

Dog Park Community Meeting Recap for the Board

March 2019

Special Projects and Facilities
Committee Meeting

Enriching lives and creating memorable experiences.



Barbara Heller our facilitator, started the meeting with an overview of the agenda and dog park information.

Dog Park Open House Meeting

February 12, 2019

Agenda

- Introductions and overview of meeting
- Dog park overview
- Meeting format
- Summary of comments



Dog Park Facts

- Since 2009 the number of dog parks has grown by 40%.
- 91% of Americans believe dog parks provide benefits to the community.
- 55% of park and recreation agencies have dog parks.
- Dog parks are the fastest growing park amenity throughout the country.



NRPA Parks and Recreation Magazine
November 2018

Dog Park Facts

- Top 3 community dog park benefits
 - 60% gives dogs a safe space to exercise and roam around freely
 - 48% allows dog to socialize with other dogs
 - 36% allows owners a chance to be physically active with their pet
- Socialization opportunities for dogs and people
- Dog parks promote moderate physical activity, promote walkable neighborhoods, enhanced sense of community, and safety for dogs.



Dog Park Facts

- Anecdotally, dog park public meetings have become the most adversarial public meeting type.
- The biggest problems with dog parks are dog owners not abiding by rules and not cleaning up after their dogs.
- Maintenance of surface has been a continuous issue.
- Not having specified areas for large and small dogs has been a problem.
- There have been problems reported of overstimulated dogs running amok, dogs practicing bully behaviors, and dog fights.*

*Whole Dog Journal

Off Leash Park Designs

- Dog runs are usually a minimum of 5,000 square feet.
- Dog Parks are at least a half acre to one acre. Best designs are several acres.
- Fencing is required, with a minimum height of four feet.
- A larger dog park may include architectural and landscaping features.
- Multiple surfaces are used: poured surface, crusher fines (gravel), crushed granite.
- Playcore makes a surface specifically made for dogs, called Canine Coat.
- Key fob or swipe card entrance.
- Entry corral of concrete is important. Double gated to prevent dogs inside from escaping.
- Education for dog park users.

Off Leash Design

- A well-constructed dog park is solidly fenced, ideally with amenities that include agility equipment, and varied terrain, such as open fields, creeks, and woods, so dogs have plenty to keep them environmentally engaged.
- Water fountains, high and low for people and dogs
- Benches and shade
- Parks that are small, overcrowded and boring greatly increase the likelihood of inappropriate canine behavior (fights).
- Separate areas exist for small and large dogs; under 30 and over 30 pounds.
- Roving pop up dog parks with temporary fencing have gained in popularity.

Dog Park Operations

- Key fob or swipe card
- Proof of vaccines
- Membership fee
- Rules and regulations visibly posted
- Programs and events
- Sponsorships such as Beneful are available.
- Typical to have a citizen's group involved in operations

Dog Related Programs

- Dog costume parades
- Dog birthday parties
- Dog wash
- Food truck for dogs and people
- Green dog program Brookline MA (13 off leash locations open from dawn to 1:00 pm)
- Santa Paws
- Dog-gone egg hunt
- Pooch plunge
- Coffee and treat bar
- Dog shuttle service
- Canine health fairs

Best Dog Parks in the US

Newtown Dream Dog Park - Johns Creek, Georgia



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Best Dog Parks

Beau's Dream Dog Park at Buchanan Park - Lancaster, Pennsylvania



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Best Dog Parks

Montrose Dog Beach - Chicago, Illinois



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Best Dog Parks

Bea Arthur Dog Park - Norfolk, Virginia



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Best Dog Parks

Jackass Acres K-9 Korral - New River, Arizona



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Area Dog Parks and Beaches

- Winnetka Beach: Centennial Dog Beach, open 12 months
 - Membership of \$50/\$200
- Highland Park
 - Debbie Gottlieb Beitler Dog Park at Larry Fink Memorial Park – open year round two off-leash exercise areas, depending on the size of your dog
 - Moraine Beach - open mid-April through mid-November
 - Highland Park Golf Learning Center – open mid-December through mid-March. There are two off-leash exercise areas, depending upon the size of dog. \$50/\$150

Area Dog Parks and Beaches

- Northbrook
 - Coast Guard Park \$49/year, residents only
- Wilmette
 - Gillson Dog Beach, \$35/residents and \$196 for non-residents
- Lake Forest (owned by Lake County FP)
 - Prairie Wolf Dog Park, 44 acres, \$50/\$150, seasonal membership as well for a reduced fee

Meeting Format

- Three station set-up
 - Ideas about potential locations for a dog park/dog run
 - Ideas in support of off leash dog park
 - Ideas against an off leash dog park
- Go to each station on your own time and record your comments on a post it note and post it on the flip chart paper.
- We will end the meeting with a review of comments at all three stations.

Summary, Discussion

- Next Steps



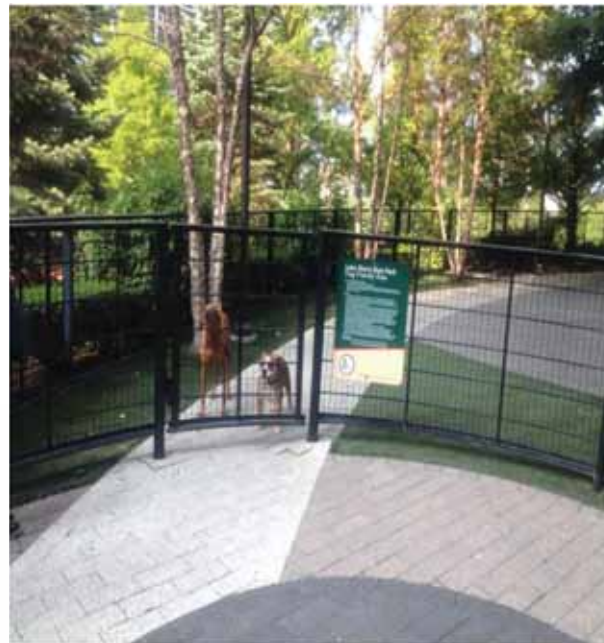
Example of a Chicago Dog Park



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Example of a Chicago Dog Park



Enriching lives and creating memorable experiences.



Notes from Dog Park Meeting

We ask the crowd of over 100 residents to visit three areas in the room to give their feedback to facilitators in each area.

The areas included:

- Ideas about potential locations for a dog park/dog run
- Ideas in support of off leash dog park
- Ideas against an off leash dog park

Resident Ideas on Potential Areas for a Dog Park In Glencoe

- We gave each person in attendance three green dots and three red dots.
- Each person was asked to put their three green dots on locations they think a dog park could go.
- Each person was asked to put their three red dots on locations they did not think a dog park should go.

Resident Ideas on Potential Areas for a Dog Park

We did give parameters on where to put the dots:

- Not on Parks or Fields that were developed already for active recreation...Athletic Fields and Playgrounds
- Park District Property Only
 - Contacted Cook County Forest Preserve and they are not interested in partnering on a dog park at this time.
 - Village does not have any suitable area for a dog park...golf course was brought up but is already an active recreation area thus not suitable.

Resident Ideas on Potential Areas for a Dog Park In Glencoe



Resident Ideas on Potential Areas for a Dog Park In Glencoe



Resident Ideas on Potential Areas for a Dog Park In Glencoe



Elimination of Areas for a Dog Park in Glencoe

Based on instruction of not putting a Dog Park on an Active Recreation area, playground or athletic field staff recommends eliminating the following locations for consideration:

- Woodlawn Park – Newly renovated playground - not enough room for a dog park
- Berlin Park – Baseball field and directly adjacent to a school
- Friends Park – not enough room to put a dog park there due to playground
- Old Elm Park - not enough room to put a dog park there due to playground
- Takiff Center – Softball field (may be enough room for a dog run behind parking and along the tracks)
- Lakefront Park – Active recreation area with high level use
- Glencoe Beach (In season) – Active recreation area from May – October which is the most desired season for a dog park
- West Park – Active recreation area – playground, athletic fields and adjacent to West School
- Watts soccer field and baseball field

Ideas against an off leash dog park

Participant Comments

Verbal comments:

- Location concern based on parking and the look of the chain link fencing
- There are two dog parks within five minutes. Why not get a cooperative agreement?
- Does not need to be a huge dog park, can be the size of the community hall
- Small community: sound, proximity to homes, thoroughfare of bikes and people

Ideas against an off leash dog park

Participant Comments

Post-It comments:

- To make it successful, perhaps consider restricting access by professional walkers with multiple dogs, so there is supervision (in favor of a dog park)
- Locating a park near any residence is unfair to the neighborhood. If we need a dog park it must be away from homes!
- Must a dog park be permanent? Why not have seasonal locations – e.g. golf course in winter months
- People who break dog park rules must be punished – including big fines and banishment
- Dogs are nice (usually). No problem with a park for them if local residents are not adversely affected.
- Concerned that placement near homes will negatively impact the homes and safety of the residents. In favor of dog park if there is space away from residential area.
- This is a flawed process – I saw people removing red dots and replacing them with green dots!
- I am in favor however, consistent barking and noise is disturbing. This park should be large enough and far away enough from homes.

Ideas in support of off leash dog park

Post-It comments:

- Dog parks allow us not to be law breakers
- Prevents dogs from off leash/ being in unwanted areas because there is a dedicated space
- We need dog beach all year around
- Engages neighbors, especially older residents, many of whom might be isolated
- Keep fence at 6 ft to keep from dog dumping
- Makes Glencoe appealing to potential homeowners who see that all neighboring burbs have dog parks
- Absolutely no membership fees! You don't charge neighborhood children to play at local parks, don't charge residents fees for a dog park
- Won't have to pay triple fees at neighboring parks
- Much needed community amenity
- Keeps the parkways along the streets clean
- People with dogs who play together stay together in our community

Ideas in support of off leash dog park

Post-It comments continued:

- Keeps dog healthier
- For dog owners it is a time and money saver
- Most dog owners pay money into other communities instead of their own for dog parks
- Glencoe residents only keeps from dog dumping
- Develops friendships and a sense of community
- Encourages outdoor activity and provides a destination for dog owners that is safe
- A space with no coyotes
- Builds relationship and community awareness as dog owners talk to each other
- Gets adults to mingle
- Dog parks are critical for dog/puppies to socialize so they are not aggressive to other dogs
- A separate place for small dogs, water, agility toys/props, dog exercise equipment, keep deer out/no deer poop, ensure dogs do not pass germs/illnesses

Ideas in support of off leash dog park

General Comments:

- Landscaping/berms between houses and the park
- Hours, sunrise/sunset, key fob system to control hours
- Is Takiff an option?
- Dog runs for small dogs the size of community hall, even a small dog park is a community builder
- There is no open space where the Village public works is located.

E-mails received regarding Community Dog Park Meeting

I received 44 e-mails in regards to the Community Dog Park Meeting from those who could not attend.

Summary:

In support of an Off Leash Dog Park: 34

Not in support of an Off Leash Dog Park: 8

Maybe....if taxpayer funds are not used: 2

E-mails with names redacted are provided in project binder

Next Steps

At the next committee meeting after evaluating all information provided, the committee should begin discussing if they would like to advance this idea forward and what further information they would like staff to gather.

Items to think about are:

- Does a dog park meet our mission?
- Are you ok with a dog park being close to a resident? How close is to close?
- Is still donor funded amenity only?
- Are you ok with ongoing expense of a off leash dog park?
- Other considerations?
- I would recommend that before the next discussion, Board members visit the sites indicated on the map as potential locations.

**AREA DOG PARK
GENERAL INFORMATION**

Dog Park	Location	Operating Months	Hours of Operation	Allows NR	Fee	Other Info
Park District of Highland Park	D. G. Beitler DP	Year Around	Dusk to Dawn	Yes	R \$50 then \$25 each addl dog	Large and small dog area
	Moraine Beach	Mid April - Mid Nov	Dusk to Dawn	Yes	NR \$150 then \$75 each addl dog	Large and small dog area Key Fob Max 2 dogs per visit
	HP Golf Learning Center	Mid Dec - Mid March	Dusk to Dawn	Yes	Fee for all three dog parks	
Northbrook Park District	Coast Guard Park	Year around	Sunrise to Sunset	No	\$49 then \$25 each addl dog July 1 - June 30 (no prorating)	
Winnetka Park District	Centennial Dog Beach (on the lake)	April 1 - March 31		Yes	R \$40 \$20 each addl dog NR \$180 \$40 each addl dog (fee includes mandatory village parking pass)	
Wilmette Park District	Gillson Dog Beach	May 26 - July 17 June 18 - August 10 August 11 - June 19, 2019	6a-10:30p 6-10a & 3:30-10:30p 6-10:30p	Yes	R \$35 then \$6 each addl dog NR \$196 then \$65 each addl dog	
Cook County Forest Preserve	Beck lake Bremen Grove Miller Meadow South	Year around Oct 1 - September 30	Sunrise to Sunset	Yes	Res \$60 per dog Non Res \$120 per dog	40 acres 7 acres (large & small dog area) 3 acres Keyless system
Lake County Forest Preserve	Duck Farm Dog Park Independence Grove Dog Park Lakewood Dog Park Prairie Wolf Dog Park - Lake Forest				Res \$50 then \$20 each addl dog NR \$150 then \$75 each addl dog Daily permit fee Price for all 4 parks	48 acres 30 acres 60 acres 44 acres
Deerfield Park District	Jaycee Park on Wilmot Rd	Year Around	Sunrise to Sunset	Yes	No fee	2 acres

Dog Park Detailed Information

Park District of Highland Park

Two dog parks and one dog beach are available to registered members:

- **Debbie Gottlieb Beitler Dog Park at Larry Fink Memorial Park – open year round** (701 Deer Creek Parkway) a relaxed park-like atmosphere with two off-leash exercise areas, depending on the size of your dog.
- **Moraine Beach – open mid-April through mid-November*** (2501 Sheridan Road) a beautiful view and opportunity for your dog to cool off in Lake Michigan.
- **Highland Park Golf Learning Center – open mid-December through mid-March*** (2205 Skokie Valley Highway) a large venue for your dog to run off some of that cabin fever energy. There are two off-leash exercise areas available, depending on the size of your dog
**Opening and closing dates are weather dependent.*

Membership Registration

- Membership is required for admittance in the dog parks and beach. You will receive a key fob membership card within then business days of registration. You must carry this key fob membership card with you when visiting all off-leash dog park areas.
- Registration can be completed **online** or in person at **Heller Nature Center**.
- Membership is valid for a 12-month period from date of purchase.

Membership Fees

- Resident: \$50 first dog (\$25 each additional dog). Must provide 2016-17 City of Highland Park dog tag number.
- Nonresident: \$150 first dog (\$75 each additional dog). Must provide current rabies vaccination tag number. A parking sticker will be provided for use of Moraine Beach dog park.



Hours of Operation

Dog parks and beach are open from dawn until dusk 7 days a week.

The parks and beach will close periodically for cleaning and maintenance.

Amenities

- Locked off-leash exercise area, accessible only with key fob membership card at Debbie Gottlieb Park.
 - Wash station available mid-April through October at Moraine Beach and Debbie Gottlieb Park.
 - Picnic tables & benches at Debbie Gottlieb Park.
 - Pickup bag dispensers and trash receptacles.
- The dog parks and beach are the **ONLY** Park District locations that dogs are allowed off-leash. We want all of our guests to have fun and be safe; rules and regulations will be strictly enforced. Dog owner cooperation and compliance is the key to the success of this program.

Rules and Regulations

- Presentation of your key fob membership card is required for use of the parks and is not transferable.
- Owners/handlers are solely responsible for damage or injury caused by their dogs to another dog, person or park property.
- Dogs must be fully immunized and display City of Highland Park and rabies tags.
- Maximum of two dogs per person on any single visit.
- Dogs known to be aggressive are prohibited. Be prepared to leash your dog if it becomes aggressive.
- Dogs must wear collars at all times. Spiked or pinch collars are prohibited.
- Owners are responsible for immediately cleaning up and properly disposing of waste.
- Children must be at least 10 years of age to enter the off-leash area and must be closely supervised.
- Appropriate dog park behavior: no running, no chasing dogs, and no petting of other dogs unless permission is requested from owner first.
- Food is prohibited in the off-leash area.
- Dogs must be leashed at all times when outside the off-leash area. Fines up to \$500. City Ord. 61-09, J.35, p. 193-219 (Passed 10/26/09), Park District Ordinance No. 01-04, SECTION 2.03.

Northbrook Dog Park



Location	Coast Guard Park
Address	2490 Dundee Road Northbrook IL 60062
Phone	847-291-2980
Hours	Sunrise-Sunset
Location Type	Facility
Amenities	Benches, Dog Park, Dog Wash, Drinking Fountain, Fenced-in Grounds, Gated Key Access

The Northbrook Park District operates a dog park where your pooch can play, socialize and exercise. This is the only public area in Northbrook where dogs are allowed to run and play off-leash in a completely fenced in area. There is an enclosed 2-acre area for all dogs and a .5-acre area for small dogs. Access to the park requires an annual membership which is available for purchase at any [Park District Registration Office](#).

Membership

The Dog Park is only open to Northbrook Residents.

Yearly fee is \$49 for first dog, \$25 for additional dog.

- Membership season runs from July 1-June 30 (no prorating)

Winnetka Park District Centennial Dog Beach



225 Sheridan Road, Winnetka, IL 60093

- Dog beach, membership required
- Swimming prohibited
- Off-street parking

Centennial dog beach is an off-leash swimming beach located on Lake Michigan. It's the perfect place for your four-footed friend to get some exercise, go for a swim, or just have some fun. The beach is open dawn to dusk throughout the year, weather permitting. All patrons must have a valid pass to enter the dog beach.

Please remember that Centennial Park is not part of the dog beach. All dogs must be leashed within Centennial Park limits. Violators of the village leash law are subject to a fine or may have their dog pass revoked.

2018-19 Dog Beach Season Pass (available for purchase March 1)

Passes are valid April 1, 2018 through March 31, 2019.

Season Pass Type	Resident	Non-Resident
First Dog	\$40	\$180*
Additional Dog	\$20	\$40

*Fee includes a mandatory \$100 village parking pass.

The dog beach season pass form is available at the Winnetka Park District office (540 Hibbard Road) or it can be [downloaded here](#).

Completed applications must be submitted in-person at the park district office and must be accompanied by the following information (as required by the Cook County Animal and Rabies Control Ordinance).

Application Checklist

- Rabies tag number
- Village tag number
- Proof of current Bordetella, Distemper, Hepatitis, Para-Influenza, Parvovirus, and Leptospirosis

Proof of current vaccinations/inoculations can be submitted in the form of a document from your vet's office. Alternatively, your vet can sign the application to confirm all are up-to-date.

About the Cook County Animal and Rabies Control Ordinance

In July 2005, Cook County passed an ordinance requiring all communities that operate dog parks to have each dog owner show written proof of:

- Current vaccinations or titers for distemper, hepatitis, para-influenza, parvovirus, bordetella, leptospirosis, and rabies
- The dog's current village tag number

If you have any questions pertaining to these Cook County rules, you may contact Donna Alexander, VMD at her Cook County office at (708) 974-6147.

Beach Rules & Regulations

Free Run Area — Beach

- You are solely responsible for the actions of your dog.
- You must bring your pass each visit. Attendants are not allowed to let anyone through the gate without a pass.
- Keep an eye on your dog and keep your dog's leash with you at all times.
- Leash your dog immediately if aggressive behavior is observed.
- For safety reasons children must be at least 10 years of age to use the park and they must be closely supervised.
- Children will be expected to behave in an appropriate manner: no running, no chasing dogs, no petting of other dogs unless permission is granted from the owner first.
- Be polite: pick up dog feces and dispose the dog feces in the waste receptacles, which are available throughout the park.
- Dogs must wear current license tag and be up-to-date on shots.
- Cover any holes your dog digs.
- No more than 2 dogs per person on any one visit.
- Check with your veterinarian before bringing a puppy under the age of four months to the park.
- Dogs must be on a leash until they reach the beach gate.
- No dogs known to be aggressive toward other dogs or people may enter the area.
- Owners/handlers are asked to closely supervise their dogs and at no time should anyone leave the area without his/her dog(s).
- Do not bring rawhide or food into the dog area as dogfights may result.
- Please remove pinch and spike collars from your dog prior to entering the dog run.
- Hours are sunrise to sunset.

Leashed Area — Park and Parking Lot

- You are responsible for the actions of your dog.
- Keep your dog leashed at all times.
- Leashes must not exceed 8 feet.
- No dogs known to be aggressive toward other dogs or people may enter the area.
- Be polite: pick up dog feces and dispose the dog feces in the waste receptacles, which are available throughout the park.

- Dogs must wear current license tag and be up-to-date on shots.
- No more than 2 dogs per person on any one visit.
- Hours are sunrise to sunset.

Wilmette Park District: Gillson Dog Beach

Wilmette's dog beach, located at the south end of Gillson Park, is a popular off-leash destination for many four-footed friends and their owners. Dogs must have a permit to use the Dog Beach.

Please note: Dogs must be on leash at all times in Gillson Park while on their way to the dog beach. The dog beach has specific hours (see below) and will be closed on July 3 & 4 for Independence Day activities.

Dog Beach Hours

May 26 - June 17, 2018:	Daily, 6am-10:30pm
June 18 - August 10, 2018:	Monday - Friday: 6-10am & 3:30-10:30pm Saturday & Sunday: 6am-9:30pm
August 11, 2018- June 17, 2019:	Daily, 6am-10:30pm

Permits

To use the dog beach owners must purchase a permit for their dog. The 2018 fees are \$35 for residents (\$6 for each additional dog), and \$196 for non-residents (\$65 for each additional dog). Permits may be purchased at the Park District Administrative Office in Village Hall, 1200 Wilmette Ave. Permits are good for one year.

Policies

The Cook County Animal and Rabies Control Ordinance requires written proof of current vaccinations and an examination within the past year for any communicable diseases. Proof of a current rabies certificate is also required for permit purchase. The following inoculations/vaccines are required:

- Rabies
- Distemper
- Hepatitis
- Leptospirosis
- Parainfluenza
- Parvovirus
- Bordetella
- Negative fecal test

Dogs are also welcome to play off leash in the large open area adjacent to West Park, located south of Lake and west of Laramie Avenues.

In ALL Wilmette parks, dogs must be on leash and owners are expected to clean up after their pet. Dogs are not permitted in tot lots, at the Wilmette Golf Club, in building interiors, at the outdoor pools, on the public swimming or sailing beaches, or in Gillson Park during special events such as Independence Day.

By Ordinance of the Wilmette Park District the following rules apply:

1. Dogs are permitted in all Wilmette parks during regular park hours. Dogs must be on leash at all times. They must be under the control of a competent person and their leash may not exceed 10 feet. Owners are responsible for clean up.
2. All dogs using designated off-leash play areas must have and wear a proper tag assigned to that dog.
3. Dogs are NOT permitted in tot lots; at the Wilmette Golf Club; in building interiors; the outdoor pools; the public swimming or sailing beaches; or in Gillson Park during special events such as the Independence Day Celebration.
4. The Cook County Animal and Rabies Control Ordinance requires written proof of current vaccinations including distemper, hepatitis, leptospirosis, parainfluenza, parvovirus, bordetella and a negative fecal test, along with an examination within the past year for any communicable diseases. Proof of a current rabies certificate is also required for permit purchase.
5. Owners who fail to clean up after their dog(s) are subject to fines and loss of access privileges.
6. Dogs who exhibit aggressive behavior will lose access privileges to the play areas.
7. Dog owners/handlers must be at least 14 years old or a freshman in high school.
8. Daily access hours for dog play area adjacent to West Park are sunrise to sundown year-round.
9. Failure of dog owners to follow any and all rules, including keeping the designated areas clean, may result in loss of privileges for all users.
10. Swimming at the Dog Beach is for DOGS ONLY. Owners are not allowed to swim with their pets.

Fines for violating these rules:

- \$75 Dog off-leash in non-designated areas or designated areas off hours.
- \$50 Dog on leash in non-designated areas or designated areas off hours.
- \$50 Failure of owner to clean up after dog.
- \$50 Dog on leash exceeding 10 feet in length.
- Loss of Privilege: Aggressive or violent behavior by dog.
- **(Ordinance 2004-0-3 adopted 6/14/04)**

Forest Preserve of Cook County: Off-Leash Dog Areas

We are Going Keyless!

Members will now use a membership card with an embedded electronic chip to gain access to all three off-leash dog areas. These new cards will be available for use starting October 15, 2018. Physical keys from the 2017-2018 season will still allow current members to access off-leash dog areas until the launch of the new keyless system.



These large open spaces allow your dog to run, fetch and play uninhibited and unrestrained.

The Forest Preserves of Cook County currently operates the Beck Lake, Bremen Grove and Miller Meadow Off-Leash Dog Areas for visitors to let their dogs enjoy the preserves without a leash. Please note that these are the only locations within the Forest Preserves where off-leash dogs are allowed.

Locations



Beck Lake

*East River Rd & Central Rd
Cook County, IL 60016 ([map](#))*

40 acres
Large pond
Outdoor shelter
Connected to 9 miles of trails (leash required)



Bremen Grove

*Oak Park Ave, south of 159th St
Cook County, IL 60477 ([map](#))*

7 acres
Separate areas for large and small (under 25 pounds) dogs
Water fountain
Connected to 33 miles of trails (leash required)



Miller Meadow South

*1st Ave, south of Roosevelt Rd
Cook County, IL 60130*

([map](#))
3 acres
Outdoor shelter
Connected to 2 miles of trails (leash required)

Registration & Rates

Dog owners wishing to enter the Off-Leash Dog Areas must first purchase an annual membership. The annual membership includes one membership card to enter *any* of the Forest Preserves' Off-Leash Dog Areas. **Annual memberships are valid from October 1 through September 30 of the following year.**

Cook County Residents \$60/dog Non- Resident \$120/dog

In addition to an application, all dog owners are required to submit a Veterinarian Health Report. A membership card will be mailed to the address you provide only after this report has been approved. Members will now use a membership card with an embedded electronic chip to gain access to all three off-leash dog areas.

Lake County Forest Preserve: Off-Leash Dog Parks



We offer four uniquely different and pawsitively popular outdoor parks (**we call them Dog Exercise Areas**) where dogs can exercise, play, swim and socialize off-leash.

Permit Required

An [annual or daily permit](#) and a dog are required for entry.

Annual Permits

An annual permit allows access to all four of our popular Dog Parks. Annual permits are valid for the calendar year only, and are not prorated. When purchased from September 1–early December, fees are reduced and permit is valid through the end of the current year. Annual permits for the next calendar year go on sale in early December. During our busiest sales months of December and January, it may take longer than usual for you to receive your permanent vehicle sticker in the mail. Continue to use your temporary pass until it arrives.

Annual Permit Fee

\$50 for the first dog, \$20 each additional (up to 3), Lake County residents

\$150 for the first dog, \$75 each additional (up to 3), nonresidents

Annual Permit Fee: Reduced price Sep 1–early December (valid through the end of the current year)

\$25 for the first dog, \$15 each additional (up to 3), Lake County residents

\$75 for the first dog, \$20 each additional (up to 3), nonresidents

To purchase a \$5 replacement sticker, call or visit our [General Offices](#) in Libertyville, 847-367-6640, 8 am–4:30 pm, weekdays, or our [Operations and Public Safety Facility](#) in Lake Villa, 847-968-3411, 6:30 am–3 pm, weekdays.

Daily Permits

To check out our Dog Parks, or for spur-of-the-moment visits, a daily permit allows you and your canine companion one day's access to all four Dog Parks.

Daily Permit Fee

\$10 per dog (up to 3), Lake County residents

\$20 per dog (up to 3), nonresidents

LOCATIONS

Duck Farm Dog Park »

Entrance is on Grand Avenue, east of Deep Lake Road in Lake Villa. This 48-acre fenced area features open fields and grass trails.

Independence Grove Dog Park »

Entrance is on Milwaukee Avenue (Route 21), north of Buckley Road (Route 137) in Libertyville. This 30-acre fenced area features open fields, wooded areas and a large pond for dogs to swim. [Learn more »](#)

Lakewood Dog Park »

Entrance is on Fairfield Road, north of Route 176 in Wauconda. This 66-acre fenced area features open fields and a shade shelter.

Prairie Wolf Dog Park »

Entrance is on Waukegan Road (Route 43), north of Half Day Road (Route 22) in Lake Forest. This 44-acre fenced area features open fields and a large pond for dogs to swim.

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I am unable to attend the meeting on Feb 12, however I am very much in favor of having the Park District establish and maintain a dog park for Village residents. At present, my wife and I pay a fee and travel to Highland Park to exercise our dog in the Highland Park dog park. To our thinking, the establishment of a dog park by the Glencoe Park District, for the benefit of Glencoe residents is long overdue. As you know, we have extensive park land within the Village. I leave it to the Park District to determine the optimal location for the dog park. Our Village isn't too big, so anywhere in the Village would be acceptable. You just need to have an adequate supply of parking proximate to the dog park in the event that our residents would choose to drive to the dog park rather than walk there from their homes. In our view, the establishment of a dog park should be the Park District's highest priority. Please feel free to contact us to follow up.

Follow up e-mail: Thanks very much, Lisa. I've lived in Glencoe for over 50 years, so I know the community well. I know that you have other priorities that are also important, and can only accomplish so much with limited financial and other resources, but I really do think that the addition of a dog park is compelling. My wife and/or I walk our dog through Glencoe about 5 miles every day. We encounter lots of fellow residents who are out with their dogs. Among the Glencoe families with dogs (I don't know the percentage, but you could easily check to see how many dogs are registered with the Village), the desire for a dog park is extremely high. Our Park District is amazing; the breadth and quality of facilities and services for a community of our small size is very rare, as you well know. However, the omission of a dog park is glaring. In my view, you've got plenty of land to choose from. I know that there will likely be vocal objections from several residents who will complain about expected noise and barking. As someone who spends quite a bit of time in the Highland Park dog park, I can tell you that there is a surprisingly small amount of barking. That always amazes me. One potentially good location would be just east of the train tracks, a block or two north of the train station. There is one block in particular which is clear of trees and about the right size for a dog park (which should probably be two contiguous parks, one each for small and large dogs, as in Highland Park). Plenty of parking right across the street (the northern end of Old Green Bay has no train commuter parkers). Any complaint from a neighbor in that neighborhood about noise would be disingenuous: they live right across the street from an active train track! Did they not know that 15+ trains go by there every day when they bought their houses? I'm happy to provide more input, if desired. Sorry that I will miss the community forum on Feb 12th.

-

Oh my gosh glad it's back on agenda. We talked about this several years ago. Not sure why it's taking so long. Yes dog park. But only if it costs next to nothing. Folks we have got to get handle on park district expenses and sources of funding. My taxes are outrageous as are your taxes. It's a real issue...(comments continued on taxes)

-

We cannot make the meeting, but we would like to share our opinion: A dog park would be a great addition to our community! In addition to being a nice benefit for the dogs of Glencoe, it is a great opportunity for members of our neighborhood to meet and connect, fostering a wonderful sense of community. The dog swim at the Glencoe beach this past summer was packed with dogs and owners alike - a huge success and indicator of need.

-

Hi, I think the dog park should be on the east side of the train tracks near Dennis, Lincoln Ave. I understand residents do not want barking dogs early or late. Limit hours to 8:00-6:00?

• [REDACTED]:
No to use of public funds or land for those with dogs. Glencoe parks and land belong to people. Yards are very large, and Glencoe is not a concrete jungle. For those who feel their yards and areas in Glencoe to walk dogs are not enough, donate land and property for a park and use your own funds.

• [REDACTED]:
Hello! We cannot attend the meeting but wanted to provide feedback on this topic. We moved to Glencoe in 2017 and have said out loud that a dog park is the only thing the community is missing! When living downtown, we went often and it's a wonderful gathering and social place. My recommendation is to have one area for small dogs, and one area for large. I've seen this be a much better success than one area for all. Also recommend benches under shaded areas or a permanent tent, the water bowl that refills itself, fake or real boulders for people to sit on and the dogs to play on. Excited to hear what comes of the meeting!

• [REDACTED]:
I am all for a Dog Park in Glencoe. Currently, we are forced to go to neighboring communities for all dog park facilities. Many of these communities - HP and Winnetka - charge for the use of the parks. It would be a great community asset and foster interactions between pets and owners. An added bonus would be if it had lake access!

• [REDACTED]:
I would LOVE to have a dog park in Glencoe! Maybe it could be part of Shelton Park; along Forestway; or the park above Glencoe beach. I have a conflict with the meeting on February 12 but would appreciate being kept in the loop on this!

• [REDACTED]:
I cannot attend the meeting on the 2nd, but just wanted to say I would love a dog park in our community. It would be great to have a place where dogs can be dogs and socialize. Thanks for putting it on the agenda.

• [REDACTED]:
Thank-you!! (with a cute picture of their dog)

• [REDACTED]:
I would love a local dog park so my pup can have some free reign exercise. Given Glencoe's size, I would like it to be secure (key fob) and limited to Glencoe residents. Let me know how I can help. I am not available the evening of the 12th.

• [REDACTED]:
I cannot make the meeting for this, but wanted to share my thoughts as a current Glencoe resident. I strongly believe there should be a dog park in Glencoe. Would be an AMAZING addition to this wonderful town. Some thoughts:
Rationale for having a Glencoe dog park:
Solves a problem - there's currently no good place to let dogs run free. Maybe Northbrook/Glenview is the closest town with a dog park?

- *Having a dog park would be one more selling point for families looking to move to the area. "Beautiful beach, charming downtown, friendly dog park, great schools, easy access to highways...Glencoe has it all".*
- *Reduces risk - right now there are a lot of people that unleash their dogs in open areas. Having a*

dedicated dog park, especially if fenced, would give those people a place to let their dogs run free, without the risk they run away or attack some person/child. It's the same reason there are public restrooms...without them, it would be a messy situation in the parks!

- *There appears to be several parks in Glencoe that largely go unused by the greater community. This would solve a problem, increase utilization of the parks, create more appeal for buyers, likely increase tax revenue (see below), etc.*
- *Perhaps you create a locked fence with a key code, and anyone that wants to use it must sign a waiver - reduces any risk that anti-dog people will inevitably bring up to justify their position.*
- *It will create a more fun and vibrant community. Only positive things will come of that. The benefits FAR exceed any downside.*

Location recommendation:

- *Kalk Park, because*
 - *Lot of people currently use it as a dog park right now...clearly the location is ideal*
 - *Easily accessible for residents*
 - *Not a lot of homes nearby, so barking less of an issue/nuisance*
 - *if a dog gets loose, would be easy to track down*
 - *It's not a park that has a lot of kids equipment, less kids hanging out there, less risk a dog gets loose bites or knocks over some kid/. Highly unlikely, but puts the risk very close to 0.*
 - *Far from Skokie Lagoons, which are notoriously filled with ticks...and if a dog got lost in the lagoons would be very hard to find*
 - *Close to downtown Glencoe, would increase foot traffic in the down town shops, ideally resulting in more shopping and thus higher tax revenue for the village*
 - *Ton of open space, much of which is currently unused*
 - *Plenty of parking for those needing to drive*
- *Alternative locations if Kalk Park won't work:*
 - *the [bluff] above Glencoe beach (next to or behind the tennis courts) would be amazing. The image of dogs playing, with the backdrop of lake Michigan would be idealistic, solidifying the beauty and family friendly environment*
 - *Berlin Park - Lot of the same reasons Kalk Park would make sense, but maybe located too close to areas where a lot of young kids hang out.*

I'm a fairly new resident with a young family, I really think a dog park would create a lot of good in the area for sure. Would get a ton of utilization and create a lot of vibrancy/smiles. Most parks (except Friends park and the beach) are only used by the 4-5 homes within a 1 minute walk. This would bring the whole dog community together in one spot. I really hope it happens. Happy to discuss via phone (or email) if there's any other input I can offer.

● *[REDACTED]:*
I won't be able to make the meeting, but here are my thoughts. I feel strongly against a dog park. I am a dog owner, but dog parks are smelly and dirty. Glencoe has an informal meeting place for dog owners (Watts mornings both on the weekdays and weekends). Glencoe has many beautiful parks and paths. Things that attract new home buyers are beautiful parks for their young kids which Glencoe has done a wonderful job developing and updating. A dog park will not increase home purchases in the neighborhood and it will be a smelly, dirty place. There are several places to bring a dog in the neighborhood and surrounding communities. We do not need to add a dog park.

- [REDACTED]:
I will be unable to attend the meeting for a dog park on 2/12. I will be out of town. Here are some thoughts....
 - *I am all for a dog park in Glencoe.*
 - *Best to have a dog park on the beach...maybe an area by Dell Place beach (parking may be an issue)?*
 - *If not the beach, maybe adjacent to the Metra tracks...*
 - *Is it possible to lease space at the Cook County Preserve? Turnbull Woods? Mary Mix McDonald Woods? Around Little House? Along Frontage Road near the water tower?**It should be large enough for larger dogs.*

- [REDACTED]:
I am opposed to a dog park in Glencoe.

- [REDACTED]:
Good afternoon. Thanks for considering a dog park in glencoe. I have a few ideas/opinions I will share below:
 - *ideally a space that could accommodate two areas- one for larger dogs who like to run, and a smaller space for small dogs.*
 - *keycard entry*
 - *dog waste dispenser*
 - *some benches*
 - *ideally a space with shade*
 - *ideally a central location*
 - *double-gate system so that dogs can't escape when others enter/exit*
 - *if there was a water hose available for drinks and rinsing off paws*
 - *it be great to find a way to make sure only well-socialized, non-aggressive dogs can enter*
 - *glencoe residents only*

- [REDACTED]:
Thank You for considering a Dog Park in Glencoe! It's a fabulous idea. We own a 1.5 year old Golden Retriever and I would use the park several days per week.

- [REDACTED]:
Hello: In response to the possibility of a dog park in Glencoe, my feelings would be a resounding YES!!! Some of my reasons are:
 - 1. It is needed.*
 - 2. It is beneficial to both dogs and humans, in many ways.*
 - 3. It is a great way to really meet neighbors.*
 - 4. It is safer than many other ways to exercise your pet!*
 - 5. It adds assets to the community, which is already great...yet could always be better.*
 - 6. It would make me and many others very happy!**I am out of town or I would be at the meeting.*
Thank you !!

- [REDACTED]:
Would love to see a dog park in Glencoe... many of us have trekked miles away and paid stiff fees to use other venues such as the Lake county dog parks in Bannockburn and Libertyville, and dog beaches in surrounding communities. No reason we can't have a dog park in Glencoe; for example, land at the top of the beach, or as a fenced off area near the Glencoe golf club. There could be separate sections for large and smaller dogs like the Northbrook dog park on Dundee. We have filled out many surveys asking for a dog park so let's get started!
Thanks for your consideration!

-

*Hi, I live by Watts park. I would like to give my input about a dog park. I think we badly need this as a community. I see people daily with their dogs off leash at Watts. I have a 7 pound dog and am terrified of my dog getting attacked by off leash dogs. I have called public safety in the past over this. I am also fearful as my husband was bitten while jogging by an off leash dog at Watts park. This was around 5 years ago or so. It was handled by public safe and court, but still makes us both very nervous when we see off leash constantly. I also work at South school and see that children are walking home through the park when school is out and people still keep their dogs off leash. I don't really know how much it is enforced and know it is not possible to watch the park all the time. In the summer it's a problem. Hopefully depending on where the dog park is this will give people a chance to have their dogs off leash safely and legally.
Thank you!*

-

I love dogs, cats, fish, and birds. We had them all. Having said that, we don't need a Dog Park. If the Park District has left over money and want to improve Glencoe, here are a few ideas. (1) Three new benches between Harbor and Jackson. (2) When trimming the tress on Green Bay cleaned the area not just the big pieces, but all around it. (3) Clean the sanctuary, spring is coming and the daffodil is having a hard time coming up because of all the mulch that has never been removed over the last 34 years. (4) Free Beach Passes for seniors (how many would that be - a 100? I don't think so). Having a Dog Park will not change anything. You will have the people that come out at night and let their dogs go in front of your house and not clean up. And who will pay for the clean up? Me the tax payer. I have paid taxes for the last 36 years. I am one of many that made Glencoe great. Its time to give some back. So if you have the extra cash, think of us so we can continue to stay in Glencoe. Perhaps you should have a work shop of how to take your dog for a walk and clean after yourself. We don't need a Park we need common sense. Thank you.

-

I am not interested in a dog park. I would rather see the money spent on something that could benefit everyone in the community - like a pool.

-

*I believe that it is very important that Glencoe have a dog park that will allow families with dogs to enjoy the community even more. I am very enthusiastic about this
Thank you*

-

I think it would be a good idea. Hopefully it will be large enough for bigger dogs to run and will have a grassy area. I live in the city but work here and have thought of moving here with my dog.

-

*Hello, Unfortunately, I'm not able to attend the meeting next week, but I appreciate the initiative by the GPD. If I was able to attend, I would have this to say:
I'm in favor of a dog park and would hope it would be located in a generally enclosed (either natural or unnatural barriers) area;*

- 1. I don't have many ideas as to the best location in which to place the park as I'm sure there will be objections by others to place it near existing playgrounds, streets and railroads, which I understand;*
- 2. I would be in favor of allowing dogs at Glencoe Beach only during off-season, when the beach is closed. I see people doing this anyway, but have heard of people being cited by Public Safety. I can understand being cited if an owner doesn't pick up after their dog, but this is a wide open, enclosed area that seems perfect for dogs. Again, thank you for the initiative in raising this idea and the invitation to participate.*

• [REDACTED]:
Good afternoon,

As I am unable to attend next week's meeting on whether or not the Park District should consider getting a dog park, I would like to provide some comments. As your meeting notice indicated you would only be considering the use of property owned by the Park District, rather than Cook County or the Village, I will limit my comments accordingly.

My family and I are very much in favor of adding a dog park in our community. We have lived in Glencoe since 2012 and have had a dog for approximately 5 years.

While the number can be verified through the Village's annual animal registration requirement, it does appear a significant percentage of Village residents are dog owners. However, Glencoe is one of the few North Shore communities that lack any approved off-leash location. Neighboring locations which do have dog parks either impose a steep upcharge to non-residents to deter usage, or bar non-residents from using the facilities outright. For example, Highland Park's dog park is 3 times the annual cost to a non-resident. Winnetka's non-resident charge is 4 times the resident rate. Northbrook's dog park is only available to its residents.

We live in a very pedestrian friendly community, and I believe our residents would benefit from a local dog park. Your meeting notice asks if there should be a "minimum size" for a dog park. I am sure you could retain a consultant who would opine that any park less than an acre (which we are unlikely to have available) is not worth building. To my knowledge, there is no existing law which imposes a minimum size for a dog park. In the City of Chicago, there are dog parks as small as 0.07 acres. See <https://windycitypaws.com/chicago-dog-parks-guide/>. I want to suggest that trying to identify the appropriate size of a dog park, and then trying to identify available space of that size, is the wrong approach, and one which will likely allow opponents to declare the construction of a dog park is infeasible. Rather, determine whether there is a need/desire for a dog park, and then identify potential locations. The ideal size should not dictate whether this is a resource that we can or cannot have in our community. In as fully developed a community as our own, with limited unused green space, defining a minimum size of a dog park would drive a results oriented approach against the creation of a dog park. Any park, even if smaller than one that would be constructed in the absence of size limitations, would be preferable than the absence of any dog park.

My suggestion would be to re-purpose a part of an existing park to add a dog park. More specifically, I would be in favor of re-purposing and expanding the footprint of one of the many tennis courts within our various parks. At present, Glencoe has 14 tennis courts spread over 5 parks (2 Shelton; 4 Central; 2 Watts; 3 Lakefront; and 3 West). This is in addition to the 6 paddle tennis courts in Winnetka, which are available to Glencoe residents at resident rates, as well as the indoor courts at Deer Creek Racquet Club in Highland Park, at which our residents also enjoy preferred residential rates. It strikes me that our residents have access to a sizable number of courts, both within the confines of the Village and immediately outside of it, either for free or at resident rates.

I would encourage the Park District to share its data on the utilization of its existing outdoor courts, and/or advise if it even tracks the utilization of these tennis courts. From my own observations, they collectively appear to be highly underutilized, or being utilized by third parties to run lessons, by all appearances, for their own profit. My understanding is the Park District derives no revenue from these courts, which appear to be available without any usage fee. In contrast, a dog park would allow the Park District to collect registration fees, and create another source of income. These are also facilities that are not utilized during the off-season. At present, dog owners frequently, and apparently illegally, allow their dogs off-leash in these courts during the off-season. I suggest the Park District evaluate the usage at the tennis courts at these locations to determine whether the elimination of one of these locations in favor of a dog park would result in any meaningful impact on existing users. My suspicion is that the remaining courts, were one location to be re-purposed, could easily absorb the existing total usage. Furthermore, since those locations already have high fences, it is unlikely neighbors would have much in a way of a valid objection to the installation of perimeter fencing (which would in fact be of a lower height than the existing tennis fencing). I believe other communities use key fobs to regulate access to registered users, and to restrict usage during approved daytime hours, so as to limit any impact on surrounding neighbors. I would like to thank the Park District for identifying a need for a new service in our community. Thank you for your consideration.

• **Susan Isaacson:**

I am so glad I got a chance to speak with you yesterday about the potential for a dog park in Glencoe. It is something our family has been interested in for over 10 years. We have followed this initiative as explored in the park district planning process and have offered inputs in previous public meetings.

Here is a summary of the inputs I shared with you. I hope you will consider these as I will not be able to make the public meeting on the 12th. I will be happy to be involved anyway that is helpful going forward.

Pros:

- *Gives residents a safe environment to exercise dogs off leash and provides a safe space for pets to engage in helpful social interaction; off leash exercise provides both behavioral and physical benefits for dogs*
- *Offers residents a destination to interact with their neighbors and other community members and their pets*
- *Allows for a regular and convenient off leash experience*
- *Helps public safety control off leash activity, by providing residents with a sanctioned space for this activity; could also provide a mechanism for discouraging non-residents from using the beach area for this purpose*

Cons:

- *Residents in close proximity to the dog park may not like to see or hear dogs using the park or the added congestion in their neighborhood due to the use of the park*
- *There may be increased dog waste near/in the park if those using it do not responsibly pick up after their pets*

Inputs on location:

1) We should have a dog park located in Glencoe; reciprocity with another community does not fully meet the need. One reason is that it is important for residents to be able to walk over to the park or have a very short drive, so it is convenient to use without requiring large blocks of time. Also, having the park in the village fosters community interaction. Neighbors can see or meet other neighbors in the community at or on their way to the dog park.

2) It would be nice if we could find a parcel that is fairly central so more residents would be walking distance - behind the Takiff Center, or perhaps along the railroad tracks near Shelton Park and the Community Garden.

3) It could be helpful to select a property that already has parking available, for instance, behind the Takiff Center or Lakefront Park or Shelton Park.

4) It would be great to have space to play with dogs at the beach, if there is some unoccupied space at the water that could be used for this purpose.

5) If #4 above is not feasible, there could be an opportunity to take advantage of the Glencoe beach and other specific locations in the off season, by providing a temporary fenced in area at the beach for dogs to run off leash in Spring, Winter and Fall. Or perhaps, in the Winter at the Glencoe Golf Course (which does already have ample parking available.)

6) If we are only able to secure a small parcel of land for a dog park in Glencoe, it would be advantageous, in addition to the Glencoe site, to negotiate an agreement with neighboring municipalities for the use of their existing dog parks. Specifically, the beach front dog exercise areas in Winnetka and Highland Park. Both of these are good sized properties, are relatively close in proximity and offer access to the water for play, scenery and a place for dogs to cool off. Currently, non-residents are allowed to gain access to the Highland Park dog

park if they purchase a HP parking sticker and may also require registration for park use. This is a costly proposition, so a negotiated rate would be useful. I don't believe Winnetka allows non-residents to use their beach front dog park at all. Perhaps, some agreement could be forged to allow Glencoe residents to obtain access to the park with a registration fee.

7) Access to a dog park could be controlled by card entry that is obtained by registration with the park district at the beginning of the year or seasonally. A small registration fee could be assessed to cover administration fees and maintenance of the site.

Thank you for considering my inputs. It's very nice to see some forward momentum on this initiative and it would be great to see a Glencoe dog park come to fruition!

Dear Park District Board of Commissioners, I am unable to attend the public meeting on February 12, but have attached a letter with some observations, concerns and suggestions.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. (letter below)

February 10, 2019

Dear Glencoe Park District Commissioners,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the potential Glencoe Dog Park Project. I recognize that there are a number of residents who would like to have a dog park in the Village. I have some observations, concerns and suggestions regarding any potential location.

Thanks to the vision of Park District Boards from the early part of the last century, Glencoe has a great park system with easy, walkable access for every resident. If you have not already done so, I would suggest establishing objective site selection criteria for a dog park. A good example is included in the informative publication "Creating Dog Parks-Without Rancor" by the Trust for Public Land (attached). The article details site selection criteria that informed the development of successful dog parks in other cities. The criteria suggest that park boards "(1) avoid interference with other established uses or department-sponsored activities; (2) avoid locations directly abutting residences; (3) assure availability of close-by parking; (4) avoid locations near children's play areas; (4) choose spots where there are minimal impacts on the visual character of a park; (5) site so as to avoid spillover into non-dog areas; and (6) avoid sensitive environmental habitats. Seattle also learned something else. "Try to find property with no history," says Dewey Potter, spokeswoman for the park department. "It's a lot easier than persuading people to change a field's use into something different." Regarding minimum size, The American Kennel Club recommends a minimum size of 1 acre, while other sources recommend between 1/2 and 1 acre.

Criteria #4 above makes clear that locating dog parks near children's play areas creates an inherent risk of injury. Additionally, planners have found it effective to site dog parks in areas away from residential areas to abate the impact of noise. The sound of a barking dog is annoying to most people, and is why Glencoe has an ordinance that addresses the issue "Animal care and control is the responsibility of the owner. An owner of any animal shall be in violation of this section in the event such animal shall: Make excess noises, including barking, so as to disturb the peace and quiet." Neighboring communities have located their dog parks adjacent to a constant source of ambient sound – i.e. the lake, or a freeway, and away from housing.

Dog parks in neighboring north shore communities are all located in areas that are quite remote from existing residences. The Evanston/Skokie "Pooch Park" 3220 Oakton, Skokie is adjacent to the Northshore Drainage Channel and an industrial zone; The Wilmette Gilson Park Dog Beach is along the lake at the south end of Gilson Park. The Winnetka Centennial Dog Beach at 225 Sheridan Road is also along the lake. Highland Park operates three dog parks: Debbie Gottlieb Beitler Dog Park at Larry Fink Memorial Park, 701 Deer Creek Parkway; Moraine Beach 2501 Sheridan Road, and Highland Park Golf Learning Center, 2205 Skokie Valley Highway; adjacent to HWY 41 and a golf course. Given the close proximity of Glencoe's established residential neighborhoods to every park, I am quite concerned about the noise impact that a new dog park would introduce. A loudly barking dog is about 90-100 decibels. Most people have experienced this level of noise; it is similar to the amount of noise from a house construction site, a motorcycle from 25' away or jet taking off from 1000' away (see the attached noise level graphics for additional information, including risks). Sound dissipates over distance; however, a loudly barking dog can be audible from about a block away (500') depending on the ambient sound/noise in the area. With probable open hours from dawn to dusk, a dog park has the strong potential to be very annoying and disruptive to neighbors. While probably not continuous, barking could occur

nearly any time throughout every day. This would be an unwelcome change of the environment for neighbors, and quite likely negatively affect property values.

Every existing Glencoe Park is adjacent to a residential neighborhood, and in many cases, children's play areas. Because of noise and safety issues, at this time I cannot support a dog park in any existing Glencoe Park District park or open space.

However, there could be other options to resolve the request, such as partnering with one of the neighboring communities for access to their facilities, similar to the pool and the paddle tennis arrangements.

Attachment: Creating Dog Parks- Without Rancor; The Trust for Public Land

• [REDACTED]:

I am a resident of Glencoe. I wholeheartedly support the proposal to add a dog park in Glencoe. Ideally, this would include a dog beach.

• [REDACTED]:

We support the dog but are unable to attend the meeting. Please note that it conflicts with a New Trier freshman placement meeting. Some comments: attendees should be reminded that they already do not clean up after their pets when walking in their own neighborhood so there should be some form of strict enforcement for rule breakers. There also needs to be two sections - one for more active dogs and one for dogs still learning to socialize. The latter could be used independently by pet owners on a 15 minute personal use basis. It avoids the aggressive dogs for taking over a park.

I understand the local dog shelters (e.g., Orphans of the Storm) have expressed interest in using the dog park to exercise foster dogs. (We spoke to one of the workers who lived above Food Stuff in Glencoe). Good luck. I can't go to the meeting tonight, but I support a dog park.

• [REDACTED]:

I think it should have parking available in the area (I have a small dog who wouldn't walk a great distance to play in a park and then walk home).

I would pay a member fee to belong to the park, if needed. (Register to be able to use the park).
Thank you

• [REDACTED]:

Good Morning, Please note: A DOG PARK WOULD BE AMAZING! (note sent in size 27font)
Kindest Regards, 32 Year Resident

• [REDACTED]:

I can't make the meeting. But we would love to see your dog park come to Glencoe

• [REDACTED]:

I cannot make the meeting tomorrow but wanted to throw in support FOR a dog park. Would be a great addition to Glencoe. Would be great if dog park could be ONLY for Glencoe residents

• [REDACTED]:

Dear Glencoe Park District,
We are writing because we are in full support of building a dog park, but unfortunately, we cannot attend the

meeting tonight. There are so many Glencoe residents with dogs and the community is in great need of an “off leash” setting of our pups and their “dog parents.” Glencoe is an amazing community, but it’s a shame that its residents have to drive to other communities to let their dogs run and play freely. The village should definitely put its attention and reasonably appropriate resources into building a dog park that would add to Glencoe’s many points of interest. It would be great to include some stationary exercise equipment within the area, which many dog parks have these days. That way, pet family members of all ages, could work on their own health as their dogs play. As you probably know, people who are out walking their dogs know so many of the folks in their neighborhood and beyond. I know, in walking my dog around town, I have gotten to know so many Glencoe residents that I would never have met before. A dog park would be a great “community builder” for residents, and visitors, of all ages. It would be a multigenerational resource that everyone could use. Likewise, it would be a wonderful resource for those with limited mobility or special needs. A dog park in Glencoe would be a wonderful addition to our “gem” of a village fostering healthy outdoor, unplugged activities uniting people, our beloved animals, and the beauty of nature!

- [REDACTED]:
Unfortunately I am unable to attend the meeting tonight for the dog park, but I am very much in favor of one. I think it would be a great asset to the community, since Glencoe is such a dog friendly town.

- [REDACTED]:
I am not sure I can make it this evening but would 100 percent support building a dog park in Glencoe. I think this would be a great asset to the community. Thank you!

- [REDACTED]:
Dear Ms. Sheppard:
I was out of town during the February 12, 2019 community meeting regarding the potential implementation of a dog park in Glencoe. I hope that it is not too late for my voice to be heard.
First of all—I commend you on your vision regarding Glencoe’s parks. I see the improvements in Glencoe’s playgrounds and wish that they were that nice when my now college aged/high school aged kids needed them. The programming is inclusive and it is apparent to me that you and your staff are doing your best to meet the myriad needs of the community. Though I view your work more from the balcony than the first row, it is apparent to me that you and your staff are doing a wonderful job.
I understand why a segment of the community would want a dog park. It appears that the love people have for their pets is only marginally less than what they have for their own children. I understand the social component. I understand that the Glencoe Park District’s mission is to reach the varying needs of all of its residents.
But I hate the idea. I really, really hate the idea. The reason is simple. There is no isolated piece of property in our community in which the sound of yapping dogs would not interfere with some other resident’s enjoyment of their private property. I say this without a shred of self-interest because my house on Hazel Avenue is nowhere near any vacant piece of land that a dog park could be located. But others would not be so lucky. This dog park idea was floated out several years ago near Phil Thomas Park. The people living near the park were up in arms and for good reason.
As a whole, dog owners do not understand that those without pets do not necessarily love their dogs as much as they do. In my opinion, dogs should be viewed in the same way that the community views somebody who wants to smoke cigarettes. You want to smoke? Go ahead in the privacy of your own home. You want a park where other smokers can gather? Sorry, that’s not our job. Can you imagine the uproar that adjoining neighbors would have if they abutted a “public smoking park”? That’s the way that I view a non dog owner having to put up with their property being located near a dog park. Owning a dog is not a right and if you wish to enjoy the company of your pet—go ahead—you have your own property to do so.

- [REDACTED]:
I am sorry I was unable to attend tonight's meeting. I am thrilled that a dog park is being investigated for Glencoe. When the dog park in Northbrook opened I was hoping that we would be able to use this park because we have reciprocity with other Northbrook Park District facilities, but is sad to see that it still is only for

Northbrook residents. I would love to see a dog park located in Glencoe. We have gone to other dog parks and a few thoughts for what we would like to see in Glencoe:

- Fenced in with double gate area, not off a busy road
- Parking available
- Sun covering with benches for people to sit
- Water fountain for people and dogs
- Large open area for dogs to run (not a lot of trees or bushes)
- Tire hoops or ramps for dogs to jump and play on

The dog park in Deerfield is nice because it is set back off of a side street and is smaller so it is easy to keep track of your dog. I also really like that there is a park next door for kids to highly discourage kids from going into the dog park. I have seen some bad situations with kids at dog parks and parents not keeping a watchful eye.

Thanks for reading!

- [REDACTED]:

Hi, I think the dog park should be on the east side of the train tracks near Dennis, Lincoln Ave. I understand residents do not want barking dogs early or late. Limit hours to 8:00-6:00?

- [REDACTED]:

Hello,

I am **not** in favor of a dog park for Glencoe. Here is why.

I am a Glencoe resident and I also work as a **full-time dog walker** along the North Shore since 2006. In the past 3 years I have studied and worked as a dog trainer. I walk dogs individually as well as in packs. I spend over 10 hours a day with dogs...of all breeds and temperments. To put it simply...dogs are my life. I understand them and how they interact and bond. I know how to read them and interpret the good and the potential bad. It has taken me many years to become very keen to what dog behavior is.

The biggest culprit to me while doing my job is off leash dogs!! While walking my pack or individual client dogs it is a huge threat to have an off leash dog approach us...often very much on the attack. While I understand that a dog park would have slightly different circumstances it does not warrant safe outcomes.

1. Off leash dogs mean there is total and complete responsibility on the owner to be in control. In my many years of observing owners and dogs it is rare to see an owner who has control to the point that their dog actually LISTENS to them. This is always potential for disaster. It's always the case where the dog is running towards us as the owner calls its name and it completely ignores the owner. The next step is usually owner states that their dog is "friendly" as their dog attempts to bite us. No joke.

2. Dogs do NOT need to play with other dogs. This is a fact. It is the misunderstanding of the owner to think that dogs "must" play or that running freely and wildy is exercise. It may be physically exerting energy but for most dogs it builds anxiety. This can be very misunderstood by the owner as "fun" when in actuality it is not fun for the dog at all. Often owners don't recognize the building anxiety in dogs running freely and when fights break out they are shocked. Fights lead to bites. And then you have a multitude of problems.

3. Puppies absolutely should never be brought to a dog park. And yet I bet the majority of puppy owners think a dog park would be the best form of exercise for their young dog. No! Puppies have few boundaries. Yes, they are taught by the pack how to "get along" BUT not in the environment of a dog park. One aggressive occurrence between a puppy and strange dog "could" alter that puppy's future ability to interact with other canines forever. I cannot tell you how many times I have heard "my dog was attacked as a puppy and never the same again...how can I train him to NOT fear other dogs?" People generally are unaware of this until they have a disaster on their hands and a problem young dog.

To summarize I'd like to be very clear in stating that unsupervised dog parks are the invitation for huge potential problems for ALL involved. For many reasons. Just because people "love" their dogs, and we all do, does NOT mean that they are dog behavior experts. Dog parks are NOT fun for most dogs believe it or not. And most humans have ZERO ability to realize this and ward off bad outcomes. The Village can avoid this possible

huge nightmare and vote against a dog park for Glencoe.

Finally, yes, dogs CAN play and have fun together but ONLY when supervised by a dog professional who knows exactly what to allow, when to allow it and how to avoid dog fights. I don't think the dog park would be staffed by such a person. Without it though the idea of a dog park is just extremely unadvisable. Please vote no.

•

Thanks very much, Lisa. I've lived in Glencoe for over 50 years, so I know the community well. I know that you have other priorities that are also important, and can only accomplish so much with limited financial and other resources, but I really do think that the addition of a dog park is compelling. My wife and/or I walk our dog through Glencoe about 5 miles every day. We encounter lots of fellow residents who are out with their dogs. Among the Glencoe families with dogs (I don't know the percentage, but you could easily check to see how many dogs are registered with the Village), the desire for a dog park is extremely high.

Our Park District is amazing; the breadth and quality of facilities and services for a community of our small size is very rare, as you well know. However, the omission of a dog park is glaring.

In my view, you've got plenty of land to choose from. I know that there will likely be vocal objections from several residents who will complain about expected noise and barking. As someone who spends quite a bit of time in the Highland Park dog park, I can tell you that there is a surprisingly small amount of barking. That always amazes me. One potentially good location would be just east of the train tracks, a block or two north of the train station. There is one block in particular which is clear of trees and about the right size for a dog park (which should probably be two contiguous parks, one each for small and large dogs, as in Highland Park).

Plenty of parking right across the street (the northern end of Old Green Bay has no train commuter parkers).

Any complaint from a neighbor in that neighborhood about noise would be disingenuous: they live right across the street from an active train track! Did they not know that 15+ trains go by there every day when they bought their houses?

I'm happy to provide more input, if desired. Sorry that I will miss the community forum on Feb 12th.

Total E-mails:	44
Yes:	34
No:	8
Only if funds and/or land is donated:	2

Why Parks Should Go to the Dogs

November 2, 2018, Department, by Gina Mullins-Cohen

Editors Letter



Did you know studies have shown that owning a dog may lead to a healthier heart? Experts from institutions, such as Harvard Medical School, say there is growing scientific research that shows dog owners have a decreased risk of cardiovascular disease compared to people who don't own a canine. Perhaps it's because caring for our four-legged friends requires regular dog walks and playtime and, therefore, owners stay fit and active in the process. I mean, have you ever played fetch with a dog? Research also shows that having a dog in a household can lower stress levels in adults, as well as children.

And, because dogs offer so much joy to people — and clearly provide health benefits to their owners — doesn't it make sense for park agencies to help return the love by providing communities with parks and amenities designed especially for our canine companions? In

this month's cover story, "Designing and Managing Innovative Dog Parks," NRPA's Richard J. Dolesh explores how quickly dog parks are growing throughout the United States. Since 2009, the total number of dog parks has increased by 40 percent, according to research by The Trust for Public Land.

This could be a great education topic for our 2019 annual conference in Baltimore, Maryland. Last month, some 8,000 park and rec professionals gathered in Indianapolis for the 2018 NRPA Annual Conference. *Parks & Recreation* magazine's Sonia Myrick and Suzanne Nathan provide a complete wrap-up of this year's conference on page 56, featuring noteworthy moments from the Opening General Session, the keynote presentation, as well as the story behind the visit to the exhibit hall by K-3 students from Nashville's Explore! Community School.

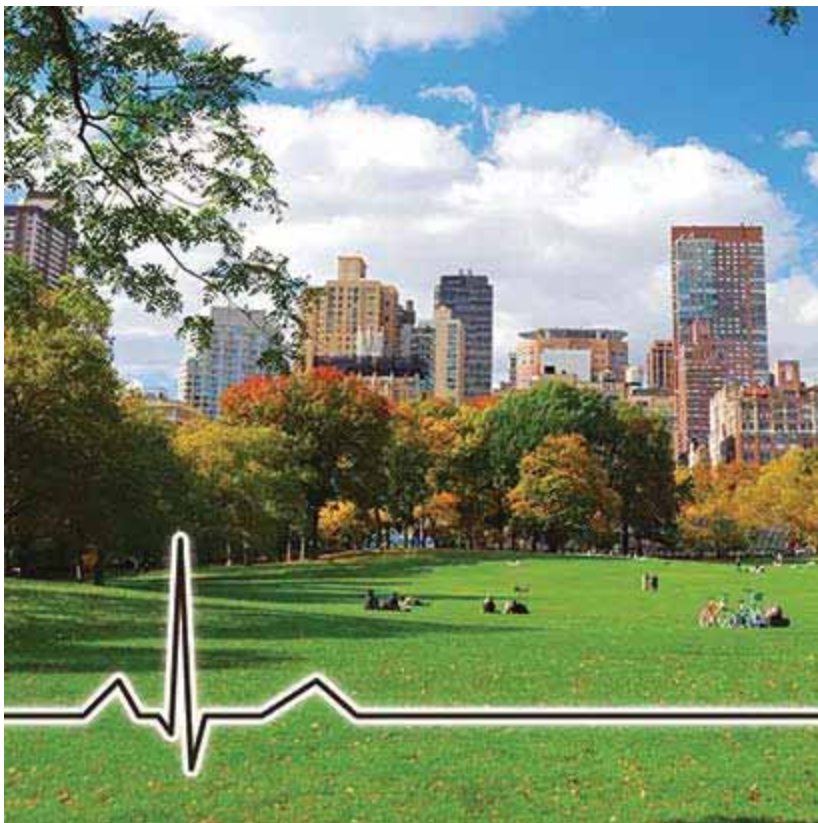
The NRPA Annual Conference, however, wasn't the only event to attract the park and recreation community in 2018. Innovation Labs have become must-attend gatherings in major cities across the country this year. Be sure to check out highlights from the Seattle Innovation Lab on page 62. The conference theme, "#Winning: The Art of Getting Voters to Open Their Wallets for Parks," featured education sessions, panel discussions, a keynote and workshop designed to provide strategies for developing effective political campaigns.

Lastly, congratulations to Sam Waldorf with Austin Parks and Recreation in Texas, who won our November cover contest. And, thanks to everyone else who submitted entries. We're sorry you weren't selected, but we make no bones about it...the competition was ruff!

NRPA Park Pulse: Americans Agree Dog Parks Benefit Local Communities

November 2, 2018, Department, by National Recreation and Park Association

Research



Local parks and recreation agencies provide dog parks for the areas they serve

Each month, through a poll of Americans that is focused on park and recreation issues, NRPA Park Pulse helps tell the park and recreation story. Questions span from the serious to the more lighthearted. With this month's poll, we look at the possible benefits dog parks bring to their communities.

91% of Americans believe dog parks provide benefits to their communities.

Availability of dog parks is especially popular among millennials (94 percent)

and Gen Xers (92 percent) followed by baby boomers (89 percent) who agree dog parks provide benefits to communities.

Top 3 Community Dog Park Benefits:

- 60% Gives dogs a safe space to exercise and roam around freely
- 48% Allows dogs to socialize with other dogs
- 36% Allows owners a chance to be physically active with their pet

Visit www.nrpa.org/Park-Pulse for more information.

The National Recreation and Park Association survey was conducted by [Wakefield Research](#) among 1,002 U.S. adults ages 18+, between September 11th and September 18th, 2018, using an email invitation and an online survey. Quotas have been set to ensure reliable and accurate representation of the U.S. adult population 18 and older.

Dog Parks

November 2, 2018, Department, by Anne-Marie Spencer

Member to Member



Promoting vibrant, active people, dogs and community

According to numerous reports, spaces where dogs can play off-leash are the fastest-growing feature in parks today. Dog parks are sought after by pet owners for multiple reasons. They provide socialization for both pets and their owners. They bring people of all walks of life together in a space where they can form bonds and friendships based on their shared love of dogs. For dogs, especially ones whose owners work long hours, regular dog park visits can provide an outlet to expend stored energy.

While demand stems from a growing number of individuals owning a pet, the value and benefits of these spaces

extend beyond pets and their owners — making a statement about a community's commitment to offering amenities that attract a richly diverse and active population. To better advocate for off-leash dog parks, it is important to understand the demand for these spaces and the benefits for dog owners and the broader community.

As populations grow, and leash laws become more restrictive, many municipalities see dog parks as a way to allow pets to play without impacting traffic, infringing on private property or potentially creating unwanted litter on public streets. While dog parks are certainly welcomed by dog owners, the value and benefits of these spaces extend far beyond the dog community.

Multiple Benefits

Dogs encourage people to walk more, and research studies show that at the individual level, being outdoors in a dog park offers diverse therapeutic, physiological, psychosocial and psychological benefits. It has been found that owning a pet is directly linked to fewer visits to the doctor and improved overall health.

Dog walking has been examined as a mechanism for promoting moderate physical activity, providing physical health benefits that link to a decrease in risks of cardiovascular diseases, such as hypertension and high cholesterol. In addition, it has been found that individuals who own a pet are more likely to participate in outdoor activities and are generally more active, healthier and more sociable, even with individuals they don't know well.

Dog parks provide important community benefits as well, and are important outlets for humans, as they provide recreational opportunities and bring together dog lovers of all ages and socioeconomic status. Dog parks promote walkable neighborhoods, an enhanced sense of community and safety, because the pet owners are not walking on busy streets. They also provide a place for owners to converse and get information about dog-related services and about the community in general. They serve as a conversation starter, and nearly half of the people who responded to a survey indicated they had become acquainted with other people in the neighborhood through their pets. From a pet ownership perspective, public dog parks allow dogs to get ample off-leash exercise and social activity with other dogs, promoting a decrease in the level of troublesome behavior.

Rejuvenate Underutilized Parks and Spaces

Dog parks can be created to suit any size space. Even in airports, where space is at a premium, dog parks are cropping up as a much-needed amenity for travelers and their pets. They can also be used to rejuvenate underutilized parks and spaces. The city of Gahanna, Ohio, used Pizzuro Park, an underused space in a floodplain, to create a dog park with four areas: two for large dogs, one for small dogs and another for agility-based activities. The dog park has made Pizzuro one of the most visited parks in Gahanna. Stockbridge, Georgia, also used a repurposed floodplain in its Clark Park to create an oasis for dogs and their owners, designating about an acre of the park's nearly 12 acres for the new dog park. The city used the space creatively, installing plantings and paths to absorb rainfall at the lower elevations of the park and placing the agility equipment at a higher elevation. Where needed, an underdrain system was installed to help divert stormwater to a pond, creating more effective drainage after heavy rainfall.

No matter the size, all dog parks start with community support. Be sure to hold meetings within the community where you are planning the dog park, and allow community members to share their thoughts. Be prepared to deal with concerns, as well as encourage advocates, by having a master plan in place to share proposed hours, rules and maintenance. Much of the concern about dog parks comes from people not understanding how the space will operate, so being able to address these concerns early will help build advocacy. If there is a dog expert who can be present, invite them to address concerns that non-dog owners may have. Dog parks encourage social behavior in dogs and park rules help address most potential issues, so being able to articulate this is an important step in neighborhood support.

In addition to providing owners with a place where their dogs can get the daily movement and activity they need, community dog parks also can be a place to train and familiarize them with the skills required to master playful obstacles or compete in the sport of agility. Dogs love the opportunity to run and play, while owners also enjoy the opportunity to socialize with each other, so including a mix of amenities that promotes enjoyment for both is an important step in creating a well-loved dog park. Amenities help dogs build confidence, strengthen muscles and build challenge by incorporating elevation changes, jumping and moving through unfamiliar spaces. They also help the owner get exercise. Dog owners will also appreciate shady places to sit, access to water fountains and restrooms, and waste/litter receptacles to help ensure the space stays clean. Be sure the dog park rules are posted prominently at each entrance.

Don't forget the importance of marketing the space to ensure usage of the dog park, as well as promote knowledge of rules, hours and other useful information. Add the information to your park website, and if you have staffing to manage it, create a Facebook or other social media page to help promote the site, events at the dog park, contests and serve as a place for photo submissions of people and their pets having fun! The Charleston County Park & Recreation Commission operates three dog parks and hosts several events, designed to bring pet owners together and generate revenue to support maintenance of the dog parks. Their popular Yappy Hour event includes live music, food and beverages and is one of many events that helps to ensure the dog parks remain clean and welcoming.

Dog parks are one of the fastest-growing amenities in public spaces, and the benefits of these off-leash spaces are clear. As people continue to move to urban centers and the trend of bringing the family pet along gains strength, the demand for spaces to exercise and socialize with their pets continues to expand. By including dog parks in our overall master plans, we can help extend health benefits to people and improve the quality of life and community capital across the country.

Material Considerations for Comfortable, Active Dog Parks

- Accessible route of travel from parking lot to and through the space
- Separate areas for large and small dogs
- Dog park rules posted prominently at entrance
- Separate entrance to park transition area, as well as to small and large dog areas
- All areas fenced with a solid base to discourage digging
- A good mix of agility equipment to accommodate large and small dogs
- Strategically placed lighting for extended hours
- Dog waste bags and receptacles
- Shaded benches to encourage socialization
- A mix of surfacing to emulate nature and offer walking paths
- High-low water fountain to accommodate both dogs and their owners
- Trash receptacles to promote park cleanliness
- Bike parking to encourage alternate modes of travel
- Trees and shrubs to provide aesthetics and shade

For more information on planning a dog park, request the free resource, [*Unleashed: Off Leash Dog Park Design Trends and Tips*](#).

[*Anne-Marie Spencer*](#) is the *Corporate Vice President of Marketing for PlayCore*.

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Raleigh, North Carolina's Dog Park Study

November 2, 2018, Department, by Sonia Myrick

Member to Member



Within the pages of this issue of Parks & Recreation is the often-repeated refrain about the growing demand for more dog parks and off-leash spaces where dogs can be free to run and explore. Most major metropolitan areas in the United States have, are or will be looking at how to meet this demand in the face of rapidly diminishing open and green spaces. This year, the city of Raleigh undertook just such an in-depth study, part of an action item in its 2014 Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources System Plan. Through a community needs assessment, it became clear that dog parks are an important park use with an unmet need in this city.

The Need

So, why does Raleigh need more dog parks? It's estimated that by 2023, a staggering 100,000-plus dogs will live in the city! Currently, one-third of its approximately 200,000 households have

at least one dog, and Raleigh is projected to see its total number of households grow by almost 10 percent over the next five years. Like most major cities, the focus is on high-density development: 60 percent of all new residential units in Raleigh are multifamily apartments. That's a lot of people and pets clamoring for easily accessible spaces where they and their pets can recreate.

Recognizing this growing demand, the Raleigh Dog Park Study was an effort to get out in front of future growth and explore what options are available to meet the increasing need for dog parks. First, a service area analysis was used to identify which areas of the city had adequate access to existing dog parks and which areas would remain underserved even after the construction of the additional dog parks the city already plans to build. Determining which areas should be prioritized, and what innovative strategies could be used to meet the need for dog parks, would require a process that included input from the public, expertise from city of Raleigh staff and an analysis of geographic and demographic data.

The Method

Beginning in January 2018, city of Raleigh staff — a diverse group that included park managers, park planners, urban designers and animal control officers — designed the planning process. It would include a comprehensive community survey and an event-based public outreach strategy. Throughout the Dog Park Study, staff also worked with citizen volunteers on the Parks Committee of Raleigh's Parks, Recreation and Greenway Advisory Board (PRGAB) to design the community survey, shape the planning process, report on progress and provide a forum for public comment.

The Dog Park Study survey was designed to help the city understand who, why, where, when and how often people use Raleigh's dog parks. In addition to gathering public input about the types of amenities and design features they value, determining where the city should invest in building future dog parks was a core goal of the process. When asked how far they were willing to walk or drive to a dog park, most survey respondents said 5–10 minutes was a reasonable amount of time. This feedback was layered with data from other spatial factors, such as adoption records, concentrations of dog ownership and locations of dog-friendly apartments to identify those areas of the city that were likely to have the highest unmet need for dog parks.

Community outreach was organized around a series of dog-friendly special events hosted throughout the spring and summer, including five pop-up dog parks at various locations around downtown Raleigh. These pop-up dog parks were created using temporary fencing to convert underutilized spaces into a dog park for a day or weekend at a time. In addition to direct outreach at special events, opportunities to participate were advertised at existing dog parks and through geographically targeted social media ads to underrepresented areas of the city. Public input was primarily gathered through an online community survey and interactive public message boards on the Dog Park Study project [website](#) .

Over the course of the six-month public outreach process, more than 4,000 people attended the various dog-friendly pop-up events, 500 unique comments were captured through online message boards and more than 1,200 participants took the Dog Park Study survey. In September, following several months of public engagement, a Key Issues Report was published online along with focused questions addressing the most important and controversial issues that had come up during the process. The feedback gathered through this Key Issues survey was incorporated into a draft Dog Park Study report. In October, this draft plan was presented to the PRGAB in a public forum, with further discussions and final board recommendation anticipated in November. The final plan is expected to be presented to Raleigh's City Council in early December, wrapping up the year-long Dog Park Study process.

The Recommendations

By taking the time to engage city residents across multiple channels, Raleigh obtained the data necessary to inform future planning, design, delivery, operation and maintenance, and creation of policies for its public dog parks. The Dog Park Study report provides a set of recommendations organized around five Key Issues: dog park access, policy, design, stewardship and options for a downtown dog park. These recommendations are accompanied by a menu of implementation strategies, acknowledging that meeting the growing demand for dog parks will require a mix of traditional dog park construction, expanded dog-friendly programs and special events, increased civic participation and partnerships between the city and private development community.

Several areas of community consensus also emerged from the Key Issues survey, including that participants were against requiring memberships for dog park access and wanted to maintain the current dog park policy, which stipulates that “dogs are only allowed off-leash in Raleigh's public parks if they are within the secure, fenced area of designated dog parks.” To read the entire study, including the Appendices that contain dog park design guidelines and a pop-up dog park handbook, [click here](#).

“The Dog Park Study process had an incredible impact on how we view these facilities, and how they function as part of a complete park system,” says T.J. McCourt, planning supervisor for the City of Raleigh Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Department. “We understand now how important they are — not just as places for dogs, but places for people.

“The most surprising finding to me was the number of people who told us dog parks are the only reason they visit our public parks,” McCourt continues. “That tells me these facilities reach a segment of the community we would otherwise miss. For many people, dog parks provide a social value and community benefit that go far beyond simply ‘areas for dogs to get exercise.’”

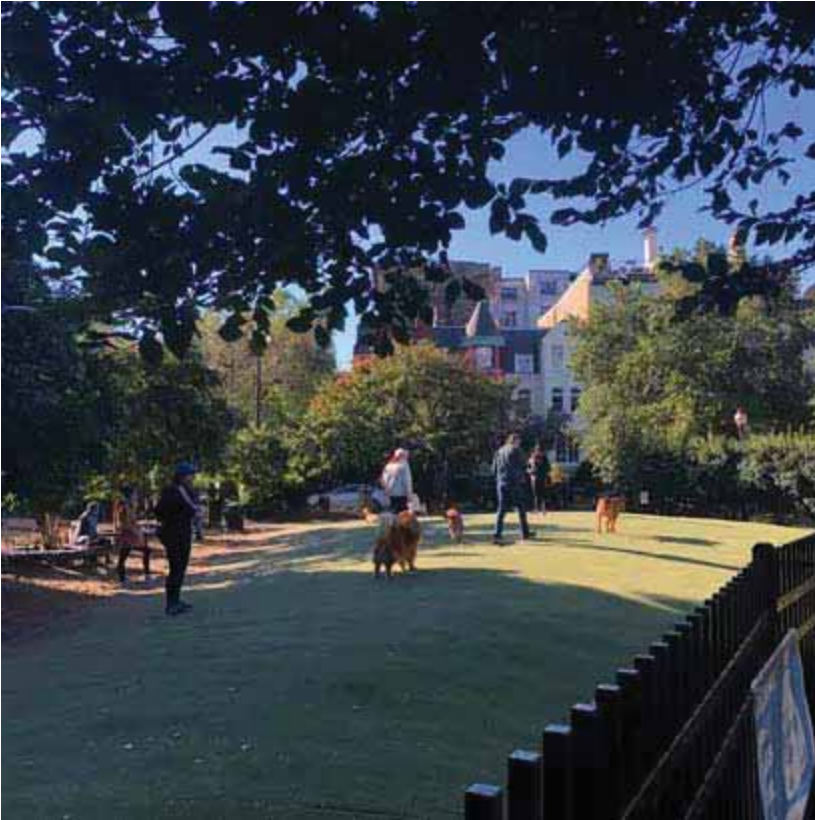
Conclusion

Dog parks are as much for people as they are for their pets. People are also a critical element in the success of any dog park system. Time and dedication on the part of volunteers, who help to “enforce rules, report incidents, stock bag dispensers, maintain and spread mulch, and take on many other essential tasks that keep our dog parks clean and safe,” are crucial. Also crucial are donors who, through individual giving or corporate sponsorships, are willing to contribute to the establishment and maintenance of these facilities. As this study reveals, building a successful system of dog parks requires the investment of many players across various city departments, public-private entities and city residents.

Making Space in Parks for Dogs

November 2, 2018, Department, by Diego Martinez

Community Center



How can parks and recreation strike a balance that pleases everyone?

The two sides of the aisle took their seats for what promised to be another fervent debate in our nation's capital. On the agenda: the inclusion of a dog space in the renovation plans of a community park and recreation center.

In one camp, residents highlighted the merits of a dog space, including having an enclosed area for their dogs to run freely and creating a space for conversations and connections between dog-loving owners. In the other camp, residents noted how they often clean up after other owners' dogs and that a dog

park would invite more dogs into their community, enlarging their maintenance concern.

These issues are not unique to this quiet, small community in northwest Washington, D.C. As cities continue to evolve and demographics reshape neighborhoods, ideas and visions for the futures of the communities must coexist. When community ideas and visions inevitably differ, how can we strike a balance that pleases everyone? In addition, if a dog space is included in a park's plans, how do we ensure that all parties remain engaged throughout planning, construction and beyond the project's grand opening?

By understanding the makeup of the neighborhoods in question, using creative thinking in the planning of a dog space and securing a sponsor to manage the space, the addition of a dog space can ultimately be a community asset.

Navigating Community Engagement

City and neighborhood profiles and demographics are dynamic. People migrate in and out, reshaping the identity of the community. When considering the addition of a dog space within a larger park space, it is important to understand and project the future needs of the community.

The challenge for park and recreation planners is to capture the voices of those who not only bark the loudest, but also of those who stand in the background. Hosting a community survey during the dog space planning process allows park planners to capture as many diverse values, voices and opinions at a time when the ability to change project requirements is easiest.

For example, prior to the previously mentioned community meeting in the District of Columbia, a survey was conducted that asked participants for, among other things, demographic information, park usage, preferred park amenities, areas of improvement and the implementation of a dog space. At a quick glance, it was evident that a dog space was a hot topic; however, merely taking a tally of who was for or against a dog space was insufficient information when planning and allocating public funding.

Through simple cross tabulations of the survey results, the planning team developed a narrative based on the residents' responses. The results showed that the lack of a dog park correlated with lower park-usage rates among respondents over the age of 50. Moreover, young families, ages 25 – 49, with low park-usage rates noted both dogs off their leashes and the lack of maintenance by dog owners as key drivers for them steering clear of the park. From the survey results, the planning team had evidence to support the idea that incorporating a dog space would satisfy the dog owners and ease the safety concerns of young families.

While not all survey results may provide a clear definition or path toward a park's future, ensuring that you capture diverse voices within the community is essential to producing accurate and useful results.

Let's Build a Dog Run!

The community has spoken, and a sizable faction is advocating for a dog space in the neighborhood; however, city space is becoming increasingly valuable and limited. According to the municipal regulations in Washington, D.C., "the creation of dog parks in the [city] requires a certain degree of flexibility due to the density of buildings, as well as the scarcity of District-owned parkland." The challenge becomes how to balance the dog owners' needs with the requests of other residents for a playground, fitness equipment and leisure space.

One solution for developing city parks is the inclusion of a dog run. Dog runs are functional, fenced-in space, usually a minimum of 5,000 square feet, where neighborhood dogs can run freely, exercise and socialize. Whereas a dog park is larger and may include architectural and landscaping features, furniture for patrons, drainage and pet-friendly surfaces, a dog run provides the essential features that will keep dogs happy and healthy, including a 5-foot fence, drinking fountains, waste bags and a surface that is both pet-friendly and sustainable.

By building a dog run, you not only address the needs of dog owners, but also of families and other residents. Dog spaces can be divisive, but if you include a dog run alongside other amenities, such as playgrounds and blacktops, the community may feel more receptive to including a space for dogs.

The Guy Mason Recreation Center in Washington, D.C., is an example of successfully integrating a dog run. Through a thoughtful analysis of the community's needs, a 250,000-square-foot space was developed that included a 6,400-square-foot dog space, baseball field, renovated recreation center and playground. The park and recreation center provides space for dogs to run freely and exercise, while reserving space for recreational sports, striking a balance between community needs.

While there is no one-size-fits-all for dog spaces, dog runs provide the flexibility to address multiple community needs. Ultimately, it is up to the city and park planners to develop a dog space that fits within the community's vision.

Maintaining a Dog Run

It is dusk at the community's new dog run, the last of the wagging tails have gone home, but a lingering smell remains. Whether it is dog-waste removal, fixing a fence or maintaining the field surface, how will the community address issues critical to the quality of the dog run? With tight budgets, park and recreation departments do not have the resources to consistently monitor and maintain dog spaces. Securing a dog run sponsor for maintenance, management and rule enforcement is vital to the health and longevity of a dog run.

Securing a dog-run sponsor during the planning phase allows the sponsor to be invested throughout the buildout process. In certain jurisdictions, the sponsor is responsible for submitting a formal proposal for the establishment of the dog run during preliminary community meetings. Sponsors can be residents, organizations or businesses with a nonprofit interest in the community. While any community member can volunteer to become a sponsor, having a broad base of engaged and committed sponsors mitigates the risks of people moving out of town, a lack of community volunteer work support and waning interest over time. According to the DC Department of Parks and Recreation, the most successful dog spaces are managed by a board of directors and have a minimum of 10 volunteers who are willing to assist with maintenance, fundraising and volunteer recruiting.

Once a sponsor is secured, it is critical to outline the roles and responsibilities between them and the city park department to manage expectations. These roles and responsibilities will serve as a reference point if the park becomes a liability for the community. Not every owner will be responsible and clean up after his or her dog. Over time, the dog run will exhibit wear and tear. It is important to outline how often sponsors are required to review the facility's state, how to communicate issues within the community and how to resolve issues.

Considerations for Planning and Maintaining an Urban Dog Space

Urban neighborhoods are trending toward adding more dog spaces. Research from the Trust for Public Land notes that off-leash dog spaces are sprouting in larger cities at a faster rate than other park types. Also, as the rate of dog ownership increases, city space for four-legged "children" to roam freely and tire out increases in demand. However, if residents seek to maintain existing amenities, such as playgrounds and blacktops, can city planners incorporate a dog space in a manner that allows all stakeholders to coexist?

Such limited space forces city and park planners to think strategically and to be creative with land allocation. Hosting temporary pop-up dog spaces offers park planners the flexibility to introduce dog spaces in neighborhoods. In addition to city-owned parkland, city and park planners may shift their attention to underutilized alleys or rooftops that can be developed into a dog space.

Something else to consider is that many apartment buildings in cities now offer amenities, such as a space for dogs to run and exercise. So, are there sufficient private dog spaces that minimize the neighborhood's need for a public dog space? Are there opportunities to engage in partnerships with private dog spaces to allocate public spaces for other recreational activities?

In answering these questions throughout the park planning process, the development of public space for either a dog run or other amenities can be a positive experience for all community stakeholders!

Designing and Managing Innovative Dog Parks

November 2, 2018, Feature, by Richard J. Dolesh



“How much more joy can you get out of life than being with your dog in a park?” asks Judy Trockel, one of the founders and driving forces for the past 25 years behind the dog park at Marymoor Park in King County, Washington. Marymoor Park has been called the “Disneyland of Dog parks,” not because it is highly developed with attractions and amenities, but because it is considered by all who go there as just about the perfect park for dogs and people, as the nearly 800,000 visitors per year attest.

Off-leash dog parks are one of the fastest growing type of parks in cities across the nation. According to The Trust for Public Land, in its annual survey of the 100 largest cities, the number of dog parks has grown by more than 40 percent since 2009. NRPA’s 2018 Agency Performance Review data show that 55 percent of park and recreation agencies now have established dog

parks, and, in conversations with directors of park and rec agencies, most agencies are either building a dog park or in the planning stage for one. The National Pet Owners 2017–2018 Survey by the American Pet Products Association reports 60 percent of U.S. households own a dog. With ever-growing dog ownership by American households, park agencies across the country are seeing enthusiastic demand for more off-leash dog areas within public parks.

Dog parks may be built as stand-alone parks or incorporated into existing larger parks. They are highly attractive to park visitors and often heavily used by residents and destination visitors. The size of dog parks varies from as small as a small building lot to large areas that encompass hundreds of acres and provide access to trails, lakes, rivers and even ocean beaches. But, size and room to roam are only one criteria, perhaps not even the most important, of what makes a quality dog park.

So, what are the characteristics of a great dog park? What amenities and features do people — and dogs — love in the parks they visit? This article examines what makes a good dog park great from the perspective of the designer, the managing agency and volunteer stewards.

The Designer Perspective

“I design dog parks as I would a children’s playground,” says Ken Smith, principal of Ken Smith Design Workshop, an award-winning landscape architecture and design firm in the heart of New York City. “When I started in my profession, there was no body of literature on how to design dog parks. When I started my firm, we realized that there was a great desire for areas for dogs in public places. It came up in community board meetings and other forums, and it led to a demand for the city to provide

areas for dogs. As in other parks, the expectation is that we design areas for dogs, as well as we design them for people.

“I thought that dog parks should be as interesting and fun as a well-designed children’s playground,” Smith continues. “I look at dog parks as a social space for both dog caretakers and the dogs themselves.” He believes that the philosophy of design is as important as what goes in the park.

Smith points out that New York City presents some unique constraints for any type of public park space. “We constantly adapt designs to fit spaces, and we try to get as much into the spaces as we can,” he explains. For dog parks, the key elements that must be in the space — shade, places for dogs to play, ramps and platforms of varying heights for dogs to jump and run, seating for people, water features and a dog-drinking area — all must be fit to the space in a harmonious way.

It is important to fit other essential features in the design as well. Smith notes that a good dog park needs a bulletin board because of the need to communicate with users and for users to know what is expected of them. In the East River dog park, Smith designed the bulletin board to fit in a cutout of a large, fake tree. Every dog park needs a storage shed, so, “We designed ours as an oversize dog house,” he adds.

Smith reports that during a community meeting, dog caretakers expressed a high concern about sanitation and, therefore, were very concerned about the type of surface that would be in the dog park. “No one was very excited about the idea of black asphalt, so we used brightly colored, highly durable tennis court paints to give it some life,” he says. He believes that every space he designs for people should have an element of surprise and fun, and, therefore, added whimsical touches to what might otherwise be a utilitarian space.

The Park Agency Perspective

Phil Macchia is the director of Charleston County Parks and Recreation in South Carolina. The agency owns and manages the James Island County Park, a dog park that often appears in the top 10 lists of best dog parks in the country. Macchia says, “We have a huge influx of people from around the country who visit Charleston County and bring their dogs. We are in this business for people, and people have dogs. That is just an extension of who we are — we are in the dog business, too.”

According to Macchia, the visitation at their three dog parks, which are all located within larger regional parks, is steadily increasing. In addition, they are also seeing demand within infill development areas near downtown Charleston and areas where millennials are seeking to live. “Without question, use is growing,” he says. “Our dog parks are as much a social gathering place as they are a place for people to recreate and exercise with their dogs. There is a lot of interest in small urban dog runs and mini-dog parks as well.” Macchia also notes that new urban housing and condo development are taking place where public open space is scarce, thus, there is a greater need for places for people and their dogs.

The highest priorities for visitors to the department’s dog parks, as in other parks, are that they must be clean and sanitary. “Shade is also a top priority,” Macchia says. “I can’t overestimate the importance of shade.” In addition, beyond having a place for dogs to exercise and run off-leash, there needs to be areas for people to socialize, whether under an umbrella, under natural shade, or sitting on benches and picnic tables. “And, of course,” says Macchia, “you need to address all the basics — water for dogs and people, a good in-and-out system, well-designed gates and good, clear signage to communicate expectations.”

They have separately fenced areas for large and small dogs, but Macchia notes that in their dog parks, the small dog areas get relatively little use. “We came to learn that people just didn’t like to be separated from the areas where all the action was,” he relates.

One of the challenges for them has been to maintain high-quality natural grass turf areas. “This is a challenge for everyone operating public dog parks. We have tried multiple strategies — sectioning off areas and periodically closing areas, and other actions. People just don’t want a big dirt field,”

Macchia says. The agency closes its dog parks on a regular basis to do maintenance, and it adheres to a strict schedule, which it communicates to the public. He says its maintenance schedule is communicated in multiple ways, including on its website and on signage in the dog parks. Customers have learned quickly, and the maintenance program is well-supported by the public.

Charleston County Parks and Recreation goes a step further, according to Macchia. “We want staff to be able to talk with customers knowledgeably, so we contract out with a provider who does dog training and who has excellent knowledge of dog behavior and people behavior.” Because all their dog parks are within larger county parks, there is always a staff member available to address a complaint or resolve an issue. “With high use there is the potential for conflicts. It is very important for staff to understand how to deal with people and to understand dog behavior,” Macchia says.

Charleston County parks is building a new dog park at Wannamaker Park that improves on each of its previous parks. The new 6.5-acre dog park will have additional parking, a spray pad for dogs, bathrooms and even a dog washing station. Because the agency has had such success with programming and special events at the existing dog parks, the new park will be designed to better host programs and events, such as concerts and food trucks. “We have found,” Macchia explains, “that events and programming expand our reach and enrich the user experience. Innovative programs at our dog parks open up the park to a lot more users and are really well-received by the public.”

Some of their most popular events are Pet Fest, an all-day celebration with games, agility contests and an evening concert, and include Yappy Hour, a highly popular weekly happy hour with music and food. Macchia notes that the agency has a beer and wine license and Yappy Hour is a good revenue producer, as well as a great activity for park users. One of their most popular events is Dog Day Afternoon, a once-a-year event at the end of the season in which they open the large wave pools in the regional parks to people and dogs for the last use of the year. “We had 1,400 people at our large park and 800 at our smaller park,” he relates. “We charge \$15 per dog (humans are free). We have vendors, games and activities. It is pretty cool.”

Generating revenue from operations and fees is an important priority for the Charleston County Park and Recreation system. All visitors to the regional parks pay a \$2 entrance fee for access to the regional park, but use of the dog parks within the regional park is free. While the dog parks, in and of themselves, do not necessarily generate much revenue, they significantly build numbers for annual passes and daily park entrance fees. According to Macchia, special events and programs at the dog parks are an excellent source of revenue as well. One of the best benefits of the dog parks, he believes, is that they create more opportunities for people, who might not otherwise come to the parks, to visit the parks.

The Volunteer Stewards Perspective

Judy Trockel is one of the founders of “Save Our Dog Area” volunteer group, which became “Serve Our Dog Area” in 1995. At that time, the nonprofit group took over management of 40 acres within the 620-acre Marymoor Park of King County, Washington, and established it as an off-leash, voice-control (OLVC) dog area.

“Our situation started before the term ‘dog park’ ever existed,” says Trockel, as she describes the history of how their off-leash dog area came to be. Prior to 1995, the park agency allowed a “dog training area” within the park. When the master plan for the park was updated, it did not have a dog training area identified. “It led us to form ‘Save Our Dog Area,’ and to advocate for off-leash recreation,” Trockel relates. “King County finally agreed and amended the Master Plan for the park, acknowledging the strong public demand and need for an off-leash dog area. The county entered into a seven-year trial agreement with S.O.D.A., and we have stewarded the off-leash dog area ever since.”

Trockel continues: “We were just a small advocacy group at the time, and when we received formal recognition, it was kind of an ‘Oh s***! moment.’ Now, what do we do? We realized that we just took

on a major responsibility. We had to go from being an ad hoc advocacy group to formal 501(c)3 status as an official stewardship group.

“One of the conditions we agreed to was to maintain the original condition of the park,” Trockel says. An argument against high-use dog areas is that they cause environmental degradation of the site. “This was a very important consideration for us, both because of our ideals and to forestall any future attempt to close the dog use area or convert it to another use,” Trockel says. “At the hearing, a man stood up, wagging his finger, and said, ‘I guarantee you that in seven years that area will be destroyed by the presence of dogs,’” she recalls. “Twenty-three years later, we are very proud of our record in keeping this park in as good a shape today as it was then. It is a beautiful area along the Sammamish River. There are six miles of trails, five river access points, and fields and forests to recreate in. We have a beaver pond, a heronry and beautiful scenery.”

Trockel believes there are three important criteria for having a great dog park. First, the size of the park needs to be large enough to handle the use. Second, you need to have a citizens’ stewardship group involved. “No matter how many park staff the agency has,” she says, “there is always a shortage of maintenance staff.” Third, the park agency (city or county) must allow the park to be successful. This has been very important for their dog area. “Groups ask me, ‘What do you mean by that?’” Trockel says. “I mean that they let us take charge of the park and let us do what had to be done. They didn’t tie us up in bureaucracy, but, when we needed help, they extended a hand in partnership and helped us when we had jobs that were too big for us to handle alone.”

Trockel believes the park agency has a high degree of trust in S.O.D.A., because the group established credibility with the agency over the course of many years. “It didn’t just happen overnight,” she relates. “We built trust, and we, in turn, support the park system in many ways. It is a great partnership.”

When it comes to managing use with an all-volunteer group, Trockel says the key is to communicate our founding philosophy and to communicate it frequently to our volunteer stewards and to park users. We nurture the concept of stewardship — everyone is responsible for the park. “This is what makes our dog park truly innovative,” she proudly says.

In terms of managing the dog park, “Off-leash does not mean out of control,” Trockel says. “It is not our responsibility to control your dog. It is yours. If your dog is not responsive to your voice control, and you don’t have sufficient recall skills, maybe you shouldn’t come to this park. Our group is not an enforcement group. We are a stewardship group.

“Dogs are a part of life today,” Trockel adds. “They have gone way beyond their purpose for hunting and herding. People have a love of them as they do their children. We serve the need for allowing people to enjoy and recreate with dogs into their daily life.”

Dogs in Parks: Managing the Waste

November 2, 2018, Department, by Richard J. Dolesh

Conservation



In a word, it's about the poop.

Environmental management of dog waste has become a more pressing issue for park and recreation agencies as the percentage of households with dogs increases and the demand for dog parks continues to grow. However, dog waste is not a responsibility that many people within park and rec agencies, want to deal with. Considering the otherwise stellar environmental performance of most park and recreation agencies in addressing environmental and waste issues, dog waste just doesn't seem to rise to top of the design, maintenance and management menu. In fact, for many dog parks or off-leash dog areas managed by parks, once the dog waste is out of sight after flushing it off pads or dog areas, it is out of mind as well.

The scope of the problem of dog waste in America is huge. America's nearly 90

million dogs produce about 11 million tons of dog waste per year. A widely quoted estimate of the volume of dog poop by a commercial dog-waste collection company, named Doody Calls, is that it would fill a line of dump trucks stretching bumper to bumper from Boston to Seattle.

The stark fact is that only about 60 percent of dog owners pick up after their dogs; 40 percent do not. This seems to hold true with some exceptions on the type of area according to studies done in parks, in urban communities, and in suburban areas.

A 2017 Penn State University study of dog waste for the Leave No Trace Outdoor Ethics Center in Open Space and Mountain Parks of Boulder (Colorado) found that dog caretakers with dogs on a leash were most likely to pick up after their dogs and dispose of the waste in receptacles. However, park visitors with dogs said the infrequent number of pet waste stations made them less likely to pick up and dispose of their dog's waste.

The problems are not just from the solid waste and nutrients that can wash into local streams and lakes, but also the potential for spreading pathogenic bacteria and viruses, including *E.coli*, salmonella, cryptosporidium and a range of intestinal worms and parasites that can be transmitted to other dogs and mammals. Numerous studies have shown that much of the bacteria in urban waters comes from pet waste.

Tackling the Problem at the Source

Prince George's County, Maryland, is meeting the problem head on. The county has launched a comprehensive effort to deal with dog waste in its communities and has applied several creative and innovative strategies to get people engaged.

Dawn Hawkins-Nixon, the associated director for sustainability for the Department of the Environment (DOE) in Prince George's County, says that the catalyst for their initiatives was the granting of the county's MS4 permit in 2014. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regulates the conveyances of stormwater into the waters of the United States, and Prince George's County's permit contained a requirement that the county reduce harmful bacteria levels in the Anacostia River and Piscataway Creek watersheds.

This requirement coincided with the growing concern residents expressed to the county about pet waste in common areas. "The lack of responsibility by pet owners was a major concern by residents, who wanted us to do something about it," says Hawkins-Nixon. This led the DOE to begin a comprehensive program of education and awareness intended to change peoples' behavior. The scale of the problem is significant, according to Hawkins-Nixon. DOE estimates there are 150,000 dogs within the county that produce 37,400,000 lbs. of waste per year. Since only 60 percent, at best, pick up, this leaves 45,000 lbs. per day that is, essentially, untreated sewage.

"We realized this could not be just a traditional paper campaign with signs and flyers," Hawkins-Nixon shares. "We knew we had to engage residents and school-age kids. We developed games and educational materials and made them bilingual as well." The agency was also innovative in its outreach. One of the games staff took to community events and schools was a bean bag pooper scooper game, where kids got points for depositing their "dog waste" in the proper receptacles and waste stations. Hawkins-Nixon says that the gross-out factor drove kids wild with delight, and it proved to be an effective way to communicate their objectives. Another innovative approach Prince George's County has taken is to hold Pet Waste Summits — one in 2017, one in 2018 — that drew more than 75 people representing various community organizations.

The DOE partners with the University of Maryland's Environmental Finance Center and the People for Change Coalition and has developed a small grant program, using stormwater management fees, to provide pet waste stations and signage to communities. They have provided local communities with 86 stations so far and plan to have 146 placed by 2019. Debra Weller, environmental section head of DOE, says that local communities have been extremely supportive, and the messages of public health, environmental quality and community appearance have really resonated with residents.

Many of these inner Beltway communities in Prince George's County are integrally linked to the stream valley parklands of the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission (MNCPPC), which connects communities to these linear parks by trails and by community and neighborhood parks. MNCPPC also owns five dog parks, which are popular and well-used, within these communities. Reducing the impacts of dog waste pollution from dog parks and within the larger community requires a full effort by county agencies and community organizations.

According to Hawkins-Nixon, the county agencies and community organizations are looking at ways to make the campaign sustainable and renewable. They are building capacity with their organizational partners. "It makes a big difference when a community takes ownership. It is so much more meaningful than when residents are being told they need to do this by the government. When a community invests in an effort, it has a much better chance of success," Hawkins Nixon explains.

The bottom line is that the county is improving public health, reducing runoff into streams and waterways, and making communities more of a place to love and appreciate. "It's great to be able to go out to public places and play with your kids safely," Hawkins-Nixon adds.

Prince George's County has recognized the problems presented by the high percentage of dog ownership and taken a direct and energetic approach to address the challenges. Park and recreation agencies with a commitment to environmental and public health must take notice of the impacts dog waste has on their communities and dog parks and forthrightly acknowledge the problems and deal with issues. Our parks, trails and streets will be much cleaner and healthier for dogs and people.

The 'Dogification' of America's Parks

November 2, 2018, Department, by Beth A. Miller

Community Center



Wagtown® research shows off-leash options attract park users

Long ago, dogs roamed free without rules or owners. Times have changed. Dogs don't have owners, they have families. People are deciding where to live, work and play based on dog-welcoming infrastructure and policies. This presents opportunities for park professionals to embrace this growing relevance driver.

Wagtown , a nonprofit dedicated to setting responsible and genuine standards for authentic dog friendliness and the nation's leading dog-friendly community expert, interviewed more than

400 leaders across the country. Following two years of intense research, we have insights from economic development, land-use planning, tourism, law enforcement, animal advocacy, park and recreation administration, park users and more. Front-runners see a surge of interest in dog-friendly open spaces like we've never seen before. In its [Unleashed: Off-Leash Dog Park Design Trends and Planning Tips guidebook](#), PlayCore, a company focused on building communities through play and recreation, states: "Dog parks help both pets and owners increase enjoyment for the outdoors, while providing a wealth of additional health and well-being benefits, as well as social and community advancements."

Park districts are embracing dog lovers because dogs bring their owners along for the run, hike, walk, paddle or to just enjoy the serenity of the open space with their best friend. Dog-friendly areas are safer because dog walkers are hypervigilant patrollers of their parks. In addition, regardless of socioeconomic background, American park users are increasingly counting Fido as one of the family. This gives parks a key to the hearts of their user constituents regardless of race, education, income, interests, etc.

New attitudes about dogs mean changing expectations for park services. Leaders recognize the value of dogs and their role in parks, but there isn't a quick answer on how to react to the demand. There is not "one right way" to create an off-leash experience. Three well-recognized categories for off-leash play are noted in Seattle C.O.L.A. (Coalition for Off-Leash Areas) [Best Practices Report](#). These categories are especially helpful in high demand and urban areas where mixed use is necessary.

Option A: Off-leash dogs under voice/sight control are free to share recreational space with non-dog users where indicated within specified times.

A great example of this format can be found in bustling New York City, where several dozen dogs can be found before 9 a.m. and after 9 p.m. on “The Hill” of Central Park. The busy urbanites scurry through the streets seeking green respite for their dogs.

Wagtown visited the park in 2016 and found that users understand that responsible dog ownership is critical to the success of the experience they treasure. Because the dogs come regularly to a well-maintained area, their social game is stellar. Then, like clockwork, when time’s up, you can hear the clicking of leashes on collars as they gather up their floppy-eared family members and head elsewhere.

Option B: Off-leash dogs under voice/sight control are free to share recreational space with non-dog users where indicated in specified zones of the park.

These areas encourage users to share recreation space with dogs in a safe and equitable way. Because it is important to allow some buffer zone, some areas may be too small to combine groups.

In Redmond, Washington, there is a community park with one of the most inspiring off-leash areas in America. Marymoor Dog Park (www.soda.org/volunteer-at-marymoor/) is well-planned and supported by the community leadership and the grassroots organization, Serve our Dog Areas (S.O.D.A.).

S.O.D.A. has developed and sustained a volunteer effort to provide assistance in dog spaces. From fence installation and repair to dog wash stations and coffee bars, members of the dog community have rolled up their sleeves and contributed to an incredible experience for dogs and their owners. The parks have provided guidance, materials, training and a financial commitment to help maintain excellence.

They have installed wayfinding, site signage and natural barriers and offer specialty vendors. Visitors can enjoy a cup of coffee from the caboose café or treat their dog to a bath before climbing aboard for the car ride home. Although Marymoor delivers a top-notch experience, it is open to the public with just a \$1 parking fee. The sheer number of dogs of all shapes and sizes in this space was impressive and speaks volumes about socialization of dogs and the irrelevance of breed.

Option C: Off-leash dogs with a permit and under voice/sight control are free to share recreational space with non-dog users where indicated in specified zones of the park.

Permits are available through classes provided by the city or parks. In this scenario, off-leash access with permit leaves the open space available for on-leash activities while allowing well-behaved dogs to enjoy off-leash play and socialization.

This solution addresses the root of most common issues — lack of education and training: issues that stem from a lack of understanding about responsible and safe dog ownership. There are cultural and geographical variances that should be taken into consideration. Some park and recreation facilities may have sensitive land preservation issues or local ordinances that can be integrated into the permitting.

One example is in Boulder, Colorado. The city provides free classes in sight and voice control, and the yearly permitting system makes for easier enforcement and sends a message to all park users about the importance of training and respect.

In short, the United States is “dogified.” Are you?

Beth A. Miller *is the CEO of Wagtown.*

Additional Resources

1. [Seattle Citizens for Off-Leash Areas.](#)
2. City of Seattle, WA., [Off Leash Areas Rules.](#)

3. Eckerman, C. (2017, September 3). Executive Director, Citizens for Off-Leash Areas (Seattle COLA). (B. C. Miller, Interviewer)
4. Moore, L. (2017, May 25). Senior Vice President, Corporate Strategic Services, PlayCore. (B. C. Miller, Interviewer)
5. Palacios, P. I. (2017, May 22). Director of Programs, Partnerships and Professional Development. (B. C. Miller, Interviewer) Chattanooga: PlayCore.
6. [PlayCore](#).
7. [UltraSite](#).
8. [Wagtown, Inc.](#) Where the Wag Happens.

‘Courtesy Hours’ for Off-Leash Dogs in Public Parks

November 2, 2018, Department, by James C. Kozlowski, J.D., Ph.D.

Law Review



Increasingly, dog owner groups and individual citizens are encouraging their city and county park departments to implement unfenced, off-leash areas in local parks. Due to existing ordinances, regulations and statutes (so-called “Leash Laws”), and perhaps the perceived threat and fear of governmental liability, many public park agencies have maintained a blanket prohibition against off-leash dogs in public parks, outside of fenced areas.

Questions of liability and safety may understandably arise when considering the feasibility of implementing a park policy that would allow dogs off-leash in parks under certain conditions as a more “dog friendly” alternative to fenced-in, designated dog run areas.

As illustrated by the “Juniper Park” court opinion described below, one such alternative was to perpetuate a tradition

of informal “courtesy hours” for off-leash dogs in parks. This unwritten park policy, however, generated 20 years of complaints, controversy and, ultimately, litigation by community opponents of this practice, demanding enforcement of existing “Leash Laws.”

Whether or not to create an off-leash policy for dogs is generally left to the judgment and discretion of local officials, who are authorized and charged with the responsibility to manage public parks. Accordingly, courts will not second-guess or question administrative decisions made by agencies and officials exercising their judgment and discretion to manage public parks in a manner consistent with the scope of their legal authority under state or local law.

Such immune administrative discretion would generally include decisions regarding where and when dogs could be off-leash in public parks, if at all. As a result, resolution of potential off-leash controversies and conflicts between dog owners and other park users is a public relations/political issue better left to the judgment and discretion of local government officials, not a legal issue for courts to decide.

Liability is also a non-issue. On the issue of potential liability, applicable state law would likely provide public park agencies with policy/planning immunity on the decision whether to restrict dogs in the parks, including the operational details of implementing an applicable leash law and/or off-leash policy. Moreover, the alleged failure to effectively enforce existing leash laws or an off-leash policy would

generally be immune from governmental liability under general police protection/prosecutorial discretion immunity.

Further, on the issue of potential liability for injuries to park users associated with leashed or unleashed dogs in public parks, in most situations, the role of a park agency would be limited to that of landowner. Accordingly, the mere presence of leashed and unleashed dogs in parks would not constitute an “unreasonably dangerous condition on the premises” necessary to provide a legal basis for landowner liability. On the contrary, the legal responsibility, if any, would lie with the dog owner, not the public park agency, for any injuries associated with leashed or unleashed dogs in public parks.

Off-Leash Political Controversy

In the *Matter of Juniper Park Civic Assn. Inc. v. City of New York*, 831 N.Y.S.2d 360 (11/30/2006), a nonprofit civic association, the Juniper Park Civic Association (JPCA), sought a court order to compel the city of New York (NYC) to enforce provisions of the New York City Health Code and the Rules of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, both of which required dogs in parks to be leashed. Formed in 1942, JPCA is “dedicated to preserving the quality of life in and around Middle Village, Elmhurst and Maspeth, Queens County.” The name of the organization is derived from a New York City park, Juniper Valley Park, located in Middle Village, Queens.

NYC, through the Department of Parks and Recreation (Parks Department), was responsible for “maintaining, policing and administering” NYC parks, including Juniper Valley Park. Another nonprofit umbrella organization of various dog owner groups, the New York Council of Dog Owner Groups (NYCDOG), filed a motion with the court to intervene in this case.

The NYC Health Code and Park Rules govern the walking of dogs in New York City and, among other things, prohibit dogs from being present in parks without being leashed. Specifically, New York City Health Code § 161.05a, which, in common parlance, is known as the “Leash Law” provides that “a person who owns, possesses or controls a dog shall not permit it to be in any public place or in any open or unfenced area abutting on a public place unless the dog is effectively restrained by a leash or chain not more than six feet long.”

Similarly, Section 1-04 [i] of the Rules of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation provide, in pertinent part, that no person owning or possessing any animal “shall cause or allow such animal to be unleashed or out of control in any park, except as permitted by the Commissioner.”

JPCA claimed “park patrons are threatened and at risk” from what JPCA characterized as non-enforcement and “active encouragement of violations of the Leash Law,” including the Parks Department’s “own rules between the hours of 9 p.m. and 9 a.m.,” which allowed dogs in parks to be off-leash. JPCA claimed the Parks Department’s non-enforcement of applicable Leash Laws have “continued despite numerous complaints and demands for enforcement by JPCA, its members, community residents and other civic and political organizations.”

NYC denied JPCA’s claim of “comprehensive non-enforcement” of Leash Laws, but admitted “the Commissioner of Parks and Recreation (Commissioner) has granted permission for dogs to be off-leash in specified areas in some parks for the limited hours of 9:00 p.m. to 9:00 a.m.”

Unwritten Policy

Based on the record and arguments in this case, the court noted “the genesis of this dispute dates back almost 20 years” when the Commissioner at the time instituted an “unwritten policy” establishing “courtesy hours” during which dogs would be permitted to be unleashed in certain portions of parkland in the city. According to the Parks Department, this “unwritten policy” has been adopted by several ensuing Commissioners of Parks and now encompasses the hours between 9 p.m. and 9 a.m.

JPCA claimed “the Commissioner does not have the authority to enact such a policy in the face of the explicit language of the Leash Law,” as well as the Parks Department’s own “Leash Law” in its written rules.

In response, NYC and NYCDOG claimed off-leash exercise benefited dogs and their owners. Moreover, considering “the increasing proportion of the citizenry owning dogs,” NYCDOG contended society benefited from “well-adjusted canines.” Specifically, NYCDOG attributed the current vitality of all New York City parks to the single fact that dogs have been allowed to roam off-leash.

In opposition to these claims, JPCA submitted photographs, news articles and affidavits to support the claim that “park patrons are threatened and at risk” by the Parks Department’s unwritten policy, which established “courtesy hours” for dogs to roam off-leash. As characterized by the court, JPCA’s material “taken in a vacuum, would lead to the inescapable conclusion that any individual daring to venture in or near a City park would expect to be harassed by marauding hordes of vicious dogs whose owners sit idly by viewing the carnage, much like spectators in the Roman Coliseum.”

While characterizing these arguments by NYCDOG and JPCA as “philosophically interesting,” the court found their positions to be “totally irrelevant to the legal issues that must be decided.” As described by the court, the legal issue to be addressed was “the extent of the Commissioner’s authority to permit dogs to roam off-leash in parks in light of the fact that other rules apparently prohibit such conduct.”

NYC claimed that “courtesy hours” were a valid exercise of the Parks Department’s authority because “the Commissioner is authorized by the City Charter to manage the parks and establish rules and regulations for the use of same.” JPCA, however, argued that the off-leash policy was in “clear contravention of a ‘law’ which the Commissioner has decided is not binding upon him due to his office.” According to JPCA, the Commissioner “cannot usurp the legislature that has created laws for the protection of the general public.”

Administrative Regulatory Code

According to the court, JPCA’s argument exhibited “a fundamental misunderstanding of the ‘laws’ at issue.” As noted by the court, the Public Health Code was “not a legislatively enacted law, but rather, like it expressly states, a code.” As noted by the court, there was a “fundamental distinction” between a “law, or more accurately a statute” created by a legislative body and a “code.” Unlike a legislated statute, the court described a “code” as an agency’s exercise of administrative powers granted by a legislative body to “make rules and regulations” to achieve the legislative intent of a given law.

In this instance, the court found the Health Code was not promulgated by the New York City Council, but by the Board of Health of the New York City Department of Health under a grant of rule-making authority in the New York City Charter. Similarly, the court found the New York City Charter authorized the Commissioner of the Parks Department to “establish and enforce” the Rules of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. Subject to the requirements of the City Administrative Procedure Act, the court further found the Health Code and the Parks Department Rules were “not only created by nearly identical processes,” but “each [is] deemed to have the force and effect of law” with “violations of each are punished as misdemeanors.”

While the Leash Law “subject of these regulations may fall predominately within the rubric of public health,” the court noted that fact did not necessarily require “the Health Code to be treated as superior or controlling on the issue of unleashed dogs in public parks.” On the contrary, while the City Health Code acknowledged the “Department of Health is the City agency with primary responsibility in the field of public health,” the Department of Health was “not the only agency in New York City with duties relating to health.” The Health Code expressly noted other agencies involved with health included “the Department of Parks and Recreation with recreational facilities and the parks.” Further, a major consideration in the Health Code was to avoid “administrative and legal duplication or inconsistency with the law and activities of other government agencies” with “their own codes and regulations.”

In this instance, the court determined the Commissioner was not attempting to “override a legislative mandate.” As a result, the court found the Leash Law provisions in the Health Code would not supersede the Parks Department Rules.

Off-Leash Authority and Discretion

The issue before the court, therefore, was to resolve the apparent inconsistency between the Health Code and the Parks Department Rules. As noted by the court, the Health Code contained “a blanket prohibition against dogs being permitted off-leash in public.” While the Parks Department Rules contained a “similar prohibition,” the court found the Parks Department Rules would permit dogs to be off-leash inside city parks when within established “dog runs” and “as permitted by the Commissioner.”

Since the Health Code acknowledged “the Parks Department’s concurrent oversight of public health issues as they relate to the City parks,” and “recognizing the Commissioner’s jurisdiction over the management of City parks and duty to promulgate rules in relation thereto,” the court concluded “the Parks Department Rules, including its exceptions, are controlling under the circumstances.”

In reaching this conclusion, the court noted that JPCA had “not challenged the propriety of the establishment of section 1-04 [i] of the Parks Department Rules, which expressly vests the Commissioner with the authority to permit off-leash activity at his discretion.” Instead, JPCA had argued, unsuccessfully, the superiority of the Health Code over Parks Department Rules.

As a result, the court found the Commissioner was indeed authorized to implement “courtesy hours” for off-leash dog activity in city parks, based on the “language of the Parks Rules, which expressly allow the Commissioner to permit such activity.” Further, the court found the New York City Charter had expressly delegated authority and powers to the Commissioner “to determine whether to permit off-leash activity within City parks.”

Enforcement Discretion

As characterized by the court, JPCA had also demanded that the Parks Department be compelled to “enforce the rule prohibiting off-leash activity during periods other than the courtesy hours”; i.e., 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. To support the alleged failure to enforce Leash Laws, JPCA had submitted sworn statements, letters and newspaper articles to show “various attacks upon park users by unleashed dogs.”

In the opinion of the court, JPCA’s “non-evidentiary anecdotal” information did not prove the Parks Department was not enforcing the Parks Rules or the Health Code from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. While expressing sympathy for the victims of these dog attacks, the court found reports of these incidents did not “constitute legally sufficient proof” that the Parks Department was “blanketly not enforcing the applicable rules through the issuance of summonses or custodial arrests.”

In response to JPCA’s anecdotal information and belief that Parks Department Rules were not being enforced, the Parks Department offered a sworn statement that its officers “may and do” cite owners for unleashed dogs outside the “courtesy hours,” as well as citing “owners who are unable to control their dogs” any time of the day.

On this issue of alleged non-enforcement, or non-enforcement in general, the court acknowledged it was “without power to intervene.” As a general legal principle, the court noted “the decision whether and in what instances police power should be exercised is peculiarly and unquestionably a discretionary function,” not subject to second-guessing by the courts. According to the court, it could not issue an order to compel a general course of official conduct; i.e., directing the Parks Department to enforce the Parks Department Rules from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., because it would be “impossible for a court to oversee the performance of such duties.”

Formalize Off-Leash Policy

While the court was “keenly aware” that it could “dispose of the legal issue presented,” it acknowledged, “the broad emotional effect of the issues raised will remain.” Accordingly, considering “the angst and vitriol exhibited” in this case by JPCA and NYCDOG, the court found “common sense would dictate that something more than an ‘unwritten policy’ governing the off-leash use of parkland by dogs which is known by few and misunderstood by many, is required in this instance.”

The court, therefore, recommended that the Parks Department follow through on its oral and written statements to the court that the Parks Department would “formalize the details of the current off-leash policy within the Park Rules.” In so doing, the court expressed its hope that the Parks Department statements were “more than mere puffery.” In the absence of a formal and clearly understood off-leash policy within the Parks Rules, the court envisioned an unacceptable alternative: “simply more endless litigation over what is, inherently, an administrative and political problem.”

Conclusion

As a result, the court denied JPCA’s petition for the court to issue an order compelling the Parks Department to “enforce section 165.05 of the New York City Health Code and section 1-04 of the Rules of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation” in a manner that would eliminate “courtesy hours” and require dogs to be leashed at all times in NYC public parks.

Creating Dog Parks - Without Rancor



JoAnne Borne (with permission)

Prospect Park; New York City

By Peter Harnik and Cerise Bridges

DOG PARKS UNLEASHED! That's how a tabloid might cover it. Or, just as plausibly, FIDO FINALLY GETS TO PLAY! Either way, the hottest new city park issue to hit America -- the skyrocketing support for creating places to let dogs run free -- has been challenging park directors, roiling communities and making headlines.

Dogs have always played a big role in city parks, but their traditional position at the end of a lead has been upended by changing mores and a rising enthusiasm among dog owners for much more active play. By one estimate there are now at least 2,000 off-leash dog areas, ranging from small parks entirely devoted to canines to substantial corners of larger green spaces—and the number is growing exponentially. From Berkeley, Calif. (site of reputedly the nation's first, in 1983) to San Antonio and Atlanta (which each opened their first only in 2003), the issue has provoked excitement and furor, with raucous public hearings sometimes running well past midnight. Interestingly, in some cases the dog park issue has badly fragmented a city while in others it has been resolved harmoniously, even adding potency to the park constituency. Why the difference?

In a crowded city where almost every square foot is precious, it's not easy for a park department to announce that some of its land will be devoted to free-running dogs. To some folks that sounds like "your dogs over my children." But from the other side of the fence, the reaction is equally strong: "My kid happens to be a dog. We all pay taxes here, don't we?"

Of all the clashes, nowhere has it gotten as bad as in San Francisco, a city with multiple park agencies and as many dogs as children.

In the 1970s, an off-leash culture began on some of the chilly, foggy and remote San Francisco beaches operated by the National Park Service. Initially, removing leashes

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Dog Owner Associations

Who says dog owners (and their opponents) don't have a sense of humor?

SCOOP: Sacramento Owners for Off-leash Parks, Sacramento

KC SCOOP: Kansas City Society of Canine Owners for an Off-leash Park, Kansas City

POOP: People Organized for Off-Leash dog Parks, Nashville

PUP - People Using Parks, Oregon

PiP - Partners in Parks, Milwaukee

FIDO - Fellowship in the Interest of Dogs and their Owners, Prospect Park, Brooklyn, New York

ROMP: Responsible Owners of Mannerly Pets, Minneapolis

Fort Woof Dog Park: Forth Worth, Tex.

LAPP: Leash-free Alliance of Piedmont Park, Atlanta, Georgia

COLA: Citizens for Off-Leash Areas, Seattle (and other locations)

UnCOLA: Off-leash opposition group, Seattle

was illegal because of a blanket prohibition on all Park Service land, but a special advisory group recommended an exception for portions of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Not everyone in the city approved, but it did provide an escape valve to keep off-leash dogs from running in more heavily used places like Golden Gate Park or Union Square. Then, in 2001 park naturalists realized that the populations of two threatened beach birds, the snowy plover and the bank swallow, were dropping rapidly and that it was probably due to the unleashed dogs. Suddenly park police began enforcing the leash law and handing out expensive tickets. Just as suddenly, owners began to take their pets to much smaller and more centrally located neighborhood parks run by the city park department.

In San Francisco, the second most densely populated city in the nation (after New York), even quarter-acre patches of green are dearly loved and heavily used. If one of them is suddenly peppered with dog droppings, or if someone is bitten while sunbathing, or if mothers start screaming at the owner of an off-leash dog, the whole city quickly hears about it. Perceiving a lack of leadership (the city has two park agencies which rarely communicate, plus the mayor and the city council are usually at odds), every park became a battleground. Both sides dug in, roiled by both the media and a number of grandstanding politicians. Ultimately, the Park Service brought in two organizations, the Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution and the Center for Collaborative Policy, to conduct a "negotiated rule making process," a formal consensus approach to problem solving. There are early indications that San Francisco's off-leash dog battle might eventually be amenable to a negotiation, but this particular process is federally mandated and, as such, is so bureaucratic that it can easily take years. When asked if he was surprised that a dog park issue has gone so far, Mike Eng, a senior program manager with the conflict resolution institute was appropriately diplomatic. "On the grand scale of environmental conflicts we deal with, this is low," he said, "but with the emotional attachments people have for their dogs, it is understandable."

Perhaps the real wonder should be reserved for Seattle, 1000 miles to the north, which made the civic transition to dog parks with relative ease and polish. Seattle, too, was hit by the off-leash trend in the early 1990s and, after complaints escalated, the city initially took a hard-line approach, adding more animal control officers and increasing the number of citations. Concerned about where the policy would lead, dog owners formed Citizens for Off-Leash Areas (COLA) and caught the attention of a city council member. The Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation was not the least bit enthusiastic, but COLA helped identify about 70 possible off-leash sites and the City Council mandated a 15-month pilot program at eight of them in 1996.

The pilot program made all the difference. First, it showed residents that the city was in charge and acting reasonably. Second, it taught Seattle how to identify site selection criteria that would lead to successful locations, which turned out to be: (1) avoid interference with other established uses or department-sponsored activities; (2) avoid locations directly abutting residences; (3) assure availability of close-by parking; (4) avoid locations near children's play areas; (4) choose spots where there are minimal impacts on the visual character of a park; (5) site so as to avoid spillover into non-dog areas; and (6) avoid sensitive environmental habitats.

Seattle also learned something else. "Try to find property with no history," says

A Temperament Test

Every dog park has guidelines and rules of etiquette. Commonly, owners are required to clean up after their pets and are prohibited from bringing aggressive dogs, dogs in heat, and dogs that have not been vaccinated. They are also required to be within calling distance of their pets. Some facilities are divided into “large dog” and “small dog” areas. However, Paw Run Recreation Area, a privately run dog park in Ann Arbor, Mich., takes things a step further. Paw Run requires dogs to pass a temperament test to enter.

The temperament test evaluates two forms of aggression: dog-to-people and dog-to-dog. In each test the dog’s reaction to a greeting, handling, and object possession is graded from A (“leans forward, averts eyes, relaxes posture and wags tail”), to F (“growls or tries to bite the handler”).

Though grades are not a judgment about dog’s worth, says Carolyn Kinsler, operator of Paw Run Recreation Area, “members appreciate the test, assured that aggressive dogs will not be a threat to their own or their dog’s enjoyment.”

Dewey Potter, spokeswoman for the park department. “It’s a lot easier than persuading people to change a field’s use into something different.”

Thanks to a phased-in program by a no-nonsense agency that backed up its promises with both real facilities in some places and tickets in others, Seattle’s program today is “wildly successful,” according to Potter. In fact, dogs in Seattle have even helped reclaim some parks from illegal users: in 1995, when police reported a high volume of unlawful alcohol, drug and sexual activity in three particular parks, the park department converted them to pilot off-leash areas and criminal activity soon evaporated.

There’s no doubt that off-leash areas are good for dogs and their owners. The dogs can run and cavort; the humans can stand or sit, talk or read, watch and provide comfort, if necessary. It’s pretty similar to a children’s playground and just about as much fun, even for non-dog owning passers-by who often stand at the fence and enjoy all the activity. The more enterprising sites even have playground-like props and accoutrements - sprinklers, fake fire hydrants, wading pools, bridges, tunnels and more - often in bright, primary colors (even though dogs are largely color-blind). When dogs run off excess energy they become less aggressive. When people socialize they often strengthen their community. In Seattle, off-leash areas were so successful that one pundit dubbed them “the singles’ bars of the 90s.”

There’s also no doubt that nearby neighbors are often less enthusiastic. As with playgrounds, noise is a factor, and most people have less tolerance for barking than for children’s delighted shrieks. Dog parks also take a physical beating. Even beyond issues of droppings and urine, there is no way to keep grass green, growing and healthy on any dog park smaller than about 15 acres, according to Don Colvin at Indianapolis Department of Parks and Recreation. Thus, most dog parks are surfaced with shredded bark, pebbles, synthetic materials - or, de facto, with mud and dust.

Robert E. Lee Park, in Baltimore, exemplifies the range of problems - environmental and otherwise—which can arise on an inadequately planned and managed space. Lee is not officially a dog park, but because of its relative remoteness and a lack of enforcement, it has become a popular one. “Overrun,” is how one user put it. “Families used to come to picnic, but that’s out of the question now with all the dogs running around,” he said. When the city announced that it would close the park for a year to reconstruct a bridge and to remediate soil that it said was contaminated by the dogs, owners engaged in what park superintendent Connie Brown called “civil disobedience,” cutting fences and circumventing welded steel bars. When a local citizen group pleaded for the creation of a fenced off-leash area within Robert E. Lee Park, the park department deferred the issue until a policy on off-leash areas can be established. Baltimore is a classic case of a city without an off-leash policy, without a plan of action, without criteria and without enforcement—there are only two animal control officers for 650,000 residents.

The story from Atlanta’s Piedmont Park had a happier ending. There, too, an out-of-the-way portion of the 185-acre park had evolved into an illegal but popular off-leash gathering spot. When it came time to renovate that section of the park, the Piedmont Park Conservancy realized it would have to confront the issue head-on or risk a Baltimore-like uprising. Fortunately, a solution was at hand. Piedmont Park has a number of undeveloped, unusable sections which have never evolved a culture or a user con-

stituency. One, down in a valley shielded by trees and tracks from earshot of most homes, had recently been renovated. It was there that conservancy staff, relying entirely on donations from dog lovers, erected a fence and posted rules. It has become one of the most frequented areas of the park and operates virtually around the clock. "Atlanta has no other dog park," said conservancy Development Director Kendra Cotton. "It was so desperately needed that people treat it as a gift, and take care of it." (The facility is basically self-policed by users, although after a pit bull killed a miniature pincher, the two-acre park was divided into sections based on canine size and weight, and a security patrol was added. The conservancy is also considering instituting a temperament test for dogs.)

The cutting edge in off-leash management is to do a dog park without a fence. This is relatively common in some of the sprawling cities of the west and southwest, such as Colorado Springs and Portland, Ore. Surprisingly, it's also the rule in New York City's Prospect Park.

Prospect Park is a 526-acre oasis in the heart of Brooklyn, one of the most densely populated places in America. Today it is a manicured delight of forest and field, but in the 1970s it was in shambles, a dangerous no-man's land where dogs were both a problem and a source of protection, and many of them were off-leash. With the creation of the Prospect Park Alliance and the successful effort to turn the park around, Tupper Thomas, park administrator, decided to add some structure to the chaotic situation. But she used the clock and the sign, not the fence. She allowed leash-free only in the morning and evening - and dog owners who didn't comply began receiving costly citations. She also stressed that taking off the leash was a privilege, not a right, and it could be taken away if there were problems. To defuse a potentially explosive situation, advocates formed Fellowship in the Interest of Dogs and Owners (FIDO) to maintain good communication with the park staff and to support self-enforcement of the rules. FIDO is now part of a community committee on park policy.

Specifically, here are the rules: from April 1 to October 31, off-leash dogs are permitted from 9 p.m. to 9 a.m. in three specific places -- Long Meadow, Peninsula Meadow and the Nethermead - which total an amazing 116 acres; in Nethermead they are also permitted from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m., but only Monday through Friday. From November 1 to March 31, the off-leash hours for all three areas are 5 p.m. to 9 a.m. seven days a week. Josephine Pittari, vice president of the Alliance, reports that off-leash problems are minimal; she attributes the program's success to good communication between the park and dog owners. In addition to some signs, the Alliance aggressively gives out cards which state clearly the rules, hours and locations.

Perhaps a more typical response was in Milwaukee. When Citizens for Public Dog Parks brought up the issue in the early 1990s, the group was greeted with deep skepticism. The county board expressed concern about maintenance costs and about slotting county land for dogs. Eventually, creativity and persistence paid off - the group located a 26-acre backwater between a highway and a river that the county owned but had no plans for. But even then, the county put most of the weight of the experiment on the backs of the dog owners by leasing the land (for \$1) instead of operating it as an official county park. When Granville Off-Leash Dog Park officially opened in the spring of 1999, Citizens for Public Dog Parks changed its name to Partners in Parks (PiP). The

county agreed to pay half the \$4,000 cost of fencing the area but it left all other expenses and management decisions to PIP, which subsists on voluntary contributions and memberships.

Fred Mennecke, board president of PiP, isn't bitter. "Milwaukee County is not a very dog friendly area, but it also has budget problems. If it were known that the county put money into a dog park, all hell would break loose." Despite its step-child status, Granville is a big success - possibly because of its dramatic landscape (stemming from the dumping of old construction fill that resulted in hills and wetlands with woods and trails), or possibly because it is still the only dog park in Milwaukee County.

In the long run, Milwaukee's experience may be more telling than Prospect Park's. Cities - Brooklyn included - need more parkland. Instead of cramming more users into existing parks, the search should be on for alternative places to take the leash off - preferably using the not insignificant political and economic clout of urban dog lovers. Dog parks can be established on vacant lots, on drainage detention sites or on former landfills. For instance, villagers in Weston, Wis., plan shortly to officially open their dog park on top of a former landfill that has been covered with topsoil and planted. They raised \$7000 for fencing, benches, and a waste disposal center for the 10-acre facility. Berkeley's Caesar Chavez Park, a closed landfill, designates 17 of its 90 acres as off-leash. (It's now the largest dog park in the San Francisco Bay area.) Genessee Park in southeast Seattle, another newly sealed landfill, includes a 3-acre off-leash area and a ball field. (Staying true to the goal of choosing land with no previous park history, Seattle is also utilizing a fenced stormwater detention site for another off-leash spot called Blue Dog Pond.)

Though dog parks are in high demand, no park department has thus far taken the step of purchasing land for one. "I don't think we're there yet," says Christine Weber of FIDO Carolina. "Normally, dog parks are added to an existing park or are part of the master plan for a new multi-purpose park." Even parks on landfills, because they are usually quite large, are designed to meet a variety of recreational purposes.

The demand for dog parks is strong and growing. This trend has the capacity to add significant power to the general park movement - or it can create divisions that debilitate it. More so than any other new segment of the park user universe (infinitely more so than skateboarders, for instance), dog owners are a constituency with clout. (The U.S. "dog economy" is estimated at around \$75 billion a year.) By communicating sensitively and by planning carefully together, park advocates of all stripes - including both dog lovers and haters - should be able to strengthen urban park systems across the board through better design, better space utilization and the acquisition of more land.