

Memorandum

TO: SMART CITIES AND SERVICE
IMPROVEMENTS COMMITTEE

FROM: Khaled Tawfik
John Ristow
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**SUBJECT: CITY ROADMAP: BEAUTIFYSJ
VEHICLE BLIGHT STATUS
REPORT**

DATE: October 24, 2022

Approved

Date

10/26/2022

RECOMMENDATION

Accept the status report on BeautifySJ Vehicle Blight improvements to vehicle abatement case handling that better coordinates cross-department response and improves outcomes as part of the approved City Initiatives Roadmap for 2022-2023.

OUTCOME

The Committee will understand and provide feedback on the BeautifySJ Vehicle Blight improvements to vehicle abatement case handling.

BACKGROUND

The BeautifySJ Vehicle Blight initiative is part of the Clean, Vibrant, and Inclusive Neighborhoods and Public Life enterprise priority in the 2022-2023 City Initiative Roadmap¹. The Abandoned Vehicle service is the lowest-rated SJ311 service at 16.7% of customers rating the service as Good or Very Good during Fiscal Year (FY) 2021-2022. Based on the increasing number of vehicle-related complaints and declining customer satisfaction, City Council communicated the need to redesign the broader handling of vehicle-related service requests in the 2022-2023 City Roadmap prioritization process.

The primary factor in the low ratings is that customer expectations do not align with the services the Vehicle Abatement program was designed and resourced to provide. Further, although

¹ 2022-2023 City Initiatives Roadmap:

<https://www.sanjoseca.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/86061/637889777025900000>

regular communications and status updates are provided in SJ311 request handling, residents communicate dissatisfaction with the level of detail in service request closure comments. Resident feedback is that cases appear to be closed without an investigation and/or reference to the resident's submittal comments. Customer satisfaction is exceptionally low when staff takes no enforcement action in all circumstances.

It is important to note that there are multiple departments involved in responding to vehicle-related concerns submitted through SJ311 and that the departments receive requests from many contact sources. For example, the Department of Transportation (DOT) will forward certain service requests to the Housing (HSG); Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services (PRNS); or Police (PD) departments based on an initial review of the submitted service requests or subsequent to an investigation by DOT officers. Some departments, such as Planning, Building and Code Enforcement (PBCE), PRNS, HSG, and PD receive concerns via email, social media, phone calls, neighborhood meetings, and Council District staff referrals that are not tracked through SJ311 data. For example, while DOT receives concerns about vehicles on City streets, PBCE receives concerns about vehicle blight on private property, PRNS receives concerns about trash and lived-in vehicles, and PD receives concerns about hazardous materials and illegally parked vehicles. The lack of a centralized management tool, in addition to the lack of process consistency among departments, creates silos that hinder collaboration among departments. The experience for residents is clearly confusing, inconsistent, and dissatisfying.

ITD launched a project in October 2022 with a multi-department team collaborating on reimagining the response, resolution, and tracking of vehicle complaints for high effectiveness and resident satisfaction. The BeautifySJ Vehicle Blight initiative project team includes representatives from the Information Technology (ITD), DOT, PRNS, PD, HSG, and PBCE departments, as well as the City Manager's Office of Communications (COMM).

ANALYSIS

During FY 2021-2022, 16.7% of customers rated the Abandoned Vehicle service as Good or Very Good, compared to an average of 64.5% for all SJ311 services and 74.2% for all of San José 311 Services when excluding Abandoned Vehicle service requests.

A review of Abandoned Vehicle-related customer survey responses indicated that approximately 70% of survey responses are associated with service requests where services were not provided. Typically, this occurs when the condition of the reported vehicle does not meet the requirements to qualify for investigation. These uninvestigated reports continue to significantly impact overall customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction is upwards of 60%, when only considering survey responses related to vehicles that were investigated. Further, when a vehicle is investigated and towed, customer satisfaction increases to over 85% Good or Very Good. Customer expectations are directly tied to vehicle removal even when removal is inappropriate or could cause distress for residents facing economic hardship, highlighting the need for alignment with the services the Vehicle Abatement Program is currently designed and resourced to provide. Residents expect

that every reported vehicle should be investigated, and nearly all investigated vehicles should be towed.

There are specific legal parameters and conditions that officers must ensure are met and accurately documented when enforcing the California Vehicle Code and San José Municipal Code related to abandoned vehicles. The Parking Compliance Unit cannot legally tow vehicles because they are perceived as a nuisance parked on a public street. Staff cannot tow a vehicle because it is unsightly, damaged, dirty, or full of trash. These legal constraints contribute to customer dissatisfaction, which is reflected in survey responses.

In FY 2021-2022, of the 29,120 Abandoned Vehicle service requests received through SJ311, approximately 25% (7,425) qualified for and were investigated upon staff review. Of those, approximately 20% (1,467) of investigations resulted in the vehicle being towed. In addition, the Proactive Abandoned Vehicle services completed 5,232 investigations and 1,623 vehicles were towed in that period. For the combined 12,657 SJ311/Proactive investigations, DOT was not the appropriate department to address some of the reported concerns, or cross-departmental coordination was required for aspects of the requested services. Therefore, they were manually referred to other departments for follow up. For example, DOT referred approximately 130 stolen vehicles to the PD and 214 service requests to the Housing Department for assistance with situations where the vehicles were occupied/inhabited. These occupied/inhabited vehicles were also sometimes referred to the Beautify Encampment Management Team to provide trash pickup services.

These referrals to other departments are, however, manual and difficult to track outcomes for, also impacting timely response and closeout. Occasionally, DOT receives service requests regarding vehicles located on private property (e.g., apartment complex or strip mall parking lot) or that are identified as being parked outside of San José's jurisdiction or authority (e.g., on private property, County or Caltrans property, etc.). In FY 2021-2022 these requests totaled approximately 300. They were typically closed out and customers were notified that the City was unable to investigate their request based on lack of authority or jurisdiction. Unlike internal referrals, private property and outside jurisdiction requests are not referred. When associated with a SJ311 service request, these non-DOT service requests provide an opportunity for SJ311 process improvements to the resident experience.

Staff's preliminary analysis found that almost all vehicle-related service requests received by the City are submitted to DOT regardless of the reason or service location. In circumstances noted above, this resulted in customers not receiving services or a resolution to their concerns. Although DOT sends out communications updating customers on the status of their service requests, some customers indicated that they are unaware of why their service request was closed and no action was taken. As evident through review of survey responses, this has a strong negative impact on customer satisfaction. Also, the current system and processes limit coordination across department when responding to and investigating service requests. Without the visibility into adjacent or overlapping investigations between different departments, service delivery response will continue to be uncoordinated.

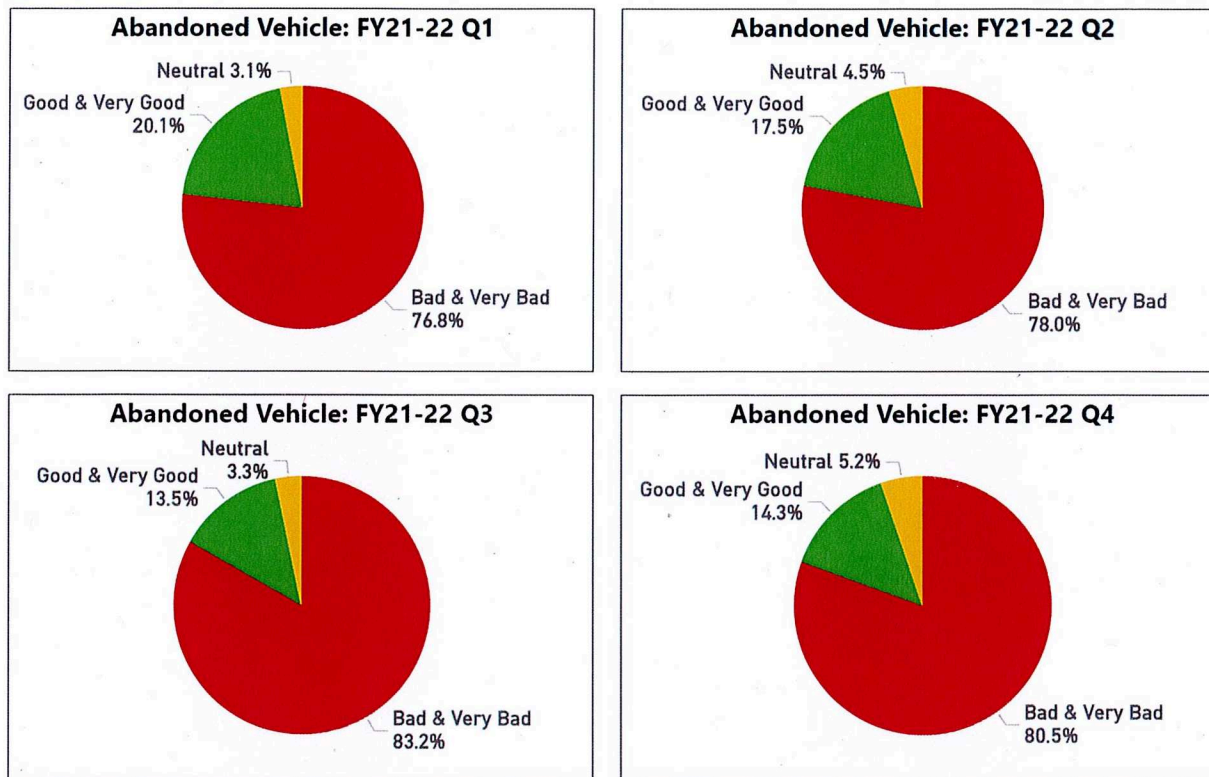


Figure 1 - Customer Experience FY 2021-2022

Project Goals

The project team's goals for the BeautifySJ Vehicle Blight initiative include:

- Design efficient workflows that result in **efficient processing** and **~70% Good to Very Good customer satisfaction**
- **Coordinated communication and response** for the community across departments
- **Convey service expectations** clearly – education, pre-submittal information, state regulations
- Enhance **options and prompts for residents to provide required information** to meet investigation requirements and to minimize the need for additional information
- Seamless **integration between SJ311 and departmental work systems**
- Provide **status lookups for stakeholders** access to information to improve collaboration and communication

Progress

Staff completed a preliminary assessment of the existing processes, identified gaps in processes and between systems, and established the project team with ITD, DOT, PD, PRNS, HSG, PBCE, and COMM. Staff hired a consulting firm with expertise in Human-Centered Design to help the

cross-departmental team understand the personas, fulfillment criteria, and customer experiences that will meet the team's service and satisfaction goals. The approach will use the SJ311 technical platform and integration engine to build the desired system and data analytics.

The Project Team identified improvements to email notification messages that will provide clearer and more fulfilling communications. The team will reassess the overall communication process during the design process.

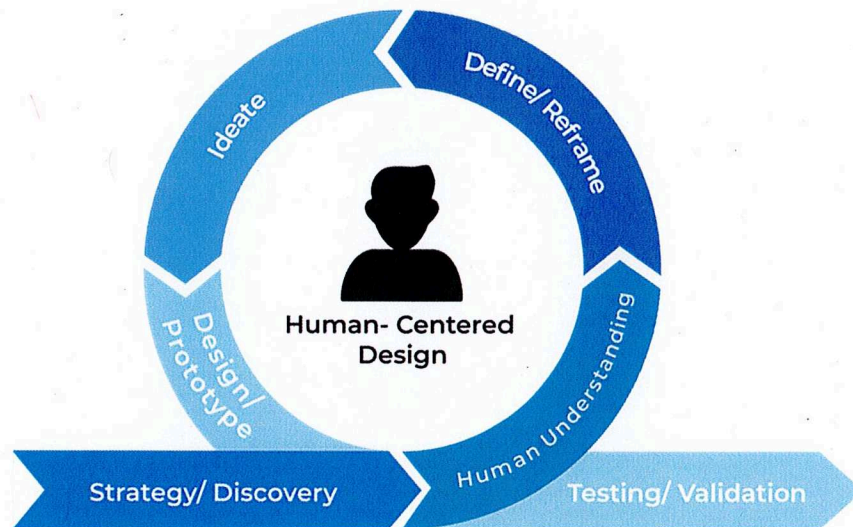


Figure 2 - Human Centered Design Process. Image by Kydak

Next Steps

The SJ311 team will engage the public, SJ311 Customer Contact Center, stakeholder departments, Council District offices, and vehicle owners to participate in this high-impact project, based on the Human-Centered Design methodology. The resulting conclusions will shape designs and prototyping that staff will test with the community.

The team will also evaluate the SJ311 platform's ability to support ticket management enhancements required for seamless interactions and collaboration between departments. Staff is currently working to add Short Message Service (SMS) communication options to the SJ311 Web and Mobile App to further improve interactions with residents.

Preliminary Schedule

The Human-Centered Design process is slated to run through December 2022. From that work, the team will finalize designs, phasing, and estimated costs. The team will then set the procurement approach with Finance—Procurement and submit resource requirements in the City Budget process. The following schedule shows the current timeline:

1. Design New Process Flow

December 2022

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| 2. Complete Functional Design | March 2023 |
| 3. Complete Application Development | May 2023 |
| 4. User Acceptance and Testing | Summer 2023 |
| 5. Deployment | Fall 2023 |

Implementation and Resource Planning

Upon completing the assessment phase, staff will have an understanding and tested designs for the scope of process and system enhancements, along with a more definitive schedule. Risks associated with this initiative currently include:

- The level of measures that can be implemented to improve customer satisfaction based on what staff has learned about the customers' perspective.
- The level of process enhancement that may be achievable as a result of the new business process improvement and collaboration.
- How many transactions, investigations, vehicles staff need to investigate and possibly tow per day or month and how many more service requests staff needs to respond to reach a desired Customer experience level.
- The level of additional resources or realigning of existing resources that may be needed to make a significant improvement in Customer satisfaction.
- How much Customer satisfaction improvement can be obtained for City services that do not translate into an investigation or tow— e.g., the Housing Department may visit a resident vehicle, provide cleanup services, and return to provide the same service again without the vehicle being towed.

CONCLUSION

Staff identified inefficiencies and gaps that provide opportunities for the City to streamline vehicle complaint processes, increase collaboration across departments, and implement enhancements to the SJ311 system to provide an overall view of all tickets submitted to SJ311 regarding vehicle blight. The team continues to identify further improvements to customer experience, expectations setting, and communications regarding vehicle abatement. This represents an opportunity to be more responsive to public needs, understanding how staff can capture information in a user-friendly manner which will result in the elimination of duplicate service requests, increase customer satisfaction, allow the City to respond in a timely manner, and provide better services. The Human-Centered Design process will allow us to be more intuitive and provide a seamless integration and operation between departments which will result in increased efficiency and customer satisfaction.

EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP

Upon completing the users/resident's requirement gathering and designing a new process flow in December 2022, staff will provide updates to the Committee based on the finding with more schedule and budget accuracy.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

- Partner with the City Manager's Office of Communications, already a Vehicle Blight project stakeholder, to plan and implement a multilingual marketing and outreach campaign.
- Leverage feedback from the Human-Centered Design effort to inform the marketing and outreach campaign. Such campaign will explain the benefits of this enhanced service, including the improved and simplified SJ311 reporting tool, and encourage users to report via SJ311.
- Work with department public information managers to identify and execute marketing and outreach tactics within their respective networks.
- Utilize a combination of no- and low-cost marketing tactics and community outreach strategies to effectively inform and encourage the use of SJ311 for vehicle blight reporting.
- Initial target audiences will include historically underserved San José communities and neighborhoods that have a combination of lower customer satisfaction and a high volume of vehicle abatement service requests.

COORDINATION

The Vehicle Blight initiative has been coordinated with the Information Technology Department; Department of Transportation; Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services; City Manager's Office/Communications Office; Housing Department; Planning, Building and Code Enforcement; and Police Department.

COST SUMMARY/IMPLICATIONS

The cost of the requirement gathering, and system design was absorbed within the ITD budget to expedite the process. Upon completing the Human-Centered Design work and new process flows in December 2022, staff will provide implementation options and consider different scenarios with various implementation phases and resources. A final proposal including the schedule, budget, service levels, and resources will be provided to the Smart Cities Committee for input, and as appropriate to the City Council.

Funding will be provided from the Vehicle Abatement Program Enhancement Reserve (\$300,000). Once the design phase is complete, staff will work to address immediate improvements with the Reserve funds and review the overall funding needs as part of the City Budget Process for ongoing requirements.

/s/

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