

8. Design of Dog Parks

Design guidelines for dog parks should ensure they are safe, secure, and support both dog exercise and socialisation, while also promoting the health and wellbeing of dog guardians. Based on benchmarking of dog parks across Melbourne and recommendations from strategies developed by other LGAs, an area of approximately 3,000 m² is commonly identified as the preferred size for a traditional dog park comprising mostly grass, as this helps to avoid excessive wear. However, given Whitehorse's limited open space and the challenges Council faces in creating new open space, particularly in higher-density areas, where public open space is even more constrained, smaller dog parks (below 3,000 m²) may also be considered. These smaller parks will require specific design responses to ensure durability and functionality.

The guidelines below are organised according to the two types of dog parks Whitehorse is likely to provide: large scale dog parks (over 3,000 m²) and small scale dog parks (under 3,000 m²). They outline the typical facilities each type should include, as well as potential additional features that may be incorporated depending on budget, site suitability, and community demand.

8.1 Large Scale Dog Parks

The following design guidelines outline the key considerations for large scale dog parks (over 3,000 m²).

A large scale dog park is generally considered to be over 3,000 m² in size and functions as a 'destination' facility. Due to its scale and appeal, it is likely that many visitors will travel to the site by car.

HIGHLY DESIRABLE FEATURES	ADVANTAGES	LIMITATIONS
Shape: Dog parks should generally feature rounded or moderately linear layouts. Square or excessively narrow, elongated shapes are not recommended.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourages smooth circulation which in turn encourages more active supervision.• Avoiding linear park layouts supports more active supervision, ensuring dog guardians remain engaged and within close proximity to their dogs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• May not be appropriate for all preferred sites, with area dimensions potentially requiring modification to achieve the preferred layout.
Fence: 1.2m high chain mesh or similar (noting that height will likely depend on site conditions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensures dogs remain contained.• Provides safety for both dogs and nearby pedestrians.• Can reduce off-lead conflicts with other park users.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Could be visually intrusive if not well-integrated with landscape.
Entry point: Double gates with hardstand, min. 3.5m wide maintenance access gates. Consider multiple entry points to connect with other paths or nearby features.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prevents dogs from escaping when entering/exiting.• Multiple access points improve circulation and connectivity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Multiple gates increase construction and maintenance costs.

Surface: Grass and gravel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A variety of surfaces provides interest for the dogs to explore and play • Gravel is durable and aids drainage. • Grass is a soft playing surface for dogs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gravel may be uncomfortable for some dogs and will require some maintenance to retain even coverage. • Grass requires high levels of maintenance to reduce degradation due to overuse.
Path: Accessible loop path within the dog park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides safe circulation for owners and dogs. Circulation can also encourage more active dog supervision. • Supports accessibility for all users. • Helps reduce wear on grassed areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional construction and maintenance costs. • Could limit usable play area.
Separate area for small, recovering, older and less confident dogs: Dog parks larger than 4,500 m ² should include a designated area for small, recovering, older and less confident dogs, comprising approximately 20% of the total area. Smaller parks may also consider incorporating a separate space where site conditions and demand make it feasible and beneficial.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces conflicts and injuries between large and small dogs. • Supports shy, older, recovering and less social dogs. • Encourages broader community use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May require additional fencing and maintenance. • Use may be limited if local demand for small-dog area is low.
Vegetation: Trees with small areas of garden bed to perimeter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides shade for users and dogs. • Improves aesthetics and environmental value. • Can act as visual screening or buffer. 	
Features: Rocks and logs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage natural play and exploration. • Enhance sensory and physical stimulation for dogs. 	
Furniture: Shelter and seating at appropriate intervals to meet user needs, taking into account the size and layout of the park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improves comfort for owners and carers. • Provides shelter from weather. • Encourages longer visits and social interaction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adds installation and maintenance costs. • Encouraging socialisation can result in reduce supervision of dogs.
Lighting: Consider on-demand or sensor lighting (for year-round and after business hour use)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improves usability during early morning/evening. • Supports year-round use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Installation and maintenance cost. • May disturb nearby residents or wildlife.

Signage: Both behavioral and etiquette signage and well as information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educates users on rules and responsible behaviour. • Reduces conflicts and enhances safety. • Can be inexpensive and easily updated. 	
Water: Drinking fountain with dog bowl	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides hydration for dogs and owners. • Encourages longer stays. • Supports animal welfare. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires regular maintenance and cleaning. • Can be costly to install, especially with plumbing.
Bins: with dog bag dispenser	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports hygiene and responsible waste management. • Encourages users to pick up after dogs. • Reduces environmental impact. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires regular emptying and maintenance. • Can overflow or be vandalised.
Car parking: Where on-site car parking is limited or unavailable, consider providing additional parking nearby to support access to the dog park. Where possible, parking should be located close to the park in safe locations to allow dogs to be easily and safely loaded and unloaded.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improves accessibility for users from outside the immediate neighbourhood. • Enhances safety for dogs during drop-off/pick-up. • Supports increased visitation and use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased construction costs.
POTENTIAL ADDITIONAL FEATURES	ADVANTAGES	LIMITATIONS
Agility equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides mental and physical stimulation for dogs. • Attracts dog owners seeking exercise opportunities. • Can diversify play options. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires regular maintenance and inspections. • Can be costly to install. • Usage levels can vary.
Dog wash station	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows owners to clean dogs after visits. • Enhances user satisfaction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High installation and ongoing water costs. • Requires maintenance. • Usage levels can vary.
Splash pad: This could include a paved area with on-demand water jet and bubblers with rain gardens located nearby to capture the run off	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages cooling and play in hot weather. • Can be integrated with stormwater management (rain gardens). • Adds visual and experiential interest, enhancing the park's appeal as a destination. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High construction and maintenance cost. • Water use considerations and potential runoff issues. • Seasonal use may limit value.
Irrigation: Provision of irrigation for grassed areas should be considered to sustain full coverage and maintain usability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintains grass coverage and usability. • Supports aesthetics and environmental benefits. • Reduces soil erosion and mud. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Installation and water costs. • Requires ongoing maintenance.

Digging areas: This may include sand pits, mulch or mulch pits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a safe outlet for natural dog behaviour. Protects other areas from being dug up. Can enhance engagement and play variety. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needs regular replenishment and cleaning. Can become messy or smelly if not maintained.
Composting dog waste bins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmentally friendly waste management option. Reduces landfill contributions. Encourages responsible owner behaviour. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires monitoring, maintenance, and eventual emptying. Can produce odour if not managed properly. May be more costly than standard bins.

Consider providing facilities or additional features outside the dog park fence, such as seating and drinking fountains, so that they are accessible to all park users, not just those visiting the dog park. These amenities can enhance the overall usability and enjoyment of the surrounding park area for the broader community.

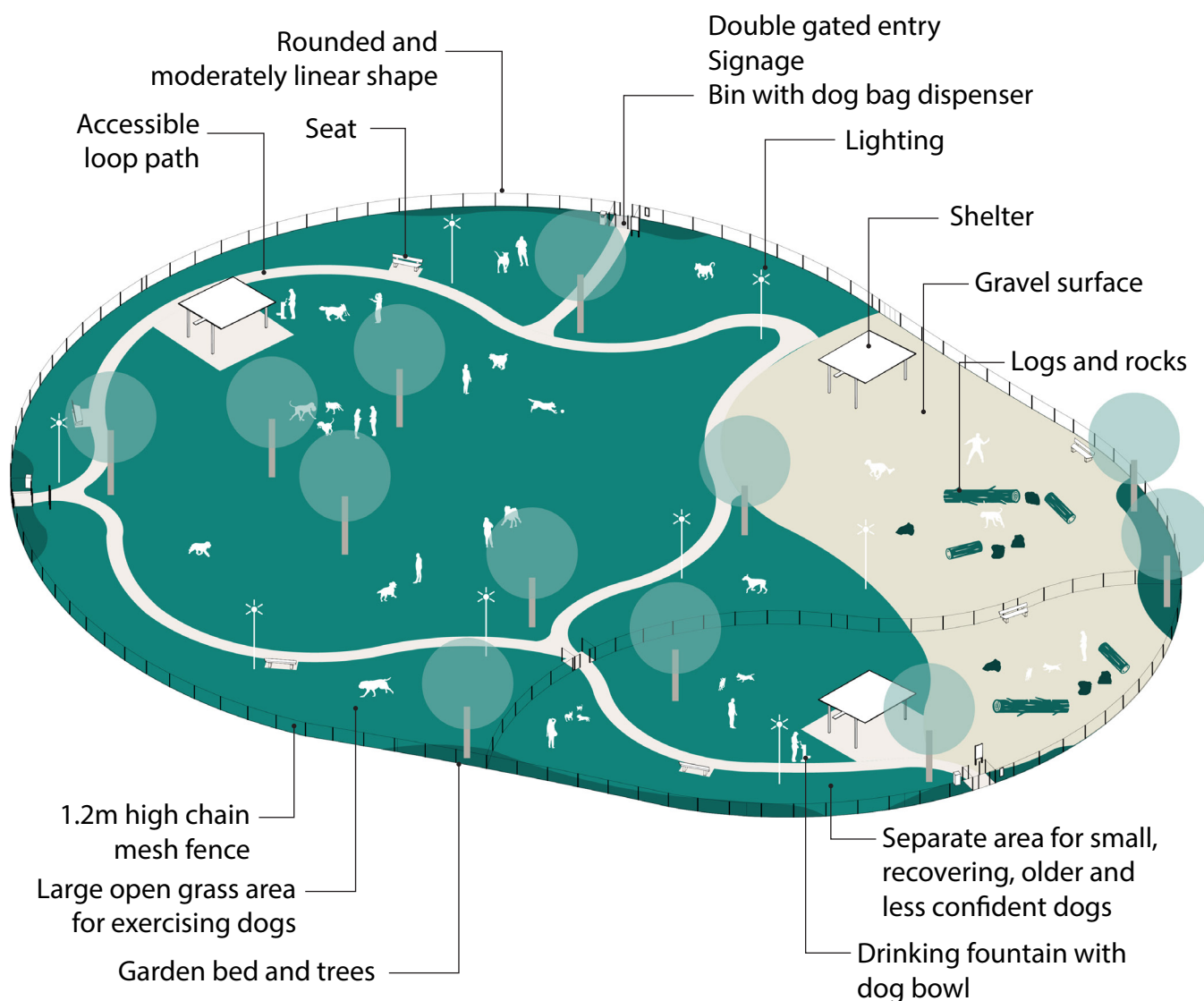


Figure 8.1: Diagram of example of large scale dog park (approximately 5,000m²), incorporating the features outlined in the above.

8.2 Small Scale Dog Parks

The following design guidelines outline the key considerations for small scale dog parks (under 3,000 m²).

A small scale dog park, generally under 3,000 m², is most suitable for areas with high urban density and serves a local catchment. These parks are typically designed for short-stay visits, with most users walking to the site. These parks may also be located in underutilised areas, so their size and layout may be determined by the available space.

HIGHLY DESIRABLE FEATURES	ADVANTAGES	LIMITATIONS
Shape: Dog parks should generally feature rounded or moderately linear layouts. However, for small scale dog parks, less optimal or irregular shapes may be acceptable if they can safely accommodate local users and provide basic functionality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages smooth circulation which in turn encourages more active supervision. • Avoiding linear park layouts supports more active supervision, ensuring dog guardians remain engaged and within close proximity to their dogs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May not be appropriate for all preferred sites, with area dimensions potentially requiring modification to achieve the preferred layout.
Fence: 1.2m high chain mesh or similar (noting that height will likely depend on site conditions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures dogs remain contained. • Provides safety for both dogs and nearby pedestrians. • Can reduce off-lead conflicts with other park users. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could be visually intrusive if not well-integrated with landscape.
Entry point: Double gates with hardstand, min. 3.5m wide maintenance access gates. Consider multiple entry points to connect with other paths or nearby features.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevents dogs from escaping when entering/exiting. • Multiple access points improve circulation and connectivity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple gates increase construction and maintenance costs.
Surface: Gravel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gravel is durable. • Gravel is more permeable than hard paved surfaces, therefore aiding drainage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gravel may be uncomfortable for some dogs • Gravel will require some maintenance to retain even coverage.
Vegetation: Trees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides shade for users and dogs. • Improves aesthetics and environmental value. • Can act as visual screening or buffer. 	
Features: Rocks and logs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage natural play and exploration. • Enhance sensory and physical stimulation for dogs. 	

Furniture: Shelter and seating at appropriate intervals to meet user needs, taking into account the size and layout of the park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improves comfort for dog guardians Provides shelter from sun and rain. Encourages longer visits and social interaction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adds installation and maintenance costs. Encouraging socialisation can result in reduce supervision of dogs.
Signage: Both behavioral and etiquette signage and well as information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educates users on rules and responsible behaviour. Reduces conflicts and enhances safety. Can be inexpensive and easily updated. 	
Water: Drinking fountain with dog bowl	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides hydration for dogs and owners. Encourages longer stays. Supports animal welfare. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires regular maintenance and cleaning. Can be costly to install, especially with plumbing.
Bins: with dog bag dispenser	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports hygiene and responsible waste management. Encourages users to pick up after dogs. Reduces environmental impact. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires regular emptying and maintenance. Can overflow or be vandalised.
POTENTIAL ADDITIONAL FEATURES	ADVANTAGES	LIMITATIONS
Path: Accessible loop path within the dog park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides safe circulation for owners and dogs. Circulation can also encourage more active dog supervision. Supports accessibility for all users. Helps reduce wear on grassed areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional construction and maintenance costs. Could limit usable play area.
Grass surface: If space allows and irrigation can be provided	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grass provides comfort and play space for dogs. Relatively low-cost material. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires high levels of maintenance to reduce degradation due to overuse, especially in a small space.
Irrigation: Provision of irrigation for grassed areas should be considered to sustain full coverage and maintain usability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintains grass coverage and usability. Supports aesthetics and environmental benefits. Reduces soil erosion and mud. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Installation and water costs. Requires ongoing maintenance.
Vegetation: Garden beds - if space allows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improves aesthetics and environmental value. Can act as visual screening or buffer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Garden beds require ongoing maintenance. May be damaged by dog activity.
Agility equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides mental and physical stimulation for dogs. Attracts dog owners seeking exercise opportunities. Can diversify play options. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires regular maintenance and inspections. Can be costly to install. Usage levels can vary.

Digging areas: This may include sand pits, mulch or mulch pits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a safe outlet for natural dog behaviour. Protects other areas from being dug up. Can enhance engagement and play variety. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needs regular replenishment and cleaning. Can become messy or smelly if not maintained.
Composting dog waste bins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmentally friendly waste management option. Reduces landfill contributions. Encourages responsible owner behaviour. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires monitoring, maintenance, and eventual emptying. Can produce odour if not managed properly. May be more costly than standard bins.
Lighting: Consider on-demand or sensor lighting (for year-round and after business hour use)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improves usability during early morning/evening. Supports year-round use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Installation and maintenance cost. May disturb nearby residents or wildlife.

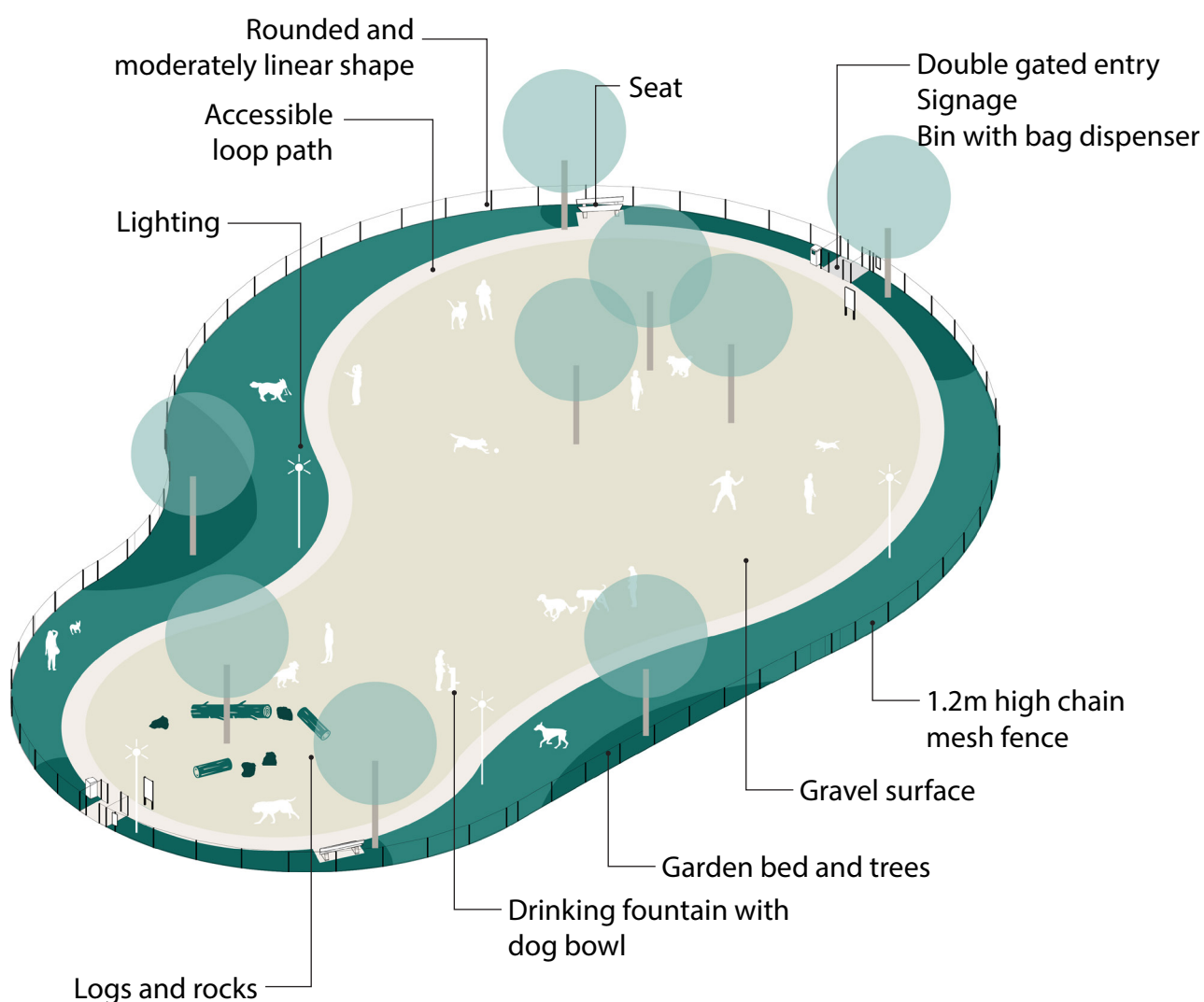


Figure 8.2: Diagram of example of small scale dog park (approximately 2,000m²), incorporating the features outlined in the above.