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Halifax service dogs get run area

By CBC News
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An exclusive off leash dog run is set to open in Halifax, designed specifically for guide dogs and other canines that work for people with disabilities.

An exclusive off leash dog run is set to open in Halifax, designed specifically for guide dogs and other canines that work for people with disabilities.

Helen McFadyen, chairwoman of the advisory committee for persons with disabilities for Halifax Regional Municipality, was one of the people who convinced city council to open such a park.

She estimated there are about 80 service dogs working in HRM, and she believes such a dog run would be the first of its kind in Canada.

The run will be only for service dogs such as seeing eye dogs, hearing dogs and dogs who work with people with autism and other disabilities.

McFadyen and her guide dog, Opal, are able to take a Metro Transit bus right to the new dog run, located on a small piece of land just north of the Centennial Pool in downtown Halifax.

The land was designated by the city as unusable because it is set aside in case they need to modify the five street intersection at Cogswell Street and Rainnie Drive, HRM spokeswoman Shaune MacKinlay said.

The new green space won't be maintained to the same extent as other parks, she said, and won't be as expensive to run.

The dog run is enclosed by a tall chain link fence, which McFadyen said is crucial.

"If I came alone, I'd be secure in that my dog could run around inside this enclosure safely and wouldn't be running into traffic, and I'd be able to keep track of her," McFadyen said.

Charlie MacDonald said his guide dog works hard helping him navigate his way around the city, and it will be

nice to be able to reward him by letting him off his leash in a public space.

"They need to have time off just like you and I do. They need to have fun, they need to relax and know the difference between working and not working," he said.

The new dog run is expected to open as soon as next week.

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