

To: Robin Korherr, Chair, Community Services Committee  
From: Ken Zeserson for TCDOG  
Re: Multi-use, off-leash dog park information  
Date: 2/14/06

This packet contains information regarding off-leash, multi-use dog parks in three cities, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada; San Diego, California, USA; and San Francisco, California, USA and was taken from the web site for each city. ([www.edmonton.ca](http://www.edmonton.ca); [www.sandiego.gov](http://www.sandiego.gov); and [www.parks.sfgov.org](http://www.parks.sfgov.org)) In each case, information pertinent to the topic was excerpted from larger documents, which are available in full at the internet sites listed. Because the information was excerpted, page numbers do not necessarily follow sequence.

#### Observations:

##### Edmonton, Alberta

The city of Edmonton includes a large, multi-use, river valley park system, 430 acres of which is known as Terwillegar Park. An ambitious study leading to the development of a master plan for its parks was completed in September of 2005. Throughout the plan, off-leash dog activities were indicated as an important component of this natural area use plan along with such activities as mountain biking, canoe/kayak launching, walking, jogging, cycling, bird watching, picnicking, and skiing. The park is described as an “outdoor classroom” and a “shared resource”. Emphasis is placed on its maintenance as a “natural park” with opportunities for nature viewing, watching wildlife, viewing landscapes, etc. Under 4.2 Key Values for Terwillegar Park is found the following statement: “Stakeholders believe that recreational activities that are in keeping with the natural attributes of the site, including traditional activities (like cycling and off leash dog activities) should be continued...”.

##### San Diego, California

Mission Bay Park in San Diego includes 4,235.6 acres of shoreline and water resources. One island within the park’s boundaries, Fiesta Island, allows off-leash dogs at any time. There is a 5.2 mile asphalt path around the island. Multi-use activities on Fiesta Island include a youth campground and a popular swimming beach.

Additionally, the following multi-use parks in San Diego have off-leash, unfenced areas for dog walking: Balboa Park, Cadman Community Park, and Grape Street Park.

##### San Francisco

San Francisco is recognized as having been an early trend-setter in the development of public, off-leash dog parks. Its experience with dog parks is extensive and continual evaluation of dog park successes and challenges is on-going. A wealth of material is available at the URL listed above. Included with this memo are two pertinent items from the website; first, a Q&A which lists concerns regarding off-leash dogs which have been expressed along with suggested solutions to those concerns; and second, a list of 24 DPA’s (Dog Play Areas) in San Francisco, 5 of which are fenced. The brief descriptions of each park infer that the unfenced parks are also multi-use areas.

Observations from a perusal of various internet resources

1. Generally speaking, larger natural areas with some, if not all, natural boundaries, are frequently designated as multi-use, with off-leash dog play allowed within some or all of the larger natural area.
2. Municipalities often partner with dog advocacy groups in developing and monitoring areas designated for off-leash play and walking.
3. Dog owners who advocate for off-leash walking and play areas are an emerging constituency group whose needs are gaining increasing legitimacy as municipalities work to respond to their needs.
4. Studies consistently show that dogs do not need to be excluded from most natural areas in order to protect other park users or the environment. With the exception of locally identified sensitive natural areas, the presence of off-leash dogs in natural areas has been shown to have little effect on the environment. One study, in fact, indicated that people are more destructive to the environment than dogs.