



# FixAustin.org

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***RENO V. AUSTIN:***  
**ANIMAL-SHELTER REFORM EFFORTS IN TWO EXPANDING U.S. CITIES  
PRODUCE DRAMATICALLY DIFFERENT FIRST-YEAR RESULTS**

***Executive Summary:***

Austin, Texas, and Reno, Nevada, each embarked on an effort to reduce the killing of lost and homeless pets in their respective city shelters in 2007. Austin's effort was led by the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), and Reno turned to and followed the model of the No Kill Advocacy Center (NKAC).

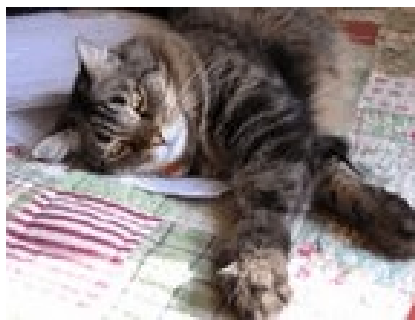
After one year, the two cities' efforts produced dramatic and disparate results: Austin's shelters killed 1,361 *more* animals in 2007 than in 2006—an 11% increase in the number of impounded animals killed. In contrast, Reno's shelters killed 2,752 *fewer* animals in 2007 than in 2006—a 53% decline in the number of impounded animals killed.

Overall, Austin's shelters impounded more animals, killed more animals, and saved fewer animals in 2007 than in 2006, while Reno's shelters impounded fewer animals, killed far fewer animals, and saved far more animals in 2007 than in 2006. By nearly every objective performance measurement, Austin's effort failed to improve the outlook for its homeless animals in 2007, and Reno's effort significantly improved the outlook for its homeless animals.

If the City of Austin wishes to reduce its shelter killing, it should follow Reno's lead and implement the NKAC's no-kill sheltering method.<sup>1</sup>

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1. This report was prepared by FixAustin.org, an independent, non-profit animal-welfare think tank and advocacy organization based in Austin, Texas. FixAustin.org can be contacted through its website, [www.fixaustin.org](http://www.fixaustin.org), or by e-mailing [fixaustin@gmail.com](mailto:fixaustin@gmail.com).



## **I. BACKGROUND**

National animal-welfare non-profits largely separate into two camps. The first is the traditional sheltering establishment, led by organizations such as the ASPCA, which has been in the animal-sheltering business since the early 1900s and generally supports status-quo policies of municipal shelters across the country. The second is a new regime, led by the NKAC, which believes that traditional reliance on killing as the primary method of animal population control is both morally and fiscally irresponsible.

The ASPCA was founded in 1866. The organization has not succeeded in ending the killing of healthy and treatable sheltered animals in any US city.

The NKAC was founded in 2004. The Center is led by Nathan Winograd, who formerly helped lead San Francisco, California's successful effort to become the first city in the country to save all adoptable pets that enter the community's open-admission animal shelters. Winograd also led Ithaca, New York's open-admission shelter, which became the first animal shelter in the country to save all non-aggressive and treatable pets brought to the county's shelter. The NKAC has helped several communities throughout the country dramatically reduce animal-shelter killing.<sup>2</sup>

## **II. PROGRAMS IMPLEMENTED TO REDUCE SHELTER KILLING IN 2007**

In 2007, the ASPCA and the NKAC embarked on competing efforts to reduce shelter killing in two expanding US cities: Austin, Texas, and Reno, Nevada. In Austin, the project included two animal shelters: the city-run Town Lake Animal Center (TLAC) and the non-profit Austin Humane Society. Likewise, Reno's project involved the county-run Washoe County Regional Animal Services (WCRAS) and the non-profit Nevada Humane Society. The statistics presented in this report combine those of the two participating shelters in each community's effort.<sup>3</sup>

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2. Implementation of the NKAC's model has dramatically reduced shelter killing in Ithaca, NY, Reno, NV, Charlottesville, VA, Ivins City, UT, and, in part, Philadelphia, PA, along with additional communities in Illinois, Virginia, Michigan and Montana.

3. The City of Austin was the 32nd fastest-growing US city from 2005 to 2006, with a growth rate of 2.7 percent. During the same period, Reno was the 42nd fastest-growing city, with a growth rate of 2.2 percent. See [http://money.cnn.com/2007/06/27/real\\_estate/258\\_fastest\\_growing\\_cities/index.htm](http://money.cnn.com/2007/06/27/real_estate/258_fastest_growing_cities/index.htm). Austin's effort also included the participation of non-sheltering organizations.

The ASPCA began implementing its “Mission: Orange” program in Austin on January 1, 2007, with the goal of achieving a community-wide save rate of 75 percent by 2010. On the same date, the NKAC began implementing its “No Kill Equation” program in Reno, with the goal of achieving “No Kill” success, defined as saving all non-aggressive and treatable animals entering the community’s animal shelters (generally considered to be more than 90 percent of animals entering community shelters).

According to “Mission: Orange” Team Leader Karen Medicus, the changes implemented during the first year of “Mission: Orange” were:

- expanding and promoting the summer sale of cats, and
- working with the Austin Humane Society to spay and neuter feral cats.<sup>4</sup>

According to NKAC director Nathan Winograd, the changes implemented during the NKAC’s first year in Reno were:

- adjusting staffing levels and space allocation to reflect the organization’s renewed focus on saving animals,
- eliminating a retail store in favor of increasing adoption space,
- cultivating a corps of volunteers (from 30 to more than 1,200),
- expanding evening and weekend hours to increase adoption opportunities for working people and families with children,
- implementing daily off-site adoption venues throughout the community,
- enacting a comprehensive marketing program for sheltered animals and cultivating partnerships with local media,
- revamping and expanding programs to socialize animals and implementing a comprehensive program to rehabilitate sick, injured, and traumatized animals; these efforts involved developing a behavior program and shelter-medicine program that included a partnership with the University of Nevada, Reno’s veterinary technician school and the hiring of two veterinarians,
- increasing community participation in shelter practices and policies,
- providing cash payments to residents to spay or neuter their pit bulls,
- implementing a free spay/neuter program for feral cats,
- creating an animal “help desk” to keep owned pets from being surrendered to local shelters,
- implementing specific adoption goals and incentives for achieving those goals, and
- streamlining the adoption process.

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4. Although not identified by Ms. Medicus, several additional initiatives are listed on the ASPCA’s “Mission Orange” website. See [http://www.aspc.org/site/PageServer?pagename=missionorange\\_austin\\_faq](http://www.aspc.org/site/PageServer?pagename=missionorange_austin_faq). It is not known whether or when these programs will be implemented in Austin.



### III. ONE-YEAR RESULTS: SUCCESS IN RENO; MORE KILLING IN AUSTIN

Comparing shelter-performance measures at the one-year mark of Austin and Reno’s reform efforts produces remarkably different results: the ASPCA’s “Mission: Orange” program failed to increase positive outcomes for Austin’s homeless pets in 2007, whereas the NKAC model dramatically elevated positive outcomes for Reno’s sheltered animals.

At the one-year mark, “Mission: Orange” has been largely unsuccessful. Comparing 2007 shelter statistics to pre-“Mission: Orange” 2006 statistics reveals that homeless pets in Austin now have a *lower* chance of leaving the city’s shelters alive. On the other hand, comparison of the same figures in Reno demonstrates that homeless pets in Reno now have a *significantly higher* chance of leaving its shelters alive.

Chart #1 provides Austin’s sheltering statistics prior to, and at the end of one year of, the ASPCA’s “Mission: Orange” program:

<u>AUSTIN, TEXAS</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>Difference</u>	<u>Percent Change</u>
<b>Intake</b>	22,773	26,490	+3,717	+16.3%
<b>Killed</b>	11,931	13,292	+1,361	+11.4%
<b>Total Died (Killed &amp; Died-in-Shelter)</b>	12,517	13,359	+931	+6.7%
<b>Released Alive</b>	12,428	12,072	-356	-2.9%
<b>Released to Rescue Groups</b>	2,741	2,046	-695	-25%
<b>Shelter Adoptions</b>	6,453	6,816	+363	+5.6%
<b>Total Adoptions (Shelter + Rescue)</b>	9,194	8,862	-332	-3.6%

As Chart #1 demonstrates, Austin’s animal shelters killed substantially more homeless dogs and cats in 2007 than in 2006: an increase of more than 11%. Likewise, the shelters adopted fewer animals (including those to rescue groups) in 2007 than in 2006: a decrease of 3.6%. As a result, there were fewer positive outcomes for pets at Austin’s shelters in 2007 than in 2006: a decrease of 2.9%. In other words, a homeless pet entering Austin’s animal shelters in 2007 had a roughly 3% *worse* chance of surviving than one who entered the shelters in 2006.<sup>5</sup>

Chart #2 provides the pre-NKAC program statistics compared to the post-NKAC program statistics in Reno:

<b>RENO, NV</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>Difference</b>	<b>Percent Change</b>
<b>Total Intake</b>	16,291	15,948	-343	-2.1%
<b>Total Died (Killed + Died in Shelter)</b>	5,174	2,422	-2,752	-53.2%
<b>Total Adoptions (Shelter + Rescue)</b>	6,307	9,184	+2,877	+45.6%

As Chart #2 demonstrates, the NKAC’s program in Reno produced very positive results within one year. Two percent fewer animals were impounded in 2007 than in 2006. Fifty-three percent fewer animals were killed in 2007 than in 2006. And nearly forty-six percent more animals were adopted from the shelter (including to rescue groups) in 2007 than in 2006.

Chart #3 presents a direct comparison of the change in animal-sheltering statistics in Reno and Austin from 2006 to 2007, illustrating that Austin’s “Mission: Orange” program failed to produce positive one-year results, while Reno’s NKAC program was highly successful in producing positive outcomes in one year:

	<b>Austin</b>	<b>Reno</b>
<b>% Change in Intake</b>	+16.3%	-2.1%
<b>% Change in Kills</b>	+11.4%	-53.2%
<b>% Change in Total Adoptions (Shelter + Rescue)</b>	-3.6%	+45.6%

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5. The only positive statistic reported by the ASPCA’s “Mission: Orange” team at the one-year mark is a 5.6% increase in direct-from-shelter adoptions. However, due to the reduction in adoptions to rescue groups, the total number of adoptions from the shelter (including those to rescue groups) actually declined by 3.6% in 2007.



#### IV. CONCLUSION

In January 2007, both Reno, Nevada, and Austin, Texas, embarked on efforts to reduce the killing of their community's lost and homeless pets. Austin's program, led by the ASPCA, did not advance the cause for Austin's homeless animals as measured by one-year benchmarks. Animals impounded at Austin's shelters were *worse off* after the first year of "Mission: Orange" than animals impounded in the year prior to the program's implementation: Austin killed 11.4% *more* animals in 2007 than it did in 2006.

On the other hand, one year of implementing the NKAC's model in Reno produced dramatic and positive results for Reno's homeless pets: Reno killed 53.2% *fewer* animals in 2007 than it did in 2006.

Based on one-year performance measurements, Reno's implementation of the NKAC's no-kill sheltering model proved vastly superior and substantially more effective than the ASPCA's work in Austin. If the City of Austin wishes to reduce its shelter killing, it should follow Reno's lead and adopt the NKAC's no-kill plan.

# Appendix

