



# Dogs in the City Challenges and Opportunities



Parks Advisory Commission Presentation

August 16, 2011

# Agenda

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- ▶ Introduction – Dog ownership
- ▶ Challenges
- ▶ Ann Arbor Dog Parks
- ▶ Opportunities
- ▶ Conclusions
- ▶ Q&A



# Introduction

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*A Neolithic man of Ireland with  
his giant Irish hound.*

- ▶ First non human pals
  - ▶ Dogs 32,000 plus years ago
  - ▶ Horse 28,000 years ago
  - ▶ Cats 23,000 years ago
- ▶ Leg up on competition
  - ▶ Hunting companions
  - ▶ Guard against dangers
- ▶ Health benefits.
  - ▶ Lower blood pressure
  - ▶ Anxiety, depression, obesity
- ▶ Best way for daily dose of nature
  - ▶ Walk dog in natural setting



# A Growing Concern

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- ▶ **Industry growth**
  - ▶ \$45B in 2009 up 5%
- ▶ **Growing number of dogs in the city**
  - ▶ 60% of US households have at least one dog
  - ▶ 75,000 in county
- ▶ **Need for socialization and exercise**
  - ▶ Leashes can cause a dog to be territorial



# Challenges

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- ▶ Complaints of off leash incidents on the rise.
- ▶ Enforcement left to police.
- ▶ Off leash options are limited.
- ▶ Informal off leash gatherings are common.
- ▶ Possible solutions
  - ▶ Increased enforcement
  - ▶ Additional dog parks



# Off-leash Dog Park Benefits / Concerns

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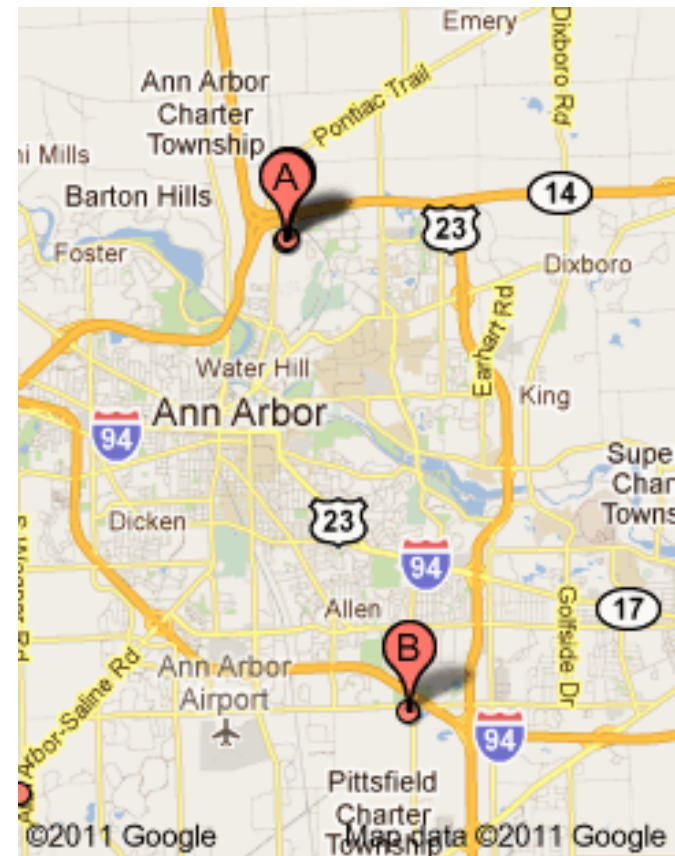
- ▶ Promote responsible pet ownership and the enforcement of dog-control laws.
- ▶ Give dogs a place to exercise safely.
- ▶ Provide seniors and disabled owner with an accessible place to exercise their companions.
- ▶ Provides an area for community-building socializing for dogs and people!
- ▶ Safety
- ▶ Sanitation
- ▶ Noise
- ▶ Traffic
- ▶ Effects on wildlife and natural areas
- ▶ Location, hard to locate adjacent to residential
- ▶ Construction and maintenance costs



# Ann Arbor Dog Parks

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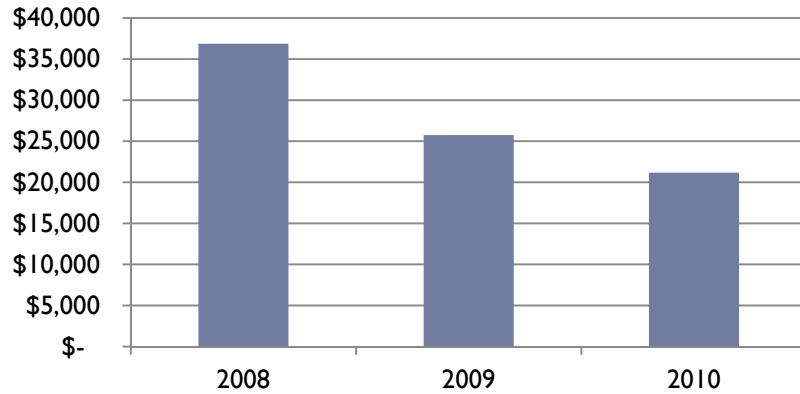
- ▶ Olsen Park
  - ▶ 1/2 Acre, fenced
- ▶ Swift run
  - ▶ 10 Acres fenced with separate small dog area
- ▶ Located at city edge
- ▶ How successful are they?



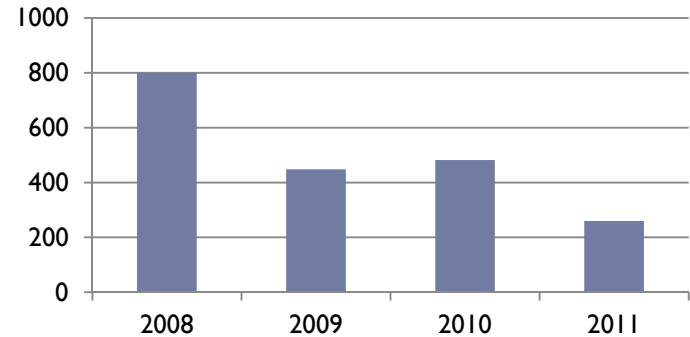
# Swift Run

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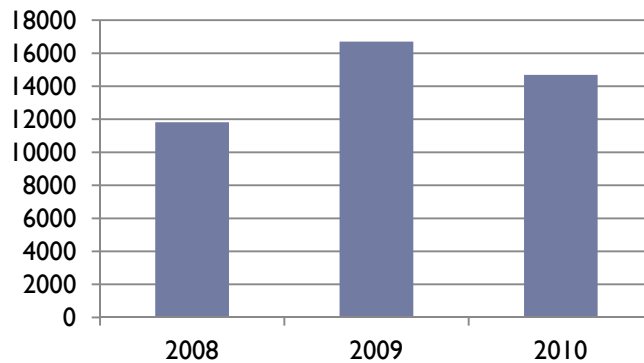
## Annual Maintenance Costs



## Number of permits



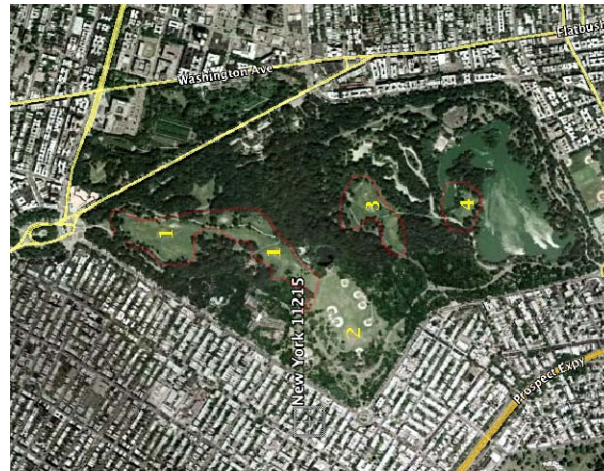
## Pounds of poo





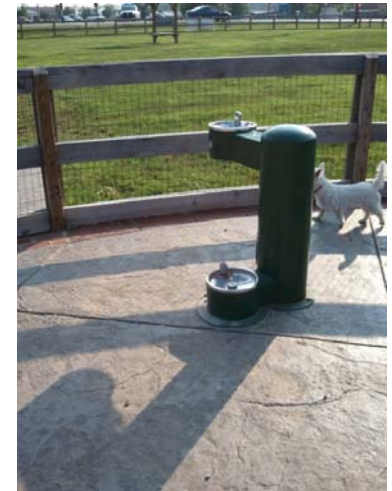
# Opportunities

- ▶ Types of parks
  - ▶ Instant dog park
  - ▶ Unfenced dog parks
    - ▶ Off lease area in large park
    - ▶ Restricted hours
    - ▶ Multi use
  - ▶ Traditional fenced dog park
- ▶ Expenses
  - ▶ Average cost \$40K to build w/o parking
  - ▶ Olsen \$21K to build
  - ▶ Swift run even in 2010



# More Opportunities

- ▶ Amenities
  - ▶ Water features
- ▶ Donors and Sponsors
- ▶ Focus on the loot not the poop



# Process

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- ▶ **Private/public partnerships**
  - ▶ Dog owner sponsor organization
- ▶ **Identify and appropriate site**
  - ▶ ¼ acre minimum, 25 dogs per acre
  - ▶ Un-programmed, adjacencies
- ▶ **Rules, regulations, enforcement**
- ▶ **Design and approvals**
- ▶ **Construct**
  - ▶ Average cost \$40K plus parking/access



# Conclusions

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- ▶ Increasing urban dog population in Ann Arbor.
- ▶ Incidents involving off lease dogs on the rise.
- ▶ Laws difficult to enforce especially if off leash options are limited.
- ▶ There is a need for a central city off leash area.
- ▶ Incorporate planning for a central city dog park into parks planning.
  - ▶ Included in PROS plan.
  - ▶ Add to considerations when looking at land acquisitions.
  - ▶ Park planners continue to actively look for potential sites.

**Public space must serve the many and diverse recreational needs of all residents.**

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