



STAFF REPORT

To: Parks and Recreation Commission

Date: November 20, 2025

**From: Nicole Acquisti, Recreation Manager
Kevin Gresh, Recreation Supervisor**

**Subject: Review of Cuernavaca Off-Leash Area Fencing Survey and Request
Direction whether to Proceed with the Installation of a Fence**

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommend that the Commission review the results of the Cuernavaca Off-Leash Fencing Survey and provide direction on whether to move forward with fencing an area on the upper Cuernavaca field for off-leash dogs.

BACKGROUND

Over the past decade, the Burlingame community has consistently demonstrated a strong interest in expanding off-leash, grassy areas for dogs. Due to this need, the City has created Skyline Park and Ray Dog Park and has worked to share ballfields, such as Washington and Cuernavaca, during times when field users are not using the fields.

With the renovation of Cuernavaca Field to resilient turf, dogs are no longer allowed on the field. In response, community members have requested that the hours for the grass area in the upper field be extended.

This idea is not new. In July 2015, the Dog Park Task Force met to discuss off-leash areas in Burlingame. In response to community requests, the group suggested exploring additional evening off-leash options at Cuernavaca Park and recommended that the Commission review the proposal.

In October 2015, the Commission directed staff to seek community input on the potential expansion of off-leash hours at Cuernavaca Park. During this time, the field was temporarily closed for maintenance from December 2015 to April 2016. A temporary fence was installed on the upper portion of the ballfield to create a designated off-leash area during field renovations.

The area was open daily from sunrise to sunset and received positive feedback from dog owners. To explore a long-term solution, staff held two community meetings to gather input from nearby residents and off-leash users regarding the potential installation of a permanent fence in the same

location. Notifications for these meetings were distributed to surrounding neighbors by mail, shared via the Department's Dog Contact List, and published in the Burlingame E-News.

In June 2016, staff held two community meetings. Attendees consistently opposed a permanent fence. The neighbors cited aesthetics and the loss of green space, while off-leash users raised safety concerns, specifically regarding hill grading and limited space. Although some emails initially supported the fence, most supporters reversed their position after the meetings.

At the July 2016 Commission meeting, staff reported community feedback on the proposed off-leash area at Cuernavaca Park's upper field. Neighbors opposed the new area and requested expanded off-leash hours when the athletic field was unused, despite concerns being raised about potential damage to the fields.

The Commission did not approve the fenced area but asked staff to survey field users on the impact of dogs. The survey results showed a significant impact on the field from off-leash usage, with most user groups opposed to additional hours. User groups also expressed that they did not feel comfortable requesting dog owners to leave. Additional off-leash hours were not approved by the Commission.

From 2016 to the present day, the upper grass area at Cuernavaca has remained unfenced and has operated as an off-leash area daily from 6:00 a.m. to 7:30 a.m.

DISCUSSION

Since the resilient turf field opened in November 2024, staff have engaged with community members to gather feedback on the potential creation of a fenced-off-leash area in the upper grass section of Cuernavaca Park.

In September 2025, staff conducted a survey (Exhibit A) regarding the possibility of fencing the upper grass area at Cuernavaca Park for off-leash use. The survey was open throughout September and promoted via email, hand delivery, the Burlingame e-news, and signage with QR codes at Washington Park, Ray Dog Park, Cuernavaca Park, Skyline Park, and Bayside Dog Exercise Park. In addition, staff hand-delivered the survey to the 25 houses that surrounded Cuernavaca

Staff received a total of 156 survey responses (Exhibit B). Of these, 146 responses were submitted via Google Form, and 10 were received by mail through USPS. Survey results indicate that 77% of respondents support the installation of a fence. Additionally, 74.3% of participants reported living within a 20-minute walk of Cuernavaca, and 84% identified as dog owners.

On November 13, 2025, the Dog Advisory Group (previously named the Dog Park Task Force) reviewed the survey results. They evaluated the advantages and disadvantages of adding fencing, taking into careful consideration all feedback provided by the community. The Group advised staff to present to the Commission for direction.

If the Commission approves moving forward with the installation of the fence, the Dog Advisory Group will meet to evaluate potential fence layouts and fence styles that balance community

needs with the practical realities of maintaining the grass. The Dog Advisory Group will also conduct additional outreach to nearby residents and off-leash users to gather feedback on any proposed concepts. Following that work, staff will prepare preliminary site maps, cost estimates, and funding options and return to the Commission with a complete recommendation for consideration.

If the Commission decides that Cuernavaca should remain in its current state, no further action will be taken.

FISCAL IMPACT

The installation of fencing is not currently funded. If approved by the Commission, funding would be requested as part of the FY2026-27 budget process.

EXHIBITS

Exhibit A-Cuernavaca Survey

Exhibit B- Survey Results and Survey Comments