

ATTENTION NEIGHBORS!

NEW RULES IN CRISPUS ATTUCKS PARK – DOG-FREE AND DOG-FRIENDLY ZONES!

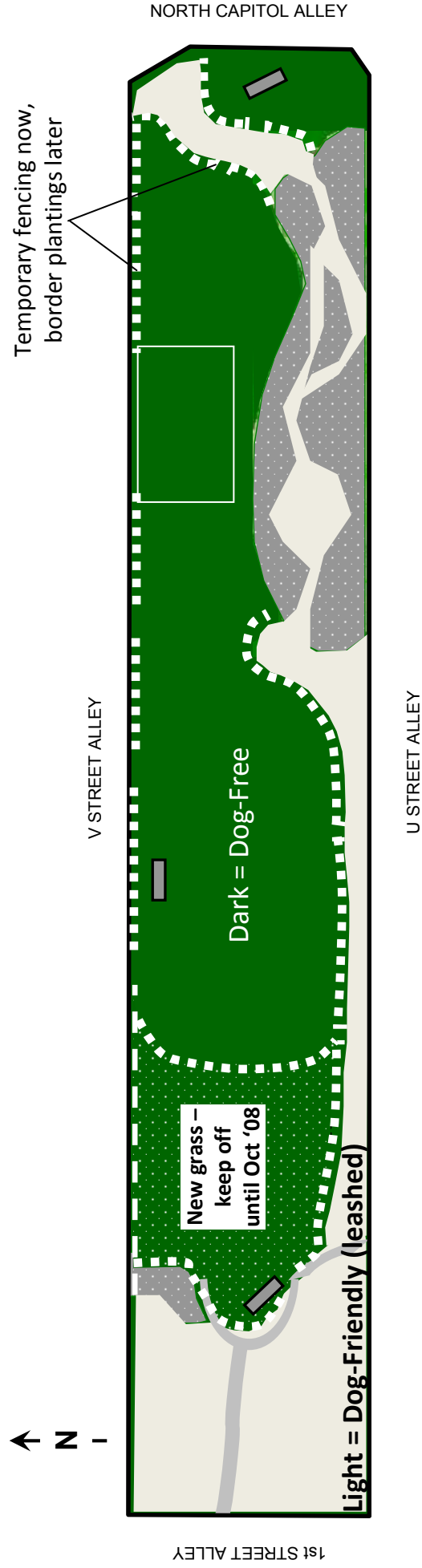
The Crispus Attucks Park community has been engaged in an ongoing discussion about whether and how to accommodate dogs in the park. After hearing from neighbors, and after much debate, discussion and research, the Park Board has developed a plan that will allow for both:

- 1- “Dog-Free” areas, where kids and adults can enjoy the park free of worry of dogs and dog waste
- 2- “Dog-Friendly” areas, where anyone is welcome, and where dog owners can walk their dogs, on-leash, through the park.

The next few months will be a trial run, to see if this arrangement works and to modify the plan if necessary. If all goes well, we will replace the temporary fencing with shrubs and plants.

Now we need YOUR help to make this a success! In the next few weeks, we will be adding new signage and low temporary fencing to clearly mark the areas where dogs are not allowed. Please look for your neighbors out in the park over the coming weekends and come out to lend a hand. If possible, please also consider donating money toward the costs of the signs, fencing, and border shrubs. And if you’re on email, watch your inbox!

Please help ensure that Crispus Attucks Park reaches its potential as a community park for everyone! For more information, call John at 202-550-2631, or email info@crispusattuckspark.org.



SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Why not just make the whole park off-limits to dogs? A: Dog owners are part of our community too. And while it is true that the park currently has a problem with dog waste, it is also true that the largest single group of users of the park are responsible dog owners who do pick up after their dogs. Many also pick up trash they see in the park while they're at it. But there are also some practical reasons: **(1) Safety:** Dog owners have for some time now been the "eyes and ears" of the park. That's because dogs always need walking, even when many humans would rather avoid the cold or heat or rain. It is a principle of urban design that a well-used space is a safe space. The more the park gets used – including by responsible dog owners – the safer a place it is for all of us. **(2) Enforcement:** The Park Board believes that the chances of having a space free of dogs and dog waste are much greater if we also provide a place where dogs can go. It is much easier to ask a dog owner to please stay within the dog-friendly areas than it is to tell a dog owner that they are not welcome in the park.

Q: Why do we need an area that's completely off-limits to dogs? A: Right now there is so much dog waste in the park that many people avoid the park. The presence of dog waste in the park makes many activities -- including possible planned activities such as movie nights or other community gatherings -- unattractive to many. Many parents, especially those with young children, are concerned that the waste (and even its residue after it's removed) spreads disease. Based on input from the community – in particular those living directly on the park – it was decided that the best chance of eliminating dog waste from a part of the park was to make it completely dog-free.

Q: Why are we devoting so much of the park to dogs? Do we really need to cut into the Great Lawn by having a path along the U Street alley? A: The placement of the "dog-friendly" zone was designed to encourage dog owners to walk through the park, rather than to stop in the park and take their dogs off leash. Designs were considered that placed the dog-friendly zone at either or both ends of the park, but these were seen as likely to promote a "dog-run" or "dog-park" type of use, while discouraging the walking of dogs through the length of the park.

Q: Why can't we just allow dogs off-leash at certain hours, for example in early morning hours when children aren't around? A: DC law requires dogs to be leashed on public property. While the park is private property, the alleys surrounding the park are public property, and the park is not fenced to contain dogs that are off leash. The Park Board simply cannot take the legal risk of instituting an official rule that is potentially at odds with DC law and that could create a liability for the board.

Q: In recent years, dogs have run off-leash and dog-owners are not always picking up their dogs' waste. How will this new arrangement change this behavior? A: Right now many people have their dogs off leash in the park because the design of the space promotes that use, and there is not a clear and consistent message (through signage and layout) that this is prohibited throughout the park. Similarly, some people are not picking up after their dogs because they have the sense that this is okay to do in the middle of the park. We strongly believe that the new signage and temporary fencing will go a long way towards reducing off-leash use. But of course it won't be enough, and we know the results won't be immediate or perfect. It will take all of us to reinforce the rules. If you yourself don't feel comfortable talking to a dog owner who isn't picking up or who is using the dog-free zone, the 5th District Police encourage all of us to call them (really!). In addition, the DC Health Department is engaged and has offered to visit the park regularly and enforce the waste removal laws. If, within the next couple months, it is apparent that this new arrangement is not working, then we will have to consider other options.

Q: Why are we designating a space for dogs instead of a playground for children? A: One of the primary reasons for this new arrangement is to reclaim a majority of the park for kids and, more generally, for a wider variety of uses than the park currently allows. Installing a tot lot for children is a separate issue with its own set of challenges. There is a parents group looking into the possibility of getting a play set for Crispus Attucks Park or some other location in the neighborhood. Contact us for more information (see reverse).

Q: The park is so large. Why can't it accommodate a small fenced dog run? A: The possibility of having a small fenced dog run in the park has been raised numerous times with the community, with the homeowners around the park, and with the Park Board in particular, and has been met with strong opposition for a variety of reasons. As will any proposed amenity for the park (whether a tot lot, a dog run, or something else), the concerns of the people who live directly adjacent to the park must be weighed very heavily, because they will be affected most directly and materially. In the case of a dog run, support from neighborhood dog owners (which was not broad – many found a small dog run useless for their large-breed dogs) could not overcome the legitimate concerns of homeowners.

Q: Won't all the grass along the narrow path along the U Street alley die and turn to dirt and mud? Won't the plants along this path all die from dog urine? A: The plan is to see if and where the grass gets worn, and let that inform how to deal with this area. Most likely, this narrow path area will ultimately be covered with hardwood mulch, which will be pleasing to the eye, practical, and economical. The plantings that will eventually create the barrier between the walking path and the dog-free zone can include plants that are more tolerant to acidic conditions. The plan is to create a beautifully planted border that homeowners will see out their back windows, and that all will enjoy as they walk along the path.

Q: The turf on the "Great Lawn" is not designed for sustained active use, as athletic fields are. Won't the grass on the "Great Lawn" die once kids start playing on it regularly, as has always happened in the past? A: We now have a professionally installed irrigation system throughout the park. This will help the grass recover from use during the hot summer months. But it is true that the Great Lawn lacks adequate drainage, and will probably suffer if overused. This is why it will be critically important that neighbors donate their time or money to keep the grass cut regularly (this promotes the health of the lawn), help fertilize, etc.

Q: Won't the area at the west end become a de facto dog park, covered in dog waste and used for off-leash play? A: Because this area is wider than the path along the U Street alley, the risk for this kind of behavior is greater. We can address this with clear signage and with some creative design. For example, there are already plans to install a new planting bed in the southwest corner. The mound on the north side will also be planted. These beds, plus possibly others, will reduce the amount of contiguous space that dogs have to run around, and make it unattractive for off-leash play.

Q: How can I help? A: See other side.