

Off Leash Facility Design and Program Guidelines

Kansas City, Missouri



Introduction

Since 2007, the staff of Kansas City, MO Parks and Recreation has spent a considerable amount of time in evaluation of the issue of dog parks and other off-leash dog utilization of the city's many parks. At the request of the prior Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners, senior staff reviewed national options and proposed a set of standards that might be used to determine the appropriate sites for dog parks. During the tenure of the current Park Board, the Dog Park Task Force was appointed. The Dog Park Task Force met on a regular basis over last year. The meetings were staffed by Parks employees, and senior staff was regularly updated on the progress, questions and suggestions of the Task Force. On two occasions, the Task Force met at a specially scheduled evening meeting of the department's Development Review Committee, to review the progress being made and to make suggestions about the proposed recommendations. Staff extensively reviewed the draft report and made suggestions for improvements. Since the release and presentation of the final report of the Dog Park Task Force, staff has met several times and has conducted its own tour of recommended sites. These steps have been taken in order to finalize a response and make a set of recommendations that the Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners can adopt on this topic.

It is important to acknowledge the excellent work of the Dog Park Task Force, and the significant role their report has played in the response and recommendations of staff. Many parts of the report are adopted or ratified with little or no change. Their work was thorough and comprehensive. They examined national models and also made several attempts to discern the public's input on this matter. They have correctly stated that the report is not about any particular site, but to provide a framework for the inclusion of dog parks into the programmed fabric of the park system.

In a broader context, Parks and Recreation also acknowledges the value and importance of the communities that have been created around dog recreation and it is the intention of the department to facilitate a process to encourage those communities. The Department's perspective in defining the process shifts from one of issue advocacy, to one of balancing the many interests and issues surrounding the programmed use of our parks. We have relied on some of the criteria we currently use when faced with a request to add an athletic field or basketball court, etc, to a neighborhood park, or to help site and design a playground in a park. These considerations always include balancing the desires of a group of potential users, with the interests of those already using the park for other programmed or unprogrammed purposes, as well as the impact on the surrounding area, traffic and the availability of that amenity in proximity to the proposed site. This process has hopefully helped us to be better communicators about the way in which these interests are balanced and the criteria for reaching our decisions.

Parks and Recreation Department takes very seriously our responsibility to make wise decisions on land management for the incredible diversity of our system of parks and boulevards. We are

the stewards of the land for the community in Kansas City and we propose, through the adoption of these standards, that we will succeed in fulfilling our responsibility.

Types of Dog Parks

Within the City of Kansas City, MO's Parks System there will be two types of dog parks: a "*dog park*" and an "*off leash areas*". A "*dog park*" is to be a minimum of five acres in size. This provides enough space for separate areas for small and large dogs. An "*off leash area*", one acre in size, can only be located within the limits defined in the Greater Downtown Area Plan, between State Line east to The Paseo and from the Missouri River south to 31st Street.

"Dog Park" Design

Three different designs of a "*dog park*" can be built, depending on the needs of the community; Class I "*dog park*" (lowest cost), Class II "*dog park*" (medium cost) and Class III "*dog park*" (highest cost).

All "*dog parks*" will be a minimum of 5 acres, fenced, have adequate parking, double entry gate, separate fenced area for small dogs, trash receptacles, sign kiosk and provide buffer if needed.

Class I "*dog park*" will be fenced with 5' black vinyl coated chain-link.

Class II "*dog park*" will have the above amenities and the following: drinking fountain, benches and picnic tables.

Class III "*dog park*" will have the same amenities as Class I and Class II, along with the following: the fence would be a 5' decorative fence, shelter and some type of water feature.

"Off Leash Area" Design

The "*off leash area*" will support the downtown residents as a location to take their dogs in the morning and in the evening. An owner who wants a larger exercise area will need to drive to the nearest dog park. It is anticipated that due to high use of the park, pervious hardscape materials will be used. To match the surrounding amenities, the "*off leash area*" will include the following; a decorative five foot fence, drinking fountain and standard park benches and trash cans.

Maintenance

Like any other park amenity, both types of dog parks will need regular maintenance, including trash pickup and mowing. To minimize the impact to the users, a time each week will be identified for maintenance at which the park will be closed. For more intense maintenance, both types of dog parks will need to be closed for two weeks each season, allowing for extensive

maintenance. The users will have access to another park during the closure. Signs will be posted that when the park conditions are poor and it is not to be used.

The maintenance, for both types of dog parks, is an additional strain for the Parks & Recreation Department. Funding will need to be identified for daily and ongoing maintenance before implementation of these parks. Potential sources of funding include fundraising, endowments, in-kind contributions from advocacy groups as well as potential public funding. Park staff will continue to explore the option of having a membership for the use of the parks.

Criteria

Staff discussed expanding the Dog Park Task Force criteria used for evaluating the parks. The Dog park Task Force's criteria were base exclusively on physical criteria. It was decided that the criteria should expand upon physical criteria to include following: proximity to existing park programming and amenities; community and partnership support; costs of implementation; and the impact of increased traffic through neighborhoods. Some criteria are perceived to be more critical and are weighted accordingly, (see Figure A). This process is similar when considering where to locate other elements in a park – baseball complex, football fields and disc golf, for example. During site visits, staff identified areas away from existing recreation amenities.

The criteria for “*dog parks*” are slightly different than the criteria for “*off leash areas*”. An “*off leash area*” would not require parking since it is assumed that users live within walking distance.

Ratings were assigned to each potential site for “*dog parks*” (areas that could support five acres) and “*off leash areas*” (located within the Greater Downtown area). A minimum score of 60 points out of 100 points was needed for recommendation as a potential site. Park Board members provided direction to the park staff, that one preferred site per Council District is needed.

Per these recommendations, one “*dog park*” site in each district has been identified. An “*off leash area*” was identified in the Greater Downtown Area. Within each park, a location away from existing programming has been chosen. No existing recreational amenity will be moved or relocated to accommodate either a “*dog park*” or an “*off leash area*”.

Preferred Potential Recommended “Dog Parks”

Park <i>Location</i>	Council District	Score *	Bonus Pts **	“Dog Park” Type
Englewood Park <i>Southern portion of the park, east of the lake</i>	1	72	10	II
Vaydik Park <i>South of the Line Creek Community Center, within the Nature First Area</i>	2	69	16	II
Blue Valley Park <i>Heritage Fountain vicinity</i>	3	68	12	I
South Oak Park <i>West side of the park, woods would buffer from the soccer practice field</i>	4	64	12	II
Swope Park <i>East of Lewis Road</i>	5	74	14	I
Blue River Athletic Fields <i>North portion of the park, east of the pond</i>	6	68	16	I

Other Potential Recommended “Dog Parks”

Park <i>Location</i>	Council District	Score *	Bonus Pts **	“Dog Park” Type
Hodge Park <i>Off of 96th Street</i>	1	65	14	I
Hidden Valley Park <i>West of Bennington Rd.</i>	1	63	14	I
Tiffany Springs Park <i>Between the soccer fields and baseball fields</i>	2	70	14	I
Jerry Smith Park <i>Southwest of the barn</i>	6	61	12	I
Minor Park <i>South of the rugby field</i>	6	69	12	I

Preferred Potential Recommended “Off Leash Areas”

Park <i>Location</i>	Council District	Score *	Bonus Points
West Terrace Park <i>Across from State Street</i>	2	73	8

Other Recommended “Off Leash Areas”

Park <i>Location</i>	Council District	Score *	Bonus Points
Mulkey Square <i>West portion of the park, away from the volleyball and baseball fields</i>	4	65	10

*Score out of 100 points, ** 16 bonus points possible

Rules & Regulation

The rules which are to be in effect at each type of dog park have been adapted from the suggestions of the Dog Park Task Force, as well as from research into best practices across the country. The City's recommendation takes into account some of the liability issues often associated with off-leash areas. These rules should be made available in all marketing and other posted information about the dog parks, as well as displayed in several locations at the dog park sites.

Dog Park Rules:

1. Handlers enter off-leash area at their own risk.
2. Handlers must clean up after their dogs and dispose of all trash.
3. Dogs may never be left unattended and must be under voice control at all times. There is a maximum of two (2) dogs per adult handler.
4. Owners are responsible legally and financially for the actions of their dogs. Aggressive dogs should not be brought into the area, and any dog must be removed immediately if aggressive behavior is noted.
5. Dogs must be healthy and free of parasites, properly licensed, vaccinated, and not in heat. No puppies under four months old are allowed.
6. Children 8 years and under are not allowed in the off-leash dog area; children ages 9 – 15 must be accompanied by an adult. An adult handler is considered anyone over 16 years of age.
7. Dogs must be leashed when outside of the fenced area. Handler should have the leash in hand when inside of the area.
8. No human food is permitted in the fenced/off-leash area. Handlers using dog treats must assume the risk of safe handling.
9. Prong, choke and spike collars must be removed for safety reasons.
10. Handlers are subject to all applicable city ordinances.

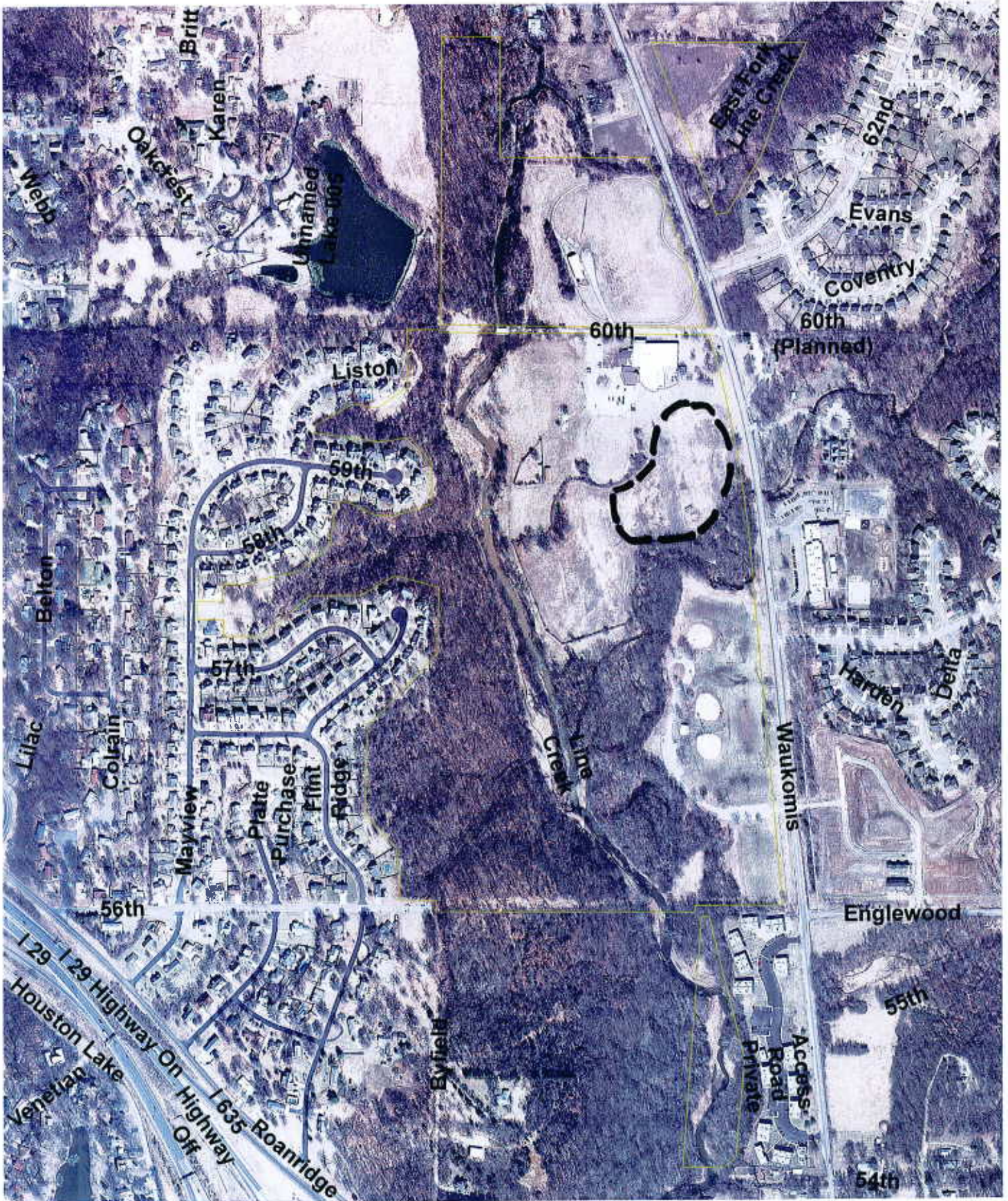
Public Hearings and Final Selection Process

A public hearing process will be used to determine the final locations for the “*dog park*” and “*off leash areas*”. They will be held in the vicinity of the seven preferred sites. Consensus for each location would need to be reached before finalizing the site recommendation.



Potential Recommended Dog Park
Englewood Park
City of Kansas City, Missouri

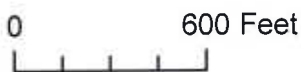




Potential Recommended Dog Park

Frank Vaydik Park

City of Kansas City, Missouri



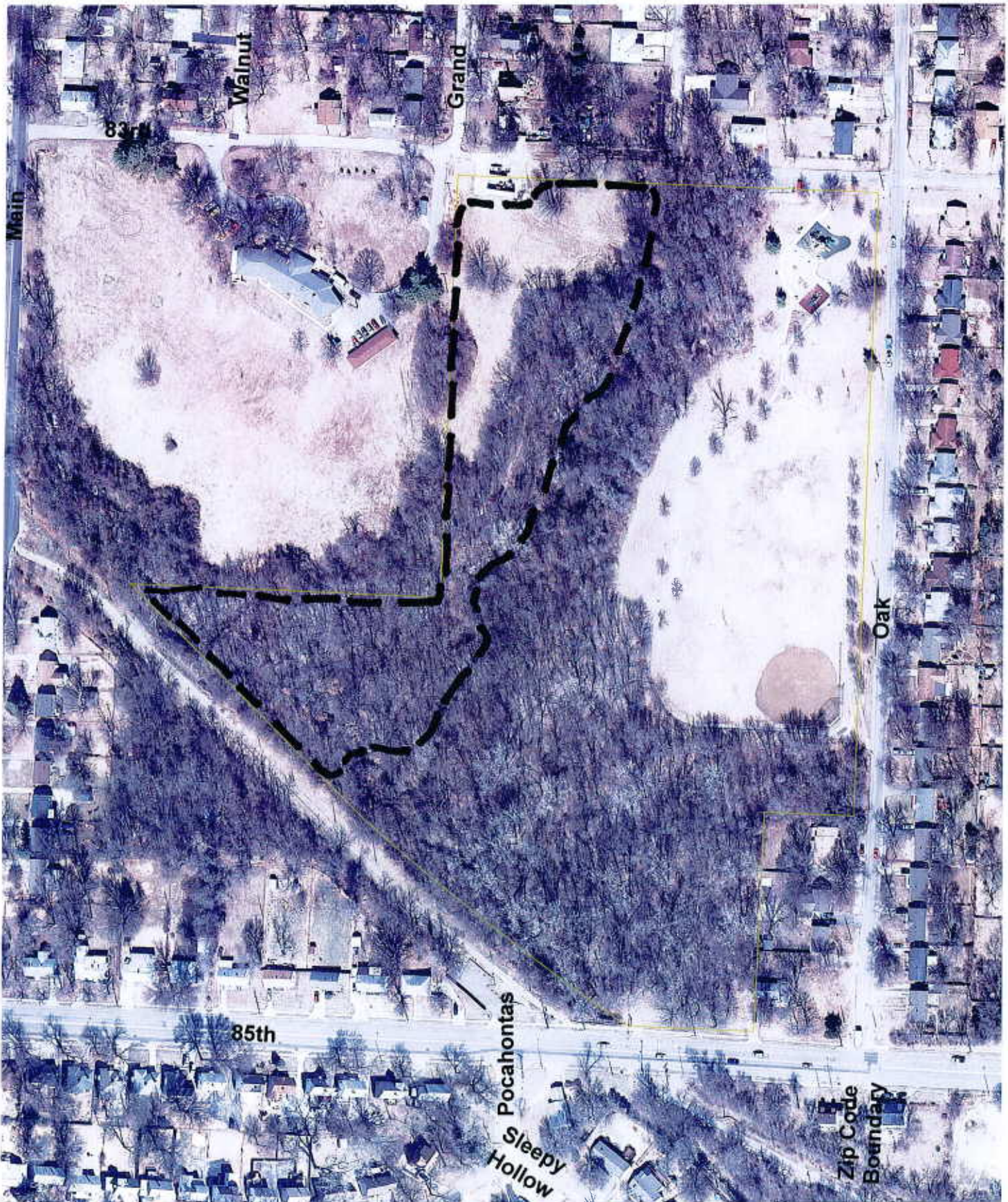


Potential Recommended Dog Park

Blue Valley Park

City of Kansas City, Missouri

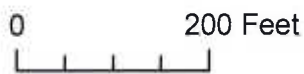




Potential Recommended Dog Park

South Oak Park

City of Kansas City, Missouri

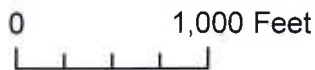




Potential Recommended Dog Park

Swope Park

City of Kansas City, Missouri





Potential Recommended Dog Park
Blue River Athletic Fields
City of Kansas City, Missouri





Potential Recommended Off Leash Area

West Terrace Park

City of Kansas City, Missouri

