

# Cat Café Business Proposal

Proposed Location: The Brooklands District  
1629 E Auburn Rd, Rochester Hills, MI

## The Business Idea

To give cats a warm, comfortable home while we help them find their forever families. Guests step into a whimsical space offering a full café with beverages and packaged snacks, a book-inspired lounge area and a playroom to interact with cats in a cozy, home-like atmosphere.

## What We'll Offer

Guests will come to enjoy a craft beverage and small pre-baked bites in our lounge, browse a selection of books for sale and, most of all, relax in the company of playful, affectionate cats up for adoption. Our space allows customers to take a break from the everyday stressors of life and settle into a cozy, welcoming space where they can stay a while and enjoy a charming experience.

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## Industry Trends & Growth

**300** cat cafés in the U.S.

**56** new cafés in 2024

**40** percent growth

Cat cafés have seen consistent and steady growth across the U.S. since the country's first opened in 2014. By 2019, the number of cafés had increased by more than 40%. Growth continued in 2023, with more than 50 new openings, followed by another record-breaking year in 2024, when 56 new cat cafés and lounges launched nationwide.

**As of October 2025, nearly 300 cat cafés are operating across the United States**, with more than 35 new ones opening this year alone.

Source: <https://thatcatlife.com/cat-cafe-trends-updates/>

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## **Operations Summary**

### **Addressing Misconceptions & Concerns**

#### **What is the primary purpose of this cat café?**

To serve as a community space that encourages cat adoption through a relaxing and social atmosphere. Cats are given a comfortable home while we help them find their forever families and guests can enjoy light food, drinks and books while spending time with cats in the lounge.

#### **How does this differ from a pet store?**

Unlike pet stores, the cat café doesn't sell animals. Cats are provided through a local rescue partner, live temporarily in the lounge until adopted, and are fully cared for by the shelter and café staff. It's an experience-based business centered around community engagement and adoption. While we will have retail merchandise available at the café, it is separate from the animal adoptions.

#### **Will visits be by appointment only?**

The cat lounge will operate primarily on a reservation system to manage traffic and ensure the cats' well-being. However, limited walk-ins will be allowed when capacity permits.

#### **Is this a service-animal or therapy-animal concept?**

No, the café is a leisure destination. Visitors come to relax and enjoy an animal-friendly experience.

#### **How will adoptions operate?**

We will partner with a local animal shelter/rescue to facilitate adoptions. The café will provide the social and visible component, allowing guests to meet cats in a relaxed environment, while the official adoption process—including background checks and paperwork—will be completed through the rescue partner.

## **Health, Safety & Sanitation**

#### **Food safety and sanitation concerns**

- The café and cat lounge will be completely separated by a double-door system that prevents cats from accessing food and beverage areas.
- All food will be pre-made off-site and brought in—there will be no cooking or baking on-site.
- **This setup will comply with Oakland County Health Department regulations for food service.**

#### **Odor Concerns**

- The building will include air purifiers and a ventilation and air filtration system to maintain clean air circulation and prevent any transfer of allergens or odor.

- Litter boxes will be enclosed, located away from guest areas and cleaned multiple times per day.
- All furniture in the cat lounge will be cleaned regularly.
- A detailed cleaning schedule will be posted and logged daily by staff.

## Noise Concerns

Cat cafés are naturally quiet environments—cats spend most of the day resting, and a reservation system limits visitor numbers to maintain a calm space.

## Are the cats vaccinated, safe and supervised? What about cat scratch fever or liability?

- All cats will come from a licensed rescue partner.
- Cats will be social, healthy and suited to an interactive environment.
- Cats will be spayed or neutered, fully vaccinated/health-checked and temperament-tested before arrival.
- A mix of male and female cats will be maintained.
- Private rest areas and elevated perches will allow cats to withdraw from guests if desired.
- Staff will monitor visitor interactions, and guests will sign a waiver before entering the lounge, acknowledging the minimal risk involved in interacting with animals.
- Cats will not be declawed, but they will be temperament-tested and selected for friendly, social behavior.

## How many cats will live in the lounge at one time?



**Maximum of 12 cats within a 1,000 sq. ft. space**

## Is there an age restriction for guests?

- Guests 13 years or younger must be accompanied by an adult. Ages 14 and up are permitted to visit without an adult.
- Staff will always be monitoring the cat lounge to ensure the safety of both cats and guests.

## Are there OSHA or sanitation standards in place?

Yes, the café will follow OSHA workplace standards, Oakland County Health Department regulations for food and drink and similar best-practice models established by other Michigan cat cafés.

# Space Layout & Separation

The proposed floor plan includes two distinct and physically separated spaces:

## The Café Area

- Dedicated to coffee service and pre-packaged food items.
- Includes a selection of books and merchandise.

- Ample seating for walk-ins and café patrons.
- Fully compliant with all local and state food and health safety regulations.
- **No animals will ever enter this portion of the space.**

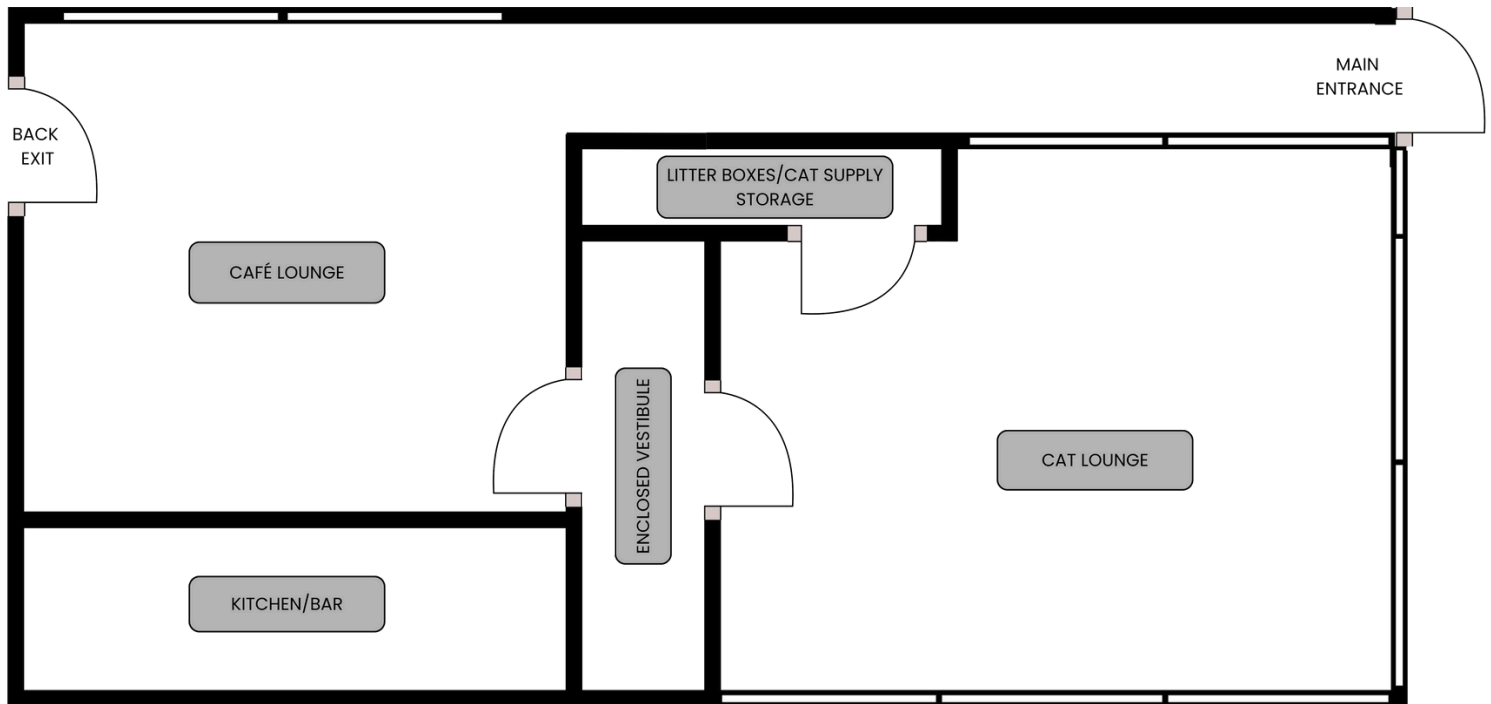
## The Cat Lounge

- A fully enclosed area with its own door and separate ventilation system.
- Accessible through a vestibule to prevent cats from escaping into the cafe area.
- Outfitted with cat-safe furniture, scratching posts and designated rest areas.



**This physical separation prevents crossover between animal and food service operations, protecting public health and ensuring compliance with all licensing requirements.**

## Example Floorplan



## Regulation & Oversight

### Staffing and Supervision

The business will employ Baristas and Cat Lounge Managers who will be responsible for café operations and ensuring animal care, sanitation and guest supervision.

- A lounge staff member will always be present when guests are in the cat area to monitor interactions and ensure proper behavior by both cats and patrons.
- All staff will receive training in basic animal behavior and body language, procedures for cat health or safety and sanitation protocols.

## Who regulates the cat café? Would the city need to take on oversight?

Oversight is managed through existing channels:

- The Oakland County Health Department regulates all food and beverage operations.
- The partnering animal rescue oversees animal care, vaccinations and adoption compliance under state and local animal control laws.
- As the business owner, I would ensure OSHA compliance, building safety and adherence to city building codes.



**No additional oversight would be required from the City of Rochester Hills beyond standard business licensing and occupancy review.**

## Zoning & Location Suitability

### Why the Brooklands?

The Brooklands has been thoughtfully developed to become a walkable, community-focused corridor, and I want to contribute to that vision. The current plan is to tear down the existing liquor store located at 1629 E Auburn Rd and rebuild a 2–3 unit mixed-use building with the cat café (and possibly other retail) on the ground floor and apartments above. The cat café would align with the city's ongoing investment in the Brooklands and support the growing, vibrant, local business ecosystem.

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## Similar Concepts in Metro Detroit

There are **13 cat cafés across Michigan**, with four being within a ~50-mile radius of Rochester Hills. The policies outlined in this document closely follow the rules and regulations placed at these established cat cafés. Below are a few similar businesses to consider.



### Malu Cat Café

Garden City

- Cat lounge with adoptable cats
- Full coffee and cocktail bar
- Private parties
- Public events



### Black Cat Beanery

Lake Orion

- Cat lounge with adoptable cats
- Keurig coffee and packaged snacks
- Private parties
- Public events



### Tiny Lions

Ann Arbor

- Cat lounge with adoptable cats
- Private parties
- Self-serve bar
- BYO food and non-alcoholic beverages
- Public events



### Happy Cat Café

Grand Rapids

- Cat lounge with adoptable cats
- Full coffee bar
- Public events



### Holland Cat Cove

Holland

- Cat lounge with adoptable cats
- Pre-packaged snacks and drinks
- Public events

(as noted in the 10/21 public hearing)

# **Potential Inclusions for an Ordinance Change**

## **I. Permitted Use:**

Allowed as a Special Land Use within the Brooklands District. This ordinance does not alter existing pet retail, kennel or animal boarding definitions.

## **II. Facility Requirements:**

Total facility must comply with all Oakland County Health Department regulations for food service operations.

The cat lounge and café area must be separated by a floor-to-ceiling, double-door airlock entryway to prevent animals from accessing food preparation or service areas.

The cat lounge must have:

- Minimum 40 square feet per cat.
- Ventilation and odor control systems meeting commercial standards.
- Designated, enclosed litter box areas cleaned a minimum of twice daily.

## **III. Animal Health & Welfare**

All cats must:

- Be sourced through a licensed rescue or shelter partner.
- Be spayed/neutered, vaccinated and veterinarian-certified as healthy prior to arrival.
- Be temperament-tested and socialized for interaction with the public.
- No breeding, sale or exchange of animals shall occur on site.
- Records of each animal's health and source must be maintained and available for inspection.
- Male/female cat ratios shall be managed to minimize territorial behavior.

## **IV. Sanitation & Food Safety**

All food and drink must be:

- Prepared in the café-only section of the business.
- Stored and served in compliance with local food service codes.
- Routine sanitation checks required by the Health Department shall include cat lounge air quality and waste management systems.

## **V. Operations**

Entry to the cat lounge shall be by reservation or controlled walk-in to manage capacity and ensure animal well-being.

Staff must be trained in:

- Animal handling and safety.
- Sanitation and visitor supervision protocols.
- Visitors must sign a liability waiver acknowledging the minor risk inherent in animal interaction.
- Hours of operation shall comply with local business hours.

## **VI. Oversight & Enforcement**

Oversight provided by:

- Oakland County Health Department – food safety compliance.
- Animal rescue/shelter partner – animal welfare standards.
- City Code Enforcement – building, zoning and sanitation compliance.

*Cat Café Business Proposal for Rochester Hills Planning Commission  
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