

A CASE FOR A DOG PARK

Presented to

the

**Lower Makefield
Board of Supervisors**

**Prepared by
The Lower Makefield/Yardley
Dog Park Committee**

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WHAT IS A DOG PARK?

General Information

A dog park, also known as an off-leash recreation area, is a place where dog owners are legally permitted to exercise and socialize their dogs without the requirement of leashes. Dog parks are quickly gaining in popularity among dog owners as the number of places to exercise dogs off-leash has decreased dramatically in recent years. This has mainly been due to loss of space to new home/business construction, and other uses, and also to stricter enforcement of leash laws. Dog parks promote responsible pet ownership and provide a means of recreation for a large and legitimate population of the community.

Requirements

An ideal dog park would be a grass-covered area of two or more acres surrounded by a four to six foot fence. In order to control entry to the park, a gate would be required. The park would be in a safe and convenient location with accessible parking. Some amount of shade and adequate drainage are necessary, as are trash cans, although the picking up of dog waste is entirely the responsibility of the dog owners.

Community Benefits

Dog parks allow dog owners to meet and socialize with other dog owners while their dogs are able to exercise in a safe, contained environment. Members of existing dog parks have shown themselves to be organized, community-oriented groups of citizens who genuinely wish to make their neighborhoods better places to live. These people wish to obey the law, have a desire to meet others with similar interests and want their canine companions to be able to run and interact with other canines.

PROLIFERATION OF DOG PARKS

Dog parks are gaining in popularity around the world, and dogs and their owners certainly know why. There is nothing more fun for dogs and their owners than to run around and play together in a nice park. For those people fortunate enough to have a neighborhood dog park, this has become a primary form of recreation and socializing for them and their dogs.

There are now almost 350 dog parks in the United States. In the Philadelphia area, there are at least seven. There are also at least seven in New Jersey, with two close by in Ewing and Lawrenceville.

Dog parks are even becoming quite common in the media. A Canadian movie called "Dog Park" was released in the Fall and several dog food commercials take place in (you guessed it) a dog park.

BENEFITS

Before we talk about the benefits of allowing dogs access to fenced-in areas where they can run, we must first acknowledge the benefits of owning a pet.

- The health benefits of pet ownership are increasingly being recognized; that is why some insurance companies are beginning to offer lower rates for people who have pets.
- Pets can help to foster family cohesion.
- Pets are valued companions to many people and can act as emotional substitutes for spouses, romantic partners and children.
- Pets can help children to learn responsibility and sharing.
- Pets, particularly dogs, encourage owners to exercise.

We will acknowledge that not all people feel the need to let their dogs run or have them interact with other dogs. Dogs, like people, are all different, with different needs. But many people who have dogs love them and are invested in making sure they get what they need for quality of life. In addition, dogs are better pets when they get what they need. They are less likely to bite, chew, bark and get into other trouble. For many dogs, getting what they need means:

- More exercise than just an occasional walk; many dogs need to run to get sufficient exercise.
- Interaction with other dogs; dogs are very social creatures.

It is important to point out that the dog park would be for the owners as much as for the dog. This is, in part, because the dog will be better behaved, resulting in a less stressful home environment for the humans.

And it gives the owner an opportunity to interact in a positive environment with his/her dog. But, in addition, there are many aspects of the dog park that enhance the quality of life for the owner. These include:

- Providing a feeling of community inclusion
- Providing a reason for being outdoors

- Meeting other like-minded people

But additional benefits for the humans are:

- A sense of community
- Interaction with like-minded people
- An opportunity to exercise their dogs in a smaller amount of time
- An opportunity to offer their dogs stimulation that will make them better pets and companions

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Who will pay for the dog park?

Expenses for the dog park could include fencing, doggie clean-up bags, lawn maintenance, trash cans and removal, lights, liability insurance and land lease. These will be financed through membership fees and corporate sponsorship funds. In addition, dogs will be required to be licensed, generating additional revenue for the Township. No tax money will be spent on the park.

2. Where will the dog park be?

There are a number of possible sites which are removed from residential areas and are not currently being used for other activities.

3. Won't there be a lot of dog fights?

Our research shows that there are very few dog fights in existing parks. This is because dogs are not as protective when off-leash and off their own property. When there is a fight, rules will require that the dog owners remove their dogs from the park. This has been happening automatically in other parks.

4. If there is a fight, who will be liable?

The members will sign a waiver. Of course, this does not mean that no one will ever try to sue. Therefore, all possible steps will be taken to protect the Township from having to pay claims.

There may even be fewer dog fights outside of the park once a park is established, as well as fewer bites, less barking, etc. because Township dogs will have a place to release their energy in a productive way.

Because dogs in heat could be the source of problems, they will not be allowed in the park. Children under 12 will also be prohibited, simply because there will be dogs running and playing and this could lead to injuries in smaller children.

5. What about the dog waste? Won't it accumulate in the park, causing a health hazard, and how will it be eliminated?

Experience shows that dog parks tend to be self-policing, with regard to clean up of waste and dogs' behavior; no one wants to lose the park because of problems. In the parks we have visited, members do not hesitate to point out to another member when his/her dog is eliminating; we have also seen members clean up after other members. Some dog parks are cleaner than the surrounding areas.

We will provide garbage cans and bags. With these available, it will be easier to clean up after the dogs than it currently is along the canal and in the parks. The trash can be picked up on a regular schedule.

6. Who will be allowed?

The park will be for Lower Makefield Township and Borough residents.

7. How will we know that outsiders are not using it?

We will require that any members of the park buy and display a dog license. As with clean-up and behavior, this will be self-policing. If, at some point, we are approached by people from outside of the Township or Borough wanting to use the park, we would have to evaluate that option at that time.

8. Why can't dog owners just walk their dogs to give them the exercise they need?

Many dogs are satisfied with just a walk and many dog owners have the time to give their dogs the exercise they need. However, there are many people who would benefit from a dog park:

- Those who work long hours and get home too late to take their dogs on long walks; an hour of running is much more efficient in terms of releasing energy than an hour of walking;

- Those who have dogs who need more than a walk; big or small dogs who are very active are much better behaved when they can release their energy;
- Those who have dogs who are very social and don't have other ways of interacting with other dogs;
- Those who love their dogs and will enjoy the social interaction of other people who feel the same way about their canine companions;
- Those who are not physically able to give their dogs the exercise they need.

We live in a society where pets often are as important to people as any other member of the family or who may be the only other "family member" a person has. When a dog is loved, the owner will want to meet all of the dog's needs. This often includes more exercise than an owner can provide, for a variety of reasons. There are times when this leads to the dog becoming a problem for the owner - chewing, barking, or even aggressive behavior. This in turn can lead to diminished quality of life for the owner, or could get to the point where the owner has to get rid of the dog, leading to real grief in many cases.

People in other areas who have access to dog parks are extremely enthusiastic about the opportunities, social and physical, that they provide for both themselves and their dogs.

LIABILITY ISSUES

Liability has been one of the most often cited objections. This has been researched with legal experts and representatives from the Township's insurance administrators.

A. Anticipated Claims

In researching this issue, it appears that actual claims in previously established dog parks has not been a significant factor for any of the parks contacted. In fact, the main liability concerns appear to be unrelated to the dogs. The most likely areas for liability exposure are for individuals being injured while on the park premises.

B. Township Liability

The township is insured through the "Delaware Valley Insurance Trust", a consortium of local municipalities that self-insure through a contribution of tax dollars. In this manner, the risk is spread among member municipalities, but township tax dollars are ultimately at risk in the event of a claim.

C. Forming an Association

If a "Dog Park Association" were to be formed, and the association rented the open space from the township, the Association would effectively offer "a layer of insulation" for the township in the event of an incident.

D. Insuring the Association

Quotes have been secured, and it appears that the Association can insure itself for \$1,000,000 of coverage for less than \$600 per year.

E. Prioritization of Liable Parties

In the unlikely event of a claim, it must first be recognized that association members would not be able to file suit against the association. An individual would, effectively, be suing themselves. This aspect would eliminate a great deal of exposure. Nonetheless, some liability potential still exists if a non-member is on the premises.

In the event of a dog-related incident, the dog owner would be the responsible party. (The individual may be covered under a homeowner or renter's policy, or be held personally liable.) The Association would only be the secondary liable party, in which case more than adequate insurance will be in place.

It is unreasonable to expect that the township could be exposed to claims in any circumstances.

PROPOSED LOCATIONS

There are several parcels of land that are open space and appear as if they might be appropriate for use as a dog park.

They are:

1. The southwest corner of Macclesfield Park
2. North Park
3. Buck Hill Farms II *SAME*
4. The eastern corner of the municipal complex near the railroad tracks
5. Dolington Road and I-95 *4-45*
6. Mirror Lake and Yardley-Newtown Roads *same*

NOTE:

Several considerations were utilized in developing the above list. They are:

- a) open space preservation
- b) accessibility for residents
- c) proximity to existing recreational sites
- d) utilization of existing parking
- e) minimal future prospective development
- f) distance from existing housing

Although other viable sites exist within the Township, the above appear to be preferential.

BUDGET ANALYSIS

NOTE: Two different mechanisms have been proposed in the establishment of this project- 1) as a Township entity and 2) as a separate association paying a "user fee" to the township. The following chart is for illustration purposes only. Modifications are expected based on the eventual organizational structure.

ESTIMATED ANNUAL COSTS

Fencing annual cost-	\$1,500
(3 year amortization of \$4,000 initial investment)	
Refuse removal(contract WMI,Anders)	\$ 750
Landscaping(reimburse TWP)	\$1,000
Administrative assistance(reimburse TWP)	\$ 750
Miscellaneous (issuance of tags, etc)	\$ 750
TOTAL YEARLY COSTS	\$4,750

(Additional costs to be incurred will be items such as disposal containers, plastic bags for members to pick up waste, etc. Those additional items will be nominal.)

ASSUMPTIONS/INCOME PROJECTIONS

Estimate of 5,000 dog owners within jurisdiction.
Estimate of 6% participation of enrollment- 300 dogs
Annual activity fee of \$25/dog

Gross membership activity fees	\$7,500
Annual Net Profit	\$2,750

Depending on organizational structure, surplus funds may be utilized for promotion, future capital investment, or contribution to other Township projects.

(The above estimates are based on information gathered from other dog parks. As such, there is no guarantee of financial viability. However, in the unlikely event that membership fees do not meet expected levels, corporate contributions and sponsorships have been secured to minimize any shortfall.)

CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP

In our continuing effort to eliminate or reduce the cost of the dog park to Lower Makefield Township, the park committee is actively pursuing corporate sponsorship. We are approaching national pet care companies requesting funding to offset the costs associated with the park.

To date, the following corporations were contacted:

1. Petsmart
2. Friskees Pet Care (Alpo)

To be contacted:

1. Iams
2. Petco
3. Purina
4. Novartis (Interceptor-Heartworm)

Other dog parks have been successful in their corporate sponsorship pursuit; we expect to do the same. To date, however, our search for funding is restricted and the approach rather delicate since the approval for the park is still pending.

We plan to continue our search for donations to the best of our abilities, always representing the Dog Park Committee and Lower Makefield Township with the respect both parties deserve.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dr. Markus Barth

Jeanne Bray

Jim Bray

Alice Gordon

Debbie Moses

JoAnne Richardson

Dr. Peter Szakacs

Dr. Jim Wilson, Special Consultant

DOG PARK RESOURCES

Dogpark.com

Links to Dog Park-Related Sites

DogWood Park

A Case for Space- University of Southern California



dogpark.com

Double Papers	Dogs at Work	Dogs at Play	The Right Dog	Caring for Dogs	Dogparks	For Associations	Showing
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What & Why

[Dogparks in the US](#)

[How to start a Dogpark](#)

[One Guy's Dogpark Experience](#)

[Dogpark Etiquette](#)

[Add a Dogpark to Our List](#)

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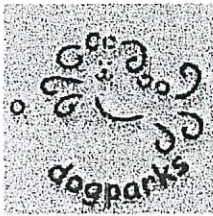
What is a Dogpark and Why Do We Need Them?

Simply stated, a dogpark is a place where people and their dogs can play together. As the name implies, these places offer dogs off-leash play areas while their people enjoy the park-like setting. Amenities, such as fencing, water, parking, and even grass, vary greatly among these places, but 'off-leash' and 'park' are the key elements that dog owners, um, taxpayers, um, voters, desire.

For some dog owners, a dogpark may provide the only opportunity for owners to socialize with other people and their dogs. Persons with limited mobility, such as elderly and disabled dog owners, deserve to have their taxpayer dollars used towards a safe, accessible place where they can meet other people and exercise their dogs. For many people, visiting a dogpark is a primary source of recreation. The ability to share activities with canine family members at a dogpark is important, and increasingly recognized by cities. A report on off-leash dogparks by Portland Parks and Recreation states that "There is a newly identified parks user group: Dogs and their owners. This user group is drawn to parks for open space, fresh air, exercise and socialization for themselves and their pets. Coming to a park is their chosen form of recreation, much the same as jogging or biking. They are legitimate park users."

The Marin Humane Society has been involved in the development of a number of local dogparks and states that

"There is no doubt that dog owners deserve to share in the "park pie" with other special use groups like baseball, soccer and tennis clubs. The recognized use of city and county maintained dog parks is growing at an amazing rate around the country, and these parks can provide an excellent venue for providing information on low cost spay/neuter and vaccination clinics, the microchip ID, dog training, and other information related to keeping canines happy and healthy. Dogs contribute immeasurably to their family's quality of life, thus helping to foster a sense of community for everyone. Making dog parks a priority creates positive community spirit."



dogpark.com



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How to Start a Dogpark

There are many benefits to having a dogpark in your town. Dog owners know this, and can move the park development process along by helping others in the community understand the need. Each community has its own rules for public facility use, so the first place to start is by doing some homework - is anyone else in your town developing a dogpark? Can your local parks and recreation department offer any help? Since many dogparks are located in city parks, this is an excellent place to begin. Well-informed people with well-behaved dogs can make a positive and powerful impact on their neighborhoods.

Tips on Starting A Dogpark

Community Benefits

- Socializes and exercised dogs in a safe environment.
- Promotes responsible pet ownership.
- Provides elderly and disabled owners with an accessible place to exercise their companions.
- Enables dogs to legally run off-leash.
- Promotes public health and safety.
- Provides a tool for realistic enforcement of dog control laws.

The Ideal Dog Park is Designed to Include

- Concern for the environment.
- One acre or more surrounded by a 4' to 6' fence.
- Entry - double gated.
- Shade and water.
- Adequate drainage.
- Parking close to site.
- Grass area: routine mowing.
- Covered garbage cans with regular trash removal.
- Pooper scooper stations.
- Benches
- Wheel chair access.
- Safe location, not isolated.
- Regular maintenance.

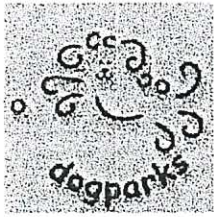
Things to Consider Before Developing a Dogpark

- Appropriate site selection.
- Noise.
- Maintenance and health concerns.
- City support.
- Traffic.
- Supervision of park.

The Role of A Dogpark Group

- Raise funds for amenities.
- Monitor use.
- Clean-up.
- Serve as communications liaison with city, neighborhood and dog owners.

(List reprinted with permission of the Marin Humane Society.)



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[Dogparks in the US](#)

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[One City's Dogpark Experience](#)

[Dogpark Etiquette](#)

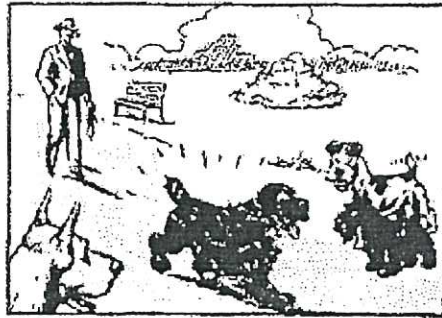
[Add a Dogpark to Our List](#)

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Dogpark Etiquette for People

Once you and your dog get to the dogpark, it's tempting to just stand back and watch all the activity. But everybody will have a much more rewarding time if you observe some basic rules. Dogparks aren't a right, they're a privilege. - please don't let bad behavior ruin things for everyone else.



Always keep your eye on your dog. Mischief can happen quickly.

Never leave your dog unattended.

Always clean up after your dog. Most parks have poopbags or scoopers, so use them. This is a primary reason that dogparks get complaints, so pay attention and **pick up the poop.**

Make sure your dog is current on her shots and has a valid license.

Don't bring dogs younger than 4 months to a dogpark. They won't have had all the necessary inoculations that allow them to play safely with other animals.

Don't bring a female dog in season. Spayed/neutered animals are recommended.

Don't bring more than three dogs. It subjects parks to overuse, and if they're not your dogs, you may not have full control over them.

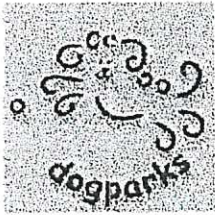
Keep your dog on-leash until you get to the off-leash area. This is not just respectful to other park users, it's much safer for your dog.

If your dog becomes unruly or plays rough, leash him and leave immediately.

If you must bring children to a dogpark, supervise them closely.

Don't smoke or eat while at the dogpark. Cigarette butts and food wrappers are tempting treats to dogs, but bad for them.

Always observe all of the rules posted at your local dogpark. Each town has its own set of regulations, so please follow them.



dogpark.com

Home	Home	Home	Home	Home	Home	Home	Home	Home
Reports	Work	Play	Dog	Play	Play	Play	Play	Play

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One City's Dogpark Experience

The city of Eugene, Oregon began its first dogpark in 1991. After six years, the Parks Department evaluated what the successes and challenges had been in developing dogparks. They drafted their results and conclusions in this report, which is reprinted here with the gracious permission of the Staff of the Eugene, Oregon Parks Department:

Dear Parks and Recreation Planner:

The City of Eugene now has six years of experience in providing off-leash areas in parks. This letter has been prepared as a response to increasing interest by other communities who have heard of our program and have inquired about its establishment and operation.

A proposal to create a dog off-leash area was received from some Eugene citizens in the spring of 1991. The site proposed was in a six acre pasture at the Wayne Morse Ranch Park, a 26 acre ranch setting now surrounded by residential development. With the site mostly fenced, it was fairly easy for the City to allow this activity on a trial basis.

The trial period was controversial as the activity rapidly became popular. There were complaints from some immediate neighbors about noise, parking impacts, surface water contamination and adverse environmental impacts. Support for the program initially outweighed detractors by a factor of about 5:1; we believe the support has strengthened since then.

Within the trial period, and to reduce the impact on the single Morse Ranch site, four other areas were established around the city, two in undeveloped portions of community parks and two on undeveloped neighborhood park sites. This action dispersed the activity in a satisfactory manner to the point that the pasture is no longer overused.

The trial period came to an end, and following public hearing, the decision was made to retain all five locations. Testimonials include the fact that people have moved into a neighborhood because of a dogpark's existence, and that people derive enjoyment in sharing this activity with others; it is as if these locations are community centers for people as well as canines. There have been no complaints from dog owners about people having failed to clean up after their dogs. Recent elimination of an off-leash site as a small undeveloped neighborhood park (as a result of a land-exchange) brought considerable outcry from those who wanted it replaced.

Moving from our experience to recommendations, we believe the following ideas and features are important for success:

Location should be in a large, community or metropolitan scaled park where between one and three acres are available. Size should be dependent on demand; too many dogs and people in too small an area can result in very muddy winter conditions in rainy weather climates.

Because people will come by car and bike, parking needs for both must be considered. Parking in front of adjacent residences will antagonize those neighbors.

Fencing can be agricultural types, about 4 feet high, with gates at logical points of entry. Areas near gates receive most wear and need special treatment to keep from becoming winter mud holes; wood chips, gravel or even concrete may be needed.

Cleaning up dog excrement is made possible by the presence of garbage cans with plastic liners and plastic scoops, which can be made from plastic gallon jugs. Scoop request signage and peer patrol serve to keep the areas clean. Our park services staff periodically collect the bags from the cans. Lids on cans keep out rain water, reducing weight.

Dog owners have suggested a number of amenities, and volunteers may be able to help provide some as they have in Eugene. They include shade trees, a hose bib so owners can fill water dishes, improved trails, tables and benches.

We believe off-leash areas will remain a part of larger Eugene parks. They do not seem feasible in smaller neighborhood parks because of the relative size, parking impacts and closer proximity to adjacent residences. In addition to the broad public support, they also have the support of the local animal control authority.

If your community has some undeveloped areas in larger parks, we feel quite certain (based on Eugene's experience) that your dog-owning community would be very supportive of your efforts to accommodate this activity. Be sure that you have a good location, since any moves to reduce size of change locations will be cause for public protest. Recognize also that introducing a new activity to a park can bring out the kind of people you want in parks, which can help control some of the undesirable activity that may be taking place.

Best wishes for your off-leash venture,

The Staff of the Eugene, Oregon Parks Department
www.ci.eugene.or.us



Links to Dog Park-Related Sites

What do I need to know to start a dog park in my community?

The following links provide information about dog parks, off-leash areas and dog runs. Together these links should provide a good starting point for individuals who are interested in establishing dog parks in their communities. Many of these sites will contain links to other sites that will provide additional information and resources.

<http://www.freeplay.org/>

This is a great site for several reasons. It contains a map which attempts to list all the dog parks in the United States. It also provides a link that enables you to subscribe to the Off-Leash Dogs mailing list which provides a forum for individuals or groups that are trying to establish dog parks in their communities. Other subscribers include individuals involved in well-established dog parks, dog runs, or off-leash areas around the country. A park official or two and the occasional Planner have been known to participate as well. The site also provides some good information about how to establish a dog park.

<http://www.dog-play.com/dogpark.html>

This site includes topics such as:

- What is a Dog Park?
- How Do I Start A Dog Park?
- Where Do I Get More Information?
- How Can I Find a Dog Park Near Me?

<http://www.nrpa.org>

The National Recreation and Parks Association, located at 22377 Belmont Ridge Rd., Ashburn, VA 20148 (Phone 703-858-2190), has a book entitled, *Planning Parks for Pets* which describes the different types of dog parks and dog runs, what makes a successful dog park, how much it costs, and what are the rules commonly associated with dog parks. Unfortunately their booklet of 21 pages costs \$17.50.

<http://www.inch.com/~dogs/runs.html>

This site discusses how to establish a successful dog park or dog run in your community.

<http://www.ur-net.com/aadogs/frequent.htm>

This Ann Arbor, MI site provides a FAQ page about dog parks designed to answer the more common questions people encounter as they work to establish a dog park or off-leash area in their community.

<http://www.petnet.com.au/city/index.html>

This Australian site includes a report concerning companion animals in the city. It is one of, if not the only comprehensive report of its kind. Australia, today is leading the world in innovative approaches in the field of urban animal management.

<http://www.dogpark.com/parkusa.html>

This site provides a list of dog parks across the US.

<http://www.dogpark.com/parkhow.html>

This site provides a brief overview about how to start a dog park.

<http://www.dogpark.com/parketiqa.html>

This page contains a good description of dog park etiquette.

<http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/3961/InnoPet.html>

This site tells you how to build your own dog park.

<http://www.mindspring.com/~patmar/index.htm#NewYork>

This site provides dog run/dog park locations and descriptions, issues, news, and other dog related links.

<http://hometown.aol.com/DalJeanLuc/index.html>

This site provides information about the Point Isabel Dog Park, one of the most visited in the country. The association that supports Point Isabel as an off-leash area used to have a wonderful video available for sale. If anyone knows how this video can be purchased please let us know and we'll update this page.

What dog park-related groups in the Maryland, DC, and Virginia area are on-line?

While the Greenbelt Dog Park in Greenbelt, MD was the first dog park in the state, it has been joined by Green Park in Gaithersburg, MD (we don't think they have a web site yet). However, there are other area groups in Maryland and Virginia that are working to establish dog parks or off-leash areas. Links to the sites we're aware of follow. If you are not listed and would like to be, just let us know and we'll update this page.

[Catonsville Off-Leash Dog Park](#)

[Bowie Dog Park Association](#)

[Lake Roland Canine Association](#)

[Reston Dogs](#)

[Herndon Area Dog Coalition \(HADC\)](#)

Are there any international dog park sites?

[Mississauga, Canada](#)

[South Melbourne, Australia](#)
[Public Open Space and Dogs in Australia](#)
[Minato-Ku, Tokyo, Japan](#)

Are there any Private Dog Parks

It was only a matter of time before someone saw the business potential in opening a private dog park -- or doggie country club.

[Dogwood Park - The Nation's First Private Dog Park](#)
[An Article about Dogwood Park](#)

Some Other Interesting Links

[At the Dog Park, a Tundra Story](#)
[Greetings from Central Park](#)
[Cities won't Slack Up Leash Laws; Some Compromise with Dog Parks](#)
[Sausalito Dog Park Gift Shop](#) - This dog park has it together as far as sweatshirts, t-shirts, bandanas, and sweatpants are concerned!

Are there any On-line Surveys about Dogs and Dog Parks?

[Why do people keep dogs?](#)

A seventh grader put this survey on-line as a class project. How about taking a moment and helping her out by answering the survey?

[A survey of dog park users](#)

A graduate student is conducting a survey of people who take their dogs to dog parks.

[**Home**](#)



Maryland's First Dog Park

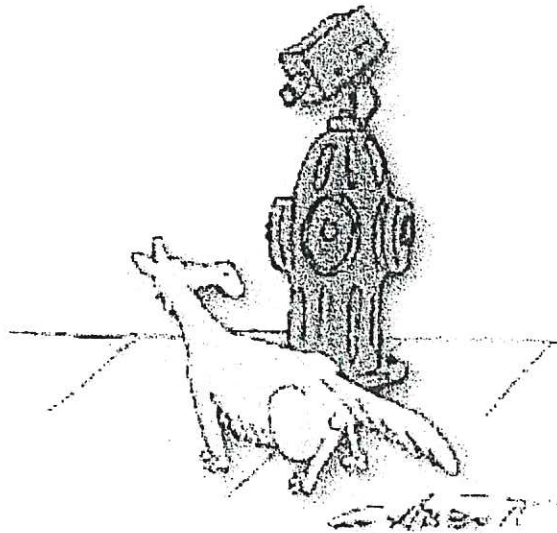


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- Photo Gallery
- Links
- Awards

Greetings Visitors! Please note that at the present time, the Greenbelt Dog Park can be used only by Greenbelt residents who have obtained the proper permits. We are currently exploring the possibility of allowing non-Greenbelt residents to obtain permits.

Enter your age:

Your age in Dog Years is:



Site hosted by
 Global Science &
 Technology
 Greenbelt, Maryland

dogpark@usa.net

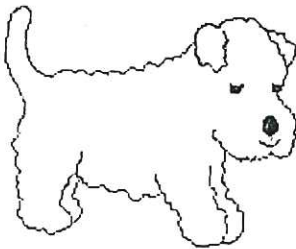


DogWood Park



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Last Updated October 11, 1999



Welcome to DogWood Park, the nation's first private country club for dogs and their people!

DogWood Park is a unique 14-acre private country club providing fitness, recreational, relaxation, and socializing opportunities for both you and your dog.

At DogWood Park dogs can run off-leash to their hearts' content in a safe controlled environment. The park offers both dogs and their people a variety of recreational and fitness amenities, including dog-swimming ponds, jogging/walking trails, and exercise equipment.

Perhaps even more importantly, DogWood Park gives dogs a chance to socialize with others of their own kind. Regular off-leash exercise and play with other dogs will result in a healthier, happier, more well-adjusted dog.





Hours & Location



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HOURS: Member dogs and their people may enjoy the park from 7am until sunset 365 days per year. If you would like to be able to use the park earlier than 7am, talk with park staff.

Non-member dogs may visit the park only on Sundays from 1pm until sunset.





LOCATION: 5505 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, Florida. **Directions:** Exit I-75 at the Archer Rd. (State Rd. 24) exit (exit #75). Go west on Archer Road exactly one mile. DogWood Park is on the left.




Park Rules






 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 must be closely supervised. Children will be expected to behave in an adult manner: no running, no chasing dogs, no petting of other's dogs unless permission is requested from the owner first.





 Be polite: scoop the poop!  Bag stations and trash cans are available throughout the park.


 Dogs must wear current license tags and be up-to-date on shots (the only proof required is proof of current rabies vaccination).

 Male dogs over one year of age must be neutered (exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis).

 Cover any holes your dog digs.

 No more than 3 dogs per person on any one visit, please.

 Check with your vet before bringing a pup under 4 months to the park.

 Dogs should be on leash in the parking lot.

 Have fun!



Rates



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At DogWood Park dogs are the members, not the people!

The following new membership rates went into effect on July 1:

The least expensive membership rate is the one for 24-months (\$288 plus tax for one dog and \$348 plus tax for *2 or *3 dogs--this averages out to \$12/month and \$14.50/month). Payment must be made in advance. Those who choose this membership plan are guaranteed forever the renewal rate of \$100/year for one dog or \$120/year for 2 or 3 dogs.

The 12-month plan costs \$180 plus tax for one dog and \$216 plus tax for *2 or *3 dogs (this averages out to \$15/month and \$18/month). Financing: the 12-month plan may be financed over 12 months with automatic withdrawals being made from either a Visa or MasterCard. The withdrawals, including tax, will be \$19/month for one dog and \$23/month for *2 or *3 dogs.

The 6-month plan costs \$120 plus tax for one dog and \$144 plus tax for *2 or *3 dogs (this averages out to \$20/month and \$24/month). Payment must be made in advance.

The 3-month plan costs \$75 plus tax for one dog and \$90 plus tax for *2 or *3 dogs (this averages out to \$25/month and \$30/month).

The 24-month, 12-month, and 6-month plans may be frozen (minimum freeze time: 30 days).

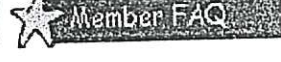
*The two or three dog rate is available only to a family living at a single residence and sharing the dogs applying for membership. It is not available to family members living at separate residences, roommates, or friends.

Day Rates. Non-member dogs are welcome to visit the park on Sundays between 1pm and sunset. Sunday day rates are \$4 for the first dog, \$2 for each additional dog, and \$1 per person.





Non-Member FAQ



Don't the dogs fight? Although dog fights do sometimes happen at a dog park, they are uncommon. Dogs that seem dog-aggressive in their own yards often get along fine with other dogs in a dog park situation. There are probably several factors contributing to this: (a) the dog park is neutral territory; there is nothing to defend; (b) the dogs at the dog park keep changing, so there isn't time for a "pack" to form; (c) dogs that are off-leash are much less likely to be aggressive than leashed dogs; (d) a large park such as DogWood Park tends to inhibit aggressiveness (the dog knows there is lots of room to get away if need be).

I'm not sure how my dog will react to being around the other dogs. Is it okay if I leave him on his leash until I know if he is going to be okay? If you have reason to believe your dog will be seriously aggressive toward other dogs even in a large neutral territory, do not bring your dog to the park. Bringing a dog-aggressive dog and keeping it on a leash is not acceptable--other friendly dogs will repeatedly approach your dog, and the situation will not be pleasant for them. DogWood Park is a park for *nice* dogs only. If you are not sure how your dog will act, but have no reason to believe he will attack other dogs in a neutral territory, your dog will more than likely be fine, *provided you let him off his leash*. We have seen time and time again a seemingly aggressive dog brought into the park on a leash who became a very nice dog once he was unleashed. Leashed dogs tend to feel intimidated by dogs running around off-leash--the leashed dog is not on equal footing with these dogs. The leashed dog, knowing he can't run away if need be, tends to act aggressive in order to "scare" off the unleashed dogs. And the leashed dog may feel protective of his owner on the other end of the leash. We recommend that unless you have reason to believe your dog is a danger to other dogs (and if that is the case he shouldn't be at a dog park at all), you let your dog off his leash as soon as he enters the park. If there is a problem you can immediately leash him. Or, drop his leash and let him run around a little bit with the leash still on; that way you can more easily catch him if need be.

What's the best way to break up a dog fight should one occur? There is no absolutely safe way to break up a dog fight, but one of the methods recommended by the experts is for each owner to grab his/her dog by the tail or hindquarters and pull the dog away from the other dog, hold on to your dog's hindquarters until he has calmed down, and then leash your dog and take him home. Under no circumstances should you ever break up a dog fight by grabbing a dog's collar or anything near the biting end of the dog!

I've stopped by DogWood Park a couple of times to check it out, but the gate is locked and I can't ever find a staff member there. Why is that? DogWood Park is staffed only on Sunday from 1pm until sunset. There may be staff members there at other times cleaning the park, but the only time you can depend on someone being there is on Sunday

from 1pm until sunset. If you are interested in joining the park, but can't make it on a Sunday or don't want to wait that long, call 335-1919 (leave a message); a staff member will try to schedule another time for you to join the park.

Do I need to worry about my dog getting fleas at the park? DogWood Park management does not expect to have a problem with fleas at the park. The park covers a large area (14 acres) and much of it is in the sun--these conditions are not conducive to flea reproduction. Also, one would guess that anyone who cares enough about their dog to buy him/her a membership in a dog country club will use one of the modern flea products such as Frontline or Advantage to make sure their dog is flea-free. But should a flea problem ever occur at the park, steps will be taken to control the situation.

Do I need to worry about my dog getting a disease at the park? When someone signs a membership application one of the rules they are agreeing to is to not bring their dog to the park if it is sick. Another rule they are agreeing to follow is to keep their dog up-to-date on its shots. Although the only kind of vaccination that is verified by the park is rabies, one would hope that anyone who would buy their dog a membership in a country club would also make sure their dog is protected by its vaccinations. But even if someone does not keep their dog up-to-date on parvo/distemper shots, *your* dog is protected as long as you keep his shots up to date.

Why do you say one should check with their vet before bringing a pup under six months to the park? It takes time for a puppy to build up immunity to diseases such as parvo and distemper. Some vets recommend that one wait a month or two after the pup has received all its shots before letting it be around a lot of other dogs. DogWood Park has no minimum age restrictions for puppies--we simply recommend that you follow your vet's advice, whatever that may be.

My kids love dogs--why can't children under 10 visit the park? We'd love to be able to safely let children visit the park, but unfortunately small children are at greater risk of being injured at a dog park than are older children and adults. A small child is more likely to be at a dog's face level, and more likely to be bitten in the face if a bite occurs. Young children often run instead of walk, and scream instead of talk--these actions can cause some dogs to get overly excited. Young children sometimes have not learned that not all dogs like to be petted. Groups of large fast-running dogs can easily knock a small child down. While we at DogWood Park firmly believe that kids need to learn proper behavior with dogs, we feel that doing so in an area with so many large dogs is not in the child's best interest.



Member FAQ



Home



Non-Member FAQ



Member FAQ

I was at the park the other day and one of other dogs kept bothering my dog. The dog's owner saw what was going on but did nothing. What should I do if this happens again? There is a wide range in dog play styles: some dogs play rough, growling and snapping as they play; some include humping behavior in their repertoire; some dogs, especially energetic puppies between 6 and 12 months of age, don't seem to know when to stop. One of the things dogs learn at a dog park is that different dogs play differently. Sometimes owners who are not used to these different play styles mistake play aggression for true aggression. If the other dog is showing true aggression toward your dog remove your dog from the area and notify park staff of the situation. Aggressive dogs (dogs who attack other dogs with the intent to harm them) are not welcome at DogWood Park. If the other dog is simply playing in a style that your dog is uncomfortable with, you have several options: (1) move your dog to another park of the park, (2) give your dog a chance to see if he can figure out how to handle the situation himself--often times dogs are able to work these things out themselves, (3) talk with the dog's owner and explain that your dog is uncomfortable with their dog's behavior; this third option will be necessary if you move to another area and the offending dog follows you. One would hope that the owner of a dog who is making your dog uncomfortable would do something to end the situation, but unfortunately not everyone understands dog behavior well enough to pick up on when a dog is scared, intimidated or really annoyed; you may need to explain to the offending dog's owner that your dog is not enjoying their dog's attentions.

Can I bring non-member people with me to the park? Is there a charge?

Member people can bring any number of non-member people with them to the park at any time; there is no charge. These non-member people are considered your guests, and you are responsible for their behavior while they are in the park. Make sure they understand and follow all park rules.

Can I bring non-member dogs with me to the park? Is there a charge? Non-member dogs should never be in the park (except on Sunday afternoons when the park is staffed) *unless* their visit has been cleared in advance with park management. Bringing non-member dogs or friends/relatives with their non-member dogs is not acceptable, even if you plan to pay a day rate, unless park management has been notified in advance. The primary goal here is not to make sure money is collected, but to try as hard as possible to make sure the park is a safe place for member people and member dogs, and that during member hours all dogs have been checked out by staff.

I have heard that there has been a problem with non-member people with

non-member dogs getting into the park. Why is this a problem and what can be done to prevent this? All member dogs have been observed around other dogs before they are allowed to join, and all member people have signed a liability waiver and an agreement to abide by all park rules. The #1 reason for wanting only member dogs and member people (and their guests) on the premises when the park is not staffed is for the safety of the members. In order to make sure that only member people (and their guests) and member dogs are in the park when it is unstaffed, please do the following: (1) try to make sure that a person behind you at the entrance gate cannot see the code you are entering, (2) do not hold the gate open for the person behind you unless you know the person and/or dog is a member--if you are not sure, ask, or just close the gate and let them punch in the code, (3) do not let in non-member people standing at the gate even if they ask to be let in; explain to them that they should return on a Sunday afternoon or call the DogWood Park phone number, (4) do not give out the combination to the gate to non-member people except under unusual circumstances (see below).

I will be gone for a few days and my friend will be taking care of my dog. Can I give my friend the combination and allow him to bring my dog to the park? Yes, you can do this, but please make sure your friend understands that the only dog he can bring to the park is your member dog (he can't bring his non-member dog). Make sure he knows all park rules and agrees to follow them. Make sure he understands that he should not give out the combination to anyone, or let anyone in the park. Make sure he understands and agrees with the liability waiver (and preferably has signed a liability waiver sign-in sheet). Even though you will not be there with your friend, he will be considered your guest and you will be responsible for his behavior while in the park.

Friends from out of town will be spending some time with me next month and they will be bringing their dog. Can they and their dog accompany me and my member dog when I visit the park on members-only days? Do I need to pay a day rate for their dog? Always check with park management before bringing a non-member dog to the park. If the non-member dog from out of town will be in town for no more than 6 days, you do not need to pay a day rate for the dog's visit (and fees are never charged for people accompanying you to the park). If the non-member dog will be visiting for more than 6 days, you have the option of purchasing a special one-month membership for the dog for \$25 (or \$30 for two dogs).





Park Amenities



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- ★ Book Club
- ★ Dog Products


Click on photos to enlarge them.

 nearly 14 acres fenced with 6 foot chain link fencing





 lots of big shade trees




 two huge dog-swimming ponds as well as wading pools


 a shaded walking/jogging trail


 a dog shower for muddy paws

 a "small dog" area restricted to dogs under 20 pounds (this area will occasionally be used as an obedience training area for dogs of all sizes)


 a "dry dog" area in which there are no ponds or pools--for those days on which you don't want to deal with a wet dog


 a large Victorian-style gazebo overlooking one of the ponds


 fitness stations for the people including parallel and chin-up bars, trapeze twists, and horizontal and vertical ladders

 benches and swings for relaxing





 hammocks for those into serious laying-back

 tunnels, tires, jumps and other fun exercise obstacles for the dogs

 park-provided dog toys

Now available for an addition fee:

 obedience, agility, and puppy classes

 24-hour access to a complete, lighted agility course



Contact the Park



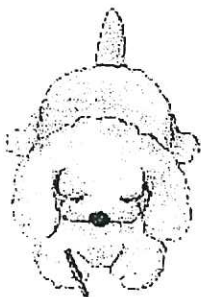
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DogWood Park phone number: 352-335-1919 (leave a message; calls are usually returned between 7 and 9 in the evening)

Emergency phone numbers: 352-376-0952 (evenings & weekends); 352-392-2821 (weekdays)

E-mail fido@dogwoodpark.com

Snail mail: DogWood Park, Inc., 5505 SW Archer Rd., Gainesville FL 32608



The Case for Space

Expanding Recreational Opportunities for Dog Owners and Their Pets

A Report Prepared for

FREEPLAY

by

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School of Policy, Planning, and Development
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University of Southern California

Professor Christopher Weare
Annenberg School for Communication
University of Southern California

Executive Summary:

The parks, recreational areas, beaches and open spaces of Los Angeles are used for myriad purposes. Los Angelenos enjoy running, walking, softball, soccer, tennis, basketball, rugby, lawn bowling, golf, a host of other sports and play with children, families and pets on the over 15,000 acres of open space in Los Angeles. Each of these recreational uses provides significant benefits to the participants. With over 3.6 million residents in the City of Los Angeles, however, different recreational activities compete for the limited open space available. The City Council and the Parks and Recreation Department must make a judgment on how to allocate scarce open space. This allocation must strive to be equitable and must be responsive to the expressed demand of citizens.

We begin with the premise that creating more open space is not a politically or economically feasible option in space-constrained Los Angeles. We are not asking to build more parks, beaches or recreational facilities. Instead, we will argue that the current allocation of open space does not meet the current demand for one type of recreational activity: off-leash dog recreation. We conclude that fairness and citizen demand require allocation of some existing open space for use as Off-Leash Recreational Areas (OLRA).

The report proceeds as follows. In Section One we briefly present evidence to support our contention that the current allocation of open space for off-leash dog recreation does not meet the expressed demand of citizens. We will focus our analysis on the Westside of Los Angeles where the expressed demand is particularly high. Section Two provides an overview of the benefits and drawbacks of OLRAs to dogs, dog owners and other residents of Los Angeles. Section Three identifies key stakeholders in the OLRA issue, and discusses the preferences of those who favor dog parks, and those who oppose them. Section Four presents criteria that attempt to satisfy the hopes of OLRA enthusiasts while recognizing the concerns of opponents. Section Five provides information that specifically addresses the concerns of those opposed to OLRAs. Section Six applies these criteria to five potential open space areas on the Westside of Los Angeles that could be re-allocated as OLRAs. In the end, we recommend that the City of Los Angeles designate a portion of Dockweiler Beach as an OLRA. As we will see, this choice may not be the "best" in terms of the hopes of OLRA supporters, but it is the "best" for all parties concerned and clearly the most likely to actually happen.

The case for more space...

In Los Angeles County there are 175,000 licensed dogs, which suggests that the number of dogs is actually in excess of 300,000. In all of Los Angeles County there are only 4 areas where owners are legally permitted to exercise with their dogs without a leash. These four off-leash dog areas comprise a total of less than 10 acres of space. To begin with a fanciful example, if all the licensed dogs in Los Angeles descended on existing OLRAs, each park would be required to hold more than 40,000 dogs or 17,500 dogs per acre. More realistically, if only 1 in 5 *licensed dog owners* (35,000) would like to use an OLRA, the demand is measured as 3500 dogs per acre, or 8750 dogs per dog park.

To place these figures in perspective it is helpful to compare OLRA allocation statistics with other forms of recreational activities. Table One compares the figures for OLRAs to competing recreational uses for open space.

Table One
Competing Recreational Uses

Recreational Activity	# of Acres	# of Users	Users per
Off-Leash Recreation Area	10	35,000	3500
Tennis	287	80,000	279
Softball	1050	39,375	40
Golf	1040	105,000	101

* all numbers rounded up

Softball:

According to the City Park & Recreation officials, there are 39,375 people in city organized softball leagues.

To accommodate these softball players, the city maintains 350 softball fields of approximately 3 acres each. These figures show that 1050 acres of open space in Los Angeles are devoted to recreational softball users compared with only 10 acres devoted to dogs and dog owner recreation.

Tennis:

There are 287 city run tennis courts in Los Angeles. We estimate that given the size of a tennis court and surrounding facilities, we estimate that 287 acres of open space are devoted to tennis courts. According to the Southern California Tennis Association (SCTA) there are 40,000 dues paying members to the SCTA, in the city of Los Angeles. Because many tennis players do not formally belong to the tennis association, this figure is under-estimated. We make the assumption that the number is underestimated by half and inflate the number to 80,000 tennis players. Spread out over 287 acres, the number of users per acre is slightly under 300, an order of magnitude less than the estimated 3500 users per acre of off-leash park land.

Golf:

The City Parks and Recreation department maintains 13 golf courses. Based on the assumption that one golf course takes up 90 acres of open space, an estimated 1170 acres is devoted to golfers in Los Angeles. In 1998, the City Department of Parks and Recreation issued 35,000 "city cards" that residents can use to reserve golf times at city courses. As with the tennis example, this is clearly an underestimate of the total number of golfers on city courses. To provide a fair estimation we inflate the 35,000 city card holders to a total of 105,000 regular users of city golf courses. These assumptions lead to an estimated 101 golfers per acre.

What if:

Given these figures we present the following scenarios based on the question of how much re-allocation would be necessary simply to provide an *equal* allocation between OLRAs and the other recreational activities. The point of this exercise is not that dog owners have more legitimate claims on open space than other activities. Even the most vocal OLRA activists do not contend that it is necessary for dog owners to have an *equal* allocation of open space. The numbers, however, show how dramatically under-allocated OLRA space is in Los Angeles compared to other recreational uses.

- **Almost 100 times more OLRA open space** would be required to provide dog owners the same recreational opportunities as softball players.
- **Over 3 million of Los Angeles' 3.6 million residents would have to be regular golfers** to equalize the amount of open space provided to golfers as to dog owners.
- **There would have to be over 1 million tennis players**, over 25% of all Angelenos, to have the same number of users per acre as dog owners currently have.
- **There would have to be only 1000 dog owners in all of Los Angeles** who wish to use OLRAs for their current allocation of open space to equal the allocation for golfers.

These figures clearly demonstrate that the supply of OLRAs is inadequate. Moreover, the expressed demand for OLRAs is particularly high on the Westside of Los Angeles. There are two citizen groups on the Westside devoted to the increased allocation of OLRAs, FREEPLAY and Hermosa Beach Friends Of Dogs. No other area in Los Angeles has the level of citizen driven activism for OLRAs as the Westside. Although statistics are not available, interviews with Animal Control officers suggest that the Westside has a higher proportion of the dogs in Los Angeles county than any other area. Finally, FREEPLAY conducted a passive survey on the week of Oct. 4, 1998 to estimate the current usage of the Westminster OLRA. The study found that over the course of one week over 2,000 dogs used this small (.75 acres) OLRA, making it one of the most intensively used parks in the entire city.

By focusing on the Westside of Los Angeles we are also able to consider the use of beach area as an option for OLRAs. There are clear advantages of beaches over parks, such as lower maintenance costs and compatibility with existing land uses. We will discuss these advantages and some potential disadvantages of beaches in later sections.

The Benefits of Dogs and OLRAs:

Dogs or companion animals have become an important part of our society. Companion animals "provide many benefits which are difficult to quantify in monetary terms, but which have important implications for the health and welfare of humans." Senator George Vast in his "Tribute to a Dog" called dogs:

"The one absolutely unselfish friend that man can have in this selfish world, the one that never deserts him, the one that never proves ungrateful or treacherous, is his dog. A man's dog stands by him in prosperity and in poverty, in health and sickness. He will sleep on the cold ground, where the wintry winds blow and the snow drives fiercely, if only he may be near his master's side. He will kiss the hand that has no food to offer; he will lick the wounds and sores that come in encounter with the roughness of the world. He guards the sleep of his pauper master as if he were a prince. When all other friends desert, he remains. When riches take wings and reputation falls to pieces, he is as constant in his love as the sun in its journey through the heavens."

Research shows that dogs are more than just companions. They provide both physical and mental health benefits to their owners. The importance of dogs in society has even helped spawn a new field of study, urban animal management, which aims to ensure that animals are taken care of in the urban environment.

Off-leash recreational areas not only foster the strong historical relationship between dogs and people, they also contribute to urban animal management and the urban environment. We begin by outlining the obvious benefits of OLRAs to dogs and proceed to show how these benefits spill over to dog owners and the community at large. We will also show benefits of OLRAs to dog owners and the community at large unrelated to the benefits of OLRAs to dogs.

Benefits of OLRAs to dogs:

- Studies have shown that dogs that exercise and are allowed to run freely are not as aggressive towards people as dogs that are under-exercised.
- Allowing dogs to have an off-leash area socializes dogs. It brings them in contact with other dogs and causes them to be less aggressive in each future encounter with dogs.
- OLRAs improve the mental state of dogs. Many dog owners report that after a visit to an OLRA their dog is less agitated, more relaxed and in general nicer to be around.

These benefits were evident during a site visit to Ocean Park Dog Beach in San Diego. In an interview, John Maloney, a regular dog park user, spoke extensively about how he regularly took his dogs to the Ocean Park OLRA without any incidence of his dogs displaying aggressive behavior toward other dogs or human visitors at the beach.

Benefits of OLRAs to Dog Owners:

The benefits enjoyed by dogs are also benefits to dog owners. A well-adjusted, less aggressive dog, is more enjoyable and easier to handle for the owner. In addition, there are benefits of OLRAs to owners alone. These benefits again are illustrated by dog owners interviewed at Ocean Park Dog beach. They include:

- OLRAs provide a vital public space allowing people to meet and form the bonds of community.
- OLRAs allow people to have the pleasure of watching their dogs at play.
- OLRAs contribute to overall physical fitness of people by encouraging them to exercise with their dogs.
- OLRAs provide an opportunity for dog owners to enjoy the outside.

Benefits of OLRAs to the Community:

OLRAs also make dogs better members of their communities. By providing socialization and exercise opportunities OLRAs can make dogs less aggressive, reducing the risks of dog attacks. In addition, well exercised puppies and dogs are less likely to create a nuisance by barking excessively or destroying property.

Communities benefit in other ways that do not rest on the improved behavior of dogs. These include:

- **OLRAs promote public safety.** Designated spaces for dogs and their owners reduces the likelihood that dogs will be let loose in other recreational areas where they could infringe on the rights of other park users.
- **OLRAs make the surrounding area safer.** Dog owners have an interest in the safety of their community and can act as a neighborhood watch. In Venice Beach, where crime rates are high, the presence of dogs and their owners on the beach create an atmosphere of safety. In addition, designated off-leash spaces reduce the resources law enforcement and animal control officials must spend on enforcing leash laws, allowing of them to devote their time to other areas of crime prevention.
- **OLRAs are a social hub for communities.** Dogs often help people break the ice, allowing people who share interests to socialize while exercising their dogs. These interactions help neighbors to get to know each other and to build a sense of community. At a time in Los Angeles when it is often difficult for people to get any sense of community, these interactions are perhaps the most significant benefit offered by OLRAs.
- **OLRAs promote responsible dog ownership.** All users will license their dogs, not only because the threat of a fine is greater in an OLRA but also because there is considerable social pressure from regular OLRA users to do the right thing. The social aspect of OLRAs also tend to enforce the basic rules of dog ownership such as cleaning up after one's dog and always controlling one's dog's behavior. Finally, OLRA provide a centralized location for providing owner training, pet information, and veterinary services.

Drawbacks and concerns about OLRAs

This analysis would not be complete without identifying all potential drawbacks to OLRAs. A competent feasibility study attempts to identify all constraints, evaluate their significance given different implementation strategies, and estimate the costs and benefits of relaxing those constraints that are not absolutely fixed. Despite the benefits and advantages of an OLRA, there are also some potential drawbacks. These concerns can be categorized in five areas:

- Confrontations that may result within OLRAs.
- Dog behaviors.
- Dog waste.
- Irresponsible owners, including liability problems.
- The effective administration of OLRAs.

Confrontations:

The first set of concerns regard fears that OLRAs will lead to various types of confrontations. These concerns were evident in a 1998 study conducted by the city of Hermosa Beach. After receiving several letters from residents asking for permission to walk their dogs on the beach, the city council of Hermosa Beach directed staff to conduct a study. They reported several potential confrontations including those between:

- humans and dogs.
- two or more dogs.
- dog owners.
- dog owners and other park patrons.
- dog owners and police or animal control officers.

Behavior and characteristics of dogs:

The second set of concerns raised at various community meetings focus on the behavior and characteristics of

dogs. These include the following:

- Vicious or aggressive dogs may disrupt the smooth operation of the OLRA.
- Dogs may carry infectious diseases transmissible to both other dogs and humans.
- Dogs in heat may excite other dogs causing problems.
- Dogs wearing spiked collars may injure other dogs.

The problem of poop:

The third major concern expressed about OLRA's is the problem with dog waste and owners who do not clean up after their dog. This is the main argument against establishing an OLRA on the beach. This is the primary reason why dogs are not allowed on the beach in Hermosa, and why FREEPLAY is having such a difficult time establishing beach space for dogs in Venice. There are specific concerns that dog feces and urine can pose both an environmental and public health hazard.

Irresponsible dog owners:

The fourth area of concern is owners who fail to take responsibility for their dogs. This problem is evident in the fear that dog owners will not clean up after their dogs. On a fundamental level, this concern is driven by the belief that there is no easy way to hold dog owners legally responsible. Other potential problems with dog owners include the following:

- Owners whose dogs are not under voice control.
- Owners taking multiple dogs to OLRA's. Multiple dogs may be more difficult for one owner to control.

In addition, problems with irresponsible dog owners may be exacerbated by the actions of others. For example, people who bring food into OLRA's may cause dogs to fight over it. Similarly, parents who take small children to the OLRA may cause problems because children and dogs often frighten one another, leading to unpleasant reactions.

The administration of OLRA's:

The fifth and final set of concerns expressed about OLRA's deal with the effective administration of the OLRA. These specific concerns include;

- Problems in enforcing the rules. Who is responsible for enforcement of OLRA rules?
- Funding. The creation of each OLRA entails initial start-up and continued maintenance costs.

With this outline of concerns about OLRA's we now turn to the identification of key stakeholders in the OLRA issue.

Key OLRA stakeholders:

A number of interested parties have emerged to state their position concerning this issue. It is possible to break them down into three groups; supporters, opponents on policy grounds, and opponents for administrative reasons.

Supporters:

Stakeholders who clearly support designating off-leash dog areas (OLRA's) include dog owners in general and advocacy groups such as FREEPLAY and Hermosa Beach Friends Of Dogs. Many non-dog owners are also likely to be included in this group because creating a designated OLRA reduces the likelihood of confrontations with other recreational uses.

The 175,000 licensed dog owners are a formidable stakeholder because of their sheer numbers. They represent

a potentially powerful electoral constituency and therefore, must be taken into account. If properly mobilized, such large numbers could come out in force to support a referendum concerning recreational areas and could also affect the votes given to local representatives who favor OLRAs. Moreover, the desires of responsible owners tend to be strong because they seek to provide adequate exercise for their dogs. Thus, for them greater access to open space is not only desirable but necessary.

Consumers of urban recreational spaces are another stakeholder because they want to enjoy public spaces for sports and relaxing. Some of these people may not like dogs, but this fact would not necessarily preclude their support for a measure allowing dogs to run freely in a designated area, especially if creating a designated OLRA decreases the confrontations and competition for open space.

Opponents on Policy Grounds:

The two elected official representing the Venice beach area, Los Angeles City council member Ruth Galanter and County Supervisor Don Knabe, have expressed concerns over creating more OLRAs. Galanter currently appears opposed to more OLRAs. Her chief concerns are for public health and safety. Council Member Galanter supports the findings of Ronald F. Deaton, the Chief Legislative Analyst, that state that a potential health risk exists when humans come into contact with dog feces or are bitten by dogs. Galanter has also been influenced by the potential costs to the city for establishing, outfitting and maintaining proper dog areas. Galanter, however, has changed her position from time to time and in fact claims some responsibility for the creation of the Westminster dog park.

A concern voiced by both Council Member Galanter and Field Deputy Tom Martin of Supervisor Don Knabe's office is that of government liability for these off-leash areas. Since beach ownership is divided between local, county and state governments in California, indemnification against liability is problematic.

Merchants, vendors, home owners, and residents in the surrounding areas of off-leash dog areas also have an interest in this issue. At the present time, many people walk their dogs on the boardwalks which can be disruptive to others. Their primary concern is that creating an OLRA will increase the number of dogs coming to the beach and therefore increase the disruption caused by dogs on the boardwalk.

Two organizations have expressed environmental concerns over increased OLRAs. Heal the Bay, an environmental organization dedicated to protecting the Santa Monica Bay, has expressed concerns about the potential environmental problems of dog waste. The second is the California Coastal Commission which issues permits necessary to alter the physical characteristics of beaches in California. Chief among its concerns is potential restrictions to beach access. An off-leash recreational area for dogs may draw the Coastal Commission's attention if it hindered full accessibility of the beach. The Coastal Commission, however, has permitted dog beaches in other areas of California.

Finally, the Society for the Protection of Animal (SPCA) has raised concerns about un-spayed dogs running free which may increase the potential for un-wanted litters.

Administrative opponents:

The Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), animal control officials, lifeguards, and employees of the Department of Beaches and Harbors have vested interests in resolving questions over enforcement and access to beaches. These workers have the responsibility of ensuring the safety and cleanliness of parks and beaches. At the present time, the LAPD assigns 30 officers a day to beach detail in the summer months. While the officers respond to many different complaints, they must also address those concerning dogs on local beaches. None of these groups are anxious to police beaches or parks for dogs, resolve disputes over dog-related matters, or handle problems with dog defecation. For example, in a report to the Hermosa Beach city council, Chief Gary Crum of the Los Angeles County Fire Department Lifeguards said that they were opposed to the idea of allowing dogs on the beach because of sanitation concerns over fecal matter on the beach and the need to enforce pooper scooper laws. Beach authorities also voiced concerns because beach cleaning machines are not designed to pick up all feces left on the beach. Consequently, the operators of the machines would be exposed to fecal material when cleaning the machines and disposing of the collected waste.

Overcoming stakeholder concerns:

This list of stakeholders opposing OLRAs presents significant obstacles to the allocation of more open space to dog owners. At first, it appears to be a Herculean task to overcome them. Taking a step back, however, the opposition to OLRAs stems either from a lack of knowledge of the facts or a lack of creativity in the design of policies that can overcome the concerns expressed by all stakeholders. It is important to return to the fundamental problem: dog owners and their pets are provided significantly fewer recreational opportunities compared to other users of Los Angeles parks. Reasoned policies for the allocation of recreational space may overcome these impediments.

Correcting Misinformation:

Much of the opposition to off leash recreational areas stems from misplaced fears concerning dogs. Consequently, clarification and information provision can significantly reduce opposition from certain stakeholders. Two areas are particularly prone to misplaced fears: the dangers of dog bites and problems emanating from dog feces.

Dog Bites. A fear of an increased number of dog bites or other incidences is a major impediment to acceptance of off-leash areas. The evidence from existing areas, however, show that this fear is misplaced. A report by Hermosa Beach city staff studied several areas that allowed dogs on the beach: Huntington, Newport, Del Mar, Cardiff, Carmel, Laguna Beach, Pismo Beach, and San Diego. Only Huntington and Del Mar reported any instances of dog bites, and these cities only reported a small number of incidences (under five). In contrast, six of the eight cities reported no incidents or confrontations at all.

Further evidence that this fear is unwarranted is that the new Westminster dog park has had no reports of dog bites since it opened. This successful record is largely due to the significant self-policing capabilities of community groups like FREEPLAY. Those who fear increased incidences of dog bites apparently ignore the important role of peer pressure in protecting against unpleasant confrontations. Finally, to the extent that OLRAs confine dogs to spaces under community supervision, dogs are less likely to become involved in confrontations than if they are roaming free in other open space areas.

Health Risks from Dog Feces. The City of Los Angeles has raised concerns over the possible transmission of diseases through dog feces left in off-leash areas. The Chief Legislative Analyst of Los Angeles compiled a list twenty diseases that could possibly be transmitted by dogs. While all dogs are subject to gastrointestinal and external parasitism, the city reports that only humans with particularly weak immune systems such as AIDs patients and young children stand any significant chance of contracting diseases from such dog-borne parasites.

Moreover, an analysis of the Legislative Analyst report by Dr. Ellie Goldstein, a leading public health expert, has shown this list to be highly misleading. Many of the diseases listed are not endemic to Los Angeles and many others are very rare. In his words, "it is as likely that people will get any of these listed diseases from their pet dog as their chance of getting hit by lightning." Based on this analysis Dr. Goldstein concludes that the creation of new off-leash recreational areas pose minimal risks from a public health perspective.

Pollution Risks from Dog Feces. In a 1996 letter to Councilmember Ruth Galanter Joel Reynolds of the Natural Resources Defense Council argued that off-leash dog beaches could result in the contamination of coastal waters. Clean water for bathers and other beach users is certainly a high priority, and his concern is a valid one. Nevertheless, this fear is clearly repudiated by the evidence: the ocean water off of existing southern Californian dog beaches is *not* any more polluted than at other beaches.

The Southern California Coastal Water Research Project recently completed the most extensive sampling of coastal water quality ever undertaken. This project collected weekly samples from 307 sites from Point Conception to Mexico. Several of these sites were at existing dog beaches located at Huntington Beach, Laguna Beach, and Coronado. As seen in Table Two the recorded bacteria levels at each of these beaches were far below all existing and proposed standards for water quality. Moreover, the water quality at these beaches

was comparable to nearby beaches that did not allow dogs.

Table Two
Average Recorded Levels of Pollution Indicators (per 100mL)

CITY	Total Coliforms	Fecal Coliforms	Enterococ
Huntington Beach	56.7	22.3	7.2
Laguna Beach	42.0	32.0	n/a
Coronado	28.0	4.5	4.0
State Standard	10,000	400	104

A major finding of the report is that the single largest contributor to elevated bacterial levels in coastal waters is storm water and urban runoff emitted through storm drains. Clearly, on-going and critical efforts to improve the water quality off of Southern Californian beaches will be better spent attacking the main causes of this problem rather than focusing on dogs that lead to no discernible increase in pollution levels.

Policy Options that Address Stakeholder Concerns:

The remaining concerns of stakeholders are both valid and important. Nevertheless, they do not preclude serving the equally legitimate demands of dog owners because these concerns may be addressed as additional open space is made available to dog owners. Existing OLRA's throughout California provide a wealth of alternative techniques by dog owners can gain access while protecting the recreational opportunities, safety, and well being of other stakeholders:

- Make a provision in the city municipal code to allow dogs on the beach in early morning and evening hours.
- Establish a permit system to allow only dogs with permits to be allowed on beach areas.
- Have a community group sponsor the OLRA and require it to hold orientation classes for owners and their dogs on how to use OLRA's.
- Establish a reporting system for people to report violations of rules at OLRA's.
- Establish a monitoring system to enforce the rules of the OLRA.
- Enact strong enforcement policies, such as fines for failure to control a dog or failure to clean up after a dog.

Each of these policies reduces risk by separating dogs into designated areas and by maintaining controls over their behaviors. We will look at each concern individually, examining how such policy designs can allay the concerns of stakeholders.

Overcoming the poop problems:

One of the strongest arguments against creating OLRA's is that they will become unsanitary and unsightly because of urine and dog waste. While the risk of disease is quite small, the chance of infection is likely to be larger when the waste is not immediately removed. In addition, there is no argument that dog feces on the ground is smelly, unsightly, and unpleasant to be around.

The fact remains that dogs will create waste regardless of whether or not they are on a leash. Thus the more important issue is finding a way to ensure that waste is properly disposed of in a timely fashion. A number of effective methods have been employed to encourage and ensure that dog owners clean up after their pets: (1) mandatory compliance on the part of dog owners to immediately remove dog waste from public spaces; enforced either by the community group or through fines; (2) regularly scheduled volunteer patrols to sweep the parks and beaches of all debris; and (3) conveniently located trash cans and waste removal bags. The use of plastic bags, "pooper scoopers", and trash cans are also effective means of dealing with the problem. As evidenced by the Westminster dog park there is considerable social pressure for owners to clean up after their dogs in an OLRA. This social pressure is not as concentrated in non-OLRA designated open space.

Irresponsible dog owners and liability concerns:

Concerns regarding liability are another significant obstacle that must be addressed to facilitate the creation of OLRAs. A city that is exposed to expensive law suits because of injuries related to OLRAs is not likely to encourage their creation. Cities have, nevertheless, found a number of ways to reduce their exposure to liability claims. Claremont dealt with the issue by creating an ordinance, which states:

"The use of off-leash areas by a dog owner or other person having care, custody or control of that shall constitute agreement by the dog owner and the person having care, custody, or control of that dog to a waiver liability of the city, and his or her agreement to protect, indemnify, defend, and hold harmless the city from any claim, injury, or damage arising from or in connection with such use."

Alternatively, cities may rely on signage. By signage, one means "full and complete signage, both advising visitors that the park is an off-leash area and that they use the area at their own risk, and advising dog owners of their assumption of liability and hold harmless agreement.

FREEPLAY, in their proposal for an OLRA addressed the issue of signage. In their report, they stated that it is important for OLRAs to announce designated off-leash areas so that the general public can then make an informed decision regarding access. "There are three types of signs that may be required: regulatory, advisory and warning signs. The choice of sign, its location and size is dependent on the information to be presented and the uses for which it is designed. Advisory signs are necessary at every entry point to the area and between one access point and another. Regulatory signs should detail relevant regulations and corresponding fines for non-compliance." The purpose of the signs is to improve relations within the local community by emphasizing positive messages to encourage responsible behavior of dog owners.

The concerns about irresponsible dog owners can yet again be mitigated by the presence of a strong community group that helps maintain order. The social and community aspect of OLRAs is actually a deterrent to irresponsible dog ownership. We contend that in many ways the self-policing evident at the Westminster dog park is more effective than external (city-run) policing. As one Westminster regular explained, "It is one thing to get a ticket from an anonymous cop, it is another thing to get corrected at by my neighbor who I have to see everyday."

Administrative Concerns:

The administrative concerns for the most part apparently stem from the belief that OLRAs will require a significant amount of "new" work for the various government agencies. It is certainly possible to think of ways to create an OLRA that would in fact require a host of new work for the agencies. For example, a new OLRA that would require regular replanting of grass would require significant on-going maintenance by city staff. A new OLRA in close proximity to other recreational activities would require on-going administration by animal control officers, especially if clear and definable boundaries do not exist. It is clearly possible, however, to design new OLRAs in a way that decreases these on going administrative costs. For example, an OLRA without grass and away from competing recreational uses would decrease these on-going maintenance costs.

A second administrative concern is the amount of start-up money an OLRA may require. An OLRA requiring a