

Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM:
Vice Mayor Chappie Jones

**SUBJECT: A BOOST IN OUR BATTLE
AGAINST BLIGHT**

DATE: September 18, 2020

Approved

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RECOMMENDATION

Accept the recommendation submitted by Mayor Liccardo and Councilmembers Diep, Davis, and Jimenez and recommendation submitted by Councilmembers Esparza, Peralez, and Foley in directing City Manager to allocate funding towards expediting trash pickup and blight through various means equitably across the City.

Direct City Manager to consider best practices adopted by other jurisdictions such as Oakland, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Dallas. Examples include illegal dumping reward programs and community engagement in litter/dumping prevention through volunteer and campaign activities.

DISCUSSION

I appreciate the ongoing efforts by City staff, Caltrans, and other partnering organizations and agencies who are working to keep our streets clean, safe, and free from obstruction. Given the current circumstances, our City is seeing an unbridled increase in illegal dumping. My office continuously receives concerns from constituents regarding increased blight, risk of fires, and threats to safety. In particular, litter, debris, and downed signs along Highway 280 in District 1



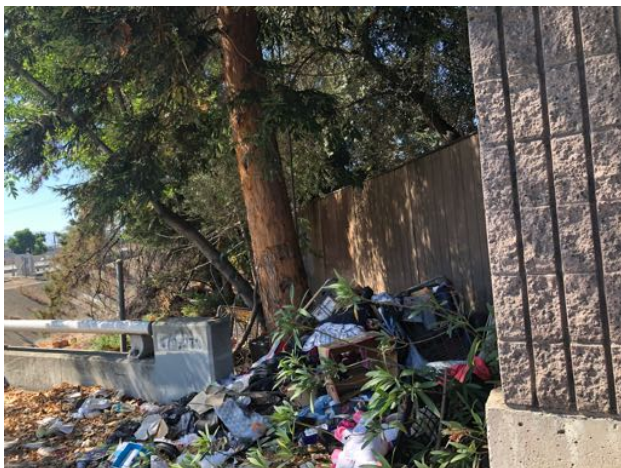
have become a common sight. One can expect anything ranging from couches to bicycles to piles of garbage alongside our highways. The same issues are occurring along our creeks and waterways. As trash accumulates, my office has received numerous reports of fires along the Saratoga Creek Trail. It is incumbent upon us to act quickly in addressing these concerns.

In recent meetings with Caltrans, they have expressed that due to their Directive Maintenance Policy, their responses to requests are prioritized based on immediate danger, safety threats and/or public health. Caltrans clarified that they prioritize responding to issues that directly impede the highway. Fires are green lighted when they affect highways or bridge cells. Trash is picked up if it poses an immediate danger or threat. As piles of garbage continue to grow in my District and all around the City, we must not wait until they pose an immediate threat to clean them up. I encourage City administration to work with Caltrans on updating this policy due to its cyclical nature.



In addition to the recommendations made by my colleagues in respect to Caltrans understaffing, I suggest exploring resources such as Work2Future and City Job Fairs in an effort to increase staffing capacity. Caltrans might benefit from sharing position openings with Council offices for distribution via social platforms.

Cities around the nation face similar issues regarding illegal dumping and blight. Best practices demonstrated by other cities include programs which offer rewards to witnesses who report illegal dumping, addition of trash receptacles at dumping hotspots, and working on campaigns which educate residents and businesses about disposing garbage materials affordably and safely.



I cautiously support an increase in funding for trash and blight relief; however, to echo what was stated by Deputy City Manager Jim Ortbal, it would be prudent for the City to focus on addressing the fundamental causes of blight, litter, and debris. Taking a preventative approach and focusing on the principles which cause these issues would prevent the City from repeatedly investing in litter and debris pick up, ideally saving the City millions of dollars and resources, including staff time.