



February 15, 2016

City of Palo Alto  
250 Hamilton Ave.  
Palo Alto, CA

Dear City of Palo Alto:

Thank you for inviting Humane Society Silicon Valley (HSSV) to share our perspective on Palo Alto Animal Services' (PAAS) recent Request For Proposal (RFP) and your interest in learning more about the reasons why we declined to submit a bid. We applaud your efforts to understand the broader issues surrounding homeless pets and welcome the opportunity to share what we have learned through extensive study of this issue in the greater Silicon Valley region, particularly in Santa Clara County. We hope our findings and suggestions will provide additional points of view to assist community thought leaders, decision-makers and those compelled to understand the dynamics of animal welfare in determining the strategic direction of PAAS.

To the extent the City of Palo Alto finds this information useful, we welcome opportunities to discuss and offer further input to best serve the interests of all the homeless animals in Santa Clara County, including those found in the cities of Palo Alto, Los Altos, and Los Altos Hills.

We would also like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for partnering with Palo Alto Animal Services through the WeCARE Alliance<sup>1</sup>. Through the alliance, Palo Alto has demonstrated it is one of the many cities in Silicon Valley working to address the needs of our broader community.

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<sup>1</sup> *WeCare Alliance is comprised of Humane Society Silicon Valley, Palo Alto Animal Services, San Jose Animal Care and Services, Santa Clara County Animal Care and Control, Silicon Valley Animal Control Authority, and Town Cats. These organizations represent the sheltering capacity /infrastructure of Santa Clara County. In 2012, the WeCARE Alliance received the Maddie's Fund Lifesaving Award for being the first community of its size population to save all healthy animals and to make the commitment to do so forever going forward.*

This letter outlines the scope of the homeless pet problem in Santa Clara County, the percentage of those animals handled through PAAS, HSSV's decision to not submit a bid in response to the PAAS RFP, our suggestions for considering the services offered through PAAS, and the future of animal sheltering in general.

### **Defining the Scope of the Problem**

**Santa Clara County intake for 2015 was 22,813 homeless animals.** This data is compiled for the WeCare Alliance. Over the last 5 years (2010 to 2015), the number of homeless animals has declined from 25,852 in 2010 to 22,813 in 2015. We believe this is largely due to aggressive spay/neuter efforts for all species, as well as Shelter, Neuter, Return (SNR) for cats and targeted spay/neuter efforts in specific zip codes where access to general animal services is limited.

**PAAS intake for 2015 was 505 animals.** This represents only 2.2% of the total intake for Santa Clara County (See Exhibit 1).

**Lost pets re-united by PAAS with their owners in 2015 were 163 animals.** Of the 505 animals handled by PAAS in 2015, 163 animals were reunited with their owners. Of these 163 animals, an estimated 15% were re-united with their owners through Palo Animal Control Officers and therefore did not need to be taken into the shelter itself. The remaining 139 animals were housed in the Palo Alto shelter and subsequently re-united with their owners.

The population for the cities of Los Altos, Los Altos Hills and Palo Alto are 104,986 residents<sup>2</sup> combined. *This means that only 0.13% of the residents of Palo Alto, Los Altos, and Los Altos Hills benefited from the geographic proximity of the Palo Alto shelter in reuniting them with their lost pet in 2015.*

**Animals not reunited with their owners by PAAS in 2015 were 342 animals.** Animals not reclaimed by their owners are in need of services such as spay/neuter and adoption placement. However, the actual physical location of those services does not impact whether or not those animals' lives are at risk. Today, there are several organizations in reasonable proximity to PAAS that offer spay/neuter services and adoption placements (See Exhibit 2).

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<sup>2</sup> Palo Alto residents estimated for 2013 = 66,642; Los Altos residents estimated for 2013 = 30,010; Los Altos Hills residents estimated for 2013 = 8,334. Data from city-data.com.

## HSSV's Decision To Not Submit a Response to PAAS RFP

HSSV's decision not to submit a response to the PAAS RFP is based on the focus of our mission to use resources to save the greatest number of animals possible in the Silicon Valley region, especially Santa Clara County. Based on our analysis of the scope of the problem as outlined above, we believe that submitting a proposal to PAAS would cause us to lose focus on our overall mission because:

- PAAS' desire to have its partner collaborate to build a new, full-service animal shelter creates redundant infrastructure within the community for a very small percentage of the county's homeless animals. This takes away from the resources that could be garnered and deployed to save the lives of animals still at risk today in Santa Clara County. In addition, as the WeCARE Alliance continues to focus on driving down total intake across the county through targeted spay/neuter initiatives, we anticipate that existing sheltering facilities will have greater capacity to handle animals in the local area in the coming years.
- There are existing facilities today that offer spay/neuter services and adoption placement within reasonable distance to PAAS (See Exhibit 2). As noted, these services are not as reliant on geographic proximity to residents' homes for their success given how infrequently they need to be accessed and the non-emergency nature of those services.

We understand Palo Alto would ideally like to have a full service shelter in the city that is operationally sustainable but we believe it's important to realize that no single **municipality**, which offers animal services, operates at "break even" for these services. While a shelter does need to break-even, there are no municipal entities anywhere in the country, to our knowledge, that offer animal services that do not also have a funding outlay in some fashion for those services. Pooling resources with other municipalities to create a break-even sheltering organization – **if** there is enough intake volume to warrant distributing the fixed costs across numerous city budgets - can lessen the costs for these services. The extremely low volume of PAAS today combined with the decreasing volume county-wide suggest that it will be difficult to create a separate sustainable sheltering organization especially when such resources could be deployed towards targeted spay/neuter to continue to drive down intake and to save the lives of animals still at risk in Silicon Valley today.

In addition for both Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties, there are viable animal control and care services in place with up-to-date facilities so it is unlikely that other municipalities would choose to leave those arrangements in order to fund a new joint venture with Palo Alto. There is a need for updated facilities further south in Santa Clara County where there is significantly more intake volume than at PAAS. However, the lack of proximity to Palo Alto, Los Altos, and Los Altos Hills residents does not make partnering with those municipalities very feasible.

### **HSSV Recommendations**

There are a number of scenarios that can be pursued to address Palo Alto's needs, largely based upon collaboration and utilization of the existing infrastructure and services in Santa Clara County and the greater Silicon Valley region. Although other entities are named as part of the solution, HSSV has not engaged these organizations in these suggestions. Should Palo Alto wish to pursue some or all of these suggestions, HSSV would be happy to work with Palo Alto to facilitate the necessary conversations and agreements.

#### **We suggest the following in regards to animal control:**

- Continue with the city's current plan to move animal control under the Police Department per the audit recommendation. This maintains the high level of service that is valued by city residents and continues to provide opportunities to reunite lost pets with their owners by not having these animals going into a shelter in the first place.
- Alternatively, Silicon Valley Animal Control Authority (SVACA) is the closest organization to Palo Alto's existing facility, which could potentially provide animal control services. They are a quality organization to consider working with in the event that PAAS wants to further explore outsourcing animal control services, which could also result in further cost savings to the city.

#### **We suggest the following options for consideration in regards to sheltering:**

- **Option A:** If Palo Alto wants to continue to have a local shelter under its operation, we would recommend turning it into a stray-holding facility and then partnering with members of the WeCARE Alliance to transport animals to other facilities, once an animal's stray holding period is up, for adoption

placement. This would minimize the number of animals that need to be cared for by PAAS at any given time. In addition, the city could contract with Pets In Need (PIN), which is located 6.5 miles from existing the PAAS facility, for veterinary services that homeless animals might need during their holding period and to get them spayed/neutered before they are returned to their owners. In addition, we highly recommend a focus on driving down the cause of intake. **Palo Alto has an exemplary save rate for dogs at 95%. The save rate for cats, however, is only 71%.** We highly encourage PAAS to undertake a SNR initiative to significantly increase its save rate for cats and to ultimately reduce intake into the shelter. It would be less costly for the city to operate a modest stray holding facility with a focus on reducing the root causes driving intake than to build a new, state of the art shelter when the broader community already has reasonable infrastructure to address the homeless pet population.

In addition, this option also supports continuing to utilize volunteer involvement with PAAS as a stray holding facility, which we recognize is an important aspect of the spirit of citizenship within Palo Alto.

- **Option B:** Outsource sheltering to closest facilities. We would be happy to assist the cities of Palo Alto, Los Altos, and Los Altos Hills in discussions with SVACA and/or PIN regarding outsourcing options, which are the two organizations most closely located to Palo Alto, Los Altos, and Los Altos Hills residents (See Exhibit 2). SVACA could potentially handle volume from all 3 cities. There may also be opportunities to have Los Altos and Los Altos Hills animals handled by SVACA for both animal control and animal sheltering and have Pets in Need handle animal sheltering from Palo Alto while Palo Alto continues to handle Animal Control for its residents. HSSV is willing to make commitments to both of these organizations to assist in managing capacity by taking animals after their stray holding periods if necessary, to maintain and help increase Santa Clara County's overall save rate.

Information in the recent PAAS audit indicated that 49% of residents would be willing to drive 10+miles to *redeem and look* for their lost pet. Using the 139 animals that entered the Palo Alto Shelter and were reunited with their owners in 2015, and applying the 49% of the population willing to drive 10+ miles, then 68 owners would have been willing to drive to another facility to be reunited with their pet. This would leave 71 animals/families in Palo Alto, Los Altos, and Los Altos Hills affected by not having a shelter located in Palo Alto each year. ***Based upon the number of residents in these cities, this would be .07% of the combined population of these cities.***

Additionally, current PAAS volunteers could offer their services to other animal-related organizations in proximity to the current PAAS facility. While not under the umbrella of city services, there are organizations that would welcome additional volunteers in their animal welfare initiatives so local residents still have the opportunity to contribute in a meaningful way to this effort. See Exhibit 3 for a partial listing of these organizations.

**We also suggest the following regarding spay/neuter services, which are an important part of driving down the number of animals needing to be sheltered in the first place:**

- Complete an analysis of where animals are originating from in the first place and working with HSSV and PIN to conduct targeted spay/neuter clinics. In addition, in collaboration with PIN, we would be open to establishing mobile spay/neuter services in critical areas that are driving intake into PAAS today. Successful spay/neuter efforts in other parts of the county have resulted in significant reductions in intake over the past few years, which would further reduce variable costs to the city.
- Encourage residents to utilize PIN for spay/neuter services. PIN currently offers free spay/neuter services to all residents of California. Their location is 6.5 miles from PAAS.
- Embrace SNR. PAAS's feline save rate is the greatest opportunity to improve Palo Alto as well as the community's overall save rate. Numerous studies have shown that SNR successfully reduces the number of animals coming into shelters and HSSV is happy to assist with a volunteer network that is highly skilled and committed to this effort<sup>3</sup>.

### **The Future of Sheltering**

The future of sheltering is changing. As noted, spay/neuter initiatives are becoming more targeted and effective which means we anticipate intake into animal shelters in Santa Clara County overall will continue to decline. In addition, Maddie's Fund, a highly respected animal welfare organization with the single largest endowment for animal welfare in the country, recently decided **not** to

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<sup>3</sup> Most recent study can be found in *Journal of American Veterinary Medical Association*, Volume 248, No. 3, February 1, 2016 regarding success at San Jose Animal Care and Services.

build a new, state of art animal shelter in the Bay Area. They believe that resources are best spent on developing a network of foster families to house animals and to encourage adoption events through existing organizations.

In conclusion, Humane Society Silicon Valley would like to thank Palo Alto's decision-makers for the opportunity to share our perspective and suggestions. Should there be questions, we are happy to discuss further. We strongly urge Palo Alto to seek a solution that can be cost-effective to the cities of Palo Alto, Los Altos, and Los Altos Hills, sensitive to these cities' residents, and in the best interests of the homeless animals across all of Santa Clara County. And, we look forward to continue collaborating through the WeCARE alliance on projects that address issues facing the broader community so the entire Silicon Valley community can continue to lead the way in animal welfare.

Regards,



Carol Novello  
President  
Humane Society Silicon Valley  
408-262-2133 x141  
cnovello@hssv.org



Jeanne Wu  
Vice President – Human Resources  
Humane Society Silicon Valley  
408-262-2133 x182  
jwu@hssv.org

### Exhibit 1: Palo Alto Animal Services Intake\*

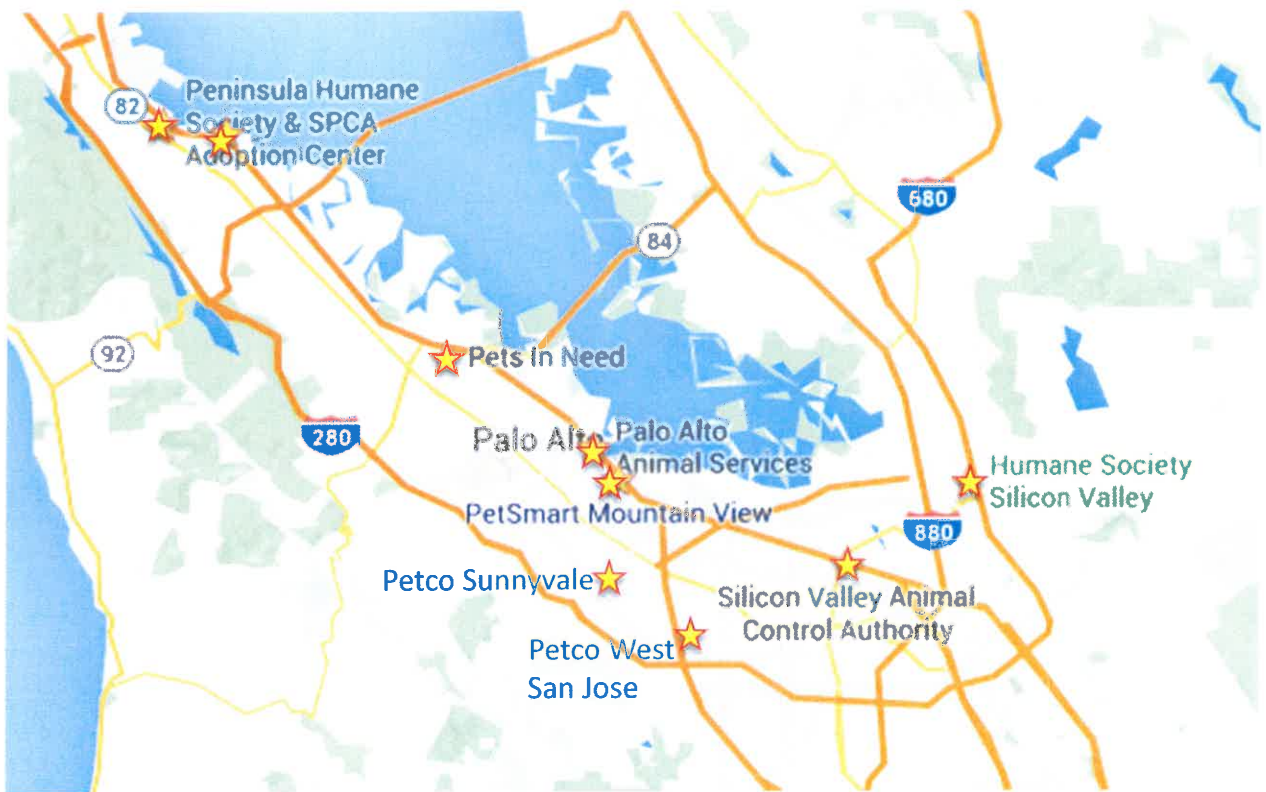
Year	Intake	Reunited	Reunited by Animal Control**	Net Reunited by facility	Remaining Animals
2013	635	182	27	155	453
2014	514	134	20	114	380
2015	505	163	24	139	342
<b>Average for 3 Year Period</b>	<b>551</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>392</b>

\* These numbers are from the WeCARE Alliance statistic worksheets, which are compiled annually for all member organizations of the alliance.

\*\*Animal control estimates that 15% of animals are reunited without entering the shelter.



## Exhibit 2: Map of Proximity To PAAS of Other Shelters and Adoption Centers



### Current distance from existing PAAS facility Based on Google Maps (In order from nearest to farthest proximity):

- PetSmart Mountain View HSSV Neighborhood Adoption Center – 1.8 miles
- Pets in Need – 6.5 miles
- Petco Sunnyvale HSSV Neighborhood Adoption Center – 7.8 miles
- Silicon Valley Animal Control (SVACA) – 10 miles
- Humane Society Silicon Valley Animal Community Center – 14.4 miles
- Petco West San Jose HSSV Neighborhood Adoption Center – 15.3 miles
- Peninsula Humane Society Holding Facility – 17.1 miles
- Peninsula Humane Society Adoption Center – 18.8 miles

### **Exhibit 3**

#### **Partial Listing of Animal Welfare Organizations For Potential Hands-On Volunteer Opportunities**

Copper's Dream ([coppersdream.org](http://coppersdream.org))

Feline Friends Network ([felinefriendsnetwork.org](http://felinefriendsnetwork.org))

Furry Friends Rescue ([furryfriendsrescue.org](http://furryfriendsrescue.org))

Homeless Cat Network ([homelesscatnetwork.com](http://homelesscatnetwork.com))

Humane Society Silicon Valley Animal Community Center ([hssv.org](http://hssv.org))

Nine Lives Foundation ([ninelivesfoundation.org](http://ninelivesfoundation.org))

Peninsula Cat Works ([peninsulacatworks.org](http://peninsulacatworks.org))

Peninsula Humane Society ([peninsulahumanesociety.org](http://peninsulahumanesociety.org))

Pets in Need, Redwood City ([petsinneed.org](http://petsinneed.org))

Petco Sunnyvale Neighborhood Adoption Center (operated by HSSV)

PetSmart Mountain View Neighborhood Adoption Center (operated by HSSV)

Pound Puppy Rescue ([poundpuppyrescue.org](http://poundpuppyrescue.org))

Safe Haven for Cats ([safehavenforcats.com](http://safehavenforcats.com))

Silicon Valley Animal Control Authority ([svaca.com](http://svaca.com))

## **Exhibit 4**

### **Humane Society Silicon Valley Leadership and Board Members Who Are Residents of Palo Alto, Los Altos, and Los Altos Hills**

#### **Sally Hazard Bourgoin**

Organizational Development Consultant  
HSSV Board Vice Chair  
Palo Alto Resident

#### **Peter Detkin**

Founder, Intellectual Ventures  
HSSV Board Member  
Los Altos Hills Resident

#### **Sumita Dutta**

Golden Seeds, Managing Director  
HSSV Board Member  
Palo Alto Resident

#### **Carol Novello**

President, HSSV  
Los Altos Resident

#### **Clint Severson**

CEO, Abaxis  
HSSV Board Member  
Palo Alto Resident