

# Seattle has one of America's best park systems. *For dogs, it's one of the worst.*

A sourced, reproducible public-data reference on Seattle's off-leash area system — and what has gone wrong with it. Every chart links to its source; all underlying data is published openly and available for independent verification. The opinion section is clearly marked; everything else is factual.

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Full website: [seattledogparkdata.com](https://seattledogparkdata.com)

Source code and data: [github.com/avrignaud/seattledogparkdata](https://github.com/avrignaud/seattledogparkdata)

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This print edition is auto-generated from the website on every update.

# Contents

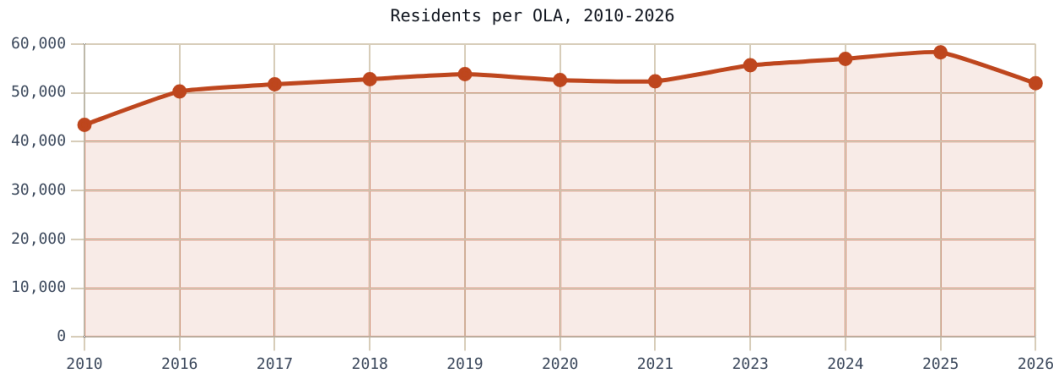
01	The Gap — counts, ratios, peer-city comparison, acreage	Part I
02	Access — network walksheds, amenities, the asymmetry	Part II
03	Forward — what works, shared-use models, non-SPR land	Part III
04	Enforcement — 4,803 citations, hotspots, revenue vs cost	Part IV
05	Budget — SPR total vs OLA spend, Cycle 1 vs Cycle 2, CIP context, peer-city funding	Part V
06	Peer City Detail — Portland, SF, Vancouver BC, DC, Minneapolis, NYC	Part VI
07	Opinion — six principles, three opinions, one recommendation	Part VII
08	Methodology, sources, and limitations	Appendix

# The Gap.

*Seattle's OLA count has been stuck at 14 since 2009 — 17 years and counting — while the population grew by more than 200,000. Per-capita comparison to Portland, San Francisco, Vancouver BC, and Austin. Budget analysis through Park District Cycle 2.*

## 01 • Residents per off-leash area, over time

In 2010, one OLA served 43,476 Seattle residents. In 2025, it serves 58,329 — a **34% increase in crowding** with no corresponding increase in OLA supply. Two new OLAs open in fall 2026 (West Seattle Stadium + Othello Playground). Even after they open, residents-per-OLA will remain worse than it was in 2010.



YEAR	POPULATION	OLAS	RESIDENTS PER OLA
2010	608,660	14	43,476
2016	704,400	14	50,314
2018	739,500	14	52,821
2020	737,015	14	52,644
2023	779,200	14	55,657
2025	816,600	14	58,329
2026 projected	832,000	16	52,000

Source: WA OFM April 1 population estimates · SPR OLA inventory · data in data/seattle-timeseries.csv.

### TAKEAWAY

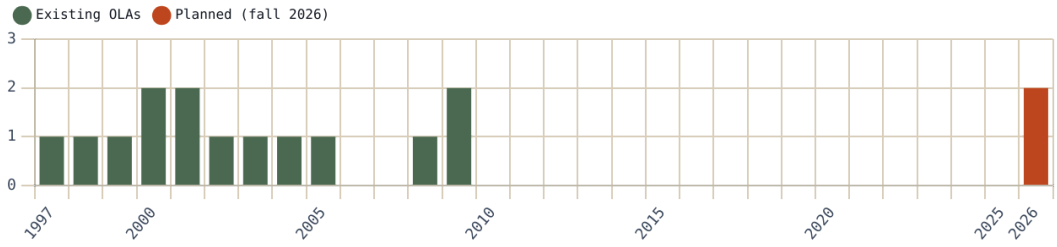
To return to 2010's 43,476 residents-per-OLA ratio at Seattle's projected 2026 population (~832,000), the city would need **19 OLAs** — three more than the 16 projected for fall 2026, or five more beyond the current 14.

## 02 • When Seattle's OLAs opened

The 1997–2009 build-out added Seattle's 14 existing OLAs. Then nothing — **17 years with no new OLAs** until West Seattle Stadium and Othello Playground open in fall 2026, while the

city's population grew from ~609,000 to ~817,000.

OLAs opened per year (note the 2010-2025 gap)

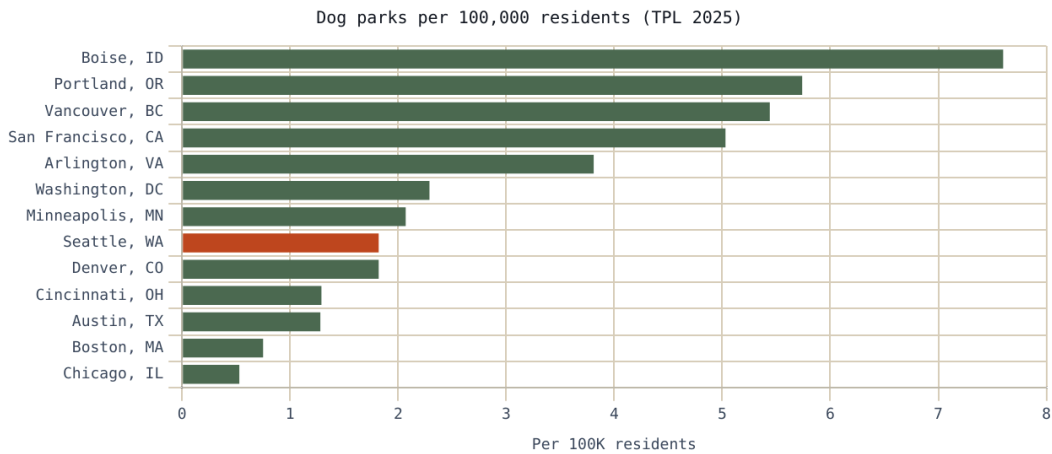


YEAR	OLAS OPENED
1997	Kinnear
1998	Magnuson Park
1999	Westcrest
2000	Denny Park, Regrade
2001	Lower Woodland, Plymouth Pillars
2002	Dr. Jose Rizal
2003	Golden Gardens
2004	Northacres
2005	Genesee
2008	I-5 Colonnade
2009	Blue Dog Pond, Magnolia Manor
2010-2025	(none)
2026 planned	West Seattle Stadium, Othello Playground

### 03 • Peer-city comparison

TPL's 2025 ParkScore measures dog parks per 100,000 residents across the 100 largest U.S. cities. Seattle ranks well below every major West Coast peer. Portland has more than three times Seattle's dog-park density. Methodology note: each city counts differently – Portland's total includes ~20 unfenced voice-control areas, SF's DPAs include carved-out sections of

larger parks, Vancouver's 36 includes time-restricted beach/field access, Austin's number is inflated by Red Bud Isle (293 acres unfenced).

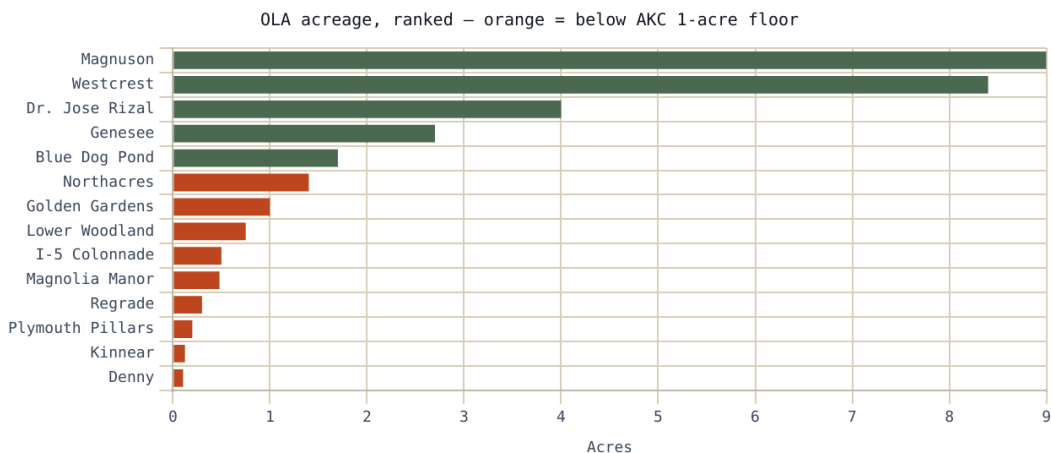


CITY	POPULATION	DOG PARKS	PER 100K	PARKSCORE RANK
Seattle, WA	816,600	14	1.82	8
Portland, OR	660,000	38	5.74	9
San Francisco, CA	870,000	42	5.03	6
Vancouver, BC	662,000	36	5.44	—
Washington, DC	699,000	16	2.29	1
Arlington, VA	236,000	9	3.81	7
Boise, ID	240,000	18	7.60	—
Austin, TX	1,025,000	13	1.28	54

Source: TPL 2025 ParkScore Seattle (tpl.org/city/seattle-washington) · data in data/peer-cities.csv.

## 04 · Acreage, not just count

The "14 OLAs" number also flatters Seattle. The four largest parks hold 79% of total OLA acreage. Seven of 14 are under one acre; the two smallest (Denny Park at 0.105 ac and Kinnear at 0.124 ac) are each roughly the footprint of a basketball court.



OLA	ACRES	NEIGHBORHOOD	YEAR OPENED
Magnuson Park	9.0	Sand Point	1998
Westcrest	8.4	Highland Park	1999
Dr. Jose Rizal	4.0	Beacon Hill	2002
Genesee	2.7	Columbia City	2005
Blue Dog Pond	1.7	Mt. Baker	2009
Northacres	1.4	Pinehurst	2004
Golden Gardens	1.0	Ballard	2003
Lower Woodland	0.75	Green Lake	2001
I-5 Colonnade	0.50	Eastlake	2008
Magnolia Manor	0.48	Magnolia	2009
Regrade	0.30	Belltown	2000
Plymouth Pillars	0.20	Capitol Hill	2001
Kinnear	0.124	Queen Anne	1997
Denny Park	0.105	South Lake Union	2000
<b>Total</b>	<b>30.7</b>		

Source: SPR ArcGIS FeatureServer (2026-04 pull) · data in data/seattle-olas.csv.

## 05 · The dogs-vs-kids ratio

Seattle has an estimated **150,000+ dogs** (conservative floor — see Appendix for the full three-tier triangulation) and **~115,000 children** under 18. The city runs **157 playgrounds** but only **14 OLAs**. Per-child playground ratio: ~1 playground per 733 kids. Per-dog OLA ratio: ~1 OLA per 10,714 dogs — **14.6× worse**.

### THE FRAMING

Prioritizing kids over dogs is right. No reasonable person disputes that. The argument on this site is that the *magnitude* of the gap has gone beyond any reasonable prioritization: the dedicated OLA budget was about **\$100,000 out of a \$168M SPR total** in 2018 (0.06%); OLAs occupy about **31 of Seattle's ~53,100 acres** (0.06% of the city). A population the size of all dog owners deserves more than 0.06%.

### PART II

## Access.

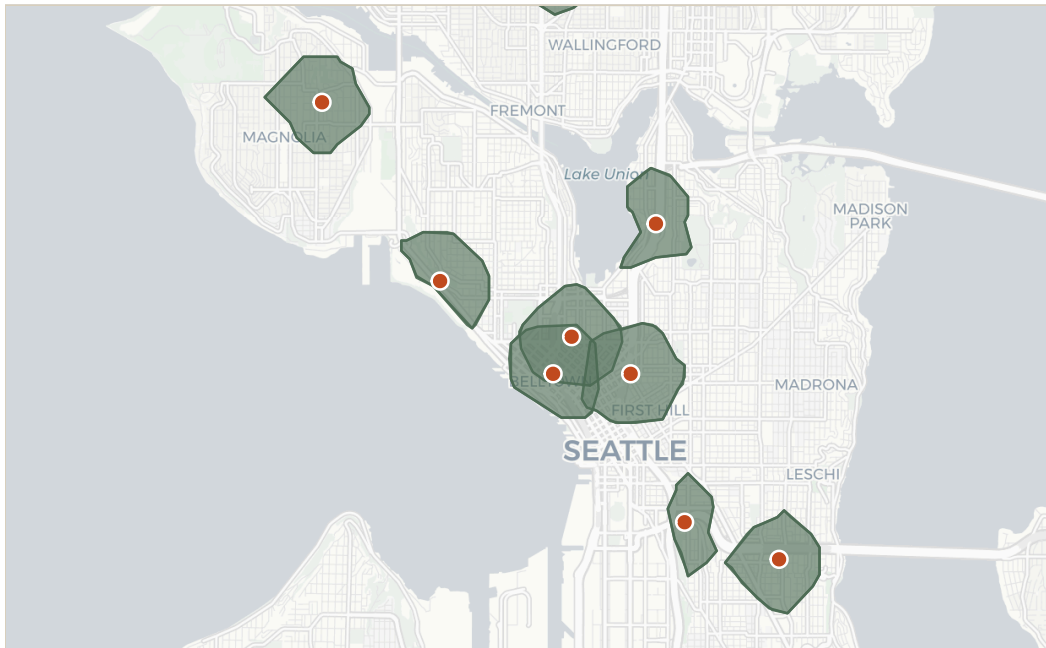
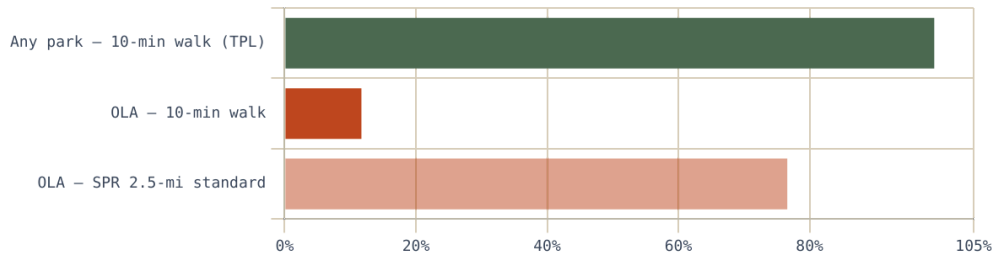
*99% of Seattleites live within a 10-minute walk of a park. 11.7% live that close to a dog park. Network walkshed analysis; amenity breakdown; the asymmetry between SPR's 2.5-mile OLA standard and TPL's 0.5-mile general-parks standard.*

## 01 · The walkshed

Trust for Public Land's 2025 ParkScore shows 99% of Seattle residents live within a 10-minute walk of a park — an industry-standard 0.5-mile half-mile walkshed. We applied the same methodology to OLAs only, using osmnx against Seattle's full OpenStreetMap walk network

(110,383 nodes / 305,582 edges, projected to UTM 10N, physical barriers respected) and 2020 Census block-group population clipped to the Seattle city boundary.

Share of Seattle residents within the stated walkshed (%)



**The walkshed, mapped.** Green polygons are the 0.5-mile (10-minute) network walksheds around each of Seattle's 14 existing OLAs. Orange dots are OLAs. The unshaded area – most of the city – is what "11.7%" means in practice. Interactive version with zoom, hover, and the 1.0-mi and 2.5-mi isochrones at [seattledogparkdata.com/part2-access.html](http://seattledogparkdata.com/part2-access.html).

MEASURE	% OF RESIDENTS
Within 10-min walk of any park (TPL 2025)	99%
Within 10-min walk of an OLA (repo-computed)	11.7%
Within SPR's 2.5-mi OLA access standard	76.6%

Source: `scripts/compute_walkshed.py + scripts/population_coverage.py · data in data/walkshed/population_coverage.csv.`

### THE ASYMMETRY

The 10-minute walk is the standard used by TPL, NRPA, the Urban Land Institute, the National Park Service, and the CDC. SPR cites it proudly when celebrating Seattle's park system generally. For dog parks specifically, SPR switched to a 2.5-mile standard — **5× more permissive**. No universal national consensus comparable to TPL's 10-min standard exists for dog parks specifically — a handful of agencies use OLA-specific radii (Seattle's own 2016 Recreation Demand Study used 2.5 mi; Fairfax County has a published dog-park siting study) — but nothing approaching TPL's benchmark has been widely adopted. The industry default for an OLA access metric is the same 10-minute walk used for any other park.

## 02 • AKC size standards and per-dog capacity

The American Kennel Club publishes a minimum-size recommendation for off-leash dog parks: **one acre per site**, with 100 square feet per dog at peak capacity.

OLA	SQ FT	PEAK @ 100 FT <sup>2</sup> /DOG	BELOW AKC 1-AC FLOOR?
Denny Park	4,574	46	Yes
Kinnear	5,401	54	Yes
Plymouth Pillars	8,712	87	Yes
Regrade	13,068	131	Yes
Magnolia Manor	20,909	209	Yes
I-5 Colonnade	21,780	218	Yes
Lower Woodland	32,670	327	Yes
Golden Gardens	43,560	436	At floor
Northacres	60,984	610	No
Blue Dog Pond	74,052	741	No
Genesee	117,612	1,176	No
Dr. Jose Rizal	174,240	1,742	No
Westcrest	365,904	3,659	No
Magnuson	392,040	3,920	No

**Source:** AKC Guide to Dog Parks ([images.akc.org/pdf/GLEG01.pdf](https://images.akc.org/pdf/GLEG01.pdf)) · sq ft computed from reconciled acreages in `data/seattle-olas.csv`.

## 03 • Amenities at existing OLAs

Per SPR's current individual OLA pages (April 2026 reconciliation):

AMENITY	OLAS WITH IT	WHICH ONES
Lighting	2 of 14	Westcrest, Denny Park
Drinking water / hose	9 of 14	Westcrest, Genesee, I-5 Colonnade, Blue Dog Pond, Dr. Jose Rizal, Denny, Magnolia Manor, Regrade, Plymouth Pillars
Small-dog separate area	5 of 14	Magnuson, Westcrest, Genesee, Golden Gardens, Magnolia Manor

## 04 • Illegal-use indicators

SPR's own 2016 owner survey and available enforcement and civic-complaint data describe the compliance picture that the current framework produces.

INDICATOR	VALUE	YEAR	SOURCE
Dog owners admitting weekly-to-monthly illegal off-leash in parks	39%	2016	SPR <i>People, Dogs and Parks</i> owner survey

Dog owners admitting weekly-to-monthly illegal off-leash on trails	38%	2016	Same SPR survey, separate question
Find-It-Fix-It nuisance-dog complaints via app	~1,100	2024	Seattle FIFI approximate; PRR #2 queued for authoritative count
Off-leash tickets issued by SAC, Mar-Aug 2016 (6-month window)	435	2016	Seattle Animal Control disclosure
OLA Expansion Study survey respondents	4,700	2023	SPR Parkways Feb 2024 announcement

#### WHAT THESE INDICATE

Self-reported illegal use is not a rounding error — roughly 40% of owners admitting monthly-plus violations to SPR's own surveyors is structural, not a fringe. And 4,700 respondents to SPR's 2023 Expansion Study survey is a constituency, not a lobby. The framework the current OLA policy assumes (most owners comply; a few scofflaws get ticketed) does not match the data SPR itself has collected.

## 05 • Peer-city acreage and methodology

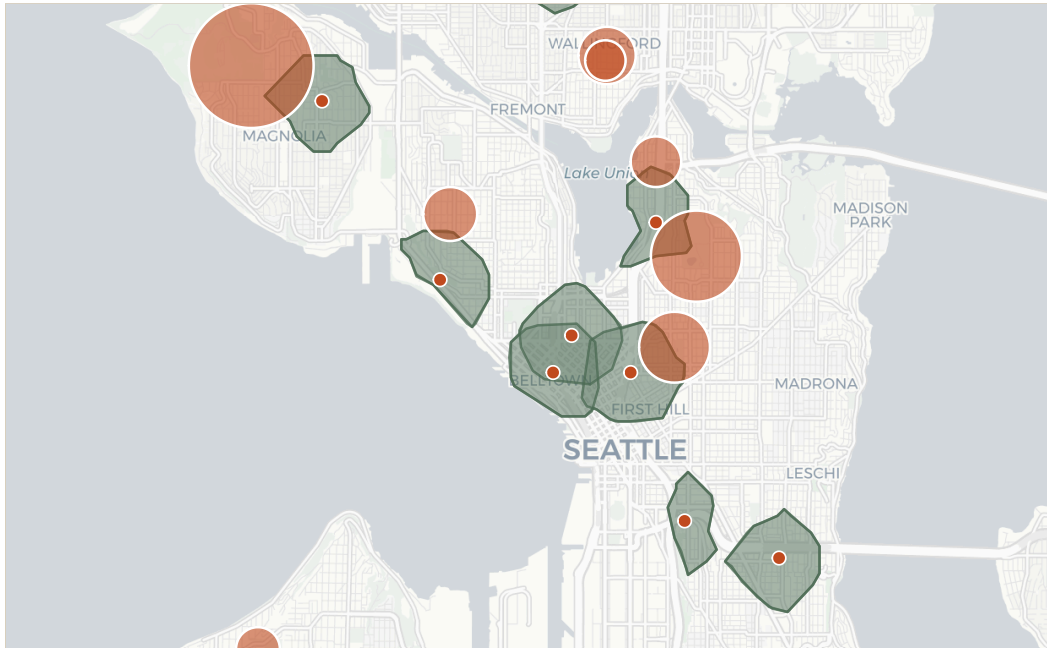
Comparing total OLA acreage across cities is harder than comparing counts because cities define "off-leash" differently. Portland has 30+ DOLAs but most are *unfenced* voice-control areas; Seattle counts only fully-fenced dedicated OLAs. The adjusted methodology below controls for definition.

CITY	OLAS	EST. TOTAL ACRES	ACRES PER 10K	COUNTING METHODOLOGY
Seattle, WA	14	30.7	0.38	All fenced dedicated
Portland, OR	38	85	1.29	Mostly unfenced voice control
San Francisco, CA	42	120	1.38	Mix fenced + unfenced
Vancouver, BC	36	168	2.54	Mostly time-restricted shared
Austin, TX	13	80	0.78	Mix (excl. Red Bud Isle 293-ac outlier)

## 06 • The access gap, measured — where citations happen vs. where walkshed reaches

If the thesis — that people run dogs off-leash where they live, and they live where OLAs aren't — is true, it should be visible in the enforcement data. It is.

MEASURE	VALUE
Citations OUTSIDE any OLA 0.5-mi walkshed (park-named + geocoded street addresses)	72.2% (2,577 of 3,570)
Citations OUTSIDE (park-named only)	69.6% (2,035 of 2,925)
Citations INSIDE an OLA walkshed (combined)	27.8% (993)
Unique parks in citation data sitting outside any OLA walkshed	26 of 35
Unique parks inside an OLA walkshed	9 of 35



**Access × enforcement, one map.** Green polygons = 0.5-mi OLA walksheds. Orange bubbles = citation hotspots (radius scales with count); amber = hotspots at OLA host parks where citations fall inside the walkshed (Magnuson, Westcrest, Genesee, Golden Gardens – citations on the non-OLA portions of those parks). Most bubbles sit outside the green. Interactive version at [seattledogparkdata.com/part2-access.html#finding-access-gap](http://seattledogparkdata.com/part2-access.html#finding-access-gap).

#### WHAT THIS RULES OUT

"Dog owners are scofflaws who violate the law anywhere" predicts citations spread evenly across the city, uncorrelated with OLA access. The data doesn't support that — citations cluster in very specific places. "Owners break the law because enforcement is lax" predicts the same even-spread pattern scaled up. The data doesn't support that either. What fits the data: people break the law where no legal alternative exists within walking distance, and they comply where one does.

#### 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: 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 what public land outside SPR's portfolio could host off-leash space without a new Park District dollar.*

### 01 • What works — the three Seattle OLAs people actually love

The enforcement data shows where the system is failing. It is equally worth asking where it is working. Three of Seattle's 14 OLAs consistently turn up in community praise, visitor "best-of"

lists, and sustained volunteer participation. Each has a different organizational structure behind it.

### **Magnuson Park — the volunteer-steward model**

**9.0 acres**, opened 1996 (pilot) / 1999 (permanent), former NAS Sand Point. Largest OLA in Seattle; only one with water access to Lake Washington. Steward: **Magnuson Off-Leash Group (MOLG)**, an all-volunteer 501(c)(3) (EIN 91-2059268) founded 1999.

Magnuson is a structural outlier on every dimension: land area, physical features (shoreline, gravel paths, woods), and governance. MOLG raises donations, runs volunteer maintenance days, and partners formally with Seattle Parks — the closest thing Seattle has to the Portland or San Francisco "dog park friends" model. The 248 citations logged at Magnuson 2014–2019 (see Part IV top-20) need to be read in context: Magnuson is the biggest park with the biggest footprint, most citations happen on the non-OLA portions, and MOLG's presence increases both compliance inside the OLA and reporting of violations outside it.

### **Genesee — the COLA-steward model**

**2.7 acres**, opened 2005 at Genesee Park & Playfield, Columbia City / Rainier Valley. Third-largest Seattle OLA; small-dog area separated. Steward: **Citizens for Off-Leash Areas (COLA)**, a 501(c)(3) that has been the system-wide SPR partner since 1996.

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. Where MOLG is site-specific, COLA works across the whole system. Genesee's physical design choices have held up: small-dog-separated area, multiple gates, drainage that handles Seattle winters.

### **Westcrest — the recent-investment model**

**8.4 acres**, renovated 2021–2022. Second-largest OLA. **\$505K** Park District Major Maintenance & Asset Management Fund investment. Partners: Highland Park Action Committee (HPAC) on-site; COLA credited for ongoing stewardship.

Westcrest is what happens when Seattle actually funds an 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. Per-acre, Westcrest's 86 citations 2014–2019 are closer to what Magnuson does on nine acres than what Kinnear does on 0.1.

#### **WHAT THE THREE PROFILES SHARE**

None of the three have anything to do with enforcement. Each has a named community partner, a specific governance structure, and a site physically large enough to absorb demand without breaking. Magnuson at 9 acres, Genesee at 2.7, Westcrest at 8.4 — compare to Kinnear at 0.124. The *access* story is about distance; the *design* story is about size plus stewardship.

Sources: [Magnuson Off-Leash Group](#) · [Citizens for Off-Leash Areas](#) · [Parkways blog — Westcrest reopening](#) · [HistoryLink: June 15, 1996 trial opening](#).

## **02 · Shared-use — the off-leash-hours model**

Several American cities solve the supply problem without building a single new fenced OLA: they designate time-windowed off-leash access in existing parks. The policy has been in formal

operation in New York City since 2007, and in functional operation for roughly two decades. If adopted in Seattle, it would expand access dramatically without new capital expenditure.

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

NYC's Dog Friendly Areas policy designates specific parks (or sub-areas within parks) where dogs may be off-leash between 9pm and 9am. Formalized via 2007 NYC Parks rulemaking; the operational pattern predated formalization by a decade or more. The policy has not been rolled back, has not produced the feared liability outcomes, and is cited by secondary sources as a working example of shared-use.

### **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.

#### **WHY THIS MATTERS FOR SEATTLE**

Seattle's existing 14 OLAs cover 11.7% of residents within a 10-minute walk (Part II · 01). Time-windowed access to existing large parks — Green Lake, Volunteer Park, Lincoln Park, Seward Park, Discovery Park — would potentially raise coverage dramatically without the multi-year capital timelines of building new dedicated OLAs. The Opinion section argues for this explicitly.

Sources: [NYC Parks Dog Friendly Areas](#) · [NYC Parks 2007 rulemaking press release](#).

## **03 · Non-SPR land — public space SPR doesn't manage**

Seattle's OLA supply is bounded by Seattle Parks & Recreation's real-estate portfolio. It does not have to be. Significant acreage of other public land inside Seattle 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 flagged this in its comments on SPR's 2023 Off-Leash Area Expansion Study: *SPR did not consider non-SPR public land*.

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

WSDOT manages land adjacent to every state-numbered road in the city. Some is unusable (active lanes, on-ramps), but a significant amount is landscaped setback, substantially fenced, and physically distant from active traffic. I-5 Colonnade — an existing Seattle OLA — is literally *under* I-5 on WSDOT land, demonstrating the principle.

### **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, which is closer to "compatible with off-leash use" than almost any other non-Parks category of public land.

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

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

## THE SYSTEMIC OBSERVATION

If the policy question is "where can SPR build a new OLA on SPR land?" the answer is "slowly, expensively, and on a multi-decade cycle." If the question is "where inside Seattle city limits is there public land where dogs could be off-leash without triggering a new capital project?" the answer is "a significant amount, across three agencies SPR has not historically partnered with." That frame shift is what the Opinion section argues for.

Sources: [SPR Off-Leash Area Expansion Study \(2023-24\)](#) · [COLA comments on the Expansion Study](#).

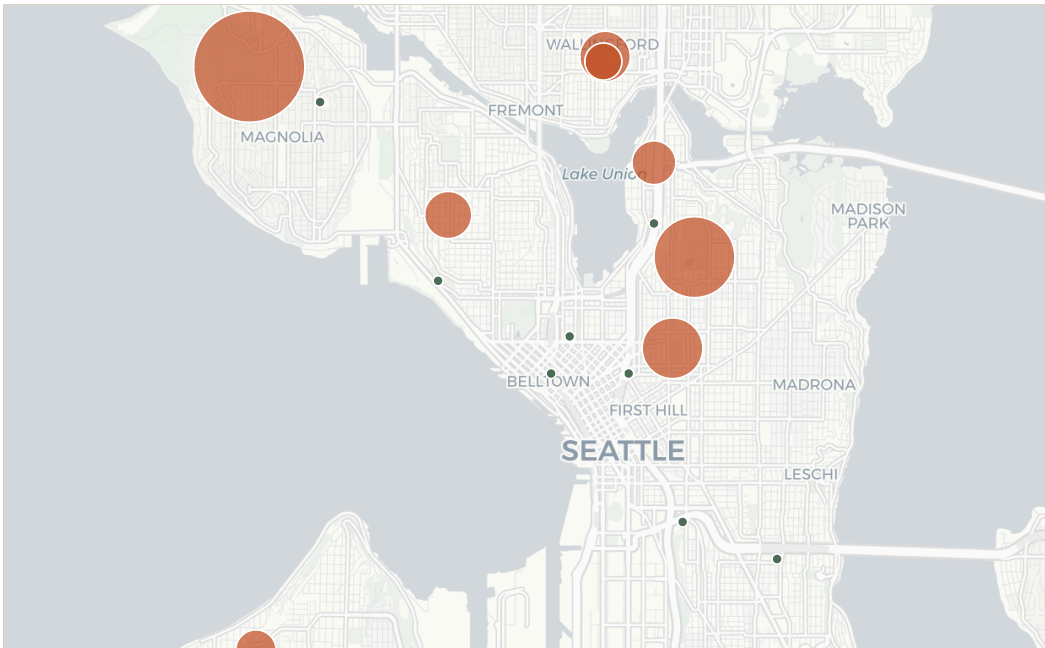
## PART IV

# Enforcement. *Where citations land, and why it matters.*

*The full PRR C049204 dataset — 4,803 off-leash citations issued by Seattle Animal Control between January 2014 and October 2019 — processed, geocoded, and cross-referenced against the OLA inventory.*

## 01 • Overview of the data

Seattle Animal Control issued 4,803 off-leash citations between January 2014 and October 2019 under Seattle Municipal Code 18.12.080(A). 4,020 had an identifiable park name (83.7%); 672 had only a street address (14.0%); 111 had no location recorded (2.3%).

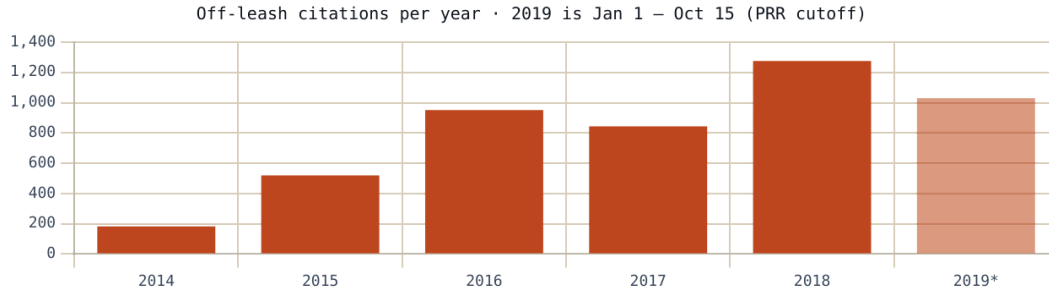


*Where citations concentrated, 2014–2019. Circle size is citation count at that park; orange fill marks hotspots without an OLA, sage-green outline marks the 14 existing OLA locations. The empirical pattern: citations cluster away from OLAs, at parks where no legal off-leash option exists. Interactive version at [seattledogparkdata.com/enforcement.html](http://seattledogparkdata.com/enforcement.html).*

## 02 • Citations per year, 2014–2019

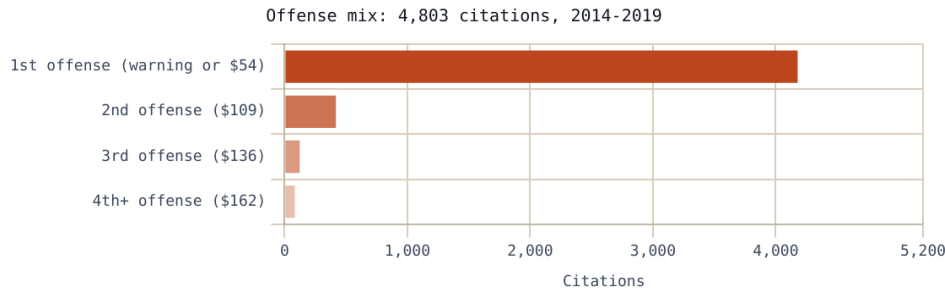
Citations rose sharply through 2018, more than doubling in four years. The 2019 number covers only January through October 15 (the PRR cutoff); pro-rated, 2019 would likely have

exceeded 2018.



YEAR	CITATIONS	PERIOD
2014	183	full year
2015	519	full year
2016	952	full year
2017	844	full year
2018	1,276	full year
2019	1,029	Jan 1 – Oct 15 (PRR cutoff)
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,803</b>	69.5 months

### 03 · Offense mix



LEVEL	COUNT	SHARE	FEE	FEE SUBTOTAL
1st offense (warning / \$54)	4,179	87.0%	\$0 or \$54	\$164,916
2nd offense	418	8.7%	\$109	\$45,562
3rd offense	123	2.6%	\$136	\$16,728
4th+ offense	83	1.7%	\$162	\$13,446
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,803</b>	<b>100%</b>	—	<b>\$240,652</b>

### 04 · Top cited parks (2014–2019)

PARK	CITATIONS	HAS OLA?
Magnuson Park	248	Yes
Lincoln Park	122	No (nearest: Westcrest, 3.4 mi)

Discovery Park	119	No
Cal Anderson Park	95	No
Volunteer Park	89	No
Westcrest Park	86	Yes
West Queen Anne Playfield	77	No (nearest: Kinnear, 0.124 ac, 0.7 mi)
Gas Works Park	64	No
Seward Park	59	No
Alki Beach Park	55	No (nearest: Westcrest, 2.7 mi)

Citations cluster at parks *without* OLAs, or where the nearest OLA is functionally too far. The empirical pattern: people run dogs off-leash where they live, and they live where the OLAs aren't.

## 05 • Revenue vs. program cost

The 2021 MOA between SPR and FAS disclosed that one Animal Control Officer II position costs \$152,399/year fully loaded (salary + benefits + overhead). Over the 6-year PRR window, that's \$914,394. Adding the paired SPR-side Facilities Maintenance Worker (the 2021 MOA treats ACO + FMW as a team) approximately doubles the cost to ~\$1.8M.

ITEM	6-YEAR TOTAL
Actual citation fee revenue (from CSV fee column)	\$240,652
FAS-side ACO II cost	\$914,394
FAS + paired SPR FMW cost (est.)	~\$1,800,000
Cost-recovery ratio, FAS-only	26%
Cost-recovery ratio, FAS + FMW	14%

Source: SPR Animal Control PRR C049204 · [SPR/FAS 2021 MOA Attachment A](#).

### ENFORCEMENT PROBABILITY

4,803 citations over 6 years against a dog population of at least 150,000 yields a city-wide-average **0.5% chance per dog per year** of being cited. Treat this as a rough SWAG — it averages over wide variation (owners who never go off-leash have zero exposure; owners who visit high-citation parks frequently face higher probabilities; quiet neighborhoods see near-zero enforcement). Even so, the average is a useful floor: Seattle cannot close the gap via enforcement without orders-of-magnitude more staff. Roughly 90% of citations are \$0 or \$54 first-offense warnings. The fine-based enforcement model is structurally mismatched to the behavior it attempts to deter.

### PART V

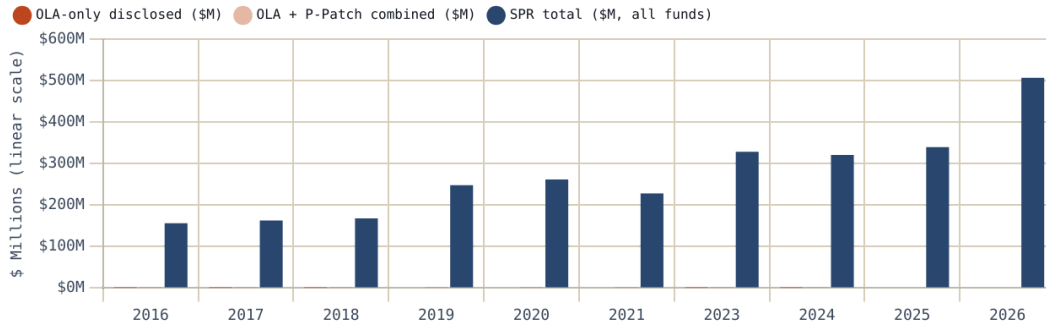
## Budget.

*SPR's total budget grew from \$156M in 2016 to \$507M projected in 2026 — up 3.2x. The OLA line went from \$100K/yr to \$129K/yr over the same period. One-time Cycle 2 capital adds \$3.46M for two new OLAs + design of a third.*

# 01 • SPR total vs OLA-only spend

Two views of the same numbers. The first is on a linear dollar axis — the axis the city budget itself is built on — so the gap is allowed to look the size it actually is. The second, further down, is the log-scale version, which lets the OLA line breathe enough to read the year-over-year trend.

SPR total vs OLA spend, 2016-2026 (linear scale)

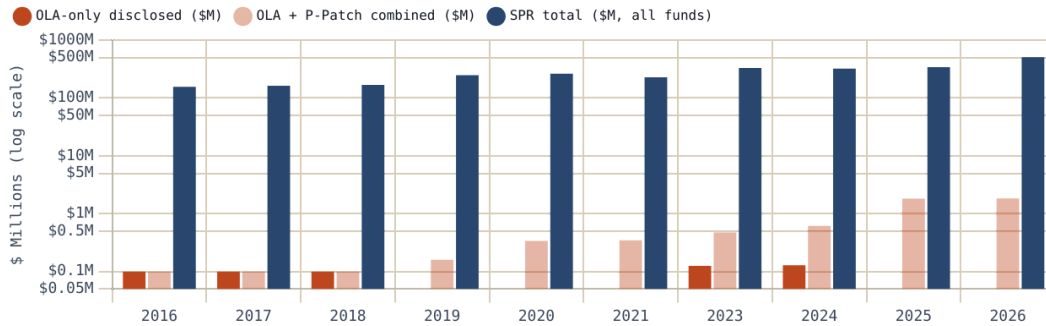


## LOOK CLOSELY

Above each year, just above the axis line, there is an orange sliver roughly one pixel tall. That is the OLA-related budget, drawn to scale against the SPR total. In 2018 — the peak year as a share of SPR — it was **0.064% of SPR's total**. This is the chart the log-scale version below is hiding: the orange bars are there, and you essentially cannot see them. That is the point.

Same data, log scale — so the OLA trend is actually readable:

SPR total vs OLA spend, 2016-2026 (log scale)



YEAR	SPR TOTAL (\$M, ALL FUNDS)	OLA-ONLY OPERATING (\$K)	OLA AS % OF SPR	CYCLE
2016	156	100	0.064%	Cycle 1
2017	163	100	0.061%	Cycle 1
2018	168	100	0.060%	Cycle 1
2019	247.7	<i>not split</i>	—	Cycle 1
2020	261.9	<i>not split</i>	—	Cycle 1
2023	328.2	126	0.038%	Cycle 2
2024	320.7	129	0.040%	Cycle 2

2025	339.4	<i>not split</i>	— Cycle 2
2026	506.9	<i>not split</i>	— Cycle 2

Source: Seattle adopted/proposed budget books 2016–2026 · SPR public statements for Cycle 1 OLA-only · Parkways blog for 2023–2024 OLA-only · data in data/budget-detail.csv. Post-2018 OLA-only splits are combined with P-Patch community gardens in the Maintaining Parks & Facilities BSL (BC-PR-50000); PRR #3 filed to request the OLA-only portion.

## 02 • OLA spending per dog (at 150,000 floor)

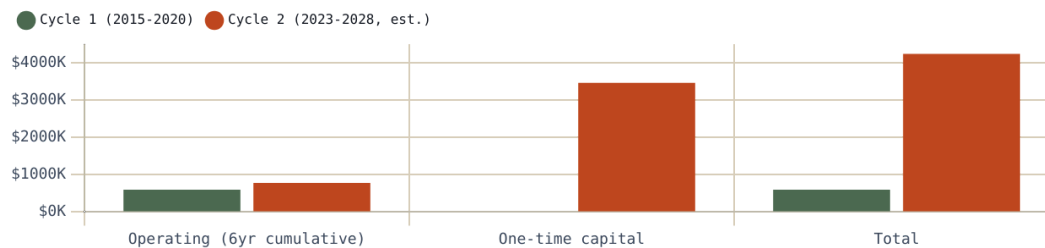
Dividing OLA-only operating spend by the conservative 150,000-dog Seattle population floor:

- **Cycle 1 peak (2016–2018):** \$100,000 / 150,000 = **\$0.67 per dog per year.**
- **Cycle 2 (2023–2024):** ~\$127K / 150K = **\$0.85 per dog per year.**
- **Cycle 2 capital (\$3.46M one-time) spread across the 6-year cycle:** ~\$3.84 per dog per year additional.

## 03 • Cycle 1 vs Cycle 2 cumulative OLA investment

The Seattle Park District runs in six-year cycles. Cycle 1 (2015–2020) had publicly-stated \$100,000/year OLA-only operating spend — ~\$600K total, zero capital. Cycle 2 (2023–2028) includes a one-time \$3.46M capital appropriation for West Seattle Stadium + Othello construction plus design funds for Ravenna, plus roughly \$129K/year operating (the 2024 disclosed figure, assumed flat). Cumulative through the full cycle:

Cycle 1 vs Cycle 2 OLA-specific spending (\$)



ITEM	CYCLE 1 (2015–2020)	CYCLE 2 (2023–2028)
OLA-only operating, cumulative	~\$600K	~\$780K (est.)
One-time capital for new OLAs	\$0	\$3.46M
<b>Total OLA-specific 6-year spend</b>	<b>~\$600K</b>	<b>~\$4.24M</b>
New OLAs built	0	2 (+ Ravenna design only)
Per-new-OLA cost (where applicable)	—	~\$1.73M / OLA

### THE 7× INCREASE

Cycle 2 OLA-specific spending is roughly 7× Cycle 1, driven entirely by the one-time capital line. The operating line barely moved — \$100K/yr Cycle 1 to \$129K/yr Cycle 2 — which is why ongoing maintenance quality at existing OLAs has not visibly changed.

## 04 • \$3.46M in CIP context

The Cycle 2 OLA capital is meaningful against Cycle 1's zero. In the context of Seattle's larger Capital Improvement Program, it's a rounding error.

CAPITAL LINE	\$ (MILLIONS)
Magnuson Park improvements (single-site, one cycle)	\$18
Gas Works Park remediation (single-project)	\$10
Green Lake shoreline (single-project)	\$7.5
SPR 2026 CIP total (all capital projects)	\$87.7
<b>Cycle 2 OLA capital (W. Seattle Stadium + Othello + Ravenna design)</b>	<b>\$3.46</b>

**Reading:** Seattle's 2026 CIP allocates roughly 25x more capital to non-OLA park projects than to OLAs. This is not an argument that CIP projects don't matter – Gas Works and Green Lake need the investment. It's an argument that the OLA capital, presented as a breakthrough, remains a rounding error in SPR's CIP.

## 05 • Peer-city funding models

CITY	OPERATING SOURCE	CAPITAL VEHICLE	DEDICATED DOG-PARK REVENUE?
Seattle, WA	SPR Maintaining Parks & Facilities BSL (bundled w/ P-Patch)	Metropolitan Park District Cycle 2	No
Portland, OR	PP&R general fund + 2020 Parks Levy	Same (levy operating only)	No
San Francisco, CA	Rec & Park general fund + Prop C Open Space Fund	GO park bonds (Prop B 2020 = \$487M)	No (SF has no mandatory dog license)
Vancouver, BC	Park Board operating (property-tax)	2023–2026 Capital Plan (\$2.1M DOLA program)	No
Washington, DC	DPR general-fund ops; parks free to users	District CIP (~\$1M per new OLA)	No – \$2/license goes to spay-neuter fund, not OLAs
Minneapolis, MN	<b>Fee-supported Enterprise Fund</b> (\$38/\$66 annual permits)	MPRB capital budget	<b>Yes – permit revenue covers operations</b>

### FINDING

Of every peer studied, only Minneapolis treats off-leash dog areas as a user-pays service – annual permits (\$38 resident, \$66 non-resident first dog) fund OLA operations. It's the closest any US-major-peer comes to a dedicated revenue model for dog parks. Every other peer folds OLAs into general parks ops with no dedicated stream.

### PART VI – PEER CITY DETAIL

## How other cities do this.

*Six peer cities with OLA systems worth studying, each with at least one design choice Seattle has not tried. The aggregate comparison is in Part I; this section*

carries the per-city detail.

## Portland, OR — voice-control model

DESIGNATED OLAS	30+ (mix of fenced + unfenced voice-control)
PER 100K RESIDENTS	5.74 (TPL 2025 ParkScore rank #9)
FUNDING	PP&R general fund + 2020 Parks Levy (~\$47M/yr). Dog license revenue goes to Multnomah County Animal Services, not PP&R
GOVERNANCE	City-run; informal volunteer advocacy via DOG PAC; no formal co-management MOUs
NOTABLE	Voice-control model: ~28 of the 30+ DOLAs are unfenced areas inside shared-use parks with designated boundaries. A Portland owner has far more legal options inside a 10-min walkshed than a Seattle owner does

## San Francisco, CA — 36 DPAs under federal-lands pressure

DESIGNATED DPAS	36 (mix fenced + voice-control; U.N. Plaza is the only fully-fenced site in Civic Center)
PER 100K RESIDENTS	5.03 (TPL 2025 ParkScore rank #6)
FUNDING	Rec & Park general fund + Prop C Open Space Fund; capital via GO park bonds (Prop B 2020 = \$487M). SF has no mandatory dog license
GOVERNANCE	City-run; SFDog is the long-standing volunteer advocacy org and sits on the Dog Advisory Committee
NOTABLE	The most <i>litigated</i> OLA history of any peer: the decades-long GGNRA (federal) vs. city dispute over Fort Funston, Ocean Beach, Crissy Field off-leash access. Seattle has no equivalent federal-lands complication

## Vancouver, BC — elected Park Board

OFF-LEASH AREAS	36+ (fenced + time-restricted + seasonal beach access)
PER 100K RESIDENTS	5.44 (not covered by TPL ParkScore — Canada)
FUNDING	Park Board operating budget (property tax) + 2023–2026 Capital Plan (~\$2.1M DOLA program; \$1.3M spent in 2024)
GOVERNANCE	Independently elected Park Board — 7 commissioners elected by Vancouver voters, running parks independently of City Council. Unique in Canada
NOTABLE	Seasonal time-restricted beach access (Spanish Banks, Sunset Beach) — dogs off-leash outside summer peak hours. Time-zoning model Seattle has never used. Heather Park OLA opened May 2025

## Washington, DC — the OLA-specific statute

DESIGNATED DOG PARKS	16 (all fully fenced, one in each of 8 wards)
PER 100K RESIDENTS	2.29 (TPL 2025 ParkScore rank #1)
FUNDING	DPR general-fund operating; District CIP for new builds (~\$1M each). Dog licenses fund spay/neuter, not OLAs

GOVERNANCE	Each DPA must have a <b>Friends of group</b> that signs an MOU with DPR for day-to-day stewardship
NOTABLE	Only peer with OLA-specific enabling legislation: the 2005 Dog Park Establishment Act (DC Law 16-175) requires fencing, a Friends group, and DOEE environmental sign-off per site. Seattle's OLAs exist under a 1997 Parks ordinance with no statutory-level definition

## Minneapolis, MN — permit-fee model

OFF-LEASH DOG PARKS	9 (Dinky, Franklin Terrace, Gateway, Lake of the Isles, Loring, Lyndale Farmstead, Minnehaha, St. Anthony Parkway, Victory Prairie)
PER 100K RESIDENTS	2.07 (TPL 2025 ParkScore rank #3)
FUNDING	<b>User-pays:</b> \$38 resident / \$66 non-resident annual; \$27/\$33 each additional dog; \$5 daily. Off-Leash Dog Park Enterprise Fund is the ring-fenced line
GOVERNANCE	Independently elected Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board (MPRB) — separate taxing district, like Vancouver
NOTABLE	The <i>only</i> US peer that treats OLAs as a user-pays service. Permit revenue covers ongoing ops + maintenance. Closest live precedent for a dedicated OLA revenue model

## New York City — shared-use hours model

POLICY	Off-Leash Hours formally codified May 10, 2007; informal since ~1986 (19 years of formal operation)
HOURS	Park-opening to 9 AM and 9 PM to park-close, in designated areas. Central Park: 6–9 AM and 9 PM–1 AM. Prospect Park: 5–9 AM and 9 PM–1 AM
SCALE	Designated areas across all five boroughs (Central Park has 23 dog-friendly areas alone). Footprint dwarfs Seattle's 14 fenced OLAs
GOVERNANCE	NYC Parks department, enforced jointly with NYPD, NYC Parks Enforcement Patrol, NYC Department of Health, NYC Sanitation
NOTABLE	The mature US shared-use-hours model. NRPA's Nov 2018 <i>Parks &amp; Recreation</i> law review treats it as the reference case. NYC does <i>not</i> publish a longitudinal evaluation; the proxy is 19 years of formal operation renewed through multiple administrations with no reversal

### CROSS-CUTTING TAKEAWAYS

1. No peer city publishes a dog-park-specific walkshed standard comparable to TPL's 10-min park standard. A handful of agencies have experimented with OLA-specific radii (Seattle's 2016 Recreation Demand Study used 2.5 mi; Fairfax County has a published siting study) but nothing approaches TPL's benchmark in adoption. SPR's 2.5-mi OLA standard is 5× more permissive than any widely-adopted park standard.
2. Two cities have elected park bodies (Vancouver, Minneapolis). Both have the most ambitious OLA programs of the six peers; Minneapolis has the only dedicated OLA revenue model.
3. DC is the only peer with OLA-specific enabling legislation.
4. Shared-use models (Portland voice-control, Vancouver time-zoned beaches, NYC off-leash hours) are widely precedented. The opinion recommendation is not radical.

### PART VII — OPINION

# What Seattle should actually do.

*This section is explicitly opinion. The principles, opinions, and recommendation below are the author's. The data claims underneath them link back to the factual pages. Every opinion sentence is separable from the underlying facts.*

## Six principles

1. **P1 · Kids first.** Prioritizing children's use of parks over dogs is the right default. This section is not arguing for a 1:1 split — it is arguing that 0.06% of the city's budget for 150K+ dogs is not a proportional response to "kids first." It's the answer to a different question.
2. **P2 · Land is finite.** Any new OLA comes at the cost of another use. This constraint makes small fenced OLAs the *worst* answer, not the best: each one solves almost nothing and burns political capital.
3. **P3 · The investment gap is disproportionate.** Seattle has more dogs than children (conservative floor: ~150K vs ~115K). SPR runs 157 playgrounds but only 14 fenced OLAs. The 2018 OLA budget line was 0.06% of SPR's total. Prioritizing kids is right; 0.06% is not that.
4. **P4 · People who don't want dogs near them have a right not to.** Non-negotiable. The status quo fails these residents — 39% of owners self-report illegal off-leash monthly or more, per SPR's own 2016 survey. The fix must protect their use of parks at least as well as the current system pretends to.
5. **P5 · Children deserve clean, safe fields.** Off-leash dogs on a baseball diamond or playfield is a policy failure on every axis. The fix has to include a cleanup component; enforcement alone doesn't produce clean fields.
6. **P6 · Families should have reliably dog-free park time.** Access goes both ways. A well-designed policy guarantees protected windows for each use.

## Three opinions that fall out of the data

- **O1 · Expanding enforcement does not change the structural math.** Going from one ACO to two full-time seven-day positions moves 0.5% citation probability to maybe 0.8%. The behavior does not meaningfully change below ~5% enforcement probability, which Seattle cannot staff.
- **O2 · The fine-based model is regressive and structurally mismatched.** \$54 is trivial to wealthy owners and meaningful to lower-income ones. Raising fines doesn't close the gap; it widens the regressive one.
- **O3 · Owners break the rule for rational reasons — it's a supply failure producing a compliance failure.** 11.7% live near a legal OLA. Seven of 14 OLAs are below AKC's 1-acre floor. Several OLAs are adjacent to chronic encampment safety issues. Enforcement alone does not address any of these causes.

## Does the NYC model actually work?

Before recommending it, the question deserves a direct answer. NYC Parks formally codified the Off-Leash Hours policy on **May 10, 2007**, after running it as an informal "courtesy hours" arrangement since roughly 1986. Nineteen years of formal operation; nearly forty including the informal period. The policy: 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. The policy runs in parallel with NYC's dedicated fenced dog runs, not in place of them. Designated off-leash areas are listed across all

five boroughs on the NYC Council public-advocate directory — the designated footprint dwarfs Seattle's 14 fenced OLAs.

**Honest caveat:** NYC does not publish a longitudinal evaluation. The proxy for "does it work" is 19 years of formal operation renewed through multiple administrations with different political postures, and no reversal. NRPA covered it in its November 2018 *Parks & Recreation* law review as the mature US example; Boston and Chicago run parallel variations. What's missing from the record is the kind of quantitative outcomes tracking we argue Seattle should do from day one. A Seattle pilot with proper measurement could be the evaluation NYC's history doesn't offer.

## Recommendation

Adopt a shared-use model similar to NYC's 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 fundamentally different enforcement posture focused on shared-use compliance, not leash-law violations.

1. **Designate shared-use parks by neighborhood.** Not every park participates. Parks with heavy children's programming stay fully leashed 24/7. Parks with demonstrated off-leash demand — the ones already showing up in the enforcement data — become eligible candidates.
2. **Time-zone the access.** Open-to-9am and 9pm-to-close, NYC style. Pilot it. Adjust hours per park based on observed use.
3. **Pivot enforcement from fines to compliance.** Redeploy SPR Animal Control and park rangers to monitor participating parks during the off-leash windows — confirming owners present, dogs under control, park left clean. Not "drive 6,400 acres hoping to catch someone."
4. **Clean-park staffing — "poop patrol."** Dedicated crew does post-session sweeps. If a participating park is repeatedly found uncleaned, it loses shared-use designation. Collective threat gives every responsible owner a stake in cleaning up after the minority who don't. Social pressure is the real enforcement mechanism.
5. **Fund it with 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 clean-park program is politically viable and avoids the regressive-enforcement problem. Minneapolis is a live precedent.
6. **Keep the small dedicated OLAs.** Kinnear, Plymouth Pillars, Magnuson, and the rest don't go away — but they stop being the entire answer.
7. **Measure and publish outcomes.** Citation counts, Find-It-Fix-It complaints, injury reports, post-session cleanliness audits, by park. Expand what works; pull what doesn't.

This approach was raised during the 2014–2017 SPR process, supported by COLA and multiple community members, and set aside by SPR as too hard to enforce. The data this report has assembled suggests the current approach is *also* too hard to enforce. If we are going to have a policy that is difficult to enforce either way, pick the one that could actually work if we did.

### APPENDIX

## Methodology, sources, and limitations.

## Dog population — three-tier triangulation

ESTIMATE	VALUE	SOURCE
Licensed floor	26,652	Seattle Open Data jguv-t9rb (April 1 2026 snapshot, active dog licenses)
AVMA-derived demographic estimate	~248,900	364,627 Seattle households (ACS 2023) × 45.5% dog-owning (AVMA 2025) × 1.6 dogs/HH
SPR Expansion Study range	187K–400K	SPR 2023–24 OLA Expansion Study
<b>Working floor used site-wide</b>	<b>150,000</b>	Seattle Humane / Cascade PBS (legacy conservative figure, sits below all three estimates)

## 10-minute walkshed

Repo-computed via `scripts/compute_walkshed.py` (osmnx against Seattle OSM walk network, projected to UTM 10N, multi-seed alpha-shape isochrones at 0.5 / 1.0 / 2.5 miles) and `scripts/population_coverage.py` (2020 Census decennial P1 block-group population via pygris/TIGER 2020, area-weighted attribution, clipped to Seattle Places boundary). Convex-hull approximation tends to slightly overstate walkable area; true alpha-shape would likely shift the 11.7% figure a percentage point or two down. Output in `data/walkshed/population_coverage.csv`.

## OLA coordinates

Authoritative geometry pulled April 2026 from SPR's Dog Off-Leash Areas ArcGIS feature service

(`services.arcgis.com/Z0yb2t4B0UYuYNYH/arcgis/rest/services/Dog_Off_Leash_Areas/FeatureServer/0`).

Replaces earlier address-derived approximations. Several points moved 0.3–1.5 km in the process.

## Peer-city comparison methodology

Counts, acreages, and per-capita figures from TPL 2025 ParkScore where TPL covers the city; direct city sources otherwise. Counting methodology varies materially between cities — each table includes a methodology column for transparency. Austin's acreage figure excludes Red Bud Isle (293-acre unfenced shared-use outlier); the inflated "682-acre" figure sometimes cited for Austin is not apples-to-apples with Seattle's fenced-only count.

## Enforcement data

Source: SPR Animal Control PRR C049204 (filed August 2019, produced October 2019). Five `xlsx` files covering 2014–2019 flattened to `data/enforcement-citations.csv` via `scripts/build_enforcement_datasets.py`. Per-row classification (`park_named / street_address / unknown`) in the `location_type` column. Follow-up PRR filed for 2019-10-16 through present.

## Budget data

SPR total budgets from Seattle adopted/proposed budget books 2016–2026. Cycle 1 OLA-only figures (\$100K/yr 2016–2018) are from SPR public statements. Cycle 2 OLA-only figures for

2023 (\$126K) and 2024 (\$129K) are from Parkways blog coverage. Post-2018 and post-2024 OLA-only splits are not publicly disclosed — SPR reports a combined OLA + P-Patch line in the Maintaining Parks & Facilities BSL. PRR #3 drafted to request the OLA-only portion.

## Known limitations

- Walkshed isochrones use an alpha-shape of reachable network nodes (multi-seed, 100 m seed radius,  $\alpha=0.003$ ). Small residual inflation at OLA boundaries but much tighter than the original convex-hull approach.
- 150,000-dog floor is legacy; the AVMA-derived estimate (~248,900) is probably closer to reality
- Enforcement data ends October 2019; PRR for post-2019 citations pending
- Post-2018 OLA-only budget split not publicly disclosed by SPR
- Find-It-Fix-It "dog in a park" complaint count is approximate; PRR #2 drafted for authoritative number
- Peer-city acreage totals are  $\pm 20\%$  estimates; cities define OLAs differently

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### HOW THIS REPORT WAS BUILT

Underlying data – public records requests, SPR budget documents, Census block-group data, peer-city research – was collected by Andre Vrignaud. Analysis, report writing, and code were produced with substantial assistance from Claude Code (Anthropic). Factual claims link to their primary source; most derived numbers are reproducible from a CSV in the public repo via a committed script (see `METHODOLOGY.md` for the full list of reproducible pipelines). All AI-generated content was reviewed and approved by a human before publication. Errors are Andre's.

### ONLINE VERSION

**seattledogparkdata.com** is the authoritative edition. This print edition is a single-document snapshot; the website carries interactive maps, charts, and a full data browser alongside the prose.

### REPOSITORY

**github.com/avrignaud/seattledogparkdata** – MIT license covers author-written code + analysis. Primary data (SPR, Seattle Open Data, Census) is public record; TPL ParkServe material carries TPL's own terms of use.

### CORRECTIONS

File an issue on GitHub or email **andre@ozymandi.as**. Corrections are published publicly.