

## **Graffiti Management Strategy Update**

### **Background**

On November 22, 2017, Council approved Graffiti Management Strategy (PW17078/PED17198). Staff brought forward six recommendations; two additional recommendations were added by committee. Recommendation (b), directed staff to report back on the progress of the Graffiti Management Strategy through the Clean and Green Strategy annual report. Below is an update on the work that has been completed to date as well as an identification of projects that will be further discussed, including recommendations and comprehensive costing, in a follow up report to Council in Q1 2019.

### **Information**

A cross-departmental staff working group met earlier this year to review the report recommendations and develop an action plan to address Council's requests for: 1) a victim assistance program; 2) a proactive approach to graffiti management; 3) additional CCTV cameras; 4) a counter social media campaign encouraging citizens to participate in assisting police in catching graffiti vandals; and, 5) the cost of a one-time City-wide graffiti clean-up.

#### **1. Victim Assistance Program**

Graffiti is defined as any mark or scratch applied on the surface of a building, structure, or street without consent. Property that has been graffitied without consent is illegal and victimizes property owners. In addition, municipal by-laws can further victimize property owners by requiring them to bear the costs to remove graffiti or risk facing penalties.

##### **(a) Paint removal/ graffiti block vouchers**

A municipal scan revealed that many cities have programs in place to assist property owners with graffiti removal. Whether it is by providing financial or material assistance, graffiti removal kits, graffiti vouchers, or free graffiti removal services, proactive municipalities are supporting residents and businesses in removing graffiti.

Staff are in the process of working with Procurement on a discounted voucher program and the City's Revenue Generation section on related sponsorship opportunities. More information about these initiatives will be included in the Q1 2019 Council report. In the interim, staff secured funding from the *Keep Hamilton Clean & Green Committee* to purchase hardware store gift cards to support victims of graffiti. Municipal Law Enforcement's co-op students are distributing these gift cards to private property owners who have been victimized by graffiti on multiple occasions and/or who self-identify as income-eligible (i.e. meet low income criteria). More information about the gift card initiative can be found in Appendix "E".

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### **(b) Youth engagement**

Evidence suggests that most graffiti is applied by youth between the ages of 12 and 25. In addition to focusing on a punitive approach in dealing with youth and graffiti vandalism, many municipalities are taking the approach of working with youth to legitimize graffiti as an art form by offering opportunities for youth to express themselves and redirect their creativity (i.e. transitioning 'graffiti vandals' into 'street artists').

Staff are investigating opportunities to engage youth through the City's Youth Strategy. In particular, staff are investigating legal walls, street art and mural programs (more below) as well as youth outreach and education on graffiti vandalism. Staff will report back to Council in Q1 2019 on how the City can better engage youth in deterring graffiti vandalism and preventing the victimization of property owners.

### **(c) Street art**

Staff are investigating several options for a pilot that may include (i) legal walls, (ii) murals and (iii) anti-graffiti wraps. These options will be presented alongside other methods of deterring graffiti vandalism, such as CCTV cameras, in Q1 2019.

#### **i) Legal walls**

Research suggests that graffiti vandalism can be reduced and controlled by offering opportunities and space for vandals to express themselves. Legal walls, also known as "sanctioned walls" or "free walls," are spaces that municipalities designate as legal graffiti zones. Walls are typically painted over a couple times a year, creating a blank canvas for new graffiti. Staff are in the process of investigating suitable City-owned locations and anticipated impacts to operating and capital budgets to establish a legal wall program in Hamilton.

#### **ii) Murals**

Like legal walls, murals can minimize unwanted graffiti and beautify cities. They can also contribute to the local economy by employing artists. Artists are typically hired to paint murals on the exterior walls of private residences and businesses. Staff are investigating a variety of options for how the City can support property owners who are interested in murals for their buildings. A scan revealed that other municipalities provide full or partial funding through granting programs, while others have created mural permitting processes.

Currently, the City of Hamilton provides funding for murals through Urban Renewal's Commercial Property Improvement Grant Program (C.P.I.G.) and the B.I.A. Commercial Property Improvement Grant Program (B.I.A.C.P.I.G.). Funding for murals is typically only approved for the front of a building or on the

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'flankage,' street facing side of the building, if it is a corner property. Therefore, staff are in the process of investigating other dedicated sources of funding for mural projects.

### iii) Anti-graffiti wraps

Traffic signal boxes (as well as other municipal infrastructure and street furniture) are often targets of graffiti. Art on these boxes can help to deter graffiti by removing the availability of a 'blank canvas' for graffiti vandals. A pilot project to create public art for traffic signal boxes in the Downtown Hamilton Community Improvement Project Area is planned for 2019. It will be led by the Tourism & Culture Division and funded from the Downtown Public Art Reserve as approved by Council in report PED18061.

### (d) CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design)

CPTED is a proactive design philosophy built on the belief that the proper design and effective use of the built environment can lead to a reduction in the fear and incidence of crime as well as an improvement in the quality of life.

Hamilton Police Service's Crime Prevention Branch provides information, tips and techniques to property owners about how they can eliminate crime in, on and around their properties by identifying problem areas and making changes.

Staff have been working closely with Hamilton Police Service on developing opportunities to leverage this existing program as it relates to graffiti prevention and supporting victims of crime. Staff are targeting the end of Q4 2018 to implement additional audits for graffiti hotspots and workshops and webinars made available online for easy consumption.

### (e) Centralized resources

Raising awareness about graffiti prevention and removal is key to the success of a city with reduced graffiti vandalism and victimization of property owners. Research overwhelmingly suggests that rapid removal is the most effective tool in mitigating graffiti vandalism.

Staff has begun the process to provide a 'one-stop-shop' for property owners looking for information on graffiti removal, reporting and prevention. This online resource will also include information about victim assistance initiatives and granting programs. Staff are targeting Q1 2019 to launch a revised webpage on the City's website that will act as a centralized location for graffiti-related resources.

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### **2. Proactive graffiti management**

Two co-op students from McMaster University were hired by Municipal Law Enforcement (MLE) in January as part of the two-year pilot that Council approved at its meeting on November 22, 2017 (recommendations (c), (d) and (e)). The students are dedicated exclusively to undertaking a proactive graffiti enforcement strategy, including victim assurance, victim education, and community engagement.

As part of their work, the students are:

- Providing information to residents and businesses about the importance of graffiti removal and how to prevent future graffiti vandalism
- Inventorying graffiti and comparing data to the 2013 graffiti audit
- Collecting information about barriers to graffiti removal for the development of a Victim Assistance Program
- Distributing gift cards for the purchase of paint, graffiti removal and graffiti prevention products, to those victimized by graffiti multiple times or self-identify as income-eligible
- Enforcing Yard Maintenance By-law (No. 10-118) as it relates to graffiti (as directed)

The soft enforcement approach by the students is having a positive response from the public to increase community confidence and voluntary compliance with the identified complaints. Details and results of inspections from January 2018 to July 2018 can be found in Licensing & By-law Services' August 3, 2018 report, noted in Appendix "E" attached to Report PW110521. Staff will continue to analyze and evaluate the data generated by the students to determine if the actions and initiatives met the goals and objectives of the pilot project.

### **3. Security cameras (e.g. CCTV, FlashCam)**

Recommendation (g) directed staff to investigate the pursuit of additional CCTV cameras with associated costing. Staff are developing a matrix for security camera options and costing to expand the existing pilot at Fay Park in Ward 6 at other locations in the City. At present, options being investigated are city-owned hard-wired and solar cameras, and third-part turnkey services.

Staff are examining each option including associated costing. Energy, Fleet & Facilities Management Division staff are also in the process of developing a corporate policy for City-wide use of security cameras in addition to issuing a Request For Information (RFI) to obtain information about the capabilities of suppliers. Staff will bring a report back to Council in Q1 2019 with options and costing for the expansion of the existing CCTV pilot program.

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### **4. Crime Stoppers campaign**

Recommendation (h) directed staff to report back on the cost of a counter social media campaign that encourages citizens to participate in assisting police in catching graffiti vandals. The City led a similar Crime Stoppers campaign in 2009-2010 encouraging the public to report graffiti and known taggers. Hamilton Police Service confirmed that there was a spike in reported graffiti “tips” and attributed the increase to this campaign.

Staff are determining the costs to expand the 2009-2010 campaign to include updated posters, bus wrapping and social media platforms. Staff will report back with advertising options and associated costing, targeting a campaign launch date in Q1 2019.

### **5. One-time clean-up**

Staff were directed through recommendation (h) to report back to Council on the estimated cost of a one-time City-wide graffiti clean-up.

Staff have estimated the cost of a one-time City-wide graffiti clean-up to be approximately \$2.5 M. The estimate is based on the current corporate contract rate per incidence for graffiti removal, and the number of graffiti hotspots identified in the 2013 graffiti audit.

One-time removal is not a strategy employed by other municipalities, likely because it is costly and will not eliminate graffiti vandalism. A multi-pronged approach that includes programs aimed at reducing graffiti vandalism through education, victim assistance, proactive graffiti management and graffiti deterrence strategies like legal walls and murals, has proven to be the most effective way to manage graffiti vandalism.