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**To:** Parks <[parks@cityofmadison.com](mailto:parks@cityofmadison.com)>  
**Subject:** Parks Contact Submission: General Parks Questions

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**Comments / Questions:**

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**Subject:** General Parks Questions  
**Comments / Questions:**  
September 5, 2019

City of Madison Parks Division  
City-County Building, Room 104  
210 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd  
Madison, WI 53703  
Eric Knepp, Superintendent

I am writing you to voice my opposition to the latest proposal of more dogs in Madison parks and to propose some alternative options. Our Madison parks have a long and distinguished history. From the turn of the last century when the Madison Park and Pleasure Drive Association (MPPDA) was established through private funds until recently, our parks have been a model for the state, the nation and the world. In the early 20th Century creative and socially-minded residents realized that getting out into the fresh air to enjoy nature was vital to personal well-being. We realize this even more today when our city has become noisier and more congested than ever before. Our parks are often a refuge from the sounds and stress of modern life. Especially those parks that nurture the natural eco-systems, support local wildlife and foster the practice of “forest bathing” or shinrin-yoku. I am fortunate to live within 5 minutes walking distance of three public parks – Hoyt Park, Quarry Park and Lucia Crest Park. I often walk through Hoyt Park on a Sunday morning or early evening to clear my mind and feed my spirit. Unfortunately, I often encounter dogs both on and off-leash. Dog owners are either ignorant of the current ordinance or simply ignore it. Probably both. I have stopped walking in Quarry Park all together, because, even though it is an on-leash park, dogs often run loose and uncontrolled. In fact, earlier this summer a woman walking her dog on leash there was bitten by an off-leash dog whose owner was not visible at the time. This behavior is both troublesome and a health issue. Even though dogs are allowed at Lucia Crest ONLY in the early morning, people do not heed the language on the sign posted. What makes you think dog owners will behave appropriately once you loosen the rules? It will be even worse! I will be a free-for-all. At least now one can point to the ordinance in place. This gives some

leverage to those of us who do not think dogs need to be everywhere. We already have trouble walking down our sidewalks without sidestepping multiple dogs on 15-foot leash lines.

I also understand the needs of dog owners to exercise and socialize their 4-legged friends. I have been lucky to have many good dogs in my life. But I always understood I had to properly train them, make them obey and not become a burden to me or people around me. Unfortunately, this is not an attitude held by all today. We all see many dogs walking their owners, doing what they please and being allowed to disturb humans in multiple ways, the worst of which are jumping up on, biting and incessant barking at all hours. I do not blame the dogs. It is obviously a problem with the dog owners.

I believe the solution and a fair compromise would be to develop a plan by which neighborhood associations can work with their resident dog owners to create fenced-in dog runs or small neighborhood dog parks developed, partially funded and maintained by dog owners in the neighborhood. Many cities have models for this, even in their most densely populated areas. See the dog park in downtown Cincinnati at <https://washingtonpark.org/dog-park/> as an excellent example.

The City of Madison could make small grants available for startup funding for design and development of these areas. Each neighborhood association could allocate some funds as well. Many years ago, I tried to get the city to consider just this kind of option on the two large median strips of Vernon Blvd. which runs perpendicular between Segoe and Midvale south of Hilldale Shopping Center. I had the backing of many residents, but the city balked because the water/sewer people were against it. It would have been ideal. One was designated for small dogs and one for larger dogs. The neighborhood was also interested in this because we were seeing an increase in surrounding rental properties allowing animals. This obviously puts more dog walkers on the sidewalks and in the parks.

The other option I would recommend is to work with the Plan Commission and Zoning to make sure new, multiuse developments have an area set aside for dog runs, if dogs are allowed in those buildings. Every time a new apartment development goes up that permits dogs, there are dozens more walking the streets. This is not fair to anyone in our neighborhoods.

To conclude, I believe the current push to open parks to more dogs, whether on leash or not, is misguided. Why should we, who love our parks and have no dogs be disenfranchised? Why would you take away our refuge, our pleasurable hours in the outdoors and our peaceful walks through natural settings? Do we have to be on guard every time we walk through the park, carry pepper spray to protect ourselves, carry sticks to fend off charging dogs? Our parks are just as special today as they were over 100 years ago. Why would you degrade them? Why would my tax dollars go to something I can no longer participate in? Please weigh your decisions regarding dogs in the parks carefully. Parks are here for all of us. They are not here only for the squeaky wheels among us. When something precious is gone, it doesn't come back.

Thank you.

Ulrike Dieterle, [REDACTED] N Blackhawk Ave, Madison 53705