



# Memorandum

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR AND  
CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Toni J. Taber, CMC  
City Clerk

**SUBJECT:** SEE BELOW

**DATE:** October 29, 2024

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**SUBJECT: BeautifySJ Neighborhood Blight Reduction Status Report**

**Recommendation**

As recommended by the Neighborhood Services and Education Committee on October 10, 2024, accept the BeautifySJ Neighborhood Blight Reduction Status Report for Fiscal Year 2023-2024.

CEQA: Not a Project, File No. PP17-009, Staff Reports, Assessments, Annual Reports, and Informational Memos that involve no approvals of any City action. (Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services)

[Neighborhood Services and Education Committee referral - 10/10/2024 - Item (d)2]



# Memorandum

**TO:** NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

**FROM:** Jon Cicirelli

**SUBJECT:** SEE BELOW

**DATE:** September 16, 2024

Approved

Date:

10/3/2024

**COUNCIL DISTRICT:** Citywide

**SUBJECT:** BeautifySJ Neighborhood Blight Reduction Status Report

## RECOMMENDATION

Accept the BeautifySJ Neighborhood Blight Reduction Status Report for Fiscal Year 2023-2024 and cross-reference the report to the full City Council on October 29, 2024.

## SUMMARY AND OUTCOME

The Committee will be knowledgeable of the BeautifySJ Neighborhood Blight Reduction programs delivered by the Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services (the Department) in fiscal year 2023-2024. This memo is focused on blight reduction services. Encampment management services reports through the forthcoming Consolidated Annual Homelessness Report.

## BACKGROUND

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, schools, 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 consists of the Graffiti Removal Program, Litter Removal and Neighborhood Beautification Program, Neighborhood Engagement, and the RAPID Illegal Dumping Program. The BeautifySJ Organizational Chart, attached, provides more detail as to how these programs are organized. Significant coordination within the Department, with other City departments, and inter-jurisdictional partners is necessary for effective implementation.

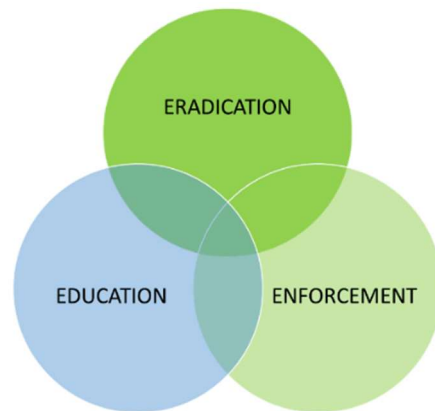
The overall BeautifySJ program has grown from 16.5 FTEs to 111.0 FTEs over the past six fiscal years, across all appropriations. The Neighborhood Blight Reduction Team

itself is comprised of forty-two (42) full-time staff and has vendor support for graffiti abatement. In FY 2024- 2025, additional staff are added including a new Program Manager to lead the expansion of neighborhood services programming and implement the Neighborhood Associations Engagement Model.

Last year, the Neighborhood Blight Reduction programs removed approximately 12,642,000 million pounds of trash and debris, eradicated 2,994,859 feet of graffiti, presented at 40 neighborhood association meetings, and engaged with 7,400 youth through education and outreach. The program continues to make strides utilizing the comprehensive Three Es approach - Education, Eradication, and Enforcement, a best practice model used by several large cities throughout the nation to combat blight.

## **ANALYSIS**

Since the initial launch of the BeautifySJ initiative over six years ago, the City's investment in blight reduction services has increased the eradication of graffiti, illegal dumping, and litter in public spaces. However, ongoing challenges persist as the preventative and enforcement efforts are limited and costly, and the influx of blight continues.



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.

In 2023-2024, the BeautifySJ Neighborhood Blight Reduction programs removed 12,642,000 million pounds of trash from the City's public spaces, 33% increase from the year before when 9,494,000 million pounds were disposed. The program eradicated 2,994,859 square feet of graffiti, a 3% increase from the prior year. Below is an update on the BeautifySJ Neighborhood Blight Reduction services utilizing the Three Es model.

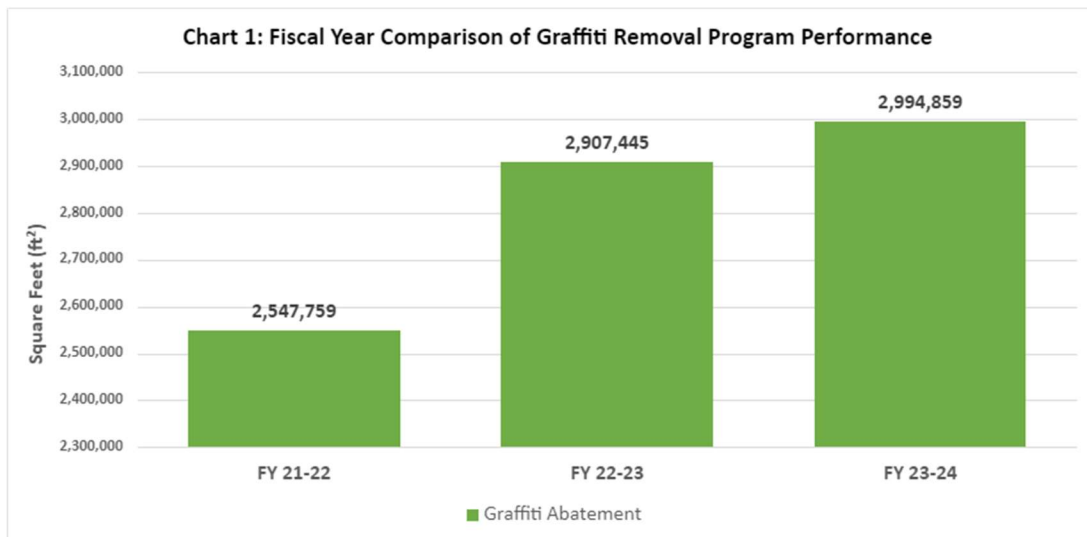
## **Eradication**

### **Graffiti Removal Program**

Over the past 3 years, the graffiti program has experienced a 17% increase in the number of graffiti incidents removed within the City's jurisdiction. 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.

Staff in coordination with the vendor Graffiti Protective Coatings (GPC) has improved program capabilities completing 30,407 work orders, increasing the square footage of eradication to assist in addressing key troubling trends:

- Removed 2,994,859 square feet of graffiti, the most abated in a single year.
- Approximately 20% (577,133 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 damaged with graffiti. Incidents are frequent along sound walls, fences, sidewalks, vehicles, and freeway signage; and
- Approximately 6% of all graffiti work order requests were located on private property. Most of the incidents were located on small businesses.



To address the 1,704 incidents of graffiti located on private property, including interjurisdictional properties, staff provided engagement and outreach to ensure that business know it is their responsibility to remove graffiti or support the business to remove the graffiti in a timely way. Many small businesses continue to be challenged with addressing graffiti that quickly returns once it is removed. For graffiti in interjurisdictional property, BSA staff notify the correct agency for abatement.

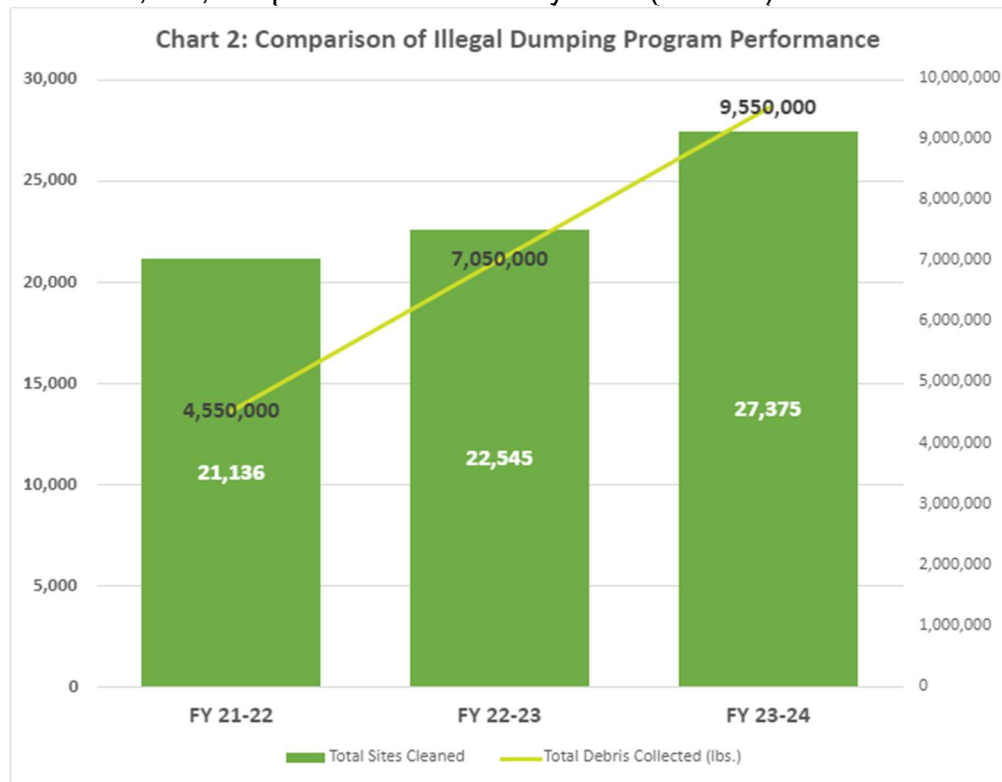
Installation of community murals have assisted with preventing graffiti along surfaces and areas frequently targeted by taggers. Installation of murals has been an effective deterrent to decrease and deter graffiti along frequently graffitied areas. Since 2018 the Graffiti Removal Program has assisted with the completion of twenty-four (24) mural projects including 116 individual art pieces located in frequently graffitied areas such as utility boxes by installing graffiti coating or murals and utility boxes. The team works collaboratively with the City's Public Art Program by providing data to support mural location recommendations, participating in community engagement, and performing

preparation and maintenance of the mural site. While the installation of murals deters graffiti at a specific location, it has not led to a reduction in graffiti overall.

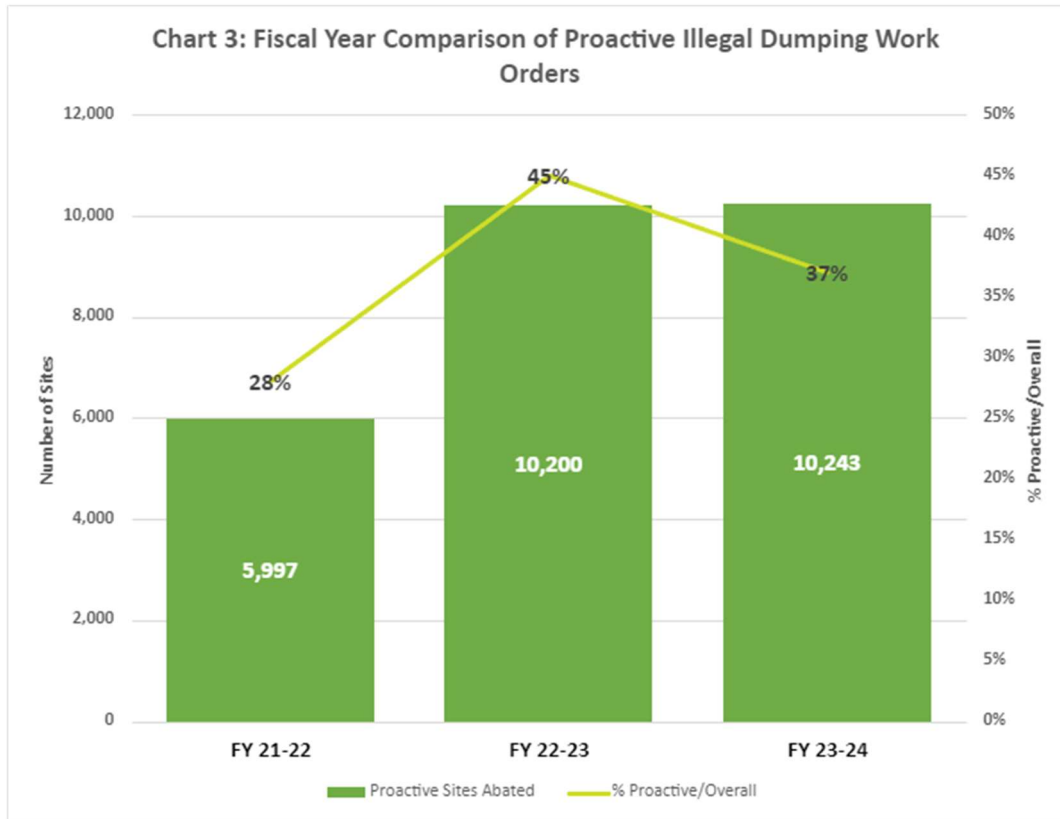
### Removing And Preventing Illegal Dumping Program – RAPID

The RAPID Illegal Dumping team exceeded expectations in FY 2023-2024.

- Collection of 9,550,000 pounds of debris citywide. (Chart 2)

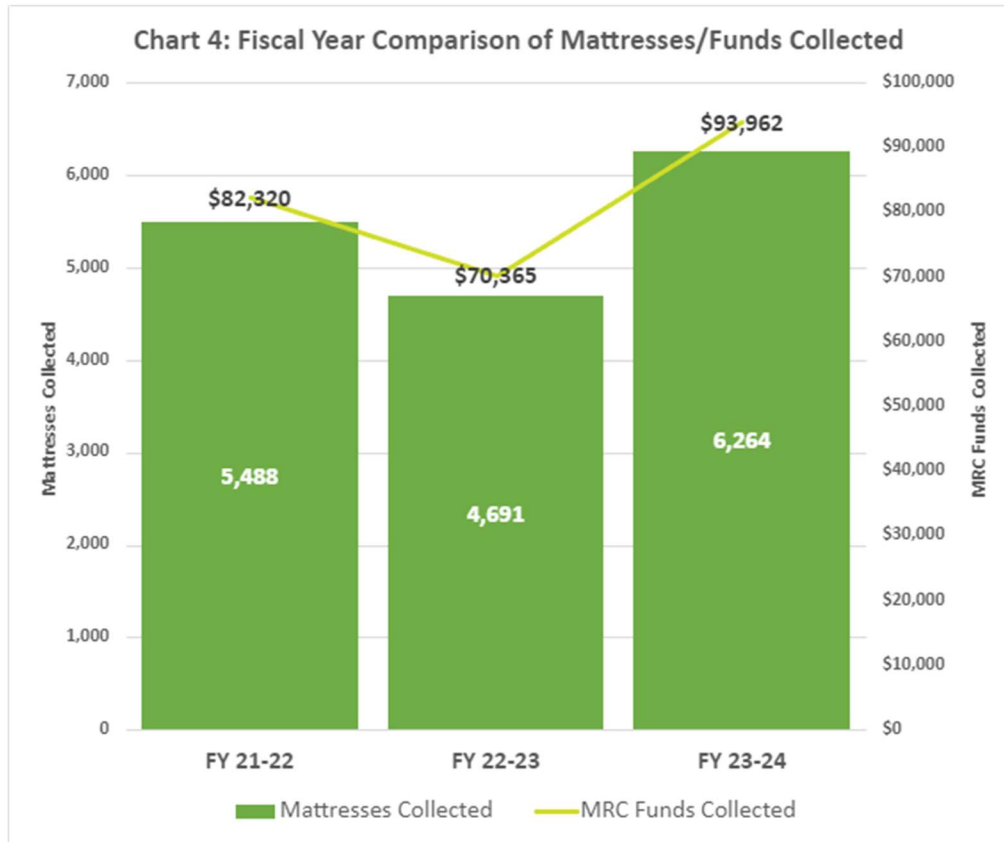


- Faster Response Times – Responded within three business days, approximately half a day sooner than the response time (3.6 days) from previous year.
- 311 app reports – 21% increase in illegal dumping reports received and a 35% increase in the amount of trash and debris collected from the prior year.
- Proactive Approach – Completed 37% of overall incidents through proactive monitoring which is on par with the efforts from the previous year. (Chart 3)



Since 2016, the City has participated in the California Illegally Dumped Mattress Collection Initiative. Each year the Mattress Recycling Council allocates \$1 million to fund the initiative to support the maximum payout of up to \$15 per mattress. Last fiscal year, the BeautifySJ Program collected 6,264 mattresses resulting in the reimbursement of \$86,640 which are reinvested to support the illegal dumping program.

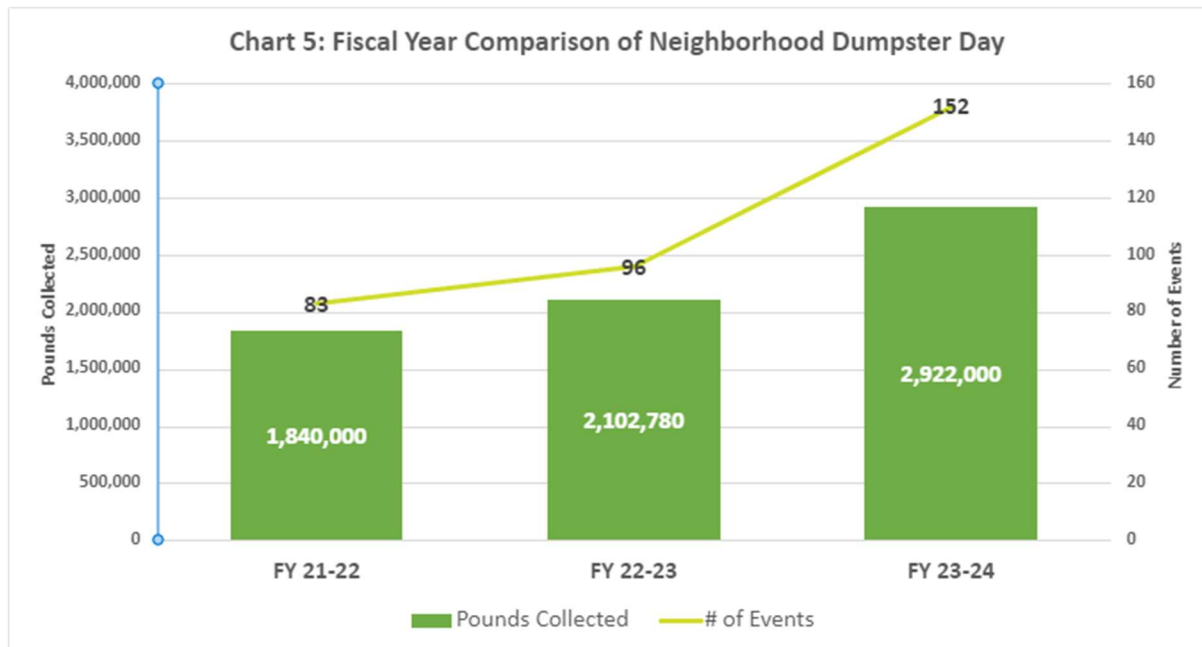
Chart 4 shows the mattress funds collected. The program coordinates efforts with San Jose Conservation Corps and Goodwill of Silicon Valley to ensure these mattresses are properly recycled.



### Neighborhood Beautification Programs

The Dumpster Day Program coordinates with neighborhood associations and Council Offices to host approximately 100 neighborhood dumpster day events each year. This is an additional method for residents to appropriately dispose of unwanted large items to the Free Junk Pick Up program offered by Environmental Services Department contracted haulers.

Staff continues to enhance collections day events on weekdays to provide communities with additional opportunities to get rid of unwanted items. Through these efforts, the program increased the overall number hosted events from 96 in the previous fiscal year to 152 events for 2023-2024. Additionally, the Dumpster Day Program implemented proactive cleanups of the participating neighborhoods to collect illegal dumping following each event. A total of 2,922,000 pounds (1,461 tons) of debris was collected as part of this process. Chart 5 illustrates the growth of the program over the last three years.



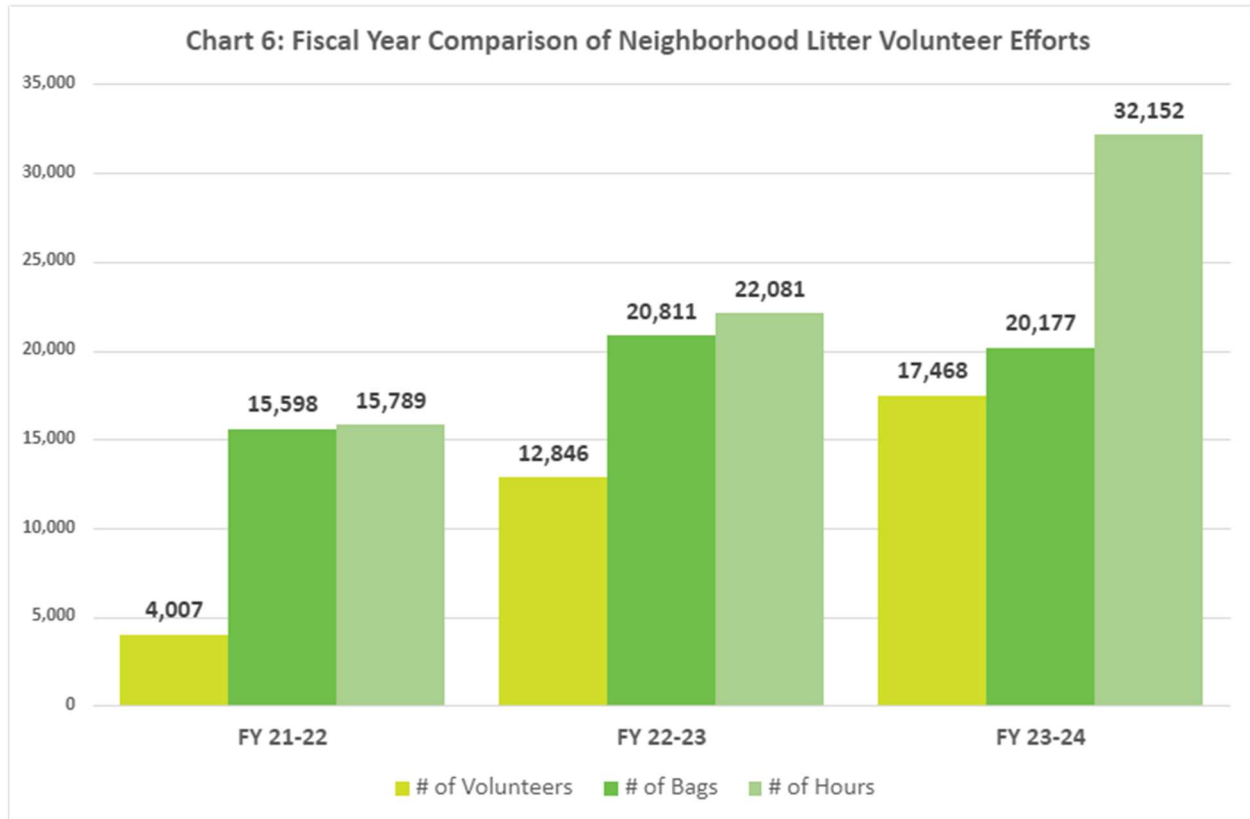
The Neighborhood Litter Program, formally known as the Anti-Litter program, is a volunteer-driven program that includes community engagement, school outreach and education, and supports litter events in coordination with neighborhood/business associations, interjurisdictional partners, the Mayor’s, and Council Offices. The Neighborhood Litter Program developed and implemented a strategy aimed at community and school involvement, which led to a sustained increase in volunteer participation throughout 2023-2024.

- 36% increase in volunteer participation from prior year
- 74 schools engaged
- 40 presentations at neighborhood association meetings
- Over 7,400 students participated in school-wide beautification and education activities

In 2023-2024, 17,468 residents volunteered 32,152 hours of their time to collect 20,177 bags of trash/debris. which equated to 907,965 pounds collected. Chart 6 shows the last 3 years of neighborhood litter volunteer efforts. These volunteers continue to help fill in the gaps where City funding is limited. These service hours are an extremely valuable contribution, a volunteer hour in California is currently valued at \$33.49 per hour<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Independent Sector – Value of Volunteer Time: <https://independentsector.org/resource/value-of-volunteer-time/>





In addition to the core blight services, two eradication pilot programs were launched this fiscal year to increase engagement with neighborhood associations and improve beautification at key downtown gateway and corridors.

- *Beautify Your Block Program* has successfully concluded, and as a result a total 17 neighborhood associations and groups were engaged to implement strategies to increase neighborhood participation in cleanup efforts. Beautify Your Block assisted neighborhood associations with 17 litter pick-ups and 8 Dumpster events. They also provided 5-workshops to educate neighborhoods on how to better access City services and support the implementation of BeautifySJ Neighborhood Grants.
- *Clean Gateways Program* focused on developing a proactive strategy to cleanup and maintain heavily trafficked intersections and corridors. Year 1 of the program focused efforts across eleven (11) gateway/corridor locations in coordination with Caltrans. This program has been funded to continue services through June 30, 2025.

**Partnerships**

BeautifySJ collaborates with key stakeholders such as Caltrans, Union Pacific Railroad, Valley Water, the County of Santa Clara, and nonprofit partners to address blight issues

effectively. Funding continues to support an Interagency Team to lead coordination, contract development and service delivery. 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 the fiscal year 2023-2024, the Neighborhood Beautification Program hosted 12 events in partnership with Caltrans, 6 neighborhood dumpster events collecting 86.52 tons, 6 litter events, and supported 215 encampment clean-ups. The City has completed the Clean California Maintenance Agreement with Caltrans removing trash/debris at 29 designated on and off-ramps and removing 7,020 square feet of graffiti on a pedestrian overpass.
- **Creek Cleanup Partners** –In 2023-2024 these partners collected 342,405 pounds (171 tons) of trash with residents volunteering 8,117 hours. Beginning in fiscal year 2024-2025 the City will increase support to \$125,000 each to three creek cleanup partners, South Bay Clean Creeks Coalition, Keep Coyote Creek Beautiful, and the Trash Punx.
- **County of Santa Clara** – The City has a contract 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 2023-2024, the City coordinated three cleanups with Union Pacific Railroad and abated approximately 48,689 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 103 cleanups were coordinated with Valley Water. The Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with Valley Water for an interagency encampment cleanup program expired as of June 2024. The City is currently in negotiation with Valley Water to enter a new MOA to continue our partnership and joint efforts to remove trash and debris from encampments along local waterways. The City and Valley Water have continued coordination in the Coyote Creek Flood Management project agreement.

*BeautifySJ Neighborhood Grant Program*

BeautifySJ Grant supports existing efforts led by the BeautifySJ Program which conducts neighborhood blight reduction and homeless encampment management and provides graffiti, blight and litter removal and encampment abatement along with supportive services for the unhoused population. The program funds neighborhood groups, including new emerging groups and community groups that support neighborhoods with beautification projects like tree planting and mural installation and neighborhood engagement such as National Night Out, cultural festivals, and community building events. Additional information on Neighborhood Associations that received grant funding can be found in the Grantmaking for Community Impact Memo that was presented at the Neighborhood Services and Education Committee in September 2024.<sup>2</sup>

Table – 1 BeautifySJ Neighborhood Grant funding 2022-2023

<b>Funded Agencies 2022-2023</b>	<b>What services are provided?</b>	<b>What is impact of program?</b>
73	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beautification projects</li> <li>• Neighborhood quality of life and organization building events</li> <li>• Neighborhood support &amp; capacity building activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen neighborhood groups</li> <li>• Improve neighborhood conditions through beautification</li> <li>• Engage with neighbors to reduce trash, graffiti, and other sources of blight</li> </ul>

**Education**

A comprehensive education plan has been deployed to continue to promote the behavior change campaign, BSJ Proud. The BSJ Proud campaign is a call to action for our residents, neighborhoods, and businesses to engage and amplify our community's sense of pride to reduce dumping and blight. Blog stories highlighted the graffiti removal team's neighborhood restoration efforts and neighborhood litter education team's educational workshops to San José children and youth on the effects of litter and debris on our communities, environment, and planet. Along with the monthly BSJ Proud event highlights and marketing outreach, social media platforms have reached thousands of accounts online and promoted BeautifySJ's services and community resources. BeautifySJ signed a three-year partnership contract with the San Jose Earthquakes to promote the program through in-stadium advertisements, tabling activations, and a

<sup>2</sup> Grant Making for Community Impact Memo:

<https://sanjose.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=13281194&GUID=184A5AF1-4FCB-4C68-ABF0-D3196D9BE36E>

community event. In stadium presence reaches up to 18,000 spectators per game, effectively promoting messaging, branding and resources.

### *Neighborhood Engagement Efforts*

The Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services Department re-launched the Annual Neighborhoods Conference in October 2023. The Neighborhoods Conference focused on neighborhood quality of life and engagement and reducing blight in neighborhoods. Partner Departments (PRNS-BeautifySJ, San Jose Police Department, Code Enforcement, Department of Transportation, and the Mayor's Office) led conference workshops and engaged with neighborhood leaders to better understand their challenges with blight and their respective neighborhood associations.

The Conference also provided an opportunity for City staff to gather feedback from conference participants on the proposed Neighborhoods Association Engagement Model, which aims to reduce barriers to engaging with the City. Through community engagement at the conference and surveys, Capacity Building, Two-Way Communication and Issue Support were identified as the three most important purposes of neighborhood associations. As a result, staff is focusing this fiscal year on the foundational Model by establishing a quarterly Neighborhood Association Forum starting in the winter of 2024, alongside the existing annual Neighborhoods Conference, to better support neighborhood association education, outreach, and engagement.

PRNS is also working on expanding the Model by developing a neighborhood strategy to enhance and coordinate existing programs, aiming to improve outcomes and more effectively utilize resources. Staff will support, monitor, and evaluate the foundational Model from fall 2024 through spring 2026, and will determine the best form and function for the years following.

### **Enforcement**

Efforts to address illegal dumping have advanced in recent years, but the issues continue to escalate. The RAPID program has six cameras placed 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 7% over the past fiscal year. Additionally, BeautifySJ is working closely with San Jose Police Department and Caltrans to determine the best strategies to reduce graffiti along freeways including enforcement.

Since its inception in 2017, the RAPID initiative enhanced community awareness and compliance through strategic placement of over 365 "No Illegal Dumping" signs at critical locations. The program continues to identify preventive measures through the adoption of innovative tactics, including the placement of bollards, boulders, and solar-

powered motion-sensor lights in strategic areas. Beautification and landscaping methods will remain core components 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](mailto:Report.dumpers@sanjoseca.gov) email account. Submitted reports are vetted by BeautifySJ when staff is available and forwards viable evidence to Code Enforcement for review and enforcement as appropriate. Code Enforcement assesses and determines the level of citation to be issued. Table 2 provides additional information related to citations and fines collected.

Table 2 – Illegal Dumping Citation Status 2023-2024

# of Citations	# of Citations Paid/Partial	Total Amount Collected	Remaining Unpaid Citation Amount
51	38	\$33,250	\$36,702

**Conclusion**

The City’s continued efforts in blight reduction services resulted in improving the coordination of the delivery of services toward the long-term objective of a cleaner city. However, there continue to be persistent challenges due to limited preventive measures and enforcement capabilities, alongside a steady influx of blight. Adopting and investing in the Three Es comprehensive approach of Education, Eradication, and Enforcement continues to show a holistic, effective model that works to prevent and enforce in addition to removal and eradication.

BeautifySJ and other debris removal efforts by departments continue to face challenges to maximizing success, such as the operational demands and resource constraints at the City’s corporation yards. Additionally, there is a lag in meeting the demand for vehicle requests for purchases, vehicle outfitting, and maintenance needed to ensure services are running effectively. In coordination with the City Manager’s Office, departments are working together to develop improvement plans to mitigate these impacts.

**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.

### **COORDINATION**

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

### **PUBLIC OUTREACH**

This memorandum will be posted on the City's Neighborhood Services and Education Committee Agenda website for the October 10, 2024, meeting.

### **COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION AND INPUT**

No commission recommendation or input is associated with this action.

### **CEQA**

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

### **PUBLIC SUBSIDY REPORTING**

This item does not include a public subsidy as defined in section 53083 or 53083.1 of the California Government Code or the City's Open Government Resolution.

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Jon Cicirelli  
Director of Parks, Recreation and  
Neighborhood Services

For questions, please contact Olympia Williams, Interim Deputy Director, Community Services Division of Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services, at [Olympia.williams@sanjoseca.gov](mailto:Olympia.williams@sanjoseca.gov) or (408) 535-3540.

The principal author of this memorandum is Aurelia Bailey, Interim Division Manager, Community Services Division of Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services. For questions, please contact [Aurelia.bailey@sanjoseca](mailto:Aurelia.bailey@sanjoseca) or (408) 975-7181.

NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

September 16, 2024

**Subject:** BeautifySJ Neighborhood Blight Reduction Status Report for 2023-2024

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Attachment: BeautifySJ Organizational Chart

## Attachment: BeautifySJ Organizational Chart

