

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Mayor and City Council of Baltimore (City), acting by and through its Department of Recreation and Parks (Department) herein provide criteria and rules for the creation of fenced-dog-runs and defined off-leash-areas within public parks. The City is in full support of developing and providing dog parks to the citizens of Baltimore and their dogs. The Department of Recreation and Parks along with the Department of Planning will work with communities that wish to add dog-runs or an off-leash-area in their neighborhood parks to evaluate sites and determine which parks can best accommodate this new use. In addition, the Department shall have primary financial responsibility for the design and construction of any necessary improvements.

SPONSORING COMMUNITY GROUP

Successful dog parks require partnerships with the community that enhance and protect the character of the neighborhood and accommodate the growing needs of Baltimore City. Each dog park will be sponsored by a dog park group, which will share the responsibilities with the Department for the maintenance, management and enforcement of the site. The sponsoring “Friends of” dog park group shall also have primary responsibility for daily management and operation of the park. The dog park group must enter into an Agreement with the Department and establish a primary point of contact as the group representative.

When contacted in writing by a community or sponsor group, the Department will assess the nominated park site for suitability for a dog park in either the “off-leash area” or “fenced dog run” design model. Not every park will be able to accommodate requests for dog parks. Only the Director of the Department of Recreation and Parks has the authority to establish a fenced dog run, or off-leash-area within a public park. If the Department feels the nominated site is suitable for a dog park, the Department will hold a series of public meetings to develop the design and rules for the specific location. Although there are general guidelines for the process of site review, each park is unique and various criteria of space and time management can be combined in the design of the dog park.

GENERAL DEFINITION/DESIGN ELEMENTS OF DOG PARKS/OFF LEASH AREAS

A ***Fenced Dog Run*** is a special fenced area for dogs to exercise and socialize. Design elements may include a five (5’) feet perimeter fence, special surface for adequate drainage and ease of cleaning, shade, benches, double gates for entry, dog water fountain and water source for cleaning the run, covered trash receptacles and dog waste bag dispenser.

An ***Off-leash Dog Area*** is a definable space within a park that is identified by signage as available for off-leash dog activity. The space is not enclosed in fencing, but is defined by park elements such as topography, landscaping or pathways. Design elements may include shade trees, a dog water fountain, benches, dog waste dispenser and covered trash receptacles. Some fencing four (4’) foot with landscaping may be required to separate the dog area from nearby roadways.

SITE SELECTION GUIDELINES AND SPECIFICATIONS

The City shall evaluate suggested neighborhood park areas for the establishment of a dog park or off-leash area using the following site guidelines and specifications to consider available space, topography, impact on existing park facilities, impact on adjacent land use and compatibility with overall park plans.

CRITERIA FOR FENCED DOG RUNS

1. The distance between the proposed fenced-dog-run and adjacent park features, homes and businesses will be evaluated for conflicts associated with noise. An ideal separation between a fenced-dog-run and businesses or residences is two hundred (200') feet; however changes in topography or landscaping can reduce the need for spatial separation.
2. Fenced-dog-runs will require well-drained land with a maximum slope of 5%. Fenced-dog-runs are not recommended for placement in a floodplain.
3. A dog park shall have a surface type that allows for positive drainage away from the site and that helps mitigate waste management issues. Fenced-dog-runs must include artificial grass or another hard surface to allow cleaning with a hose.
4. If located within a city park, a fenced-dog-run shall not be placed in any area where it will negatively impact primary uses of the park, unless the impact can be mitigated by regulating the hours of operation. Sites will be evaluated for noise conflicts with adjacent park uses, residential areas and businesses. Potential use conflicts include but are not limited to the following:
 - Playgrounds and children's play areas
 - Athletic fields and courts
 - Sensitive habitats or wildlife areas
 - Areas directly upslope from community gardens
 - Jogging or bicycle paths
 - Historic sites
5. Ideally, a fenced-dog-run shall be no less than five thousand (5,000) square feet in area.
6. Design of a fence-dog-run shall include a water supply to provide water for cleaning and maintenance of the park, a potable source for dogs to drink, and preferably, water for dog play.
7. A fenced-dog-run shall have permanent signage, posted in English and Spanish, displaying hours of operation, rules and regulations and contact information for the Department of Recreation and Parks and Baltimore City Animal Control.
8. A fenced-dog-run shall comply with all codes and regulations as they apply to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Clean Water Act (Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1972), and the Baltimore City Building Code.

9. Hours of operation will be set specifically for each location and may change with the seasons. Hours will be determined following consideration of other park activities, adjacent land uses, input from the immediate neighborhood and sponsoring dog group. The majority of dog owners exercise their dogs in the early morning and evening, so hours of operation will reflect common use unless adjustments are necessary to avoid conflict with other popular park activities. By adjusting hours of operation, potentially conflicting uses can share close proximity in a park. Hours of use may be suspended for special events in the park.

CRITERIA FOR OFF LEASH DOG AREAS

1. The distance between the proposed off-leash area and adjacent park features, homes and businesses will be evaluated for conflicts associated with noise. An ideal separation between off-leash-areas and businesses or residences is two hundred foot (200); however changes in topography or landscaping can reduce the need for spatial separation.
2. Off-leash-areas should be located on well-drained land with a maximum slope of 15%.
3. The surface of off-leash-areas can include natural turf or a hard surface.
4. If located in a city park, an off-leash area shall not be placed in any area where it will negatively impact primary uses of the park, unless the impact can be mitigated by regulating the hours of the dog park. Sites will be evaluated for noise conflicts with adjacent park uses, residential areas and businesses. Potential use conflicts include but are not limited to the following:
 - Playgrounds and children's play areas
 - Athletic fields and courts
 - Sensitive habitats or wildlife areas
 - Areas directly upslope from community gardens
 - Jogging or bicycle paths
 - Historic sites
5. Ideally, an off-leash area shall be a minimum of one (1) acre.
6. Design of an off-leash area may include a potable water source for dogs.
7. An off-leash-area shall have permanent signage, posted in English and Spanish, displaying hours of operation, rules and regulations and contact information for the Department of Recreation and Parks and Baltimore City Animal Control.
8. An off-leash-area shall comply with all codes and regulations as they apply to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Clean Water Act (Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1972), and the Baltimore City Building Code.

9. Hours of operation will be set specifically for each location and may change with the seasons. Hours will be determined following consideration of other park activities, adjacent land uses, input from the immediate neighborhood and sponsoring dog group. The majority of dog owners exercise their dogs in the early morning and evening, so hours of operation will reflect common use unless adjustments are necessary to avoid conflict with other popular park activities. By adjusting hours of operation, potentially conflicting uses can share close proximity in a park.

For example, a schedule of off-leash-area hours twice a day (5AM - 9AM and again from 5PM - 10PM) would avoid most conflicts between dog parks and playgrounds or dog parks and commercial zones. A schedule of only morning hours (5AM - 10AM) would reduce conflicts with athletic fields, and a schedule of only evening hours (5PM - 10PM) would reduce conflicts with many joggers.

Weekends could be further adjusted with some parks offering longer off-leash hours such as Sunday morning (5AM – 12PM) or less Off-leash area hours such as dog-free Sundays. Time and space management of the off-leash-areas will be determined by meeting with each sponsor group and community to find the best fit for individual parks.

OPERATING RULES FOR FENCED DOG RUN OR DESIGNATED OFF-LEASH AREA

1. Dog owners/handlers wishing to use fenced-dog-runs or off-leash-areas will be required to pay an annual fee, and register each dog with the Baltimore Animal Rescue and Care Shelter (BARCS), 301 Stockholm Street. Registration will include proof of Baltimore City dog license and current vaccinations. The fee for the “fenced-run/off-leash” tag will be \$20/year, with a reduced rate of \$10/year for seniors. The special tag will permit the dog access to any Baltimore City fenced-dog-run or off-leash-area. BARCS is open seven (7) days a week and hours can be found at www.baltimoreanimalshelter.org
2. All fenced-dog-runs and off-leash-areas are for dogs, their owners/handlers and those accompanying them. No animals other than dogs are allowed in the area.
3. Children under eight (8) years are not permitted inside fenced-dog-runs or off-leash-areas. Children age 9-15 must be accompanied and supervised by an adult. Dog Handler must be 16 years of age or older.
4. Owners and dog handlers are limited to a maximum of three (3) dogs. Professional dog walkers, trainers and groomers shall not use the fenced-dog-runs or off-leash-areas to conduct their business.
5. Dogs under the age of four (4) months and females in heat will not be allowed to use fenced-dog-runs or the off-leash-areas. Dogs that are ill or known to carry untreated parasites will not be permitted with in the fenced-dog-runs or the off-leash-areas.

6. Dogs must wear a proper fitting collar or harness displaying their identification tag, Baltimore City “off-leash” registration tag, and rabies tag while in the fenced-dog-run or off-leash-area. Pinch collars, spike collars or slip collars that could cause injury to another dog during play are not permitted. Owners/Handlers must have possession of a dog leash at all times.
7. Dogs must be under the control of their owners/handlers and in view of their owners/handlers at all times. Leaving dogs unattended is prohibited.
8. Owners/Handlers must clean up after their dogs with plastic bags and dispose of dog waste in covered trash cans.
9. Food and drinks in glass containers are not permitted in the Fenced Dog Run or Off-leash area. Treats for dog training are permitted.
10. All dogs must be on a leash, eight (8’) feet or less when entering or leaving the fenced-dog-run or off-leash-area. Any dog found “off-leash” outside of an established fenced-dog-run or off-leash-area will be subject to Baltimore City Leash Laws and associated fines.
11. Dogs must be leashed and removed from any fenced-dog-run or off-leash-area at the first sign of aggression. Dogs with a record of aggressive behavior on file with the Baltimore City “Dangerous Dog Hearing Board” will not be allowed to register for use of fenced-dog-runs or off-leash-areas.
12. Owners/Handlers are legally responsible for their dogs and any injuries caused by their dogs. Owners/Handlers use the fenced-dog-runs or off-leash-areas at their own risk.
13. Any bites to humans must be reported to the Department of Health and Animal Control within 24 hours in accordance with communicable disease laws.
14. In case of a special event or emergency, the Director shall post a notice of a planned closing at each entrance, stating the reasons for closure.

COMPLAINTS AND ENFORCEMENT

Sponsoring dog park groups are primarily responsible for the enforcement of the operating rules; however, they may seek assistance and authority from the Department of Recreation and Parks Urban Rangers, Baltimore City Animal Control or City Police as necessary.

Complaints and concerns regarding a specific dog park will be directed to the sponsoring dog park group for resolution. If, after thirty (30) days, the complaint or concern is not satisfactorily resolved by the sponsor, the complainant and sponsor shall meet with the Director, or designee for mediation.

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