



Recommendations and Guidelines for Dog Park Site Selection, Design, Operations and Maintenance



Park Advisory Commission Dog Park Subcommittee, 2013/14

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MISSION STATEMENT

To create formal guidelines regarding the placement and management of new dog parks and the improvement of existing dog parks in Ann Arbor.

INTRODUCTION

Dog parks have grown in popularity throughout the country as more people have pets, and are asking that communities provide recreational opportunities for them. The City of Ann Arbor is no exception. This planning document has been developed in response to resident advocacy for additional dog parks, and to assure that moving forward, the existing and proposed dog park areas are successful and well received.

The City of Ann Arbor currently has 158 parks covering 2118 acres. Two of these parks contain fenced off-leash dog run areas, known as dog parks. These include 10-acre Swift Run Park and .7-acre Olson Park. These parks are located at the extreme south and north of the City, and residents have requested that new dog park areas be more accessible to their residence. This document provides historical information on the background leading up to the development of the existing dog parks, information about the existing dog parks in the City, data about dog parks in other cities, guidelines for the location and design of any new off-leash dog parks, and guidelines for how to improve existing dog parks. In addition, details are provided about the process that the City's dog park sub-committee went through to establish these guidelines.

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

A Brief History

Public advocacy to establish dog parks dates to the mid1990's. To address these requests, in 1997, a Dog Off-Leash Taskforce was formed as recommended by staff and the Park Advisory Commission with the goal of gathering and reviewing information, reporting findings, and making recommendations for the design, placement and management of dog parks. The task force met for seven months. Their work included holding interviews with dog behavioral specialists, and researching materials on dog behaviors and management from around the country.

The resulting [report](#), (attached as a hyperlink) released in 1998, addressed design criteria, including size, fencing, gates and entrances, sanitation facilities, water, surfacing, shade, seating, emergency phone, agility equipment, paths, parking, park maintenance, supervision and monitoring, signs, and hours of operation. It also provided information about obtaining a permit, dog park rules, costs and funding, enforcement, changing the City ordinance, and a pilot project. The report was presented to the Park Advisory Commission in November of 1998.

The effort to establish the first dog park did not move forward until 2005 as there were concerns about potential management issues, funding, and resistance from residents. However, the concept of an off-leash dog park continued to gain momentum in the intervening years, and advocates continued to lobby

to establish one or more dog parks. In response, the City researched potential locations using the criteria developed in the 1998 report. In 2005, the City started discussions with Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission, who were also hearing from constituents that a dog park was a desired amenity, to explore the joint development of a dog park at Swift Run Park.

Establishment of Dog Parks in Ann Arbor

In June, 2007, City Code was amended to provide for dogs to run off-leash in designated dog play areas (i.e., dog parks). In December, 2007, a partnership agreement was signed between the City of Ann Arbor and Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission for the development, maintenance and operation of a dog park at Swift Run Park. Swift Run was suggested as a location because of its proximity to the County maintenance facility, was not near residences, was adequately sized, and was not being used for any other park purpose.

A second dog park area was established at Olson Park in 2008. This location was adopted after a series of public meetings, in which alternative locations were discussed, including Ward Park, Leslie Park, and South Maple Park, but were not supported by adjacent residents or was not compatible with other city functions for the site at the time. Olson, like Swift Run, is located away from housing. It is part of a larger multi-use park, and does not conflict with or preclude any other existing park use; however it is much smaller, and primarily serves residents in the northern part of the City.

Assessing the Desire for Additional Dog Parks

In the past few years, public advocacy for additional dog parks has once again risen to the forefront of desired park amenities. Input from the 2011-2015 Parks and Recreation Open Space Plan also supported the desire for additional Dog Park areas. This input has been focused on creating additional parks closer to residences, especially one that is centrally located, and walkable from the downtown for residents who do not drive.

In 2012, staff suggested West Park would be worth considering since a master plan had just been completed, and property purchased along Chapin that was not being utilized for any specific purpose. A public meeting was held, and there was general support for the concept. However, enough opposition arose that the project was eventually rejected. A new initiative to explore dog park locations was needed.

In response, a subcommittee of the Park Advisory Commission (PAC) was formed in 2013. Over the course of 2013-14, the committee met more than 13 times. These meetings were posted and open to the public, and public commentary was first and last on every agenda. The committee was tasked with developing a public input plan, and a process for determining appropriate criteria to locate dog parks. The committee looked to establish criteria and to test these criteria at several park locations to see if the elements were relevant and a good determinant for a successful location. The committee looked at the parks in the vicinity of the downtown as a first step. Several potential locations were identified to test the criteria before holding public meetings. Two public meetings were held to discuss the criteria and other issues surrounding establishment of dog parks.

After considering strong public feedback regarding the process, the committee decided to take a step back to revisit the existing criteria, and develop revised recommendations for locating, designing, and operating a dog park, before proposing any locations and holding public meetings on specific park areas. A key piece of these recommendations relates to process, more specifically, ensuring that the public has a chance to be actively engaged in discussing, reviewing, and commenting on these criteria for locating new dog parks. This document is the culmination of these discussions and provides the framework for how the City can move forward with creating and maintaining successful dog parks. However, it is also understood that this is a living document and will be revisited in the future to consider new initiatives and trends.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

To guide the sub-committee's mission, a series of goals were established. These goals cover the process and outcomes for creating new dog parks and improving existing ones. The four goals established by the sub-committee include:

Goal 1 – Evaluate Community Preferences Around Existing and Potential Future Dog Parks

To meet this goal, the sub-committee utilized a series of tools, including a community-wide survey, a series of public meetings, targeted outreach to engaged citizens, and discussion during dog park sub-committee meetings.

Goal 2 – Research Best Management Practices to Inform Guidelines for Ann Arbor Dog Parks

To meet this goal, the sub-committee contacted communities from around the country, referenced master plans and conducted interviews with staff and other community members. From this research, summaries and charts were developed to compare best practices regarding dog parks. Results can be found in Appendix 4 and 5.

Goal 3 - Provide Guidelines for the Development and Maintenance of New Dog Parks

To meet this goal, the sub-committee set three objectives: 1) To develop criteria for site location; 2) To develop criteria for site design; 3) To establish a public process for decision making regarding siting new dog parks.

To inform the guidelines, the committee reached out to communities around the country to gather best management practices, as well as to learn what might be improved with existing dog parks (Goal 2). The research included email, telephone interviews, website research, and review of master plans from other communities. The data was then collated into charts to compare criteria that guide development and maintenance of dog parks (Appendix 4).

The committee also created a community-wide survey to assess citizen needs, interests, desires, and concerns regarding future and existing dog parks in Ann Arbor. In addition, two public meetings were held with citizens to review the results of the survey and further discuss issues and opportunities related to new and existing dog parks in Ann Arbor. The sub-committee reviewed the survey and public meeting input in the creation of this document. The results from the survey and the public meetings can be found in Appendix 1 and Appendix 3, respectively.

Goal 4 – Provide Guidelines for the Ongoing Operation and Improvement of Existing Dog Parks

To meet this goal, the sub-committee inventoried the existing Ann Arbor dog parks, including layout, amenities, operation, and maintenance practices. Enforcement issues outside of the existing dog parks were also studied. Input gathered from the survey and public meetings about what is and is not working well at Swift Run and Olson Parks, and research from other communities helped the subcommittee to learn about best management practices. The committee also looked at volunteer and educational opportunities to aid in management of future and existing dog parks.

From this information, the subcommittee made recommendations to improve ongoing operation, infrastructure and amenities at existing dog parks and to improve enforcement issues surrounding off leash dogs in parks.

RESEARCH AND FINDINGS

Evaluate Community Preferences Around Existing and Potential Future Dog Parks (Goal 1)

Research was conducted by asking residents of Ann Arbor to provide input through a number of mechanisms explored below. Additionally, other cities and regions were interviewed to determine best management practices for establishing new dog parks and operating existing ones.

Public Input Methods

Several methods were used to obtain public input including a citizen survey, two public meetings, input at task force meetings, emails, and phone interviews. Each input method provided important information that helped to inform the criteria for site selection and design, as well as recommendations for improvements to existing dog parks.

A questionnaire was designed by the PAC subcommittee with public input and advertised via email and press releases, the City website, and postcards placed at recreation facilities, the City Hall customer service desk, and other public locations. The questions were designed to gain a better understanding of the existing dog population, the desire for or concerns against dog parks, whether and how people use dog parks, and what they like or dislike about them. Questions also addressed dog behaviors, geographic distribution, and locations where dog parks would or would not be acceptable.

A dog park web page was maintained during the public input period detailing the ways in which residents could be involved and provide input. The page listed the survey link, public meeting dates, email address, and PAC subcommittee meeting times and locations. The page is attached in the appendix (Appendix 2).

Two public meetings were held to obtain input. The meetings included discussion about potential location and design criteria, maintenance issues with existing dog parks, concerns about creating new parks, potential locations, and questions about what other communities are doing about dog parks.

Minutes of both meetings and detailed survey results are attached in the appendix (Appendix 3).

Summary of Survey Responses

- The survey was completed by over 1500 people, ranging in age from teens to seniors, and representing all areas of the City, with the majority being from zip code 48103.
- The majority of respondents own dogs, and many own more than one dog.
- The majority of respondents do not currently use dog parks, but of those who do, more use Swift Run. Frequency of use ranged from daily use to a few times annually.
- The current dog parks were appreciated for their existence, their size, fencing, and distance from homes. The dislikes included ill behaved dogs, fees, lack of shade, and issues with cleanliness.
- Respondents indicated that dog park usage would increase as the distance to the home decreased, with the most popular time for use being late afternoon.
- The most important items mentioned for a successful dog park were cleanliness, maintenance, location, and shade.
- The greatest concerns were cleanliness, dog conflicts, and maintenance.
- Many residents were willing to volunteer at a dog park to help clean, landscape, organize events and activities, and fundraise.

Summary of Input from Public Meetings

- Two public meetings were held with 29 at the first meeting and 9 in attendance at the second meeting
- Important considerations should include buffers between the dog park and other uses, protection of natural areas and water quality, provision of shade, appropriate surfacing, adequate drainage, and parking so as not to put additional burden on existing neighborhoods.
- Take care of what we have and correct existing issues, including cleanliness, inadequate shade, condition/maintenance of existing dog parks, and issues with dogs running off leash.
- Location is important, but it is also important to recognize that that the City will never be able to provide dog parks walkable from every residence, and land other than parks should be considered.
- Research and provide data from other communities to establish best practices when designing and locating new dog parks and managing existing parks.
- Establish an ample and well thought out process for public input.

Summary of Placement, Design and Management Practices from Other Cities (Goal 2)

Staff and PAC subcommittee members researched development and management practices from numerous cities, and obtained information via phone conversations, email, websites, master plans, and policy documents. Cities contacted include: Baltimore, MD, Boulder, CO, Chicago, IL, Kalamazoo, MI, Madison, WI, Norfolk, VA, Alexandria, VA, Portland, OR., San Francisco, CA and Meridian Township, MI. Existing master plans referenced include Denver, CO, Salt Lake County, UT and Oakland, CA.

Below is a summary of the responses. The data from the research on each city is detailed in Appendix 5.

Placement

- **Size:** The recommended minimum size for dog parks varies considerably among cities, but is generally between ½ acre and one acre.
- **Buffer from Residential:** A few cities provide definitive distances from residences, varying from 50' to 200'. All strive to minimize conflicts, and include guidelines such as making sure that noise and activity levels are no more than other park uses, that screening or visual buffers are important, and that there should be minimal impact on residences.
- **Water Source:** Most recommend having a source of drinking water for humans and dogs if possible.
- **Parking:** Recommendations include that parking should be readily accessible, close to the site, sufficient/adequate size, and convenient. There were no formulas for size, rather it is important to consider parking when locating a dog park.
- **Drainage:** Important aspects included that the site be relatively flat and have permeable soils.
- **Shade:** All recommend some shade as desirable, but not heavily shaded to allow for grass growth and for the ground to dry.
- **Use Conflict Avoidance:** Guidelines include avoiding play areas and other recreational amenities, high use areas, natural areas, wildlife, natural water sources, trails, community gardens, and historic sites.
- **Protect Wildlife and Natural Areas:** Several cities discuss avoidance of conflicts with wildlife habitat and sensitive habitats.
- **Geographic Distribution:** A few cities have general guidelines, such as a one or two mile service area, but most do not state explicitly how the parks should be distributed through their community.

Design

- **Visual Character and Aesthetics:** Dog
- **Fence Height and Material:** All cities contacted have galvanized or vinyl coated chain link fences, with a minimum height of 4'. Double gated entries to allow for dog owners to unleash the dogs in a corral prior to letting the dog run free are the norm.
- **Surfacing:** There is no consensus as to the best type of surface. Several cities have multiple surfacing types, including crusher fines or decomposed granite around the entrance area, concrete, grass and mulch. For the larger areas, grass is used most often.

- **Separate Small and Large Dog Areas:** Most cities provide small dog areas if space allows.
- **Site Furniture and Other Amenities:** Most provide benches. Some have community bulletin boards to post announcements, and some have shade structures. Very few have dog play amenities.
- **Trash Cans and Bag Holders:** All provide trash containers, and some provide bag holders. A minority of cities also provide bags.
- **Signage:** All cities contacted post rule signs.
- **ADA Access:** All cities contacted said that they comply with the ADA for access to the site.

Management

- **Staffing:** Cities that have rangers or other park staff monitor the dog parks, as well as illegal off-leash activity outside of dog parks, find this helpful for controlling dogs as well as building community support.
- **Fines:** Cities that issue warning tickets and/or fines find this effective at reducing the number of repeat offenders of illegal off leash dog activity.
- **Entry Fees:** Fees to use dog parks range from free to \$35 or \$40 per year.
- **Entry Key Fob:** Cities that restrict use of the dog parks to patrons who pay for the permit by installing a key fob entry find that it encourages more people to follow rules, increases revenue, and provides a more equitable system for all users.
- **Hours of Operation:** Dawn to dusk is common.
- **Use Permit:** Obtaining a dog park permit as part of purchasing a dog license is common practice.
- **Volunteers and Enforcement:** A few cities have volunteers involved with the park maintenance and activity programming. Involvement of community members was noted to increase acceptance of the dog park and helps to minimize problems.

DOG PARK GUIDELINES FOR ANN ARBOR

Guidelines for the Development and Maintenance of New Dog Parks (Goal 3)

Many of the below criteria are consistent with the Off Leash Task Force Report of June 1998. However, several criteria have been updated based on current research and public input. This section outlines guidelines for placement, design, management, and enforcement of both existing and proposed dog parks, and the public process to be followed to establish new dog parks. The guidelines are derived from public input and what the subcommittee learned from research of other city's practices.

Guidelines for Placement of New Dog Parks

- **Size:** the size of dog parks will be dependent upon the particular park in which it is proposed, other park activities, facilities, proximity to residences, etc. Larger is better (at least ½ acre), but if a smaller dog park area is all that can be accommodated in a particular park, and if there is community support, then a smaller size will be considered.

- **Buffer:** It is crucial to provide a buffer between nearby residences and the dog park area. The buffer should allow for neighbors to have no more disturbance than typical park uses. Buffers may include vegetation and/or berms to aid in noise/visual attenuation.
- **Water Source:** A source of water is highly desirable within or adjacent to the dog park area.
- **Accessibility and Parking:** Ideally, dog parks should be convenient to residents within walking distance, however, realizing that this may not always be possible, sufficient parking, convenient to the site should be provided such that the dog park does not create undue burden on surrounding neighborhoods.
- **Topography, Drainage, Water Quality:** The site should be relatively flat, have permeable soils, and positive drainage. If a desirable site has excessive slopes, it should be designed such that erosion does not become an issue, that water bodies are protected, and that visibility to all dogs is possible within the fenced in area.
- **Shade:** Shade is highly desirable, however, at least a portion of the site should be free of tree canopy to maintain visibility and allow for healthier turf grass.
- **Use Conflict Avoidance:** It is important to provide a sufficient buffer between the dog park area and other recreational facilities such as playgrounds, trails, ball fields, picnic shelters, game courts, or any existing heavily used or programmed area.
- **Protect Wildlife and Natural Areas:** Dog park areas should not be located in or in close proximity to natural areas where flora and fauna, such as ground nesting birds, small mammals, and native plants would be disturbed.
- **Geographic Distribution:** Dog park areas should be distributed in the City such that residents are served within a reasonable distance. As there is no way to serve all residents within walking distance, a goal should be to locate a site in a part of the City that would be significantly closer than either Olson or Swift Run Parks. For example, this may mean one per quadrant of the City.

Guidelines for Design of New Dog Parks

- **Fencing Height and Type:** A minimum of a 4 foot high chain link fence, either galvanized or vinyl coated, be installed around the perimeter of the site.
- **Perimeter Plantings/Buffers:** If the budget and site permit, and if it is necessary to buffer the dog run area, vegetation should be planted on the outside of the fence to aid in the aesthetic quality of the site and to assist in mitigating noise associated with the dog park.
- **Entrance Design:** An entry corral, consisting of at least an 8 x 8 fenced area with two gates should be provided to allow for pet owners to safely unleash their dog prior to letting them in the dog run area.
- **Visual Character and Aesthetics:** Dog parks should be located so as not to detract from the aesthetic quality of a park or open space. Ideally, the dog park should be designed to integrate well into the existing site.
- **Surfacing:** A variety of surfaces may be used within a site. Crushed fines at the entry are recommended as this area has a concentration of use. In smaller dog run areas, a larger crushed fines area is recommended as the concentration of dogs may not allow grass to grow. All

surfaces should be easy to maintain. If possible, lawn areas should be rested periodically to allow for the turf to recover.

- **Separate Areas for Large and Small Dogs:** When space permits, separate small dog areas should be provided for dogs up to 25 pounds.
- **Signage:** Rules shall be clearly posted, including codes of behavior, hours, and requirements for entry.
- **ADA Accessibility:** Barrier free access to the site shall be provided, as well as an area through the corral and at the entry. Barrier free paths through the dog run area should be provided if space and funding permit.
- **Trash Containers:** Trash containers and waste removal bag holders shall be provided in the dog run area, making sure that they are located with easy access for maintenance vehicles.
- **Site Furniture:** Ideally, several benches should be provided in convenient locations to allow for gathering and resting throughout the dog park area.
- **Pathways:** Walking trails around the perimeter would encourage owners to interact with and monitor their dogs more closely as well as to provide additional ease of access to the entire site, and should be provided if there is sufficient space and funding.
- **Shade:** Trees and/or small shade structures should be provided if the site has insufficient shade to allow humans and dogs to retreat from the sun.
- **Water:** Drinking fountains should be provided if water is readily available and should include a dog drinker/bowl.
- **Lighting:** As the park areas are open from dawn to dusk, lighting need not be provided as an additional amenity.
- **Agility Equipment:** Amenities such as agility equipment may be included if a user group desires them.
- **Ease of Maintenance:** Service gates and trash barrels should be located such that maintenance vehicles may easily enter from an existing park road, parking lot, or street frontage.
- **Bulletin Board:** A community kiosk and bulletin board should be provided to provide a place to post notifications for meetings, work days, and events.

Guidelines for Management and Enforcement of Dog Parks

- **Staffing:** Staff monitoring of dog parks during heavy use periods is recommended.
- **Fines:** Warning tickets followed up by fines are recommended for repeat offenders to help reduce the amount of illegal off leash dog activity outside of dog parks, and enforce use by those who have not paid the fee to use dog parks.
- **Entry Fees:** Fees to use dog parks ranged from free to \$35 or \$40 per year. The City's fees are in line with those around the country. Continue to evaluate fees in relationship to other dog parks.
- **Entry Key Fob:** Restricting use of the dog parks to patrons who pay for the permit is recommended to encourage more people to follow city rules, increase revenue, and provide a more equitable system for all users. A key fob would assist in monitoring who has purchased dog park passes and have obtained the required vaccinations.

- **Hours of Operation:** Maintain current hours to be consistent with all parks: dawn to dusk.
- **Dog Park License:** Obtaining a dog park permit as part of obtaining a dog license is efficient and should be continued. Explore implementation of an online application process to be more user friendly and to increase compliance.
- **Rules:** City rules are consistent with other cities and should remain as is and continue to be posted. Existing dog park rules are listed in the appendices.
- **Turf Maintenance:** Design of dog parks should permit resting grass to allow turf to reestablish.
- **Volunteers:** Volunteer involvement should be encouraged to promote stewardship of dog parks. Work with Park volunteer staff to help develop programs and events and recruit stewards.
- **Education:** Develop program to educate park users on dog etiquette and to educate the community about dogs and dog parks in general.

Process to Establish New Dog Park Sites

Any proposed location should have strong support from surrounding neighbors, and in general be supported by the community. Buy-in from immediate neighbors is crucial to the success of any proposed location. Given this basic criteria, the following process shall be followed when considering establishment of a new dog park.

1. Establish an ad-hoc committee comprised of members from the Park Advisory Commission, staff, and citizens to identify potential sites using established guidelines.
2. Have committee evaluate sites using the placement criteria (appendix 7) to ensure the greatest opportunity for success while considering geographic distribution.
3. Using the scoring sheets, narrow the sites to those that meet the greatest number of placement criteria.
4. Develop a concept plan for the site being considered that shows the proposed location in the particular park or public land, the access points, parking, amenities, and landscaping.
5. Plan for public input using the Community Engagement Tool, including conducting an online questionnaire available to all citizens, and notifying all residents within ¼ mile of the proposed site by mail with the link for the questionnaire, and the date and place for the public meeting.
6. Hold public meeting to discuss site being considered, and include the input received from the email questionnaire.
7. If there is general support for the project, but opposition exists, such that the project is unlikely to be successful, the public process will continue to see if modifications can be made to enhance the proposal.
8. If after enhancements are proposed, the opposition to the project is still such that the project would fail, then the second site on the list of potential parks would be considered, and the public process would be repeated.
9. When a proposed location is generally supported, being sensitive to residents in close proximity to the proposed dog park, the proposed site would then be brought to PAC for discussion and recommendation.
10. If PAC approves the proposal, the site would then be brought to City Council and include a public hearing so that City Ordinance could be modified to accommodate the proposed site.

Guidelines for Improvements to Existing Dog Parks (Goal 4)

In order to improve existing dog park areas, it is important to inventory what we have and explore what is working and what needs improvement. Lessons learned will also inform maintenance practices for new dog parks. The City currently has two dog park areas, Swift Run and Olson Parks. The inventory of these parks follows, as well as recommendations for improvements.



Inventory of Existing Dog Parks

Overview of Swift Run Dog Park

- Location: 2998 E. Ellsworth Road at corner of Platt Road
- Size - 10 acre grassy field area with 5' high perimeter fencing
- Large and small dog run areas
- Gravel parking lot with approximately 30 spaces
- Double entry/exit control gates (wheel chair accessible)
- Mowed trail, landscaping and benches

- On-site portable toilet and nearby, off site, flush-restrooms (Southeast Area Park at NW corner of Platt and Ellsworth)
- Trash receptacles and dog waste disposal stations
- Posted rules, signage, and information kiosk

Issues and Potential Improvements to Swift Run Dog Park

1. The location of the park on a former landfill limits the types of amenities that can be installed as footings are not permitted that might puncture landfill cover.
2. The condition of the parking lot has been a source of complaint because of muddy conditions and rutting. Paving the parking lot should be considered.
3. Requests have also included water and permanent restrooms, however, no water is available at the site due to the fact that there is no water main in the vicinity.

Overview of Olson Dog Park

- Location – Dhu Varren Road, at corner of Pontiac Trail
- Size - .7 acre grassy field area
- 5' high perimeter fencing
- One area – no separate large and small dog run areas due to space limitations
- Paved parking lot for all park uses
- Two double entry/exit control gates (wheel chair accessible)
- Benches
- Flush restrooms on site
- Drinking fountain with dog bowl located near restrooms
- Trash receptacles and dog waste disposal stations at entries to dog park
- Posted rules, signage and information kiosk
- Separate maintenance/entry gate for mowing/maintenance equipment
- Surfacing consists of gravel and grass
- Wind and shade shelter
- One bench in fenced in area, and other under shade structure
- Shade trees within fence, but not many mature trees

Issues and Potential Improvements at Olson Dog Park

1. Maintenance of the surfacing has been challenging because of the small size and clay soils. Staff have experimented with different surfacing types, including woodchips and gravel.
2. Trees have been planted, but they are still small.
3. Location serves north area of town, but is too far from other parts of town.
4. In response to public input, improvements made to the dog park after initial construction include a wind/shade structure, a second entry corral, and installation of a variety of surfacing types.

Suggestions for Improvements to Existing Dog Parks

1. Continue to evaluate surfacing and make changes to improve drainage, wearing surface, and turf quality.
2. Work with Park Volunteer staff to find ways to engage volunteers for clean up days and other dog park events.

3. Establish a plan for future amenities and improvements so that if funding for park amenities is donated, there is a plan for inclusion in the existing dog parks.

DRAFT

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Community Questionnaire

The subcommittee decided that a questionnaire of the general public would allow a greater number of residents to participate in the public process. The questionnaire was posted on the City's website, emails were sent out via Egov delivery, two press releases were posted, and post cards were placed at City Hall as well as several recreation facilities. The questionnaire was available to the public for several weeks in August, 2013. The results are as follows:

Over 1,500 individuals completed the questionnaire

2/3 were female (67.1%); 1/3 male (32.9%)

Age breakdown for Respondents:

0.2% under 18

2.1% 18-24

42.4% 25-44

45% 45-64

10.3% 65+

Zip codes for Respondents:

58.8% from zip-code 48103

18.9% from zip-code 48104

15.2% from zip-code 48105

7.1% from zip-code 48108

Q1: Do you currently have a dog?

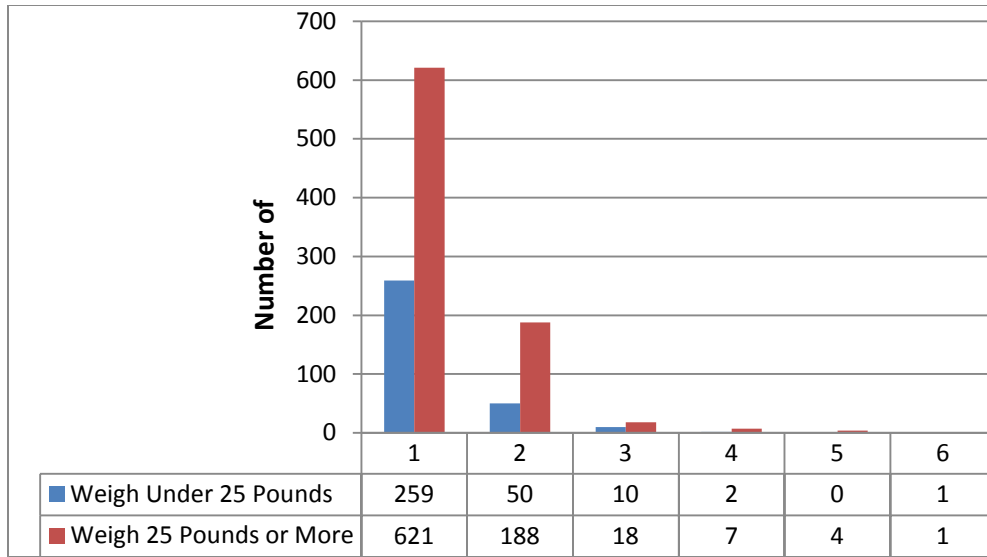
67.5% currently have a dog

26.2% Don't have a dog

6.2% planning to get a dog

Q2: If yes, how many dogs?

Participants were asked to list the number of dogs they owned under 25 pounds and/or over 25 pounds.



Q3: Do you currently use any existing dog parks? If so, which dog parks do you use? Respondents could select all that applied.

- Swift Run – 332
- Olson Park – 158
- Don't use dog parks – 956

Participants were also able to list other area dog parks. Other sites mentioned included:

- Animal Kingdom
- Arise Dog Park
- Mill Pond
- Paw Run
- Neighborhood

Q4: How often do you use dog parks?

- I don't use dog parks – 61%
- A few times annually – 16.6%
- Once a month – 7.6%
- Multiple times per week – 6.8%
- Daily – 1.9%

Q5: What do you currently like about the existing dog park(s)?

This was an open ended question. The most common responses are listed below:

- That they exist
- The space – size

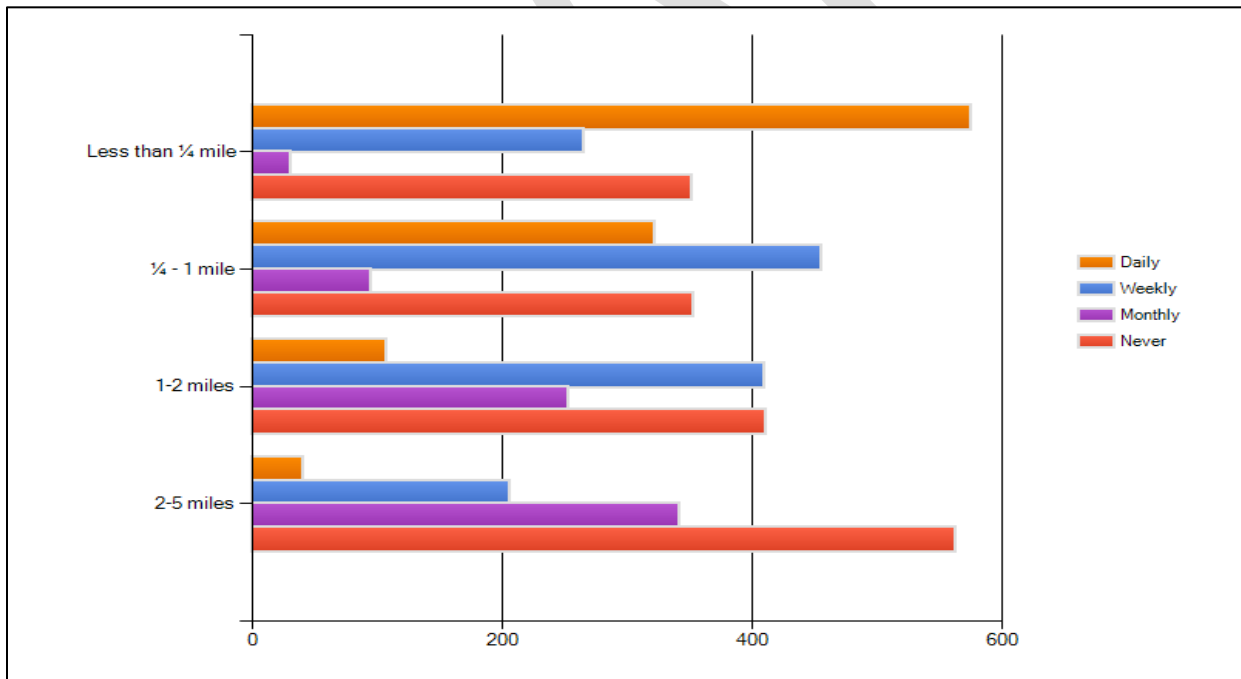
- Secure fencing
- That they are close to my home
- That they are far from my home
- No competition for other uses – outside existing parks
- Seating
- Nothing
- That there is a legal place for dogs to play off leash

Q6: What do you dislike about the existing dog park(s)?

This was an open ended question. The most common responses are listed below:

- Ill-behaved dogs
- Fee charged
- Location – too far away
- No water
- Not enough shade
- Cleanliness
- No enforcement

Q7: If a dog park were located at a given distance from your residence, how often would you use it? (check all that apply):



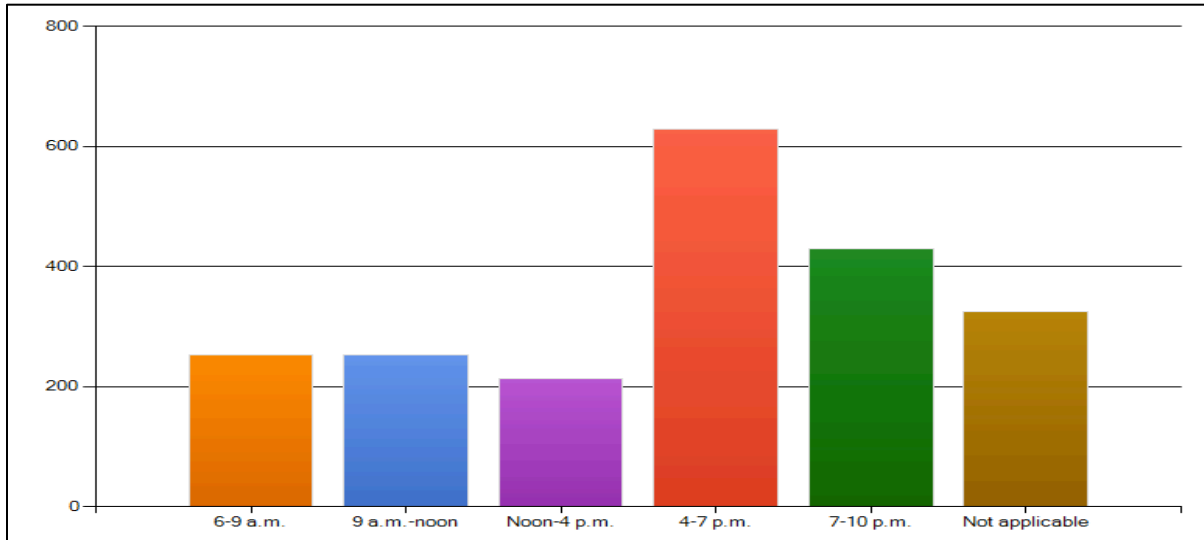
68.8% would use a dog park daily if it was less than 1/4 mile from their residence

63.5% would use daily or weekly if it was 1/4 to 1 mile from their residence

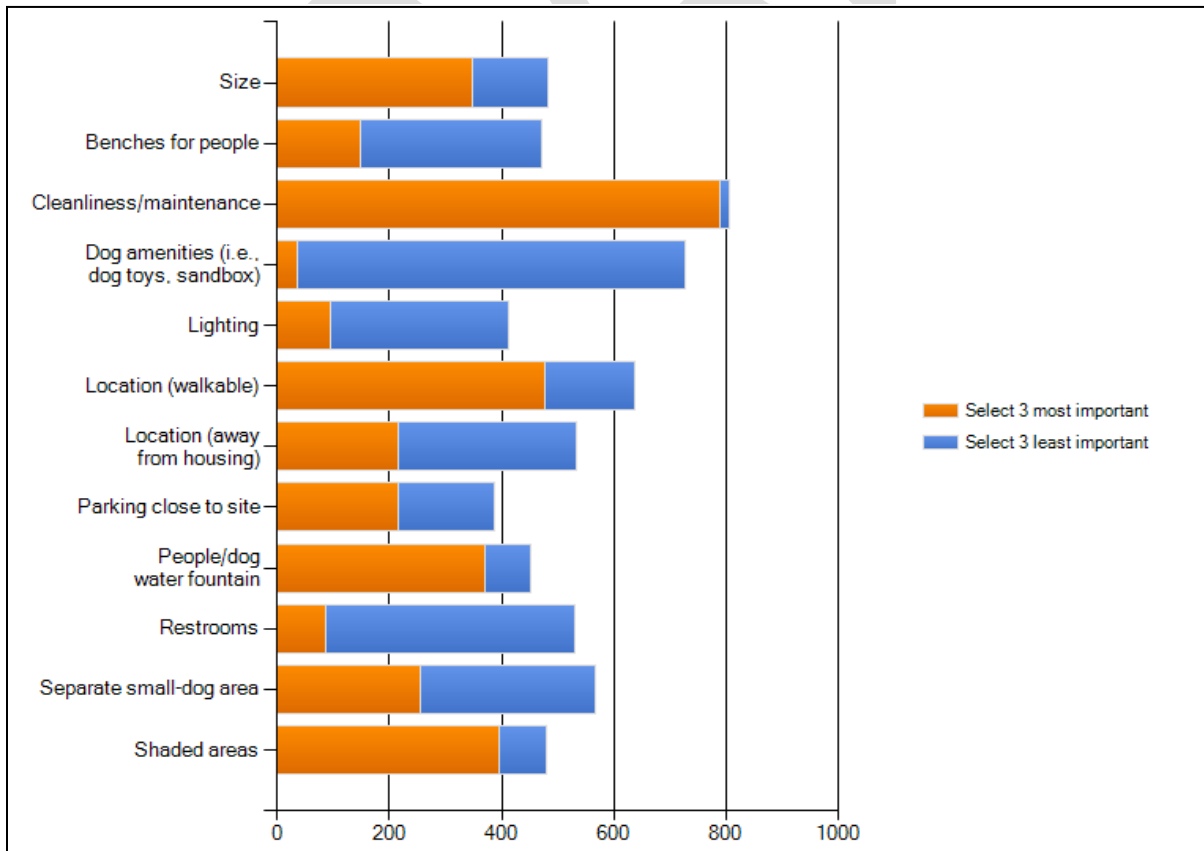
56.1% would use weekly or monthly if it was 1-2 miles from their residence

78.7% would use monthly or not at all if it was 2-5 miles from residence

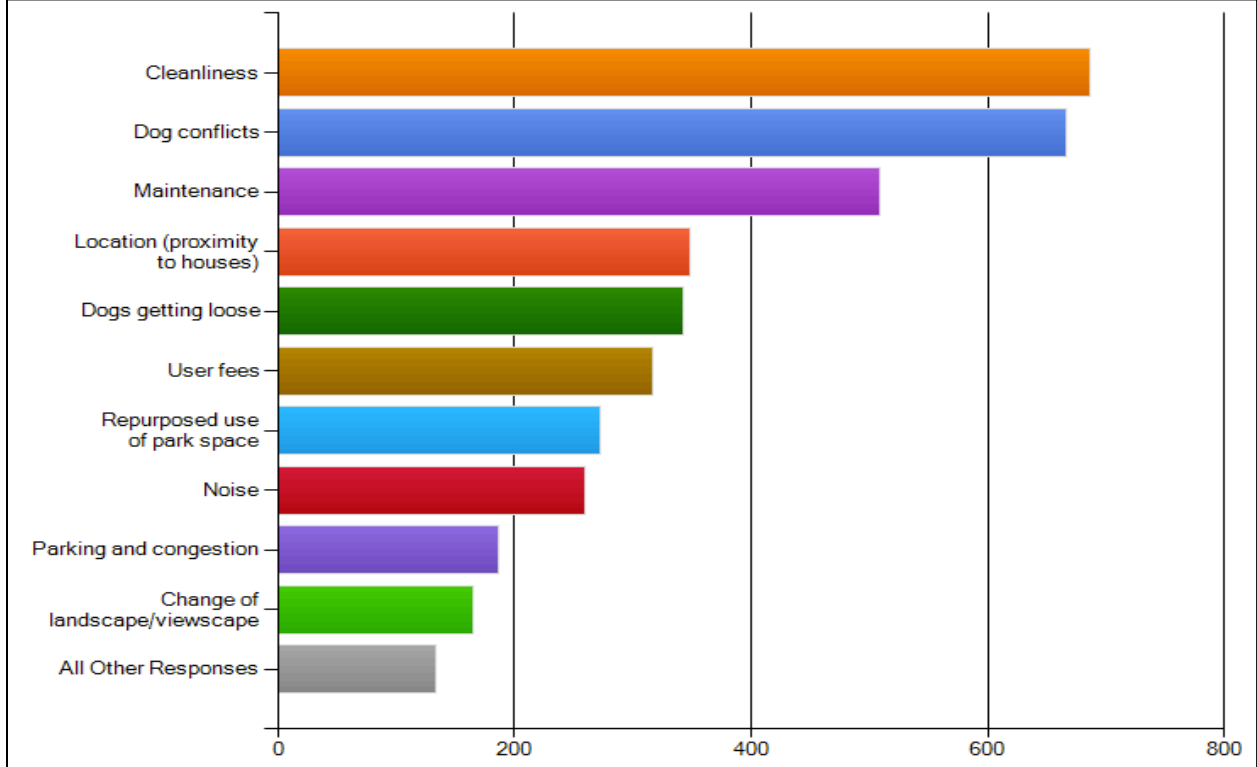
Q8: What times of day do you or would you most likely use a dog park? (Select all that apply.)



Q9: How important are the following items to a successful dog park? Please select the 3 items that are MOST important to you and the 3 items that are LEAST important to you. Selecting more than 3 for each column will nullify the response.



Q10: Are there issues related to dog parks that concern you? (Select all that apply.)



Q11: Would you support a dog park being located in...? (Answer all that apply)

Participants were asked to list parks for each sub-question. Word clouds are used to indicate the variety of responses. The larger the word(s) appear, the more times it was mentioned.

My neighborhood park (please provide the name of the park) 581 out of 943 selected this option



Larger community-wide park (please provide the name of the park) 478 out of 943 selected this option

Allmendinger Almendinger Park Bandemer Barton Bird Hills Buhr Burns Park County Farm
Eberwhite Gallop **Gallup** Hunt Park Nature Area Veterans Park **Vets West Park**

Other community park (please provide the name of the park) 251 out of 943 selected this option

Allmendinger Bird Hills Field Greenview Hudson Mills Liberty Plaza **Nature Area Park**
School Virginia West Side Woods **Wurster**

As many places as the city will provide (please provide locations) 267 out of 943 selected this option

Allmendinger **Ann Arbor** Bandemer Bird Hills Buhr Campus **Downtown**
Fuller Gallup Haisley Land Langford Lillie Locations Nature Area **Park** Place River
School Slauson Space Specific **West Side** Wurster

I do not want a dog park anywhere

130 out of 943 selected this option

Q12: Would you be willing to volunteer at a dog park?

Clean – 199

Landscape – 180

Help organize events and activities – 156

Fundraise – 115

Q14: Would you support off leash dog hours in parks without fencing?

Yes – 40.1%

No – 46.1%

Don't know – 13.8%

The full results of the community questionnaire, including all open ended responses may be found at this link: [PAC Dog Park Survey Results \(PDF\)](#)

Appendix 2: Website Page

A web page was developed and information concerning meetings, the survey, and resource materials were posted.

Page Content:

Survey on Potential New Dog Parks

Your input and feedback are important to us! The desire for additional dog parks is identified in the current City of Ann Arbor Parks and Recreation Open Space Plan (an element of the City Master Plan). In an effort to ensure the Park Advisory Commission is responding to this need in an appropriate manner, the public is being asked for input on where one or more dog parks could be located and what types of amenities should be considered for inclusion in new and existing dog parks.

Complete a survey:

We invite everyone to take the dog park survey, whether or not you have a dog. In total, the survey should take between 5-10 minutes to complete. We greatly appreciate your time, and thank you in advance for sharing your thoughts. The survey link is www.surveymonkey.com/s/7YXPXG, or please call 734.794.6230 ext. 42590 to receive a paper copy. The survey will remain open through Monday, Aug. 12, 2013.

Attend a public meeting:

- Wednesday, Sept. 11, 7 to 9:00 p.m. at Cobblestone Farm Barn (2781 Packard Road)
- Tuesday, Sept. 24, 7 to 9:00 p.m., Traverwood Library, 3333 Traverwood Drive

Email your input:

a2parks@a2gov.org and visit our website: at <http://www.a2gov.org/parks>.

Persons with disabilities are encouraged to participate in public meetings. Accommodations, including sign language interpreters, may be arranged by contacting the city clerk's office at 734.794.6140; via email to cityclerk@a2gov.org or by written request addressed/mailed or delivered to Ann Arbor City Clerk's Office, 301 E. Huron Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48104. Requests need to be received at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting.

PAC Subcommittee Meetings

Tuesday, April 23, 2013, 3:30 to 5 p.m., City Hall, Larcom 1st Floor N Conference Rm,
Monday, May 5, 2013, 8 to 9:30 a.m., City Hall, Larcom 1st Floor N Conference Room,
Friday, May 31, 2013, 4 to 5:30 p.m., City Hall, Larcom 1st Floor S Conference Room,
Friday, June 21, 2013, 4 to 5:30 p.m., City Hall, Larcom 1st Floor S Conference Room

Monday, July 8, 2013, 4 to 5:30 p.m., City Hall, Larcom 1st Floor N Conference Room
Thursday, July 25, 2013, 8 to 9 a.m., City Hall, Larcom 1st Floor S Conference Room
Friday, Aug. 23, 2013, 2:30 to 4 p.m., City Hall, Larcom 1st Floor N Conference Room
Friday, Sept. 20, 2013, 8:00 a.m., City Hall, Larcom 1st Floor N Conference Room
Friday, Nov. 8, 2013, 9 to 10 a.m., City Hall, Larcom 1st Floor N Conference Room
Monday, Nov. 25, 2013, 8 to 9 a.m., City Hall, Larcom 1st Floor S Conference Room
Monday, Dec. 2, 2013, 8 to 9 a.m., City Hall, Larcom 1st Floor N Conference Room

City wide public meetings:

Wednesday, Sept. 11, 2013, 7 to 9 p.m., Cobblestone Farms, 2781 Packard Road, Ann Arbor
Tuesday, Sept. 24, 2013, 7 to 9 p.m., Traverwood Library, 3333 Traverwood Drive (at Huron Parkway)
The Dog Park Subcommittee of the Park Advisory Commission is exploring options for additional dog parks within the City of Ann Arbor. Meetings are open to the public and a space for public commentary is included on the agenda.

You can e-mail Parks Planner [Amy Kuras](#), or call **734.794.6230, ext 42590** to receive additional information.

Subcommittee Members Include:

Ingrid Ault
Karen Levin
Missy Stults
Staff support include Amy Kuras, Colin Smith, David Rohr

Documents that the subcommittee is reviewing include:

- [Dog Park Questionnaire](#)
- [Dog Park Survey](#)
- [Dog Park Letter](#)
- [Dog Park Article](#)
- [PAC Dog Park Survey Results \(PDF\)](#)
- [PAC Dog Park Survey Results \(Excel\)](#)

The survey results are now available in an Excel spreadsheet format (above) for those interested in delving deeper into the material. The Excel file can be downloaded and saved to your computer. Additional cross tabulated survey reports are available upon request. Please email request to David Rohr at drohr@a2gov.org.



Appendix 3: Public Meetings

Two public meetings were held to obtain general feedback about locations, criteria, and existing parks. At the first public meeting, the background and an overview of the input process was presented as well as a summary of the survey. Meeting participants then asked to provide feedback.

Notes from public meeting held on September 11, 2013

31 members of the public, and 4 Park Advisory Commission members attended

Discussion about criteria:

- Parks are used by many types of people, children, etc.
- Adequate space is important
- Big spaces – wide and long for dogs to run
- Pay attention to potential use conflicts; children’s play area at Wurster Park
- Permeable soils are important
- Not bordering households
- Distance from neighbors
- Avoid established neighborhood uses
- Drainage – not on slopes, so that feces don’t drain into areas where children are playing
- Adequate parking – Old West Side is already full of cars from people who work downtown, there is already traffic congestion. People who would drive to a proposed park would make the situation worse.
- What did we look at – want more specifics – how did these come about
- Every site needs to be evaluated on its own merits. The neighborhood is going to need to like it
- Drainage – not only slope away but how soil perks – permeability.
- Can you please reveal which parks informed your criteria
- Baltimore, Provincetown, Madison, New Haven – lessons learned

Maintenance

- Why are we considering another dog park when we can’t maintain what we have?
- Would help to know mitigation strategies for taking care of what we have.
- We need to know how to fix things – do it right before building more dog parks

Budget

- What is the budget?
- How much is the partnership with the County?
- What is the budget for capital and operating? Why can’t we cooperate with the County?

Existing Dog Parks

- Users had a lot of complaints about existing dog parks
- Lessons learned – needed to modify parks, volunteers didn’t work out.
- Why not reconfigure Swift Run to make it more fun?

- Add to Swift Run – sand, pea gravel, cement – surfaces that can be cleaned.
- Swift Run – water, filling in of low areas, parking lot, partitioning

Issues

- Every park is a dog park – everyone lets their dogs run off leash
- Do not want a dog park in West Park
- Focus on one park vs. many parks
- Illegal gatherings
- Dog park licenses – on line instead of having to come down to City Hall
- Remedy current dog park issues and learn from it

Location

- Is there something that can be a walkable amenity from downtown?
- It will never be walkable for everyone.
- Look at the process in other communities – what is the best distance from houses, what is the minimum size. People are interested in what makes a good location.
- What parameters should we consider for a downtown park?
- Identify dead spaces, other spaces that are not parks.
- What about newly acquiring areas for dog parks?
- Consider spaces that are not currently used as parks. Are there empty lots in the downtown or parking lots that could be used as part time dog runs?
- Will the city acquire new property for a dog park to avoid existing use conflicts in existing parks?
- Be clear about centrally located dog park
- The question of dog park locations needing to be no more than 2 miles away makes me ask ‘away from whom?’ The people who would like Wurster Park would not be willing to walk to the North Main City property, but folks closer to that spot would. How will you resolve that?
- Why not remodel or use space not currently a park?
- What properties have you looked at and eliminated – non-City owned.

Other

- Excited to have a dog park.
- How do we hear what cities like Baltimore are doing?
- Timeline – when do we expect to arrive at a conclusion?
- Park fee with dog licensing fee

At the second public meeting, the same presentation was made, but then participants were divided into two groups to discuss the criteria and make suggestions as to specific potential locations.

Notes from public meeting Sept 24, 2013

Input on Proposed Criteria:

- Size - people tend to take little dogs to little parks
- Enforcement is crucial – needs to be staffed
- Cleaning up after dogs
- Bar code entry, swipe card
- Swift Run is really huge – it doesn't need to be that big. People lose track of their dogs
- Drainage – muddy dog park not good, need to rethink surfacing, provide alternatives, make sure any new areas have proper drainage
- Parking spaces – need to be adequate for anticipated use
- Noise – elevation difference between park and surrounding area – in a valley or on a hill can help
- Keep an eye on historical nature of park, make sure that change in use does not change intention or character
- Natural feature preservation – no development of sensitive natural features/areas
- Shade – need to make sure there are adequate trees
- Operation – can you control # of dogs using a particular dog park at any one time?
- Use conflicts – buffers needed between different types of uses (play areas, etc.)
- Connection to river or a moving body of water is a desirable feature

Ideas for new dog parks:

- Fuller Park south – has adequate parking, need to stay away from wetlands
Kuebler Langford Park – thruway hikers, away from neighbors, noisy highway would cover noise of barking
- Broadway Park, close to downtown, not much pedestrian traffic, not connected to B2B trail, noise from trains, away from neighbors
- Veterans Memorial Park – noise offset by traffic, parking adequate, may be too popular, need an acre minimum for this site
- DTE property is not owned by City, away from neighbors.

Appendix 4: Research from Other Communities

Staff and PAC subcommittee members performed research to explore best practices from communities around the country, as well as professional organizations that specialize in pets. The research included internet searches to find out what type of criteria were being used to site dog parks, as well as what kind of design criteria were used to establish the areas. In addition to the web searches, staff and PAC members telephoned and emailed individuals from more than 10 cities to discuss the successes and struggles associated with their public process, design, and maintenance of dog parks in their communities. A range of cities were contacted, including several whose population and makeup were similar to Ann Arbor (university towns), several major cities who have numerous dog parks, and regional facilities in Michigan and other states in the Midwest with similar climate.

The questions that were asked included the following. Responses are summarized in the charts:

- Do you have criteria to site a dog park?
- Do you have criteria for design of a dog park?
- Do you have a minimum buffer and/or distance between dog parks and existing residents? If so, how did you arrive at the criteria?
- What kind of oversight do you have to enforce rules, monitor behavior of dogs, restrict entry, etc? Do you have staff on site?
- Do you engage volunteers? If so, how?
- Do you have any educational programs for the public, such as dog behavior issues they might encounter, complaint procedures, etc.
- What type of decision making process was involved to establish the dog park?
- Are you satisfied with how your public process panned out? Were there contentious issues? If so, how did they get resolved?
- Do your dog parks include a separate area for small dogs? If so, how large is the area?
- What has, in your opinion, worked well in establishment and maintenance of your dog parks?
- What would you do differently next time around?

In order to compare the responses that were gathered, the following charts outline the responses received in categories to allow for comparison.

Several cities, including Denver, CO, Salt Lake County, UT and Oakland, CA, have master plan documents that were used to provide data. Others were telephoned and emailed, and others had useful information on their websites. These were all utilized to compare criteria. Not all cities had criteria for every category included in the charts, but there was sufficient information to provide comparative information.

Appendix 5: Charts Summarizing Data from Other Cities

APPENDIX 5: Comparison Research of Siting and Development Criteria

	Size Guidelines	Parking	Buffer from Residential	Conflict Avoidance	Surfacing	Drainage	Fees	Separate Small and Large Dog Areas	Geographic Distribution	Perimeter Fencing	Other information
Alexandria, VA	≥ 21,780 ft ² (0.5 acre)	Easy access for police/ animal control	50ft			At least 60ft from stream bed or water source				Double gated entry	
Baltimore, MD	≥ 5,000 ft ²		200ft; changes in topography or landscaping can reduce amount	Avoid playgrounds, athletic fields, sensitive habitats, areas directly upstream from community gardens, paths, historic sites	Natural turf or hard surface to allow for cleaning with a hose	Well drained, max 5% slope, avoid floodplains				5' perimeter fence, double gated entry	
Boulder, CO	No specific design requirements		No set criteria	Locate as far away from adjacent residences as possible	Decomposed granite or crusher fines material that isn't too sharp, all weather surface		Free and open to public during normal park hours	Unspecified size		Vinyl coated fence chain link	Volunteers occasionally work as ambassadors, important to work closely with community advocacy group to assist with maintenance
Chicago, IL	≥ 3,500 ft ² (not to exceed 3.5% of total park acres)		Ensure noise and activity levels are no more disruptive than typical park uses	Strong buffer between uses	Hard surface	Proximity to drainage to a sanitary sewer system	Annual: \$5				
Denver, CO	≥ 43,560 ft ² (1 acre) (2-3 acres preferred)	Existing off street parking should be available	200ft from street	100' from playground or other children's facility. No arterial streets within 200' unless fully fenced.	Crusher fines at entrance. Minimum 1 acre of alternative surface (sand based soil mix, synthetic turf or infield mix)	Must have positive drainage	Annual: \$25 residents, \$40 non-residents	Recommended	One mile service area radius for most populous areas. Two mile service area for lower density areas	4' fence, double gated entry	Discounted fee provided in exchange for volunteer maintenance support and participation in educational programs.
Kalamazoo, MI		Nearby	No set criteria; existing park sits 100-150' from street.	Full time staff for park maintenance			Fee and Key fob required	Separate areas; Same entrance			
Madison, WI	≥ 43,560 ft ² (1 acre)	Nearby	Maximize distance, include vegetative buffer	Avoid use conflicts	Grass		Daily: \$5, Annual: \$30 Regular, \$15 Senior/	100x300' for small dogs		Chain link	Park Ranger visits daily and leads monthly dog park user meetings. Dog park cleanup days.
Meridian Township, MI	10 acres		Screening from other park uses required		Decomposed granite	Screening should help mitigate runoff		Small dog area 1/4 size of large dog area		4-6' galvanized, double gated entry	
Montgomery County, MD	10,000 ft ²	Adequate parking	Appropriate distance from residents		Various					5' min height, double gated entry	
Norfolk, VA	≥ 32,670 ft ² (0.75 acre), approx 175' x 200'	Appropriate parking. Minimize disruption to resident parking	Avoid highly populated or high use areas	Avoid high use areas such as schools, jogging tracks, trails, playgrounds or recreational amenities							Neighborhood acceptance requires majority approval at public meeting. Adjacent property owners must provide written approval.
Oakland, CA	≥ 20,000 ft ²	Nearby (within reasonable walking distance)	Avoid locating adjacent to residences	Avoid wildlife conflicts or conversion of parkland	Easy to maintain. Turf not desired in smaller fenced areas. Preferred surfacing TBD	Relatively flat, well drained, berms, catchments to avoid runoff	Annual: \$25 - \$35 recommended	Small dog area: Minimum 1/4 acre	Ideally dog area within two miles of every Oakland resident	4' black vinyl, 8x8 double gated entry with two 4' gates, separate gate for maintenance	Opportunities for community bulletin board, kiosk. Park stewardship days.
Portland, OR	≥ 5,000 ft ²	Nearby	Minimize impact to adjacent residences	Avoid conflicts with fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, playgrounds		Dry and irrigated rather than wet, avoid slopes, relatively level	Free		Focus on multi-family neighborhoods where people don't have backyards		No permanent volunteer group. Some programs. Fines of up to \$150 for violation of off-leash law.
Salt Lake County, UT		Sufficient and convenient	Minimize conflicts with existing or planned land uses		Surfacing type must be carefully considered	No standards, but very important		Sometimes; Unspecified size			
San Francisco, CA	≥ 10,000 ft ² (30,000 ft ² preferred)		Natural or man made buffer to avoid conflicts	Avoid use conflicts and overcrowding	Turf in larger parks, alternative surfaces in smaller parks						
American Kennel Club	≥ 43,560 ft ² (1 acre)	Parking				Adequate drainage					
Association of Pet Dog Trainers	Enough to avoid crowding		Visual buffer within fenced park								

Appendix 6: Existing Dog Park Rules

DOG PARK USERS

PLEASE OBSERVE THE FOLLOWING RULES

1. A permit is required to use this facility. For registrations call 994-2725 City, 222-6600 County.
2. Dogs must display current registration, license, and vaccination tags.
3. Users of this facility do so at their own risk. Dog behavior can be unpredictable around other dogs and strangers.
4. Dog owners and handlers are strictly liable for any damage or injury caused by their dogs.
5. Dog handlers must be 16 years of age or older.
6. Children under age 15 are not allowed in the park unless accompanied by an adult.
7. All dogs must remain on leash until inside the designated fenced area.
8. Dogs must not be left unattended. Dogs must be in view and under the voice command of their handler at all times.
9. Dog handlers are required to clean up and dispose of their dogs' waste.
10. Dogs in heat and puppies under 4 months of age are not permitted in the park.
11. Dogs that fight or exhibit aggressive behavior must be immediately removed from the park.
12. No more than two dogs per handler are allowed at one time.
13. No smoking, food, or alcohol is allowed within the park.
14. Professional dog trainers shall not use the park to conduct their business.
15. Failure to comply with posted rules is subject to citation, expulsion, or arrest, as well as dog impound.

Park Hours are dawn to dusk
(Subject to closures during required maintenance operations.)

Call 911 for Emergency Assistance

Appendix 7: Scoring Sheet for Placement Criteria

5= ideal conditions, 4= exceeds basic criteria, 3=meets criteria, 2= minimally meets criteria, not optimal, 1= does not meet criteria

Criteria Description	Score 1	Score 3	Score 5	Comments	SCORE
Size variable and dependent upon proposed park location. Minimum ¼ acre; minimum ½ acre preference	Less than 1/4 acre	1/2 acre to 1 acre	over 2 acres		
Buffer from Residential ideally limit neighborhood disturbance to be consistent with typical park uses. Desired: increased distance; vegetative buffer	Close to residents and may create disturbance	Residents in area, but opportunities exist for buffer/landscaping	No neighbors, would not cause disturbance		
Water Source highly desirable within or adjacent to dog park area	Water access not currently existing and not feasible	Water is available on site, but outside of immediate vicinity	Water access within proposed dog park area		
Accessibility and Parking sufficient and convenient; provided without undue burden on neighbors. Dog parks accessible to residents within walking distance is preferred.	On-site parking not currently existing and not feasible to build. On-street parking not feasible.	On-site parking not currently existing. Opportunity exists to construct parking lot	Existing parking lot on site can accommodate dog park		
Topography, Drainage, Water Quality preferences: relatively flat topography, permeable soils, design to minimize erosion potential, protection for water bodies, good visibility through site	Excessive slopes, impermeable soils, and high erosion potential	Moderately flat, moderate visibility, moderately permeable soils	Primarily flat, good drainage, permeable soils, good visibility		
Shade highly desirable; site provides good mix of shade/ mature trees and open space/ turf grass	No trees on site or fully wooded	Some mature trees, but primarily open	Mature trees, good mix of shade and open space		
Use Conflict Avoidance provide sufficient buffer for other recreational facilities (e.g. playground, game court, other programmed field use) to avoid conflict and displacement of active and passive activities	Recreation facilities or programmed field use in close proximity	Recreation facilities or other programmed field use on-site, but outside of immediate vicinity	There are no other recreation facilities or programmed field uses near proposed site		
Protect Wildlife and Natural Areas should not be located in close proximity to high quality natural areas (e.g. nesting birds, small mammals, native plants)	Site is contiguous or close to a high quality natural area	Natural area outside of immediate vicinity	No natural areas at site		
Geographic Distribution distributed in the city such that residents are served within a reasonable distance- ideally minimum one per quadrant of city	Within 1/4 mile of an existing dog park	Within a 1 mile of an existing dog park	Equal distance from other dog parks in unserved quadrant		
Visual Character and Aesthetics located so as not to detract from the aesthetic quality of a park or open space. Ideally should improve park aesthetic/visual character	Would detract from the aesthetic/visual character of park	Would not add or detract from park aesthetic/visual character	Would fit well with park aesthetic/visual character		
Total Score					

Highest score attainable = 55 pts, Minimal score for consideration 33 pts, Eliminate as possibility <33 pts

Summary Comments:

