

**Policy Title: Leash-Free Zones**

**Policy Number: 05-01-13**

Section:	<b>Property and Facilities</b>	Subsection:	<b>Use of Public Property</b>
Effective Date:	<b>May 9, 2018</b>	Last Review Date:	<b>[Last Review]</b>
Approved by: <b>Council</b>		Owner Division/Contact: <b>Parks, Forestry &amp; Environment Division, Community Services Department</b>	

## Policy Statement

The City of Mississauga recognizes the requirement for responsible pet ownership within City Parks and the social benefits of dogs and their owners having access to the Parks system. The City oversees and operates the Leash-Free Zones.

## Purpose

This policy outlines:

- The procedure for the establishment of Leash-Free Zones (LFZ)
- The location and design criteria, and
- The operation and enforcement of LFZs in City Parks

## Scope

This policy applies to all new and existing Leash-Free Zones in the City of Mississauga.

## Definitions

For the purposes of this policy:

“City” means the Corporation of the City of Mississauga.

“Leash-Free Zone” (LFZ) means a designated area of a City Park which has been set aside for residents to socialize and exercise their dogs off-leash without being in contravention of municipal by-laws.

“Leash-Free Mississauga” (LFM) is a non-profit organization registered with the City’s Community Group Registry Program that works closely with the community and the City to provide safe, friendly Leash-Free Zones.

“Park” means the land, including any body of water, that is owned or leased by the City and that is established, dedicated, set apart or made available for use as public open space, with the exception of marinas, golf courses and cemeteries.

“Stewardship Group” means an established organization or group of local residents that work closely with the City to provide educational information and enhancements, as determined in this policy and by the City, concerning the physical development of Leash-Free Zones.

## **Procedure for Establishing New Leash Free Zones**

- 1) A request for a LFZ will be reviewed by staff in the Parks, Forestry & Environment Division, Community Services Department, against the location criteria set out in this policy. New LFZs will be considered against the policy criteria in conjunction with capital redevelopment of existing Parks or new Park development. If the request does not meet the criteria, Parks, Forestry & Environment staff shall advise the requester in writing, explaining which criteria were not met.
- 2) Notice of community engagement shall be provided to the applicable ward councillor and the local community as part of the consultation process when the existing Park redevelopment or new Park development is occurring.
- 3) Members of the public are encouraged to participate and provide comments on the Park project, including proposed LFZs. Staff will take public input into consideration in finalizing the design of the Park development/redevelopment.
- 4) If approved, a follow-up meeting will be held with LFM to present the design and timeline for implementation of the LFZ.
- 5) Once the LFZ is established, information will be posted on the Parks, Forestry & Environment website.

## **Removal**

The following may result in the City removing a LFZ:

- Declining usage
- Extensive damage to the Park
- Documented complaints to the City, or
- LFM or other Stewardship Group has defaulted on Management and Operation Agreement (MOA) obligations

Consultation with the Stewardship Group will take place prior to the closure of a LFZ.

## Location Criteria

When identifying appropriate locations, consideration must be given to balancing the needs and interests of the community, impact on the natural environment and sustainability of the LFZ. Requests will only be considered in City Parks. Opportunities for new LFZs will be considered as part of the redevelopment of existing Parks or development of new Parks.

The following criteria will be used in staff's review of site suitability:

- Neighbourhood characteristics (adjacent land uses, population density, housing types, proximity of other existing and/or potential LFZs)
- Compatibility with the Park's design and conditions, established uses, features and components
- Potential impacts on the Park's functionality, condition and natural environment
- Proportion of Park to be utilized by the proposed LFZ
- Availability of adequate parking, if applicable
- Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles, and
- Requirements of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) and the City's Accessibility Design Standards

## Exclusions

New LFZs will not be located in or immediately adjacent to the following:

- Children's play sites or spray pads
- Horticultural display areas or ornamental gardens
- Sports facilities, including fields and outdoor stadiums, skateboard bowls, tennis courts and other sports pads
- Artificial or natural ice rinks or toboggan hills
- Designated heritage, memorial, commemorative and ceremonial areas or cemeteries
- Burial grounds
- Special Management Areas, in accordance with the Parks By-law 186-05, as amended
- Woodlands
- Areas protected by Mississauga Official Plan section 6.3 (Value the Environment), unless approved by Parks, Forestry & Environment
- Areas protected by Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), Credit Valley Conservation (CVC) and Conservation Halton, unless approved by the appropriate conservation authority
- Areas containing species of concern, including local or regionally uncommon, rare, threatened or endangered species or areas that have undergone tree/shrub/wildflower planting or where plans exist for such planting to occur, and
- Natural shorelines with natural vegetation that would be disturbed by foot/paw traffic, unless approved by Parks, Forestry & Environment

## Leash-Free Zone Standards

The City will fund the capital costs of all new LFZs to the following City standards:

- Perimeter fencing (minimum 1.21 metres or four feet)
- Double service gates for maintenance and service purposes
- Double entrance gates in a paddock area for LFZ users to enter/exit
- Waste containers outside the LFZ
- Ground cover of grass and/or woodchips with accessible hard surface entrance areas, and
- Picnic tables

## City of Mississauga Responsibilities

The City is responsible for:

- Funding core operational expenses for all existing and new LFZ grass cutting and garbage collection
- Winter maintenance (snow from parking lots and double gate entrances to LFZs)
- Regulatory and advisory signage, and
- Inspection of fences and gates and any other equipment or amenities installed in the area to ensure that they are safe and in good working order

## Leash-Free Mississauga Responsibilities (LFM) or Stewardship Group

- Cost of Capital Improvements above the City standard:
  - Lighting
  - Water access (where feasible)
  - Seating and information boards
- Cost of electricity for lights in LFZ interiors
- LFZ clean-up, clearing pathways where pathways exist, spreading mulch/wood chips
- Liaising with Parks, Forestry & Environment staff regarding any LFM member concerns as LFZ stewards, and
- Other amenities as approved by the City

## Enforcement and Fines

Regulatory and advisory signage will be posted outlining the LFZs rules of conduct. The rules will also be posted on the City and LFM websites.

Dog owners must comply with the City's Animal Care and Control By-law 98-04, the City's Parks By-law 186-05 and the *Dog Owners Liability Act* (DOLA), all as amended.

## Monitoring and Dispute Resolution

Parks, Forestry & Environment staff will monitor all LFZs, track issues as they arise and liaise with LFM; Security Services, Corporate Services Department; Animal Services, Enforcement

Division, Transportation and Works Department; and other Park users in an effort to resolve issues as effectively as possible.

## Revision History

Reference	Description
GC-0277-2018 – 2018 05 09	
March 20, 2019	Housekeeping to update Division to Parks, Forestry & Environment