UPDATED
2026

DESIGN GUIDE

BARKITECTURE

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL BUILDS



Barkitecture is a custom pet architecture competition benefiting local pet rescues. Barkitecture challenges local architects, designers, and creative minds to design and build custom pet architecture to be auctioned off with all proceeds benefiting local pet rescue groups and supporting organizations.

This design guide is intended to help you better understand the Barkitecture event, its rules/ guidelines, the judging criteria, and more, to ensure that you and your team has a successful Barkitecture. Before we get started, we ask that all barkitects keep the following in mind:

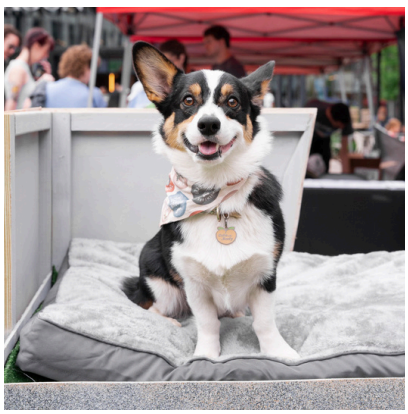
All barkitecture builds are auctioned off at the event to benefit local animal rescues. The final bid price does not represent the value of your build. Barkitecture wouldn't be possible without the incredible designs from our barkitects, and that means hundreds of adoptable pets wouldn't get seen and rescues wouldn't get the funding they need. Some builds go for a much lower price than it would get in the commercial space, which means our attendees are getting an INCREDIBLE deal! And that's ok!

Animal welfare is a focus, and no designs should be considered permanent outside homes for dogs/cats - participants are encouraged to design interior pieces, furniture, and outdoor structures/houses that act as a temporary oasis on visits and short stays outside!







GUIDELINES

WE DON'T LIKE THE 'RULES' WORD IN DESIGN,
BUT WE DO 'STRONGLY ENCOURAGE'



GENERAL DESIGN GUIDELINES:

- Design entries for the competition are open to **any kind of pet architecture** – these may be doghouses, cat condos, bunny barns, fish tanks, chicken coops, bird houses, etc.

- **Display areas on site will be limited to 5' x 5' x 5'** and designers should **be considerate with the weight and size of builds**. Two people should be able to move your build efficiently.
  - WE PROMISE: If someone cannot picture themselves moving your build and taking it home in the car/truck they have - they will not be bidding on it!
  - The 5' x 5' x 5' area includes any additional staging associated with your build. Coordinate with Barkitecture staff/volunteers for approval first if your staging requirements exceed these dimensions, but actual build size of your barkitecture should not exceed these requirements.

- Material costs should be modest, if possible. Consider using recycled and/or donated materials as an alternative to spending an excessive amount of money on your prototype.

- Builds are encouraged to adopt sustainable strategies and green design practices whenever possible.

- All design structures must be freestanding and constructed so they are not a hazard to pets and humans on site. Your barkitecture will get bumped in to, explored, drooled on, and more. Accidents also happen! You are responsible to maintain the safety of your design on site and your design may be disqualified and removed if Barkitecture staff/volunteers view this as a risk.

- All design teams are encouraged to **submit a progress image** of their design prior to the competition that will be used to promote your build/firm/business in the lead up to the event - so make a good impression and get people excited to see and bid on your design.



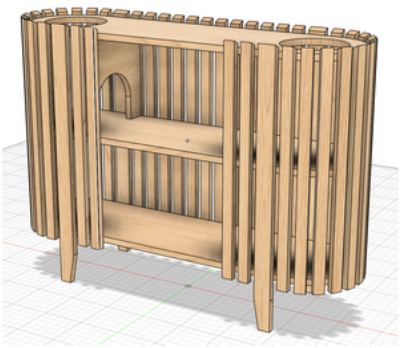




MEOW-DULAR MANSION
HDR / WPM / DPR







WHISKER WALLS
NUSBAUM & NUSBAUM

YES, THE SIZE OF YOUR BUILD DOES MATTER
Let's face it — no matter how incredible your Barkitecture masterpiece is, if someone can't figure out how to get it home, they're not going to bid on it.

Think of it this way: if your design requires a flatbed truck, a construction crew, and a city permit… it might be more "architectural statement" than "adoptable home accessory."





Modular builds like the by RND Architects can allow you to still GO BIG but pack up into a smaller footprint for easier lifting and transport.

Ideal Size
Your entire display (that's including your staging) should fit comfortably within a 5-foot cube. That's roughly the size of a large cat tower or small dining table.

If two average humans can't lift and maneuver it, it's too big!

Small builds can make a BIG Impact

Transport Reality Check
Most bidders at best are showing up in SUVs, minivans, or pickup trucks. Very few have access to a moving van or trailer because they aren't planning ahead of time just how incredible your build is and how good it will look in their homes.

If they can't picture how your creation gets from the event to their living room, porch, or yard, they'll hesitate to bid no matter how much they love it.

Tips for Beginners and BIG Thinkers
If your concept needs to be large:

- **Make it modular**. Design it to come apart into smaller, lightweight sections.
- **Mind the weight**. Think thinner plywood, hollow framing, and lighter finishes.
- **Simplify the setup**. Use quick hardware like bolts, clips, or tabs so it's easy to assemble/disassemble.
- Just HAVE to go BIG?? Offer local delivery. If you're willing to drop off your build within the area, coordinate with Barkitecture so we can include this on the bid form, it can make a huge difference!

Why This Matters
The easier it is for someone to bring your Barkitecture home, the more likely they are to try to win it.

Smaller Builds = More Bids = More Rescue Donations

That's a design equation we can all get behind.

STAGING YOUR BUILD:

Staging your build matters when setting up your barkitecture display and can be the make or break to capture the judges' and bidders' attention. You are encouraged to set up your build to cater to the pets and owners that will be checking them out.

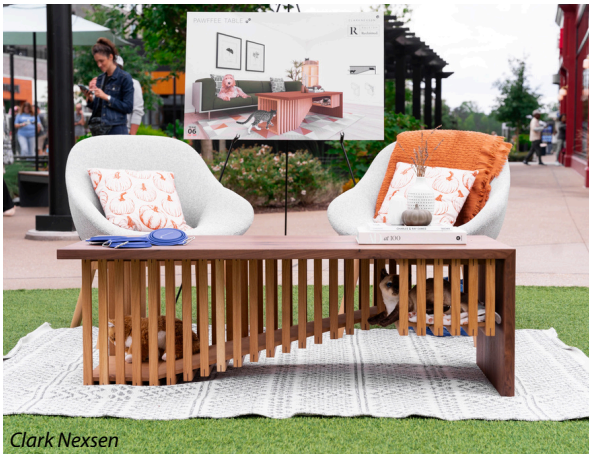
Examples include:

- Home Decor (plants, rugs, furniture, etc.)
- Fresh water bowls and pet treats
- Toys and attention grabbers

Important to note: Be clear and coordinate with Barkitecture staff/volunteers on what is and what is not included with your build to avoid confusion with anyone bidding. While we know that gorgeous $800 chair you have set up with your barkitecture is to help visitors imagine your custom design in their home, but it doesn't mean the bidders will know or think about that unless told!

Accidents happen - things will get peed and drooled on (usually by the dogs) so be prepared.


CPL


Clark Nexsen



Moseley


R/DA Architects


IA Interior Architects

DESIGN BOARD GUIDELINES:

- Each team must design a signage board (sized 24"x36") to accompany their build, and can be oriented either portrait or landscape. All boards must be mounted on foamcore or similar

All signage should include:

- Your company logo (if applicable)
- The name of your design (ALL designs must have a name!)
- Information about your design to make it more enjoyable for guests and may be valuable for potential buyers (remember this is a FUNDRAISER!)
- Acknowledgement of any vendors or sponsors that contributed to your prototype.
- Design matters! No text only signage will be allowed.
- AI generated boards and visuals are highly discouraged.







Past board examples - some developed prior to the board template introduction.

AWARDS

HINT: THIS SAME SECTION IS
SHARED WITH THE JUDGES



AWARDS OVERVIEW:

Barkitecture has a series of awards, some awarded through a panel of judges and others for meeting specific criteria as detailed below in the award descriptions.

Our judge panel will include at least one architect or design professional, and someone from the community at large (media personality, pet rescue volunteer, etc.).

Barkitects are allowed to talk with the judges during judging, but your build and board should speak for themselves.

There may also be Honorable Mentions in each category.



BEST IN SHOW

The best overall pet architecture design as chosen by the panel of judges. The biggest award of them all and the one everyone wants. The winner of Best In Show should have a strong showing in ALL of the other judge-awarded categories listed below, and truly stand above as innovative pet architecture with quality craftmanship.

GREENEST PAW

The build representing the most sustainability focused design as chosen by the panel of judges. This is awarded to the most sustainable design through clever use of materials and green design strategies as chosen by our panel of judges

CRAZIEST CAT

The most unique design as chosen by the panel of judges. The winner challenges the idea of what pet architecture is in new and innovative ways through fun and creative design strategies with 'outside of the box' thinking.

GRAPHIC BARK

Best Signage as chosen by our panel of judges. This award is based on the graphic design of the board and information included about your build. The board should be dynamic and engaging while telling the story of your build and its features.

FAT CAT

Awarded to the build that receives the highest donation for their build during the silent auction at the event. Barkitects should promote their builds and let visitors know they can bid on the design to increase their chances of winning.

PEOPLE'S CHOICE

Award based on the number of votes given by the public on-site for their overall favorite build.

AWARDS GALLERY

A SNAPSHOT OF PREVIOUS WINNERS TO GIVE YOU AN IDEA OF WHAT JUDGES HAVE BEEN DRAWN TO IN PAST COMPETITIONS

THESE ARE FROM TRIANGLE BARKITECTURE (NOT NEWARK & SUBURBAN ARCHITECTS) - THEY'VE BEEN DOING THIS LONGER THAN US AND HAVE MORE PHOTOS!



BEST IN SHOW



THE NUTHOUSE - Redline Design Group, 2023
The judges loved that this build paid tribute to the 'City of Oaks' and home to Triangle Barkitecture. The were wowed by the expert level craftmanship and the gorgeous wood shell. The design also scored points for having hidden storage in the acorn crown, and offered a stylish place for your pup to get comfy with the built in bed.

THAT IS SO FETCH- Cline Design, 2021
The pop of blue against the wood tones and the hard to miss tennis ball wall caught the eyes of the judges who appreciated the fun and playful architecture. They also appreciated that this build could folded up and closed when not is use to save space and keep your pups toys tucked away with the hidden storage up top.





THE DOGWOOD - Parc Design Lab, 2019
The judges appreciated the story this build told and the attention to detail with the design. Slightly bent panels mimic the leaves of the dogwood tree, allowing them to rock gently in the breeze and offer diffuse light and shade for the pup resting in it. The judges liked to imagine this as a quiet and calming getaway for pets when outside.

BEST IN SHOW (Cont.)



CLAW HOUSE - CRB, 2024
Judges appreciated the design's take on a modern cat tree that had the flexibility to be configured into different stacking options. The bold use of color was an attention grabber, but the functionality and craftmanship won over the judges.

HEXA PAWD - LS3P, 2022
With its bold shape and gorgeous wood, the design won over judges who appreciated that the build offered both a place for their pet and owner to be side-by-side. The beautiful craftsmanship of the folding panels allowed for different configurations, like the bench shown, but also allowed the build to be folded up when needing to save space.



CRAZIEST CAT



THE BARK ROYALE - Bobbitt, 2024
The judges really enjoyed the fun take on design and use of reclaimed wood with a fun spot for your dog and storage for their toys. The judges also imaged the netting used for the sail would be a big hit with curious cats trying to reach the top.



HYGEE - LS3P, 2019
Judges appreciated the uniqueness of the sliding design that allowed the users to adjust the size to fit their space and pets best. They also enjoyed the matching wall angles to add for accent shelving or fun places for your cat to explore.

CRAZIEST CAT (Cont.)



PURR POST - Clark Nexsen, 2023
An accent piece for your home and play space for your cat, the judges loved the unique concept that reimagined a traditional cat tree into a stylish accent light for your home.

FURRIGAMI - IA Interior Architects, 2024
The judges were impressed with the transformational architecture that allowed the Furrigami to hold into differs uses while offering a space for your pet. That, along with the great craftsmanship and staging made this build a favorite.



GREENEST PAW



LINCOLN DOGS- Cline Design, 2024
Judges loved the re-use of the large cardboard printer rolls to form a fun structure that could be configured in multiple different ways for pets and kids of all sizes.

BOW WOW HAUS - RND Architects, 2023
The judges thought this was a excellent example of furniture upcycling done right, giving existing furniture a new, bold look with a space for your pet, including bed and feeding station.





CAR-PET - Integrated Design, 2019
The re-used carpet samples and use of leftover wood captured the judges' attention for its use of giving forgotten materials a new life.

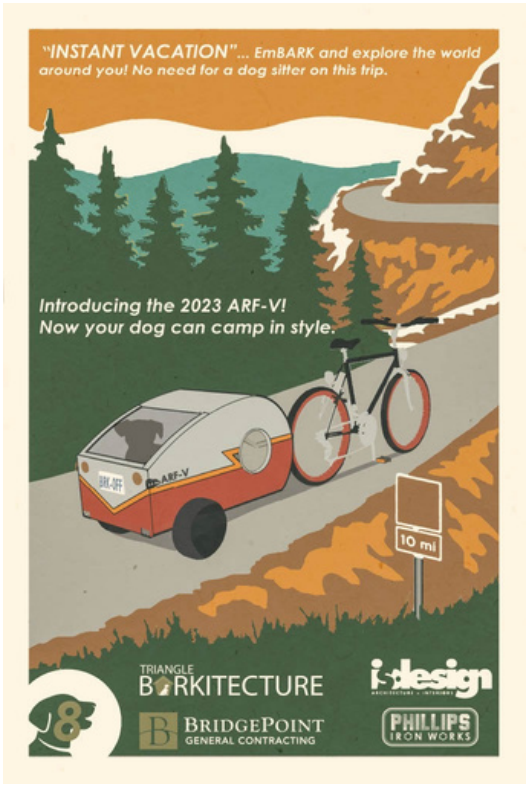
GRAPHIC BARK



PLAY FRAME- and other works, 2021
The colorful art caught the judges' attention and they appreciated the design that also gave a lot of easy to understand information on the build, including how the different treat puzzles worked.

ROCKET CAT- Davis Kane Architects, 2024
A fun board for kids of all ages, the judges loved that the board gave a description of the build and its features, but also turned it into a fun game of "Find Rocket Cat' that had people interacting with the board as well as the build.





ARF-V- IS Design and Bridgepoint, 2023
The judges loved the color and composition of the board - it felt like a piece of art that also called back to more vintage national park posters, while also helping you image the design getting used and the adventures that could be had.

FAQ'S

AND QUESTIONS WE DEFINITLEY MADE UP
JUST FOR CLARIFICATION



For the Barkitecture auctions, are teams allowed to set a starting bid for their builds?
Yes, teams are allowed to set a starting bid for their designs, but we ask you to be prepared to pay that price if the build does not receive any bids. The auction is meant to raise donations for rescues, and while we wish every build sold for a lot of money, that is not the reality. We understand that a lot of work, time and money goes into each build, but all builds entered into Barkitecture are required to be auctioned off regardless of the final bid.

My build did not receive any bids, what happens now?
In the unlikely event that your build does not receive any bids during the competition, we ask that your team help Barkitecture volunteers by taking your build with you at the end of the event. One of the participating rescues may also be interested in auctioning the build off at one of their future events.

Do I need to be an architect to compete in Barkitecture?
No, the Barkitecture competition is open to everyone.

Does my team have to stay by my build during the whole event?
You are not required to stay by your build, but it is encouraged to have a team representative present at all times to talk to potential bidders about your build, encourage them to bid, and have them vote in the People's Choice Award.

The board template doesn't fit with our design aesthetic, can we modify it?
Your board must follow the template sent from your Barkitecture event coordinator to clearly indicate your team's number for judging and bidding. The color and font of this team number can be adjusted to match your board's colors, but must be clearly labeled. Teams not following the template may be disqualified from the 'Graphic Bark' Award to be fair to other teams that followed the template.

Where can I find my team's number?
A team number will be assigned to you by your Barkitecture event prior to the competition.

Can we offer to deliver our build to the buyer?
Yes, you may offer to deliver your build, just make sure that it is clearly coordinated with Barkitecture volunteers and in the bidding of your build.

When do I deliver my build to the site?
Logistics of build delivery will vary by event. Coordinate with your Barkitecture event's volunteers for time and drop off locations. It is important that you arrive to site on time to make sure your build can be properly setup and staged for the event. If you are unable to deliver your build during the scheduled time, make sure you coordinate with Barkitecture for at alternate delivery.