



## **FRIENDS OF LAKE FOREST ANIMALS**

### **PROPOSAL FOR A DOG OWNERS' PARK IN LAKE FOREST**

#### **OVERVIEW**

The City of Lake Forest currently has 27 parks totaling over 180 acres, and is working to add another 32 acres featuring sports fields and a community center. There is currently no off-leash area for dog owners. All nearby cities have such areas, except Mission Viejo which is adding one. This speaks to residents' need for a dog owners' park: south Orange County is heavily urbanized, and build-out has resulted in few open areas for free play between dog and owner. Many dogs need more exercise than their owner can provide on leash – especially seniors, and those with full-time jobs. Importantly, a dog owners' park is also a social center for people who like dogs.

There are approximately 7400 licensed dogs in Lake Forest, and (general estimate) at least as many unlicensed animals. A conservative guesstimate would be that over 10,000 LF city residents own at least one dog.

The lack of a dog owners' park, combined with the needs of dog owners, has resulted in dogs running off-leash in many parks. This has created a whole new breed of dog park supporters: those who are unhappy with the off leash dogs, especially those with small children and those afraid of dogs. Some nearby residents understandably object, and many non-dog owners are supportive of the off leash park idea.

Until recently, the lower half Montbury Park (3.5 acres total) served as an unofficial dog owner's park. Complaints from nearby residents prompted a crackdown by OC Animal Care Services, resulting in fines of \$248 per loose dog, and a request to the P & R Commission for an off-leash area to be created.

The solution, as other cities have found, is to give the dog owners a place to take their dogs where they can socialize, while their canine companions run off-leash, play fetch, and chase

around with other dogs. Such a park does not need to be extensive, or completely level, or any particular shape, and it does not need a lot of infrastructure.

## **PROGRESS TO DATE ON A DOG-OWNERS PARK IN LAKE FOREST**

**FOLFA** has received the following comments from city staff:

1. There is no demand for such a park
2. There is nowhere to put a dog-owners park

1. On the first point, there is indeed demand for such a park. FOLFA receives e-mails daily from Lake Forest residents inquiring about the status of a Dog Owners' Park and offering to assist in this effort. A city-sponsored resident's planning workshop several years ago placed a dog-owners park second only to sports facilities in importance (4 out of the 5 work groups.)

Also, following the O.C. Animal Control crackdown in Montbury Park in the summer of 2009, approximately 30 residents attended the Parks and Recreation Commission meeting on 8/20/09 and petitioned for the leash law to be suspended in Montbury Park. The petition was denied, and FOLFA subsequently agreed to coordinate efforts to establish a dog-owners park. A presentation asking for a dog owners' park was made at the Parks and Recreation Commission in September 09.

Demand does exist, and it has been increased by: build-out removing open land; the creation of formal "Open Spaces" managed by Whiting authorities and banning dogs (Glass Creek and Viejo Open Spaces); residential complaints restricting loose dogs in Montbury Park.

2. On the second point, a suitable site, FOLFA members have taken 2 actions: first, a survey of dog parks in surrounding cities, (appendix E) and secondly, a search throughout Lake Forest for a suitable site, specifications for which are on the next page.

## **PROPOSED "FOLFA" ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Form a working group to assist the city with planning and constructing a dog owners' park

Seek donations of materials and services to be used in park construction

Propose a set of rules for dog park use (Appendix D).

Form a volunteer committee to liaise with City staff and oversee responsible use of the park when opened

Perform ongoing fund raising to support maintenance of the park

## PHYSICAL SPECIFICATIONS FOR A DOG OWNERS PARK.

Location:	Situated so that adjacent properties are not inconvenienced by noise, traffic/parking, unsafe or unsanitary conditions. A central location is preferable to serve all city residents.
Minimal acreage:	1.5 – 2 acres
Parking:	On or off-street, approx 20 spaces
Fencing:	5-6 ft high chain-link fencing all around. Plus double gates with enclosed transfer spaces at both entrance and exit.  Separate fenced areas for small dogs (approx 1/4) and large dogs (approx 3/4) of property.
Surface:	Grass is first choice, DG is becoming used, mulches appear undesirable.  Pathways desirable for seniors, disabled
Water:	Sprinkler system if surface is grass. Regular fountain with low bowl for dogs. Hose point attachment for clean-up.
Lighting	Similar to existing non-sports parks
Seating:	Benches for owners, some in shade. For seniors, some shade should be available close to entrance.
Shade:	Trees and/or simple shelters.
Trash receptacles:	For trash, dog poop.
Other:	Holder for dog poop bag dispenser.
Signage:	Park name, designation and rules; legal disclaimers.

## **BENEFITS OF INSTALLING A DOG OWNERS' PARK**

- Meet the needs of LF residents who own dogs, estimated as at least 10%.  
(Many of these residents, especially seniors, do not have children or use sports facilities.)
- Improve the safety of existing parks by minimizing usage by unleashed dogs.
- Increase the number of licensed dogs by requiring licensing as a condition of use.
- Make city recreation facilities comparable to those in surrounding cities
- Compensate for the loss of open, undeveloped space caused by build-out
- Opening a new park would provide a wonderful way to celebrate Lake Forest's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Dec 2011.

## **POSSIBLE SITES IN LAKE FOREST**

The open space along the east side of Lake Forest Drive, between Vintage Woods and Dimension streets. This site is bracketed by Starbucks and the Whispering Hills apartments.

Tamarisk Park. (*Redesign contract just awarded.*)

The proposed Sports Park at Portola and the 241 Toll Road. (*Master plan now being redefined.*)

? Any available land in LF adjacent to the extension of Alton Parkway

? Any available land adjacent to the extension of Rancho Parkway

## SUITABILITY ANALYSIS

	Lake Forest Drive	Tamarisk Park	Sports Park
<b>Location/ remoteness</b>	<p>Fairly good. Adjacent apartments are well buffered.</p> <p>This site was suggested by city staff as a possible dog owners' park at city workshop several years ago.</p> <p>Whispering Hills HOA donated the land to the city, and some WH residents are now asking for a dog owners' park to be created there.</p>	<p>Excellent. No close residences. Currently being redesigned to improve sports facilities. With the new Sports Park imminent, 1 acre could be provided for dog owners without sacrifice of overall sports facilities.</p> <p><i>(Ownership of the vacant land adjacent to the park, on the end of Peachwood?)</i></p>	<p>Excellent. Well buffered from residences off Regency; otherwise surrounded by open space or commercial areas.</p> <p>A dog owners' park could be located in a peripheral area, or on sloping land unsuitable for sports fields. (Project is still in late planning stage.)</p>
<b>Parking</b>	<p>Would have to be provided within vacant area, taking away from park area.</p>	<p>Limited existing parking within park. Street parking available on Peachwood and Tamarisk,</p>	<p>Extensive parking facilities are already envisaged for the Sports Park and Recreational Center.</p>
<b>Convenience To users</b>	<p>Conveniently central, but would be accessed from a busy, fast road (Lake Forest Drive). Possible pedestrian tie-in to Starbucks/Subway could enhance their business and appeal to dog owners.</p>	<p>Less central than LF Drive, but easily accessible from residential streets.</p>	<p>Not central. Will be readily accessible from El Toro Road and Portola Parkway.</p>
<b>Cost comments</b>	<p>Most expensive. Providing access from LF Drive, and a parking lot, would be costly.</p>	<p>Relatively inexpensive if incorporated in the overall redesign of the park.</p>	<p>Relatively inexpensive if incorporated in the overall design of the Sports Park.</p>
	<p><i>See picture page 6</i></p>		

## Appendices

- A. City of Lake Forest Park Guide
- B. Lake Forest demographics
- C. Number of licensed dogs per city
- D. Proposed Rules for Dog Owners' Park
- E. Mission Viejo Dog Park survey of Irvine Bark Park usage (from MV website)
- F. Profiles and pictures of 10 Dog Owners' Parks in nearby cities
- G. From "The best of Orange County." O.C. Register publication



Possible site on LF Drive

C. Dog populations in local cities with Dog Owners' Parks

City	# of Licensed dogs	# and size of park(s)
Ladera Ranch (private)	2185	1 1 ½ acres
Laguna Woods + Laguna Beach	2500	2 ¾ + 2 acres
Costa Mesa	2900	1 2 acres
Rancho Santa Margarita	4658	1 ¾ acre
San Clemente	5415	1 1 acre
Laguna Niguel	6982	1 1 acre
Lake Forest	7426	0
Irvine	7526	1 2+ acres
Mission Viejo	12114	1 planned

**F. Profiles and pictures of Dog Owners' Parks in nearby cities**

**(to be added)**

Costa Mesa

Dana Point (1 large and 4 small fun zones)

Irvine

Laguna Beach

Laguna Niguel

City of Orange

Rancho Santa Margarita

San Clemente

Ladera Ranch (private)

Laguna Woods