



COMPREHENSIVE REPORT

MGST 615: Strategic Business Analysis

Prepared For: Calgary Humane Society

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Executive Summary

Working with the Calgary Humane Society (CHS), we embarked on a project that explores the lack of affordable pet-friendly housing in Calgary and its connection to an increase in pet surrenders. Using primary research methods including surveys and interviews, we collected insights from key stakeholders including landlords, tenants, and social services groups to identify barriers and opportunities in the Calgary rental market. The purpose of this project is to outline strategic direction that CHS can take to alleviate intake pressures, find ways to influence the supply of pet-friendly rentals, and keep more families and their pets together.

Through primary research, we found that most landlords are risk adverse due to the perception that renting to pet owners results in more damage, cleanliness, and noise than renters without pets. Tenants confirmed how difficult it was to find pet-friendly housing without strict requirements including breed, size restrictions, and steep deposits or monthly pet rent. Lastly, common themes from the social services group confirmed that landlord requirements are major barriers and both funding and safe keeping programs are overwhelmed.

Based on our research, we recommend that CHS develops six initiatives. These include building a landlord and tenant toolkit, adding a dashboard to better track KPIs, expand on existing programs offered, develop a partnership ecosystem map, and implement an internal response hub for staff responding to intake requests. These initiatives will position CHS as a leader in pet-friendly housing change while also preventing unnecessary pet surrenders.

Background Information: A Holistic Assessment

As part of the MGST 615 capstone project, our team partnered with the Calgary Humane Society (CHS) to explore the rise in pet surrenders across Calgary. Although CHS had observed increasing intake volumes over the past few years, the organization had addressed many of the known drivers such as veterinary access and spay/neuter support through existing programs. What remained less understood was the role of pet-friendly housing and how it contributed to intake pressures. Early insights from previous student teams suggested that housing challenges might be a significant pressure point, prompting a deeper examination of rental market barriers and their connection to surrender trends. Building on this foundation, our team focused on analyzing the relationship between affordable pet-friendly housing, surrender patterns, and broader community impacts, with the goal of informing future strategies that may help reduce avoidable intakes and alleviate pressures on CHS.

Since housing pressures intersect with broader market conditions and community supports, the project required a wide lens. Our work involved analyzing ten years of CHS intake data, gathering perspectives from tenants, landlords, and service providers, and reviewing Calgary's rental market conditions to understand how affordability constraints and restrictive pet policies influence surrender decisions.

Through CHS's intake data, stakeholder interviews, and Qualtrics survey results, clear patterns emerged regarding the housing related pressures that contribute to pet surrenders. Feedback from tenants, landlords, and community organizations consistently highlighted limited pet friendly options, rising rental costs, and policy restrictions as recurring challenges for pet owners. These findings help illustrate the broader environment in which surrender decisions occur and highlight opportunities for CHS to strengthen prevention through partnerships, education, and targeted outreach.

Together, these elements provide the foundation for a holistic assessment of housing related pressures and help clarify the strategic context for CHS as it continues refining its approach to surrender prevention and community support.

Background Information: Primary and Secondary Data

Pet ownership is an integral part of many Canadian households, yet housing restrictions continue to create significant challenges for pet owners, particularly renters. At the time of engaging the project team, the issue of pet surrender due to availability of affordable pet-friendly housing was the third highest reason for pet surrenders according to the CHS intake data. This pattern is shaped by several factors in the Calgary Housing market including changing vacancy rates, availability of pet-friendly units, new supply of housing, rent fluctuations, landlord/condo policies, Calgary's

housing policies and Calgary's population growth, tenant expectations that often limit pet ownership. Understanding how these dynamics influence pet ownership sustainability is essential to designing interventions that reduce unnecessary relinquishments and expand pet-friendly housing options in Calgary.

Primary and Secondary Data Sources

Primary Data

The following primary data was collected and formed the cornerstone of this research:

- Comprehensive report from previous students on related topic
- Calgary Humane Society's shelter intake records (by date, and reason for surrender) to identify patterns over time.
- Landlord, tenant and social group interviews exploring attitudes and policies
- Landlord, tenant and social group surveys exploring attitudes and policies
- Rental market scan across major listing platforms (e.g. RentFaster) to quantify the proportion of pet-friendly rental units in Calgary.

Secondary Data

Secondary data provided broader context for interpreting the primary findings, including:

- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) rental market and vacancy statistics for Calgary (2018–2024)⁵.
- Rentals.ca & Urbanization data - Urbanation is a real estate research firm providing market research. Urbanation provides in-depth market analysis and consulting services to the apartment industry since 1981⁶.
- City of Calgary Housing Market and Affordability Reports, which track changes in supply, rents, and vacancy rates⁷.
- Pet friendly tool kits in use in other cities, provinces and countries
- Government of Canada announcements on housing and immigration policy, including 2024–2025 international student permit caps that may affect rental demand.

Findings from Secondary Data

The secondary research revealed that Calgary's pet-friendly housing landscape is shaped by a complex ecosystem of animal-welfare organizations, non-profit service providers, housing operators, legal information agencies, and private-sector market players. Collectively, these actors influence the supports available to renters with pets, the guidance provided to landlords, and the systemic barriers contributing to housing-related pet surrender.

In terms of housing prices in Canada, rents have seen a two-year consecutive drop as well as year-over-year decline for the 13th consecutive month, the 2.2% annual drop in October was the

smallest in a year, suggesting a softening in declines⁶. The western provinces led the decline in rents, with B.C. (-5.8%) and Alberta (-5.3%) posting the steepest drops. In Calgary, average rent decreases were steep for one-bedroom apartments⁶ (-6.8% to \$1,633) and two-bedroom apartments (-6.8% to \$2,004) however, data suggests mixed trends as this decline in rent does not apply to all apartment types. In particular, detached and townhouse/duplexes continue to set historic highs \$3,747 a 3.27% increase YoY, the latest rent declines have coincided with record high apartment completions, population decreases for non-permanent residents, and a weakening job market.

With respect to social groups, our scan of Calgary and Alberta organizations did not identify any other structured renter-readiness and behaviour program for pet-owning renters comparable to Calgary Humane Society's Pets & Renters program. While several organizations offer critical supports such as food assistance, crisis safekeeping, legal information, or general pet-care guidance, CHS appears to be the only organization locally providing integrated behaviour support specifically to help renters succeed in tenancies and reassure landlords.

Across the animal-welfare sector, organizations such as AARCS, MEOW Foundation, Parachutes for Pets, Alberta SPCA, ARF, and Rescue Friends offer strong foster networks, food assistance, rehoming resources, veterinary support, and crisis-response programs. However, most lack dedicated renter education, landlord engagement, or housing-navigation tools. Several organizations particularly AARCS and MEOW represent strong collaboration opportunities for CHS through cross-referrals, shared educational content, and emergency boarding support.

Secondary research also revealed substantial gaps and opportunities in the local ecosystem. Key needs include: a centralized tenant-resources hub; consistent pet-friendly screening tools; improved landlord assurance materials; cross-agency emergency boarding pathways; a coordinated pet-food support network; and data-driven advocacy connecting housing supply, rental trends, and animal surrender rates. The research points to significant collaboration potential with organizations such as AARCS, MEOW, YW Calgary, Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter, and national bodies like Humane Canada.

Overall, the secondary research demonstrates that while Calgary's ecosystem holds many strong service providers, information is fragmented, landlord engagement is limited, and systemic barriers persist. These insights directly inform CHS's role as a potential central hub for pet-inclusive housing offering coordinated supports, cross-agency partnerships, risk-mitigation tools for landlords, and structured programs that keep people and pets together.

PESTLE Analysis of the Calgary Housing Market (2023 – 2025)

We performed a PESTLE and SWOT analysis (see [Appendix I](#) for SWOT Analysis) for the Calgary housing market, and the result of the PESTLE Analysis was as follows:

Political Factors

Political decisions across federal, provincial, and municipal levels have influenced Calgary’s housing landscape in the past two years. The federal government introduced international student permit caps in 2024 to help manage population growth and reduce pressure on housing, infrastructure, and public services⁸ This policy reduced incoming international students by an estimated forty percent, easing rental demand in areas with high student populations.

At the provincial level, Alberta’s *Stronger Foundations* strategy sets a 10-year plan to expand affordable housing for an additional 25,000 households through new units and rent supplements, signaling long-term policy attention to housing need ⁹

At the municipal level, the City of Calgary released a Housing Strategy in 2023 focused on increasing non-market housing and expanding diverse housing types across the city⁷. This commitment has strengthened long term supply planning and encouraged collaboration with affordable housing providers and developers.

Overall, supportive municipal policies and moderating rental demand have begun to relieve pressure on the housing market. As supply grows, there is potential for more flexible rental practices that better accommodate tenants with pets.

Economic Factors

Economic conditions in Calgary have shifted significantly from 2023 to 2025, directly affecting rental supply, affordability, and household decisions. The city has experienced strong growth in purpose built rental construction, which has contributed to rising vacancy rates and slower rental price growth. Calgary’s total rental market has seen an increase in vacancy rates from 1.4% in 2023 to 4.6% in 2024¹⁰. This increase in completion has moved the market from a period of tight supply toward a more balanced environment.

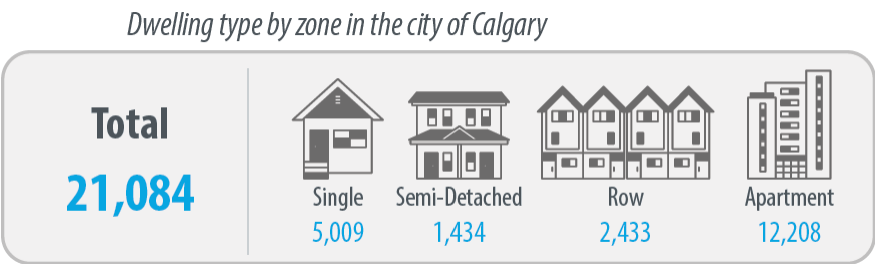


Figure 1a: Total number of housing completions in 2024 ¹

This supply shock has begun to show up in rents. CMHC’s 2025 mid-year update indicates that advertised rents in Calgary declined between **2% and 8% year-over-year in Q1 2025**, depending on segment ¹¹

At the same time, rental demand has softened due to slower migration, a cooling labor market, and fewer temporary residents. These changes have reduced economic pressure on rent, although larger

and family-oriented units remain more expensive because of sustained demand for additional space.

Overall, these economic trends have shifted in favour of renters: higher vacancy and softer rents give tenants more leverage and choice. For households with pets, this improves the chance of finding an affordable, suitable unit without resorting to surrender. However, rents are still elevated compared to pre-2022 levels, so lower-income families remain at risk.

Social Factors

Calgary's renter population continues to diversify, with young professionals, families, and newcomers shaping new expectations for housing. Tenants increasingly prioritize amenities, convenience, and flexible living arrangements, which has contributed to growing demand for newer, higher quality multi-family developments.

First, population growth remains strong, even as temporary resident numbers are being deliberately reduced. Investor analyses highlight that Calgary's population grew by roughly 6% in 2024¹² driven largely by interprovincial in-migration of young professionals and families seeking relatively affordable housing and job opportunities.

Second, social attitudes toward pets as part of the family also remain strong. CHS intake data shows that housing related pet surrenders have declined in recent years, a trend that aligns with improving rental affordability and greater unit availability. With more choice in the market, many renters are better able to secure housing without relinquishing their pets.

To go with that, tenant expectations are changing. Renters increasingly favour amenity-rich, professionally managed multi-family buildings with modern finishes, good transit access, and flexible leases. This drives demand toward newer purpose-built rentals, where standardized policies (including pet policies) are more common and can, in some cases, be more transparent.

However, social inequities persist. Lower-income households and larger families still face difficulty securing affordable units with adequate space. These barriers can become even more challenging for renters with multiple pets or large breed animals.

Technological Factors

Technology affects both how housing is built and how it is accessed. On the construction side, technological innovation in construction and property management has influenced both the volume and quality of Calgary's housing supply. New multi-family projects increasingly employ modern building systems, improved sound insulation, energy-efficient designs and digital access controls, all of which enhance tenant satisfaction and simplify management for property owners.

On the market access side, digital platforms (Rentals.ca, Rentals.ca, RentFaster, etc.) provide detailed, filterable listings that often explicitly state whether pets are allowed. Digital rental platforms also shape the tenant experience. Advanced listing tools allow renters to search by price,

location, and amenities making it easier to identify suitable housing. Tenants can even view a 3D video of the apartment before deciding to schedule a viewing or not. For landlords, technology supports more efficient screening and property management, helping ensure consistent application of policies.

Together, these advancements contribute to a more transparent and responsive rental market, which benefits renters seeking pet friendly housing.

Legal / Regulatory Factors

Alberta's residential tenancy framework gives landlords significant discretion over pet acceptance, fees, and related conditions. This flexibility supports property owners but creates structural barriers for renters with pets, who have fewer legal protections than in jurisdictions where pets are permitted by default or where pet deposits are regulated.

Condominium bylaws add further restrictions based on pet size, number, or breed, reducing options within many multi-unit buildings. Although Calgary has taken steps to increase overall housing supply, there are no regulatory mechanisms that guarantee pet inclusive access.

As a result, even when vacancy rates improve, the legal environment remains a key factor in determining whether better market conditions translate into meaningful access for pet owning households.

Environmental & Demographic Factors

Finally, environmental and demographic trends shape long-term housing demand patterns. Calgary continues to grow through both densification and outward expansion. New multi family and high-density developments support environmental and land use goals by reducing urban sprawl and offering more sustainable housing options. These projects make up much of the recent rental supply and appeal to smaller households and mobile professionals.

The city has also experienced strong population growth over time. Although recent federal caps slowed short term demand from temporary residents, long term projections still anticipate growth driven by interprovincial migration, international immigration, and natural population increase. These trends will continue to shape expectations and pressures within the rental market.

Environmental design features such as green spaces, walkable layouts, and pet amenities are becoming more prominent in new developments. Projects that incorporate outdoor relief areas, dog wash stations, and durable flooring can attract both tenants and developers, particularly as competition within the rental market increases.

Project Objectives

When beginning this project, our principal goal was to deliver strategic initiatives based on research and data analysis. Although there were similar toolkits available online, for example,

through the Edmonton Humane Society, CHS wanted to ensure they provided guidance rooted in data. By supporting our deliverables with data that came from local sources, we hoped the added context of this being a Calgary problem would enhance our initiatives due to direct relevance. Another thing that was important was gathering as much primary data as possible. This meant circulating our survey to a broad network and interviewing as many stakeholders as we could fit in. The more data we collected, the more feedback and insights we could inform our deliverables with.

There are a few ways to measure this project's success. First and foremost, staying on track with our project timeline and hitting every milestone. Given the tight time frame, we had to complete this project, sticking to our timeline is instrumental to success of the project. Additionally, upon delivering the final presentation, we measure success by receiving positive feedback from the client. If the client is happy and feels they can utilize our deliverables, then that means we achieved our goal. This leads us to the last benchmark that measures success, which is the implementation of the strategic initiatives. We will know if we were successful if CHS takes our strategic direction and applies it to the problem.

The outcomes of this project were 6 strategic initiatives including a landlord and tenant toolkit, this comprehensive report summarizing key insights, and a presentation. CHS's priorities were data collection, analysis, and resources for landlords and tenants who find themselves in this predicament. As for expectations, CHS did not have many besides the deliverables. They would have been happy no matter what we delivered, but being able to go beyond and develop a dashboard for them to improve their surrender tracking efforts was very appreciated. Overall, our deliverables were in alignment with both CHS' expectations and strategic priorities.

Methodology

This project adopted an exploratory, mixed-methods approach aimed at understanding the perceptions, behaviors, and attitudes of landlords, tenants, and social service or non-profit organizations toward pet ownership and affordable housing. The primary research question guiding the study was:

What are the behaviors, perceptions, and experiences of landlords, tenants, and social service organizations regarding pets and affordable housing, and how do these shape the connection between housing accessibility and pet surrender?

Our research process followed industry best practices to ensure methodological rigor and actionable insights for the Calgary Humane Society (CHS). We began by engaging in comprehensive consultations with CHS stakeholders to clarify the project objectives, align expectations, and identify key research themes related to pet-inclusive housing and surrender prevention. Based on these consultations, we developed a detailed project roadmap and execution timeline outlining data collection, analysis, and synthesis phases.

To gather primary data, we designed and administered three structured surveys targeting landlords, tenants, and social service/non-profit organizations across Calgary. After evaluating several data collection tools, we selected Qualtrics for its robust analytical features, user-friendly design, and integrated statistical functions. Qualtrics allowed us to streamline survey creation, distribution, and analysis within one platform, eliminating the need for secondary software such as SPSS or Excel for quantitative data analysis. The surveys were designed to capture both quantitative measures (e.g., prevalence of pet policies, perceived risks, frequency of pet-related challenges) and qualitative insights (e.g., open-ended reflections on housing barriers, landlord attitudes, and client experiences). Qualitative analysis was conducted on interviews and some open-ended responses from the survey through Excel. This dual approach provided a comprehensive understanding of stakeholder perspectives and revealed nuanced relationships between pet ownership, housing access, and surrender risk.

Throughout the project, we adhered to a disciplined milestone tracking system to ensure timely completion and accuracy. Iterative progress reviews were conducted with CHS representatives to validate emerging findings and integrate client feedback. The final analysis synthesized cross-sector data to uncover patterns, shared challenges, and opportunities for collaboration within Calgary's housing ecosystem.

Prior to final delivery, we performed rigorous quality assurance to verify data integrity, ensure consistency across datasets, and confirm that findings accurately reflected participant input. This exploratory methodology provided CHS with a grounded understanding of how stakeholder behaviors and perceptions influence the availability of pet-friendly housing and informed the development of targeted, evidence-based recommendations to keep people and pets together.

Key Findings/Project Results

Landlord Descriptive Analysis of Survey

A total of 78 respondents identified as landlords in the survey. Most are small-scale housing providers: 71% manage a single rental unit and a further 21% manage 2–5 units, with only a small minority overseeing more than six units. This means the dataset primarily reflects the experiences and views of individual or “mom-and-pop” landlords rather than large corporate property managers.

In terms of housing types, landlords most commonly reported managing single-family homes (n = 35), followed by townhouses/duplexes (n = 19), basement suites (n = 18), and condo units (n = 17). Apartment buildings were rare in the sample (n = 1), and seven landlords selected “Other,” describing rooming houses, bachelor basement suites, a four-plex, individual room rentals, mixed +main-floor/basement arrangements, and some commercial or edge-use spaces.

Current pet policies show a substantial degree of pet acceptance. Just under 40% of landlords reported allowing all pet types in all units, and a further 27% allow only certain pet types in all units (e.g., cats and small dogs, non-shedding animals, or pets that meet condo rules). An additional 9% allow pets in only some units or under specific conditions (e.g., fenced yard, main floor with backyard), while 24% reported that pets are not allowed at all.

Demand for pet-friendly housing appears high: over half of landlords indicated that tenants “often” or “very often” inquire about bringing pets, and 81% have rented to tenants with pets either frequently or occasionally. Sentiment toward tenants who own pets is mixed but leans positive overall: 20 landlords described their views as “very favorable” and 17 as “somewhat favorable,” while 21 were neutral and 20 expressed unfavorable views. Around 39% reported being more concerned about specific pet types, sizes, or breeds (e.g., large or “aggressive” breeds, cats due to allergies or odor, or untrained dogs), while 61% said they did not have particular pet-type concerns.

Experiences with pet-related challenges are varied. Among those who have rented to pet owners, the most frequently reported issues were cleaning and turnover costs (47 landlords) and property damage (44 landlords), followed by noise complaints (20) and some insurance concerns (14). Thirteen landlords reported no problems at all, and open-text comments indicated that when issues did occur, they were often manageable or tied to specific tenants rather than pets in general.

Risk management practices are common. Most landlords who accept pets use some combination of requirements and conditions: 62 reported using a pet agreement in the lease, 43 limit the number of pets, 21 impose size or breed restrictions, and 15 ask for vaccination records; some also request pet resumes, references, or additional cleaning fees. Cost-based controls are similarly widespread: 34 charge a pet-specific deposit, and others use monthly pet rent, one-time fees, or higher overall security deposits, although one-third reported charging no additional pet-related costs. The majority view these measures as at least somewhat effective in managing risk, with most rating them “somewhat effective” or “very effective.”

Finally, the descriptive data indicate a nuanced attitudinal landscape. Building features such as soundproofing and shared spaces are influential for many landlords, though 31 reported they are not influenced by these features at all when deciding about pets. Many landlords said they would be more flexible with pets if supports such as higher deposits, pet insurance, strong tenant references, pet resumes, or industry/insurance incentives were available. At the same time, a distinct subgroup selected “no willingness to compromise” and expressed firm opposition to pet-inclusive policies. Views on responsibility are similarly split: while many landlords believe they have “some” or a “significant” role in supporting tenants who own pets and agree that lack of pet-friendly housing contributes to pet surrender and housing insecurity, others deny any responsibility and see pet ownership as a purely individual choice. Overall, the descriptive profile suggests a predominantly small-scale landlord population with high exposure to pet-owning tenants, a mix of

pet policies and risk controls, and a wide range of attitudes from highly supportive to strongly resistant toward pet-friendly housing.

Tenant Descriptive Analysis of Survey

A total of 215 tenants responded to the survey, forming the largest respondent group. Approximately two thirds of tenants currently own pets, most commonly dogs and cats, but also rabbits, birds, reptiles, and foster animals. Pet ownership spans all major housing types including apartments, townhomes, single family homes, condos, and basement suites, demonstrating that pet related rental challenges extend across the entire housing market rather than being limited to dense multi unit buildings. Almost all tenant respondents rent rather than own their homes, creating structural dependence on landlord policies.

While only 11 percent reported surrendering a pet due to housing, open responses describe significant emotional distress, such as rehoming long-term companions, staying in unsafe relationships, or moving into poor quality housing because it was the only pet friendly option. Sixty two percent have been denied a rental because of a pet, and half stated that finding pet friendly housing has been “extremely difficult.” Only one respondent reported that it was “extremely easy.”

Most tenants encountered multiple requirements when securing housing, including pet deposits, number limits, breed and size restrictions, and monthly pet rent. Many faced both non-refundable deposits and ongoing fees. Sixty-seven percent of all tenants stated these requirements made securing housing difficult. They also identified limited unit choice, higher rental costs, and negative assumptions from landlords as major barriers. Some described pressure from boards to euthanize aging pets to comply with number limits or secretly keeping pets to avoid eviction.

Even tenants without pets cited structural concerns. Many want animals but avoid getting one due to fear of displacement, lack of available units, or cost barriers. Three quarters of all tenants said that pet friendly housing was “extremely important” to them. When asked what would improve affordability, respondents most often requested pet inclusive rent instead of layered fees, along with more available units, lower deposits, subsidized insurance, or access to low-cost veterinary care. The most desired support was a verified pet friendly listings database, followed by tenant legal resources and help with deposits or mediation. Nearly half of tenants would obtain pet insurance if required, and sixty percent expressed willingness to participate in future pilot programs or advocacy efforts.

Open text responses confirm the intensity of the issue. Many tenants feel trapped in unsafe or unaffordable units because moving would require giving up their pets. Others reported staying in unhealthy relationships or living in substandard conditions because pet friendly options were too limited. Respondents repeatedly described their animals as family members and expressed frustration with inconsistent policies, non-refundable deposits, eviction threats, and discrimination based on breed or size. A recurring theme was the belief that Alberta should adopt legislation like Ontario, where landlords cannot prohibit pets outright.

Overall, the tenant data demonstrates a systemic shortage of pet friendly rental housing in Calgary. Restrictions appear not only through fees, but through outright lack of availability. The findings

support the development of an external dashboard to build public awareness, tenant facing toolkits and legal guidance, and partnership pilots with landlords willing to adopt pet inclusive models. The results position Calgary Humane Society as a neutral and credible partner able to bridge housing policy, landlord risk management, and humane outcomes for renters and their animals.

Advocacy / Social Service Agency Descriptive Analysis of Survey

A total of 32 respondents identified as social service or non-profit organizations, representing 10 percent of the full sample of 325 survey participants. These agencies include frontline shelters, outreach programs, housing providers, senior's services, and organizations supporting families with low income, disabilities, immigration challenges, or homelessness. Their perspectives offer an important system level view of how pet related housing barriers affect vulnerable groups.

Most agencies work directly with clients who own pets, with 18 organizations reporting frequent contact with pet-owning households and another 13-reporting occasional contact. Nineteen agencies formally track pet ownership in intake or case files, giving them direct visibility into clients' challenges. These organizations consistently report that pets play a meaningful role in wellbeing, with 24 respondents stating that pet ownership is "very important" or "extremely important" to their clients' mental health and stability.

Agencies overwhelmingly describe housing barriers as a frequent and persistent challenge. Nearly eighty percent of respondents said clients "often" or "very often" mention pets as a barrier to finding or keeping housing. Low-income families, people experiencing homelessness, seniors, and people with disabilities were identified as the groups facing the most severe obstacles. Agencies highlighted a consistent pattern of rental scarcity, high pet related fees, rigid size and breed restrictions, and subsidized housing programs that prohibit pets entirely. Many organizations reported that clients hide pets to avoid eviction or service denial.

Housing instability is a direct driver of pet surrender. Twenty-four agencies, representing three quarters of the sample, reported clients who had considered giving up a pet due to housing pressures. Open ended responses describe clients living in vehicles, entering unsafe housing, or remaining in harmful environments rather than surrender animals they consider part of their family. Multiple agencies noted that older adults and survivors of domestic violence are especially likely to keep pets even in risky situations because the emotional attachment is so strong.

Support needs are significant. The majority of respondents identified demand for pet friendly rentals, financial assistance for deposits, emergency foster care, and legal or advocacy help. Existing resources were widely viewed as ineffective. Agencies often cannot assist clients because of limited funding, lack of partnerships, shelter restrictions, and gaps in foster care networks. Only a small number reported existing collaborations with animal welfare groups, although most expressed interest in deeper partnerships moving forward.

Across the sector, agencies strongly endorsed systemic solutions. Pet friendly housing networks, financial assistance funds, and policy advocacy efforts were the most requested partnership

models. Respondents consistently stated that pet related housing issues should be treated as a high or critical community priority. Many emphasized that meaningful progress will require shifts in landlord engagement, condo and subsidy program rules, and broader public education about the role pets play in mental health and family stability.

Together, these findings portray a service system that frequently encounters clients in crisis because of pet related housing barriers. Agencies see the emotional, financial, and safety consequences firsthand, and they identify significant gaps in structural supports. Their responses point to opportunities for collaboration, targeted programming, and policy leadership aimed at reducing preventable pet surrenders and stabilizing households across Calgary.

Landlord Cross-Tabulation Analysis – Overall Summary of Key Findings

A series of cross-tabulation analyses were conducted to explore relationships between landlords' pet policies, experiences, attitudes, housing types, and willingness to change. Detailed tables for each cross-tab are presented in [Appendix II](#). Below is a narrative summary of the main patterns.

The landlord cross tabulation analysis reveals a coherent narrative about how pet policies, past experiences, attitudes, and structural housing constraints shape access to pet friendly housing. Across the data, landlords' decisions appear strongly influenced by their personal experiences with pet-related damage, the types of properties they operate, and the supports they believe would help them manage risks more confidently.

Landlords who prohibit pets report the highest rates of past damage and cleaning issues. Rather than suggesting that pet bans prevent problems, this pattern indicates that restrictive policies often emerge as reactive responses to earlier negative experiences. In contrast, pet friendly landlords generally report smoother operations and fewer issues, which may reflect the benefits of clearer expectations, stronger screening, or simply more positive relationships with tenants who own pets.

Attitudes closely mirror policies. Landlords who already allow pets tend to hold more neutral or favorable views toward pet-owning tenants, while those who prohibit pets report the most negative sentiment. This reinforces the idea that familiarity and direct experience reduce stigma, whereas landlords who never rent to pet owners maintain harsher assumptions. This finding could also indicate reactive negative sentiment after personal experiences with tenants who own pets. Housing type also adds a structural layer. Pet acceptance is highest in single family homes, basement suites, and other low-density, privately owned rentals. Condos and apartment buildings show much more restrictive patterns, shaped by condo board bylaws, shared governance, and perceived risks. These constraints limit pet friendly supply even when individual landlords might otherwise be open.

Support needs further differentiate landlords. Although most individual supports do not test as statistically significant on their own, the descriptive patterns are consistent: landlords who express interest in tools such as deposits, insurance, references, or partnerships show much higher willingness to consider allowing pets. This contrasts with a smaller, resistant subgroup who select

“no willingness to compromise” and remain firmly opposed regardless of incentives. Together, these patterns point to a large “moveable middle” of landlords who could shift their policies with the right supports.

Finally, the analysis highlights a belief–behaviour gap. Many landlords agree that a lack of pet friendly housing contributes to pet surrender and also acknowledge that landlords share some responsibility in addressing the issue. Yet these beliefs do not always translate into fully pet friendly policies. Emotional history, structural constraints, and risk perception appear to shape behaviour more strongly than values alone.

Overall, the findings illustrate a rental landscape where openness to pets varies widely by experience, housing type, and perceived support. They also reveal strategic opportunities for CHS to reduce surrender risk through education, practical risk-mitigation tools, and tailored engagement with landlords who show conditional openness. The detailed cross tab tables in [Appendix II](#) provide the underlying percentages and chi-square statistics that support these summarized findings.

Tenant Cross-Tabulation Analysis – Overall Summary of Key Findings

A series of cross-tabulation analyses were conducted to explore relationships between tenants’ pet ownership, experiences, challenges, past housing discrimination, and accessibility to find pet-friendly housing. Detailed tables for each cross-tab are presented in [Appendix III](#). Below is a narrative summary of the main patterns.

The tenant cross tabulation analysis reveals consistent patterns showing how pet ownership, past rental experiences, and current housing conditions shape renters’ access to pet friendly homes. Across multiple comparisons, current pet owners face more pronounced barriers than renters without pets, particularly those with dogs. These challenges appear to compound as renters search for housing, encounter landlord restrictions, or navigate the limited availability of suitable units.

Pet-owning tenants are more likely to report having been denied housing because of a pet, suggesting that ownership itself triggers barriers that non owners have not yet encountered. Housing type also plays a meaningful role. Renters living in townhouses or duplexes report the most difficulty securing pet friendly options, indicating that certain segments of the rental market may impose stricter or more inconsistent pet policies. Emotional attachment and practical necessity further intensify these challenges. Dog and cat owners place far greater importance on securing pet friendly housing than renters who do not currently own pets, reinforcing how lived experience shapes urgency.

The analysis also points to a clear link between hardship and engagement. Renters who have struggled the most to find pet friendly housing show the strongest interest in participating in CHS programs, pilots, or advocacy initiatives. Those who experienced smoother rental searches express less urgency, underscoring how direct exposure to housing barriers motivates community involvement.

Taken together, these patterns highlight that pet related housing challenges are not evenly distributed across the renter population. Instead, they concentrate among current pet owners, especially dog owners, and among households living in specific housing types with limited pet accommodating inventory. These insights reinforce the importance of targeted strategies and suggest that CHS initiatives will resonate most strongly with renters who have already faced significant obstacles in securing stable housing for their pets.

Non-Profit Organizations Cross-Tabulation Analysis – Overall Summary of Key Findings

A series of cross-tabulation analyses were conducted to understand how non-profit Organizations perceive and experience pet-related housing barriers among their clients. These findings highlight how structural conditions, landlord willingness, policy constraints, and early crisis detection shape pet-related vulnerability in Calgary. Detailed cross-tab tables are available in [Appendix IV: Advocacy & Social Services Cross-Tabulations](#). Below is a narrative summary of the most significant patterns.

These agencies occupy a close vantage point in the community and regularly support households that rely on pets for emotional stability, companionship, and family continuity. Their insights show that housing related pressures are not evenly distributed. They fall most heavily on clients who already have pets and who often struggle to secure stable, pet friendly accommodation.

Agencies that work closely with pet owning households report far more frequent exposure to housing barriers. They are also more likely to identify these barriers early, confirming that front line organizations act as early warning systems for families at risk of surrender. The analysis shows that structural restrictions such as subsidized housing limits, condominium rules, size and breed constraints, and a shortage of pet friendly units are strong predictors of clients considering surrender. These pressures arise well before a formal interaction with a private landlord and often shape the entire housing search process.

Landlord willingness also plays an important role. Agencies that report low landlord openness see higher levels of surrender pressure among their clients, while agencies that engage with more flexible landlords see fewer crises. Even minor increases in willingness can reduce the emotional and practical strain families face. The findings also show that agencies that track pet ownership detect more crises, including hidden pets and escalating housing risk. This suggests that improved data practices could significantly strengthen early intervention.

Across the sector, there is strong agreement that financial and program-based supports can help prevent surrender. Agencies consistently highlight the need for practical assistance such as emergency pet deposits, temporary foster options, landlord reassurance tools, and targeted subsidies. These supports are viewed as realistic and effective and are seen as essential for stabilizing households during periods of housing transition.

Together, these patterns show that advocacy and social service agencies hold important knowledge about how housing barriers shape the experiences of pet owning households. Their insights underscore the need for CHS to strengthen partnerships, enhance early identification of at-risk clients, and explore new support and pilot programs that address structural and financial pressures. The detailed findings in [Appendix IV](#) provide the foundation for these next steps.

Structured Interviews – Qualitative Analysis

The structured interviews provide a fuller picture of the realities behind Calgary’s pet friendly housing crisis. Across landlords, tenants, and advocacy agencies, a consistent set of themes emerged that reveal where the strongest pressures lie and where CHS can focus its efforts to stabilize families and prevent surrender. The insights suggest that while each stakeholder experiences the issue from a different angle, the underlying barriers are tightly connected. These barriers revolve around structural rules, affordability pressures, emotional bonds, past experiences, and gaps in support.

Landlords spoke most often about fear and risk. Property damage and cleanliness concerns were the most dominant themes, supported by vivid stories from past negative experiences. Noise complaints, insurance gaps, and strict condo bylaws added another layer of caution. At the same time, many landlords showed conditional openness when supports or assurances were available. Several described situations where trained pets, meet and greets, or higher deposits made them more comfortable. A smaller group held firm no pet policies rooted in personal preference or long-standing belief. The interviews suggest that many landlords are not hostile to pets in principle but feel unprotected by current systems. Clearer protections, education, and standardized tools may shift this group toward moderate acceptance.

Tenants, meanwhile, described the issue from a place of urgency and emotional weight. Many framed their pets as family members and shared that giving them up is not an option, even if it means living in cars, breaking leases, or accepting unsafe or unstable housing. Pet friendly units were consistently difficult to find, especially for larger dogs. Fees, deposits, and monthly charges added strain on top of an already severe affordability crisis. Tenants want clearer pathways to approval, honest communication about rules, and basic amenities like dog runs or pet-friendly outdoor space. The interviews underline how deeply tenants rely on their pets for emotional stability and wellbeing. For many, housing decisions are reorganized entirely around keeping the animal in their lives.

Non-Profit brought a systems level view, confirming how widespread and severe the problem has become. Almost every agency reported clients who struggled with finding housing that allows pets, with many describing extreme situations like people sleeping in cars or staying in unsafe units. Advocates emphasized the trauma of surrendering a pet and how heavily it impacts seniors, newcomers, low-income renters, and individuals fleeing crisis. They highlighted how structural restrictions like subsidized housing rules, weight and breed caps, and strict landlord criteria funnel vulnerable people into impossible choices. The interviews also pointed out gaps in funding, deposit assistance, and safe-keeping programs. Agencies stressed the need for stronger public education, collaboration with landlords, and expanded programs to keep families together.

Taken together, the qualitative findings reveal a system where emotional needs, structural rules, and resource gaps collide. Landlords want protection from financial or behavioural risk. Tenants want stability and fairness. Advocacy agencies see daily evidence of how rigid pet restrictions can destabilize already vulnerable households. Across all groups, there is broad support for practical solutions such as clear policy guidance, insurance or cleaning safeguards, deposit assistance, temporary foster options during crises, and collaborative landlord engagement. The themes indicate that interventions should focus on building trust, addressing structural gaps, and increasing the supply of safe, affordable, pet friendly housing. These findings offer a strong foundation for CHS to shape targeted programs, advocacy efforts, and partnerships that reduce avoidable surrenders and strengthen housing stability for families with pets.

Argument & Logical Connections

From the outset, this project aimed to move beyond surface-level explanations and understand the root causes behind the shortage of affordable, pet-friendly housing in Calgary. Together with the Calgary Humane Society (CHS), we set a clear objective: to explore the underlying behaviors, perceptions, and decision-making patterns of landlords, tenants, and social service providers, while examining the external forces market conditions, supply dynamics, and policy structures that shape the availability of pet-friendly rental units. Our goal was to generate recommendations that did not simply alleviate symptoms but meaningfully addressed the structural drivers of housing-related pet surrender.

In view of this goal, CHS and the project team agreed on three core deliverables:

- A landlord toolkit to support pet-inclusive practices,
- A tenant toolkit to help renters navigate and succeed in pet-friendly housing, and
- An internal CHS resource to guide staff and future advocacy efforts.

These were intentionally scoped to be realistic within the project timeline and to directly support CHS's immediate operational needs.

To achieve the project's objectives, we adopted an exploratory, mixed-methods approach (as described in the methodology section of this report) that allowed us to gather quantitative patterns and capture unfiltered, honest qualitative insights. The surveys—distributed to landlords, tenants, and social service/non-profit organizations—were designed to be anonymous to encourage openness. The mixed-methods design proved invaluable: while closed-ended questions revealed broad trends (e.g., prevalence of pet restrictions, perceived risks, and common challenges), the open-ended responses exposed nuances we could not have predicted, such as emotional dimensions of pet guardianship, misconceptions between groups, and concrete partnership opportunities.

So, we had a coherent logical progression through the project - the objective informed the methods; the methods generated findings across multiple perspectives; and those findings revealed clear pathways for evidence-based recommendations. Importantly, although the findings did not change the overall scope of the project, they did broaden the range of deliverables needed to address the issues uncovered. Through our analysis, several key insights emerged:

Landlord policies are driven more by perceived operational risk than by hostility toward pets. Many landlords reported that their greatest concerns were cleaning, damage, and unit condition, rather than noise or aggression, which are often assumed to be the main issues. Most also had limited awareness of how their policies contribute to housing-related pet surrender or how significant pets are to tenants' mental health and family stability. This insight reinforced the value of the landlord toolkit but also highlighted the need for ongoing education and myth-busting, not one-off guidance.

Tenants' main issue is access, not rules—and some tenant behaviours genuinely reinforce landlord fears. Many tenants indicated they were willing to follow reasonable pet policies, but their biggest barrier was simply finding units that allow pets at all. At the same time, some landlords described instances of poor tenant behaviour (e.g., inadequate cleaning, disregard for property expectations) that reinforce negative stereotypes about renting to pet owners. These findings led us to strengthen the tenant toolkit beyond “how to find housing” and into “how to be a responsible pet parent renter”, emphasizing education and responsibility. They also informed our recommendation to expand CHS's pets-and-renters program to support better tenant behaviour and build landlord confidence over time.

Market conditions strongly influence openness to pet-friendly renting—but relying on the market alone is fragile. Contextual housing data and stakeholder comments showed that when supply increases and vacancy rates rise, landlords become more open to renters with pets. Conversely, when the market tightens, pet owners are often the first to be excluded. This confirmed that while the current market environment may temporarily make things easier, sustainable change requires shifting attitudes and systems, not just waiting for favourable market cycles.

The problem is largely invisible to those who have not experienced it directly. Many stakeholders outside of those directly affected had limited awareness of how severe the pet-friendly housing shortage is or how directly it translates into pet surrender. The issue is often experienced as an individual problem (“my landlord won't take my dog”) rather than a systemic one. This realization prompted us to add two major recommendations that were not part of the original project scope: an external-facing awareness and data dashboard to visualize the scale and nature of the problem, and ecosystem engagement mapping to show the network of actors that must be involved in long-term solutions.

There is real appetite for collaboration among builders and social organizations. Some respondents, particularly attainable homes Calgary, expressed interest in partnering to design or operate pet-friendly rental structures. This validated our original internal resource for CHS but also showed that CHS could play a more strategic convening role, connecting willing partners and aligning efforts across the ecosystem.

As a result of these insights, three new deliverables emerged (to make six interconnected initiatives which will be discussed shortly) which are

- External awareness and data dashboard (new)
- Pets-and-renters program expansion to address tenant behaviour and support positive tenancy outcomes (new)
- Partnerships & ecosystem engagement mapping guide CHS's strategic role in the broader housing system (new)

This evolution is a key part of the argument: the data itself pushed us to broaden the solution set. What began as a narrow focus on toolkits naturally grew into a more comprehensive, system-level response as the findings revealed deeper gaps in awareness, behaviour, and coordination. Taken together, these elements support the central argument of this report:

That the core barrier to pet-friendly, affordable housing in Calgary is not simply a lack of units, but the *misalignment of beliefs, expectations, and experiences* among landlords, tenants, and support organizations. These misalignments rooted in unaddressed risk perceptions, inconsistent tenant practices, limited public awareness, and fragmented service supports create a structural environment in which pet surrender becomes a predictable outcome. Addressing pet surrender therefore requires bridging these perceptual gaps, aligning incentives across stakeholders, and building shared understanding through education, tools, and coordinated partnerships.

The objectives led us to the right methods; the methods uncovered layered findings; and those findings logically shaped a richer, more robust set of recommendations than initially planned. CHS is uniquely positioned to act as a bridge across this ecosystem supporting landlords and tenants, influencing policy conversations, convening partners, and keeping people and pets together.

Recommendations

Initiative 1: Landlord Toolkit

The Calgary Humane Society (CHS) should develop a comprehensive Landlord Toolkit to address misinformation, fear, and inconsistent management practices that currently limit pet-friendly housing supply across Calgary. This initiative directly responds to findings from the CHS Landlord Survey, which revealed that restrictive pet policies are often based on past negative experiences and perceived risk rather than ongoing or verified issues.

Despite 81% of surveyed landlords having rented to pet-owning tenants, only a minority use formal pet agreements or screening tools, and nearly one-quarter prohibit pets outright. Data shows that landlords who currently ban pets reported the highest historical rates of damage and cleaning problems (73.7%), suggesting that these restrictions are reactive measures stemming from previous incidents. Pet-friendly landlords, by contrast, reported fewer current challenges and were more likely to describe their experiences as “manageable” or “positive.”

This pattern underscores a critical need to rebuild landlord confidence through practical tools, education, and structured policy templates. The toolkit would equip landlords with evidence-based solutions that transform risk perception into proactive management, promoting consistency and fairness while maintaining property standards.

Several key gaps justify this initiative:

- *Structural gap*: Although most landlords have experience with pet-owning tenants, 80% of respondents reported inconsistent or informal approaches to pet management. Few rely on standardized agreements or inspection checklists.
- *Perception gap*: Almost 60% of landlords who prohibit pets hold negative attitudes toward tenants with animals, reflecting emotional responses to isolated incidents rather than systemic data.
- *Knowledge gap*: 39% of landlords cited concerns about specific breeds, sizes, or species despite 61% reporting no type-related problems, indicating misinformation and lack of animal literacy.
- *Support gap*: A statistically significant relationship ($p < .05$) exists between landlords’ willingness to allow pets and the presence of concrete supports such as insurance, references, or behaviour resources, suggesting most are open to change if equipped with the right tools.

The Landlord Toolkit contains six integrated modules:

- a) Pet Policy and Lease Templates – Standardized, customizable policy and lease addendum examples that clearly define permitted pet types, deposits, and expectations, reducing ambiguity and disputes.
- b) Screening and Reference Forms – Simple templates allowing landlords to verify pet history, training, and references, shifting decisions from fear-based to evidence-based.
- c) Move-In / Move-Out Checklists – Structured inspection sheets including pet-specific items to document unit condition and prevent conflict over normal wear and tear.
- d) Insurance and Liability Guidance – Clear summaries of coverage boundaries and recommended riders, dispelling myths that landlords are unprotected when renting to pet owners.
- e) Behaviour and Conflict-Resolution Resources – Practical guidance for addressing noise, odour, or property concerns through communication and CHS training support rather than eviction.

- f) The Pet Playbook: Know Your Tenants – An illustrated, educational guide with species profiles, behavioural insights, and myth-busting facts designed to build empathy and animal literacy among landlords new to pet ownership.

Together, these components address the emotional, procedural, and informational barriers revealed in the survey. The toolkit would be available in both printable and interactive digital formats, supported by short instructional videos and webinars.

Implementation should begin with a pilot cohort of small-scale landlords, the demographic most represented in CHS's data (over 70% manage a single property). CHS can collaborate with the Alberta Residential Landlord Association (ARLA), City of Calgary Housing & Affordability division, and local property managers to co-design content and ensure legal accuracy under Alberta's Residential Tenancies Act. Feedback from this cohort will inform iterative updates before public rollout.

By formalizing supports that already work in isolated cases, such as pet agreements, reference forms, and behaviour resources, CHS can move landlords from reactive avoidance to confident, proactive engagement. This toolkit also positions CHS as a trusted intermediary bridging animal welfare and housing sectors, demonstrating that pet-friendly policies can be both humane and operationally sound.

In the long term, the toolkit would contribute to systemic outcomes:

- Reduced housing-related surrenders through improved landlord-tenant stability.
- Increased number of pet-inclusive units in Calgary's rental market.
- Greater landlord satisfaction, lower turnover, and strengthened community perception of CHS as a practical housing partner.

Ultimately, the Landlord Toolkit transforms fragmented landlord experiences into structured, data-informed practice. By acknowledging landlords' past challenges while equipping them with practical solutions, CHS can reframe pet ownership not as a liability but as a manageable, community-strengthening aspect of rental housing.

A detailed appendix outlining toolkit contents, evidence, and implementation considerations accompanies this recommendation.

Initiative 2: Tenant Toolkit

The Calgary Humane Society (CHS) should develop a comprehensive Tenant Toolkit to address the uncertainty, misinformation, and systemic barriers that currently prevent renters with pets from accessing safe, stable, and affordable housing in Calgary. This initiative responds directly to findings from the CHS Tenant Survey and interviews, which revealed that housing denial, financial strain, and inconsistent landlord practices frequently place pet owners in precarious living situations and increase the likelihood of crisis-driven pet surrender.

Despite strong attachment to their animals, the tenant survey shows that a majority of renters with pets have faced rejection, discrimination, or significant difficulty securing housing, and many continue to make personal sacrifices to remain with their animals. Tenants frequently report being denied rental applications due to breed, size, or species restrictions, high pet-related fees, or landlords with blanket no-pet policies. These barriers persist even though tenants overwhelmingly describe themselves as responsible pet owners and express willingness to comply with structured rules or documentation requirements.

Survey data also indicates that many renters lack access to reliable information about their rights, legal protections, or best practices for navigating the rental process. As a result, tenants often rely on anecdotal advice, scattered online sources, or emotionally charged interactions with landlords to determine what is possible. This lack of centralized guidance leaves renters underprepared during application stages, vulnerable to misinformation, and overwhelmed when confronted with housing instability or conflict.

These patterns highlight an urgent need for supportive, consistent, and authoritative tools that enable renters to confidently advocate for themselves, present their pets effectively to landlords, and maintain stable housing for their animals. The Tenant Toolkit would provide renters with practical, evidence-based resources that reduce uncertainty, strengthen their applications, and offer lifelines during crisis moments.

Several key gaps justify this initiative:

- *Structural gap:* Pet owners face inconsistent, confusing, and sometimes arbitrary restrictions across rental listings and landlords. Many do not understand what constitutes a legal fee, what may appear in a pet addendum, or how to evaluate pet-friendly policies. Information is fragmented across blogs, word of mouth, and outdated online sources.
- *Preparation gap:* Tenants lack standardized tools—such as pet resumes, references, or behaviour documentation—that could significantly improve their application success and reduce landlord concerns. Many renters only learn about these tools *after* being denied housing.
- *Knowledge gap:* Confusion about rights and responsibilities under the Residential Tenancies Act creates vulnerability during lease signing, conflict resolution, and eviction risk. Tenants frequently misinterpret terms, misunderstand pet policies, or accept conditions that are not legally enforceable.
- *Navigation gap:* There is no centralized, trustworthy directory of pet-friendly housing options. Renters spend excessive time sifting through inconsistent listings, misleading “pet-friendly” tags, or units with hidden breed/size restrictions.
- *Crisis gap:* When faced with eviction, rapid relocation, domestic safety concerns, or financial shock, renters with pets lack clear pathways for crisis navigation. Without support, many feel forced toward informal housing arrangements, unsafe environments, or surrendering their pets.

The Tenant Toolkit contains six integrated modules:

- a) **Pre-Application Education and Rights Guide** A clear, accessible resource that explains tenant rights, landlord obligations, pet addendum components, legal vs. illegal pet fees, and realistic expectations for renting with pets in Calgary.
- b) **Application-Strengthening Documentation Tools** Standardized, fillable templates that help tenants present themselves and their pets professionally, including pet resumes, reference letters, behaviour profiles, vaccination checklists, and sample communication scripts to reduce fear and stigma.
- c) **Housing Search and Navigation Supports** A CHS-verified directory of pet-friendly rentals, along with guidance on evaluating listings, identifying red flags, understanding market conditions, and navigating misleading or incomplete information.
- d) **Move-In and move-out resources** - Structured inspection sheets including pet-specific items to document unit condition and prevent conflict over normal wear and tear.
- e) **Tenancy and Behaviour Management Resources** - Practical checklists and guidance on minimizing noise, preventing damage, managing cleanliness, communicating with neighbours, and accessing CHS behaviour support to prevent conflict and eviction.
- f) **Crisis Navigation and Emergency Support** - Pathways Structured guidance for renters facing sudden instability, including landlord negotiation scripts, legal information, steps to take within the first 24–48 hours of crisis, and connections to CHS emergency foster programs and crisis-support partners.

Together, these components address the informational, emotional, and structural barriers facing renters with pets. The toolkit would be available as both a printable PDF and an interactive digital resource hub, supported by short instructional videos and referrals to legal, financial, and behavioural supports.

Implementation should begin with a pilot cohort of community housing tenants, social agencies, and pet-owning renters who have recently experienced housing transitions. CHS can collaborate with Calgary Housing Company, HomeSpace, Calgary Legal Guidance, and local housing navigators to validate content accuracy, usability, and legal clarity under Alberta’s Residential Tenancies Act. Feedback will inform iterative updates before citywide rollout.

By formalizing the tools and supports that renters currently lack—such as templates, crisis pathways, and clear rights information—the Tenant Toolkit enables pet owners to transition from reactive crisis management to proactive housing stability. It also positions CHS as a trusted partner in bridging the gap between the animal welfare and housing sectors, demonstrating that supporting pet owners through education and crisis navigation contributes to stronger communities and fewer preventable surrenders.

In the long term, the toolkit would contribute to systemic outcomes:

- Reduced housing-related pet surrenders

- Increased rental stability for pet-owning households
- Improved tenant preparedness and confidence
- A more equitable rental landscape for pet owners
- Stronger partnerships between CHS, tenants, and housing stakeholders

Ultimately, the Tenant Toolkit transforms fragmented renter experiences into structured, informed, and empowered pathways. By addressing the real barriers tenants face and equipping them with practical, accessible tools, CHS can help ensure that pet ownership does not jeopardize housing stability—and that families can stay together, even during periods of uncertainty.

Initiative 3: Dashboards

Internal Dashboard

The Calgary Humane Society should develop a visualized internal dashboard to help track the broader set of systemic pressures that contribute to pet surrender, including but not limited to housing. To support this, our team created a working prototype that CHS can use as a baseline for building a full internal system. The prototype is not a finished product, but it shows how key indicators about housing barriers, financial challenges, personal crises, and other external pressures can be organized and monitored in one place.

This prototype responds to several gaps we observed during the project. CHS collects valuable information across intake, safe keeping, community support, and outreach programs, but much of that data is stored in narrative notes or different spreadsheets. This makes it difficult to see the full picture of what families are experiencing or to identify patterns early enough to intervene.

By visualizing multiple categories of pressure together, the prototype illustrates how CHS could gain early insight into trends such as eviction risk, affordability challenges, personal emergencies, shifting landlord policies, pet-related crises, and safe keeping demand. This broader focus reflects what we heard throughout the consultations: housing is important, but it is only one part of a larger set of systemic issues affecting people and their pets.

Building on this prototype could help CHS address several internal gaps.

- *Tracking gap.* Systemic pressures such as housing barriers, financial strain, and urgent personal crises are not consistently captured in structured fields.
- *Coordination gap.* Information across safe keeping, intake, outreach, and social service partners is not centralized, which limits cross-team awareness.
- *Prevention gap.* Without early visibility into clusters of risk factors, opportunities for early intervention may be missed.
- *Learning gap.* Staff cannot easily see how different pressures change over time or how they interact for specific groups.

The prototype demonstrates how indicators like housing type, landlord willingness, affordability challenges, household instability, surrender motivations, and related stressors could be summarized through simple, dynamic charts. These visuals can support decision making at the frontline level, help allocate safe keeping resources, and provide leadership with a clearer understanding of emerging community needs.

Although CHS would need to refine and expand the prototype into a fully functional dashboard, the model we created provides a practical foundation. It shows both the structure and potential value of a system designed to capture the wide range of pressures that influence pet surrender risk. A detailed appendix outlines the prototype layout and recommended data fields.



Internal Dashboard Summary and Interpretation

The internal dashboard offers a simple but useful snapshot of surrender activity at CHS, helping highlight how patterns have shifted over the past decade and where pressures may be emerging. It is not a full analytics tool yet, but it already gives CHS a clearer sense of the scale and direction of key trends.

Overall Surrenders

Total surrenders for 2024 reached one thousand five hundred and seventy one, which represents a drop of roughly twenty four percent from the year before. This decline softens some of the pressure CHS experienced in 2023, although the ten year comparison shows a very different story. Surrenders in 2024 remain almost fifty percent higher than they were in 2015, reminding us that long term demand for shelter services remains elevated even with recent improvements.

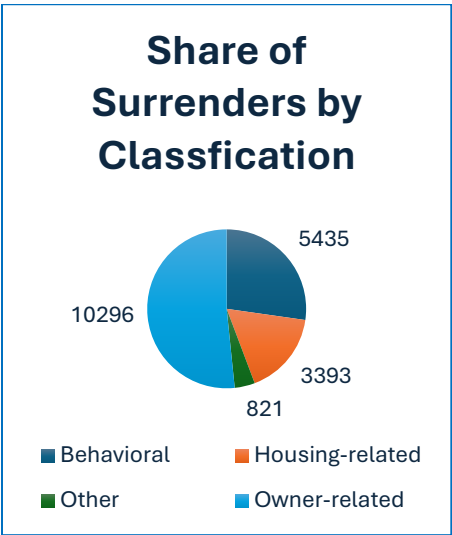
2025 Surrenders Year to Date

As of the end of October, CHS recorded one thousand two hundred and eighty one surrenders. This equals about eighty two percent of the entire 2024 total, suggesting that 2025 is tracking

slightly lower but still within a high demand range. Owner related surrenders remain the top classification this year. This category usually captures situations such as owner illness, financial strain, housing challenges, or behavioural mismatches that families feel unable to manage.

Fastest Growing Surrender Reason

The most striking number in the dashboard is the eight hundred and thirty three percent increase in surrenders classified as “Injured” between 2023 and 2024. Although the base number behind this rise is likely small, the jump signals a need to look more closely at external factors such as rising veterinary costs, lack of access to urgent care, or situations where owners cannot afford treatment. This is an area where CHS may need to deepen analysis or collaborate with vet partners to understand what is driving the spike.



Share of Surrenders by Classification

When looking at ten years of data combined, behavioural issues make up the largest share at just over ten thousand animals. Owner related reasons follow at a little more than five thousand, with housing related reasons accounting for about three thousand three hundred. Although housing is not the majority driver, it remains a stable and meaningful contributor that continues to intersect with other pressures, such as affordability, pet fees, and restrictive policies in private rentals or condominiums.



Top Five Surrender Reasons Over Time

Across three years of comparison, the dashboard shows recurring patterns. “Abandoned by owner,” “death of owner or family member,” “health of animal,” and “too many animals” consistently appear at the top of the list. Housing related reasons fluctuate, but still remain visible in the data. This tells us that surrenders are rarely shaped by a single issue. They tend to reflect clusters of social, financial, or personal pressures that shift with broader economic conditions.

What This Means for CHS

Taken together, the internal dashboard suggests that surrender trends are shaped by both long term structural pressures and shorter term economic or social shifts. The decline from 2023 to 2024 is encouraging, but the ten year trajectory reminds us that demand for shelter services remains higher than past norms. Rising “Injured” classifications also signal new gaps that may not be fully understood yet.

The strength of this prototype is that it gives CHS an accessible baseline view. With further development, it can become a decision support tool, helping staff anticipate seasonal surges, identify emerging risk areas, and communicate trends more clearly to partners, funders, and the public.

External Dashboard

The Calgary Humane Society (CHS) should develop a public-facing External Dashboard modeled after the Enough for All (E4A) Wellbeing Dashboard to increase visibility and understanding of

the connection between housing affordability and pet surrenders. This initiative responds directly to findings from the CHS landlord, tenant, and social agency surveys, which collectively reveal that the issue remains both poorly understood and inadequately tracked across Calgary's housing and animal welfare systems.

Public awareness of this link is limited. Nearly one-third of landlords remain unaware or unconvinced that lack of pet-friendly housing contributes to pet surrenders, despite strong evidence from tenants and agencies that housing barriers are among the leading causes. Tenants report losing pets due to rental restrictions, higher fees, or inability to find affordable housing, while many social agencies confirm that clients consider surrendering pets but lack available supports. The absence of unified data and public communication leaves these systemic drivers largely invisible, reinforcing a narrative that blames pet owners rather than addressing structural housing inequities.

Several critical gaps highlight the need for this dashboard:

- *Awareness gap*: Roughly 30% of landlords are unaware that housing restrictions contribute to pet surrender, underscoring limited understanding of the issue's systemic roots.
- *Data gap*: CHS lacks standardized surrender tracking tied to housing causes, and social agencies do not consistently record pet ownership or housing-related issues in client files.
- *Visibility gap*: Without real-time, public-facing data, the scale of housing-linked surrenders remains hidden from policymakers, landlords, and the broader public.
- *Education gap*: Only five agencies identified landlord education as a community need, showing that awareness and advocacy around pet-friendly housing remain minimal.

The proposed dashboard would combine internal CHS data, such as surrender reasons and trends, with external housing datasets from sources like CMHC, RentFaster.ca, and the City of Calgary Open Data Portal. By integrating these datasets, CHS can visualize the correlation between rising rents, reduced pet-friendly listings, and spikes in housing-related surrenders. Designed to be interactive and narrative-driven, the dashboard will mirror the E4A model by blending quantitative metrics with qualitative storytelling, such as testimonials from tenants and landlords, to bridge empathy and evidence.

This initiative would allow CHS to take a leadership role in framing pet surrender as a social and economic issue rather than an individual one. The dashboard will include dynamic visualizations of surrender trends, maps of pet-friendly housing availability, partner highlights, and an impact tracker that measures CHS's success in keeping pets and families together. It will also feature an Action and Advocacy Section inviting landlords to sign the Pet-Friendly Housing Pledge, donors to support prevention programs, and policymakers to engage with data-informed housing solutions.

Ultimately, the dashboard would transform internal insights into a public awareness and policy advocacy tool, making the hidden link between housing and pet surrender visible to Calgarians. It would improve data integrity, support evidence-based programming, and help CHS mobilize new partnerships across housing, welfare, and animal advocacy sectors. By doing so, CHS positions itself as a national leader in data-driven animal welfare advocacy, using transparency and storytelling to drive lasting, systemic change.

A detailed appendix outlining the data findings, dashboard structure, and implementation plan accompanies this recommendation.

Initiative 4: Expanded Pets and Renters Program

Calgary Humane Society (CHS) should build on its existing *Pets and Renters Program* by expanding it into a more comprehensive prevention initiative that combines education, certification, and tangible supports for landlords and tenants. The current program, which offers free animal behaviour consultations, plays a key role in addressing individual cases of pet-related challenges. However, survey data from landlords, tenants, and social agencies indicate that housing barriers to pet ownership are systemic and persist despite education efforts alone. A broader program would allow CHS to transform its role from offering behavioral support to leading citywide prevention and trust-building efforts between landlords, tenants, and pet owners.

Survey evidence highlights the urgency of strengthening this program. Over 70% of landlords cited property damage and cleaning challenges as their top deterrents to allowing pets, making these the most significant operational concerns. Tenants, on the other hand, described the human cost of these restrictions, with 133 renters denied housing because of pets, 143 facing added financial burdens, and 23 reporting they had to surrender their animals when they could not secure suitable accommodation. Many tenants admitted to hiding pets to keep them, reflecting a lack of safe, transparent options. Collectively, these findings reveal that while CHS has succeeded in providing behavioral expertise, the community now needs broader, practical mechanisms to build confidence and reduce surrender risk linked to housing.

The expanded program would introduce four new components designed to tackle both perception and practice:

CHS Certified Pet-Friendly Property Badge

The CHS Certified Pet-Friendly Property Badge would recognize landlords who adhere to CHS's pet-friendly housing guidelines and complete basic education on pet behaviour and property care. Certification would offer credibility, visibility, and a marketing advantage, helping landlords attract responsible tenants while providing renters with a trusted list of pet-accepting properties. This recognition system would also reinforce CHS's leadership in promoting humane, data-informed housing practices.

Tenant Pet Certification Program

Complementing the *CHS Certified Pet-Friendly Property Badge* is the Tenant Pet Certification Program, designed to help renters demonstrate verified responsibility and build trust with landlords. Through this initiative, renters could earn a "CHS Responsible Pet Tenant" badge by completing a series of CHS-approved trainings on pet behaviour and housing readiness.

The program would operate as a tiered certification system, where tenants advance through levels by completing multiple CHS training modules such as *Pet Behaviour 101*, *Noise and Damage Prevention*, and *Living in Shared Spaces*. Each completed module would contribute to a higher

certification level, for example Bronze, Silver, or Gold Responsible Pet Tenant, reflecting greater investment in responsible pet ownership.

This model draws inspiration from Renter's Choice & Management Ltd. (n.d.), whose pet program integrates tenant education, behavioural assessments, and verified landlord-facing records. Renters can upload certificates, veterinary documents, and references into a shared platform that landlords can access. CHS could create a similar or collaborative framework, issuing verified digital certificates or QR-coded badges that reflect each tenant's completed training record.

By introducing this system, CHS would provide renters with a credible way to show preparedness and accountability, while helping landlords feel confident that certified tenants understand pet behaviour, maintenance, and property care. Together with the *CHS Certified Pet-Friendly Property Badge*, the program would foster transparency, reduce housing-related pet barriers, and strengthen CHS's leadership in keeping pets and families together.

CHS Carpet-Cleaner Lending Program

A third component, the CHS Carpet-Cleaner Lending Program, directly responds to landlords' most common concerns. By providing access to a small fleet of portable carpet-cleaning machines for short-term rental at low cost, CHS can help landlords and tenants address minor issues like stains and odors before they escalate. The program could be supported through collaborations with companies such as the RugDoctor or Bissell Pet Foundation, which already funds animal welfare initiatives and produces pet-safe cleaning products. This small but practical service would reduce cleaning-related conflict, reinforce landlord confidence, and strengthen CHS's reputation as a community problem solver.

Damage Prevention and Restoration Resource Hub

A Damage Prevention and Restoration Resource Hub would extend CHS's educational reach beyond behaviour training into property care and maintenance. This hub would include short instructional videos, printable guides, and a directory of affordable local services for pet-related repairs. Many landlords in the survey noted that they would be more open to pets if they had access to reliable guidance or repair options. By creating a centralized, accessible resource, CHS could equip both landlords and tenants with tools to handle issues independently, reducing costs, misunderstandings, and pet relinquishment risk.

Expanding the *Pets and Renters Program* in this way would allow CHS to tackle the structural barriers behind pet surrenders rather than only the symptoms. These additions would strengthen landlord trust, empower renters to demonstrate responsibility, and introduce shared accountability mechanisms that make pet-friendly housing more viable across Calgary. The initiative would also advance CHS's mission of keeping pets and families together by combining education with prevention, recognition, and real-world support. It would reinforce CHS's leadership in integrating animal welfare with housing advocacy and position the organization as a national example of how community-driven innovation can reduce surrenders and create lasting change in the rental landscape.

A detailed appendix outlining the supporting survey data, external collaborations, and phased implementation plan accompanies this recommendation.

Initiative 5: Partnership & Ecosystem Engagement / Mapping

The CHS should lead a citywide *Pet-Inclusive Housing Ecosystem Mapping Initiative* to strengthen collaboration across the housing, social service, and animal welfare sectors. This recommendation adapts the Human Animal Support Services (HASS, 2023) framework used by leading U.S. shelters to map community resources, identify service gaps, and build partnerships that keep people and pets together.

Findings from CHS's social service survey demonstrate that Calgary's support system for pet owners is fragmented and under connected. Three-quarters of organizations (75%) reported clients who considered surrendering their pets due to housing barriers, and nearly all (97%) identified the lack of pet-friendly rentals as a top challenge. Yet only 38% currently collaborate with animal welfare organizations, and more than half cited insufficient partnerships and funding as barriers to helping clients with pets. These figures reveal an urgent need for a coordinated ecosystem that aligns housing providers, social agencies, and animal welfare efforts.

Several key system gaps reinforce the need for this initiative:

- *Collaboration gap:* Most social service agencies operate in isolation, without established referral pathways to CHS or other animal welfare resources.
- *Information gap:* There is no centralized database or visual map showing which Calgary housing and support providers accommodate pets or offer pet-related assistance.
- *Equity gap:* Seniors, low-income families, and people exiting homelessness face the greatest barriers to keeping pets, yet lack targeted programs and referral options.
- *Advocacy gap:* Policymakers and housing organizations lack the data to understand how pet restrictions deepen housing insecurity and contribute to surrender rates.

Through this initiative, CHS would create a comprehensive, interactive ecosystem map that visualizes Calgary's pet-inclusive housing and support network. Using tools such as Google My Maps or ArcGIS, CHS can catalogue every partner organization by service type (housing, mental health, food security, veterinary care, and financial assistance) along with contact details and service areas. The map would highlight both active partnerships and geographic or programmatic service gaps.

This tool would serve dual purposes. Internally, it would support CHS's case management and intake diversion by allowing staff to quickly locate external supports for clients at risk of surrendering pets. Externally, it would help CHS and its partners identify collaboration opportunities, advocate for policy reform, and build funding proposals grounded in shared data.

Implementation should begin with a *Partnership Task Force* including CHS, the City of Calgary's Housing and Affordability division, Calgary Housing Company, HomeSpace, Horizon Housing, ARLA, Affordable Homes Calgary, and major property management firms. Together, the group would pilot the first version of the map, combining CHS intake data with social vulnerability indicators to target high-need neighborhoods. Over time, this could evolve into a *Calgary Pet-Inclusive Housing Network*, holding quarterly meetings to coordinate efforts and share outcomes.

By leading this initiative, CHS can position itself as the central connector between human and animal welfare systems. The resulting ecosystem map will reduce duplication, improve access to pet-friendly housing resources, and make visible the collective infrastructure needed to keep families and their pets together.

A detailed appendix outlining the adapted HASS framework, data evidence, and implementation plan accompanies this recommendation.

Initiative 6: CHS Response Hub

The Calgary Humane Society (CHS) should establish an internal *CHS Response Hub* to coordinate proactive support for individuals facing housing-related pet surrender. This initiative would give staff a clear, consistent framework for identifying at-risk clients, connecting them with relevant supports, and preventing unnecessary surrenders before they reach crisis levels.

Survey evidence demonstrates that housing instability remains one of the most common reasons clients consider giving up their pets. Among Calgary social service agencies, 75% reported working with clients who faced pet-related housing barriers, and 24 organizations confirmed that clients had considered surrender due to eviction, affordability, or pet restrictions. Despite these figures, few agencies track pet ownership or have clear referral pathways to animal welfare resources, leaving clients without timely support or guidance.

The CHS Response Hub addresses this gap by providing staff with a structured workflow for housing-related surrender cases. It ensures every client receives consistent triage, resource information, and referrals, reducing reliance on emergency surrender intake. The workflow will include:

- Clear procedural steps for assessing and recording housing-linked cases.
- A reference directory of pet-friendly rental properties verified quarterly.
- An emergency foster network of vetted volunteers available on short notice.
- Access to financial aid options such as the Alberta Pet Assistance Foundation, Renters Choice, and CHS's own micro-grant fund.
- A centralized partner list including Calgary Housing, HomeSpace, Carya, and the City of Calgary's Housing and Affordability division.

By integrating these resources into a single, accessible hub, CHS can reduce intake pressures, improve client experiences, and foster stronger collaboration with external agencies. The Response Hub also aligns with CHS's broader ecosystem-mapping and partnership initiatives by capturing valuable data on housing-related cases, resource gaps, and outcomes.

This proactive model reframes CHS's role from reactive intake to coordinated prevention, positioning the organization as a leader in humane, data-informed, and community-integrated approaches to animal welfare.

A detailed toolkit outlining workflow steps, resource directories, and implementation recommendations accompanies this section.

Alternative Recommendations

CHS-Led Tenant & Landlord Workshops (Free or Low-Cost)

As an alternative to (or complement to) the Tenant and Landlord Toolkits, CHS could offer free or low-cost educational workshops aimed at directly teaching the core content of the toolkits to renters, landlords, and housing support workers. Instead of relying on self-directed learning, this approach would provide live, guided support and create space for real-time questions, skill-building, and community engagement.

This model addresses several pain points uncovered in the surveys: tenants struggle to navigate rental barriers even when resources exist, and many landlords base decisions on assumptions or isolated negative experiences. Workshops create a structured environment where both groups can build confidence, correct misconceptions, and learn practical tools together.

What the Workshops Would Cover

The workshop curriculum would mirror the toolkits but be delivered in a more hands-on, interactive format, including:

For tenants:

- Understanding rental rights and legal protections
- How to strengthen rental applications (pet resumes, references, scripts)
- Budgeting for pet-inclusive housing
- Strategies for preventing noise, damage, and neighbour conflict
- Crisis navigation steps and knowing when/how to seek help
- Direct support from CHS behavioural experts

For landlords:

- Understanding real vs. perceived risks
- How to evaluate pet applications fairly
- Using pet agreements, screening tools, and checklists
- Behavioural insights: breed myths, behaviour basics, indicators of responsible pet ownership
- Conflict prevention and resolution
- How pet-friendly policies can improve retention and reduce turnover

These sessions could be delivered in multiple formats:

- Monthly virtual webinars
- In-person workshops with Q&A
- Partner-hosted sessions with ARLA, HomeSpace, Calgary Housing Company, social agencies

Why This Alternative Could Be Highly Impactful

1. Deeper behavioural change: Workshops allow CHS to engage more personally with landlords and tenants, addressing fears, misunderstandings, and emotional roadblocks directly.
2. Builds trust and reduces stigma: Tenants and landlords often carry negative assumptions about each other. A live format humanizes both groups and fosters mutual understanding.
3. Fits vulnerable populations better: Some tenants, especially those in crisis or with lower digital access, benefit more from guided learning than from navigating a large toolkit alone.
4. Live behavioural expertise: CHS trainers can demonstrate practical solutions in real time (noise prevention, crate training, introduction techniques), which is more persuasive than written instructions.
5. Opportunity for ongoing follow-up: Workshops create a direct touchpoint for referrals to CHS behaviour support, fosters, legal navigation, and housing partners.

However, This Approach Is More Resource-Intensive (Key Limitation)

While workshops have high impact potential, they also come with significant operational demands:

- **Staff Time & Delivery Capacity:** Regularly facilitating workshops require CHS educators, behaviourists, or volunteers to commit hours to planning, hosting, and follow-up.

- Scalability Challenges: Live programs can only reach a limited number of participants at a time, compared to toolkits which can reach thousands with no marginal cost.
- Coordination Requirements: Workshops require scheduling, partner collaboration, marketing, and continuous community outreach—resources CHS may not currently have at scale.
- Reliance on Attendance: Workshops rely on participants showing up, which is often difficult for tenants in crisis or landlords with limited availability.
- Ongoing Cost Structure: Even low-cost workshops have nontrivial expenses: staff time, digital platforms, print materials, and potentially space rentals.

How this strategy can fit into CHS's strategic options

CHS could adopt a hybrid model, using workshops as a value-added enhancement rather than replacing toolkits entirely. For instance:

- Toolkits serve as the primary resource for broad dissemination, low cost, and scalability.
- Workshops serve as an optional deeper intervention for those who need hands-on support or for pilot cohorts like vulnerable renters, subsidized housing providers, or small landlords.

This ensures broad impact while still offering personalized guidance where needed. This alternative is a “High-Impact Alternative, Not the Primary Pathway - A high-impact but more resource-intensive alternative that could be layered onto the toolkit strategy for deeper engagement with select groups”

If CHS were to choose a single approach, the toolkits remain the preferred option because they provide:

- Immediate scalability
- Low ongoing operating costs
- Easy distribution through partners
- Clear structure and consistency
- Long-term sustainability

Workshops, while valuable, require much more ongoing effort and may not be feasible without expanded staffing or dedicated funding.

Landlord Support Hotline — A 311-Style Early Intervention Line for Pet-Related Rental Issues

CHS could introduce a Landlord Support Hotline a 311-style early intervention line offering real-time assistance for pet-related tenancy concerns. This service would help landlords navigate emerging issues with clarity and confidence, preventing escalation and reducing the risk of eviction or surrender. However, due to its ongoing staffing and operational requirements, the hotline should be considered a high-impact but resource-intensive option, complementing rather than replacing the broader toolkit approach

While the toolkit provides self-serve solutions, this hotline offers something the toolkit cannot: real-time guidance, reassurance, and coaching when unexpected problems appear. Landlords often operate in isolation, with no neutral party to turn to when they are unsure how to handle pet-related concerns especially in buildings where property managers are absent or inexperienced. The Support Hotline would fill that gap.

What the Landlord Support Line Would Offer

1. Provide Real-Time Problem-Solving of Pet-Related Incidents. Landlords could call when unexpected issues arise, something a static toolkit cannot anticipate such as:
 - Sudden complaints from neighbors
 - Concerns about a pet being left alone for long periods
 - Signs a tenant may be struggling to care for their animal
 - Escalating tensions or misunderstandings
 - Situations where the landlord feels stuck or unsure how to proceed

Instead of reacting through eviction or restrictive policy changes, landlords get immediate, guided next steps.

2. Offer Neutral, Third-Party Perspective. Landlords often lack a sounding board. The hotline gives them access to:
 - A calm, objective evaluation of the issue
 - Guidance on how to approach the conversation with tenants
 - Suggestions that balance compassion, fairness, and property standards

This lowers stress and reduces reactionary decisions.

3. Triage Cases That May Require CHS Support. When appropriate, CHS can help landlords identify whether the situation may involve:
 - A tenant in crisis
 - An overwhelmed pet owner

- A neglected animal needing welfare intervention
- A situation where proactive outreach could prevent surrender

This creates an early-warning system that keeps pets safe and families together.

4. Strengthen the Tenant-Landlord Relationship by Facilitating Early Intervention. The goal is not to replace formal processes, but to support landlords in taking reasonable, humane steps first, such as:

- Understanding why the issue is happening
- Learning what questions to ask
- Identifying the tenant's capacity to resolve the concern
- Avoiding escalation into legal channels

This preserves goodwill and stability in the tenancy.

Why This Service Is Impactful

- a) Gives landlords support at exactly the moment they feel most isolated. Pet incidents tend to create panic, frustration, or pressure—landlords want help in the moment.
- b) Prevents small issues from becoming large ones. Early advice prevents avoidable evictions, conflict, or surrenders.
- c) Provides CHS with real-time insight into emerging housing trends. The hotline becomes an intelligence-gathering tool for:
 - Early detection of housing instability
 - Patterns of landlord confusion
 - Common crisis triggers
 - Gaps in existing education tools
- d) Positions CHS as a trusted neutral adviser. A reputation that no other Calgary organization currently holds.

Why This Is an Alternative (Not the Recommended Pathway)

Despite its potential, this model is resource-intensive, requiring:

- Staff trained in mediation and animal welfare
- Same-day or real-time availability
- Case tracking and follow-up
- Clear protocols for when issues cross into legal or welfare matters

It also has limited scalability only a certain number of landlords can be supported at a time. For these reasons, the hotline is best positioned as a value-added alternative for deep engagement, not the primary citywide solution.

Next Steps & Implications

The recommendations in this report range from ready to implement tools to longer term strategic directions. To make them manageable, the following roadmap organizes next steps into short term, medium term, and long-term actions, based on what CHS can realistically start now and what will require further design and partnership work.

Short-term priorities

1. Strengthen data collection and intake practices

The first step is tightening how CHS captures information about the pressures families face. Updating intake and case management forms so staff can consistently record housing type, affordability issues, landlord restrictions, or personal crises will immediately improve visibility across the organization. This work supports

- The internal dashboard
- The future Response Hub
- Stronger evidence for advocacy and grants

2. Formalize the internal dashboard prototype into a functional operational tool

The prototype we built is not final, but it is enough to start shaping a real operational dashboard. CHS can align dashboard metrics with updated intake fields, automate data pulls, and build simple views for frontline staff and leadership.

This lays the foundation for a system where trends are monitored in real time instead of through manual review.

3. Deploy ready to use templates as early wins

While the full toolkits are still conceptual, CHS already has draft pieces such as the pet resume template. Sharing these with staff, partners, or pilot landlords gives immediate value while the larger toolkit is still being built.

This shows practical movement early and helps normalize the idea of pet friendly readiness.

4. Lay the groundwork for a CHS Response Hub

The Response Hub is a direction, not a finished playbook. CHS can start small by naming a working group, mapping current informal practices, and testing a simple triage checklist.

These early steps make the eventual Response Hub far easier to build and signal a shift toward preventive, rather than reactive, support.

5. Continue and deepen cross sector partnerships

Relationship building is something CHS is already doing well. In the short term, sharing key findings, exploring pilot opportunities, and starting an informal ecosystem map will strengthen the collaborative base needed for bigger future initiatives. The implication here is momentum. The stronger the network, the easier every long-term recommendation becomes.

Medium Term Actions

1. *Develop full landlord and tenant toolkits*

Using the strategic recommendations and draft materials from this project, CHS can design toolkits that are legally reviewed, user tested and tied to the Pets and Renters program.

This turns big ideas into practical, trusted resources that can actually change landlord and tenant behaviour.

2. *Expand the Pets and Renters Program in phases*

CHS already runs behaviour and support services for renters with pets. The next phase is to gradually add:

- Short educational modules on housing readiness
- Optional certification for tenants
- Light touch supports that can feed into landlord confidence, such as simple behaviour reports

Expansion can start with a small pilot cohort and grow as capacity and funding allow.

3. *Build an internal version of the ecosystem and partnership map*

Before launching a citywide initiative, CHS can create an internal working map of key housing, social service, and animal welfare partners. This will support staff in making referrals and will help identify where the biggest gaps are. Once refined, this map can be the foundation for a larger external ecosystem effort.

4. *Prototype a fuller CHS Response Hub workflow*

As data collection and the internal dashboard mature, CHS can flesh out the Response Hub with

- a standardized triage pathway for housing related cases
- a shared resource directory linked to the partnership map
- simple outcome tracking to see which supports are most effective

Long Term Direction

1. *Develop a public facing external dashboard*

The external dashboard is currently a strategic concept rather than a built tool. In the longer term, CHS can use the strengthened internal data and new partnerships with the City of Calgary, CMHC, and listing platforms to

- Link surrender trends with housing and affordability indicators
- Share clear visual stories with the public, funders, and policymakers
- Position CHS as a leader in data informed advocacy on pet inclusive housing

2. *Scale the toolkits and expanded Pets and Renters Program citywide*

Once the landlord and tenant toolkits and the enhanced Pets and Renters components have been tested and refined, CHS can scale them through

- Partner agencies
- Property management networks
- Community workshops and online delivery

Over time, this can shift norms around renting to pet owners and reduce surrender risk across the city.

3. *Formalize a Pet Inclusive Housing Network for Calgary*

Building on the ecosystem mapping and partnership work, CHS can help convene a standing network of housing providers, social agencies, and animal welfare organizations focused on pet inclusive housing. This network can share data, coordinate pilot projects, and advocate for policy changes that reduce structural barriers.

4. *Fully embed the Response Hub and dashboards into organizational strategy*

In the long term, the internal dashboard, Response Hub, and external dashboard can form a connected system that guides CHS's strategic planning, resource allocation, and public messaging. Housing related surrender will be tracked not just as an intake category, but as part of a broader picture of systemic pressures that CHS can help address in partnership with the wider community.

Conclusion

This project brought together the voices of tenants, landlords, and social service agencies with the Calgary Humane Society's own data to paint a clearer picture of how housing pressures shape pet surrender in Calgary. While each group experiences the issue differently, their stories consistently point to the same reality: many families are fighting to keep their pets in a system that was not built with them in mind. Housing rules, affordability challenges, and structural barriers are creating preventable crises that ripple across animal welfare, social services, and the broader community.

What we learned from the surveys and interviews is both sobering and encouraging. Sobering because the patterns are real. Renters are turned away, landlords feel exposed, and agencies regularly meet clients who are on the edge of losing their pets because they cannot find a stable place to live. Encouraging because every group also pointed to practical opportunities to make change. Better data, clearer communication, support for damage or deposits, stronger education, and more pet friendly pathways could reduce surrender pressure in meaningful ways.

The internal dashboard prototype, cross tab analyses, and qualitative synthesis give CHS a foundation to move forward. None of these tools are “finished,” but each one offers something usable. They show where the issues cluster, how the experiences connect, and where CHS can lead next. Strengthening intake data, formalizing the dashboard, expanding the Pets and Renters program, and continuing cross sector partnerships will move this work from insight to action. In time, a public facing dashboard and coordinated Response Hub could help shift citywide understanding and support real systems change.

At its core, this project emphasizes that pet surrender is rarely an isolated moment. It is the outcome of broader pressures that families face long before they arrive at CHS’s doors. By addressing those pressures with evidence informed strategies, CHS can help prevent crises, support tenants and landlords more effectively, and keep more pets with the people who love them. This work positions CHS to not only respond to immediate needs but also shape the long-term landscape of pet inclusive housing in Calgary.

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Appendices

Appendix I: SWOT Analysis of the Calgary rental market (2023 – 2025)

Strengths	Weaknesses
▪ Significant increase in rental supply: Calgary has experienced a surge in purpose-built rental construction, adding thousands of new units and improving overall availability ▪ Rising vacancy rates: Higher vacancy rates shift bargaining power toward tenants, allowing greater choice and reducing competition for units ▪ Modern building stock: Newer developments often include improved amenities, better soundproofing, and more adaptable layouts—conditions that can support more flexible pet policies ▪ Supportive municipal direction: City-level housing strategies emphasize increasing housing supply, diversifying unit types, and reducing barriers to development, creating a more stable long-term housing environment.	▪ Persistent barriers to pet-friendly tenancy: Alberta’s legal framework gives landlords wide discretion to restrict or prohibit pets, limiting meaningful access even as supply increases ▪ Affordability gaps for vulnerable populations: Despite added supply, many low-income households still struggle to secure stable and affordable rental housing, including non-market options ▪ Uneven rent trends across housing types: While apartment rents have softened, family-sized or multi-bedroom rentals continue to command high prices—restricting options for larger households or multiple-pet owners ▪ Aging older rental stock: Older units, which may otherwise be more affordable, often lack the amenities or management flexibility needed to support more inclusive, pet-friendly policies.
Opportunities	Threats
▪ More competitive rental market: With greater supply and higher vacancies, landlords may become more receptive to tenants with pets to fill units ▪ Growth of purpose-built rentals: Developers may differentiate new projects by offering pet-friendly features (dedicated pet amenities, fewer restrictions, or clear pet policies) ▪ Digital transparency in listings: Online rental platforms make it easier	▪ Future economic tightening: If economic conditions worsen—such as rising interest rates, shrinking employment, or reduced construction activity—the rental market could tighten again, reducing tenant leverage and pet-friendly access ▪ Population shifts reigniting demand: Renewed immigration, stronger in-migration, or policy reversals could quickly absorb excess rental supply, driving up rents and decreasing vacancy ▪ Investor withdrawal or reprioritization: If rental yields fall due to softened rent growth, investors may retreat from the

for renters to identify pet-friendly housing, encouraging landlords to advertise flexible policies and compete for a wider tenant base ▪ Collaborative initiatives: Partnerships between animal welfare organizations like CHS, property developers, and the municipality could pilot pet-inclusive housing programs or create standardized “best practice” guidelines for pet-friendly tenancy.	market or revert to stricter tenant criteria to protect asset value, including tighter pet restrictions ▪ Legal rigidity: Without changes to tenancy regulations, landlords retain broad authority to impose pet bans. Even a well-supplied market does not guarantee improved access for tenants with animals.
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Appendix II: Landlord Cross-Tabulation Analysis – Summary of Key Findings

Finding 1: Past Damage Experiences May Influence Current Pet Policies

Analysis of landlord survey data (Q6 × Q10) revealed that landlords who currently prohibit pets reported the highest rates of property damage at 73.7% and cleaning challenges at 73.7%. This compares to a range of 45% - 57% among landlords who allow pets. This pattern suggests that landlords who previously encountered more damage related issues may have adopted pet restrictions as a precautionary response to earlier negative experiences.

Rather than showing that pet bans lead to fewer operational problems, the results point toward a reactive policy choice based on past events. Landlords who allow pets were more likely to report no issues at all. This indicates that strong management practices such as thorough screening, consistent communication, and clear agreements can reduce challenges regardless of whether tenants have pets.

This finding highlights the importance of addressing emotional and experiential concerns within CHS’s landlord engagement strategy. Recognizing these past experiences while offering practical and evidence-based tools may help shift landlord perceptions from avoidance to confident and proactive risk management.

Finding 2: Pet-Friendly Policies Are Linked to More Positive Attitudes

(Q6: Pet Policy × Q9: Sentiment Toward Tenants with Pets)

A chi square test showed a statistically significant association between pet policies and overall sentiment toward tenants who have pets ($p < .05$). Landlords who prohibit pets held the most negative views, with nearly sixty percent of this group reporting unfavorable sentiment. In contrast, landlords who allow pets, whether in all units or with certain restrictions, were much more likely to report neutral or positive views. A majority within each pet friendly group expressed favorable attitudes. Landlords who allow pets but limit the type such as size or species showed the

highest share of positive sentiment. These results suggest that direct experience with tenants who have pets is linked to more positive attitudes, while landlords who never allow pets tend to maintain more negative perceptions.

Finding 3: Housing Type Shapes Pet Access, Especially in Condos and Apartments

(Q5: Housing Type × Q6: Pet Acceptance)

Housing type did not show a statistically significant association with pet policy in chi-square tests, but the descriptive patterns are clear and strategically meaningful. Pet access is highest in single-family homes, where just over half of landlords allow all pet types in all units and the majority allow pets in some form. Townhouses/duplexes and basement suites also show high, though more selective, pet acceptance: most landlords in these categories permit pets but often with limits on units or types. In contrast, condo units and the single apartment-building respondent show much more restrictive patterns, with a substantial proportion reporting “no pets allowed” and very few fully open policies. Landlords in the “Other” category (rooming houses, rooms, four-plexes, commercial or blended spaces) display mixed policies, often in contexts where tenants may already face precarious housing. Overall, pet-friendly opportunities are concentrated in privately owned, low-density housing, while higher-density and governed settings (e.g., condos with boards, apartment buildings) impose more structural constraints.

Finding 4: Supports Do Not All Test as Significant, but Consistently Align with Higher Willingness

(Q18: Supports Needed × Q20: Willingness to Consider Allowing Pets)

Most individual support options (e.g., higher deposits, pet insurance, references, pet resumes, tax credits, insurance discounts, partnerships with animal welfare groups) did not reach statistical significance on their own in chi-square tests. However, the descriptive patterns are remarkably consistent: landlords who selected a given support were far more likely to say they would “probably” or “definitely” allow pets if that support were in place, and the share of “definitely yes” responses is substantially higher in each selected-support group than among landlords who did not select that support. The one exception is the “no willingness to compromise” option, which showed a statistically significant result. Landlords selecting this option overwhelmingly chose “definitely not,” “probably not,” or “unsure,” and none indicated they would probably or definitely allow pets, whereas landlords who did not select it were largely positive about future willingness. Together, these findings indicate a bifurcation between a flexible majority whose decisions are influenced by concrete supports and a small, highly resistant subgroup that is unlikely to shift regardless of incentives.

Finding 5: Belief–Behavior Gaps Around Responsibility and Pet Surrenders

(Q23: Housing-related pet surrender × Q22: Perceived landlord role × Q6: Pet policy)

Three related cross-tabs examined how landlords' beliefs about pet-related surrender and their perceived role align with their actual pet policies. The relationship between belief that lack of pet-friendly housing contributes to pet surrender (Q23) and perceived landlord role (Q22) was statistically significant ($p < .05$): landlords who strongly agree that housing affects pet surrender are much more likely to say landlords have a "significant" role in addressing the issue, while those who strongly disagree are more likely to say landlords have "no role." However, neither belief about surrender (Q23) nor perceived role (Q22) was significantly associated with actual pet policy (Q6). Descriptively, even among landlords who strongly agree that lack of pet-friendly housing contributes to surrender and who believe landlords have a significant role, a notable subset still prohibit pets or only partially allow them. Conversely, landlords who report "no role" are the most likely to enforce complete pet bans. These patterns highlight a belief-behaviour gap: many landlords intellectually recognize the problem and even acknowledge some responsibility, but this does not always translate into fully pet-friendly policies.

Appendix III: Tenants Cross-Tabulation Analysis – Summary of Key Findings

Finding 1: Pet-Owning Renters are more likely to face rental denial more than those who have never had pets during housing search

(Q29: Pet Ownership $\times$ Q33: Ever been denied a rental because of pets)

Although this pattern is descriptive only and not statistically confirmed, respondents who currently have pets, especially dog owners, report a higher likelihood of having been denied a rental because of a pet. The elevated proportion of dog owners in the "Yes, denied" category suggests that concerns related to breed or size from landlords may be influencing these outcomes. In contrast, the high share of non pet owners who want a pet in the "No" category shows that many prospective pet owners have not yet faced the type of gatekeeping that often appears only after someone acquires an animal. This challenges the assumption that denial risk is evenly distributed across renters regardless of their pet status. Instead, it suggests that pet ownership itself exposes renters to greater vulnerability. The data also show how renter experiences can differ significantly depending on the type of pet they own. Overall, this finding deepens our understanding of how housing barriers that relate to pets disproportionately affect people who currently own animals.

Finding 2: Renters in townhouses/duplexes have the hardest time finding pet-friendly housing.

(Q30: Type of housing $\times$ Q34: Difficulty finding pet-friendly housing)

Although this pattern is descriptive only and not statistically confirmed, the data suggests that the ease of finding pet-friendly housing varies meaningfully by current housing type, with those living in townhouses or duplexes reporting the most severe challenges. Renters living in

townhouses/duplexes show the highest concentration of “Extremely difficult” experiences finding pet-friendly housing (30.6%), noticeably higher than those in apartments (14.8%) or single-family homes (22.2%). This concentration of “Extremely difficult” responses among townhouse/duplex residents implies that the segment may face uniquely restrictive policies or limited inventory relative to other housing types. Apartment dwellers appear to face consistent but moderate obstacles, as reflected in their high percentages of “Somewhat difficult” and “Neutral,” suggesting a predictable but not overwhelming barrier landscape. The absence of “Extremely easy” responses across townhouse/duplex and single-family homes further shows that ease is not evenly distributed across the market. Altogether, these patterns suggest that pet-friendliness is more strongly influenced by landlord norms and local supply constraints than by broad housing categories alone. This insight reframes how we understand structural obstacles in the rental market for pet owners.

Finding 3: Current pet owners, especially dog owners, feel a strong emotional need for pet-friendly housing.

(Q29: Type of housing × Q39: Importance of pet-friendly housing)

Current pet owners, especially dog owners, are far more likely to say that having pet friendly housing is extremely important, with 56.4% of dog owners and 26.4% of cat owners selecting this category. In contrast, respondents who do not currently have pets but hope to own one in the future overwhelmingly fall into the lower importance categories. All respondents who selected “Not at all important” and most of those who selected “Slightly important” or “Important” came from this group. This pattern shows a clear divide between people who already have pets and those who do not in terms of how much they prioritize access to pet friendly housing. Dog and cat owners express the strongest sense of importance, reflecting the practical need to keep their animals safely and consistently housed. Meanwhile, individuals who do not yet have pets, even if they plan to in the future, do not feel the same urgency because they are not currently facing the constraints that pet policies create. This finding challenges the idea that interest in owning a pet automatically leads to concern about housing barriers. Instead, urgency emerges when renters already have a pet and must navigate these restrictions directly. Overall, this cross tab shows that lived experience with pets influences perceived importance much more than hypothetical interest. It also suggests that communication about housing barriers may resonate differently depending on whether someone has personally encountered these challenges.

Finding 4: Current pet owners, especially dog owners, face unique restrictions.

(Q34: How easy has it been to find pet-friendly housing × Q29Do you currently have pets)

Dog owners and owners of “other” pets (rabbits, birds, reptiles, etc.) are far more likely to report that finding pet-friendly housing is “Extremely difficult,” with 58.2% of dog owners and 72.7% of other-pet owners falling in this category. This finding demonstrates that the burden of finding

pet-friendly housing falls most heavily on renters who already own pets, particularly dogs and non-traditional pets. Their high rates of reporting “extremely difficult” searches suggest that restrictive policies, scarcity of acceptable units, and fear of displacement are greatest among those with the most to lose. Cat owners experience elevated difficulty as well, though not as severely as dog owners, implying that weight, size, or perceived risk biases may be shaping landlord decisions. Meanwhile, renters who want a pet but don’t yet have one face materially fewer barriers, reinforcing that the presence of a pet—not just interest in one—triggers structural obstacles. This challenges assumptions that all renters face similar conditions; instead, the data shows that difficulty emerges from lived conditions rather than hypothetical planning. The insight that other-pet owners struggle the most adds nuance and underscores how niche or uncommon animal types can trigger even stronger landlord restrictions. Ultimately, this cross-tab highlights that the moment a renter adopts a pet, their housing vulnerability increases sharply

Finding 5: Renters who have been denied housing because of a pet are far more likely to want to participate in CHS programs.

(Q34: Difficulty finding Pet Friendly Housing× Q43: Participation Interest)

Interest in participating in CHS pilots, advocacy, or focus groups is strongly concentrated among renters who found it extremely or somewhat difficult to secure pet-friendly housing. Nearly 60% of all “Yes, interested” responses come from those who experienced “Extremely difficult” searches, compared with only 37.8% of “No” responses.

This pattern shows that the people most motivated to participate in CHS initiatives are those who have struggled the most in obtaining pet-friendly housing. Renters who describe their search as “Extremely difficult” make up a disproportionately large share of those eager to join pilots or advocacy efforts, suggesting that firsthand hardship translates directly into engagement. The moderate participation from those who found it “Somewhat difficult” reinforces the idea that even partial barriers create enough frustration to spur civic involvement. By contrast, renters who experienced “Neutral” or “Somewhat easy” searches are far less represented, implying that ease reduces the sense of urgency or desire to push for systems change. This disproves the assumption that all renters are equally inclined toward advocacy, showing instead that lived difficulty is the primary driver importance categories, with 100% of “Not at all important” and over three-quarters of “Slightly important” and “Important” coming from this group. This pattern shows a clear divide between current pet owners and those without pets in how much

Appendix IV: Advocacy / Social Service Agency Cross-Tabulation Analysis – Summary of Key Findings

Finding 1: Agencies Serving Pet-Owning Clients Encounter Housing Barriers More Frequently

(Q45: Do your clients have pets × Q47: How often do clients report housing as a barrier?)

Agencies whose clients predominantly own pets report housing related barriers far more frequently than agencies whose clients do not own pets. Respondents working closely with pet owning households consistently selected “often” or “very often,” while agencies serving few or no pet owners reported little to no visibility of housing issues. This pattern suggests that housing barriers are not evenly distributed across service providers and are most visible to organizations supporting families that rely on pets for companionship, stability, or emotional support. The findings reinforce that front line agencies working directly with pet owning households are important early warning systems for identifying clients who may be at risk of surrender due to housing pressures.

Finding 2: Structural Housing Restrictions Are Strong Predictors of Surrender Risk

(Q49: What structural barriers affect clients × Q51: Have your clients considered surrender due to housing?)

Agencies that identify structural housing restrictions such as subsidized housing prohibiting pets, restrictive condominium bylaws, limits on size or breed, and limited availability of pet friendly housing also report much higher rates of clients considering surrender. These structural constraints create pressure early in the housing search process, especially for low income renters and newcomers navigating subsidized or tightly regulated housing. This pattern indicates that surrender risk is often shaped before clients interact with private landlords or screening systems. The finding highlights the influence of policy environments rather than individual landlord choices in driving avoidable surrenders among vulnerable groups

Finding 3: Low Landlord Willingness Directly Increases Surrender Pressure

(Q55: Landlord willingness to allow pets × Q51: Client consideration of surrender)

Across respondents, low landlord willingness consistently aligns with higher reports of clients considering surrender. Agencies that selected “not willing” or “rarely willing” were much more likely to indicate that their clients had contemplated giving up a pet due to housing challenges. In contrast, agencies exposed to more willing landlords reported fewer surrender related crises. This pattern emphasizes the influence of landlord attitudes on family stability, particularly in rental markets where flexibility is limited. The finding shows that even small improvements in landlord openness can meaningfully reduce surrender pressure and help families remain housed with their pets.

Finding 4: Agencies that Track Pet Ownership Detect More Crises and Hidden Pet Situations

(Q46: Does your agency track pet ownership × Q50: Do clients hide pets due to housing rules?)

Agencies that track pet ownership report significantly higher awareness of clients hiding pets to avoid eviction, conflict with property managers, or issues related to lease restrictions. Agencies that do not track pet information report fewer cases of concealment, although this likely reflects

lower visibility rather than lower prevalence. Tracking sharpens awareness of repeated risk patterns such as hidden pets, emergency housing needs, and rising tensions between landlords and tenants. This finding suggests that gaps in data collection limit the sector's ability to identify high risk clients early. Improving pet related data practices across agencies may support early intervention and coordinated prevention strategies.

Finding 5: Agencies Strongly Support Pilot Programs and Financial Assistance to Reduce Surrender

(Q57: Support for pilot initiatives × Q58/Q61: Perceived effectiveness of supports to prevent surrender)

Across the sector, agencies express strong support for financial and program-based interventions that help families keep their pets. Examples include emergency pet deposits, landlord reassurance programs, short term crisis foster arrangements, targeted subsidies, and pet insurance supports. Agencies that work closely with vulnerable households were especially likely to view these interventions as effective. The consistency of this pattern suggests a strong belief that structured supports can reduce crises and help stabilize families. This provides a clear mandate for CHS to explore partnerships, develop pilot programs, and pursue advocacy for municipal or provincial resources that address the financial and structural factors that contribute to surrender.