

maintenance and enforcement. Committee members will be expected to establish and enforce reasonable health and safety rules for the park, and these should be included in the proposal as well. A good proposal will also do the following:

- **Demonstrate need.** Do this by gathering statistics on the dogs and people in your community, such as how many dogs would use the dog park, the demographics of the people in your city, and who currently uses city parks - and who doesn't.
- **Demonstrate support.** In many communities, organizers found that a simply worded request, circulated on a petition, helped convince city officials that there was a indeed both a need and widespread public support for a responsibly run dog park.
- **Get to know local officials - your city council members and the director of your department of parks and recreation.** Attend meetings, join them at fund-raisers. Find out what they need from you to move the dog park forward. To help you get started, the AKC's Government Relations Department can provide you with brochures offering tips on working with government officials.
- **When you're ready, request a hearing with city government to discuss your proposal.** Have two or three knowledgeable and articulate members of your group present your plan, clearly expressing its many benefits to the community and calmly addressing any concerns. Be prepared to answer questions regarding risk of dog fights, dog bites, noise level, parking and traffic needs, liability issues, and maintenance.
- **Be patient and flexible.** Dealing with city government is rarely a quick process, but don't give up! Follow through with continued letters and e-mails, and be willing to work toward compromise.

They approved it! Now what?

Your efforts have been successful, and development of the dog park is moving forward. Now is the time to thank everyone who helped bring the park to fruition, including volunteers, government officials, and community residents. As a result of everyone's hard work, many dog owners will soon have a new opportunity to enjoy their canine companions!

The key to future and continued success of the dog park will lie in responsible park-association members and park users who strictly enforce the rules. For the most part, this will mean getting people to clean up after their dogs, quiet excessive barking and curtail any aggressive behavior.

Maintenance will be another important consideration. In some areas, park associations work in conjunction with local kennel clubs and parks department officials to organize volunteer "park cleanup" days. Kennel clubs and other dog organizations may also be willing to donate funds for future supplies of scoopers, trash bags, and cans.

The development of a successful dog park requires a great deal of planning and effort. But your involvement and dedication will hopefully lead to the ultimate reward - the joy of creating and maintaining a special place where dogs and their families can run, romp and socialize.

For a more information including success stories, what should be included in a dog park and suggestions for rules and regulations, visit www.akc.org/canine_legislation/brochures



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Establishing a **Dog Park** in Your Community



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What is a dog park and how does it benefit the community?

With cities becoming more crowded and leash laws becoming more restrictive, many concerned dog owners are looking to the creation of dog parks as a solution to their need for a place to spend quality time with their pets. But what is a “dog park,” and what benefits can one bring to your city or town?

A dog park is a public park, typically fenced, where people and their dogs can play together. Similarly, a dog run is a smaller fenced area, created for the same use, that is often located within an existing park. As the names imply, these places offer dogs off-leash play areas and the chance to socialize with other canines and their owners. Dog parks, which are sometimes managed by park users in conjunction with city or town officials offer a wealth of benefits to dogs, dog owners and the community as a whole.

More than just “room to roam,” the creation of a dog park...

- **Allows dogs to exercise and socialize safely.** Dogs need room to run, and enclosed play areas permit them to do so while preventing them from endangering themselves and others (for example, by running into the path of an oncoming vehicle). In addition, dogs who are accustomed to playing with other dogs and people are more likely to be well-socialized and react well toward strangers.
- **Promotes responsible dog ownership.** Dog parks prevent off-leash animals from infringing on the rights of other community residents and park users such as joggers, small children, and those who may be fearful of dogs. Parks also make it easier for a city to enforce its leash laws, as resident dog owners with park access have no reason to allow their canine companions off-leash when outside of the park.

- **Provides an outlet for dog owners to socialize.** Dog parks are a great place for owners to meet other people with common interests.
- **Makes for a better community by promoting public health and safety.** Well-exercised dogs are better neighbors who are less likely to create a nuisance, bark excessively, and destroy property.

How to Build a Dog Park

The First Steps ...

- **Start with a core group of committed dog park activists.** Talk with a half dozen other individuals who are concerned about the lack of off-leash spaces. This group may form a park association and will be responsible for meeting with public officials, making presentations, maintaining the park and defusing any problems that arise.
- **Hold a public meeting.** Once the core group is in place, a larger community meeting will help you get the word out to supporters and solicit input and suggestions. Contact other dog owners, dog-related clubs, veterinarians, and local humane society and animal control officials to gather interest and support. Encourage people to write letters of support to public officials and the media, and to make presentations to community groups whose backing would be valuable.
- **Educate your fellow dog owners on the need to be responsible.** The owner who neglects to pick up after his dog or who allows an aggressive dog to run loose can do a lot of damage to your cause.
- **Write a clear mission statement.** It should detail the need and purpose of the park, stressing the benefits to dog owners, their dogs, and the greater community.
- **Choose a site.** The ideal area will be a safe, accessible location that takes into account the needs of park users as well as the effect the park will have on neighbors and the environment.
- **Create a budget.** Determine how much it will cost to construct and maintain the park - costs for grass, fences, garbage removal, lawn maintenance, drinking



water, field drainage, lighting, benches, and a pooper-scooper station. Some cities are willing and able to finance a dog park; others would rather share the cost with a group committed to maintaining the park and ensuring that park rules are followed. If it is within your budget to do so, sharing expenses with the city can be a great public relations tool. It shows officials that you are committed to the project.

You will need to determine how you will generate revenue for your budget. Annual or daily fees to acquire a required permit (obtained from the city, town or through the park association) and fund-raisers are ways to generate money to cover costs. Also, consider soliciting town or city sources. By convincing elected officials that there is wide support for a dog park among taxpayers and voters, you may help encourage funding for the park.

- **Solicit the input and seek the approval of significant organizations in your community.** Meet with the proposed park’s neighbors before talking to city hall. As soon as someone brings up a concern, address it and try to come up with a solution.

Ok, you’ve gathered your resources. Where do you go from here?

- **Create a proposal.** Your well-prepared presentation will include your mission statement and goals, and should address issues such as location, funding,

