

## **DOG PARK STUDY: An Evaluation of the Need for Dog Parks in the Unincorporated Areas of Los Angeles County**

### **Purpose**

A dog off-leash area is a designated enclosed space specifically designed for use by dogs and their guardians for off-leash recreation, socialization, and exercise. In order to meet the growing demand for dog off-leash areas or dog parks, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors approved a motion on December 17, 2019, directing the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) to complete a Dog Park Study to evaluate the need for dog parks in the unincorporated areas of the County.

In response to the motion, DPR has conducted research, consulted with key County departments and stakeholders, and prepared this report which: summarizes information on dog parks from the 2016 Los Angeles Countywide Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment; describes existing and planned dog parks; discusses the County's Park Design Guidelines and Standards in relation to best management practices and standards for dog parks; and offers various recommendations to address the need for dog parks in the unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County.

### **Background**

The number of dog parks is growing faster than any other type of urban park in the U.S. According to the 2019 City Park Facts report by The Trust for Public Land<sup>1</sup>, parks where dogs can roam freely off-leash are the fastest-growing segment of urban parks. Since 2009, the largest 100 U.S. cities saw a 74% increase in dog parks<sup>2</sup>. Dog owners are increasingly seeking facilities to safely interact with their pets in the same way that other groups engage in active recreation, such as baseball, softball, basketball, skateboarding, tennis, equestrian, and other recreational activities.

Currently, the Crescenta Valley Dog Off-Leash Area is the only such facility operated and maintained by DPR in Los Angeles County. Located at Crescenta Valley Community Regional Park, this 1.5-acre fenced facility was approved by the Board on October 12, 2010, as a pilot project. This dog off-leash area is well-used and has been positively received by many park patrons and neighbors.

On July 6, 2016, the Board approved and adopted the Los Angeles Countywide Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment, a study prepared to document and better understand the recreational needs of County residents as well as the quantity and quality of park infrastructure throughout the County. As part of the public engagement process, many residents identified dog parks as high-priority park projects in their communities.

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<sup>1</sup> The Trust for Public Land. 2019 City Park Facts. Washington, DC: Center for City Park Excellence; 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Playcore. Unleashed: Off-leash Dog Park Design Trends & Planning Tips. Wisconsin: Playcore, Inc; 2019.

On April 18, 2017, the Board approved an amendment to Title 17, Parks, Beaches, and Other Public Areas Ordinance of the Los Angeles County Code, Chapter 17.04, Parks and Recreation Areas, to allow establishment and regulation of dog off-leash areas within unincorporated areas of the County (see Appendix A). The amendment process included:

- A review of current County ordinance to determine which codes need to be updated;
- Research of ordinances of other cities and counties with existing Dog Off-Leash areas; and
- Collaboration with DPR field staff, County Counsel, the Department of Beaches and Harbors, and the Department of Animal Care and Control, to review and revise Title 17.

With this amendment, it became legal for dogs to be off-leash in designated dog off-leash areas within the unincorporated areas of the County.

### **Benefits of Dog Parks**

A dog is often known as "a man's best friend" and dogs make a difference in their owners' lives. Dog parks offer various health, well-being, social, and community benefits, as detailed in a recent report on dog parks called *Unleashed: Off-leash Dog Park Design Trends & Planning Tips* by Playcore. Dogs have been linked to reduced occurrences of psychological conditions, including depression, stress and grief<sup>3</sup>. Dog parks are important outlets for humans as they provide recreational opportunities and bring together dog lovers of all ages and socio-economic status<sup>4</sup>.

In recent years, there has been a growing body of evidence that associates dogs with physical, mental, and social dimensions of human health. Studies have shown that dogs can make people feel motivated to exercise. Data from local surveys suggest that the same holds true in L.A. County. Specifically, responses from the Built-Environment Survey conducted by the Veterinary Public Health Program (VPH) of the L.A. County Department of Public Health in 2014 showed that over half (54%) of pet owners felt their dog motivated them to walk<sup>5</sup>.

Dog parks may provide a safe place for older people or people with disabilities who may not be able to walk their dogs. Dog parks also provide areas where dogs can exercise and run freely while their owners socialize. In addition, spending time with their dogs at the dog park reinforces the bond between owners and their dogs.

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<sup>3</sup> Wood LJ, Giles-Corti B, Bulara MK, Bosch DA. More than a furry companion: The ripple effect of companion animals on neighborhood interactions and sense of community; *Society and Animals*. 2007;15(1):43.

<sup>4</sup> Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. Healthy Pets, Healthy Families Initiative. California: A Publication of the 2020 Healthy Pets, Healthy Families Coalition; 2014.

<sup>5</sup> Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. Obesity Report: 2020 Healthy Pets Healthy Families Initiative; 2014.

Dog parks can facilitate socialization between dogs and provide an outlet for dogs who live in small spaces or have owners who work long hours. They allow dogs to get ample off-leash exercise and social activity with other dogs under the supervision of their owners. According to one study, owning a dog indicated a potential health improving average effect of 22 minutes of additional time spent walking and 2,760 extra steps per day<sup>6</sup>.

There is also evidence that supports the health effects of dogs on older populations, who may lack the motivation to be physically active, often feeling sluggish, unproductive, and even isolated. Since dogs thrive on consistency and structure in daily life, they depend on their owners to be walked and exercised. Dogs can help a person to find purpose, stay safe, and be independent. In addition, dog parks can facilitate socialization between various breeds. They can also be a wonderful outlet for adolescent dogs that have lots of energy and no place to release it.

### **Current Inventory of County Dog Off-Leash Areas**

#### Crescenta Valley Dog Off-Leash Area (Supervisorial District 5)

Currently, the Crescenta Valley Dog Off-Leash Area is the only such facility operated and maintained by DPR in Los Angeles County. Located in the northwest section of the 32-acre Crescenta Valley Community Regional Park, this 1.5-acre fenced facility was approved by the Board of Supervisors on October 12, 2010, as a pilot project. It includes: separate areas for small and large dogs; dog hose-off areas; walkways; drinking fountains and water faucets for the dogs; decomposed granite and cedar chip surfacing; ADA parking; a six-foot-high chain-link fence; benches; shade coverings; and trash receptacles.



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<sup>6</sup> Dall PM, Ellis SLH, Ellis BM et al. The influence of dog ownership on objective on objective measures of free-living physical activity and sedentary behavior in community-dwelling older adults: A longitudinal case-controlled study. BMC Public Health. 2017.



Photos from Crescenta Valley Dog Park

As a part of the development of the Crescenta Valley Dog Off-Leash Area, DPR also established departmental policy and procedures for dog off-leash areas (see Appendix B), which include guidelines on location selection, design features, maintenance and operational practices, and recommended enforcement.

In order to establish this pilot project and the policy and procedures, DPR consulted with various other County departments, including Animal Care and Control and Sheriff's as well as a number of industry experts. DPR also researched and reviewed the rules and regulations that selected cities and counties have in place for dog off-leash areas to identify best management practices.

#### Department of Beaches and Harbors operated facilities

A dog run is typically a linear space where dogs can exercise and play off-leash in a controlled environment under the supervision of their owners. Dog runs are usually smaller than dog parks and are not separated into distinct areas for large and small dogs. The Department of Beaches and Harbors (DBH) currently operates two small enclosed dog runs at Dockweiler Beach: one at the entrance to the Recreational Vehicle (R.V.) park and another at the end of the R.V. park. DBH plans to double the size of the dog run at the entrance and remove the one at the end of the R.V. park.

Within Marina del Rey (Supervisorial District 4), there is a small dog run at Burton Chace Park and another one may be added at Yvonne B. Burke Park. According to DBH, dogs are prohibited by Code on County beaches whether on or off-leash.

### **Planned Dog Parks**

To address the growing demand for dog parks, there are two dog off-leash areas planned for development within the unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County.

#### Schabarum Regional Park Dog Park (Supervisorial District 4)

On February 11, 2020, the Board approved the construction of a new dog park to be located at Peter F. Schabarum Regional Park, a 575-acre facility with 75 acres of developed parkland. Schabarum Regional Park is suitable for the development of a dog off-leash area due to its size, availability of open lawn area, proximity to the intersection of two major streets, Colima Road and Azusa Avenue, and convenient location for residents in both the unincorporated communities of Hacienda Heights and Rowland Heights. It should be noted that this dog off-leash area is being situated at a location where it would not affect other recreational activities at the park and would not displace other recreational amenities.

No such facility currently exists in proximity to the Schabarum Regional Park as the closest dog off-leash area is over eight miles away. The amenity will provide a much-needed service for a rising demographic of dog owners wanting a secure space for dog socialization and play.

The proposed dog off-leash area consists of the development of a 0.75-acre dog off-leash area that includes two fenced-in dog areas (one for large dogs and one for small dogs), along with additional amenities such as drinking fountains, shaded seating areas, landscaping, benches, and trash receptacles. Code-required ADA upgrades to the existing parking area will also be provided. The total project budget is \$1.4 million.

#### Earvin Magic Johnson Recreation Area Dog Park (Supervisorial District 2)

A new dog off-leash area is proposed to be developed at the Earvin Magic Johnson Recreation Area, which is currently undergoing major renovations in accordance with the Master Plan that was first adopted in 2016 and revised in 2018 and 2019. The proposed dog off-leash area is 0.75-acres in size. The total proposed budget for the project is approximately \$800,000.

### **2016 Countywide Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Summary**

According to the 2016 Countywide Parks Needs Assessment, there is only one dog park per 100,000 residents in Los Angeles County. This is significantly below the national average of 3.6 dog parks per 100,000 residents. As part of the Parks Needs Assessment, dog parks were on the lists of top ten priority park projects for 13 unincorporated study areas as shown below:

<b>Study Area Name</b>	<b>Supervisory District (S.D.)</b>	<b>Park Need Level</b>
Unincorporated Acton	5	Very low
Unincorporated Angeles National Forest-Sylmar	3	Moderate
Unincorporated Altadena	5	Low
Unincorporated Castaic	5	Moderate
Unincorporated Compton	2	Low
Unincorporated El Monte-Monrovia	5	Low
Unincorporated Hacienda Heights	4	Low
Unincorporated Hawthorne-Alondra Park	2	Very High
Unincorporated Ladera Heights	2	Very low
Unincorporated San Pasqual-East Pasadena	5	Very low
Unincorporated Stevenson Ranch-Newhall Ranch	5	Very low
Unincorporated Sunrise Village-South San Gabriel	5	Low
Unincorporated West Rancho Dominguez	2	Very low

Dog parks were identified either to be added at existing parks or to be created at new locations. In addition, since the completion of the Countywide Parks Needs Assessment in 2016, DPR has received numerous requests for the development of new dog parks in some of the above study areas as well as several other unincorporated communities, including (but not limited to):

<b>Study Area Name</b>	<b>Supervisory District (S.D.)</b>	<b>Park Need Level</b>
Unincorporated East Los Angeles	1	Very high
Unincorporated Florence-Firestone	2	Very high
Unincorporated Walnut Park	1	Very high
Unincorporated Willowbrook	2	High

**County Park Design Guidelines in relation to Best Management Practices and Standards for Dog Parks**

The County's Park Design Guidelines and Standards document includes a section on dog off-leash areas (see Appendix C), which addresses the following topics: spatial considerations, amenities, water source, dog waste disposal, surface, fencing, entry gates, runoff mitigation, signage, and additional amenities.

DPR has reviewed and researched best management practices and standards for dog parks from other jurisdictions, as well as various publications. Specifically, DPR staff examined codes, rules and regulations, and policies from the following cities in Southern California:

- City of Long Beach
- City of Los Angeles

- City of Pasadena
- City of Santa Monica
- City of Upland

DPR has incorporated many of the best practices from these cities and other jurisdictions into its Park Design Guidelines and Standards. As a result, some of the experts consulted as part of this study indicated that the document provides helpful and sound guidance on the design of dog off-leash areas. Nevertheless, DPR may need to update the Park Design Guidelines and Standards in the future to address the latest trends in dog park design and evolving issues like surfacing and the development of standalone dog off-leash areas based on the following feedback from County and industry experts:

- **Surfacing:** Public Health experts recommend the use of grass to better protect dogs' paws when it is hot outside, especially in the northern portion of the County which gets unbearably hot during the summer months. Grass may also be a superior surface option in comparison to decomposed granite and cedar chips to control dust and mud. However, many dog parks in the L.A. area use decomposed granite with a wax polymer to maintain permeability and mitigate the "heat island" effect. Also, cedar chips have natural repellent qualities, helping to repel insects, bacteria, and fungi. In addition, grass cannot be used in those areas of the park, which need to be ADA accessible. DPR will continue to dialogue with Public Health experts on this issue and monitor the surfacing at Crescenta Valley Dog Off-Leash Area, which uses decomposed granite and cedar chips.
- **Setback from Residential Areas:** There were previously some internal discussions about establishing a certain setback to ensure adequate separation or a buffer between a dog off-leash area and nearby residences. County and industry experts advised DPR not to adopt a general or one-size-fits-all setback requirement due to the vastness and diversity of the County's unincorporated communities, which include urban, suburban, and rural areas. Thus, their recommendation is to site and design dog off-leash areas on a case by case basis, depending upon the characteristics of the neighborhood, neighborhood input, and geographic context.
- **Standalone Dog Off-Leash Areas:** It is not always desirable or appropriate to add a dog off-leash area to an existing park. There can be issues with setbacks as mentioned above and "over-amenitization" which refers to the situation that is created when there are too many amenities at a park. When a park is over-amenitized, it lacks open space for passive recreation and quiet enjoyment. Thus, staff recommend also seeking opportunities to develop standalone dog off-leash areas.
- **Conflict of Use:** In determining the appropriate location for a new dog off-leash area, conflict of use issues must be considered. Specifically, DPR should not replace an existing park amenity with a dog off-leash area or create a new dog off-leash area at a location that would adversely impact adjacent uses. For example,

for safety and other reasons, it would be incompatible to have a dog off-leash area situated adjacent to playgrounds. Thus, there needs to be sitting considerations for dog off-leash areas to ensure they are away from active and passive recreation amenities for public safety.

*Unleashed* is a recent publication that includes sections on designing a high-quality dog park; maintaining and sustaining dog parks; planning and community engagement strategies; and case studies. With the exception of maintenance issues, many of the report's suggestions have already been incorporated into the dog off-leash area section of the County's Park Design Guidelines and Standards.

Public Health experts also recommended that dog off-leash areas be cleaned and maintained daily due to potential contamination risk of soil from dogs' feces.

### **Park Classifications and Over-amenitization of Existing Parks**

The County operates and maintains a wide variety of parks and recreational facilities, which fall under two systems: local park system and regional park system, as summarized in the table on the following page.

Based on the County's park classifications and the typical size and design considerations of a dog off-leash area, DPR has determined that such an amenity may generally be allowed in neighborhood parks, community parks, regional community parks, and regional parks. However, based on staff experience and input from experts, it is important to evaluate the suitability of each potential location on a case-by-case basis given the uniqueness of each park.

Also, it is not always desirable or appropriate to add a dog off-leash area to an existing park because many of the County's parks are already over-amenitized or the adjacency of other active or passive recreational amenities, resulting in a lack of open space for passive recreation and quiet enjoyment. Thus, as part of its land acquisition strategy, DPR is proactively seeking other opportunities like utility rights-of-way, freeway-adjacent lands (that are owned but not used by Caltrans), and other available properties to accommodate amenities like dog off-leash areas.

LOCAL PARK SYSTEM				
FACILITY	ACRES PER THOUSAND POPULATION	SUGGESTED ACREAGE*	SERVICE AREA	TYPICAL PARK FEATURES / AMENITIES
Community Park	4 / 1,000	10 - 20 acres	1 - 2 mile	<p><b>Passive Park Amenities</b> including but not limited to: informal open play areas, children's play apparatus, family and group picnic areas with overhead shelters, barbecues</p> <p><b>Active Sports Activities</b> including but not limited to: lighted sports fields, basketball courts and tennis courts</p> <p><b>Additional amenities</b> may include: aquatics complex, skate park, arena soccer, rollerhockey, community gardens and dog parks</p> <p><b>Park Facilities</b> including but not limited to: public restrooms, concession building, community buildings, maintenance building and on-site parking and informational kiosks</p>
Neighborhood Park	4 / 1,000	3 - 10 acres	1/2 mile	<p><b>Passive Park Amenities</b> including but not limited to: informal open play areas, children's play apparatus, family picnic areas with overhead shelters, barbecues</p> <p><b>Active Sports Activities</b> including but not limited to: practice sports fields, basketball, tennis and volleyball courts</p> <p><b>Park Facilities</b> including but not limited to: public restroom, on-site parking and informational kiosk</p>
Pocket Park	4 / 1,000	less than 3 acres	1/4 mile	<p><b>Passive Park Amenities</b> including but not limited to: picnic areas and seating areas</p> <p><b>Active Park Amenities</b> including but not limited to: children's play apparatus</p>
Park Node	4 / 1,000	1/4 acre or less	no service radius area	<p><b>Varies - can include:</b> plazas, rest areas, playgrounds, landmarks and public art installations</p>
REGIONAL PARK SYSTEM				
FACILITY	ACRES PER THOUSAND POPULATION	SUGGESTED ACREAGE*	SERVICE AREA	TYPICAL PARK FEATURES / AMENITIES
Community Regional Park	6 / 1,000	20 - 100 acres	up to 20 miles	<p><b>Passive Park Amenities</b> including but not limited to: informal open play areas, children's play apparatus, family and group picnic areas with overhead shelters and barbecues</p> <p><b>Active Sports Activities</b> including but not limited to: lighted sports fields, basketball courts and tennis courts</p> <p><b>Additional features</b> may include one or more of the following features: multiple sports facilities, aquatics center, fishing lake, community building and gymnasium and outstanding views and vistas.</p> <p><b>Park Facilities</b> including but not limited to: public restrooms, concession building, maintenance building, informational kiosks and on-site parking</p>
Regional Park	6 / 1,000	greater than 100 acres	25+ acres	<p><b>Passive Park Amenities</b> including but not limited to: group picnic areas with overhead shelters and barbecues</p> <p><b>Additional amenities</b> may include one or more of the following features: lakes, wetlands, auditoriums, water bodies and campgrounds, water bodies for swimming, fishing and boating, and sports fields</p>
Special Use Facility	6 / 1,000	no size criteria	no assigned service radius area	<p><b>Generally single purpose facilities.</b> Uses can include passive features such as: wilderness parks, nature preserves, botanical gardens and nature centers</p> <p><b>Active uses can include:</b> performing arts, water parks, aquatic facilities, skate parks, golf driving ranges and golf courses</p>

## Operations and Maintenance

Currently, there is only one dog off-leash area operated by DPR. To ensure best practices for maintenance of future dog off-leash areas, DPR should incorporate maintenance considerations into an operations and maintenance manual.

The level and frequency of maintenance depend on a variety of factors, such as the site characteristics, amenities, surfacing, and usage. *Unleashed* lists the following maintenance considerations:

- Tending to surfacing
- Mowing grass
- Hand weeding/tending to the landscaping
- Removing dog waste
- Spraying/hosing down equipment, furnishings, trash receptacles
- Refilling disposable waste bags and hand sanitizer
- Emptying trash receptacles
- Inspecting fencing for damage
- Tending to bacterial growth on fencing
- Inspecting gates and locking mechanisms
- Inspecting equipment and amenities

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, DPR should implement various restrictions and protocols for the maintenance and monitoring of dog off-leash areas, including requiring dog owners to wear face coverings and maintain physical distancing of six (6) feet.

In addition, DPR should encourage and support the formation of friends groups to provide support to dog off-leash areas, including fundraising or management of volunteers. Such groups can provide support with programs, events and activities, minor maintenance, and improvement projects.

### **Need for a Comprehensive Countywide Dog Park Needs Assessment**

Based on the costs of the 2016 Countywide Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment and the preliminary budget of the Regional and Rural Recreation Needs Assessment currently undertaken by DPR, staff estimate that a comprehensive Countywide Dog Park Needs Assessment could cost up to approximately \$1 million. This would be roughly equivalent to the cost of developing a new 0.75-acre dog off-leash area at an existing park.

A Dog Park Needs Assessment would be costly, time-consuming, and unnecessary. Specifically, DPR has already collected a significant amount of information from previous studies, including the 2010 Pilot Study, the Dog Off-Leash Area Policy and Procedures, the 2016 Countywide Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment, the 2017 County Code Update for Dog Off-Leash Areas, and the Park Design Guidelines and Standards. Using these studies and documents as a foundation, the County has the necessary factual support to move forward to developing additional dog off-leash areas on a case-by-case basis at appropriate locations.

### **Recommendations**

Based on our research and consultation with County and industry experts, DPR offers the following recommendations:

1. **Make existing County parks and trails more dog-friendly.** This can be done by placing doggy bags, trash cans, and water fountains (for both humans and dogs) along walking paths in parks and at trailheads. Adding such amenities would help dog owners walk their dogs and enjoy existing parks and trails while the dogs are leashed. A number of experts recommended this as a key first step, given that it would take some time and funding to develop new dog off-leash areas.
2. **Update the dog off-leash areas section of the Park Design Guidelines and Standards as needed.** The Park Design Guidelines and Standards document provides helpful and sound guidance on the design of dog off-leash areas. Nevertheless, DPR may need to update it to address the latest trends in dog park design and evolving issues such as the development of standalone dog off-leash areas, setbacks from residential areas, and surfacing based upon feedback from County and industry experts.
3. **Allocate and secure funding for the implementation of dog off-leash areas, rather than undergoing a large-scale, comprehensive Countywide Dog Parks Needs Assessment.** Such an Assessment would be costly, time-consuming, and unnecessary, given the information that has already been compiled.
4. **As funding becomes available, move forward with the creation of additional dog off-leash areas, with prioritization given to those projects located in high and very high need unincorporated areas of the County to meet the growing demand.** As part of the assessment process for new dog parks, DPR recommends prioritizing sites in those unincorporated Study Areas which identified dog parks as top ten park projects from the 2016 Parks Needs Assessment and those communities from which DPR has received requests for the development of new dog parks.
5. **Prepare an operation and maintenance manual for dog off-leash areas.** To ensure the proper and regular maintenance of dog off-leash areas, DPR should prepare a manual on operation and maintenance issues. The development of this manual should be informed by the experience of operating and maintaining the dog off-leash area at Crescenta Valley Dog Off-Leash Area, information and recommendations from recent studies like *Unleashed*, and input from County and industry experts.
6. **Consider establishing friends groups to provide support to dog off-leash areas, including maintenance, fundraising, or volunteer management.** Such groups can provide support with programs, events and activities, ongoing maintenance, and improvement projects. In addition, through these efforts, the volunteers can create a sense of ownership of the dog off-leash areas.
7. **Identify potential land acquisition opportunities, such as utility corridors and Caltrans land.** As part of its land acquisition strategy, DPR is proactively seeking opportunities like utility rights-of-way, freeway-adjacent lands (that are owned but

not used by Caltrans), and other available properties to accommodate needed park amenities such as dog off-leash areas

### **Consultation with Key Departments and Stakeholders**

As part of this study, the following County experts were consulted:

- Allison Cardona, Deputy Director, Department of Animal Care and Control
- Karen Ehnert, Chief Veterinarian, Department of Public Health
- Tamerin Scott, Public Health Veterinarian, Department of Public Health
- Padma Jones, Epidemiology Analyst, Department of Public Health
- Cesar Espinosa, Planning Specialist, Department of Beaches and Harbors

DPR also reached out to and conducted telephone interviews with the following key stakeholders and industry experts:

- Sabrina Ashjian, California State Director, Humane Society
- Kaylee Hawkins, Director, Pacific Regions, Best Friends Animal Society
- Susan Riggs, Senior Director of State Legislation, American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)

These experts provided valuable and insightful input which has been incorporated into this study, including its recommendations.

## APPENDIX A: COUNTY DOG OFF-LEASH AREA ORDINANCE

An ordinance amending Title 17 – Parks, Beaches, and other Public Areas of the Los Angeles County Code to permit unleashed dogs in designated Dog Off-Leash Areas and to establish rules and regulations for Dog Off-Leash Areas.

The Board of Supervisors of the County of Los Angeles ordains as follows:

**SECTION** Section 17.04.400 is hereby amended to read as follows:

**17.04.400 Animals—Prohibited ~~w~~When.**

Except as provided in Section 17.04.410 of this code, A person shall not bring into a park any cattle, horse, mule, goat, sheep, swine, dog, cat, or other animals of any kind ~~except as hereafter specifically provided or as otherwise~~ other than dogs in designated Dog Off-Leash Areas, as permitted by the ~~d~~Director.

**SECTION** Section 17.04.410 is hereby amended to read as follows:

**17.04.410 Dogs and ~~c~~Cats ~~p~~Permitted ~~w~~When.**

A person may bring and maintain, in any park exclusive of golf courses, a dog or cat if such dog or cat is kept on a leash or chain no more than six feet in length and under full control of its owner or ~~eustodian, or upon written permission of the Director when required for authorized park programs~~ person responsible for the animal, or is confined in a vehicle, tent, trailer, enclosure, or other structure allowed by park rules and in accordance with applicable State law. Dogs are permitted unleashed in designated Dog Off-Leash Areas

**SECTION** Section 17.04.411 is hereby added to read as follows:

**17.04.411 Dog Off-Leash Area Defined.**

A Dog Off-Leash Area is a fenced dog exercise area within a County park, or portion of a County park, permitted by the Director. When using a Dog Off-Leash Area, a person responsible for a dog shall comply with all posted Dog Off-Leash Area Rules and Regulations.

**SECTION** Section 17.04.412 is hereby added to read as follows:

**COUNTY DOG OFF-LEASH AREA RULES AND REGULATIONS**

According to Section 17.04.412 of the County code, the dog off-leash areas rules and regulations are as follows:

- A. Dogs are not permitted to be in the Dog Off-Leash Area except during the hours that it is open, as posted on the premises.
- B. The Dog Off-Leash Area shall be closed as posted for maintenance.
- C. Dogs must be accompanied by persons responsible for the dog who are 18 years old or older. A person responsible for the dog is legally responsible and liable for any injury caused by the dog.

- D. Children under the age of six years old are not permitted in the Dog Off-Leash Areas. Children, 6 to 17 years of age must be accompanied and supervised by an adult (18 years of age or older) while in the Dog Off-Leash Areas.
- E. Dogs under the age of four months are not permitted to use the Dog Off-Leash Areas.
- F. Dogs not displaying a valid and current County- or city-issued dog license are not permitted to use the Dog Off-Leash Areas. Dogs must be current on vaccinations and licensing. Unlicensed dogs or dogs with communicable diseases are not allowed at any time.
- G. Dogs that are sick or injured are not permitted in Dog Off-Leash Areas.
- H. All dogs using Dog Off-Leash Areas must be neutered or spayed.
- I. No more than three dogs are allowed per person responsible in attendance inside the Dog Off-Leash Area.
- J. Dogs exhibiting aggressive or other behavior that jeopardizes human or animal safety are not permitted and are to be immediately removed.
- K. Any dog(s) which has been declared vicious or potentially dangerous, pursuant to Section 10.37 et seq. of the County Code, or any dog that has been declared "vicious," "dangerous," "potentially dangerous," or a "public nuisance," or an attack dog, guard dog or sentry dog, as defined in Health and Safety Code section 121875 et seq., is not permitted to enter or remain.
- L. Nothing in this section shall prohibit law enforcement personnel from being accompanied by a trained police dog or military working dog at any County park.
- M. If a dog injures a person or another animal, the person responsible for the dog shall immediately provide his/her name and address and the dog owner's name and address, if different, as well as any insurance information requested by or on behalf of the injured person, or by any County employee and shall file a report with the County within five days.
- N. Large dogs (over 35 lbs.) are permitted only in designated large dog areas, and small dogs (under 35 lbs.) are permitted only in designated small dog areas.
- O. A person responsible for a dog shall remove dog feces and shall dispose of it in waste containers for that purpose. It is the responsibility of each person responsible for a dog(s) to supervise and clean up after his/her dog(s) to ensure a clean and orderly Dog Off-Leash Area.

- P. A person responsible for a dog must remain with his/her dog(s) in Dog Off-Leash Areas, must keep his/her dog(s) in sight at all times, and must keep his/her dog(s) under voice control at all times.
- Q. A person responsible for a dog must stop his/her dog(s) from digging. Any holes created by his/her dog(s) must be filled.
- R. A person responsible for a dog shall comply with all rules governing the parks and relevant parking regulations.
- S. When not secured within the enclosure of a Dog Off-Leash Area, every dog shall at all times be restrained by a leash no more than six feet in length, held in the hand of a person capable of controlling and actually controlling the dog.
- T. No person shall harass, tease, or incite any dog in any way in any Dog Off-Leash Area, including, but not limited to, verbal or physical gestures or throwing of objects.
- U. Dog Off-Leash Areas are non-smoking facilities. Smoking, including the use of electronic cigarette products, is prohibited in Dog Off-Leash Areas.
- V. No food (for people or dogs) is allowed in Dog Off-Leash Areas.
- W. No glass containers are allowed in Dog Off-Leash Areas.
- X. No toys (except toss toys, such as balls and frisbees) are allowed in Dog Off-Leash Areas.
- Y. Spiked collars on dogs are not permitted in any Dog Off-Leash Areas.
- Z. Bicycles, rollerblades, roller skates, skateboards, strollers, and similar items are not permitted in any Dog Off-Leash Areas. Wheelchairs and other aids for the disabled are permitted.
- AA. Dog trainers may not use any Dog Off-Leash Area to conduct their business.
- BB. No person shall play any team sport, including, but not limited to, football, baseball, soccer, rugby, and volleyball, within Dog Off-Leash Areas.
- CC. Anyone who abandons an animal anywhere, including a Dog Off-Leash Area, is subject to a \$500 fine and/or up to six months in jail (California Penal Code section 597s).
- DD. Use of Dog Off-Leash Areas by any person responsible for a dog shall constitute implied consent of that person to all regulations and shall constitute a

waiver of liability to the County and an agreement to protect, defend, indemnify, and hold harmless the County, its officials, and employees for any injury or damage caused by a dog within such Dog Off-Leash Area when the dog is not on a leash.

Other Regulations. The Director may approve additional administrative regulations relating to the use of any Dog Off-Leash Area not inconsistent with this chapter and shall cause those regulations to be posted prominently within the Dog Off-Leash Area.

## **APPENDIX B: DPR POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR DOG OFF-LEASH AREAS**

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION/PURPOSE**

1.1 The popularity of and need for dog off-leash areas has given rise to the development of many dog parks in numerous municipalities in the County of Los Angeles.

1.2 People in unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County have begun requesting dog park facilities in their communities.

1.3 The purpose of this Policy is to provide guidelines for design, operation and maintenance of dog off-leash areas in unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County.

1.4 This policy, used in conjunction with the Department's Dog Off-Leash Area Design Guidelines, encourages the selection and development of dog off-leash areas within the Department that meet the needs of the community, including dogs and their owners. The policy and guidelines ensure that recreational experiences at our facilities are enjoyable for everyone.

### **2.0 POLICY**

2.1 Provide Dog Off-Leash Areas (DOLAs), as feasible, given limited open space resources, to provide opportunities for off-leash exercise, socialization, interaction among owners, and to balance this use with other park uses to optimize park use by the greatest number of people.

2.2 Only County or city licensed dogs will be allowed in County DOLA facilities.

2.3 Require responsible behavior of dog owners in their use of park facilities including adherence to posted rules and regulations, and other County codes, including the leash law.

2.4 Be sensitive to adjacent land uses and the immediate community in selecting and operating DOLAs.

2.5 Develop relationships with local dog park volunteer groups or other community groups to support DOLAs to assist in monitoring, cleaning, fundraising, public education and raising awareness of DOLA rules and regulations.

2.6 Develop DOLA facilities that are designed using principles of sustainability, low impact development, and low maintenance including: water and energy conserving design, on site water retention, and sustainable products and materials, where possible.

2.7 Develop DOLA facilities that could be incorporated into a County disaster plan as facilities for household pets and service animals in the event of a major disaster or

emergency as required by the Federal Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards (PETS) Act.

2.8 The number and size of DOLAs within the Department will be a function of demand, available resources, and compatibility.

### **3.0 PROCEDURES**

3.1 All requests to establish off-leash areas will be in writing and referred to as the Deputy Director of the affected agency.

3.2 Agency staff will work with the Planning and Development Agency to prepare a map to identify the proposed site (as well as other potential County-owned sites in the area) for an off-leash area, and apply the basic criteria in relationship to existing park facilities, uses and setback requirements, noting non-compliance and compatibility issues.

3.3 The Agency Deputy Director will discuss the proposed site(s) and related issues with the Department's Director or designee.

3.4 If it is agreed that the proposed off-leash site is feasible, the proposal will be presented to the affected Board of Supervisor's (BOS) Office (Park Deputy and Deputy for the affected area), and a community meeting will be held to discuss the proposal.

3.5 If the community supports the off-leash site, the affected agency will work with the Budget and Fiscal Services Division and Planning and Development Agency to consider the proposal, noting funding sources and/or needs including labor, annual operating costs, planning, design and environmental fees and requirements. If Department staff determines that it is feasible and a funding source is available, or the community wishes to raise the funding necessary to develop the off-leash area, the proposed project will go forward for further review.

3.6 A second community meeting will be conducted to allow for community input and discussion of the issues associated with the development of the dog off-leash area and to prepare a draft environmental document to be circulated through government agencies and the public for review and comment.

3.7 A final environmental document will be prepared and a report and recommendation will be presented to the BOS for project approval.

### **4.0 GUIDELINES**

The following guidelines have been established for Dog Off-Leash Areas (DOLAs) based on a review of similar facilities in cities throughout the County of Los Angeles (County), as well as feedback and advice from experienced professionals. The purpose of these guidelines is to assist in the site selection, design, development, and operation of DOLAs in the County.

The key factors to be considered in selecting a DOLA in the Department are the distance from adjacent land uses, relationship to other recreational uses, size, and availability of parking and accessibility. If a proposed site does not meet the standards established in these guidelines, it may still be considered provided that it successfully passes the environmental review process and addresses any health and safety issues. Appropriate environmental clearances in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) are required.

## **LOCATION**

Designated Dog Off-Leash Areas shall:

1. Be far enough away from residential or commercial land use that the single-event sound of a dog bark would generally be perceived as a background sound or would be screened by traffic noise.
2. The size of the DOLA will reflect the amount of available land; however, the recommended minimum is one acre and should comprise an area for big dogs (min.75 ac.) and an area for small, timid, older or less mobile dogs (min. .25 ac).
3. Be accessible to disabled users.
4. Be situated on property that is not currently developed for recreational use and/or in areas of parks that are not heavily used for other recreational activities so as to reduce the potential for conflict.
5. Not displace another organized recreational use or unstructured use in a park given the County's limited park resources and need for active recreation and passive open space areas.

Have sufficient adjacent parking, preferably off-street, that does not require users to cross a street; curbside parking is less desirable but optional.

## **DESIGN FEATURES**

1. Install separate bullpen entrances for large and small dog areas with self-closing (double) gates located as far from residences as possible and as close to parking as possible.
2. Surfacing shall be low maintenance and require little or no irrigation. Decomposed granite (d.g.), cedar wood chips, and/or artificial turf designed specifically for dogs (K-9 Grass) are preferred choices, but consideration will be given to other low maintenance surfaces).

3. Install separate water sources for people and animals. No bowls or any containers are allowed where the communicable disease may transfer due to contact from previous dog's usage.

4. Provide seating and locate away from the perimeter of the off-leash area; this will discourage users from congregating at the perimeter where they are close to adjacent structures. No tables are allowed in the off-leash area.

5. Landscape buffer zones can be utilized to mitigate noise and provide a pleasant aesthetic environment separating off-leash areas from other park users. Security concerns must be taken into consideration when determining whether or not to use a visual landscape barrier.

6. It is recommended that off-leash areas maintain some separation from other recreational activities, if possible, and shall not be located immediately adjacent to any children's play areas.

7. Provide a hose-off area for the dogs. This is desirable, but not required.

8. Provide a six-foot-high minimum perimeter chain-link fence.

9. Include water faucets, drinking fountains (if possible), a means for feces disposal, garbage cans with bag liners, sufficient shade, and seating (benches).

10. Provide signage, including, but not limited to:

- DOLA Rules and Regulations
- Large dog and small dog area signs
- Educational sign briefly explaining sustainability and indicating the sustainable design elements in the dog park.

11. All features require jurisdictional approval.

## **MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONAL PRACTICES**

1. The primary conditions of off-leash areas that can affect nearby residents or other park users include:

- Noise from barking dogs, owners yelling and increased traffic.
- Unattractive park conditions, including erosion and damage to vegetation, and
- Odor from feces and urine.

These conditions shall be mitigated by design, maintenance and operational practices, or by modification and enforcement of regulations.

2. Designate an opening and closing time for off-leash areas.
3. Lock the off-leash area when it is closed.
4. Assign a closed time period during the week for maintenance. Also, the facility may be closed for renovation or due to inclement weather.
5. Provide an adequate number of covered trash cans with plastic liners and bags, scoopers, or shovels for dog waste.
6. Provide a means for dog waste disposal (shovels, dispensers with biodegradable bags), plastic bag dispenser box and/or a box for recycled plastic bags.

### **RECOMMENDED ENFORCEMENT**

It is well-established that self-enforcement efforts by off-leash area users are the key to successful operations. However, a combination of self-enforcement and coordination with the office of Public Safety and Department of Animal Care and Control is recommended to enforce regulations and laws.

1. Dog owners are required to comply with all posted rules and regulations.
2. Provide staff and/or volunteers to monitor the off-leash area during peak use periods.
3. Provide staff and/or volunteers to monitor the park at irregular intervals or during other peak periods.
4. The Los Angeles County Police and/or the Sheriff's Department will respond to staff requests for assistance and conduct periodic spot checks. The Department of Animal Care and Control will monitor the park at irregular intervals and will respond to staff requests for assistance.
5. All dogs are required to wear County or city license tags and, if required, an annual permit tag issued by DPR, when they are in the DOLA facilities as proof that they are current on their licenses and rabies vaccinations. Cite dog owners whose dogs are not wearing license tags or annual permits and deny entry to County DOLA facilities.

### **DOG OFF-LEASH AREA RULES AND REGULATIONS**

The rules and regulations shall include, but not be limited to the following text:

## **DOG OFF-LEASH AREA RULES AND REGULATIONS**

Welcome to the County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation Dog Off-Leash Area. Please abide by the following rules and regulations while you and your dog enjoy the facility.

1. The off-leash area will be open as posted.
2. The off-leash area is closed as posted for maintenance.
3. Dogs not displaying a County or city-issued dog license (or annual permit tag, if required) will not be permitted to use the facility and may be cited. Dogs must be current on vaccinations and licensing; unlicensed dogs or dogs with communicable diseases are not allowed on park premises at any time and may be cited.
4. Female dogs in any stage of heat are not permitted in the park.
5. It is the responsibility of each owner to supervise and clean up after his/her dog(s) to ensure a clean and orderly facility; dog defecation is to be immediately removed by the owner.
6. No smoking, eating, or toys (except toss toys such as balls and frisbees) are allowed in the off-leash area. This includes human or canine food, including snacks.
7. Aggressive dogs are not allowed in the park. Dogs exhibiting unusually aggressive behavior are to be immediately removed.
8. No more than three dogs are allowed per person.
9. For the health and safety of your puppy, no dogs under the age of six months are allowed to use the facility.
10. Owners must remain with their dogs in the park and keep their dog(s) in sight at all times.
11. Owners must stop their dogs from digging. Any holes created by your dog must be filled.
12. Dogs must be leashed at all times in the parking area; owners must carry a leash and dogs must be leashed before leaving the park.
13. Users and/or dog owners assume full liability and are legally responsible for any injuries resulting from their actions as well as their pet(s).
14. Professional dog trainers may not use this facility to conduct their business.

15. Dogs must be accompanied by persons eighteen years old or older. Children under the age of eighteen must be accompanied and supervised by an adult (18 years of age or older) while in the off-leash area.

16. Owners must abide by all County ordinances and policies.

17. Anyone who abandons an animal is subject to a \$500 fine and/or up-to six months in jail. (California Penal Code Sec. 597S).

18. Keep an eye on your dog. You unleash your dog at your own risk.

People who violate these rules are subject to removal from the park and/or citation.

Park staff can be contacted at xxx-xxx-xxxx

County Police can be contacted at xxx-xxx-xxxx

Animal Care and Control can be contacted at xxx-xxx-xxxx

Please help us keep the park beautiful and clean by picking up any litter and defecation you may encounter on your visit.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION – ENJOY YOUR VISIT

# APPENDIX C: Park Design Guidelines – Dog Off-Leash Areas



## 5.10 Dog Parks

The County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation has established Policy and Procedures for Dog Off-leash Areas (Policy and Procedure Number 542 dated 03/30/2010).

### 5.10.1 SPATIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The location designated Dog Off-Leash Area (DOLA) should be far enough away from residential or commercial land use that the single-event sound of a dog bark would generally be perceived as a background sound or would be screened by traffic noise.

- a. The size of the DOLA will reflect the amount of available land; however, the recommended minimum is one (1) acre and should comprise an area a minimum of three quarters (¾) of an acre for big dogs and an area a minimum one quarter (¼) of an acre for small, timid, older or less mobile dogs.
- b. It must be placed on property that is not currently developed for recreational use and/or in areas of parks that are not heavily used for other recre-

ational activities so as to reduce the potential for conflict.

- c. It must not displace another organized recreational use or unstructured use in a park given the County's limited park resources and need for active recreation and passive open space areas.
- d. It must have sufficient adjacent parking, preferably off street, that does not require users to cross a street; curbside parking is less desirable, but optional.
- e. The topography must be considered, a portion of open play areas in both large dog and small dog parks must be ADA accessible and must not exceed two percent (2%) in any direction.
- f. All structure designs should consider the distinctive qualities and character of the surrounding architectural vernacular and incorporate those qualities into the design where appropriate.
- g. The design of the structures and dog park elements should implement unifying architectural features such as repeating details, colors, and materials.

- h. Organize all shade and seating areas to accommodate long unobstructed running areas.
- i. Long unobstructed running areas should be provided within (both) mulch surfaced and decomposed granite (D.G.) surfaced portions of dog park.
- j. Provide ADA access from ADA parking stalls to DOLA entrances to a shaded area with benches and ADA companion seating.

### 5.10.2 AMENITIES

Per The County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation Policy and Procedures for Dog Off-leash Areas the following design elements should be provided for County public dog parks:

- a. Provide a separate large dog DOLA minimum of three quarters (¾) of an acre.
- b. Provide a separate small dog DOLA minimum one quarter (¼) of an acre.
- c. Provide separate double gated pen entrances for each DOLA.
- d. Provide shaded seating.
- e. Consider using shade structures for sites where there are no or few existing shade trees.
- f. Tree canopy should provide a minimum of one hundred percent (100%) shade coverage in the seating areas within ten (10) years.
- g. Provide a minimum size of forty eight inches (48") box trees to meet the goal set in line (f) this section.
- h. Existing or proposed, trees should be grouped to create ample shaded areas and leave ample open space for long unobstructed running
- i. Consider arranging benches in groups under shade shelters and trees

- j. To avoid entrapment of dog's heads, legs or paws select bench with solid seating.

### 5.10.3 WATER SOURCE

Each separate large and small DOLA must have a minimum of one drinking fountain which includes one standard bowl, one ADA compliant bowl and one canine bowl (with pet strainer).

- a. Drinking fountains must be powder coated with stainless steel bowls and sand filters.
- b. Provide Irrigation (for planted and mulched areas only). (Mulched areas must be irrigated daily for a quick wash down to prevent dust and odors from accumulating).
- c. Each park will be equipped with a standard locking quick coupler for each five thousand (5,000) sq. ft.

### 5.10.4 DOG WASTE DISPOSAL

- a. Provide biodegradable bags or biodegradable cardboard scoops or shovels and covered cans for every two thousand (2000) square feet of DOLA.
- b. Provide biodegradable bags or biodegradable cardboard scoops or shovels and covered cans at all entrances and exits of DOLA.

### 5.10.5 SURFACE

- a. The preferred surface material for the DOLA's sunny open play areas is unstabilized decomposed granite (D.G.). The D.G. can be of varying size but should not be greater than one quarter-inch (.25 inches) in size.
- b. The preferred surface material for shaded areas (beneath all trees) should be cedar wood "Walk on Chips", the particle sizes ranging from three eights inch to two inches (3/8"-2"). Cedar wood repels, kill or inhibits insects like fleas, flies, termites,

cockroaches, cloth-eating moths, carpet beetles and ants while remaining completely harmless to humans and animals.

- c. The double gated pen entrance area should be surfaced with concrete.
- d. The D.G. surfacing should be installed upon entering the DOLA, to the extent of providing an ADA accessible play area of equal proportion in relationship to the mulched play areas. This may be limited by the constraints of the site.
- e. The D.G. will be installed six inches (6") in depth and all installation should be based on manufacturer's specifications.
- f. Six inches (6") concrete curbs should be used as edging for the D.G.
- g. All necessary drainage systems should be installed prior to the installation of the D.G.

### 5.10.6 FENCING

- a. The fencing type should be galvanized or vinyl coated chain-link fencing.
- b. The standard fence should be a minimum of six feet (6') above finish grade.
- c. The footings should be buried to a depth of eighteen inches (18").

d. To prevent dog from digging out of the DOLA, a fence barrier (such as snake fencing) should be buried to a depth of minimum six inches (6") between all footings at all locations except at access points.

e. Alternative installation; each fence panel should be tied to a bottom rail and a twelve inch (12") mow strip will be provided at the base of the entire length of fencing except at access points. The bottom of fencing and bottom rail should be a maximum one inch (1") above the mow curb.

### 5.10.7 ENTRY GATES

- a. Each DOLA will have a double gated pen entrance. These gates will be the same height as the fence. **Exhibit 32**
- b. Each entry must comply to the most current ADA requirements.
- c. Each gate will open (one way) into the pen.
- d. Both gates should be self-closing, self latching and lockable.
- e. The pen should be sized a min. of five by eight feet (5' x 8') or forty (40) square-feet. This enclosure serves as a calming area, this is where the user will remove the leash from the dog prior to entering the DOLA.

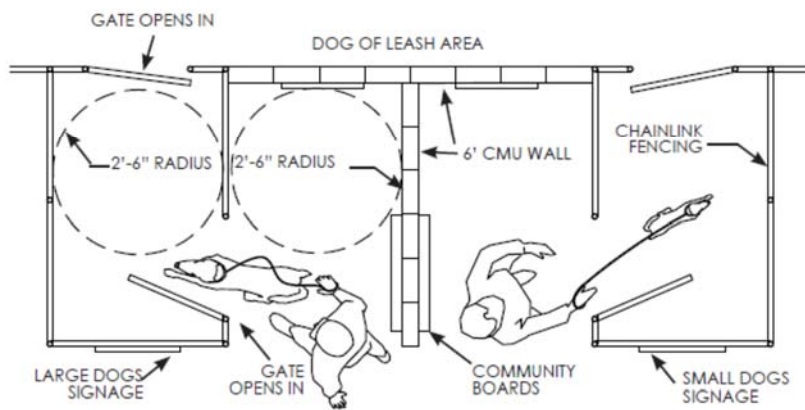


Exhibit 32: Dog Park Double gated Entry to DOLA

- f. Provide a solid CMU wall between entrances. This area serves as a waiting zone to the entrance of the DOLA.
- g. The dog park entrance and gates should be far from dog activity areas.
- h. Provide a second gated DOLA entrance for maintenance vehicles.
- i. This entry will be approximately sixteen feet (16') wide to allow full access to the site.
- j. DOLA maintenance gate location should be near the parking lot.

#### 5.10.8 RUNOFF MITIGATION

- a. DOLA should retain 100% dry weather and storm-water runoff through the use of gravel or pre-manufactured sumps.
- b. All run-off on impermeable surfacing must be drained to a sumps or sloped toward the permeable surfacing and allowed to infiltrate.

#### 5.10.9 SIGNAGE

- a. Each dog park should have permanent signs, stating the hours of operation, rules, and regulations for the DOLA and contact information for the Department of Parks and Recreation.
- b. Each dog park should have an outdoor enclosed locking letter board to display operating, and maintenance hours. This board must be placed where it is easily seen by large dog and small dog DOLA visitors.
- c. Consider adding community bulletin boards.

#### 5.10.10 ADDITIONAL AMENITIES

Additional amenities such as Agility Equipment may be added with the approval of the Department of Parks and Recreation agency having jurisdiction in the area of the dog park.