



*A People Place, A Change of Pace*  
**SHELBURNE**  
ONTARIO, CANADA

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**Meeting Date:** Monday, September 13, 2021

**To:** Mayor Mills and Members of Council

**From:** Denyse Morrissey, Chief Administrative Officer

**Report:** CAO 2021-09

**Subject:** Off Leash Dog Park – Locations Review

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### Recommendation

Be it Resolved that Council:

1. Receives report CAO 2021-09 regarding Off Leash Dog Park – Location Review; and that
2. A temporary location for an Off Leash Dog Park not be implemented; and that
3. To allow public engagement and consultation for a permanent Off Leash Dog Park to be established at the preferred location of Fiddle Park that it be referred to the parks and recreation master plan.

### Background

On Date November 18, 2019 Council provided the following direction regarding the 2020 budget:

BE IT RESOLVED THAT staff allocate \$20,000 from the future Parks & Rec reserve levy for the production of a dog park location to be determined.

Due to COVID-19 and the range of limitations that began in March 2020, the project was not commenced or considered in 2020. This Council direction was also re-included in the 2021 budget notes and to confirm that \$20,000 was dedicated for this project from the special levy. Staff also confirmed in 2021 that there was also \$60,000 in development charges (DCs) designated for an Off-Leash Dog Park.

Staff indicated in 2021 that prior to the Parks and Recreation Master Plan being completed, a report on the Off Leash Dog Park would be presented to Council. The report would include evaluating if it was strategic and cost effective to implement a temporary location in 2021. The project was included in the capital projects listed and scheduled for 2022.

## Analysis

As part of the review, staff also looked at other off leash dog parks including those in Orangeville and Acton. The estimated size in Orangeville is 1.53 acres (66,791.96 SF) and in Acton it is about 0.78 acres (34,300.39 SF). These sizes were used as a general guideline in reviewing space needed with our parks.

General guidelines for Off Leash Dog Parks specific to risk management and general planning and layout was also reviewed, including other existing park uses and adjacent property uses that should be considered and avoided when considering the location for an off-leash dog park.

Information from Frank Cowan Company, (now Intact Insurance as purchased by Intact Financial Corporation) the Town's insurance firm, and risk management considerations for off leash dog parks is provided in Appendix 1.

Recommendations and Guidelines for Dog Park Site Selection Design, Operations and Maintenance; City of Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA is provided in Appendix 2.

## Elements of Good Off Leash Park Design

Staff also attended a webinar on Off Leash Dog Parks in late November 2020. The session information included the elements of a good dog park design:

- 1 to 5 acres in size
- Good drainage
- 5 to 6-foot fence and type of fencing to use and avoid
- Double gates
- Water access or stations
- Covered waste containers
- Shade – must be available
- Accessibility

- Seating - only seating inside dog park area
- Signage
- Parking, including bike racks
- Buffer zones
- Surfacing
- Risk management and liability considerations

## **Park Locations in Shelburne Considered**

The four parks considered were:

1. KTH park
2. Simon Street Park
3. Greenwood Park
4. Fiddle Park

## **General Evaluation Criteria Used**

The five general evaluation criteria staff used in considering each a park were:

1. Landscape and Terrain
2. Safety
3. Access
4. Design
5. Existing Use

## **Evaluation of KTH Park**

### **LANDSCAPE/TERRAIN**

- Proposed dog park surface is grass
- Existing residential within 20 meters of dog park, consider potential for barking dogs and smell from waste receptacles to disrupt residents
- Existing baseball diamond outfield within 20 meters of proposed dog park, consider impact hazard created by baseballs
- Existing cricket pitch area within 40 meters of proposed dog park, consider impact hazard created by cricket balls

- Existing public washrooms adjacent to parking area

## SAFETY

- An existing baseball diamond and cricket pitch may result in users coming within close proximity to the proposed dog park, consider risk of dog bites through fence

## ACCESS

- Centrally located in south-end of town
- Proposed dog park can be accessed from both the KTH Park entrance (northeast driveway) and Simon Street Park via the southwest pathway
- Existing sidewalks and pathways provide safe walking routes to the park
- Existing parking area has a large capacity

## DESIGN

- Proposed dog park is rectangular in shape in order to maximize distance between existing residential and the proposed dog park
- The rectangular shape is widened at the south end allowing for both a small and large dog section to have ample space

## EXISTING USE

- Existing soccer field at site of proposed dog park would be eliminated

The potential layout and a size of about .85 acres at KTH Park is provided in Appendix 3.

Recommendation: KTH Park is not recommended as a location for an Off Leash Dog Park.

## **Evaluation of Simon Street Park**

### LANDSCAPE/TERRAIN

- Proposed dog park surface is grass with a light westerly slope
- Existing residential within 50 meters of dog park, consider potential for parking dogs and smell from waste receptacles to disrupt residents



## SAFETY

- An existing nearby play structure may result in children and their guardians coming in close proximity to the proposed dog park, consider risk of dog bites through fence

## ACCESS

- Centrally located in south end of town
- Existing sidewalks and pathways provide safe walking routes to the park
- Existing parking area has limited capacity

## DESIGN

- Proposed dog park is rectangular in shape in order to fit between the Besley Drain and an existing large hill
- The rectangular shape causes both the small and large dog sections to be long enough for dogs to run, but with limited width

## EXISTING USE

- Existing large hill (east of proposed dog park) is a popular sledding location and would be blocked once the proposed dog park was constructed

The potential layout and a size of about .75 acres at Simon Street Park is provided in Appendix 4.

Recommendation: Simon Street Park is not recommended as a location for an Off Leash Dog Park.

## **Evaluation of Greenwood Park**

### LANDSCAPE/TERRAIN

- Proposed dog park surface is grass
- Existing residential within 50 meters of dog park, consider potential for barking dogs and smell from waste receptacles to disrupt residents
- Existing helipad within 60 meters of dog park, consider potential for helicopters to frighten dogs resulting in unsafe conditions

## SAFETY

- Limited vehicle access to the dog park in an emergency situation, closest road is Rintoul Crescent or the Wastewater Treatment Facility driveway (private drive)

## ACCESS

- Centrally located in town
- Existing sidewalks and pathways provide safe walking routes to the park, but do not lead directly to the proposed dog park
- Existing parking areas have large capacity but are not close to the proposed dog park

## DESIGN

- Proposed dog park is rectangular in shape in order to fit between the existing hill (adjacent to northwest) and existing trees (adjacent to south)
- The rectangular shape allows both the small and large dog sections to be long enough for dogs to run

## EXISTING USE

- Four mini soccer pitches located at the site of the proposed dog park would be eliminated

The potential layout and a size of about .86 acres at Greenwood Park is provided in Appendix 5.

Recommendation: Greenwood Park is not recommended as a location for an Off Leash Dog Park.

## **Evaluation of Fiddle Park**

### LANDSCAPE/TERRAIN

- Natural area consisting of plants, weeds, and shrubbery which would require clearing - Option 1
- Grass surface - Options 2, 3, and 4
- Slight westerly slope - Options 1, 2, and 4
- Existing residential of another municipality within 50 meters of options 1, 2, and 4 - consider potential for barking dogs and potential smell from waste receptacles

## SAFETY

- Various community events are held in Fiddle Park annually, consider risk of event attendees, such as children, approaching a dog park fence and impacts.

## ACCESS

- Located in far south-east of town, the park is not easily accessed without a vehicle
- Existing pathways provide walking routes throughout the park, but do not provide a controlled crossing over County Road 11
- Existing parking area has limited capacity, a dedicated parking area being constructed for each option is shown to ensure vehicles do not park on the existing interior gravel roads

## DESIGN

- Each off leash dog park option is square in shape allowing for equally spacious small and large dog sections

## EXISTING USE

- Several events are held in the park annually and may be impeded by the construction of a dog park
- Area adjacent to option 1 on the north side is reserved for the Community Garden, the expansion of that area and related programming and events.

The four (4) potential layouts, which range from .85 acres to 2 acres in size, at Fiddle Park are provided in Appendix 4.

Recommendation: To allow public engagement and consultation for a permanent Off Leash Dog Park to be established at the preferred location of Fiddle Park that it be referred to the parks and recreation master plan.

### **On Leash Dog Walking in Town and at Fiddle Park, and general issues**

As the existing options to walk a dog on leash are quite extensive and includes sidewalks, trails and parks it is noted in this report. The existing interior road at Fiddle Park is about a 1 km and is shown in Appendix 7.

The Town wide challenges and issues include those who do not adhere to having their dogs on leashes in parks. The amount of time staff have to spend picking up and disposing of dog waste by those who do not respect the 'poop and scoop' requirements, whether in the parks, or on sidewalks is also noted. Fiddle Park, like Simon Street Park, in particular is currently

used by many who do not have their dogs on leash nor are they picking up after their dogs.

### **Estimated Project Cost**

Based on 2021 information from various suppliers, and an area of about 2 acres, the project cost in 2021 is:

Fencing (about 442 metres) and Installation	\$53,000
Signage (rules and requirement of use)	\$2,000
Trees and benches/seating inside off leash area	\$5,000
Water access- dogs for drinking	\$3,000
Shade Structure	<u>\$15,000</u>
Sub Total	\$78,000
New hard-surface Parking Area (about 9,000 sq ft)	\$13,000
Accessible Walkway/Path from parking area	<u>\$4,000</u>
Total	\$92,000

This estimated budget does not include new operational costs for maintenance annually. It is assumed the off leash dog park would be open year round or 12 months of the year from 'dawn to dusk' and not open when it is dark. Those operating related costs will be estimated to include in the draft 2022 operating budget.

### **Financial**

The estimated cost, based on 2021 estimates received in 2021 for the off leash dog park is \$92,000.

The funding available in 2021 is:

Special Parks and Recreation 2020 Levy	\$20,000
Development Charges	<u>\$60,000</u>
Total	\$80,000
The estimated shortfall in 2021	\$12,000

Materials and construction related costs have been increasing significantly, and often more than 20% in the past year.

A phased-in approach of the project could defer (or eliminate) costs shown in the total estimated budget of \$92,000.

Allocation of an amount from a special parks and recreation levy, if in place for 2022, could also be considered for the estimated additional \$12,000 costs for the off leash dog park.

Local fundraising and donations from expected users could also generate additional funding for the project in 2022 (and future years) and be a requirement of the project.

### Policies & Implications

Not applicable

### Consultation and Communications

Not applicable.

### Council Strategic Priorities

Council's Strategic Priorities has three Goals - Sustainable, Engaged and Livable. There are a total of 12 targets with the three Goals.

This report aligns with the Sustainable Goals within the Targets:

T10 Improve and enhance parks and recreation services

### Supporting Documentation

Appendix 1: Risk management considerations for off leash dog parks; Frank Cowan Company

Appendix 2: Recommendations and Guidelines for Dog Park Site Selection Design, Operations and Maintenance; City of Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA

Appendix 3: Off Leash Dog Park - potential layout at KTH Park

Appendix 4: Off Leash Dog Park - potential layout at Simon Street Park

Appendix 5: Off Leash Dog Park - potential layout at Greenwood Park

Appendix 6: Off Leash Dog Park - potential 4 layouts at Fiddle Park

Appendix 7: On Leash Dog Walking - Fiddle Park walking loop

Prepared with:

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Chad Smith,  
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Respectfully submitted:

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Denyse Morrissey, CAO

# Risk Management Considerations For Off-Leash Dog Parks

**M**any municipalities have been approached by groups in the community to establish off-leash or leash-free parks within public areas. While these parks may provide exercise and socialization opportunities for Fido, they expose municipalities to considerable risk.

## Risk Management Considerations

Although your municipality would be able to rely on any dog owners legislation applicable in your province that requires dog owners to maintain control of their animals at all times (such as the Dog Owners Liability Act in Ontario), there is a potential for liability because you are the occupier permitting the existence of the leash-free zone. It is foreseeable that injuries could occur in the off-leash parks.

For example, you might see:

- A child or adult being attacked by an unleashed dog.
- A conflict between two or more unleashed dogs.
- An injury to a dog owner trying to protect their dog from another.

Due to the likelihood of these incidents and the lack of viable risk controls to serve in the municipality's defence, some percentage of fault would likely be attached to the municipality permitting off-leash zones.

The municipality has a duty of care to implement controls that mitigate risk.

Rules should be posted on municipal websites and signs at and around the park. Signs should use simple language and should note fines for not following park rules:

- All visitors use the park at their own risk.
- State the hours of the park.
- Warn users and others that it is an off-leash park.
- Advise that children should be supervised at all times.
- Puppies under four months old and aggressive dogs should not use the park.
- No food or glass containers are allowed.
- Owners must clean up after their dog and properly dispose of waste.
- Remind dog owners of their responsibility to keep their animal under control at all times.

- Choke collars or collars with spikes are not allowed.
- If a dog digs a hole, the owner is responsible for filling it prior to their departure.
- Limit the number of dogs per person to two.
- Professional dog walkers cannot enter the park with more than two dogs.

The park should be physically separate from the general public. It shouldn't be located around playgrounds, sports fields, public pathways or schools.

The municipality must conduct inspections to monitor the use of the off-leash dog park.

Remove or repair hazards as soon as they are reported.

Ensure that there are waste receptacles placed around the park.

Instruct owners that their pets must be licensed and have up to date vaccinations, including rabies.

Consider working with a dog group in the community. Members are likely to be regular visitors to the off-leash dog park and will have a vested interest in its upkeep. Ask them to be vigilant in reporting misbehaviour, aggression or irresponsibility on behalf of dogs and/or their owners.

Thoroughly inspect the park on a regular basis. There have been several cases recently where poison has been left around the park and dogs have ingested toxic material. In one instance antifreeze was injected into cupcakes. They were left by trees for dogs to find and eat. This reinforces why a "no food" rule is important. It allows out of the ordinary objects to be located quickly.

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



2013/2014

Park Advisory Commission Dog Park Subcommittee

## 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.



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## 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 2,118 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 subcommittee went through to establish these guidelines.

## BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

### A Brief History

Public advocacy to establish dog parks dates to the mid 1990'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 the 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 the 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 were 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 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 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 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 subcommittee'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 subcommittee include:

## **Goal 1 – Evaluate Community Preferences around Existing and Potential Future Dog Parks**

To meet this goal, the dog park subcommittee 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 subcommittee meetings.

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

To meet this goal, the subcommittee 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 [Appendix 5](#).

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

To meet this goal, the subcommittee 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 subcommittee reviewed the survey and public meeting input in the creation of this document. The results from the survey and 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 subcommittee 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 the 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 Park Advisory Commission subcommittee with public input and advertised via email, 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 Park Advisory Commission subcommittee meeting times and locations. The page is attached in [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 included in [Appendix 3](#).

#### Summary of Survey Responses

- The survey was completed by over 1,500 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, 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

- Three public meetings were held with 29 people attending the first meeting, 9 people attending the second meeting, and 17 attending the third 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 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 Park Advisory Commission 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 1/2 acre and one acre.
- **Buffer from Residential:** A few cities provide definitive distances from residences, varying from 50 feet to 200 feet. All strive to minimize conflicts and include guidelines such as: making sure that noise and activity levels are no more than other park uses, importance of screening or visual buffers, and having a 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 standards 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 and water sources, wildlife, trails, community gardens, and historic sites.
- **Protect Wildlife and Natural Areas:** Several cities discuss avoidance of conflicts with wildlife 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

- **Fence Height and Material:** All cities contacted have galvanized or vinyl coated chain link fences, with a minimum height of 4 feet. 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 dog parks, as well as illegal off-leash activity outside of dog parks, find this helpful for controlling dogs and 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 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 from Residential:** It is crucial to provide a buffer between nearby residences and the dog park. The buffer should allow for neighbors to have no more disturbances from a dog park than other typical park uses. Buffers may include vegetation and/or berms to aid in noise/visual attenuation.
- **Non-residential Adjacent Land Use:** Depending on the type of business or institution, a dog park may be considered either a beneficial amenity or an undesirable facility.
- **Drinking Fountain:** A source of drinking water is highly desirable within or adjacent to the dog park area.
- **Parking:** Sufficient parking, convenient to the site, should be provided such that the dog park does not create undue burden on surrounding neighborhoods.
- **Land Suitability:** The site should be relatively flat and have permeable soils. If a desirable site has excessive slopes, it should be designed such that erosion does not become an issue, water bodies are protected, and visibility to all dogs is possible within the fenced in area.
- **Shade:** Shade is highly desirable. The site should provide a good mix of mature trees and open space/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 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 there is equitable distribution to dog parks in 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 foot x 8 foot 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 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 increase compliance.
- **Rules:** City rules are consistent with other cities. They should remain as is and continue to be posted. Existing dog park rules are listed in *Appendix 6*.
- **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 score the highest.
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 the site being considered and include the input received from the email questionnaire.
7. If there is general support for the project, concerns and suggestions are shared at the public meeting and staff will explore modifications to the concept plan.
8. If, after the concept plan is modified, opposition to the plan is still such that the project lacks the necessary support to succeed, then the second site on the list of potential parks will be considered, and the public process will be repeated.
9. When a proposed location is generally supported, being sensitive to residents in close proximity to the proposed dog park, the ad hoc committee will vote on the proposed site.
10. If the committee approves the proposed site, it would then be brought to the Park Advisory Commission for discussion and recommendation.
11. If the Park Advisory Commission approves the proposal, the site will be brought to City Council and include a public hearing so that City Ordinance can 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 foot 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 Northwest 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.
4. Continue to explore improvements to surfacing.

### OVERVIEW OF OLSON DOG PARK

- Location – Dhu Varren Road at corner of Pontiac Trail
- Size – .7 acre grassy field area
- 5 foot 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 has 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. 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.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Community Questionnaires

The subcommittee decided that questionnaires of the general public would allow a greater number of residents to participate in the public process. The questionnaires were posted on the City's website, emails were sent out via govDelivery, two press releases were posted, and post cards were placed at City Hall as well as several recreation facilities. The first questionnaire was available to the public for several weeks in August 2013, and the second in February and March, 2015. The results are as follows:

#### Questionnaire #1

Over 1,500 individuals completed the first 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

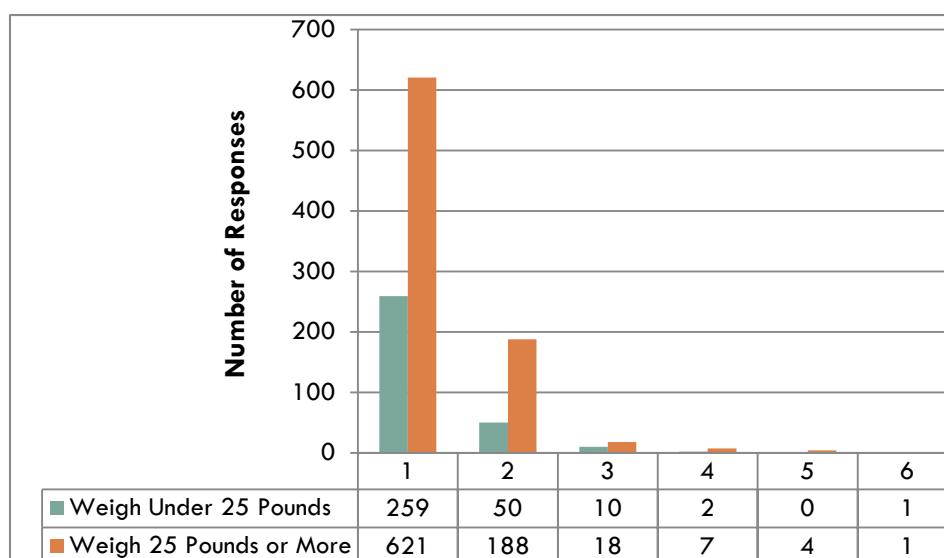
18.9% from zip-code 48104  
 15.2% from zip-code 48105  
 7.1% from zip-code 48108

**Q1: Do you currently have a dog?**

Currently have a dog – 67.5%  
 Do not have a dog – 26.2%  
 Planning to get a dog – 6.2%

**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  
 Do not 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:

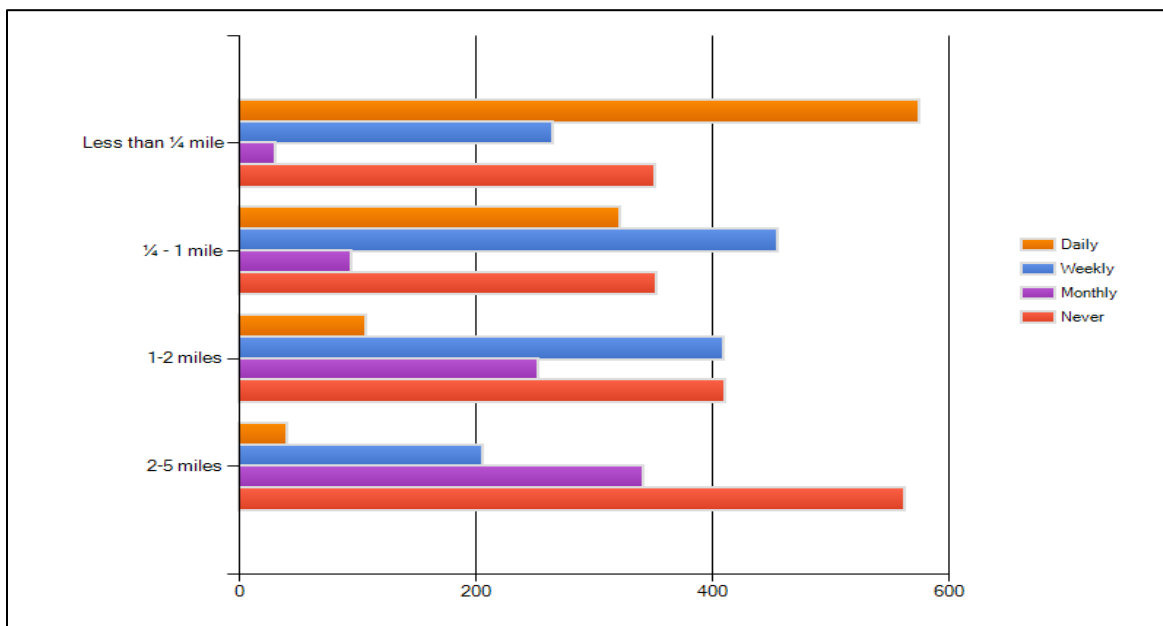
- That they exist
- The space – size
- Secure fencing
- That they are close to my home
- That they are far from my home
- No competition for other uses – outside existing parks
- Seating
- Nothing
- That there is a legal place for dogs to play off-leash

**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):**



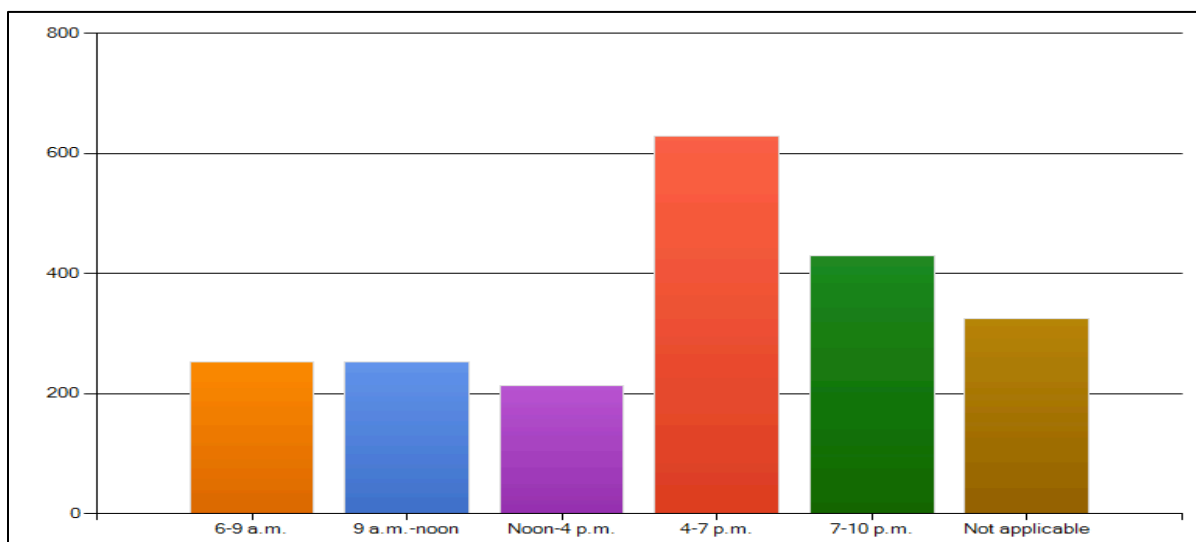
68.8% Would use a dog park daily if it was less than 1/4 mile from their residence

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

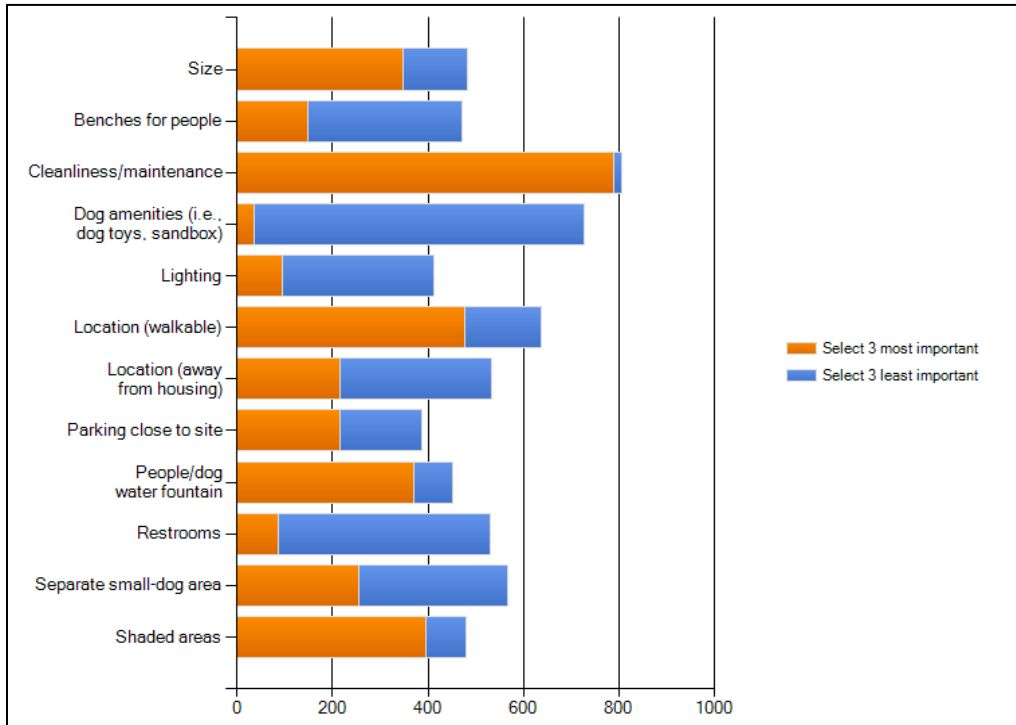
78.7% Would use monthly or not at all if it was 2-5 miles from residence

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

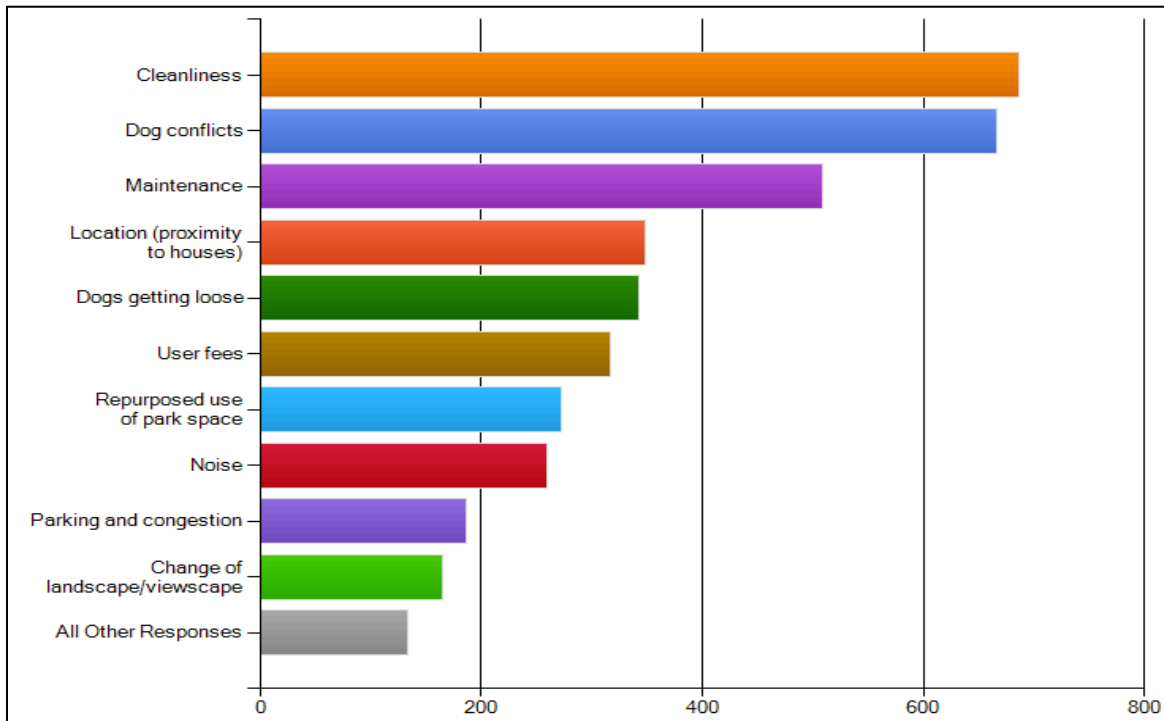




**Q9: How important are the following items to a successful dog park? Please select the 3 items that are MOST important to you and the 3 items that are LEAST important to you. Selecting more than 3 for each column will nullify the response.**



**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.



Other community park (please provide the name of the park).

251 out of 943 selected this option.



As many places as the city will provide (please provide locations).

267 out of 943 selected this option.



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

**Q13: 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).

**Questionnaire #2**

The subcommittee decided that a second questionnaire of the general public was needed after there were requests to revisit the criteria. The questionnaire was posted on the City's website, emails were sent out via govDelivery, a press releases was posted, and emails were sent to everyone who had attended a previous meeting or provided their email. The questionnaire was available to the public for several weeks in February and March, 2015. The results are as follows:

168 individuals viewed the questionnaire, and 40 completed the questionnaire.

Three questions were asked about the process, research and scoring sheet:

**Q1: Given the research presented from other cities, and that there are not universally accepted dog park best management practices, does the proposed criteria for Ann Arbor provide sufficient guidance to determine potential sites for a new dog park?**

Yes – 55%

No - 42.5%

No opinion – 2.5%

**Q2: Do you feel that the proposed scoring sheet provides an objective means to help determine whether or not a particular site should be proposed for a dog park?**

Yes – 60%

No – 32.5%

No opinion – 7.5%

**Q3: Do you feel that the proposed process to establish new dog park locations provides for an open and fair decision making process for locating dog parks?**

Yes – 67.5%

No – 25%

No opinion – 7.5%

The full results of the survey included open ended responses are located on the dog park website page.

## Appendix 2: Website Page

A webpage was developed containing information concerning meetings, the survey, and resource materials.

### Information on the website included the following:

#### 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.

#### SURVEYS:

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/7YXPKXG](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/7YXPKXG) or please call 734.794.6230 ext. 42590 to receive a paper copy. The survey will remain open through Monday, Aug. 12, 2013.

#### PUBLIC MEETINGS:

- 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. at Traverwood Library (3333 Traverwood Drive)
- Tuesday, March 5, 7-8:30 at City Hall (301 East Huron Street)

#### EMAIL YOUR INPUT:

[a2parks@a2gov.org](mailto: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 at [cityclerk@a2gov.org](mailto:cityclerk@a2gov.org); or by written request addressed/mailed or delivered to the 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, Monday, May 5, 2013, 8 to 9:30 a.m., Friday, May 31, 2013, 4 to 5:30 p.m., Friday, June 21, 2013, 4 to 5:30 p.m., Monday, July 8, 2013, 4 to 5:30 p.m., Thursday, July 25, 2013, 8 to 9 a.m., Friday, Aug. 23, 2013, 2:30 to 4 p.m., Friday, Sept. 20, 2013, 8:00 a.m., Friday, Nov. 8, 2013, 9 to 10 a.m., Monday, Nov. 25, 2013, 8 to 9 a.m., Monday, Dec. 2, 2013, 8 to 9 a.m.

CITY WIDE PUBLIC MEETINGS:

Wednesday, Sept. 11, 2013, 7 to 9 p.m., Cobblestone Farm, 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](mailto:drohr@a2gov.org).

## Appendix 3: Public Meetings

Three public meetings were held to obtain general feedback about locations, criteria, and existing parks.

### Notes from public meeting held on September 11, 2013

29 members of the public and 5 Park Advisory Commission members attended. The background and an overview of the input process was presented as well as a summary of the survey. Meeting participants then were asked to provide feedback.

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 does not drain into areas where children are playing.
- Adequate parking – Old West Side is already full of cars from people who work downtown. There is 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, and 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 – online 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 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

### Notes from public meeting held on September 24, 2013

9 members of the public and 3 Park Advisory Commission members attended. The same presentation was made as at the first meeting, but then participants were divided into two groups to discuss the criteria and make suggestions as to specific potential locations.

#### 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 number 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 – not owned by City, away from neighbors.



### Notes from public meeting held on March 5, 2015

Fifteen members of the public and two Park Advisory Commission members attended the meeting. Research done by the subcommittee was presented, along with proposed revised scoring criteria based on what was learned.

Comments from attendees about why they came to the meeting:

- Would like equal access to city services
- Saline dog park – really like it, interested in parks in general
- Special place where dogs should be, not around churches and things of that nature
- Where could a dog park be placed? Concerned about cleaning up after dogs
- Walks in regular parks, don't think that Ann Arbor is going to make a dog park because we have too many spaces where people keep their dogs off leash
- Dog clean up is an issue and would like to have input on where dog parks could be and where they shouldn't be
- Concerned about proximity of parks and who is going to maintain the park
- Concerned about dog residue, and don't want dogs around little people and elders because they could bite, concerned about location around church. Wants to know about methods for choosing dog parks.

Overview of meeting purpose

- There is a long history of advocacy to establish dog parks, and people have very strongly held views about dog parks
- Worked to come up with a consistent and coherent process for locating dog parks, and want to make sure that the process is as objective as possible
- Want to make sure City is on the right track before considering specific sites

Attendees at meeting scored a location, and provided the following feedback about the scoring sheet:

- There should be extra points for water bodies for swimming
- Change residential buffer to institutional buffer as well, including churches, hospitals, etc.
- Buffer from residents isn't always better as maybe being closer for walkability is desired
- Shade criteria is confusing
- Use conflict avoidance should be about not just what is in the park, but what is around it
- Geography – simplify so that it is about more equitable distribution
- Clarify water quality and drainage criteria

- Water source was confusing – is it about places to drink or swim or both?
- Not sure that separating kids from dog parks is a desirable thing, having the kids at the park and then a place for dogs in the same vicinity can be desirable as well.
- Could the scoring be weighted?
- Is there wiggle room in the selection criteria in the times of use, etc. It's not like there is a formula, it is site by site.

## Appendix 4: Research from Other Communities

Staff and Park Advisory Commission 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 Park Advisory Commission 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 resident? 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: Data Summary											
Location	Size Guidelines	Parking	Buffer from Residential	Conflict Avoidance	Surfacing	Drainage	Fees	Small & Large Dog Areas	Geographic Distribution	Perimeter Fencing	Other Information
Alexandria, VA	≥ 21,780 ft² (0.5 acre)	Easy access for police/animal control	50 ft			At least 60 ft from stream bed or water source				Double gated entry	
Baltimore, MD	≥ 5,000 ft²		200 ft; Changes in topography or landscaping can reduce amount	Avoid playgrounds, athletic fields, sensitive habitats, areas directly upstream from community gardens, paths, and historic sites	Natural turf or hard surface to allow for cleaning with a hose	Well drained, max 5% slope, and avoid floodplains				5 ft perimeter fence and 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 chain link fence	Volunteers occasionally work as ambassadors. Important to work closely with community advocacy group to assist with maintenance
Chicago, IL	≥ 3,500 ft² (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 ft² (1 acre) (2-3 acres preferred)	Existing off street parking should be available	200 ft from street	100 ft from playground or other children's facility. No arterial streets within 200 ft unless fully fenced.	Crusher fines at entry. Min 1 acre alt. 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 ft fence and 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 100-150 ft from street	Full time staff for park maintenance			Fee and key fob required	Separate areas; Same entrance			
Madison, WI	≥ 43,560 ft² (1 acre)	Nearby	Maximize distance; Include vegetative buffer	Avoid use conflicts	Grass		Daily: \$5; Annual: \$30; Senior/Disabled: \$15	100x300 ft for small dogs		Chain link	Park Ranger visits daily, leads monthly dog park user meetings and 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 ft galvanized and double gated entry	
Montgomery County, MD	10,000 ft²	Adequate parking	Appropriate distance from residents		Various					5 ft min height and double gated entry	
Norfolk, VA	≥ 32,670 ft² (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 meetings. Adjacent property owners must provide written approval.
Oakland, CA	≥ 20,000 ft²	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 ft black vinyl fence and 8 ft x 8ft double gated entry with two 4 ft gates; Separate gate for maintenance	Opportunities for community bulletin board/kiosk. Park stewardship days.
Portland, OR	≥ 5,000 ft²	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/planned land uses		Surfacing type must be carefully considered	No standards, but very important		Sometimes; Unspecified size			
San Francisco, CA	≥ 10,000 ft² (30,000 ft² 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 ft² (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

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		
<b>Size</b> Variable and dependent upon proposed park location. Minimum 1/4 acre; 1/2 acre preference	Less than 1/4 acre	1/2 acre to 1 acre	> 2 acres				
<b>Buffer from Residential</b> Ideally limit neighborhood disturbance to be consistent with typical park uses. Desired increased distance; vegetative buffer	50' or less from adjacent residents, and little opportunity for buffer	> 100' from residents and moderate opportunities for buffer	> 200' from residents and good opportunity for buffer				
<b>Nonresidential Adjacent Land Use</b> Depending on the type of business or institution, may be considered either a benefit or an undesirable amenity	Surrounding institution/business does not consider dog parks compatible with its mission/constituency	A dog park would be neutral for the surrounding institution or business	An adjacent dog park would be a positive addition to the surrounding institution or business				
<b>Drinking Fountain</b> Highly desirable within or adjacent to dog park area	No drinking water available on site; would be expensive/difficult to provide water	Drinking fountain and/or water service available on site, but outside of dog park	Drinking fountain available within proposed dog park area				
<b>Parking</b> Sufficient and convenient; Provided without undue burden on neighbors.	Onsite parking not currently existing; Site too small to accommodate parking lot	On-site parking not currently existing; Site can accommodate parking lot	Existing parking lot on site can accommodate dog park				
<b>Land Suitability</b> 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				
<b>Shade</b> Highly desirable; Site provides good mix of shade/mature trees and open space/turf grass	No trees on site; full sun	Some trees on site; smaller trees don't provide much shade	Mature trees; good mix of shade and open space				
<b>Use Conflict Avoidance</b> Avoid placing dog park in area that would conflict with or displace desired active and passive activities	Dog park would conflict with existing park uses	Existing park use would not be impacted by proposed dog park	Dog park would complement existing park uses				
<b>Protect Natural Areas</b> Should not be located in close proximity to high quality natural areas to limit disturbance of nesting birds, small mammals, native plants	Site within 50' of high quality natural area	Natural area > 100' from proposed dog park area	No natural areas at site				
<b>Geographic Distribution</b> Located such that there is equitable distribution to dog parks in the City	Within 1/4 mile of an existing dog park; Well served by dog park	Within a 1 mile of an existing dog park; Moderately well served	Equal distance from other dog parks in unserved area of City				
Highest Score Attainable - 45 points; Minimal Score for Consideration - 27 points; Eliminate as Possibility <27 points					Total Score		
Summary Comments:							






REPORT NUMBER CAO 2021-09	DOCUMENT NAME Appendix 3
PROJECT Off-Leash Dog Park	MAP TITLE KTH Park Suitability Analysis
<b>LEGEND</b> <div><div></div> Park Boundary</div> <div><div></div> Proposed Dog Park Footprint</div>	
<div><div><div>N</div><div>E</div><div>S</div><div>W</div></div><div>0 5 10 20 30 40 50</div><div>Meters</div></div>	
<b>Proposed Dog Park Statistics</b> Area in Acres: 0.85 Area in Square Feet: 37,650	
<b>Suitability Analysis for KTH Park</b> <b>LANDSCAPE/TERRAIN:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Proposed dog park surface is grass</li><li>- Existing residential within 20 meters of dog park, consider potential for barking dogs and smell from waste receptacles to disrupt residents</li><li>- Existing baseball diamond outfield within 20 meters of proposed dog park, consider impact hazard created by baseballs</li><li>- Existing cricket pitch area within 40 meters of proposed dog park, consider impact hazard created by cricket balls</li><li>- Existing public washrooms adjacent to parking area</li></ul> <b>SAFETY:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- An existing baseball diamond and cricket pitch may result in users coming within close proximity to the proposed dog park, consider risk of dog bites through fence</li></ul> <b>ACCESS:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Centrally located in south-end of town</li><li>- Proposed dog park can be accessed from both the KTH Park entrance (northeast driveway) and Simon Street Park via the southwest pathway</li><li>- Existing sidewalks and pathways provide safe walking routes to the park</li><li>- Existing parking area has a large capacity</li></ul> <b>DESIGN:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Proposed dog park is rectangular in shape in order to maximize distance between existing residential and the proposed dog park</li><li>- The rectangular shape is widened at the south end allowing for both a small and large dog section to have ample space</li></ul> <b>EXISTING USE:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Existing soccer field at site of proposed dog park would be eliminated</li></ul>	
<div><div><div><div>A People Place. A Change of Pace</div><div>SHELBURNE</div><div>ONTARIO, CANADA</div></div></div></div>	







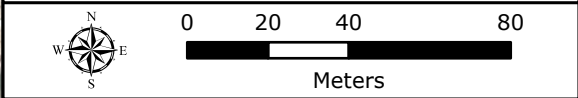
REPORT NUMBER CAO 2021-09	DOCUMENT NAME Appendix 4
PROJECT Off-Leash Dog Park	MAP TITLE Simon Street Park Suitability Analysis
<b>LEGEND</b> <div><div></div> Park Boundary</div> <div><div></div> Proposed Dog Park Footprint</div>	
<div><div><div>N</div><div>E</div><div>S</div><div>W</div></div><div>0 5 10 20 30</div><div>Meters</div></div>	
<p align="center"><u>Proposed Dog Park Statistics</u></p> <p>Area in Acres: 0.75 Area in Square Feet: 33,095</p> <p align="center"><u>Suitability Analysis for Simon Street Park</u></p> <p><b>LANDSCAPE/TERRAIN:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Proposed dog park surface is grass with a light westerly slope</li><li>- Existing residential within 50 meters of dog park, consider potential for barking dogs and smell from waste receptacles to disrupt residents</li></ul> <p><b>SAFETY:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- An existing nearby play structure may result in children and their guardians coming in close proximity to the proposed dog park, consider risk of dog bites through fence</li></ul> <p><b>ACCESS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Centrally located in south-end of town</li><li>- Existing sidewalks and pathways provide safe walking routes to the park</li><li>- Existing parking area has limited capacity</li></ul> <p><b>DESIGN:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Proposed dog park is rectangular in shape in order to fit between the Besley Drain and an existing large hill</li><li>- The rectangular shape causes both the small and large dog sections to be long enough for dogs to run, but with limited width</li></ul> <p><b>EXISTING USE:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Existing large hill (east of proposed dog park) is a popular sledding location and would be blocked once the proposed dog park was constructed</li></ul>	
<div><div><div><div>A People Place. A Change of Pace</div><div>SHELBURNE</div><div>ONTARIO, CANADA</div></div></div></div>	





REPORT NUMBER	CAO 2021-09	DOCUMENT NAME	Appendix 5
PROJECT	Off-Leash Dog Park	MAP TITLE	Greenwood Park Suitability Analysis

LEGEND	
	Park Boundary
	Proposed Dog Park Footprint



<b>Proposed Dog Park Statistics</b>
Area in Acres: 0.86
Area in Square Feet: 37,800

Suitability Analysis for Greenwood Park

- LANDSCAPE/TERRAIN:
- Proposed dog park surface is grass
  - Existing residential within 50 meters of dog park, consider potential for barking dogs and smell from waste receptacles to disrupt residents
  - Existing helipad within 60 meters of dog park, consider potential for helicopters to frighten dogs resulting in unsafe conditions

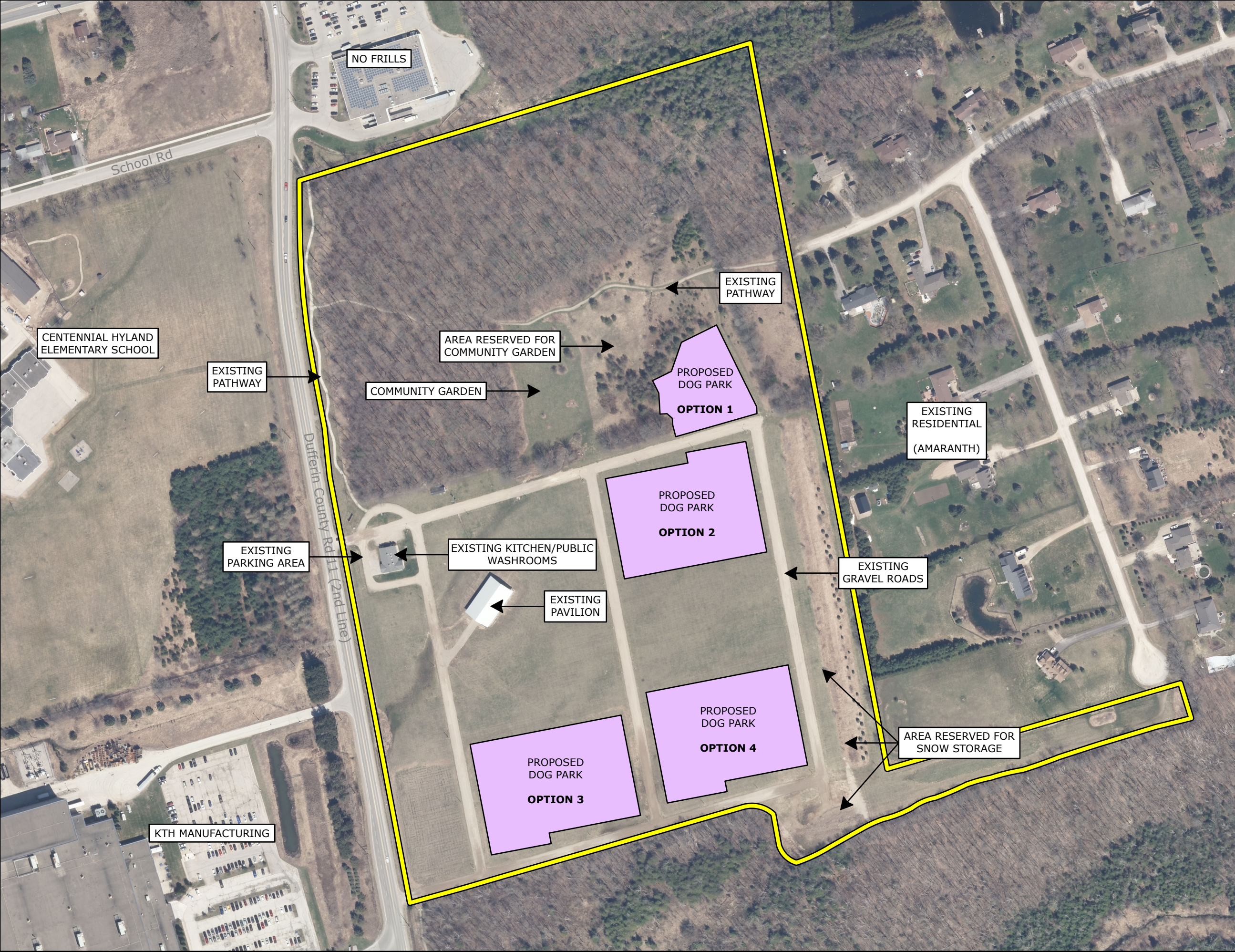
- SAFETY:
- Limited vehicle access to the dog park in emergency situation, closest road is Rintoul Crescent or the Wastewater Treatment Facility driveway (private)

- ACCESS:
- Centrally located in town
  - Existing sidewalks and pathways provide safe walking routes to the park, but do not lead to the proposed dog park
  - Existing parking areas have large capacity but are not close to the proposed dog park

- DESIGN:
- Proposed dog park is rectangular in shape in order to fit between the existing hill (adjacent to northwest) and existing trees (adjacent to south)
  - The rectangular shape allows both the small and large dog sections to be long enough for dogs to run

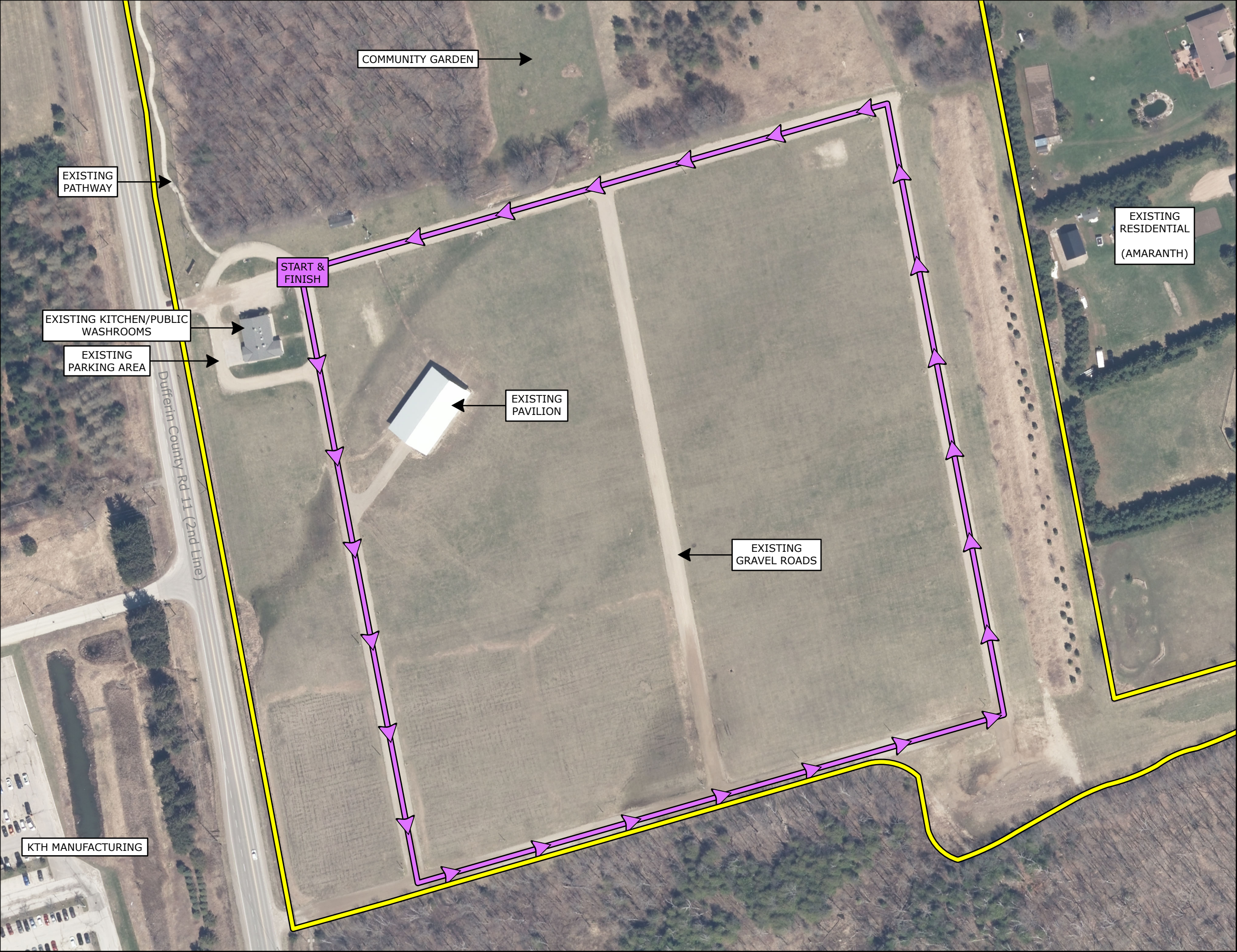
- EXISTING USE:
- Four mini soccer pitches located at the site of the proposed dog park would be eliminated
  - Existing hill (adjacent to proposed dog park) is likely a sledding location and would be partially blocked






REPORT NUMBER	CAO 2021-09	DOCUMENT NAME	Appendix 6
PROJECT	Off-Leash Dog Park	MAP TITLE	Fiddle Park Suitability Analysis
LEGEND			
<div><div></div> Park Boundary</div> <div><div></div> Proposed Dog Park Footprint</div>			
<div><div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div><div>0204080120</div><div>Meters</div></div>			
Proposed Dog Park Statistics			
OPTION 1			
Area in Acres: 0.86			
Area in Square Feet: 37,800			
OPTION 2 (includes parking area)			
Area in Acres: 1.95			
Area in Square Feet: 85,000			
OPTION 3 (includes parking area)			
Area in Acres: 2.00			
Area in Square Feet: 90,000			
OPTION 4 (includes parking area)			
Area in Acres: 1.95			
Area in Square Feet: 85,000			
Suitability Analysis for Fiddle Park			
LANDSCAPE/TERRAIN:			
<div>- Option 1 is currently a natural area consisting of plants, weeds, and shrubbery which would require clearing</div> <div>- Options 2, 3, and 4 have a grass surface</div> <div>- Options 1, 2, and 4 have a slight westerly slope</div> <div>- Existing residential within 50 meters of options 1, 2, and 4, consider potential for barking dogs and smell from waste receptacles to disrupt residents</div>			
SAFETY:			
<div>- Various events are held in Fiddle Park annually, consider risk of event attendees, such as children, approaching a dog park fence and being bitten</div>			
ACCESS:			
<div>- Located in far south-east of town, the park is not easily accessed without a vehicle</div> <div>- Existing pathways provide walking routes throughout the park, but do not provide a controlled crossing over County Road 11</div> <div>- Existing parking area has limited capacity, a dedicated parking area would need to be constructed for each option to ensure vehicles do not park on the existing gravel roads</div>			
DESIGN:			
<div>- Each dog park is square in shape allowing for equally spacious small and large dog sections</div>			
EXISTING USE:			
<div>- Several events are held in the park annually and may be impeded by the construction of a dog park</div> <div>- Area adjacent to option 1 on the north side is reserved for any Community Garden activities</div>			







REPORT NUMBER	DOCUMENT NAME
CAO 2021-09	Appendix 7
PROJECT	MAP TITLE
Off-Leash Dog Park	Fiddle Park Walking Loop

LEGEND

 Park Boundary

 Walking Loop

 0 25 50 75  
Meters

Walking Loop Information

Length in Kilometers: 1.0

Surface Material: Gravel

Gravel Road Width in Meters: 8.0

