

KC needs a cleanup, council members say

By LYNN HORSLEY
 The Kansas City Star

Kansas City Council members talked trash on Thursday, voicing concerns over a survey that showed more than half the city had a litter problem.

The council reviewed results of the first "litter index," conducted as part of Kansas City's affiliation with the Keep America Beautiful campaign.

This month, 35 volunteers visually surveyed litter in more than 100 randomly mapped parts of neighborhoods and roadways representing about 15 percent of the city's geographic area.

On a scale of 1 to 4 — with 1 being clean and 4 being filthy — the volunteers found some areas that rated 1. And 43 percent of the area scored 2 or better.

But nearly 60 percent of the city had visible litter that probably would require an organized removal effort.

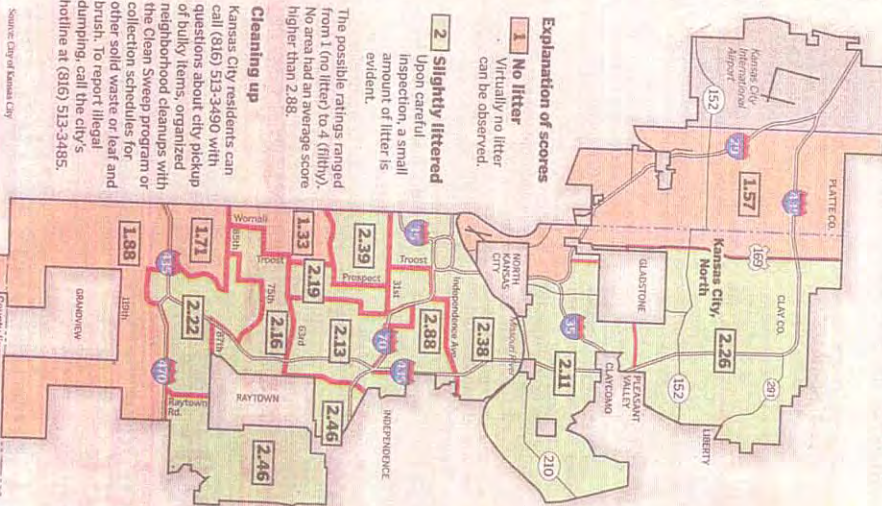
"What can we do to deal with this?" asked 5th District Councilman Terry Riley, who has made illegal dumping one of his pet causes. "This goes beyond the rhetoric... This is serious."

Mayor Kay Barnes agreed, saying the piles of rotting furniture and other eyesores around the city "drive me nuts."

The average survey finding ranged from 1.33 in the area along Ward Parkway to 2.88 in the area north and east of 31st Street and Prospect Avenue. But Councilman Troy Nash, who represents that area around Prospect, said he thought that score was too lenient.

"There's no way you could drive through many parts of the 3rd

Litter ratings around the city



TRASH: Officials cite need for cleanup

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District and not see a 4," Nash said, describing dump sites full of refrigerators, commodes, mattresses, reeliners and tires.

Barnes said she thought the city's new bulky-item pickup service, which provides residents with a curbside pickup date each month, had improved the situation.

However, she noted that when people got evicted, landlords sometimes piled items by the curb regardless of whether the pickup date was approaching.

John Struffebaan, environmental management director, said Kansas City had an efficient trash collection program, organized neighborhood cleanups and an effective enforcement effort with a high conviction rate.

But Struffebaan said the Keep Kansas City Beautiful campaign provided the other essential element — public education.

Campaign coordinator Gwen Slurkey said the index would provide a baseline score that could be used for comparison when the litter surveys were conducted each year.

The city plans several major cleanup efforts in April and May.

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The Kansas City Council puts off a decision on a