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Thornberry Gift Funds Construction of Iowa City Dog Park

By this time next year Iowa City's newest park will be going to the dogs, thanks to a gift from civic leader Dean Thornberry. Thornberry, a retired business owner who served on the City Council of Iowa City from 1996-1999 has pledged to support the construction of the dog park.

The gift was announced today (Oct. 14, 2005) at the future site of the 11-acre section on the Peninsula parkland.

"Dean Thornberry's thoughtful and generous gift allows us to move full steam ahead with construction of the dog park," said Beth Shields, president of Johnson County Dog Park Action Committee (JC DogPAC). "A park like this is a very special addition to our community and Mr. Thornberry has given all of us a very special legacy."

Previously, in order for the project to proceed on schedule, the City of Iowa City had agreed to lend \$70,000 to the JC DogPAC. Thornberry's gift means that additional donations will go to park improvements, upkeep, and maintenance.

Thornberry was born in Iowa City and attended the University of Iowa. Until his retirement, he owned two Burger King restaurants in Iowa City, as well as other businesses. In addition to his stint on the city council, his civic activities included participation in the AirLifeline association, which provides volunteer medical flights. He and his late wife raised and showed Rhodesian Ridgebacks. He currently owns a seven-month old Ridgeback puppy named Boulder.

The fenced-in dog park will include areas for small dogs, for all dogs and for training and events. The plan, designed by landscape architects Shoemaker and Haaland, includes a walking trail, shelters, plantings, benches and garbage stations, as well as a pond.

Established in November 2002 members of the JC DogPAC have worked to increase awareness of the benefits of dog parks and raised funds for its creation. Through a series of fund-raising events and donations, such as the annual Dog Paddle at City Park pool, the group has raised \$40,000 toward the construction and set-up of the park.