

# Off-Leash Area Advisory Committee's (OLAAC)

## Off-Leash Area (OLA) Policy

ADOPTED 6/9/10

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## 1.0 Introduction

The City of Austin has experienced a rapid increase in population in recent years and with it the dog population. This document seeks to address issues arising from this growth and provide a set of city wide uniform guidelines and policies by which an Off Leash Area program will be regulated and continue its success in Austin Parks.

This policy document is meant to outline a range of Off Leash Areas (OLA) for exercise opportunities to supplement the on leash opportunities at Austin Parks, to accommodate the needs of dogs and their owners, while not compromising the needs and use of this shared public space for other park users on the natural resources of the parks.

Dedicated off leash areas provide pet owners with the opportunity to exercise and socialize their dogs in a controlled area: these parks facilitate interaction between pet owners, bringing about social and physical activity benefits to residents.

The model outlined in this document consists of two types of leash free facilities: "Fenced" and "Unfenced", where dogs can be exercised without being in contravention of any municipal by-laws. Unfenced OLAs are designated areas within the existing parkland and open space infrastructure, which have been set aside for residents to exercise their dogs off leash. Fenced OLAs are facilities where residents are provided with the opportunity to exercise their dogs off leash within a controlled fenced environment without being in contravention of municipal by-laws.

Every effort will be made to bring existing OLAs up to criteria to the extent that is realistic so they can continue to successfully serve their intended purpose. Features of existing OLAs that cannot meet criteria will not necessarily be grounds for closure and will be considered on a case by case basis.

Please note, PARD has ultimate control of parkland and its best interest as sustainable sites. If any site shows signs of degradation, the site may be subject to closure, temporary or otherwise, for restoration purposes, or could be decommissioned and reprogrammed by PARD. Every effort will be made to identify a replacement if an OLA is to be decommissioned.

The policies and procedures outlined below will be carried out in partnership between Volunteer Stakeholder Groups (VSG) and Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) to ensure the greatest level of design, funding, and management for OLAs.

The main principles of the OLA Policy are to:

1. Provide leash free exercise for dogs and their guardians.
2. Create sustainable and accessible OLA facilities at Neighborhood, District, and Metro park levels.

3. Geographically distribute off leash areas throughout the City of Austin with consideration given to varying types and attributes of OLAs.
4. Minimize negative impacts on the environment and public health.
5. Encourage rotation and restoration of each OLA to minimize overuse impacts.
6. Maintain public safety and animal safety.
7. Decrease user conflicts between dogs & people.
8. Form community partnerships to support the creation and maintenance of OLAs.
9. Create a funding model to support OLA development and maintenance.
10. Establish performance measures to monitor and evaluate facility conditions and operation.

The following policy has been developed in order to insure OLA (off leash area) sites and designs have been reviewed holistically for sustainability.

## 2.0 OLA Site Criteria

### 2.1 OLA Categories:

- Fenced OLA
- Unfenced OLA

### 2.2 OLA must have a Volunteer Stakeholders Group (See Section 5.1 for details).

### 2.3 Site Guidelines for all OLAs:

1. In general OLAs shall be sufficiently distant from residences so that noise and activity levels are no more disruptive to neighbors than typical park uses. Some noise is expected and will not be used as a reason to disallow the establishment of an OLA. OLAs should be placed at least 50 ft. away from the boundary of adjacent residence or business (031009-09 Section 3-2-13).
2. NO PET ZONES: physical barriers should be installed to separate no pet zones from OLA's.
  - a. City Preserves, Historic sites, scenic points and gardens
  - b. Multi-purpose fields, ball fields, sports courts
  - c. Children's playgrounds/areas, school grounds and pools
  - d. Picnic areas and reservable sites.
  - e. OLA distance from the outer perimeter of the above must be at a minimum of 50 feet.
3. Generally, OLAs should be set back 50-300 ft from springs, creeks or other critical environmental features as defined in city code Land Development 25-8-1, setbacks 25-8-281, Environmental Criteria Manual 1.3.0B. Site specific review by City staff will determine the specific buffer requirement.
4. OLA boundaries shall be clearly marked and mapped
5. Ability to place OLA on well drained area of any given park or financial resources to install appropriate infrastructure.
6. Mutt Mitt Stations and trash receptacles available – quantity to be determined by respective site's Park Supervisor.

7. Parking areas are required onsite where possible or on nearby streets if they do not conflict with residential uses. PARD will make every effort to provide dedicated parking that fits the intended capacity of each OLA.
8. Design should provide adequate erosion control and protection to natural features (water, trees, plants, etc.).
9. Adequate delineation, natural or manmade, to protect dogs from vehicles, steep cliff, and other hazards as well as to prevent conflicts with other park users.
10. Design of OLA should encourage movement of people and dogs.
11. OLAs shall comply with all COA codes and regulations.
12. Signage requirements:
  - a. Informational Kiosk (per PARD standards) to include the following:
    - i. OLA Name and Address
    - ii. Hours of operation
    - iii. Emergency contact numbers
    - iv. Volunteer work days: maintenance and restoration
    - v. Scoop the Poop information
    - vi. OLA Rules and Regulations: as defined by PARD per relevant Ordinance and based on public safety, health, and environment
    - vii. PARD Logo.
    - viii. Map of OLA indicating boundaries, trails, streams, and Critical Environmental Features\* identified by the City of Austin
    - ix. Map of other City of Austin OLAs.
    - x. Signage at entrance indicating suggested carrying capacity of OLA and suggesting the use of another nearby OLA if the one being visited is full.
  - b. Signage for Mutt Mitt/pet waste stations
  - c. Trail markers
  - d. Signs on barriers indicating on and off leash areas where appropriate
  - e. Mark Critical Environmental Features identified by the City

2.4 Site Guidelines for Fenced OLAs:

1. Fenced boundary is required to contain OLA activities.
2. Adequate ground cover must be provided, and should allow for adequate drainage and erosion control.
3. Double entry gates are necessary to minimize escapes and ensure safety of entering dogs.
4. Emergency exit/maintenance access gates are required.

2.5 Site Guidelines for Unfenced OLAs:

1. Barriers and divergent paths should be considered in multi-use areas on a site by site basis.
2. Where multi-use areas exist, caution signage should be used.

2.6 Optional features that could be included in an OLA:

1. Water fountain for dogs and people

2. Water features: splash pool, fountain pad.
3. Benches
4. Dog playscapes
5. Shade
6. Lighting
7. Agility course
8. Training ground
9. Swimming facility
10. Restrooms
11. A user fee could be required in certain areas.

Please note that PARD has ultimate control of parkland and its best interest as sustainable sites. If any site shows signs of degradation, the site may be subject to closure, temporary or otherwise, for restoration purposes, or could be decommissioned and reprogrammed by PARD.

### 3.0 OLA Use Rules and Etiquette

#### 3.1 OLA RULES

- 1) Rules for all categories of OLA:
  - a) Handlers are responsible for all actions of their dogs.
  - b) Dogs must remain under voice and sight control.
    - i) Voice and sight control means the dogs you are responsible for must be within your sight and under your verbal command at all times, regardless of distractions which can occur during a walk. If your dog cannot immediately obey verbal command, your dog must remain on-leash.
    - ii) Dogs under voice and sight control are not allowed to charge, chase or display aggression towards other people or dogs or chase, harass, or disturb wildlife and livestock.
    - iii) Dogs displaying inappropriate behavior must be leashed immediately and removed from the situation. Inappropriate behavior may include unwanted jumping, snarling, excessive barking, pestering, or mounting other dogs.
  - c) Handlers must remain in the off leash area with the dog.
  - d) You must clean up after your dog(s) and deposit feces in the containers at the site, and you must carry scoop equipment. See Austin City Code 3-4-6
  - e) Do not let dogs defecate in water, dry creek beds, or on stream banks.
  - f) All dogs must be restrained by a leash no longer than six feet in length when entering or leaving an off leash area. See Austin City Code 3-2-1, 3-4-1.
  - g) Handlers shall be in possession of one leash for each dog at all times
  - h) A handler shall have no more than three dogs off leash at any time.
  - i) All dogs must be vaccinated for rabies. See Austin City Code 3-3-2
  - j) No dog less than four months old shall be permitted in the off leash area
  - k) Only dogs that have been spayed or neutered shall be permitted within off leash areas. See Austin City Code 3-4-5

- l) For the safety of dogs and their handlers, no metal or studded collars are allowed in the off leash area.
  - m) No dogs (leashed or unleashed) are permitted in any playground, swimming pool, fountain, ball-field, or basketball, handball, or tennis court.
  - n) Any dog left unattended within an off leash park area shall be deemed "at-large" and may be impounded. Austin City Code 3-1-14
  - o) Handlers who see unattended dogs or other rule violations should call Animal Control at 911.
  - p) Unleashed dogs must be leashed immediately upon request by any police officer, park ranger, or official of the Parks or Health departments.
  - q) Failure to comply with reasonable request for compliance by any enforcement agent may result in police action, including the fine/arrest of suspected violators. See Austin City Code 3-7-2; 3-7-3
  - r) An attending adult must closely supervise all children in off leash areas. Do not allow children to approach dogs without handler's permission.
  - s) Holes dug by dogs must be filled by the handler prior to leaving the off leash area.
  - t) Dogs with a history of aggressive behavior are not permitted in the park. See Austin City Code 3-4-7.
  - u) Do not bring glass containers into an off leash area.
- 2) Special rules for fenced off leash areas
- a) Dogs must remain on-leash until they are inside the fenced area.
  - b) Where a double gate is provided, close the first gate entirely before you open the second gate. This provides a safe enclosure during the transition from on-leash to off leash.
  - c) Leave bicycles outside off leash area.
  - d) No children under 6 years of age are allowed in a fenced off leash area.
- 3) Special rules for unfenced off leash trails:
- a) Even when you hike a loop, you're not allowed to park your dog's poop. Don't leave bags on the trail to be picked up later.
  - b) Handlers must leash their dogs upon exiting and entering their vehicle at trailheads and in the area of the trailheads.

### 3.2 Etiquette Tips

1. Facilitate positive interactions in playgroups.
2. Bring poop scoop bags from home to clean up after your pet. Please help by picking up extra. Even responsible dog handlers get distracted.
3. Bring ample water for your dog(s) and some to share.
4. Food, dog treats and dog toys can cause conflicts. Bring them into the area at your own risk.
5. Do not congregate and chat with other handlers without watching your dog. Keep your dog in sight at all times.

6. Move about the OLA so your dog keeps an eye on you, as this encourages non-linear movement and exercise.
7. Moderate your park use during peak hours to avoid potential conflicts and minimize impact on our parks.
8. Keep dogs away from the entrances of fenced OLA's, and don't enter if there are a large number of dogs near the entrances.
9. Control excessive barking.
10. Do not allow digging (all holes must be filled by owner).
11. Call 911 to report all emergencies and any criminal activity, including property damage. Police, fire and animal control will provide appropriate responses to these calls.
12. Call 311 about maintenance issues such as empty bag dispensers or full trash bags.

The City of Austin's Law Enforcement Officers have the authority to enforce restraint and pet waste laws. **Violators are subject to fines up to \$500 according to City Code.**

**Dial 3-1-1 for non emergencies**

**Dial 9-1-1 for emergencies**

#### 4.0 New OLA Creation Procedure Process Summary (or expansion of existing)

In general, users and neighbors, and/or a park partner can submit a written request regarding the establishment of new OLAs, or adding/repairing amenities at existing OLAs to PARD. Submit to PARD Volunteer Coordinator. PARD will evaluate the request and make a recommendation to the OLAAC within 45 days of receiving the request to reject the new OLA site proposal or recommend that it proceed to the next step for further consideration. Siting an OLA shall follow the accepted community-wide planning process, which includes public notification and opportunities for input from users and neighbors, PARD and relevant civic associations(s).

Prior to establishing an OLA, adequate funding must be identified by PARD, OLAAC and/or community partners. PARD will work with the Volunteer Stakeholder Group, the OLAAC and other government agencies to identify support through additional city monies, grants, private and corporate funding, and agency partnerships. PARD has the primary responsibility for providing the resources necessary for the maintenance and management of OLA's.

#### 4.1 PARD/Volunteer Stakeholder Group Collaboration

While PARD has jurisdiction over OLAs on PARD property, and will contribute to both the capital start-up and operating expenses, the success of any OLA is based on the ability of its users to help establish, fund, operate, maintain and monitor each OLA site. Documentation of OLAs in other cities has shown that most off leash areas require direct support by site users, local residents, and/or organized groups of volunteers. An identifiable responsible Volunteer Stakeholder's Group is required for

new and existing OLAs. An acceptable group could be a smaller subset or committee of a larger Park Adopter/Friends group. Volunteer Stakeholder Groups must demonstrate their commitment, organizational skills and willingness to support and promote OLA standards (see section 5.0 OLA Management).

#### 4.2 New OLA Application and Preliminary Site Proposal (or expansion of existing)

1. Volunteer Stakeholder Group Application Procedure:
  - a) If dog owners decide that a new OLA is needed in their community, they should organize themselves as a Volunteer Stakeholder Group with at least three members. This group should seek out other members, and maintain a contact person throughout the application process.
  - b) Complete online New OLA Application (see attached application).
  - c) Contact Regional Park Manager to alert that New OLA Application has been submitted (see list of Park Managers on PARD website)
  - d) Determine if proposed OLA meets Preliminary Site Selection Criteria before proceeding to formal proposal (see criteria attachment)

#### 2. Preliminary Site Visit and Evaluation:

PARD will review the New OLA Application and schedule a site visit within 45 days.

- a) The Volunteer Stakeholder Group shall be included in the site visit. PARD will complete the "New OLA Site Evaluation Score Card" to determine if they should proceed to the next step (see 7.0 Attachments, for the score card).
  - b) PARD will review adopted neighborhood plans for any language regarding OLAs and/or if other recommendations have been made for the recommended site.
  - c) PARD will review other adopted plans to determine if other recommendations have been made for site (e.g. trails).
3. PARD will respond in writing to the Stakeholder Application within 45 days of the site visit. The response will include a completed copy of the New OLA Site Evaluation Score Card and list of actions required to move to the next step.
  4. PARD will provide written rejection or approval of the site to move to the Community Support/Public Process.

#### 4.3 Community Support/Public Process

After an appropriate site is selected for a proposed OLA, the following steps are required to be conducted by the Volunteer Stakeholder Group.

1. List of Supporters (see attached form):

A list of supporters shall be collected from park users and the surrounding area of the proposed site. The completed support list shall be submitted as part of the proposal to PARD.

2. Site Amenities:

A list of site amenities and draft design utilizing PARD standards for OLAs (attached) shall be identified. This list identifies the Volunteer Stakeholder's desired site amenities for the proposed OLA, such as a retaining wall, landscaping, parking, and site furnishings.

3. Public Meetings:

A minimum of two public neighborhood meetings must be conducted to inform, educate, and determine the level of support of the surrounding neighbors of the proposed OLA. Representatives from PARD, neighborhood associations, and OLAAC must be present at these meetings. It is recommended that the Volunteer Stakeholder Group coordinate these meetings with one of these offices to include this item on their regularly scheduled meeting agenda. The Volunteer Stakeholder Group must provide a minimum of 15 days advanced public notice to the surrounding community to allow for maximum input. Means of notification shall include but not be limited to: signs posted in the park, notice to surrounding neighborhood associations, notice to Community Registry, announcement on PARD website and City Notes, and notice sent to park friends groups and other park user groups. The List of Supporters, site location, boundary map, and site amenities list/draft design should be distributed and discussed.

4.4 Formal OLA Proposal, Review, and Approval

1. Volunteer Stakeholder Group Proposal:

After the previous steps are complete, the Volunteer Stakeholder Group will submit a written proposal with all supporting documentation to PARD Volunteer Coordinator to distribute for review. This proposal shall include:

- a. Letters of support from the district park manager, the governing neighborhood association(s), the neighborhood planning contact team if any, and any other organized entities that border the proposed site (e.g. schools, other park user groups, businesses)
- b. Copies of the List of Supporters and community meeting results.
- c. Volunteer Stakeholder Group leader names
- d. Map outlining proposed boundaries of OLA
- e. Funding proposal
- f. Draft design and amenities list
- g. Copies of this proposal shall be forwarded to the above mentioned organizations for feedback.

2. OLA Proposal Review by PARD:

- a. Site visit and proposal review by PARD staff
- b. Cross-reference site with design criteria and constraints
- c. Watershed review the proposed site recommendation if applicable
- d. Urban Forestry review
- e. Determine if any PARD funding for signage, boundary barriers, parking etc are available for New OLA
- f. Meet with Park Supervisor for logistics and feasibility.
- g. Department of Transportation review.
- h. Proposal review by PARD Director or designee.

#### 4.5 PARD Design/Layout

After approval of OLA proposal PARD will:

1. Oversee site plan development:
  - a) Designs must be Site Plan Set ready, which includes, but not limited to:
    - i) Existing Conditions
    - ii) Survey
    - iii) Erosion Control
    - iv) Layout Plan (includes site support facilities, utilities, etc)
    - v) Grading
    - vi) Tree protection
    - vii) Re-vegetation/landscape plan
    - viii) Construction Details
  - b) Identify and secure all required permits.
  - c) Complete installation cost estimates.
  - d) Design and layout should be approved by PARD's:
    - i) Park Coordinator or Landscape Architect ,
    - ii) Planning, Design & Construction Div.,
    - iii) Park Division Manager
    - iv) Environmental Dept.
    - v) PARD Director or designee.

#### 4.6 Final Approval of Proposed OLA:

1. Present final plan and design at OLAAC and community meetings for review and agreement.
2. Discuss exactly which costs and responsibilities belong to PARD and to the Stakeholder Group.
3. PARD and OLA Adopter Group will sign the Adopt A Park Agreement.

- 4.7 If PARD initiates the creation of a new OLA, they will follow the procedure outlined above with the addition of working with the OLAAC to form a Stakeholder Group to support the new OLA.

## 5.0 OLA Management

### 5.1 Volunteer Stakeholder's Group Responsibilities

OLAs require an active Volunteer Stakeholder's Group to assist PARD with monitoring and maintenance. The most important aspect of having a successful OLA in a park is on-going community support and communication between the Stakeholder Group and PARD.

Groups must demonstrate their commitment, organizational skills and willingness to support and promote OLA standards by entering into an Adopt-A-Park agreement with PARD. Failure to meet standards and responsibilities established in the agreement and the OLA Dog Policy will subject the OLA to a review by PARD.

PARD retains the right to discontinue activities with any given partnership group and/or to close the OLA if agreements and criteria are not followed.

The Volunteer Stakeholder Group Will:

1. Act as ambassadors of OLAs to uphold PARD OLA Policy standards.
2. Post OLA rules and other educational materials for park users.
3. Ensure OLAs grounds are kept free from pet waste.
4. Assist PARD in the maintenance of the OLA:
  - o Assist in establishing priorities for repair and renovations.
  - o Schedule semi-annual cleanup.
5. Communicate frequently with PARD regarding the management of the OLA. If problems occur with the operation or patrons of the OLA, PARD District Manager and OLAAC must be informed and involved in the resolution of the problem.
6. Recruit, train, and organize volunteers.
7. Organize fundraising activities to support additional amenities based on OLA needs.
8. Conduct regular educational activities such as off leash dog/owner training, scoop the poop training, volunteer training.
9. Participate in an annual OLA site visit and review.

### 5.2 PARD Responsibilities

1. Provide Mutt Mitt stations, bags and sign with ordinance regarding removal of animals feces.
2. Provide trash cans.
3. Empty waste receptacles.
4. Enforce OLA rules and applicable City Codes.
5. Participate in annual evaluations of OLA to determine general compliance and effectiveness (see section 5.6).
6. Work with Volunteer Stakeholder Groups to remedy any flaws when possible in OLA design, location or infrastructure.

7. Provide signage outlining City of Austin laws and ordinances.
8. Provide, maintain and repair surrounding landscape, informational signs, and mulch or other ground cover material.
9. Install, repair or replace barriers/boundaries and other basic amenities.

### 5.3 Complaints

Complaints and concerns arising inside the boundaries of the OLA should be brought to the attention of PARD. The OLAAC may assist with unresolved complaints from OLA Adopter Groups or PARD.

### 5.4 OLA Advisory Committee (OLAAC) (see section 7.0 Attachments for OLAAC Bylaws)

The OLAAC should have a balanced membership reflecting persons who are interested in public parks and recreation that includes off leash dogs and their owners. The OLAAC should include, but not be limited to, those who have a demonstrated working knowledge of the City's current OLAs, educating and engaging others on responsible off leash use, experience in positive dog behavior training, and/or in the development, funding, and implementation of improvements that support recreational sustainability of OLAs on City property.

The OLAAC shall, in coordination with PARD:

1. Assess the need for OLAs throughout the City and make recommendations for the creation, development, implementation and maintenance of additional areas;
2. Facilitate annual site reviews of existing OLAs throughout the City and recommend improvements and changes that increase their safety, and sustainability;
3. Facilitate ongoing public education and awareness of City ordinances and guidance that supports responsible use of OLAs;
4. Actively identify and partner with civic, volunteer, and neighborhood groups to foster, promote, and sponsor OLAs and their responsible use;
5. Provide support, guidance and mentoring for OLA park adopters; serve as a liaison between PARD and OLA park adopters;
6. Encourage and support ongoing efforts and new volunteer efforts to generate responsible use, improvements, and maintenance of OLAs;
7. Explore, develop, and support the implementation of policies that contribute to the continued use, development, and maintenance of sustainable OLAs;
8. Provide ongoing input and information to PARD, the Parks and Recreation Board members, and City Council and others to forward these objectives and to complete other activities consistent with OLAAC's purpose and with PARD's approval; and
9. Provide ongoing input and information to PARD, the Parks and Recreation Board members, and others on initiatives that require investments of public and other funding sources.

### 5.5 OLA Evaluations

OLA evaluations shall be carried out annually with a minimum of one representative from PARD, OLAAC and OLA Stakeholder Group. In addition to the formal site review criteria, the evaluation should consider the number, severity and resolution of complaints and issues raised during the prior year. See Section 7.0 for the OLA Annual Site Review Form that should be used for written results of the evaluation. OLA Site review results will be presented at the next OLA meeting following the review. The park manager and at least one OLA Stakeholder representative should be present at the meeting.

## 6.0 Definitions

**Adopt-A-Park:** Partnership Agreement between anyone outside of PARD (e.g. an individual, neighborhood/community group, non-profit, etc.) and PARD that includes, but not limited to, a description of what improvements are being made to the park, project objections and conditions, and desired outcome or end results.

**Conflict of Users:** Users competing for different uses of the same space.

**Critical Environmental Features:** (CEFs) are features that are of critical importance to the protection of environmental resources, and include bluffs, canyon rim rocks, caves, sinkholes, springs, and wetlands (as defined in the Land Development Code 25-8-1)

**Ground Cover:** Various types of natural material such as: wood chips, mulch or pea gravel.

**Mutt Mitt Stations:** Signed stations with free pet waste bags to be used for proper disposal of pet waste in the appropriate receptacle. Call 311 for refills.

**No Pet Zone:** PARD Policy to restrict entry of any pet; include, but not limited to:

- City Preserves, Historic sites, scenic points and gardens
- Multi-purpose fields, ball fields, sports courts
- Children's playgrounds/areas, school grounds and pools
- Picnic areas and reservable sites
- OLA distance from the outer perimeter of the above must be at a minimum of 50 feet.

**OLA:** Off Leash Area, a designated public area where restraint of a dog is not required (as defined by Ordinance No. 031009-09 section 3-4-4)

**OLA Informational Kiosks:** Provide information on, but not limited to, Volunteer Stakeholder Group events relevant to site, clean up/restoration days and bad weather etiquette reminders. Kiosks will be maintained by site's Volunteer Stakeholder Group. PARD Policy prohibits advertising profitable services on parkland.

**OLA Trail:** Off Leash Area loop trail that promotes continual linear movement for the dog with the owner/guardian.

**Orphan Pet Waste:** Pet waste that has not been removed by dog owner/guardian.

**PARD:** Austin Parks and Recreation Department.

**Volunteer Stakeholder's Group:** An active volunteer based group focused on improving and maintaining areas within specific parks. Groups may also be called "Friends of..."

## 7.0 Attachments

### New OLA Site Evaluation Score Card

YES	NO	CRITERIA
		<b>1) Existing or Planned Uses</b>
		a) If area has Master Plan, are new uses of the area compatible with the Plan?
		b) Does new proposed use of area conflict with current or existing and planned uses?
		c) Are the proposed uses compatible with surrounding land use?
		<b>2) Environment</b>
		a) Will water quality be affected by proposed use?
		b) Is erosion a possibility with sustained use? Can erosion be mitigated?
		c) Will vegetation be impacted with sustained use? Can this impact be mitigated?
		d) Do water features exist that would be a desired component for the proposed use?
		<b>3) Wildlife</b>
		a) Are there existing species (plants, animals) that may be affected adversely by proposed use? Can this be mitigated?
		c) Are encounters with dangerous wildlife likely?
		<b>4) Neighbors</b>
		b) Will new uses have an adverse impact on neighbors adjacent to area (noise, parking, property infringement)? Can this be mitigated?
		<b>5) Access</b>
		a) Is there existing parking?
		b) Is there a maintenance entrance?
		b) Is the area ADA accessible?
		c) Can the above features be added?
		<b>6) Public Safety</b>
		a) Is the area safe from traffic, crime?
		b) Can barriers be installed that protect from traffic and crime?
		<b>7) Carrying Capacity</b>
		a) Can the size of the area support the number of users, current and additional?

		b) Is parking sufficient for the size of the proposed OLA or can it be expanded to meet the new use?
		<b>8) Drainage</b>
		a) Is the drainage compatible with the proposed use?
		b) Does it hinder or enhance the proposed use?
		<b>9) Water Availability</b>
		a) Is potable water needed and are water lines available nearby?
		<b>10) Open Areas</b>
		a) Are there open areas that are desirable for proposed use?
		<b>11) Shade – is shade available or can it be added?</b>
		<b>12) Fences, able to fence or Natural Barriers present</b>
		a) Do fences or natural barriers exist that would render the area more desirable for a proposed use?
		b) Can the area be fenced if no fence or natural barrier exists?
		<b>13) Trails</b>
		a) Are there trails linking accessing to and from the area that would make it a more desirable locations?
		<b>14) Volunteer or Community Group Adoption</b>
		a) Is there a group already in place or will be in place that is committed to stewardship of the area?
		<b>15) Land Ownership</b>
		a) Is Land privately or publicly owned?
		b) Is the land city parkland, state or federally owned lands?
		<b>16) Ability to raise funds for project.</b>
		<b>17) Need for OLA in the area: are there existing OLAs nearby? Is another OLA needed in this area?</b>
		<b>18) Sufficient volunteers to form a Stakeholder group. Or current Friends Group already exists?</b>
		<b>SITE EVALUATION SCORE</b>

## CITY OF AUSTIN

### OFF-LEASH AREA APPLICATION

Off-Leash Areas (OLA) are facilities where residents have the opportunity to exercise their dogs off leash within a controlled environment without being in contravention of municipal bylaws. They provide a range of exercise opportunities, to supplement the on leash opportunities at Austin Parks, to accommodate the needs of dogs and their owners, while not compromising the needs and use of this shared public space for other park users on the natural resources of the parks.

The following criteria (as stated in Section 2 of the OLAAC's Off-Leash Area Policy) will be used to assess the appropriateness of proposed sites for OLAs.

The goal of OLA's are to:

1. Provide leash free exercise while still being in voice control and sight control of their guardian.
2. Minimize negative impacts on the environment and public health.
3. Decrease user conflicts between dogs & people.
4. Insure public safety.
5. Geographically distribute off leash areas throughout Austin Park Districts with consideration given to varying types and attributes of parks distribution of OLAs throughout the City of Austin.
6. Encourage rotation and restoration of each OLA to minimize overuse impacts.

OLA Categories:

- Fenced OLA
- Unfenced OLA

OLA must have a Volunteer Stakeholders Group that can commit to the following.

1. The OLA creation process can be a lengthy process of possibly one year or more, therefore it is important to make sure that your group has the time and resources to devote to the process.
2. Raise funds for a portion of the OLA costs.
3. Recruit, train, and manage OLA volunteers.
4. Site Selection Criteria: the proposed OLA site will be reviewed according to the attached New OLA Site Evaluation Score Card.

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Proposed Park Location: (provide map if needed)

Park Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Closest Cross Streets: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Information: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

- Are you willing and able to raise funds for this project? Yes\_\_\_\_ , No \_\_\_\_

If no to the above question, please explain

- Are you willing to recruit, train and manage volunteers for this project?  
Yes \_\_\_\_, No \_\_\_\_

If no to the above question, please explain

- Do you believe that the proposed OLA site meets or has the potential to meet the criteria indicated on attached New OLA Score Card? Yes \_\_\_\_, No \_\_\_\_

If no to the above question, please explain

- Why do you think this location be a great OLA?

**Volunteer Committee Contact Information**

Note: An initial Volunteer Committee containing at least **three** members is required.

Name	Address	Telephone	E-Mail	Signature

## OLA Annual Site Review Form

OLA Name:

Date of Site Review:

Liaisons (**Lead**):

Others in attendance: N/A

The following checklist should serve as a general review guideline during your site review. Include comments as appropriate.

- Speak with park users: ask for likes/dislikes about the OLA
- Kiosk or message center/Signage
- Accessibility and Parking
- Play areas: condition, small dog area
- Trails: condition
- Pet waste
- Water: type, availability, condition
- Shade
- Natural hazards (e.g. erosion, poison ivy)
- Describe the types of activities people and dogs are engaged in at the OLA
- Primary issue/concern(s) and recommendation(s)

## **BY-LAWS OF THE OLA (Off Leash Area) Advisory Committee**

### **ARTICLE 1. NAME.**

The name of this committee shall be known as the OLA Advisory Committee (OLAAC)

### **ARTICLE 2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE**

The OLAAC should have a balanced membership reflecting persons who are interested in public parks and recreation that includes off leash dogs and their owners. The OLAAC should include, but not be limited to, those who have a demonstrated working knowledge of the City's current OLAs, educating and engaging others on responsible off leash use, experience in positive dog behavior training, and/or in the development, funding, and implementation of improvements that support recreational sustainability of OLAs on City property.

The OLAAC shall, in coordination with PARD:

- Assess the need for OLAs throughout the City and make recommendations for the creation, development, implementation and maintenance of additional areas;
- Facilitate annual site reviews of existing OLAs throughout the City and recommend improvements and changes that increase their safety, and sustainability;
- Facilitate ongoing public education and awareness of City ordinances and guidance that supports responsible use of OLAs;
- Actively identify and partner with civic, volunteer, and neighborhood groups to foster, promote, and sponsor OLAs and their responsible use;
- Provide support, guidance and mentoring for OLA park adopters; serve as a liaison between PARD and OLA park adopters;
- Encourage and support ongoing efforts and new volunteer efforts to generate responsible use, improvements, and maintenance of OLAs;
- Explore, develop, and support the implementation of policies that contribute to the continued use, development, and maintenance of sustainable OLAs;
- Provide ongoing input and information to PARD, the Parks and Recreation Board members, and City Council and others to forward these objectives and to complete other activities consistent with OLAAC's purpose and with PARD's approval; and
- Provide ongoing input and information to PARD, the Parks and Recreation Board members, and others on initiatives that require investments of public and other funding sources.

### **ARTICLE 3. MEMBERSHIP.**

- A. The OLAAC is a citizen-based committee of 13 OLAAC members initially identified through a deliberate outreach and application process by PARD and members of the OLA Task Force; which was appointed by PARD in spring 2009.
- B. Each OLAAC member shall meet the following criteria:
  - a) Has an interest in:
    - i) Current OLAs as defined by the City of Austin Ordinance 3-3-4; and/or

## OLAAC's OLA Dog Policy

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- ii) Development of future areas where dogs are not required to be restrained; and/or
  - iii) Participating in educational outreach and engagement on issues of sustainable recreational stewardship that involves people and off leash dogs
  - b) Is willing to identify and bring resources, including knowledge, volunteers, and/or funding to the table that will contribute to the sustainable use of current and future OLAs (Off Leash Areas); and
  - c) Is not employed in a department of a city or county agency that has responsibility for funding, maintaining, implementing, testing or regulating OLAs within the city park system
- C. To select the initial committee members, Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) shall establish an Ad Hoc Selection Team consisting of two City Staff , three citizens and two OLA Task Force members not applying to the OLA Advisory Committee (OLAAC) who will review each application, seeking to include as broad and diverse a base of OLAAC members as possible with specific focus on the geographic diversity of participants, the inclusion of both current and prospective park adopters of OLAs, the range of resources that each can bring, and the aggregate of resources that the OLAAC will engage.
- D. The OLAAC will set a process for selecting additional or replacement members consistent with the aforementioned criteria.
- E. OLAAC members are expected to prepare for all meetings as deemed necessary by the group, including reading materials, consulting with affected groups and/or others for advice or direction, or preparing constructive proposals for the OLAAC's consideration.
- F. OLAAC members are expected to keep their organizations informed on issues being discussed and to get regular input from those that they represent as to their organization's concerns and interests.
- G. OLAAC members serve for a term of staggered two years beginning October 1<sup>st</sup> except for the first terms of the committee. At the first meeting of the committee, the members shall draw lots to determine those committee members whose terms will expire on October 1, 2010 and those members whose terms shall expire on October 1, 2011.
- H. An individual OLAAC member may not act in an official capacity except through the action of the OLAAC.
- I. An OLAAC member who is absent for three consecutive regular meetings or one third of all regular meetings in a 12 month time period automatically vacates the member's position. This does not apply to an absence due to illness or injury if the member notifies the OLAAC Chair or his /her designee of the reason for the absence no later than the next meeting of the OLAAC.

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- J. At each meeting, each OLAAC member shall sign an attendance sheet which indicates that the member does not have a conflict of interest with any item on that agenda, or identifies each agenda item on which the member has a conflict of interest.
- K. A member who seeks to resign from the OLA Advisory Committee (OLAAC) shall submit a written resignation to the OLAAC Chair or his /her designee. If possible, the resignation should allow for a 30 day notice so the Chair, with the consensus of the OLAAC, can appoint a qualified replacement who meets the criteria outlined in Article 3.
- L. A member who is unable to attend an OLAAC meeting or a Sub-committee may vote by written proxy through another OLAAC member who is in attendance at the meeting in question. A vote by proxy will not be counted toward the number of OLAAC or Sub-committee members needed to be present to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. A proxy is valid only for the meeting for which it is given.
- M. An OLA Advisory Committee (OLAAC) member may be removed, with cause, at any duly constituted meeting of the OLAAC, by the affirmative vote of a majority of then-serving OLAAC members.

### **ARTICLE 4. OFFICERS.**

- A. The officers of the OLAAC shall consist of a Chair, a Vice-Chair, and Secretary.
- B. Officers shall be elected annually by a majority vote of the OLAAC at the first regular meeting after Oct 1<sup>st</sup>.
- C. The term of office for officers shall be one year, beginning October 1, 2009. An officer may continue to serve until a successor is elected. An officer may be re-elected for not more than one additional consecutive one-year term.
- D. A member may not hold more than one office at a time.

### **ARTICLE 5. DUTIES OF OFFICERS.**

- A. The Chair shall preside at OLAAC meetings and represent the Committee at ceremonial functions.
- B. In the absence of the Chair, the Vice-Chair shall perform all duties of the Chair.
- C. The Secretary or his/her designee shall prepare and distribute the agenda to the OLAAC members not less than 72 hours before the meeting. The Secretary shall also take minutes documenting votes at all OLAAC meetings. The minutes will be printed and presented at the following OLAAC meeting for approval by the OLAAC. The Secretary will keep a file containing all approved OLAAC meeting minutes.

**ARTICLE 6. AGENDAS.**

- A. Two or more OLA Advisory Committee (OLAAC) members may place an item on the agenda by oral or written request to the Chair or his/her designee at least five days before the meeting.
- B. The Secretary or his/her designee shall prepare and distribute the agenda to the OLAAC members not less than 72 hours before the meeting. Minutes shall document official actions taken by the OLAAC.

**ARTICLE 7. MEETINGS.**

- A. The OLAAC meetings shall comply with the Texas Government Code Chapter 551 (Texas Open Meetings Act) and not conduct a closed meeting at any time.
- B. OLAAC meetings shall be governed by Robert's Rules of Order as amended by Austin City Council.
- C. The regular meeting of the OLAAC shall be held every other month on that recurring weekday, at the time, and at the location determined to be mutually convenient to the OLAAC's members. If the regular meeting day is a holiday, the meeting will be held on the date, time, and location determined to be mutually convenient to the OLAAC members.
- D. The Chair may call a special meeting, if requested in writing by three or more members. A special meeting must be submitted to PARD staff who will post on Austin City Connection. The call shall state the purpose of the meeting. A notice of a special meeting must be sent to all members at least three days before the meeting.
- E. A quorum is 1 more than half the members currently in office. If a quorum for a meeting does not convene within one-half hour of the posted time for the meeting, then the meeting may not be held.
- F. To be effective, an OLAAC action must be adopted by affirmative vote of the majority of those present.
- G. The Chair has the same voting privilege as any other member.
- H. The OLAAC shall allow citizens to address the members during a period of time set aside for citizen communications on agenda items. The Chair may limit a speaker to three minutes.
- I. The minutes of each OLAAC meeting shall document the vote of each member on each item before the OLAAC, a member's absence or abstention from the vote on an item, and a member's vote by proxy on an item.

- J. The City of Austin's Parks and Recreation Department (PARC) shall retain all electronic copies of the official (OLA Advisory Committee) OLAAC agendas and minutes. The documents are public records under Texas Local Government Code Chapter 552 (Texas Public Information Act).
- K. The Chair shall adjourn a meeting not later than 10 p.m., unless the OLAAC votes to continue the meeting.

**ARTICLE 8. STANDING OR SPECIAL SUB-COMMITTEES.**

- A. The OLAAC shall establish standing or special sub-committees by affirmative vote and provide a written charge to each sub-committee. Each standing or special subcommittee shall consist of at least two OLAAC members and may have other relevant members.
- B. Each standing or sub-committee shall be chaired by an OLAAC member.
- C. A majority of the total number of sub-committee members constitutes a quorum.
- D. Each standing sub-committee shall meet on a regularly scheduled basis and report to OLAAC at each OLAAC meeting.
- E. Sub-committee meetings must be in accordance with the Texas Government Code Chapter 551 (Texas Open Meetings Act) and must be submitted to PARC staff who will post on Austin City Connection.

**ARTICLE 9. PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY.**

The rules contained in the current edition of Robert's Rules of Order as amended by Austin City Council shall govern the Committee in all cases to which they are applicable, except when inconsistent with these by-laws or with special rules of order which the Committee may adopt.

**ARTICLE 10. AMENDMENT OF BY-LAWS.**

These by-laws may be amended by the OLAAC at its discretion and approval by PARC. Amendments shall not take effective unless approved by PARC