



CITY OF
MODESTO
CALIFORNIA

BLIGHT ABATEMENT STRATEGY

FISCAL YEARS
25/26 - 26/27



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Introduction

The Blight Abatement Strategy is designed to consistently evaluate the City programs to mitigate blight, identify immediate opportunities for efficiency and improvement, determine potential partnerships while strengthening others, and create an initiative that is practical and fiscally sustainable.

Purpose

This is an important opportunity to gather and examine meaningful data, identify trends, and evaluate future opportunities to leverage technology and help eliminate blight throughout Modesto. For purposes of this strategy blight shall be defined as trash, debris, and other items that have been discarded improperly along roadsides, waterways, and other areas that are uncontained or unkempt. Illegal dumping shall be defined as bulky items/garbage piles on public or private property, which is considered to be an extreme litter or violation of a litter-related crime. Litter and illegal dumping both contribute to the overall definition of blight, and they are a complex social phenomenon with different meanings based on the effects of larger social dynamics such as poverty, and other social norms.

Background

In a 2019 Citywide community survey, blight was identified as one of the most pressing concerns among Modesto residents. Since then, the City has been diligently working to address concerns raised in the community survey through the goals and strategies outlined in the 2020-2025 Blight Abatement Strategy. Achieving the progress made over the past five years has required the collaboration of various departments and divisions, including the Solid Waste Division, Parks, Recreation & Neighborhood Department (PRN), Modesto Police Department (MPD), Fire Department, as well as partnerships with the California Department of Fish & Wildlife, Natural Resource Volunteer Program, Operation 9-2-99, and the Dry Creek Trails Coalition. While the past five years have brought significant challenges, particularly with the pandemic, they also created new opportunities, such as the passage of Measure H, which has further supported our blight abatement efforts.

Our Story thus far...

In October 2020, the City officially established the Blight Abatement Advisory Committee with the goal of providing recommendations for program improvements, identifying funding opportunities, and developing strategies to increase volunteer participation. Additionally, City staff delivers quarterly updates to the Safety and Communities Committee to inform them regarding the progress of the Blight Abatement Strategy. To keep the community engaged, the City employs a consistent promotional and educational campaign that ensures clear communication with residents and business owners about the importance of blight abatement, while also encouraging their involvement.

The COVID-19 pandemic created substantial challenges for the City's blight prevention and abatement efforts. Staggered work schedules and the need for safety gear, including personal protective suits, masks, gloves, and goggles, were necessary to protect staff from both the virus and field hazards. Despite these concerns, the Blight Abatement team continued their regular duties, such as park cleaning and camp removal. The quieter environment, due to fewer people in parks, allowed the team to focus on projects and repairs. However, the pandemic also resulted in increased illegal dumping, staffing shortages, and delays in forming the Blight Abatement Advisory Committee. Virtual meetings further hindered the Committee's ability to maintain active participation.

The passage of Measure H in November 2022 significantly strengthened the City's Blight Abatement efforts by adding staff and abatement teams within the Parks Department, Solid Waste Division, and Police Department. This additional support has alleviated pressure on Parks staff, enabling them to focus more on maintaining parks. As a result, response times have improved, and parks are now being cleared more efficiently and regularly. Going forward, increased resources for equipment upgrades and enhanced collaboration with other departments will further improve response times and overall efficiency.

To address these ongoing challenges, the City plans to continue hosting Drive Up Drop Off events, funded through the legislative priority budget and CalTrans, while also updating the municipal code to implement stricter penalties for violations. The Public Works Blight Abatement Teams will expand by converting part-time positions to full-time roles and enhancing weed abatement efforts, with support from Measure H funding. Programs such as the Mattress Recycling Center, Multi-Family Bulky Item Program, and Drive Up Drop Off Events—recently launched or expanded—provide residents with no-cost disposal options to reduce illegal dumping. The Blight Abatement Teams, funded by ARPA and Measure H, will persist in clearing illegal dumping sites while remaining focused on offering convenient disposal options and swiftly addressing violations through code enforcement.

Partnerships

By working together, programs will have an opportunity to thrive instead of just surviving. Engaging our community, schools and internal partners to become more efficient and coordinated to enhance our City. Listed ahead are partnerships or affiliations that the City is a part of to help further our efforts to combat blight.



Love Modesto

Love Modesto, a program within loveourcities.org, leads community wide volunteerism and initiatives among neighborhoods, schools and kids. At these community-wide volunteer days, volunteers engage in a variety of projects, including appreciating public servants, visiting convalescent homes, donating blood, building a house with Habitat for Humanity, and working in City parks and schools, among other opportunities. **Love Modesto primarily leads a community clean up initiative along with other associated activities annually on held on the last Saturday of April.**



**"Don't PASS it up,
PICK it up!"**

DRY CREEK TRAILS COALITION

The Dry Creek Trails Coalition is a community group comprised of volunteers who use and enjoy the park, and the five miles of trail located along Dry Creek in Modesto. They meet regularly to perform cleanups and partner with Love Modesto each year. The mission of the group is to preserve and advocate for the Dry Creek Regional Park trails for all trail users to enjoy. The focus of the group's projects is to clean up the creek and the surrounding riparian habitat. The group works closely with their public and private partners to ensure that the park and trails system is clean, crime free, and family friendly.

DOWNTOWN MODESTO PARTNERSHIP (DOMO)

The mission of the Downtown Modesto (DOMO) Partnership is to create a vibrant community through activities and partnerships designed to improve the quantity and quality of experiences in downtown Modesto. The work of DOMO also aims to eliminate blight in the downtown region using their downtown experience engineers that are regularly picking up litter and removing tagging from the downtown region.



OPERATION 9-2-99

OPERATION 9-2-99

Operation 9-2-99 seeks to reclaim, rehabilitate, and restore the area along the Tuolumne River in Modesto, from the 9th Street Bridge to Highway 99. The initiative focuses on removing trash, tires, shopping carts, and abandoned camps to transform this blighted area into a public space and riparian river habitat that the community can take pride in and safely enjoy. Operation 9-2-99 works to achieve these objectives by organizing volunteers to conduct regular clean-ups of the Tuolumne River area.

Dry Creek Trails Coalition and Operation 9-2-99 are projects that are supported and organized by members of the Modesto Outdoor Recreation Alliance www.modestooutdoor.org



DOWNTOWN STREETS TEAM

The Downtown Streets Team (DST) volunteer program invites individuals experiencing homelessness to join DST to work collaboratively on beautification projects in the downtown and other targeted areas in Modesto. The volunteer model aims to provide a daily meaningful activity, personal and professional growth, work experience, and a sense of belonging in the larger community. By raising their hand and saying, "I want to make a change," team members have access to case management and employment services to reach their self-defined goals.



Every Effort Counts in Making...



"Modesto Mo'Beautiful" is a rallying cry for residents to unite, take pride in their City, and tackle blight issues through community empowerment and collective action. In response to increasing illegal dumping and persistent blight across the City, Modesto brought together internal departments, community members, partner agencies, and other stakeholders to create the Blight Abatement Strategy, which ultimately led to the launch of the Modesto Mo'Beautiful campaign. The initiative strives to make Modesto cleaner, safer, and more beautiful by encouraging collaboration and instilling pride among its residents.

The goal is to revitalize community engagement and encourage a shared responsibility for improving Modesto and its neighborhoods. The campaign brings together groups with a common mission to inspire collaboration, build civic pride, and promote lasting care for the city's appearance and well-being.

The campaign is made up of three phases:

Phase I: Campaign Launch and Awareness

Introduce the "Modesto Mo'Beautiful" campaign to residents and begin raising awareness about blight issues and the importance of community involvement.

Phase II: Community Education and Engagement

Educate residents about blight prevention and mitigation strategies, while encouraging them to participate in clean-up efforts across the community.

Phase III: Sustained Action and Impact

Maintain the momentum of the campaign by reaffirming positive behavior changes. Track data and measure progress against objectives to showing the community the real impact that these efforts have had on reducing blight.

Modesto Mo'Beautiful is a community-driven campaign aimed at celebrating the beauty of Modesto while inspiring residents to take action against blight. The campaign encourages civic pride and community engagement, urging individuals to unite in making their City more beautiful together toward preserving the beauty of Modesto.

Blight Abatement Advisory Committee

In 2019, with the creation of the 2020-2025 Blight Abatement Strategy, it was recommended that a new committee be formed that will advise the partnerships and initiatives. This new committee will also facilitate interdepartmental partnerships within the City as well as revitalize public-private and public agency partnerships. Funding challenges will always face various programs; therefore, it is necessary to constantly measure the programs for success through evaluation of key performance indicators. To ensure program resiliency in the future, it will be necessary to invoke a method of tracking and reporting, in addition to providing a space for collaboration and future planning.

MISSION

The mission of the Blight Abatement Advisory Committee shall be to promote public engagement concerning blight abatement in the community and to make recommendations to the City regarding program improvements, potential funding opportunities, and support with increasing volunteerism.

VISION

A City that takes pride in its parks and neighborhoods and promotes opportunities for all residents to make Modesto more beautiful.

POWER & DUTIES:

- ★ Act in an advisory capacity to the City Council and the City Manager in all matters pertaining to blight and blight abatement efforts. Blight includes abandoned vehicles, nuisance properties, litter, garbage, tagging, or other debris that is discarded improperly.
- ★ Promote engagement from nonprofits, neighborhood associations, and other groups to perform community clean ups; and support engaging private stakeholders to raise funds for programmatic efforts for this committee.
- ★ Formulate and recommend programs relating to blight abatement, fundraising efforts, and promoting volunteerism to promote a more beautiful City through blight abatement efforts.
- ★ Receive reports from City staff on ongoing efforts and strategies that have been established by the City to abate blight and offer recommendations for improvements to these strategies.

Events & Community Engagement Programs

HOUSEHOLD BATTERY RECYCLING

This is a grant funded program that allows residents to make an appointment for their used batteries to be picked up from their homes and recycled. Accepted battery types include alkaline, button cell, and Ni-Cadmium batteries.

USED OIL RECYCLING

The Residential Collection Program is a free service for used oil and is available to all residents who have 96-gallon garbage cans. Residents can make an appointment and the used oil and oil filters will be picked up on the scheduled appointment day by their garbage company.

TIRE ENFORCEMENT

Grant funding is used to collect and properly dispose of illegally dumped tires throughout Modesto. The City collects an average of 2,000 tires per year from public right of ways.

FREE TIRE AMNESTY EVENTS

Modesto residents can dispose of up to nine tires free of charge with a coupon during each event. The coupon can be requested by contacting the Public Works Department.

MATTRESS RECYCLING CENTER

This is a partnership with the Mattress Recycling Council's Bye-Bye Mattress program to provide easy and free recycling of used mattresses, box springs, and futon mattresses at the Mattress Recycling Trailer located at 610 S. Conejo Ave.

EARTH DAY IN THE PARK

This is an annual event hosted by the City created to celebrate sustainability and environmentalism. The event, held in April, is a family-friendly, fun, and educational event to engage with the community.

**DRIVE UP DROP OFF
EVENTS**

Modesto Mo' Beautiful Drive-Up Drop-Off events provide Modesto residents with a convenient way to dispose of unwanted items like appliances, tires, trash, furniture, and mattresses at no cost. These free disposal events are funded by grants, Measure H, and through partnerships with Clean CA, Caltrans, Bye-Bye Mattress, and CalRecycle.

**NATIONAL
CLEANUP DAY**

Each year, residents have the opportunity to come together with family, friends, or neighbors to beautify and clean up their community. The City can provide litter grabbers, gloves, safety vests, and trash bags to any group that wants to participate in this initiative.

**HOUSEHOLD
HAZARDOUS WASTE
FACILITY**

All residents (and small businesses) of Stanislaus County and its nine cities can recycle the following products at the Hazardous Waste Facility for free:

- Antifreeze, Batteries
- Motor Oil & Oil Filters
- Brake Fluid, Transmission Oil
- Gasoline
- Paints, Solvents
- Computers, Monitors, & Televisions

GLEANING

The gleaning program is designed to eliminate food waste and encourage food recovery in Modesto. Gleaning is the practice of collecting leftover or excessive food from crops or trees. The City partners with volunteers from the East Stanislaus Conservation District to provide gleaning by request and deliver food to local food banks and charities.

**SECOND CHANCE
WEEK**

The 2nd Chance Week Event is a nationwide event that promotes the reuse of old items. Each year, the City hosts a special collection event of useful items for non-profit agencies to highlight existing reuse opportunities.

**RECYCLING
TRAILERS**

Free recycling trailers for cardboard and CRV plastic, cans, and bottles are available for official events. Staff will deliver and pick up the trailer or recycling bins, ensuring the materials are properly processed. This service was designed to meet the recycling needs of festivals, concerts, sporting events, school events, parades, and more, helping event producers save costs while diverting recyclables from landfills.

Department Roles & Responsibilities

There are various departments and divisions within the City of Modesto who are an integral part of the initiative of blight abatement. Each playing a key role with respect to various programs, services, enforcement, and abatement.



PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT: SOLID WASTE SERVICES DIVISION



Bulky Item Pickup

Residential customers (single-family dwellings) are entitled to two annual bulky item pickups with service provided by their contracted hauler. The City has a pilot program for multi-family dwellings which currently has no limit. Pickups must be scheduled in advance, and staff will confirm acceptable items. Bulky items include furniture, appliances, and mattresses, but exclude small household trash, construction debris, or items requiring special disposal. To prevent scavenging and illegal dumping, bulky items should be placed in the street no earlier than 6:00 PM the evening before the scheduled pickup.



Green Waste

Green waste, including brush and trimmings less than six feet long, six inches in diameter, and weighing less than 50 pounds, is collected from City streets and alleys once a month. In 2023, 14,398 tons of green waste were collected from January through November, with an additional 3,909 tons of leaves collected during the leaf season in November and December. Four green waste crews operate in each City quadrant on a set schedule, with extra crews added during leaf season. No appointment is necessary, but residents must place green waste out no more than three days before and no later than the Sunday of their designated pickup week.



Street Sweeping Program

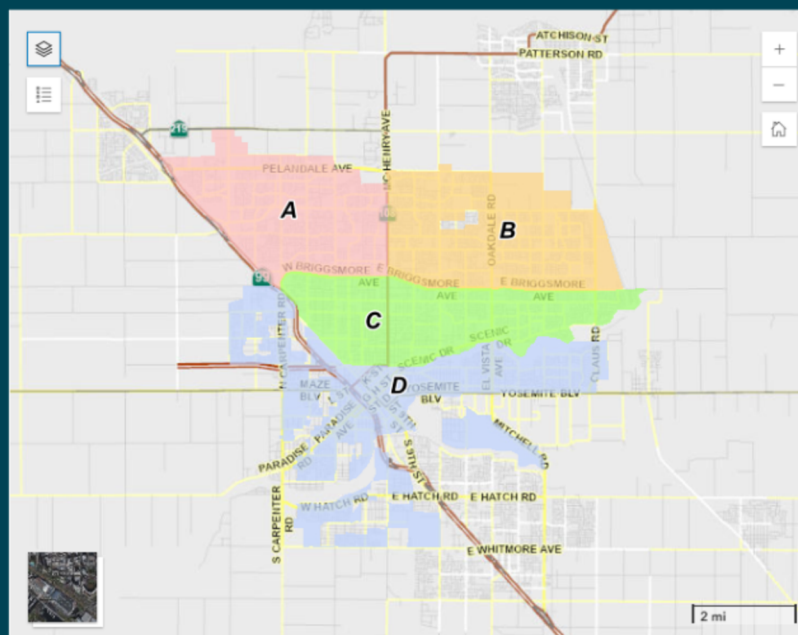
The Street Sweeping Program includes five sweepers that follow green waste crews to clear small debris and dirt, covering about 4,000 lane miles each month. Crews are also dispatched as needed to clean nonhazardous spills and accident debris. Green waste goes to the City's Composting Facility and Gilton Solid Waste, while street debris is taken to the Fink Road County Landfill.

The street sweeping program is funded by the Storm Water Fund and the budget is approximately \$2 million for fiscal year 24/25. The City also consistently receives \$18,000 from the California Department of Transportation on an annual basis for street sweeping services on state right of ways in Modesto.

City of Modesto streets are swept once per month, within 48 hours after large yard trimmings are collected. The street sweeping schedule is as follows:

- **Area A (pink)** - Streets in this area are swept the 1st Full week of each month.
- **Area B (yellow)** - Streets in this area are swept the 2nd Full week of each month.
- **Area C (green)** - Streets in this area are swept the 3rd Full week of each month.
- **Area D (blue)** - Streets in this area are swept the 4th Full week of each month.

Street Sweeping Map



Modesto Police Department: Code Enforcement Unit (CEU)

Code Enforcement: Complaint Process

The Code Enforcement Unit (CEU) ensures private properties follow City Codes and Ordinances to help keep neighborhoods safe and vibrant. Blight includes issues like abandoned shopping carts, junk or debris in public view, graffiti, overgrown weeds, and neglected vacant lots. When illegal dumping happens on private property, the CEU follows these steps:

1. Complaint is received via GoModesto, CEU phone line, email or walk in.
2. The assigned CEU officer makes the initial inspection within 72 hrs.
3. Upon verification of a Modesto Municipal Code (MMC) violation, the assigned officer generates a Notice of violation which requires the property owner to make corrections within fourteen (14) calendar days of the date of the notice.
4. After fourteen (14) calendar days, the assigned CEU officer re-inspects the property to verify the required corrections have been made. If the required corrections have been made, the case is closed. If the required corrections have not been made, the CEU officer issues an Administrative Citation to the property owner of record as shown on the Stanislaus County Recorders Assessment Roll.
5. Ten (10) calendar days after the mailing of an Administrative Citation the assigned CEU officer makes an inspection to determine if the required corrections have been made. This may occur up to three (3) times with the Administrative Citation amount increasing each time from \$100, to \$200 and up to \$500.00 for the 3rd Administrative Citation.

*At any point after the initial inspection, if the CEU officer sees little progress or finds conditions that require stronger action, they may issue a Notice and Order (N&O) to enforce compliance.

When issued, a Notice and Order (N&O) requires the property owner to fix violations within 20 calendar days. Unlike Administrative Citations, it carries a daily civil penalty of \$100 to \$1,000 and allows Code Enforcement to monitor the property for a year. Staff can also abate violations and recover City costs related to staff time and cleanup efforts.

Signs Regulations

The MMC provides regulations for signs. The purposes of these sign regulations are to:

- Encourage well-designed, aesthetically pleasing signs, while allowing flexibility for variety, good design, proper spacing, and thoughtful placement.
- Provide a reasonable and comprehensive system of controls of signs.
- Encourage a clean urban character with minimal overhead clutter.
- Attract and direct persons to various activities and enterprises in order to provide for commerce and the maximum public convenience;
- Enhance the economic value of the community and each area of it through the regulation of size, location, design and illumination of signs;
- Protect and enhance the character of residential neighborhoods and property values by prohibiting obtrusive and incompatible signs; and
- Promote and preserve healthy commercial centers and property values by ensuring clear communication of goods and services while preventing wasteful, unattractive, and excessive signage competition.

The signs are approved through the City and upon approval they are enforced by CEU. Enforcement is handled on a complaint bases.

Abandoned Shopping Carts Process

Abandoned shopping carts are a nuisance, create health and safety risks, and block pedestrian and vehicle traffic. When the CEU receives a complaint through GoModesto, the CEU hotline, or email, the case may proceed as follows:

- If the reporting party identifies the store, CEU checks the list and contacts the registered retrieval company. After three days, CEU verifies if the cart has been removed. If not, CEU can follow up, impound the cart, or return it to the store. If the store is unidentified, CEU determines ownership and the retrieval company, notifies them, and allows three days for pickup. After this period, CEU verifies removal and can follow up, impound, or return the cart.
- If after verifying a cart does not have any identification or is badly damaged, CEU takes the cart to the corporation yard for disposal.

Any shopping cart not retrieved within 30 days of a notice of violation may be sold or disposed of by the City. The City may also impose an administrative

Abandoned Shopping Carts Process continued...

penalty of up to \$50 for each instance exceeding three occurrences within a 6-month period. An occurrence includes all carts impounded in a single day. The City is authorized to recover all costs associated with impounding the carts.

Fines Procedures

Pre-Fine Procedure

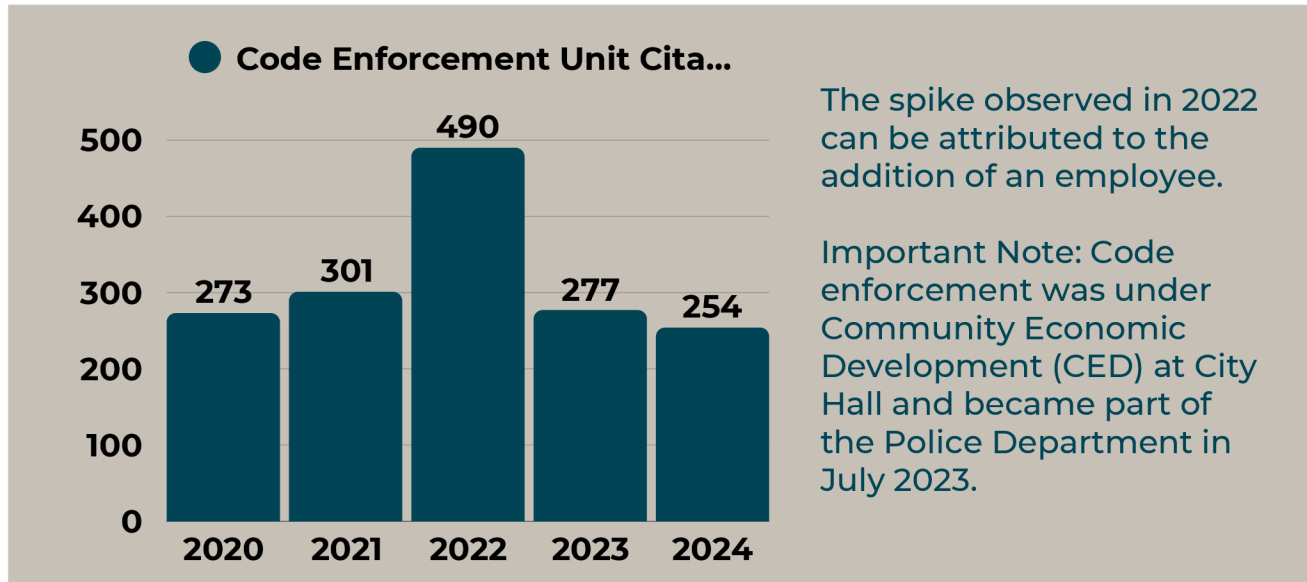
- **Education First:** The current philosophy of CEU is to work with property owners to abate blight. Often, property owners are unaware of their property's violations and how they affect their neighborhood. For example, many property owners are unaware that overgrown vegetation such as private trees that hang too low can impede garbage trucks from accessing trash bins in alleys or interfere with the clear vision triangle.
- **Case by Case Basis:** Code Enforcement Officers are given the discretion to determine the best enforcement strategy depending on various factors such as visibility and hazard level. Many times, a phone call or site visit may be all that is required for a violation to be abated.
- **Administrative Remedies Process:** Begins with an issue of a Notice of Violation to the property owner. This serves the purpose of identifying the violation and providing a timeline for the owner to abate it. If the violation is not abated, the Code Enforcement Officer may issue an administrative citation. If the violation continues to exist or is of a severe enough nature, a Code Enforcement Officer may issue a (N&O) which includes civil penalties. Once the time given for compliance has lapsed, City staff may abate the nuisance conditions or hire private contractors to abate the nuisance.

Post-Fine Procedure

- **Appeal process:** Any person served with an Administrative Citation may file an appeal within 20 days from the service of the document. It is important to note that A Notice of Violation from the CEU cannot be appealed.
- **Confirmation of costs hearing:** When the City, directly or indirectly through a contractor, abates a nuisance condition an itemized accounting of the costs incurred are presented to a Hearing Officer at a confirmation of costs hearing. All administrative and actual costs may be recovered from the responsible party.

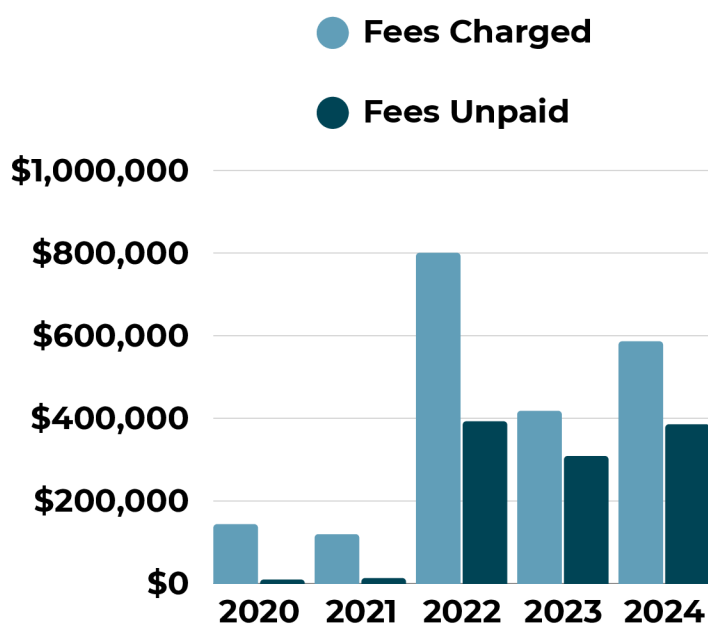
Post-Fine Procedure continued

- **Administrative penalty hearing:** A hearing officer affirms whether the civil penalties assessed through a (N&O), or administrative citation were appropriate and whether the responsible party caused or maintained the violation.



Modesto Police Department: Alternative Response Unit Abatement Data

The Modesto Police Department: Code Enforcement Unit Citations Fees Charged vs Outstanding Fees

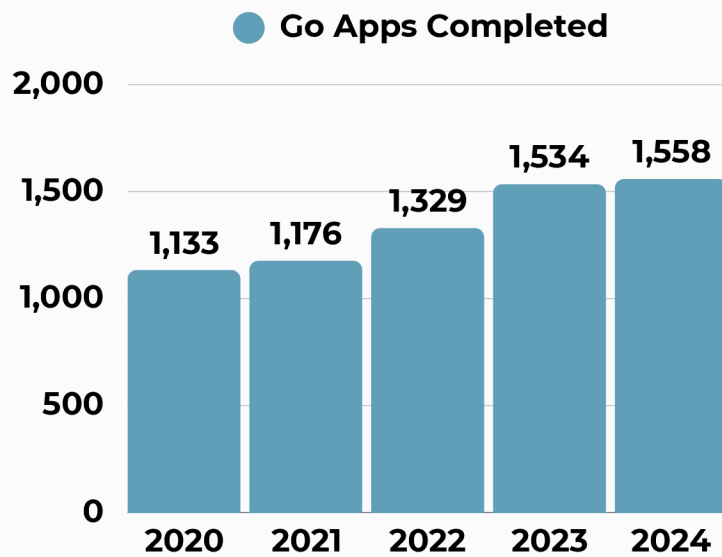


Fees are based on Administrative Citations and hearing enforcements. In 2022, fees were higher due to a backlog of cases from the pandemic when hearings were delayed. These fees ranged from \$1,000 to \$100,000 and could result in liens, which may explain unpaid fees. For 2023 and 2024, fees have stabilized as the caseload has returned to normal. However, fees still fluctuate depending on the number of hearings held each year, which can cause them to be higher in some years and lower in others.

GoModesto!

GoModesto! is an intuitive, multi-lingual, on-the-go reporting tool allowing residents of Modesto to report issues like street flooding, light outages, illegal dumping, tagging, vandalism, broken playground equipment, or more, along with progress notifications until the job is done!

Town hall meetings and active collaboration with City council members have played a key role in promoting the Go App process, resulting in increased participation.



As shown above, these are the number of GoModesto requests completed on an annual basis.



Connect with the City through the GoModesto! App

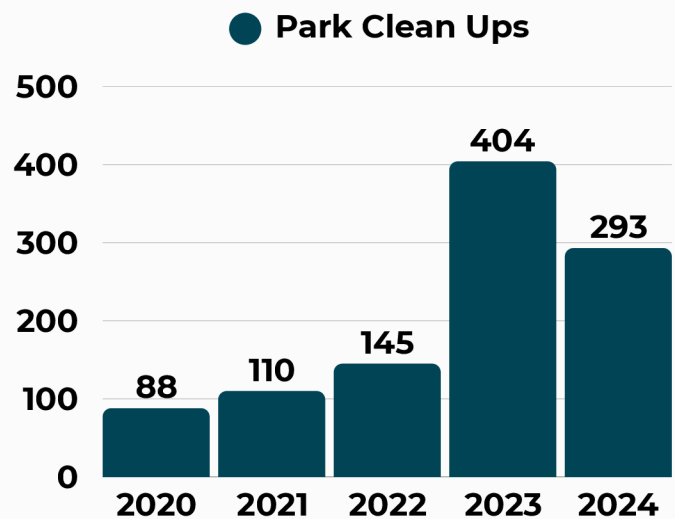
A faster, easier way to connect with your City in English and Spanish. Report anything from overgrown trees to illegal dumping with just a few clicks.



Parks Cleaned Up

Routine Quality of Life (QOL) overtime shifts, specifically aimed at addressing blight, contributed to a more robust 7-day-a-week effort to reduce vagrancy and clean up camps. With more enforcement units patrolling the streets, there were fewer camps in parks, which in turn reduced the need for park clean-ups.

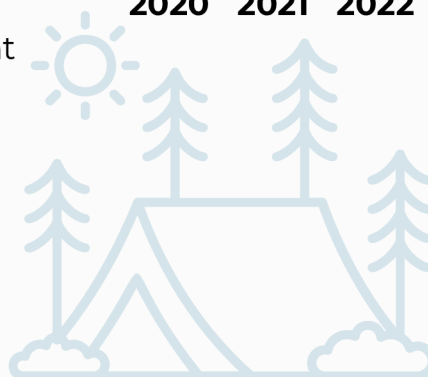
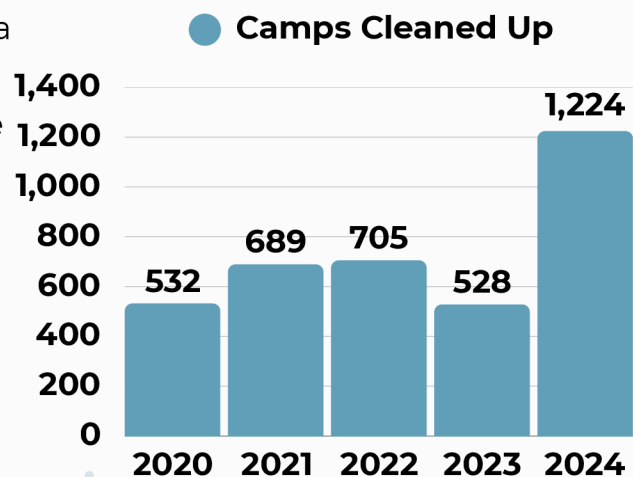
While speculative, the decline in park clean-ups may also be attributed to increased engagement from the Community Health Assistance Team (CHAT) team, which has led to more unhoused individuals accepting shelter.



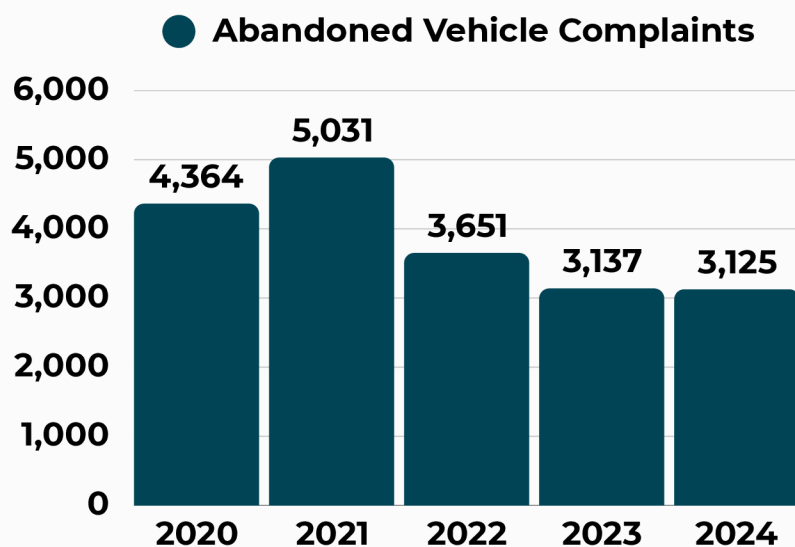
Camps Cleaned Up

Stats from 2020 to 2023 only reflected data from the Homeless Engagement and Response Team (HEART). In 2024, with the expansion of the Area Command Division, "camps cleaned up" now includes efforts from the entire division, including Park Rangers.

Furthermore, in Q1 of 2024, Park Rangers reached more robust staffing and transitioned to a 7-day-a-week deployment model, leading to an increase in camp clean up.



Abandoned Vehicle Complaints



It's difficult to pinpoint why complaints fluctuate; fewer vehicles or fewer people noticing them could be factors. During the COVID pandemic, with more people working from home, reporting may have increased. Regardless, fewer complaints are a positive trend. Recently, we added a second Abandoned Vehicle Abatement Officer to help address these issues, and with increased efforts, we may see a rise in enforcement next year.

As shown above, these are the annual complaints the City receives regarding abandoned vehicles.

The City of Modesto has a policy and procedure for managing abandoned vehicles, with the assigned officer responsible for the following actions:



Check Vehicle Information:

- Verify the vehicle's license and VIN through California Law Enforcement Systems (CLETS) to obtain the registered owner's details.
- Place an abandoned vehicle warning sticker in a visible location on the vehicle.
- Mark the tires to track the vehicle's position.

Complete Required Documentation:

- Obtain a case number and fill out a Vehicle Report form.
- Do not submit the report until after the 72-hour or 10-day waiting period.
- During this period, attempt to contact the registered owner via registered letter and document these attempts in the report.
- If the vehicle is moved during the waiting period, ensure this is recorded in the report before submitting.

Issuance of Citations and Towing:

- Parking citations for the 72-hour ordinance are not issued if the vehicle is stored

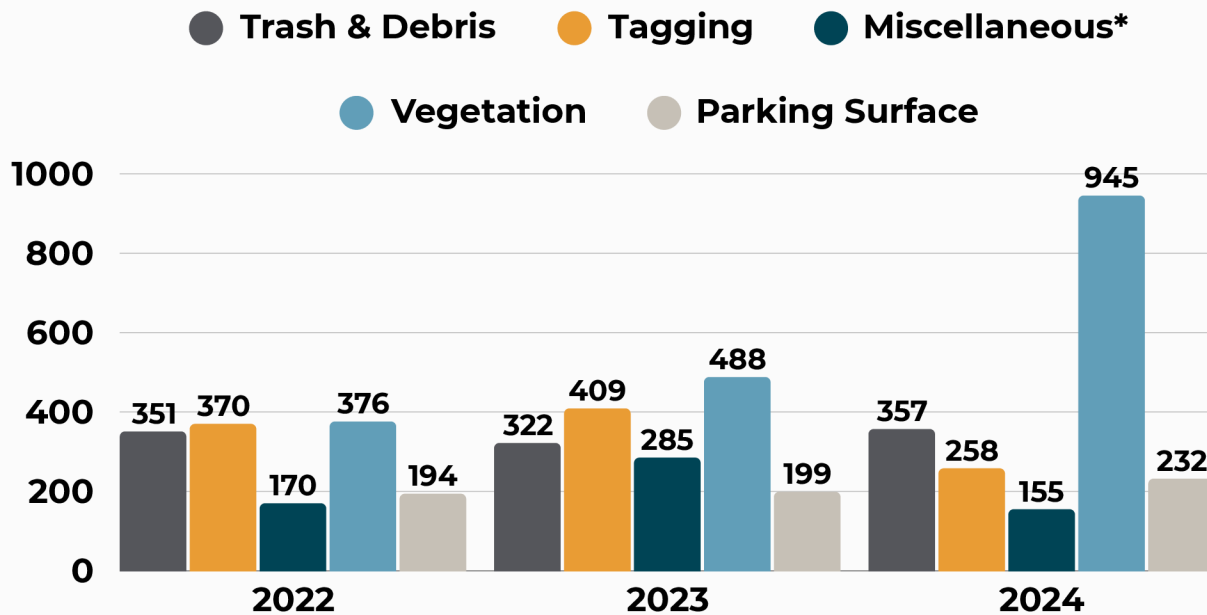
Issuance of Citations and Towing continued

for a parking violation.

- If the vehicle is missing essential parts (such as the engine, transmission, or wheels), it may be towed immediately under Vehicle Code § 22669(d), bypassing the waiting period.

TOP 5 MOST FREQUENT TYPE OF VIOLATIONS

*Misc-represent things like green pools, basketball hoops, rodents, etc.



These violations are complaint-driven, as the CEU has not yet become a fully proactive unit. Determining what causes complainants to report violations year to year is challenging. However, vegetation complaints are among the most common reoccurring violations, as simply failing to mow grass after a rainy season can lead to issues.

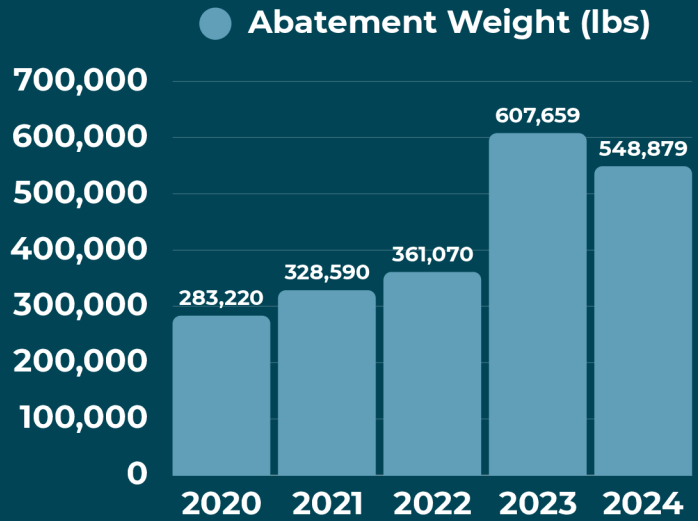
A quick search shows 2023 was the 8th wettest year in a century, while 2024 was about average, so it's unclear whether an unusual rainy season contributed to more vegetation growth in 2024.



Abatement Weight

Before 2023, MPD had an abatement truck staffed by part-time employees. In 2023, MPD expanded the team to include one full-time abatement worker and three part-time staff, allowing for more time in the field to address trash.

This trend continued with the addition of another full-time employee in 2024. Additionally, this timeline aligns with the previously mentioned increase in Park Rangers and their 7-day-a-week schedule. In 2024, MPD also partnered with the solid waste department on larger abatement and code enforcement projects to support clean-up efforts.



Due to a change in the tracking system, data for 2020 and 2021 is unavailable, with records beginning in mid-August 2021.

PARKS, RECREATION & NEIGHBORHOODS



Tagging Abatement

“Tag We’re On It” brings together public and private partners through five coordinated components, each playing a unique role in the shared mission to eliminate tagging in Modesto.

COMPONENT	DEPARTMENT
Abatement	Modesto Police Department (Code Enforcement Unit)
Program Administration	Modesto Police Department (Code Enforcement Unit), Park and Recreation and Neighborhoods (Tagging Crew)
Volunteer/Outreach	Park and Recreation and Neighborhoods
Code Administration	Modesto Police Department, Planning, City Attorney’s Office
Deterrence	Modesto Police Department (Code Enforcement Unit), City Attorney’s Office



Program Administration

CEU and their support staff provides needed coordination and data entry for this program. All complaints that come into the City regarding tagging are entered into a database for distribution. If the report is on public property, the case is retrieved by the tagging removal crew and placed in their daily work routine. If the incident is on private property, the case is queued for a Code Enforcement Officer to investigate the next day.



Volunteer/Outreach

The first step to provide awareness to the anti-tagging team was to develop a slogan for the campaign. With donated time from Never Boring, Inc. the slogan, “Tag. We’re On It!” was created to help the community know that the City is actively and aggressively combating tagging. Dual use of the word “Tag.” gives the visual of the child’s game “Tag, you’re it!” as well as describes what the team is removing. The use of the word “We’re” denotes that eliminating tagging in the City is not only the responsibility of City staff but also of the entire community. It takes City staff, volunteer groups, and every citizen of Modesto getting involved to make a difference.



Code Administration

Tagging on private property must be handled differently since due process is required. The owner must be properly notified and given seventy-two hours (72) to remove or paint over the tagging. If the owner does not comply with the City’s request, CEU can remove or paint over the tagging with the use of a private contractor or the City’s abatement crew and invoice the owner for this cost. A confirmation of cost hearing is eventually required to verify the City followed due process in assessing this cost. If the owner does not pay the invoice, the City can lien the property. Much of the time, the owner removes or paints over the tagging; therefore, this step is often not necessary.

CEU staff works hard to partner with owners in removal. Staff recognizes that it can be difficult for some owners to constantly remove tagging on private fences or buildings that are in high-risk areas. In these cases, the owner will be asked to sign a waiver, and the property will be placed on the abatement crew’s hot spot route. In other cases, CEU staff will work with the Volunteer component to find groups that may be able to help an owner that is finding it difficult to remove or paint over the tagging.



Deterrence

The MMC allows us to administer an effective anti-tagging program through aggressive fines and penalties, clarified roles and tools for enforcement staff to remove and or paint over tagging. The MMC sends a message that the City is serious about this type of vandalism, which not only impacts the City economically but also detracts from our citizens' quality of life. The term "tagging" was added to the definition of Graffiti in Section 4-12.401. Modesto is unique in that the term "Graffiti" has a special meaning to the community. Even though most communities use this term to describe vandalism, the City will not be using it in enforcement mechanisms. In addition to these amendments in this section, refinements are being proposed in the "Responsible Party" definition and two new definitions were added: "Property Owner" and "Abatement" to help clarify the City's enforcement actions.

Section 4-12.405 Punishment Provisions includes proposed increases in the number of administrative fines that can be imposed for tagging violations, as follows:

1. For first violation: two hundred dollars (\$200)
2. Second violation: five hundred dollars (\$500)
3. Third violation within one year: one thousand dollars (\$1,000)

The proposed language clarifies that the City may petition a sentencing court to impose additional penalties or conditions for individuals criminally charged with violating the City's tagging regulations, including community service and suspension or delay of issuance of a driver's license. The Program Administration component has a "moniker" field in the database to track taggers monikers. If the Police Department is able to apprehend a tagger, staff will be able to search the database for all the incidents in which their moniker appeared. This will allow prosecution to add all the violations that have occurred for a substantial fine.



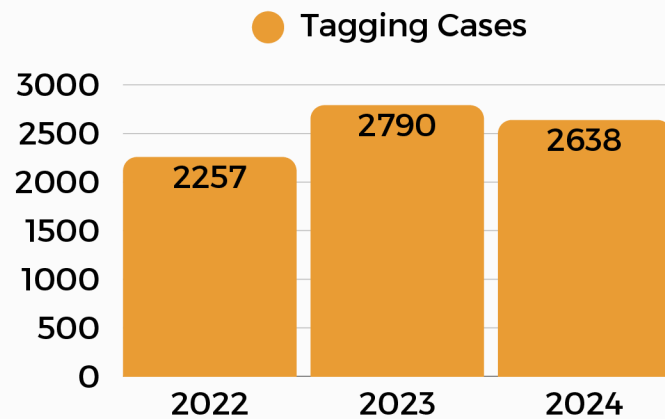


Tagging Data

Looking at the data you can see that the abatement crew completes 14-20 abatements per day. The tagging numbers below are both on private and public property. On average we can gain compliance within 72 hours 74% of the time.

Generally, once tagging is reported in a public area, the abatement crew can remove it or paint over it in 24 to 48 hours.

*We do not have data for 2020 or 2021 as the tracking system was different and unfortunately the records begin at the middle of August 2021. To allow a clear calendar year perspective of tagging abatement we are showing data beginning 2022.



Abatement Teams

The Modesto Police Department Abatement Teams focuses on addressing homeless encampment remnants and enhancing efforts to abate illegal dumping throughout the City. The team operates proactively while also responding to requests submitted through the GoModesto app. The current staffing and resources are the following:

- Staffing: 1 full-time and 4 part-time team members, with the capacity to expand to 2 full-time and 6 part-time members.
- Equipment: 2 trucks and 2 trailers.
- Work Hours: The team collectively works approximately 64 hours per week.

The Solid Waste Division Blight Abatement Team focuses on illegal dumping and blight in the public right of way, especially in cases where a responsible party cannot be located. The Blight Abatement Team is comprised of 4 full time staff and 2 part time staff. They operate trucks and trailers or a grapple truck to efficiently collect material from streets and alleys.

In some cases where there is significant blight or where either team cannot fully clean

The Solid Waste Division Blight Abatement Team continued...

the area, MPD and SW will work together (often with the assistance of other City staff) to complete large projects. While both teams have specialized tools and skills that best address their individual blight needs, the combined effort of these teams demonstrates ways that the City is using its resources for interdepartmental success.

The Tagging Abatement crew consists of two full-time teams that work 5-7 days a week, primarily focusing on removing tagging from public or City-owned properties. In some cases, the City obtains permission from private property owners, through a waiver, to remove tagging from highly visible areas such as fences or sound walls along busy thoroughfares. Each day, the crew follows a designated "hot spot" route, actively searching for and removing tagging as it occurs.



Illegal Dumping on Private Property

The CEU ensures private properties comply with City Codes to maintain safe, vibrant neighborhoods. Blight includes abandoned shopping carts, junk, debris, tagging, tall grass, weeds, and unmaintained vacant properties. When illegal dumping occurs on private property, the CEU follows these steps:

1. Complaint is received via GoModesto, CEU phone line, email or walk in
2. The assigned CEU officer makes the initial inspection within 72 hrs.
3. Upon verification of a MMC Violation, the assigned officer generates a Notice of violation which requires the property owner to make corrections within fourteen (14) calendar days of the date of the notice.
4. After 14 calendar days, the assigned CEU officer re-inspects the property to confirm corrections have been made. If corrected, the case is closed. If not, an Administrative Citation is issued to the property owner of record.
5. Ten (10) calendar days after mailing an Administrative Citation, the CEU officer inspects the property to check if corrections were made. This process may repeat up to three (3) times, with fines increasing from \$100 to \$200, and up to \$500 for the third citation.

*If the CEU officer determines progress is insufficient or that a more aggressive approach is needed, they may issue a (N&O) at any point after the initial inspection. A (N&O) requires corrections within 20 days and imposes daily Civil Penalties of \$100 to \$1,000. It allows for 12 months of monitoring, with penalties for continued non-compliance, and enables the City to recover costs for abatement and staff time.

Illegal Dumping on Public Right-of-Ways

The Solid Waste Division investigates illegal dumping in public areas as a violation of the MMC. Some residents are unaware of proper disposal methods, while others dump to avoid fees. The following steps are taken to address reported incidents:

- Complaints are reported by citizens, City employees, and Solid Waste staff through phone, email, and GoModesto, with staff also identifying potential illegal dumping during routine work.
- Code Enforcement investigation—A code enforcement officer is assigned based on the report's order, conducts field investigations, and contacts the reporting party if needed.
- If the responsible party is identified, a Notice of Violation is issued, giving them five business days to remove the dumping. If not addressed, an Administrative Citation is issued, and the waste is removed within three days. For dumping that

Illegal Dumping on Public Right-of-Ways continued...

blocks sidewalks or bike lanes, removal occurs immediately, and the responsible party is charged.

- If no responsible party is found—the pile is referred to Blight Abatement Team or the haulers for pickup within three business days.

As of 2024, the City refers all illegal dumping reports to the Blight Abatement Team for collection, using haulers only in cases of delays or large amounts of material. This streamlines the process, ensuring prompt and efficient removal from public areas.

Future Goals & Strategies

PARKS, RECREATION & NEIGHBORHOODS

Tagging Abatement Goals:

- Maintain the current pace of addressing and removing tagging within 48 hours, with a goal of responding within 24 hours.
- Ensure team remains familiar with "hot spots" to efficiently address tagging issues.

Camp Cleanup & Collaboration Goals:

- Reduce camp cleanup tonnage collected by Park Ops staff by utilizing support from MPD and Solid Waste abatement teams.
- Share the workload across departments to respond more quickly and reduce tonnage collected by Parks staff, enabling them to focus on park maintenance.

Park Usage Goals:

- Support positive use of parks and reduce negative use where possible.
- Continue collaboration with MPD, Park Rangers, CHAT, SW, and CARE teams to enhance park operations and abatement efforts.

MPD/CEU

Ordinances & Enforcement:

- Finalize and implement massage parlor and vacant building ordinances.
- Designate code enforcement officers to oversee enforcement of these ordinances.

Staffing & Resources:

- Hire 2 full-time and 4 part-time positions for blight abatement.
- Acquire new trucks and trailers to replace aging equipment.

Blight Abatement Improvements:

- Enhance community outreach to prevent blight.
- Streamline tracking and coordination of abatement efforts.

Meetings & Collaboration:

- Continue heading county-wide blight abatement meeting (Turlock, Ceres, CHP, Cal Trans, etc.).
- Participate in City of Modesto department head meeting to coordinate abatement efforts.

PW: Solid Waste/Streets

Increase Engagement for the Blight Abatement Advisory Committee (BAAC):

- Revitalize the BAAC by supporting members in community projects to reduce vacancies, boost attendance, and expand service opportunities.

Launch the "Mo Beautiful" Campaign/Designation as Clean California City:

- In 2025, the City will launch a campaign to unite departments and engage residents, businesses, and stakeholders in reducing blight and enhancing community beautification."
- The goal of the Clean California campaign is to address the state's litter problem through public education and strategic partnerships.

Develop Software for Enforcement Efficiency:

- Partner with a software contractor to create a case management system to improve tracking and managing blight-related issues, boosting enforcement speed and efficiency.

Reduce Illegal Dumping Response Time:

- Aim to decrease the response time for illegal dumping from 8 days to 72 hours, building on past improvements and increased staff.

Weed Abatement Team (Streets Division):

- Track progress in managing overgrown vegetation and blight in public spaces. Public Works will monitor the effectiveness of the Weed Abatement Team.



Conclusion

The City's efforts to address blight and boost community engagement are driven by targeted initiatives with clear, measurable outcomes. The revitalization of the Blight Abatement Advisory Committee (BAAC) aims to reduce vacancies, increase attendance, and create more community events and volunteer opportunities.

The "Modesto Mo Beautiful" campaign will unite City departments, residents, businesses, and stakeholders to beautify the area, with success measured by campaign reach, events, and stakeholder involvement.

The Weed Abatement Team tackles overgrown vegetation and blight in public spaces, with progress tracked by reports, resolution times, and completed projects. A new case management software system will streamline blight enforcement, aiming for faster case resolution. Additionally, the goal to reduce the response time for illegal dumping from 8 days to 72 hours will be tracked by quicker removal times.

These combined efforts are designed to create a cleaner, safer, and more engaged community with measurable progress.

The City has established clear performance metrics to meet its goals for tagging abatement, camp cleanups, and park usage. In terms of tagging removal, the focus is on quick responses and regular monitoring of high activity "hot spots" to ensure tagging is addressed promptly.

In camp cleanups, the City aims to reduce waste collected by Park Operations by sharing responsibilities with the MPD and Solid Waste teams, ensuring cleanups are efficient and timely.

To boost park usage, the City is promoting positive activities while reducing negative incidents. This includes launching joint initiatives each month and improving response times to park-related concerns.

These goals and performance metrics are designed to keep public spaces clean, safe, and welcoming for everyone.

The City is taking strong steps to fight blight and involve the community by setting clear goals and boosting resources. With new ordinances, more trained staff, and better equipment, we're stepping up enforcement and cleanup efforts.

We're also making it easier to track issues and hear from residents. By working closely with nearby cities and our own departments, we're building a united front against blight—working together for a cleaner, stronger, and more connected community.

GLOSSARY

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

A large-scale economic stimulus package designed to address the economic and public health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Blight Abatement Team

Operates two large pickup trucks with trailers to abate unsightly trash and debris related to quality of life and criminal activity. They operate at the direction of the area commanders and work in close conjunction with the other units in the division.

Code Enforcement Unit (CEU)

Manages enforcement and compliance efforts for the vacant building ordinance, neighborhood blight and municipal code compliance, sidewalk vending, banner posting, and other administrative citation processes.

Community Health and Assistance Team (CHAT)

Created to help address the unhoused population and individuals experiencing mental health / substance abuse crisis.

Home Engagement And Response Team (HEART)

The mission of HEART is to address vagrancy issues by building partnerships and collaborations between the Criminal Justice System and Social/Medical Services.

Measure H

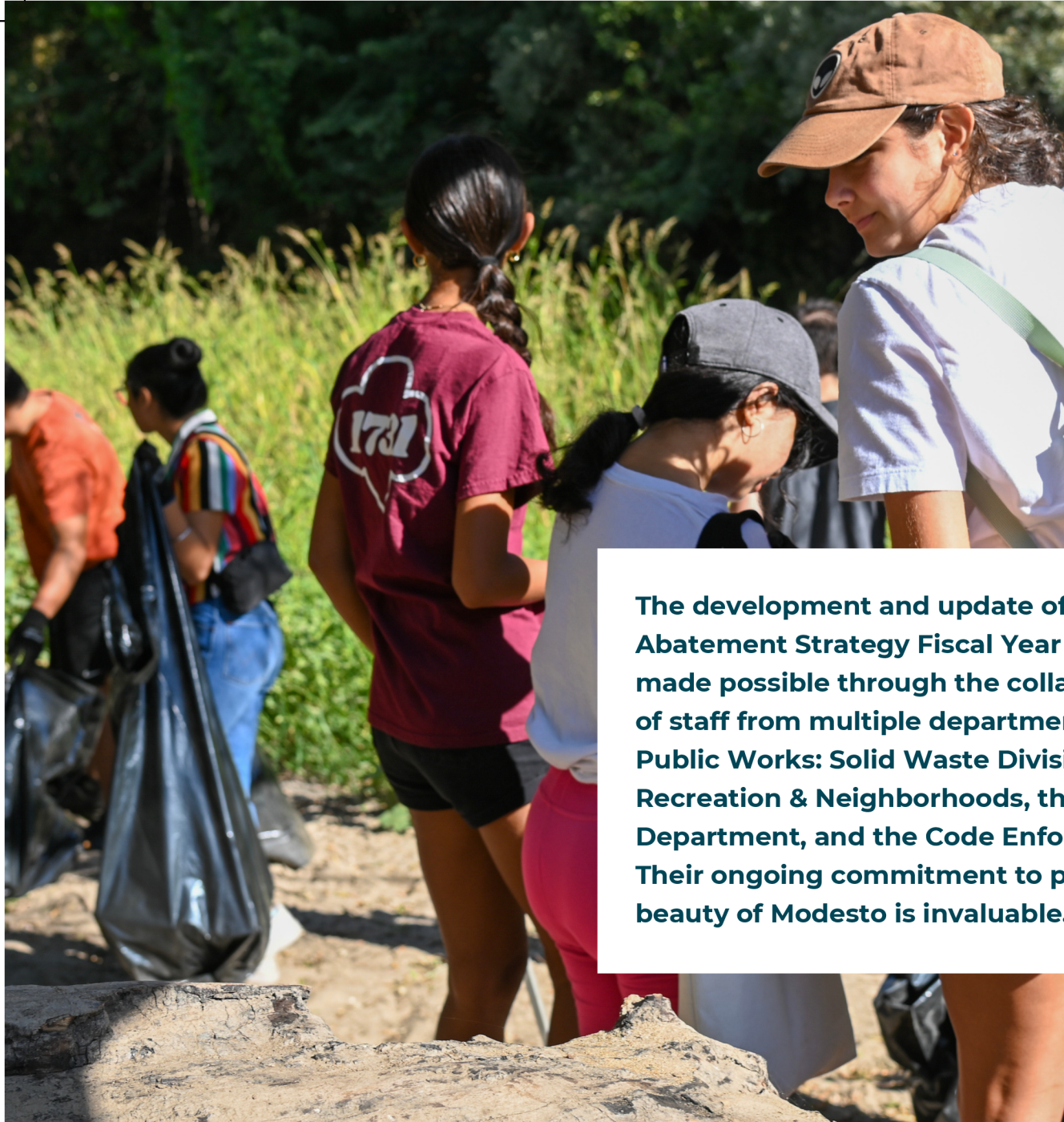
A one-cent sales tax to fund general City services passed by Modesto voters in November 2022.

Modesto Municipal Code (MMC)

A municipal code is a set of laws that are enacted and enforced by a village, town, city or county government.

Notice and Order (N&O)

A document used in abatement actions and assessment of civil penalties involving serious code violations which provide notice of municipal code, uniform code or applicable State Code violations and orders a responsible party to take certain steps to correct the violations within a definitive period of time. Civil penalties may also be imposed in conjunction with this notice.



The development and update of the Blight Abatement Strategy Fiscal Year 25/26 - 26/27 was made possible through the collaborative efforts of staff from multiple departments, including Public Works: Solid Waste Division, Parks, Recreation & Neighborhoods, the Modesto Police Department, and the Code Enforcement Unit. Their ongoing commitment to preserving the beauty of Modesto is invaluable.

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