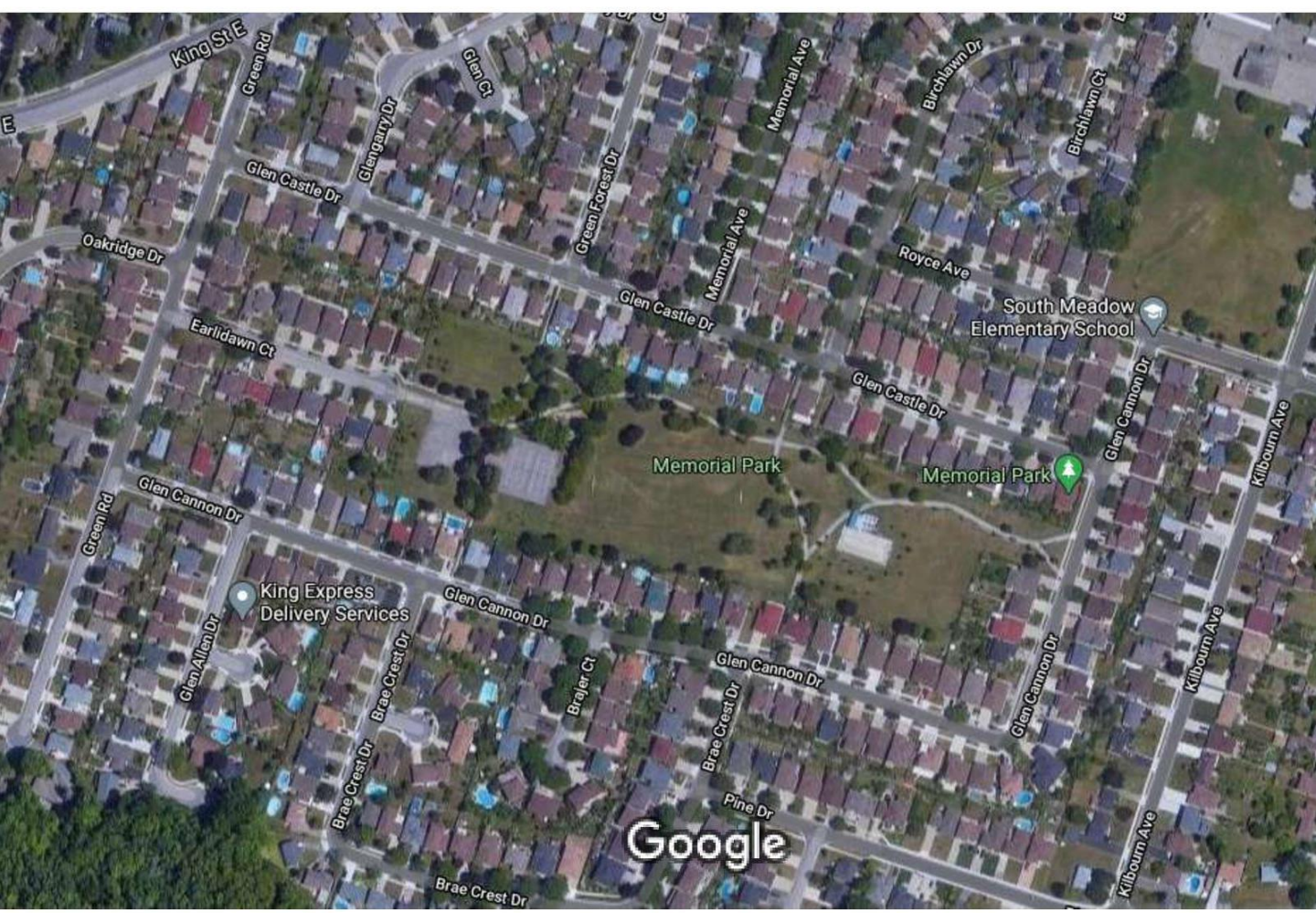


Dog feces in parks

Memorial Park in ward 10 Hamilton





Memorial park has 6 entrances.

The main entrance at the east end with the signs as shown previously shown.

A parking entrance at the west end.

Two entrances on south side between houses.

Two entrances on north side between houses.

There are two waste bins, one near the entrance as previously shown, the other is close to the centre of the park.

Feces on grass



Bags



Hamilton Spectator Article

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Why do so many dog owners refuse to scoop poo?

Local parks, cemeteries and even sidewalks are fecal minefields during a pandemic spring when everyone wants to be outside

MATTHEW VAN DONGEN
THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

It's the squishy sign of spring that forces you to tiptoe through the fecal field of nightmares that was once your local park.

Dog poop. A week of melting snow and suddenly all you can

see is feces — on trails and sidewalks, in baseball diamonds, cemeteries and park grass.

"It's so gross. A lot of people seem to think it's OK to hide the stuff in the snow, but guess what? It's still there in the spring," said city parks head Kara Bunn,

whose department is starting to field calls from residents demanding park cleanups.

She has to give them a heavy "doody" dose of reality instead. "No one is going to pick up after your

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dog. We don't have the staffing to do that ... it's just everywhere."

It's hard to quantify if 2021 is especially crappy for park users. Bunn noted the poop problem may be more noticeable because more people are spending pandemic time outdoors.

But just do the daunting math. An estimated 85,000 pet dogs live in Hamilton, said city Animal Services head Brad Potts. That's up from roughly 70,000 in 2016.

A healthy dog makes a doo-nation between once and five times a day. Some studies say the average canine produces about a kilogram of poop every five days, or 73 kilograms a year.

Depressing surveys in the United States suggest scoopers represent only 60 per cent of dog owners.

The resulting leftovers are a health and environmental risk, says the Canadian Public Health Association, which notes kids are especially susceptible to diseases carried in dog feces.

And unless neighbourhood volunteers come to the rescue, most of that abandoned poop



BARRY GRAY THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

An estimated 85,000 pet dogs live in Hamilton.

will wash down storm drains and into beloved water bodies like Cootes Paradise — which has enough problems with human waste.

It's not clear why so few people are willing to scoop. But Bunn said areas with "fewer eyes" — like alleys or less prominent parks — are hot spots for no-scoop poops. "If more people are watching, you get better compliance," she said.

Brenda Duke's home backs onto one of those hot spots, Birch Avenue park. Poop piles old and new littered the grass and even the sidewalk at the park Wednesday.

Duke, who helps organize the annual Beautiful Alleys cleanup, is willing to cheerfully chase down and offer poop bags to "forgetful" dog owners in her backyard park, but the messes still pile up.

It's no excuse in her view, but Duke said she wonders if the city's winter removal of some park trash cans contributes to the poop-scoop strike.

Some park trash cans are removed across the city, including near trails, to cut the workload for city staff needed for winter duties, said Bunn.

Duke said some irritated dog walkers on Birch have respond-

ed by leaving dog doo near a sundial in nearby Powell Park. "People were calling it the Powell Park poop pole for a while," she said.

More city trash cans will be reinstalled in parks as summer approaches. But is there anything else the city can do?

You can be fined \$65 for ignoring Hamilton's stoop-and-scoop bylaw and the city responded to nearly 200 complaints about unscooped poo last year, said Potts.

But only 15 charges were laid — and all against private property owners who didn't clean up smelly yards when asked. "It's really hard to prove that someone left dog poop in a park ... unless you see it happen," said Potts.

Hamilton also installed special pet waste receptacles at Grove cemetery, the Hill Street dog park and Bayfront Park as part of a composting pilot in 2019. That pilot is on hold over concerns the material was being incinerated, rather than "recycled" by the Waterloo recycling contractor, said Bunn, but more locations could be considered next year.

Matthew Van Dongen is a Hamilton-based reporter covering transportation for The Spectator. mvandongen@thespec.com

Suggested Solution

Bins at all entry points, with signage and poop bags.

Newsletter to all residents close to park indicating safety and health concerns, and that changes have been made and facilities are available.

Article in Stoney Creek News to notify about improvements in the park and to encourage compliance.