

**From:** [Donna Legge](#)  
**To:** [Public Comment](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Opposition to off-leash dogs hours at Heritage Oaks Park  
**Date:** Friday, November 6, 2020 2:38:42 PM

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**From:** Smadar Agmon [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, November 6, 2020 1:53 PM  
**To:** City Council <council@losaltosca.gov>; Donna Legge <dlegge@losaltosca.gov>  
**Subject:** Opposition to off-leash dogs hours at Heritage Oaks Park

Dear Los Altos City Council,

I am writing to oppose the proposed off-leash dog hours at Heritage Oaks Park. I am a long time resident on McKenzie Ave.

Heritage Oaks is a small and narrow neighborhood park with residents living right across the street. It does not meet the essential criteria of sufficient distance to residences. The proposed grassy area borders with the street and about 50 feet from the front yards of multiple houses. The park has two play structure areas and picnic tables, the proposed grass borders with all of them with no buffer to protect kids playing or families dining.

Safety to residents, kids, seniors, and on-leash dogs and their owners is an issue.

Parking and traffic will also be impacted and the current problem of violators of the no off-leash law will only be worse with more people coming to this park with their dogs and park on the street. The law is not currently enforced and there is no suggestion of better enforcement in the future which will make the current problem even worse in the suggested hours and the rest of the time.

Currently the park is used by many during all hours of the day during weekdays and weekends. The off leash dog hours will displace users from the park and will give dogs privileges above people.

Biking to school is promoted in Los Altos and designated/recommended bike routes are published. This park is located at an intersection of three streets. All those streets are in the designated bike routes to the local schools. Many kids ride their bikes by the park to school and from school and the off-leash dogs will be right by the passing bikes. Blach school has a late start on block days so the suggested morning times will collide with biking to school on those days.

In late mornings, babies and toddlers come to the park with their caretakers and in the afternoons working parents and their kids come to the park.

The park is regularly used for soccer, volleyball, and other exercise activities. It

attracts large groups that come to celebrate birthdays and special events in the picnic tables area. On the weekends the park is packed and visitors park their cars along the streets way past the park itself, blocking mailboxes and sometimes even driveways.

Noise is a major concern to the adjacent residents as well. Between dog barks, owners calling and whistling, the noise will be beyond the allowed noise in our neighborhoods.

Health is another major issue with the grass shared by dogs and people. Fecal material contamination is unsanitary for people who want to use the grass.

I hope this proposal is rejected. We collected more than 240 signatures from people that oppose it just by approaching local residents and park users using Covid-19 time.

Thank you for your consideration.

Regards,

Smadar Agmon  
1359 McKenzie Ave. Los Altos

**Jane Clayton**  
**1305 McKenzie Avenue**  
**Los Altos, CA 94024**

November 8, 2020

Dear Members of the City Council:

I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed Off-Leash Dog Hours Pilot Program at Heritage Oaks Park. There are many reasons why off-leash dog hours are not appropriate for this park, and I will summarize them below. My husband and I have lived across the street from Heritage Oaks Park for 22 years, and we have observed park activity throughout that time.

### **Displacement of Other Park Users**

My primary reason for opposing off-leash dog hours at Heritage Oaks Park is that it will displace lots of other people who now use the park. The public safety risk posed by off-leash dogs is real: even well-trained dogs can behave unpredictably at times. Off-leash dogs can also be an annoying nuisance to other park users, as they use the two playgrounds or the picnic tables, relax or play in the large grassy area, or walk or jog through the park. Under the existing prohibition against off-leash dogs, if a dog is annoying someone, they can ask the dog owner to please put a leash on their dog and lead it away.

But, with official off-leash dog hours, could a park user ask the dog owner to put their dog on a leash and leave them in peace? The dog owner could say that they are legally allowed to let their dogs run off-leash and other park users can't stop them. Plus, most dog owners typically claim their dog is just being "friendly," even when a park user is clearly being disturbed or even intimidated by their dog. Some dog owners just make excuses for their dog's behavior, even when the dog is clearly annoying others.

Who would have priority to use the grassy area at Heritage Oaks Park during off-leash hours? If people are playing catch or volleyball, would off-leash dogs have to right to kick them out during off-leash hours? The staff recommendation is for the ENTIRE GRASSY AREA of the park to be used by off-leash dogs during some of the times that it is already highly used for other recreational activities. The lack of fencing or spatial buffer between the large grassy field where off-leash dogs would be allowed and the picnic and playground areas is also problematic and would result in fewer people choosing to use the entire park.

Plus, who would monitor that off-leash dogs are only present during the posted hours? Who would monitor that off-leash dogs do not enter the playground areas and picnic areas? The staff recommendation would result in essentially converting Heritage Oaks Park to a *de facto* dog park.

The Parks and Recreation Commission voted against the proposals for fenced-in dog parks at Lincoln Park and McKenzie Park, partly because open grassy space is so precious in Los Altos that they didn't want to sacrifice any. The staff proposal for the ENTIRE grassy field to be used by off-leash dogs would result in Heritage Oaks Park would sacrifice most of the park for all other park uses, simply by a different means. This would occur especially during off-leash dog hours, but also during other hours given the lack of any enforcement mechanism.

**The area used by off-leash dogs should be a separate dedicated space and should not overlap with the grassy area used by soccer, volleyball, families playing together, and people who simply enjoy the outdoor space to spread a picnic blanket and enjoy the sunshine.** Even Mountain View, which has many off-leash dog areas, has defined the space for off-leash dogs as only a portion of the available space and well away from playgrounds, picnic areas, and other highly used park facilities.

### **Parks Should be Welcoming to All Residents**

There is an issue of cultural sensitivity and cultural respect here. It is important to ensure that Los Altos's parks provide equitable access to people from ALL cultural backgrounds and ensure that our park environments are experienced as welcoming by EVERYONE. I have spoken with numerous residents from cultural backgrounds who are not at all comfortable with off-leash dogs. Establishing official off-leash dog hours throughout the grassy area and adjacent to the playgrounds would make such individuals likely to avoid Heritage Oaks Park at all times, frankly.

Others who are often uncomfortable with off-leash dogs include seniors, disabled persons, people who allergic to dogs, and those who have previously been charged or attacked by a dog. Establishing off-leash dog hours with no fencing or buffers is not consistent with goals of diversity and inclusion. In contrast, fenced dog parks provide safety for all park visitors and allow everyone to enjoy a park without fear. **This is why MOST municipalities throughout the U.S. create fenced dog parks.**

I understand that dog owners will respond by saying parks should welcome them and their dogs, too. I agree, but only if an off-leash dog area can be implemented in a way that respects other park users. I think the off-leash dog area at Cuesta Park, for example, is great.

### **Mountain View's Off-Leash Dog Areas vs. Heritage Oaks Park**

One of the most commonly mentioned reasons given by members of the Parks and Recreation Commission (PARC) for creating an off-leash dog area at Heritage Oaks Park was that "Mountain View has parks with Off-Leash Dog Hours; Los Altos should have them, too."

Mountain View is lucky to have much larger parks than Los Altos. ALL of the parks in other nearby cities that have off-leash dog hours are very different from Heritage Oaks Park in size and layout, as shown in the following table.

Numerous agencies recommend standards for dog parks/off leash areas. The most prominent recommendation is: **The location of a Dog Park/Off Leash Area should be in a non-viable area not to interfere with expected park usage.**

All Mountain View, Cupertino, Burlingame and Foster City off-leash dog areas meet this standard. Heritage Oaks Park does not. Notably, Heritage Oaks Park does include an undeveloped area that is not used for other park purposes, but it was eliminated from consideration.

Standards/Guidelines for Off Leash Dog Areas	<u>Mountain View Off Leash Areas:</u> Cooper, Eagle, Bubb, Cuesta, Whisman, McKelvey (fenced), Rengstorff (fenced). <u>Cupertino Off Leash Area:</u> Jollyman. <u>Burlingame:</u> 2 Off Leash Areas, <u>Foster City:</u> 4 Off Leash Areas.	Heritage Oaks Park, Los Altos.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No displacement of expected park usage.</li> </ul>	Yes	No (People - especially families and seniors -will avoid park.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More than 100 yards from a children’s playground.</li> </ul>	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children/adults play or sit on fecal-free grass.</li> </ul>	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No interference with sports/playing field.</li> </ul>	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Located away from picnic areas.</li> </ul>	Yes	No (Less than 25 feet.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not located near watershed/creek.</li> </ul>	Yes	No (Permanente Creek less than 50 feet.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimal impact on nearby residents.</li> </ul>	Yes	No (No buffer to residents. Less than 50 feet.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Respect for nearby residents’ quality of life.</li> </ul>	Yes	No (Noise impact/loss of property value.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safety for bicyclists/pedestrians.</li> </ul>	Yes	No (Portland/McKenzie Avenues – high use by cyclists & pedestrians.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safety for off leash dogs.</li> </ul>	Yes	No (Nearby busy street.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adequate parking.</li> </ul>	Yes	No

## **Many Dog Owners Do NOT Support Off-Leash Dog Hours**

Another reason frequently cited by several PARC Commissioners for implementing off-leash dog hours at Heritage Oaks Park was their estimate that 38% of Los Altos households own dogs. They erroneously jumped to the conclusion that all dog-owning households would want off-leash dog hours. This is absolutely incorrect.

MANY dog owners do not want or support off-leash dog hours for a wide variety of reasons and MANY dog owners would not take their dog to an off-leash area, especially one crowded with lots of other dogs. Among the many reasons for their lack of support are: the increased potential for conflicts with other dogs, their understanding that even well-trained dogs can behave unpredictably, their preference for keeping their own dog on a leash, a previous bad experience with off-leash dogs (for themselves or their dog), their respect for other park users, the fact that their dog is not under voice control, etc.

## **Hours**

The staff recommendation to City Council would begin off-leash dog hours at **6:00 AM**, which is entirely disrespectful of the residents living adjacent to the park. The official time that the park opens is 7:00 AM – and I'm sure that was established partly out of respect for adjacent homeowners.

The Parks and Recreation Commission approved **7:00 AM** as the start time for off-leash dog hours when they approved the pilot program in May.

The Parks and Recreation Commission approved **8:30 AM** (weekdays only) as the start time for off-leash dog hours in September, based on the Dog Park Subcommittee's recommendation. That recommendation had been agreed to by dog owners who were advocating for off-leash hours. The current staff proposal for a 6:00 AM start time on weekdays has NEVER been submitted to or approved by the Parks and Recreation Commission.

As I write this at **5:00 PM on a Sunday afternoon**, the entire grassy field is in use by kids playing soccer and others. On most Sunday afternoons, a group of people also gathers for a volleyball game in the late afternoon. The proposal to allow off-leash dogs from 4:00 – Sunset on Sundays is probably the worst possible time during the weekend, based on current usage patterns.

If the City Council sees fit to implement off-leash dog hours, I would encourage you to implement the hours approved by the Parks and Recreation Commission in September.

## **Enforcement – and the Lack Thereof**

A key issue in implementing off-leash dog hours would be enforcement of the posted hours and rules for dog owners. As a long-time observer of the park, I'm sure that if off-leash dog hours are implemented, many dog owners will disregard the posted hours and exercise their dogs off-leash during other (non-posted) hours. Who would stop them?

The need for enforcement was noted in the Dog Park Subcommittee's report, but the cost of any enforcement or maintenance related to off-leash hours has NOT been included. The staff cost estimate of \$6,275 to implement the pilot program at both Hillview and Heritage Oaks Parks clearly does not include any money for enforcement. To enforce the posted off-leash hours and prevent Heritage Oaks Park from becoming an "all-hours" off-leash area, there would need to be frequent visits by the Los Altos Police and/or Animal Control officers. Actually, officers should enforce all the rules suggested by the Dog Park Subcommittee, not just hours. Any accurate estimate of the cost of the program to the City should include the cost of enforcement.

However, the Los Altos Police do not have the time to respond constantly to non-emergency phone calls regarding off-leash dogs. Even if they are able to respond, they typically arrive long after the offending dog owner has left the park. And, when police cars are noticed in the vicinity of the park, dog owners suddenly pay attention to their dogs and put them back on a leash. It's similar to drivers slowing down when they see a police or CHP vehicle. So, even frequent spot checks by the police would not capture all the violations, unfortunately.

The other enforcement option is Palo Alto Animal Control, with which the City currently has a contract. Palo Alto Animal Control is currently short-staffed, since one officer retired and Palo Alto decided not to fill that position, due to budget constraints. An Animal Control officer spoke with a group of Heritage Oaks Park neighbors and noted that calls from Palo Alto have priority and that they were already short-staffed, even before the pandemic-related budget crisis led to elimination of one position.

Expecting dog owners to police themselves is unrealistic, given that the current rule that dogs must be on a leash at all times was flaunted on a daily basis, prior to COVID and a few neighbors calling the police to report off-leash dogs after the May PARC meeting.

### **Potential for MANY More Dog Owners to Use Heritage Oaks Park**

One of the major problems with the City's approach of proposing only two locations for off-leash hours is that once it becomes known that off-leash dogs are officially allowed at Heritage Oaks Park, it will become a magnet for dog owners from a large area. It is reasonable to expect that MANY more Los Altos residents, including those who now unofficially exercise their dogs off-leash at Marymeade Park, McKenzie Park, and Grant Park, will bring their dogs to Heritage Oaks Park.

Greatly increased park usage by off-leash dogs (compared to the pre-COVID status quo) would completely change the character of Heritage Oaks Park. Over the past 22 years, we have observed park usage increase substantially, by dog owners and everyone else. However, most people know that if they come to the park to play volleyball, picnic, use the playground equipment, gather with friends, or any other of the multitude of reasons why people visit the park, THEY WILL HAVE THE SPACE AND FREEDOM TO DO SO. Allowing dog owners to "take over" the park for many hours a day, every day of the week, will completely change the

character of the park. As proposed in the staff recommendation, off-leash dogs would interfere with ALL the existing park uses.

### **Dog Waste and Park Users, including Soccer Programs**

I cannot imagine letting very young children play in a grassy area that is visited every day by lots of dogs who have peed and pooped in that exact same area! There are many studies showing that pet waste contains bacteria and parasites that are harmful to health.

Clearly, this conflict between dog waste and soccer use already exists, since there were off-leash dogs using the soccer area every day for years. But, it is fair to assume that when word gets out about a location where dogs are officially allowed to run off-leash, many more dog owners will show up with their dogs. This will increase the contamination of the grassy area now used by young children who play and roll in the grass all the time. Kids will pick up a soccer ball that just ran through the residue of dog feces, even after an owner picked up most of the waste. The grassy area is also used by children from birthday parties (a frequent use of the park), by youth organizations who hold large picnics there, and by countless families.

Very few dog owners would intentionally leave dog poop behind, but dog owners frequently chat with each other or look at their phones, rather than watching their dogs every minute. Plus, even when an owner picks up their dog's waste, some residue is always left behind on the grass. The City's recommendation to use the entire grassy area for off-leash dogs is tantamount to saying that it doesn't care if park users step in dog waste on a regular basis, or that children are playing in grass that has been contaminated by dog waste residue from many dogs every day.

### **Noise**

A dog's bark can be extremely loud (90 decibels) and carry a long distance. Having multiple dogs barking at once creates a real din. Dog owners' voices are also loud, as they try to maintain voice control over their dogs or shout to each other from opposite sides of the field. Whistles are even louder. Especially during warmer months, when windows are open, the noise generated by off-leash dogs was already an occasional nuisance (prior to COVID lockdown of the parks) for those of us directly adjacent to it. However, given the current prohibition against off-leash dogs, a resident can respectfully request dog owners to silence their off-leash dogs and the dog owners would generally do so, even if grudgingly.

As someone who has lived across the street from the park, I can attest that dog owners frequently ignore their barking dogs because they are utterly oblivious to the fact that there are residences nearby. Many times, dog owners are chatting with one another or on their phones and totally ignore their dogs.

I love the sounds of children playing in the park and of people having a good time in the park, but the sounds of incessantly barking dogs are another matter. Especially early in the morning!



If more dog owners bring their dogs to Heritage Oaks Park, the noise issue will be greatly exacerbated, due to more dog owners shouting and whistling and more conflicts among dogs.

### **Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety**

Portland Avenue is an official bike-to-school route and is well-used by students heading to several nearby schools every weekday morning. Since it is the City's official policy to encourage kids to bike to school, rather than be dropped off by parents, it makes no sense to permit dogs to run without a leash during the times that kids are typically biking to and from school on a street right next to the park. The Dog Park Subcommittee's recommendation to allow off-leash dogs in the park beginning at 8:30 AM was intended to mitigate the noise impact on adjacent residences and to allow children to bike to school safely without off-leash dogs approaching or chasing them.

Both Portland Avenue and McKenzie Avenue are well-used by bicyclists and pedestrians of all ages. The path through the park next to the creek is highly used by walkers and joggers. Off-leash dogs are a safety risk to all of them. One mother has told me of an off-leash dog who charged her as she was walking her baby in a stroller. A neighbor has told me of being charged as she walked her dog next to the park on a leash. Such stories are not uncommon.

### **Traffic and Parking**

Some dog owners now walk their dogs to the park and some drive to the park. Prior to the COVID closure of the park, I saw lots of people throughout the day pull into a parking space and let their dog out to run. The City's idea that all current dog owners walk to the park and that new users would also walk to the park is simply incorrect. It is fair to assume that many of the "new users" of the park who would come to run their dogs would drive, since they will likely come from further away. This raises traffic and parking concerns.

The parking spaces available next to the park are already filled to capacity during the afternoon/evening hours and weekend hours proposed by staff for off-leash dog hours.

### **Conflicts Between Dogs**

When fenced-in dog parks are created, there are often separate areas for large and small dogs. Such a separation is clearly not possible in an unfenced off-leash program. Conflicts between dogs have happened for years, with the pre-COVID number of dogs that were being exercised off-leash in the park. The greater the number of dogs and dog owners, the harder it is for owners to maintain voice control of their dogs. And, the more instances of dogs fighting each other, as the area becomes more crowded. Again, it is fair to assume that the park would become a magnet for many more dog owners if it becomes an official off-leash site, and far more instances of dogs attacking other dogs will occur. This would make the park far less enjoyable and safe for ALL park users.

## **Heritage Oaks Park Fails to Meet the City's Own Criteria**

At the public workshops regarding dog parks in February, the materials presented on poster boards included a list of criteria for potential locations for off-leash dog hours. Heritage Oaks Park fails to meet FOUR of the criteria presented at the February workshop.

1. **Sufficient buffer between the area used by off-leash dogs and playground areas.** There is no such buffer. Prior to the COVID closure of the park, I frequently observed off-leash dogs disturbing and intimidating children in the playground areas and people at the picnic tables. Dog owners were often oblivious to their dog's intrusion into the playground and picnic areas or would brush off parents' concerns, sometimes quite rudely.
2. **Sufficient buffer between the park and residences to mitigate impact.** No other park in Los Altos has as many homes directly adjacent to it as Heritage Oaks, and there is NO buffer. A neighbor of mine has actually had an off-leash dog run into her home and her living room, muddy paws and all. Noise from barking dogs and dog owners shouting and whistling at their dogs is an additional issue, especially in the early morning hours.
3. **Sufficient parking.** Parking spaces at the park are frequently already filled to capacity during the weekday afternoons/evenings and on weekends. Unlike many other Los Altos parks, Heritage Oaks Park does not have a parking lot
4. **The area used by off-leash dogs should not be used as a sports field.** The off-leash dog area IS a sports field for children's soccer, and the fact that the City is proposing that this field serve "double duty" as an off-leash dog area contravenes public health and hygiene principles. Dog owners do not always notice their dog's waste on the grassy area where young children play soccer and where families spread picnic blankets. Even when owners pick up their dog's feces, some residue is always left behind. Kids in the City's Coach Ken soccer program frequently fall and roll on the grass in the exact same location where many dogs leave their waste.

So, if Heritage Oaks Park fails to meet four of the City's own criteria for an off-leash dog area, why is it still being considered? It would make much more sense for the City to simply state that there is no park that fully meets its criteria for off-leash dogs and, therefore, it is unable to responsibly implement off-leash dog hours.

## **Widespread Neighborhood Opposition to Off-Leash Hours**

The City held workshops regarding the proposals for dog parks and off-leash dog hours in February 2020. With the exception of just two households, residents who live near Heritage Oaks Park DID NOT KNOW about the workshops in February. (City staff say postcards were sent to all houses within 1000 feet of the park. The postcards were clearly designed to appeal to dog owners and featured a photo of a dog, with the text announcing workshops at Shoup Park and Grant Park. The fact that the workshops were intended to discuss a proposal for off-leash hours at Heritage Oaks Park was in much smaller print on the reverse side of the postcard, as

the third bullet point after a paragraph of text. Most Heritage Oaks neighbors who got the postcard apparently recycled it without ever realizing it concerned Heritage Oaks Park.)

Therefore, the surveys conducted at those workshops do NOT include responses from the Heritage Oaks Park neighborhood. Because the workshops were attended by many residents from the neighborhoods around Lincoln Park and McKenzie Park, the survey captures their opposition to dog parks at those locations, but simply does not capture feedback from Heritage Oaks Park neighbors to the off-leash dog hours proposal. If folks from the Heritage Oaks neighborhood had attended the workshops, the City's survey would show a MAJORITY of respondents opposed to off-leash dog hours at Heritage Oaks specifically and/or at all parks.

In addition, two community-generated petitions, one from Lincoln Park neighbors with about 100 signatures and one from McKenzie Park neighbors with about 50 signatures, were submitted to the Parks and Recreation Department prior to the May PARC meeting when a decision about dog parks and off-leash dog hours was on the agenda. Thus, the staff report included the fact that there was community opposition to both dog park proposals.

Heritage Oaks Park neighbors only learned about the May meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission TWO DAYS before the meeting took place. Thus, there was no time to gather signatures on a petition prior to the May PARC meeting, when a vote was taken. However, many letters were written to the Commission expressing opposition to off-leash dog hours prior to the meeting. Since May, over 240 signatures have been gathered from neighbors and park users, registering opposition to off-leash dog hours at Heritage Oaks Park. We request that the Council accept these petitions with the same level of respect for residents' concerns as the petitions from the Lincoln and McKenzie Park neighborhoods.

It is worth noting that 100% of residents on McKenzie Avenue, adjacent to Heritage Oaks Park are opposed to the proposal for off-leash dog hours at Heritage Oaks Park.

### **In Conclusion**

I believe Off-Leash Dog Hours should NOT be approved at Heritage Oaks Park, for all the reasons listed above. However, if the City feels compelled to undertake the off-leash dog hours pilot program in light of its decision not to pursue fenced-in dog parks, I believe it should allow off-leash dogs ONLY during the hours approved by the Parks and Recreation Commission in September. Further, the area where off-leash dogs are allowed should be much smaller and farther away from the other park facilities. There should be some days when off-leash dogs are not permitted at all so that others may enjoy the park in peace.

Respectfully submitted,

Jane Clayton  
1305 McKenzie Avenue  
Los Altos, CA 94024

**From:** [Donna Legge](#)  
**To:** [Public Comment](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Opposition of Off-Leash Dog Hours Proposal  
**Date:** Sunday, November 8, 2020 10:13:40 PM  
**Attachments:** [City Council Letter.pdf](#)

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**From:** janeemilia@aol.com [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Sunday, November 8, 2020 5:57 PM  
**To:** City Council <council@losaltosca.gov>  
**Cc:** Donna Legge <dlegge@losaltosca.gov>  
**Subject:** Opposition of Off-Leash Dog Hours Proposal

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Numerous agencies recommend standards for dog parks/off leash areas. The most prominent recommendation is: **The location of a Dog Park/Off Leash Area should be in a non-viable area not to interfere with expected park usage.**

All Mountain View, Cupertino, Burlingame and Foster City off-leash dog areas meet this standard. Heritage Oaks Park does not. Notably, Heritage Oaks Park does include an undeveloped area that is not used for other park purposes, but it was eliminated from consideration.

Standards/Guidelines for Off Leash Dog Areas	<u>Mountain View Off Leash Areas:</u> Cooper, Eagle, Bubb, Cuesta, Whisman, McKelvey (fenced), Rengstorff (fenced). <u>Cupertino Off Leash Area:</u> Jollyman. <u>Burlingame:</u> 2 Off Leash Areas, <u>Foster City:</u> 4 Off Leash Areas.	Heritage Oaks Park, Los Altos.
No displacement of expected park usage.	Yes	No (People - especially families and seniors -will avoid park.)
More than 100 yards from a children’s playground.	Yes	No
Children/adults play or sit on fecal-free grass.	Yes	No
No interference with sports/playing field.	Yes	No
Located away from picnic areas.	Yes	No (Less than 25 feet.)
Not located near watershed/creek.	Yes	No (Permanente Creek less than 50 feet.)
Minimal impact on nearby residents.	Yes	No (No buffer to residents. Less than 50 feet.)
Respect for nearby residents’ quality of life.	Yes	No (Noise impact/loss of property value.)
Safety for bicyclists/pedestrians.	Yes	No (Portland/McKenzie Avenues – high use by cyclists & pedestrians.)
Safety for off leash dogs.	Yes	No (Nearby busy street.)
Adequate parking.	Yes	No

-

-

### **Many Dog Owners Do NOT Support Off-Leash Dog Hours**

Another reason frequently cited by several PARC Commissioners for implementing off-leash dog hours at Heritage Oaks Park was their estimate that 38% of Los Altos households own dogs. They erroneously jumped to the conclusion that all dog-owning households would want off-leash dog hours. This is absolutely incorrect.

MANY dog owners do not want or support off-leash dog hours for a wide variety of reasons and MANY dog owners would not take their dog to an off-leash area, especially one crowded with lots of other dogs. Among the many reasons for their lack of support are: the increased potential for conflicts with other dogs, their understanding that even well-trained dogs can behave unpredictably, their preference for keeping their own dog on a leash, a previous bad experience with off-leash dogs (for themselves or their dog), their respect for other park users, the fact that their dog is not under voice control, etc.

### **Hours**

The staff recommendation to City Council would begin off-leash dog hours at **6:00 AM**, which is entirely disrespectful of the residents living adjacent to the park. The official time that the park opens is 7:00 AM – and I'm sure that was established partly out of respect for adjacent homeowners.

The Parks and Recreation Commission approved **7:00 AM** as the start time for off-leash dog hours when they approved the pilot program in May.

The Parks and Recreation Commission approved **8:30 AM** (weekdays only) as the start time for off-leash dog hours in September, based on the Dog Park Subcommittee's recommendation. That recommendation had been agreed to by dog owners who were advocating for off-leash hours. The current staff proposal for a 6:00 AM start time on weekdays has NEVER been submitted to or approved by the Parks and Recreation Commission.

As I write this at **5:00 PM on a Sunday afternoon**, the entire grassy field is in use by kids playing soccer and others. On most Sunday afternoons, a group of people also gathers for a volleyball game in the late afternoon. The proposal to allow off-leash dogs from 4:00 – Sunset on Sundays is probably the worst possible time during the weekend, based on current usage patterns.

If the City Council sees fit to implement off-leash dog hours, I would encourage you to implement the hours approved by the Parks and Recreation Commission in September.

### **Enforcement – and the Lack Thereof**

A key issue in implementing off-leash dog hours would be enforcement of the posted hours and rules for dog owners. As a long-time observer of the park, I'm sure that if off-leash dog hours are implemented, many dog owners will disregard the posted hours and exercise their dogs off-leash during other (non-posted) hours. Who would stop them?

The need for enforcement was noted in the Dog Park Subcommittee's report, but the cost of any enforcement or maintenance related to off-leash hours has NOT been included. The staff cost estimate of \$6,275 to implement the pilot program at both Hillview and Heritage Oaks Parks clearly does not include any money for enforcement. To enforce the posted off-leash hours and prevent Heritage Oaks Park from becoming an "all-hours" off-leash area, there would need to be frequent visits by the Los Altos Police and/or Animal Control officers. Actually, officers should enforce all the rules suggested by the Dog Park Subcommittee, not just hours. Any accurate estimate of the cost of the program to the City should include the cost of enforcement.

However, the Los Altos Police do not have the time to respond constantly to non-emergency phone calls regarding off-leash dogs. Even if they are able to respond, they typically arrive long after the offending dog owner has left the park. And, when police cars are noticed in the vicinity of the park, dog owners suddenly pay attention to their dogs and put them back on a leash. It's similar to drivers slowing down when they see a police or CHP vehicle. So, even frequent spot checks by the police would not capture all the violations, unfortunately.

The other enforcement option is Palo Alto Animal Control, with which the City currently has a contract. Palo Alto Animal Control is currently short-staffed, since one officer retired and Palo Alto decided not to fill that position, due to budget constraints. An Animal Control officer spoke with a group of Heritage Oaks Park neighbors and noted that calls from Palo Alto have priority and that they were already short-staffed, even before the pandemic-related budget crisis led to elimination of one position.

Expecting dog owners to police themselves is unrealistic, given that the current rule that dogs must be on a leash at all times was flaunted on a daily basis, prior to COVID and a few neighbors calling the police to report off-leash dogs after the May PARC meeting.

### **Potential for MANY More Dog Owners to Use Heritage Oaks Park**

One of the major problems with the City's approach of proposing only two locations for off-leash hours is that once it becomes known that off-leash dogs are officially allowed at Heritage Oaks Park, it will become a magnet for dog owners from a large area. It is reasonable to expect that MANY more Los Altos residents, including those who now unofficially exercise their dogs off-leash at Marymeade Park, McKenzie Park, and Grant Park, will bring their dogs to Heritage Oaks Park.

Greatly increased park usage by off-leash dogs (compared to the pre-COVID status quo) would completely change the character of Heritage Oaks Park. Over the past 22 years, we have observed park usage increase substantially, by dog owners and everyone else. However, most people know that if they come to the park to play volleyball, picnic, use the playground equipment, gather with friends, or any other of the multitude of reasons why people visit the park, THEY WILL HAVE THE SPACE AND FREEDOM TO DO SO. Allowing dog owners to "take over" the park for many hours a day, every day of the week, will completely change the character of the park.



As proposed in the staff recommendation, off-leash dogs would interfere with ALL the existing park uses.

### **Dog Waste and Park Users, including Soccer Programs**

I cannot imagine letting very young children play in a grassy area that is visited every day by lots of dogs who have peed and pooped in that exact same area! There are many studies showing that pet waste contains bacteria and parasites that are harmful to health.

Clearly, this conflict between dog waste and soccer use already exists, since there were off-leash dogs using the soccer area every day for years. But, it is fair to assume that when word gets out about a location where dogs are officially allowed to run off-leash, many more dog owners will show up with their dogs. This will increase the contamination of the grassy area now used by young children who play and roll in the grass all the time. Kids will pick up a soccer ball that just ran through the residue of dog feces, even after an owner picked up most of the waste. The grassy area is also used by children from birthday parties (a frequent use of the park), by youth organizations who hold large picnics there, and by countless families.

Very few dog owners would intentionally leave dog poop behind, but dog owners frequently chat with each other or look at their phones, rather than watching their dogs every minute. Plus, even when an owner picks up their dog's waste, some residue is always left behind on the grass. The City's recommendation to use the entire grassy area for off-leash dogs is tantamount to saying that it doesn't care if park users step in dog waste on a regular basis, or that children are playing in grass that has been contaminated by dog waste residue from many dogs every day.

### **Noise**

A dog's bark can be extremely loud (90 decibels) and carry a long distance. Having multiple dogs barking at once creates a real din. Dog owners' voices are also loud, as they try to maintain voice control over their dogs or shout to each other from opposite sides of the field. Whistles are even louder. Especially during warmer months, when windows are open, the noise generated by off-leash dogs was already an occasional nuisance (prior to COVID lockdown of the parks) for those of us directly adjacent to it. However, given the current prohibition against off-leash dogs, a resident can respectfully request dog owners to silence their off-leash dogs and the dog owners would generally do so, even if grudgingly.

As someone who has lived across the street from the park, I can attest that dog owners frequently ignore their barking dogs because they are utterly oblivious to the fact that there are residences nearby. Many times, dog owners are chatting with one another or on their phones and totally ignore their dogs.

I love the sounds of children playing in the park and of people having a good time in the park, but the sounds of incessantly barking dogs are another matter. Especially early in the morning! If more dog owners bring their dogs to Heritage Oaks Park, the noise issue will be greatly exacerbated, due to more dog owners shouting and whistling and more conflicts among dogs.

### **Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety**

Portland Avenue is an official bike-to-school route and is well-used by students heading to several nearby schools every weekday morning. Since it is the City's official policy to encourage kids to bike to school, rather than be dropped off by parents, it makes no sense to permit dogs to run without a leash during the times that kids are typically biking to and from school on a street right next to the park. The Dog Park Subcommittee's recommendation to allow off-leash dogs in the park beginning at 8:30 AM was intended to mitigate the noise impact on adjacent residences and to allow children to bike to school safely without off-leash dogs approaching or chasing them.

Both Portland Avenue and McKenzie Avenue are well-used by bicyclists and pedestrians of all ages. The path through the park next to the creek is highly used by walkers and joggers. Off-leash dogs are a safety risk to all of them. One mother has told me of an off-leash dog who charged her as she was walking her baby in a stroller. A neighbor has told me of being charged as she walked her dog next to the park on a leash. Such stories are not uncommon.

### **Traffic and Parking**

Some dog owners now walk their dogs to the park and some drive to the park. Prior to the COVID closure of the park, I saw lots of people throughout the day pull into a parking space and let their dog out to run. The City's idea that all current dog owners walk to the park and that new users would also walk to the park is simply incorrect. It is fair to assume that many of the "new users" of the park who would come to run their dogs would drive, since they will likely come from further away. This raises traffic and parking concerns.

The parking spaces available next to the park are already filled to capacity during the afternoon/evening hours and weekend hours proposed by staff for off-leash dog hours.

### **Conflicts Between Dogs**

When fenced-in dog parks are created, there are often separate areas for large and small dogs. Such a separation is clearly not possible in an unfenced off-leash program. Conflicts between dogs have happened for years, with the pre-COVID number of dogs that were being exercised off-leash in the park. The greater the number of dogs and dog owners, the harder it is for owners to maintain voice control of their dogs. And, the more instances of dogs fighting each other, as the area becomes more crowded. Again, it is fair to assume that the park would become a magnet for many more dog owners if it becomes an official off-leash site, and far more instances of dogs attacking other dogs will occur. This would make the park far less enjoyable and safe for ALL park users.

### **Heritage Oaks Park Fails to Meet the City's Own Criteria**

At the public workshops regarding dog parks in February, the materials presented on poster boards included a list of criteria for potential locations for off-leash dog hours. Heritage Oaks Park fails to meet FOUR of the criteria presented at the February workshop.

**1. Sufficient buffer between the area used by off-leash dogs and playground areas.** There is no such butter. Prior to the COVID closure of the park, I frequently observed off-leash dogs disturbing and intimidating children in the playground areas and people at the picnic tables. Dog owners were often oblivious to their dog's intrusion into the playground and picnic areas or would brush off parents' concerns, sometimes quite rudely.

**2. Sufficient buffer between the park and residences to mitigate impact.** No other park in Los Altos has as many homes directly adjacent to it as Heritage Oaks, and there is NO buffer. A neighbor of mine has actually had an off-leash dog run into her home and her living room, muddy paws and all. Noise from barking dogs and dog owners shouting and whistling at their dogs is an additional issue, especially in the early morning hours.

**3. Sufficient parking.** Parking spaces at the park are frequently already filled to capacity during the weekday afternoons/evenings and on weekends. Unlike many other Los Altos parks, Heritage Oaks Park does not have a parking lot

**4. The area used by off-leash dogs should not be used as a sports field.** The off-leash dog area IS a sports field for children's soccer, and the fact that the City is proposing that this field serve "double duty" as an off-leash dog area contravenes public health and hygiene principles. Dog owners do not always notice their dog's waste on the grassy area where young children play soccer and where families spread picnic blankets. Even when owners pick up their dog's feces, some residue is always left behind. Kids in the City's Coach Ken soccer program frequently fall and roll on the grass in the exact same location where many dogs leave their waste. So, if Heritage Oaks Park fails to meet four of the City's own criteria for an off-leash dog area, why is it still being considered? It would make much more sense for the City to simply state that there is no park that fully meets its criteria for off-leash dogs and, therefore, it is unable to responsibly implement off-leash dog hours.

### **Widespread Neighborhood Opposition to Off-Leash Hours**

The City held workshops regarding the proposals for dog parks and off-leash dog hours in February 2020. With the exception of just two households, residents who live near Heritage Oaks Park DID NOT KNOW about the workshops in February. (City staff say postcards were sent to all houses within 1000 feet of the park. The postcards were clearly designed to appeal to dog owners and featured a photo of a dog, with the text announcing workshops at Shoup Park and Grant Park. The fact that the workshops were intended to discuss a proposal for off-leash hours at Heritage Oaks Park was in much smaller print on the reverse side of the postcard, as the third bullet point after a paragraph of text. Most Heritage Oaks neighbors who got the postcard apparently recycled it without ever realizing it concerned Heritage Oaks Park.)

Therefore, the surveys conducted at those workshops do NOT include responses from the Heritage Oaks Park neighborhood. Because the workshops were attended by many residents from the neighborhoods around Lincoln Park and McKenzie Park, the survey captures their opposition to dog parks at those locations, but simply does not capture feedback from Heritage Oaks Park neighbors to the off-leash dog hours proposal. If folks from the Heritage Oaks neighborhood had attended the workshops, the City's survey would show a MAJORITY of respondents opposed to off-leash dog

hours at Heritage Oaks specifically and/or at all parks.

In addition, two community-generated petitions, one from Lincoln Park neighbors with about 100 signatures and one from McKenzie Park neighbors with about 50 signatures, were submitted to the Parks and Recreation Department prior to the May PARC meeting when a decision about dog parks and off-leash dog hours was on the agenda. Thus, the staff report included the fact that there was community opposition to both dog park proposals.

Heritage Oaks Park neighbors only learned about the May meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission TWO DAYS before the meeting took place. Thus, there was no time to gather signatures on a petition prior to the May PARC meeting, when a vote was taken. However, many letters were written to the Commission expressing opposition to off-leash dog hours prior to the meeting. Since May, over 240 signatures have been gathered from neighbors and park users, registering opposition to off-leash dog hours at Heritage Oaks Park. We request that the Council accept these petitions with the same level of respect for residents' concerns as the petitions from the Lincoln and McKenzie Park neighborhoods.

It is worth noting that 100% of residents on McKenzie Avenue, adjacent to Heritage Oaks Park are opposed to the proposal for off-leash dog hours at Heritage Oaks Park.

### **In Conclusion**

I believe Off-Leash Dog Hours should NOT be approved at Heritage Oaks Park, for all the reasons listed above. However, if the City feels compelled to undertake the off-leash dog hours pilot program in light of its decision not to pursue fenced-in dog parks, I believe it should allow off-leash dogs ONLY during the hours approved by the Parks and Recreation Commission in September. Further, the area where off-leash dogs are allowed should be much smaller and farther away from the other park facilities. There should be some days when off-leash dogs are not permitted at all so that others may enjoy the park in peace.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jane Clayton  
1305 McKenzie Avenue  
Los Altos, CA 94024

**From:** [Donna Legge](#)  
**To:** [Public Comment](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Dog policy changes at Heritage Oaks  
**Date:** Friday, November 6, 2020 5:04:20 PM

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Donna Legge  
City of Los Altos  
Recreation & Community Services Director  
Office: 650.947.2889

----- Original message -----

From: Eran Agmon <[REDACTED]>  
Date: 11/6/20 3:03 PM (GMT-08:00)  
To: City Council <council@losaltosca.gov>, Donna Legge <dlegge@losaltosca.gov>, Casey Richardson <crichardson@losaltosca.gov>  
Subject: Dog policy changes at Heritage Oaks

To whom it may concern,

I am writing about the proposed changes to the dog policy at Heritage Oaks park.

I live with my two children, age 4 and 7, across the street from the park. We bike through the park regularly in the mornings, fly kites on the grass, have picnics on the grass, and play in the young children section.

The proposed unleashed dog policy does not include a fenced-in area, and coincides with our regular use hours. This concerns me because of how close everything is in the park, and also right next to the road. When biking or playing, we will certainly come across the unleashed dogs. From personal experience I know some of these dogs will rush us and scare the kids, perhaps even cause injury. As proposed, the policy change appears to be a large and unacceptable obstruction of our regular park use.

Please take this into consideration when making the decision.

Sincerely,  
Eran Agmon

--

Eran Agmon, PhD  
Department of Bioengineering, Stanford University  
<http://eagmon.tumblr.com/>

**From:** [Chris Jordan](#)  
**To:** [Public Comment](#); [Donna Legge](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: Chris Higgins  
**Date:** Sunday, November 8, 2020 8:56:39 AM

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Sent from my iPad

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** City of Los Altos Official Website via City of Los Altos California  
<[info@losaltosca.gov](mailto:info@losaltosca.gov)>  
**Date:** November 8, 2020 at 8:01:05 AM PST  
**To:** City Council <[council@losaltosca.gov](mailto:council@losaltosca.gov)>  
**Subject:** Chris Higgins  
**Reply-To:** "City of Los Altos Official Website" <[info@losaltosca.gov](mailto:info@losaltosca.gov)>

Submitted on Sunday, November 8, 2020 - 8:01am  
Submitted by anonymous user: 108.217.160.15  
Submitted values are:

Department: City Council  
Name: Chris Higgins  
Email Address: [REDACTED]  
Comments / Requests:

I am so pleased that Los Altos is considering an off-leash dog park pilot. There are so many benefits to having one. Off-leash parks are community centers for people just as much as for our dogs. Establishing a designated time and place for off leash creates a community center of activity where neighbors gather to relax and experience life together.

On a personal note, I retired several years ago and as part of adjusting to my "new normal", I began taking my golden retriever to Heritage Oaks and then forced to switch to Mountain View parks in the early morning & evening, making new "neighborhood" friends in the process.

This past May, we had to put down our 12.5-year old golden retriever. The morning the vet was to arrive, I texted my dog park friends to let them know the sad news. The outpouring of love was unbelievable. Some came to our home to give Bentley a final hug as we waited on the front porch for the vet to arrive to administer the injection. Later that evening, my park friends hosted a get together where we got to share memories of Bentley over a glass of wine, helping me process my loss.

My wife & I are waiting for awhile before getting another dog. However, I still go to a MV park every day to catch up on how everyone is doing and to get my dog fix. I just wish we had an off-leash park in Los Altos, closer to home. I encourage you to approve the dog off-leash pilot at Heritage Oaks.

Thank you!

Chris & Barbara Higgins

The results of this submission may be viewed at:

<https://www.losaltosca.gov/node/7/submission/43781>

**From:** [Donna Legge](#)  
**To:** [Public Comment](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Proposal to use Heritage Oaks Park as a no-leash dog run  
**Date:** Friday, November 6, 2020 2:39:45 PM

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**From:** Janet [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, November 6, 2020 1:33 PM  
**To:** Donna Legge <dlegge@losaltosca.gov>; City Council <council@losaltosca.gov>  
**Subject:** Proposal to use Heritage Oaks Park as a no-leash dog run

I am opposed to this proposal. There are too many children who use the park off-leash. Chaos could ensue.

The park is bounded on 2 sides by streets, with no barrier to keep dogs from running into the streets, or children from running after them.

It would make what is a small neighborhood park a magnet for surrounding neighborhoods to bring their dogs for a free run. Parking is already a problem. Too much traffic for people who live on McKenzie where we own property.

Who will supervise clean-up and dog control?

These are the main reasons that I oppose this proposal.

Respectfully,  
Janet Rampa



**From:** [Heather Larkin](#)  
**To:** [Public Comment](#)  
**Cc:** [City Council](#)  
**Subject:** PUBLIC COMMENT AGENDA ITEM #12 NOVEMBER 10  
**Date:** Sunday, November 8, 2020 1:15:43 PM  
**Attachments:** [Off Leash Dog Comparison.docx](#)

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Dear Council Members,

Information for the attached chart was obtained by recent site visits to each and every off leash dog area. All of the city parks that have off leash dog areas are much larger than Heritage Oaks Park.

Sincerely,  
Heather Larkin  
Oakhurst Avenue

Numerous agencies recommend standards for dog parks/off leash areas. The most prominent recommendation is: **The location of a Dog Park/Off Leash Area should be in a non-viable area not to interfere with expected park usage.**

All Mountain View, Cupertino, Burlingame and Foster City off leash dog areas meet this standard. Heritage Oaks Park does not.

Standards/Guidelines for Off Leash Dog Areas	<u>Mountain View Off Leash Areas:</u> Cooper, Eagle, Bubb, Cuesta, Whisman, McKelvey (fenced), Rengstorff (fenced). <u>Cupertino Off Leash Area:</u> Jollyman. <u>Burlingame:</u> 2 Off Leash Areas, <u>Foster City:</u> 4 Off Leash Areas.	Heritage Oaks Park, Los Altos.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No displacement of expected park usage.</li> </ul>	Yes	No (People - especially families and seniors - will avoid park.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More than 100 yards from a children's playground.</li> </ul>	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children/adults play or sit on fecal-free grass.</li> </ul>	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No interference with sports/playing field.</li> </ul>	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Located away from picnic areas.</li> </ul>	Yes	No (Less than 25 feet.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not located near watershed/creek.</li> </ul>	Yes	No (Permanente Creek less than 50 feet.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimal impact on nearby residents.</li> </ul>	Yes	No (No buffer to residents. Less than 50 feet.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Respect for nearby residents' quality of life.</li> </ul>	Yes	No (Noise impact/loss of property value.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safety for bicyclists/pedestrians</li> </ul>	Yes	No (Portland/McKenzie Avenues – high use by cyclists & pedestrians.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safety for off leash dogs.</li> </ul>	Yes	No (Nearby busy street.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adequate parking.</li> </ul>	Yes	No

**From:** [Donna Legge](#)  
**To:** [Public Comment](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Off-Leash Dog hours at Herit  
**Date:** Friday, November 6, 2020 5:03:58 PM

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Donna Legge  
City of Los Altos  
Recreation & Community Services Director  
Office: 650.947.2889

----- Original message -----

From: Barb Orrock [REDACTED]  
Date: 11/6/20 4:29 PM (GMT-08:00)  
To: City Council <council@losaltosca.gov>, Donna Legge <dlegge@losaltosca.gov>  
Subject: Off-Leash Dog hours at Herit

Dear City Council Members & Parks & Rec,

We are writing again to express our concern about the proposed off-leash pilot program at Heritage Oaks Park. We wrote to the council back in May about our concerns and it appears this is now moving towards a vote. We are discouraged that we hadn't received any information about the Parks and Rec's plan to move this forward until a friend close to the park brought it to our attention. We never received any notification of the workshops conducted back in February, and no further notice about the Parks and Rec recommendation to move this towards a vote with the city council. There has been no transparency in this entire process.

We already see people violating the on-leash ordinance that is posted at Heritage Oaks Park. This pilot program will encourage those who do not live in the immediate area to use the park for off-leash recreation. I think it is highly presumptuous to believe that individuals will adhere to the hours specified for off-leash. It isn't adhered to now.

Lastly, Heritage Oaks Park is not well-suited for an off-leash pilot program. The play structures, picnic tables, and grass area does not offer enough space between park users and off-leash dogs. This park is a busy neighborhood park

for kids and adults alike.

We, and many neighbors, believe the city council needs to postpone any recommendation for off-leash hours at Heritage Oaks Park and reevaluate this program.

Sincerely,

Mark and Barb- Orrock  
1340 Sunrise Ct.  
Los Altos

**From:** [Donna Legge](#)  
**To:** [Public Comment](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Objection to Dog Off-Leash at Heritage Oak Park  
**Date:** Sunday, November 8, 2020 2:23:01 PM

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-----Original Message-----

From: Chaya Shahar [REDACTED]  
Sent: Sunday, November 8, 2020 12:09 PM  
To: City Council <council@losaltosca.gov>  
Cc: Donna Legge <dlegge@losaltosca.gov>  
Subject: Objection to Dog Off-Leash at Heritage Oak Park

To: Los Altos City Council

My name is Chaya Shahar and I am leaving at 1335 McKenzie Ave near Heritage Oak Park since 2005.

I'm opposed to the off leash dog proposal at Heritage Oak.

I am often taking my grandchildren to play in the park. My hearing has deteriorated and I am wearing hearing aids at both ears. Even with the hearing aids, I don't hear well and I am very concerned I will not hear a dog charging at me or my grandchildren when I am in the park or even in front of my home. My home is very close to the park and dogs can get to my front yard from the park in no time.

There is no sufficient buffer zone between the park and my home and there is no sufficient buffer zone between the park lawn and the playground!!!!

Moreover, there is no fence and no natural barrier, e.g., bushes, as is the case in many of the other parks, between the park and my home!!!

A running dog cannot be stopped by his owner, by Los Altos police or by Palo Alto animal control. It will be too late!!! We are talking about 2-5 seconds...!!!!

Please don't take away my rights (and other old people or deaf people ) to play in the park, live safely and not to be afraid of running dogs!!!!

Please let me continue to live in peace in my neighborhood !

Chaya Shahar  
1335 McKenzie Ave Los Altos