



INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Mayor and Members General Issues Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	May 7, 2014
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Graffiti Management Program (City Wide) - (PW14042)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
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SIGNATURE:	

Council Direction:

A staff presentation on Graffiti was received by the General Issues Committee at its October 17, 2012, meeting and included the following recommendation:

"That staff be directed to develop a comprehensive multi-departmental and collaborative Graffiti Management Strategy which supports Council's strategic direction to improve the City's image, support Neighbourhood Action Plans and to be the best place in Canada to raise a child, and report back to the General Issues Committee as part of the 2013 budget deliberations."

Staff recommended for the 2013 Capital Budget, the inclusion of funds to assist in the development of a comprehensive graffiti management program. This Information Report aims to fulfill Council's direction to develop a comprehensive Graffiti Management Program.

Information:

This purpose of this information report is to provide Council with an update on the development of a comprehensive Graffiti Management Program. To ensure long term success of the program, a number of pilot strategies will be implemented in 2014-2015 to test the efficacy of the initiatives and allow for appropriate resourcing that will support a sustainable program.

The proposed Graffiti Management Program is a research-based, multi-jurisdictional program aimed at managing graffiti in Hamilton. As a comprehensive program it addresses graffiti remediation, prevention and enforcement through strategies and measurable objectives. Utilizing considerable multi-jurisdictional research information and Hamilton-specific data, the Program will be based on five strategies: remediation

strategies, prevention strategies, enforcement strategies, special situation strategies and corporate remediation and prevention strategies.

The goal of the Graffiti Management Program mirrors that of the Clean and Green Hamilton Strategy: For Hamilton to be recognized as a sustainable clean and green community where everyone takes responsibility for, and has pride in, the environments in which they live, work and play. To this end, the Program's successes will be strengthened through partnerships and collaboration among all stakeholders.

Research and Data

Staff gathered research data through municipal scans, Internet searches and phone inquiries across Canada and with some American municipal contacts. Multi-year data from Hamilton's graffiti complaints, municipal asset surveys and Keep Hamilton Clean & Green's Community Appearance index were reviewed and analysed. A detailed graffiti audit provided objective data on the prevalence and severity of graffiti in high complaint areas of the city.

The municipal scans identified the scope, programs, responsibilities, administration, budget and success metrics of each of the municipality's graffiti management programs. A review of material and follow-up phone interviews with staff of the comparator cities (Edmonton, Winnipeg, Vancouver, Ottawa and London) revealed that established graffiti management programs had the following characteristics:

- Annual budget: Ranges from \$750,000 (Ottawa) to \$1,700,000 (Vancouver).
- All have dedicated municipal staff to administer and coordinate the programs.
- Most municipalities have some type of victim assistance program (e.g. free clean-up kits, subsidized graffiti removal service, grant programs).
- Other types of programs include: murals, legal walls, asset wraps.
- Metrics range from an annual graffiti audit (Edmonton) to reports on complaints and remediation.

All municipalities reported that graffiti management programs and strategies were developed by staff. Some municipalities contracted help with collecting data or providing analyst services.

Hamilton data and information was also collected and analysed by staff including the Transportation Division's 2013 condition/vandalism survey of bus shelters and the Keep Hamilton Clean & Green Committee's Community Appearance Index windshield survey of City-wide graffiti (2009 to 2012). Hansen data from citizen graffiti complaints submitted through the on-line reporting form on the City's Website or by phone through the Customer Contact Centre and Hamilton Police Service's Communications Branch for the period of 2009 to 2012 was also analysed. This data allowed the City's Geographic Information Systems (GIS) staff to map the four years of graffiti complaint locations resulting in a cartographic representation of several hot spot neighbourhood areas primarily in lower city. This GIS data was helpful in developing the parameters for a comprehensive graffiti audit with a focus on areas of concern.

In September 2013, MGM Management Inc. was contracted by staff to conduct Hamilton's first comprehensive Graffiti Audit. Using the GIS graffiti complaints data, the consultants selected eight Wards (Wards 1 to 8) where the majority of graffiti was reported (83%). The consultants selected thirty sample areas of approximately 25 hectares each - two hot spot areas and two random areas per Ward (except Ward 5 where the concentration of complaints did not support an extra random area). Two consultants captured data in thirteen categories for each graffiti tag/piece found. In the eight wards sampled, there were 372 graffiti locations where graffiti was observed. A total of 2,256 graffiti tags, with 493 taggers, were documented during the audit, averaging 6.3 graffiti tags per site.

The consultants provided staff with a comprehensive report in December 2013. Some of the key findings are as follows:

- Graffiti Index (GI) average per area (tags/hectare) = 2.92.
- The top ten Graffiti Index scores were recorded in Wards 1, 2, 3 and 4. These represent 86% of all graffiti observed across the City.
- Neighbourhoods in Ward 3 hold the top three Graffiti Index scores - Landsdale (GI 15.73), Stipley (GI 10.71) and Blakely (GI 7.69).
- The top thirty identifiable taggers account for 41% of tags observed. Ten taggers represent 27% of all tags in the City.
- 68% of tags are small (2 square feet or less in size).
- 97% of tags are text only.
- 87% of tags are on private property;
 - Commercial and retail = 42%
 - Single family dwelling = 27%
 - Utilities = 8%
 - Multi-family dwelling = 4%

Implementation and Pilot Strategies

Through analysis of the 2013 Graffiti Audit, anecdotal information and complaints forwarded by Councillors, Public Works staff will be responsible for coordinating and implementing Hamilton's Comprehensive Graffiti Management Program which will be focused on:

- Remediation strategies for Wards 1, 2, 3 and 4 beginning in 2014, focusing on properties identified in the top fifty Location Intensity Ratings (LIRs).
- Strategies to prevent graffiti on private property.
- Enforcement strategies aimed at taking the top ten taggers out of action.
- Pilot strategies/programs for exceptional circumstances (e.g. public/private fences, victim assistance programs) and Pan Am transportation routes.
- Corporate remediation and prevention strategies for City assets.

1. Remediation Strategies

The 2013 Graffiti Audit demonstrated that the highest concentration of existing graffiti is in Wards 1, 2, 3 and 4. The consultants noted that many “old” tags remain on property in Hamilton. It is surmised that the majority of visible graffiti in Hamilton can be eradicated through remediation strategies in Wards 1 to 4.

In 2014, graffiti remediation strategies will focus on Wards 2 and 3 in preparation for the Pan Am Games. In 2015, graffiti remediation initiatives will continue in Wards 2 and 3 with Wards 1 and 4 added. Graffiti remediation strategies planned in these Wards include an enforcement and neighbourhood clean-up blitz, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) property audits and City and utilities proactive operations.

2. Graffiti Prevention Strategies - private property

The 2013 Graffiti Audit demonstrated that, excluding utilities properties, the majority (78%) of observed tags were on private properties. This statistic correlates with graffiti complaints escalated to Councillors’ offices and demonstrates the need for victim assistance programs and grants for private property owners in Hamilton.

Victim assistance programs being considered for implementation in 2014 include exterior paint discounts through corporate sponsors and volunteer graffiti removal/paint-over programs to assist residential property owners who are demonstrated victims of multiple vandalism incidents.

Mural programs have proven to be successful strategies for the management of graffiti in several jurisdictions. For 2014, the Hamilton Graffiti Management Program will encourage private property owners to consider commissioning murals on frequently tagged surfaces. The Graffiti Management Program will provide the property owner with tips, considerations and information on developing a mural project that positively contributes to the neighbourhood environment.

3. Enforcement Strategies

The 2013 Graffiti Audit provided information and data that will enhance the Hamilton Police Service’s (HPS) intelligence activities as well as provide Municipal Law Enforcement (MLE) staff with detailed information to allow the enforcement of the applicable Property and Yard Maintenance Bylaws. Both HPS and MLE staff have agreed to collaborate with Graffiti Management Program staff to conduct strategic enforcement of relevant laws and Bylaws related to graffiti activity.

For the past five years, Hamilton Police Services has been running a program that encourages beat officers to watch for graffiti vandal activity. An incentive program rewards officers who are make arrests for graffiti vandalism. The Service also maintains an intelligence file of more than 360 taggers who have been active in Hamilton.

The 2013 Graffiti Audit surveyors were able to identify the authors of almost 1,000 graffiti tags. Of these identifiable tags, the surveyors found that thirty taggers account for more than 40% of the identifiable tags in the survey areas. Further

analysis by HPS using graffiti intelligence reveals that some taggers use multiple signatures. The Office of the Deputy Chief of Police, Field Support is developing an operational plan that will focus on the arrests of the most frequent graffiti offenders in Hamilton.

Using graffiti intensity data from the 2013 Graffiti Audit, Municipal Law Enforcement staff has agreed to conduct a proactive blitz on the top fifty properties with the highest Location Intensity Ratings (LIR). The LIR is a measure of the relative intensity of graffiti on a property within the audited Ward. The higher the LIR score, the more noticeable the graffiti to both trained and untrained observers. The Ward distributions of the top fifty location intensity rating properties are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 - Distribution of Top Fifty Location Intensity Ratings Properties

Ward	Number of Locations	% of Total
Ward 3	25	50%
Ward 2	12	24%
Ward 4	5	10%
Ward 8	4	8%
Ward 1	3	6%
Ward 7	1	2%
Ward 5	0	0%
Ward 6	0	0%
	50	100%

In 2014, the MLE blitz on high intensity graffiti properties will initially focus on commercial and industrial properties. MLE and Graffiti Management Program staff will develop a tiered enforcement/victim assistance program for residential properties to ensure residential property owners have sufficient supports and resources to remove and prevent graffiti on their properties.

4. Special Situation Strategies

Staff recognizes that there exists some graffiti issues of unique nature either by the type of property (e.g. fences between City property and private property), ownership (e.g. rail property, Provincial or Federal assets) or shared maintenance responsibilities (e.g. road/rail overpasses and bridges). Consideration is also given to ensuring a positive image to visitors to the City for large events such as the TO2015 Pan Am Games.

Graffiti on privacy fences separating residences and public property such as parks or roadways presents unique challenges. With the support of the Ward 6 Councillor, Graffiti Management Program staff is recommending a fedge (willow hedge/fence) installation along specific fence sections in Fay Avenue Park and Lisgar Park that have been repeatedly vandalized with graffiti and are extremely difficult to monitor for illegal activity. Staff research has shown that fedge installations on commercial properties have proven to be an effective graffiti prevention strategy with immediate and lasting effects. (Refer to Appendix A for illustrations of proposed pilot projects and an example of fedge installation.)

Graffiti Management Program staff continue to liaise with private and Provincial transportation authorities to address highly visible graffiti on their structures and assets. In consultation with the respective Ward Councillor, pilot projects that require the cooperation of multiple agencies and may benefit from economies of scale are being explored. In 2014, Graffiti Management Program staff will facilitate collaborative graffiti remediation and prevention initiatives on highly visible rail properties through Hamilton such as the retaining walls along the CP tracks adjacent to Kay Drage Park and on MTO overpasses and the Niagara Escarpment rock face along Highway 403.

Staff will also explore legal and cost implications of mural programs and other graffiti remediation and prevention strategies along Pan Am transportation routes for implementation in Fall 2014 or Spring 2015.

5. Corporate Remediation and Prevention Strategies

Although the 2013 Graffiti Audit showed that only 9% (211 tags) of the recorded tags were identified to be on City of Hamilton assets, the City is committed to ensuring that it sets a leading example in the community by contributing to a clean neighbourhood environment. In 2014, staff will develop corporate-wide standard operating procedures for the timely removal of graffiti from City assets as well as develop criteria for the application of graffiti prevention tactics (such as anti-graffiti coatings and murals) on frequently tagged assets. These procedures will also address processes that will facilitate the engagement of citizen volunteers in graffiti prevention strategies such as murals on City assets and neighbourhood watch programs.

The Public Works department has successfully implemented asset wrap anti-graffiti pilot projects. A 2012 pilot project demonstrated that vinyl wraps on traffic control boxes is a practical and economical graffiti prevention strategy. The Traffic Operations & Engineering Section has continued the traffic control box wrap initiative and is continually testing different graphics and designs.

Following on the success of the traffic control box wraps, Parks & Cemeteries Section staff, in consultation with Corporate Assets & Strategic Planning staff, will implement a splash pad control box wrap pilot program this spring at select splash pads. The green cabinets will be covered with a colourful aquarium themed vinyl wrap to deter graffiti taggers from vandalizing City property.

Through Public Works' right-of-way management processes, opportunities for collaboration with and between utilities will be explored. In 2014, Graffiti Management Program staff proposes to develop a utilities stakeholder working group to confirm their commitment to rapid removal of graffiti from their assets, explore the capacity of utilities to deploy graffiti prevention strategies and look at opportunities for inter-agency collaboration and economies of scale.

Implementation

Upon acceptance by Council of the strategic components of the Graffiti Management Program, staff will develop measurable objectives for each strategy. Pilot program activities in 2014 will be funded from existing departmental operating and capital

budgets. Graffiti management programs and initiatives proposed for 2015 and beyond requiring staff and expense allocations will be referred to the respective 2015 budget processes.

The success of the City of Edmonton's Graffiti Management Program is measured through annual graffiti audits. It is strongly recommended that the City of Hamilton repeat the graffiti audit to measure the effectiveness of graffiti management strategies and programs. This initiative will be planned for 2015 and as such, referred to the 2015 budget process.

Staff will provide updates on the Graffiti Management Program through the semi-annual Clean & Green Hamilton Strategy information updates to the General Issues Committee.