

# FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY 2020 DOG PARK STUDY REPORT



FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY  
Endorsed by Park Authority Board - JULY, 2021



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY BOARD

William G. Bouie, Chairman, Hunter Mill District  
Ken Quincy, Vice Chairman, Providence District  
Michael W. Thompson, Jr., Secretary, Springfield District  
Timothy B. Hackman, Treasurer, Dranesville District  
Dr. Abena Aidoo, At-Large Member  
Dr. Cynthia Jacobs Carter, Lee District  
Marguerite F. Godbold, Sully District  
Linwood Gorham, Mount Vernon District  
Faisal Khan, At-Large Member  
Ronald Kendall, Mason District  
Kiel Stone, Braddock District  
James P. Zook, At-Large Member

## SENIOR STAFF

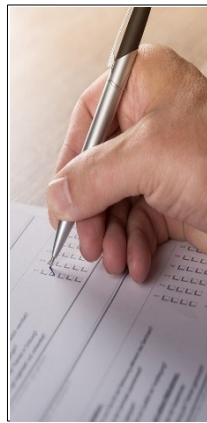
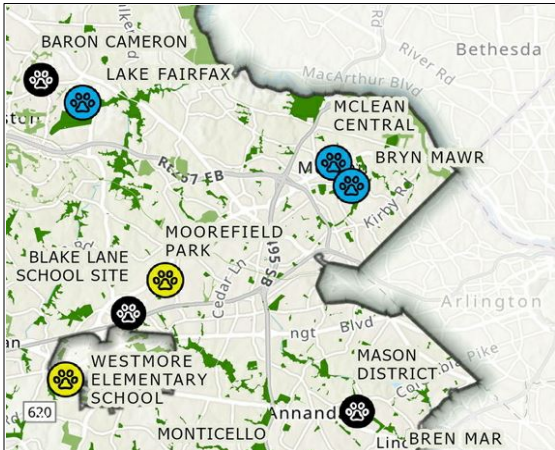
Kirk W. Kincannon, Executive Director  
Aimee L. Vosper, Deputy Director/Chief Business and Development  
Sara Baldwin, Deputy Director/Chief Operating Officer  
Barbara Nugent, Community Connections Program Manager  
Stephanie Leedom, Director, Planning & Development Division (P&D)  
Cindy Walsh, Director, Park Services Division (PSD)  
Dan Sutherland, Park Management Branch Manager, Park Operations Division (POD)  
Judith Pedersen, Public Information Officer

## PROJECT TEAM

Adam Wynn, Senior Project Manager/Planner, P&D  
Melissa Cameron, Park Planner, P&D  
Anna Bentley, Planning Manager, P&D  
Nick Duray, Marketing Manager, PSD  
Fariss Agatone, GIS Spatial Analyst, P&D  
Julie Tahan, Community Support Specialist, POD  
Nicole Varnes, Revenue Operations Manager, Financial Management Branch (FMB)  
David Fallert, South Run RECenter Manager, PSD  
Roberta Longworth, Executive Director, Fairfax County Park Foundation  
Kimberly Eckert, Management Analyst, POD  
Wayne Brisse, Manager, Area 6, POD  
Ryan Stewart, Long Range Planning Chief, P&D  
Jeffrey Winkle, East Region Manager, POD  
Kevin Rudd, Management Analyst, P&D  
Walter Wesley, Park Recreation Specialist, POD

# CONTENTS

## DOG PARK STUDY REPORT



### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#### 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1 STUDY BACKGROUND & PURPOSE
- 3 REPORT ORGANIZATION
- 4 STUDY SCOPE
- 5 STUDY APPROACH & METHODOLOGY

#### 13 PLANNING

- 13 COUNTYWIDE PLANNING
- 30 SITE PLANNING

#### 37 DESIGN

#### 47 OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE

#### 54 VOLUNTEERING

#### 61 FUNDING SOURCES, PARTNERSHIPS AND DONATION OPPORTUNITIES

#### 70 RULES & ENFORCEMENT

#### 75 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

### APPENDICES

- APPENDIX 1 - FCPA DOG PARK STANDARDS & GUIDELINES
- APPENDIX 2 - COMPLETE SURVEY RESULTS & QUESTIONNAIRE
- APPENDIX 3 - INVENTORY & EVALUATION OF EXISTING DOG PARKS
- APPENDIX 4 - DEFINITIONS

# LIST OF FIGURES

Page	
8	Figure 1: How Did Respondents Find Out About the Survey
8	Figure 2: Survey Discovery Word Cloud
8	Figure 3: Survey Respondent Type
8	Figure 4: Survey Respondent Age
9	Figure 5: Compared to other services provided by the Park Authority, how important are dog parks to you?
10	Figure 6: How many FCPA Dog Parks Have You Visited in the Past 12 Months?
10	Figure 7: How Often Do You Visit This Dog Park?
11	Figure 8: How important are each of these features when deciding whether to take your dog to a new dog park?
12	Figure 9: Dog Park Satisfaction – Key Driver Analysis
12	Figure 10: Are There Issues At This Dog Park That Concern You?
14	Figure 11: Publicly Owned Dog Parks in Fairfax County
15	Figure 12: Dog park quantity comparison among similarly sized municipalities
16	Figure 13: Dog park quantity comparison among municipalities with similar population sizes to Fairfax County
17	Figure 14: Dog park quantity comparison among other municipalities in the region
18	Figure 15: Existing and Planned FCPA Dog Parks Map
21	Figure 16: How far are you willing to walk to go to a dog park?
21	Figure 17: How far are you willing to drive to go to a dog park?
22	Figure 18: Residential Population Density in Fairfax County
24	Figure 19: Application of countywide service area (20-minute drive) to existing dog parks in Fairfax County
24	Figure 20: Application of countywide service area (20-minute drive) to master planned dog parks
25	Figure 21: Density of Registered Dog Population (2019) Map
26	Figure 22: Where Does Fairfax County Most Need a New Dog Park? Survey Map
27	Figure 23: Estimated total number of dog parks needed in Fairfax County to satisfy FCPA's service level standard
35	Figure 24: Preliminary Dog Park Site Feasibility Checklist
38	Figure 25: Dog Park Surfacing Types Comparison Table
41	Figure 26: Survey: How important are each of these features when deciding whether to take your dog to a new dog park?
42	Figure 27: Survey: Percent Satisfied with Dog Park Surface Condition
44	Figure 28: Crusher Fines/Washed Stone Dust Composition
49	Figure 29: Annual Average Maintenance Costs per FCPA Dog Park
52	Figure 30: Existing Dog Park Improvement Recommendations
57	Figure 31: Survey: Percent Interested in finding out about volunteer opportunities with dog parks
60	Figure 32: Dog Park Volunteering Options Table
63	Figure 33: Other Jurisdictions' User Fees Table
73	Figure 34: Percent that agree or disagree with 2 dogs per handler FCPA dog park rule



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) has received an abundance of questions and commentary over the past years related to the operation and expansion of dog parks within the County. The perceived demand for more dog parks coupled with the operational challenges of the County's existing dog parks formed the backbone of this study. The intent of the study was to address these questions and challenges through comprehensive analysis, research, and public outreach to better inform the planning, design, and operation of existing and future dog parks. The study developed recommendations to address these questions and challenges. In addition to developing recommendations, updated guidance and a number of tools were developed as part of this study, such as revised dog park siting and design guidelines, a revised dog park monitor checklist, and a dog park incident report form. These items are included in Appendix 1 of this report.

The study was conducted by a team consisting of subject matter experts across many FCPA functional areas, including the Planning & Development, Park Operations, and Park Services Divisions; Public Information Office; Community Connections Program, and the Financial Management Branch. The Fairfax County Park Foundation (FCPF) was also instrumental in the preparation of the analysis and recommendations provided in this report. The team identified the following focus areas to be addressed by the study:

- Evaluate countywide dog park need and update dog park countywide planning approach and site placement guidelines
- Review and revise dog park design standards
- Review and develop operations and maintenance best practices for dog parks
- Recommend potential design and operational improvements to FCPA existing dog parks
- Evaluate dog park volunteering opportunities and identify appropriate responsibilities
- Research and recommend funding sources, partnerships, and donation opportunities
- Analyze rules, enforcement, and etiquette

These focus areas have been organized into six themes which each have a dedicated section within the report. The six themes are: ***Planning; Design; Operations & Maintenance; Volunteering; Funding Sources; Partnerships and Donation Opportunities; and Rules & Enforcement.*** Each section of this report provides recommendations and supporting analysis. The ***Key Takeaways*** part of each section provides an overview of the primary recommendations with a brief description of the analysis that informed the specific recommendation. Below is a composite of those Key Takeaways for each section.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

### PLANNING

- FCPA should construct at least one new dog park by 2025, using the list of master planned but unbuilt dog parks for potential locations. The selection of the dog park should be based on community support and prioritization utilizing the planning criteria established in this report and described below. This will satisfy the estimated service level need based on the projected population for 2025 as well as the substantial community interest expressed through the dog park study survey.
- Following the selection and construction of one planned dog park, establish a schedule for the construction of the remaining six dog parks that are master planned but not yet built, and identify funding sources for the construction of these parks. Construction of these parks should be prioritized utilizing the planning criteria established in this report and described below. Building and establishing these planned dog parks will exceed the number of dog parks required to satisfy the County's estimated service level need over the next 20+ years, close dog park gaps in planning districts and help better meet community demand as indicated by both the location and quantity of licensed dogs and the community survey.
- FCPA should explore options for planning a new dog park in the Baileys and Jefferson Planning Districts, as well as the Bull Run Planning District, and/or identify and convey information about the privately owned publicly accessible dog parks in these districts. These districts currently do not have existing or planned FCPA dog parks. These actions would help close these gaps.
- In the future, FCPA should employ the following planning criteria (in addition to Needs Assessment standards) when planning for dog parks:
  - Geographic distribution - Planning Districts
  - The recommended access-based service areas for dog parks; 20-minute drive access (countywide) and consideration of 10-minute walk access in densely populated neighborhoods. Note that these access-based service areas were developed based on public input received from the dog park study survey.
  - Density of licensed dogs in the County
- The total number and location of privately owned and publicly accessible dog parks in the county is currently unknown. FCPA should conduct an inventory of these facilities in the County. This effort should be prioritized in the Baileys and Jefferson Districts as well as the more dense Special Planning Areas (as defined in Figure 18) in the County where these types of dog parks are more likely to be constructed, to better understand how access and need is being met in these areas. These dog parks and dog runs located within private developments should continue to be encouraged through the development review process, where appropriate.
- FCPA should consider hosting additional dog-related events, building on what has been offered in the past, and following examples from other similar jurisdictions, to meet public need and interest.

- To provide more robust information about dog parks and dog park events, as requested by the public, FCPA should consolidate all information related to dog parks, dog classes and events hosted by FCPA, dog park volunteer information, donation opportunities, and dog-owner related requirements (vaccination, rabies clinics, etc.) into a single webpage.
- FCPA should adopt the newly revised dog park siting criteria, which were developed as part of this study to better accommodate the evolving County landscape.
- Going forward, FCPA should utilize the newly prepared dog park siting tools. These siting tools factor in the revised siting criteria as well as feedback received from the public on dog park preferences. These tools will standardize, streamline, and enhance the dog park site planning process.
- FCPA should adopt the updated process for establishing a new dog park. This process, developed as part of this study, more fully captures current planning procedures and the public participation process.
- FCPA should continue to coordinate with the Fairfax County Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (DPWES) stormwater department on annual dog park inspections so that FCPA can readily address any areas in need of improvement as it relates to site level stormwater compliance.

## DESIGN

- The standards and guidelines for dog park planning, siting, placement, and design have evolved since the establishment of FCPA's first dog park. As part of this study, industry trends, best design practices, public feedback, and County policy were analyzed. This study report puts forth a revised and refreshed set of standards and guidelines to be consistently referenced for the planning and development of new FCPA dog parks. The standards and guidelines may also be used as an optional resource for design guidance by private communities such as homeowner's associations (HOAs) or by developers of privately owned publicly accessible dog parks (which are typically created through rezoning applications and proffers). To emphasize, the guidelines and standards presented in this report apply to new FCPA dog parks; private communities and developers may utilize them as a resource as needed, however, there is no requirement to do so.
- Review of other jurisdictions' dog park design guidelines has proved that there is no universal consensus on the best type of surfacing. All surfacing types, such as natural turf, washed stone dust, wood mulch, and synthetic turf have pros and cons related to use, maintenance, and cost to be considered. Washed stone dust should continue to be FCPA's surfacing of choice, due to its minimal maintenance need and high durability. For newly developed FCPA dog parks, natural turf can be considered if the enclosed dog area is larger than 3 acres.
- All FCPA dog parks have crusher fines/washed stone dust surfacing with the exception of Westgrove, Chandon and Blake Lane dog parks. The survey results indicated dissatisfaction with the condition of the surfacing in some of these parks. It was found that excessive slope and the absence of a containment edge within these dog parks was a contributing factor to

the surface condition. Reducing the slope and adding a concrete or timber curb in these dog parks would help improve the surfacing condition by limiting the migration of the surface material.

- Designated areas for large dogs and smaller, younger, or older dogs were expressed as a need through survey responses, comments, and emails. Additionally, nearly all guidelines reviewed as part of this study recommended some variation of separated areas. Designated areas are recommended as part of the design guidelines for new dog parks.

## OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE

- Overall, research found that FCPA's dog park maintenance standards and practices are largely consistent with the practices employed by other jurisdictions. However, research also identified a gap in some maintenance task frequencies due to a corresponding gap in funding for labor and material resources. Increasing the frequency of these tasks would address many of the concerns expressed within the survey, although would require additional funding for resources. Revised maintenance task frequencies have been provided within the Recommendations portion of the Operations & Maintenance Section.
- The survey indicated that dog waste bag stations were often empty, due to heavy use of the dog park and visitors taking bags for non-park use. The study recommends setting a standard of restocking pet waste bags once per week and installing signage discouraging visitors from taking more bags than needed while at the dog park. Signage at the dog park should prominently display contact information to report any maintenance issues that need to be addressed.
- Locations of trash receptacles are currently inconsistent throughout FCPA dog parks. This study recommends placing trash receptacles within the entry corral area or immediately adjacent to the outside of the dog park fence in all FCPA dog parks. Consistently placing trash receptacles in these locations will encourage visitors to dispose of dog waste and allow maintenance staff to empty the receptacles without entering the dog area(s).
- As part of this study, visitors' satisfaction levels with different aspects of the operation and design of FCPA dog parks were assessed as part of a countywide dog park survey. Survey results indicated the key improvements that users would like to see in dog parks are surface condition, a water source, rule enforcement, and shade. Suggested key improvements to the operation and design of each dog park are provided as part of this report. New features and maintenance frequency of existing dog parks are limited by current funding. This report puts forth recommendations for exploring additional funding sources, volunteering opportunities, and partnerships to improve the conditions of dog parks and increase the maintenance frequency across all dog parks.

## VOLUNTEERING

- FCPA should leverage the interest conveyed by the public in volunteering in FCPA's dog parks.
- FCPA can and should support formation of park volunteer teams (PVT) in dog parks via the existing PVT program. To support their formation, as well as the formation of Dog Park



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Friends Groups, FCPA should provide more robust information about dog park PVT and Friends Group opportunities on the dog park webpage.

- There are three volunteering paths that can be taken in FCPA dog parks: individual volunteers/dog park monitors, PVTs, and Friends Groups. An ambassador program could be explored in the future, though this would require additional staff support to develop guidelines and manage the program.
- FCPA should utilize the dog park monitor checklist for volunteers (which was refined as part of this study) and explore options for digitizing it in the future.
- FCPA should utilize the incident report form for volunteers, developed as part of this study.

**FUNDING SOURCES, PARTNERSHIPS AND DONATION OPPORTUNITIES**

- The planning analysis identified that construction of at least one new dog park will be needed by 2025 to meet service level standards adopted in the 2016 Needs Assessment. It is recommended that park bond funding be utilized to fund the construction of one new dog park by this time.
- The study does not recommend charging membership and/or user fees for access to dog parks. Dog park membership and user fees do not exist at any nearby local jurisdictions and charging fees would likely discourage dog park visitation.
- The study recommends discussing options with the Department of Tax Administration (DTA) to use a portion of the dog license fee to fund a portion of the operational costs associated with maintaining FCPA dog parks, both now and in the future.
- It is recommended that FCPA staff coordinate with Fairfax County Park Foundation (FCPF) to develop new and promote existing dog park donation opportunities that can be marketed to prospective individuals and organizations.
- Maintenance agreements with HOAs or other private organizations should continue to be considered and encouraged when establishing a new dog park on FCPA-owned property during the development review process for new residential and commercial developments within applicable areas of the county.
- Friends Groups are the primary dog park partnership opportunity recommended as part of this study. FCPA should work with interested community members to encourage these partnerships which form the basis for mutual support for dog parks.

**RULES AND ENFORCEMENT**

- No changes to FCPA's existing dog park rules or operating hours are recommended. The survey results, paired with staff observations, determined that many issues related to rules within FCPA dog parks are due to a need for additional enforcement, as opposed to the rules themselves. This study report recommends advocating for additional volunteers, partnerships, and clear reporting procedures to help curb any undesired dog park use or etiquette.

- Conduct a signage audit at each FCPA dog park to ensure that rules, regulations, and FCPA contact information are clear and consistent. Signage should state that there could be fines or penalties that can be ticketed by law enforcement officers. Signs should also provide a non-emergency police number for reporting any issues. Having clear and consistent signage at the dog parks is critical for visitors, volunteers and FCPA staff alike.
- FCPA's [Dog Park Webpage](#) should be reviewed and updated to ensure that rules, reporting procedures, contact information and operating hours are prominently displayed.
- On FCPA's dog park webpage, future informational brochures, and signage, include the following statement to provide clearer language on the requirement for owners to pick up their dog's waste, "Dog owners are required to pick up all waste from their dog (County Code 26-04-41.1.). Violators may be subject to penalties and fines."
- FCPA should develop a dog handling and behavior brochure to further promote safe and enjoyable use of dog parks for all.

### IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Four implementation strategies centered around coordination and communication have been formulated as part of this report to help address many of the recommendations provided within each of the themed sections. These strategies include:

- Enhance FCPA's dog park webpage
- Create a "Dogs in Public Spaces/Dog Park Information" brochure
- Provide a single point of coordination for all dog park-related matters across the agency
- Adopt a project schedule for construction of one planned dog park

# INTRODUCTION

## STUDY BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Since the first municipal dog park was founded in 1979 in Berkeley, California, dog parks have become an increasingly desired public amenity in communities throughout the United States. To many, dogs are considered beloved family members and collectively, American communities have shifted their views; dog parks are no longer seen as specialty auxiliary facilities, but rather public spaces necessary for dog socialization and exercise.

While the exact number of dogs in the United States is unknown, the American Veterinary Medical Association reported in 2016 that there are an estimated 77 million dogs in the United States, with this figure increasing annually<sup>1</sup>. The development of new dog parks in the United States has risen over 40 percent in the last decade<sup>2</sup>. According to Fairfax County's dog license data, in 2019 there were a total of 81,007 dogs registered in the County. Fairfax County, like many jurisdictions across the United States, has seen an increase in its dog population. The number of licensed dogs in the County increased by approximately 10% between 2009 and 2019.

Fairfax County is a large and populous county; it contains almost 400 square miles and is home to more than one million people. As of the 2010 Census, Fairfax County was the most populous jurisdiction in the Washington D.C. metropolitan region<sup>3</sup>. As of 2019, it is estimated that 19.3% of households in the County own a dog<sup>4</sup>. Fairfax County is also a diverse and growing county; as the County continues to grow, so will its dog population.

Over the years, the public has shared numerous inquiries and ideas pertaining to both existing and future dog parks with FCPA. At present, there are 13 public dog parks in Fairfax County, 11 of which are owned and operated by the Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA). While these parks meet the County's 2020 need<sup>5</sup> (as calculated by total population) for dog parks, the public's interest in dog parks continues to grow.

In addition, the County is comprised of a complex combination of both suburban and urban land uses and lifestyles. This variation in geography has influenced the size, design, and operation of existing dog parks, and will continue to have implications for future dog parks in the County.

Moreover, the planning, operations, and maintenance standards for public dog parks in the County have evolved significantly since the first dog park was constructed in 2000. To capture these changes, as well as to ensure FCPA's procedures are aligned with current best practices, updates to guidance surrounding how dog parks are planned, designed, and maintained both now and in the future are needed.

---

<sup>1</sup> [www.washingtonpost.com/science/2019/01/31/how-many-americans-have-pets-an-investigation-into-fuzzy-statistics/](http://www.washingtonpost.com/science/2019/01/31/how-many-americans-have-pets-an-investigation-into-fuzzy-statistics/)

<sup>2</sup> [www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-02-28/not-everyone-loves-your-new-dog-park-this-is-why](http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-02-28/not-everyone-loves-your-new-dog-park-this-is-why)

<sup>3</sup> Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, Policy Plan, Preface and Introduction p.1

<sup>4</sup> According to 2019 Fairfax County dog license data tabulations conducted by Park Authority staff.

<sup>5</sup> Established by the 2016 FCPA Needs Assessment,

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/sites/parks/files/assets/documents/plandev/parkscount/needs-assessment-plan-050616.pdf>

## INTRODUCTION

Recognizing the County's ever-growing population distributed across a mix of suburban and urban land uses, the many voices and interests conveyed by the public, and need for updated standards and guidance, the 2019-2020 dog park study was undertaken by FCPA to achieve the following:





- Evaluate countywide dog park need and update dog park planning and siting processes
- Review and revise site placement guidelines and design standards
- Recommend potential design and operational improvements to existing dog parks
- Review and develop operations and maintenance best practices
- Evaluate dog park volunteering opportunities and identify appropriate responsibilities
- Research membership, sponsoring, and fundraising opportunities
- Analyze rules, enforcement, and etiquette

---

*Note: Components of this report drew inspiration from a variety of other similar dog park studies that were conducted in other jurisdictions across the U.S., including the following: City of Raleigh (Dog Park Study 2019), Ann Arbor (Recommendations and Guidelines for Dog Park Site Selection, Design, Operations and Maintenance 2013/2014) Montgomery County (Dog Park Site Suitability Study 2019), and the City of Seattle (People, Dogs & Parks Plan 2017).*

## REPORT ORGANIZATION

The 2020 Dog Park Study is organized around six themes, shown below. The themes, which are underpinned by the study scope, guided research, and analysis, are also reflected in study recommendations. A report section is dedicated to each theme and the sections are color-coded for ease of use. The six themes are:

 PLANNING	 VOLUNTEERING
 DESIGN	 FUNDING SOURCES, PARTNERSHIPS AND DONATION
 OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE	 RULES AND ENFORCEMENT

Each themed section is organized into three key parts:

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

The *Key Takeaways* part of each section provides an overview of the primary recommendations with a brief description of the analysis that informed the specific recommendation.

### ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

The *Analysis & Findings* part of each section presents the information collected and analyzed for each themed section. Data sources used include public input, benchmarking, Geographic Information System (GIS) analysis, and research, including a review of historical documentation, industry literature, and regulatory and policy guidance documents.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The *Recommendations* part of each section builds upon the analysis and findings determined for each theme by providing suggestions that address the key questions or areas identified for potential improvement. Following the themed sections, the report concludes with implementation strategies, followed by appendices.

### IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

The report includes an *Implementation Strategies* section that provides action items that support and sustain the implementation of the theme's recommendations. These strategies are centered around coordination and communication and span all six research themes.

### APPENDICES

The report includes four appendices that provide more detailed information to support the report. These appendices are referenced in several of the themed sections and should be used as supplemental material in conjunction with the report. Appendices include:

- APPENDIX 1 – DOG PARK STANDARDS & GUIDELINES
- APPENDIX 2 – FULL SURVEY RESULTS
- APPENDIX 3 – INVENTORY OF FCPA'S EXISTING DOG PARKS
- APPENDIX 4 – DEFINITIONS

## STUDY SCOPE

At the beginning of the study, 20 questions were proposed to be addressed through research and analysis. These questions formed the study scope, which was heavily informed by public inquiries received by FCPA over the past few years, as well as by existing conditions and current dog park operations practices. The study questions were organized into six key themes: planning, design, operations and maintenance, volunteering, funding sources/partnerships/donation opportunities, and rules and enforcement. These themes also form the organizational structure of this report. The themes and study questions are presented below:

### STUDY SCOPE QUESTIONS

THEMES	STUDY SCOPE QUESTIONS
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How many dog parks should Fairfax County have?</li> <li>How far should citizens be expected to travel to visit a dog park?</li> <li>Where should they be located?</li> </ul>
Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the most important design features and amenities for dog parks?</li> <li>What are the optimal design guidelines and criteria for new dog parks?</li> <li>What improvements can be made to existing dog parks?</li> </ul>
Operations & Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the most important features or amenities to upkeep in dog parks?</li> <li>What should the optimal maintenance procedures and standards be for dog parks?</li> <li>What maintenance issues vary depending on dog park features, design and intensity of use?</li> <li>What factors of dog park operation warrant oversight and at what frequency?</li> <li>Should FCPA provide off-leash unfenced areas for dogs in other public parks?</li> </ul>
Volunteering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Should FCPA encourage citizens to get involved with volunteer teams to care for dog parks?</li> <li>What duties are appropriate for dog park volunteers to perform?</li> </ul>
Funding Sources, Partnerships and Donation Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Should FCPA establish a dog park membership program?</li> <li>Should the County provide a portion of revenues from dog license fees to support FCPA dog parks?</li> <li>Should revenue-generating programs be provided/permitted in dog parks?</li> <li>What opportunities exist for successful partnerships for dog parks?</li> <li>What types of donations would be feasible for dog parks?</li> </ul>
Rules & Enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Should current rules for the age of children permitted in dog parks be revised?</li> <li>Should current regulations for dog park hours, closures for routine maintenance or other events be revised?</li> </ul>

## **STUDY APPROACH & METHODOLOGY**

With the dog park study scope established, FCPA formed a cross-agency project team. This cross-agency team brought diverse perspectives and expertise from a variety of FCPA functional areas, which were critical to addressing the wide range of subjects included in the study scope. The team was comprised of representatives from functional areas such as planning and development, operations and maintenance, park services, and the Fairfax County Park Foundation, among others.

The approach to the dog park study was two-fold: first, the project team conducted research and analysis and employed data-driven methods; second, the project team engaged the public to gain insights, ideas, and a deeper understanding of the public's needs, priorities, and preferences when it comes to dog parks. Combined, these methods formed the basis for the recommendations in this report.

## **RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS**

The project team conducted extensive research on industry best practices and employed benchmarking to peer jurisdictions. The team also inventoried and analyzed existing and planned dog parks, and conducted data analysis, using tools such as GIS and examining datasets such as Fairfax County dog license data. Past and present policies and procedures were also analyzed. The appendices of this report contain a variety of outputs prepared as a part of the research conducted for this study (such as recommended design guidelines), as well as a complete inventory of FCPA's existing dog parks.

## **PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

Public input played a critical role in the dog park study. The community provided feedback during two key stages in the project: the project initiation phase (Fall/Winter 2019) and the draft report stage (Spring 2021).

## **PROJECT INITIATION (FALL/WINTER 2019)**

In the project initiation stage, the public was invited to provide feedback to FCPA on the County's dog parks through two primary methods: through a 30-day online survey and through submission of comments to FCPA via the project website. Over 4,600 responses and 2,500 unique comments were received through the survey. Eleven electronic comments were received via the project website.

### ***Dog Park Study Survey Summary***

The public was invited to participate and provide responses to the survey during a 30-day period, from November 15, 2019, to December 15, 2019. The survey was hosted on FCPA's dog park study webpage using PublicInput.com, a public engagement platform and survey software tool. Information from the survey helped FCPA to better understand current dog park use, concerns, and future needs. Over

4,600 responses to the survey were received. An overview of the survey and results is provided in the section below, and the complete survey results are provided in Appendix 2.

### **Dog Park Study Project Initiation Comments**

During the Fall/Winter 2019 timeframe, the public was also invited to share their comments with FCPA, both electronically via the survey as well as through FCPA's project website. As described above, the survey was available for a 30-day period, from November 15, 2019, to December 15, 2019. The window for comments through FCPA's project website was open from November 2019, to February 2020. Over 2,500 unique comments through the public survey and eleven electronic comments submitted via the project website were received and evaluated. These comments supplemented the quantitative portions of the survey by providing FCPA with qualitative insight and additional detail on the public's preferences. The ideas and insights garnered from these comments were incorporated into the various sections of this report and helped to inform the recommendations.

### **DRAFT REPORT (SPRING 2021)**

Following the survey and public comment period for the project initiation stage, the Park Authority compiled all public input received, analyzed the survey results, and prepared a draft report of the dog park study. A draft of the report was published on the dog park study webpage and made available to the public on March 3, 2021.

### **Draft Dog Park Study Report Public Comments**

The draft report was made available on the dog park study webpage, where the public could review the report and share their comments. The draft report comment period was open from March 3, 2021, to April 23, 2021, and approximately 120 comments were received. FCPA reviewed and considered all comments received as revisions were made to the draft report. This feedback was critical and helped to inform key revisions to the report.

### **Draft Report Public Meeting**

On March 23, 2021, the Park Authority hosted a virtual public meeting through the Public Input platform to share the study's findings and recommendations and to create an open forum for the public to ask questions and share feedback on the draft report. The public shared a variety of comments, questions, and feedback with the Park Authority during the meeting. Over 60 people were in attendance.

## **SURVEY OVERVIEW AND RESULTS**

This section shares a selection of key insights, obtained from the dog park study survey, on how existing dog parks are utilized and experienced in Fairfax County.



Note that other responses obtained from the survey have been incorporated throughout this report as relates to a specific topic. For example, the interest expressed by respondents in volunteering at dog parks is included in the Analysis and Findings portion of the Volunteering section. In addition, as described in the public engagement summary above, there were several opportunities throughout the survey where the public was invited to provide comments and share opinions. These comments have helped to inform the recommendations provided throughout this report.

### Survey Overview

The public survey was available from November 15, 2019, to December 15, 2019. Survey outreach was conducted through three primary channels:

- Postcards inviting participation in the dog park survey were sent to 10,000 Fairfax County dog owners who were selected from the Fairfax County registered dog license database. The sample was selected at random and was stratified by zip code to ensure the sample accurately reflected the geographic distribution of dog license holders in the County.
- An email inviting survey participation was sent to over 250 residents who had previously attended dog-related events hosted by FCPA and had indicated their interest in receiving dog-park related updates.
- The survey was posted to FCPA's dog park study project website and was publicized through a public information release from the FCPA Public Information Office.

Media coverage by news outlets such as WTOP and Greater Alexandria Patch helped to further spread awareness about the survey, following the information release. The public survey was also shared and circulated by citizens through several other digital platforms such as Nextdoor and Facebook. In fact, when asked how respondents learned about the survey, "other" was the channel most cited by respondents, as shown in Figure 1. And, as Figure 2 illustrates, Nextdoor and Facebook were the most popular platforms cited among these respondents. Over 4,600 individual responses to the survey were received.

The survey solicited input from dog owners and dog walkers as well as those who do not own dogs but were interested in dog park issues. Most survey respondents were dog owners (90%), and a variety of age groups from ages 18 and older participated. See Figures 3 and 4 for a complete breakdown of respondents.

### How Did You Find Out About this Survey?

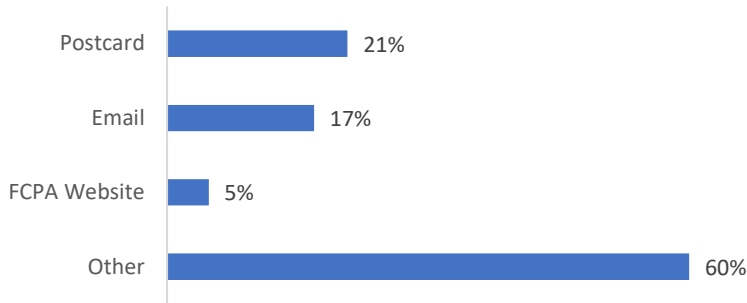


Figure 1: How Did Respondents Find Out About the Survey  
 Note: Percentages add up to more than 100% since multiple selections were allowed.

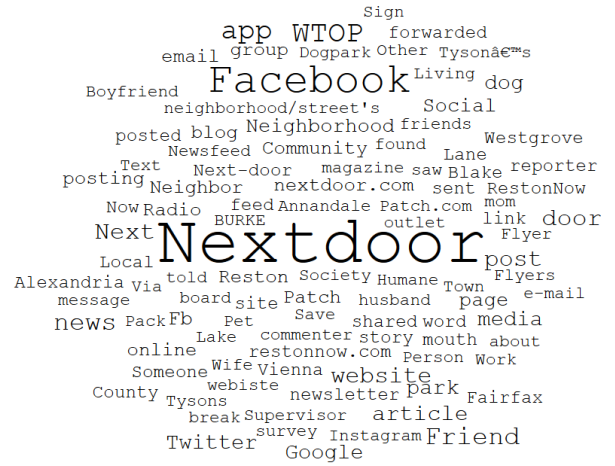


Figure 2: Survey Discovery Word Cloud  
 Responses shared by those who selected "Other" to the question: "How did you find out about this survey?"

### Which of the following best describes you?

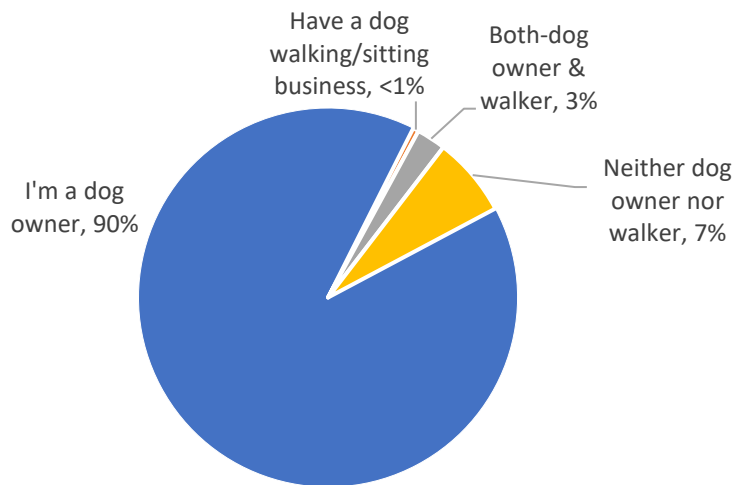


Figure 3: Survey Respondent Type

### What is your age?

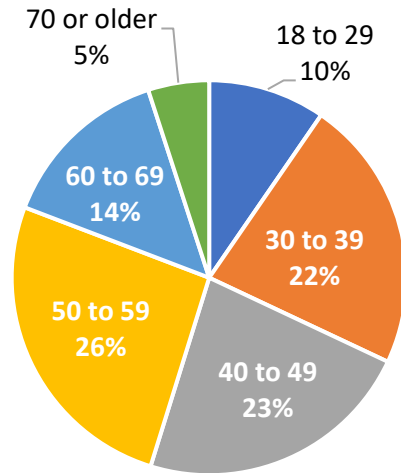
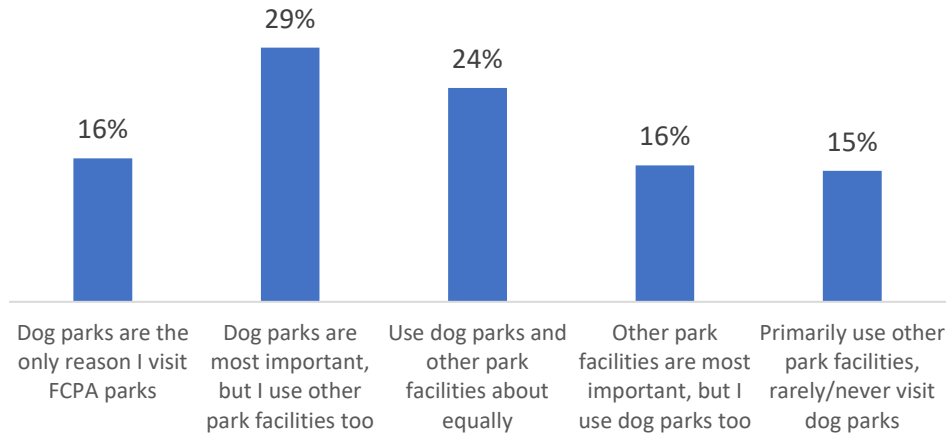


Figure 4: Survey Respondent Age

**Survey Results**

Dog owners and dog walkers surveyed were asked to indicate how important they felt dog parks were compared to other FCPA facilities using the range of answer choices shown in Figure 5. Almost half (45%) indicated that dog parks were either the sole FCPA facility they used or that dog parks were the most important FCPA facility they used. More than half (56%) of those who had visited an FCPA dog park within the last year (i.e., recent dog park visitors<sup>6</sup>) felt similarly. Overall, this demonstrates how well-loved dog parks are among dog owners and walkers in Fairfax County. It also demonstrates how for many, dog parks are considered a primary FCPA facility, and may be one of the only facilities in the entire park system that these visitors utilize.

*Compared to other services provided by the Park Authority, how important are dog parks to you?*



*Figure 5: Compared to other services provided by the Park Authority, how important are dog parks to you?*

**45%**

of all dog owners and walkers

Shared that dog parks are the “only reason” or are the “most important” facility provided by FCPA.

**56%**

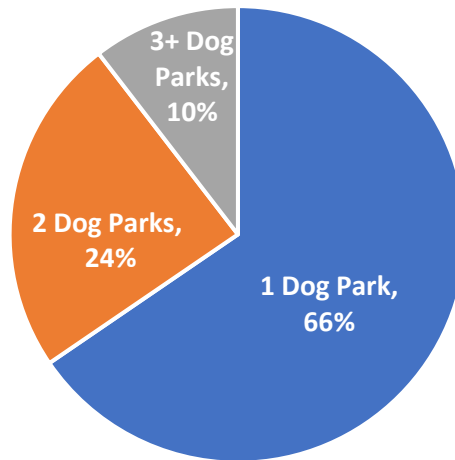
of recent FCPA dog park visitors

Shared that dog parks are the “only reason” or are the “most important” facility provided by FCPA.

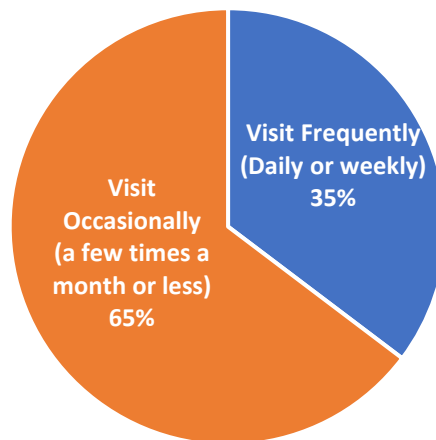
<sup>6</sup> “Recent dog park visitors” refers to respondents who identified as dog owners, dog walkers/have a dog walking business, or both, and had visited an FCPA dog park within the last year.

As shown in Figure 6, the majority of recent dog park visitors indicated that within the last year, they frequented one FCPA dog park. When asked how often they visit their favorite dog park, nearly two-thirds (65%) of recent dog park visitors reported that they typically visit a few times per month or less (Figure 7).

***How Many FCPA Dog Parks Have You Visited in the Past 12 Months?***



***How Often Do You Visit This Dog Park?***



*Note: Results based on respondents who had indicated they had visited one or more FCPA dog parks in the past 12 months. This was a follow up question to "Of the FCPA dog parks you have visited in the past 12 months, which one do you visit most often?"*

When asked how important different features of a dog park were to dog owners and dog walkers when deciding to take their dog to a new dog park, respondents indicated the following elements were of greatest importance:

- Room for their dog to run
- Trash cans
- Pet waste bag stations
- Shade
- Water (drinking fountain for dogs and visitors)
- Parking

**How important are each of these features when deciding whether to take your dog to a new dog park?**

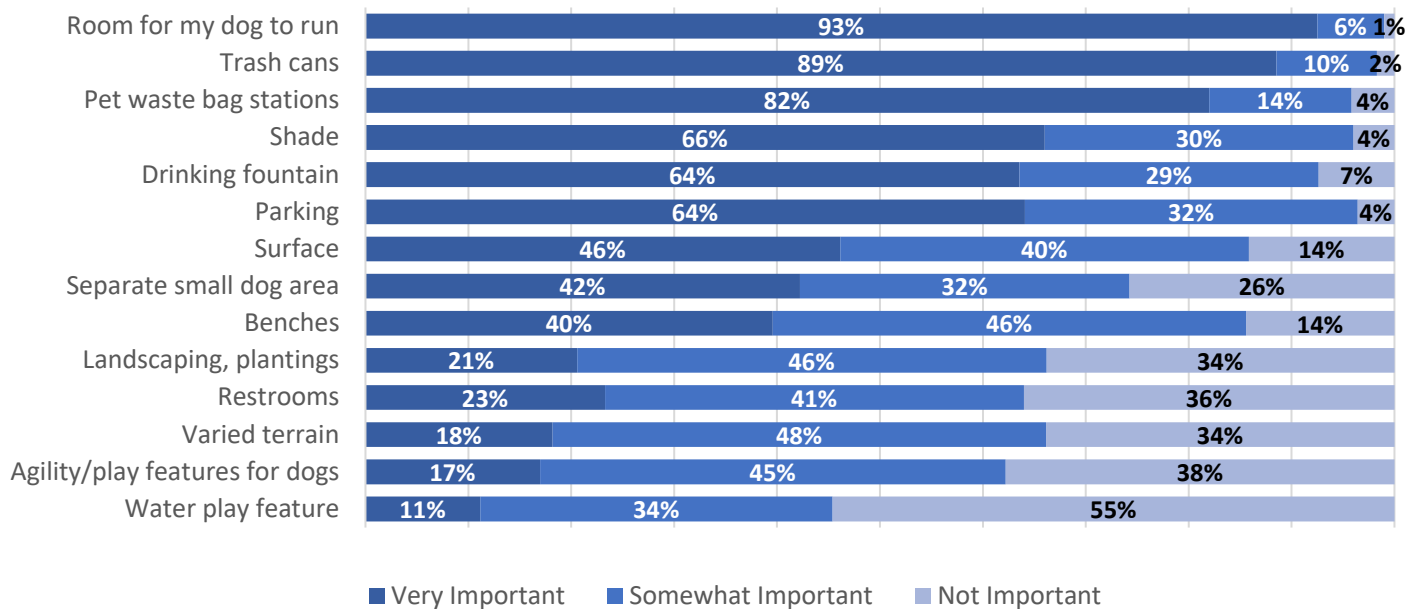


Figure 8: How important are each of these features when deciding whether to take your dog to a new dog park?  
 Note: Percentages for some features in the above chart may not add to 100% due to rounding error.

Survey responses also indicated that cleanliness and surface condition play an important role in the satisfaction of a dog park visitor’s experience. Surface conditions, inattentive owners, and lack of water fountains are among the chief concerns for visitors at their favorite dog park.

**Dog Park Satisfaction - Key Driver Analysis**

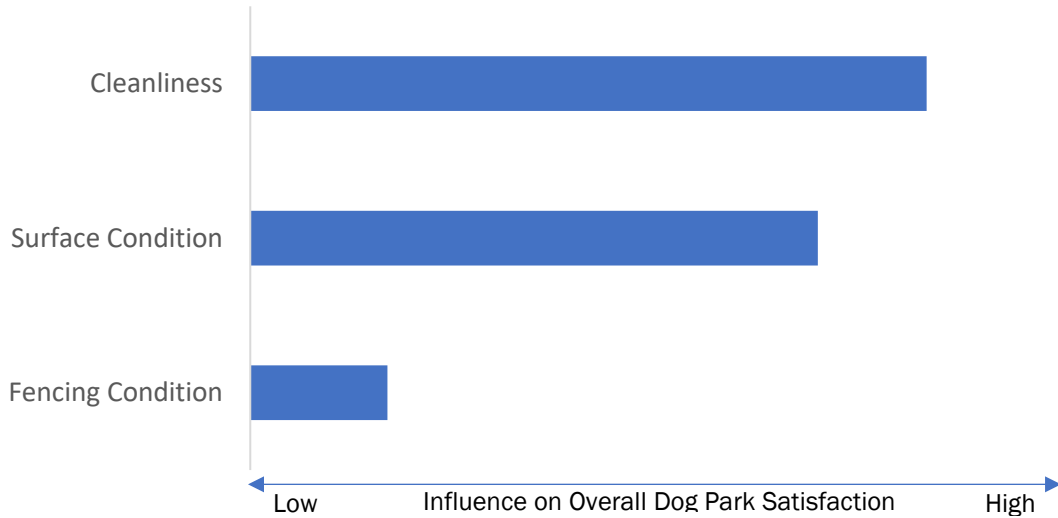


Figure 9: Dog Park Satisfaction – Key Driver Analysis

**Are There Issues At This Dog Park That Concern You?**

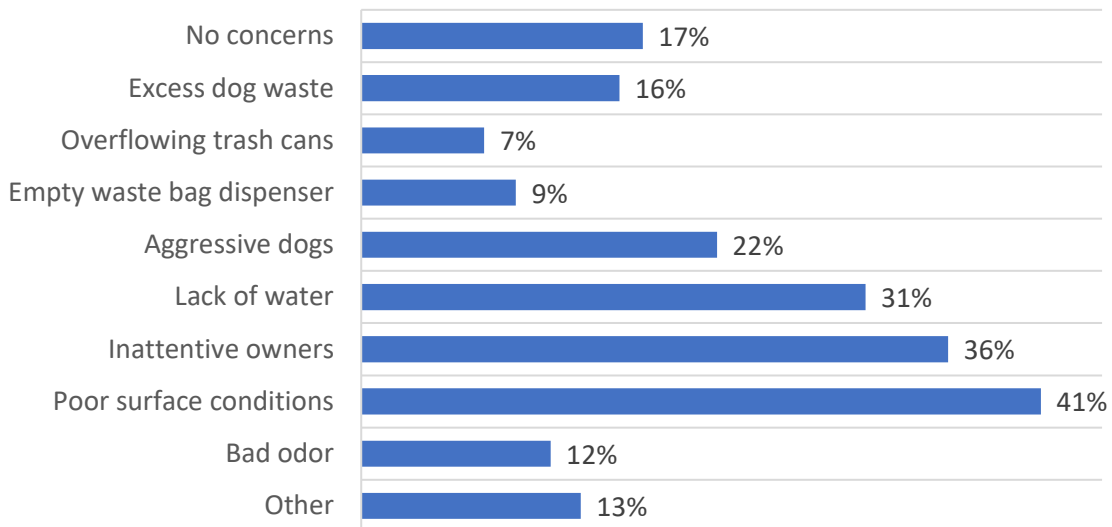


Figure 10: Are There Issues At This Dog Park That Concern You? Note: For the above figure, the results correspond to concerns that dog park users identified at their most frequently visited FCPA dog park. Percentages add to more than 100 since multiple selections were allowed.

## PLANNING

### KEY TAKEAWAYS – COUNTYWIDE PLANNING

- FCPA should construct at least one new dog park by 2025 and use the list of master planned but unbuilt dog parks for potential locations. The selection of the dog park should be based on community support and prioritization utilizing the planning criteria established in this report and described below. This will satisfy the estimated service level need based on the projected population for 2025 as well as the substantial community interest expressed through the dog park study survey.
- Following the selection and construction of one planned dog park, establish a schedule for the construction of the remaining six dog parks that are master planned but not yet built, and identify funding sources for the construction of these parks. Construction of these parks should be prioritized utilizing the criteria established in this report and described below. Building and establishing these planned dog parks will exceed the number of dog parks required to satisfy the County's estimated service level need over the next 20+ years, close dog park gaps in planning districts and help better meet community demand as indicated by both licensed dogs and community survey.
- FCPA should explore options for planning a new dog park in the Baileys and Jefferson Planning Districts, as well as the Bull Run Planning District, and/or identify and convey information about the privately owned publicly accessible dog parks in these districts. These districts currently do not have existing or planned FCPA dog parks. These actions would help close these gaps.
- In the future, FCPA should employ the following planning criteria (in addition to Needs Assessment standards) when planning for new dog parks (beyond those that are master planned):
  - Geographic distribution – (Planning Districts)
  - The recommended access-based service areas for dog parks: 20-minute drive access (countywide) and consideration of 10-minute walk access in densely populated neighborhoods. Note that these access-based service areas were developed based on public input received from the dog park study survey
  - Density of licensed dogs in the County
- The total number and location of privately owned and publicly accessible dog parks in the county is currently unknown. FCPA should conduct an inventory of these facilities in the County and prioritize this effort in the Baileys and Jefferson Planning Districts as well as the more dense Special Planning Areas (as defined in Figure 18) where these types of dog parks are more likely to be constructed, to better understand how access and need is being met in these areas. These dog

parcs and dog runs located within private developments should continue to be encouraged through the development review process, where appropriate.

- FCPA should consider hosting additional dog-related events, building on what has been offered in the past, and following examples from other similar jurisdictions, to meet public need and interest.
- To provide more robust information about dog parks and dog park events, FCPA should consolidate all information related to dog parks, dog classes and events hosted by FCPA, dog park volunteer information, donation opportunities, and dog-owner related requirements (vaccination, rabies clinics, etc.) into a single webpage.

## ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

When planning for dog parks in Fairfax County, there were three main questions that this study was tasked with answering: how many dog parks does Fairfax County have, how many should it have, and how far should people travel to get to them?

The study sought to answer these questions to determine dog park need and to establish a baseline of where Fairfax County is today. By knowing where we are today, FCPA can better plan for dog parks in the future. This section presents the study’s findings to these questions.

### HOW MANY DOG PARKS DOES FAIRFAX COUNTY HAVE?

There are 11 public dog parks in Fairfax County that are owned and/or operated by FCPA. Also, there are two public dog parks owned and operated by other jurisdictions (the City of Fairfax, and the Town of Vienna) bringing the total number of publicly owned and publicly accessible dog parks in Fairfax County to 13, as detailed in the table (Figure 11).

#	FCPA Dog Park Name	Year Constructed
1	Blake Lane Dog Park	2000
2	Baron Cameron Dog Park	2001
3	South Run Dog Park	2001
4	Mason District Dog Park	2002
5	Chandon Dog Park	2003
6	Grist Mill Dog Park	2006
7	Rock Hill District Dog Park	2006
8	Westgrove Dog Park	2012
9	Lenclair/Blackjack Dog Park	2014
10	Dulles Station Community Dog Park	2017
11	Monticello Dog Park	2018
<b>Other publicly owned and accessible dog parks in Fairfax County (not owned or operated by FCPA)</b>		
12	Moorefield Dog Park Town of Vienna	2002
13	Westmore Dog Park City of Fairfax	2019

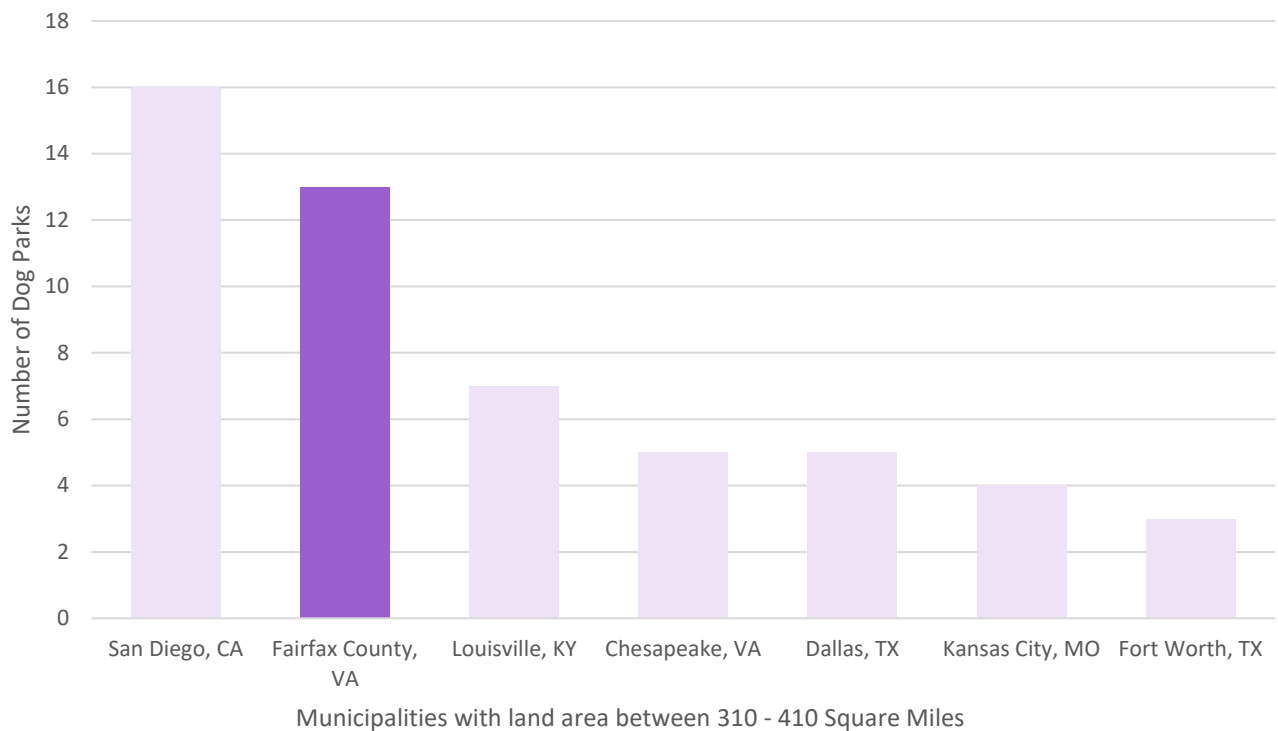
Figure 11: Publicly Owned Dog Parks in Fairfax County

**Data Sources** Personal Communication via e-mail between Town of Vienna Parks and Recreation and FCPA regarding the year of construction of the Moorefield dog park, August 28, 2019. Personal Communication via e-mail between City of Fairfax Parks and Recreation and FCPA regarding dog parks in the City of Fairfax, May 2, 2019.



Figures 12-14 below compare the number of public dog parks in Fairfax County to peer municipalities. In looking at these charts, it can be observed that Fairfax County is a leader among similarly sized (both square miles of land area and population) municipalities, as well as among municipalities in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area. Fairfax County has the second highest amount of dog parks in all three comparison charts. However, in comparing to other municipalities in the Washington D.C. region, when the City of Alexandria's unfenced off-leash dog areas are accounted for, this puts Alexandria ahead of both Washington D.C. and Fairfax County in total number of public dog parks, with Fairfax County ranking third in this comparison.

### ***Dog Park Quantity Comparison by Similar Land Area***



*Figure 12: Dog park quantity comparison among similarly sized municipalities*

**Notes:** Land area shown above is inclusive of water area measurements for each municipality. Municipalities shown above limited in part to data available from the Trust for Public Land's Dog Park Rankings for the 100 largest U.S. cities, 2019. Fairfax County dog park totals are inclusive of two publicly accessible non-FCPA owned dog parks (Moorefield Park and Westmore Dog Park). The total number shown above does not reflect planned (unbuilt) or privately owned dog parks.

#### **Data Sources**

U.S. Census Bureau. 2010 decennial Census. Table GCT-PH1. Population, Housing Units, Area, and Density: 2010 - United States -- Metropolitan and Micropolitan Statistical Area, in Principal City, Not in Principal City, and County; and for Puerto Rico. American Fact Finder (now data.census.gov). Available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/TheTrustforPublicLand.2019.Dogparkrankingsforthe100largestU.S.cities,2019>. Available at: [https://www.tpl.org/sites/default/files/City%20Park%20Facts%20Dog%20Parks%202019\\_R5\\_0.pdf](https://www.tpl.org/sites/default/files/City%20Park%20Facts%20Dog%20Parks%202019_R5_0.pdf)

### Dog Park Quantity Comparison by Similar Population Size

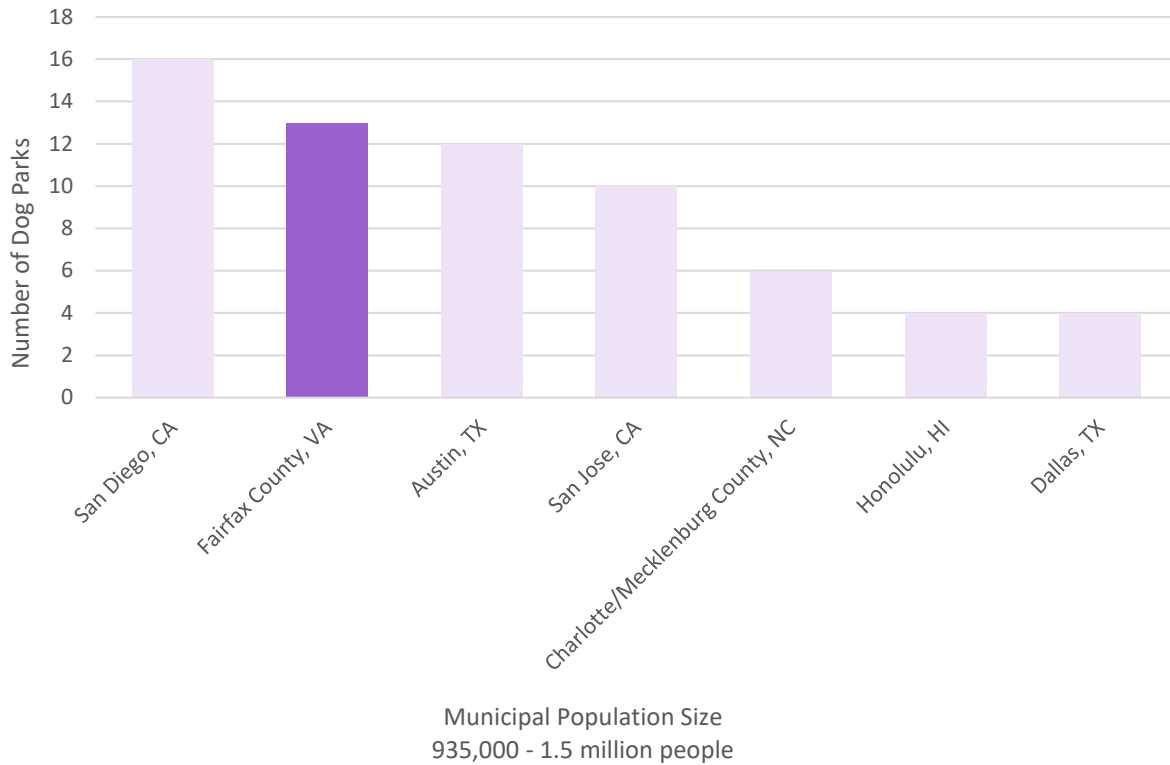


Figure 13: Dog park quantity comparison among municipalities with similar residential population sizes to Fairfax County

**Notes**

Population data for Fairfax County derived from Fairfax County Economic, Demographic and Statistical Research, 2019. Population data for all other municipalities obtained from the Trust for Public Land’s Dog Park Rankings for the 100 largest U.S. cities, 2019.

Municipalities shown above limited in part to data available from the Trust for Public Land’s Dog Park Rankings for the 100 largest U.S. cities, 2019.

Fairfax County dog park totals are inclusive of two publicly accessible non-FCPA owned dog parks (Moorefield Park and Westmore Dog Park). The total number shown above does not reflect planned or privately owned dog parks.

**Data Sources**

County of Fairfax, Virginia. Demographic Reports. 2019. Available at <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/demographics/sites/demographics/files/assets/demographicreports/fullrpt2019.pdf>  
 The Trust for Public Land. 2018. Dog park rankings for the 100 largest U.S. cities, 2018. Available at: [https://www.tpl.org/sites/default/files/City%20Park%20Facts%20Dog%20Parks%202019\\_R5\\_0.pdf](https://www.tpl.org/sites/default/files/City%20Park%20Facts%20Dog%20Parks%202019_R5_0.pdf)

### Dog Park Quantity Comparison to Municipalities in the Washington D.C. Metropolitan Area

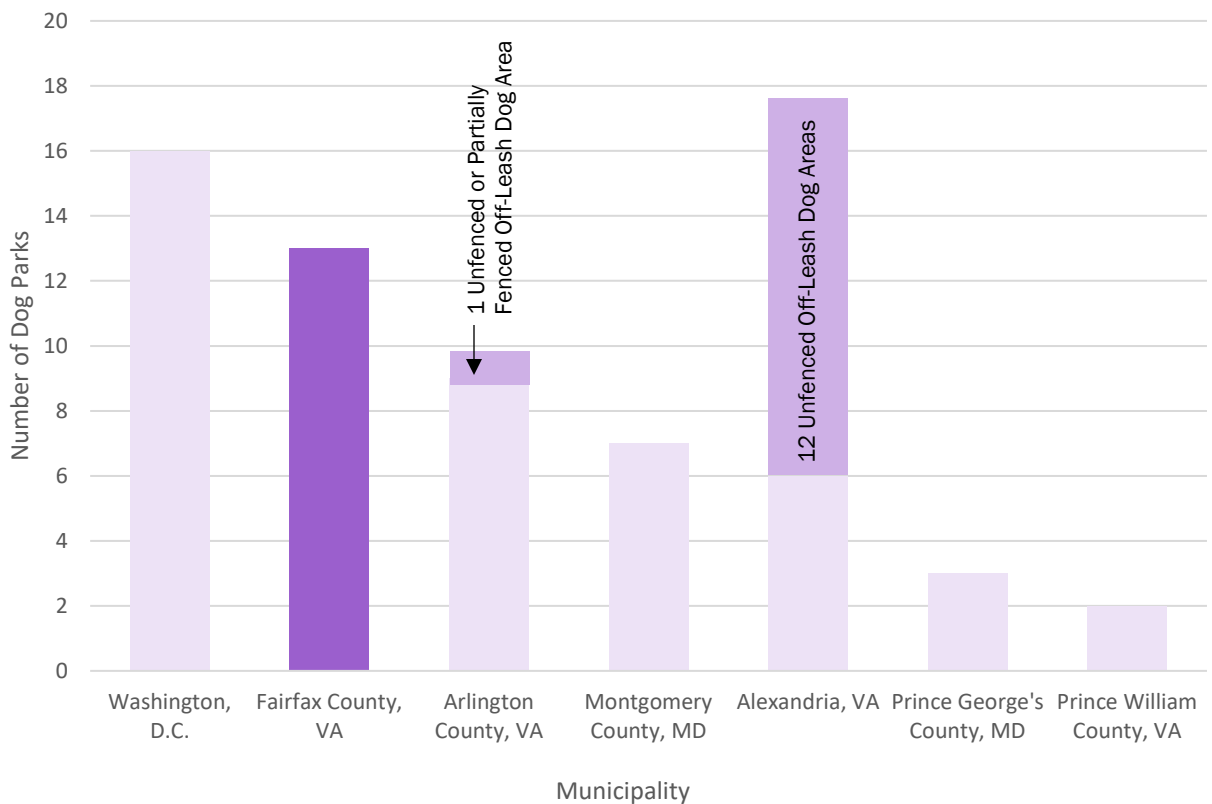


Figure 14: Dog park quantity comparison among other municipalities in the region.

#### Notes

Fairfax County dog park totals are inclusive of two publicly accessible non-FCPA owned dog parks (Moorefield Park and Westmore Dog Park). The number shown above does not reflect planned or privately owned dog parks. All dog parks are fenced unless otherwise noted.

Arlington County has a total of 10 dog parks when including the 1 dog park that is unfenced or partially fenced. The City of Alexandria has a total of 18 dog parks when including the 12 unfenced off leash dog areas. One dog park in Prince William County is temporarily closed due to construction. Data compiled in August 2019, updated in June 2021.

#### Data Sources

- <https://dpr.dc.gov/page/dog-parks-00>
- <https://parks.arlingtonva.us/parksfacilities/dog-parks/>
- <https://www.montgomeryparks.org/about/rules-and-regulations/dog-parks/>
- <https://www.alexandriava.gov/Dogs>
- <https://www.mncppc.org/4496/Dog-Parks>
- <https://www.pwcva.gov/department/parks-recreation-tourism/dog-park>
- <https://www.pwcva.gov/department/animal-control/dog-park>

In addition to the 13 dog parks that are on the ground today, there are planned, but unbuilt dog parks included in the master plans for seven existing FCPA-owned parks. Combining the number of both existing and planned dog parks brings the total number of dog parks in Fairfax County to 20, exceeding all the peer municipalities examined above. The FCPA parks where dog parks are master planned but not yet built are listed below and shown in Figure 15: Existing and Planned FCPA Dog Parks .

- Franconia Park
- Lake Fairfax Park
- McLean Central Park
- Bryn Mawr Park
- Bren Mar Park
- Olander and Margaret Banks Sr. Park
- Laurel Hill Park

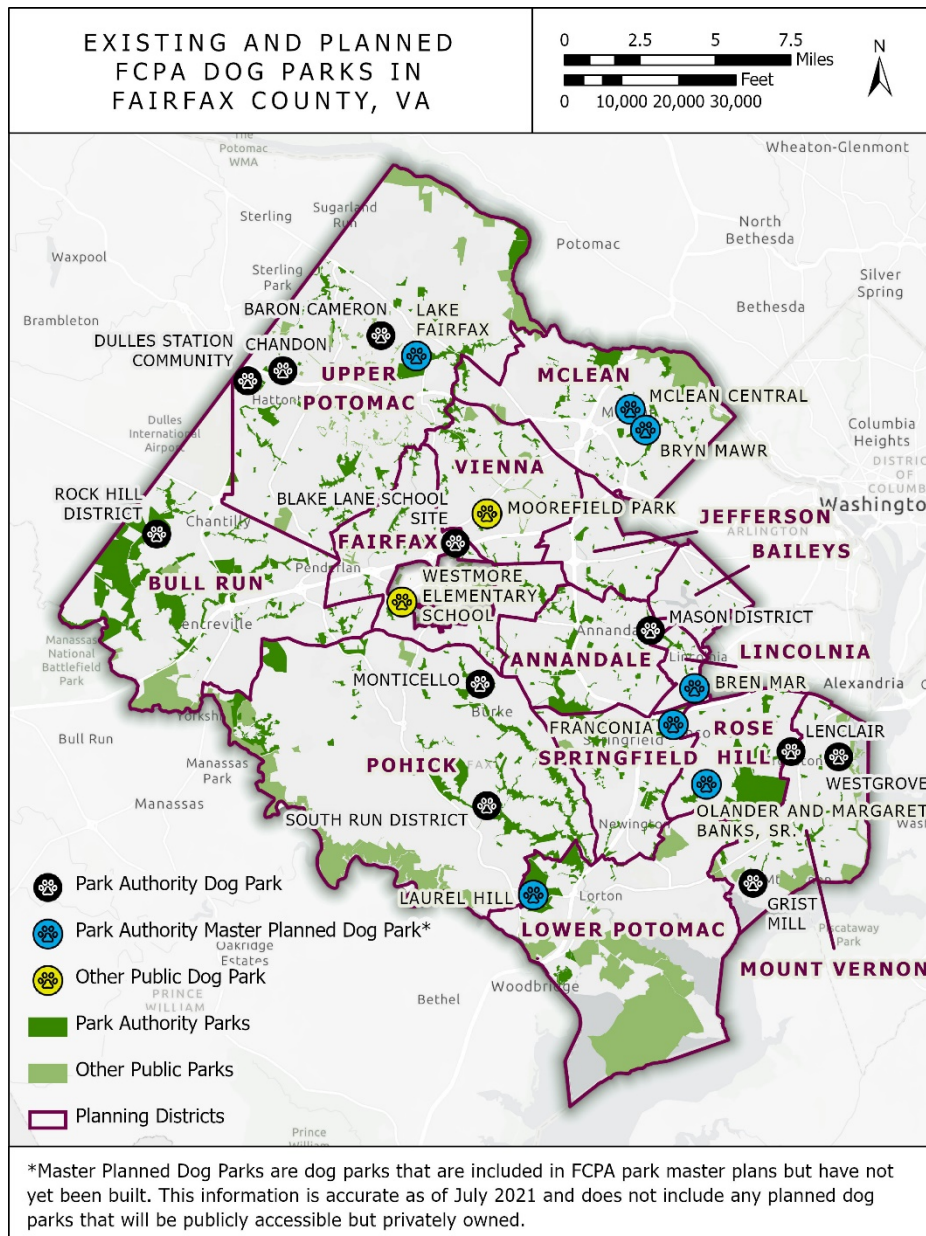


Figure 15: Existing and Planned FCPA Dog Parks Map

Beyond the 13 existing FCPA dog parks and seven that are planned, there are additional, publicly accessible but privately owned dog parks and dog runs<sup>7</sup> in the County, such as The Mile Dog Park in Tysons Corner, which are typically constructed by private developers. The Mile Dog Park is a 0.5-acre dog park located in Tysons Urban Center and is nestled amongst mixed-use residential development, and part of a planned urban neighborhood. It features artificial turf for surfacing, a variety of benches, shade trees, and a water fountain for visitors and their dogs. These privately developed dog parks and runs play an important role in filling the County need for dog parks, particularly in densely populated settings, such as Tysons Urban Center. The total number and location of these types of facilities at this time is not known<sup>8</sup>.

## HOW MANY DOG PARKS SHOULD FAIRFAX COUNTY HAVE, AND HOW FAR SHOULD RESIDENTS TRAVEL TO GET TO THEM?

This study examined four main criteria when answering this question:

- Service level analysis - Needs Assessment standards
- Geographic distribution – Planning Districts
- Walk and drive access
- Density of licensed dogs in the County

These criteria help to determine the County’s need for dog parks. In addition, the study drew from public input and, as a best practice, the study undertook research to better understand how other localities have answered these questions as well when planning their dog parks.

### Needs Assessment Standards

One of the tools that FCPA utilizes for park planning are service level standards, which are generated by FCPA’s decennial Needs Assessment and are published in FCPA’s Comprehensive Park System Plan, *Great Parks Great Communities 2010-2020* (2011). These population-based standards are also published in the Parks and Recreation section in the Policy element of the County’s Comprehensive Plan (2017).

The adopted service level standard for neighborhood dog parks (which are typically less than three acres)<sup>9</sup> is one dog park per 86,000 residents. According to the 2011 Comprehensive Park System plan, the number of neighborhood dog parks needed in 2020 to meet this standard is 13 (Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, Policy Plan, Parks

<sup>7</sup> Runs are often less than 0.25 acres, and may have less amenities

<sup>8</sup> This report focused on publicly owned and accessible dog parks. More data on privately owned publicly accessible dog parks is needed in order to conduct a complete analysis, thus, the Mile Dog Park located in the Tysons Urban Center was not included in this report’s evaluations. Upon the compilation of a more complete inventory, The Mile Dog Park, and other dog parks like it, should be considered and incorporated into future analyses.

<sup>9</sup> All 13 of Fairfax County’s existing dog parks are less than two acres and are all considered neighborhood dog parks. For the purposes of this report, all references to dog parks, unless otherwise noted, are considered neighborhood dog parks.

and Recreation, 2017, p. 22; Great Parks Great Communities 2010-2020 Park System Plan, 2011, Countywide Chapter, p. 23). Currently, Fairfax County is meeting the need for neighborhood dog parks.

The most recent Needs Assessment study (2016) also recommended that the service level standard for a countywide dog park be removed. Note that a countywide dog park (also referred to as a regional dog park) is distinct from a neighborhood dog park; a countywide dog park is typically greater than eight acres and has special amenities and event features (Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, Parks and Recreation, 2017, p. 22). Because a countywide dog park would likely need to be established through corporate sponsorship and/or a public-private partnership and would require market feasibility research, through the Needs Assessment it was determined that the population-based standard was not the appropriate planning tool for this type of dog park. Note that the removal of the population-based service level standard for a countywide dog park does not preclude the construction of one in the County, rather, this administrative change informs how this type of dog park should be planned for in the future. Currently, there are no countywide dog parks in Fairfax County.

### Geographic Distribution – Planning Districts

The study examined geographic distribution of dog parks by planning district<sup>10</sup>; as shown in *Figure 15* and detailed below, there are seven planning districts that do not have a dog park<sup>11</sup>:

- Baileys\*
- Jefferson\*
- Rose Hill
- Springfield
- McLean
- Lincolnia
- Lower Potomac

Except for the Baileys and Jefferson planning districts (\*), planning districts listed above have unbuilt master planned dog parks, as shown in *Figure 15* above. This gap is addressed in the Recommendations section below.

### Walk and Drive Access

In the dog park survey, FCPA asked the public how far (in terms of time, i.e., minutes) they are willing to travel to dog parks by different travel modes. Walking a maximum distance of 6-10 minutes to a dog park was the most popular selection among respondents who were willing to walk to a dog park and driving a maximum distance between 11-20 minutes was the most popular selection among respondents who were willing to drive to a dog park, as shown in *Figures 16* and *17*.

<sup>10</sup> The early planning of Fairfax County's first dog parks sought to establish one dog park for each of the nine Supervisory districts, which was successfully accomplished. As part of this study however, FCPA has employed the lens of the county planning districts as a means for evaluation, to align with the Comprehensive Plan and other county planning efforts.

<sup>11</sup> Publicly owned, publicly accessible dog park (e.g., an FCPA dog park). Note that there may be privately owned dog parks in these districts.

### How far are you willing to walk to go to a dog park? (Respondents willing to walk)

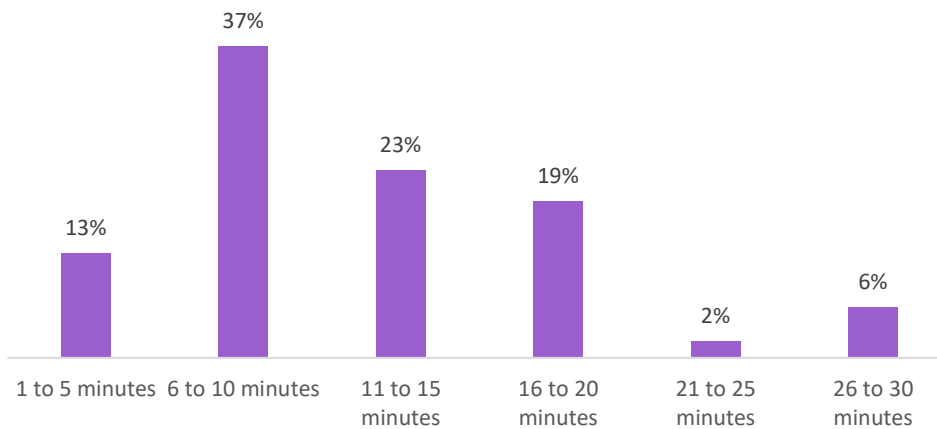


Figure 16: How far are you willing to walk to go to a dog park?

Note: Those who were not willing to walk excluded from above chart.

### How far are you willing to drive to go to a dog park? (Respondents willing to drive)

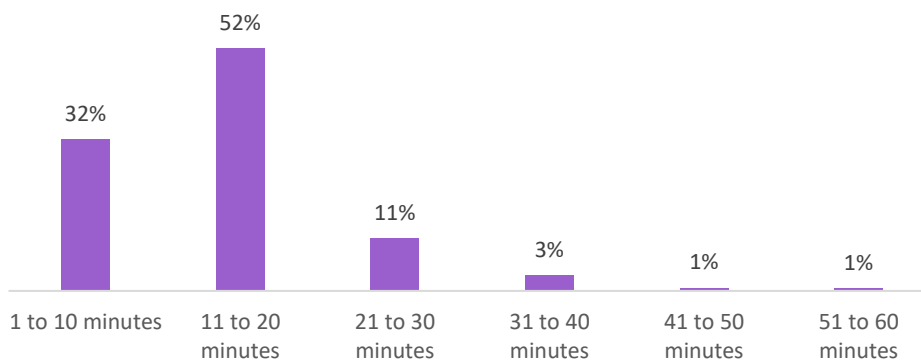


Figure 17: How far are you willing to drive to go to a dog park?

Note: Those who were not willing to drive excluded from above chart.

Approximately 90% of dog owners and walkers indicated they are willing to walk some distance to dog parks, and approximately 94% of dog owners and walkers indicated they are willing to drive some distance to dog parks. In addition, 87% of dog owners and walkers indicated they are willing to both walk and drive to dog parks.

This information was used to establish recommended access-based dog park service areas for consideration in the planning of future dog parks which is presented here and included in the Recommendations section below.

Acknowledging the largely suburban landscape of Fairfax County and the willingness of residents to drive to dog parks as indicated in the survey, it is recommended that at a

minimum, Fairfax County aim to provide access to a dog park that is within a 20-minute drive of most residents<sup>12</sup>. This can be referred to as the countywide service area standard. It is also recommended that in the future where practicable, in the densely populated areas of the County, access to a dog park or dog run that is within a 10-minute walk for residents be considered.

The densely populated areas of the County are shown below in Figure 18 and are representative of several of the County's Special Planning Areas, which are designated by the Comprehensive Plan. Special Planning Areas are areas in the County where walkable, mixed use neighborhood planning is especially encouraged and emphasized, and access to open space and automobiles is likely to be lower when compared to the county at large. Dog parks and dog runs in these areas are also more likely to be established through new construction, where they are integrated into new residential and mixed-use developments<sup>13</sup>. These dog parks and dog runs located within private developments should continue to be encouraged through the development review process, where appropriate.

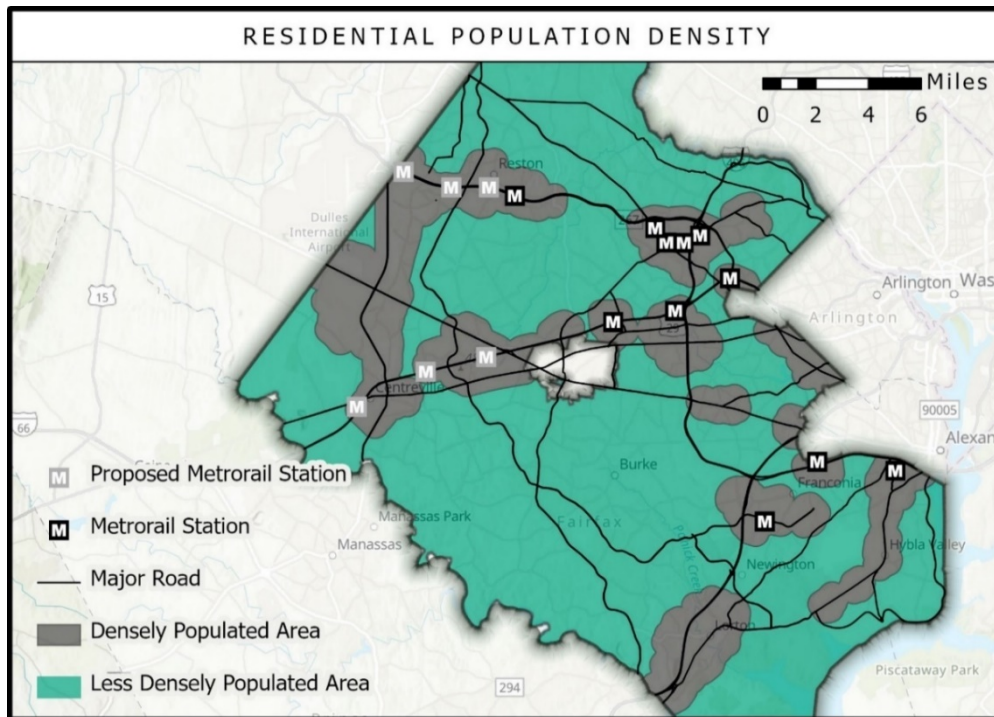


Figure 18: Residential Population Density in Fairfax County

Note: Several Special Planning Areas as defined in the County Comprehensive Plan (2017) were used as a proxy for population density. The densely populated areas shown above are reflective of select Special Planning Areas in Fairfax County and include a half mile buffer around these areas. The Special Planning Areas included are: Urban Centers, Suburban Centers, Community Business Centers, and Transit Station Areas. Industrial Areas and Large Institutional Land Areas were excluded.

<sup>12</sup> After careful consideration, the countywide drive access standard to dog parks was determined to be the most appropriate and feasible at this time.

<sup>13</sup> Because FCPA does not have complete data on privately-owned, publicly accessible dog parks, and because this report focused on publicly owned and accessible dog parks, a complete walk analysis in the more dense areas of the county was not conducted. Once all data is readily available, it is recommended that a walk analysis in these areas be conducted.



In applying the recommended countywide service area standard (20-minute drive), as *Figure 19* demonstrates, most of the County has suitable driving access to Fairfax County's 13 dog parks (approximately 98.4% of County residents). However, there are some gaps in dog park access based on the driving access threshold; as can be seen in *Figure 19*, a portion of the McLean Planning District does not have complete access. As shown in *Figure 20*, construction of either of the master planned dog parks in this planning district would close these access gaps, thereby providing 20-minute driving access to an estimated additional 1.3%<sup>14</sup> of County residents. This gap is addressed in the Recommendations section below.

---

<sup>14</sup> Approximately 15,371-15,635 residents, depending on which park.

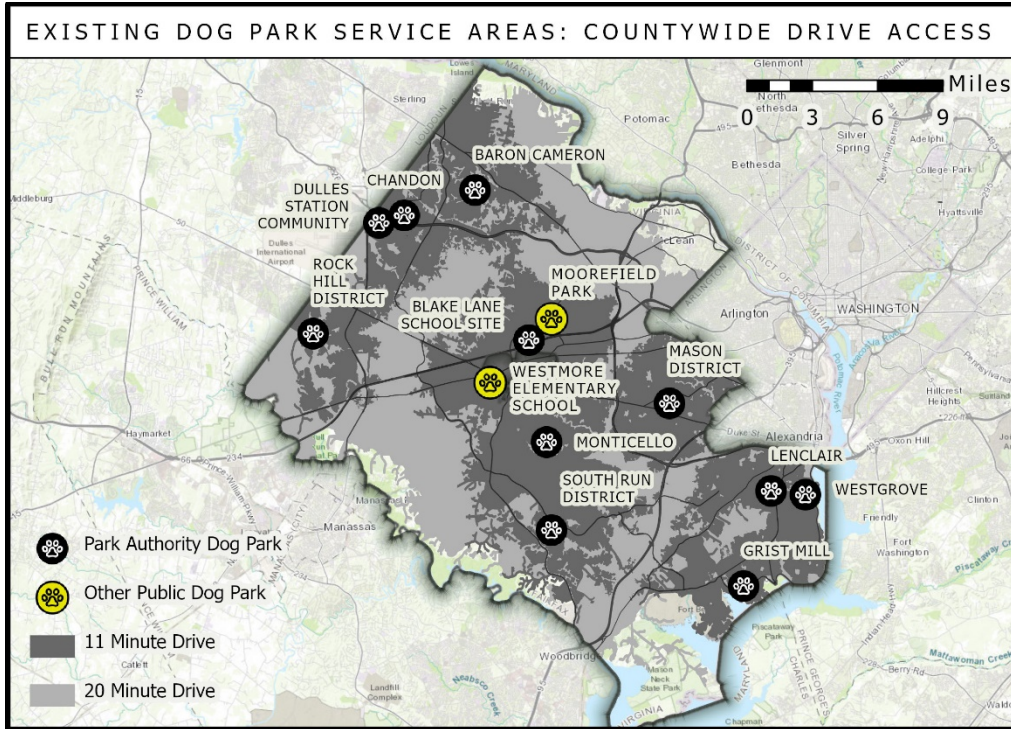


Figure 19: Application of countywide service area (20-minute drive) to existing dog parks in Fairfax County.

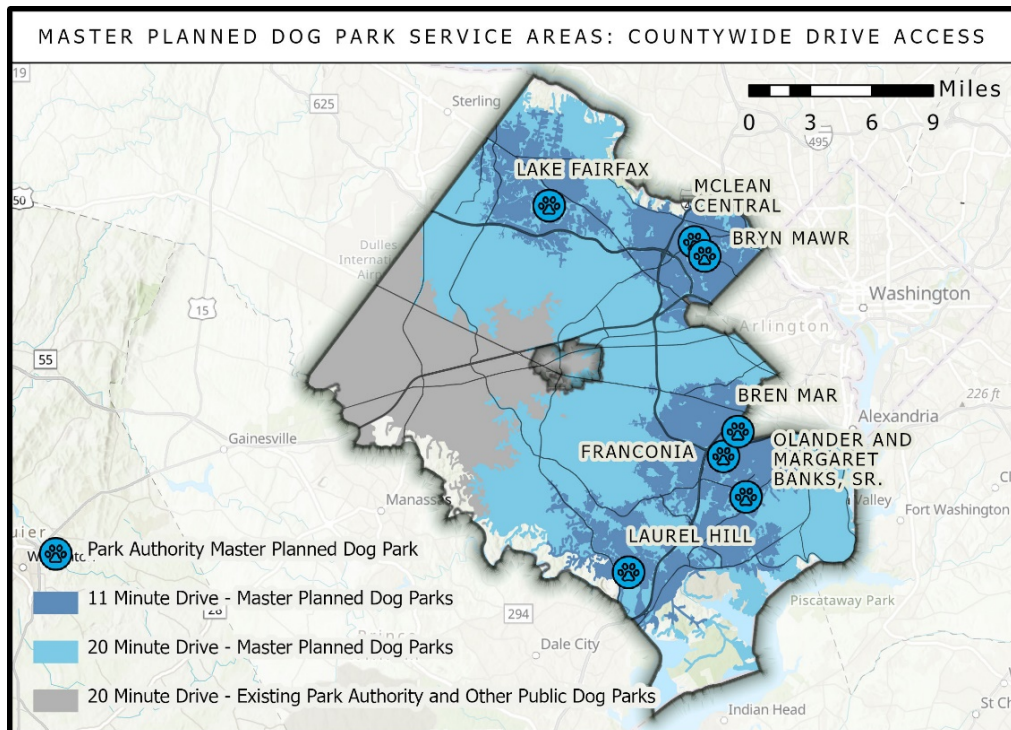


Figure 20: Application of countywide service area (20-minute drive) to master planned dog parks.

Note: For both figures, drive times have been generated using ArcGIS Business Analyst. This models the movement of cars and other similar small automobiles, such as pickup trucks, and finds solutions that optimize travel time. Travel obeys one-way roads, avoids illegal turns, and follows other rules that are specific to cars. Dynamic travel speeds based on traffic are used where it is available. A 5:00pm start time was included to account for rush-hour traffic.

### Density of Licensed Dogs in the County

Using dog license registration data from 2019, FCPA generated a map, shown below in Figure 21 which indicates the density of the registered dog population in Fairfax County. This datapoint helps to further illustrate demand and can be used to inform future planning of dog parks.

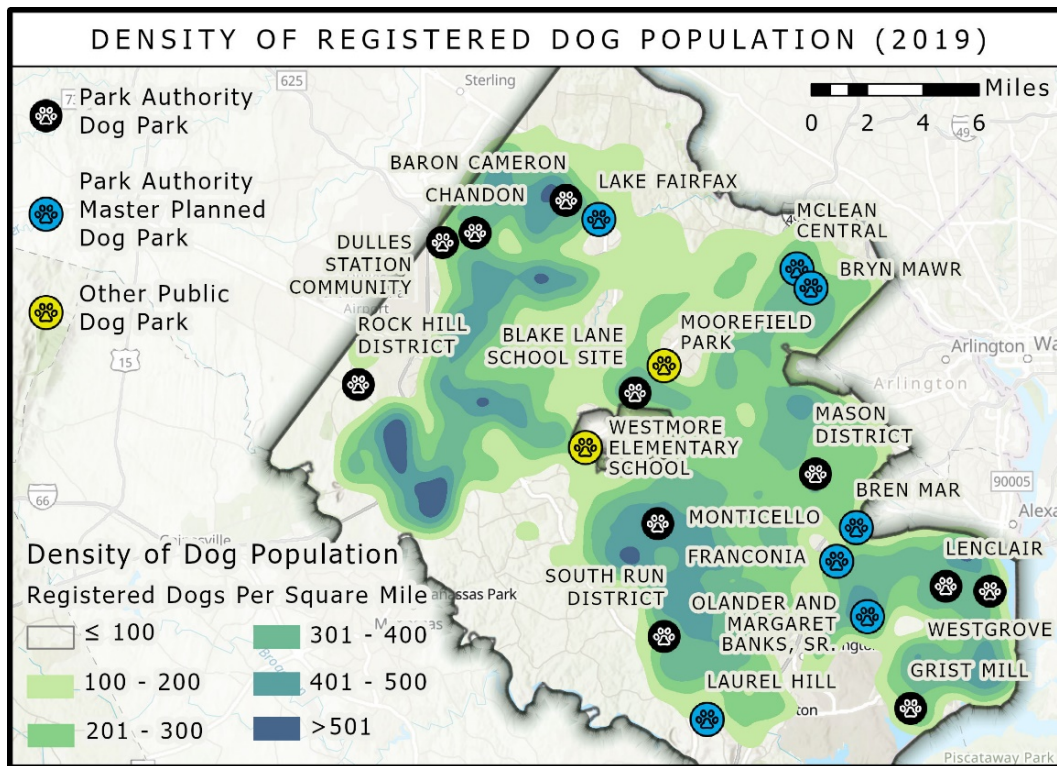


Figure 21: Density of Registered Dog Population (2019) Map

Note: This data is from the Fairfax County Department of Tax Administration. The total number of registered dogs in Fairfax County in 2019 was 81,007.

The dog license registration data from 2019 indicates that existing and master planned dog parks generally provide sufficient coverage to these pockets of demand. However, there may be potential gaps in the western portion of the County (Bull Run Planning District). This gap is addressed in the Recommendations section below.

### What We Also Heard

Several respondents inquired through the survey about the maintenance and ownership status of a dog park located within a private development located along Archstone Way, in the Alexandria area of Fairfax County. This dog park is part of a recreation area that also includes a small field and a tot lot. This recreation area, inclusive of the dog park, is owned by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors (BOS) and is both privately and publicly maintained; public maintenance is provided by Fairfax County's Facilities Management Department (FMD). This park (and dog park) is not owned, operated, or maintained by FCPA. Due to its unique ownership, maintenance arrangement, and siting location, this dog park was excluded from the analyses in this report.

In the survey, FCPA asked the public where in the County a new dog park is most needed. As shown in Figure 22, Upper Potomac and Bull Run were the top two most voted planning districts.

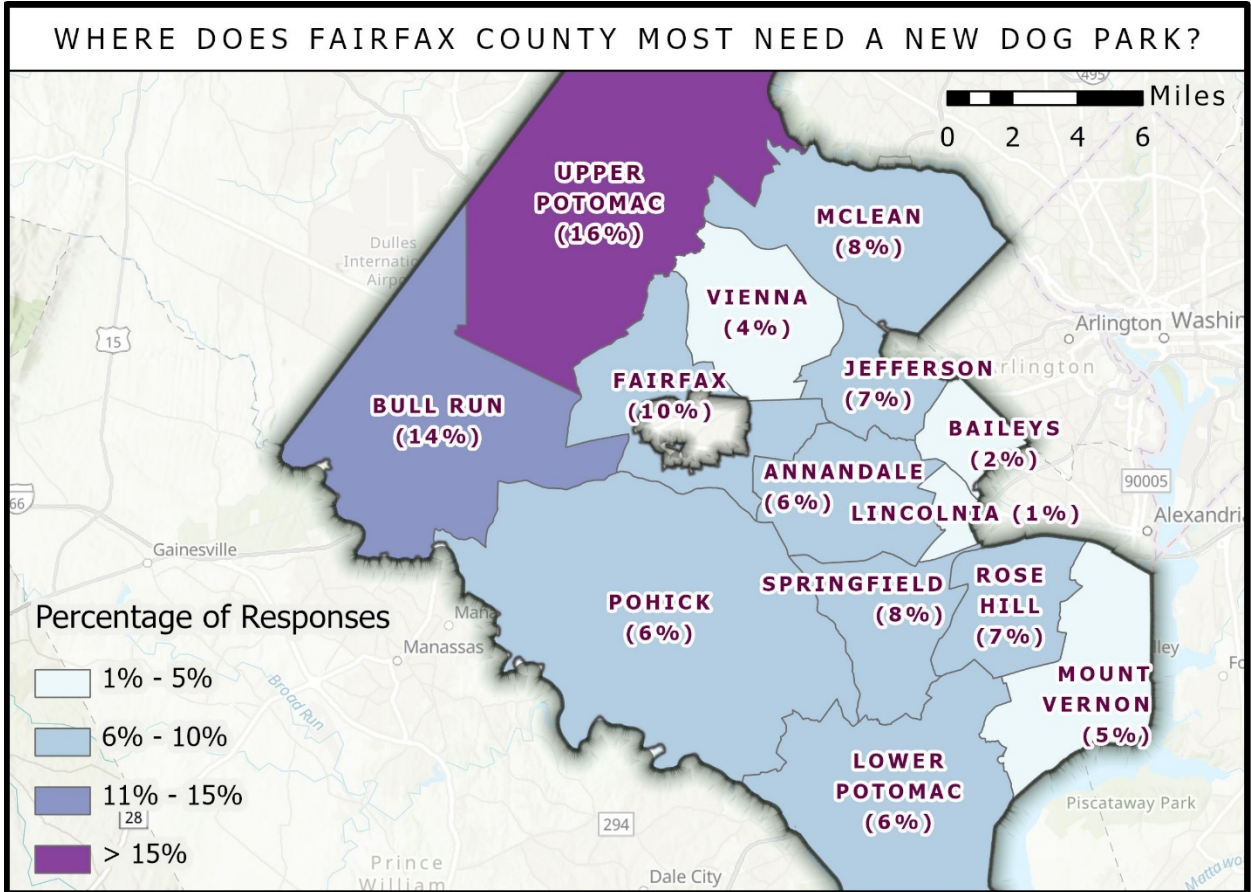


Figure 22: Where Does Fairfax County Most Need a New Dog Park? Survey Map

In addition, in the open comment portion of the public survey, commenters expressed high interest in accessing other FCPA parks (non-dog parks) and/or trails with their dogs off-leash, and suggested scheduling certain times of the year when visitors would be permitted to do so. Commenters also shared that they really enjoy special dog events, such as the annual Dog Days of Summer event, and suggested that FCPA host more of these types of events and other classes and activities.

Commenters shared that they would like to see additional and improved public information about dog parks and dog related events. Commenters also shared that some of the Google Map listings of FCPA’s dog parks (e.g., names of dog parks) are inconsistent with the information shown on FCPA’s dog park webpage.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### FUTURE DOG PARK CONSTRUCTION

- Construct at least one new dog park by 2025. This will satisfy the estimated service level need based on the projected population for 2025. Please see Figure 23 below.

Year	Projected population	Total number of dog parks needed (1/86,000)
2025	1,207,752	14.04
2035	1,311,996	15.25
2045	1,405,920	16.34

*Figure 23: Estimated total number of dog parks needed in Fairfax County to satisfy FCPA's service level standard. Fairfax County General Overview. 2020. Fairfax County VA Overview: Demographic Characteristics. Population data retrieved from <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/demographics/fairfax-county-general-overview>*

- Utilize the list of master planned but unbuilt dog parks for selection of the next dog park and prioritize based on community support and the following planning criteria:
  - Geographic Distribution (planning districts),
  - Dog Park Access (20-minute drive access), and
  - Density of dogs in the County
- Construction of either of the dog parks that are master planned in McLean (Bryn Mawr or McLean Central) would provide residents in this area 20-minute drive access to a dog park, closing driving access gaps in the county. It would also provide a dog park for this planning district, where there is currently none. Construction of the dog park that is master planned at Lake Fairfax would satisfy the high interest expressed by residents in the Upper Potomac Planning District (the survey's most-voted area for a dog park) and address demand indicated by the high concentration of dogs in this area of the County. It should be emphasized that continued community support and funding would be needed prior to developing any of the master planned but unbuilt dog parks where a significant amount of time has passed since the master plan's adoption.
- Following the selection and construction of one planned dog park, establish a schedule for the construction of the remaining six dog parks that are master planned but not yet built, and identify funding sources for the construction of these parks. Construction of these parks should be prioritized utilizing the criteria described above. Building and establishing these planned dog parks will exceed the number of dog parks required to satisfy the County's estimated service level need over the next 20+ years, close dog park gaps in planning districts and help better meet community demand as indicated by both licensed dogs and community survey.

- Explore options for planning a new dog park in the Baileys and Jefferson Planning Districts and/or identify and convey information about the privately owned publicly accessible dog parks in these districts, both of which currently do not have any existing or planned FCPA dog parks. These actions would help close these gaps.
- Explore options for planning another dog park in the Bull Run Planning District and/or identify and convey information about the privately owned publicly accessible dog parks in this district to better address demand in this area. There is a high concentration of licensed dogs in this area of the County and Bull Run was the 2<sup>nd</sup> most voted area for where respondents felt that Fairfax County most needs a dog park.

### FUTURE DOG PARK PLANNING

- In the future, prioritize the development of new dog parks (beyond those that are master planned) based on:
  - Expressed community interest
  - Planning criteria:
    - Needs Assessment Standards
    - Geographic distribution - Planning Districts
    - Dog park access-based service areas; 20-minute drive access (countywide) and consideration of 10-minute walk access in more densely populated neighborhoods
    - Density of licensed dogs in the County
  - Suitability of prospective sites based on siting criteria described in the Site Planning section below
- Conduct an inventory of all privately owned, publicly accessible dog parks in the County. Prioritize this effort in the Baileys and Jefferson Districts as well as the more dense areas in the County (*Figure 18 Residential Population Density*) where these types of dog parks are more likely to be constructed, to better understand how access and need is being met in these areas. This effort could be incorporated into a future comprehensive countywide park planning effort.
- Due to its unique ownership, maintenance arrangement, and siting location, evaluate the dog park located on Archstone Way when conducting the future inventory of privately owned, publicly accessible dog parks discussed above and identify how to best characterize this dog park going forward.
- Per the recommendation of the 2016 Needs Assessment, eliminate the service level standards for a countywide dog park from the County Comprehensive Plan Parks and Recreation section in the Policy Plan (2017), and in the next update to FCPA's Comprehensive Park System Plan. Note that the removal of the population-

based service level standard of this park type does not preclude the construction of one in the County, rather, this administrative change more accurately reflects how this type of park should be planned for (e.g., market feasibility research and exploration of a public-private partnership).

## ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Consider hosting additional dog-related events, building on what has been offered in the past, and following examples from other similar jurisdictions, to meet public need and interest.
- In the future, work with the Fairfax County Department of Planning and Development to establish suggested siting and design guidelines for dog runs for use by the development community.
- Consolidate all information related to dog parks, dog classes and events hosted by FCPA, dog park volunteer information, donation opportunities, and dog-owner related requirements (vaccination, rabies clinics, etc.) into a single webpage. This will greatly enhance FCPA's dog park webpage and will aid in providing more robust information about dog parks and dog park events, as requested by the public. In addition, on the dog park webpage, improve FCPA's existing dog park map to be more user-friendly. As part of this effort, the Google Map listings of dog parks should be corrected to ensure listings of FCPA's dog parks (e.g., names of dog parks) are accurate.
- FCPA has historically referred to publicly accessible fenced recreational facilities for dogs as Off Leash Dog Exercise Areas or Off-Leash Dog Areas (OLDAs). However, the term "dog park" is commonly used by other jurisdictions in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area, as well as elsewhere within the County, such as on local dog advocacy websites, to describe these facilities. This study recommends that FCPA adopt an informal reference to OLDA facilities as "dog parks" which can be utilized in FCPA's communication and planning materials, with the understanding that the rules surrounding how these facilities are regulated will remain as Off Leash Dog Exercise Areas or Off-Leash Dog Areas according to Fairfax County Code. The adoption of the term "dog park" for communication purposes would allow for consistency with language used by other jurisdictions, minimize confusion when searching for these facilities, enhance marketing, programming, and planning materials, and overall make reference to these facilities more clear.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS – SITE PLANNING

- FCPA should adopt the newly revised dog park siting criteria, which were developed as part of this study to better accommodate the evolving County landscape.
- Going forward, FCPA should utilize the newly prepared dog park siting tools included in this report. These siting tools factor in the revised siting criteria as well as feedback received from the public on dog park preferences. These tools will standardize, streamline, and enhance the dog park site planning process.
- FCPA should adopt the updated process for establishing a new dog park developed as part of this study, which more fully captures current planning procedures and the public participation process.
- In the future, FCPA should continue to coordinate with the Fairfax County Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (DPWES) stormwater department on annual dog park inspections so that FCPA can readily address any areas in need of improvement.

## ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

In addition to examining countywide planning, the study also took a deeper dive into researching site planning for dog parks. The study was tasked with answering: how should dog parks in the County be sited?

The study sought to answer this question to establish updated dog park site planning criteria, as well as to provide updated and clarifying language on the required process for establishing a new dog park. Updated and clear criteria and information about this process will better equip the County and the community in the future when considering establishing a new dog park. This section presents the study's finding to this question.

### HOW SHOULD DOG PARKS IN THE COUNTY BE SITED?

While there are seven dog parks that are master planned but unbuilt (e.g., sites have already been selected through previous master planning processes), siting criteria is needed for the future siting and development of dog parks outside of those seven locations. The siting criteria can also be applied on a site-level basis to determine the portions within the site that are most optimal for dog park development.

As part of this study, FCPA planners reviewed FCPA's existing siting criteria, reviewed previous studies, county ordinances and policies, examined peer localities and best management practices, and met with DPWES. Drawing from the key findings detailed below, in combination with public feedback and additional research, FCPA compiled revised and updated dog park siting criteria and developed siting analysis tools. The criteria and tools are detailed in the Recommendations section below.



Examination of site planning for dog parks yielded the following findings:

- More specific siting criteria is needed to accommodate the evolving County landscape. For example, FCPA's previous siting criteria did not provide a specified distance for siting dog parks away from floodplains, employ a population density framework for the size of dog parks, or specify how far a new dog park should be from an existing one. The need for revised criteria to address these aspects of site planning was recommended in a previous FCPA dog park study (2011) but was not formally adopted.
- FCPA does not have consolidated guidance on dog park siting in a digital or hard copy document that is readily available to the public. Previous siting criteria (1999 OLDA Standards and 2015 OLDA Locational Criteria) had been published in the form of digital memos and/or webpages, which have since been retired. Currently, this information is not posted online. In addition, a previous FCPA dog park study (2011) recommended that FCPA consolidate all dog park related guidelines, siting criteria, and rules in one easy to find place. It is crucial that this information be readily available for FCPA staff and the public.
- As staff reviewed site planning criteria, a need to document the process for establishing a new dog park was identified. While the process to establish a new dog park is the same as it is for any desired park use or feature, due to the many inquiries FCPA received related to dog parks, staff found that documentation and publication of this process was necessary. In addition, staff identified that the documentation needed to be updated to reflect current planning procedures, and, similar to the siting guidance described above, staff determined that information about this process should be made available online.
- The Fairfax County DPWES conducts dog park site inspections annually to satisfy MS4<sup>15</sup> permit compliance. To date, these site inspections, which are primarily concerned with runoff and impacts to stormwater, have been satisfactory. Continued coordination with DPWES on these inspections at existing dog parks will strengthen County partnerships and compliance. Also, additional stormwater best management practices undertaken by FCPA in the siting and design of new dog parks will further enhance environmental stewardship. Staff has recommended these additional stormwater best management practices in the revised dog park siting criteria detailed in this section.

## WHAT WE ALSO HEARD

In the dog park survey and as described elsewhere in this report, respondents shared that shade and drinking fountains for visitors and dogs were among some of the most important features to be included within a dog park. Commenters also shared their preference for designated areas for large and small dogs within a dog park.

---

<sup>15</sup> Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The top recommendation related to dog park site planning is to adopt the proposed revised dog park siting criteria presented in this report. The revisions represent minor updates to FCPA's existing dog park siting criteria. Key additions to the dog park siting criteria include:

- Where appropriate, specified distances, such as proximity from residential dwellings, floodplains, and other dog parks, were provided
- Population density considerations were incorporated
- Consideration of marine clay soils and park/visitor use conflicts were accounted for
- Stormwater best management practices have been added
- Dog park carrying capacity was modified to allow for more flexibility and consistency with peer jurisdictions

As described above, these revised criteria are based on research, combined with an examination of peer localities and best management practices, a review of the County's Zoning Ordinance, as well as a review of relevant policies put forth by the County and/or FCPA. The siting criteria can be considered the minimum requirements a site must meet for a future dog park to be considered at that site. The revised recommended siting criteria for the construction of future dog parks on FCPA property is presented below on the following page.

The study also developed several tools to accompany the recommended revised siting criteria, to be used in the siting and planning process of future dog parks. The tools developed incorporate the feedback FCPA heard from the public survey about desired features in a dog park. These tools are also detailed in this section.

The second key recommendation is for FCPA to adopt the proposed updated process for establishing a new dog park, prepared as part of this study. This process has been revised to reflect current FCPA practices and provides updated and clarifying language. An infographic of the process is detailed below, and the updated language can be found in Appendix 1.

In addition, heeding recommendations from a previous dog park study, the revised siting criteria, along with siting tools, the revised process for establishing a new dog park, and other relevant reference material (e.g., design guidelines, maintenance standards, etc.) has been compiled into one cohesive document. That compiled document is Appendix 1 of this report and is made available online on FCPA's dog park webpage.

Finally, it is recommended that FCPA continue to coordinate with the DPWES stormwater department on annual dog park inspections for site compliance so that FCPA can readily address any areas in need of improvement.

**RECOMMENDED SITING CRITERIA<sup>16</sup>**

- 1. Location.** The establishment of new FCPA dog parks requires review by the FCPA Planning and Development Division, and approval from the Park Authority Board. A Public Use Determination also must be approved by the Planning Commission (this process is often referred to as a 2232 Review). The feasibility of establishing a new dog park within a FCPA park should be evaluated and vetted during the park master planning phase along with any other potential new facilities, with input from the public. The siting of a new dog park is also subject to the County site plan provisions as administered by Fairfax County Land Development Services (LDS). FCPA will evaluate all prospective locations within the park against established criteria and will use the GIS dog park siting model and site criteria checklist. If the location is deemed suitable, funding sources for construction would need to be identified and a public engagement process would be required. A maintenance plan would also need to be established. Similarly, if the location of a planned but unbuilt dog park is revisited, a public engagement process would ensue if a significant period of time has passed since the master plan was approved, and funding sources would need to be identified and a maintenance plan established.
- 2. Size.** The size of an FCPA dog park is dependent on the population density of the area. In more densely populated areas, the minimum size for a dog park is  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre. In less densely populated areas, the minimum size for a dog park is  $\frac{1}{2}$  acre. Note that these criteria apply to dog parks, not dog runs, which are typically sited in more dense areas and are often smaller than  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre and may be privately owned and operated. A dog park should have separate areas for large dogs and small dogs when the size of the dog park permits. Dog park carrying capacity, or dog park maximum occupancy, is the total number of dogs a fenced-in dog area can safely accommodate. The carrying capacity for FCPA dog parks should be determined using a metric of between 500 to 700 square feet per dog within fenced-in dog areas. The dog park carrying capacity will be determined during the master planning or site design phase and will be responsive to the specific site conditions of the park. Signs should be posted at or near the respective entrances for each designated dog area stating the carrying capacity.
- 3. Buffer from residential areas.** Consider proximity of the potential dog park location to nearby neighbors. It is recommended that dog parks be sited at a minimum distance of 100 feet from the exterior of nearby existing residential dwellings. When siting a dog park near a residential area, screening (e.g., engineered barrier, vegetation) should be considered. The need for screening will be identified during the park master planning phase, and screening specifications will be determined at the time of site plan review.
- 4. Land suitability.** A new dog park should be constructed on well-drained soils. The site should be relatively flat (between 1.5%-4.5% slope); excessive slopes and marine clay

---

<sup>16</sup> The general framework of the siting criteria was modeled after the City of Ann Arbor's Recommendations and Guidelines for Dog Park Site Selection, Design, Operations and Maintenance. Retrieved from: <https://www.a2gov.org/departments/Parks-Recreation/play/Documents/Recommendations%20and%20Guidelines%20for%20Dog%20Park%20Site%20Selection%20updated%204-10-15.pdf>

soils should be avoided. If a desirable site has excessive slopes, it should be designed such that erosion does not become an issue. Additional health and safety protocols will be required should construction occur in soils containing naturally occurring asbestos.

5. **Natural and cultural resource protection.** Dog parks cannot be placed in locations where there is abundant native vegetation, nor within Resource Protection Areas (RPAs), Floodplains, Environmental Quality Corridors (EQCs), on sites with cultural resources, or within most easements. New dog parks should be sited at least 50 feet from floodplains<sup>17</sup>. In addition, park design should consider utilizing the following best practices to minimize the impacts of dog parks to stormwater and waterways:
  - Install a curb around the outside perimeter of the dog park to contain surface runoff, or a vegetated buffer to minimize runoff; and
  - Install pet waste stations/bags near dog park entrances, at intersections of walking paths, and near parking lots that serve the dog park
6. **Park/visitor use conflicts.** A new dog park should not conflict with or displace other desired recreation activities in the park. The location of the proposed dog park should work in harmony with the overall park design and adjacent facilities. Planning a dog park in concert with other park facilities adds to the potential for shared amenities, such as a water supply or shade opportunities. Locations directly adjacent to sport fields and other high use areas should be avoided.
7. **Proximity to other dog parks.** Consider the proximity of a potential site to existing dog parks. In less dense areas of the County, consider 20-minute drive access and in more dense areas of the County, consider 10-minute walk access (10-minute walk = ½ mile).
8. **Pedestrian connectivity and parking.** Connections to nearby trails and footpaths should be considered and the site should be evaluated for its ability to support safe, comfortable, and convenient pedestrian connectivity. If the site is in a less densely populated area, the site should provide sufficient parking (a minimum of 10-20 spaces). In more densely populated areas, a dedicated parking lot may not be necessary. Regardless of setting (e.g., more/less dense areas in the county), all parking provided should be convenient and designed to minimize impacts to the surrounding neighborhood.

---

<sup>17</sup> The Fairfax County RPA is defined as 100 feet distant from any perennial stream unless a detailed analysis trumps its delineation. The floodplain refers to, “those land areas in and adjacent to streams and watercourses subject to continuous or periodic inundation from flood events with a one (1) percent chance of occurrence in any given year (i.e., the 100-year flood frequency event also known as the base flood) and having a drainage area greater than seventy (70) acres, and include all areas of the County which are designated as a floodplain by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), by the United States Geological Survey, or by Fairfax County.” (ZO 20-300). The Fairfax County EQC is typically designated during a zoning application and contained within a resource-based park. EQCs “include 100-year floodplains, areas of 15% or greater slope adjacent to floodplains, or 50 feet from all streams, all wetlands connected to stream valleys, and all and measured from the stream bank 50 feet plus four feet per percent slope.”

**RECOMMENDED SITING CRITERIA TOOLS**

The study developed two primary tools to assist in siting future dog parks. The first tool developed was a checklist, which factors in the minimum siting criteria detailed above, as well as dog park visitor preferences for shade, water, and designated areas for dogs. The second tool developed was a GIS model to help screen for suitable sites using siting criteria that have a spatial component. The checklist is shown in Figure 24.

Preliminary Dog Park Site Feasibility Checklist <sup>1</sup>		
Required Criteria		
Criteria	YES	NO
<b>Size</b> Less densely populated area – site is a minimum of 0.50 acres More densely populated area – site is a minimum of 0.25 acres	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Residential Buffer</b> Site is at least 100 feet from nearby residential dwellings. Screening and/or a vegetated buffer is strongly preferred.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Land Suitability</b> Site is located on well-drained soils and can support drainage design that minimizes erosion potential; site is between 1.5-4.5% slope; proposed space within the site does not contain an existing facility.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Natural and Cultural Resource Protection</b> Site is not located in an RPA, Floodplain, EQC, on a site with cultural resources, a location where there is heavy native vegetation, or within an easement, and is at least 50' from adjacent floodplains.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Park/Visitor Use Conflicts</b> Site does not conflict with nor displace other desired park uses.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Proximity to other dog parks</b> The proximity of existing, nearby dog parks has been considered (20-minute drive access in less dense areas and 10-minute walk or half mile in more dense areas).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Pedestrian Connectivity and Parking</b> The site can support safe, comfortable, and convenient pedestrian connectivity and connections to nearby trails have been considered. If the site is in a less densely populated area, the site can support 10-20 spaces. If the site is in a more densely populated area, dedicated parking may not be necessary. Where applicable, parking that is convenient, with minimal impact on the surrounding neighborhood, can be supported.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Preferred criteria, but not required.</b>		
If a site does not have these elements, they should be considered as part of the dog park's design.		
<b>Designated Areas – strongly preferred</b> Site can support separate areas for small and large dogs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Shade- strongly preferred</b> Site has mature trees and a good mix of shade and open space.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Water- strongly preferred</b> Site has a water line connection that can support a drinking fountain for visitors and a water source for dogs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**About this checklist.**

This checklist was created to establish a standardized site evaluation process for prospective dog parks within existing FCPA parks. All required criteria need to be met for a site to be considered.

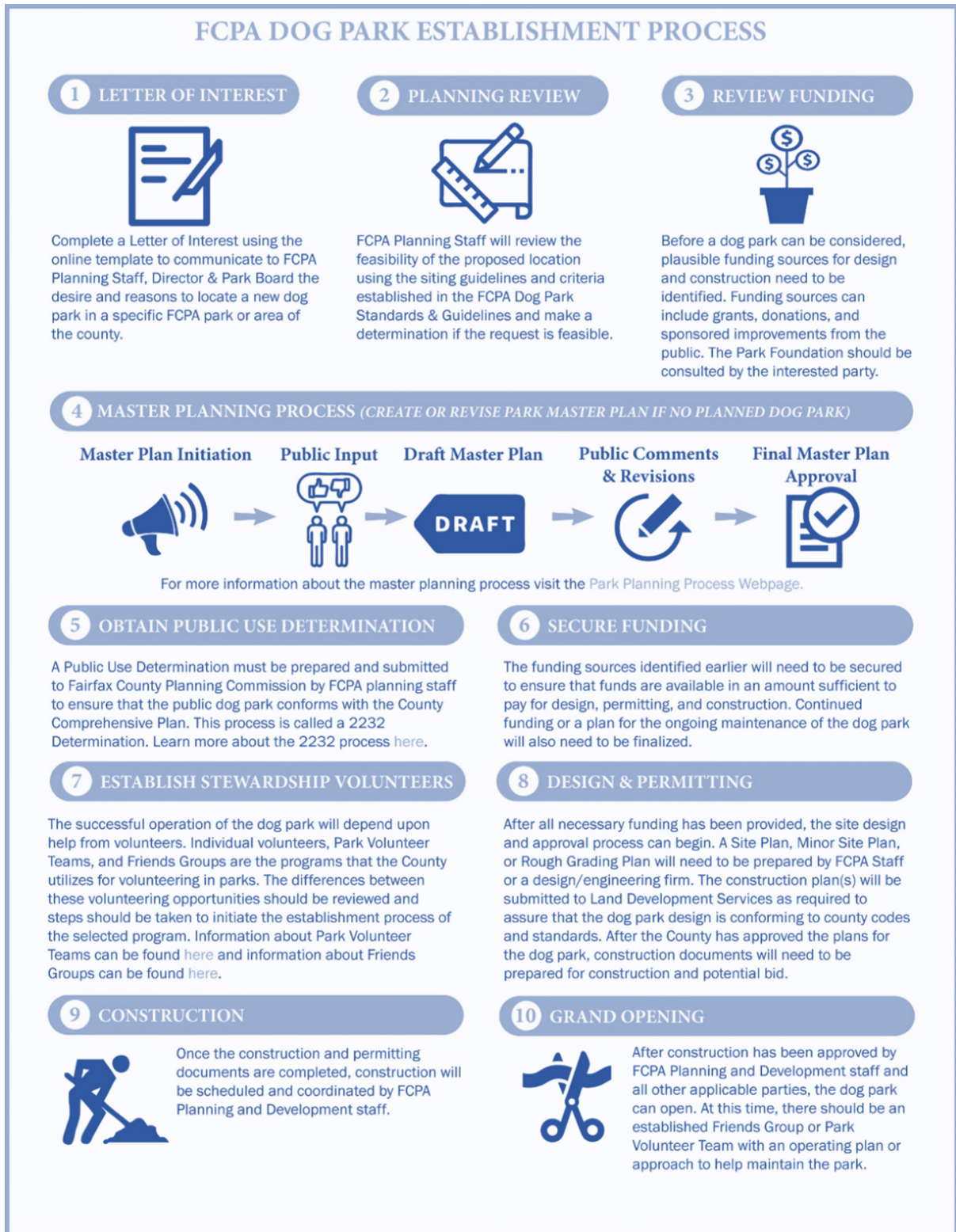
This checklist should be used by FCPA Park Planning staff to gauge the feasibility of a site for a prospective FCPA dog park and should be used in conjunction with the GIS dog-park site feasibility model, which was also completed as part of the 2019-2020 dog park study. The checklist can be used to assess one site as part of the master planning process, or to compare the feasibility of multiple prospective sites. Some of the required criteria are directly tied to physical site constraints, other criteria require consideration.

<sup>1</sup> The general framework of the above siting criteria was modeled after Ann Arbor's Recommendations and Guidelines for Dog Park Site Selection, Design, Operations and Maintenance. Retrieved from: <https://www.a2gov.org/departments/Parks-Recreation/play/Documents/Recommendations%20and%20Guidelines%20for%20Dog%20Park%20Site%20Selection%20updated%204-10-15.pdf>

Figure 24: Preliminary Dog Park Site Feasibility Checklist

## RECOMMENDED DOG PARK ESTABLISHMENT PROCESS

The study revised and streamlined the process for parties interested in taking the steps to initiate the development of a new FCPA dog park in the county.



## DOG PARK DESIGN

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Review of other jurisdiction dog park design guidelines has proved that there is no universal consensus on the best type of surfacing. All surfacing types, such as natural turf, washed stone dust, wood mulch, and synthetic turf have positive and negative aspects related to use, maintenance, and cost to be considered. However, washed stone dust surfacing was determined to be FCPA's surfacing of choice, due to its minimal maintenance and high durability. For newly developed FCPA dog parks, natural turf can be considered if the enclosed dog area is larger than 3 acres.
- All FCPA dog parks have crusher fines/washed stone dust surfacing with the exception of Westgrove, Chandon and Blake Lane dog parks. The survey results indicated dissatisfaction with the condition of the surfacing in some of these parks. It was found that excessive slope and the absence of a containment edge within these dog parks was a contributing factor to the surface condition. Reducing the slope and adding a concrete or timber curb in these dog parks would help improve the surfacing condition by limiting the migration of the surface material.
- The standards and guidelines for dog park planning, siting, placement, and design have evolved since the construction of FCPA's first dog park. This study examined and analyzed industry trends, best design practices, public feedback, and County policy. This study report puts forth a revised and refreshed set of standards and guidelines to be consistently referenced for the planning of new FCPA dog parks. The report can also be used as a guide for privately owned publicly accessible dog parks, which are typically developed through rezoning applications and proffers.
- Designated areas for large dogs and smaller, younger, or older dogs were expressed as a need through public comments. Additionally, nearly all guidelines reviewed as part of this study recommended some variation of these separated areas. Designated areas are recommended as part of the design guidelines for new dog parks and should be included when the size of the park can accommodate.

### ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

The design of a dog park has implications that affect user experience, safety, and long-term maintenance costs. The study evaluated survey response data, researched design best practices, and documented existing issues to determine a framework for both improving existing dog parks as well as guiding the design of future dog parks.

## DESIGN BEST PRACTICES

The study reviewed other jurisdictions' guidelines, survey data, and accepted industry standards<sup>18</sup> and identified the following design best practices:

### Surfacing Type Comparison

A thorough review of other jurisdictions' practices found that there is no universal agreement on the best type of surfacing. Each type of surfacing has positive and negative implications related to use, maintenance, and cost. Ultimately, the surface type selected should be responsive to the planned size of the dog park, anticipated amount of usage, available construction budget, and frequency of maintenance intended. A summary table presenting the pros, cons, and typical use for each surface type is provided below in Figure 25.

SURFACING	PROS	CONS	COST	TYPICAL USE
Natural Turf (e.g., grass)	Soft/clean	Wears quickly/high maintenance	Medium	Dog parks larger than 3 acres
Crusher Fines <sup>19</sup> /Washed Stone Dust	Drains well/longevity	Can erode if not on level surface	Medium	Preferred choice for all dog parks
Wood Mulch	Easy to replace	Holds dog waste/poor drainage	Low	Not recommended for use in dog parks
Synthetic Turf	Less maintenance	Requires frequent cleaning/high cost to replace every couple of years	High	Smaller dog parks and dog runs if coupled with an irrigation system

Figure 25: Dog Park Surfacing Types Comparison Table

All existing FCPA dog parks are smaller than three acres and crusher fines/washed stone dust has been the surfacing type primarily used due to the material's longevity and modest replacement cost. The exceptions are Westgrove, Chandon, and Blake Lane dog parks which have either natural or turf surfacing. The grass has been worn down to the dirt surface in many areas of these dog parks due to the high volume of use. FCPA is working with the Westgrove PACK<sup>20</sup> Friends Group to evaluate a surface maintenance regime to help restore the grass. Chandon Dog Park should remain as natural surfacing for the foreseeable future but can be considered for crusher fines/washed stone dust surfacing should the existing surfacing cause maintainability

<sup>18</sup> Guidelines and publications reviewed include:

American Kennel Club Dog Park Guidelines

Recommendations and Guidelines for Dog Park Site Selection, Design, Operations and Maintenance, City of Ann Arbor Parks & Recreation

The Anatomy of a Great Dog Park, Citylab, John Metcalfe, April 14, 2017

Dog Parks Design Standards and Process, DC Department of Parks and Recreation

Dog Parks 101, The Trust for Public Land – Center for City Park Excellence, 2019

<sup>19</sup> Crusher fines is a finely-crushed stone mix that is often the byproduct of gravel operations.

<sup>20</sup> Pumphouse Association for Canine Kindness



or usability issues. Conversion of the natural surface to crusher fines/washed stone dust is recommended Blake Lane Dog Park.

### **Natural Turf**

Studies and experience have indicated that natural turf (e.g., grass) requires a fair amount of maintenance and a large area (3 acres or larger) to not wear quickly. Complete or partial closures of a dog park would need to occur periodically to re-establish worn turf areas.

### **Crusher Fines/Washed Stone Dust**

Crusher fines or washed stone dust are an appropriate surface choice for dog parks, as it has a moderate replacement cost, drains well, and holds up to heavy use. One of the negative aspects of crusher fines/washed stone dust is that it can create dust during heavy use and can migrate if the surfacing is not graded properly.

### **Synthetic Turf**

Synthetic turf holds up to wear and tear but requires a subsurface drainage system with irrigation or a hose bib to wash off accumulated dog urine and waste. Additionally, synthetic turf is the most expensive of all the options and is most suitable for smaller dog parks or privately owned dog runs in urban or dense communities.

### **Wood Mulch Surfacing**

Wood mulch surfacing is a relatively inexpensive surfacing type but poses several maintenance issues. The composition and color of wood mulch makes dog waste difficult to detect and remove. Additionally, wood mulch does not drain as well as the other surface types and holds odors.

## **Fencing**

Design guidelines for other jurisdictions reviewed as part of this study recommended using galvanized or vinyl coated chain link fence between 4 and 6 feet in height around the perimeter of the dog park and separating designated dog areas when applicable. Additionally, a double-gated entry with a foyer area is a standard feature that allows for safe entry and exit so that dogs can be taken on or off their leash in a contained environment. This helps prevent unplanned escapes and allows for visitors to shift into and out of the dog park.

## **Designated Areas**

Separate areas for large dogs and smaller, younger, or older dogs are consistently recommended in most of the guidelines reviewed. Designated areas separated by fencing reduce conflicts and give visitors an option for their dog to acclimate to the behavioral climate of the dog park.

### **Trash Receptacles and Waste Bag Dispensers**

Trash receptacles and waste bag dispensers are a necessity in any dog park to facilitate the disposal of dog waste or general trash. The survey results showed that both features are considered critical elements for visitors when visiting a dog park. The placement of trash receptacles varied, with some jurisdictions placing them inside the dog area, while others placed them outside the fenced area. It should be noted that the placement of trash receptacles and dispensers inside the dog area increases the likelihood of users disposing of waste but also creates challenges for maintenance employees to empty the trash or restock the bags. Many of the dog parks that were researched also provide recycling bins, as bottled water or drinks are often brought to dog parks.

Most of the studies reviewed recommend the provision of waste bag dispensers. Dog park visitors do not always pack their own waste bags and providing a dispenser reduces the possibility of a visitor leaving dog waste. Waste bag dispensers are typically placed near the entrance inside the dog park for ease of access. If the dog park has designated areas, separate dispensers are typically located within each area.

### **Site Furniture & Amenities**

Research of site furniture and amenities found that most guidelines recommend seating options, a drinking water source, shade structures or trees, and an informational kiosk. Additionally, the survey results indicated that water and shade were of high importance for visitors visiting FCPA dog parks. Dog agility equipment or play amenities were recommended in some guidelines and were typically observed only in smaller private dog parks.

### **Parking & Pedestrian Connectivity**

In the studies and guidelines reviewed, parking recommendations varied depending upon the locational context of the dog park. Dog parks located in more densely populated or urban areas do not always have dedicated parking areas, as these areas are typically much more walkable and often have public transportation options<sup>21</sup>. Dog parks located in less dense or rural areas typically have parking spaces in an amount sufficient to accommodate dog park visitors so that they are less inclined to park in surrounding neighborhoods.

Nearly all guidelines reviewed recommended providing an ADA (American Disabilities Act) accessible route from reserved spaces in the parking area and/or public walkways to the dog park. Several studies recommended bike racks to support additional means of accessing the park.

### **Signage**

Most guidelines suggested the provision of signage with clearly displayed rules and

---

<sup>21</sup> Fairfax Connector Buses only permit service animals and small animals if transported in a secure container.

hours, which should be placed at dog park entrances. Additionally, it was found that informational kiosks were typically placed outside of the dog area to post volunteer opportunities, dog related events, and/or local dog-oriented businesses. While examining other jurisdictions’ dog parks, it was found that signs were most effective when placed in highly visible areas with clear and consistent language. Dog parks that had a variety of sign types and locations placed sporadically throughout the park were found to be less effective in communicating critical information.

**Cost Considerations**

The construction of a new dog park can cost between \$50,000 and \$500,000 depending upon the size, complexity, and amenities offered within the park. Costs typically include construction procurement, permitting/site plan review fees, and administrative work. Ongoing costs for the maintenance and operation of the dog park should also be considered and these are discussed.

**WHAT WE ALSO HEARD**

The survey results indicate the relative importance of design elements to dog park users (see Figure 26). Pet waste bag stations, trash receptacles, and the availability of space for dogs ranked as primary importance to users. Shade, drinking fountains, and the availability of parking were also considered important design elements.

**How important are each of these features when deciding whether to take your dog to a new dog park?**

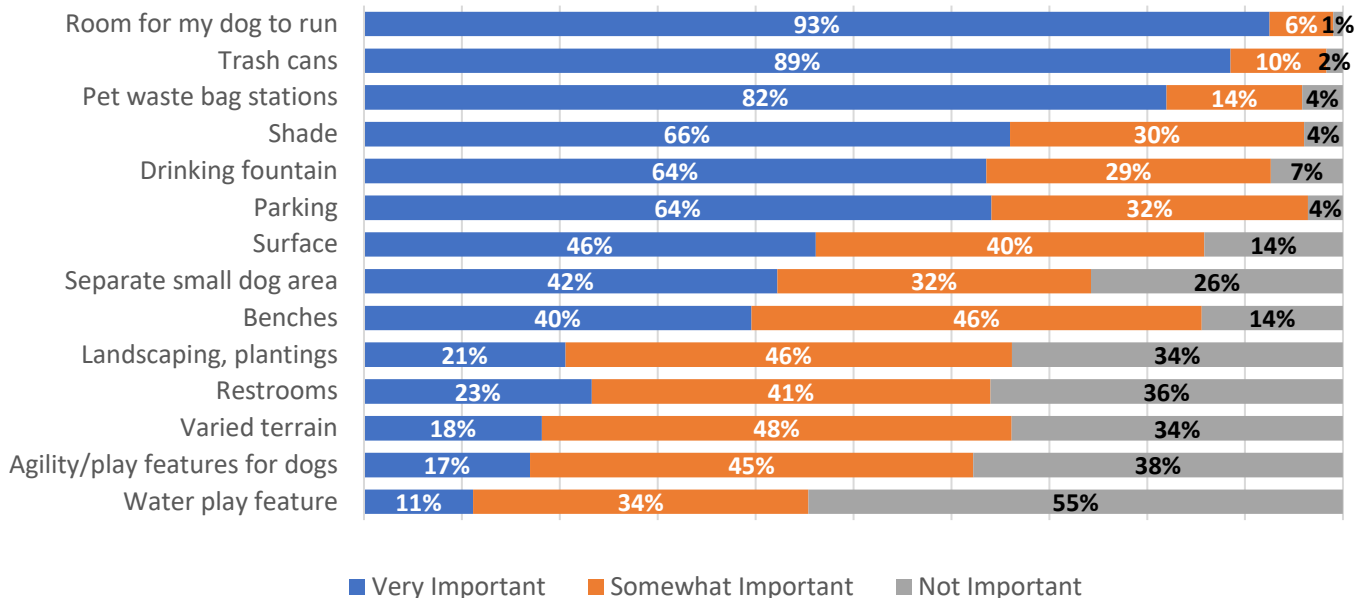


Figure 26: Survey: How important are each of these features when deciding whether to take your dog to a new dog park? Note: Percentages for some features in the above chart may not add to 100% due to rounding error.

The survey showed that visitors were least satisfied with the surface condition at Blake Lane (38% satisfied), Chandon (44% satisfied), and Dulles Station Community dog parks (44% satisfied), as displayed in Figure 27. Similar levels of satisfaction with the surfacing conditions at Baron Cameron, Rock Hill, and South Run dog parks were observed as well; in each of these parks, only 45% of visitors were satisfied. Frequency of use, maintenance regime, and the original design all attribute to the condition of the surface. In many existing FCPA dog parks, including Blake Lane, Chandon, and Dulles Station Community parks, it was found that excessive slope and the absence of a containment edge within the dog park was a contributing factor to the surface condition.

### **% Satisfied - Dog Park Surface Condition**

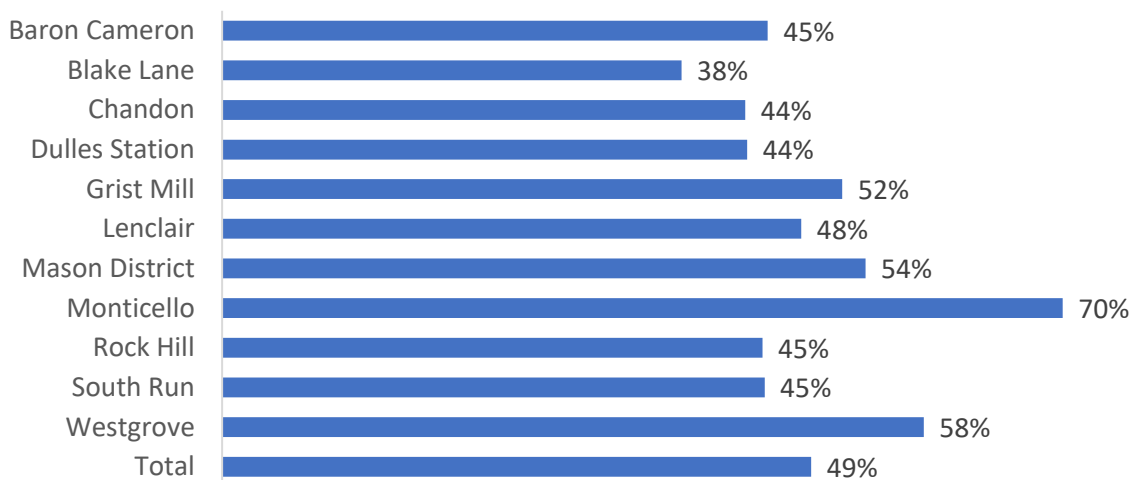


Figure 27: Survey: Percent Satisfied with Dog Park Surface Condition

Note: Respondents were asked to evaluate their satisfaction with FCPA dog park surface conditions on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 “very unsatisfied” to 5 or “very satisfied”. The percentages shown here reflect the percentage of who indicated they were either “somewhat satisfied” or “very satisfied” with surface conditions.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following FCPA dog park design guidelines are recommended and were informed by the previous analysis and findings of best practices conducted as part of this study. These design guideline recommendations are intended for the design of future FCPA dog parks and as a resource for the development of privately owned publicly accessible dog parks in the County.

## **SIZE AND LOCATION**

The dog park size and location should adhere to the siting standards put forth in the planning section of this report.

## DESIGNATED AREAS

Separate areas for large and small dogs (designated areas) should be provided when space and funding permit. These designated areas can accommodate smaller dogs that are uncomfortable in the larger portion of the park. Designated areas also provide opportunity for maintenance and operations tasks in one area of the dog park while keeping the other area(s) open.

## PARKING AND PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIVITY

Sufficient parking, convenient to the site, should be provided such that the dog park visitor parking does not overflow onto surrounding neighborhood streets. In lower density neighborhoods (as shown on Figure 18), 10 to 20 parking spaces should be dedicated to dog park use. In higher density neighborhoods, which are generally more walkable and may have on-street parking spaces, a dedicated parking lot may not be necessary. The parking need for all dog parks in both lower and higher density neighborhoods should be determined and provided as part of the park master planning process.

Accessible pathways that comply with ADA regulations should connect the dog park to parking areas and any existing public sidewalks if possible. Pedestrian connections should be made to existing trail networks wherever possible. In addition, while pedestrian connections to FCPA parks are typically provided by FCDOT (Fairfax County Department of Transportation)/VDOT (Virginia Department of Transportation), FCPA should work with these agencies when establishing new dog parks to ensure that there are safe, comfortable, and convenient crossings for pedestrians.

## SURFACING MATERIAL

The type of surfacing to be used within a dog park is very much dependent upon the size, context, budget, and maintenance regime of the dog park as described in the Analysis and Findings Section. Each type of surfacing has advantages and disadvantages depending on the context of its use. Below are the surfacing recommendations for FCPA dog parks.

### Natural Turf

Given the maintenance demands and size requirements, natural turf is not recommended as the primary surface within FCPA dog parks. Natural turf can be considered for newly proposed dog parks if the area is larger than three acres and if an appropriate maintenance regime is shown as feasible.

**Crusher Fines/Washed Stone Dust**

This type of surfacing is the preferred choice for FCPA dog parks. The composition of stone for the crusher fines or washed stone dust should be between #4 and #200 as shown in the construction specifications table.

**Synthetic Turf**

Synthetic turf is only appropriate for privately owned smaller dog parks or dog runs in urban or dense communities. Synthetic turf can be considered for partial sections of a new FCPA dog park but is not recommended as the primary surfacing for the entire dog park.

**Wood Mulch Surfacing**

This type of surfacing is not recommended for FCPA dog parks due to the maintenance issues it poses.

CRUSHER FINES/WASHED STONE DUST COMPOSITION	
SIEVE SIZE	% PASSING
No. 4	95-100
No. 8	75-80
No. 16	55-65
No. 30	40-50
No. 50	25-35
No. 100	20-25
No. 200	5-15

*Figure 28: Crusher Fines/Washed Stone Dust Composition*

**SURFACING DESIGN**

The design of the dog areas, entryways, and pathways have a direct correlation with the longevity of the chosen surface material and the overall accessibility of the dog park. The following surface design elements are recommended.

**Entrance Surfacing**

The surface within and directly outside double gated entryways should be concrete for ease of maintenance, dog safety, and ADA accessibility. A 10'x 10' minimum entry corral with two gates is recommended. If amenities are located within the entry corral the size should be large enough to accommodate ADA accessibility standards and space for dogs and people to maneuver. An ADA accessible pathway should lead to the entrance and connect to a public sidewalk and/or ADA parking spaces.

**Pathways and Alternative Surfaces within Dog Parks**

A concrete, asphalt, or poured-in-place rubber pathway that forms a loop or multiple loops within a dog park provides enhanced accessibility, allows owners to interact with and monitor their dogs more closely. It also adds additional interest to the park. Pathways and walking loops should be provided if there is sufficient space and funding.

**Surfacing Edge and Containment**

A concrete or timber curb that is a minimum of 6 inches in height from finished grade inside the dog park and a minimum of 8 inches in width should encompass the surfacing of the dog park to minimize material migration. Weeps (drainage holes)

incorporated within the curb should be placed where appropriate to facilitate surface drainage.

## **FENCING**

Dog parks should be fully enclosed with a 6-foot height black vinyl 6-gauge chain-link fence except where existing features of the site provide the same level of enclosure as that provided by a fence. Posts should be embedded in footings securely to frost depth and the chain link portions adequately anchored to ensure that no dog may escape.

The dog park should be equipped with a minimum 10' x 10' double-gated entry corral to keep dogs from escaping and to facilitate access for individuals with disabilities. If the dog park has separate designated areas, entrances to these separate areas should be located within the entry corral. Placing gates in the corners of the fenced area is not recommended, as this allows new dogs entering the park to easily be cornered by other dogs as they rush to greet each other. Gates should be equipped with a page latch and lock for durability. A separate lockable 8-foot-wide gate is recommended for maintenance access in designated dog areas.

Other types of fencing and barriers may be considered on a case-by-case basis. Other types of barriers include walls, transparent polycarbonate sound-reducing panels, and architectural welded wire mesh fencing.

## **PERIMETER LANDSCAPING/BUFFERS**

If the budget and site permit, and if it is necessary to buffer the dog park, vegetation should be planted on the outside of the fence to enhance the aesthetic quality of the site and to assist in mitigating noise associated with the dog park. Plant material that is native, low maintenance, and not dangerous (low toxicity, no thorns, etc.) to dogs is recommended. Small rain gardens, bio-swales, or curbs surrounding the perimeter of the dog park are encouraged for capturing and treating runoff whenever feasible.

## **SHADE**

Shade is critical for the wellbeing of dogs and visitors within a dog park. Dog parks should offer shaded areas using trees and/or shade structures to allow visitors and dogs to retreat from the sun. A maintenance regime should be established for shade shelters if present. Rigid shade structures, such as pergolas and arbors, require less maintenance and upkeep than shade sail structures.

## **DRINKING FOUNTAIN**

A source of drinking water for dogs and visitors is highly desirable within or adjacent to the dog park area and is recommended if a connection to a water line is possible. The drinking fountain should be ADA compliant and frost free. A hose bib is also recommended for maintenance needs. Both the hose bib and the fountain should be placed on an accessible concrete pad that freely drains.

## **TRASH RECEPTACLES AND WASTE BAG DISPENSERS**

Trash receptacles should be located within the entry corral area or immediately adjacent to the outside of the dog park fence near the entrance to encourage waste disposal and to facilitate ease of emptying. Receptacles should have self-closing lids to prevent insects, rodents, and odor. Pet waste bag dispensers mounted at ADA height should be located within each designated dog area in close proximity to the entrance(s). Pet waste stations/bags should also be placed near the primary dog park entrance, at the intersections of walking paths, and near parking lots that serve the dog park.

## **SITE FURNISHINGS**

Dog parks should incorporate several benches and/or tables located in accessible areas for people to rest or socialize. Benches should be strategically located within the dog park and outside the fenced perimeter of the dog park to allow for a comfortable visitor experience. Selected benches and/or tables should be treated, or powder coated metal to limit deterioration. Benches and tables should be surface-mounted to a concrete pad whenever possible.

## **RESTROOMS**

Permanent restroom facilities should be considered during the planning and design of a new dog park if the inclusion of the restroom is found to support other park uses. A dog park alone does not warrant a permanent restroom as most dog park visitors utilize the facility for a short period of time and the development and maintenance costs of such a facility are considerable.

## **AGILITY EQUIPMENT**

Agility equipment provides dogs with engaging activities, opportunities for physical fitness, and enhanced communication with the owner. These amenities may be included if desired by the community and there is a maintenance plan that details care and replacement costs.

## **SIGNAGE**

FCPA Dog Park Rules, including codes of behavior, hours, and requirements for entry, should be posted in clear view and near the entry. A community kiosk and bulletin board should be provided outside of the fenced dog area to provide a place to post local community information related to pet services, meetups, and events as permitted.



## OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Overall, research found that FCPA's dog park maintenance standards and practices are consistent with the practices employed by other jurisdictions; however, research also identified a gap in some maintenance task frequency due to a corresponding gap in funding for labor and material resources. Increasing the frequency of these tasks would address many of the concerns expressed within the survey, although would require additional funding for resources and potentially two additional full-time maintenance employees. Revised maintenance task frequencies have been provided within the Recommendations portion of this section.
- The survey indicated that dog waste bag stations were often empty, due to heavy use of the dog park and visitors taking bags for non-park use. The study recommends setting a standard of restocking pet waste bags once per week and installing signage discouraging visitors from taking more bags than needed while at the dog park. Signage at the dog park should prominently display contact information to report any maintenance issues that need to be addressed.
- Trash receptacles are currently placed inconsistently throughout FCPA dog parks. This study recommends placing trash receptacles within the entry corral area or immediately adjacent to the outside of the dog park fence in all FCPA dog parks. Consistently placing trash receptacles in these locations will encourage visitors to dispose of dog waste and allow maintenance staff to empty the receptacles without entering the dog area.

### ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

Dog parks require oversight and routine maintenance to function properly and ensure a safe environment for visitors. The study evaluated existing dog park operations, reviewed maintenance costs, and analyzed best practices utilized by other jurisdictions.

The intent of the analysis and benchmarking of other jurisdiction's maintenance regimes was to determine if FCPA's current practices and frequency of maintenance is sufficient and meets the expectation of park visitors.

### EXISTING DOG PARKS OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE

FCPA has maintenance procedures for dog parks to ensure safe use by both humans and dogs. These maintenance standards were developed to provide sufficient service levels with current funding. Routine maintenance activity includes the following procedures:

### **Current FCPA Maintenance and Operations Tasks**

- Routinely inspect gates, fencing, and site furniture for integrity and cleanliness.
- Annually inspect water sources and repair as needed.
- Regularly inspect surface materials within dog park area to ensure the proper depth. Add new materials at least once a year if needed. Maintain a desired edge around the surfacing where applicable.
- Repair paved walkways leading to the dog park and the entry coral as needed.
- Remove all garbage, debris, weeds, and dog waste from use area as needed.
- Inspect and maintain trees within dog park use area.
- Empty trash receptacles two times per week.
- Check dog waste bag stations two times per week and replenish as needed.
- Work with volunteers to oversee proper usage, rule enforcement, and posting of information on kiosks.
- Inspect and repair shade shelters annually.
- Maintain and ensure proper visibility of rule and safety signage as required.
- Report any incidents such as vandalism, safety issues, or misuse of the dog park.

### **Current FCPA Dog Park Volunteer Maintenance and Operations Tasks**

- Empty dog waste bins (e.g., buckets) daily (if applicable).
- Report any dog park violations or observed issues.
- Maintain and replace any authorized volunteer-provided dog agility equipment.

### **Annual Average Maintenance Costs Per Dog Park**

The study examined FCPA's current dog park maintenance costs and compared them with other jurisdictions around the country. Research showed that FCPA's annual maintenance costs for dog parks are within the typical range of what other jurisdictions spend. *Figure 29* below provides a breakdown of FCPA tasks per dog park on an annual basis.

<b>ANNUAL AVERAGE MAINTENANCE COSTS PER FCPA DOG PARK</b>			
<b>Task</b>	<b>Labor Cost</b>	<b>Materials/ Equipment Cost</b>	<b>Total Cost</b>
Trash Removal	\$1,500	\$300	\$1,800
Inspections	\$100	\$0	\$100
Dog Waste Bag Restocking	\$300	\$1,200	\$1,500
Landscape Maintenance	\$1,000	\$100	\$1,100
Surface Maintenance	\$1,300	\$500	\$1,800
Fence/Gate Repair	\$300	\$300	\$600
Tree Trimming	\$200	\$0	\$200
Site Furniture Maintenance	\$100	\$0	\$100
Water Source Fees & Maintenance	\$900	\$500	\$1,400
Sign Maintenance	\$200	\$100	\$300
Trash Receptacle & Waste Bag Station Maintenance	\$400	\$100	\$500
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$6,300</b>	<b>\$3,100</b>	<b>\$9,400</b>

Figure 29: Annual Average Maintenance Costs Per FCPA Dog Park

## MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS BENCHMARKING & ANALYSIS

The study analyzed FCPA’s current dog park conditions and maintenance procedures to identify avenues for potential improvement. The following resources and tools were utilized to acquire insight:

- Site visits and online research of dog parks in neighboring jurisdictions, including Arlington, Alexandria, Montgomery County and Prince George’s County.
- Telephone interviews conducted with staff in other agencies with direct responsibility for dog park maintenance.
- Documented complaints and comments received over the years related to dog parks.
- Industry literature, webinars, and prior dog park studies (internal and external).
- Multiple team members’ experience with managing public dog parks.
- FCPA dog park survey analysis and results.

Overall, research found that FCPA’s dog park maintenance standards and practices are consistent with the practices employed by other jurisdictions. However, research also

identified a gap in some maintenance task frequency due to a corresponding gap in funding for labor and material resources. The following are documented challenges in FCPA's dog parks that could be addressed with increased maintenance frequency:

- The primary surfacing type used within FCPA dog parks is crusher fines/washed stone dust. The survey results indicated that the surfacing condition is a concern for many park visitors. Several FCPA dog parks have slopes over two percent and lack a containment edge around the dog use area. These two conditions can cause crusher fines/washed stone dust to migrate. These two factors coupled with a high volume of use can contribute to less than ideal surface conditions.
- Trash receptacles often become full quickly and require more frequent emptying than the current practice of two times per week.
- Dog waste bins (e.g., buckets) that are inside the dog areas of some FCPA dog parks are not consistently emptied by volunteers. These waste bins were added by volunteers in some FCPA dog parks for the added convenience of avoiding exiting the dog area to deposit waste in the trash receptacles, which are currently outside the dog area.
- Keeping the dog waste bag stations stocked can be a challenge due to visitors taking bags for use outside of FCPA dog parks.
- Gates often need repair due to becoming misaligned from frequent use.
- Water sources can break from use or cold weather. In addition, water tends to pool around the base of water sources due to the current drainage configuration. The addition of insulation around the plumbing for these fixtures is needed to reduce the possibility of breaking.

FCPA's Park Operations Division (POD) is allocated a finite amount of financial and labor resources each fiscal year and those resources are spread amongst all FCPA facilities and amenities. The available budget detailed in *Figure 29* allows for maintenance procedures to be performed only at the current frequency referenced earlier (under "Current FCPA Procedures"). An increase in maintenance frequency would require additional funding to be identified.

Research showed that many jurisdictions close their dog parks at specific times each week or for a full day per month to perform more in-depth maintenance tasks. To add an additional day per week or month to perform the above tasks at additional frequencies, such as increased trash removal or more frequently addressing surfacing conditions, at least two additional full-time maintenance employees as well as additional financial resources to go towards purchase of additional materials would be required.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

FCPA's maintenance standards are consistent with nearby jurisdictions, although additional maintenance frequency would address many of the issues identified within the Analysis and Findings section above. An increase in maintenance tasks would require identifying additional funding to support additional maintenance staff and/or working with individual volunteers, Volunteer Teams, and/or Friends Groups to facilitate additional volunteering duties and donation opportunities.

## MAINTENANCE TASKS & FREQUENCY RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings and analysis done as part of this study have informed the following recommendations for maintenance tasks and frequency for FCPA Dog Parks.

### Landscaping & Mowing

This study recommends increasing the mowing frequency to manage weeds and invasive species within the dog park and along the fence perimeter to once every two weeks. Previously, mowing was done on an as-needed basis but based on survey feedback and research, the study is recommending this new standard. Note that larger issues of invasive species removal are managed by the Natural Resources Branch and should be coordinated between departments.

### Pet Waste Bags Replacement

The study recommends setting a standard of restocking pet waste bags once per week. FCPA recognizes that some visitors may take several bags at a time for use outside of FCPA dog parks. This is a difficult practice to prevent but could be addressed through appropriate signage and volunteering oversight.

### Surfacing

The survey results identified surfacing conditions as a primary concern expressed by park visitors. This study recommends reducing the surfacing slope and installing containment edges in specific dog parks as detailed in the *Suggested Alterations to Existing Dog Parks Table* below. Additionally, the current practice of routinely inspecting the surfacing and replenishing as needed should continue.

### Trash Receptacles

The placement of trash receptacles is currently inconsistent throughout FCPA dog parks. Some trash receptacles are placed inside the dog area while other parks have the trash receptacle located outside the dog area. This study recommends placing trash receptacles within the entry corral area or immediately adjacent to the outside of the dog park fence in all FCPA dog parks. Consistently placing trash receptacles in these locations will encourage visitors to dispose of dog waste and allow maintenance staff to empty the receptacles without entering the dog area.

The study also recommends increasing the frequency of emptying trash receptacles from the current frequency of two times per week to a frequency of three times per

week in select dog parks that receive heavy use. This will require identifying additional funding to support the additional labor.

### SUGGESTED ALTERATIONS TO EXISTING DOG PARKS

The survey results, paired with in-house assessments of FCPA existing dog parks, have identified several alterations and improvements that can be made in each of the existing dog parks, as shown in the Figure 30. These improvements would require additional funding. Funding potentially could be acquired from several sources, including park bonds, membership programs/user fees, partnerships, dog license revenue, and sponsored improvements/donation opportunities. Potential funding is discussed in greater detail in the Funding Sources, Partnerships and Donation Opportunities section of this report.

#### SUGGESTED ALTERATIONS TO EXISTING DOG PARKS

Dog Park Name	Primary Improvement Recommendations
Baron Cameron	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regrade surface and install edge containment</li> <li>More frequent maintenance of surfacing due to high use</li> <li>Convert hose bib to dog/visitor drinking fountain</li> </ul>
Blake Lane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regrade surface and install edge containment</li> <li>Install crusher fines/washed stone dust surfacing after regraded</li> <li>Install dog/visitor drinking fountain</li> <li>Install a shade structure and/or protected trees to provide a shade source</li> </ul>
Chandon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Install edge containment and maintain grass/natural surface. Crusher Fines/Washed Stone Dust can be considered in the future if it is determined that the grass/natural surfacing causes maintenance or usability issues</li> <li>Improve accessibility from parking area to dog park entrance</li> <li>Reduce stormwater runoff from other park features into dog park</li> <li>Convert hose bib to dog/visitor drinking fountain</li> </ul>
Dulles Station Community Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Install edge containment and improve drainage</li> </ul>
Grist Mill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Convert areas of existing trees into protected beds with incorporated seating</li> <li>Redesign a portion of the park to be separated for smaller/older dogs</li> </ul>
Lenclair/Blackjack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Install edge containment and improve drainage</li> <li>Install a shade structure and/or protected trees to provide a shade source</li> </ul>

<p><b>Mason District</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convert areas of turf to stone dust and install edge containment</li> <li>• More frequent maintenance of surfacing due to high use</li> <li>• Convert areas of existing trees into protected beds with incorporated seating</li> <li>• Redesign a portion of the park to be separated for smaller/older dogs</li> </ul>
<p><b>Monticello</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Install edge containment</li> <li>• Install dog/visitor drinking fountain</li> <li>• Install benches within the perimeter of the park</li> <li>• More frequent maintenance of surfacing due to high use</li> <li>• Install a shade structure and/or convert areas around existing trees into protected beds with seating</li> </ul>
<p><b>Rock Hill District</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Install edge containment and improve drainage</li> <li>• More frequent maintenance of surfacing due to high use</li> <li>• Install dog/visitor drinking fountain</li> <li>• Install a shade structure and/or convert areas around existing trees into protected beds with seating</li> </ul>
<p><b>South Run District</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Install edge containment and improve drainage</li> <li>• Install dog/visitor drinking fountain</li> </ul>
<p><b>Westgrove</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve turf surface through partitioning sections of the park with fencing and rotating usable sections for reestablishment of turf</li> <li>• Install dog/visitor drinking fountain</li> <li>• Install dog park wayfinding signs</li> <li>• Improve accessibility of dog park entry</li> </ul>

Figure 30: Existing Dog Park Improvement Recommendations

## VOLUNTEERING

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- FCPA should leverage the interest conveyed by the public in volunteering in FCPA's dog parks.
- FCPA can and should support formation of park volunteer teams (PVT) in dog parks via the existing PVT program. To support their formation, as well as the formation of Dog Park Friends Groups, FCPA should provide more robust information about dog park PVT and Friends Group opportunities on the dog park webpage.
- There are 3 volunteering paths that can be taken in FCPA dog parks: individual volunteers/dog park monitors, park volunteer teams (PVTs) and Friends Groups. An ambassador program could be explored in the future, though this would require additional staff support to develop guidelines and manage the program.
- FCPA should utilize the dog park monitor checklist for volunteers which was refined as part of this study and explore options for digitizing it in the future.
- FCPA should utilize the incident report form for volunteers, developed as part of this study.

### ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

Through the dog park survey, as well as a review of best practices for public dog parks nationwide, it was found that dog parks operate most effectively and are most positively received when oversight by staff is supplemented by organized community support, e.g., in the form of volunteering. There are currently three pathways for volunteering in FCPA's dog parks: Individual volunteers (dog park monitors), Park Volunteer Teams (PVTs), and Friends Groups.

There were two main questions that the study sought to answer as it relates to volunteering: should FCPA encourage citizens to get involved with volunteer teams to care for existing and future dog parks and if so, what strategies should FCPA employ? And, what duties are appropriate for dog park volunteers to perform? This section presents FCPA's findings to these questions.

#### **Should FCPA encourage citizens to get involved with volunteer teams to care for existing and future dog parks? If so, what strategies should FCPA employ?**

Benchmarking of volunteer practices related to groups and teams across other jurisdictions throughout the country revealed a strong reliance on sponsor groups<sup>22</sup> to support the operations and maintenance of dog parks. Most sponsor groups engage in fundraising and other revenue-generating activities to sustain dog parks. In addition,

<sup>22</sup> A group of volunteers interested in a specific facility such as dog parks, who are committed to a high level of involvement, up to and including managing the facility, volunteering, fundraising, recruiting, and managing volunteers, hosting special events, and forging partnerships with businesses and other community partners.



they typically organize the volunteer support needed for dog park maintenance, operations, and improvements.

While FCPA no longer uses the sponsor group model, it has developed numerous partnerships with volunteers for park facilities through Friends Groups, which serve a similar purpose<sup>23</sup>. These groups have come together in common interest around a specific park or program and provide invaluable support to FCPA. Currently, Westgrove PACK is the only dog park-focused Friends Group working with FCPA. FCPA has also established a Park Volunteer Team<sup>24</sup> (PVT) program, though there are no dog park-focused PVTs that are currently active. Volunteers who are part of a dog park-related Friends Group or a PVT have the same roles and responsibilities as individual volunteers (e.g., dog park monitors) but these types of affiliation have different requirements. For example, the formation of a dog park PVT would not require insurance on the part of the PVT, as PVTs are considered FCPA volunteers, and as such are protected under the County's insurance provisions. Formation of a dog park Friends Group, however, would require insurance and liability coverage separate from the County. These requirements are illustrated in further detail in *Figure 32* at the end of this section.

Through the provision of more robust information by FCPA surrounding these existing group volunteering pathways, community involvement in these programs at dog parks could strengthen.

In addition, research done as part of this study provided many successful examples of jurisdictions employing individual volunteers as ambassadors<sup>25</sup> to actively promote positive dog park visitor etiquette. It was found that such roles require extensive volunteer screening, training, and oversight. FCPA currently does not offer a dog park ambassador volunteering opportunity, but individuals interested in volunteering at dog parks can sign up with FCPA to volunteer as a dog park monitor. The roles and responsibilities of a dog park monitor are detailed below.

### **What duties are appropriate for dog park volunteers to perform?**

Research of industry literature regarding dog parks and feedback received from the public through the survey, suggest volunteers can best assist FCPA by supporting some operations and maintenance tasks, monitoring dog park use and activity by other

---

<sup>23</sup> More on FCPA's Friends Group program, including the Friends Group Handbook, can be found here: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/friends>

<sup>24</sup> More on FCPA's Park Volunteer Team program, including the PVT Handbook, can be found here: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/park-volunteer-team>

<sup>25</sup> A dog park ambassador possesses excellent interpersonal skills and is knowledgeable about canine behavior and skilled in reading dog social cues. For example, an ambassador would be able to distinguish between dog aggression vs. dog play and then be able to address skillfully with handlers. This volunteer role also provides education (e.g., friendly reminders) about dog park rules as well as dog park etiquette. In terms of required training or experience, ambassadors would be required to have advanced knowledge of canine behavior. They would have the ability to read canine signals and understand communication and play-behavior differences across breeds and would have American Kennel Club (AKC) or similar certification.

visitors, documenting observations, and reporting issues to staff. This applies to both new and existing FCPA dog parks.

With volunteers serving as the eyes and ears of park staff, staff can then identify messaging improvements around rules or etiquette through a combination of signage, social media, website updates, etc., and can respond to maintenance needs in a more targeted fashion. Furthermore, ongoing, systematic reporting of maintenance needs by dog park volunteers could also assist FCPA staff by speeding up identification and staff response to unsafe or unappealing situations.

The specific duties that volunteers can assist with, regardless of volunteer type (individual volunteers/dog park monitors, PVTs, Friends Groups), include:

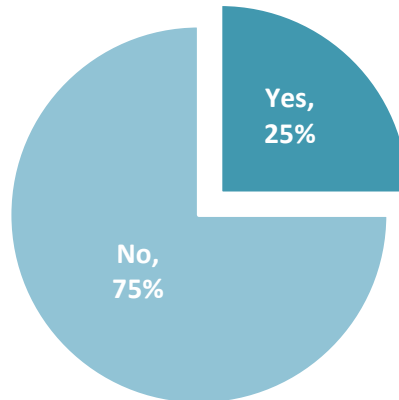
- Inspecting the dog park facility
- Filling pet waste bag dispensers
- Checking trash receptacles
- Checking for missing or improper signage; post authorized FCPA notices and flyers
- Documenting violations of dog park rules
- Communicating issues to FCPA staff
- Reporting incidents as needed

These duties, along with the requirements of each volunteer type, are detailed in the recommendations section below.

## **WHAT WE ALSO HEARD**

In the survey, 25% of respondents (over 700 respondents) indicated that they would be interested in obtaining more information about volunteering opportunities with FCPA dog parks and provided their contact information to FCPA. This indicates there is high interest in volunteering and suggests there could be potential for formation of dog park volunteer teams.

### ***Interested in finding out about volunteer opportunities with dog parks?***



*Figure 31: Survey: Percent interested in finding out about volunteer opportunities with dog parks*

**Notes:** Based on responses from dog owners and dog walkers. Contact information was received from 719 survey respondents who were interested in finding out about volunteer opportunities with FCPA dog parks.

In addition, the survey revealed that inattentive owners in FCPA dog parks rank second as a key concern among respondents, surpassed only by surface conditions.

More generally, issues related to rules and enforcement were among the top list of subjects that commenters in the survey cited as the one thing that would most improve the dog park they primarily visited.

Combined, these expressed concerns underscore the importance of volunteerism in FCPA's dog parks, which helps to promote visitor etiquette and actively supports rule enforcement.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **VOLUNTEER TEAMS**

As evidenced by the work done by existing FCPA dog park volunteers, as well as FCPA's research and input from the survey, it is clear that volunteers and volunteer groups play a critical role in supporting FCPA's operations and maintenance of dog parks.

First, based on the high interest in volunteering in FCPA dog parks as indicated in the survey, it is recommended that FCPA continue to leverage this invaluable resource and wealth of community support.

In addition, it is recommended that FCPA promote, cultivate, and provide support to volunteer teams as a means of caring for future and existing dog parks. This can be

accomplished through FCPA's existing Park Volunteer Team (PVT) program. A PVT can support a specific park, program, or facility. The duties of a dog park PVT would be the same as that of the individual volunteer/dog park monitor, as detailed in the next section.

The development of a PVT is an organic process; it is envisioned that volunteers who sign up individually as dog park monitors may over time network to form PVTs for specific dog parks. Formation of a PVT would require a volunteer to serve as the key point of contact (i.e., PVT Lead) between those interested in the PVT and FCPA, who would then reach out to FCPA's Park Operations Division Volunteer Coordinator to coordinate. From there, FCPA would guide the PVT Lead and interested volunteers through the team formation process.

Also, as discussed in the *Sponsored Improvements and Donation Opportunities* findings section, research found that sponsor groups were another form of group volunteerism that were strongly relied upon by other jurisdictions. FCPA's Friends Group model serves a similar purpose, and it is recommended that this model remain in place for those interested in this volunteer pathway that offers a higher level of volunteer involvement at dog parks. Friends Groups can perform volunteer duties like those of individual volunteers/dog park monitors and PVTs but also have the ability to fundraise for improvements and host events, if included in the Friends Group's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). As mentioned previously, Friends Groups are required to provide their own insurance and liability coverage separate from Fairfax County, whereas individual volunteers and PVTs are considered FCPA volunteers and are not subject to this requirement.

To further support the formation of dog park PVTs and/or Friends Groups, it is recommended that FCPA provide more information about these opportunities on the dog park webpage.

### **DOG PARK VOLUNTEER DUTIES**

As part of this study, FCPA refined a dog park monitor checklist to ensure clarity around specific volunteer duties (as identified in the Analysis and Findings section). It is recommended that FCPA promote the use of this checklist to allow dog park volunteers to document their observations. The volunteer duties outlined in the checklist directly address the concern expressed by the public regarding visitor etiquette and issues surrounding rules and enforcement. The purpose of the checklist is to provide FCPA's Park Operations Division (POD) with documented dog park violations, as well as maintenance and operational conditions. The reporting received from multiple volunteer monitoring shifts over time at each dog park will enable staff to adjust specific resources and operation practices accordingly, although POD's response time to issues indicated on the checklist will vary according to staff availability and prioritization of the issues reported.

As the volunteer program expands, it is recommended that this checklist be digitized. This could be established in the form of a mobile phone application, so that volunteers could seamlessly submit their observational data. The mobile application utilized by FCPA's Park Monitor program in response to COVID-19-related park closures in the spring of 2020 could serve as a model for a Dog Park Volunteer/Monitor mobile application.

In addition, a dog park incident report form patterned after the general FCPA Incident Report form has been created to allow for improved documentation and tracking of dog park incidents. It is recommended that this incident report form be made available to dog park volunteers and its use covered during volunteer training.

Combined, these two tools (dog park monitor checklist and incident report form) can be utilized to further strengthen FCPA's dog park volunteering program.

As presented in the Analysis and Findings section above, individual volunteers who serve as dog park ambassadors are a popular and successful model employed by some jurisdictions. Based on the especially high concern expressed by respondents in the survey regarding dog park visitor etiquette, it is recommended that FCPA explore an ambassador program in the future.

The role and core duties of an ambassador would be the same as an individual volunteer/monitor. However, the ambassador would have more involvement and discretion to address dog behavior within dog parks. Because ambassadors are required to have more advanced knowledge of canine behavior and their duties put them at a greater risk, an ambassador program would require more extensive volunteer screening, training, and oversight strategies than FCPA has developed to date. The development of this program would require additional dedicated staff resources to develop standards and procedures, publicize the program, manage communications, monitor volunteer activities, and provide additional logistical support.

A table summarizing the different responsibilities and requirements of dog park volunteering options (both existing and recommended) is presented below.

## VOLUNTEERING

	Individual Volunteer Opportunities		Group Volunteer Opportunities	
	Individual Volunteer (Dog Park Monitor)	Dog Park Ambassador (Does not exist but recommended to explore in future)	Volunteer Team	Friends Group
Observe conditions and violations in park and note on checklist. Familiar with dog park rules. Fills out incident report as needed. Encourage compliance but does not take enforcement measures.	X	X	X	X
Fill pet waste bag dispensers, check trash receptacles, and pick up pet waste as needed.	X	X	X	X
Post FCPA authorized notices and flyers at the direction of FCPA staff and remove outdated and unapproved notices such as unauthorized business cards or literature.	X	X	X	X
Can donate to the Park Foundation for improvements to dog park	X	X	X	X
Volunteer activity covered under County insurance	X	X	X	
Expertise in canine behavior. Provide friendly reminders about dog park rules and dog park etiquette. Requires AKC certification.		X		
Volunteer activity requires insurance independent from Fairfax County				X
Requires establishing a 501 (c)(3) and an MOU				X
Can raise funds for improvements, conduct business on parkland and/or advertise, if defined in MOU				X
Can run events in coordination with FCPA, if defined in MOU				X

Figure 32: Dog Park Volunteering Options Table

## FUNDING SOURCES, PARTNERSHIPS AND DONATION OPPORTUNITIES

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The construction of at least one new dog park will be needed by 2025 to meet service level standards identified in the Needs Assessment. It is recommended that park bond funding be utilized to fund the construction of one new dog park by this time.
- The study does not recommend charging membership and/or user fees for access to dog parks. Dog membership and user fees do not exist at any nearby local jurisdictions and charging fees would likely discourage dog park visitation.
- The study recommends discussing options with the Department of Tax Administration (DTA). One opportunity includes the solicitation of voluntary contributions through Fairfax County Park Foundation (FCPF) as part of the registration process. Another option is the dedication of a portion of the dog license fee to fund a portion of the operational costs associated with maintaining dog parks, both now and in the future.
- It is recommended that FCPA staff coordinate with Fairfax County Park Foundation (FCPF) to develop new and market existing dog park donation opportunities to prospective individuals and organizations.
- Maintenance agreements with HOAs or other private organizations should continue to be considered and encouraged when establishing a new dog park on FCPA-owned property during the development review process for new residential and commercial developments within applicable areas of the County. Friends Groups are the primary dog park partnership opportunity recommended as part of this study. FCPA should work with interested community members to encourage these partnerships which form the basis for mutual support for dog parks.

### ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

Funding is critical for financing the ongoing costs of operations, maintenance, and associated improvements within FCPA dog parks. As such, this study reviewed funding strategies undertaken by other jurisdictions and reviewed potential funding sources within the County. The funding sources reviewed as part of this study include park bonds, membership programs/user fees, partnerships, dog license revenue, and supplemental support via sponsored improvements/donation opportunities.

### PARK BOND PROGRAM

The funding from Park Bonds to FCPA is spread throughout the County for the purposes of land acquisition, new park/facility development and renovations of FCPA parks to meet the open space and recreation needs of residents.

**FUNDING SOURCES, PARTNERSHIPS AND DONATION OPPORTUNITIES**

A needs assessment is completed decennially to determine if FCPA facilities are meeting service level standards. The needs assessment informs prioritization of Park Bond funding, as capital investment needs typically exceed the available funding. The analysis completed in the planning section of this report demonstrates that the current need for dog parks is being met, but that one new dog park by 2025 is needed. The allocation of Park Bond funding for the construction of one new dog park to meet projected service levels would be appropriate and consistent with past bond funding use.

**MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS FUNDING**

FCPA currently maintains nine of the 13 County dog parks and spends an estimated average of \$84,600 per year for these operations across all nine dog parks. The specific dog parks that FCPA maintains are referenced in Appendix 3 – Inventory & Evaluation of Existing Dog Parks. These operations and maintenance costs are funded by the County's General Fund.

**MAINTENANCE AGREEMENTS**

When establishing a new dog park on FCPA, in some instances, it may be more appropriate for an HOA or other private organization to maintain the new FCPA dog park facility through a maintenance agreement or MOU with FCPA. This type of arrangement typically occurs through the development review process for new developments in certain parts of the County. Maintenance agreements for these types of developments enable the possibility of new facilities within the County and directly benefit the immediate community.

For example, a maintenance agreement to maintain Dulles Station Community Park, which includes a public FCPA dog park, was required as a proffer condition for the development of the park as part of a rezoning application in 2016. The maintenance agreement between FCPA and the Dulles Station HOA outlines the maintenance and operational responsibilities of the HOA as well as the terms and conditions.

**MEMBERSHIP PROGRAMS AND USER FEES**

FCPA currently does not require the public to pay fees for use or membership at dog parks. The current rules do require dogs to be licensed and vaccinated for visitors to access the park. The study reviewed how other jurisdictions both nationally and locally employ membership programs and user fees to support their jurisdiction's operations, maintenance, and improvement costs.

Research found many examples of localities across the country that employ an annual membership fee with varying amounts and discounts as shown in *Figure 33*. Research of such programs found that annual fees range anywhere from \$10 - \$78 and that some localities provide discount rates to residents and seniors while others have a standard rate for all users. Aside from annual fees, other fee structures include daily admission fees, VIP passes which work at multiple locations, and discounted rates for visitors with multiple dogs. Some jurisdictions employ a single annual permit fee for



## FUNDING SOURCES, PARTNERSHIPS AND DONATION OPPORTUNITIES

one dog park, while other dog parks throughout the jurisdiction remain free to the public.

Membership and user registration for dog parks can occur online, email/mail, phone, and in-person. The most common methods offered are the email/mail and in-person options. One jurisdiction that the study researched employs self-pay kiosks where users can purchase passes at an unstaffed gate. Generally, gate control access restrictions are in place to prevent access without payment. Fines are assessed if entry is gained without payment. In all cases, including non-fee-based parks, proof of vaccinations and/or dog licensing are required to use facilities.

In examining the surrounding northern Virginia jurisdictions, the study identified that membership and user fees for dog park use, or amenities are non-existent. Research has also indicated that the administrative and

operational costs associated with charging fees in an amount realistic for the northern Virginia area far outweigh the revenue potential. Costs are inclusive of but not limited to administrative fees, increased maintenance, and access controls.

## PARTNERSHIPS

In the past, the construction and operation of new dog parks were largely funded by self-organized sponsor groups that desired a dog park. In 2002, the sponsorship group model was disbanded due to a loss of liability insurance coverage that was previously provided under the volunteer provisions of the County's insurance program. Since the

Other Jurisdictions' User Fees		
Location	# of Sites	Fees
Chesapeake, VA	4	\$10/Yr
Town of Leesburg, VA	1	\$0
Prince William County, VA	1	\$0
Arlington County, VA	8	\$0
City of Alexandria, VA	18	\$0
New Orleans, LA	1	\$55/Yr for one dog; \$5 per additional dog
Nashville, TN (Private Partnership)	1	\$48/month; \$78/Yr 50% off for additional dogs
Kalamazoo, MI	2	\$5/day; \$25/Yr \$20 Senior Pass
Branson, MO	1	(Residents) \$25/Yr \$5 per additional dog (Non-Residents) \$30/Yr \$10 per additional dog
Iowa City, IO	2	(Residents) \$52/Yr (Non-Residents) \$57/Yr \$5 discount if spayed or neutered
Virginia Beach, VA	3	\$0
Columbia, MD (Private Association)	1	(Residents) \$35/Yr (Non-Residents) \$70/Yr
Three Rivers Park District, MN (multiple Counties)	9	\$45/Yr
Durham, NC	4	(Residents) \$17/Yr \$15 per additional dog (Non-Residents) \$22/Yr \$20 per additional dog
Glenview Park District, IL	1	(Residents) \$60/Yr \$35 per additional dog (Non-Residents) \$138/Yr \$75 per additional dog
Indianapolis, IN	4	\$125/Yr for all parks \$75/Yr for one park 50% discount for up to 2 additional dogs

Figure 33: Other Jurisdictions' User Fees Table

**FUNDING SOURCES, PARTNERSHIPS AND DONATION OPPORTUNITIES**

disbandment of the sponsor group model, partnerships with Friends Groups remains the preferred method for partnering with the community to help FCPA both fund and maintain dog parks. The Friends Group model and program is expanded upon below.

Note that volunteering in the form of park volunteer teams and individual volunteering are additional pathways for the community to support and be involved in the operations and maintenance of FCPA dog parks. However, unlike Friends Groups, these pathways of involvement do not include the option to fundraise. More information on these forms of community support and their distinctions are expanded upon in the Volunteering section of this report.

**Friends Groups**

Friends Groups are individuals who come together to provide ongoing operations, programmatic, maintenance and/or fundraising support at a park, facility, or specified program, and work closely with a FCPA staff liaison to develop projects and plans. The structure and responsibilities of each Friends Group are unique and defined within an MOU between the Friends Group and FCPA.

Each Friends Group has a site-specific Staff Liaison within FCPA who serves as their primary point of contact for working on projects and events. FPCA also has a Central Outreach Friends Group Coordinator to assist with new Friends Group formation and ongoing coordination efforts. It should be noted that Friends Groups must obtain their own insurance to provide maintenance and operational volunteer support at any park facility, including dog parks. FCPA may grant Friends Groups permission to use park names, provide services, and conduct business on parkland. More information about Friends Groups can be found in the Volunteer Section of this report.

In 2019, Westgrove PACK obtained their own insurance coverage, entered into an agreement with FCPA, and became a Friends Group. The Westgrove PACK Friends Group maintains its own webpage and accepts public donations for planned improvements to the dog park through their website and through various fundraisers. This Friends Group serves as a successful example of a partnership between FCPA and the community in the development and operations of a public dog park.

**DOG LICENSE REVENUE**

The research done as part of this study has found that many jurisdictions utilize a portion of dog licensing or permitting revenue to fund the operation of dog parks. Dog license fees generate approximately \$830,000 in revenue for Fairfax County annually. The annual revenue from dog license fees is combined with annual tax revenue which is allocated to the General Fund which supports the operations of all county agencies. The allocation of general funding for each agency is managed through the County's annual budgeting process.

**FUNDING SOURCES, PARTNERSHIPS AND DONATION OPPORTUNITIES**

Typically, FCPA receives less than 1% of the budget for Fairfax County's general fund.<sup>26</sup> In addition, no portion of the annual dog license fee revenue is earmarked specifically for the operations and maintenance of dog parks.

**SPONSORED IMPROVEMENTS AND DONATION OPPORTUNITIES**

Sponsored improvements and donation opportunities to support new dog park construction and ongoing operational costs were researched as part of this study. Sponsored improvements and donation opportunities that other local jurisdictions employ include websites and/or brochures that provide information for donating or sponsoring specific improvements to dog parks. For example, the City of Fairfax has a website dedicated to their sole dog park that provides information about sponsoring specific dog park amenities and improvements, with sponsorship levels listed for each.

Currently, FCPA does not have marketing material, or a website dedicated to sponsored improvements or donation opportunities for existing dog parks. However, donations are accepted for FCPA's Westgrove Dog Park through the Westgrove PACK website, as they jointly operate this dog park in partnership with FCPA through a MOU agreement.

The Fairfax County Park Foundation (FCPF) is a nonprofit 501(C)(3) organization that supports FCPA by raising private funds, obtaining grants, and creating partnerships that supplement tax dollars needed to meet the County's need for parkland, facilities, and services. FCPF accepts some contributions for dog parks and events. FCPF can facilitate a campaign to encourage donations and sponsored improvements for dog parks, although the opportunity to donate towards FCPA dog parks is largely unknown to the public due to the absence of a formal project with marketing material and targeted outreach campaigns.

FCPA currently offers a variety of dog classes and events. Classes include obedience training, competitive agility, and non-competitive agility. Dog-focused events include "Dog Daze" at The Water Mine in Lake Fairfax Park and "The Ides of Bark" at Grist Mill Park. These events and classes are generally offered at larger staffed parks throughout the County and are not hosted at dog parks to avoid potential conflicts with regular use of the park. Classes are held for a fee paid to FCPA.

FCPF accepts monetary and in-kind contributions from charitable sponsors to help offset costs of these dog events in addition to accepting voluntary donations at the event. In addition, vendors can have an on-site presence during an event for a fee. The donations and fees associated with these events are used for the operational costs of the event and any net revenue is typically donated to a charitable organization such as the Park Foundation and/or canine organization.

---

<sup>26</sup> <https://fairfaxparkfoundation.org/>

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

FCPA requires additional funding to support any increased maintenance or improvements in existing dog parks or the construction of any new dog parks in the County. This study puts forth recommendations for a variety of funding sources to be considered.

### **PARK BOND PROGRAM**

As determined in the needs analysis done as part of this study, construction of at least one new dog park will be needed by 2025 to meet service level standards. It is recommended that park bond funding be utilized to fund the construction of one new dog park by this time.

### **MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS FUNDING**

Additionally, this study identified that the current level of maintenance for FCPA dog parks provided by staff is bound by the available funding appropriated through the County's General Fund. The study identified that increased maintenance frequency and oversight by staff or volunteers would alleviate many of the issues identified by visitors in the survey. Additional funding from the County's General Fund would be needed to provide the additional level of maintenance and oversight by FCPA staff.

### **MAINTENANCE AGREEMENTS**

Maintenance agreements created in conjunction with the establishment of new FCPA dog parks on FCPA or other county-owned property, help expand services where there is increased development and subsequently additional recreational demands in the County. These types of agreements with HOAs or other private organizations should continue to be considered and encouraged where appropriate when evaluating new construction of an FCPA dog park during the development review process for new residential and commercial developments within applicable areas of the County.

### **MEMBERSHIP PROGRAMS AND USER FEES**

The study does not recommend charging membership and/or user fees for access to dog parks. Dog membership and user fees do not exist at any nearby local jurisdictions and charging fees would likely discourage dog park visitation. Additionally, research has indicated that the administrative and operational costs associated with charging fees reasonable for this area far outweigh the investment return. Costs are inclusive of but not limited to administrative fees, increased maintenance costs, and access controls.

### **PARTNERSHIPS**

FCPA should work with interested community members and encourage partnerships which form the basis for mutual support for dog parks. Friends Groups are the primary partnership opportunity recommended as part of this study.

Individual volunteers and park volunteer teams remain as other options for the community to be involved in and support FCPA dog parks, however these forms of community involvement differ from Friends Groups because they do not have the ability to fundraise for dog park improvements. The different volunteering options are expanded on further in the Volunteering section of this report.

### Friends Groups

Friends Groups can be established at the planning stage of a new dog park to help fund and guide the development. They can also be established for an existing dog park to help facilitate additional improvements and operational needs. The relationship between FCPA and the Friends Group is defined through the establishment of a MOU agreement and may include ongoing operational support, programming, maintenance, and fundraising support for the dog park. The establishment of a Friends Group is a formal process undertaken with FCPA's Friends Group Coordinator and requires establishment of a non-profit entity registered with the IRS. It also requires insurance independent from Fairfax County. It should be noted that volunteering is only one facet of a Friends Group; the formation of a PVT may be more appropriate if providing maintenance and operational oversight within a dog park is a primary interest. Additional information about volunteering can be found in the Volunteer section of this report.

Westgrove Dog Park is the only FCPA dog park that has an established Friends Group partnership with FCPA as defined by an MOU between the Westgrove PAK Friends Group and FCPA. This study recommends exploring the potential community interest in forming Friends Groups for the other remaining dog parks. This level of outreach would require ongoing coordination and would require dedicated staff resources, as described in the Implementation section of this report.

Friends Groups should also be encouraged during the establishment phase of a new dog park as detailed in "Process for Establishing New FCPA Off Leash Dog Areas" section of this report. The interested group should consult with FCPA's Central Outreach Friends Group Coordinator to determine if the establishment of Friends Group is appropriate for the group's needs. The following should be considered when forming a Dog Park Friends Group:

- How organized and established does the group intend to be?
- What level of involvement does the group want in the management of the dog park?
- Does the group wish to fundraise for improvements or operations of the dog park?
- Does the group intend to provide services and conduct business on parkland?

## FUNDING SOURCES, PARTNERSHIPS AND DONATION OPPORTUNITIES

### DOG LICENSE REVENUE

As the population of dogs grows within the County, so too should the funding to support the dog parks that they may frequent. Dog park funding appropriated through dog license revenue is an effective method of ensuring funding for this expected increase in recreational demand over the years. As such, the study recommends soliciting a portion of the dog license fee collected by the Department of Tax Administration (DTA) to fund a portion of the operational costs associated with maintaining dog parks, both now and in the future. Additionally, earmarked funding from the dog license fee would allow for an increased maintenance regime as detailed above and supported by the public.

### SPONSORED IMPROVEMENTS AND DONATION OPPORTUNITIES

FCPF is equipped to facilitate donations and sponsored improvements at dog parks. This study identified that marketing material and outreach campaigns that focus on dog parks are needed. It is recommended that FCPA staff coordinate with FCPF to create a formal project and to market existing dog park donation opportunities with recognition benefits for prospective donors. Recommended marketing efforts are detailed below.

#### Marketing Recommendations

- It is recommended that FCPA staff coordinate with Fairfax County Park Foundation (FCPF) to develop new and market existing dog park donation opportunities from individuals and organizations.
- An FCPF mailing insert depicting existing donation opportunities that can support FCPA dog parks should be prepared and marketed. The mailing insert should be included with the dog license annual renewal mailing. Another development opportunity is conducting dog-focused direct mail campaigns.
- A dedicated FCPF webpage that accepts donations or sponsored improvements for individual dog parks should be established. The page should provide estimated sponsorship levels for potential improvements, such as the addition of a drinking fountain or a shade canopy. The webpage should link to FCPA's dog park webpage, other County dog-related webpages as appropriate, and may be promoted through relevant social media outlets.
- Signage, flyers, or brochures that inform visitors of dog park sponsorship and donation opportunities may be posted at dog parks, distributed at dog events or classes, and provided to local dog related businesses.

### SPONSORED IMPROVEMENTS RECOMMENDATIONS

Research of other jurisdictions showed that many improvements and amenities within dog parks are provided through sponsoring. This study recommends pursuing and

establishing the following dog and dog park-related sponsoring opportunities in Fairfax County:

- Sponsored dog park amenities, such as benches, shade structures, etc.
- Dog-related community events hosted by a sponsor, such as low-cost vaccines, micro-chipping, and special merchandise sales where a portion of the proceeds could be donated to FCPF to be used specifically for dog park improvements.

In return for sponsoring improvements, amenities, or events, the sponsor could receive recognition through donation plaques, social media, and ParkTakes.

## RULES & ENFORCEMENT

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- No changes to FCPA's existing dog park rules or operating hours are recommended. The survey results, paired with staff observations, determined that most issues related to rules within FCPA dog parks are due to a need for additional enforcement, as opposed to the rules themselves.
- Having clear and consistent signage at the dog parks is critical for visitors, volunteers, and FCPA staff alike. A signage audit at each FCPA dog park to ensure that rules, regulations, and FCPA contact information are clear and consistent is recommended.
- On FCPA's dog park webpage, future informational brochures, and signage, include the following statement to provide clearer language on the requirement for owners to pick up their dog's waste, "Dog owners are required to pick up all waste from their dog (County Code 26-04-41.1.). Violators may be subject to penalties and fines."
- FCPA's dog park webpage should be reviewed and updated to ensure that rules, reporting procedures, and operating hours are prominently displayed.
- FCPA should develop a dog handling and behavior brochure to further promote safe and enjoyable use of dog parks for all.

### ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

As part of this study, the current rules and enforcement procedures for FCPA dog parks were examined to determine what, if any, modifications might be needed. FCPA benchmarked existing rules, enforcement, and etiquette procedures against other nearby jurisdictions. In addition, some rules and enforcement procedures were vetted through the public survey. Below are the current FCPA dog park rules.



## EXISTING FCPA DOG PARK RULES

### OLDA Hours of Operation

7 a.m. to one half-hour after sunset Monday through Friday. On weekends and federal holidays, the hours are 8 a.m. to one half-hour after sunset (County Code 108.1-5-1 (s)).

### The following are prohibited in FCPA off-leash dog areas:

1. Dogs barking incessantly.
2. Food (includes treats, bones and edible toys) and glass containers.
3. Dogs under four months of age.
4. Female dogs in heat.
5. Animals other than dogs.
6. Children under the age of nine.
7. Professional training of dogs.

### Other rules that apply to dog parks:

1. Users of the facility do so at their own risk. Neither Fairfax County nor the Park Authority shall be liable for any injury or damage caused by any dog in the off-leash area. Handlers are legally responsible for their dogs, and any injury or damage to facilities caused by them.
2. Aggressive dogs (defined as dogs posing a threat to human beings or other dogs) are not allowed at any time. Dogs must be removed from the off-leash dog area at the first sign of aggression.
3. All dogs must be legally licensed and vaccinated and shall wear a visible dog license and have vaccination documents available upon request.
4. The off-leash dog area is for dogs, their handlers, and those accompanying them only.
5. Dogs must be on leash when entering and exiting the off-leash dog area.
6. Dogs must be under the control of their handler and in view of their handler at all times.
7. Handlers must be 16 years or older. Children ages 9 -15 years must be accompanied by a chaperone, 16 years or older.
8. Handlers must have possession of the dog leash at all times.
9. Handlers are limited to a maximum of two dogs.
10. Handlers are responsible for removal and disposal of waste.
11. Handlers must prevent dogs from digging holes and are responsible for filling them.

### OLDA Hours of Operation

7 a.m. to one half-hour after sunset Monday through Friday. On weekends and federal holidays, the hours are 8 a.m. to one half-hour after sunset (County Code 108.1-5-1 (s)).

## DOG PARK RULES BENCHMARK COMPARISON

In examining nearby jurisdiction's dog park rules, the study found that current FCPA dog park rules are similar, with some minor variations in the number of dogs permitted per handler and the age of children permitted in a dog park. Dog park hours of operation for the other jurisdictions studied showed that dawn to dusk is typical. Nearby jurisdictions that were analyzed for comparison to FCPA's current rules include:

- Prince William County
- Arlington County
- City of Alexandria
- Washington, D.C.
- Leesburg

Some of these jurisdictions permitted children of all ages to enter a dog park if they were accompanied by an adult, while other jurisdictions had age limit rules similar to FCPA's rule that states handlers must be 16 years or older and children ages 9 -15 years must be accompanied by a chaperone. Some of the local jurisdictions researched permitted three dogs, while others have a limit of two dogs. Currently, FCPA limits handlers to two dogs maximum within dog parks, which is supported by 66% of the respondents that completed the survey as shown in *Figure 34* below. FCPA established these rules as a safety precaution, as it may be difficult to supervise multiple dogs or properly look after a dog and young children at the same time.

### **DOG PARK RULE ENFORCEMENT**

Regarding enforcement, FCPA posts dog park rules on signage at each dog park as well as on FCPA's dog park website. FCPA staff enforce dog park rules when they are on-site performing maintenance tasks, but staff's presence at each of the dog parks is largely limited to performing maintenance tasks. FCPA encourages visitors to call the Fairfax County Police Non-Emergency phone number that is displayed within the park to deal with violations of rules and regulations if they are unable to resolve the situation civilly in person. Dog park users are also reminded that dog parks are public, shared resources and that appropriate, responsible, and cooperative behavior is expected from users at all times.

Because dog parks are unstaffed facilities, dog park volunteers play an important role when it comes to supporting rule enforcement and visitor etiquette. While volunteers do not take specific enforcement actions, as monitors, they serve as the eyes and ears of the dog park and can help expedite and relay information about violations and unsafe or unappealing situations to FCPA.

FCPA expects that by reinvigorating volunteering in dog parks and helping to establish volunteer teams and/or Friends Groups in FCPA's existing dog parks, a direct and positive impact on rule enforcement will result. Recommendations on how volunteers can best support FCPA in dog park rule enforcement are detailed further in the Volunteer section of this report.

### **WHAT WE ALSO HEARD**

Rule enforcement was on the top six list of subjects that commenters in the dog park survey cited as the one thing that would most improve the dog park they primarily visited. Concerns relating to rule enforcement included the following:

- Aggressive dogs
- Unvaccinated dogs
- Inattentive owners
- Dog waste pickup by owners
- Clearly displayed rules
- Clearly displayed reporting procedures for violators
- Dog park etiquette/behavior educational signage

The survey results showed that the majority of respondents either somewhat or strongly agreed (67%) with the existing FCPA rule of handlers being limited to a maximum of two dogs, as shown in Figure 34 below.

***Currently, handlers may not bring more than 2 dogs into a Park Authority dog park at one time. How much do you agree or disagree with this rule?***

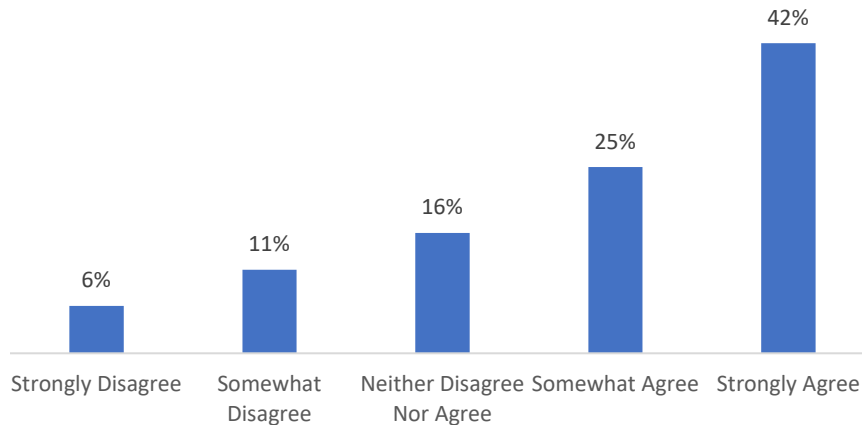


Figure 34: Percent that agree or disagree with 2 dogs per handler FCPA dog park rule

## RECOMMENDATIONS

No changes to FCPA's existing dog park rules or operating hours are recommended. The survey results, paired with staff observations, determined that most issues related to rules within FCPA dog parks is due to a need for additional enforcement, as opposed to the rules themselves. The study puts forth the following recommendations for reducing issues related to rules and enforcement:

- Conduct a signage audit at each FCPA dog park to ensure that rules, regulations, and FCPA contact information are clear and consistent. Signage should state that there could be fines or penalties that can be ticketed by law enforcement officers. Signs should also provide a non-emergency police number for reporting any issues. Having clear and consistent signage at the dog parks is critical for visitors, volunteers and FCPA staff alike.
- FCPA's dog park webpage should be reviewed and updated to ensure that rules, reporting procedures, and operating hours are prominently displayed. Other County dog-related webpages should be reviewed to ensure that there is a link to FCPA's current dog park page.
- On FCPA's dog park webpage, future informational brochures, and signage, include the following statement to provide clearer language on the requirement for owners to pick up their dog's waste, "Dog owners are required to pick up all waste from

their dog (County Code 26-04-41.1.). Violators may be subject to penalties and fines.”

- Encourage and publicize information about dog park volunteering opportunities. The assistance of these volunteers is needed for monitoring and reporting any misconduct issues. The monitoring checklist and reporting procedures provided as part of this study will support these efforts.
- Staff should be resourced to provide a single point coordination for all dog park-related matters across the agency. Such responsibilities include managing volunteers, advocating for additional amenities, and liaising between volunteers and maintenance staff to address issues at specific locations.
- FCPA should develop a dog handling and behavior brochure to further promote safe and enjoyable use of dog parks for all.

## IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES



This section presents four implementation strategies. Recognizing the wide-reaching areas of cross-agency research that this study explored, these strategies are centered around coordination and communication. These strategies span all six research themes (*Planning, Design, Operations & Maintenance, Volunteering, Funding Sources/Partnerships/Donation Opportunities, and Rules & Enforcement*) explored throughout this study and will support and sustain the implementation of the recommendations put forth in this dog park study.

### STRATEGY #1

#### **Enhance FCPA’s Dog Park Webpage**

Through cross-agency collaboration among the dog park study team as well as from public input as part of this study, a variety of insights were yielded on ways the existing dog park webpage could be enhanced to better streamline information. This update would consolidate a wide variety of dog park and dog activity related information and provide more robust resources for navigating to existing dog parks.

The website refresh would consolidate all dog park and dog activity related information in one easy to find place. This would include information related to rules and regulations, volunteer opportunities, license and vaccine information, dog-related events, dog training classes, dog park planning and design guidance, donation opportunities, and of course, this dog park study report. Consolidating the wide range of information related to dog parks and countywide dog activities into a single easy to use webpage will allow for more efficient navigation of resources, for both the public and County staff users alike.

The website refresh would also entail a revision to the existing dog park map on the current webpage to allow for easier location of FCPA’s existing dog parks. A revision to the Google map nomenclature of FCPA’s dog parks would be included as part of this update. Combined, these revisions will significantly improve locating and navigating to FCPA’s dog parks.

### STRATEGY #2

#### **Create a “Dogs in Public Spaces/Dog Park Information” Brochure**

Like the update to FCPA’s website described above under Strategy #1, this brochure would serve to consolidate key pieces of information surrounding FCPA dog parks, as well as key pieces of information surrounding vaccination, licensing, rules and regulations, and health and safety best practices. This brochure will help to provide community members with additional county resources and will serve as a printed paper option to complement FCPA’s dog park webpage. This will greatly enhance and expand public information about FCPA dog parks and dog handling in the County.

### **STRATEGY #3**

#### **Centralize Dog Park Coordination**

FCPA dog parks are a park amenity that has significant community interest; this can be demonstrated both by this study (over 4,000 survey responses and over 2,500 individual comments) as well as historic community input received by FCPA. In addition, FCPA's dog parks require a great deal of community partnership; from Friends Groups to volunteers and donors, FCPA's dog parks flourish from these forms of continued community investment. This high level of community interest and forms of community involvement help FCPA's dog parks thrive and are critical to their success.

Recognizing that these partnerships and forms of community involvement require consistent and sustainable coordination, FCPA should explore dedicating a key staff person to serve as the primary point of contact to help facilitate dog park development, operational needs, volunteer coordination, and community relations.

FCPA's dog parks are like FCPA's farmer's markets (10 sites) and garden plots (9 sites) in that they all require a great deal of coordination across multiple county departments, volunteer groups and the community. FCPA farmer's markets and garden plots both have dedicated staff resources to help facilitate the complex coordination that is required for these types of facilities that rely on help from volunteers.

A staff person dedicated to centralized coordination could serve as an inter-agency liaison, who would be responsible for coordinating the many facets of dog park activity and requests related to FCPA's 11 dog parks. This individual would work collaboratively with FCPA's Planning and Development Division, Park Operations, Park Services, and the FCPF, and serve as a primary point of contact for the community, such as Friends Groups, volunteers, and animal-related businesses. This enhanced coordination would ensure timely updates to the dog park website, prompt responses to community inquiries, and would help to provide more information to the community about dog park related resources and dog related activities. The recommendations and strategies presented as part of this study could serve as a guide and by dedicating staff resources to these unique county facilities, community involvement in FCPA's dog parks would be bolstered.

### **STRATEGY #4**

#### **Adopt a Project Schedule for Construction of One Planned Dog Park**

As described in both the Executive Summary and Planning sections of this report, it is recommended that FCPA construct at least one new dog park by 2025 and utilize the list of master planned dog parks to do so. This will not only satisfy the estimated service level need, but also the substantial community interest expressed through the dog park study survey.

While constructing a dog park that is already planned significantly expedites the process for establishing a new dog park, there are still several additional steps

required such as securing funding, construction permits, and community outreach if a significant period of time has passed since the master plan was approved. Should the process for establishing this new dog park begin in 2021, it is estimated that ribbon cutting for this dog park would likely occur between 2023/2024.

Recognizing the number of steps required as part of this process, it is recommended that FCPA adopt a formal project schedule and initiate this process in 2021 to ensure that this recommendation is realized within this time frame (2025).

# APPENDIX 1 – FCPA DOG PARK STANDARDS & GUIDELINES

## PURPOSE OF STANDARDS & GUIDELINES

The standards and guidelines are intended to be used as resource for the public establishment process, planning, and design of FCPA dog parks. These guidelines can also be referenced for the development of privately owned publicly accessible dog parks in the County. The standards and processes provided shall be considered a living document and are subject to change by way of alterations, additions, and deletions at any time. Any member of the Board of Supervisors, the FCPA Board or citizen may recommend changes or exceptions to these Standards; however, all changes and exceptions must be approved by the FCPA Board.

## DOG PARK ESTABLISHMENT

The Fairfax County Park Authority 2020 Dog Park Study has provided several ways new dog parks can become established, including through a community process to propose specific sites within FCPA parks. To ensure that new dog parks are developed that adhere to environmental, community, regulatory, and operational perspectives, FCPA has developed a review process for new dog park proposals.

## PROCESS FOR ESTABLISHING NEW FCPA DOG PARKS

1. **Letter of Interest:** The interested party first submits a Letter of Interest using the provided template to communicate to FCPA Planning Staff, Director, and Park Authority Board the desire and reason to locate a new dog park in a specific FCPA park or area of the County. It is recommended that the interested party review and reference the siting guidelines and criteria in the [Preliminary Dog Park Site Feasibility Checklist](#) to ensure that the minimum requirements for a dog park can be achieved. The letter of interest must be accompanied by additional information showing community support, including signatures of support or opposition from households (owners or renters) and businesses that immediately adjoin the parcel or area of interest.
2. **Planning Review:** FCPA Planning Staff reviews the feasibility of the proposed location(s) using the siting guidelines and criteria established in the [FCPA Dog Park Standards and Guidelines](#) and determines if the request is feasible. FCPA Planning Staff should respond within 30 to 45 days and follow up with any questions or additional information needed.
3. **Review Funding:** The ability to fund the construction and operation is considered and funding sources are identified before moving forward with planning, design, and construction of a dog park. Funding sources can include grants, donations, and sponsored improvements from the public. Additionally, the interested party should



determine if establishing a Friends Group or Volunteer Team is desired as a means of support should the dog park be developed. The [Fairfax County Park Foundation](#) should be consulted by the interested party to discuss possibilities. A Mastenbrook Grant may be available from FCPA to help contribute towards the required funding. More information about the Mastenbrook Grant can be found [here](#).

- 4. Master Planning Process:** Park planning staff review the approved master plan and/or conceptual development plan for the park and determine whether a proposed dog park is an acceptable planned facility. If a dog park is not shown as a planned improvement within the master plan or the park does not have an approved master plan in place, then a master planning process, with public input, must be completed by FCPA park planning staff, and the resulting master plan approved by the FCPA Board.

The process to develop or update a master plan involves a detailed review of the park with opportunities for public input to comment on any newly proposed or changed facilities, including dog parks. The master planning process is complete when the master plan is approved by the FCPA Board and the process can take 6 to 12 months, or longer depending on the complexity of the site and proposed changes. It should be noted that the master planning process may yield that a dog park is not desirable if public commentary and/or site analysis supports this conclusion. The siting guidelines and criteria established in the [FCPA Dog Park Standards and Guidelines](#) will once again be referenced to determine the ultimate planned size, location, and design in the master plan. More information on FCPA's Park Master Planning Process can be found [here](#).

- 5. Obtain Public Use Determination:** Once the park master plan is approved, the Fairfax County Planning Commission determines whether the planned public improvements conform to the County's Comprehensive Plan regarding their location, character, and extent, as required by Virginia Code §15.2-2232. This formal process, known as a Public Use or "2232" Determination is initiated by FCPA planning staff and is coordinated with the County's Department of Planning and Development. The timeline from initiation to receiving a determination from the Planning Commission can take six to eight months. Learn more about the 2232 process [here](#).
- 6. Secure Funding:** After the Public Use Determination has been approved, the funding sources identified earlier are secured to ensure that funds are available in an amount sufficient to pay for design, permitting, and construction. Continued funding or a plan for the ongoing maintenance of the dog park is finalized.
- 7. Establish Stewardship Volunteers:** The successful operation of a dog park depends upon sustainable help from volunteers. Individual volunteers, Park Volunteer Teams, and Friends Groups are the programs that the County utilizes for volunteering in parks. The suitability of each program for the proposed dog park is

reviewed and the process to establish the selected program is initiated. Information about Park Volunteer Teams can be found [here](#) and information about Friends Groups can be found [here](#).

8. **Design & Permitting:** After all necessary funding has been provided, the site design and approval process can begin. A Site Plan, Minor Site Plan, or Rough Grading Plan is prepared by FCPA Staff or a contracted design/engineering firm. The construction plan(s) are submitted to Land Development Services as required to ensure that the dog park’s design conforms to county codes and standards. These plans are reviewed by applicable county departments for conformance and eventual approval after any reiterations. More information about the County’s site development review process can be found [here](#).

After the County has approved the plans for the dog park, construction documents are prepared to communicate the design and details of the dog park for construction and potential bid. These documents are prepared by a design/engineering firm or FCPA staff. The design and approval process can take three to twelve months depending upon the complexity of the project.

9. **Construction:** Once the construction and permitting documents are completed, construction is scheduled and coordinated by FCPA Planning and Development staff. Construction can take between three to twelve months for completion.
10. **Grand Opening:** Once the construction has been approved by FCPA Planning and Development staff and all other applicable parties, the dog park can open, provided that the established Friends Group or Park Volunteer Team has implemented an approved operating plan and sustainable approach to help maintain the park.

## STEPS TO ESTABLISH A DOG PARK – HANDOUT/WEBSITE INSERT

## FCPA DOG PARK ESTABLISHMENT PROCESS

## 1 LETTER OF INTEREST



Complete a Letter of Interest using the online template to communicate to FCPA Planning Staff, Director & Park Board the desire and reasons to locate a new dog park in a specific FCPA park or area of the county.

## 2 PLANNING REVIEW



FCPA Planning Staff will review the feasibility of the proposed location using the siting guidelines and criteria established in the FCPA Dog Park Standards & Guidelines and make a determination if the request is feasible.

## 3 REVIEW FUNDING



Before a dog park can be considered, plausible funding sources for design and construction need to be identified. Funding sources can include grants, donations, and sponsored improvements from the public. The Park Foundation should be consulted by the interested party.

## 4 MASTER PLANNING PROCESS (CREATE OR REVISE PARK MASTER PLAN IF NO PLANNED DOG PARK)

## Master Plan Initiation



## Public Input



## Draft Master Plan

Public Comments  
& RevisionsFinal Master Plan  
Approval

For more information about the master planning process visit the [Park Planning Process Webpage](#).

## 5 OBTAIN PUBLIC USE DETERMINATION

A Public Use Determination must be prepared and submitted to Fairfax County Planning Commission by FCPA planning staff to ensure that the public dog park conforms with the County Comprehensive Plan. This process is called a 2232 Determination. Learn more about the 2232 process [here](#).

## 6 SECURE FUNDING

The funding sources identified earlier will need to be secured to ensure that funds are available in an amount sufficient to pay for design, permitting, and construction. Continued funding or a plan for the ongoing maintenance of the dog park will also need to be finalized.

## 7 ESTABLISH STEWARDSHIP VOLUNTEERS

The successful operation of the dog park will depend upon help from volunteers. Individual volunteers, Park Volunteer Teams, and Friends Groups are the programs that the County utilizes for volunteering in parks. The differences between these volunteering opportunities should be reviewed and steps should be taken to initiate the establishment process of the selected program. Information about Park Volunteer Teams can be found [here](#) and information about Friends Groups can be found [here](#).

## 8 DESIGN &amp; PERMITTING

After all necessary funding has been provided, the site design and approval process can begin. A Site Plan, Minor Site Plan, or Rough Grading Plan will need to be prepared by FCPA Staff or a design/engineering firm. The construction plan(s) will be submitted to Land Development Services as required to assure that the dog park design is conforming to county codes and standards. After the County has approved the plans for the dog park, construction documents will need to be prepared for construction and potential bid.

## 9 CONSTRUCTION



Once the construction and permitting documents are completed, construction will be scheduled and coordinated by FCPA Planning and Development staff.

## 10 GRAND OPENING



After construction has been approved by FCPA Planning and Development staff and all other applicable parties, the dog park can open. At this time, there should be an established Friends Group or Park Volunteer Team with an operating plan or approach to help maintain the park.

## NEW FCPA DOG PARK LETTER OF INTEREST TEMPLATE

The first step for parties interested in establishing a new dog park is submitting a Letter of Interest as outlined in the FCPA Dog Park Establishment Process. The following template can be used to communicate to FCPA Planning Staff, Director, and Park Authority Board the desire and reason to locate a new dog park in a specific FCPA park or area of the County.

### FCPA Park Name:

### Your name and/or organization information and relationship to the park

Please provide your name and/or the organization name that is interested in a new dog park within the FCPA park provided above. What is your or the organization's relationship to the park? (neighbors, dog advocacy group, etc.)

### Proposed approximate location and size in park

Please provide the approximate location and size of the proposed dog park within the park. The proposed location can be described verbally or shown graphically on a map.

### Preliminary Dog Park Site Feasibility Checklist

Has the Preliminary Dog Park Site Feasibility Checklist been completed? (Y/N)

Does the proposed dog park location meet the minimum threshold criteria shown in the checklist? (Y/N)

Please attach the completed checklist as part of this letter.

### Statement of Justification for new dog park

Please provide a brief explanation for the reason(s) you believe a dog park is needed in this park. The justification should include the probable utilization of the dog park and any supporting information.

### Signatures and letters of support and opposition

Please provide signatures and/or letters showing community support or opposition. These should include community interest groups and organizations as well as households (owners or renters) and businesses that immediately adjoin the parcel or area of interest.

### Statement of Understanding

The letter should include a statement that the interested party has read and understood the FCPA DOG PARK STANDARDS & GUIDELINES and accepts responsibility for being the primary party for communication regarding this request.

### Planning Review

FCPA Planning Staff will review the feasibility of the proposed location(s) using the siting criteria established in the FCPA DOG PARK STANDARDS & GUIDELINES and determine if the request is feasible. FCPA Planning Staff will respond within 30 to 45 days and follow up with any questions or additional information needed.

## DOG PARK PLANNING SITING CRITERIA AND CHECKLIST

The dog park siting criteria and the Preliminary Dog Park Site Feasibility Checklist have been provided as part of this appendix and should be referenced in the feasibility and planning stages of a dog park as described in the Process for Establishing New FCPA Dog Parks section. The siting criteria can be considered the minimum requirements a site must meet for a future dog park to be considered at that site. The checklist is intended to be used as a planning tool, which factors in the siting criteria detailed below, as well as dog park visitor preferences for shade, water, and designated areas for dogs.

### SITING CRITERIA

- 1. Location.** The establishment of new FCPA dog parks requires review by the FCPA Planning and Development Division, and approval from the Park Authority Board. A Public Use Determination also must be approved by the Planning Commission (this process is often referred to as a 2232 Review). The feasibility of establishing a new dog park within a FCPA park should be evaluated and vetted during the park master planning phase along with any other potential new facilities, with input from the public. The siting of a new dog park is also subject to the County site plan provisions as administered by Fairfax County Land Development Services (LDS). FCPA will evaluate all prospective locations within the park against established criteria and will use the GIS dog park siting model and site criteria checklist. If the location is deemed suitable, funding sources for construction would need to be identified and a public engagement process would be required. A maintenance plan would also need to be established. Similarly, if the location of a planned but unbuilt dog park is revisited, a public engagement process would ensue if a significant period of time has passed since the master plan was approved, funding sources would need to be identified and a maintenance plan established.
- 2. Size and capacity.** The size of an FCPA dog park is determined, in part, by the population density of the area. In more densely populated areas, the minimum size for a dog park is  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre. In less densely populated areas, the minimum size for a dog park is  $\frac{1}{2}$  acre. Note that these criteria apply to dog parks, not dog runs, which are typically sited in more dense areas and are often smaller than  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre and may be privately owned and operated. A dog park should have separate areas for large dogs and small dogs when the size of the dog park permits. Dog park carrying capacity, or dog park maximum occupancy, is the total number of dogs a fenced-in dog area can safely accommodate. The carrying capacity for FCPA dog parks should be determined using a metric of between 500 to 700 square feet per dog within fenced-in dog areas. The dog park carrying capacity will be determined during the master planning or site design phase and will be responsive to the specific site conditions of the park. Signs should be posted at or near the respective entrances for each designated dog area stating the carrying capacity.

3. **Buffer from residential areas.** The proximity of the potential dog park location to nearby neighbors should be considered, with a recommended minimum distance of 100 feet from location to the exterior of nearby existing residential dwellings. When siting a dog park near a residential area, screening (e.g., engineered barrier, vegetation) should be considered. The need for screening will be identified during the park master planning phase, and screening specifications will be determined at the time of site plan review.
4. **Land suitability.** A new dog park should be constructed on well-drained soils. The site should be relatively flat (between 1.5%-4.5% slope); excessive slopes and marine clay soils should be avoided. If a desirable site has excessive slopes, it should be designed such that erosion does not become an issue. Additional health and safety protocols will be required should construction occur in soils containing naturally occurring asbestos.
5. **Natural and cultural resource protection.** Due to regulatory controls and the FCPA's mission objectives, dog parks cannot be placed in locations where there is abundant native vegetation, nor within Resource Protection Areas (RPAs), Floodplains, Environmental Quality Corridors (EQCs), on sites with cultural resources, or within most easements. New dog parks should be sited at least 50 feet from floodplains<sup>27</sup>. In addition, park design should consider utilizing the following best practices to minimize the impacts of dog parks to stormwater and waterways:
  - Install a curb around the outside perimeter of the dog park to contain surface runoff, or a vegetated buffer to minimize runoff; and
  - Install pet waste stations/bags near dog park entrances, at intersections of walking paths, and near parking lots that serve the dog park.
6. **Park/visitor use conflicts.** A new dog park should not conflict with, displace, or encroach upon other desired recreation activities in the park. The location of the proposed dog park should work in harmony with the overall park design and adjacent facilities. Planning a dog park in concert with other park facilities adds to the potential for shared amenities, such as a water supply or shade opportunities. Locations directly adjacent to sport fields and other high use areas should be avoided.

---

<sup>27</sup> The Fairfax County RPA is defined as 100 feet distant from any perennial stream unless a detailed analysis trumps its delineation. The floodplain refers to, "those land areas in and adjacent to streams and watercourses subject to continuous or periodic inundation from flood events with a one (1) percent chance of occurrence in any given year (i.e., the 100-year flood frequency event also known as the base flood) and having a drainage area greater than seventy (70) acres, and include all areas of the County which are designated as a floodplain by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), by the United States Geological Survey, or by Fairfax County." (ZO 20-300). The Fairfax County EQC is typically designated during a zoning application and contained within a resource-based park. EQCs "include 100-year floodplains, areas of 15% or greater slope adjacent to floodplains, or 50 feet from all streams, all wetlands connected to stream valleys, and all and measured from the stream bank 50 feet plus four feet per percent slope."

7. **Proximity to other dog parks.** The proximity of a potential site to existing dog parks should be considered. In less dense areas of the County as displayed in Figure 18, consider 20-minute drive access and in more dense areas of the County, consider 10-minute walk access (10-minute walk = ½ mile).
  
8. **Pedestrian connectivity and parking.** Connections to nearby trails and footpaths should be considered and the site should be evaluated for its ability to support safe, comfortable, and convenient pedestrian connectivity. If the site is in a less densely populated area, the site should provide sufficient parking (a minimum of 10-20 spaces). In more densely populated areas, a dedicated parking lot may not be necessary. Regardless of setting (e.g., more/less dense areas in the county), all parking provided should be convenient and designed to minimize impacts to the surrounding neighborhood.

## PRELIMINARY DOG PARK SITE FEASIBILITY CHECKLIST

Preliminary Dog Park Site Feasibility Checklist <sup>1</sup>		
Required Criteria		
Criteria	YES	NO
<b>Size</b> Less densely populated area – site is a minimum of 0.50 acres More densely populated area – site is a minimum of 0.25 acres	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Residential Buffer</b> Site is at least 100 feet from nearby residential dwellings. Screening and/or a vegetated buffer is strongly preferred.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Land Suitability</b> Site is located on well-drained soils and can support drainage design that minimizes erosion potential; site is between 1.5-4.5% slope; proposed space within the site does not contain an existing facility.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Natural and Cultural Resource Protection</b> Site is not located in an RPA, Floodplain, EQC, on a site with cultural resources, a location where there is heavy native vegetation, or within an easement, and is at least 50' from adjacent floodplains.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Park/Visitor Use Conflicts</b> Site does not conflict with nor displace other desired park uses.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Proximity to other dog parks</b> The proximity of existing, nearby dog parks has been considered (20-minute drive access in less dense areas and 10-minute walk or half mile in more dense areas).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Pedestrian Connectivity and Parking</b> The site can support safe, comfortable, and convenient pedestrian connectivity and connections to nearby trails have been considered. If the site is in a less densely populated area, the site can support 10-20 spaces. If the site is in a more densely populated area, dedicated parking may not be necessary. Where applicable, parking that is convenient, with minimal impact on the surrounding neighborhood, can be supported.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Preferred criteria, but not required.</b> If a site does not have these elements, they should be considered as part of the dog park's design.		
<b>Designated Areas – strongly preferred</b> Site can support separate areas for small and large dogs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Shade- strongly preferred</b> Site has mature trees and a good mix of shade and open space.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Water- strongly preferred</b> Site has a water line connection that can support a drinking fountain for visitors and a water source for dogs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<sup>1</sup> The general framework of the above siting criteria was modeled after Ann Arbor's Recommendations and Guidelines for Dog Park Site Selection, Design, Operations and Maintenance. Retrieved from: <https://www.a2gov.org/departments/Parks-Recreation/play/Documents/Recommendations%20and%20Guidelines%20for%20Dog%20Park%20Site%20Selectio%20Updated%204-10-15.pdf>

**About this checklist.** New locations in FCPA-owned parks for dog parks are required to undergo FCPA's formal master planning process and are subject to the County site plan provisions. This checklist was created to establish a standardized site evaluation process for prospective dog parks within existing FCPA parks. All required criteria need to be met for a site to be considered.

This checklist should be used by FCPA Park Planning staff to gauge the feasibility of a site for a prospective FCPA dog park and should be used in conjunction with the GIS dog-park site feasibility model, which was also completed as part of the 2019-2020 dog park study. The checklist can be used to assess one site as part of the master planning process, or to compare the feasibility of multiple prospective sites. Some of the required criteria are directly tied to physical site constraints, other criteria require consideration.



## DESIGN GUIDELINES

The following FCPA dog park design guidelines were informed by the analysis and findings of best practices conducted as part of the 2020 FCPA Dog Park Study. These design guidelines are intended for the design of future FCPA dog parks and as a resource for the development of privately owned publicly accessible dog parks in the County.

### SIZE AND LOCATION

The dog park size and location should adhere to the siting standards provided as part of the Dog Park Planning Siting Criteria and Checklist.

### DESIGNATED AREAS

Separate areas for large and small dogs (designated areas) should be provided when space and funding permit. These designated areas can accommodate smaller dogs that are uncomfortable in the portion of the park designated for larger dogs. Designated areas also provide opportunity for maintenance and operations tasks in one area of the dog park while keeping the other area(s) open.

### PARKING AND PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIVITY

Sufficient parking, convenient to the site, should be provided such that the dog park does not create undue burden on surrounding neighborhood streets. In lower density neighborhoods as displayed in (Figure 18), 10 to 20 parking spaces should be dedicated to dog park use. In higher density neighborhoods, which are generally more walkable and may have on-street parking spaces, a dedicated parking lot may not be necessary. The parking need for all dog parks in both lower and higher density neighborhoods should be determined and provided as part of the park master planning process.

Accessible pathways that comply with ADA (The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Pub. L. No. 101-336, 104 Stat. 328 (1990), as amended) regulations should connect the dog park to parking areas and any existing public sidewalks if possible. Pedestrian connections should be made to existing trail networks wherever possible. In addition, while pedestrian connections to FCPA parks are typically provided by FCDOT (Fairfax County Department of Transportation/VDOT (Virginia Department of Transportation), FCPA should work with these agencies when establishing new dog parks to ensure that there are safe, comfortable, and convenient crossings for pedestrians.

### SURFACING MATERIAL

The type of surfacing to be used within a dog park is dependent upon the size, context, budget, and maintenance regime of the dog park. Each type of surfacing has advantages and disadvantages depending on the context of its use. Below are the surfacing recommendations for FCPA dog parks.

**Natural Turf**

Given the maintenance demands and size requirements, natural turf is not recommended as the primary surface within FCPA dog parks. Natural turf can be considered for newly proposed dog parks if the area is larger than three acres and if an appropriate maintenance regime is shown as feasible.

**Crusher Fines/Washed Stone Dust**

This type of surfacing is the preferred choice for FCPA dog parks. The composition of stone for the crusher fines or washed stone dust should be between #4 and #200 as shown in the table below. A construction detail for crusher fines/washed stone dust surfacing is provided in the Design Details section of this appendix.

CRUSHER FINES/WASHED STONE DUST COMPOSITION	
SIEVE SIZE	% PASSING
No. 4	95-100
No. 8	75-80
No. 16	55-65
No. 30	40-50
No. 50	25-35
No. 100	20-25
No. 200	5-15

**Synthetic Turf**

Synthetic turf is only appropriate for privately owned smaller dog parks or dog runs in urban or dense communities. Synthetic turf can be considered for partial sections of a new FCPA dog parks but is not recommended as the primary surfacing for the entire dog park.

**Wood Mulch Surfacing**

This type of surfacing is not recommended for FCPA dog parks due to the maintenance issues it poses.

**SURFACING DESIGN**

The design of the dog areas, entryways, and pathways have a direct correlation with the longevity of the chosen surface material and the overall accessibility of the dog park. The following surface design elements are recommended.

**Entrance Surfacing**

The surface within and directly outside double gated entryways should be concrete for ease of maintenance, dog safety, and ADA accessibility. A 10'x 10' minimum entry corral with two gates is recommended. If amenities are located within the entry corral the size

should be large enough to accommodate ADA accessibility standards and space for dogs and people to maneuver. An ADA accessible pathway should lead to the entrance and connect to a public sidewalk and/or ADA parking spaces. A construction detail for entry corral layout is provided in the Design Details section of this appendix.

#### **Pathways and Alternative Surfaces within Dog Parks**

A concrete, asphalt, or poured-in-place rubber pathway that forms a loop or multiple loops within a dog park provides enhanced accessibility and allows owners to interact with and monitor their dogs more closely. It also adds additional interest to the park. Pathways and walking loops should be provided if there is sufficient space and funding.

#### **Surfacing Edge and Containment**

A concrete or timber curb that is a minimum of 6 inches in height from finished grade inside the dog park and a minimum of 8 inches in width should encompass the surfacing of the dog park to minimize material migration. Weeps (drainage holes) incorporated within the curb should be placed where appropriate to facilitate surface drainage.

### **FENCING**

Dog parks should be fully enclosed with a 6-foot height black vinyl 6-gauge chain-link fence except where existing features of the site provide the same level of enclosure as that provided by a fence. Posts should be embedded in footings securely to frost depth and the chain link portions adequately anchored to ensure that no dog may escape.

The dog park should be equipped with a minimum 10' x 10' double-gated entry corral to deter dogs from escaping and to facilitate access for individuals with disabilities. If the dog park has separate designated areas, entrances to these separate areas should be located within the entry corral. Placing gates in the corners of the fenced area is not recommended, as this allows new dogs entering the park to easily be cornered by other dogs as they rush to greet each other. Gates should be equipped with a page latch and lock for durability. A separate lockable 8-foot-wide gate is recommended for maintenance access in designated dog areas.

Other types of fencing and barriers may be considered on a case-by-case basis. Other types of barriers include walls, transparent polycarbonate sound-reducing panels, and architectural welded wire mesh fencing. Fencing and gate details are provided in the Design Details section of this appendix.

### **PERIMETER LANDSCAPING/BUFFERS**

If the budget and site permit, and if it is necessary to buffer the dog park, vegetation should be planted on the outside of the fence to enhance the aesthetic quality of the site and to assist in mitigating noise associated with the dog park. Plant material that is native, low maintenance, and not dangerous (low toxicity, no thorns, etc.) to dogs is

recommended. Small rain gardens, bio-swales, or curbs surrounding the perimeter of the dog park are encouraged for capturing and treating runoff whenever feasible.

## **SHADE**

Shade is critical for the wellbeing of dogs and visitors within a dog park. Dog parks should offer shaded areas using trees and/or shade structures to allow visitors and dogs to retreat from the sun. A maintenance regime should be established for shade shelters if present. Rigid shade structures, such as pergolas and arbors, require less maintenance and upkeep than shade sail structures.

## **DRINKING FOUNTAIN**

A source of drinking water for dogs and visitors is highly desirable within or adjacent to the dog park area and is recommended if a connection to a water line is feasible. The drinking fountain should be ADA compliant and frost free. A hose bib is also recommended for maintenance needs. Both the hose bib and the fountain should be placed on an accessible concrete pad that freely drains. A drinking fountain detail is provided in the Design Details section of this appendix.

## **TRASH RECEPTACLES AND WASTE BAG DISPENSERS**

Trash receptacles should be located within the entry corral area or immediately adjacent to the outside of the dog park fence near the entrance to encourage waste disposal and to facilitate ease of emptying. Receptacles should have self-closing lids to prevent insects, rodents, and odor. Pet waste bag dispensers mounted at ADA height should be located within each designated dog area in proximity to the entrance(s). Pet waste stations/bags should also be placed near the primary dog park entrance, at the intersections of walking paths, and near parking lots that serve the dog park.

## **SITE FURNISHINGS**

Dog parks should incorporate several benches and/or tables located in accessible areas for people to rest or socialize. Benches should be strategically located within the dog park and outside the fenced perimeter of the dog park to allow for a comfortable visitor experience. Selected benches and/or tables should be treated, or powder coated metal to limit deterioration. Benches and tables should be surface-mounted to a concrete pad whenever possible. A detail exhibiting the surface mounting standards is provided in the Design Details section of this appendix.

## **RESTROOMS**

Permanent restroom facilities should be considered during the planning and design of a new dog park if the inclusion of the restroom is found to support other park uses. A dog park alone does not warrant a permanent restroom as most dog park visitors utilize the facility for a short period of time and the development and maintenance costs of such a facility are considerable.

### **AGILITY EQUIPMENT**

Agility equipment provides dogs with engaging activities, opportunities for physical fitness, and enhanced communication with the owner. If desired by the community, these amenities may be included if there is a maintenance plan that details care and replacement costs.

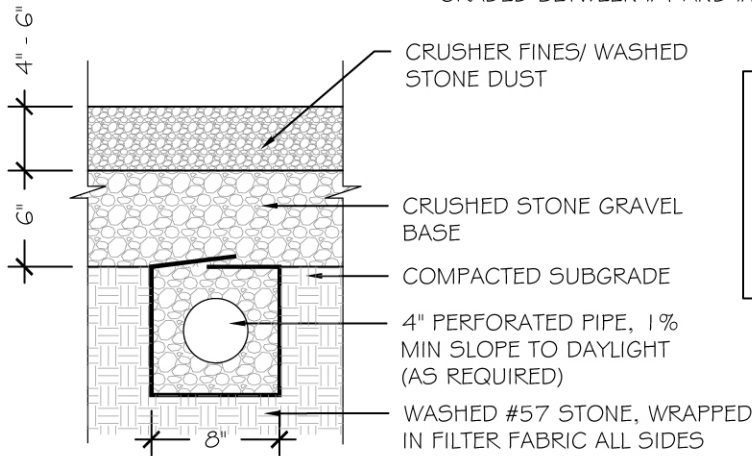
### **SIGNAGE**

FCPA Dog Park Rules, including codes of behavior, hours, and requirements for entry, should be clearly posted in clear view and near the entry. A community kiosk and bulletin board should be provided outside of the fenced dog area to provide a place to post local community information related to pet services, meetups, and events as permitted.

DESIGN DETAILS

NOTES:

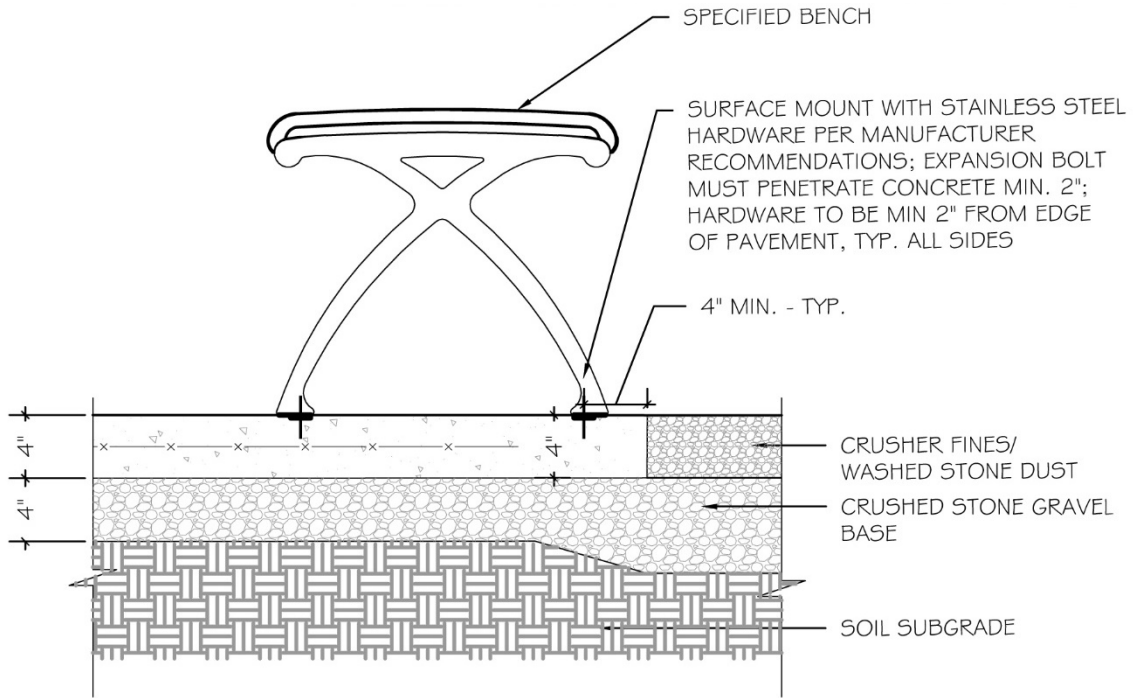
- CONTRACTOR SHALL PROVIDE CRUSHER FINES OR WASHED STONE DUST SAMPLE TO PARK AUTHORITY PROJECT MANAGER FOR APPROVAL, PRIOR TO INSTALLATION. IDEAL COMPOSITION OF CRUSHED ROCK FINES SHOULD BE GRADED BETWEEN #4 AND #200 AS FOLLOWS:



SIEVE SIZE	% PASSING
NO. 4	95-100
NO. 8	75-80
NO. 16	55-65
NO. 30	40-50
NO. 50	25-35
NO. 100	20-25
NO. 200	5-15

CRUSHER FINES/WASHED STONE DUST SURFACE

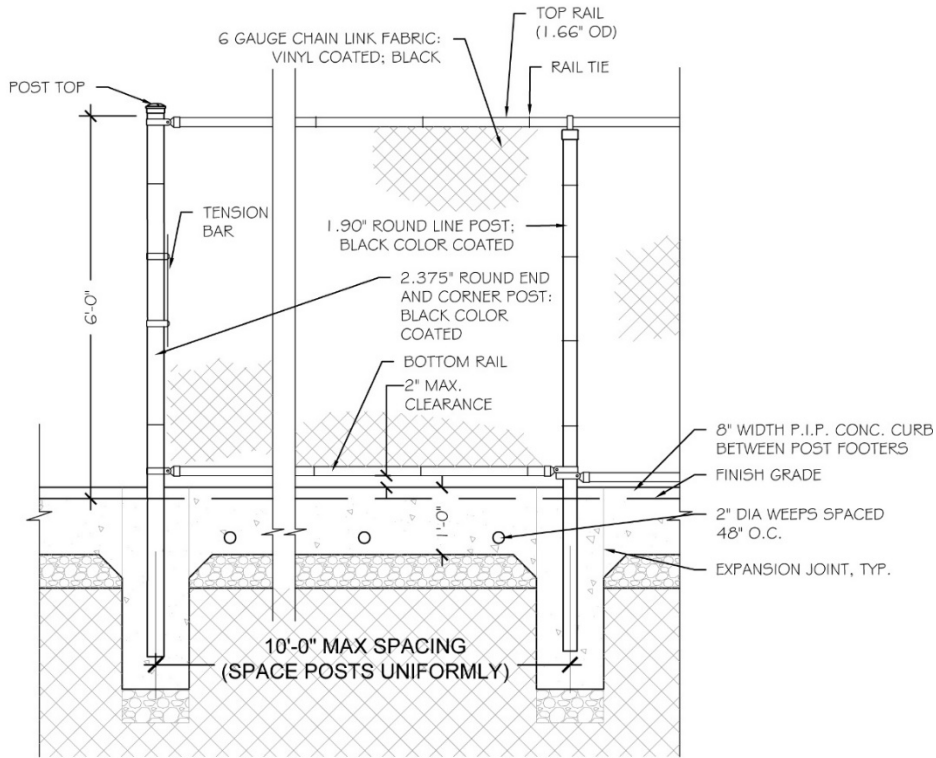
NOT TO SCALE



BENCH MOUNTED ON CONCRETE SURFACE

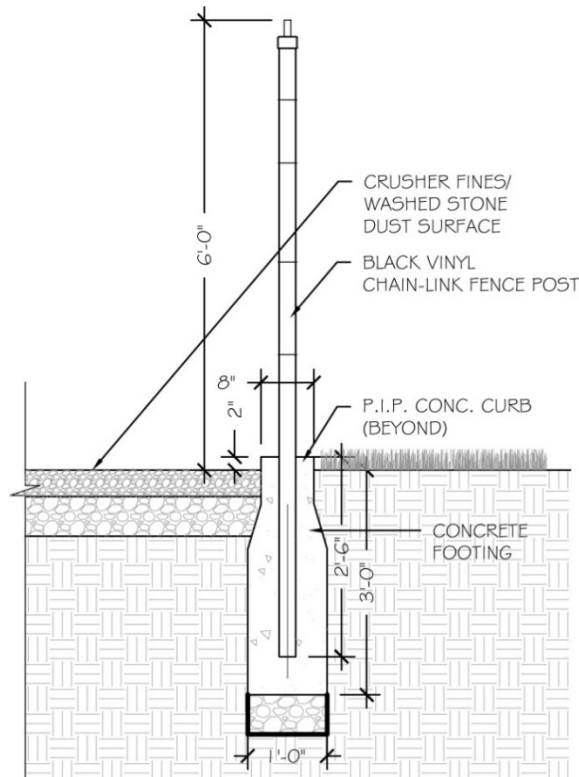
NOT TO SCALE

APPENDIX 1 – FCPA DOG PARK STANDARDS & GUIDELINES



**FENCE WITH INTEGRATED CONCRETE CURB ELEVATION**

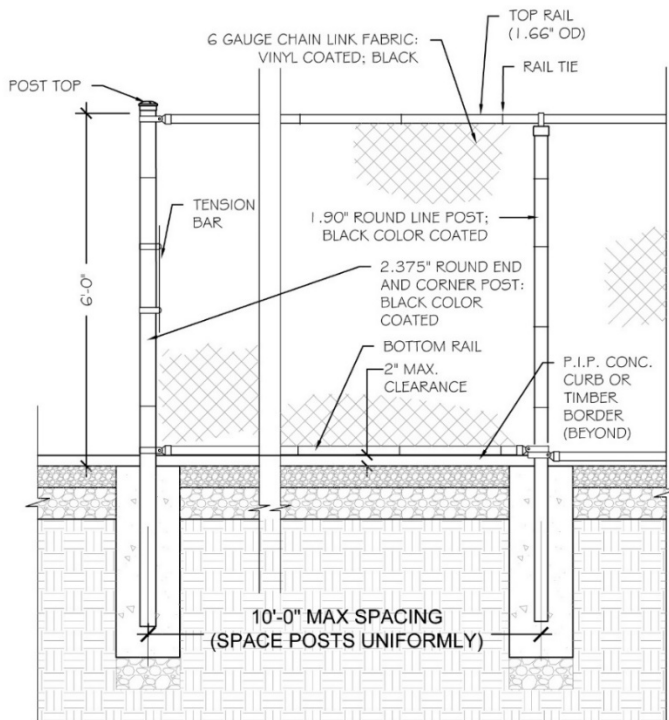
NOT TO SCALE



**FENCE WITH INTEGRATED CONCRETE CURB SECTION**

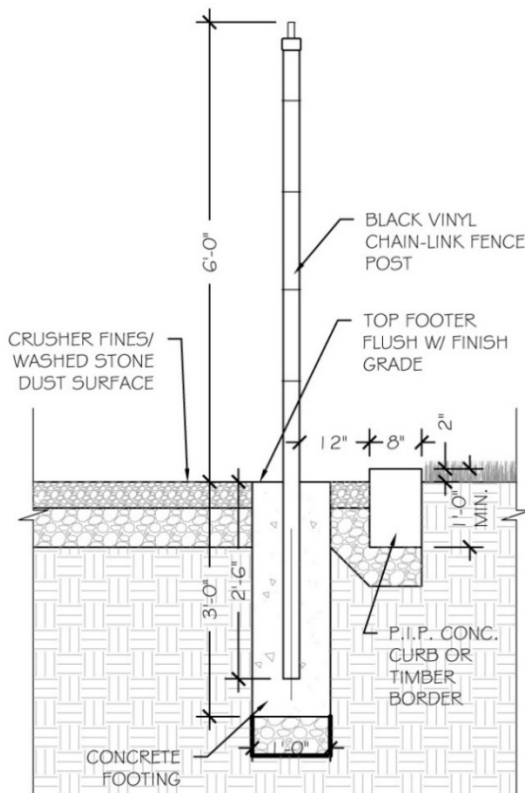
NOT TO SCALE

APPENDIX 1 – FCPA DOG PARK STANDARDS & GUIDELINES



FENCE WITH

NOT TO SCALE

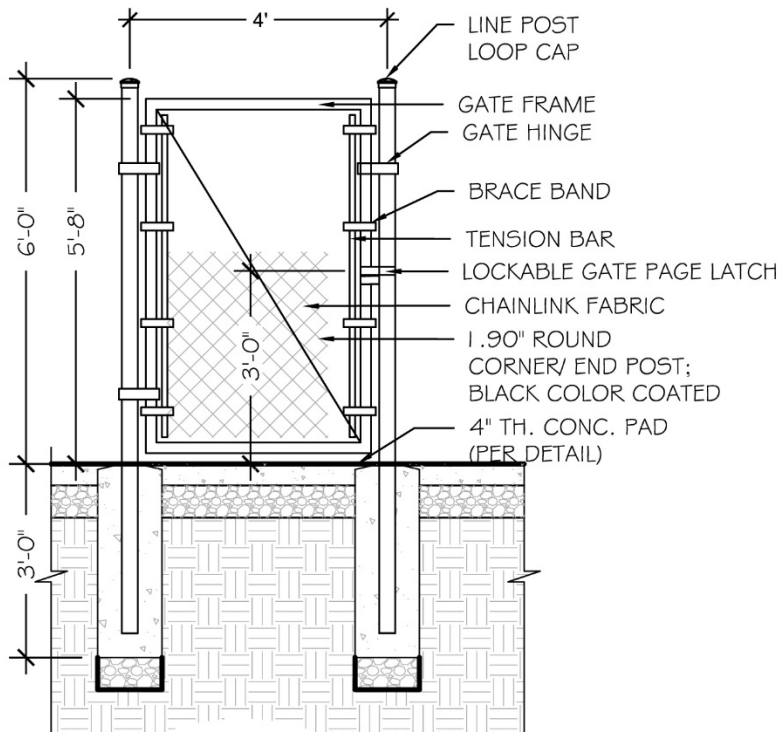


FENCE WITH OFFSET CURB SECTION

NOT TO SCALE

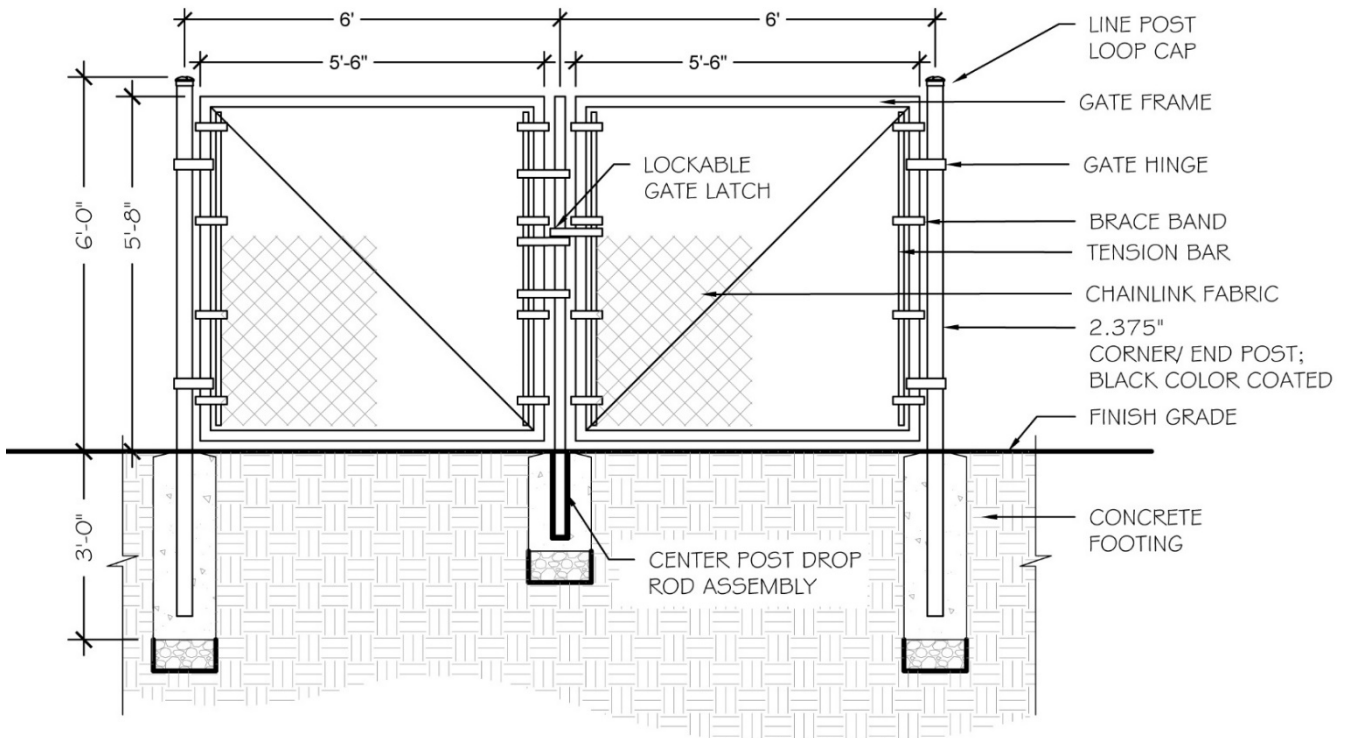


APPENDIX 1 - FCPA DOG PARK STANDARDS & GUIDELINES



**DOG PARK ENTRY GATE**

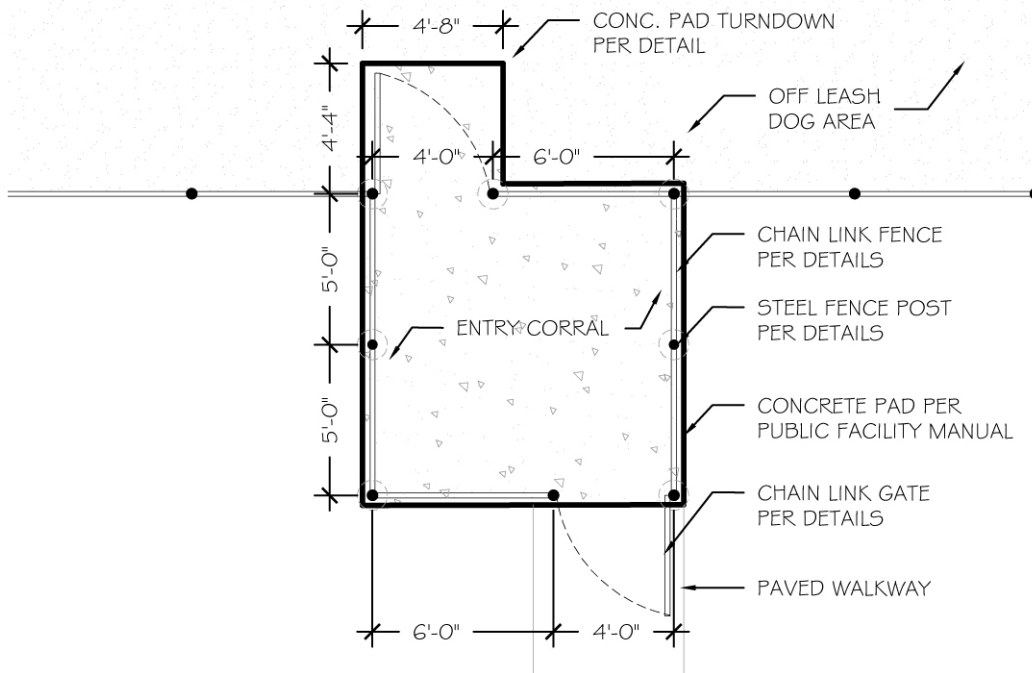
NOT TO SCALE



**DOG PARK MAINTENANCE GATE**

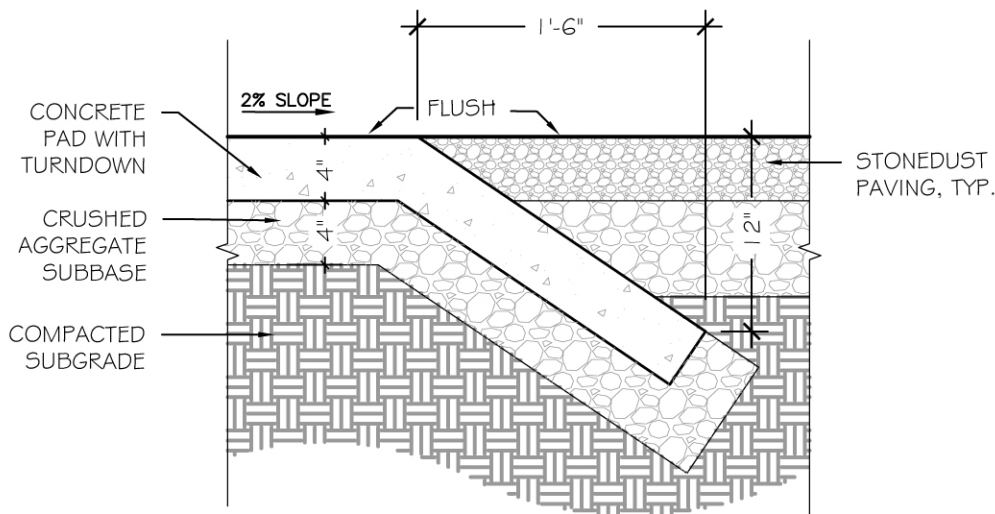
NOT TO SCALE

APPENDIX 1 – FCPA DOG PARK STANDARDS & GUIDELINES



**DOG PARK ENTRY CORRAL LAYOUT**

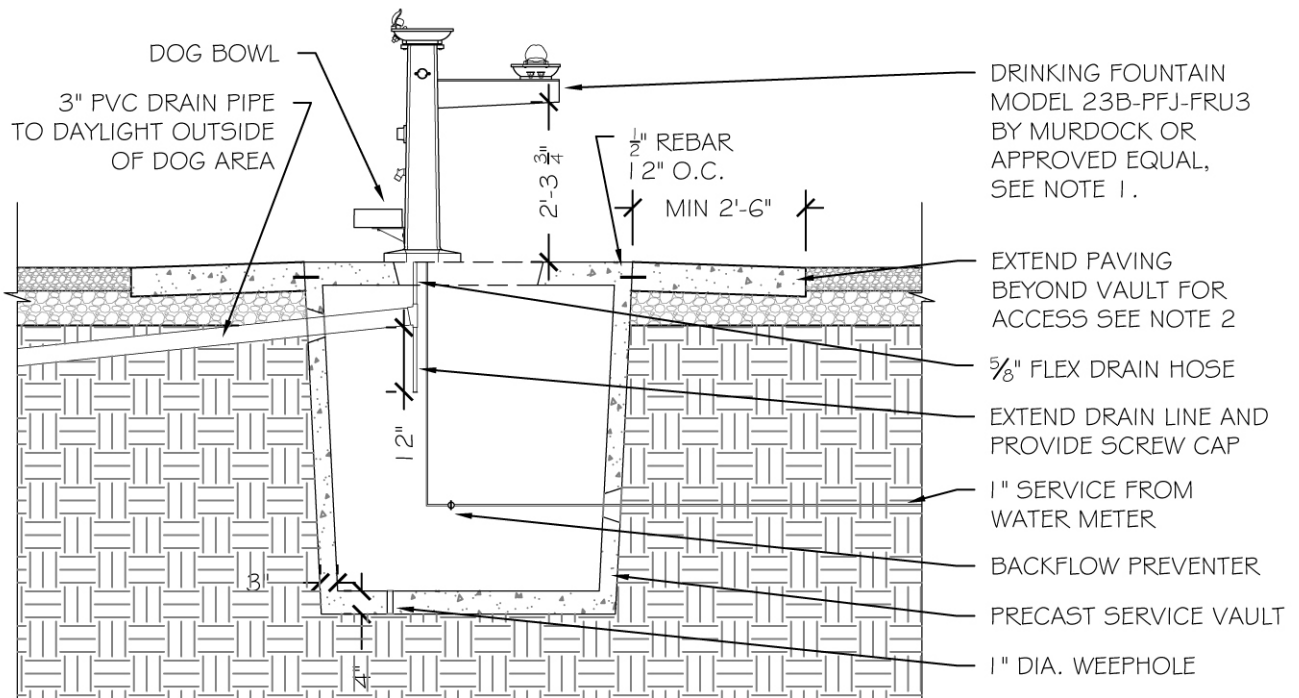
NOT TO SCALE



**ENTRY CORRAL CONCRETE SURFACE TO STONE DUST SURFACE**

NOT TO SCALE

APPENDIX 1 - FCPA DOG PARK STANDARDS & GUIDELINES



NOTES:

1. DRINKING FOUNTAIN MUST MEET ADA REQUIREMENTS AND BE FROST-FREE.
2. PROVIDE MINIMUM 2'6" PAVING AROUND ALL SIDES OF VAULT.

**DOG PARK DRINKING FOUNTAIN**

**NOT TO SCALE**



# Fairfax County Park Authority

## Dog Park Volunteer Monitor Checklist

*This form is for the use of authorized FCPA Volunteers who have been approved for the Dog Park Monitor volunteer opportunity. Proper completion of the form and timely submission assists the Park Operations Division with awareness of maintenance and operational conditions observed during the day/time noted. The Division's response time to reported issues varies according to staff availability and nature of the issue. This tool is not intended to prompt immediate response. Volunteers are trained on how and when to report urgent issues.*

Complete and submit this checklist to the FCPA Park Operations Division at the end of each volunteer shift. Provide details for any incidents or situations requiring follow up. Email to [parkmaintenance@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:parkmaintenance@fairfaxcounty.gov).

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Start/End time: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Name of Dog Park: \_\_\_\_\_ Weather: \_\_\_\_\_

Large Dog Area:      People Count: \_\_\_\_\_      Dog Count: \_\_\_\_\_

Small Dog Area:      People Count: \_\_\_\_\_      Dog Count: \_\_\_\_\_

Yes	No	Indicate which of the following tasks you completed.
		Collect and discard any dog waste and trash left on ground – both inside and around the perimeter of the dog park.
		Check trash receptacles. Note condition (full/not full):
		Check waste bag receptacles.
		Make sure water faucet (if any) is completely turned off when not in active use.
		Make sure gates are working properly and signage is not defaced or missing.
		Fill any holes, to the best of your ability, with surrounding dirt.
		Enter hours in VMS (do no less than monthly).
		Other tasks:
Yes	No	Did you observe violations of any of the Dog Park Prohibitions or Rules?
		Number of dogs exceeding posted capacity.
		Dogs barking incessantly.
		Food (includes treats, bones, edible toys)
		Glass containers.
		Dogs under four months of age.





## Fairfax County Park Authority Dog Park Incident Report Form

This form is for the use of authorized staff and FCPA Volunteers who have completed training for the Dog Park Monitor volunteer opportunity. The purpose of this form is to facilitate accurate reporting of incidents which were concerning to staff or volunteer monitor. Examples include but are not limited to dog bites, serious injury to canine, injury to human, park property damage, or other incidents of concern.

Please complete and forward to your FCPA staff contact within one day of the incident. If police were called, contact your FCPA staff contact as soon as the incident is resolved or sooner if possible.

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Dog Park Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Date & Time of Incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Whom did you call? (check all that apply)

911

Police/Animal Protection Non-Emergency: 703-691-2131

FCPA Staff Contact

FCPA Staff Name (if contacted): \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

---

*For Park Operations Division staff use only:*

IF VANDALISM OR PROPERTY LOSS OF COUNTY EQUIPMENT IS OBSERVED, FAIRFAX COUNTY POLICE MUST BE CONTACTED AND A CASE NUMBER PROVIDED.

In most cases this can be done online at <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/police/crs/>

Please describe the incident in the page below. Please provide as much detail as possible. State the facts as you observed them. Try to describe the events in chronological order. Describe individuals involved, canines (if any) involved, action taken by you or others, location/scene of incident, witnesses, etc.

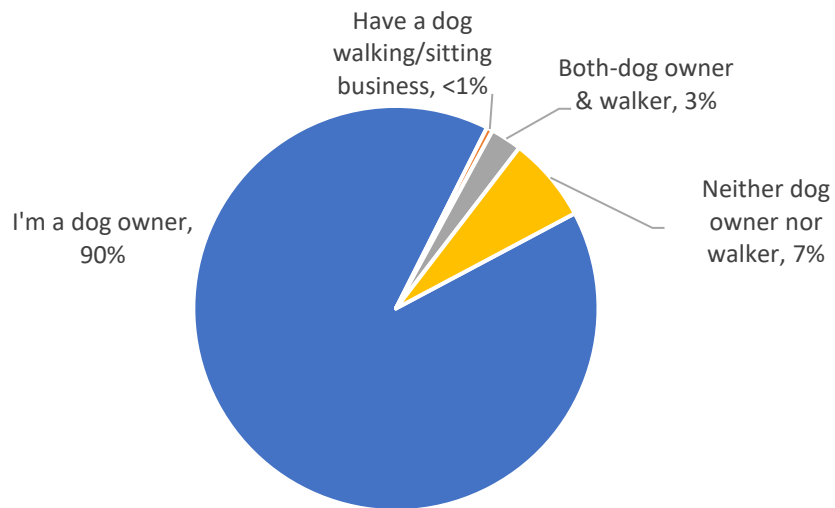


## APPENDIX 2 – COMPLETE SURVEY RESULTS & QUESTIONNAIRE

### SURVEY RESPONSE SUMMARY

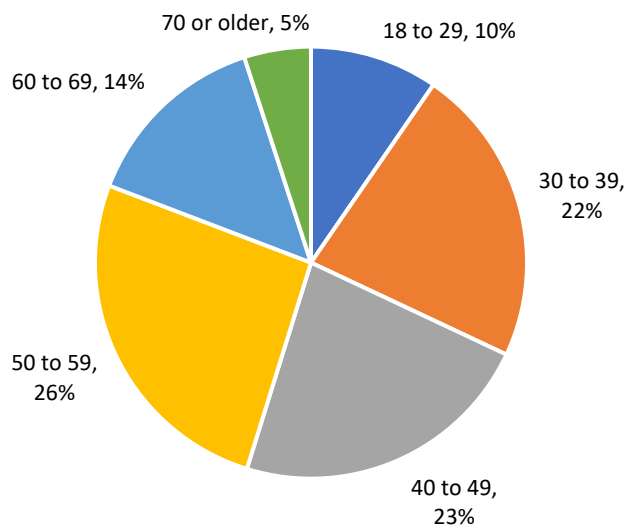
This section summarizes who responded to the survey and how respondents found out about the survey.

#### *Which of the following best describes you?*



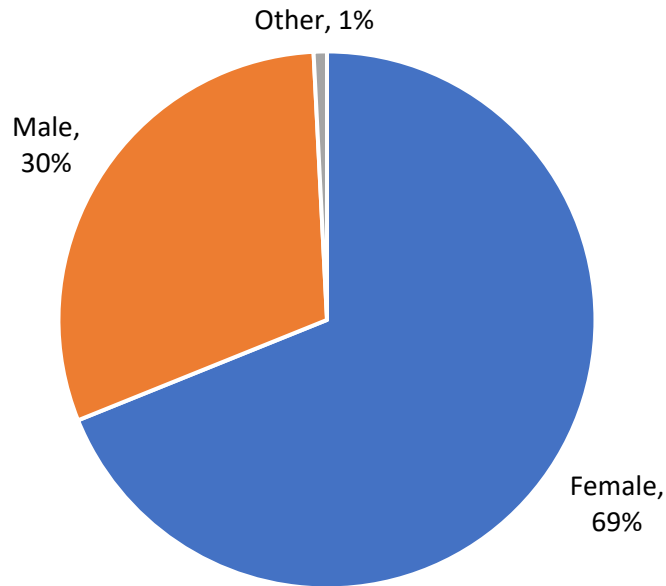
The FCPA dog park survey received a total of 4,645 valid responses.

#### *What is your age?*

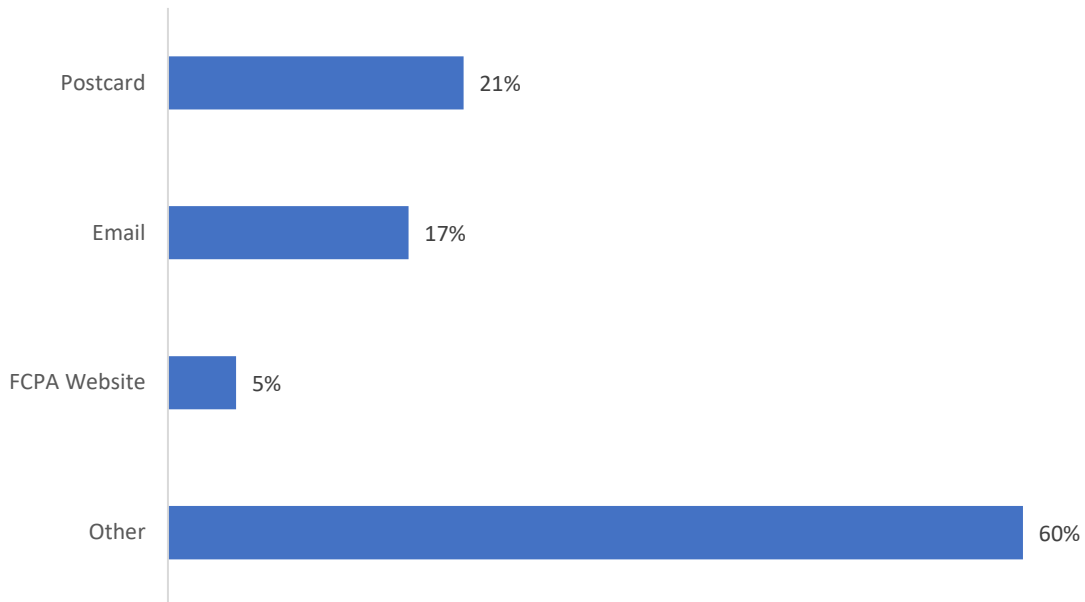




**What is your sex?**



**How Did You Find Out About this Survey?**



Note: Percentages add up to more than 100% since multiple selections were allowed.

### How Did You Find Out About this Survey?

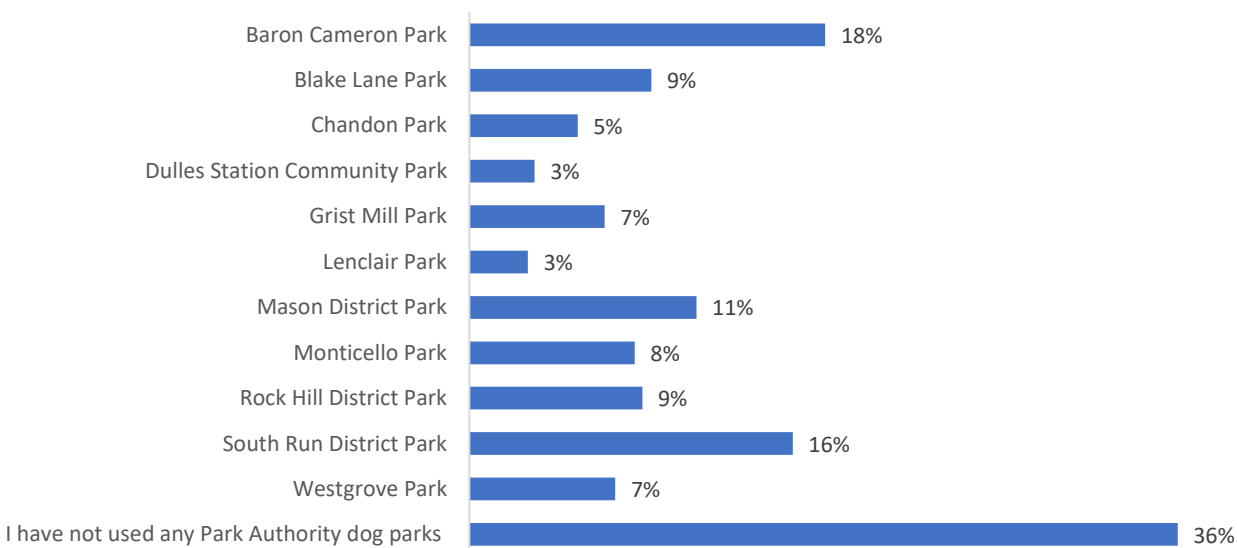


Results based on respondents who selected “other” to the above question.

### FCPA DOG PARK VISITATION

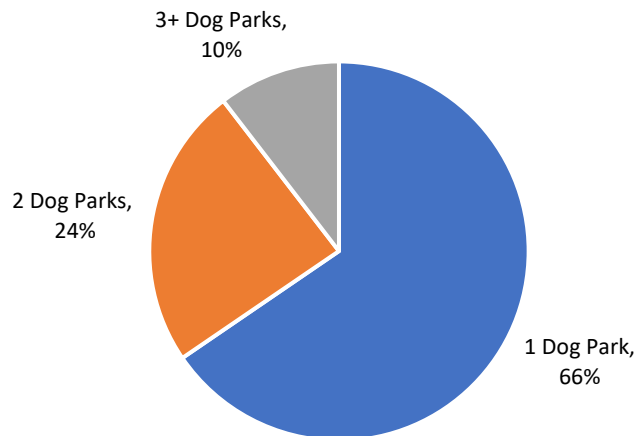
This section presents information about FCPA dog park visitation, such as which FCPA dog parks respondents frequent most often, how often they go there, and other dog parks they may have visited.

#### Which FCPA Dog Parks Have You Visited in the Past 12 Months?



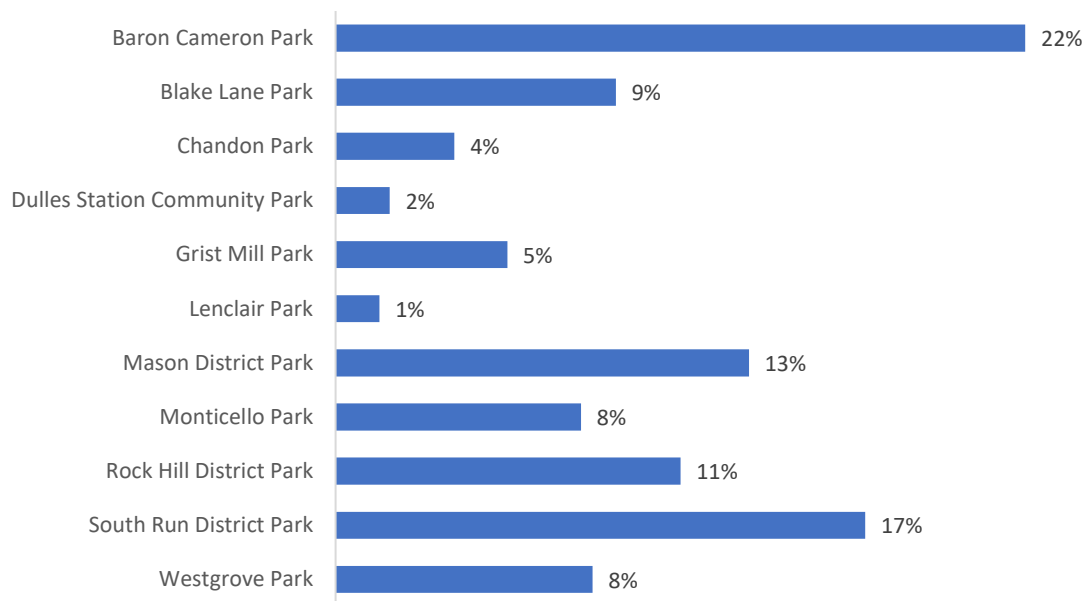
Results based on responses from those who self-identified as either dog owners, dog walkers or both. Percentages add to more than 100% since multiple selections were allowed.

**How Many FCPA Dog Parks Have You Visited in the Past 12 Months?**



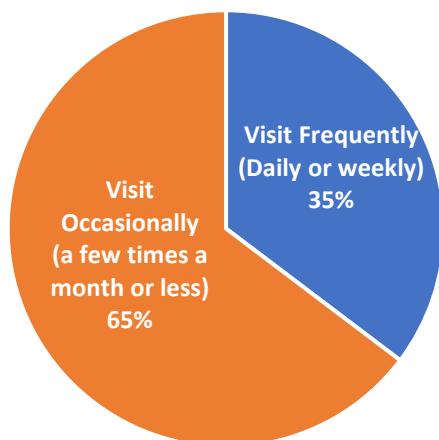
Results based on those who reported visiting one or more FCPA dog parks in the past 12 months.

**Which FCPA Dog Park Do You Visit Most Often?**



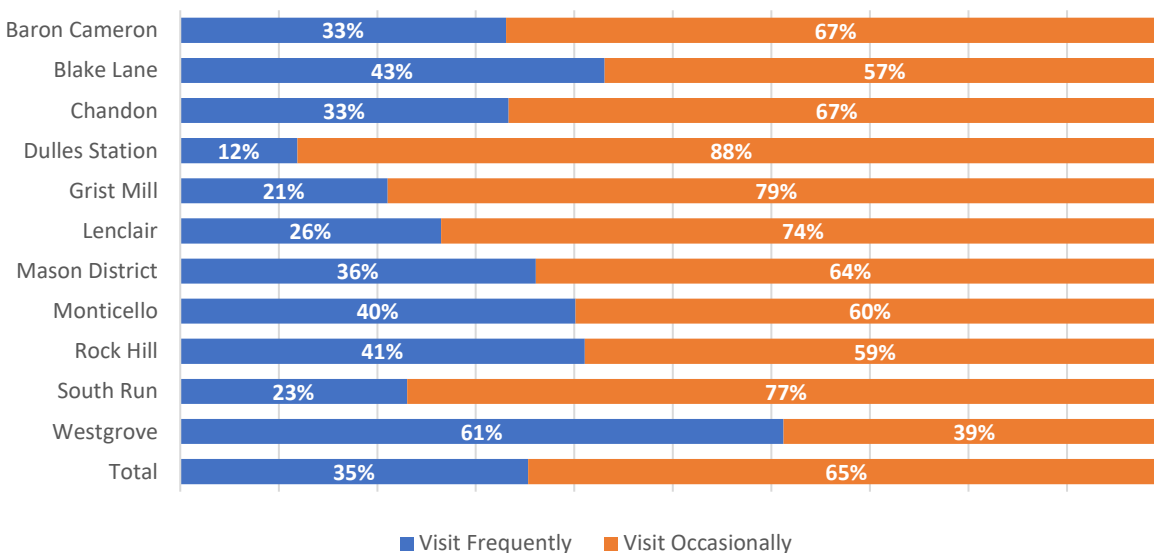
Results based on those who reported visiting one or more FCPA dog parks in the past 12 months.

### How Often Do You Visit This Dog Park?



“Visit frequently” includes all respondents who indicated that they visited “daily” or “weekly.” “Visit occasionally” corresponds to those who indicated they visited either “a few times a month” or “monthly or less.” Results based on those who reported visiting one or more FCPA dog parks in the past 12 months.

### How Often Do You Visit This Dog Park?



“Visit frequently” includes all respondents who indicated that they visited “daily” or “weekly.” “Visit occasionally” corresponds to those who indicated they visited either “a few times a month” or “monthly or less.” Results based on those who reported visiting one or more FCPA dog parks in the past 12 months.

<b>Which of these dog parks have you visited in the past 12 months?</b>											
<b>Percent (%) of visitors who visited other FCPA dog parks, in addition to their favorite FCPA dog park</b>											
Dog Park	Baron Cameron	Blake Lane	Chandon	Dulles Station Community Park	Grist Mill	Lenclair	Mason District	Monticello	Rock Hill	South Run	Westgrove
Baron Cameron	N/A	27%	67%	46%	8%	15%	16%	7%	19%	11%	6%
Blake Lane	14%	N/A	13%	20%	8%	13%	17%	15%	13%	9%	5%
Chandon	20%	7%	N/A	40%	3%	9%	2%	3%	11%	3%	3%
Dulles Station Community Park	9%	7%	24%	N/A	4%	9%	3%	5%	10%	3%	4%
Grist Mill	3%	6%	4%	8%	N/A	40%	8%	8%	2%	12%	38%
Lenclair	3%	4%	5%	8%	17%	N/A	6%	5%	3%	3%	28%
Mason District	10%	21%	5%	9%	14%	23%	N/A	21%	6%	16%	11%
Monticello	3%	13%	5%	12%	9%	13%	15%	N/A	4%	26%	9%
Rock Hill	9%	12%	17%	27%	3%	9%	4%	5%	N/A	6%	3%
South Run	10%	16%	7%	16%	28%	18%	23%	51%	11%	N/A	13%
Westgrove	2%	4%	5%	9%	41%	69%	7%	8%	3%	6%	N/A

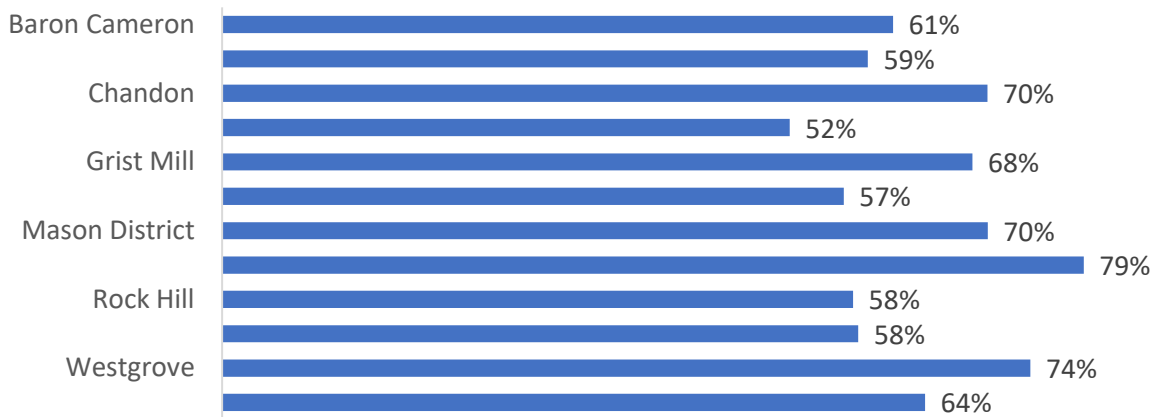
A note for interpreting this chart: each column represents the visitors at one FCPA dog park as noted in the column heading. Read down the column to see what proportion of the visitors of that dog park also visited other FCPA dog parks. For example, 14% of Baron Cameron Dog Park visitors also had visited Blake Lane Dog Park and 20% had visited Chandon Dog Park.

**SATISFACTION RATINGS FOR MOST VISITED FCPA DOG PARK**

The following section presents the results for the levels of satisfaction respondents indicated for the FCPA dog park they visit most (i.e., visitors’ favorite dog park).

***Rate your satisfaction with the level of cleanliness of this dog park.***

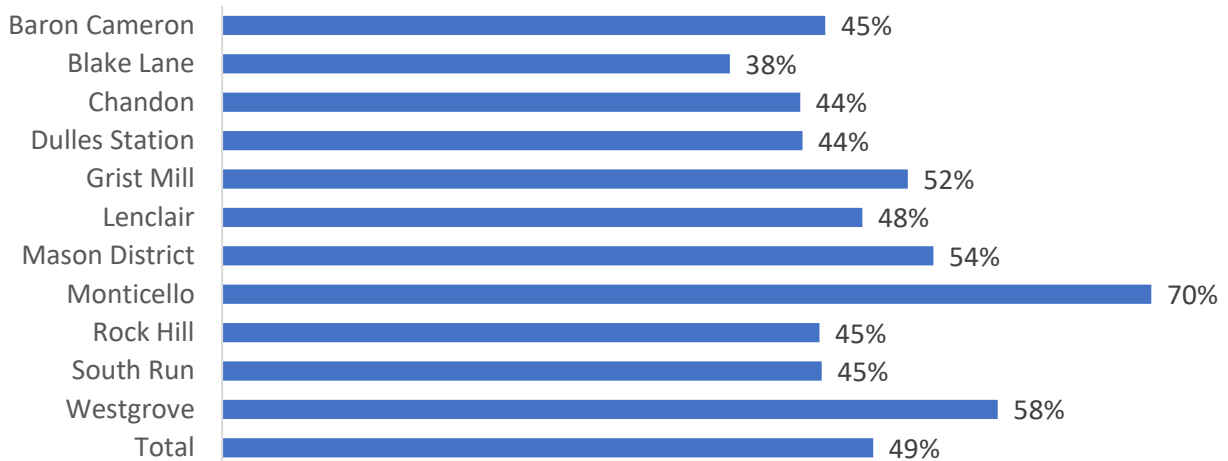
***% Satisfied - Dog Park Cleanliness***



Note: Respondents were asked to evaluate their satisfaction with FCPA dog park surface conditions on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 “very unsatisfied” to 5 or “very satisfied”. The percentages shown here reflect the percentage of who indicated they were either “somewhat satisfied” or “very satisfied” with surface conditions.

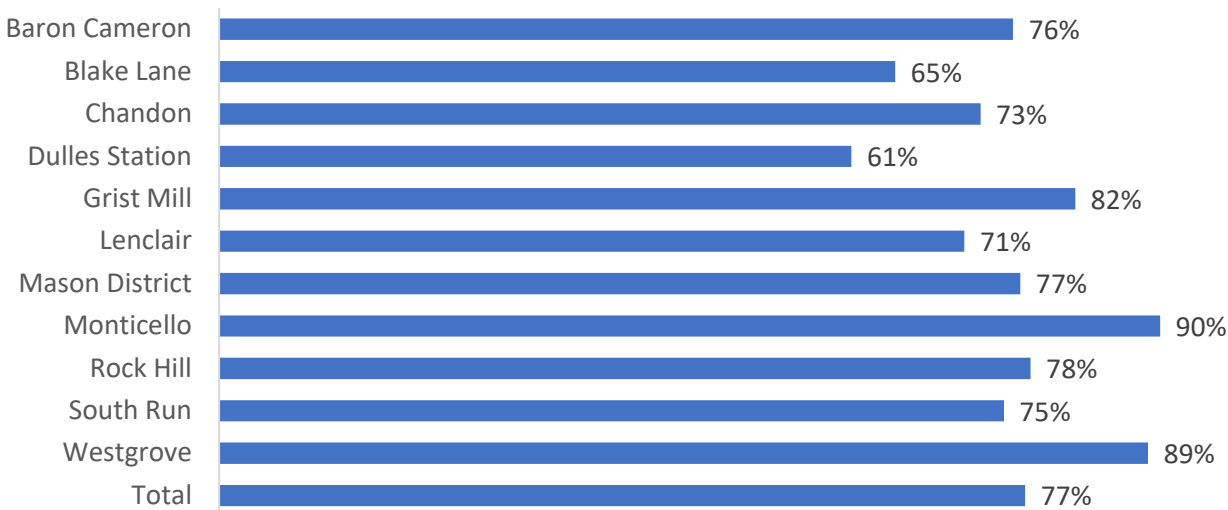
***Rate your satisfaction with the surface condition of this dog park.***

***% Satisfied - Dog Park Surface Condition***



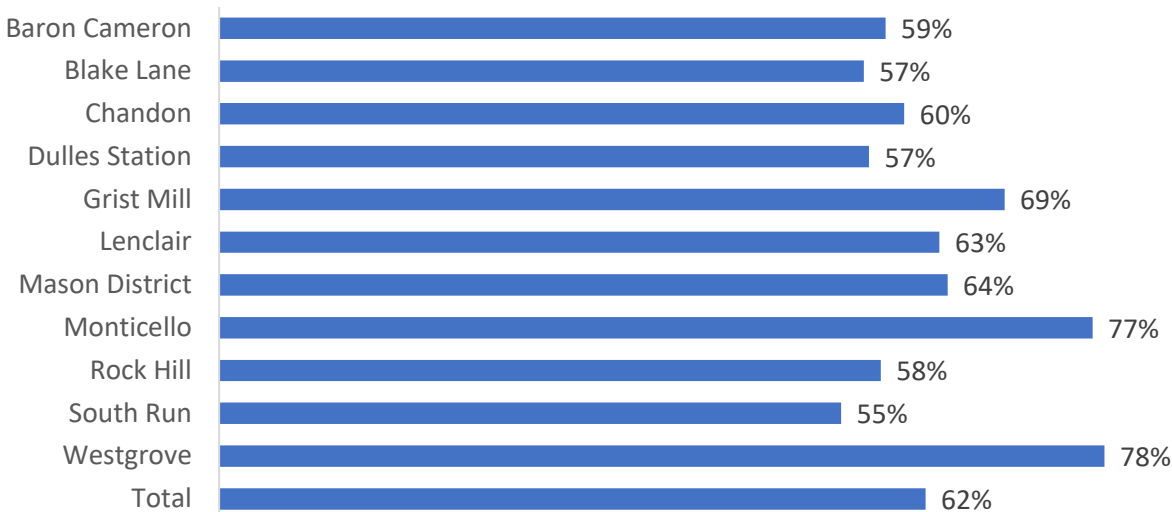
Percent (%) satisfied includes those who indicated they were “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” - the top two rating points on a 5-point rating scale ranging from “very satisfied” to “very unsatisfied.”

**Rate your satisfaction with the fencing condition of this dog park.**  
**% Satisfied - Dog Park Fencing Condition**



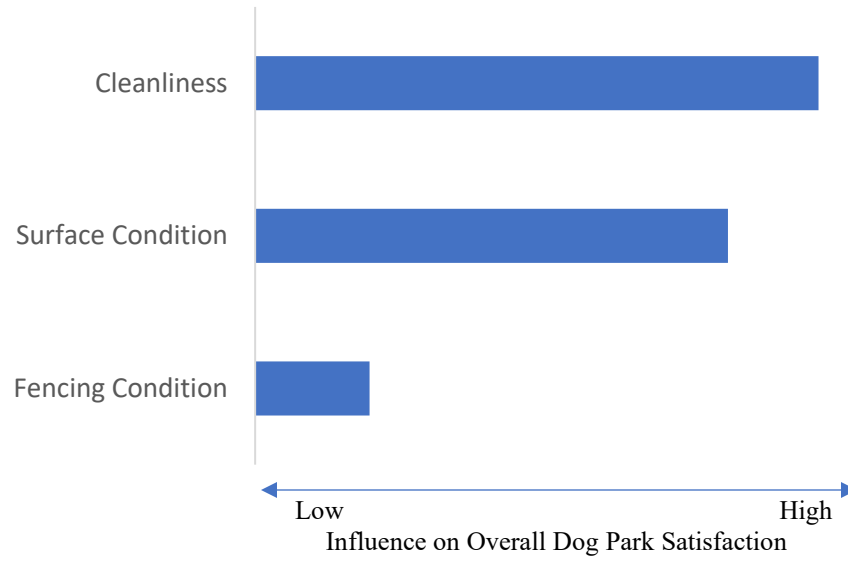
Percent (%) satisfied includes those who indicated they were “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” - the top two rating points on a 5-point rating scale ranging from “very satisfied” to “very unsatisfied.”

**Overall, how satisfied are you with this dog park?**  
**% Satisfied - Overall Dog Park Satisfaction Rating**



Percent (%) satisfied includes those who indicated they were “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” - the top two rating points on a 5-point rating scale ranging from “very satisfied” to “very unsatisfied.”

***Dog Park Satisfaction- Key Driver Analysis***

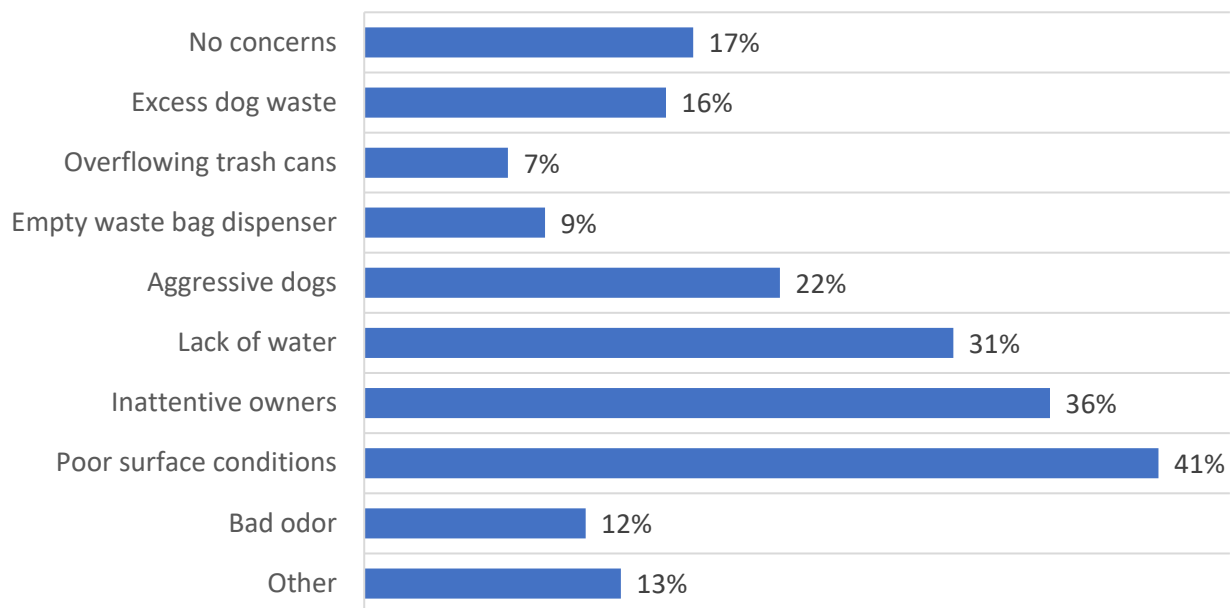




### CONCERNS IDENTIFIED AT VISITORS' FAVORITE FCPA DOG PARK

This section presents the results pertaining to issues identified at the dog park that respondents visit most.

#### *Are There Issues At This Dog Park That Concern You?*



Results correspond to concerns that dog park users identified at their most frequently visited FCPA dog park. Percentages add up to more than 100% since multiple selections were allowed.

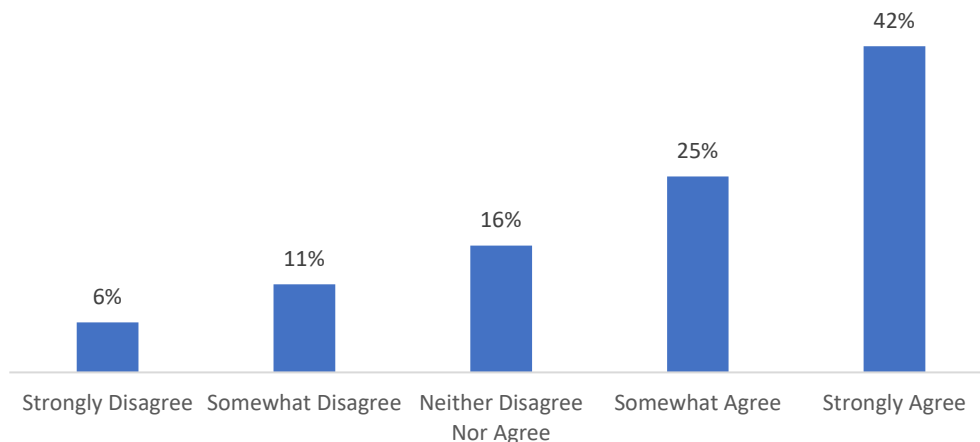
<b>Are There Issues at This Dog Park That Concern You?</b>										
Percent (%) of FCPA dog park visitors indicating a concern about this issue, by most visited dog park										
FCPA Dog Park Visited Most, Last 12 Months	No concerns	Excess dog waste	Overflowing trash cans	Empty waste bag dispenser	Aggressive dogs	Lack of water	Inattentive owners	Poor surface conditions	Bad odor	Other
Baron Cameron	18%	14%	9%	8%	26%	13%	41%	43%	25%	13%
Blake Lane	17%	9%	6%	13%	13%	41%	22%	49%	8%	17%
Chandon	17%	19%	3%	4%	25%	22%	35%	62%	5%	16%
Dulles Station Community Park	15%	18%	18%	9%	21%	30%	27%	33%	12%	12%
Grist Mill	33%	6%	4%	11%	20%	11%	25%	36%	2%	8%
Lenclair	32%	18%	11%	21%	11%	18%	29%	36%	0%	21%
Mason District	18%	14%	5%	10%	20%	52%	31%	32%	7%	11%
Monticello	25%	8%	8%	13%	25%	15%	35%	22%	8%	23%
Rock Hill	11%	30%	7%	9%	19%	57%	37%	43%	12%	12%
South Run	12%	13%	12%	10%	28%	43%	40%	41%	8%	12%
Westgrove	14%	28%	3%	4%	8%	11%	44%	56%	5%	12%
Overall	17%	16%	7%	9%	22%	31%	36%	41%	12%	13%

To interpret this table, please read the rows across. Each row represents those who said they visited a particular dog park the most (i.e., visitors’ favorite dog park). Reading across each row, the percentages indicate the proportion of respondents who identified one of nine concerns at that dog park or said they had no concerns. For example, of dog park visitors who said they visited Westgrove Dog Park most frequently, 14% had no concerns, while 56% identified poor surface conditions as a concern.

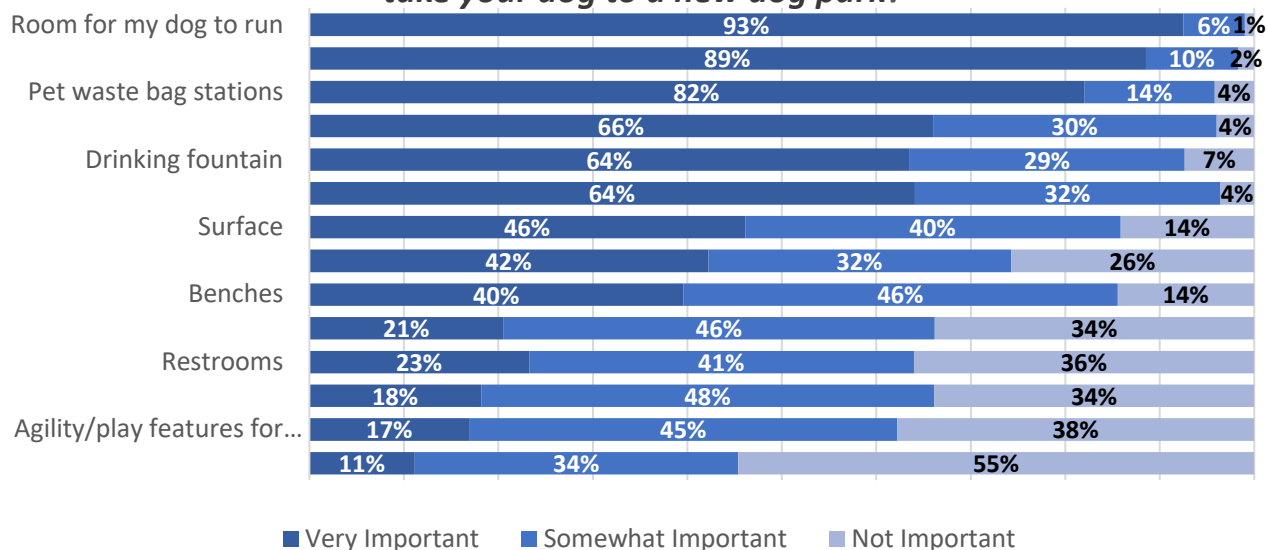
### DOG PARK PREFERENCES

The following section presents respondents' preferences when it comes to dog parks. Respondents shared their thoughts on FCPA's two dog rule, features that are most important in a dog park, walking and driving preferences, and where in the county they felt a new dog park was most needed.

**Currently, handlers may not bring more than 2 dogs into a Park Authority dog park at one time. How much do you agree or disagree with this rule?**

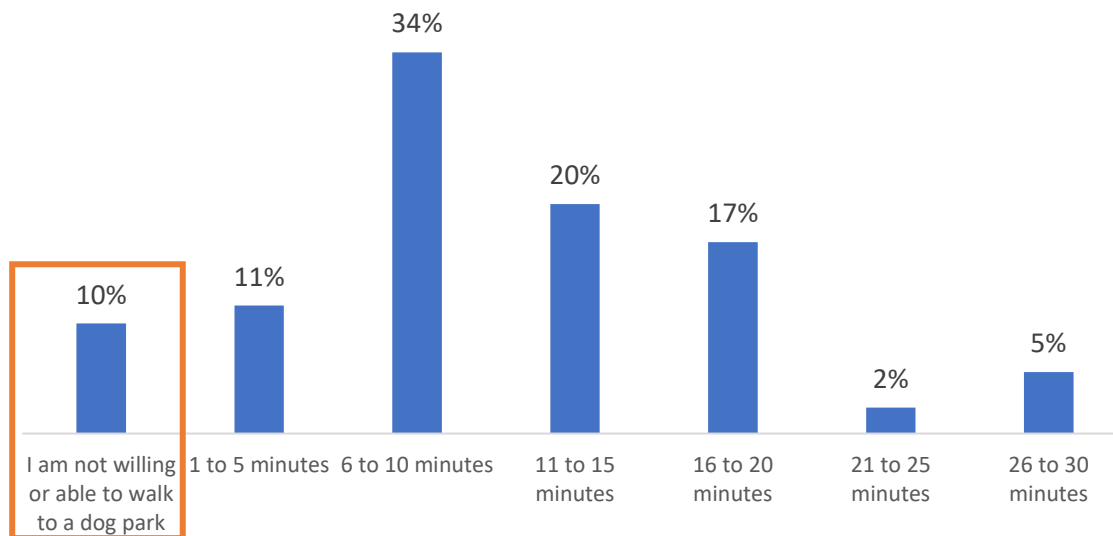


**How important are each of these features when deciding whether to take your dog to a new dog park?**

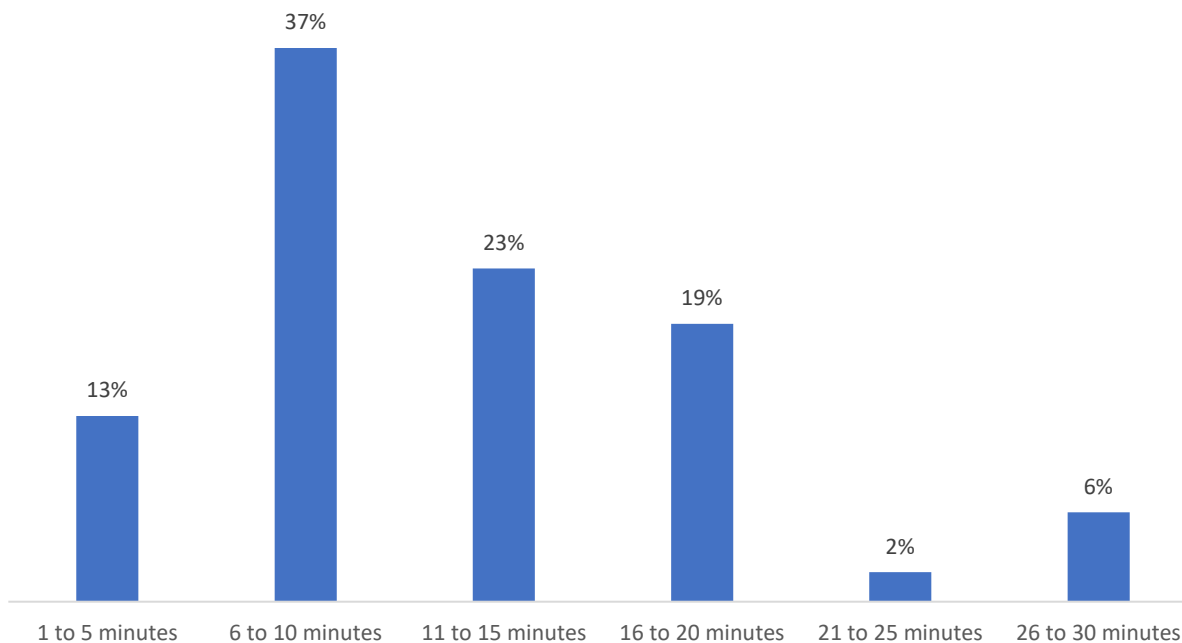


Based on responses from dog owners and dog walkers. Percentages for some features in the above chart may not add to 100% due to rounding error.

**How far are you willing to walk to go to a dog park?  
(All Respondents)**

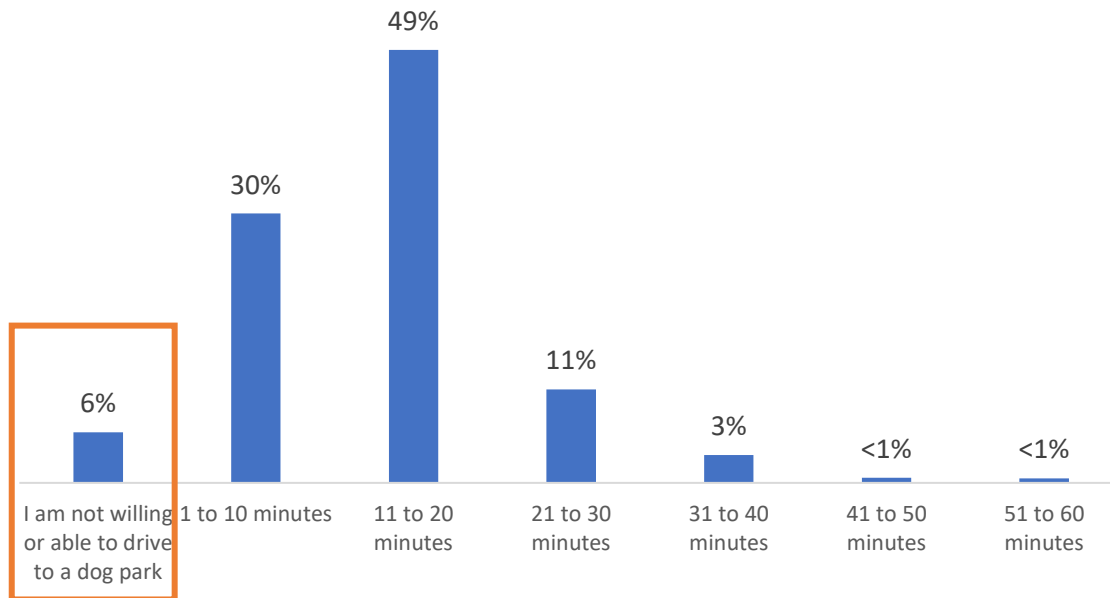


**How far are you willing to walk to go to a dog park?  
(Respondents willing to walk)**

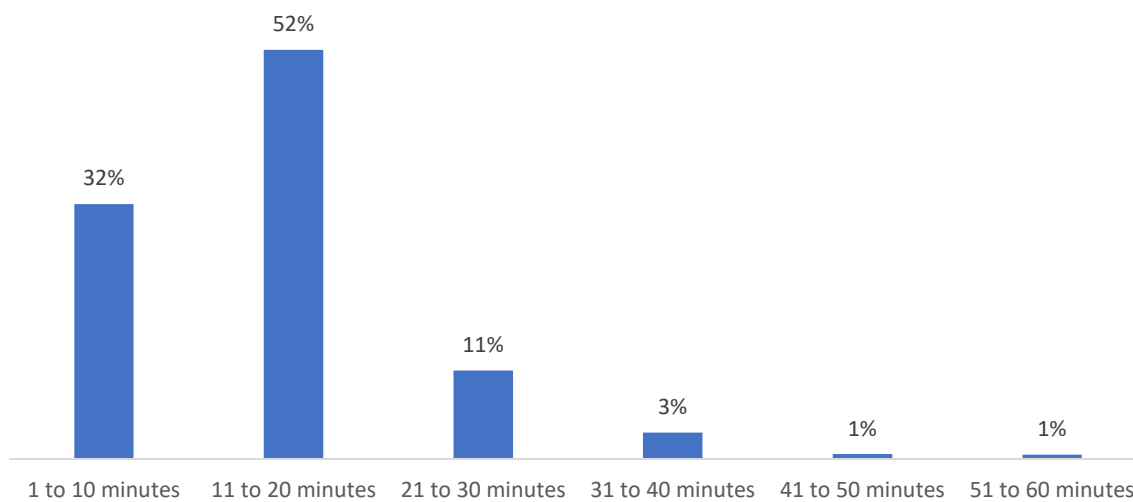


Note: Only those respondents who indicated they were willing to walk are included in the above chart.

**How far are you willing to drive to go to a dog park?  
 (All Respondents)**

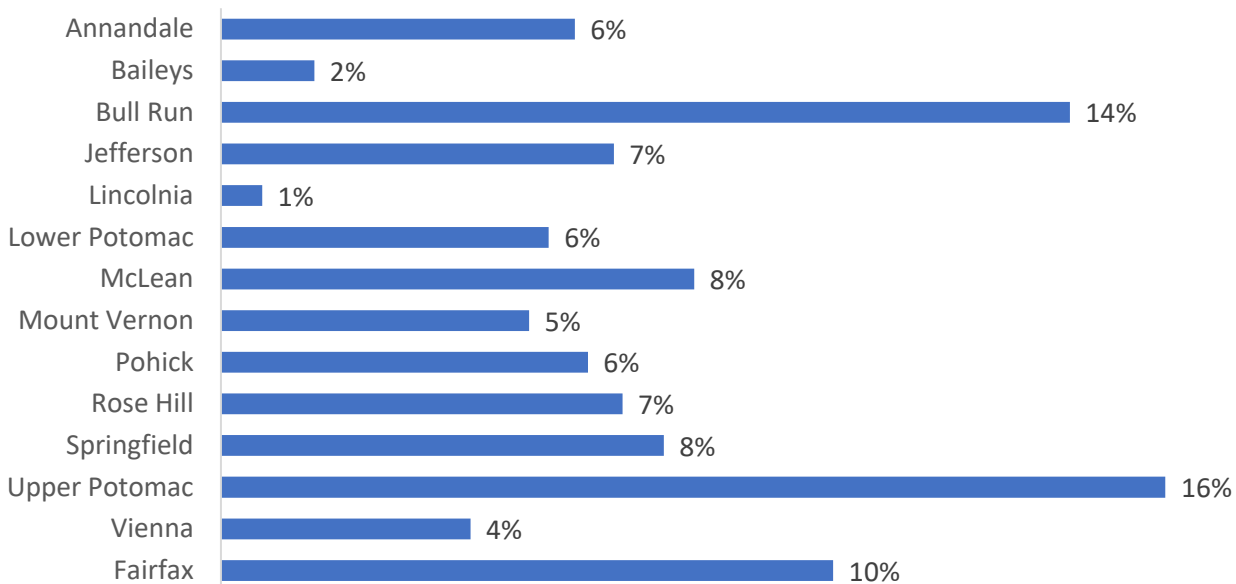


**How far are you willing to drive to go to a dog park?  
 (Respondents willing to drive)**

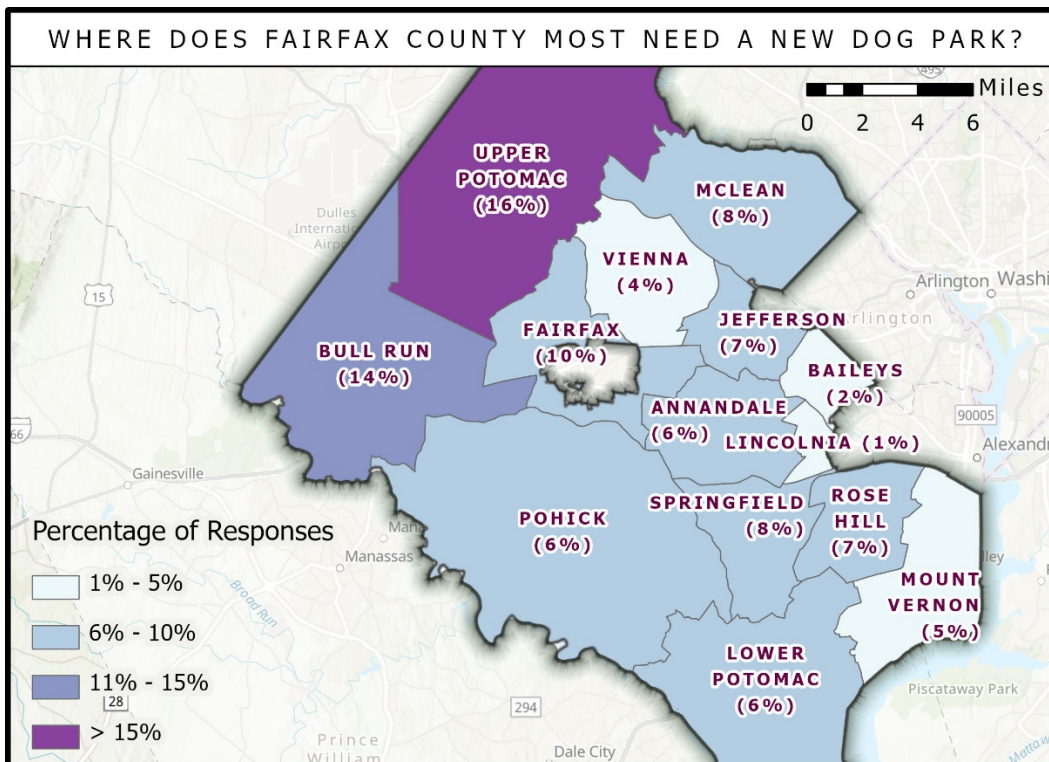


Note: Only those respondents who indicated they were willing to drive are included in the above chart.

**Where Does Fairfax County Most Need A New Dog Park?**



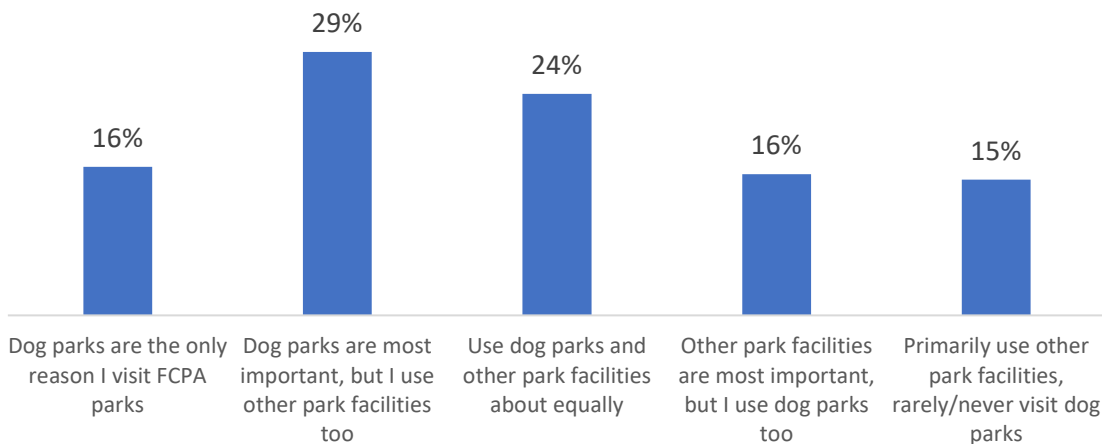
Dog owners and dog walkers were asked to select one of the Fairfax County planning districts from an accompanying map to indicate where they thought Fairfax County most needed a new dog park. The above results are summarized in the map below.



### FCPA DOG PARK INTEREST AND INVOLVEMENT

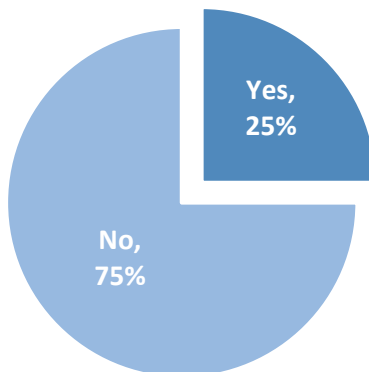
The results shown below provide insight into how respondents feel about dog parks compared to other FCPA services and amenities, as well as respondents' interest in volunteering in FCPA dog parks.

***Compared to other services provided by the Park Authority, how important are dog parks to you?***



Based on responses from dog owners and dog walkers.

***Interested in finding out about volunteer opportunities with dog parks?***

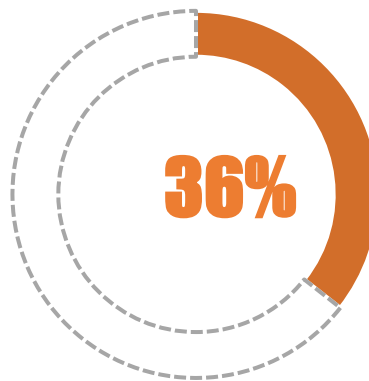


Based on responses from dog owners and dog walkers. Contact information was received from 719 survey respondents who were interested in finding out about volunteer opportunities with FCPA dog parks.

### NON-USE OF FCPA DOG PARKS

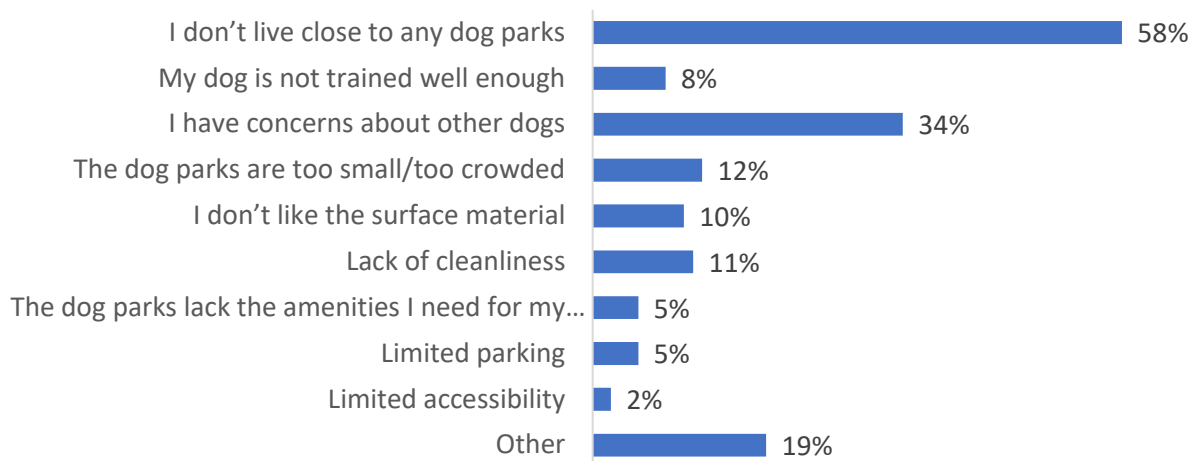
The results shown below share insights from respondents who indicated they have not visited an FCPA dog park in the past year, as well as insights from those who have visited other, non-FCPA dog parks in the region.

***I have not used any Park Authority dog parks in the past 12 months.***



Percentage of dog owners and dog walkers when asked which FCPA dog parks they have used in the past 12 months.

### ***Which of the following are reasons why you don't use Park Authority dog parks?***



Results based on respondents who were dog owners and dog walkers who had not visited an FCPA dog park within the last 12 months. Percentages add up to more than 100% since respondents could select multiple answers.





## FCPA DOG PARK SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

The following is the full questions and provided selections for the dog park survey as it was administered.

Which of the following best describes you? (Select one)

- I'm a DOG OWNER
- I have a DOG WALKING/DOG SITTING business
- BOTH – dog owner and dog walker
- NEITHER a dog owner nor dog walker

There are 11 dog parks located in Fairfax County Park Authority parks (see the map for locations - click it to make it larger). Which of these dog parks have you visited in the past 12 months? (Select all that apply from the list below)

- Baron Cameron Park
- Blake Lane Park
- Chandon Park
- Dulles Station Community Park
- Grist Mill Park
- Lenclair Park
- Mason District Park
- Monticello Park
- Rock Hill District Park
- South Run District Park
- Westgrove Park
- I have not used any Park Authority dog parks

Of the Park Authority dog parks you have visited in the past 12 months, which *\*one\** do you visit *\*most\** often? (Select one)

- Baron Cameron Park
- Blake Lane Park
- Chandon Park
- Dulles Station Community Park
- Grist Mill Park
- Lenclair Park
- Mason District Park
- Monticello Park
- Rock Hill District Park
- South Run District Park
- Westgrove Park

The next few questions are about the Park Authority dog park you visit most often...

How often do you typically visit this dog park? (Select one)

- Daily
- Weekly
- A few times a month
- Monthly or less

Rate your satisfaction with the following features of this dog park.

	<b>Very Unsatisfied</b>	<b>Somewhat Unsatisfied</b>	<b>Neither Unsatisfied nor Satisfied</b>	<b>Somewhat Satisfied</b>	<b>Very Satisfied</b>
Level of cleanliness	Very Unsatisfied	Somewhat Unsatisfied	Neither Unsatisfied nor Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Surface condition	Very Unsatisfied	Somewhat Unsatisfied	Neither Unsatisfied nor Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Condition of the fencing	Very Unsatisfied	Somewhat Unsatisfied	Neither Unsatisfied nor Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied

Overall, how satisfied are you with this dog park? (Select one)

- Very Unsatisfied
- Somewhat Unsatisfied
- Neither Unsatisfied nor Satisfied
- Somewhat Satisfied
- Very Satisfied

Are there issues at this dog park that concern you? (Select all that apply or select 'None' if no issues concern you)

- None – I have no concerns
- Excess dog waste in the dog park
- Overflowing trash cans
- Empty waste bag dispenser
- Aggressive dogs
- Lack of water for dogs
- Inattentive owners
- Poor surface conditions (standing water, holes, dust)
- Bad odor
- Other

What is the one thing we could do to most improve this dog park?

Currently, handlers may not bring more than 2 dogs into a Park Authority dog park at one time. How much do you agree or disagree with this rule?

- Strongly Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Neither Disagree Nor Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Strongly Agree

Which of the following are reasons why you don't use Park Authority dog parks? (Select all that apply)

- I don't live close to any dog parks
- My dog is not trained well enough
- I have concerns about other dogs
- The dog parks are too small/too crowded
- I don't like the surface material
- Lack of cleanliness
- The dog parks lack the amenities I need for my dog
- Limited parking
- Limited accessibility
- Other

Please list any other dog parks you have visited in or near Fairfax County besides those run by Fairfax County Park Authority.

How far are you willing to *\*walk\** to go to a dog park? (Select one)

- I am not willing or able to walk to a dog park
- 1 to 5 minutes
- 6 to 10 minutes
- 11 to 15 minutes
- 16 to 20 minutes
- 21 to 25 minutes
- 26 to 30 minutes

How far are you willing to *\*drive\** to go to a dog park? (Select one)

- I am not willing or able to drive to a dog park
- 1 to 10 minutes
- 11 to 20 minutes
- 21 to 30 minutes
- 31 to 40 minutes
- 41 to 50 minutes
- 51 to 60 minutes

Where does Fairfax County most need a new dog park?

(Click the colored area on the map where you feel a dog park is most needed.

Zoom in and out to see more details on the map using the + and - buttons.)

- Annandale
- Baileys
- Bull Run
- Jefferson
- Lincolnia
- Lower Potomac
- McLean
- Mount Vernon
- Pohick
- Rose Hill
- Springfield
- Upper Potomac
- Vienna
- Fairfax

How important are each of these features when deciding whether to take your dog to a new dog park?

	<b>Not Important</b>	<b>Somewhat Important</b>	<b>Very Important</b>
Benches	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
Shade	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
Landscaping, plantings	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
Separate small dog area	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
Parking	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
Grass surface	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
Drinking fountain for dogs and people	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
Varied terrain	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
Water play feature	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
Agility/play features for dogs	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
Restrooms	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
Pet waste bag stations	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
Trash cans	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
Room for my dog to run	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important

Compared to other services provided by the Park Authority, how important are dog parks to you? (Select one)

- Dog parks are the only reason I visit Fairfax County Park Authority parks
- Dog parks are most important, but I use other park facilities/services too
- I use dog parks and other park facilities/services about equally
- Other park facilities/services are most important, but I also use dog parks
- I primarily use other park facilities/services and rarely or never visit dog parks

Are you interested in finding out about volunteer opportunities with Fairfax County Park Authority dog parks?

- Yes
- No

Thanks for your interest. Please provide your contact information and Park Authority staff will be in touch to discuss volunteer opportunities.

What is your home zip code?

What is your age?

- 18 to 29
- 30 to 39
- 40 to 49
- 50 to 59
- 60 to 69
- 70 or older

What is your sex?

- Female
- Male
- Other

How did you find out about this survey?

- Postcard in the Mail
- Email Invitation
- Park Authority Website
- Other

Please share any comments you have about Park Authority dog parks.

Thanks for participating in the survey. All of your responses have been submitted. Click the Finish Survey button to close-out the survey.

If you would like additional information about the FCPA Dog Park Study, copy and paste the following link into your browser. You can also sign up for email updates at FCPA's Dog Park Study page.

[https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/planning-development/dog-park-study\\_](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/planning-development/dog-park-study_)

APPENDIX 3 – INVENTORY & EVALUATION OF EXISTING DOG PARKS

# APPENDIX 3 – INVENTORY & EVALUATION OF EXISTING DOG PARKS

There are a total of 13 publicly owned and operated dog parks in Fairfax County. Eleven of these dog parks are owned and/or operated by the Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) and are indicated by the black pawprints in Figure 1 below. Two (2) dog parks are owned and operated by other local jurisdictions (the City of Fairfax and the Town of Vienna). These are indicated by the yellow pawprints in Figure 1 below. More information about these two dog parks is provided in the Planning findings section of this report.

This section presents an inventory and overview of the 11 existing FCPA dog parks within Fairfax County. Details on the dates of park construction, existing amenities, and dog capacity are summarized in the table below, which is subsequently followed by a brief overview and history of each individual FCPA dog park.

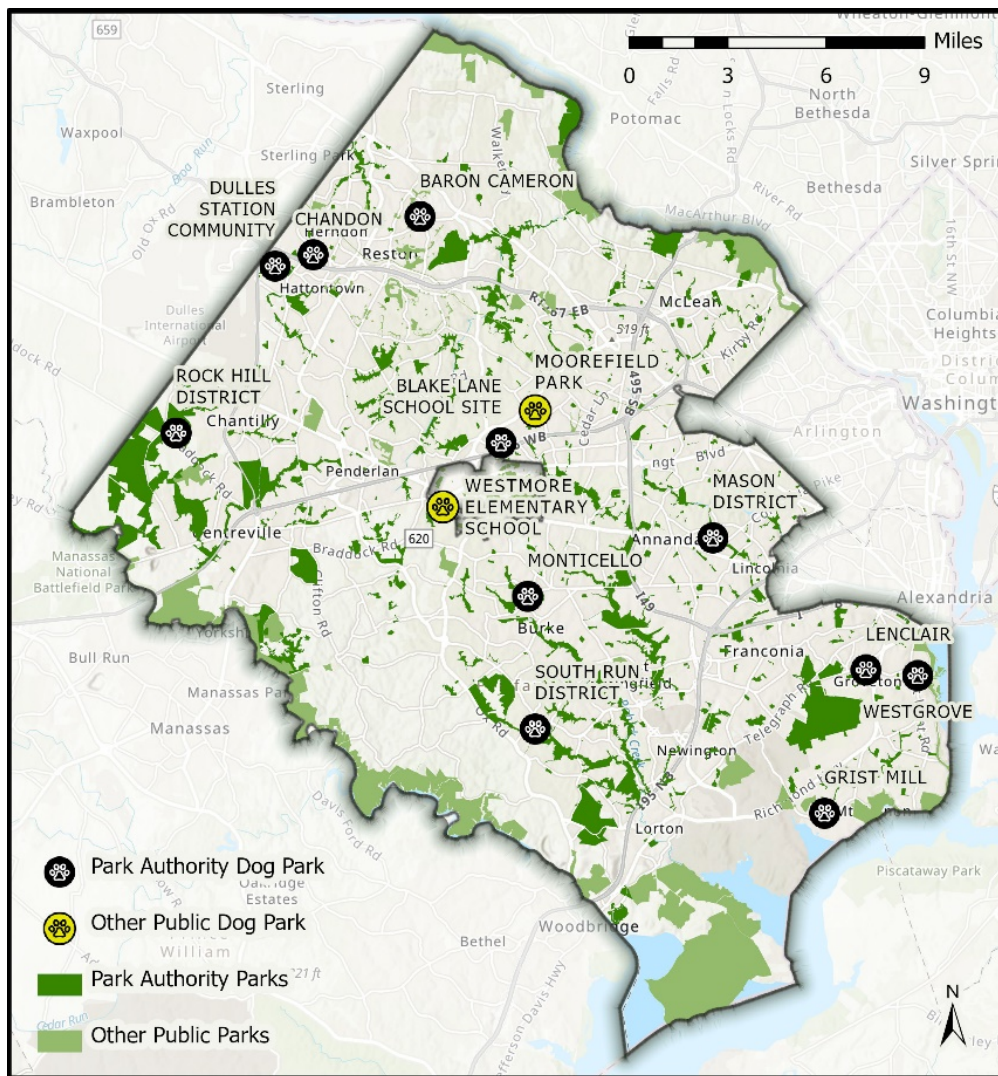


Figure 1: Existing Dog Parks in Fairfax County



## APPENDIX 3 – INVENTORY &amp; EVALUATION OF EXISTING DOG PARKS



## EXISTING FCPA DOG PARK SUMMARY TABLE

Dog Park Name	Address	Size (SF /Acres)	Establishment Date	Surface Type	Amenities	Max Dog Capacity
<b>Baron Cameron</b>	11300 Baron Cameron Ave Reston, VA 20190	24,841 SF /0.57 Ac	1/9/2001	Crushed Stone	Benches, Natural Shading, Parking, Water supply, Portable Restroom (Seasonal)	35*
<b>Blake Lane</b> (Park is owned by Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and maintained by FCPA)	10033 Blake Lane, Oakton, VA 22124	17,166 SF /0.39 Ac	1/6/2000	Grass/Natural Surface	Benches, Parking	25
<b>Chandon</b> (Park is owned by the Town of Herndon and maintained by FCPA)	900 Palmer Drive Herndon, VA, 20169	34,340 SF /0.79 Ac	1/1/2003	Grass/Natural Surface	Benches, Natural Shading, Parking, Water supply, Portable Restroom (Seasonal)	47*
<b>Dulles Station Community</b> (Privately maintained)	13707 Sayward Blvd. Herndon, VA 20171	12,902 SF /0.30 Ac	6/22/2017	Crushed Stone	Benches, Shade Structure, Parking, Water supply	18
<b>Grist Mill</b>	4710 Mt. Vernon Memorial Highway, Alexandria, VA 22309	44,944 SF /1.03 Ac	1/4/2006	Crushed Stone	Benches, Natural Shading, Parking, Water Supply, Portable Restroom (Seasonal)	64
<b>Lenclair/Blackjack</b>	6725 Lenclair Street, Alexandria, VA 22306	32,189 SF /0.74 Ac	1/10/2014	Crushed Stone	Benches, Parking, Water supply	46
<b>Mason District</b>	Intersection of Alpine Drive and Pinecrest Parkway, Annandale, VA 22003	43,679 SF /1.00 Ac	1/6/2002	Crushed Stone	Benches, Natural Shading, Parking	62
<b>Monticello</b>	5315 Guinea Road, Burke, VA. 22032	28,823 SF /0.66 Ac	11/20/2018	Crushed Stone	Benches, Parking	41*
<b>Rock Hill District</b>	15150 Old Lee Road, Chantilly, VA, 20151	63,247 SF /1.45 Ac	1/3/2006	Crushed Stone	Benches, Natural Shading, Parking	90*
<b>South Run</b>	7550 Reservation Drive, Springfield, VA, 22153	59,146 SF /1.36 Ac	1/12/2001	Crushed Stone	Benches, Natural Shading, Parking, Portable Restroom (Year-round)	85
<b>Westgrove</b> (Maintained in partnership w/ Westgrove PACK Friends Group)	6801 Fort Hunt Road, Alexandria, VA 22307	58,085 SF /1.33 Ac	1/11/2012	Grass	Benches, Shade Structure, Parking, Water supply	82*

Figure 2: Existing FCPA Dog Park Summary All parks are owned and maintained by FCPA unless otherwise noted.

\*Indicates there are designated areas within these dog parks based on dog size

APPENDIX 3 – INVENTORY & EVALUATION OF EXISTING DOG PARKS

**BARON CAMERON DOG PARK**

(Established 2001)

The 0.5-acre dog park was added to the Baron Cameron Park Master Plan in 2001 following a public planning process to amend the master plan. The dog park was subsequently established as a sponsored use with Reston Dog Park Coalition, locally known as “Reston Dogs”, according to the memorandum of understanding (MOU) between FCPA and Reston Dogs. The dog park is served by multiple parking lots that are shared with athletic field users. The dog park is owned and maintained by FCPA.



Figure 3: Baron Cameron Dog Park Map

**BLAKE LANE DOG PARK**

(Established 2000)

Blake Lane Dog Park is Fairfax County’s first public dog park. The master plan for Blake Lane Park was revised in 1999 to incorporate a small dog park in response to numerous local dog owners expressing the need for this facility. The dog park was subsequently constructed and opened in 2000. The dog park is surrounded by dense residential development and is accessible via a pathway from the parking lot. The parkland is owned by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and is maintained by FCPA.

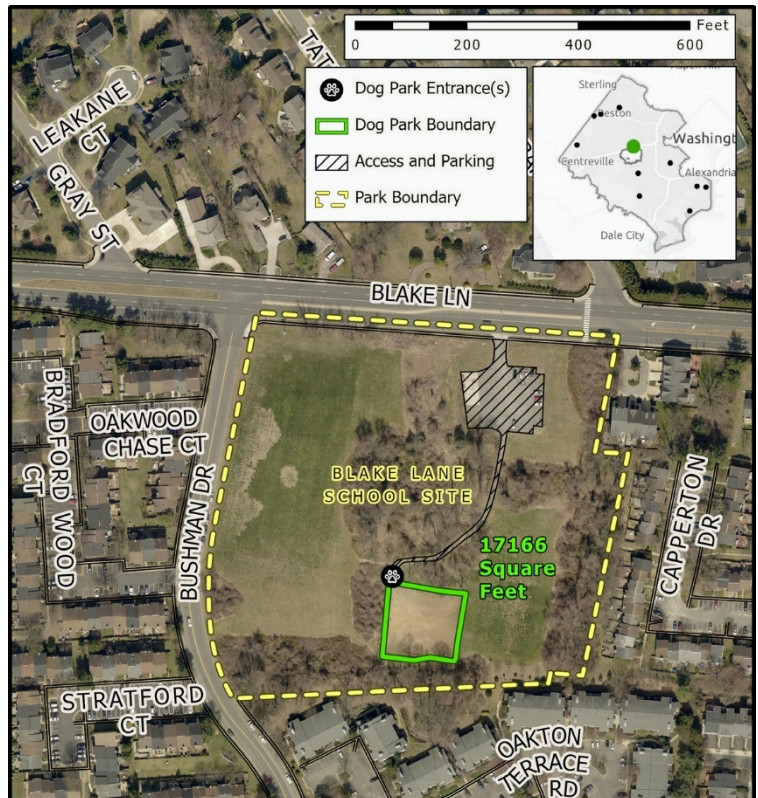


Figure 4: Blake Lane Dog Park Map

APPENDIX 3 - INVENTORY & EVALUATION OF EXISTING DOG PARKS

**CHANDON DOG PARK**

(Established 2003)

Herndon Dogs, Inc., a dog park advocacy group, petitioned the town of Herndon for a dog park in June 2000. The group spent over a year gathering information and researching potential sites in the Herndon Area. They determined that Chandon Park was the most suitable site for this type of facility based on available land, neighborhood impact, and accessibility. This information was presented to the Town Council in 2001 and the proposal was unanimously supported. FCPA revised the Chandon Park Master Plan in 2002 and included a dog park with a specified location, size, fencing, surfacing, amenities, additional parking, and operational guidelines. In 2003, the dog park was built according to the specifications outlined in the master plan. The dog park is owned by the town of Herndon and maintained by FCPA.



Figure 5: Chandon Dog Park Map

**DULLES STATION COMMUNITY DOG PARK**

(Established 2017)

Dulles Station Community Park was approved in 2013 as part of a proffer agreement associated with the development of Greystar's Station on Silver Apartments. The agreement between the County and Greystar included a park with a playground, seating areas, a multi-use court, a shade pavilion, and a dog park. Construction of the park was completed and opened in 2017. The park, including the dog park, is owned by FCPA but maintained by the development's HOA.

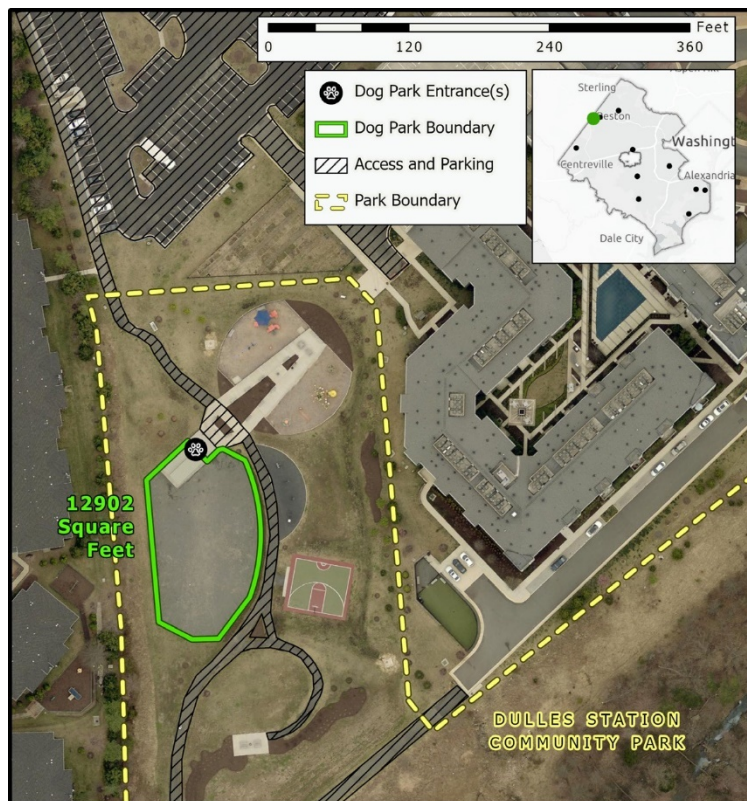


Figure 6: Dulles Station Community Dog Park Map

APPENDIX 3 – INVENTORY & EVALUATION OF EXISTING DOG PARKS

**GRIST MILL DOG PARK**

(Established 2006)

FCPA accepted a recommendation to consider a dog park in each County supervisor district. Several possible sites were identified for each district and Grist Mill Park was selected as the preferred site in the Mount Vernon District. The master plan was revised in 2002 to include a dog park slightly under one acre in size. The dog park was constructed and opened in 2006. It is owned and maintained by FCPA.

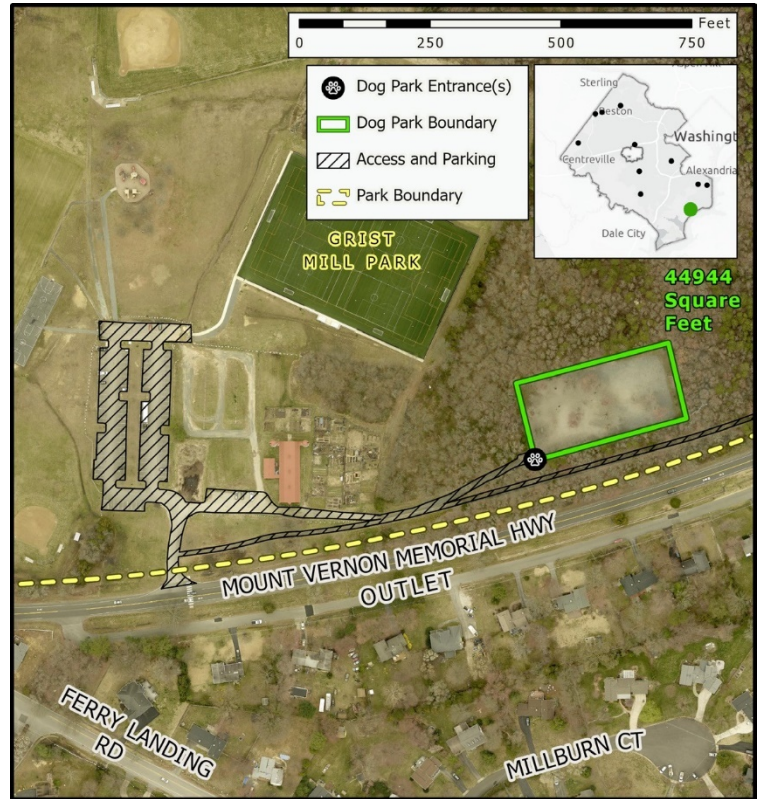


Figure 7: Grist Mill Dog Park Map

**LENCLAIR/BLACKJACK DOG PARK**

(Established 2014)

As part of a rezoning for the Beacon of Groveton Apartments in 2005, a public dog park was proposed as part of the dedicated Lenclair Park. FCPA and local residents collaborated on the design of the dog park and construction began in 2013. The dog park opened in 2014 and is owned and operated by FCPA.



Figure 8: Lenclair/Blackjack Dog Park

APPENDIX 3 - INVENTORY & EVALUATION OF EXISTING DOG PARKS

**MASON DISTRICT DOG PARK**

(Established 2002)

Prior to 2001, a dog park advocacy group, Dog Opportunity Group, was established by local dog owners. The group sent out a survey to 2,000 registered dog owners in the Mason District to determine the interest in a new dog park. The results favored the development of a new dog park in the area and the Mason District Park Master Plan was amended in 2001 after several public meetings to include a dog park, open play area, and additional parking within the park. The development of the dog park was funded by D.O.G. (Dog Opportunity Group) and was opened in 2002. The dog park is owned and operated by FCPA.

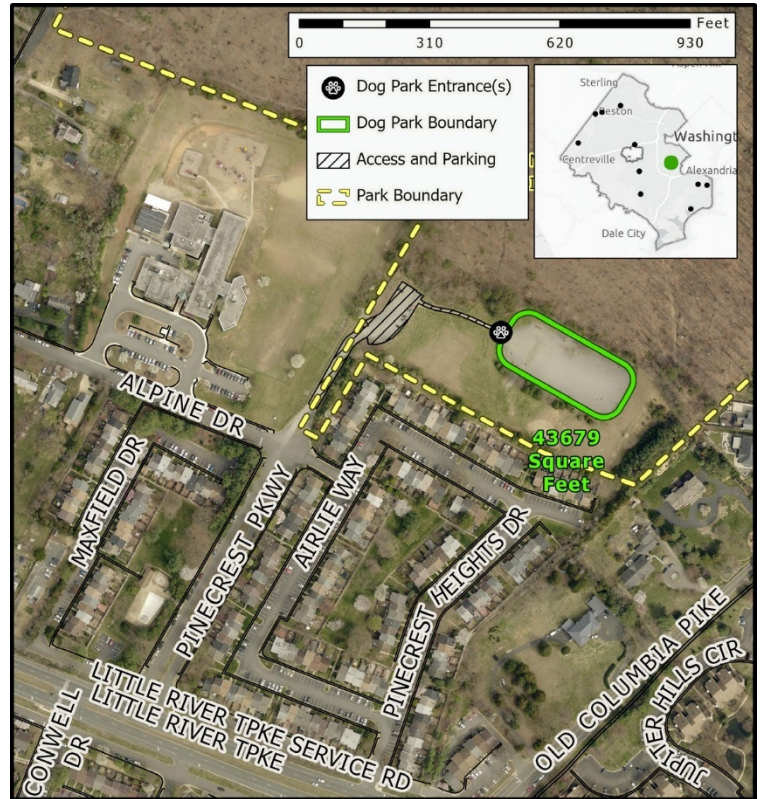


Figure 9: Mason District Dog Park Map

**MONTICELLO DOG PARK**

(Established 2018)

Braddock Dogs, an organized sponsor group, sought a location within the immediate vicinity of most of its initial members and evaluated 42 potential sites in the Burke and Fairfax areas. Evaluation of these candidate sites indicated that Monticello Park was the optimal park site for the dog park, based on proximity and site suitability. Locating the dog park in the Braddock District also supported FCPA's objective of having a dog park in each County supervisor district. The Monticello Park Master Plan process began in 2011 and public outreach showed support for a dog park. The master plan was approved in 2012 and the dog park was constructed in 2018. The dog park is owned and operated by FCPA.

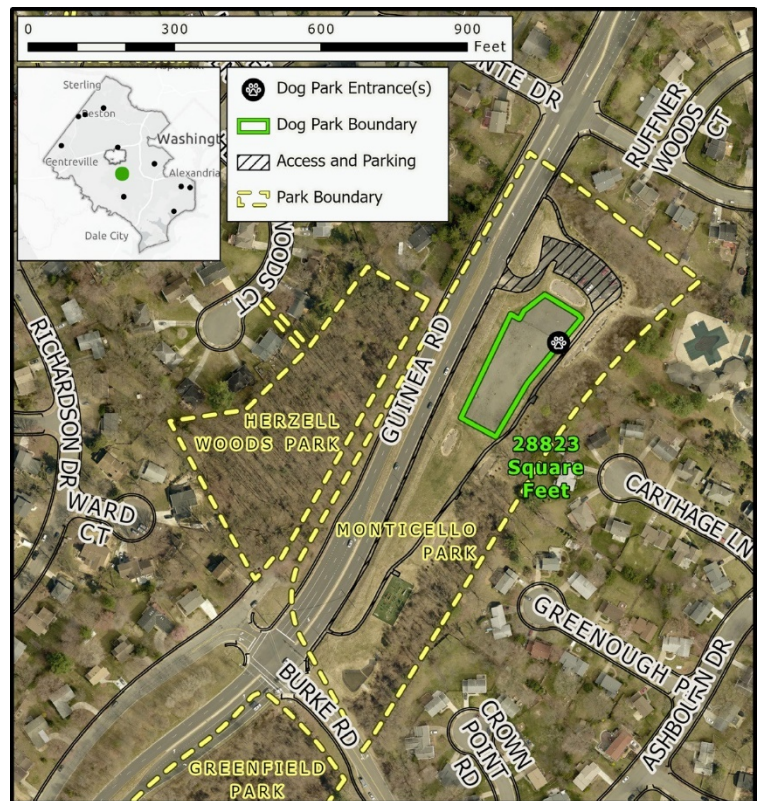


Figure 10: Monticello Dog Park Map

APPENDIX 3 – INVENTORY & EVALUATION OF EXISTING DOG PARKS

**ROCK HILL DISTRICT DOG PARK**  
(Established 2006)

Rock Hill District Dog Park was formed as an interim use at Quinn Farm Park in 2006. The dog park was sponsored by Centerville Dogs, a sponsor group of 350 area residents and businesses. The group raised funding for the construction of the park through donations and a Mastenbrook Grant from the Fairfax County Park Authority. The park was later renamed to Rock Hill District Park. The dog park is owned and operated by FCPA.

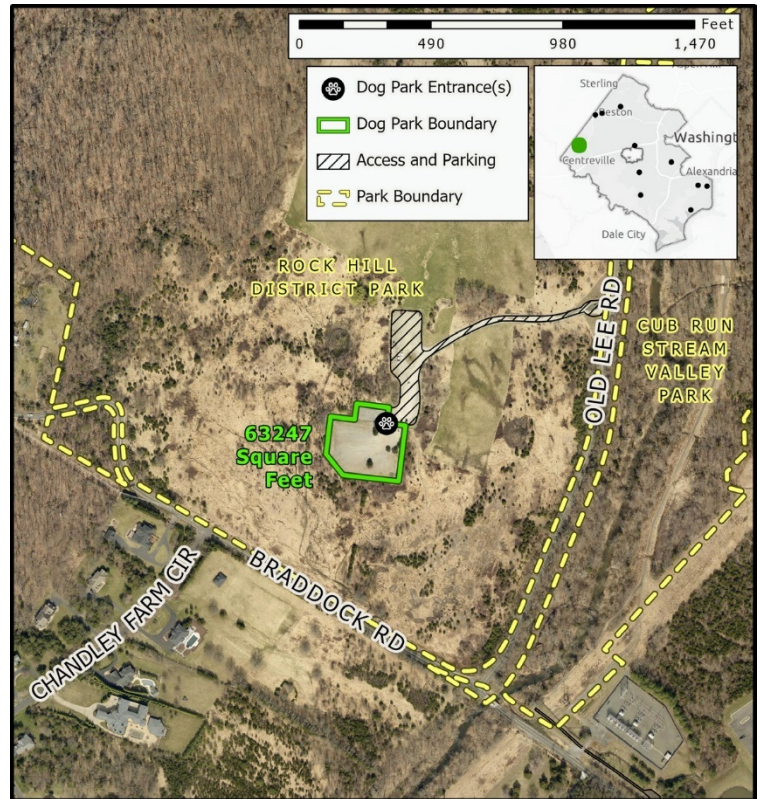


Figure 11: Rock Hill District Dog Park Map

**SOUTH RUN DOG PARK**  
(Established 2001)

Following the development of Blake Lane Park, a dog park advocacy group, formed and recommended a dog park in South Run District Park. The master plan for South Run District Park was amended in 2001 to include an off-leash dog area with a minimum size of one-quarter acre to the west of the park entrance road within the forested area and extending into the open, grassed area of the Dominion Virginia Power utility-line easement. The dog park was constructed and opened in 2001. The dog park is owned and operated by FCPA.

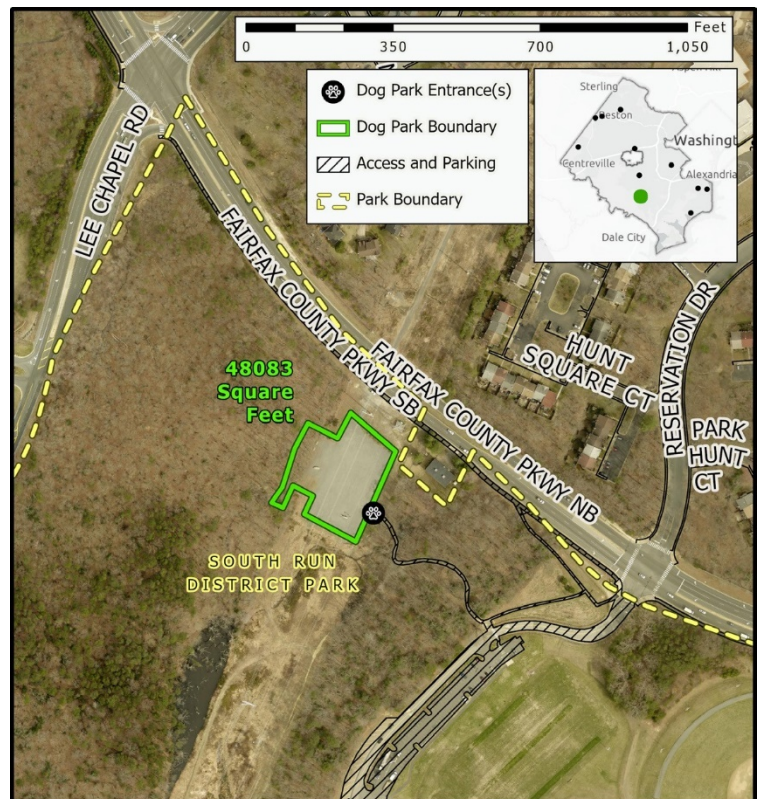


Figure 12: South Run Dog Park Map

## APPENDIX 3 – INVENTORY &amp; EVALUATION OF EXISTING DOG PARKS

**WESTGROVE DOG PARK****(Established 2012)**

Prior to 2012, a mowed open area at Westgrove Park was regularly used by dog owners from nearby communities. In 2010, the need for this area to become designated as a formal dog park was recognized and a volunteer Friend's Group, known as the Pumphouse Association for Canine Kindness (PACK), was formed. The Westgrove PACK Friends Group obtained approximately 500 signatures on a petition to establish a dog park on an interim basis within the park. At the time, there was documented support from local civic associations and the community. A MOU between FCPA and Westgrove PACK was signed in 2011 that outlined each parties' respective responsibilities for the development of the dog park on an interim basis. The dog park was constructed in 2012 and the park's master plan was amended to include a permanent dog park in 2013. The dog park is owned by FCPA and operated in partnership with the Westgrove PACK Friends Group.



Figure 13: Westgrove Dog Park Map

## **APPENDIX 4 – DEFINITIONS**

Throughout this study, various terms and acronyms are referenced. The definitions provided below are intended to provide clarification and background for the reader.

### **FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY (FCPA)**

The Fairfax County Park Authority, also referenced in this report as FCPA or the Park Authority, was created by action of the Board of Supervisors of Fairfax County, Virginia, at its meeting on December 6, 1950, by Resolution, in accordance with the provision of the Park Authorities Act (Sec. 15.1-1228 to 15.1-1238.1, Ch. 27, Code of Virginia. FCPA is governed by a 12-member Board, referenced in this report as the Park Authority Board or FCPA Board, with members appointed by the Board of Supervisors. The Park Authority Mission is to enrich quality of life for all members of the community through an enduring park system that provides a healthy environment, preserves natural and cultural heritage, offers inspiring recreational experiences, and promotes healthy lifestyles.

### **FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK FOUNDATION (FCPF)**

The Fairfax County Park Foundation, Inc. is a nonprofit charitable corporation under Section 501(C)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. The Foundation is led by a volunteer Board of Directors and staffed by an Executive Director with a lean and efficient staff. The Board is comprised of community and business leaders. The Fairfax County Park Foundation supports the Fairfax County Park Authority by raising private funds, obtaining grants, and creating partnerships that supplement tax dollars to meet the County's needs for parkland, facilities, and services.

### **OFF-LEASH DOG AREAS(OLDAs)**

Off-Leash Dog Areas (OLDAs) are publicly accessible fenced in dog facilities within FCPA parks where dogs are permitted to be off-leash.

### **DOG RUNS**

For the purposes of this report, Dog Runs are typically less than 0.25 acres and may have less amenities than a dog park. They are typically constructed by private developers in densely populated settings.

### **DOG AREA**

For the purposes of this report, the Dog Area is defined as the portion of the dog park that is fenced in specifically for allowing dogs to be let off leash.

### **SPECIAL PLANNING AREAS**

Special Planning Areas are land use planning designations in the County's Comprehensive Plan that include Urban Centers, Suburban Centers, Community Business Centers, and Transit Station Areas. Generally speaking, these Special Planning Areas are areas within the county that have a higher population density compared to



other parts of the county and are areas planned for guided growth. These are locations where walkable, mixed-use neighborhood planning is especially encouraged and emphasized. Note that because the analysis in this report is centered around population density, two Special Planning Areas, Industrial Areas and Large Institutional Land Areas, were excluded from Figure 18.

**RESOURCE PROTECTION AREA (RPA)**

Chesapeake Bay Act Resource Protection Areas (RPAs) are regulated corridors of environmentally sensitive land that lie alongside or near the shorelines of streams, rivers, and other waterways.

**ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY CORRIDOR (EQC)**

The Environmental Quality Corridor system is an open space system in Fairfax County that is designed to link and preserve natural resource areas. The EQC policy can be found in Objective 9 of the Environmental section of the Policy Plan volume of Fairfax County's Comprehensive Plan.

**CULTURAL RESOURCES**

Cultural resources are those sites or structures, including their landscape settings, that exemplify the cultural, architectural, economic, social, political or historic heritage of the County or its communities.

**MS4 PERMIT**

MS4 permits authorize cities, counties, or other governmental entities to discharge stormwater collected by their storm sewer systems to waters of the United States.

**FRIENDS GROUP**

Friends Groups are individuals who come together to provide ongoing operations, programmatic, maintenance and/or fundraising support at a park, facility, or specified program, and who work closely with a FCPA staff liaison to develop projects and plans.

**PARK VOLUNTEER TEAM (PVTs)**

Park Volunteer Teams (PVTs) are volunteer-led teams who offer support for a site or program. The PVT volunteers can develop and implement their own services and work in coordination with site plans and programs. PVT volunteer services help advance the mission of the site and embody the Park Authority mission and vision to inspire a passion for parks amongst visitors and the community.

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU)**

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is a legal agreement between two or more parties outlined in a formal document. For the purposes of the Park Authority's dog parks, an MOU is often between the Park Authority and a nongovernmental community group and outlines the responsibilities of the parties.