

CASE STUDY: 21ST CENTURY DOG APARTMENTS



Organisation: San Francisco SPCA
Location: USA, California, San Francisco
Kennels Type: Indoor
Kennels Function: Boarding
Number of Kennels: 18 dog and 67 feline apartments
Apartment Size: Average 12ft x 12ft, and 9ft high
Year Built: 1998 (ARQ Architects)

www.sfspca.org

Maddie's Adoption Center photographs by Jane Lidz and Hiroshi Shimizu

THIS GROUNDBREAKING, STATE-OF-THE-ART ADOPTION CENTER IS ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFULLY DESIGNED ENVIRONMENTS OF ITS KIND IN THE WORLD. DOGS ENJOY SPACIOUS APARTMENTS WHERE THEY ARE SHOWN TO THEIR BEST ADVANTAGE

MADDIE'S ADOPTION CENTER ~ SAN FRANCISCO SPCA

The San Francisco Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was founded in 1868. It was the fourth SPCA established in the United States and the first to be located west of the Rockies, and has long been a national leader in the humane and compassionate treatment of animals. Maddie's Adoption Center is named in memory of the canine companion of Cheryl and Dave Duffield, President and CEO of PeopleSoft. The Duffield Family Foundation provided the lead gift of \$1 million for the project as a tribute to their cherished miniature schnauzer, Maddie.

Maddie's Adoption Center has proved to be an unqualified success. Suddenly, some of the hardest-to-place animals are finding new homes in record time, thanks to the center's unique new training programmes, architectural design and public appeal. The groundbreaking \$7 million facility is 27,000 square feet and can accommodate approximately 200 animals awaiting adoption.

Maddie's was considered to be revolutionary when it opened in 1998, and it still is, even today. The Adoption Center is a brand new concept in animal sheltering, where the dogs live in light, airy apartments with cosy beds, furniture, rugs and toys. Constructed to incorporate an already existing building, the design and philosophy of Maddie's is today emulated across America and around the world. It is even included in several San Francisco guide books as a 'must see' tourist destination!

A SHELTER FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

The difference between Maddie's and a typical shelter is noticeable from the moment a visitor enters the lobby. It is a spacious, inviting area filled with natural light from the floor-to-ceiling picture windows, and it offers comfortable furniture featuring animal motif cushions, plants, and a large, flat-screen television showing SF/SPCA-produced animal advice DVDs. On the verandah, market umbrellas shade tables and chairs for people who want to relax outside, or talk over their decision about adoption.



What would you do differently?

- Use less glass 'everywhere' because the upkeep is constant and costly
- The sealed concrete floors have not worn well, and have been replaced in several areas with ceramic tiles
- Locks would have been installed on the doors of the animal rooms. Visitors are not allowed inside the rooms without permission and accompanied by a staff member. However, it is difficult to monitor all the rooms all the time. Some closed circuit cameras have now been installed
- A public address system and internet cable would have been installed during construction
- The shelter could use more people/office space
- Install half frosted/half clear glass panels in the doors between dog rooms, useful to prevent the dogs seeing their neighbours and becoming over-stimulated (see addition of temporary opaque adhesive panels right)

What are you most pleased with?

Maddie's Adoption Center has exceeded the Society's most hopeful expectations. From increased adoptions, including many hard-to-place dogs and cats, to reductions in the animals' length of stay, Maddie's has been an unqualified success!



UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

PREPARING FOR NEW LIVES

All the animals at Maddie's Adoption Center initially go through an intake process that includes medical evaluation by veterinarians from the Society's Community Veterinary Hospital, and behavior assessment by skilled staff trainers and behaviorists. Every animal adopted from the Center is altered, prior to adoption, at The SF/SPCA Spay/Neuter Clinic.

Maddie's Adoption Center illustrates how homeless animals can be sheltered and prepared for new lives. It's an environment where dogs and cats are treated with respect, and where their dignity is reflected in their surroundings and the care they receive. Gone are the cellblock-like dog kennels and steel cat cages of a typical shelter. In their place are comfortable dog apartments and cat condominiums. Every room is like a room at the Ritz.

Dogs on Lassie Lane live in typical San Francisco Victorian and Spanish style apartments. Natural light streams from windows and skylights, and toys and TVs offer entertainment and stimulation. All of the animals' rooms have specially designed acoustic insulation and air circulation systems to keep them quiet and fresh-smelling at all times.

The result is an environment that prepares the animals for the transition from shelter to home. It is also an atmosphere that is conducive to adoption.

Every one of the lovable dogs and cats awaiting adoption at The San Francisco SPCA receives safe refuge, extensive medical care and abundant amounts of love. They are all assessed by expert trainers, and, if warranted, given extra socialisation and behaviour training to prepare them for their new homes.

At this state-of-the-art adoption center, dogs enjoy play sessions with other dogs, and head out on daily walks with volunteer dog walkers. Cats reside in deluxe kitty 'lofts' and are visited 'in house' by cat-socialising volunteers who brush, pet and play with them.

LIFE ON LASSIE LANE

The dog apartments are along 'roads' with facades evocative of San Francisco neighbourhoods. This design reinforces the original goal of providing a more 'home-like' setting for each dog. Above Lassie Lane is an 'acoustic cloud' – a special sound buffer that reduces the noise of barking dogs. Additionally, the walls of all the dog corridors are not flush. This is a noise-reduction feature, as are the floor to ceiling, retractable drapes in each hallway.

“The atmosphere at Maddie's is conducive to adoption, and prepares dogs for the transition from shelter to home”

To buffer sound inside the rooms, specially formulated plaster was used on the walls and an anti-microbial fibre finish put onto the concrete floors to eliminate bacteria. Center drains in all the dog rooms make hosing and cleaning easier. In addition, a state-of-the-art air filtration system pulls air out from floor level to reduce any unpleasant doggie smells.

MORE FEATURES

Another interesting setting at Maddie's Adoption Center is the upstairs Solarium. An airy, spacious room, it has picture windows and doors that open on to a small outdoor terrace. The Solarium serves as a combination board room, staff meeting place and volunteer training room. Next to the Solarium is a Rotunda, which was designed to allow in lots of natural light.

Underneath the adoption center is a very large multi-purpose room that can be divided into three sections, with floor-to-ceiling sliding doors. This room is used for dog training sessions and play groups. The floor is covered with rubberised material for easy washing and for quietness. An overhead sound buffer also reduces dog noise.

While they are residing at Maddie's Adoption Center, all the shelter dogs receive one-on-one, reward-based obedience training with SF/SPCA trainers, often in the multi-purpose room. Some lucky shelter dogs are chosen to be project dogs for The SF/SPCA's renowned Academy for Dog Trainers. Their adoption is put on hold, and for six weeks they spend a large portion of each day being trained by their student mentors. This is a win-win situation for the dogs and their eventual adopters.



FEELS LIKE HOME

DOG APARTMENTS

The animal apartments at Maddie's Adoption Center are spacious but cosy, with picture windows, artwork on the walls, and soft furniture to sink into. Natural light streams through skylights, the sun is warming and there's always something diverting to watch – birds, people, or even a video. All the apartments have specially designed acoustic insulation and air circulation systems to keep them quiet and odor-free at all times.

Great care has been taken to make the environment in the dogs' living quarters comfortable and relaxed. The roomy interior of each of the 18 shared apartments (holding from 1-5 dogs) is designed to look and feel like a real home, complete with non-chewable furniture, low hammock-style dog beds, dog crates, artwork and an occasional television set. Visitors are able to observe each dog, up-close and personal – something that is not easy in a conventional shelter. Each apartment also has a 'sniff hole' where interested adopters can formally introduce themselves with the smell of a hand before they actually meet a dog.

The canine apartments open onto multi-function interior courtyards where the dogs can socialise together in groups. In addition, these courtyard spaces between dog apartments provide a temporary home for the dogs while their apartment is being cleaned, or they are used to separate them so that a potential adopter can meet a particular dog, alone.

Because these areas are used for 'get-acquainted' and play sessions, they also provide an opportunity for an adopter to observe how a particular dog interacts with other dogs, not easy in a conventional shelter. The courtyard skylights supply natural light, and exhaust fans provide ventilation.

Each animal's daily activities are educational, fun and rewarding, making his or her placement in an adoptive home successful and long-lasting. It's a wonderful experience for the dogs. They're happier and they're seen to their best advantage. SF/SPCA adoption counsellors and staff match potential owner/guardians with cats and dogs suitable to their lifestyles. The Society's Adoption Outreach Program also takes shelter pets to shopping centers, business districts and community events so the animals can be seen by more potential adopters.

THE MADDIE'S MODEL

In the 12 months after Maddie's Adoption Center opened in 1998, there was a 20 percent increase in adoptions and a 50 percent decrease in the length of stay of an animal at the shelter. The adoption rate has since evened out; in 2006-2007 The SF/SPCA found homes for 3,217 dogs and cats. In 2007 its live release rate for companion animals was 97 percent. In one of the most beautifully designed environments of its kind in the world, Maddie's Adoption Center brings people and animals together to find each other.

"An unqualified success, suddenly some of our hardest-to-place animals are finding homes in record time"

VISITORS' REACTIONS

The Director of Adoptions at Maddie's remembers visitors and adopters making comments such as *"This place is better than my home"* and *"I'd love to live here!"*

POSITIVE FEATURES FOR ADOPTERS

Because the animals are viewed in a home-like environment it's easier for adopters to picture them in a home. Visitors can also see the animals better because they, and the animals, are more comfortable. Many visitors have commented that they don't like going to typical shelters, but they enjoyed the experience of Maddie's. A great number of visitors thank the staff for taking such good care of the animals. There are also many conducted tours of the facility, including for young school children participating in The SF/SPCA Humane Education Program.

POSITIVE FEATURES FOR STAFF & VOLUNTEERS

Many of the staff and volunteers, who are highly qualified and have a great deal to offer, will not work in traditional shelters because it is too difficult for them to function in such an environment. Staff enjoys working at Maddie's Adoption Center, and because they are more comfortable, the animals are happier, too. At Maddie's opening ceremony, employees expressed their personal appreciation to Mr Dave Duffield, who provided the lead gift to build the facility, for their very special workplace that his gift had helped make possible.





