

Why dog owners make the best citizens

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Richard Kayman's paean to dog walkers (<http://urbanplacesandspaces.blogspot.com/2009/07/breakdown-in-functioning-civil-society.html>) describes my experience perfectly:

I am not a dog person myself, but I am deeply appreciative of well-managed dog parks because in many urban neighborhoods, dog owners are some of the only regularly walking people in a community -- many neighborhoods outside of the inner core of Washington are dominated by automobiles and there is relatively little positive pedestrian activity on often empty sidewalks. Dog walkers contribute positive activity not just to streets and sidewalks but to parks. It's very easy for a park to devolve into a dangerous place. One technique for people committed to disorder to keep people (especially families and children generally) out of parks is to break a lot of bottles -- broken glass keeps a park free of children, making it easier to conduct illicit business and activities. My neighborhood isn't the world's best, but nor is it the world's worst. After dark, the streets fill with dog walkers. A couple per block, at least. In the winter, they're the only people on the streets. Without them, the neighborhood would be lot emptier, and the streets would feel a lot more forbidding. Placing a couple of poodles -- and my neighborhood has a lot of poodles -- on the landscape really does wonders. Developing neighborhoods should give some sort of tax credit for dog ownership.

Actually, my area is doing the next best thing. The city is building a big park/open air drug market near my house. At least, that's the joke. But the design is smart: It's got a big dog park, in addition to a community garden and some playgrounds. And if the streets are any indication, the dog park will be used, which means the park will be used, which means the plan might work out after all. ...