

# Final 2024 Dog Park Observations and Recommendations

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**CITY OF LOS ALTOS**  
**PARKS, ARTS, RECREATION,**  
**AND CULTURAL COMMISSION**

# Project Objectives

- 🐾 Observe and record usage of Hillview and McKenzie fenced dog park installations; include usage outside fences
- 🐾 Use intake forms to :
  - Quantitatively and qualitatively observe and rate dog and human behavior
  - Record environmental and situational factors to assess their impact on utilization.
- 🐾 Engage community members at parks to garner opinions, issues, and perspective.
- 🐾 Observe other parks as possible
- 🐾 Tabulate Data, Summarize Trends, Findings, and make Recommendations

# Parks Assessed

## 🐾 McKenzie

- Scope included observation at West and East sections of the park
- Dog park is in West section along with courts and parking lot
- 43 Observations made December 2022 through September 2023

## 🐾 Hillview

- Scope included observation in dog park, soccer field, and adjacent sidewalks/paths
- 40 Observations made January 2024 through December 2024

## 🐾 Lincoln

- Scope included North park span between 168 and 108 University Ave
- 26 Observations made February 2024 through December 2024

## 🐾 Heritage Oaks

- Scope included entire park
- 11 Observations made March 2023 to July 2023

# McKenzie Findings

- 🐾 McKenzie had a few hiccups as it got started
- 🐾 Dog Park is indeed utilized
- 🐾 Dog park did not alter behavior of off leash dog owners at East End
- 🐾 Increased usage during adverse weather compared to Hillview
- 🐾 Dog Noise is a non-issue at McKenzie
- 🐾 Community

# Hillview Findings

- 🐾 Dog Park unusable for much of the year --lost grass and much mud
- 🐾 Hillview exhibited generally higher dog counts when aggregating all segments (lots of foot traffic with onleash dogs outside the park)
- 🐾 Minimal dog reactivity observed, despite many triggers outside the park; there were no sustained noise/fight incidents.
- 🐾 Observed a large amount of dog waste not being picked up.
- 🐾 Offleash activity on the soccer field was light, yet present.
- 🐾 There was after-curfew use of the dog park at a substantial 10% rate. Reason given by visitors was consistent work hours conflict.
- 🐾 There were some professional dog handlers that visited, but they stopped once the mud to grass ratio was about 25-30%. Interviews with dog owners was the felt a community benefit from handlers.

# Heritage Oaks and Lincoln North Findings

## 🐾 Heritage Oaks

- Behavior consistent with observations made during 2021-2022 Hillview Baseball Pilot program

## 🐾 Lincoln North

- Substantial On- and Off-Leash behavior; mostly solitary or paired humans, only 3 groups (2 training and 1 social) ever observed
- Never saw any parking issue; never saw an owner leave a poop behind
- Did not gather specific data for Lincoln South, but casual observation confirmed that area remains popular with on- and off-leash walkers, more often sunny and turf less wet.

# Aggregated Data for All Parks

Violations by Type		94
All Parks	After Curfew	4
All Parks	NOISE	6
All Parks	poop	25
All Parks	offleash outside dogpark	58
All Parks	lack of voice control	1

Violation Types By Park					
Park	After Curfew	NOISE	poop	Offleash outside dogpark	Lack of voice control
McK	0	6	8	9	1
Hv	4	0	17	23	0
Linc	0	0	0	22	0
HO	0	0	0	4	0
94	4	6	25	58	1

Number of Dogs in Dogpark by Day of Week								
Park	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Totals
McK Dogs	13	5	12	16	9	8	18	81
McK Observ	4	5	6	11	6	5	6	43
Dogs/Observ	3	1	2	1	2	2	3	
Hv Dogs	20	12	19	12	14	5	7	89
Hv Observ	6	7	9	4	5	5	4	40
Dogs/Observ	3	2	2	3	3	1	2	

Total Observations	
McKenzie	43
Hillview	40
Lincoln	26
Heritage Oaks	11

# Influence of Weather

Usage Per Weather Condition								
Park	Dogs inside DP when Clear	Dogs Outside DP Onleash when Clear	Dogs inside DP when Overcast	Dogs Outside DP Onleash when Overcast	Dogs inside DP when Windy	Dogs Outside DP Onleash when Windy	Dogs inside DP when Rainy	Dogs Outside DP Onleash when Rainy
McKenzie	54	14	11	0	16	21	0	0
Hillview	76	94	4	4	4	4	5	11
Lincoln	n/a	45	n/a	0	n/a	18	n/a	0
Heritage Oaks	n/a	2	n/a	2	n/a	0	n/a	1



# Population totals

43	1755	911	0	0	35	41	81	90	18	20	1	12
Total McK visits	total prkg spaces avail during observ period	total cars present at McK on days counted	total dogs onleash inside fence		total dogs onleash outside fence		total dogs offleash inside fence		total dogs offleash outside fence			unattended poops inside fence
		52%	0%		26%		60%		13%			15%
		utilization of parking capacity for days observer counted	of total dog hdcount are onleash inside fence		of total dog hdcount are onleash outside fence		of total dog hdcount are offleash inside fence		of total dog hdcount are offleash outside fence			of dogs inside fence who left a poop (approx)
40	1800	811	2	2	113	120	87	79	37	41	0	51
Total Hv visits	total prkg spaces avail during observ period	total cars present at Hv on days counted	total dogs onleash inside fence		total dogs onleash outside fence		total dogs offleash inside fence		total dogs offleash outside fence			poops left inside fence
		45%	1%		47%		36%		15%			89
		utilization of parking capacity for days observer counted	of total dog hdcount are onleash inside fence		of total dog hdcount are onleash outside fence		of total dog hdcount are offleash inside fence		of total dog hdcount are offleash outside fence			dogs were observed inside the fence during the data collection period

🐾 Hillview had higher headcounts than McKenzie

🐾 McKenzie had substantially more dogs inside fence than onleash outside.

🐾 Hillview had fewer dogs inside the fence and more dogs onleash outside.

🐾 Interviews cited turf damage or mud as reasons at Hillview

# Parking Utilization Indicator

Parking Usage by Day of Week -- McK 45 spaces, Hv 50 spaces, Linc 20 spaces								cksum
Park	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
# McK days when cars counted	3	5	6	11	5	4	5	39
# McK Cars	43	188	120	312	118	35	95	<b>911</b>
# days McK Obsrvd on this DOTW	4	5	6	11	6	5	6	43
Pkg utilization	32%	84%	44%	63%	52%	19%	42%	
#Hv Days when cars countd	5	6	9	4	4	4	4	36
#Hv Cars	101	135	177	54	132	62	150	<b>811</b>
# Days Hv Obsrvd on this DOTW	6	7	9	4	5	5	4	40
Pkg utilization	40%	45%	39%	27%	66%	31%	75%	
#Linc Days where cars countd	0	0	0	0	26	0	0	98
#Linc Cars	0	0	0	0	98	0	0	<b>98</b>
#days Linc Obsrvd on this DOTW	0	0	0	0	26	0	0	0
Pkg utilization	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!	19%	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!	
#HO days when cars countd	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
#HO Cars	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
#days HO Obsrvd on this DOTW	1	2	1	1	1	3	2	11
utilization	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!	

🐾 Utilization varied widely.

🐾 No correlation between dog park usage and community events or court sports

🐾 No correlation between dog park usage and court sport schedules

🐾 If parking was not available, people walked in.

🐾 Did not assess parking at Heritage Oaks

# Overall Commentary

- 🐾 Natural turf cannot tolerate year around usage, even during fair weather usage. Grass lasted less than a quarter.
- 🐾 Full parking lots do not deter use of dog parks. Mud does.
- 🐾 After-hours use at Hv supports enabling evening usage there
- 🐾 There was a community benefit observed at Hillview from the presence of knowledgeable dog handlers in the park.
- 🐾 Interviews showed there is a subset of users that seek isolated, off-leash space for very specific reasons, including:
  - 🐾 Dog reactive
  - 🐾 Desire for isolated training
  - 🐾 Owner's/handler's disability
- 🐾 While the occurrence of noise and dog reactivity was low, there is opportunity to explore programming the dog parks to address offleash use.