

the GraffitiConsultants

Ten Steps To A Graffiti-Free City

Guidebook 7 of 10 Steps

Save Money In Your Graffiti Program:  
What NOT To Do.



By: Rick Stanton

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

Rick Stanton, The Graffiti Consultants Ten Steps To A Graffiti-Free 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 7: SAVE MONEY IN YOUR  
GRAFFITI PROGRAM: WHAT NOT TO DO.  
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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 7 OF 10**

### **SAVE MONEY IN YOUR GRAFFITI PROGRAM: WHAT **NOT** TO DO.**

*In many cases, it is as important to know what **NOT** to do, as it is to know what to do. This is especially true when running a city's anti-graffiti program. There are many people in city government and the public at large, for that matter, who think they know what a city needs to do to improve its graffiti situation. Unfortunately, many times their good intentions don't translate to cost effective or efficient activities that really help a city become graffiti-free. Many of the times these activities or projects don't hurt anything but they should be very low on your overall "to do" list. This information is the basis for one of our consulting sessions when we work with cities. I was going over the items on this list one-by-one with the manager of the new graffiti program. He was not normally a reserved person but he was exceptionally quiet during this session. As a matter of fact, he hardly uttered a word. At the end, I asked him if he was OK*

*because he was so quiet. He slowly just shook his head back and forth and finally said "You know, I was planning on doing practically all of those things. You just saved me thousands and thousands of dollars as well as staff hours. This is the best and most valuable session so far". I hope this illustrates how important this information can be. In this section, I will discuss several things that may sound like good ideas but I would not recommend them...unless you have everything else on my "Ten Steps To A Graffiti-Free City" list implemented and you want to do even more.*

## **SECTION 61**

### **VOLUNTEER GROUP PAINT OUTS**

#### **SECTION HIGHLIGHTS**

- What are examples of groups that participate in volunteer group paint outs?
- Why is it best to move away from volunteer group paint outs?
- What is a great alternative event for these civic-minded volunteer groups?

Almost every city does them. Sometimes the city recruits people to participate in them and sometimes an established group approaches the city and offers its help. But regardless of who initiates the action, cities should move away from volunteer group paint outs. Many types of civic-minded groups participate in these: neighborhood associations, scouts, church groups, service groups, school clubs, businesses and senior centers to name a few. It is great that they are willing to help. However, when we were running volunteer group paint outs, I asked our volunteer coordinator, “How many of the people in these groups will remove graffiti between now and when their group does it again next year?” She answered “None”. And she was right. Even though it was nice to have these people remove graffiti once a year, what we really needed were people who were committed to keeping their street or neighborhood or park graffiti-

free all year long. The time it took for our volunteer coordinator to communicate with the group, plan the event, get supplies ready, assist at the actual paint-out itself, and clean up after was replaced with the volunteer effort described in Guidebook 2 "How To Recruit A Volunteer Graffiti Fighting Army". That is when our graffiti volunteer effort really took off. When your city gets to the graffiti-free level to which you are aspiring, there will not be any large locations for a volunteer group to clean anyway. A simple alternative for these groups is to redirect them to a volunteer litter pick-up day instead, as you will always be able to find a location for that. Also, that is easier to coordinate, staff does not need to be present during the event, the group still gets to participate in a positive event and the city gets the benefit of the labor from these civic-minded groups.

Guidebook 7. Save Money in Your Graffiti Program: What **NOT** To Do.



### **GROUP LITTER PICK UP**

## **SECTION 62**

### **SPECIAL EVENTS**

#### **SECTION HIGHLIGHTS**

- What is an example of a citywide special event?
- What is the primary downside of conducting a citywide special event?
- What one event would be an exception to this rule?

This book will give you a laundry list with plenty of things to do. Don't add any more to your plate in the form of special events or projects. These events can be a significant time killer if you are not careful. It takes a great deal of staff time, not to mention budget, to plan and run special events. One example would be a citywide graffiti paint out. In almost all cases, the time and expense that goes into these far out pace the positive results that will come from them. The only exception that I can think of to this rule is holding the annual graffiti volunteer recognition event that was mentioned in Guidebook 2 "How To Recruit A Volunteer Graffiti Fighting Army".

## **SECTION 63**

### **COMMUNITY GRAFFITI CONFERENCES**

#### **SECTION HIGHLIGHTS**

- Why should hosting a community graffiti conference be a very low priority item?
- What are the two main things you want residents to do to help you?
- How can you keep your residents and volunteers informed without holding a community graffiti conference?

Even though this is another example of a special event, I thought I would highlight this one because it is one that many cities offer to their residents. Coordinating a community graffiti conference for the public is a big mistake. I don't mean to be too blunt, but cities need their residents to do two critical things when it comes to graffiti: report it and remove it. You can get these messages to your residents through all your volunteer recruitment efforts. These efforts will reach thousands of people. Putting the time and money into a community graffiti conference is a big waste. I should know. We hosted several community graffiti conferences until we finally wised up. Talk about preaching to the choir! Your on-going volunteer recruitment efforts and your weekly emails to your existing volunteers that were discussed in Guidebook 2 "How To Recruit A Volunteer Graffiti Fighting Army" are



sufficient to keep your residents aware and engaged in your efforts.

Additionally, the people who attend this conference will undoubtedly recommend several ideas to reduce graffiti that they want you to implement. Of course you will not be able to implement the vast majority of these ideas, leaving the attendees somewhat frustrated.

## **SECTION 64**

### **ANTI-GRAFFITI PRESENTATIONS TO ELEMENTARY AGED SCHOOL CHILDREN**

#### **SECTION HIGHLIGHTS**

- What are some valuable anti-graffiti educational activities?
- Why is it hard for an anti-graffiti presentation to elementary aged children to have a long-term influence on its participants?
- Can you quantify the results of early anti-graffiti education programs?

OK, get your rotten eggs ready. I am about to make what probably is the most controversial point in the whole “Ten Steps To A Graffiti-Free City” guidebook series. I know that many people will disagree with me on this...and that's OK. However, I feel it is important to have this discussion.

The phrase “graffiti education” means many things to many people. I am totally on board with educating:

- residents to report graffiti and how to become anti-graffiti volunteers
- graffiti vandals about the package of penalties they will experience when they get caught

- the media on how they can help with your efforts

However, when it comes to providing graffiti education to elementary aged children, I am not sure the benefits outweigh the effort. Believe me, I have heard the argument that you need to talk to children at a young age and let them know why graffiti is bad and why they shouldn't do it. I have no problem with that. However, I believe that we sometimes forget the enormous peer pressure that exists during the teen years. A couple of one-hour lessons in early primary school from someone the child didn't know at the time and has never seen since is simply no match for the constant peer pressure from a friend, acquaintance, classmate, neighbor or relative whom they see several times a week. At that stage, they know the difference between right and wrong and whatever anti-graffiti lesson was given to them years ago probably did not have the long-lasting effect that we would like or had hoped for.

Also, it is important to quantify the results of these types of education programs. Unfortunately, we will never know how many or what percent of youth chose not to become graffiti vandals because of a classroom presentation they had a few years prior to their teen years.

Please don't get me wrong. It doesn't hurt to provide an in-class anti-graffiti lesson to elementary aged school children. It's just that I know that most cities are operating on a limited budget and there

are higher priorities. If you have all of the strategies in this book in place and running at full speed and you want to add a youth education component, that's great. There is one elementary school graffiti education effort that I support, however. The City of Sacramento, California teamed with the drama department of a local college to provide the class. The college drama students received valuable experience delivering a positive message and the elementary students received a valuable anti-graffiti message. The City of Sacramento's role is to help coordinate the project but their staff is not leading the sessions. This can be an educational effort designed for schools for which the city does not have to pay if you can get the local college to contribute all the resources.

In case you do decide to initiate a graffiti education effort, here are some programs that I know of that may still be available:

- Graffiti Hurts
- Painted Problems
- Troubling Signs
- Graffiti in Tahiti

If it is any consolation, I do feel that early childhood education presentations can be very successful to deal with litter issues in a city. The difference to me is that most people who litter are not doing so with the awareness that they are committing a crime. It is usually a bad habit that can be changed with the right message at the right time.

Our anti-graffiti puppet show for elementary-aged children mentioned in the introduction seemed successful on the surface; number of students served and their reaction to the production. However, that was one of the activities we dropped when we re-focused our energies on the efforts we promote in our Ten Step Program. It was not long after this and other non-productive activities were eliminated that we really began seeing a dramatic decline in graffiti.

Guidebook 7. Save Money in Your Graffiti Program: What **NOT** To Do.



## **CLASSROOM PRESENTATIONS**

## **SECTION 65**

### **NEWSLETTERS**

#### **SECTION HIGHLIGHTS**

- What is the major drawback of publishing and distributing an anti-graffiti newsletter?
- How many of your constituents would actually read an anti-graffiti newsletter?
- What is a smart communication alternative when compared to a newsletter?

Some cities are producing anti-graffiti newsletters that they are sending to their mailing list. The cost of labor, printing and mailing a newsletter can be an issue – even with a small distribution list. Just producing and sending an e-newsletter is very time consuming, even if you save on printing and mailing. Additionally, most people are too busy to read a whole newsletter these days anyway. When I first started working in San Jose's graffiti program, we published and distributed a physical newsletter to about 200 people. When we stopped sending out the newsletter, I wondered how many people would complain or comment on its demise. The answer: none.

Again, the best way to get messages out to your base is to send them a short weekly email message. Facebook and Twitter are also easy and low cost options.

# Newsletter



## NEWSLETTERS



## **SECTION 66**

### **MASS MAILINGS**

#### **SECTION HIGHLIGHTS**

- What are mass mailings?
- What are the costs of doing mass mailings?
- What is the major downside to mass mailings?

The City of San Jose has a contract with a garbage hauler that services residential units. The city sends out all of the bills for this service. The graffiti program was invited (actually directed) to provide an insert to these bills that are mailed to all residents. There was no cost for postage since all of the bills were already being sent out anyway. We just needed to pay for the design and printing of the insert. The flyer gave people information about graffiti and encouraged them to report it and to volunteer. Because of the volume needed, it cost our program \$16,000 to print the flyer. That was a lot of money but we were expecting great results because every household was going to receive one. When the bills were mailed out, I brought in a few additional people to the office to handle the flood of calls I was sure were going to come in. We got six.

Guidebook 7. Save Money in Your Graffiti Program: What **NOT** To Do.



## **MASS MAILINGS**

## **SECTION 67**

### **PRIVATE PROPERTY**

#### **SECTION HIGHLIGHTS**

- What is the national trend in regard to cities removing graffiti on private property?
- Should cities be providing free graffiti removal on private property?
- What absolutely needs to be in place in order for a city to require private property owners to keep their property graffiti-free?

I know that this was covered in great detail before in Guidebook 3 “The Best Solution For Graffiti On Private Property: Graffiti Ordinances That Work”, but when another guidebook is titled “What Not To Do”, this has to be included in it also. It definitely bears repeating. Many cities still remove graffiti on private property as a free service. No cities are changing direction and moving from a position requiring property owners to be responsible for graffiti on their property to removing it for them for free. However, many cities are going in the opposite direction – and for good reason. Cities provide their residents with lots of services but graffiti abatement on private property should not be one of them. If your city is still doing this, it has to change. It begins with the appropriate ordinance. Implementing the transition from the city removing graffiti for everyone to the property owner being responsible can be relatively

Guidebook 7. Save Money in Your Graffiti Program: What **NOT** To Do.

painless if it is implemented as I have described in Guidebook 3 "The Best Solution For Graffiti On Private Property: Graffiti Ordinances That Work".

## **SECTION 68**

### **CONTRACTING GRAFFITI ABATEMENT TO PRIVATE COMPANIES**

#### **SECTION HIGHLIGHTS**

- What do politicians usually say about the results of contracting out graffiti abatement services?
- Why has contracting graffiti abatement services gained momentum recently?
- What is the upside of using city staff to abate graffiti?

I discussed the concept of contracting out graffiti abatement services in Guidebook 6 "State Of The Art Graffiti Abatement Strategies For Success". I think I painted a fair picture of the advantages and disadvantages of this option. In this section, I will give my opinion of whether I recommend this or not. Even though this seems to be working in some cities, I hear more often than not, that it is not working. Usually, politicians tell me that it is working. This is not surprising because they are the ones who had to approve the budget that included the contracting out of this service. I typically hear from department staff that it is not working. This also is not surprising because some of these people probably had co-workers and friends replaced by contractors. Although contracting out this service to professional graffiti abatement companies is still a relatively new

concept, it is gaining traction quickly because most cities are always trying to save money.

A few of the stories that I have heard regarding contractors include:

- Contractors actually doing graffiti so they would have work to do.
- Contractors inflating the square feet they report when they are paid by the square foot.
- Contractors reaching the annual square foot maximum three months prior to the end of a fiscal year leaving the city in the position of having no graffiti removal for three months or adding money to the contract.

Remember that contractors have a vested interest in cities having an ongoing graffiti problem.

If a city is strongly considering contracting out its graffiti abatement services, instead they should hire part-time maintenance workers. This saves the city the cost of employee benefits. It also keeps the graffiti abatement in the hands of dedicated city workers.

After talking with many city people, I tend to lean towards having city staff abate graffiti due to the overall level of control, dedication, quality of work, professionalism and consistency they bring to the table.

## **SECTION 69**

### **CONTRACTING WITH YOUTH GROUPS**

#### **SECTION HIGHLIGHTS**

- Why would cities contract with youth groups for graffiti removal?
- Have many cities nationally had success contracting with youth groups to abate graffiti?
- Why is it a challenge for youth to be successful as graffiti contractors?

In this section we focus on when cities contract out all or part of their graffiti abatement out to an organized youth group. This is completely different from a program where youth are sentenced by a judge to do community service work for breaking a law.

Even though I recommend having city staff remove graffiti instead of graffiti contracting companies, there are cities where this is working fine. However, contracting with youth groups is a different story. It is hard to find city employees who feel that this type of effort has been successful for them. Many times, a politician has pushed for this relationship as a political favor to the youth group. In most cases, I hear that these groups are an unprofessional, undependable, poorly trained, poorly supervised, unskilled, uncaring and undisciplined workforce. We

were required to support a group such as this that had a portion of our graffiti removal responsibility. This group was hired as a political favor and no amount of documentation of their poor work record was going to deter their continued contract year after dreadful year. They were an unqualified disaster to work with and a total waste of money. Our experience mirrors that of other cities I have talked to during the last few years. In my ten years as the manager of San Jose's Anti-Graffiti Program, I never received a complaint about any work done by city staff. However, we did receive several by angry residents who were frustrated about the work done by this youth group. I realize that they need to get training and work experience somewhere. Just don't let it be by abating your city's graffiti.



## **SECTION 70**

### **FREE WALLS**

#### **SECTION HIGHLIGHTS**

- What are free walls?
- What usually happens to the neighborhood where a free wall is located?
- Are there many cities that have had success with free walls?

Sometimes the gap between theory and reality is huge. The gap between theory and reality when it comes to free graffiti walls is about as wide as the Grand Canyon. For any of you who don't know, free walls are walls that the property owner or city has deemed available for individuals to use as a canvas for their artwork. The theory goes that graffiti "artists" will use these walls to showcase their work. They will get the recognition they are seeking legally and therefore won't feel the need to illegally vandalize other's property. What almost always happens is that these walls are popular spots for individuals to express themselves. Unfortunately the neighborhood around the free wall also gets hit hard with graffiti – both from those who paint on the wall and those who come to see the work on the wall. Free walls do not stop the people who take advantage of them from vandalizing other property also. I am in contact with several hundred cities in the US and Canada and I know of only one

Canadian city that currently uses free walls and they are happy with them. Conversely, many other cities have tried free walls. They always run headlong into the scenario I described earlier and quickly abandoned the idea. Free walls don't work. Don't even think about trying them. Save yourself the inevitable headache and heartache.



**FREE GRAFFITI WALL**

## **GUIDEBOOK 7 WRAP-UP AT A GLANCE**

- Transition your group graffiti paint outs to an effort to recruit volunteers who will remove graffiti all year long.
- Large special events take too much time away from your meat and potatoes activities.
- Community graffiti conferences usually don't give you the payoff that you were hoping for.
- It is hard to quantify the success of anti-graffiti presentations for younger elementary aged school children.
- In today's busy world, newsletters are rarely read.
- The response from mass mailings is way too low to justify this expensive method of marketing.
- Cities should not be responsible for removing graffiti on private property.
- If all things are equal, city staff are almost always more dedicated to the goal of a graffiti free city than are contracted staff.
- Paying youth groups to have an active role in graffiti abatement almost never works out well for the city.
- Free walls are good in theory, but never achieve their goal in practice.

In city government these days, every penny counts. Don't waste money working on anti-graffiti efforts that won't give you a big payoff.

## 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](http://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!

Guidebook 7. Save Money in Your Graffiti Program: What **NOT** To Do.

# THE GRAFFITI CONSULTANTS

**Rick Stanton, Owner**

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!**