

*Dog Exercise Areas In Montgomery County Parks:*

*A Proposal for Locations, Funding and  
Operating Criteria*

June 2002



The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission

# DOG EXERCISE AREAS IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY PARKS: A PROPOSAL FOR LOCATIONS, FUNDING AND OPERATING CRITERIA

## *Introduction*

This report has been developed by a special staff taskforce within the Maryland-National Park and Planning Commission in response to the continuing public interest, which has been expressed over several years, in the creation of dog exercise areas within the Montgomery County Parks System. If approved, these new facilities would allow dogs to exercise in the park system off-leash.

This report is the basis for public review and comment to test the level of public support for such facilities in specific areas of County parks. It sets forth recommendations to the Montgomery County Planning Board for the location, funding and operating criteria, and provides information on similar facilities within the Washington region.

The concept of dog exercise areas on Commission-owned park property was adopted by the Montgomery County Planning Board when it approved the Commission's Capital Improvements Program (CIP) for FY03-08, which provides funds for facility planning and minor construction.

Staff would continue to explore the following additional funding options for both facility development and maintenance:

- (1) the creation of sponsorship groups with retail partners;
- (2) sponsorship by local community groups;
- (3) private corporate donors in exchange for facility advertisement; or
- (4) a combination of one or more of the alternative funding/sponsorship groups listed above.



## Dog Exercise Areas in Montgomery County Parks A Summary of Recommendations

1. *Staff recommends that dog exercise areas be selected on the basis of a set of guidelines that address parking, proximity to adjacent neighborhoods, compatibility to other park uses and environmental impacts. (see p.13)*
2. *Staff has identified nine sites, located at varied geographic locations and varying in size, for more in-depth site analysis: (see p.17)*
  - a. *Black Hill Regional Park, Boyds (near the boat launch ramp)*
  - b. *Cabin John Regional Park (adjacent to the handball court)*
  - c. *Centerway Local Park, Gaithersburg*
  - d. *Martin Luther King, Jr. Recreational Park, White Oak*
  - e. *Northwest Branch Park, Silver Spring (the former Bonifant Landfill site)*
  - f. *Olney Manor Recreational Park, Olney*
  - g. *Ridge Road Recreational Park, Germantown*
  - h. *Water's Landing Local Park, Germantown*
  - i. *Wheaton Regional Park (behind the indoor tennis facility)*
3. *Staff recommends that, at a minimum, each dog exercise facility must include a fence with double-gated entrances, a suitable surface, bag dispensers, tree screens and buffers, large trash cans with lids, and posted rules. (see p.14)*
4. *Staff recommends that, through standard agreements with sponsoring Dog Owner Groups or other organizations, selected dog exercise areas would be constructed in accordance with proposed facility development guidelines. Oversight of the dog exercise areas will be the joint responsibility of the sponsoring organization, the users, park management and the Maryland-National Capital Park Police. (see p. 13)*
5. *Staff is recommending \$14,000 annually for the operating budget to support the on-going maintenance of these facilities.( see p. 16)*
6. *Staff recommends one or a combination of the following strategies to support development and on-going maintenance: (see p. 13)*
  - (a) sponsorship groups with retail partners;*
  - (b) sponsorship by local community groups;*
  - (c) private corporate donors in exchange for facility advertisement.*
7. *Staff recommends several rules that will govern the operation of the dog exercise facilities. (see p.26)*



# **DOG EXERCISE AREAS IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY PARKS: A PROPOSAL FOR LOCATIONS, FUNDING AND OPERATING CRITERIA**

## **WHAT IS A "DOG EXERCISE AREA?"**

The types of facilities that have amenities particularly conducive to use by dogs and their owners are known by several names: "dog park," "bark park," "dog exercise area (d.e.a.)," etc. The National Recreation and Park Association defines the facility as " a contained public area where dog owners may allow their dogs to run off-leash."

## **WHY ARE DOG EXERCISE AREAS NEEDED?**

With an estimated 31.6 percent of United States' households owning at least one dog in 1996 (about 53 million dogs, according to the American Veterinary Medical Association,) the demand for dog exercise areas is great. More than 758,000 dogs are part of 32% of households in the State of Maryland. Montgomery County has about 25,000 licensed dogs and many more that are unlicensed

Because of dogs' popularity, dog owners represent a substantial portion of park users and dogs need access to public open space.

Owning a dog encourages people to exercise and visit their local park. More than most other park facilities, dog exercise areas have been places where neighbors and other local residents regularly meet and greet, often forming the beginning of longer-lasting community ties.

Public exercise areas also benefit dogs. Dogs are social creatures who need sufficient exercise to maintain their physical health and to learn appropriate behavior when socializing with humans or other dogs. They also need regular outings to reduce boredom, release pent-up energy at home, and decrease aggressive behavior. According to the Humane Society, public exercise areas contribute to the humane treatment of dogs.

Dogs and their owners have been affected first by planning for communities and public open space and then by its management. As more people live in compact types of housing surrounded by heavier traffic, greater demands are placed on public open space. More intense user conflicts within existing parks, especially those in more urbanized areas, have often meant greater restrictions on domestic animals to public open space.

The absence of any authorized fenced areas in County parks for dogs has led to numerous conflicts between dog-owners seeking an opportunity for their pet to run in the park and other users. Fenced dog exercise areas would provide a means not only of meeting the needs of dogs and their owners, but of providing for the harmonious co-existence with other park users. These facilities in other localities have provided the added benefit of reducing crime in those parks and providing a safe place where the elderly and the physically challenged can exercise their dogs.

## **WHAT ARE THEY LIKE ON THE NATIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS?**

Although only a few existed in the early 1990's, nearly 600 dog exercise areas are now scattered among the states. The majority are owned and operated by local government agencies, although many are still assisted and monitored by sponsoring resident groups.

Existing dog exercise areas range from 10,000 square feet to 70 acres in size and are located on a variety of terrains: from small neighborhood parks to portions of large regional parks to natural

wilderness areas, trails and portions of beaches, lakes, rivers, and other bodies of water. Dog exercise areas have also been established on other public lands, such as transportation and utilities' rights-of-way, former landfills, and school sites.

About 40 dog exercise areas are located in the metropolitan area, and quite a few more are being planned. These parks are located in a wide range of areas, including dense, urbanized and commercial/industrial areas and, in a few cases, in natural resource areas. The greatest number is in residential neighborhoods. Most of the recently developed parks are fenced, but otherwise, are no more isolated from their surroundings than other park uses. Grass is the most popular surface, although mulch, pea gravel (also called bluestone or blue dust) and wood chips are all common. Dog exercise areas usually have a few amenities and trash cans, especially, are normally provided. Other common amenities are water fountains, bulletin boards, kiosks, small open shelters, picnic tables, benches, bag dispensers for dog-wastes, and balls for dog play. Most of the fenced areas have double gates and posted rules.

Park departments and other public works agencies own and operate the great majority of these facilities, although a few are on public land earmarked for other uses (such as road right-of-ways). Some of the areas were initiated by sponsoring groups, who helped plan and sometimes funded some amenities, and still participate in overseeing the facilities' operation and maintenance. Dog-owners generally bear liability for their own dogs' actions. Relatively few injuries have been reported at these parks. Dog exercise areas (d.e.a.) were established as early as the 1970's in Alexandria, Virginia and the 1980's in Arlington County, Virginia. These dog exercise areas proved very popular with their users, and were followed by the development of more d.e.a.'s, including, in the late 1990's, in the Cities of Gaithersburg and Greenbelt in Maryland, and Fairfax County in Virginia. Again reflecting the national experience, these parks have provided an enjoyable means for dogs—and their handlers—to exercise and socialize. Official dog exercise areas are also helpful to non-users, since they draw many dogs away from other park facility areas and their users.

## **WHAT ARE THEY LIKE ON THE LOCAL LEVEL?**

### ***City of Gaithersburg***

#### ***Green Run Dog Park***

##### ***Bickerstaff Road and I-370.***

The only official dog park in Montgomery County, this elongated, 55,000 square foot dog park has two sections and is bordered by some townhouses on one side and a gully on the other. The first but smaller section, open year-round, is covered with blue dust. The second, a 45,000 square-foot section, has been re-seeded and remains open only during the warm months. Both of these portions are fenced, and a double-gated entrance. A gravel parking lot is immediately beside the dog exercise areas.

Because overuse has been such a problem, the City instituted a yearly \$25 entrance fee for dogs living outside the City. According to sign-in sheets at the park, when both sections were open, the park had an average 200 sign-in visitors daily on weekdays and 300 daily on weekends. About 75 percent, or a total of over 62,000 of the sign-in visits were by people who lived in Montgomery County outside the City of Gaithersburg.

The park is heavily patrolled by the City Animal Control Division, and maintained by the City's Parks Department. An Ad Hoc Dog Park Advisory Committee makes recommendations about the planning and use of the park, and has advised the City to create additional dog exercise areas.

***City of Greenbelt – Prince George’s County***

***Hanover Drive and Hanover Parkway***

The City of Greenbelt has one, quarter-acre fenced dog park, which has been open for several years. Land for the park was donated by a developer, who thought the parcel was too small for another use. A group of local dog-owners lobbied the City to develop the park, and a number of sites were considered before this one was selected.

***City of Bowie – Prince George’s County***

***Northview Drive near Enfield Chase Neighborhood Park***

The City of Bowie’s dog exercise area opened in mid-December 2001. This grass exercise area is about an acre and has a separate fenced area for small dogs. A local dog-owners’ group initiated the request for the exercise area, which is operated and maintained by the City, which maintains a close association with the dog owners’ group.

***Ellicott City - Howard County***

Howard County will be opening a three-acre dog exercise area in July in Ellicott City. The County will charge \$25 per year per family for a pass to use the fenced facility. The Howard County Dog Owners Group will serve as a watch organization to ensure that users have passes. During part of this year, the County provided a fenced ballfield as a temporary dog exercise area.

***Arlington County, Virginia***

Over the past 15 years, Arlington County developed seven “Community Canine Areas,” spaced throughout the County, with a sophisticated system for their establishment and operation. Especially unique and popular are two canine areas in the Four Mile Run stream valley area at Glencarlyn and Shirlington Local Parks. Located beside a shallow running stream, these canine areas provide a dog swimming area and wading area for handlers, as well as a flat area above the stream for land-play. Other community canine areas are located in neighborhood parks. Most of the County’s community canine areas are fenced and some have double-gated entries. The community canine areas have a variety of surfaces, including grass, sand/soil (for the stream-valley park), wood chips, mulch and blue dust.

New community canine areas are usually initiated by resident requests for a particular site. If the site is approved, the County usually signs a Memorandum of Understanding (M.O.U.) with sponsors for the canine area, agreeing to fund the basic amenities (e.g. fence, trash can, bench, water fountain) and provide general maintenance, such as grass mowing, trash removal and fence repair. The sponsors pay for extra amenities, oversee the canine area to ensure rules are observed, and serve as liaisons to the County for maintenance needs and as the first point of contact for complaints and disputes. Sponsors are liable for any claims attributable to their own actions, but dog-owners are liable for claims related to their dogs.

***Fairfax County, Virginia***

Fairfax County has several off-leash dog exercise areas, and at least two more nearing the final planning stages. The County opened Burke Lane Park in Oakton as a pilot program more than a year ago, and recently opened dog exercise areas in Reston and Lorton. At least two other exercise areas are nearing the final planning stages. The Burke Lane Park is a 10,000-square foot park located between some ballfields and townhouses. The Barren-Cameron exercise area in Reston and the Lorton area are substantially larger (about one acre), and contain separate fenced areas for big and small (under 25 pounds) dogs. These most recently opened areas are experimenting with various ground covers, and include turf-covered portions, as well as portions covered with blue dust and with an infield soil mix similar to that used in ballfields.

The County's procedures for establishing and maintaining exercise areas are similar to Arlington County's, except that sponsoring groups provide a substantial amount of the start-up money. This money is raised in accordance with Fairfax' matching grants program, which is also used for funding a number of other recreational facilities. Besides raising money, the sponsoring group also requests the establishment of an exercise area, helps oversee and maintain it, and signs a Memorandum of Understanding concerning the group's responsibilities. The exercise areas are all in County parks, and the Park Authority owns and operates them, and also bears some underlying maintenance and operational responsibility. The Planning Department prepares a master plan amendment for each new exercise area.

### ***City Of Alexandria, Virginia***

The City of Alexandria now owns nearly 20 dog exercise areas. Several more are planned, including one that will be three acres in size.

These areas were unfenced until a few years ago, but now about five are fenced; some require dogs to be leashed. The City funds and maintains dog exercise areas, although citizens participate in the overall process. Most of the parks have a grass surface. Some are all or partially bluestone while others have maintained their natural wood surface.

All new fenced parks must be at least one-half acre and contain double-gated entry areas. Individual dog-owners are liable for any claims or damages attributable to their dog.

The City's wide variety of dog exercise areas include some small ones in neighborhoods and high-density areas such as Old Town, and some along bike trails and in designated portions of larger parks. The City has sometimes used roadway loops, medians and areas that are available temporarily during construction for dog exercise areas.

### ***Washington, D.C.***

The District of Columbia is expecting to designate and develop several dog exercise areas in the near future. As the first formal step, the City Council voted to amend its leash laws to release certain park properties (to be decided later) from leash requirements so they may be used for dog exercise areas. The leash amendment must undergo public hearings before being enacted. Anticipating the amendment's enactment, the Department of Parks and Recreation is preparing recommendations on parks to contain off-leash areas, targeting those that are under-utilized and neighborhoods with many dogs but few places for dogs to run. All properties selected for dog exercise areas will be fenced.

## **WHAT KINDS OF SERIOUS PROBLEMS HAVE DOG EXERCISE AREAS EXPERIENCED?**

Most problems in official dog exercise areas have involved complaints from neighbors, or conflicts among various types of park users vying for park space. More serious complaints, although relatively uncommon, usually involve dog aggressiveness to other dogs. Injuries resulting from dog aggression towards humans are rare. In fact, localities monitoring injuries and problems in park property report that human injuries in off-leash dog exercise areas are very unusual and less than in other park areas. Further, many localities report that dog exercise areas can actually reduce some park problems, since crime has often declined in parks with these areas. In almost all cases, dog-owners are liable for any injuries or damage caused by their dog. No localities nationwide contacted by staff report any formal legal suits involving injuries in dog exercise areas.

The booming growth in dog exercise areas attests to their popularity. Dog-owners are greatly enthusiastic about these parks, and enjoy the socialization, fresh air and exercise these parks provide as much as their dogs do. For non-dog-owners, the availability of dog exercise areas has drawn dogs away from other public areas where they may be unwanted. Since the basic costs and liability to localities have been small, the primary issues regarding dog exercise areas relate to the competition among various interests for use of public lands. A secondary issue, in some cases, has been that neighboring residents felt that a dog exercise area was too close to their homes. In a number of cases, even the problem related to the competition for public space has been avoided, since the dog exercise area was located on land not well suited or available for other public use.

## **HOW ARE THEY FINANCED?**

Local groups employ a myriad of techniques to fund dog exercise areas. Local governments, individual dog-owners and dog-advocacy groups, and commercial enterprises may all contribute funds, equipment or services for these areas, and use many creative avenues to do so.

### **Local Government Financing Tools**

#### **➤ Operating and Capital Funds:**

Local operating and capital budgets are the most common local governmental means for funding dog exercise areas. Usually, local budget funds are combined with money or donations from other sources. Some localities, however, such as the City of Alexandria, Virginia, fund nearly all the capital and operating costs for these areas. However, like most localities that provide such funding, they only finance basic costs and amenities. Extra amenities, such as special equipment and enhanced landscaping, rely on private funds.

#### **➤ Dog-Related Fees:**

Increasing dog-licensing fees or enclosing solicitations for voluntary contributions with the license renewal applications are common financing techniques. A number of localities sell memberships or special registration tags required for dogs using the exercise area. Some localities, such as Gaithersburg, Maryland, only require such tags for dogs living outside the City. A few cities, such as Greenbelt, Maryland, require membership tags only available to those dogs licensed by the City. Sometimes, local staff is on the site to check for membership tags; but usually enforcement relies on staff spot checks or peer pressure and voluntary compliance.

#### **➤ Fees Charged at Dog-Exercise Areas:**

Some localities, such as Anne Arundel County, Maryland, Virginia Beach, Virginia, and many mid-western and western localities, charge entrance fees for their parks and dog exercise areas, or require purchase of an annual park pass, or a pass usable at all local exercise areas. Minneapolis, Minnesota and some other localities require the purchase of a key to enter the locked gates to the exercise areas. Anne Arundel County also charges an annual parking fee for users of its dog exercise area at Quiet Waters Park. Poway, California has three separately fenced areas in its local dog park. These fenced areas include a standard and a reserve fenced play area, as well as a fenced area that is rented for private events such as dog shows, training events, and birthday parties. A few localities charge stiff fees for violations at the exercise areas, (such as unlicensed dogs), and then apply these funds to the dog exercise area.

➤ **Special Events and Related Activities:**

Many localities, often in conjunction with local humane societies, dog-advocacy groups and others, sponsor special fund-raising events at local parks. Examples of such events are a recent Gaithersburg event consisting of costume contests and other dog-related activities, an annual K-9 carnival in Virginia Beach, Virginia, dog walks (such as those sponsored by the Montgomery County and Arlington County, Virginia humane societies), and various other canine games and contests, parades, dances and similar events. Products such as bandanas, caps and dog calendars may also be produced and sold at these events. Localities frequently host an array of activities at the opening festivities for dog exercise areas to raise funds.

**Financing by Dog-Owners and Dog-Advocacy Groups**

➤ **Funding by Sponsors of Dog Exercise Areas:**

Local sponsors (organized users of dog exercise areas) raise a substantial portion of funds needed for these areas. In some localities, such as Anne Arundel County and Bowie, Maryland, sponsors initially approached the government agency to develop a certain exercise area, and raised much of the development funds for the facility. In other localities, such as in Fairfax County, Virginia, sponsors must meet a funding formula establishing the amounts the sponsors and the locality must pay. Frequently, not all funds are required before the exercise area is initially established, but may be provided later as the area develops. Sponsors or localities may rent fencing or temporarily use another public place as an exercise area while raising funds for the permanent facility. Alternatively, the locality may agree to build the facility, and permit the sponsors to pay later. Often, as in Arlington County, sponsors do not pay for the facilities, but only provide certain amenities.

Sponsoring groups employ many fund-raising methods. These include direct donations from membership dues, other member donations and public solicitations. Sponsors may be permitted to charge entrance fees for their exercise area, and commonly, may stage fund-raising activities at their exercise area or another public place. Typical fund-raising events may include puppy parties, various dog games and shows, dog washes and flea dips, kid days, costume contests at Halloween parties and Easter parades, sales of T-shirts and other items, and a variety of parties and festival-like events.

➤ **Financing by Dog-Advocacy Groups and Private Individuals:**

Other advocacy groups, such as Arlington Dogs in Arlington County, and innumerable rescue groups, breed clubs, private humane organizations, and other dog clubs also donate money and equipment to dog exercise areas, and sponsor fund-raising activities. Sometimes, such as in Coral Springs, Florida, a private individual may donate a substantial sum or parcel of land towards the development of an exercise area.

**Commercial Funding**

➤ **Commercial Donors:**

Pet product companies and veterinary clinics, especially larger emergency clinics and dog-care services, frequently donate money, supplies or services to dog exercise areas. In return, these companies may install their name at the facility, display their name and products on flyers and promotions related to the facility, or distribute product samples at specified events or for a set time period. Besides monetary contributions, these donors may provide dog dispensers and bags and other equipment, prizes for dog contests and games, and other contributions. Sometimes, fencing and landscaping companies will also donate products and services to dog exercise areas.

➤ **Developer Contributions:**

Developers sometimes contribute a parcel of a development tract for a dog exercise area. These contributions are increasing as developers find that these areas can attract potential home-buyers.

**Collaborative Contributions**

While local governments and sponsoring groups are usually the key contributors in developing and maintaining dog exercise areas, the entire process is most often a collaboration involving many contributors and fund-raising mechanisms.

**WHAT TYPES OF PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS ARE USEFUL IN DEVELOPING AND MAINTAINING DOG EXERCISE AREAS?**

Grass-roots initiatives usually fuel the establishment of the first dog-exercise areas in a locality. Either the local government or the private sector, but usually both together, plan, develop and maintain dog exercise areas, which are nearly always located on government lands. Development and operational responsibilities are shared by a wide array of formulas.

**Planning and Locating Exercise Areas**

Dog exercise areas are often located in parks where owners already exercise their dogs off-leash (usually illegally), or at specially selected sites. Site selections are usually on an ad-hoc basis and mostly initiated by private petition, such as in Fairfax and Arlington Counties, Virginia. In other jurisdictions, local agencies propose the establishment of individual dog exercise areas.

Local agencies may propose locations and develop overall plans for the jurisdiction-wide development of dog exercise areas. Alternately, citizen advisory committees, composed of representatives of various dog advocacy groups, dog experts, local neighborhood and citizens' associations and other interested groups, may propose an overall location plan. These committees may be a joint public-private task forces, including representatives from involved local agencies and, sometimes, public officials. Members of these task forces are either appointed by local officials, such as in Minneapolis, Minnesota, or are voluntary, or both.

Sometimes, overall plans for the development of additional dog exercise areas are formulated after a number of facilities already exist. In Arlington County, a citizens' advisory committee conducted user surveys, reviewed all existing dog exercise areas, recommended standards for dog exercise areas, planned for bringing existing areas up-to-standards, and developed a strategy for developing future exercise areas. Overall reviews of exercise areas and plans for the future can also be developed by local staff. In Alexandria, Virginia, local staff recently developed a master plan for dog parks, which reviewed the status of and made recommendations concerning all existing dog parks, proposed standards for these parks, and proposed the locations for new ones.

Occasionally, the locations for dog exercise areas are determined by private donations. In Greenbelt, Maryland, a local developer donated a leftover piece of his tract for a dog exercise area. Sometimes, private developers plan dog exercise areas, which they intend to retain as a special amenity of their development, such as in Clarksburg, Maryland and Loudoun County, Virginia.

Places recommended for dog exercise areas typically undergo a community review process before actual development. However, if land is privately donated for an area, such review may not occur.

## Constructing Dog Exercise Areas

The locality, the private sector, (usually neighborhood or community groups or dog advocacy groups) or both sectors together may physically develop dog exercise areas. In a number of localities, such as Gaithersburg and Bowie, Maryland, and Arlington County, Virginia, the localities actually develop the exercise areas, although often with substantial private funding.

Many times, a locality provides the basic structure for an exercise area, such as fencing, gates, trash cans and ground cover, and the private sector provides extra amenities as they raise funds. Variations of shared public/private development and development funding occur in other localities. Fairfax County, Virginia requires a private group to raise substantial funds for an exercise area, which are matched by the County. The County and the private fund-raisers share actual development responsibilities. In Howard County, Maryland, the locality is developing a permanent dog exercise area, which will eventually be rented to a dog advocacy group. While developing the permanent area, the County has provided an enclosed baseball diamond for a temporary exercise area.

In a few localities, private groups raise nearly all of the funds for establishing an exercise area, and sometimes actually develop the facility.

## Maintaining and Operating Dog Exercise Areas

### ➤ *Sponsoring Groups:*

In some cases, such as Alexandria, Virginia, the locality may operate and maintain the local dog exercise areas with little help from dog-owners and advocacy groups other than pick-up and other minor maintenance. Usually, however, private sponsoring groups play a key role in maintaining and overseeing these areas.

Sponsoring groups are formed for individual dog exercise areas, and primarily consist of dog-owners supporting the area; members of general dog-advocacy organizations, commercial supporters and others may also be a part of the group. (Often, such as in Arlington, Virginia and Seattle, Washington, the sponsoring groups also initiated the original establishment of the exercise area.) The duties of sponsoring groups vary widely from place to place. However, the specific maintenance and oversight responsibilities of the sponsoring groups and the locality are often delineated in a memorandum of understanding between the sponsors and the locality. Typically, sponsors must perform their established duties to retain the dog exercise area. Periodic reviews or surveys may be undertaken by the locality, or the sponsors may just be warned to resolve occurring problems.

In some cases, the sponsoring groups provide most of the maintenance and oversight. Generally, however, the locality performs such primary maintenance as mowing, emptying trash cans, and repairing fences and equipment. Sponsoring groups frequently supervise daily activities at the site, ensuring that users obey rules, pick up after and properly supervise their dogs. Sponsors also report serious behavioral or other safety problems to the local authorities, and notify the locality of major maintenance needs. Often, such as in Arlington County, the sponsors act as the initial negotiators for resolving disputes involving the exercise area. Depending on the locality, sponsors may enforce local government regulations for dog exercise areas, or determine some or all of their own rules. Sponsors frequently schedule events for the exercise area, and determine and/or finance some or all of their amenities. In a few places, such as Greenbelt, Maryland, sponsors limit the use of their exercise areas to their own members.

➤ *Umbrella Groups:*

Umbrella groups may also help oversee and develop policy for dog exercise areas. These groups operate on a jurisdiction-wide basis. They make or recommend decisions and policy concerning the general operation and sometimes the development of exercise areas, and address problems that cannot be resolved by the individual sponsoring groups. Umbrella organizations sometimes raise funds and handle public relations and publicity matters for the exercise areas as a group

Frequently, local officials appoint the members of umbrella groups, or some or all of the members may be volunteers. Often, as in Gaithersburg, and Fairfax County, the group is a public-private task force; but sometimes all members are from the private sector. Members of umbrella groups typically include dog experts such as veterinarians and other dog specialists, and representatives of individual sponsoring groups, dog-advocacy groups, community associations and other interested parties. Representatives of appropriate local agencies may also belong to the group. Usually, these groups welcome general citizen involvement.

➤ *Collaborative Management:*

Sometimes a collaboration of public and private sector individuals and groups help maintain an exercise area. In these cases, besides the usual public and citizen sponsors, corporations and other volunteer organizations may perform certain maintenance and operational functions. In Virginia Beach, Virginia, for instance, local pet supply stores provided waste disposal bags and dispensers, Boy Scouts installed some park equipment, and a landscaping company provided some landscaping. In Coral Springs, Florida, several commercial enterprises provide supplies and amenities for the exercise area. Often, a host of public and private groups and individuals will be involved in some aspect of planning, locating, developing and operating an exercise area.

## **WHAT'S BEING PROPOSED FOR DOG EXERCISE AREAS WITHIN MONTGOMERY COUNTY'S PARK SYSTEM?**

The adopted Capital Improvements Program for FY03-08 provides for dog exercise areas as follows:

1. \$20,000 in Facility Planning: Non-local PDF 958776 for facility planning for non-local park sites, e.g. the Black Hill Regional Park or Bonifant Landfill site. The PDF states that in FY 02 the Department will "facility plan for a dog park at a site to be determined during studies to be concluded in FY 02."
2. \$97,000 in Minor New Construction: Local PDF 998799 in FY03 to be distributed between planning, design, and construction of dog parks along with other minor new construction projects like the conversion of unused tennis courts to roller hockey – all at sites yet to be determined; and \$120,000 appropriation in FY 04 to be spent over two years (\$60,000 in FY 04 and \$60,000 in FY 05) to be distributed between the same two purposes.

***Staff of the Department of Park and Planning is proposing that dog exercise areas be established by using one or a combination of the following strategies to supplement public funding for their development and on-going maintenance.***

- (1) sponsorship groups with retail partners;***
- (2) sponsorship by local community groups;***
- (3) private corporate donors in exchange for facility advertisement; or***
- (4) a combination of one or more of the alternative funding/sponsorship groups listed above.***

***Staff is proposing the following criteria for choosing locations for dog exercise areas within the public parkland system:***

- At least one-half acre in size; perhaps an area large enough to develop two sections, allowing for use of one while maintaining the other; areas as small as one-quarter acre may be developed for dogs under one year or under 25 pounds;
- Healthy soils with good drainage, some large shade trees or an open shelter;
- A site that is assessed for environmental impact;
- A site that is generally compatible with existing uses in that park;
- Safe distance from roadways;
- Accessible parking area with safe passageway between parking area and dog park
- At least 100 feet from residential property lines or at least 50 feet if buffered by thick evergreens or other appropriate screening;
- A clean drinking water source for dogs (desirable but not mandatory);
- Easy accessibility for trash removal and other park maintenance tasks;.
- If designed for neighborhood use, accessibility (within walking or short driving distance) to residential areas;

***\*While the above criteria are for the optimal situation and sites meeting these criteria are preferred, some sites may not be able to meet all criteria***

***Staff identified nine (9) sites, located at varied geographic locations and varying in size. It is recommended that, through standard agreements with sponsoring Dog Owner Groups or other organizations, selected dog exercise areas would be constructed in accordance with proposed facility development guidelines. Oversight of the dog exercise areas will be the joint responsibility of the sponsoring organization, the users, park management and the Maryland-National Capital Park Police.***

***Staff recommends the following guidelines for developing and maintaining dog exercise areas:***

- All dog exercise areas must have dog owner group (DOG), which will serve as a partner for facility development, maintenance and management, and provide volunteers on a daily basis to supervise operations and handle complaints.

- Each DOG will be responsible for the daily maintenance and rule enforcement governing the operation of the park pursuant to a contract with the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission.
- A DOG volunteer will report violations of regulations to the Park Police.

## **WHAT THE PROCESS FOR BECOMING AND OPERATING A DOG OWNER GROUP (DOG)?**

Staff anticipates several local dog owners organizing themselves to form a DOG. Each group would be required have at least 20 dog owners with licensed dogs willing to abide by the standard agreement with the Commission.

The staff would work with the DOG and conduct a facility plan and preliminary design for the proposed facility, subject to the site selection and facility development guidelines. The staff and the DOG would then proceed to present the proposed facility to the Planning Board for both site and construction approval. Each DOG would be encouraged to work with their local communities in the development of their proposal for a dog exercise facility.

### ***Dog Owner Group Requirements & Responsibilities-***

Each dog owner group (DOG) would be required to:

1. Have a membership of at least 20 dog owners willing to abide by the standard DOG agreement. A roster of all members shall be provided to the Commission and updated annually;
2. All dogs must be licensed and photographed for identification and data collection purposes;
3. There must be at least 3 individuals serving as the key leaders of the DOG. Each of these individuals shall agree to complete special Park Police training in conflict resolution and park regulation enforcement protocols and serve as the liaison between the DOG, Park Manager and Park Police in the management and operations of the facility;
4. All DOG members shall commit themselves to encouraging all patrons of the facility to abide by the posted rules and regulations;
5. All DOG members will agree to work with the park manager in order to address operational problems and/or improve the operations of the facility.

## **WHAT TYPES OF AMENITIES WOULD THESE PARKS REQUIRE?**

### ***Staff recommends that, at a minimum, dog exercise areas must include:***

- A fence, if the dog park is not separated from outside areas by an existing barrier, such as steep slope, etc. If provided, the fence should be at least 6 feet tall, and constructed so that dogs cannot escape through or under the fence.
- A double-gated entrance within fenced areas, with enough space between gates for dogs and handlers to wait while others are entering and leaving.

- Where necessary, screening trees planted outside of a perimeter fence.
- Grass, sand, mulch, bluestone, pea gravel, or other surface (not dirt) or combination of other suitable surfaces. Woodlands, and some other natural surfaces may be suitable if environmental and other conditions permit. If grass is used, blue gravel or similar material may be used to reinforce the entry areas and other areas of very active use.
- Vegetative buffers and stormwater management techniques to provide suitable drainage
- Durable, easy to empty, large trash cans with lids and replaceable liners;
- Bag Dispensers for dog waste disposal;
- A visible sign posting rules at park entry;
- Provisions to meet A.D.A. accessibility requirements.

*Note: While desirable, some of these amenities may be infeasible due to locational, financial, or maintenance constraints.*

***Staff recommends that the following amenities, if desired, should be at the expense of participating users or a sponsoring organization:***

- Bench(es) for handlers
- Kiosk with bulletin board for notices
- A picnic table
- Small, open shade/rain shelter
- Telephone
- Balls and/or other play equipment suitable for dog exercise areas (probably dependent on donations and pursuant to a contract with the donor regarding maintenance and similar matters)
- Lights (may be from adjacent athletic fields or courts)

## **WHAT WOULD THE FACILITY DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE COSTS BE?**

***Staff of the Northern and Southern Regions responsible for park maintenance estimate the following costs associated with developing, outfitting and maintaining an acre size dog exercise area:***

### **Set-up Costs**

|   |                   |
|---|-------------------|
| Standard 6-foot high chain link fence<br>2 types@ \$12/\$15 per linear foot (840 LF of fence) | \$10,080/\$12,600 |
| Trash cans  | \$14.00 each      |
| Trash can lids  | \$45.50 each      |
| Mutt Mitt (Park Green )Dispenser  | \$69.50 each      |
| Mutt Mitts (800 mitts per carton)<br>1-10 cartons   | \$54.50 each      |

|                |              |
|----------------|--------------|
| 11 or more     | \$49.75 each |
| 12 x 18" signs | \$40 each    |

**Total Set-up Costs** **\$12,818.75**

**Annual Labor Maintenance Costs per 1 Acre Dog Exercise Area**

*(Labor time and costs will vary with the size of the dog exercise area and the location – within a developed park area or in a stand alone area – and the current maintenance standards for the area)*

|  |        |
|--|--------|
| Mowing and trimming, as needed, and parking area, once per 7 days for 32 weeks<br>(2 workers for 1 hour @\$20 per hour)<br><i>Note: some sites may not require mowing.</i> | \$ 640 |
|--|--------|

|  |        |
|--|--------|
| Trash removal, trash bag and mutt mitt replacement,<br>litter patrol, 2 times per week for 52 weeks<br>(2 workers for 1/2 hour @\$10 per 1/2 hour) | \$1040 |
|--|--------|

|   |        |
|---|--------|
| Annual routine fence and sign repair<br>(2 workers for 6 hours @ \$20 per hour) | \$ 120 |
|---|--------|

|  |        |
|--|--------|
| Annual over-seeding and fertilizing area<br>(4 workers for 96 hours @ \$20 per hour) | \$1920 |
|--|--------|

|   |        |
|---|--------|
| Material<br>(Grass seed, fertilizer and lime) | \$ 225 |
|---|--------|

|   |               |
|---|---------------|
| <b>Annual Labor Maintenance (with mowing and seeding)</b> | <b>\$3945</b> |
| <b>Annual Labor Maintenance (without mowing/seeding)</b>  | <b>\$1160</b> |

**Other Cost Considerations**

|  |        |
|--|--------|
| 1 Acre Sod: 4840 sq. yards @ \$1.25 per yard                                   | \$6050 |
| Site preparation and installation<br>(4 workers for 128 hours @ \$20 per hour) | \$2560 |

|   |        |
|---|--------|
| 1 Acre Mulch: a low-cost alternative that can be produced in-house            | \$ 0   |
| Site preparation and installation<br>( 2 workers for 8 hours @ \$20 per hour) | \$ 320 |

**Total** **\$8930**

|   |        |
|---|--------|
| 1 Acre Gravel: 6" CR-6 1210 ton @ \$5.90                                      | \$7139 |
| 3" Stone dust 604 ton @ \$7.20  | \$4349 |
| Site preparation and installation<br>(4 workers for 128 hours @\$20 per hour) | \$ 640 |

**Total** **\$12,127**

## WHAT LOCATIONS ARE BEING CONSIDERED?

*Staff has identified 9 sites, requiring further analysis and study, which could serve as possible candidates. These sites were identified through a combination of site selection guidelines, staff and public suggestions, population served and/or residential density, and geographic location within the County. The sites are identified for illustrative purposes only. Each site will require the support of a Dog Owner Group and a facility planning effort in order to become a reality:*

### Black Hill Regional Park—20030 Lake Ridge Dr., Boyds

#### ➤ *Site Description:*

The proposed site is just north of the gravel boat parking area on Black Hill Road for the boat ramp on the middle finger of Little Seneca Lake. The nature campfire ring is just west and south of the site, and the park police headquarters area is southwest of Black Hill Road. The sizable site includes a meadow on a knoll (with various underbrush), which extends across a utility right-of-way, and then farther eastwards and somewhat downhill towards the lake. This surrounding area is covered with tall grass as well as some clumps of small trees and bushes. The remainder of the park surrounds the site on all sides. An existing trail links with the general site area.

#### ➤ *Site Advantages*

- The meadow, lake, and adjacent woodlands provide an attractive, natural setting for a dog exercise area.
- The large site can provide a reserve exercise area as well as a small dog area, and will serve the Germantown and Clarksburg areas.
- The site is well buffered from outside areas; the site is also removed from the remainder of park, and will not conflict with other park activities.
- Parking is adjacent to the site, and trails are also nearby.

#### ➤ *Site Requirements*

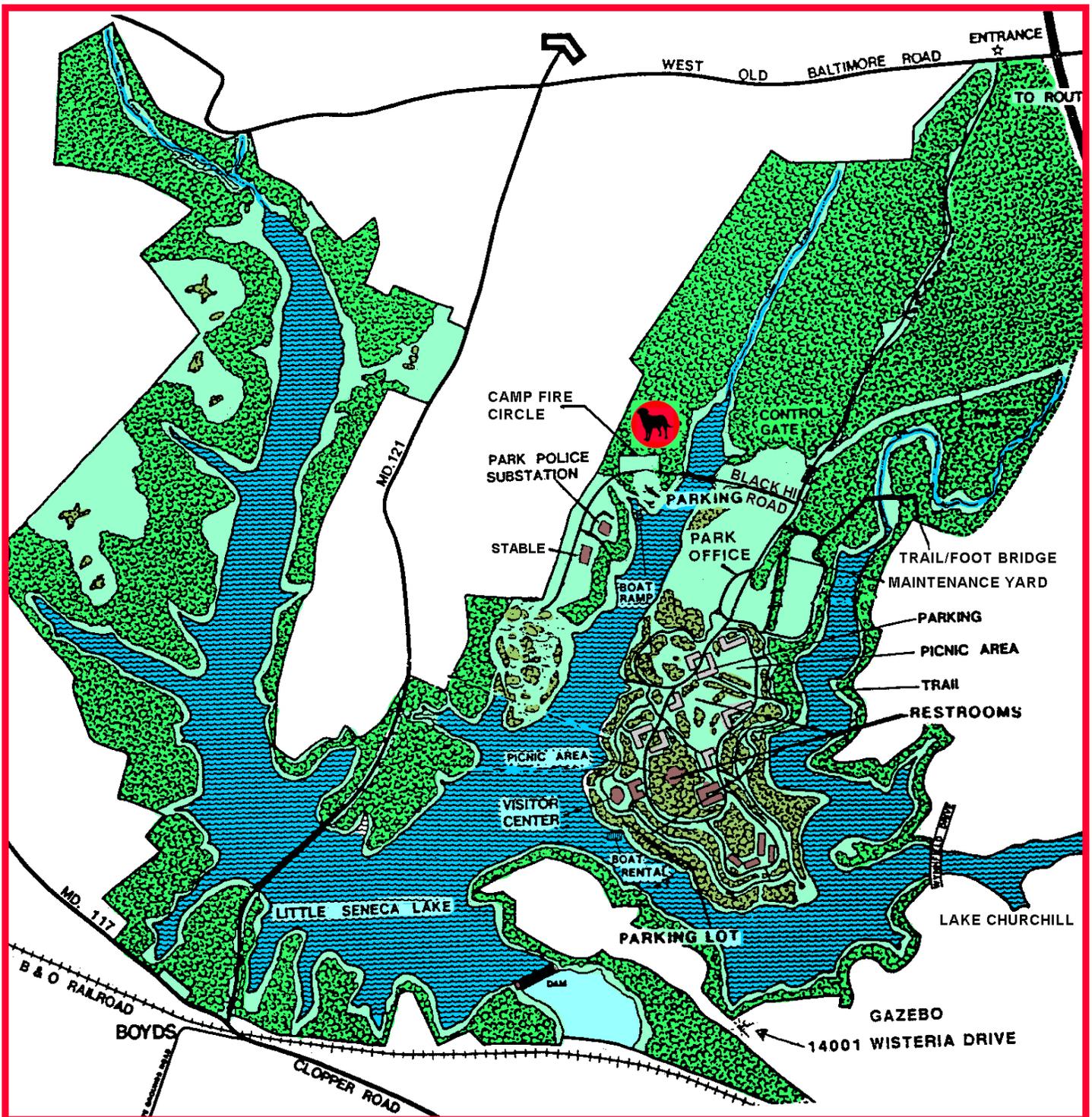
- Fencing
- Double-gated entrances
- Mitt dispensers or container for bags
- Signage
- Posted rules
- Trash cans
- Removal of some of the existing brush
- Site design so that fences will not be located in utility r-o-w
- Water must be brought to the site from near-by locations since potential water hook-ups are not available on-site
- Possibly the planting of some trees
- Sufficient buffer from the campfire ring

#### ➤ *Optional Improvements*

- Fencing for the puppy or small-dog play areas

# BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK

20030 LAKE RIDGE DRIVE, BOYDS



**Bonifant Landfill site (part of the Northwest Branch Recreation Park  
(Bonifant Road just east of the National Capital Trolley Car Museum.)**

➤ *Site Description:*

Most of this former sludge disposal site is now a large, grassy meadow. The site is surrounded on three sides by the Northwest Branch Recreation Park (where the National Capital Trolley Museum is located). The Naples Manor single-family detached housing development is to the east on Bonifant Road. Other residential development and the Northwest Branch Golf Course are further from the proposed site. This site is linked with Bonifant Road by an asphalt drive. Grass and other wild plants cover much of the site, and trees are along its northern, eastern and southern borders. A graveled area is at the west end of the site, and two equipment sheds and a water spigot are on park property on the other side of the southern fence section.

➤ *Site Advantages:*

- Site is convenient to large residential areas
- Site is well-buffered by trees and parkland from outside areas, and has no nearby conflicting uses
- Site is large, with an interesting mix of vegetation, including trees for shade
- Graveled areas can be used for parking or for dog-running

➤ *Site Requirements*

- Fencing
- Double-gated entrances
- Filling of small holes and removal of scattered rubbish (such as small boards)
- Mitt dispensers
- Signage
- Posted rules
- Trash cans
- Grass mowing and weed removal in some sections

➤ *Optional Improvements:*

- Access to water spigot on other side of fence, or extension of water-line to site
- Possibly, some parking improvements.



**Cabin John Regional Park—7400 Tuckerman La., Rockville**  
**(adjacent to the handball/volleyball site)**

➤ *Site Description:*

The proposed site is a grassy area between the volleyball courts and the PeeWee soccer field. The area is just south of the paved parking lot. A few trees buffer the parking lot and large evergreens buffer the adjacent community. High-rise and other multi-family residential units in the Lakeview area of Bethesda are south of the site.. A water fountain and bench are located near the parking lot. This site is bordered by the park on three sides.

➤ *Site Advantages:*

- The site offers a large grassy area for dog play and exercise
- The surrounding trees provide shade and an attractive surrounding
- The area is much needed to serve the Bethesda and surrounding community
- The area is very convenient to the adjacent multi-family community
- A water fountain and bench are on the site, and parking is adjacent to the facility

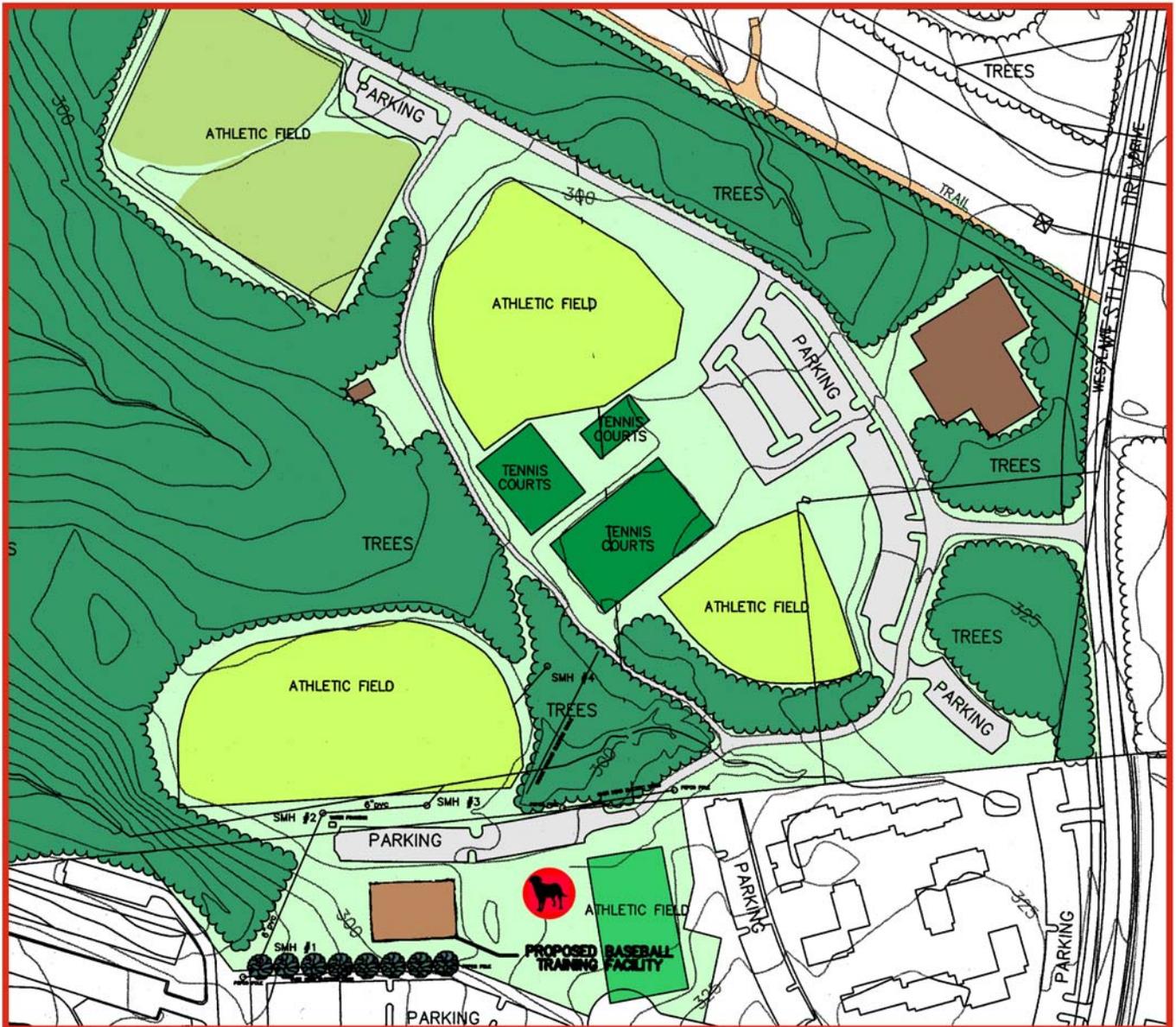
➤ *Site Requirements*

- Fencing
- Double-gated entrances
- Mitt dispensers or containers for waste bags
- Signage
- Posted rules
- Trash cans

*\*Note: The agency is in the process of negotiating with the Potomac Electric Power Company to use a larger parcel along PEPCO's transmission lines adjacent to softball fields #3 and #4 for a dog exercise area, but does not yet know the outcome of these discussions.*

# CABIN JOHN REGIONAL PARK

7400 TUCKERMAN LANE, ROCKVILLE



Centerway Local Park—9551 Centerway Road, Gaithersburg area

➤ *Site Description*

This park is in Montgomery Village beside the Whetstone Elementary School. Townhouses are on three sides of the park, and single-family detached houses face the Park across Centerway Road. The northwest and northeast corners of Centerway Local Park connect with Cabin Branch Stream Valley Park. Together, these two parks offer sites for a general exercise area and a “puppy play area.” The general exercise area would be northeast of the ball fields and mostly within Cabin Branch Stream Valley Park. This one-acre location is gently sloping land with tall grasses and other wild plants, small shrubs, and small trees. A small puppy area could either be adjacent to the larger area or along the eastern asphalt path leading from the parking lot to the stream valley park. This latter site is a gently sloping grassy strip.

➤ *Site Advantages:*

- This local park and stream valley park provide a large potential area for a dog-park
- With two very different sites for dog exercise areas, this park would meet the needs of many different users
- The site is in the midst of a large amount of residential development, and would serve a substantial population
- Portions of the park are already used as illegal off-leash dog exercise areas

➤ *Site Requirements*

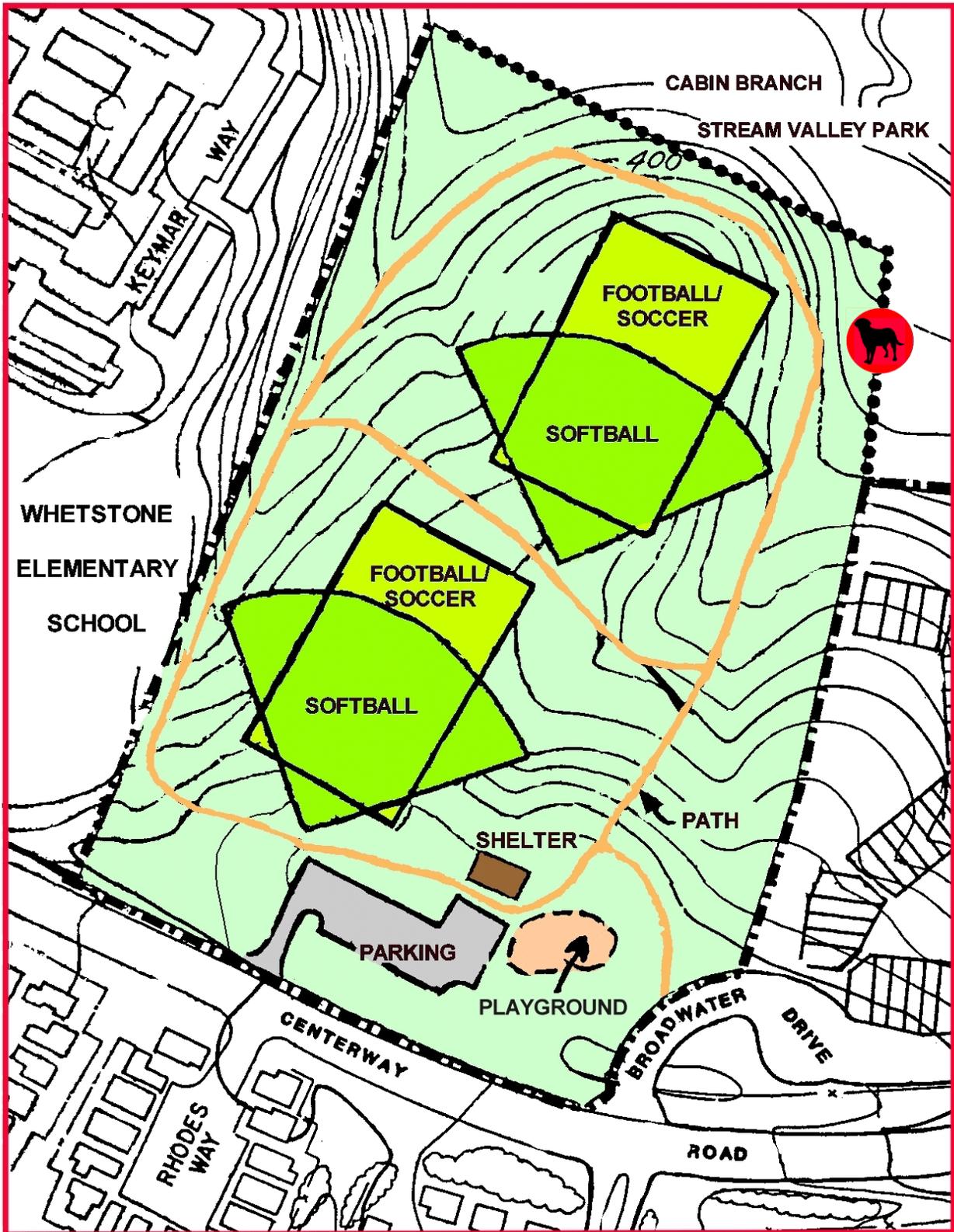
- Fencing
- Double-gated entrances
- Thistle removal
- Vegetative buffers to protective stream quality
- Mitt dispensers
- Signage
- Posted rules
- Trash cans

➤ *Optional Improvements*

- Water fountain

# CENTERWAY LOCAL PARK

9551 CENTERWAY ROAD, GAITHERSBURG



*Martin Luther King, Jr. Recreation Park—1100 Jackson RD., White Oak*

➤ *Site Description:*

This flat grassy area is just northeast of Jackson Road and northwest of the two connected parking lots between Jackson Road and southwest of Martin L. King Lake. The swim center is just southwest of the site. A hiker- biker path and exercise path runs north of the area. The users of the dog exercise area could park in the existing lots and would benefit from the lighting for Jackson Road and the swim-center. MLK Recreational Park connects with Paint Branch Stream Valley Park and is adjacent to the East Springbrook and Springbrook Village subdivisions.

➤ *Site Advantages:*

- The flat grassy area is well suited for dog exercise
- The site is well buffered from surrounding uses
- The site is well-situated to serve the Silver Spring area
- Existing parking and ambient lighting will serve the site

➤ *Site Requirements:*

- Fencing
- Double-gated entrance
- Mitt dispensers or containers for waste bags
- Signage
- Posted rules
- Trash cans

➤ *Optional Improvements*

- Provide a water fountain
- Plant some trees

# MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. RECREATIONAL PARK

1100 JACKSON ROAD, WHITE OAK



**Olney Manor Recreational Park—16601 Georgia Ave., Olney**

➤ *Site Description:*

This site is a grassy area beyond the outfield of a softball field and beside a stormwater management pond; the site is south of the aquatic center parking area. Several large shade and evergreen trees are located along the outfield fence for the softball field. The site slopes gradually to the south. The fence and lighting for the softball diamond could also serve the dog exercise area, and parking is available at several small lots near the site.

➤ *Site Advantages:*

- The site is convenient to the Olney area, but buffered from residential areas
- The site contains a flat grassy area for play as well as trees for shade
- Fencing and lighting for the softball field can also serve the dog exercise area
- Parking is available at several nearby small lots

➤ *Site Requirements:*

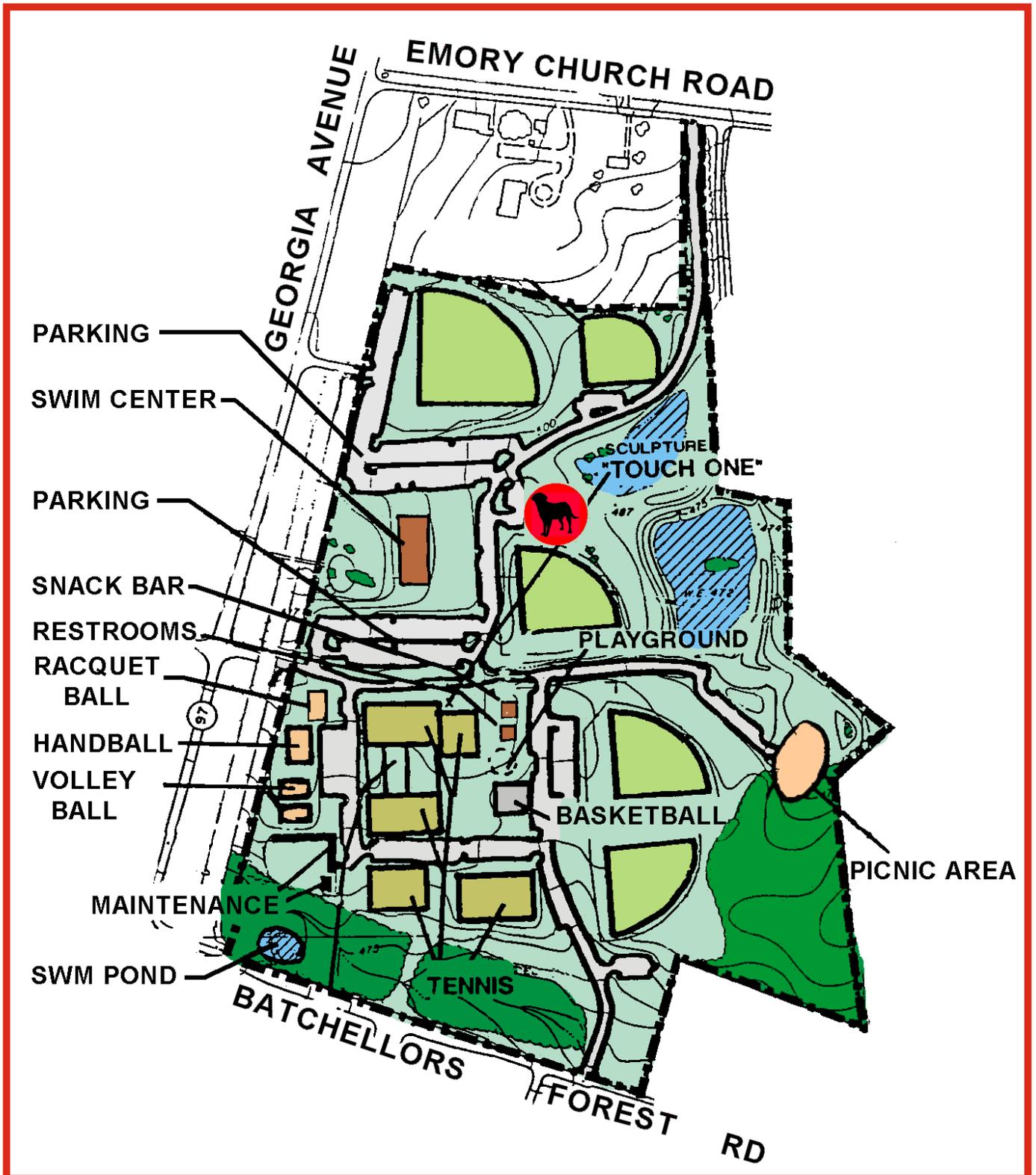
- Fencing for unfenced areas
- Double-gated entrances
- Mitt dispensers or containers for waste bags
- Signage
- Posted rules
- Trash cans

➤ *Optional Improvements:*

- Water fountain

# OLNEY MANOR RECREATIONAL PARK

16601 GEORGIA AVENUE, OLNEY



**Ridge Road Recreational Park—Frederick Rd., Brink Rd., and Father Hurley Blvd., Germantown**

➤ *Site Description:*

The proposed sites are in a gasoline right-of-way. The primary and larger site is located between the two stormwater management ponds north of the soccer field in the northwest section of Ridge Road Recreational Park. The site is a long, grassy rectangle that is separated by a slight hill on its south side and various taller vegetation on its northern side from the two ponds. Frederick Road is just west of the site and an internal connecting road and two parking lots are to its east. A large triangular island between the two parking lots that is over another section of the gas pipeline could serve as an exercise area for puppies and small dogs. This park is bordered by major roads on three sides.

➤ *Site Advantages:*

- The site offers a flat grassy area for dog play and exercise, and a nearby parking triangle will serve puppies and small dogs
- The site is buffered by park uses on three sides
- Parking is adjacent to the site
- The area would serve a heavily populated area of Germantown

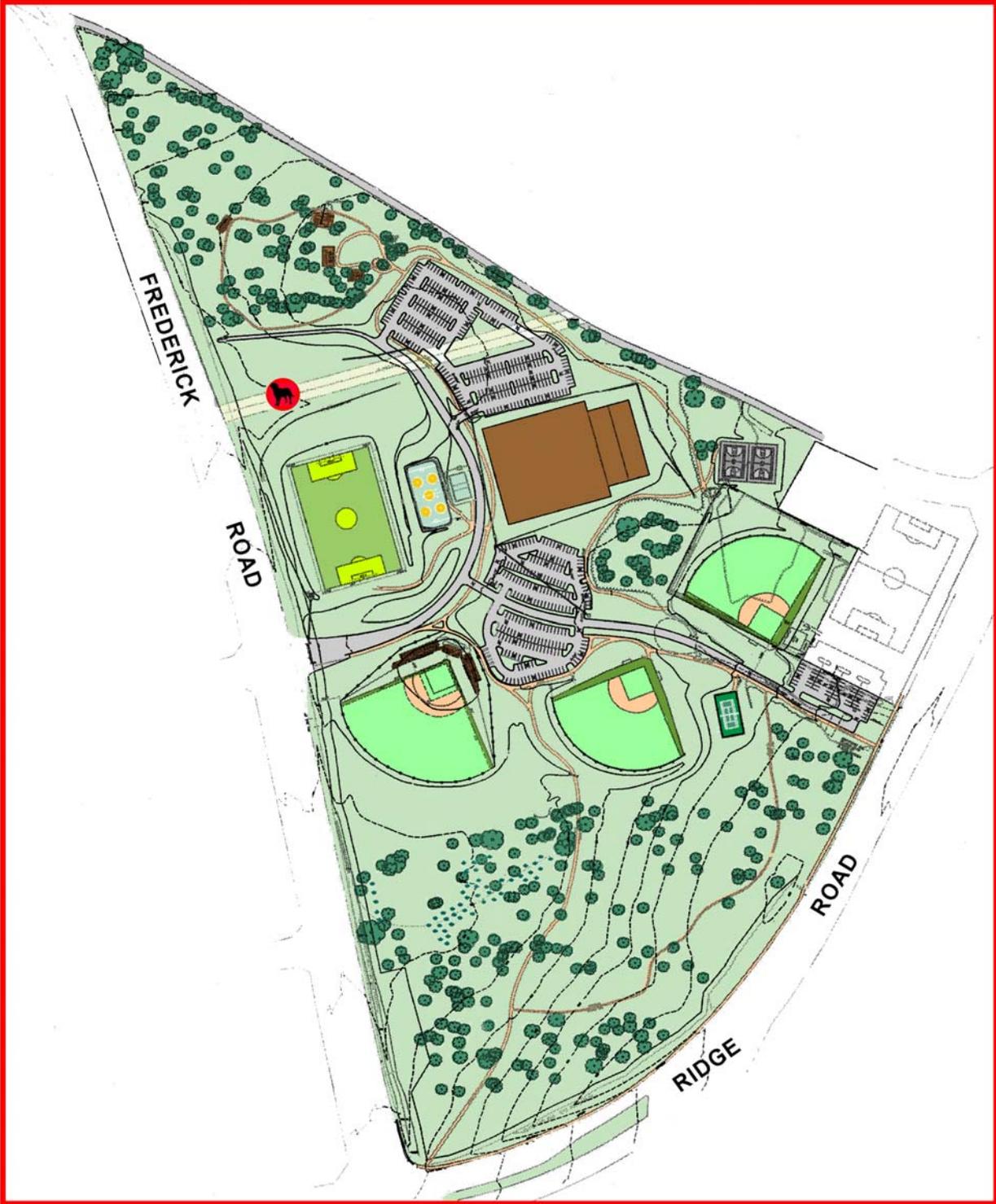
➤ *Site Requirements*

- Fencing
- Double-gated entrances
- Mitt dispensers or containers for waste bags
- Signage
- Posted rules
- Trash cans
- 12-foot gates on east and west sides over gas lines for gas company vehicular entrances
- Removal of steel barrier sections along roads for user entryway
- Sufficient setback from Frederick Rd.
- Probably, as an additional safety feature, an extension of some type of fencing on either side of the exercise facility alongside Frederick Rd.

*\*Note: The agency has asked Columbia Gas Transmission Corporation for permission to use their right-of-way for these dog exercise areas, and is waiting for their final answer.*

# RIDGE ROAD RECREATIONAL PARK

21155 FREDERICK ROAD, GERMANTOWN



**Water's Landing Local Park—13701 Waters Landing Drive, Germantown**

➤ ***Site Description:***

This park is in the midst of the large, residential Churchill Town sector development, which includes townhouses, single-family detached homes and apartments in the northern portion of Germantown. The potential dog exercise area site is about 400 feet south of the park entrance, parking lot and soccer field. A large gazebo with a water fountain is central in the park. An asphalt path leads from the parking lot to the site, and natural paths connect the site with adjacent residential development. The site is a large plateau bordered by thick brush and a small wooded area. Although the site was originally intended as a soccer/football field, it has instead been used for jogging and other unofficial uses

➤ ***Site Advantages***

- The site is in the midst of a sizable residential area with a substantial number of townhouses and apartments, and thus will serve many users
- An existing path connects the site with much of the adjacent residential development
- The field is underutilized
- The area is an attractive, grassy area with a large, potential running area
- The site is already illegally used as an off-leash dog exercise area

➤ ***Site Requirements***

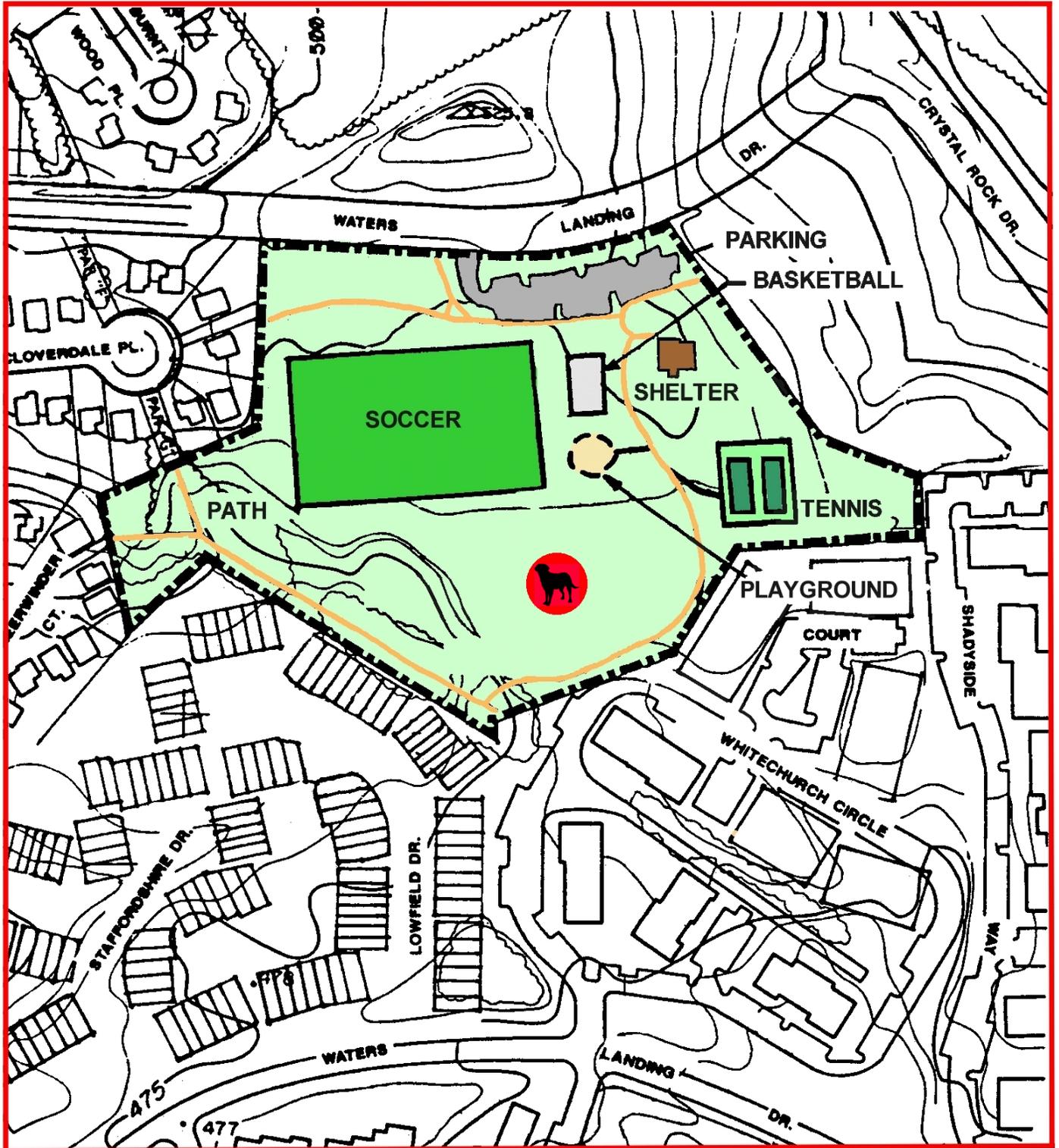
- Fencing
- Double-gated entrances
- Screening trees, planted outside the perimeter fence, as buffer to homes located on the south side of the proposed site
- Mitt dispensers
- Signage
- Posted rules
- Trash cans

➤ ***Optional Improvements:***

- More shade trees and possibly an open shelter
- Water fountain in the dog area site (so that dogs will not use the gazebo fountain)
- Alteration and extension of path so it leads to the field from the street, but bypasses other uses

# WATERS LANDING LOCAL PARK

13701 WATERS LANDING DRIVE, GERMANTOWN



***Wheaton Regional Park—Orebaugh Avenue entrance, Wheaton  
(Frank Rubini Athletic Complex area)***

➤ *Site Description:*

The proposed site is behind and south of the tennis bubble at Wheaton Regional Park. The site is a flat grassy area between the backside of the bubble and some outside courts. An unoccupied yellow house owned by the Commission marks the southern boundary of the site; and several single-family residences, which front on Arcola Avenue, are further south of the yellow house. Some large evergreens, shade trees and ornamental trees scattered throughout the site and along its borders serve an natural screening from the adjacent housing. A wooded area is east of the site.

➤ *Site Advantages:*

- The site is an attractive flat grassy area with trees and would be a pleasant dog exercise area
- Wheaton Regional Park already serves many dog-walkers in the area
- The lights and parking from the tennis bubble could serve the site
- The fencing from the tennis bubble could also serve the dog exercise area
- Water may be available from the existing park house

➤ *Site Requirements*

- Remaining fencing
- Double-gated entrances
- Mitt dispensers or containers for waste bags
- Signage
- Posted rules
- Trash cans
- Additional screening on the south side to provide more buffering for the several houses along Arcola Avenue
- An appropriate pedestrian path from the parking lot at the tennis bubble



## WHAT RULES WILL GOVERN THE USE OF DOG EXERCISE AREAS?

### *Proposed Rules for All Dog Exercise Areas.*

(Note: final rules must be approved by the Maryland–National Capital Park and Planning Commission)

- Dogs must display current license and rabies vaccination tags.
- Dogs must be over 4 months old, unless the facility provides a separate area or specific times of operation for this age group.
- Dog-handlers must leash their dogs when outside the dog park, and must be in possession of a leash at all times when inside the park.
- Dog handlers must be in control of and in visual contact with their dogs at all times.
- No pet handlers under age 13 (or other specified age).
- Parents must be in control of their children.
- No more than 3 dogs per handler.
- Dog handlers must immediately remove their dogs' feces, and repair any holes created by their dogs.
- No smoking or eating by dog handlers.
- No feeding dogs (except for dog treats).
- No aggressive dog behavior.
- No female dogs in heat are allowed admittance.
- Hours of dog exercise area are the same as the hours for the remainder of the park, except November through March when hours for this facility could be extended to one hour beyond sunset.
- Dog owners are liable for any injuries or damage caused by their dogs.
- No professional dog training unless sponsored by or approved by the Humane Society, Department of Park and Planning, or Montgomery County.
- No pet grooming.
- There will be a limit on the number of dogs allowed in park at any one time.
- No glass or metal containers
- Users of the dog park do so at their own risk.
- *Additional rules or amendments may be jointly developed, as needed, and approved by the Dog Owners Group and the Director of Parks.*

## HOW CAN THE PUBLIC GET INVOLVED?

The Department of Park and Planning is interested in your comments on the subject of placing six dog exercise areas in certain areas of the county. Using the criteria proposed for selecting sites, perhaps there are suitable areas within parks near you that you'd like to suggest for consideration. Let us know what you think of this issue by:

- *Contacting Terry Brooks, Special Projects Coordinator, 301-495-2477, for more information*
- *E-mailing your comments to [www.mc-mncppc.org](http://www.mc-mncppc.org). Click on "mcp-feedback," cc: Terry Brooks*
- *Writing to: Arthur Holmes, Jr., Chairman, Montgomery County Planning Board, 8787 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring, MD 20910.*
- *Attending the Montgomery County Planning Board's public hearing: Thursday, June 27, (the evening session begins at 7:30 p.m.)*

## APPENDIX A

### PUBLIC RESPONSE TO FEBRUARY 2002 STAFF DRAFT ON DOG EXERCISE AREAS IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY PARKS

On February 12, 2002, agency staff presented a staff draft proposal for Dog Exercise Areas in Montgomery County Parks to nearly 200 persons at the Earle B. Woods Middle School in Rockville. Additionally, the draft copy has been on the agency's Internet site, and staff established a special web-site mailing address for comment on the dog exercise areas. The agency has received several hundred responses to the draft proposal by mail, e-mail, and phone. Also, about 50 dog-owners registered their support for the proposal through the agency's participation in the Montgomery County Humane Society's "Paws in the Park" fundraiser at Wheaton Regional Park on April 28, 2002.

#### *General Results of Outreach*

As a result of the public outreach, over 200 persons (nearly 150 who commented at the forum or who wrote, called, or e-mailed the agency, and the remainder who registered at "Paws in the Park") have indicated support for the dog exercise areas. Also, petitions and large numbers of comments have been received opposing the proposed dog exercise areas at Aberdeen Local Park and Evans Parkway Neighborhood Park. Only 16 individuals opposed the dog exercise areas altogether. Due to public comment, staff deleted the proposed exercise areas at Aberdeen and Evans Parkway, and proposes several new areas. Also, as a result of the public forum, the Montgomery County Dog-Owner Group, the Lower County Dog-Owner Group, a dog-owner group forming in Kensington, and possibly others, have formed and are meeting to gather members and raise funds for the dog exercise areas.

#### Positive Response to Overall Proposal

Many of the dog-owners supporting the proposal indicated they already exercised their dog in our parks, regularly meeting with a group of other dog-owners. They indicated they enjoyed the chance to socialize with others while their dogs exercised; and would like a fenced area so that their dogs could safely exercise off-leash. Some relayed that they used the dog exercise area in the City of Gaithersburg although it was inconvenient, and that additional areas, including ones closer to their homes, were needed. Some noted that they did not own dogs but planned to, and wanted a place for their exercise; others indicated that they did not have a dog since they did not have a place to exercise. A number of residents who opposed the exercise areas at Aberdeen or Evans Parkway, supported the concept of dog exercise areas at other locations.

A number of individuals indicated that they were responsible dog-owners who picked up after their pets, and would happily join dog-owner groups and contribute to their financing and operation. Others stated that they were taxpayers and felt that their park requests should be as important as other County residents'. They noted that they paid for ballfields and other park facilities, many with fences around them, that they did not use. They felt their dogs were their family members and that taking their dogs to the park was their favorite or one of their favorite park activities. They believed the County should accommodate these uses as much as other park activities. Many felt the County should pay for or else share in the financing of these facilities.

Many stressed the benefits of the exercise areas to the dogs. They indicated that their dogs were much happier and better behaved when they were well exercised. A representative from the Humane Society also emphasized a dog's benefits from proper exercise. She noted many dogs were given to the Humane Society because they were poorly exercised and thus behaved badly, and their owners could not

handle them. She relayed the Humane Society's experience that exercise areas lead to better-exercised and better-behaved dogs, and thus save some of the dogs' lives. One e-mail to our agency relayed that a dog-owner at the Gaithersburg dog run was about to give his unmanageable dog to a shelter. However, he started bringing his dog to the dog run, and his dog's behavior improved so remarkably, that he kept the dog.

### ***Comments on Individual Dog-Exercise Areas***

#### *Aberdeen and Evan's Parkway Local Parks:*

The Eastern Area Recreation Board and the Forest Grove Citizens' Association supported an exercise area at Evans Parkway. However, neighbors overwhelmingly opposed the exercise areas at Aberdeen and Evan's Parkway Local Parks, and submitted petitions stating their opposition. Primarily, residents believed the areas are too close to their homes, and that the parks have no extra space for the exercise areas. They feared increased traffic and parking problems if the dog exercise areas were developed, and that the dogs and their owners would disturb their peace and quiet. A number of residents noted that many dogs already exercised off-leash illegally in these parks, and feared that the exercise areas would result in dog wastes left indiscriminately on their property and all over the park, and danger to humans. Several individuals also favored each of these areas.

#### *Public Supports Remaining Exercise Areas:*

The public generally supported the other 4 proposed exercise areas. Fourteen residents especially favored the Water's Landing Local Park, and a number of others stood in support of the facility at the February public forum. (Several people opposed the facility.) A spokesperson stated that a group already meets there daily to exercise their dogs. Twelve persons indicated their support for a facility at Centerway Local Park, and several opposed it. Eleven residents, as well as the Eastern County Recreation Board supported the Bonifant area. Many supporting dog-owners noted that they already exercised their dogs at that location. The Montgomery County Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society opposed the Bonifant site because birdwatchers enjoy watching several bird species in that general area. (However, a site map submitted with the Society's letter, shows that the birdwatching area is generally north and west of the proposed exercise area.) Seven residents as well as the Eastern County Recreation Board support the Parklawn Camping Area, and some indicated they already exercised their dogs in this area.

### ***Other Comments***

#### **Dog Exercise Areas Recommended for Regional Parks and Down-County Areas**

Many people, commenting at the public forum and afterwards, thought dog exercise areas should be in regional and other large County parks, and many noted the need in down-County areas. Of the regional and larger parks, nine persons recommended Wheaton Regional Park, and several recommended Cabin John Regional Park, various portions of Rock Creek Stream Valley Park (especially in the Silver Spring area around Beach Dr. and Meadowbrook Local Park), and Sligo Stream Valley Park. Other suggestions were Lake Frank and Lake Needwood (both at Rock Creek Regional Park), Black Hill Regional Park, South Germantown, Martin L. King and Fairland Recreational Parks. Dog-owners requesting down-County locations particularly noted the Silver Spring, Takoma Park, Bethesda-Chevy Chase, and Kensington areas.

#### *Home Locations of Commenting Dog-Owners:*

Naturally, dog-owners wanted the exercise areas close to home. About two-thirds of the dog-owners commenting to the agency or registering at the "Paws in the Park" fund-raiser indicated their home location. Of those giving their general address, 50 per cent lived in the down-County area (including 38

percent in Silver Spring/Takoma Park, and 12 percent in Bethesda/Chevy-Chase/Kensington). Of the remaining group, 16 percent lived in Rockville, 13 percent in Germantown, 8 percent each in Gaithersburg and Potomac/North Potomac, 5 percent in Olney, and 1 percent in Damascus.

### **Other Suggestions for Dog Exercise Areas:**

Residents supplied many suggestions concerning the development of the dog exercise areas. A number of dog-owners believed that the County should finance these areas, or else bear much of the costs. Many suggested that some exercise areas with several acres of land were needed, and a number also suggested that the minimum 1-acre size should be reduced, especially in urban areas. Some other recommendations include the following:

- Provide separate enclosures for big and small dogs
- Provide facilities that are suitably located and adapted for the elderly and the handicapped
- Recycle plastic grocery bags in a container as a low-cost replacement for mutt-mitts and mutt-mitt dispensers
- Provide lights, perhaps with a quarter-pay slot
- Provide a variety of exercise areas with different sizes, and types of terrain and equipment.
- Take advantage of unused ballfields and tennis courts as dog exercise areas
- Develop a facility(ies) with a beach and water
- Provide a facility suitable for training, shows, and other special events, and charge for its use

### **Conclusion**

Substantial public support exists for developing dog exercise areas at appropriate locations. Exercise areas are especially desired down-County and in other urban and dense suburban areas such as Germantown, Rockville, and Gaithersburg. Dog-owners would like exercise areas to be located in regional and other large County parks, but would also like them to be convenient. Dog-owners are interested in joining dog-owner groups to help support and maintain these exercise areas, but many feel the County should bear most of their costs.

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DOG EXERCISE AREAS IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY PARKS:  
A PROPOSAL FOR LOCATIONS, FUNDING AND  
OPERATING CRITERIA

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