

Safe and Clean Streets Initiative

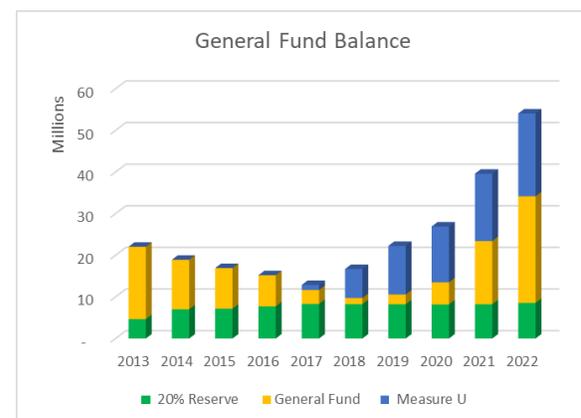
Promoting Community Safety and Beautification Strategies to Position the City of Hemet for Increased Investment and Prosperity

Introduction

On April 18, 2023, City of Hemet staff representing the Police, Fire (including Code Enforcement), Public Works, City Attorney's Office, and Office of the City Manager met at the City's Covell Building to discuss strategies to clean and beautify the community. Participants in this "Beautification/Code Summit" discussed challenges in the community, opportunities to improve the City's Municipal Code to aid cleanliness and beautification efforts, opportunities to streamline operations, improve communication, discuss resources that would add value, and seek opportunities for innovation.

Following the Summit, an interdepartmental team of department directors, led by Police Chief Pust, were tasked with preparing recommendations for the City Manager by May 23, 2023 in support of advancing efforts that would result in a cleaner, safer city. Concepts were reviewed and feedback provided by the City Council Clean Up/Graffiti Ad Hoc Committee consisting of Mayor Males and Mayor Pro Tem Lilienthal on May 30, 2023. The resulting draft strategy, preliminarily branded the **Safe and Clean Streets Initiative**, promotes an accelerated series of initiatives to beautify and position the City of Hemet for increased prosperity and investment.

Disciplined financial stewardship and improving economic performance in recent years has grown the City's General Fund financial reserves to a remarkable \$54 million, which equates to over 80% of current annual General Fund expenditures. This has prompted a decision by the State Auditor in October 2022 to remove the City of Hemet from a Local High-Risk designation the State Auditor applied in 2016.



This strong economic performance and the City's growing financial resources are allowing the City to consider additional strategic one-time investments intended to position itself for increased commercial investment and community prosperity. Initiatives are designed to integrate with and build upon several existing partnerships, as well as engage residents in solutions.

Safe and Clean Streets Initiative

Strategies at a Glance

“Safe” Strategies

1. **Deploy Enhanced Technology Cameras for Crime Suppression.** To suppress crime and improve community safety, the City will install high quality surveillance cameras at eight of the City’s main intersections and implement a Real-Time Crime Suppression Center by September 2023. Data will direct active patrols and special teams’ resources to areas of need. Implementation of this initiative will include establishing appropriate data handling and data retention policies in order to ensure the City complies with all relevant privacy laws and regulations.
2. **Expand Patrol Staffing by Eight Officers to Enhance Data Driven Patrols on Commercial Corridors.** Supported by data-driven GIS mapping and policing strategies, enhanced patrol staffing will conduct directed traffic/vehicle enforcement and crime suppression and deterrence efforts along commercial corridors.
3. **Expand Community Behavioral Assessment Team (CBAT) to Seven-Day a Week Coverage.** Adding an additional Police Officer and Mental Health Clinician in coordination with expanded City Net services as of July 1, 2023 will provide seven-day a week services to address and mitigate mental health and homelessness challenges.
4. **Add 30% more Flock Cameras as a Resources Multiplier.** The City’s 40 Flock safety cameras helps neighborhoods, businesses, and law enforcement work together to eliminate crime and provide objective evidence to investigate and solve crime. The FY 2023-24 budget includes funding to install another 20 cameras citywide to grow the City’s crime suppression efforts.
5. **Utilize Drone as a First Responder Program as Crime Deterrent.** The Hemet Police Department launched its new Drone as a First Responder Program on April 17, 2023, the first city in Riverside County to do so. This tool, which can arrive in seconds, will enhance the City’s law enforcement capabilities and provide critical information and documentation of crime scenes, improving officer situational awareness and efforts to solve crimes.
6. **Establish a City Prosecutor Pilot Program to Prosecute Infractions and Misdemeanors not Prosecuted by the District Attorney’s Office.** In recent years, the volume of cases presented to the Riverside District Attorney’s Office has reduced the probability that infractions and misdemeanors will be prosecuted. As a result, some cities have initiated efforts to designate a City Prosecutor to ensure victims of crime receive justice and people engaged in unlawful activities are held accountable. The proposed Pilot Program is expected to result in community service and penalties for violators and deter unlawful behavior. Funding is available in Measure U fund reserves to initiate this pilot program.

7. **Distribute Section 602 Trespass Letters to All Commercial Businesses on Main Corridors within 45 Days.** The Hemet Police Department will proactively engage all business owners on main commercial corridors and seek permission via Section 602 Trespass Letters that, when signed, allow law enforcement to arrest anyone loitering or engaged in unlawful activity on private property. This effort will be sustained annually.
8. **Expand Business Watch Program and Improve Business Engagement with Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED).** By October 2023, the Hemet Police Department in coordination with its ROCS team, will gather criminal activity information on high volume call areas on main commercial corridors. This will include assessing businesses creating any type of nuisance issues. The effort will include education and enforcement, including Zoom workshops with the Chamber of Commerce/business community.
9. **Establish Monthly Community/Police Engagement Focus Group.** Hemet Police Department Command staff will create an integrated and diverse focus group to meet monthly comprised of diverse Hemet community members to provide recommendations on how to improve service delivery and engagement.
10. **Support and/or Sponsor State Legislation and Ballot Measures that Impose Stricter Penalties and Accountability for Criminal Actions.** The City of Hemet seeks to further reduce crime and criminal activities. Efforts will be made to support and/or sponsor State legislation and ballot measures that impose stricter penalties and accountability for criminal actions.

Safe and Clean Streets Initiative

Strategies at a Glance

“Clean” Strategies

1. **Initiate Proactive Seven Day a Week Crews for Graffiti, Shopping Carts, and Debris Pickup Along Commercial Corridors.** The current service levels do not meet community expectations for cleanliness. To improve the appearance of the community, Public Works will initiate seven day a week proactive patrols with the use of part-time employees beginning at 6:30 a.m. Additionally, the Department of Life Safety/Fire Prevention will aggressively enforce combustibles close to buildings. These crews will be responsible for responding to all See-Click-Fix issues within 24 hours. Friday and Saturday patrols will be contracted with Liberty Men’s Restoration. This effort will be coordinated with CalTrans to ensure right-of-way access is permissible.
2. **Establish Trash Enclosure Pilot Program.** There are a number of unsightly commercial trash enclosures in the city that attract scavenging, graffiti, and homeless activities as they are designed without locking doors and without secure roofs. Many of these trash enclosures were built before 1990 before recycling was mandated in California and are therefore not large enough to accommodate the bins required today. The City will establish a Trash Enclosure Pilot Program to improve the City’s appearance and allocate \$450,000, including \$50,000 from CR&R, to support rebuilding or modifying approximately 10 trash enclosures. Implementation of this program will include a modification of the City’s Municipal Code to allow for use of an additional parking space(s) to accommodate all bins and waiver of fees.
3. **Reestablish and Conduct an Annual Community Service Day.** This will mobilize hundreds of volunteers of all ages for a morning once a year to complete projects throughout Hemet that benefit all sectors of the community and increase civic pride. The effort will be organized by the City in partnership with Hemet businesses, organizations, and non-profits. Projects will include cleaning up trash/debris, improving trails, weeding, painting, and assisting with home repair, renovation, and maintenance projects.
4. **Improve Community Awareness and Use of “See-Click-Fix” App.** The City utilizes a service request app called See-Click-Fix to provide residents with an easy opportunity to submit requests for potholes, graffiti, homelessness encampments, fire hazards, water leaks, etc. Because the tool is underutilized by our community, the City will enhance communication efforts to raise awareness and use of this tool. Additionally, the City will adjust service level expectations to resolve and/or address service requests within 24 hours.
5. **Expand the City’s Adopt-a-Street Program by 100% in Six Months.** The City today has eight miles of streets supported under its Adopt-a-Street Program. Public Works and City Manager Office staff will coordinate community outreach efforts to solicit additional participants/participating organizations in support of city beautification.

6. **Establish a Council District Commercial and Residential Beautification Contest.** Improving neighborhood beautification can build community pride, attract new residents and businesses, and grow improve the quality of life of residents. Each of the five Council Districts will have an opportunity to nominate a project for “Most Outstanding” property and several “Honoree” properties. Property owners who have recently remodeled the exterior of their property or made significant improvements to their landscaping may also be eligible to be recognized as one of Hemet’s “Most Improved” properties. Example categories include:
- Best Residential Appearance
 - Most Improved Residential
 - Best Commercial Appearance
 - Most Improved Commercial
 - Best Water Wise Landscaping (Xeriscape)
 - Best New Commercial Project
7. **Create an Art in Public Places Program.** Hemet has a strong arts history and an opportunity to further enhance its civic beauty and pride, cultural and aesthetic environment, and increase property value through public art and murals. This program can also provide new employment opportunities for local and regional artists and craft workers. Funding for the program can come from fees collected for new development and remodel projects.
8. **Expand Proactive Code Enforcement Efforts on Commercial Corridors.** Code Enforcement today actively patrols Florida Avenue and the downtown area twice per week. This will be expanded to five days per week to post violations and work with the City Attorney and City Prosecutor to rectify.
9. **Consider Adjusting Street Sweeping Service Levels in Commercial Corridors.** The City’s contract with CR&R for street sweeping includes twice a month street sweeping in commercial corridors. CR&R is providing a slightly enhanced level of service by sweeping the commercial corridors every other week. To improve the cleanliness and appearance of the City, the City will consider adjusting commercial corridor street sweeping to weekly service as is common in other communities.
10. **Develop and Launch a Two-Year Façade and Property Improvement Pilot Program.** The goal of the program is to assist local businesses with completing façade and property improvements to enhance business-use properties and improve the economic climate. With the creation of program criteria, this two-year pilot program will provide matching grant funding to business owners and/or property owners of retail, commercial, industrial, and office properties within the City of Hemet to complete exterior improvement. It is envisioned that there will be micro and macro grants available totaling at least \$450,000 annually.
11. **Create Storefront Vandalism Relief Program.** The City previously provided funding to offset the cost of storefront vandalism to local businesses. Creation of a Storefront Vandalism Relief Program will reimburse small businesses impacted by deliberate actions resulting in the destruction or damage to business storefronts. Examples of eligible damages include broken windows, broken doors, broken locks, etching on windows, graffiti, and more. Funding is available through Code Enforcement fines and Measure U fund reserves.