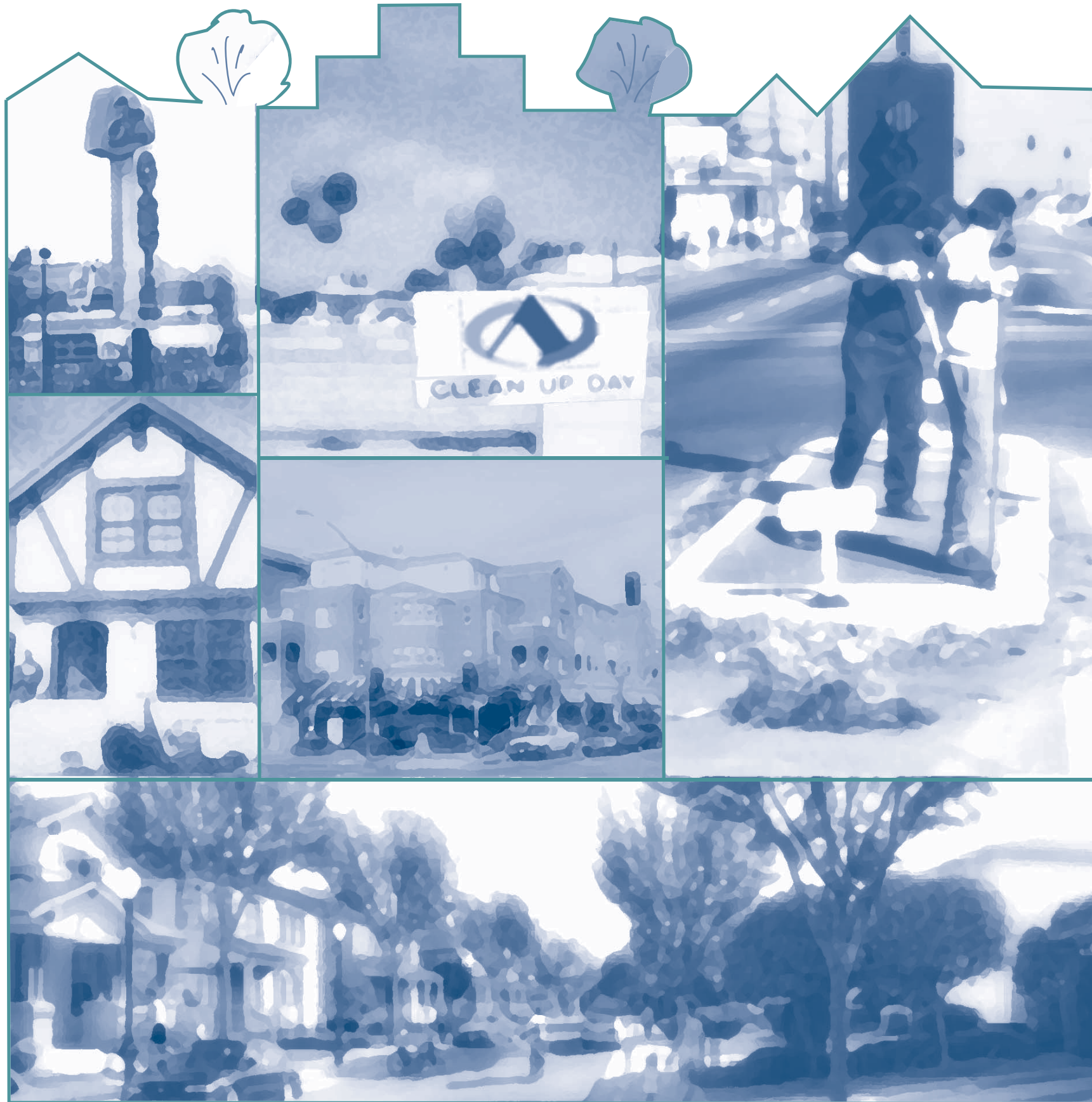


# community...unify...beautify



## Community Beautification Campaign



Public Works Agency



Community Development Agency



Sheriff's Office



Board of Supervisors

A Collaboration of Alameda County Departments





# Dear Concerned Citizens:

If you are reading this, you probably don't like litter and want to see your community become a better and cleaner place to live. You're in good company! Most people don't like to see litter, graffiti, blight and run-down properties in their neighborhoods...and neither does the Board of Supervisors.

The County's "Community Beautification Campaign" recognizes that it is an individual and public responsibility to improve and beautify the Unincorporated Areas of Alameda County. Change may not happen over night but over the long haul, we strongly believe that the community and its public servants can work together through grass roots efforts, public policy, effective enforcement and established programs to reduce litter and increase neighborhood pride.

This booklet is intended to give you, as an Unincorporated resident or businessperson, the information and tools you need to play an active role in the "Community Beautification Campaign." This booklet is divided into three parts:

- Educational information on litter and blight
- Suggestions on how you as an individual can get involved and make a difference
- Information on what the County departments are doing to make a difference

There is no single answer or program that will magically reverse the deterioration of our neighborhoods. However, with a range of programs and solutions, and most importantly, a passionate commitment to change and improvement, we will make strides together towards beautification and seeing real results.

This campaign reminds us that the elimination of blight and the creation of a better community are the number one priorities for County departments working in the Unincorporated Area. It is the everyday goal of our work and we are determined to make a difference. We hope you'll be our partner in this effort!

Sincerely,

*Gail Steele*  
Gail Steele, Dist. 2

*Nate Miley*  
Nate Miley, Dist. 4

*Alice Lai-Bitker*  
Alice Lai-Bitker, Dist. 3

# Litter research: impacts and prevention

Recent research indicates that litter and blight causes far more serious problems in a community than just making it look unsightly. Litter build-up can have a depressing effect on the value of land and housing in the community. Properties will sell for less than an equivalent property in a cleaner neighborhood. The presence of abandoned vehicles, visual clutter, litter and rundown properties also makes it difficult for the community to attract additional commerce and businesses to the area. It signals to visitors and potential investors that this environment is acceptable to the residents and current businesses in the area and that there is no momentum towards change or improvement.

It has been proven there is a link between community blight, social disorder and physical decay. The Alameda County Sheriff's Office Community Oriented Policing & Problem Solving Unit refers to this issue as "the broken window theory."

Community members of Unincorporated Alameda County can help by reporting incidents of blight, litter and graffiti in their neighborhoods to the proper authorities.

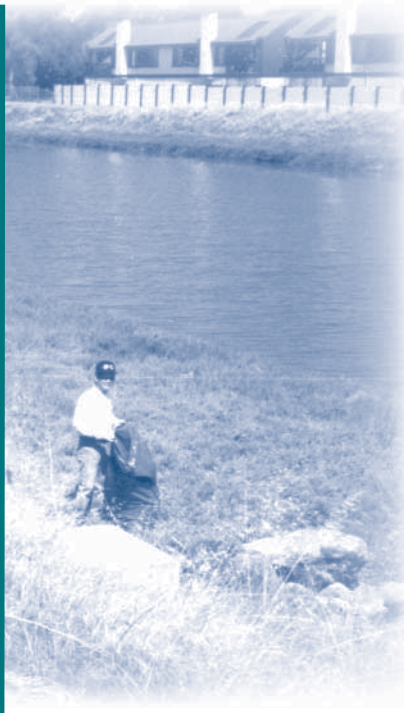
Few people realize the enormous economic burden litter, abandoned vehicles, graffiti and rundown properties place on their community. Cleaning up and revitalizing communities costs counties, cities, states and the federal government millions of dollars each year. Research shows that prevention and maintenance requires fewer resources and tax dollars than litter removal. This creates an economic incentive to keep community standards at an acceptable level and thereby freeing up public and private funds for beautification efforts, capital improvements and economic development.

Aside from the economic impact, litter, illegal dumping and dilapidated structures can cause a public health hazard. Litter and abandoned properties can attract and breed disease-carrying rodents and insects. Even if you are doing a good job of spending time and money to keep your homes clean from these pests, it is being counteracted by the public trash that collects beyond your property line. The illegal dumping of household chemicals and oil which can destroy natural habitats and overtime contribute to contamination of the air and soils around us leads to added health problems, particularly for small children and the elderly. Mold can also grow in abandoned structures and has been linked to respiratory problems and increased asthma in a community.

# Proven ways to stop litter

**Increase Public Trash Cans:** Numerous studies have shown that people litter because finding a proper place to dispose of trash is inconvenient. Therefore increasing the number of trash receptacles in an area is an effect way to decrease littering. However, research has also shown that the location and actual design of the trash can is important. One study showed that brightly painted trash cans collect up to twice as much trash as plain unadorned trash cans.

**Litter Attracts Litter:** People are more likely to litter in places that are already littered. Scientific studies over the past 30 years have proven this over and over again. The presence or lack of litter in an area offers a strong visual clue as to whether littering is socially inappropriate in the area. Research has demonstrated that when people walk through a neat and clean environment, they are much more likely to go out of their way to dispose of their trash properly. The single most productive step to decreasing litter is the removal of existing litter.





# Individual response

A community’s active involvement in clean-up has been found to go a long way in creating pride and satisfaction in a neighborhood. Here are a few suggestions for some daily steps you can take to be part of the “Community Beautification Campaign” and for those up to the challenge, some additional ways to get involved:

- **Assess areas where litter is building up.** Are there trash receptacles present and conveniently located? Draw a map of the area and mark locations prone to littering or take pictures with a camera. Contact the Agency responsible for trash collection in the area (if it’s a park it could be the local park district or the local sanitary district) and use your maps and pictures to make your case for more trash cans.
- **Organize or participate in small on-going anti-litter clean-ups.** Large clean-ups have their advantages, but small regular clean-ups of a particular problem area usually are more effective in eliminating the problem over time.
- **Check on the status of public trash receptacles.** If you find them continually overflowing with trash, contact the agency responsible for servicing them and request that they be emptied more frequently or that additional trash cans be added.
- **Your own behavior sends a strong message.** Scientists have found that people are strongly influenced by the behavior of those around them. People are more likely to dispose of trash or clean their property when they see others doing likewise. If you see trash on the ground, pick it up and dispose of it in a trash can. You never know who’s watching you and might consider doing the same themselves.
- **Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle.** Work to decrease the amount of trash you produce which will reduce litter and conserve resources for the future. Some simple examples include reusing grocery bags and sorting your trash.

# County’s response

The County currently offers a number of programs that help keep the public areas clean and assist private property owners in maintaining and beautifying their own properties. We separate these programs into two categories, 1) Blight Elimination, and 2) Community Beautification.

# Blight elimination

- **Adopt-a-Spot/Creek Program:** The County works with individuals and groups interested in volunteering too regularly clean-up an area. The County will provide all necessary equipment free of charge and remove all bagged debris.
- **Business Crime Prevention:** County works with business owners to help them set-up their stores and keep businesses secure from crime.
- **Community Clean-Ups:** The County sponsors large clean-ups of public areas, including streets, parks and other publicly-owned properties. Approximately two to four clean-ups can be sponsored on an annual basis and County staff organizes, publicize and work on the clean-ups.
- **Debris Clean-Up Program for Public Areas:** A phone-in line is available for registering complaints about trash or debris in the public right-of-way. Once messages are picked up the Maintenance Department schedules a crew to pick the trash up, weed, prune and sweep usually within 48 hours.
- **Flood Control Channel:** All flood control channels are cleaned on a regular basis and kept free of debris.

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Common litter materials breakdown time			
Cotton:	1-5 months	Plastic bags:	10-20 years
Paper:	2-5 months	Leather:	25-40 years
Orange Peels:	6 months	Metal containers:	50-100 years
Wool:	1-5 years		

- **Graffiti Abatement:** The County contracts with a service to clean graffiti off all public and private property in Unincorporated County at no-cost to property owners and tenants.
- **Installation of Public Trash Cans:** The County has begun to help by purchasing trash cans for installation along major thoroughfares in the Unincorporated Area. This program works in partnership with Oro Loma Sanitary District who is responsible for trash pick-up in all of the unincorporated areas with the exception of Castro Valley.
- **Neighborhood Preservation Ordinance:** The County cites properties for violations of the Neighborhood Preservation Ordinance that sets standards for maintenance and upkeep of private properties.
- **Neighborhood Watch:** Promotes crime reduction in neighborhoods through resident involvement in active projects like community clean-ups and educates individuals on how to eliminate public nuisances and crack houses.
- **Ordinances:** Alameda County has numerous ordinances and policies on the books to strengthen our enforcement of litter abatement and promote community beautification.
- **Removal of Inoperable Vehicles:** The County runs a program to tow inoperable vehicles off private and public property.
- **Residential Recycling Programs:** Offers a curb side integrated waste program serving Cherryland, Fairview and Mt. Eden.
- **Shopping Cart Pick-Up:** County staff pick-up shopping carts found in the public right-of-way or in the flood control channels on a weekly basis. The carts that are collected are returned to the stores they came from the same day.
- **Street Sweeping:** The Public Works Agency has developed a pilot street sweeping program for the San Lorenzo and Ashland areas.
- **Traffic Issues:** The County cites big rigs that are parked along residential and commercial corridors and issues tickets for other parking violations, including parking on sidewalks.

# Community beautification

**Façade Improvement Program:** Provides grants and loans to commercial properties that want to make external, structural and internal improvements to their property. Funds can also be spent on landscaping and new sidewalks.

**Housing Rehabilitation Program:** Provides loans to households who are income qualified for home rehabilitation and paint grants. The program helps with emergency repairs and more expensive code and safety upgrades.

**Tree Program:** Promotes regulation for tree planting and removal and is intended to preserve public trees and encourage tree planting in local neighborhoods.

**Sidewalk Program:** The County uses public funds and grants to construct new sidewalks and landscaping in residential neighborhoods and funds larger streetscape beautification projects along major commercial corridors.

# For more information on all these programs contact:

Board of Supervisors  
1221 Oak Street, Suite 536  
Oakland, CA 94612

Supervisor Gail Steele - 272-6692  
Supervisor Nate Miley - 272-6694  
Supervisor Alice Lai-Bitker - 272-6693