



Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services  
Off-Leash Dog Areas Pilot Project

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Why is Shoreline planning to develop an off-leash dog area?**

An interested group of Shoreline dog owners called ShoreDOG, approached the Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services (PRCS) Board in 2005 about locating an area for off-leash dog use in Shoreline. The group was asked by the PRCS Board to help find a suitable location as part of the PRCS Board's subcommittee, an off-leash study group. A community survey conducted by Shoreline also indicated that citizens felt it was a need for the City. The PRCS Board recommended to the City Council that funds for an off-leash dog area be included in the Open Space, Parks & Trail Bond Issue. With approval of the Bond by voters in May 2006, the City has \$150,000 to identify locations and develop off-leash dog areas in Shoreline.

### **What sites are being recommended as pilot off-leash areas?**

The 2008 Off-Leash Dog Area Study Group (OLDA) has conducted a seventeen month process of research, criteria development, site visits and consideration of 38 potential sites in Shoreline. From that extensive list, fourteen were identified for thorough evaluation as potential pilot sites followed by a screening to six most promising sites. This summer, the OLDA Study Group reviewed new information and identified two pilot site locations to test both timed-use and traditional use approaches. OLDA was formed at the request of the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Board (PRCS) to go through a rigorous process of research, criteria and rules development, and identification and screening of potential sites. Both of these sites are owned by the city and therefore available for immediate implementation.

#### **South Beach Area at Richmond Beach Saltwater Park**

The 1.2-acre beach area south of the pedestrian bridge which currently receives off-leash use is being considered for an unfenced, seasonal timed-use site when other beach use is low. The south beach area is one of the few sites in Shoreline that could offer water access. The existing sandy surface is the most durable surface for off-leash dog areas and the site has good separation from other active use areas. It offers a family outing opportunity in the larger Saltwater Park experience and would serve Northwest Shoreline.

#### **Shoreview Park**

This 2.5-acre parking lot located adjacent to Shoreline Community College in Shoreview Park provides an opportunity to transform a parking lot into public park use. The site has two entry points with good access from the lower Shoreview parking lot and through the SCC property during the summer and weekends. The site would be easily modified for off-leash use and is recommended as a traditional off-leash area.

**What is the difference between a Traditional Off-Leash Dog Area and a Timed-Use Area?** During the Off-Leash Dog Area Study Group's research phase, the group looked at the potential of timed-use sites as well as traditional off-leash areas, so their resulting recommendation includes both types of sites.

**Traditional Off Leash Areas** are designated areas for only off-leash use and are designated as Off-Leash Dog Areas during *all* posted park hours. These areas are enclosed using natural or manmade barriers.

**Timed-Use Sites** are sites that are designated areas in a park or other public land, or a portion thereof that are designated for off-leash use during *specific* posted times based upon a defined schedule (daily, weekly, monthly and seasonally) so as not to conflict with other scheduled and non-scheduled park uses. The areas are usually minimally amended with signage, boundary markers and dog waste deposit stations. This flexible best management practice for managing dogs in urban environments has been used by many major cities to allow multiple uses for one site while reducing potential impacts to any one off-leash dog area.

**What will happen to the other sites that were identified?**

Nothing will happen to the other sites at this time; they will remain as on-leash sites. However, they will be included in the OLDA Study Groups report that will be used by the PRCS Board in the future to consider other off-leash dog areas. At that time, a public process would be initiated.

**What are other cities in the region doing about off-leash dogs?**

Several surrounding cities throughout the region have developed off-leash sites for their communities. Seattle has eleven sites with stewardship responsibilities provided by Citizens for Off-Leash Areas (COLA). South Marina Park in Edmonds is supported by a non-profit organization called Off-Leash Area-Edmonds (OLAE), plus Snohomish County offers multiple sites including several parks in Everett. King County has multiple sites including Marymoor Park in Redmond and also uses a volunteer group, Serve Our Dog Area (SODA) to provide stewardship of sites.

**Why don't we just continue to have owners take their dogs to facilities in surrounding communities?**

All communities have a responsibility to provide facilities for their own community members. Shoreline currently has over 3,000 licensed dog owners within the city that would benefit from a system of off-leash areas. There are currently many illegal off-leash users that are now being ticketed through added enforcement of the leash laws that exist in Shoreline. By providing multiple off-leash sites within the City, there will be places for people to legally recreate with their off-leash dogs and to socialize with other dog owners.

**Who is on the OLDA Study Group and how were they formed?**

At the PRCS Board's recommendation, the OLDA group was formed. The May 2007 *Currents* volunteer request netted 26 applications for the PRCS Board subcommittee. Eleven citizens and three PRCS Board members were selected to form the group.

**Now that the pilot sites are identified, how will they be paid for and maintained?**

The construction and much of the regular maintenance will be provided by Shoreline Parks; however, as has occurred at other off-leash dog areas in the region, Shoreline will be looking to the support of ShoreDOG. A volunteer organization, ShoreDOG will provide added stewardship of the off-leash dog areas through volunteer work parties to care for ongoing repairs such as replacing worn surfacing, sectioning off areas for repair and removing invasive species.

**Won't multiple users at these sites create impacts on the area and for the surrounding community?**

Each of the six most promising sites was evaluated based on potential impacts from use as an off-leash dog area. OLDA Study Group and staff conducted a preliminary SEPA (State Environmental Protection Act) Checklist review of the sites and any with serious SEPA issues were deleted from the list. Considerations included proximity and type of adjacent uses, potential drainage issues, and parking and access concerns. Having a system of off-leash sites and an ongoing stewardship program are strategies to lessen impacts to individual parks by dispersing the users, providing more sites within walking distance of residents to reduce traffic impacts, and providing work parties for environmental stewardship.

Based on each site's location, condition and needs, the addition of various functional amenities may need to be added to support the off-leash use. These design features include:

- surface improvements such as mulch, gravel, grass or sand
- natural or man-made enclosures
- separate gated areas for maintenance access
- dog waste stations with dog bags, trash receptacles for cleaning waste
- signage with listed rules and regulations
- restrooms, portable or permanent.

**How do we know that off-leash areas will work? Haven't there been problems in other parks?**

By researching other off-leash sites, OLDA Study Group identified both the physical characteristics of successful sites and the necessary rules to make them operationally safe and enjoyable for all their users. They also talked with the stewards – members of groups like COLA and SODA to understand the educational and operational responsibilities that they undertake to avoid or solve problems. Rules are important and they include very specific guidance on who can use the facilities and what responsibilities they have in doing so.

At a minimum, the following user etiquette and rules would apply and others may be required for some sites:

- Owners must remain with and watch their dogs at all times as unattended dogs are not allowed in off-leash areas.
- Dogs must be leashed prior to and upon leaving an off-leash area.
- Owners must carry the leash for each dog while in the off-leash dog area.
- Owners must immediately clean up after their dogs and deposit feces in the containers at the site.
- Dog owners are responsible for the monitoring and maintenance of the area.
- Children under thirteen years of age must be accompanied by an adult and must be closely supervised. It is recommended that no child under the age of six be permitted in the area.
- Puppies under four months and female dogs in heat are prohibited.
- Dogs must be healthy, fully immunized, dewormed, licensed and comply with King County Animal Control regulations, which includes having a current rabies vaccination.
- Owners are legally responsible for their dogs and any damage or injury caused by their dogs.
- Dogs with a known history of or who exhibit dangerous behavior are prohibited from the area.

#### **How many people will use the off-leash areas?**

Many of these sites are already used by dog owners as off-leash sites, so looking at levels of current use gives some initial indications. Numbers will likely increase given that it will now be a legal use and also due to population growth in Shoreline; however, the use of multiple sites will lesson impacts on any one site.

#### **Why doesn't the City purchase or lease new land for the off-leash area rather than use existing open space?**

OLDA investigated all potential sites within Shoreline, including those that were owned privately or by other agencies. Their search was based on the necessary size and physical requirements for an off-leash area. They then looked at sites to determine how they are currently being used – often by dogs and their owners – and if they had any competing uses. Many can be improved from their current condition, such as transitioning property from parking lots to green space.

#### **What Has Happened in the Process?**

The City spent several months hearing from community members beginning with the June 12, 2008 public presentation by OLDA and the city of the work to date. City staff and members of OLDA briefed community organizations about the process and potential sites. After receiving public comment throughout the summer, the OLDA Study Group met several more times to review options based on public feedback and additional findings and to develop their recommendations for the two pilot sites. The Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services (PRCS) Board accepted the OLDA recommendations at their October 23rd meeting. The October 29th, 2008 public meeting is to hear public responses to the recommended

pilot sites. The Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services (PRCS) Board will make their final recommendation to City Council in November. City Council will review the PRCS Board recommendation in mid-December or early January. Following the PRCS Board's recommendation, the City Council will consider the OLDA Study Group's extensive work, the interests and concerns expressed by community members and the recommendation of the PRCS Board in making a decision about the pilot sites.

All selected sites will require some level of improvements. Following the selection of the pilot sites, the City will complete a SEPA review and begin design for each facility. Initial pilot sites will be implemented in Spring and Fall 2009.

**What happens after the "pilot" phase is over?**

The sites will be evaluated on a regular basis during the pilot phase by the City with input from ShoreDOG. The evaluations will enable City staff to report back to the PRCS Board at the close of the 12-month pilot phase to determine the success of the use, changes that would improve the function and concerns that need to be addressed. Comments expressed by community members throughout the pilot phase will be documented as part of the review.

**Can I take my dog off-leash to other parks in Shoreline?**

No. All other parks in Shoreline will remain on-leash sites. If dogs are off-leash in other parks in Shoreline, users will be in violation of the Leash Law and be subject to a ticket.

**Who can I contact with if I have additional questions or comments to offer?**

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