

**CITY COUNCIL
COMMUNICATION:**

ITEM _____

**OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER
CITY OF DES MOINES, IOWA**

00-549

SYNOPSIS -

AGENDA:
NOVEMBER 20, 2000

A process has been developed with the intent to upgrade the way in which the City of Des Moines abates junk and debris violations, including junk vehicles, on private property. On August 23, 2000, key members of City staff and neighborhood volunteers met for a one-day retreat to examine the current process and investigate how the City might improve this critical function. This Council Communication and the accompanying report are a direct outcome of that effort.

SUBJECT:
JUNK AND DEBRIS
ABATEMENT
PROCESS

The new process reduces the average time frame of City cleanups from 52 days to 31 days. The goal of the new process is to have cleanups completed by day 32, but no later than day 35 except in extraordinary circumstances. The process also involves serious consequences for habitual violators and collects the full cost of cleanups. Furthermore, the process significantly reduces the cost of notifying citizens of their violations and requesting their compliance.

TYPE:

RESOLUTION
ORDINANCE
RECEIVE/FILE

FISCAL IMPACT -

SUBMITTED BY:

Year One
The process will reflect a net cost to the City of \$317,000 for the first year. This cost is broken down as follows:

JAMES GRANT
COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT
DIRECTOR

WILLIAM STOWE
PUBLIC WORKS
DIRECTOR
DESIGNEE

Field computers and software for Neighborhood Inspections Division (NID) Inspectors:	\$200,000
Additional Public Works cleanup crews and equipment:	161,000
Additional Hearing Officers:	20,000
Part-time Impound Specialist:	<u>Not more than</u> <u>15,000</u>
	= \$396,000

Minus the difference in service to serve violators with official notice by mail rather than process server:	(79,000)
	TOTAL = \$317,000

Once this program has been operating for a year, we believe the costs and consequences of becoming a habitual violator will have significant impact on our City. We believe we will see a significant aesthetic improvement in the City. We also believe that we will see a significant impact on our cost of doing business.

Year Two

During Year Two of this program the capital costs are gone. It is anticipated that the consequences of achieving habitual violator status will reduce operating costs to less than or equal to our current costs.

RECOMMENDATION -

Approval.

BACKGROUND -

For an extended period of time the City of Des Moines has struggled with the issues surrounding junk and debris in our community. Currently, it takes an average of 52 days for the City to complete a cleanup on properties when the property owner is unwilling or unable to abate the nuisance once he/she has been advised of the problem. The current system provides a service to property owners who are unwilling to act responsibly rather than creating consequences for inappropriate behavior.

When notified by the City of a junk and debris complaint, property owners clean 62 percent of the violations within the first 20 days. An additional 7 percent are cleaned between day 21 and day 30; 11 percent take longer than 30 days; and 20 percent are not cleaned by the property owner and require the City to perform this function.

Research indicates that 62 percent of the junk and debris complaints received by the NID are complaints about 5 percent of the properties in the City. We suggest that serious consequences need to be implemented to force compliance. This process involves filing municipal infractions or criminal charges on persons having three or

more violations in any three-year period.

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