

Calgary Humane Society

Research Report – Pets and Housing

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Executive Summary

This research report explores the relationship between pet-friendly housing and pet surrender, examining potential solutions to the issue of capacity faced by the Calgary Humane Society (CHS). In recent years CHS has seen significant increases in pet surrenders, seemingly linked to a lack of pet-friendly housing options. This increase has limited CHS's capacity to serve the broader population of animals in need, also restricting progress toward its recently updated strategic organization plan that includes supporting the well-being of the entire community – both people and pets.

Key findings, uncovered through several interviews with stakeholders and data analysis, include a common struggle across multiple offices which include:

- A lack of capacity
- Minimal communication and collaboration within the sector
- Little to no data collection

Through improved communication/collaboration with like-minded organizations and a new approach to data collection with the housing continuum in mind, greater change could be achieved to impact the community as a whole. Strengthened ties to other community organizations will allow for a better understanding of services available and, in turn, better instruction to be passed along to those in need, limiting the number of pet owners in crisis and reducing surrender requests.

It is our recommendation that CHS seek to connect and share the findings of this report with individuals included in appendix D of this report in hopes of creating future partnerships. Many of those we interviewed shared concerns about pet-friendly housing within Calgary and expressed interest in strengthening their relationship with the Calgary Humane Society.

Introduction

This research report, conducted on behalf of the Calgary Humane Society as a part of the Haskayne School of MBA program Capstone Course, studies the potential relationship between pet surrender and pet-friendly housing offered in the city of Calgary. In recent years, a large amount of pet surrenders has left the Calgary Humane Society kennels at capacity, limiting CHS's ability to service a portion of animals in need. CHS has turned to a priority list when considering surrender requests, with the waitlist at times exceeding 100 animals¹. Research efforts to better understand how the Calgary pet-friendly rental market relates to the recent increase in pet surrender requests have been conducted through interviews with stakeholders and data provided by various sources.

This report will include a detailed problem statement relating to housing and pet surrender, the methodology used in collecting relevant data, our analysis and findings. This report will also provide an analysis exploring opportunities and gaps along the Canadian housing continuum, exploring services offered to Calgary pet owners. This analysis will include opportunities and gaps for organizations within the city to combat the issue of securing housing as a pet owner. Finally, this report will provide CHS with potential partnership opportunities and initiatives to move forward in their efforts to resolve the problem at hand.

Problem Statement

In recent years, the Calgary Humane Society has faced capacity limitations that have prevented them from supporting a significant number of animals in need of surrender. It is believed that a number of these surrenders are associated with a lack of affordable pet-friendly housing options. At any given time, the Calgary Humane Society's waitlist for surrendered animals is upwards of 100 animals. Often, pet owners are unable to utilize the services offered by CHS due to a lack of capacity in their kennels. Without the

¹ Figure provided by CHS in January

choice of immediate surrender for those at risk of homelessness, this often means a choice must be made; abandon their pet to secure housing or forego their living situation to remain with their animal.

Due to the transient lifestyle and unstable housing situations of those affected by this decision, data collection is a nearly impossible task. Calgary Humane Society has been able to capture data surrounding pet surrender, but even this data is subject to inaccuracies as instances are self-reported. Without proper data, understanding the extent of the relationship between pet surrender and pet-friendly housing becomes more difficult. Initiatives among organizations throughout Calgary often combat similar issues, and without effective communication, they fail to achieve their goals to the extent that is possible. Overcoming communication barriers among organizations aiming to service a vulnerable population is another key contributor to ensuring that the number of those affected by the decision between housing and pets is limited.

Cost remains one of the key drivers of pet surrender within Calgary. In 2024, Calgary saw vacancy rates 0.4% below the national average, sinking to 1.1%². This highly competitive rental market resulted in rental rates rising in Calgary by 14.3% in 2023 before slightly reducing in 2024. Low vacancy, in combination with high rental rates, would seemingly impact one's ability to find suitable housing for pets, additionally, CHS estimates that roughly only 20% of rental units within Calgary are pet-friendly³, substantially reducing the number of suitable units. While Calgary's rental and housing markets have steadily become one of the most competitive markets nationwide, pet ownership costs have increased as well, with Rover.ca estimating that dog ownership costs fall anywhere between \$1,418 and \$4,485 yearly.⁴

² Retrieved from CMHC yearly rental data in January: <https://www03.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/hmip-pimh/en/TableMapChart/Table?TableId=2.1.31.3&GeographyId=0140&GeographyTypeId=3&DisplayAs=Table&GeographyName=Calgary>

³ Figure provided from the Humane Society via a 2023 CBC, retrieved in January, 2024: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/calgary-pet-friendly-rentals-1.6927453>

⁴ Provided by Rover.ca (<https://www.rover.com/ca/blog/cost-of-dog-parenthood/>) retrieved February 2024.

While reducing rental rates and pet ownership costs is not within CHS's current capabilities, the organization can help inform the relevant population of programs and organizations who can aid in the journey of securing permanent, pet-friendly housing, ultimately reducing the number of pet surrenders within Calgary.

Methodology

Key Takeaways

1. A lack of specific, reliable data limited the ability to analyze connections between pet surrenders and housing instability.
2. Stakeholders consistently cited financial barriers and limited resources as key challenges in supporting pet owners in crisis.
3. Though statistical analysis was limited, interview insights and available data revealed notable trends linking housing issues to pet surrenders.

Although data relating to housing and rental markets was available, analysis against data involving pet surrenders was difficult to source due to the lack of specific information available. The majority of the research conducted during this project was through speaking to organizations within Calgary, gathering perspectives through interviews. This allowed our group to better understand the relation these parties had to the matter as well as their own experiences dealing with pets and transitional/emergency housing.

Interviews

Throughout this project, our group managed to collect the opinions of several stakeholders through interviews including Calgary Housing, CUPS, QuadReal (a rental management company), and the Children's Cottage/ Brenda's House. This forum allowed interviewees to share their perspectives on issues on topics including pet surrender, the housing crisis, outside resources their offices rely on, and trends they have observed in recent years among other topics.

Referencing data from Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and CHS, we asked interviewees to share their thoughts on if they saw any relation between pet

surrender and the housing crisis in Calgary and how their offices' operations are affected by the issue at hand. This allowed interviewees to share their personal connection to the issue and touch on trends they have observed. An open dialogue was extremely beneficial, allowing us to better understand their ideas, and experiences with the ongoing crisis. The majority of interviewees shared concerns aligned with CHS's and spoke to similar limitations that impede their ability to best service Calgary (financial barriers, limited partnerships, data collection difficulties). CUPS, the Children's Cottage and Calgary Housing all spoke to budgetary difficulties, and the barriers involved in aiding pet owners, and shared an interest in better understanding the operations of others supporting those who are precariously housed.

Data Analysis

As mentioned, a lack of reliable data surrounding the issue resulted in the inability to perform a full correlation analysis. However, data provided by the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation and surrender/adoption data from CHS did allow us to identify trends in animal surrender and housing/rental rates that became key during our interviews with stakeholders. Graphs highlighting Calgary's vacancy and rental rates, as well as the Humane Society's surrender intake data are included later on this report, showcasing the trends relating to pet surrender and vacancy rates in Calgary.

The data analysis section will delve further into relevant points highlighted by examining trends in both the housing and pet surrender data.

Limitations

The largest limitation faced by our research time revolved around a lack of data available specific to the problem at hand. As previously mentioned, gathering data from someone with unstable housing is often difficult. Additionally, data can see increased inaccuracies due to the stigma associated with homelessness, with subjects potentially

not disclosing the full extent of their situation. Many others are likely impacted by this issue and have not reached out to Calgary Housing or other initiatives due to this stigma.

Although a survey that highlighted significant increases or decreases in pet surrenders when compared to rental rates would have been useful, time constraints and the lack of data made this task impossible.

Data Analysis and Findings

Key Takeaways

1. Long-term reasons for pet surrenders consistently include financial and housing constraints, health concerns, and owner-related issues, with notable peaks and fluctuations across economic and pandemic periods.
2. Vacancy rates and pet surrenders appear inversely related, suggesting that tighter housing markets may increase the likelihood of pet surrenders due to financial and housing pressures.
3. Post-pandemic economic stress and rising housing costs have likely contributed to a rebound in surrenders linked to financial and owner-related issues, highlighting the importance of affordable, pet-friendly housing options.

Calgary Humane Society Data Analysis

The following yearly analysis is a breakdown of the CHS surrender and intake data. After completing the analysis, the key indicators of long-term reasons for pets being surrendered include financial and housing constraints, health concerns of both pet and owner, and owner related issues. A complete breakdown of the surrender data categories can be found in Appendix C.

2014-2019

Within this timeframe trends in pet surrenders reflected the pre pandemic stability, along with the economic variability. Financial and housing constraints remained high but dropped in 2017, most likely linked to economic fluctuations. Abandonment, neglect and

owner related issues fluctuated during this time but peaked in 2019. Health concerns of both owners and pets were a main contributor to surrenders during this time. However, on average adoptions were at a peak during this period and could potentially also be linked to the strengthening of the economy.

2020-2021

During this time the world was impacted greatly due to the COVID-19 pandemic. At this time financial and housing constraints dropped significantly in 2021, this is most likely due to the government financial support programs that were available. Behavioral issues also had a sharp decline, and this is possibly because more people stayed at home with their pets. However, health issues of pets and owners, along with owner related surrenders remained a top reason for surrendering and fluctuated slightly during this time. Adoptions declined during this time, and this could be due to the uncertainty everyone was feeling during the pandemic.

2022-2024

In the past couple of years owner-related issues have peaked, and the financial and housing constraints have rebounded. This is most likely reflecting the economic hardships society is facing post pandemic. Health concerns for pets and owners also remained consistently high indicating that it is a long-term challenge.

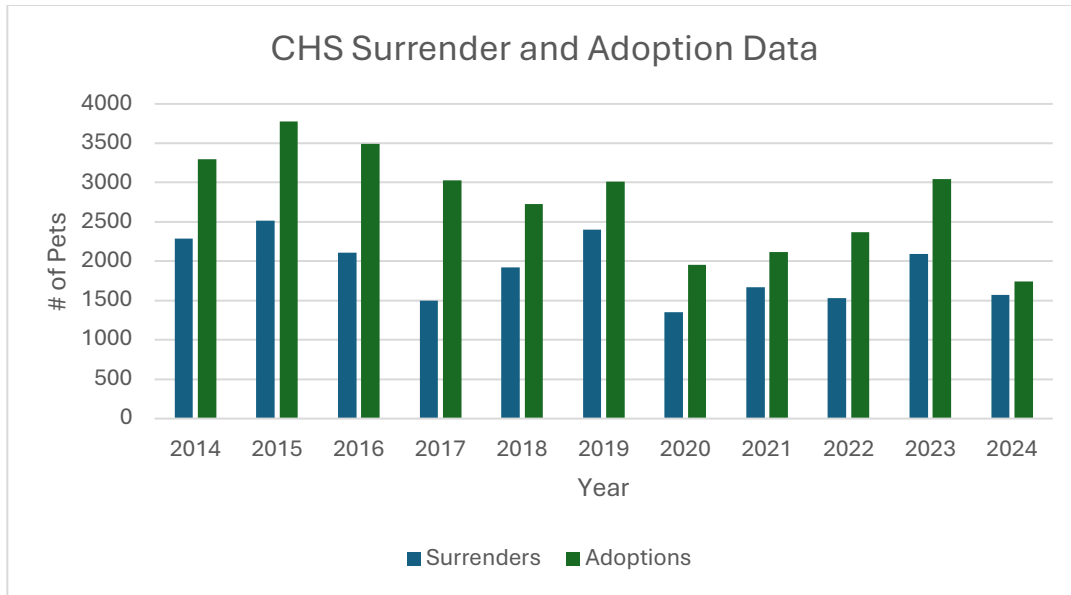


Figure 1: Shows the yearly comparison of CHS surrender and adoptions

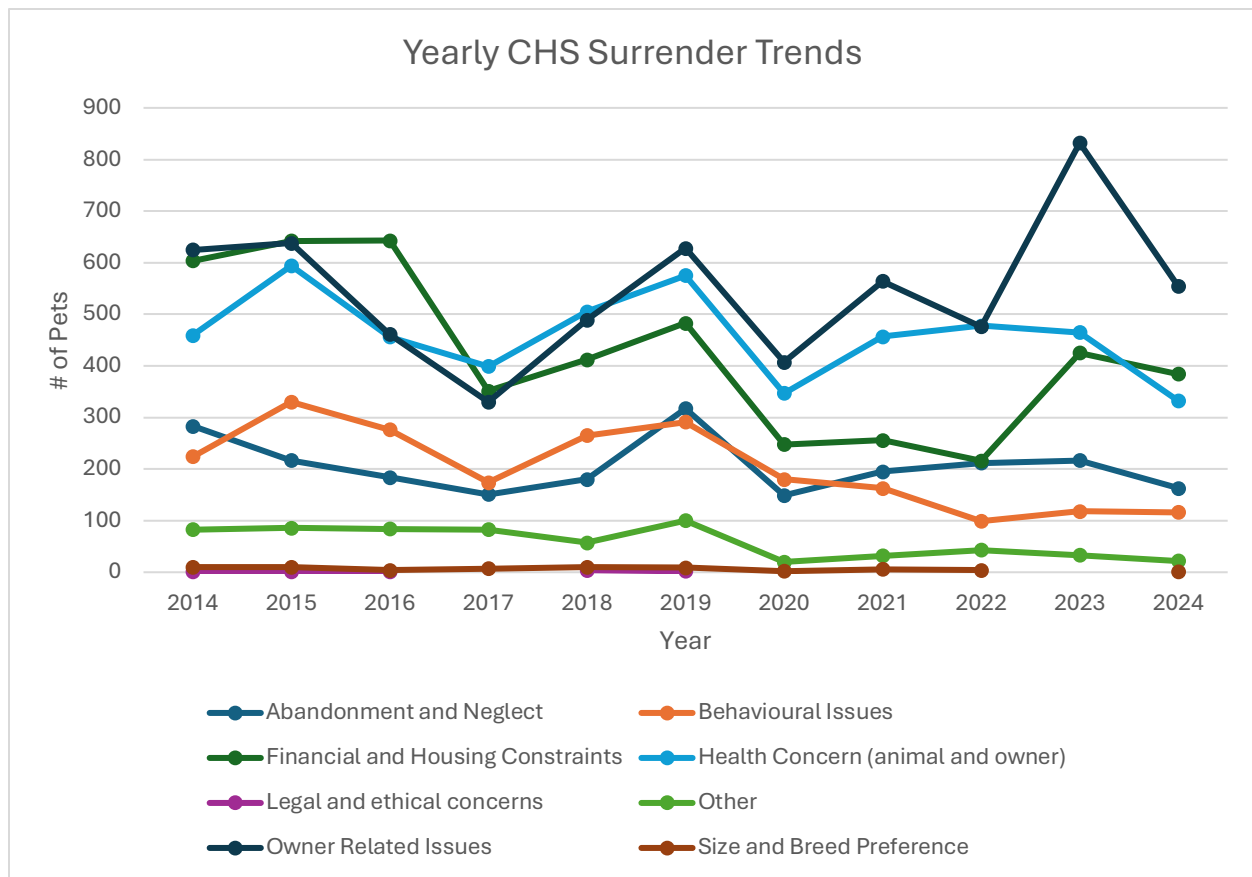


Figure 2: Yearly surrender trends pulled from CHS data

Impact of Affordable Pet Friendly Housing Analysis

Vacancy Rates and Pet Surrenders

During our data research, we explored the relationship between trends in pet surrenders and housing affordability. Vacancy rates in particular show compelling possible relationships in recent trends. In Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's annual rental surveys, 2020 represents the highest vacancy rates at 6% across all rental apartment/condo categories, while 2023 is the lowest, from 2019 to 2024.⁵ Among the reasons provided to the Calgary Humane Society over that time period, "Owner Related Issues" and "Financial & Housing Constraints" follow inverted patterns that may be related.^{6, 7} Although a comprehensive correlational analysis may be difficult given the limits of available data, including more specificity in reasons for surrenders and the various inputs that affect rental vacancies, we believe this possible relationship deserves more attention and tracking.

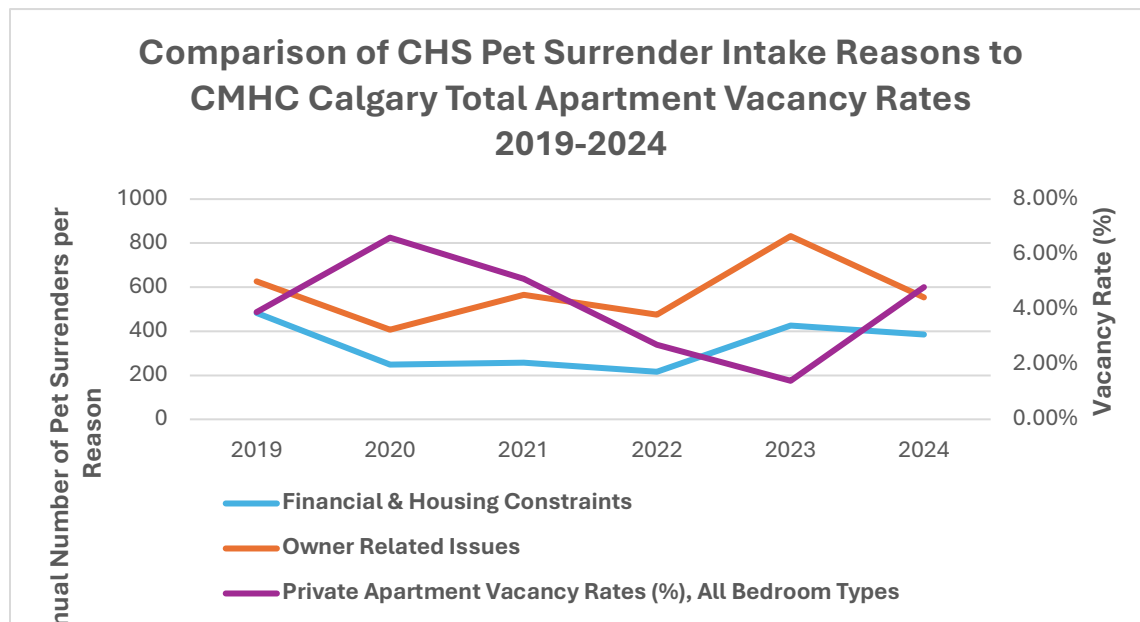


Figure 3: Compares the CHS surrender data to vacancy rates in Calgary

⁵ CMHC releases annual rental survey data files available on their website: <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/professionals/housing-markets-data-and-research/housing-data/data-tables/rental-market/rental-market-report-data-tables>

⁶ CMHC annual rental survey data files: <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/professionals/housing-markets-data-and-research/housing-data/data-tables/rental-market/rental-market-report-data-tables>

⁷ See Calgary Humane Society data on intake reasons for pet surrenders.

It's reasonable to expect a relationship exists between these overall trends. When rental vacancies are high, renters are likely to have more bargaining power as landlords compete over tenants by lowering rents and by otherwise accommodating their needs to attract their business. Contrarily, when vacancies are low, landlords have more pricing power, which in turn can cause more stress on renters. To people surrendering their pets and identifying housing/financial constraints as the cause, this may be an important factor. Given the high-level and short descriptions of other reasoning within CHS' surrender intake data, this may also relate similarly to "Owner Related Issues" surrenders. Overall, it's reasonable to assume that higher financial stress and possible housing precarity is related to these various reasons underlying that category, and thus a similar and strong trend comparison may be present.

In 2020, at the height of vacancy rates, was also the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. Mobility dramatically decreased that year and a large amount of people worked from home.⁸ A smaller number of people were likely to move permanently, and rental vacancies may have risen as a result. By 2023, the vacancy low during the period, Calgary was experiencing an influx of people moving to the city and region, putting pressure on housing prices and rents.⁹

⁸ Statistics Canada reported a peak of work-from-home in Canada of around 40% in 2020: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/240118/dq240118c-eng.htm>

⁹ The Canadian Real Estate Board reported recorded historical net migration to Calgary in recent years, particularly in 2023 and 2024: <https://creastats.crea.ca/board/calg-migration>

Calgary : Perspective on housing affordability

Monthly mortgage payment on median home price (25 year amortization, 5-year term)

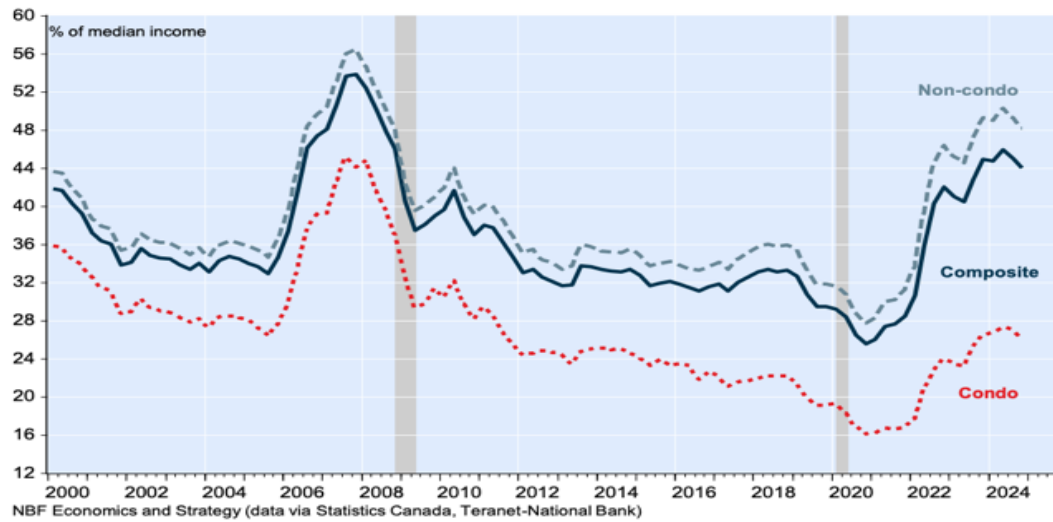


Figure 4: Illustrates mortgage payment data in Calgary

Calgary: Buying compared to renting

Premium/discount for buying compared to renting a two-bedroom condo

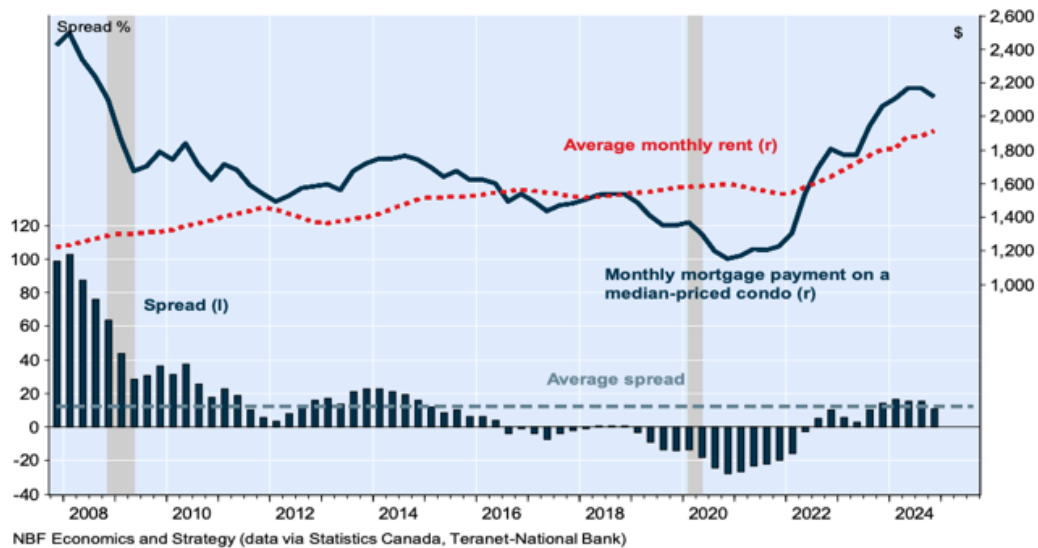


Figure 5: Illustrates the yearly analysis of buying vs renting data in Calgary

Homeowners from 2020 to 2024 are facing price increases not seen since the latter part of the 2000s decade (figure 5). The average two-bedroom condo prices also show that since mid-2022, buyers have been worse off than renters, while both face substantial increases.¹⁰ In our own analysis on rental prices from CMHC (figure 6), average rents have clearly worsened, particularly since the beginning of the pandemic and in all sizes/configurations of apartments.¹¹

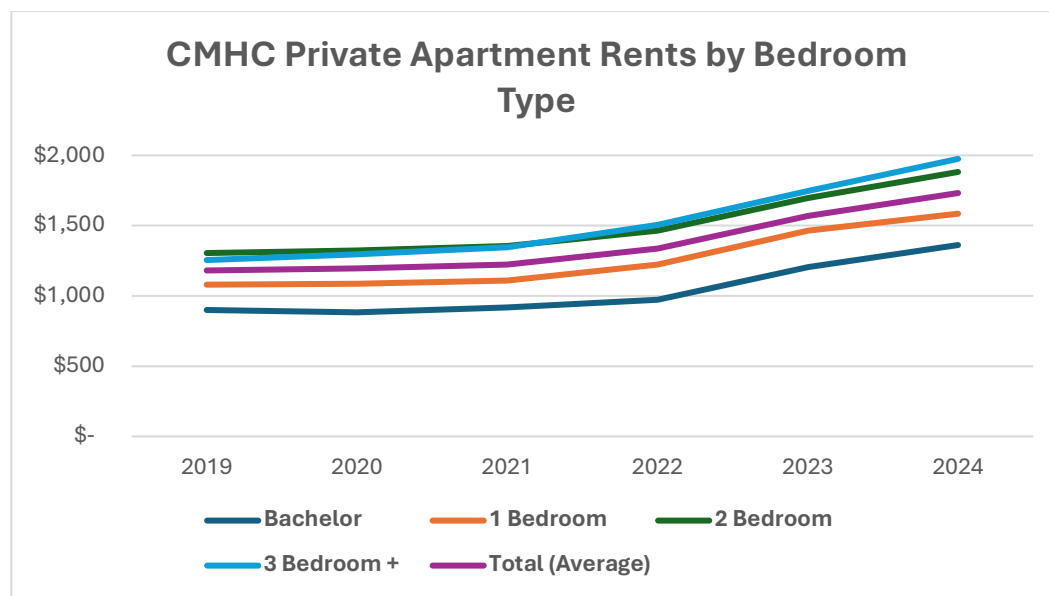


Figure 6: Illustrates rental prices in Calgary

Ultimately, these trends form the basis of our overall understanding of the housing market in the Calgary region in recent years. Our interview results, explored below, describe further breakdown in personal experiences across different housing situations and for those facing issues with pet-friendly housing.

¹⁰ National Bank regularly publishes a Housing Affordability Monitor Report. See their most recent: <https://www.nbc.ca/content/dam/bnc/taux-analyses/analyse-eco/logement/housing-affordability.pdf>

¹¹ CMHC data from the annual rental survey data files: <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/professionals/housing-markets-data-and-research/housing-data/data-tables/rental-market/rental-market-report-data-tables>

Introduction to the Housing Continuum

A persistent finding from our data research and across our interviews was a realization that there is little consolidated publicly available data to explain the availability of housing where pets are allowed across different housing types. Similarly, this quantifiable data is hard to come by for identifying the more subtle issues people are facing in the interaction between their pets and their housing situations. What we did discover is a broad array of non-profits and charities that aid people in the Calgary region with accessing housing, particularly for people in crisis. Our research focused on interviewing experts at those organizations to learn about their work and knowledge of people in housing crisis situations and how pets may or may not affect those crises.

The housing continuum is a useful framework to understand the types of crises people face broadly in accessing housing. Our research has used this framework to interpret our interview results from various organizations dedicated to helping people in the Calgary region access housing and resolve barriers to housing in their specific cases. Ultimately, to uncover the relationship between pet surrender and housing, we delved into questioning what housing scenarios are pets involved and the relevant issues unique to each part of the continuum.

THE HOUSING CONTINUUM



Figure 7: The Housing Continuum illustration

Homelessness

Key Takeaways

1. Individuals experiencing homelessness often choose to remain unhoused rather than surrender their pets, due to emotional attachment, stigma, and limited availability of pet-friendly shelter options.
2. Existing supports like the Navigation Centre, YW Calgary, Fear Is Not Love, and Parachute for Pets provide some assistance, but coverage remains limited, and there is widespread lack of awareness among both service providers and unhoused individuals.
3. Major gaps exist in data collection, inter-organizational collaboration, and community awareness, highlighting the need for standardized pet-related intake questions and stronger partnerships between pet- and people-focused organizations to reduce unnecessary pet surrenders.

Problem

A recent study found that 3,121 individuals are currently experiencing homelessness in Calgary ¹², with the rate holding steady at approximately two out of every 1,000 Calgarians remain unhoused. This number continues to rise annually, driven by factors such as Calgary's competitive rental market, the rising cost of living, and the city's rapid population growth.

¹²CTV News <https://www.ctvnews.ca/calgary/article/significant-progress-latest-homeless-numbers-in-calgary-are-up-but-stabilizing/>

Interviews conducted throughout this project with key community stakeholders revealed a recurring theme regarding homelessness in the city: individuals experiencing homelessness often feel a strong stigma when seeking help, particularly when they own a pet. Many would rather remain unhoused than surrender their animal. For many, their pet is a source of emotional support and the only consistent relationship they have. Since the pandemic, these challenges have intensified and have become more prevalent for the non-profits who are working with individuals to try and secure pet friendly shelter or housing, such as CUPS.

Another major issue is the widespread lack of awareness surrounding available support for pet owners facing homelessness. Nonprofits navigating the housing system often lack knowledge of pet-related services, and those experiencing homelessness are similarly uninformed. While emergency shelters like Fear Is Not Love and YW Calgary provide limited pet-friendly rooms, most do not due to AHS regulations. As a result, surrendering a pet often becomes the only option.

Supports

Through our research we were able to identify the following key supports in the region working to support those experiencing homelessness and offer pet friendly services.

1. [Navigation Centre](#)
2. [YW Calgary](#)
3. [Fear is Not Love](#)
4. [Parachute for Pets](#)

Gap Identification and Opportunities

Within the Homeless section of the housing continuum in correlation to pet friendly housing and services available we have identified the following key gaps and opportunities.

One key insight is the critical gap in data collection among nonprofit organizations supporting individuals facing homelessness. While some data exists, it is often high-level and inconsistent. For instance, the Navigation Centre tracks when individuals accessing services are accompanied by pets, but since the facility only recently opened, the data is still limited and not yet sufficient for identifying trends. Similarly, shelters like Brenda's House conduct basic screening, but they do not include pet-specific questions.

Additionally, interviewees noted that many individuals will omit pet ownership during intake or screening due to fear of being denied services and this leads to inaccurate data. This gap presents a major opportunity for CHS to collaborate with key stakeholders and nonprofits to create standardized pet related questions. A unified approach would allow for more robust data collection, enabling the sector to uncover trends and inform future decisions.

Another gap identified in this area is education, communication and community awareness. There is room for collaboration within this space that would allow for a stronger dialogue between pet focused and people focused organizations. This collaboration could lead to strong partnerships that decrease the surrenders of pets to CHS as it will be a proactive approach to align programming with the needs of the individuals within the community. These partnerships, accompanied by a stronger data set will establish a strong case for change within the industry and assist in future advocacy work.

Through creating these partnerships, it will open the doors for collaboration on awareness and education of CHS and pet support services within the region on a broader scale. This could also lead to an increase in the use of prevention programs such as the training classes, rather than surrenders, keeping families together in the community.

Emergency and Temporary Shelters

Key Takeaways

1. Most transitional and emergency shelters lack the capacity and infrastructure to accommodate pets, forcing many individuals to choose between securing shelter and staying with their animals.
2. Stigma and fear of being denied services lead many pet owners to conceal pet ownership, resulting in poor data collection and limited understanding of the true demand for pet-friendly housing.
3. Stronger inter-agency communication and data sharing could improve awareness of existing pet-related supports and guide better planning, reducing unnecessary pet surrenders and easing pressure on shelters like CHS.

Problem

Transitional housing acts as a short-term housing option that bridges homelessness and permanent housing. From speaking to organizations like Calgary Housing, the Children's Cottage (Brenda's house) and CUPS it is clear they face similar issues to those of homeless shelters. The "2023 Housing Needs Assessment" conducted by the City of Calgary noted that the Calgary Housing Company's waitlist grew to 4,911 applicants in 2023 (an 18% increase over the last 5 years), further burdening emergency and transitional housing services¹³. This issue of capacity results in applicants waiting years for stable housing, leaning on organizations like CUPS and Brenda's House. Interviews with these offices highlighted that a lack of capacity and funds prevents them from being able to service a long list of Calgarians, resulting in individuals turning to homelessness.

¹³ Retrieved from data provided by the city of Calgary in March of 2025
(<https://www.calgary.ca/communities/housing-in-calgary/housing-needs-assessment.html>)

Emergency Housing relates to a much shorter-term type of support. Emergency shelters are designed for those in need of very quick stays and function best when there is no long-term dependence from visitors. In Calgary, this would include the Drop-In Centre, the Salvation Army, the Journey Church Warming Centre and other similar services.

The issue of pets relating to emergency/transitional housing is a complicated matter. Often, emergency and transitional housing shelters have shared spaces like common rooms or dining spaces. When dining spaces are shared, Alberta Health codes do not allow animals due to sanitary reasons, eliminating a large portion of transitional housing options for pet owners¹⁴. This again forces those to make a choice: secure emergency/transitional housing and abandon their pet or resume homelessness and remain with their animal. Another factor relates to the nature of temporary housing. Those who are using a service like Brenda's House are given a fixed number of days to secure housing (in Brenda's House's case, 21 days). This again leaves pet owners with having to secure separate shelters for their animals if they choose to use temporary housing. Certain instances, highlighted by interview subjects, include tenants claiming their animals act as emotional support animals. This is a growing trend seeing a number of renters using this tactic in hopes of securing housing without parting from their animal. A smaller number of cases include service animals, which is a regulated status for animals and much harder to dispute from a landlord's perspective.

The stigma surrounding homelessness very much impacts operations at transitional and emergency housing operations. According to our research, individuals commonly refrain from sharing the extent of their problems surrounding homelessness (including details about pets). This has two large impacts on transitional housing; the first is related to communication and the second regards data collection. Without effective

¹⁴ Retrieved from Food Retail and Food Services code provided by the province of Alberta (<https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/0ea69179-2f90-4776-a64d-c903299b2ca6/resource/3354d461-6834-4744-b185-18dfa401960d/download/health-food-retail-and-foodservices-code-2020.pdf>)

communication of available services, many individuals fail to take advantage of programs in place around Calgary to limit those in need of transitional housing. With strong lines of communication in place (both with unhoused individuals and other organizations), several programs could see increased usage and lead to reduced strain on temporary shelters.

Emergency and Transitional Housing Supports

Very few temporary housing shelters have the privilege of supporting pet owners due to the previously mentioned regulations concerning shared kitchen spaces, but in our research, we did uncover the following supports for pet owners in need of transitional housing:

1. YW Calgary: Transitional Housing for Women
2. Parachute for Pets
3. Calgary Children's Cottage & Inn from the Cold
4. CUPS and University of Calgary Vet Clinic Services
5. Alberta Animal Rescue Crew Society (AARCS)
6. Parachute for Pets

Gap Identification and Opportunities

During our research exploring transitional housing and emergency shelters, our group identified gaps in services that may allow for areas of opportunity for these initiatives.

Capacity remains one of the biggest hurdles for transitional/emergency shelters. Although little can be done to increase capacity directly, shelters can take steps to increase advocacy and reduce the number of individuals in need of their services.

The first gap relates to data collection. Information gathering related to those in need of emergency and transitional shelters is difficult, given most organizations are already spread thin. In addition, collecting data from a population that disproportionally

suffers from mental illness and is affected by the stigma of homelessness results in inaccuracies in data. Emergency shelters like the Children's Cottage Society impose screening before offering services but do have the resources for in-depth data collection. Interviews with stakeholders also revealed that it is common for individuals to hide the fact they are pet owners out of fear of being denied aid. The longer average stay of a person in need at a transitional housing site would allow for better data collection. Application processes should collect data from both accepted and declined applicants to best understand who is seeking to utilize temporary housing. One key issue remains that pet owners will often not apply knowing that pets are not welcome at most shelters. Similar concerns apply to emergency shelters as most pets do not utilize the available shelters, given very few offer services for animals due to health and safety concerns. Data collection by emergency and transitional shelters should be a focus to better understand the demographics of who they provide services for and who they do not. With this data, a better understanding of homelessness as it relates to pets is possible. This data collection could be done in-house or outsourced by these organizations.

Communication is another key opportunity for improvement. There is an abundance of services that would be beneficial to those utilizing transitional and emergency shelters, including the SNAP program, the pet-friendly shelter provided by YW Housing, and the pet food bank provided by Parachute for Pets. Nearly all stakeholders we spoke to displayed an interest in increasing communication lines across organizations. With improved communication, efforts and programs can be made more evident for those in need, allowing pet owners in Calgary to better understand their options before making key decisions relating to pet surrender and temporary/emergency housing. Working closer together with other community initiatives could present an opportunity to create a detailed process for pet owners who need shelter to follow, reducing the strain on CHS.

Permanent Housing

Key Takeaways

1. Pet ownership in permanent housing is influenced by cost pressures and landlord restrictions, with renters facing increasing pet fees and limitations despite high demand for pet-friendly units.
2. Lack of standardized data on pet-related housing challenges and availability makes it difficult to assess the full scope of issues renters face, especially as housing affordability worsens.
3. Opportunities exist to improve pet-friendly housing access through data sharing and pet fee standardization, which could ease transitions across the housing continuum and reduce barriers for pet owners.

The least precarious part of the continuum is permanent housing, or “Market Housing”, where homeowners and renters are living in housing scenarios that are well within their budget (<30% of income) and/or they own the property.¹⁵ In our research, people in these situations are still facing housing pressures, but not necessarily as many immediate crises related to pets and housing as the more precarious situations further on the continuum. Overall trends from our interviews show increasing pressures on everyone, including in permanent housing.

Pet ownership surged during the pandemic, and homeowners increased the number of pets in their care as a result. However, homeowners have the greatest flexibility of anyone along the housing continuum to decide whether and how many pets to live with. Renters, on the other hand, face possible further restrictions. Even those in permanent and

¹⁵ See Inn from the Cold’s “What is the Housing Continuum?”: <https://innfromthecold.org/what-is-the-housing-continuum/>

less precarious rental housing have to negotiate with restrictions and costs on pets in their care.

In our interviews with Children's Cottage Society, CUPS, Calgary Housing Company, and the private rental suite management company QuadReal, all identified rising pet fees in rental suites as a recent increasing financial pressure on renters. QuadReal, although the vast majority of its properties allow pets, explained that wear and tear from pets, particularly cats due to their sharp claws, have led to costly floor repairs. All interviewees understand that smaller pets are often preferred by landlords, including cats and small dogs, while others may be restricted. Parachute for Pets also explained that landlords have concerns over the health and safety of other tenants and their own liabilities.

QuadReal explained that, very recently, they have seen a decrease in pet ownership amongst new tenants, possibly a reaction to cost concerns in the housing markets and/or changing life priorities for tenants. Overall, QuadReal and others believe there is a high demand for housing that allows pets, but tension over costs and landlords' interests is ongoing.

All interviewees in the housing space explained that they do not specifically track incidences of pet challenges related to housing or vice versa. This is a challenge for addressing issues in permanent housing and it's our understanding that the best available data for permanent housing is in tracking housing affordability broadly for home ownership and renting since those broad trends will necessarily impact those in permanent ownership or rental scenarios.

QuadReal pet fee charges include a \$250 one-time pet fee, while most other landlords charge monthly fees of \$25 and higher to help cover damages and maintenance costs. Although many housing interviewees identified a one-time fee as more appropriate, some tenants with subsidies can only receive subsidies for ongoing rent fees, adding complexity to negotiations with landlords and cost structuring for supports.

A further challenge, as in other areas of the housing continuum, is that renters facing limited supply of pet-friendly housing may claim that they have certified service animals or emotional support animals, although they mostly do not have the former and the latter is an unregulated status. All housing organizations interviewed as well as Parachute for Pets see this as a growing problem indicative of limited pet-friendly housing supply.

Supports

QuadReal is among the most permissive local private landlord in allowing pets in their properties. They allow most pets—dogs (excluding Dobermans and German Shepherds), cats, birds, and fish—while excluding rabbits due to maintenance concerns. Sometimes fees are waived as a competitive strategy, and QuadReal collects and uses pet ownership data from move-in to strategically manage services and enhance tenant satisfaction. This data is not available publicly. Despite the cost challenges, QuadReal continues to offer pet-friendly options to expand their market share and retain tenants.

Services at both the Calgary Humane Society and Parachute for Pets are available for permanent housing residents. Both organizations operate pet safekeeping programs, emergency boarding, and food programs.¹⁶ CHS requires a reference from a certified professional such as a social worker to use these programs, while Parachute for Pets has no reference requirement nor income testing. Parachute for Pets also offers a food program that is income tested.

Gap Identification and Opportunities

Consistently available rental pet-friendliness data would help identify and address problems in permanent housing. Various resources exist at the individual level to find pet-friendly housing, including through sites like RentFaster on in interactions between

¹⁶ <https://www.calgaryhumane.ca/animals/community-services/> and <https://www.parachutesforpets.com/our-programs/>

prospective tenants and companies like QuadReal. However, these are point-in-time databases and only serve individuals. More open databases are needed to track pet-friendly housing availability, pet fees, and rules for pet-friendly housing.

Pet fee standardization is an opportunity that would limit the complexity and regulation of pet-friendliness across the housing continuum, according to interviews. Standardization would require education of both landlords and tenants, and further research to find out what is most appropriate and fair to all parties. Furthermore, standardization may allow more mobility on the housing continuum if pet owners can get access to permanent housing through supports they receive in more precarious housing situations than permanent housing.

Recommendations

Key Takeaways

1. Because data is often collected during moments of crisis and individuals may not disclose pet-related housing issues, implementing standardized intake language using the Canadian Housing Continuum would improve consistency and trend tracking.
2. With nonprofits stretched thin by staffing, funding, and housing shortages, stronger data and storytelling can help mobilize donor and government support to address capacity challenges.
3. Since intake data is siloed across organizations, creating collaborative partnerships would enable shared tracking of service usage and help identify gaps across the housing continuum.

Data

In the current landscape of data collection for organizations it is a prominent struggle when people are in crisis whether they are surrendering their pet to CHS or their housing situation is changing. In the majority of cases people are reaching out for support when they are already in crisis, and this increases the difficulty to respond to their issue or collect the data in real time and allow organizations to prepare for the times when increased capacity is required. If intake data questions are asked, people broadly have various incentives to not inform the service providers when they have challenges with their pets in their housing situation and this makes it increasingly difficult to collect data.

Recommendation #1- Data Collection

Our recommendation to solve the data collection issue is to create common language for intake data around housing and pet challenges. This will allow organizations

such as CHS and other organizations, to contextualize pet surrenders based on what people in a housing crisis are experiencing in their situations. By utilizing the Canadian Housing Continuum (Appendix A) as a benchmark it would allow for organizations to identify what type of housing people are surrendering their pet from and where they are on the continuum. Creating this common language will create consistency in reporting and it will be easier to understand the reason and resources utilized prior to surrender. Also, by establishing common language around the pet challenge that led to the surrender will allow for a better understanding of the reason and reporting consistency to identify key trends. A future objective could also be to invest in a centralized data collection and reporting tool that would allow for organizations to collaborate and create a shared data tracking system.

Coordination

Within the housing and pet nonprofit sector the data for intakes to the various programs and services currently lives in silos and is not shared among organizations. This leads to there being no good resource to track how people move through the housing continuum and track what services were utilized, when and where.

Recommendation #2 – Collaboration with other Nonprofit Organizations

Create a collaborative partnership with the key nonprofit partners in the community that are focused on providing house and/or pet supports. This partnership would work to create a space for organizations to discuss issues, areas for improvement and collaboration opportunities. The goal would be to create shared goals with other organizations and work to collect further data that could help all organizations involved. These partnerships would allow for improvement in tracking how clients are moving through the housing continuum and what services were utilized, and where the gaps are present within the support system here in Calgary.

Capacity / Services

Through our analysis it became clear the given the increasingly difficult housing support sector within the community all the supports previously mentioned in this report are consistently under pressure and often focused on providing the best direct services possible with less focus on data collection. Their capacity challenges cover everything from employee and volunteer attraction, retention, donations, government funding, housing supply, pet friendly housing supply and resources for advocacy work.

Recommendation #3 – Strategic Allocation of Time and Services

The final recommendation is focused on using better information to advocate for more funding and prioritize what areas of the housing continuum need pet related the services most. By working alongside key stakeholders such as donors and the government lasting change could be implemented through strategically aligning supports where required most. This will allow for supports to be provided in the areas needed most and allow organizations to strategically utilize funding and resources to increase capacity.

The intersection of housing instability and pet ownership presents a growing challenge for both individuals and the organizations that support them. Addressing this issue requires a more unified and strategic approach across the nonprofit sector. By implementing consistent intake data practices, fostering cross-organizational collaboration, and using insights to strategically allocate resources, Calgary's housing and animal support organizations can collectively improve their responsiveness and long-term impact. These recommendations aim to create a more informed, connected, and efficient system, ultimately supporting people and their pets before a crisis occurs and reducing the number of preventable surrenders in our community.

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Appendix A: Simplified Housing Continuum for Pet Owners (Supports Included)

THE HOUSING CONTINUUM



Appendix B: Specific Opportunities for the Calgary Humane Society

Although the focus of this report has been to provide research, our broader recommendations may also be useful to inform specific opportunities for CHS.

Data

Calgary Humane Society can improve the quality of its surrender intake data by including more detailed and structured information:

- First, create standardized ‘buckets’ for the reason for surrender to establish common language and streamline reporting, as illustrated in Appendix C. This will allow a simpler ongoing analysis of changes in the trends for surrender reasons
- Additionally, collect separate data about the type of housing individuals are coming from. This would entail adding another input field that details what part of the housing continuum people are living in when they surrender, whether that’s home ownership or rentals, affordable housing, supportive housing, transitional housing, or homelessness. This will help track trends in the future and identify whether housing is trending with other challenges causing surrenders, even if it’s not the primary cause.
- Include another input field to determine whether any organizations other than CHS have been involved in helping individuals address pet-related issues. This, in addition to the above suggestion, may help CHS identify which organizations it should collaborate with when certain causes of surrenders increase or decreases.

Capacity / Services

Evaluate the current 21-day stay policy under the Pet Safe Keeping Program to determine if it is adequate for individuals in housing crises. This evaluation should be done in collaboration with community partners to ensure timelines align with clients’ needs. When capacity challenges arise within the pet safe keeping program, improved coordination and support with Parachute for Pets is essential, as they may be facing similar challenges.

For the Emergency Boarding program, expand efforts to promote more shelters that can accommodate pets, as there are currently limited options in Calgary. Work with these shelters to understand and resolve their concerns about accepting pets and provide education to support the integration of pet-friendly services.

Coordination

Adopt a more collaborative approach across sectors. Meet regularly with housing support organizations (see Appendix E for a list of potential contacts) to foster stronger partnerships. Data sharing should be prioritized by regularly summarizing and distributing information that can be made public. This data should highlight trends in how housing issues impact pet surrenders and detail the types of housing people are transitioning from.

Additionally, increase public awareness and education around pet-friendly housing and the unique challenges faced during housing crises. Collaborate with organizations to start conversations and promote available services.

A potential partnership and awareness campaign was brought forward by the Children's Cottage Society team that is focused on providing a platform to speak about the services available to pet owners in the communities, as well as the challenges including cost, housing and more. They would like to discuss with the CHS team a potential collaboration on a campaign to align with their new launch of a mental health and wellness initiative at the Children's Cottage Society. They have connections with local news and radio outlets to gain a wider audience and to bring to light the important issues facing pet support programs and housing supports in Calgary.

Appendix C: CHS Surrender Data Categories

Below is a breakdown of the categories that all CHS surrender data was grouped into for the surrender trend analysis and a proposed approach moving forward.

Abandonment and Neglect	
Abandoned	Unwanted Litter
Abandoned by Owner	Unwanted Gift
Cruelty	Unwanted
Feral	Found - Cannot Keep
Behavioural Issues	
Afraid	Doesn't Like Children
Aggression - People & Animals	Doesn't Like Other Pets
Aggression to Animals	Escapes
Aggression to People	Euthanasia (IMPORT)
Aggressive	Housoiling (IMPORT)
Aggressive - People (IMPORT)	Killed Another Animal
Behavior Issues	Not Friendly
Bite History	Not Housebroken / Housoiling
Chases Animals	Problems With Pets (IMPORT)
Chases People (IMPORT)	Soiling (IMPORT)
Chases Vehicles	Temperament
Destructive	Too Active
Destructive Inside	Too Noisy
Financial and Housing Constraints	
Can't Afford (IMPORT)	Moving
Cannot Afford	No Home
Cost (IMPORT)	No Homes (IMPORT)
Inadequate Facilities (IMPORT)	No Pet Housing
Inadequate Housing / Yard	Not Allowed
Landlord Issues	
Health Concern (animal and owner)	

Allergic to Animal	Health of Animal
Allergies (IMPORT)	Health of Owner / Family
Animal Pregnancy (IMPORT)	Injured
DOA	Litterbox Odor
Euthanasia Request	Pregnancy of Animal
Euthanasia Request (IMPORT)	
Legal and ethical concerns	
Illegal Animal	
Other	
Other	Unknown
Owner Related Issues	
Change in Lifestyle	Personal Problems
Death of Owner / Family	Pregnancy of Owner / Family
Divorce / Separation	Responsibility (IMPORT)
Guardian (IMPORT)	Sheds
Military Transfer of Owner	Too Many (IMPORT)
Needs Too Much Attention	Too Many Animals
New Baby	Too Much Responsibility
No Time (IMPORT)	Travel
Not Enough Time	Unable to Train
Owner Died (IMPORT)	Unrealistic Expectations
Owner Problems (IMPORT)	Wants to go Outside
Size and Breed Preference	
Too Big	Too Young
Too Old	Wrong Sex
Too Small	

Appendix D: Available Services along the Housing Continuum

Organization	Services Provided
Alberta Animal Rescue Crew Society (AARCS)	AARCS is a welfare organization that looks to aid animals in need of critical care. Working to provide care for homeless animals, AARCS has more than 6,000 animals go through their program yearly. In the event an animal is abandoned in hopes of securing emergency housing, AARCS, having their own kennels, would act as a support for CHS.
Calgary Children's Cottage & Inn from the Cold	With Brenda's Housing closing, which formally provided temporary shelter to Calgarians in need since 2008, the Children's Cottage is going through a transitional period. Their focus remains on early-stage prevention and limiting the number of those in need of services formally offered by Brenda's House. Now partnered with Inn from the Cold, efforts will be streamlined and reduce duplication of services. Brenda's House did not offer shelter for pets.
CUPS and University of Calgary Vet Clinic Services	CUPS's longstanding partnership with the University of Calgary allows for those in need to receive free veterinary services for their pets. Complimentary vet services are offered monthly and provide services that may cost roughly \$400 at a standard vet.
Navigation Center	They offer a community hub model that includes professionals from various organizations including The Calgary Homeless foundation, rehabilitation centres, CUPS, Alberta ID services, Parol, Indigenous connections and more. This model creates an opportunity for those facing homelessness or crisis to stop at one location and have immediate assistance to address or navigate the issues. This facility opened in ___ and is also now offering temporary shelter, which includes ___ pet friendly beds. Currently, they work closely with Parachute for Pets to assist the pet owners that stop for assistance.
Parachute for Pets	Parachute for Pets does not offer housing, but works to support the emergency shelters in the region by offering twofold, safe keeping and food program.

YW Calgary and Fear is Not Love	Both the YW Calgary and Fear is Not Love offer Pet Friendly emergency shelter beds/rooms for individuals.
YW Calgary: Transitional Housing for Women	YW Calgary provides transitional housing for women who have been victims or are fleeing instances of domestic abuse, women at risk of homelessness and experiencing other barriers surrounding mental illness or addiction. YC Calgary Transitional Housing for Women focuses on supporting their clients through crisis, providing them with stability while aiding in securing permanent housing. Costs and fees for YW's service are dependent on the income of the client. Pet owners are welcome to bring their pets to YW shelters.

Appendix E: Contact Book for Reference

Name	Organization	Role	Email
Louisa Hogensen	CUPS	Housing Locator	louisah@cupscalgary.com
Pat Dube	Calgary Housing	Tenant Support Worker	Pat.Dube@calgary.ca
Nadine McClure	Children's Cottage	Major Gifts Associate	nmcclure@childrenscottage.ab.ca
Claire Cownden	Children's Cottage	Manager of Brenda's House Family Shelter	ccownden@childrenscottage.ab.ca
Melissa David	Parachute for Pets	Founder and Executive Director	info@parachutesforpets.com
Alexis Macphail	Parachute for Pets	Client Support Work	alexis.macphail@parachutesforpets.com
Mohamed Abdalmajed	QuadReal Residential Properties	Community Manager	mohamed.abdalmajed@quadreal.com
	Calgary Navigation Centre		*403-410-1167
Holly Shaw	Ward 11- Councilor Penner's Office	Constituency Assistant	ward11@calgary.ca
Councilor Penner	Ward 11- Councilor Penner's Office	City Councilor	ward11@calgary.ca

Appendix F: Interview Notes from All Interviewees

(Attached Separately)

Appendix G: Data File

(Attached Separately)