



MEMORANDUM

To: Saint Anthony Village Parks and Environmental Commission
From: Ashley Morello, Assistant City Manager
Date: September 8, 2025
Request: Dog Park Exploration

BACKGROUND

The topic of exploring the feasibility of a dog park in Saint Anthony Village was an agenda item at Parks & Environmental Commission meetings in Fall 2022 and Winter 2024, and historically as far back as 2014. It was also discussed at the Parks Summit in March of this year, which included attendees from both Commissions, City Council, school district, sports boosters and staff. While a dog park has been subject of public interest, the geographic restraints, development of the City, as well as anticipated staff demand are challenges that impact the feasibility of establishing a dog park within the City. This meeting will build upon previous discussions in response to community desire for a dog park. As part of the Parks and Environmental Commission 2025 Work Plan, the Commission is being asked to identify the best location for a dog park with the least adverse impacts.

STAFF RESEARCH

To provide guidance on a recommendation that provides the best possible amenity to serve the greatest number of community members as possible, included in the meeting attachments are a report from Ann Arbor, MI that outlines recommendations for dog park site planning, as well as a guide from The Trust for Public Land. Some key components for best practices from the documents are summarized below:

Size: The recommended minimum size for dog parks varies considerably among cities, but is generally between $\frac{1}{2}$ acre and one acre. This allows adequate space for a higher volume of dogs as well as larger dog breeds that require more space for activity.

Buffer from Residential: A few cities provide definitive distances from residences, varying from 50 feet to 200 feet. All strive to minimize conflicts and include guidelines such as: making sure that noise and activity levels are no more than other park uses, importance of screening or visual buffers, and having a minimal impact on residences.

Parking: Recommendations include that parking should be readily accessible, close to the site, sufficient/adequate size, and convenient. There were no standards for size; rather it is important to consider parking when locating a dog park.

Use Conflict Avoidance: Guidelines include avoiding play areas and other recreational amenities, high use areas, natural areas and water sources, wildlife, trails, community gardens, and historic sites.

The Parks Summit confirmed that establishing a dog park that can serve as a community-wide amenity would require displacing current activities or amenities. After the Parks Summit, staff assessed potential dog park locations that present the least impact to current uses and/or addresses other known issues or amenity changes being considered (see the Table below).

Location	Size	Residential Buffer	Parking	Conflict Avoidance
Central Park	Largest park in city. Would need to displace another service in order to consider.	Doesn't meet residential buffer.	Existing on-site parking. Parking competes with existing uses of park.	High use area. Low conflict avoidance.
Emerald Park	Smallest park in city. Area is not configured to accommodate a city-wide use.	Doesn't meet residential buffer.	On-street parking only. Would not meet demand.	Medium conflict avoidance.
Silver Point Park	Medium sized park. Would need to displace another service in order to consider. Possible dog park size: approximately 0.5 – 1.15 acres	Doesn't meet residential buffer.	Existing on-site parking. Parking over-utilized based on current uses.	Medium conflict avoidance.

Staff do not recommend considering Central Park as a dog park location due to its existing usage and high potential conflicts with other users. Staff further do not recommend considering Emerald Park as a dog park location due to its size and inadequate parking. It is also worth noting that because of Emerald Park's location and size, its current usage is more consistent with a neighborhood park and playground and is not suited to be a city-wide dog park. As a result, other small parcels owned or not owned by the City are not considered viable dog park locations, as they do not meet size, parking or buffer needs and would further not be suited as a city-wide dog park.

While no location in the City has ideal conditions to reflect dog park best practices, staff has determined that a dog park at Silver Point Park could have the least adverse impacts. That said, a dog park within the City would require staff time and labor to establish as well as maintain beyond existing staff capacity. Staff compiled and attached a summary of considerations and tasks that are to be expected with managing and maintaining a city dog park. Due to the anticipated staff demand for a dog park at an existing park, staff do not recommend considering a non-city owned park, as that would result in even greater demand from staff to maintain.

SILVER POINT PARK

In order to consider the feasibility of a dog park at Silver Point Park, the existing amenities need to be considered.

Accessible Playground

In 2024, the playground at Silver Point Park was modified to a fully accessible playground, including accessible play equipment, accessible rubber surface, and a swing set. This is the only fully accessible

playground within the city and is a key amenity for kids of all abilities. Any consideration of a dog park should not have adverse impacts on the accessible playground.

2024 Street Improvements

As part of the 2024 Street Improvement Project, the basketball court and parking lot were repaved as well as repairs were made to the sidewalk and trails. Any consideration of a dog park should not have adverse impacts on the basketball court, parking lot, sidewalk and trails.

Ball Fields

There are two existing ball fields at Silver Point Park. This existing usage, in conjunction with the accessible playground, basketball court and ice rinks result in high parking and traffic conditions that the park and surrounding neighborhood is not designed to meet. The ball field #2, the southerly ball field closest to Highway 88 has been reported as often unusable due to flooding conditions, meaning that most T-ball activities take place on the inner field closest to the playground. It is worth noting that this area was originally designed as a stormwater retention area and therefore was designed with intention to retain water.

If the ball field were removed, the space could be considered for a dog park. If this location were considered, additional infrastructure such as trails would likely be needed for vehicles to access the dog park for maintenance purposes as existing paths are not suited for such vehicle traffic and maneuvering vehicles around the accessible playground is not feasible. This cost is not reflected in the preliminary quote.

If this option is *not* recommended, staff will continue to explore reducing the number of ball fields due to site challenges and site usage overwhelming the park's capacity.

Ice Rinks

The City currently has a hockey rink and a pleasure rink at each of its three primary parks. While not every season will be as mild as the last several winters, the management of all 6 rinks across 3 parks requires time, cost and labor for the Public Works crews to maintain for a relatively short period of usability.

These ice rinks have traditionally been an important amenity for the community and the rinks at the three parks each serve surrounding neighborhood. Removing the ice rinks at Silver Point Park could allot space for a dog park. Central Park is a short distance away and its rinks are an alternative for those who currently use the rinks at Silver Point.

Pros and Cons

Either of the above options will result in programming changes for those who currently participate in sports or use the ice rinks at Silver Point Park. There is a parking shortage in this park for the activities that currently take place, and adding a dog park would further contribute to parking congestion unless most users walk to the facility.

	Ball Field #2 Location	Ice Rink Location
Pros	Reduces parking and traffic congestion associated with T-ball activities	Reduces the quantity of ice rinks maintained by the city
Cons	Area will experience wash outs from heavy rain events	Proximity to residential back yards

	Proximity to accessible playground	Ice rink is popular amenity for the neighborhood
	Additional trail/path infrastructure need to access	

Construction Estimate

A preliminary estimate for anticipated construction costs of a dog park is included in the meeting materials. This is for preliminary purposes only and does not account for any specific location.

DISCUSSION ITEMS FOR COMMISSION FEEDBACK

If a dog park is pursued, staff recommend considering the two locations at Silver Point Park. Utilizing one of the existing parks as a space for a dog park would require modifying or eliminating existing amenities at the park, which could reduce existing parking and traffic stress on the local neighborhood streets. Staff do not recommend pursuing a new location as that would result in additional demand and labor for Public Works.

Staff request PEC's recommendation on which site would be best suited for a dog park.

NEXT STEPS

City Council will receive PEC's recommendation on a dog park location. The dog park and other park amenities are currently not in the 2026 CIP and would be subject to Council consideration.

ATTACHMENTS

- Presentation
- Dog Park Exploration
- Dog Park Estimate
- City of Ann Arbor, MI – Recommendations and Guidelines for Dog Park Site Selection, Design, Operations and Maintenance
- Trust for Public Land – How to build a dog park