

Colchester Dog Park Proposal

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Document History

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Who We Are:

We are a strictly volunteer group of Colchester dog owners and dog lovers of all ages, who have gathered to propose the development of a dog park in the town of Colchester. Our work will consist of creating a detailed proposal on where and how a dog park would be built, maintained and funded. Consider attending our dog park committee meetings held at the town hall.

Our Mission:

To establish, support and assist in the ongoing maintenance of a fenced-in, off leash dog park where well behaved canine citizens can exercise in a clean, safe environment without endangering property, wildlife or fellow citizens, and dog lovers can socialize with other dog lovers.

What is a Dog Park?

A dog park, or off-leash dog exercise area, is a fenced piece of land designated for the use of residents who wish to exercise their dogs safely and allow them to socialize with other dogs. It may provide amenities such as benches, shade and has a separate, double-gated entry and exit point called a “bull pen” for safe entry and exit for owners and dogs. It will also provide a disposal facility for dog waste.

How many Dogs are there in Colchester?

There are currently 1,500 dogs registered in Colchester!
Approximately 1,800 unregistered dogs in Colchester (Estimated by Dog Warden)

Benefits of a Dog Park for the dogs:

- Provides a safe and controlled environment for dogs to play and exercise.
- A well-exercised dog is a happier and healthier dog. An exercised dog makes a better next door neighbor than an under-exercised dog. Puppies and dogs which get enough exercise are less likely to create a nuisance, bark excessively, destroy property, jump on passers-by, etc.
- Allows for the socialization of dogs. Socialization helps builds your dog's temperament, and an even-tempered dog is less likely to be aggressive or fearful and will have fewer behavioral problems.

Benefits of a Dog Park to the dog owners:

- The provision of a vital public space allowing people to meet and form the bonds of community.
- Allows people to have the pleasure of watching their dogs at play.
- Contributes to the overall physical fitness of people by encouraging them to exercise with their dogs.
- Provides an opportunity for dog owners to enjoy the outside.
- Provides our seniors, disabled and apartment/condo dwellers with a place to exercise their companions.

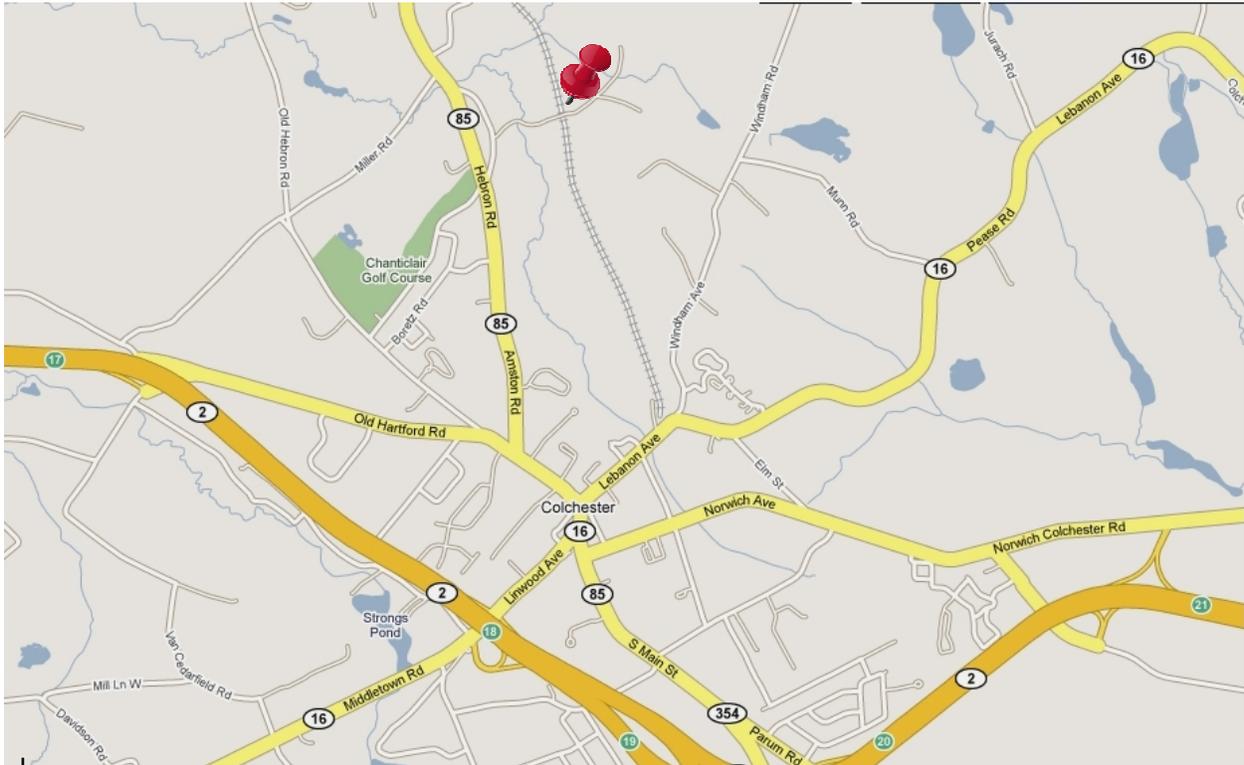
Benefits of a Dog Park to the community:

Enclosed play areas prevent off-leash dogs from infringing on the rights of other community residents and park users such as joggers, small children and those who may be fearful of dogs. A dog park helps build community and lasting friendships between dogs and their owners. Dogs help to bring people together and break down many social or economic barriers.

Where will the park be located?

Colchester's old town dump, located down the road from the current transfer station.

Located on map below as red push pin.



Benefits of this location:

- Redevelopment of Brown field
- Fits with national green/re-use movement
- No neighbors
- Accessible by both road and from the air line trail spur
- Plenty of space (~10 Acres)
- Great natural features/landscaping
- Proximity to center of Town
- While no access to water, there is potential to tie in to electric
- Already owned by the Town of Colchester

Proposed Layout of Dog Park



Minimum Requirements

- Fence – 4ft high, Large and Small Dog areas
- Signs – Posting Park Rules, Times and Contact information
- Parking lot – dirt
- Waste disposal – trash cans and bags

Desired Additional Requirements

- Parking lot – gravel or paved
- Trail – trail to rail trail
- Benches
- Shade (trees)
- Agility equipment
- Bulletin board
- Toys – Balls, Ropes, Tug toy's, etc

Future Enhancements

Fence – additional fenced in area
Trail – additional trails
Pavilion – in small and large dog area

What is the initial Cost of the Dog Park

Fencing - \$25,000 (4ft high fence with gates)
Architecture planning
Permits – Planning and Zoning, conservation, Water
Waste Cans - \$250 - \$500
Yearly cost of bags - \$100 - \$200

How will the Dog Park be paid for?

If a dog park is approved by the town, the Dog Park Committee will organize fundraising events to raise ALL money necessary, including ongoing maintenance, so that it has a **negligible cost to tax payers.**

Funds will be deposited in a special fund and will be managed by the Dog Park Committee under the guidance and oversight of the Parks and Recreation Director.

Fund Raising Ideas?

- “Wag and Walk/Run” Colchester Dog Park would be an afternoon event could include K9 demonstrations (usually the police depts. Will donate some time)

- 5k run for residents in town
 - 2 mile run with a dog
 - 2 mile walk with dog
 - 1 mile kids run (families and dogs welcome)

Event will also include activities such as Best Costume, Best trick, Biggest Dog, Smallest Dog etc. in which people can enter. Prizes and donations will be collected prior to the event. Maybe we could allow business to “buy” a booth and come share their product during the time the event occurs. Raffles, bake sale, photo area for families and dogs, t-shirts, anything we can sell on the side for some extra contributions.

- Dinner Dance- public event open to anyone interested with food and music. Cost approx \$25 a couple depending on where event is held. Have raffles people can buy to win prize packages that are donated from the different businesses around town.
- Committee Town wide yard sale- Host a yard sale and anything sold, money or a large percentage goes to the dog park fundraising.

- Golf Tournament- Local golf tournament with food and prizes.
- Coin Buckets at local shops and businesses- to collect donations and provide flyers with information the residents in town.
- Brick Sales- for the walkway leading into the dog park (bull pen area) Can be purchased by businesses, families etc. (estimate to cost around 50-75 dollars) sold prior to building park for initial walkway, they annual additions to walkway.
- Fence section sales- Families, businesses etc can buy a section of the fence. A plaque with their name or company name will be placed on that are of the fence to show their support and donation. (estimated cost is approximately 300 dollar donation) sold prior to building the dog park.
- T-shirt sales- Colchester Dog Park t-shirts printed to be sold at different fundraising events or events around town.
- Bake Sales- conduct some bake sales around town (in front of stop and shop, hardware stores etc)
- Dog Park Cookbook – collect peoples favorite recipes and put them together in a book to sell to community members. Include photos of dogs and families to spice it up.
- Donations
- Holiday Pet Photo sales
- Bench and equipment donations
- Sponsorship\Advertisement of local businesses
- Advertisement (Temporary)

How will the park be maintained?

The majority of park maintenance of a dog park is done by those that visit the dog park, as well as by volunteers organized by the Dog Park committee and the town Parks and Recreation Department. Doggy waste bag dispensers and shovels are often provided, rules are posted and dog owners are expected to pick up after their pets. By maintaining an active dog park committee, the members can encourage users to treat the facilities with respect.

Parks and Recreation Department will be responsible for trash disposal and parking lot maintenance (Snow removal)

Maintenance Plan

The Dog Park Committee will develop a comprehensive maintenance plan to work in coordination with the Parks and Recreation Department for ongoing maintenance to the park. The goal of this plan will be to maintain the park at negligible cost to the town through the use of volunteers and fund raising. A volunteer plan will also be developed.

Liability?

CT Law states that liability and responsibility for dog injuries are the responsibility of the dog owner regardless of on whose property the damage occurs.

This will be posted at the Park

The Town of Colchester **is not responsible and shall have no liability** for the acts or omissions of individuals or their animals that utilize the dog park. **You are liable for any injury or damage caused by your animal.**

Proposed Names

Here is a list of the proposed names for the dog park, this list is in no specific order.

- Colchester Dog Park
- Colchester Freedom Park
- Colchester Bark Park
- Born Free
- Fun Free
- Born to Run
- Colchester Woof's Run (or Park)
- Colchester Canine Park
- Colchester Pooch Park
- Colchester Tail-Wagger Park
- Colchester Happy Tails Park
- Colchester Pooches and People Park
- Colchester Pooch Park
- Colchester Paw Playground
- Colchester Paw Park
- Dogwoods Park
- (Insert name of major donor here)
- Colchester Paws For Play
- Colchester Canine Recreation Park
- Colchester Waggin Tails Park
- Colchester Park Paw Playground
- Colchester Canine Commons

- Colchester Canine Open Space Park
- Colchester Field of Dogs
- Colchester Community Paws Park
- Colchester Woof-Pac Park
- Colchester Canine Fields
- Colchester's Canine Corner
- Happy Tails Dog Park

Dog Park Rules:

1. Handler of a dog is responsible for the acts and conduct of their dog when it is at the park.
2. Park users, dog handler and attendants assume all risk related to the use of the park.
3. Park Hours: ½ hour AFTER sunrise to ½ hour BEFORE sunset.
4. Smoking and food are not allowed within the dog park.
5. Dogs must be vaccinated and licensed and tags worn.
6. Dogs must be neutered/spayed.
7. Sick dogs, aggressive dogs and dogs under 4 months of age are not allowed.
8. Dogs must be on leash when entering and leaving the off-leash area.
9. Dogs with a known history of aggressive or dangerous behavior are not allowed.
10. Handler must have a leash on hand for each dog at all times.
11. Dogs must be attended, within sight and under voice control of their handler at all times.
12. Users are limited to no more than 2 dogs at any one time.
13. Children under the age of 16 must be supervised by an adult.
14. Choke, prong, spiked and electronic collars must be removed when your dog is in the park.
15. Handler must immediately clean up after their dog. Waste must be disposed in proper receptacles.
16. Handler is responsible for filling holes and repairing damage caused by their dog.
17. Dog treats, chews and dog bones are not allowed in the park.
18. Pets other than dogs are not allowed in the park.
19. Bikes, strollers, baby carriages, skateboards, skates, rollerblades and motorized vehicles (except park maintenance, wheelchairs) are not allowed.

HELPFUL HINTS FOR DOG PARK VISITORS

WHEN TO VISIT THE PARK: First time users should consider coming at off-peak times (week days between 9 – 4) for their initial visit. Ask questions of those people inside the fence about how to ease your dog's initial stress of entering for the first time. At times, the park can become quite crowded. If you are not sure how your dog will react to the current conditions, don't put pressure on your dog by forcing it into what it thinks is a threatening situation. Instead, come back at another time when it is less crowded.

LEASHING YOUR DOG: Keep your dog leashed at all times while outside the fenced dog park area. Even if your pet is under perfect voice control, many non-dog people have fears and any dog off-leash outside the fenced area violates the Town's Leash Law. Dogs must be kept on a leash until the handler and dog(s) are inside the double-gated transition area. Leashes should be removed while inside the double-gated transition area. Some dogs may feel threatened if they are leashed in the presence of unleashed dogs.

ENTERING THE PARK: Do not enter the double-gated transition area if there is already someone in there. Make sure that the gates are secured in front of and behind you when entering and leaving the park. Quickly move away from the entrance area as you enter. That will help disperse the group of dogs that will come over to welcome your dog to the park. Move away from the fence so that your dog will not feel cornered or threatened. This will lessen the problem caused when several off-leash dogs already in the park come running over to greet the new arrival, perhaps overwhelming the arriving dog. And of course, be sure to ask any handlers at the park to secure their dogs so that you and your dog can come into the park without a struggle.

YOUR DOG'S EXPERIENCE: Many dogs will be experiencing the off-leash environment for the first time and may not be used to the excitement and level of energy. Please watch your dog closely. If your dog acts aggressively, please put the dog on a leash immediately and let it "cool down." It takes time for a new dog to become comfortable with the idea that other dogs all share this neutral environment. Keep in mind that everyone at the park wants the same thing - socialized dogs that can have fun playing together. If you are not sure how your dog will react, try to come to the park when few other dogs are there to keep the intimidation level as low as possible. You may wish to keep your first visit to the dog park rather short to minimize the stress on your pup. Leaving early when your dog is having a good time will make it more likely that your dog will be anxious to return for another visit.

STAY ALERT! Keep your head on a swivel at all times as there will likely be groups of dogs running around the park and having fun. People standing around are obstructions - a dog being chased may try to run its pursuer into a person in order to gain an advantage. Keep in mind that the picnic tables are there for the dogs' use and you may be bumped or jostled if you are not paying attention to the action in the park. Stay alert!

INJURIES: If another dog injures your dog, get the name, address and phone number of the other dog's owner/handler and the license and rabies tag number of the dog.

ABOUT CHOKE AND PRONG COLLARS: Remember that choke, prong or spiked collars are not allowed inside the off-leash area. Each of these collar types can result in injury to its wearer, another dog or a person depending on the situation. If a choke collar gets hung up on something while running, its wearer can become choked. Some dogs, while playing, like to softly bite the back of another dog's neck. Dogs wearing prong collars receive a much stronger bite during this type of play, while dogs wearing spiked collars can inflict injury.

BE RESPONSIBLE! Be a responsible dog owner - if your pet has a contagious condition, **STAY AWAY** from the dog park until your veterinarian has said that there is no danger to other dogs. For your own dog's and all other dogs' protection, your dog needs to be current on all of its' vaccinations.

DOG WASTE BAGS AND RECEPTACLES: Our dog park is equipped with waste receptacles and plenty of bags, so please use them! The complaint most heard from opponents of dog parks is the handling of waste matter and the upkeep of the park. Please clean up after your own pet and while visiting, help pick up any "orphan poop" that someone else might have missed. Continued use of this park will depend on our control of this issue and pitching in to help.

DIGGING: Owners must stop their dogs from digging and are responsible for quickly filling in any holes or repairing any damage their dog causes.

CLEAN UP: Please clean up YOUR park. Trash, cigarette butts (**SMOKING IS NOT PERMITTED WITHIN THE PARK**) and anything else on the ground may end up in a dog's mouth. Before you drop something on the ground, ask yourself "Would I want my dog to eat this?" We must all work to keep our park clean.

NO BARE FEET! There is debris in the park. Avoid getting infections by keeping your shoes on!

FOOD ITEMS: Do not bring human or dog food, treats or bones into the dog park.

Frequently asked Questions:

Won't dogs fight if they run free together?

Since dogs are pack animals, they usually get along well together on neutral territory. Occasionally a dog shows aggressive behavior, but park rules prohibit aggressive dogs and such a dog must be removed immediately. Liability for damage caused by a dog rests with the owner, whether on a street, in a home or on municipal property. Very few problems have been noted in established parks.

What are the rules of a dog park?

All dog parks have a set of rules that are vital to the success of the dog park. Our committee is establishing rules which will be posted at the dog park. Owners are expected to abide by the rules established.

Is there an Admission fee?

No, the Dog Park would be free to everyone.

Is water available?

No, the Dog Park does not have water resources so please bring plenty of water and a drinking bowl for your dog to enjoy.

Do other communities have dog parks?

Currently in Connecticut, the following list of towns have established dog parks

Town	Link
Hamden	http://www.hamdenrdog.org
Norwich	http://www.pawsitivepark.com/index.html
South Windsor	http://www.southwindsorbarkpark.org/
Wethersfield	http://www.wethersfielddogpark.org/
Granby	http://www.granbydogpark.com/5.html
Groton	

Many towns are in the processes of developing a dog park such as:

Town	Link
Enfield	http://www.enfielddogpark.com/
Glastonbury	http://town.glasct.org/parks/dogpark.htm
Rocky Hill	http://www.rhparkrec.org/DogPark/index.htm
Bristol	http://www.bristoldogpark.com/
East Windsor	http://www.freewebs.com/ewdogpark/
Manchester	http://www.mdogct.com/

Additional Resource links:

Resource	Link
List of parks by State	http://www.ecoanimal.com/dogfun/
Online Resource for Dog parks	http://www.dogpark.com/
Dog Park USA	http://www.dogparkusa.com/

Where can I get more information?

For more information on meetings visit the web at:

<http://www.colchesterct.gov/dogpark>

Contact Jay Cohen, Parks & Recreation Director, at jcohen@colchesterct.gov or 860-537-7295 with questions or comments.