

ESTABLISH A GRAFFITI TASK FORCE

The goal of a citywide task force is to "solve a problem," usually one, such as graffiti vandalism, that is chronic or requires a multifaceted response from among a diverse group of public and private entities. Creating a task force to target graffiti vandalism can:

- improve responsiveness to citizen reports of graffiti,
- facilitate coordination of city services, and
- initiate activities that produce measurable results.

1. Organize a Team

- Bring together representatives from key public agencies, law enforcement, business and downtown associations, schools, neighborhood groups, and others to establish a local graffiti task force. Each representative should be in a position to make decisions and ensure follow through with any identified responsibilities. Get a list of potential team members.
- The organizing entity might be the government agency tasked with responding to graffiti, local law enforcement, or an organization that coordinates graffiti removal. If possible, involve the Mayor or a representative from the Mayor's office. The support of elected officials can be critical to the success of a graffiti prevention effort.
- Establish how frequently the task group will meet (e.g., quarterly) and identify possible meeting locations or organize conference calls. Consider establishing an online list-serve for the task group to provide for ongoing communication.

2. Evaluate the Community's Graffiti Problem

Gather and share information to assess the local graffiti problem:

- Use a survey to count the amount of graffiti and identify locations where it is most prevalent. A survey is also a good baseline to measure results.
- Conduct a site visit to one or more targeted neighborhoods to evaluate the amount and types of graffiti. Have law enforcement or others knowledgeable about graffiti lead the visit. Take photos.
- Share information and data documenting the problem among task force members. This may include reported violations, number of arrests, number of cleanups/month, removal costs, number of calls to report graffiti, photos, etc.

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3. **Develop a Plan of Action**

Discuss possible strategies for responding to the city's specific graffiti problems that will ensure effective and measurable impacts. Task force initiatives might include:

- ensuring rapid removal,
- the development of a shared database to track graffiti vandalism, a public education ad campaign,
- a community arts project
- youth education
- organizing adopt-a-block for graffiti removal
- outreach to business and neighborhoods groups to help with prevention,
- organizing a graffiti summit
- the enforcement of existing anti-graffiti laws, or
- coordination with law enforcement and the courts.

After agreeing on a plan of action, each task force member is assigned specific tasks and is responsible for coordinating the activities of his or her agency to carry them out within a given time frame.

4. **Involve Citizens**

Involve local residents in appropriate task force activities. Make sure they know how to report graffiti, have an opportunity to volunteer for cleanups, and have received education about the impact of graffiti on the community.

Consider holding neighborhood meetings to educate about graffiti vandalism and to introduce law enforcement, and other task force representatives from the various city services that work on graffiti prevention and removal.

5. **Track and Evaluate Results**

Monitor the action plan to ensure follow through. Following completion of task force activities, evaluate the results. Compare any baseline data with outcomes after completion of activities to get results. For example, a 40% decrease in reported graffiti, a 35% reduction in the number of graffiti tags, etc.

6. **Publicize and Sustain Success**

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Announce the formation of the task force to raise awareness about graffiti, put graffiti vandals on notice, and get public support. Consider having the Mayor or other elected official publicly kick off the task force.

Follow up with regular media releases about task force activities or specific results, such as a drop in graffiti, number of graffiti sites cleaned up, formation of an adopt-a-block program, etc.

Periodically, such as annually, evaluate the goals and strategies of the Task Force, as well as how best to sustain specific programs.

Ensure task force representatives are in a position in their organization or agency to make a decision and can confirm follow through with tasks. Consider including:

- Arts council
- Building and safety
- Churches or faith-based organizations
- City attorney
- City council member
- Code inspectors
- Downtown association
- Housing authority
- Keep America Beautiful affiliate and other nonprofit organizations
- Law enforcement
- Local businesses or the Chamber of Commerce
- Mayor's office
- Neighborhood groups
- Office of public works
- Real estate representative
- Transportation department
- Schools

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- Social services
- Urban development