



# CITY OF HOUSTON

## PRESS RELEASE

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### CITY COUNCIL APPROVES MAJOR INITIATIVE TO DECREASE ANIMAL OVERPOPULATION

As part of a major initiative to reduce and prevent animal overpopulation, Houston City Council on Wednesday approved a contract with Emancipet, a nationally recognized non-profit animal welfare organization.

Emancipet will provide low-cost spay/neuter and preventive veterinary services from their 48-foot semi-permanent trailer clinic, which will be located at Neighborhood Centers' Ripley House facility (4410 Navigation Boulevard) in Houston's East End. The clinic will be able to spay/neuter approximately 7,000 to 8,000 animals per year, and provide approximately 10,000 preventive care visits.

"We have had a stray dog problem in our community for decades in part due to a lack of comprehensive spay/neuter strategy, and limited educational initiatives on responsible pet ownership," said Council Member Robert Gallegos, who represents much of the East End. "Over the past year, we have focused on a multi-pronged approach to address the issue; we have increased funding for BARC enforcement operations, launched more proactive educational campaigns on responsible pet ownership, and made affordable spay/neuter services, like the those Emancipet will provide, more accessible to pet owners who need them."

There are an estimated 800,000 to 1,200,000 strays in the Houston area. These animals pose public safety risks that include the potential to spread rabies or attack residents. Strays also affect municipal costs, as shelter intake is primarily driven by accidental litters of unwanted puppies and kittens. One of the most effective tools against the continuing proliferation of the stray animal population is an aggressive municipal spay/neuter program. Texas cities such as Austin, have had substantial success lowering their shelter intake (and by extrapolation, their stray population) and increasing live release rates through partnerships with low-cost, spay/neuter organizations, such as Emancipet.

Emancipet is expanding to Houston, its first location outside Central Texas, thanks to an innovative partnership with the City of Houston and its elected leadership. The partnership was spearheaded by Council Member Robert Gallegos and made possible thanks to the support of Mayor Annise Parker, Council Members Ed Gonzalez, and Oliver Pennington.

“This is an innovative move by Houston’s leadership to reduce the number of homeless pets in the city,” said Amy Mills, CEO of Emancipet. “We have been working with Council Members Gallegos, Gonzalez, and Pennington, leaders of the City’s Bureau of Animal Regulation and Control, and local animal welfare groups for several years to understand the needs in Houston and increase their spay/neuter capacity. We are delighted that the collaboration has resulted in Emancipet launching in Houston,” added Mills.

“Our partnership with Emancipet will further complement the city’s efforts to reduce the number of stray dogs and cats,” said Mayor Parker. “In fact, BARC modelled its own new spay/neuter strategy on Emancipet’s model and pricing system, which has been successfully implemented in Austin, Killeen, and Pflugerville.”

Emancipet expects that after six to nine months of operation, it will move into a brick-and-mortar space in the East End, and move the trailer clinic to a new location. By 2017, Emancipet hopes to have three permanent locations in underserved areas of Houston.

Mayor Pro-Tem Ed Gonzalez praised the leadership of his colleagues, the City of Houston’s Administration and Regulatory Affairs Department, and the Emancipet team. “Tackling pet overpopulation is not only a public safety issue but also a quality of life concern.” Said Gonzalez. “I am pleased to have allocated \$150,000 out of our Council District Service Funds to ensure that our residents have access to affordable spay/neuter services. I am particularly excited that the first location is within City Council District H, which I represent. Citizens from across Houston will benefit from this innovative partnership; I know it will be a huge success and am grateful to the many individuals that made this possible.”

### **About Emancipet**

Emancipet is a non-profit on a mission to make high-quality spay/neuter and preventive veterinary care affordable and accessible to every pet owner. Emancipet manages an expanding statewide network of high-quality, low-cost clinics; offers customized training and consulting programs to animal welfare organizations nationwide; and advocates for prevention-based solutions to animal homelessness. Since 1999, Emancipet veterinarians have safely spayed or neutered more than 210,000 pets at little or no cost. [www.emancipet.org](http://www.emancipet.org).

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