



Memorandum

TO: NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES AND
EDUCATION

FROM: Jon Cicirelli
Director

**SUBJECT: BEAUTIFYSJ NEIGHBORHOOD
BLIGHT REDUCTION STATUS
REPORT**

DATE: October 12, 2023

Approved

Date

10/5/23

RECOMMENDATION

Accept the BeautifySJ Neighborhood Blight Reduction Status Report for 2022-2023 and:

- 1) Cross-reference the report to the full City Council on November 14, 2023

OUTCOME

The Committee will be knowledgeable of the BeautifySJ Neighborhood Blight Reduction programs delivered by the Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services (PRNS/BSJ) in 2022-2023. This memo is not focused on the encampment management program.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

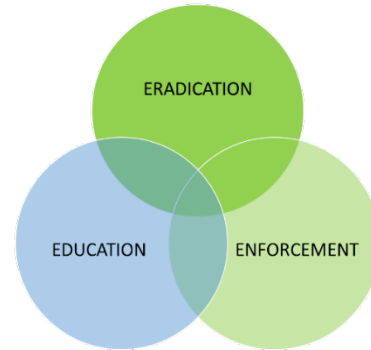
The BeautifySJ Neighborhood Blight Reduction programs are the core delivery system for the City's blight reduction and beautification strategy that focuses on working collaboratively with neighborhood associations, businesses, and residents to improve the cleanliness of public spaces. The unit is managed by the Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services Department's Community Services Division and consist of the Graffiti Removal Program, Litter Removal and Neighborhood Beautification Program, Neighborhood Engagement, and the RAPID Illegal Dumping program. Significant coordination within the Department, with other City departments, and interjurisdictional partners are necessary for effective implementation.

In 2022-2023, the Neighborhood Blight Reduction Programs removed approximately 9,494,000 million pounds of trash and debris throughout the City, eradicated 2,907,445 square feet of graffiti, presented at 87 neighborhood association meetings, and engaged with 6,000 youth as

part of our education and outreach programs. While the programs have made great strides to engage neighborhoods, clean public spaces and remove graffiti, there continues to be opportunities to implement the comprehensive Three Es approach - Education, Eradication, and Enforcement, a best practice model used by several large cities throughout the nation to combat blight.

BACKGROUND

Neighborhood beautification is a long-time priority of the Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services (PRNS). In the 1980s, graffiti removal services began, and anti-litter efforts followed in the 1990s. From 2000-2012, the Strong Neighborhoods Initiative moved neighborhood development and revitalization efforts into the Redevelopment Agency, but PRNS continued to provide core beautification services to promote safe and clean neighborhoods based on the Broken Windows Theory that blight contributed to unsafe conditions and communities.



As the City rebounded from the Great Recession of 2008, limited core services continued and in 2017, the BeautifySJ initiative was launched to increase the number of resident volunteers to amplify efforts to clean-up streets, neighborhoods, and waterways. Since 2017, the initiative expanded dramatically to meet the growing demand to remove graffiti, dispose of illegal dumping, litter, household waste and provide trash services at homeless encampments.

The overall BeautifySJ program has grown from 16.5 FTEs to 91.0 FTEs over the past four fiscal years, across all appropriations, including the transfer of the illegal dumping team from the Environmental Services Department. The Neighborhood Blight reduction team itself is comprised of forty-four (44) fulltime staff and has vendor support for graffiti abatement. In 2023-2024, additional staff will expand blight reduction, beautification, and neighborhood engagement efforts. This includes two new pilot programs, *Beautify Your Block* and *Clean Gateways* which will support enhancing quality of life in neighborhoods and public spaces.

ANALYSIS

In 2022-2023, the BeautifySJ Neighborhood Blight Reduction programs removed 9,494,000 million pounds of trash from the City's public spaces, 19% increase from the year before when 7,724,455 million pounds were disposed. The program eradicated 2,907,445 square feet of graffiti, a 14% increase from the prior year. These increases in program output not only exceeded the previous year but are also the highest results in annual performance since its inception. These increases align with the additional investment over the past two budget cycles.

Current resources are primarily dedicated toward the eradication of blight in the form of removing graffiti, dumping, and litter and hosting dumpster days. A proven approach includes the Three Es – Education/Prevention, Eradication, and Enforcement. This best practice model to combat blight is used by several cities in the region and large cities throughout the State of California and the nation. BeautifySJ is a member of the Regional Illegal Dumping Task Force which is an advocate for utilizing the Three Es approach. Below is an update on the BeautifySJ Neighborhood Blight Reduction Programs based on the Three Es model.

Eradication

Graffiti Removal Program

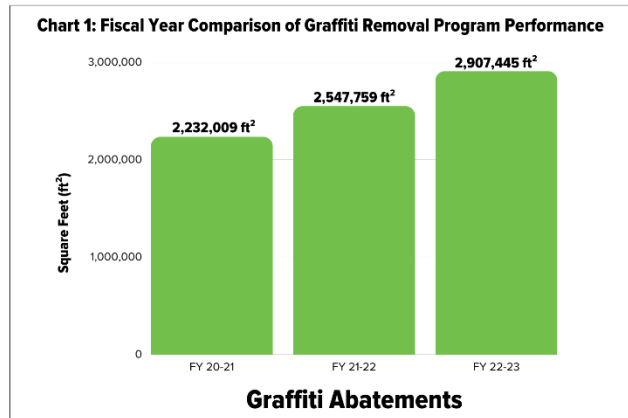
In 2022-2023 the program underwent an operational reorganization to improve its response times to abate graffiti both reported via SJ311 app and proactively in graffiti hotspot areas. The program is designed to respond to graffiti incidents within three business days with an emphasis on removing gang, offensive, and hate speech within one business day.

- Completed 26,098 graffiti work orders.
- Removed 2,907,445 square feet of graffiti, the most abated in a single year.
- 26% increase in the square footage of graffiti removed over last 3 years.

Installation of community murals have assisted with preventing graffiti along surfaces and areas frequently targeted by taggers. Since 2018, the Graffiti Removal Program has assisted with the completion of seventeen (17) mural projects including 30 individual art pieces located in highly graffitied areas by installing graffiti coating on murals and when necessary, removing graffiti. The team works

collaboratively with the Office of Cultural Affairs by providing data to support mural location recommendations, participating in community engagement, and performing preparation and maintenance of the mural location. Murals are an effective beautification strategy for these highly graffitied areas, all but one have minimal reoccurring graffiti.

In 2022-2023 additional funding in the amount of \$200,000 in American Rescue Funds dollars was allocated to enhance program capabilities. Often during the last few months of the fiscal year, graffiti removal or eradication was slowed as program funds had already been depleted. This funding has allowed the program to increase the square footage of eradication and has been increased for fiscal year 2023-2024 to assist in addressing key troubling trends:



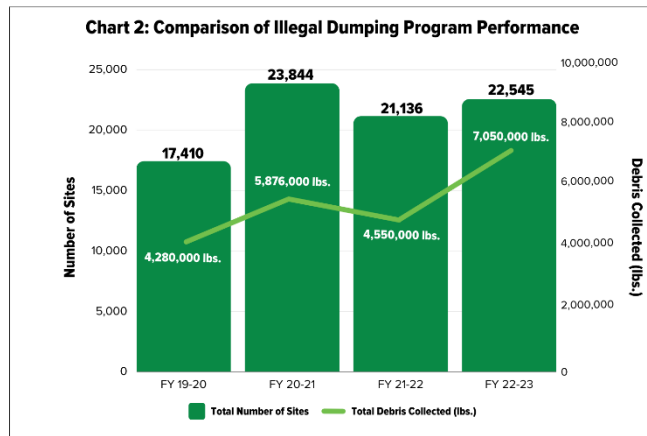
- Approximately 20% (581,000 square feet) of all graffiti reported was gang, hate or offensive.
- Increase of graffiti bombing incidents -- where an area is targeted, and all surfaces are graffitied. Incidents are frequent along sound walls, fences, sidewalks, vehicles, and freeway signage; and
- Approximately 16% of all graffiti work order requests were located on private property. Most of the incidents were located on small businesses.

The Graffiti Removal Program provided engagement and outreach to address 4,100 incidents located on private property, including interjurisdictional properties. Many small businesses continue to be challenged with addressing graffiti that quickly returns once it is removed.

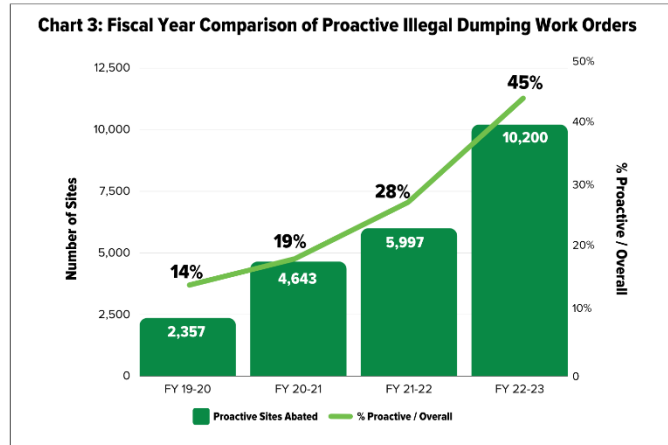
Removing And Preventing Illegal Dumping Program – RAPID

The RAPID Illegal Dumping team exceeded expectations in 2022-2023.

- *Faster Response Times* - Responded within four business days (3.6 days), approximately one day sooner than the response time from the previous year (4.3 days).
- *Proactive Approach* - Monitored 180 illegal dumping hot spots, 16 residential neighborhoods and 17 alleyway locations experiencing high volumes of illegal dumping. Assessing each location quarterly to incorporate new hot spot areas and remove those no longer needing proactive services. Hot Spots are defined as 13 or more clustered dumping incidents in one calendar year.
- *More 311 app Reports* - 7% increase in illegal dumping reports received and a 54% increase in the amount of trash and debris that was collected from prior year.
- Collection of 7,050,000 pounds of debris citywide.

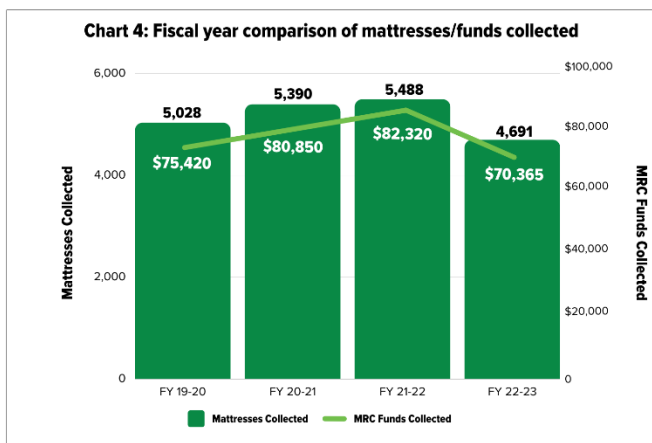


- The significant increase in collected debris by the program further highlights the need for Education to reduce this overall trend. The team completed 45% (10,200 work orders) of overall incidents through proactive monitoring which is nearly double the efforts from the previous year (5,997 work orders). The increase in proactive monitoring by RAPID



reduced the number of illegal dumping incidents reported by the public from the previous year, from 14,936 in 2021-2022, down to 12,305 in 2022-2023, an 18% decrease.

The City has been a participant in the California Illegally Dumped Mattress Collection Initiative since 2016. Each year the Mattress Recycling Council allocates \$1 million to fund the initiative to support the maximum payout per mattress of up to \$15. In 2022 the BeautifySJ Program



collected 4,691 mattresses, resulting in the reimbursement of \$70,365 which are reinvested to support the illegal dumping program. The program coordinates efforts with our partners, San Jose Conservation Corps and Goodwill of Silicon Valley, to ensure these collected mattresses are properly recycled.

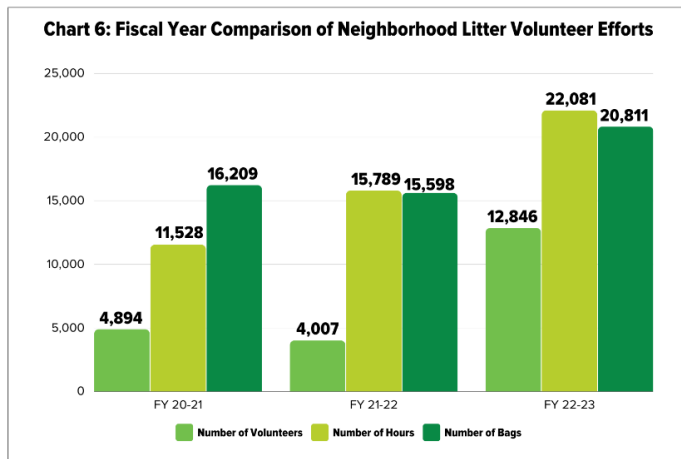
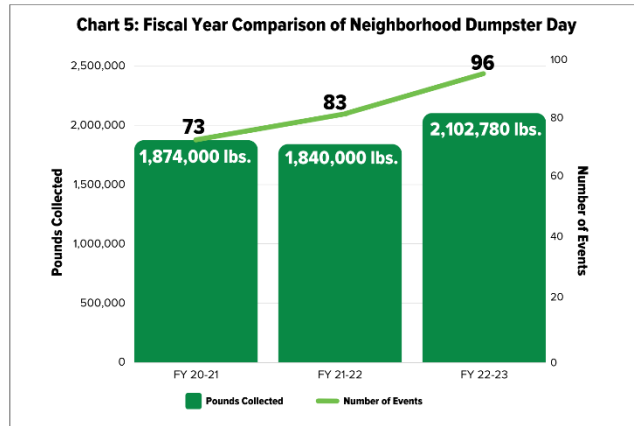
Neighborhood Beautification Programs

The Dumpster Day Program coordinates with neighborhood associations and Council Offices to host approximately 100 neighborhood dumpster day events each year to provide a method for residents to appropriately dispose of unwanted large items. In 2022-2023 dedicated full-time

staff and non-personal/equipment funds were added on an ongoing basis allowing for the increase in dumpster day events and trash collected.

Last year, staff enhanced collection day events on weekdays to provide communities with additional opportunities to get rid of unwanted items. These efforts allowed residents to dispose of

items that are not normally accepted during the weekend dumpster day events such as tires, e-waste, metal debris, and more. Through these efforts, the program increased the overall number of hosted events from 83 in the previous fiscal year to 96 events for 2022-2023. Additionally, the Dumpster Day Program implemented proactive cleanups of the participating neighborhoods to collect illegal dumping following each event. A total of 2,102,780 pounds (1,051.39 tons) of debris was collected as part of this process. Chart #5 below illustrates the growth of the program over the last three years.



The Neighborhood Litter Program, formally known as the Anti-Litter program, is a volunteer-driven program that includes community engagement, school outreach and education, and supports litter events in coordination with, neighborhood/business associations, interjurisdictional partners, the Mayor’s Office, and Council Offices. In 2022-2023, the Neighborhood Litter Program implemented a neighborhood and school engagement strategy that focused on re-engaging the community to increase

program volunteerism after the impacts of COVID-19.

- 28% increase in volunteer participation from prior year
- Engagement of 44 schools
- 87 presentations at neighborhood association meetings
- Attendance at 38 resource fairs
- Over 6,000 students participated in school-wide beautification and education activities.

In 2022-2023, 12,846 volunteers worked 22,081 hours to collect 20,811 bags of trash/debris which equated to 936,495 pounds collected. These service hours are an extremely valuable contribution to the program, a volunteer hour in California is currently valued at \$31.80 per hour¹.

This current year, additional funding is allocated for two more eradication activity pilots aimed at more engagement with neighborhood associations and beautification at key downtown gateway and corridors with serious blight challenges.

- *Beautify Your Block Program* will engage with neighborhood associations and groups to implement strategies to increase neighborhood participation in cleanup efforts, provide workshops to educate neighborhoods on how to better access City services and support implementation of BeautifySJ Neighborhood Grants.
- *Clean Gateways Program* will focus on developing a proactive strategy to cleanup and maintain heavily trafficked intersections and corridors that serve as gateways to the City. Year 1 of the program will focus efforts across eleven (11) potential gateway/corridor locations in coordination with Caltrans

Partnerships

BeautifySJ works closely with Caltrans, Union Pacific Railroad, Valley Water, the County of Santa Clara and nonprofit partners to coordinate the delivery of services and respond to blight concerns. In 2021-2022, funding was allocated for an Interagency Team to lead coordination, contract development and service delivery. Since its implementation, over 4,289,200 pounds (2,145 tons) of debris were removed from waterways, freeways, roadways and more. BeautifySJ also contracts with community-based organization to clean up our waterways. Below is a summary of activities and the status of current agreements with BeautifySJ Partners.

- **Caltrans, California Department of Transportation** – Through strong coordination efforts, during fiscal year 2022-23, the Neighborhood Beautification Program hosted 13 events in partnership with Caltrans, eight neighborhood dumpster events, supported 30 encampment clean ups and five litter clean ups. The City has an agreement with Caltrans in the amount of \$750,000 through June 2024 to address trash/debris and graffiti on soundwalls at designated on and off-ramps.
- **Creek Cleanup Partners** – Beginning in fiscal year 2023-2024 the City will increase support to \$100,000 each to three creek cleanup partners, South Bay Clean Creeks Coalition, Keep Coyote Creek Beautiful, and the Trash Punx. In 2022-2023 these partners collected 454,410 pounds (227 tons) of trash with residents volunteering 8,204 hours.

¹ Independent sector – value of a volunteer hour: <https://independentsector.org/resource/value-of-volunteer-time/#:~:text=In%20its%20newest%20Value%20of,increase%20from%202020%20to%202021.>

- **County of Santa Clara** – The City has entered into an agreement with the County to provide trash pick-up and encampment management services at specified locations within the County’s jurisdiction such as expressways. This includes routine garbage, debris, bio-waste, and hazardous materials removal from occupied encampments. The County is reimbursing the City for all related costs.
- **Union Pacific Railroad** – In 2022-23, the City coordinated six cleanups with Union Pacific Railroad and abated approximately 36,000 square feet of graffiti along the railways. Union Pacific Railroad and the City focused efforts on areas along the railway that are most impacted by illegal dumping, encampments, and large graffiti abatement projects. The City has a ten-year Memorandum of Understanding through 2030.
- **Valley Water** – A total of fifty-two (52) cleanups were coordinated with Valley Water. The City has a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with Valley Water for an interagency encampment cleanup program along waterways as part of Valley Water’s Safe Clean Water Program. As part of the MOA the City pays for the debris disposal, bio-waste handling and removal, San José Police Department Secondary Employment Unit and coordinates outreach services for joint cleanups. In 2022-2023 the City and Valley Water established an additional Coyote Creek Flood Management project agreement.

Education

In 2022-2023, Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services - BeautifySJ Program launched a behavior change campaign, *BSJ Proud*, as a call to action to our residents, neighborhoods, and businesses to instill and strengthen community’s sense of pride therefore reducing dumping and blight. With \$200,000 in one-time funding, the *BSJ Proud* campaign reached nearly one million impressions through a multilingual education and outreach plan that used traditional and digital media platforms to build awareness of neighborhood blight reduction programs including graffiti removal, anti-litter efforts, neighborhood beautification efforts, and illegal dumping removal.

Enforcement

While the approach to address illegal dumping has improved over the past years, illegal dumping still appears to be on the rise. RAPID program has eight camera sets to place in identified high-volume illegal dumping hot spots to act as deterrents and has effectively reduced illegal dumping activity within a 150-foot vicinity by an average of 31% over the past fiscal year.

In addition to the use of cameras, the RAPID program has installed over 300 “No Illegal Dumping” signage deterrents at identified hotspots since 2017. In 2022-2023 the program implemented a strategy to bolster deterrent efforts by adding new methods such as the installation of bollards, boulders, and solar-powered motion sensor lighting where applicable. Moving forward, beautification and landscaping methods will be a part of the deterrent strategy against illegal dumping citywide and through the Clean Gateways pilot.

San José residents and businesses can forward evidence of illegal dumping to the City’s Report.dumpers@sanjoseca.gov email account. Submitted reports are vetted by BeautifySJ when staff is available and are forwarded to Code Enforcement for review and enforcement as appropriate. Code Enforcement assesses and determines the level of citation that will be issued. The table below provides additional information related to citations and fines collected.

Table 1 – Illegal Dumping Citation Payment Status 2022-2023

| # of Citations | # of Citations Paid/Partial | Total Amount Charged | Balance Due Remaining |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 41 | 27 | \$74,010 | \$36,702 |

CONCLUSION

The City’s investment in blight reduction services resulted in major increases in the eradication of graffiti, illegal dumping, and litter focused on public spaces. However, there continues to be ongoing challenges as the preventative and enforcement efforts are limited and the influx of blight continues. Balancing the Three Es comprehensive approach of Education, Eradication and Enforcement can provide BeautifySJ with a holistic, effective model that works to prevent and enforce in addition to removal and eradication.

While the programs continue to show progress, the City faces a few challenges to maximizing success including the capacity and resource strain placed upon the City corporation yards (where trash is sorted, weighed and disposed), and the inability to keep pace with vehicle requests for purchases, vehicle outfitting, and maintenance needed to ensure services are running effectively.

EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP

BeautifySJ will provide key program priority updates via the Neighborhood Services Community Services Area on issues impacting service delivery and neighborhood livability.

CLIMATE SMART SAN JOSÉ

The recommendation in this memo has no effect on Climate Smart San José energy, water, or mobility goals.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

This memorandum will be posted on the City's Neighborhood Services and Education Committee Agenda website for the October 12, 2023, meeting.

COORDINATION

This memorandum was coordinated with the City Attorney's Office, City Manager's Budget Office, and the City Manager's Office.

CEQA

Not a Project, File No. PP17-009, Staff Reports, Assessments, Annual Reports, and Informational Memorandums that involve no approvals of any City action.

/s/

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Director of Parks,
Recreation, and Neighborhood Services

For questions, please contact Andrea Flores Shelton, Andrea.floresshelton@sanjoseca.gov, Deputy Director, Community Services Division of Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services.

The principal author of this memorandum is Olympia Williams, BeautifySJ Division Manager. For questions, please contact Olympia.williams@sanjoseca.gov.

ATTACHMENT A:

BeautifySJ Organizational Chart

