

From: Katie Lassi [mailto:klassi@d.umn.edu]
Sent: Wednesday, August 19, 2015 12:06 PM
To: Council; Kathy Bergen
Subject: Support for eastern Duluth dog

Hello council members,

I wanted to take a minute of your time to tell you why I am in support of a dog park on the east side of Duluth. I live about as far east as you can in Duluth (60th Ave E to be precise) and driving to the current dog parks can be a pain as it is about a 25 minute drive. Although I would love to have a park closer to me there is a different reason I strongly support this new park:

The greater reason I would like a park on the east side is due to the proposed size of it. I trained to be a naturalist interpreter at Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center and while hiking with groups of students I would dream of the day that I could walk through the woods alone with my future dog. Now that I own a dog I love to hike with her off leash, but it isn't legal in most places around Duluth so I am forced to drive up the shore. Recently, with the rash of wolf attacks I do not feel as safe as I used to letting my dog off leash in the forest. In January I visited a friend from grad school who now resides in Minneapolis and she took me to the dog park near her house - it was amazing! It was a huge enclosed forest that you could hike around in with your dog off leash. It was a big bonus to living in the cities and added to the list of reasons that I might want to move to Minneapolis. I can be a scientist anywhere, but I choose to live in Duluth. The new park could help to retain young professionals who are moving out of Duluth because of the amenities that large cities offer.

Lastly, and slightly related to the previous point, the new park would be big enough to allow dog owners to move and get exercise with their dogs on the proposed trail. Dog parks are great for elderly or disabled dog owners because it allows pets to exercise with each other without straining their owners (for example, I broke my leg last winter and was unable to walk/run with my dog for 2 months and I was so thankful that I could hobble around the dog park while she still got exercise and remained healthy), but a larger dog park would allow owners to exercise themselves without feeling like they have to keep up with their dogs or restrain them. The city of Duluth as well the entirety of the US has a weight problem and part of it is that some people just don't know how to exercise or get started being active. We could put up signs in the park encouraging people to walk the trail in the park as a way to be active with their dogs. This could also be another opportunity to encourage Duluthians to enjoy the outdoors more, I guarantee people who start to feel comfortable hiking or walking in this park will begin to feel more comfortable going to places like Hartley, Bagley, Lester, Chester or even rougher trails on the SHT - they just need to first few safe encounter with venturing into nature to get started. I saw this everyday when I lead student groups that came from inner city Minneapolis. Kids would come to me scared or hostile to being in the woods and after a safe and guided encounter through the forest they wanted to go back for more. It's never a bad thing to have more citizens interested and invested in our city's green space!

This dog park could benefit not only dogs, but it could increase owner health, appreciation of Duluth forest/green space, and retention of young professionals who might otherwise move away.

Thank you for your time and be well,
Katie Lassi

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