

GRAFFITI TASK FORCE – SUBCOMMITTEES  
PUBLIC MEETING  
THURSDAY, APRIL 5, 2007  
5:00 TO 6:30 PM

DISTRICT 1 POLICE STATION – 1311 W. 46<sup>TH</sup> AVE

Regina Huerter, Co-Chair for the Graffiti Task Force, introduced the group to Steve Charbonneau mediator from CMC, a nonprofit mediation organization, and the members of the Graffiti Task Force Steering Committee, as well as the co-chairs of the three pronged subcommittees: Prevention, Abatement and Enforcement.

PREVENTION Jerome Davis, area manager for Xcel Energy, who has been involved with graffiti for many years, is the co-chair of Prevention, along with Erin Trapp. He summarized the subcommittee work as follows:

- The committee has focused on 3-5 areas:
  - Targeted education programs – at all different levels
  - Restorative Justice Program (positive alternatives)
  - Positive art opportunities

ABATEMENT Don Pesek, Downtown Denver Partnership, co-chair for the Abatement Subcommittee with Danamarie Schmitt and Lisa Flores, said his committee had agreed upon the following values:

- Zero tolerance
- Expediency of removal
- Fairness
- Responsibility goes with ownership

He said the work order system is good, but allow flexibility for work crews to hit some of the hot spots, and use new technologies such as cameras.

ENFORCEMENT Captain Doug Stephens of the Denver Police Department, summarized the Enforcement Subcommittee values:

- Graffiti is a crime
- Swift and sure penalties for this crime
- Resources and processes to make anti-graffiti efforts more efficient
  - Legislative – changes in the municipal code and state statutes to beef up penalties for graffiti vandalism
  - Coordination - Who should be responsible for the overall management of the City's anti-graffiti efforts?
  - Enforcement process – police resources and policies and prosecution

Mediator Steve Charbonneau explained the expected format of the meeting: people were to give their names and speak their mind; solutions, however, would be discussed by the Task Force at the next meeting on April 12.

The following comments were made at the meeting:

- There is an inconsistency in reporting graffiti. Graffiti at DPS is handled differently than graffiti at a bus bench. At the Ashland Rec Center the word “Blood” was written four feet tall. It was reported in December and not removed until April 3.
- Some addresses in Denver do not get cleaned. It can be 48-72 hours for a commercial building. At 38<sup>th</sup> and Federal (Car Quest and Checkers), it can be “up to 4 months” before graffiti is removed. It should be removed in 24 hours.
- There are no substantial penalties for young people; there are no consequences
- (From 33<sup>rd</sup> and Shoshone): There are too many graffiti meetings. The graffiti consultant from San Jose [Rob Boyles] has the answers.
- (Sunnyside): Permission forms should be required from all households. When the forms are not turned in, someone should go after them. There should be an increase in penalties, an increase in enforcement. We need to find out who is doing it. The graffiti is removed and they [taggers] are right back. Horace Mann was tagged at 4 AM. (lives in Sunnyside). Locking up paint should be a state law.
- (Bear Valley – SW Denver)
  - Private citizens should not have to pay for removal of graffiti
  - Kids and parents should be held responsible
  - We bought a power sprayer for \$350. When City doesn’t respond, use your own power sprayer, and get volunteers to help
  - CDOT is very slow to respond to graffiti removal requests
- I don’t see graffiti in Phoenix or Albuquerque.
- (1<sup>st</sup> & Broadway Cop Shop) There are 11 Cop Shops in Denver; Cop Shops should be given paint and volunteers to help clean up graffiti.
- (Berkeley Regis United Neighbors – 51<sup>st</sup> and Federal) We need to use Cop Shops. The I-70 barrier walls are hit every night.
- (Bill Johnson) Regarding public property, we find graffiti on street signs, park benches, and restrooms. City employees should be encouraged to report from the field when they see graffiti.
  - For abatement, the city needs to provide more money for removal of graffiti
- (Villa Park) Absentee landlords need to remove graffiti. How can this be done? I’m talking about a high rental area.
- (Downtown business improvement district) We have cleaned up 12,000 graffiti hits since last January. We are sending mixed messages in Denver. While the Rocky Mountain News is featuring graffiti designer clothes, a Rocky Mountain editor is saying that we need more graffiti Enforcement [“Going After Graffiti” March 27, 2007 Rocky Mountain News]
  - Need stronger enforcement
  - We need to give the police tools to work with.
  - We need to hold under-aged kids’ parents responsible

- (N. Denver homeowner) These are vandals. They need to be on probation, pay fines, or pay off fines by work
  - Homeowners should not have to pay for the clean-up. We have elderly people who cannot scrub off their homes and garages.
  - Adult vandals are setting a poor example.
- Although there is a paint lock-up law in Denver, kids can purchase spray paint online.
- (JoAnn Phillips, Villa Park) Where is DPS? We need to go into schools and show the kids that this is not acceptable. DPS needs to be with us. The Business Improvement District needs more people to clean up. In 1998, we had money: 10 cameras, 3 police officers and an undercover car. We need more police resources.
- The vandal who etched the windows of the Convention Center has been seen on video, Det. Ruybal said.
- (Broadway Cop Shop) District 4 sets up graffiti stings. "They catch some of them."
- (Avery Packer) We could have "Graffiti [crime] stoppers". Give a small reward for the person who calls in to report a person doing graffiti and that person is arrested. Kids are getting off with a slap on the hand.
- (Villa Park) We need to set up 1 clearing house – there are too many places to call: 3-1-1, Partners Against Graffiti, the Police District, the Cop Shop etc.
- Las Vegas has a rampant graffiti problem. Now they give jail time and highly publicized arrests. This isn't the broken windows policy. It's the broken walls.
- (South Athmar Park – Alameda and Federal)
  - The City should write citations when graffiti is not removed.
  - We need to educate the judiciary that this is not a petty crime.
  - We need more public participation. In Adopt-A-Spot, everyone is responsible for just one thing.
- (Owner of building on Tejon) How many vandals are caught? We need these arrests to be publicized in the Rocky Mountain News.
- (Sgt. Robert Motyka – District 1 Street Crime Arrest Team) We go out every night to look for kids doing graffiti. I have four guys working for me. We do foot patrol in the park. We have arrested 15 kids since January. "These guys are hard to catch."
  - We work closely with citizens who help us catch vandals.
  - Vandals are quick.
  - By the time a car is dispatched, the guys are gone.
  - If the kid is over 18, he'll go to jail.
  - Often, while the kid is tagging, mom and dad are at work.
  - How can parents be accountable for kids when they aren't there. Kids tag all hours of the day.
- (Det. Ruybal) Officers can add additional charges to graffiti: trespassing, curfew, possession of graffiti materials. We have names and tags; we know who is doing it. "It's just a matter of catching them."
- (Alamo Placita Park – Terry) When the kids are under age, make the parents pay the fine.

- (Sgt. Motyka) Penalties should be more harsh.
- You can buy paint at a garage sale for 10 cents. You can get a can of paint anywhere.
- Det. Ruybal – We have 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation taggers. Right now juveniles do community service, and go through Juvenile Diversion. Adults go to jail and get their driver's license revoked.
- (Peggy) We need to fine the parents.
- (JoAnn Phillips, Villa Park) There's a paint lock-up law in Denver but you can go to Lakewood and buy paint. Former State Rep. visited our Enforcement meeting and showed how the money for defacing goes into the General Fund. We need it to go back to the graffiti effort.
- In Boulder, a bartender who sells liquor to a person who later gets a DUI can be held responsible for selling liquor to the person. We need legislation to hold people accountable.
- (Villa Park – Restorative Justice) One vandal must do 200 hours of clean-up. He and his mother came and apologized to the neighborhood group. He learned graffiti techniques through a neighborhood Boys' Club.
- (Susan Mercado – Highlands) You must make the kids, rather than the parents responsible. Have them paint homes for seniors and help revitalize the neighborhood. There are two types of graffiti: gang graffiti and art. At Cinco de Mayo, artists could paint their artwork on canvases.
- Lyn Reed – Data shows that murals do not cut down on the graffiti problem.
- (Sloan's Lake) We had some kids from Lake Middle School who helped clean the alleys on the south side of Colfax. "Those kids made a difference." This is an example of positive activities that neighborhood associations can do with kids.
- (Ernie Ruiz) I grew up thinking that there must be a consequence if you do something wrong. If a kid defaces something, he needs to be put in jail for 72 hours. The problem is there are no consequences. My house was tagged. I saw it. Nothing happened to the kid.
- (Liz – Knox Court) I have a Knox Court business. We have video cameras. \$1000 damage has been done to our windows. The cost is for mylar covering for those windows. We need to get them to pay when they are young.
- (Morrison Road) We need to go into the schools and teach them respect. Do you want to live in a city that looks like this?
- How do we catch them?
- (on the way out the door) I want to choose my own art.

Regina Huerter thanked everyone for coming and said the public could send emails or call.

The next Task Force Meeting will be held April 12 at District 1, 1311 W. 46<sup>th</sup> Avenue, from 5:00 to 6:30 PM. The public is invited.