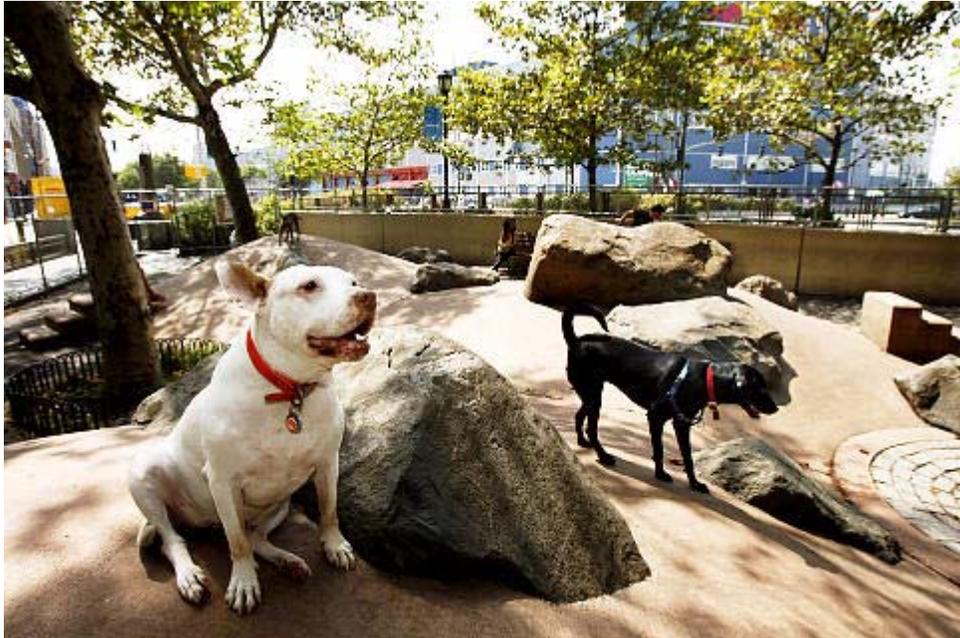


Pet Peeves: Dog policies create controversy - and harmony - in city buildings

BY [BILL CRESENZO](#)

Friday, August 28th 2009, 2:47 AM



Hagen for News

The barking. The poop. The trotting of dogs through the building's lobby when rules dictate that dogs must travel via a service elevator. Dogs that run around without a leash, and those overfriendly dogs that jump on people. These are issues that divide pet owners and non-pet-owning neighbors.

"I love my building and my apartment," said [Lawrence Rich](#), a broker with [Prudential Douglas Elliman](#). "Life would be perfect. I am just very sad that I can't have a dog."

Rich recently lobbied his neighbors and co-op board to change the rules to allow pets in his building. His initial attempts failed but he's still trying.

"The people who didn't want pets were really mean and angry that I should even think about changing the policy," he said.

A couple of years ago, [Jono Waks](#) ran for a seat on his Chelsea building's co-op board, which does not allow dogs. He even came up with a slogan, "The Puppy Platform."

"I was sitting there and thinking to myself, 'I want a dog,'" he said. "I live in Chelsea, which is the most dog-friendly area in the entire city. I had dog envy."

His campaign came to halt two weeks ago at a board meeting.

"If you hate puppies, vote for the other guys," he recalled telling residents. "Then the board president starts tearing up. She told everyone she is not a puppy hater, but she is allergic. I withdrew my name. I don't know how a puppy in the hallway could cause someone to go into shock, but apparently for her, it does."

Not only are buildings saying "no" to changing the rules to allow pets, buildings that were once pet-friendly are now saying "no more at all."

"We are seeing more and more buildings restricting their policies toward dogs," said [Mitchell Speer](#), a broker with Corcoran. "I have found that all it takes is one bad dog to change the whole policy of the building. It could be a dog that barks, a dog that snarls at a neighbor in the elevator or a dog that urinates in the lobby."

Dogs do what dogs do, so considerate residents pick up after them. They control the barking, and they keep their pets out of restricted areas, like lobbies. But when it comes to pet etiquette, the issue isn't the pets themselves.

"It's not as much the pets as it is the owners," said [Jordan Platt](#), vice president of operations for [Kaled Management Co.](#), which oversees thousands of units in [New York City](#).

Like parents, dog owners are often quick to point out that their dogs aren't the ones causing problems.

Mantioni owns a medium-size mutt. In his Chelsea building, he said, it's not his doggie that causes difficulties.

"The people in my building have dogs that are annoying," he said. "I try to be a good neighbor and make sure that my dog doesn't do what the other dogs do."

Such as?

"The neighbors have dogs that yap like crazy all the time," he said. "They are the little, tiny dogs. One of my neighbors had to leave at night, and whenever they were gone all that little dog did was bark."

Platt manages several buildings that let residents have dogs but then changed the rules.

"There were a lot of complaints about noise, barking during the day when the tenants weren't home, certain animals doing their business on the grounds of the building," Platt said. Dogs who lived in the building under the old rules were grandfathered in.

"Legally, you can't get rid of them if they are already there," he said.

It's the job of the property manager to coordinate a building's pet policy.

Owners of rental buildings decide on a building-by-building basis whether to allow pets.

Managers have to referee between neighbors when it comes to complaints. Kaled, which allows dogs in some of its buildings, gives two warnings, then issues a fine. In their rental buildings though, they have a strict no-pet policy.

Still, no matter how strict a pet policy, there are always people who try to skirt the rules.

"A young woman called me and said her boyfriend bought her a dog," said Platt, who had to sternly warn the woman to not allow the pet on premises. "You don't buy someone a pet if the building doesn't allow them."

Happily, the dog ended up living with the boyfriend.

[Paul Purcell](#), president of [Charles Rutenberg Realty](#), knows of a building on Fifth Ave. that has a strict policy — absolutely no dogs unless they were there before the rule was adopted, decades ago. Residents became suspicious of one woman's very long-lived pet.

"The dog was about 100 years old," Purcell said. "They think she replaced the dogs after they passed away with ones that looked exactly like it."

Sometimes building managers turn a blind eye. "I lived in a building that had a no-pet policy, but as the dogs caused no problems, they overlooked it," Platt said.

Some have extremely strict rules. The Excelsior on E. 57th St. is a good example. "This is a lovely white-glove building, and they have very specific rules for pets," said [David Branyan](#), a broker with Corcoran. "If it's a cat, it has to be spayed. As far as dogs go, they have to be small enough to be carried in the elevator. In order for a new person to come in, they must verify the dog is 15 pounds or less with a certificate from a veterinarian. These are the strictest that I have ever seen."

If residents get new puppies, they need vet confirmation that the dogs won't grow to be more than 15 pounds.

Other buildings use a liberal pet policy to draw buyers. Some new condos and rentals have added pet-related amenities.

"It's become a sales tool for us because some competing projects don't want them," said [Greg Berger](#), managing director of The Residences at Dixon Mills in [Jersey City](#). "They have become a major part of our community."

Berger said his building does everything to make sure those with pets and those without live harmoniously.

At the William Beaver House in lower [Manhattan](#), pets have their own play area. On a recent afternoon, a group of owners gathered to let their dogs frolic in the 47-story building's dog run — part of which is covered.

[Jessica Gordon](#), the building's lifestyle manager, said the dogs are an integral part of the community, and she is even starting a scheduled play group for the pups.

[The Related Companies](#) own and manage the [Caledonia](#), which provides a "pet spa" for residents. Resident Mark Strong frequently uses it to groom his dog, Izzy.

He said that rather than dividing neighbors, pets bring them together.

"We have met so many people in our building and around the neighborhood," he said. "I had no idea the power she would have in terms of bringing us closer to our neighbors."

[Chelsey Prudhomme](#) agreed. She said her dog, Stewy, has become something of a mascot at her building, 20 Exchange.

"He knows everyone," she said. "Everyone knows his name, even if they don't know mine."

But she admits that late at night, she and Stewy and other residents break one of the rules.

"If there are not a lot of people around, we will let them play in the lobby, even if they are supposed to be on a leash," she said.