

# PROPOSAL

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June 26, 2020

The Honorable Eric Garcetti  
Mayor, City of Los Angeles  
200 N. Spring Street, Room 303  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Attention: Barbara Romero, Deputy Mayor

### **ADDITION TO ANIMAL SERVICES RECONSTITUTION PLAN: RECOMMENDATION TO APPROPRIATE THE WEST VALLEY ANIMAL SERVICES CENTER AS A COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTER PROVIDING SERVICES AND ASSISTANCE FOR PETS AND PEOPLE FOR PET RETENTION**

We are pleased to present this addition to the Department of Animal Services (Department) Reconstitution Plan which will support your important leadership to end institutional racism and injustice while doing our part to make a sound financial recommendation during this difficult economic time.

### **PROPOSED PROGRAMMING AT WEST VALLEY ANIMAL SERVICES CENTER**

To support and assist with the City's large goal of ending institutional racism and injustice, the same work must be done in animal welfare to combat discrimination and inequality in animal services and to build programs and services that are accessible and welcoming to all.

We want to create a Community Resource Center in partnership with some of our existing New Hope Rescue Partners and others in the City to provide services to support pet ownership so that having the love of a companion animal in your life does not become a matter of privilege.

We envision providing space for two or three dog rescue partners, one or two cat rescue partners and one rabbit rescue partner to house and maintain adoptable pets obtained from our five Animal Services Centers (Centers). A Center that welcomes community volunteers. We have a spay/neuter clinic at West Valley (WV) and would encourage them to offer low-cost wellness exams, vaccinations and microchipping. In addition, we want to create office space for other services such as a qualified dog trainer to assist community members with training and behavior problems to create a safer City, office space for homeless advocates for people and pets and those facing eviction because they have a pet,

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space for our intervention partners who can counsel and assist families who need assistance keeping their pet and more.

The partners would all be required to carry insurance to meet City standards, sign an MOU, provide their own staffing, maintain at least 80% animal capacity for the space they are allotted, supplies and medical care for the animals they have pulled from our five City operated Centers. In other words, they would provide the services to the community at their own expense in exchange for occupying space in the Community Resource Center. We believe this proposal is very feasible because it will offer much-needed resources to our communities while allowing rescues to expand their capacity, as most must depend solely on foster care. The Department would provide one senior-level manager from within our current staff to manage and maintain oversight of the operations with an office on premise.

As we reimagine animal sheltering in these economically challenged and uncertain times, we must create community resource centers to prevent animal sheltering from slipping back into the high kill shelters of the past that we have invested so much to change.

In compliance with all City regulations, we will administer a fair and unbiased application process for all potential partners including New Hope Rescue Partners (501c3 animal welfare groups) that have a formal partnership with the Department and who pull animals from our Centers and rehome them to obtain animal space. As part of the rating factor for each applicant, we will include a provision for extra points if the applicant agrees to employ individuals from underrepresented communities.

## **BACKGROUND**

In 2010-11 the City of Los Angeles had not emerged from the economic effects of the recession. The Department had seven (7) Centers and a budget that would barely allow the operation of six (6) Centers. The Department formed a unique public-private partnership with Best Friends Animal Society to operate the Mission Hills Center (which they are still operating) to help the Department reach the City's no-kill goal. Not only did the partnership save the City \$3.2 million dollars annually (before inflation for each of the past 8 years), the live-save rate for dogs and cats in the City's Centers was only 57% and at the end of the calendar year 2019, the live-save rate was 87.86% (dogs at 93.6% and cats/kittens at 83%).

In April 2018, Best Friends entered into an agreement to lease the newly remodeled Jefferson Park Shelter where they have MOUs with at least three local nonprofit animal rescue/welfare organizations, making it possible for those rescues to pull more dogs and cats from the Department, house them and adopt them to families as well as housing a spay/neuter clinic to add services for the community.

## **FISCAL IMPACT: MULTI-YEAR SAVINGS**

The cost to operate the WV Center is \$8.5 million annually and requires a staff of 45 individuals. Cost savings will be realized through attrition associated with retirements, transfers, and resignations and the Department's inability to backfill vacancies caused by these occurrences.

As a Community Resource Center, the one senior-level manager from within our current staff managing and maintaining oversight of the operations would have an office on premise and there would be no increase in salary costs for the Department.

Due to the furloughs, even delayed for a few months, and possible incentivized retirements, we do not have the staffing to safely or adequately staff all six (6) Centers. Savings generated by transitioning WV to a Community Resource Center will not occur immediately but over time through attrition.

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## **NEXT STEPS IF APPROVED TO MOVE FORWARD**

Receive approval to establish WV as a Community Resource Center through the CAO's Debt Management Office.

Second, we would meet with the Council members who serve the area surrounding WV Animal Services Center, to discuss this proposal and ask for their support.

Third, we would present the proposal to the Board of Animal Services Commissioners and request approval.

Fourth, we would present the proposal to the PAW Committee and, if passed it would go to City Council for consideration.

During this time we would be working with our Assistant City Attorney to prepare MOUs and other legal documents as required.

We could then be able to post the opportunities and begin an interview and selection process.

From the time we are given the approval to move forward until WV could be open and operational as a Community Resource Center, there would be an estimated three to six month startup period.

Respectfully submitted,

*Brenda F. Barnette*

Brenda F. Barnette  
General Manager