

# 11.7%

SEATTLE DOG PARK DATA · MAY 2026

## Share of Seattleites within a 10-minute walk of a *legal* off-leash area. 99% live that close to a park of any kind.

Seattle has one of America's best park systems. For dogs, it's one of the worst. This site is a sourced, reproducible public-data reference — every number links back to where it came from. The [opinion page](#) is clearly marked; everything else is factual. Prefer it on paper? [Download the full PDF](#).

OFF-LEASH SPACE / DOG

## 5.4<sub>sq ft</sub>

Footprint of a doormat. 30.7 designated off-leash-area (OLA) acres (12 fully fenced; Magnuson and I-5 Colonnade partial) ÷ ~249K AVMA-estimated dogs. [src](#)

YEARS SINCE LAST NEW OLA

## 17

Blue Dog Pond, 2009 → West Seattle Stadium, fall 2026. [src](#)

FEWER / CAPITA THAN PORTLAND

## 3.2<sub>x</sub>

Seattle 1.82 vs Portland 5.74 per 100K residents. [src](#)

CITATIONS OUTSIDE OLA WALKSHED

## 71.9%

3,089 of 4,299 park-named citations, 2014–2026 (via public records request, PRR). [src](#) · [script](#)

#### RECENT UPDATES

**May 2026** · [More citation data; enforcement page updated](#)

A new records request (C263949) extended the record through April 2026, now a continuous 2014–2026 series. Output peaked in 2018 and hasn't recovered; the cost per citation has risen.

**April 2026** · [Site launch \(v1.0.0\)](#)

First complete public release. Eight pages — overview, Part I, Part II, Part III, Enforcement, Budget, Peer Cities, Opinion — with every claim sourced and the underlying dataset pipeline reproducible from committed scripts.

[See all updates →](#)

## The reports, *in short*.

Seven sections covering the OLA system: counts, access, what's working, enforcement, budget, peer-city comparisons, and the author's opinion. The first six are factual; the last is opinion. Sources and scripts are linked throughout.

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**Part I — The Gap.** Seattle has added zero net dog parks since 2009 (two open fall 2026). The city's population grew 34% over the same window. Per-capita, Seattle runs at one-third of Portland and San Francisco's OLA density.

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**Part II — Access.** 11.7% of Seattleites are within a 10-minute walk of an OLA. (the [Trust for Public Land \[TPL\] says 99%](#) are within a 10-minute walk of any park.) Seven of 14 OLAs are below the [AKC 1-acre minimum](#). [2 of 14 have lighting](#); [5 have small-dog areas](#); water access varies by site.

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**Part III — Forward.** Three questions worth pressing on: which of Seattle's existing OLAs actually function well and why, what shared-use looks like in cities that have run it for decades, and which public lands outside Seattle Parks & Recreation (SPR) — WSDOT right-of-way, Seattle City Light corridors, Port of Seattle property — could host off-leash space without a new Park District dollar.

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**Enforcement.** 7,015 off-leash citations (2014–2026). Six of the top ten cited parks have zero designated OLA. The empirical pattern: citations cluster where OLAs aren't, or where the OLA that exists is below the AKC 1-acre minimum.

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**Budget.** SPR's reported budget grew from \$168M (2018, operating only) to \$507M proposed (2026, all funds) — about half the apparent jump is a 2019 reporting shift, not real growth. The disclosed dedicated-OLA line peaked at 0.064% of SPR's total in 2016 (\$100K of \$156M); SPR has disclosed \$126K (2023) and \$129K (2024) since, but no separate OLA-only figure for 2025–2026.

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**Peer Cities.** Per-city detail on how eight peers — Portland, San Francisco, Vancouver BC, Washington DC, Minneapolis, New York, Austin, and Boise — actually run their off-leash systems. Counting methodology, governance, funding, operating rules, and at least one design choice per city that Seattle hasn't tried.

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**Opinion & Recommendation.** Author's policy recommendation: a time-zoned shared-use model for existing parks (NYC-style off-leash hours), with enforcement redirected to clean-park compliance.

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## Primary *data*.

All underlying data lives in the GitHub repo under [/data](#). Plain CSVs; no database, no build step, no login required. Download any file, run your own numbers, and tell us if we got something wrong.

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seattle-olas.csv

14 existing OLAs

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|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| seattle-timeseries.csv       | population / budget / OLA count, 2010–2026            |
| peer-cities.csv              | Portland, SF, Vancouver BC, Austin, etc.              |
| planned-olas.csv             | under-construction & planning                         |
| kinnear-timeline.csv         | 20-year incident chronology                           |
| enforcement-citations.csv    | 7,015 off-leash citations, SPR PRRs C049204 + C263949 |
| enforcement-by-park-year.csv | citations aggregated by park & year                   |
| SOURCES.md                   | primary sources, cited                                |

## Methodology & *caveats*.

This site favors explicit methodology over headline-friendly numbers. Every finding on the report pages links back to its underlying CSV and, where applicable, to the script that produced it. The master reference is [METHODOLOGY.md](#) — the "show your work" index. A few caveats readers should also carry:

- **Walkshed (now network-based).** Previously a straight-line estimate of ~33% of residents; replaced April 2026 with a proper network-distance analysis: **11.7% of Seattle residents** live within a 10-minute walking path of an OLA, computed via [scripts/compute\\_walkshed.py](#) (osmnx against Seattle's full OSM walk network) and [scripts/population\\_coverage.py](#) (2020 Census block-group overlay, area-weighted). SPR's published 2.5-mile standard covers 76.6%.
- **Peer-city OLA counts differ in definition.** Seattle counts only fully-fenced dedicated OLAs; Portland includes unfenced voice-control areas; Vancouver BC includes time-restricted shared-use areas. Direct comparison requires caveats.
- **OLA-specific budget.** SPR's Park District "Maintaining Parks & Facilities" line funds both OLAs and P-Patch community gardens and is not broken out. The \$100K/year Cycle 1 figure is OLA-only because SPR stated it publicly; Cycle 2 figures are combined.
- **Dog population.** Triangulated from three independent sources: [~26,700 active dog licenses](#) (Seattle Open Data, hard floor implying ~90–135K actual), an [AVMA-derived demographic estimate](#) of ~248,900, and the [SPR 2023 Expansion Study](#) range of 187K–400K. The site uses 150,000 as a conservative floor for per-dog math; see [Part I methodology](#) for the full triangulation.

### AI DISCLOSURE

This site was built by [Claude](#), Anthropic's AI assistant. The underlying data — public records requests, SPR budget documents, census data, peer-city research — was collected by the author. The author reviewed the output before publication. The [editorial](#) reflects his personal views.

**CORRECTIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS WELCOME**

We stand behind this work and publish every source so it can be verified, disputed, or improved. If you find an error — a wrong number, a stale figure, a methodological flaw, or a better primary source — we want to know. Known gaps where outside help would be especially useful: current dog-population estimates, per-OLA usage data, and SPR's internal budget split between OLAs and P-Patches.

[FILE AN ISSUE ON GITHUB](#)

(preferred — corrections stay public and auditable) or email us at [seattledogparkdata@ozymandi.as](mailto:seattledogparkdata@ozymandi.as). The site will be updated and the change noted.

## PART I · THE GAP

# Seattle added *zero* net off-leash areas in seventeen years.

The city's [population grew by roughly 208,000](#) between 2010 and 2025. Its [parks budget rose 37%](#) on an apples-to-apples baseline. Two new off-leash areas open in late 2026 — the first net increase since 2009.

ANDRE VRIGNAUD · SEATTLE DOG PARK DATA · UPDATED MAY 2026

## ABOUT THIS DATA

Population and budget data are current through Seattle Parks & Recreation's (SPR) 2025–26 proposed budget and Washington Office of Financial Management (OFM) April 2025 estimates. Peer-city comparisons use the Trust for Public Land (TPL) 2025 ParkScore. Any of the figures below that are approximate, contested, or derived rather than citable are flagged in the "Data notes" at the bottom of the page. Corrections and better primary sources are welcome — see [the overview](#).

### OLAS IN 2010

# 14<sup>†</sup>

Total Seattle off-leash areas (OLAs). † 2010 row in the timeseries CSV is flagged approximate — the 14 sites all opened by 2009; SPR did not publish a formal 2010 inventory. [src](#)

### OLAS IN 2025

# 14

Unchanged. West Seattle Stadium + Othello open late 2026. [src](#)

### POPULATION, 2010→2025

# +34%

608,660 → 816,600 residents. [src](#)

### SPR BUDGET, 2019→2025

# +37%

\$247.7M → \$339.4M all funds (apples-to-apples baseline). [src](#)

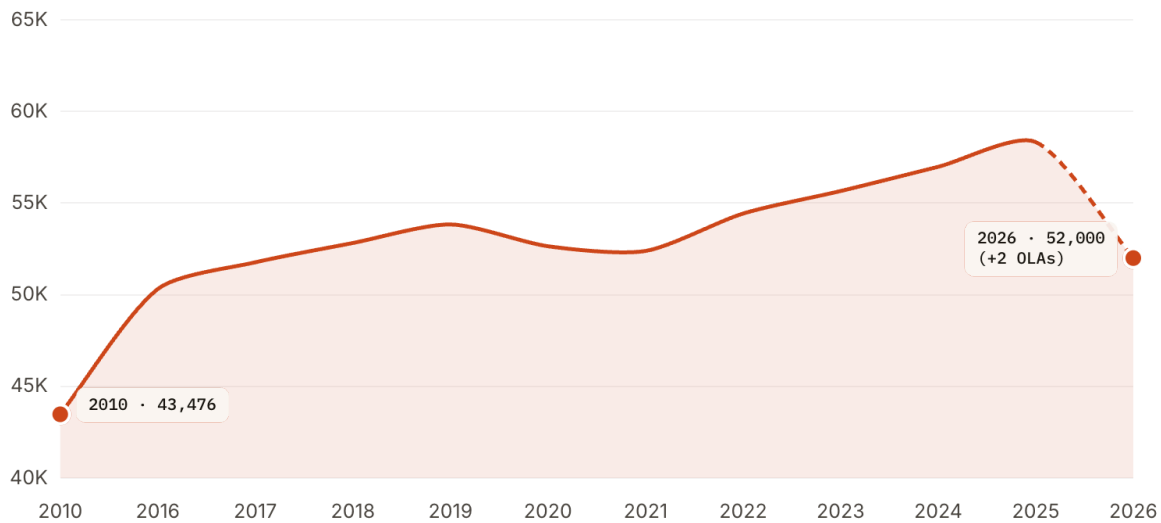
FINDING 01

## Residents per off-leash area, over time.

Dividing [Seattle's population](#) by the [number of off-leash areas](#): in 2010, one OLA served about [43,500 residents](#). In 2025 the figure is [58,329](#) — a 34% increase while the OLA count held at 14.

### Residents per OLA, 2010–2026

The last OLAs opened in 2009 (Blue Dog Pond, Magnolia Manor). Two new ones are scheduled to open at the end of 2026 ([West Seattle Stadium](#) and [Othello Playground](#)).



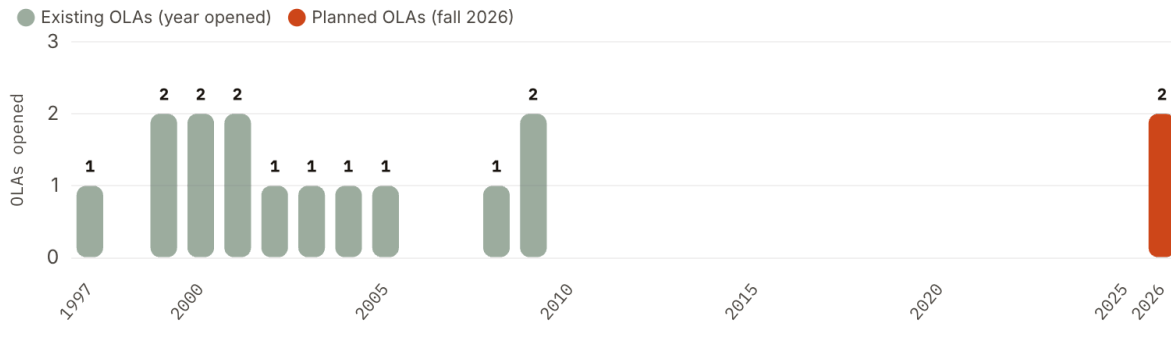
Source: [WA OFM April 1 population estimates](#) · [SPR OLA inventory](#) · [Seattle Park District Cycle 2 Fact Sheet](#) · data in [data/seattle-timeseries.csv](#)

OBSERVATION

With the two 2026 openings factored in, residents-per-OLA projects to ~52,000 — still above the 2010 figure of 43,476. Returning to the 2010 ratio at Seattle’s projected 2026 population (~832,000) would require 19 OLAs total, three more than the 16 projected for fall 2026. Full calculation in [data/seattle-timeseries.csv](#).

### When Seattle’s 14 OLAs opened, and when the next ones will

Count of OLAs that opened in each year, 1997–2026. The last fenced OLAs (Magnolia Manor and Blue Dog Pond) opened in 2009. West Seattle Stadium and Othello Playground are under construction for fall 2026.



Source: year-opened from SPR individual OLA pages · planned sites per [West Seattle Stadium project page](#) and [Othello Playground project page](#) · data in [seattle-olas.csv](#) + [planned-olas.csv](#)

OBSERVATION

The 1997–2009 build-out added Seattle’s 14 existing OLAs. No new OLAs opened in the 16 years between 2010 and 2025. Over the same window the city’s population grew from ~609,000 to ~817,000. SPR’s 2023 Expansion Study acknowledges demand “has grown since the pilot program was launched in 1997.”

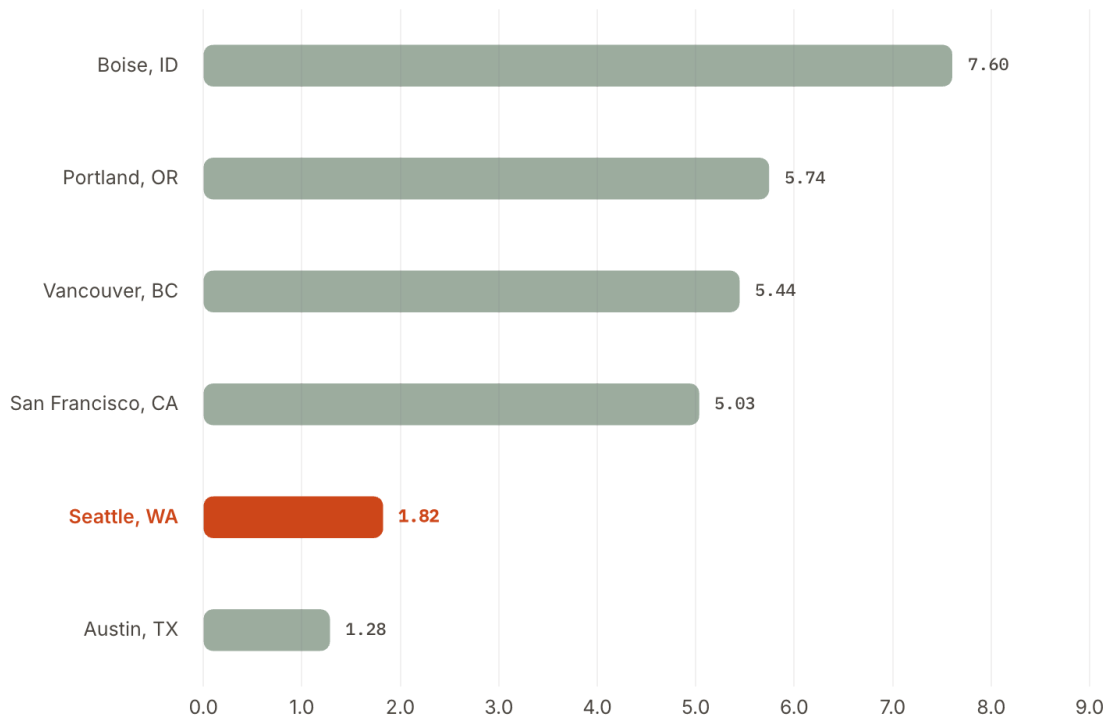
FINDING 02

## The peer-city comparison.

[Trust for Public Land's 2025 ParkScore](#) measures dog parks per 100,000 residents across the 100 largest U.S. cities. Seattle sits below every major West Coast peer; [Portland](#) is at roughly 3.2× Seattle's per-capita supply.

### Dog parks per 100,000 residents, 2025

Comparable and aspirational cities. Vancouver BC is not in ParkScore (not in the U.S.), so this uses its self-reported count of 36 OLAs from the [People, Parks & Dogs Strategy](#) and Statistics Canada 2021 census population (carried forward).



Source: [Trust for Public Land 2025 ParkScore Index](#) · [Vancouver Park Board People, Parks & Dogs Strategy \(2017\)](#) · data in [data/peer-cities.csv](#)

#### OBSERVATION

Seattle's West Coast peers cluster near 5 dog parks per 100,000 residents; Seattle is at **1.82**, adjacent to [Austin](#) (1.28, ParkScore rank 54). [Boise](#) (7.6) has led TPL's dog-park-per-capita category in recent years. Counting rules differ across cities — Portland counts some unfenced voice-control areas, Vancouver BC includes time-restricted shared-use areas — but normalizing for those differences narrows the gap without closing it. Per-city data in [data/peer-cities.csv](#).

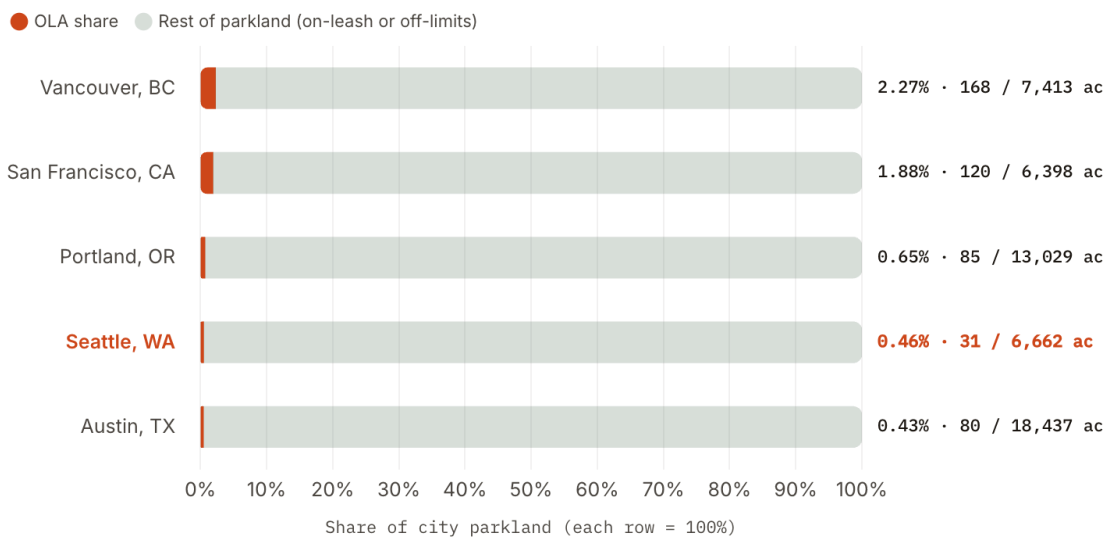
FINDING 02B

## The allocation question: how much of each city's parkland is legal off-leash.

Per-capita supply is one frame; *allocation within an existing park system* is another. The "Seattle is land-constrained" defense argues against building more parks; the allocation cut asks how much of the parks the city *already operates* are legal for dogs. Of Seattle's 6,662 acres of municipal parkland, 30.7 are legal off-leash — about **0.46%**.

### OLA acreage as a share of total municipal parkland

OLA acres divided by total parkland acres in each city. Uses each city's own published count, with the same fenced-OLA caveats as Finding 02. Portland's 0.65% includes ~85 ac of mostly-unfenced voice-control DOLAs (Portland's fenced-only acreage understates the share by an unpublished but smaller amount). Austin's 0.43% sits below Seattle on a fenced-comparable basis (~80 ac), excluding the much larger Walnut Creek voice-control natural area. Vancouver figures from the Park Board's [People, Parks & Dogs Strategy](#); U.S. peers from [TPL 2025 ParkScore](#).



Source: total parkland acres from [TPL 2025 ParkScore](#) (US) and [Vancouver Park Board](#) · OLA acres reconciled to each city's own inventory · data in [data/peer-cities.csv](#)

OBSERVATION

Vancouver allocates ~5× the share of its parkland to off-leash use that Seattle does (2.27% vs 0.46%). San Francisco allocates ~4×. Even Portland, with most of its sites unfenced voice-control rather than dedicated acreage, still allocates a higher share. Austin sits at 0.43% on a fenced-comparable basis — comparable to Seattle. The framing matters because it isolates the policy choice (how much of the existing park system is legal for dogs) from the system-size argument (how much park land the city has overall).

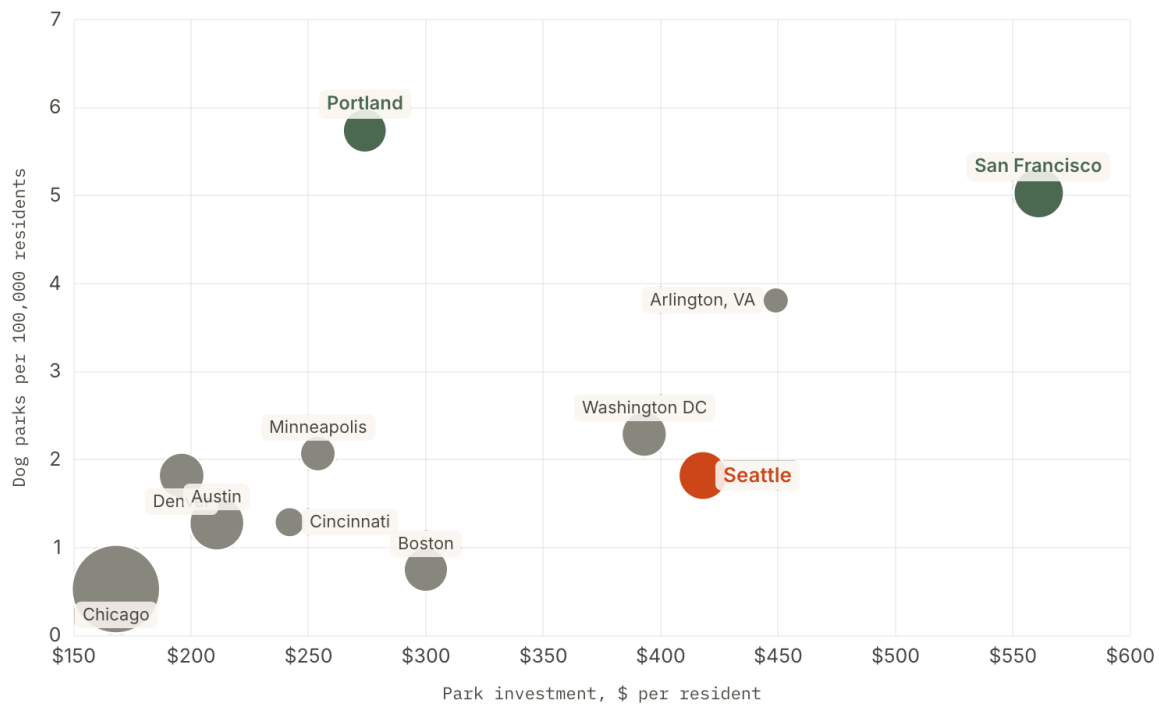
FINDING 03

## Park investment versus dog-park density.

Seattle is one of the [best-funded municipal park systems in the country](#), with [\\$418 per resident per year](#) in TPL's investment category. The chart below plots each city's three-year average park investment against its dog-park density.

### Park investment per resident vs. dog parks per 100K

Each city's three-year average park investment (per TPL ParkScore methodology, all agencies), plotted against its dog-park density.



Source: [TPL 2025 ParkScore](#) (three-year average spending across all park-providing agencies) · data in [data/peer-cities.csv](#)

#### OBSERVATION

[San Francisco](#) spends more per resident than Seattle (\$561) and has roughly 2.8× the dog-park density. [Portland](#) spends less (\$274) and has 3.2× the density. Seattle's position on this plot is high investment, low dog-park density. See [Budget](#) for Seattle's OLA-specific allocation.

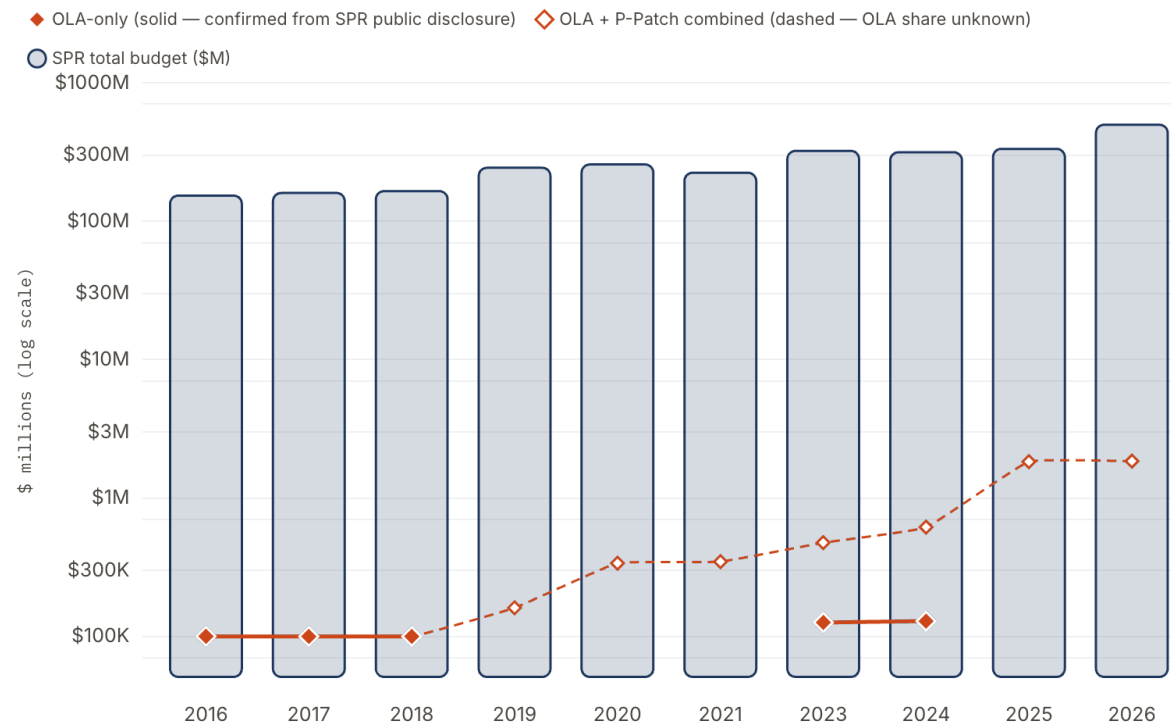
FINDING 04

## Seattle's parks budget, versus its OLA budget.

[Seattle Parks and Recreation's total budget](#) has grown substantially since 2016. During Park District Cycle 1, [SPR publicly stated](#) the dedicated OLA improvement line was \$100,000/year. The combined OLA + P-Patch line item (which the city has reported as a single number since 2019) has grown sharply; the OLA-only share inside it is not separately disclosed for 2025–2026. A [public records request](#) for that split has been filed and is awaiting SPR's response; this page will be updated when SPR responds. See [Budget](#) for the full picture.

### Seattle Parks budget vs. dedicated OLA improvement funding

All values in millions of dollars on a single log-scale axis. **Solid orange diamonds** mark years where SPR publicly disclosed the OLA-only amount. **Hollow orange squares, dashed line** show the combined OLA + P-Patch community-garden line — the OLA share is smaller by an unknown amount because SPR stopped separating them after 2024.



Source: [Seattle City Budget Office archives](#) · [Parkways \(SPR blog\)](#) · [Seattle Park District Cycle 1 & Cycle 2 financial plans](#) · data in [data/budget-detail.csv](#)

OBSERVATION

SPR's total budget rose from \$156M in 2016 to \$506.9M proposed in 2026. Every OLA-related series on the chart sits two to three orders of magnitude below it. The combined OLA + P-Patch line rises in part because P-Patch funding has grown. The OLA-only markers that SPR has publicly confirmed are \$0.100M in Cycle 1 and \$0.126M / \$0.129M in Cycle 2 years 1–2. The \$3.46M Cycle 2 one-time capital line funds [two new OLAs plus Ravenna design](#). A [public records request](#) for the 2025–2026 OLA-only share has been filed and is awaiting SPR's response.

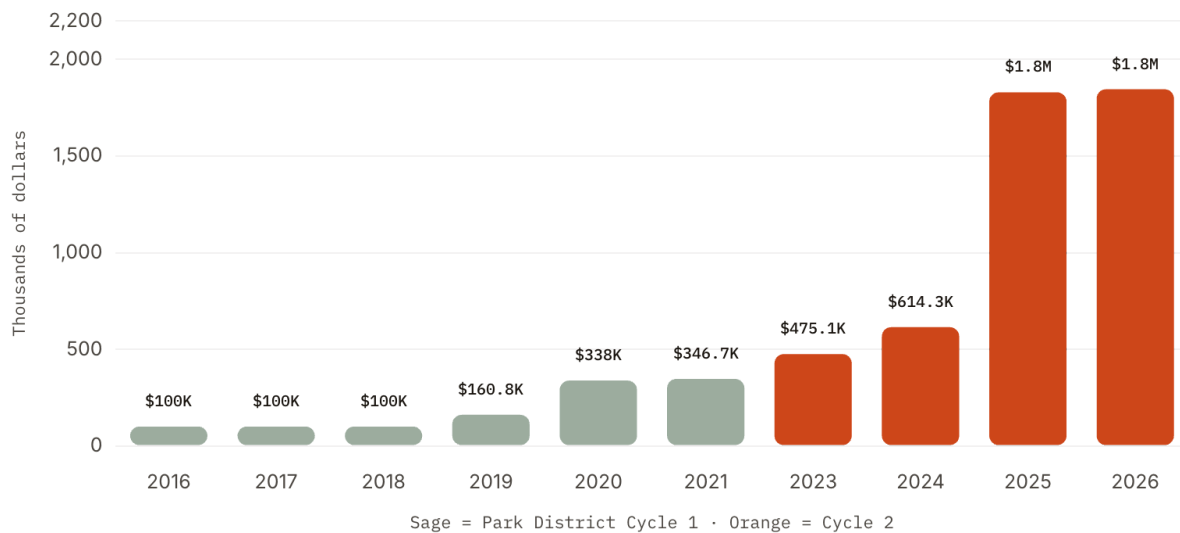
FINDING 05

## Cycle 1 vs. Cycle 2 improvement funding.

The Park District's "Maintaining Parks and Facilities" budget line ([Budget Summary Level \[BSL\] BC-PR-50000](#), which funds OLA and P-Patch community-garden improvements) has grown roughly 11x since 2019, and [Cycle 2 added \\$3.46 million in capital](#) for new OLA construction. See [Budget](#) for chart-level detail.

### OLA improvement spending, 2016–2026

The "Maintaining Parks & Facilities" budget line covers both OLAs and P-Patch community gardens, so the actual OLA-only share is smaller than what's shown.



Source: [Seattle Park District Cycle 1 & Cycle 2 financial plans](#) · [West Seattle Stadium OLA project page](#) · [Othello Playground OLA project page](#) · data in [data/budget-detail.csv](#)

OBSERVATION

[Cycle 1 of the Seattle Park District](#) (2015–2020) allocated a flat \$100K/year for OLA improvements. [Cycle 2](#) (2023–2028) added both operational funding and \$3.1M for two new OLA construction projects. [SPR has acknowledged](#) that additional OLA construction will require future funding requests.

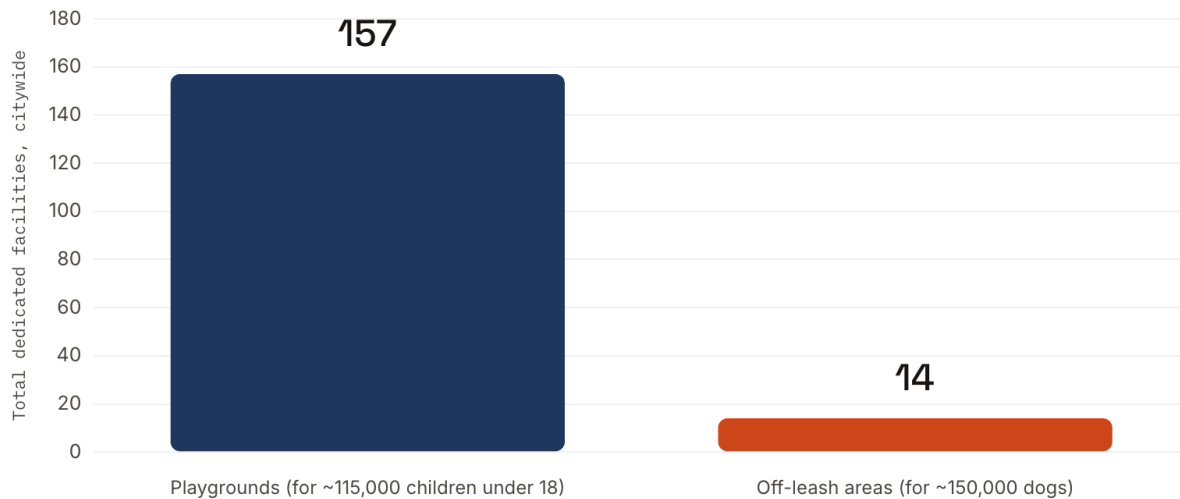
FINDING 06

## Dedicated facilities: playgrounds vs. OLAs.

Seattle famously has more dogs than children. Estimates for Seattle's dog population range from 150,000 (conservative floor cited by [Seattle Humane](#) and [Cascade PBS](#)) to over 400,000 (per the [SPR 2023–24 OLA Expansion Study](#)). Using the low estimate and the most recent child population, dogs outnumber children under 18 roughly 1.4 to 1.

### Facilities per constituent: playgrounds for kids vs. OLAs for dogs

Seattle has [157 playgrounds](#) for its under-18 population, and [14 OLAs](#) for its dog population. Both are rough proxies for "dedicated recreational space."



Source: [TPL 2025 ParkScore Seattle](#) (157 playgrounds) · [OFM 2025 population](#) · [Seattle Humane](#) / [Cascade PBS](#) dog population estimates (150K low bound)

### OBSERVATION

The ratio of dedicated facilities to constituents is roughly 14.6× more favorable for children than for dogs (1 playground per ~733 kids vs. 1 OLA per ~10,714 dogs using the low 150K dog-population estimate). At the 400K SPR Expansion Study estimate, the ratio is ~39×. See [Budget Chart 03](#) for per-dog spending calculation.

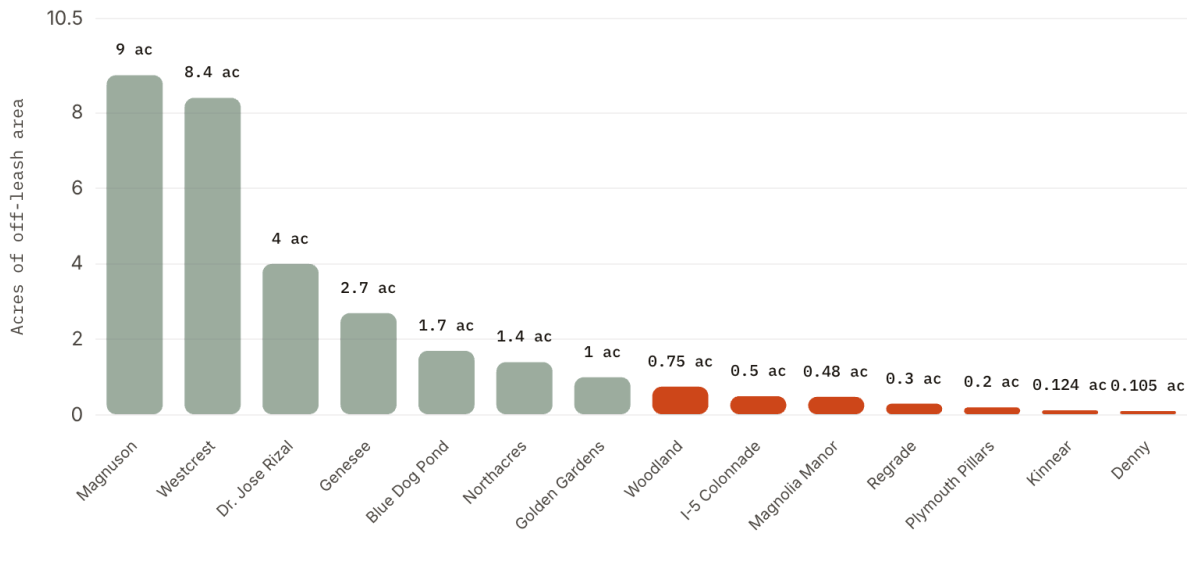
FINDING 07

## Acreage, not just count.

The four largest parks hold ~79% of total OLA acreage, and half of Seattle's OLAs are under one acre. The two smallest (Denny at 0.105 and Kinnear at 0.124) are roughly a tenth of an acre each. The dog-park size standards in Part II quantify what "too small" means.

### OLA acreage concentration

Share of Seattle's ~31 total OLA acres by park. Acreages from SPR's individual OLA pages (reconciled April 2026); see <data/seattle-olas.csv>.



Source: [COLA 2017 biennial report](#) · [SPR off-leash area inventory](#) · data in <data/seattle-olas.csv>

### OBSERVATION

Magnuson alone holds nearly a third of the city's total OLA acreage (9.0 of ~30.7 acres per <seattle-olas.csv>). The bottom ten OLAs, combined, hold about a fifth. Seven of the 14 sites sit below the AKC 1-acre minimum. See Part II: size standards for per-dog capacity math.

APPENDIX

# Raw comparison data & methodology.

All values below are the exact figures from Trust for Public Land's 2025 ParkScore methodology, except Vancouver BC (not in the U.S. dataset).

| CITY                 | POPULATION | PARKLAND ACRES | % CITY AREA | DOG PARKS | PER 100K | \$/CAPITA | PARKSCORE RANK |
|----------------------|------------|----------------|-------------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------------|
| Seattle, WA          | 816,600    | 6,662          | 12.6%       | 14        | 1.82     | \$418     | 8              |
| Portland, OR         | 660,000    | 13,029         | 15.8%       | 38        | 5.74     | \$274     | 9              |
| San Francisco, CA    | 870,000    | 6,398          | 21.4%       | 42        | 5.03     | \$561     | 6              |
| Vancouver, BC (est.) | 662,000    | ~3,000 ha      | ~11%        | 36        | 5.44     | n/a       | n/a            |
| Austin, TX           | 1,025,000  | 18,437         | 9.0%        | 13        | 1.28     | \$211     | 54             |
| Boise, ID            | 240,000    | ~3,400         | ~10%        | 18        | 7.60     | n/a       | n/a            |

## Seattle time series: population vs. OLA count

| YEAR         | POPULATION | OLAS | RESIDENTS / OLA | SPR BUDGET (ALL FUNDS) | OLA IMPROVEMENT \$          |
|--------------|------------|------|-----------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2010         | 608,660    | 14   | 43,476          | —                      | —                           |
| 2016         | 704,400    | 14   | 50,314          | ~\$156M                | \$100,000                   |
| 2017         | 724,745    | 14   | 51,768          | \$163M (ops only)      | \$100,000                   |
| 2019         | 753,700    | 14   | 53,836          | \$247.7M               | \$160,757                   |
| 2020         | 737,015    | 14   | 52,644          | \$261.9M               | \$338,000                   |
| 2021         | 733,400    | 14   | 52,386          | \$228.1M (COVID)       | \$346,680                   |
| 2023         | 779,200    | 14   | 55,657          | \$328.2M               | \$475,142                   |
| 2024         | 797,700    | 14   | 56,979          | \$320.7M               | \$614,343                   |
| 2025         | 816,600    | 14   | 58,329          | \$339.4M               | \$1,829,717                 |
| 2026 (proj.) | ~832,000   | 16   | 52,000          | \$506.9M (proposed)    | \$1,845,706 +\$3.1M capital |

## Data notes

**Dog park count methodology.** Trust for Public Land and City of Seattle both count 14 OLAs. Definitions of "dog park" vary slightly between cities — Portland counts unfenced designated off-leash areas, Vancouver BC counts 36 including time-restricted unfenced areas, and Seattle counts only fully-fenced or clearly-delineated sites. Adjusting for these definitional differences does not close the per-capita gap.

**OLA improvement budget.** The Park District's "Maintaining Parks & Facilities" Budget Summary Level (BC-PR-50000) funds both dog off-leash areas *and* community P-Patch gardens. The exact OLA-only share is not broken out in the budget books. During Cycle 1, SPR publicly stated the OLA portion was \$100,000/year; the post-2023 OLA/P-Patch split is not disclosed separately.

**SPR budget comparisons.** Seattle's 2016–2018 SPR budgets of ~\$156M–\$168M are General Fund + core operating only; from 2019 forward the published figures are all-funds (operating + capital). To avoid methodology drift, the stat tile at the top of this page uses the 2019→2025 all-funds comparison (\$247.7M → \$339.4M, +37%). The log-scale budget chart in Finding 04 plots both eras on one axis with the methodology shift noted.

**Dog population estimates — three independent sources bracketing the same range.**

Seattle does not universally license dogs, so dog-population figures are estimates. This site triangulates three:

- **Licensed floor:** [26,652 active dog licenses](#) as of the April 1, 2026 snapshot of Seattle Open Data dataset [j.guv-t9rb](#) (published by Finance & Administrative Services [FAS] / Seattle Animal Shelter). A hard lower bound — every dog counted is a real paid license. Widely estimated to represent 20–30% of actual dogs, implying ~90K–135K total.
- **AVMA-derived demographic estimate:** [AVMA's 2025 Pet Ownership Sourcebook](#) reports 45.5% of U.S. households own a dog, averaging 1.5 dogs per dog-owning household. Applied to Seattle's [364,627 households \(ACS 1-year 2023\)](#):  $364,627 \times 0.455 \times 1.5 \approx 248,900$  dogs. Limitation: AVMA publishes state-level data in the paywalled Sourcebook, so the rate used here is the national figure as a Seattle proxy.
- **SPR upper bound:** the [SPR 2023–24 OLA Expansion Study](#) cites estimates ranging from ~187,000 to "upwards of 400,000."

All three estimates cluster between ~90K and ~400K. The site uses the **AVMA-derived ~248,900** as its canonical dog-population number and names the **150,000 conservative floor** whenever a claim benefits from understating. A public records request to Seattle Animal Shelter ([PRR #6](#)) has been filed and is awaiting response; it will add historical licensed counts and any SPR-internal compliance estimate when answered.

**Vancouver BC.** Because Canada is not in the TPL ParkScore, Vancouver's data comes from its own Park Board documents (36 OLAs per the "People, Parks & Dogs Strategy") and current population estimates. Vancouver does not publish OLA-specific budget data in a format comparable to Seattle's.

**Boise.** Boise has led [TPL's dog-park-per-capita category](#) in recent years (7.6 per 100K in the 2025 ParkScore). It is not a true peer city in size or density, but is included as the national-best benchmark.

**Playground count.** Seattle's 157 playgrounds is from the TPL 2025 ParkScore data. This includes playgrounds in parks and schoolyards with joint-use agreements.

## Primary sources

[Seattle Parks & Recreation budget books \(2021, 2023–24, 2025–26 proposed\)](#) · [Seattle Park District Cycle 1 \(2015–2020\) and Cycle 2 \(2023–2028\) financial plans](#) · [SPR "People, Dogs, and Parks Plan" \(2017\)](#) · [SPR "Off-Leash Area Expansion Study" \(2023–2024\)](#) · [Washington State OFM April 1 official population estimates](#) · [Trust for Public Land 2025 ParkScore Index \(city-level PDFs\)](#) · [Vancouver Park Board "People, Parks & Dogs Strategy" \(2017\)](#) · [Citizens for Off-Leash Areas \(COLA\) Seattle](#) · [Parkways \(SPR blog\)](#) · [Seattle Dog Spot](#) · [Cascade PBS](#) · [KUOW](#) · [The Urbanist](#) · [West Seattle Blog](#)

## ABOUT THIS DATA

Off-leash survey data referenced below is from Seattle Parks & Recreation's (SPR) 2016 owner survey, published in the 2017 [People, Dogs and Parks Strategic Plan](#). That decade-old behavioral survey is the most recent public version; the 39% figure needs a current replacement. The "~1,100 Find-It-Fix-It nuisance-dog reports" figure is a secondary citation; a [public records request \(PRR\)](#) to Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) for exact annual counts has been filed and is awaiting response. Corrections and better primary sources are welcome — see [the overview](#).

# 11.7%

## PART II · ACCESS

**99% of Seattleites live within a 10-minute walk of a park. 11.7% live within a 10-minute walk of one where dogs are legal.**

11.7% of Seattleites are within a 10-minute walk of a legal off-leash area (OLA). 76.6% are within SPR's published 2.5-mile OLA standard. This report measures the gap between "a park" and "a park where dogs are legal."

ANDRE VRIGNAUD · NETWORK-DISTANCE ANALYSIS · UPDATED MAY 2026

## 10-MIN WALK TO ANY PARK

## 99%

Seattle residents, [Trust for Public Land \(TPL\) 2025 ParkScore](#).

## 10-MIN NETWORK WALK TO AN OLA

## 11.7%

Seattle residents, osmnx network + 2020 Census block groups. [src](#)

## SEATTLE'S DOG-PARK DENSITY

## 1.82

Dog parks per 100K residents — [TPL 2025](#), below every West Coast peer.

## DOG OWNERS REPORTING ILLEGAL OFF-LEASH USE

## 39%

Monthly or more frequent, per [SPR's 2016 survey](#).

# The walkability paradox.

Seattle ranks among the top U.S. cities for park access: [99% of residents live within a 10-minute walk of a park, per TPL's 2025 rankings](#). Measured the same way, the off-leash system covers 11.7% of residents. This section quantifies that difference across the 14 existing OLAs.

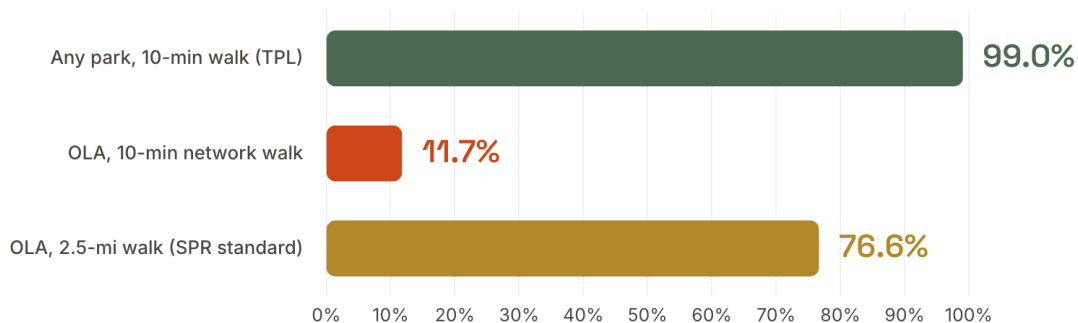
## FINDING 01

## Any park vs. a legally usable park.

[Trust for Public Land's access metric](#) uses a half-mile walkshed — the distance most people will walk before driving. By that measure, [99% of Seattle residents live within a 10-minute walk of a park](#). Applying the same metric to Seattle's off-leash areas produces a substantially smaller number.

### Share of Seattle within a 10-minute walk

All three bars are **population coverage** — share of Seattle residents within the specified walk of the amenity. TPL's 99% for any park is their published figure. The two OLA bars are computed on this site: an osmnx network walkshed around every OLA ([compute\\_walkshed.py](#)) intersected with 2020 Census block-group population ([population\\_coverage.py](#)), area-weighted.



Source: [TPL 2025 ParkScore Seattle](#) (all-parks access, 99%) · OLA network walksheds computed via [scripts/compute\\_walkshed.py](#) (osmnx + Seattle OpenStreetMap walk network, 110,383 nodes · 305,582 edges, projected to UTM 10N) · population overlay via [scripts/population\\_coverage.py](#) against [2020 Census Decennial P1](#) block-group population · output in [data/walkshed/population\\_coverage.csv](#) · methodology in [METHODOLOGY.md](#)

## OBSERVATION

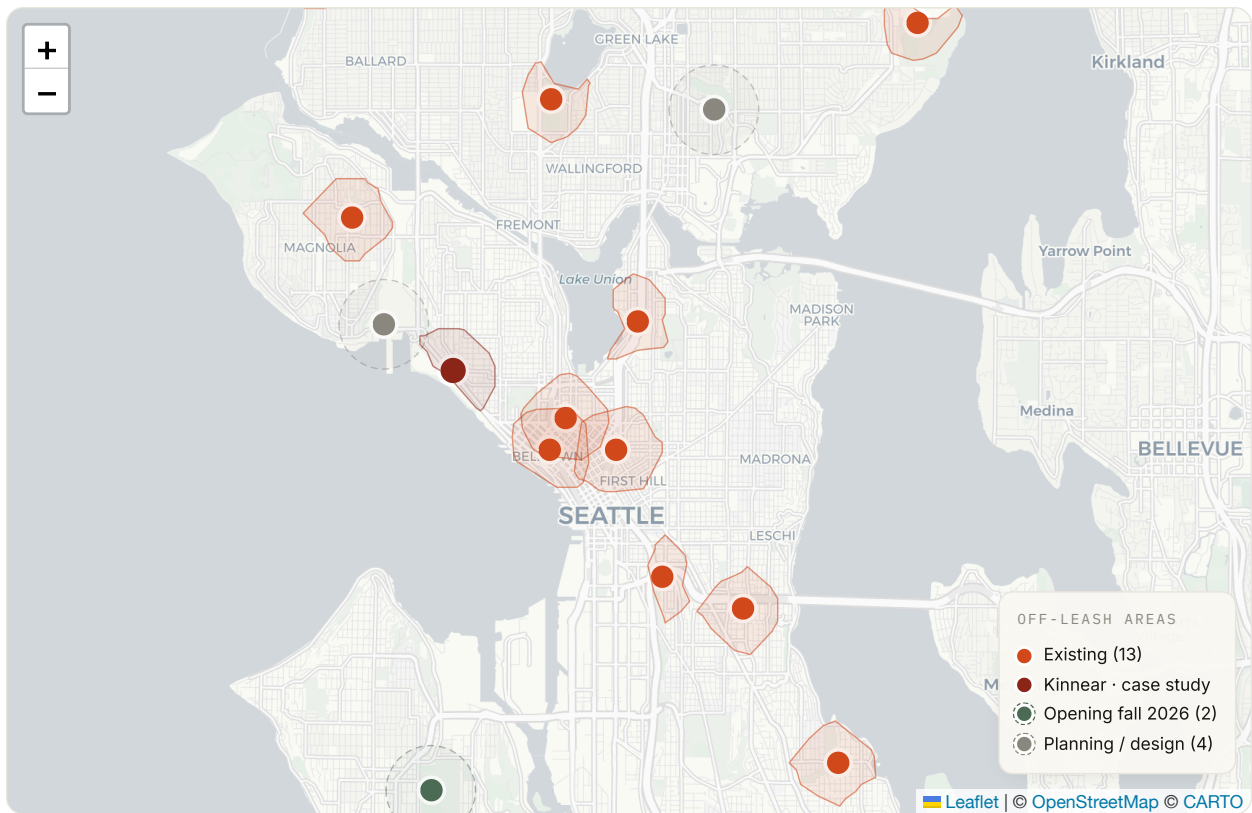
The 10-minute-walk standard — used by [TPL](#), [NRPA](#), [the 10-Minute Walk Campaign](#), and [SPR](#) when citing all-park access — yields 11.7% for OLAs. SPR's OLA-specific standard is 2.5 miles, which corresponds to roughly a 50-minute walk one way and covers 76.6% of residents. Applying the same 10-minute standard to both, 86,207 of Seattle's 737,559 residents (2020 Census) have a legal off-leash area within a 10-minute walk.

# Mapping the OLA gap.

The map shows Seattle's 14 existing off-leash areas with their half-mile walking-distance areas, the two under construction for fall 2026, and four sites in longer-term planning. These walk areas follow Seattle's pedestrian street network and stop at barriers — I-5, the Ship Canal, steep terrain — that a straight-line circle would cross.

## Seattle off-leash areas, with half-mile walksheds

Half-mile network walking-distance areas along Seattle's pedestrian street network. Planned and in-design sites (walk area not yet computed) are shown as dashed straight-line half-mile circles and labeled as placeholders.



Source: [SPR OLA inventory](#) · [SPR Off-Leash Area Expansion Study \(2023-24\)](#) · [Park District Cycle 2 project pages](#) · isochrones from [data/walkshed/ola\\_isochrones.geojson](#) · map from [CARTO](#) / [OpenStreetMap](#) · data in [data/seattle-olas.csv](#) and [data/planned-olas.csv](#)

OBSERVATION

Even after the two fall-2026 OLAs open and all four planned sites are built, coverage remains uneven. The southeast quadrant (Rainier Valley, Beacon Hill south of Jose Rizal, Othello) gains access. Central and north neighborhoods (Ravenna, Wallingford, Green Lake, Phinney, Maple Leaf) remain largely uncovered. The nearest legal OLA for most of Queen Anne and Magnolia is Kinnear (0.124 acres); see the case study below.

FINDING 02B

## Where citations happen vs. where walkshed reaches.

If off-leash citations concentrate where OLAs aren't, the pattern should be visible in Animal Control's enforcement data. Here is the overlay.

CITATIONS OUTSIDE ANY OLA 0.5-MI WALKSHED

73.4%

3,631 of the 4,948 placed citations (park-named + geocoded street addresses)

CITATIONS INSIDE AN OLA WALKSHED

26.6%

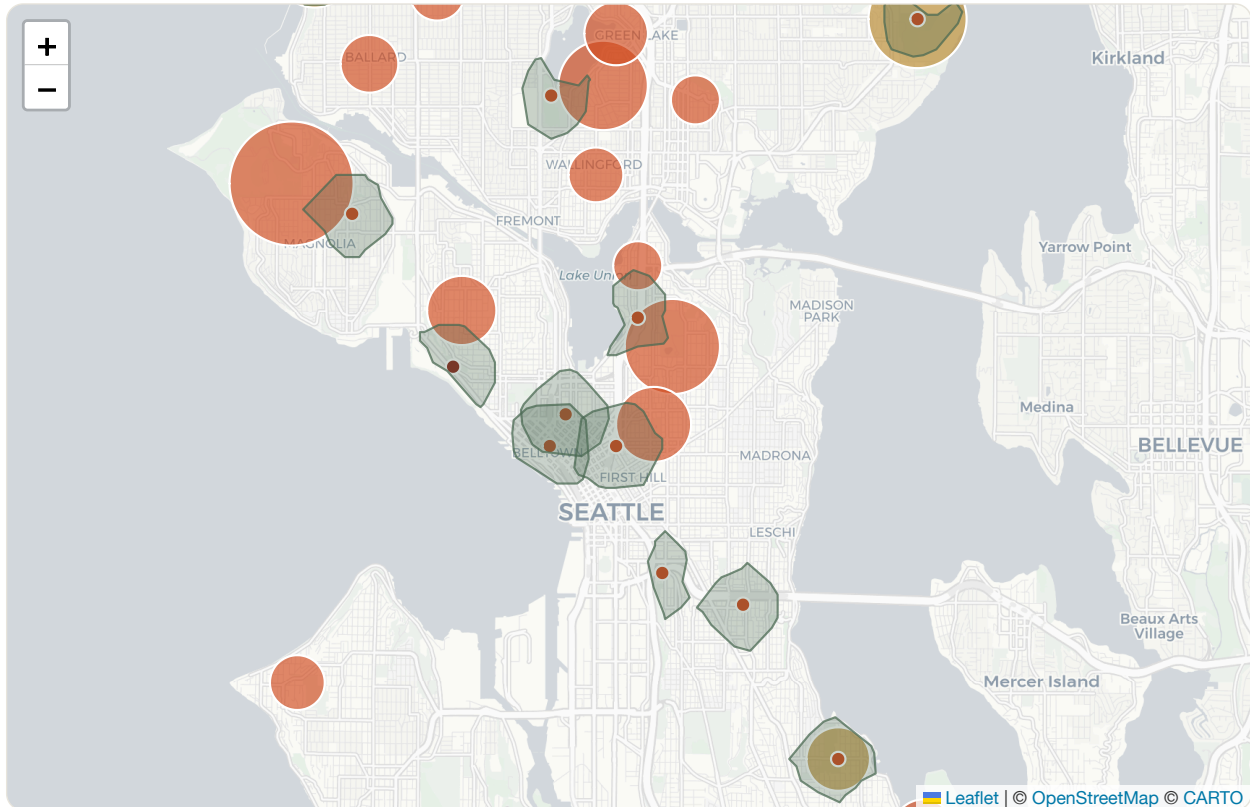
1,317 citations (1,210 park-named + 107 geocoded street addresses) — concentrated at the large OLA host parks: Magnuson (367), Woodland (291), Golden Gardens (227), Genesee (152), Westcrest (122), where citations fall on the non-OLA portions.

Of 37 uniquely identified parks in the citation data, **26 sit outside any OLA's 10-minute walkshed** and 11 sit inside. Most of the inside parks are themselves OLA host parks — Magnuson (367 citations), Woodland (291), Golden Gardens (227), Genesee (152), Westcrest (122) lead — where the citations fall on the non-OLA portions (athletic fields, shorelines, wooded sections).

Two passes, same direction. Park-named only: 71.9% outside (3,089 of 4,299). Combined with 649 street-address citations geocoded via the Census Bureau batch geocoder with Nominatim fallback (464 of 489 unique addresses matched, 94.9%): 73.4% outside (3,631 of 4,948). Reproducible end-to-end via [citation\\_walkshed\\_analysis.py](#) + [geocode\\_street\\_addresses.py](#).

## Access × enforcement, one map

The 14 existing OLAs' 0.5-mi network walksheds are shaded green. Citation hotspots are bubbles (radius scales with citation count, 2014–2026). Orange bubbles are citation hotspots outside any OLA walkshed; amber bubbles are OLA host parks where citations occur on non-OLA portions.



● 0.5-mi OLA walkshed (network) ● OLA location ● Citation hotspot — no OLA ● Citation hotspot — at an OLA host park

Sources: walkshed polygons from [scripts/compute\\_walkshed.py](#) via [data/walkshed/ola\\_isochrones.geojson](#) · citation locations from [data/enforcement-citations.csv](#) (PRRs C049204 + C263949) aggregated by canonical park name · park coordinates from [data/park-coordinates.csv](#) · tiles: [CARTO](#) / [OpenStreetMap](#)

### OBSERVATION

Citation hotspots cluster outside OLA walksheds: Capitol Hill (outside Plymouth Pillars), Queen Anne (outside Kinnear), Wallingford / Maple Leaf / Ravenna (north Seattle gap), Lincoln Park (3.4 mi from Westcrest). The observed concentration is consistent with walkshed absence, but citation records cannot distinguish violation rates from patrol targeting — they record where citations were issued, not where off-leash use is highest.

Method: each citation location is tested for whether it falls inside the merged 0.5-mile walk-distance areas (a point-in-polygon test against the network isochrones). Citation source: [data/enforcement-citations.csv](#) (PRRs C049204 + C263949). Isochrones: [data/walkshed/ola\\_isochrones.geojson](#). 114 blank-location rows excluded. Aggregated output: [citation-rate-by-walkshed-status.csv](#).

FINDING 02C

## Seattle’s OLAs and TPL’s park-priority tiers.

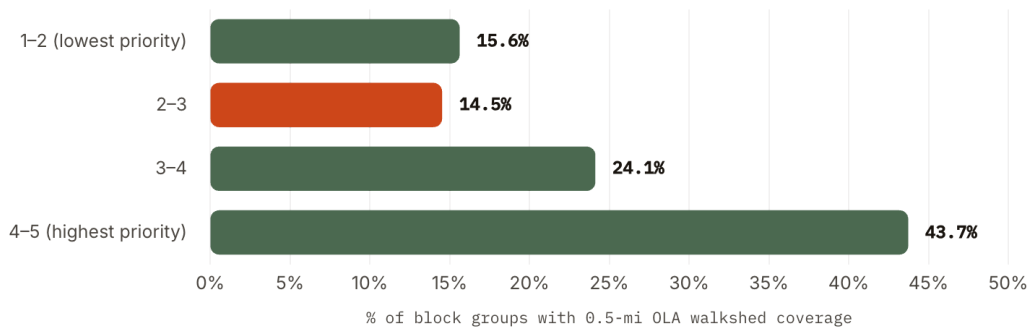
One more check on placement: overlay the 14 OLAs on an independent map of where new parks would help most. Trust for Public Land maintains exactly that map.

**What TPL’s Park Priority Index is.** For every Seattle Census block group, [TPL ParkServe](#) publishes a 1–5 composite score combining low-income density, density of people of color, health indicators (CDC PLACES), and heat/environment stress. A block group scoring 5 is where a new park would have the biggest equity and public-health impact; a 1 is already well-served on those dimensions. Seattle spans 606 block groups across the full range. The index is not a measure of existing park coverage and does not mention dogs.

**The cross-tab.** Sort each block group into four priority bands (1–2, 2–3, 3–4, 4–5), then compute the share of each band that intersects the union of the 14 OLAs’ half-mile walksheds.

### Share of Seattle block groups within a 10-min walk of an OLA, by TPL priority tier

606 block groups grouped by TPL’s 1–5 priority score (higher = more acute need for new parks, combining income, race, health, heat stress). Bars show the share of block groups in each tier that fall inside the union of OLA walksheds.



Source: [TPL ParkServe 2025 priority-area shapefile](#), filtered to Seattle (PlaceID 5363000, 606 block groups) · cross-tabbed against [data/walkshed/ola\\_isochrones.geojson](#) via [scripts/build\\_tpl\\_overlay.py](#) · output in [data/tpl-parkserve/ola-walkshed-by-tpl-priority-tier.csv](#)

OBSERVATION

The top-priority tier (4–5) has the highest OLA coverage at 43.7% — Magnuson, Westcrest, Dr. Jose Rizal, and Blue Dog Pond all sit in high-priority equity areas. The middle tier (2–3) has the lowest coverage at 14.5%. The enforcement pattern in [Finding 02b](#) shows citation hotspots concentrated in neighborhoods that fall in that middle tier (Queen Anne, Wallingford, Maple Leaf, Ravenna) and lack a nearby OLA.

## OLA acreage vs. licensed-dog population, by ZIP.

Findings 01–02c measure geographic access. This one asks whether OLA acreage inside each ZIP is proportional to the number of dogs registered there. If it were, the per-ZIP ratio would be roughly constant.

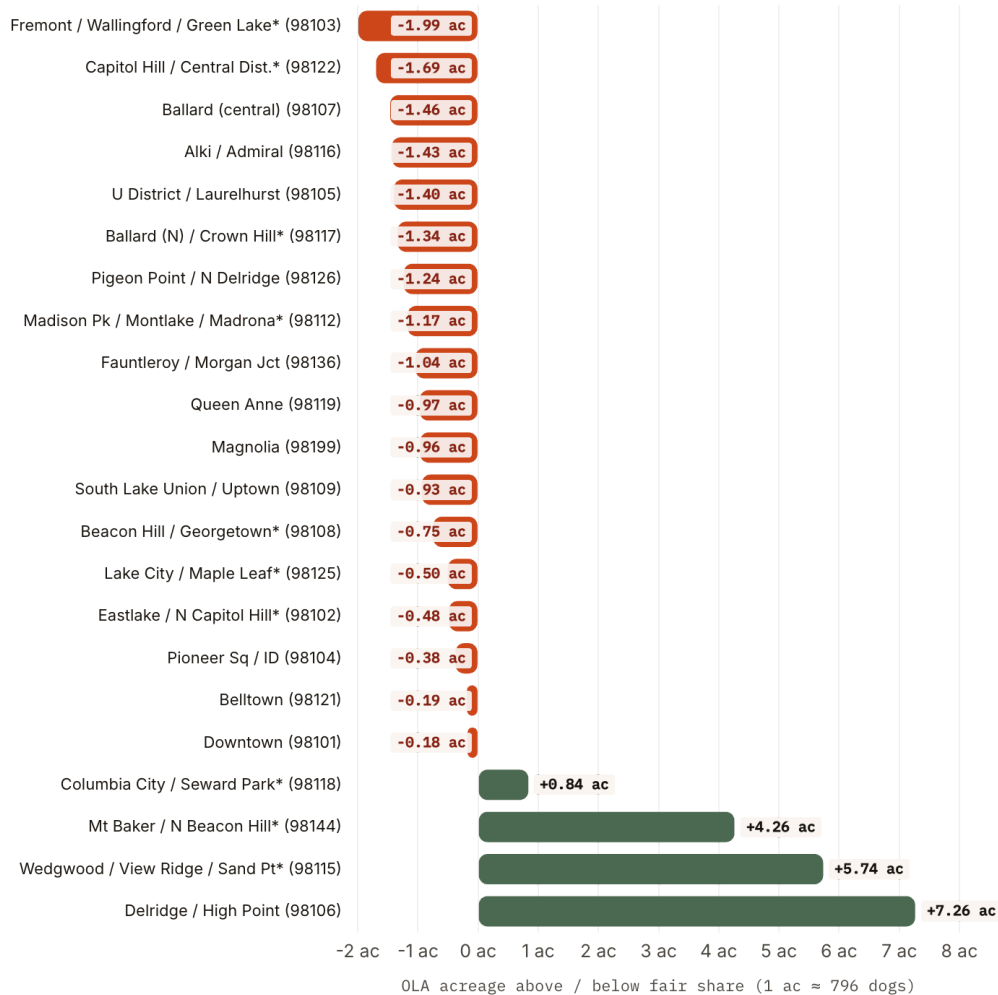
**What the data is.** Seattle Animal Shelter publishes every active pet license on [Seattle Open Data](#). Filtered to species = Dog and joined on ZIP, the April 1 2026 snapshot has **26,652 active dog licenses across 138 ZIPs**, of which 32 are inside or adjacent to Seattle. Each ZIP's dog count is joined to the OLA acreage physically inside that ZIP (from `data/seattle-olas.csv`, point-in-polygon against [seattleio/seattle-boundaries-data](#)).

**Fair-share baseline.** If Seattle's 30.7 OLA acres were distributed in proportion to licensed dogs, each ZIP's fair share would be its dog count times the citywide ratio (~54.7 sq ft of OLA per dog, or 1 acre per ~796 dogs). Actual minus fair share gives the deficit (negative)

or surplus (positive).

## OLA acreage above or below fair-share baseline, by ZIP

Seattle-proper ZIPs only. Orange bars are under fair share; sage bars are over. Labels use neighborhood name with ZIP in parentheses — \* marks ZIPs that span multiple commonly-distinguished neighborhoods; † marks ZIPs that extend beyond Seattle city limits (excluded).



Source: [Seattle Pet Licenses](#) (April 1 2026 snapshot) · ZIP polygons from [seattleio/seattle-boundaries-data](#) · OLA acreage from [data/seattle-olas.csv](#) · join via [scripts/analyze\\_pet\\_licenses.py](#) · output at [docs/data/seattle-zips/dogs-and-olas-by-zip.csv](#)

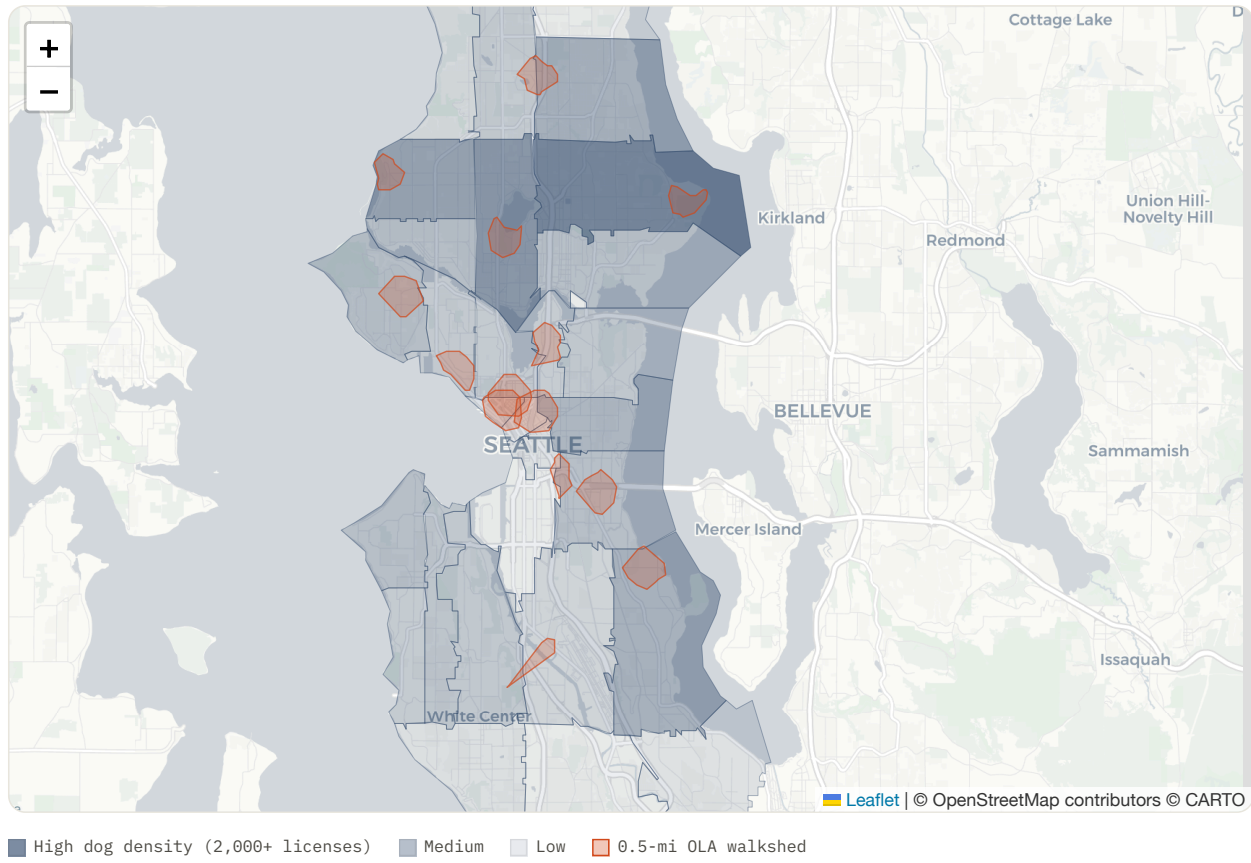
### OBSERVATION

The two largest deficits are South Lake Union / Uptown (98109) and Queen Anne (98119): each has roughly 850 licensed dogs and a single OLA of about one-tenth of an acre. The next three (U District / Laurelhurst, Madison Park / Montlake, Capitol Hill / Central District) have zero OLA acreage inside the ZIP. Four ZIPs sit above fair share — Westcrest (+7.3 ac), Magnuson (+5.7 ac), Dr. Jose Rizal + Blue Dog Pond (+4.3 ac), Genesee (+0.8 ac). Nearly every other Seattle ZIP is below fair share.

The same data drawn geographically. Darker navy = more licensed dogs in that ZIP; orange polygons are the union of OLA walksheds. The gaps — high-density navy without orange — are the under-served areas.

### Seattle: licensed-dog density × OLA walksheds

ZIP polygons shaded by licensed-dog count. Orange polygons are the 0.5-mile network walksheds around each OLA.



Same sources as the deficit chart above.

Two adjacent-but-distinct neighborhoods carry the city's highest dogs-per-OLA-acre ratios.

SOUTH LAKE UNION • 98109

**7,876**

licensed dogs per OLA acre in SLU / Uptown — highest ratio in Seattle.

827 licensed dogs. Denny Park's OLA: 0.105 acres — 4,574 sq ft, roughly one basketball court for the neighborhood.

QUEEN ANNE • 98119

**7,016**

licensed dogs per OLA acre in Queen Anne — second-highest ratio in Seattle.

870 licensed dogs. Kinnear OLA: 0.124 acres — 5,401 sq ft, about one basketball court for the neighborhood.

**On neighborhood labels and ZIPs.** ZIP codes are the finest geography the Pet Licenses dataset provides, but they don't map cleanly to named neighborhoods. Most Seattle ZIPs span two to five recognizable neighborhoods (98103: Fremont, Wallingford, Green Lake, Phinney Ridge, south Greenwood; 98122: Capitol Hill + Central District). Labels here lead with a primary neighborhood name and cite the ZIP for precision. A few ZIPs (98133, 98155, 98177, 98178, 98146, 98168) extend past Seattle's city line; those are excluded from the deficit chart because OLA acreage is Seattle-only. Licensed-dog counts are floors — compliance estimates put the actual dog population several times higher.

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PART TWO

## Acreage — not just count.

"14 OLAs" is the headline count. Of those 14, half are under one acre and three are under a quarter-acre. The three largest — Magnuson, Westcrest, Dr. Jose Rizal — hold roughly three-quarters of Seattle's total OLA acreage.

FINDING 03

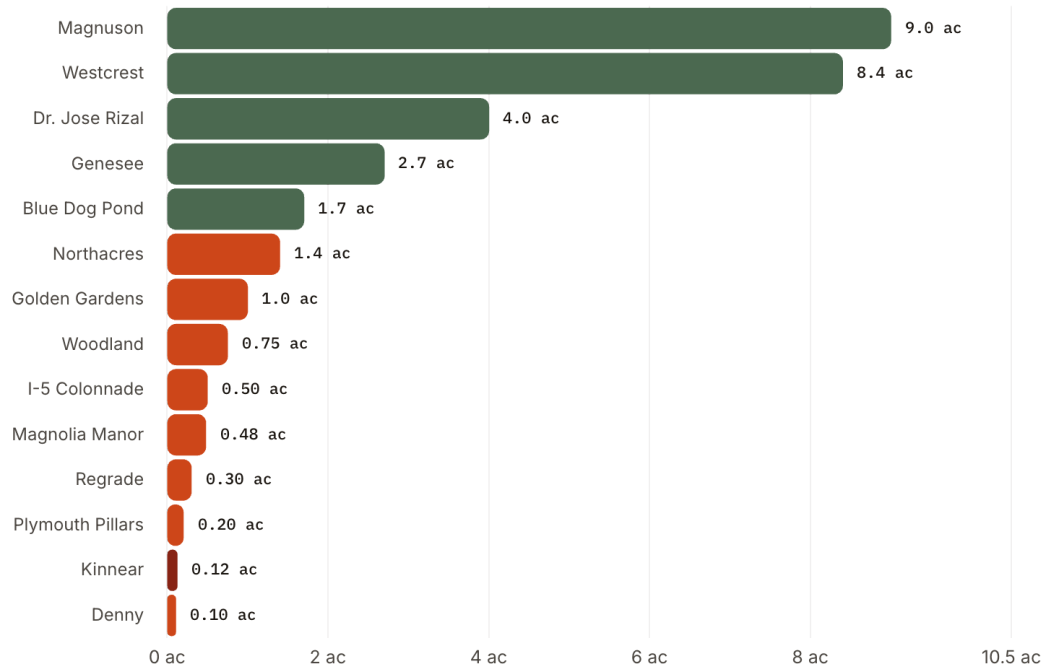
## How small is small?

The median Seattle OLA is under one acre. The two smallest (Denny at 0.105 ac and Kinnear at 0.124 ac) are roughly the footprint of a basketball court each.

Portland's smallest fenced OLA is larger than Seattle's third-smallest.

### Seattle OLA acreage, ranked

Acreage estimates compiled from SPR site pages, the Seattle OLA Expansion Study, and COLA biennial reports. Values vary  $\pm 10\%$  between sources; where ranges exist, midpoints are used.



Source: [SPR individual OLA pages](#) · [Seattle Dog Spot](#) · [BringFido](#) · [SPR OLA Expansion Study 2023-24](#) · data in [data/seattle-olas.csv](#)

#### OBSERVATION

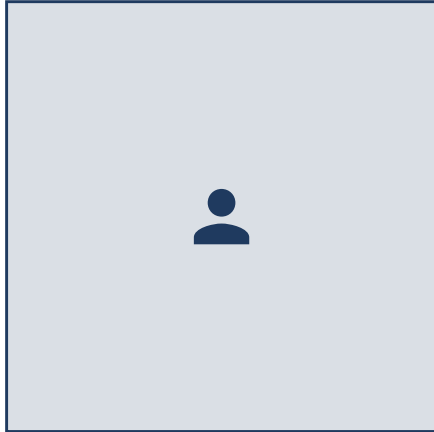
The top four OLAs (Magnuson, Westcrest, Dr. Jose Rizal, Genesee) hold ~79% of Seattle's ~31 total OLA acres. The bottom seven (Lower Woodland, I-5 Colonnade, Magnolia Manor, Regrade, Plymouth Pillars, Kinnear, Denny) collectively hold under 10%.

FINDING 03B

## Space per resident, space per dog.

Divide Seattle's total parkland by its human population, and divide the OLA footprint by the dog population. The resulting footprints, drawn at the same scale:

DRAWN TO SCALE · 1 PX = ~0.4 SQ FT



EVERY SEATTLE RESIDENT'S SHARE OF PARKLAND

**355 sq ft**

About the footprint of a small studio apartment



EVERY SEATTLE DOG'S SHARE OF OLA

**5.4 sq ft**

About the footprint of a doormat

A Seattle resident has roughly **66× more parkland per person** than a Seattle dog has dedicated off-leash space per dog. At the conservative 150,000-dog floor (Seattle Humane's lower estimate), the ratio is **40×**.

ON THE COMPARISON

Dogs are allowed in Seattle parks — on leash. The comparison here is specifically off-leash space. Seattle has 6,662 acres of parkland where off-leash dogs are either prohibited or subject to citation. The 30.7 designated OLA acres — 12 fully fenced sites, plus Magnuson and I-5 Colonnade as partial-fenced — are the legal exception. 99.5% of Seattle's parkland is off-limits to off-leash dogs; that is what the boxes are drawing.

Math:  $6,662 \text{ ac total parkland (TPL 2025 ParkScore Seattle)} \div 816,600 \text{ residents (WA OFM 2025)} = 0.00816 \text{ ac/resident} = 355 \text{ sq ft.}$   
 $30.7 \text{ ac OLA total (seattle-olas.csv)} \div 248,858 \text{ AVMA-estimated dogs (illegal-use-indicators.csv)} = 5.37 \text{ sq ft/dog. Ratio } 355/5.37 = 66.1.$

## Amenities: lighting, water, small-dog areas

Amenity inventory for Seattle's 14 OLAs. [Citizens for Off-Leash Areas \(COLA\)](#) surveyed OLA users and published the amenity breakdown; numbers are cross-checked against current SPR OLA pages (April 2026).

HAVE LIGHTING

**2 of 14**

Westcrest and Denny per SPR individual OLA pages. Fall/winter evenings after work are unusable at the other 12.

HAVE WATER ACCESS

**9 of 14**

Drinking fountain, doggie fountain, or hose listed by SPR at Westcrest, Genesee, I-5 Colonnade, Blue Dog Pond, Dr. Jose Rizal, Denny, Magnolia Manor, Regrade, Plymouth Pillars. Kinnear is not on that list.

HAVE SMALL-DOG AREAS

**5 of 14**

Magnuson, Westcrest, Genesee, Golden Gardens, Magnolia Manor per current SPR OLA pages.

Approximately 79% of Seattle's total OLA acreage is concentrated in four parks (Magnuson, Westcrest, Dr. Jose Rizal, Genesee). SPR's own survey work identifies the top reason non-OLA users give for avoiding OLAs as location inconvenience. The four most-frequented OLAs in SPR's tracking are Magnuson, Westcrest, Golden Gardens, and Woodland. The [Kinnear](#) case study below details one site's usage profile.

Source: [COLA](#) biennial report and user survey · amenity inventory cross-checked against [SPR individual OLA pages](#) · primary citations retained in [sources/nextdoor-qa-playfield-2021.md](#)

## What "too small" means, quantified

Three independent authorities publish overlapping standards for the size of a functioning neighborhood dog park and the per-dog capacity a park of a given size can support.

### AKC RECOMMENDATION

**≥ 1 acre**

Minimum size with 4–6 ft fence, per [AKC Establishing a Dog Park in Your Community](#).

### INDUSTRY DESIGN CONSENSUS

**1–5 acres**

Community dog-park sizing, with 1 acre as the practical floor. Per [Parks & Rec Business](#) and municipal design guidelines ([Ann Arbor](#), [Fairfax County](#)).

### PER-DOG CAPACITY

**75–100 sq ft**

Recommended planning density at peak use. Below this, injury and behavioral-conflict risk rise. [Dog Park Size Guide](#).

Applied to Seattle's 14 OLAs: **seven of 14 are below the AKC 1-acre floor**. Three are below 0.25 acre. Implied peak capacity at the 100 sq ft per-dog standard, for the smallest sites:

| OLA                     | AREA (SQ FT) | CAP AT 100 SQ FT/DOG | CAP AT 75 SQ FT/DOG | BELOW AKC 1-AC MIN? |
|-------------------------|--------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Denny Park</b>       | 4,574        | 46                   | 61                  | Yes — 0.105 ac      |
| <b>Kinnear</b>          | 5,401        | 54                   | 72                  | Yes — 0.124 ac      |
| <b>Plymouth Pillars</b> | 8,712        | 87                   | 116                 | Yes — 0.20 ac       |
| <b>Regrade</b>          | 13,068       | 131                  | 174                 | Yes — 0.30 ac       |
| <b>Magnolia Manor</b>   | 20,909       | 209                  | 279                 | Yes — 0.48 ac       |
| <b>I-5 Colonnade</b>    | 21,780       | 218                  | 290                 | Yes — 0.50 ac       |
| <b>Lower Woodland</b>   | 32,670       | 327                  | 436                 | Yes — 0.75 ac       |
| Golden Gardens          | 43,560       | 436                  | 581                 | At floor — 1.0 ac   |
| Northacres              | 60,984       | 610                  | 813                 | No — 1.4 ac         |
| Blue Dog Pond           | 74,052       | 741                  | 987                 | No — 1.7 ac         |
| Genesee                 | 117,612      | 1,176                | 1,568               | No — 2.7 ac         |
| Dr. Jose Rizal          | 174,240      | 1,742                | 2,323               | No — 4.0 ac         |
| Westcrest               | 365,904      | 3,659                | 4,879               | No — 8.4 ac         |

Magnuson 392,040 3,920 5,227 No — 9.0 ac

OBSERVATION

Kinnear’s implied peak capacity is 54 dogs at the 100 sq ft standard and 72 dogs at the 75 sq ft floor. SPR signage at the park asks owners with more than 3 dogs to use another OLA. Kinnear is the only designated OLA within a 10-minute walk of most of Queen Anne.

ON THE GROUND AT KINNEAR · JULY 2019

Park signage asking 3+-dog owners to use another OLA. Park entrance, July 2019 — Tent against the OLA's back fence encampment tarp visible (intermittent). (July 2019); intermittent.

Photos by Andre Vrignaud, July 2019. Click any image to view full size. The site's 20-year incident record is in the [Kinnear timeline CSV](#) (Seattle Weekly 2007, Seattle Times 2008, KOMO 2025).

Sources: [AKC](#) · [Parks & Rec Business](#) · [Ann Arbor Dog Park Guidelines](#) · [FCPA Dog Park Standards](#) · Seattle OLA acreage from [data/seattle-olas.csv](#)

FINDING 04

## Peer-city acreage, with a methodology note.

Comparing total OLA acreage across cities is harder than comparing counts because cities define "off-leash" differently. Portland has 38 DOLAs (TPL 2025) but most are unfenced voice-control areas. San Francisco counts 42 dog-friendly sites including small Dog Play Areas (DPAs) inside larger parks. Vancouver BC counts 36 including time-restricted areas. Seattle counts only fully-fenced dedicated OLAs.

A best-effort comparison of OLA acreage per capita, with caveats inline:

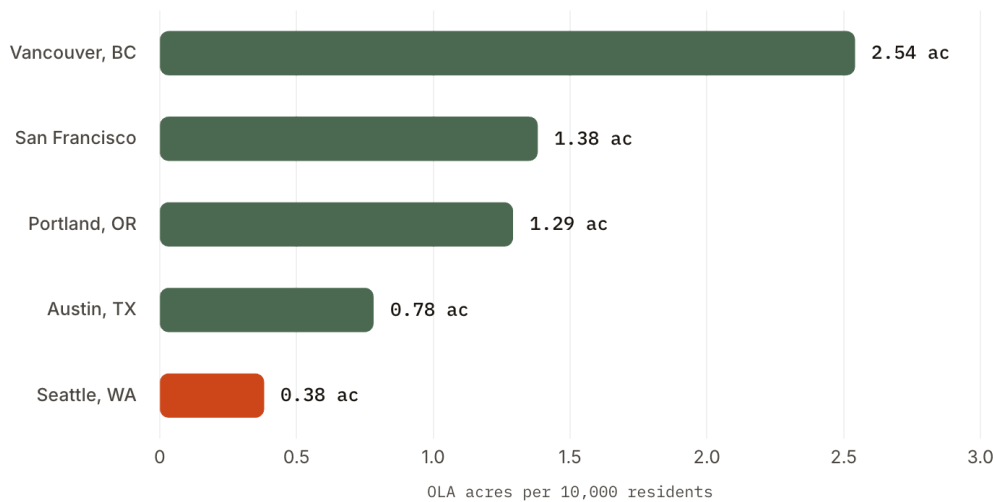
| CITY              | OLA COUNT (METHODOLOGY)     | EST. TOTAL OLA ACRES | OLA ACRES PER 10K RESIDENTS | LARGEST SINGLE OLA   | MEDIAN OLA SIZE |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|--|-----------------|
| Seattle, WA       | 14 (all fenced)             | ~31                  | 0.38                        | 9.0 (Magnuson)   | 0.9             |
| Portland, OR      | 38 (most unfenced)          | ~85                  | 1.29                        | ~5 (Gabriel; fenced)                                       | 1.3             |
| San Francisco, CA | 42 (mix fenced/unfenced)    | ~120                 | 1.38                        | 14 (Fort Funston, GGNRA)‡                                  | 1.5             |
| Vancouver, BC     | 36 (mostly time-restricted) | ~168                 | 2.54                        | 40 (New Brighton)  | 2.3             |
| Austin, TX        | 13 (mix)                    | ~680*                | 6.63*                       | 293 (Walnut Creek Metro Park, voice-control natural area)* | 2.0             |

\* Austin's "largest" entry (Walnut Creek Metropolitan Park, 293 ac voice-control natural area) is not a traditional fenced dog park; the unadjusted Austin total of ~680 ac (sometimes cited externally) reduces to ~80 ac on a fenced-comparable basis (the figure

used here). Portland's ~85-ac total comes from PP&R's published DOLA inventory and includes unfenced voice-control sites; Portland's largest single fully-fenced site is Gabriel Park's ~5-ac DOLA, well below the totals shown for SF, Vancouver BC, or Austin's largest. \* Fort Funston is GGNRA federal land, not SF Rec & Parks property; off-leash access there has been contested under the GGNRA Dog Management Plan. Listed here as the largest off-leash *area* SF dogs commonly use; SF's largest city-managed dog play area is closer to 4 ac. The per-capita counts still substantially exceed Seattle. Vancouver BC's 168-acre total (from its 2017 *People, Parks & Dogs Strategy*) reflects time-restricted shared-use areas on beaches and fields.

### OLA acres per 10,000 residents — methodology-adjusted

Excludes outlier off-leash hiking areas (Thousand Acres OR, Red Bud Isle TX). Vancouver BC includes time-restricted beach/field access.



Source: [SPR OLA inventory](#) · [Portland Parks & Recreation DOLA list](#) · [SF Rec & Parks DPA list](#) · [Vancouver Park Board People, Parks & Dogs Strategy \(2017\)](#) · [BringFido aggregated data](#) · peer-city numbers in [data/peer-cities.csv](#)

#### OBSERVATION

On per-capita OLA acreage, counting only fully-fenced sites in Seattle against each peer city's own definition, Seattle sits at the bottom of this five-city comparison. Vancouver BC has ~6.7× Seattle's per-capita acreage; San Francisco and Portland, ~3.4× and ~3.4×.

#### PART THREE

## Illegal off-leash use: what the data shows.

Two public datasets bear on the scale of illegal off-leash use: SPR's 2016 owner survey (self-reported) and Find-It-Fix-It nuisance-dog reports (~1,100 in 2024, secondary citation). A [public records request](#) for exact annual FIFI counts has been filed and is pending; this page will be updated when the data arrives. The off-leash ticket records have since arrived (PRR C263949) — citation-record analysis through April 2026 is on the [Enforcement](#) page; this section collects the survey and complaint numbers.

FINDING 05

## What Seattle's own data says.

In 2016, as part of the research that became the *People, Dogs and Parks Strategic Plan*, SPR surveyed Seattle dog owners about compliance with leash laws. The results have not been prominent in SPR communications.

OWNERS OFF-LEASH IN LOCAL PARKS

39%

Monthly or more frequently (SPR 2016 survey).

OWNERS OFF-LEASH ON PARK TRAILS

38%

Same survey, separate question.

FIND-IT-FIX-IT NUISANCE-DOG REPORTS, 2024

~1,100

"Dog in a park" complaints filed via city app (secondary citation; PRR filed, awaiting response).

OFF-LEASH TICKETS, MAR-AUG 2016

435

Seattle Animal Control issuance over 6 months.

SPR, 2017 STRATEGIC PLAN

**"Park rangers routinely encounter dogs off-leash in parks and on trails. These encounters have a direct impact on park users who feel unsafe, and on native wildlife in Seattle's natural areas."**

Two of five dog owners in the 2016 survey reported illegal off-leashing in parks on a monthly-or-more basis — a self-reported figure, to a survey run by the enforcing agency. SPR's 2023 OLA Expansion Study frames expansion as a goal "to advance [the] goal of creating OLAs that are increasingly within walking distance of residents and allow SPR to fill in geographic gaps where neighborhoods lack access to an OLA."

Find-It-Fix-It complaints about off-leash dogs in parks have risen year-over-year as Seattle's population has grown and the OLA count has remained flat.

## Factors associated with illegal off-leash use.

### 1. No legal option nearby.

About nine in ten Seattle residents are outside a 10-minute walk of an OLA (only 11.7% are within one). A 25-minute drive with a 70-pound dog is a higher friction cost than walking to the local park.

### 2. The legal option is small.

A 0.1-acre OLA (Kinnear, Denny) or 0.2-acre OLA (Regrade, Plymouth Pillars) has limited running room. Owners with high-energy dogs often choose a larger unauthorized space over a smaller authorized one.

### 3. Site-adjacent safety concerns.

Several OLAs — among them Kinnear and Plymouth Pillars — sit adjacent to or are accessed through areas with chronic encampment and safety issues. The Kinnear case study below documents one 20-year record.

### Net pattern.

Enforcement data ([Finding 02b](#)) shows citations concentrated in neighborhoods without a nearby OLA, not distributed evenly across the city. The pattern is consistent with a supply-driven explanation.

CASE STUDY · 20-YEAR DOCUMENTED RECORD

## Kinnear Park.

Queen Anne's only nearby OLA is Seattle's smallest at 0.124 acres. Located at the bottom of a hillside greenbelt on the southwest slope of Queen Anne Hill, it is the closest legal off-leash option for most of Queen Anne and large parts of Magnolia — an area home to tens of thousands of residents and an estimated several thousand licensed dogs (see the deficit chart above; ZIP-level counts in [scripts/analyze\\_pet\\_licenses.py](#)).

**0.124 ac**    **20+ yrs**

FENCED AREA

INCIDENT RECORD

CONTEXT

## A small OLA with long-running site-adjacent issues.

Kinnear's OLA is at the far side of Lower Kinnear Park from the parking lot and main entrance. The park it sits in has been the site of documented homeless-encampment activity and clearance cycles for over 20 years. Contemporaneous reporting and city records are summarized below.

● 2000

Kinnear is not included in Seattle's \$198 million Pro Parks Levy.

● 1999 & 2003

Beating deaths reported in Lower Kinnear. Quoted in 2007 Seattle Weekly feature: "Everyone in Queen Anne knows that lower Kinnear Park is just a place you don't go because it's not safe."

● 2007

A new dog run is approved for Kinnear — the 12th in the city. Initial reporting notes two issues: no construction funding, and "the area just below where the dog run is supposed to be situated is currently occupied by regular encampments of the homeless."

● 2008

City crews clear the Queen Anne greenbelt near Kinnear over multiple days, filling multiple garbage trucks. SPR spokesperson Dewey Potter to the Seattle Times: "We try to be as laissez-faire as we can. Because life is tough with these folks. We try to look the other way."

● 2020

Dog-owner review notes the encampment along the access path: "You have to walk past it to get to the off-leash area and we didn't feel super safe doing so... I would recommend not going when it's dark and not going alone."

● 2023

Investigative reporting identifies Kinnear as part of a "hidden encampment network" in Seattle's wooded parks.

● APRIL 2025

City clears a Kinnear encampment. Tents reappear within days. KOMO News: "It's unclear how many people were living in the park this time, but the garbage left behind is extensive."

● MAY 2025

Memorial Day cleanup: ~100 volunteers remove an estimated 10,000 lbs of trash from Kinnear and the adjacent greenbelt.

**Implications for access counts.** Kinnear is counted as Queen Anne's OLA in SPR's gap analysis. Observed usage patterns indicate that many Queen Anne dog owners drive to Magnuson or Magnolia Manor, or use Kerry Park, Rodgers Park, Queen Anne Bowl, or nearby school playfields (where off-leash use is not authorized). Plymouth Pillars (Capitol Hill), Denny Park (SLU), and Regrade (Belltown) sit in or adjacent to similar site-safety patterns. The nominal OLA count of 14 assumes all 14 are practically functional for their neighborhoods.

## Summary of the Part II findings.

The Part I, Part II, and Part III findings stack into a consistent profile:

- Seattle has been at 14 OLAs since 2009. Population grew 34% over the same window.
- Per-capita OLA count is 1.82 per 100,000 — roughly one-third of Portland, San Francisco, and Vancouver BC.
- Per-capita OLA *acreage* is lower still. Vancouver BC runs ~6.7× Seattle's per-capita acreage on methodology-adjusted numbers.
- 11.7% of Seattle residents live within a 10-minute network walk of an OLA; 99% live within a 10-minute walk of any park.
- Seven of 14 existing OLAs are below one acre; four are below a quarter-acre.
- Several OLAs have documented site-adjacent safety concerns that shape practical use.
- 39% of Seattle dog owners reported illegal off-leash use in parks monthly or more often in SPR's 2016 survey.
- Two new OLAs open fall 2026, bringing the total to 16. This is the first net increase since 2009 — 17 years — and does not close the per-capita gap.
- Three OLAs — Magnuson, Genesee, Westcrest — show working models with visible governance: a site-specific 501(c)(3), system-wide COLA stewardship, and a recent Park District-funded renovation. ([Part III, Finding 03a](#))
- Six peer cities run some form of shared-use, time-zoned, or voice-control access alongside fenced OLAs (Portland, San Francisco, Vancouver BC, New York, Austin, Boise). Seattle's all-fenced, single-designation model is not represented among them. ([Peer Cities](#))
- Non-SPR public lands — Port of Seattle, SDOT right-of-way, SPU watersheds, Seattle Public Schools fields — are largely untapped as potential OLA sites. ([Part III](#))

### Data notes

**10-minute walkshed methodology.** TPL defines the 10-minute walk as a half-mile service area along the public road network, cut by physical barriers (highways, tracks, rivers without bridges). TPL publishes the “99% of Seattle residents” figure using this methodology for all parks; TPL does not publish a dog-park-specific version. The OLA walkshed figures on this page (11.7% at 10-min, 76.6% at 2.5-mi) are computed in-repo: [scripts/compute\\_walkshed.py](#) runs `osmnx` against Seattle's OSM walk network (projected to UTM 10N; physical barriers respected) to compute per-OLA isochrones; [scripts/population\\_coverage.py](#) intersects the union with 2020 Census block-group population clipped to the Seattle city boundary. Each walk-area boundary is drawn as an alpha-shape ( $\alpha=0.003$ ) — a shape that hugs the reachable street network's actual concavities rather than bridging across them the way a simpler convex outline would — of reachable network nodes, with a 0.3 km<sup>2</sup> area floor and a convex-hull fallback for OLAs at the edge of OpenStreetMap (OSM) coverage (Westcrest is one). Output at [data/walkshed/population\\_coverage.csv](#); full methodology in [METHODOLOGY.md](#).

**Peer-city OLA counts.** The methodological differences are real and material. Portland's 38 DOLAs (TPL 2025) include 20+ unfenced voice-control areas; Seattle counts zero unfenced sites. Redefining Seattle's approach to include unfenced designated sites (as several other cities do)

would raise its count, though SPR has publicly stated a preference for fenced sites on liability and environmental-impact grounds. The comparison in this report uses each city's TPL ParkScore count.

**OLA acreage.** Per-OLA acreage is pulled from SPR's Dog Off-Leash Areas ArcGIS FeatureServer (April 2026) and cross-checked against SPR individual OLA pages — see [data/seattle-olas.csv](#). Peer-city totals are rougher ( $\pm 20\%$  reasonable) because no peer city publishes a single authoritative inventory in the way Seattle does.

**Kinnear Park timeline.** Drawn from contemporaneous reporting: Seattle Weekly (2007), Seattle Times (2008), Aussiedoodle Adventures (2020), Fix Homelessness (2023), KOMO News (2025). The 2008 Dewey Potter quote is verbatim from the Seattle Times piece.

**"Dogs per OLA" calculation.** Using the widely-cited 150,000 dog-population floor divided by 14 OLAs gives ~10,700 dogs per OLA; SPR's 2023 Expansion Study cites higher estimates (up to 400,000), which would raise the ratio to ~28,500.

## Primary sources

[TPL 2025 ParkScore Seattle PDF](#) · [TPL ParkServe methodology documentation](#) · [Seattle Parks & Recreation individual OLA pages](#) · [SPR Off-Leash Area Expansion Study recommendations \(Parkways blog, Feb 2024\)](#) · [SPR People, Dogs and Parks Strategic Plan \(2017\)](#) · [KOMO News on Kinnear \(April & May 2025\)](#) · Seattle Weekly "Ruff Trade" (2007) · Seattle Times Queen Anne encampment clearing coverage (2008) · Queen Anne & Magnolia News OLA expansion coverage (Nov 2023) · [Portland Parks & Recreation DOLA list](#) · [Sniffspot](#) and [BringFido](#) (cross-referenced)

**On framing.** SPR foregrounds the city's overall park access, which is genuinely strong, and OLA investment has recently increased. TPL appropriately weights total park access more heavily than any single amenity. This report presents the specific slice of data that describes the off-leash system, computed on the same standards TPL and SPR use elsewhere. Related opinions and policy recommendations are kept on a separate [opinion page](#).

## PART III · FORWARD

# What works, and what Seattle *hasn't tried*.

Parts I and II document the supply gap and the access gap. Part III looks forward through three questions: which of Seattle's existing off-leash areas (OLAs) function well and why, what shared-use looks like in cities that have run it for decades, and what public land outside Seattle Parks' portfolio could host off-leash space without a new Park District dollar.

ANDRE VRIGNAUD · PART III · UPDATED MAY 2026

**ABOUT THIS PAGE**

Parts I and II document supply and access using data Seattle Parks & Recreation (SPR) and the Census publish. Part III looks forward, and some of the underlying research involves public-records requests still outstanding, organizational records not publicly indexed, and peer-city operational data that is not separately published. Each section names what is available, what is not, and what is still open. Corrections and primary materials on any of these topics — Citizens for Off-Leash Areas (COLA) records, SPR internal memos, or peer-city operational data — are welcome via [the issue tracker](#).

**SECTION 3A**

## 01

### What works

Three Seattle OLAs that consistently draw community praise, and the governance and design they share.

**SECTION 3B**

## 02

### Shared-use

The off-leash-hours model. How New York, Boston, and Chicago run time-windowed access in existing parks.

SECTION 3C

## 03

### Non-SPR land

WSDOT, Seattle City Light, Port of Seattle — public land SPR does not manage but Seattle hosts.

FINDING 03A

## What works: three Seattle OLAs that draw sustained community support.

The [Enforcement](#) data shows where the system is failing. It is equally worth asking where it is working. Three of Seattle's 14 OLAs have visible organizational structure behind them — a site-specific 501(c)(3) at Magnuson, system-wide stewardship by COLA at Genesee, and a recent Park District-funded renovation at

Westcrest. Each card below documents the governance model and what the public record shows; usage and satisfaction data are flagged as gaps where they are missing.

## Magnuson — the volunteer-steward model

ACRES

**9.0**

Largest OLA in Seattle; only one with water access to Lake Washington

OPENED

**1996 / 1999**

1996 pilot trial · 1999 permanent designation · former NAS Sand Point

STEWARD

**MOLG**

All-volunteer 501(c)(3), founded 1999, EIN 91-2059268

Magnuson is a structural outlier on land area, physical features (shoreline, gravel paths, woods), and governance. [Magnuson Off-Leash Group](#) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that raises donations, runs volunteer maintenance days, and partners formally with Seattle Parks. It is the closest parallel in Seattle to the Portland or San Francisco "dog park friends" model in which a local nonprofit partners with the parks department.

The 248 citations logged at Magnuson 2014–2019 ([Enforcement top-20](#)) read in context: Magnuson is the biggest park with the biggest footprint, most citations occur on the non-OLA portions (athletic fields, shoreline outside the fenced OLA), and MOLG's presence raises both compliance inside the OLA and reporting of violations outside it. The park draws traffic from across the region, not just the surrounding neighborhoods.

### DATA GAP

Still open: MOLG's most recent IRS 990 (volunteer hours, donation volume, expense lines); copy of the MOLG–SPR memorandum; MOLG-captured usage counts if any exist.

SOURCES · [SPR: Magnuson Off-Leash Area](#) · [Magnuson Off-Leash Group \(MOLG\)](#) · [HistoryLink: June 15, 1996 trial opening](#) · [data/seattle-olas.csv](#)

## Genesee — the COLA-steward model

ACRES

**2.7**

Third-largest Seattle OLA; small-dog area separated

OPENED

## 2005

Genesee Park & Playfield, Columbia City / Rainier Valley

STEWARD

## COLA

[Citizens for Off-Leash Areas](#), 501(c)(3), system-wide SPR partner since 1996

[COLA](#) is the system-wide advocacy and stewardship group for Seattle's OLAs, and Genesee is one of the sites where COLA's volunteer stewardship is most visible. COLA organized the 1996 resolution that created the year-long OLA pilot ([Magnuson opened as the first site on June 15, 1996](#)) and the 1997 City Council vote that made OLAs permanent. The organization has held formal memoranda with Seattle Parks for most of the intervening decades, and steward-volunteers continue to show up at Genesee, Westcrest, and other OLAs. Where MOLG is site-specific to Magnuson, COLA works across the whole system.

Genesee's physical design has held up: small-dog-separated area, multiple gates, drainage that handles Seattle winters. The 130 citations logged there 2014–2019 include many from the larger Genesee Park & Playfield (athletic fields) rather than the OLA itself.

### DATA GAP

Still open: COLA organizational documents (current board, current SPR memorandum); verified quotes from Genesee users on what works about the site and what does not.

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SOURCES · [Citizens for Off-Leash Areas \(seattlecola.info\)](#) · [COLA – Our Story](#) · [Seattle City Council blog \(2011\) on COLA](#) · [SPR: Genesee OLA](#)

## Westcrest — the recent-investment model

ACRES

**8.4**

Second-largest OLA; 2021–2022 renovation

INVESTMENT

**\$505K**

Park District Major Maintenance & Asset Management Fund, 2021–2022

PARTNERS

**HPAC + COLA**

Highland Park Action Committee on-site; COLA credited for ongoing stewardship

Westcrest is an example of a funded OLA renovation. The [2021–2022 Park District renovation](#) addressed drainage, erosion control, access/parking, and accessibility after seven months of closure, reopening June 10, 2022. Scope was maintenance-driven, not a full rebuild: rock-lined swales, piping and outfalls, sediment traps, regraded high-use areas, and accessible pathways. Community input came through the Highland Park Action Committee (HPAC); ongoing stewardship is credited to COLA.

Westcrest's 86 enforcement-data citations 2014–2019 are lower than those of the four biggest host parks, and the site generates sustained community advocacy. Per-acre, Westcrest operates closer to Magnuson's scale than to Kinnear's 0.1 acres.

### DATA GAP

Still open: post-renovation usage or satisfaction data (MOLG-style volunteer counts exist for Magnuson; a Westcrest equivalent is not documented).

SOURCES · [Parkways blog \(June 13, 2022\) – reopening and scope](#) · [SPR: Westcrest Park](#) · [Highland Park Action Committee](#)

### WHAT THE THREE PROFILES SHARE

Each has a named community partner, a specific governance structure, and enough physical area to absorb demand: Magnuson at 9.0 acres, Westcrest at 8.4, Genesee at 2.7 — compared to Kinnear at 0.124. The access story in Part II is about distance; the design story here is about size plus stewardship.

FINDING 03B

## Shared-use: the off-leash-hours model in peer cities.

Several U.S. cities designate time-windowed off-leash access in existing parks rather than building new fenced OLAs. The policy has been in formal operation in New York City since 2007, and in functional operation for roughly two decades. Adoption in Seattle would expand access without new capital expenditure.

### New York City — formal since 2007, functional longer

New York's current Dog Friendly Areas policy designates specific parks (or sub-areas within parks) where dogs may be off-leash between 9pm and 9am. NYC Parks maintains the [official list](#) of Dog-Friendly Areas and off-leash-hours parks. Formalization happened in 2007 via [a 2007 NYC Parks rulemaking action](#); the operational pattern predated formalization by a decade or more.

As of April 2026, no public post-2018 longitudinal evaluation of the policy's outcomes is searchable — a boundary condition for interpreting the model. What is in the public record: the policy has not been rolled back, has not produced the liability outcomes that were initially feared, and is cited by secondary sources as a working example of shared-use.

DATA GAP

Still open: NYC Parks internal operational data on off-leash hours enforcement, injury and complaint statistics 2007–present, and comparison cities that formally evaluated similar policies.

### Boston, Chicago, and variants

Boston and Chicago each run variants of shared-use access. Chicago's Dog-Friendly Areas (DFAs) are closer to Seattle's fenced-dedicated model than to NYC's time-windowed shared-use, but Chicago also allows specific park areas to operate on an off-leash basis during defined hours. Boston's approach is less formalized but includes documented time-windowed use at specific parks.

DATA GAP

Still open: city-by-city operational documents for Boston and Chicago, clear scope of time-windowed vs. fenced-dedicated at each, and a comparison table that makes the policy space legible.

RELEVANCE TO SEATTLE

Seattle's 14 OLAs cover 11.7% of residents within a 10-minute walk ([Part II Finding 01](#)). Time-windowed access to existing large parks — Green Lake, Volunteer Park, Lincoln Park, Seward Park, Discovery Park — would change the coverage figure without the multi-year capital timelines of building new dedicated OLAs. The [Opinion page](#) takes a position on this; the mechanism itself is a matter of peer-city record.

SOURCES · [NYC Parks Dog Friendly Areas](#) · [NYC Parks 2007 press release](#)

FINDING 03C

## Non-SPR land: public space SPR does not manage.

Seattle's OLA supply is bounded by Seattle Parks & Recreation's real-estate portfolio. Significant acreage of other public land inside city limits — WSDOT right-of-way, Seattle City Light transmission corridors, Port of Seattle property — is, under current rules, unused for off-leash recreation. COLA raised this in its comments on SPR's 2023 Off-Leash Area Expansion Study: the study did not consider non-SPR public land.

### WSDOT — state highway right-of-way

The Washington State Department of Transportation manages land adjacent to every state-numbered road in the city. Some of that land is unusable (active lanes, on-ramps), but a portion is landscaped setback, substantially fenced, and physically distant from active traffic. I-5 Colonnade — an existing Seattle OLA — sits under I-5 on WSDOT land, a functioning precedent.

DATA GAP

Still open: inventory of WSDOT-managed parcels inside Seattle city limits that could host off-leash use without a lane closure; WSDOT's formal policy on recreational use of right-of-way (if any); the I-5 Colonnade agreement as a template.

### Seattle City Light — transmission corridors and utility property

Seattle City Light owns transmission corridors running across the city. Several already host informal recreational use (walking trails, community gardens). These are typically fenced, signed, and maintained on a predictable schedule — attributes compatible with off-leash use relative to most other non-Parks categories of public land.

DATA GAP

Still open: City Light's recreational-use policy for transmission corridors; identified corridors with a minimum of one acre of contiguous flat ground; any existing precedent for dog-specific use.

### Port of Seattle — waterfront and industrial-adjacent

The Port of Seattle owns substantial waterfront property. Most is industrial and security-restricted, but parcels at the edges — landscape buffer, parking, unused waterfront — may be compatible with off-leash use within the Port's operational constraints.

DATA GAP

Still open: Port of Seattle asset inventory inside Seattle city limits; Port's public-access policy; precedent for Port-SPR partnerships on recreational use.

FRAMING OBSERVATION

Seattle's multi-agency public-land footprint is larger than SPR's portfolio alone. Framed as "where can SPR build a new OLA on SPR land?" the answer is a multi-decade capital cycle. Framed as "where inside city limits is there public land where

dogs could be off-leash without a new capital project?” the answer involves three agencies SPR has not historically partnered with on this use. The [Opinion page](#) argues for the second framing; this page documents the land.

SOURCES · [SPR Off-Leash Area Expansion Study \(2023-24\)](#) · [COLA comments on the Expansion Study](#) · [WSDOT](#) · [Seattle City Light](#) · [Port of Seattle](#)

### PART III · CLOSING

## Open lines for primary source material.

Part III is the forward-looking half of this project. The three sections above sketch each direction and name the specific primary sources that would strengthen them. Materials on any of the three — Magnuson stewardship records, NYC/Boston/Chicago operational data, or WSDOT/City Light/Port recreational-use policies — can be submitted via the [project issue tracker](#).

The [Opinion & Recommendation page](#) is where the policy argument lives. This page documents the case studies and implementation options. The two are meant to be read together.

ABOUT THIS DATA

Citations on this page run from **January 1, 2014 through April 17, 2026**, combining two Seattle public records requests to cover the full period: [C049204](#) for 2014–2018 and [C263949](#) for 2019 through April 17, 2026. Headline figures use “Dog Loose in Park” (DLP) citations — Seattle’s off-leash violation under [SMC 18.12.080\(A\)](#) — so every year is measured the same way. Where 2019 appears in both requests, the fuller C263949 record is used. 2026 is a partial year (through April 17) and is marked as such on every chart.

ENFORCEMENT

# 13 years of off-leash enforcement in Seattle: *rising cost, falling output.*

Seattle Animal Control's records cover 13 years of off-leash (“Dog Loose in Park,” DLP) enforcement. Citation output peaked in 2018, fell sharply during the COVID period, and has not recovered. The program's cost per published citation has risen. Across the full record, the available data does not show the program reducing violations — first-time offenders remain the overwhelming majority of citations every year. The 2026 staffing expansion is being implemented without a published evaluation of the 2016 expansion's results.

SOURCE: SEATTLE ANIMAL CONTROL PRRS [C049204](#) (2014–2018) AND [C263949](#) (2019–2026-04-17) · STAFFING: [2016 MOA](#), [SIGNED 2021 MOA](#), [AXIOS SEATTLE APRIL 2026](#) · COORDINATES APPROXIMATE FROM PARK NAMES

DLP CITATIONS 2014–2026

7,015

Dog Loose in Park, all offense levels, both PRRs. [src](#)

2024 OUTPUT VS 2018 PEAK

35%

The strongest year since the COVID period (2024, 447) is 35% of the 2018 peak (1,276).

FIRST-TIME OFFENDERS, EVERY YEAR

84–96%

Share of citations that are 1st offenses. The mix never shifted toward repeat offenders.

2026 COST INCREASE

~2x

Annual baseline rises from \$292K to ~\$585K under the [announced expansion](#).



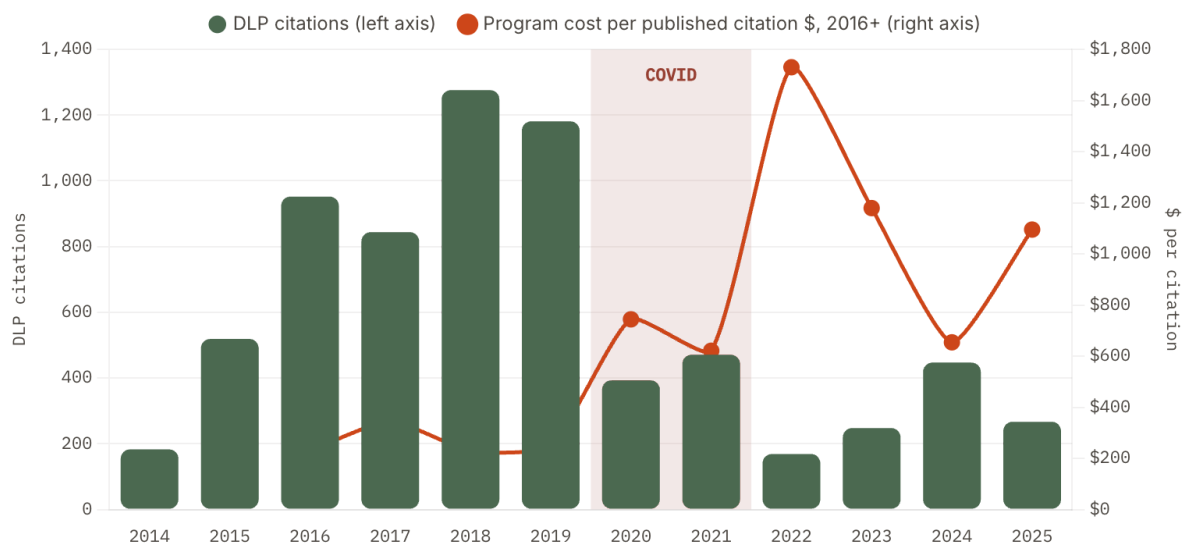
FINDING 01

## Fewer citations, and a rising program cost per published citation.

Citation volume has fallen well below its 2018 peak, while the program's staffing cost has held roughly flat (and is set to roughly double in 2026). The result: the cost attributable to each citation has risen. The bars show citations issued per year; the line shows the program's annual cost divided by that year's citations — a cost-to-output ratio, not the price of writing a single ticket. The MOA defines the ACO/FMW team's work as *primarily educational*, so citations are one output among several (warnings, contacts, deterrent presence); read the line as a trend in cost against the one output the city publishes, not as a unit production cost.

### DLP citations vs. program cost per published citation, 2014–2025

Green bars (left axis): DLP citations per year, 2014–2025. Orange line (right axis): annual FAS+FMW program cost ÷ that year's citations. The program cost-per-citation line begins in 2016 — the first year with a documented cost basis (the April 2016 MOA) — because pre-2016 part-time staffing has no separately documented cost. COVID period shaded. The line stops at 2025 because 2026 is a partial year (see Finding 02). All dollars nominal.



Citations: [enforcement-citations.csv](#) · FAS cost: [2021 MOA Attachment A](#) (\$152,399/yr per ACO II) · FMW pairing ~\$140K/yr (author estimate, documented in [enforcement-year-metrics.csv](#))

#### OBSERVATION

Across 2014–2025, fee revenue (\$351,099 cumulative) covered roughly 11% of the program’s estimated \$3.34M FAS+FMW cost. In the MOA-documented era (2016 on), the program cost per published citation was lowest in the peak-output years — \$229 in 2018 — and highest in the trough — \$1,730 in 2022. Even the 2024 partial recovery to 447 citations leaves cost-per-citation at \$654, nearly triple the 2018 figure. Because the announced 2026 expansion roughly doubles staffing cost, holding the existing cost-per-citation ratio would require citation output to roughly double from current levels — which it has not approached in any year since 2019.

#### ON COST RECOVERY

Public-safety programs are not generally expected to pay for themselves through fees — police patrols, fire response, and park rangers all run at a net cost by design, and that is a legitimate use of public money. Cost recovery is included here as one measurable input, not as a standard the program is failing to meet. The question this page raises is narrower: the program's cost is rising while its measurable output falls and its offense mix shows no shift away from first-time violations — and that combination is worth examining before doubling the program's size. Policy recommendations are on the [opinion page](#); this page stays with the data.

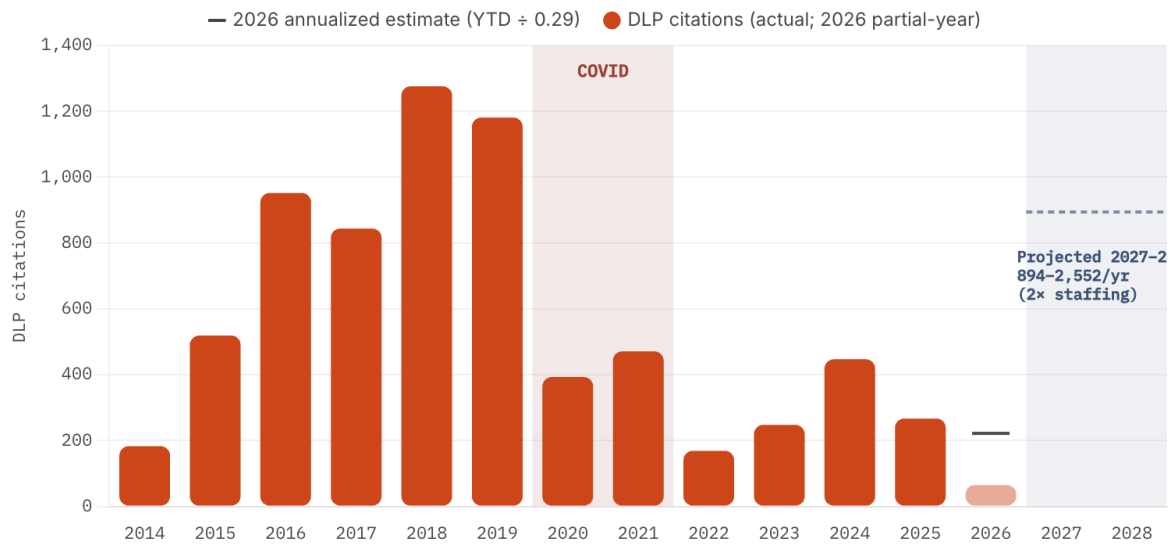
FINDING 02

## The arc: 2016 build-up, COVID crater, 2026 expansion.

Annual DLP citations rose roughly seven-fold from 2014 to 2018 after the April 2016 Animal Control Officer + paired Facilities Maintenance Worker team went full-time. Output cratered during the COVID period and has not returned to anything near peak. The shaded box at right shows the range of plausible 2027–2028 output if the announced 2026 expansion (roughly double the staffing) is fully deployed.

### Annual DLP citations, 2014–2026, with projected 2027–2028 range

Orange bars: actual DLP citations. 2026 (lighter) is partial-year through April 17; the dashed marker shows its annualized full-year equivalent (~222). The shaded box at right is the 2027–2028 projection range at the announced 4-FTE staffing — floor = current (2024) per-officer rate, ceiling = 2018 peak rate. COVID period shaded.



Source: [enforcement-citations.csv](#) · projection staffing baselines: 2016 MOA, 2021 MOA, Axios Seattle April 2026

### OBSERVATION

Three phases are visible. The 2016–2019 build-up: citations climbed from 183 (2014) to a 1,276 peak (2018). The COVID-era crater: 2020 fell to 393 (–67% from 2019), and output has not recovered — the strongest year since the COVID period (2024) reached 447, about a third of peak. The 2026 expansion: doubling staffing produces a projected 2027–2028 range of roughly 894 citations/year (if per-officer output stays at the 2024 rate) to 2,552/year (if it returns to the 2018 peak rate). Per-officer output has not exceeded ~225 in any year since 2019, so the lower half of that range is the more likely outcome absent a change in approach.

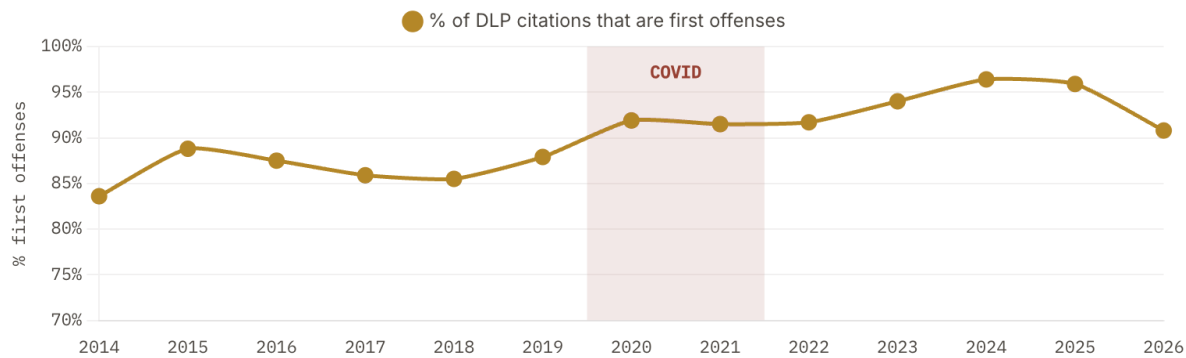
FINDING 03

## No measurable shift away from first-time offenders.

If enforcement were deterring repeat violations, the share of citations going to people cited before would be expected to grow over time as a stable population of repeat offenders accumulates contacts. Instead, first-time offenses have stayed the overwhelming majority every year — and their share has risen, not fallen.

### First-offense share of DLP citations, 2014–2026

Share of each year's DLP citations that are first offenses (vs. 2nd, 3rd, or 4th+ under SMC 18.12.080's escalation schedule). COVID period shaded. 2026 partial-year.



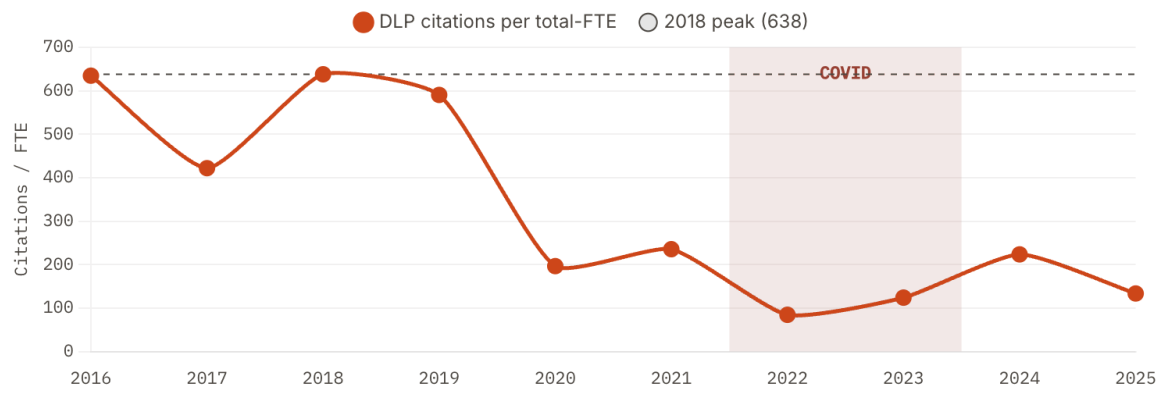
Source: offense levels in `enforcement-citations.csv` · SMC 18.12.080(A)

#### OBSERVATION

First offenses have ranged from about 84% to 96% of DLP citations in every year of the record, rising over time rather than falling. One reading is that enforcement is deterring repeat offenses. A second reading is that lower total citation volume mechanically reduces the chance of an officer encountering the same person twice, which would push the first-offense share up regardless of behavior. The two cannot be separated here: neither PRR includes owner identifiers that would let us track individuals across citations. What the data does show is that the offense mix never shifted toward repeat offenders — the pattern is consistent with a program issuing fresh first-time contacts year after year, not one drawing down a shrinking pool of repeat violators. SPR's own 2016 owner survey found 39% of dog owners admit weekly-to-monthly illegal off-leash use; no follow-up survey has been published (see [what SPR has not measured](#)).

#### Citations per officer-FTE per year

A productivity view of the same record: DLP citations divided by the total ACO+FMW FTE attributable to off-leash enforcement. Shown from 2016 on (the MOA-documented full-team era); pre-2016 part-time FTE is imputed and not directly comparable. Among these years, per-FTE output peaked at 638 in 2018 and fell to 224 by 2024 — about a third of peak. 2026 partial-year excluded.



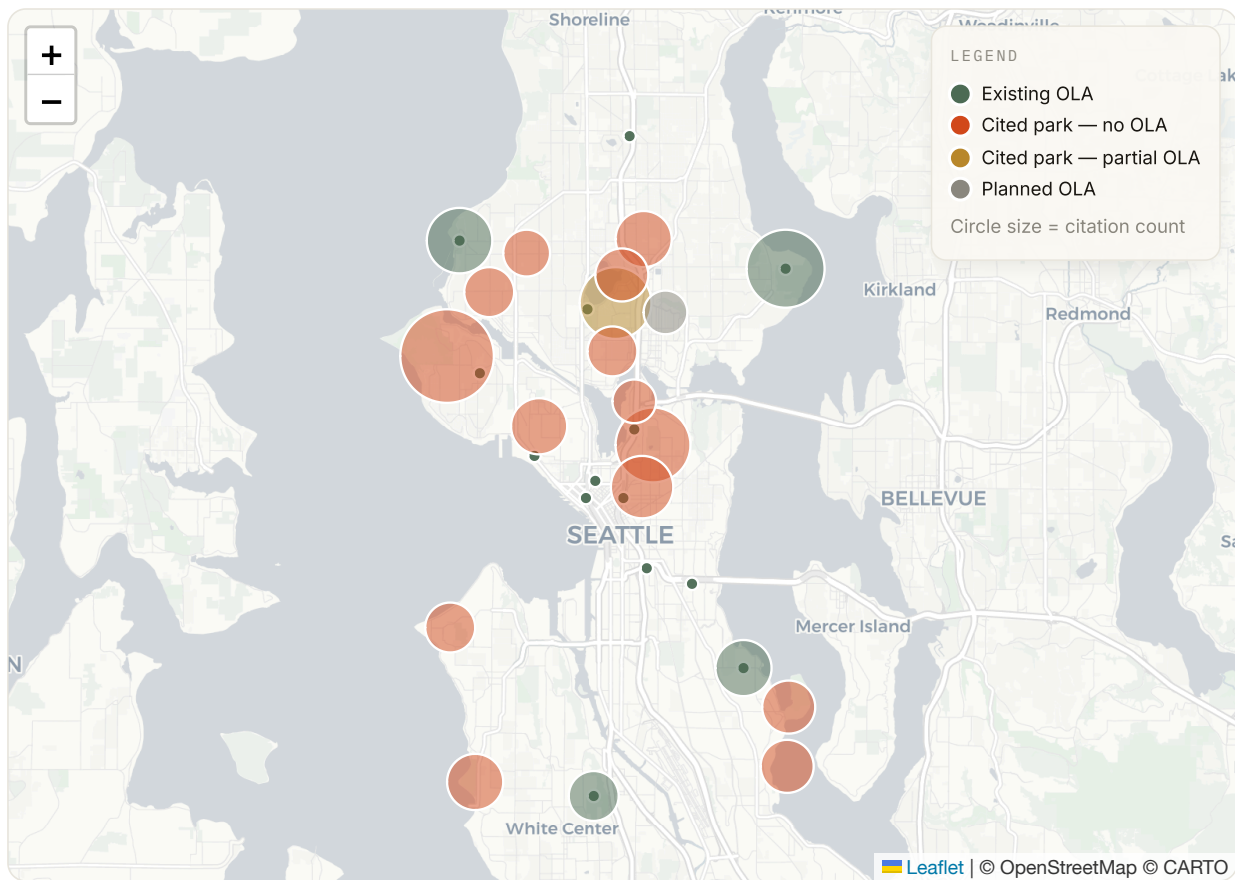
FINDING 04

## Enforcement concentrates in a few large parks.

Citations are not spread evenly across the city. A small number of large, heavily-used parks account for most citations in every year. The records do not say *why* these parks were chosen — whether because violations concentrate there, because patrols were directed there, or both.

### Where off-leash citations were issued, 2014–2026

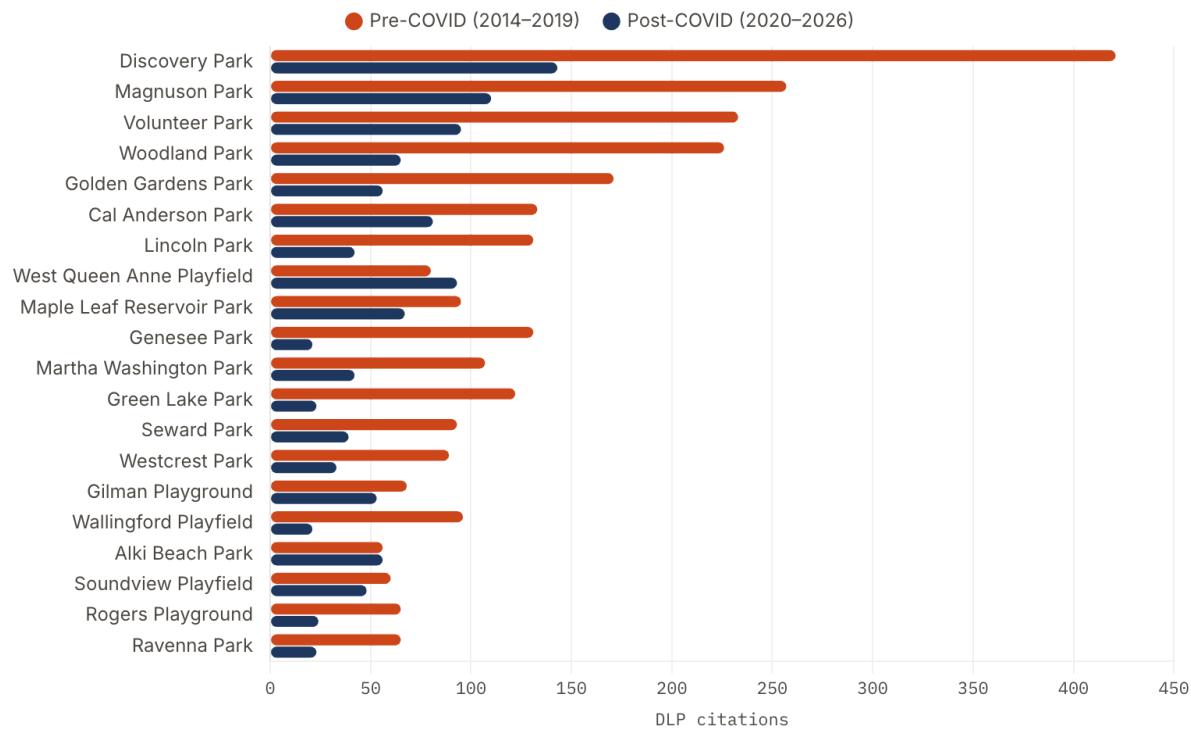
Circles sized by DLP citation count at the cited park. Green dots mark all 14 existing OLAs. Hover a marker for details.



Source: [enforcement-citations.csv](#) · coordinates [park-coordinates.csv](#) (approximate) · tiles: [CARTO](#) / [OpenStreetMap](#)

### Top 20 cited parks: pre-COVID (2014–2019) vs post-COVID (2020–2026)

Orange bars: 2014–2019 DLP citations. Navy bars: 2020–2026 DLP citations. Parks ordered by combined total.



Source: [enforcement-by-park-year.csv](#)

**OBSERVATION**

Citations cluster where designated OLAs aren't. Discovery, Volunteer, Cal Anderson, Lincoln, Martha Washington, Wallingford Playfield, Seward, and Maple Leaf Reservoir all rank in the top 20 and none has a dedicated OLA on site. Magnuson and Westcrest appear as hotspots because the non-OLA portions of those large host parks are used off-leash. The top 10 parks accounted for 46% of citations before COVID and 40% after — concentration eased somewhat but the same handful of parks still dominate. The data records where citations were issued, not why officers were there, so it cannot establish whether a given park is a hotspot because of higher violation rates or because patrols were directed to it. One post-COVID shift is worth noting without over-reading: West Queen Anne Playfield is the only top-10 pre-COVID park whose citation volume did not fall with the citywide decline — consistent with enforcement attention following community complaints in that area, though the data alone cannot confirm the cause.

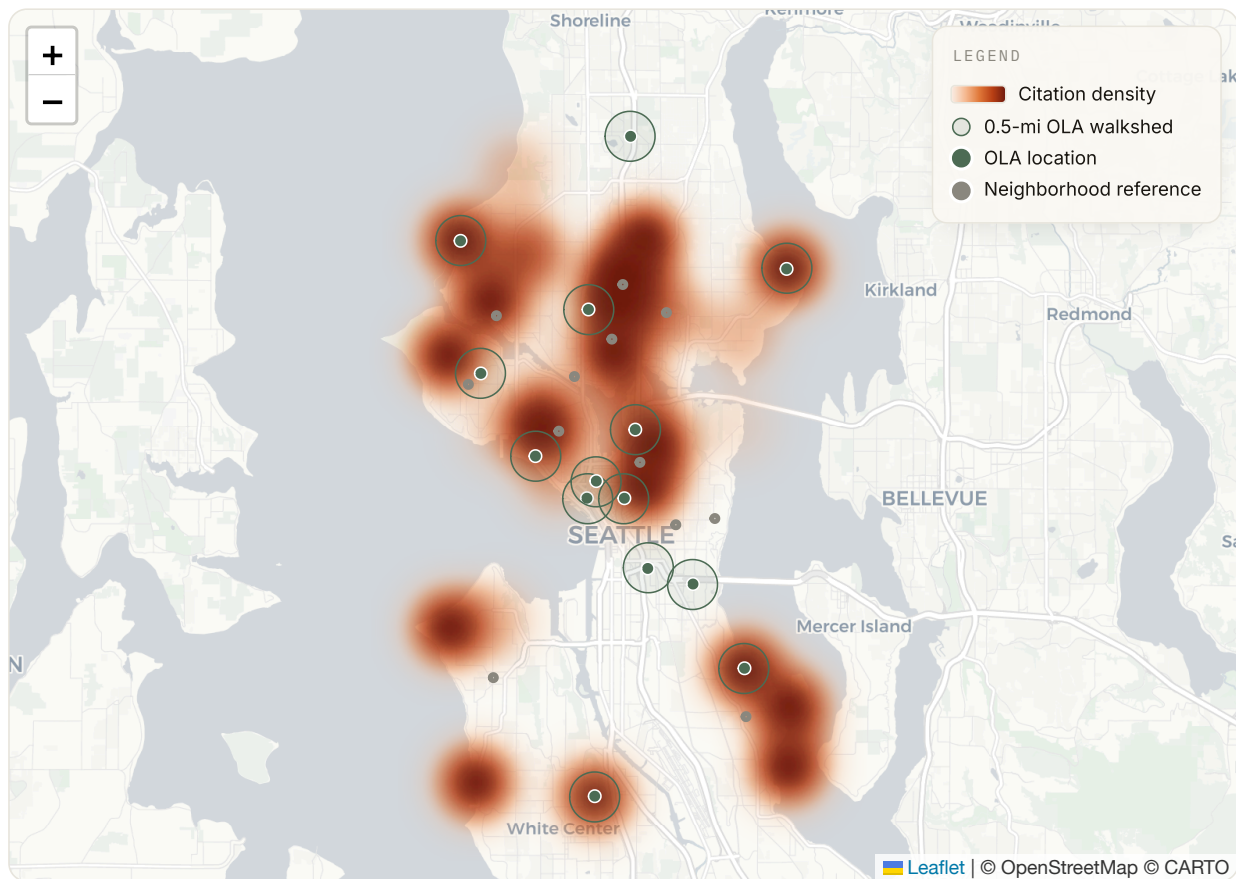
FINDING 05

## Citation density vs. walkable OLA coverage.

Overlaying citation density on the half-mile walksheds around every existing OLA (the [Trust for Public Land 10-minute-walk standard](#)) shows citation activity concentrating in areas without walkable OLA coverage.

### Citation density and 0.5-mile OLA walksheds

Heat = DLP citation density (a smoothed heat surface across geocoded park locations, weighted by citation count). Green rings = 0.5-mile walksheds around each of the 14 OLAs. Green dots = OLA locations. Grey dots = neighborhood reference points.



Sources: [enforcement-citations.csv](#) · [seattle-olas.csv](#) · walksheds per [TPL ParkScore](#) · [Leaflet.heat](#) · tiles: [CARTO](#) / [OpenStreetMap](#)

#### OBSERVATION

Citation density concentrates outside OLA walksheds. North of the Ship Canal — Wallingford, Ravenna, Maple Leaf, Green Lake, Laurelhurst — shows heavy density with little walkable OLA coverage. The Queen Anne / Magnolia core has Kinnear (0.124 acre) and Magnolia Manor (0.48 acre), both below the [AKC one-acre minimum](#), and a citation band through Discovery, West Queen Anne Playfield, and Smith Cove. Lincoln Park (West Seattle) carries 173 cumulative citations; the nearest OLA, Westcrest, is [3.4 miles](#) away.

FINDING 06

## The full top-20 table.

| RANK | PARK                      | NEIGHBORHOOD  | TOTAL 2014-2026 | PRE-COVID | POST-COVID | OLA?    |
|------|---------------------------|---------------|-----------------|-----------|------------|---------|
| 1    | Discovery Park            | Magnolia      | 564             | 421       | 143        | No      |
| 2    | Magnuson Park             | Sand Point    | 367             | 257       | 110        | Yes     |
| 3    | Volunteer Park            | Capitol Hill  | 328             | 233       | 95         | No      |
| 4    | Woodland Park             | Green Lake    | 291             | 226       | 65         | Partial |
| 5    | Golden Gardens Park       | Ballard       | 227             | 171       | 56         | Yes     |
| 6    | Cal Anderson Park         | Capitol Hill  | 214             | 133       | 81         | No      |
| 7    | Lincoln Park              | West Seattle  | 173             | 131       | 42         | No      |
| 8    | West Queen Anne Playfield | Queen Anne    | 173             | 80        | 93         | No      |
| 9    | Maple Leaf Reservoir Park | Maple Leaf    | 162             | 95        | 67         | No      |
| 10   | Genesee Park              | Columbia City | 152             | 131       | 21         | Yes     |
| 11   | Martha Washington Park    | Rainier Beach | 149             | 107       | 42         | No      |
| 12   | Green Lake Park           | Green Lake    | 145             | 122       | 23         | No      |
| 13   | Seward Park               | Seward Park   | 132             | 93        | 39         | No      |
| 14   | Westcrest Park            | Highland Park | 122             | 89        | 33         | Yes     |
| 15   | Gilman Playground         | —             | 121             | 68        | 53         | No      |
| 16   | Wallingford Playfield     | Wallingford   | 117             | 96        | 21         | No      |
| 17   | Alki Beach Park           | Alki          | 112             | 56        | 56         | No      |
| 18   | Soundview Playfield       | Crown Hill    | 108             | 60        | 48         | No      |
| 19   | Rogers Playground         | Eastlake      | 89              | 65        | 24         | No      |
| 20   | Ravenna Park              | Ravenna       | 88              | 65        | 23         | Planned |

### WHAT SPR HAS NOT MEASURED

Citation counts measure *enforcement activity*, not underlying violation rates. A drop in citations could mean fewer violations *or* fewer patrols. SPR's 2016 *People, Dogs and Parks* owner survey found 39% of dog owners admit weekly-to-monthly illegal off-leash use; **no follow-up survey has been published**. The 2026 staffing expansion is being implemented without a publicly-released review of the 2016 expansion's effect on behavior. Pending public-records requests that would help close these gaps:

- SPR program evaluation, deployment logs, and 2026 expansion decision record ([PRR #8](#), filed; SPR responding)
- Find-It-Fix-It “dog in a park” complaints by year — an independent behavior proxy ([PRR #2](#), pending)
- Current SPR/SAS MOA and 2026 budget lines for the expanded staffing ([PRR #7](#), partial — CBO closed with no records; SPR responding)

Until these land, this page can describe enforcement output and cost but cannot prove or disprove that the program changed behavior. Policy implications are discussed on the [opinion page](#).

## Source & method

Citation records come from two Seattle public records requests. **C049204** (filed 2019-08-29, produced 2019-10-15 by SPR) covers Dog Loose in Park citations 2014-01-01 through 2019-10-15. **C263949** (filed 2026-04-17, produced May 2026 by Seattle FAS) covers all parks-related violations 2019-01-01 through 2026-04-17. Raw files and documenting READMEs are at [data/prr-responses/](#). The consolidated CSV ([enforcement-citations.csv](#)) is built by [build\\_enforcement\\_datasets.py](#) and checked by [verify\\_enforcement\\_data.py](#).

## Why DLP-only, and the 2019 overlap

This page restricts to Dog Loose in Park citations across both requests so each year is measured identically. C263949's broader categories (license, scoop, permit-at-large, etc. — 517 additional post-2019 rows) stay in the consolidated CSV under `violation_category` but are not in the year series. Both PRRs contain 2019: C049204 ends 2019-10-15 (partial), C263949 covers the full year. The build uses C263949's full-year 2019 as authoritative, so the rebuilt 2019 figure (1,181 DLP) is higher than the legacy site's 1,029 (which was Jan–Oct only).

## 2026 is a partial year

C263949 ends April 17, 2026 — day 107 of the year, about 29%. Charts mark 2026 as partial. Where a full-year comparison is needed, the annualized equivalent ( $YTD \div 0.293$ ) is shown as a dashed marker, not treated as actual. The cost-per-citation and per-FTE lines stop at 2025 to avoid the partial-year denominator inflating the most recent point.

## Headcount & cost assumptions

Annual ACO+FMW FTE attributable to off-leash enforcement: 0.5 ACO (2014–2015, imputed from PRR context); 0.75 ACO + 0.75 FMW for the 2016 transition year; 1.0 ACO + 1.0 FMW (2017–2025, per the 2016 and 2021 MOAs); doubling to 2.0 ACO under the 2026 expansion. FAS-side ACO II cost = **\$152,399/yr** (sourced, 2021 MOA Attachment A). FMW pairing = **\$140,000/yr** (author estimate; SPR does not publish a per-FMW off-leash line). The exact 2026 MOA terms are pending [PRR #7](#). Pre-2016 and 2016-transition FTE are the softest assumptions here and are flagged accordingly.

## Location quality

Of the 7,015 DLP citations, about 89% are confidently attributable to a named park (top contributors: Discovery 564, Magnuson 367, Volunteer 328, Woodland 291, Golden Gardens 227). The rest are street-address citations (geocoded separately, used in the Finding 05 heatmap) or blank locations (excluded from spatial analysis). Park-name canonicalization is documented in [METHODOLOGY.md](#).

BUDGET · 2016-2026

# The SPR budget, and the *off-leash* share of it.

Seattle Parks & Recreation's (SPR) reported budget grew from \$168M (2018, operating only) to \$507M proposed (2026, all funds). About half the apparent jump is a 2019 reporting shift, not real growth. The publicly disclosed off-leash area (OLA) line went from \$100K to \$129K through 2024, after which SPR no longer breaks the OLA share out from the combined OLA + P-Patch line; a [public records request \(PRR\)](#) for the missing split has been filed and is awaiting response. These charts put both series on one page with the methodology caveats intact.

ANDRE VRIGNAUD · SEATTLE DOG PARK DATA · UPDATED MAY 2026

## ABOUT THIS DATA

SPR total budget figures are drawn from published Seattle budget books. Since 2019, SPR's Maintaining Parks & Facilities line item (Budget Summary Level [BSL] **BC-PR-50000**) has funded both off-leash areas *and* P-Patch community gardens, and the city has not published the OLA-only share in its budget documents. Cycle 1 (2015-2020) OLA-only figures are from SPR's public statements. Cycle 2 OLA-only amounts for 2023 and 2024 are from Parkways coverage; 2025-2026 OLA-only splits are not publicly disclosed. A public records request for the missing OLA-only detail has been filed and is awaiting response (see [PRR #3](#)); this page will be updated when SPR responds. Every figure below has its source linked; approximate or combined figures are flagged explicitly.

### SPR TOTAL, 2018

**\$168**<sub>M</sub>

2018 adopted budget — **operating only**. Pre-2019 books did not consolidate Park District and CIP. [src](#)

### SPR TOTAL, 2026 PROPOSED

**\$507**<sub>M</sub>

**All funds** including Park District + CIP. Apples-to-apples 2019→2025 is \$247.7M→\$339.4M (+37%). [src](#)

### OLA-ONLY, DISCLOSED PEAK

**\$129**<sub>K</sub>

2024, last year SPR published the OLA-only split. [src](#)

### OLA-ONLY SHARE OF SPR

**0.04**%

2024 OLA-only as a share of SPR total. Peak disclosed share was 0.064% in 2016.

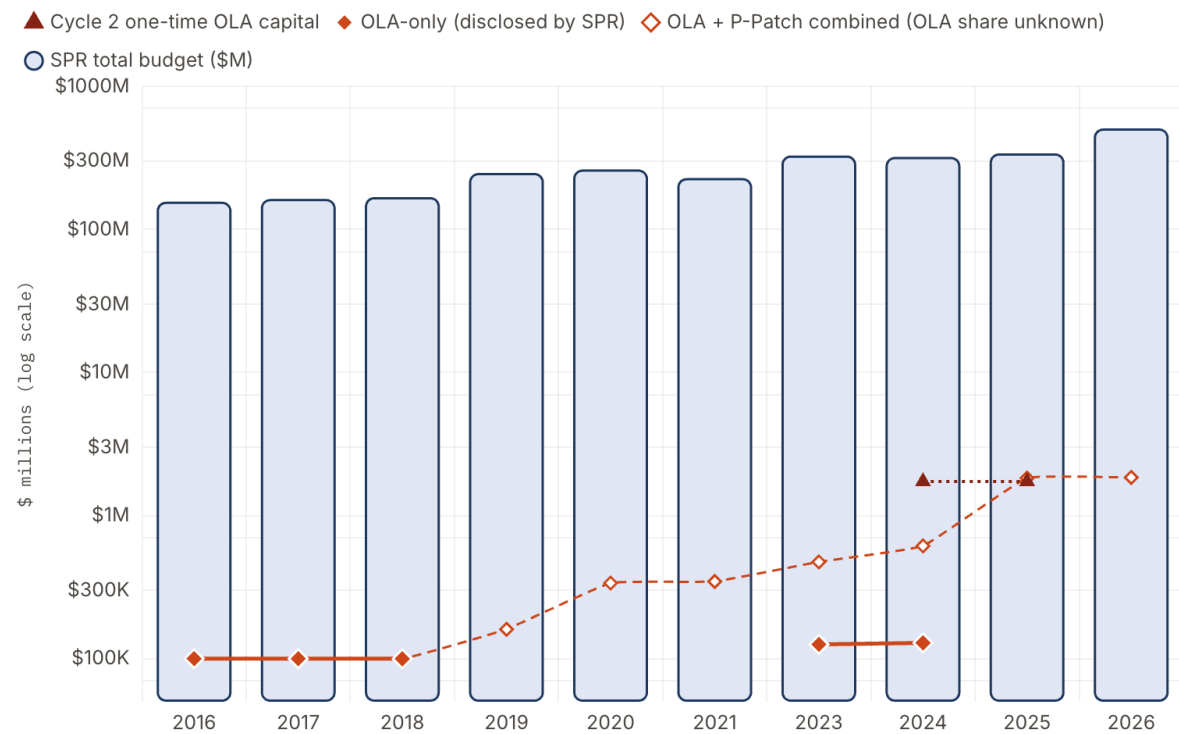
FINDING 01

# SPR total budget vs. OLA-related spending, 2016–2026.

Bar = SPR total (\$M). Lines = the OLA-related series. Solid orange markers show the OLA-only figures SPR has publicly disclosed; the dashed orange line is the combined OLA + P-Patch “Maintaining Parks & Facilities” BSL, which overstates OLA-only. A log axis lets the OLA series remain legible alongside the SPR total; a linear version would render the OLA line as a flat sliver on the baseline.

## SPR total budget vs. OLA-related budget line, 2016–2026

Navy bars = SPR total (\$M). Solid orange line = OLA-only amount for years SPR publicly disclosed it. Dashed orange line = combined OLA + P-Patch BSL (OLA share unknown and smaller). Red dashed = one-time Cycle 2 OLA capital, shown in the year booked. Single log-scale axis.



Source: Seattle 2016–2026 proposed/adopted budget books · [Parkways blog](#) · [Mayor Harrell's Park District Cycle 2 Fact Sheet](#) · data in [data/budget-detail.csv](#)

OBSERVATION

SPR's total budget rose from \$168M (2018) to \$507M (2026 proposed, all funds). Every OLA-related series on the same chart sits 2–3 orders of magnitude below it. The disclosed OLA-only markers sit at \$100K in Cycle 1 and \$126K–\$129K in Cycle 2 years 1–2. The dashed combined line rises partly because P-Patch funding has grown; the OLA-only portion of that combined line is not published for 2019–2022 or 2025–2026. A one-time \$3.46M Cycle 2 capital appropriation is booked in 2024–2025.

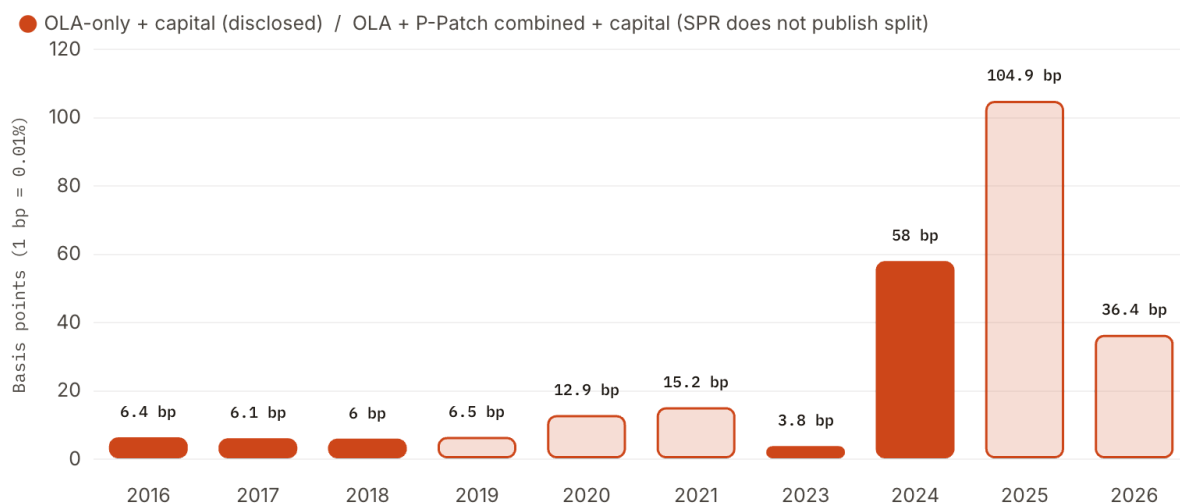
FINDING 02

## OLA-related spending as a share of SPR total.

Same series, expressed as a share of SPR's total budget and scaled in basis points (1 bp = 0.01%). Solid bars use the publicly disclosed OLA-only figures; dashed-outline bars use the combined OLA + P-Patch BSL for years SPR has not disclosed the split. A reference line marks the 2016 disclosed peak of 6.4 bp (0.064%).

### OLA-related budget as a share of SPR total, 2016–2026

Bars in basis points (1 bp = 0.01%). Solid = SPR's publicly disclosed OLA-only figure plus any Cycle 2 capital that year. Dashed-outline = combined OLA + P-Patch BSL plus capital — SPR does not publish the OLA-only split for 2019–2022 or 2025–2026, so those bars are an upper bound on the OLA share.



Source: Seattle budget books (SPR total) · SPR People, Dogs and Parks Strategic Plan (2017) · raw calculation in [data/budget-detail.csv](#)

OBSERVATION

The tallest disclosed OLA-only bar is 2016 at 6.4 bp (0.064% of SPR spending); by 2018 it was 6.0 bp. Dashed-outline bars for 2025–2026 reach roughly 36–54 bp because they include P-Patch community gardens and, in 2024–2025, one-time Cycle 2 OLA capital; the OLA-only slice inside those bars is smaller and not published. SPR’s 2016 People, Dogs and Parks survey found that about 25% of Seattle residents use OLAs; proportional spending would be 2,500 bp, which would render the actual bars as a flat baseline at this scale.

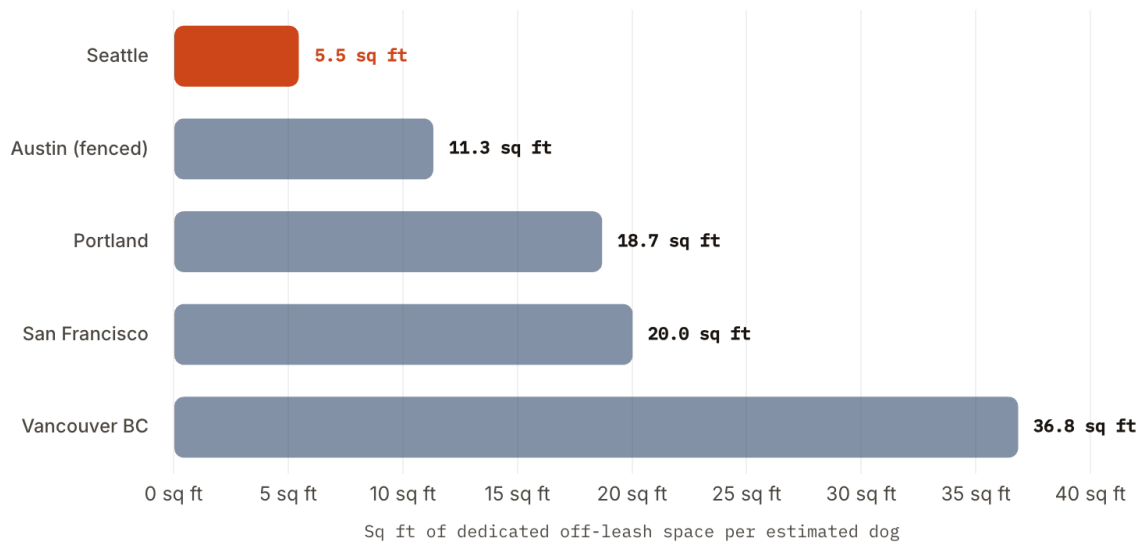
FINDING 03

## Off-leash space per dog, peer cities.

Few major U.S. or Canadian cities publish a dog-park-specific operating line, which makes a dollars-per-dog peer comparison impossible without public records requests to each parks department. What every city does publish is OLA acreage. Divided by an estimated dog population (city population × 0.30 dogs/person, AVMA-derived), that yields square feet of dedicated off-leash space per dog.

### Off-leash space per dog, five West Coast & peer cities

Published OLA acreage divided by estimated dogs (pop × 0.30). Reported in square feet per dog. Portland's 85 acres and San Francisco's 120 acres include unfenced voice-control sites that Seattle does not count; Austin's 80-acre figure is the fenced-comparable subset (the oft-cited 682-acre Austin total is inflated by Walnut Creek Metropolitan Park voice-control area).



Math: OLA acreage from [data/peer-cities.csv](#) (Seattle 30.7, Austin 80 fenced-comparable, Portland 85, SF 120, Vancouver BC 168). Populations: WA OFM 2025 (Seattle), US Census ACS 2023 (Portland/SF/Austin), Statistics Canada 2021 (Vancouver BC). Dog-ownership rate: AVMA 2025 Pet Ownership & Demographics Sourcebook applied uniformly at 0.30 dogs/resident.

OBSERVATION

A Seattle dog has about 5.5 sq ft of legal off-leash space at the cross-city 0.30 dogs/resident rate — roughly the footprint of a doormat. (The 5.4 sq ft figure used elsewhere on the site comes from the more granular AVMA-by-household derivation for Seattle — 364,627 households × 0.455 × 1.5 = ~248,900 dogs; the difference is the same calculation rounded against two equivalent denominators.) Portland sits at ~19 sq ft, San Francisco at ~20, Vancouver BC at ~37. Austin’s fenced-comparable figure (~11 sq ft) is about twice Seattle’s. Because peer cities use wider definitions of off-leash space than Seattle does, these bars likely understate the gap rather than overstate it. Per-OLA acreage detail for each Seattle site is in [Part II — Access](#).

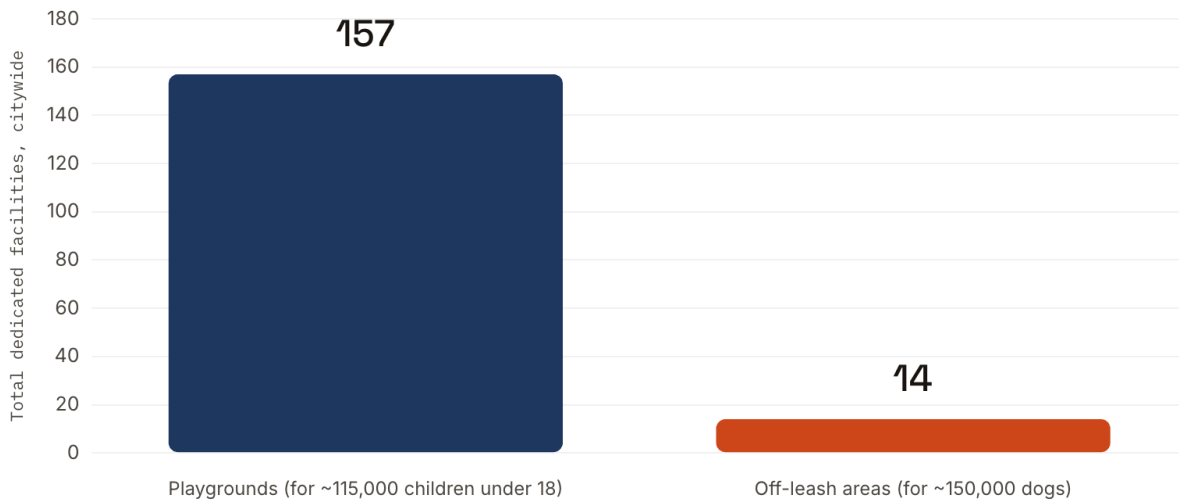
FINDING 04

## Dedicated facilities: playgrounds vs. OLAs.

A different scaling: the count of dedicated facilities per user. Seattle has 157 playgrounds (Trust for Public Land [TPL] 2025 ParkScore, includes joint-use schoolyards) for roughly 115,000 residents under 18. It has 14 fenced OLAs for at least 150,000 dogs (Seattle Humane / Cascade PBS conservative floor; SPR's 2023 Expansion Study cites estimates up to 400,000).

### Dedicated facilities, Seattle, 2025

Count of dedicated facilities citywide. 1 playground per ~733 kids, 1 OLA per ~10,700 dogs at the 150K floor (about 14.6× more users per facility).



Source: [TPL 2025 ParkScore Seattle](#) (playground count) · [SPR OLA inventory](#) · Seattle Humane / Cascade PBS (dog-population floor) · data in [seattle-olas.csv](#)

#### OBSERVATION

At the 150,000 dog floor, Seattle has one dedicated off-leash area per ~10,700 dogs and one playground per ~733 kids — a ratio roughly 14.6× higher for dogs. Using the higher 400,000 estimate from SPR's 2023 Expansion Study, the ratio widens to about 39×. Per-OLA acreage and site sizes are charted in [Part II — Access](#); the full opening-year sequence is in [Part I — The Gap](#).

#### FINDING 05

### Cycle 1 vs. Cycle 2, and the \$3.46M capital line.

The Seattle Park District runs in six-year cycles. Cycle 1 (2015–2020) funded OLA operations at a publicly stated \$100,000/year (about \$600K over six years) with no new OLA construction. Cycle 2 (2023–2028) adds a one-time \$3.46M capital appropriation for West Seattle Stadium and Othello construction plus Ravenna Park design, alongside roughly \$129K/year OLA-only operating (the 2024 disclosed figure, assumed flat).

Put in context, the \$3.46M Cycle 2 OLA capital is comparable in scale to individual non-OLA line items in SPR's 2026 CIP: the Gas Works Park priority project (\$1.8M), city restroom improvements (\$2.0M), or the Green Lake Community Center + Evans Pool planning line (\$2.7M). SPR's 2026 combined CIP across all capital projects is \$87.7M; the OLA capital is about 4% of that total. Ravenna Park has design funds only — its construction is unfunded and would require a future appropriation ([Parkways](#)).

#### FINDING 08 · PEER-CITY FUNDING MECHANISMS

Of the six peer cities the site tracks (Seattle, Portland, San Francisco, Vancouver BC, Washington DC, Minneapolis), only Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board publishes OLA operating costs as a separable line: an [Enterprise Fund](#) funded by user permits (\$38 resident / \$66 non-resident, first dog). Portland, SF, Vancouver BC, and DC bundle OLA operating inside general parks ops. Capital vehicles differ: Seattle has its Metropolitan Park District, SF uses GO park bonds, Portland uses the 2020 Parks Levy, Vancouver and DC use standard CIP lines, and Minneapolis uses the MPRB capital budget for new OLAs while permits fund ongoing ops. Per-city detail in [Peer Cities](#).

## AppendixThe raw budget table

The full year-by-year data is in <data/budget-detail.csv>, with a source column on every row. SPR totals are all-funds figures where available; the OLA-only column is populated where SPR publicly disclosed a split and left blank (visibly) where it was not. Where only the combined OLA + P-Patch line is available, that value is shown in its own column.

| YEAR | CYCLE   | SPR TOTAL (\$M) | OLA + P-PATCH COMBINED (\$K) | OLA-ONLY (\$K) | ONE-TIME CAPITAL (\$K) | OLA AS % OF SPR  |
|------|---------|-----------------|------------------------------|----------------|------------------------|------------------|
| 2016 | Cycle 1 | \$156           | \$100                        | \$100          | —                      | 0.064%           |
| 2017 | Cycle 1 | \$163           | \$100                        | \$100          | —                      | 0.061%           |
| 2018 | Cycle 1 | \$168           | \$100                        | \$100          | —                      | 0.060%           |
| 2019 | Cycle 1 | \$247.7         | \$160.8                      | not disclosed  | —                      | —                |
| 2020 | Cycle 1 | \$261.9         | \$338.0                      | not disclosed  | —                      | —                |
| 2021 | Cycle 1 | \$228.1         | \$346.7                      | not disclosed  | —                      | —                |
| 2023 | Cycle 2 | \$328.2         | \$475.1                      | \$126          | —                      | 0.038%           |
| 2024 | Cycle 2 | \$320.7         | \$614.3                      | \$129          | \$1,730                | 0.040% + capital |
| 2025 | Cycle 2 | \$339.4         | \$1,829.7                    | not disclosed  | \$1,730                | —                |
| 2026 | Cycle 2 | \$506.9         | \$1,845.7                    | not disclosed  | —                      | —                |

## Notes & methodology

**SPR total.** “All funds” figures where available (2019 onward); 2016–2018 are general-fund + operating only, which is why the step between 2018 and 2019 looks large — about half of it is methodology, not real growth. 2026 is the proposed budget; 2025 is the adopted + CIP. Primary source: [Seattle City Budget Office — archives](#).

**OLA-only line.** Cycle 1 \$100K/year OLA-only is from SPR's own 2016 public statement, repeated in Parkways and community reporting. Cycle 2 \$126K (2023) and \$129K (2024) are from [Parkways](#) coverage of the Expansion Study and budget. **Post-2024 OLA-only splits are not publicly disclosed**; the Maintaining Parks & Facilities BSL (BC-PR-50000) is reported as a combined OLA + P-Patch number. [PRR #3](#) requests the split.

**Combined OLA + P-Patch.** The post-2019 line values (\$160.8K through \$1,845.7K) include both OLA maintenance and P-Patch community-garden maintenance. SPR has not published the internal allocation methodology. The line value overstates OLA-specific spending; the 2023 and 2024 disclosed OLA-only portions (\$126K, \$129K) are roughly 21–26% of the combined BSL, suggesting P-Patch is the larger share.

**One-time capital.** Cycle 2 includes \$3.46M across 2024–2026 for construction at West Seattle Stadium OLA, Othello Playground OLA, and design only at Ravenna Park. Split across years as roughly \$1.73M in 2024 and \$1.73M in 2025 for chart purposes; the actual expenditure schedule depends on construction cadence.

**Per-dog figure.** Uses the 150,000 Seattle dog-population floor from Seattle Humane / Cascade PBS coverage. SPR's 2023 Expansion Study cites higher estimates up to 400K; the higher estimate would make any per-dog spending figure proportionally smaller.

**Peer cities.** Dog-park-specific budget lines were not found in published budget documents for Portland, San Francisco, Vancouver BC, Austin, DC, or Minneapolis (operating) as of April 2026 search. Minneapolis's MPRB publishes the OLA Enterprise Fund in its CAFR; the other cities do not separately report. See [data/peer-cities-budget.csv](#).

**Corrections and contributions.** Primary-source corrections or access to peer-city dog-park budget data welcome — email us at [seattledogparkdata@ozymandi.as](mailto:seattledogparkdata@ozymandi.as) or via the [issue tracker](#).

## PEER CITIES

# How eight peer cities *run* their off-leash systems.

Per-city detail on Portland, San Francisco, Vancouver BC, Washington DC, Minneapolis, New York, Austin, and Boise. Counting methodology, governance model, funding mechanism, operating rules, and at least one design choice per city that Seattle has not used. The aggregate comparison is in [Part I](#) and [Budget Finding 08](#); this page carries the per-city detail and primary sources.

SEATTLE DOG PARK DATA · UPDATED MAY 2026

**METHODOLOGY CAVEAT**

Peer-city off-leash-area (OLA) counts use different definitions and are not directly comparable without adjustment. Seattle counts only fully-fenced dedicated OLAs; Portland includes unfenced voice-control areas; Vancouver BC includes time-restricted beach and field access; San Francisco mixes fenced and voice-control zones; Austin's headline figure is inflated by large natural-area voice-control sites. Each city section below flags the relevant definition. The underlying data, with both raw and adjusted figures where applicable, is in <data/peer-cities.csv>.

PORTLAND

SAN FRANCISCO

VANCOUVER BC

WASHINGTON DC

MINNEAPOLIS

NEW YORK

AUSTIN

BOISE

## Portland, OR — the voice-control model

Portland Parks & Recreation operates a mix of fenced and unfenced off-leash sites, with unfenced voice-control areas making up the majority. The city's own page describes ["over 30 dog off-leash areas — both fenced and unfenced"](#); [Trust for Public Land \(TPL\) ParkScore 2025](#) counts 38. The 5.74 / 100K and 3.2× per-capita figures throughout this site use the TPL count for apples-to-apples comparison; the fenced-only / voice-control mix is the methodological difference from Seattle's fenced-only count.

30+ DESIGNATED OFF-LEASH AREAS

### 3.2×

Portland's per-capita rate is 3.2× Seattle's, using each city's own published count.

MOST ARE UNFENCED

### voice-control

The majority of Portland's 30+ sites operate on voice-control rather than fencing.

VOTER-FUNDED

### 2020 Levy

Renewed by voters in 2020 at ~\$47M/yr citywide; no dedicated OLA line item within the levy.

## Governance

City-run by Portland Parks & Recreation (PP&R). Volunteer advocacy runs through long-standing groups such as DOG PAC (Dog Owners Group Political Action Committee); there are no formal co-management MOUs at the scale of Seattle's Citizens for Off-Leash Areas (COLA) or DC's Friends-of-park system. Day-to-day maintenance is PP&R staff.

## Funding

PP&R general fund plus the voter-approved [Parks Local Option Levy](#) (renewed November 2020, five-year, ~\$47M/yr citywide). A dog-park-specific line item is not broken out. Dog license fees flow to [Multnomah County Animal Services](#) rather than to PP&R, so license revenue does not fund dog parks.

## Access standard

Portland uses the general **half-mile / 10-minute walk** standard for parks overall. There is no published OLA-specific walkshed standard. Because the count is larger and many areas are unfenced voice-control, a typical Portland dog owner has multiple legal options within a 10-minute walk.

COMPARISON WITH SEATTLE

Portland's framework accepts shared-use friction — people and dogs co-mingling off-leash under voice control — that Seattle policy has not incorporated since the 1997 OLA ordinance. A Portland dog owner reports ~30+ legal options for off-leash access; Seattle reports 14 fully-fenced OLAs. A Seattle analogue

would be adopting time-zoned or voice-control access in a designated subset of existing parks, which is the approach proposed on [the opinion page](#).

SOURCES: [Portland PP&R – Find a dog off-leash area](#) · [PP&R Policy PRK-1.22 – DOLA rules](#) · [Portland Parks Levy · PP&R funding sources](#) · [Multnomah County Animal Services](#)

PEER 02

## San Francisco, CA — DPAs inside a federal-lands dispute

San Francisco Rec & Park's own catalog lists [36 designated Dog Play Areas \(DPAs\)](#), a mix of fully fenced enclosures and voice-control zones within larger parks; [TPL ParkScore 2025](#) counts 42 dog parks in SF using its own methodology. The 5.03 / 100K and 2.8× per-capita figures throughout this site use the TPL count for apples-to-apples comparison with other peers. Golden Gate Park alone contains four DPAs. SF's dog-park history is also the most heavily litigated of any peer: the GGNRA (federal) versus city-level dispute over Fort Funston, Ocean Beach, and Crissy Field off-leash access has run for nearly two decades.

36 DOG PLAY AREAS ACROSS THE CITY

**2.8×**

SF's per-capita rate is 2.8× Seattle's; federal GGNRA lands are off-limits for off-leash use.

FOUR DPAS IN GOLDEN GATE PARK ALONE

**4**

SF has sited DPAs inside large flagship parks; Seattle has no OLA inside Green Lake, Volunteer, Discovery, or Lincoln.

CAPITAL VIA VOTER GO BONDS

**\$487M**

Prop B 2020 Health & Recovery Bond — park capital funded by voters rather than annual operating appropriations.

### Governance

City-run (SF Rec & Park). [SFDog \(San Francisco Dog Owners Group\)](#) is the long-standing volunteer advocacy org and participates in the Dog Advisory Committee. Rules require picking up waste, keeping dogs under owner control, professional dog-walkers limited to eight dogs per person, and dogs must be licensed and vaccinated.

### Funding

SF has no mandatory dog license, so license revenue does not fund parks. Operating costs sit inside the Rec & Park general fund plus the Prop C Open Space Fund (property-tax set-aside). Capital comes from GO park bonds — [Prop A 2000](#), Prop B 2012 (\$195M), and [Prop B 2020 \(\\$487M\)](#). Additional capital comes through philanthropy via the SF Parks Alliance.

## Access standard

SF uses TPL's 10-minute walk standard for parks generally; SF ranks #6 on TPL ParkScore with near-100% of residents within 10-minute walk of any park. There is no OLA-specific walkshed.

### COMPARISON WITH SEATTLE

SF's defining complication is the [GGNRA Dog Management Plan](#) — the federal-lands restriction on off-leash access that Seattle does not have. SF's 36 DPAs exist in part because federal land is off-limits for off-leash use and the city built dedicated city-level alternatives. Seattle has no equivalent federal-lands complication.

SOURCES: [SFRPD – Dog Play Areas](#) · [SFRPD Bonds & Initiatives](#) · [Prop B 2020 Health & Recovery Bond](#) · [GGNRA Dog Management Plan \(NPS\)](#) · [SFDOG volunteer advocacy](#)

### PEER 03

## Vancouver, BC — the elected Park Board

Vancouver's Park Board is the only independently-elected parks body in any major Canadian city — seven commissioners elected by Vancouver voters, running parks independently of City Council. The Park Board passed the [People, Parks, and Dogs: A Strategy for Sharing Vancouver's Parks](#) in 2017, the most detailed OLA planning framework among the eight peer cities.

36+ OFF-LEASH AREAS, MANY TIME-ZONED

**3.0×**

Vancouver's per-capita rate is 3.0× Seattle's; some sites shift status seasonally.

VOTERS ELECT THE PARK BOARD DIRECTLY

**7 seats**

Only major Canadian city where park commissioners answer to voters rather than the mayor.

DEDICATED OLA CAPITAL PLAN

**~\$2.1M**

2023–2026 four-year OLA-specific capital cycle.

## Governance — the distinguishing feature

Vancouver's [Park Board](#) is elected citywide every four years. Parks decisions — including OLA site selection, designation changes, and programming — go through commissioners who are directly accountable at the ballot box, rather than through a mayoral department. This is the largest governance contrast with Seattle, where Seattle Parks & Recreation (SPR) is a mayoral department.

## Recent builds (2023–2026)

Under the Park Board's [2023–2026 Capital Plan](#), Vancouver has opened or is completing: [Heather Park OLA](#) (13,000 sq ft, opened 2025), [Granville Park OLA](#), [Emery Barnes Park OLA](#) renewal and expansion, and a renewed Cooper's Park OLA — approximately \$2.1M in OLA-specific capital across the four-year cycle, with ~\$1.3M spent in 2024 alone.

## Notable: time-zoned beach access

Vancouver uses **seasonal time-restricted beach access** (Spanish Banks, Sunset Beach, Kits Beach) where dogs are allowed off-leash only outside summer peak hours. This time-zoning model is one of the reference points for the shared-use-hours framing described on [the opinion page](#).

### COMPARISON WITH SEATTLE

Two structural differences. First, governance: decisions by elected commissioners rather than a mayoral department. Second, time-zoning: the same stretch of Vancouver beach can host dogs off-leash in winter mornings and be dog-free in summer afternoons. Seattle's framework has no equivalent concept of temporal shared-use; parks are either on-leash at all times or OLAs at all times.

SOURCES: [People, Parks, and Dogs Strategy](#) · [2023–2026 Capital Plan appendix](#) · [Vancouver Park Board structure](#) · [Heather Park OLA project page](#) · [Heather Park opening announcement \(May 2025\)](#)

### PEER 04

## Washington, DC — the only peer with an OLA-specific statute

DC operates [16 designated dog parks](#) across all eight wards, all fully fenced. DC is the only peer with an OLA-specific enabling statute: the 2005 Dog Park Establishment Act (DC Law 16-175) defines what a Dog Park Area is, requires fencing, requires a recognized "Friends of" group to sign an MOU for stewardship, and requires environmental sign-off per site from DOEE.

### DOG PARKS ACROSS ALL 8 WARDS

**16 / 8**

16 fenced dog parks; every ward covered.

### THE ONLY PEER WITH AN OLA STATUTE

**DC Law 16-175**

Seattle's OLAs exist under a 1997 parks ordinance; DC's 2005 Act legally defines what a dog park is and what stewardship it requires.

### FRIENDS GROUPS REQUIRED BY LAW

**1 per park**

Every DPA requires a recognized Friends group with a signed MOU.

## The statute that defines the system

The [Dog Park Establishment Act of 2005](#) is the clearest example among the eight peer cities of OLAs being legally defined rather than policy-defined. It requires:

- Each Dog Park Area must be fenced.
- Each DPA must have a recognized **Friends of Group** that signs an MOU with DPR for day-to-day stewardship (cleaning, minor maintenance, community rules enforcement).
- DOEE (Department of Energy & Environment) must sign off on each site for environmental impact.
- \$2 of each dog-license fee goes to the [Animal Education & Outreach Fund](#) — a spay/neuter fund, not OLAs. Pet licenses do not fund dog parks directly.

## Funding

DPR general-fund operating for ongoing maintenance. Capital for new DPAs is per-project through the District Capital Improvements Plan (recent builds such as Texas Avenue DPA have come in around \$1M each). No user fees or permits.

## Access standard

DC uses the 10-minute walk to a park standard (TPL-aligned). DC has ranked #1 on TPL's ParkScore most years since 2019, in part because of dense park coverage across all eight wards. Dog-park coverage is placed ward by ward.

### COMPARISON WITH SEATTLE

Seattle's OLAs exist under a 1997 Parks ordinance without statutory-level definition, without a required stewardship structure, and without required per-site environmental review. Any future effort to formalize the relationship between Seattle's COLA and SPR could draw on DC's [2005 Act](#) and Arlington County's CCA Guidelines as existing peer templates.

SOURCES: [DC DPR — Dog Parks](#) · [DC Law 16-175: Dog Park Establishment Act of 2005](#) · [DC Code §8-1810.01 Animal Education Fund](#) · [DC Health dog licensing](#)

### PEER 05

## Minneapolis, MN — the permit-fee model

The [Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board \(MPRB\)](#) operates nine off-leash dog parks, and is the only major US peer that treats OLAs as a user-pays service. Every dog using any of the nine OLAs must carry an annual permit; permit revenue is the primary funding source for OLA operations and maintenance through MPRB's dedicated Off-Leash Dog Park Enterprise Fund.

### USERS FUND OPERATIONS DIRECTLY

**\$38 / year**

Minneapolis resident annual permit; the only US peer where OLAs are funded primarily through user fees.

## Enterprise Fund

Revenue goes to the Off-Leash Dog Park Enterprise Fund, a dedicated OLA budget line.

## Own taxing authority

MPRB is a separate taxing district with its own elected commissioners, outside City Council.

### Permit structure

|   |  |
|---|--|
| MINNEAPOLIS RESIDENT, FIRST DOG           | \$38 annual  |
| MINNEAPOLIS RESIDENT, EACH ADDITIONAL DOG | \$27 annual  |
| NON-RESIDENT, FIRST DOG                   | \$66 annual  |
| NON-RESIDENT, EACH ADDITIONAL DOG         | \$38 annual  |
| DAILY PERMIT (ANY VISITOR)                | \$5 per dog  |
| HOURS                                     | 6 AM – 10 PM   |
| ORDINANCE                                 | <a href="#">PB2-18</a> – dedicated ordinance for off-leash areas |

### Governance

Like Vancouver, Minneapolis has an **independently-elected park body** — the MPRB is a separate taxing district with its own elected Board of Commissioners. Park Board decisions — including OLA siting, permit rates, and rule changes — sit outside the City Council's jurisdiction.

### Funding

Operations: the Off-Leash Dog Park Enterprise Fund is a ring-fenced budget line funded almost entirely by permit revenue. MPRB publishes the fund's revenue and expenses in its annual CAFR. Capital for new OLAs comes from MPRB's general capital budget (property-tax-funded), separate from the Enterprise Fund.

#### COMPARISON WITH SEATTLE

Minneapolis's permit system is the only live US precedent for OLA permit revenue funding OLA operations. Roughly 180,000 dogs in Minneapolis at any point would — if every one carried a \$38 annual permit — generate ~\$7M/yr, a full order of magnitude above Seattle's ~\$100–130K/yr disclosed OLA operating line for the Cycle 1 window. Whether a permit model is politically viable in Seattle is a separate question; it exists as a live precedent.

SOURCES: [MPRB – Dog Parks](#) · [Minnehaha OLA / permit info](#) · [Minneapolis pet licensing \(separate from MPRB permits\)](#) · [MPRB 2018 CAFR](#)

## New York City — the shared-use hours model

NYC operates both dedicated fenced dog runs and a city-wide [Off-Leash Hours policy](#) formally codified on April 10, 2007 (informally since ~1986). In designated areas of participating parks, licensed and vaccinated dogs may be off-leash from park-opening until 9 AM and from 9 PM until park-close. The designated footprint spans dozens of parks across all five boroughs.

SHARED-USE HAS RUN FOR TWO DECADES

### 19 years

Formally codified 2007; informal operation since ~1986.

DOGS OFF-LEASH OUTSIDE PEAK HOURS

### 9 PM – 9 AM

Parks remain dog-friendly at low-traffic times and leash-only when busy.

PARTICIPATING PARKS IN FIVE BOROUGHS

### dozens

Central Park alone has 23 dog-friendly zones.

### How it works

Participating parks designate specific zones where dogs may be off-leash during the two daily windows. Outside those windows, normal leash rules apply and are enforced by NYPD, NYC Parks Enforcement Patrol, Department of Health, and Department of Sanitation. Dogs must be licensed and currently vaccinated for rabies; owners must be present and in control. Central Park has 23 dog-friendly areas (no enclosed dog runs). Prospect Park uses 5–9 AM and 9 PM–1 AM. Forest Park, Riverside Park, Van Cortlandt, and dozens of neighborhood parks participate under the citywide framework.

### Outcomes evidence

NYC does not publish a longitudinal evaluation — no official report with trend lines for citations, complaints, or injury rates. The available proxy is durability: nineteen years of formal operation across multiple administrations, no reversal, and no sustained move to repeal the policy. NRPA's November 2018 *Parks & Recreation* law-review treats the NYC model as the mature US example; Boston and Chicago run parallel variations.

COMPARISON WITH SEATTLE

NYC runs shared-use off-leash hours across dozens of parks alongside its dedicated dog runs. Seattle runs 14 fenced OLAs — no shared-use hours, no voice-control areas, no time-zoned access. A Seattle pilot of this model, instrumented to track citations, Find It Fix It complaints, injury reports, and post-session cleanliness audits (as [the opinion page](#) proposes), would produce quantitative outcomes data of a kind NYC's 19-year history does not supply.

PEER 07

## Austin, TX – the acreage-headline caveat

Austin is cited in several popular "most dog-friendly cities" rankings for its large off-leash acreage (~682 acres). That figure is not apples-to-apples for peer comparison: Austin counts large natural-area parks with voice-control designation, rather than the fenced dedicated OLAs that Seattle, Portland, and most peer cities count. The fenced-OLA comparable is closer to ~80 acres, one-eighth of the headline.

APPLES-TO-APPLES WITH SEATTLE

**~80 ac**

Fenced off-leash acreage — the figure used for cross-city comparison.

HEADLINE TOTAL (ALL DEFINITIONS)

**682 ac**

Includes 293-ac Walnut Creek Metro Park and natural-area voice-control sites.

~2× SEATTLE PER CAPITA

**0.78 ac / 10K**

Fenced OLA acreage per capita vs Seattle's 0.38. On dog-parks-per-100K (TPL), Austin's 1.28 is below Seattle's 1.82.

[Austin Parks & Recreation](#) maintains a directory of 16 off-leash areas that distinguishes fenced dog parks, voice-control dog zones, and natural-area off-leash sites. Cross-city headline rankings work if everything on that list is included; capital-cost-per-acre comparison to Seattle or Portland fenced sites does not.

The [peer-cities.csv](#) carries both numbers for Austin and uses the fenced-only figure (ola\_acres\_total\_est = 80) for per-capita math, with Walnut Creek Metropolitan Park's 293-acre voice-control footprint called out as the biggest single inflator. Any peer-city comparison on this site that cites Austin uses the adjusted figure.

NOTES ON INTERPRETATION

When Austin is cited as a comparison city, which figure is being quoted matters. The 682-acre number is real but not directly comparable to Seattle's fenced 30.7 acres. The ~80-acre figure is the fenced-only comparator, and on that basis Austin has roughly 2× Seattle's fenced-OLA acreage per capita (0.78 ac/10K vs 0.38). On dog-parks-per-100K (TPL's count), Austin trails Seattle (1.28 vs 1.82).

PEER 08

## Boise, ID — layered access in a smaller city

Boise has roughly a third of Seattle's population and more than four times the dog parks per capita, using each city's own published count. This peer is relevant because the supply gap is not explained by city size or density alone.

FENCED PERMANENT

7

Fenced-only, apples-to-apples with Seattle's 14 — still ~1.6× per capita. (TPL counts the combined 18 below.)

SEASONAL / TIME-WINDOWED

11

Designated-hours off-leash access at existing multi-use parks. Boise PARD's published count of 18 = these 11 + the 7 fenced; the 7.60 / 100K figure used in Part I uses the combined 18.

POPULATION

240K

Roughly one-third of Seattle's 816K.

Boise's off-leash system has two layers Seattle does not: **seven fenced permanent** sites comparable to what Seattle counts, plus **eleven additional parks with designated off-leash hours** in the existing multi-use park network. The seasonal program (Ann Morrison Park, Optimist and Simplot Sports Complexes) allows dogs off-leash during winter months when sports fields are inactive.

NOTES ON INTERPRETATION

A common response to Seattle's OLA count is that the city is too dense to build more dog parks. Boise is smaller rather than denser, so a population-scale argument is testable here. Boise runs 7 fenced sites for 240K people; Seattle runs 14 for 816K. The gap narrows when fenced-only methodology is applied uniformly, but Boise's seasonal program then adds 11 more sites. The two-layer model (permanent fenced plus time-windowed shared-use) is the design choice Seattle has not used.

DATA NOTE

peer-cities.csv carries the combined count (18) for headline per-capita math. For fenced-only comparability to Seattle, use 7. Both figures are in the Boise PARD directory; the `counting_methodology` column flags the mix.

# Observations across the eight peers

Four observations emerge from the per-city detail above:

1. **No peer publishes a dog-park-specific walkshed standard.** Every peer uses the same 10-minute / half-mile standard that TPL, NRPA, ULI, NPS, and CDC use for parks generally. SPR's 2.5-mile OLA-specific standard is 5× the distance used by peer cities for parks overall.
2. **Two cities have elected park bodies (Vancouver, Minneapolis).** Those are also the two cities with the most detailed OLA planning documents and, in Minneapolis's case, the only dedicated OLA revenue model among the peers.
3. **DC is the only peer with OLA-specific legislation.** Seattle's OLAs exist under a 1997 Parks ordinance with no statutory definition, no required stewardship structure, and no required environmental review per site.
4. **Shared-use models are widely precedented.** Portland (voice-control), San Francisco (voice-control zones), Vancouver (time-zoned beaches), New York (Off-Leash Hours), Austin (voice-control natural areas), and Boise (seasonal time-windowed) each run a form of shared-use that Seattle does not currently use.

## CROSS-PEER PATTERN

Six of the eight peer cities operate at least one form of shared-use, time-zoned, or voice-control access alongside fenced dedicated OLAs: Portland (voice-control), San Francisco (voice-control zones within larger parks), Vancouver (time-zoned beaches), New York (Off-Leash Hours), Austin (voice-control natural-area sites), and Boise (seasonal time-windowed). Seattle's all-fenced, single-designation model is not represented in this peer set.

THIS IS THE OPINION PAGE

Every other page on this site is factual. This one is signed editorial — principles, opinions, counterarguments, and a policy recommendation from the site's author. Data claims link back to the factual pages.

OPINION · SIGNED EDITORIAL · APRIL 2026

# Seattle will not build its way out of this. *It needs a policy change.*

This is my take on what the data on this site shows, and what the city should do differently. This page is my opinion — everything else on the site is intended to be a factual reference.

BY **ANDRE VRIGNAUD**, QUEEN ANNE · 20+ YEARS USING SEATTLE'S PARKS WITH DOGS · PARTICIPATED IN SEATTLE PARKS & RECREATION'S (SPR) 2014–2017 PEOPLE, DOGS AND PARKS STRATEGIC PLAN LIVE INTERVIEWS



SEATTLE DOG PARK POLICY IN A NUTSHELL.

I'll be upfront — I own dogs, I walk them in Seattle's parks, I run them off-leash, and I have a strong opinion about how the city has managed off-leash access. The rest of this site is deliberately neutral. This page isn't. What follows is six principles I think most reasonable Seattle residents can get behind, three opinions that fall out of the data this site has gathered, seven counterarguments I've tried to take seriously, and a recommendation I've been sharing with the city, council candidates, and SPR since 2014.

#### WHY THIS SITE EXISTS

*I've been collecting data on Seattle's off-leash situation for twenty years. When [Axios Seattle](#) asked for thoughts on the latest round of this debate, I realized I could stop pasting numbers into Nextdoor threads and put them somewhere permanent — so I used Claude to turn my messy notes into this site. The data pages are fact; this page is opinion. If you take one thing away, it's not the specific details of my proposal — it's that the current policy is demonstrably broken, and doing the same thing for another decade won't change anything. We need to try something different.*

## The broader argument: *this is a hard problem.*

One thing first, because it gets lost in advocacy writing on this topic — this is a hard problem. There's no clean answer that leaves everyone satisfied.

Park space in a dense, land-scarce city is finite, and the people asking for more of it all have legitimate claims — dog owners, soccer leagues, community gardeners, neighbors who want a quiet lawn to read on, kids who want a playground, runners, cyclists, birders. Every one of them can point to data saying they're under-served. Several of them are right at the same time. (Veterinary behaviorists also make a separate case that traditional dog parks aren't ideal for many dogs — but that's a conversation about design and education, not policy.)

I have real empathy for the council members, mayors, and SPR staff who've taken a run at this over the last two decades. They've held listening sessions, commissioned studies, drafted plans, spent years trying to site new dog parks — finally putting two more into construction in 2026 after a seventeen-year gap — absorbed the complaints from everyone who didn't get what they wanted, and moved on to the next file on a desk that's never empty. Sit down with this in good faith and you run into the same walls every time — land, money, competing uses, neighborhood opposition. Anyone who engages with it seriously figures out pretty quickly why the easy answers aren't easy.

Not everyone leaves happy. Any real change here upsets someone. A policy that gives dogs more access feels like a loss to people who'd rather be in parks without them. A policy that protects the status quo leaves 150,000+ dogs and their owners exactly where the rest of this site documents. There's no version of this where nobody's disappointed.

So I'm not writing this to claim I have the perfect answer, or to suggest the people who've tried before were foolish for not finding it. I don't, and they weren't. What I am saying is that after twenty years of running the same playbook — study, listen, plan a park, repeat,

with the first new off-leash areas (OLAs) since 2009 only now breaking ground — the data on this site shows the approach isn't closing the gap. It isn't even keeping pace. At some point, continuing to run a strategy that measurably isn't working becomes its own choice.

That's why this page is here. Not to argue the answer is obvious (it isn't), but to argue that trying something different is overdue. The specific alternative I think is worth a real look is a time-zoned shared-use model, borrowed from cities that have run it for decades. The sections below make the case.

# Part One: six principles

These aren't numbers — they're values plus factual observations. I think most reasonable Seattle residents, dog owners and non-owners alike, can sign on to them.

## P1 Seattle will never build its way out of the OLA shortage.

Zero net dog parks added since 2009 — seventeen years and counting — while the population grew 34%. Two more open in fall 2026. Even if SPR eventually builds every site on its current list, the per-capita gap to Portland, San Francisco, and Vancouver BC doesn't close. Seattle is physically constrained: dense, land-scarce, expensive parcels, already-extensive parks to maintain.

### SUPPORTING DATA ON THIS SITE

[Residents per OLA, 2010–2026](#) · [Peer-city per-capita comparison](#) · [Per-capita OLA acreage](#) · [Trust for Public Land \(TPL\) 2025 ParkScore](#)

## P2 The little buildable land Seattle has should not go to dog parks first.

Seattle's in the middle of a long housing-affordability crisis and an ongoing homelessness emergency. When a rare parcel of city land comes loose, the case for housing, shelter, or services is stronger than the case for a new fenced dog park. I own dogs and I still believe this. Any serious plan to improve off-leash access has to start from the assumption that we're *not* getting more than a handful of small new OLAs over the coming decade — and that even a substantial funding increase *would not be enough* to close the gap. The land isn't there; no dollar figure conjures it into existence.

### REFERENCE

[City of Seattle housing](#) · [King County homelessness](#)

## P3 Seattle has more dogs than children, and the investment gap reflects that poorly.

The obvious part first — **yes, kids should be prioritized over dogs**. Most reasonable people agree. A city with 157 playgrounds and 14 dog parks is making a choice about who its parks are for, and on the first axis — kids first — that choice is right. I'm not arguing for a 1:1 split.

What I am arguing is that the *magnitude* of the gap has gone past any reasonable prioritization. Widely cited estimates put Seattle's dog population at around 150,000 as a floor, and SPR's own 2023 Expansion Study cites figures up to 400,000. Seattle's under-18 population is roughly 115,000. Even at the conservative floor, dogs outnumber kids — and SPR runs 157 playgrounds against 14 fenced OLAs. The dedicated OLA budget line in 2018 was about **\$100,000 out of a \$168M SPR total**: roughly **0.06%**. On the land side, OLAs occupy about **31 of Seattle's ~53,800 acres of land** ([U.S. Census Quick Facts — 84.0 sq mi land area](#)) — again roughly **0.06% of the city**, about one-sixteenth of one percent. Prioritizing kids is right. Arriving at 0.06% for a population the size of all dog owners is how we got here. That's what this principle says should be fixed.

SUPPORTING DATA ON THIS SITE

[Playgrounds for kids vs OLAs for dogs](#) · [SPR budget vs OLA budget](#) · [OLA acreage ranked](#) · [data/seattle-olas.csv](#)

#### P4 **People who don't want to be around dogs have a right not to be.**

Non-negotiable. Every dog owner I respect accepts this. Kids who are afraid of dogs, adults who don't want a strange dog in their face, picnickers, joggers, runners, people using the park for a dozen other reasons — none of them signed up to share space with an unfamiliar off-leash dog. The current setup, where 39% of dog owners self-report monthly-or-more illegal off-leash use, fails these residents directly. Whatever fix comes next has to protect their use of parks at least as well as the current system pretends to.

##### SUPPORTING DATA ON THIS SITE

[SPR's own 2016 survey on illegal off-leash use](#) · [7,015 citations issued 2014–2026](#) · [SPR People, Dogs and Parks Plan](#)

#### P5 **Children have a right to play on clean, safe fields.**

A playfield with dog feces on it, or a baseball diamond where someone's loose dog just ran through left field, is a system failure on every axis. This isn't a dog-vs-kid argument — both groups deserve protected recreational space. The current policy doesn't actually deliver clean playfields; enforcement happens at the margins, after the fact, with no cleanup component.

#### P6 **Families and non-dog-owners should have park time that's reliably dog-free.**

Access goes both ways. Right now, dog owners have a few tiny, often-unsafe OLAs; non-owners have a city full of parks that are technically dog-free but in practice aren't. Both groups lose. A well-designed policy protects time windows for each use.

## Part Two: three opinions that fall out of the data

#### 01 **The current rules have failed, and Seattle is doubling down on the part that isn't working.**

In 2014 the Seattle City Council asked SPR to rethink off-leash policy. SPR spent over a year running surveys and in-person interviews with dog owners, parents, Citizens for Off-Leash Areas (COLA), and neighborhood groups. The consistent feedback was that the pre-2014 policy was unworkable, enforcement was structurally insufficient, and other cities had already tried shared-use or time-zoned models worth studying. The [resulting People, Dogs and Parks Strategic Plan](#) kept the same framework, added two full-time animal-control officers, and declined to pilot any shared-use approach. Seattle Magazine [covered it at the time](#). In the years since, the OLA count hasn't meaningfully moved, and illegal off-leash use has if anything grown with the dog population.

And yet in April 2026, [Axios Seattle reported](#) that SPR and the Seattle Animal Shelter are expanding enforcement again — moving from one officer Wednesday through Saturday to **two full-time seven-day positions plus backup**, on top of roughly 26 park rangers patrolling more than 460 parks. SPR's framing: "it's not a crackdown, officials say — but

more boots on the ground are coming." That's the same lever, pulled harder. Moving from one officer Wed-Sat (~4 officer-days a week) to two officers seven days plus backup is roughly a **3-4x scale-up** in officer-hours, and if citation volume scales linearly with staffing the [historical ~0.4% in annual citation events per dog](#) (7,015 citation events over thirteen years, 2014 through April 2026, against at least 150,000 dogs — a rough upper-bound proxy, not unique dogs contacted) could rise into the low single digits. That is a real change in cost and ground presence; it is not a meaningful change in behavior. Deterrence is a product of two numbers — the probability of getting cited and the cost of a citation — and the expansion only moves one of them, modestly. The other doesn't move at all: [as O2 below lays out](#), about 89% of historical citations were first-offense warnings at \$0 or \$54, the practical ceiling is \$162, and even the Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) maximum of \$150 gets absorbed by higher-income owners as a de-facto access fee. Triple the probability and hold the fine structure constant and the expected cost of off-leashing stays well below the value of a usable run — especially in neighborhoods where no legal OLA exists within walking distance. Enforcement at this intensity doesn't shift behavior, and no amount of patrol manufactures a legal place to run a dog where none exists.

It does, however, cost real money — and now we know roughly how much. The [2021 signed Memorandum of Agreement \(MOA\) between SPR and the Seattle Animal Shelter](#) (AG21-PRF03-032) lays it out in Attachment A — one Animal Control Officer II is billed to SPR at **\$43.07/hr plus 45% benefits overhead = \$62.45/hr × 2,088 hours = \$130,399/year in personnel**, plus \$3,000 in supplies and \$19,000 in divisional overhead, for **\$152,399/year**. That's the Finance & Administrative Services (FAS)-side cost only. The SPR-side Facilities Maintenance Worker who patrols with the ACO as a paired team sits on SPR's books separately. They're paired half-time with each other, four days a week — roughly **160 officer-hours per month to cover 485+ parks and 6,414 acres**.

Scaling those 2021 numbers forward for wage growth and the April 2026 expansion (from 1 ACO II Wed-Sat to 2 ACO II seven-day plus backup), the combined program — ACO + FMW paired teams, vehicles, supplies, overhead — lands plausibly in the **\$700K to \$1M per year** range. (Step-by-step math in [sources/aco-moa-2016.md](#).) That's real money aimed at a lever the site's own [enforcement analysis](#) shows has historically produced about 0.4% in annual citation events per dog (an upper-bound proxy, not unique dogs contacted) and mostly-warning outcomes, and that even at 3-4x staffing stays well short of deterrence. Redirect the same half-million-to-million dollars to a clean-park compliance model — time-zoned shared use plus post-session cleanup staff, per the [recommendation](#) below — and you'd fund a far larger ground presence at the moments parks actually need it. This is what the 2014-2017 process warned against, and the cost just makes the misdirection easier to see.

#### SUPPORTING DATA ON THIS SITE

[Residents per OLA time series](#) · [Citations issued per year](#) · [Kinneer case study](#) · Axios Seattle, "More paw patrols," April 2026 (print edition)

## 02 Fines will never work — not at any amount Seattle could plausibly adopt.

The numbers: 7,015 off-leash citations between January 2014 and April 2026, against a dog population of at least 150,000. At the city-wide average, that's roughly a **0.4% chance per dog per year** of being cited — it peaked near 0.85% in 2018 and has fallen since. Treat that as a rough SWAG, not a statistic — it averages over huge variation. Owners who never

off-leash have zero exposure. Owners who visit high-citation parks a few times a week face probabilities several times higher. Owners in neighborhoods where rangers don't patrol face close to zero. The city-wide rate is useful as a floor for the argument (even at the most heavily-patrolled parks the per-visit probability is small, and Seattle's enforcement capacity can't close that gap without orders-of-magnitude more staff), but it isn't a per-owner risk calculation. What the data *does* support: **about 89% of the 7,015 citations were first-offense warnings** at \$0 or \$54. Second offense is \$109, third is \$136, fourth-plus is \$162. The practical ceiling is about \$162, and even at the Seattle Municipal Code's \$162 maximum it gets absorbed by higher-income owners as a de-facto access fee. Raise fines higher and you hit a regressive-enforcement problem — the same \$500 fine that's meaningful to a lower-income owner is a rounding error to a wealthy one. The fine-based model is structurally mismatched to the behavior. [SMC 18.12.080\(A\)](#) is the cited violation.

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SUPPORTING DATA ON THIS SITE

[Full enforcement analysis](#) · [Citations by offense level](#) · [data/enforcement-citations.csv](#)

### 03 Dog owners will keep running dogs off-leash under the current rules. For rational reasons.

People break the law here because the legal option is often worse. Many neighborhoods have no legal OLA within a 10-minute walk ([walkshed analysis](#)). Where a legal OLA exists, it's often too small to use safely — [seven of Seattle's 14 are under one acre](#), below the [AKC's one-acre recommendation](#), and three are under a quarter-acre; Kinnear (0.124 acre) posts its own signs asking owners to bring no more than 1–2 dogs at a time. Several OLAs sit in or next to [areas with chronic safety concerns](#) that make them effectively unusable — especially for women, after dark, or alone. And the probability of enforcement is under 1% per year.

It's a supply failure producing a compliance failure, exactly what basic economics would predict. No amount of enforcement addresses the underlying cause.

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SUPPORTING DATA ON THIS SITE

[OLA acreage distribution](#) · [39% admit monthly+ illegal off-leash use \(SPR 2016 survey\)](#) · [Hotspot map](#)

## Part Three: counterarguments

Before I get to the recommendation, the best arguments against it. These are pulled from a 147-comment [April 2021 Nextdoor thread about Queen Anne Playfield](#) where neighbors on both sides engaged substantively. Every argument below was made by a real neighbor, not a strawman. Where the counterargument is correct, I say so.

### c1 "Dogs are not allowed on this playfield. The rules are clear. Follow them."

**This is correct.** [SMC 18.12.080](#) is unambiguous, SPR signage is unambiguous, and athletic playfields are dedicated to organized play. When dog owners off-leash on a marked playfield during softball practice, they're breaking the law and interfering with the park's intended use. My argument here isn't that individual rule-breaking is justified — it's that the rule has failed at the *system* level, and the system needs policy change, not more individual rule-breaking. The recommendation on this page is addressed to the city, not a defense of what people already do.

### c2 "Having a dog is a privilege, not a right. You chose this. Don't expect public resources to subsidize that choice."

**Agreed in the narrow sense** — and I think it's the wrong frame for a policy question. Dog ownership is discretionary. It's also mainstream — [SPR's own 2016 survey](#) found roughly 25% of Seattle residents use OLAs, and Seattle's dog population is [plausibly larger than its under-18 population](#). When a city allocates [0.06% of its parks budget](#) to a constituency that size, the question isn't whether dog ownership is a "right." It's whether the allocation matches the constituency. It doesn't. That's the policy argument, not a rights claim.

### c3 "Off-leash dogs cause real harm to other park users. I've seen it."

**Confirmed — multiple times, by non-advocates, at the same park.** In the thread referenced above, one neighbor documented a small off-leash dog running at an 8-year-old's feet at Big Howe. Another described a flag football game at Queen Anne Playfield being paused several times because a single off-leash dog kept running into play. A softball parent described her daughter's practice where "every practice the girls are stepping in dog poop." These are real, and honestly they strengthen the case for a structured shared-use model rather than weaken it. The current setup produces these incidents *despite* the law, because [enforcement is structurally insufficient](#). A time-zoned model with dedicated cleanup staff (the recommendation below) directly addresses each of these by reserving prime athletic hours for athletic use and pairing the off-leash window with visible compliance staff.

### c4 "The ratio of dogs to children isn't a reasonable basis

## for setting the OLA budget.”

Correct, and the site doesn't argue otherwise — I want to say that explicitly. "More dogs than children" is a scale indicator showing dog ownership is mainstream in Seattle. It's not a prescription that dog-park spending should match playground spending per capita. What I'm arguing is narrower: SPR's 0.06% allocation for a population that's 25%+ of residents is an order-of-magnitude mismatch with any reasonable allocation principle. Not that 25% of the parks budget should go to OLAs.

## c5 “There’s no land. And if there were, it should go to housing and shelter before dog parks.”

Yes, and yes. This appears in both the thread and in [Principle P2](#). Don Harper, the Queen Anne Community Council Parks Chair, has spent 20+ years on this problem — and described several attempted sites (MacLean Park, David Rogers Park, Smith Cove) that were rejected by SPR, by adjacent neighbors, or by funding-source restrictions. That's exactly why my recommendation isn't "build a lot more OLAs." It's a [time-zoned shared-use policy](#) on parks the city already owns.

## c6 “Why are you taking it out on the people using the playfield for its intended purpose? Lobby for change. Don’t break the law.”

The first sentence is completely fair. A parent watching softball practice at Queen Anne Playfield didn't personally set SPR's OLA allocation. Taking frustration out on them is both wrong and counterproductive. My argument here is only with the city — which is also the body that can change the policy. The second sentence is the interesting one: "Don't break the law, lobby for change." I'd argue they're not mutually exclusive. People have lobbied. COLA has lobbied. The QACC Parks Chair has spent two decades lobbying. The city's answer has been to [expand enforcement of a failing law](#) rather than reexamine it. At some point "lobby harder" stops being a serious response.

## c7 “Fine, but don’t fantasize that a shared-use pilot will actually be enforced any better than the current rule.”

Fair and concrete. If the city can't enforce "no dogs ever on athletic fields," why would it enforce "no dogs on athletic fields from 9 AM to 9 PM"? Two answers. First, the *shape* of the rule is different — a time-bounded window is something an owner can plan around, which the current blanket rule isn't. Second, the [recommendation](#) specifically redirects the enforcement budget away from citations and toward on-site compliance monitoring at the transition hours and post-session cleanup. You can't enforce every park every minute of every day. You *can* enforce a handful of designated parks at two specific transition points per day. That's tractable, and it's what [New York has done for 20+ years](#). It's not a new idea. What's new, apparently, is Seattle trying it.

The shared-use recommendation hasn't been piloted in Seattle, and its transferability from NYC, Boston, and Chicago isn't proven under Seattle-specific conditions (hills, rainfall, seasonal daylight, homelessness-response pressure). If a pilot ran and failed, the right response is to say so, document why, and try the next thing. My argument is that the current approach has measurably failed, and piloting a well-precedented alternative is a smaller ask than what the city is currently making — expanded enforcement of the approach that's already failing.

## Part Four: SPR's own access standard proves the point

SPR's 2017 *People, Dogs and Parks Strategic Plan* defends current OLA coverage with an access claim that, once you look at it, is the clearest evidence of the framework's failure: most Seattle residents live within **2.5 miles** of an OLA. The Green Lake loop is [2.8 miles](#). SPR is effectively arguing that walking the Green Lake loop one-way to reach your dog park — and then walking it back — counts as reasonable access.

For comparison, [Trust for Public Land's industry-standard metric](#) — the same one SPR happily cites when noting that 99% of Seattleites live within a 10-minute walk of a park — is **0.5 miles**. [NRPA](#), the [Urban Land Institute](#), the National Park Service, and the CDC all use the same 10-minute walk standard for parks. There's no universal national consensus like that for dog parks specifically. A handful of agencies have tried OLA-specific service radii — Seattle's own [2016 Recreation Demand Study](#) used 2.5 miles, [Fairfax County](#) has a published dog-park siting study — but nothing like TPL's 10-min benchmark has caught on for OLAs. When a city needs an access metric for OLAs, the industry default is the same 10-minute walk it uses for any other park. **SPR uses the tighter standard when it's celebrating Seattle's park system in general, and a standard 5× more permissive to paper over the OLA-specific failure.** That asymmetry alone is the argument.

## Part Five: what Seattle should actually do

Given the principles and the evidence, the realistic path forward isn't to keep building small fenced OLAs. It's to change the policy about how dogs and people

share the parks Seattle already has.

## NYC Does the NYC model actually work? What the record shows.

Before I recommend it, this deserves a direct answer. The New York City Department of Parks & Recreation [formally codified the Off-Leash Hours policy on April 10, 2007](#), after running it as an informal "courtesy hours" arrangement since roughly 1986. Nineteen years of formal operation, nearly forty if you include the informal period. The policy is simple — in designated areas of participating parks, licensed and vaccinated dogs may be off-leash **from park-opening until 9:00 AM and from 9:00 PM until park-close**. Outside those windows, normal leash rules apply ([NYC Parks — Dog-Friendly Areas](#)). The policy runs in parallel with NYC's dedicated fenced dog runs, not in place of them.

**Scale.** Off-leash hours are designated at a large share of NYC's ~1,700 parks. The city doesn't publish a consolidated count, but public advocate and Parks Department inventories list eligible areas across all five boroughs ([NYC Council public-advocate directory](#)). Designated areas include sections of Central Park, Prospect Park, Riverside, Van Cortlandt, Forest Park, and dozens of neighborhood parks. By any counting methodology, NYC's off-leash footprint dwarfs Seattle's 14 fenced OLAs.

**The caveat.** NYC doesn't publish a longitudinal evaluation of the policy's outcomes — no official "is it working?" report with citation counts, complaint trends, or injury rates. The longevity is the proxy. Nineteen years of formal operation, renewed through multiple administrations with different political postures on parks, and no reversal. NRPA covered the model in its November 2018 *Parks & Recreation* law review ("Courtesy Hours for Off-Leash Dogs in Public Parks") and treats it as the mature US example other cities look to. Boston has similar time-based variations. Chicago runs a parallel DFA (Designated Free Area) system. What's missing from the public record is the kind of quantitative outcomes tracking I'm arguing Seattle should do from day one (Recommendation point 7). If Seattle piloted this, Seattle's evaluation could become the analysis NYC's history doesn't offer.

**What this doesn't prove.** It doesn't prove the policy transfers cleanly to Seattle. NYC has higher density, different topography, different rainfall, different enforcement institutions, and a very different relationship between parks and homelessness response. What it does prove is that a city of 8 million has run a time-zoned shared-use off-leash policy for nearly twenty years without catastrophic failure or reversal — which is a higher bar than anything Seattle's current OLA framework has cleared.

### THE RECOMMENDATION

## A time-zoned shared-use policy for Seattle's parks.

Adopt a shared-use model similar to [New York City's long-standing off-leash hours policy](#) — early morning and evening windows in designated parks during which dogs may be off-leash under owner control, with the rest of the day

reserved for traditional park use. Pair it with a different enforcement posture focused on shared-use compliance, not leash-law violations.

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- 01 Designate shared-use parks by neighborhood.** Not every park participates. Parks with heavy children's programming — active playfields during league season, for instance — stay fully leashed 24/7. Parks that already show up in [the enforcement data](#) as places people off-leash anyway become eligible candidates.

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- 02 Time-zone the access.** A model like NYC's — off-leash from park-opening to 9:00 AM and from 9:00 PM to park-closing — gives owners practical morning and evening windows and reserves prime daytime hours for general park use. Pilot it. Adjust the hours per park based on observed use.

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- 03 Pivot enforcement from fines to compliance.** Redeploy SPR Animal Control and park rangers to monitor participating parks during off-leash hours — confirming owners are present, dogs are under control, and the park is left clean. That's a different job description from "drive 6,400 acres hoping to catch someone."

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- 04 Add clean-park staffing — call it poop patrol.** A dedicated crew does post-session sweeps of shared-use parks at the transition back to leashed hours. If a participating park is repeatedly found uncleaned, it can lose shared-use designation. That collective threat is the real enforcement mechanism — it gives every responsible owner at the park a stake in cleaning up after the minority who don't. Off-leash culture in practice runs on social pressure: owners who don't pick up get called out by other owners, not because anyone enjoys the confrontation but because the shared benefit depends on it. Tickets and fines still apply to individual violators who get caught, but the enforcement that actually moves behavior is peer pressure plus a credible threat of losing shared-use status at the park level. A \$54 ticket handed out hours after the fact by an officer who wasn't there doesn't change anyone's behavior.

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- 05 Fund it with expanded dog-license fees and redirected enforcement spend.** Seattle's dog-licensing revenue is modest. A meaningful increase, dedicated to the [Seattle Animal Shelter](#) and this new clean-park program, is far more politically viable than a fines increase, and it avoids the regressive-enforcement problem.

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- 06 Keep the small dedicated OLAs.** Kinnear, Plymouth Pillars, Magnuson, and the rest don't go away. They stay as all-day off-leash options for people who want them. They just stop being the *entire* answer to a

city-wide demand they were never sized to handle.

- 07 Measure and publish outcomes.** Track citation counts, Find-It-Fix-It complaints, injury reports, and post-session cleanliness audits by park. If a pilot park is underperforming on non-dog-user experience, pull it. If it's working, expand.

This approach was raised during the 2014–2017 SPR process, was supported by COLA and multiple participating community members, and was set aside as too hard to enforce. The [data this site has assembled](#) suggests the current approach is *also* too hard to enforce — 7,015 citations over thirteen years (2014 through April 2026) against 150,000+ dogs. If we're going to have a policy that's difficult to enforce either way, we should pick the one that could actually work if we did.

## Part Six: what I'd ask of the City Council and the Mayor

This argument has been made to the city before. Many times. This is a request for one specific thing the Council, and the Council alone, can deliver.

Residents, [COLA](#), [MOLG](#), [QACC](#) volunteers, and ordinary dog owners have told SPR and City Council for more than two decades that the "build a few more fenced OLAs, increase enforcement against scofflaws" framework is not closing the off-leash gap. The reasons have been laid out each cycle: Seattle's land and budget constraints put a hard ceiling on how many traditional fenced OLAs are physically possible; that ceiling is well below demand; and enforcement aimed at the 39% of dog owners who self-report illegal off-leash use has no realistic mechanism for changing that behavior at scale.

The most recent city-commissioned effort to rethink this was the 2023–24 [SPR Off-Leash Area Expansion Study](#), produced at the Council's request explicitly to re-examine the approach. Read its recommendations alongside the 2017 *People, Dogs and Parks Strategic Plan* and the two documents are the same proposal in different cover pages. Summarized fairly: *identify a handful of additional OLA sites where geometry and funding permit* (with the acknowledgment, again, that neither fully permits it), and *increase enforcement against off-leash violations*. That was the pre-2014 plan. It was the 2017 plan. It is the 2024 plan. It has measurably failed to close the gap at every iteration.

If the Council or the Mayor's office chooses to revisit off-leash policy — and I hope they do — the practical next step will almost certainly be another round of community engagement and another SPR-authored report. Process matters; the delay is disappointing but the diligence isn't wrong. The request I'd make is narrower and specific to the charge:

**Before the next study begins, the Council should put on the record that the 2023–24 Expansion Study returned an almost identical plan to the 2017 strategic plan, that the plan has measurably failed to close the gap at both junctures, and that returning a third time with the same framework is not an acceptable deliverable.**

The charge to SPR — or to whichever body runs the next study — should explicitly require the production of at least one genuine alternative for Council consideration. A shared-use time-zoned pilot is one such idea, raised on this site and by advocates over the years. It's not the only one. Residents, peer cities, and practitioners outside SPR will have their own proposals if invited to offer them. Which specific alternative lands on the table matters less than that at least one does. A third round built on the same two levers — *build a few more OLAs, fine the off-leash violators* — is not an acceptable deliverable. Either or both might be components of a larger plan (though the citation data in this site's enforcement chapter makes me skeptical fines meaningfully shift behavior at this scale). Neither can be the core of it. The core has to be something we haven't tried.

The Council has the standing here that individual advocates and SPR itself don't. SPR works with the mandate it's given. If the mandate keeps asking for a version of the same answer, it will keep getting a version of the same answer. Making "same plan, different cover page" an unacceptable outcome is the one thing only the Council can do.

# Acknowledgments: the people who have been trying

This page argues that Seattle has failed at the OLA question. It hasn't failed because nobody tried. A lot of people have spent years — some of them decades — working on this, inside and outside city government, and been stymied by constraints no individual advocate can solve on their own. A few of them, by name.

## [Queen Anne Community Council](#) · Parks Committee

Two-plus decades of organized volunteer advocacy on Queen Anne parks, including the hilltop OLA question. [QACC's Parks Committee](#) has kept "locate and build an off-leash area on top of Queen Anne" as a standing priority for years, alongside ongoing work on West Queen Anne Playfield, Smith Cove Park, Queen Anne Boulevard, and park cleanup from illegal encampment damage. Board members rotate; the committee doesn't. Current QACC leadership includes [chair Beth Bunnell](#), [vice-chairs Nicole Friedman and Laurie Jordan](#), and [board member Don Harper](#), who chairs the Parks Committee and has been the most visible single voice on the Queen Anne OLA question. QACC secured 2008 Pro Parks & Green Spaces Levy funding that ultimately produced Kinnear and Magnolia Manor OLAs; participated in the Smith Cove design process (originally 55,000 sq ft, reduced by SPR to 25,000 sq ft three months later); and has attempted sites at MacLean Park (blocked by funding-source restrictions) and David Rogers Park (blocked by neighborhood pushback). Still at it. See also the 2021 neighborhood thread summarized in [sources/nextdoor-ga-playfield-2021.md](#).

## [Citizens for Off-Leash Areas \(COLA\)](#)

The 501(c)(3) that has organized volunteer advocates, maintained biennial OLA surveys and inventory data, and participated in every major SPR planning process since well before the 2014 *People, Dogs and Parks Strategic Plan*. The usability data on [Part II](#) (lighting, water, small-dog areas, residents' regularly-used sites) is COLA's work. Every advocate who comes to this issue fresh builds on theirs.

## [Magnuson Off Leash Group \(MOLG\)](#)

Twenty-plus years of volunteer stewardship that made Magnuson the functional model of what a neighborhood-governed OLA can be: programming, fundraising, infrastructure upkeep, community coordination. Magnuson is the counterexample to "Seattle can't do OLAs well" — it's what happens when a community owns the outcome. The [recommendation](#) on this page borrows explicitly from the MOLG model on the community-governance side.

## Seattle Parks and Recreation staff

This page is critical of SPR's policy choices, and it should be read alongside the acknowledgment that SPR has been asked to do a genuinely impossible job. Seattle is one

of the densest, most land-constrained major US cities. Park parcels big enough for a real OLA cost tens of millions of dollars, when they can be found at all. SPR has to balance the needs of kids, athletic-league users, non-dog park users, dog owners, wildlife, environmental remediation, and a housing-and-homelessness emergency that puts pressure on every square foot of public land — all at once. The 2014–2017 *People, Dogs and Parks* process was sincere and the staff who ran it worked hard. My criticism is narrower: the resulting plan repeated the pre-2014 framework rather than piloting a shared-use alternative. And now, a decade later, it's being repeated again with expanded enforcement. That's factual, not accusatory. The same approach has failed twice, and SPR is the right partner to run the pilot that tries something else.

## Local elected officials who've engaged substantively

Then-candidate and later Councilmember Andrew Lewis (District 7, 2019–2023) was the most visible elected voice on this issue during his time in office. Other council members have moved seats since 2019 but multiple offices have received data packets from community advocates. If you're a current council member or staffer, see the [public records request \(PRR\) and outreach directory](#) — these are the questions we're asking SPR and what we're asking to see the answers to.

## Dog owners who have changed their behavior, and park users who haven't given up

Every dog owner who has driven out of their way to reach a real OLA rather than off-leashing at the neighborhood playfield. Every parent who has kept bringing their kid to that playfield anyway. Every softball coach still running practice on a field that sometimes has dog feces on it. The status quo is a tax everyone pays, and it doesn't have to stay that way.

### CORRECTIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS WELCOME

This page, and the site overall, will be updated when better data comes in or when I've gotten something wrong. If you have primary sources, corrections, or additional data — especially on Seattle's land availability, dog population, Find-It-Fix-It complaint counts, or peer-city shared-use outcomes — please get in touch — email us at [seattledogparkdata@ozymandi.as](mailto:seattledogparkdata@ozymandi.as) or file an issue on the [repo](#). If you're one of the people listed in the acknowledgments above and would like a correction, an addition, or a removal, just say so — happy to edit.

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— *Andre Vrignaud*

QUEEN ANNE, SEATTLE · APRIL 2026

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#### NOTES ON THIS PAGE

**This page is opinion.** The principles, opinions, and recommendation above are mine. The data claims underneath them link back to the factual pages on this site, to public records, or to published primary sources.

**Relationship to the 2014–2017 SPR process.** I participated in the *People, Dogs and Parks Strategic Plan* live interviews as a community member. I'm not and have never been an SPR employee, a COLA board member, or an elected official. My views are personal.

**On the "more dogs than children" figure.** The 150,000-dog floor used throughout this site is conservative. [Part I's methodology note](#) walks through three independent estimates — a Seattle Open Data licensed floor (~26,700 active licenses), an AVMA-derived demographic estimate (~248,900), and the SPR 2023 Expansion Study range (187K–400K). All three bracket the same order of magnitude. The 150K floor sits below all of them by design.