

Land swap deal clears way for OKC project

Steve Lackmeyer

The Oklahoman USA TODAY NETWORK

The OK Humane Society is set to build a new campus along the Oklahoma River, freeing up a previously chosen site adjoining Scissortail Park that will likely be offered up for development.

The Humane Society did a deal with the Oklahoma City Urban Renewal Authority in 2019 that named the nonprofit developer of the publicly-owned property at SW 10 and Harvey Avenue. The Humane Society's plans to build a new campus on the property stalled, and the organization recently announced it is going to instead relocate to a 14.5-acre spread at 4001 SW 15th St. along the Oklahoma River.

When that change took place, a funding agreement resulted in the lone lot owned by the Humane Society adjacent to the park ending up in the control of the Arnall Family Foundation. The Urban Renewal Authority is set to do a trade with the foundation that would give it in exchange an Urban Renewal- owned property on NE 12th St. between Lottie Avenue and Kate Avenue.

The swap, if approved, will give the Urban Renewal Authority complete control over a two-block-wide stretch of land fronting the park both to the north and the east. The property ends a few addresses east of the Riverside Latino Center and also is adjacent to

new homes being built to the west of Scissortail Park.

Kenton Tsoodle, director of the Urban Renewal Authority, told The Oklahoman the proposed swap represents a "good compromise" with the Arnall Family Foundation, which had bought and then donated land for the city's MAPS 4--funded Diversion Hub and mental health center.

"Once we have that site consolidated, we anticipate being able to start marketing and putting out a request for proposals in the short term on how to develop it," Tsoodle said. "We've had different proposals over the years ranging from offices to housing and other uses."

A representative of the Arnall Family Foundation declined to comment on the proposed swap or what plans it might have for the property at NE 12th St.

Construction is set to start this fall on the new OK Humane Society campus, which will consolidate the nonprofit for the first time in its 20-year history. The group's adoption center, spay and neuter clinic, and animal care operations are at separate facilities across the metro area. As demand has grown, that model has created challenges and left programs with limited room to expand.

Currently a foster-based group without overnight sheltering for dogs, OK Humane will add dog housing at the new campus, increasing capacity while relying on its foster network. The new campus is expected to open in 2028.

"This is a defining moment for OK Humane and for animal welfare in our state," said Mark Eby, Humane Society CEO. "Our team has found ways to do extraordinary work despite operating ... with limited room to grow. This campus will give us the space and infrastructure to help more animals, support more pet owners and create a true hub for animal welfare in Oklahoma."