

Bark Down Barriers: Frequently Asked Questions

What is Bark Down Barriers?

Bark Down Barriers is an ordinance amendment by Council Members Wonsley, Chowdhury, Whiting, and Chavez that removes conditions and restrictions on pet ownership solely due to a prior conviction for certain felonies.

Currently, individuals with a felony record may be charged a \$250 fee associated with owning dogs weighing more than 20 pounds or other limited criteria. Bark Down Barriers removes this barrier to pet ownership for justice-impacted individuals. Should the ordinance amendment pass, Minneapolis Animal Care and Control retains the authority to restrict ownership for individuals convicted of a felony for animal mistreatment or using an animal to perpetrate an assault. No changes are made with respect to Minneapolis Animal Care and Control's ability to restrict the ownership of individuals who have demonstrated a failure to comply with city ordinances concerning the ownership of potentially dangerous or dangerous animals.

Why is Bark Down Barriers important?

Bark Down Barriers removes barriers for justice-impacted community members as they reintegrate into life after imprisonment and helps large dog breeds that are overrepresented among dogs surrendered to Minneapolis Animal Care and Control and struggle to be adopted. In 2025, the Minneapolis City Council included justice-impacted status as a protected class under the [Civil Rights Ordinance](#). Currently, justice-impacted residents have to undergo extra barriers and fees to own dogs weighing more than 20 pounds, solely due to their prior convictions. Also, justice-impacted residents may currently be subject to additional fees for owning a dog, based on certain criteria, despite MACC not declaring that animal either dangerous or potentially dangerous. Removing these barriers aligns with Minneapolis ordinances and city values, ensuring all residents have equal access to opportunities.

Where did these barriers come from?

In 2008, the City Council passed stronger restrictions and regulations on dogs that have been declared dangerous or potentially dangerous. Those restrictions also included extra barriers for justice-impacted residents. Nearly 20 years later, Council has the opportunity to improve this policy by keeping the provisions regulating dangerous dogs but removing the discriminatory extra barriers for justice-impacted residents solely because of their prior convictions.

Who supports Bark Down Barriers?

Bark Down Barriers is authored by Council Members Wonsley, Chowdhury, Whiting, and Chavez. It is being supported by justice-impacted community members, advocacy groups, and Minneapolis Animal Care & Control.