
CITY OF KELOWNA

MEMORANDUM

Date: September 3, 2002
File No.: 0540-20
To: City Manager
From: Planning and Development Services Department
Subject: Local Graffiti Prevention Efforts
Report prepared by Greg Routley, Planner – Long Range

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council receive the information relating to local graffiti prevention efforts, as outlined in the Planning and Development Services Department report of September 3, 2002;

AND THAT Council endorse the recommendation of the Kelowna and District Graffiti Task Force to encourage local retailers to voluntarily regulate the sale of products that could be used for graffiti vandalism, as outlined in the Planning and Development Services Department report of September 3, 2002;

AND THAT Council direct Civic Properties to assume the primary responsibility for co-ordinating City of Kelowna graffiti prevention efforts with the Kelowna and District Graffiti Task Force;

AND FINALLY THAT Council request that Civic Properties submit a supplemental budget request for \$15,000, to be used for graffiti removal and prevention efforts, for consideration at the time of 2003 budget deliberations.

BACKGROUND

At the Regular Meeting of Monday, September 10, 2001, Council passed a resolution to adopt the attached Council Policy on graffiti vandalism. The Council Policy clarifies the City's stance on graffiti, supports the basis for establishing graffiti prevention strategies, and states the City's commitment towards working with private property owners and local agencies to find long-term solutions that prevent graffiti vandalism.

Since September 2001, City staff has worked towards implementing the graffiti prevention strategies and has, in co-operation with the RCMP and other local groups, worked with a Graffiti Task Force in monitoring the success of the prevention strategies and in finding long-term solutions to prevent graffiti vandalism. The Council Policy noted that the effectiveness of the graffiti prevention strategies would be monitored on an annual basis. This report is intended to fulfil that commitment.

The intent of this report is to: 1. provide Council with an update on current graffiti prevention efforts; 2. recommend ways to expand graffiti prevention efforts; and 3. report on the financial ramifications of expanding graffiti prevention efforts.

1. CURRENT GRAFFITI PREVENTION EFFORTS

Coordinating Efforts

The Council Policy on graffiti states that the City, in co-operation with the RCMP, will continue to monitor graffiti prevention strategies to ensure ongoing effectiveness. In response to this direction, the Community Operations Support Unit of the Kelowna RCMP, in co-operation with the City and other local groups, has established a Graffiti Task Force to monitor graffiti prevention programs and to find long-term solutions to prevent graffiti vandalism.

Local agencies, utility companies, non-profit groups, local businesses and residents have been invited by letter from the Kelowna RCMP to join the Graffiti Task Force. To date, the Downtown Kelowna Association, the Teen City Beat Youth Centre of the Okanagan Boys and Girls Club, the Rutland Business Association, Farwest Transit Services (BC Transit), School District No. 23, the Central Okanagan Regional District and the City of Kelowna have all responded positively and are active participants.

The Graffiti Task Force has been meeting on a bi-weekly basis since March 14, 2002. During this time, the Graffiti Task Force has been encouraging organisations and residents to join the Task Force and have been reviewing various graffiti prevention strategies, including strategies that promote awareness of graffiti related issues, strategies that involve voluntary restrictions on the sale of graffiti products and strategies for the co-ordination and cost sharing of graffiti prevention programs.

Promoting awareness of graffiti related issues

To date, the Graffiti Task Force has been focusing efforts on establishing and strengthening programs that promote awareness of graffiti related issues. Graffiti Task Force participants have co-operated in preparing graffiti related information which was incorporated in the City's 2002 Taxes and Expenditures brochure and in the attached "Graffiti Vandalism: Find out what you can do about it!" brochure. 500 copies of the "Graffiti Vandalism" brochure are currently being distributed by Graffiti Task Force participants to local residents and businesses.

Graffiti Task Force participants are also currently developing programs which local schools could use to educate teens on the impact graffiti vandalism has on the community and to empower them to speak out against their peers who choose to vandalise properties with graffiti. The Graffiti Task Force is also currently looking at ways in which the media could be used to help raise awareness in the community about the problems associated with graffiti vandalism.

Graffiti Hotline

The City of Kelowna operates a telephone and email Graffiti Hotline that allows Kelowna residents to report graffiti vandalism on private and public properties. The Hotline has been placed as a stand-alone telephone number in the City of Kelowna section of the TELUS Blue Pages. The telephone number and the email address are advertised in various City information brochures, on the City Website and in the Citizen Information sections of the local newspapers.

Since September 24, 2001, the Graffiti Hotline has generated a total of 248 reports of graffiti vandalism. Of these reports, 92 have been related to private properties and 156 have been related to City-owned properties.

Clean-up on City-owned Properties

Once a report of graffiti on City-owned property is received through the Graffiti Hotline, City staff send the report to the Civic Properties Paint Shop. In most cases, City staff has been able to remove the graffiti within 24 hours of it being reported. In situations where it is efficient, City crews also remove unreported graffiti while conducting ongoing maintenance and repairs. City staff also conduct weekly inspections of City properties as well as conducting site inspections to determine if any graffiti requires removal prior to special community events.

Encouraging Clean-up on Private Properties

To date, the City has opted to provide private property owners and local agencies with information on how to properly remove and prevent graffiti as opposed to assisting with the costs associated with cleaning up graffiti. Advice on preventative techniques can also be obtained from a Kelowna RCMP Crime Prevention Officer.

Utilicorp, TELUS, Canada Post Clean-up Efforts

Utilicorp, TELUS and Canada Post respond to reports of graffiti from the general public and the Graffiti Hotline by conducting inspections of reported graffiti sites. Once inspected, staff determines whether or not the graffiti should be immediately removed or painted over.

School District No. 23 Clean-up Efforts

Graffiti on School District No. 23 schools is removed within a 24-hour period. Custodians at each school conduct a site inspection every morning at 6:00 a.m. If graffiti is present, a painter is called to paint over the graffiti. The School District's goal is to have all graffiti removed from school grounds by 7:00 a.m. every morning. The objective of this goal is to prevent students from ever seeing the graffiti.

BC Transit, Kelowna Regional Transit Board and Farwest Transit Services Inc. Clean-up Efforts

BC Transit, the Kelowna Regional Transit Board and Farwest Transit Services Inc have been aggressively campaigning and introducing programs to eliminate graffiti vandalism to their bus fleets. Their prevention program has been one of introducing under cover security personnel to ride the buses and to apprehend vandals in the act. A reward of \$50.00 has also been introduced along with a hotline number to report vandals. Introduced in 2001, this program has been successful in the apprehension and conviction of 11 vandals. Other programs involve educating young children by using Transit Ambassadors and the McGruff school program, as well as removing reported graffiti from bus shelters before it can be seen by bus users.

Downtown Kelowna Association Clean-up Efforts

Through the Downtown and BIZ Patrols, the Downtown Kelowna Association photographs and cleans graffiti on structures along downtown streets. The DKA also advertises the Graffiti Hotline in their quarterly newsletters.

Enforcement and Penalties

Reports of graffiti on privately owned properties continue to be forwarded to the affected property owners via the Regional District Bylaw Enforcement Department, which has been contracted by the City to administer the City's Unsightly Premises and Visual Nuisance Bylaw. The Unsightly Premises and Visual Nuisance Bylaw provides that if a person fails to remove

graffiti, a Bylaw Enforcement Officer may issue a written order requiring that the graffiti be removed. If the graffiti is not removed in response to such an order, a Bylaw Enforcement Officer or designate may enter on the property and remove the graffiti at the expense of the person who has failed to comply. To date, property owners have responded positively by removing graffiti at their own expense after receiving a written order.

Prosecution of Graffiti Vandalism

The Kelowna RCMP has appointed two staff members from the Community Operational Support Unit to work on ways to deal with graffiti vandalism. This work has resulted in extensive research on what other communities are doing to deal with graffiti, in cataloguing graffiti around Kelowna for the purpose of tracking repeat offenders and in meeting with local groups and organisations to discuss the impacts of graffiti and the potential co-ordination of graffiti prevention efforts from an enforcement standpoint.

With regard to the latter, the Kelowna RCMP has liaised with Kelowna Crown Counsel to enhance consistency in Criminal Prosecutions of Mischief (Graffiti) Criminal Charges. A meeting between the RCMP and Crown Counsel resulted in the assigning of one individual Crown Counsel to handle all graffiti vandalism cases. The RCMP then prepared a report to Crown Counsel with the following recommendations on probation conditions for persons convicted of graffiti vandalism:

- one year probation with a curfew from 9:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.;
- not to be in possession of any material that can be used for graffiti;
- 40 hours of community service; and
- a fine related to the cost of the damage caused by the graffiti, which is to be awarded to the victims of the graffiti vandalism.

Some judges have gone further and have added conditions such as restricting the hours the convicted person can drive a vehicle and requiring the convicted person to participate in the Restorative Justice Program.

Summary

In short, at the one year anniversary of the City's Graffiti Prevention Program, staff can report that each of the steps outlined in Council Policy 302 have been implemented.

2. RECOMMENDED WAYS TO EXPAND GRAFFITI PREVENTION EFFORTS

Promoting awareness of graffiti related issues

As previously mentioned, the Graffiti Task Force has been focusing efforts on establishing and strengthening programs that promote awareness of graffiti related issues. By doing so, it is felt that more people will become aware of the issue and will be more knowledgeable and willing to take preventative actions.

The Graffiti Task Force is recommending that City Council endorse this approach and consider allocating funds totalling \$5,000 to the Civic Properties Paint Shop budget. The funds would be used to produce 10,000 copies of the "Graffiti Vandalism: Find out what you can do about it!" brochure. The Task Force is recommending the production of 10,000 copies of the brochure, as there are cost advantages in doing large production jobs as opposed to doing smaller production jobs on a yearly basis. It is anticipated that 10,000 copies of the brochures would last for three years. Task Force participants would be responsible for distributing the brochures.

Encouraging voluntary regulations on the sale of products used for graffiti vandalism

Research indicates that one important strategy in preventing graffiti vandalism is to have retailers voluntarily regulate the sale and display of potential graffiti implements. This strategy encompasses the way graffiti implements are displayed and marketed as well as an education to owners, staff and customers of good preventative practises.

The Graffiti Task Force is recommending that City Council endorse this strategy which would involve the Graffiti Task Force inviting, by way of a letter, businesses located within the City of Kelowna to join this effort by voluntarily complying with this strategy. Retailers would be asked to consider preventative practises and to implement measures that are commercially viable. A copy of the proposed letter and suggested preventative practices are attached to this report.

If supported by Council, the letters would be distributed by City of Kelowna Bylaw Enforcement Officers during the course of their regular duties. For businesses that comply in part or in whole with the recommended practices, the Bylaw Enforcement Officers would provide a Graffiti Task Force poster that would acknowledge the business's co-operative efforts to prevent graffiti vandalism in the community. Labour and material costs associated with this strategy would be covered through existing departmental budgets.

It is noted that the Chair of the Regional Board endorsed this strategy by way of letter to the Kelowna and District Graffiti Task Force dated June 25, 2002. To date, it has not been determined whether or not Regional District staff will be directed to carry out this strategy within communities located in the Regional District itself.

Supporting Cleanup efforts

The Graffiti Task Force is currently reviewing ways in which local citizens and community organisations could co-ordinate efforts and share the costs associated with cleaning and removing graffiti vandalism. In assessing what it may take to implement such a strategy, it has become apparent that a considerable amount of staff time would be required to effectively co-ordinate these efforts. Based on existing staffing levels and associated work commitments, Graffiti Task Force participants, including City of Kelowna staff, would be unable to effectively provide this service.

To address this, the Graffiti Task Force is recommending that a co-ordinator position be considered. The co-ordinator's responsibilities would be to administer agreed upon criteria that would help determine whether or not affected property owners are eligible for assistance, to co-ordinate volunteer efforts and to solicit the donation of products and funds needed to operate the program.

Funding will be required to establish a co-ordinator position. Since the graffiti issue affects a multitude of local organisations and property owners, it is recommended that the costs of funding the position be shared. The Graffiti Task Force is recommending that City Council consider allocating funds totalling \$10,000 to the Civic Properties Paint Shop budget. These funds would be used to help leverage funds to be used to hire a co-ordinator.

The Graffiti Task Force has approached representatives of local agencies and utility companies to determine if partnerships could also be established with these organisations. However, labour contracts and union agreements have rendered it difficult to reach formal agreements to have graffiti removed by any one group. The Graffiti Task Force has established a contact with the B.C. Federation of Labour for guidance when considering potential partnerships that could be established between these organisations in the future.

3. FINANCING GRAFFITI PREVENTION EFFORTS

The City of Kelowna currently spends \$65,000 in labour and material costs related to removing graffiti from City-owned buildings and structures. The \$65,000 is provided for in established base operation budgets. During this past year, other labour and material costs associated with the program, such as Bylaw Enforcement, Graffiti Hotline and advertising costs, have been covered through existing departmental budgets.

2003 Civic Properties Paint Shop Budget

To budget for the costs associated with the proposed 2003 program, funds can be redirected, as was done in 2002, from the base budgets of the various departments previously involved in graffiti removal to the Civic Properties Paint Shop budget. In this regard, it is recommended that each department, as part of their 2003 budget submissions, submit recommendations for the appropriate budget transfers.

In order to cover the costs associated with the expanded 2003 program proposed by the Graffiti Task Force, it is recommended that Council also consider allocating, through a Civic Properties 2003 supplemental budget request, an additional \$15,000 towards the Civic Properties Paint Shop budget. These funds would assist in covering the costs associated with the Graffiti Task Forces proposed expanded graffiti prevention program, as noted earlier in this report.

Other labour and material costs associated with the 2003 program, such as those costs associated with developing educational programs, refining graffiti policies, Bylaw Enforcement and the 'Graffiti Hotline', would continue to be covered through existing departmental budgets.

SUMMARY

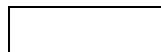
The City of Kelowna, the Kelowna RCMP, private property owners, local businesses, and local agencies spend considerable time and money on removing graffiti. Existing graffiti prevention strategies have been selected on the basis of their appropriateness for the types of graffiti problems currently being experienced in Kelowna and for their relative ease of implementation. While it is difficult to assess the success of a few of these relatively new strategies, it is obvious that the problem persists. It is suggested however that through the co-ordinated efforts of the Graffiti Task Force participants, graffiti prevention strategies will continue to improve over time.

Signe K. Bagh, MCIP
Long Range Planning Manager
City of Kelowna

Jim Waugh
Civic Properties Manager
City of Kelowna

Cpl. Reg Burgess, Chair
Graffiti Task Force
Kelowna Detachment RCMP

Approved for inclusion



R.L. (Ron) Mattiussi, ACP, MCIP
Director of Planning & Development Services

GDR/
Attach.

c.c. Director of Parks and Leisure Services
Director of Works and Utilities
Kelowna and District Graffiti Task Force

GRAFFITI TASK FORCE

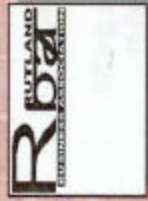
Through the Kelowna RCMP, a **Graffiti Task Force** has been established to find ways to deal with graffiti.

If you would like to volunteer your time by getting involved with the Graffiti Task Force, please leave a message on the Graffiti Hotline by calling **862-5500** or by emailing graffiti@city.kelowna.



Call the
GRAFFITI HOTLINE
862-5500
OR EMAIL
graffiti@city.kelowna.bc.ca

Graffiti Task Force Participants:



Graffiti
Vandalism

Find out
what
YOU
can do
about it!

What is graffiti?

Graffiti is wilful defacement of someone else's property by writing words or drawing with any marking substance.

Graffiti can be placed on any surface including: walls, fences, rocks, trees, mail and news boxes, sidewalks, roadways, windows and equipment covers.

Why should you care?

Graffiti is a crime and the incidence of this crime is increasing.

Graffiti invites other types of vandalism and crime, because it suggests the neighbourhood does not care or cannot cope.

Graffiti gives the impression a neighbourhood is unsafe. This drives people away.

Areas filled with graffiti are less appealing to those who may be looking to buy or rent property. Properties become more difficult to sell and values are reduced.

Graffiti costs. Private property owners and public agencies spend thousands of dollars every year on graffiti removal. Every dollar spent to clean up graffiti is a dollar that could have been spent on other programs.

How can you prevent graffiti?

- Ensure your property always looks occupied. Lock all doors and exterior gates and ensure there is good lighting around the property.
- Start or participate in a neighbourhood watch program.
- Do not glorify graffiti by using graffiti images in advertising displays.
- Remove objects which can be used to access target areas such as roofs, and eliminate target areas such as walls and fences by planting shrubs or bushes in front of them.
- Landscape walls, fences and storefronts with flowers, shrubs or other landscaping. Studies show that graffiti, as well as litter, is less common in landscaped areas.
- If you sell products that could be used for graffiti vandalism, be careful how you display the products.



What can you do about graffiti on your property?

- Do not ignore graffiti. Clean it up as soon as possible. This will prevent offenders from receiving the recognition they desire from their tag.
- There are two basic ways to get rid of graffiti: 1) Wash the graffiti off the surface. 2) Paint over the graffiti.
- Fast action improves the chances of a good clean up.
- Purchase environmentally friendly graffiti remover from paint stores.
- For assistance in removing graffiti, call a company listed under the Building Cleaners – Exterior section of the TELUS Yellow Pages.

What can you do about graffiti on the property of others?

- Alert neighbours if you spot graffiti on their property and encourage them to clean it up.
- Report graffiti on private and public properties to the City of Kelowna by calling 862-5500 or email a message to graffiti@city.kelowna.bc.ca.
- When reporting graffiti please leave detailed information on the graffiti's location. If the graffiti is on private property, your report will be forwarded to the property owner. If the graffiti is on City-owned property, the City will attempt to have it removed within 24 hours.