

Capitola City Council Agenda Report

Meeting: September 26, 2024

From: Public Works Department

Subject: Dog Park at Noble Gulch Park



Recommended Action: 1) Provide feedback on the proposed dog park design; 2) approve the Coastal Development Permit; 3) defer the funding decision to future budget discussions; and/or 4) direct staff to assess interest in donations and/or community fundraising for the project.

Background: Noble Gulch Park is a City-owned park that is bordered by Soquel Creek to the east, the intersection of Monterey and Park Avenues to the south, and private properties to the north. On the west side, the park is adjacent to the only sidewalk along Monterey Avenue, which leads to New Brighton Middle School. Water service is available near the intersection, and lighted bollards are installed along Monterey Avenue.

A split rail fence runs along part of the park's western edge, delineating a steep slope from the sidewalk into the park. Benches and tables are located near the intersection and in a grove at the back of the park, connected by a narrow pathway constrained by the creek and the slope leading up to Monterey Avenue. Vehicular access is available for City and County of Santa Cruz staff to maintain the creek and wastewater system facilities. Approximately ten parking spots are directly adjacent to the site. Parking is also available at the City-owned parking lots across Bay Ave.



Figure 1. Noble Gulch Park – Existing Conditions

As part of the required ADA transition plan, the park was previously assessed and found to have several deficiencies related to ADA access. Currently, there is no accessible pathway from the public sidewalk into the park. The park must provide accessible features and pathways to all amenity types. Any modifications to the park would need to bring it up to ADA standards.

During the July 25, 2024, City Council meeting, staff was directed to evaluate the feasibility of converting a portion of Noble Gulch Park into a dog park. Neighboring property owners were notified of this meeting.

Discussion: Staff conducted a site evaluation to assess existing conditions and identify the necessary modifications to make the park suitable for a public dog park. Staff also met with local dog owners to gather input on desired features, considering the constraints of the site and regulatory requirements for public parks.

The following categories were considered:

1. **Park Boundaries:**
 - City Council previously directed the dog park be set back from the intersection to maintain public access and seating outside the designated dog park area.
 - Both City and Santa Cruz County vehicles require access to the park.
 - Dog advocates did not believe a fence was necessary on the creek side for purposes of dog control.
2. **Park Conditions:**
 - Turf near the intersection is currently irrigated, but the rear of the park is not. The back area becomes muddy in the winter.
 - Dog advocates expressed a preference for turf over wood chips and concerns about drainage issues during winter.
3. **ADA Access:**
 - The park currently does not meet accessibility standards.
 - Accessible paths from the public sidewalk to all park elements are required, including pathways into the park, level landings for the dog park area, and accessible routes to water fountains, waste receptacles, and seating.
4. **Amenities:**
 - Installation of water fountains for dogs would require extending the existing water service.
 - Dog advocates are amenable to delaying water service installation.
 - Additional waste receptacles and retaining existing seating are needed.
 - Updated signage for dog park rules should be installed.

Based on the analysis and feedback, staff proposes the following improvements for Noble Gulch Park, detailed in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Noble Gulch Park – Proposed Dog Park Improvements

- **Fencing:** Install hog wire fencing on all sides of the dog park area. The fence along Monterey Avenue is proposed to be installed at the base of the slope, away from the sidewalk, making it less visible from the street. Staff recommends placing the fence in this configuration to prevent dogs from accessing the heavily used sidewalk and the creek. A double-gated entry corral at the park entrance will provide a safe space for leashing and unleashing dogs. Two vehicular gates are required for City and County access.
- **ADA Improvements:** Install a 700-square-foot concrete pad for ADA access, including the corral area and initial park entry. This features an accessible waste bin, table, and future water fountain.
- **Maintain Existing Conditions:** Maintain existing park furnishings and turf. The turf in the dog park area is not irrigated and will likely deteriorate over time.
- **Signage:** Install new signage with dog park rules. During the winter, there may be periodic closures of the park due to wet weather.
- **Water Fountain Installation:** Delay the water fountain installation due to excess costs.

Alternatively, more costly fencing options include black vinyl-coated chain-link fencing, which is commonly used in dog parks due to its greater strength and durability.

Fiscal Impact: Staff obtained quotes for the proposed improvements.

Table 1. Itemized Park Costs

Item	Qty	Units	Unit Cost	Total Cost
Hog Wire Fence	875	LF	\$45	\$39,375
Vehicle Gate - Hog Wire	2	Each	\$1,200	\$2,400
Person Gate - Hog Wire	2	Each	\$500	\$1,000
Fencing Total				\$42,775
Concrete Pad	700	SF	\$28	\$19,250
Doggie Bags	1	Each	\$250	\$250
Trash Can	1	Each	\$0	\$0
ADA picnic table	1	Each	\$4,000	\$4,000
Amenities Total				\$23,500
Total Cost				\$66,275

Other potential improvements not currently included in the recommended scope:

Table 2. Optional Items

Item	Qty	Units	Unit Cost	Total Cost
Coated Chain-Link Fence – Cost Difference	---	---	\$7/LF	\$6,825
Drinking/Dog Fountain	1	Each	\$7,000	\$7,000

This project is not included in the current FY 2024-25 budget. Staff recommends that, if Council wishes to proceed, the project be considered for inclusion in future budget cycles or the midyear review. Alternatively, Council could direct staff to gauge interest in donations and/or community fundraising for the effort.

CEQA: The proposed dog park improvements are exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under Section 15303 (Class 3) and Section 15304 (Class 4) of the CEQA Guidelines. Class 3 covers new construction or conversion of small structures, including minor accessory structures such as fences. Class 4 applies to minor alterations to land, including landscaping and minor trenching and backfilling where the surface is restored. The project will not have a significant effect on the environment, as it involves minor improvements to an existing park area.

Coastal Development Permit Findings:

The proposed project requires approval of a Coastal Development Permit (CDP). The City Council is the approval authority on CDP applications for Public Works projects that require no other discretionary permit approvals from the City other than funding approval. The required findings for a CDP can be made for this application and are listed below.

A. The project is consistent with the LCP land use plan, and the LCP implementation program.

The dog park project aligns with the City's certified Local Coastal Plan (LCP) land use plan and the LCP implementation program. It enhances public recreational opportunities within the coastal zone while preserving the park's existing character.

B. The project maintains or enhances public views.

The project will maintain existing public views, as the dog park improvements involve minor alterations that will not obstruct or degrade visual access to the coastal areas.

C. The project maintains or enhances vegetation, natural habitats and natural resources.

The project involves minimal ground disturbance and will incorporate appropriate landscaping to preserve the surrounding natural habitat. Any necessary tree removals will be mitigated by

replanting in compliance with city standards, ensuring no significant impact on vegetation or natural resources.

D. The project maintains or enhances low-cost public recreational access, including to the beach and ocean.

The proposed improvements will enhance low-cost public recreational opportunities by providing a designated area for dog owners and their pets to enjoy the park, promoting greater use of this public space.

E. The project maintains or enhances opportunities for visitors.

The dog park will increase recreational options for visitors and local residents, encouraging more community engagement and enjoyment of the park amenities.

F. The project maintains or enhances coastal resources

The project will not adversely impact coastal resources. The improvements are designed to be compatible with the existing park environment and will support the continued use of the area for passive recreation.

G. The project, including its design, location, size, and operating characteristics, is consistent with all applicable design plans and/or area plans incorporated into the LCP.

The design, location, size, and operating characteristics of the dog park are consistent with the applicable design and area plans incorporated into the LCP. The project complements the overall park setting and adheres to the guidelines for development within the coastal zone.

H. The project is consistent with the LCP goal of encouraging appropriate coastal development and land uses, including coastal priority development and land uses (i.e., visitor-serving development and public access and recreation).

The project supports the LCP goal of promoting appropriate coastal development and land uses, specifically public access and recreation. By providing a dedicated dog park, the project enhances visitor-serving amenities and encourages recreational use within the coastal zone.

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