HUMAN ANIMAL SUPPORT SERVICES

Intake-to-Placement: Strategic Offsite Adoption Events Using Heat Maps
Guide developed as part of the Competitive Pet Placement Project

Using Heat Maps to Develop Offsite Adoption Event Strategies
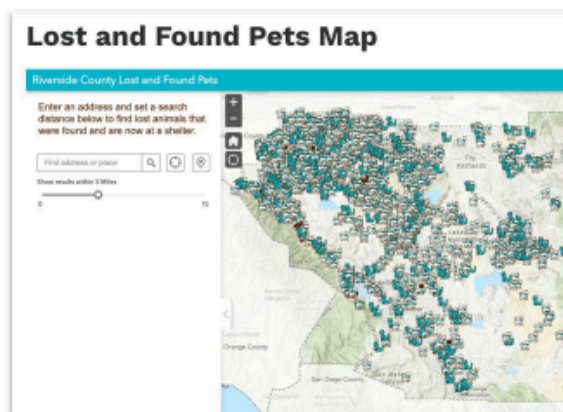
Develop a strategy to guide your organization's offsite community adoption events by analyzing heat map data to help you engage with people in specific geographic areas, understand adoption trends, and increase adoptions in specific areas. Developing heat maps that use existing data about pet ownership, census data, access to services, and community needs can support the organization by seeing a holistic view of who, what, when, and where organizational efforts should be focused.

Enhancing the strategy behind in-person adoption event planning allows the organization to increase community engagement, especially in areas where engagement has been historically low, and get the best value for your efforts.

Terminology

- **Heat Map:** Visualizations on a map that use colors to represent how big or small the values are in a dataset. This may include:
    - Geographic: Pinpoints where things happen based on the density of your data
    - Choropleth: Different geographical areas are shaded based on how much of a specific data point as defined by your heat map goals is occurring in that area

Geographic (point density)
Source: Riverside County Animal Services
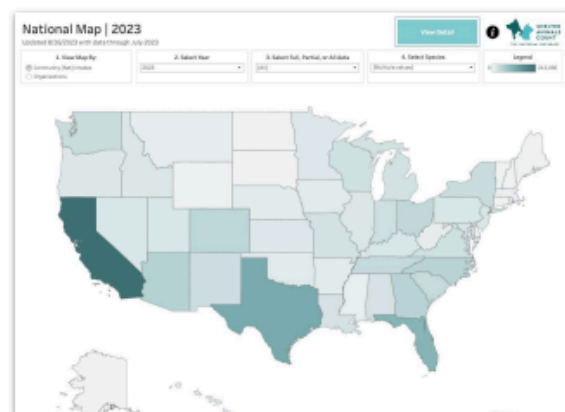
Choropleth
Source: Shelter Animals Count

How Organizations Can Begin Heat Mapping

The following steps can help you get started with heat mapping data to utilize for strategic planning. For additional information on heat maps, see the HASS webinar, Data Visualization Demystified: Heat Mapping 101 for Animal Shelters, and view the accompanying slide deck.

1. Define your primary goals for the creation of a heat map
    a. What is the primary location you want to focus on?

b. What is the final metric you want to focus on?
c. Example: We want to create a heat map that shows the number of large (50 lbs+) dog adoptions by zip code in a specific city.

2. Consider mapping software options
   a. Free
      i. Google Looker Studio
         1. Live data connections
         2. Easy to collaborate with others
      ii. Tableau Public
         1. Does not support local workbook storage
         2. Limited rows of data allowed
      iii. Power BI Desktop
         1. Fully featured app to learn from
         2. Limited sharing/collaboration capabilities
         3. Not Apple friendly
   b. For Purchase
      i. Tableau Desktop
         1. Local/cloud storage
         2. Higher price point
         3. Privacy
      ii. Power BI Pro/Premium
         1. Connects well with advanced Microsoft databases
         2. Enables more sharing/collaboration
         3. Multiple pricing levels

3. Consider data parameters to include, such as:
   a. **Basic Example:** Zip codes and adoption count
   b. **Advanced Example:** Latitude/Longitude, adoption count by species category, and weights/size of adopted pet
   c. Zip codes
   d. Fields analysis
      i. Adoption by species per community
      ii. Adoption by age/species per community
      iii. Adoption by size (dogs only) per community
      iv. Adoption by LOS (under 30 days, over 30 days, over 90 days)
      v. Animal-level data such as age, size, breed
   e. Census Data / Data layers to look at (if available and relevant)
      i. Population density (to weed out low population areas)
      ii. Income
      iii. Languages spoken
      iv. Resident age
      v. % of population that owns home vs % of population that rents
      vi. Access to public transit
      vii. Access to parks / outdoor space (dog parks?)
      viii. Access to veterinary clinics
      ix. Access to dog care services (grooming, doggy daycare?)
   f. Geocoded data

          i.   Full address data that has been transformed into latitude and longitude coordinates

4. **Watch [this video clip from the HASS webinar, Data Visualization Demystified, for a step-by-step how-to guide to the creation of a heat map](#)**. (*Clip starts at 21:18*)
   a. Download and format your dataset based on the data parameters selected
   b. Load data into your preferred data mapping software
      i.   This process may vary by software*
   c. Map relevant fields with the specific field type the data refers to
      i.   This may include date, text, number, latitude and longitude, or other
   d. Insert/Create heat map
   e. Filter information
   f. Change style of visualization of each geographic area
      i.   Example: Fill entire area
      ii.   Example: Bubbles
   g. Add dimensions and color metrics to specific data
      i.   Example: Different colors for different species
      ii.   Example: By record count (darker areas have higher counts)
   h. Toggle between specific filters, data ranges, and inclusion of additional data parameters

5. Utilize heat map data to inform strategic planning for outreach, events, and support.

Using Heat Maps for Offsite Adoption Event Planning

To support strategic planning for offsite adoption events, you may start by mapping the basics including data by zip code, adoptions by species, adoptions by age or breed, population density, access to transit, and more. To determine where an offsite adoption event may be beneficial, you might compare where adoption numbers are lowest by species compared to population density and access to transit is not available. These locations may benefit from a local adoption event as community members may have more difficulty physically visiting your organization.

Additional Sample Strategies

- Compare adoption rates by zip code and access to services to identify opportunities for partnership building and traveling support services.
- Utilize the most common languages spoken in the community by location to create more supporting documents in those languages and manage community outreach more effectively.
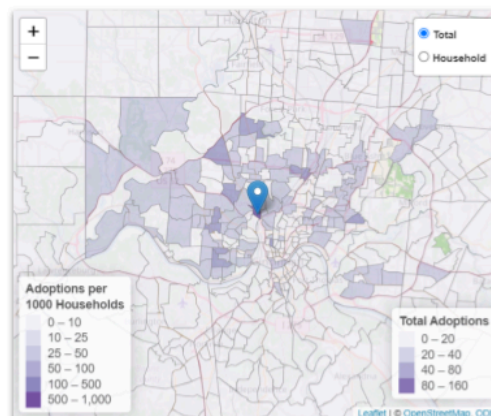
Sample Shelter Implementation

Strategic Off-site Adoption Events

- **Intervention**: Targeted marketing and offsite adoption events in area with less adoptions happening
- 3 tiered **marketing strategy** for adoption events
- 60% of adoptions that occurred at the event were to **people who lived in the targeted area**.

The following is a suggested set of criteria for developing a plan for an off-site event. These considerations can aid in strategic decision-making regarding budget, as well as staff and volunteer delegation for all shelter events throughout the year.

TIER 1 EVENT
No-to-Low Budget

Adoption Event Criteria

- Event goal & ROI considered important, but not vital
- Budget for supplies or necessary equipment is low
- Event expects less than 25 attendees
- Often regularly occurring on more frequent basis such as monthly/weekly
- No to limited extra marketing aside from usual channels required
- No to limited partnerships required to host event
- Volunteers utilized more frequently than onsite staff

TIER 2 EVENT
Ave. Budget

Adoption Event Criteria

- Event goal & ROI ties directly to daily organizational goals
- Designated allocated budget aside from day-to-day needs
- Event ranges 25-100 attendees
- Often regularly occurring on more frequent basis such as monthly/weekly
- Extra marketing initiatives including existing channels implemented
- Partners usually included to host event
- Volunteers AND staff utilized for event needs

TIER 3 EVENT
Premium Budget

Adoption Event Criteria

- Event goal & ROI ties to mission critical initiative such as fund raising & community engagement
- Significant budget allocated to specific initiative
- Event includes 100+ attendees
- Often annual and/or biannual event
- Significant, all-channel marketing initiatives implemented specific to event only
- Partners included to host event
- Staff to lead initiatives with volunteer support where appropriate

humananimalsupportservices.org

Event Planning Resources

- [12 Tips for Big Adoption Events - ASPCA PRO](#)
- [How to Conduct Successful Adoption Events - Best Friends](#) (*timeline, pet profiles, participation forms/groups, sample flyers/cards, supplies and donations, volunteer positions, dog trainer enlistment, shift tracker, PSA, adoption profiles*)
- [How to Organize a Local Pet Adoption Event | Petfinder](#)
- [Experts Weigh in on How to Best Plan Adoption Events - Best Friends](#) (*event planning, community engagement, volunteers, marketing, placing hard-to-adopt animals, adoption processes*)

Supporting Resources

- [Data Visualization Demystified: Heat Mapping 101 for Animal Shelters - HASS](#)
- [Offsite Adoption Events - Best Practices and Supporting Resources](#)