

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

April 4, 2011  
SRPRS.11.052

Planning and Regulatory Services Department  
Policy Planning Division

**SUBJECT: Pilot Off Leash Dog Area (SRPRS.11.052)**

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**PURPOSE:**

To report back to Council regarding the pilot off leash dog area and make recommendations regarding the future operation of off leash dog areas in the Town.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- a) That a new off leash dog area project be initiated immediately with final determination of an appropriate site and design to occur in 2011 and construction of the new facility to take place in 2012.
- b) That the existing off leash area at the south west corner of Tower Hill Road and Yonge Street remain in operation until a new facility is opened, which time period is not to exceed two years from Council's decision on this matter.

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Submitted by:

Ana Bassios  
Commissioner of Planning and Regulatory Services

Approved by:

M. Joan Anderton  
Chief Administrative Officer

## **BACKGROUND:**

On October 25, 2009, as a result of Council direction received on September 22, 2008 (SRPRC.08.44) and July 13, 2009 (SRPRC.09.49), the Town of Richmond Hill opened its first off leash area as a one year pilot project. The pilot off leash area is located within Ward 4, in the open space lands south of Tower Hill Road and west of Yonge Street (Appendix 1). Prior to the opening of the pilot off leash area, the establishment of an off leash facility in the Town of Richmond Hill had been the subject of public and Council debate since 2000. A complete summary of the chronology of events leading up to the opening of the pilot off leash area is attached as Appendix 2.

Pursuant to SRPRC.09.49, staff were directed to report back at the end of the one year pilot project regarding the operational and enforcement costs associated with the pilot off leash area, and with recommendations regarding the continued operation of the facility. This report provides the requested information.

### **Resident Comments on the Pilot Off Leash Area**

Since the pilot project opened, the Town has received written comments from over 300 individuals regarding the off leash area. The number of comments received encouraging the Town to make the pilot off leash area permanent, was approximately equal to the number of comments received encouraging the Town to close the pilot off leash area and relocate it elsewhere (outside the urban area of the Town). Staff note that the majority of the respondents, both for and against the pilot off leash area site, did not provide their address of residence.

The Town also received a petition against making the pilot off leash area a permanent facility. The petition is signed by 200 individuals with some apparent overlap between people that signed the petition and also sent in written comments. Similar to the written comments received, the majority of the petition signatures are not accompanied by an address of residence and hence it is difficult to assemble any statistics associated with where the petitioners reside.

The arguments against the off leash area, which were submitted to the Town in writing over the one year pilot period (including those cited on the petition), are as follows:

- noise (both from dogs and owners)
- inadequate public consultation in association with the location of the off leash area
- perceived decrease in the value of nearby residential properties
- destruction of the natural environment and associated views
- perceived increase in local traffic and parking
- potential safety and security issues for nearby residential properties
- agitation of resident dogs

Written comments in favour of making the pilot off leash area permanent, note that the off leash area:

- has increased the physical activity of both dogs and dog owners
- has increased safety of, and generally improved, an open space area that was previously used for unauthorized activities
- has enabled residents to meet and socialize with many new people

- is very well designed as it provides a good variety of terrain and interest for dogs (some users state that the Town's pilot facility is the best designed municipal off leash facility they have visited)
- is easily accessible (not a far drive for many users and within walking distance for some users)
- creates a sense of community in the neighbourhood
- is far enough from residences that it does not result in noise occurrences that are of any greater nuisance than other community noises
- is located near other amenities (such as banks, stores, coffee shops and a pet store) making it a convenient site to visit

Since the end of the one year pilot period, Staff have undertaken a systematic public consultation process with the neighbours of the off leash area. The residents living at the 41 private properties located closest to the off leash area were all invited (via first class mail) to schedule a time to meet with staff and provide feedback on their experiences associated with the off leash area. In response to the invitation, residents from 11 different properties attended meetings with Town staff.

One of the residents that met with Town staff did so in order to advocate in support of the off leash area remaining at its current location. This resident indicated that the off leash area does not seem to generate any more noise than the barking from dogs on private property in the neighbourhood. She also stressed her view that the Town needs to make its decision based on whether or not the facility is providing a valuable service for the community; rather than complaints from a few neighbours, who are strongly opposed to the off leash site on the basis that they think it impacts their property values. She indicated that as a result of the off leash area she has met many people that she would not have otherwise met and that she enjoys sitting on the bench in the dog park and talking to people.

The other neighbourhood residents who met with Town staff (representing 10 properties) clearly expressed that, although they are not against off leash facilities, such facilities should not be sited as closely to residential properties as the current facility. They are clearly opposed to the location of the pilot off leash area, and they indicated their opposition to the site is predominantly as a result of:

- Noise (dogs barking and sometimes people yelling profanities at dogs or each other)
- Increased neighbourhood traffic and concern about the pedestrian crossing from the north side of Tower Hill Road
- Lack of enforcement (dog waste not being picked up, people using the off leash area at times when it is officially closed, dogs off leash outside the off leash area)
- Security (the off leash area attracts strangers to the neighbourhood)

At the meetings with staff, residents also indicated that when they purchased their property they were of the understanding that the off leash area site would always be passive greenspace, yet now it is something very different. In particular, they explained that the enjoyment of their yards has been significantly impacted because the off leash area is busiest and noisiest on precisely those days that they want to be out enjoying their private outdoor space. They are unhappy they were not expressly consulted regarding the siting of the off leash area, prior to the facility being constructed in its current location; and they feel that it is unfair that the impacts of such a Town-wide/regional use must be borne by them.

The residents who came in for meetings were asked by Town staff to provide examples of some of the individual experiences they have had, which would further explain their concerns. One of the neighbours indicated that she can sometimes see the light from flashlights being used by people in the off leash area at night (when the area is supposed to be closed). Another individual indicated that he can hear barking in his house on some days even when all of the windows are closed. One couple described how, in the past, their young son frequently cycled around the stormwater management facility path, but now they are hesitant to let him do so due to the increased chance of confrontation with dogs. Staff were also given photographs of people in the off leash area, which were perceived by residents to be "loitering" against the park fence (a concern on the basis that there is a view from this portion of the off leash area to Moraine Ridge Drive back yards). A few residents also submitted photographs of dog waste, which had not been picked up or which was left dangling from the off leash area fence in a plastic bag.

### **Staff Observations and By-law Enforcement related to the Pilot Off Leash Area**

The Town of Richmond Hill's By-law Licensing and Enforcement Section have received four noise complaints and a complaint regarding dogs off leash outside the off leash area since the pilot project opened. Additionally, over the course of the one year pilot period residents of Moraine Ridge Drive submitted emails and videos to Park Planning staff demonstrating that barking at the off leash area is easily heard outside their residences. Staff visits to the site have confirmed that when dogs bark in the off leash area, the barking is audible on Moraine Ridge Drive. During monitoring visits to the site staff have not heard persistent noise from the off leash area. Staff believe that while the off leash area generates a different type of noise disturbance, the level of noise generated by the area is not significantly different than that created by traditional parks and school yards. It should however, be noted that staff monitoring of the site has taken place predominantly during business hours when the site is not in heavy use.

Volunteers from the K9 Klub implemented a noise monitoring program at the off leash site, which involved evaluation of noise levels at the park on a scale of zero to five (where 0 was no noise and 5 was persistent barking). Although not particularly conclusive due to its subjective nature, the noise monitoring (which includes over 150 recordings) does reveal that there is frequently no noise at all emanating from the off leash area (55 % of the recordings were 0). Additionally, noise levels at the off leash facility were never considered by these observers to be greater than 3.5 during the monitoring. As would be expected, the monitoring also reveals that high noise levels generally occur mid-day on weekends and holidays, when weather is good, and use of the area is very high.

In response, to noise complaints and the report that dogs were frequently being unleashed before entering the off leash area, the OSPCA was asked to visit the off leash area on a regular basis to determine if any by-law infractions were occurring at the site. The OSPCA reports that they have not observed any serious issues with the Town's pilot off leash area over the year and a half that it has been open. There have been no complaints about the area reported to the OSPCA's dispatch and the OSPCA has not issued any tickets in relation to the park. OSPCA officers indicate that they have cautioned people a number of times (approximately 20) about keeping their dogs on leash while walking between the off leash area and their vehicles.

By-law Licensing and Enforcement staff have responded to a couple of complaints regarding parking on side streets in the vicinity of the off leash area, but in responding to these complaints they have not found any cars parked illegally. Transportation staff have also conducted field

investigations of Tower Hill Road and have not found any issues. When contacted in February of this year, York Region Police reported they have record of only one traffic incident occurring along this stretch of Tower Hill Road in the past year and it was completely unrelated to use of the off leash facility (it was an accident involving someone turning into the Canadian Tire).

### **Discussion**

The Town is presented with three basic options with respect to the pilot off leash area, which will now be discussed in detail.

#### OPTION 1: Close the pilot off leash facility and not provide off leash facilities in the Town .

The pilot off leash area has shown there is significant demand for an off leash area in the Town. In fact, monitoring data and observations of the pilot off leash area suggest, that on a year round basis (and with the possible exceptions of Mill Pond Park, Sunset Beach Park and Richmond Green), the off leash area is used more than any other park or open space area in the Town. When considered in context with the level of use the pilot facility has sustained, the relatively low capital and operating costs of the off leash facility (compared to the cost of other outdoor recreational facilities) represent a very fiscally responsible investment for the Town. It is also important to note that although there is a clear divide between residents for and against the location of the pilot off leash area, the vast majority of people providing comments (of any sort) about the pilot facility, indicated support for the Town having an off leash area.

Additionally, it should be noted that operation of a municipal off leash facility in the Town is consistent with several goals and objectives of the corporate Strategic Plan. Many of the users of the existing off leash area have commented that the facility provides a great place for people to connect with their neighbours and other residents of the Town. The off leash area is also consistent with the goal of providing better choice in Richmond Hill. Prior to the opening of the pilot off leash area there was no area in the Town where residents could let their dogs exercise off leash; now residents have more choice regarding how to exercise their dogs and interact with other dog owners. Finally, off leash areas are also consistent with the Town's goal of creating a more vibrant Richmond Hill. In particular, the off leash area is a year round facility consistent with the specific Strategic Plan strategy to "create and promote opportunities for people to experience the Town's natural environment year round."

While past debates regarding off leash facilities in the Town of Richmond Hill have focused on whether or not the Town should have an off leash facility, the current debate has moved beyond this question to now focus on where an off leash facility would most appropriately be sited. Immediately closing the pilot off leash facility and not having an off leash facility in the Town is therefore not recommended.

#### OPTION 2: Make the pilot off leash area permanent and implement measures to mitigate the concerns of residents living in the area

An analysis of whether the existing off leash site should be made permanent needs to start with a discussion regarding an overall vision for the provision of off leash facilities in the Town. In particular, should the Town have one large off leash facility which is used by residents Town-wide; or, should the Town provide several facilities, which predominantly serve local neighbourhoods? The suburban municipalities around Richmond Hill have adopted the first type

of model for their off leash facilities and provide one large drive-to facility at least 200 metres from the nearest residence (e.g., Vaughan, Markham, Aurora). On the other hand, some municipalities (e.g., Toronto, Guelph and Mississauga) provide several smaller off leash facilities throughout their jurisdiction embedded in residential neighbourhoods.

It seems many of the issues that have surfaced regarding the Town's pilot off leash facility are a result of the fact that the current site is not ideally suited to either of the two models for off leash facility provision. The pilot site is servicing the entire Town, and even attracting users from beyond the Town's boundaries, but it is located less than 100 metres from the nearest residential property. Most of the concerns voiced by residents living in the vicinity of the pilot off leash area are directly related to the very high volume of use at the site (e.g., safety and security concerns related to the number of strangers the off leash facility attracts to their neighbourhood, the level of noise generated by the off leash facility, and claims of increased traffic in the area).

The decision as to whether the pilot facility should be made permanent hinges, to a great extent, on which of the two models for off leash facilities the Town would prefer to adopt, and whether the existing site and facility are appropriately suited to the chosen model.

Staff believe the existing off leash site would be an appropriate site for an off leash facility if the Town adopted a multiple-facility off leash area model. In theory, constructing additional off leash facilities in the Town would mitigate the concerns of residents living near the existing facility by reducing the volume of use at the current site. To adopt this model, the Town would need to commit resources to the construction and operation of additional off leash facilities (in the order of \$85 000 capital and \$6 000 annual operating cost per facility). Additionally, it would be recommended that some design upgrades to the existing facility be implemented to mitigate some of the concerns of local residents (e.g. the planting of a coniferous hedgerow along the west perimeter of the off leash area would be recommended to mitigate views to and from the off leash area from residential properties). The challenge for the Town in adopting a multiple-facility model for off leash facilities, is that it would undoubtedly be difficult to find several off leash locations amenable to residents. Discussions with local residents in opposition to the pilot facility have confirmed that they do not accept this as a solution to their concerns. While having off leash facilities distributed amongst neighbourhoods, within walking distance of users and close to other amenities, is seen as optimal in terms of providing services close to where users live, the pilot facility has demonstrated that this model of off leash facility provision is likely to be contentious amongst residents.

The single facility model for off leash area provision therefore seems better suited to the residents of the Town; but, the existing off leash area is not an optimal site to serve residents Town-wide. The most significant issues with the current site relate to the combined impact of the site being located closer to residential properties than would be preferred, and it being subject to heavy use. The distance between the existing off leash area and residential properties can not be changed, and while the off leash area could potentially be screened from view of residential properties with landscaping, it would not be possible to entirely mitigate noise emanating from the facility. Additionally, and perhaps most significantly, the existing location does not support on-site parking and therefore users of the off leash area must park in the privately-owned parking lot on the north side of Town Hill Road and cross the street to access the off leash facility. This is not an optimal arrangement for a facility serving large number of users from across the Town.

**OPTION 3:** Close the existing pilot off leash facility and open a Town-wide off leash area in a location less sensitive to resident uses

While staff believe the pilot off leash facility has been successful as a test site and learning experience, the analyses of options 1 and 2 above suggests that the best option for the Town may be to close the pilot facility and open a Town-wide facility at a location less sensitive to residential use. Doing so would meet the needs of Town residents wishing to use an off leash facility and reduce the impact the off leash facility has on residential communities.

It is proposed that Phyllis Rawlinson Park and the lands owned by the Town north of Stouffville Road and east of Leslie Street should be further investigated for their potential as off leash area sites. In this regard, a public consultation process should be undertaken in tandem with the design of the new facility in order to confirm the appropriateness of these lands for the off leash use. Additionally, it is suggested that the design and public consultation process for a new facility should be initiated this year. Staff would then request a 2012 construction budget for the project.

#### **FINANCIAL/STAFFING/OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

The pilot off leash area has had minor staffing implications for both the Town's Parks Operations and Maintenance Division and the By-law Licensing and Enforcement Section. Perhaps the most significant staffing implication has been felt by the Parks Planning and Natural Heritage Section which has one Parks Planner acting as a liaison with off leash area volunteers and coordinating and compiling information and comments regarding the pilot phase of the off leash facility. This staffing implication, however, is expected to be reduced in relation to a permanent facility.

The Parks Operations and Maintenance Division estimates the Town's one year operating cost associated with the pilot off leash area was approximately \$6 000 (predominantly associated with bi-weekly emptying of the waste container, replacing mulch and weekly sanitation inspections). This operating cost was minimized due to the Richmond Hill K9 Klub's dedicated commitment to assist in the ongoing operation and maintenance of the facility. The Klub's dedication to making the pilot facility work as well as it has is definitely worthy of recognition and much appreciated. It is expected that the K9 Klub's commitment to operations and maintenance would continue in the event the off leash facility was moved to a different location and therefore overall operating costs are not expected to change with relocation of the off leash site.

A preliminary design will be necessary in order to determine the cost of developing a new off leash facility and closing the existing facility. In determining the overall cost staff will consider the potential to reuse materials from the pilot off leash facility site.

The construction of a new off leash facility will have implications for the Parks Design and Construction Section as a Landscape Architect will need to be assigned to manage this new project. The Parks Design and Construction Section advises that the new off leash area project results in an added workload to already aggressive 2011 and 2012 work plans as established by the 10 Year Capital Plan approved in June of last year. To accommodate this project staff, through the 2011 and 2012 capital budgets, will need to identify currently planned projects to be deferred to later years.

## **RELATIONSHIP TO THE STRATEGIC PLAN:**

Off leash areas are consistent with the Town goal of providing stronger connections in Richmond Hill. In particular, many of the users of the existing off leash area have commented that the facility provides a great place for people to connect with their neighbours and other residents of the Town. The off leash area is also consistent with the goal of providing better choice in Richmond Hill. Prior to the opening of the pilot off leash area there was no where in the Town where residents could let their dogs exercise off leash; now residents have more choice regarding how to exercise their dogs and interact with other dog owners. Finally, off leash areas are also consistent with the Town's goal of creating a more vibrant Richmond Hill. The Strategic Plan includes a specific strategy to "create and promote opportunities for people to experience the Town's natural environment year round" and monitoring data clearly illustrates the off leash area is a year round facility.

## **CONCLUSION:**

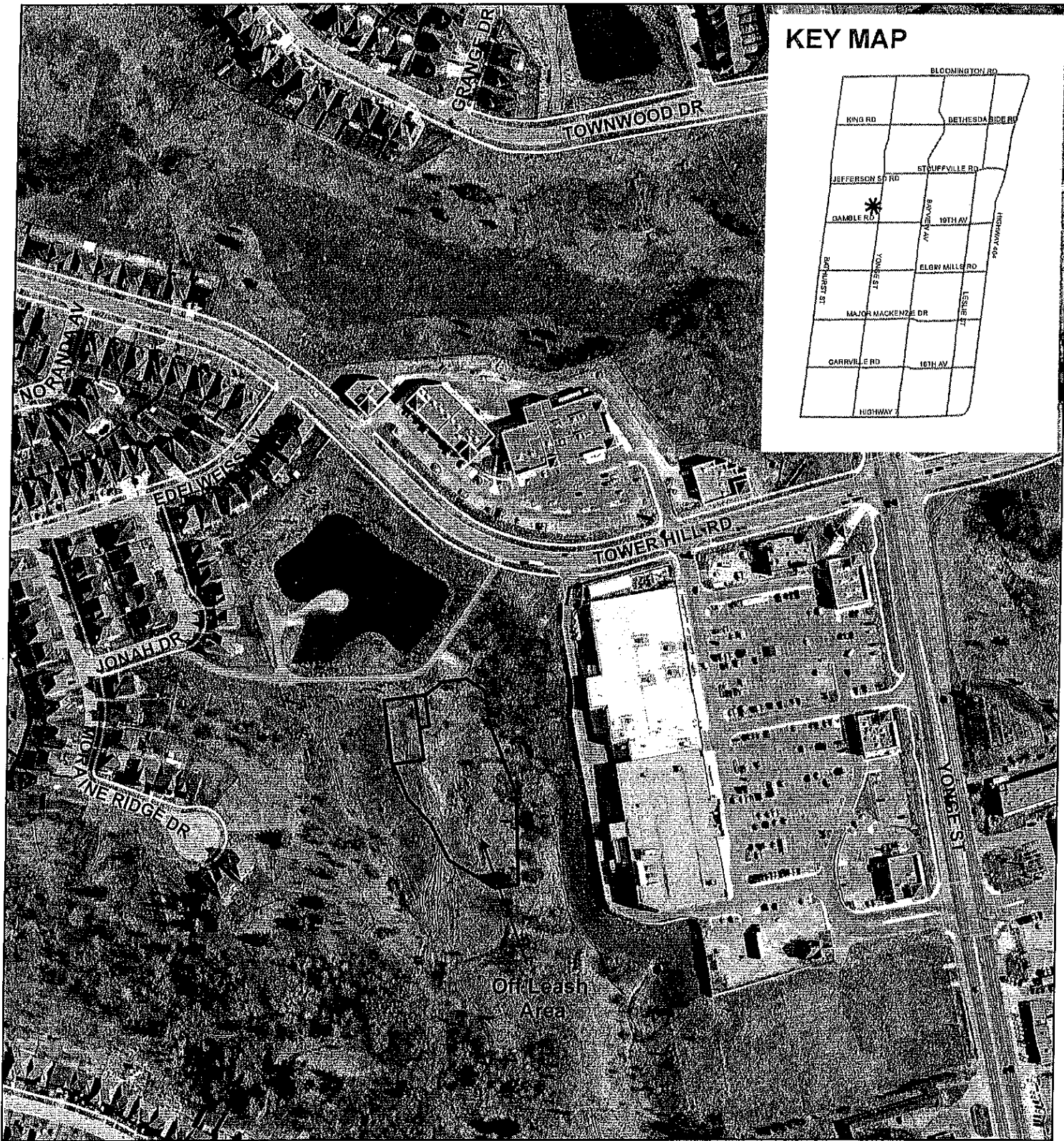
This report provides details related to one year of operation of the pilot off leash area located in the open space area south of Tower Hill Road and west of Yonge Street. Based on feedback received from residents over the one year pilot period, as well as information collected from the Town's By-law and Licensing Enforcement Division, the K9 Klub and other off leash area volunteers and the Town's Parks Operations and Maintenance Division, staff are recommending the pilot off leash area remain open until such time as a new off leash facility, located in a area more distant from residential uses, is opened. It is estimated that the new facility could be opened in 2013 and at that time the pilot facility will be closed.

## **APPENDICES:**

Appendix 1 – Location of Pilot Off Leash Area

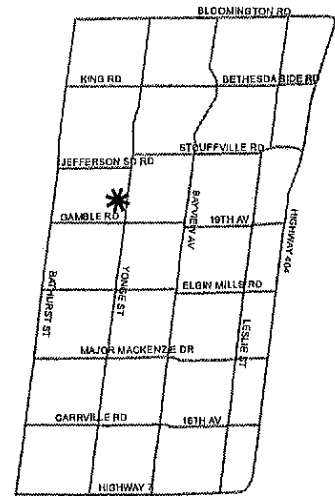
Appendix 2 – Chronology of events leading to the establishment of the pilot off leash area

Appendix 3 – Off Leash Dog Area Policy – Approved by Council July, 2009

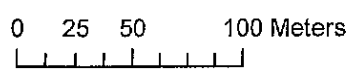


Off-Leash Area

**KEY MAP**



**LOCATION OF PILOT  
OFF LEASH AREA  
APPENDIX 1**



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### Chronology of Events Leading to the Establishment of the Pilot Off Leash area

**June 20, 2000** – As a result of several resident requests for an off leash area within the Town (including a petition signed by 99 residents of Richmond Hill), staff submitted SRPRC.00.10 regarding *Dogs off Leash Zone Within the Town of Richmond Hill – Merits and Issues* to Council. As a result of SRPRC.00.10 staff were directed to establish a working subcommittee (with resident members) and report back to Parks, Recreation and Culture (PRC) Committee in September 2000 on a proposed site for an off leash zone.

**September 26, 2000** – Staff presented SRPRC.00.56 *Dogs off Leash Project* to the PRC Committee. SRPRC.00.56 recommended the establishment of an off leash area at Hillcrest Heights Park. The report was the subject of significant debate at the committee meeting and a petition against locating an off leash area at Hillcrest Heights was submitted by residents living in the vicinity of the park. Staff were directed to investigate other site options, consult the public and report back to the PRC Committee.

**February to November 2001** – Staff consulted the public regarding a site for an off leash dog area. Phyllis Rawlinson Park was determined to be the preferred site.

**December 10, 2001** – SRPRC.01.60 *Equestrian Vision/Dogs-Off Leash Area Phyllis Rawlinson Park* was presented to Council identifying Phyllis Rawlinson Park as the preferred site for an off leash area; however, at the same time, this report noted that it was unknown whether the newly enacted Oak Ridges Moraine Act and Conservation Plan would permit siting of the off leash area at this park. Staff were directed to report back to Council on feasibility of an off leash dog park when the implications of the Oak Ridges Moraine Act were known.

**2003 to 2007** – Residents continued to inquire regarding an off leash area within the Town. An off leash area was the new recreation facility type most frequently requested by residents during public consultations associated with the 2006 Parks, Recreation and Culture Strategic Master Plan Update.

**March 4, 2008** – A delegation of residents appeared before Budget Committee of the Whole to request that funds be allocated in the 2008 budget for construction of an off leash facility. The resulting Budget Committee of the Whole direction, which was approved by Council on March 17, 2008, was as follows:

- i. That staff prepare a comprehensive report on the proposed new level of service respecting leash free parks;
- ii. That the report provide information on the pros and cons for this project and the service level impacts on the Town; and
- iii. That staff report back to Committee of the Whole by July 2008 with its findings.

**April to August, 2008** – To complete the requested report staff conducted comprehensive background research including:

- An internet-based search of Canadian and United States websites;
- Interviews with local veterinarians;
- Discussions with Parks and By-law Enforcement staff at numerous municipalities across Canada;
- A review of legislation and by-laws related to dog ownership; and,

- An online survey open to all Town residents. The survey was advertised via posters at Town facilities, pet stores and clinics, and advertisements about the survey were run on The Liberal notice board. The Town received 441 responses to the survey from individual IP addresses with 88% of the responses in favor of the establishment of an off leash facility in the Town.

**September 22, 2008** – SRPRC.08.44, which included an *Off Leash Dog Area Feasibility Assessment*, was presented to Council. Staff were directed to proceed with work towards the establishment of a one year pilot project in Ward 4 or the Oak Ridges Corridor Park. Staff were also directed to report back on the cost of implementing a one-year pilot project for consideration as part of the 2009 budget process.

**March 10, 2009** – SRPRC.09.14 was submitted to Budget Committee of the Whole to provide an update on progress towards establishment of a one year pilot off leash dog area. The report did not, however, provide detailed costing information pending a response from the Province or Toronto and Region Conservation regarding the siting of a pilot off leash area in the Oak Ridges Corridor Park.

**July 13, 2009** – SRPRC.09.49 established Council approval for the allocation of funds for the pilot off leash area at the recommended site in Ward 4 (the open space south of Tower Hill Road, west of Yonge Street). In addition, Council approved the *Off Leash Dog Area Policy* (Appendix 3) and associated Municipal Code amendments. The recommended site was approved and staff were directed to report back to Council at the end of a one year pilot period.

**October 25, 2009** – Official opening of the pilot off leash area.

**October 25, 2010** – End of one year pilot period for the off leash area.



## **TOWN OF RICHMOND HILL**

### **Off Leash Dog Area Policy**

Prepared by: Parks Development & Design Division,  
Parks, Recreation & Culture Department

Effective Date: July 13, 2009

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#### **PURPOSE**

This *Off Leash Dog Area Policy* is intended to provide a framework for the development and operation of Off Leash Dog Areas within the Town's Park and Open Space System.

#### **POLICY STATEMENT**

The Town of Richmond Hill recognizes the social benefits that designated off leash dog areas can provide for both dogs and their owners. The Town further acknowledges the requirement for responsible pet ownership within our Park and Open Space System and the potential for a designated off leash dog area to prevent unauthorized off leash activity within parks and sensitive environmental areas. The Town of Richmond has therefore adopted this policy with respect to the provision of off leash dog areas on publicly-owned lands within the Town.

#### **SITING OF OFF LEASH DOG AREAS**

The following criteria will be considered in selecting sites for designated off leash dog areas:

1. **Size** – The site should be able to accommodate a fenced area with a minimum size of 1 hectare, 15 m outside the boundaries of other recreational facilities, excepting a 30 metres setback from playgrounds.
2. **Adjacent Uses** – The potential for conflict between the off leash dog area and abutting land uses including residential properties, schools and community centres should be carefully considered.
3. **Site Access** – Preferred sites should include parking, nearby transit, and/or be within a suitable walking distance for a significant number of potential facility users (800 m).
4. **Environmental Impacts** – Sites which would result in negative impacts to sensitive environmental/open space areas are not recommended.
5. **Economic Factors** – Sites that require higher capital investment are less favourable than those that can be provided with a lower capital costs (e.g., grading, fencing and/or landscaping).

## OFF LEASH DOG AREA DESIGN REQUIREMENTS

The following will be considered standard design requirements of off leash dog areas:

- Minimum 1 hectare area;
- Separate fenced area for small dogs and/or puppies within the larger off leash area;
- 1.5 metre black vinyl chain-link fencing around the perimeter with a double-gated entrance and exit (to avoid dogs escaping into areas not permitted for off-leash use while being leashed or unleashed);
- A notice board conspicuously placed at the facility entrance on which rules of use (and the consequences of breaking them) are clearly posted;
- Waste container(s) for disposal of dog waste and litter;
- Seating for dog owners.

Additional features for pet exercise and agility equipment may be considered for inclusion in off leash dog areas.

## USE OF DESIGNATED DOGS OFF LEASH AREAS

The following rules apply to all designated off leash dog areas and will be posted at each entrance to the off leash areas and conspicuously within the off leash area as appropriate. Note that Section 942.3.23 of Town of Richmond Hill Municipal Code Chapter 942 (*Park Use*) indicates that “No person shall contravene any posted rules and regulations relating to the operation of areas, swimming pools, beaches, lakes, ponds, recreation centres or other facility.”

1. The following dogs are not permitted within designated off leash dog areas:
  - female dogs in heat;
  - unneutred male dogs;
  - dogs which are required to be muzzled pursuant to the *Dog Owner's Liability Act*;
  - dogs without up-to-date vaccinations; and
  - unlicensed dogs (allowable licences can be issued by any municipality).
2. Off leash dog areas will be open for use between dawn and dusk daily;
3. Dogs must be appropriately leashed when entering and exiting the off leash dog area;
4. Dogs within the off leash dog area must be within visible range of their owner at all times;
5. Areas reserved for small dogs shall be limited to dogs weighing 5.4 kg (12lbs) or less;
6. As in all Town park and open space sites dog owners are responsible for picking up dog and other waste and ensuring that it is disposed of in the appropriate waste containers;
7. Glass containers and food are not permitted within off leash dog areas;
8. All dogs within off leash dog areas must be accompanied by an owner of at least 16 years of age and no one owner may be responsible for more than 3 dogs within the facility;

9. Children under the age of 12 are not permitted within off leash dog areas;
10. All dogs remain the responsibility of their owners as set out in the *Dog Owners' Liability Act*, R.S.O. 1990.

### **SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FOR ONGOING OPERATIONS**

The experiences of other municipalities in the establishment and operation of off leash dog areas overwhelmingly suggest that the success of such areas is dependant upon the formation of a designated group of volunteers who use the facility and are willing to share in ongoing responsibility for the operations and maintenance of the facility. Off leash areas will not be established within the Town of Richmond Hill without the existence of such a group that commits to:

1. Ensuring that the facility is kept free of dog waste;
2. Routine inspection and temporary fence repairs;
3. Repair of holes and/or turf damage;
4. Fostering awareness around the rules applicable to the off leash area and the consequences for breaking the applicable rules amongst users of the areas; and,
5. Facilitating communication and cooperation amongst dog owners, between dog owners and other park users, and between the group itself and Town staff.

It is not intended that volunteers be responsible for enforcement of off leash dog area rules.

### **ENFORCEMENT**

Any violation of off leash dog area rules should be reported to the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (O.S.P.C.A., currently contracted by the Town to enforce Chapter 314 *Dog Licensing and Keeping* of the Town's Municipal Code) at 905-898-7122 or to the Town of Richmond Hill the By-Law and Licensing Enforcement Section at 905-771-0198 for enforcement action. Contact information for both the O.S.P.C.A. and Town By-Law and Licensing Enforcement Section will be posted at Off Leash Dog Areas.

### **RIGHT TO REVOKE OFF LEASH DOG AREA DESIGNATION**

Designation of an off leash dog area may be revoked by the Commissioner of Parks, Recreation and Culture in the event that a serious issue arises, which cannot be remedied through increased, targeted enforcement of the rules applicable to the off leash dog area. In the event that the Commissioner revokes an off leash designation he may reinstate such designation given resolution of relevant issues or submit a report to Town Council to confirm the revoking of the designation or seek Council direction otherwise.