

DALY CITY

Pilot Project's Outreach Effort Reduces Illegally Dumped Mattresses

Overview

Daly City has been combating illegal dumping for years and, in 2020, began increasing its efforts to mitigate it. The enhanced efforts achieved some success, but the problem of illegal dumping persisted.

In 2024, the Mattress Recycling Council (MRC) partnered with Daly City to launch targeted mattress collection and enhanced outreach strategies to reduce illegal mattress dumping in high-density neighborhoods with identified hot spots.

Executive Summary

The city selected 12 neighborhoods, each with a history of illegal dumping, to participate in the pilot. The two-pronged approach included an outreach campaign and 12 hyperlocal collection events. The outreach campaign successfully increased awareness of the city's free annual services, and 892 mattresses were collected at the special events. Overall, Daly City's efforts reduced the number of illegally dumped mattresses from 756 in 2023 to 504 in 2024, a decrease of 254.

The Problem

In Fall 2020, the city launched a campaign, C.L.E.A.N. Daly City, to reduce illegal dumping using the "Four E's": Education, Engagement, Enforcement, and Eradication.

While the education and enforcement efforts yielded positive results, the engagement and eradication components fell short. Strategies during this period focused on sending direct mailers to property owners, surveillance camera-based enforcement, and holding community cleanup events.

Following the implementation of the C.L.E.A.N. campaign, city staff identified two primary causes for mattresses still being illegally dumped – both of which would be addressed in the MRC pilot program:

- **Landlords failed to schedule bulky item pickups for multi-family dwellings.**
- **Residents lacked transportation to bring mattresses to community recycling events.**

Many hot spots were located near multi-family dwellings.

City staff and Republic Services determined that property managers in these areas had not scheduled the free bulky item collections available to city residents.

The Pilot Program

At the start of the pilot, the city partnered with Republic Services to test targeted strategies to improve recycling access for residents who faced barriers to disposal. The pilot focused on expanding mattress disposal options in the selected neighborhoods while reinforcing awareness of the city's existing annual services: one bulky-item pickup and a twice-a-year mattress collection event. Visitors to the city's website, www.dalycity.org/mattressrecycling, were reminded that fines for illegal dumping begin at \$1,000 and increase up to \$10,000 per incident.

Hyperlocal Mattress Collection Events

A core component of the pilot was the 12 hyperlocal collection events, which allowed residents in eligible neighborhoods to schedule an appointment for curbside mattress pickup. Residents could schedule pickup for up to four mattresses or box springs, which were collected by City staff and Republic Services crews. This approach was designed to address the transportation barrier faced by tenants and increase participation in proper disposal. A total of 892 mattresses were collected across all events.

The city also offered supplemental collection events at its Corporation Yard, inviting residents outside of the selected neighborhoods to drop off mattresses at no cost. Through these additional events, the city collected 113 mattresses.

Outreach Efforts

To inform residents about the curbside collection appointments, the city mailed invitations to all households in the selected neighborhoods 7–10 days before each event. Each invitation included a QR code linked to a translation tool on the city's website, www.dalycity.org/mattressrecycling. The invitation was available in seven languages. More than 23,000 pieces of mail were sent throughout the pilot year.

Through the invitation, residents were encouraged to call and schedule a mattress pickup on their designated collection day. During the scheduling process, the city staff spoke with approximately 500 residents. The residents were not only told about their neighborhood pickup but also about ongoing options such as the free annual bulky item pickup and semiannual recycling events.

The outreach efforts successfully increased awareness of the City's pick-up programs. Appointment calls made during the pilot period revealed that many residents were unaware of the city's free annual bulky-item service.

Mattress Collection Events	Mattresses Collected
12 hyperlocal neighborhood events	892
Corporation Yard events	113
Total mattresses collected	988

Objectives Met

The city set a 2024 goal to reduce illegal dumping by 25% (182 fewer mattresses) compared to 2023. The pilot exceeded that goal, achieving a 34% reduction and eliminating 254 illegally dumped mattresses in 2024.

Year	Mattresses Illegally Dumped	Change from Prior Year
2023	756	—
2024	502	254 fewer

The pilot demonstrated that neighborhood-level curbside bulky-item collection events, combined with effective outreach, can shift resident behavior and reduce illegal dumping. The efforts highlighted which communication strategies resonate most in Daly City's high-density neighborhoods and underscored the value of offering disposal options that match residents' needs.

Lessons Learned

Just scheduling an extra mattress collection event would not have enabled the city to meet – and exceed – its goal. Rather, the key was multilingual outreach to both the property managers and the tenants of the apartment complexes. More than half of Daly City residents are born outside the U.S., making it critical to provide printed multilingual outreach and education to reach a wider audience. Rental properties are more likely to experience illegal dumping due to higher tenant turnover and the potential absence of on-site property management. The high turnover necessitates ongoing direct education on the proper disposal and recycling of mattresses, as well as the consequences of illegal dumping.



Going Forward

Building on insights learned, Daly City plans to continue offering hyperlocal collection events and multilingual outreach into its ongoing bulky item programs. Future efforts will focus on sustained engagement with multifamily communities, consistent use of direct mail for event promotion, and refining communication timing to maximize participation. These steps aim to maintain the city's progress while preventing illegal dumping.