



meet **SMIDGEN**

SHAPING A STRONGER, SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR PETS AND THEIR PEOPLE

FIVE YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

(2026-2030)

PAWSATLANTA.ORG



PAWS Atlanta:

Shaping a Stronger, Sustainable Future for Pets and Their People



*A Message
from our
Executive Director
& Board Chair*

Dear Friends and Supporters,

It is with great pride and deep gratitude that we share PAWS Atlanta's new five-year strategic plan. For 60 years, PAWS Atlanta has been a trusted resource for pets and pet owners across Metro Atlanta. Since 1966, we have remained dedicated to creating a more compassionate community where every pet can thrive and every family has access to the resources they need to keep their beloved animals healthy and safe.

This plan is the product of thoughtful collaboration among our staff, board, volunteers, donors, and supporters. We listened closely to our community, reflected on our role in a rapidly changing animal welfare landscape, and envisioned how we can deepen our impact for decades to come. The result is a bold, yet grounded roadmap designed to expand lifesaving care and ensure that we are meeting the evolving needs of our community with empathy, innovation, and excellence.

Our strategic priorities will guide us as we continue to advance our animal-centric shelter operations, expand community-based programs, and build the systems, collaborative relationships, and resources necessary to support more Metro Atlanta pets and their owners. We will invest in our team, leverage data to inform decisions, cultivate partnerships, and strengthen our financial resilience to ensure long-term sustainability.

This work is possible because of the supporters, fosters, adopters, donors, and volunteers who believe in our mission. Your commitment has shaped PAWS Atlanta's history and will protect the future of countless cats and dogs as we broaden access to care, empower pet owners, and help keep animals out of shelters.

The journey ahead is both ambitious and inspiring, and we approach it with purpose and optimism. Together, we will continue transforming lives, one pet and one family at a time.

With gratitude,

Crystal Brennan
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Katie Beacham
BOARD CHAIR



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Shelby's Story

Shelby, a beloved PAWS Atlanta alum originally adopted in 2023, was found by animal control in March 2025. Because of our lifelong commitment to our pets, she came straight home to us but was barely able to walk and had a frightening cancer diagnosis from another vet. However, our veterinary team took a closer look and discovered the real issue was a severe torn cranial cruciate ligament, a painful but treatable injury. Shelby received a life-changing surgery and weeks of foster-based recovery care. Free from pain for the first time in a long while, she regained her strength and joy and was ultimately adopted again into a loving home, proving that lifelong commitment and donor-funded medical care can truly change everything.

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Executive Summary



For 60 years, PAWS Atlanta has stayed true to the heart of who we are: a no-kill shelter dedicated to rescuing animals in need, giving them compassionate, high-quality care, and working tirelessly to match them with their perfect forever families. Our mission has always extended far beyond the day an animal is adopted. We believe deeply in a lifetime commitment to every pet who leaves our doors, and no matter how much time has passed, or how far we need to travel, we will always welcome back any PAWS Atlanta alum who needs us again. This unwavering promise remains at the heart of who we are and will continue to guide our work for decades to come, and it is the foundation on which we now build the next chapter of our strategic vision.

PAWS Atlanta stands at a pivotal moment in its history. From our roots as a small shelter to our role today as a leader in no-kill excellence, we have adapted to meet the changing needs of animals and families in Metro Atlanta. This growth has positioned us not only as a safe haven for pets in crisis, but also as a trusted partner in building stronger, healthier communities.

Looking ahead, the challenges facing animal welfare are complex and interconnected. Rising veterinary costs, housing instability, and limited access to affordable pet care place families at risk of losing beloved companions. At the same time, shelters across the country are experiencing record intakes and growing demands for resources. These realities call for organizations like PAWS Atlanta to think beyond traditional sheltering and embrace holistic solutions that support both pets and the people who love them.

This strategic plan was developed to chart a clear and ambitious path forward by providing a roadmap for the next five years or growth and innovation. Through a collaborative process that included input from staff, volunteers, board members, supporters, and community partners, we identified both our greatest strengths and the areas where we must grow. This plan reflects both the challenges and opportunities facing animal welfare in Metro Atlanta and positions PAWS Atlanta as a trusted leader in the field. Developed from extensive research into emerging needs, trends, and best practices related to sheltering and animal welfare, and with input from key stakeholders, the plan balances aspirational goals with practical strategies for impact.



Our Mission:

PAWS Atlanta is a trusted no-kill animal shelter committed to compassionately caring for pets in need, supporting the people who love them, and keeping pets where they belong, safe in their homes and communities. We provide refuge for animals in need, vital resources for pet owners in crisis, and tailored pathways that lead to successful, lasting placements. Guided by integrity, innovation, and a deep sense of community, we stand with pets and their people through every stage of life and create a lifelong safety net for both.

Our Vision:

We envision a community where no pet is at risk simply because care is out of reach. By expanding access to veterinary services, strengthening partnerships, and offering compassionate support, PAWS Atlanta helps keep pets with their families and prevents crisis before it begins.



Neco's Story

"A week ago was the first month mark that we adopted Neco. He has adapted to his new home and his new routine very well.

Also, something magical occurred the day after I brought him home. We were walking on the Beltline and this guy came toward me asking me if my dog was named Neco and if I adopted him from PAWS Atlanta. With all the people living in the city, we met the person who surrendered Neco. He was crying, I was crying; it was very emotional. He told me all about his mom and dad (who were the original owners) and how after their deaths he couldn't take care of Neco. During our chat, I could see his guilt disappear! It was magical... It was like his parents were there to show him that their beloved Neco was ok and surrounded by a lot of love again!

Both my husband and I are besotted with this little fluffy lovable creature. We are so lucky to have found him!"

- NECO'S FOREVER FAMILY



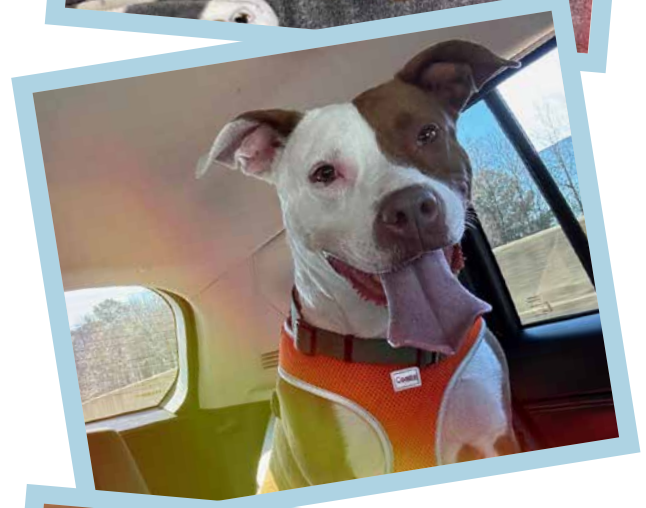
Smidgen's Story

BioLab Fire Pup Finds Her Forever Home

Smidgen, a playful and affectionate pit bull mix, was rescued from the BioLab chemical plant fire in Rockdale County in September 2024, the same disaster that left much of the area under a shelter-in-place order due to hazardous air conditions. Among the 14 dogs saved that day, Smidgen became the longest-tenured of the BioLab pups at PAWS Atlanta, waiting 461 days for her perfect match.

During her time in foster care, Smidgen thrived. Her foster shared that she loved napping on the couch, curling up in laps, and enjoying playtime far more than long walks. She learned to manage her excitement around people and other dogs, adapted well to house-training, and settled into routines. "She's such a sweetheart and has gotten a lot of love," her foster said. "All in all, she's doing very well and has settled in wonderfully."

Now adopted by a loving family and renamed Frankie, she adores her new home, snuggling with her people, playing with her toys, and soaking up all the attention she waited so long for. Her story is a testament to PAWS Atlanta's unwavering commitment: we never give up on the pets in our care, no matter how long it takes to find their perfect match.



PAWS Atlanta's Strategic Pillars

The PAWS Atlanta Strategic Plan is organized around three interconnected pillars. Each pillar reflects a central area of focus, supported by specific objectives that define how we will achieve our vision for 2030. Together, they create a balanced approach that advances animal welfare, strengthens community partnerships, and ensures long-term organizational sustainability.

Long-Term Sustainability

To secure PAWS Atlanta's future, we will strengthen our financial foundation, expand philanthropic and grant support, and diversify revenue streams through community-based services. We will also invest in our staff, volunteers, and organizational culture to ensure our team is equipped to lead with compassion and expertise.

Leader in Animal Welfare

We will advance innovative practices in animal care, reduce in-shelter stress, and expand educational resources for the community. By creating a physical space that fosters innovation and access, PAWS Atlanta will become a cornerstone for training, advocacy, and thought leadership in Metro Atlanta and beyond.

Community Partner

Recognizing that keeping pets in homes is as important as adopting them out, we will expand crisis support, veterinary access, and mobile services to meet families where they are. Through partnerships with human service organizations, we will deliver holistic support that strengthens the human-animal bond and reduces the need for surrender.



meet
BERNADETTE



meet
DJ SKIP TRAC



meet
NEWSIES



Objective:

Ensure PAWS Atlanta has the financial resources, visibility, and talent to thrive long into the future.

Long-Term Sustainability

Key Strategies

1. Strengthen long-term financial sustainability

- Achieve sustainable financial growth by moving beyond a balanced budget and expanding organizational cash reserves.
- Implement cost-containment measures to maintain operational efficiency without compromising quality of care.
- Build a multi-year financial model to project growth, manage reserves, and identify funding gaps early.
- Allocate annual surpluses to a designated reserve fund to ensure future financial stability.

Timeline:

Short-term launch (Year 1), Ongoing growth (Years 2-5)

2. Expand Philanthropic Support

- Increase major donor contributions by 50% through cultivation, stewardship, and personalized engagement.
- Publish impact reports to build donor trust, potentially increasing contributions by demonstrating ROI on donations.
- Secure four new corporate sponsors each year for the first three years.
- Grow sustaining/recurring donor base by 15% year over year.

Timeline:

Short- to mid-term launch (Years 1-2), Ongoing growth (Years 3-5)



meet
PHOENIX



meet
RED



meet
CADET KELLY





meet **CHEEZ-IT**

Key Metrics for Success

- Annual revenue growth of 15% with a goal of a \$4.5m budget by 2030.
- Increase in sustaining donors by 50% over five years.
- Corporate sponsorships valued at \$100K annually by Year 5.
- Increase institutional giving by 50% by Year 5.
- Launch of targeted marketing campaign by Year 1.
- Development of one key media partnership by Year 2.
- Doubling social media engagement and growing email subscribers by 50% by Year 2.
- Implementation of two earned-income programs by Year 2.
- Staff retention rate above 85%.

Strengthen Grant Funding

- Apply for and secure multi-year foundation and corporate grants aligned with pet retention, veterinary access, and innovation.
- Establish at least three new private foundation partnerships by Year 2

Timeline: Short-term relationship building (Year 1), Mid-term growth (Years 2–3).

Grow Brand Visibility in Metro Atlanta

- Launch a targeted marketing campaign to showcase PAWS Atlanta's community impact.
- Increase earned media coverage and strategic partnerships with local media.
- Measure visibility by doubling social media engagement and growing email subscribers by 50%.

Timeline: Short-term launch (Year 1), Ongoing growth (Years 2–5)

Expand Revenue-Generating Services

- Increase availability of low-cost spay/neuter and preventive care.
- Explore additional fee-for-service programs that align with mission (training classes, wellness clinics, mobile services).

Timeline: Short-term launch (Years 1-2), Ongoing growth (Years 3–5)

Invest in People and Culture

- Create and implement professional development plans for each staff member.
- Increase volunteer retention and engagement through recognition and training.
- Build a leadership succession plan to secure long-term growth.

Timeline: Short- to mid-term (Years 1–3)



Objective:

Position PAWS Atlanta as a trusted leader in animal care, advocacy, and innovation.

Leader in Animal Welfare

Key Strategies

1. Reduce In-Shelter Animal Stress and Behavioral Issues

- Implement evidence-based enrichment, training, and foster expansion programs that align with the Five Freedoms, ensuring every animal's freedom from hunger, discomfort, pain, and fear, and their ability to express natural behaviors, to strengthen PAWS Atlanta's leadership in humane, science-based care.
- Expand targeted programs for hard-to-place animals using behavioral assessments and marketing campaigns to increase adoption rates.

Timeline:

Short-term (Years 1-2)

2. Become the Go-To Resource in Metro Atlanta

- Advocate for local policies in DeKalb County to position PAWS as a thought leader beyond education. Partner with organizations for broader impact.
- Establish PAWS Atlanta as a hub for training, education, and advocacy for pet owners, shelters, and the community.
- Develop partnerships with schools, businesses, and civic organizations.

Timeline:

Mid-term (Years 2-3)

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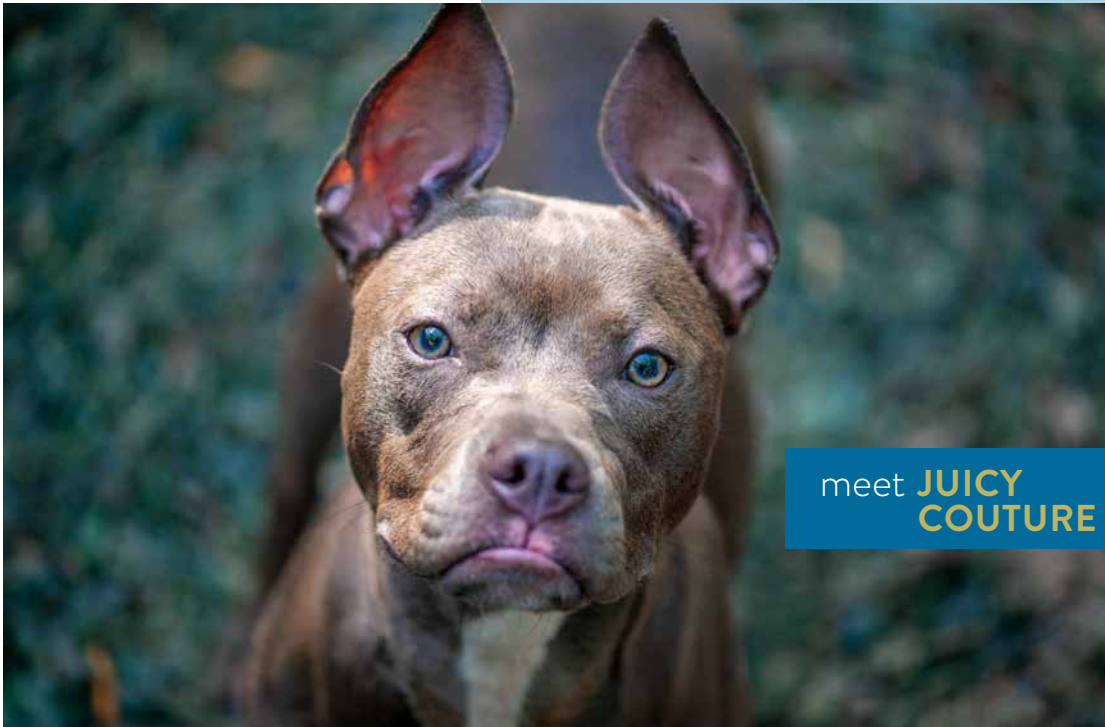


meet
ROLLY



meet
MIKE THE MANAGER





meet **JUICY COUTURE**

Key Metrics for Success

- 25% reduction in behavioral-related returns by Year 3.
- At least 500 people trained annually through education programs by Year 5.
- Launch of new or improved behavioral/medical/foster programs by Year 5.
- Capital campaign readiness by Year 3.
- PAWS Atlanta recognized by peers as a top innovator in no-kill practices.

Expand Educational Offerings

- Pilot community workshops and online resources on pet care, behavioral training, and retention.
- Train volunteers and staff as ambassadors for community education.

Timeline: Short-term launch (Year 2), Ongoing growth (Years 3–5)

Build or Expand a Physical Space to Support Mission

- Complete feasibility study for new or renovated facility that accommodates adoption, training, community engagement, and medical services.
- Launch capital campaign feasibility study and begin campaign.

Timeline: Feasibility and planning (Years 2-3), Capital campaign (Years 3-5) ongoing growth (Years 2-5)

Advance Animal Welfare Innovation

- Pilot new programs related to behavioral therapy, advanced medical interventions, or foster-to-adopt innovations.
- Share outcomes with the wider sheltering community to position PAWS Atlanta as a thought leader.

Timeline: Mid- to long-term (Years 3–5)

Objective:

Deepen PAWS Atlanta's role as a safety net for pet owners and a trusted partner in community health and welfare.

Community Partner

Key Strategies

1. Expand Crisis and Support Services

- Build out resources for families in crisis (temporary pet housing, food pantry, limited vet services).
- Partner with human service organizations (animal welfare organizations, domestic violence shelters, senior programs, housing agencies).

Timeline:
Short-term launch (Year 1),
Expansion (Years 2–3)

2. Grow Veterinary Access for Underserved Communities

- Expand public veterinary services, with focus on preventive care.
- Pilot mobile vet unit(s) to reach pet owners in underserved neighborhoods.

Timeline:
Planning (Year 1),
Launch (Years 1–3),
Full rollout (Years 4–5)



meet
LABORGHINI



meet
SCARLET WITCH



meet
MAMA HEN





meet **DR. SCISSOR PAWS**

Key Metrics for Success

- At least 100 pets kept with families annually through crisis services.
- Mobile vet program serving 500+ pets per year by Year 5.
- Documented reduction in surrender reasons tied to financial or housing barriers.
- Establishment of 2 new partnerships annually with local nonprofits and/or governmental organizations.
- At least 6 annual meetings, testimonies, or letters of support submitted to local or state policymakers by Year 2.
- At least 25 trained community ambassadors or peer educators equipped to share information about PAWS Atlanta's services by Year 3.

Strengthen Pet Retention Programs

- Provide resources (food, training, supplies, other assistance) that reduce owner surrenders.
- Track retention outcomes to demonstrate impact and attract new funding.

Timeline: Short-term launch (Year 1), Evaluation and scaling (Years 2–5)

Integrate Human-Animal Support Services

- Develop holistic programming in partnership with local nonprofits and government agencies (mental health, housing, senior support).
- Position PAWS Atlanta as a leader in community-based animal support services.

Timeline: Mid-term (Years 2–3), Expansion (Years 4–5)

Community Engagement & Advocacy

- Strengthen PAWS Atlanta's role as an advocate for animal welfare policies that keep pets and families together.
- Mobilize community volunteers and ambassadors to share resources in underserved areas.

Timeline: Ongoing (Years 1–5)

The Road Ahead: PAWS Atlanta's Vision for 2030

Staff and Volunteer Roles

- **Staff:** Lead program design, donor relations, and service delivery
- **Volunteers:** Expand reach through fostering and community outreach
- **Board:** Provide governance, fundraising support, and strategic oversight

Partnerships and Collaborations

- Collaborate with local shelters, human service providers, vet schools, local government, and corporate partners
- Join regional and national coalitions to strengthen advocacy and thought leadership



By 2030, PAWS Atlanta will be recognized as a cornerstone of animal welfare in Metro Atlanta: a trusted leader in lifesaving care, a hub for education and advocacy, and a vital resource for families across our community. We will operate from a position of strength, with the financial stability, innovative programs, and dedicated team needed to make lasting change for pets and the people who love them.

5 Year Timeline

Year 1

Launch major donor program, increase recurring donors, expand food bank, implement shelter enrichment.

Year 2

Increase institutional giving, launch mobile vet programs, pilot community workshops.



for 2030



Measuring Success

Evaluation Framework

- Quarterly dashboard tracking key metrics across all pillars.
- Mobile vet program serving 500+ pets per year by Year 5.
- Annual program evaluation tied to objectives and outcomes.
- Annual and midyear performance evaluations for all team members, including progress against professional development plans.

Annual Reporting Process

- Produce a publicly available Annual Impact Report for donors and stakeholders.
- Share transparent progress updates with the community.

Continuous Improvement

- Annual strategic plan review and refresh with the board, facilitated by the executive director.
- Incorporate stakeholder feedback into program design
- Adjust goals if needed based on evolving community needs.

Year 3

Begin advocacy initiatives and launch capital campaign feasibility study.

Year 4

Expand earned revenue programs, double outreach impact.

Year 5

Meet \$4.5M budget target, demonstrate measurable reductions in surrenders.





meet
FRED FLINTSTONE

2026 PAWS Atlanta Leadership

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Jennifer MacMillan Eicher, Vice Chair
Henry Yoo, Treasurer
Uren Patel, Secretary
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Heidi Gleason
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Tamara Lopata
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Crystal Bowman, Executive Director
Laura McKelvey, Director of Operations
Dr. Erica Noltemeyer, Medical Director
Harriet Ribbons, Director of Development
JD Downs, Finance Manager
Michael Knutsen, Shelter Manager
Phillip Smith, Facilities Manager

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