



# Embedded Community Outreach in Baltimore City

Project #  
14-050

County: Baltimore City

<b>Number of Cats Spayed:</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>Number of Dogs Spayed:</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>Number of Cats Neutered:</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>Number of Dogs Neutered:</b>	<b>38</b>

<b>Amount Received: \$17,340</b>	<b>Amount Remaining (to be returned to MDA): \$1.24</b>
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### Project Synopsis:

Charm City Companions planned, prepared and launched an embedded outreach program to target under-served communities to share information and connect pet owners to wellness resources, especially spay and neuter services, at no cost. We spent Dec 2014 – Dec 2015 meeting over 200 pet families and spaying/neutering 141 cats and 100 dogs for a total of 241 more altered and vaccinated pets in and around 21205 zip code, a community where 86% of the pets are unaltered when we first meet.



### Project Description:

Charm City Companions shares information with pet owners and provides free resources to increase pet wellness for cats and dogs in under-served communities in Baltimore City. In 2014, we started our efforts by conducting a comprehensive Community Assessment where we identified Baltimore's most impoverished neighborhoods based on a variety of indicators. Once we selected our Area of Focus, zip code 21205, we started our work. We knocked on our first door in McElderry Park, the westend neighborhood of our eastside zip code. We were able to officially launch with our first surgeries in December 2014 using the MDA grant funds. Over the duration of our grant period of 13 months, CCC proposed to alter 200 pets. In the end we were able to alter 20% more with a total of 241 spay/neuter surgeries provided in, and surrounding, our Area of Focus.

We selected our Area of Focus primarily because a third (34%) of the residents and a quarter (26%) of families with children live below poverty (\$23,550 for a family of four). We also found that there were no veterinary practices or spay/neuter clinics in our entire zip. Since we know the two biggest barriers cited among the strong majority of those who do not spay or neuter their pets are cost and access, we knew our services were needed.

The majority of people in our neighborhoods do not have reliable transportation so we have incorporated transport to and from the clinic as a service which has been needed for 98% of our pets to date.



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Charm City Companions is focused on developing on-going relationships with our clients and their pets. Through these relationships and by collaborating with local animal care providers such as MD SPCA, BARCS, BMORE Dog, Rescue Well/ReLove, Baltimore Community Cat Project and others, we aim to shift the cultural norm to the majority having vaccinated and altered pets.

As we grow, we are beginning to identify and engage community ambassadors as a key component to our program. These individuals (or families) are well-known community members that often connect the neighborhood with information and resources. CCC community ambassadors are also "animal people" and usually know most people around who have pets.

As our program matures we will begin to track and compare our benchmark metrics for shelter in-take, percent of community pets altered, and eventually pet adoption. We plan to impact all of these numbers for our local shelter and spay/neuter providers moving forward. We will remain narrow in our focus until we see sustainable, measurable change within the communities in which we work.

### **Summary of Approach:**

Our approach revolves around genuine desire to increase pet wellness in under-served communities. Primary to our approach is the lack of negative judgment or assumptions at all times toward our clients and our colleagues. CCC is not solely a spay/neuter program so we are not focused on only achieving goal numbers of surgeries. Rather we are an on-going resource for our clients long after they decide to alter their pet or not. We have found that by not "pushing" spay/neuter, but simply sharing information (CCC to client/client to CCC), organically the surgeries follow.

Our approach also involves "meeting people where they are" both physically and mentally on pet wellness issues. CCC teams are in our neighborhoods 2-3 times a week, every week of the year when possible. In 2015, our teams were in the neighborhood at least once, canvassing, visiting or providing transports for our pet families 48 out of 52 weeks. By having a constant presence we demonstrate to the community we are committed and will be around long-term.

Within our launch neighborhood, community members now know and trust CCC's intentions and have started referring clients for spay/neuter and general pet wellness questions and services. A few have volunteered their time to walk the blocks and talk to people with us and more have shown interest and want to give back.

Important to our success is our consistent and reliable schedule. This has been key for both our clients and for securing solid, committed volunteers. This has also (along with providing transport) been important in maintaining a consistent (nearly 100%) "show rate" for our spay/neuter providers.

Our schedule every week throughout the year is as follows:

Saturdays, 9a-9:45a: Outreach planning for the day, including mapping visits to current clients as well as repeat block or new block door-to-door outreach. New outreach volunteer training also takes place during this time for those doing community outreach that day.

Saturdays, 10a-12:30p/1p: Outreach begins with visits to any current clients, if needed. The time usually ends up split in half with visits until 11:30am and resuming with door-to-door outreach on blocks where people were not home previous weeks and then covering new blocks once we've met and served any pet we can on the current "block of focus."

Saturdays, 2p-3p: Data entry from outreach.

Sundays, before 4p: Contact all people met the day prior (during Saturday outreach) and connect with all clients to remind them of Monday appointment, pre-op instructions and transport logistics.



Mondays, 7a-9a, 3:30p-5:30p: Transports to and from MD SPCA. We currently have reserved space for 3-4 pets on Mondays.

Tuesdays, afternoon: Contact all people who had pets altered the day prior to check in.

[Once a month]

Wednesdays, 5a-9a, 2p-6p: Transports to and from Spay Spa & Neuter Nook, Davidsonville, MD. Since September 2015 we have been working with this partner and plan to continue in 2016 once a month for larger transports (25-30 pets).

By following a consistent schedule we find ourselves working efficiently and enjoying the process. We have also been able to establish boundaries so our clients understand what our schedule is and when we can be available for none emergent issues. That said, we always make ourselves available for anyone that has what they believe to be an emergency whether we can help resolve or not.

Recently we have established a relationship with a veterinarian who will be volunteering with CCC and going into the neighborhood to provide boosters for our pets and other minor services at no cost. We also have a veterinary practice we will be working with in an adjacent zip code that already works with under-served community members. These two partners will be incorporated into our regular schedule on a monthly basis starting January 2016. We are thrilled with these new relationships as we have made collaboration with interested veterinarians within the Baltimore region a priority.

#### **Accomplishments:**

Throughout the grant period CCC met 201 families and their 358 pets. Of those pets, 86% were unaltered when we met them and CCC was able to alter 87% through our program.

As already mentioned, we started establishing community ambassadors, with Ms. Diggs and her family as our first official ambassador. CCC altered Ms. Diggs' nine Shih Zu's and since then she has advocated aggressively for our organization and for spay/neuter in her neighborhood. Ms. Diggs also recently represented CCC at a BMORE Dog free rabies vaccine clinic in a park within our zip code. Where the volunteers usually sign up 4-5 pets for spay/neuter, Ms. Diggs and her daughter signed up 24 pets in 2 hours. This extension of our reach through Ms. Diggs is a significant accomplishment in 2015.

Another relationship we established is through a community member that does not have a pet. Reggie saw us on his block a few times one week when he approached us and told us he is head of the Outreach Ministry for the church next to his home. We have now been invited to speak at the church periodically in 2016.

We also established a relationship with a community gardener who has a plot that she helps maintain for another church within our neighborhood. CCC has committed to volunteering at the community garden and the church has invited us to share information among their parishioners.

While going through our community assessment we discovered a neighborhood association for McElderry Park. In 2015 we were able to meet the director and have been invited to attend community meetings and place any information within the printed and online community paper. Our approach is not to mass advertise our services but rather infiltrate small, neighborhood-focused communication vehicles. This relationship has been ideal in establishing a presence in the community.

Developing relationships within the animal welfare community has also been a critical milestone for CCC. Specifically, working with MD SPCA and SS&NN as surgery providers, has strengthened our relationship with these organizations and has set us all up for even more success in 2016. These providers are professional and organized but more importantly, they understand our clients and pets and regardless of what we present, they go above and beyond, holding back any visible judgment. Securing these relationships is a significant accomplishment for CCC.



Finally, we were able to gain some recognition by both local and national reporters. At the start of the year, we were contacted by a Baltimore Sun reporter who later wrote a story on animal welfare organizations providing services to under-served pet owners, mentioning CCC. The reporter since expressed interest in doing a feature story on CCC in 2016.

We were also contacted by The Humane Society of the United States Animal Sheltering Magazine as part of a larger story about grant recipients of the MDA grant. Following the interview, CCC was contacted again by the reporter to do a feature story on CCC for the April/May 2016 issue of Animal Shelter Magazine. The reporter has since visited Baltimore City for the first time and joined us on surgery transports and door-to-door outreach. In fact, she was with us the day we met one of our community ambassadors, Reggie (Outreach Ministry), so she was able to see immediately how our established community presence is taking off.

Aside from the relationships we've established, we have been able to promote other resources beyond what we offer. We have altered all of our clients to BARCS for low-cost shots, to BMORE Dog free shot clinics, and have shared with all spay/neuter clients that the State of Maryland Department of Agriculture has granted these funds to pay for these services. Our clients are impressed and appreciative of this information and the services for their pets. We see this growing positive image for all of these organizations an accomplishment and important part of our work.

### **Lessons Learned:**

One area of key learning is the need for a consistent schedule. While this was more confirmation of what we already know, maintaining this regularity made our work fluid and revealed early on when issues would arise.

We also quickly learned that our local provider had a policy, which excludes dogs under 10lbs. This became a significant issue for CCC since over half (57%) of the dogs altered were "toy breed" dogs, many under 10lbs. We have been able to address this issue by partnering with another provider who conducts low-cost spay/neuter surgeries for small and tiny dogs.

Another key learning is the limited capacity in Baltimore for low-cost (under \$100), high volume spay/neuter. When we proposed the original plan for this grant, MD SPCA and CCC had a verbal agreement to add reserved surgery hours for our pet families, however, they found they needed that time to fulfill their own MDA S/N grant obligation. We are hopeful they will continue to service under-served audiences and assume they will be limited in capacity due the high need of services in these communities. Our newly established relationship with the other provider has resolved this issue to date – at our current volume (30-50 animals/month); the only drawback being that this provider is not local.

Finally, we confirmed that most of our clients do not have transportation and therefore, providing pet transport will be key to our successful moving forward. This involves additional coordination and volunteer time, which we have incorporated into our plans for 2016 and beyond.

### **Attachments:**

- 1] Spay/neuter surgery detail spreadsheet
- 2] Results Info-graphics
- 3] Additional images (photo credits: illum communications) see following dropbox.com links:  
<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/yu9yywmlqazzkvh/AAA1tg6cA9N7pgRwTvDgdHLFa?dl=0>  
<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/6du0dshioigphk3/AACVFGHuCt4baJYHqMuAQIoBa?dl=0>

**For More Information Contact:** Charm City Companions

**Name:** Annie Pruitt, Co-Founder

### **Organization Name and Address:**

Charm City Companions  
805 E. Baltimore Street  
Baltimore, MD 21202

**Email:** [annie@illumecomm.com](mailto:annie@illumecomm.com)



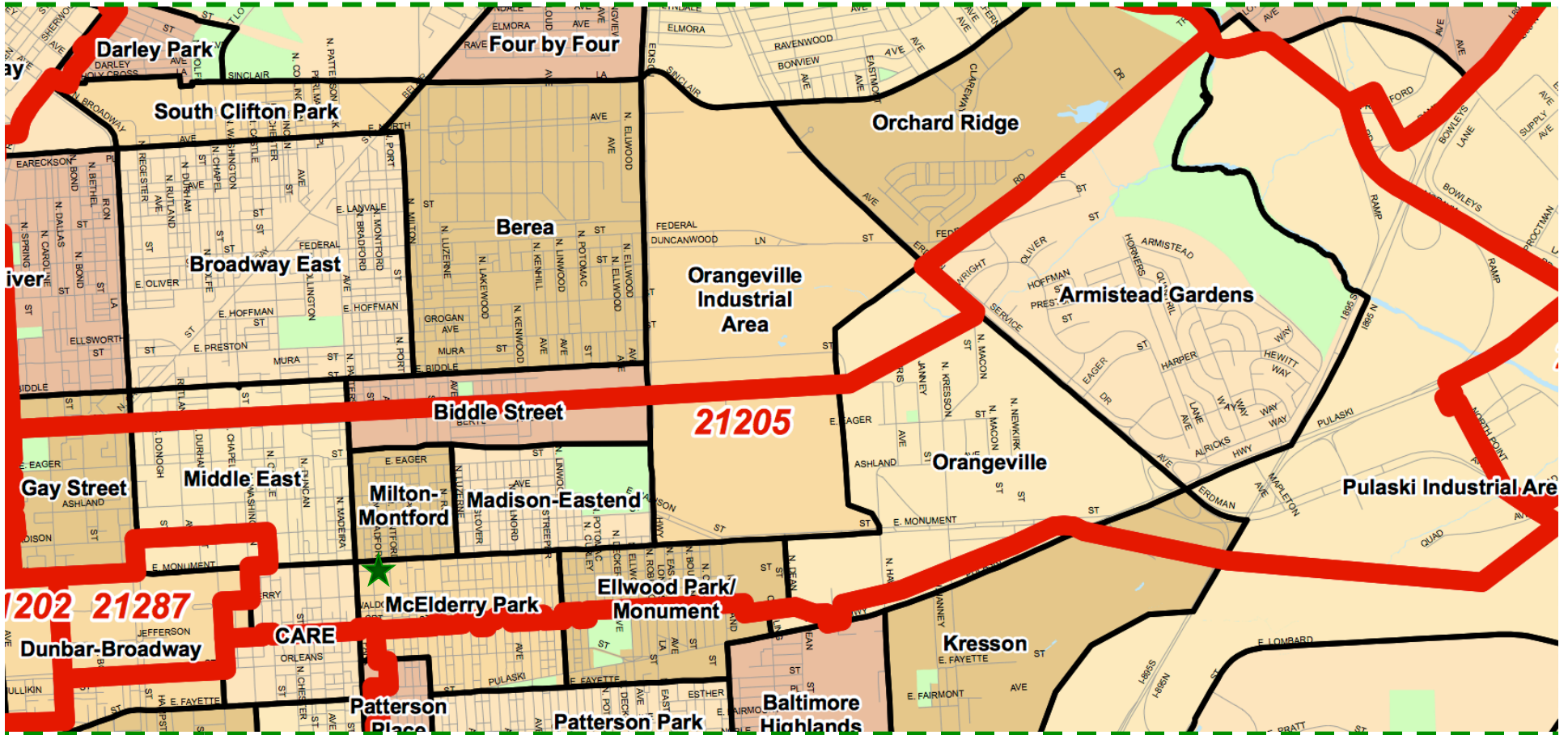
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# AREA OF FOCUS

## [21205]



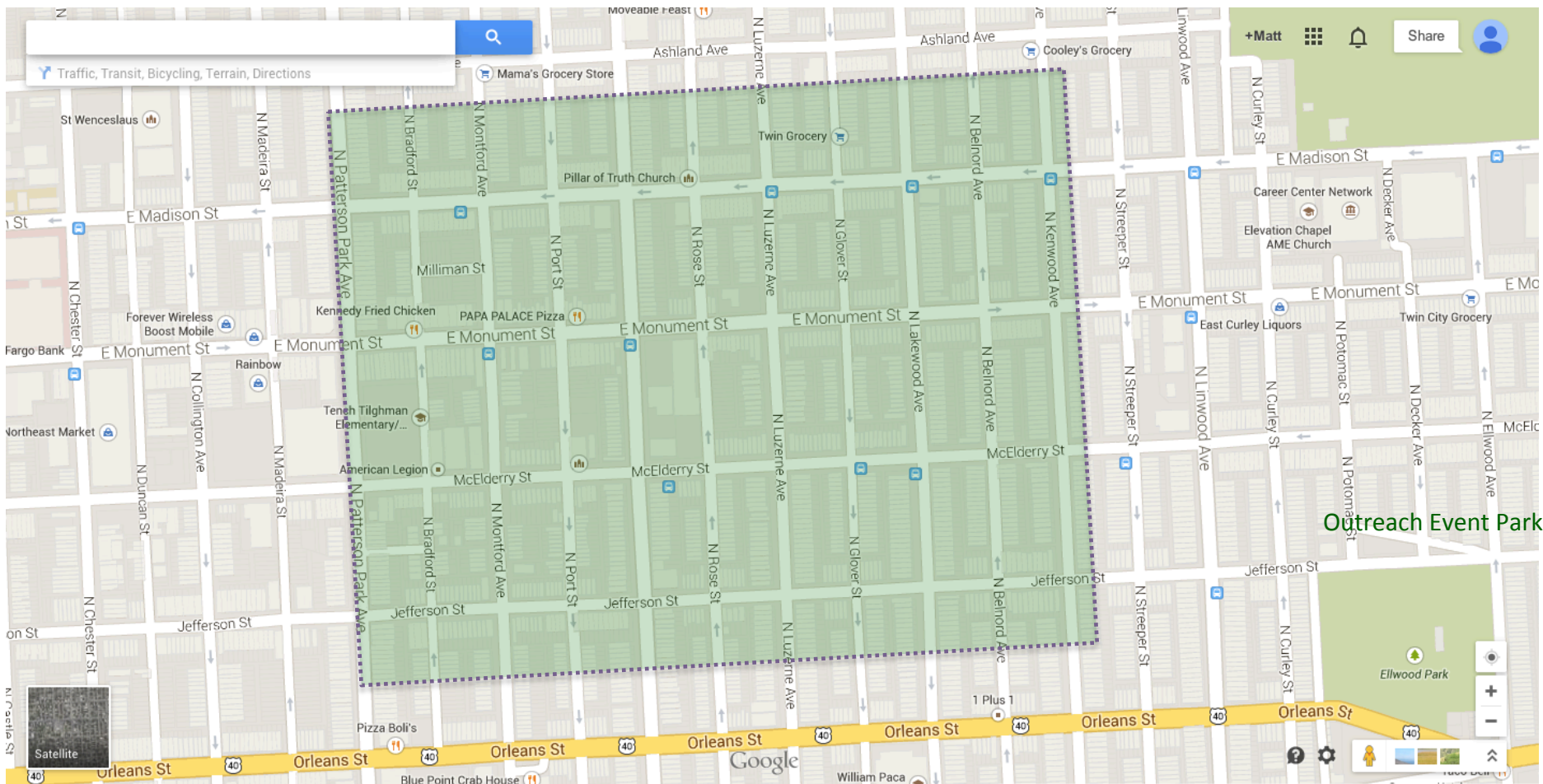
- Population: 16,146 | AA: 72%
- Number of Households: 7,293
- Average HHI: \$25,369
- % renters: 59%
- People living below poverty: 34.7%
- High school grads: 58% | Bachelor's degree plus: 6%
- Estimated # of HH with Dogs: 3,355 | Cats: 2,844
- Estimated # of Dogs: 5,703 | Cats: 6,257

★ Launch neighborhood

Source: US Census, City-Data.com



# Launch Neighborhood: McElderry Park

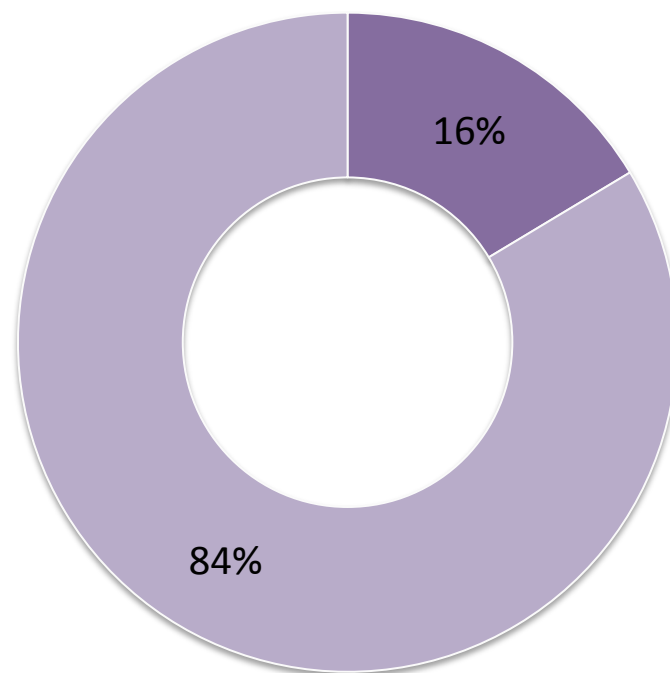
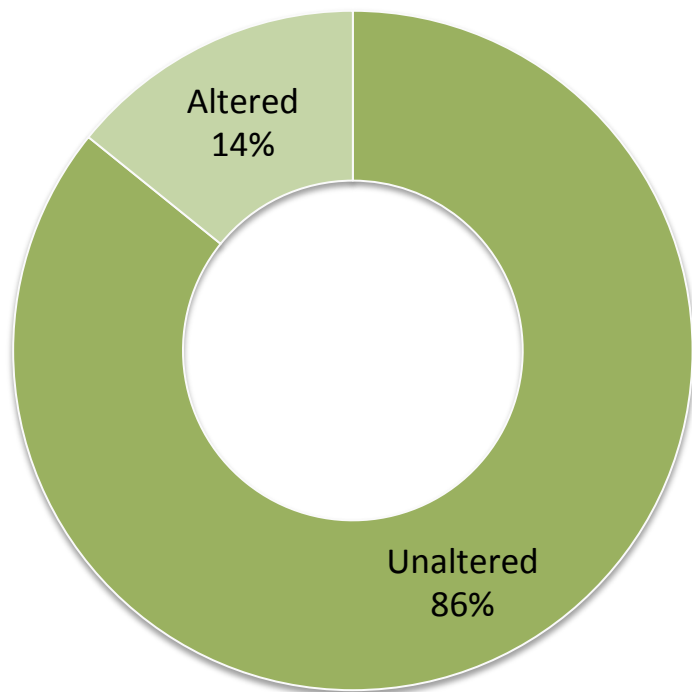


Outreach Event Park



# Program Results

Dec 2014 – Dec 2015: 358 pets met

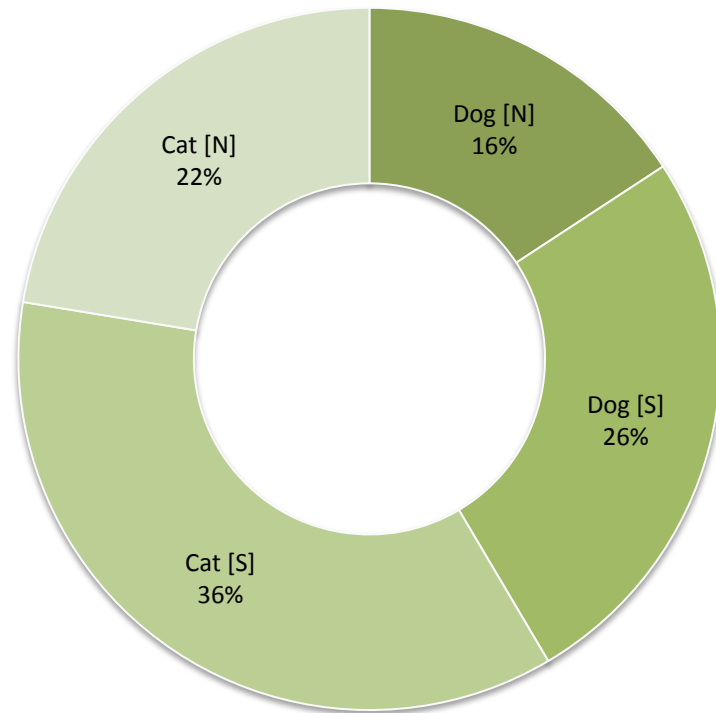
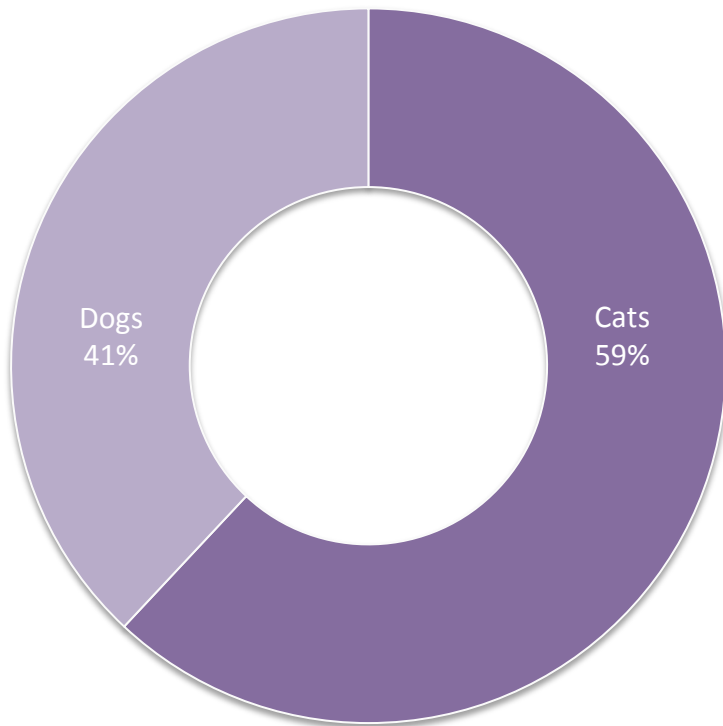


■ Pet has seen vet    ■ Pet has NOT seen vet



# Program Results

Dec 2014 – Dec 2015: 241 Surgeries

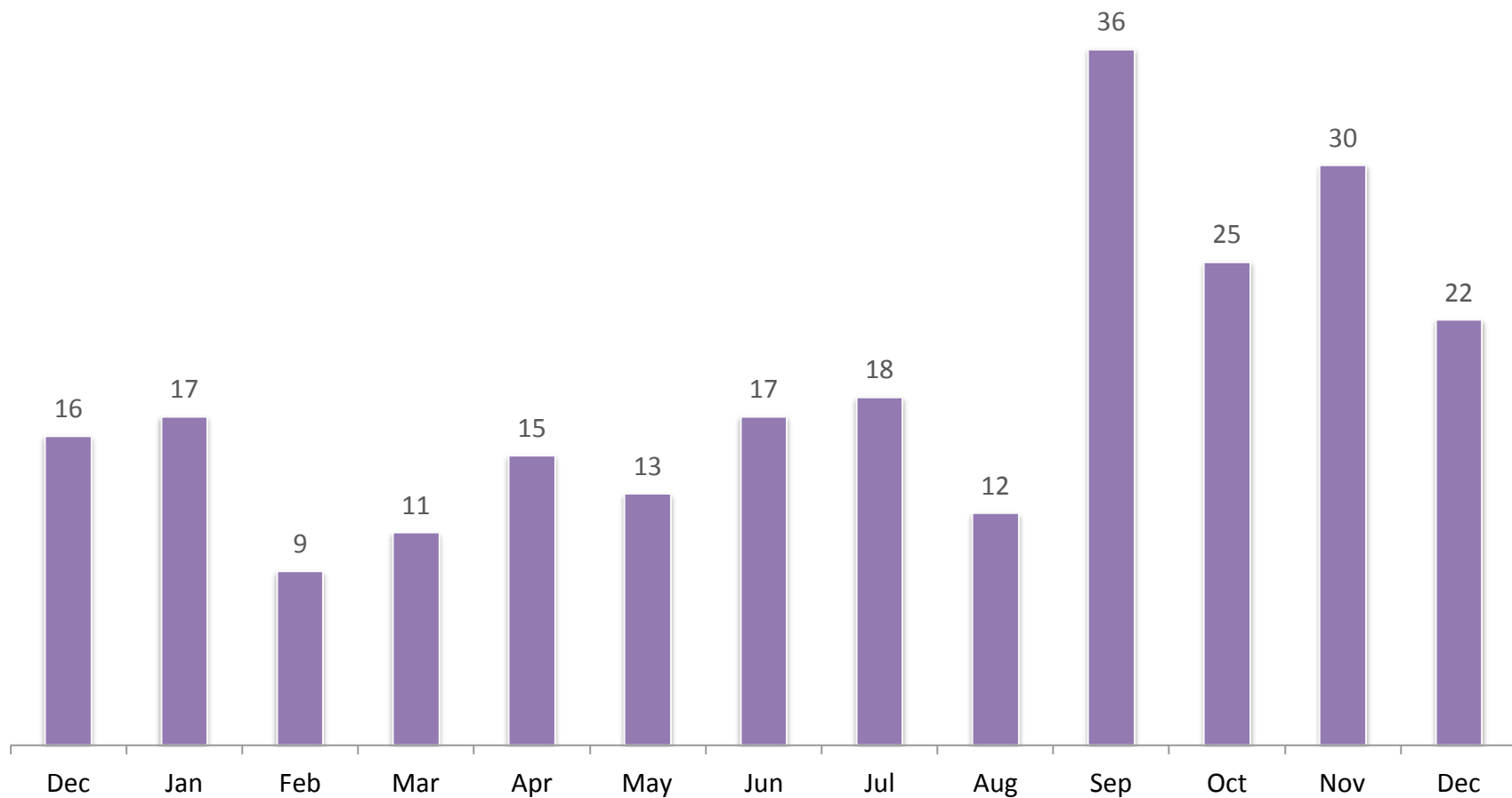






# Monthly Surgery Totals

Dec 2014 – Dec 2015: 241 surgeries

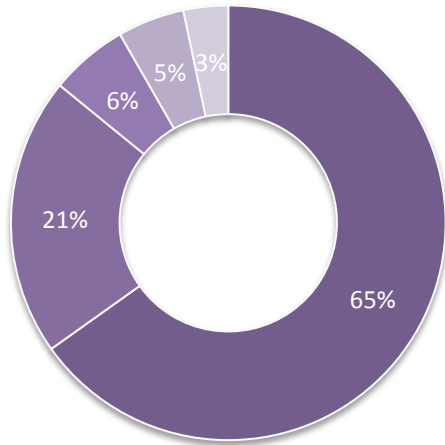
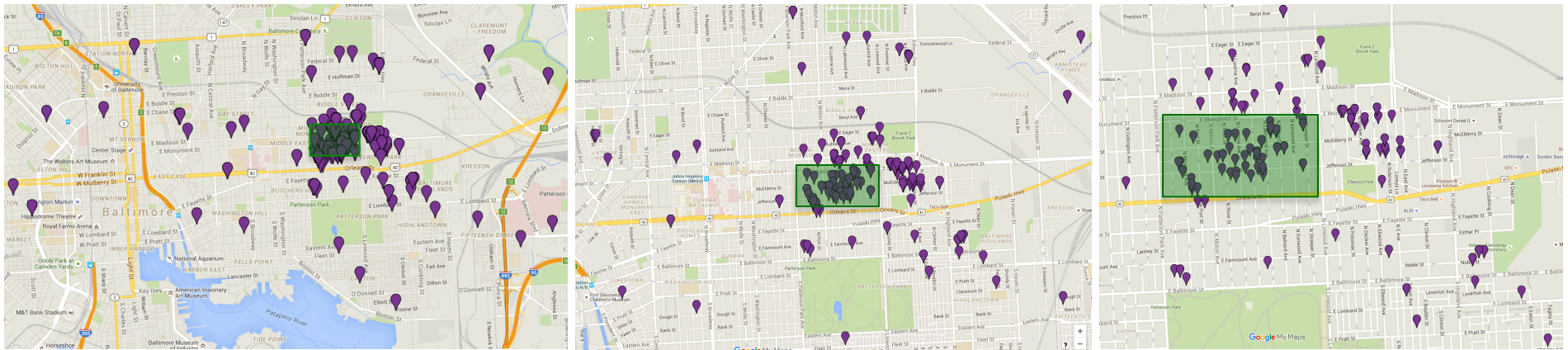




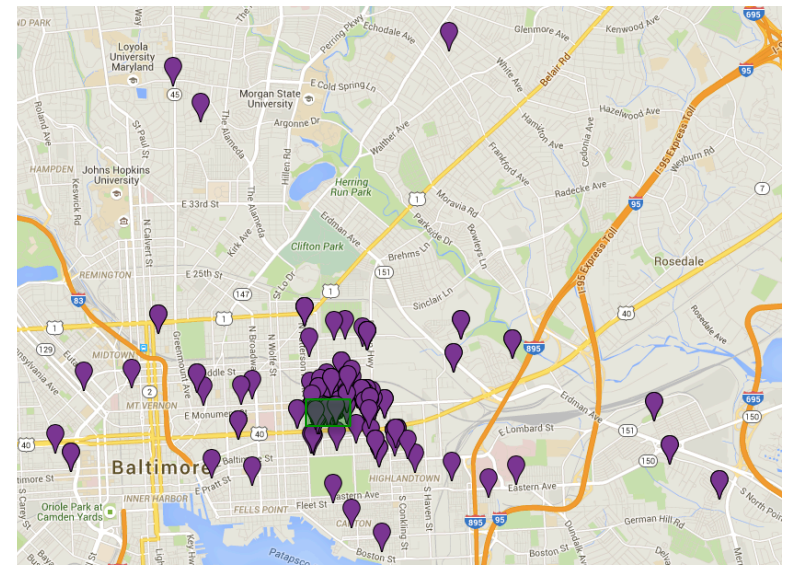
# Program Results

## Dec 2014 – Dec 2015 Spay/Neuter Clients

Current Area of Focus [21205] | Launch Neighborhood: McElderry Park



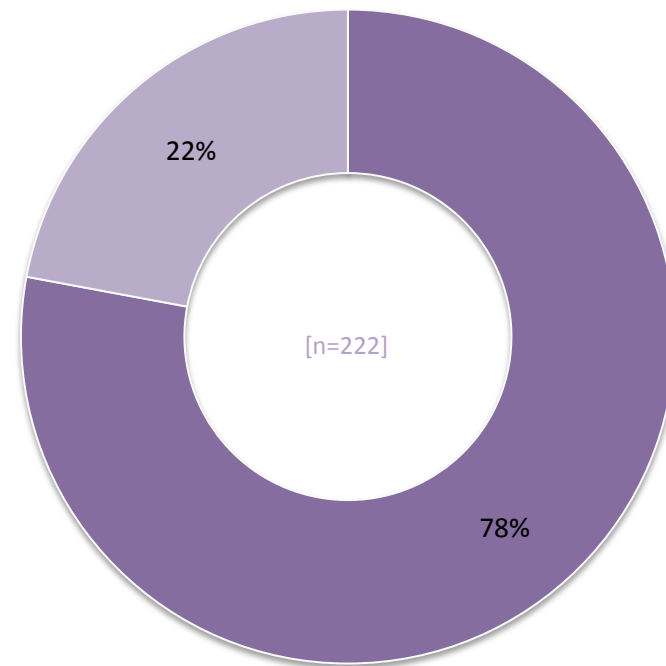
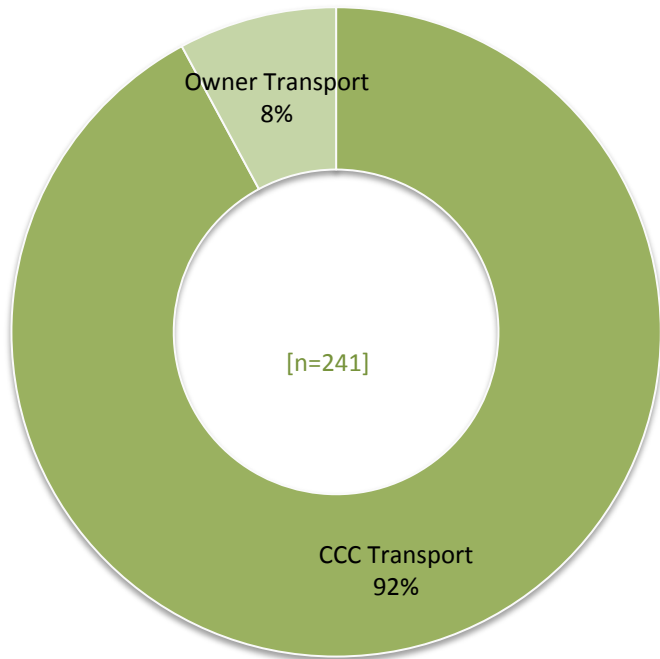
- 21205
- 21224
- 21213
- 21201, 21202
- 21231, 21212





# Program Results

## Dec 2014 – Dec 2015: Pet Transports



- MD SPCA (10 min/6 mi from AOF) [Ave Cost Per Transport: \$1.50]
- SS & NN (1 hr/44 mi from AOF) [Ave Cost Per Transport: \$11.00]