



For the Committee of the Whole Meeting May 25 2017

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**Date:** Friday May 19 2017 **From:** Mayor Helps and Councillor Thornton-Joe

**Subject:** Dogs off Leash, Location Specific and Time-Limited Pilot Project

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## **Background**

On May 11 Council adopted the City's first Parks and Open Spaces Masterplan, which will guide the growth and development of our parks system for the next 25 years. One action outlined in the plan is to develop a Dogs in Parks Strategy. This is identified as a short-term item, to be done sometime in the next three years. This strategy will build on the work of Council's former Dogs in Parks Committee that brought forward the leash optional areas.

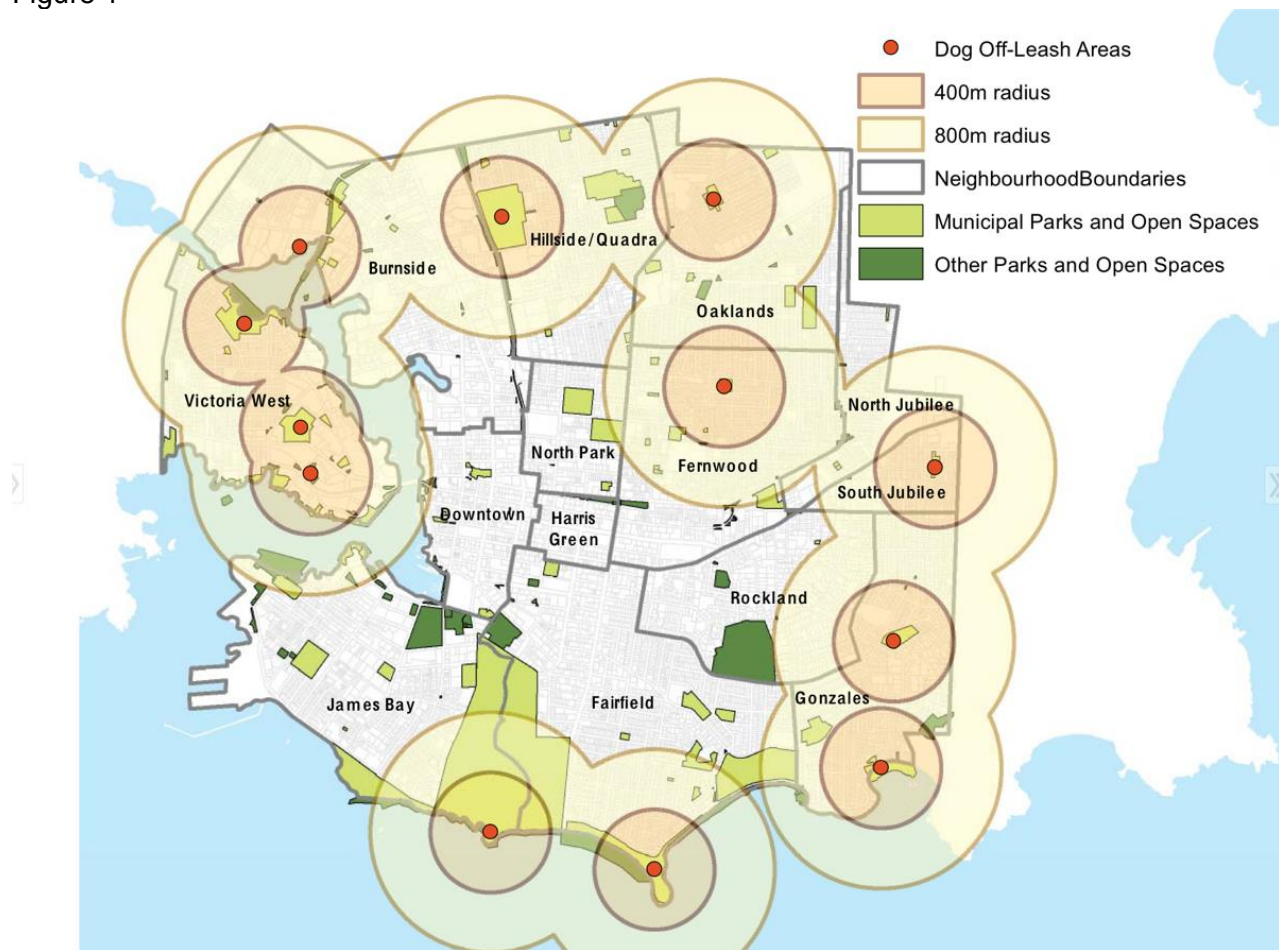
At the same time as the Parks and Open Spaces planning process was underway, there were two areas of the city identified by residents as requiring change with regard to the City's dog policy. The first was a request to allow dogs on Gonzales Beach in the summer months during the early morning. The second was a request for time specific off leash opportunities at Fisherman's Wharf Park. Both of these groups of residents were told to sit tight and that these requests would be addressed through the Parks and Open Spaces Masterplan.

Given that more time will pass before the Parks and Open Spaces Masterplan Dogs in Parks Strategy will developed, to aid and provide information into the development of this strategy, and in response to residents, we are recommending a one-year pilot project for dogs (and their owners!) as follows:

1. At Fisherman's Wharf Park for off-leash between 6:30-8:30am and 5:30-6:30pm
2. Gonzales Beach for dogs allowed on the beach in the summer months between 6:30-8:30am

Specifically with regard to Fisherman's Wharf Park, the Parks and Open Spaces Masterplan revealed a lack of off-leash opportunities in James Bay as illustrated in Figure 1. The residents who brought this to our attention have noted that since they have been prohibited from having their dogs off leash in Fisherman's Wharf Park there are seniors who are not getting social opportunities – which are critical for a sense of connectedness and well-being. As well, there are people that are now driving with their dogs to Dallas Road, increasing greenhouse gas emissions, even though they have a perfectly good park across the road. In addition, from a tourism point of view, many of the hotels in the area allow dogs and see an early morning off-leash dog area as an amenity as noted in the attached letter from the Laurel Point Inn.

Figure 1



## Recommendations

1. That Fisherman's Wharf Park allow dogs off leash from 6:30-8:30am and 5:30-6:30pm as a one year pilot project.
2. That Gonzales Beach allow dogs on the beach from 6:30-8:30am during the summer months.
3. The feedback be gathered on both of these pilot projects through the regular channels that citizens communicate with council, specifically [mayorandcouncil@victoria.ca](mailto:mayorandcouncil@victoria.ca)
4. That Council evaluate the Gonzales Beach pilot project in the fall of 2017 based on input received.
5. That Council evaluate the Fisherman's Wharf pilot project in the late spring of 2018 based on feedback received.

**Respectfully Submitted,**

Mayor Helps

Councillor Thornton-Joe