



Illegal Dumping, Dumpster Day and Proposed Solutions for Trash Equity!

Contact chi@westgrand.org for Questions.

Issue at Hand

Trash is being illegally dumped on public and private properties, business properties and more.

Why does illegal dumping happen?

- **Residents:** Those who do not have the money to maintain their trash account, afford to buy tags for large items, do not have a way to get to the dump or use approved disposal methods, etc.
- **Shady companies or people:** That get residents to pay money for trash removal and they dump it in various areas of the city, essentially take the money and run and leave others to clean up the mess.

Who and What does it affect?

People

Residents: Get complaints on their properties and bear the cost and consequences from another person illegally dumping on their property.

Landlords: Get complaints on trash being dumped on their properties, they bear the cost and consequences of illegal dumping.

Homeowners: Get complaints on trash being dumped on their properties, have to use precious time, resources to clean and pay for the cleaning of their property.

Tenants: Tenants can get the blame for the trash, it could strain relationships with their landlords and lead to the tenant losing their housing or get billed for the cleanup.

Business owners/Organizations (including non-profits): Get complaints on their properties because trash is dumped in their dumpsters, their properties, they can bear the cost and consequences of someone else illegally dumping on their property.

Neighbors: Uncontained trash dumped on properties can be blown into neighboring yards, etc. They also absorb the costs of removal.

Who and What does it affect?

The City of Grand Rapids

City Properties: Parks, dead ends, city properties and more also get illegally dumped in. The city bears the cost cleanup/staff time and removal.

City Services: Code Compliance receives thousands of complaints each year on trash. In the last 12 months there have been over 9,000 yard cases. (See next page for breakdown).

Environmental Services: Public Works - Improper recycling costs the city money and time. Additionally, they could lose the ability to offer free recycling to residents and businesses because of contaminated loads. How much does the city spend on storm drain cleaning?

Police Department: Has to investigate, might dig through trash to see if there is an address. Limited resources are being spent than people being caught doing it.

TRP Program: Cost to send city workers to the areas to check the (Trash Reduction Program) TRP areas.

Additional Note: The city USED to take care of illegal dumping. More often than not the residents take the hit now. Railway and MDOT also are responsible for their properties and sometimes not as responsive as we would like.

Who and What does it affect?

Environmental

Water Systems and natural resources:

The trash gets into storm drains, into the Grand River and can affect our city water.

Soil Contamination: Trash dumped can also contaminate the soil in the areas that it is left. Especially if there is hazardous waste in the trash, bloodborne pathogens, etc.

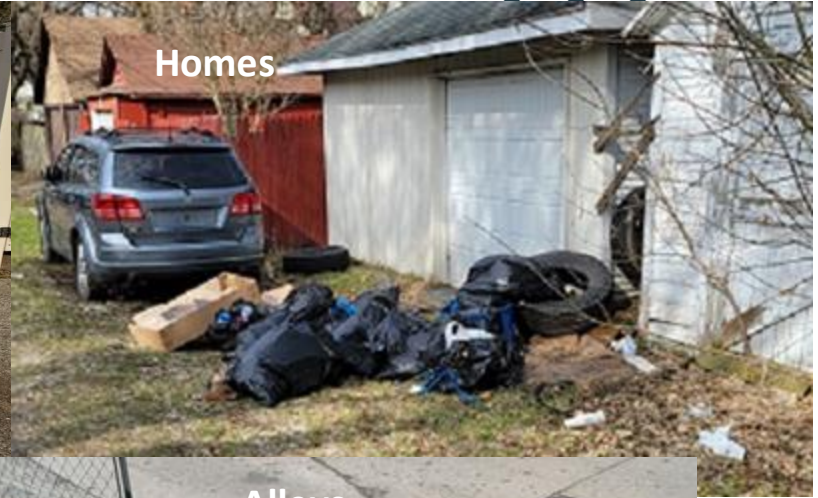
Carbon Footprint: Every week as many as 3-5 trash trucks can go down a single block, a lot of times just to pick up trash for one home. It's a waste of gas, time and energy. If we had one trash company covering a single area, it would reduce the carbon footprint in the city and decrease air pollution.

Noise Pollution: Multiple trash trucks in a neighborhood from multiple companies every week increases noise pollution.

Health and Welfare: Trash dumped on properties can also affect the health and welfare of neighbors.

This is a quality of life issue.

Examples of Illegal Dumping



West Side

Why should we care?

- **City of Grand Rapids:**

- With the millions of dollars the City, County and State are putting into the Grand River restoration project, our city water systems and more we should be doing more to protect our water in the city and our natural resources.
- It will decrease the amount of trash dumped into the free recycle bins which the county could penalize or increase costs to the city over.
- Reduce air, water, noise and soil pollution.
- Reduce our carbon footprint.
- Reduce the amount of trash complaints in the city because all residents would have equal access to trash service.
- Improve quality of life in all neighborhoods, including the areas that are less economically sound.

- **Need to Stop Penalizing the Poor:**

- Our current city trash system mainly penalizes those who are not economically sound (This includes our seniors, disabled and low income residents). Including the cost to tip the trash weekly and the increases in cost of those tips.
 - If they cannot pay it they can get hit by code compliance for trash on their property by the city adding additional fees.
- It also includes the fines for those caught illegally dumping who could receive a \$500 ticket or 90 days in jail, again penalizing people who may be doing this out of desperation.

Examples of Illegal Dumping

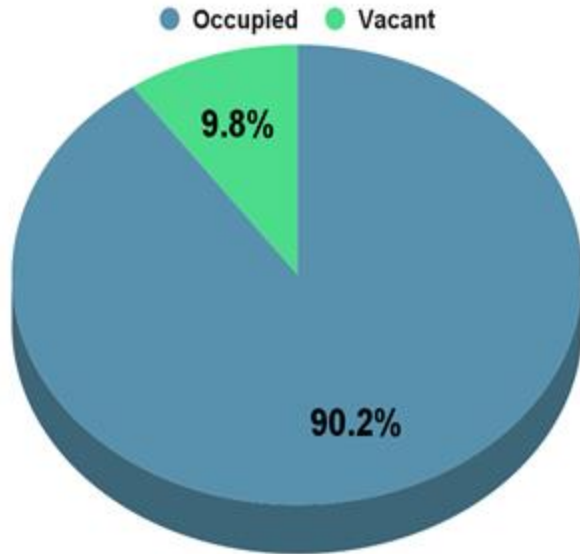
**This is a
city-wide
problem.**



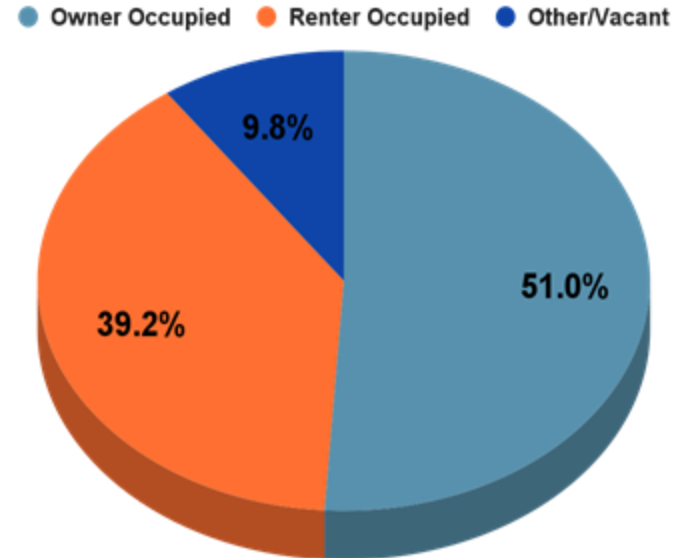
Boston Square

Owner Occupied vs. Renter Occupied Housing Units In the City of Grand Rapids

Occupied VS Vacant Housing in 2019



Owner Occupied VS Renter Occupied in 2019



NOTE: 2019 Data from U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 1 year estimates: <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/>

It is important to note that in 2019 39.2% of housing units in the City of Grand Rapids were rental units.

Trash-Related Horror Stories

In the West Grand Neighborhood:

In one particular housing complaint that WGNO dealt with a few years ago had to do with multiple issues including Trash Removal and a shady landlord.

A two unit rental-The tenants in the upstairs unit had said they had trouble keeping up with their city trash bill. The landlord had “offered” to haul their trash away. The previous month he charged them \$50. The following month the tenants had paid their \$500 in rent, only to have landlord decide that \$100 of the rent would be for his removing their trash. He had sent the tenants a notice to take possession of the property for not paying \$100 of their rent (They had). The tenants paid the \$100 to keep the apartment. Tenants told me that they still owed the landlord \$50 next month for trash. The tenant had the receipts & paperwork proof. So for 3 months of trash removal (Landlord hauled away himself) he was charging them \$200 or an average of about \$67 a month (Note: City trash at the time would have cost this resident \$28 a month). This does not take into account that they may have had a large buildup of trash that he removed. My concern was did he actually remove it, or did he just throw it into the long vacant downstairs apartment, which was filled top to bottom and front to back with trash and could be seen through windows and doorways. We were able to document with pictures and get the city involved.

These tenants were living in what was eventually condemned housing due to multiple hazardous and unsafe conditions there including a cracked heater (that had been shut down by DTE twice but the landlord kept turning back on so DTE then shut it off at the main), large hole in the roof, flooring that was so damaged from a continuous water leak that a boot heel actually went through it, mold and more. All of this was well documented too. The new owner had to hire exterminators for pest infestations and hire someone to remove the hazardous materials/trash from the bottom unit.



2021 Total: 8,028

2022 Total: 6,764

Code Compliance

Thank you to Code Compliance for providing this breakdown of numbers for a more accurate picture.

NOTE: The column represents Nuisance Yard Complaints during 2021 and 2022 as of today (9/7/2022). Tall grass and trash cases have both trash and tall grass involved and yard other usually involves things like discarded materials and things that may be more like rubbish than actual trash. Basically this is all but the grass numbers in this breakdown.

* There have been just over 9,000 yard complaints in the last 12 months overall (not just trash).

Case Count	Year	Yard Complaint
3,099	2021	Tall Grass
2,467	2022	Tall Grass
1,169	2021	Tall Grass and Trash
1,338	2022	Tall Grass and Trash
2,049	2021	Trash
1,625	2022	Trash
1,711	2021	Yard-Other
1,334	2022	Yard-Other



2021 Total: 124


2022 Total: 64

GRPD Reports

*Thank you to GRPD for providing this
breakdown of numbers for a more accurate
picture.*

NOTE: The column represents police reports for
littering on public or private property during
2021 and 2022 as of today (9/13/2022).

Report Count	Year	Police Complaint
124	2021	Littering on public or private property
64	2022	Littering on public or private property



City Departments Affected by Trash

- Code Compliance - Trash complaints for yards, illegal dumping, etc.
- GRPD - Illegal Dumping reports and citations
- Storm Water Treatment Plant - How much money gets spent on filtering the trash?
- 311 complaints
- Public works - How many times do they go out on trash complaints, unpaid trash service, pick up of unpaid bins, trash issues in streets, Storm Drain cleanout due to flooded storm drains clogged with trash?

We have asked residents to Adopt Storm Drains which they then take on the cost of cleanup.

We NEED to factor in ALL of these departments and not just Public Works when we are talking about resources, time city employees use to take care or attend to these issues, cost of cleanup, etc.

Proposed Long-Term Solution Illegal Dumping/Trash Issues.

Long Term Solution to trash issues

1. **Create a millage or tax to provide trash service to EVERY household and include large items as part of it (with a limit of 2 or 3)**
 - a. This will eliminate the issue of landlords not providing trash receptacles and tenants or homeowners not having the money to get their trash dumped regularly.
 - b. This could also help eliminate trash being dumped in recycling bins and contaminated recycling loads heading to the recycling center. Which can cost the city and it's residents money and potential loss of free recycling program.
 - c. Could reduce trash hoarding issues in the city.
 - d. Reduce the number of trash complaints to the city.
 - e. Reduce pollution.
 - f. Improve environment
 - g. Improve quality of life for residents.

See the next page for examples of municipalities in Michigan that DO provide trash to their residents through a millage or general funds.

Cities that provide Trash Service

- **Saint Johns, Michigan** (Pop. 7,920 (2020) - <https://cityofstjohnsmi.com/egov/apps/services/index.egov?view=detail;id=6>)
 - **Tax/Millage Rate** - (0.50000 - This extra millage was voted in as a result of the election on November 7, 2017. *2019 **Garbage assessment was \$200.00 a year. This assessment is on the summer bill**) : <https://cityofstjohnsmi.com/topic/index.php?topicid=40&structureid=16>
- **Troy, Michigan** (Pop. 84,051 (2020) - https://troymi.gov/departments/public_works/refuse_and_recycling/refuse.php)
 - **Tax Millage Rate** - <https://apps.troymi.gov/MillageRates>
- **Taylor, Michigan** (Pop. 61,164 (2020) - <https://www.cityoftaylor.com/238/Rubbish-Recycling-Program>)
 - **Tax Millage Rate** - <https://www.cityoftaylor.com/Faq.aspx?QID=278> See “What is the “Garbage and Disposal tax” line item?”
- **Saline, Michigan** (Pop.9,296 (2020) - https://www.cityofsaline.org/departments/public_works/refuse_collection.php)
 - **Tax/Millage Rate** - https://www.cityofsaline.org/departments/treasurer/millage_rate.php
- **Midland, Michigan** (Pop. 41,922 (2020) - <https://www.cityofmidlandmi.gov/DocumentCenter/View/12867/City-of-Midland-Collection-Guide-PDF>)
 - **Tax Millage Rate** - I emailed Midland DPS to ask how they paid for their programs, they replied: “Our refuse, recycling and heavy item programs are covered by General Fund and there is no separate millage for these services – all costs are covered by our general operating millage. The only service that residents pay directly for is yard waste, which is a pay as you throw program. To participate in our yard waste program you need to purchase a yard waste bin from us (\$80) and then also purchase an annual sticker for a bin (\$40). If a resident wants to use compost bags instead, they need to purchase a \$.40 sticker for each bag.”

Other municipalities do it, we should consider the potential cost savings and equity it creates. Others: Westland, MI; South Haven, MI, Ann Arbor, MI (still looking for their data). Midland, MI has a VERY comprehensive collection guide for their residents and very interesting perks of their program: [Midland DPS Collection Guide](#) (Highlight their dumpster borrowing program)

Why look into what other municipalities are doing?

Our current trash system costs a homeowner/renter \$400.40 a year at the current rate of \$7.70 a tip for the 90 gallon container for 52 weeks (1 year). We pay that up front. (If we had a millage similar to Saint Johns, MI that would be a savings of at least \$200 per household) It would be paid through your taxes (or escrow account if you have one).

This does NOT include savings for the following services the City of Grand Rapids charges for:

Item	Cost	Additional	Additional Cost	Where available
Bulk Item Stickers	\$35 per item			City Hall
Yard Waste Carts	\$27.50	Additional tag for each tip	\$6.00	City Hall
Yard Waste Bags	\$2.50 each or 5 for \$12.50			City Hall, at select supermarkets*
Yard Waste Bulk Tags	\$2.50 each			City Hall, at select supermarkets*

**Sporadically available, usually not within walking distance for those without transportation.*

In short: A millage could save each resident money and include businesses/residents that do not pay the city directly for trash service which could offset additional program costs. It could help pay for the additional costs accrued by the city for dealing with trash issues/cleanup for all residents and businesses in the city. We could also have additional programs offered! Residents would no longer have to worry about having access to transportation, money on hand or a computer to get their trash taken care of on a regular basis.

Proposed Short-Term Solutions Illegal Dumping/Trash Issues.

Short Term Solutions are:

1. **Expansion of Home Repair Services (HRS) Administration of the City's Low-Income Refuse Collection Program to include BOTH Homeowners and Renters.** Authorized through the end of this year:
http://grandrapidscitymi.iqm2.com/Citizens/Detail_LegiFile.aspx?ID=11318&highlightTerms=home%20repair%20services
2. **Update/Remove ordinance about weekly trash pickup.** Not all residents put trash out weekly, as they wait to fill their bins completely. This ordinance needs to be more clearly defined. Chapter 25, section 2.4 & 2.5
https://library.municode.com/mi/grand_rapids/codes/code_of_ordinances/179425?nodeId=TITISE_CH25SOWAMA
3. **Require landlords to provide renters with trash service.** Currently the ordinance states that they only have to provide "storage" for trash, not service. It is 308.2.1 of the 2012 IPMC (International Property Maintenance Code) which means we would have to make a local amendment to change it. **It should say that each unit be provided trash service.** Link: http://www.healthyhomescoalition.org/uploads/files/IPMC_Pest_and_Garbage.pdf
4. **Provide Trash receptacles at ALL bus stops and in ALL business districts. NOT JUST DOWNTOWN.**

Dumpster Day

Dumpster Day is not equitable. Why?

- It only helps a small percentage of neighbors in our city. Less than 4 % of households in neighborhoods participate.
- Those without vehicles or transportation cannot partake in them.
- Not all neighborhoods in the city have a Neighborhood Association or entity that can run them. Meaning some neighborhoods in the city do not get the benefit of a Dumpster Day. Lack of capacity.

Residents with no vehicle carrying trash to dumpster day in the West Grand Neighborhood 2022.



What issues do NA's see when we do the event?

- **Trash hoarding.** WGNO in particular has a household that hoards their trash for an entire year and rents a large U-Haul truck to dump. We have tried limiting the number of times they go through to discourage the trash hoarding, but they only got a bigger U-Haul.
- WGNO had a fight break out between a resident and volunteer because the resident was told they could not dump an item at one dumpster day, this resulted in the police being called.
- We have seen landlords with properties all over the city do the same and attend ALL Dumpster Days they have properties.
- WGNO has seen instances of landlords charging tenants for trash removal in addition to rent in two unit properties and then stuff the trash they were paid to remove in the vacant unit of the two.
- Lack of Volunteers: It's a very dirty job and there can be concerns with the handling of trash and large items.
- Exposure to dangerous materials: We have to worry about our volunteers getting exposed to hazardous materials, bed bugs, cockroaches and potentially bring them home with them. We also have to worry about injuries.

Dumpster Day Neighbor Participation

Neighborhood associations a couple years ago had put together a spreadsheet a couple years ago to prove this point. (NOTE: This does not include data from 2021 and does not reflect all NA's). Note tip cost has increased twice in at least the past two years.

Organization	Households attended Dumpster Day in 2018	Households attended Dumpster Day in 2019	Households attended Dumpster Day in 2020	Total households served between 2018-2020 in each neighborhood	Neighborhood Population (Households) CRIdata from 2017 # of housing units	Percent of Household participation per neighborhood.	NOTES
West Grand Neighborhood Organization	143	117	0	260	6,919	1.25%	Cancelled in 2020 due to pandemic.
East Hills Council of Neighbors	150	165	45	360	3,844	3.12%	
Neighbors of Belknap Lookout	64	65	75	204	2,061	3.30%	NOBL counts individuals, there may be some duplication in numbers.
Garfield Park Neighborhood Association				No Data	6,260	No Data	Do not have a household count
Eastown				No Data	5,215	No Data	Do not have a household count
Roosevelt Park Neighborhood Association	70	80	48	198	4,032	1.64%	
Creston Neighborhood Association	96	100	104	300	10,659	.94%	Creston ends early & would serve more people with more dumpsters.
South West Area Neighbors dba John Ball Area Neighbors	58	93	0	151	4,373	1.15%	Cancelled in 2020 due to pandemic.
Eastgate	100	100	100	300	5,461	1.83%	Numbers estimate by leadership. They do Mulick Park/Southeast End too and so I did add those population numbers.
Highland Park Neighborhood Association				No Data	1,526		Do not have a household count

Note: Less than 4% of households participated in the event from 2018-2020 in each neighborhood.

If All Neighborhoods had Dumpster Day

This page denotes if all neighborhoods were able to participate in Dumpster Day and used 15 dumpsters a year.. (NOTE: This data was from 2020 and does not reflect all NA's as some are new and were not reflected in CRI Data numbers from 2020).

Data	Neighborhoods	Dumpsters	Total Dumpsters Per Year	Cost of Dumpsters (Last Known)	Total Cost Per Year	Total Cost For 3 Years	NOTES
By CRI Data NA's	32	15	480	\$500	\$240,000	\$720,000	
By CRI Data Neighborhoods	37	15	555	\$500	\$277,500	\$832,500	

Estimated Cost per Year

This page shows potential cost for all households in the City of Grand Rapids to receive trash service. (NOTE: This data was compiled in 2020, cost of trash and household units have increased since then).

Data	# of Housing Units	Cost of one large Tip per Household	Total Per Year (x52 weeks)	Total Cost For 3 Years	NOTES
City of Grand Rapids - CRI Data from 2019	85,549	\$7.15	\$31,807,118.20	\$95,421,354.60	Keep in Mind this is total housing units, not just those who use City of GR trash services.

NOTE: These numbers were calculated when the tip cost for a large container was still \$7.15, it is now \$7.70

Proposed Solutions to Make Dumpster Day Equitable

Dumpster Day Equitable Solutions

1. Have a FREE curbside pick up day, 4 times a year (Spring/Summer/Fall and Winter) for residents to help eliminate trash hoarding. It would be nice to do a quarterly yard waste curbside pickup as well.
 - a. This can be done on regular trash pickup days by zone.
 - b. This will make it equitable for ALL residents in the city of Grand Rapids to participate in, regardless of transportation, economic status, where they live, etc.
2. Create a comprehensive guide to trash services and alternatives available to residents in the City of Grand Rapids-The NA's have a great example that could be used as a template.

These proposed solutions are supported by the following entities & residents:

Seeds of Promise

Southwest Area Neighbors dba John Ball Area Neighbors

West Grand Neighborhood Organization

Highland Park Neighborhood Association

Grand Rapids Food Co-op

Annette & Gerald Vandenberg - Creston Residents

Chi Benedict - West Grand Resident

Greg Wilkins - Eastgate Neighborhood

Regenail Thomas – Southtown

Daniel Grinwis – Westside Champion

Kymie Spring - Highland Park

Resident of Highland Park

Ed Novakowski - West Grand Resident

Ellen Atkins - King Park Neighborhood

Eileen Kane - West Grand Resident

Vicki Manning - West Grand Resident

Sharon Straight

Lisa Honeycutt - West Grand Resident

Lisa Taylor - West Grand Resident

Alan Poulisse - West Grand Resident

Bex & Brian Brix – SWAN/JBAN Resident

Linda Jones - Grand Rapids Food Co-op

Lucas Leverett - West Grand Resident

Take the survey and let us know your thoughts on the Proposed Solutions!

Link: [Trash Equity Survey](#)