Guidelines for

Off Leash Dog Parks

In the City of Winnipeg

Prepared for: City of Winnipeg

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2012-13

Executive Summary & Recommendations

The City currently has a number of off leash areas which are functioning within multi-use park and open space areas. This designation was made following the conditions outlined in the By-Law, in an ad hoc basis in the absence of an overall plan or schema.

A number of these areas are temporary in nature, located in the hydro or street right of way, or on otherwise vacated park land. While an excellent use of land, if the site is not secure in the longer term, it is an impediment to proper development of an off leash facility.

Further, some of these sites have specific issues related to their use as off leash areas. These include adjacency to busy roads, incompatible adjacent uses, high density of uses in a confined space, for example.

Other sites are under development pressure and/or prone to development pressure due to their location on sites not under Parks jurisdiction. Currently two of the City's sites are under development pressure due to proposed transportation projects (Rapid Transit phase 2, and an extension of the William Clement Parkway). A third is located within The Forks Renewal Corp. land holding.

This document proposes the following:

A framework for the distribution of off leash areas within the City of Winnipeg
Guidelines for the evaluation of potential sites,
Guidelines for the establishment and designation of new off leash areas,
Guidelines for the development of new off leash areas,
Guidelines for the review of existing off leash areas.

This document recommends:

1. The proposed guidelines are circulated, reviewed, necessary amendments made, and that they be adopted by Council.
2. The City endeavor to increase the area available to off leash use within the schema proposed herein.
3. The City endeavor to have no net loss of off leash land by preparing replacement land as existing off leash areas cease to operate as such.
4. The City ensures any new off leash areas meet the terms of the approved guidelines.
5. The City endeavor to upgrade the existing off leash areas to be consistent with the guidelines as monies and resources become available.
6. That "Neighborhood off leash areas" are incorporated into new developments in much the same way as are playing fields and playgrounds.

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Introduction

The City of Winnipeg currently operates 11 off leash areas within the City of Winnipeg Parks system. This is a 'middle of the road' level of service when compared to other Western Canadian prairie cities. Edmonton, for instance, operates 49 off leash areas. Calgary operates 150 off leash areas. At the other end of the scale are Saskatoon with 5 year round areas and Regina with 6 areas, (5 of which are seasonal outdoor hockey rinks). While our level of development lies between these two extremes, we are much closer to the level of service offered in Regina and Saskatoon than in Calgary and Edmonton.

Increased numbers of users

The provision of off leash areas needs to be understood in the context of an ongoing increase in this activity. It is beyond the scope of this study to determine why this increase has occurred, nor is it within the scope to quantify the increase. That being said, it is clear even to a casual observer that usage has increased to the extent that some of the current facilities are under regular and possibly constant over-use. It is conceivable off leash use of specific public lands may be one of the larger park use activities in the City (based on consideration of person-trips to the parks or person-hour use of the parks).

The current "over-use" of some of these areas indicates we have reached a point that some of the sites are unsustainable given their current level of development. For example, at some locations, grass paths are wearing out and have become mud paths, parking areas are inadequate, and existing land drainage is problematic due to the dense and sustained use over all weather periods. Some users of particular parks have organized, and are advocating for improved level of development and maintenance practices. Furthermore, there is a perception created by users that the off leash areas need to be defended from other uses lest it be re-designated.

Suitability of existing sites

Most of the current off leash areas were established on land that was either unused or under-utilized. Sites were located in parks, unused street right of ways, or hydro transmission corridors. Several off leash areas were located on former landfills. At the time of establishment, users were generally satisfied to have an area to walk their pets off leash. However, many of these areas were available and designated primarily because they were unsuitable for other uses - and not because they were well suited to off leash usage.

Historically, some of these sites were designated on unused street or hydro right of way, and, as a consequence, two main issues affect them.

i. The off leash use may be temporary in nature – as long term plans for streets or hydro infrastructure may require the use of this land, and the off leash use may be terminated or reduced in size. Charleswood off leash area, for example, will likely be impacted by a planned extension of the William Clement Parkway. And the Brenda Leipsic Dog Park will be impacted by the extension of the bus rapid transit.

   Because the off leash areas develop a specific and engaged group of users, decommissioning an area will not be without significant user concern. Furthermore, there will be pressure to relocate any decommissioned off leash area elsewhere in the community.

ii. The temporary nature of the sites is also an impediment to planning and capital improvement of the off leash site. The temporary nature of the sites means desirable and necessary amenities such as fencing, paths, and signage are not sustainable developments, despite the fact 'temporary use' may continue for decades.

There is a third issue that affects most of the off leash areas in the city including locations in under-utilized or un-used portions of parks. The City's population is growing and off leash park usage increasing. The consequence of this trend is:

iii. The under-utilized park areas where off leash is permitted, as well as areas adjacent to them, are under pressure to accommodate increased users and uses. As the City's off leash areas are 'multi-use' areas, (not dedicated solely to off leash), greater consideration needs to be given to the specific mix of uses occurring in the off leash areas. And non-complimentary mixed uses such as jogging or cycling, and non-compatible uses such as tobogganing, playing fields, and playgrounds need to be addressed. The City has closed one off leash area within an active transportation corridor in Transcona due to multi-use conflicts. There is also ongoing pressure on off leash areas by sporting organizations. For instance, a flag football field has been set up within the off leash area without City authorization at Little Mountain Park.

Further compounding the third issue is the reality, that when designated, the boundaries of the off leash area were not clear (and in some cases still aren't), and park usage of adjacent lands was minimal. In many cases off leash use has expanded well beyond the designated 'limits'. 'Boundary creep' was compounded by the fact off leash areas were often established in the areas of the parks that lacked paths, shelter or proximity to parking, while the more attractive areas remained underused. This unchecked 'boundary creep' has led to both a sense of entitlement and assertiveness by off leash users.

Finally, whether it is a case of boundary creep into an undesignated area, or conflict between users in a designated site; or dogs off leash in playgrounds, athletic fields, toboggan hills, all are common occurrences and existing rules are not aggressively enforced. Without proper enforcement, complaints and concerns from residents not comfortable with off leash dogs, and potential conflicts between park users can and do occur.

The three issues outlined above demonstrate a need and desire on the part of dog walkers for an expanded off leash system. And the development requires that the specific needs of off leash users be taken into account and the enforcement of designated areas be addressed.

Types of Off Leash Areas

Off leash areas generally take one of two forms: a large open field or a pathway. A number of the current sites are a hybrid of this with a large open field adjacent to the site entry with walking paths leading off from this location into areas and providing walking opportunities.

Character of Off Leash Areas: Groomed Sites

Off leash areas can be described as groomed or natural. The groomed sites tend to be traditional lawn and tree park space. Grass is cut on a regular basis (standard mowing cycle), and waste receptacles are emptied on a similar cycle, or as required if budget allows. Currently, the waste removal standard may be inadequate for off leash areas during specific times of the year or days of the week. Paths in the groomed sites are maintained and other types of maintenance appropriate to the site are performed. This level of maintenance is similar to non-designated community parks such as Bunn's Creek and King's Park. An example of a groomed off leash area, that approaches this level of maintenance is the area at King's Park.

Most of our off leash areas receive less maintenance than the area at Kings Park. Typical is a lower level maintenance where the site receives a regular and ongoing maintenance but at a reduced rate. Overall these sites have an appearance similar to the groomed sites but the reduced level of maintenance is noticeable. These sites have the grass cut less frequently although waste receptacles are emptied as frequently if required by and allowed by budget, and other maintenance only as required. Charleswood Dog Park, or the designated off leash area at Little Mountain Park would be an example of this level of maintenance.

Naturalized Sites

Naturalized sites receive a modest level of maintenance beyond servicing waste receptacles. Naturalized open fields will receive "rough cut mowing" up to twice a season. Trails receive infrequent cuts, (as required), with the remainder of the site uncut or cut annually. These areas receive the minimum level of maintenance to keep them usable in the intended manner and as such users 'use at their own risk', (much like a natural riverbank or forest). An example of a naturalized off leash area is in Kilcona park which is primarily located on a former landfill, where users have the perception it has the character of a natural area.

Natural Areas in the City of Winnipeg

These ‘naturalized’ sites are not ‘natural’ sites like our public riverbanks and urban forests. A City managed ‘natural‘ site is a protected area preserved in a natural state for the foreseeable future. Typically the site has a character or endangered resource considered worth preserving. The resource may be a plant species, animal habitat or an entire ecosystem which would otherwise be at risk or endangered. These natural sites need protection and preservation contrary to accommodating human use. And given the density of use in designated off leash areas, it is clear the off leash use is incompatible with the need to preserve these sites. For this reason, all of our existing designated off leash areas that appear to be ‘natural’ are actually naturalized sites and need not be protected in the same way a truly natural site would. However more complex is the example of Little Mountain Park where an open field has been designated an off leash area adjacent to an actual ‘natural’ area the City designated as tall grass prairie preserve. This is a more difficult and complex situation as care must be taken to ensure the uses do not overlap in a way that threatens the natural resource being protected.

Typology of Off Leash Areas - Mixed Use

All of Winnipeg’s current off leash areas are mixed use areas. They are best thought of as a general use park where off leash use is permitted. For the most part, park use in off leash areas is dominated by the off leash users, and occasionally issues arise when the non-dog walking residents are told they are not allowed to use the off leash area or are uncomfortable or intimidated doing so.

This ‘mixed use’ designation creates issues with non-compatible mixed uses such as jogging/running and cycling. Because some dogs like to chase, off leash is not compatible with playing fields in Little Mountain or toboggans in Kilcona. Similarly, the rental of picnic spaces within off leash areas presents other issues and is best avoided except, in exceptional circumstances such as a Dog Club event. For the most part, these conflicts present public safety concerns.

The guidelines will consider these conflicts and propose a type of single use off leash facility.

Comparison with Other Cities

The City of Winnipeg currently operates 11 facilities for a population of ~700,000. Other western cities vary greatly in the extent of off leash areas. At one extreme is Calgary, with 150 facilities for a population of ~1.1 million and at the other extreme is Regina which operates 6 sites, five of which are in off-season hockey rinks. Calgary clearly has more sites, and lays claim to having the most off leash areas of any City in North America. And while we are offering more than some of our neighbouring cities, it is clear some of our sites are nearing their capacity to sustain their current density of use. These sites require some relief in the form of additional areas or capital improvements to ensure that they are sustainable as we move forward.

Our middle level of service with regard to off leash facilities has some unique characteristics; almost 50% of our total off leash area is in one site (Kilcona), which lies in the extreme north east corner of the city. If we assume a catchment area of a 20 minute drive; then 50% of our off leash area is servicing 25% of our citizens. Notwithstanding, Kilcona is still showing signs of wear, and usage may be at capacity for the current level of development.

	# of Sites	Area of Sites		Population	
Winnipeg	11	109	ha	685,000	48 ha in one site (Kilcona)
Calgary	150	1280	ha	1,098,000	
Edmonton	40	na		817,000	Not Fenced
Saskatoon	6	na		222,000	2 planned
Regina	6	6.45	ha	200,000	5 are seasonal (hockey rinks)

Figure 1: Comparison of Major Canadian Prairie Urban Centers

Based upon data published by the respective Cities.

City of Winnipeg Bylaws related to Off Leash Areas Risk

Designation of an off leash area is defined in the City's Parks Bylaw 85/2009

> *6(2) Without restricting the generality of subsection (1), the Chief Operating Officer may designate parks or areas of parks in which dogs are not required to be restrained by leashes. The Chief Operating Officer may only make such a designation if he or she determines that the parks or areas of parks so designated will minimize the risks that unleashed dogs will*
>
> *(a) be injured by or interfere with nearby vehicular, railroad or pedestrian traffic;*
>
> *(b) interfere with activities taking place in or on children's play areas, school grounds, athletic fields and public open spaces, including picnic areas and public gardens.*
>
> *City of Winnipeg Bylaw 85/2009 as amended by 92/2013*

The City of Winnipeg's Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw makes provision for having dogs off leash when in a designated off leash area (92/2013 4.1.C.iii) and further identifies the following responsibilities of the dog's owner when using an off leash area:

> *4(5) When the dog is in an off-leash area, the owner of a dog must*
>
> *(a) be present and have the dog within view at all times;*
>
> *(b) ensure that the dog is not in heat and that it does not act in a dangerous or aggressive manner towards humans or other dogs;*
>
> *(c) remove the dog from the off-leash area immediately if the dog is in heat or acts in a dangerous or aggressive manner towards humans or other dogs;*
>
> *(d) ensure that the dog comes when called;*
>
> *(e) have a leash available to restrain the dog if needed;*
>
> *(f) remedy any harm caused by the dog, including filling in holes dug by the dog; and*
>
> *(g) immediately remove and properly dispose of any excrement left by the dog.*
>
> *City of Winnipeg Bylaw 92/2013*
> *(Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw)*

The City's perspective on the off leash areas are that use of these facilities is a privilege and pet owners and other patrons attend at their own risk. Pet owners are responsible for any and all acts or behavior of themselves and their dog(s). The City of Winnipeg shall not be responsible for any liability arising from the actions of a pet owner or their pet and shall not be liable for any problems, damages, or injuries caused to or by a dog or the dog owner during their visit to a City of Winnipeg Off Leash Dog Area. A pet owner is solely responsible for their dog's actions if they have allowed their dog to cause injury to a person or dog in a manner that could have been prevented.

Off leash areas which are groomed need generally have the same standard of care and risk as any other park space which is groomed.

With regard to the Off Leash areas in a natural or naturalized state the City's position is that it is acknowledged by patrons, these Off Leash Dog Parks are not groomed and are in a naturalized state. Because these parks are left close to their naturalized state, there may be unforeseen hazards and conditions that could pose a risk to patrons

and/or their pets. These parks are made available to the public by the City of Winnipeg for their use and enjoyment but patrons attending these facilities do so at their and their pet's own risk. The City commits to maintaining these natural parks in a reasonable manner to keep them safe and free from unusual hazards but cannot be responsible for unforeseen and unknown hazards. If an unsafe condition or hazard is observed by a patron, the City of Winnipeg should be notified immediately through our non-emergency 311 line.

Proposed Overall Schema

The City is currently served by 11 off leash areas of different sizes and amenities. Each has unique characteristics and serves different users within the City. Larger sites and sites with more amenities tend to attract users driving from further distances. Similarly, the smallest sites are generally of local interest with a higher proportion of users arriving on foot.

In general, it is desirable the City continue to offer off leash areas in a diversity of sizes and with varied services so that it might best meet the needs of a diverse population with a broad range of needs. We propose the different sites be understood to fit within the following structure:

Regional Sites

Regional sites (see Figure 2), would be larger sites with more amenities. Based upon existing use patterns these should be at least 8 ha. These sites will attract users from the greatest distances, arriving by car. A guideline used in Calgary is that a Regional off leash area will have a catchment area within a 20 minute drive. This appears reasonable when applied to Winnipeg. It also bears some resemblance to existing usage as evidenced by anecdotal surveys of users and dog clubs. Applying the 20min. criteria to Winnipeg, it appears the City could be served with between 3 and 4 regional sites.

A typical Regional site would consist of one or more arrival points and include: on-site parking, an information center (eg bulletin board), an open grassed area, pathway extensions beyond the open area, site furnishings such as park benches, waste receptacles, signage, and demarcation of the limits of the off leash area. Ideally it would offer a small fenced enclosure for new dogs. Given their size the Regional facilities require site maps to orient new users.

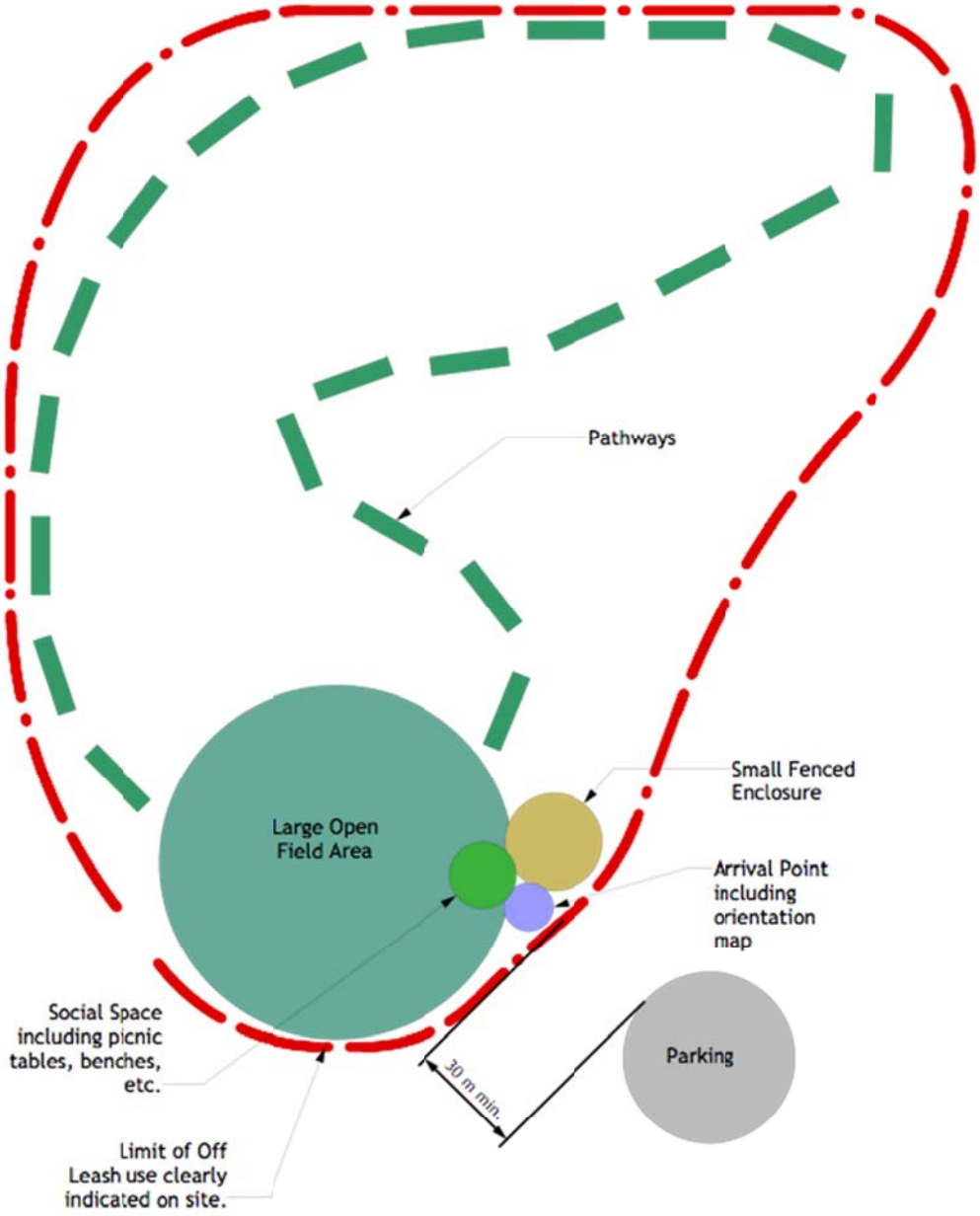

Figure 2: Schematic Design for a Typical Regional Off Leash Facility

Community Sites

Community sites are of intermediate size, and generally be located at least a 10 minute drive from a Regional facility. These sites would have many of the same amenities as the Regional one, but tend to attract a higher number of 'local' users, who may or may not arrive on foot. These sites will provide the off leash area where the regional sites are too distant and or impractical to establish. They would tend to be associated with a cluster of neighborhoods. Typically between 2.0 and 8.0 ha., these sites could be smaller if they are designated as 'off leash only', i.e. single use rather than mixed use space.

A typical Community site would consist of one or more arrival points and may include onsite parking, and an open grassed area (see Figure 4), or pathways (see Figure 3), but not necessarily both, site furnishings such as park benches, waste receptacles, signage, demarcation of the limits of the off leash area and a boundary map. It may also contain an information center (such as a bulletin board).

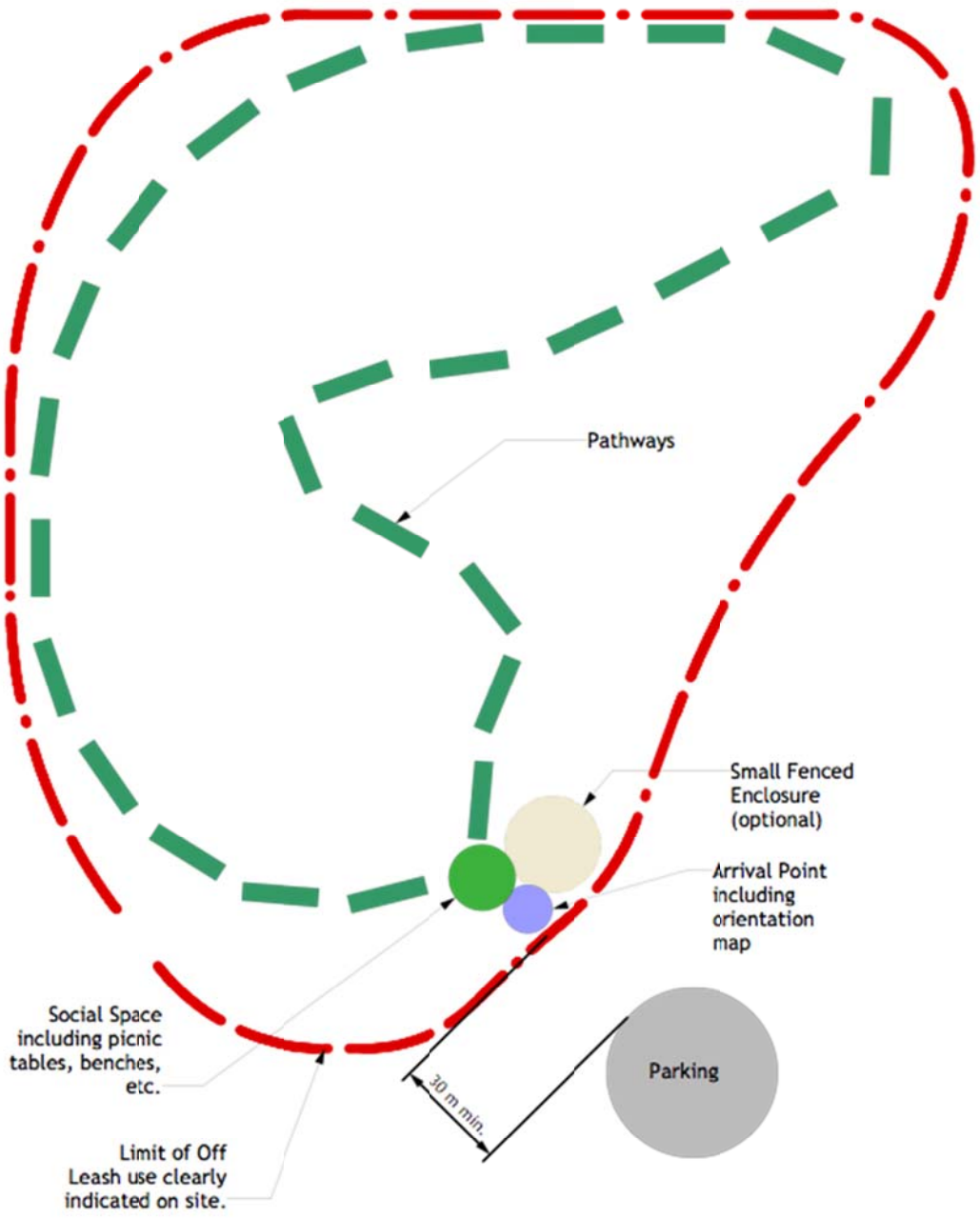

Figure 3:
Schematic Design for a Typical Community Off Leash Facility: Pathways Type

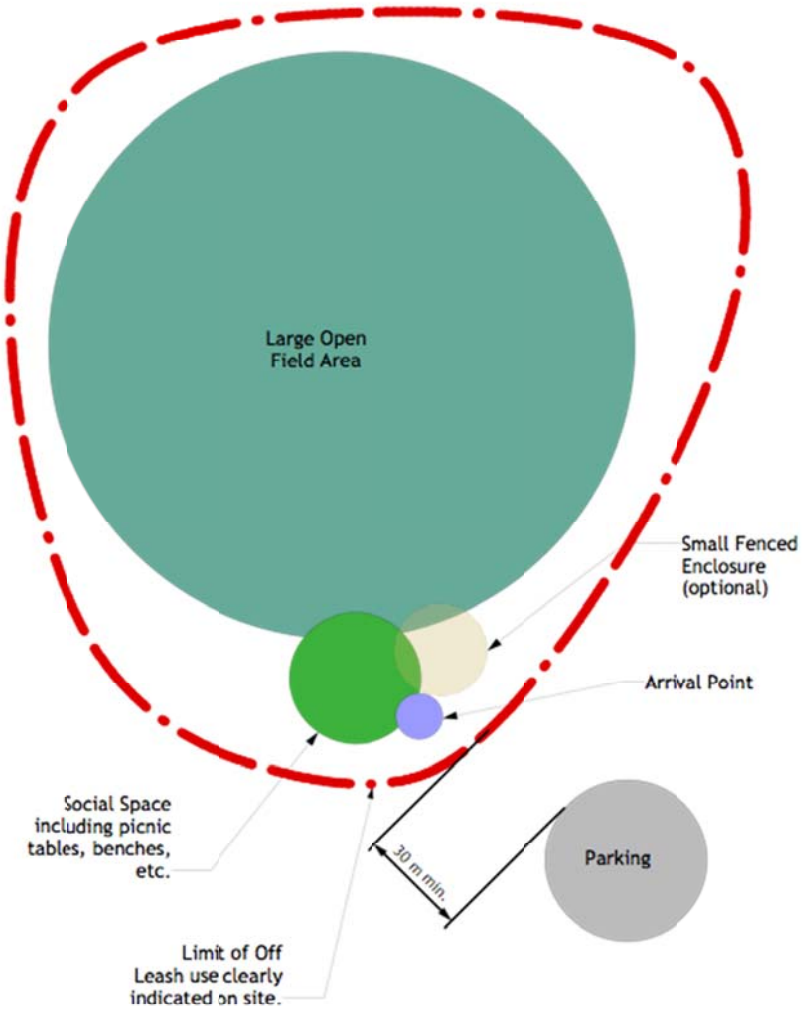

Figure 4:
Schematic Design for a Typical Community Off Leash Facility: Open Field Type

Neighborhood Sites

Neighborhood sites are located within a 5 minute drive or a 20 minute walk of their users, with good pedestrian access. They tend to be smaller sites of .5 and 1.0 ha, with fewer amenities and are of interest to local users who see their role in maintaining vibrant neighborhoods and building a sense of community. They tend to be gathering places, much like a playground, where the same neighbours meet habitually to socialize and walk their dogs just as parents socialize at the play structure.

A typical neighborhood site (see Figure 5), would consist of an arrival point, an open grassed area, site furnishings such as park benches, waste receptacles, signage, and demarcation of the limits of the off leash area. If parking can be provided adjacent to the site, this would increase the catchment area of the off leash facility. Given the 'neighborhood' role of the park, on-site parking can only be considered a fortuitous circumstance rather than a requirement.

If conceived as part of passive and active green space planning when a new neighborhood is developed, many of the difficulties with adjacencies that complicate the designation of an off leash park can be overcome. Off leash areas should become part of the open space planning like athletic fields, AT network and schools in all new communities.

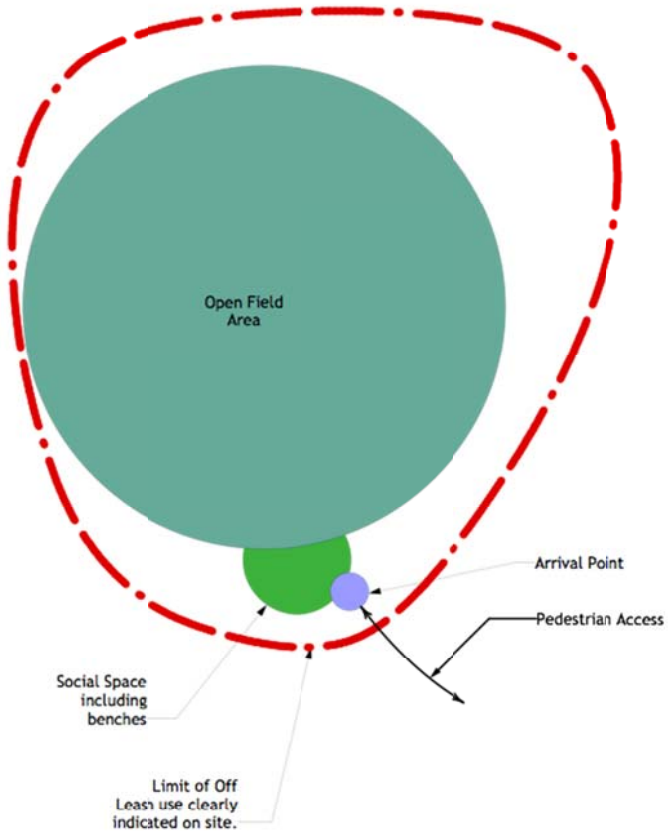

Figure 5: Schematic Design for a Typical Neighborhood Off Leash Facility

Single Use Sites

Single use sites would be very small sites between 0.25 and 0.75 ha with few amenities and frequented by local (pedestrian) users. Larger sites may become single use, in this case these sites would have a larger catchment area and would likely require parking.

These sites (see Figure 6), allow for off leash facilities when the density of use does not allow for the development of a mixed use facility, but the need is present and limited land is available. These sites would have little amenities with the exception of waste receptacles, signage and fencing with gates. Examples of these small types of single use amenities can be found in large cities likes Manhattan, where dogs are walked on leash to a small enclosed “yard” to socialize with other dogs.

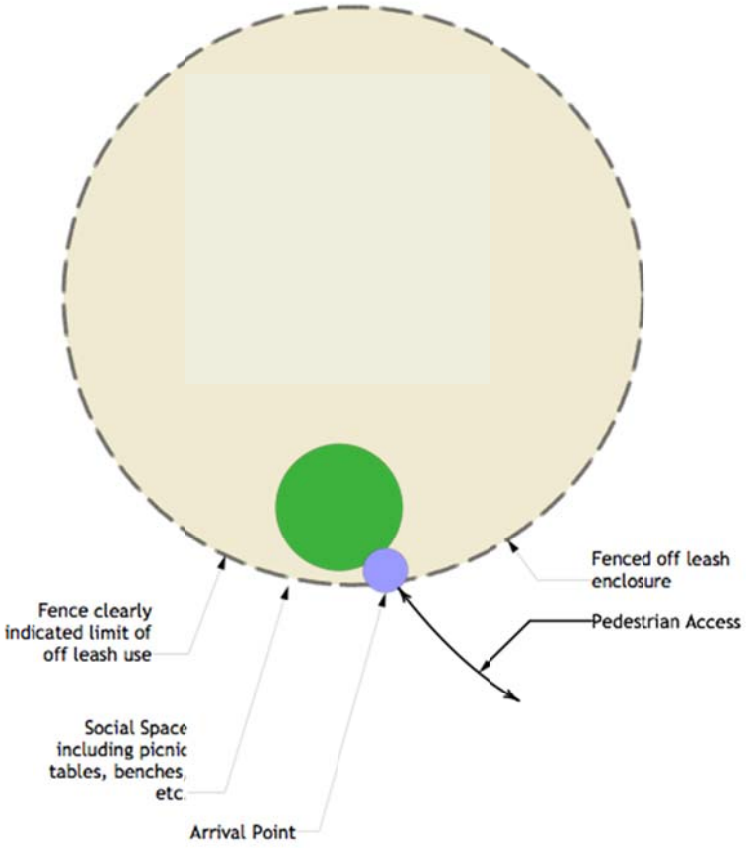

Figure 6: Schematic Design for a Typical Single Use Off Leash Area

Distribution of existing sites

Figure 7 lists the off leash use sites and the prescribed catchment area for each. Catchment areas are shown as follows: regional sites have a 7.5 km radius, community sites a 3.75 km radius, and neighbourhood sites a 1 km radius. This approximates the 20 minute drive, 10 minute drive, and 20 minute walk applicable to each schematic (See Figure 8). Some anomalies exist in this distribution, for example, during wet conditions, residents may relocate to other sites until conditions of the park in their catchment area improve. It should also be noted available parking will increase the catchment area of a neighbourhood park as in the case of Bourkevale which will have a somewhat larger catchment than is actually shown in the distribution map. Finally, no attempt has been made to rationalize the catchment area with the street system. For instance, the 7.5 km radius will only roughly correspond to a 20 minute drive.

It also needs to be noted that different sites will provide different user experiences and that some users will travel great distances for the preferred layout/character/or amenities that a particular site may have to offer. This sort of 'out of catchment' user may also happen because of a social connection as witnessed with anecdotal onsite interviews.

Despite these qualifications, in discussions on site with users of the facilities, the drawn catchment areas appear to be consistent with the bulk of the users of the facilities.

An analysis of this diagram leads one to identify gaps in existing service areas (see Figure 9):

The Windsor Park area is currently underserved lying outside of the coverage of either Kilcona or Maple grove and having no neighborhood off leash sites. Although this is somewhat mitigated by the easy access to Lagimodiere Blvd. - a high speed route to the regional Kilcona site, the area is still underserved.

South East Transcona is at the limit of the catchment area of Kilcona. The street system connecting this area with the park does not allow for high speed (or efficient) travel and, as a result, this area may be deserving consideration of a community facility.

The neighbourhoods north of Selkirk Ave. between the Red River and Salter St. are also underserved. And although Chief Pequis trail is a direct link to Kilcona, this dense area would benefit from neighbourhood facilities.

Charleswood, Tuxedo and River Heights are currently served by Brenda Leipsic and Charleswood. The greater concern for these areas is that both of these existing facilities are under development pressure, and may cease to exist within a near planning horizon. Steps should be taken to locate and secure alternative facilities.

Little Mountain Park users have expressed concern their off leash area is under development pressure from future construction phases related to Centreport Way. It would appear the Centerport web site show conceptual plans of a future phase where a roadway would pass between the adjacent sports complex and the off leash area. The dog club associated with this site fear the proposed right of way would significantly reduce the off leash area, and the busy roadway would be an incompatible use.

Finally the downtown currently served by Juba park has recently passed into the ownership of the Forks Renewal Corporation and this area is likely to be delisted as an off leash area. This will create a need for a local park to service the needs of downtown residents.

Existing Sites

Location	Usable Area
Regional Facilities (>8 ha)	
Kilcona Park	48.78 ha
Maple Grove Park	12.92 ha
Charleswood Dog Park	8.22 ha
Little Mountain Park	8.42 ha
Community Facility (1 ha to 8 ha)	
Brenda Leipsic Park	6.15 ha
Mazenod Park	6 ha
King's Park	4.41 ha
Sturgeon Road and Silver Ave.	4.03 ha
Westview Park	4 ha
Local (< 1 ha)	
Woodsworth Park	0.83 ha
Bourkevale Park	0.28 ha

Figure 7: List of Existing City of Winnipeg Off Leash Areas

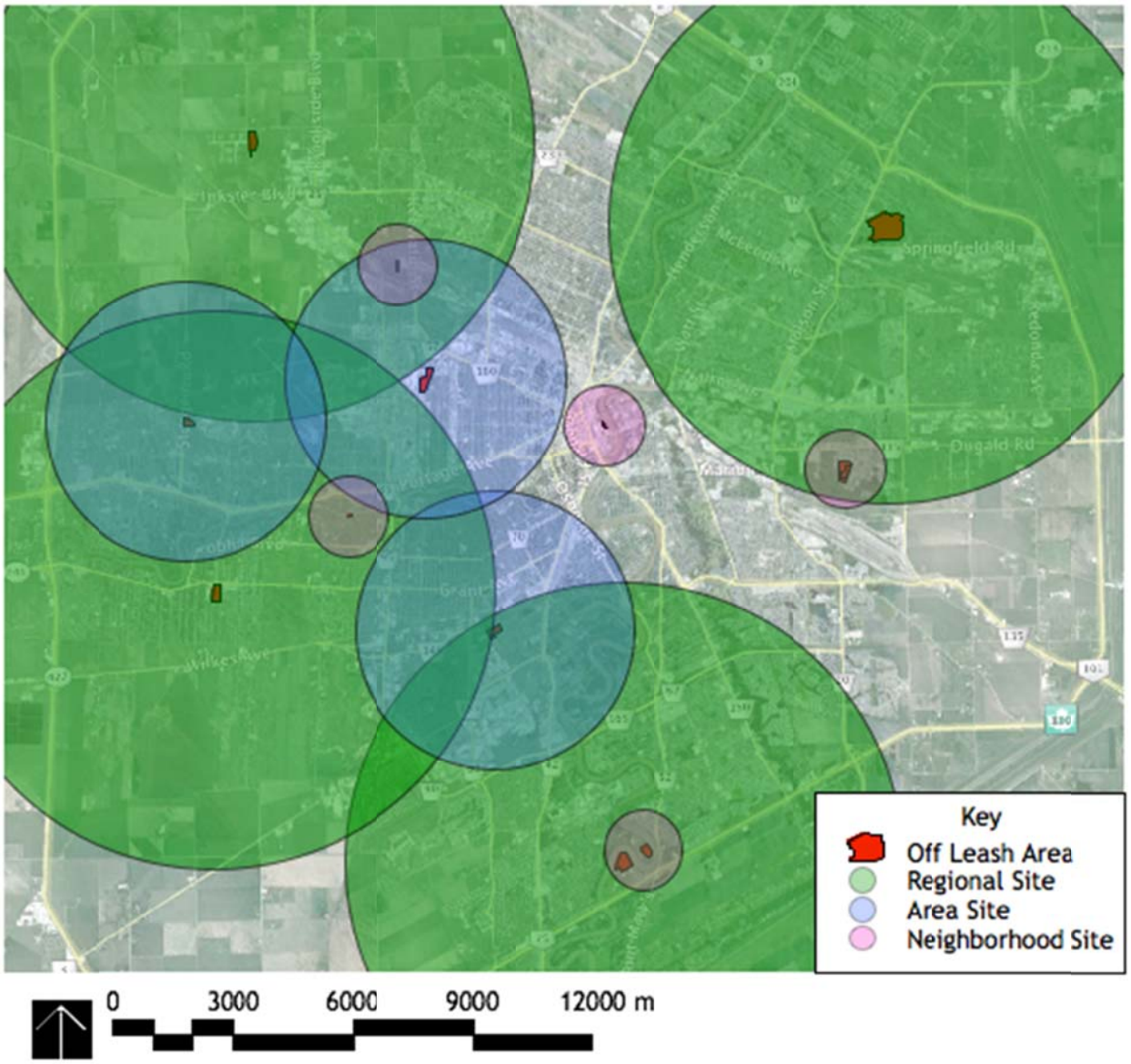

Figure 8: Catchment Areas of Existing Off Leash Areas

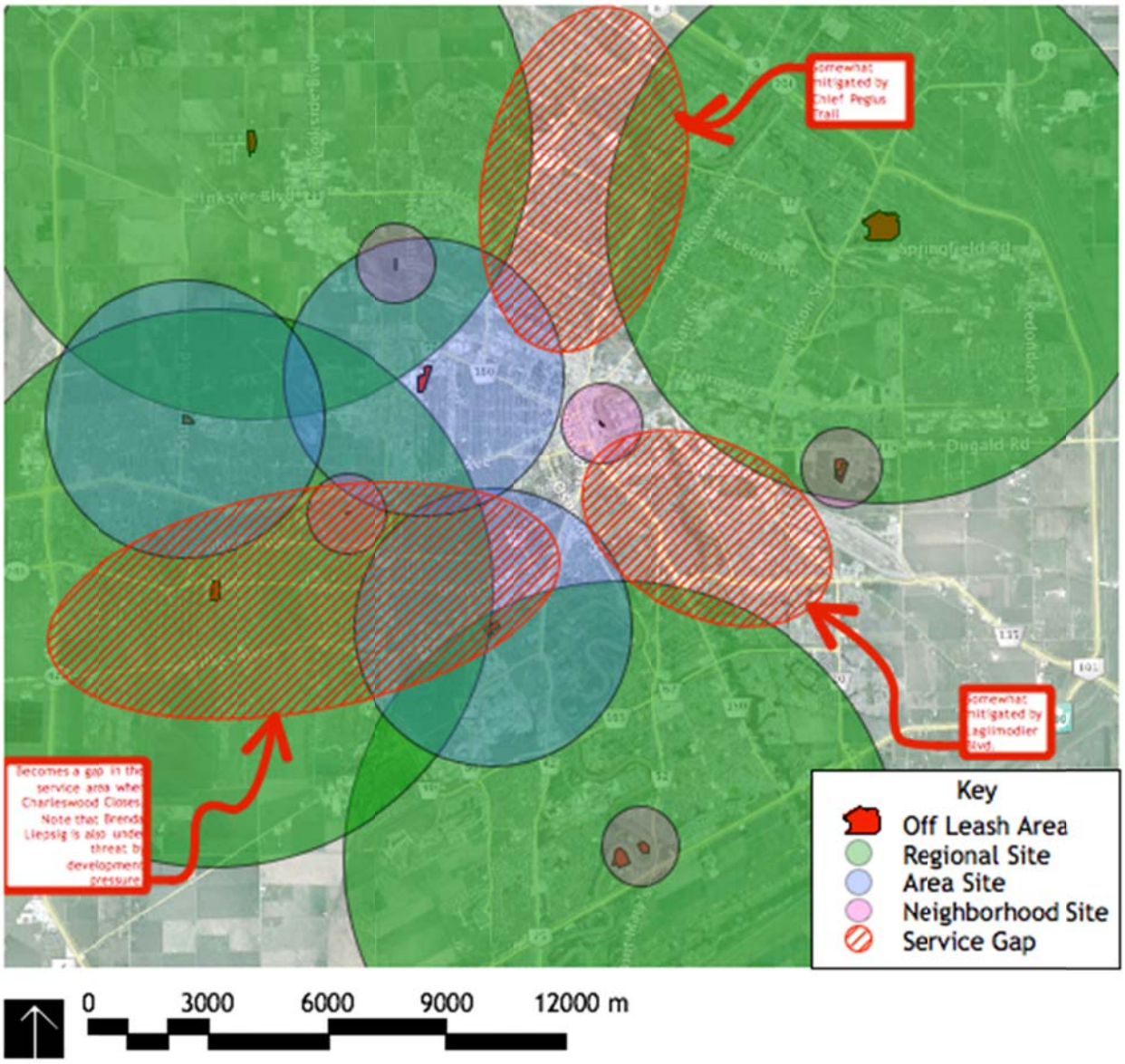

Figure 9: Gaps in Existing Service Areas

Level of Service Guidelines

Figure 10 below demonstrates the ideal maintenance and amenities at the proposed off leash areas. Both the level of maintenance and the amenities may vary with the role of the site (regional vs. neighbourhood) or the type of site (naturalized vs. groomed).

It is also important to note that level of service related to emptying waste receptacles will vary with the level of use at each facility as well as the number and distribution of the receptacles. Furthermore, stewardship volunteers would also skew the maintenance and amenities at a site. Weather will also play a role as the site conditions may preclude servicing the waste receptacles at times, and will also impact the usage of them.

		Type of Site		
	Neighborhood (single use)	**Neighborhood**	**Community**	**Regional**
Size of Facility	0.25 -0.75 ha	0.5 -1.0 ha	1.0-5.0 ha	> 5.0 ha
Catchment Area	5 min drive or 20 minute walk	5 min drive or 20 minute walk	10 minute drive	20 minute drive
Services				
Standard Waste Removal	Always	Always	Always	Always
Enhanced Waste Removal	As demand dictates	As demand dictates	As demand dictates	As demand dictates
Standard Park Maintenance	Always	Always	Always	Always
By-law Enforcement	Always	Always	Always	Always

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		Type of Site		
	Neighborhood (single use)	**Neighborhood**	**Community**	**Regional**
Amenities				
Site Maps	Not Required	Always	Always	Always
Wayfinding Signs	Not Required	Not Required	For sites with Trails only	Always
On leash/off leash Exit signage	Always	Always	Always	Always
User Guidelines/By-law Education	Always	Always	Always	Always
Washrooms	No	No	No	if feasible*
Drinking Water	No	No	No	if feasible*
Parking area lighting	Not Required	Not Required	No	if feasible*
Perimeter Fencing	Always (gated)	Only if adjacent to incompatible uses	Only if adjacent to incompatible uses	Only if adjacent to incompatible uses
Parking	No	If feasible	On or off site	On Site
Site Furnishings				
Waste Receptacles	Always near entry	Always near entry	Throughout	Throughout
Benches	If feasible	Always	Always	Always
Picnic Tables	Not Required	If demand	Always	Always
Bulletin Boards	Not Required	Not Required	By Users	By Users

Figure 10: Level of Service Chart

* Amenities denoted as ‘if feasible’. This indicates that the item is desirable within the type of facility but that, given typical costs associated with establishing and maintaining the amenity and given site issues with providing the item; that amenity should be implemented only if possible and budgets permit.

Guidelines for Establishment of New Off Leash Areas

The establishment of any new Off Leash Area must take into account the limited land available, the multi-use demands, and the existence of adjacent uses on this land base.

Establishment can be seen as taking place in four stages. The first stage of the process – Initiation, comes from a motion from Community Committees which triggers a report from the Public Service to Stranding Policy Committee. The second stage consists of an administrative review with a cursory level of detail. The intent of this review is to determine if the site has merit as an off leash area prior to committing to a full review, and is based on Section 49 of the Parks Bylaw 85/2009. The third stage involves the same considerations of the Bylaw but involves a much higher level of detail, and consideration of established criteria, and with appropriate levels of consultation with stakeholders. The final stage concerns the establishment of the off leash area.

The City's bylaws govern the process. As they stand now they are as follows:

> *6(2) Without restricting the generality of subsection (1), the Chief Operating Officer may designate parks or areas of parks in which dogs are not required to be restrained by leashes. The COO may only make such a designation if he or she determines that the parks or areas of parks are so designated will minimize the risks that unleashed dogs will*
>
> *(a) be injured by or interfere with nearby vehicular, railroad or pedestrian traffic;*
>
> *(b) interfere with activities taking place in or on children's play areas, school grounds, athletic fields and public open spaces, including picnic areas and public gardens.*
>
> *Parks Bylaw 85/2009*
> *Section 49 Consequential amendment to Parks By-Law. Section 6 of the current parks by-law 85/2009.*

The administrative review includes the following criteria for establishing an off leash area:

1. *The area shall be of sufficient size and/or diverse landscape to allow dogs and owners to pursue activities such as running, fetching, and walking: and*
2. *The area shall be far enough removed from major roads and railway tracks to reduce the likelihood of an unleashed dog from running into traffic: and*
3. *The area shall be far enough removed from children's play areas, school grounds and scheduled athletic fields to reduce its potential for conflict between children and unleashed dogs; and*
4. *The area shall be far enough removed from heavily used public open spaces such as public gardens and picnic areas, to avoid conflict with the users of these facilities; and*
5. *The area shall be reasonably accessible to users.*

For a more detailed list of the considerations at each stage of the process please refer to Appendix A.

Guidelines for Review of Existing Off Leash Areas

In general terms, the existing off leash areas should be reviewed every 5 years and the asset conditions on an annual basis. The schedule for review may be accelerated when issues with the existing off leash area become apparent.

If the off leash area has an identified user group (i.e. dog club), the user group concerns should be included in the review and consultation could include 311 statistics at a minimum, or it could take the form of a report by the club representative or an on-site, walk through of the site with appropriate City personnel.

If the off leash area is located adjacent to other user groups, the identified stakeholders (i.e. sports league), should also be consulted during the review.

Indicators that an early review is warranted include, but are not limited to the following:

- Number and nature of bylaw and 311 complaints relative to size and number of users
- Number and severity of risk management / safety issues
- Number and severity of damage to turf, shrubs, trees etc.
- Number and severity of damage to amenities
- Negative impact on wildlife or natural areas
- Significant and evident change in user patterns
- Significant change in number and type of pathway users
- Amount of dog feces not picked up
- Negative impacts on nearby water quality
- Incompatibility of uses in multi-use areas has become evident
- Changes in usage of adjacent land

Further, the review shall take into consideration the criteria for canceling an off leash area as per current guidelines:

1. *Where there is a consistent violation of the requirement to pick up feces;*
2. *Where use of the area by unleashed dogs interferes with public use of the site;*
3. *Where conflicts between dogs and/or dog owners becomes problematic;*
4. *Where the future development of the site changes the nature of the area making it unsuitable for further use as an off leash area.*

Review Considerations

Parking

- Is the current parking adequate?
- Is the ‘off site’ parking causing issues for adjacent uses/land owners?
- If the parking is inadequate can it be extended?

Waste Receptacles

- Are there sufficient waste receptacles to allow a reasonable “time between servicing”?
- Are the waste receptacles located so as to be visible?
- Are the waste receptacles located in convenient locations for the users and for servicing?
- What is the condition of the waste receptacles?
- Are the Waste Receptacles serviceable (condition/type)?

Signage

- Site map
  - Is the site map in good condition?
  - Does it accurately reflect the site?
  - Is it legible?
- Are the entry signs in place, Are they in good condition?
- Are the hours of operation clearly marked?
- Are the off leash area rules posted at the site entries?
- Is it clear from signage when a user enters the off leash area, When they leave?
- If there are ‘no dog’ areas are they clearly marked?
- Is it clear from signage when one enters an ‘on leash’ area?
- If the site has a bulletin board is it in good condition, Is it being maintained?

Feces Pick up

- Is the area generally clear of dog feces or
- In as good condition as normally expected on parks and public sidewalks?
- Is there a culture in the off leash area that enforces picking-up?
- If not is this a problem?
- Has defecation and urination threatened the health of the park vegetation?

Condition of Pathways

- Are the pathways in serviceable condition?
  - If not is this because of overuse
  - Maintenance issues
  - Drainage issues
  - Construction Issues
- Is it possible and/or reasonable to address path condition issues?

Site Furniture

- Is the nature and quality of the existing site furnishings (benches and picnic tables) adequate to the current use rates?
- Are the site furnishings being vandalized?
- Are the site furnishings in serviceable condition?

Fencing

- Are there fences located between incompatible uses?
- If not are there other physical barriers?
- Are the fences in serviceable condition?
- Are gates/openings appropriately located?
  - Does the concentration of traffic at a gate/opening create a maintenance issue?

Condition of Grounds

- Natural and naturalized areas
  - Is the level of use causing significant harm to the native habitat or riverbank?
  - Can the level of harm to the natural area be managed?
  - Is feces in the natural area a problem?
- Groomed areas
  - Is the condition of maintained grass areas acceptable?
    - If not is it possible to address the issue?
  - Does the off leash use cause issues with existing plantings?
  - Are additional plantings required?
    - for shade
    - for buffering
      - from adjacent uses
      - from wind

Use Conflicts

Shared Use

- Have there been significant number of complaints from other users of the site?
- Have there been significant number of complaints from off leash users of the site?
- Is there a way of addressing these concerns?

Adjacent Uses

- Have there been significant number of complaints from users adjacent to the site?
- Have there been significant number of complaints from off leash users of the site about adjacent users/uses?
- Is there a way of addressing these concerns?

Development Guidelines-Amenities

Amenities

The amenities will vary from one off leash area to another. A number of amenities need to be present in all off leash areas, others present in some, and others optional. Some amenities may be desirable, but are impractical for various reasons. The latter will be noted as 'if feasible' (refer to Figure 10, "Level of Service chart").

Critical Amenities

All off leash areas shall have the following amenities:

Signage

- Signage to indicate the designated off leash area, shall be present at all major entries.

- Such signage shall include a map drawing of the off leash area complete with a 'you are here' indication. Orientation of such map shall be consistent with the placement on site.

- On larger sites where trails are present, maps shall indicate the lengths of the trails and, if slopes exceed 5% on the trails; the maximum slope conditions.

- Signage to indicate the 'guidelines for use' shall be present at all major entries. Such signage shall indicate at minimum:

- Dog Owners shall

    (1) be responsible for all actions of their dog.
    (2) be present and within view of their dog.
    (3) remove their dog from the area at the first sign of aggression.
    (4) ensure that their dog is under voice control while off leash and come when called.
    (5) have a leash on hand at all times.
    (6) fill up any holes dug by their dogs
    (7) pick up all feces and place in a waste receptacle.
    (8) ensure their dog is licensed

- Dangerous or aggressive dogs are not allowed in the off leash area.

- Female dogs in heat are not allowed in the off leash area.

- Off leash area is open between the hours of dawn til dusk, unless otherwise stated.

- Signage to indicate ‘now entering’ and ‘now leaving’ off leash area shall be present at most common entries.

- Where boundaries are not clear, additional signage shall be provided to identify limits as one navigates the site, or to clarify boundary to adjacent users.

- Signage entering an area shall indicate that ‘Off Leash Dogs’ may be present and that running or bicycling is not recommended.

- Signage leaving an off leash area shall indicate that ‘all dogs should be leashed beyond this point’.

Site Furnishings

- Waste receptacles shall be present in all off leash areas near all entries/exits. In larger off leash areas, ideally waste receptacles shall be located throughout the area and shall be visible from each open field location and where feasible, on pathways. Consideration shall also be given for servicing these waste receptacles.

    - Waste receptacles may be standard Side Opening Metal Slat (SCD-119) or equivalent, or

    - Waste Receptacles may be ‘in ground’ larger containers as determined by the Parks staff.

- Benches and/or picnic tables shall be provided at all off leash sites. These shall in general be located at major site entries and/or at the terminus of paths. Where paths are longer, or where large areas of open space are present additional seating may be provided. Generally, seating should be a ten minute walk apart but may be closer if usage warrants. Seating may be sited to take advantage of views or shade or shelter. In broad terms the number of benches and/or picnic tables shall be similar to the number of standard waste receptacle locations, however, seating shall be at least 15 m from waste receptacles. All site furnishings shall be selected on the basis of function and resistance to vandalism. Site Furnishings shall be accessible.

Conditional Amenities

The following amenities are to be provided in some, but not all facilities. The decision to provide them shall be based on the anticipated number of users (eg Regional/Community/Neighbourhood site) or adjacent conditions which may affect the need for the amenity.

Fencing and buffering

- Incompatible uses are understood to include (but are not limited to) the following:
  - Athletic/Playing fields
  - Playgrounds
  - Toboggan runs
  - Active Transportation Corridors/ Running or biking paths
  - Park rental sites

- Where the off leash areas are adjacent to an incompatible use separation must be provided using either:
  - Perimeter fencing (minimum 1.2 m hgt. chain link) and a buffer of 30 m shall be provided, or
  - A buffer of at least 200 m shall be provided.
  - Openings in perimeter fencing facing incompatible uses shall be gated.
  - Openings in perimeter fencing facing compatible uses may be created by the use of a baffle gate.

- Baffle gates shall be aligned such that an animal inside the fenced area, running along and following the fence, is directed back into the facility rather than out of the off leash area.

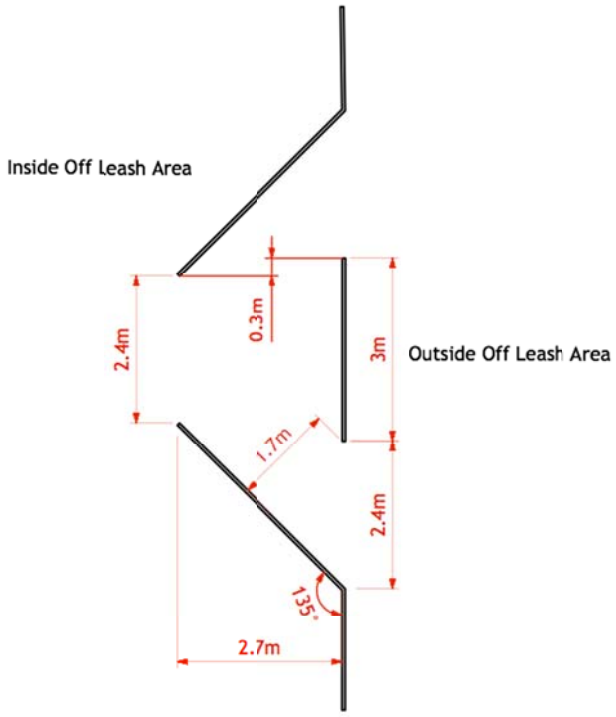

Figure 11: Baffle Gate Diagram

Parking

- Parking shall be provided at all Regional and Community off leash facilities
    - Regional facilities shall have onsite parking for a maximum of 80 cars.
    - Community facilities shall have a maximum available parking of 40 cars.
        - If on-site parking at is not feasible, the site must offer comparable off-site parking spaces.
- Accessible stalls shall be provided in accordance with City of Winnipeg Zoning Bylaws. (Currently 2 for 40 cars and 4 for 80 cars) Accessible stalls shall conform to City of Winnipeg accessibility standards.
- In all cases, parking shall be separated from the off leash area by a buffer of a minimum of 30 m. It shall be clear from signage, developed feature, or existing park feature where the off leash area begins. The connection between the parking and the off leash area shall be an accessible route of travel.

Wayfinding Signage

- Wayfinding signage shall be provided at Regional and Community sites where the areas and or paths are not legible from the entries.
- Wayfinding signage will show the direction to significant locations on site as appropriate.

Trails and Pathways

- The developed trails shall be of a construction sufficient to sustain the anticipated level of traffic (eg. grass for lightly used trails, crusher fines for heavier use, asphalt for high use.)

‘If Feasible’ Amenities

- These amenities are not practical to install and maintain on all sites. These desirable amenities are to be provided only where it is feasible from both a capital and operating point of view.
- Onsite parking area lighting shall be provided only when feasible.
- Drinking water shall be provided only where feasible.
- Regional and Community site washrooms shall be provided only where feasible.

Sponsored Amenities

- Some amenities are appropriate to be provided or maintained on a sponsored basis but must be provided with the permission of the Public Works Department and in accordance with City of Winnipeg programs and policies concerning sponsorship.

- Benches and/or picnic tables or other site furnishings can be sponsored by third parties and may have dedication plaques, (as per Park Bench Dedication program), but must be of a type and construction acceptable to the Public Works Department.

- Doggie ‘bag’ dispensers and bags can be sponsored but must be approved by the Public Works Department. They may contain commercial messages but this message must also be approved.

- Bulletin boards can be sponsored but must be maintained by the user group. The request to install a bulletin board must be accompanied by a commitment on the part of a user group to maintain the board to a minimum standard including daily monitoring of content. Bulletin boards shall be of durable and weatherproof construction and not more than 20% of the board may be used for sponsor acknowledgement. Placement and construction details of the board are to be reviewed and approved by the Public Works Department.

APPENDIX A

Stage 1: Initiation

The creation of an off leash park may be requested by an individual citizen, a group of citizens, an organization external to the City or internally to the City.

The request to initiate must be supported with the following information:

I. Legal description of property (an address of legal lot description)
II. Supporting rational (why is this project being proposed)
III. Demonstrated support from stakeholders including but not limited to:

- Current park users
- Community organizations local to the area
- Social recreational organizations
- Adjacent property owners

Stage 2: Administrative Review / Screening

Upon receipt of the request to initiate the Director of Public Works shall conduct a high level review to determine if the request can receive support in principle. This high level review shall consider the following aspects of the site and its context:

Site Context

1. Is the site in an area underserved by off leash areas with reference to the 'Overall Schema' and 'Level of Service Guidelines'?

   If the site is in an area already adequately served by off leash areas are there other factors that make the designation reasonable?

   - Does it provide an alternative experience?
   - Does it offer the possibility of 'linkage' to existing facilities?
   - Is the existing facility under development or change of use pressure?
   - Is the existing facility under stress from overuse?

2. Would the 'Off Leash' designation fit broader planning principles for the area?

3. Is the site under short term development pressure? Long term?

4. Is the site reasonably accessible by users? By service vehicles?

5. Are abutting and adjacent property uses compatible with the off leash park?
   - If not, can the site be secured by fencing or other means to mitigate the conflict?

6. Are abutting property owners/users likely to support the 'Off Leash' designation?

7. Is the site designation to be temporary or permanent?

    - If temporary, are there other opportunities to service the area when the site has to be closed?

    - If temporary, is the cost of designating the site an off leash area reasonable given the expected duration of use?

Site Availability and Suitability

1. Is the site within Parks control?
    - If not, are there options to acquire or lease the land that are feasible or
    - Is there an option to operate the facility jointly with the current owners?
        - Are there issues with this agreement that may limit the facilities provided?

2. Is the existing site topography, vegetation, wildlife etc, suitable for the establishment of an off leash area?
    - Is the area ecologically sensitive?
    - Does the area have habitat that is or needs to be protected?
    - Does the site's topography present unsurmountable challenges in terms of:
        - site drainage
        - accessibility

3. Are the site's current users likely to support the designation of the site as an 'off leash area'?
    - If the site is currently multi-use would the designation preclude or complicate existing uses of the site?
    - If the site is currently multi-use would the designated off leash area be a reasonable proportion of the available site?
    - Would the off leash use be complimentary to the existing use?
    - If the current use is not complimentary to off leash use are there options to relocate the existing use to better or equivalent facilities?
    - If the current use is not complimentary, which is the better use in terms of amenity to the neighborhood or region?
    - Is the site currently being used as an off leash facility in an 'ad hoc' or undesignated manner? If so, has this lead to an excessive number of complaints or undesirable incidents?
        - Would these issues be reduced if the area was designated for off leash?

4. Is the usable area of the site of sufficient size to meet the 'level of service' guideline for its intended use?

5. Is the usable area of the site of sufficient size to sustain the level of use anticipated after the site is designated?

6. Can the site be used safely for off leash use (eg not adjacent to roadway or if adjacent, is fenced)?
   - If not, can this be effectively mitigated by a fence or through other means?

Site Amenities (existing and proposed)

1. With reference to the 'level of service' guideline, does the proposed facility currently offer the required amenities? The optional amenities?

2. If not, can these amenities be provided for at the site with a reasonable level of funding? Is the funding available?

3. Can service vehicles access the site to maintain the amenities? Provide emergency service?
   - Is the cost to provide this access significant or prohibitive?

Site Opportunities and Constraints

1. Can the boundaries of the off leash area be clearly delineated?

2. Are the boundaries reflected in current site features?

3. If the site has parking, can the parking lot be clearly separated from the off leash area?

4. Are other safety issues manageable and risks acceptable either now or with feasible strategies to mitigate safety concerns or potential issues?

If, after a high level consideration of the above issues, it is determined by the Director of Public Works that it is reasonable and within the interests of the City to proceed, the Director's Office shall engage in a preliminary consultation within the City to determine if the proposed designation may proceed. This consultation shall include at minimum: Planning, Zoning, Universal Design, Real Estate, Animal Services, Parks Operations, Ward Councillor, and Risk Management. It may also include other groups representing the interests of stakeholders as appropriate to the site. This review shall be considered in preparation for a broader consultation both internal and external to the City.

If, following this review, the decision is to proceed with the designation, then the Parks Superintendents Office shall proceed to develop site plans, cost estimates, and a more thorough consultation with stakeholders.

Stage 3: Stakeholder Review and Site Plans

Site Plans and Cost Estimates

Prior to Stakeholder review the following plans shall be created:

A site plan showing the following:

1. Limits of the off leash area
2. Adjacent properties and land uses
3. Proposed enhancements to the site for the proposed use
4. Location and nature of existing and proposed amenities as required by the 'Level of Service Guidelines'
5. Location and nature of amenities deemed optional by the 'Level of Service Guidelines'
6. Locations and nature of proposed signage

A proposed project budget

1. A Class 'C' project estimate for costs related to:
    - Capital improvements to the site required to meet the 'Level of Service Guidelines'
    - Capital improvements to the site beyond that required to meet the 'Level of Service Guidelines'
    - An assessment of the costs to maintain the site (operating) and its assets

Internal City Review

The City will conduct an internal review of the project including the site plans and cost estimates which consider both the Level of Service Guidelines and a detailed review of the initial Administrative Review. This review will consider the initial (triage) review, and shall include all the same parties as well as any others needed to finalize the plan requirements. If, at the end of this internal city review it is determined to proceed with the project, the City will endeavor to consult with external stakeholders.

Consultation with Stakeholders External to the City

The City will engage through appropriate means to determine if the project has broad community support. This shall include at a minimum:

- A survey of adjacent and abutting property owners.
- Consultation with any community or homeowners associations within the immediate area.
- Consultation with any park or pathway user groups within the proposed off leash area's catchment area.
- Discussion with community or homeowners associations within proposed catchment area for the regional or community off leash area sites.
- Consultation with local dog walker groups and citywide dog walker groups as appropriate to the facility being proposed.

Stage 4: Implementation and Documentation

If following all consultations it is determined that the site shall be designated an off leash area then the Director of Public works or his/her designate (typically the Park Superintendent) shall proceed with the designation to be effective once any necessary capital improvements have been made.

APPENDIX B

Review of Existing Off Leash Facilities

The following information is provided as background only. Each site was visited on several occasions, informal discussions undertaken with users and in three cases meetings were held with dog park user groups. This is not intended as an ongoing or periodic review as described above. Instead the intent was to identify issues and opportunities in the existing park so that they might inform the guidelines being developed. Similarly it is not intended to make recommendations for remedial work on these sites or the status of their designation as an off leash area.

The City of Winnipeg has twelve areas designated for off leash use under it's 'Fields for Fido' Program. These areas have a variety of amenities and vary in size from 0.28 hectares to more than 48 hectares. Some of these facilities have users from the broader region, while others are primarily of local importance.

What follows is a brief review of each of these sites, an evaluation of the facilities they offer, and some discussion as to their strengths and weaknesses.



Regional Off Leash Facilities

Charleswood Dog Park

In many ways the Charleswood off leash area is ideal for the users. It is located at the edge of a large single family residential area and this proximity allows many of its users to walk to the site. Most users who arrive by car, park in the rear lot of the Charleswood Curling Club or at the adjacent mall. Currently this is not an issue, but given this is private property, it may become an issue in the future. Parking is also available at the nearby Eric Coy Arena.



The off leash area is a large grassed area surrounded by trees on three sides. Sides that abut public streets are fenced with 1.8 m ht. chain link fencing. The site has 5 waste receptacles and that appears to be sufficient to its needs. Users have added a 'bag dispenser' at one of the entries. Given the number of users at the site on successive visits, and the condition of the grass (which evidences use but seems to be maintainable) the site appears to be well used but within carrying capacity.

The biggest issue the site faces is the threat from the planned expansion of the William Clement Parkway. The area was initially established on land acquired for the extension of the parkway and this project is in the planning stages. The parkway will bisect the site at best reducing the usable portion of the park to a fraction of its current size and, at worst, precluding off leash as a viable use. Current plans call for this to take place in as little as 4 years.





Figure 13: Charleswood Dog Park (8.22 ha)

Advantages

- Adjacent parking areas
- Fenced where it abuts roadways
- Adjacent to residential areas (many users walk to the site)
- Off leash area limits clearly demarked by physical features of the site (although it is not well signed - see below)

Site Issues

- Development threat
- Lack of signage indicating limits of off leash area, location of facilities etc.
- Poor condition of existing signage
- Lacks site furnishings other than waste receptacles and therefore, does not provide sitting areas for users.









Kilcona Park



Kilcona Park is the City's largest off leash area. The site is adjacent to an asphalt surface parking lot (off street) which is lit at night so parking is adequate. Further, a few hundred feet to the west of the off leash area is a City operated seasonal washroom facility.



The site is a former landfill rehabilitated to a regional park. The park has both active and passive recreation opportunities including golf, tennis, soccer, softball, disk golf, a traditional 'park' with asphalt paths as well as gravel and dirt trails, and an extensive pond area. The off leash area encompasses one of two former landfill sites in the park. Upon arrival the users enter an open field with cut grass. Site furnishings are in place to provide opportunities for social interaction and also a logical place for signage. A site map is present as are usage guideline signage. From the entry field the users may take a number of walks either over or around the 'hill' (landfill). The site has a significant amount of site furnishings (benches, picnic tables, waste receptacles).

This site is heavily used and pathways are under pressure because the level of use exceeds their capacity. A few of the pathways are gravel (maintenance roads), but most are grassed trails. In addition the limited usage received by some of the adjacent portions of the park has resulted in some 'spill over' into these areas.



Figure 14: Kilcona Off Leash Area (48.78 ha)

Advantages



- Large, lit on-site parking adjacent to the off leash area
- Sufficient site furnishings
- The off leash areas are generally remote from other uses (see further comment below)
- Adjacent seasonal washrooms located near the parking



- Large entry space
- Extensive trail network with a variety of surfaces

Site Issues

- There is no clear demarcation of the limits of the off leash area other than signs which are small, widely spaced and difficult to see from a distance. This presents a safety issue where the off leash area is adjacent to incompatible uses and also leaves it unclear where the dogs are allowed to be off leash and where they must be leashed.
- Usage conflicts with the toboggan area and the softball diamond (seasonal) to the south west.
- Usage rates, particularly in inclement weather, exceed the capacity of the existing paths to sustain the use.
- Legibility issues - The limits of the off leash area are not always clear and it is easy to move onto or off of the designated area without realizing it. Similarly, and because of the size of the facility more orientation signage is necessary
- Accessibility issues due to terrain and level of development
- With a significant number of dirt paths the site is difficult to use during inclement weather

Little Mountain Park

Little Mountain Park is a City of Winnipeg facility located in the RM of Rosser. The off leash area is a large field located along the west edge of the park. A parking lot is located south of the off leash area; a short walk away. Many users have complained about the remoteness of this parking and also expressed some 'safety' concerns with using it at night. This lot is not lit and is not easily visible from the road because it is obscured by trees. With few after dark users the safety concern is understandable. A second parking lot is located mid way along the northern boundary of the park. This is close to a service building but is a somewhat longer walk to the off leash area.

The grassed area designated for off leash use is demarked by trees along the east edge and also because the grass is cut in the off leash area and not in the adjacent natural tall grass area located immediately to the east of the off leash area. The off leash area abuts a gravel road and is separated by a bollard fence. This fence type is somewhat problematic as it does not effectively separate dogs from the sometime fast traffic on the street.



The off leash area receives moderate use relative to its carrying capacity but this may be due to the fact much more of the park than is designated is used as an off leash area.

Further, the off leash area has been used as a flag football field for the last two years. This use includes the line marking and scheduled games. This is clearly incompatible with off leash use.





Complicating the use of the off leash area is the fact that immediately adjacent to the off leash are park rental sites. This is an incompatible adjacent use which requires a significant buffer.

Recently users have expressed some concern that the park may be threatened with a future transportation corridor.



Figure 15: Little Mountain Off Leash Area (8.42 ha)

Advantages

- Parking adjacent at both ends of off leash (north lot requires crossing an on leash (rental) area.
- Large open field
- Adjacent fields and treed natural area on two sides
- Large size of off leash area



Site Issues

- Inadequate separation from road on west side (bollard fence won't stop dogs)
- Needs more clearly defined edges at the limits of the off leash area (users seem to treat the fields to the west and the tall grass area as off leash)
- Waste receptacles are too far apart
- No adjacent residential area - all users must drive to the park. Parking adequate but adjacent parking lot has security issues (see above)
- Consideration needs to be given to the question of whether the off leash area has been properly selected.
- Adjacent to rental space - sometimes rental use is in conflict with off leash use.
- Industrial uses to the east of the park are not fenced (although not technically proximal to the off leash area). Not a problem in that it is not close to the designated off leash area but, it is somewhat problematic in that it is adjacent to areas actually being used for off leash.





Maple Grove Park

Maple Grove park is located on a point of land isolated from the rest of the City by the Red River (which bounds the park on three sides) and the Perimeter Highway. Much of the park is dedicated to organized sport with portions of the park leased and managed by a Rugby Club, the Mustangs Football Club, and the Manitoba organization of Disk Sports. Other park uses include a boat/canoe launch and a large open field along the entry drive.



The off leash area is located at the northern end of the park and parking is along an access road. The off leash area consists of a large open field at the site entry and a number of trails that extend through native tree stands and along the river bank. The site also has a fenced enclosure which is unfortunately located remote from the site entry.



One major asset of this park is the combination of the large field at the entry and the path network which extends into the natural areas. This combination is only found in one other off leash area in the City (Kilcona).

The site is heavily used and is nearing its current capacity.



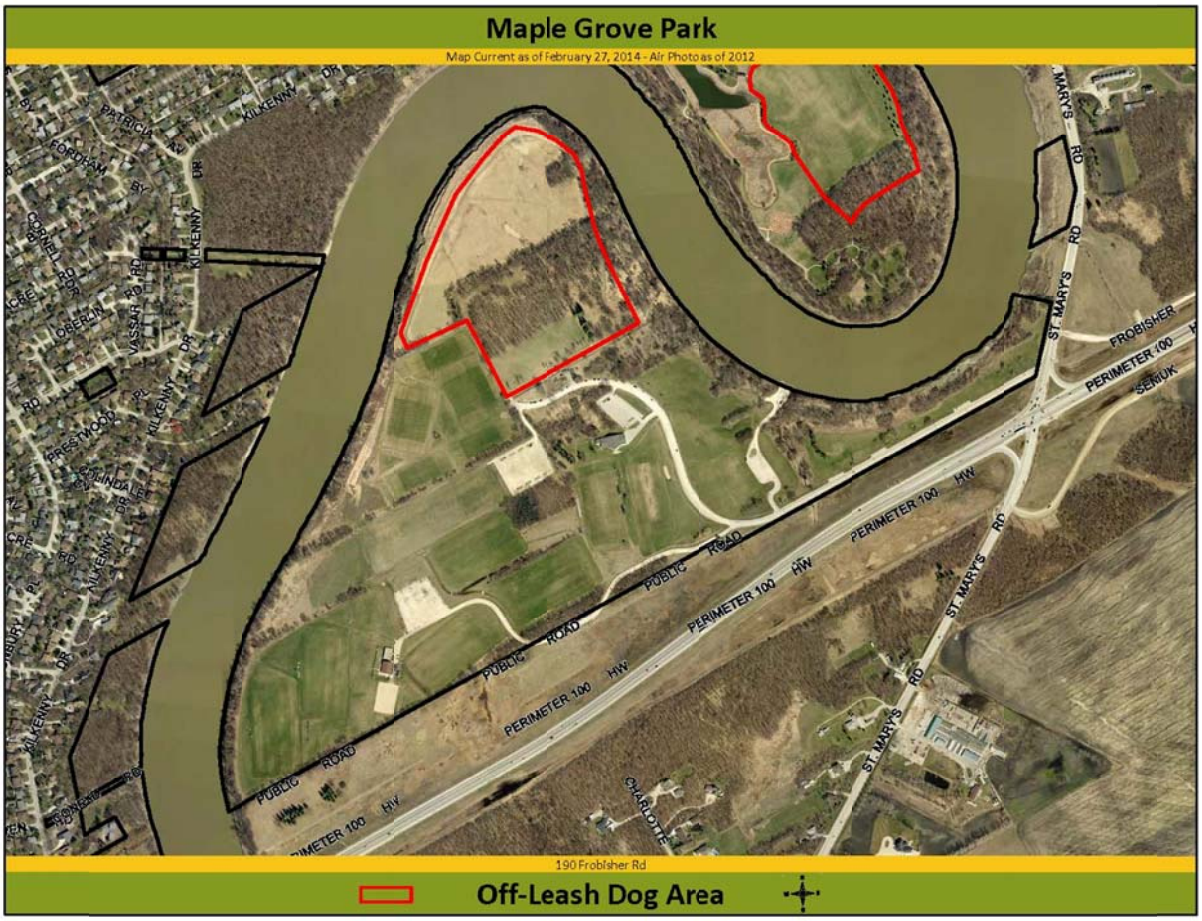

Figure 16: Maple Grove Off Leash Area (12.92 ha)

Advantages

- Large area
- Open field at off leash area entry
- Paths running along the river bank and through the bush
- Significant amounts of site furnishings already on site.
- Generally the limits of the off leash site are reflected in the physical nature of the site (exception on the south east side)



Forest Path

Site Issues

- The limits of the off leash area needs to be more clearly signed especially on the south east limit to the off leash area.
- Parking is inadequate for the usage.
- Paths are grassed or mud and are now receiving traffic levels that are not sustainable on that surfacing.
- Eroding river banks create safety issues
- Occasional seasonal flooding of a portion of the off leash area may prevent use of part of the site and block paths.



Access Road

- Concerns regarding the lack of lighting and the isolation of the site. (not adjacent to any residential areas)
- Fenced compound is remote from the site entry (and not very visible)
- Ditch along south limit of site creates some hazards to users.



Bulletin Board

Community Sites

Brenda Leipsic





The Brenda Leipsic off leash area is, located adjacent to the Winnipeg Humane Societies facility in Fort Gary. This site is not on City owned land, but on a Hydro right of way. The park consists of a couple of large fields (beneath Hydro towers) bounded on the sides by a stand of trees. These fields are also adjacent to a residential area. Parking is provided via a gravel road and small gravel parking area. Two waste receptacles are located at the park entry.

The site appears to receive moderate use, and is well within it's capacity. The fields are rough cut and have some issues with Richardson's ground squirrel holes. The parking lot is gravel and in places holds water. Users have created an alternative way to access the parking by driving across the boulevard. Signage is present but limited. There is not an on-site map and it is not always clear when you are leaving the site.

Some off leash activity occurs outside of the off leash area in the treed area located to the north.

The off leash use of the site is subject to a future expansion of rapid transit.



Figure 17: Brenda Leipsic Off Leash Area (6.45 ha)

Advantages

- Large open field adjacent to parking
- Adjacent to residential area and Winnipeg Humane Society



Site Issues

- Located on Hydro owned land.
- Quality of the parking lot and access road
- Quality of the grassed field (somewhere between tall grass and cut field).
- Close to street with limited separation
- Limited signage
- Not easy to find the entry to the site
- Lack of site furnishings.



It should be noted that the City is currently making efforts to improve the parking and signage but the fact that this is on Hydro owned land, and subject to a future extension of rapid transit limits these improvements.

Sturgeon and Silver

The off leash area at Sturgeon and Silver is at the north east corner of the intersection and located on street right of way. The south west corner of the intersection has a skate park with associated parking and this is the only parking in the vicinity. To get from the skatepark to the off leash area one must cross both Sturgeon and Silver; both roads can be busy at times. An active transportation corridor is on the south side of Silver.



Housing is located to the west and to the south of the site, but in both cases the housing is across busy streets. The area to the north is industrial but is buffered by a native forest. Notwithstanding the proximity to housing the site appears to receive only limited use possibly due to signage and parking issues. If the Charleswood site is reduced in size it can be anticipated that this site will receive much more use.



The site consists of a large field which is partially cut. A grass path is maintained by grass cutting at the periphery. It was noted that some dumping was occurring along the edge of the bush to the north of the field. This creates a problem from a safety and aesthetic point of view.

The site has only two waste receptacles and signage is limited.



Figure 18: Sturgeon & Silver Off Leash Area (4.03 ha)

Advantages



- Near active transportation corridor
- Single family housing is nearby

Site Issues

- Located on street right of way
- Off leash area is proximal to two busy streets with little separation
- Parking is across a busy street (have to cross two streets to get to off leash)
- Lack of signage indicating limits of off leash area, location of facilities etc.
- No site furnishings other than waste receptacles
- Some dumping is occurring in bush behind off leash area creating both a safety and aesthetic issue.



Westview Park

Westview Park is located near the 'West End' neighborhood to the north of the Polo Park commercial area. It is on the site of a former landfill and adjacent to a City maintenance yard. Because of its past as a landfill site the park has a great deal of verticality. This makes much of the site unusable for walking. Of the portion that is usable crusher fines paths have been installed although some of these still have significant slopes.

That being said, the site has much to offer as an off leash area. It has an asphalt parking lot which is centrally located in the off leash area. This is the only facility in Winnipeg where the parking lies wholly within the off leash boundary. Further, the steep slopes at the periphery increase the separation between the surrounding uses and isolate the off leash area from incompatible uses.



The area is also partially fenced which creates a strong barrier between the park and the industrial land uses to the north west. Also a fence exists between the gravel parking lot on the north boundary and the off leash area.

The park has six waste receptacles most of which are located at the upper parking area. Some large limestone blocks have been placed to provide seating in selected areas.

The park appears to be heavily used and is approaching its carrying capacity (based upon condition of grassed areas).



Figure 19: Westview Park Off Leash Area (4.00 ha)

Advantages

- Integrated parking area (for all users of the park).
- Separation between off leash and adjacent land uses by steep slopes and in some cases fences.



Site Issues

- only partially fenced (this is minor given the isolation created by the slopes)
- degree of slope in some area presents challenges in terms of accessibility to some users.
- The site has some slope condition issues with evidence of some slumping.
- Potential conflict in use between tobogganers and off leash users in one portion of the park during the winter months.

Bourkevale Park



Bourkevale is a small off leash area located south of the Bourkeville community center and the North Assiniboine Parkway path. The Community Center is a busy multi-use facility attracting many users. The pathway, just north of the off leash area also receives high traffic.

While the off leash area has adjacent parking, the size of the off leash area may limit the off leash usage to smaller dogs and local residents. That being said the park itself consists of a cut grassed area located some distance south of a dyke and just north of the Assiniboine river. It has significant amenities with numerous benches, picnic tables, and waste receptacles. Most of the amenities are just north of the designated off leash area.

The off leash area itself appears to receive heavy use but is within its carrying capacity.



Figure 20: Bourkevale Off Leash Area (0.28 ha)

Advantages



- Adjacent to a large number of single family residents (users can walk to the park)
- Well furnished (although furniture is not in the designated off leash area).
- One large open space with cut grass means that most of the apparent off leash area is usable (although the designated area is the sloping bank)

Site Issues

- There is no clear demarcation of the limits of the off leash area. Both a row of trees and a dyke appear to bound the area but in actuality the designated off leash area is some distance south of this 'apparent' boundary. This can lead to confusion on the part of the off leash users and conflicts with the other users - especially those on the path or at the picnic tables.
- Further complicating this, is that the actual designated off leash area is the sloping bank of the Assiniboine river and not the open field immediately to the north. Thus, in this case, the apparent off leash area is much more suitable for off leash use than the designated off leash area.



- The apparent off leash area (as defined by on site features such as the dyke) is larger than the 'designated' off leash area (as indicated by the fields for fido map).
- The limited size of the off leash area may reduce its appeal
- This is a small site with many different uses. There are conflicts between the off leash use and other uses and in some cases those uses are not entirely compatible. An example is someone jogging through the park or bicycling that might feel unsafe with the number of off leash dogs or someone playing catch on the open grass area.
- This site appears to be too small to carry an off leash area as part of a multi-use park. Options to address this could include making the off leash area single use and fencing it. That being said such an action should only be taken after careful consideration and consultations with park users and user groups.

Kings Park

Kings Park is located in the residential area of Fort Richmond and accessed from King's Drive. It is a ten minute walk from the University of Manitoba and directly across the river from Maple Grove Park. The park itself is a regional park for south west Winnipeg. It is a multi-use park with playing fields, a botanical garden, a water fall garden, picnic areas, ponds, a labyrinth, and walking trails. The off leash area consists of a large field which is bounded on the north and south by a woodland area, on the east by an asphalt path, and on the west by a man made pond.

The site receives moderate to heavy use but is well within its carrying capacity.

Kings park is physically close to Maple Grove park, which also has an off leash area, the separation of the two off leash areas by the Red River means that it is a five to ten minute drive from one to the other. This separation means that the two parks serve different communities. Further, the Kings Park off leash area provides a very different experience than Maple Grove. The smaller size, legibility of the one open field, and the proximity to residences in nearby Fort Richmond have lead to the park operating functionally as a neighborhood off leash area which is of the most appeal to those with smaller and mid-sized dogs. This is not to say that larger dogs do not use the area - just that they are in smaller proportion when compared to the larger sites like Maple Grove and Kilcona.

Advantages

- Large, lit parking within a few minute walk over paved pathways to the off leash area
- Seasonal Washrooms available within the park (although some distance from the off leash area)
- Convenient to the residents of Fort Richmond.
- Limits of the off leash area are legible because of natural and man-made features.

Site Issues

- The 'on leash' nature of the walk from the parking to the off leash area is not always respected.



Figure 21: Kings Park Off Leash Area (4.41 ha)

Mazenod Road Off Leash Area



The Mazenod road off leash area is located on park land around a retention pond in an industrial park in east Winnipeg. The area consists of a grassed field which is cut. No paths exist on the site.

Because the area has no adjacent residential all of the users must drive to the site. However, the parking is on street with limited spaces available. Further the site also been used for watersports such as dragon boat practices in the summer and ice racing in the winter.

The site is bounded by streets on three sides and commercial to the north. Further, the off leash usable space is relatively narrow because the center of it is a retention pond. Given that it is a narrow usable space, surrounded by busy streets, and unfenced it is expected that many off leash area users will have concerns about conflicts between dogs and traffic.

Signage is limited and the site is not recognizable as an off leash area other than by signage. The site has 3 waste receptacles.



The site appears to be underutilized by off leash users. It is assumed that this is due to the issues noted above.

Advantages

- No other conflicting uses for most of the year.

Site Issues

- Adjacent to streets
- Parking is limited (on street)
- Shared site with water based activities during summer
- Limited site furniture



Figure 22: Mazenod Off Leash Area (6.00 ha)

Woodsworth Park



The Woodsworth Park off leash area is located around a retention pond in an industrial area in north Winnipeg. The area consists of a grassed field which is cut on sloping land that goes down to a retention pond. The off leash area is bounded on the north side by a busy street, on the east by a commercial property (which is fenced) and on the west by an open field sloping down to a retention pond. The off leash area does not have formal paths, however, an informal foot path has developed along the edge of the retention pond.

On-site parking is available at the south end of the site. The parking services the off leash area, the rest of the park area as well as athletic fields located south of the off leash area and the parking. Seasonal washrooms are available, however, these have limited hours and are often not opened during the day.

The site has 1 waste receptacle at the parking lot. Site furnishings are just outside of the off leash area. The lot itself is difficult to find, even if you know there is an off leash area and parking is not visible from adjacent streets.

To the north of the site and across a busy street is a single family residential area. Some off leash users park in this residential area as opposed to the provided parking lot, possibly because it is easier to access and has more natural surveillance. This reduces the parking available to the residents and forces the off leash users to cross a busy street.

Finally the site is not clearly legible. The limits of the off leash area are in the middle of the field and are not marked. Signage is in poor condition and not fully legible.



Figure 23: Woodsworth Park Off Leash Area (0.83 ha)

Advantages

- Adjacent to a residential area
- On-site Parking
- Washrooms (seasonal with limited hours)



Site Issues

- Adjacent to a busy street
- Limits of the off leash area not clearly marked or reflected in site development
- Limited site furniture
- Parking is isolated - especially after dark
- Site does not visually identify as an off leash area