

Councilmember Ben Bartlett
City of Berkeley, District 3

CONSENT CALENDAR

October 13th, 2020

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Councilmembers Ben Bartlett and Sophie Hahn

Subject: Enforce Bi-Weekly (Once Every Two Weeks) Residential Cleaning Measures to Address Encampments and Promote Clean Streets in Berkeley

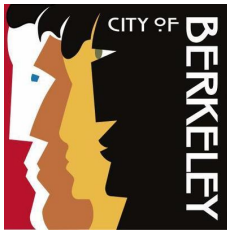
RECOMMENDATION

Refer to the City Manager to promote equitable street cleaning practices and require biweekly (once every two weeks), cleanings of populated encampment sites in Berkeley and adjacent residential neighborhoods. In order to determine where City Staff should prioritize residential cleaning services, the City Manager should establish a radius around the campsites. When encampments are on non-City owned property, such as Caltrans, the City should bill the appropriate agency for the cost of staff and materials.

BACKGROUND

Residential cleaning is a City service that beautifies our community by removing litter and debris from our streets. In doing so, it protects our environment by reducing pollutants that can clog storm drain systems and reach waterways. Clean sidewalks with little to no litter would also ensure access and safety for pedestrians and people with disabilities. Such residential cleaning would promote an aesthetically pleasing neighborhood for residential and commercial spheres.

The City of Berkeley currently mandates residential cleaning once a month and follows a sweeping schedule according to the street name. Residents are encouraged to rake their leaves for composting and avoid sweeping materials into streets or curbsides where debris could impede people's ability to safely travel along the sidewalks. While street cleaning is not required for some exceptions, such as holidays, streets are usually swept on a regular basis based on the schedule. However, our current sweeping schedule has not been sufficient in addressing issues of littering, illegally dumped materials, and encampments in certain areas throughout Berkeley, especially in the South Berkeley neighborhood. As a result, the City should promote equitable street cleaning practices by requiring biweekly (once every two weeks) residential cleanings of



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not only the camps themselves but also adjacent neighborhoods to these encampment sites.

CURRENT SITUATION

According to the 2019 report conducted by the nonprofit EveryOneHome, the City of Berkeley has counted 1,108 homeless people, which is an 11 percent increase since 2017.¹ Due to the lack of affordable housing, encampments have increased on the Caltrans property under the Interstate 880 overpass at University Ave in Berkeley as well as in certain areas in South Berkeley².

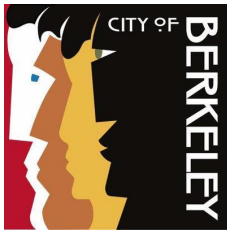
According to South Berkeley residents, their neighborhood has been littered with trash, which has become a safety and sanitary concern. Reports of discarded clothing and illegally dumped materials, such as couches and televisions, are common in South Berkeley, especially along the block of Martin Luther King Jr. Way in the corner between Alcatraz Avenue and 62nd Street. Other encampments, trash, and debris have also been located in the BART-owned area, and this resultant litter violates the 1971 agreement between the City of Berkeley and BART in which the City holds responsibility in maintaining and cleaning the sidewalks along the BART tracks in South Berkeley.

The littering issue has expanded to the “Here There” site that runs on the east side of Adeline Street, starting at Alcatraz Avenue and ending at 62nd Street below the BART overpass. While the “Here There” artwork has been intended to welcome visitors to the Berkeley community and commercial districts, encampments at this site populate the sidewalks. These sites have formed as a result of the BART fence, which prevents these encampments from moving onto the lawn around the sculpture and impedes the access and safety of the sidewalks due to the absence of an established clearance.

To promote health, safety, and cleanliness in Berkeley, the City should provide more frequent residential cleaning services for neighborhoods with a higher population of encampments, such as South Berkeley. In addition to the neighborhoods, the proposed biweekly cleaning services should help clean the camps as well. These neighborhoods should also include non-City owned property, such as Caltrans. However, in these

¹ <https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/Sanctioned-homeless-encampments-Oakland-and-15058546.php>

² <https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/Sanctioned-homeless-encampments-Oakland-and-15058546.php>



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City of Berkeley, District 3

cases, the City should have the authority to bill the appropriate agency for the cost of staff and materials.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

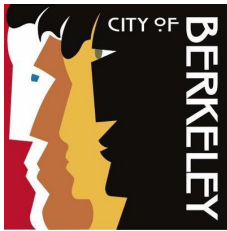
Debris has spread over the intersections, sidewalks, and yards throughout Berkeley, especially in District 3. Such debris contaminates the residential and commercial areas and poses a safety risk to pedestrians and motorists. In addition, dumping illegal trash along the sidewalks only attracts more littering. In effect, the trash exacerbates the safety, sanitary, and environmental issues of the community. To protect the safety and health of Berkeley residents, residential cleaning of the camps and the adjacent neighborhoods of the encampments in the city should be conducted at least once every two weeks.

The Public Works Department should determine the radius around the encampments in Berkeley so that City Staff can focus their efforts on areas that receive a considerable and frequent amount of litter due to the growing issue of encampments. The current schedule of one street cleaning per month is not satisfactory in eliminating waste and litter among the streets or in addressing the growing issue of encampments in Berkeley. Equitable residential cleaning services would ensure that Berkeley residents, especially those in South Berkeley, have safe and sanitary areas for residential and commercial purposes.

ACTIONS/ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The City could enforce fines on those who dispose of trash along the sidewalks or on residents whose property contains illegally discarded trash. However, fining residents in possession of illegally discarded trash is an inequitable practice because they may not have been the one who disposed of the trash, nor do they have the resources to properly dispose of the detriment. In addition, this could have the unwanted effect of criminalizing poverty and would be inefficient because it would require police, or another authority, to monitor and patrol the neighborhoods. This would increase police focus on non-criminal matters when their services are better used elsewhere.

An alternative is to set up a system where community organizations and members of the public can volunteer to dispose of the litter. Another option is the City could mandate more residential cleaning across all of Berkeley. However, this practice would ignore the fact that areas with more encampments require more attention and residential cleaning due to the ongoing aforementioned issues.



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City of Berkeley, District 3

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

Staff time. More resources would also be necessary to fund more frequent street cleaning services regarding the City staff who would sweep the Berkeley streets and clean the camps. For encampments on non-City owned property, the City would save on financial resources by billing the appropriate agency for the cost of staff and materials. With greater accessibility, safety, and sanitation, cleaner streets could attract more people in the commercial areas, supporting local businesses and boosting the economy.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Bi-weekly (once every two weeks) residential cleanings would remove the litter populating the camps and streets, which would reduce the risk of trash clogging storm drain systems or polluting the waterways. Litter can also carry unsanitary germs and thus, increase the ability to contract diseases. These issues must be prevented and mitigated, especially during a time when people are vulnerable to becoming infected with coronavirus.

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