

Moss Park residents learn to live with trash

Although not happy about mounting garbage, it 'has to go somewhere'

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Joachim Kun has barely noticed the growing mounds of garbage in the middle of Moss Park.

The 62-year-old drifter has been sleeping in the park, on the northwest corner of Queen and Sherbourne Sts., since the weather got warm, and has watched black trash bags slowly fill the nearby basketball courts.

"I really don't notice the smell," said Kun as he lay in the sun, a stone's throw from the temporary dump site.

"If it gets worse, I'll go to the beach. But it's okay right now."

In stark contrast to the Christie Pits site, which stopped accepting new trash yesterday after the city said it had reached capacity – and after two weeks of protests by local residents – many Moss Park-area residents have quietly accepted the influx of trash in their green space.

The park, which sits near three of the city's largest homeless shelters, is a popular refuge for the area's underprivileged. It boasts a playground, a community garden, a cricket pitch and a dog park.

"It's a wonderful spot. But the garbage has to go somewhere," said J.J. Witherspoon, a psychologist who has lived in the area for 16 years.

When the fences were erected 10 days ago, they stretched the length of the park, prompting several complaints from residents that they had been robbed of their public space.

On Thursday, the dump zone was reduced after several fences were repeatedly knocked over.

"I seen people going over the fence to play soccer, to walk their dogs. They didn't like it," resident Danielle Humphreys said.

The trash site is now next to Moss Park Arena, away from the fields where a handful of people played baseball on the weekend.

However, if the current zone reaches capacity, the city would extend the dump site back to the fields, said city spokeswoman Cheryn Thoun.

Perry Missal, who has been lobbying the city to consider an alternate dump site, said restoring the larger site would anger many residents.

"People are just resigned to the fact that the garbage has to go somewhere. But that would change," Missal predicted.

Until it does, it's business as usual for those who use Moss Park.

Jackie, out walking her border terrier, said she hasn't seen a drop in dog-walkers since the temporary dump was opened.

"We just don't go anywhere near (the garbage)," said Jackie, who declined to give her last name.

Meanwhile, Humphreys said she will bring her two sons to the water park until the strike ends.

"We don't like the garbage, but we can't do anything about it," she said.