

From: Danielle Norkunas [mailto:danielle@ywcaduluth.org]
Sent: Monday, August 24, 2015 3:00 PM
To: Council; Kathy Bergen
Subject: Eastern dog park

Good afternoon -

I'm writing to show some support for the plans to build a dog park in the east. While I am not currently a Duluthian (I live in Proctor), most of my time and money is spent in wonderful Duluth. I LOVE the Twin Ports area, and part of that reason is the ability to spend time outdoors (you know, when it isn't -50.) And I'd love to live in Duluth, but it isn't as pet friendly as I'd like and apartments allowing pets are fairly rare I've found.

Unfortunately, my situation is not one in which my faithful sidekick, Copper, has room to run around outside our home. Copper is, as you may have already guessed, a dog. Like many dogs, he is energetic. Although he is somewhat small at 20 lbs (he is a black lab/dachshund mix), he likes to play with the big dogs and race around as fast as his short little legs can carry him.

We visit the Keene dog park fairly frequently as that is the closest to our home, but we have been spotted a few times at Observation. We would love to add a third park to our rotation, especially one such as the Riley Road park being discussed. I'd like to respectfully address a few of the issues the naysayers have brought up:

1. "You're using taxpayers' land and not paying anything for it." - Well, true. Except the dog parks have been built (by volunteers) on land that was not being used. I'm aware dogs don't pay taxes, but their owners do. And let's talk children's playgrounds - also being built on taxpayers' land, and also not being paid for directly by the consumers of all the fun times there. Parents of children not only get to have this great recreational area for their children to run off their energy, they receive tax breaks for having the children in the first place! So really, the argument could be made that they are not only receiving those areas for free, taxpayers without children are the ones primarily paying for it. Please don't take this as me being against playgrounds - I think they are amazing things to provide for the children of this area. But think about that for just a moment.

2. "It is dangerous...dogs could attack other dogs or even people!" Well, true. Except usually dogs that attack others are those who have not been well-socialized. Dogs kept solely in backyards or only taken outside for walks tend to be those that are not as well-socialized because they don't have the opportunity to do so. Hmmm....if only there were somewhere they could go to meet other dogs and not turn to anti-social behavior.

3. "There are already two dog parks and Duluth isn't that large of a city!" - True again. There are two dog parks. However, as you may be aware, Duluth is a very, very long city. Even the more centralized of the two dog parks is on the western side of the city. Observation is great for those that live near it, but is a little small. I've been there with 7 or 8 dogs on the one side and it seemed a bit crowded. As for residents to the far northeastern side of Duluth, are you aware of how long it can take them to get to and from the existing dog parks? I work in downtown Duluth and it would take me about 15 minutes to get to Keene - and 10 or 15 minutes to get out towards

Lester Park. For constituents living in that area, it would mean about a half hour drive each way to take their dogs to Keene (if they wanted a little more room to run).

4. "The dog parks already built aren't even used that much!" - Actually, I don't even know how to address this one. More than once, I have left because there were so many dogs and people I had a hard time keeping my eye on mine. Which most of us, as responsible pet owners, do.

5. "No one wants to listen to all those dogs barking." - My barky boy (and boy can he be a barker sometimes) almost NEVER barks at the park. He is too busy having fun with the other dogs and can always find one to play with. Most of the time, he barks when he's bored.

6. "But they POOP!" - True. But responsible dog owners clean up after their dogs. You will always have those that leave it for others, but most of the dog park users clean up the poop piles whether they belong to their dog or not. Without dog parks, those owners who are allowing their dogs to poop and not cleaning up after them would be walking them around the neighborhoods. Isn't it better to contain this behavior in an area where everyone is always on the lookout for stray piles?

7. This one isn't addressing an issue the naysayers brought up, but it is extremely important. Dog parks aren't just for dogs! Those that frequent the park have formed a community. They are caring and compassionate - not just about pets, but about other people! These parks encourage people to get outside and socialize just as much as they encourage their pets to do so. Through the online groups, people offer or solicit advice and help from their fellow pet lovers. People who may have never met without the parks and group have become close friends. They help each other. And isn't the goal of the city council to make Duluth a better place to live? Wouldn't having people care for and help you make your life better?

I could go on, but you probably aren't interested in a full book, so I'll leave you with this (relatively) short story.

Thank you for your time,

Danielle

--

Danielle Norkunas

Executive Office Administrator

YWCA Duluth

32 E First Street, Ste 202

Duluth, MN 55802

[218-722-7425](tel:218-722-7425) X113 (w)

[218-722-2765](tel:218-722-2765) (f)

danielle@ywcaduluth.org

www.ywcaduluth.org