



Reclaiming Public Space and PARK(ing) Day: Exploring Opportunities for People and Pets

A White Paper from **Mars Petcare & Nashville Civic Design Center** for Pet-Friendly Cities

IMAGINE A WORLD WHERE PET-FRIENDLY SPACES & PLACES ARE CONSIDERED, SUPPORTIVE AND INCLUSIVE.

A world where:

- Pet needs are included in green space and park planning
- Pet hydration and waste stations are plentiful and easy to find
- People know the benefits and expectations of pets in public places

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 – GREEN SPACE IS GOOD SPACE,

Mayors know their cities best. So we asked them for their thoughts regarding the state of green space in their areas.

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**



NATIONAL DATA FROM U.S. CONFERENCE OF MAYORS 2017

In a Mars Petcare survey with the U.S. Conference of Mayors, respondents reported a mix of pet-friendly amenities outdoors, but also noted that there's a need for more in their cities.

- 81% of cities say they have off-leash parks where pets can play
- 29% say their city's residents do not have adequate access to off-leash dog parks and pet-friendly greenways or trails.
- Local availability of pet-friendly amenities can help increase the value of residential property. 81% of Mayors agree or strongly agree

GREEN SPACE IS GOOD SPACE FOR PEOPLE & PETS

When pets have a place to run and play, it can help keep them healthy, reduce anxiety or boredom, and stimulate their minds. Plus, active play with other pets helps improve social skills. Being active with pets is good for people too. The more accessible open and green space a community has for pets and people to go and "to go," the easier it is to get outside to exercise, get happy and make social connections.

Exercise is Vital for Pet Health. Pet obesity in the United States is on the rise, affecting one in four dogs and a third of pet cats. That risks pets' health and leads to increased costs for pet owners. As Mars Petcares' BANFIELD Pet Hospital notes, just getting out for a walk at a local green space can be a great first step to a pattern of exercise for pets and people.

Pets Get People Moving. Pets love to run and that gets people moving too. Studies have shown higher levels of activity in kids from families with dogs and that kids with

dogs are less likely to be overweight. Also, older adults with dogs tend to be more physically active than those without and to stay mobile longer.



Green Space Promotes Happiness. Beyond the importance of parks for pets, green space is key for human health too. A study using the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index suggests that parks in urban areas support physical activity, but also contributes to a sense of community and are a key predictor of people's health and happiness.

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Green Space Builds Community Connections. Interacting with others, as people tend to do in parks and green spaces, builds what's known as social capital--- the relationships that bind people to their communities and each other. Dog parks strengthen and contribute to social capital and provide opportunities to build relationships and share information.

Green space that is open and available to all become rich opportunities for public life to thrive. We began to wonder, could this focus on public space be considered and planned to include pets? We began a journey to explore the potential pet-friendly possibilities within a movement known as Reclaiming Public Space.

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SHAPING THE POSSIBILITIES & RECLAIMING PUBLIC SPACE

One of Nashville Civic Design Center's core initiatives involves a movement known as Reclaiming Public Space. Work around Reclaiming Public Space (RPS) supports efforts to improve the built environment in creating and sustaining vibrant public spaces for all to enjoy. Many organizations and cities are actively working to reclaim public space and there can be many facets and components to these efforts.

Public spaces are literally all around us.



“A public space means open, free, accessible to all – of and belonging to the people. Each day, every one of us moves through public space, whether driving down the street, walking down the sidewalk, sitting in a park, etc. Quality public space instills in people a sense of being a part of a larger community and in turn, that our city is a part of us. When the public realm is vibrant, beautiful and active it is a demonstration that local government values its citizens and their quality of life. Alternatively, when the public realm is neglected, badly designed or treated as an afterthought, it reflects poorly on the city, effectively sending a message that the government does not value its citizens or its visitors.

Cities are complex places with diverse stakeholders who often have competing interests and goals. In order to tackle big problems, we must recognize the power of good design to positively impact our lives and our cities. Quality open space --whether a park, plaza, public building or even a modest street bench are the spaces that enable us to absorb our surroundings, relax, eat lunch, meet a friend, experience nature, make social connections or even exercise. Well-designed, beautiful public spaces have the power to instill or restore a sense of dignity and civic pride to our urban environment, enhance quality of life, increase feelings of community and connectivity, and more for residents and visitors alike. **Public space is where our cities come alive.**”

-Excerpted from Nashville Civic Design Center's
Reclaiming Public Space in Downtown Nashville publication

Beyond beautification, civic vibrancy and other noted benefits, reclaiming public space projects go hand in hand (and paw to paw) with city issues related to safety and mobility. With the influx of pets into our homes and cities, we realized that projects involving reclaiming public space can provide creative solutions to lack of open, green spaces and pet-friendly amenities, send



clear messages to all that our city is welcoming to all, provide exercise opportunities, promote happiness and public safety, help get people moving, build community connections and more!

SEEKING CREATIVE SOLUTIONS—PARKING SPACES OR PARK(ing) PLACES?

Mars Petcare and Nashville Civic Design Center set out to creatively consider new ideas and solutions in working to envision a more pet-friendly city.

Nashville had launched recent initiatives to: install and encourage use of a city-wide bike-share program, make improvements to Nashville’s transit along with parks and greenways systems; plentiful fee-based car services and sharing options; an active campaign to encourage walking and more. However, automobiles are still the primary mode of transportation for much of the resident population – and requires parking for cars. However, what if parking spaces became PARK(ing) places? Could cities give up a little concrete to get more of those “green spaces are good spaces” benefits for people and pets?



In order to have more pet-friendly areas anywhere—the fundamental need is space. Available space is often difficult to readily find or obtain. For example, in Nashville, along with major building development, there has also been a marked rise in parking lot/space development.

According to an article in *The Tennessean* in 2016, Nashville had 58,860 parking spaces in the downtown core which represented a 12% increase over one year. Further, downtown parking spaces are highly lucrative for private business with daily rental rates increasing 64% between 2008 and 2016. While parking lots are terrific spaces to consider public space activation and/or conversion to open, green areas – it can’t compete with pay parking spaces from a revenue-generating

perspective.

However, what if revenue wasn’t the primary objective and supporting quality open space was? Or finding innovative solutions to trending challenges for cities looking to support and grow vibrant public life and their citizens? Nashville Civic Design Center had participated in an international event known as, PARK(ing) Day since 2011. Could inspiration from that global event help us think about how create something that would enhance public life and person -pet connections? What could innovative ideas around what constitutes a “park” involve?

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WHAT DID WE DO? LEARNINGS & IDEAS FOR CITIES TO EXPLORE

Discovery and change making takes time – especially in the midst of the explosive growth Nashville is experiencing. We started looking for innovative solutions, collaborative partners, key components to consider, quick wins and long-game support and sustainability. Our learnings are your learnings found below and visit BetterCitiesForPets.com to get the latest info and updates!

Test & Learn is Not a “Thing” – It is a Way

When trying something small and new in the public realm, it often begins through a process of testing, piloting and assessing your learnings before making large investments or purchasing valuable space. Testing and learning or “piloting” is a key component of the RPS movement. Therefore, Mars Petcare and Nashville Civic Design Center started by working to consider and create a prototype of an urban dog park that would provide new urban green space options where concrete currently existed. Design considerations included:

- creating a pilot model that had a smaller footprint than a traditional park or “pocket park;” (less than three acres);
- had clearly identifiable pet-friendly amenities; and
- was temporary in nature for testing and if needed, could be relocated.

The prototype evolved into a 30x30 foot installation that debuted at SXSW in Austin, Texas (in a parking lot!). We then brought the Pop-Up Dog Park home to Tennessee for three more full installations and tested several smaller, and even indoor versions throughout the year.



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Our experience with the full Pop-Up Dog Park led us to consider other types of spaces and smaller footprint possibilities. Where was available, natural green space being underutilized? Where were opportunities to take small areas—say, a parking space and turn it into say a pet-friendly parklet or micro-park? In 2017, we began to envision what the future of what a green space-challenged pet-friendly city could look like. We excitedly look forward to reporting results from future pilots.

“Walk & Talk” to See All Possibilities

We studied the data and recognized the need for more open, green areas and public spaces. We also researched Nashville’s data and were astounded by the rapid growth in the urban pet population. It was clear Nashville would need more pet-friendly amenities to support this trend of urban dwellers with more pets than ever.

We had conducted successful tests of the Pop-Up Dog Park prototype (that Mayor Megan Barry is challenging us to find a permanent home for). However, we knew we couldn’t simply put more 30x30 foot installations all over town. Thus, we began a process of regular “walk and talks”—consciously observing activities and look at our city through “all things possible” eyes. We found opportunities all around us!

ENVISIONING THE FUTURE OF YOUR PET-FRIENDLY CITY

On our “walk and talks” we discovered a myriad of opportunities for placing pet-friendly amenities in ways that support RPS that included the potential for creating new private-public partnerships as well. We also discovered new ideas and strategies about how to create pet-friendly green space in dense, urban cores.



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Green Space Opportunity • Bridgestone Arena

The Nashville Predators' Bridgestone Arena had underutilized green space that was adjacent to their building and across the street from what will be a \$430 million dollar, mixed-use development encompassing retail, restaurants, office space, residential space, parking and the future home of the National Museum of African American Music. This development will be in addition to the over 10,000 residents and over 3,000 pets currently living in the downtown core.

Sean Henry, CEO of Nashville Predators understood the value that pets can bring to individuals and into the workplace—holding monthly “Pet Friendly Friday’s” where employees could bring their pets to the office. When the idea of turning the underutilized green space into a dog park was raised, the Predators CEO and team (both personnel and players!) immediately responded in support. The organizations sees the pocket dog park as a way to support their employees, community, and Nashville’s work to become more pet-friendly for residents and visitors alike.

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Plans to transform this slice of open space into a new dog park were announced in late 2017. The park will be implemented over a three-phased process, ultimately becoming an off-leash dog park for employees, neighbors the public, and their pets to enjoy.



Going from Public Space to Pet-Friendly Public Space • Nashville Farmers' Market

Since its inception in Nashville's town square in the early 1800's, Nashville Farmers' Market has been a vital part of Nashville life. Over the years it has moved locations, recovered from the 2010 flood, expanded and contracted in size, gone from a resellers market to farmers', artisans and makers-only and more. Today, Nashville Farmers' Market (NFM) sits on over twelve acres of land in downtown Nashville, adjacent to Bicentennial Mall Capitol State Park. NFM consists of one covered, open-air sheds, an enclosed Market House home to over 25 permanent and "pop-up" restaurants and shops, an International Market and a locally-owned and operated garden center.

Nashville Farmers' Market is open seven days/week, 362 days per year. It serves as an urban, local-centric grocery store; premiere outlet for farm-to-fork food experiences and a cultural and

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tourist hub for the city. Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County owns NFM with oversight of Market leadership by a seven-person Executive Board. NFM has served as a vibrant space of public life for well over two hundred years.

In 2016, Nashville Farmers' Market Executive Director, Tasha Kennard, began noticing that more pets than ever were coming to NFM. There were signs in many locations indicating that "Service Animals Only," were allowed. Due to the Market's adjacency to a large state park, pets—particularly dogs, there had always been some degree of incidental, four-legged visitors at the Market. Now, these visitors were becoming much more frequent. NFM's staff and security team had begun getting more questions than ever before about NFM's pet-friendly status. Pets began being seen at the Market daily — in bags, in strollers or on leashes.

NFM conducted some research and found that becoming a pet-friendly business can be good for business; resulting in higher spending, longer visits and increased customer traffic. Several new residential buildings were under construction near the Market and all were pet-friendly. If NFM was to continue to grow with its neighborhood and as an entity, staff and NFM's Executive Board felt it was time to consider becoming a more pet-friendly place.

Mars Petcare, Nashville Civic Design Center, and NFM leadership got together to envision what a pet-friendly farmers' market could look like and developed a multi-year plan. The first

phase would begin by allowing pets into a common, grassy area that sits outside NFM's Market House and across the street from Bicentennial Capitol Mall State Park. Next, 2 pet waste stations would be installed and positively messaged signage encouraging responsible pet ownership placed. When planned, upcoming minor construction occurs, 1-2 plumbed hydration stations will be installed as well.

By converting this existing public space into a welcoming, people and pet-



friendly space, NFM hopes to attract new visitors and encourage current visitors to stay, eat and shop longer with their pets. This also creates opportunities for new types of gatherings and events such as; pet meet-up groups, "dining with dogs," "yappy hours," and more.

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Look for Underutilized Existing Open, Green Space to Convert into Pet-Friendly Public Space • Parklets & Micro-Parks

On our “walk-and-talks” we saw many areas that had rich opportunities to become pet-friendly public spaces. Unused space on corners was one we are looking to explore in the future. Also, we conducted research with Nashville Downtown Partnership to study where the most pets lived or went to work in pet-friendly workplaces. From there, we began looking at creative designs for parklets and micro-parks near these locations. Looking to convert existing landscaping or even take one parking space alone can provide pet-friendly public space for all to enjoy. We look forward to learning more as we begin to test and pilot new designs.



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COMPONENTS TO CONSIDER • DOG PARK BEST PRACTICES

Depending on the size and location of any pet-friendly proposed space, certain key components and should be included. For example, in parklets you will need a clear barrier between your parklet space and automobile traffic. In larger spaces, if you are implementing an off-leash park, you will need a double-gate system to keep pets safe as they go in and out of the park off-leash. All spaces should provide waste bag dispensers and reasonable access to hydration (whether it be plumbed hydration stations, refillable dog bowls et al). Lastly but of great importance, plan to include clear signage about rules, expectations, usage and responsible pet ownership practices. To learn more about dog park best practices, visit www.BetterCitiesForPets.com



COLLABORATE & CONSULT WITH CITY GOVERNMENT

When you want to do something that affects the public realm, you likely must engage with governmental entities for permission, ensure adherence to laws, safety, codes, etc. In efforts to make your city more pet-friendly on public property (and often private as well) – you’ll need to know who to contact, collaborate and consult with to assure a smooth and successful project.

Depending on the size and scope of your proposed project, it may involve reaching out to one department or several. Common departments we engage with include; Metro Water department to ensure proper flow and drainage, Public Works for permits, disposal and/or signage, General Services for logistics and sustainability matters, Planning departments, Parks department and Office of the Mayor. Depending on location and other project aspects you may likely also engage with neighborhoods and neighborhood associations, Metro council members, state agencies et al.

Take time to get to know these governmental entities and what they do. Having these knowledgeable consultative partners (and perhaps potential future project champions!) is invaluable. Make sure you have appropriate data together if necessary, and a general awareness of relevant laws or policies. Share your concerns and your ideas for solutions to challenges.

LOOK TO CREATE NEW PARTNERSHIPS

Regardless of your cities size or location, it seems an oft-heard phrase across our nation is “private-public partnerships.” While you’re on your “walk and talk” stop to consider what businesses and residences exist around spaces you are looking to improve. In many cases, it may require verification on who owns the property (concrete and/or grass) that may make it necessary to reach out and introduce your ideas. Take time to thoughtfully consider “what’s in it for them?” imagine their point of view, anticipate objections and let yourself get creative with ways to explore new partnerships through your efforts.



PARTICIPATE IN PARK(ing) DAY EVENTS IN YOUR CITY

Consider starting or participating in global reclaiming public space event, PARK(ing) Day, held on the third Friday each September. Nashville Civic Design Center has been the organizer of Nashville’s PARK(ing) Day since 2011. In Nashville, regular participants include local; architecture and design firms, departments of city government, nonprofits, student organizations, and more. While the mission and goals of this international event focus on creating awareness, education and attention on the importance of

reclaiming public space, you can learn a lot and gain inspiration for insertion into a pet-friendly public realm. This a terrific, one-day opportunity to test out your ideas on what a pet-friendly parklet or public space could be.

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WHAT'S NEXT FOR NASHVILLE?

Mars Petcare, Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, Nashville Civic Design Center, Nashville Downtown Partnership and many other entities will be collaborating to: pilot new prototypes and projects around creating more green spaces and places; increase the number of pet amenities in Downtown; and grow awareness of pet-friendly issues and how we're tackling them to create Better City for Pets in Nashville and beyond.

We are currently working with partners on designs, placement proposals, consulting with government agencies, exploring new partnerships, planning PARK(ing) Day 2018 and look forward to sharing future updates.

Visit www.BetterCitiesForPets.com to get the latest news, fresh ideas, download tools and resources and join the Better Cities for Pets movement!



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