



Gateway Pet Guardians

Strategic Plan

Background and Context

Fifteen years ago, those driving through East St. Louis, Illinois would encounter dozens of homeless animals. Mangy dogs, packs of dogs huddling in abandoned houses, litters of kittens. Feral dogs roamed the outskirts of town, fearful of humans and slinking through the brush. These animals posed a health risk, as they spread disease to owned pets and were undersocialized and unpredictable.

Gateway Pet Guardians (GPG) was established in 2004 to support the efforts of PJ Hightower, who had been feeding these strays daily since 1995. However, the landscape wasn't changing. We took a different approach and created a holistic Community Outreach Program offering services to residents in the Metro East. Our current service area includes zip codes in East Side Pet District, including 62201, 62203, 62204, 62205, 62206, and 62207. Our services now include spay/neuter services, bi-annual vaccination clinics, emergency vet care, support for community cat caretakers, and access to resources that otherwise would be unavailable to residents in our service area.

Statistics from St. Clair County Animal Control (SCCAC) support the need for additional programming and support for residents in the Metro East St. Louis Community. In 2017, 607 pets entered the facility from East Side Pet District (ESPD), of 2,475 pets from the entire county. 24.53% of intake at SCCAC came in through this designated area. Of that intake, 24.05% of pets did not leave the facility and were euthanized.

Animals enter the system one of four ways: owner surrender, stray, confiscation, or owner requested euthanasia. Pets surrendered to SCCAC in 2017 included 31 adult cats, 78 adult dogs, 27 kittens, and 22 puppies from East Side Pet District (26% of all intake from ESPD). Strays brought into SCCAC in 2017 included 62 adult cats, 226 adult dogs, 73 kittens, and 18 puppies (62.4% of all intake from ESPD). Gateway Pet Guardians plans to address these statistics in our move to East St. Louis, Illinois through peripheral programming.

East St. Louis has always been our primary target area. With this move, our first step will be to focus all intake efforts on East St. Louis with the intention of expanding and replicating our success to the rest of East Side Pet District.

In 2017, of SCCAC's total intake of 2,475 pets, the intake from East St. Louis alone was 221 pets. We believe by absorbing 8.9% of SCCAC's intake population, SCCAC could better serve surrounding communities (including many others in our service area) and we could make a

greater impact on the animals we are intaking. For example, in 2017, the return-to-owner percentage for large dogs from East St. Louis to SCCAC was only 4.7%. Of the 149 adult dogs entering the facility from East St. Louis, only 7 returned home to their families. This statistic is even more striking for cats. No cats left the facility to return home to their families from East St. Louis. By creating a return-to-owner and lost pet flying initiatives targeting this statistic, as well as the convenient location and hours of our facility, we can significantly increase the likelihood of pets returning home from East St. Louis.

Furthermore, East St. Louis has a population of 26,662, with a median household income of \$19,946. 44.7% of residents are at the poverty level ([U.S. Census Bureau](#)). Of that population, there are approximately 3,790 pet owning households. It's a community in need of help, but not just financially. East St. Louis is what we call a 'resource desert,' with no veterinary clinics and few pet supply/grocery stores available to obtain pet food. Even if residents are financially able to care for their pets, there are few resources within the community they can rely on. We plan to be that resources for community members seeking assistance for their pets.

Solution

At Gateway Pet Guardians, we strive to provide the resources necessary to care for pets, so residents can better care for both themselves and their animals.

In late October/early November 2018 (date TBD), we are hoping to further our mission by bringing these crucial resources directly into the Metro East Community. We are purchasing an old school building and retrofitting it to fit our organizational and our community's needs. We plan to close on the old Miles Davis School located in East St. Louis, Illinois in late October/late November, 2018 (date TBD). This space offers over a dozen classroom spaces that can be utilized to create an all inclusive facility, including shelter operations, low-cost veterinary wellness services and spay/neuter surgeries, and community resources. This building will be a central hub for pet owners in the Metro East to access free and low-cost services.

Mission

Gateway Pet Guardians community outreach program strives to ensure that pet owners in the Metro East have the resources they need to provide their pet(s) with a long, happy and healthy life.

We will be redefining our mission as we move.

Strategic Objectives

Our move into the new facility will be driven by the following strategic objectives:

- 1.) Supporting pet owners in the East Side Pet District to keep pets in their homes and out of the shelter by providing access to free and low-cost resources.
- 2.) Facilitate programming such as shelter intervention and return-to-owner initiatives to prevent intake into the shelter system.

- 3.) Create and cater programming and resources to meet the unique needs of the community.
- 4.) Provide shelter for homeless animals, including intake, rehabilitation, adoption and/or networking to other animal welfare organizations.
- 5.) Support St. Clair County's No-Kill Resolution by absorbing East St. Louis city stray and owner surrender cases, thus reducing intake from our service area at St. Clair County Animal Control.
- 6.) Explore and implement innovative approaches to ending animal homelessness in our service area.

Key Programs

The following programs will be integral to the success of our new facility:

1. Intake/Intake Diversion Program
 - a. Divert owner surrenders through resource provisions
 - b. Improve return to owner rate through lost pet programming, free ride home programming and accessible/affordable location
 - c. Increase and improve networking and transport of animals in East Side Pet District
2. Shelter Program: Intake stray and owner surrendered animals from East St. Louis and provide temporary shelter until animals can be moved to foster, adoption, or another organization.
 - a. Increased shelter capacity
 - b. Designated cat sheltering spaces
3. Foster Program: Animals to remain in GPG's care may be moved to temporary foster homes as they wait for families to adopt.
 - a. Crash pad foster programming to house animals waiting for transfer
4. Adoption Program: Adoption process (application through final paperwork) for animals in Shelter and Foster Programs.
 - a. Reduce barriers to adoption through conversational adoptions
 - b. Increase adoptions through onsite adoptions and adoption events
5. Volunteer Program: Opportunities for volunteers to engage at the shelter and in other areas within the organization.
 - a. Targeted volunteer recruitment within East Side Pet District
 - b. Pay It Forward program for recipients of East Side Pet Crisis Fund
6. Fundraising Program: Establish revenue streams and support donor relationships to maintain and grow the organization.
7. PR/Marketing Program: Maintain positive messaging and supportive marketing materials to support our mission in the Metro East.
8. Community Outreach Program: Several programs and services are available to aid families within our service area.
 - a. Provide access and transport to free or low-cost spay/neuter services.
 - b. Support pet owners in cases requiring free or low-cost emergency vet care.

- c. Provide access to supplies and resources--both animal and human-centric--to families within our service area.
- d. Provide access to free or low-cost pet food.
- e. Provide access to free or low-cost wellness services.
- f. Provide access to free or low-cost microchip services.

External Analysis

One organization that has established similar services in low-income communities is Emancipet. Emancipet's mission is to make high-quality spay/neuter and veterinary care affordable and accessible to all pet owners. They have strategically built high-quality low-cost clinics in targeted communities--including Central Austin, East Austin, Pflugerville, Killeen, Houston, and Philadelphia.

Another national movement is the Humane Society of the United States' Pets for Life Program. Pets for Life builds humane communities using innovative strategies and fresh approaches designed to extend the reach of animal services, resources, and information to underserved areas. Addressing the critical need for accessible, affordable pet care, they help animals by empowering the people who care for them.

Locally, Carol House Quick Fix Pet Clinic provides low-cost services to families in the St. Louis area, including spay/neuter surgeries and wellness services. We have been partnering with this clinic since 2012, and they perform most of the surgeries for our Spay/Neuter Program.

It is our intent to use best practices identified by the facilities and organizations listed above and cater services and resources to our local landscape to meet our community's needs.

Goals, Measures, Targets, and Initiatives

We plan to move in two phases: Initial Shelter Operations and Wellness Clinic and Spay Neuter Suite. Each phases consists of the following 'rooms':

Phase 1: Initial Shelter Operations

During this phase, we will move general operations from our current shelter in St. Louis to our new facility. The following rooms will need to be renovated and operating to accomplish this phase:

- 1.) Intake Exam Room: Initial stop for pets upon intake to receive vaccinations and other vetting.
- 2.) Intake Room: Holding room for seven-day stray hold for new intakes with indoor/outdoor access.
- 3.) Intake Segregation Room: Holding area with indoor/outdoor access for sick or aggressive animals to be closed to general volunteers and staff only.
- 4.) Grooming/Bathing Suite: Facilities for grooming and bathing pets
- 5.) Adoption Floor: General indoor/outdoor access kennels for adult dogs.
- 6.) Indoor/outdoor Multi-dog Suites: 4 suites to house multiple dogs that have proven to be dog friendly through play groups.

- 7.) Single Cat Room: General kennel housing for cats and kittens.
- 8.) Free-Roaming Cat Room: Multiple spaces for cats that can live together to roam free.
- 9.) Administration Desk and Director Offices: Workspace and initial entry into the building.
- 10.) Volunteer Check-in and Lounge: Space for lockers, volunteer resources and computer for check-in at start and end of each shift.
- 11.) Community Resource Center: Space for shelter diversion and intervention initiative as well as access to additional GPG programming.
- 12.) Retail Center: Low-cost pet resources and supplies available on site, including tie-outs, leashes, collars, bowls, treats, doghouses, etc.

Phase 2: Wellness Clinic and Spay/Neuter Suite

During this phase, we will focus on opening our low-cost wellness clinic to the general public. We will also build our spay/neuter suite to provide services to animals at intake with the possibility of providing low-cost high volume services in the future.

- 1.) Waiting Room/Education Room: Space for pets and owners to wait for services. Includes heartworm education materials, spay/neuter information, and details about additional services.
- 2.) Exam Rooms: Series of three exam rooms for pets receiving wellness services.
- 3.) Surgery Prep Room: Veterinary equipment for surgical prep, including recovery kennels.
- 4.) Surgery Suite: Surgical equipment and supplies.