

Albuquerque Model City Council Curriculum

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Bill's Passage Unleashes Search for Dog Parks

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The city will start looking for six underused city parks, or portions of them, following the City Council's approval of a bill Monday creating spaces for dog parks.

The dog parks will not displace existing uses, said Councilor Eric Griego, the bill's sponsor. The idea is to find places not being used to give city dog owners more options than the two current dog parks, plus one that allows dogs to be off-leash for a couple of hours every morning.

"If it's a park that's being used, we don't want it," Griego said.

The bill also gives neighborhoods the chance to add an off-leash dog area to their new parks if they want them, or leave them out if they don't, he said.

The only vote against the bill was cast by Councilor Miguel Gomez, who said he was concerned about creating dog parks while southwest areas in his District 1 are in need of new parks, said council staffer Tom Menicucci.

"There is nothing in this bill that would undermine what he wants to do," Griego said.

The bill authorizes the council and administration to impose fees if necessary, Menicucci said. They may choose one of three methods: an increase in the city pet license; an entrance fee; or a permit, similar to fishing permits sold by the state.

Menicucci said the parks department will do an in-depth study of its maintenance costs, which now are about \$5,600 an acre a year.

Other costs, such as fencing, shade structures, water supplies or parking, would come out of the city's Capital Implementation Program, funded mostly by general obligation bonds backed by property taxes.

Griego said it will take about two years to find, evaluate and choose the parks. Public hearings will be held on each.

A subcommittee of the Parks and Recreation Department advisory board has looked at 15 parks as possible to be used for off-leash dogs.

The current dog parks are Rio Grande Triangle Park at 1511 Kit Carson SE, Tom Bolack Urban Forest Park at 2000 Dakota SE and Roosevelt Park at 500 Spruce SE.

Roosevelt allows dogs off their leashes only from 9 to 11 a.m. daily. The other parks' hours are 6 a.m. to 10 p.m.