

Clause embodied in Report No. 3 of the Midtown Community Council, as adopted by the Council of the City of Toronto at its meeting held on April 16, 17 and 18, 2002.

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**Sherwood Park and Blythwood Ravine
Dogs Off-Leash Review
(Don Valley West - Ward 25)**

(City Council on April 16, 17 and 18, 2002, adopted this Clause, without amendment.)

The Midtown Community Council recommends adoption of the report (March 1, 2002) from the Commissioner, Economic Development, Culture and Tourism.

The Midtown Community Council advises having:

- (1) directed that all communications submitted to the Midtown Community Council with respect to this matter be forwarded to the Commissioner, Economic Development, Culture and Tourism for inclusion in the yearly review;
- (2) directed that the communication from Ms. Mary Kirk, with respect to Sunnybrook Park, be forwarded to Sunnybrook Stables, attention Mr. Walter Shanley, for direct response to Ms. Kirk;
- (3) requested the Commissioner, Economic Development, Culture and Tourism to submit a report to the Midtown Community Council with respect to the 2002 Capital and Maintenance Budget implications and a further report on the 5-year Maintenance and Capital Improvement Plan for Sherwood Park; and
- (4) requested the Chair, Board of Health, in consultation with the Medical Officer of Health, to submit a report to the meeting of the Midtown Community Council on May 7, 2002, if possible, on the provision of adequate animal control enforcement officers, specifically for Sherwood Park and Blythwood Ravine, such report to provide recommendations for submission to the Budget Advisory Committee for consideration during the 2003 budget process.

The Midtown Community Council submits the following report (March 1, 2002) from the Commissioner, Economic Development, Culture and Tourism:

Purpose:

To report back to the Midtown Community Council, as requested, and to provide an overview of the public meeting held in late autumn 2001, and the subsequent recommendations from Economic Development, Culture and Tourism.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

There are no financial implications resulting from the adoption of this report.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

- (1) the designated off-leash area for dogs in Sherwood Park continue providing that the recommendations outlined in Attachment No. 1 are put into place;
- (2) given the sensitive ecosystem of the Blythwood Ravine, that this area continue to require that dogs remain on-leash and under control;
- (3) the Ward Councillor and City staff conduct a yearly review of Sherwood Park to ensure every effort is being made to ensure public safety and enjoyment, and for the protection of the forest and park; and
- (4) the appropriate City Officials be authorized and directed to take the necessary action to give effect thereto.

Background:

The Toronto City Council at its meeting of July 24, 25, and 26, 2001, supported the recommendations contained in Report No. 6, Clause No. 28 of the Midtown Community Council. Council requested that the Commissioner, EDCT convene a public meeting in the fall, that the Lawrence Park Residents Association and other interested residents be invited to the meeting, and that a further report be submitted to the Midtown Community Council.

On Thursday, November 29, 2001, a public meeting was arranged and the community was invited to attend. The community was advised that the purpose of the meeting was for the City to continue to work with the community to resolve the issue of how to achieve a balance of uses in Sherwood Park, and that the City was continuing to seek insight from local residents regarding opportunities to resolve issues related to dogs off-leash in Sherwood Park and in Blythwood Ravine. All participants were given a workbook and requested to complete and submit it to the Department for consideration.

A total of 73 Participant Workbooks and 65 other written comments were submitted by the community for the City's consideration. The comments have been summarized and are contained in "Meeting Record and Consultation Report", prepared by the facilitator of the November 29, 2001 meeting and available from the Parks and Recreation Division. The key areas have been addressed in the recommendations contained in Attachment No. 1.

Comments:

The dogs off-leash area in Sherwood Park has been in place since May 20, 1986. Many of the participants at the community meetings held to-date, wish to continue to have the use of an

off-leash area within Sherwood Park. In support of this community need, the Department must also factor-in and consider the issues of public safety and the protection of the forest and sensitive ecosystem of Sherwood Park.

Sherwood Park is a multi-use park because of its many amenities including walking trails wading pool, splash pad, playground, baseball diamond, and hills for tobogganing use. The park is enjoyed on a year-round basis.

Environment and Protection

Forested areas including Sherwood Park are suffering from a general degradation from a level of use that is well beyond the threshold that can be sustained. There is an urgent need to try and sustain and enhance this delicate ecosystem. Plant materials found on the forest floor of Sherwood Park, can not survive intensive recreational use including foot traffic and digging by dogs. Areas of steep slopes are particularly susceptible to increased erosion caused by foot traffic and seepage areas (naturally wet areas with groundwater seepage) are more susceptible to compaction due to the soft surface conditions. Foot traffic is less common on slopes and seepage areas, although some areas of concern have been identified and need to be protected.

Park visitors, including people and dogs often stray from the main trails in areas of tableland forest, particularly in the more open oak forest conditions. As a result, the Department took the initiative in 1998 to protect an area of the oak tableland forest, that staff considered most susceptible to trampling. This area of Sherwood Park was enclosed in farm fencing to protect it from regular foot traffic. The results have been encouraging. Areas outside of the protected area continue to show signs of increased stress from intensive use. Farm fencing has also been used in the off-leash area of High Park with similar positive results. Farm fencing prohibits people from entering the sensitive environment, but because it is non-intrusive, does not visually obstruct the beauty of the forest.

As a result, it is recommended that farm fencing be installed in the remaining forested area adjacent to the off-leash portion of Sherwood Park, and that the entrance to the off-leash location be clearly indicated with the installation of a gateway. This will encourage park users to stay on the main walking trails of the park.

Public Safety

Safety continues to be viewed as a priority, and this was again supported by the participants at the community meeting of November 29, 2001.

In support of public safety, it is being recommended that an increase to by-law enforcement be provided to discourage off-leash use outside of the leash-free area. Particular attention is especially required during the peak-operating season of May 24 to the Labour Day weekend.

It is also being recommended that park sign improvements be made within Sherwood Park so that visitors clearly understand where the off-leash area is, along with directions to Sunnybrook Park (Eglinton Avenue East and Leslie Street). These communication efforts will encourage public awareness towards our goal of public safety.

Conclusions:

The area residents and park visitors have identified Sherwood Park as an essential contribution to the quality of life. It is our goal to continue to meet these needs, along with making every effort to ensure public safety, and for the protection of the forest and the environment.

Contact:

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Attachment No. 1:

Sherwood Park Recommendations

1. Sherwood Park – Off-Leash Area Support
Recommendation: continue the existing off-leash location.
 - Many of the participants were dog walkers, who use Sherwood Park.
 - Option to walk their dog contributes to the quality of life.
 - Support for a balance of use within the park.
 - No consensus reached for off-leash location. Many prefer the existing off-leash area.
2. Public Safety
Recommendation: increase by-law enforcement and education, and improve signage system so that the off-leash and on-leash areas are clearly understood.
 - Community members of all ages use the park for a wide range of activities including walking, running, jogging, cycling, dog-walking, tobogganing, playground use, and water features of the wading pool and splash pad.
 - Regular community presence in the park increases safety.
 - Some visitors and park users are very frightened by off-leash dogs and others believe that off-leash dogs present a safety risk.
 - Many participants both those who do and do not have problems with off-leash dogs in the park believe it is important that the off-leash by-law be enforced.
 - By-law education and enforcement increases public safety.
3. Environmental Value and Park Beautification
Recommendation: farm fencing of the forested area adjacent to the off-leash area.
 - This is a priority issue for many users, and particularly people who believe off-leash dogs are having a negative impact on the park. Participants indicated that the trees, natural areas, and wildlife in Sherwood Park have intrinsic value in themselves, and that this value needs to be protected.

4. Link Between Sherwood Park and Blythwood Ravine
Recommendation: Blythwood Ravine continue to be on-leash location.
- The majority of the feedback from the consultation focused on Sherwood Park.
 - Comments reflected questions of concern from community members regarding why Blythwood, as a sensitive ravine area that does not meet the City's off-leash dog area criteria would be added to the list of locations being considered for off-leash dogs.
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The Midtown Community Council also had before it the following communications:

- (i) (March 22, 2002) from Leslie Smith;
 - (ii) (March 28, 2002) from Bob Cutler;
 - (iii) (March 28, 2002) from John Hopkins;
 - (iv) (April 1, 2002) from Mike Andrade;
 - (v) (March 27, 2002) from Malcolm Martini, President, Sherwood Park Residents' Association;
 - (vi) (April 1, 2002) from Scott Douglas; and
 - (vii) (May 15, 2002) from Mary Kirk.
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Anne Valliere, Manager, Parks and Recreation, gave an overhead slide presentation and submitted the meeting record and consultation report of the community meeting for users of Sherwood Park and Blythwood Ravine held on November 24, 2001, prepared by Lura Consulting.

The following persons appeared before the Midtown Community Council in connection with the foregoing matter:

- Eric Parker, Chair, Sherwood Park Advisory Committee;
- John L. Hopkins;
- Robert Sutter, Sherwood Park Residents' Association;
- Jim Walker;
- Jeff Osborne, and submitted a photograph of Sherwood Park "Toboggan Hill";
- Fred Kasper;
- Mike Andrade; and
- Philip Creighton.

(City Council on April 16, 17 and 18, 2002, had before it, during consideration of the foregoing Clause, a communication (April 12, 2002) from Mr. Jim S. Allan forwarding comments with respect to the designated off-leash area for dogs in Sherwood Park and Blythwood Ravine.)