

# Los Angeles Times

## A great place for leash

**Newly arrived dog owners can find plenty of services and treats for their canine pals. But they might need a little training themselves.**

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If personal style starts with knowing who you are, perhaps man's best friends could show us a few things. Canines, especially those who cohabit with their owners in downtown L.A., are some of the coolest cats around.

On the other hand, some downtown dog owners — especially the new ones — may be in need of a makeover in terms of what it means to share space with canines.

Alternately, up-coming and down its heels, overly paved and sorely lacking green space, the city core demands a forward-thinking style of pet ownership. The good news for those seeking assistance is that it's out there. There are dog-walking services (which can cost \$15 to \$25 per hour), and pet-sitting (which can run as much as \$55 a day if you choose to leave your dog home when you're out of town). Doggie daycare, for those who work long hours and can't stand the thought of leaving Fido or Fifi alone for 12 hours, can cost up to \$30 a day.

The dearth of turf is one of the biggest hurdles facing downtown dogs, said Janene Zakrajsek, who, with her husband Rob Gaudio, conceived and created a business called Pussy and Pooch. The couple's flagship store (another has opened in Long Beach's Belmont Shores neighborhood) is located in the Santa Fe Lofts building at Sixth and Main streets.

The sleek, airy space carries a wide variety of food and treats, in price categories for a range of budgets. Accessories include Buddy Belts, designed for the ergonomic comfort of dogs and greater control for their handlers, artfully enameled name tags, elegant pet carriers, and leads in a rainbow of colors.

To provide a measure of relief from downtown's shortage of grass, the store carries the PETaPOTTY. The units are designed for dogs who spend long stretches of time indoors and come in a variety of sizes for lofts or patios. And, yes, one model comes equipped with a faux fire hydrant.

Some 44,000 people live downtown, and by some estimates, 40% of them have dogs. Developers are starting to get it, offering amenities such as rooftop runs and common areas for pets in newer projects while retrofitting animal-friendly features into more established buildings.

On the plaza of the Cathedral of Our Lady of Angels one recent evening, some of the area's four-legged residents and their owners turned out in a display of doggie diversity. Shelties schmoozed Shih Tzus, Chihuahuas checked out chocolate Labs, beagles begged, and an array of pit bulls, poodles, Pomeranians, and about 500 other canine citizens of various shapes and sizes mingled with their similarly diverse human sidekicks.

The event was the fourth annual Dog Day Afternoon, a mash-up of mixer, pet services trade show and community outreach for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. Sponsored by the Downtown Center Business Improvement District in cooperation with the cathedral, the gathering was open to those who live, work and play downtown — and their dogs. Ten pet-needs providers participated in the event, including walkers, groomers and rescue organizations.

"A lot of people come into this environment from a completely different one," said David Cerwonka, who manned a table for Walk Fido, the company he runs with his wife, Callie Miller. The couple's business is based downtown to offer services almost exclusively to residents there. Cerwonka said the walking and sitting service also teaches "proper urban dog etiquette" to its canine and human clients.

"We don't want to come to your place to take your dog out just so he can go to the bathroom," Cerwonka said on a dog-walking tour of downtown two days later. "We want to help socialize the dogs so they're better citizens at home and in public."

Twentysomething entrepreneurs Jessica Medeiros and Joseph Chavanu, who own and operate Jessi Joey's Downtown Dog Sitting, take a different tack. Their walks are designed to offer a respite from the city streets. The couple said they usually drive their four-legged clients to Echo Park or Vista Hermosa Park to walk, so the dogs can feel real ground beneath their paws. "That's the hardest part about having dogs downtown," said Chavanu. "No grass. That, and the traffic."