

McQuast

Building a Pet Friendly
Home Design

Our furry friends have always been part of the family. But more and more often, pet owners from across North America are seen putting their pets as a priority when house hunting. A study by Rover.com claims that over 74% of Canadians factor their pets into any major financial decisions. After all, every member of the family needs consideration when it comes to a new home!

And like all real estate, supply and demand is an active aspect of the design for new communities. As more people put their pets first, more builders consider these extra family members in order to appeal to pet owners in a competitive market.



According to the Canadian Animal Health Institute, as of 2019, at least 41% of all households in Canada have at least one dog, and 38% have at least one cat, growing by over 1 million pets in the last 3 years. During the summer of 2020 however, pet ownership saw the biggest jump in history - rescues were seeing up to six times their normal application rate during the COVID-19 pandemic! As more people felt isolated, lonely, or simply were spending more time at home, pet ownership skyrocketed up to 60% in some provinces. That's a big market!



Let's consider some features that make homes more pet-friendly...



1. Easy-clean, durable flooring

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It's no secret that pets make messes in the home. To minimize the damage a pet can do, consider choosing flooring that is stain-resistant, easy to clean, and durable to withstand scratches and stains. Good choices for pet-friendly flooring include:

- Vinyl
- Laminate
- Marble
- Stone
- Porcelain
- Ceramic
- Cork

Offering these durable flooring options is a great way to ensure the happiness of pet-owning homebuyers.



2. Separate utility/pet room

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One of the best ways to keep all the clutter and mess of owning a pet out of the home is by dedicating one room to hold all supplies, or even the pet, too! A big trend for many pet owners with some extra budget is by including built-in sleeping quarters for cats and dogs in this designated pet room. With either crates or beds becoming part of the architecture of your home, this pet room can function as your pet's bedroom, too, and keep the rest of the home free of cumbersome dog beds or cat trees.

Having an optional utility room for homeowners to use for this purpose is greatly appealing to this market, adding versatility to those who both do and don't own pets.



3. Dog Wash

A rising trend in many condo communities is a grooming station amenity for dog owners to wash and dry their dogs without needing to pay for a visit to the groomer. This is seen mainly in high-end communities as a luxury amenity, but adding this option as a shared condo amenity or even offering it as an addition to floorplans in towns, singles, and semis would bring huge appeal to any design.

No more messy bathrooms after a bathroom in the tub, no more costly grooming visits, and one more way to show homebuyers that you consider their whole family when designing homes.



4. Yard - spacious and fenced

A yard is a must-have to many dog owners, and even some cat owners these days as the understanding of animal enrichment grows. Building communities with fenced-in yards - or, for condos, the possibility of a small leash-free park - is the most important thing for many pet owners. Especially in a post-COVID world, facilitating their pets' need for safe outdoor space (and giving their people some much-needed fresh air!) is a crucial feature in their house hunt.

And to go the extra mile, consider designing around the option for a catio to give cats a safe place to explore outdoors without risking escape or harming any local wildlife.



5. Mud room

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Similar in theme to having a designated pet utility room, a mud room holds great appeal to many dog owners. Coming in from walks in the rain, a trip to the beach, or a run through a muddy field means bringing dirt into your home no matter which way you look at it, but by including a mud room as part of home design gives pet owners - and parents - a way to keep all the mess in one easy-to-clean location instead of having it tracked through the house.

Mud rooms can:

- Contain messes
- Reduce clutter
- Provide extra storage
- Act as a secondary entrance



6. Improved Ventilation

Building codes all have very important rules on ventilation, but what they may not consider is ventilation in areas to help remove pet odour. Where people keep a cat's litterbox may not be an area that is ventilated in the same way that a bathroom is, but consider offering alternative options for ventilation throughout the home to make a home with pets a little fresher.



7. Built-in feeding stations

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The best way to show that a pet is part of the family is by giving them a seat at the table. Not literally, of course, but creative design features allow a pet's dishes to become part of the natural landscape of the kitchen. With creative designs, a pet's food and water can be discreetly tucked out of the way while still being fully accessible!



8. Wall Finish

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When choosing options for standard wall finishes, always consider a semi-gloss paint or tile in areas where pets are likely to have more access, or even use an odour-blocking paint or primer. Dirt and moisture is more difficult to remove on other surfaces, and odour may become an issue.

Use durable finishes in:

- Kitchens
- Hallways
- Main living rooms
- Mud rooms

Simple design choices or alternative options can be the deciding factors for homebuyers. Making a home pet-friendly and taking into consideration the needs of a pet adds value and versatility, and is a great way to show homebuyers how much you truly consider their lifestyles when designing their homes.



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