



# **Dog Park Planning and Design Guidelines**

## **Purpose:**

This document provides guidance for the planning, design, construction, and improvement of dog parks across the City, recognizing that each site will present unique conditions, community needs, and operational considerations.

Dog park planning should be integrated within the broader parks network and consider the design principles outlined in the Parks Master Plan.

## **Guidelines:**

### **Public Consultation**

Public consultation will be an integral component of dog park planning. This can take various forms, ranging from online surveys to neighborhood consultation. The scope and approach to public engagement should be proportionate to the scale of the park and aligned with available operational capacity.

### **Location Selection**

The following will guide dog park locations:

|                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Land Availability                     | City owned lands that have sufficient space to support a dog park may be considered for future dog parks.   |
| Community Need                        | Locations may be prioritized in areas experiencing urban growth, higher residential density, or limited access to existing dog park amenities to ensure equitable service distribution. |
| Accessibility                         | Sites may be assessed based on proximity to residential areas, walkability, and parking availability.   |
| Geographic Suitability                | Functional site characteristics such as size, terrain and slope may be evaluated against usage needs.   |
| Compatibility with Adjacent Land Uses | Dog parks may be located and designed to complement surrounding land uses to ensure positive integration within the broader park or area context.                                       |
| Operations and Maintenance            | Operational impact such as maintenance requirements, site access, and efficiency of service delivery will be considered.  |
| Financial Considerations              | Dog parks should be economically feasible with respect to both capital and long-term costs.   |

### **Funding Sources**

Dog parks may be funded through or by a combination of the following sources:

- Capital budget requests
- Development cost charges
- Parkland dedication contributions
- Ongoing maintenance costs will be supported through the operating budget.

## **Parking and Access**

Dog parks should consider safe and convenient access for users.

- On-site or street parking
- Safe pedestrian connections to the park
- Accessible routes and entrances

Note: Not all dog parks will require dedicated parking, such as those serving neighborhood scale use.

## **Surfacing**

Dog park surfacing should be chosen based on site-specific conditions that consider maintenance requirements, durability, drainage needs, user safety, and long-term operational sustainability.

### **Primary Surfacing Type**

Bark mulch may serve as the primary surfacing in dog parks due to its advantages, including effective weed suppression, reduced dust and mud, cost effectiveness, and strong performance under regular use resulting in lower ongoing maintenance resources.

### **Alternative Surfacing Options**

The following materials may be considered where they better align with site conditions, usage, or available resources:

- Gravel – May be used in high-traffic areas or as drainage solutions, where a more resilient and free-draining surface is required.
- Sand – May be appropriate in specific locations, such as waterfront parks, where it complements the surrounding environment and intended park experience.
- Natural turf (grass) – Considered in locations with irrigation, suitable topography, and the capacity for required maintenance. Turf is best suited to lower-traffic parks due to its sensitivity to wear.
- Engineered wood fiber – May be used as an alternative to bark mulch should budget allow.

## **Dog Park Amenities**

Amenities should be selected to support safe, comfortable use and will vary depending on the park's classification, size, site conditions, and available funding. Amenities may include:

- Water access – Drinking water where access to water sources is available.
- Waste receptacles – Bear proof garbage cans will be standard and located at park entrances to encourage proper disposal of dog waste.
- Washroom access – Access to nearby washroom facilities such as temporary or permanent washroom buildings, depending on the park context, should be planned for where feasible.
- Signage – Clear, informative signage outlining park rules, etiquette, and safety guidelines should be installed.
- Seating – Seating for park users. Placement should support sightlines across the park.
- Interactive features – Elements that encourage exercise, training, and interaction such as agility equipment, logs, boulders, or other natural features may be included.
- Shade – Shade may be provided through existing or planted trees, or through permanent shade structures.
- Fencing – Standard fencing is typically 4 ft high and with a double-gated entry system. Park type and location may require higher fencing or no fencing.