



DOG ON IT PARKS

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TIPS FOR BUILDING SUCCESSFUL DOG PARKS IN YOUR MULTI-FAMILY COMMUNITY

Did you know there are currently more dogs in the US than children? And that renters often base their decision making on whether their pets will be welcome too? Dog parks aren't just a trend in the multifamily industry, they're a hugely popular amenity for your residents and can also help to promote your community as being truly pet-friendly! There is always a market for pet-owners who are looking for affordable, long term housing and your dog park can help turn a "Maybe" into a "Yes!".



Here are some of the most common considerations to address as your community moves towards opening a very successful pet park:

Big Benefits: From a marketing perspective, having an onsite dog park can give you an advantage over a competing property whose residents may have to drive to a nearby off-leash area. Residents are often willing to pay a higher deposit *and* monthly rent in order to live somewhere that accepts (and welcomes!) their pets. In addition to the financial perks, pet-friendly communities typically see less resident turnover and have a higher rating from resident satisfaction surveys. Dog parks also provide a perfect place to host fun resident gatherings such as Yappy Hour, Howl-O-Ween, and even obedience training and adoption events. These are all great opportunities for your residents to get to know one another and help to cultivate a sense of community.

Inexpensive Amenity: One of the best benefits of dog parks are the relatively low construction costs and the low maintenance requirements. This yields the greatest amount of recreation opportunities for the investment compared to building a children's playground or other recreational area, and items from our Canine Courtyard™ line (developed specifically for MF communities!) offer play components and site amenities for every budget. Depending on available space, dog parks can be built for as little as a few thousand dollars or more for a larger park with additional amenities.

Location, Location, Location: As in real estate, a good location is key. There may be apprehension about barking, loose dogs, smells and foot traffic, but all of these issues can be resolved with proper planning. However, be sure to avoid locating dog parks adjacent to playgrounds to reduce potential conflicts with children.

How Much Space Do I Need?: You don't need acres of open fields to build a dog park. We've designed smaller parks with as little as 500 square feet and larger parks with 10,000+ square feet. Multifamily communities often have the opportunity to get creative with possible locations. Overgrown, neglected and unmanaged areas can become great dog parks! Many properties are also re-purposing existing tennis courts, volleyball courts, unused greenbelts and parking lots/garage space.

Professional Design Assistance: We're here to help you through the entire process! As the first company in the US to specialize exclusively in dog parks, no one else has as much experience or enjoys it as much as we do (and we have a lot of fun here!). Our team of dog park experts can assist you with design, make recommendations based on your space and budget, and provide guidance to help make your dog park something your community will enjoy for years to come. And the best part? It's a complimentary service we offer as part of our quoting process.

Fencing: Good fences make good dog parks! Fences should be four-to-five feet or higher, and be absolutely escape proof; if possible, we recommend burying several inches of the fence beneath the surface to help prevent dogs from digging their way out. Self-closing double gates are also a must to reduce the possibility of dogs escaping unexpectedly and don't forget to include a maintenance entrance for large equipment like mowers. For budgeting purposes, figure that the typical installed costs are about \$20-\$25/linear foot for heavy duty chain link fencing, including gates and accessories.

H2O: Drinking fountains are essential for the health of both dogs and people, especially after playing or exercising. If fountains are not available, residents may be tempted to provide their own water in bowls or buckets which can cause problems. Standing water creates a perfect haven for mosquitoes and other creepy critters, and can also spread diseases between dogs. Look for fountains that offer a slow draining dog bowl and to prevent corrosion, all stainless steel fountains are always your best option. Dog wash stations have also become a very popular amenity, particularly when combined with a pet fountain. Our Deluxe Dog Watering Station provides the best of both worlds and allows your residents to water *and* wash their pups after using the dog park.

Agility Equipment is a Must Have: A tired dog is a happy dog! Studies have shown dogs with access to daily exercise and stimulation have *significantly less* behavioral issues such as barking, chewing and destruction of property – all things community managers want to avoid, right? Offering dog agility equipment allows the guardian to exercise with their pet while also helping to build a dog's confidence level. Choose components that offer a variety of activities like ramps, tunnels, jumps and weave poles to accommodate the many different skill levels of both the dogs and their owners. Make sure to have safe and appropriate spacing between each component (this is where our design expertise comes in handy!) and choose a manufacturer who specializes in dog parks and dog park equipment. Dog agility activities will help make your dog park more of a destination which leads to an increase in the amount time your residents use the park *and* how often they visit. That's what we call a win-win!

To Pee or Not to Pee: That is the question... and unfortunately, all dogs are going to do it. Because dog urine is highly corrosive and causes degradation of equipment quickly (in addition to environmental factors such as salt air, rain, snow, mud, etc.), avoid products made from steel, brittle PVC or lumber. All of our agility equipment is manufactured solely with 100% rust-resistant materials and *we offer a lifetime warranty against rust on all of our metal agility components.*

Have a Seat: Dog parks are parks for people...and their dogs! Be sure to include seating for your two legged park users and to help encourage conversation between residents, consider arranging your benches in an L or U shape. Whether you opt for our colorful dog paw benches or an eco-friendly option from our EcoDog line, there are plenty attractive and durable options to choose from.

Scoop Your Poop: Pickup stations and receptacles are absolutely critical for a clean dog park and community as a whole. Placing 5-10 stations throughout the property can help to increase compliance; the more access residents have to bags and trash receptacles, the more likely they are to clean up after Fido. Dog Park Tip: Setting receptacles on the outside of the dog park fence will make trash pickup easier for maintenance staff, as does using signage and/or color coding your receptacles for specific uses like “Trash Only” or “Dog Waste Only”.

The Grass Is Always Greener: While natural surfacing such as grass is ideal, it can quickly become worn out by enthusiastic canines. Consider reinforcing high use areas with artificial dog park turf or our popular Woof Fiber™. Woof Fiber™ interlocks together to stay in place far better than ordinary mulch or chips and helps to eliminate the mud problems that can often close a park or create resident frustration. Both options are also ADA Accessible, so the park can be enjoyed by all regardless of ability. The grass adjacent to the fence line is especially susceptible to damage, so consider creating a gravel perimeter track and only maintaining the grass or turf in the middle of the park.

Signage: Good signage can be an effective user education tool, while bad signage will be completely ignored. Signs should have friendly and colorful graphics and the text should take a positive tone instead of a long list of “Don’ts”. Keep the rules brief and provide a phone number for the management office in case there is a maintenance issue or other problem at the park.

These tips should help make your dog park more successful, from concept through the grand opening. Any questions? Contact us for more help at sales@dog-on-it-parks.com or visit our website at: www.dog-on-it-parks.com.

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