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DEPARTMENT OF  
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

CITY OF SACRAMENTO  
CALIFORNIA

1231 I STREET  
SACRAMENTO, CA

March 21, 1990

**APPROVED**  
BY THE CITY COUNCIL

ADMINISTRATION  
ROOM 300  
95814-2987  
916-449-5571

MAR 27 1990

City Council  
Sacramento, California

OFFICE OF THE  
CITY CLERK

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
ROOM 300  
95814-2987  
916-449-1223

Honorable Members In Session

NUISANCE ABATEMENT  
ROOM 301  
95814-3982  
916-449-5948

SUBJECT: Neighborhood Services Program Evaluation

SUMMARY

This report is submitted at the request of the City Council. It includes an examination of the present Neighborhood Services Division activities, steps which either have been taken or are being taken to improve services with existing resources, and recommendations for augmentations and policy changes to further improve services.

In summary, this report recommends that the resources of the Neighborhood Services program be increased by five (5) F.T.E., an increase of about 24% to existing staffing levels.

The Budget and Finance Committee has directed that this report be placed on the City Council agenda on the same day that it is heard by Committee.

BACKGROUND

The Neighborhood Services Division is one of five divisions within the Planning and Development Department. The major responsibilities of this Division include enforcement of the City's Nuisance Codes, Zoning Ordinance, Sign Ordinance, Weed Abatement, Litter and Abandoned vehicle laws.

This service program was first authorized by the City Council in October 1985. The first budget, approved in January 1986, provided the new division with a total of 20 staff positions. These positions and responsibilities were consolidated from operations in the Building Division, Fire Department, Solid Waste Division and the Police Department. The Neighborhood Services Division staffing level has remained essentially unchanged since 1986 with the exception of the addition of one Nuisance Abatement Officer position for the Sign Enforcement Program in mid-1988.

## DIVISION ACTIVITIES - SERVICE REQUIREMENTS

Our citizens desire for a cleaner and safer city caused the doubling of requests for service from 10,000 in 1986 to over 20,000 in 1987. Exhibit A attached to this report includes a summary of complaint activity levels since 1986.

Over 18,000 requests for service were logged in both 1988 and 1989. During the past three years, almost all field investigations were the result of service requests, including those referred by individual Council members and other departments. Virtually no time has been available for pro-active Code Enforcement or patrolling in the neighborhoods looking for violations.

An examination of the division's 1989 nuisance and zoning activity as compared to previous years shows a 15% decrease in initial complaints between 1988 and 1989. Requests for on-street vehicle abatement increased by 3% during that same period. Because the first and only major public education campaign initiated by the Division in 1986 resulted in a landslide of requests for service, the Division has not proactively advertised the service since 1986. In addition, media coverage and news releases have also been minimal this past year. Thus, the 1989 service level demand figures may be more of a norm. However, current service demand is still about 15% above the 1986 level for nuisance and zoning complaints. The on-street vehicle requests for service continues to exceed the 1986 level by over 140%.

The most dramatic statistic is the reduction in the number of closed cases in 1989 as compared to 1988. The 38% reduction in closures was the result of a large loss of available staff hours due to a number of extenuating circumstances including military leaves totaling 5 months, extended medical leaves for three staff members, and routine turnover.

The 1989 temporary hiring chill also had a negative impact on the division's ability to keep up with service level demand. During the "chill", the Division was unable to fill vacancies for clerical, Parking Enforcement Officer and Nuisance Abatement Officer positions. Once the positions were released and persons hired, they were not 100% efficient for quite a few months. In addition, an enumerable number of hours of experienced clerical, Senior Nuisance Abatement Officer and Nuisance Abatement Officer and Parking Enforcement time had to be spent training the new employees. The combined effects of these lost hours meant a substantial loss of time spent on investigating new cases and closing old ones.

Various means of reallocating existing resources were ultimately utilized to catch-up the backlog during the last six (6) months of 1989. Weekend overtime was used; however, this was only effective as long as volunteer staff was available for this duty. The Assistant Manager also handled zoning complaints. Various other investigations were assigned to the Weed Abatement staff members.

The effects of these efforts resulted in a reduction of backlog from four and five months to perhaps two and three months. However, given the current workload, any gains are typically lost when vacations are taken and/or illness occur. For example: the vehicle abatement team consists of four Parking Enforcement Officers who are responsible for investigations of all on-street

vehicle complaints. When one Parking Enforcement Officer is on vacation, and another Parking Enforcement Officer is ill, only 50% of that workforce is on duty. This means all other scheduled re-inspections and tows are delayed and the total backlog increases again.

The current average backlog for conducting initial investigations is approximately two months for nuisance and zoning cases and one month for vehicle complaints. However, response time typically increases during the spring and summer months when more citizens are out and about in their neighborhoods.

The Neighborhood Services Division believes that the combination of improved efficiency and staff augmentations will allow them to respond within 24 hours for hazardous or health and safety related requests for service and within one month for others. The Division will evaluate its progress over the next six months and recommend further program changes and/or augmentations to improve response time for non-emergency calls to within one week.

#### DIVISION GOALS

Recognizing that the Neighborhood Services Division plays an important role in both improving and maintaining the quality of life in this growing city, the Division developed the following Mission Statement and goals in hopes of better directing existing resources in 1990.

The mission of the Neighborhood Services Division is to enhance and preserve the quality of neighborhood life through a program of education and enforcement of the Nuisance Code, Zoning Ordinance, Sign Ordinance, Vehicle Code, Weed Abatement and other applicable codes.

The Divisions major goals revolve around three areas:

- 1) Improvement of operational efficiency
- 2) Improvement of customer service and
- 3) Emphasis of neighborhood improvements through education

The remainder of this report describes the development and implementation of some of the objectives along with recommendations for improvements in the areas of resources and policies that will help attain these goals.

#### STEPS TAKEN TO IMPROVE EXISTING OPERATIONS

##### **Computer Assistance**

With major assistance from the Data Management Department, a new computer program has been written to allow public complaints to be taken over the telephone and entered directly into the Neighborhood Services Division data base. Now, when a telephone complaint is received several things happen:

1. The case number is assigned
2. The parcel file number and property owner name and address is immediately available
3. Any history of previous complaints are shown
4. A computer generated complaint form is then printed and available the following morning for distribution to staff

Automation of the complaint intake process alone has relieved the clerical staff of hours and hours of handwriting names and addresses, entering information into log books, tracking addresses and transferring information from one place to another. It also saves field and clerical staff time researching owner information.

The second phase to be initiated this month, is to produce computer generated form letters and notices for all vehicle abatements on private property and all public nuisance hearings. This step will save hours of typing and retyping the same name and address, case number, etc. on innumerable forms that have to be mailed first class and certified, and for posting on the property itself. It is anticipated once the Division receives a sufficient number of terminals, field staff will soon be able to process cases quicker and thus have more time to investigate more cases. Once this occurs, it is estimated that field staff should easily handle 20 to 30% more cases than under the present system. For example it is anticipated that the number of inspections for private property nuisance and zoning complaints will be increased to 15 per day per code enforcement officer from the present average of 12 per day.

This new Data Management system will also improve the division's ability to monitor all cases, i.e., officer assigned, date assigned, date inspected, status of all cases, date of referral and actions by attorney, etc. etc. A week-at-a-glance feature has also been written into the program so that supervisors and field staff can quickly determine each week their scheduled re-inspections for the week. Staff will then have the ability to insert new inspections in all open time slots.

### **Efficiency**

Both field and office procedures were reviewed and evaluated as to need for improvements. Foremost was the need to achieve standardization in field investigations and handling of enforcement reports and notices. These improvements are now being made utilizing data processing generated management tools.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENT OF SERVICE**

There are three types of actions that will help meet the continuing demand for service in this area. Two of these three steps would require increasing staff resources.

First, the Division has already been utilizing a priority system in responding to citizens requests for service; complaints representing a threat to public safety have been given the highest priority. Prioritization does not mean that some complaints are investigated while other are not. All complaints will be investigated, but some sooner than others. Staff has refined this system to make it more effective.

Second, a small expansion of staff to deal with existing service demands is appropriate considering there has been virtually no change in staffing since 1986. During the same period service level demand increased 80%.

Third, taking special steps to increase neighborhood action to prevent blight and beautify neighborhoods should help control the inevitable increase of zoning violation. A small increase in staff to set up a "neighborhood preservation" program should yield a dividend.

## PRIORITIZATION OF SERVICE RESPONSE

Another means of improving response time to requests for service is to establish a better system for prioritizing complaints.

The division must ensure that the most accurate information possible is included with a request for service. Therefore, it is important that the complaining party name, address and telephone number be submitted should it be necessary to call them back for additional information.

The complaint should also be prioritized as to high and low priorities. High priority will include those in danger of public safety or public health. These will be investigated immediately. Lower priority complaints may include such items as fences (unless endangering safety), inoperable vehicles parked in excess of 72 hours on a public street. An example of the delineation between low and high priorities is shown in Exhibit D.

An examination of several other city agencies finds them utilizing a variety of methods in handling public complaints. Most agencies do not allow anonymous complaints. Some agencies send out a standard form to be completed, signed and returned to the department before they are assigned for investigation. The City of Fresno recently adopted an ordinance that will only allow acceptance of a complaint that is within 300 feet of complaint's home. However, staff feels the combination of disallowance of anonymous calls and the prioritization of requests for service, will help improve their response time and service to the public as some of the general call-ins will be reduced. This refined prioritization procedure is to be implemented immediately.

### **Improved Response to Service Demand**

Two additional Parking Enforcement positions are needed to direct attention to the most visible violations in the neighborhood, the junk car on the street. Parking enforcement is one of the most effective means of immediately improving the appearances of a neighborhood, and the legal process of warning notices and tows are among the quickest processes available to the Division. (See Exhibit A). The two additional Parking Enforcement Officers will help rid the city streets of at least 6,000 more abandoned vehicles per year.

An Administrative Analyst position is needed if the Division is to continue to develop programs for recovery of costs, and improve monitoring, tracking and overall efficiency within the division. At the present time staff time is taken away from field duty to help with this work.

### **Neighborhood Preservation**

This concept is an entirely new one for the Neighborhood Services Division. Whereas service delivery has primarily been a reactive process for implementing neighborhood changes via the enforcement process, the neighborhood preservation concept proposes to develop a proactive citizen oriented program that would encourage citizens to take a more active role in preserving their own neighborhoods. The Neighborhood Preservation Program would not only coordinate many existing community programs, but also initiate activities that would emphasize prevention of neighborhood blight. The objectives

of such a program would be to help convert some of the anger and frustration presently felt by many of our citizens to one of Community Pride.

The focus of the Neighborhood Preservation Program would be to:

1. Identify interested and concerned citizens.
2. Cultivate citizens participation.
3. Assist citizens to formalize a neighborhood association.
4. Provide technical and educational services to the organization on neighborhood improvement methods and programs.
5. Assist citizens in implementing their own neighborhood improvement programs.
6. Coordinate with other City/County agency neighborhood improvement programs.
7. Research other public service and/or non-profit neighborhood improvement programs.
8. Other possible examples of the Neighborhood Preservation Program are reflected on Exhibit C.

The benefit of pro-active citizen involvement is to give property owners the opportunity through a neighborhood organization to actively protect his or her individual property investment by encouraging other owners to maintain their own properties.

Given the increasing trend of our citizens to desire cleaner and safer neighborhoods and the trend of tighter City budgets, it would seem prudent for the City to encourage citizens to take a more active role in maintaining their neighborhoods.

This neighborhood preservation concept has already been initiated by the Neighborhood Services Division management on a small scale (i.e., meeting and working with several neighborhood groups). However, existing staff does not have the time nor resources to implement this program on a full time basis.

A special team, trained and properly supported is needed. Two full time employees with background in community or neighborhood organization work would be needed to convert this to a full time program.

#### Effect On Support Services

Any increase in staff workload affects staff support services. An immediate observation is that increased efficiency would result in more enforcement cases and thus the need for more legal services. The need for clerical support should also increase, however, with the many computer improvements already initiated and those yet to be implemented, potential resource needs need to be re-evaluated at a later date.

#### FINANCIAL DATA

The cost of the program for FY 1989-90 assuming a May 1 start date would be \$112,482. This includes one-time start-up costs of \$81,001 for the required services and supplies and equipment needs. The projected costs of the program for the 1990-91 fiscal year would be \$182,131.

The positions and equipment would be funded by the General Fund. The table below outlines the cost:

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>FY 1989-90</u>	<u>FY 1990-91</u>
Parking Enforcement Officer (2.0 FTE)	\$ 9,238	\$ 56,244
Administrative Analyst (1.0 FTE)	7,660	\$ 45,606
Neighborhood Preservationist (2.0 FTE)	11,948	67,790
Telephone	2,500	500
Office Supplies	875	875
Chairs, Calculator	1,963	0
Uniforms	160	960
Vehicle Lease	1,600	9,800
Vehicles	47,200	0
Computers	2,800	0
Desk	1,338	0
Workstations	16,000	0
Main Frame Terminals	4,400	0
Walkie Talkies	4,800	0
Bookcases	0	356
TOTAL	<u>\$112,482</u>	<u>\$182,131</u>

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

A number of staffing alternatives were explored including the addition of more code enforcement officers for investigation of nuisance and zoning complaints. However, Division Management is of the opinion that the efficiency of field officers will improve upon utilization of the newly implemented computer system. It is therefore suggested that the City Council waive any decision regarding an increase of those positions until the effectiveness of the improvements outlined in this report has been determined.

Instead, additional parking enforcement resources are requested to help meet the Divisions' most numerous complaints, the abandoned vehicle in the streets. In addition resources are requested to provide full-time staff support to the neighborhood preservation effort to help educate and guide neighborhood energies toward more "self-help" improvement activity.

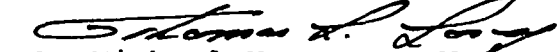
MBE/WBE CONSIDERATIONS

No Impact

RECOMMENDATIONS

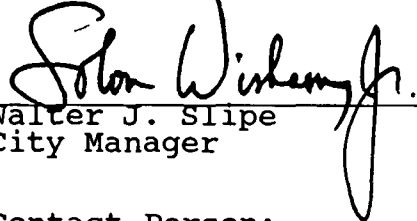
Staff and the Budget and Finance Committee recommend approval and adoption of the attached resolution which increases the staff of the Neighborhood Services Division by a total of five (5) positions.

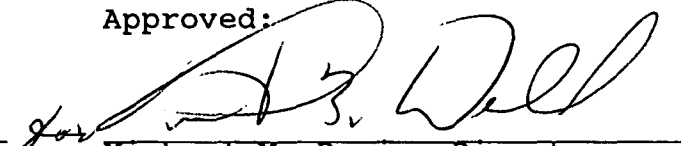
Respectfully submitted,

  
for Michael Hanamura, Manager  
Neighborhood Services Division

Recommendation Approved:

Approved:

  
for: Walter J. Slipe  
City Manager

  
Michael M. Davis, Director  
Planning & Development Dept.

Contact Person:

Michael Hanamura  
Neighborhood Services Division  
449-5948

March 27, 1990  
All Districts



**RESOLUTION NO. 90-227**

**APPROVED**  
BY THE CITY COUNCIL

ADOPTED BY THE SACRAMENTO CITY COUNCIL

MAR 27 1990

OFFICE OF THE  
CITY CLERK

ON DATE OF \_\_\_\_\_

RESOLUTION AMENDING THE OPERATING BUDGET OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES DIVISION OF THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT BY THE ADDITION OF 5 POSITIONS AND TRANSFERRING FUNDS FOR THE POSITIONS.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SACRAMENTO THAT:

- 1. The Neighborhood Services Division budget is hereby amended by:
  - (a) Adding the following positions to the Department of Planning and Development, Neighborhood Services Division as follows:

<u>Class Code</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>ORG</u>	<u>FTE</u>
03630	Parking Enforcement Officer	3540	2.0
Not Yet Classified	Neighborhood Preservation Specialist	3540	2.0
10002	Administrative Analyst	3540	1.0

- (b) Appropriating \$112,482 from the unappropriated General Fund balance to the General Fund Contingency reserve (101-710-7012-4999) budget for the purpose stated above;
- (c) Transferring \$112,482 from the General Fund Contingency Reserve budget (101-710-7012-4999) to the budgets and accounts listed below for the purpose stated above.

**FOR CITY CLERK USE ONLY**

RESOLUTION NO.: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE ADOPTED: \_\_\_\_\_

3540

101-350-3540-4101	Salaries	\$28,846
101-350-3540-4202	Telephone	2,500
101-350-3540-4411	Office Supplies	875
101-350-3540-4461	Small tools, Equipment	1,963
101-350-3540-4492	Uniforms	160
101-350-3540-4234	Fleet Management	1,600
101-350-3540-4630	Equipment	76,538

\_\_\_\_\_  
MAYOR

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
CITY CLERK

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FOR CITY CLERK USE ONLY

RESOLUTION NO.: \_\_\_\_\_

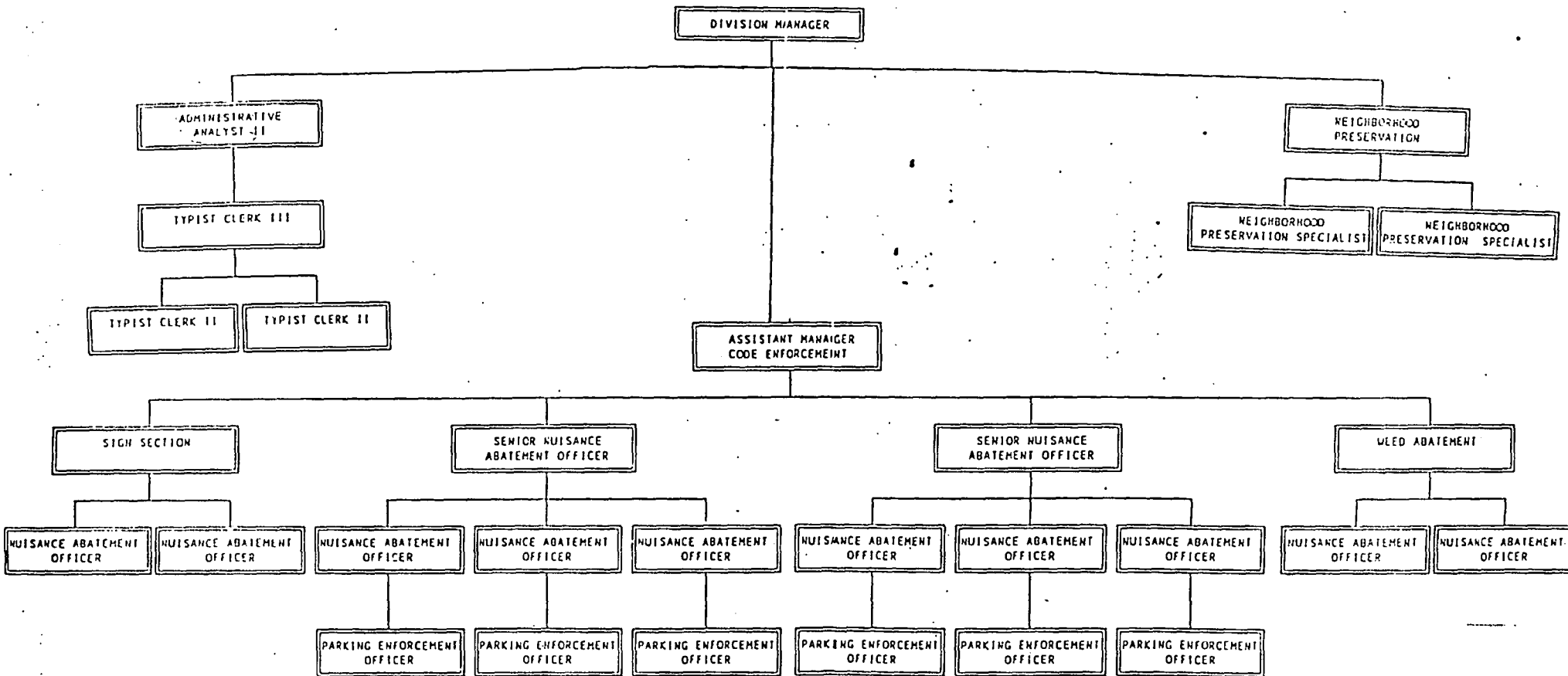
DATE ADOPTED: \_\_\_\_\_

NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES DIVISION ACTIVITIES

	1986	1987	1988	1989	% Difference 1988-90
I. Nuisance and Zoning					
New Complaints	5,000	6,000	6,800	5,750	-15%
Closed Cases	3,400	5,100	7,135	4,444	-38%
Nuisance Hearing Cases	n/a	955	1,310	1,035	-21%
II. Vehicle Abatement(On Street)					
Complaints	5,000	14,000	12,000	12,300	+ 3%
Vehicles Removed by Owner/City	4,900	8,500	13,000	11,890	- 9%
III. Weed Abatement					
Notices Mailed to Owner	12,300	11,300	10,900	10,850	0%
Owner Abatements	9,900	9,200	8,800	8,860	0%
City Abatements/Private Contracts *	2,400	2,100	2,100	2,030	0%
Complaints	n/a	n/a	1,190**	1,250**	0%
IV. Signs					
Permits Issued	620	700	685	720	+ 5%
V. Evening Community Meeting	n/a	54	50	58	+16%

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n/a - Figures not available  
\* - Includes work by SLCC  
\*\* - Includes Approx 600 proactive



PROPOSED NEIGHBORHOOD PRESERVATION SECTION

Objective: Motivate and encourage citizens and businesses to clean up, beautify, and maintain their own neighborhoods.

Possible Responsibilities and Projects

Organize homeowner/neighborhood associations.

Assist with development of bylaws and structure.  
Assist with newsletters and flyers initially,  
Advise of City services and procedures.  
Develop citizen's handbook.

Organize community fairs (all City departments; service organizations)

Organize neighborhood clean-up block parties.

Involve citizens and businesses.  
Utilize workrecreation and work furlough groups.  
Establish special discount vouchers for City dumps, transfer stations.

Develop special pick-up programs for tires and refrigerators.

Act as a liaison with SHRA, real estate, industry, etc., and other public services.

Serve as a resource center for all City services, provide translators for posters, notices.

Develop volunteer network for above projects and possible "citizens' hotline".

Establish a speakers bureau for community meetings.

Development/present programs for schools.

Neighborhood improvement contests; work projects.

Develop video; slide presentations for citizen groups as well as professional.

PRIORITIES FOR REQUESTS FOR SERVICE

Administrative Policy: All citizens must leave their name, address and telephone number when submitting a complaint

Specific Procedures: High priority complaints will include those endangering health and safety and will be investigated immediately

Low Priority complaints will be investigated as time and staffing allows.

High Priority Complaints (Examples)

Nuisance/Zoning

- a. Junk and Debris
- b. Residential auto repair
- c. Residential auto dismantling
- d. Inoperative/hazardous vehicles in front setback; lawns; or vacant lots

Vehicles (Public Right-of-Way)

- a. Abandoned vehicles in traffic zones
- b. Hazardous vehicles (on jacks; broken windows; dismantled, etc.)

Low Priority Complaints (Examples)

Nuisance/Zoning

- a. Operable vehicles parked on front lawns or vacant lots
- b. Vehicles in driveways with only a flat tire(s) but not dismantled
- c. Fence complaints unless a traffic hazard.

Vehicles (Public Right-of-Ways)

- a. Licensed vehicles that appear operable but have been parked in excess of 72 hours
- b. Vehicles with only a flat tire but not dismantled