

--	--

Lisa McNiven

TO:	COMMUNITY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING ON FEBRUARY 17, 2016
FROM:	J. M. FLEMING MANAGING DIRECTOR, PLANNING and CITY PLANNER
SUBJECT:	UPDATE ON PARKS FOR LONDONERS WITH DOGS
RECOMMENDATION	

That, on the recommendation of the Managing Director, Planning and City Planner, the following actions **BE TAKEN**:

- a) that this report **BE RECEIVED** for information regarding:
 - 1. an update on the Dingman Off-Leash Dog Area,
 - 2. a new initiative to develop an urban dog area that supports dog-owning downtown residents, and
 - 3. a new initiative to pilot the City's first timed off-leash area;
- b) that the construction of a new off-leash area at 941 Commissioners Rd. E. **BE APPROVED**;
- c) that the construction of 1 pilot urban dog area at 280 Dundas Street **BE APPROVED**;
- d) that the designation of 1 pilot timed off-leash dog area in Harris Park **BE APPROVED**;
- e) in keeping with the City's Bylaw No. A.-6151-17 Public Notice policy, properties within 200 meters of the projects **BE INFORMED** of the plans, and;
- f) that staff **BE DIRECTED** to bring back revisions to By-Law PH-7, a by-law to establish and regulate an area which dogs can run at large in the City of London, to a future meeting of CPSC.

PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER
--

- Our Move Forward: London's Downtown (April 14, 2015, approved by Council)
- Proposed Dingman Dog Off-Leash Area (July 22, 2013 of CPSC)
- Dogs Off-leash Area Amending By-law (November 12, 2007, meeting of CPSC)
- Off-leash Area Site Evaluation (July 9, 2007, meeting of CPSC)
- Site Selection Criteria for Dogs Off-leash Areas (April 2, 2007, meeting of CPSC)
- Dogs Off-leash Area Amending By-law (September 26, 2005, meeting of CPSC)
- Plan for Off-Leash Areas (April 2005, approved by Council)

BACKGROUND

In April 2005, City Council endorsed London's Plan for Off-leash Areas (OLAs). This plan calls for an equal distribution of sites throughout the City in order to serve Londoners more conveniently. Currently there are three off-leash areas at: Pottersburg Park, 1139 Hamilton Road (East); Stoney Creek Meadows, 1343 Adelaide St. N. (North); and Greenway Park, 50 Greenside Avenue (West). The priorities for the next off-leash areas are in South-Central London and the urban area of the City to balance the availability of OLAs.

The need for Dogs Off-leash Areas has been confirmed in two City Planning documents. The Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan, (2009) lists them as desirable features within our parks system and the Our Move Forward: London's Downtown Plan (2015) has identified them as "a priority downtown to provide neighbourhood amenities and appeal to a variety of age groups, lifestyles and household compositions".

For many people, visiting an off-leash dog area is their sole form of recreation. Off-leash areas help to reduce the number of off-leash dogs in other parks and provide a suitable, attractive and safe facility for dog-owners to exercise and socialize both themselves and their pets. Currently,

--	--

Lisa McNiven

there are over 26,000 dog owners in the City [estimated that only 53% of pets are registered] , including many who are seeking this type of recreation opportunity and requesting more off-leash areas through our main point of contact, the London Dog Owners' Association.

UPDATE ON DINGMAN OFF-LEASH DOG AREA

In the summer of 2013, Council approved the development of an off-leash area at 4695 Dingman Drive to serve the South-Central sector of London. By August 2014, Archeological Clearance of the site had been registered with the Provincial Government and permission to construct in the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority's regulated area had been granted.

Contractors were engaged for the seeding of the site, installation of fencing and construction of a parking lot. Unfortunately after successive attempts, contractors were unable to get their equipment onto the site due to excessively wet conditions. It was determined that an extensive drainage system would need to be installed to make the site accessible by construction crews and usable in the future by park users. The projected costs for the drainage works extended well beyond the allocated project funds.

Recognizing this, the Environmental and Parks Planning Division began investigating other sites in the south-central area of London. After considerable review, an alternative site has been identified at 941 Commissioners Rd. E. (Appendix A).

NEW OFF-LEASH AREA IN SOUTH-CENTRAL LONDON

With the Dingman Drive site too wet to be utilized, staff reviewed again all available City-owned lands in the south-central area of the City. Lands investigated were those adjacent to the Exeter Road Operations Centre at 707 Exeter Road and those adjacent to the Dearness Home at 710 Southdale Rd. E. Both of these sites were deemed unsuitable due to access restrictions and conflict with current uses. Staff also sought permission to utilize lands owned by London Health Science Centre (LHSC) near Wellington and Commissioners Rds. LHSC Executive did not grant permission for the development because it felt that a dog off-leash area was not compatible with other hospital uses. No other parcels of a suitable size are available for this use other than 941 Commissioners Rd. E.

The approved screening criteria for an off-leash area was applied to a north-easterly parcel of 941 Commissioners Rd. E. The parcel met all the screening criteria. It was then subjected to a qualitative review that included an evaluation of its natural setting, its pedestrian accessibility, vegetative buffers, impact on the natural environment and its economic feasibility for construction. This parcel scores very high and the Environmental and Parks Planning Division proposes that the site be developed as the fourth off-leash area serving south-central London.

The parcel has a gentle undulating terrain with stands of trees growing. An additional buffer will need to be planted along the sides of the parcel to provide screening to commercial properties on the west and a residential property to the east.

The new access driveway location has been reviewed and approved by the Transportation Division.

Staff propose that this new dog off-leash area be named after London Police Service Dog Caesar who gave up his life in the line of duty in 1974. Caesar died while attempting to apprehend an armed man. Caesar is now the mascot of the London Police Force, who asked for this commemoration. The naming of the dog area after Caesar will pay tribute to his ultimate sacrifice and to other London's Police Service Dogs and the K9 Services.

Funding for this project has already been approved; capital project PD2160.590000.13200 has funding of \$116,000 available for construction. Standing purchase contracts will be utilized to construct this facility.

--	--

Lisa McNiven

NEW INITIATIVE – ONE PILOT URBAN OFF-LEASH AREA

The downtown is home to over 4,000 residents and its population has been steadily increasing since the 1990s at a substantially faster growth rate than the city as a whole. Residential construction is sharply up, mainly in the form of high-rise towers. Many people choosing to live downtown own dogs, but have limited access to outdoor amenity space. To support the downtown as a vibrant, welcoming and inclusive community, it is important to provide amenities that appeal to a variety of lifestyles and age groups. In most large cities, urban parks for dogs are a standard feature and serve the community by providing both a recreation and social function. By providing this area and future similar amenities, we also hope to control or reduce the issue of dog detritus on sidewalks and boulevards.

Currently, there are approximately 240 dog licenses and an estimated 130 non-licensed dogs in the urban core. To accommodate the interests and lifestyle of these current and future urban residents, the City is proposing to develop one pilot urban area that permits dogs to run off-leash in Downtown London. No permanent structures or furnishings will be installed at this time. Temporary fencing will be erected to delineate the area and to make the parcel safe for dog owners and their pets.

The degree of use and success of the park will be monitored over 2016/17. Assuming, the park is successful as they are in other cities, we would proceed to finalize the park and propose a second park in the north-central part of Downtown.

An analysis has been performed of the concentration of dog licenses and their relationship to City parkland in Downtown London (Appendix B). Through a GIS analysis of license owners' addresses, the Campbell Memorial Park at 280 Dundas Street (Appendix A) has been identified as being within a five minute walk from high concentrations of dog license holders.

Funding for this project was included in the 2015 budget in capital project PD3020-15.590000.13200 for \$50,000. Standing purchase contracts will be utilized to construct this facility.

NEW INITIATIVE – TIMED OFF-LEASH AREA [NO FENCING]

A timed Off-leash Area is an unfenced area within a park, where dogs are permitted to run off-leash. The area is delineated as an off-leash area with a sign that includes a delineating plan. The dogs must be under their owner's control at all times and must respond to their owner's voice, sound or visual commands. Like in all dog parks, owners are required to pick up and dispose of their pet's waste.

Timed off-leash areas are designed as walk-to amenities within neighbourhoods to meet the recreational needs of immediate dog owners. There is clear evidence of this need as the downtown population grows and the number of complaints regarding dog detritus in our downtown parks and public spaces increases. Many large cities have timed off-leash areas including Calgary, Ottawa and Toronto.

The City is proposing to develop one pilot timed off-leash area within Harris Park (Appendix A). No furnishings will be installed; signs will illustrate the area graphically plus L-shaped fences will be erected in the area's northwest and southwest corners to help delineate the dog area from the greater park and to provide some separation from a pedestrian path.

The degree of use and success of the timed area will also be monitored over 2016/17. Assuming, this pilot project is successful, we would proceed to add benches and trees. Future need elsewhere in the city will be initiated and supported by a neighbourhood engagement process.

Funding for this project was included in the 2015 budget in capital project PD3020-15.590000.13200 for \$15,000. Standing purchase contracts will be utilized to construct this facility.

--	--

Lisa McNiven

PUBLIC NOTICE

The City strives to engage its citizens in the development of new master plans and capital projects. Four meetings have been held to define and confirm the off-leash area strategy, including provision of off-leash areas and timed off-leash areas. The London Dog Owners Association [LDOA] endorsed the strategy.

As per the City’s Bylaw No. A.-6151-17 Public Notice policy, properties within 200 meters of the projects will be informed of the plans to implement the off-leash strategy.

MAINTENANCE AND ENFORCEMENT

Key to the success of this program is proper maintenance of the off-leash areas and enforcement of the Parks By-law and the Off-leash Area rules. OLAs are used 365 days a year and require on-going maintenance such as garbage removal, gate repairs, fencing repairs, trail resurfacing and tree pruning or removal.

For existing sites and the fourth large OLA, Parks Operations has the operating funding available in base budgets to carry out the needed work. For the other new proposed OLAs, additional operational costs are expected to be minimal. Assessment growth funding will be requested in future years to address the additional maintenance requirements of these new parks if necessary.

Enforcement of off-leash rules will continue as per existing standards. By law officers will respond to urgent and/or recurrent issues.

CONCLUSION

The 3 new OLA areas complete the City-wide need for an equal distribution of dog areas. Pilot “urban” OLA and “timed” OLA respond to the growing need in urban cores consistent with other cities and help to address on-going litter issues associated with urban dogs.

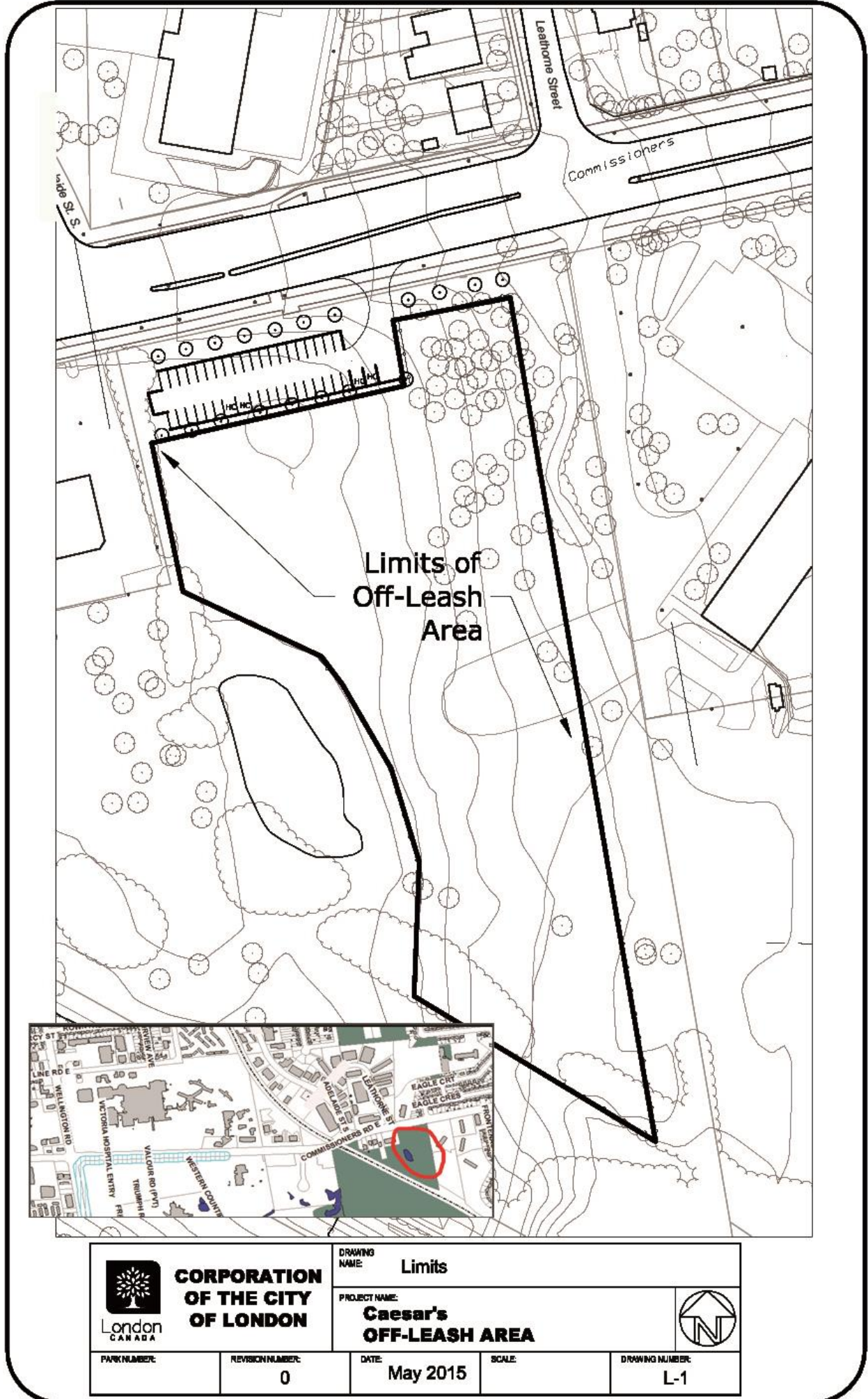
PREPARED BY:	SUBMITTED BY:
LISA MCNIVEN, PARKS PROJECT COORDINATOR	ANDREW MACPHERSON, OALA MANAGER ENVIRONMENTAL AND PARK PLANNING
RECOMMENDED BY:	
JOHN M. FLEMING, MCIP, RPP MANAGING DIRECTOR, PLANNING AND CITY PLANNER	



APPENDIX A – New Off-leash Areas
 APPENDIX B – Concentration of Dog Licenses and Available City Lands in Downtown London

--	--

Lisa McNiven

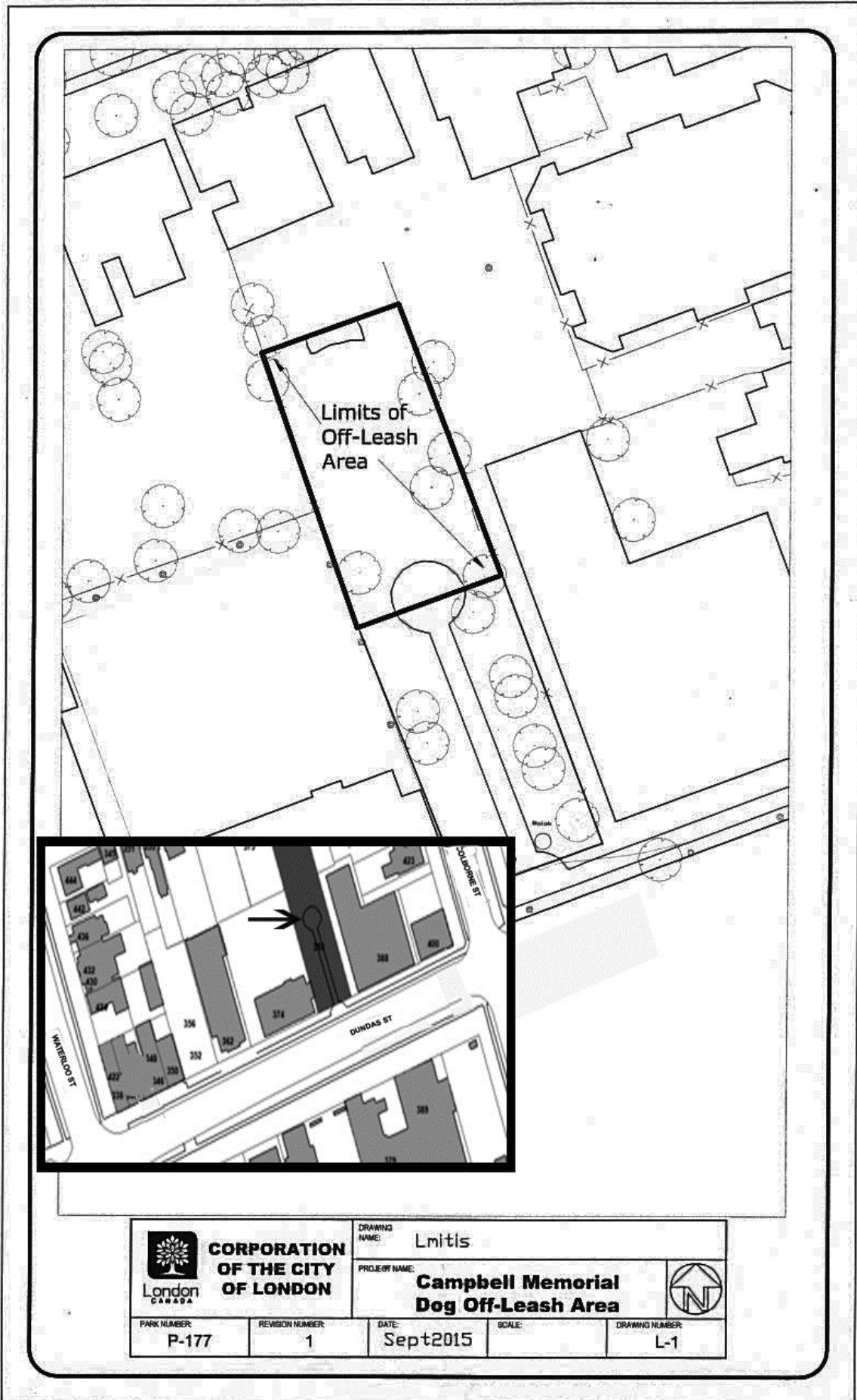
APPENDIX A – NEW OFF-LEASH AREAS





 <p>CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF LONDON</p>	DRAWING NAME: Limits		
	PROJECT NAME: Caesar's OFF-LEASH AREA		
PARK NUMBER:	REVISION NUMBER: 0	DATE: May 2015	SCALE:
			DRAWING NUMBER: L-1

--	--

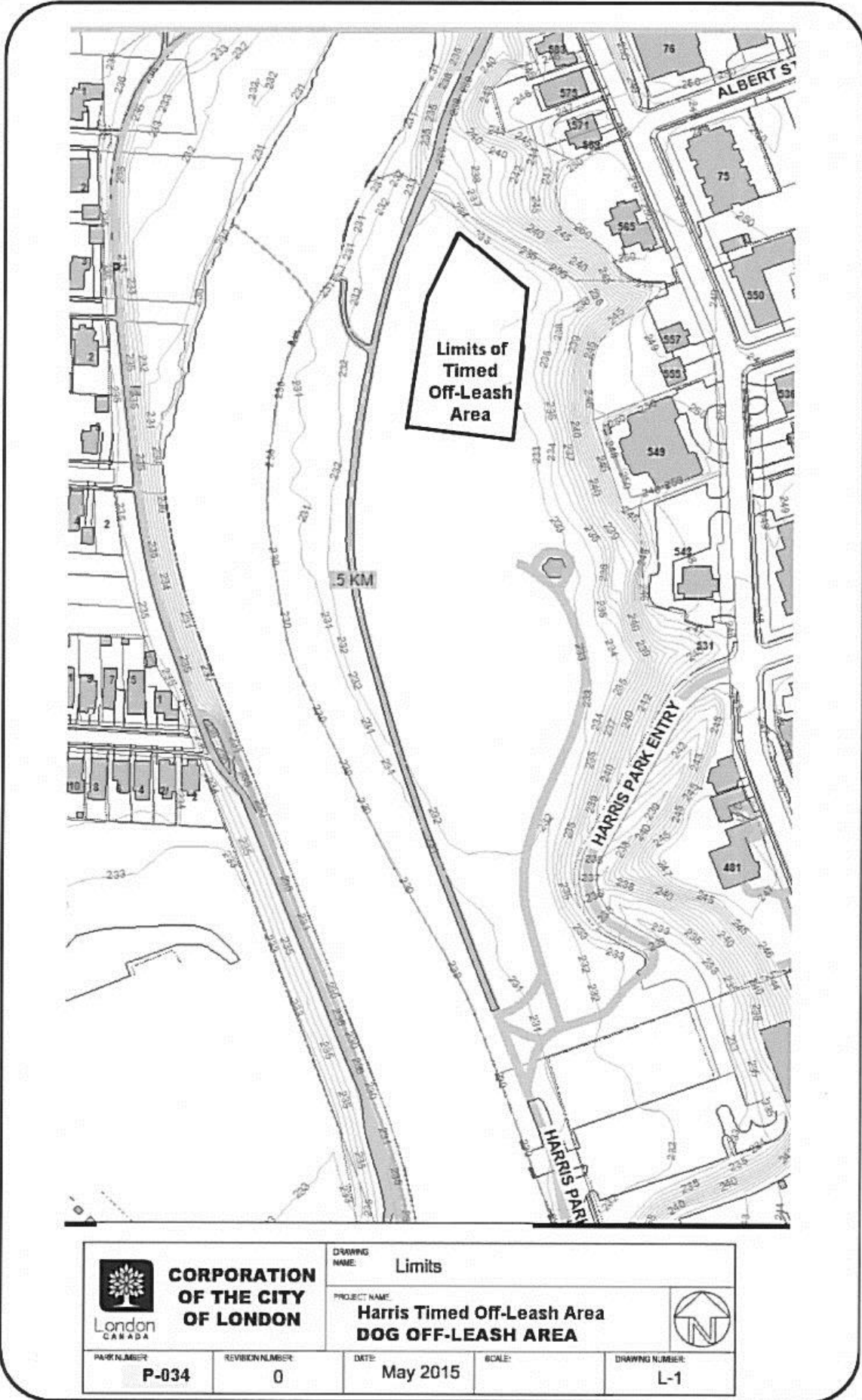
Lisa McNiven



 CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF LONDON	DRAWING NAME: Limits			
	PROJECT NAME: Campbell Memorial Dog Off-Leash Area			
PARK NUMBER: P-177	REVISION NUMBER: 1	DATE: Sept2015	SCALE:	DRAWING NUMBER: L-1

--	--

Lisa McNiven



Two empty rectangular boxes for agenda item and page numbers.

Lisa McNiven

APPENDIX B: CONCENTRATION OF DOG LICENSES AND AVAILABLE CITY LANDS IN DOWNTOWN LONDON

