces and waterfront areas are becoming more pronounced. Currently Toronto Public Health, Animal Services estimates there are 250,000 dogs residing in the city. As stewards of Toronto's parks, greenspaces and waterfront areas, it is prudent of the Division to take a leadership role in integrating off-leash areas into the equation of balancing needs and finding common ground amongst our many park users.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation recommends that:

1. City Council adopt the People, Dogs and Parks – Off Leash Policy, in accordance with the report recommendations and Attachment 1 of this report;
2. Prior to the implementation the People, Dogs and Parks – Off Leash Policy, the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation be directed to develop a communication plan, in order to promote public education, awareness and compliance with the Policy;
3. The People, Dogs and Parks – Off Leash Policy come into effect in the fall of 2007;
4. The General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation be directed to report back on the effectiveness of the People, Dogs and Parks Off-Leash Policy in one year's time to the Parks and Environment Committee.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Increased enforcement and parks improvements to fully implement the People, Dogs, and Parks Strategy will require additional Operating funding of \$1,163,200 on an annualized basis and additional Capital funding of \$580,000 in 2008 and \$405,000 annually from 2009 onwards. These requests will be submitted for consideration during the 2008 Budget process.

The 2008 request for ten new By-Law Enforcement Officers, including supplies and space rental costs for 6 months in 2008 will require \$666,600 of Operating Budget funding and an additional \$175,000 of Capital Budget funding for five new vehicles. For 2009, an annualization of \$496,600 will bring the total annual Operating Budget funding to \$1,163,200. In addition, approximately \$405,000 per year of Parkland Capital improvements will be requested to support the installation of off-leash amenities in parks.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting of July 20-22, 2004, City Council adopted “Our Common Grounds” the Strategic Plan for Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division which includes a recommendation that the division develop a Dogs in Parks Strategy.

Staff prepared the Dogs in Parks Strategy Report dated April 19, 2006, which was submitted to the Economic Development and Parks Committee at its meeting of May 4, 2006 for adoption.

The Economic Development and Parks Committee referred the April 19, 2006, Dogs in Parks Strategy Report from the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation to the Community Councils for consideration and further public consultation and directed the Division to submit separate reports on the following:

- (a) People, Dogs and Parks Strategy including an Off Leash Policy and;
- (b) Commercial Dog Walker Permit Policy.

Recommendations from the former Economic Development and Parks Committee have been adapted to reflect the new Council and Committee structure and procedures.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Within the City of Toronto's 1,470 parks, there are currently 32 approved off-leash areas. The majority of these off-leash areas are situated in the former City of Toronto with the exception of three located in Etobicoke-York and one in North York. Existing off-leash areas are over-used and over-crowded. This situation has led to individuals who break the current rules by running their dogs off-leash outside designated times, or in areas or parks not intended for this use.

This situation has given rise to an increase in conflict situations amongst those bringing dogs into City parks and those residents who use parks for other purposes. Parks staff and councillors' offices are frequently inundated with complaints, and often find themselves embroiled in serious community conflicts around the contentious issues of people, dogs and parks. The status quo is not sustainable.

COMMENTS

In order to develop an effective and successful policy document to govern the provision and operation of off-leash areas in City parks, greenspaces and waterfront areas, the following challenges, concerns and issues must be addressed.

- 1) Location, design features & operation protocols
While dogs on-leash are welcome throughout most of the city's parks system, not all parks, greenspaces and waterfront areas are suitable for off-leash areas. The People, Dogs and Parks – Off Leash Policy (Attachment 1) has been drafted to clearly articulate the exclusions, restrictions and requirements for operation.
- 2) Community Involvement and Accountability
Community involvement and consultation has been identified as the cornerstone of a successful People, Dogs and Parks - Off Leash Policy. This approach has

been included in the process for developing, organizing and sustaining off-leash areas through the establishment of local dog-owner associations. (Attachment 2)

3) By-law Enforcement

By-law enforcement is a critical component to the People, Dogs and Parks Strategy and has been identified as a key tool to successfully manage dogs in parks and off-leash areas. By-law enforcement is a shared responsibility between the Parks, Forestry and Recreation By-law Enforcement Unit and Toronto Public Health, Animal Services. Jointly, these staff units are responsible for enforcing the provisions of Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 608-Parks, and Chapter 349-Animals.

The success of an off-leash policy will require increased enforcement and penalties which must be applied against irresponsible dog-owners and dog-walkers that disobey City by-laws and park rules.

4) Dog Waste

Dog waste is a concern in all City parks and many public spaces. The problem of dog waste in City parks is not restricted to off-leash areas; it is a critical concern that must be addressed. All dog-owners and dog-walkers must be responsible and pick-up after dogs under their care. Dog-owners need to be informed about proper disposal methods and support methods to reduce the amount of dog waste in the parks litter stream. Dog-owners are encouraged to participate in and promote the diversion of dog waste from the waste stream to the green bin program by;

- i) Using green bins where piloted in the following parks, Earl Bales Park – North District, Trinity Bellwoods Park and Withrow Park – Toronto & East York District, Neilson Park – Scarborough District and Cruikshank Park – West district ;
- ii) Picking up and removing dog waste from parks, green spaces and water front areas and disposing of it at their residence or workplace, in either the green bin or the toilet.

Parks staff are monitoring and researching new methods and alternatives to reduce and manage dog waste in city Parks. There is much work to be done in this area.

5) Education and Communication

The off-leash policy needs to be supported by an ongoing communication and public education plan to inform target audiences of components of the policy as adopted. Appropriate messaging will be disseminated through a variety of communication vehicles to residents and park users.

6) Grand-parenting

Existing off-leash areas that are working well will be grand-parented. Staff will work to apply the new criteria and rules of engagement, including establishment of dog-owners' associations, agreements, and dog licensing requirements to these areas. In addition, staff would work with groups to make adjustments to these

areas to improve overall functionality, including fencing, seasonal adjustments, and alternate locations.

Pilot projects and “hot spots” - those off-leash areas that have had a series of complaints from community members, local councillors or where by-law enforcement officers have been called on to attend on a complaint basis – will be assessed immediately on a priority basis to determine their continuation.

Research

There are a variety of methods utilized around the world to address the contentious issue of dogs and people using parks, greenspaces and waterfront areas. Several cities in Canada and other countries were researched by Parks, Forestry and Recreation staff to obtain information on the subject. They include: Sydney, Kiama New South Wales, Melbourne, Australia; San Francisco, Seattle, Chicago, New York, USA; Calgary, Vancouver, Mississauga, Hamilton, and Halifax in Canada. The information obtained through this research (see Attachment 3) has provided a basis for the formation of the Division’s draft People, Dogs and Parks Strategy.

Consultation Process

Parks, Forestry and Recreation staff has taken a leadership role in the development of the City’s off-leash strategy, which has included an extensive public consultation process involving a wide cross-section of park-users and members of the public. This engagement process has been key to the development and final revisions to the off-leash policy document. Implementation of the new policy and continued engagement efforts will result in more success at balancing the diverse needs and finding common ground among park users.

Staff conducted and participated in five public meetings attended by an estimated 345 members of the public and representatives from Council, conducted on June 4, 5, 6, 7 and 13, 2007. Participants were given an opportunity to review the proposed strategy, participate in discussions and provide their input via a public feedback form. The draft strategy and public response survey were posted on the City’s website. Members of the public were invited to send their completed survey responses to Parks, Forestry and Recreation staff either on-line, by fax or by mail. Parks, Forestry and Recreation received 390 responses which have been incorporated into the Public Consultation Report. (Attachment 2)

Key comments from the Public consultation and impact on Policy include:

- **Designated Locations -Unclear off-leash location criteria.** Policy revised to clearly identify requirements for specific park types, excluded areas, process for Natural Environment areas, alternative sites and pedestrian pathways which include boardwalks and linkages
- **Permit Concept.** Concern regarding requirement for dog-owner association to be established and responsible for obtaining a permit for the off-leash area and potential associated liability. The requirement to establish a local dog-owner

association remained. The application process was revised to include: a written proposal to Parks, Forestry and Recreation, provision of dog-owner association membership, public meeting process for sites deemed suitable and the creation of the Conditions of Use. The Conditions of Use outlines contacts, roles and responsibilities and agreed to terms and conditions forwarded to the dog-owner association by the Director of Parks. Additionally the City of Toronto is not requesting liability insurance of the Dog-Owner Associations.

- **Clear and Concise Signage.** Need for clear and concise signage that includes pertinent information and rules and regulations for the specific off-leash area. Phase 2 of the Implementation plan in the Next Steps section of this report includes development of a signage plan.
- **Increase By-Law Enforcement.** Prevalent theme that surfaced throughout the discussions was increased By-Law Enforcement is required. Parks, Forestry and Recreation have identified the financial requirement within the Financial Impact section of report and will include this item as part of the 2008 Budget process.

For detailed public consultation discussion points see Attachment 2 – Public Consultation Report.

By-Law Enforcement Service Level Increase

Results from the People, Dogs and Parks Strategy – Draft Off-Leash Policy, on-line survey and the public consultation sessions which were held on June 4, 5, 6, 7, & 13, 2007, clearly indicated a prevalent theme for increased by-law enforcement in City parks, greenspaces and waterfront areas. The main concern is that an increased need for enforcement would definitely arise from the implementation of the draft policy.

Currently there are 11 By-law Enforcement Officers in Parks, Forestry and Recreation that provide by-law enforcement of Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 608, Parks and Chapter, 548 Illegal Dumping which is insufficient to cover 1,470 named parks, 7 days per week on 2 shifts. The following service level was provided in 2006 by this unit;

- 20,745 Inspections
- 250 Written Warnings Notices and
- 1,046 Tickets Issued

The request is to increase the number of full time By-law Enforcement Officers with Special Constable Status by 10, to enforce City by-laws and problem solve on a pro-active basis in City, parks, greenspaces and waterfront areas. The Special Constables would be equipped to address issues that may arise in parks that our current By-Law Officers do not have jurisdiction/authority for. This will give the Special Constable the ability to arrest difficult individuals that refuse to comply with park by-laws and deal with repeat offenders. It is anticipated that there will be an increased level of inspections and warnings and a decrease in the number of tickets over time based on a pro-active approach to by-law enforcement through public education and an increase presence in parks.

The financial implications resulting from the adoption of the People, Dogs and Parks Strategy, provision of off-leash areas in Toronto parks, greenspaces and waterfront areas is as follows and this request will be part of the 2008 budget submission process:

- On-going Operating Budget Impact for this level of service would be \$1,163,200. 00.
 - 2008 operating budget impact \$666,600.00 and;
 - 2009 operating budget impact \$496,600.00
- One time capital costs for the purchase of five vehicles would be \$175,000.

Capital Improvements

Currently there is no existing funding within the Parks, Forestry and Recreation Capital Budget for the provision of dog off-leash areas. Improvements to these areas could cost in the range of \$50,000 to \$500,000 depending on the amenities. Staff is requesting capital funding in the amount of \$405,000 per year over the next five years for installation of off-leash area amenities such as fencing, surface treatments other than turf, natural barriers, provision of water, recycling opportunities and signage

Benefits

The proposed People, Dogs and Parks Strategy offers numerous public benefits including increased physical and mental health associated with people exercising and socializing, better socialized and healthier dogs within the community, and a positive presence and improved security provided by night time dog walkers. Dog owners and dog walkers will have the opportunity to be part of a dog owner association and participate in the successful implementation and operation of off-leash areas in City parks, greenspaces and waterfront areas.

Parks, Forestry and Recreation staff have prepared a separate staff report which pertains to the Commercial Dog Walkers Permit Policy. These reports and policies are complimentary to one another and both are being submitted to the July 4th, 2007 meeting of the Parks and Environment Committee for consideration with a recommendation to be forward to the July 16, 17, and 18th meeting of Council.

Next Steps

Upon approval of the People, Dogs and Parks Strategy by Toronto City Council, Parks, Forestry and Recreation will implement the strategy in the following multi-phased sequence:

Phase 1: July – October 2007 (upon Council approval)

- Staff training program to commence
- Development of administrative systems
- Development of off-leash area letter outlining conditions of use
- Development of communication and public education plans
- Review existing “hot spots” and pilot projects on a priority basis

Phase 2: Fall 2007

- Apply rules of engagement and operation to grand-parented off-leash areas
- Orientation Kit for Dog Owner Associations - distribution
- Development of a signage plan.
- Monitoring & evaluation plan development

Phase 3: Fall 2007/Winter 2008

- Review decisions regarding pending off-leash area applications and new requests.
- Review and decisions regarding existing off-leash areas commences.
- Monitoring and Evaluation plan for off-leash areas begins.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE


Brenda Librecz,
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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – People, Dogs and Parks Off-Leash Policy

Attachment 2 – Public Consultation Report

Attachment 3 – Off-Leash Research Report

People, Dogs and Parks – Off-Leash Policy	Approved By: Approval Date: July 4, 2007 Revision Date: June 14, 2007	
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Attachment 1

Policy Statement	<p>This policy pertains to the provision of off-leash areas for dogs in City-owned parks, greenspaces, waterfront areas and alternative sites.</p> <p>Dogs must be kept on leash at all times in all parks, greenspaces or waterfront areas unless otherwise posted.</p>
Location and Criteria Neighbourhood Parks/Parkettes Other Parks-Destination Regional Off-Leash Area Exclusions	<p>The following criteria will be considered in determining off-leash areas:</p> <p>Proximity to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Horticultural Displays • Playgrounds, splash pads or wading pools • Skateboard bowls, tennis courts or other sports pads • Artificial or natural ice rinks, toboggan hills • Sportsfields <p>Areas within 10 metres of the above criteria must be fenced. Areas may be seasonally adjusted.</p> <p>In addition to the criteria noted above which pertains to Neighbourhood Parks/Parkettes, other City parks will be considered on an individual basis for off-leash areas based on specific site amenities and opportunities available.</p> <p>Areas that will <u>not</u> be considered for off-leash include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Horticultural displays or ornamental gardens • Playgrounds, splash pads, wading pools • Skateboard bowls, tennis courts or other sports pads • Sports fields, tennis courts • Blue Flag designated beaches

<p>Natural Environment Areas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campgrounds • Animal Display areas (High Park Zoo, Riverdale Farm and Far Enough Farm (Toronto Island)) • Environmentally sensitive areas and buffer zone • Wet lands and buffer zone • Areas of scientific interest and buffer zone • Areas which have undergone significant habitat restoration or their buffer zones <p>Natural or environmentally sensitive areas refers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designated ravines • Wooded or Savannah areas • Areas which have undergone significant habitat restoration or their buffer zones and • Trails <p>These areas will be reviewed on an individual site basis by appropriate representatives from Parks, Forestry, and Recreation to determine suitability and specific site requirements.</p>
<p>Alternative Sites</p>	<p>Alternative areas for consideration;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hydro Corridors • Reservoir Properties • Vacant Properties/Lots • Abandoned Railway Corridors <p>Parks, Forestry and Recreation shall negotiate the use of alternative sites with the owners, where the General Manager deems it necessary or desirable to do so, and subject to any necessary approval from City officials.</p>
<p>Pedestrian Pathways Boardwalks And Linkages</p>	<p>Dogs on pathways must be on a leash no greater than two meters in length. Please stay to the right of the pathway at all times. Dogs should not interfere with or obstruct other pathway users.</p>
<p>Pre-existing Off-Leash Areas</p>	<p>Existing off-leash areas that are working well will be grand-parented. Staff will work to apply the new criteria and rules of engagement, including establishment of dog-owners' associations, agreements, and dog licensing requirements to these areas. In addition, staff would work with groups to make adjustments to these areas to improve overall functionality, including fencing, seasonal adjustments, and alternate locations.</p> <p>Pilot projects and "hot spots" - those off-leash areas that have had</p>

	<p>a series of complaints from community members, local councillors or where by-law enforcement officers have been called on to attend on a complaint basis – will be assessed immediately on a priority basis to determine their continuation.</p>
<p>Application Procedure for Off-Leash Park Area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dog owners interested in establishing a leash free area in a City-owned park, greenspace, waterfront area or alternative site must establish a local dog-owner association. • The proponents must provide a membership list, identify two key contacts and submit a written proposal to Parks, Forestry and Recreation, Parks Director. • Parks, Forestry and Recreation in consultation with Toronto Public Health, Animal Services, Toronto Water or other divisions/agencies as required, will review the proposal and assess the site against the above noted criteria. • Parks, Forestry and Recreation shall negotiate the use of alternative sites with the owners, where the General Manager deems it necessary or desirable to do so, and subject to any necessary approval from City officials. • If the proposal does not meet the above criteria, the Park Supervisor will advise the association in writing of the reasons why the location is not appropriate. • Where the proposed site is deemed suitable by Parks, Forestry and Recreation, the Division will host a public information meeting to advise interested residents, community representatives, advisory council members, sports groups, area schools, business improvement associations, residents' associations and other park users that an off-leash area will be located in the identified park. <p>The meeting agenda will review the Conditions of Use with the attendees.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Size and location of area (seasonal adjustment) ○ Hours of operation (seasonal adjustment) ○ Rules and Regulations ○ Amenities (lighting, seating, access to water for people and dogs, waste and recycling programs) ○ Fencing or natural barriers ○ Signage ○ Other landscape components <p>The meeting outcomes and terms will be noted in the Off-Leash Area Park Conditions of Use Letter which will also include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dog-Owner Association Contacts • Roles and Responsibilities of the Dog-Owner Association

	<p>and Parks, Forestry and Recreation Staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Review of Off-Leash Area • Evaluation criteria for the Off-Leash Area <p>The finalized Off-Leash Area Park Conditions of Use will be forwarded to the Dog-Owner Association contact by the Director of Parks or designate, outlining the agreed to Terms and Conditions.</p> <p>There are no fees associated with the application for an Off-Leash Area nor any fee for area user</p> <p>Communication to local residents regarding the off-leash area will include the area established and conditions of use which will be made available by Parks, Forestry and Recreation staff.</p>
Monitoring and Dispute Resolution process	<p>Parks, Forestry and Recreation staff will track issues as they arise and liaise with the dog-owners association, By-law Enforcement, Animal Services and other park users in an effort to resolve issues as effectively as possible.</p> <p>Should unresolved issues continue Parks, Forestry and Recreation staff will host a community meeting to reinforce the roles and responsibilities of the Dog-Owner Association outlined in the conditions of use and attempt to resolve issues or determine the feasibility of continuing the site.</p>
Cancellation of Off-Leash Designated Area	<p>Designation of an Off-Leash Area may be cancelled at anytime by the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation for due cause.</p>
Appeal Process	<p>Applicants who wish to appeal the decision to cancel the off-leash area designation may do so within 30 days, in writing to the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation.</p>
Enforcement and Fines	<p>Dog owners or Commercial Dog walkers with unlicensed dogs or an invalid licence or tag will be guilty of an offence and will be subject to a fine, as set out in Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 349-10. http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/municode/1184_349.pdf</p> <p>Dog owners and/or Commercial Dog walkers who fail to comply with any of the conditions stipulated within Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 608 and any of the conditions set out in this Policy will be guilty of an offence and will be subject to appropriate fines in accordance with Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 608-34. http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/municode/1184_608.pdf</p>
Liability	<p>The City of Toronto is not requesting liability insurance of the Dog Owner Associations.</p>

	Dog owners and/or Commercial Dog walkers are legally responsible for their own dog(s) and any injuries or damage caused by their dog(s). Individuals who choose to use off-leash areas do so at their own risk.
Municipal Responsibility	The City of Toronto, Parks, Forestry and Recreation is responsible for City-owned or operated parks, greenspaces and waterfront areas.
Signage	Designated off-leash areas and hours will be clearly signed and consistent throughout City parks, greenspaces and waterfront areas.

**People, Dogs and Parks –Off-Leash Policy
Summary Consultation Report**

June 18, 2007

1. Background and Introduction

- The Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division, in conjunction with Councillor Paula Fletcher, Chair of the Parks and Environment Committee, hosted 4 public consultation sessions to receive feedback on the People, Dogs and Parks - Draft Off-Leash Policy entitled “People, Dogs and Parks – Balancing needs, finding common ground”. A fifth session was held for Commercial Dog Walkers to receive feedback on the Draft Commercial Dog Walkers Permit Policy.
- The 5 public consultations were hosted on the following days, at the following city-wide locations:
 - June 4, 2007 at Scarborough Civic Centre (Scarborough District).
 - June 5, 2007 at Humberwood Community Centre (Etobicoke/York District).
 - June 6, 2007 at Toronto City Hall (Toronto/East York District).
 - June 7, 2007 at North York Memorial Hall (North York District).
 - June 13, 2007 at Metro Hall (Commercial Dog Walkers).
- Participants were provided with an information package that describes the issue, the development process and the specifics of the draft policy. Based on this information facilitators led discussions on the specifics of the draft policy which will be used to further develop and/or amend the draft.
- Other mechanisms used to elicit feedback include written commentary sheets which were handed out to each participant, and an on-line survey containing the same discussion points that were used during the consultation process.
- A summary of the themes that emerged at the public consultations and the online survey are summarized in the report below as *Section 3 – Summary of Responses from Public Consultations (People, Dogs and Parks – Draft Off-Leash Policy) and Online Survey*.
- A summary of responses at the public consultation session that was held on June 13, 2007 at Metro Hall, where commercial dog walkers were consulted on the Draft Commercial Dog Walker Permit Policy is summarized in the report below as *Section 4 – Summary of Responses from Commercial Dog Walkers Public Consultation (People, Dogs and Parks – Draft Commercial Dog Walker Permit Policy)*.

2. Participant Demographics

Demographic	June 4, 2007 Scarborough Civic Centre	June 5, 2007 Humberwood Community Centre	June 6, 2007 Toronto City Hall	June 7, 2007 North York Memorial Hall	June 13, 2007 Metro Hall	Online Survey Ended June 15, 2007	TOTALS
Dog Owners	53	11	151	28	36	275	554
Not Dog Owners	11	0	28	3	3	97	142
Unknown	4	2	7	2	6	18	39
TOTALS	68	13	186	33	45	390	725

- Based on postal code information provided by participants, all but 22 participants are residents of the City of Toronto.
- A total of 23 professional dog walkers attended the public consultations and 16 responded to the on-line survey. They are represented in the above chart within the demographic of “dog owners”.
- Demographics information shown above reflects those who voluntarily signed-in and provided their information at a consultation session or on the on-line survey. There may have been additional participants that did not choose to sign-in. All on-line surveys are accounted for in the above numbers, regardless if demographics information was provided.

3. Summary of Responses from Public Consultations (People, Dogs and Parks – Draft Off-Leash Policy) and Online Survey

- A total of 4 questions (each question comprised of 2 parts, ‘a’ and ‘b’) were used as discussion points during the public consultation sessions and for the online survey.
- In sorting through the responses, defined themes emerged for each discussion point. The following is a summary of responses sorted by discussion point and provided for by theme (identified in *italics*).
- Note “participants” refers to those who participated in the public consultations and those who participated in the online survey.
- Also note, that participants in the on-line survey may have answered all questions, or only some questions. Regardless of how much of the survey was filled in, all were included in the summary below.

Discussion Point 1:

- 1(a). What aspects of the “location and criteria” section of the draft policy for off-leash areas and times, do you think will work?
- 1(b). What needs improvement in the “location and criteria” section of the draft policy for off-leash areas and times?

Designated Locations

- Many participants expressed that the policy must recognize the diversity and density of the City (small downtown parks versus large regional parks) and not use a standardized approach when establishing location criteria for these areas.
- A large number of participants cited that poor criteria were used to establish suitable locations to be used for potential off-leash areas.
- In reviewing the list of areas that are not suitable for off-leash areas that was provided in the information package, many participants felt that these locations would indeed be suitable. A sample of areas that were frequently identified in responses as suitable include:
 - Naturalized areas
 - Hydro corridors
 - Large regional parks (or designates areas within these parks)
 - Near playgrounds
 - Close to sport fields or actual sport fields
 - Tennis courts that are not used by the public
 - Treed areas
 - Campgrounds
 - Near wading pools
- It is also important to note, that there were also many respondents that disagreed with some of the above locations, most notably with the following:
 - Near playgrounds
 - Campgrounds
 - Near wading pools
- Although there was not a clear list of suitable or not suitable locations that emerged, there was a consensus that many of these areas may not be suitable during certain seasons, but would be in others.
- There also was a strong consensus on the designation of off-leash areas to be incorporated within large regional parks. The size of a park should reflect the size of a leash free area.
- When establishing appropriate criteria for locations of off-leash areas, many participants stressed the importance of having appropriate “walk” areas for dogs, as well as appropriate “play” areas for dogs, which may not necessarily be based on the same criteria.

Designated Hours of Operation

- Designating hours of operation for off-leash areas has emerged as a prevalent theme, however, there were many opinions expressed on how those hours should be defined. A sample of the varying hours proposed are as follows:
 - 24 hours (expressed often)
 - 6 am to 8 pm (expressed often)
 - 10 pm to 6 am
 - 7 am to 10 pm
 - Hours designated based on season

- Although there were many variations of operating hours provided, most agreed that the hours of operation should be seasonally consistent and flexible in order to accommodate society's changing work hours (to accommodate night schedules).
- The hours provided that were most contentious are the overnight operating hours, as many felt barking dogs in neighbourhood parks overnight would not be welcomed.

Discussion Point 2:

- 2(a).** What aspects of the “application for off-leash area permits” section of the draft policy for off-leash areas and times do you think will work?
- 2(b).** What needs improvement in the “application for off-leash area permits” section of the draft policy for off-leash areas and times?

Concept of a Dog Association

- When discussing the concept of a Dog Association, a clear approach did not surface. Many respondents expressed the need and desire for establishing Dog Associations, while many expressed it is an unnecessary measure that would prove cumbersome.
- Those in favour thought it would act as a good communication tool between the community, by-law enforcement and parks staff. Those against thought it would be too difficult to organize and unfair to have operational responsibilities placed on residents. A clear view did not surface for or against the concept of a Dog Association.
- Other suggestions included having a City-wide Advisory Committee for dog owners or a dog Ombudsman. Both could govern off-leash areas, liaise with staff on issues and even be a forum for the administration of permits for these areas including the resolution process.
- A shared concern from many on both sides of the issue was the accessibility of off-leash areas. The question of “would members of one Dog Association be able to travel to and use an off-leash area where they are not a member” arose during many discussions.
- Another shared concern from most on both sides of the issue was the liability associated with being a member of a Dog Association. Similar to the liability linked to the permit holder, residents were concerned that they could not be responsible for the actions of other dog owners or dogs. Many wondered about insurance to cover liability concerns and whose responsibility it would be to purchase the insurance.
- Many participants were unclear on how many members were required to form a Dog Association and if multiple Dog Associations could share one off-leash area.

Concept of Permit

- The proposed permit process for establishing an off-leash area was a contentious discussion point. Some felt the proposal is needed and doable, but most felt the concept is too bureaucratic and will be problematic.
- Those in favour of a permit process expressed that this would formalize an off-leash area and would expedite the implementation of these areas across the City.

- Those against the permit process expressed concern that too much responsibility is being placed on the permit holder. It was unclear how long a permit is valid, if the permit is transferable, if there can be multiple permit holders for one area and what would be the consequence if a permit holder moved out of the neighbourhood. Again, the issue of liability associated with permit holder was an issue, particularly that a permit holder cannot be held responsible for the actions of dogs owned by others.
- Recommendations that were well received included the public consultation process. Most agreed that this is a good measure that would ensure communication and compromise.
- Other comments related to a permit included the need to have the permit on-line for application and that timelines should be shortened to ensure expediency.
- Some felt that the decision making authority of the Parks Supervisor is too great in denying a permit application without due process.

Clear and Concise Signage

- Many of the participants expressed the need for clear and concise signage that includes information such as hours of operation, rules and regulations of the off-leash area, a contact number to reach staff and a website address that will allow residents to read the policy.
- Clear and concise signage could be used to aid park users in self policing off-leash areas and aid in settling disputes. Self policing was a term used often during discussions, but would require tools such as signage to allow a reference point for self policing.

Varying Costs and Potential Fees

- Another popular discussion point was the amenities that should be provided for in off-leash areas and costs associated with these amenities. A variety of amenities were identified including fencing, green bins, biodegradable disposal bags, turf in good condition, waste disposal services, water and play components.
- When reviewing all of the amenities cited, the most controversial was that of a fence. Some participants felt that off-leash areas should be defined with a fence, while others stated fences are not required, only hours of operation should be used. A fence was seen as beneficial particularly when off-leash areas are close to playgrounds or sport fields or more specifically, are located in large parks that have multiple uses.
- Although not all could agree on the types of amenities, there was a shared concern of who would be responsible to pay for these amenities, as well as pay for their ongoing maintenance. Most felt it was the responsibility of the City to provide for and maintain the amenities and off-leash areas, as opposed to placing the responsibility on the Dog Association.
- There were some suggestions made regarding potential cost recovery which include tapping into Corporate Sponsorship opportunities for off-leash areas, charging a fee for a permit for an off-leash area, charging a fee to enter and use an off-leash area, charging a license fee for dog walkers and/or charging a dog licensing fee for dog

owners with a portion being designated to support off-leash areas. A concern did arise in that any potential fees or sponsorships should be directed solely to the benefit of off-leash areas.

- 3(a). What aspects of the “monitoring and dispute resolution” section of the draft policy for off-leash areas and times will work?
- 3(b). What needs improvement in the “monitoring and dispute resolution” section of the draft policy for off-leash areas and times?

Appeals Process

- The most noted comment made during this discussion point is that the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation should not have the sole right to revoke a permit at any time.
- Most felt that an appeals process is fair and needed, as long as there is a timely process in place that includes community consultation and an impartial review of issues.
- There is a concern that the individual that revokes a permit should not be the same person who is a part of the appeals process.
- Another issue stated was the tracking of issues, how they would be handled and with whom they would reside.

Increased Enforcement Needed

- A prevalent theme that surfaced throughout many of the discussion points was that increased enforcement is required. Many spoke to the lack of current enforcement through the Parks By-law Unit, and strongly suggested that there exists a need for more By-law Enforcement Officers or a partnership with Animal Control.
- Many shared stories of irresponsible dog owners, unauthorized activities, disputes between dog owners and non dog owners. The main concern is that an increased need for enforcement would arise from the implementation of this draft policy.
- Some cited that self policing could successfully govern these areas, but the majority felt By-law Enforcement is a better measure.
- Although many enforcement issues were voiced the main concerns were owners who do not pick up after their pet, banning unruly dogs and dealing with irresponsible dog owners.
- Another enforcement issue arose from discussions about the permit process and the creation of Dog Associations. It is unclear if permit holders and/or the Dog Association would be expected to enforce rules and regulations. It is seen as unfair to put this responsibility on these parties when they do not have a means by which to enforce, nor do they want that responsibility.
- Increased education and awareness of dogs and parks was mentioned throughout many discussion points, particularly with enforcement, as it is seen as a way to deter irresponsible behaviour.

4(a). Other suggestions/ideas/comments about how to improve the draft policy for off-leash areas and times?

4(b). Do you have any other suggestions and/or comments to add?

- Most took this opportunity to reinforce comments made that are identified in the themes above. Some comments include:
 - “Seems that the City – Parks, Forestry and Recreation want minimal responsibility and are instead pushing it to the public.”
 - “Education and awareness about dogs and dogs in the City is needed.”
 - “One size of a policy does not fit all – there are different areas in the city that have different needs and amenities.”
 - “Dog Associations are good but there is too much work involved.”
 - “A compromise is needed for all park users.”
 - “No park should be off limits when deciding where to put off-leash areas.”
 - “Grandparenting of existing off-leash areas and not requiring a permit is a good idea.”
 - “Off-leash areas are not well maintained – grass is poor and no bins.”
 - “Size of a fenced in off-leash area should include density because many become overcrowded.”
 - “How are you going to address irresponsible dog owners.”
 - “This process is too bureaucratic.”
 - “Dog walkers are making money off of the public and they abuse off-leash areas.”
 - “No off-leash areas in public parks. The public shouldn’t have to pay for dog owners pets.”
 - “It’s not just the dog owner, it’s also the parents. There need to be rules to keep kids out of the dog areas, penalties for kids who misbehave.”
 - As a dog owner, I’m thrilled that the city is addressing the need for more off-leash areas, especially given the increase in residents and dogs in the City.”
 - “The section on disposing of pet waste needs to be improved, need special bins for pet waste only.”
 - “There need to be clear penalties laid out for individual dog owners. The majority of dog owners are responsible, but a minority ignore the rules.”
 - “I like the community involvement aspect, but wonder how practical it will be to create local dog owners associations. Perhaps some guidelines on how to set-up such an association would be helpful.”
 - “Enforcement presently is a farce. The policy needs to commit to improved enforcement and the funds to implement it.”
 - “The application process is inherently unfair. Other regular park users do not have to apply to use public space and are not held responsible for its maintenance.”
 - “I fear the proliferation of off-leash areas for dogs in the City will limit park area available for children and adult recreational activities.”
 - “I am utterly disappointed in the direction of this document. There are enough places already for dog owners to leave their dogs off-leash.”

4. Summary of Responses from Commercial Dog Walkers Public Consultation (Dog Walker Permit Policy)

1(a). My suggestions for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the Commercial Dog Walker Permit Policy are:

- There was not a focused discussion on this discussion point. Most of the participants were not in agreement with the concept of a permit and concentrated their feedback on this point. The following summarized the general sentiments of this discussion point:
 - These commercial dog walkers felt like they were being singled out and that undue liability was being placed on them, more so than individual dog owners.
 - Most felt that having to wear a visible permit was not safe and they were not in favour.
 - Enforcement is a key issue they felt needed to be increased and expanded across the City for compliance to this policy.
 - Dog walkers should not be responsible for dog owners who do not obtain dog license tags.

1(b). I would like to be involved in monitoring and evaluation the Commercial Dog Walker Permit by:

- There was not a tremendous amount of discussion on this discussion point. Most felt they were not prepared to be fully engaged in the monitoring and evaluation process. Some suggestions made included:
 - Become involved in the education component through schools.
 - An annual review consultation / meeting with dog walkers over 3 different meeting times (days, evenings, weekends).
 - Regular contact and open dialogue with park supervisors.
 - Participate in local community events.

2(a). My suggestions for park improvements I think the Commercial Dog Walker Permit fees should contribute to are:

- Many suggestions were provided for the different types of improvements that permit fees should contribute toward. These suggestions included:
 - Green bins
 - Public education tools (video, print material)
 - Signage
 - Maintenance of off-leash areas
 - Dog fountains
 - Fencing
 - Tree protection
 - Irrigation
 - City-wide Committee to monitor policy
 - Community events

- Obedience training
- Dog Info stations
- Trail protection
- Staff to monitor off-leash areas
- Biodegradable bags
- Off-leash park maps
- ‘Doggy Doolies Digesters’

2(b). Partnership opportunities/alternative sources of funding for park improvements that I would recommend are:

- Many participants cited the potential for sponsorship or partnership opportunities with corporations such as coffee companies, fencing companies and dog food companies.
- Alternative sources of funding identified centred on donations from foundations, individuals and community event fundraising events. It was suggested that these donations be designated as tax deductible for incentive.
- Although not all were in favour of permit fees, they did agree that any fees associated to off-leash areas should be directed to the upkeep and amenity improvement of that area.

3. Other suggestions, ideas and comments regarding the Commercial Dog Walker Permit Policy are:

- Most took this opportunity to reinforce comments made during earlier discussion points. Some comments include:
 - “Work as partners, don’t make us responsible to enforce an owner getting a license.”
 - “Permit should have to be on person, but not displayed.”
 - “Six dogs maximum to each dog walker.”
 - “Signage needed in off-leash areas in multiple languages.”
 - “Walkers should not be responsible for dogs not licensed by their owners.”
 - “Concerned that dog walkers would be targeted by enforcement.”
 - “Happy to pay for permit, but don’t need liability insurance.”
 - “Will my permit ensure, a safe and clean environment? Free of garbage, broken glass?”
 - “Do not have other activities occurring during off-leash hours.”
 - “Need a media blitz stating rules of off-leash areas with a link to a web-site that provided information on off-leash conduct.”

5. Conclusion

- A large number of residents (both dog owners and non dog owners, as well as commercial dog walkers) participated in the consultation process by either attending a public meeting or responding to the on-line survey.
- Many views were shared and advice provided regarding the improvement and enforcement of the draft policies.

- This information will be used to amend the People, Dogs and Parks – Draft Off-Leash Policy and Draft Commercial Dog Walker Permit Policy for consideration by the Parks and Environment Committee and Toronto City Council.

Attachment 3 – Off-Leash Research Findings

City and Country	Protocol for Off-leash (Yes/No)	Protocol Key Elements	Fenced Area (Yes/No)	# of Parks with Off-leash	Dogs on Beach or Waterfront (Yes/No)	Protocol for Beach or Waterfront (Yes/No)	Other Information
New York City U.S.A.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Called Dog Runs ▪ Dog License, Rabies and Identification tags required and visible on dog ▪ Dogs are properly inoculated and parasite-free ▪ No Pinch and Spike Collars 	Both	44	No	No	
Kiama, New South Wales, Australia	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All Off-Leash Areas(OLAs) are subject to on-going regulatory patrol and evaluation by Council's Ranger Service 	No (Use Natural Barriers)	7	Yes	Yes	Dogs are only permitted to swim in a designated Off-Leash area according to the signs erected on the beach
Sydney, Australia	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dogs are not permitted within 10 metres of children's playground equipment or tables in all reserves. ▪ Faeces must be removed immediately 	No (Use Natural Barriers)	7	Yes	Yes	Dogs in a Beach/Waterfront Park must be under effective control by a competent person at all times
Melbourne, Australia	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dogs are allowed off-leash in designated areas in some Parks, provided they are under control 	No (Use Natural Barriers)	7	No	No	
San Francisco, U.S.A.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dogs off-leash must be under voice control and must respond immediately and obediently to a single command 	Both	17	No	No	
Seattle, U.S.A.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Female dogs in heat are not allowed in area. Puppy's under 4 months not allowed in area 	Yes	11	No	No	Not allowed on beaches, children's play areas or on organized athletic fields
Vancouver	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Formal Policy: "Good Dog Decorum" - dog off-leash code of conduct 	Both	31	Yes	Yes	

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Mississauga	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Leash-free Mississauga”, an affiliated volunteer group with the City of Mississauga, is an umbrella organization, which represents all leash-free locations in Mississauga 	Yes	7	No	No	Membership fees are applied to leash-free area's
Hamilton	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sick dogs to be kept out of area. Aggressive dogs are to be kept out of area. Dog owners are subject to Ontario's Dog Owner's Liability Act 	Yes	5	No	No	The leash free parks program is funded through the sale of dog licenses. For every tag sold \$1.00 is dedicated to the leash free parks program
Halifax	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Signage is used to indicate where dogs are allowed off-leash under the control of their owner 	No	2	No	No	On sports fields from November 1 to May 1, between 6am and 10am, so long as the field is not in use or does not have signs indicating that dogs are not allowed or must be on leash
Chicago, U.S.A.	Recommended	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently, Dog Friendly Areas in Cook County (Chicago) are recommended by the Chicago Ornithological Society 	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	There are 5 Recommendations. 1) Standardized Application Process, 2) Size, Space and Location, 3) Environmental Criteria, 4) Access, 5) Enforcement