



# Memorandum

**TO:** Mayor and City Council

**FROM:** Councilmember David Cohen  
Councilmember Dev Davis  
Councilmember Peter Ortiz  
Vice Mayor Rosemary Kamei  
Mayor Matt Mahan

**SUBJECT: SEE BELOW**

**DATE: May 12, 2023**

Approved

Date: 5/12/2023

*David Cohen Dev Davis Peter Ortiz Rosemary Kamei Matt Mahan*

**SUBJECT: City Initiatives Roadmap: BeautifySJ Vehicle Blight Status Report**

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Accept the staff recommendation with the additional direction:

1. Addressing Abandoned and Illegally Parked Vehicles:
  - a. Return to City Council with an ordinance to address the parking of all boats, unoccupied trailers, and other accessories (equipment and signage like advertising, pumps, tanks, etc.) on the street by the end of 2023.
  - b. Improve compliance of the 72-hour parking limit ordinance by more prominently marking vehicles with a large warning message when they have violated the time limit. If they still do not move, provide citations, and eventually tow vehicles.
  - c. Consider expanding and marketing the Free Unwanted Car Pickup program, potentially partnering with a non-profit, that facilitates residents disposing their unwanted vehicles, to include public property.
    - i. Explore ways this can be integrated into the SJ 311 app.
    - ii. Potentially allow vehicle owner to mark the notice of violation or call a number if they want the vehicle towed if they are the legal owner of the vehicle.
  - d. Shift resources to respond to at least 10,000 complaint-based investigations of vehicles that are violating the 72-hour parking ordinance, while continuing focused proactive enforcement.
  - e. Pursue legislative and ordinance changes to address health, safety, and environmental impacts of lived-in vehicles to address dumping bio-waste and other safety hazards.
2. Improving the SJ 311 Application:
  - a. Provide more courteous and clear replies to vehicle blight reports.

- b. Offer an opportunity for one appeal/rebuttal of the decision with guidance given on what the requirements are and why the original complaint did not meet the parameters.
3. Develop and present recommendations to the Transportation and Environment Committee (T&E) of how to improve street sweeping performance through enforcement of parking restrictions.
  - a. Explore the use of alternating sweep schedules that allow residents to park on one side of their street on street sweeping day.
  - b. Explore a method for tracking street sweeping and where trouble spots are to focus outreach and enforcement.
  - c. Develop communications and marketing campaign to inform residents of their street sweeping days, including providing sweeping schedules to City Councilmembers' offices to distribute to their districts.
4. Provide a verbal status report every six months to T&E committee in FY23-24, followed by annual reports in subsequent fiscal years.

## **BACKGROUND**

We would like to thank staff for creating this comprehensive Status Report on Vehicle Blight. In reviewing this plan, we wanted to address gaps to determine ways we can reduce vehicle blight with improved policy implementation.

By developing policy to not only address cars, but to also address other sources of blight such as boats and unoccupied trailers, we can free up parking spaces for vehicles and prevent eyesores for neighbors. Additionally, the City hosts the Free Unwanted Car Pickup program for residents to have unwanted vehicles towed at no cost from their own properties. We should explore ways to potentially expand this project or partner with non-profits to widen the availability of this service to have cars be picked up that are located on a street. Additional marketing efforts should also be created to boost the use of this program. Existing vehicle blight addressed by the 72-hour policy can also be improved by more "loudly" marking cars with more visually prominent notices.

The City should also take an active effort to address the negative impacts that lived-in vehicles may leave, namely biowaste and safety hazards. Ordinances should be created to better assist these residents and mitigate the environmental effects of these vehicles while respecting the residents who reside in them, and perhaps move vehicles that do not comply.

In the memorandum, staff explain increased patrols for vehicle blight are currently aligned to areas with a combination of higher proactive investigations and high tow rates. Given the differences in how neighborhoods report complaints and the greater effectiveness of proactive efforts in some neighborhoods, we see that staff should work to balance response to resident complaints, merging duplicate submittals, and using proactive approaches to minimize vehicle blight. Neighborhoods that do not report may face higher levels of vehicle blight because

residents are unaware of how to report these issues. City Council offices should also be able to request services for 'intensity areas' where vehicle blight is concentrated in their district, to inform staff's investigation efforts.

San José 311 currently does not allow for the rebuttal of closed tickets, which has led to a frustrated customer service experience as residents cannot give additional context for how the complaint may meet the legal standards for an investigation. Residents must create a new ticket and the reason for the disqualification is not always abundantly clear. This can be remediated by a straightforward explanation of the standards and allowing for a rebuttal on the same ticket allowing for the case to be reopened and potentially addressed.

Currently, street sweeping notices are limited to the posted signs along sidewalks. In most of the city, though, these signs are either not posted or are not followed. To support our street sweepers, we should develop a marketing campaign to reach residents about when their streets are being swept to ensure they move their vehicles to accommodate the service. This marketing campaign can come in the form of direct mailers, push notifications, or updated information on the city website map of city services. Some residents also face the challenge of finding parking when their street is being swept; alternating street sweeping schedules may alleviate this pain by allowing residents to park on the opposite side of the street while one side is being swept.

Vehicle blight remains one of the pressing issues our residents are concerned about. We hope that continuous updates to T&E on these changes will further reduce the blight on our streets, alleviate parking issues for our residents, improve customer satisfaction with the city and allow us to adjust as needed.

*The signers of this memorandum have not had, and will not have, any private conversation with any other member of the City Council, or that member's staff, concerning any action discussed in the memorandum, and that each signer's staff members have not had, and have been instructed not to have, any such conversation with any other member of the City Council or that member's staff.*