

ANIMAL ADVOCATES EXPRESS JOY OVER PROPOSAL, WHICH MUST GO THROUGH ULURP

Bronx animal shelter planned/Full-service facility will open in 2024 on Bartow

By Patrick Rocchio
Bronx Times



Photo courtesy of the mayor's press office
An artist rendering of interior of the planned new Bronx animal shelter is pictured.



Photo courtesy of Dotti Poggi
Bronx Animal Shelter Endeavor members including (l-r) Marion Koenig, Donna DeChiaro and Dorothea Poggi celebrate outside the Bartow Avenue site on the day of the announcement, Tuesday, January 23.

The borough, which has been without a full-service animal shelter for years, will finally have a place for strays.

An announcement came on Tuesday, January 23 that Mayor de Blasio's office, NYC Department of Health, several other city agencies and Animal Care Control Centers of NYC are proposing a new \$27.3 million animal shelter for a location on Bartow Avenue, across from Co-op City.

The proposed facility, which must go through the city's Uniform Land Use Review Procedure, including a local review of the plan before construction, will be located at a city-owned parcel at 2050 Bartow Avenue, presently occupied by NYPD trailers.

It is slated to have 47,000 square feet and projected to open in 2024, with adoption, shelter facilities and veterinary services.

The facility would have space for up to 140 cats, 70 dogs, 30 rabbits and 20 other types of animals, and will also include ACC's administrative offices for the borough, according to those who attended the announcement in Manhattan.

The borough's animal advocate community greeted the news with euphoria, while some elected officials cautioned the need to gather community feedback to the proposal.

Dotti Poggi, a member of the Bronx Animal Shelter Endeavor, said she and others have been advocating for a borough animal shelter for 20 years and that she was thrilled.

"When we look at it in terms of our advocacy, we feel that this is way overdue," said Poggi.

Currently, she said, in the borough there is only a pet intake center in Fordham that does not have any veterinary services and can only house animals until they are transported to shelters operated by ACC in Staten Island, Brooklyn or Manhattan.

If an animal is sick or dying, the intake center takes no action, she said.

"This new shelter closes the gap in terms of the Bronx being underserved," said Donna DeChiaro, a BASE member.

A shelter can be a safe place to bring lost animals so that they stay close to home and be reunited with their owners, have veterinarians that can administer medication and give local community members a place to surrender their animals.

Additionally, the facility will have a 68-car parking lot, said Donna DeChiaro, a BASE member, a potentially useful attribute.

The parking lot could possibly be used for community based programs that operate out of vehicles, including programs where low-income pet owners can get free pet food and private spay neuter van can offer services, said Poggi.

"We are very happy to get the shelter and we want to form a citizens advisory board (when it opens)," said DeChiaro.

Bernadette Ferrara, an animal advocate in the east Bronx, said that the shelter is definitely needed, and could be "filled in a week."

She hopes it will be an informational hub for pet owners and offer resources for animal rescuers like herself.

DeChiaro said that the city expects the ULURP process to be completed by the end of 2018.

According to Community Board 10, no official paperwork has been received as of press time.

A spokesman from the borough president's office said the borough's chief executive looks forward to working with the community during the ULURP process.

Not all are happy or supportive of the animal shelter plan in Co-op City.

The president of Co-op City's Riverbay Corporation's board, Linda Berk, expressed indifference to the proposal because the development is predominantly a dog-free community.

She stated that many Riverbay board members are not happy about the shelter coming to Bartow Avenue.

“We have proposed for years the use of the space as a community center,” she said.

She added that if the animal shelter is built, Co-op City will have lost a valuable asset to meet community needs.

Councilman Andy King also noted in a statement that the Co-op City development does not allow animals, except for medical reasons.

“This brings about a lot of concerns among residents,” said King. “This proposal needs to be brought before the community for full support and discussion on what’s best for the neighborhood.”

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