

BARK9 Dog Park Proposal

Executive Summary

This proposal is to outline the minimum requirements for the establishment of a dog park site within existing Parks and Recreation Department (City) property. A dog park is a clearly defined location where dog owners can safely and legally exercise and socialize their dog's off-leash. The proposal is being submitted by the Bay Area Running K9s (BARK9), a non-profit 501c3, community based group whose charter is to develop and support a network of dog parks in the Bay Area that surround Clear Lake. BARK9 recommends the minimum distance to residential property should be not less than 50 yards. The City will approve the specific site, with input from the local Parks Board and BARK9.

Benefits to the City

A network of dog parks would provide clear health, safety, and legal benefits to the City and to park users.

Legal: Clearly posted waivers of liability would relieve the City of any legal responsibility for the actions of dogs and their owners inside the park. Dog parks would make off-leash activity legal within the official dog parks.

Safety: Dog parks reduce the likelihood that dogs will be let loose in park areas where they could interfere with other park users such as bicyclists, skateboarders, and rollerblading. Providing separate areas for dog exercise segregates dog owners from other users and reduces the risk of collisions, etc. Years of experience at dog parks across the country indicate that dogs are less aggressive in open areas because they are on neutral territory and not constrained by their leashes.

Health: Dedicated dog parks improve public health by keeping dog waste confined to one area. Peer pressure encourages dog owners to pick up after their dogs and keep the park clean. Dog parks provide a centralized area to provide information on dog health, veterinary services, training, etc.

Legal Issues

The BARK9 understands that there will be concerns about liability and about public health at dog parks. BARK9 proposes that the following or similar language be posted prominently at each entrance to the dog park:

“By entering this dog park, the park user agrees to hold the City of _____ Parks and Recreation Department harmless and free from liability from any action of any park users or their dogs. Park users agree to fully comply with posted rules and take full legal liability from any action of their own or their dogs.”

BARK9 Dog Park Proposal

This language reduces liability for dog park usage in City parks much more clearly than for other uses such as rugby, mountain biking, or rollerblading, which generally do not have posted liability waivers.

Health Issues

The operational proposal below addresses housekeeping issues in dog parks so public health will not be compromised. The BARK9 is committed to monitoring park usage along with park users to be sure that they are well maintained, safe, secure, and clean. Dog park experience in hundreds of parks across the United States indicates that users cooperate to keep their designated areas clean and well maintained.

Minimum Site Requirements / Funding

Size and Amenities: The optimal site size is 3 - 5 acres, although smaller sites may be considered if particularly suitable in location or other features. BARK9 recommends that the site be fenced with at least 5 foot minimum height cyclone or field fencing for clear definition and safety. Future unfenced dog park sites may be considered, however fenced sites are preferred. The site should have adequate parking ten (10) vehicle parking spaces per acre of land, drainage, and will be clearly signed and posted. Other amenities such as shade, running water, and lighting are desirable but not required. Sites will be planned for handicapped accessibility per the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Federal Law, as one of the major benefits of a dog park is to provide handicapped dog owners with a way to exercise their dogs.

Funding: The funding for development of the dog park, improvements and amenities will be provided by the private sector, unless the city can allocate the needed funds. Improvements include any site preparation such as clearing and grading. Amenities may include, but not be limited to, fencing, shade structures, water lines / faucets / fountains / ponds, lighting, dog exercise / agility equipment, and furniture for human use.

Site Plan: Upon approval of the specific site location by the City, a detailed site plan including improvements and amenities will be submitted.

Operations

Maintenance: The BARK9 proposes that the City provide ongoing lawn maintenance, trash containers, and garbage pickup for the dog park. Trash containers with liners and lids will keep out rain and be easier to empty. BARK9 and/or park users will provide disposable bags for clean up of dog waste. BARK9 will maintain amenities through private sector investment and volunteer efforts.

BARK9 Dog Park Proposal

Operations: Park hours will be jointly developed by the City, BARK9, and the Parks and Recreation, will be consistent with existing park operations, and will be appropriate for the specific site chosen for the site. The BARK9 will work with City staff and neighborhood organizations to develop a plan of operations acceptable to all involved parties.

Signage: A sample mock-up of signage with rules, hours of operations, and liability waiver is attached. The rules will be clearly posted at all entrances of the dog park.

Security: Security would be provided by a combination of the City Police Department, County Sheriff, and or Constables.

Staffing and Administration: BARK9 and Parks Board propose that the dog park be free to its users, with no staffing required. This will make the park easy to administer from the City's standpoint with a minimum of resources.

Recommendation

BARK9 requests Legal and Health endorsement of this proposal. If you have any questions, feel free to contact BARK9 President Fred Swerdlin at (281) 488.8193
Email: info@bark9.com; US Mail: P. O. Box 591297; Houston, Texas 77259-1297.

BARK9 Dog Park Proposal

Signage (Example)

PLEASE READ AND COMPLY WITH ALL OF THE FOLLOWING RULES

Hours of Operation: 7 AM to Sunset

YOU are the key to this park's success, and the success of all future dog parks in the Bay Area. Together we can have a network of parks where our dogs can legally play and socialize off leash! Thanks in advance for your cooperation.

By entering this dog park, the park user agrees to hold The City of _____, Parks & Recreation of _____, and _____, harmless and free from liability from any action of any park users or their dogs. Park users agree to fully comply with posted rules and take full legal liability from any action of their own or their dogs. Thanks in advance for your cooperation.

Dogs must be leashed prior to entering and upon leaving the park.

Dog owners are solely responsible for the actions and behavior of their dogs. Please ensure dogs do not escape the fenced area.

Animals other than dogs are not allowed.

Owners must carry a leash & their dog's vaccination certificate while in the park.

All Dogs must have current rabies and all other vaccinations as required by _____ County & _____ Public Health Departments, are licensed, free from contagious diseases and parasites.

Dogs must wear a collar with identification & license tags at all times.

Dogs must be in view of and within voice control of their owner / handler at all times. Immediately leash your dog and leave the park if aggressive behavior is observed.

Never leave your dog unattended.

Limit 3 dogs per person per visit.

No female dogs in heat. Spayed / neutered animals are recommended.

No puppies under 4 months of age.

Clean up after your dog. Fill any holes your dog may dig.

Dogs with a known history of dangerous or aggressive behavior are prohibited.

No children under 10 years of age allowed. Children over the age of 10 must be closely supervised and must behave appropriately: no running, shouting, chasing dogs, petting of other's dogs without the owner's permission.

No food or drink, (Human or Dog) or smoking allowed in the dog park enclosure.

Absolutely no bicycles, skateboards, rollerblades, scooters, or any motorized vehicles except those required for the physically challenged are allowed.

Persons are encouraged to wear shoes while in the Dog Park.