

Attachment 2 – Leash Free Areas Handbook

Location Attributes:

- LFAs should only be permitted on Town property, unless a qualified and dedicated community organization comes forward and a private partnership is deemed mutually beneficial by the Town of Aurora
- Consideration should be given for natural drainage, with preference to tableland that is generally dry in spring and fall
- Consideration of Natural Heritage System (NHS) lands will be determined on a case-by-case basis
- There is no minimum or maximum size requirement
- Natural shading and tree canopy cover is preferred

Proximity limitation zones:

LFAs adjacent to or within 50 metre of the following locations must have natural barriers or partial fencing as a minimum:

- Children’s playgrounds or splash pads
- Athletic Fields/sports fields, including ‘playout’ buffers
- Sports courts
- Schools
- Toboggan hills
- Ornamental gardens
- LFAs should not be placed within 10 metres of Environmental Protection Areas, or associated buffers

Site Design Attributes:

- Where fencing is required, fence must be a minimum 4 feet in height, and up to 5 feet as necessary
- When fencing is installed, a self-closing double gate is required
- Consideration should be given to location of required infrastructure for access to electrical, and water use
- Ease of access should be considered for maintenance, and emergency response
- Design should have consideration for accessibility and age-friendly design
- Natural buffers should be sought to serve as a replacement for fencing, where appropriate
- Privacy screening is recommended in locations adjacent to schools

Setbacks:

- Locating of a new LFA shall respect the following setbacks:
 - Shall be no closer than 250 metres from a regional road right-of-way (without fencing); 50 metres with fencing
 - Shall be no closer than 50 metres from a local right-of-way (without fencing); 20 metres with fencing
 - Shall be at least 50 metres from residential properties unless separated by partial fencing
 - Shall be at least 100 metres from commercial properties

Exceptions may be considered.

Amenities:

- Compost receptacles for excrement should be provided and maintained
- Lighting should be considered
- Covered and uncovered seating nodes, including picnic tables, shall be considered
- Shade structures and screening for weather element protection shall be considered, including natural shade elements
- Natural turf or wood mulch are recommended surface types
- Water supply and paw-washing stations may be considered
- On-site parking is recommended for Destination LFAs

Types of Leash-Free Areas:

Neighbourhood Park Leash-Free Area: Neighbourhood LFAs are those situated within neighbourhood parks, with or without parking, and strong emphasis on pedestrian walkability and surrounding neighbourhood connectivity. Minimum standard amenity features expected. Full or partial fencing is recommended.

Community Leash-Free Area: Destination Park LFAs are those situated within larger destination parks, with parking, accessibility and likelihood of additional amenity features, above the minimum standard. Fencing or natural barriers are recommended where adjacent to active recreation amenities.

Natural Heritage System Leash Free Area or Trail: Natural Heritage System LFAs are situated within or abutting valley lands where appropriate to do so, with fencing or natural barriers. Parking and fencing optional, based on site attributes. May also be incorporated as a designed trail, limiting use to walking, running, not multi-use.

Recommended Design Guidelines:

The following represents best practices and guidelines for design elements, planting materials, and general recommended requirements:

Fencing Style and Gate Closures: Fencing style should attempt to be permeable and translucent, with regard to safety and site aesthetics. Squared link fencing is the preferred recommendation as shown in Figure 5. Fencing should be a minimum 5 feet in height. Self locking double gate closures, are required for LFAs where fencing is required.

Prohibited Planting List: Although beneficial for providing shade and visual interest, certain trees, shrubs, and plants can be severely toxic to dogs if ingested. Staff recommend consulting toxic plant listings for any flora that shall be included in any LFA.

Materials: Material choice installed in LFAs can greatly impact user experience, longevity, and design of the park. The below table presents a catalog of material options for ground cover and screening that may be installed in LFAs.

MATERIAL	PROS	CONS	COST
Artificial Turf	Does not discolour due to dog waste Can handle repeated traffic Low maintenance	May overheat under direct sunlight, damage paws Debris can impact drainage	\$\$\$
Grass	Soft underfoot Visually appealing Low installation cost	High maintenance Drainage issues may cause ponding Easily damaged by heavy traffic	\$
Kennel Tiles	May be used as dog run liner or in surrounding areas where surface is overused Interlocking, flexible fit Soft	High cost	\$\$\$
Mulch/ Woodchips	Low maintenance and cost Allows adequate drainage Natural & recycled material	Needs replenishment due to decomposition Risk of splinters in paws May harbour bacteria from waste	\$\$\$
Decomposed Granite	Sterile Good for paths and areas with heavy foot traffic Does not retain waste smell	Proper drainage required May migrate downhill	\$\$\$
Shredded Rubber	Soft texture	Higher cost Risk of ingestion	\$\$\$

MATERIAL	PROS	CONS	COST
	Does not attract weeds or insects		
Sand	Natural material Adequate drainage	Difficult to maintain and keep clean Not accessible for mobile devices May overheat under direct sunlight, damage paws	\$\$
FENCING & SCREENING			
MATERIAL	PROS	CONS	COST
Woven wire	Easy to install Inexpensive Concrete ledge may be poured under the frame to prevent dogs from digging	May be fragile	\$\$
Chain Link Fencing	Easy to install. Inexpensive and durable	May be fragile or distorted over time	\$\$
Mulch / Woodchips	Low maintenance and cost Allows adequate drainage Natural & recycled material	Needs replenishment due to decomposition Risk of splinters in paws May harbour bacteria from waste	\$
Decomposed Granite	Sterile Good for paths and areas with heavy foot traffic Does not retain waste smell	Proper drainage required May migrate downhill	\$\$\$

Minimum Standard Features include:

- Waste and excrement collection containers, and pick up bag dispensers
- Fencing and double-gate self latching closure, where required
- Signage

Additional Features for Consideration:

- Dedicated 'small and shy dog' area
- Paw washing station
- Dog drinking fountain
- Lighting fixtures
- Dedicated parking
- Social seating spaces (picnic tables, covered or uncovered seating)
- Shaded features, including dog-run area, also used for sudden inclement weather
- Agility training features

Accessibility

The Town of Aurora is committed to accessibility. When designing and implementing new LFAs, consideration must be given to provide full access where possible.

Considerations for design criteria may include:

- Accessible parking
- Hard surfacing
- Depressed curbs
- Gradual grading and slope
- Accessible gated entrances and turn around space
- Edge protection (where slope and grade changes present, including railings)
- Rest areas along path of travel to LFA (where not near parking)
- Viewing areas (inside and outside of fenced LFAs)
- Accessible transitions from pathways
- Accessible seating

Private Amenity Spaces

Staff investigated feasibility of private amenities spaces within condominium sites as options for LFAs. Particularly with apartment style residencies, LFAs are most needed as pet-relief without occupants having a space for their pet. This should be considered in during development at the site plan review stage, particularly where there is no significant private amenity greenspace. Staff will seek to incorporate this into future policy proposals. With privately owned public spaces encouraged within the Town's Parkland Dedication By-Law and Official Plans, staff will explore options for partnerships where appropriate.