

Committee Works to Establish a Safe Area for Dogs in Latrobe Park

by Barbara Wilson

If you haven't noticed, Locust Point is full of dogs. From young pups to old mutts, they're everywhere... sniffing the ground for goodies after Halloween, chasing squirrels in Latrobe Park, going for long walks with their best friend around the Fort. These dogs have the life, minus one setback... a safe and clean place in the neighborhood for them to play with each other.

Members of the community have spent much of the past year making it their goal to provide a fenced-in, off-leash area for their four-legged kids in which to run around. Although there are still several steps to be completed in the process before the park can be opened, the dog park committee is hard at work ironing out all of the details.

There are many benefits to the creation of a dog park in Locust Point. Peace of mind is a big one. We all know many dog owners already let their pups run free in the park. However, it is illegal and subject to a hefty fine if police ever stop by. A dog park would allow a secure spot where dogs are required to be off-leash. Owners don't have to worry about fines bothering strangers walking by, or endangering the lives of their dogs and others should the dog be enticed by something on the busy streets.

Dog parks provide a social setting where both humans and canines can interact and have fun. For owners and non-dog owners alike, how entertaining is it to watch the hilarious and diverse ways dogs interact? My dog does this silly 360-degree twirl when playing with other dogs that inevitably makes people laugh. Also, both people and dogs make friends at a dog park, just as parents and kids do at a playground. And we can always use more friends.

Dogs will become better neighbors if they have a place to play. Dogs that are socialized and exercised frequently are less of a disturbance to their surroundings. We live in such close quarters in Locust Point that a dog who barks regularly, usually out of boredom, can be very annoying to the neighbor separated only by a brick wall or alley way. If there was a dog park for that pup to run around in and get their energy out, levels of barking and many other unpleasant canine

behaviors (such as chewing, jumping, accidents) would likely decrease since they'd be so worn out to be doing anything naughty.

Thinking about selling your house anytime soon? Believe it or not, a dog park could help set you apart from comparable listings in Federal Hill or Riverside! A homebuyer moving to Baltimore with their dog would be enticed by an amenity such as an off-leash dog area. And we all know that in this market, the more perks that help a house sell, the better, right?

Members of the dog park committee feel there are many benefits to creating a dog park, but we are well aware of the concerns. As a community, it's good to be cautious, but the members of the committee strongly feel issues such as smell, rats, parking and noise shouldn't be a problem. The dog park will contain heavy-duty sealable trashcans that will be emptied daily by volunteers. If the current situation in Latrobe Park, where dog feces sit in plastic bags in trashcans that are not sealed for several days doesn't bring odor or rat issues, a well-maintained dog park will not be any worse. Actually, we hope it will be nicer.

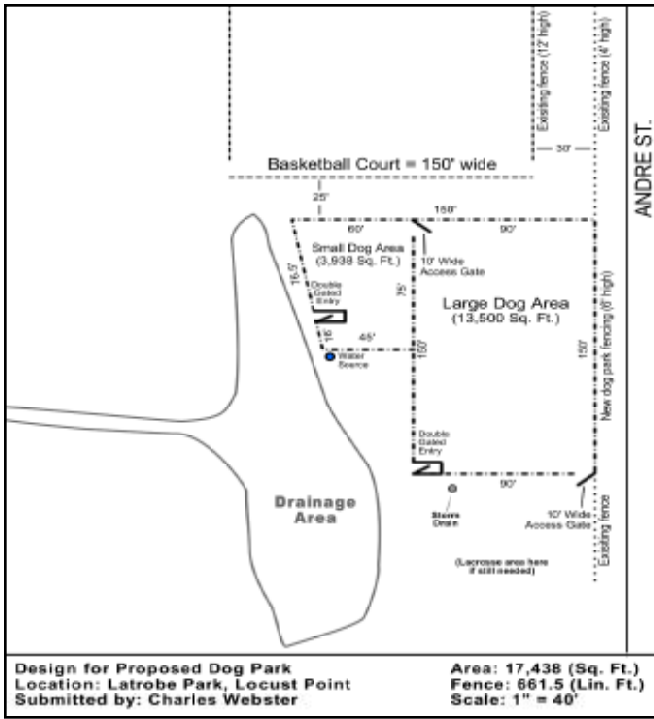
The location of the dog park will be behind the basketball courts in the back corner of Latrobe Park (see picture). One side of the dog park will border Andre Street, which will have plenty of angled parking should people from outside Locust Point visit the dog park. It's highly unlikely that parking for the dog park will disrupt residential parking. In regards to noise from dogs barking, the park is over 500 feet from any residences, well beyond the requirement of 200 feet issued by the Department of Recreation and Parks. Additionally, the dog park will follow the dusk 'til dawn usage rules that are in place in every city-owned park.

So, what will happen next? The dog park committee will enter into a formal agreement with the city (who will then refer to our committee as The Friends of Locust Point Dog Park). The city has already given us tentative approval based on our location, but final approval had to wait until the community approved the concept of a dog park.

In order to make anything happen we will need funds. The estimated initial cost for the dog

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park is close to \$30,000. To raise the money, the dog park committee is actively soliciting donations from businesses and developers, and we will also hold several fundraisers in the upcoming months. Please contact us if you or someone you know want to be a sponsor of the park by donating money or materials. Information can be found on our website, www.locustpointdogpark.org.

Thank you to all the volunteers who have given so much of their free time to this cause. We could use more volunteers, though, so please get involved if you have time to spare. Here's hoping that the fence will be up and our dogs will be running free by spring.

Barbara Wilson is chairman of the Dog Park Committee.

A motion in support of the Locust Point Civic Association moving forward in negotiations with the City to formally establish a Dog Park was passed at the November General Meeting. Further information of specific community legal and financial responsibilities,

including fundraising, will be presented and discussed at the December General Meeting.

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