

# Research On the Problems and Countermeasures of Pet-Friendly Cities

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**Abstract.** With the increase in the number of pets in Chinese cities, there is a strong demand for pet space and related supporting facilities in cities. However, there are many problems in the harmonious coexistence of humans and pets. For instance, urban residents have a relatively low tolerance for pets, and the awareness of planning pet Spaces in urban green construction is relatively backward. Currently, most public green Spaces are not open to pets, and there is a relative lack of laws and regulations related to pets, space design, and operation and maintenance. In view of this situation, this paper analyzes the existing problems in the current construction of pet-friendly cities, such as the insufficient supply of pet-friendly facilities in cities, the lack of relevant laws and regulations, and the insufficient tolerance of citizens and communities towards pets. It summarizes the advanced experience of building pet-friendly cities abroad or in other regions. On this basis, Countermeasures and suggestions for building pet-friendly cities have been put forward from the perspectives of enterprises, the government, individual citizens and society, so as to enhance the soft power and civilization level of "pet-friendly" cities.

**Keywords:** Pet-friendly City Problem; Suggestion.

## 1. Introduction

The growing affection for pets among the new generation and the increasing willingness to keep them have accelerated the development of the pet economy, and the concept of "pet-friendly" has also taken root in people's hearts. According to the "2022 China Pet Industry Trend Insight White Paper", in the pet industry, the number of urban pet (dog and cat) owners across the country reached 68.44 million in 2021, an increase of 8.7% compared with 2020[1]. According to the "2022 China Pet Consumption Report", the number of pet cats and dogs in China reached 116.55 million in 2022, an increase of 3.7% compared with 2021[2].

The "2023-2024 China Pet Industry Consumption Report" shows that the number of pet dogs in China reached 51.75 million in 2023, representing a year-on-year growth of 1.1%. The number of pet cats was 69.8 million, increasing by 6.8% year-on-year. In 2023, the market size of urban pet consumption in China has reached 279.3 billion yuan, and it is expected to grow to 361.3 billion yuan by 2026[3].

Pets are no longer merely companions but have taken on the role of deeply integrating into their owners' emotional world and social circles. People often think that pets understand love and loyalty better than humans, so they start to entrust their emotions to pets, seeking that rare loyalty and companionship. Pets, as an important role in human daily life, have been integrated into human life. "One pet, two people, three meals a day, and four seasons" is the ideal life that many contemporary young people pursue. Maintain the connection between each other through pets, and thereby form a unique social culture.

Not only that, the pet economy has given rise to new forms of tourism. As the number of pet owners continues to grow, people's demands are no longer limited to owning a pet, but have developed into multiple levels such as sharing pets, traveling with pets, and socializing with pets. In the first two weeks of the Dragon Boat Festival holiday, the search volume for keywords such as "pets allowed" and "pet-friendly" increased by four times year-on-year, and the booking volume of related homestays for the Dragon Boat Festival holiday increased by two times year-on-year. Ctrip

has more than 65,000 pet-friendly hotels. The number of pet-friendly hotel check-in orders in Chongqing, Guangzhou, Chengdu, Shanghai and Beijing ranks among the top five [3].

With the increasing importance of pets and the development of the pet economy, people have a strong demand for "pet-friendly Spaces" in cities, and there are also many pain points that need to be urgently addressed.

There are many problems in the harmonious coexistence of humans and pets. For instance, the awareness of planning pet Spaces in urban green construction is relatively backward. Currently, most public green Spaces are not open to pets, and there is a relative lack of laws and regulations related to pets, space design, and operation and maintenance. Due to the obvious deficiencies in pet storage facilities in public places, which cannot reasonably meet the needs of pet owners, it is very likely to cause conflicts among groups. Taking pets in and out of public places not only causes the aversion of some groups but also brings safety hazards.

In recent years, the concept of "pet-friendly space" has developed accordingly, that is, public activity places that do not reject and are willing to accept pets. However, it is still at an immature and unstable stage. Compared with the relatively mature mechanisms and systems abroad, only a few first-tier cities in China have recognized the significance and value of building pet-friendly cities. The academic research on "pet-friendly cities" started relatively late. Most of the research on pets focuses on the directions of physiology and medical health, and the theoretical research on spatial planning is not systematic.

Therefore, based on the current situation and problems, this paper raises the research question of how to build pet-friendly cities. The so-called "pet-friendly space" is not merely a simple concept. It represents a brand-new lifestyle, emphasizing the harmonious coexistence between humans and pets. It ensures that pets are comfortable while not causing adverse effects on the participants within the space. This is a concept of "mutual friendliness". "Pet-friendly" means not rejecting, accepting and welcoming pets into the space.

For a city, "pet-friendly" corresponds to its soft power and also to the innovation of concepts. It is related to the level of civilization of a city and also to bioethics. Commercial Spaces are gradually transforming into "pet-friendly" ones. This not only involves commercial and market considerations, but also reflects the increasing tolerance of urban society towards the behavior of keeping pets. With the continuous rooting and deepening of pet-keeping culture, more and more humanized concepts have been introduced into life. The shift from "No entry" to "pet-friendly" is not only a manifestation of civilized pet-keeping, but also an endorsement and respect for the deep emotional bond between pets and humans.

## **2. Problems existing in the current construction of pet-friendly cities**

### **2.1. The supply of facilities and services related to urban pets is insufficient**

In recent years, with the upgrading of consumption and the changes in the consumption concepts of the new generation of pet owners, pet owners hope to allow their pets to participate in their lives to the greatest extent and promote human social interaction through pet social interaction. However, at present, there is a problem of insufficient supply of pet-related facilities and services in cities, mainly reflected in the issues of food and accommodation, transportation and safety in cities.

Compared with outdoor Settings, pet-friendly restaurants are more favored by pet owners for their safety and comfort. The "National Pet-Friendly Restaurant Reputation Report" previously released by Dianping shows that the number of "pet-friendly restaurants" in Beijing has exceeded 1,700[4].

Nevertheless, there are still practical problems that cannot be ignored in the development of pet-friendly restaurants. One important reason is that the quality of pet owners varies greatly. Some consumers allow their dogs to eat at the table and use human tableware, while some dogs run around and bark, which leads to dissatisfaction and complaints from other consumers.

When it comes to travel, pet owners also have higher-level demands on how to accommodate their pets when going out. If traveling with pets, pet owners often encounter problems such as being refused by ride-hailing vehicles and cumbersome procedures for pet registration, inspection and quarantine. If pets are not taken out, pet owners often leave them in pet stores, worrying that they won't eat or drink well, or keep them in cages, etc.

There are also certain safety issues regarding the storage of pets in urban public places. Non-pet owners have a low acceptance rate. If a large number of shared pet storage products are put into use, 54% of the respondents who are not pet owners cannot accept their pets entering public places [5]. Not only that, for pets, the hygiene and safety issues in public places are hard to guarantee. The owners are worried and anxious, and it affects the mood and normal order of others. Due to the obvious deficiencies in the pet storage facilities in public places, the needs of pet owners cannot be reasonably met, which is very likely to cause conflicts among groups.

## **2.2. Relevant laws and regulations concerning urban pets are lacking**

The management of pet dogs in China is mainly composed of national legislation and local legislation. In the national legislation section, there is no complete and unified law and regulation on the management of pet dogs yet. Relevant provisions can only be found in certain legal chapters and articles, and there is no explicit regulation that pets are not allowed to enter public places. In the local legislation section, due to the sharp increase in the number of pet dogs, a series of problems have been brought about by society. To address the corresponding challenges, major cities across the country have successively introduced regulations and policies on dog keeping management. Some local management regulations clearly stipulate that dog are not allowed to be brought into public places. For instance, Article 24 of Chapter 3 "Protection and Management" of the "Measures for the Administration of Urban Parks in Fuzhou City (2009)" stipulates that pet are prohibited from being brought into the parks. However, the "Regulations on the Administration of Parks in Shanghai (2017)", the "Regulations on the Administration of Parks in Guangzhou (1998)", the "Regulations on Urban Gardens in the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone (2019)", and the "Regulations on Parks in Beijing (2019)" do not prohibit pets from entering parks. At the same time, Paris announced in 2019 that it would change its park regulations, allowing dogs to enter every park and garden in the city. The management methods of many urban parks have not been revised since 2009, which are clearly out of line with the actual situation of social development and difficult to meet the diversified usage needs of the people for urban parks [2].

## **2.3. Restrictions on the attitudes of urban citizens and communities**

The pointing fingers of pet lovers, the ruthless expulsion by security guards, and the explicit refusals from major supermarkets, stores, parks and scenic spots... All of these are like high walls, ruthlessly isolating pets from most of our daily life scenarios. Carrying pets in and out of public places not only causes aversion among some groups but also brings safety hazards. Moreover, in some local urban management regulations, it has been clearly stipulated that pet are prohibited from entering public places. The existing urban pet activity Spaces in our country have problems such as a small number, remote location and unreasonable structure [6].

Most public green Spaces, parks, community places, etc. prohibit pets from entering, resulting in pet owners having the need but no space. The phenomenon of pets disturbing order in public places occurs from time to time. The citizens' aversion and resistance to sharing public Spaces with pets have further intensified the conflict between humans and pets. Most administrative regulations on dog walking also adopt a one-size-fits-all approach, failing to reasonably address the needs of pet owners. To a large extent, urban civilization depends on its inclusiveness [1].

### **3. Experience in building pet-friendly cities abroad**

#### **3.1. Build a scientifically friendly spatial environment and facility supply**

When pet dogs are forced to share only an outdoor space with humans that has complex environmental factors, conflicts are bound to arise. Therefore, spatial zoning is the basis of pet-friendly urban space design. There are various ways to divide Spaces. The North Point Waterfront Pet Park in Hong Kong divides the site into areas where pets are not lethered, shared pet areas, and non-shared pet areas based on the relationship between humans and pets. Moreover, facilities such as dog feces collection bins and guiding signs have been added to the shared pet areas [2].

The Shanghai World Expo Dog GO Park divides the venue into large dog and medium and small-sized dog activity areas according to the differences in pet body sizes [7].

In Colorado Springs, the United States Dog Park (Bear Creek Dog Park) based on pet activity category field can be divided into agility training area, cleaning area and the etc. [8].

In addition to spatial zoning, the construction of basic service facilities for pets is also of vital importance, mainly including fences, double-decker doors, direct drinking water facilities, dog defecation and urination areas, rest facilities, information facilities, etc. In addition, the coverage rate of facilities should also be taken into account in the layout. For instance, Central Park in New York, USA, has scientifically arranged 29 pet direct drinking water facilities, several toilet bag dispensers and trash cans within the park, basically achieving full coverage of the park. In addition to infrastructure supply, the Butterfly Valley Road Pet Park in Hong Kong also offers customized entertainment facilities for pets, such as lawns, pipes, jumping rings, and shuttle swings. Moreover, exclusive pet dog patterns are painted on the park paths, site facilities, and signboards. The Lingzhi Street Pet Park in Shenzhen has a pet activity area of approximately 450 square meters. It has equipped pets with recreational facilities such as climbing, jumping and burrowing by using waste materials like tires and wood. Beau's Dream Dog Park in Lancaster, the United States, provides splash-resistant MATS, tunnel metal pipes, tennis trees, large dogs shooting tennis balls, shallow pools, etc. to enhance the experience of pets in the park [2].

#### **3.2. Establish a sustainable operation and maintenance model**

People tend to spend on their pets around pet-friendly Spaces. Xuhui Binjiang Pet Park, as one of the few pet-friendly areas in the center of Shanghai, offers free pet activity Spaces. It also introduces pet-friendly stores such as Starbucks and Manner around the venue, providing specially designed animal cream for pets to stimulate the consumption enthusiasm of pet owners. Another example is that the parks in Santa Barbara County, the United States, are seeking cooperation with local enterprises, introducing professional pet washing equipment (Evolution Dog Wash), and using the profits obtained for the maintenance and improvement of the dog park. Furthermore, internationally, the model of cooperation between dog parks and non-profit organizations has also been explored. The American charity My darling theo established the Dog Park Foundation in 2010 to establish and maintain non-profit community dog parks in communities across the United States [2].

#### **3.3. Enhance the tolerance of pets and the community's self-awareness of friendliness**

When a city has a sufficient number of pet owners and potential, as well as an open cultural atmosphere, and can show the greatest care for pets, it can gradually achieve a "pet-friendly" transformation in more commercial Spaces. Many countries and cities have effectively alleviated the conflict between humans and pets by opening up dedicated dog-walking parks and areas. From the perspective of humanistic care and social ethics, as one of the supporting facilities of urban life, it is increasingly becoming an indispensable part in urban environmental construction. In the urban green space system, there are pet Spaces specifically designed for pet owners and their outdoor activities. All green space facilities are prioritized to serve the outdoor activities of pets and their owners. The activity Spaces for humans and pets are reasonably distinguished. The site has a complete

management guarantee. The signboards are located reasonably and are clear and easy to understand. The ground covers are well covered with suitable shade Spaces. The terrain and landforms are suitable for dogs to play in. The facilities for collecting and treating excrement and feces are set up reasonably and effectively. Other sanitation facilities are set up reasonably and effectively. The rest facilities are distributed reasonably. The utilization rate of dog activity facilities is high. The interaction among different dog breeds is good, and the interaction between humans and pets is also good. The cultural heritage park in Henderson, Las Vegas, USA, has activity zones for dog walkers and non-walkers, as well as large and small pet dogs, to fully meet the needs of different users. The Shangcheng International Community in Zhengzhou City has transformed a piece of abandoned and idle land into a pet activity area within the community [1].

#### **4. Countermeasures and suggestions for building pet-friendly cities from different perspectives**

##### **4.1. Enterprises should improve the corresponding supporting service facilities**

To build pet-friendly cities, based on the analysis in the previous text, enterprises need to strengthen construction and improvement in the aspects of pets' food, accommodation and transportation, so as to provide better services and meet the diverse needs of pet-friendly people. First of all, pet-friendly restaurants should be added in cities. The Starbucks in Jinmao Bay Shopping Center in Qingdao is a pet-friendly restaurant. If you bring your pet to the store, you can also get a free "Claw puccino". In the design of its pet-friendly theme stores, Starbucks has set up outdoor areas for pet activities and indoor areas for normal business and consumption. This way, it not only avoids disturbing the consumption experience of ordinary customers but also keeps the outdoor space spacious, allowing the cute pets and their owners to enjoy leisure time together. During the Dragon Boat Festival, Jinmao Bay launched the Qingdao Pet Carnival, introducing activities such as the pet obstacle race experience and the Kursin simulated hunting sports Experience field, further enhancing the service quality of the pet-friendly restaurant [9]. Many restaurants also offer highly distinctive pet menus, such as "Puppy Pizza", "Puppy Swiss Roll", and "Puppy Japanese Kebabs". This is a special menu at ASH COFFE&BAR ASH on Jingwu Road in Jinan. These delicacies all sound inviting and delicious, but they are carefully crafted for "pet guests". The aim is to provide pets with healthy and delicious dietary options. This approach of ASH COFFE&BAR ASH truly embodies the concept of equality and harmony between humans and pets[10]. Here, pets are no longer marginalized beings at last. Not only that, a service model that combines multiple business forms can also be developed. For instance, when pet owners are waiting for their pets to take a bath at a pet store, they can refer to the idea of Baihao Le Enterprise to use it for a meal, allowing them to eat while waiting. This cross-industry combination model of catering and cute pets not only brings customers a better consumption experience but also increases the revenue of the stores.

Secondly, efforts should be made to enhance the construction of pet-friendly hotels. As the name suggests, the concept of a hotel is to replace traditional iron cages with independent Spaces in the environment to meet the accommodation needs of pets. Xiyuanqian Pet Hotel is a landmark pet boarding hotel in Qingdao. Over the past six years of operation, it has always adhered to the business philosophy of "Enjoying life and accompanying with heart". It has a total of 37 boarding rooms, each equipped with 24 high-definition surveillance cameras, ensuring that the owners can see the real-time movements of their pets at all times. For hotel enterprises, the so-called "pet-friendly" is not merely a business model; it should also be a wonderful practice. Some coastal homestays in China have also added pet-friendly rooms and created a pleasant environment. The sound of the waves echoes outside the spacious screens. When the curtains are drawn, it feels as if one is embraced by the sun and the sea. In such an environment, pets can run and play freely on the beach. This form can reflect the humanization of the merchant's service and also attract more pet lovers to come for its reputation. It has greatly enhanced the happiness of both pets and their owners.

In terms of pet-friendly travel, common urban public transportation and urban public Spaces should enhance the capacity for pet-friendly travel. For instance, Hainan Airlines has launched a pet cabin care service, allowing pets to be placed in pet boxes and brought into the cabin with their owners. In the face of strong market demand, it is very necessary for enterprises to provide a pet-friendly shared storage product that can basically solve the disease needs of both parties by combining user research and emotional experience. The pet storage area specially set up at the entrance of the public place is equipped with a ventilation system for the pet storage products and equipment. This can help eliminate odors and prevent the spread of diseases. Meanwhile, the plastic material and workmanship, along with the ventilation hole design, not only increase light transmission but also make it resistant to damage. Whether it is portable or easy to carry, such designs have all contributed to the construction of a safe and stable storage area. It also features the following advantages: enclosed space, away from people, ventilation system, independent storage, and creating an Eden for pets and their owners in the hustle and bustle of traffic. Qingdao Hisense Plaza is one of the high-end shopping malls in China. It has a very high tolerance for pets and is equipped with specially set up pet-friendly elevators, sunken plazas and pet-friendly drinking water areas. At the pet-friendly service counter in the shopping mall, items such as strollers, leashes, sanitary bags and drinking cups are also available for rent. Meanwhile, Hisense Plaza is not confined to so-called circles. It holds activities that combine various cultures around the theme of pets and has pioneered commercial forms such as "trend + cute pets" and "market + cute pets", which has contributed to creating a unique and exquisite "pet-friendly" atmosphere and image for the shopping center.

#### **4.2. The government should enhance the laws and regulations on pet keeping as well as publicity and guidance**

In the construction of pet-friendly cities, the role played by the government is irreplaceable, especially in improving the construction of laws and regulations and strengthening publicity and guidance in the city. In the national legislation section, as there is no complete and unified law and regulation on the management of pet dogs yet, relevant provisions can only be found in certain legal chapters and articles, but there is no clear regulation that pets are not allowed to enter public places. In response to this, municipal governments of various cities, considering the interests of multiple parties, have replaced the short-term effect of a one-size-fits-all approach with the management wisdom of adapting to the situation, revised the bans that are inconsistent with the development of The Times, and updated and improved the legal and regulatory system, so as to maximize the interests of multiple groups. Take Fuzhou City as an example. Currently, the Fuzhou Municipal Government, on the basis of existing pet-related laws such as the "Regulations on Urban Dog Keeping in Fuzhou City" and the "Measures for the Administration of Urban Parks in Fuzhou City", has drawn on the legislative experience of advanced major cities at home and abroad, and successively improved relevant pet-related laws, regulations and policies from the national to the local level. At the same time, efforts should be made to enhance publicity and guidance, requiring pet owners to raise their awareness of behavioral norms. Publicity measures should be implemented on various public media platforms and pet sales and service venues of relevant departments in the city to teach people about the behavioral norms of pet keeping. And following the example of Shanghai, Paris and other places, the city has issued the "Guidelines for Pet-Friendly Public Spaces", taking the relevant behavioral norms for pet access in public Spaces stipulated by the authorities as the criteria [2].

Not only that, government-led pet-friendly Spaces, as part of urban public facilities, have strong resource integration capabilities and stable sources of funds. In terms of the planning and construction of urban infrastructure, two types of pet-themed activity areas, namely the affiliated type and the shared type, are first built through methods such as time-sharing utilization and fence isolation. At the same time, make full use of community parks, public Spaces of buildings, and inefficient land left over from urban renewal (such as the space under elevated Bridges and sponge city facilities) to renovate them. In this way, while meeting the needs of taking pets out, it can also play a role in revitalizing the venues. In new urban areas such as Cangshan, Jin 'an and Changle, where there are

more opportunities for the construction of new park green Spaces, independent pet parks can be appropriately planned, introducing pet infrastructure, customized entertainment facilities and attracting related theme shops to gather and form a synergy. At the same time, during the planning stage of other parks within the area, efforts were made consciously to make up for the shortcomings of public activity Spaces for pets, ensuring that pet-themed activity areas were reasonably reserved.

#### **4.3. Citizens should enhance their study of pet-keeping behavioral norms and theories**

From the perspective of individual citizens, pet owners are the primary responsible parties for their pets. They should enhance their own learning and behavioral norms, and contribute to maintaining urban order and building a pet-friendly city. At present, some local management regulations clearly stipulate that dog are not allowed to be brought into public places. Despite the explicit provisions, many citizens still bring their pets into public places, thus disrupting urban order due to the lack of self-discipline. Some pet owners still lack the corresponding knowledge reserves. For instance, some pet owners are eager to take their pets to see the world, but they often overlook issues such as "It's easy to encounter ticks when taking pets for stream tracing in summer", "Middle-aged and elderly dogs are not suitable for participating in activities like mountain climbing and long-distance hiking that cause wear and tear on the joints", and "Some puppies have 'glass stomachs'". In view of this, pet owners should enhance their own learning through various means. In the "Jinan Library 'Yeah' Returning Citizen Night School" hosted by Jinan Library, there is a course called "Pet Social Friendship Class". Here, one can not only explore the ideal state of coexistence between humans and pets by sharing their daily lives and pet-keeping experiences, but also gain social value when jointly building a pet-friendly community; It is also possible to build a relationship with some pet lovers, pet owners and pets, and get along well with each other. They gradually "personify" their pets, taking them as specific objects for emotional expression, in order to gain the physical and mental values of unrestrained warmth, love and healing power from their pets.

#### **4.4. Society strengthens friendly relationships between humans and pets through non-governmental organizations and communities**

Non-government-led dog parks are developed and managed by market-oriented profit-making organizations or community public welfare organizations. Such parks enjoy greater freedom and market response capabilities. The management and maintenance subjects of the parks are more diversified, including development organizations, industry associations, and social volunteers, etc. This type of space lacks stable operation and maintenance costs and can maintain basic operations through ticket sales. It is also possible to cooperate with nearby pet day care centers, pet grooming shops and animal hospitals to promote the opening and ticket information of the pet park. Conversely, the park can also post a sign to highlight that they are the park's sponsors and promote and attract traffic for them.

Many communities providing public rental housing are not very friendly to pets. I want to rent a public rental housing unit where I can keep pets. Chengkai Xin Community, located at Lane 555, Xiulian Road, Minhang District, is a large-scale public rental housing community. It offers pet-friendly apartments. In front of the apartments, there is a pet park covering hundreds of square meters, equipped with various recreational facilities such as pet climbing, jumping, and cave crawling. There is also a pool specifically for tenants to walk their dogs and other pets. Entering the apartment, there are also many unique features in the interior decoration. While the walls of other apartments are painted with latex paint, this building is a prefabricated structure, and its walls are both scratch-resistant and wear-resistant. A pet nursery will also be set up on the basement floor of the apartment to solve the problem of pet care for tenants during business trips and travels. After the apartment is opened, the operator will also sign a "Tenant Convention for Pet-Friendly Apartments" with the tenants, restricting the number of large dogs kept. More and more communities will launch a series

of diverse services to meet the personalized rental life needs of tenants and allocate housing according to the category of pets to minimize pet disturbance to the greatest extent [11].

Friendly coexistence between humans and pets is a manifestation of a civilized society. The prerequisite for pet-friendly travel is to strengthen the standardized management of pet travel and the construction of relevant standards. Effective regulations and guidance should be provided in aspects such as pet travel safety, public health, pet-friendly norms, management measures, and the awareness of responsibility for civilized pet keeping. The Pet Industry Branch of the China Animal Agriculture Association believes that according to the relevant needs of pet socialization, The branch will also take the lead in organizing relevant units to jointly promote the formulation of corresponding national standards, industry standards and group standards.

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