




COMMUNICATION UPDATE

TO:	Mayor and Members City Council
DATE:	June 13, 2025
SUBJECT:	Birch Avenue Leash Free Dog Park Soils Finding (ES2508) (Ward 3)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	Ward 3
SUBMITTED BY:	Cynthia Graham Director, Environmental Services Public Works Department
SIGNATURE:	

PURPOSE

To update City Council on the temporary closure of the Birch Avenue Leash-Free Dog Park, effective June 13, 2025, as a precautionary measure to ensure the protection of dog health.

INFORMATION

In October 2010, the dog park at Birch Avenue was established and since then, has been well used. When the park was established, site background studies were reviewed and determined to meet the standards at the time for park use. The site was historically used as a disposal location for non-hazardous fill including brick, rubble and concrete.

In May 2024, staff received a complaint by a local Ward 3 resident, who believed that the soil condition at the dog park was negatively affecting the health of the dogs using the space, citing illness and death. City staff initiated an RFQ process to conduct site soil analysis in July 2024.

After awarding that work to a consultant in November 2024, soil sampling and analysis was completed in January 2025.

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The results of the soil testing identified that each of the four (4) soil samples at the dog park contain exceedances on some criteria of the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks current standards for parkland. After receiving the results, staff requested an analysis on the human risk associated with the soils on the site.

In June 2025, City staff received an opinion that common use of the site by humans, with the grass coverage over the site, **poses no imminent danger to people**. However, some exposed soil is common at dog parks, and this site is no exception. Human health is not at risk, but the impacts to dog health remain uncertain.

The City has engaged a consultant to initiate further review of the tests with a dog as the target species in mind. Once comprehensive testing and information is available, next steps can be better understood and planned.

Effective immediately and out of an abundance of caution related to protecting health of dogs, the dog park will be closed to the public until further notice. The fully fenced dog park will be locked and a closure notice sign will be placed at the entrance. These precautionary measures are based on the initial soil screening information.

It is recognized this closure will be an inconvenience and ask for patience while further testing is completed. Residents will be encouraged to visit nearby leash free areas such as the Ward 2 Dog Park at 371 Wellington Street North and the Rail Trail Dog Park at 175 Ferguson Avenue South. **Appendix A** includes a map of nearby dog parks.

Staff will report back to Council with a subsequent Communication Update once the extent of the impacted soils is fully known, including an action plan for recommended next steps.

If you have any questions regarding this Communication Update, please contact Rory Doucette, Manager of Parks, at Rory.Doucette@hamilton.ca

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix A – Birch Street Dog Park Closure Alternative Locations



Birch Street Dog Park Closure Alternative Locations

Legend

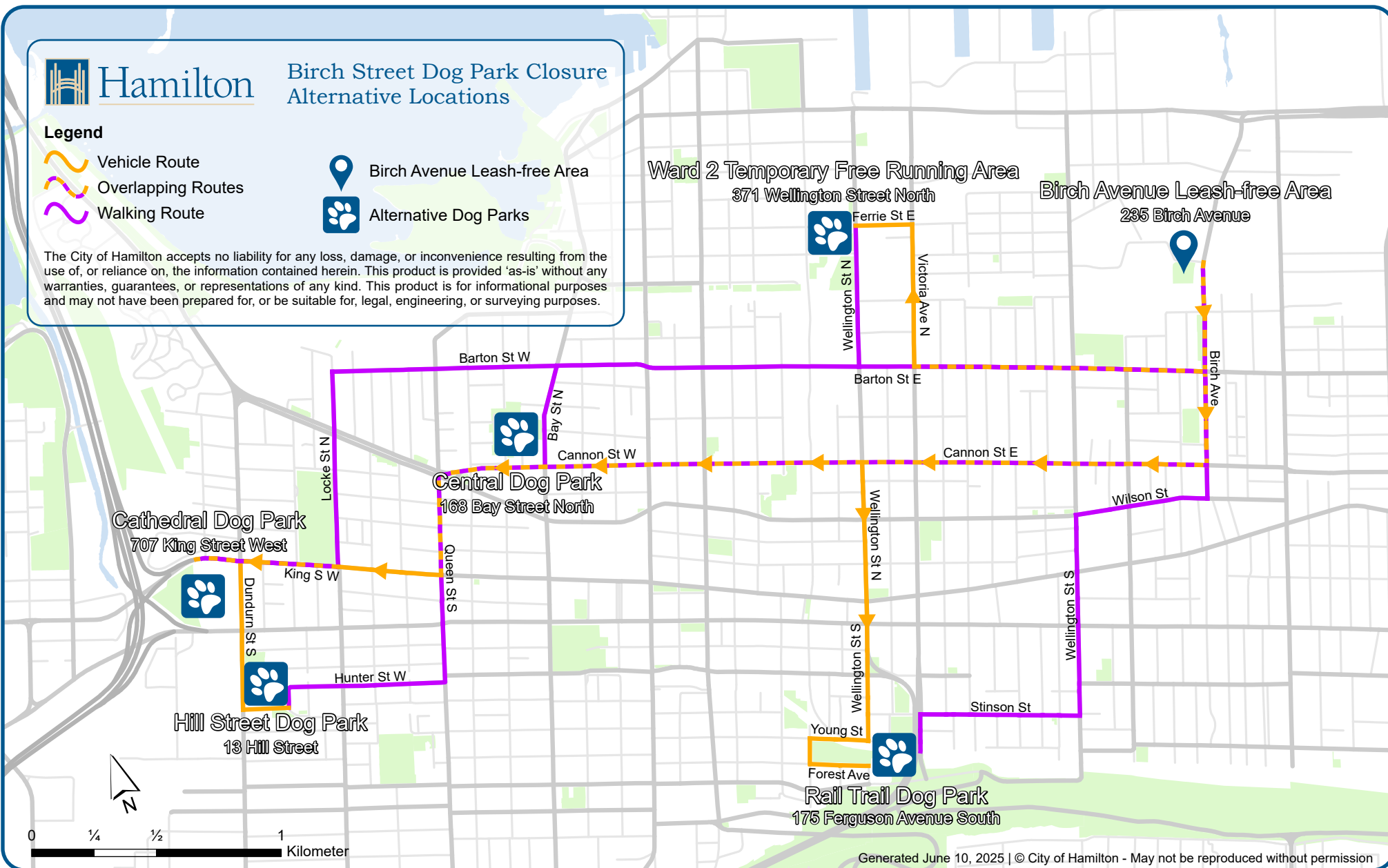
- Vehicle Route
- Overlapping Routes
- Walking Route



Birch Avenue Leash-free Area

Alternative Dog Parks

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Park Name	Walking Time (Minutes)	Driving Time (Minutes)	Additional Dog Park Information
Ward 2 Temporary Free Running Area	30	5	Unfenced, No Parking Available
Rail Trail Dog Park	45	10	Drinking Fountain, Dog Bowl, Lighting, Parking Available at Corktown Park
Central Dog Park	50	10	Drinking Fountain, Dog Bowl, Lighting, Separate Small Dog Area, Limited Street Parking Available
Hill Street Dog Park	80	20	Drinking Fountain, Dog Bowl, Limited Street Parking Available
Cathedral Dog Park	80	25	Drinking Fountain, Dog Bowl, No Parking Available