

DRAFT – May 26, 2016
**STATEMENT OF POLICY AND GUIDELINES FOR SITING OFF-LEASH DOG
EXERCISE AREAS WITHIN THE MADISON PARK SYSTEM**

AUTHORIZATION

The Madison Board of Park Commissioners is the approving authority for policies governing the Madison Park system. This Policy is intended to guide the Parks Division in affirmatively planning for off-leash dog exercise areas, as well as to assist the Parks Division in responding to community requests for the creation of off-leash dog areas in their parks.

This Policy is intended to achieve the following:

- Provide for a system of off-leash dog exercise areas that can accommodate the needs of present and future Madison dog owners, particularly those without yards.
- Establish criteria to guide the Parks Division in siting off-leash dog exercise areas, taking into account the needs of the park system as a whole.
- Promote the development of off-leash dog exercise areas having sufficient size and variety to provide healthy exercise for dogs and for their owners.
- Promote regional planning within Dane County to maximize the variety of off-leash dog-exercise-area options as to size, location, topography, and other relevant characteristics.
- Provide that fenced dog parks take in enough revenue to cover their operating costs, including among other things the costs of ranger enforcement.
- Assure that the use of City parks by dog owners respects park use by non-dog owners.

GUIDELINES FOR SITING OFF-LEASH DOG EXERCISE AREAS

1. Siting Fenced Off-Leash Dog Exercise Areas in Existing Parks.
 - a) Place highest priority on parks where dog owners reside (based on license and permit sales) and where there is not another off-leash dog exercise area within two miles. Give priority to areas where multi-family housing is common.
 - b) Smaller fenced areas may be considered where the park's primary service area includes multifamily housing developments that limit the size of pets.

Once a site is identified, whether by a request from the public, an alder, or the Parks Division, follow the Parks Master Plan Process.

2. Siting Unfenced Off-Leash Dog Exercise Areas in Existing Parks.

Future policies may consider allowing unfenced off-leash access to specific parks during designated periods, under the following conditions;

- a) *Limiting unfenced off-leash dog use to neighborhood or community parks.*
- b) *Supporting unfenced off-leash dog use with signage, education regarding removal of feces and the necessity of dog control, and substantial fines for non-compliance.*

- c) *Locating unfenced off-leash dog areas in locations where there are at least three acres of land that Parks staff determines suitable for dogs to run off-leash.*
- d) *Obtaining input from residents prior to citing an unfenced off-leash dog exercise area in a specific park.*
- e) *Evaluating other factors contributing the success of an off leash dog exercise area including;*
 - i. *Avoiding interference with established uses,*
 - ii. *Avoiding locations directly abutting residences,*
 - iii. *Assuring availability of parking nearby,*
 - iv. *Choosing sites where there are minimal impacts on the visual character of the park,*
 - v. *Choosing sites where spillover into non-dog areas is unlikely,*

The Park Commission shall approve the designation of any unfenced off-leash dog exercise area,

3. “Destination” Off-Leash Dog Exercise Areas.

In coordination with Dane County Parks and other Dane County municipalities, identify opportunities for sizeable off-leash dog exercise areas that would be attractive and challenging to hikers and walkers.

Consider dog-walking trail systems within or between dog parks.

Consider allowing amenities such as food carts and coffee carts in destination dog parks.

4. “Friends” Organizations.

Where an off-leash dog exercise area (whether fenced or unfenced) is contemplated, encourage the formation of a “Friends” group (either independently or within the local neighborhood association) to educate dog owners and other members of the public about the rules regarding off-leash park use, to raise funds for amenities (e.g., landscaping, benches), to police clean-up regularly and with annual events, and generally to build community and local leadership in the context of off-leash dog park use.

5. Maintenance.

The Parks Division is responsible for maintenance of City of Madison off-leash dog parks.