

DOG USE FACILITIES MASTER PLAN

DRAFT REPORT

LINCOLN PARKS AND RECREATION



NOVEMBER, 2015

PREPARED IN COOPERATION WITH BVH ARCHITECTS (STEVE MILLER, AICP)

INTRODUCTION

The City of Lincoln has 128 parks, 131 miles of trails, seven recreation centers, and five golf courses that are enjoyed year round by Lincoln’s residents and visitors. As the champion of these valuable community assets, the Lincoln Parks and Recreation Department encourages community input to guide its planning and visioning process in the interest of creating a legacy of parks and recreation resources fundamental to the community.

An emerging trend in Lincoln and across the United States is the desire by park users to recreate with their dogs in parks in unprecedented numbers. Lincoln is thriving and growing and, as a result, demand continues to rise for more and better park amenities for all park users. In addition, more and more park users are exploring ways to visit their neighborhood, community and regional parks with their dogs. Dogs and their owners present the Lincoln Parks and Recreation Department the challenge of addressing the demand and impact of more dogs in our parks. This challenge is most evident for Lincoln residents who live in or near downtown and in southwest and northeast Lincoln where no dog use facilities exist at this time. These challenges have prompted the Lincoln Parks and Recreation Department to develop this Dog Use Facility Master Plan.

Both national and local statistics support the need to plan for increased use of park facilities by dogs and their owners:

- There are approximately **80 million** pet dogs in the United States
- **40%** of U.S. households own at least one dog
- Dog parks are one of the fastest growing segments of city parks nationally
- There are more households with dogs than with children in the U.S.: 43 million with vs. 38 million without
- There are an estimated **66,360** dogs in Lincoln.

The Trust for Public Land, a national leader in parks, open spaces and related public policy issues, has identified that “the hottest city park issue to hit America is the skyrocketing support for creating places to let dogs run free...” The phenomenon is evident in Lincoln too where, anecdotally, the city’s two dog use facilities—Rickman’s Run in southeast Lincoln and Oak Creek Dog Run in northwest Lincoln—are perhaps the city’s most used park facilities. On days when the weather is nice, the parking lot at Rickman’s Run is commonly at capacity or overflowing. With the two dog use facilities noted above, the City of Lincoln ranks low compared to similarly-sized U.S. cities for the number of dog parks per 100,000 residents,

according to the Trust for Public Land's rankings. The ranking is based on number of parks, and does not take into account the park size.

This planning process was initiated to address how Lincoln can further improve opportunities to support and accommodate all park and open space users in a healthy, sustainable environment. Lincoln Parks and Recreation has come to recognize the need for more and different types of spaces for dogs and their owners in close proximity to dwellings, in particular near downtown Lincoln.

The goal of this process is to develop an easy-to-use master plan which includes recommendations for strategies to develop reasonable and effective solutions for increasing the use of parks by dogs and their owners.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The planning process for this master plan was initiated by Lincoln Parks and Recreation to explore the potential for adding new dog use facilities. The success of Lincoln's existing dog use facilities and the demand for additional off leash facilities supports this planning process and the study of new policies and locations for additional off leash facilities in Lincoln.

GOAL

The goal of the planning process and the master plan is to develop reasonable and effective solutions for increasing the use of parks by dogs and their owners, and to foster healthy relationships between dog owners, non-dog owners, and all park users.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives for the planning process and recommendations include:

- Community and stakeholder engagement
- Existing facility assessment
- Research best practices
- Develop prototypical design standards and guidelines for existing and new facilities
- Establish level of service standards, guidelines for site selection, and identify general locations for future dog use facilities
- Recommend policies and regulations for the operation and maintenance of facilities.

COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The master plan and the recommendations were formed with input from an internal steering committee consisting of Lincoln Parks and Recreation staff and Advisory Board, input from Friends of the Dog Parks, Inc. (FODP, private stakeholder group), Lincoln residents and dog facility users via Open Lincoln, an online survey tool.

The online survey was conducted in April 2015. It included questions on demographics, existing facility use, frequency of use, and areas for improvement. The feedback will form the basis for finding ways to improve existing facilities, develop new facilities and to strengthen dog owner responsibilities.

A draft version of this report was made available to the FODP, members of the Lincoln Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and online for public comment prior to finalizing.

The text of the April 2015 online survey is shown on the next page.

Lincoln Parks & Recreation Dog Use Facilities Master Plan Survey

The Lincoln Parks & Recreation Department is undertaking a Dog Use Facilities Master Planning process to guide facilities improvements and the potential development of new dog use facilities in the future. The planning effort started March 2, 2015 and is anticipated to conclude in December, 2015 with a presentation to the Lincoln Parks and Recreation Advisory Board. More information will be available on the Lincoln Parks & Recreation website - <http://lincoln.ne.gov/city/parks/> - as the project progresses.

1. Which dog run do you visit?
 - Rickman's Run
 - Oak Creek Dog Run

2. How often do you visit?
 - Daily
 - Weekly
 - Monthly

3. How long is your typical visit?
 - Less than 1 hour
 - More than 1 hour

4. What size dog(s) do you have?
 - Small < 25 pounds
 - Large > 25 pounds

5. What are your aspects/favorite features (please select all that apply)?
 - Portable restrooms
 - Walking paths
 - Small dog area
 - Landscape/natural terrain
 - Location
 - Other. Please explain in the comments field.

6. What aspects/features need improvement or need to be addressed (please select all that apply)?
 - Parking facilities
 - Big/small dog conflicts
 - Drinking water
 - Shaded seating
 - Collection of pet waste
 - Informational signage
 - Other. Please explain in the comments field.

The results from the 300 responses to the survey are summarized below:

- Rickman's Run users – 67% of respondents
- Oak Creek users – 33%
- Daily users (both facilities) – 18% of respondents
- Weekly users – 32%
- Monthly users – 35%
- Facility usage by duration
 - Less than one hour – 42% of respondents
 - More than one hour – 43%
- 61% of all respondents have large dogs (over 25 pounds)
- Best Features:
 - Landscape/natural terrain – 62% of respondents
 - Location – 50%
 - Walking paths – 48%
- Features that need improvement:
 - Parking – 63% of respondents
 - Drinking water – 62%
 - Shaded area to sit and rest – 38%
 - Pet waste collection – 36%
- Additional comments were very consistent with survey responses. Common comments and themes were:
 - More parking needed at Rickman's Run.
 - Fence along 70th Street at Rickman's Run needs improvement.
 - Dogs often get muddy in the creek at Rickman's Run and it would be great to have a washing station available on site.
 - All weather surface—mulch, cement, gravel, etc.—needed at entrances.
 - More mulch needed on walking paths.
 - Too many owners allow big dogs in small dog area.
 - Small dog area needed at Oak Creek Park.

- Shade needed at Oak Creek Park.
- Fill in holes and cover “old” trash at Oak Creek Park.

EVALUATION OF EXISTING FACILITIES & ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNITY NEEDS

In addition to the online survey results, an evaluation of the existing dog use facilities and an inventory of private facilities was completed.

Lincoln Parks and Recreation has two existing off-leash dog use facilities, both classified as Dog Runs. Rickman’s Run consists of approximately 24 acres and is located in southeast Lincoln, east of 70th Street between Van Dorn Street and Pioneers Boulevard; it’s immediately east of the Holmes Lake Park and Golf Course. Rickman’s Run is adjacent to residential land uses on the north and east, and commercial land uses on the south. It is easily accessible to the surrounding neighborhoods via sidewalks and trails.

The Oak Creek Dog Run consists of approximately 17 acres and is located in northwest Lincoln at the southeast corner of NW 1st Street and Cornhusker Highway. Oak Creek Dog Run is isolated from surrounding land uses by transportation corridors on the north and east, Cornhusker Highway and Interstate 180 respectively. The facility is bounded by Oak Creek on the south and vacant city-owned property on the west. The facility is accessible via the trail on NW 1st Street, but is mainly accessed via automobile.

Both facilities are enclosed by fencing with containment gates at the entrances. The facilities generally are unimproved, natural settings and contain limited amenities, such as all-weather walking paths, benches, and portable restrooms. Rickman’s Run features a separate small dog facility, while Oak Creek does not. Both facilities have gravel parking lots with space available for approximately 40 to 50 vehicles per lot.

A facility evaluation (attached in the Appendix) was created for this planning process and completed by LPR staff and members of Friends of the Dog Parks. The form provides for the evaluation of existing conditions related to: design elements, natural features, structural elements, benches, water fountains, waste-bag stations, waste cans, signage, community bulletin board, and restrooms.

In summary, the priority needs for the existing dog use facilities are:

Rickman’s Run

The natural features at Rickman’s Run, e.g. the natural trails, Antelope Creek, wooded areas, primarily are viewed as an asset and an amenity. However, because of the creek, dogs often get dirty, prompting a limited call for installation of washing rinsing facilities.

- Expanded parking lot
- Potable water for dogs and owners
- Maintain trails with additional wood chips or rock
- Dog washing rinsing facility
- Area/security lighting

Oak Creek Dog Run

- Potable water for dogs and owners
- Maintain trails with additional wood chips or rock
- Shade structures for dogs and owners
- Small dog area
- Area/security lighting

ANNUAL COST DATA

The table below shows LPR’s current annual data for cost to operate and maintain (O&M) the two existing dog runs on a cost per acre basis. Compare costs to the cost per acre associated with O&M for neighborhood parks, community/regional parks, and conservancy areas. As the data shows, O&M of our two dog runs is much less on a per acre basis than either neighborhood or community/regional parks, but more than conservancy areas.

| Facility | O&M Cost | Size (acres) | O&M Cost per acre |
|---|---------------|--------------|-------------------|
| Rickman’s Run | \$7,214 † | 23.7 | \$304 |
| Oak Creek Run | \$3,221 † | 16.6 | \$194 |
| Neighborhood Parks | \$627,721 ‡ | 397 | \$1,580 |
| Community/Regional Parks | \$1,002,532 ‡ | 1,715 | \$584 |
| Conservancy Areas (excluding Wilderness Park) | \$26,665 ‡ | 1,801 | \$15 |

INVENTORY OF PRIVATE DOG USE FACILITIES

The following inventory of private facilities identifies, by name, the facility and the services provided by such facility. This list includes organizations which provide dog day care as a primary service versus overnight boarding and in-home boarding or pet sitting. A goal of the planning process is to identify the gap filled by private facilities and to ensure that Lincoln Parks and Recreation does not impede the growth and development of such private-sector facilities in the community.

A Pause for Paws – 5034 Old Cheney Road – *apauseforpaws.com*

Services: dog walking, pet sitting, and in-home boarding.

Camp Bow Wow – 5620 S. 49th Street – *campbowwow.com*

Services: dog day care, full service grooming, retail products for dogs, overnight boarding.

Driftwood Kennels – 100 McKelvie Road – *driftwoodkennelsinc.com*

Services: dog day care, full services grooming, overnight boarding, and training.

Kenl Inn Downtown – 2019 P Street – *kenlindowntown.com*

Services: dog day care, full service grooming and retail products for dogs.

Nebraska Animal Medical Center – 5720 Old Cheney Road – *namcvet.com*

Services: dog day care, grooming, boarding and veterinary services.

PetSmart Doggie Day Camp – 2801 Pine Lake Road – *pets.petsmart.com*

Services: dog day care, full service grooming and retail products for dogs.

The Canine Scrub – 2774 South Street – *thecaninescrub.com*

Services: self-serve dog wash with tools provided for bath and dry.

U-Paws Pet Wash – U-Stop at 71st & Pioneers

Services: self-serve, climate controlled pet wash station.

BEST PRACTICES RESEARCH

The planning process included evaluating best practices from across the U.S. for off-leash dog areas. Analyzing levels of service and pros and cons from other cities strategies and policies was very useful in identifying the best solutions for Lincoln. The size, features, fees, level of service, and location of dog use facilities varies widely. In addition, park policies and practices such as affinity group sponsorship and management is commonly used across the country for dog use facilities.

The following is a summary of best practices from across the U.S., including practices from a few cities Lincoln compares its policies to on a regular basis.

Highlights from Best Practice Research

- **Des Moines, IA** (comparable city) – Des Moines has three fenced, off-leash dog parks. A dog park permit fee of \$20 per year, per dog is required.
- **Omaha** (comparable city) – Omaha has two fenced, off-leash dog parks managed by a non-profit organization in city-owned parks. See www.omahadogparks.org.
- **Springfield, MO** (comparable city) – Springfield has one, fenced, off leash dog park. A dog park permit fee of \$25 per year, per dog is required for a maximum of two dogs per owner.
- **Sioux Falls, SD** (comparable city) – Sioux Falls has two off leash dog parks. One park is fenced and the other is not fenced.
- **Englewood, CO** – Englewood, a Denver suburb, has five off-leash dog use areas within existing city parks that are unfenced and open for use in the early morning and evening hours.
- **Portland, OR** – Portland has six fenced dog parks that are open 24 hours per day and 7 days per week. The city also has 27 designated areas in existing parks where dogs can run off-leash during seasonal hours depending on daylight hours.
- **Minneapolis, MN** – Minneapolis has seven off-leash dog areas; six are fenced and one is not. Minneapolis requires a permit tag for use which costs \$35/year for the first dog and \$25/year for each additional dog. The permit program reportedly has increased licensing and vaccinations.

The Trust for Public Lands regularly evaluates park and recreation programs and facilities for cities across the United States. The Trust's ParkScore evaluation provides a valuable benchmark for cities to use to compare how they are performing in relation to cities of similar size across the country. In addition, the City of Lincoln regularly compares itself to similar cities in the Midwest. These cities are: Des Moines, IA; Omaha; Overland Park, KS; Sioux Falls, SD; Springfield, MO; St. Louis, MO; St. Paul, MN; Tulsa, OK; and Wichita, KS.

The table of the following page is the level of service comparison of Lincoln with regard to off-leash dog use facilities per 100,000 population (Source: City Park Facts 2014, Trust for Public Land). It serves as a reasonable evaluation tool to determine the need for additional dog use facilities in Lincoln. It is noted that the data in this table is based on number of facilities only and does not take into account the size (acres) of each facility.

| City | Off Leash Dog Parks/Runs | OLDP Per 100,000 Residents |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Portland, OR | 32 | 5.3 |
| Norfolk, VA | 11 | 4.5 |
| Las Vegas, NV | 25 | 4.2 |
| Henderson, NV | 11 | 4.1 |
| Arlington, VA | 8 | 3.6 |
| Madison, WI | 8 | 3.3 |
| San Francisco, CA | 27 | 3.3 |
| Tampa, FL | 9 | 2.6 |
| St. Petersburg, FL | 6 | 2.4 |
| Seattle, WA | 14 | 2.2 |
| Lincoln, NE | 2 | 0.74 |
| If Lincoln had... | 4 | 1.5 |
| | 5 | 2 |
| | 8 | 3 |
| Des Moines, IA | 3 | 1.45 |
| Omaha, NE | 2 | 0.46 |
| Overland Park, KS | 1 | 0.55 |
| Sioux Falls, SD | 2 | 1.21 |
| Springfield, MO | 1 | 0.61 |
| St. Louis, MO | 8* | 2.51 |
| St. Paul, MN | 2 | 0.68 |
| Tulsa, OK | 3 (1 private) | 0.75 |
| Wichita, KS | 3 (2 private) | 0.78 |

* includes suburbs

RECOMMENDATIONS

Lincoln's existing dog use facilities are well used and popular with users. However, the best practices research shows that Lincoln ranks low with respect to its comparable cities for the number of dog parks per 100,000 residents based on number of facilities only (number of facilities does not take size/acres into consideration). Based on this research and the evaluation of Lincoln's existing dog use facilities, the following recommendations are outlined to address the demand for additional dog use services and to make basic improvements to existing facilities.

Definitions established by Lincoln Parks and Recreation: The terms Dog Runs and Dog Parks are often used interchangeable; however, Lincoln Parks and Recreation has established the following definitions or classifications.

- Definitions
 - Dog Run
 - Dog Park
 - Un-fenced Dog Run
 - Small Dog
 - Large Dog
- Dog Facility Location and Design Guidelines
 - Service Area
 - Site Criteria
 - Design Criteria
 - Dog Facility Rules
- Other Considerations for Dog Use Facilities
 - Small Dog Only Parks
 - Pay-as-you-go Facilities
 - Members-only Facilities

DEFINITIONS

Dog Run – Fenced and gated open space with minimal amenities where dogs are permitted to be off-leash for the purpose of exercise, play and social interaction with other dogs. Similar to conservancy areas, Dog Runs involve a minimal amount of grounds maintenance.

Dog Park – Fenced and gated open space that may include amenities intended for use by dogs and their owners. Dog Parks are managed with a level of maintenance similar to standard park operations that include routine care of the grounds and amenities.

Unfenced Dog Run – Designated open space with minimal amenities where dogs are permitted to be off-leash for the purpose of exercise, play and social interaction with other dogs. The designated spaces for Unfenced Dog Runs may be changed from time to time for recovery and restoration of ground cover. In addition, the usage time for Unfenced Dog Parks may change seasonally due to daylight considerations. Similar to park conservancy areas, Unfenced Dog Runs involve a minimal amount of grounds maintenance.

Large Dog – A dog taller than 15 inches in height ~~or weighing over 25 pounds.~~

Small Dog – Any dog less than 15 inches in height ~~or weighing over 25 pounds.~~

Weight criteria not recommended, difficult to monitor and enforce.

POTENTIAL DOG FACILITY DESIGN GUIDELINES

Service Area

An evaluation of Lincoln's dog ownership, based on Lincoln Parks and Recreation GIS system (see Exhibit 1 – Existing Dog Use Facilities Service Areas), indicates that a three-mile service radius for dog use facilities is recommended, with the addition of identifying a dog use facility location in downtown Lincoln, because of the higher density of development in this area. The identification of park land, surplus or vacant land within a three-mile service area in all four quadrants of the city will provide opportunities for filling the existing voids in dog use facility service areas across Lincoln.

- Three-mile service area
- One designated/fenced facility (dog run or dog park) in each quadrant of Lincoln, e.g. northwest, northeast, southwest and southeast
- One facility (dog park) in downtown Lincoln

Based on the evaluation of existing facilities and best practice research, the following site selection and design criteria was developed for any proposed off-leash area within the Lincoln Parks and Recreation system. Site and design criteria for sites not within the LPR system will be developed and reviewed on a case by case basis.

The recommended criteria accommodate a wide range of potential options for off-leash dog use areas from exclusive-use, fully fenced areas to shared use sites with limited or no fencing

and time of day use restrictions. Some key considerations for new dog use locations are walking distance from neighborhoods, adequate parking, city-wide distribution, and community/neighborhood involvement and support.

Site Criteria

- No designated natural areas or wildlife habitat
- No toxic residue from previous uses
- Positive drainage
- Clear separation from other park uses/amenities such as picnic areas, athletic fields, or trails via a fence, vegetation, or an acceptable distance
- Distance of approximately 100 feet from a playground or other children's facility
- No arterial streets within 200 feet unless the area is fully fenced
- Access to existing off-street parking
- Good connection to adjacent/surrounding neighborhoods via pedestrian connections, e.g. sidewalks or trails
- No other site within the same service area (3-mile radius)
- Possible separation distance from adjacent residential neighborhoods

Design Criteria

- Minimum size of one acre; larger areas are more desirable
- Existing off-street parking adjacent to the site; the number of stalls should increase with the size of the facility
- Non-linear layout to maximize usable space
- When fenced, use a minimum of four-foot tall perimeter fence with a minimum of two double-gated entrances plus two, ten-foot wide maintenance gates
- ADA accessible paved entrance path
- Crusher fines surfacing around entrance at least 30'x30' in total area

- Alternative surface area minimum, e.g. crusher fines, field turf, mulch, pea gravel, etc.; the balance can be native vegetation
- Trash receptacles located near entrance/exit
- Dog waste clean-up stations with bag dispensers and trash barrels
- Community bulletin board/informational kiosk
- Shade trees or shade structure
- Benches
- Restroom (portable)
- Drinking water for users and dogs
- Attractive visual buffer from surrounding residents and/or park areas via vegetation or fencing
- Consideration for area/security lighting
- Rules and regulations signage

Dog Facility Rules

- Off-leash dog area will be open from sunrise to sunset seven days a week unless closed for maintenance. (*Consideration for area/security lighting that may extend hours of operation to 11:00 pm*).
- Enter at your own risk.
- Dogs must be leashed when entering and leaving the enclosure.
- Handlers assume full responsibility for their dogs.
- Handlers must dispose of dog feces properly and immediately.
- Dogs must be supervised and under handler's control at all times.
- Dogs must have current rabies tag and dog license.
- Dogs must be spayed or neutered.

- Dogs must be accompanied by a person 17 years of older.
- Children under 17 years of age in the enclosure must be accompanied by an adult.
- No aggressive or ill dogs.
- No human food.
- Please clean up toys, chairs, water dishes or trash

Any bite, attack, potential violations or problems should be reported to Lincoln Animal Control at 402-441-7900. In case of emergency, call the Lincoln Police Department at 911. To report non-emergency concerns to the Lincoln Police Department, call 402-441-6000. Please note, the standard rules and regulations to which dog owners and park users must follow are enforced by a limited number of City staff.

Other Considerations for Dog Use Facilities

- ~~Small dog only parks~~
 - ~~In facilities of less than one acre~~
 - ~~At locations in higher density urban settings~~

Small Dog only not recommended, concern with monitoring and enforcement.

- Pay-as-you go dog parks
 - Per dog fee per visit (typical fee is \$3)
 - Fee may be mandatory or voluntary
 - May be collected for a limited time to offset cost of facility improvements
 - Collected via a lock-box at the entry gate or card reader
 - Staff may be present during high volume usage times
 - Often feature more amenities, e.g. agility equipment
- Members only dog parks, e.g. affinity group or neighborhood association managed facility
- Designated unfenced areas within parks (1-2 pilot acres for a trial period)
- Dog use facilities pass program, coordinated with Animal Control, generating revenue to assist with maintenance of, and improvements to, dog use facilities (fee based or voluntary)

LOCATION RECOMMENDATIONS

See Exhibit 2 – Perspective Park Locations Map

See Exhibit 3 – Priority Location Service Areas

The existing Oak Creek Dog Run is located on a parcel of land that once served as a land fill. Unfavorable soil conditions make establishment of both turf and trees very difficult. In addition, over time, land fill remnants such as broken glass tend to make their way to the surface causing concern for dogs and owners alike. As a result of these conditions and alternative potential future land uses for the area surrounding Oak Lake Park, relocation of this existing dog use facility to another northwest Lincoln Park is recommended.

In conclusion, this master plan report proposes improvements to Rickman's Run including expanded parking, relocation of the Oak Creek Dog Run to another northwest Lincoln Park, and development of three new dog use facilities in northeast Lincoln, southwest Lincoln and near Downtown. The near-term goal is to have one dog facility in each quadrant of the community plus a dog facility to serve residents living in downtown.

- **Northeast Quadrant**

Mahoney Park (fenced/off-leash dog run)

- **Southwest Quadrant**

Peterson Park (fenced/off-leash dog run)

- **Northwest Quadrant**

Roper Park (fenced/off-leash dog run for alternative location to the Oak Creek Run)

- **Downtown Environs**

South Haymarket (fenced/off-leash dog park)

- **Potential Future Dog Use Facilities to meet community growth**

Stevens Creek Park (Northwest Quadrant)

Bison Park (Southwest Quadrant)

Jensen Park (Southeast Quadrant)

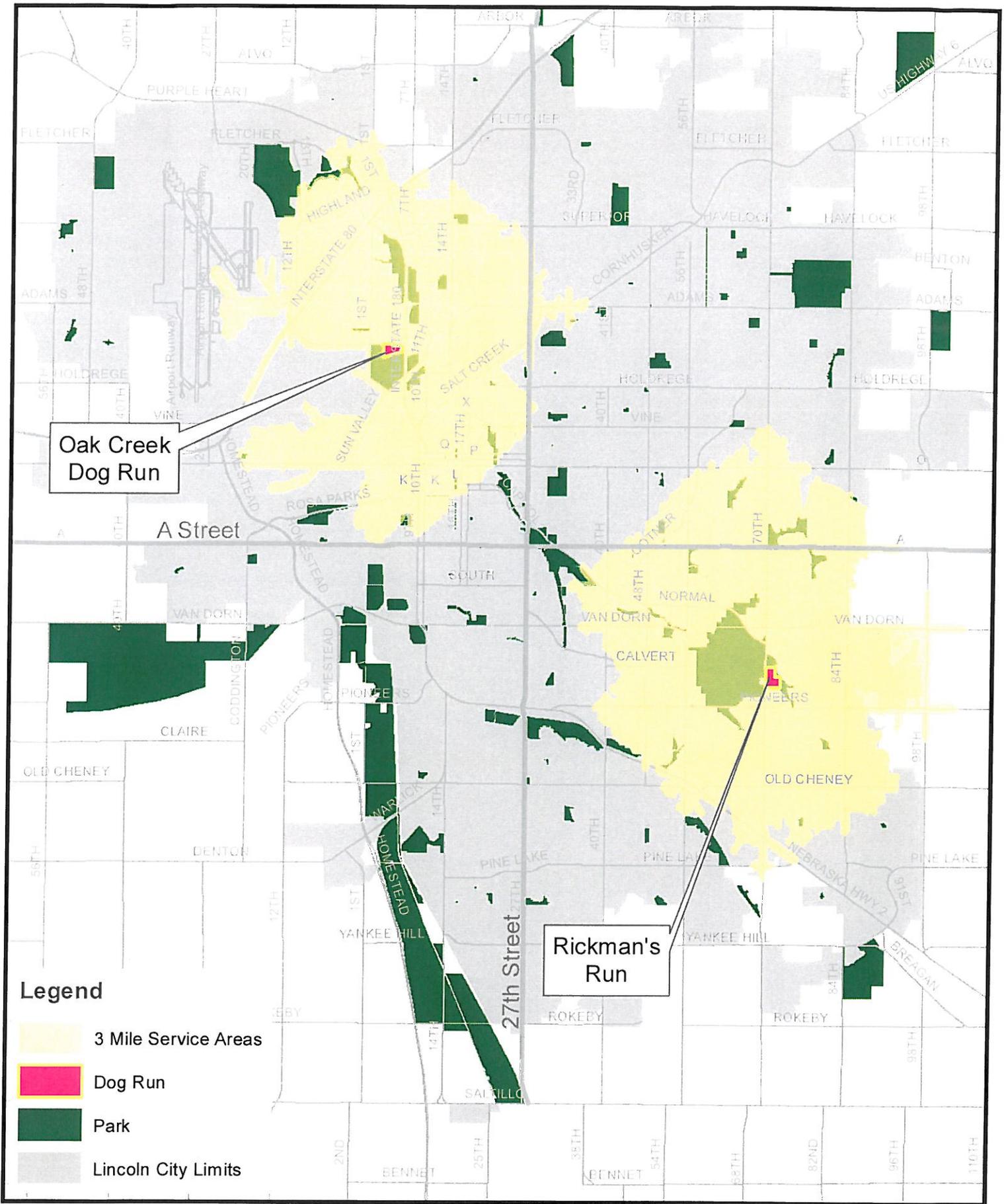
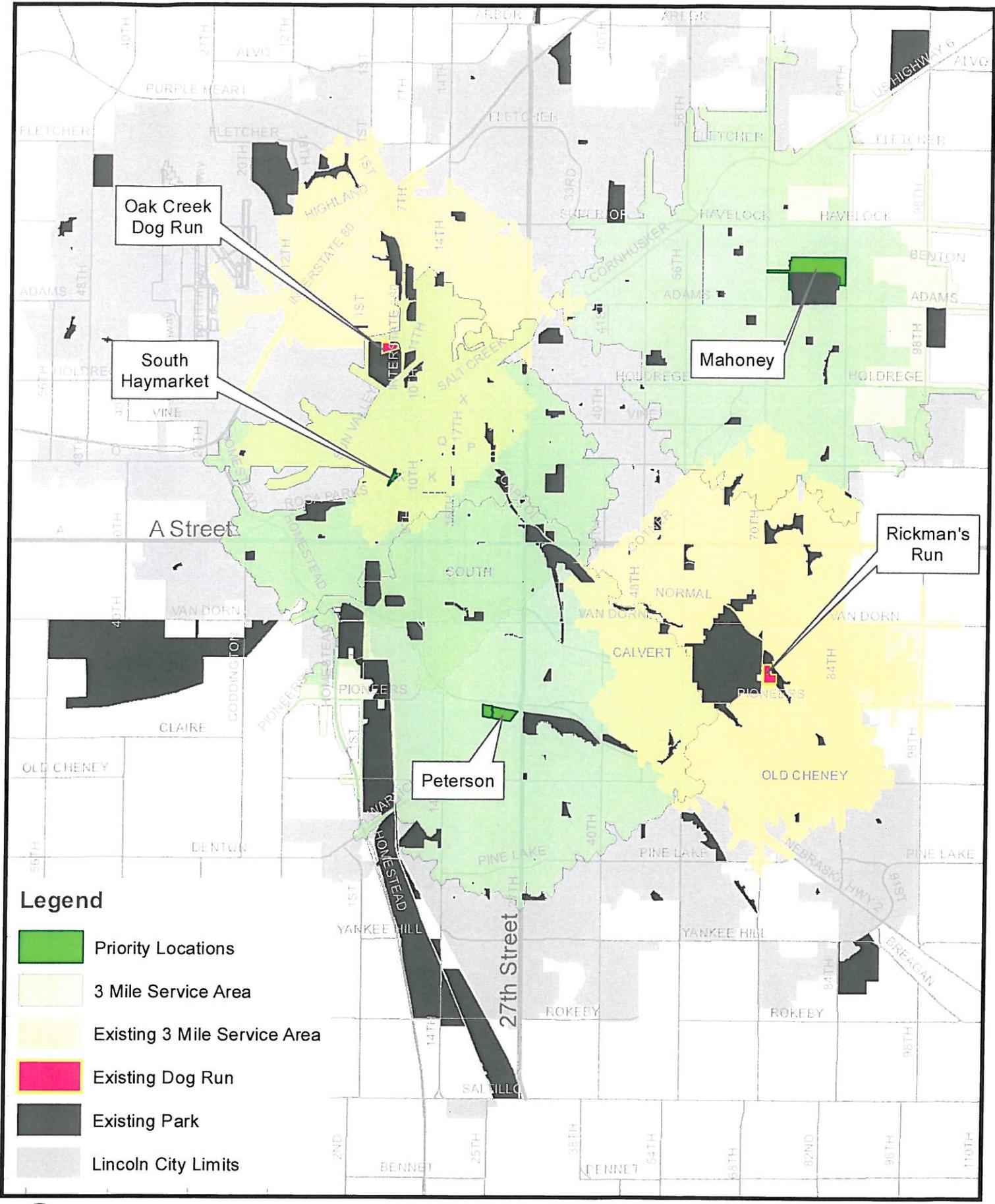


Exhibit 1 - Existing Dog Use Facilities Service Areas

1 inch = 8,000 feet

11-12-15





Legend

- Priority Locations
- 3 Mile Service Area
- Existing 3 Mile Service Area
- Existing Dog Run
- Existing Park
- Lincoln City Limits



Exhibit 3 - Priority Location Service Areas

1 inch = 8,000 feet

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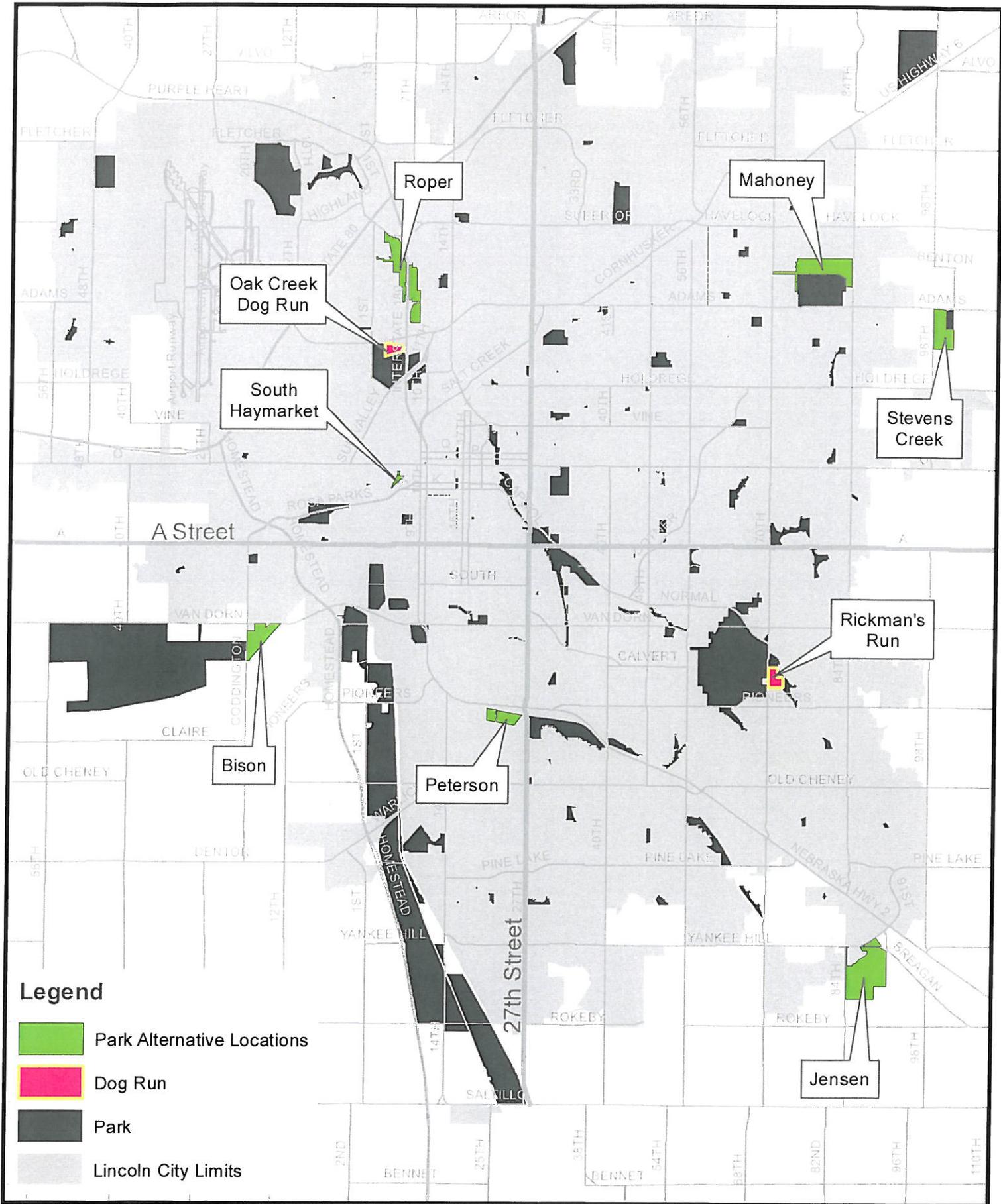


Exhibit 2 - Perspective Park Locations Map

1 inch = 8,000 feet

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