

Chicago Park District

Dog friendly Areas

INTRODUCTION

Chicago City Ordinance requires dogs to be on leashes in public areas for the protection of fellow residents, as well as the dogs themselves. To offer the numerous dogs in the city some room to move, Mayor Richard M. Daley and the Chicago Park District have supported the development of several Dog Friendly Areas (DFAs) to provide safe places for dogs to exercise, play and socialize legally “off-leash.”

Both the development of, and the continued existence of any DFA on Chicago Park District property depend on the ongoing and active involvement of an official group (DFA Committee) in the community where the DFA is proposed. If dog owners decide that a DFA is needed in their community, they should organize themselves as a DFA Committee with at least five members. This Committee should seek out other members, select a President and maintain a contact person throughout the existence of the DFA. The Chicago Park District requires this DFA Committee to comply with its guidelines when proposing to develop a DFA; however, the Chicago Park District at its sole discretion shall make any final decision about whether to develop a DFA or about where it should be located.

After the Chicago Park District has approved a proposal to develop a DFA, the DFA Committee is required to cooperate with the Chicago Park District to maintain it. Should any DFA Committee dissolve or fail to meet its obligations under the guidelines to maintain its DFA, the Chicago Park District, at its sole discretion, may revert this DFA to other park uses. In addition, should the Chicago Park District decide that exigent circumstances require that other use be made of land devoted to a DFA, the Chicago Park District will work in good faith under these guidelines with any DFA Committee in good standing to find an alternative location for the DFA.

The program is a 50/50 partnership between the DFA Committee and the Chicago Park District with the Chicago Park District absorbing 50% of the total standard project cost up to a maximum of \$75,000. Any cost over and above this amount is the responsibility of the DFA Committee.

Once established, the DFA Committee shall establish relationships with the local park advisory council, the local neighborhood association, C.A.P.S.

Representative and Ward Alderman. Attendance at these organizations' meetings is important and the concept of a DFA should be discussed.

In the following pages, the process of submitting a Dog Friendly Area proposal to the Chicago Park District is defined in detail.

STEP ONE: DEFINING A SPACE FOR A DOG FRIENDLY AREA

There are certain factors in identifying and defining a site for a proposed DFA. Look for areas that include the following:

"Under utilized" sections of existing parks (to be determined as "under utilized" by the Region Manager in conjunction with the Planning and Development Department and the local park advisory council after the DFA Committee has performed a usage survey of the proposed site. A section of park that is deemed "under utilized" does not guarantee acceptance of the area as a Dog Friendly Area by the Chicago Park District.)
Linear parks/easements to section off for off-leash dog use
Land adjacent to elevated train tracks

In identifying a site for a DFA, there are also certain criteria that should be considered:

Able to allow for hard surface area
Proximity to drainage to a sanitary sewer system
Able to have a water line installed at the site, or the finances necessary to install appropriate infrastructure. (Water line availability is necessary for area maintenance and a doggie drinking fountain)
Provide shaded and open areas for animals.
A strong buffer zone between DFA and other uses such as, tennis courts, field house, etc. DFAs adjacent to playgrounds will not be considered.
DFAs within a Park, or an area within a park, which is adjacent to ecologically sensitive areas such as nature areas, rivers, or lagoons will not be considered.
Distance from residences to ensure that noise and activity levels are no more disruptive to neighbors than typical park uses.
Compliance with all Americans With Disabilities Act Codes and Regulations.
Size of DFA will reflect the amount of available land, licensed dog population, park size and other considerations, and will be a minimum size of 6,000 square feet

Once the DFA Committee identifies a preferred site, the Committee should contact the Chicago Park District (Janis Taylor, Planning Coordinator - 312/742-4687) to confirm that the Chicago Park District owns the property

Step Two: CONDUCTING SURVEYS

After an appropriate site is selected for a proposed DFA, three steps are

required to be conducted by the DFA Committee members simultaneously over a one-year period:

<i>Petition</i>
A petition of support (sample attached) shall be distributed to the surrounding area of the proposed site. (The petition area must be a minimum of five blocks in each direction). It is important to include the signatures of both dog owners and non-dog owners. The community support must significantly out-weigh the opposition in order for the site to be considered. The petitions shall be submitted as part of your proposal to the Chicago Park District.
<i>Usage Surveys</i>
The DFA Committee members shall conduct usage surveys of the proposed area over a period of one year. These surveys determine the existing use of the proposed DFA site and identify who currently uses the site, what types of activities they are participating in, which days and hours the park is heavily used, weather conditions, other amenities around the site such as a playground or athletic field, and if the observed park user is a dog owner or not. Usage surveys shall represent usage for each day of the week, including weekends, and shall represent morning, afternoon and evening hours. The surveys must also represent usage for each of the four seasons. (A sample usage survey is attached). The usage surveys shall be submitted as part of your proposal to the Chicago Park District.
<i>Site Amenities</i>
Once the above petition and two survey types have been conducted, a list of site amenities utilizing the Chicago Park District's Standards for Dog Friendly Areas (attached) shall be identified. This list identifies the DFA Committee's desired site amenities for the proposed DFA, such as a retaining wall, landscaping, paved areas, and site furnishings.

Step Three: COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Community support and consent is vital in obtaining Park District approval for a DFA. The DFA Committee should be taken under the umbrella of the closest neighborhood association in order to assist in financial, maintenance, and safety concerns. (The program is a 50/50 partnership between the DFA Committee and the Chicago Park District with the Chicago Park District absorbing 50% of the total standard project cost up to a maximum of \$75,000. Any cost over and above this amount is the responsibility of the DFA Committee.)

A Use Agreement will be developed by the Chicago Park District indicating both the commitment to the maintenance of the park and the financial commitment of the DFA Committee. 75% of the DFA Committee's portion of the total project construction cost must be secured prior to the advancement of the design process. (Amounts and percentages are subject

to change based on the scope of work)

A minimum of three public neighborhood meetings must be conducted concurrently with the petition and surveys, to assure the consensus of the surrounding neighbors of the proposed DFA. Representatives from the Chicago Park District, Ward Alderman's office, C.A.P.S., any governing neighborhood associations, and the local park advisory council must be present at these meetings. It is recommended that the DFA Committee coordinate these meetings with one of these offices to include this item on their regularly scheduled meeting agenda. The DFA Committee must provide significant advanced public notice (a minimum of 10 business days) to the surrounding area for maximum community input. The petition, usage surveys, and site amenities list should be distributed and discussed.

Step Four: INVOLVING THE CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

After steps one through three are completed, and the community approves the proposed DFA, a written proposal with all supporting documentation must be submitted to Janis Taylor, Planning Coordinator, at the Chicago Park District for review and consideration by the Chicago Park District.

This proposal shall include letters of support from the local park advisory council, the Ward Alderman, the governing neighborhood association, and any block clubs, schools, condominium associations or local businesses that may border the proposed site. The proposal shall also include copies of the petitions and usage surveys. Copies of this proposal shall be forwarded to the Ward Alderman and governing neighborhood association.

Upon approval of a proposed DFA, the Chicago Park District will provide design possibilities, which will be presented at the advisory council and neighborhood association meetings for review and agreement. The Chicago Park District will also obtain costs for the proposed DFA and discuss exactly which costs will be the responsibility of the DFA Committee. (The program is a 50/50 partnership between the DFA Committee and the Chicago Park District with the Chicago Park District absorbing 50% of the total standard project cost up to a maximum of \$75,000. Any cost over and above this amount is the responsibility of the DFA Committee.) After the completion of the cost estimate, the Chicago Park District will prepare a Use Agreement to be signed by the DFA Committee and the Chicago Park District.

Step Five: DFA COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES

The most important aspect of having a successful DFA in a park is on-going community support and communication between the DFA Committee and the Chicago Park District.

There are certain responsibilities the DFA Committee and members must adhere to:

<p><i>Maintenance</i></p> <p>The DFA Committee and members must assist in the maintenance of the DFA. It is the responsibility of the Committee and members of the DFA to clean up after their pets; rotate, bleach and replace any pea gravel areas, including removing pea gravel and waste that has spilled outside of the dog friendly area; wash down the hard surface area bi-weekly; powerwash hard surface area 3 - 4 times per year (schedule this with the Chicago Park District Area Manager); and on a daily basis, clean up any waste that other users may have missed. The regular users of the DFA should inform new users of the DFA rules and regulations as well as the importance of maintenance. The DFA Committee must provide the Chicago Park District with a monthly cleaning schedule and must sign the Use Agreement referred to in Steps 3 and 4, stating their agreement to maintain the DFA.</p>
<p><i>Monitoring</i></p> <p>The DFA Committee and members of the DFA shall assist in the monitoring of the DFA. The DFA Committee members should encourage the enforcement of the leash laws outside of the DFA, monitor the behavior of the dogs and dog owners using the DFA, and assist in the education of new users. DFA Committee and members of the DFA shall educate users of the Chicago Park District rules and regulations for a DFA, including the license requirements.</p>
<p><i>Management</i></p> <p>The DFA Committee should communicate frequently with the Chicago Park District regarding the management of the DFA. If problems occur with the operation or patrons of the DFA, the Chicago Park District must be informed and involved in the resolution of the problem.</p>
<p><i>Fundraising</i></p> <p>The DFA Committee should organize fundraising campaigns to finance new projects for the DFA such as a doggie drinking fountain, an information/ bulletin board; an isolation area or an agility area; non-capital improvements or repairs; a storage shed for hose, waste bags, and cleaning supplies; new benches; non-standard Chicago Park District DFA design element repair or replacement; and upgrades of standard design elements.</p>
<p><i>Clean-Ups</i></p> <p>The DFA Committee and members should hold semi-annual entire park clean-ups in conjunction with the Friends of the Parks, Earth Day, and Clean and Green celebrations.</p>

Failure to provide this type of support, both operational and financial, may result in the Chicago Park District reconverting the parkland to other uses.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT RESPONSIBILITIES

Once a Dog Friendly Area is approved, the Chicago Park District will be responsible for the following:

<p><i>Funding</i> 50% of the total project construction cost up to \$75,000.00</p>
<p><i>Maintenance</i> Capital projects - sewer repair, fencing or gate repairs, asphalt replacement, site furnishing repair or replacement, landscape improvements, fountain repair or replacement. 50/50 funding of the repair or replacement of any Chicago Park District DFA standard design element.</p>
<p><i>Community Support</i> Support and assist in organizing community meetings; supply guidelines, rules and regulations, standards, sample petitions, sample usage surveys, and site plans for proposed DFA; attend meetings as needed.</p>
<p><i>Park Development</i> Utilizing the Chicago Park District's portion of the total project construction costs (50% up to a maximum of \$75,000), the Chicago Park District's portion will be applied toward the cost of designing the DFA and toward any of the CPD standard amenities for a DFA, as outlined on the attached "Chicago Park District Standards for Dog Friendly Areas.</p>

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