Chance likes to stretch and gnaw on his ball. Chewy is more of a runner. Sky and Ruby? They came to play.

All four dogs are regulars at the Novi Dog Park, a 3-acre grassy playpen for off-leash canines that’s tucked behind the Novi Ice Arena, off Novi Road, just south of 10 Mile.

“This park is amazing. Just the size of it is astounding,” said Mike Manta, who recently moved from Canton to Novi. He and his wife, Heami, generally bring their two Siberian huskies, Sky and Ruby, to the park on weekends.

“I like that the owners are respectful. It seems like everyone here is super laid back,” he said. “It’s peaceful for me.”

Brian Osterling likes to take his mixed-breed, Chewy, to the dog park on weekends for the exercise. The park is just a five-minute drive from his home and offers separate secure, fenced areas for small and large dogs.

“It’s been great so far,” he said. “He’s pretty active, so we needed a place for him to get up and run around a little bit, socialize with other dogs.”

Candice Clark’s 18-month-old pit bull, Chance, played a little catch before turning the ball into a chew toy during a visit. Clark lives in a condo and takes Chance to the dog park four or five times a week. It gives him plenty of time and space to stretch his legs.

“He likes it, so we make time for it,” she said.

The City of Novi, responding to the public’s request for an off-leash area, used capital improvement funds to pay for the park when it was built in October 2014.

“The property was already owned by the city,” said Jessica Mistak, supervisor in Novi’s Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services Department. “Its location near apartment and condominiums lends itself to serving residents who need a place nearby for their dog.”

The city, which manages and maintains the park, upgraded the entry last year and improved drainage at the site. Benches and dog waste stations are located throughout the park, and drinking fountains for dogs and their owners are stationed just inside the entrance.
Prospective dog park members are required to submit an application, view a video about park rules and etiquette, and take a short quiz.

Clark, who has been a dog park member for just over a year, said she was surprised by the quiz but likes the idea. “It made me feel like they actually cared about what was going on out here,” she said.

Mistak said the park currently has 360 registered users, and that membership has increased 6 percent over last year. But there’s still plenty of space for dogs to romp around.

The membership fees are $30 for residents and $60 for non-residents. Each additional dog costs $12, with a limit of three. There’s also a one-time fee of $20 for an electronic key fob that’s necessary to open the main entry gate.

“Requiring membership to the park gives our members peace of mind because they know the other dogs in the park are up to date on their vaccines and owners have had to take a test to ensure they understand the rules,” Mistak said. “It’s also unique because members can use the dog park located at Northville Community Park in addition to the Novi Dog Park.”

Donna Conway, a longtime Novi resident, checked out the Northville site, but prefers the park in her hometown. She started taking her 9-month-old English yellow Lab, Cayman, to the Novi Dog Park two months ago.

Conway said she feels safe in the park, even when no other dog owners are there. “It’s really clean, very well behaved and for the most part it’s never really crowded,” Conway said. “There’s usually not more than six or seven dogs, so they have a chance to run around and play a lot. And everyone is really friendly.”

To learn more about the city’s dog park, and to fill out an application to become a member, visit cityofnovi.org.