

## **First Pitch to Parks Dept.**

**6/10/08**

RE: Downtown Bellevue Park OLA

NANCY MALVIN, PRESIDENT Bellevue Dogs.Org

Hello to the members of the Bellevue Parks Dept. Thank you for allowing me the time to briefly introduce and present to all of you here our organization's interests. I am Nancy Malvin and represent the constituency of Bellevue Dogs. Org. I hope to convey our groups' needs for a SMALLISH (25 lbs. or less) Doggy Off Leash Area in or next to the Downtown Park in Bellevue.

I have been a Bellevue resident for over 3 years and am the owner of a 7 lb. toy poodle named Elsa who is now two years of age. I am among many other smallish doggy owners. On a daily basis, I am joined by other smallish dog owners, even as many as 30 at a time, for the purpose of recreating or K9-ing as we call it, with our pets. In addition, we sport together with our small dogs in the Downtown Park for the benefits of socializing with other local residents and their families, and thus create a deeper sense of comradery and community. K-9ing also gives us as well as our pets lots of healthy exercise, and an opportunity to socialize with other dogs. Studies have shown that daily exercise and romping together with other pets in an off-leash capacity greatly reduces the likelihood that aggressive interaction amongst themselves and or other park users will occur.

I have in my hands, a petition with over 200 signatures from Bellevue signees who also visit the Downtown Park with or without pets. The petition is advocating for an off-leash area in this park which is dedicated to the owners of smallish dogs so that we may continue a 5 year tradition of frolicking and romping there. As far as I know, there has never been a report of any medical injury to anyone due to the dogs interactions with other park users, nor has there been a severely violent episode amongst our critters. In other words, the recreation and interaction we enjoy works!!

Each day, twice a day from 12 to 2pm as well as from 5pm to 7pm, we owners of smallish dogs meet in the Downtown Park. Our group of puppies is growing at an exponentially rapid rate, and will continue to do so especially with the very substantial new dwelling construction going on. According to an article written in the Seattle Post-Intelligence dated recently on 6/7/08, entitled "Downtown Bellevue is growing up—and up", the housing population is currently 3,750 units and is forecasted to grow to 11,100 by the year 2020. This means that the number of smallish dogs will increase each year by approximately 120! According the the King County Animal Licensing Dept. the Bellevue area dogs who are in fact licensed, is growing each year at an average approximate rate of 3 00 dogs per year. Clearly there is a huge impending need to accommodate the folks who also recreate off leash and sport with their pets in a safe, protected area.

I am uncertain if the Parks Dept. is aware that the only off leash area park at Robinswood is completely unsuitable for recreators who own smallish doggies. Most of the larger dogs have dominated the off

leash corralled arena there, and smallish dogs will not engage in playful activity either with their owners, nor other critters. It's one of those naturally self protective response deals not that far removed from playing dead.

In return for a smallish doggy off leash area, the Bellevue Dogs organization will accept responsibility for keeping a watchful eye over our own as well as others' pets for obedience to the park ordinances already in place. Such as issues of safety and cleanliness. It has been recorded that in a controlled, off leash contained area, people are much more likely to scoop up after their pets when under the watchful eyes of their peers. A fenced in or loose area where we typically congregate to sport and socialize our smallish pups promotes peer pressure to keep the park clean and safe from unwanted confrontations among other park recreators. It is not at all uncommon to hear us alert one another that our pooches are making "deposits" or venturing off a little too close to others who do not wish to interact with dogs off leash or otherwise.

The Downtown Bellevue Park is a lovely one with lots of open space. We intend to preserve this great quality by seeking out a small lot on the south east end corner. We in fact used this area all winter and not only have retained and maintained it, do not disrupt any natural life there. The ducks continue to proliferate, and lots of birds fly overhead. The children's play area is on the far opposite end of this small parcel, thus providing added safety. Also, this section is far removed from residential proximity so the potential barking noises will not disturb them.

I will present more options such as designated off leash hours in the Downtown Park site, or another nearby Robinswood location when our group meets with Mr. Nissley next week.

In summary, for the purposes of this informal introduction we would like to strongly advocate for the growing need of a SMALLISH doggy off leash area and to emphasize that K-9ing is a very legitimate sport such as soccer and tennis for example and needs to be considered as such by all parties involved. Fair allocation of space is deserved by the downtown small doggy owners too!

On behalf of Bellevue dogs. Org, we Thank You again for your prompt consideration in this rather impending dilemma.