



DOWNTOWN LIVING WITH PETS: Pet-Friendly Spaces & Places

A WHITE PAPER FROM MARS PETCARE & NASHVILLE CIVIC DESIGN
CENTER FOR PET-FRIENDLY CITIES

Imagine a world where pet-friendly places and spaces are supported, inclusive, and considered.

A world where:

- Pet-friendly housing options exist for all families;
- Pet ownership is not restricted by breed or size bans;
- Amenities are available that help pets and pet owners.

Happy pets, like happy people, are closely linked to where they feel welcome.

EXPERT PERSPECTIVES:

PETS AFFECT WHERE PEOPLE CHOOSE TO LIVE

In a 2017 study by National Association of Realtors Research Department, 81% of respondents said pet-related considerations would play a role as they choose their next living situation. People spend on their pets too, bringing economic benefit to communities.

PETS HELP PEOPLE FEEL SAFER

A study by the University of Western Australia with the Waltham Centre for Pet Nutrition looked at dog walking and people's perception of their safety. In both the U.S. and Australia, people reported feeling safer when walking with their dog and perceived their neighborhoods to be more watchful.

PETS HELP NEIGHBORS CONNECT

A 2015 study also supported by Waltham highlighted the role pet's play in helping people build social relationships. Researchers found dog owners are five times more likely to get to know their neighbors than non-owners.



U.S. MAYORS AGREE – PETS ARE GOOD FOR CITY DEVELOPMENT

Mayors know their cities best. So we asked them for their thoughts regarding the impact of pet-friendliness on economic development

NATIONAL DATA FROM 2016 US CONFERENCE OF MAYORS:

- Offering pet-friendly amenities can help residential rental communities improve tenant stability, thus reducing turnover (74% agree or strongly agree).
- Local availability of pet-friendly amenities can help increase the value of residential property (81% agree or strongly agree).
- 69% said a responsible pet ownership educational campaign would help make their city more pet friendly.

ARE OUR CITIES GOING TO THE DOGS?

Cities of all sizes are beginning to see the impact of having more pets where people live, work and play—which often is concentrated around urban centers or downtown “cores.” In many of these areas around our nation, the number of pets has begun to outnumber the amount of children as urban dwellers and millennials opt for “fur babies.”



The rise of pet-friendly residential development, workplaces, hotels and retail businesses seems to be happening everywhere. New service-oriented jobs related to the care and keeping of pets is also on the rise. At that same time and over time, cities are beginning to notice an ever-diminishing lack of green space and places to create public, open green space. Overall– cities are beginning to see and feel the need for more publicly available pet-friendly amenities that help pets, pet owners and non-pet owners too!



HOMETOWN PERSPECTIVE • NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

The City of Nashville was beginning to notice more pets downtown on a daily basis. Mars Petcare and Nashville Civic Design Center set out to get some data about the rise in pets and found that no one was tracking this. Thus, we began a relationship with Nashville Downtown Partnership to help dig in and get the dirt on the prevalence of pets in downtown. In our survey with Nashville Downtown Partnership, respondents shared insights on what our city currently offered and what was needed in the future.

In a 2017 Residents Survey conducted by Nashville Downtown Partnership, 43% of respondents reported owning pets. Of that 43%, 71% reported owning dogs. In 2017, Nashville downtown core reached a population of 10,000—meaning there are well over 3,000 dogs in a 1.2-mile dense, urban downtown core—**wow!**

Next, we took a look at current public amenities available related to waste stations, hydration stations, pet-friendly awareness through signage, dog parks and open, green spaces. We accomplished this through further research, study and a lot of “walk and talk” sessions around town from March-October 2017. **Most of what we found was surprising.**

THE NEED FOR MORE PUBLIC AMENITIES WAS GREATER THAN WE THOUGHT

In reviewing Nashville’s downtown core, we found an extreme lack of amenities to support the residential pet population. In fact, Nashville only had a few readily visible pet amenities with most concentrated largely in a park-space aligning the Cumberland River on downtown’s far east side. Clearly, there were not enough amenities or varied locations to support the over 3,000 -4,000 resident dogs and their families that currently live downtown predominately in mid-downtown core areas.

Also in the Nashville Downtown Partnership Residents Survey, several respondents reported having access to amenities (waste bag dispensers and dog runs) in privately owned residential buildings. While many of Nashville’s newer residential developments were starting to include expanded pet considerations, most of the existing properties did not have amenities or adequate space in which to do so. Further, as in any neighborhood, Nashville’s downtown dwellers and their pets don’t simply stay in their building or on their own block. They walk around their neighborhood – which in their case; happens to be a dense, urban downtown area. For these reasons, residents clearly communicated a desire and need for available, well-maintained public amenities and support around their neighborhood.

CONF”USE”D? • CONCERNS ABOUT USE & MAINTANCE OF PUBLIC AMENITIES

In beginning our work to identify where amenities were located, who could use them and how they were maintained; we discovered widespread confusion over who “owned” and were responsible for upkeep on various amenities – and what was available for public use



WASTE NOT DOESN'T NECESSARILY MEAN WANT NOT...

Of the 24 downtown core locations found to have waste stations and/or bag dispensers, only 12 were publicly owned and maintained by Metro Parks Department. Many Downtown Resident survey responders reported that bag stations were often out and not easily found by residents and visitors (black or dark green boxes attached to the base of black or dark green trash cans for example).

The majority of privately owned waste stations/bag dispensers were placed in areas only near pet-designated areas such as rooftop dog parks and runs. Therefore, residents departing the building did not have easy access to these amenities for their public, outdoor adventures. If you forgot your waste bags, it is unlikely you'd find additional amenities readily available publicly.



WATER WONDER?

Of the 3 downtown hydration stations, 100% were found to be publicly-owned and maintained by Metro Parks Department and concentrated solely around a new, small off-leash dog park adjacent to Nashville's new Ascend Amphitheatre in Riverfront Park. While it is a huge step forward that Metro Nashville has begun considering pets in their space and amenity planning, a lack of signage and this adjacency to a new, private attraction made residents and visitors unsure if it was "for them." Over a two-hour period on a hot day, passersby were observed and engaged with (both with and without pets). Only six of the 32 people we interacted with knew that it was a public space and that public hydration stations were for pets and people.



GREEN ≠ PARKS

Of the 16 areas identified as frequented as dog relief and/or park areas only 4 were publicly owned and maintained by Metro Parks. In talking with downtown residents, many shared that they go to private spaces not designated as pet-relief areas. Wherever the closest green space was, is where they would go to “go.” This includes the lawns in front of the iconic AT&T “Bat Building,” and landscaped or planter areas.

OTHER KEY FINDINGS

Nashville Downtown Partnership Residential Survey respondents provided many comments regarding accessibility and safety of Nashville’s downtown park areas and it is clear that this will need to be an area of focus for Nashville moving forward.

Regardless of type of amenity or area, we learned that in Nashville, there was not a private nor public standard communication or responsible pet ownership education mechanism for finding or supporting pet-friendly places and spaces. This further adds to the Conf “Use”d state of pet-friendly places and spaces.

WHAT WASN'T AS SURPRISING?

As typical of most dense, urban downtown cores, Nashville has a marked lack of green, open public spaces for people and definitely for pets. Due to the immense, rapid growth of Nashville over the last ten years, the lack of green, open space was so startling this quickly became an area of separate, concentrated focus. Visit www.BetterCitiesForPets.com to find out more and get ideas for your city on how to grow your green space possibilities.

SO WHAT DID WE DO?

Discovery and change making takes time – especially in the midst of explosive growth. We started looking for collaborative partners, key components to consider, quick wins, long-game support and sustainability. Our learnings are your learnings found on the following pages.



Also visit
www.BetterCitiesForPets.com for more resources, tools and to get the latest information on new developments.



LEARNINGS & IDEAS FOR CITIES TO EXPLORE

FIND A CONNECTIVE & COLLABORATIVE PARTNER WHO IS INVESTED IN DOWNTOWN'S SUCCESS:

In Nashville, that aptly named “partner” has been Nashville Downtown Partnership. As we worked with them to discover the data and uncover the issues, they realized that they had an opportunity to step up and help bridge the gap for residents, visitors and local businesses.

Nashville Downtown Partnership manages over fifty “ambassadors” who travel by foot, Segueway, truck and bus all over downtown who focus on keeping our city clean and safe. Further, ambassadors are ready to assist or guide anyone, support downtown beautification and maintenance issues and give hometown faces to what has often been named one of our nations’ friendliest cities. Downtown Partnership quickly agreed to get their ambassador team to assist in the placement and maintenance of new waste bag dispensers, help identify opportunities to install new hydration stations, report issues, and develop further ways to help make downtown Nashville a pet-friendlier place.

Downtown Partnership also is partnering with Mars Petcare in developing and implementing a signage program that clearly identifies pet-friendly amenities and more. Since the Downtown Partnership team and their ambassadors interact regularly with both residents & businesses, have a vested interest in tourism and the economic vitality and sustainability of our city overall, Nashville Downtown Partnership is an ideal connective and collaborative partner.





KEY COMPONENTS OF PET-FRIENDLY DOWNTOWN LIVING • AMENITIES

Consider frequency, location and placement of any type of pet-friendly amenity thoughtfully. When pets have been home all day, they may not often be able to “make it” very far so having relief spaces that are plentiful and easy to find are critical—especially in areas known to house or attract a lot of dogs. The same is true for hydration stations especially in cities located in warmer climates or that experience very hot seasons.

Hydration Station Considerations:

- Plumbed hydrations can be an expensive endeavor. To get the “biggest bang for your buck” consider putting in hydration stations that take care of both people and pets
- Look to partnering with private businesses doing construction in your downtown. If they are creating or breaking concrete to get to water lines, that is a prime opportunity to install a hydration station—erasing need for future concrete-breaking and showing community goodwill, support and engagement on the part of the private or public entity.
- Create a plan and directive signage if the hydration station becomes inoperable. A small “to report issues...” gives the public an opportunity to share, communicates “ownership,” and prevents larger issues from lack of reporting or attention.
- Ensure responsible pet ownership signage is a part of your hydration station plan. Remind people, whether they have pets or not, that staying hydrated is important for health and happiness of all creatures!



Signage Considerations:

- Look for existing opportunities. How can you incorporate with existing way-finding signage in physical locations and/or digitally?
- Be considerate of historic or other style guidelines—make sure you partner with the appropriate City or Residents Association group to learn of any stylistic needs or concerns
- Loud and proud signage—make sure your signage indicating that there is a pet amenity is up high and can be seen from further away.
- Stay away from the “shame game” when working to encourage responsible pet ownership practices. Great examples of language that is more “pawsitively” and positively-oriented can be found at www.BetterCitiesForPets.com along with more tools and resources for your city!



Waste Station & Bag Dispenser Considerations:

- Placing bag dispensers on existing poles or even buildings mitigates the need for “more poles” in already likely pole-packed areas. Work with public and private partners to gain approval to add to what already exists and add a highly visible pet-amenity sign near or on the location.
- To mitigate concerns regarding smells, ensure you put waste stations that include disposal in shaded areas and away from restaurants and food vendors.
- Consider putting waste bag dispensers in close adjacency to already existing trashcans that are regularly picked up. This will help “keep a lid on” smells and build confidence in the quality of services you are providing.
- Remember to include signage encouraging responsible pet ownership, indications about who “owns” or maintains the dispenser or station and a way to report issues.



Look for Opportunities to Grow Your Open Green Space

- Conduct “walk and talks” with stakeholders dedicated to specifically looking for opportunities to insert or expand spots of publicly accessible, open green space. Some examples we found were; unused grassy spaces offset from corners, unutilized strips of grass, small courtyards, extensions or slight modifications to existing landscaping and more.
- Concrete often has possibilities as well! Turning an underutilized parking lot or even something as small as a parking space can become pet-friendly with modifications.
- Explore opportunities for private and private-public partnerships. Many for-profit firms are looking for opportunities and new ways to support their city as good corporate citizens. Many governmental departments have terrific ideas and would benefit from pairing up with a private for-profit or nonprofit organization to help bring their plans to life.



WHAT'S NEXT FOR NASHVILLE?

Also discovered in 2017's Nashville Downtown Partnership Survey, respondents shared other items high on their pet-friendly priority list:

- 56% desired pets welcome in more businesses either inside or outside on patios
- 51% wanted increased water access through hydration stations or outdoor water bowls
- 42% wanted additional off-leash dog parks

Aside from just residents, Nashville is an "IT City" for tourism and many are looking for that "home away from home" experience for the pets they are bringing with them. Added to our mix, **five** new pet-friendly hotels are slated to open over the next year in downtown Nashville, bringing that daily dog density even higher during already busy seasons. Visitors will be looking for pet-friendly spaces and places to take their furry family members while enjoying our city. Thus, we'll also be focusing on tourism, pet-friendliness and how that impacts our city.

Based on this feedback and findings, Mars Petcare, Nashville Downtown Partnership and Nashville Civic Design Center will be working on all of these priorities!

LOOKING FOR MORE INFORMATION ON PET AMENITIES & CREATING MORE PET-FRIENDLY CITIES?

Visit BetterCitiesForPets.com to learn more, get the latest updates, downloads, developments and more ideas!

