Expanding Access to Affordable Spay and Neuter

For Gwinnett County, GA

BY MARCI REYNOLDS

Director of Development, Planned PEThood of Georgia
Animal Welfare Advocate with 12 years of experience in Georgia's Shelter and Rescue Community

Updated September 17, 2026

Table of Contents

- **Executive Summary** 3
- **Why: The Critical Need to Invest in Spay & Neuter** 4
- **Who: The Gwinnett Population Who Needs Assistance** 5
- **Where We Can Deliver Spay & Neuter Services** 6
- **The Cost Per Surgery** 7
- **How We Can Fund Spay & Neuter Access** 8-9
- **Potential Next Steps & Contact Information** 10
- **Sources** 11

© 2026 Planned PEThood. Written by Marci Reynolds, Director, Development and Marketing. All rights reserved.

Executive Summary

This paper explores why Gwinnett County, Georgia should expand access to affordable spay and neuter services for owned cats and dogs- and practical ways to make that happen. It looks at who needs assistance, where services could be provided, what they may cost, and potential funding options. With thousands of animals entering the county shelter each year, investing in prevention can help reduce shelter intake, ease the strain on animal welfare services, improve public safety, prevent animal suffering, and ultimately save taxpayer dollars.

- Data analysis suggests we target free spay and neuter options to **144,180 Gwinnett households** with approximately **88,237 unaltered pets** whose owners may need assistance in paying to have their animals sterilized.
- Shelter intake and stray animal data could help us further target areas of the county with the greatest need.
- There are **six high-volume and low-cost spay/neuter providers in and around Gwinnett County** that could potentially participate in a targeted program - building on resources that already exist in the community.

Cost Per Surgery

Based on available data, the estimated **average cost per surgery is approximately $215 per animal,** including spay/neuter surgery and a rabies vaccination. This includes staff time, anesthesia, surgical supplies and recovery.

Surgery costs will vary based on species, animal weight, complexity and potential complications.

Potential Funding

Funding could come from a mix of private grants, philanthropic support, and government investment.

DeKalb County, Georgia provides a recent example of what this type of investment can accomplish, using additional government funding to significantly expand spay/neuter and community veterinary services.

© 2026 Planned PEThood. Written by Marci Reynolds, Director, Development and Marketing. All rights reserved.

Why: The Critical Need To Invest in Spay & Neuter

Georgia is facing a severe companion animal overpopulation crisis. More than 150,000 cats and dogs entered Georgia shelters in both 2024 and 2025. Tragically, more than 30,000 cats and dogs died in municipal shelters each of those years.

Gwinnett County reflects Georgia's broader companion animal overpopulation crisis, with more than 7,000 cats and dogs entering the county shelter each year. Despite strong adoption efforts, the shelter regularly operates at or near capacity, hundreds of animals die annually, and taxpayers spend more than $7.4M million each year on animal welfare and enforcement.

Available data suggest that approximately 70–75% of animals entering Georgia's shelters are unsterilized. About 30% of animals entering shelters and rescues are surrendered from families struggling with financial, medical, or housing hardship.

Reducing the number of animals entering the shelter is imperative.

Fewer incoming pets allow Animal Welfare staff to focus more resources on public safety, animal cruelty investigations, dangerous dog cases, and other critical community needs, while reducing preventable euthanasia, roaming animals, and bite incidents.

Investing in prevention keeps pets with their families, reduces shelter intake, and creates a more humane, effective, and fiscally responsible animal welfare system—benefiting pets, families, taxpayers, and the entire Gwinnett County community.

Key Statistics

Gwinnett Animals

7,000

cats and dogs enter the Gwinnett County shelter each year.

Unsterilized

70-75%

70–75% of animals entering Georgia's shelters are unsterilized.

Taxpayer Cost

$7.4M

Gwinnett County taxpayers spend more than $7.4M million each year on animal welfare and enforcement.

Owner Surrenders

30%

About 30% of animals entering shelters and rescues are surrendered due to financial, medical, or housing hardships.

Public Safety Considerations

21,658

In 2025, Gwinnett County Animal Control Officers responded to 21,656 calls, including hundreds involving strays, 826 bite investigations, 693 neglect cases, 286 court cases, and 41 dangerous or vicious dog cases—highlighting significant public safety and resource demands.

Who: The Gwinnett Population Who Needs Assistance

Data analysis suggests an accessible spay and neuter program should focus on an estimated 144,180 Gwinnett County households who collectively own approximately **88,237 unaltered cats and dogs.**

Households	There are approximately 356,000 total households in Gwinnett County and more than half are estimated to own two companion animals, and at least 40% of these cats and dogs are likely already altered.
Pet Owners In Need	To understand where funding may be needed, we estimate the population who makes enough money to own a pet, but may not have funding to pay for veterinary care, or spay or neuter surgery. This includes households who make $25,000 to $75,000 per year.
Targeting	To further target spay/neuter efforts, we can leverage data from the Gwinnett County Shelter identifying the areas with the highest numbers of reported stray animals and shelter intakes. This information would help direct spay/neuter resources to the communities where they are most needed and could have the greatest impact on reducing future shelter intake.

The Calculation

356,000	total Gwinnett Households
× 40.5%	
144,180	households making $25,000 to $75,000 per yr
× 51%	
73,531	households with pets
× 2	
147,062	total potential pets in need (most have 2 pets)
× 60%	
88,237	estimated animals in need of affordable or free spay and neuter services

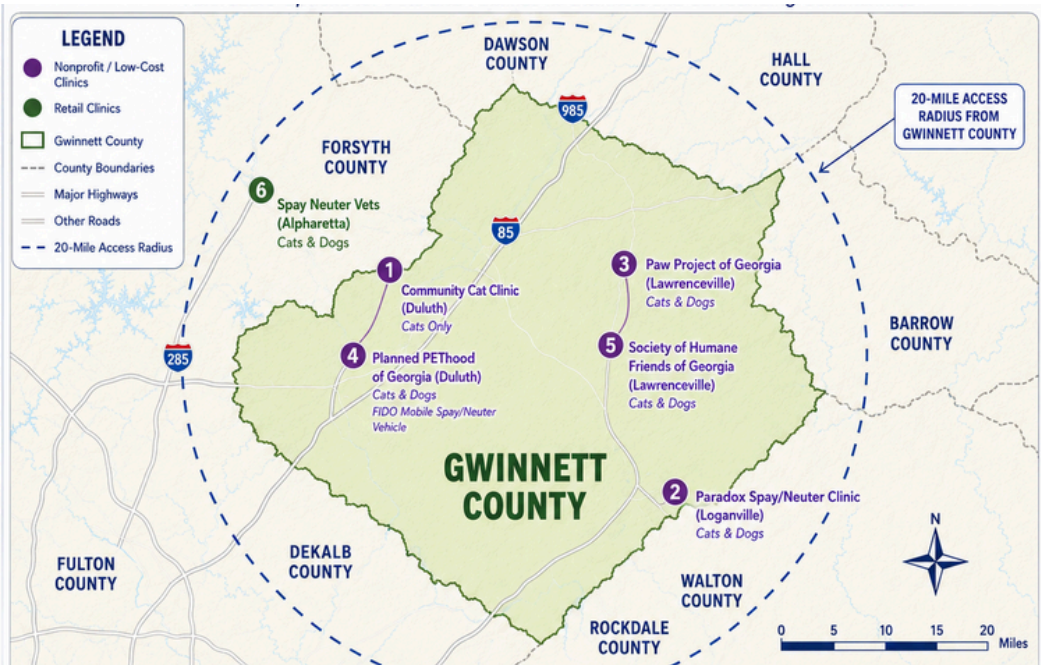
Where We Can Deliver the Spay and Neuter Services

Gwinnet County boasts 80 veterinary clinics including four who are known for providing low cost or high volume Spay and Neuter Services. There are also two nearby clinics who specialize in spay and neuter.

As a next step, we could reach out to these six vets, and validate their capacity for surgeries, interest in participating in a Gwinnett Spay/Neuter program, and cost per surgery. 5 to 6 clinics is a manageable number, and this group covers different sections of Gwinnett County.

In alphabetical order, these six clinics are:

- **Community Cat Clinic** (Duluth- Gwinnett County)- Retail Clinic, Cats Only
- **Paradox Spay/Neuter Clinic** (Loganville- Walton County) - Nonprofit, Cats & Dogs
- **Paw Project of Georgia** (Lawrenceville- Gwinnett County) - Nonprofit, low-cost clinic, cats and dogs
- **Planned PEThood of Georgia** (Duluth- Gwinnett county): Nonprofit, low-cost clinic, cats and dogs. Also has FIDO Mobile Spay/Neuter Vehicle
- **Society of Humane Friends of Georgia**, (Lawrenceville) - Nonprofit, low-cost clinic, cats and dogs
- **Spay Neuter Vets** (Alpharetta- Forsyth County): Retail Clinic, Cats and Dogs



© 2026 Planned PEThood. Written by Marci Reynolds, Director, Development and Marketing. All rights reserved.

The Cost Per Surgery Estimate

The estimated cost per spay and neuter surgery is approximately $215 per animal, based on data gathered by Planned PEThood of Georgia and the cost of utilizing high-volume, lower-cost spay/neuter clinics. This estimate includes the surgery and a required rabies vaccine.

Cost Per Surgery, $200

- Inclusive of staff time, anesthesia, surgical supplies, recovery.
- This is an estimated average. Surgery costs will vary based on species, animal weight, complexity and potential complications.
- The cost to spay or neuter a cat, is less than the cost to spay or neuter a dog. $200 per surgery is a weighted average of both species.

Rabies Vaccine, $15 each

- A requirement for all animals in Georgia and those undergoing spay and neuter surgery.

Microchip (Optional), $25 each

- Funding could be added to include an option for microchips. It is possible to get some of these donated by a microchip supplier.

Other expenses to consider include

- program management
- transportation/gas
- technology
- overhead

© 2026 Planned PEThood. Written by Marci Reynolds, Director, Development and Marketing. All rights reserved.

How We Can Fund Expanding Spay and Neuter Access

Expanding affordable spay/neuter access in Gwinnett County will require investment, but that investment does not have to come from a single source. A combination of private philanthropy and public funding could support a coordinated countywide effort while sharing both the cost and responsibility across multiple partners.

Private and Philanthropic Grant Funding

Private foundations and national and statewide animal welfare organizations are one potential source of funding. **The strongest approach may be to present this initiative as a coordinated, countywide effort,** rather than a program led by or benefiting any single organization.

Funders increasingly value collaboration and measurable collective impact. A Gwinnett County spay/neuter initiative could bring together veterinary providers, nonprofits, community partners, and potentially county government around shared goals and clearly defined roles.

Participating organizations could jointly pursue funding from groups such as Fix Georgia Pets, the ASPCA, Best Friends Animal Society, and other animal welfare funders.

A unified approach focused on countywide goals and measurable outcomes could strengthen the case for larger investments. Most importantly, **the funding case becomes about solving a Gwinnett County problem—not funding any one organization.**

Reducing shelter intake, preventing animal suffering, expanding access to veterinary care, and lowering taxpayer costs provide a strong case for both pilot and long-term investment.

© 2026 Planned PEThood. Written by Marci Reynolds, Director, Development and Marketing. All rights reserved.

How We Can Fund Expanding Spay and Neuter Access *(continued)*

Government Funding

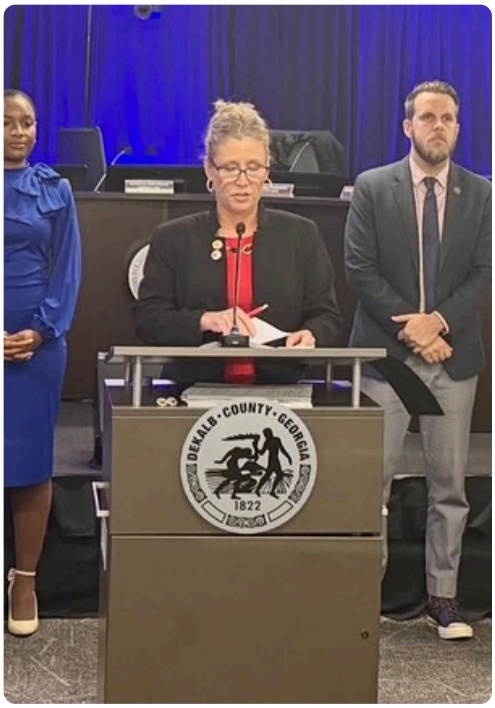
Gwinnett County could also consider dedicated public investment in spay/neuter and other prevention-based services. Public funding could complement philanthropic support and provide the foundation for a coordinated public-private approach.

DeKalb County recently demonstrated this model by approving more than $1.18 million in additional government funding in 2026 to expand free spay/neuter services, mobile veterinary clinics, and outreach in high-need neighborhoods. The investment is expected to increase free spay/neuter capacity from approximately 1,000 surgeries in 2025 to 4,800 in 2026 and eventually 6,000 annually at full scale.

Separately, DeKalb County used more than $4 million in voter-approved SPLOST funding for a major shelter expansion, demonstrating how local governments can use multiple funding mechanisms to address animal welfare needs.

Gwinnett County could explore a similar mix of dedicated annual funding, special appropriations, eligible SPLOST investments, and private philanthropy.

A countywide collaborative could also help leverage public dollars to attract additional private investment—allowing government, nonprofits, veterinary providers, foundations, and community partners to share the investment and work toward measurable improvements across Gwinnett County.



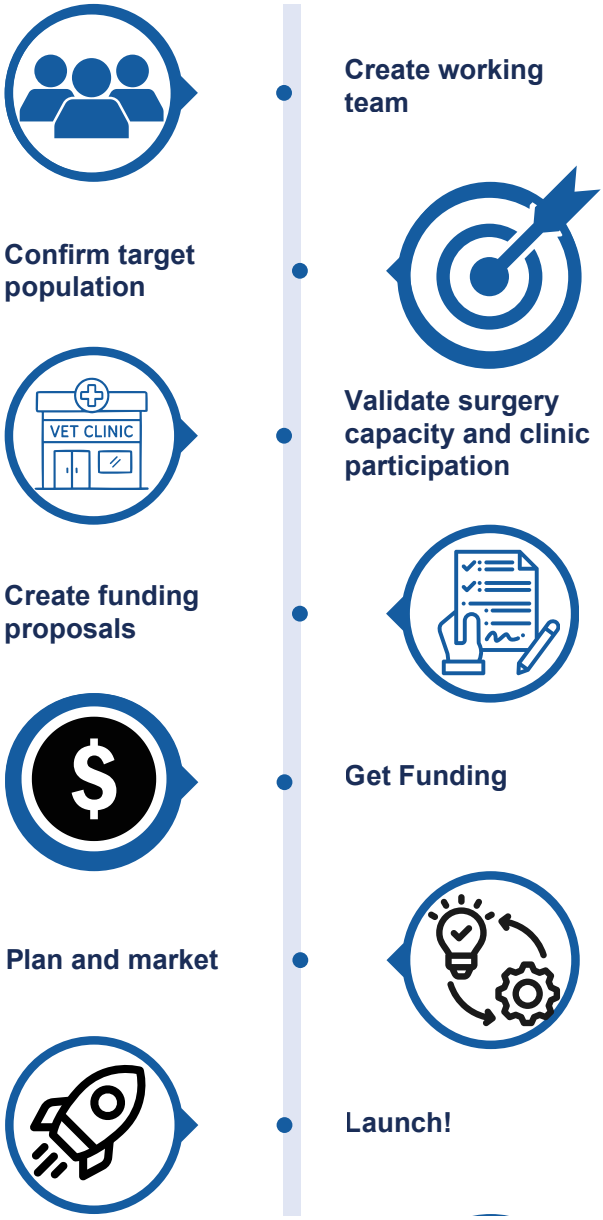
Dekalb Commissioner Michelle Long Spears advocating for Spay and Neuter, May 2025

© 2026 Planned PEThood. Written by Marci Reynolds, Director, Development and Marketing. All rights reserved.

Potential Next Steps

This paper is intended to serve as a starting point for discussion and collaboration. The next step is to bring interested parties together- including Gwinnett County representatives, animal welfare organizations, veterinary providers, funders, and other community stakeholders- to discuss questions, identify opportunities, and determine what a coordinated countywide approach could look like.

Planned PEThood of Georgia welcomes the opportunity to meet with interested parties to discuss the findings in this paper, answer questions, and explore potential next steps toward developing a collaborative spay/neuter initiative for Gwinnett County.



Contact Information

Marci Reynolds
Director, Development and Marketing
Animal Welfare Advocate
mreynolds@PEThoodGA.org
TheMarciReynolds@gmail.com

CJ Bentley
CEO, Planned PEThood of Georgia
CJBentley@PEThoodGA.org

Planned PEThood of Georgia
2860 Buford Highway
Bldg F, Suite 2
Duluth, GA 30096

a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization
EIN: 90-0516757
PEThoodGA.org

Sources

- Data USA. “DeKalb County, GA.” compare=gwinnett-county-ga
- Data USA. “Gwinnett County, GA.” https://datausa.io/profile/geo/gwinnett-county-ga
- Dogster. “Pet Ownership Statistics in Georgia.” https://www.dogster.com/lifestyle/pet-ownership-statistics-in-georgia
- Georgia Department of Agriculture. “Government Shelter Data Reporting.” https://www.agr.georgia.gov/government-shelter-data-reporting
- Georgia Recorder. “Georgia Shows the Way in Fix for Pet Overpopulation.” February 23, 2026. https://georgiarecorder.com/2026/02/23/georgia-shows-the-way-in-fix-for-pet-overpopulation/
- Gwinnett County Government. “2026 Budget in Brief.” https://www.gwinnettcounty.com/static/departments/boc/pdf/2026-budget/2026-budget-in-brief.pdf
- Gwinnett County Government. “Animal Advisory Council Meetings, 2026.” https://www.gwinnettcounty.com/government/departments/county-clerk/boards-authorities/-/bacs/meetings/2/2026
- Gwinnett County Government. “Gwinnett Animal Advisory Council Unofficial Minutes.” February 23, 2026. https://www.gwinnettcounty.com/static/upload/bac/2/20260223/m_92709_GAAC_Unofficial_Minutes_2.23.26.pdf
- Journal of Shelter Medicine and Community Animal Health. Article. https://jsmcah.org/index.php/jasv/article/view/157/
- LifeLine Animal Project. “DeKalb County Invests Over $1 Million Annually to Expand Spay/Neuter and Community Pet Services.” https://lifelineanimal.org/dekalb-county-invests-over-1-million-annually-to-expand-spay-neuter-and-community-pet-services/
- Planned PEThood of Georgia
- Shelter Animals Count. “Altered Status at Intake for 2025 Spay/Neuter Awareness Month.” https://www.shelteranimalscount.org/altered-status-at-intake-for-2025-spay-neuter-awareness-month/
- United Spay Alliance. “Making the Financial Case for Spay/Neuter.” https://www.unitedspayalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/Making-the-Financial-Case-for-SpayNeuter.pdf
- U.S. Census Bureau. “QuickFacts: Gwinnett County, Georgia.” https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/gwinnettcountygeorgia/PST045225
- U.S. Census Bureau. https://www.census.gov/

This content may be freely shared for educational, advocacy, and informational purposes with appropriate credit to the original sources.

© 2026 Planned PEThood. Written by Marci Reynolds, Director, Development and Marketing. All rights reserved.