

ABSTRACT

CREATIVE PROJECT: Landscape Barkitecture: Guidelines for Behaviorally, Mentally, and Physically Responsive Dog Parks

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In response to the growing dilemma surrounding urban companion animal management, municipalities are beginning to designate specific locations to offer dogs an opportunity to play, socialize, and exercise off-leash. Current dog park establishment practices utilized by municipalities typically give little consideration to the multiple needs of canines. The focus of this project is the introduction of new guidelines for designing urban dog parks to support the multiple needs of dogs and their owners.

In the process of responding to major issues surrounding dog parks, six categories of research help direct the project. These categories include current practices in dog park design and management, the three basic needs of canines (behavioral, mental, and physical), needs and use patterns of dog owners, and the demands of the surrounding community.

Several city parks departments have established dog park design guidelines. With the multiple needs of dogs and their owners in mind, the existing guidelines and design principles are analyzed, compared, and critiqued. In addition to these guidelines, information on current dog park design is gathered through interviews with Andre Denman, the principle park planner for Indy Parks, and Ryan Geismar, Graduate Landscape Architect at Human Nature, Inc.

The review of canine needs and current practices for dog park development inform the creation of a new set of design guidelines. These guidelines serve as a model for implementing behaviorally, mentally, and physically responsive dog parks. This new approach to dog park design does not offer prescriptive answers, due to local conditions such as demographics, presence of special interest groups (agility clubs), the size of the park system, and the number of dog parks in the system. What this study does offer is a framework and the supporting background for the development of unique dog park design.

These guidelines are applied and tested with the design development of a new dog park in Indianapolis, Indiana. The guidelines help develop a list of programmatic elements appropriate for a fourteen-acre urban dog park, while specific site inventory and analysis promote a complete understanding of the site and its character. This process, utilized by landscape architects, offers a new approach to dog park design.