

**BRONX BOROUGH PRSIDENT'S RECOMMENDATION
ULURP APPLICATION NO: C 180346 PSX
BRONX FULL SERVICE ANIMAL SHELTER**

DOCKET DESCRIPTION

IN THE MATTER OF an application submitted by the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS), pursuant to Section 197-c of the New York City Charter, for the site selection of property located at 2050 Bartow Avenue (Block 5141, p/o Lot 1085) for a full service animal shelter, veterinary clinic and accompanying office space facility.

BACGROUND

Approving this application will facilitate construction of a full service animal shelter constructed to serve Bronx County. The site selected for this facility is located at 2050 Bartow Avenue (Block 5141, p/o Lot 1085). This building site includes 88,200 square feet of vacant city-owned property. The remaining property on Block 5141, Lot 1085 is privately owned. The site is located on the south side of Bartow Avenue, between Asch Loop on the west and Co-op City Boulevard on the east. This site located within the Co-op City community in Bronx Community District #10. It is zoned C4-3.

The scope of development that is being proposed includes construction of a two-story, full service animal-care facility. Highlights of this of this proposal include:

- A state-of-the-art building composed of 46,823 gross square feet (use Group 16A)
- Public access will be by from 9:00--6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday
- A full service animal shelter and veterinary medical clinic on the first story
- Boarding accommodations for 70 dogs, 140 cats, 30 rabbits and 20 small animals and birds
- Separate admission, adoption and medical clinic entrances
- LEED certified
- Exterior courtyards for dog runs and client-pet meetings composed of 8,600 square feet
- Accommodations for administrative functions, employees, and professional assistants
- Off-street parking facilities offering 68-spaces: 39 for clients, 29 for shelter and employee vehicles. Approximately 12-15 facility vehicles will drop off and pick up animals on the average two times daily. Twenty field vehicles will be parked on site overnight.
- The shelter will be staffed 24/7 and employ a total of 116 people. It is anticipated that 110 employees will work on site between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Fifteen staff members will work on site between 8:00—7:00 p.m. Approximately 16 staff members will be on site between 12:00 a.m and 8:00 a.m. The applicant has stated a majority of employees will be Bronx residents.

Development of the surrounding community is defined by the residential buildings of Co-op City. This complex includes approximately 15,000 residential units, a majority of which are located in high rise buildings approximately .5 miles from the proposed animal shelter site located on Bartow Avenue. Co-op City's population approximates 60,000 residents. Co-op City is also a Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC).

A seven-story residential building offering 100 units of affordable housing is located immediately to the west of the proposed development site on the privately-owned portion of Block 5141, Lot 1085. This portion of Block 5141 Lot 1085 was sold by the City of New York in 1990 (ULURP Application # C 900700 HDX). Retail activity is located in numerous shopping center complexes. The Bartow Mall Shopping Center is located on the north side of Bartow Avenue. One of the largest of these centers is Bay Plaza, which is south of the proposed animal shelter site. Additional retail activity is situated on East Gun Hill Road, west of the New England Thruway.

Mass transit options within the Co-op City complex are exclusively bus or car services. Bus routes include the BX 5, BX12 and the BX12-Select Bus Service (SBS). Express bus transit into Manhattan is available via the BxM7. These bus lines offer access within a half block radius of the Bartow Avenue location. Access to subway transport is provided at the Pelham Bay station of the #6 Lexington Avenue line. This station is approximately 1 mile from the site of the proposed animal shelter site. The Co-op City community is well served by the Hutchinson River Parkway and the New England Thruway, both of which are accessible within .5 miles of the proposed animal shelter site.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW AND ULURP CERTIFICATION

This application was reviewed pursuant to CEQR and SEQR and received a Negative Declaration. The City Planning Commission certified this application as complete on April 23, 2018.

BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD PUBLIC HEARING

Bronx Community Board #10 held a public hearing on this application on June 18, 2018. A vote taken by this community board on developing the proposed Bronx Full Service Animal Shelter as presented in ULURP Application C 180346 PSX was zero in favor, 23 disapproval, three abstaining. Bronx Community Board #10 recommends disapproving this application by the tally heretofore stated.

BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S PUBLIC HEARING

The Bronx Borough President convened a public hearing on this application on July 19, 2018. The applicant was present and spoke in favor of this application. This hearing drew approximately 146 members of the public, with 40 members of the public offering comment on this application. Of those speaking, 16 spoke in favor of the proposed animal shelter, 24 spoke against approval of the proposed animal shelter. Numerous mass mailings and petitions were

presented. All those who signed up to speak did so. As of July 27, 2018, a combined total of approximately 1,270 signatures on petitions, mass mailings and e-mails were received by this office. Of these, most of those favoring the animal shelter resided throughout The Bronx, with a modest number from Manhattan and Queens. Of those opposing the shelter a substantial majority offer a Co-op City address.

BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S RECOMMENDATION

There is no doubt in my mind that there is a critical need for a full service animal shelter facility in The Bronx. I agree that every borough must offer such a facility, if for no other reason than by so doing the number of dogs, cats and rabbits cared for by these centers can increase. So too, this added capacity means that the numbers of dogs and cats that must be "put down" will decline. In short, the investment this application is considering and that the city is advancing will make New York far more "animal friendly," and thereby much more "pet friendly."

The merits of this proposal are significant. They include a full-service medical facility which will provide visitors with a comprehensive array of health related care for all sorts of animals, including both dogs and cats, but also rabbits and birds. This proposal will bring approximately 100 living-wage jobs to The Bronx. Programming for youngsters designed to introduce elementary school age children to both books and animals will be a part of what this center will offer. I am pleased that consideration is being given to the suggestion that programs specifically designed for seniors be developed. I would also encourage those affiliated with the actual functioning of this shelter consider establishing paid internships for Bronx high school students. Such a program just might inspire a career in veterinarian medicine. Clearly, as proposed this full service animal shelter for The Bronx will be just that: a place where people seeking the companionship of a pet, care for their pet or even a chance to learn more about pets will all be made available.

Despite the merits of this vision, I must also voice objection. First and foremost, I once again find myself confounded as to why little if any outreach was apparently made by the City to the "host community." At my public hearing the applicant stated that 14 sites were reviewed, yet I was not aware such a review was being undertaken. I cannot help but think that had my office been aware that this process was underway, a suitable site that satisfied all stakeholders could have been identified. Similarly, at my public hearing among those expressing opposition to this proposal, numerous references were made to the lack of communication between the city and the community. Here too, had there been an ongoing dialogue between Co-op City residents and the applicant many of the concerns expressed at my public hearing would have been resolved beforehand. Instead, many speakers stated plain and simply, "I feel disrespected."

Giving further consideration to this application I am compelled to state my opposition to the proposed facility being constructed on the selected site. I am mindful of the following facts:

- 1) The stated opposition to the siting of this facility on property which those charged with managing Co-op City have long sought for construction of a recreational center.

- 2) The fact that Co-op City prohibits pets suggests that those who would benefit most from this facility are not local residents.
- 3) Co-op City is located in the extreme northeastern section of The Bronx and not well served by time-efficient mass transit services. Indeed, from Yankee Stadium to Bartow Avenue by subway requires a subway transfer at 125th Street in Manhattan (from the #4 to the #6) riding this train through its entire Bronx route followed by a bus transfer at Pelham Bay Park to the SBS#12. An alternative subway route would be riding the #4 to 149th Street-Grand Concourse to transfer to the #5, riding to East Gun Hill Road which as noted by the applicant is a 20-minute walk to the Bartow Avenue location. Finally, for those with large animals either option is not practical, meaning that the use of a livery vehicle is the only alternative.
- 4) As substantial retail development has made the Co-op City community a regional destination, traffic congestion remains a major challenge. This concern is exacerbated when considering that the proposed animal shelter is also envisioned as a regional destination.

I applaud the applicant's vision for a full service animal shelter in The Bronx. As such, my office is well prepared to assist the applicant in seeking out an alternative location for this facility. Key to this search will be a more centralized location so as to maximize accessibility for Bronx residents, especially those reliant on public transportation (subway, bus or livery cab).

I concur with Bronx Community Board #10 and the ardent sentiments of the residents of Co-op City, as I recommend disapproving this application. I urge the City Council member to do the same.