

**DATE:** October 19, 2015  
**TO:** City of Martinez Parks, Recreation, Marina & Cultural Commission (abbreviated PRMCC)  
**FROM:** Martinez Dog Park Group  
**SUBJECT:** Downtown Martinez Dog Park Proposal



The Martinez Dog Park Group is an ad hoc group of citizens that are working together to help Martinez establish a place for humans and canines to socialize and play freely. There are nearly 200 members who actively support the project, and represent the thousands of dogs and their families in Martinez who would benefit from a designated place to run and socialize.

A fenced, secure, maintained dog recreation area will provide a safe place for dog owners to play with their dogs off-leash. City parks are often busy and surrounded by busy streets, which make them not ideal for dog play. Open spaces like Briones are too wild and boundless for many dogs to roam safely. The solution is for a fenced location within Martinez that specifically accommodates dogs and their owners.

The Downtown/Marina area is an ideal place for a dog park. This will draw dog owners Downtown and to the Marina year round. Main Street cafés and shops are an easy dog walk from the Marina complex. By providing a fenced in, off-leash area, the city will divert dogs from the parks and playgrounds, and help keep dogs out of the enticing East Bay Regional Park where dogs are not permitted.

Another upside to a Marina dog park is that the steady patronage will help improve the otherwise unpatrolled areas of the waterfront. Dog park patrons will deter drugs, loitering, camping, vandalism, dumping, and other unwanted elements that now lurk the edges of the parks.

The ASPCA and the Humane Society both estimate that 44% of American households have dogs. For Martinez, that means at least 6,500 homes have at least one dog. That is a lot of people, and a LOT of dogs for our town of 37,500 people. Martinez residents will be well served by a dog park.

**Martinez Dog Park Group Mission:**

*"To establish a fenced-in, off-leash dog park where well-behaved canine citizens can exercise in a clean, safe environment without endangering or annoying people, property or wildlife. To develop a beautiful, well-maintained space open to all dog lovers and friends who are willing to uphold the park's rules and restrictions. To view this park as a community project, in partnership with the City of Martinez, designed to satisfy the needs of dog-owners and non-dog owners alike."*

### **Comparable Dog Park usage from our area:**

- Albany dog park averages 250 off-leash dogs per day
- Carmel Valley (Monterey) dog park has up to 100 per day
- Novato Community Dog Parks have 50-100 users per day
- Sausalito dog park hosts over 300 dogs per day

Visitor draws by dog parks in comparable cities in our region show that they are well used and in demand. The boost of 100 to 200 daily local patrons through the Downtown Area will contribute to the local economy. Also, a dog park will draw users from the surrounding area, who then will discover the charms of Downtown Martinez as they visit. The draw of a downtown dog park is the equivalent of having a sold-out show at the Campbell Theater every day, all year.

### **The PROs of a Downtown Dog Park:**

- Bring hundreds of people a week to downtown Martinez
- Increase downtown and city-wide commerce
- Reduce crime and loitering; Improve property values in the community
- Allows dogs to exercise and socialize safely.
- Promotes responsible dog ownership
- Provides an outlet for dog owners to socialize
- Promotes health and safety by giving dogs a designated play spot

### **FUNDING THE DOG PARK**

There are many established pathways to funding community dog parks. The Martinez Dog Park Group has researched many, and is willing to work with the City to help gain the financial support needed to cover what the City cannot afford to spend on this needed recreational space. There are other sources in the region to help build this project. Community support, corporate donations, civic groups, regional monies, and dog park membership dues are all strategies that we can employ together.

Unfortunately, the park bond Measure H funds are not available for use for this project.

On the upside, there is existing WW bond funding that this project qualifies for. The WW bond was passed by East Bay communities to provide recreational funding via the East Bay Regional park District based on a per capita division. The allocation for the City of Martinez was about \$1.6MIL. These funds are approved, collected, and ready to be spend on Martinez park projects.

The City Council has spent some of our WW allocation. They voted to spend \$262,500 to buy the West Hills Farm property outside of Martinez for the Muir Land Trust give to the Federal Government.

There is a remaining balance of WW funds, \$1,389,461 available to the City. It is currently part of an application for a Waterfront Park Renovation Project. This application can be amended to include or carve out a small fraction to cover the development of a dog park at the Marina or Downtown.

## POTENTIAL SITES

Members of the Martinez Dog Park Group have spoken with many members of the community, government staff, and experts about possible locations for a dog park. A downtown location is preferred for many reasons, but we considered every location that was presented to us. There are three viable locations in the downtown/marina area. Also, there are two locations that have previously been considered that have been ruled out for various reasons. All are presented below.

The AKC and our research have found that the ideal dog park location has most or all of the following attributes:

- Safe and convenient access by car, paw, and foot
- Available parking with ADA compliant ramps and curbs
- Electricity, water, and amenities
- Mostly flat or even terrain
- A neighborhood tolerant of a dog park



### **Site A – Cannery Sports Complex**

This location is part of the recently developed sports complex across from the Amtrak station in the old cannery buildings. The parking lot is paved, illuminated, and is in a well trafficked and accessible area. The site can readily be filled, fenced, plumbed, and made ready for dogs to play. The area is about .4 acres, which is on the small end of a good size for a dog park. But the readiness and location make this spot worthy of top consideration.



### Site B – Yacht Club Adjacent

Located at the waterfront on City property, along a paved parking lot with power and water, this large area is well suited to becoming a dog park. It can be up to two acres, and has room for both large dog area, and a smaller small dog fenced off area. The lot is currently housing dumpsters, containers, and illegally dumped rubbish. It is often frequented by drug dealers and users due to the seclusion. A dog park here would drive away crime, camping, and loitering. There MAY be plans to use this lot as part of the larger Waterfront Plan, but until that Plan is available we should maximize the potential of this lot and let the dogs enjoy it. If a hotel or convention center is eventually planned for the Marina, the dog park can be relocated.



### Site C –Triangular Park at Alhambra/Marina Vista

This site offers the opportunity to kill several birds with one stone. The triangular park known as “People’s Park” or “Needle Park” to locals is overrun with homeless campers, drug dealers and users, and vagrant misuse. A dog park in this location would push out the negative elements encamped in the park, and bring families and urban professionals to the block. Crime hates an audience. The fence-able area is about half an acre, and already has the amenities needed of a park. Plus it has ready access and parking downtown. The cost to convert this spot will be little more than a fence and signage.



## **REJECTED SITES**

### **Alhambra Avenue Detention Basin**

The PRMCC has previously evaluated and proposed the Alhambra Avenue Detention Basin as a site for dog park construction. This proposal is not considering that location for the reasons identified by the committee that made it unfit for dog park development. These included the high cost of building Alhambra Ave. frontage for parking and access; improvements to the basin to make it operable as a park; proximity to Briones and the Pleasant Hill Dog Park; and the fact that the basin is submerged during the rainy season.

### **Waterfront Road Open Space**

Members of the community mentioned this location during our online discussions of possible sites. It is a wonderful setting that was improved as a park in 2006, after being recapped with clean fill dirt in 2002. This site was the City dump until 1957, and an auto wrecker after that. As a former landfill that was capped, further contaminated, and capped again, the site is encumbered with restrictions from Bay Conservation and Development Commission's (BCDC) Settlement and Stipulated Cease and Desist and Civil Penalty Order. The Order allows "public access for walking, sitting, viewing and related public trust purposes." Contra Costa County Health Services conducts annual inspections due to the site being a closed land fill. Per the City Engineer, a dog park would not be allowed on this site.

## **CONCLUSION**

The upsides for a downtown dog park benefit more than just the thousands of dog owners in Martinez. A dog park will draw people and their spending money downtown. It will discourage crime and vagrancy in the area. It will increase property values in the community. And most importantly, it will give dogs a safe place to run free in a setting made for them. Consider the park an investment in the community that will pay off in health and happiness for all.

