

Snowicane, shmoicane -- brokers are hitting the streets

The Real Deal talks to brokers about business on a snow day and shares a rough list of real estate offices that are closed February 26, 2010 03:30PM **By Candace Taylor**



Marcus & Millichap's Adelaide Polsinelli is out working today in the snow

"Snowicane" or not, New York City real estate brokers are hard at work.

Unlike teachers or other professionals who can stay home when the weather gets bad, brokers must be prepared to show properties to eager home-seeking clients, rain or shine.

"Real estate is like the post office: neither sleet nor rain nor dark of night will keep us indoors," said Paul Purcell, co-founder of Manhattan's Charles Rutenberg Realty, who made sure the firm's office on East 56th Street was open today. ***(See a list of today's real estate office openings and closings below.)***

"We work seven days a week and 24 hours a day," said Leonard Steinberg, an executive vice president at Prudential Douglas Elliman, who was on his way to show a \$14 million listing and had competed two showings this morning.

On snow days, "the only difference is that I wear very different shoes," said Steinberg, who donned heavy-duty waterproof boots to help navigate piles of slush. On days like this, he sometimes hires a four-wheel drive vehicle from a car service to ferry clients from one listing to another.

Home-seekers often have a limited amount of time to find a new apartment, and that doesn't stop because of a few snowflakes, said Mary Lou Currier, a vice president at Century 21 Metro. But today's storm is more than a few flakes and the media has dubbed it "Snowicane" -- a snow storm

with strong winds reminiscent of a hurricane in some parts of the country.

"Some clients don't have a lot of open time," Currier said from her office at 575 Madison Avenue. "When people really want something, when they're seriously looking, they go out."

Currier took a client out in the snow yesterday morning to see an Upper West Side apartment with a terrace.

"Even though it was a blizzard out, it was clear that there was a river view," she said, adding: "real estate brokers in general are pretty intrepid. They're not going to let something like this slow them down."

As a young broker, Purcell recalls scaling a snow bank to show an apartment to two clients who insisted on seeing it that day.

"They were serious buyers," he said. "I remember thinking that was my job, and if they wanted to see it in a blizzard, I would do it."

Moreover, in the increasingly busy Manhattan real estate market, Steinberg said, inventory in some areas is growing scarce, and some buyers are not about to let a snowstorm prevent them from seeing what could be the perfect apartment.

"It's that kind of market again -- if you don't show up at 9 a.m. you don't get the apartment you want," he said.

In fact, some potential buyers are taking advantage of the snow day to sneak in a few extra showings, according to Purcell, who said the phones at Rutenberg were ringing off the hook.

"There are some people saying, 'I have a day off work, let me go see some apartments,'" Purcell said.

Still, inclement weather does discourage some clients from venturing outside.

"This storm certainly slowed things down," said Adelaide Polsinelli, an associate vice president of investments at commercial brokerage Marcus & Millichap. "However, it's easier to work on snow days because there is a less hectic attitude." Eric Benaim, the CEO of Long Island City brokerage Modern Spaces, kept his main office and the sales office of the Powerhouse, a new condo the firm represents, open. Still, he estimated that his 15-agent company will likely do three or four showings today, as opposed to five or six on most weekdays.

Rutenberg agent Stefany Blount said she had readied her mukluks in preparation for a 4 p.m. showing at the Chelsea Modern today, but the tenants occupying the apartment canceled.

They claimed they weren't given enough notice, but "I think they want to sit [at] home and drink hot chocolate," Blount quipped.

Inclement weather can also make brokers' jobs harder.

"It's not ideal to show in bad weather," Century 21 Metro's Currier said. "If you have a terrace and it's under six feet of snow, it doesn't have the same wow factor. If you go to a roof deck and there are models in bathing suits, it's a lot more compelling than if it's empty."

While many brokers -- who make their own hours and schedule their own showings -- decided to brave today's storm, real estate offices are another story.

Many of the city's firms officially closed their offices today to save support staff members -- especially those in the outer boroughs -- from having to brave the storm. Most were still allowing agents access to their offices, however.

"We are closed," said Robyn Kammerer, a spokesperson for Halstead Property. "Agents still have access to the offices, as they do 24/7, but we wanted to ensure that staff and administrative personnel were safe in this inclement weather."

With additional reporting by [Lauren Elkies](#) and [Amy Tennery](#).