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November 2, 2007

BPC #07-0436

The Honorable Audits and
Governmental Efficiency Committee
c/o City Clerk's Office
City Hall, Room 395
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Attn: P. Lattimore

Dear Honorable Members:

CITY COUNCIL MOTION RELATIVE TO GRAFFITI (COUNCIL FILE #07-2083)

At the regular meeting of the Board of Police Commissioners held Tuesday, October 23, 2007, the Board APPROVED *AS AMENDED the Department's report to indicate the following:

- Clear indication that this was unproven in at least in the large city context.
- Maybe some feasibility issues in that larger environment about its usefulness
- May be greater cost to it.

This matter is being forwarded to you for your approval.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Donna Basulto".

DONNA BASULTO
Acting Commission Executive Assistant

JAN 03 2008
PUBLIC WORKS

Enclosure

c: Chief of Police

INTRADEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

BPC #07-0436
SF

REVIEWED

October 4, 2007
1.8
OCOP# 07-0067

M. J. Frank
FRANK
DATE 10/18/07

TO: The Honorable Board of Police Commissioners

RECEIVED

FROM: Chief of Police

OCT 12 2007

POLICE COMMISSION

SUBJECT: CITY COUNCIL MOTION RELATIVE TO GRAFFITI

RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. That the Board of Police Commissioners APPROVE and TRANSMIT the attached report relative to the Graffiti Tracker program and Department's graffiti abatement strategies to the City Council, Audits and Governmental Efficiency Committee.

DISCUSSION

The Los Angeles City Council requested the Department to provide information concerning the Graffiti Tracker program and the Department's graffiti abatement initiatives. Graffiti Tracker is an innovative graffiti analytical service that is purchased on a yearly basis by the concerned city. The program analyzes graffiti images and produces a detailed report for the prosecution of vandals once they are arrested. The attached Fact Sheet outlines in more detail the feasibility of adopting this program for the City.

Briefly, in September 2006, Pico Rivera became one of the first cities in Los Angeles County to purchase the program. At that time, they documented 828 vandalism incidents. By June 2007, the number of incidents had fallen to 324. Under the program, clean up crews record each new graffiti tag with a digital camera outfitted with Global Positioning System (GPS) technology. The pictures are then downloaded to a website for analysis and reference. The system categorizes graffiti by moniker, which enables the individual tagger to be monitored via every act of vandalism that is photographed. This allowed officers to focus their enforcement efforts on the most active vandals.

CONCLUSION

Based on the level of effectiveness of the City of Pico Rivera and the success with the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department Carson Station, it is recommended that Graffiti Tracker be invited to make a formal presentation to the requisite City entities. It is difficult to predict the effectiveness of this program in the City. Pico Rivera and some of the other subscribing cities are significantly smaller than the City and they have fewer tagging groups in operation. The success of Pico Rivera may or may not be completely reproducible in the City; however,

The Honorable Board of Police Commissioners

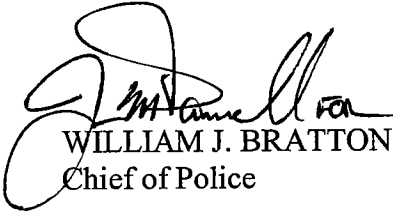
Page 2

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successful utilization of the program mandates a commitment by the concerned geographic Area to staff this initiative with at least one full-time officer. Graffiti Tracker costs approximately \$24,000 per year, to subscribe to its analytical services.

If you have any questions, please contact Deputy Chief Gary Brennan, Commanding Officer, Detective Bureau, at (213) 847-4491.

Respectfully,


WILLIAM J. BRATTON
Chief of Police

**BOARD OF
POLICE COMMISSIONERS**

Approved
Secretary

OCT 23 2007

as amended



Attachment

FACT SHEET

LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT GRAFFITI ABATEMENT

September 28, 2007

BACKGROUND

The Los Angeles City Council requested information on the methodology employed by the Graffiti Tracker program in the city of Pico Rivera and whether this approach could be adopted in communities in the City. They also requested information on the efforts, status and effectiveness of existing Los Angeles Police Department (Department) graffiti abatement programs. Recommendations were also requested as to how these programs could be increased in scope and effectiveness and better coordinated.

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, graffiti is the most common type of vandalism. It is a marker of decay and makes people feel that their community is being lost to criminal gangs and crime. Nationwide, it costs communities more than \$8 billion per year to clean up and its immediate removal, within 24 to 48 hours, is one component to successful prevention and abatement. Graffiti is also very much a youth-related problem, although graffiti vandals come from all ethnic, social and economic backgrounds.

FINDINGS

Graffiti Tracker Program

The Graffiti Tracker program was developed by Mr. Timothy Kephart, a Carson crime analyst who began by examining 450 gang graffiti photographs in the Carson area. His research lead him to develop two software packages, the Graffiti Analysis/Intelligence Tracking System (GAITS) and Vandal Apprehension/Graffiti Reduction Program (VanGraff).

Graffiti Tracker analysts using the GAITS and VanGraff components extract intelligence information from each graffiti photograph and provide information reports regarding the overall graffiti problem. Each piece of intelligence information is collated and indexed to an image of the graffiti and can be accessed via the computer. The images are stored on Graffiti Tracker's secured website, which reduces the storage needs on subscriber computers.

The system provides graffiti intelligence, 24-hours a day and 7 days a week. The reports allow the user to determine who the most active vandals are, which gang members are associated with each other and patterns of vandalism. This allows for the intelligent and efficient deployment of law enforcement resources. When an offender is identified and arrested, he or she can be held accountable for all other graffiti damage in the area bearing his or her moniker.

Pico Rivera was one of the first cities to purchase the program in September 2006. At that time, the City had documented 828 vandalism incidents. By June 2007, the number of incidents fell to 324. Deputy Gilbert Dominguez, Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD), Pico Rivera Station, coordinates the Graffiti Tracker program for the Pico Rivera Station. He explained the operation of the program, his duties and the successes they achieved.

Pico Rivera is approximately 11 square miles in size. At the beginning of the program, their city's public works graffiti clean-up crew consisted of two two-person teams. Graffiti Tracker equipped each team with one digital camera, outfitted with Global Positioning System technology. The crews then began photographing each graffiti tag, prior to its removal. At the end of the day, the clean-up crews would return to their office and up-load the images to the Graffiti Tracker website. No police personnel were involved with the photography of graffiti tags. Graffiti Tracker performed analysis on the uploaded photographic data and categorized graffiti by moniker, location and gang or tagger crew.

Deputy Dominguez had access to their website and could download analytical reports containing graffiti intelligence and data. More importantly, the reports contain information regarding the most prolific taggers operating in the area. This enables individual taggers to be monitored via every act of vandalism they perform. Pico Rivera focused their resources on the most active vandals in their city. Deputy Dominguez stressed the fact that this program does not specifically catch taggers, rather it is a tool that must be actively utilized and supplemented with intelligence to be beneficial.

He has taken a comprehensive approach to his mission. For example, he receives weekly Graffiti Tracker reports, actively liaises with Graffiti Tracker analysts and all of the school deputies, school police and principals to develop information on active taggers. He has also examined "MySpace.com" type websites of taggers to obtain intelligence for prosecution and keeps up his education and training by taking graffiti identification courses at other police departments. His experience indicates that most taggers vandalize the area around their residence, the route to their school and their favorite park or hang out. Once he receives information regarding a prolific tagger, he queries Graffiti Tracker for all locations and photographs containing the vandal's tag.

Tagging that occurs on private property does not require a separate crime report for inclusion in the filing package when a felony case filing is being pursued. According to the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office the essential information for the filing would be the name of the private property owner, the cost to paint out the damage and the fact that he or she did not give the vandal permission to deface their property. Alternatively, the Los Angeles City Attorney requires the presence of a crime report for private property misdemeanor vandalism cases that are filed. If the City adopted this program, a protocol would have to be developed that mandates that a vandalism crime report be completed whenever graffiti occurs on private property, within the City.

Deputy Dominguez explained that in felony cases, one crime report is completed and it covers all of the documented vandalism that was on city and private property. If the damage was particularly extensive, he wrote a search warrant for additional evidence at the suspect's residence. Invariably, the search warrant team recovered substantial evidence consisting of spray paint, scrapers, graffiti-related chemicals and associated paraphernalia.

He always presses for felony vandalism convictions and supports this position with ample photographic evidence. Pico Rivera has been awarded over \$100,000 in restitution from the courts and has collected \$35,000 in actual payments. The remaining amounts are currently in payment mode or are being refuted. The city is also consulting with their district attorney

regarding the application of liens on the property of those parents who refuse to pay their court-ordered graffiti fines.

The success in Pico Rivera has led them to consider expansion of their graffiti efforts through the addition of one sergeant and two additional deputies. These personnel will be solely dedicated to graffiti abatement. During the first nine months of 2007, over 60 arrests were made using Graffiti Tracker information. Deputy Dominguez highly recommends this program and has had positive experiences with Graffiti Tracker.

The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD), Carson Station shut down Carson's second largest tagging crew using this technology. They tracked all of the graffiti by this crew and its individual members and arrested three of the four members. The fourth member turned himself in following the arrests.

There are 20 cities nationwide that are using the Graffiti Tracker. Within Southern California; Ventura, San Jacinto, Rancho Cucamonga, Lawndale and Hawaiian Gardens have purchased the system, which costs between \$24,000 to \$30,000 annually. Pico Rivera purchased the system at the lower cost of \$18,000 due to that city being one of the first to sign up for the service. This fee is paid out of their city's general fund

Feasibility of Utilizing Graffiti Tracker within the Department

Use of the Graffiti Tracker program may be a viable option to addressing the proliferation of graffiti. The essential "make or break" factor is the support it receives from Area command staff. Adequate personnel must be assigned to develop the leads, which feed and drive the program toward successful convictions. The Graffiti Tracker is an analytical service, which is only as good as the information that is entered.

Detective III Alejandro Rosales, Juvenile Division echoed this sentiment when provided with information regarding the program. He explained that the essential factor would be adequate staffing at the Area level. One or two full-time sworn officers would be necessary to monitor and visit field locations, make necessary arrests, prepare search warrants and file criminal cases. This is especially challenging given the demands placed on detective and patrol personnel. Also, if a pilot program were adopted, it should be limited to one or two geographic Areas, rather than the entire City. Its evaluation would be more efficient and manageable in a limited area.

Ms. Alejandra Gutierrez, Vice President of Marketing, Graffiti Tracker explained that she provides personal training to participants at their location. Extensive computer or analytical knowledge is not required for the web-based program. Specialized computer hardware is also not required, aside from a Personal Computer.

Most of the cities that subscribe to their program deploy one or two officers to perform follow up and criminal case development-type activities. Their customer support is extensive and consists of individual training and telephonic support. If the City decided to contract with her company, she recommended that the initial program be limited to one specific region or area (e.g., a geographic division). The company is also actively working to promote networking among law enforcement entities. In this way innovative strategies can be shared and discussed at regional meetings.

The cost to the City would be based on the number of tags, per week, that are removed. For example, if the City painted over 200 graffiti sites, in a specific area, on a weekly basis, the charge would be \$24,000 per year. Thus, in a given Area, 10,400 images could be uploaded and analyzed by Graffiti Tracker, for a one-year period, for \$24,000. The images are tracked by the computer program that receives them from the clean up crews. With the cities that have subscribed, the cost has run between \$24,000 to \$30,000 per year. There is an additional cost of \$1,300 per camera. The number of cameras to be purchased depends on the number of clean up crews that are to be equipped with cameras.

Hypothetically, for a one-year subscription the cost would be \$24,000, plus \$2,600 for the purchase of two cameras. The total would be \$26,600 for the first year and \$24,000 for each additional year. Management Analyst II Erica Swift, Fiscal Operations Division (FOD), Budget Section, said the annual subscription could be requested through the Department's budget process. According to the FOD Grants Unit there are not any grants that would pay for this type of analytical program. Other funding options may include private foundations and donors such as the LA Police Foundation, Police Protective League and corporate sponsors. The challenge with these funding sources is that this program is not a one-time expense, it requires annual renewal.

Department Graffiti Abatement Initiatives

Juvenile Division is designated as the Department's Graffiti Rewards Program coordinator or facilitator. This Program was developed in 1989 and offers a reward to persons who provide information resulting in the identification, apprehension and conviction or final adjudication of persons committing the act of graffiti-related vandalism or defacement, resulting in the destruction to property within the City. To qualify for the reward, the person reporting the crime must remain involved in the conviction or final adjudication process. The total sum of \$1,000 is paid to the person identified as having submitted the information relative to identifying, in whole or in part, those responsible for the act of graffiti vandalism. The payment of the reward must be approved by the City Council, after the Department determines that the person submitting the application warrants such payment. Since inception of the Program, the City has paid out an average of \$12,4588 annually in graffiti rewards.

The Department's graffiti abatement strategies include a multi-component approach that includes prevention, community education, neighborhood clean up and aggressive prosecution. Each geographic Area determines the most feasible approach for their level of vandalism. Some Areas are able to commit more resources than others to eradicate graffiti vandalism. The Areas also work closely with community-based organizations such as Operation Clean Sweep (OCS) and the Board of Public Works, Office of Community Beautification (OCB). The status of the Department's initiatives are that they are currently in operation and actively seek to prevent and eliminate, if possible, graffiti.

Operation Clean Sweep operates a hotline and contracts with thirteen community-based organizations geographically spread throughout the City. Each community-based organization has a graffiti removal program. The OCB awards competitive annual matching grants to community groups to fund neighborhood beautification projects, which include the prevention

and removal of graffiti. During 2006, OCB documented a total of 527,796 graffiti removal incidents and removed 27,529,605 square feet of graffiti Citywide.

Evaluating the effectiveness of Department strategies is difficult. One of the tenets of combating graffiti is the swift and timely removal of new tags. A important message is sent when a graffiti location is continually being cleaned. To this extent Department strategies are successful. However, the task is daunting. Graffiti frequently returns and prevention is a challenge due to the size of the City and the entrenched presence of multiple gangs and tagging crews. This makes measuring effectiveness difficult, since the vandalism may eventually return to the location. Further, the Department does not have the resources to continually monitor multiple locations throughout the City for the return of graffiti. The Department has other competing priorities for its personnel (e.g., reducing of Part I Crime, providing patrol and investigative services, etc.). Most Department graffiti initiative are conducted by Senior Lead Officers (SLO) and Community Relation Officers (CRO), in addition to their other community, administrative patrol and responsibilities.

Despite these limitations, a significant number of graffiti arrests continue to be made. These arrests are a culmination of the daily enforcement efforts and the cooperative efforts among the Department and the various community-based groups. From January 1, 2005 through February 28, 2007, Department personnel arrested 1,141 persons for Penal Code Section 594(a)(1), Graffiti Vandalism. Specifically, in 2005, 507 arrests were made and in 2006, 559 arrests were made. In 2007, from January through February 2007, 74 arrests were made.

Detective Support and Vice Division, Special Enforcement Section, Community Problems Unit

The Detective Support and Vice Division (DSVD), Special Enforcement Section, Community Problems Unit performs graffiti abatement. They obtain their graffiti cases via Area Vice Units, referrals from SLO and directly from local residents. In their investigations they frequently encounter locations with entrenched graffiti problems. They work with the concerned property owners to ensure clean-up resources are available and can be delivered in a timely manner.

The Department participates in the City's Graffiti and Illegal Dumping Apprehension Reward program. The City provides a \$1,000 monetary reward for information leading to the arrest, apprehension and conviction or final adjudication of persons committing the act of graffiti vandalism or illegal dumping. Payment of the reward is contingent upon a conviction or final adjudication and must be approved by the City Council. The Department is responsible for an initial determination that the person's involvement warrants such payment. Since inception of the program in 1989, the City has paid out an average of \$12,500 annually in graffiti rewards.

Operations-Central Bureau Graffiti Removal Programs

Central Area

Central Area police personnel are directed to be continually observant as to graffiti and chronic tagging sites. Upon observing or being notified of graffiti, the officers make a direct referral to one of several graffiti removal agencies. Three of the more prominent agencies include the

Board of Public Works, OCB, Graffiti Abatement Unit, the Business Improvement District and the California Department of Transportation (Cal Trans).

The OCB Graffiti Abatement Unit, is a Citywide anti-litter/graffiti program. Through its community graffiti hotline, it has funded over 5,000 graffiti-removal projects through grants to community-based organizations. Central Area's Business Improvement Districts are private organizations that are funded through property taxes. There are three Business Improvement Districts in Central Area and all participate in graffiti referral and removal. The Cal Trans graffiti-removal program is used primarily to remove graffiti that appears on freeway overpasses and pedestrian bridges.

Northeast Area

Within Northeast (NOE) Area the Police Assisted Community Enhancement (PACE) program is utilized to combat graffiti vandalism. Graffiti is addressed through various components of the PACE program. The Parenting Component is used to enforce parental responsibility at their level, while the Apprehension and Referral Component identifies graffiti perpetrators to effect their arrest. The Community Service Component is then used to directly accomplish the graffiti removal.

The NOE Area Volunteer Surveillance Team (VST) also plays an important role in this endeavor. This team consists of approximately 32 community volunteers who work with SLOs in graffiti surveillance operations. Senior Lead Officers will begin an operation by painting over a graffiti-laden site and then place VST participants in selected locations to observe the painted-over site. When a graffiti vandal approaches and tags the location, they contact the SLOs, via Astro radio. The SLOs are positioned out of sight and subsequently effect the arrest. In similar operations, the VSTs are used in a preventative capacity to address curfew and truancy problems. By contacting truants and curfew violators, vandalism is reduced.

Graffiti-related stakeouts are also conducted at graffiti hot spots. Participants include the VST and the Crime Reduction Operations Center (CROC) Unit. They monitor locations for several days after the graffiti has been removed. The purpose is to arrest offenders and to keep the graffiti off the walls once it is removed.

The Graffiti Removal Program is another program designed to arrest those juveniles who are caught committing graffiti crimes. Through this court-ordered program, offenders are sentenced to perform community service work. The Graffiti Removal Program team responds, usually within 24-hours, to remove the offensive markings.

Rampart Area

The Rampart Area Gang Unit maintains a file system (i.e., Rampart Gang Graffiti File) that documents tagging crews, membership and monikers. The Unit aggressively targets high tagging incident areas and arrests accordingly.

The SLO works in conjunction with the California Highway Patrol, several times a month, to address graffiti along the 101 Freeway and 110 Freeway at 9th Street. Their tactics include

deployment of officers who monitor locations for graffiti vandals and upon observing such activity, the SLOs will make the arrest.

The Rampart Area, CROs, SLOs and officers from the Los Angeles Unified School District have developed a Juvenile Intervention Program (JIP) that deals with at-risk teens within the community. As part of the program, the teens receive several hours of anti-graffiti education and participate in hands-on graffiti removal.

MacArthur Park has several pan/tilt/zoom surveillance cameras that record 24-hours a day. The SLO for that area focuses the cameras on particular locations within the park to videotape graffiti vandals. Other cameras are situated on Vermont Avenue and other vandalized areas.

Graffiti prevention information is routinely disseminated at Community Police Advisory Board (CPAB) meetings. Most recently, one of the CPAB members was tasked with developing a PowerPoint presentation outlining, in detail, graffiti problems and locations in the area. The adult CPAB formula has also been modified and adapted to a younger set of individuals. A "Teen CPAB" has been developed to deter teens from straying into a life of criminality. Graffiti prevention is an integral part of the curriculum and seeks to counteract the lure of tagging and vandalism.

Hollenbeck Area

Hollenbeck Area officers conduct graffiti task forces and work with the local City Council offices to establish and maintain graffiti-free zones. They utilize two primary graffiti referral agencies. These include the Gang Alternative Program (GAP) in the Boyle Heights community and the Central City Action Committee Youth Program in the Lincoln Heights community. The City retains these private agencies for the removal of graffiti.

Operations-South Bureau Graffiti Removal Programs

77th Street Area

The 77th Street Area utilizes the services of the GAP for graffiti removal. The concerned SLOs work with this agency to identify and abate graffiti locations. Additionally, a graffiti education component is part of the instructional regime of their Police Activities League (PAL).

Southeast Area

Southeast Area conducts graffiti task forces and makes removal referrals as necessary. They also reach into the local community to enlist their assistance. The "Southeast Volunteers" and CPAB members are continually educated as to the patterns of graffiti and its long-term abatement. Additionally, members of the Southeast Explorer Program receive instruction in the prevention and removal of graffiti.

Southwest Area

Within Southwest Area, gang officers conduct periodic graffiti task forces. The most recent task force was conducted on September 13, 2007. They also maintain files on chronic taggers in an

effort to monitor and reduce their criminality. The SLOs take the message of community awareness to their Neighborhood Watch meetings. They lecture on the community's use of "311" as a resource to have graffiti removed. They also promote use of the City's website for making graffiti removal referrals. The SLOs also work closely with the City Attorney's Office toward the arrest and prosecution of vandals. Lastly, patrol officers are well schooled in the blight of graffiti and are trained to continually monitor their areas and utilize the GAP as a removal source.

Harbor Area

Harbor Area adopted a multi-tiered approach to addressing graffiti vandalism. Their SLOs assume the lead in prevention, reporting and documentation of graffiti. The GAP is utilized for referral services. A "Graffiti Car" was also deployed for approximately one year in 2006 and 2007. The Graffiti Car was dedicated to the prevention, arrest and prosecution of graffiti vandals. Once an arrest was made, the assigned officers performed a type of vertical prosecution, whereby they followed the case to its conclusion. This tactic proved to be very useful and productive. The deployment was discontinued in June 2007 due to patrol demands, which necessitated the return of the two assigned officers.

Harbor Area also developed a Teen C-PAB program, modeled on the adult format, which focused on preventative activities for youths. This successful endeavor resulted in the production of an innovative videotape, which was widely distributed and reviewed. The video presentation was aimed at teens and designed to prevent or reduce criminal behavior, including tagging.

Operations-West Bureau Graffiti Removal Programs

Hollywood Area

Hollywood Area personnel are vigorously involved with the graffiti prevention and removal activities of the "Hollywood Beautification Team." The Hollywood Beautification Team is a vandalism reduction component of the community-based "Hollywood Business and Improvement District." Graffiti removal requests are made directly to the organization.

Additionally, Hollywood Area personnel focus on educating the community as to removal resources. Hollywood Area newsletters contain toll free referral numbers. On the patrol and specialized unit side, detection and identification of specific tagging groups is a primary goal. When arrests are made, the cases can be filed as misdemeanors or felonies, based on the total cost of removal, including paint and equipment per incident and the number of hours expended by the graffiti removal entity.

Wilshire Area

Wilshire Area personnel monitor and abate graffiti within the Area and work closely with various Korean community volunteer groups. Through education and the exchange of criminal information, they have been able to make inroads in the prevention and reduction of graffiti. Graffiti/gang task forces, have also been conducted in an effort to arrest chronic tagging/gang members.

West Los Angeles

West Los Angeles officers receive specific training in graffiti enforcement and conduct abatement activities as appropriate to the location. They do not maintain a separate graffiti reduction program, aside from the continual monitoring performed by their patrol and specialized unit officers. Graffiti/gang task forces, in conjunction with the Gang Enforcement Detail, have also been conducted in an effort to arrest chronic tagging/gang members.

Referrals for graffiti removal are made to Operation Clean Sweep and Pacific Graffiti Solutions. West Los Angeles also dedicates one reserve police officer to abating graffiti within the Area. Community members email digital photographs of graffiti locations to him and he investigates and begins abatement.

Pacific Area

Pacific Area personnel utilize Operation Clean Sweep to facilitate graffiti removal. Requests for graffiti removals are made via completion of the Community Enhancement Request form. Pacific Area personnel work closely with the community to document and remove graffiti vandalism as soon as possible.

Operations-Valley Bureau Graffiti Removal Programs

North Hollywood Area

North Hollywood Area conducts graffiti task forces to target specific locations and suspects. Their officers work with community groups in an effort to educate and promote preventative activities. They utilize "Graffiti Busters" and "New Directions for Youths" as removal entities. Additionally, they review vandalism crime reports in an effort to identify vandals and discern patterns of criminality.

Van Nuys Area

Van Nuys Area operates the Community Tagger Task Force. The Task Force has been in operation over five years and is comprised of two full-time officers who are dedicated to the prevention and removal of graffiti. Their primary duty involves monitoring the community for the appearance of graffiti. They make community presentations, one of which is a 20 minute PowerPoint presentation that they recently delivered at the Semi-Annual Basic Car Meeting. Information regarding the City's Graffiti and Illegal Dumping Apprehension Reward program is also provided to the community. They regularly liaise with the concerned school police to identify taggers and abate their vandalism.

The Task Force operates a community hotline where community members can report graffiti locations. The locations are then investigated and referred to the appropriate removal entity. Van Nuys Area also operates a community surveillance squad, to monitor chronic tagging locations. During graffiti task force operations, the surveillance squad will "set up" on a location and when they observe any tagging activity, they radio the suspect information to uniformed officers who are stationed in an adjacent area.

Foothill Area

The Foothill Area Tagger Task Force is deployed to specifically address tagging within the Area. It is staffed by two officers and assigned to their Gang Enforcement Detail. Their primary mission is the prevention and eradication of graffiti within the Area. The Foothill Area Valley Surveillance Team regularly participates in graffiti task force operations to deter vandalism and apprehend taggers. There is also an anti-graffiti component in the instructional curriculum of the Foothill Area Explorer and Jeopardy programs.

Devonshire Area

Devonshire Area personnel work directly with community members to identify graffiti vandals. They review vandalism crime reports and work toward identifying graffiti vandals through their monikers and affiliation with tagging crews and gangs. When a tagging identification is made, the case is presented to the District or City Attorney.

West Valley Area

In addition to training patrol officers in graffiti abatement activities and reviewing vandalism crime reports, West Valley Area developed the Graffiti Detail, in the Gang Impact Team to specifically develop prevention and removal strategies.

Mission Area

Mission Area conducts community tagger task forces to identify locations and arrest vandals. Police officers coordinate their efforts with OCB to exchange intelligence to increase their rate of identification. They also utilize the resources of the VST.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Graffiti Tracker Program

The Graffiti Tracker program represents a new and innovative graffiti prevention initiative. Its success in Pico Rivera underscores its viability in reducing and preventing graffiti under certain conditions. These conditions include the affected area being a limited size, agreeing to a serious commitment by police commands to support utilization of the program with personnel and agreement by the district and city attorney to file felony and misdemeanor cases as applicable. Application of property liens by the concerned district attorney for non-payment is also highly advisable.

Graffiti Tracker has expressed a desire to make a formal presentation to any and all City departments regarding their program. It is recommended that they be invited to deliver such a presentation. If the program looks viable, an Area could be selected for a trial run to determine its efficacy in reducing and preventing the return of the graffiti. Arrests and prosecution should also be tracked and a determination should be made as to whether targeting the most prolific taggers results in a decline in graffiti.

Department Graffiti Abatement Initiatives

It is recommended that the City continue its support of the Graffiti Rewards Program and implement a city-wide campaign to increase public awareness of the Program. Increased public exposure would contribute to increasing graffiti reward applications. The campaign could include billboard advertising, the display of information posters and a commitment to discuss the Program at all community events and school-based meetings.

Through its initiatives, the Department maintains a varied and multi-dimensional approach to graffiti reduction. To increase the scope and effectiveness of these initiatives it is recommended that each geographic Area designate a Graffiti Abatement Coordinator. The Graffiti Abatement Coordinator will function to coordinate all vandalism abatement activities in their respective Areas. They will liaise with Juvenile Division to ensure the Graffiti Rewards Program is being publicized and fully supported. They will also be responsible for providing feed back to Juvenile Division as to the efficacy of their efforts.

It is also recommended that a Department Graffiti Coordinator be designated and that he or she establish clear guidelines for Area Graffiti Abatement Coordinators. Quarterly meetings should be held to discuss eradication efforts in the Areas and to explore innovative strategies and approaches. In this way, the Department's mission of zero-tolerance towards graffiti vandalism can be fully communicated and reinforced.

MOTION

Graffiti defaces public spaces, mars the landscape, and violates our shared responsibility to protect community property. Whether it appears on buildings or bridges, on underpasses or in alleys, graffiti undermines quality of life.

Graffiti is also often used to send gang messages. As the Los Angeles Police Department notes on its website, "Graffiti identifies territorial boundaries, lists members, and communicates with rival gangs. The gang says 'This place belongs to us.'" As part and parcel of our efforts to make our City safe, Los Angeles must redouble its efforts to make our City graffiti free.

Efforts to prevent, remove, and suppress graffiti Citywide are implemented by multiple agencies, including the: Los Angeles Police Department ; Board of Public Works - Office of Community Beautification; County of Los Angeles; and community based organizations. Each makes important contributions to the overall effort. However, increased coordination would better enable the community to act strategically and maximize scarce resources.

In addition, the City could benefit from innovative new strategies in graffiti prevention and suppression. In Pico Rivera, the aggressive new "Graffiti Tracker" program has reportedly targeted an 11-square-mile area with a high-tech system that analyzes and categorizes graffiti scrawls. This information is then analyzed by the police, who use it to collect evidence and build legal cases against the culprits. According to recent media reports, this approach has led to a 40% decline in monthly tagging incidents since September 2006.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the **City Council request the** Los Angeles Police Department, Board of Public Works, and Department of Recreation and Parks to report to the Audits and Governmental Efficiency Committee on the efforts, status and effectiveness of existing graffiti prevention, suppression, and removal activities in the City of Los Angeles.

JUN 26 2007

07-2083

I FURTHER MOVE that the above reports include clear recommendations on how these initiatives could be: (a) increased in scope and effectiveness; and (b) better coordinated to maximize scarce resources.

I FURTHER MOVE that the LAPD be requested to report on the methodology employed by the Graffiti Tracker Program in Pico Rivera and on whether this approach could be adopted in communities in the City of Los Angeles.

I FURTHER MOVE that the CLA be directed to report to the Audits & Governmental Efficiency Committee on the nature and status of the Multi-Agency Graffiti Intervention Committee (MAGIC), which was previously comprised of the following members: the Los Angeles Police Department; Office of Community Beautification – Operation Clean Sweep; Metropolitan Transportation Authority; Caltrans; L.A. County; and the County of L.A. Sheriff's Department, which historically coordinated graffiti prevention and suppression efforts at a regional level.

PRESENTED BY: 
JOSE HUIZAR
Councilmember, District 14

SECONDED BY: 