

# SPOT

## Swampscott Park for Off-leash Time

Proposal by the Swampscott Ad-Hoc Dog Park Committee:  
Implementation Plan to establish a Public, Fenced-in  
Off-leash Dog Play Area in  
Swampscott, MA



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# Swampscott Park for Off-leash Time

## See SPOT Run



### S.P.O.T.

Swampscott Park for Off-leash Time

## About SPOT

We are a community organization of Swampscott, MA residents who have come together to help create a year round, safe environment for dogs and their owners to socialize, exercise and contribute to the vibrancy of Swampscott's beaches and parks.

## Proposed Project

1) Scope: Create a fenced-in dog park within a Swampscott park that will:

- Permit dogs to play with each other off-leash;
- Prevent dogs from escaping;
- Deter unwanted encounters between dogs and other park users;
- Provide a year round forum for social interaction among dog-owners and other interested passers-by to supplement the current beach access permitted from late Sept. thru early May and provide an outlet for dog owners during the excluded beach access months.

2) Location: Through careful research and planning, SPOT committee members have identified a parcel of town owned land adjacent to the Phillips Park playing fields and the Blocksidge Field house which was formerly known as the "Kids Cove Playground". (See Attached Map.)

This area has been identified as the most logical location for a community park accessible to off-leash dogs and their owners due to a variety of factors:

- centrally located in the heart of Swampscott, convenient to all residents.

- an area that was formerly a child's playground but was recently dismantled due to health concerns, this location is now used for overflow parking only. Automobile traffic in this area during periods when the ground is wet and soft has caused significant damage to the area.
- ample parking and available access for the elderly and physically challenged.
- suitable space for multiple dogs to exercise and play.
- terrain that would require minimum preparation to create a dog park and minimum maintenance.
- adjacent to youth playing fields currently used by some dog owners to exercise their pets. Having this resource so close by would encourage dog owners to limit their use to only the designated and approved area.
- pre-existing fencing on at least one side would reduce the cost necessary to construct the park.

## **Implementation**

- Fence in a limited space in one of the public parks with a 5-foot standard chain link fence;
- Cover the enclosed ground with gravel, graded to provide adequate drainage;
- Install several benches for dog owners and others, a water spigot, trash receptacle, a bag dispenser for cleaning up waste, and appropriate signage;
- Precise location and parameters can be negotiated with various park constituencies. Space can be chosen that would not be useful for other purposes, such as ball fields, and that would be sufficiently far from neighbors' properties.



## **About Dog Parks**

A dog park is a fenced in public area where dogs can legally run off-leash and play with other dogs under the supervision of their owners.

- A double-gated entry provides safety when entering and exiting the park;
- Movable benches, poop bags, trashcans and watering stations are provided.

In other words, a dog park is a doggie playground!

# **ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

## **1) WHY A DOG PARK?**

### **Dogs need exercise to stay healthy.**

For most dogs, just a walk around the block is not enough exercise to keep them fit and happy.

### **Dogs need exercise to keep them happy.**

It is a known fact that dogs that are well exercised are happier and less likely to exhibit destructive behaviors (digging, chewing, barking, etc.).

### **Dogs need to socialize with other dogs and humans.**

Dogs are social animals. With frequent, active contact with other dogs and humans, dogs are calmer and tend to have better social manners.

### **Dog owners need to socialize with other dog owners.**

A dog park gives dog owners an opportunity to meet other dog owners and share information and experiences that help them become better dog owners. Plus, it is a great place to make new friends!

### **People will not be tempted to break existing leash laws.**

Knowing that there is an area where dog owners can exercise their dog off-leash, owners are less likely to take their dog off-leash in public areas where the dogs must be leashed.

### **Dog parks provide opportunities for educational activities.**

A dog park can be a common place that dog owners can go for dog-related information and education. Activities can be posted at the dog park and in some cases can be held at the park. It's a great place for both owners and dogs to learn!

## **2) ARE DOG PARKS UNSAFE?**

Dog experts attest that dogs are inherently protective of their own property such as their house or yard, but don't adopt a protective attitude when in neutral territory such as a dog park. Also, dogs with a history of aggression are worse when leashed than when unleashed. It seems that leashes increase the potential for fear and protectiveness, possibly because dogs are nervous when they are restricted.

Furthermore, an owner pulling on a leash sends a signal of danger to the dog, which puts the dog on the defensive. Established dog parks report that occasional spats occur between dogs, but no major incidents have happened.

## **3) IS THERE POTENTIAL PUBLIC OR PERSONAL LIABILITY?**

Public liability has been resolved at other dog parks by the posting of signs that warn park users that they are entering an off-leash dog area, that they enter at their own risk, and that the dog owners are liable for their pets' behavior. Moreover, the liability issue associated with dog parks has been established in Massachusetts, pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 140 sec. 155, holding the dog owner liable for any damages caused by their dog.

## **4) IS THERE A POTENTIAL PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE WITH A DOG PARK?**

Owners are required to pick up their dog's feces while in the park. Signage, poop bag dispensers and

trashcans throughout the park reinforce this. Furthermore, it is the owner's responsibility not to take his/her dog to the park if the dog is contagious or has not received appropriate vaccinations.

### **5) WILL DOG PARKS BE A DANGER TO CHILDREN AND NON-DOG OWNERS?**

Fencing and a double-entry gate help to prevent dogs from getting out of the dog park. Also, school age children under 10, "aside from infants and toddlers" are not permitted in the dog park unless an adult supervises them.

### **6) WILL THE DOG PARK BE NOISY AND A NUISANCE TO AREA RESIDENTS?**

The fenced-in area would be located in a part of a park that is not near local residents. Furthermore, based on the many dog parks that exist across the U.S. and Canada, it has been found that dog parks are no noisier than children's playgrounds.

### **7) WHAT WILL THE DOG PLAY AREA LOOK LIKE?**

We envision a fenced-in space that will allow dogs to play together off-leash without causing annoyance to other park users. The space itself would have sand or gravel to increase drainage, a drinking fountain for the dogs and owners, benches for owners, "and a 'holding pen' at the entrance to insure that no dogs escape when others are entering or exiting the area." Depending on space constraints, a separate, smaller fenced-in area could be designated for puppies and smaller dogs.

### **8) HOW MANY DOG PARKS OR OTHER PUBLIC DOG PLAY AREAS EXIST IN THE COUNTRY?**

Literally hundreds and they are located in every type of environment: urban, suburban, and rural.

### **9) ARE THERE DOG PARKS IN MASSACHUSETTS?**

There are quite a few dog parks in Massachusetts, including Salem, Brookline, Boston, Hingham, Somerville, Cambridge, Medway, Provincetown, Egremont, Sharon. Additionally, Marblehead is in the process of implementing their own dog park which has received town approval.

### **10) WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE UPKEEP?**

Day-to-day upkeep is provided by those who use the park, and other parks from around the country report that peer pressure motivates owners to pick up after their dog and to pitch-in for larger upkeep projects. The town would only be responsible for emptying garbage cans on a regular basis and providing basic park services.

### **11) HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO ESTABLISH A DOG PARK?**

Please see the separate budget in this package.

### **12) FROM WHERE DOES THE FUNDING COME?**

Please see the separate fundraising plan that is part of this package.

### **13) WHO CAN PARTICIPATE IN SPOT?**

In a word, anyone! We welcome individuals and businesses, and you need not be a resident of Swampscott to participate.

#### **14) DO PEOPLE NEED TO BE MEMBERS OF SPOT SWAMPSCOTT IN ORDER TO USE THE DOG PARK?**

No. Although we hope everyone who uses the dog play area will want to be a member, the dog play area, as a public space, will be open to all owners with dogs that are licensed and have had all required shots and vaccinations.

#### **15) WHAT ARE THE RULES OF THE DOG PARK?**

As with any public gathering place, rules must exist to make sure that everyone enjoys the dog park. The Proposed Rules are as follows:

1. Dogs must be leashed when entering or leaving the park.
2. Owners must remain in the fenced area with their dog while the dog is off leash.
3. Dogs must be in view and within voice control of the owner.
4. Owners must carry a leash with them at all times while in the park.
5. Owners are responsible for picking up and disposing of all dog feces.
6. No dogs in heat allowed.
7. Dogs showing signs of aggression must be leashed and/or immediately removed from the park.
8. No dogs under the age of 4 months or who have not received their complete round of vaccinations allowed.
9. Dogs must wear current license tags.
10. A limit of 3 dogs per person is allowed.
11. No food allowed in the park.
12. School age children must be supervised by an adult. No infants and toddlers allowed.

\*Additionally, please view the Sample Rules set out on page 10.





<b><u>PRELIMINARY ESTIMATED BUDGET FOR SPOT</u></b>	
<b>Swampscott Dog Park Estimated Budget -Start up Construction</b>	
<b>Size: approximately .5 Acres:</b>	
<b>Location: Former Kids Cove playground, Phillips Park, Swampscott, MA</b>	
Landscaping: Grading, Loam, Pathway construction, Trees and Seeding	\$10,000.00
Fencing	\$15,000.00
Trash Cans (Std and / or Big Belly)	\$1000.00
Signage (rules)	\$100.00
Clean Up Bag Holder	\$50.00
<b>Total Estimated Cost</b>	<b>~ \$26,150.00</b>

## **SPOT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

### **Not-for-Profit Pet Owners Association**

The model for establishing and funding the dog park is a not-for-profit approach under which SPOT would raise the necessary funds from private citizens, corporations, foundations, and government (possibly including the Town). Under this model, the land would be donated by the Town, and SPOT would raise necessary funding, and the park would be open for use by the general public without subscription or membership fees. Because SPOT does not yet have 501(c) (3) tax-exempt status from the Internal Revenue Service, this model requires SPOT to find an umbrella organization non-profit 501 (C3) (or the Town itself) to use as a repository for donations so that donors could take a tax deduction. The marketing and fundraising plan below detail the steps to be taken to fund this model.



# **SPOT MARKETING PLAN**

## **BACKGROUND**

SPOT is looking to secure an area for a dog park that will provide a place where dogs and their owners can have a safe area to socialize. Therefore, money needs to be raised to support the dog park initiative.

The Marketing Plan offers Objectives (or goals), and Strategies (the methods to accomplish the stated goals). In addition target audiences are outlined. In all possible cases, expected results are quantifiable.

## **OBJECTIVES**

### **1. Raise Awareness Among Key Target Audiences:**

SPOT is currently a group of volunteers whose intention is to raise awareness and funds for a dog park in Swampscott. It is crucial to SPOT that we identify key community influencers, funders and donors, as well as those who are willing to collaborate with us become aware of and support our efforts. These audiences are identified as follows:

- Key community influencers:
  - Swampscott political office holders,
  - Community leaders,
  - Media representatives,
  - Officers of civic organizations
- Business owners;
- Private foundations and corporate foundations;
- High worth individuals in Swampscott;
- Middle income donors in SPOT;
- Potential partners or collaborators.

### **2. Support & Fund Development Efforts**

A coordinated effort involving marketing, communications, development, and community relations provides opportunities to reinforce our message across these target audiences in order to influence their giving decisions.

## **STRATEGIES**

### **1. Unify the Message and Brand Logo**

SPOT is developing a logo and fundraising message in order to clearly and effectively communicate its message to the public. The message and logo will be communicated to the public via it's website (under development), and other branding opportunities (T-shirts, bumper stickers, etc.)

### **2. Promote SPOT through Media Exposure.**

Create a SPOT information program to be broadcast on local access television in Swampscott. Advertise in local papers and via local events.

### **3. Promotional Planning**

As needed, we will create or leverage promotional opportunities, such as brick fundraising initiative for the Dog Park, Pet / Owner fun runs, etc., charitable events, etc.

### **4. Capture New Donor Leads**

A Mailing list will be compiled for possible use by SPOT for solicitations.

## **SPOT FUNDRAISING PLAN**

SPOT will employ a variety of techniques to raise the funds to establish the dog park. These include direct mail campaigns and special fundraisers (such as selling park benches and canine-related paraphernalia (t-shirts and coffee mugs reflecting the SPOT logo and doggie accessories, such as leashes, feeding dishes and scarves). SPOT will also cultivate private donors through a direct mail appeal to all dog owners in Swampscott (using the town's dog license registration list). Large donors will be cultivated through the SPOT's connections to the business community, including dog boarding facilities, trainers and specialty shops. Cash donations as well as gifts "in-kind" will be sought. In-kind donations may include, but are not limited to, construction labor, fencing materials, benches, trash receptacles and clean-up bags.

SPOT also plans to apply to private foundations and corporations for cash grants and/or in-Kind support under a non-profit fiduciary right. We also plan to appeal to those corporations and foundations which generally support animal welfare projects.

## **SAMPLE RULES FOR SPOT SWAMPSCOTT** **THESE RULES WOULD BE POSTED PROMINENTLY AT THE DOG PARK**

### **General**

- Dog park hours are sunrise to sunset daily (unless closed for maintenance or weather)
- Park users and dog owners assume all risk related to dog park use
- All other general park rules and city ordinances must be obeyed

### **Dogs**

- Limit of 3 dogs per person per visit
- Dogs must be licensed and vaccinated with current tags displayed on collar
- Puppies using the park must be four (4) months of age or older
- Female dogs in heat and dogs with fresh wounds are not allowed in the park
- Spike or pinch collars are not allowed in the park
- Any dog exhibiting aggressive behavior must be removed immediately

### **Behavior**

- Dogs must be kept on leash until inside the double-gated entry
- Dogs are not permitted to remain on leash once they are inside the dog park
- Dogs must be under voice control and in sight of owners at all times
- Owners must immediately clean up and properly dispose of any waste left by their dog(s)

### **Children**

- Children under 10 years of age are not allowed in the dog park
- Children 10-16 years of age must be accompanied by an adult
- Children are not allowed to run with or chase after dogs in the dog park

## **Letters of Support from Community Leaders, Canine Experts, Swampscott Residents: (See Attached)**

# PETDOG TRAINING

GLENN E. GOLDMAN, CPDT

JUDITH GOLDMAN

Behavioral Consultants & Trainers

978-281-3141

[www.petdogtraining.com](http://www.petdogtraining.com)

July 30, 2008

Dear Members of the Board:

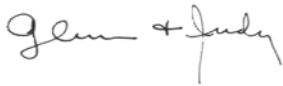
As canine behavioral consultants and trainers, my husband, Glenn, and I have had opportunity to study and witness off-leash dog parks. We are very aware of the need for dogs to run free and to socialize with other dogs. Many of the aggression problems we see are directly related to the fact that dogs are no longer living "dog" lives, i.e. have little or no chance to socialize off-lead with other dogs and people in a natural setting.

Certainly, an off-lead dog park must be carefully planned. And, yes, there are some risks, but the benefits to dogs, and thus to the community at large, far outweigh them. Many parks are successfully in operation in communities around the country. We have monitored their status, and none that we are aware of has closed due to serious problems or liability issues.

We would strongly urge Swampscott's Board of Selectmen to allow SPOT to establish an off-lead dog park. We would advise that the Board require SPOT to submit a well thought-out plan based on research of other successfully operating parks in other communities.

Please feel free to call us at 978-281-3141 if you have any questions or concerns.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Glenn + Judy", positioned below a horizontal line.

Judith Goldman & Glenn Goldman, CPDT  
PetDog Training

**Northeast Veterinary Hospital**  
150 Main St., Peabody, MA 01960

July 28, 2008

SPOT: Swampscott Park for Off-leash Time  
c/o Marc Eichler, Committee Chairman  
95 Farragut Rd.  
Swampscott, MA 01907

Dear Sir:

I am writing in response to your request for a letter expressing my opinion as a doctor of veterinary medicine as to the benefits to canines of off-leash recreation time. In the course of my experience as a veterinarian (DVM, Tufts 1999) and as the director Northeast Veterinary Hospital, Peabody, MA, I am familiar with the numerous scholarly articles on the effect of off-leash time on canine health and behavior as well as having formed an opinion based on my personal experience and observations as a practicing veterinarian.

Dogs require daily exercise and contact with other dogs in order to remain healthy and well socialized. A well socialized dog learns the skills required for getting along with the people and the other dogs (he/she) meets each day. Dogs socialize with each other through subtle displays of posture and behavior that can only occur when they are not impeded by a leash. A leash limits a dog's natural movement and can even cause some dogs to become territorial, protecting the area to which the leash confines them. Also, walking them on a leash is not sufficient exercise: it is not optimal for their physiological and psychological well-being, and it is important for a dog to be provided with natural outlets—to be able to run and exercise and chase things and do as a dog was bred to do. (see, Dogs Behaving Badly: An A-to-Z Guide to Understanding & Curing Behavioral Problems in Dogs, by Dr. Nicholas Dodman, Tufts University veterinarian and behaviorist.)

Furthermore, dogs need to be properly socialized to be good "canine citizens" (Canine Behavior, 1965). They also need appropriate exercise to reduce boredom and pent-up energy at home. Because dogs, like human beings are "pack" animals, they like us, need to socialize in order to remain psychologically healthy. Keeping dogs isolated from one another goes against a dog's most basic instincts. Studies have shown that dogs that exercise and are allowed to run freely are not as aggressive towards people as dogs that are under-exercised. Allowing dogs to have an off-leash area socializes dogs. It brings them in contact with other dogs and causes them to be less aggressive in each future encounter with dogs. In short, dog parks improve the mental state of dogs. Many dog owners report that after a visit to the park their dog is less agitated, more relaxed and in general nicer to be around. Dogs who are accustomed to playing with animals and people other than their owners are more likely to be well-socialized and react well toward strangers.

In short, well-exercised dogs are better neighbors who are less likely to create a nuisance, bark excessively and destroy property. Creating dog parks is a method for more efficiently educating dog owners and facilitating them in assuring excellent behavior with their dogs, according to Dr. Lynette Hart, director of UC Davis' Center for Animals in Society.

Therefore, it is my opinion that access to an off-leash park close to home is the safest and most effective way to ensure that owners socialize their dogs and provide them with on-going experiences in the outside world. This not only benefits the dog and its owner but also neighbors, other park and street users, and authorities responsible for urban animal management, all of whom are affected by unacceptable behavior from un-socialized and under-exercised dogs.

Sincerely,

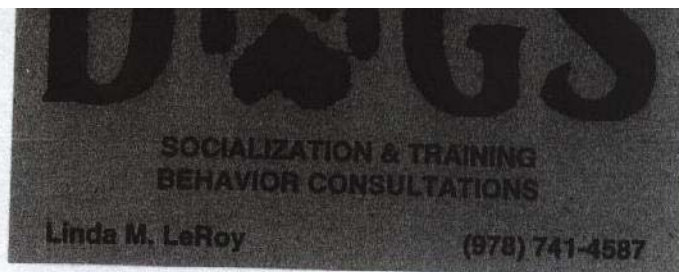
*Doug DePiero*

Doug DePiero, DVM



Board of Selectmen  
Swampscott, Massachusetts 01907

August 4, 2008



To Whom It May Concern:

I was recently contacted by Lynn Zabar, a member of SPOT (Swampscott Park for Off-leash Time), to address the value of exercising our canine companions without restraints, and the positive effects on the community at large.

Recreational exercise has long been known to provide physical, psychological, and emotional benefits to those who participate. We know that stress contributes to inappropriate behaviors. Dogs and humans are similar in this regard.

We are also aware that walking is not vigorous enough for some of us, hence the inordinate number of choices of activities available through public and private facilities. A responsible and moral community establishes safe and appropriate opportunities for recreation on public lands, so it only follows that some spaces should also be set aside for our companion animals.

**CLOSE YOUR EYES .....**Take a moment to remember diving from the high board, sinking that lay-up shot, running over that hurdle, catching the long bomb at the 10-yard line, slapping the puck into the net, heading the soccer ball back to your goalie, landing solid on the mat after a double somersault, jumping to grab that fly ball in right-center field, winning the game - the match - the event. Now imagine accomplishing any of those things attached to another person by 6 feet of leather. **IT WOULD HAVE BEEN VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE!**

**REMEMBER HOW GOOD IT FEELS TO PARTICIPATE ...**

The quality of play is directly related to the **FREEDOM** we have to participate. While our dogs do not place any social value on specific events, participation in **FREE PLAY** does contribute to overall health.

For the dog who has regular opportunities to run, jump, climb, roll, spin, weave, dart, and chase, walking well on a 6-foot leash becomes a more realistic expectation. A calmer dog will be passing people and other animals on the sidewalks, contributing to better public safety.

As our population increases and dog ownership does as well, it is in the best interests of owner, neighbor, and canine that we accommodate each other's needs with consideration and respect. Since we either confine or restrain our dogs for all parties concerned, the presence of a fence insures the safety of the public. I hope the Board will vote in the affirmative to establish several enclosures in the town of Swampscott to provide off-leash exercise.

Respectfully submitted,

*Linda M. LeRoy*  
Linda M. LeRoy  
DOGS



Lynn Zabar  
87 Salem Street  
Swampscott, MA 01907

September 5, 2008

Board of Selectman  
Swampscott, MA 01907

Dear Board Members;

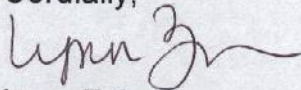
I am writing to express my support for the establishment of a recreational off-leash dog park in our town. For over 15 years I held various positions in both the pet and veterinary industry, as the director of a humane society, a behavioral consultant, and administrator for a 24 hours emergency veterinary hospital.

During that time I witnessed numerous incidents of injury because a pet owner attempted to exercise their dog in an unsafe environment. Additionally, behavior problems are a leading reason for pet surrender and abandonment. Most behavioral issues develop from lack of proper exercise and poor socialization skills. A properly designed and managed park would allow owners to exercise and socialize their dog(s) in an environment that is not only safe for the dog, but safe for the community at large.

As a Swampscott resident and member of the S.P.O.T. committee, I am certainly familiar with the frequent complaints and articles in the paper from other residents about dog owners using playing fields and other inappropriate open spaces to exercise their dog(s). This only reinforces the need to establish a dog park in our community.

Thank you for your consideration, I am readily available to address any questions or concerns the board may have.

Cordially,



Lynn Zabar  
781-599-9888

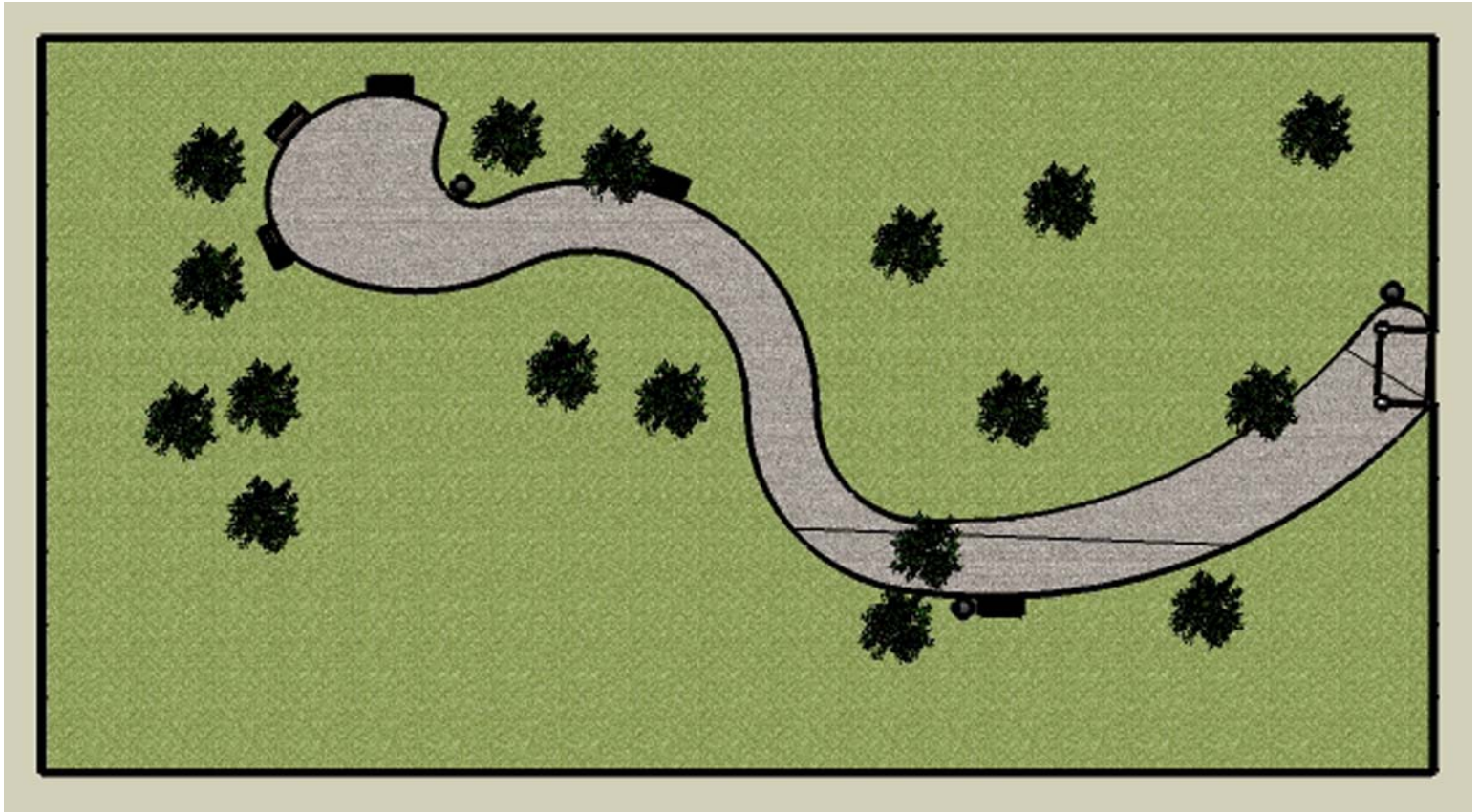


## SPOT Site Map

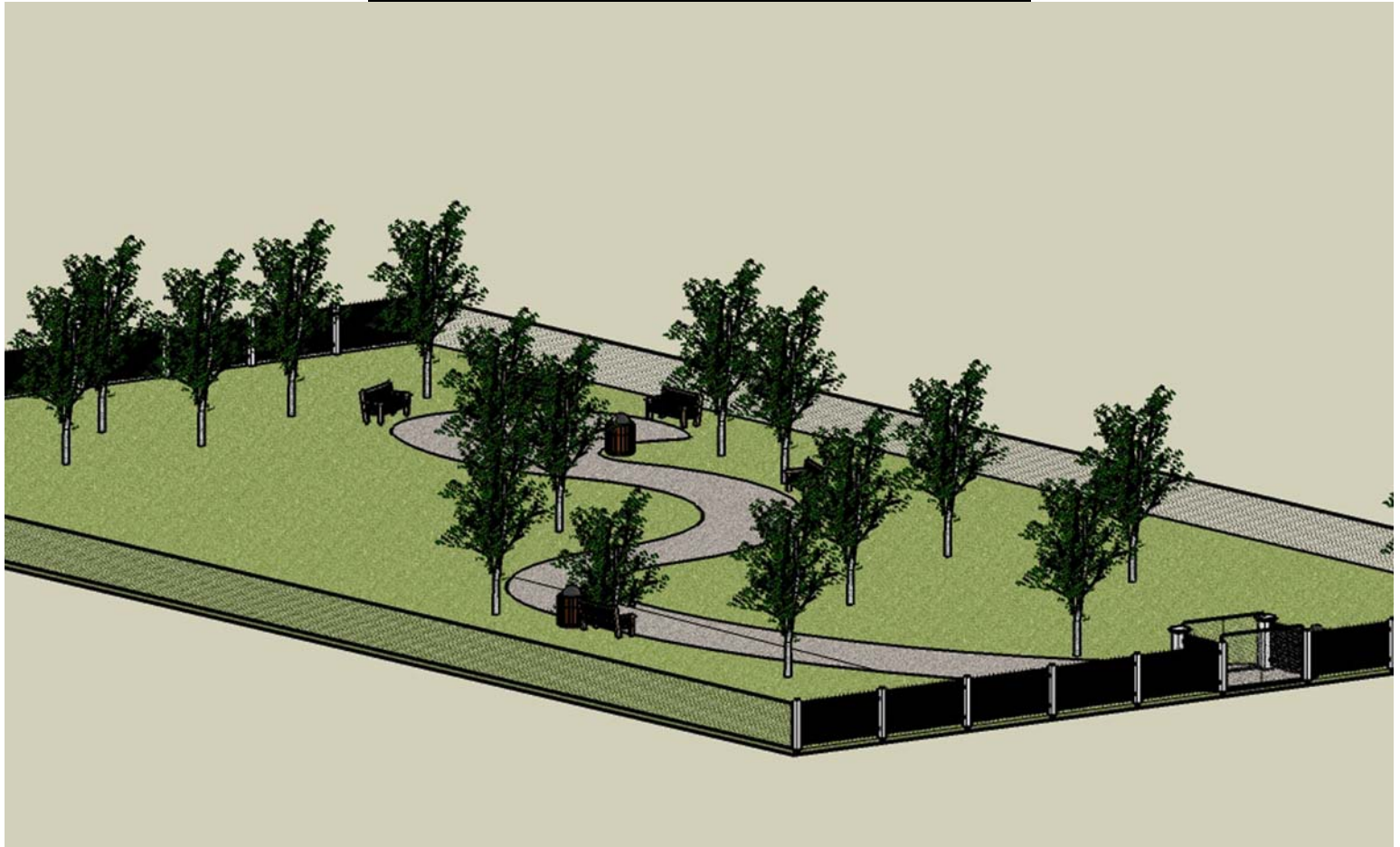




**SPOT Preliminary Site Plan Sept. '08: Overhead View**



**SPOT Preliminary Site Plan Sept. '08: Side View**



## Information on other area dog parks:

Cambridge, MA Park: <http://www.cambridgedog.org/>

Brookline, MA Park: <http://www.townofbrooklinemass.com/recreation/PDFs/DogsOffLeash.pdf>

Somerville, MA Park: <http://www.somdog.org/>  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/somervilledog/sets/72057594103630687/>  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/somervilledog/sets/72157594394823221/>

Salem, MA Park: <http://www.salemspace.org/>  
See Photos attached



Salem Dog Park 8/08 Entrance Photo -1





Salem Dog Park 8/08 Side Fence Photo -2



Salem Dog Park 8/08 Maintenance Gate Photo -3