



Plans under way for new animal shelter

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The Animal Shelter of the Wood River Valley plans to build a new, state-of-the-art facility to host twice as many animals and new opportunities.

The facility would be across Croy Canyon Road and a bit east from its current location west of Hailey. Plans include more space for each animal, extra indoor and outdoor space for animals to play and train, a cat cafe and more space for shelter administrators who are currently renting space near Friedman Memorial Airport.



16-11-30 Animal Shelter@.jpg

Brooke Bonner, the shelter's associate director and capital campaign director, said the old facility is, in many ways, held together with "literal zip ties and duct tape."

"It's not like this is a luxury," she said of a new shelter. "It's a necessity."

The current shelter is 34 years old, and Bonner said plans to replace it started 15 years ago, largely because of actions in 1999 to make it the first no-kill shelter in the state. She said that while that was a great thing, the shelter was not built for long-term residents that require more care.

"It's more like building a hospital than building a home," she said, noting that precautions were taken against disease and discomfort.

Bonner said animals in shelters become stressed from the smells, passing cars, seeing other animals and loud noises.

Behavior and Training Coordinator Hillary Hayward said some animals can deteriorate under these stressors, changing attitudes to become less adoptable and more aggressive. Hayward said the new building will be designed to mitigate these stressors, creating a space that would limit the amount that cats and dogs see, smell or hear each other. She said that will not only be good for long-term residents, but will also enable some dogs to be adopted sooner.

"The sound is just out of control when the dogs start barking," Hayward said about the current facility.

With more comfortable kennels and training areas for small and large dogs, she said, the dogs will be able to show "their true selves a little more" and settle in sooner to be adopted.

Bonner said planning for the new facility started in earnest two and a half years ago after an anonymous donor made a gift of 20 acres.

Bonner said the location is on flat ground that is more easily defensible against natural disasters like the 2013 Beaver Creek Fire, which almost destroyed the current facility, and the following mudslide, which did

destroy some kennels.

She said the planned facility's size, too, plays a major role at the new location. She said the shelter will be able to house twice as many cats and dogs, about 68 each. She said that will mean they may be able to save more dogs from shelters that euthanize animals and provide a large diversity of animals for people to adopt from. The shelter already cares for about 1,600 animals a year that pass through the facility.

Bonner said she hopes a new, larger facility will also attract more people from within and outside the community through more educational programs, more animals and possibly through educational seminars for other shelters. Already, she said, a third of the shelter animals are adopted from people outside the area.

Bonner listed at least 20 other potential benefits of a new facility, including everything from wheelchair-accessible walkways to separate ingoing and outgoing pet areas.

However, she said the shelter will still need more donations before it can break ground. While it has raised more than \$10 million so far, Bonner said, the shelter needs at least \$12 million to begin construction next spring and \$16 million to complete the facility.

Bonner said the shelter will begin a public fundraising campaign soon, but for those eager to help out, there is already an opportunity at www.wagthefuture.org. The site also includes more details about the facility plans and improvements.

Bonner said the shelter will use the crematorium at the old facility and perhaps use the building for storage. She said the new shelter will include a free spay/neuter clinic for Blaine County residents like the one at the current location to keep the stray animal population low.

The animal shelter's plans will be presented in full to the Blaine County Planning and Zoning Commission Thursday, Dec. 8. The shelter will need a conditional-use permit to move forward.

Bonner said the shelter hopes to open at the new location by late 2018.

11-30-2016 Eye on Sun Valley

Animal Shelter Unveils Plans for Model Facility



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BY KAREN BOSSICK

The inner courtyard is called "Central Bark." And the Cat House has a Cat Café where cat lovers will be able to curl up with a cat and coffee while they read a book.

The Animal Shelter of the Wood River Valley will take plans for its new \$16 million campus before Blaine County Planning and Zoning at 7 p.m. Dec. 8, at the Blaine County Courthouse in Hailey.

If approved, they hope to break ground on the 27,000-square foot facility in late spring or early summer. They hope to have the grand opening by late 2018.

There will be an open house from 4 to 7 p.m. today—Nov. 30—to acquaint neighbors and the curious with plans.

The campus—envisioned as a model destination shelter--would sit on 20 acres across from the existing shelter on Croy Canyon Road. It would replace a 34 year-old facility that is worn out, overcrowded, poorly ventilated and vulnerable to fire and mudslides.

The facility sports a barn-like look.

It was designed by the Denver-based Animal Arts, and Damian Farrell Design Group of Ann Arbor, Mich.

Animal Arts has worked on more than 900 animal shelter and veterinary hospitals, using modern kennel design and materials to decrease stress and prevent the spread of disease.

Damian Farrell Design Group has worked on several projects in the Wood River Valley, including the home of Dan Drackett, the campaign donor recognition chair. So, the firm is familiar with the valley's building ordinances.

The new facility will have special flooring that can withstand pet pee. The outside of the facility looks like wood but is actually composed of concrete composite for the same reason.

"Designing this facility is more like designing a hospital than a home," said Brooke Bonner, associate director of the shelter. "Who knew, for instance, that drains are so important! Other shelters have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to correct drains that ended up spreading disease and killed animals because they weren't designed right. Because these are donor dollars, we're going to do it right the first time."

Here's a look at the proposed facility:



"This shelter will be a model that we hope promotes awareness of our how we treat animals," said Bonner.

"The shelter also brings people to the valley, with people spending money on hotels, restaurants, recreation and souvenirs while here," Bonner said. Harry Griffith, the director of Sun Valley Economic Development, is currently preparing an economic analysis of the shelter's impact. "What is known is that a third of those who adopted 600 animals from the shelter this past year were not residents."

"A lot of people travel here just to adopt—we had people from as far away as New York and Canada, sometimes because they saw a dog or cat on Facebook or online," said Bonner. "Look at Best Friends in Kanab, Utah. There's nothing there, but people go there from everywhere to volunteer and adopt pets because it's a model shelter."

There's always a dramatic increase in the number of adoptions when a shelter moves into a new facility, added Bonner: "This will raise our visibility nationwide."

The shelter has already raised \$10.2 million of the \$16 million it needs from private donors. It has received donations from nearly every state—some of the donations from those who have adopted animals from the shelter.

It needs to raise \$12 million by March 31, 2017, to ensure the groundbreaking. The shelter will launch the public campaign at the same time it breaks ground.

About \$1.5 million of the \$16 million has been earmarked for sustainability endowment.

"A bigger facility is going to require a bigger operation budget," Bonner said.

There are a number of naming opportunities available. A half-million dollars will let you put your name on the Memorial Garden; \$250,000, the play yard observation deck; \$25,000, a dog kennel, and \$10,000, a cat condo. Five million dollars and you can name the entire campus in honor of your mother—or your favorite dog.

"The one thing I never want to hear anyone say is they never want to go to a shelter because it's too sad," Bonner said. "This will break the stereotype. It'll be a happy, healthy hub—a model—that people will want to come to interact with animals and other people."

WANT MORE INFORMATION: Visit www.wagthefuture.org

THE CAMPAIGN LEADERS

The Campaign Task Force is made up of Co-chairs Jan Main and Jill Vogel, Dan Drackett, Rosemary Aquilante, Mary Ann Peters, Priscilla Pittiglio and Carol Thielen. Rita and George Golleher, of Bigwood Bread, are honorary chairs.