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City Council Neighborhood Blight Committee announces Fight Blight initiative
Initiative gives residents new, easy-to-use tools to identify and report blight

JACKSONVILLE, Fla*., March 4, 2015* – Members of the City Council Special Ad Hoc Committee on Neighborhood Blight and city leaders today unveiled the Fight Blight initiative, designed to give residents new, easy-to-use tools to identify and report blight. The elements of the initiative include:

- A new Fight Blight mobile app, which allows residents to report issues including overgrown grass, litter and illegal dumping directly from the palm of their hands
- A website, www.coj.net/blight, dedicated to educating citizens on different types of blight, how to report it and what local government is doing to reduce blight
- The Fight Blight kiosk, a dedicated, mobile booth featuring information on blight and how citizens can be a part of fighting blight, that can be transported to communities across the city to increase awareness
- A Fight Blight mascot that will accompany the kiosk and make special community appearances to engage with young people and educate them on the importance of preventing and reducing blight

Designed to be efficient, simple and user-friendly, the Fight Blight app allows users to use cell phones to pinpoint the precise locations of nuisances from GPS-enabled devices or an easy-to-use map within the app and report them directly to the City of Jacksonville, rather than having to register the report via telephone or website. The app also allows residents to include photos in their reports and receive updates via the app as progress is made.

"The Fight Blight initiative, and particularly the mobile app, is an important tool in our community's fight against neighborhood blight," said City Council Member E. Denise Lee, chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Neighborhood Blight. "Together, we are transforming neighborhoods by addressing ongoing nuisance issues throughout our city, and this app empowers citizens to easily shine a light on areas for improvement."

Former City Council President Bill Gulliford formed the City Council Special Ad Hoc Committee on Neighborhood Blight in October 2013, designated Council Member Lee as chair and charged it with examining the status of blighted neighborhoods in Jacksonville and the City's response and responsibility for improvement in these areas. Current Committee members include City Council Members Greg Anderson, Bill Gulliford, Bill Bishop, John Crescimbeni, Warren Jones and Jim Love. Over the last year-and-a-half, the committee has introduced events, such as tire and snipe sign buy backs, and legislation designed to combat blight.

Today's announcement of the Fight Blight initiative is the result of a partnership with the administration, Jacksonville Transportation Authority, Jacksonville Children's Commission, JEA, Jacksonville Public Library, Jacksonville Sheriff's Office and Duval County Public Schools.

At the press conference, JTA and the City unveiled a new bus with a colorful wrap promoting the Fight Blight app. The bus wrap will remain in place for one year, and will help to increase the app's visibility and spread awareness about the initiative.

"JTA is proud to be a part of this citywide effort to improve Jacksonville's neighborhoods," said JTA CEO Nathaniel P. Ford Sr. "We are pleased to provide a rolling advertisement in the form of a wrapped bus that supports the public blight awareness campaign. We encourage residents to use the application to report nuisance properties and other issues. Together, we can and will make Jacksonville a cleaner city."

During the announcement, the committee also unveiled the Fight Blight mascot, which will make special appearances at events across the city to engage with the public and educate young people on the importance of fighting blight. The mascot, a friendly trash can, is in need of name, and the City of Jacksonville and the Jacksonville Children's Commission is holding a naming contest. The contest is open to those between the ages 5-18 and entries will be accepted March 4 through the end of business on March 25. Official ballots can be found at http://www.jaxkids.net, www.coj.net or by paper copy at local libraries or at City Hall. Members of the public can also access computers at the Jacksonville Public Library to vote online. The winner will be chosen on April 8 by the City Council Special Ad Hoc Committee on Neighborhood Blight and the winner will receive an iPad Air.

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