



Pets Welcome: Pet-Friendly Places that are Good for Business, People and Pets

A White Paper From **Mars Petcare & Nashville Civic Design Center** For Pet-Friendly Cities & Events

FRANKLIN TENNESSEE GOES PET FRIENDLY!

IMAGINE A WORLD WHERE PET-FRIENDLY PLACES & SPACES ARE CONSIDERED, SUPPORTED & INCLUSIVE:

- Shops and restaurants make it easy to be out with your pet
- Needs of non-pet owners are respected and addressed
- Amenities are available that help pets and pet owners

Happy Pets, like Happy People, are closely linked to where they feel Welcome. Welcomed Pets, like welcomed people, tend to stay longer (and spend more!).

EXPERT PERSPECTIVES

In its 2017-18 survey of national pet owners, the American Pet Products Association (APPA) reports that:

- Pet ownership is now at its highest level ever reported at 68%
- More than 55% of dog and cat owners say their pet is “like a child or family member.”
- 28% of dog owners and 23% of cat owners cite pet care while they’re away as a drawback of pet ownership.

PETS ARE FAMILY

Many cities are experiencing the highest rates of pet ownership ever. Further, in many homes around our nation pets are seen and treated as part of the family. As busy families juggle the myriad of work, school, extra-curricular activities, family and social engagements—it gets harder to leave these furry family members at home for long periods of time. Simply put, people are looking for more places that pets are welcome. From the rise of pet-friendly patio policies, open-door policies and even retail areas touting their pet-friendliness as a marketing tool—cities and businesses are beginning to see and feel the need for more “pets welcome” policies and options

Pets make life better in countless ways. Yet in many places, there are barriers that make it hard to enjoy life with a pet. Let’s make cities pet friendly, so everybody benefits.

Join the movement and get **A Playbook for Pet-Friendly Cities: BetterCitiesForPets.com**

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MANY CITIES ARE GOING TO THE DOGS...OR WANT TO! U.S. MAYORS AGREE – PETS ARE GOOD FOR BUSINESS

Mayors know their cities best. So we asked them for their thoughts regarding the impact of pet-friendliness on positive economic impacts and conducted a survey in 2017.

NATIONAL DATA FROM US CONFERENCE OF MAYORS (USCM):

- Pet-friendly policies and amenities can attract additional traffic to retail establishments, restaurants, cafes, etc. 63% of Mayors agree or strongly agree
- Providing pet-friendly amenities can have an overall positive economic impact on my community. 82% of Mayors agree or strongly agree

PET-FRIENDLY CITIES INCLUDE PET-FRIENDLY BUSINESSES

Informal policies and practices that allow customers or employees bring pets into establishments have been occurring since the beginning of commerce in this nation. In modern times, outside governmental regulations - private businesses can make the rules regarding the allowance of pets into their places. The growing population of service and therapy dogs has further compounded the need for businesses to begin considering what their policies are related to animals - indoors and out. Mars Petcare set out to uncover issues and work to provide solutions for cities and business districts interested in supporting or growing their 2 and 4-legged customers.



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HOMETOWN PERSPECTIVE • FRANKLIN, TENNESSEE

The City of Franklin has traditionally been a relatively pet-friendly place. With its sixteen blocks of businesses, residences, thriving Main Street and tourist attractions—pets had generally been welcome around town for locals and visitors alike. Over the last few years, City officials, civic, and business leaders began to notice a marked increase in the frequency of pets. At the same time, local business owners had become interested becoming known as a pet friendly business group and city.

Mars Petcare's U.S. headquarters are located in Franklin, TN. Through its community engagement efforts, they began to learn of the concerns of the citizens and neighbors. When Mars Petcare reached out to city officials and civic leaders to learn more, they found a community ready to explore piloting the first ever "Pets Welcome" program.

OPENING THE DOOR TO A "PETS WELCOME" PILOT PROJECT

A "Core Committee" was formed led by Downtown Franklin Associations' Economic Vitality Chair and made up of members from; city government, Mars Petcare, business owners, Williamson County Convention and Visitors Bureau, residents and more.

The Core Committee would soon branch out into sub-committees and invite additional members as we worked to develop a plan and pilot new pet-friendly practices. The first step was to discover the current state of pets and pet-friendliness in Franklin.

Mars Petcare and Nashville Civic Design Center set out to get some data about the rise in pets in the area and found that no one was tracking this. Thus, we began gathering data with Franklin business owners and residents to find out what they were experiencing in their city. In our surveys, respondents shared insights on what Franklin currently offered and what was needed in the future.



RESIDENT PERSPECTIVES

- In a 2017 Residents Survey conducted by Franklin Residents Association, 93% of respondents identified themselves as living within five blocks of Main Street—the downtown core.
- 62% of respondents reported owning pets. Of that 62%, 88% reported owning dogs.
- Residents reported being consistently more likely to engage and visit downtown Franklin with their pet, than those who didn't own a pet or didn't bring them downtown.
- 49% of resident respondents reported their top reasons as to why they would be more likely to visit a business that was pet-friendly even without their pet as: 1) they valued pets being welcome in a business (79%) and 2) having pets around builds social connections with other people (65%).
- If respondents were less likely to visit a pet-friendly business the top reason was a concern regarding cleanliness (63%).
- Residents reported that they were more likely to visit a pet-friendly business with their pet if there were:
 - 1) clear rules and guidelines for pets and pet owners (79%); 2) clear and uniform signage showing which businesses were pet friendly (73%);
 - 3) special amenities for pets (56%);
 - 4) special events that were pet-friendly (42%)and
 - 5) educational resources provided by pet-friendly businesses (41%).
- Finally, residents with pets said they'd be less likely to visit a pet-friendly business with their pet is for concerns about people who have allergies to pets (40%).



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HOMETOWN BUSINESS PERSPECTIVES:

In this dense, 16-block area, Franklin is home to almost one hundred businesses of all types. In partnership with Downtown Franklin Association, we set out to survey them. Of this group:

- 75% currently allowed pets within their buildings and 67% currently considered themselves pet-friendly.
- Of the 67% that currently considered themselves pet-friendly, 58% were interested in collaborating together to join a "Pets Welcome" merchant group in Franklin.
- Of the businesses not currently pet-friendly, most reported that they may become pet friendly if given clear and consistent signage and guidelines.
- 56% strongly agreed that pet-friendly businesses are good for the community and 49% strongly agreed that it was good for the individual business.
- 33% strongly agreed that businesses becoming pet-friendly was important to them.
- Of the respondents, primary concerns regarding being a pet-friendly business were identified as worries around current health code/legislation and customer-perceived concerns around cleanliness.
- There was general uncertainty that adopting pet-friendly policies would increase revenue or foot traffic. However, 48% did believe more pet-friendly policies would increase traffic to downtown Franklin.
- Businesses reported that their primary motivation for becoming pet-friendly was not due to expected increases in revenue or foot traffic, but instead a sense of community spirit and customer goodwill.
- Businesses indicated a desire for programmatic and consistent elements that identified the business as pet-friendly and clarified expectations for businesses and customers.





12+ DOGS DAILY, CATS ON A LEASH, A LAMB, AND A PLAN

Aside from surveys, Mars Petcare and Nashville Civic Design Center further set out to learn the issues and hear directly from residents and merchants. We attended Downtown Franklin Association (DFA) meetings. We listened, presented, and made ourselves available for input, feedback and discussion. We visited and talked with business owners and residents all over town. One business owner memorably shared that he was being visited by “12 or more dogs daily, a cat on a leash, a lamb and needed a plan.” Both business owners and residents consistently told us that the high number of pets in Franklin were a “good problem.” However, they were very much wanting assistance in creating standards that owners, employees and customers alike could understand and clearly comply with.

In collaboration with an expanded Core Committee, and all entities we embarked on a six-point pilot plan that became key tenets of our Pets Welcome Pilot.

POLICY CHECK

In a U.S. Conference of Mayors survey conducted in 2017, 66% of Mayors don't have, or aren't aware of, pet-friendly policies for public-private spaces such as restaurants or stores.

One consistent finding in Franklin was that business owners wanted to stay in compliance of policies, but were uncertain of what the laws surrounding pets were (outside established health codes).

A “City Committee” to investigate policy and coordinate with government and City Council was developed. A check with State government found that while there was a provision within Tennessee statutes regarding pets on outdoor patios—it was up to individual cities to determine if they would like to adopt it. An additional city ordinance was one related to tethering animals outside businesses in small sidewalk areas. In talks with city officials, business owners and residents, they determined that further legislation would not be needed at this time. However, through this process, everyone learned what the rules were; and all felt more comfortable and confident about moving forward.



SIGNAGE

We had to find a way to clearly indicate pet-friendly places and spaces from those that pets either could not or would not be welcome—while working to maintain the overall pet-friendly feel of the city itself. An idea arose to test the effectiveness of door/window decals letting people know you were a pet-friendly business. The discussions on verbiage and design were some of the most robust. Through the input process, we learned that one decal simply wasn't going to be able to communicate what was needed. Thus, three designs were developed—all with supportive, positive messaging whether the business allowed pets or not.





PROVIDE TOOLS & RESOURCES TO PARTICIPATING BUSINESSES



After listening and gathering feedback, another core pilot component became clear. However, they were wanting assistance in creating standards that owners, employees and customers alike could understand and clearly comply with. A “toolkit” was developed to help support the pilot participating business owners.

A sample Code of Conduct was developed in both written, downloadable, poster and summary card formats so that business owners could display it for their guests in all mediums to clearly indicate expectations for all parties in being in a pet-friendly environment.

Business owners clearly communicated that they wanted and needed to support each other in evolving more consistent pet-friendly policies and practices. No longer wanting to “go it alone,” they were looking to provide strength in numbers and consistency. Further, they wanted advice from the experts on how to anticipate and address issues with their

employees and customers. Therefore, leveraging Mars Petcare expert knowledge, a Pets Welcome Program Guide was developed as a comprehensive resource with guidance on issues ranging from information about how and why the program was important to how to handle concerned customers, how to promote your business as pet-friendly and more.

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Hydration can quickly become a serious issue for both people and pets particularly in warmer temperatures. Thus, a branded, Pets Welcome water bowl was created to provide businesses with an opportunity to offer hydration whether they allowed pets indoors or not when placed outside their business. This also added to the general pet-friendly feel of Franklin, which was important to all.

It happens... sometimes a pet will wriggle out of a collar, a leash breaks, or you run out of waste bags. Pets Welcome businesses were provided with tools and resources to help humans in these types of particular predicaments by providing a Better Cities for Pets leash, collar and attachable waste-bag dispenser that could be made available to guests in need.



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✓ AMENITIES CHECK

If Franklin wanted to support its current pet populations and be known as a pet-friendly city, it was important to take a look at what types of current amenities were available around town. Particularly, we looked for public amenities related to waste stations, hydration stations, pet-friendly awareness through signage, dog parks and open, green spaces. We accomplished this through research and a lot of “walk and talk” sessions around town. (IMG)

There was a clear lack of amenities to support the growing pet population. In fact, Franklin only had 5 readily visible pet amenities.

Based on public input, some amenities were placed in slightly different areas than originally recommended. Installation of waste bag dispensers were designed referencing Franklin's historic guidelines. Water bowls were designed and distributed for use as temporary hydration stations. Signage around responsible pet ownership were posted. Plans are being discussed to develop dog park and open, green space opportunities creating more pet-friendly spaces and places.



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WELCOMING THE “PETS WELCOME” PROGRAM TO THE WORLD

The City of Franklin, Franklin’s Convention and Visitors Bureau, pilot participants and more were excited and armed with compliance confidence, resources and tools and pet-friendly amenities. Our next step was to hold a public launch of the program, making Franklin, TN the first official “Pets Welcome” Better City for Pets. The public launch was a two-day event that invited residents, businesses, local and state officials, visitors, the media and more to celebrate the cities singular status. Event happenings included; a proclamation by Mayor Moore proclaiming Franklin a, "Pets Welcome City." The first hometown debut of the Mars Petcare Pop-Up Park, opportunities to walk adoptable dogs for donation to the Williamson County Animal Center. Other activities included pet-friendly family portraits, "Yappy Hours" at participating businesses and more. The event was attended by over 2,000 people and 1200 (check numbers JY) dogs over the two days and was by all accounts, a huge success.



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WHAT'S NEXT?

Our work is not over and our comparative results will not be available for some time. We look forward to sharing updates and developments and continue to work hand-in-hand and paw-to-paw to make Franklin a vibrant city for locals and visitors (2 and 4 legged!) alike. We will be posting more findings and learnings at BetterCitiesForPets.com. Be sure to visit the site for the latest updates and to download the resources and tools used in this pilot program.

