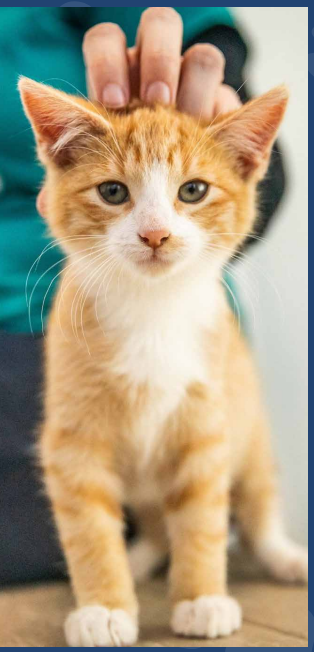
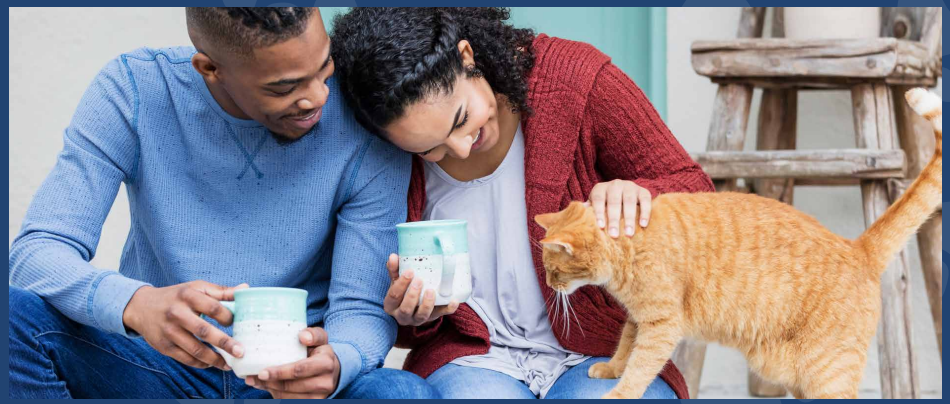
ANIMAL SERVICES OFFICE
STRATEGIC PLAN
2025-2030 DRAFT





SUBJECT TO FURTHER REVIEW AND REVISION BY CITY MANAGEMENT AND AUSTIN CITY COUNCIL. MARCH 5, 2025 DRAFT.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....2-4
Message from the Chief Animal Services Officer 5
Strategic Planning Background & Overview 6-9
ASO Strategic Plan 2025-2030 10-21
- Humane Care.....10-12
- Spay Neuter.....13
- Open Intake.....14-15
- Live Release.....16-17
- Public Health & Safety.....18-19
- Staff & Volunteers 20-21

Acknowledgements.....22
Appendix.....23-32
- Measuring Success.....23-30
- Glossary.....31-32

INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THE AUSTIN ANIMAL SERVICES OFFICE

The City of Austin Animal Services Office (ASO) operates the Austin Animal Center, the municipal shelter for the city of Austin and unincorporated Travis County, one of the largest no-kill shelters in the nation. Throughout the year, the Austin Animal Center is a temporary home for thousands of pets, working to place all adoptable pets in homes. Animal Services emphasizes a prevention based, educational approach by enforcing animal-related ordinances and by connecting residents with resources to care for animals in the community.

WHAT IS THE ASO STRATEGIC PLAN?

The ASO Strategic Plan provides a clear and actionable framework to guide the organization's efforts in achieving its goals and realizing its vision over the next five years.

ASO staff and City of Austin leadership will use this plan to:

- Establish a roadmap for departmental initiatives
- Guide operational, resource allocation, and budgeting decisions
- Track and evaluate progress toward goals and performance targets
- Communicate ASO's vision and priorities to stakeholders
- Identify opportunities to collaborate with stakeholders to advance ASO's goals and vision

COMPONENTS OF THE ASO STRATEGIC PLAN

THE ASO STRATEGIC PLAN INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING COMPONENTS:

VISION: A shared idea of what the community will experience when ASO implements this plan.

MISSION: The core purpose and role ASO serves in supporting the community and achieving its vision. ASO's mission was not updated as part of this process.

FOCUS AREAS: This plan has six focus areas representing ASO's high-level priorities. These foundational elements guide ASO in advancing its mission and achieving its vision.

DESCRIPTION: A brief overview of each focus area.

GOALS: Each focus area has three to four goals. Goals are the specific end-results that ASO envisions, plans, and commits to achieve.

STRATEGIES: Each goal has several strategies. These are the actionable plans or methods that ASO will take to achieve its goals.

MEASURES: Each goal has associated measures which can be found in the Appendix on page 23. These measures will be used to track progress toward achieving the goal and inform ASO on whether to modify or sustain its approach to reach the desired outcome. ASO staff will develop targets for each measure and measures may be amended during plan implementation.

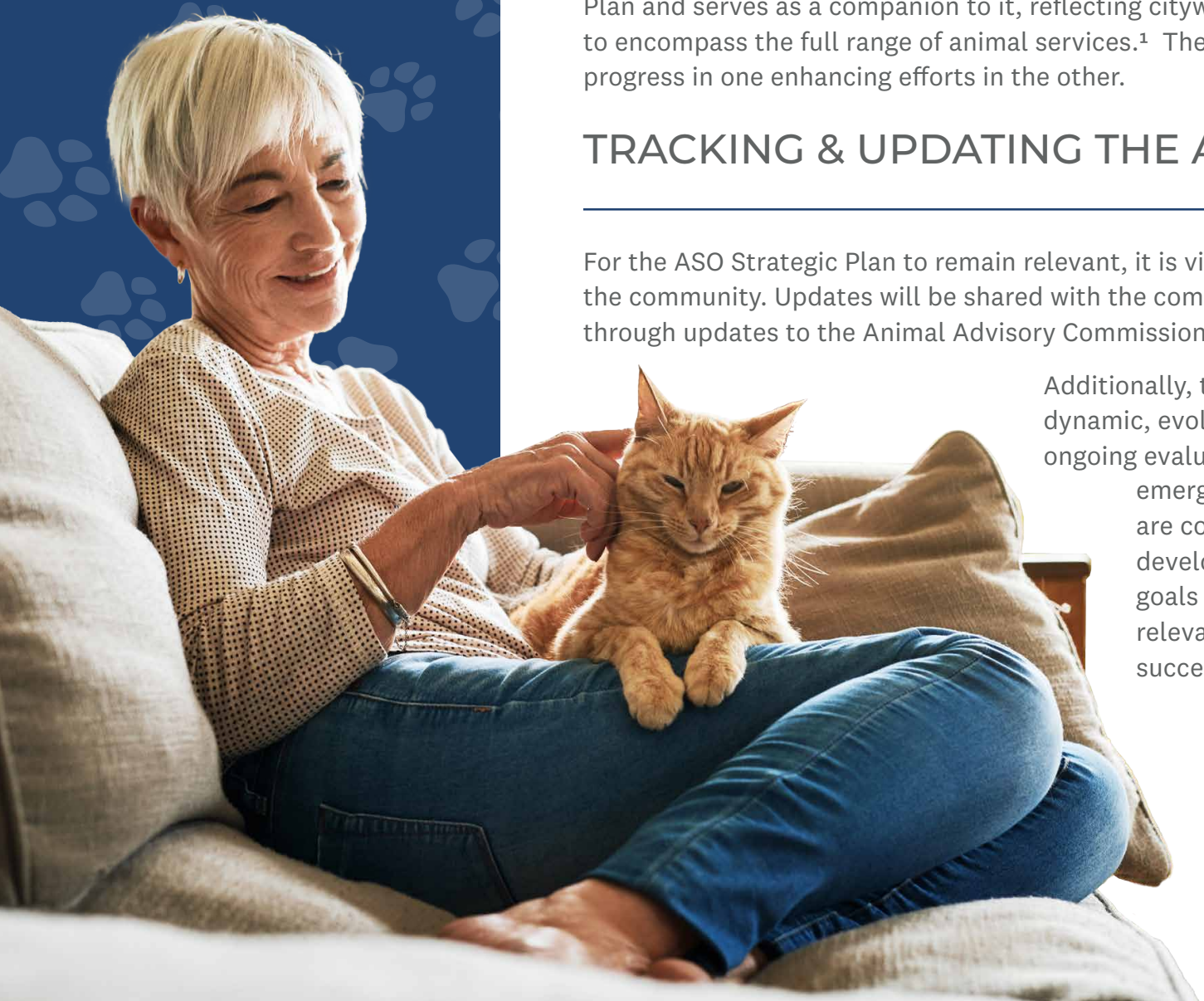
An alphanumeric system is used to organize goals and strategies, but the ordering does not reflect priority.

ALIGNMENT WITH THE CITYWIDE STRATEGIC PLAN

The City of Austin has a Citywide Strategic Plan that includes a goal, measures, and strategies related to ASO. This plan was developed in alignment with the Citywide Strategic Plan and serves as a companion to it, reflecting citywide efforts while expanding the focus to encompass the full range of animal services.[1] These plans complement each other, with progress in one enhancing efforts in the other.

TRACKING & UPDATING THE ASO STRATEGIC PLAN

For the ASO Strategic Plan to remain relevant, it is vital to track progress and report back to the community. Updates will be shared with the community on the ASO website as well as through updates to the Animal Advisory Commission and Mayor and Council.



Additionally, the ASO Strategic Plan is meant to be a dynamic, evolving plan. Updates will be informed by ongoing evaluation, feedback from stakeholders, and emerging community needs. As strategies are completed, new strategies may be developed to continue progress toward the goals and vision, ensuring the plan remains relevant and effective in achieving long-term success.

[1] City of Austin Citywide Strategic Plan, see goal 5 under Community Health & Sustainability

MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF ANIMAL SERVICES OFFICER

Dear Austin Community,

I am pleased to present to you the Austin Animal Services Office (ASO) Strategic Plan, a comprehensive framework developed to address the 2023 City Audit and to guide our organization towards a successful and sustainable future. This plan reflects months of thoughtful collaboration and careful analysis to ensure we are positioned to achieve our goals, improve our operations, and address future challenges while meeting the needs of our growing community.

The strategic plan serves as a blueprint for achieving our mission and vision over the next five years. In alignment with our commitment to animal welfare and serving the residents of the City of Austin and unincorporated Travis County, the plan outlines six key focus areas: Humane Care, Spay & Neuter, Open Intake, Live Release, Public Health & Safety, and Staff & Volunteers.

I would like to thank the members of the strategic plan working group for their dedication and contributions throughout this process. Their work, along with input from key stakeholders and animal welfare partners, has been vital in the plan's creation. All of this would not have been possible without the dedication and hard work from the Office of Budget and Organizational Excellence.

Additionally, I extend my appreciation to the Austin residents and volunteers who provided feedback through surveys and other engagement opportunities. Your input has played a critical role in shaping this plan. I also want to recognize ASO employees for their hard work and commitment to caring for the animals in our charge, as well as their support and participation in the plan's development.

This strategic plan is more than a document; it is a shared vision for our future. ASO will work closely with the City Council and the City Manager's Office to implement the goals outlined in the plan. Through the development of appropriate policies, programs, and processes, we will ensure the plan's successful execution and the long-term sustainability of our operations. Along the way, we will measure our progress and provide regular updates to the community, ensuring accountability and transparency throughout implementation.

Thank you for your continued support as we take this significant step forward. Together, we can move forward in achieving these objectives.

Regards,

Don Bland, CAWA
Chief Animal Services Officer

STRATEGIC PLANNING BACKGROUND & OVERVIEW

BACKGROUND

The City of Austin Animal Services Office (ASO) launched a strategic planning process in June 2024. This planning process was initiated in response to two 2023 reviews of ASO by the City of Austin Auditor's Office and the National Center for Animal Shelter Evaluations.[2] Both reviews identified misaligned departmental goals, as well as issues with stakeholder engagement and alignment. One of the City Auditor's recommendations was for the Chief Animal Services Officer to work with stakeholders to develop, implement, and monitor a strategic plan. In line with this recommendation, the City of Austin hired external consultant Dr. Larry Schooler in May 2024 to facilitate the development of a 5-year strategic plan for ASO in collaboration with internal and external stakeholders.

PROCESS OVERVIEW

The strategic plan was developed over an 8-month period with input sought from diverse stakeholders, including staff, volunteers, partners, and the community. The objectives of the planning process were to align the City's animal welfare priorities, chart a course for addressing overcrowding at the animal shelter, improve relationships among stakeholders, and rethink the compilation, tracking, and presentation of animal services data.

The planning process was directed by a Planning Team that included representatives from ASO, the City Manager's Office, Travis County, and the Animal Advisory Commission. The Planning Team was responsible for logistics and coordination of the strategic planning process, including managing timelines and selecting Working Group members. The Working Group included representatives from the City of Austin City Manager's Office, ASO staff, ASO volunteers, Animal Advisory Commission, Austin Humane Society, Austin Lost and Found, Austin Pets Alive, Classic Canines, Emancipet, TRAPRS Trapping, Rescue and Pet Recovery Service, Travis County, and a community advocate.[3] The Working Group was responsible for using feedback and information gathered from stakeholders, along with their expertise in animal welfare, to collaboratively develop the strategic plan during a series of workshops facilitated by the external consultant.

[2] City of Austin Auditors Office - Austin Animal Center September 2023 Audit , National Center for Animal Shelter Evaluations 2023 Report

[3] A list of Planning Team and Working Group members can be found in the Acknowledgements section on page 22

PHASE 1: ASSESSMENT

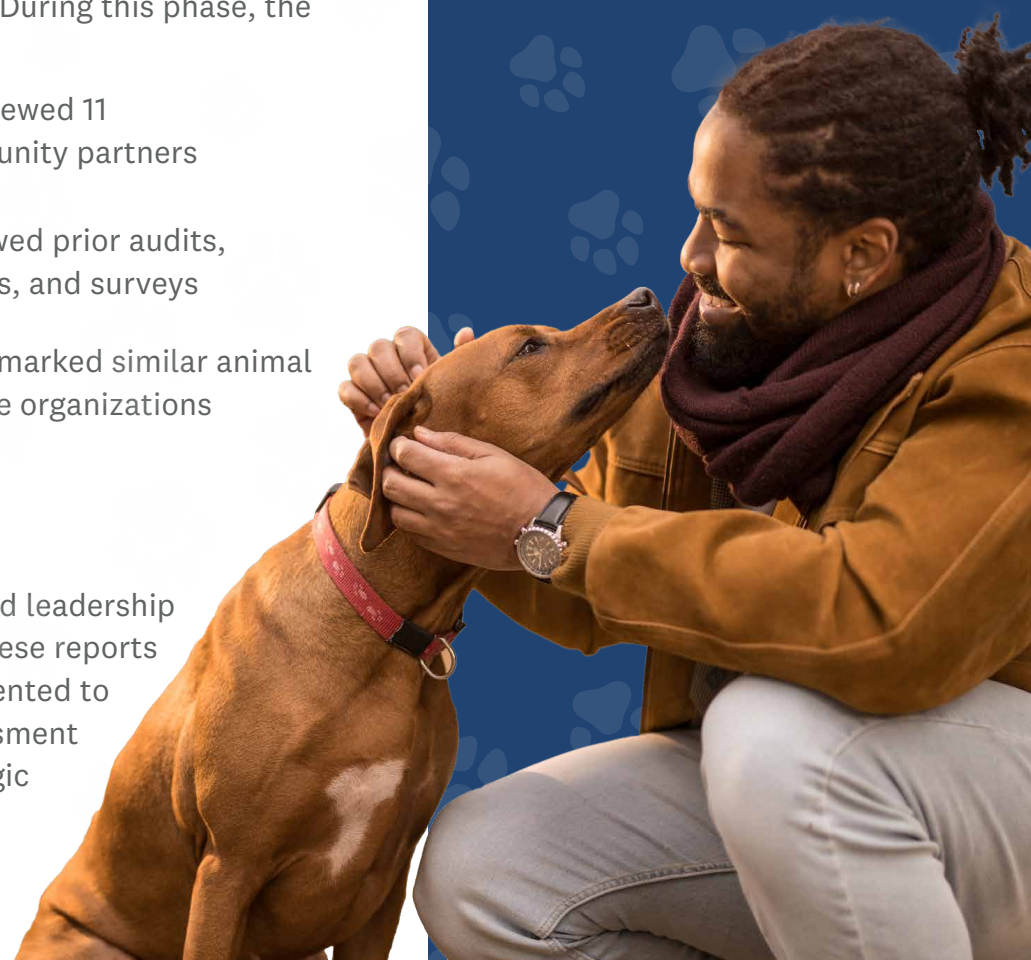
JUNE – AUGUST 2024

The first phase of the strategic planning process, known as the Assessment Phase, focused on understanding ASO's current state and gathering feedback from stakeholders, including staff, volunteers, partners, and the community to ensure the strategic plan is responsive to their needs, priorities, and aspirations.

In collaboration with the external consultant, the City's Office of Budget and Organizational Excellence (BOE) Continuous Improvement Team conducted a thorough assessment to guide the development of ASO's strategic plan. During this phase, the consultant and BOE team:

- Conducted a community survey with 2,041 participants
- Held four listening sessions with 40 ASO volunteers
- Facilitated nine listening sessions with 94 ASO staff members
- Interviewed 10 ASO leadership team members
- Interviewed 11 community partners
- Reviewed prior audits, reports, and surveys
- Benchmarked similar animal welfare organizations

The insights from the community survey, listening sessions, and leadership interviews were compiled into two comprehensive reports.[4] These reports were shared with stakeholders, and the key findings were presented to the Animal Advisory Commission. The findings from the Assessment Phase were shared with the Working Group to guide the strategic plan's development.



[4] ASO Strategic Plan Community Survey Report 2024; ASO Strategic Plan Staff and Volunteer Interview and Listening Session Report 2024

PHASE 2: STRATEGIC PLANNING & FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENT

AUGUST 2024 – JANUARY 2025

Building on the insights gathered during the Assessment Phase, the Framework Development Phase focused on creating a strategic plan that addresses audit findings, fulfills ASO's mission, and effectively balances stakeholder needs and aspirations while building trust among Working Group members.

The consultant facilitated five collaborative workshops with the Working Group. During these workshops, topics and activities included building relationships, understanding stakeholders, reviewing Assessment Phase findings, identifying ASO's goals, and charting a course for ASO's future. From these activities, the Working Group developed the foundation of the strategic plan, including draft focus areas, goals, strategies, and measures.

The draft of the plan's focus areas and goals were then shared with staff and the community for feedback through a town hall and survey, respectively. Insights from the community survey were compiled into a report and findings were shared with the Working Group.[5] The consultant facilitated two additional workshops to incorporate this feedback, update the plan, and ensure the Working Group's support of the final plan. The Planning Team also convened twice to further refine the draft, ensuring cohesion, clarity for the community, and a consistent tone while preserving the Working Group's intent.

[5] ASO Strategic Plan Framework Community Feedback Survey Report 2024

PHASE 3: STRATEGIC PLAN FINALIZATION

JANUARY – MARCH 2025

Building on the efforts of the previous phases, the Strategic Plan Finalization Phase focuses on sharing, finalizing, and adopting the plan. During this phase, the plan will be shared with stakeholders, including staff, volunteers, partners, the community and the Animal Advisory Commission. City Council will then review for potential adoption of the plan so it can transition to the Implementation Phase.

PHASE 4: IMPLEMENTATION

MARCH 2025 – ONGOING

ASO will begin implementing the goals and strategies outlined in the strategic plan. The plan will serve as the foundation for developing a five-year roadmap to guide the organization in advancing its priorities of:

- HUMANE CARE
- OPEN INTAKE
- PUBLIC HEALTH & SAFETY
- SPAY NEUTER
- LIVE RELEASE
- STAFF & VOLUNTEERS

To achieve its goals, ASO will prioritize engaging stakeholders for sustained collaboration, allocating resources effectively, and developing and executing detailed action plans. ASO will track and report progress, leveraging data insights to refine its strategies and measures, as needed. Additionally, ASO will remain adaptive and adjust as necessary based on emerging opportunities and the evolving needs of the community.

ANIMAL SERVICES OFFICE STRATEGIC PLAN 2025 TO 2030

VISION

The vision of the Animal Services Office (ASO) is to provide services and resources that allow people and animals to thrive in the city of Austin.

HUMANE CARE

Meet animals' physical and emotional needs and ensure a high quality of life for animals in shelter and foster care by providing enrichment, behavioral support, and well-maintained facilities.

1 GOAL: INCREASE ENRICHMENT, SOCIALIZATION, AND BEHAVIORAL SERVICES

STRATEGIES:

A. Expand capacity to provide enrichment and socialization services for all animals through adequate staff, volunteers, funding, and partnerships

B. Offer staff training and educational opportunities in animal behavior

C. Enhance support for fosters through training and resources

2 GOAL: IMPROVE CAMPUS FACILITIES AND PHYSICAL SPACES

STRATEGIES:

A. In partnership with the Building Services Department, identify opportunities to enhance proactive maintenance and optimize facility operations

B. Identify priority facility upgrades and develop a timeline to enhance animal and staff spaces for optimal care and safety

C. Research, analyze, and explore additional locations to offer ASO services throughout the community (i.e., new satellite locations, secondary locations)

3 GOAL: ENHANCE SHELTER CLEANLINESS AND SANITATION

STRATEGIES:

A. Establish and implement a sanitation protocol for facilities and kennels aligned with best practices, including routine checks to maintain a high standard of cleanliness

4 GOAL: DEVELOP RESPONSIBLE PATHWAYS FOR ALL ELIGIBLE ANIMALS EMPHASIZING THOSE WITH BEHAVIORAL NEEDS

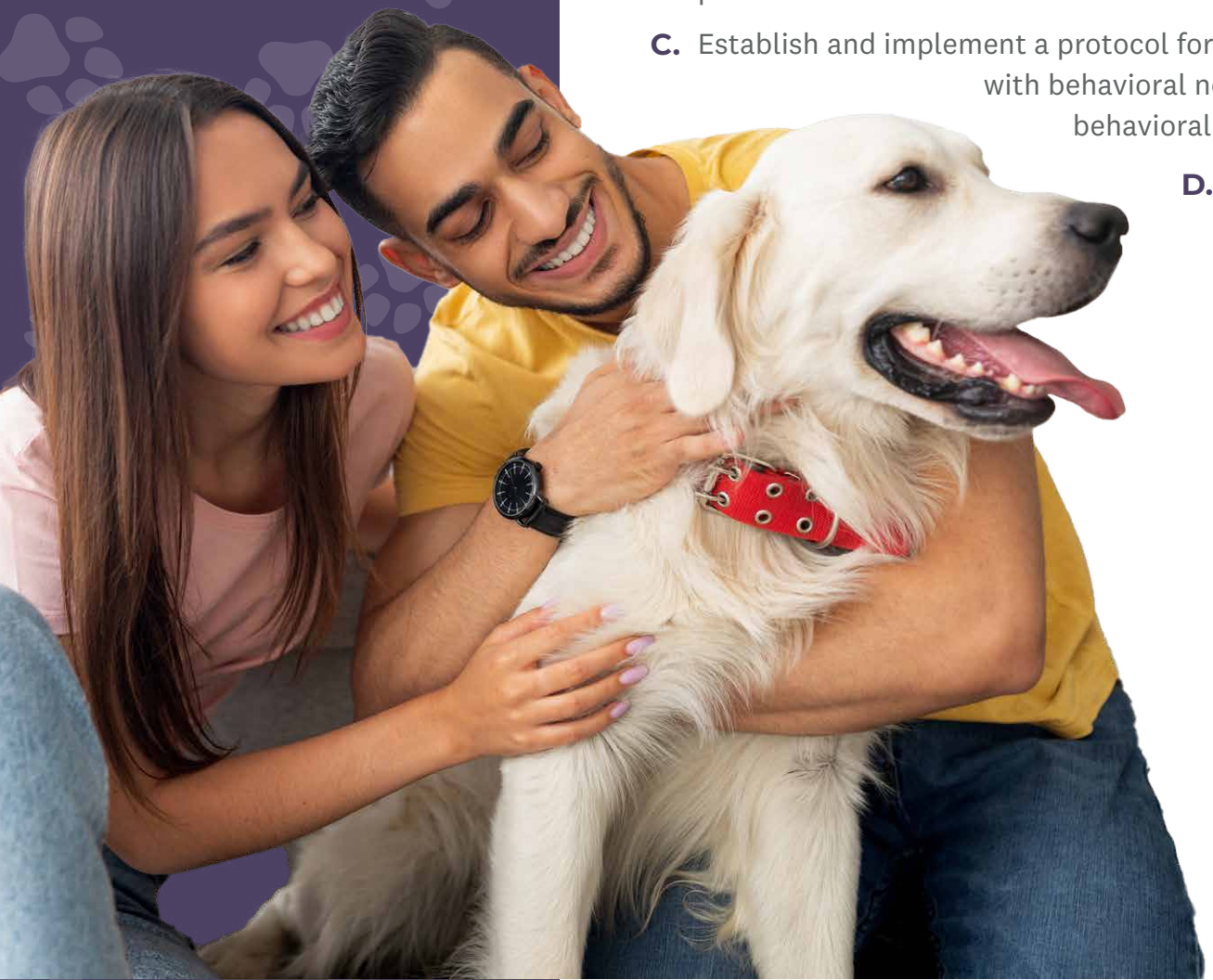
STRATEGIES:

A. Create a citywide, inter-shelter team to identify, assess, and connect at-risk animals into the most appropriate behavior program

B. Proactively identify animals at risk of behavioral decline and prioritize for appropriate placement

C. Establish and implement a protocol for assessing, managing, and supporting animals with behavioral needs, including the process for developing behavioral training plans

D. Review, research, and provide recommendations for policies, regulations, processes, and programs to support animals with behavioral needs, seeking review and/or approval from governing bodies (e.g., City Council, Animal Advisory Commission, Travis County Commissioners Court) as applicable



SPAY NEUTER

Reduce the number of stray, unowned, and unwanted animals by improving and increasing spay/neuter services.

1 GOAL: INCREASE THE NUMBER OF FREE AND SUBSIDIZED SPAY/NEUTER SURGERIES FOR OWNED ANIMALS

STRATEGIES:

A. Develop and maintain strong partnerships with community organizations and national vendors to expand low-cost spay/neuter services and referral opportunities available within the community

B. Review, research, and provide recommendations on policies, regulations, processes, and programs that promote and expand spay/neuter, seeking review and/or approval from governing bodies as applicable

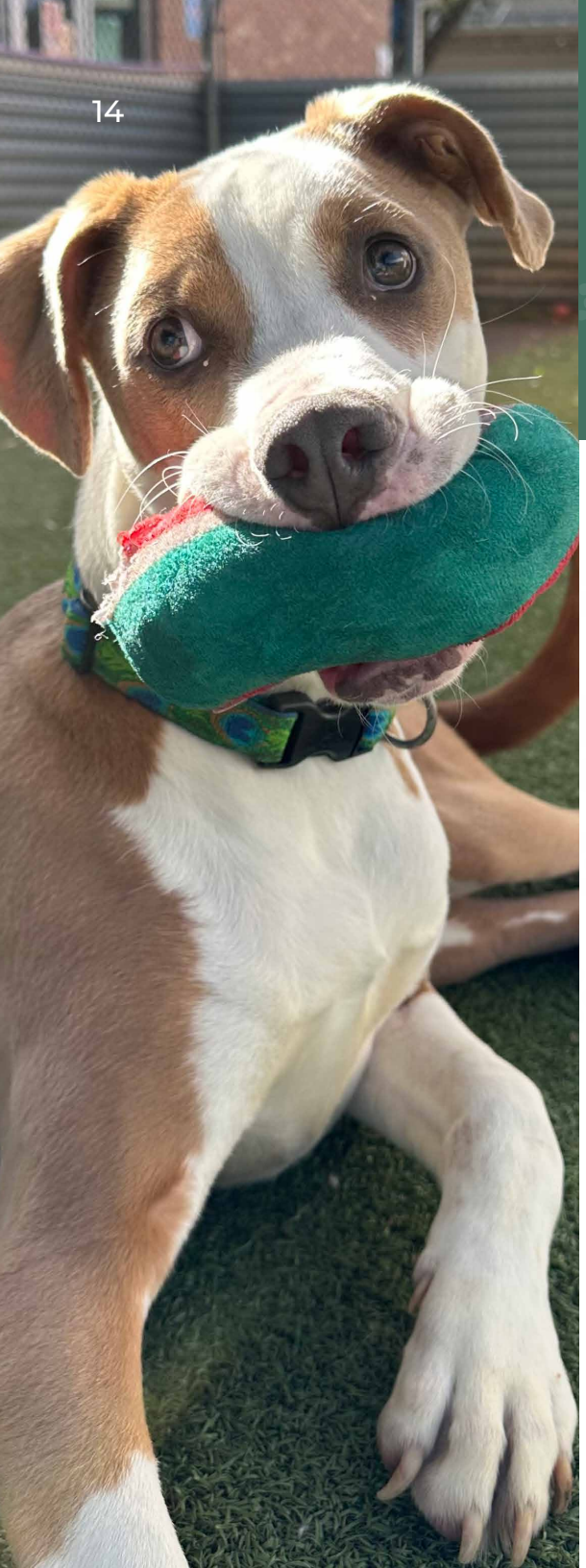
C. Create additional marketing efforts to communicate spay/neuter services to the community, targeting areas with the highest rates of stray and surrendered pets

2 GOAL: INCREASE THE NUMBER OF SPAY/NEUTER SURGERIES FOR STRAY AND UNOWNED ANIMALS

STRATEGIES:

A. Partner with volunteers and organizations that support community cats to identify opportunities to enhance, reduce barriers to, and maximize the impact of trap-neuter-return (TNR) programs

B. Allocate additional resources and optimize processes and staffing to ensure stray animals are spayed/neutered as quickly as possible while in shelter or foster care



OPEN INTAKE

Ensure Austin Animal Center has the capacity to accept animals, facilitate care by partners and the public, and assist people in keeping their pets in a timely manner.

1 GOAL: INCREASE THE TIMELINESS OF ASO INTAKE SUPPORT

STRATEGIES:

A. Develop and implement standard operating procedures for triaging intake requests and providing customers with appropriate and timely support

B. Collaborate with volunteers to identify opportunities to involve them in intake support, with appropriate training and guidance

C. Develop methods to identify and implement policies to prioritize emergency cases and most at-risk animals for immediate intake

2 GOAL: EXPAND THE CAPACITY OF THE SHELTER

STRATEGIES:

A. Explore innovative collaborations with community groups and partners to facilitate the direct placement of animals into care, minimizing shelter intake

B. Increase foster enrollment and streamline the foster process to improve efficiency and responsiveness

C. Expand capacity of the finder-to-foster program, including developing protocol and providing adequate staffing to provide timely services for finder-to-foster participants

D. Collaborate with community partners to increase awareness and accessibility of programs that divert animals from shelter (e.g., lost and found resources, finder-to-foster, microchip scanner locations)

E. Enhance capacity to comprehensively manage the flow of animals, ensuring optimal space utilization, improved animal well-being, and successful placements

3 GOAL: REMOVE BARRIERS TO PET OWNERSHIP THROUGH RESOURCES AND POLICY CHANGE

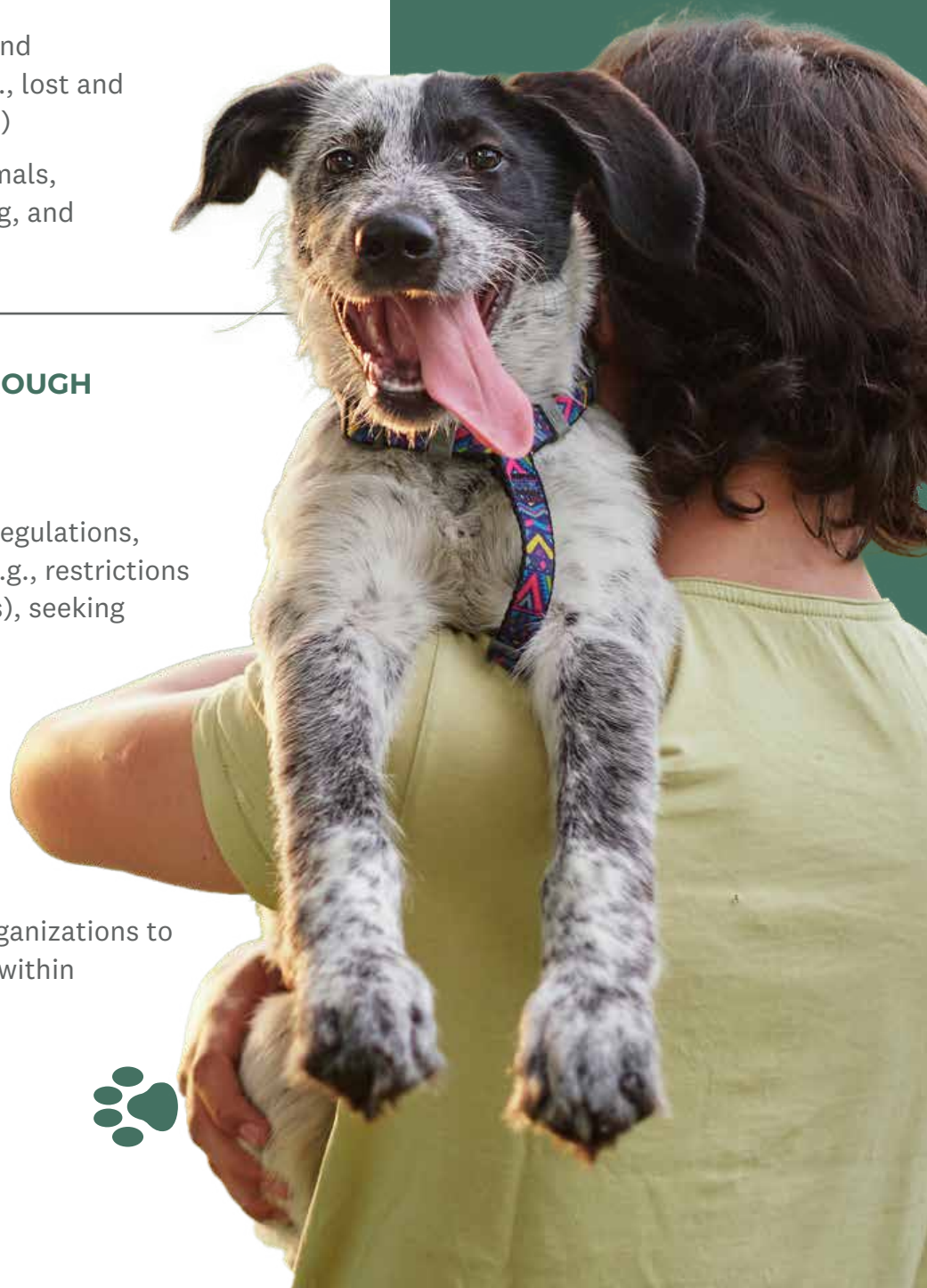
STRATEGIES:

A. Review, research, and provide recommendations on policies, regulations, processes, and programs that advance pet-friendly policies (e.g., restrictions on pet rent, pet deposits, breed restrictions, and weight limits), seeking review and/or approval from governing bodies as applicable

B. Expand and market resources and education on responsible pet ownership, including microchipping and spay/neuter

C. Identify grants and partnerships to increase and promote services to those in need including fences, vet assistance, and behavior assistance services

D. Develop and maintain strong partnerships with community organizations to expand low-cost services and referral opportunities available within the community



LIVE RELEASE

Maximize the number of animals that are adopted, rescued, transferred, or returned to their owners through enhanced services, partnerships, and community engagement.

1 GOAL: EXPAND AND ENHANCE ALL PROGRAMS THAT LEAD TO SUCCESSFUL PLACEMENTS FOR ANIMALS

STRATEGIES:

A. Improve the adoption process and ensure successful placements by expanding services and providing adopters with training and resources

B. Improve the rescue process and ensure successful placements

C. Develop and implement innovative solutions to expand the transfer network and increase the quick transfer of animals

D. Improve the availability of information and the marketing of shelter animals

E. Design and implement methods that leverage technology, outreach, and partnerships to increase visibility of animals in stray hold, maximizing the number of animals returned to their owners

F. Review, research, and recommend policies, regulations, programs, and processes to support high live release rate, gathering stakeholder input and seeking review and/or approval from governing bodies as applicable

G. Develop and implement plan to foster media partnerships in English and Spanish and increase opportunities for media coverage

2 GOAL: IMPROVE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

STRATEGIES:

A. Create more and easier ways for customers to share their feedback to enhance customer experience (e.g., exit surveys)

B. Enhance the shelter experience by improving signage and navigation and ensuring staff and volunteers are available to support customers

C. Develop and implement customer service training for staff and volunteers

D. Increase accessibility to ASO services through offsite events and exploring new locations across the community

E. Analyze and explore opportunities for fixed satellite adoption centers in high-traffic locations

3 GOAL: INCREASE AWARENESS OF ASO AND BUILD COMMUNITY TRUST

STRATEGIES:

A. Implement a new data management system for transparency and to ensure data accuracy

B. Launch a comprehensive marketing campaign to increase awareness of ASO's mission, policies, resources, and location

C. Expand ASO's community presence, including increasing participation in local events, hosting new activities, and building partnerships

D. Expand multilingual resources and improve accessibility across ASO services

E. Strengthen outreach and trust-building efforts with community partners

PUBLIC HEALTH & SAFETY

Ensure the health and safety of the public and animals by providing resources and information, working with community partners, and responding quickly to animal related concerns.

1 GOAL: INCREASE PUBLIC AWARENESS ON HOW TO INTERACT SAFELY WITH ANIMALS

STRATEGIES:

A. Offer targeted training, resources, and support for managing behaviorally challenging animals, including through an online training and resource hub

B. Enhance public education and awareness on safely interacting with behaviorally challenged pets, unfamiliar animals, and local wildlife

C. Strengthen partnerships and increase awareness of community cat programs and trap-neuter-return (TNR)

2 GOAL: ENSURE TIMELY RESPONSE TO ANIMAL WELFARE CALLS AND PUBLIC SAFETY CONCERNS

STRATEGIES:

A. Expand capacity of animal protection officers (APOs) and dispatchers consistent with community need

B. Collaborate with 311 to enhance ASO service call triage, ensure consistent messaging, and provide clear interim assistance to the community (e.g., steps to take while waiting, when to expect updates)

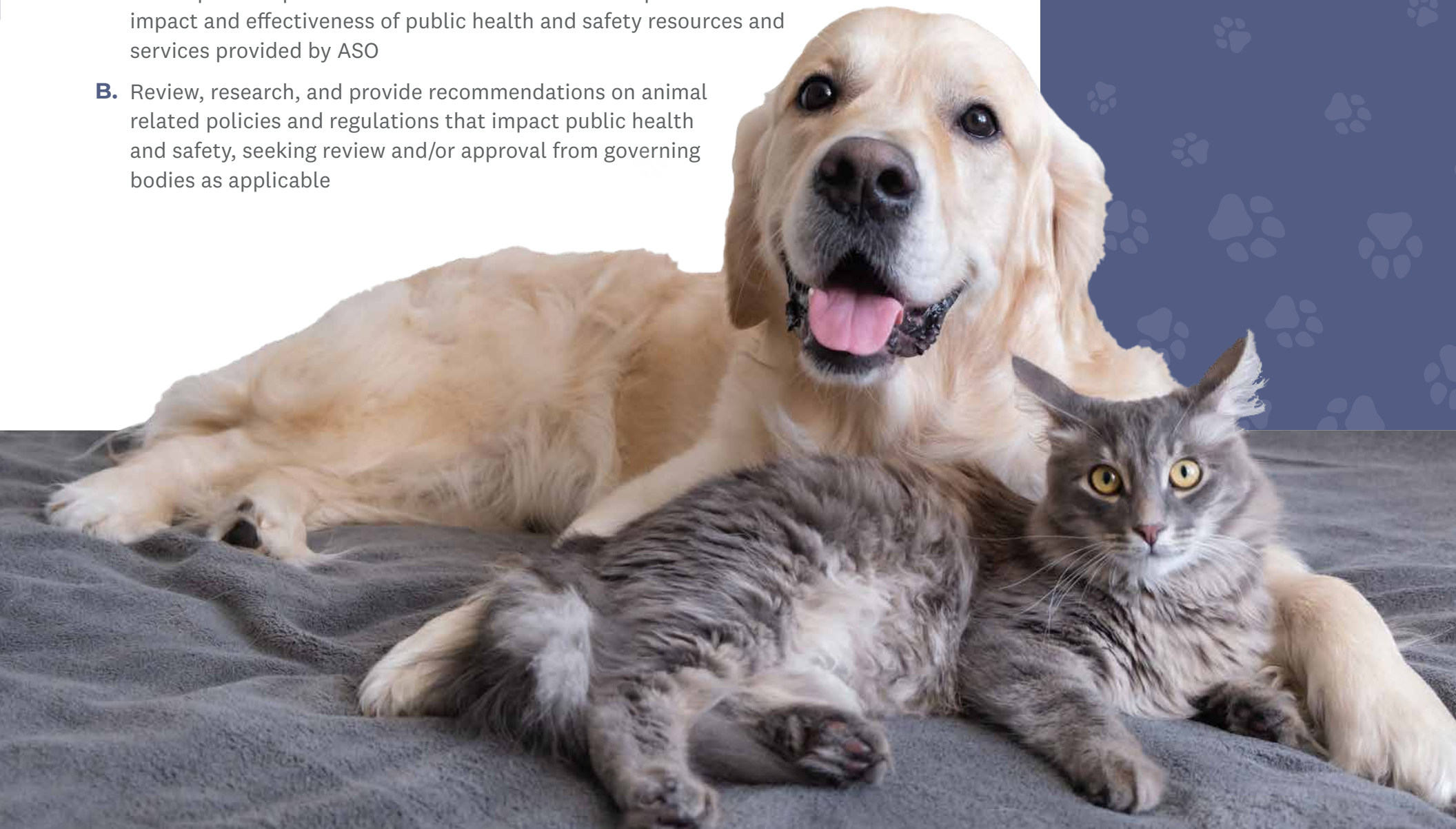
C. Identify opportunities for external organizations, such as wildlife rescues, to directly support response to animal welfare needs

3 GOAL: REDUCE THE NUMBER OF INCIDENTS INVOLVING AGGRESSIVE OR UNHEALTHY ANIMALS IN THE COMMUNITY

STRATEGIES:

A. Develop and implement methods to evaluate and improve the impact and effectiveness of public health and safety resources and services provided by ASO

B. Review, research, and provide recommendations on animal related policies and regulations that impact public health and safety, seeking review and/or approval from governing bodies as applicable



STAFF & VOLUNTEERS

Recruit and retain well-trained and dedicated staff and volunteers by providing the tools, resources, and support they need to create a culture of inclusion and responsibility.

1 GOAL: ENHANCE WORKING CONDITIONS AND BUILD SKILLED AND SUPPORTED STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

STRATEGIES:

A. Develop and implement a comprehensive training and development program for staff and volunteers

B. Conduct staffing analysis to determine appropriate levels of staff and volunteers and ensure pay equity

C. Conduct an analysis of equipment needs for staff and volunteers, and take steps to address them

D. Review, research, and recommend policies, regulations, training, and processes to ensure the health and safety of staff and volunteers, seeking review and/or approval from governing bodies as applicable

2 GOAL: INCREASE MORALE AND SATISFACTION OF STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

STRATEGIES:

A. Increase awareness of and access to resources to support the mental health needs of staff

B. Develop programs to improve volunteer participation and retention, including incentives and team building

C. Develop programs to improve staff retention, including team building, mentorship, and career development

D. Increase and improve cooperation between staff and volunteers

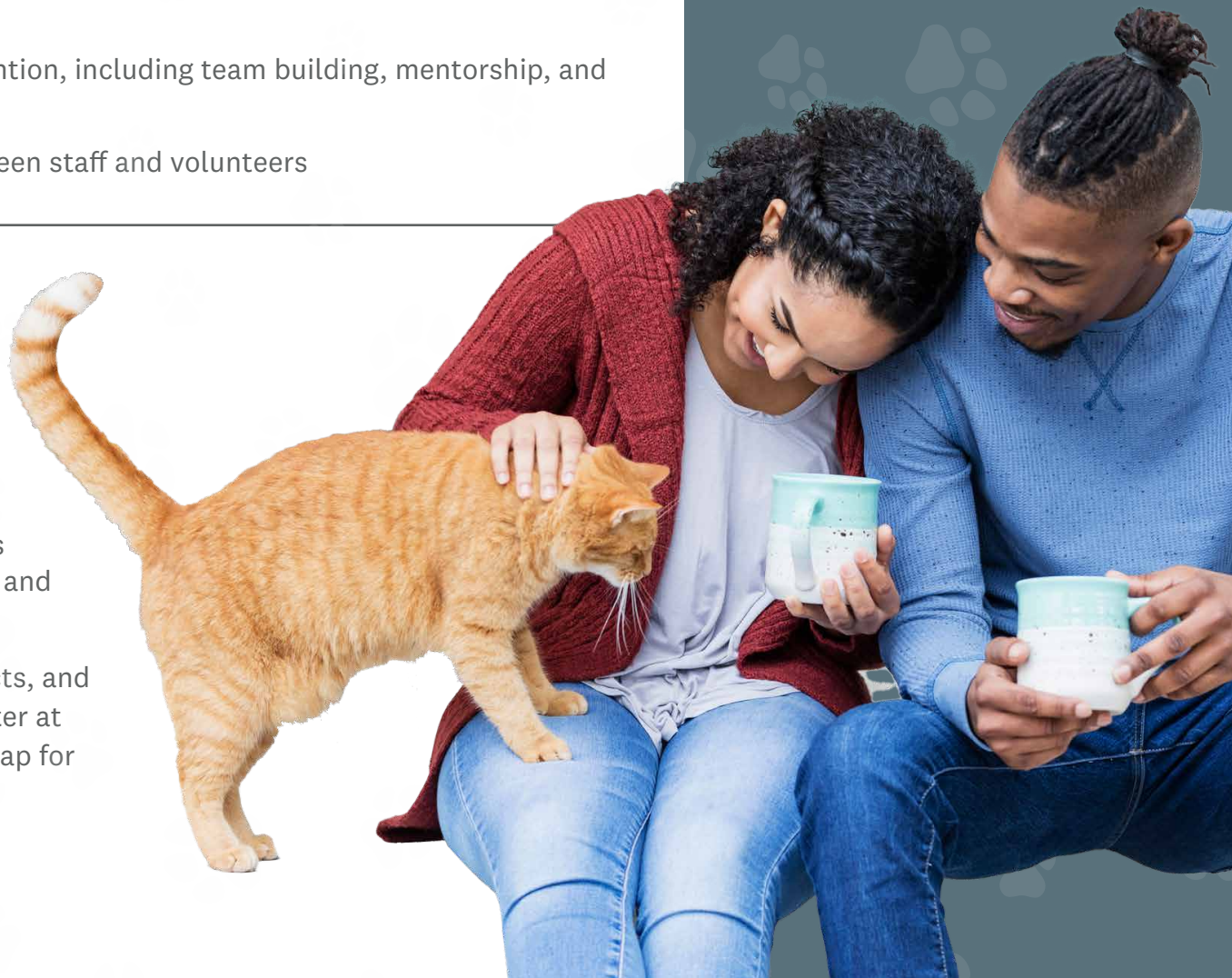
3 GOAL: IMPROVE OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY

STRATEGIES:

A. Maintain, regularly update, and enforce clear standard operating procedures

B. Review, analyze, clarify, and define roles and responsibilities of staff, volunteers, and partners

C. Conduct analysis of technology, contracts, and shared services needed to operate shelter at maximum efficiency and create a roadmap for implementation



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to staff, volunteers, partners, and community members who shared their experiences, concerns, hopes, and time during listening sessions, interviews, and through surveys. This valuable input has shaped the creation of ASO's Strategic Plan.

A special thank you to our Planning Team and Working Group members who volunteered their time over eight months to provide guidance and support for this plan.

PLANNING TEAM MEMBERS

- **Don Bland**, Chief Animal Services Officer
- **Susana Carbajal**, Assistant City Manager
- **Cassandra Gallegos**, Assistant City Manager Advisor
- **Stephanie Hayden-Howard**, Assistant City Manager
- **Whitney Holt**, Travis County
- **Ann Linder**, Animal Advisory Commissioner
- **Kaycie Roberts**, Assistant City Manager Advisor
- **Lotta Smagula**, Animal Advisory Commissioner

WORKING GROUP MEMBERS

- **Myles Chadwick**, Emancipet
- **Caitlin Chapman**, TRAPRS*
- **Debbie Elliot**, Animal Services Office
- **Sarah Hammel**, Austin Humane Society
- **Laura Hoke**, Animal Advisory Commissioner*
- **Jean Hubrath**, Austin Animal Center (AAC) Large Dog Volunteer and Director of Classic Canines
- **Ellen Jefferson**, Austin Pets Alive
- **Frances Jonon**, Austin Humane Society
- **Shelly Leibham**, AAC Cat Volunteer Liaison
- **David Loignon**, AAC Large Dog Volunteer and TRAPRS
- **Beverly Luna**, Austin Lost and Found
- **Rebekha Montie**, Animal Services Office
- **Pat Valls-Trelles**, Community Advocate

Thank you to external consultant Dr. Larry Schooler for facilitating workshops and guiding the Working Group in completing the Strategic Plan

EXTERNAL CONSULTANTS

- **Dr. Larry Schooler**

Thank you to the Office of Budget and Organizational Excellence staff for their support in project coordination and evaluating ASO's current state. This included facilitating and analyzing listening sessions with staff and volunteers and conducting the community surveys.

OFFICE OF BUDGET AND ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE STAFF

- **Samantha Eaton Moncayo**, Business Process Consultant Sr.
- **Audrey Muntz**, Budget and Performance Manager
- **Nicole Peterson**, Business Process Consultant

* Acted as a substitute when the designated representative from their organization was unable to attend a workshop

MEASURING SUCCESS

GOAL	STRATEGIES	MEASURES
1. Increase enrichment, socialization, and behavioral services	A. Expand capacity to provide enrichment and socialization services for all animals through adequate staff, volunteers, funding, and partnerships B. Offer staff training and educational opportunities in animal behavior C. Enhance support for fosters through training and resources	1. Number of times out of kennel per day per dogs (2 times for large dogs, 3 times for small dogs) 2. Percentage of animals with daily in-kennel enrichment 3. Number of staff training hours in animal behavior
2. Improve campus facilities and physical spaces	A. In partnership with the Building Services Department, identify opportunities to enhance proactive maintenance and optimize facility operations B. Identify priority facility upgrades and develop a timeline to enhance animal and staff spaces for optimal care and safety C. Research, analyze, and explore additional locations to offer ASO services throughout the community (i.e., new satellite locations, secondary locations)	1. Average time between issue identification and Building Services work order entry 2. Additional location analysis completed within 12 months of strategic plan implementation
3. Enhance shelter cleanliness and sanitation	A. Establish and implement a sanitation protocol for facilities and kennels aligned with best practices, including routine checks to maintain a high standard of cleanliness	1. Pass yearly state health inspection 2. Quarterly kennel cleanliness audit

GOAL	STRATEGIES	MEASURES
4. Develop responsible pathways for all eligible animals emphasizing those with behavioral needs	A. Create a citywide, inter-shelter team to identify, assess, and connect at-risk animals into the most appropriate behavior program B. Proactively identify animals at risk of behavioral decline and prioritize for appropriate placement C. Establish and implement a protocol for assessing, managing, and supporting animals with behavioral needs, including the process for developing behavioral training plans D. Review, research, and provide recommendations for policies, regulations, processes, and programs to support animals with behavioral needs, seeking review and/or approval from governing bodies (e.g., City Council, Animal Advisory Commission, Travis County Commissioners Court) as applicable	1. Percentage of at-risk animals who have a behavioral training plan 2. Percentage of behavioral animals placed with partners and rescues 3. Percentage of adult animals in ASO care beyond 30 days who are plead for foster or rescue placement 4. Percentage of behavioral animals in ASO who are plead for foster placement 5. Total number of cats and dogs over 30 days

SPAY NEUTER

GOALS	STRATEGIES	MEASURES
1. Increase the number of free and subsidized spay/neuter surgeries for owned animals	A. Develop and maintain strong partnerships with community organizations and national vendors to expand low-cost spay/neuter services and referral opportunities available within the community B. Review, research, and provide recommendations on policies, regulations, processes, and programs that promote and expand spay/neuter, seeking review and/or approval from governing bodies as applicable C. Create additional marketing efforts to communicate spay/neuter services to the community, targeting areas with the highest rates of stray and surrendered pets	1. Number of free or subsidized spay/neuter surgeries performed by contracted partners 2. Number of free or subsidized spay surgeries for large female dogs performed by contracted partners 3. Number of free or subsidized spay surgeries for female cats performed by contracted partners
2. Increase the number of spay/neuter surgeries for stray and unowned animals	A. Partner with volunteers and organizations that support community cats to identify opportunities to enhance, reduce barriers to, and maximize the impact of trap-neuter-return programs B. Allocate additional resources and optimize processes and staffing to ensure stray animals are spayed/neutered as quickly as possible while in shelter or foster care	1. Number of cats served through trap-neuter-return (TNR) 2. Number of spay/neuter surgeries performed at the shelter 3. Average length of wait time for spay/neuter for ASO shelter and foster animals (from eligibility to receive surgery to time the surgery is performed)

GOAL	STRATEGIES	MEASURES
1. Increase the timeliness of ASO intake support	A. Develop and implement standard operating procedures for triaging intake requests and providing customers with appropriate and timely support B. Collaborate with volunteers to identify opportunities to involve them in intake support, with appropriate training and guidance C. Develop methods to identify and implement policies to prioritize emergency cases and most at-risk animals for immediate intake	1. Number of days intake is fully open per quarter 2. Number of people seeking intake; Number of animals for which intake sought (with measures categorizable by stray and owner surrender) a. Number receive same day intake b. Number receive services with a later appointment c. Number receive services without same day intake and without later appointment scheduled 3. Pet Resource Center (PRC) wait times for walk-ups and for owner surrender appointments
2. Expand the capacity of the shelter	A. Explore innovative collaborations with community groups and partners to facilitate the direct placement of animals into care, minimizing shelter intake B. Increase foster enrollment and streamline the foster process to improve efficiency and responsiveness C. Expand capacity of the finder-to-foster program, including developing protocol and providing adequate staffing to provide timely services for finder-to-foster participants	1. Number of active fosters 2. Number of pets fostered 3. Number of people participating in finder-to-foster 4. Percentage of animals in ASO care/control in foster and other placements (i.e. boarding, training programs)

GOALS	STRATEGIES	MEASURES
	D. Collaborate with community partners to increase awareness and accessibility of programs that divert animals from shelter (e.g., lost and found resources, finder-to-foster, microchip scanner locations) E. Enhance capacity to comprehensively manage the flow of animals, ensuring optimal space utilization, improved animal well-being, and successful placements	
3. Remove barriers to pet ownership through resources and policy change	A. Review, research, and provide recommendations on policies, regulations, processes, and programs that advance pet-friendly policies (e.g., restrictions on pet rent, pet deposits, breed restrictions, and weight limits), seeking review and/or approval from governing bodies as applicable B. Expand and market resources and education on responsible pet ownership, including microchipping and spay/neuter C. Identify grants and partnerships to increase and promote services to those in need including fences, vet assistance, and behavior assistance services D. Develop and maintain strong partnerships with community organizations to expand low-cost services and referral opportunities available within the community	1. Number of community events with ASO staff/volunteers providing responsible pet owner education 2. Services provided (number of vouchers, number of families receiving fencing supplies, number of microchips) 3. Number of owner surrenders

GOAL

1. Expand and enhance all programs that lead to successful placements for animals

STRATEGIES

A. Improve the adoption process and ensure successful placements by expanding services and providing adopters with training and resources

B. Improve the rescue process and ensure successful placements

C. Develop and implement innovative solutions to expand the transfer network and increase the quick transfer of animals

D. Improve the availability of information and the marketing of shelter animals

E. Design and implement methods that leverage technology, outreach, and partnerships to increase visibility of animals in stray hold, maximizing the number of animals returned to their owners

F. Review, research, and recommend policies, regulations, programs, and processes to support high live release rate, gathering stakeholder input and seeking review and/or approval from governing bodies as applicable

G. Develop and implement plan to foster media partnerships in English and Spanish and increase opportunities for media coverage

MEASURES

1. Average length of shelter stay

2. Number of animals adopted

3. Number of animals transferred

4. Number of animals returned within 30 days of adoption

5. Percentage of pets returned to owner

GOALS	STRATEGIES	MEASURES
2. Improve customer experience	A. Create more and easier ways for customers to share their feedback to enhance customer experience (e.g., exit surveys) B. Enhance the shelter experience by improving signage and navigation and ensuring staff and volunteers are available to support customers C. Develop and implement customer service training for staff and volunteers D. Increase accessibility to ASO services through offsite events and exploring new locations across the community E. Analyze and explore opportunities for fixed satellite adoption centers in high-traffic locations	1. Customer satisfaction ratings 2. Number customer service training hours per employee
3. Increase awareness of ASO and build community trust	A. Implement a new data management system for transparency and to ensure data accuracy B. Launch a comprehensive marketing campaign to increase awareness of ASO's mission, policies, resources, and location C. Expand ASO's community presence, including increasing participation in local events, hosting new activities, and building partnerships D. Expand multilingual resources and improve accessibility across ASO services E. Strengthen outreach and trust-building efforts with community partners	1. ASO Web and Social Media Traffic 2. City of Austin Community Survey ASO Service Rating 3. Number of participants at ASO events 4. Number of animal outcomes associated with offsite events (e.g., adopted at event, returned to shelter to adopt after event attendance)

GOAL	STRATEGIES	MEASURES
1. Increase public awareness on how to interact safely with animals	A. Offer targeted training, resources, and support for managing behaviorally challenging animals, including through an online training and resource hub B. Enhance public education and awareness on safely interacting with behaviorally challenged pets, unfamiliar animals, and local wildlife C. Strengthen partnerships and increase awareness of community cat programs and trap-neuter-return (TNR)	1. Reduction in incidents with unhealthy or aggressive animals 2. Number of dogs adopted from ASO returned for aggression/behavior 3. Web page traffic to resources
2. Ensure timely response to animal welfare calls and public safety concerns	A. Expand capacity of animal protection officers (APOs) and dispatchers consistent with community need B. Collaborate with 311 to enhance ASO service call triage, ensure consistent messaging, and provide clear interim assistance to the community (e.g., steps to take while waiting, when to expect updates) C. Identify opportunities for external organizations, such as wildlife rescues, to directly support response to animal welfare needs	1. APO to call volume ratio 2. 311 call measures (ASO response time; percentage of APO service calls meeting service standard) 3. Number of ASO dispatcher training hours

GOALS	STRATEGIES	MEASURES
PUBLIC HEALTH & SAFETY		
3. Reduce the number of incidents involving aggressive or unhealthy animals in the community	A. Develop and implement methods to evaluate and improve the impact and effectiveness of public health and safety resources and services provided by ASO B. Review, research, and provide recommendations on animal related policies and regulations that impact public health and safety, seeking review and/or approval from governing bodies as applicable	1. 311 call volume related to animal public health and safety incidents
STAFF & VOLUNTEERS		
1. Enhance working conditions and build skilled and supported staff and volunteers	A. Develop and implement a comprehensive training and development program for staff and volunteers B. Conduct staffing analysis to determine appropriate levels of staff and volunteers and ensure pay equity C. Conduct an analysis of equipment needs for staff and volunteers, and take steps to address them D. Review, research, and recommend policies, regulations, training, and processes to ensure the health and safety of staff and volunteers, seeking review and/or approval from governing bodies as applicable	1. Training completion rates for staff and volunteers

GOAL	STRATEGIES	MEASURES
2. Increase morale and satisfaction of staff and volunteers	A. Increase awareness of and access to resources to support the mental health needs of staff B. Develop programs to improve volunteer participation and retention, including incentives and team building C. Develop programs to improve staff retention, including team building, mentorship, and career development D. Increase and improve cooperation between staff and volunteers	1. Retention rates for staff and volunteers 2. Staff and volunteer satisfaction rates (collected through surveys) 3. Percentage of staff that attend annual compassion fatigue training
3. Improve operational efficiency	A. Maintain, regularly update, and enforce clear standard operating procedures B. Review, analyze, clarify, and define roles and responsibilities of staff, volunteers, and partners C. Conduct analysis of technology, contracts, and shared services needed to operate shelter at maximum efficiency and create a roadmap for implementation	1. Percentage of standard operation procedures reviewed and updated annually

GLOSSARY

ADOPTION: The act of obtaining (adopting) a pet from an animal shelter or animal rescue organization.

AGGRESSIVE ANIMAL: A dog or cat that exhibits a range of behaviors that can be threatening or harmful to other animals or people. These behaviors may include growling, snarling, biting, snapping, swatting, or attacking other animals or people.

ANIMAL PROTECTION OFFICERS (APOS): Staff responsible for responding to animal welfare and safety concerns in the community.

ANIMAL SERVICES OFFICE (ASO): The City of Austin department responsible for providing animal welfare services and resources for Austin and unincorporated Travis County.

AUSTIN ANIMAL CENTER (AAC): The name of the municipal animal shelter that ASO operates for the City of Austin and unincorporated Travis County located at Levander Loop in East Austin.

BEHAVIORAL ANIMAL: A classification used at AAC for a dog or cat that requires additional resources and staff time and experience to safely manage or handle.

BEHAVIORAL PLAN: A process or procedural plan that identifies the actions needed for the individual animal to encourage safe handling by the staff and public. This plan may also include opportunities for training and learning as a means of enriching the animal both physically and mentally.

BUILDING SERVICES DEPARTMENT: City of Austin department responsible for maintaining and improving AAC's facilities.

COMMUNITY CAT PROGRAM: AAC program that assists with the large number of free roaming cats in Austin by providing health care, sterilization, and resources to the community members who care for them.

DESCRIPTION: A brief overview of each focus area.

ENRICHMENT: The process of improving the care of confined animals by providing them with social interaction, physical and mental stimulation, opportunities to perform species-typical behaviors, and choice and control over their environment.

FINDER-TO-FOSTER PROGRAM: A program that provides people who find stray animals with resources, vaccinations, and health care to enable them to temporarily house them while efforts are made to reunite the animal with their owner or find an adopter. This reduces the number of animals entering the shelter.

FOCUS AREA: ASO's high-level priorities. These foundational elements guide ASO in advancing its mission and achieving its vision.

FOSTER: A person who works with animal shelters or rescue organizations to care for adoptable animals in their own home until the animal can be placed in a permanent home.

GOAL: A specific end-result that ASO envisions, plans, and commits to achieve.

LIVE-RELEASE RATE: The percentage rate of live outcomes (adoptions, transfers and animals returned to their owner) divided by all outcomes that occur within the operations of the shelter.

MEASURE: How ASO will track progress toward achieving its goals. Targets will be developed to gauge progress year to year.

MICROCHIP: A small permanent electronic chip, the size of a grain of rice, that has been implanted under an animal's skin. When scanned by a microchip scanner, a unique identification number is found with the owner's contact information of that animal.

MISSION: The core purpose and role ASO serves in supporting the community and achieving the vision. ASO's mission was not updated as part of this process.

OWNER SURRENDER: A term used to describe a pet owner, residing within the jurisdiction of ASO, who knowingly and under no duress, surrenders their pet, and their rights to their pet, to ASO.

PET RESOURCE CENTER (PRC): A service providing resources to help pet owners keep their animals rather than surrendering them to a shelter.

PLEADING AN ANIMAL: The process of contacting rescue partners and/or the public to locate permanent placement for an animal, generating an outcome for the shelter.

RETURN TO OWNER (RTO): The term used when reuniting lost pets with their owners.

RESCUE: A non-profit organization whose mission is finding homes for animals they have rescued from a variety of sources including private and public animal shelters.

SPAY AND NEUTER: Surgical procedures to sterilize animals through removal of the reproductive organs.

STRATEGIES: Actionable plans or methods that ASO will take to achieve its goals.

TRAP-NEUTER-RETURN (TNR): An approach for population management of outdoor community cats for sterilization. Cats are humanely trapped, surgically sterilized, vaccinated, ear-tipped, and returned to their original location.

VISION: A shared idea of what the community will experience when ASO implements this plan.

Animal Services Office