

DIAMOND CREEK DOG PARK CONCEPT DESIGN

Prepared by



In conjunction with



GLOSSARY OF TERMS			
Term	Definition	Term	Definition
Dog park	A dog off leash area that is fully enclosed or fenced	Parks / reserves	Areas that include open parkland, play spaces, sporting areas, trails, natural environments
Dog owner	The person responsible for the overall care and wellbeing of a dog	Dog walker	Refers to anyone responsible for the actions of a dog when it is in a park, reserve or other public place
Off leash area	Areas where dogs are permitted off leash but only if they are under effective control of their owner / walker	On leash area	Areas where dogs have to be on a leash at all times
Responsible pet owners	People who care for pets responsibly e.g. register their pets, confine their pets, proactively attend to their pets' health needs etc.	Local Laws	Regulations (state govt. or council) that are developed and/or regulated by council
Dog litter	Dog droppings or excrement		

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1. The purpose of the Diamond Creek Dog Park Concept Plan

This document has been prepared to guide the development of the Diamond Creek Dog Park, and fenced dog off-leash area at the Diamond Creek Recreation Reserve.

The site of the proposed dog park is located to the west of the Diamond Creek Bowling Club greens and to the south of the Marngrook sports oval and the Diamond Creek. The Diamond Creek and associated billabong and wetlands form the north and north-west boundary of the proposed dog park.

The site is on a popular walking circuit that follows Diamond Creek corridor. There are plans to connect the walking trails on the east and west side of the creek with a bridge in the vicinity of Watkins Street. This will enhance pedestrian access to the trail network and the dog park from the residential areas abutting the creek corridor.

2. What is a dog park?

Dog parks are fenced areas that may contain a number of activity areas including open runabout areas and, natural rummaging environments such as rock scramble areas or grassed areas.

They may also include educational or agility equipment for developing social and physical skills, and confidence in dogs.

Dog parks should include amenities for dog owners and other people who may visit the dog park.

These amenities include natural shade or shade structures, water, seating, attractive and robust ground cover. Larger dog parks that attract people for longer stays and from further away should include access to toilets, car parking and picnic facilities (outside the dog park).

This will ensure it is an appealing social environment, and a well-used community destination.

3. Why have a dog park?

Council's Domestic Animal Management Plan¹ identified the significant community interest for fenced dog parks that complement existing dog off leash facilities. Ninety percent of people responding to the community survey² conducted as part of the project supported the provision of fenced dog off leash areas. The issue also attracted a significant number of requests for this type of facility at various locations in the shire, and at sites that are separate to sporting fields.

Council's Open Space Strategy identifies dog walking as one of the 5 most popular recreation activities undertaken by residents. It also highlights the need to cater for people who walk dogs and to provide areas for dog exercising.

The advantage of fenced dog parks is that they allow dog off leash activities to occur in close proximity to other park activities. They also have a number of other social and environmental benefits³. They allow dog and non-dog people to be in close proximity to each other when in the park; they provide elderly and disabled owners with a safe and contained place to exercise their pet dog; they allow dogs to socialise in a safe environment; they are an alternative recreation activity and encourage community interaction and; they provide a focal point for dog education and training programs.

Dog parks should be considered as one of a range of opportunities to provide for the dog owning community. Other opportunities for dog owners and their pets should be considered in relation to dog off-leash areas that are unfenced, trails, and urban environments including outdoor cafés.

¹ Nillumbik Domestic Animal Management Plan 2013-2017

² The majority if these were dog owners

³ www.paws4play.com.au/information

4. Why was the site chosen for a dog park?

The following outlines the reasons for selecting the Diamond Creek Recreation Reserve as the site of a dog park in Nillumbik:

- Diamond Creek has the second highest population of dogs in Nillumbik
- to increase the use of the recreation reserve and its role as a recreation and social hub, and a family friendly destination
- to provide for the recreation needs of the dog owning community in Diamond Creek and a focus for meeting other dog owners
- to enhance the range of 'non- sport' outdoor and recreation opportunities at the reserve
- to minimise the use of the Marngrook sports field for dog off leash activities
- the dog park will provide additional opportunities associated with council's annual Pet Expo, which is held at the reserve.

5. Designing the dog park

5.1 Why 'design' a dog park?

The same planning and design principles should apply to a dog park as they do to any other type of open space area. Applying open space planning and design principles will ensure the dog park:

- is well integrated with the wider environment or the park in which they are located
- considers environmental or potential environmental impacts
- is designed in line with 'healthy design' or CPTED4 principles that optimise safety and perceptions of safety e.g. good sight lines for casual surveillance of the site. This will encourage use of the site.
- considers the activity (e.g. dog exercise, training, socialisation) needs and the social needs of dog owners and other visitors (e.g. shade, seating, water, car parking, disability access)
- is in line with the open space provision hierarchy.

5.2 Why have different activity zones in the dog park?

The rationale for providing different zones in the dog park is to:

- provide a range of environments that encourage physical, social, intellectual, and sensory development of dogs
- enable owners to train/play with their dogs using different environments and stimuli away from other people/dogs
- allow the opportunity for separation from other dogs

5.3 Universal design

The Diamond Creek dog park has been designed in line with 'universal design principles'. This means it has been designed to optimise access for as many people as possible, and in consideration of accommodating the needs of people with restricted mobility.

This means we have considered:

- Locating disability car parking close to the entrance gate
- firm surfaces (e.g. granitic sand loop pathway) in the dog park and from the car park to the dog park entry to allow for easy navigation and even under surfacing
- a gated system that allows easy access by wheelchairs e.g. placement of latches in easy reach of people in wheelchairs or older people who are on foot
- seats with backs and arm rests

5.4 Activity zones proposed for the Diamond Creek Dog Park

5.4.1 Play/runabout zone with climable/rummaging features

The purpose is to create spaces within the zone where dogs can run free and where there are stimulating environments to explore (e.g. sensory vegetation), open run about areas and rock features for climbing/scrambling.

Low-level vegetation throughout the area helps prevent large groups of dogs forming. It also allows play in and around obstacles/installations (vegetation plantings, logs etc.), which provides a more stimulating environment with more play/exercise options and spaces.

An informal pathway around the perimeter of the area provides a firm surface for people using mobility aids. It can also be used as an educational feature (e.g. on leash and at-heel walking training).

To manage areas well consideration must be given to:

- Appropriate under surfacing for installations and high use areas
- Reparation of high use areas and possible conversion to more durable under surfacing
- Maintenance and replacement of vegetation
- Maintenance of pathway
- Regular mowing of grassed areas and fence lines

5.4.2 Education/Training Zone

The purpose is to create an area that has some visual separation from the rest of the area to enable dog training to occur. These zones support early stage dog (e.g. for beginner dog/owner, younger dogs) obedience/education training. The zone can be an open flat area or it can include dog education/confidence development equipment. The equipment provides a focus for obedience training but is not essential. The purpose is not to create a totally isolated environment because this is not the norm in public environments. Instead the aim is to provide a partially secluded environment that minimises distractions but does not remove them altogether.

As dogs become more responsive to owner commands there is/should be less need for visual barriers. Partial screening provides a controlled early learning environment.

The aim is to encourage owners to educate their dogs to the point where they are responsive to voice commands as required by responsible pet ownership and local laws requirements.

To manage areas well consideration must be given to:

- Appropriate edging and under surfacing around any installations
- Maintenance and replacement of vegetation
- Regular mowing of grassed areas, along fence lines and area immediately outside the dog park fence line
- Reparation of external fencing.

5.4.3 Small Dog/Time Out Zone

The purpose is to create an area that allows small dogs to run separately from larger dogs. These areas are particularly popular with owners of small, timid or younger dogs. It can also act as a time out area for owners who want to temporarily remove their dogs, regardless of size, from the energy of the dog park and to settle them down. Ideally this space would be fenced, however the dog park needs to be of a reasonable size if a separate space is to be provided. Fencing within a small dog park makes it too congested and defeats the purpose of a dog park plan.

To manage areas well consideration must be given to:

- Appropriate edging and under surfacing around any installations
- Maintenance and replacement of vegetation
- Regular mowing of grassed areas, along internal and external fence lines and area immediately outside the dog park fence line
- Reparation of external fencing.

5.4.4 Seating/shade zone (inside the dog park)

The purpose is to capitalise on the relaxing and expansive shade environment provide by the large eucalypt trees in the park and outside the boundary of the park and create a major seating and social area for dogs and people.

To manage areas well consideration must be given to:

- Reparation of external fencing
- Replacement of mulch under surfacing under trees and around installations (e.g. seating)
- Reparation of eroded areas around entry

5.4.5 Seating/shade zone (outside the dog park)

At the south end of the dog park purpose is to provide modest picnic table and seating amenities under the large eucalypt trees that abut the dog park. This allows people to picnic with friends and family but without having to go into the dog park to access seating. (Refer to rules section)

5.4.6 Service areas (car park, gates and trail)

The car park, access pathway and gate areas should be maintained to ensure the area is maintained in line with relevant service standards. This is particularly important in high traffic areas such as entry exit points and pathways.

6. Managing the dog park

6.1 Possible challenges associated with managing the dog park

Management challenges associated with the dog park are similar to those associated with all off leash dog areas and can include:

Possible management challenge	How to address the situation
1. Lower than desired level of use because of the low profile and seclusion of the site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Removing some of the low level vegetation to increase sight lines between the trail on the eastern side of the creek and the dog park ▪ Signage – to the reserve, in the reserve and along pathways leading to the site ▪ Promotional information e.g. dog off leash sites brochure
2. Dog owners/walkers not picking up their dogs litter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Education/etiquette signage, educational programs and literature
3. Litter bags being left at the gate (often an issue when bins are not provided)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consider provision of rubbish bins ▪ Education/etiquette signage, educational programs and literature
4. Too many dogs brought to the dog park by the one person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased/targeted monitoring of the site ▪ Education/etiquette signage, educational programs and literature
5. People leaving their dog unattended in the dog park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased/targeted monitoring of the site ▪ Education/etiquette signage, educational programs and literature
6. Inappropriate dogs being brought to the dog park (e.g. entire dogs, restricted breeds, dogs that are too young, and unvaccinated dogs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased/targeted monitoring of the site ▪ Penalties as appropriate ▪ Education/etiquette signage, educational programs and literature
7. Young children being taken into the dog park and children being left unattended	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased/targeted monitoring of the site ▪ Education/etiquette signage, educational programs and literature
8. People/children playing/hanging out in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased/targeted monitoring of the site

Possible management challenge	How to address the situation
the dog park or playing on equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education/etiquette signage, educational programs and literature
9. Domination of the dog park by commercial or community activity groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased/targeted monitoring of the site Education/etiquette signage, educational programs and literature

6.2 Dog park rules⁵

The following information is from the book 'Planning the Community Dog Park and provides a summary of rules or regulations that should be considered for the community dog park. Only rules that can be or will be monitored and enforced should be included on the rule signboard.

Dog park etiquette is another matter. These are the behaviours and actions of dogs and owners that make the dog park a more pleasant place to be and may relate to dog owners/carers actively monitoring their dog, or retrieving or leashing their dog when it is being too boisterous.

The following are those rules and regulations that can be enforced or reported on, that is they can be monitored or observed. For responsible dog owners these rules and regulations are common sense.

Rules and regulations can be couched in different terminology and tone. Some councils take a more corporate or serious approach to their communications while others will see the dog park as an opportunity to communicate the sense of enjoyment that is associated with dog ownership, and the relaxed atmosphere of the dog park.

The rules and regulations below are couched in a more formal language but only for the purpose of conveying the key messages succinctly.

Table 1: Dog park rules and regulations
<p>Dog registration and identification requirements</p> <p>Rule 1. Dogs to be registered with council</p> <p><i>Why the rule:</i> Assists with identification of dogs in the case of an incident and reinforces responsible pet ownership practices</p>
<p>Supervision of dogs</p> <p>Rule 2: No more than 2 per adult*</p> <p><i>Why the rule:</i> A person cannot responsibly supervise more than 2 dogs</p> <p>* Some dog parks have a 1 or 2 dog per 1 adult rule which is quite justified from a risk management point of view.</p> <p>Note: For safety reasons adults should not take a young children and a dog/s into the dog park</p> <p>Rule 3: No leaving dogs unattended</p> <p><i>Why the rule:</i> Dog owners need to be fully attentive in order to attend to any incident their dog may be involved in and to insure their dog is safe at all times</p> <p>Rule 4: Dog owners must pick up dog litter</p> <p><i>Why the rule:</i> The amenity of the park is severely impacted when dog litter is not cleaned up and it increases the risk of infection for dogs and people</p>
<p>Dog behaviour</p> <p>Rule 5: No aggressive dogs or dogs that show aggressive or unruly behaviour</p> <p><i>Why the rule:</i> Aggressive behaviours may indicate fear and severe discomfort and be a precursor to more aggressive actions (e.g. bites) causing injury to other dogs and people</p>

⁵ 'Planning the Community Dog Park' Paws4play Design notes

Table 1: Dog park rules and regulations
<p>Children in the dog park</p> <p>Rule 6: No children under 5 allowed in the dog park*</p> <p><i>Why the rule:</i> Children can be too easily knocked over; dogs can sometimes feel the urge to protect children they know which can result in aggressive dog behaviour; children running can be interpreted as prey animals by some dogs</p> <p>* Some dog parks do not allow children under 14 at all</p> <p>Rule 7: Children under 14 should not be left alone to supervise a dog</p> <p><i>Why the rule?</i> Children under 14 are too young to have the experience or presence of mind to deal with potentially threatening situations appropriately; children can be upset by situations they do not understand or cannot manage</p>
<p>Food</p> <p>Rule 8: No food in the Dog Park*</p> <p><i>Why the rule:</i> Some dogs can be excitable or aggressive which may result in jumping up on people or dog fights</p> <p>* Make an exception to dog treats used for the reinforcement of dog training skills. The use of these needs to be discrete.</p>
<p>Equipment and toys</p> <p>Rule 9: People not to play on or near dog exercise/training equipment</p> <p><i>Why the rule:</i> Dog education/exercise equipment is not design for the purpose of children or adult play or exercise</p>
<p>Gentle handling</p> <p>Rule 10: No choker or spiked collars or rough dog handling techniques</p> <p><i>Why the rule:</i> Positive reinforcement or gentle handling techniques promote positive and trusting responses. Aggressive handling techniques can encourage fearful and aggressive responses in dogs and should be avoided. Positive reinforcement or gentle handling techniques promote positive and trusting responses increasing the ease by which dogs can be handled.</p>

Local Laws will need to established a monitoring schedule for the park that takes into consideration the relatively low profile of the site, the level of use of the dog park particularly at weekends, and user feedback.

6.3 Maintaining the dog park

Inspection and maintenance protocols need to be developed in line with service levels for other dog off leash and open space areas. Particular consideration will need to be paid to:
















- secure fencing and checking for areas where dogs have dug holes under fences or where erosion has occurred
- the integrity of large trees/branches
- mowing of grass particularly along fence lines, around installations (rock areas, seating) and in adjoining areas to minimise opportunities for snakes. This is particularly relevant given the close proximity of the dog park to Diamond Creek.
- replacing or introducing under surfacing in areas of high use
- replacing or repairing fences
- managing weed encroachments on pathways
- maintaining car park and access pathways
- maintaining signage to the dog park
- ensuring correct functioning of gates and water taps/fountains.

7. Site concept plan

Please refer to the following page.



LEGEND:

-  Existing contours - 1m intervals
-  Double gated entry / exits
-  Seating
-  Seating (outside dog park)
-  Existing trees to be retained
-  Proposed park trees - indigenous species
-  Proposed low screening vegetation
-  Internal granitic sand pathway
-  Informal natural features area to include fallen logs, low sensory vegetation clusterings, granitic or gravel surface treatment
-  Play Area - Mounding & climbable / rummaging features. To include low sensory vegetation, rock features, obstacles, durable surface treatment
-  Seating / social area
-  Small dog / time-out zone to include grass area, boundary vegetation for semi-seclusion. Fencing an option.
-  Improve sight lines (trim / clean-up existing vegetation) for passive surveillance from outside the park
-  Existing shared pathway link
-  Existing fence line (Dog Park boundary)

8. Design notes⁶

8.1 Fencing

Barrier (perimeter) fencing - The purpose of fencing is to provide a significant barrier to prevent dogs from running out of the area. It is not the intention that fencing be of a height to prevent dogs prone to jumping over fences from escaping. These dogs should be discouraged from using the dog park.

Fencing should be to the ground, and preferable into the ground to prevent/minimise dogs digging under fences.

Corners – There should be no right angled/tight corners. Dogs may get trapped in corners by other dogs, which may encourage fearful/defensive behaviour e.g. snarling, biting.

The aim is to eliminate any features that may result in the dog park being a negative experience for dogs.

8.2 Entries

General – Minimise opportunity for congestion around entries/exits as much as possible by locating installations such as bins, drinking stations, shelters, seating, equipment away from entry/exit areas.

Low vegetation should be planted on the inside of the dog park fence to minimise dogs running the fenceline (breaks eye contact) to greet new arrivals.

Double gated entries - All external entries/exits should be double gated to protect against escapees. These should be on the outside of the dog park to minimise corners within the dog park.

The double-gated system should not be too large such that too many dogs end up in a confined space, but wide/large enough to enable someone with a wheelchair or mobility aid to maneuver through. A 2.0 metre by 1.5 metre area with the long length positioned along the fence line.

Location of gates – Gates should be located along a straight length of fence. Locating a fence in or near a corner increases the potential for congestion and trapping of dogs and people in corners. Every opportunity to minimise congestion at gates should be considered because they become busy places with dogs arriving and exiting, and congregating around the entry to greet new arrivals.

Single gated entries – These are appropriate for entries to internal spaces e.g. small dog area

Accessible entries – All entries should be accessible for people with restricted mobility, including latches at a suitable height, and of a width to allow easy access for wheelchairs.

8.3 Under surfacing

The purpose of providing different surfaces within the dog park is to give dogs exposure to different tactile/sensory experiences (confidence development).

Appropriate surfaces will also:

- minimise maintenance requirements
- prevent dust/mud forming in high traffic areas resulting in a less attractive and appealing environment
- ensure easy access to shelters for people in wheelchairs and minimise trip hazards e.g. between concrete surrounds of the shelter or equipment and surrounding area
- improve the general aesthetics of the dog park

Surface treatments are particularly important in high wear areas including entries/exits, around seating, around shelters, at points where people congregate e.g. near/under trees, and

⁶ 'Planning the Community Dog Park' Paws4play Design notes

around vegetation and obstacles where dogs play/clamber. A surface other than grass is recommended in these areas e.g. granitic sand or mulch as appropriate.

Surface options:

- Entries/exits – Good design is necessary to ensure water does not pool and can disperse without eroding the surface run-off is effective. A surface of granitic sand and/or concrete is preferable to prevent/minimise erosion. Ensure surfacing extends past immediate entry/exit area.
- Around installations e.g.
 - seats, shelters – granitic sand*, concrete (note however erosion can cause trip / access hazards where different surface types meet)
 - obstacles e.g. logs, rock mounds – granitic sand (e.g. between larger rocks in the outcrop to eliminate paw, hand and feet entrapments and provide ease of maintenance) and mulch (e.g. around base of outcrop to vary tactile/sensory variety)
 - education/agility equipment – granitic sand*, mulch
 - water stations – preferably drainage installed to prevent area becoming muddy/dusty with a concrete* or grass blocks* under surfacing etc. (*recommended)

8.4 Infrastructure that enhances accessibility and sociability of the dog park

All infrastructure should be designed to optimise opportunities for people with restricted mobility. Particular note should be provided to:

- Entries and pathways
 - Wide enough for mobility aids to navigate
 - Latches at hip height
 - Surfacing that allows for easy access for people with restricted mobility to get to different zones in the dog park.
- Seating
 - Ensure smooth transition between different surface types
 - Seats should have backrests and preferably arm rests
 - Seating should provide a variety of options e.g. single bench seats and L-shape seating configurations (social interaction)
- Shade structures
 - Should be of a size and alignment that maximise shade during the day, shelter from wind/rain and social opportunities
 - Should include seating and be accessible for people in wheelchairs
- Water access
 - Drinking fountains for people should be disability friendly and dog water taps should have an under surfacing that is easily and safely accessible for people with restricted mobility (an easy to maintain)
 - Drinking stations should not have dog tie up points
- Natural shade

8.5 Pathways

Approach pathways

Approach pathways should not run along the immediate perimeter of the dog park. This will lessen the likelihood of congestion at the entry by minimising the number of dogs in the dog park that follow the new arrival along the fence line to the entry.

If the approach pathway does have to run along or near the dog park fence line then plant low-level vegetation along the fence line. Planting on the outside the dog park will allow vegetation to establish without being trampled by energetic and curious dogs.

Internal pathways

Internal pathways provide access for people with restricted mobility or using mobility aids to access areas within the dog park. They also provide another valuable education opportunity

for dog owners to teach their dogs footpath etiquette and experience different textural surfaces (confidence development).

Internal footpaths are also a way of defining different activity zones.

Adjoining parkland pathways

Consideration should be given to low level plantings between the dog park fence line and closely located external pathways. This provides a visual barrier for the dogs in the dog park and will minimise the likelihood of dogs running the fence line and barking at people using the external pathway.