

# Campaign urges residents to report abandoned couches, mattresses dumped on city streets

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*The amount of illegally dumped garbage the city's sanitation bureau collected last month nearly tripled*

By **Jessica Flores** | Sep 23, 2019, 9:35am PDT



A group sweeping the side of a street in Van Nuys. | Jessica Flores

*Picking up abandoned couches, mattresses, washing machines, sometimes even*

human feces and syringes, might not be a fun job, but Luis Hurtado views it as a way to give back to the city where he grew up.

“I’m here for a purpose,” he says.

In 2014, Hurtado was the first full-time employee hired by Los Angeles City Councilmember Nury Martinez to form a team dedicated to pulling abandoned bulky items and trash from streets and sidewalks. The team just expanded to two full-time staffers, and Martinez announced Friday that she’s launching a campaign to encourage residents to use the city’s 311 phone line and MyLA311 app to report illegal dumping.

“Communities in the Northeast San Fernando Valley have long suffered from a lack of services and attention,” Martinez says. “It isn’t fair that other more affluent communities are better maintained while communities suffer from so much illegal dumping and trash in our streets.”

The campaign is specifically targeted to her district, which covers North Hollywood, Van Nuys, Lake Balboa, Arleta, Panorama City, and Sun Valley, but the message could be applied across many other parts of the city of Los Angeles, as sanitation workers pick up more and more

In June, the mayor’s office reported that the Bureau of Sanitation had collected an average of 228.2 tons of illegally dumped items every week between January and April, up more than 9 percent from the same period last year. Since that report, the amount the bureau has collected has skyrocketed, nearly tripling in August, with 2,195 tons collected that month.

### **Bulky item pickup**

In the city of Los Angeles, bulky items, like couches, mattresses, and other furniture, are collected the same day as your regular trash collection. But you need to call at least one day in advance: 1-800-773-2489. The line is operated 24/7.

*The LA City Council then approved a motion in June introduced by council members in response to the report that will use \$150,000 to hire homeless and formerly homeless individuals to collect trash and debris, an effort to address illegal dumping.*

*As part of her campaign, Martinez is putting ads bus benches and shelters to encourage residents to use the 311 to report illegal dumping. Last week, she introduced a motion to have permanent 311 signs in her district in addition to the ads.*

*“I want the city to put resources into my district to make everyone aware that this program exists and that there’s no excuse to not be able to report illegal dumping in the area,” Martinez says.*



Community member Severiana Pablo cleans the streets of Van Nuys.

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*Most of the city's 15 council offices either have a contractor or a staff member who clean the streets. Martinez was the first to put together a street cleaning team, according to Heather Johnson, a spokesperson for [LA Sanitation](#).*

*Since January, the "Clean Sweep Team" has picked up 50 tons of trash in the sixth council district.*

*The team was aided Friday by about 30 volunteers who picked up trash in Van Nuys, where streets were littered with abandoned couches, plastic cups, candy wrappers, a baby booster, and old rags.*

*Severiana Pablo, a volunteer from Van Nuys, tagged along with city staffers. Donning plastic gloves and a mouth cover, she helped sweep the streets with a broom with a pink handle. Cleaning the streets is important, she says, as she swept debris out of a drain, "because it goes to the ocean."*