



# BETTER CITIES FOR PETS UPDATE

*Presented by Justine Sparling, Co-Founder & Executive Director, Dog Friendly KW*

January 20, 2025



# ABOUT DOG FRIENDLY KW



*Dog Friendly KW Founders & Senior Leadership Team, 2024*

- Kitchener based non-profit corporation founded in 2020.
- Dedicated to creating a safe and inclusive dog-friendly community.
- Team includes a small board of directors and over 50 volunteers.
- Engages and supports local small businesses while promoting responsible dog ownership through education, community events, and resources such as a podcast and a quarterly community guide.



# Better **CiTiES** for **pets**™

A MARS PETCARE PROGRAM

- In December 2023, City of Kitchener Council approved Dog Friendly KW to submit the Better Cities for Pets Assessment for certification with support and approval from the Kitchener-Waterloo Humane Society and City of Kitchener staff.
- **In January 2024, the City of Kitchener was the 1st city in Canada to become a certified “Pet Friendly City” under Mars Petcare’s Better Cities for Pets program garnering national media coverage for our community.**
- As of today, Kitchener & Caledon, Ontario are the only Canadian communities to have received this designation.






# MEDIA COVERAGE


Kitchener-Waterloo

### Kitchener's now officially a pet-friendly city. Could it be the next tourism hot spot for pet parents?

'Pet owners are willing to spend quite generously to meet their travel needs,' says professor David Fennell



Cameron Mahler · CBC News · Posted: Jan 27, 2024 6:00 AM EST | Last Updated: January 27, 2024



Justine Sparling and her dog, Marsha spearheaded the initiative to have Kit

CBC article and Morning Edition interview reached a National audience!

CityNews Everywhere

News ▾ Watch Listen ▾ Traffic Weather Gas Prices Community ▾

X

f

d

M

### Pup, pup hooray! Kitchener becomes first 'Better City for Pets' in Canada



CityNews Pup Freddie. File photo.

By Christine Clark

Posted Jan 23, 2024 06:40:26 AM. Last Updated Jan 23, 2024 06:40:30 AM.





KITCHENER | News


### Kitchener named first certified pet-friendly city in Canada


Published Jan. 28, 2024 7:13 p.m. EST

Share










Kitchener has officially "gone to the dogs"...in a good way.

The city has been named the first certified pet-friendly city in Canada by the Better Cities for Pets Program.


The certification recognizes municipalities with pet-friendly programs related to the focus of homes, parks, businesses, and shelters.




dogfriendlykw and cityofkitchener


Kitchener, Ontario


View profile



View more on Instagram







1,163 likes


dogfriendlykw

We are SO EXCITED to share in partnership with the @cityofkitchener and @kwsphumane that the City of Kitchener is the FIRST CITY in Canada to be certified as a #BetterCitiesForPets by @MarsPetcareUS — a national honor that means we're one of Canada's pet-friendliest places!

WATCH | Kitchener earns pet friendly certification:

### Kitchener earns pet friendly certification


12 months ago | News



Kitchener is Canada's first city to earn a pet-friendly certification through the Better Cities for Pets program from Mars Petcare. Justine Sparling, founder and director at Dog Friendly K-W, advocated for the city to get the designation and says it's about more than a title. She brought her dog Marshall to CBC K-W to talk about what happens next.

the Community edition

### KITCHENER GAINS PET-FRIENDLY CERTIFICATION



Rachael MacInzosh

Published: March 12, 2024

Filed under: News

**Tags:** Better Cities for Pets Initiative; David Fennell; Dog-Friendly K-W; Humane Society of Kitchener Waterloo and Stratford

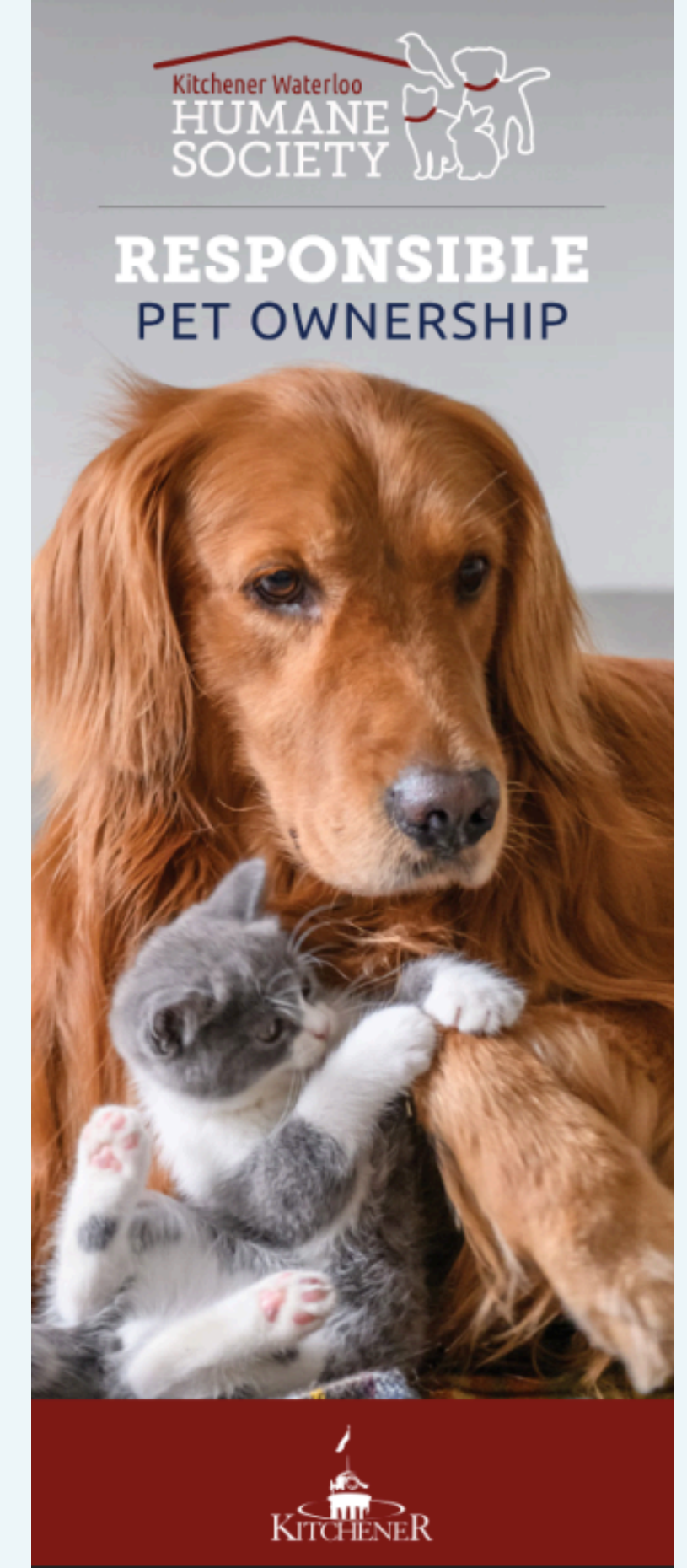
In January 2024, Kitchener was officially certified under the Better Cities for Pets Initiatives from Mars Petcare. Kitchener is the first Canadian city to receive this designation, but not the first community. That goes to Caledon, Ontario.

The title allows for the city to be more inclusive and accessible for pets and pet owners alike. The pet-friendly designation was a joint effort between the City of Kitchener, the Humane Society of Kitchener Waterloo and Stratford



# TOP CITY PRIORITY UPDATE

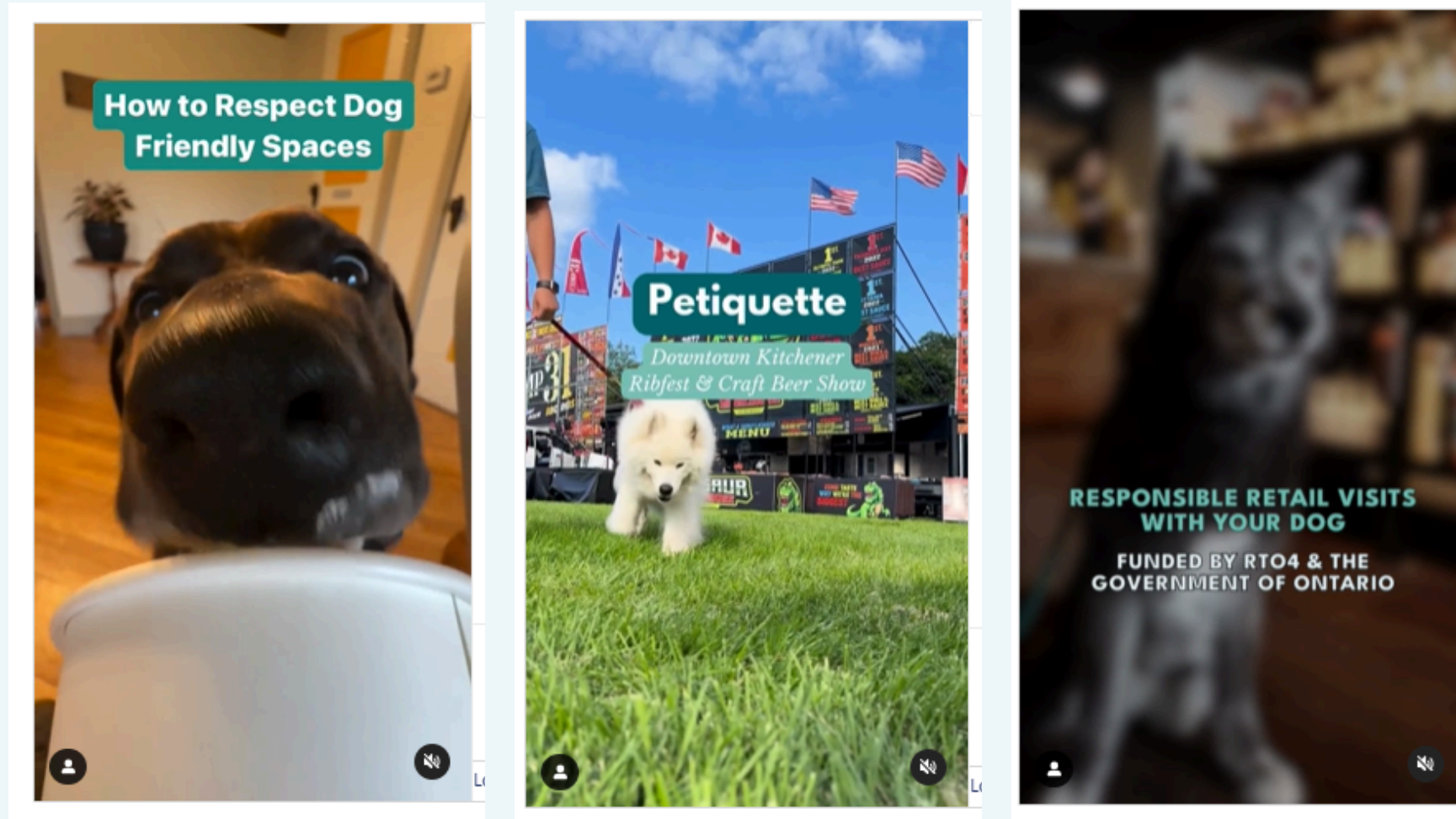
- Upon certification, each city must commit to continuing to take action that benefits people and pets.
- Our top priority for 2024 was to implement a **Responsible Pet Ownership Community Campaign**.
- This campaign used the Responsible Pet Ownership checklist approved by City of Kitchener Council as a framework.
- **Our progress in 2024:**
  - Hosted an event in Downtown Kitchener on the Gaukel Block in July 2024 focusing on Responsible Dog Ownership.
  - From May to November 2024, Dog Friendly KW developed and shared 14 social media posts on both Instagram & Facebook promoting various elements of responsible pet ownership.
  - In November 2024, our Winter Community Guide (found on our website at [dogfriendlykw.com/community-guides](https://dogfriendlykw.com/community-guides)), featured a 5-page spread focusing on responsible pet-ownership. This guide will stay on our website until end of February.



*KWHHS Responsible Pet  
Ownership Brochure*

# TOP CITY PRIORITY UPDATE

## *Social Media*



**51k+**

views on social media posts

**1.5k+**

interactions on social media posts (likes, comments, shares)

**36k+**

accounts reached via social media posts

- Social media posts spanned a variety of topics related to responsible pet ownership.
- Many posts engaged partnerships with local businesses and community groups such as Downtown Kitchener's Ribfest & Craft Beer Show and local businesses such as Gifted in Belmont Village.
- Some posts were funded by RTO4 & the Government of Ontario to promote responsible dog-friendly tourism in the Waterloo Region.



# TOP CITY PRIORITY UPDATE

## *Community Guide*

**RESPONSIBLE PET OWNERSHIP**  
*Help Kitchener Thrive with Better Cities for Pets*

**Better  for pets™**  
A MARS PETCARE PROGRAM

Did you know that Kitchener is a certified pet-friendly city under the Better Cities for Pets program?


This program recognizes Kitchener as a place where neighbours, pet owners, businesses, and dogs can safely enjoy many aspects of community life together.

Pet owners can do their part by making responsible and ethical choices for their pets.

**RESPONSIBLE PET OWNERSHIP STARTS WITH THREE KEY STEPS**

- 1**  
*Getting your pets from ethical sources*  
Learn more on [page 17](#)
- 2**  
*Licensing your dog annually*  
Learn more on [page 19](#)
- 3**  
*Getting your pets spayed and neutered*  
Learn more on [page 21](#)

**RESPONSIBLE PET OWNERSHIP**  
*Help Kitchener Thrive with Better Cities for Pets*

**Better  for pets™**  
A MARS PETCARE PROGRAM

**LICENSING YOUR DOG**

All dogs in Waterloo Region must be licensed annually and have their tag on at all times.

**Licensing Makes Reuniting With Your Lost Dog Quicker and Easier**

The Humane Society can return licensed dogs immediately to their owners using the contact information associated with the dog license. This means you can avoid a stressful trip to the shelter for both you and your pup. It also helps minimize the time and resources the Humane Society spends trying to reunite lost dogs with their people.

Plus, part of the proceeds of dog licenses go towards funding local animal welfare initiatives in our community.

**Where to License your Pet**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Waterloo: Online through DocuPet.                                 | Kitchener: Online or at KWS Humane Society. |
| Cambridge: Online through DocuPet or at Cambridge Humane Society. |   |

- A 5-page spread in the November 2024 Community Guide focused on Responsible Pet Ownership with an emphasis on:
  - 1 - Getting your pet through ethical sources.
  - 2 - Licensing your dog annually.
  - 3 - Spaying & neutering your pet.
- The Waterloo Region Community Guide is typically viewed every single day, with some days seeing more than 55 views in a day.



# WHAT'S NEXT?

## How do we continue to build a pet-friendly city?

- Establishing & declaring more city-owned properties in Kitchener as pet-friendly (i.e. City Hall Rotunda, Square Peg & The Boathouse patio).
- City of Kitchener Council support to advocate for a pet-friendly LRT system across the Waterloo Region.
- Continue to work collaboratively to educate & advocate for responsible pet ownership.



*Dog Friendly KW Gaukel Block Event, 2024*





**THANK YOU FOR  
YOUR SUPPORT**