



# top dog





## Think outside the box with rooftop parks and other pet amenities.

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**W**hen people think of dog parks, they might envision acres of open fields for running, ball throwing, dog agility and other activities.

But how can multifamily communities offer the same conveniences for residents and their pets in an urban environment where available space is often at a premium? From finding resourceful (think rooftop) bark park locations to other amenities such as convenient pet wash stations and custom branded products, there are many ways to make the most of every pet-friendly community.

As an owner or manager, opting for a pet-centric approach is a worthwhile investment. A recent survey by RadPad determined that of over 20,000 millennials noted, nearly 40 percent of them are renting and nearly 60 percent of them own pets. Millennials also place a higher value on perks such as pet-friendliness over other considerations such as location and having a larger living space. Another survey by Petfinder found that pet-friendly apartment homes see higher profitability due to pet rents and other fees, along with a lower percentage of resident turnover and fewer marketing dollars spent on advertising as pet-friendly units rent very quickly.

In Washington D.C., City Market at O Street and Park Chelsea at the Collective have put an emphasis on truly welcoming pets, and both communities have been featured in the Washington Post and Wall Street Journal. What do they have in common other than loving their four-legged residents? They both have unique rooftop parks that allow everyone, human and dog, to appreciate 360 degree views of the nation's capital.

Whereas rooftop terraces were once overlooked, with dog parks becoming somewhat of a norm or a standard to pet owners, they are now seen as a unique community space with the ability to host a wide range of amenities. From communal grilling and cooking areas, to swimming pools, courtyards and, of course, room to run for Fido. City Market at O Street features both large and small dog areas, agility equipment, fun spray hydrants to help keep pups cool during the humid summer months and custom fence portholes in the small dog section so the little ones can safely enjoy the scenery as well. For pooches in need of a little pampering and TLC, they also provide complimentary dog grooming stations for their resi-

dents. Another perk? Security. If a resident's pooch needs to use the facilities late at night, it's much safer heading up to the private roof than relieving their pets down on the street.

Park Chelsea at the Collective, a 429-unit luxury building, chose dog play components with custom portable bases to provide flexibility. This allows their residents to rearrange the agility course for added challenge and for management to stow the equipment for "Yappy Hours" if they might need the extra room. From an event planning perspective, this allows the exercise area to transform into a gathering space in a pinch. Hosting resident events fosters a true sense of community, which can be further developed by partnering with a local dog trainer for an obedience refresher course, a humane society or rescue organization for an adoption event or by renting out the park for private parties.

Another example of this is featured at Hartford 21, a Northland community in Hartford, Connecticut, which noticed a small section of its parking garage was underutilized and would make an ideal park. They converted this dead space into an 800-square foot pet play area with the benefit of year-round access and enjoyment due to its protection from the elements. The H21 Bark Lounge has some must-have dog park furnishings, including cheerful dog-themed silhouettes to spruce up the fence and a pet wash station. The Hartford 21's Property Manager Matt Alexander says, "We have a loyal following of about 20 residents who use the park daily. We show the park and washing stations on our leasing tours to illustrate that our community is very pet friendly. We also installed an infrared, electric heater so residents can use the space in the winter and mingle with fellow residents."

The H21 Bark Lounge also features turf pods – a modular turf system that offers the benefits of easy disassembly for cleaning underneath and the ability to rotate the sections so they wear evenly with use. These pods are ideal for both indoor and outdoor hard surface applications, and they don't require professional installation so you can maximize your budget in other areas.

Repurposing tennis or basketball courts is something to consider as well. Since pet guardians need to exercise and relieve their dogs regardless of weather conditions, dog parks typically see much more use than sport courts, which lend themselves to more "fair

weather" types of activities. From a budgeting perspective, fencing is often one of the largest expenses when planning a dog park, so developing an area that is already secured makes it an attractive and cost-effective investment.

Pet wash stations are another value-added amenity, and are quickly becoming a must have for pet owners. Having a dedicated dog spa also helps prevent residents from bathing their best friend in either the bathtub or sink, both of which can lead to costly plumbing repairs for clogged drains. An indoor or outdoor professional grade grooming tub can range from \$2,500 to \$4000 and should come fully stocked with the plumbing kit containing the spray head, heavy duty hose, a drain trap, along with a floor grate to keep paws out of the soapy water. Another affordable option are outdoor wash stations; these can be as simple as a stainless-steel pedestal with a metered hose attachment and leash hook or a dual function unit offering both a pet fountain and hose bibb for washing. They have a small footprint, but a big impact.

Lastly, no pet-friendly community is complete without a fire hydrant. They're cute, yes, but they're also practical. Installed in the dog park itself or near a tree or plant that is currently being "watered" to death by enthusiastic canines, they can help save your landscaping. To really set your community apart, look for hydrants that can be personalized with your logo or with a custom color to complement the unique look of your property.

Compared to other amenities, pet-centric updates don't require much open space nor large budgets. A recent study by NAA noted that as far as community revenue influencers are concerned, being pet-friendly made the top of the list and offered the most bang for your buck. Adding a few select conveniences can make all the difference for potential and existing residents, and help set your community apart as being truly pet-friendly. 🐾

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