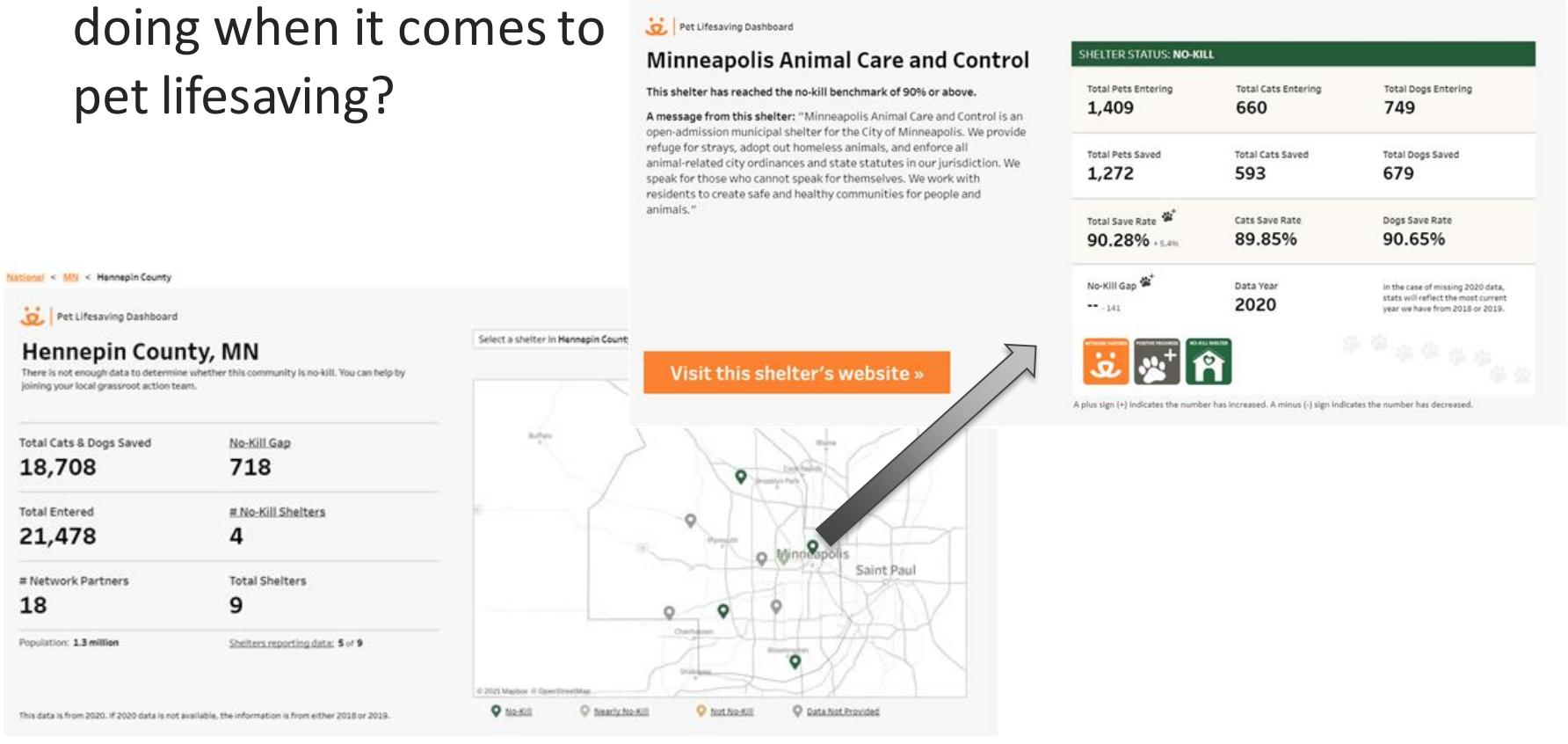
- Steve Houchin, Deputy City Attorney, Los Angeles
- Ana Schumacher, Assistant County Attorney, El Paso County
- Ledy VanKavage, Sr. Legislative Attorney, Best Friends Animal Society
- Deanna Shahnami (Moderator), Associate Counsel, International Municipal Lawyers Association

Transparency
www.bestfriends.org/2025

- How is your community doing when it comes to pet lifesaving?



Pet Inclusive Housing



Pets & Families

- 95% of Americans consider pets to be members of the family
- Consumers spend $95.5 billion on pet food, veterinary care and pet insurance



Pet-inclusive policies promote public health



According to the CDC, pets have positive impacts at nearly every stage of life:

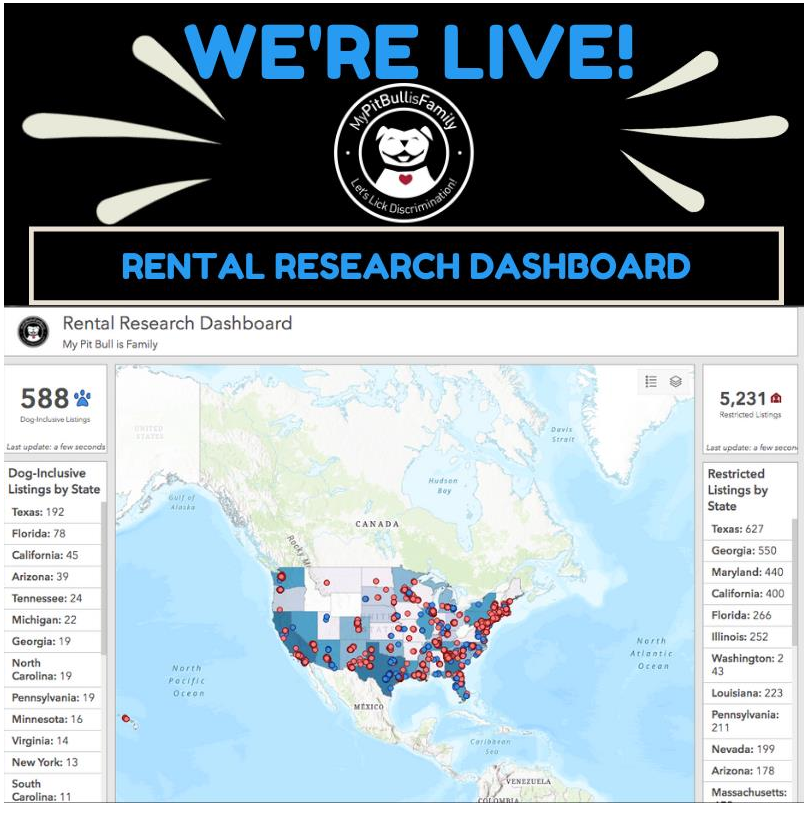
- Lower blood pressure
- Lower risk of heart disease
- Reduced stress levels
- Decreased anxiety and depression
- Strengthened immune systems
- Increased physical activity

The Problem

- **Nearly 90%* of landlords do not allow pets, or they impose arbitrary pet restrictions such as limiting weight, breed, size, type or number**



Is Pet Inclusive Housing Available in Your City?



https://www.mypitbullisfamily.org/housing/



Nationally, over 14% of dogs and cats surrendered to shelters are being relinquished due to housing issues*

City and source (2019 data)	% of pets surrendered
San Diego, CA (SDHS)	Nearly 30%
Chicago, IL (ACS and CRISP)	23%
Belleville, IL (BAHS)	38%

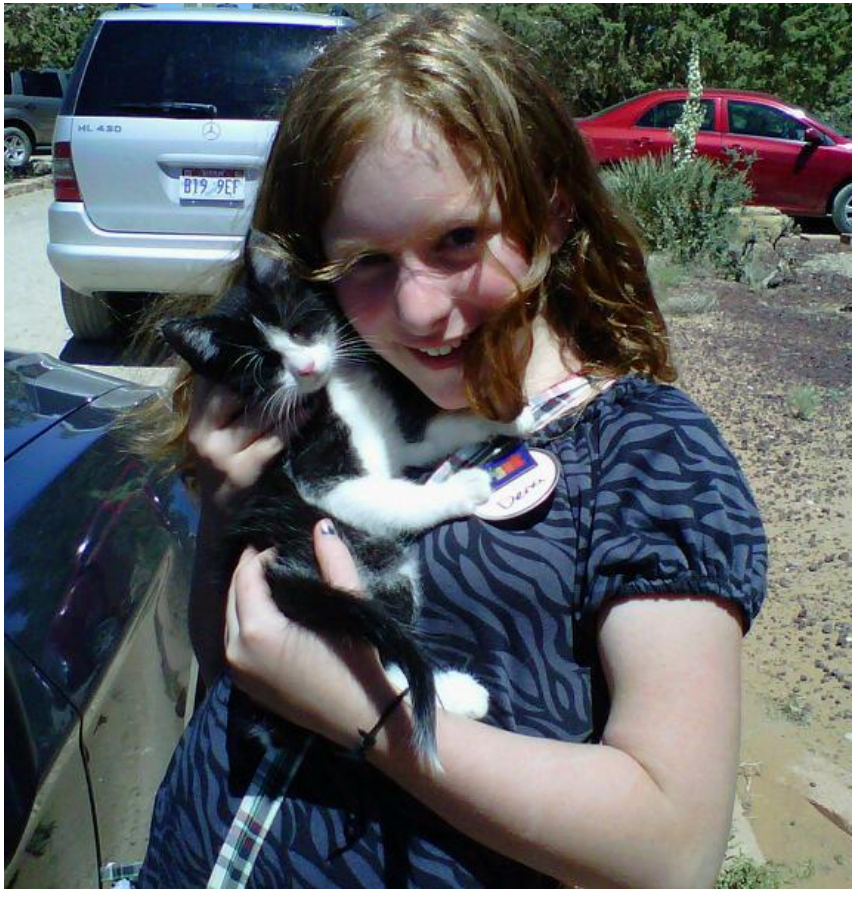
*SOURCE: *National study conducted by Shelterluv*

Housing Issues Break Up Families

- Housing is the # 1 reason why dogs are relinquished and the #2 reason why cats are relinquished to animal shelters

but

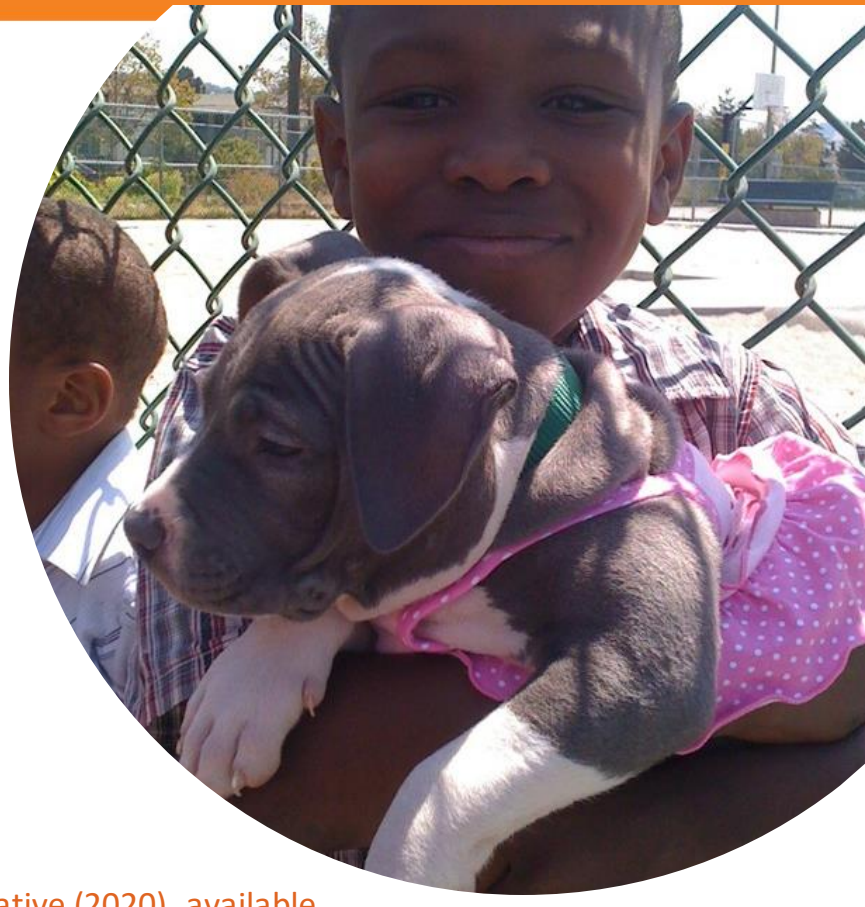
- 81% of Americans believe it is important to have no-kill shelters in their area



PET INCLUSIVE HOUSING BENEFITS LANDLORDS TOO

- 21% of residents in pet-inclusive housing stay longer than those that don't allow pets

- 83% of owner/operators say that pet-inclusive vacancies can be filled faster



SOURCE: Michelson Found Animals, Pet-Inclusive Housing Initiative (2020), available at https://www.foundanimals.org/pets-and-housing

- **There is little difference in damage between tenants with and without pets. In fact, the greatest differential between damage from tenants with pets and those without was under $40 ***



** Companion Animal Renters Study: The Market for Rental Housing for People and Pets.*

Pet Inclusive Housing

- LA City and LA County ordinances establish protections to allow tenants to have pets in new or rehabilitated multi-family housing developments financed, in whole or in part, by the City or County.



Los Angeles Municipal Code Section 51.20, et seq.

- The City of Los Angeles is experiencing a housing affordability crisis of unprecedented proportions, with estimates of the need for additional rental units ranging as high as 500,000 over the coming decade. While federal, state and local housing finance programs are in place to help address this need, "no-pet" policies require tenants to choose between residence in these units and relinquishing their pets.

- The growth in housing relocation over the past decade has exacerbated this problem. As the City promotes and assists in financing new, affordable housing, pet ownership should not pose a barrier to individuals and families who qualify for residence in publicly-financed rental housing. Federal and state laws already require allowing pets in certain publicly-financed housing developments, including California Health and Safety Code Section 50466 and 24 Code of Federal Regulations Part 960.

- Purpose is to ensure that tenants of a housing development financed by the City are allowed to maintain pets in their homes, consistent with and subject to applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations.

SEC. 51.22. PET-FRIENDLY PUBLICLY-FINANCED HOUSING.

A. An applicant for, or a tenant of, a rental unit in a housing development publicly financed by or through the City on or after the effective date of this article, shall not be rejected on the basis of pet ownership, nor denied the ability to own or otherwise possess and maintain at least one pet per rental unit, provided that the pet is maintained in accordance with Article 3, Chapter V, of this Code pertaining to animals and fowls, and all other applicable state and local laws and regulations, including those related to public health and humane animal welfare, and guidelines and regulations promulgated by the Department in furtherance of this article. This article shall also apply to a publicly financed housing development for which a contractual modification or amendment, or additional public financing, is provided by or through the City, on or after the effective date of this article.

B. Each pet maintained pursuant to this article shall be spayed or neutered, vaccinated, implanted with an electronic animal identification device (microchip) and, if required, licensed. The pet shall be maintained consistent with all state and local laws and regulations, and not constitute a nuisance to the housing development and/or to the other tenants.

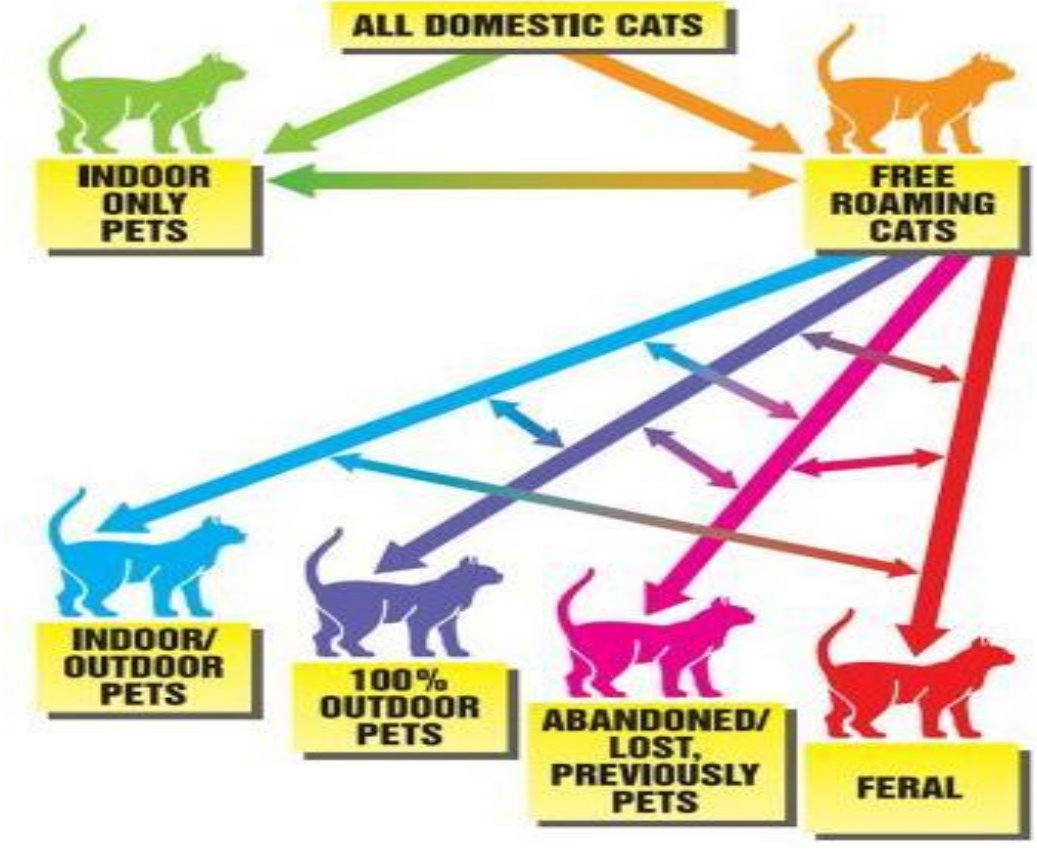
C. Any pet deposit charged to the tenant shall be reasonable and refundable. The pet deposit shall be used only to pay reasonable expenses directly related to the presence of the pet in the housing development, such as the cost of repairs and replacements to, and fumigation of, the tenant's rental unit. Pet deposits shall be administered consistent with state and local laws applicable to the retention of security deposits, interest on security deposits, and return of the deposit or portion thereof to the tenant, and any other applicable requirements.

D. The Department shall, in consultation with the Department of Animal Services, develop "pet policies" that provide guidance to ensure that the presence of pets in publicly-financed housing developments is done in a responsible, safe, and harmonious manner. The Department shall incorporate such "pet policies" in the Department's public financing regulations. The Department's public financing regulations shall require landlords to provide a copy of the "pet policies" to the tenants of such housing developments.

E. Nothing in this article shall be construed to limit or otherwise affect other statutes or laws that require reasonable accommodations to be made for an individual with a disability who maintains an animal to provide assistance, service or support.

F. Nothing in this article shall be construed to prohibit the removal of any common household pet from a housing development if the pet's conduct or condition is determined to constitute a violation of state or local law or a nuisance or a threat to the health or safety of other occupants of the housing development, or of other persons in the community where the housing development is located.

Creating cat ordinances and policy: Different Species Require Different Policies



The simple truth is that current methods of animal control are expensive and ineffective.

Taxpayers deserve a program that is animal-friendly and more cost-effective, and reduces the burden and bureaucracy placed on animal control.



Cats are 68% of Animals Killed in Shelters

- While dog intakes are higher than cat intakes, more than twice as many cats are dying in shelters.
- The remaining 32% killed are dogs.
- It's expensive to house, care for, and kill dogs and cats.



TNR

Trap-neuter-vaccinate-return is a common-sense, cost-effective solution for controlling populations by preventing additional births instead of trying to house, feed and kill more cats.



TNR

- The most significant concerns about free roaming cats are the spread of diseases **(58%)**, abandoned litters **(51%)**, overpopulation **(50%)**, and safety of the cats **(44%)**.
- These concerns can be remedied through **TNR (Trap Neuter Return) and community cat programs** and yet **53%** of adults have never heard of TNR.



Is Your Ordinance Dealing Effectively with Community Cats?



American Bar Association, 2017

The ABA Resolution urges all local governments to adopt uniform laws and policies that allow the implementation and administration of TNR programs.



National Animal Care and Control Association's stance on community cats

Extended Animal Care & Control Concerns – Community Cat Management

Guideline Statement

Animal care and control personnel should be empowered to manage all feral, community, stray, and unowned cats within the community. Management may include but is not limited to enactment and enforcement of cat-related laws, education, targeted Trap-Neuter-Return programs, low income and free spay/neuter programs and assisting local grassroots groups in TRN related activities.

Basis for Guideline

The basis of the policy is to protect the public and the community to minimize the potential for a rabies outbreak. A community cat, sometimes referred to as a feral cat, is defined as a cat that has been born in the wild or has lived outdoors for an extended period of and is likely unsocialized and unadoptable. A stray cat is one that is at large or escaped from an owner. An owned cat has been claimed by a person who provides the essentials including food, water, shelter, and veterinary care.

Guideline Recommendation

To protect community, stray, and owned cats, all local and state governments should pass laws requiring the vaccination of all cats in their community. The law should also require that all owned cats be identified with a microchip, tattoo or identification tag so as to distinguish them from community cats.

NACA recognizes that methods such as "trap and remove" have proven to be ineffective at reducing community cat populations and nuisance complaints and recommends, humane management programs, including Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR). Furthermore animal care and control personnel should be trained in effective conflict resolution techniques to help mitigate nuisance complaints by residents.

NACA advocates for effective public education related to cats, active, cost-effective spay and neutering initiatives for cats and responsible care for all cats.

The aforementioned Guideline has been affirmed as duly adopted by the NACA Board of Directors on November 21, 2018.

John W. Thompson, Executive Directo
National Animal Care & Control Association

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El Paso's Adoption of TNR Program

- In January 2016, El Paso's Shelter Live Release Rate was 53%.
- The City Manager created a Task Force to assess Shelter operations, recommend best practices, and develop an innovative 5-year plan to achieve a 90% live release date.
- Community Cats/TNR was the first of 11 Taskforce proposed recommendations to increase the live release rate.
- Proposed amendments to update Title 7.
- On February 23, 2016, City Council adopted Ordinance No. 018472 to implement and support a trap-neuter-return philosophy.

Ordinance 018472

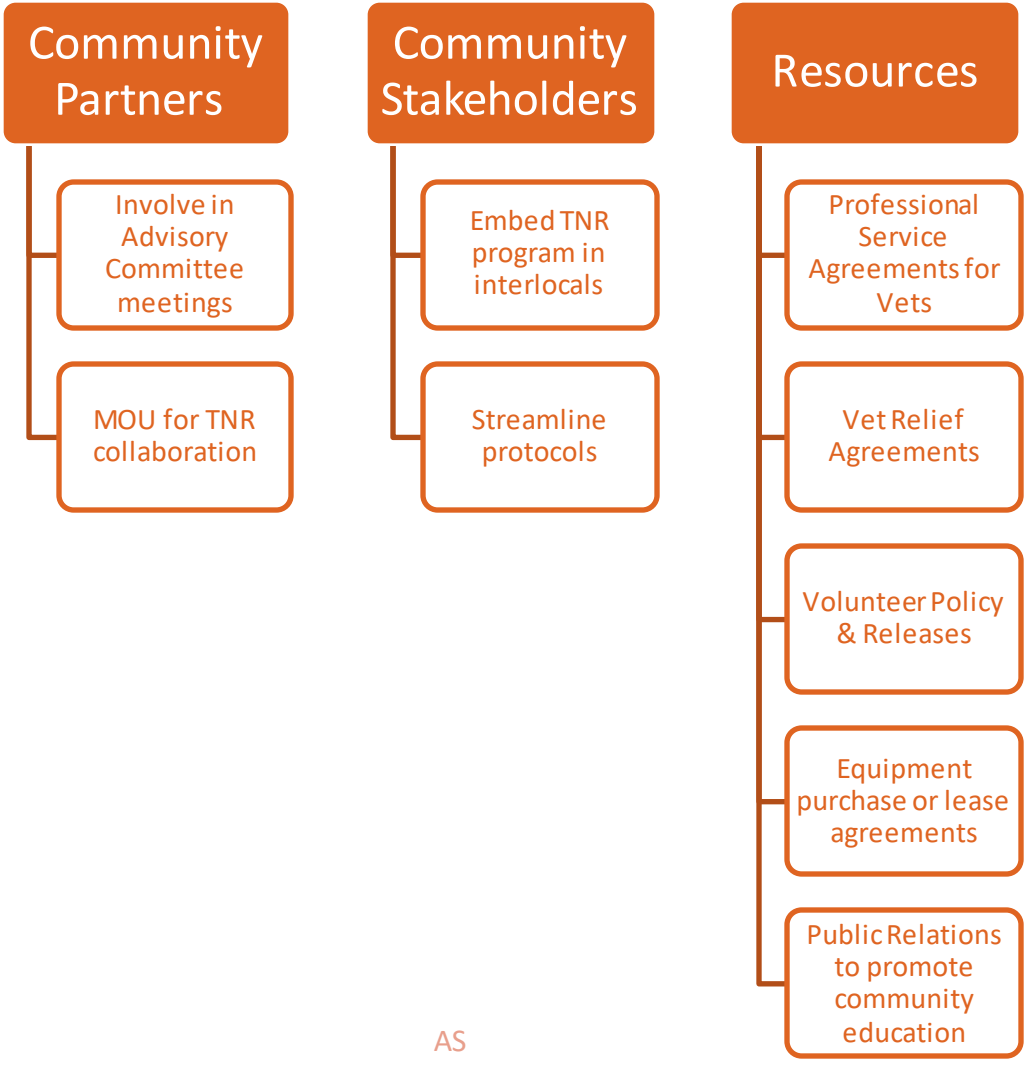
Definitions	Abandonment
Running at large	Restraint
Impoundment	Registration and microchip exemption
Borrowing Traps	Disposition

- Defined "ear tipped cat," "trap-neuter-return" and modified the term "owner" to except TNR for persons who may care, feed or harbor an animal for more than 72 hours.
- Release of an ear tipped cat to the location it was trapped is not "Abandonment."

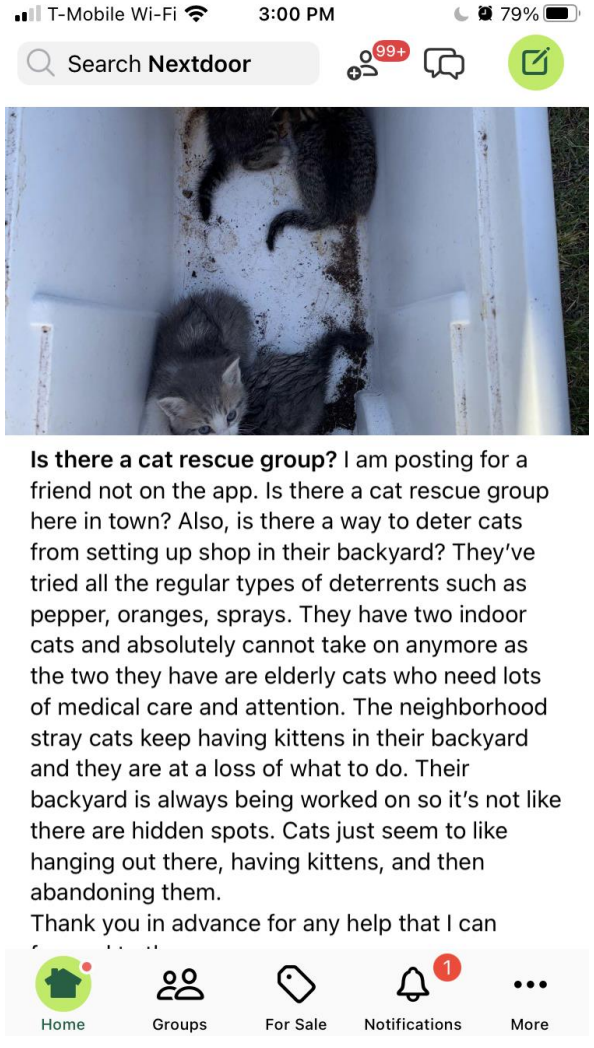
Ordinance 018472 Cont.

- Adds a defense to prosecution of a Restraint charge.
- Excludes ear tipped cats from prohibitions of cats being exclusively on a persons own premises.
- Exempts ear tipped cats from registration and microchip requirements.
- Excludes ear tipped cats from being subject to warrant and impoundment.
- Excludes an ear tipped cat from being impounded for running at large.
- Provides that if an ear tipped cat is impounded, it's not subject to the impoundment holding period provided a cat is not injured or ill, and returning it to the location the cat was trapped as soon as the Shelter's resources permit.
- Provides that if a cat lacks evidence of ownership and is impounded, it may be processed through TNR protocols.
- Cat traps are made available to adult residents for purposes of TNR or if a cat is injured or sick.

Added Tools


Community Partners
Involve in Advisory Committee meetings
MOU for TNR collaboration
Community Stakeholders
Embed TNR program in interlocals
Streamline protocols
Resources
Professional Service Agreements for Vets
Vet Relief Agreements
Volunteer Policy & Releases
Equipment purchase or lease agreements
Public Relations to promote community education

Involving the Community



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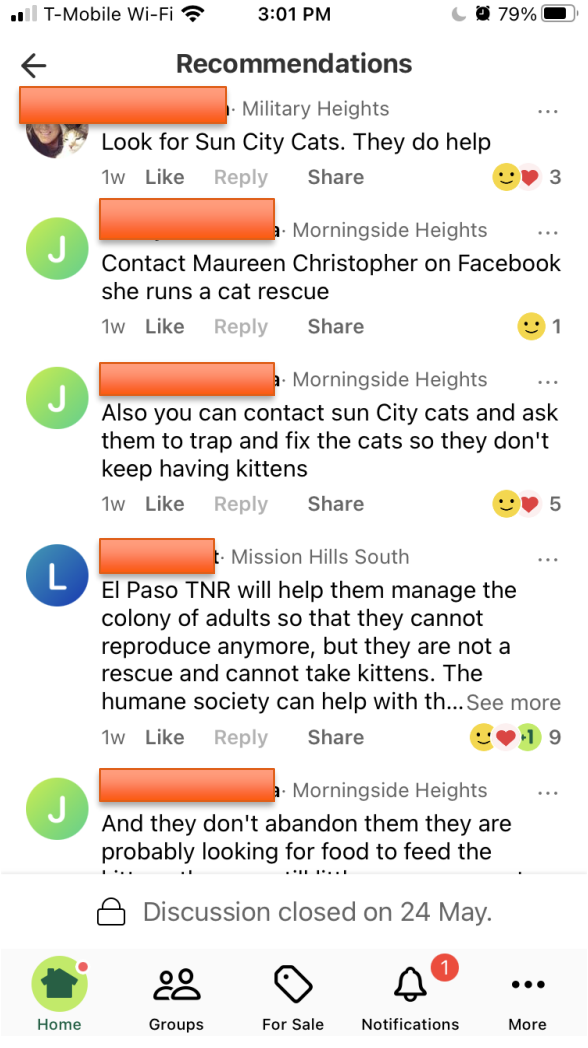

Humane Trapping

Ensure that ordinances provide for humane trapping.



How to Avoid Creating a Nuisance

[redacted] · Valley Creek South

How can we leave some water for them without it evaporating quickly. Do you think store owners would refill the water bowls?

7h Like Reply Share

[redacted] · Portsmouth

Someone has replied that sh... See more

3h Like Reply Share

[redacted] Valley Creek South

I presently have a shop at [redacted] and I would like to assure all of you that the cats are well cared for. Your concern is greatly appreciated but please do not leave bags of food or water cont... See more

3h Like Reply Share 4



- Educate the public of what constitutes a nuisance and provide suggestions for how to lawfully care for community cats.
- Share information at HOA meetings.
- Coordinate with Colony Managers.
- Penalize poison. Enact ordinances that penalize use of poison or toxins to eliminate cats.

AS

Conflict mitigation

- People are more concerned with the nuisance behavior than the actual presence of the cat
- Cats can be conditioned to avoid a property through simple, proven techniques
- Best Friends offers free training to teach participants how to work with residents on mitigating conflicts with cats



Return-to-field benefits

- Lower intake and euthanasia
- Less need for cat housing
- Major increase in employee morale
- Greater community goodwill
- Reduced nuisance calls
- Cost savings



Community focused animal sheltering

Free drive thru vaccination and microchip for pets and COVID-19 vaccine for pet owners.

Collaborate with Food Pantry to also provide pet food.

Offer drive thru pet food distribution in rural areas.

Mobile vaccinations in various areas of City

C

No fee and low cost pet wellness clinic that offers no-contact appointments

Increase foster care-ask the community for help

Give the director the power to waive fees for good cause

Give field officers the ability to return animal to owner in field