



City of Seattle Anti-Graffiti Efforts: Best Practices and Recommendations



City of Seattle
Office of City Auditor
<http://www.seattle.gov/audit/>

Report Highlights, July 2010

What We Found

Why We Did This Audit

We conducted this performance audit of the City of Seattle's (City's) anti-graffiti efforts at the request of Seattle City Councilmembers Tim Burgess and Tom Rasmussen. Specifically, they asked us to examine how the City handles graffiti removal, prosecutes offenders, and educates the public about graffiti. They requested this audit based on feedback from citizens who expressed concern about not feeling safe in their neighborhoods, and their concerns about "street disorder" in Seattle. According to recent academic studies, there is a connection between visible environmental disorder and higher rates of crime.

What We Did

To complete our audit, we reviewed City ordinances and laws; interviewed City and community stakeholders; reviewed relevant City policies, procedures, and studies; observed Seattle Public Utilities' (SPU's) Graffiti Rangers; attended a regional anti-graffiti conference; performed a physical inventory of graffiti in four sample areas in two Seattle neighborhoods; implemented and analyzed the results of an electronic survey of a broad range of community participants; researched best practices from other jurisdictions, non-profit organizations and academic research; and traced a sample of SPU Graffiti Hotline calls to verify abatement response times.

Graffiti in Seattle

Writing, painting, or drawing on public or private property without the owner's permission is not permitted under the law in the City of Seattle (Seattle Municipal Code 12A.08.020). In addition, the City of Seattle also has a Graffiti Nuisance Code (Seattle Municipal Code 10.07) that requires property owners to promptly remove graffiti found on their property after notice from the City of Seattle. During our audit we collected a wide variety of

views about the impact of graffiti. A web survey of over 900 Seattle residents, businesses and organizations revealed a range of public opinion, with 39% indicating that graffiti was not a problem and 40% indicating that graffiti was a medium to very big problem. These results appear to reflect how often respondents had been the victim of graffiti: 37% percent had never been victims, while 33% had been victimized at least several times a year.

Our systematic, single-day, physical count of graffiti in four



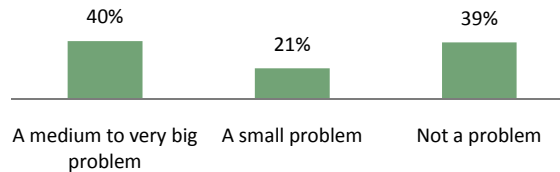
A Seattle Public Utilities Graffiti Ranger removes a tag reported by a resident.

sample areas in two Seattle neighborhoods (each .7 miles) captured 556 instances of graffiti including 551 common tags* and five that appeared to be gang graffiti. We found that public property was nearly twice as commonly tagged as private property, with traffic/street signs, utility poles, and pay stations as common targets.

Costs of Graffiti in Seattle

The City of Seattle spent approximately \$1.8 million dollars in 2009 abating graffiti from public property. Also, the nearly 300 survey respondents who reported graffiti damage spent a total of \$232,000 to remove graffiti in 2009.

Views on graffiti were mixed among over 900 survey respondents



Profile of Graffiti Vandalism (Adult Misdemeanors)

Based on our analysis of 2007 and 2009 data on persons charged with graffiti vandalism in the City of Seattle, we found the following:

Of the 18 offenders whose cases were closed in 2009:

- 17 (94%) were male
- Their median age was 24 (ranging from 20 – 34 years old)

Of the 40 offenders charged in 2007:

- 22 had criminal charges in addition to a graffiti vandalism charge
- These charges included: assault, theft, obstructing an officer, carrying a concealed weapon, criminal trespass, reckless endangerment, harassment, and violation of a domestic violence protection order

Vancouver B.C. has studied its persistent offenders (those with 5 or more graffiti-related police contacts) and found that among this group:

- 63 % have police contacts related to violent offences
- 29% have five or more criminal charges
- 23% have a drug or alcohol related offence as their first offence

*"Tags" are simple names or symbols, often written in a stylized manner found in high volumes and in high-visibility locations. Tags range from small single-color marks to large elaborate "pieces" in multiple colors and bubble-lettering. Seattle officials indicate that "tagging" is the City's most common graffiti. Nationally, about 78-80% of graffiti is common tags; 10% is gang graffiti; 5% are "pieces," or large elaborate tags; and the remaining 5-7% include hate, message (e.g., Class of '09), political, and artistic graffiti. Source: GraffitiHurts.org

What We Recommend



A community mural in West Seattle covered with tags.

Graffiti walls, murals, and restrictions on the sale of spray paint were not included in our recommendations due to lack of evidence about their efficacy in preventing graffiti. Murals may be effective for areas that are frequently tagged, and graffiti walls might provide a creative outlet for youth. However both require monitoring and maintenance.

Contact Us:

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Based on our research and analysis, we developed 14 recommendations. **The first five are directed at the City Council and Mayor:**

1. Develop a clear policy statement on graffiti in accordance with current City laws. If the Mayor and City Council decide that addressing graffiti is a policy priority, they should:
2. Establish clear directives about who in the City is authorized, responsible, and accountable for anti-graffiti efforts;
3. Develop specific outcome goals for the key components of Seattle's anti-graffiti program (e.g., a 50% reduction in graffiti in three years);
4. Require departments to gather baseline data before new policies and procedures are implemented; and
5. Require an annual physical inventory of the graffiti in Seattle to evaluate the effectiveness of the City's efforts and to measure outcomes.

These five recommendations, if implemented by City leaders, will provide direction and momentum for City departments and community stakeholders to work together to implement nine additional specific recommendations.

Summary of Specific Recommendations

The next nine recommendations address each of the questions posed by the City Council in their audit request. The recommendations utilize existing City resources, leverage volunteers and partnerships, or have minimal cost.

We identified three jurisdictions that have experienced a significant decrease in graffiti over time that is supported with quantifiable, data-supported outcome measures. Each of these jurisdictions use a multi-faceted approach to graffiti that includes:

- 1. Eradication,**
- 2. Enforcement, and**
- 3. Engagement/Education.**

Our recommendations are designed to strengthen these three elements for the City of Seattle.

They include:

1. Amend Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) 12.A.08.020 (Property destruction) to include stickers in the list of prohibited materials.
2. Amend SMC 12.A.08.020 (Property destruction) to add a clause stipulating the elements that should be included in calculating restitution for violations of the code.
3. Strengthen recording of graffiti by having Parking Enforcement Officers (PEOs) and other City employees photograph and report graffiti they discover in the course of their work.
4. Strengthen the Seattle Police Department's ability to analyze graffiti crimes by creating and maintaining a photographic database.
5. Strengthen the City's ability to apprehend, and prosecute graffiti vandals by creating a pilot program with a dedicated graffiti detective (redeploy existing resource).
6. Work with the City Attorney's Office prosecutors familiar with the Community Court's Diversion program and chronic graffiti offenders to develop diversion programs that are effective for this population, based on their knowledge of the population and the results of evidence-based research on effective programs.
7. Redeploy resources to help ensure that graffiti on parking pay stations is abated within the 6 day target goal set by the City.
8. Implement a three-part model to enhance community involvement and public education, consisting of:
 - A broadly-based coalition of City and other public employees, community organizations, businesses, and residents,
 - A comprehensive community outreach plan, and
 - A strategic plan for public education about the costs and impacts of graffiti.
9. Conduct further study of the business improvement area (BIA) programs for graffiti removal based on comparing physical inventories in BIA and non-BIA locations, while continuing to support SPU grants to BIAs.

Office of City Auditor

City of Seattle Anti-Graffiti Efforts: Best Practices and Recommendations

July 28, 2010



City of Seattle Office of City Auditor

Our Mission:

To help the City of Seattle achieve honest, efficient management and full accountability throughout City government. We serve the public interest by providing the Mayor, the City Council, and City department heads with accurate information, unbiased analysis, and objective recommendations on how best to use public resources in support of the well-being of the citizens of Seattle.

Background:

Seattle voters established our office by a 1991 amendment to the City Charter. The office is an independent department within the legislative branch of City government. The City Auditor reports to the City Council and has a four-year term to ensure his/her independence in selecting and reporting on audit projects. The Office of City Auditor conducts financial-related audits, performance audits, management audits, and compliance audits of City of Seattle programs, agencies, grantees, and contracts. The City Auditor's goal is to ensure that the City of Seattle is run as effectively and efficiently as possible.

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City of Seattle Office of City Auditor



July 28, 2010

The Honorable Michael McGinn
Seattle City Councilmembers
City of Seattle
Seattle, Washington 98104

Dear Mayor McGinn and City Councilmembers:

Attached is our audit report *City of Seattle Anti-Graffiti Efforts: Best Practices and Recommendations*. The purpose of the audit was to examine how the City handles graffiti removal, prosecutes offenders, and educates the public about graffiti; to compare the City's efforts to best practices; and make recommendations for potential improvements. Writing, painting or drawing on public or private property *without the owner's permission* is not permitted under the law in the City of Seattle (Seattle Municipal Code 12A.08.020). In the report, we make five overarching recommendations and nine specific recommendations for improving the City's approach to preventing and abating graffiti.

The Seattle Police Department and Seattle Public Utilities provided formal, written comments on a draft of this report. Those comments are found in Appendix J.

We appreciate the cooperation of City officials from Seattle Public Utilities, Seattle Parks and Recreation, the Seattle Police Department, the Seattle City Attorney's Office, the Seattle Department of Transportation, and the Seattle Mayor's Office during the audit process. If you have any questions regarding this audit, please call Jane Dunkel, Auditor in Charge, 684-7892, jane.dunkel@seattle.gov, or me at 233-1095, davidg.jones@seattle.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Jones". The signature is written in a cursive style.

David Jones
City Auditor

Attachment

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Contents

- Introduction 3
 - Purpose and scope..... 3
 - Methodology..... 3
 - Acknowledgements..... 4
- Background - What is Graffiti? 5
 - Definition and descriptions..... 5
 - How graffiti is legally defined in the City of Seattle 5
 - Responsibilities of property owners 5
 - Main types 5
- Graffiti in Seattle 6
 - Where is it and what type is it? 6
 - Other physical inventory results 6
- Graffiti - Who Does It? 8
 - Regional profile of graffiti vandalism 8
 - Portland, Oregon..... 8
 - Vancouver, B.C. 8
 - National profile 9
 - Seattle 9
- Graffiti’s Impact in Seattle 11
 - Survey responses 11
 - Opinions of Major Stakeholders 12
 - The costs of graffiti in Seattle 14
 - Costs to private property owners 14
 - City of Seattle costs..... 14
- What Prevents Graffiti? Lessons Learned from Other Jurisdictions 15
 - Eradication: Gwinnett County, Georgia (Greater Atlanta) - population ~800,000 15
 - Enforcement: Vancouver, British Columbia - population ~600,000 15
 - Engagement/Education: San Jose, California - population ~950,000..... 16
 - Responses with limited or unproven effectiveness..... 17

Graffiti Walls/"Free Walls"	17
Murals	18
Restricting Sale of Graffiti Supplies.....	18
Overall Recommendation: Seattle Needs to Establish a Graffiti Policy.....	19
Summary of Specific Recommendations	21
Responses to the Specific Questions Posed by the Seattle City Council	25
Question 1: Are any changes needed to current City ordinances to facilitate rapid abatement of graffiti and prevent further occurrences?	25
Recommendation 1:.....	25
Recommendation 2:.....	26
Question 2: How frequently are graffiti vandals arrested and prosecuted and what are their rates of recidivism?	26
Recommendation 3:.....	28
Recommendation 4:.....	29
Recommendation 5:.....	29
Recommendation 6:.....	29
Question 3: How well are the different City departments responsible for graffiti clean-up on public property coordinating with one another? Should these efforts be centralized in one department or office?	29
Recommendation 7.....	33
Questions 4 and 5: Is the City following best practices for educating the public about graffiti and encouraging community involvement?	34
Recommendation 8.....	35
Question 6: How effective are the private sector programs that target graffiti and litter removal, such as the program run by the Metropolitan Improvement District?	36
Recommendation 9.....	39

City of Seattle Anti-Graffiti Efforts: Best Practices and Recommendations

Introduction

Purpose and scope

We conducted this performance audit of the City of Seattle's (City's) anti-graffiti efforts at the request of Seattle City Councilmembers Tim Burgess and Tom Rasmussen. Specifically, they asked us to examine how the City handles graffiti removal, prosecution of offenders, and public education efforts to discourage graffiti and litter¹. The councilmembers requested this audit based on feedback from community members who expressed concern about not feeling safe in their neighborhoods, and the councilmembers' concerns about "street disorder" in Seattle. According to recent academic studies, there is a connection between visible environmental disorder and higher rates of crime.

We were asked to compare Seattle's efforts to best practices around the country in seven areas:

1. The sufficiency of current City ordinances and laws;
2. The frequency of arrest and prosecution of offenders and rates of re-offending;
3. Coordination of clean-up between different City departments;
4. Education of local residents and business owners;
5. City programs to encourage community involvement;
6. The effectiveness of private sector programs; and
7. Innovative efforts from other cities that Seattle might replicate².

Methodology

To answer these questions, we reviewed City ordinances and laws; interviewed officials from multiple City departments; reviewed relevant City policies, procedures and studies; rode-along with Seattle Public Utilities' (SPU's) Graffiti Rangers to observe their work; met with community representatives; attended a regional anti-graffiti conference; conducted a stakeholders meeting based on the logic model³; performed a physical inventory⁴ of four neighborhoods in Seattle; created, implemented and analyzed the results of an electronic survey that a broad range of community participants responded to; obtained density maps of where graffiti incidents occurred in the City in 2009 from SPU; researched best practices from other jurisdictions, non-profit organizations and academic research; and traced a sample of SPU Graffiti Hotline calls to verify abatement response times. The City Attorney's Office, the Mayor's Office, the Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation, the Seattle Police Department, Seattle Public Utilities, and the Seattle Department of Transportation reviewed a copy of our draft report. Two departments provided formal comments (see Appendix J).

¹ See Appendix A for a copy of the request letter.

² We incorporated our responses to this question into our responses to the other questions, so it is not addressed separately in the report.

³ A **logic model** is a diagram of a process or system. "Logic models help create a 'theory of causation' that can connect work within an organization's direct control (e.g., its processes or outputs) to high-level outcomes of that work, things over which the agency has little influence." Source: Performance Measure Guide, State of Washington Office of Financial Management, August 2009.

⁴ See Appendix G for information on the methodology we used to conduct the physical inventory.

We conducted our work between February and May 2010, in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Acknowledgements

We were able to produce this audit report in a relatively short timeframe due to the cooperation that we received from City departments and through some creative collaboration with experts in the field and community stakeholders. So we would like to extend our thanks to:

- City officials from Seattle Public Utilities, Seattle Parks and Recreation, the Seattle Police Department, the Seattle City Attorney's Office, the Seattle Department of Transportation, and the Seattle Mayor's Office;
- Community volunteers including Mike Peringer of Art Works and Laine Ross of Seattle Paint Out;
- Business Improvement Area representatives;
- Key contacts from other jurisdictions including Marcia Dennis and Detective Matt Miller from Portland, who hosted seven City of Seattle staff at their Portland Graffiti Summit, and Constable Valerie Spicer, from Vancouver B.C.; and
- Our research partners including Russ Lidman Ph.D., and Danielle Potter from Seattle University's Institute of Public Service, Melissa Lewis Ph.D., University of Washington Center for the Study of Health and Risk Behaviors, and Deborah Lamm Weisel, Ph.D. North Carolina State University Public Safety Leadership Initiative.

Background - What is Graffiti?

Definition and descriptions

How graffiti is legally defined in the City of Seattle

While there is much debate over whether graffiti has artistic merit and should be termed “street art,” the key concept in the legal definition is permission. Writing, painting, or drawing on public or private property without the owner’s permission is not permitted under the law in the City of Seattle. Specifically, Seattle Municipal Code 12A.08.020 (Property destruction) states that a person is guilty of property destruction if he or she, without the owner’s permission:

1. Intentionally damages the property of another; or
2. Writes, paints or draws any inscription, figure or mark of any type on any public or private building or other structure or any real or personal property owned by another person.

Responsibilities of property owners

In addition to the Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) referenced above, the City of Seattle also has a Graffiti Nuisance Code – SMC 10.07. Under this code, property owners are held responsible for removing graffiti on their own property. SMC 10.07 outlines a detailed enforcement process and specifies abatement time requirements. See Appendix B for a description of the property owner’s duties, responsibilities and available resources.

Main types

A 2002 graffiti study completed by the U.S. Department of Justice describes 6 types of graffiti and the features associated with each type. Chart I below summarizes this information.

Chart I: Types of Graffiti

Type of Graffiti	Features
Gang	Gang name or symbol, including hand signs Gang member name(s) or nickname(s), or sometimes a roll-call list of members Numbers Distinctive, stylized alphabets Key visible locations Enemy names and symbols, or allies’ names
Common Tag	High volume, accessible locations High-visibility, hard-to-reach locations May be stylized but simple name or nickname tag or symbols Tenacious (keep retagging)
Artistic Tag	Colorful or complex pictures known as masterpieces or pieces
Conventional Graffiti: Spontaneous	Sporadic episodes or isolated incidents
Conventional Graffiti: Malicious or Vindictive	Sporadic, isolated or systematic incidents
Ideological	Offensive content or symbols Racial, ethnic or religious slurs Specific targets, such as synagogues Highly legible Slogans

Source: Department of Justice Graffiti Guide: <http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/ric/ResourceDetail.aspx?RID=99>

Graffiti in Seattle

Where is it and what type is it?

As part of our fieldwork, on May 18, 2010 we conducted a systematic, single-day, physical count of graffiti in four sample areas in two Seattle neighborhoods⁵ of approximately equal size (.7 mile) using a customized version of Keep America Beautiful's Community Appearance Index.

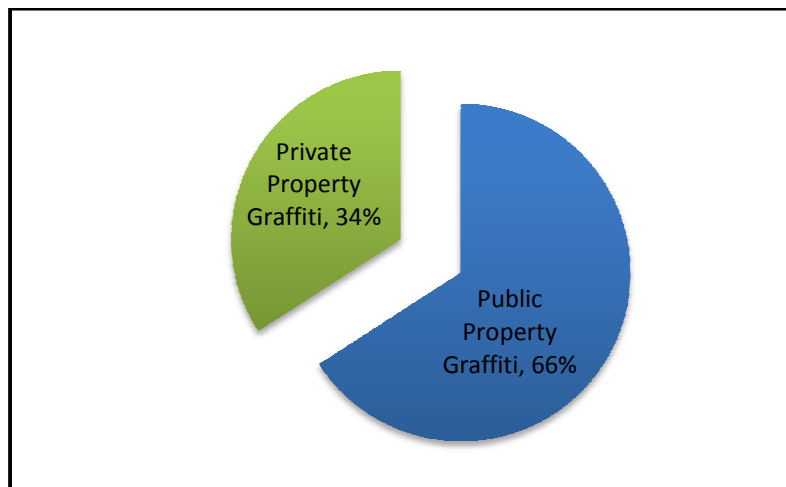
During this count, we found 556 instances of graffiti among the four areas studied. Of these, 551 were common tags and five appeared to be gang graffiti. In the four areas we sampled, we did not find any instances of what could be called artistic tagging, nor did we find any instances of ideological graffiti.

A Citywide inventory might yield dissimilar results.

Other physical inventory results

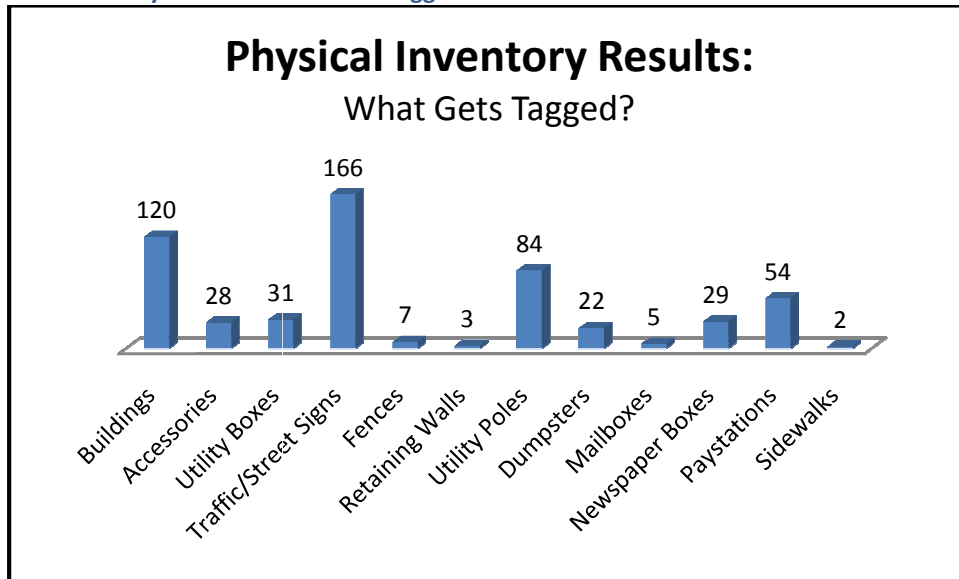
We found that public property was nearly twice as commonly tagged as private property, with traffic/street signs, utility poles, and pay stations as common targets for tagging.

Chart II Physical Inventory Results: Nearly Twice As Much Graffiti on Public as on Private Property



⁵ Area 1 was 22.6 acres downtown (between 1st & 6th Avenues and Marion and Spring); Area 2 was 22.6 acres on First Hill (between 7th Ave and Minor and Marion and Spring); Area 3 was 0.7 miles (along Broadway Ave East from E. Pine St to E. Roy St.); and Area 4 included two sections along E. Pine St, which totaled 0.7 miles in length (Nagel Place to 16th Ave and Minor Ave to Boylston Ave).

Chart III Physical Inventory Results: What Gets Tagged?



In addition to our physical inventory count, we asked Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) to create GIS (Geographic Information System⁶) maps of graffiti abated in 2009 by three major city departments: SPU, the Seattle Department of Transportation, and the Department of Parks and Recreation. We chose these three departments because they are responsible for the majority of the City's graffiti abatement on public property⁷. There are six maps altogether, representing different combinations of data, which can be found in Appendix C.

The most comprehensive map of Seattle graffiti hotspots is in Appendix C-1 of this report. This map contains data from the three departments for all graffiti they abated in 2009. This includes both reported graffiti - graffiti that has been reported to the SPU Graffiti Hotline - and discovered graffiti - graffiti that City employees find in the course of their work, and abate or schedule for future abatement.

⁶A geographic information system (GIS) is any system that captures, stores, analyzes, manages, and presents data that are linked to location.

⁷ Other City departments who abate graffiti on their property include: the Fleets and Facilities Department, Seattle Center, Seattle City Light and the Seattle Public Library. In addition, the manager of the Maintenance Division of Seattle Public Schools told us that the school district employs two full-time employees to abate graffiti on school property.

Graffiti - Who Does It?

Regional profile of graffiti vandalism

Although the City of Seattle does not routinely analyze data related to the perpetrators of graffiti in Seattle, some inferences can be made about who creates graffiti from the data on graffiti vandalism that has been collected by Portland, Oregon and Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

Portland, Oregon

The Portland Police Department provided the following statistics about the graffiti that occurs in Portland:

- Tagger (80%)
- Gang (15%)
- Communicative/Political (3%)
- Hate (1%)
- Art (1%)



Source: Portland Police Department

In addition, Portland's graffiti detective identified, based on his professional experience⁸, the following characteristics among "taggers" in the Portland area:

- 18 to 35 years old
- Generally Caucasian males
- Educated
- Computer literate
- Often organized into small groups, called "crews"
- View "tagging" as an extreme sport or game
- Most not discouraged by police contact
- Often feel there are no consequences for their actions
- No concern for victims
- Addictive personalities
- Chemical dependency
- Prone to violent behavior

Vancouver, B.C.

A constable within the Vancouver Police Department conducted an in-depth study of local graffiti vandals.⁹ Her findings about Vancouver's graffiti subculture include:

⁸ Source: Officer Matt Miller, Portland Police Department. Officer Miller has worked on graffiti investigations in Portland for 6 years and has attended numerous trainings on the subject, including 16 classroom hours and 10 "in the field" hours on "graffiti crimes and investigations" provided by Sergeant Dwight Waldo, San Bernardino, California Sheriff's Department, a nationally recognized expert on graffiti crimes and culture. Officer Miller has investigated hundreds of graffiti cases, interviewed hundreds of vandals, and arrested many highly prolific vandals in the City of Portland. He has developed partnerships with law enforcement agencies throughout the nation and has aided those agencies with their criminal investigations, including San Francisco, California; Boston, Massachusetts; and Reno, Nevada.

⁹ Couch Surfing in Vancouver: An Aggregate Study of the Vancouver Graffiti Suspect Network, Valerie Spicer, Simon Fraser University, August 2005.

- It has internal ethics and guidelines that are similar to graffiti sub-cultures elsewhere in Canada and in the United States.
- Graffiti is learned first as a viewer, and then, the typical progression for viewers who move on is: young tagger (“toy”), accomplice (“crew member”), and finally, full participant (“king”).
- Hierarchical norms exist in the subculture. For example, young taggers tag to gain notoriety and acceptance, and are only permitted to tag in certain locations by taggers with more experience and status. If a young tagger writes outside of these acceptable locations his tags may be crossed out and labeled “toy” by more experienced taggers.
- Taggers who create larger more intricate “pieces” receive recognition in the subculture as “Kings”.
- There is evidence that graffiti vandals known as “Kings” in Vancouver travel to other cities to gain additional recognition (called “going on tour”).

The [Vancouver Graffiti Suspect Dataset](#) was created to provide more detailed information about the City’s graffiti vandals. It contained information on over 500 graffiti suspects. Its findings include:

- Graffiti suspects in Vancouver share certain consistent traits:
 - Caucasian males ages 16-24
 - Frequent alcohol and marijuana use is common
 - Anti-establishment mentality
 - May have learning disabilities and/or conduct disorders
- There were 27 suspects who had five or more graffiti-related contacts with the Vancouver Police. Among this group of persistent offenders:
 - 63 percent have police contacts related to violent offences
 - 29 percent have five or more criminal charges
 - 23 percent have a drug or alcohol related offence as their first offence

National profile

Some information, based on arrest data from 17 cities across the nation, has been compiled by the non-profit organization Keep America Beautiful. Based on their analysis, Keep America Beautiful has concluded that:

- Nationally:
 - About 78-80 percent of graffiti is "tagger" graffiti.
 - Another 5 percent are "pieces," or large visuals.
 - Gang graffiti makes up about 10 percent of graffiti.
 - The remaining 5-7 percent includes hate, message (e.g., Class of '09), political, and artistic graffiti.
- Arrest data from 17 major cities shows that 50 to 70 percent of all street-level graffiti is created by suburban adolescents, predominately males between the ages of 12 and 19.
- There are four primary motivating factors for graffiti vandalism: fame, rebellion, self-expression, and power.

Seattle

Based on our analysis of 2007 and 2009 data on persons charged with graffiti vandalism in the City of Seattle, we found:

Of the 18 offenders whose cases were closed in 2009:

- 17 (94 percent) were male
- 13 (72 percent) were white, 3 (17 percent) were black, 1 (5.5 percent) was Asian, and 1 (5.5 percent) was of unknown ethnicity
- Their median age was 24 (ranging from 20 – 34 years old)

Of the 40 offenders charged in 2007:

- 22 (55 percent) had other criminal charges
 - 8 with charges before the 2007 charge
 - 4 with charges after the 2007 charge
 - 10 with charges both before and after the 2007 charge
- 21 of the cases were closed as of May 2010, 12 were open but the defendants had suspended sentences, and 7 individuals had warrants out for their arrests

For the 22 out of 40 offenders who had criminal charges in addition to a 2007 graffiti vandalism charge, these charges included, among other things: property destruction, assault, theft, obstructing an officer, carrying a concealed weapon, criminal trespass, reckless endangerment, harassment, and violation of a domestic violence protection order.

Graffiti's Impact in Seattle

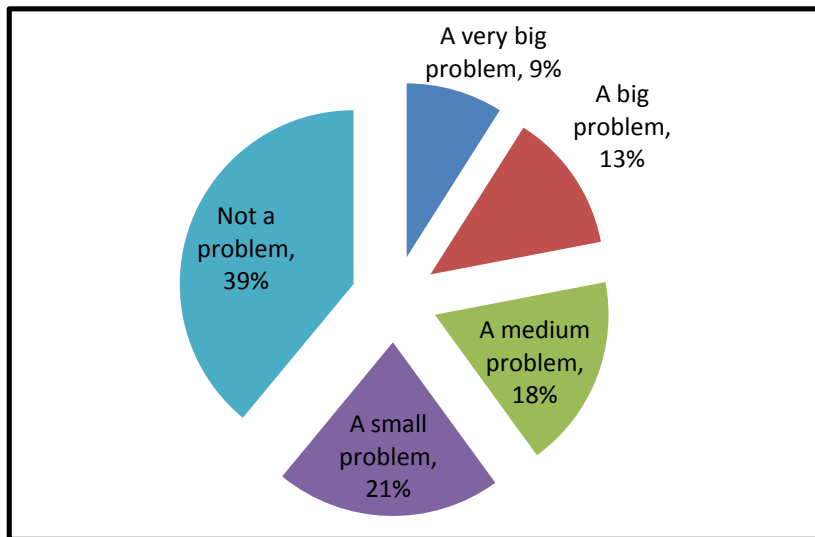
To assess how graffiti affects Seattle residents, we interviewed representatives of community business organizations, conducted a focus session with major stakeholders who are either affected by graffiti or have responsibility for cleaning it up, and sent an electronic survey to a list of over 300 individuals and organizations including district councils, neighborhood groups, local business organizations, and community blogs. The survey was also mentioned in media outlets including KOMO, the Stranger, and KUOW.

Survey responses

We received 913 responses, but not all of the respondents answered all of the questions. There was a wide geographic distribution of responses throughout the Seattle region (see Appendices D-1 and D-2 for distribution of responses by zip code; a list of the responses to the open-ended survey questions is in Appendix D-3).

The results about whether graffiti is a problem for respondents were mixed.

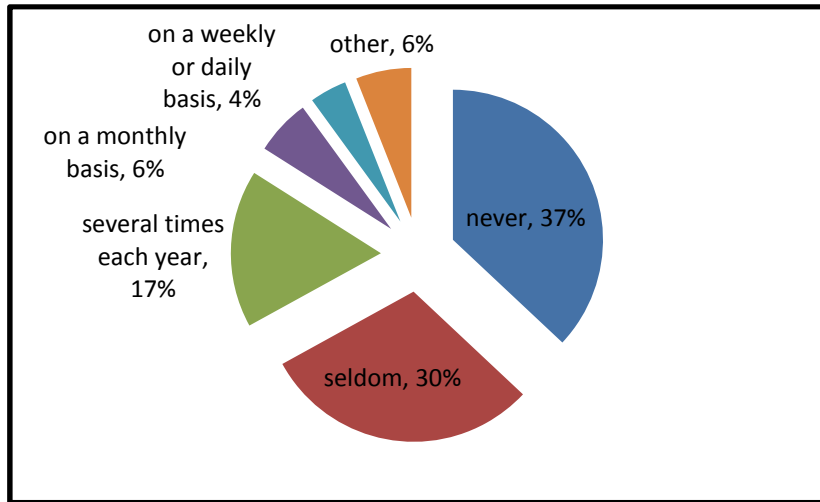
Chart IV: Do Survey Respondents Consider Graffiti a Problem?



As Chart IV shows, 39 percent of survey respondents do not believe graffiti is a problem, while 40 percent categorize it as a medium to very big problem.

These results appear to reflect how often respondents have been the victim of graffiti (see Chart V below): 37 percent have never been victims, while 27 percent have been victimized anywhere from weekly or daily to several times a year.

Chart V: How Often Were Survey Respondents Victims of Graffiti?



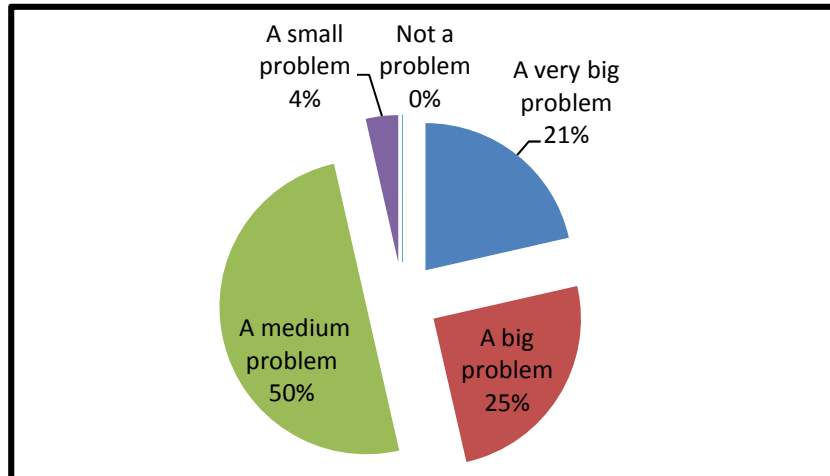
Opinions of Major Stakeholders

To obtain input from major stakeholders, we conducted a focus session to gather information on their perspectives. There were 28 participants, of whom:

- 15 were City of Seattle staff responsible for responding to graffiti
- 4 were representatives of community and business organizations
- 2 were other public agency staff
- 1 worked for King County
- 1 worked for an elected official
- 5 did not identify themselves with any of these categories

During this session, we used the logic model¹⁰ and anonymous, electronic voting to help us obtain answers to the following questions, which are provided below with the corresponding responses from the stakeholders:

Chart VI: Do Major Stakeholders Consider Graffiti a Problem?



¹⁰ See footnote 3 for the definition of a logic model.

Chart VII: What do Major Stakeholders Believe Best Describes the Problem¹¹?

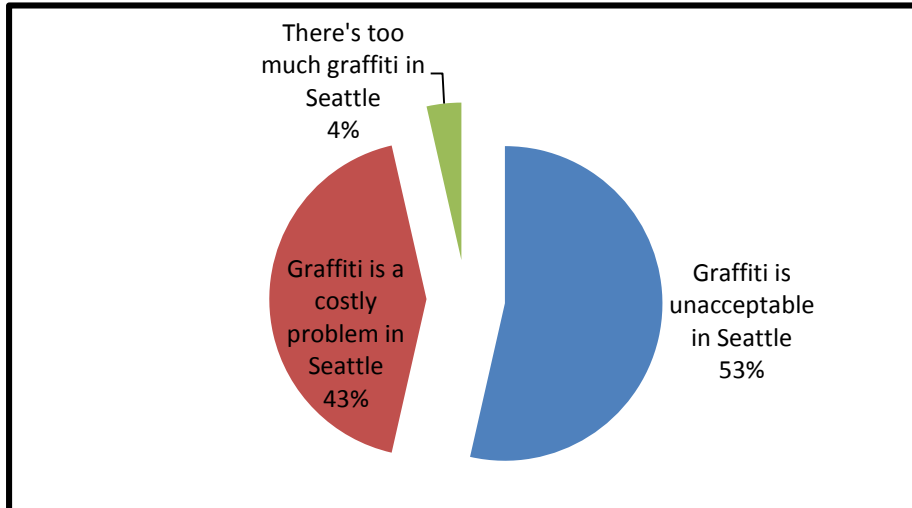
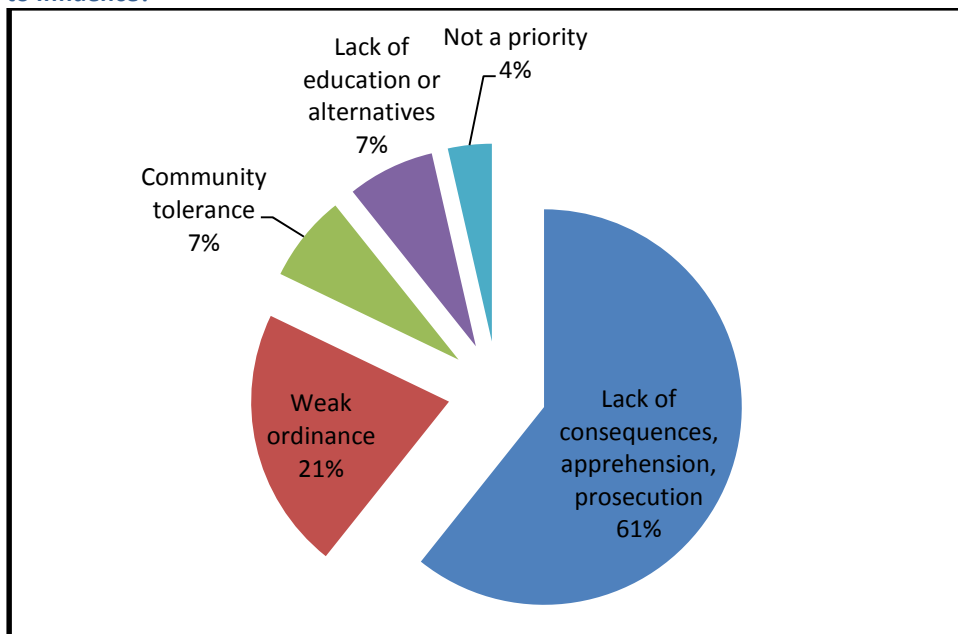


Chart VIII: What Local Condition, Related to Anti-Graffiti Efforts, do Major Stakeholders Believe the City Has the Most Ability to Influence?



¹¹ These three choices were the result of a brainstorming session with the whole group and then a vote that narrowed the choices to the three responses that received the most votes.

The costs of graffiti in Seattle

Costs to private property owners

To estimate the amount that private property owners in the City of Seattle spend annually on graffiti abatement, we used data from our online survey. Four hundred and ninety-five people answered our survey's cost question. Of these:

- 44% (219) replied that they had spent zero dollars abating graffiti.
- 56% (276) stated that they had spent some amount on graffiti abatement, from "unknown" to tens of thousands of dollars.

The average cost per person for the 276 who responded that they had spent something on graffiti abatement was \$790 per year, with a median cost of \$200 per person per year.

City of Seattle costs

We asked nine City departments how much they spent in 2009 on graffiti abatement on their property, including direct labor costs and the cost of administrative support, equipment, and materials. In total, the City of Seattle spent approximately \$1.8 million abating graffiti from public property in 2009. However, the \$1.8 million figure does not include hidden costs such as:

1. The opportunity cost of having City painters and maintenance workers abate graffiti rather than work on other needed maintenance and repair projects. According to the Department of Parks and Recreation's Paint Crew Chief:

Graffiti has become our maintenance. We use three Parks paint crew staff full time every day for this purpose, which is a third of our paint staff.

2. The potential future cost involved in restoring vandalized property to its original condition. According to one City Paint Shop manager, their unit's abatement efforts often consist only of "touching up" surfaces that have been vandalized (i.e., they only paint over the graffiti portion). As a result, the manager noted that:

Touch-up of these surfaces may leave behind demarcation lines that appear as rectangles or squares in the middle of a wall. This attracts additional tagging over these areas. At some point, the walls need to be totally repainted. This is a hidden cost of the vandalism as it does not happen during the original occurrence but sometime after.

3. Damage done to historic buildings or public art, which can be complicated, expensive and/or impossible to restore.

What Prevents Graffiti? Lessons Learned from Other Jurisdictions

During our research of other jurisdictions, we identified three jurisdictions that stood out as “Best Practice” cities based on the following criterion:

They measure quantifiable data-supported outcomes (increase or reduction in graffiti) through a physical graffiti inventory, **and** they have measured a significant decrease in graffiti over time:

- **Gwinnett County, Georgia** 70 percent decrease
- **Vancouver, British Columbia** 80 percent decrease
- **San Jose, California** 59 percent decrease

In addition, each of the three jurisdictions is comparable in population size to the City of Seattle, and each uses a multi-faceted approach to graffiti that includes:

- Eradication
- Enforcement
- Engagement/Education

Eradication: Gwinnett County, Georgia (Greater Atlanta) - population ~800,000

Gwinnett County conducts an annual graffiti survey, which is a point in time “snap shot.” It is conducted each year during a two-week period in February and covers more than 1,000 miles of roadways, including all major primary and secondary roads as well as targeted neighborhood streets in Gwinnett County.

Gwinnett County experiences a much higher than national average percentage of gang graffiti – approximately 96 percent is gang-related whereas nationally it is only 10 percent. However, they have seen a sharp decline in surface area tagged – 70 percent less in 2010 than it had been in 2003.

Gwinnett County officials attribute this reduction in surface area tagged to their approach which includes a close relationship with the police gang crime investigations unit, strong engagement of community volunteers through an affiliation with the Keep America Beautiful program, and rapid eradication within 48 hours.

Gwinnett County has leveraged a successful public/private partnership with the Georgia State Department of Corrections¹² (DOC) to provide eradication services. The County’s contract with the State DOC covers graffiti eradication on walls, pavement, and private property (with the owner’s permission). Gwinnett County officials report that their DOC contract has consistently achieved a 48 hour response time during 2008-2010.

Enforcement: Vancouver, British Columbia - population ~600,000

Vancouver, B.C. utilizes an approach to graffiti comprised of five elements: leadership, education, eradication, enforcement, and empowerment. Between 2004 and 2007, they were able to reduce their

¹² See Appendix I for more information on how the City of Seattle could utilize Washington State Departments of Corrections crews for graffiti abatement.

graffiti by 80 percent, as confirmed through physical inventories that are conducted every six months by city workers from the Graffiti Management Team. Although Vancouver Police officials indicated that all of the elements of their approach contributed to the reduction in graffiti, they cited enforcement as a particularly important element of the overall approach.

The Vancouver approach to enforcement includes the following components:

1. **Police Graffiti Unit** – This unit includes two full-time police graffiti investigators who maintain the suspect database, investigate graffiti cases, and maintain contact with known suspects within the graffiti subculture. The graffiti unit also makes contact with the parents of known graffiti vandals and obtains warrants to search for evidence including graffiti supplies and graffiti sketchbooks.
2. **Vancouver Graffiti Suspect Dataset** – This dataset was created to provide more detailed information about the city’s graffiti vandals to assist in investigations and prosecutions. It contains information on over 500 graffiti suspects including a subset of suspects who had five or more graffiti-related contacts with the Vancouver Police.
3. **Targeted Investigation of Chronic Graffiti Vandals** – Within the database, the graffiti investigators have been able to identify suspects who are frequent perpetrators of graffiti. These suspects often travel to other parts of Canada or the west coast of the United States. Vancouver’s graffiti investigators work collaboratively with a network of graffiti investigators in other jurisdictions to apprehend and prosecute these suspects.
4. **Prioritization of Graffiti Calls** – Part of Vancouver’s approach to enforcement was a change in the prioritization of 911 calls related to graffiti. Previously these calls were categorized by police dispatch staff as “Be on the Look Out For...” calls and received lower priority. Now graffiti related calls are categorized as “Mischief in Progress,” which receives a higher priority for patrol response.

Engagement/Education: San Jose, California - population ~950,000

San Jose has a nationally recognized anti-graffiti program which includes:

- Rapid abatement by City crews and community volunteers,
- Education and outreach including public service announcements and commercials,
- Community mobilization through affiliations with Keep America Beautiful and Keep California Beautiful,
- An ordinance for minors that revokes their driver’s license after three graffiti-related arrests or citations, and
- A graffiti enforcement team that includes two dedicated plain clothes officers who maintain a graffiti database and perform investigations.

San Jose has performed an annual physical inventory of graffiti since 1999, which allows them to measure their progress in each of ten districts over that period. Based on the 2010 inventory data, San Jose has seen an overall 59 percent decrease in graffiti since 1999. San Jose’s community mobilization is one of the most successful examples in the country. The City has leveraged its affiliations with state and national organizations, and as of April 2010, they report a database of 3,752 active community volunteers who are trained and given supplies to remove graffiti on their own property as well as light poles, utility boxes, and sound walls.

Responses with limited or unproven effectiveness

The U.S. Department of Justice Graffiti Guide¹³ has identified ten responses to graffiti used in jurisdictions around the country that have unknown impacts and can be difficult to enforce. These include:

1. Controlling graffiti tools
2. Channeling behavior into more acceptable activities (graffiti boards and walls)
3. Providing alternative activities and services
4. Involving youth in developing graffiti prevention programs
5. Expanding applicable laws
6. Holding parents accountable
7. Increasing sanctions for offenders
8. Applying new technologies
9. Establishing juvenile curfews
10. Warning offenders

In addition to being difficult to enforce, some of these responses may not change the behavior of chronic graffiti vandals. Below we discuss three of these potential responses to graffiti that were frequently mentioned by stakeholders during our interviews and by respondents to our survey. These are responses that the City could certainly pursue; however, we did not include these in our set of recommendations because of the current lack of research-based evidence about their efficacy.

Graffiti Walls/“Free Walls”



These are designated walls or spaces which are open to graffiti, art, or other forms of personal expression. An example of this is the Free Expression Tunnel in Raleigh, North Carolina (pictured to the left) on which anyone is permitted to paint or decorate the floor, ceiling, or walls. Similar free expression spaces are in place in other communities. However, Police officials in Portland, Oregon indicated that, in their experience, graffiti on free walls generally expands to exceed the boundaries of the “free wall” and becomes problematic for the surrounding area.

The Public Safety Leadership Institute indicates that “free walls” can provide a type of “do no harm” outlet for individual expression and can augment a graffiti program already focused on eradication, enforcement, and education. However, they indicate that the jurisdiction should monitor the “free wall” daily for gang graffiti and hate graffiti. Also, they recommend that the surrounding neighborhood be monitored at least weekly to ensure that spill-over graffiti is not occurring. This additional monitoring would have to be provided by City staff or community volunteers.

¹³ See the Department of Justice Graffiti Guide: <http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/ric/ResourceDetail.aspx?RID=99>

Murals

Some communities create murals on walls that are chronically tagged. Keep Albuquerque Beautiful, for example, has created 30 such community murals, and found that they are tagged less frequently than the empty walls had been. This has been the experience in Seattle as well. Artworks, a Seattle non-profit agency, was originally founded to help the SODO Business Association clean up the bus way in Seattle's industrial zone by creating vibrant murals that would enrich the surroundings and discourage graffiti and litter. The program has subsequently expanded to create panels for businesses during construction and painted utility boxes and street fixtures.



Artworks officials told us that some tagging occurs on these murals, and that they have been trying to abate graffiti on the murals on a quarterly basis. Artworks is currently exploring whether the Seattle Community Court community service program might be able to assist with abatement of graffiti on Artworks murals. The Community Court community service program can assist communities with community mural creation, mural maintenance, and general graffiti abatement. (See Appendix I for more information on low cost resources potentially available to the City of Seattle for graffiti abatement.)

Restricting Sale of Graffiti Supplies

While some communities restrict the sale of graffiti supplies, the U.S. Department of Justice's Graffiti Guide indicates that this is difficult to enforce and the effectiveness is questionable because it is easy to obtain materials elsewhere, such as through the Internet. The California Penal Code, for example, has prohibited businesses from selling spray paint, wide markers, and etching materials to individuals under the age of 18¹⁴ since 2002. However, within the state there is considerable variation in the effectiveness of graffiti efforts among the cities. San Jose experienced a decline in graffiti after this legislation was implemented, while a Los Angeles official reported an increase in graffiti from 2005-2008. This would indicate that the strength of other elements of the overall graffiti program including eradication, enforcement, and education, might outweigh the impact of restricting sales of graffiti supplies.

¹⁴ California penal code section 594.1, which restricts the sale of spray paint and other graffiti supplies to minors, was established in January 2002. Also, the City of Los Angeles has had a municipal ordinance since November 1990 that requires retailers to keep spray paint and graffiti supplies in locked placements.

Overall Recommendation: Seattle Needs to Establish a Graffiti Policy

Following a summary of our specific recommendations (below), we provide data and analysis to answer the questions posed to us by members of the Seattle City Council (see Appendix A for the letter that contains the City Councilmembers' questions). For each question, we offer at least one recommendation for how that particular area could be improved. However, it is important to note that before any of these recommendations are implemented, City policymakers need to decide what will be the overall City policy on graffiti. Key questions policymakers need to consider include:

1. Do they believe that graffiti is an inevitable part of the urban landscape or a type of vandalism that should be addressed through concentrated effort?
2. Do they find the evidence for the theory of street disorder compelling? In other words, do they believe that keeping Seattle neighborhoods free of graffiti and litter will have an impact on low level crimes in those neighborhoods and/or on the perceptions of public safety?
3. Do they consider graffiti a "gateway" crime – i.e., one that leads to other criminal activity?
4. Are they willing to allocate, on a trial basis, the resources necessary to support a comprehensive anti-graffiti program, including improvements in the three key areas of rapid abatement, enforcement, and community involvement and public education?

Based on our interviews with key City personnel, who have been involved in developing and implementing the City's current anti-graffiti program, we believe that even a comprehensive, coordinated approach to address graffiti will not succeed without clear policy guidance from City leaders. Therefore, in addition to the nine specific recommendations listed in the next section, we developed five overarching recommendations.

Overarching Recommendations for the City Council and Mayor

- 1. Develop a clear policy statement on graffiti, in accordance with current City laws. If the City Council and Mayor determine that addressing graffiti is a policy priority, they should:**
- 2. Establish clear directives about who in the City is authorized, responsible, and accountable for the program;**
- 3. Develop specific outcome goals for the key components of Seattle's anti-graffiti program (e.g., a fifty percent reduction in graffiti in three years);**
- 4. Require departments to gather baseline data against these measures before new policies and procedures are implemented; and**
- 5. Require an annual physical inventory of the graffiti in Seattle to evaluate the effectiveness of the City's efforts (outcomes).**

These five recommendations, if implemented by City leaders, will provide direction and momentum for City departments and community stakeholders to work together to implement the nine specific recommendations described in the next section.

Summary of Specific Recommendations

These recommendations were formulated in response to the specific questions posed to us by the Seattle City Council. A detailed explanation of the data and findings that support each recommendation can be found in the sections following Summary Chart IX.

Chart IX: Summary of audit recommendations and related costs, potential benefits and outcome measures

Council Question 1	
Are any changes needed to current City ordinances to facilitate rapid abatement of graffiti and prevent further occurrences?	
<p>Recommendation 1 Amend Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) 12.A.08.020 (Property destruction) to include stickers in the list of prohibited materials under A.2</p> <p>Recommendation 2 Amend SMC 12.A.08.020 (Property destruction) to add a clause stipulating the elements that should be included in calculating restitution for violations of the code.</p>	<p>Additional Costs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of staff time to draft ordinance changes, City Attorney time to review, and City Council time to consider.
<p>Potential Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows City to prosecute one of the most common forms of tagging (use of stickers). • Provides guidance to help ensure that private and public property owners are fully compensated for their damages. • Potential deterrence effect. 	
Council Question 2	
How frequently are graffiti vandals arrested and prosecuted and what are their rates of recidivism?	
<p>Recommendation 3 Strengthen recording of graffiti incidents by having Parking Enforcement Officers (PEOs) and other City employees photograph and report graffiti they discover in the course of their work.</p> <p>Recommendation 4 Strengthen the Seattle Police Department’s ability to analyze graffiti crimes by creating and maintaining a photographic database.</p>	<p>Additional Costs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PEOs could use current hand-held devices, which are already equipped with GPS mapping capability. • Some software programming would be required to develop an interface between the PEO system and the SPU Graffiti Hotline. • Cost for GPS equipped digital cameras for Parks Department and other City personnel. • Cost to set up and maintain photographic database (see below). • \$5,500 annually for an AmeriCorps participant (provides 1,700 hours). • Seattle Police Dept would need to evaluate whether additional software is needed.

<p>Recommendation 5 Strengthen the City’s ability to apprehend, and prosecute graffiti vandals by creating a pilot program with a dedicated graffiti detective.</p> <p>Recommendation 6: Work with the City Attorney’s Office prosecutors familiar with the Community Court’s Diversion program and chronic graffiti offenders to develop diversion programs that are effective for this population, based on the prosecutors’ knowledge of the population and the results of evidence-based research on effective programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity cost of deploying a Seattle Police Officer to this duty, rather than other duties. • Staff time to develop program and cost of implementing program. Would need to be weighed against potential cost savings from lower rates of recidivism.
<p>Potential Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive, timely and accurate reporting of graffiti events in the City. • Enhanced ability to track graffiti incidents in the City of Seattle to support investigative work and apprehension of offenders. • Enhanced ability to investigate, track, apprehend, and prosecute first-time and chronic offenders. • Possible deterrence effect of enhanced enforcement. 	
<p>Council Question 3 How well are the different City departments responsible for graffiti clean-up on public property coordinating with one another? Should these efforts be centralized in one department or office?</p>	
<p>Recommendation 7 Implement one of the following options to ensure that graffiti on parking pay stations is abated within the 6 day target goal set by the City:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Redeploy 1 FTE position from SPU’s Graffiti Rangers to SDOT’s Parking Pay Stations Shop and dedicate this position to abating graffiti on parking pay stations. 2. Redeploy 1 FTE position from SPU’s Graffiti Rangers to SDOT’s Signs and Markings Maintenance Shop and reassign responsibility for abating graffiti on parking pay stations to the Signs and Markings Maintenance Shop. 3. Negotiate an MOA between SPU’s Graffiti Rangers and SDOT that authorizes, assigns responsibility to, and compensates SPU’s Graffiti Rangers 	<p>Additional Cost Staff time to develop protocols, memorandums of agreement (MOA), and operating procedures.</p> <p>Redeploying a position from SPU's Graffiti Rangers could affect SPU's abatement performance.</p>

<p>for abating graffiti on parking pay stations.</p>	
<p>Potential Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should allow SDOT to achieve goal of abating graffiti within 6 days of reporting. This could be verified during the pilot program. • Frees SDOT Parking Pay Station staff to focus on high-priority pay station operations and maintenance and timely response to systems alarms for the city’s 2,100 pay stations. 	
<p>Council Questions 4 and 5 What is the City doing to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate local residents and business owners about their legal responsibilities with respect to graffiti, the negative effects of graffiti and the positive benefits of clean neighborhoods? • Encourage community organizations to involve themselves in the effort to prevent and clean-up graffiti? Could the City be doing more? 	
<p>Recommendation 8 Implement a three-part model to enhance community involvement and public education, consisting of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A broadly-based coalition of City and other public employees, community organizations, businesses, and individuals; 2. A comprehensive community outreach plan; and, 3. A strategic plan for public education about the costs and impacts of graffiti. 	<p>Additional Cost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approximately \$8,000 one-time fee to join Keep America Beautiful. • Opportunity cost of dedicating SPU Public Education Specialist’s time to creating and establishing the coalition. Would need to be weighed against potential long-term benefits of leveraging substantially greater community resources for graffiti abatement.
<p>Potential Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A comprehensive, coordinated approach to community mobilization that empowers community members and considers their needs. • Ability to leverage a significantly larger volunteer base. • Ability to use existing tested curriculum and public education materials. 	
<p>Council Question 6 How effective are the private sector programs that target graffiti and litter removal, such as the program run by the Metropolitan Improvement District?</p>	
<p>Recommendation 9 Further study needed. Could:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Start by defining areas similar in size and commercial activity to existing Business Improvement Areas (BIAs), and then conducting physical inventories of these areas to gather baseline data. 2. Continue supporting SPU grants and consider expanding them by using Washington State Department of 	<p>Additional Costs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff time to plan, conduct and analyze the results of a physical inventory, including recruiting community volunteers to assist with the count.

<p>Corrections or Community Court participants to abate graffiti in the BIAs that are not active (using University District BIA model).</p> <p>3. Conduct another physical inventory of the BIAs and their control sites after a pilot period has ended to determine effectiveness.</p>	
<p>Potential Benefit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City would have data on the overall and relative effectiveness of anti-graffiti efforts, which could be used to compare their effectiveness over time. 	

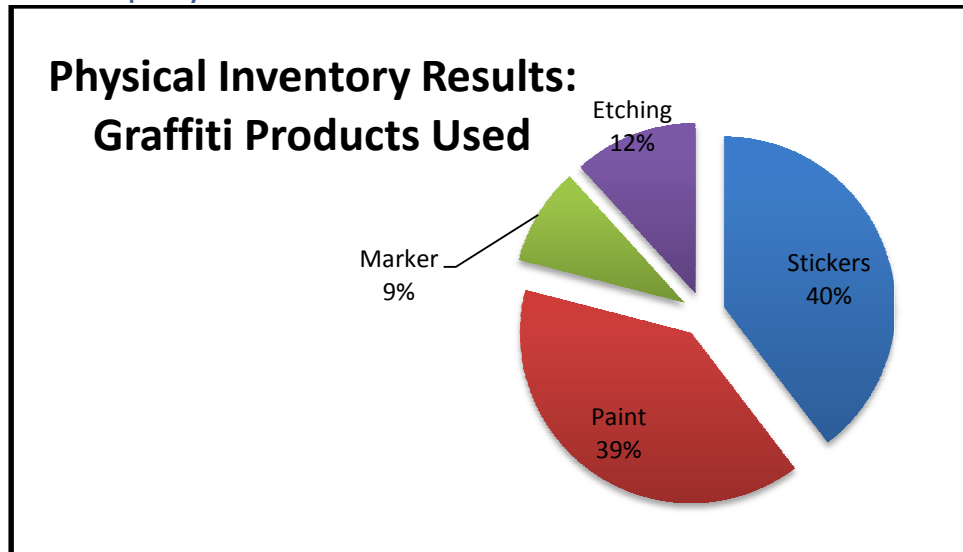
Responses to the Specific Questions Posed by the Seattle City Council

Question 1: Are any changes needed to current City ordinances to facilitate rapid abatement of graffiti and prevent further occurrences?

Based on our review of City of Seattle anti-graffiti ordinances, our research of best practices from other jurisdictions, our review of final dispositions for a sample of graffiti vandalism cases, and discussions with the attorneys in the Seattle City Attorney’s Office who are most experienced at prosecuting graffiti vandalism cases, we concluded that the two City of Seattle ordinances governing graffiti¹⁵ are adequate, with two exceptions.

Exception one pertains to the need to add stickers to the list of materials used to deface property. This recommendation is based on our physical inventory count of graffiti in four Seattle neighborhoods, during which we found that 40 percent of the graffiti consisted of stickers.

Chart X: Types and Frequency of Graffiti Products Used in Seattle



Recommendation 1: Amend SMC 12.A.08.020 (Property destruction) to include stickers in the list of prohibited materials under A.2

Exception two pertains to the calculation of restitution – one of the consequences imposed on violators of Seattle’s graffiti code.

Under current City law, graffiti vandalism is categorized as a gross misdemeanor. Under State of Washington law (RCW 9.92.020), the maximum penalties for a gross misdemeanor, unless otherwise prescribed by statute, are 365 days in jail and /or a \$5,000 fine. We reviewed the case dispositions of 18 individuals who were charged with property destruction-graffiti in Seattle and found that none were given sentences close to the maximum penalties.

¹⁵ See Background section “What is Graffiti?” above.

However, our analysis of case dispositions and discussions with prosecutors from the City Attorney's Office and other City officials, suggest that improvements could be made in how restitution for graffiti cases is calculated. For example, in our case-disposition analysis, we found that two of the seven individuals (29%) sentenced to pay restitution to the victims of their property destruction-graffiti crimes were excused from payment because the victims did not submit supporting documentation for the cost of repairing the damage. Furthermore, one City Paint Crew Chief told us that he does not believe that the restitution amounts paid to the City of Seattle for graffiti damage to Parks Department properties cover the full costs of abatement. Finally, we found in our physical inventory count that 12% of the graffiti we identified consisted of etching on large glass windows. Since these windows are very expensive to replace¹⁶ we believe it would be more equitable if there were a mechanism to ensure that the full cost of replacement is covered by the restitution paid to the victim.

Recommendation 2: Amend SMC 12.A.08.020 (Property destruction) to add a clause stipulating the elements that should be included in calculating restitution for violations of the code. For example, restitution should include, at a minimum: 1) the costs of materials used to clean or remove the graffiti or replace the surface vandalized, if necessary, 2) the labor costs, using the State of Washington's hourly minimum wage as a base, for the total amount of time used by all persons who are needed to purchase materials and clean, remove, or replace the surface, and 3) the relevant property insurance deductible amount, in the event the victim's insurance covers the cost of abatement.

Question 2: How frequently are graffiti vandals arrested and prosecuted and what are their rates of recidivism?

Arrests and Prosecutions of Adult Graffiti Vandals in the City of Seattle

According to Seattle Police Department records, 234 arrests were made in 2008 and 41 in 2009 for violations of SMC 12.A.08.020 (A) (2) Property Destruction – Graffiti. Arrest data for violations of the SMC 12.A.08.020 (A) (2) Property Destruction – Graffiti ordinance is not available for years preceding 2008 because before this date the Police Department did not track arrest data for vandalism by type. As a surrogate for arrest data, we obtained and analyzed data on the number of Seattle Police Department Incident Reports filed for Property Destruction – Graffiti for the years 2003 – 2009. See Chart XI below for a summary of this data.

¹⁶ Survey respondents indicated that this cost ranges from \$2,500 to \$5,000 per window panel.

Chart XI: Seattle Police Department (SPD) Incident Reports for violations of Seattle Municipal Code 12.A.08.020 (A) (2) sent to the Seattle City Attorney’s Office for the years 2003-2009

Year	SPD Incident Reports for property destruction-graffiti offenses	Percent change from previous year in number of incident reports filed	SPD Incident Reports sent to the City Attorney for prosecution	Percent change from previous year in reports sent to the City Attorney for prosecution	Variation from average in reports sent to the City Attorney for prosecution
2003	815	unknown	55	unknown	+12%
2004	774	-5%	60	+9%	+22%
2005	687	-11%	50	-17%	+2%
2006	825	+20%	60	+20%	+22%
2007	938	+14%	41	-31%	-17%
2008*	1246	+33%	32	-22%	-35%
2009	857	-32%	43	+34%	-13%
7 year average	877		49		

Source: Seattle City Attorney’s Office

*Transitional year for Seattle Police Department technology (new software and officer-direct data input implemented)—figures may not be accurate.

Analysis

The area highlighted in gray in Chart XI shows the years when the City did not have a Seattle Police Department (SPD) detective dedicated to graffiti investigations. Before this time, SPD had a full-time detective (1 FTE) dedicated to this work. This individual retired in January 2007, and was not replaced. Note that although the number of SPD incident reports relating to graffiti vandalism increased in 2007 by 14 percent (the year the graffiti detective retired), the number of cases forwarded to the City Attorney’s Office for prosecution decreased by 31 percent that same year.

A similar pattern is found in 2008, but due to the implementation of new SPD software that year, the data may not be accurate. As a result, we cannot draw reliable conclusions based on it. A more reliable analysis examines the relationship between the number of SPD incident reports forwarded to the City Attorney’s Office for prosecution and the average number of reports forwarded annually over the seven year period. This analysis reveals that the number of reports forwarded was increasing from 2003-2006—when the City had a dedicated graffiti detective on staff—and decreased from 2007-2009 when the City did not.

This apparent correlation between graffiti vandalism cases sent for prosecution and having a dedicated graffiti crimes detective on staff was supported in our discussions with representatives from the Seattle Police Department and the City Attorney’s Office who have experience investigating and prosecuting graffiti vandals. According to these individuals, a dedicated graffiti detective is necessary for the successful prosecution of graffiti vandals because, among other things, a graffiti detective can:

1. Conduct the investigative work that is necessary for successful prosecutions of graffiti vandals, but that City Attorneys have neither the capacity nor authority to conduct;
2. Gather and analyze data that allows for targeted enforcement of repeat offenders; and

3. Gather and analyze data that supports multiple charges for one individual, thereby resulting in greater penalties.

Rates of Re-offense

To determine rates of recidivism for adult graffiti offenders, we examined the case histories of 18 individuals who were charged with property destruction-graffiti in Seattle whose cases were closed in 2009. Of these 18 individuals, 5 (28 percent) had criminal charges after the case we examined. Of these 5, 1 individual was charged with graffiti vandalism only, 1 was charged with a criminal violation not related to graffiti vandalism, and 3 were charged with both. The final dispositions for these 18 cases were as follows:

- 8 were dismissed with prejudice¹⁷ because all the conditions of sentencing were met
- 3 were dismissed with prejudice because of compromises of misdemeanors¹⁸
- 3 were dismissed with prejudice because of negotiated pleas
- 1 was dismissed with prejudice in the interests of justice
- 3 were dismissed without prejudice – 1 for no witness, 1 in the interests of justice, and 1 for incompetency

All 8 of the graffiti offenders whose cases were dismissed due to meeting all their sentencing conditions completed community service hours, ranging from a high of 200 hours to a low of 48. These 8 individuals were also the ones who did not have any subsequent criminal charges. In addition, 5 offenders paid restitution to their victims, ranging from a high of \$710 to a low of \$150. Two offenders were sentenced to pay restitution but the victim did not respond to the court, so restitution was waived in both cases.

This data, along with our analysis of 40 graffiti offenders charged in 2007 (55 percent of whom had other criminal charges on their records) suggests that there are two main categories of graffiti vandals in Seattle:

1. Those who comply with sentencing and do not repeat their offenses, and
2. Chronic violators who are involved in repeat graffiti offenses and other criminal activity.

This information, combined with our best practice research from other jurisdictions, suggests that if City policymakers are serious about enforcing anti-graffiti laws, more police resources should be dedicated to this task, at least on a short-term basis. To that end, we would recommend a three-part approach:

Recommendation 3: Strengthen recording by having Parking Enforcement Officers¹⁹ and other City employees photograph and report graffiti they discover in the course of their work.

¹⁷ When cases are dismissed with prejudice, it means that legally the plaintiff is prohibited from bringing a new lawsuit for the same claim. Alternatively, when cases are dismissed without prejudice, it means the plaintiff can file a new lawsuit for the same claim.

¹⁸ A case is compromised when the victim agrees that she/he has been adequately compensated for the damages and doesn't want to pursue further charges.

¹⁹ According to an official in the City of Seattle's Parking Enforcement Unit within the Seattle Police Department, this unit is willing and technologically well-positioned to report occurrences of graffiti on properties in the areas where they currently provide parking enforcement. The Parking Enforcement Unit has a total of approximately 88

Recommendation 4: Strengthen SPD’s ability to analyze graffiti crimes by creating and maintaining a photographic database. This could be accomplished by a .5 FTE administrative position, possibly staffed by an intern or AmeriCorps volunteer.

Recommendation 5: Strengthen the City’s ability to identify, apprehend, and prosecute graffiti vandals by creating a pilot program²⁰ with a dedicated graffiti detective. This person would perform intelligence gathering, crime investigation, and coordination with other City departments and outside agencies; conduct training for law enforcement and court officials on the costs and impacts of graffiti vandalism and the profiles of chronic offenders; and work with the City’s Anti-Graffiti Public Education Specialist on outreach to community organizations and schools.

Recommendation 6: Work with the prosecutors from the City Attorney’s Office who are familiar with both the Community Court’s Diversion program and chronic graffiti offenders to develop diversion programs that are effective with chronic offenders. The program would be based on both the prosecutors’ knowledge of the population and the results of evidence-based research on effective diversion programs.

To determine the impact of this approach, baseline data on arrests and prosecutions of graffiti vandals should be gathered before the implementation of this recommendation, and again once the pilot program has ended.

Question 3: How well are the different City departments responsible for graffiti clean-up on public property coordinating with one another? Should these efforts be centralized in one department or office?

Background and overall organization

Currently, all City departments are responsible for removing graffiti from their own property. These departments include the Fleets and Facilities Department (FFD), the Department of Parks and Recreation (Parks), Seattle Center, Seattle City Light (SCL), the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT), the Seattle Public Library (SPL), and Seattle Public Utilities (SPU)²¹. The City of Seattle

field staff and operates six days per week, up to 20 hours per day. Parking Enforcement Officers (PEOs) currently patrol many of the areas in the City known to have the highest concentration of graffiti (e.g., Capitol Hill). The PEOs are currently equipped with handheld devices that can capture a digital photograph of the graffiti as well as its geographic location. This information could be provided to SPU’s Graffiti Hotline for abatement and/or to an SPD database for investigation through a nightly automated system upload process.

While the Parking Enforcement Unit is willing to take on this additional function, it would reduce time available for enforcement activities to some degree. Optimal utilization of PEOs for increased graffiti reporting would require that three conditions be met:

1. Agreement from SPD leadership that graffiti reporting was a worthwhile function for the PEOs to perform;
2. A graffiti-reporting process that is as efficient and automated as possible; and
3. Demonstrated timely abatement by City departments, so that PEOs will be motivated to continue to report new occurrences of graffiti.

²⁰ We believe that such a pilot program should last a minimum of two years to allow for reliable evaluation of outcome data.

²¹ The Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs has a memorandum of agreement with SPU’s Graffiti Rangers and Parks for the removal of graffiti from public artworks.

Community Court also provides limited support for graffiti removal. In addition, SPU has responsibility for managing and running the Graffiti Hotline, one employee dedicated to public education and outreach, and a policy analyst whose duties include policy direction and interdepartmental leadership for anti-graffiti programs.

Over the last six years, SPU and other City departments have supported multiple efforts to improve the City's anti-graffiti activities, including a 2004 program evaluation conducted by SPU's Asset Management Committee, a 2006 SPU anti-graffiti program benchmarking study conducted by an independent consultant, and an interdepartmental Graffiti Task Force that was part of the former Mayor's Customer Improvement Project, which culminated in a summary memorandum dated July 16, 2008. A brief history of the City's efforts in this area can be found in Appendix E.

Our review indicates that the largest improvements have been made in the areas of:

1. The adoption of standard reporting metrics on graffiti for all departments, and a monthly reporting schedule;
2. The organization of public property abatement by geographic area;
3. The formation of an interdepartmental working team that meets monthly to share information on current challenges and successes in public property graffiti abatement;
4. The creation in 2008 of a full-time anti-graffiti public education and outreach coordinator within SPU; and,
5. The creation of a Private Property Anti-Graffiti Task Force, whose recommendations were summarized in an April 4, 2010 memorandum (see Appendix F).

Given these successes, especially the improvement in interdepartmental cooperation due to the work of the task force and working team, we do not believe that there is a need at this time to centralize Citywide graffiti abatement in one department or office. This is consistent with the conclusions of the Mayor's Customer Improvement Project Graffiti Team in April 2010, which were:

After careful analysis of each department's graffiti abatement process map and discussion with managers and crew chiefs, the Task Force has determined that departments are as effectively organized as possible and are utilizing staff as efficiently as they can in order to meet abatement performance metrics within current financial resources.

However, our analysis of workload, staffing and response times within the three departments that perform the majority of the abatement on City property suggests that efficiencies could be gained from redeploying personnel both within and across departments. See the next section for more information on this point.

Comparison of Graffiti Abatement Response Times for Three Major Departments (SPU, Parks and SDOT)

The Graffiti Task Force finalized citywide standards and definitions for measuring and reporting on graffiti abatement during a September 11, 2008 meeting. Most important among these were the definitions of reported graffiti, discovered graffiti, and tag units, as follows:

- Reported graffiti – Graffiti is considered “reported” when a customer²² contacts a City department to abate graffiti and this contact is documented as a request. This contact may be received through various means, including emails, phone calls, faxes, walk-ins, and written correspondence.
- Discovered graffiti – Graffiti is considered “discovered” when a graffiti abatement crew and/or maintenance laborers find and remove graffiti during the course of their route or work.
- Tag unit – Discovered graffiti is measured in “tag units” to gauge the effort exerted by crews in removing it. A tag unit is based on size (1 square foot = 1 tag unit) and includes a multiplier to compensate for especially-difficult-to-remove graffiti. SDOT, SPU and Parks crew chiefs have standardized the “tag unit” across City departments.

Equally important are the performance metrics this group agreed the three major departments would report on monthly, including, but not limited to:

- Year-to-date contacts requesting removal of graffiti from the department’s property;
- Percent of year-to-date graffiti abated within 6 business days (10 business days for roadway structures) from the time the responsible department first documents an abatement request.

To test the SPU Graffiti Hotline call response rates for each of the three major City departments involved in graffiti abatement, we traced a random sample of 90 calls (30 for each department) made to the hotline in 2009. Chart XII below summarizes the results of our analysis, compares our verified response percentages to those reported by the departments, and provides information on the staff and budget resources available to each department for graffiti abatement. Since graffiti abatement by SDOT is divided between two units —1) Parking Pay Stations Shop, and 2) Signs and Signals—we reported the data for this department both as an overall average and broken out by unit.

²² A customer may be anyone internal or external to the City of Seattle, and includes City staff.

Chart XII: Comparison of 2009 Graffiti Incidents Abated, Available Staff, Budget and Abatement Response Times for Three Major City Departments

	Seattle Public Utilities (SPU)	Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT)	Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation (Parks)
2009 graffiti incidents abated, by department	Reported graffiti abated: 842 reported incidents Discovered graffiti abated: 245,622 square feet	Reported graffiti abated: 2,113 incidents Discovered graffiti abated: 4, 257 square feet	Reported graffiti abated: 3,986 incidents Discovered graffiti abated: 15,652 square feet
Staff available for abatement	6 FTE	1.2 FTE	3.39 FTE*
Budget for graffiti abatement (labor, materials and equipment)	\$535,902	\$300,174**	\$317, 396
Reported abatement response time (percent completed within 6 days)	99%	91%	91%
Office of City Auditor verified abatement response time for sample of hotline calls (percent completed within 6 days)	90% <i>(see note below)</i>	Parking Pay Stations Shop: 0% <i>(see note below)</i> Signs and Signals: 70% Overall: 53%	73%

*Equivalent of: 1 FTE Maintenance Laborer, 1.8 FTE Painter, 0.01% FTE Carpenter, 0.15% Installation Maintenance worker

**Does not include the costs related to abating on parking pay stations.

Notes: Regarding verified abatement response times:

- **For SPU**, ten percent of the SPU Hotline calls in our sample (three calls) were originally directed to the SPU Graffiti Rangers, but subsequently had to be forwarded to other responsible parties. Two calls were forwarded to outside agencies and one call was forwarded to the SPU division responsible for contacting private property owners. This causes a delay in the abatement response times.
- **For SDOT's Parking Pay Stations Shop**, SDOT officials told us that records from their Hansen database indicate a much higher rate of compliance than zero percent. Due to questions about data reliability, we were unable to verify this statement. However, if we had analyzed a larger sample of parking pay station work orders, we agree that we may have found a higher rate of compliance.

SPU and Parks Department officials told us that interdepartmental comparisons between graffiti abatement workload and the resources allocated to it should be adjusted to account for the following factors:

1. Mix of tag sizes
2. Difficulty of access
3. Need for special equipment (lifts and ladders to reach high places)
4. Graffiti medium (paint, acid, stickers, etc.)
5. Surface or item defaced (building wall, parking pay station, etc.)
6. Travel time between incidents

For example, parking pay stations, SDOT's responsibility, are particularly challenging to clean because of their hard plastic surface and the sensitive electronic equipment they contain. In contrast, the graffiti abated by SPU's Graffiti Rangers may cover large surface areas and require special lifts for the workers to reach. While Chart XII does not account for these differences, it does reveal a significant discrepancy between the three department's compliance rates with the City's graffiti abatement target goals.

One area of particular concern that emerged was abatement of graffiti on parking pay stations. SDOT officials agree that they have not been able to consistently meet the six day turnaround for abating graffiti on parking pay stations. In addition, community members and managers from other City departments told us that the lack of timely graffiti abatement on parking pay stations was a significant problem for them. Our field observations confirmed that parking pay stations are frequent targets of graffiti vandalism. Recommendation 7, below, offers options for addressing this problem.

Recommendation 7

Implement one of the following options to ensure that graffiti on parking pay stations is abated within the 6 day target goal set by the City:

1. Redeploy 1 FTE position from SPU's Graffiti Rangers to SDOT's Parking Pay Stations Shop and dedicate this position to abating graffiti on parking pay stations.
2. Redeploy 1 FTE position from SPU's Graffiti Rangers to SDOT's Signs and Markings Maintenance Shop and reassign responsibility for abating graffiti on parking pay stations to the Signs and Signals Maintenance Shop.
3. Negotiate a memorandum of agreement between SPU's Graffiti Rangers and SDOT that authorizes, assigns responsibility to, and compensates SPU's Graffiti Rangers for abating graffiti on parking pay stations.

To help ensure that this shifting of responsibility works effectively SDOT managers should consider developing:

- Written guidelines for how to safely abate (remove or paint over) graffiti from parking pay stations, and
- A protocol that allows those responsible for graffiti abatement on parking pay stations to communicate with the Parking Pay Stations Shop on a regular basis, so that information about broken meters that need to be repaired is communicated quickly and accurately.

Questions 4 and 5: Is the City following best practices for educating the public about graffiti and encouraging community involvement?

SPU's Graffiti Education and Outreach Program began in May 2008. This was when the Public Education Specialist position was added to develop and maintain a volunteer corps develop and disseminate technical assistance materials, and conduct education/outreach events at schools, youth groups, block watch groups, etc. The program was designed to promote community stewardship through the use of volunteers to abate graffiti from private property. Notable accomplishments in the first year the position was filled (2009) include, among others:

1. Working with Seattle Municipal Court Community Court participants and the King County Juvenile Division to abate graffiti on private property;
2. Conducting eight presentations to community organizations;
3. Providing supplies for Seattle Paint Out events;
4. Working with Department of Neighborhoods District Coordinators to increase volunteer access to supplies; and,
5. Working with Seattle Police Department's Crime Prevention Team and Coordinators to disseminate information about the program.

As mentioned earlier in this report, we found that community involvement and public education are key to any successful anti-graffiti program. Based on our research of best practices, we concluded that successful anti-graffiti community outreach programs include the following three key elements:

1. **Anti- Graffiti Outreach Coalition** - This coalition would bring together key stakeholders from government entities, businesses, non-profit organizations, and the community for the purposes of: 1) coordinating efforts, 2) building capacity for anti-graffiti activities, and 3) leveraging community resources²³. The coalition would have a lead organization serve as the convener and umbrella organization for the coalition stakeholders. The lead organization could be the City or a partner non-profit or business organization. Based on our interviews, coalition members might include:

- City departments
- King County Metro
- The Washington State Department of Transportation
- Seattle Paint Out
- Seattle Works
- Art Works
- Seattle Community Court
- The Washington State Department of Corrections
- Seattle School District
- Business Improvement Districts Associations
- Seattle Neighborhood Group

²³ Examples of leveraging community resources could be optimizing the use of the Seattle Community Court Community Service Program for graffiti abatement and neighborhood mural projects, or collaborating on a grant application to produce public service announcements through Keep America Beautiful.

- Other community or business organizations

Every best-practice city that we studied has an active anti-graffiti coalition. The leadership can either be housed in the city government (San Jose) or in a partner non-profit organization (Milwaukee). Nearly all of the best practice cities use the coalition framework provided through an affiliation with Keep America Beautiful (see Appendix H for a summary of the Keep America Beautiful program). Among the cities we studied, Portland, Oregon is the only city that has established an anti-graffiti coalition without an affiliation with Keep America Beautiful.

2. **Comprehensive Community Outreach Plan** – This would include the development of community outreach strategies that are based in proven best practices and are designed to achieve specific measurable outcomes.²⁴ Goals of the community outreach plan would be to educate the public about the costs and impacts of graffiti, recruit and train a volunteer base to assist with abatement on private property, and involve community members in clean-up projects in their neighborhoods.

This is consistent with the governmental best practice of developing a data-supported logic model for a city’s overall anti-graffiti effort. The development of a logic model was the subject of our April 19, 2010 Graffiti Stakeholders Meeting.

3. **Public Education Program** – This would include public education programs targeted to children, youth and adults.

Many of the best practices jurisdictions that we studied utilize the public education tools and materials provided at no charge by Keep America Beautiful’s “Graffiti Hurts” program. This program also offers curriculum materials for grades K-6, which are used as is or tailored for use by many cities. In addition, Portland, Oregon and Phoenix, Arizona have developed their own elementary grade curriculum materials.

Because the model described above relies heavily on leveraging community resources, and because the City has already started to move in this direction by creating SPU’s Education Specialist position, we believe it is a good fit for the City’s current budget situation.

Recommendation 8

Implement a three-part model to enhance community involvement and public education, consisting of:

1. A broadly-based coalition of city and other public employees, community organizations, businesses, and individuals;
2. A comprehensive community outreach plan directed toward engaging community members in volunteer clean-ups; and
3. A strategic plan for public education about the costs and impacts of graffiti, particularly directed toward late elementary and middle school children and youth.

We believe the City’s Graffiti Public Education Specialist should be involved in the formation of the Anti-Graffiti Coalition. However, in terms of resources needed to implement this recommendation, policymakers should be aware that during the transition period, when the Education Specialist is busy

²⁴ For example, an intermediate outcome measure might be percentage per capita increase in reporting of graffiti. An example of a long-range outcome might be percentage change in perceptions about graffiti among Seattle youth as reported in the Washington State Healthy Youth Survey.

forming and organizing the Anti-Graffiti Outreach Coalition, he will not be available to organize and lead other volunteer abatement efforts. Unless another City employee, intern, AmeriCorps or community volunteer assumes these duties; there will likely be a gap in services before the new structure is in place. We believe this opportunity cost is worth the much higher level of service that could ultimately be provided through more efficient and effective use of community resources.

Question 6: How effective are the private sector programs that target graffiti and litter removal, such as the program run by the Metropolitan Improvement District?

Background

The City of Seattle currently has seven Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) in the following neighborhoods: Capitol Hill/Broadway, Chinatown/International District, Downtown (Metropolitan Improvement District or MID), University District, West Seattle Junction, Pioneer Square and Columbia City²⁵. Seattle Public Utilities provides annual grants, which totaled \$58,000 in 2009, to the BIAs to assist their graffiti abatement efforts. Some of these BIAs, including Broadway, Chinatown/International District, the MID and the University District, are very proactive about graffiti abatement in their district. Chart XIII below provides a summary of the seven BIA’s efforts to clean and remove graffiti in their areas.

Chart XIII: Summary of BIA Efforts to Abate Graffiti

BIA	Graffiti abatement	By Whom	2009 Estimated Cost	Funding
Broadway	Abates graffiti on both public and private property	Contracts with CleanScapes	\$7,500	BIA funds only
Chinatown/International District	Abates graffiti on private property and sidewalks	In-house unless on brick or mortar, then contract out	\$13,300	BIA funds plus \$3,000 SPU grant
Columbia City	Does not abate	N/A	N/A	Report graffiti to City due to lack of funding to abate on their own
MID	Abates graffiti on private property if owner provides paint and on all public spaces in the MID except parking pay stations (for	In-house staff (Cleaning Ambassadors)	\$100,000	BIA funds and SPU grant of \$20,000

²⁵ BIAs are special assessment districts that are established to revitalize and enhance neighborhood business districts. They are a self-help mechanism whereby business and/or property owners choose to assess themselves a regular membership fee. BIAs fund improvements and services that are aimed at maintaining and improving the overall viability of business districts.

	example: light poles, mailboxes, and signs, through a MOA with SDOT)			
University District	Abates graffiti on both public and private property	16 hours a week for volunteer coordinator and volunteers	\$12,000	BIA funds and \$10,000 SPU grant
West Seattle Junction Association	Abates graffiti on private property and light poles	On-call worker during summer 5 hours a week, contract out for hard-to-reach work, occasional volunteers	\$3,500	BIA funds plus SPU grant of \$1,400
Pioneer Square	Supplements what MID does, on private property only	Staff coordinate volunteer events	\$7,500	BIA funds plus SPU grant of \$1,833. Materials provided by SPU Red Wagon Paint Out Program

The largest of the City’s BIAs, the Metropolitan Improvement District or MID, abates graffiti on private property and, through a memorandum of agreement with the Seattle Department of Transportation, also on light poles, mail boxes, and other public property in the right-of-way (excluding parking pay stations). Under this agreement, the MID pays for labor costs and the City subsidizes material costs. The MID estimates that they spent over \$100,000 in 2009 on graffiti abatement, which does not include the cost of graffiti removal on private property that is done primarily by private property owners. The MID estimates that from 2008-2009 their cleaning ambassadors removed approximately 17,000 graffiti tags from public property and another 300 from private property in their district.

Chart XIV compares the number of tags abated by the MID’s Cleaning Ambassadors for the years 2005 and 2009 by neighborhood. Clearly, all the neighborhoods in the MID experienced an increase in graffiti over the four-year period, ranging from 17 to 540 percent.

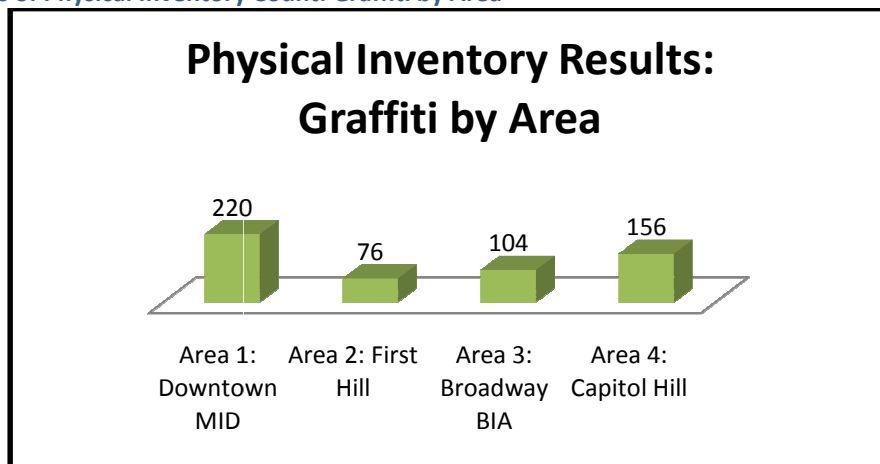
Chart XIV: Tags abated by MID in Years 2005 and 2009

Downtown Neighborhood and MID Sectors	Graffiti tags abated by MID Cleaning Ambassadors on public property in 2005	Graffiti tags abated by MID Cleaning Ambassadors on public property in 2009 ²⁶	Percent change over four-year period
Denny Triangle	2,703	3,155	+17 percent
Financial District	346	1,284	+271 percent
Pioneer Square	1,133	3,363	+197 percent
Retail Core	2,646	9,011	+241 percent
Waterfront	55	352	+540 percent

The University District BIA is also proactive in graffiti abatement, although they do not abate on public property. Currently, they use a grant from Seattle Public Utilities to fund a two-day-a-week volunteer services coordinator, who in turn supervises crews of Community Court participants who abate graffiti. A University District BIA official reported that this system is working well.

To assess how effective private sector programs in the City of Seattle have been at abating graffiti, we conducted a systematic, single-day, physical count of graffiti using a customized version of Keep America Beautiful's Community Appearance Index. We selected four areas of approximately equal size (.7 mile); two areas were within BIA's, and two were not. We captured data on each instance of graffiti including: street address, property description, visibility, graffiti location, graffiti size, type of graffiti, surface, and medium. We found:

Chart XV Results of Physical Inventory Count: Graffiti by Area



²⁶ MID added 6 team members to their cleaning ambassadors in July 2007 but unfortunately due to lower revenue, they lost 3 of those full time positions in July 2008. They currently have 32 cleaning ambassadors on staff.

As Chart XV demonstrates, the results from our physical inventory count related to the impact of BIA abatement programs are mixed. On one hand, the Broadway BIA (Area 3) had a third less graffiti than its matched geographic area, Pine Street Corridor (Area 4); alternatively, the Downtown MID (Area 1) had almost 3 times the graffiti as its matched geographic area, First Hill (Area 2).

However, we realized after conducting the inventory that the comparison of Area 1 to Area 2 may not be valid due to the difference in commercial activity in the two areas, because it is possible that more graffiti occurs in more highly trafficked areas. Given that the MID Cleaning Ambassadors abated over 17,000 graffiti tags in 2009, it seems safe to say that there would be a lot more graffiti in the MID without their program. However, further study is needed to determine the relative effectiveness of the BIA's efforts, both compared to government abatement efforts and compared to the different models employed by the BIAs—for example, use of in-house cleaning ambassadors, contractors or volunteers.

Recommendation 9

City leaders should direct Seattle Public Utilities, as the lead department for anti-graffiti efforts, to:

1. Start by defining areas similar in size and commercial activity to existing BIAs (control groups), then conduct physical inventories of these areas and the BIAs to gather baseline data (our office has already performed this for the Broadway BIA);
2. Continue supporting BIA graffiti abatement through Seattle Public Utilities grants and consider expanding this support by using part-time volunteer coordinators and Washington State Department of Corrections or Community Court participants for graffiti abatement (the University District model); and
3. Conduct subsequent physical inventory counts of graffiti in the BIAs and the control sites to compare the effectiveness of the BIAs' programs.



Seattle City Council

February 4, 2010

David Jones
Office of the City Auditor
P.O. Box 94729
Seattle WA 98124-4729

Re: Assessment of City Graffiti and Litter Laws, Best Practices and Recommendations

Dear Mr. Jones,

As Council members, we hear from many citizens who do not feel safe in their own neighborhoods. These citizen concerns are expressed in e-mails and telephone calls to Council members and regularly at community meetings.

We are concerned about “street disorder” in Seattle. Recent academic studies confirm and quantify the connection between visible environmental disorder and higher rates of crime. Two of these studies are enclosed for your information. The study from the Netherlands focuses on the negative impacts of litter and graffiti, including documentation of the increase in crime that occurs when these environmental disorders are not cleaned up.

As a result of citizen concerns and the studies linking environmental disorder to increased rates of crime, we request that your office conduct a performance review of the way the City handles graffiti and litter removal, prosecution of offenders and public education efforts to discourage graffiti and litter.

We acknowledge these problems do not have simple answers. The City already has many dedicated staff painting over graffiti and picking up litter every day, yet the problem remains. To achieve cleaner, safer streets the City may need better education efforts, a more coordinated response among different city departments, stronger laws and enforcement – or all of the above. And the way to reduce graffiti may differ from the way to reduce litter.

To help us find workable solutions, we would like your office to explore the following areas, comparing Seattle’s efforts to recognized best practices around the country:

1. Current city ordinances regarding graffiti and litter and whether these laws are sufficient, including an assessment of whether business owners should be required to clean-up and remove graffiti and litter that is adjacent to their properties;

2. The frequency of arrest and prosecution of offenders and rates of re-offending;
3. The coordination of clean-up between different city departments and, specifically, whether or not these efforts should be centralized in one department or office;
4. Education of local residents and business owners about their responsibilities according to the law, the negative effects of graffiti and litter and the positive benefits of clean neighborhoods;
5. City programs for encouraging community organizations to involve themselves in this effort;
6. The effectiveness of private sector programs that target graffiti and litter removal, including those of the Metropolitan Improvement District; and
7. Innovative efforts other cities have successfully implemented that Seattle might replicate.

Please include in your assessment specific recommendations or actions the City should take to reduce street disorder by eliminating graffiti and litter.

If possible, we would like to receive your assessment and recommendations no later than June 1, 2010 so this issue can be part of our fall budget process. Please feel free to contact us if you have questions about this request. Councilmember Burgess' office has done a preliminary study of these issues and would be happy to work with your staff as they start this review.

Sincerely,



Tim Burgess
Chair, Public Safety and Education



Tom Rasmussen
Chair, Transportation

Cc: Councilmember Sally Bagshaw
Councilmember Sally Clark
Councilmember Jean Godden

Enclosures

Appendix B

Private Property Owner's Duties, Responsibilities and Resources For Graffiti Abatement

Private Property Owner's Legal Responsibilities

City of Seattle ordinance (Seattle Municipal Code 10.07) requires property owners to promptly remove graffiti found on their property after receiving notice from the City of Seattle.

Failure to remove graffiti from private property is a violation of the law and may lead to legal action to remove the graffiti at the expense of the private property owner and also subject the responsible party to civil penalties of \$100 per day (up to a maximum of \$5,000).

City of Seattle Process for Enforcing the Graffiti Nuisance Law

Private property graffiti enforcement is managed by one full-time staff person in Seattle Public Utilities, whose position is funded by the City's General Fund. According to their own records, SPU receives, on average, 235 complaints each month about graffiti on private property.

Once SPU receives a complaint, the private property enforcement graffiti manager (Manager) conducts research to identify the legal owner of the property and sends the owner a Graffiti Removal Letter. This letter explains the owner's responsibilities, directs him/her to available resources, and notifies him/her that a City inspector will visit the property in 10 days to determine if the graffiti has been removed. If the graffiti is confirmed to have been removed after the first inspection, the Manager closes the file. According to the current private property enforcement manager, approximately eighty percent of private property owners abate graffiti from their property within the ten day deadline of receiving the first letter.

If inspection reveals that the graffiti has not been removed, a second letter is sent. This letter reminds the property owner of his/her legal responsibilities, and tells them another inspection will take place in ten days. Again, according to the current private property enforcement manager, an additional eighteen percent of private property owners abate graffiti from their property after receiving the second letter.

In the approximately two percent of cases where the graffiti is not removed after receipt of the second letter, the property is considered a graffiti nuisance and the owner is notified that a hearing date will be set with the City's Office of Hearing Examiner. This letter also explains the monetary penalties for failing to promptly remove graffiti from private property once a property owner has been notified. According to an official from the City's Office of the Hearing Examiner, there were 22 cases filed with the Hearing Examiner's Office under the Graffiti Nuisance Ordinance in 2009. All but two of these cases were resolved before the scheduled hearing date (i.e., the graffiti was cleaned or removed), so hearings were not required.

Resources Available to Private Property Owners for Graffiti Abatement

The City's website includes two places to look for information on graffiti enforcement and abatement.

For information on how to report graffiti to the Seattle Police Department, residents may go to:

<http://www.seattle.gov/police/prevention/Neighborhood/vandalism.htm>

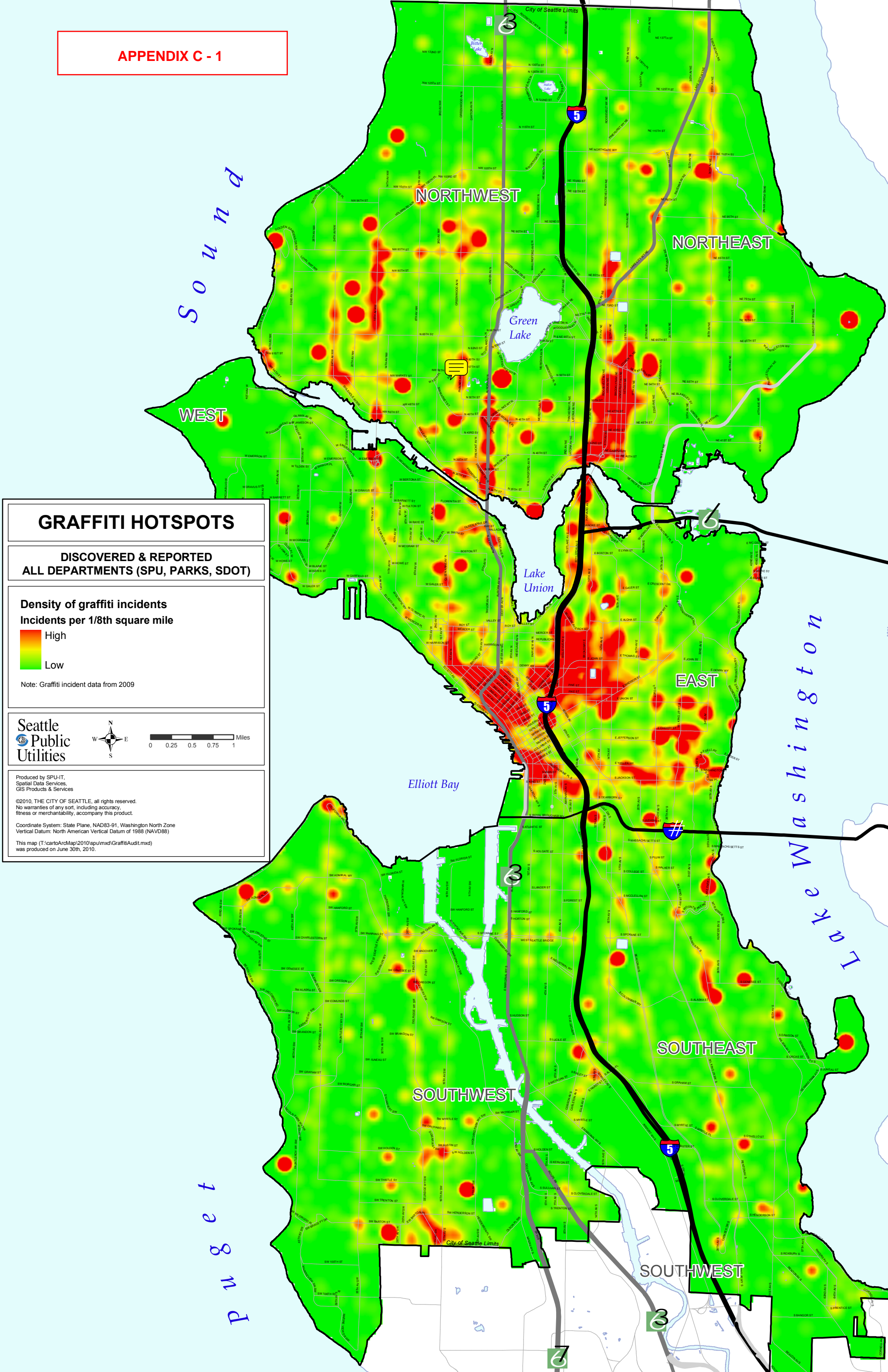
For information on graffiti prevention and abatement, the site is:

[http://www.seattle.gov/util/Services/Garbage/KeepSeattleClean/Graffiti Prevention & Removal/index.asp](http://www.seattle.gov/util/Services/Garbage/KeepSeattleClean/Graffiti_Prevention_&Removal/index.asp)

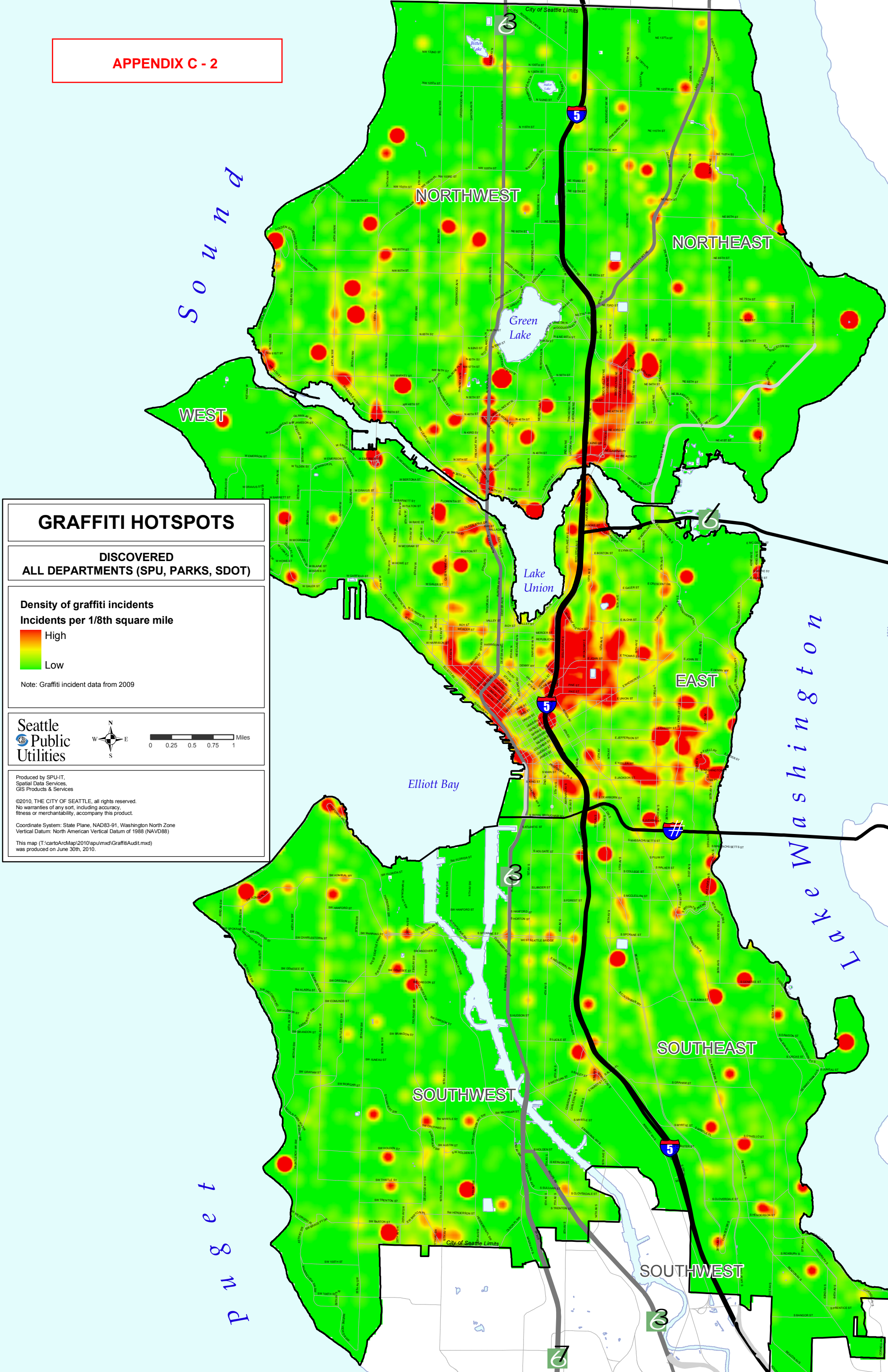
This second site includes information on how to remove graffiti, volunteer to clean up graffiti in your neighborhood, make your property graffiti-resistant, obtain assistance from Seattle Public Utilities volunteer crews to abate graffiti on your property, and obtain resources (the Red Wagon Paint Out Program - see below).

Volunteer assistance for abating graffiti on private property is available to senior citizens and persons whose property is repeatedly defaced with graffiti. Volunteers can only abate graffiti on private property if the property owner signs a waiver giving the volunteers permission to work on their property.

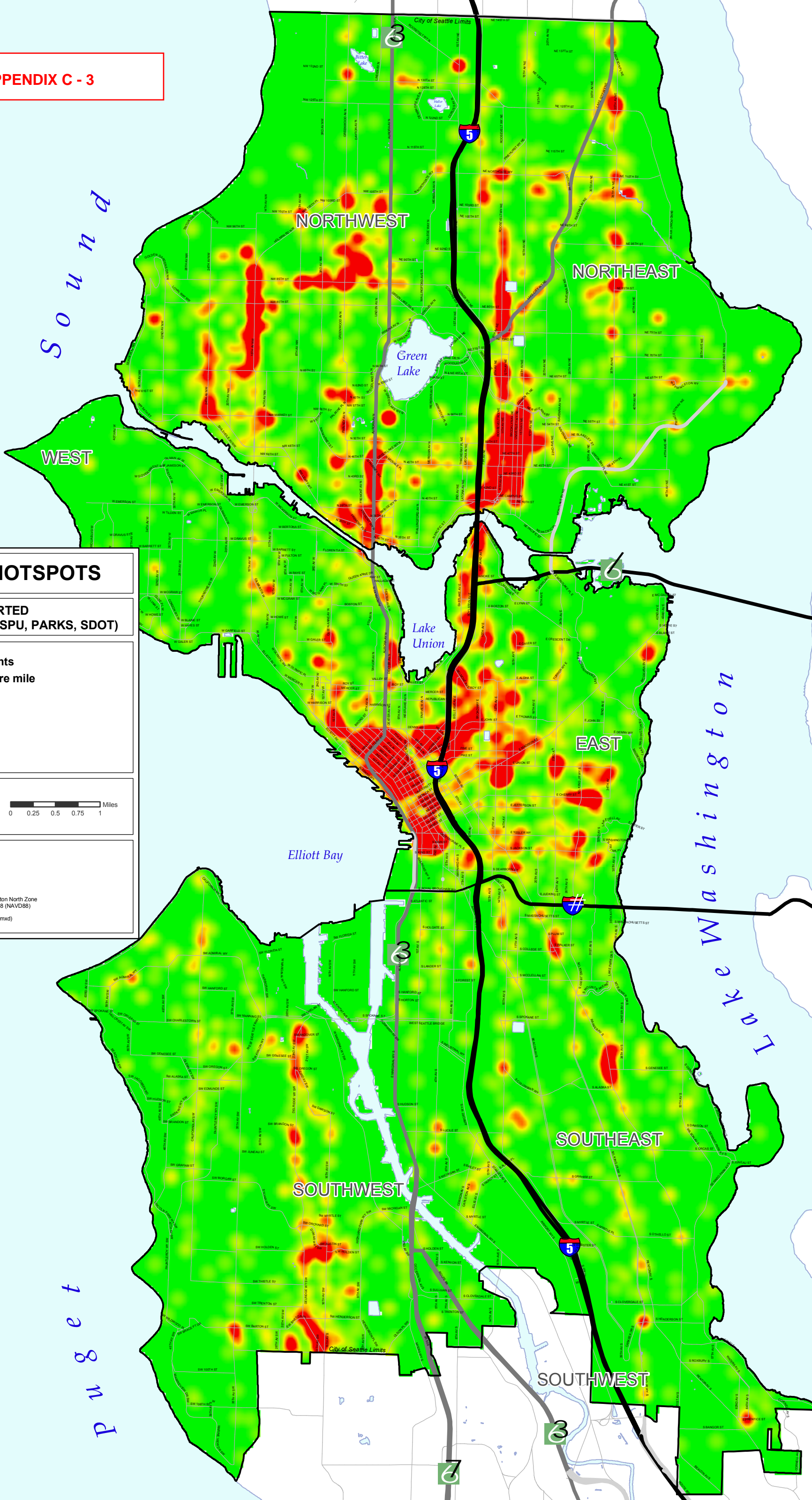
The Red Wagon Paint Out Program provides free materials and training to volunteers who want to remove unsightly graffiti in their neighborhood. According to Seattle Public Utilities Public Education Specialist, red wagons stocked with graffiti supplies are now available at some City of Seattle Neighborhood Service Centers.



APPENDIX C - 2



APPENDIX C - 3



GRAFFITI HOTSPOTS

REPORTED
ALL DEPARTMENTS (SPU, PARKS, SDOT)

Density of graffiti incidents
Incidents per 1/8th square mile

High
Low

Note: Graffiti incident data from 2009

Seattle Public Utilities

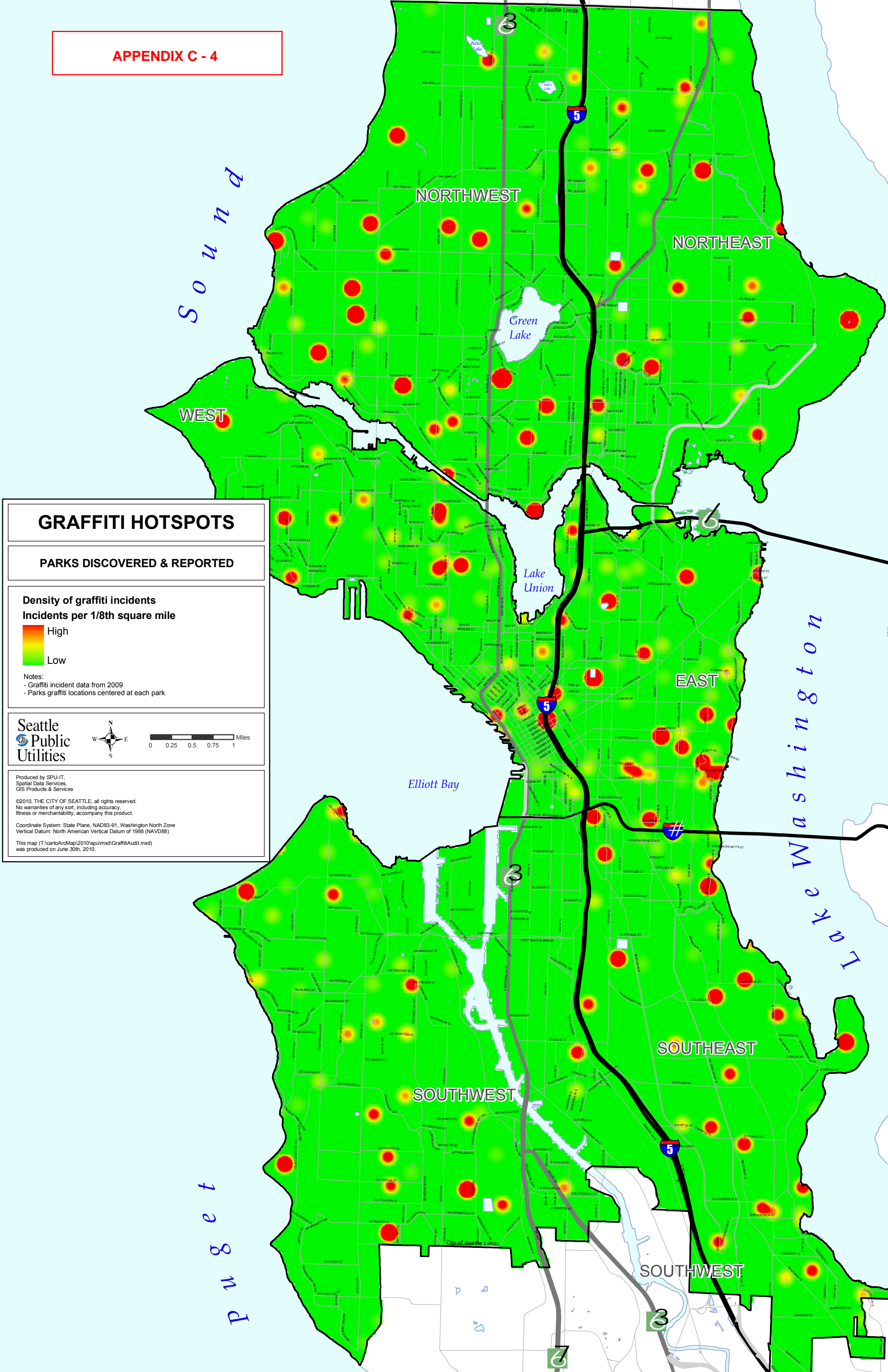
0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles

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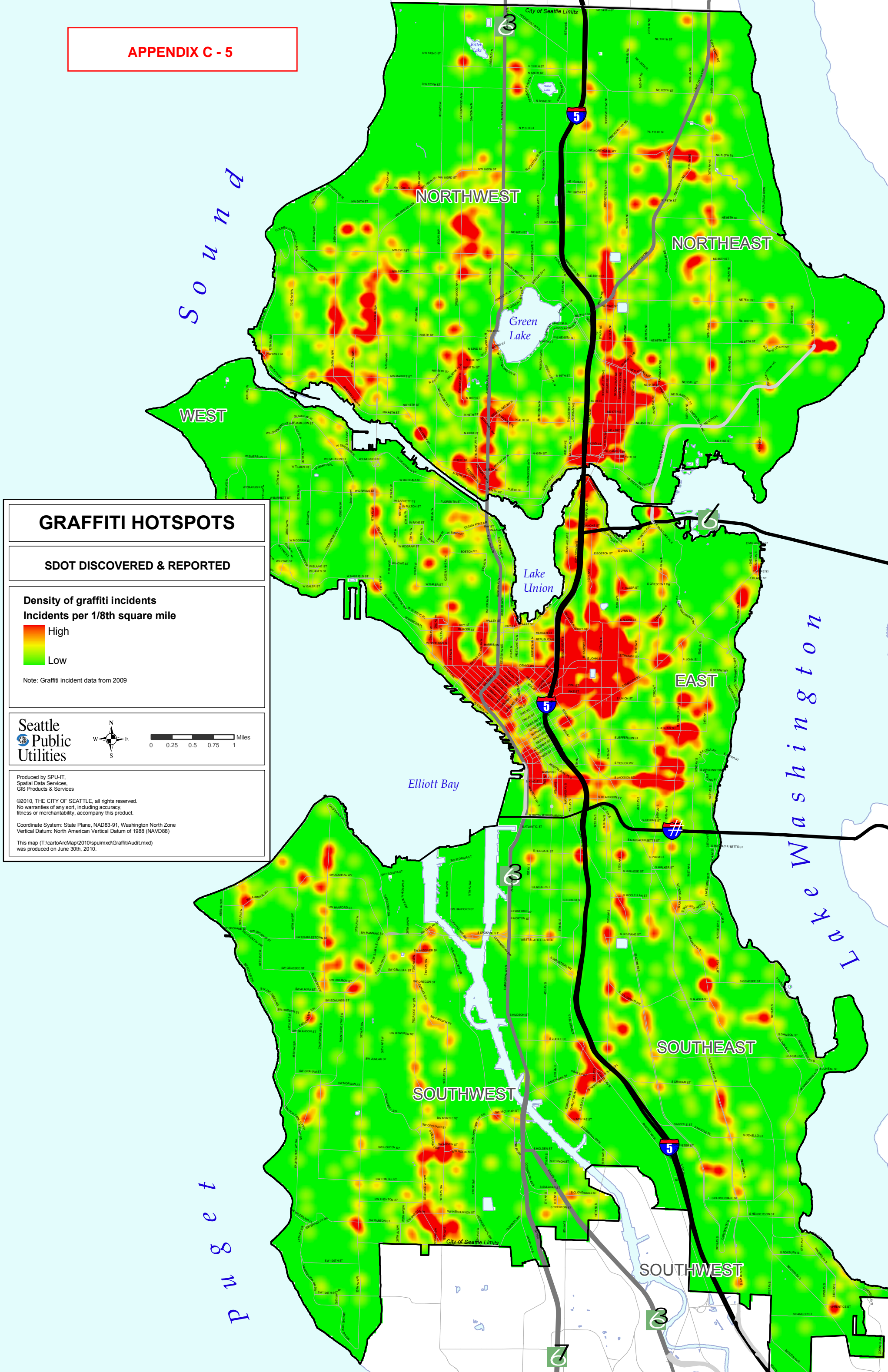
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Coordinate System: State Plane, NAD83-91, Washington North Zone Vertical Datum: North American Vertical Datum of 1988 (NAVD88)

This map (T:\carto\ArcMap\2010\spu\mxd\GraffitiAudit.mxd) was produced on June 30th, 2010.



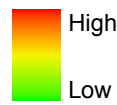
APPENDIX C - 5



GRAFFITI HOTSPOTS

SDOT DISCOVERED & REPORTED

Density of graffiti incidents
Incidents per 1/8th square mile



Note: Graffiti incident data from 2009

Seattle
Public
Utilities

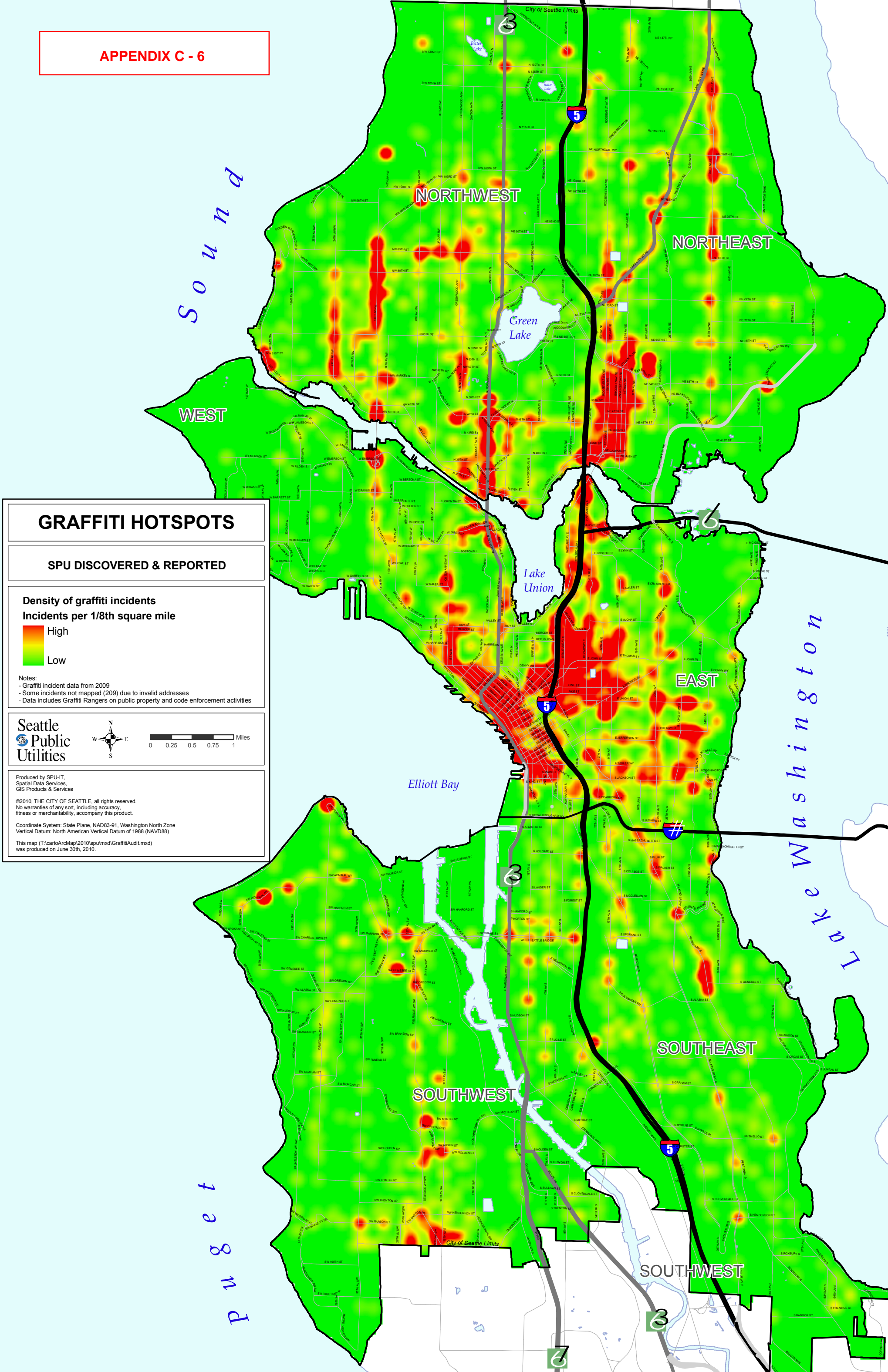


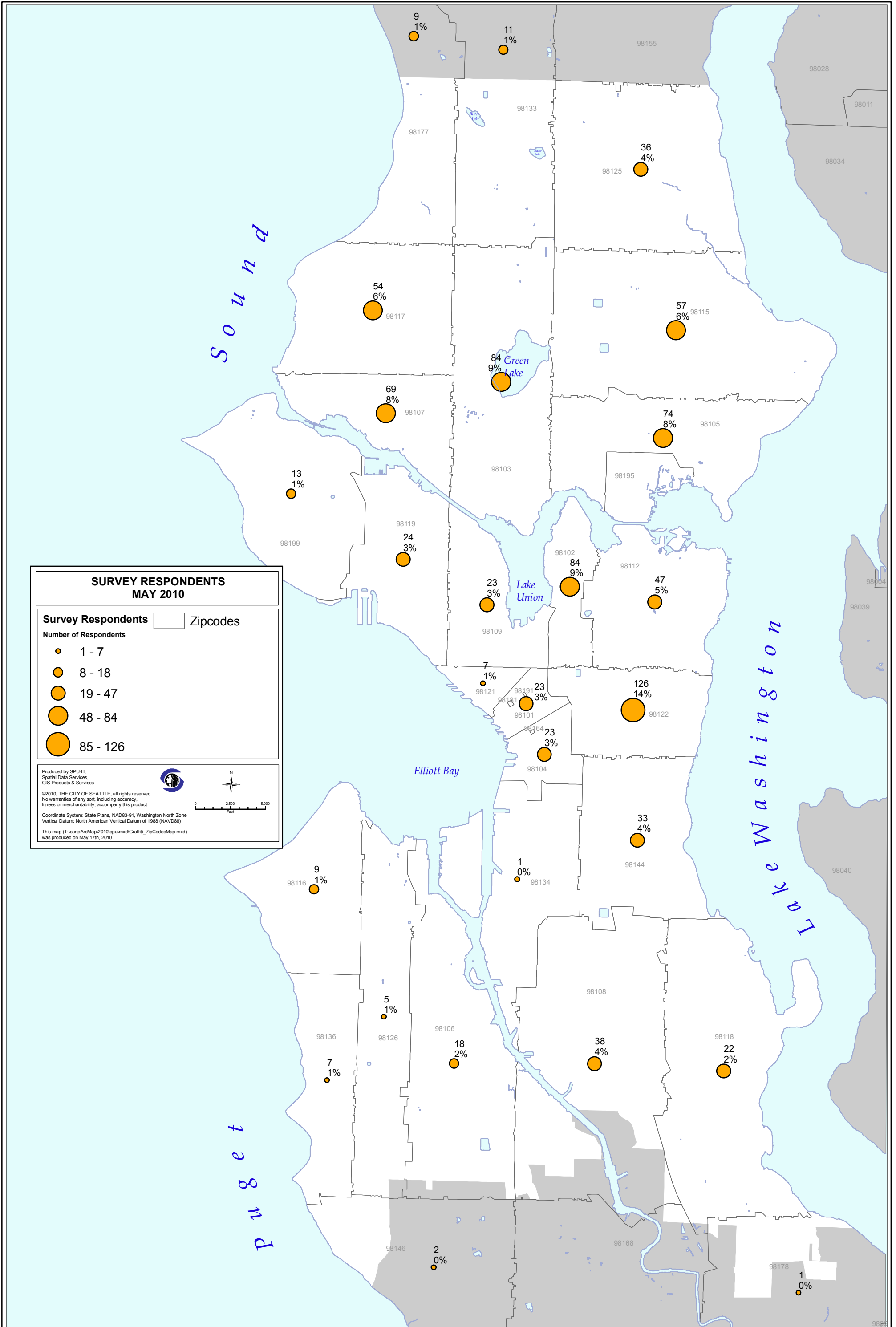
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Coordinate System: State Plane, NAD83-91, Washington North Zone
Vertical Datum: North American Vertical Datum of 1988 (NAVD88)

This map (T:\cartoArcMap\2010\spu\mxd\GraffitiAudL.mxd)
was produced on June 30th, 2010.





Appendix D -2

May 3 2010 Graffiti Questionnaire

City of Seattle

Results Overview



Date: 6/3/2010 3:02 PM PST

Responses: Completes


Filter: No filter applied

Seattle City Councilmembers Tim Burgess and Tom Rasmussen asked the Office of City Auditor to review and evaluate the City's response to graffiti. To that end, we would like to know more about how graffiti affects you, your business, or organization. Completing this questionnaire is optional. However, your responses will help the Office of City Auditor formulate recommendations to the Mayor and the City Council. Please feel free to pass this survey along to others who may want to share their views. *** Please complete your questionnaire by May 10, 2010 *** The space for comments on the survey form is limited. So, if you have additional comments or questions, please send them to: graffitiaudit@seattle.gov You may also contact the Office of City Auditor at 206/233-3801. This questionnaire is subject to and in compliance with the City of Seattle Security Policy--available at: <http://www.seattle.gov/pan/privacypol.htm>






2. Zip Code

98101		23	3%
98102		84	9%
98103		84	9%
98104		23	3%
98105		74	8%
98106		18	2%
98107		69	8%
98108		38	4%
98109		23	3%
98112		47	5%
98115		57	6%
98116		9	1%
98117		54	6%
98118		22	2%
98119		24	3%
98121		7	1%
98122		126	14%
98125		36	4%
98126		5	1%
98133		11	1%
98134		1	0%
98136		7	1%
98144		33	4%


Appendix D -2

98146		2	0%
98177		9	1%
98178		1	0%
98199		13	1%
Other		13	1%
Total		913	100%

3. Description - How would you describe yourself? (Check all that apply.)

Home owner		470	52%
Home renter		365	41%
Business owner		84	9%
Employed in Seattle		332	37%
Other, please specify		66	7%

4. Graffiti - Is graffiti a problem for you, your business, or organization?

A very big problem		79	9%
A big problem		118	13%
A medium problem		163	18%
A small problem		193	21%
Not a problem		346	38%
Total		899	100%







5. Please tell us how much of a problem these graffiti issues are for you, your business, or organization.

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	A very big problem	A big problem	A medium problem	A small problem	Not a problem
Cost and effort of graffiti removal	76 9%	100 11%	126 14%	177 20%	414 46%
Repeat occurrences of graffiti	118 13%	112 12%	121 13%	149 17%	399 44%
Neighbors do not rapidly remove graffiti on their property	97 11%	129 14%	126 14%	133 15%	411 46%
Graffiti on public property is not rapidly removed	135 15%	134 15%	137 15%	146 16%	347 39%
Graffiti decreases my personal feeling of safety	132 15%	114 13%	93 10%	109 12%	453 50%
Graffiti creates					







Appendix D -2

perception that the area has a crime problem	224 25%	141 16%	74 8%	117 13%	343 38%
Loss of business due to the perception that the neighborhood is unsafe	90 10%	106 12%	80 9%	129 15%	471 54%
Graffiti decreases my property value	157 18%	113 13%	82 9%	120 14%	414 47%

6. Occurrence - How often has your property been marked with graffiti?

never		339	37%
seldom		275	30%
several times each year		154	17%
on a monthly basis		55	6%
on a weekly or daily basis		33	4%
Other, please specify		50	6%
Total		906	100%

8. Graffiti Improvements - Which of the following ideas would improve the graffiti situation for you, your organization, or business? Check all that apply.

Better information on how to report graffiti incidents on private property		303	34%
Better information on how to report graffiti on public property for clean-up		348	39%
Technical assistance on how to clean up graffiti on your property		236	27%
More murals and art on street fixtures		568	64%
More arrests and prosecutions of graffiti vandals		299	34%
Stiffer penalties for graffiti vandals		320	36%
A local law that restricts access to spray paint and other materials by prohibiting		216	24%



Appendix D -2

suppliers from selling to minors and keeping the materials secured			
Greater City support for community organization and involvement in graffiti prevention and removal		404	46%
More community clean-ups of graffiti on private property		408	46%
Other, please specify		231	26%

9. Most Important Graffiti Improvement - Please identify which of these improvements would be most helpful.

Better information on how to report graffiti incidents on private property		10	1%
Better information on how to report graffiti on public property for clean-up		30	3%
Technical assistance on how to clean up graffiti on your property		32	4%
More murals and art on street fixtures		321	37%
More arrests and prosecutions of graffiti vandals		128	15%
Stiffer penalties for graffiti vandals		73	8%
A local law that restricts access to spray paint and other materials by prohibiting suppliers from selling to minors and keeping the materials secured		43	5%
Greater City support for community organization and involvement in graffiti prevention		102	12%

Appendix D -2

and removal			
More community clean-ups of graffiti on private property		46	5%
Other, please specify		75	9%
Total		860	100%

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Appendix D-3 - Graffiti Survey: Open Ended Comments

10. Additional Information - Is there anything else that would be helpful for us to know about how graffiti affects your business or organization? The space for comments on the questionnaire form is limited. So, if you have additional comments or questions, please send them to: graffitiaudit@seattle.gov

#	Response
1	Stiffer penalties for people who do not promptly remove graffiti from their property - including public property. For instance, if WSDOT doesn't clean up their property in timely fashion, they should have to pay a fine and a percentage of that would to to the neighborhood or community council.
2	Graffiti is an urban art form, a means of self expression that is rooted in historically marginalized communities. It usually manifests itself as colorful murals, or abstract images. What I think you are talking about is tagging. Rooted in gang culture tagging is about marking territory, not unlike dogs peeing on trees. It looks like a name that is hard to read. Graffiti is generally good. Tagging is generally bad. There is a distinction to be made. My \$.02 Randy
3	Follow-up to reported graffiti violations. I reported graffiti on a business/abandoned property in my neighborhood 1 month ago - no follow-up from city and graffiti has not been removed.
4	Thank you for your efforts.
5	The big problem is that no one is around to see the tagging happening and even if we do see it, the police are not able to respond quickly enough to catch them. Ideally, we need to find out why graffiti is done in the first place and provide these "artists" with a more positive outlet.
6	Graffiti and tagging on Capitol Hill tends to diminish in cold weather months and increase during warm weather. We have had a pretty stable period of little or no graffiti. It will be interesting to see what the next few months bring, or whether we've "solved" the problem.
7	I don't see graffiti as a gigantic issue in our neighborhood though it's worse as you get closer to Lake City. But I think both public art and community clean-ups would go a long way towards fixing the problem. It will never go away 100% but it can be a small enough problem that we need to dedicate a lot of resources to it. Both of those also provide dual benefits to the community through fixing the graffiti itself and creating a stronger sense of community. Also, I tried to give ratings that showed that it is a problem but it also shouldn't be a top priority. Part of the other reason I like tackling it through art and community is that it would require finding people who see it as a problem that needs to be solved. If it's a small enough issue that nobody cares then you won't be finding people to do community clean-ups. If it's the top priority for a neighborhood you'll most likely get a lot of volunteers.
8	I have had trouble getting graffiti cleaned up on vacant property with containers and not necessarily an address because of empty lot
9	Graffiti does not directly affect me, but as a journalist, it is a topic I cover quite frequently (and it no doubt affects the neighborhood I serve). I would like to see an emphasis on the difference between mural/graffiti art (which should be supported by the community) and graffiti vandalism.
10	When graffiti is discovered on our property, we are the victims. Threatening letters from the City are the last thing we need. A polite "heads-up" would be appreciated instead. Work with the victims, and keep your own house clean!
11	Graffiti offenders need to be held accountable no matter what their age. Make them do the clean-up!

12	It seems to be increasing in frequency and in spreading to new areas.
13	The community council gets a lot of complaints about it; so, in that sense, it affects us by making the council seem powerless to stop a significant community problem.
14	West Seattle triangle area with closed car dealerships is really looking like a slum.
15	I'm not particularly a fan, but I don't feel that public graffiti is a big problem in the grand scheme of things. (offensive/hate speech graffiti is a different matter and should of course be removed immediately)
16	Grffiti attracts graffiti so getting it removed quickly is important.
17	There are no police patrolling my neighborhood. This lets the kids know that they are not being watched...there is no deterrent. We need more police during the nighttime hours, especially during summer.
18	Grffiti is most commonly a sign of gang presence. Seattle should set a NATIONAL STANDARD of having ZERO TOLERANCE for anything that relates to gang crime, including graffiti. Gang presence in Seattle has exploded and it's a plague that Seattle should attack on several fronts. I live in Los Angeles and the gangs here have moved to Seattle, I've seen their tags there. It's time to act. Seattle is by far and away my favorite city in the entire world. I know I will be moving back someday. Please don't let the gangs take over like they've done in LA.
19	public notices of how vandals are prosecuted. This problem is a great expense to the govt. as well as individuals.
20	SDOT must be more responsive to residents who report graffiti on parking pay stations. We are told volunteers can not be authorized to remove it, but City is not keeping up with the overwhelming graffiti in Uptown around Seattle Center.
21	Publish a list of graffiti reports and status information - reported; letter to owner sent; escalation in progress; etc.
22	Property owners are the victims twice. By the graffiti then cost and penalties for removal.
23	I clean up graffiti at Carkeek Park. I am one of the volunteers who help maintain trails at Carkeek Park.
24	I can see the city is doing better cleaning it up. But the city needs to be more proactive about catching who is doing it and making them clean it up and pay for it.
25	Yes, when I don't know the exact address of a building, say, the one on NW Leary and 17th NW next to Hill Machine, the graffiti hotline people tell me there is NOTHING they can do. I tried google maps, I have NO IDEA what the address is. So, if a business has no address, the graffiti gets to stay. You won't accept cross streets and geographical designations.
26	I see the most graffiti in areas with lots of abandoned vehicles/car encampments. I think the unkempt appearance of these vehicles may encourage graffiti. If the City devoted more resources to enforcing abandoned vehicle laws and posting No Parking 2-5AM signs, graffiti would likely decrease. This is particularly true around the Seattle City Light facility on NW 46th St and 6th Ave NW in Ballard.
27	my entire neighborhood is marked up regularly on street signs, garbage cans, fences, guard rails. Its kids that live in the neighborhood we know this but do not know how to prevent it. the graffiti on public property takes up to a year to get removed.

28	Transporting the painting and cleanup supplies from one location to another is a challenge. We have a cart which is a great help - but we're lucky we have a volunteer who does this and can do it and is very focused on this project. It's not really a solution that's repeatable in other areas unless you find that kind of person.
29	Graffiti is not just paint. Etching windows with acid or scratching is a big problem that is a huge expense the windows must be replaced, they can not be fixed. Also posters and stickers glued to surfaces are a problem.
30	There has been graffiti on the new section of the Burke Gilman trail along Seaview Ave. It is the section to the east of the RR tracks across from Ray's. It has been there for over a year, and not removed.
31	First of all -- we should define graffiti -- Is it gang tags? sticker art? stencil art? murals? These categories are lumped together in all of these recent discussions. I strongly believe that too much money is going into graffiti removal. We should support street art and arts in the schools with these funds. Look at what other cities have done to create partnerships which include street art. Street art is NOT gang tagging and they should not be lumped together
32	I would rather have money spent replacing the south park bridge than this. It is offensive to me that we waste so much taxpayer money on trivial things and let vital infrastructure go. Graffiti is unavoidable, step in only when necessary, but absolutely do not let a literal lifeline fail and neglect/abandon an entire community.
33	graffiti makes our lovely city of seattle look drab and unkept. We need to clean up the city. It is curbing tourists from coming back.
34	Street art is a valid form of art and exists worldwide. Sure, some of the challenge and the value comes from putting art in areas where it's not legal to do so. But a lot of what street art is can be embraced by urban spaces if by changing attitudes and redirecting public money. I think it would be great to see Seattle embrace this approach instead of making this a situation where we target graffiti artists as criminals. I think re-education would have to happen both for community members and artists.
35	tagging private property is a problem and vandalism. graffiti art (pictures, decorative lettering, other art) on public property is these days part of the picturesque urban landscape and i have no problem with it. go after taggers who etch glass, paint on houses and leave the same tag on every sign. be much more lenient towards artists who seek out walls, traincars, derelict buildings that aren't an individual's business or home. and please make that distinction to the public.
36	In central Seattle near the train tracks there is something called the "free wall" where graffiti artists, or just anyone looking to paint, can go and spray paint whatever they want. I feel like most of the time there is graffiti around, kids are just looking for a way to express themselves. If South and Southwest Seattle had something like this accessible, maybe the graffiti problem on public property in areas like South Park would decrease. Kids just need a space to express themselves.
37	There are plenty of abandoned/unplanned areas in this city. We can give these artists canvas since they have beautiful capabilities. Prosecute all "Taggers" and reward positive appealing art!
38	I will send sep email about my Graffiti Busters group...a bit in the past. But most important is get groups in community to paint out fast. The message is clear..we do not let it stay in our area..go back to LA or where ever. BT
39	I think too that local business owners need to be held responsible for reporting graffiti. If they see it on the side of their building and can't take it down themselves there should be a penalty for not reporting it to the police or city for cleanup. They should be held accountable to cleaning it up within 5 days. This is what is done in other states - the state then contracts with a vendor to come through once a month and remove everything. If you keep taking it away eventually those

	people perpetuating the crimes will stop. Also, I would suggest that anti graffiti paint should be used everywhere possible. Requiring business owners to maintain that paint will significantly help the neighborhood.
40	Those found guilty of a graffiti act should spend 100s of hours in the community cleaning up the remnants they & their peers leave behind. This, in addition to fines. Do not just put vandals behind bars while the citizens clean up their unsightly mess.
41	Remove union issues at Parks,the city property. Let volunteers remove the graffiti
42	This is really a serious problem in the U-District. We really need more help to combat crime and defacing of property.
43	The fundamental flaw with this survey is that it does not define graffiti. Is all paint/pen/sticker/wheat-paste vandalism on public or private property considered graffiti? Is it only the mindless tags that plague road signs, mailboxes etc.? Does it include art on a wall that has been allowed by the owner? Before asking any questions about prevention, you first need to define the problem.
44	Give art a space, it IS an art, granted some use it for direct defacement of property, but more murals or a free tag space may encourage artists to come together and have a place where it can be OK to express and even compete with each other through public art.
45	As a renter in Upper Fremont I do my part to make the area clean and friendly. My neighbors and I plant gardens along the sidewalk, clean up trash, and call the police when there is criminal activity. Graffiti, littering, and public defecation, and garden vandalism are constant problems that we face.
46	There are tags on public property (the onramp signs to I-90) that have been in place for months. These are not being cleaned. Also, vacant homes and businesses are a huge target. The owners sometimes live out-of-state and don't care.
47	There's a huge difference between tagging of property to mark gang territory and graffiti-- whether, authorized, legal or illegal--that has aesthetic or artistic merit. While there is a public interest in deterring and cleaning up the former, at there present there's absolutely no need for the city to spend it's time on the latter.
48	Our block watch is comprised of dogwalkers and people with cellphone cameras so it would be great if the city has a reporting service where you can take the picture of the graffiti and tag location and put in the database to alert the graffiti inspectors to cleanup within 24 hours
49	Despite my dismay at seeing random tags throughout the UDistrict, I am in total support of what is happening at the closed TUBS building on 50th and Roosevelt. It has become a colorful, changing, and (in my opinion) beautiful expression of street art. It seems spontaneous and uncurated, and I think provides a wonderful space for this kind of expression. I am definitely in support of these places where graffiti is unofficially welcomed.
50	Less media attention on the vandalism would give fewer props to the persons doing the deed. Getting their graffiti noticed is the main purpose of taggers.
51	The taggers don't respect murals so I'm concerned painting more of these without enforcement won't help.
52	Why the heck does the city support a graffiti club at Cleveland HS? Graffiti has made the Rainier Valley a much less hospitable and welcoming place than when we moved there in 2005. It is obvious that it contributes to a feeling of crime, unlawfulness and general inability of the city to maintain civility. Crack down and crack down hard! Take care of the little things and the big things will take care of themselves! A policy of zero tolerance, please!

53	I am not a business owner, but I do live in Ballard and work in Seattle. I am stunned by the volume of graffiti. I appreciate that the city is FINALLY taking a look into this growing problem.
54	Most of us can't or won't afford the supplies needed to paint over or remove in a timely fashion. Resources to needed supplies would help a lot with the time factor...as in, discourage further graffiti by getting rid of it immediately.
55	I do see graffiti as a serious problem for some -- it just hasn't been so for me.
56	I don't have a problem with the graffiti in my area--Ballard graff is largely bored white kids thinking they're "hard". In other areas is can pose an actual threat. But I think the large supply of big, empty walls is too much of a temptation for the young street artist and/or "hoodlum". Murals! Community paint-spaces! Public/private art convergence! Sure...murals get tagged, but they tagged less and only by the true "criminals" of the graffiti world--the real vandals and troublemakers.
57	Lets be proactive not reactive. We are spending to many tax dollars cleaning. One officer \$150000 year, what is the cost of all the crews that clean it up? How many different people clean MID, Gaffiti hot line
58	Graffiti is not inherently bad. It should be allowed in more public spaces. Stop prosecuting graffiti artsits now.
59	Let art be art!
60	As a resident of Seattle, I would be outraged if the city spent ANY funding on an anti-graffiti campaign. Instead, I would like to see those funds go towards social services and education, which actually ARE important issues in the community!
61	I do think it is like the broken window scenario - the graffiti makes it look like the neighborhood is in trouble and inviting more drug deals and vandels
62	Graffiti is a huge waste of time and money. There doesn't seem to be any effort to make any arrests. The few arrests you hear about in the news result in dropped charges and no penalty for the person committing the crime.
63	Graffiti that is does not obstruct anyone's ability to peacefully carry on their day, does not contain offensive or racist messages, and does not vandalize anyone's home or private property is not a problem to me.
64	It seems as those we are quite reactive in responding to graffiti as opposed to proactive. Prosecuting the thugs who deface public and private property seems to be a way we could discourage future delinquent behaviour. As a citizen, I would guess that graffiti could be a gateway crime that if prosecuted would discourage future crimes. Additionally, fining the homeowner or business owner for not cleaning up is simply punishing the victims. And if the homeowner or business owner actually have video of the person doing the tagging the police should use this evidence to find them and prosecute. Assuming that most people who leave graffiti are kids - perhaps offering a hotline to anonymously report who has done the graffiti would help discourage future occurrences.
65	Having places these artists could use to do their graffiti might be a nice way to deter from private property vandalism. Some people see this medium as an art form and want to see it incorporated more into public art.
66	Every parking meter in and around our location is covered with graffiti and has been for years. We cover ours up within 24hrs. The city does not seem to care. I get a nasty letter with the threat of a fine. Very frustrating.

67	Graffiti on public property is only cleaned after being reported, however the reporting process is not "mobile device friendly" Since you usually see graffiti when out it would be extremely handy to have mobile (iPhone, Windows Mobile, Android...) apps to easily submit a report at the moment you see the graffiti. Graffiti on private property (in my experience) is rarely cleaned even after being reported.
68	Appears graffiti isn't a priority to the city nor police. City needs to can this place up, graffiti, trash, pot holes, etc. Go to a grid system and map out city and systematically renew (clean it up). Recruit homeless to do the work and provide food and housing credits on visa like card to them. Allow the to resale them and you'll solve both homelessness and graffiti in one effort.
69	When graffiti reported on-line, any response would be appreciated. Complaints and reports seem to vaporize, with no results.
70	One problem in my area (Wallingford) is that my neighbors do not care to remove it from their property. Also, when I contacted the city about the problem on my street, workers only removed tags from a telephone pole. They left it all over the street and sidewalks.
71	There are kids using permanent marker to write and draw obscenities on the playground equipment at Webster Park, near the Nordic Heritage Museum. It would be great to have access to cleaning supplies, or even suggestions of what I can buy and have myself, so I can just clean it myself. I don't want my daughter reading the bad words and looking at obscene drawings while at the park, and I just as soon clean it immediately myself. Just need supplies or ideas for cleaning. Thanks.
72	Home owners often have graffiti on their garbage/recycling bins and don't remove it, and because these items are out only once a week the city can't confirm/detect/fine people who don't remove it. Rules need to change for that. Adolescents and their parents should be subject to stiffer penalties for tagging.
73	Tagging is the biggest problem. True graffiti is minor.
74	Really makes the neighborhood look crime infested. Especially on play ground equipment and the new sound wall on the eastside of I-5
75	it feels very threatening
76	I especially hate it when they tag public or private art murals. OK, i hate it when they tag anything except maybe the odd abandoned boarded up building--that doesn't bother me much.
77	Graffiti is not a major problem in my neighborhood. A recent incident gives impression this, and other related crime, may be on the rise.
78	the gang-related aspect is disconcerting-we need many more programs to engage youth-they can do the clean-up-and maybe public painting projects
79	Make those convicted of causing the problem, clean up the problem and pay for the expenses incurred - both to the property owners and the taxpayers.
80	A significant portion of the graffiti in this area is the result of chronic inebriation of vagrants living near the 50th exit of I-5. Please stop the sale of cheap liquor and malt beverages in Seattle.
81	Once again this city needs more beat cops. Between the graffiti punks and homeless using the city as a trash can and toilet it's becoming unlivable. We need more cops for more arrests and stiffer penalties which call for hefty fines large amounts of community service for first offenses and jail time for subsequent offenses

82	We've got to enforce immediate removal of graffiti. It's like the broken window syndrome, it attracts more graffiti and vandalism.
83	Graffiti is not a big deal, it is part of living in a city. We do not need new restrictive laws or ridiculous increases in arrests.
84	Graffiti is trashy, it makes our home town look trashy and unsafe. To do their expressions on everything from trains to buildings to curbs is disturbing. What does this say about our community as a whole. It's not just kids that are doing it, it's also adults. Give them a brush and start cleaning up, after all we are Ballard!
85	I report our graffiti and clean it up within a timely manner. I have spoken to police and they can identify the tagger by gang affiliation etc but in most cases it is immediately re-tagged after it is removed. Ballard seems to be a common recurring favorite for graffiti.
86	Please think of the long term holistic health of our city. If you try and restrict sales of paint to young artists, I'll be first in line to buy paint for kids. I won't be alone.
87	Graffiti, drug dealing, aggressive panhandling and homeless people on my street corner very much reduces business for me because people feel unsafe here. WE NEED POLICE PRESENCE - POLICEMEN WALKING/BIKING OUR STREETS AND ARRESTING THESE CRIMINALS NOW. POLICE PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE
88	I see graffiti all over Ballard - from the community center, to private buildings and fences, to the downtown area, to the various parks. If the city would address the graffiti situation, it seems other crimes that accompany it would be less likely to occur.
89	While some graffiti is "free speech" by disturbed individuals, it may also be gang/drug related and that perception impacts attendance to our services. It's very hard to get people to come at night. There are concerns about retribution if arrests made. Are there solutions other than punitive? Education of the young as to how serious a problem it is? Current laws make the owner responsible; victimized on both ends.
90	Graffiti is a very minor problem in Seattle, particularly in the context of the major economic and infrastructure challenges before us. The notion that it's part of a crime problem, that we have a right not to see something unsightly, or that it somehow lowers our quality of life is absurd. We live in a city. It can be ugly, but getting bent out of shape over graffiti is a waste of time--because we live in a city, and we'll never eradicate it. Graffiti is already illegal--we don't need laws that ban paint--and we can leave it at that.
91	please include what i said above. for every dozen that say graffiti is a problem, i promise that a thousand will feel the same way as me (but not complete this survey). thanks.
92	thanks for caring!
93	"Tagging" is a nuisance but some graffiti art is beautiful. Please consider providing more public space for these artists.
94	The only graffiti that bothers me is also hate speech. More public art spaces would be awesome.
95	If you folks are thinking about restricting access to spray paint by arbitrarily restricting people under a certain age, then you should be forewarned that you'd really be stepping in a minefield, and we are NOT going to tolerating the scapegoating of Seattle's youth. It's honestly kind of offensive to me that you'd even suggest such a thing!
96	distinguish between Graffiti Art and taggers.

97	Graffiti is taboo so first everyone needs to get the XXX over it and see it as art. Now obviously it doesn't make graffiti better to know it is art if it is ugly, but giving more public areas for this art would be useful. Listen, it is like any movement and look at history. With skateboarding it XXXed peoples XXXX up so instead of arresting you build skateparks. There are a lot of people that like graffiti and do it so why make it harder to do? seriously, council members and politicians are stupid people, and I could do each and every one of your jobs better than you, know that.
98	Graffiti isn't a crime. Put some public art up already.
99	Focus on more important things than graffiti. More homeless shelters and resources, for example.
100	Your making a big deal out of nothing
101	Designated 'graffiti walls' or designated public graffiti-art spaces (like a skate park, but a 'graffiti park') to provide an outlet for graffiti artists ('taggers' who don't make graffiti 'art' or 'murals' don't have any sympathy from me, though).
102	With predictable spots available for people to tag, there's no reason to change any laws.
103	I don't have hard data to reference but I'm guessing stiffer penalties don't do an awful lot to discourage graffiti. I can also think of better uses for our police apparatus and our jail beds. If We're going to send people to jail for painting pictures on my store front can we put clear channel in jail for putting pictures all over my skyline? Who decided it was OK to put a bunch of faces on Mount Rushmore? Certainly not the Lakotah tribe. What's good for the goose and all that.
104	The Tubbs legal street art location in the University District is a source of civic pride and a positive outlet for street art. More legal, sanctioned street art locations, including on public property, would be helpful.
105	Hire more police. More police. More of them. Seattle has too few police officers. Hire more of them.
106	I am not sure how much I agree with the notion that we should punish property owners for failing to clean graffiti quickly. I think we need more fines of vandals, and then need to put the proceeds into a community fund to help address the costs of cleanup. \$5,000 is far too little.
107	I don't think vandals are minors. Also, my building isn't being hit with spray paint but rather a paint like pen which is easily concealed but just as difficult to remove and cover up.
108	Tigher restrictions of purchase of spray paint will help, god knows If I have to jump thru hoops for a sudafed, I am willing to do the same for paint to spray a lawn chair
109	I don't create graffiti, but I enjoy looking at street art as I walk around my neighborhood. Yeah, there are a lot of lame tags, but I'm happy to live with them if it also means I get to live with the great art. In general, also, I think graffiti artists tend not to tag on preexisting art...
110	Is this going to end up fueling a stupid reactionary law?
111	Stop fighting street culture. Fund the Arts. Stop Criminalizing Poverty!
112	Trespassing within buildings to leave tagging is bad. Fines for graffiti artists should support community art to cover it up. Tagging is not the worst crime, but lack of surveillance and law enforcement is bad.
113	I live and work in and near the University District where there is a lot of graffiti. I don't care about it at all and I often think it looks quite nice. I really think tax dollars should be spent on something much more important. Unless it's hate speech or something seriously dangerous (covering a road sign) or offensive, it just shouldn't be a priority. The city is going to cut the budgets of many more

	important things this year, so now's the time to cut this budget too. Maybe save some money for human services?
114	Thanks for getting the input.
115	In an artistic city, graffiti should be embraced as an art form. More legalized graffiti walls lets underprivileged artists shine
116	Why don't you create more art classes and projects for local youths. Graffiti is a art, like it or not. Give them a outlet, teach them art is encouraged as opposed to telling them it's a jail-able offense.
117	I think there are bigger issues to worry about than graffiti.
118	We don't just need MORE public art and murals, we need BETTER public art and murals. We need art that speaks to these young artists; that they can appreciate and possibly participate in themselves. Real graffiti is a sign of vibrant and active street life and should be considered as not a nuisance but rather a valid form of personal expression.
119	really want to stress more murals and artwork about. the existing works REALLY do a lot for the city and it would be fantastic to see more and more.
120	Public art is a bonus to any community. Free places for community members to express themselves as part of that community, on hindered by parents, teachers, peers, government officials, art critics, etc encourages creativity, self expression, and pride in the artistic process. A vibrant public/street art movement is a sign of a creative collective conciousness that values expression and community. It is not a nuisance. Laws to punish graffitti artists will not dissuade them from their practices, they'll just move to the next wall until the heat cools off, and keep on painting. It is a waste of tax dollars and beuracratic inertia to spend extra effort trying to eradicate something they can't be stopped (nor in my opinion should be). Let these folks paint the backstops in parks, the retaining walls along the highways, the miles and miles of ugly grey concrete that dominate our cityscape and serve to reinforce an aura of industrial weight and oppresive infrastucture. COLORS in this city especially, should be welcome.
121	I don't understand why all the effort and money is put in to covering it with mismatched municiple paint. I also don't understand why graffiti is perceived as dangerous. More murals would be nice, of course, but I happen to like street art and think the effort to cover it up is silly, wasteful, and futile.
122	I respect graffiti art and artists, but disagree with vandalism.
123	I don't have a problem with a majority of graffiti. I think a lot of graffiti is done in a thoughtful and compelling way and can make an ugly/blank wall feel more alive and vibrant. I have an issue with graffiti as a method for intimating a business or neighborhood or individual. Graffiti that has a hate-crime/type message or repeated graffiti against specific businesses should be addressed as a priority. To clean up graffiti just for the sake of it, if there have been no complaints is a waste of resources.
124	This short film sums things up nicely: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9jyv6WIXUY
125	Don't fine these kids - that doesn't work! Make them spends hours and hours cleaning up after someone else!
126	There are more important things to spend our money on. How about hiring more teachers? How about on the roads? How about more programs for homeless individuals?
127	vandals should not necessarily go to jail, but should be held accountable, and should personally have to clean up their tags

128	Seriously, this is what you're wasting public tax dollars on?
129	I think it's important to distinguish between graffiti murals and tags. Some "uncommissioned" graffiti is quite beautiful and can transform a bland concrete space into a colorful mural and add character to the neighborhood. But tags are a menace. They show up on trash cans, building corners and other small surfaces and are quickly replaced if removed.
130	The problem isn't that graffiti creates the perception of crime, it's that it creates a perception that the neighborhood doesn't care -- which isn't true. Kill the little bastards. Track them on Flickr.
131	beacon hill, much is gang related, or wanna-be gang related. fast removal is mandatory. in a working class neighborhood, this is not about art or freedom of expression or an "urban-feel", it's about territory. Broken window theory totally applies.
132	I've never looked at graffiti as a problem. I understand that it is to property and business owners, but I actually like it. Gang tagging is a separate issue.
133	I reject the idea of forbidding kids from buying what is frequently a legitimate tool for creating art. Nanny state much?
134	Abandoned buildings are much more of an eyesore and make people feel much more unsafe. Unoccupied buildings should be beautified or torn down. The graffiti on them is less important than terrible odors and broken windows.
135	the id is hit all the time by the same crews, when we catch people, they are out in a day or same day. start all over again. some worked at paint company so get free paint, ladders, trucks. most are not kids here but adults.
136	If the city invests in keeping vandals occupied and productive perhaps they will be disinclined to make graffiti. Graffiti has been documented in ancient Rome; its part of complex societies, its not a big deal.
137	I do not have property affected personally by graffiti, but I see it in the neighborhood and in Lincoln Park and other parks. It makes the neighborhood feel unsafe and allows the gangs to claim turf.
138	Several "tags" in my neighborhood and I feel bad for the property owners who do not know how to remove it or don't have the means to. I live in a very diverse neighborhood where not everyone has the mean to afford removal. I don't want to "punish" my neighbors for not removing the graffiti, however, I would still like to see it removed. Technical and perhaps small grant funds to help with removal would be great for neighborhoods!
139	I don't really know which of the graffiti improvements would be the most helpful; perhaps some research into what other cities have done that has proven to have the greatest effect first would be more useful and cost effective?
140	Do like you did with skateboarding: Give graffiti artists ample opportunity to express themselves in public places.
141	I have no problems in abatement programs targeting mere tagging, however more spaces and opportunities should be provided for graffiti art and mural work. A city covered in giant gray squares on giant gray walls is far uglier than one with rich and colorful murals in dedicated spaces.
142	Last time I reported a tagging attack the cop told me the city police no longer keep track of the worst taggers -- apparently there used to be who guy who did but he retired. That's not good enough!

143	after the graffiti is removed the scars look worse than the graffiti. More info on how to remove tags from various materials... written in different languages would be helpful.
144	This is a deeply flawed survey. Surveys are meant to find answers to legitimate questions, not steer respondents to prescribed answers.
145	Arrests, laws, and general enforcement is the wrong approach. Limiting access to spray paint does absolutely nothing except XXX off people who want spray paint, and that includes more than just vandals. Personally, I appreciate well done "graffiti", and I believe it to be a form of art. Seattle's biggest problem is its lack of thoughtful street art, and proliferation of tasteless, destructive tagging. I think you should declare certain walls to be graffiti zones and people could practice in a place that doesn't deface a business or home, promoting well done public art.
146	Graffiti is not a primary issue for the city to spend time on. Compared to transportation issues, figuring out how to manage city services effectively with less revenue, working toward carbon neutral goals - these are heavy lifting problems. Not graffiti.
147	The business I work for, the Low Income Housing Institute based in Belltown, used to have our walls tagged regularly. Our management made the decision to invite graffiti artists to come to our business and create murals on the exterior walls. The project was a phenomenal success, and the property has NOT BEEN TAGGED ONCE since we did this. You are most welcome to see what we have done, LIHI is at 2407 1st Ave., 98121.
148	I miss the "graffiti" under the west seattle bridge. i would rather look at cool pictures than a blank, grey, wall.
149	Seattle should have more designated areas for (and encourage) legal, artistic graffiti and focus prosecution on those who are merely tagging.
150	A lot of really ugly building are being put up (legally!) around here. This is to me a much bigger problem than graffiti, which is to me a non-issue. I wish someone would put up some art on them to lessen the ugliness.
151	The city is in a budget crunch. Let's not waste public resources (that could be spent on development) on the clean-up of private property.
152	Is it about graffiti, or is it about tagging specifically? Seems like there are some very different kinds of graffiti out there, and not all deserve the same response.
153	I strongly believe that city resources (especially law enforcement) can be better spent on other issues, and should not be wasted on graffiti cleanup and expensive anti-graffiti prosecution.
154	Graffiti is not just a 'spraypaint' problem. Permanent markers & stickers are as prominently used as spraypaint & stencils. There really is no 'defeating' graffiti, only steadfastly cleaning it up afterward (and perhaps the use of graffiti-resistant materials).
155	As long as it's not hate speech, I don't mind graffiti.
156	you're wasting your, and our, time. graffiti should be embraced.our city is better with graffiti than without. this is a CITY, boring and pristine is not why we live here.
157	There is a lack of dedicated public space for contemporary urban art whether it's graffiti, posters, or other emerging mediums. If the city isn't offering practical and legitimate means of expression, young people are going to continue to annex private and public property for art forms that are important to them.
158	Graffiti is beautiful. I love it.

159	Graffiti is not that big of an issue for me, my neighbors or my business. Id rather see the removal money and time spent on beautification and murals and public art than the constant never ending battle of removal. Thank you.
160	Penalties for graffiti are already ridiculous. More enforcement, maybe, but no one should ever be jailed for graffiti.
161	I'm not sure that it's the problem you might think.
162	Please don't get all police state on the taggers. Yes graffiti can be a problem, but some of it is quite artistic, and a city with no graffiti just wouldn't be a city. Give property owners tools to deal with the problem. Put up lots of public art. Maybe some of the taggers could go legit. Quit trying to manufacture issues for your upcoming mayoral run, Mr. Burgess.
163	Graffiti clean-up is so costly and it doesn't reduce the occurrence of it. All it does is keep that graffiti clean-up company in business. Improve funding for youth programs, skate parks, arts education, etc. and keep young people from tagging in the first place. Murals do wonders to prevent tagging.
164	I now live in a quiet, mostly graffiti-free neighborhood, but the Broadway area is a mess. I've participated in numerous paint-outs, but i really think more pressure needs to be put on property owners to keep their properties tidy.
165	What has worked in other communities? I'd be for restricting access to graffiti supplies if it was shown effective. I've heard that rapid response and removal is the most effective deterrent. I also know we have someone that can respond/remove graffiti on public property. What about resources for private property?
166	If you spent as much time crafting policies to create jobs as you do on putting bandaids on the symptoms of this recession you might actually improve the quality of life in Seattle.
167	I am only speaking for myself and not my organization. My comments are not a criticism of my employer. My criticisms are of the vandals and of our society that tolerates this behavior. I see graffiti regularly at my work place. Recently there was pornographic graffiti in one of our elevators.
168	I don't know a lot (more like anything) about this subject, but I do see it everyday on my route to work. I always wonder what is being done to prevent/deter such crimes. I can't imagine how frustrating it is for a private or public property owner. I know we spend tons of money on it for cleanup which is a waste when we need that money to be used on more important issues.
169	I get angry when people tag plants, and I absolutely hate the acid-drawn-on-windows stuff, but on the whole I think that a lot of graffiti is beautiful and interesting. It's urban folk art. My perception of safety is not affected by the existence of graffiti; it's affected by street lighting, and visibility and availability of police officers.
170	Graffiti isn't the problem. Not having enough public outlets for visual artistic expression is the problem. More murals and better public art will solve all problems.
171	Private property owners are generally fairly good about cleaning up graffiti (with some delays, and sometimes prompted with phone calls), but after 11 years in Pike/Pine I've NEVER seen graffiti being removed from public property (unless part of a community paint-out effort). From our experience, the quicker we remove graffiti, the less often it returns - It would be nice if the city helped with this effort! Also, I don't generally support restricting the sale of spray paints and the like, but glass etching materials should be considered for restricted access as they contribute to the highest cost to repair damages.
172	Success has been achieved in other places where a multi-part approach is taken. But the most

	important part of the approach has to be neighborhood "ownership" of places (done through observation and clean up)and the then the community justice solution of swift and certain punishment for vandals of having to clean up their own tags (before the paint is dry would be great), or having to spend other time where they committed their crime doing general clean-up or community based improvement (park maintenance, bus stop cleaning, cleaning alleyways of urine etc.). Vandalism would be nearly as much fun if you had to clean up the neighborhood.
173	So many of the walls that get tagged could have plants/vines put in front of them, or a mesh metal grate placed over them (I'm thinking about the gate/plantings that were put along the high walled walking path under the West Seattle Bridge next to the parking spaces). The mesh style gates keep the plants off of the wall, which prevents damage to the wall, and the plantings prevent graffiti.
174	While Graffiti is a crime and annoying, especially for private business owners and home owners; I feel the city has much great issues to worry about such as the viaduct and other security issues including gang related violence. To focus on such petty occurrences seems like a waste of resources. Besides, some graffiti is really cool and I wish we could learn to educate people and give them more access to the arts since that is ultimately where this stems from.
175	Graffiti will always remain. We should culturally encourage good graffiti artists, and culturally/socially discourage 'tagging'
176	I am all for street and urban art, but absolutely LOATHE the tagging that happens so often in Seattle. I know it's hard to crack down on since it happens after dark and in the middle of the night, but it is such a blight on properties both business and private that I think whatever strict and harsh penalties can be put into place should be.
177	Graffiti is a nuisance and obscene when gang or drug oriented. However it has become more accepted in our culture when it is viewed as street art. City's like Berlin for instance are very lax on their graffiti enforcement in certain areas and it gives the city character and personality a city like Seattle seems to lack.
178	Cities like Amsterdam and Barcelona do not cover up the street art, and what appears is amazing free style art murals all over the city, Seattle should try to replicate those city streets
179	I think it's important to have visible community support -- then it's grassroots, and if people are tagging neighborhoods, they should see it's affecting the people who live/work there, not just anonymous city agents. It's personal then.
180	It's a losing battle to fight graffiti as only a nuisance; only an illegal activity. Graffiti can be positive. It's a way for individuals to add to our urban landscape, to express themselves. Do you really want the only art you see in a given day to be that of advertisements? Walking around the city? I find the billboards along 1st avenue much more offensive than the tagging. Let's provide opportunities for graffiti in the public realm. For example, the vacant building on the corner of 11th and Pine across from Cal-Anderson park. It's the most interesting place in all of Capitol Hill right now. It's the revolving billboard of flyers, posters, large scale artwork. Some are advertising for events, some are just art. I pass the enormous plywood wall around the Lightrail John Street station everyday. What an opportunity! A temporary wall? Why not totally open that up to artists? Tagging, posters, painting, etc. I choose to live in a city- Seattle-because of incredible creative energy. Let's celebrate it.
181	I'm really glad to see that Seattle's graffiti issue is finally getting some attention. Keep up the great work, Tim!
182	i'm not sure you can stop the tagging but i truly believe we need to have more mural related graffiti art in areas that tagging and spraying is at it's most prolific. it would cost a heck of a lot less to pay some of the more talented artist to take up residence (so to speak) in some spots. once the real art goes up you will se the crap and cost come down.

183	There is nothing the city can do. As long as there are ugly pieces of cement there will always be graffiti. The only option is getting these people into art class.
184	Places like New York City have shown that more public art and murals not only brighten up drab, rundown neighborhoods (for instance, Lake City, Aurora and Columbia City), but also help curb graffiti - even having designated walls where people are allowed to create graffiti is a good idea! More public art outlets, fewer laws and regulations! The more laws and regulations you have, the more rule-breakers you'll have.
185	Cleanup is a waste of time unless it is done immediately. If tags are left up for even a few days, it is easy for them to return. Vandals will avoid walls that are too quickly painted. That said, blotches of primer-gray are also pretty ugly, and frankly unwelcome if covering slightly less ugly "graffiti art". judiciousness on the part of the crews, along with better smoother coverage of walls, is important. Please don't put blotches of gray on private property; that is the owner's responsibility.
186	I feel like this problem would be more self regulating if there was a space for artists to create murals and good art- and not have these painted over- rather than people creating stupid, racist, ugly, degrading, or otherwise ridiculous tags. Those who use spraypaint as an artist medium- and those who enjoy the aesthetic value that adds to public places, are numerous, and would become more involved and prevent folks from grafiting the aforementioned tags.
187	Graffiti is not a problem. It can actually be an effective art form and a way to make a neighborhood more beautiful and interesting. We need to start encouraging public art. Seattle is a city that is supposed to foster this sort of creativity and it is sad to see surveys like this that are built on the assumption that graffiti is unwanted and entirely destructive, when we should be asking questions about how art can be made more accessible.
188	Graffiti is art! I love it! I have never myself done graffiti, but I know the culture does not necessarily have anything to do with crime, gangs, or the like (therefore I don't associate the two). It seems like there is a larger issue of respect of property and maybe there could be better communication of where it is and is not okay to do graffiti (for example, I know some businesses openly welcome graffiti artists to their walls, whereas graffitng historical buildings is just plain rude.)
189	We've got a lot more pressing problems than graffiti.
190	Cities have graffiti. Please spend money on beat cops instead.
191	I think a large part of graffiti is the challenge to society, "rebellion", and expression of point of view. Many large graffiti murals are legitimate public art, and many graffiti artist are legitimate artists. If you allow for the large murals with artistic merit to remain in place, it would take the fun of rebellion out of it & gain more public art.
192	More laws (laws that we already have, as far as I know) won't work. Give people a place to paint and that is where they will do it. I shot a photo of a wall in San Francisco where people can do their art -- we should have more stuff like this in Seattle: http://www.flickr.com/photos/michaelholden/4516475222/
193	Graffiti has gotten way worse in my neighborhood in the last 6 monhts. I have lived here 3 years and it's worse now than ever.
194	I think that there is a huge difference between graffiti and tagging. I think that tagging is a larger problem because it is less artistic than some graffiti works. I think graffiti is a form of art should be appreciated but it does need to be done in a appropriate place. I think tagging ultimately is the bigger problem and needs to be addressed. I think we need to figure out why people tag and fix that problem, do we want to fix the problem or cover up the symptoms?

195	Placing more value on public art, community murals, beautification of ugly, grey on-ramp walls, more support for community clean-ups of private property, would all be ways to improve our neighborhood. If there are already graffiti laws, I don't see how stiffening penalties improves anything.
196	While tags are annoying and sometimes gang related, good graffiti--that is to say, well executed artwork on unused public spaces--is awesome and makes the city more fun to live in. I think prosecuting graffiti artists is a waste of taxpayer funds. It's annoying, yes, but not more important than violent crime. I'm way more concerned about getting mugged or assaulted than I am about graffiti. Art should be encouraged. Rather than prosecute the annoying taggers, lets send them to art classes so they can just do a better job.
197	I don't know what the actual story is on fining property owners for having graffiti on their property, but if it is true, then it totally sucks. This is a blame-the-victim approach that solves nothing, but totally XXXes off the public. How about if we start fining people who get robbed because they didn't prevent getting robbed?
198	I don't think stiffer penalties for graffiti is the answer--i suspect that the main perpetrators of these acts are youths with little concept of the law. Stronger punishment if caught is just going to potentially derail the future opportunities for these kids which may lead to more severe antisocial behavior later. Community service cleaning up the graffiti or providing outlets like murals projects or even public graffiti walls may provide an outlet for these young people and prevent them from destroying private property.
199	no other information
200	A ban on spraypaint would be ridiculously destructive to the art community which most times does not use spraypaint on private property. Public art contracts are typically difficult to access in Seattle. Many cities have public art competitions that anyone can enter. I think that conducting competitions for murals and industrial design of benches, wastebaskets, bike stations, etc... would be enormously beneficial to Seattle. Here is an example of what I'm talking about: http://www.athensbenchmark.com/en
201	i support graffiti as an art form and would like to see more city sanctioned murals. i do not support tagging.
202	Graffiti in no way decreases my perception of personal safety or crime in a neighborhood. I think graffiti removal is often a waste of money. We have other priorities. I'd prefer that we spend tax dollars on creating art. We should fund programs for urban art and community organization.
203	We have the "Tubs" property at NE 50th ST and Roosevelt Way NE, whose developer has decided not to proceed on selling or leasing. After a few months of featuring a mural upon it, it has been tagged several times. A restaurateur across the street - Mamma Melina's - cited the tagged nature of the property as one reason they are moving.
204	Mandatory clean up and community service/work (cleaning up graffiti?) for people who are arrested and prosecuted?
205	I have no problem with street art graffiti but taggers are a nuisance to homes businesses and the city. I think that graffiti is a low priority for the police and they should only go after taggers and gang graffiti not street artists. The city should use the parking enforcement offices to handle the small tagging and gang graffiti problem, and to monitor gang tags throughout the city, leaving the patrol officers to handle more serious crime. Graffiti should be one of the lowest priorities for neighborhoods with low gang activity, but closely monitored in high crime areas.
206	I would support a crack down on arrests ONLY if punishment meant community service help with city murals for all offenders.

207	I think we need to make a distinction between graffiti and tagging. tagging is an issue and I'm sick of seeing it. Graffiti is a valid part of the urban landscape, and I'm saddened to see the two lumped together. I love the Tubs building, hate the tags on garbage bins and buildings.
208	Graffiti is more than an eyesore. It is another indication of the wanton disregard that the Seattle City government has for violations of property rights and civil order. Rights, for which, government was organized to protect. For which citizens and businesses pay substantial fees and taxes. I'd sooner have someone kick me in the groin then actually go downtown or the U district for anything besides work. So by all means continue to do nothing, you do it so well. I will spend my disposable income elsewhere.
209	My church has had several graffiti incidents. They deface our property and cause us needless effort to remove. I consider graffiti to be a violation of private property, NOT ART. We should not make excuses for graffiti vandals, they should be prosecuted.
210	Do not punish the victims - punish the vandels!
211	Business owners who have spaces that are tagged often should consider putting in a mural if possible--it'll deter taggers.
212	Have a SPD Detective for people to contact. To report a Graffiti Vandal. Thanks,Best Regards
213	Change the perception of public art. Make more "legal" approved places for graffiti art, engage businesses in choosing quality graf artists to do good public art. Tagging is crap, no one wants initials on their mailboxes but show how good graf can be. Educate.
214	Other than community involvement, laws that restrict access to spray paint and other materials. It appears that "tags" are left by all ages so the restrictions would have to incorporate restrictions that all individuals (tagger in shoreline recently caught was 33 years old). It shows that people of all ages have no consideration for other peoples property and would, if compelled, buy the paint for younger people. The problem is getting worse the more it is unchecked.
215	How about a year in jail every time you get caught tagging. I'm pretty sure that'd take a lot of the fun out of it.
216	How about asking people who were caught doing graffiti why they do it and what might discourage them from doing it? More data might be helpful here to understand what might be most effective to reduce graffiti.
217	This is a very low priority item. Resources should be applied to social programs that help to decrease gang activity and give young people better outlets for activity.
218	Getting graffiti cleaned up on construction property (signs, walls etc.) is key. How do we report that?
219	Berlin's graffiti is beautiful thing to see by train.
220	Graffiti isn't really much of an issue in the vast majority of the city.
221	Large, blank, unadorned surfaces are just as ugly as graffiti sometimes. The recently re-painted fences around 3rd & Cherry are not much of an improvement. I sort of wish that someone (a talented person!) with a spray can would come along and make it more interesting.
222	There are some type of graffiti that I actually like to see in the neighborhood. Stencils / stickers that have some artistic value etc. The real problem is tagging - not the use of public (or private) walls as an artistic canvas.

223	it isn't about just painting over all the graffiti, it's about making street art a part of the landscape. i, personally, don't perceive graffiti to be an indicator of a high crime area, but only when it is well done. Tubs in the U-District is a great example of where you can get street artists together to make great art rather than the vandalism of more juvenile integrity.
224	My minor daughter who lives in the city has purchased spray paint for a perfectly innocent purpose. I would be very upset if this was banned.
225	The creativity and art are nice. Quit wasting taxpayer dollars to rearrange deck chairs on the Titanic, and work to create jobs that pay a living wage.
226	The residents of my building (Monique Lofts, 11th & Pike) commissioned a large-scale graffiti/mural on the side of our building, & since then that wall has been left alone! We got a small grant from the city to help pay for it. (Thank you!!) There are still random tags around the neighborhood, sometimes in our entryway, but mural made a MAJOR difference, & looks really cool. I definitely recommend this solution for other buildings... graffiti went from being a major problem to just a small problem. (Technical assistance on how to remove grease pencil tags + spraypaint on glass window/door would be greatly appreciated for the tags that do happen in our entryway though.) Thanks for conducting this survey!
227	There is a lot of 'graffiti' in the capitol hill neighborhood. However I view a lot of it as random street art a la banksy. If all of it was to be instantly removed from the neighborhood I would feel as though part of the culture of why I love living here would also be removed. Tagging and other graffiti is not visually appealing and does feel as though it negatively impact the surrounds. I don't know how you could differentiate between the two. Politely ignore the whimsy? I don't know.
228	In many places, graffiti art adds interest and value to previously blank spaces. Some graffiti makes the city seem more vibrant.
229	The removal of street art should be a choice, not a demand. Seattle's graffiti laws are clearly classist and ignorant. "More arrests and prosecutions of graffiti vandals" will not stop graffiti. "Stiffer penalties for graffiti vandals" will not stop graffiti. You will never be able to stop graffiti. Instead, set up more Free Walls, encourage more art programs, and don't treat young street artists like wild vandals. Don't try to stop it, encourage safe and available spaces for it.
230	I enjoy some of the more artistic graffiti such as the stickers and stencils but would like to see a crackdown on tagging and etching.
231	First I think the focus on graffiti needs to be on gang related graffiti. I find enjoyment in seeing "street art" even if it was not necessarily done in the most proper fashion but it is gang related graffiti that makes me feel unsafe and uneasy. My neighborhood has been hit my hispanic gangs and all it tells me is during the years I've lived here gangs are moving in and making the neighborhood dangerous. Second I think that there needs to be more assistance from the city for home owners. From what I've experienced, a vandal placed graffiti on our property and instead of offering support and assistance, the city code enforcers told us to clean it up immediately or we'll face fines.
232	It seems as though this survey has a negative connotation towards graffiti. I feel that graffiti is positive. Some people have no other method of releasing emotion or letting out problems. They do so by showcasing their thoughts. However, I feel as though the government doesn't realize that these young adult graffiti are caused by low-income, low poverty students who have family issues. These people don't always have access to youth groups, counseling. It feels as though some of the graffiti is a call for help. Some inspirational (if you get it) and meaningful. Instead of approaching these graffiti artists with charges and arrests, maybe with counseling or help.
233	I reported graffiti that was on a city traffic sign in my parking strip. I was very pleased with the prompt response.

234	I want stiffer fines and penalties for property owners that do not promptly remove graffiti.
235	Graffiti on neighbors' properties in the allies appears to be the biggest problem. The owners don't see it, but I do every time I look out my back bedroom window. The neighbor's rockery getting tagged discourages me from improving my own property with a rockery. Plantings have proven to be effective at keeping at least my alley fence from getting tagged.
236	Graffiti - tagging, is a way for individuals to "claim/mark a territory." It creates an unsafe environment for all. It is concerning that the level of tagging continues to grow, and it seems that there are no penalties for defacing public and/or private property.
237	In my view, bad or poorly designed public art murals by children and youth are visual blight and are just as bad as graffiti. More creative design solutions are needed.
238	I would like to have access to information about graffiti, that is how to identify if it is gang-related, for example.
239	Legal ownership of property or structures is not more important than grassroots art. If it's not a gang tag, leave it. Feel lucky.
240	We need the judges to take this seriously -- sentences should include community service. Business owners need to be educated and pressured to act promptly when their property is "tagged". Our public officials need to stop referring to this vandalism as "art" and worry less about being hip and more about caring for our city.
241	I also work in the CD, but if there is a problem that discourages business, it would be litter at the bus stops, not the prevalent graffiti. Bus stops litter cans need to be bigger, or collected more often. Thanks!
242	Make the penalty for defacing property the community service of cleanup of other graffiti plus a fine
243	Commission graffiti artists. It's a down economy. Lots of businesses are closed and there are tons of blank canvases all over the city waiting for some love. Encourage art. The only cost involved is removal.
244	People often have a tolerance policy, even referring to the vandals as 'artists', without understanding the long term impact on the neighborhood. Education is important. Also, penalties for offenders must be SWIFT & SURE!
245	Gov't is a bully pulpit: Graffiti is a nuisance, ugly and is not artistic expression on another's person's property. Put out that message through gov't, gov't communicated to organizations, Communicate that again and again, get that message out.
246	Graffiti and street style art creation programs for youth and adults, and dedicated locations for this art to be placed. As some Seattle residents oppose and some approve street art, and all are tax payers, compromise ought to be reached. I enjoy seeing art on otherwise grey and unpleasantly bland looking city surfaces, but respect the different opinions that others have. Let's find a solution.
247	Horrible waste of resources to correct. Stiffer penalties are needed for offenders.
248	90% of what I see is harmless, if not part of the texture of my neighborhood. The only time I consider this vandalism is when it damages property on large scale (the kid with the sprayer, scribbling initials on whole buildings) and indiscriminate damage to historic property/buss timetables.

249	I actually enjoy artistically done graffiti and stickering. I think that there should be public areas dedicated for graffiti artwork.
250	Grffiti affects my neighborhood--Belltown. Private property owners do a good job of controlling tagging, but the parking pay stations are a source of constant blight. I have talked to SDOT and know they have limited staff but this should be as much of a funding priority for the city as other graffiti, or more because pay stations are everywhere!
251	It is frustrating that people are allowed to mark Tubs just because of some loophole. It is an eyesore and I'm tired to watching people loitering around there. I avoid walking by there and I hate that I see it from my living room.
252	Grffiti is a great way to showcase artwork (unless of course gang related) but otherways, it helps create a more...urban setting to the city.
253	Between homelessness, trash and graffiti, Seattle is becoming a second rate city...not a world class city.
254	It's important to me that there is a distinction made between street art and graffiti tags. Street art can really enrich and enliven a community, while graffiti tags do not.
255	Property damage bad, street art good.
256	I used to know who to call, but lost the information. In the past, when the grafitti was on public property it seemed to be cleaned quickly. Sometimes questions arise as to who is responsible (i.e. on utility boxes)
257	One of the most important things you haven't addressed in any of the questions is "you", the person judging graffiti, needs to change their view on graffiti being "a problem". The actual problem is a capitalist culture that does not put enough resources into educating all of our youth and the disadvantaged family they may come from; and leaves a large portion of it's families poor and undereducated, which results in neglected youth. The disadvantaged youth does not have enough venues to express themselves and have a creative voice. This is the most one sited survey I have seen. Why is it that the dominant voice of commerce and the private business owner decides on what to be done about graffiti? Where is the opportunity for the voice of the disadvantaged youth and the graffiti artist in this survey? Do they not have a voice because they don't own property? They are just as much a part of the city fabric as the business owner. And, the present laws that rules business owners be fined for not removing graffiti on their property is ridiculous! The property owners did not make the graffiti. If the government is going to make business owners remove graffiti, that business owner should be refunded the cost of removing the graffiti from the local government's budget. More important than removing graffiti, is for property owners and government officials to "remove" their distorted view of graffiti and all the issues that surround it.
258	The graffiti hotline has a very long list of instructions before you leave a report. I recognize the need to inform callers of the procedures but a "press 1 to leave report" style bypass would result in less wasted time for repeat callers.
259	The City of Seattle needs to provide for the basic services to keep our city clean and safe. This work should not fall to the MID (Metropolitan Improvement District)because of budget cuts or by default. The MID does a great job of helping to take off graffiti and needs to have the grant funding continue in order to do the work they can do. The City of Seattle does a horrible job of dealing with graffiti on parking meters. This needs attention now!
260	Not all graffiti is bad. Some is quite nice and adds to the personality of a neighborhood. Obviously stuff like "Bob wuz here" sucks, but interesting pictures and screens actually add to teh charm of a neighborhood.

261	Graffiti is only a nuisance until it reaches "critical mass" as it did in LA and elsewhere, where essentially all property has been tagged or otherwise painted up. Such an environment gives an impression that nobody in this community cares about it, nor about its future. It increases the comfort level for gangs and others who prey on the innocent. Seattle does a reasonably effective job of keeping graffiti under control. No need to consider naive proposals like keeping spray paint away from juveniles (who thinks that most graffiti painters are juveniles???).
262	Discouraging tagging/gang symbology would be good from a safety perspective, but don't chase away the street artists! Street art is one of the cool things about Capitol Hill. It's part of city life and trying to sterilize places like the Pike/Pine corridor would make me sad (plus it seems like the city has far more important things to worry about in tough financial times).
263	Increases perception that area is over run with the lawless. Increase restrictions on sales of spray paints, Hot line for citizens to report businesses that sell and crimes when they occur of paint vandalism
264	A "free tag zone" in each neighborhood would be OK. Take an ugly retaining wall and invite people to tag the heck out of it.
265	I want more information about graffiti vs. gang tags. We have an increase of tagging in our area and want to know what to report and what not to.
266	Please remember that we live in a city - a real, alive, vibrant, multicultural *city*. While I don't mean to disparage property owners who are harmed by persistent, ugly, or gang-related 'tagging', graffiti can be much more than vandalism. We all collectively own sidewalks, lampposts, parks, and other spaces, and street art can and has been an expression of our shared and interconnected lives, both celebration and critique. Perhaps the first question we need to ask is: is graffiti always a bad thing? Can we separate good from bad? If so, can we encourage one and not the other? Many times I've found myself enthralled by something a neighbor has taken considerable time and effort to place in a public place for anonymous enjoyment, be it wheatpasted flyers, spraypainted masterpieces or simple musings. Don't equate sterility with safety or decoration with danger in my city - it's patronizing and, I'm afraid, is used to distract from more serious underlying issues.
267	We need more street art!
268	"Graffiti" is not necessarily bad, and sometimes is a vast improvement. Tagging bugs me, but often the things people do look far more like art to me than vandalism. I see things all the time that are much better to look at than business signs.

Appendix E

Comprehensive Graffiti Program Overview Seven Year Retrospective: Major Events Affecting Policy and Program

2004 Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) service cut - Elimination of three SDOT roadway structures structural painters.

2005 Sharp increase in hotline calls and customer correspondence. Analysis reveals approximately half of hotline calls are related to SDOT-maintained properties.

Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) resource adds - Following Mayor's Office discussions, SPU directed to develop Budget Issue Paper (BIP) for incorporating roadway structures work. As identified in the BIP, SPU provided two full-time equivalent (FTE) positions and requested budget to incorporate roadway structures work.

2006 SPU benchmark study - Similarities between the City of Seattle and other jurisdictions include public property abatement process and City ordinance 10 day abatement requirement. Jurisdictions vary on how comprehensive their anti-graffiti programs are, especially in the areas of outreach/education, apprehension/prosecution, and private property abatement. The study found that the City of Seattle's program was less comprehensive than most of the other jurisdictions in the study; programs in other jurisdictions offered more outreach/education/volunteer opportunities and apprehension/prosecution.

City-wide service level proposal - Mayor proposes 48 hour abatement on public property. However, City cuts all General Fund adds during budget process but leaves tonnage tax-supported adds, which generate revenue used to fund SPU's graffiti abatement program.

2007 SPU resource adds - SPU requests ordinance change to redeploy new resources. Results in shifting resources from abatement to outreach/education and transitioning to "live" hotline.

SPU's Asset Management Committee approves customized MAXIMO application. Facilitates graffiti data reporting and analysis.

2008 City-wide process (public property) - Concurrent with City Council-initiated process, graffiti is one of twelve Mayor's Office Customer Service Improvement projects. Led by Parks Department staff, a task force was convened which originally focused on the entire universe of "graffiti," and then narrowed to abatement on public (i.e., Parks, SDOT and SPU-assigned) property.

Specifically, the task force was charged with:

- Examining the City's graffiti abatement strategies
- Developing recommendations that would provide external customers a more responsive and consistent (equitable) approach to graffiti abatement across City departments.

Task force recommendations/outcomes included:

- Promote the SPU hotline (684-7587 or online web form) as the main reporting conduit

- Establish a common service level across City departments; 24 hour (business day) abatement for hate/racist graffiti, 6 business days internal target for other graffiti (10 business days for abatement on roadway structures)
- Track and report common metrics across departments. Also, report discovered graffiti abatement (to reduce the incentive to place higher priority on abating reported graffiti at the expense of discovered graffiti, and potentially improve service equity).
- Organize public property abatement by geographic area or “sectors” to facilitate interdepartmental coordination (i.e., coordinated scheduling so abatement staff are working in the same sector each day of the work week)
- Launch on-going, regularly-scheduled interdepartmental meetings of dedicated field abatement staff to coordinate efforts, discuss challenges and opportunities, etc.
- Assemble a task force to address other issues.

2009 City-wide process (private property) – Building on the work of the 2008 task force, a subsequent effort was undertaken that focused on graffiti on private property. This group consists of participants from seven City departments including the Customer Service Bureau, Department of Neighborhoods, Department of Planning and Development, Law, Office of Economic Development, Seattle Police Department, and SPU. This task force was asked to review current anti-graffiti legislation, enforcement protocol and support related to private property, and to develop recommendations for improvement.

Recommendations are included in the areas of: reporting, education and outreach, the private property permission and release form, an enforcement protocol for alerting tenants, and strategic partnerships. See Appendix F for a detailed description of these recommendations.

Based on our review, the Office of City Auditor agrees with all the Private Property Task Force recommendations.

APPENDIX F**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Cameron Keyes, CBO
FROM: Private Property Anti-Graffiti Task Force Members
SUBJECT: Recommendations for Enhancing Private Property Anti-Graffiti Programs
DATE: 04/04/10
CC: CSB, DON, DPD, Law, OED, SPD, and SPU Department Heads

BACKGROUND

Multiple customer service improvement projects were sponsored by the Mayor's Office and initiated in 2008. One of these projects included a task force that focused on the City's graffiti program. Given the complexity of the issue, the task force concentrated predominantly on public property graffiti abatement. However, the group recommended continued interdepartmental efforts to review other components of a comprehensive anti-graffiti program.

Building on the work of the 2008 task force, a successive effort focused on graffiti on private property. This second group consists of participants from seven City departments including, CSB, DON, DPD, Law, OED, SPD, and SPU. The task force was asked to review current anti-graffiti legislation, code enforcement protocol and support related to private property and to develop recommendations for improvement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Task force meeting discussions addressed current anti-graffiti legislation, code enforcement protocol and support issues (i.e., outreach, technical assistance, etc.) related to private property that have been raised by the public, City staff and elected officials over the past several years. For some issues, the discussion culminated in recommendations for improvement. Other discussion topics resulted in clarification of legal issues or draft recommendations that were subsequently dropped because they were either deemed ineffective or counter to goals (see attached issues matrix, which summarizes task force discussions).

Recommendations for improvement follow.

Reporting

Enforcement of the City's anti-graffiti nuisance ordinance on private property is driven by reported incidents of graffiti. It is, therefore, imperative to increase reportings for graffiti that is not rapidly abated by the property owner. To increase reporting:

- Develop marketing materials, including public service announcements, which motivate the public to report graffiti for abatement.

- Consider system improvements that increase the ease of reporting such as incorporating streamlined electronic submittals with GPS locators.

Education and Outreach

The City disseminates anti-graffiti information through presentations to neighborhood and community groups and departments' web sites. Education and outreach enhancements include:

- Translate the anti-graffiti brochure into additional languages.
- Disseminate anti-graffiti information through neighborhood blogs.
- Post additional information related to enforcement of the City's anti-graffiti nuisance ordinance, including detailing steps of the enforcement process, associated time lines, and annual compliance rates.

Private Property Permission and Release Form

The City recruits and coordinates abatement volunteers. To receive volunteer services, private property owners sign and submit a permission and release form granting volunteers permission to enter a property and authorizing them to paint over graffiti on private property. Form improvements include:

- Extend time before the release form "expires" so that property owners and/or business improvement areas (BIAs) do not need to resubmit completed forms annually.
- Insert language that requests property owner(s) to notify tenant(s) of permission granted to volunteers to enter property and paint over graffiti on private property.
- Provide property owner with a copy of the signed private property permission and release form.
- Edit the private property permission and release form as suggested by task force members (suggested edits submitted electronically).

Legislative Change

Given the prescriptive nature of SMC 10.07, task force members discussed multiple potential code changes to decrease time between a report and abatement. However, discussion ultimately resulted in only one recommendation.

- Change notification requirements: delete the current requirement for certified mail and replace with first class mail.

Enforcement Protocol

Per code, properties are posted as a potential graffiti nuisance property if graffiti has not been removed following receipt of the first “informational” letter. Following the delineated process, properties are posted more than 30 days after a report has been received. Enforcement staff has stated that on-site posting is beneficial for rental properties: the tenant(s) often facilitates property owner(s) notification, which expedites abatement.

- Consider enforcement protocol that would alert tenant(s) of potential graffiti nuisance property status earlier in the process than required by code.

Strategic Partnerships

Effective private property anti-graffiti programs require strategic interdepartmental and community collaboration. Strongly recommended improvements include:

- Develop or enhance strategic partnerships between SPU anti-graffiti staff and other City departments, including DPD (unabated graffiti on vacant buildings), SPD (surveillance and apprehension), and DON (hot spots and repeatedly tagged areas, frequently asked questions).
- Increase effectiveness of Red Wagon program by strategically identifying and linking active community groups with paint out resources. Groups to contact include high schools (community service requirements), Parent Teacher Associations, other community service organizations, and youth at risk initiatives.

NEXT STEPS

- Apprehension, prosecution, and legislative criminal aspects, such as stricter sentencing alternatives, are outside the private property anti-graffiti task force’s scope of work. However, task force members strongly recommend further anti-graffiti program development in these areas.
- In conjunction with interested stakeholders, develop an implementation plan by July 2010 which further develops the recommendations and clearly designates accountable staff and implementation timelines.
- Reconvene task force members to provide update on status of implementation by end of the year.

Appendix G



Graffiti Survey

www.kab.org

www.graffitihurts.org



KAB.ORG



Graffiti

- Words, colors, and shapes drawn or scratched on buildings, overpasses, and other surfaces
 - One-color monikers (like a nickname) "tag"
 - One-color gang usually black, red or color of gang
 - Hate graffiti
 - Complex compositions of several colors
- Without permission



Goals and Objectives

- Determine occurrences, type, and location of graffiti in two Seattle neighborhoods
- Compare results for a neighborhood with a Business Improvement District and one without
- Establish guidelines that may be used to develop a baseline from which to measure progress with eradication efforts
- Use collected data to assess effectiveness of current graffiti prevention efforts and determine opportunities for new initiatives in graffiti education and prevention, eradication



Scoring

- Instructions
- Field Analysis
 - 4 Teams
 - 2 scorers each
 - Same team scores entire designated neighborhood



Graffiti Survey – Property Site

- ‘Site’ is determined by the possible responsible party for removing the graffiti.
 - Office building wall
 - Dumpster
 - Street sign
 - Utility box



Graffiti Survey - Property Site

- Address
- Description
 - Residential
 - Business
 - Public
 - Occupied
 - Vacant



Graffiti Survey - Graffiti Description

- Visibility

 - 1-Major Roads

 - 2-Secondary/ Residential Roads

 - 3-Private Roads

- Location

 - Building

 - Accessory

 - Utility Box

 - Traffic/Street Sign

 - Fence

 - Retaining Wall

 - Utility Pole

 - Dumpster

 - Mailbox

 - Other

- Size – Square Feet



Graffiti Survey–Type and Surface

- Type of Graffiti
 - Tag
 - Gang
 - Hate
 - Other
- Surface
 - Brick, wood, aluminum
 - Paint, marker, etched, sticker



Graffiti - “Tags”



Graffiti - "Tags"



Graffiti - “Tags”



Graffiti - “Throw-ups”



Graffiti - “Pieces”



Graffiti - "Pieces"



Gang Graffiti



Gang Graffiti

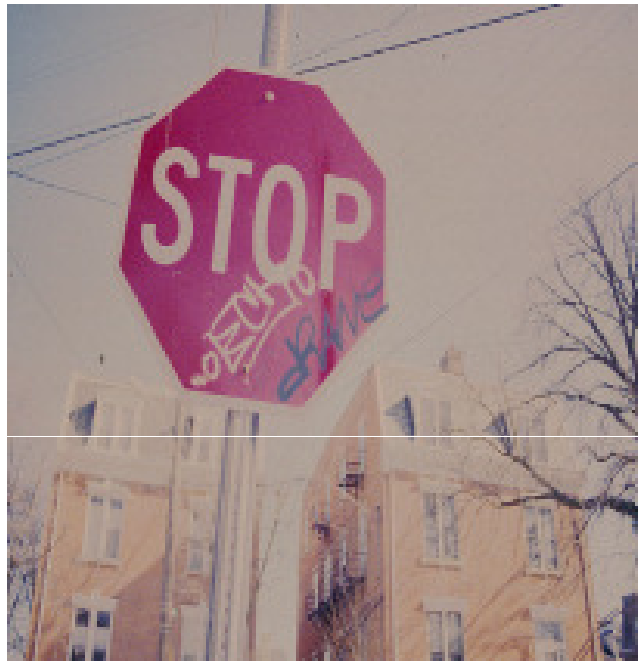


Recording

Property Site



Recording



S-Traffic/Street Sign



F-Fence



Recording



R-Retaining Wall



U-Utility Box



Surface and Material



Surface and Material



Surface and Material





GRAFFITI HURTS

1010 Washington Blvd.
Stamford, Ct. 06901
203-659-3000

www.kab.org



KAB.ORG



Appendix H

Potential Benefits from an Affiliation with Keep America Beautiful

Background:

Keep America Beautiful (KAB) is a nonprofit organization founded in 1953, and its publicity materials indicate that it is the largest volunteer-based community action and education organization in the country): <http://www.kab.org>.

Focus Areas - KAB has three areas of focus: 1) litter prevention, 2) waste reduction and recycling, and 3) beautification and improvement of public spaces. KAB has also developed a program called “Graffiti Hurts” that provides educational materials, event information, and mini-grant opportunities to jurisdictions around the country: <http://www.graffitihurts.org/>.

Affiliate Organizations - KAB has over 1,000 affiliate organizations¹ throughout the country, and the organization provides on-line interaction and conference opportunities for the affiliates to learn from one another. In addition, KAB affiliates are required to conduct annual physical inventories to capture quantitative data on their progress with their anti-litter efforts through use of KAB’s Litter Index. KAB has recently developed the Community Appearance Index, a similar data-gathering tool, to measure progress with eliminating graffiti, abandoned vehicles, and derelict properties.

Most of the larger jurisdictions in the country as well as those considered to be “best practice” organizations for their anti-graffiti programs are KAB affiliates. These include, but are not limited to:

Albuquerque, New Mexico	Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Atlanta, Georgia	Nashville, Tennessee
Austin, Texas	New York, New York
Charlotte, North Carolina	Oakland, California
Chicago, Illinois	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Columbus, Ohio	Phoenix, Arizona
Dallas, Texas	Raleigh, North Carolina
Denver, Colorado	San Diego, California
Houston, Texas	San Jose, California
Indianapolis, Indiana	Washington, D.C.
Las Vegas, Nevada	West Palm Beach, Florida
Los Angeles, California	

Potential Benefits:

As explained below, the City of Seattle could realize a number of important benefits through an affiliation with Keep America Beautiful including: collaborative coalition framework, community volunteers, data-driven evaluation, and funding opportunities.

¹ For a city the size of Seattle, Keep America Beautiful requires a one-time-only affiliate initiation fee of \$8,000 to provide technical assistance and training for establishing the affiliate structure.

Collaborative Coalition Framework - KAB affiliates are required to gather a coalition of key City and community stakeholders.

KAB provides training to help launch the coalition including the development of governance materials, mission statements, guidelines, and procedures. Additional training is available through conferences and on-line collaboration tools. Through this training and technical assistance, the coalition can build its capacity to work together to identify local concerns and to apply the KAB five-step approach:

“From the onset (the coalition) should involve a broad scope of citizens involving business, government, and civic sectors.”
- Keep America Beautiful Application for Certification

1. Getting the facts
2. Involving the people
3. Planning systematically
4. Focusing on the results, and
5. Providing positive reinforcement.

Community Volunteers - Several KAB affiliates reported to us that they maintain databases with between 2,000 and 4,000 active community volunteers (Albuquerque: 2,946; Milwaukee: 3,000-4,000; San Jose: 3,752) for anti-graffiti efforts. They indicated that the affiliation with KAB helps with promoting events and providing give-aways for volunteers (e.g., visors, key chains, etc). They also indicated that national KAB events, like the Great American Clean-up, help provide and sustain momentum for ongoing local efforts.

To further leverage its ability to recruit and retain community volunteers, KAB has formed partnerships with other volunteer-network organizations including the Hands-On Network <http://www.handsonnetwork.org/> (Seattle Works and United Way of King County are local members of the Hands-On Network) and Service Nation <http://www.servicenation.org/>.

Data-Driven Evaluation - KAB provides proprietary data-gathering tools for its affiliates including the Litter Index and the Community Appearance Index. We used a modified version of the Community Appearance Index when we conducted the four-area physical inventory as part of this audit work. In addition, KAB has a proprietary cost-benefit model that affiliates may use to help calculate their return on investment from their efforts. Outcome measures and cost-benefit results must be reported in an annual report to KAB. Finally, KAB affiliates are required to use the data that they have collected to make recommendations for changes in four areas: education, technology (resources and tools), ordinances, and enforcement.

Funding Opportunities – KAB offers grants to its affiliates that can be used to create or expand local programs. KAB indicated that, in 2009, affiliates received grants and in-kind services valued at over \$6 million.

Appendix I

Additional Potential Graffiti Abatement Resources

Graffiti Abatement

Community Court - Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) now utilizes teams from the Seattle Community Court¹ community service program for graffiti abatement on private property. However, Community Court officials indicate that they have capacity to expand this service to include additional graffiti abatement as well as the creation of community murals. In the summer of 2009, Community Court participants created a community mural in Lake City – see link at: http://www.seattle.gov/communitycourt/about/Lake_City_Mural.htm.

Currently SPU uses the Community Court program twice per month. This occurs every other Saturday, when an SPU staff member picks up a team of Community Court participants and an AmeriCorps supervisor and drives them to various locations in Seattle to abate graffiti on private property. Throughout 2009 and 2010, the Community Court community service program has had on average a weekly total of 35 participants² who could be available to assist with graffiti abatement, mural creation, and/or mural maintenance.³ The participants can be transported to a job site with an AmeriCorps volunteer who serves as a coordinator and coach to the participant teams. Participants are dismissed from job sites at the end of the job and provided with a Metro bus pass to return home.

Community Court officials indicated that they could provide additional single-site graffiti abatement services (e.g., graffiti clean-up in a business district) at no additional cost to the City. And they could provide graffiti abatement in multiple sites if the City provided transportation.

Department of Corrections - Since 1995 SPU has used teams from the Washington State Department of Corrections - King County Work Crew for assistance with illegal dumping. Department of Corrections officials indicate that they could potentially provide graffiti abatement services under their existing contract with SPU. However, logistical details would need to be worked out with SPU, since this is not in the existing scope of work.

For a rate of \$47 per hour, their teams provide four to ten laborers, a corrections officer who supervises the crew, and a vehicle to transport the crew and supplies. The King County Work Crew operates seven days per week except during major holidays and extremely inclement weather.

In our research of best practices in other jurisdictions, we found that Gwinnett County, Georgia (Greater Atlanta) has leveraged a successful public/private partnership with the state Department of Corrections (DOC) to provide eradication services. Their DOC contract covers graffiti eradication on walls,

¹ Seattle Community Court is a community involved justice initiative that provides a nontraditional approach to address traditional problems. Rather than go to jail, non-violent misdemeanor offenders who enter the program can help themselves in overcoming their own problems as they complete community service to improve the neighborhood and make a variety of comprehensive social service linkages to help address the root and underlying issues of repeated criminal behavior. Seattle Community Court is managed by the City of Seattle, and is a collaborative effort of the Seattle Municipal Court, the City Attorney's Office and the Associated Counsel for the Accused.

² This number includes weekly average of 19 community court participants and 16 pretrial diversion participants.

³ Recently Community Court officials and Artworks (<http://www.urbanartworks.org/>) have been discussing the possibility of having Community Court participants regularly maintain and remove graffiti from Artworks' murals.

pavement, and private property (with the owner's permission). Gwinnett County officials report that their DOC contract has consistently achieved a 48 hour response time between 2008 and 2010.

Community Volunteer Mobilization

SPU officials indicated that their current anti-graffiti volunteer database included 36 individuals and 16 groups or teams. Although SPU's community outreach and education function for graffiti is relatively new, there is potential for dramatically increasing community volunteer mobilization through strategic partnering with volunteer organizations.

Several Keep America Beautiful (KAB) affiliates reported to us that they maintain data bases with between 2,000 and 4,000 active community volunteers (Albuquerque: 2,946; Milwaukee: 3,000-4,000; San Jose: 3,752) for anti-graffiti efforts. They indicated that the affiliation with KAB helps with promoting events and providing give-aways (e.g., water bottles, visors) for volunteers. They also indicated that national KAB events, like the Great American Clean-up, help provide and sustain momentum for ongoing local efforts.

To further leverage its ability to recruit and retain community volunteers, KAB has formed partnerships with other volunteer-network organizations including the Hands-On Network <http://www.handsonnetwork.org/> (Seattle Works and United Way of King County are local members of the Hands-On Network) and Service Nation <http://www.servicenation.org/>. The City of Seattle can partner with these volunteer-mobilizing organizations for its anti-graffiti programs regardless of whether it pursues an affiliation with Keep America Beautiful.



City of Seattle
Seattle Public Utilities

July 26, 2010

David Jones, City Auditor
Office of City Auditor
PO Box 94729
Seattle, WA 98124-4729

Dear Mr. Jones:

Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) is pleased to submit comments on the performance audit draft report of the City's anti-graffiti efforts, which was conducted at the request of Seattle City Councilmembers Burgess and Rasmussen. As you are aware, SPU has engaged in multiple anti-graffiti program benchmark studies, interdepartmental task forces and other improvement processes over the past several years. Multiple program improvements have resulted from these efforts, including:

- Enhanced interdepartmental coordination
- Adoption of common City-wide graffiti abatement service level targets and performance metrics
- Creation of a full-time anti-graffiti public education and outreach coordinator
- Upgrade of the graffiti hotline, which functions as the City-wide centralized point of contact for graffiti reports, to a live operator

SPU welcomes the opportunity to identify additional ways to improve program efficiency and effectiveness and enhance customer service.

SPU sincerely appreciates the collaborative working relationship with the Office of City Auditor (OCA) staff throughout the performance audit process. The process and approach were consistently professional, open and cordial.

SPU's comments on the draft performance audit report are listed below.

1. Additional Costs Associated with Parking Enforcement Officer (PEO) and Other City Staff Reports (page 21)

SPU supports the recommendation to strengthen reporting of graffiti incidents by PEOs and other City staff as appropriate. PEOs could employ hand-held devices that are currently used for other job duties. If this recommendation were implemented, however, there would be additional hotline costs to interpret the GPS information. Hotline staff currently receives telephone and web form reports which include discrete addresses or cross streets. In turn, abatement staff currently relies on addresses or cross streets to respond to abatement requests.

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2. Additional Costs Associated with Expanding SPU Business Improvement Area (BIA) Grant Program and Continued Assessment of BIA Graffiti Abatement Effectiveness (page 23 and 39)

SPU provides annual grant funding to the seven (7) BIAs to support the BIAs' litter collection and graffiti abatement activities. In 2010, SPU's grant funding totals \$57,000. An expanded grant program would require a new allocation or reallocation of resources. In addition, the City benefits from the partnership with the BIAs. The BIAs' efforts decrease abatement demands for City abatement staff and code enforcement staff. Therefore, SPU recommends continued support of the BIA grant program. Further, SPU recommends that any additional resources be plowed back into the grant program to fund abatement activities rather than applied to physical inventories.

3. Recommendation to Redeploy 1.0 FTE from SPU's Graffiti Rangers to SDOT or Negotiate an Agreement to Perform Work on Parking Pay Stations (pages 22 and 33)

SPU agrees that additional resources are required to abate graffiti on pay stations. SPU prefers the resources to come from within the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT). If the assignment from within SDOT is not possible, then reassignment of one of SPU's Graffiti Ranger staff to SDOT for pay station abatement is probably warranted. However, this would have some impact on SPU's abatement performance. With fewer resources available, the total square feet of graffiti discovered and abated by SPU's Graffiti Ranger clean sweep activities will decrease. In turn, additional reports may be received by the hotline and other avenues (Customer Service Bureau, electeds, etceteras) as additional unabated graffiti moves to the report level.

The parking pay stations are critical SDOT assets, which require unique maintenance protocol and practices. SPU recommends the work remain under the direct control of SDOT.

4. Anti-Graffiti Outreach Coalition (pages 23 and 34-36)

SPU appreciates that other cities have active anti-graffiti coalitions. SPU strongly supports collaborative efforts among stakeholders and currently leads interdepartmental/inter-agency anti-graffiti coordination efforts. However, SPU is concerned that the level of resources required to implement and maintain the recommended process is understated. In addition, based on SPU's experience with coordinating anti-graffiti efforts, SPU questions the effectiveness and sustainability of focusing collaborative efforts on outreach rather than a more inclusive scope as done in other jurisdictions.

5. Affiliation with Keep America Beautiful (Appendix H)

SPU agrees that community involvement and public education are key to successful anti-graffiti programs. SPU also strongly supports the recommendations to develop a comprehensive community outreach plan and a more robust public education program. However, there are other models and organizations that should be considered in addition to Keep America Beautiful. SPU believes that other models may be more compatible with the City's policies and goals and yield more favorable outcomes.

Again, thank you for the collaborative approach to this process and for the opportunity to provide comment on the performance audit draft report.

Sincerely,



Ray Hoffman, Director
Seattle Public Utilities

Appendix J-2

Seattle Police Department comments on the draft report

July 8, 2010

The Seattle Police Department (SPD) agrees that a comprehensive anti-graffiti enforcement approach as outlined in the audit's analysis and recommendations is valid and viable. If anti-graffiti enforcement is designated a city-wide policy priority, SPD management agrees it would be helpful to have a dedicated graffiti detective on staff to focus on investigating, identifying and apprehending chronic repeat offenders. Charges for cases with probable cause would be requested from either the City Attorney's Office (Law Department) for adult misdemeanor and gross misdemeanor cases or the King County Prosecutor's Office for felony and juvenile cases.

SPD management would only implement this policy if they are directed to do so. Given the limited staffing resources available to SPD at this time, and the fact that any staff reductions or readjustments will likely impact detectives first (rather than patrol officers), SPD management has not, of its own volition, chosen to reallocate a current detective to anti-graffiti efforts at this time.

SPD management is also concerned that re-directing Parking Enforcement Officers (PEOs) to photograph graffiti and download the photographs into a database as part of their regular duties, could have an undue impact on their ability to accomplish their primary duty of enforcing the parking laws. SPD would want to carefully consider the potential impact this additional duty may have before adding it to the PEOs' current workload. Thank you,

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