

Item Title: Approval of Schematic Design for the New Animal Center Project

Specific Action Requested:

That the Board of Commissioners approves Schematic Design for the New Animal Center Project.

Item Summary:

Purpose: The Board of Commissioners reviews and approves Schematic Design for all new construction projects. This is an important milestone in the development of a building, park, major renovation, or significant capital project.

Background: The planned new Animal Shelter will be a 54,600 square foot facility to replace the existing shelter and meet the sheltering needs for the next 30 years. It will be located on the southern tract of the Randleigh Farm in eastern Wake County that was jointly purchased by the County and City of Raleigh in 2005 from NCSU who previously used the property as a dairy farm.

The Animal Center is the only open admission shelter in Wake County. It accepts all seized, stray, quarantined and surrendered pets in Wake County and partners with five Animal Control jurisdictions in Wake County to hold bite quarantines, court case holds, strays and protective custody animals that Animal Control Officers bring to the facility. Together, with community partners and volunteers, they treat and re-home thousands of homeless animals every year.

The Board approved proceeding with the Construction Manager at Risk construction method for this project in July 2025. The schematic design for the new animal center was presented to the Board at the January 12, 2026 work session.

Strategic Plan: This action supports Foundations of Service Goal 3: By 2029, 10% more residents will agree that Wake County provides high-quality, fair, and equitable services.

Fiscal Impact: A portion of this project's funding was included in the FY2025 and FY2026 approved budget under the Capital Improvement Program (CIP). The balance of the project funding, totaling \$17 million, is identified in the CIP and to be included in the FY2027 budget.

Additional Information:

The animal center takes in strays, abandoned and surrendered pets in Wake County and partners with five Animal Control jurisdictions in Wake County to hold seized, quarantined,

court case holds, strays and protective custody animals that Animal Control Officers bring to the facility.

Wake County has operated its Animal Center at the current Beacon Lake Drive facility in northeast Raleigh since 1998. It has been expanded and received multiple updates over the years to address consolidated sheltering, general population growth, and evolving sheltering strategies. The current property size limits further expansion, which has led to the proposed new facility.

A master plan for the future animal center was developed in 2016 for capital planning and updated again in 2024. Over the past several months the design team confirmed the facility program and prepared the schematic design for the new facility.

The new animal center will include expanded and improved animal housing and adds new service areas to help mitigate shelter population through diversion programs. The new facility includes 54,600 sf of conditioned space and another 8,000 sf of covered unconditioned space. This will increase capacity for dogs and cats by over 50%. A portion of the dog kennels have outdoor runs which help reduce animal stress, especially dogs held for extended periods. Site improvements include fenced yards for dog exercise and social activity, and a safe walk path for volunteers and staff to walk the dogs around the site.

The facility's public facing services include animal adoption, a public veterinary clinic, animal foster program offices, and animal surrender/redemption. Each having its own entry point to limit stress and spread of disease to the animals. The secure portions of the facility include animal intake from Animal Control, a covered vehicular sallyport, a 2,000 sf storage warehouse, mechanical yards, and a standby generator.

The design includes two alternates. One is to add 31 dog kennels to reach the goal to provide a total of 265 dog kennels overall. The current cost estimate indicates the allotted CIP funds will run short which led to this alternate. The second alternate is for a dog training pavilion and community room that will offer support to the public for pet owner education and increase pet retention. While staff sees this alternate as critical to reducing animal housing needs over time, the current project funding does not cover this feature.

The project is currently on track to bid late winter of 2027 and is estimated to begin construction Spring 2027. The estimated completion of the project is early 2029.

Attachments:

1. Presentation