

We must pursue positive and meaningful ways to include dogs as community members, to transform and strengthen the “resiliency” of our community.

The acceptance of dogs as part of our community depends on what true values are reflected in policy and physical infrastructure, to support their needs and highlight their strengths, as well as, to assure the rights and safety of people who are unfamiliar with or choose not to include dogs in their lives are recognized.

Housing incentivization:

Changing demographics:

Housing:

- Total # of So Burl homes = 8700+, (3500+ include dogs).
- Total # of So Bu residents = 20,000, (6000 residents live with dogs).
- People report their dogs are considered family members.
- Millennials are the largest age group of dog owners.
- Married families have the most dogs.
- Neighborhoods are becoming more compact, characterized by multi-unit buildings with high densities and rely on common areas – shared active space.

Health & Safety:

- Pets allow people to develop a routine and sense of purpose.
- Dogs prevent isolation, provide safety, prevent physical attacks, home invasions, assist elders and people with disabilities.

Business / employment:

- People with dogs choose where they live based on the available amenities for dogs.
- More jobs are allowing hybrid work options, allowing people to stay home with their pets.
- The number of businesses catering to the needs of pets (veterinarians, retail, doggie day cares, dog walkers, groomers, etc) is increasing.
- Municipalities throughout the US are integrating the needs of dogs in community development.

Environmental impact:

- The Potash Watershed covers 43% of South Burlington.
- Pet waste = excess nutrients (nitrogen & phosphorus) = algae blooms/ invasive vegetation.
- Average dog produces 4.5 lbs of waste/week (**So Burl 3500 dogs = 7.8 tons of waste/week**). Dogs must relieve themselves at least 2x per day and have **no** dedicated dog relief areas.
- Dogs are brought to parks, school yards and along bike and ped paths, to relieve themselves.
- Present infrastructure addressing dog hygiene: 7 dog waste bag dispensers near 6 So Bu parks.

Agriculture/Tree Canopy:

Tree canopy and street trees:

- There is a great deal of focus on the importance of preserving and increasing the city’s tree canopy, focusing on street trees and existing small forests.
- The tree canopy could be increased substantially, if the city’s parks and the dog parks were included. An increase of trees would improve the health of people and dogs.
- They would assist in the filtration and impact on runoff to So Bu stormwater due to dog urine.

Current status of space for dogs in So Burlington:

Demographics:

- Nearly 60% of people who walk on a regular basis, are accompanied by a dog.
- Dogs need between ½ hour and 3 hours (depending on dogs' health and age)
- Most dog owners walk at least ¼ - ½ mile or 10-15 minutes a day.
- Off-leash dog parks "lead the pack" in new urban parks across US.

Recreation:

Current space available to dogs:

• Off-leash (allowed):

- 1 urban neighborhood dog park on Farrell Street (<1/4 acre)
- 1 combination: "neighborhood/ destination" dog park - Wheeler (approx. 1 acre)

○ Off-leash (prohibited):

- 40 miles of multi-use paths.
- 425+ acres of parks.
- Prohibit dogs off-leash in public spaces, paths, trails.

Unmet needs:

- Completion of Wheeler Dog Park.
- Reconstruction of Farrell Dog Park.
- Develop master plan for new "neighborhood" dog parks/runs distribute (walk <15 min) in alignment with Recreation Master Plan>
- New "destination" dog park located near city limits (walk < 35 min, short drive +/- 1 mile).
- Identify and install sanitation resources, as soon as possible.

Comprehensive Plan needs to reflect and support the current and growing dog population in So Bu.

- Guidelines should be developed for new developments and redevelopment, to develop more livable spaces and support the wellbeing of all users (dogs and people).
- City initiatives need to support all residents, pet-owners and non-pet owners.
- Policies should be reviewed to ensure they reflect the current community needs.

