

the GraffitiConsultants

Ten Steps To A Graffiti-Free City

Guidebook 6 of 10 Steps

State Of The Art Graffiti Abatement
Strategies For Success



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We would like to commend
you for your dedication to
eliminating graffiti vandalism in
your city.

THE GRAFFITI CONSULTANTS

Rick Stanton, Owner

TEN STEPS TO A GRAFFITI-FREE CITY

By Rick Stanton

Owner of The Graffiti Consultants

We are the only full service graffiti consultation firm. Our proven track record includes:

- Helping our first municipal client reduce their graffiti 62% in one year with almost no increase in their graffiti budget.
- Coaching one city to an 87.9% reduction in graffiti in just one year.
- Training in one city that resulted in a 91.3% reduction in graffiti hotline calls in less than one year.
- Assisting a city in recruiting 1003 new anti-graffiti fighting volunteers in one year.

How can we help you?

Dedication

This book is dedicated to my wife, Patricia Rolland and my three sons, Garrett, Ethan and Jordan.

Author's Acknowledgments

I would like to thank those who have been of great help along the way. They include Patricia Rolland, Jordan Stanton, Lois Rolland, Dave Bonillas, Adriana York, Traci Tokunaga, Erik Hove and Manny Ruiz.

**GUIDEBOOK 6: STATE OF THE ART GRAFFITI
ABATEMENT STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS
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INTRODUCTION

TEN STEPS TO A GRAFFITI FREE CITY

My name is Rick Stanton and I despise graffiti. It frustrates me to no end that graffiti vandals eagerly deface the property of others. Given the target market for this information, I'm sure that the vast majority of you feel the same way. By the way, right now, some of you may be reading this and some of you may be listening to this on a CD. Either one is great because they are exactly the same. So, when those of you who are listening to this hear it referred to as a book, don't be alarmed – it is the same as the CD that you are listening to. In any case, how many of you have ever asked a coworker "How do you think they would like it if I wrote my name with spray paint on their car?" According to the United States Department of Justice, the annual cost of graffiti removal in the US in 2010 was a staggering \$12 Billion. I am also pretty sure that many of you have said "Just think of all the good things that could be done in the world if all the money that is needlessly wasted on anti-graffiti efforts was used for the good of the community. Imagine all the additional soccer fields, community centers, and libraries we could have built. Imagine how many fewer potholes there would be". Can we all agree that working full-time (or even part-time) in an anti-

graffiti effort can be frustrating, demanding, exciting, and challenging all at the same time? Most likely, you don't find it easy or boring.

The bottom line is that it is my hope and dream that this book will help you with your anti-graffiti efforts. If you follow the suggestions in this book, you'll succeed in your efforts to reduce (almost to the point of elimination) the graffiti for which you are responsible. The information contained in the following pages is the culmination of my 19 plus years of full-time work in the anti-graffiti field. It also includes the insights of other highly successful anti-graffiti professionals worldwide.

How do you know that it is worth your time to read this book? How do you know that the information (if followed) will lead to what I promise you – graffiti being substantially reduced in your area? Well...the best way to answer these questions is to give you some background of what happened when San Jose employed the systems and strategies that I've spelled out for you in this book. Other cities we have trained also achieved similar results.

First, however, let me identify the primary target market for most of the information in this book: city employees. We will spend most of our efforts explaining how cities should organize themselves and carry out the plans that are described herein. Some of the information does focus on county agencies – especially in regard to the consequences graffiti vandals must face when they are caught. These groups include judges, adult

and juvenile probation departments, and the offices of district attorneys.

I will now attempt to show you why I'm confident that the systems and strategies in this book will greatly reduce graffiti in your city. I was the manager of the City of San Jose's Anti-Graffiti and Litter Program for 10 years. Believe it or not, San Jose is the 10th largest city in the United States with a population of over a million and an area of 177 square miles. During my time there we were able to reduce graffiti in San Jose by 99.88%. Like any successful achievement, this improvement included the ingredients of hard work, learning from mistakes, and good luck. But most important of all was the mayor and city council who were determined to get rid of graffiti and allowed staff to design and follow a strategic plan that will dramatically reduce graffiti in any city that chooses to implement it. I freely admit that a very few cities may never be able to fully benefit from this information simply because they're too large to make improvements in systems that are written too deeply into stone and/or that have severe gang populations i.e. New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago quickly come to mind.

Let me paint a picture for you of the graffiti situation in San Jose when I was transferred into the Anti-Graffiti Program in 1997. The program was not new. It had been established as a multi-faceted anti-graffiti effort (or program) for at least five years. Individual pieces of the program had been in existence even before that. They had embraced the popular "4E's": Enforcement (catching and

prosecuting graffiti vandals), Education (sharing graffiti information with adults and telling youth not to participate in graffiti vandalism), Eradication (getting rid of the graffiti), and Empowerment (recruiting volunteers to remove graffiti in their neighborhoods). The program was well respected – both inside and outside of San Jose. They did an excellent job of promoting their strengths and successes. The staff in the program was very comfortable in their roles and very proud of their efforts. Their marketing materials were first-class. Their oral reports in meetings always put a positive spin on the many anti-graffiti activities that they provided with an immense amount of pride.

The only problem that I saw when I was transferred into the Anti-Graffiti Program was that there was graffiti **EVERYWHERE**. It had become part of the urban landscape. You couldn't drive anywhere without seeing graffiti - lots of it. It was in all corners of the city. It was big and small. It was on sound walls. It was on bridges. It was on freeway signs. It was on utility boxes. It was on buildings. It was on fences. It was on polls. It was on... well you get the idea. There seemed to be a huge disconnect between the image of this respected program and what you saw on the streets. What I didn't know was why this disconnect existed.

When I first started, I asked the staff lots and lots of questions. I assured them that I was not going to come in and make willy-nilly changes. I didn't even tell them that I was thinking of the disconnect that I just described. Remember - they were proud

of what they did and did not think that there was a problem. I felt that I had to tread lightly. During this initial period, I learned quite a bit. I learned that:

IN TERMS OF ERADICATION

- If someone reported graffiti on the Graffiti Hotline it would take an average of 22 days to remove it.
- If a member of the city council (or their staff) reported graffiti, staff would drop everything and remove it immediately.
- If a member of the public complained about the slow response time and threatened to call the mayor...staff would drop everything and remove it immediately.
- The performance measure target for removing graffiti was "48 working" hours. It was explained to me by staff that "48 working" hours was really six workdays NOT two days. They told me that sounded better and that the administration never really asked them specifically what that meant. I knew right away that deception would come back to haunt us some day when the administration figured it out...and boy did it!

IN TERMS OF EMPOWERMENT

- To become a graffiti volunteer, you were required to attend a three-hour class, held once a month, only on Saturday. The class covered the history of graffiti, how to remove graffiti with solvent, how to paint over graffiti and my favorite...how to operate our power

washer – which no one was ever allowed to borrow or use anyway.

- There were a total of 124 on-going graffiti volunteers.
- Staff organized group graffiti paint-outs every Saturday. Members of these groups did not do any additional graffiti removal throughout the rest of the year.
- Staff would go to community meetings to tell the group about the Anti-Graffiti Program and to recruit volunteers. They would usually go first on the agenda to explain the program and tell them about the three-hour class they needed to take to volunteer. They would ask for volunteers, give each a business card, and tell them to “call me at the office and I will tell you when the next class is and sign you up for it”.

IN TERMS OF EDUCATION

- Staff conducted an anti-graffiti classroom skit for second graders with giant puppets.
- The Anti-Graffiti Program sponsored a large annual Graffiti Conference for the public.

IN TERMS OF ENFORCEMENT

- On the enforcement side, very few graffiti vandals were caught and when they were, not much happened to them. The recidivism rate was very high.
- The only police effort involved one officer who was given a small number of overtime hours each week to investigate graffiti crimes.

- There was a group of about ten adult volunteers (cop wannabees) who were given night-vision binoculars and were sent out to do surveillances at locations that were frequently hit with graffiti.

All in all, after talking with everyone concerned, I felt that San Jose's Anti-Graffiti effort was all "smoke and mirrors".

I will delve into the details of the previous highlights (or lowlights) in the later guidebooks and share with you the changes in those areas that ultimately took place and paved the way for San Jose to become a virtual graffiti-free city. What I will do now is share some bottom line results that will illustrate what is possible if a city trusts and follows the plan that I will present to you in this book.

Please keep in mind that I was involved in varying degrees in most, if not all, of the following examples of the fantastic turnaround we experienced. However, so were others. The main point here is that graffiti can be drastically reduced when dedicated and hard working people follow a proven plan that will lead them to great success.

From: No way to measure success, trends, percent of gang graffiti, etc.

To: An annual Citywide Graffiti Survey

From: 124 graffiti volunteers

To: Over 6,400 graffiti (and litter) volunteers

From: A very light penalty for graffiti vandals
To: An effective package of penalties that severely reduced graffiti recidivism

From: No proactive graffiti abatement
To: An extensive, strategic and successful proactive system

From: A hotline response time of 22 days
To: A hotline response time of 48 hours that was achieved 99% of the time

From: A poor system for dealing with graffiti on private property
To: A private property system that really works

From: A miniscule focus on graffiti from the police department
To: An actual police Graffiti Enforcement Team dedicated to graffiti cases

From: 71,541 citywide tags
To: To 129 citywide tags

These types of improvements are possible in just about every city that implements the systems and strategies that you will soon know.

During my last few years as the manager of San Jose's Anti-Graffiti and Litter Program (the mayor added litter to our responsibilities in 2002) word had spread that incidents of graffiti were going down in San Jose. I received over 60 calls from cities all over the world asking what we were doing to get such

good results. Some cities even sent representatives to shadow us. It was obvious that there was a real need out there to help cities that were struggling with graffiti. After I retired, I began working as a graffiti consultant and have successfully assisted other cities in their goal of drastically reducing their graffiti.

I would like to conclude this introduction by issuing a WARNING: The war against graffiti is never-ending. By following the recommendations in this book, the graffiti in your city will go down. Period. However, when it gets to a level that is satisfactory to most people...that is when the danger begins. The danger is that someone will decide that he can now take the "pedal off the metal" a little. He might think that you do not need to do all of the things that you did to get rid of the graffiti in the first place. He might think that it is now OK to cut or move one of the staff positions. He might think it is OK not to replace an old spray rig that can't perform any more. Please don't let this happen! In San Jose the graffiti has risen dramatically over the past few years because the effort has been largely neglected. Vancouver worked hard to be graffiti-free for the 2010 Winter Olympics. After the Olympics, city leaders felt they won the war on graffiti and defunded their anti-graffiti effort. You can all guess what happened – graffiti came back hard and fast. There will always be an undercurrent of graffiti everywhere. It will be there - ready to explode if cities turn their back on it or even water it down just a little.

It is almost time to begin getting into the details of how you can become a graffiti-free city. I just need to share a few housekeeping items with you. First of all, the Ten Steps to a Graffiti-Free City is made up of ten guidebooks. Each guidebook corresponds to one of the ten steps. You may have invested in all ten of the guidebooks or just the one or more that were of the most interest to you. In either case, each CD and guidebook has a different step or chapter on it but each has the same introduction. So, if you have more than one CD or guidebook, you don't need to listen to or read the introduction again. You can skip directly to the next track on the CD or chapter in the guidebook.

Also, (and I hope this does not offend anyone) instead of using "he or she" throughout the book, I will just use "he" for simplicity sake.

If you thought that this book on graffiti would have a lot of pictures of graffiti in it, you would be wrong. I will use pictures to illustrate some key points but I don't see the need to give the vandals any more sense of accomplishment than I need to. Besides, if you are already involved in an anti-graffiti effort, I'm sure that by now you have seen enough graffiti to last a lifetime.

As I mentioned earlier, this introduction is the same in all of the ten CDs and guidebooks. The same can be said for the short conclusion at the end. So if you have more than one of these books, you don't need to read or listen to the conclusion again.

Finally, most of the guidebooks have one or more "Bonus Documents" at the end of it for you read. Also, in the CD case, the CD that is labeled "Bonus Documents" contains the same documents ready for you to plug into your computer and use as needed. These documents will save you hours upon hours of time. So, thank you for taking the time to read this introduction and on with the show.

GUIDEBOOK 6 OF 10

STATE OF THE ART GRAFFITI ABATEMENT STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS.

When cities start being defaced by graffiti, almost universally, the first thing they do is to initiate a graffiti removal effort. Of all the anti-graffiti efforts that cities use, their abatement work is usually the one that is the most established. This makes total sense because once graffiti is on city property, it will stay there for a long time because if a city staff person doesn't remove it, usually no one else will. Along with being the most established anti-graffiti effort in most cities, the abatement team is usually the group most resistant to change. Additionally, I have found that the overwhelming majority of abatement units are very hard working and dedicated people who develop a kind of competitive battle with the taggers. It is my hope that this group can find a few new tricks they might want to at least try. With an honest effort, they may find something that will help them do their job easier, faster or more efficiently.

SECTION 51

TO CONTRACT OR NOT TO CONTRACT – THAT IS THE QUESTION

SECTION HIGHLIGHTS

- What is the most compelling reason that drives most cities to contract out their graffiti abatement services?
- What are some advantages of contracting graffiti abatement services?
- What are the disadvantages of contracting out graffiti abatement services?

Cities need to decide who will do their graffiti abatement work. Some cities use only city staff. Others contract out their graffiti abatement work. Still others combine a blend of city workers and contractors. Which is best? That depends upon whom you ask. Most cities usually have very good luck with city staff in terms of control, quality, dependability and commitment. However, some cities feel that the cost of city staff, especially when benefits are factored in, is just too high a price to pay. I talk to cities every day and those that contract graffiti removal services can have very different experiences and opinions about this practice. The ironic thing is that even within the same city, I have heard conflicting views about the same contractor.

The most compelling and positive aspect about contractors in general is that they are usually less expensive than city staff. Some do have experience and skilled workers and state of the art vehicles and high tech database and mapping systems.

On the flip side, cities have reported to me that graffiti abatement contractors do not have the same commitment, loyalty, professionalism and skill as city staff. Their work is often low quality. They overstate the size of graffiti when they are paid by the square foot. Some have deliberately given a low bid for a one-year contract only to reach the total dollar amount of the contract three or four months before the fiscal year ended. The city then needs to add more money to the contract or receive no graffiti removal service until a new fiscal year begins. I have heard concerns from law enforcement that when contractors are paid by the square foot of graffiti removed, sharp defense attorneys will successfully argue that restitution to the city by a convicted graffiti vandal should be calculated this way. This drastically reduces the restitution amount charged to the convicted graffiti vandal compared to being able to package the costs of vehicles, paint, law enforcement time (if your state allows it), abatement staff time and administration time when determining restitution due to the city when city staff removes graffiti. Probably the biggest complaint I hear when cities complain about graffiti contractors is that, if truth be told, they have no real motivation for the city to be graffiti-free. This is because they need graffiti to be pervasive in order to justify future contracts and

contract amounts. If the city were graffiti-free, they may not get a contract for the next year. Because of this, I am told; contractors rarely do any proactive or extra graffiti abatement (unless they are paid by the square foot). They may meet their response time goals but not much extra. I have also heard complaints about some contractor's quality of work, customer service and response time.

Please remember, there are many contractors and they should not all be lumped together when talking about strengths and weaknesses.

There are three primary types of contractors. One is the small independent person who removes graffiti for the city. They may do this on an on-call basis or they may work full time at it. These types of contractors are usually found in smaller towns.

Another type is the larger corporation-type graffiti contractor. They usually can service several cities at one time and have a fleet of specialized vehicles and several abatement staff members. Generally, they have integrated high tech databases and tracking systems. The staffs of these large contractors are generally skilled and experienced in graffiti removal. Before contracting with one of these corporations, do your homework. There are many to choose from. Talk to cities where they have worked in the past as well as ones where they are currently working. Be sure to talk to more than one city employee in each city. A council member, a department director and the person who supervises the contract may all have different

opinions about the same contractor. Also be sure not to under fund the contract. Again, I have heard more than once that these contracts have run out of money well before the end of the fiscal year. As you can imagine, this creates an uncomfortable dilemma for the city.

The third primary type of graffiti abatement contractor is when cities contract with organized youth groups. Many times these youth are participating in a vocational and educational program. Quite often the participants can loosely be classified as hard-to-reach because most, if not all have chosen or have been referred to this program as an alternative to traditional high school. Contracts with these groups are generally less expensive than with others because the abatement staff is young and inexperienced. The advantage of saving money and providing job training experience for youth is sometimes offset by poor work and non-dedicated, high turnover staff. One unfortunate California city was not able to renew its long-standing contract with one of these youth contractors due to budget reasons. The result was that the youth in this program lost their jobs. These same youth, many of whom were identified as “rehabilitated, former taggers” retaliated against the city by bombing it all summer with the help of many of their friends.

The choice of whether to contract out graffiti in a city should not be taken lightly. If the choice is made to contract, be sure to thoroughly research your options. There are major differences in the

types of contractors available to you as well as the level of competence and price within each of these types. Finally, if you do select and hire a graffiti abatement contractor, it is critical to assign someone to monitor the contract. This seems obvious, but many times the city never (or very rarely) spot checks individual jobs or even tracks the spending and performance targets monthly to make sure things are on track to the benefit of both the city and the contractor. It is better to catch issues early and deal with them before they get out of control and become a negative media or political firestorm.

SECTION 52

GRAFFITI ABATEMENT VEHICLES

SECTION HIGHLIGHTS

- What features would the perfect graffiti abatement vehicle possess?
- How would you go about getting a customized graffiti abatement vehicle?
- What is the approximate cost of the perfect abatement vehicle?

After you know who will be abating the graffiti in your city, they need the tools of the trade to do that work. If you are contracting your abatement to an individual, large company, or youth group, chances are that they have their own vehicles. If city staff is abating graffiti for you, they will need a vehicle in order to get to the graffiti and to hold the tools and materials they need to abate it. I have seen every type of vehicle imaginable for graffiti staff. I have seen big trucks, small trucks, flat bed trucks, small vans, large "UPS" style vans, cars and even bicycles. When cities begin their anti-graffiti abatement efforts, they usually give the staff person a truck and have him do what he can to make it work. Some I have seen are very creative. The world is not an ideal place many times, however let's dream a little bit. If your city had the money to provide the abatement staff with a perfect vehicle, what would

it, what could it have? Here is a list of what the ideal graffiti abatement vehicle would include:

- A minimum of three airless paint sprayers for standard colors.
- An equal number of retractable 50-foot hoses to match the sprayers.
- A power washer and water tank for it.
- A computerized color matching machine and paint shaker.
- A caution board for safety.
- And, of course, heating and air-conditioning. The abatement staff works hard outside every day. It is important to keep them comfortable when they drive from site to site.

In all my years in this business, I can't remember seeing a vehicle that included all that I just listed. As a general rule, the better equipped your graffiti vehicles are, the more productive your graffiti staff will be when they are in the field. Some cities have given their fleet manager their wish list and they have hired an automaker to assemble the vehicle according to the desired specifications. Also, there are companies that have developed graffiti fighting vehicles on their own and will sell them directly to cities. There is a good chance that you will spend between \$125,000 and \$150,000 on one of these types of vehicles alone. Also, keep in mind, this is just for one. Large cities will need several vehicles for graffiti removal.



GRAFFITI SPRAY RIG

SECTION 53

GRAFFITI HOTLINES

SECTION HIGHLIGHTS

- What is a graffiti hotline?
- How important is it to have a live person answer the graffiti hotline?
- What information should be on the outgoing graffiti hotline message?

Now that you have staff and a vehicle that is equipped and supplied, you are ready to remove graffiti. It is very possible that you already have a graffiti hotline for residents to call and report graffiti for city abatement staff to remove. In order for the community to call, the phone number must be known. It is very important for you to publicize your graffiti hotline telephone number every way you can, including the phone book, the city's web site, program brochures, business cards, any small give-away items (refrigerator magnets, pens, stickers, etc.), and any other ways you can think of. There are cities that have different departments remove graffiti from different city property. Because of this, it may be tempting to have different graffiti hotline numbers for different departments. Please don't do this. We are here to serve the public and complicating people's lives by having them try to figure out what city department to call for graffiti on different items is not serving them well at all. Just

have one graffiti hotline number and the staff person who pulls the calls from that line can redirect the calls to the correct departments.

The hotline should really be just that...a hotline. There is really no need to have a staff person answer these calls if you have a good outgoing message that asks the caller to leave all the specific information that the abatement staff will need to do their job effectively. Another downside to having staff answer the hotline live is that some callers can really extend a conversation for a long, long time. This can really cut down on the time the staff person has to complete his daily assignments. Finally, the graffiti hotline should be one specific number that is just for graffiti reports. I think graffiti abatement is important enough to warrant its own special phone hotline. This will be much better than having graffiti reports go to a general complaint line that takes reports for anything and everything.

**PLEASE SEE BONUS DOCUMENT:
GRAFFITI ABATEMENT STRATEGIES
HOTLINE VOICEMAIL SCRIPT
PAGES 62 AND 63**

Above all, the caller should leave his phone number just in case the abatement staff has questions about the report.

Besides reporting graffiti through the hotline, there are other methods that give the public more options for reporting. Some to these more high tech options

include reporting from your website or email. Some cities are even set up so residents can download an application on their internet connected cellular phone or other device. This reporting system is very cool because it uses GPS to pinpoint the location and the device's camera will send you a photograph of the graffiti.

As part of your performance measurements, you should check on the customer satisfaction level of the people who are reporting graffiti on your hotline. Call (and actually talk to) ten different persons each month and report the results on the forms that are part of Guidebook 10 "Treasure Chest Of Graffiti Related Topics", Section 94: Performance Targets.

**PLEASE SEE BONUS DOCUMENT:
GRAFFITI ABATEMENT STRATEGIES
HOTLINE CALLER PHONE SURVEY QUESTIONS
PAGE 64**



GRAFFITI HOTLINE PHONE SURVEYS

SECTION 54

STAFFING PER VEHICLE

SECTION HIGHLIGHTS

- The number of graffiti abatement staff a city has depends on what?
- Is it more efficient to have graffiti abatement staff work in teams of two or by themselves?
- What are some examples when it is better to have two graffiti abatement staff work together?

The number of graffiti staff you have depends on a few key things, primarily need and budget. Unfortunately, all cities get some graffiti. The lucky ones get very little. But even those cities need someone to get rid of it when it does occur. They may need only a maintenance person to remove it when needed. That maintenance person may have many other responsibilities besides graffiti, but the need to have someone removing graffiti full time is simply not there. At the other end of the spectrum, are cities that have a large team of full time graffiti abatement specialists of between 10 and 15 people. There are also many cities that have a certain number of full time abatement staff, however that number is not sufficient to meet the need. The graffiti removal effort is understaffed due to budget constraints. Regardless of the number of graffiti staff you have, one fact is perfectly clear to

me: that staff needs to be used in the most efficient manner possible. What I am getting at is that I still run into cities that continue to have their abatement staff work in pairs or teams of two. There are rare occasions when this makes sense or is even a requirement. For example, in an area with heightened gang tensions, in an area with a dangerous traffic flow, in an area that is logistically difficult, one that has a huge amount of graffiti, or when one person is being trained. However, in the vast majority of cases, one staff person can efficiently and safely remove the graffiti in question. It may take one person slightly longer to remove the graffiti than two at any given job site...but not twice as long! Simple math tells us that two people in two vehicles can remove more similar graffiti in one day than two people in one vehicle. If your city can find enough vehicles to give each graffiti abatement staff his own, it is much better to have them work independently rather than with a partner. Remember that the vehicle does not need to be the fully decked out truck that was described in Section 52. Any vehicle that you can load with paint and solvent will do if it will allow you to split up your abatement pairs.

SECTION 55

ABATEMENT WORK SCHEDULE

SECTION HIGHLIGHTS

- How many days a week should be covered by the abatement staff in a perfect situation?
- What are the two nights of the week when the most graffiti vandalism takes place?
- How can you have graffiti abatement staff work weekends without requiring your existing staff to change their schedule?

How many graffiti abatement staff does your city have? What days do they work? Ideally, you want abatement coverage seven days a week. If you have more than one abatement staff member, this should not be a problem. Unfortunately, many city graffiti programs allow their staff to work a Monday through Friday schedule. The two days that the city does not have anyone removing graffiti just happen to be the two days when graffiti vandals cause the most damage. Obviously, juvenile vandals don't have school on Saturday or Sunday, so they have more freedom to stay out later on Friday and Saturday nights. I am not advocating that you force a staff person to change his schedule so that it includes weekends. What I am saying is that you need to have abatement staff working every weekend. What you can do is ask if anyone wants to volunteer to change his schedule to work one or

both days on the weekend. You can also require any new staff, through transfers or promotions, to work weekends in their new assignment.

SECTION 56

PROACTIVE GRAFFITI ABATEMENT

SECTION HIGHLIGHTS

- What is proactive graffiti abatement?
- What is the beauty of proactive graffiti abatement?
- What are the goals of proactive graffiti abatement?

In addition to removing graffiti that has been called into a graffiti hotline, most cities also remove graffiti proactively. Just to be clear, proactive graffiti removal is when city staff removes graffiti that was not called into your graffiti hotline. The beauty of proactive graffiti abatement is that one can remove a lot more graffiti per day than they can by hop scotching all around the city working on hotline calls. Proactive graffiti abatement allows staff to target specific hard-hit areas or locations. A city might have graffiti “hotspots” (locations that are historically frequent targets of graffiti vandals) that staff check regularly to make sure they stay graffiti-free. City staff may also see graffiti somewhere themselves and decide to remove it right then and there or they may return shortly thereafter and remove it. This section will describe four key proactive graffiti removal strategies that have very specific and targeted goals. The goals are to constantly remove graffiti from strategic locations

until they are graffiti-free and then expand that strategy to additional locations, while maintaining the success achieved with the initial set of locations. This is accomplished by:

1. Identifying initial strategic locations to make graffiti-free.
2. Removing graffiti on those locations with the dedication needed to make them graffiti-free.
3. Repeating steps one and two with additional targeted locations while maintaining the success achieved with the initial locations by ongoing return visits.

100 Mile Routes: These routes should be a primary pillar of any city's graffiti abatement effort. The first step is to plan the route. As the name implies, the route should be 100 miles long (50 miles in one direction and then the same 50 miles in the opposite direction for a total of 100 miles). This route needs to be in the most graffiti-prone area of your city. The route should cover the major city streets with the most traffic on them. Also on the route should be streets around middle and high schools in that area, as well as any retail and/or commercial locations that are highly targeted by graffiti vandals. You may have additional areas of graffiti but this initial 100-mile route should really focus on the concentrated section of the city with the absolute most graffiti. Map out this route so that any driver knows where to turn at each step on the route.

The route should have a specific starting point. Since the route is 50 miles “out” and 50 miles “back”, the ending point should be the same as the starting point. The starting point is not where you park your vehicle. It starts somewhere in the neighborhood that has the most graffiti in the city. Before you officially begin removing graffiti on the route do a graffiti survey similar to the one described in Guidebook 1 “Just How Bad Is It Anyway? How To Conduct A Citywide Graffiti Survey”. Drive the route and count all of the tags you see – even the very small ones. It will be very entertaining and interesting to see the reduction in tags on the route as time goes by.

After you have planned the targeted route and finished the survey, you are ready to begin. The graffiti abatement staff person drives from the location his vehicle was parked overnight to the starting point of the 100-mile route. He should check his odometer to see what the mileage is or set the “trip” odometer to “zero”. Now he can begin. The following process needs to be followed exactly as I explain it. Now is not the time for creativity or flexibility. There is no doubt that this process will be successful, but you need to be committed to it. As the abatement person begins the route, he is looking for graffiti, obviously. Whenever he sees any graffiti, and I mean any graffiti, he needs to stop and deal with it. It doesn't matter how small it is. If it is a small tag on a light pole or utility box, clean it or paint it accordingly. It doesn't matter if it is on another governmental agencies property. Report it to that agency. It doesn't matter if it is on private

property. Initiate the process described in detail in Guidebook 3 "The Best Solution For Graffiti On Private Property: Graffiti Ordinances That Work". It doesn't matter if is a paint match job. Deal with it the same way you would with any paint match job. Just do it right then; or the next day if you have to go back and mix paint or have paint matched at a paint store. The driver should go as far on this route as possible for that day. At the end of the day make a note of how many miles were completed that day. Don't be surprised if you don't go very far.

Now comes a very important point! When you start a 100-mile route, you work that route every day. Period. No exceptions. This is very important. On your second day, you start working on the 100-mile route again. However, (and this is the whole key to the success of this process) you begin the route at the same place you started on the first day. As a matter of fact, you will always begin the route at the same place. Always. Let's assume that you got through only six miles of the 100-mile route on the first day. As you start the route at the starting point on the second day (again, check your odometer), you will remove any new graffiti that appeared overnight, you will remove any graffiti that you missed on the first day, you will report any graffiti again that is still there after you reported it on the first day, and you will eventually get to where you left off the previous day. Now you will continue on the route and go as far as you can – just as you did the first day. That's the point. Each day, you will zip along the route pretty quickly until you get to where you left off the previous day. It is that "retracing"

your footsteps from the previous day that makes this whole thing work. That is because when graffiti vandals tag the route after you clean it on any given day, it will be gone the next day. Every time! Each day you will track how far you have gone in order to measure your progress. However, please remember, it is cleanliness, not speed, that will determine your success. Don't be in a race to get through the route in one day. It is more important, by far, to have a clean route than to just zoom through it. Eventually (and this does not take long) no one will deface anything on that route with graffiti. Eventually, that route will be driven in its entirety with only a few stops each day for graffiti removal or reporting. It will be completely clean. This is exciting! Now let's keep it that way...and expand this strategy to another 100 mile route.

After you are able to get through the first 100 mile route in one day for several (five to eight) days in a row, it is time to expand to another 100 mile route (route B). You will need to design route B. Use the same process and criteria you used to design route A to design route B. The only difference is route B will cover the area of the city that has the second most graffiti. After those five to eight consecutive days of being able to drive the entirety of route A in one day, start on route B. Again, follow the same process you did with route A with one big exception. The exception is needed to keep route A graffiti-free for the long term. The exception is: after your first day on route B, go back to route A the next day and clean it again. The following day, go back to route B and start at the beginning of the route

again. The following day, clean route A. Keep alternating routes A and B until both can be cleaned on a daily basis. Then, if your city is big enough, you can start a third route, route C. You would initiate route C the same way you initiated route B. The rotation is also the same (route A, route B, route C, route A, route B, route C, etc.) because you don't want to lose ground to the taggers on routes A and B. If it makes your paperwork any easier and to get credit for the work on your 100 mile routes, enter each as one hotline work order and combine all of the information together.

Another advantage of the 100-mile routes is that they are also full of locations that have frequently been called into your graffiti hotline for abatement. Keeping these clean should also have the additional positive affect of significantly reducing your hotline calls.

These 100 mile routes are the focal point of your proactive graffiti strategy and should be at the top of every graffiti program's "to do" list.

Neighborhood Graffiti Sweeps: Another excellent proactive graffiti abatement method is to focus on specific neighborhoods in need of graffiti abatement. This is a very effective method of keeping graffiti out of a selected number of targeted neighborhoods. The focus is different from the 100-mile routes because those routes were designed to concentrate on major thoroughfares and frequently vandalized high visibility locations.

In these targeted neighborhood graffiti sweeps, everything within the neighborhood is wiped free of graffiti. Chances are that most of this graffiti will be on corner lot fences, along with smaller tags on light poles and utility boxes.

Again, the planning stage for these neighborhood sweeps is critical. Begin by identifying ten different neighborhoods in need of extra graffiti abatement. These neighborhoods should be geographically separate from one another...not contiguous. You don't want just one large chunk of the city divided up into ten sections as your ten neighborhoods. Each neighborhood should have distinct boundaries such as major streets, railroad tracks, a river, etc. They should also not be too large. Each boundary should be about one half mile to one mile long. As with the 100-mile route, before you actually begin cleaning in one neighborhood, do a graffiti survey to record how many tags are there.

Begin cleaning in neighborhood 1 and do your abatement just as you would for the 100-mile route. Because graffiti inside neighborhoods is usually smaller in size, a lot of it goes unreported. The goal behind these neighborhood graffiti sweeps is to get rid of all that "aged" graffiti as fast as you can in as many areas as you can. If you get through neighborhood 1 the first day, then proceed to neighborhood 2. If you don't finish neighborhood 1 the first day, go back to it in the next day. This, however, is where this differs from the 100-mile route: start each day where you left off from the previous day. Just continue to move from one neighborhood

to the next until you finish all ten. Then, start with neighborhood 1 again. One of your graffiti performance measures should be to thoroughly clean your targeted neighborhoods a specific number of times each year. After you can breeze through each neighborhood quickly, it is time to increase the number of neighborhoods to fifteen. You may be able to grow this number to a maximum of twenty if you have someone working on these neighborhood sweeps on a daily basis. I have provided a tracking form for you to record these sweeps.

**PLEASE SEE BONUS DOCUMENT:
GRAFFITI ABATEMENT STRATEGIES
PROACTIVE NEIGHBORHOOD ABATEMENT
CHART
PAGE 65**

The last two proactive graffiti abatement methods are basically the same; but with different targets. One will focus on highways and the other on expressways.

Graffiti-free Highways and Expressways: Many, if not most cities have state-owned highways that run through the city limits as well as county owned expressways that also run through the city limits. The goal is to keep graffiti from being seen from these high traffic areas. Even though the city is not responsible for keeping these roads graffiti-free, there is a still lot of graffiti that can be seen from these roads that is on city property. As with the

other proactive methods I discussed earlier, start with a survey. Then clean or report to the appropriate jurisdiction all of the graffiti you see. Do this for each highway or expressway that runs through your city and focus only on the sections of these roads that are in the city limits. One significant difference is that you should do each one of these only once a week. That will be sufficient. Each time you work on the highway or expressway effort, track the number of tags you see and compare it to the original number from your survey. These should also be performance measures.

SECTION 57

HOW TO ASSIGN GRAFFITI ABATEMENT STAFF

SECTION HIGHLIGHTS

- Why should the graffiti that is reported on your hotline be the first priority for abatement?
- If you have only one graffiti abatement staff, what should he do after he finishes all of the hotline jobs?
- What is the best way to deploy two graffiti abatement staff?

There are a variety of options from which to choose when it comes to deciding how to deploy your graffiti abatement staff. Any graffiti abatement is good but utilizing this staff with a focused and targeted plan can actually lead to more graffiti being abated and less graffiti returning. The best part of this is that it doesn't cost any more to deploy this staff effectively than if does to deploy them otherwise. Of course a lot of these decisions are based on the size of the city, the severity of the graffiti problem, and the number of graffiti staff available.

Regardless of the size of the city, if there were only one graffiti abatement staff person available, I would assign him to service all of the hotline calls. Whenever he is all caught up with the hotline list, he should then work on a 100-mile route. Even though

he would not be able to work on it daily as I recommended, it would at least make a dent in the graffiti on some of the major thoroughfares that are hardest hit with graffiti. The reason I would focus on the graffiti hotline first is that it is extremely important to show the residents that you care about them by removing the graffiti that is so bothersome to them that they felt compelled to report it. This staff person should only abate the most aged graffiti that is reported on the hotline until all that was reported is successfully cleaned. He should then start at the beginning of the 100-mile route.

If your city has two full time graffiti abatement staff members, I would have one of them work on the hotline calls and the second work on 100-mile routes. If there are three full time graffiti abatement staff people, I would have the first do the hotline, the second do 100-mile routes and the third work on the freeway and expressway routes and the neighborhood graffiti sweeps. If you are able to keep your hotline response time performance measure to 85% of your hotline calls abated within 48 hours, that is great. Then have your fourth person work on either the 100-mile route or the neighborhood sweeps – whichever one you feel is needed most.

SECTION 58

THE BASICS OF GRAFFITI REMOVAL

SECTION HIGHLIGHTS

- What are the four primary methods of graffiti abatement?
- How many standard paint colors should be sufficient for most cities?
- When would you use a power washer to remove graffiti?

Although there may be others, there are four primary methods of graffiti abatement. The four are: mixing paint to match the original surface color, using a standard color paint to paint over items that are frequent targets of graffiti, removing graffiti with a chemical solvent and power washing the graffiti off the structure. In this section, I will discuss each of these in a little more detail.

Note: I really won't go into glass etching because most city graffiti programs won't be making these repairs. When glass is etched, it sometimes can be buffed clean. When it can't be buffed, it needs to be replaced. Whether it is buffed or replaced, it is more expensive dealing with etched glass than with graffiti written with paint or markers. Because it is so expensive, I recommend that these graffiti victims look into placing form-fitting film over their windows after they are repaired or replaced. If the window

gets etched again, then you just need to replace the film, which is much less expensive than replacing an entire window.

Mixing Paint to Match the Original Surface: If your city removes graffiti from private property, or if you provide paint for private property owners, it is important that you have the ability to paint match. The skill of paint matching is not easy. There is a fine art to doing it well. Some graffiti programs have a computerized paint matching system on their vehicle and can match paint on the job site. Some programs have a computerized paint matching system located at the office. The disadvantage of this system is that it requires two trips to the job site: one to check the color of the needed paint, go back to the office to mix and match the paint, then a second trip back to the job site to paint over the graffiti and/or leave paint for the property owner. Another way city staff can get paint matched when they don't have the computerized equipment needed is to bring a color wheel to the job site. Match the color of the structure to a color on the wheel and then go to a paint store where they will match the paint for you. This also requires a second trip to return to the job site and take care of business.

Using Standard Paint Colors: The easiest and least expensive way to remove graffiti on targets that are frequently tagged is to paint over the graffiti with a standard paint color. Fences, concrete structures and sound walls are all frequent targets of graffiti. For the most part, these items could be painted over

and over with the same color each time. We used a chocolate brown to paint over graffiti on fences. These fences were almost always located on corner lots. We used gray paint to cover graffiti on concrete. For most sound walls, we used Navaho white. We also had a fourth color, beige, that we used for painted utility boxes. These four standard colors were mounted on our graffiti abatement vehicles and each was attached to an airless paint sprayer with a 50-foot retractable hose. This system worked very well for those frequently tagged structures. As a matter of fact, we could have easily reduced that number down to three and used Navaho for utility boxes. I personally was open to reducing that number down to two by using Navaho on fences also. I thought that it was a fresher look but others thought that the city would be covered with too much Navaho if we did that. The point is that you should have a small number of standard colors on your vehicles to use on items that you are frequently painting. Be careful, however, not to have too many of these standard colors. I think that three is about right. I know of some cities that had as many as 16 and that is way too many!

Using a Chemical Solvent: Chemical solvents are great for removing small tags off street light poles, the back of street signs and utility boxes with their original finish on them. Most of the tags that will be removed with solvent are relatively small and made by markers. Larger tags on walls almost always have to be covered by paint. As you remember in Guidebook 2 “How To Recruit A Volunteer Graffiti Fighting Army”, I really encourage cities to give

volunteers free solvent to remove the smaller tags in their neighborhoods. This really helps the city because these tags rarely get reported on your graffiti hotline. City staff will use solvent to remove tags also – especially the ones on routes. They need to also use the same safety precautions as the volunteers do. As a quick reminder, the solvent, in most cases, is sprayed directly on the tag and left for about a minute to soak in. Then it is wiped off, preferably with the rough side of a two-sided sponge. Then the area is wiped down with a clean rag. Always remember to dispose of your dirty rags in a manner that meets state and federal environmental standards.

Using Power Washers: Power washers are used for removing graffiti off surfaces that you don't want to paint. An example might be a stone or rock wall. We found power washers to be highly effective for removing graffiti from trees. For a long time, we used power washers to remove graffiti from sidewalks. One day we decided to experiment with using our standard gray paint instead. It looked great. You could not tell one square of painted sidewalk to one next to it that had not been painted. Also, it took only a fraction of the time that power washing requires. Ideally, the vehicle that carries your power washer also has a large tank of water so you don't need to find water at the job site, which at times is difficult. Many cities will spray solvent on the tags that are about to be power washed away. This makes it easier for the power washer to do its job. Some, but very few cities, still use sand blasting as a graffiti removal method.

Many others have gone to soda blasting. The trend now is using “hot” water power washers that use hot water to help dissolve the graffiti. Again, remember to clean up after power washing jobs in a way that meets state and federal environmental laws.



PAINT MATCHING



PAINTING WITH A STANDARD COLOR



USING A CHEMICAL SOLVENT



USING A POWER WASHER

SECTION 59

TALK TO THE POLICE

SECTION HIGHLIGHTS

- Why do the police want information from the graffiti abatement staff about what tagging crews are doing the most damage?
- What information do the police want after they catch a graffiti vandal?
- Why do the police want to know the repair cost of city property that was damaged by graffiti vandals they have apprehended?

It is really important that the graffiti staff and the police officers who are investigating graffiti cases have great communication with each other. The police will want to know which tag or crew is causing the most damage in the city so they know where to focus their investigations. When they catch a graffiti vandal, they will want as much information as possible about the damage that person has caused for their report. The police will want information about the location of the graffiti so they can contact the owner of the property to find out what it cost to remove the graffiti. Many times, when the police are looking for a specific vandal or tagging crew, they will want as much information as possible about them from the city graffiti staff because that may help them in their investigation.

SECTION 60

PULLING ALL THE ABATEMENT INFORMATION TOGETHER

SECTION HIGHLIGHTS

- How should you keep track of all the graffiti abatement information that you produce?
- Why will you need that information later?
- What are some of the fields that should be in your abatement database?

You will have a constant need to access a wide variety of information quickly. You will need this information for your performance measures, for police reports, for media requests, etc. The only way to have access to this information quickly is to have a good database to track all of the data that you will inevitably need at a later date. Many cities have successfully created their own work order, database and tracking system and others have purchased graffiti specific programs. Abatement records and pictures are important for program reports and police investigations. The sample Daily Job List that was referred to in Guidebook 3 “The Best Solution For Graffiti On Private Property: Graffiti Ordinances That Work” is also provided for you here.

**PLEASE SEE BONUS DOCUMENT:
GRAFFITI ABATEMENT STRATEGIES
DAILY JOB LIST**

PAGE 66

You may want to add to this list to satisfy a specific need that your city may have.



GRAFFITI ABATEMENT DATABASE

GUIDEBOOK 6 WRAP-UP AT A GLANCE

- There are both advantages and disadvantages in contracting out your graffiti abatement services.
- The better equipped your graffiti vehicles are, the more productive your graffiti abatement staff will be in the field.
- An automated graffiti hotline is a must for all cities.
- To get the biggest bang for your buck, assign just one graffiti abatement staff person per vehicle.
- Do your best to have some weekend graffiti abatement staff coverage.
- Strategic proactive graffiti abatement can make a big difference in a city.
- Assign your graffiti abatement staff according to specific priorities.
- There are four primary methods of graffiti removal.
- The police and the abatement staff will need to have open lines of communication.
- You will need a good database to keep track of all the important information you collect.

Every city needs to remove graffiti. You can remove a lot more for a lot less if you use your personnel efficiently and effectively.

CONCLUSION

Thank you for letting me share my experiences with you. I truly feel honored that you trusted me enough to listen to my story. I sincerely hope that you found something in this guidebook and CD that resonated with you and that you can use to improve the graffiti situation in your city. If this does happen, and I really hope that it does, please let me know. I would love to share your success with others!

If you would like more information on strategies that will drastically reduce graffiti in your city, please check our website at www.thegraffiticonsultants.com. There, you can find out more about our innovative Phone Training Program where you have direct access to me and we can work together, one-on-one to correctly and successfully implement any of the recommendations that have sparked your interest from this book and CD.

And finally, also in our website, is information on our full-service consulting packages that are designed to meet the needs and budgets of each individual city. This is really the best way to be sure that your graffiti will go away and stay away.

So, call today and watch your graffiti disappear. Thank you for taking the time to check out the information in this book and CD. I sincerely look forward to your city becoming graffiti-free!

Rick Stanton, The Graffiti Consultants Ten Steps To A Graffiti-Free City

BONUS DOCUMENTS

BONUS DOCUMENT PAGES 62 AND 63

HOTLINE VOICEMAIL SCRIPT

(CITY NAME)

Hotline Voicemail Script (PHONE NUMBER)

Hello, you have reached the Anti-Graffiti Hotline.

To report graffiti please leave the following information after the tone:

- The Location of the graffiti
- The structure that has been vandalized such as a fence, utility box, or sidewalk and
- The original color of the structure that was vandalized

And finally, your name and phone number, should we need to contact you for further direction.

If you would like to speak to Anti-Graffiti Program personnel during regular business hours from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., please hang up and dial (PHONE NUMBER).

Thank you and have a nice day.

BONUS DOCUMENT PAGE 65

PROACTIVE NEIGHBORHOOD ABATEMENT CHART

(CITY NAME)
Proactive Neighborhood Abatement Chart

Month: _____

Day	100-A	100-B	100-C	City Routes	N.1	N.2	N.3	N.4	N.5	N.6	N.7	N.8	N.9	N.10	N.11	N.12	N.13	N.14	N.15	Highway	
1																					
2																					
3																					
4																					
5																					
6																					
7																					
8																					
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30																					
31																					
Total																					

BONUS DOCUMENT PAGE 66

DAILY JOB LIST

Daily Job List

Entered by _____

SNI Location	100 Mile Route	Expressway	City Route	Low/Mod	Census Tract
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Job #	Who	Area	Description	Color	Hot/Pro
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Call	Done	RT	Sq Ft	Entered by	Closed by
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Location					Initials
<input type="text"/>					<input type="text"/>
		S	P	UB	MB
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 100px; width: 100%;"></div>					
Tags					
<input type="text"/>					
LDH1	LDH1 Date	LDH2	LDH2 Date	# of Tags	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	
LP	LP Date	Verbal/Written	VW Consent Date		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>		
Refer to OS	Refer to Enforce	Sent Letter to Prop. Owner	Refer to Code Enf.		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>		

Refer to County <input type="checkbox"/>	Begin Location <input type="text"/>
Refer to AGP <input type="checkbox"/>	End Location <input type="text"/>
Repeat Contact <input type="checkbox"/>	Start Mileage <input type="text"/>
Refer to Cal Trans <input type="checkbox"/>	End Mileage <input type="text"/>
Refer to CC <input type="checkbox"/>	Total Miles <input type="text"/>
Refer to RDA <input type="checkbox"/>	% Completed <input type="text"/>
Refer to VTA <input type="checkbox"/>	Paint Stops <input type="text"/>
Refer to Signs <input type="checkbox"/>	Cleaning Stops <input type="text"/>
Refer to GSA <input type="checkbox"/>	Contacts Made <input type="text"/>
Refer to SCVWD <input type="checkbox"/>	Expressways Only <input type="checkbox"/>
	Tags Left <input type="text"/>

Rick Stanton is the owner of The Graffiti Consultants. He has a great track record in the development and implementation of highly successful graffiti reducing strategies. He led the City of San Jose's effort that resulted in a 99.88% reduction of graffiti before his retirement. Now as a consultant, Rick and his firm have been working with various cities with amazing results. He can do the same for your city by providing you with tailor made plans that fit not only your city's needs but your budget as well. Call today and watch your graffiti start to disappear!

Don't forget these powerful programs designed to help you drastically reduce graffiti in your city:

- Just How Bad Is It Anyway? How To Conduct A Citywide Graffiti Survey.
- How To Recruit A Volunteer Graffiti Fighting Army.
- The Best Solution For Graffiti On Private Property: Graffiti Ordinances That Work.
- Getting Graffiti Vandals To Stop: How To Establish An Effective "Package of Penalties".
- Tips and Tricks For Catching Graffiti Vandals.
- State of the Art Graffiti Abatement Strategies For Success.
- Save Money In Your Graffiti Program: What Not To Do.
- Let's Work Together: How To Build A Successful Anti-Graffiti Collaborative Partnership.
- Let's Stop It Before It Starts: Graffiti Prevention And Alternatives.
- Treasure Chest Of Graffiti Related Topics.

ASK ABOUT OUR PERSONALIZED GRAFFITI FREE INITIATIVE FOR YOUR CITY!

ASK ABOUT OUR FULL SERVICE GRAFFITI CONSULTING!