

Performance Audit

REDD UP DIVISION

**DEPARTMENT
OF PUBLIC WORKS**

Report by the
Office of City Controller

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September, 2010



September 29, 2010

To the Honorables: Mayor Luke Ravenstahl and
Members of Pittsburgh City Council:

The Office of City Controller is pleased to present this Performance Audit of the *Department of Public Works Redd Up Crew* conducted pursuant to the Controller's powers under Section 404(c) of the Pittsburgh Home Rule Charter.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Redd Up Crew was formed primarily to address vacant property blight within the City. The crew is used for a variety of tasks such as lot clearance, boarding of vacant structures, debris removal, site remediation, and code enforcement blitzes. During the winter season the Crew performs general Department of Public Work (DPW) functions, such as snow removal and pot-hole repair. The Crew is used heavily for city-wide special events work.

Findings and Recommendations

City Operating Budget Presentation

Finding: In 2009, Redd Up Crew positions were listed as part of Public Works Bureau of Properties budget which is concerned primarily with the maintenance of City-owned public facilities. The Redd Up Crew deals primarily with vacant property remediation, DPW operational tasks as needed and special events tasking.

Recommendation: The Redd Up Crew should be returned as a separate entity in the City budget to better provide information about staffing, cost and work statistics. As an alternative, Redd Up Crew resources should specifically be identified within the Bureau of Properties budget.

Work Distribution

Finding: The Haul and Load cost charged for Redd Up operations, which consists of set-up, tear-down, and travel time costs, have been at 24-25% of total costs during the audit period. Working at sites across the City from one location with a flexible schedule, the amount of time charged to this function appears to be within an acceptable range.

Finding: Half of the Redd Up crew's work is involved in its original and primary function of vacant lot clean-up. In 2008, 22% of its time was spent in boarding up vacant houses, dropping to 14% in 2009. A minimal (under 10%) amount of the time was charged to general operations, special events, or administrative/maintenance functions.

Finding: The Green-Up tasks of fertilizing, mulching, planting and watering are not being recorded by the Green-Up crew, which charges most of its work to "Cleaning". This makes the Site Cost reports inaccurate and less useful as a Public Works management tool.

Recommendation: The Green-Up crew should use the proper task codes when charging work hours. This would provide a more accurate accounting of completed work.

Redd Up Actuals versus Budget

Finding: The overall 2008 budget for Redd Up was \$328,382 and the actual amount spent was \$352,671. The overall 2009 budget was \$526,799 and the actual amount spent was \$533,631.

Finding: Redd Up salary costs were 10% over budget in 2008, but within ½% of budget in 2009.

Finding: Redd Up premium pay rose from 3% of total payroll in 2008 to 8% in 2009. Nearly two-thirds of the overtime costs were due to special event work downtown.

Recommendation: The Redd Up crew is used for city-wide special events so that neighborhood DPW divisions are not left with insufficient manpower. Public Works must strike a balance between spreading the workload and satisfying the requirements of existing contracts, especially regarding overtime determination. Management should address the issue of overtime scheduling as a part of future contract negotiations.

Finding: The materials cost charged to Redd Up rose 23% from 2008 to 2009 while the budget increased only 3%.

Recommendation: Material costs should be budgeted at the same rate as the projected workload for the year. Workload increased 33% from 2008 to 2009, and a corresponding increase in material costs should be anticipated.

Neighborhood Distribution of Redd Up Services

Finding: During 2008-09 41% of Redd Up services work was done in the North Side and Council District #6. Another 37% of services were rendered to the western sector of the City, the South Side, and the Garfield-East Liberty-Homewood area. The South Hills, Hilltop, and the Shadyside-Squirrel Hill, 8th and 15th Wards generated the least Redd Up activity.

Finding: Much of the scheduling of the Redd Up crew is determined by citizen complaints made through the 311 system. The neighborhoods serviced correspond in a large degree to those areas that generated larger amounts of complaints. However, some communities appear to be under-served based on 311 call volume.

Finding: The Hilltop communities of Carrick, Knoxville, Allentown, and Mt. Washington, along with the South Hills neighborhoods of Beechview and Brookline, are six of the top twelve neighborhoods in reporting incidents of Redd Up related blight problems to 311. Yet in 2008 none of those communities were among the top ten neighborhoods serviced by Redd Up, and in 2009, none of them were among the top twenty.

Recommendation: Both the Hilltop neighborhoods and the South Hills should be more actively served by the Redd Up crew.

Task Completion Rate

Finding: The lot clean-up crew cleared 360 properties in 2008 and 839 in 2009. The Mayor's 311 Service Center (MSC) forwarded 142 complaints in 2008 and 147 in 2009 to the Redd Up section and to Public Works.

Finding: The Board Up section closed 1,588 open buildings in 2008 and 1,038 in 2009. The calls forwarded to them specifically and to Public Works generally by the MSC were 1,303 in 2008 and 1,082 in 2009. This would indicate a high completion rate performed in an acceptably timely manner.

Finding: It appears that the majority of Redd Up jobs are undertaken and completed in a timely manner. Part of the difficulty in determining the call volume is because the MSC reports and PITTMaps reports capture different aspects of the complaint data.

Recommendation: For internal management purposes, DPW should design a report in conjunction with PITTMaps and the Mayor's Service Center that shows Redd Up related and other departmental complaint resolution by neighborhood. At a minimum, information should include complaint type, address, date the complaint was forwarded for action and date the complaint was resolved.

We are pleased that Department of Public Works administration concurs with the audit findings.

Sincerely,

Michael E. Lamb
City Controller

INTRODUCTION

This performance audit of the Department of Public Works Redd Up Crew was conducted pursuant to Section 404(c) of the Pittsburgh Home Rule Charter. The audit examines the activities and performance of the City Redd Up Crew.

OVERVIEW

The concept of “Redd Up” (a local colloquialism taken from a Scottish idiom that means “to clean”) was introduced into City operations in 2006 during the administration of Mayor Bob O’Connor. The term was used to launch a neighborhood clean-up campaign during the Major League Baseball All-Star Game and associated festivities.

The Redd Up concept is still used today as an anti-litter umbrella sponsored by various community groups and Allegheny CleanWays. It allows neighborhoods to address litter and illegal dump sites by combining local volunteer labor, non-profit supplies and expertise, and City pick-up. The work of Allegheny CleanWays is *not* part of the audit.

The audit will examine the performance of a dedicated Department of Public Works (DPW) section known as the Redd Up Crew. The Redd Up Crew was formed to address vacant property blight within the City.

Redd Up Crew

The Redd Up Crew had its own budget section during 2007-08. Since 2009, the crew has been included with the DPW’s Bureau of Properties. The Redd Up section consists of the Redd Up crew, which clears debris and vegetation, a Board-Up crew, a two man crew which seals vacant buildings, and a Green Up crew, which reclaims vacant lots by planting grass and other greenery.

The Redd Up Crew exists as its own specialty division and is located at 931 Saw Mill Run Boulevard. It has a work fleet of three pick-up trucks, 1 one-ton dump truck, 1 Tiger machine (a mechanized vegetation remover) and a skid loader. Additional equipment is available as needed through the other DPW divisions.

The Redd Up Crew’s budgeted positions consist of 1 foreman, 1 full-time driver, 1 part-time driver, four full-time laborers, four seasonal laborers, and an account clerk. If needed crews from other DPW divisions can be utilized when available.

The Redd Up Crew had its own manager during the audit period, but that position was eliminated in the 2010 budget. Now its activities are overseen by the Assistant Director of Properties.

The crew is used for a variety of tasks such as lot clearance, boarding up of vacant structures, debris removal, site remediation, and Main Street/code enforcement blitzes. They also perform general DPW functions, such as snow removal and pot-hole interdiction during the winter season when lot clean-up is less needed and City facility maintenance.

The crew is used heavily for city-wide special events work such as the Super Bowl and Stanley Cup parades and the G-20 summit so that the neighborhood divisions are not left with insufficient manpower.

**TABLE 1
2008-2009 REDD UP CREW
PERFORMANCE STATISTICS**

MONTH	Properties Boarded 2008	Properties Boarded 2009	Lots Cleared 2008	Lots Cleared 2009	Tons of Debris Cleaned 2008	Tons of Debris Cleaned 2009
January	175	62	8	4	102	60
February	86	72	9	16	51	308
March	85	99	5	32	34	490
April	117	23	15	530	245	0
May	217	95	12	38	196	675
June	184	93	25	31	419	456
July	71	70	58	26	967	453
August	75	93	64	52	958	2143
September	148	128	28	26	980	1519
October	186	121	54	49	1422	1031
November	124	68	28	23	452	407
December	120	114	54	12	139	84
TOTAL	1588	1038	360	839	5965	7626

** Information from PittMAPS 2008 & 2009 "Department of Public Works" reports*

The Redd Up crew's schedule is made up by the foreman, usually a day in advance. Sources for job assignments include calls received by 311, requests originated by the Bureau of Building Inspection (BBI), the Department of Public Safety, City Council, the Mayor's Office, and reports and observations made by the crew members while on other job sites.

The schedule also depends on various factors such as neighborhood clustering of requests, urgency of the work required, community sweeps, and special events.

As a rule of thumb, the job requests for the Redd-Up crew are usually generated through the 311 Mayor's Service Center (MSC), which serves as the pass-through agency for service requests from different City departments. Job requests from Public Safety,

BBI, and MSC, and Green-Up jobs are seasonal and planned in advance with community input.

TABLE 2

2008-2009 MAYOR'S SERVICE CENTER (311) COMPLAINTS*			
Top 311 Complaints by Complaint Type:	2008	2009	Grand Total
<i>Weeds/Debris</i>	<i>6730</i>	<i>5478</i>	<i>12208</i>
Potholes	5340	4522	9862
Snow & Ice Control	2377	2865	5242
Abandoned Vehicle	1652	1575	3227
<i>Vacant and Open</i>	<i>1309</i>	<i>1074</i>	<i>2383</i>
Miscellaneous	903	1074	1977
Building Violation - Residential	1040	1116	2156
<i>Overgrowth</i>	<i>1150</i>	<i>1091</i>	<i>2241</i>

**Information from PittMAPS "Citywide Problems 2007-2009" report*

The creation of the Redd Up Crew was a response to the overwhelming number of complaints concerning weeds, debris, vacant and open buildings, and overgrown lots by Pittsburgh residents. As shown in Table 2, these categories formed three of the top eight complaint categories handled by the Mayor's Service Center in 2008-09.

The Redd Up crew cleans blighted lots in the City, while City and Urban Redevelopment Authority owned properties in Community Development Block Grant eligible areas are maintained under contract by City Source Associates, a private vendor.

OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the work scope and performance of the Redd Up Crew.
2. To determine the work distribution of the Redd Up Crew.
3. To make recommendations for improvement.

SCOPE

The audit scope is limited to an examination of Redd Up Crew operations during the years of 2008 and 2009.

METHODOLOGY

The auditors met with the Director of Public Works, the Assistant Director of Properties, and crew foremen and visited Redd Up headquarters.

City budget documents were examined for 2008-09. Work statistics were provided by Pittsburgh Management and Performance System (PittMAPS) and the Department of Public Works 2008-2009 Site Cost reports for the Green Up and Redd Up crews. Site Cost reports show hours charged by task and neighborhood.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Budget Presentation

In 2008, the Redd Up Crew was budgeted as its own section under the Department of Public Works (DPW). In 2009, its positions were listed as part of the DPW's Bureau of Properties budget.

Finding: The Bureau of Properties is concerned primarily with the maintenance of City-owned public facilities. The Redd Up Crew deals primarily with vacant property remediation, DPW operational tasks as needed and special events tasking.

RECOMMENDATION NO. 1:

The Redd Up Crew should be returned as a separate entity in the City budget to better provide information about staffing, cost and work statistics. As an alternative, Redd Up Crew resources should specifically be identified within the Bureau of Properties budget.

Work Division

The work duties of the Redd Up division boarding open structures, cleaning overgrown yards, planting greenery to help reclaim neighborhood eyesores, and aiding Public Work operations City-wide. The hours charged to the Crew's various tasks in 2008 & 2009 were:

TABLE 3

2008-2009 REDD UP CREW TIME BY TASK*					
2008 Function	Hours	%	2009 Function	Hours	%
Clean Up	8,352.5	0.505	Clean Up	12,957.0	0.519
Haul & Load	3,970.0	0.240	Haul & Load	6,229.5	0.249
Board Up	3,573.0	0.216	Board Up	3,485.0	0.139
Admin/Maint.	481.0	0.029	Admin/Maint.	1,319.0	0.053
Street/Ops	156.5	0.010	Street/Ops	830.0	0.033
Green Up	-	0.000	Green Up	165.5	0.007
Total Hours	16,533.0	1.000	Total Hours	24,986.0	1.000

**Information from Public Work's 2008 & 2009 "Site Cost" reports*

Finding: The Haul and Load cost charged for Redd Up operations, which consists of set-up, tear-down, and travel time costs, have been at 24-25% of total costs during the audit period. Working at sites across the City from one location with a flexible schedule, the amount of time charged to this function appears to be within an acceptable range.

Finding: Half of the Redd Up crew’s work is involved in its original and primary function of vacant lot clean-up. In 2008, 22% of its time was spent in board-up jobs, dropping to 14% in 2009. A minimal (under 10%) amount of the time was charged to general operations, special events, or administrative/maintenance functions.

Finding: The Green-Up tasks of fertilizing, mulching, planting and watering are not being recorded by the Green-Up crew, which charges most of its work to “Cleaning”. This makes the Site Cost reports inaccurate and less useful as a Public Works management tool.

RECOMMENDATION NO. 2:

The Green-Up crew should use the proper task codes when charging work hours. This would provide a more accurate accounting of completed work.

Overall Redd Up Budget Performance

Finding: The overall 2008 budget for Redd Up was \$328,382 and the actual amount charged was \$352,671. The overall 2009 budget was \$526,799 and the actual amount charged was \$533,631.

TABLE 4

2008-2009

REDD UP BUDGET VS. ACTUAL SPENDING

Year	Budget Salary	Actual Salary	Budget Materials	Actual Materials	Budget Total	Actual Total
2008	\$ 265,784	\$ 290,073	\$ 70,000	\$ 62,598	\$ 328,382	\$ 352,671
2009	\$ 454,799	\$ 456,072	\$ 72,000	\$ 77,559	\$ 526,799	\$ 533,631

**Figures from 2008 & 2009 City Council Budget documents and Public Work’s “Site Cost” reports including equipment costs*

Labor and Overtime Costs

In 2008, salaries were budgeted for \$265,000 but, according to DPW Site Cost Reports, \$290,073 was spent, including \$9,188 in overtime. In 2009, Redd Up crew salaries were budgeted for \$468,865 and \$456,072 was spent, including \$36,282 in overtime. (See Table 6 on page ten for overtime details.)

The 2009 budgeted amount rose because of personnel additions and changes. A three-man Green-Up crew and a dedicated account clerk were added to the staff; the Program Director was upgraded to an Assistant Director.

Overtime must be approved by the Director or Assistant Director, and is generally used to complete scheduled jobs in one neighborhood so the crew does not have to return to clean one or two lots. No premium pay was allotted for the Redd Up crew in 2008 and no extra premium pay was added to the Bureau of Property budget in 2009.

TABLE 5

2008-2009 REDD UP BUDGETED SALARY ACCOUNT*			
TITLE	SALARY 2008	TITLE	SALARY 2009
Program Mgr.	\$ 60,607	Asst. Director	\$ 72,861
Acct. Clerk	\$ -	Acct. Clerk	\$ 29,886
Foreman	\$ 40,160	Foreman	\$ 41,164
2 Laborers	\$ 66,909	3 Laborers	\$ 103,484
2 Seasonal	\$ 32,168	2 Seasonal	\$ 68,989
Gen. Laborer	\$ 37,163	2 Gen. Labor	\$ 76,407
Driver	\$ 36,997	2 Drivers	\$ 76,074
Total	\$ 274,004	Total	\$ 468,865
Vacancy	\$ 265,784	Vacancy	\$ 454,799

**Information from City Council's 2008 &- 2009 Budget Documents*

As illustrated in Table 6, much of the 2009 overtime costs were incurred preparing downtown for the G-20 summit. Sixty-three percent (63%) of the premium pay earned by the Redd Up crew is attributable to this event.

Finding: Redd Up salary costs were 10% over budget in 2008, but within ½% of budget in 2009.

Finding: Redd Up premium pay rose from 3% of total payroll in 2008 to 8% in 2009. Nearly two-thirds of the overtime costs were due to special event work downtown. (See Table 5 on page nine.)

RECOMMENDATION NO. 3:

One of the purposes of the Redd Up crew is to provide a city-wide staff for special events tasks so that neighborhood DPW divisions will not overtax their manpower or workload. However, Public Works must strike a balance between spreading the workload and satisfying the requirements of existing contracts, especially regarding overtime determination. Management should address the issue of overtime scheduling as a part of future contract negotiations.

TABLE 6

2008-2009 REDD UP LABOR OVERTIME CHARGES*			
OT NEIGHBORHOOD	SITE TOTAL \$	OT NEIGHBORHOOD	SITE TOTAL \$
Cal-Kirkbride	\$ 2,303.18	<i>Downtown</i>	\$ 22,815.04
North Shore	\$ 1,719.34	North Shore	\$ 2,693.98
Brighton Heights	\$ 1,432.20	Esplen	\$ 1,748.61
Homewood North	\$ 599.73	Marshall-Shadeland	\$ 1,462.14
East Hills	\$ 553.52	Middle Hill	\$ 1,087.36
2008 REDD UP OVERTIME COSTS		2009 REDD UP OVERTIME COSTS	
Citywide Overtime Cost	\$ 9,188.35	Citywide Overtime Cost	\$ 36,282.40
Total Overall Labor Cost	\$290,073.13	Total Overall Labor Cost	\$ 456,072.24
OT Percent (%)	0.03167	OT Percent (%)	0.07955

** Information from the 2008 & 2009 Public Work's "Site Cost" reports*

Supplies and Equipment Costs

In 2008, Redd Up material and supply expenses were budgeted at \$70,000 and \$63,194 was spent. In 2009, material and supply expenses were budgeted for \$72,000 and \$77,963 was spent.

In 2008, Redd Up equipment costs were \$141,721. In 2009, equipment costs increased to \$217,128. (Equipment costs are not a budgeted item. The actual usage value of the equipment and vehicles used by the Crew are determined by fuel, upkeep, purchase price, etc. in accordance with Federal Emergency Management Agency calculations.)

Manpower was increased in 2009, as shown by the salary budget increase of 71% in 2009, but there was no corresponding increase in the equipment and supply budget.

Finding: The equipment costs charged against the Redd Up Crew went from \$141,721 to \$217,128, an increase of 47% (these charges are used for internal purposes or as costs that can be charged to an outside source, and are not budgeted). The materials cost charged to Redd Up rose 23% from 2008 to 2009 while the budget increased only 3%.

RECOMMENDATION NO. 4:

Material costs should be budgeted at the same rate as the projected workload for the year. The workload, as shown on Table #7 below, increased 33% from 2008 to 2009, and a corresponding increase in material costs should be expected.

Neighborhood Distribution of Redd Up Services

The Redd Up program is designed to help reclaim blighted vacant properties that threaten the viability of a neighborhood. The auditors examined the areas served most heavily to determine the geographical distribution of Redd Up resources.

TABLE 7

2008-2009 REDD UP RESOURCES USED BY CITY COUNCIL DISTRICT*						
2008-09 CITY BY CD	2008 HOURS	2008 COST	2009 HOURS	2009 COST	2008-09 HOURS	2008-09 COST
Council District 6	2411.0	\$ 88,561.15	5856.0	\$ 175,523.94	8267.0	\$ 264,085.09
Council District 1	3773.5	\$ 109,833.65	4855.5	\$ 135,981.22	8629.0	\$ 245,814.87
Council District 2	2278	\$ 65,749.67	3767.5	\$ 105,962.94	6045.5	\$ 171,712.61
Council District 9	2196.5	\$ 66,432.69	2948.5	\$ 88,867.90	5145.0	\$ 155,300.59
Unspecified	1576.5	\$ 38,026.42	2725.0	\$ 105,930.33	4301.5	\$ 143,956.75
Council District 3	1820.0	\$ 55,604.29	2404.5	\$ 70,514.98	4224.5	\$ 126,119.27
Council District 5	850.5	\$ 25,312.21	855.5	\$ 24,036.58	1706.0	\$ 49,348.79
Council District 4	1164.0	\$ 31,596.92	676.5	\$ 17,718.21	1840.5	\$ 49,315.13
Council District 7	371.0	\$ 10,948.41	751.0	\$ 21,661.54	1122.0	\$ 32,609.95
Council District 8	92.0	\$ 2,922.37	146.0	\$ 4,965.37	238.0	\$ 7,887.74
CITY TOTAL	16,533.0	\$ 494,987.78	24,986.0	\$ 751,163.01	41,519.0	\$ 1,246,150.79

** Information from the 2008 & 2009 Public Work's "Site Cost" reports and includes equipment costs*

The Redd Up service areas appear to fall into three tiers of work activity. The first tier is comprised of Council District #6, which includes the Hill District, Downtown, Uptown, the Strip District, Manchester, Central Northside, California-Kirkbride, and Allegheny West, as well as parts of West Oakland, South Oakland, and Fineview and North Side Council District #1.

This tier received \$509,900 worth of services and 16,896 hours of labor, representing 41% of Redd Up's total 2008-2009 expenditure.

The second tier of service covers Council Districts #2, #3, and #9, which take in the western part of the City, the South Side, and the East-Liberty-Homewood-Garfield section of the East End. These areas average from \$62,500 - \$85,000 worth of services annually, representing 2,000-3,000 hours of work per year.

They consumed \$453,133 and 15,415 hours of Redd Up resources in 2008-09, between 36-37% of the work performed during the audit period.

The remaining four Council Districts, #4, #5, #7, and #8 comprise tier 3 and received less than \$25,000 per year in services from the Redd Up crew. These Council Districts include the South Hills and Hilltop communities and the remaining East End neighborhoods.

It should be noted that Redd Up activities are not limited to the Redd Up division. DPW divisions also perform similar duties in their neighborhoods as staff availability permits.

Finding: Distribution of Redd Up services during 2008-09 broke down into the following tiers: 41% of the work was done in the North Side and Council District #6. Another 37% of services were rendered to the western sector of the City, the South Side, and the Garfield-East Liberty-Homewood area. The South Hills, Hilltop, and the Shadyside-Squirrel Hill, 8th and 15th Wards generated the least Redd Up activity (See Recommendation No. 5 on page thirteen).

TABLE 8
2008-2009 REDD UP WORK DISTRIBUTION
BY TOP 10 NEIGHBORHOODS*
(Descending order by cost)

2008		2009			
REDD UP COST BY NEIGHBORHOOD	TOTAL HOURS	TOTAL COST	REDD UP COST BY NEIGHBORHOOD	TOTAL HOURS	TOTAL COST
Marshall-Shadeland	1421.5	\$ 41,179.14	Downtown	2659.5	\$ 84,659.81
Manchester	610.5	\$ 35,798.21	Marshall-Shadeland	1550.5	\$ 41,710.29
Brighton Heights	1243.0	\$ 35,341.44	Middle Hill District	1402.0	\$ 39,528.60
Elliott	852.5	\$ 25,761.51	Brighton Heights	1420.0	\$ 38,091.79
Homewood North	731.0	\$ 21,858.90	Sheraden	1326.5	\$ 36,907.32
Middle Hill District	738.5	\$ 20,846.97	Esplen	859.5	\$ 25,897.39
Hazelwood	682.0	\$ 20,663.34	Homewood North	757.5	\$ 23,658.62
Beltzhoover	663.0	\$ 19,290.81	Perry South	736.5	\$ 22,295.79
Sheraden	581.0	\$ 16,119.84	Garfield	685.0	\$ 19,813.95
Larimer	453.0	\$ 13,267.17	Homewood South	579.5	\$ 18,821.78
Top Ten Totals	7,976.0	\$ 250,127.33	Top Ten Totals	11,976.5	\$ 351,385.34
City Totals	16,533.0	\$ 494,987.88	City Totals	24,986.0	\$ 751,163.01
Percent (%)	0.48	0.51	Percent (%)	0.48	0.47

** Information from Public Works 2008 & 2009 "Site Cost" reports and includes equipment costs*

TABLE 9

2008-2009 TOP NEIGHBORHOODS FOR 311 BLIGHT CALLS*	
COMMUNITY	2008-09 COMPLAINTS Per 311 for Weeds, Debris, Vacant & Open Buildings (descending order)
Carrick	626
Allentown	577
Hazelwood	577
Mt. Washington	573
Sheraden	566
Brookline	551
Homewood North	515
Brightwood	481
Perry Hilltop	479
Homewood South	476
Beechview	474
Knoxville	467
L-L-B	466
Larimer	423
Garfield	415
Elliott	414

** Information from PittMAPS “City Wide Problems 2007-2009” report*

Finding: Much of the scheduling of the Redd Up crew is determined by citizen complaints made through the 311 system. The neighborhoods serviced correspond in a large degree to those areas that generated larger amounts of complaints. However, some communities appear to be under-served based on 311 call volume as shown on Table 9.

Finding: The Hilltop communities of Carrick, Knoxville, Allentown, and Mt. Washington, along with the South Hills neighborhoods of Beechview and Brookline, are six of the top twelve neighborhoods in reporting incidents of Redd Up related blight problems to 311. Yet in 2008 none of those communities were among the top ten neighborhoods serviced by Redd Up, and in 2009, none of them were among the top twenty.

It should be noted that the amount of blight complaints logged by 311 may not match the referrals sent to Redd Up. There may be multiple complaints for a single lot, and other complaints may be forwarded initially through the Public Works Department, the Bureau of Building Inspection, or the Public Safety Department, and may or may not be sent to Redd Up for further action.

RECOMMENDATION NO. 5:

Both the Hilltop neighborhoods and the South Hills should be more actively served by the Redd Up crew.

Task Completion Rate

The task completion rate of the Redd Up is difficult to calculate, as the jobs are scheduled by a variety of criteria rather than by the “first come, first serve” standard as discussed on page two of the Overview introduction.

The auditors based completion rates on the number of jobs referred to the Redd Up section by other City agencies. There is no accurate listing of privately owned properties that are blighted or abandoned in the City that would fall under Redd Up jurisdiction, so complaints are the most accurate measurement available for Redd Up service demand.

Finding: The lot clean-up crew cleared 360 properties in 2008 and 839 in 2009 (See Table 1, page two). The Mayor’s 311 Service Center (MSC) forwarded 142 complaints in 2008 and 147 in 2009 to the Redd Up section and Public Works. (Some properties may have been visited more than once.)

Lots added to the schedule also include neighborhood sweeps, community clean-ups, overgrown lots found while working in an area, and other situations that by-pass the 311 system. The auditors have been unable to determine a reliable number of Redd Up complaints received because of these jobs referred from outside the MSC system.

Finding: The Board Up section closed 1,588 open buildings in 2008 and 1,038 in 2009 (See Table 1, page two). The calls forwarded to them specifically and Public Works generally by the MSC were 1,303 in 2008 and 1,082 in 2009. This would indicate a high completion rate performed in an acceptably timely manner.

Most Board Up calls are initiated by either citizens or the Bureau of Building Inspection, and are recorded by the 311 system. All Board-Up complaints are personally inspected prior to closing a structure to ensure that no one is living, legally or not, in the building and to guarantee that the complaint is valid.

Finding: It appears that the majority of Redd Up jobs are undertaken and completed in a timely manner. Part of the difficulty in determining the call volume is because the MSC reports and PITTMaps reports capture different aspects of the complaint data.

The Redd Up administration estimates that it clears 90% of its annual site work, and the auditors found no data that would dispute their claim. A log is kept of pending job requests, so Redd Up can eventually complete them.

The Mayor's Service Center, when contacted for information during the audit, noticed that its breakdown could not be manipulated in certain ways that could be helpful to analysis, and is planning to design a new report format for Redd Up data.

RECOMMENDATION NO. 6:

For internal management purposes, DPW should design a report in conjunction with PITTMaps and the Mayor's Service Center that shows Redd Up related and other departmental complaint resolution by neighborhood. At a minimum, information should include complaint type, address, date the complaint was forwarded for action and date the complaint was resolved.

Cost Recovery

The Redd Up division handles many "dead end property" jobs; that is, the site has been researched, no owner can be located, and is considered abandoned. If the owner or a property holder such as a bank or individual can be located, the City would first attempt to have them clear the property rather than use the Redd Up Crew.

"Clean and Lien" properties are coded separately by Redd Up so that their charges can be segregated from "dead end" jobs. 'Dead End' jobs refer to properties where the owner is dead, unknown or cannot be located. "Clean and Lien" properties have known owners. The site is inspected by BBI, the necessary work is performed by Redd Up, and the costs filed as a lien to be paid when the property is sold. 'Clean and Lien' is seldom utilized because of court costs and administrative time involved in filing and poor prospects for cost recovery.

Any fees collected on outstanding Clean and Lien properties are returned to the General Fund, and it is not possible to segregate them separately from other lien fees. Therefore, the amount recaptured is unknown.