



BAY AREA HOUSE-HUNTING, WITH CANINES IN MIND

By Morgan Hall

If you are looking for a place to live in the San Francisco Bay Area – and you have a dog – you’re in for a special journey. Luckily it’s a pet-friendly region for the most part, with progressive local regulations and a high dog-ownership rate. In fact, the city of San Francisco alone is estimated to have over 110,000 canine residents, outnumbering babies.

So what does the responsible pet-owner need to keep in mind when shopping for a new living space? I’ve worked in the real estate business for years and have a pet, and I asked a few local colleagues for their best practices. As always, common sense is the first rule, but one dog owner’s good sense may seem less to a landlord, condominium association, or neighbors.

So here are some key tips and tactics for home-shopping with Fido.

1. PET INSURANCE.

Most experts strongly recommend pet liability insurance, especially for multi-family living, and it can make you desirable as a resident for being so conscientious. Renter and buyer agreements often require this. Here’s why it’s so important.

The vast majority of people and dogs live quite harmoniously in cities, but close proximity can lead to personality differences and behavior differences, just like with people. For example, dog owners are responsible for controlling and training their loved ones and can be held at fault after a dog-bite or other altercation. Pets soiling or chewing others’ property is another potential problem.

Apartment landlords and condominium associations have some level of obligation to protect both property and other residents, so make sure your dog is a good fit for your new home.

Proper training and dog-parenting are the best ways to avoid problems, but pet insurance can be a safety net for your own financial and mental well-being. Most major insurers have options for including pet coverage in your home or apartment policy.

2. PET-FRIENDLY PROPERTIES

Condominium communities such as The Bond in Oakland offer private dog-walking lawns, and San Francisco’s Marlow homes on Van Ness tout proximity to the dog-haven of Lafayette Park. Also the Archstone apartment properties in San Francisco state “dog & cat friendly” on their list of amenities, ahead of washer/dryer, pool, and everything else.



Otis, at the Bond condominiums’ dedicated dog-lawn

Still, be sure you look past the marketing. Apartment leases and condominium ownership regulations generally have pet-ownership clauses; read them carefully. While the owner of a Pug or Maltese may have only noise or urination accidents to worry about, large dog owners have greater liability concerns if their dogs do harm to property, people, or other animals.

3. DOG-WALKING REQUIREMENTS

Because around a third of San Franciscans own a dog, it makes sense that there are over 500 dog walkers servicing the City. That is positive news for dog owners who work long hours but still want their dogs to have a daily exercise break. It’s important to check references and make sure a prospective dog walker has the required training and licensing.

There are other requirements to research. For instance, in San Francisco professional dog walkers are not allowed to walk more than eight canine charges at a time and all dog walkers must keep dogs on-leash at all times. Other cities have different policies and others don’t require licensing at all. Shop for your best fit.

4. LOCAL PET AMENITIES

In choosing a new place, you will want good proximity to vets, groomers and pet-supply stores. Thankfully, well-regarded veterinarians can be found everywhere; you’re in luck if there is one within walking distance. Dog-grooming, training, and daycare services can be important as well.

The right new neighborhood can become your pet’s new “best friend” and expand your social life, too, with the myriad dog-centric businesses serving many neighborhoods in San Francisco and throughout the Bay Area.

5. WEATHER AND WALKABILITY

The San Francisco Bay Area’s weather and park systems provide ample opportunities to enjoy time with your dog outside the home. Whether you live in the heart of the city or in a less-dense community, you’re often quite close to parks, dog-friendly beaches, and/or pedestrian paths. Scout out such place when you’re hunting for your new home.

If you’re good at house-hunting and maybe a bit lucky, too, you’ll find a place that fits your own and your dog’s lifestyle and offers healthy, happy, and neighbor-friendly living.

Morgan Hall works for real estate marketing firm, PolarisPacific (polarispacific.com) in San Francisco, and knows dog-friendly property!

BAY WOOF
NEWS WITH BITE FOR BAY AREA DOG LOVERS

COMING SOON. BEAST OF THE BAY AWARDS!

Vote for your favorite dog-friendly people and places, and help us acknowledge the Bay Area businesses that love canines as much as we do.

Online ballot posted November 1 through midnight, January 31, 2014 at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/BoBA2014>

COME CELEBRATE all the nominees with us in April, then follow #BoBA14 on Twitter and FaceBook to stay in the noise.