



Urban Dog Park of the Future • Creating Pet Friendly Spaces & Places

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

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

- Amenities are available that help pets and pet owners
- Pet needs are included in green space and park planning
- Pet relief spaces are plentiful and easy to find

Happy Pets, like Happy People, are closely linked to where they feel Welcomed.

MORE PETS IN MORE PLACES

In many cities of all sizes around our nation, the number of concrete and parking spaces has gone up while the number of open, green spaces has been reduced. Additionally, cities are beginning to see the impact of having more pets in areas people live, work and play. With pets in more places and fewer places for them to go and to be with their people, cities (and large events!) are beginning to see and feel the need for more pet-friendly spaces and places that offer amenities, are easy to find, and overall—are considered in urban planning processes.

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 activities, but also contribute to a sense of community and are a key predictor of people's health and happiness.

BUILDING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Interacting with others, as people tend to do in parks and green spaces, builds what is 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.

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**



LARGE EVENTS TRANSFORM CITIES • THE SXSW EXPERIENCE

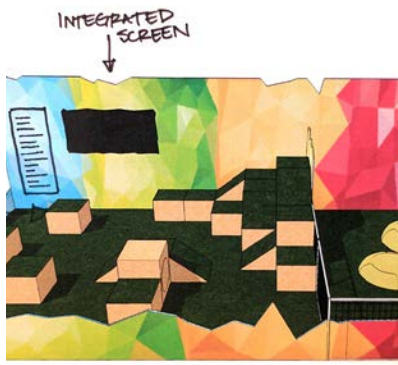
Large local, regional, national and global events transform our cityscapes. Whether it's for a few hours or sometimes even weeks—events are created to be community and revenue building happenings from which all participants, residents and local businesses may benefit. One such festival, transforms a well-known U.S. city annually and for the first time in 2017, considered pet participation.

SXSW is known all over the world as one of the biggest, largest, longest and best festivals and conferences. SXSW has been held in Austin, Texas since 1987. SXSW was founded originally as a local “meet up” of creative and business people looking to celebrate and grow the convergence of the interactive, film and music industries. The event has grown to global recognition, participation and engagement over nine days and hosting over 500,000 attendees in 2017.

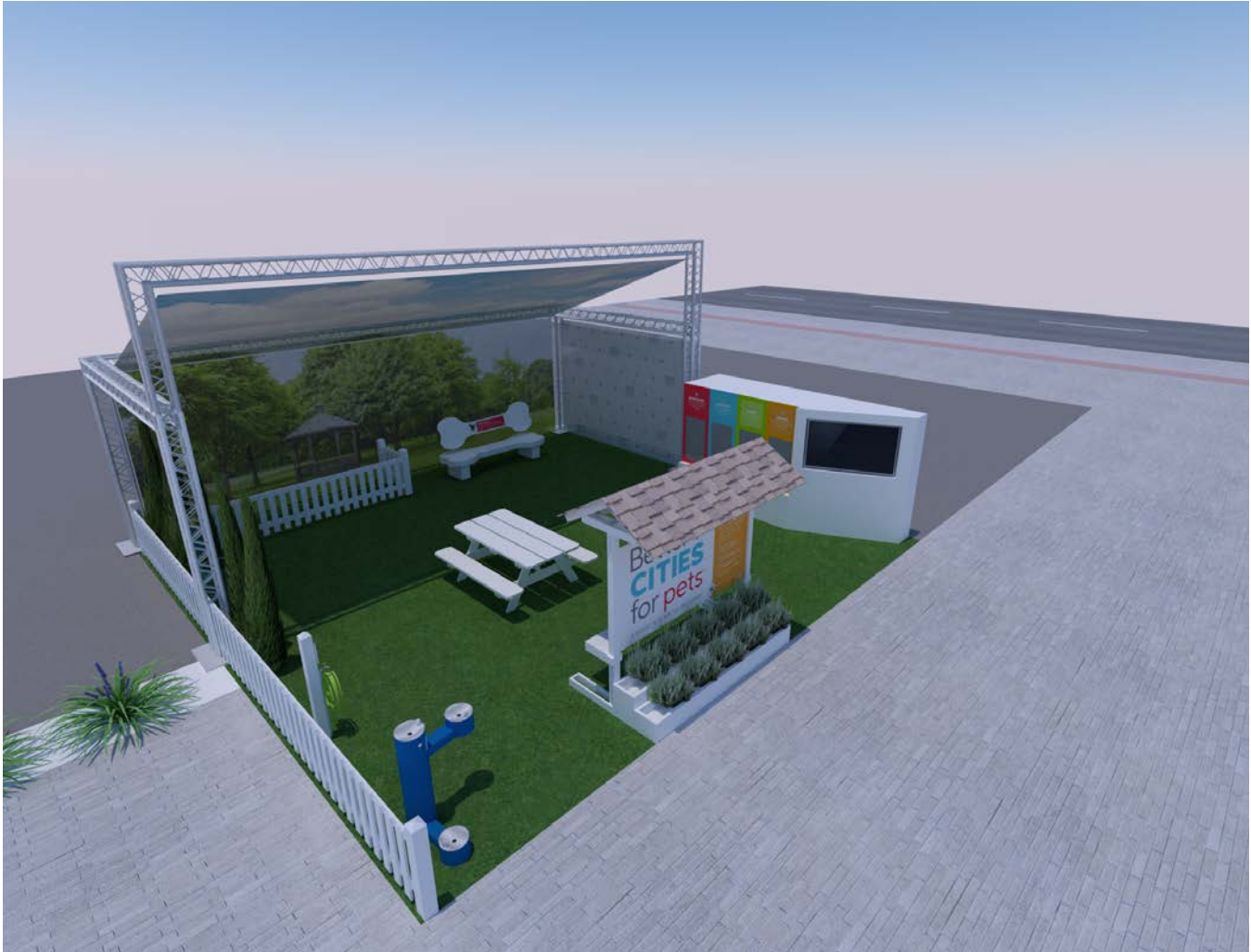
SXSW organizers began to notice that there were more pets traveling to Austin with festival attendees and a rise in downtown residents having pets that live within and around the festival's urban core footprint. SXSW organizers are always looking for opportunities to be on the cutting-edge of “what's next” in a rich, festival experience. SXSW and Mars Petcare connected and the result would give rise to a whole new way to think about the urban pet experience.

POP-UP DOG PARK PILOT • SXSW IN AUSTIN, TX

Mars Petcare contacted their hometown partner, Nashville Civic Design Center and the organizations conducted design charrettes with Mars experts, Rescue Rebuild dog park experts, Austin officials and more. The group worked to determine: core design; build and installation principles that addressed safety; basic needs and functionality; and other key principles. The goal is that it would support an interactive, engaging experience for people and pets that truly transformed the space from parking lot to park. We considered several prototype options (displayed below) before we found "the One."



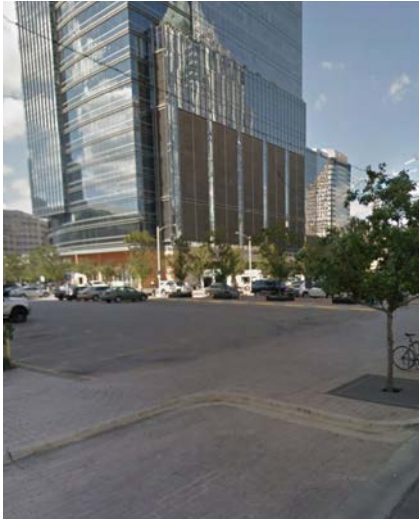
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The Pop-up Park (PuP!) was ultimately designed to be a 30x30 foot installation on what is normally a paid parking lot on one of Austin’s busiest downtown streets across from SXSW conference rooms. The pop-up park was also adjacent to a residential tower in which an estimated 75% of residents have pets.

After five weeks of intense communications, efforts and build-ability, Mars Petcare introduced a prototype for an urban pop-up dog park, “Dogstin,” to SXSW that would transform a parking lot into a temporary park environment. Aside from meeting core principles and functionality (give people and pets a place to go, pets a place “to go,” etc.). It also included other key elements of offering festivalgoers a place to interact and relax with adorable, adoptable pups, while learning about and experiencing our efforts to make cities better for pets.

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Before



During SXSW



After

TESTING THE TRANSFORMATION:

The Pop-Up Park was found to be an engaging, park-like experience that both people and pets enjoyed. People & pets flocked to our Pop-Up Park wanting to know what this was, learn about BETTER CITIES FOR PETS[™], participate in activations like donation-based dog-walking providing public input, enjoying our amenities and more. However, we had to challenge ourselves to test the transformation to see if our pop-up park prototype had legs – whether they be two or four. So we began asking our over 4,500 attendees some questions.

- **We asked visitors-- did it feel like a parking lot? A park? In between?** All visitors we inquired with responded that it definitely felt like a park. When it was being removed, nearby residents and businesses came by to express their disappointment in its return to a parking lot.
- **Is the model attractive & engaging? Did it have “wow factor?”** By all accounts, visitors agreed the park was attractive & engaging. Visitor feedback also included many **“WOW’S!”** and requests to bring our PuP to other cities.
- **Did the parks public input components drive discussion topics in a rich way?** Over 500 people provided rich public input about the status of pet-friendliness and issues with regards to shelters, homes, businesses and parks in their over 200 different cities. Interestingly, less than 10% of the public input conversations were about cats or pets other than dogs.
- **Does the pop-up park have the potential to provide real solutions for city’s and/or festivals?** YES! One of the most strongly conveyed learnings and helped to spur us to take the prototype out to future events and see if findings were consistent.

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TRANSFORMATION IN ACTION: PETS ARE SOCIAL CONNECTORS LIKE NO OTHER

The urban Pop-Up Park quickly became a vibrant and rich display of how dogs spur social interaction. Mars Petcare had planned interactions--from “greeter dogs,” Gunnar and Dexter, through the collectively shared joy of a “puppy release,” dog walks that supported a local shelter donation and more. We exceeded attendance expectations even on cold, rainy days and built awareness and excitement among festival-goers and locals. Unplanned person-to-person interactions were the most steady and eye-opening in how dogs visibly bonded people from all over the world. Whether they were both petting a dog, just talking about their pets, discussing unique challenges their cities had and more—simply put, pets bring people together.





TAKING THE TRANSFORMATION TO THE NEXT LEVEL—SUMMARY

FINDINGS:

Mars Petcare, Nashville Civic Design Center and other partners learned some unexpected lessons through our Pop-Up Park experience that has spurred us to think of how to expand and grow a creative idea into a new way to think about green space in cities and events. We found that:

- **Our park truly serves a need.** The urban pop-up park prototype model has huge potential to benefit cities in addressing temporary needs & solving longer-term space and amenity challenges efficiently and affordably;
- **Our park is a viable solution.** Whether the issue is a dense, urban core with little or no green space or an event or festival that functions like a “mini-city” temporarily—the model being created ably solves a multitude challenges and deftly overcomes typical barriers to implementation;
- **People want our park in their city.** Many attendees requested information on how to bring the Pop-Up Park to their urban areas and/or festivals. Several inquired about obtaining design guidelines and more to build it themselves.
- **People want to know how they can get involved in the BETTER CITIES FOR PETS[™] program.** Many attendees requested information, communication, and offered to become an ambassador to bring Better Cities for Pets to their city.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Mars Petcare and partners are going to further study and pilot pop-up parks. Over 2018, we'll be experimenting with modified prototypes, taking the pop-up park model on the road across the nation for more feedback and further refinements. We'll be looking for additional events and festivals to debut our Pop-Up Park and learn more.

We'll also begin piloting smaller versions such as parklets and micro-parks in our hometowns of Franklin and Nashville, Tennessee. We're exploring public-private partnerships with businesses that allow pets at work, pet-friendly hotels, and our Metro Parks, Planning, Water and Works departments.





LEARNINGS & IDEAS FOR CITIES TO EXPLORE

FIND A COLLABORATIVE PARTNER

In the case of SXSW, Mars Petcare found a willing and enthusiastic partner in SXSW event officials and organizers. As we worked with them to discover the needs, define the constraints and manage everything from placement to permitting and more—we realized that in any situation, a critical partner is whomever functions as your “Parks Department” and “Public Works Department.” In events/festivals, that might be organizers and facility coordinators. For cities, it might be actual departments. In either case, involving them in the design requirements process creates a collaborative “work-with” partnership that becomes invaluable as changes or challenges arise.

GET CREATIVE WITH YOUR POP-UP PARK IDEAS:

While you can certainly offer these in permanent dog park areas, when you are “popping up” it is an opportunity to capture feedback and create things that may or may not become permanent.

- **Public Input opportunities:** whether its simply a big chalk board or a box to put suggestions, capturing public input and feedback about your pop-up park and issues related to pet-friendliness.
- **Public Art:** because your park is temporary and ideas around public art can vary widely, pop up parks give the opportunity for a temporary installation either created before or by attendees while park is up. This may be combined with public input components noted above.
- **Signage encouraging Responsible Pet Ownership:** In this smaller than a park, “captured” space, people will take time to look, read and learn. Simple reminders about codes of conduct, making sure pets are hydrated, waste disposed of properly and more are critical. Having tips and tricks, or even interactive ways to relay information about how to best train, care for, or understand pet behaviors are great options as well.



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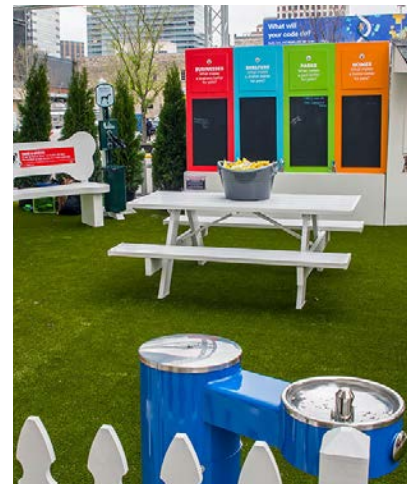


KEY COMPONENTS TO CONSIDER • LOCATION & AMENITIES

As in any endeavor, location is key. At SXSW, we were in a prime spot for attendees to pass by and strategically placed next to a residential building that was home to many pets. These location benefits assured that we received many two and four-legged visitors interested in the experience and amenities we offered. It's wonderful for any event or city to place a pet-friendly space in an area—however, choosing to place it where it will maximize utilization takes it from “nice to do” to a much-lauded critical installation.

- **Hydration elements:** hydration stations that provide water to people and pets, splash pads, water bowls and water access for hydration and cleanliness are critical
- **Waste stations and/or bag dispensers:** When you have pets in any space, you must plan for responsible pet ownership practices and even just accidents. Have a refillable waste bag dispenser and trash receptacle inside or immediately adjacent to your temporary park
- **Shade:** Provide some type of shade structure—whether it is natural tree/green scape, shade sails or creative and weather-hardy design elements—offer a space for relief from sun or inclement weather conditions.
- **Seating:** You'll want to provide some type of seating accomodation for those who need to sit. However, do not over-do on seating such that your park becomes a place people hang out with their phones and not their pups!

For more information, visit BetterCitiesForPets.com and download our MARS Petcare and Nashville Civic Design Center Urban Pop-Up Park Case Study and more ideas!



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