



The City of Stockton, California:  
Empowering Proactive Code  
Enforcement Through AI and Education

July 2025



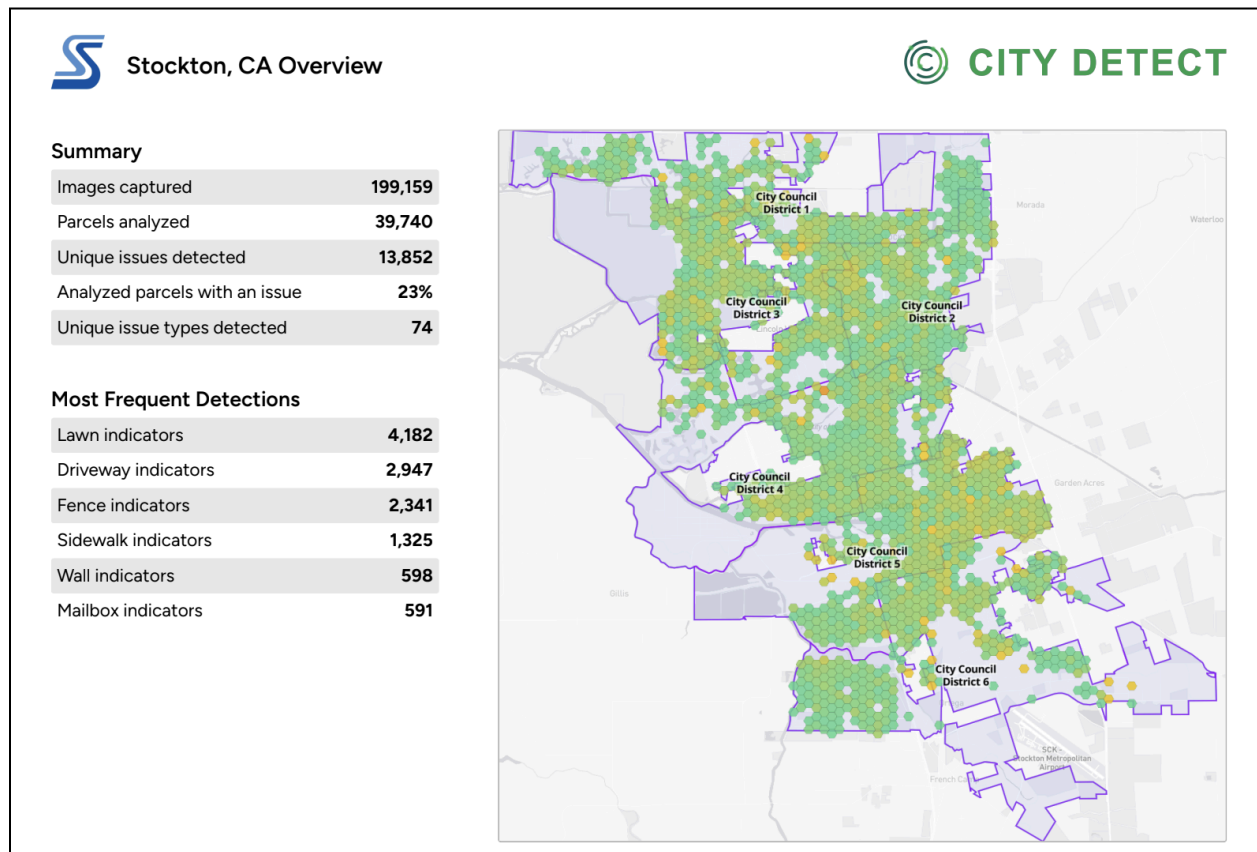
**Client:** City of Stockton

**Industry:** Municipal Government | Code Enforcement

**Solution:** City Detect PASS AI

## Executive Summary

In early 2025, the City of Stockton, California, launched the Revitalizing and Improving Stockton through Education (RISE) program in partnership with City Detect. The initiative addressed a critical challenge: improving urban safety, health, aesthetics, and livability amidst resource constraints. By integrating City Detect’s AI-powered code violation detection technology, Stockton transitioned from a reactive, complaint-driven enforcement model to a proactive strategy centered on education and community engagement. Within weeks, tens of thousands of violations were identified and categorized, and roughly 2,000 proactive compliance notices were delivered to residents, laying the foundation for increased voluntary compliance and operational efficiency.



*Executive summary of Stockton’s detections across their districts*

## The Challenge

In early 2025, the City of Stockton's Code Enforcement Division was operating with six officer vacancies, leaving only 12 officers responsible for covering the city's 65 square miles and serving over 319,500 residents. This labor shortage made it impossible to maintain a proactive inspection schedule. As a result, enforcement became almost entirely complaint-driven, limiting the department's ability to address violations in a timely or equitable manner.

"We are only essentially complaint-driven, where we should be doing proactive work and utilizing education among the citizens. But because of the staffing, we have not been able to do that,"

said Almarosa Vargas, Police Services Manager for Code Enforcement.

Without a proactive and automated system for routine, data-driven inspections, violations like boarded-up windows, graffiti, overgrown lawns, and vehicles parked on unapproved surfaces often went unaddressed unless reported by residents. This approach allowed visible deterioration to persist, making long-term planning for neighborhood revitalization nearly impossible. Business owners like Al Greco, a decades-long resident of Stockton's Miracle Mile, described an exhausting cycle of neglect.

"It just keeps coming back. It's never-ending," Greco said, referring to graffiti on his storefront in an interview with [CBS News](#). "I think it would be worth it if they can stop some of the problems."

These challenges weren't just operational — they were systemic, rooted in the city's reliance on manual data collection and reactive enforcement. The lack of capacity to detect, document, and follow through on violations at scale meant that existing, city-funded programs, such as free graffiti removal and abandoned vehicle towing, were often underutilized because staff couldn't consistently identify where and when to deploy them. This strained trust between residents and the city contributed to a sense of civic disengagement.

A growing body of research underscores the consequences of a complaint-driven, reactive approach. Studies show that proactive engagement, such as contacting property owners early, redesigning violation notices, and following up consistently, can improve compliance by up to 14.7% and reduce enforcement costs by 6% to 15% (see [Nudging Early Reduces Administrative Burden: Three Field Experiments to Improve Code Enforcement](#)). Yet, as Vargas noted, even with a complete team, the city lacked the tools and time to manually identify problems at the scale necessary to support such outreach and education strategies.

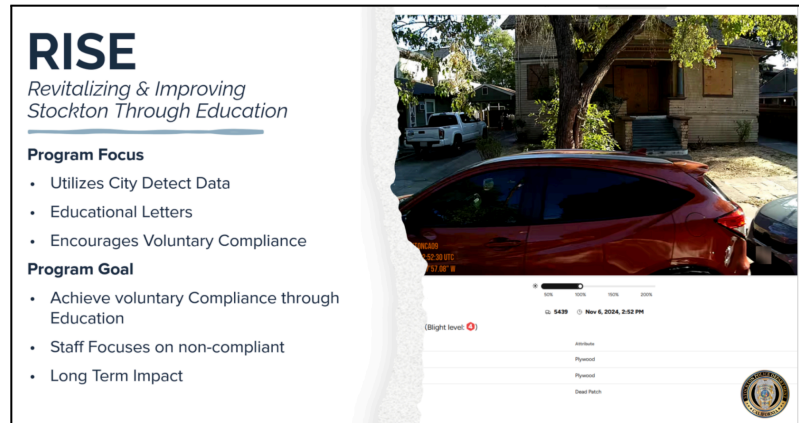
"Even if I was fully staffed, I don't believe we'd be able to identify the number of issues that are out there," Vargas explained.

Stockton didn't just need more personnel — it needed a fundamentally different approach to code enforcement, one that could close the gap between community expectations, limited municipal resources, and the city's responsibility to maintain safe, livable neighborhoods.

## The Solution

In January 2025, the City of Stockton launched the **RISE (Revitalizing and Improving Stockton through Education)** program as a strategic response to chronic understaffing and escalating urban blight. Developed in partnership with City Detect, RISE introduced a proactive, education-first model of code enforcement powered by AI-driven code violation detection.

Using vehicle-mounted Data Collection Units (DCUs), City Detect’s PASS AI system captured and analyzed thousands of street-level images as part of officers’ normal patrol routines at driving speeds up to 55mph. PASS AI automatically flagged a wide range of blight indicators,



*Overview of Stockton’s RISE Program*

including deteriorating facades, overgrown vegetation, and vehicles parked on lawns. These detections were then compiled and mapped in a web application. The outcome: precise, geolocated reports without adding administrative burden to city staff.

Each detection is reviewable by code enforcement officers, keeping the system accountable to stakeholders. Once a determination is made to escalate, an educational letter is automatically populated with the address, the detected compliance issue, and a photo of the violation. personalized and sent to the property owner. Crucially, the city included information on how to correct the violation to support compliance and provide access to additional resources, such as graffiti removal or vehicle towing. This vital step in the enforcement process emphasizes awareness and voluntary action, fostering a collaborative approach to community improvement.

“When I first saw the demo of City Detect, I knew that it could be something that would help us with that educational component,” said Almarosa Vargas. “To educate the citizens on what they should and should not be doing within the city of Stockton limits.”

By incorporating education earlier in the process, the city aims to resolve a significant number of violations before they escalate to formal enforcement. The RISE program serves as a bridge between enforcement and community support by highlighting existing city services that were often underutilized or unknown to residents. For example, Stockton’s free Abandoned Vehicle Abatement (AVA) program allows property owners to request the removal of non-operational vehicles at no cost. The city also employs a dedicated graffiti abatement team, which will repaint vandalized surfaces upon receiving the owner’s consent.

Educational notices issued through the RISE program are based on code violations identified by City Detect’s PASS AI system, which captures and presents geocoded issues in an intuitive web-based application. Stockton’s code compliance officers then review each detection to determine the appropriate course of action — a critical step that reflects City Detect’s commitment to ethical AI implementation and human oversight. Once verified, the system generates personalized notices that include clear images of the violation, references to the relevant city code, and, where applicable, information about free city services such as graffiti removal or abandoned vehicle towing. By embedding both the violation details and available support resources into these communications, the RISE program reframes compliance as a collaborative process — one where the city not only identifies problems but also helps residents resolve them. This proactive, education-based model aligns with best practices in municipal code enforcement, where early outreach and resource visibility are proven to boost compliance and reduce administrative costs.



*PASS AI DCU Mounted on Stockton Code Enforcement Vehicle*

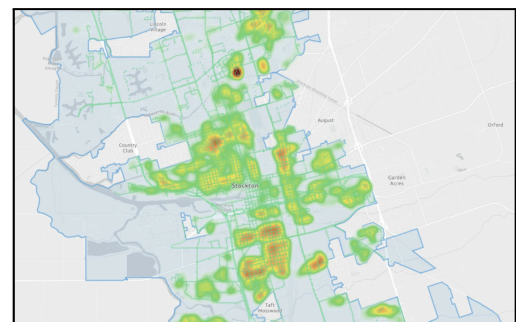
The program also allows for more strategic use of city personnel. Officers now shift their focus to higher-priority or repeat violations, confident that the system was handling first-touch communication effectively. For a department managing over 15,000 annual cases, this redistribution of effort was critical.

“We’re just trying to give people an extra opportunity to correct the violations before we even start that process,” Vargas noted, emphasizing that education wasn’t just about efficiency — it was about fairness.

Beyond internal gains, RISE positioned Stockton to deliver more consistent enforcement citywide, including in communities that had historically been underreported due to lower complaint volume. The data from City Detect enabled targeted planning, neighborhood-level monitoring, and a more transparent, equitable approach to municipal code management.

## The Results

80% of residents who received an educational notice complied with the city’s request. The early success of Stockton’s RISE program can be directly attributed to the integration of City Detect’s PASS AI platform, which enabled the city to shift from fragmented, complaint-based enforcement to strategic, data-informed outreach. PASS AI did more than just identify blight; it



*Heat map of Stockton's blight detections*

quantified and geolocated it, enabling city leaders to craft a targeted, low-cost, high-impact intervention.

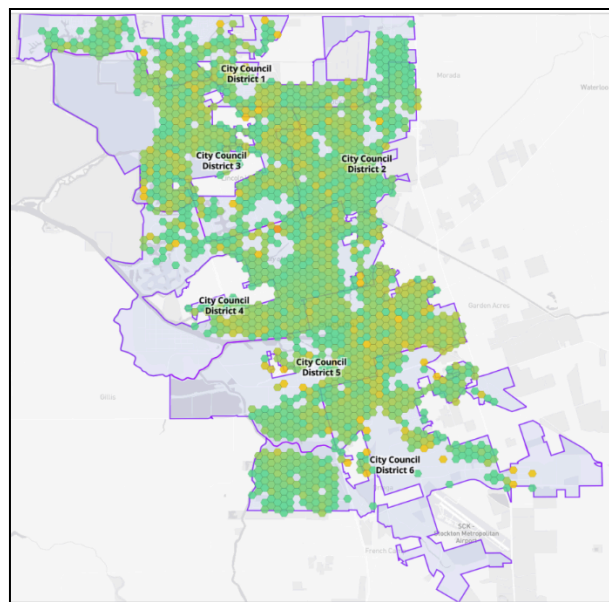
“These folks know what the issues are and largely where they’re at,” said City Detect’s CEO and Cofounder Gavin Baum-Blake. “But what we’re able to actually do is come in and help them identify just precisely and granularly where these issues are and how big the problem really is.”

City Detect’s ability to categorize and rank issues by type and severity allowed Stockton’s code enforcement team to triage their caseloads with precision. Instead of reacting to scattered complaints, officers could plan targeted neighborhood interventions and prioritize enforcement based on urgency and impact.

The platform processed tens of thousands of street-level images, transforming routine patrols into a citywide audit of property conditions. In doing so, it laid the foundation for RISE — a system that could not only detect but also educate, engage, and activate community members to take corrective action.

**By the numbers:**

- 199,159 images captured
- 39,740 parcels analyzed
- 13,852 unique issues detected
- 23% of parcels exhibited at least one detectable issue
- 74 Unique issue types detected



*Hex map of Stockton's detections across their districts*

**District-level analysis revealed significant disparities:**

- Across all districts, **23% of parcels** were found to have at least one detectable issue, with thousands of violations documented.
- In two districts, nearly 30% of analyzed parcels exhibited at least one code-related concern, underscoring the scale and pervasiveness of urban blight.
- The most common issues included
  - 4,182 neglected lawns
  - 2,947 driveway issues
  - 2,341 fence-related detections
  - 1,325 sidewalk indicators of urban decay
  - 598 wall indicators (cracks, mildew/mold, overgrowth)
  - 591 mailbox indicators

But numbers alone don't convey the full impact. PASS AI's ability to categorize and rank issues by type and severity allowed city staff to triage their caseloads with unprecedented precision. Instead of reacting to scattered complaints, officers now plan, concentrate educational outreach where it is needed most, and prioritize enforcement only when necessary.

This shift has led to increased detection efficiency, a sharp rise in voluntary compliance, a reduction in administrative backlog, and a more strategic deployment of field resources amidst a staffing shortage. As RISE continues into its enforcement phase, Stockton is poised to build on this momentum, supported by an intelligent system that not only sees the city's challenges but also helps solve them.

"City Detect's integration into our RISE program gave us the clarity and control we needed to address blight proactively. We're seeing neighborhoods respond—not out of fear, but out of shared investment in their community." - Almarosa Vargas, Code Enforcement Director, City of Stockton

City Detect's technology didn't just make Stockton's RISE program possible — it made it purposeful.

## Next Steps

As Stockton approaches the end of the six-month educational grace period under the RISE program, the city is preparing to shift from outreach to enforcement. Beginning with the March 3rd mailing, property owners who receive RISE notifications will be expected to comply by the stated deadline. Cases that remain unresolved after this compliance date may be subject to traditional code enforcement processes.

This transition is supported by the operational foundation built through City Detect's PASS AI platform, which continues to provide real-time visibility into code violations across the city. The system enables Stockton to focus its limited staff time on verified, high-priority properties, streamlining enforcement while maintaining a strong commitment to voluntary compliance.

### Beyond Code Enforcement: Scaling AI Across Departments

In parallel, City Detect is expanding its role in municipal operations through a new 60-day pilot with the City of Stockton's Public Works Department. This initiative focuses on identifying and routing the removal of roadside debris and illegal dumping, including:

- Tires
- Mattresses
- Electronics
- Appliances
- Televisions

The pilot includes integration with Stockton's case management system, Cityworks, allowing Public Works



Tire detection captured by City Detect

to



generate optimized cleanup routes directly from PASS AI detections. This workflow not only improves efficiency but also ensures that cleanups are prioritized based on need and geographic density, helping the city address chronic dumping sites and restore public spaces more effectively.

Looking ahead, Stockton plans to:

- Expand the RISE program to include additional types of code violations.
- Use detection data to plan neighborhood-specific interventions and targeted outreach campaigns
- Pilot a “Rapid Response” Team to deal with high-priority or recurring violations
- Scale the Public Works integration following the pilot evaluation

Together, these next steps reflect Stockton’s continued investment in technology-enabled, community-focused governance, with City Detect as a key partner in operationalizing that vision.

To learn more about how City Detect can support proactive code enforcement and public works in your municipality, [contact us](#) to schedule a demo or consultation.