

# Highlights

## Why We Did This Audit

Illegal dumping is a citywide issue that has health and environmental impacts and affects the overall cleanliness of the city. Addressing illegal dumping is important to city residents. This audit is based on public audit suggestions.

## Objectives

How long does it take the city to respond to illegal dumping complaints and clean-up illegal dump sites?

How can the city improve community engagement efforts to reduce illegal dumping?

## Background

Illegal dumping is garbage, rubbish, yard waste, or large debris dumped in public places or on private properties without the owner's consent. The Public Works Department's Illegal Dumping Program is responsible for investigating and collecting illegal dumping in public places.

In Fiscal Year 2022, the program has a budget of \$2.1 million and 22 positions, including investigators and clean-up staff. The program also contracts for some illegal dumping clean ups.

Most illegal dumping requests are submitted by residents to the city's 311 Action Center. The program also receives service requests from other sources.

The illegal dumping investigators investigate illegal dumping service requests. Dump sites are then cleaned up by those responsible for the illegal dumping, city crews, or the city's contractors

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# PERFORMANCE AUDIT

## Better Data, Analysis, Goals, and Community Engagement Needed to Combat Illegal Dumping

### What We Found

Public Works did not track or analyze response times or establish response time goals for addressing illegal dumping service requests. Establishing goals and measuring and reporting timeliness of addressing illegal dumping service requests would provide accountability to the public, establish resident expectations, communicate priorities to staff, and inform management decisions about use of resources.

Based on our analysis of 311 service requests, it generally takes the department about 24 days to respond to and resolve illegal dumping service requests.

311 Service Request Types and Average Days to Close

Request Type	Opened Requests	Closed Requests	Average Days to Close
Dumping in the Right-of-Way	2,328	2,291	25
Early Trash or Bulky Set Out	155	155	15
Dumping Camera Request	141	140	17
Landlord Set Out	76	76	16
All Cases	2,700	2,662	24

Sources: 311 system and City Auditor's Office analysis.

Public Works also receives illegal dumping complaints and service requests from an illegal dumping hotline, complaints made directly to department staff and management, and the Land Bank. The data on these complaints and requests and their resolution were either not available or not recorded in a way that is suitable for analysis. In addition to not having complete data to calculate response times, receiving requests from multiple sources could also result in duplicated or missed requests, and inequities in the delivery of city services.

Public Works has not implemented community engagement strategies to reduce illegal dumping outlined in the Citywide Business Plan since 2017. Although not part of a more comprehensive plan for community engagement, the city has several programs to get residents involved in helping to clean up their neighborhoods.

Community engagement efforts can be viewed as a series of phases on a continuum moving from informing residents to empowering residents. The city's current community engagement efforts for addressing illegal dumping are generally focused on early phases of this continuum, education and information. The city can improve its engagement by empowering community members to create and lead new programs. This will help mobilize resources and address illegal dumping beyond what the city can do on its own.

### What We Recommend (full list on back)

We make recommendations to consolidate illegal dumping service request intake and data, analyze response times and establish response time goals, and develop an anti-illegal dumping campaign using a community engagement framework.

Management agreed with the recommendations.

## **Recommendations**

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1. The director of public works should consolidate all illegal dumping service requests in the 311 system.
2. The director of public works should analyze and report response times for resolving illegal dumping service requests.
3. The director of public works should develop a written set of response time goals for each type of illegal dumping service request, and communicate the goals to residents and department staff.
4. The director of public works should develop an anti-illegal dumping campaign and related communications using a community engagement framework as well as regional resources available through the Mid-America Regional Council.