

POP-UP DOG OFF-LEASH PILOT PROGRAM



Bellevue Parks & Community Services is excited to launch a new “Pop-up” Dog Off-Leash Pilot Program in response to growing demand for accessible and safe spaces for pets and their owners to get exercise and enjoy the outdoors. Fenced off-leash facilities will “Pop-Up” in parks and other city-owned properties to provide off-leash dog facilities on a temporary basis. The objective of this program is to improve permanent access to Off Leash Facilities throughout Bellevue.

This report provides an overview of the Pop-up Dog Off-Leash Pilot Program, identifies criteria to consider for successfully siting off-leash facilities both on a temporary and permanent basis, outlines the communication and outreach plan and lists the initial 2023 Pop-up Dog Off-Leash Pilot sites.

Overview of the OLA Pop-up Pilot Program

Bellevue Parks is creating a pilot program to test new Off Leash Area (OLA) facilities on a temporary basis in parks and other city-owned property throughout the City. Parks & Community Services department staff regularly receive requests for



additional OLA facilities. It is also common to hear interest in OLA facilities through outreach as part of planning processes, such as the Parks & Open Space System Plan. As the city grows additional OLAs are needed, particularly since nearly all growth is through multi-family residential development and most of those housing units have little or no private yard space. To provide additional capacity, more OLAs are recommended, distributed across the city. The 2022 Parks & Open Space System Plan identifies a near-term priority to locate at least one OLA near Downtown, with additional sites in underserved neighborhoods.

This new pilot program will provide opportunities to provide OLA facilities throughout Bellevue's Park & Open Space system. Program outcomes include:

- Providing strategies and processes for considering, prioritizing, and implementing new or improved OLAs.
- Establishing a reliable process for hearing community feedback regarding alternative OLA service models and locating new OLA facilities.

In 2010, Parks & Community Services conducted a study of OLAs that included general criteria to consider for site selection, that will be applicable to this program and future development of permanent OLA facilities:

- Complement existing visual park character.
- Will not displace existing park recreational uses.
- Are compatible with existing park uses.
- Consider previous community-based planning processes or seek Community feedback.
- Provide generous residential buffers.
- Accessibility - sufficient parking, transit/bus, and ADA accessible.
- Can address sensitive environmental concerns (slopes, wetlands etc.).
- Are geographically dispersed and proximate to people/dogs,
- High visibility into an OLA site is desirable.
- Maintenance access and servicing, including regular removal of dog waste and garbage collection.

No site in the Park System clearly meets all OLA siting criteria. That is not because the criteria are overly restrictive, rather Bellevue's Park system is mature and there

isn't a large supply of available, undeveloped, or unencumbered City owned land. In a mature park system existing recreational uses need to be considered such that placement of a new use does not displace or negatively alter other existing desired park activities.

After assessing our current system of OLAs and learning from the practices of other cities' parameters, the criteria for locating OLAs may need to be modified. This pilot program will provide the opportunity to test temporary OLA facilities. Community feedback will help inform if an OLA facility is working and supported, if adjustments may help a facility work better and whether a temporary OLA site should become permanent or be removed and the site refurbished.

Temporary Off-Leash Facility Improvements

Investments in facility improvements to the pop-up temporary OLA sites will be limited until we hear from the community and a decision is made to make an OLA permanent. Temporary OLA facilities will minimally include:

- Fully fenced areas with at least one double-entry gate.
- Garbage cans, dog waste bag dispensers and regular servicing.
- Signage including contact/feedback information as well as typical education and park rules.

Until a Temporary off-leash facility is determined to become permanent, construction improvements such as water, shelters, dog wash, and some surface improvements will not be available.

Determining Permanent OLA Facilities

The objective of this program is to transition from temporary OLA facilities to permanent OLA facilities where appropriate to best serve the community. The transition to permanent OLA facilities will be made only after a complete assessment of each temporary OLA facility based on:

- Community Support, Use and Feedback.
- Property Agreements allowing continued OLA use.

- Environmental, Operation and Maintenance impacts.
- Capital Improvement Costs (water, power etc.)

If a site is determined to be unsuitable to support OLA facilities, temporary facilities will be removed, and the site fully restored.

Communication Plan/Community Feedback

Critical to the success of this pilot program is hearing from the community as to whether the pilot off-leash facilities are being used, of value to the community and what should be changed to make this amenity work better. Is there value to the community transitioning a site into a permanent facility? Public outreach will include:

- On-site signage with staff contacts information including:
 - How to submit comment/suggestions
 - QR code and links to website and survey opportunities
- Entry-gate and area counters to help understand level of use.
- Off-Leash web site with staff contact information including:
 - A Welcome to pups and their owners (on leash)
 - Rules and Regulations and contact information.
 - Off-leash areas in the City.
 - Pop-Up Off-leash Program Information
 - How to submit comment/suggestions
 - Survey opportunities
 - Web alert for updates
- Neighborhood News
- It's Your City
- Other social media recommended (news release etc.)

Pop-Up Off-Leash Areas 2023

The Crossroads, Wilburton and Downtown neighborhoods were selected as the program's pilot sites based on population density, sites meeting most of the identified OLA needs and criteria. Initial Temporary OLA sites include:



1. **Crossroads Park (Crossroads Area)**

Access to this pilot program OLA includes a pedestrian pathway system which runs the length of the 35-acre park and serves a large adjacent multi-family housing community. The Park offers 4 parking lots that can support the OLA area. The OLA program does not offset other established park program uses. Environmental impacts should be minimal. Staff will monitor the health of the well-established trees in the OLA. The site has good access for maintenance. The OLA estimated size is 1 acre.

2. **Wilburton Hills Park (Wilburton and Downtown)**

Excellent access for pedestrians in the nearby Wilburton Hill Neighborhood as well as for drivers, this pilot program OLA is located along the Lake to Lake Trail, under powerlines. The park provides a large capacity parking lot. The level lawn area is comfortable for use and the OLA does not compete or offset other park programed uses. This site additionally offers opportunities for potential OLA expansion, if supported by the community, and is determined to become permanent. Maintenance access is very good. The temporary OLA is approximately 0.25-0.3 acres.

3. **Wildwood Park (Downtown) – Street Parking only**

This pilot program OLA services the high-density commercial and residential Downtown neighborhood. The park has good pedestrian access although has limited parking opportunities with street parking only. OLA facilities share a level lawn area with other park users. The site has reasonable access for servicing and the OLA is estimated at 0.25 to 0.3 acres.