



Setti D. Warren  
Mayor

## Off-Leash Area Criteria



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Commissioner

*The following criteria are used by the Off-Leash Area Working Group when evaluating green space:*

1. **ADA Compliance**—For off-leash areas that require new construction, assure availability of handicapped access parking and an ADA compliant route into the park, in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. The goal is to have accessible off-leash areas to the maximum extent feasible.
2. **Aesthetic Impact**—Due consideration should be given to the visual impact that an off-leash area might have on the character of a park (e.g., fences, signs, etc.).
3. **Conservation Impact**—Due consideration should be given to the impact that an off-leash area might have on wildlife, habitats, and plants in the proposed and surrounding areas, with special consideration given to possible negative impact on environmentally sensitive areas.
4. **Consideration of Abutters**—Due consideration should be given to the potential impact on abutters to the off-leash site, for things like noise, parking, waste removal, and access to the park.
5. **Cost**—Due consideration should be given to the amount of funding (if any) that might be needed or available to create an off-leash area.
6. **Current Off-Leash Status**—The question of whether a site is already being used for off-leash activity should be noted. If it is not already being used, potential barriers to the creation of off-leash space should be identified and considered. If it is already being used, any problems related to current off-leash activity should be identified and the potential impact of increased usage should be determined.
7. **Distribution of Parks**—Due consideration should be given to the distribution of off-leash areas throughout the city, so that their impact on any single neighborhood can be mitigated and relatively close access to off-leash areas can be afforded to those who wish to use them.
8. **Enforcement**—Due consideration should be given to whether a proposed off-leash area will facilitate the Newton Animal Control in their responsibilities to oversee both off-leash and non-off-leash areas, and whether a proposed site would create any special enforcement issues.
9. **Impact on Other Usage**—Due consideration should be given to the potential impact that an off-leash area might have on other activities in adjacent or shared space.
10. **Park Access**—Due consideration should be given as to how dog owners will reach the off-leash area and how maintenance (such as emptying waste receptacles) will be conducted.
11. **Parking**—Consideration must be given to the availability of adequate and appropriate parking, based on anticipated usage.
12. **Site Characteristics**—Due consideration should be given to the topography of a potential site. For example, drainage, slope, the absence of ticks, the presence of trees or bushes as a natural buffer or for shade, etc., should be considered. Where fencing is proposed, the presence of an existing fence is a plus.
13. **Size**—An off-leash area should be of adequate size for its intended use.