

**Performance Audit  
City Cleanliness**

March 2007

**City Auditor's Office**

**City of Kansas City, Missouri**



March 14, 2007

Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council:

We initiated this audit because Kansas Citians expressed dissatisfaction with the cleanliness of city streets and public areas. The city manager, in his 2007 proposed budget, wrote that he would focus on cleanliness issues in the city, noting that a clean city provides opportunities for an overall better quality of life.

Residents' dissatisfaction reflects cleanliness problems in the city. Residents who attended meetings to discuss neighborhood conditions frequently cited specific conditions including: maintenance and upkeep of housing, commercial property, and vacant lots; overgrown vegetation; illegal dumping; trash and litter; and water runoff.

Kansas City could do better. A city with a population and housing age similar to Kansas City would be expected to have cleanliness satisfaction significantly higher than the current satisfaction level. In other words, there is room for improvement. Setting specific goals and monitoring performance would help the city improve key cleanliness conditions and improve satisfaction.

A draft was sent to the city manager on January 24, 2007 for review and comment. His response is appended. We would like to thank city staff from the City Manager's Office, and the Neighborhood and Community Services, Public Works, and Parks and Recreation departments. The audit team for this project was Brandon Haynes, Joan Pu, and Michael Eglinski.

Gary White  
Acting City Auditor



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# City Cleanliness

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## Introduction

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### Objectives

We conducted this audit of city cleanliness under the authority of Article II, Section 216 of the Charter of Kansas City, Missouri, which establishes the Office of the City Auditor and outlines the city auditor's primary duties.

A performance audit systematically examines evidence to independently assess the performance and management of a program against objective criteria. Performance audits provide information to improve program operations and facilitate decision-making.<sup>1</sup>

This report is designed to answer the following questions:

- Do satisfaction ratings reflect cleanliness conditions in Kansas City?
- Can the city expect to improve citizen satisfaction with cleanliness?

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### Scope and Methodology

Our review focuses on factors related to satisfaction with the cleanliness of streets and public places.

Our methods included:

- Collecting information on citizen satisfaction in Kansas City and 28 other cities.
- Compiling information about specific programs and policies related to cleanliness.
- Interviewing staff in the City Manager's Office and the Neighborhood and Community Services, Public Works, and Parks and Recreation departments.

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<sup>1</sup> Comptroller General of the United States, *Government Auditing Standards* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office 2003), p. 21.

*City Cleanliness*

- Interviewing staff of Bridging the Gap and Mid-America Regional Council.
- Conducting statistical analyses to identify factors related to citizen satisfaction and to examine those relationships.

See Appendix A for more information about our analyses.

We conducted this audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. No information was omitted from this report because it was deemed privileged or confidential.

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## **Findings and Recommendations**

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### **Summary**

Kansas Citizens responding to recent citizen surveys expressed dissatisfaction with the cleanliness of streets and public places. In the most recent survey (2005), 37 percent of the respondents were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. Kansas City's level of satisfaction is below that of residents of other large cities and other metro area cities. City staff and prior audit work have identified cleanliness problems, such as illegal dumping.

Residents at neighborhood-level meetings identified observable conditions related to cleanliness. Residents expressed concerns with: maintenance and upkeep of housing, commercial property, and vacant lots; overgrown vegetation; illegal dumping; trash and litter; and water runoff.

Kansas City could do better. Our analysis of demographic, municipal programs, and citizen satisfaction in Kansas City and 28 other cities, shows that Kansas City could feasibly reach satisfaction levels significantly higher than the current level. Setting cleanliness goals and monitoring performance would help the city improve key cleanliness conditions and improve satisfaction.

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### **Resident Dissatisfaction Reflects Cleanliness Problems in the City**

Kansas Citizens responding to recent citizen surveys expressed dissatisfaction with the cleanliness of streets and public places. Those ratings, which are consistently below ratings for other metropolitan area and regional cities, reflect cleanliness problems within the city. Residents identified specific cleanliness problems, including poor maintenance of housing and vacant lots, overgrown vegetation, illegal dumping, and trash and litter. City staff and prior audit work also identified cleanliness problems. We found that selected policies and programs that could be related to cleanliness had little relationship to citizen satisfaction.

### Residents Dissatisfied with Cleanliness

Kansas Citians responding to recent citizen surveys expressed dissatisfaction with the cleanliness of streets and public places. Only around a third of survey respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with city streets and public areas; and that satisfaction has been decreasing. (See Exhibit 1.)

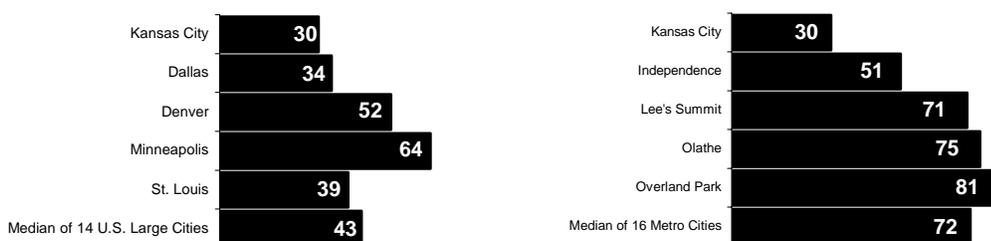
Exhibit 1. Cleanliness of City Streets/Public Areas (Percent of Respondents)

Response	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Satisfied/very satisfied	32	36	32	37	30	29
Neutral	35	36	37	36	30	31
Dissatisfied/very dissatisfied	32	26	30	26	37	37
Don't know	1	1	2	1	3	3

Source: City Services Performance Report, November 2005.

Kansas Citians' satisfaction was low compared to other cities. We compared Kansas City's 2005 survey results with 13 U.S. large cities and 15 cities in the metropolitan region. (See Appendix A for a list of the cities.) Exhibit 2 shows Kansas City's satisfaction compared to four other U.S. cities of similar size and the four largest cities in the metropolitan area. Kansas Citians were the least satisfied in both cases.

Exhibit 2. Percent of Respondents Rating Cleanliness of Streets and Public Areas as "Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied"<sup>2</sup>



Source: ETC Institute

Because cleanliness is an observable condition, citizen perceptions provide a valid measure of cleanliness of streets and public areas. Some cities, such as New York City, San Diego, and Seattle, have programs that allow citizens to record the presence or absence of clean streets, littered vacant lots, abandoned vehicles, and other conditions; and report to government agencies and other organizations that are responsible for correcting the problems. These conditions provide important clues about the basic look and feel of a community.

<sup>2</sup> The percentages exclude "don't know" responses.

### **Residents Identified Observable Conditions**

Residents identified observable conditions in neighborhood assessment workshops, conducted for FOCUS Kansas City around 2000. Attendees at the meetings were asked to identify one thing in their neighborhood that they would fix if they could. They identified problems or issues that could keep residents from enjoying their neighborhood and from doing the things they like to do. We reviewed 124 neighborhood assessment reports based on the workshops, looking for specific conditions related to cleanliness.

We summarized the conditions related to cleanliness in the areas of property maintenance, street maintenance, dumping, trash and litter, water and flooding, vacant lots, sidewalks and curbs, and others. Neighborhood residents were concerned with:

- Up-keep and maintenance of housing
- Overgrown trees, brush or weeds along streets blocking traffic signs or lights
- Illegal dumping
- Trash and litter
- Standing water in streets
- Clogged catch basins
- Condition or cleanliness of commercial property
- Condition of vacant lots

Exhibit 3 shows the detailed list of the conditions described by neighborhoods.

Exhibit 3. Observable Cleanliness Conditions Identified by Neighborhoods

Category	Problems/Conditions	Neighborhoods	
		Number	Percent
Property maintenance	Upkeep, maintenance of housing	49	40%
	Condition, cleanliness of commercial property	18	15%
	Condition of yards at houses	11	9%
	Maintenance of parks property - mowing, dead trees, condition of shelters	10	8%
	Other property maintenance (school, government, land-trust, contractor, etc)	8	6%
	Maintenance of city property	6	5%
	Upkeep, maintenance of KCATA property	4	3%
	Maintenance of graveyard	2	2%
Street maintenance	Tree branches, brush or weeds block traffic signs/lights	47	38%
	Street cleaning	7	6%
	Alley cleaning	4	3%
	Metal plates on streets	1	1%
	Debris following car crashes	1	1%
	Other street maintenance	1	1%
Dumping	Illegal dumping	36	29%
	Rocks dumped	3	2%
	Tires dumped	3	2%
	Bulky items dumped	3	2%
Water, flooding	Stormwater run-off, erosion	36	29%
	Other water, flooding (e.g. standing water in streets)	33	27%
	Clogged catch basins	24	19%
	Debris in culverts	8	6%
Trash, litter	Trash and litter	33	27%
	Installing, maintaining trash receptacles	10	8%
	Installing, maintaining, emptying trash receptacles at KCATA stops	7	6%
	Business trash	7	6%
	Trash spread when animals get into bags waiting for collection	5	4%
	Removing trash, bulky items from evicted tenants	5	4%
	Other trash, litter (e.g. trash in parks, broken glass)	13	10%
Vacant lots	Condition of vacant lots	17	14%
	Woody overgrowth	11	9%
	Other vacant lot	3	2%
Sidewalks, curbs	Sidewalks broken by roots	9	7%
	Other sidewalks, curbs	7	6%
	Broken curbs	4	3%
Other	Abandoned cars	10	8%
	Others (e.g animal waste, wooded area, old rusty signs)	9	7%
	Graffiti	5	4%
Total Number of Neighborhoods		124	

Source: City Planning and Development Department, *Neighborhood Assessment Reports*, 1998 -2002.

### **City Staff Described Cleanliness Problems**

City staff described a number of problems related to cleanliness. When we interviewed them, they described a number of problems: a lack of options for legally disposing of waste encourages dumping; a lack of trash receptacles encourages littering; litter problems exist in some parts of the city; the two-bag residential trash limit encourages dumping; open curbside recycling bins allow litter to blow out of the bins while at the curb; and a lack of solid waste management plans at construction sites encourages practices that harm the environment.

The city manager thought Kansas City was dirty when he first arrived here, noting problems with illegal dumping, street lights, and catch basins. In his proposed 2007 budget, the city manager wrote that he would focus on cleanliness issues in the city, noting that a clean city provides opportunities for an overall better quality of life.

### **Prior Audit Work Identified Some Cleanliness Problems**

In prior audit work, we addressed illegal dumping and cleanliness of city parks. We looked at the extent of illegal dumping and evaluated efforts to reduce it. We also inspected a sample of city parks to assess conditions, noting that litter and disrepair were common and that some facilities, including restrooms, were in deplorable condition.

The 1996 audit report of illegal dumping found that illegal dumping was a major problem citywide and that illegal dumpsites were located throughout the city<sup>3</sup>. Much of the dumping was done by commercial refuse haulers. The report recommended that the city enforce waste hauling permits and register private hauling of solid waste.

The 2000 follow-up audit found that illegal dumping was still a problem in the city.<sup>4</sup> Businesses were still responsible for much illegal dumping. The city still did not issue waste hauler permits, nor did it register waste tire haulers. The report recommended again that the city regulate businesses that transport and dispose waste.

While the follow-up audit found that dumping remained a problem, the audit also found that the city had increased efforts to prosecute illegal dumpers. The city hired two investigators to work dumping cases. From the summer of 1998 through December 1999, the city had successfully prosecuted 11 illegal dumping cases.

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<sup>3</sup> *Solid Waste Management and Illegal Dumping*, Office of the City Auditor, Kansas City, Missouri, August 1996.

<sup>4</sup> *Follow-Up Audit, Solid Waste Management and Illegal Dumping*, Office of the City Auditor, Kansas City, Missouri, April 2000.

The 2002 audit of park conditions found litter and illegal dumping in city parks, disrepair of amenities and structure, and unsanitary conditions in park restrooms<sup>5</sup>. We recommended the department measure and report on the conditions of city parks. The department began inspecting and reporting on park conditions, through the SHAPE (Save, Healthy, Attractive Public Environment) program, beginning in January 2003.

### **Cleanliness Ratings Not Directly Related to Selected Policies and Programs**

Differences in policies and programs among comparative cities do not directly explain the differences in cleanliness ratings. We analyzed the relationships between programs and policies related to cleanliness conditions and citizen satisfaction with cleanliness. We examined eight programs or policies suggested to us by city staff as related to cleanliness. We did not find that the programs and policies we tested could directly explain the varied perceptions of cleanliness in different cities.

We selected these policies and programs to test:

- Having a street sweeping program
- Having landfill/transfer station(s) within city limit
- Having rental property regulation(s)
- Picking up trash more than once a week
- Residents paying directly for trash collection services
- Using trash carts instead of bags
- Collecting yard waste
- Having curbside recycling program(s)

We did not perform statistical analysis on yard waste collection and curbside recycling programs, because almost all of the cities have these programs which would not explain the varied satisfaction ratings of cleanliness.

We analyzed the relationships between satisfaction and programs using data from 29 cities. We included 15 metropolitan communities and 13 regional U.S. cities, along with Kansas City, Missouri, in our analyses. These metropolitan communities and regional U.S. cities were included in our annual city services performance benchmarking reports. (See Appendix A for a list of these cities.)

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<sup>5</sup> *Park Conditions*, Office of the City Auditor, Kansas City, Missouri, November 2002.

Street sweeping programs, frequency of trash pickup, and rental property programs have no significant relationship to perceptions of cleanliness. Relationships between cleanliness perceptions and landfill/transfer stations, use of trash carts, and directly paying for trash collection are better explained by other factors, such as population size, median house value, and median housing age.

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## **Kansas City Could Improve Cleanliness and Satisfaction**

Kansas City could do better. A city with a population and housing age similar to Kansas City would be expected to have cleanliness satisfaction significantly higher than Kansas City's current level of satisfaction. In other words, there is room for improvement. Setting specific goals and monitoring performance would help the city improve key cleanliness conditions and improve satisfaction.

### **Significant Improvement in Satisfaction Ratings Feasible**

A city with a population and housing age similar to Kansas City would be expected to have satisfaction significantly higher than the actual level of satisfaction. We used regression models to predict satisfaction ratings based on population size, median household income, median housing value, and median house age. Our models are able to accurately predict satisfaction ratings of about 60 percent of the cities included in our analyses, within a +/- 5 percent range. (See Appendix A for a detailed methodology.)

It is feasible that Kansas City can significantly improve its satisfaction ratings of cleanliness. Kansas City could have about 50 percent satisfaction ratings according to our best model. Over the last six years, Kansas City's highest satisfaction level was 37 percent. There is room for improvement.

### **Set Goals and Monitor Progress toward a Cleaner City**

The city should set goals and develop reporting procedures to monitor cleanliness conditions. Performance monitoring could rely on data compiled by the city and others. The newly established 311 call center collects data on citizen complaints and requests for services. The annual citizen surveys collect residents' perceptions of conditions. The parks inspection program in the Parks and Recreation Department evaluates conditions of city parks. The Center of Economic Information at University of Missouri – Kansas City conducts housing condition surveys. The Keep Kansas City Beautiful program of Bridging the Gap

rates litter conditions in Kansas City annually. These resources could provide useful data for the city to set goals and monitor progress toward a cleaner city.

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## **Recommendation**

1. The city manager should develop cleanliness measures; propose goals for the cleanliness measures; and monitor and publicly report on progress toward the goals.

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## **Appendix A**

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### **Summary of Statistical Analyses**



## Summary of Statistical Analyses

We analyzed the relationship between citizen satisfaction with cleanliness, demographics, and the presence of specific policies and programs for Kansas City and 28 other cities. This appendix provides detailed information on the cities, the data, and our analysis.

### Selecting Cities

We selected the metropolitan communities and regional U.S. cities that were included in our annual city services performance benchmarking reports for our analyses. The contractor that provides the survey data, ETC Institute, provides us with survey results for 28 other cities.

#### Metropolitan communities:

Blue Springs, MO	Grandview, MO	Merriam, KS
Bonner Springs, KS	Independence, MO	Olathe, KS
Butler, MO	Lee's Summit, MO	Overland Park, KS
Excelsior Springs, MO	Lenexa, MO	Platte City, MO
Gardner, KS	Liberty, MO	Spring Hill, KS

#### Large U.S. cities:

Arlington, TX	Houston, TX	San Antonio, TX
Dallas, TX	Indianapolis, IN	St. Louis, MO
Denver, CO	Minneapolis, MN	Tulsa, OK
Des Moines, IA	Oklahoma City, OK	Wichita, KS
Fort Worth, TX		

### Variables to Analyze

We designed our work to identify and test factors that contribute to citizen's satisfaction with "overall cleanliness of city streets and other public areas." We selected some variables that might connect to conditions or perceptions of the cleanliness in a city, such as, some demographic variables, some city programs/facilities, and methods related to trash collection. The variables are:

- Satisfaction with the cleanliness (percent of survey respondents that were satisfied or very satisfied with cleanliness of city streets and other public areas) in the most recent survey
- Population (in 2000)
- Median household income (in 2000)
- Median house value (in 2000)
- Median housing age (in 2000)
- Street sweeping program (Does the city has a sweeping program?)
- Landfill/transfer station (Does the city have a landfill or transfer station within the city limits?)
- Rental property regulation (Does the city regulate rental properties?)
- Trash pick up frequency (Is the trash picked up more than once a week?)
- Direct trash cost (Do residents pay directly for trash collection?)
- Trash cart (Are trash carts used?)
- Yard waste collection (Is yard waste collection available?)

## City Cleanliness

- Curbside recycle program (Is there a curbside recycling program?)

We had to eliminate yard waste collection and curbside recycling programs from our analysis because nearly all of the cities provide those services, which would not explain the varied satisfaction ratings of cleanliness.

### Collecting Data

To complete our analysis we began by collecting the raw data. ETC Institute provided the percentages of survey respondents who were satisfied or very satisfied with the cleanliness of city streets and other public areas for each city. We obtained population, median household income, median house value, and median housing age from Census 2000. We contacted staff in each of the cities and reviewed city web pages to obtain data on specific programs and services. The following table summarizes the data of the 29 cities.

	Number of Cities	Percent
<b>Population size</b>		
population <150,000	15	51.7
population >=150,000	14	48.3
<b>Median household income</b>		
<\$40,000	15	51.7
>=\$40,000	14	48.3
<b>Median housing value</b>		
<\$100,000	17	58.6
>=\$100,000	12	41.4
<b>Median housing age</b>		
1939 or earlier	1	3.4
1940 to 1959	5	17.2
1960 to 1969	8	27.6
1970 to 1979	8	27.6
1980 to 1989	6	20.7
1990 to 1994	1	3.4
<b>Satisfaction with cleanliness</b>		
percent of satisfaction <60%	16	55.2
percent of satisfaction >=60%	13	44.8
<b>Sweeping program</b>		
No	2	6.9
Yes	27	93.1
<b>Landfill/transfer station</b>		
No	14	48.3
Yes	15	51.7

<b>Rental property regulation</b>		
	Number of Cities	Percent
No	22	75.9
Yes	7	24.1
<b>Trash pick up over 1/week</b>		
No	24	82.8
Yes	5	17.2
<b>Direct trash cost</b>		
No	4	13.8
Yes	25	86.2
<b>Trash cart</b>		
No	16	55.2
Yes	13	44.8

### Analyzing Correlations

After collecting the data, we analyzed the correlations between our variables and citizen satisfaction. The correlation analysis answers questions like: “is the population of the city related to satisfaction with cleanliness?” and “is the provision of trash carts related to satisfaction with cleanliness?”

We found significant relationships between Census measures and satisfaction. Residents tend to be more satisfied with the cleanliness in cities with smaller population, higher median household income, higher median house values, and newer housing stocks.

<b>Bivariate Correlation of Percent Satisfied with Cleanliness with Population, Income and Housing Variables</b>	
<b>Population in 2000</b>	-.733(**)
<b>Median household income</b>	.716(**)
<b>Median house value</b>	.631(**)
<b>Median housing age</b>	.411(*)

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Residents’ satisfaction with the cleanliness is not significantly related to: sweeping programs, frequency of trash pickup, and rental property regulation. Their satisfaction is, however, significantly related to: having a landfill or transfer station, using trash carts, and directly paying for trash collection services. However, these significant correlations are probably due to the size of the city and wealth of the residents.

Bivariate Correlation of Percent Satisfied with Cleanliness with other Variables	
Sweeping program	.164
Landfill/transfer station	-.542(**)
Trash cart	-.428(*)
Trash pick up over 1/week	-.343
Direct trash cost	.504(**)
Rental property regulation	-.101

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Certain programs and services are related to the size and wealth of the city. Bigger cities tend to have landfill or transfer stations within the city limit. Residents in smaller cities tend to use private trash collection services and directly pay for the services. Median household income is positively correlated with the size of the city in our analysis. That is to say, people living in cities with a smaller population have a higher median household income. In addition, bigger cities tend to use trash carts.

Median housing age may also better explain the significant correlations.

Bivariate Correlations of Population with other Variables	
Sweeping program	.049
Landfill/transfer station	.519(**)
Trash cart	.471(**)
Trash pick up over 1/week	.357
Direct trash cost	-.442(*)
Rental property regulation	.108
Median household income	-.376(*)
Median house value	-.260
Median housing age	-.087

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

### Regression analyses

We conducted regression analyses to develop a method to predict citizen satisfaction with cleanliness. Regression analyses answer questions like: “if the population of a city is 100,000 and the median income is \$40,000, what level of satisfaction with cleanliness should we expect?”

We tested three hypotheses:

- Residents’ satisfaction with cleanliness of city streets and other public areas depends on demographic factors of a city, such as population, residents’ income, and housing age.

- Residents’ satisfaction with cleanliness of city streets and other public areas depends on trash-related programs or services offered by the city, such as availability of landfill or transfer stations within the city limit, using trash cart, and free (no direct cost) trash service.
- Residents’ satisfaction with cleanliness of city streets and other public areas depends on a combination of demographic characteristics and city services/programs.

The results of the regression follow:

- (1) Each variable significantly contributes to “satisfaction with cleanliness” when they were regressed individually. Population and median household income can predict about 50 percent of the variance in “satisfaction with cleanliness,” respectively.

**Each variable regressed individually**

	Standardized Coefficient	Adjusted R Square
Population	-.733**	.520
Median House Value	.631**	.375
Median Housing Age	.411*	.138
Median Household Income	.716**	.495
Landfill/Transfer Station	-.542**	.267
Using Trash Cart	-.428*	.153
Having Direct Trash Cost	.504**	.226

\*\* Standardized Coefficient is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* Standardized Coefficient is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The adjusted R square means the proportion of variance in “satisfaction” can be predicted from predictor variable, such as population. In other words, 52 percent of the variance in “satisfaction” can be predicted from the variable “population.” The standardized coefficient means that, for example, for one standard deviation increase in “population,” we would expect a .733 standard deviation decrease in “satisfaction.”

By applying the regression coefficients, we can predict the value of “satisfaction with cleanliness” for 18 cities (62% of 29 cities) within a +/- 5 % range, and 24 (83%) cities within a +/- 10% range. Kansas City’s actual value of “satisfaction with cleanliness” is consistently lower than the predicted values. Some other cities, such as, Lenexa, Overland Park, and Minneapolis, have actual “satisfaction” values higher than predicted ones.

- (2) We regressed the dependent variable, “satisfaction with cleanliness,” on different combinations of the predictor variables. The predictive power (adjusted R square) increased to between over 60% and over 80%. “Population” is always the strongest predictor in different models.

Kansas City’s predicted “satisfaction” value was closest to the actual survey result when considering all predictor variables together. The predicted results of most of the other cities, however, were much lower than their actual results.

## **Conclusions**

Based on our statistical analyses, we reach three main conclusions:

- Residents' satisfaction with cleanliness of city streets and other public areas depends on population, residents' income, and housing age. When looking at these factors individually, Kansas City's actual survey result is lower than predicted values. In other words, given Kansas City's population, income, and housing age, we would expect satisfaction to be higher than it actually is.
- Residents' satisfaction with cleanliness of city streets and other public areas depends on trash-related programs or services offered by the city, such as availability of landfill or transfer stations within the city limit, using trash cart, and free (no direct cost) trash service. These trash-related programs and services are related to the demographic factors of the city, e.g. cities with a higher population tend to offer landfill/transfer stations within the city, "free" trash pick up, etc.
- Residents' satisfaction with cleanliness of city streets and other public areas depends on a combination of demographic characteristics and city services/programs. Kansas City's actual survey result of "satisfaction" approaches the predicted values when we use all of the variables together. However, most of other cities' predicted values are much lower than their actual "satisfaction" results. In other words, the model that best predicts satisfaction in Kansas City does a bad job of predicting satisfaction in other cities.

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**Appendix B**

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**City Manager's Response**





Office of the City Manager

29th Floor, City Hall  
 414 East 12th Street  
 Kansas City, Missouri 64106



(816) 513-1408  
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DATE: February 21, 2007  
 TO: Gary White, Acting City Auditor  
 FROM: Wayne A. Cauthen, City Manager  
 RE: Response to Draft Performance Audit on City Cleanliness

FEB 21 2007

I have received your Draft Performance Audit on City Cleanliness. It yielded one recommendation. Please find my response below:

The information included in this report as submitted is helpful as it addresses citizen concerns as it relates to observable cleanliness, but the information excludes two key factors:

- 1) Activities the city has undertaken to address these concerns since the information was collected and reported, and;
  - 2) The budgetary and staffing environment at the time the survey was conducted.
- Specifically, the table on page 6 of the draft that addresses observable cleanliness issues throughout neighborhoods is a result of conversations had in 2002. Over the past four years, the city has been able to allocate more dollars, restore staff, and dedicate programming to directly address these cleanliness issues throughout the city.

**Recommendation #1: The city manager should develop cleanliness measures; propose goals for the cleanliness measures; and monitor and publicly report on progress toward the goals.**

Response: Agree in part. I believe the city auditor should provide further statistical and comparative analysis for each area of cleanliness. Something that should also be considered in these goals is the functions the City of Kansas City delivers that other cities do not. While observable cleanliness in our city is being addressed, I believe that many of these issues require on-going maintenance and will never be fully resolved. However, for the more egregious cleanliness issues, it would be helpful to identify causation. Identifying the causes for unclean areas would facilitate the development of meaning policy that can address root cause of these issues, and not just the symptoms. This information will help the administration determine a 'fair' or 'excellent' determinations as goals are developed and set.

Since 2003, there have been a myriad of activities to address basic services related to observable cleanliness, and to deliver them to our various communities with limited staff and dollars. The following highlights the activities and some results that have recently been accomplished to address the observable cleanliness of our city:

Consolidation and Increased Frequency Mowing of Vacant Lots: The mowing of vacant lots and weeds was consolidated in 2004 so that rather than at least 5 different departments mowing for the city, one would. Housed in the Parks Department, this consolidated function received

additional dollars, and specialized equipment so that the department could double its mowing effort during the mowing season. As a result, empty lots get mowed four times per mowing season versus two times per mowing season. This effort **directly addresses overgrown trees, brush and weeds.**

Catch Basin Replacement Program: In 2005 a targeted effort to address deteriorating, old and clogged catch basins was undertaken at the Water Department. The Department utilized approximately \$11.2M in bond dollars to address catch basins throughout the city. To date, nearly 2700 catch basins have been replaced throughout the city. Since August 2005, the department has cleaned and unclogged an additional 15,760 catch basins. Since July 2005, the Water Department has completed 317 sewer main repairs, and 373 private line repairs. These efforts **directly address standing water streets, and clogged catch basins.**

Recycling and Weekly Recycling: The City's effort to address refuse in a more environmentally responsible manner was addressed when the city began recycling in March 2004. In November, 2005, the frequency of recycling increased from once every other week to once per week. This effort increased the amount of recyclable materials collected by 20%. The Solid Waste Division of the Public Works Department has also played an active role in neighborhood cleanup activities. On top of the regularly scheduled activities of trash pick-up, leaf and brush collection, and bulky item collection, the Division provided 40-yard trash dumpsters 303 times for neighborhood-volunteer cleanup activities. Additionally, the division provided staff support and dumpsters for 118 curbside neighborhood clean up events. These efforts **directly address trash and litter removal.**

Trash Cart Program: One of the cleanliness issues pointed out in this audit states that many individuals litter because there are not enough receptacles available in which to place trash. To directly address this, the city is prepared to roll out the trash cart program. Housed in the Solid Waste Division of Public Works, this program will begin in March 2007, and will place trash carts in nine neighborhoods throughout the city. These carts will allow citizens to dispose of trash more efficiently, and the instances of animals opening trash bags and spreading trash in the streets will decrease. This program **directly addresses trash and litter removal.**

Addition of Codes Enforcement Officers: The city has consolidated and added codes officers, specifically in the Neighborhood Preservation Division of the Neighborhood and Community Services Department. Neighborhood and Community Services is currently cross-training codes officers so that they will be able to address issues on the interior as well as the exterior of the home. In the last year, 217 illegal dumping cases were investigated. These activities directly address **up-keep and maintenance of housing, and condition or cleanliness of commercial property.**

Neighborhood Improvement Program: Launched in September 2006, the Neighborhood Improvement Program (NIP) is an effort to better coordinate city services to address issues in specific neighborhoods throughout the city. NIP addresses issues ranging from potholes and illegal dumping to health and personal safety. This program addresses **all observable cleanliness issues** raised throughout the city.

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**Appendix C**

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**Acting City Auditor's Response to City Manager's Response**



The city manager’s response asks for further statistical and comparative analysis for each are of cleanliness.

Our annual citizen survey includes questions related to property maintenance, tree trimming, mowing, illegal dumping, litter, and stormwater. The survey for 2006 will be released soon. The exhibit below shows satisfaction with specific areas of cleanliness for the period of 2000-2005.

Percent of respondents satisfied or very satisfied with:

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Cleanliness of city streets/public areas	32	36	32	37	30	29
Enforcing maintenance of residential property	30	33	35	32	18	19
Enforcing exterior maintenance of business property	33	37	39	38	20	21
Mowing and tree trimming along streets/public areas	41	41	40	43	36	33
Enforcing mowing and cutting of weeds on private property	26	31	31	31	16	17
Enforcing and prosecuting illegal dumping	20	25	31	25	14	14
Enforcing clean up of litter and debris on private property	26	33	31	30	16	17
Quality of the city’s stormwater runoff/management system	31	37	40	41	29	30

Source: *City Services Performance Report for Fiscal Year 2005*, November 2005, pp. 38, 45-46.