

Dog Parks: A Tool for Communities

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Introduction & Background

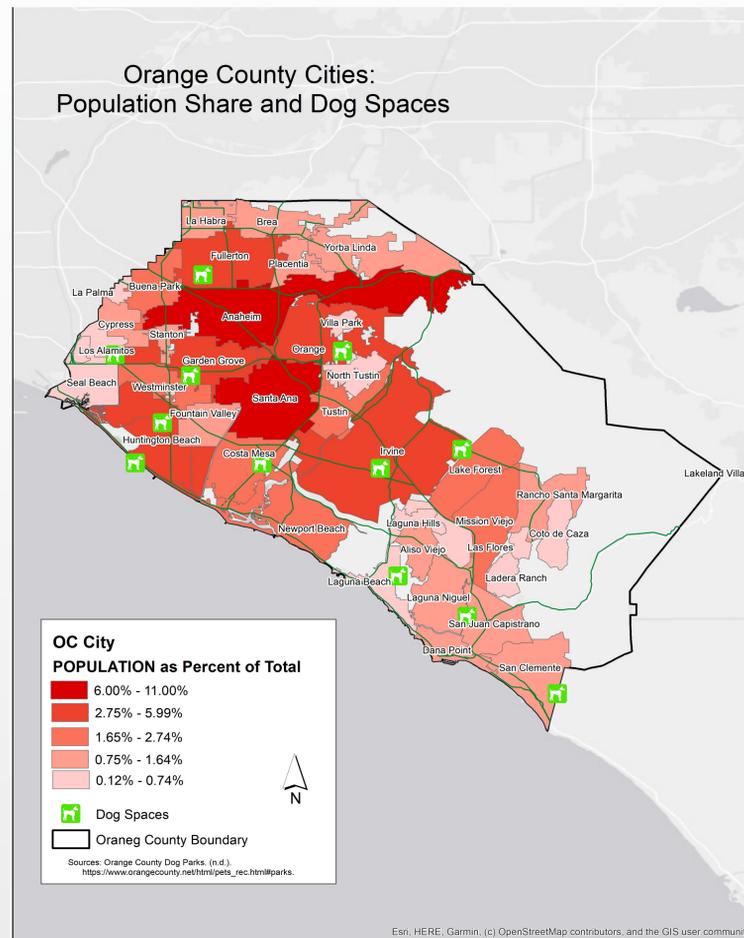
During the urbanization process, humans have had to live in increasingly smaller spaces yet their four-legged companions, dogs, have also had to undergo such dramatic changes in a relatively short evolutionary timeframe. Moreover, dogs have created a new alternative to the American nuclear family; with millennials overwhelmingly preferring pet ownership to parental responsibilities (Hendrix, 2019). Additionally, in urban centers, pet ownership has overtaken the number of households with children (Hendrix, 2019). Thus, it is vital that cities reflect the needs of those who inhabit it. That is why, this poster emphasises the need to create open green space in urban centers to create a more just and sustainable living space for humans and their four-legged companions. Most specially, this project advocates for the construction of dog parks in the Latinx majority city of Santa Ana.

Agyeman (2013) argues that a just and sustainable ethical approach offers social safety nets, infrastructure, and economic security while proportionally investing in the surrounding ecosystem for current and future generations. In other words, community wellbeing must include everyone and their decedents while highlighting a biotic lens, that is to include all living beings, such as dogs and humans. Hence, properly providing one of Orange County's largest population center, Santa Ana, with its first dog parks or off leash areas will be inherently just and sustainable. Lee, Shepley, and Huang (2009) evaluation of off-leash dog parks suggest that dog parks increase the well-being of the biotic community. Not only do dog spaces increase the owners own exercise activity, but dogs have access to more open spaces while the walking corridors become part of a larger community space. This is heavily important because in Santa Ana one in five children are overweight and obese (Garcia, Brakke, and Strongin, 2011). Additionally, Noonan, Matisoff, and Hoelzel (2016) argue that more consistent interaction with public spaces create a holistic blending of private and public spaces which reinforces the commitment and responsibility of those spaces. Thus, access to dog spaces can help create a larger sense of community that could stem more altruistic behaviors between the individuals in direct contact to institutionally provided green spaces, further enhancing the collective well being of the community environment for future generations. Utilizing the contemporary knowledge about the effects of dog parks on individuals, dogs, and the surrounding community, it is evident that their implementation in Orange County's most populous city could help create a more just and sustainable living environment for people and their companions.

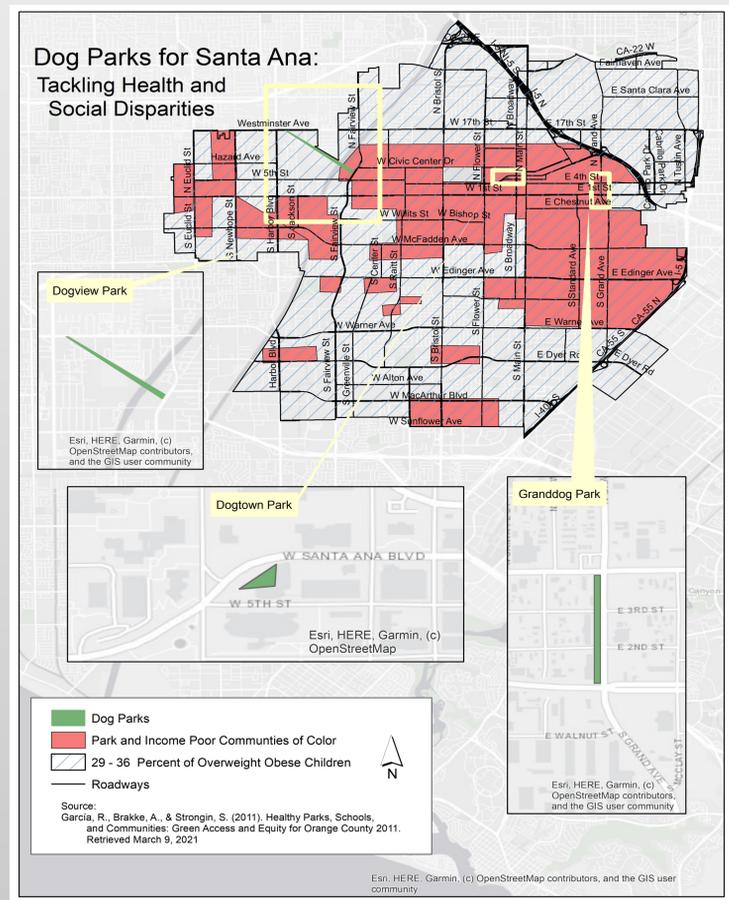
Methods

The methods used to justify the proposed dog park locations in Santa Ana and Anaheim is to utilize Rahim et al's (2017) work that suggest that while there are health risks brought on by the congregation of non-human species, such as dogs, potential hazards can be positively mitigated within the community. Moreover, this article provides helpful guiding programs and policies that decrease any potential risk. Some important findings indicate the need to create buffers around zones occupied by children, requiring properly fenced off areas and advocating for community programs that reprimand individuals that fail to control physically distraught canines or to properly dispose of their feces. Additionally, The City Project assessment of Orange County's Green Access and Equity will provide the underlying data that will dictate where the most optimal location for future green dog spaces. They provide critical information on the distribution of variables that create vulnerable communities that face high level of health and social disparities. These three metrics will aid to provide dog spaces that will create a more just and sustainable experience for the present and future communities in this region while providing clear justification for their location. Also, previous knowledge and field work across Santa Ana aided the research to pinpoint three locations that are currently undergoing construction work or that been vacated by their previous occupiers for some time. The last step is to utilized ArcGIS to properly display the locations of new dog parks across Santa Ana and to compile all the health and social disparity across Santa Ana and data from Orange County Dog Parks. (n.d.) will be utilized to pinpoint the current distribution of dog parks in Orange County.

Results



Map 1: Dog Parks across Orange County in relation to each city's population share. Two of the largest city centers, Anaheim and Santa Ana, have no dog spaces within their city boundary, even though they have the largest proportional of the county's' population.



Map 2: This map shows the locations of three dog parks across Santa Ana. These locations were chosen because they sit within Santa Anas' most vulnerable communities that lack park access, face high levels of poverty, and are communities of colors. Additionally, their northern orientation will help alleviate the park access of residents with Anaheim and the surrounding areas that according to Map 1 also lack dog spaces even though they hold a large portion Orange County population.

Discussion

The City Project (2011) analysis of Orange County, showcases that while the obesity levels across Santa Ana are not uniform, city wide it tends to be amongst the highest levels of the county. Thus using Lee, Shepley, and Huang (2009) evaluation that dog parks increase the well-being of both people and their counterparts it becomes more evident that the locations highlighted in Map 2 are justified because due to the prevalence of obesity in the city, implementing green space anywhere in the city could help combat health issues across the city. Additionally they sit in areas classified as "Park and Income Poor Communities of Color Community" thus increasing the well being of the community and green space access. Furthermore, the three parks are set in the northern half of the city because the north side of Santa Ana borders other cities that have large population shares but no dog spaces. In this way, the parks would increase dog access to Santa Ana most vulnerable areas while also being a more just implementation by including the surrounding cities that also face social and health disparities. Therefore, while the parks are located in Santa Ana they are within proximity of neighboring communities, for example in Anaheim another large urban enter that has no dog park within its city limits, inherently fulfilling Agyeman's aim to create a more just and sustainable dog spaces not only for Santa Ana but also for the surrounding region. Also, as mentioned in the earlier, these three locations are based upon sections of the city that have ongoing construction activity, *Dogview* and *Granddog* Park, or that have been used for other city activities, *Dogtown* Park. Lastly, using Noonan, et al (2016) suggestion that increasing the interaction between the community and the institutionally provided spaces will increase the attractiveness of such places, advocating the city to reconstructed these visible ills into more constructive and useful spaces for the community can increase the care and sustainability of the areas for present and future generations. Even though the maps outlined in this project are new spaces, Rahim et al's (2017) show that off-leash dog spaces can be constructed from current green spaces and implementational throughout the city with small adjustments and fence construction; increasing the availability and integration of dog spaces.

Conclusions

As dogs become a fundamental part of people's homes, public spaces have to adapt and integrate the need of humans and their companions. The urbanization process has also decreased the amount of private space available to individuals; this underscores the need to increase access to shared spaces. In particular, this project aims to create dog parks in one of Orange County's most populated city, Santa Ana, that still lack access to off-leash spaces in its city limits. The construction of dog spaces is necessary for these particular areas because they are home to a high Latinx population percentage compared to other cities in the county that have access to dog parks and even dog beaches. Dog spaces with a high walkability factor increase the interaction between individuals and their immediate community, fostering a sense of accountability and responsibility to maintain the surrounding environments' well-being for present and future generations. Furthermore, the creation of dog spaces can sustainably aid in creating a positive community environment and increase the physical and cognitive well-being of dogs and humans. In other words, creating dog spaces in these areas will help combat the unequal distribution of public spaces built for human-dog relationships. Ultimately, the community's expansion to include dogs' well-being and ability to survive and thrive alongside humans in our new urban landscape is necessary to live in a more just and sustainable lifestyle along with all of the biotic community beings.

For more information

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