



Going to the dogs! Veterinary clinics - by April Intrabartola

January 17, 2023 - Long Island



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In the last few years, a substantial portion of our firm's projects have centered around the construction of healthcare facilities. The surge in this type of activity initially was due to the proliferation of satellite or neighborhood units being opened by hospitals, such as Mount Sinai, Weill Cornell, Northwell, and other healthcare groups, including a host of then-emerging practices in urgent care.

During COVID, the construction of healthcare facilities was deemed essential, and the work continued without embargo delays. By early 2021, many of the healthcare facilities were expanding in size and operations, from basic doctors' offices to full-service centers. At that time, we already had been working on several multi-level adaptive re-use projects in the category.

Then the shift! Having been recognized over the years for our work in the construction of a diverse range of healthcare for humans' facilities throughout the greater New York Metro, including senior care centers, Eastman Cooke became a go-to for a different kind of medical practice, veterinary care!

Formerly, the construction of an endovascular center or an ambulatory care facility would never have been conflated with building an animal clinic. But the fact is, the new veterinary centers – and we are currently working on six this year – have more in common with premium healthcare practices for people than many of the two-legged walk-in clinics!

So far, the work has entailed interior fit-outs of grade-level retail units, ranging between 2,000 s/f to 3,000 s/f. The different practices we've worked on have branded decors that include custom millwork and cabinetry, new doors, drywall partitions, demising walls, new ceilings and flooring, new mechanicals, upgraded plumbing, etc. As with most buildouts, we are also responsible for the installation of up-to-code electrical, sprinkler, and fire alarms.

But here's where the veterinary clinics begin to mirror human healthcare centers: Many of the projects additionally require special lighting for surgical rooms, as well as wiring for wet tables and x-ray rooms.

One of the groups we have been working with primarily focuses on urgent care, comparable to a city MD, in which walk-ins are encouraged. The waiting rooms are spacious and welcoming and there are on-site specialists for multiple animal ailments. This practice is one of the first in this burgeoning category. Although it's been in business for barely three years, it already has more than three dozen units spanning Boston to Philadelphia, with multiple units throughout New York City, Long Island, and Westchester!

Within this emergent category is another brand we have more recently begun working with, which is launching with four units in Manhattan by first quarter 2023. This group's focus is, ostensibly, a one-stop-shop for pets and includes such practices as primary care, dental, oncology, surgical, pharmacy, and 24-hour urgent care services at each unit. In addition, it is introducing its own pet

healthcare insurance program to help cover costs that often mimic human healthcare costs.

Whereas most of the clinics in the category are comfortable and inviting, this particular disruptor is notable for highlighting high design for its canine and feline patients! Unique to the veterinary space, finishes encompass calming color palettes of powder blue and turquoise, with porcelain flooring and powder blue tile counters and backsplashes in reception areas and examination rooms.

They've even crafted waiting areas with coffee bars for pet parents, custom-designed, pet-friendly furnishings with stain-resistant upholstery. Exam rooms are featuring fluted accent walls, light blue herringbone porcelain floors, and blue cabinetry. The custom color palettes in the waiting room and hallways are highlighted in powder blue with limewash walls. Operating rooms will have cutting-edge surgical equipment with high-intensity lighting.

The space has the ambiance of a movie or television set but with skilled practitioners!

In New York City, alone, it is estimated there are 1.1 million pets, primarily comprising dogs and cats, and their humans are spending approximately \$1.5 billion on pet-related products annually, including healthcare. The data also indicates pet ownership accelerated during the pandemic, for obvious reasons. Pets can be great company, including my own pup!

The fact that Eastman Cooke & Associates already had an impressive record of experience in constructing healthcare facilities for many years made this new and rapidly expanding category of veterinary clinics an easy segue. It is also a rewarding one -- on both personal and professional levels. So, here's to going to the dogs...because we love them!

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