

Leash Free site preference Ward 2 (RCC-04-22) (SD-13-22)



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April 18, 2022

To: Members of Burlington City Council  
Re: Agenda Item 12.4 (g) April 19 City Council Meeting: Leash free dog park site preference concerns, April 19

I'm writing to you on behalf of the Burlington Tennis Club (BTC) to express a concern with the proposal to locate a leash free zone for large and small dogs on the lawns near the Drury Lane and New Street corner location of Central Park.

BTC members and visiting tennis players value and use the extensive lawn areas near the tennis courts and the shady stand of mature trees. BTC's location in Central Park is a key asset to our club's unique tennis offerings to the Burlington community, a draw for the larger Ontario tennis community and a major reason that the club succeeds. Positioning a leash free dog park in this part of the park will infringe on this use, to the detriment of both amenities. The proposed location is currently, visible, wide-open and accessible. This esthetic would change when enclosed by the fencing required by a leash free zone and the removal of several mature trees.

BTC is a joint venture lease-holder of Central Park and has been operating since 1979. It provides a wide range of tennis programs and lessons for all ages and has grown into a vibrant recreation facility. In 2021, our club's membership reached a peak of 720, including 284 families, 272 Adults and 164 Junior players. Our 2022 membership numbers continue to be strong. The summer camps and youth programs comprise tennis and wellness components that use the park's lawns in games of soccer, fitness training and agility. This use would not be possible if fenced to provide for a leash free zone.

Through a partnership with ACE Tennis, the Club hosts over 20 Ontario Tennis Association (OTA) tournaments throughout the season, attracting approximately 500 players and their families to downtown Burlington during the summer, generating over \$10,000.00 in annual revenue for BTC and benefits to downtown businesses. The Central Park facility provides an amenable space for players, parents and others to enjoy the game in a quiet setting with accessibility, nearby parking. Over the past two years, due to adherence to COVID-19 protocols, use of the clubhouse was limited, however visitors were able to social distance on Central Park's extensive lawns and be cooled by the shade of its mature trees. Would these trees be cleared to accommodate the building of a leash free dog park?

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The parking lot already serves several park amenities and at times is insufficient for all of them. It would be pressured further by visiting dog owners' use of the leash free area.

As a frequent visitor to Central Park, I've met and observed how residents and their dogs enjoy full use of the entire park already – on a leash. I'm also a dog owner and enjoy meeting other people and their pets. This arrangement seems to suit everyone and with the added benefit of fewer disruptions that might result from a leash free zone such as excessive noise from barking and owners yelling, parking issues and loose dogs, creating potential safety issues for people and their dogs. Consequently, I wonder whether the cost of changing the park to accommodate the few who wish to let their dogs run free in a fenced area outweigh the benefits of the many, who already enjoy exercising themselves and their leashed pets in a safe and responsible manner throughout the entirety of Central Park.

I hope the above perspective will assist Council in their decision-making.

Regards,

*Christina Wilson*

Christina Wilson  
President, Burlington Tennis Club