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A clean BEACH FLATS Sweep in Beach Flats

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Volunteers with paint, brooms and garbage dumpsters will take to the streets Saturday to give Santa Cruz's Beach Flats neighborhood a major spring cleaning.

The event, sponsored by the city, will run from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Police will barricade streets around a five-block area that encompasses most of the neighborhood while participants pick up trash, clip weeds and paint over graffiti.

Mayor, council to participate

Mayor Don Lane and other city council members are expected to pitch in. Firefighters will barbecue food for participants.

Lucky and Safeway supermarkets have donated food. Local hardware and paint stores have donated other supplies.

So far, about 50 people have signed up — from students to retired people to city employees donating their weekend time.

"Everybody seems really excited about it," said organizer Linda Garner. "It's been long overdue."

Garner is Santa Cruz's housing code enforcement officer.

Refurbishing Beach Flats

She was hired this year as part of a city council push to refurbish the Beach Flats area, a neighborhood near the Beach Boardwalk amusement park that in recent years has been plagued by gang activity, prostitution and drug sales.

Many Beach Flats residents are recent arrivals from Mexico and Central America who are regularly intimidated by drug gangs, and at the same time forced by economic hardship to live in poorly maintained housing.

"We have a lot of people down there who are nice families trying to keep their units clean," said Garner. "But it is difficult."

"We want to work together and show that the city cares."