

**CITY OF OTTAWA  
EMERGENCY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES  
DOGS-IN-PARKS DESIGNATION POLICY**

**OVERVIEW**

The "Dogs-in-Parks Designation Policy" has been developed in consideration of all people who use City parkland. The policy establishes fair and consistent criteria which, when applied city-wide, ensures access to parkland by dogs with their owners as well as freedom from dogs where parks, parts of parks, or park activities are not compatible with the presence of dogs. The policy provides for community involvement in the designation process.

**APPLICATION**

This policy applies to all dedicated parkland owned or leased by the City of Ottawa. Where there is City grassland contiguous to but not part of the park, the designation of the park will apply to the grassland.

**1. DESIGNATION CRITERIA**

The Dogs-in-Parks Designation Criteria assesses various elements of City parks to determine whether or not dogs are compatible with activities expected in the park. A point value is assigned to the park size and facilities with higher points assigned to the least "dog compatible" elements of a park.

Elements Measured and Assignment of Points

The following elements are used to assess "Dog/Park" compatibility: park size; facilities; proximity to schools/community centres.

**A. Park Size**

The park inventory (former Ottawa complete) will be divided into eight size categories with each category assigned a point value:

Park Size Category	Points	Number of Parks*
<b>Very Small ( 0.000 - 0.199 hectares)</b>	30	26
<b>Small ( 0.200 - 0.399 hectares)</b>	25	22
<b>Medium 1 ( 0.400 - 0.799 hectares)</b>	20	33
<b>Medium 2 ( 0.800 - 1.199 hectares)</b>	15	33
<b>Medium 3 ( 1.200 - 1.799 hectares)</b>	10	37
<b>Medium 4 ( 1.800 - 3.199 hectares)</b>	5	27
<b>Large ( 3.200 - 9.999 hectares)</b>	0	30
<b>Very Large (10.000 - over )</b>	0	6

\*former Ottawa

The park size criterion generally measures the availability of open space for the purpose of exercising dogs. Small parks which do not provide sufficient space to exercise dogs are not appropriate for dogs: the potential for dog/people conflicts increases and, where "Stoop & Scoop" is not observed, the concentration of dog waste is most problematic in small parks. Consequently, small parks rate the highest point score. Very large parks, on the other hand, can usually accommodate a number of designations, and so have no points associated with size.

Since the overall size of the park was used to assign a point score, the measurement does not always reflect the actual open space available after taking into account facilities in the park such as buildings, sports courts, wading pools, and play structures. Facilities in a park are separately accounted for below.

## **B. Park Facilities**

Park facilities are divided into 6 categories. The point value assigned to each facility takes into consideration: the compatibility of the facility with the presence of dogs; the amount of space occupied by the facility; and the probability that dogs might safely use the space when the facility is not in use by park patrons.

### **B.1 Play Area/Play Structures Swings** **4 for the first, 1 for each additional 1 for each structure**

These facilities are used primarily by exuberant children running from one structure to another. The children's noise and movements may provoke dogs. The area around these structures should not be contaminated by dog waste.

### **B.2 Wading Pool/Spray Pad** **4 for the first 2 for each additional water facility**

Wading pools are used primarily by children. The children's noise and movements may provoke dogs. The area around these structures should not be contaminated by dog waste.

### **B.3 Ball Diamond** **3 for each lit Ball Diamond 2 for each unlit Ball Diamond**

When not in use, ball diamonds may offer open spaces for dogs to exercise. A higher point value is assigned to lit ball diamonds because they are more apt to be used at all times during park hours.

### **B.4 Sports Field** **3 for each lit Sports Field 2 for each unlit Sports Field**

When not in use, sports fields may offer open spaces for dogs to exercise. A higher point value is assigned to lit sports fields because they are more apt to be used at all times during park hours.

### **B.5 Basketball/Tennis Courts Horseshoe** **2 for each type of court 1 for each pitch**

Tennis and basketball courts are often fenced and their surface is not appropriate for dogs. The point value reflects the fact that the surface area taken up by the courts reduces the overall park space available for dogs. Of the two, the horseshoe pitch takes up less space and is usually grassed.

**B.6 Picnic (4 Tables)****1 point per each 4 tables**

The space around picnic tables may be used by dogs for exercise when the tables are not in use. Picnic tables are typically used during lunch/supper times for short periods. The presence of many tables in a park is an indication that picnics are common occurrences.

**C. Proximity to Schools****3 points****Proximity to Community Centres****2 points**

The proximity of schools and community centres to a park is associated with higher park use, often by young people. Consequently, there is an increased opportunity for dog/people conflict in such parks. In this policy, proximity means the school or community centre abuts the park.

**2. TYPES OF DESIGNATIONS****A. "No Dogs"**

The "No Dogs" designation is the designation most restrictive of dogs, prohibiting them from the park at all times. The designation is appropriate where the small size of the park is not compatible with exercising dogs, or where the combination of size and facilities creates a high risk of people/dog conflicts. Dog waste tends to be concentrated in certain areas of such parks with health-related risks more acute than in other parks even if "Stoop & Scoop" provisions are observed.

Parks receiving a score of 30 points or higher are designated "No Dogs" parks. Parks with a score of less than 30 points but with facility points of more than 15 may also be designated "No Dogs" if on-site conditions such as the location or distribution of the facilities are incompatible with "Dogs Allowed" designations. Signage for notification is required.

**B. "No Dogs" within 5m of Play Areas/Wading Pools/Spray Pads**

The prohibition of dogs from all play areas within 5 metres of play structures, wading pools and spray pads will apply in all City parks that allow dogs. The prohibition will not prevent persons from walking leashed dogs in "Dogs Allowed" parks on asphalt paths that pass within 5 metres of a play area or pool.

The prohibition will be posted in problem parks but, may be otherwise unsigned. Like "Stoop & Scoop", which is often unsigned, awareness of the prohibition and hence, voluntary compliance with it, is expected to build over time.

**C. "Dogs on Leash"**

The "Dogs on Leash" designation will permit dog handlers to bring only leashed dogs into a park so signed. The dogs must be under control at all times.

The designation will be used in parks where heightened control of the dog is in order but where a total prohibition is not necessary. Unrestricted roaming or interaction with park patrons will be prohibited but people will be able to walk with their dogs through a park that links a network of paths, or through a park that provides convenient access from one neighbourhood to another.

**D. "Timed Designation"**

The "Timed" designation will establish a particular designation or designations during certain times of the day, days of the week, or months of the year. Since parks are closed to the public between 11:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. pursuant to By-law 225-74, those times will not be included in any timed designation period.

**E. "Mixed" Designation**

As is the case currently, a number of parks can support a "Stoop & Scoop" (Dogs Allowed) area and a "No Dogs" area. The boundaries of the separate areas must be well defined by signs, or by natural or man-made delineations.

**F. "Stoop & Scoop" (Dogs Allowed)**

Parks which are not signed with a more restrictive designation will permit dogs off-leash but always under control. Such parks must have sufficient space to allow dogs to run off-leash without interfering with other park patrons.

**3. DESIGNATION OF PARKS**

The designation of each City of Ottawa park will ultimately be identified in a list and/or database, once all park information is available and compiled.

**4. PARKS REDESIGNATIONS**

Applications to change a park designation will be accepted by the Emergency and Protective Services Department if:

- submitted in writing by a recognized Community Association, or
- accompanied by a petition supporting the redesignation signed by the occupants of 25 or more households residing within a five-block or 500 metre radius of the subject park, whichever is the lesser distance, and
- no request for redesignation of the same park has been processed within two years immediately preceding the date of the application.

The application must outline clearly the reasons for the requested change.

If the application is in order, the Department will accept it and, as soon as possible, will post notices in the park of the redesignation request. Persons will be invited to submit comment to the Department during a specified timeframe (not less than three weeks).

At the conclusion of the consultation period, the Department will report to the Ward Councillor with the results of the public consultation, a history of dog-related service requests related to the park, and the Departmental recommendation.

If the Ward Councillor agrees with the Departmental recommendation, appropriate action will be taken by the Department to either effect the change or notify the applicant that there will be no change.

If the Ward Councillor disagrees with the Departmental recommendation, the matter will proceed to the Emergency and Protective Services Committee (EPSC) by way of Departmental report. The decision of EPSC will be final.

#### **5. DEPARTMENTAL DISCRETION**

Despite any other provisions of this policy, the Emergency and Protective Services Department may impose a "No Dogs" designation in parks where chronic disregard of the "Stoop & Scoop" By-law results in health concerns or maintenance problems especially if dog waste is regularly found within 5 metres of play structures. The Department will advise the Ward Councillor of the intention to redesignate and the public will be notified in at least one community newspaper fourteen (14) days before the "No Dogs" signs are installed.

Further, the Department may, at its discretion, redesignate a park, or a portion of a park, in the event that it has undergone significant redesign to include additional or exclude specific facilities or, that the nature of the redesignation request is such that only a small portion of the park, such as a pathway for example, is affected and gives consideration to the needs of the community.