

Item No. 11.1.4
Halifax Regional Council
October 23, 2012

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original signed by 
Richard Butts, Chief Administrative Officer

Original Signed by 
Mike Labrecque, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: August 2, 2012

SUBJECT: Graffiti Abatement

ORIGIN

2012/13 Transportation and Public Works Business Plan
TPW 4.4 Review and Implement Improvements to Graffiti Management Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council:

- 1) Rescind the existing Graffiti Management Plan (Appendix A); and
- 2) Disband the existing Graffiti Task Force in favor of an Operational Stakeholder Group comprised of staff and representatives from partner agencies and community groups.

BACKGROUND

HRM experienced an escalation in the proliferation of graffiti, as well as, the resulting negative effects of Graffiti in 2005. In response, HRM formed a Graffiti Task Force to develop a plan to address the issue. In 2006, a draft HRM Graffiti Management Plan was introduced to Regional Council. The draft plan continued to be revised as the Graffiti Task Force recognized changing trends within the Graffiti sub culture and the requirement to incorporate research and best practices introduced by other cities in North America.

Regional Council approved a revised Graffiti Management Plan in 2009, which included fifty (50) policy statements that were developed to support the plan.

In spite of these efforts, HRM and its appointed body the Graffiti Task Force, continued to struggle with a number of aspects of graffiti management. In July of 2011, operational staff reviewed the Graffiti Management Plan and proposed the development of a new strategy that would move the policies outlined in the Graffiti Management Plans to operational plans, with clear ownership and accountability. The consensus of the stakeholders was that the management of graffiti in HRM had matured beyond the existing policy statements, and that there was a requirement to formalize HRM's commitment in a specific operational plan.

Therefore, staff is recommending that the Graffiti Management Plan be rescinded.

Because of Municipal Operation's key role in the service delivery and records management administration, it was determined that the Transportation and Public Works Business Unit would be best positioned to coordinate the overall approach to "operationalize" the policies established in the Graffiti Management Plan. The focus of the operational plans would be: **enforcement** managed by Halifax Regional Police; **abatement**, managed by Municipal Operations and **education, civic mindedness and communication** coordinated by Municipal Operations in conjunction with Corporate Communications, Community & Recreation Services and Halifax Regional Police. These operational groups in addition to community partners would make up the membership of the Operational Stakeholder Group, effectively replacing the existing governance structure. The Graffiti Task Force has not met since May 2011.

It is suggested that the newly formed Operational Stakeholder Group would meet quarterly during the first year to craft a stakeholder agreement; then semi-annually to discuss items/issues of concern.

Therefore, staff is recommending that the Operational Stakeholder Group replace the Graffiti Task Force as a means to engage representatives from partner agencies and community groups.

DISCUSSION

In order to determine the effectiveness of the proposed operational approach, a trial of the proposed Graffiti Abatement Plan (Appendix B) was undertaken in August 2011. The following information illustrates the success of this approach to date:

Graffiti Service Requests

Table 1 illustrates that calls from the public had increased substantially (35.5%) from 2009 to 2010 and again (by 17.9%) from 2010 to 2011. Calls for the first six (6) months of 2012 show a significant decrease that can mostly be attributed to the engaging of a contractor to focus strictly on graffiti within the peninsula boundary.

Table 1:

Graffiti	Service Requests via Call Centre	Directed to Community Response Team	# Resolved by Municipal Operations	% Resolved by Municipal Operations
2008	426	89	337	79.11%
2009	394	95	299	75.89%
2010	534	102	432	80.90%
2011	630	104	526	83.49%
2012	168	0	168	100%

NOTE: 2012 figures in this section are calculated from January 1, 2012 to June 30, 2012.

Graffiti Work Orders

Table 2 illustrates the success of a proactive approach to graffiti abatement. Completed work orders increased from 2008 to 2009 by almost 20%. They then dropped by 33% in 2010. Pro-actively identified work also spiked in 2009 and fell significantly in 2010 (-45%) and then rebounded in 2011 (120%). The number of tags removed from HRM assets so far in 2012 has been 5,367.

Table 2:

Graffiti	All Work Orders		Pro-actively Generated		
	Total	Year on Year % Change	Total	% of Total Work Orders	Year on Year % Change
2008	1,168	n/a	869	74.40%	n/a
2009	1,398	19.69%	1,198	85.69%	37.85%
2010	932	-33.33%	656	70.39%	-45.24%
2011	1,780	90.99%	1,448	81.35%	120.73%
2012	538		460	85.50%	

NOTE: 2012 figures in this section are calculated from January 1, 2012 to May 31, 2012.

Graffiti Occurrences Leading to Arrests

Table 3 illustrates that a focused approach to graffiti abatement has made it possible for enforcement to make numerous arrests. Police can now identify a string of tags on infrastructure applied as the tagger walks down a street; this was not possible without active control of the area.

The arrest and pending court dates of the problem “taggers” has also driven down the incidence of graffiti in the area.

Table 3:

GRAFFITI	Historical Graffiti Occurrences (reported to police)	Number Charged
2007	297	25
2008	188	17
2009	178	12
2010	239	18
2011	405	44
2012	78	11

In the review of graffiti management, staff did consider the merits of a Graffiti By-Law. Staff believes the best approach at this time is to use the Graffiti Abatement Plan to better operationalize the identification and eradication of graffiti. The Graffiti Abatement Plan recommends a proactive approach that deals with this issue at the grass roots level involving community partners and stakeholders.

Overall, the Graffiti Abatement Plan incorporates the guiding principles and policies of the Graffiti Management Plan, into an operational action plan that establishes clear accountabilities. One exception to this is the removal of the use of urban art in the management of graffiti. It has been determined based on research that urban art, although an important component of a vibrant community, no longer contributes to the prevention of graffiti. Therefore, the cultural aspects of urban art should not be associated with graffiti.

Going forward, with the assistance of the Operational Stakeholder Group, staff will continue to use the Graffiti Abatement Plan to guide the efforts for the identification and eradication of graffiti.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no budget implications to this report; funding has been established through operational efficiencies and reallocation of budget during the 2012/13 budget process to this priority.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES/BUSINESS PLAN

This report complies with the Municipality’s Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Project and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Project and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

No community engagement was sought. If Council is in agreement with the recommendations, business partners and community will be engaged in approach.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

No environmental implications as a consequence of this report.

ALTERNATIVES

No alternatives were considered.

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A – HRM's Graffiti Management Plan, (Adopted 2006, Updated 2009)

Appendix B – Graffiti Abatement Plan, 2012

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.html> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

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Appendix A

HRM's Graffiti Management Plan

INTRODUCTION

HRM's Mayor and Council are committed to providing a clean, vibrant, safe and welcoming atmosphere for all residents, workers and visitors. As part of this commitment, HRM has created a Graffiti Management Plan.

Since 2002, HRM has dedicated resources towards the removing of graffiti and advising how to reduce the likelihood of property from being targeted by graffiti vandals. The issue continues to grow and pose challenges.

The Graffiti Management Plan encapsulates a whole community approach, meaning it recognizes that graffiti occurs on a range of public and private property and affects the whole community. Accordingly, the responsibility for managing graffiti will be most effective when all the stakeholders participate and a multi-faceted approach is applied.

CHAPTER ONE

THE BACKGROUND

1.1 What is Graffiti

Graffiti is a form of vandalism (property damage) where property is marked or defaced through the use of spray cans, markers or any form of paint, without the permission of the property owner. The word 'graffiti' derives from the ancient Greek (*yrafo*, meaning 'to write') and from Latin (*graffito*, 'scratch'). There are a number of forms of graffiti. The most commonly seen are "tags" and "throw-ups" which usually appear on highly visible areas such as buildings and railway sidings.

- a) **Tagging** – style of calligraphy writing that is an identification mark representing the name of an individual or group
- b) **Throw-ups** – 'fat' bubble style outline of a word (usually a tag name) drawn quickly
- c) **Political or social comments** – slogans used to signal concern about particular issues
- e) **Piece**– generally a more complex work involving some form of 'artistry'. They are usually a highly stylized and colourful version of a tag or crew name
- f) **Etching** - scratching of a surface through use of rock, etching tools and or sharp objects.

1.2 Who is Writing Graffiti?

People who write graffiti are often named "graffiti bombers", "graffitists", "graffiti vandal", "graffiti artist", "graffers" or simply "writers". In HRM, there does not appear to be a typical demographic for writers. While many teenagers are involved, many bombers continue well into their twenties and thirties.

1.3 Why is Graffiti a Problem?

There are many people in HRM, particularly graffiti vandals, who do not view graffiti to be a problem. Rather, they strongly support graffiti as a form of expression. However, most of HRM's residents and many business owners view graffiti, as the criminal offence that it is. The problems with graffiti can be generally categorized into the following:

a) **Physical danger**

Graffiti is often performed in dangerous and difficult to access locations, such as beside railway lines and on high buildings. Vandals who manage to tag in higher and more difficult locations achieve a higher stature amongst the graffiti subculture.

b) Community perceptions of “disorder”

Graffiti adds to community perceptions of “disorder”, fear of criminal activity and feelings of general “lawlessness” in our society. Graffiti leads to social decline including alcohol, drugs, litter, broken glass.

c) Graffiti may involve young people in cross offending behaviour

Young people who are involved with graffiti may also be involved with other minor offences such as shoplifting for materials, fighting between crews or individuals, vandalism and forceful entry to private property.

d) The costs to the community

The financial costs of graffiti are significant including the resources of staff, police, legal systems, corrections, graffiti removal, administration and management expenses, insurance premiums, and treatment of properties for prevention.

1.4 HRM’s Graffiti Experience

The experience of graffiti in HRM is not unlike that experienced by many other municipalities. Graffiti is found on a variety of public and privately owned property throughout the municipality. There is not necessarily any particular pattern to where it appears, although some places have become popular and regular canvasses for graffiti. These places include but are not limited to:

- a) Railway lines
- b) Capital District Retail Core
- c) Regional and Major Commercial Streetscapes
- d) Community Recreation Centres and Schools
- e) Parks and Playgrounds
- f) Highway overpasses/bridges
- g) Fences
- h) Street furniture and equipment (ie. light poles, mailboxes, traffic signs, and bus shelters)
- i) Utilities (electrical boxes and pumping stations etc.)

1.5 The History of HRM’s Graffiti Initiative

In 2002 the Community Response Team (CRT) was established. The CRT was created to respond to community crime prevention issues, including taking a lead role in graffiti eradication.

As a first step, the CRT retained Inspector Heinz Kuck from the Toronto Police Service, a well known expert in Graffiti, to conduct training and education workshop sessions. The workshops were intended to provide HRM staff with a good understanding of Toronto’s approach to graffiti management, which focussed on:

- Eradication
- Education
- Empowerment
- Enforcement, and
- Economic development.

In 2003, the CRT formally launched HRM's Graffiti Eradication Program, which was based on Toronto's approach. The program recommended several key actions including:

- establish and train staff in removal of graffiti
- coordinate education
- establish and maintain graffiti removal equipment
- liaise with Dept of Justice in the placement of people for community service
- catalogue and file all incidents of graffiti
- coordinate cleanup in a timely fashion
- coordinate CPTED audits
- promote anti graffiti program
- liaise with HRP, RCMP and other business units

1.6 HRM's Progress

HRM staff have been busy with graffiti removal off HRM assets since the launch of the eradication program. Further, the HRM call centre takes reports of graffiti on HRM owned assets from the general public at which time Public Works staff are assigned to remove the graffiti. Further, a partnership has been established with the Halifax Regional School Board, Aliant, Nova Scotia Power, and Canada Post, such that the HRM call centre will accept calls from the general public of graffiti on their respective assets. This information is forwarded to each Partner for removal. Graffiti has cost HRM and its Partners millions of dollars over the years (includes labour costs, equipment, vehicle expenses, police response, mural programs etc).

A number of HRM staff regularly deliver education programs about graffiti. The RCMP currently deliver a Graffiti Awareness Program targeting school aged children, while HRP conducts modules on anti-graffiti aimed at Junior and High School Students. A Graffiti Information Brochure and a children's flyer was produced to educate the public, and community meetings are attended by the CRT to educate residents on how to prevent and report graffiti incidences. The CRT also annually mans a booth during Police Week to promote awareness of the detriment of graffiti to a neighbourhood.

Upon the laying of charges HRM conducts mediation sessions with the offenders, parents and Community Justice representatives. These sessions are intended to raise the level of awareness among the violators and parents, of the true impact of graffiti.

1.7 Why is a Graffiti Management Plan Necessary?

Despite HRM's progress on many fronts, graffiti remains a challenge. Graffiti is viewed as a blight on the urban landscape perpetuating feelings of a community that is dangerous and uncared for.

The cost of graffiti is considerable for HRM in terms of removal from assets. Even more challenging are the immense number of privately owned buildings, as well as assets owned by public utilities and other levels of governments to which HRM has no direct control. When HRM spends funds on maintaining its own assets, and adjacent private property owners don't, it ultimately increases HRM costs. It has been proven that where graffiti is not removed, it increases, by spreading onto abutting properties.

This Plan is required because there is a need for a more coordinated, multifaceted approach to graffiti management. There needs to be a clear message to all citizens that graffiti is a crime, is unwelcome and will not be tolerated. In HRM the Plan must articulate Council's commitment to getting tough on graffiti and to generate lasting change in attitudes and behaviour towards graffiti.

1.8 What Best Practices Research Says

Communities worldwide continue to grapple with graffiti and in response have adopted graffiti management strategies. Given that HRM still has much to do in the area of managing graffiti, the best practice research may provide added insight into areas for improvement. The following is a brief overview of some of the key findings of a best practice research. These findings have been considered in the overall context of the policies contained within the graffiti management plan

- a) Communities are looking to HRM for leadership on the graffiti issue, and to work with communities to address the problem
- b) HRM is seen as having an essential financial role to play in supporting private properties in the removal of graffiti. At this point in time, there is no legislation in place forcing property owners to maintain their property free of graffiti, however, legislation is in the discussion stage
- c) The prompt removal of graffiti is widely seen as an effective deterrent to further hits
- d) Many view private property owners as victims of graffiti who should not be punished for having graffiti on their properties. While there is no legislation in place forcing private property owners to maintain their property free of graffiti, they can participate in the Graffiti Management Plan by taking civic pride in their property and neighbourhood. Where resources permit, HRM will provide some level of assistance
- e) HRM encourages artistic opportunities through approved designated spaces for public art

initiatives

- f) No artistic work shall be located within a heritage conservation area unless discussed first with HRM Heritage Planners
- g) Creators of urban art are generally very critical of the tagging, hateful messages, etching, etc., which they consider simple vandalism. Most graffiti vandals indicate they would not target other properties if legitimate spaces were made available, but also recognize that taggers and vandals may not be dissuaded by legitimate spaces
- h) Education is seen by many as a key to reducing graffiti:
 - Education on the implications of not removing graffiti;
 - Education of property owners, business owners and communities as to how to prevent and cost-effectively deal with graffiti;
 - Education of vandals and their parents regarding the damage graffiti vandals cause and the penalties they may face;
 - Education of the legal system as to the importance of prosecutions and deterrent penalties.
- i) There is support for more aggressive policing for apprehending and charging graffiti vandals and requiring them to remove graffiti as part of their punishment or providing monies to cover the cost of removal
- j) Business improvement associations are viewed as important mechanisms for fighting graffiti on retail properties
- k) Working with private property owners to encourage removal of graffiti from assets they own, including offering graffiti removal kits where appropriate and clean blitz in retail core and high profile pedestrian areas throughout the municipality
- l) Providing information and advice on how to prevent graffiti vandals from targeting their property is important
- m) Property taxes may be increased to enhance the Plan.

CHAPTER TWO

THE POLICY

The Graffiti Management Plan is a municipal wide approach to graffiti management that incorporates a range of actions to be implemented over the next several years that will not only prevent and clean-up graffiti but improve our engagement with the people who are involved in the crime of graffiti. While Council is providing leadership to this Plan, its ultimate success will come from all stakeholders – residents, businesses, institutions, graffiti vandals and property owners participating in graffiti management.

2.1 The Goal

The goal of the Graffiti Management Plan is:

To reduce the prevalence of graffiti in HRM:

2.2 The Objectives:

- a) To adopt best practice initiatives deployed in other municipalities
- b) To remove graffiti as quickly as possible as a deterrent
- c) To encourage preventative techniques as a deterrent to graffiti
- d) To involve the business community, community organizations, individual residents, and youth as partners in reducing graffiti
- e) To ensure a good understanding of the factors that motivate individuals to commit illegal activities and anti-social behaviours
- f) To ensure legal instruments necessary for discouraging and responding to graffiti are in place.

2.3 The Guiding Principle Statements

While it is not possible to eliminate graffiti altogether, the policies contained herein are intended to reduce the prevalence of graffiti. The approach to graffiti management is guided by a series of statements which will guide all decisions and policy directions.

GP1 HRM recognizes that in order to reduce the prevalence of graffiti, a range of strategies and a 'whole-of-community' approach is required.

- GP2 HRM recognizes that there is great value in programs which focus on the prevention of graffiti before it occurs.
- GP3 HRM acknowledges that as far as possible, measures taken to remove graffiti need to be prompt and environmentally friendly.
- GP4 HRM recognizes graffiti to be a crime, and
- GP5 HRM is committed to working at the community level to address graffiti issues.

2.4 The Strategic Focus

HRM has a critical leadership role to play in the successful engagement of government, the private sector and the broader community necessary to prevent and remove graffiti. To fulfill this role this Plan provides a comprehensive approach based on the following 7 strategic areas of focus:

1. Zero Graffiti Tolerance
2. Rapid Removal and Monitoring
3. Community Awareness and Education
4. Prevention and Diversion
5. Active Enforcement
6. Community and Corporate Partnerships
7. Understanding & Engaging Graffiti Sub Culture

Part One

ZERO GRAFFITI TOLERANCE

Graffiti is a major concern for all of HRM. Therefore, HRM's approach to graffiti management will focus on HRM in its entirety being designated a 'no tolerance' graffiti zone.

By creating a 'no tolerance' graffiti zone HRM wide, it is intended to send a clear message that graffiti is not tolerated in any area of HRM. Specifically, all communities HRM wide will be encouraged to take civic pride as it pertains to graffiti clean-up, with HRM providing available resources for monitoring and policing. Local business communities and other government and corporate partners are encouraged to focus their efforts in this direction as well.

- Policy 1 HRM in its entirety will be designated a 'no tolerance' graffiti zone.
- Policy 2 Pursuant to Policy 1, HRM will seek the commitment of corporate and other government partners to take civic pride as it pertains to graffiti removal off their property.
- Policy 3 Pursuant to Policy 1, HRM will provide available resources for monitoring and policing, to proactively identify graffiti incidents.
- Policy 4 In an effort to make HRM graffiti free, artists will be provided with opportunities to express and showcase their creativity in a positive manner, through the identification of new opportunity sites for their work.
- Policy 5 Notwithstanding Policy 4, no graffiti opportunity site shall be located within a heritage conservation or streetscape area unless discussed first with HRM Heritage Planners.

Part Two

RAPID REMOVAL AND MONITORING

Experience shows that quick removal of graffiti from the time of its occurrence is very important in the overall reduction of graffiti. This is due primarily to the fact that graffiti vandals tend to become easily discouraged and will not continue in a particular area where their work has been rapidly and repeatedly removed.

The challenge with rapid removal is that the degree of effectiveness depends on graffiti being removed from the entire area. This obviously is more complicated where graffiti is found on properties other than those owned by HRM.

HRM has focussed graffiti removal on HRM owned assets.

Removal Service from HRM Owned Assets

- Policy 6 HRM will regularly monitor, report, record and assess the level of graffiti vandalism on HRM owned assets.
- Policy 7 HRM will remove graffiti from HRM owned assets within 3 business days of notification, and 5 business days in the outer core (outside the Capital District area).
- Policy 8 Notwithstanding Policy 7, HRM will remove graffiti from HRM owned assets that contains racist, obscene or offensive material immediately upon notification, not exceeding a maximum of 24 hours.
- Policy 9 All solvents, additives or products used by HRM for removing graffiti will be handled with ecologically sound practices to minimize harm to the environment and to comply with relevant environmental law and policies.
- Policy 10 HRM will ensure that prior to removal of graffiti from heritage buildings and monuments (structures of special significance), Public Works staff will first discuss same with HRM Heritage Planners.

Integrated Removal Service

- Policy 11 Litter, stickers, bubblegum, posters, broken glass, liquor bottles and drug paraphernalia are intrinsically linked with graffiti in their negative impact on HRM's environment. Therefore, stickers, posters, litter etc. found within the vicinity of the graffiti will be removed as a component of the overall removal service.

- Policy 12 Pursuant to Policy 7, while removing graffiti, within a distance of at least 10 metres from the point of the incident as well as 10 metres back from where a side street intersects, HRM will scan and remove other incidents of graffiti, litter, posters, stickers, etc.

Graffiti Removal From Private property

- Policy 13 HRM will provide assistance to private property owners with the removal and prevention of graffiti through introduction of a graffiti removal program, focussing on, but not limited to:
- a) providing Graffiti Removal Tool Kits (subject to availability)
 - b) conducting targeted 'blitzes' through community cleanups, and
 - c) intervening where graffiti is racist or obscene.

Other Government, Agencies and Corporations

- Policy 14 HRM has partnered with Halifax Regional School Board, Aliant, Nova Scotia Power and Canada Post. Other governments, agencies and corporations will be approached, to become partners and work toward a common standard as set out in Policies 1 and 2.
- Policy 15 Notwithstanding Policy 3 and 4, HRM may consider establishing agreements with public authorities, other levels of government, agencies and commissions to remove graffiti where the costs can be recouped and where resources are available.

Part Three

COMMUNITY AWARENESS & EDUCATION

Education is absolutely key to a successful graffiti management program. A more informed community is more likely to adopt prevention measures and change from being passive victims to becoming active participants combatting graffiti within their community. The proposed policy aims to raise community awareness of the graffiti vandalism problem, its impact on the whole community, and the prevention and diversionary measures that are available.

Information

- Policy 16 HRM will minimize misconceptions around graffiti and community safety that arise from a lack of information and knowledge through the ongoing provision of information on a) the complex nature of graffiti, b) the causes, and c) the costs of graffiti to society.
- Policy 17 HRM will raise public awareness on the importance of reporting graffiti and how to report graffiti.

Messaging

- Policy 18 HRM will reinforce the message that graffiti is a crime and not acceptable in HRM through educational materials and communications.
- Policy 19 HRM will engage local media and corporate partners to assist in educating and informing the public on graffiti management and to reinforce the message that graffiti is a crime and not acceptable in HRM.

Social Marketing and Accountability

- Policy 20 HRM will aim to reverse anti-social behaviours such as graffiti, littering, etc through a sustainable social marketing campaign.

Part Four

PREVENTION AND DIVERSION

Prevention and diversion are an important component of any graffiti management plan. The rationale behind this preventative and diversionary technique is to gradually change the attitudes and behaviours of graffiti vandals.

Preventative techniques refer mostly to environmental measures that are used to minimize the opportunity or occurrences of graffiti vandalism. For instance, urban and building design features, and through the following of CPTED principles, are all measures that can be very effective in preventing graffiti.

Alternatively, social diversion focuses on engaging graffiti vandals to participate in positive community-based projects; developing a positive community image for youth, and implementing education about graffiti through the school system.

Preventative Measures

- Policy 21 HRM will consider the goal and objectives of the graffiti management plan and their relationship to community planning, public space, urban character and neighbourhood amenity.
- Policy 22 HRM will consider amending municipal permitting processes (ie. vending, construction, development) to ensure responsible graffiti management practices and implementation of CPTED principles are inherent.
- Policy 23 HRM will reduce the potential for creating environments that support criminal activity by implementing CPTED principles.

Restitution

- Policy 24 HRM will continue to pursue opportunities for graffiti offenders to make reparation for their offences and to assist in rehabilitation.

Part Five

ACTIVE ENFORCEMENT

Apprehending, prosecuting and obtaining restitution from offenders is a key element of successful graffiti management. Therefore, Police and legal tools are required to discourage the crime of graffiti.

An important aspect of an overall approach to enforcement is a coordinated supply of graffiti evidence. Police collect data on both the prevalence and nature of graffiti, linking the data to vandals.

The involvement of an entire community, both residents and business owners is necessary to fight this crime.

Legislative options to enhance graffiti reduction outcomes of this Plan have been discussed, such as a graffiti bylaw. New legislation may facilitate greater coordination and partnership between HRM, statutory and voluntary organizations, and private business.

Enforcement

- Policy 25 HRM will actively enforce all applicable laws as they relate to graffiti.
- Policy 26 Where resources allow, HRM will apply more aggressive and persistent enforcement practices in specific areas.
- Policy 27 As available resources dictate, HRM will move towards a gradual focusing of police resources to the following areas:
- a) building on existing database to assist investigations and prosecutions
 - b) placing increased emphasis on arresting and charging suspects wherever possible
 - c) targeting prolific graffiti crews
 - d) encouraging Crown Counsel in prosecuting offenders
 - e) encouraging the Neighbourhood Watch Program to include activities such as recording, reporting and voluntary eradication
 - f) involving Crime Stoppers in dealing with graffiti.

Surveillance

- Policy 28 Repeat graffiti is a problem that adds to the costs of removal and management of graffiti. Where feasible and resources allow, HRM will perform surveillance in areas known to be especially prone to repeat or prevalent graffiti vandalism.

Data Management

- Policy 29 Police will retain dated photographic evidence of each case of graffiti where charges are laid, for evidence in support of the prosecution of graffiti vandals.
- Policy 30 HRM will refine data collection methods to ensure the availability of statistics relating specifically to graffiti offences are readily available.
- Policy 31 HRM will continue to develop partnerships with other policing agencies to encourage the exchange and communication of data.

Legislation

- Policy 32 HRM will act as an advocate for legislative changes to give HRM greater power to deal effectively with graffiti vandalism.

Graffiti By Law

- Policy 33 HRM **may** consider adopting a Graffiti Bylaw to provide Council with the power to consider:
- a) facilitating the removal of graffiti from private property;
 - b) fining a property owner, manager or occupier if graffiti is not removed when directed to do so by an authorized officer; and
 - a) prohibiting retailers from displaying and selling graffiti implements
- Policy 34 Notwithstanding Policy 33, HRM will take all reasonable steps to avoid using a Graffiti Bylaw and its powers contained within by focussing on co-operative and constructive partnership arrangements with private property owners and occupiers to prevent, manage and remove graffiti.

Part Six

COMMUNITY & CORPORATE PARTNERSHIPS

Local communities have a significant role to play in graffiti management as they are best placed to understand their local environments and as such develop relevant solutions to local graffiti issues.

Local community organizations such as Neighbourhood Watch groups and Citizens on Patrol, should be supported and encouraged to facilitate the development of innovative and sustainable local approaches to graffiti management. Engaging residents in a range of volunteer based activities including surveillance and reporting has been an effective management technique.

Parental/guardian involvement and education is also a key component in preventing the crime of graffiti vandalism through observation, child-parent communications and parental observation that may help detect the involvement of youth in graffiti vandalism activities.

Individuals of all ages are involved in graffiti. Education on the detriments of graffiti on a community is an important aspect of graffiti management.

Widespread involvement of other government partners, agencies and corporations is also essential to addressing the complex issues associated with the effective management of graffiti. While corporations such as Aliant, and agencies such as the School Board continue to invest significant resources in prevention and clean-up of graffiti, considerable scope exists to engage other levels of government and the private sector.

Civic Accountability

- Policy 35 HRM will foster a greater sense of civic-mindedness in HRM adults and youth through focussed education on the value of community and skills for value-oriented thought and action within a context of social responsibility.
- Policy 36 HRM will focus resources towards rebuilding social control and increasing citizen accountability for its actions by facilitating the establishment of neighbourhood advocacy groups or organizations, and support them in activities.

Community Capacity

- Policy 37 HRM will enhance community awareness about their roles and actions and initiatives which might be taken to reduce and prevent graffiti including but not limited to:
- a) Detecting and reporting incidents of graffiti vandalism and identifying those responsible for the crime if possible

- b) Delivering educational programs to inform youth and adult audiences of the negative impact of graffiti to a community, its prevention, and the consequences related to graffiti vandalism
- c) Helping with distribution of graffiti tool kits to assist in removing graffiti
- d) Coordinating citizen efforts to combat graffiti vandalism
- e) Participating in community graffiti clean-up days
- f) Participating in anti-graffiti vandalism efforts wherever needed
- g) Working with respective neighbourhood groups
- h) Providing alternative legal artistic opportunities.

Policy 38 HRM will continue to assist communities and neighbourhoods to develop locally appropriate responses to graffiti prevention and management through ongoing education, information sessions, and community capacity building initiatives.

Corporate Partnerships

Policy 39 HRM will continue to encourage private sector support for the development and implementation of initiatives to address graffiti.

Policy 40 HRM will pursue formal agreements with the corporate sector and other level of government partners, to enter partnerships on joint graffiti management initiatives.

Policy 41 HRM will pursue funding from other levels of government in support of establishing strong community partnerships and developing innovative responses to graffiti in high priority areas that can be replicated elsewhere.

Policy 42 HRM may provide opportunities for private sector contributions through direct funding and/or in kind support for strategies to address graffiti at the local level.

Part Seven

UNDERSTANDING & ENGAGING GRAFFITI CULTURE

Understanding graffiti culture is crucial to developing some solutions to this problem as hard enforcement and removal will never totally eradicate graffiti.

While significant research has been undertaken into the nature and culture of graffiti, further work is required to investigate the factors that influence antisocial behaviours such as graffiti. The availability of such research will help in designing targeted intervention strategies to encourage more positive social outcomes.

Research

Policy 43 HRM will continue to research the graffiti culture.

Engaging Graffiti Vandals

Policy 44 HRM will engage graffiti vandals where possible in an effort to:

- a) reduce graffiti
- b) encourage and invite former vandals to act as mentors to younger individuals.

CHAPTER THREE

IMPLEMENTATION

This Plan identifies areas where further work is required to enhance HRM's approach to graffiti management. A number of HRM business units have a role in graffiti management. The success of this Plan will depend on HRM working collaboratively to maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of the Plan.

3.1 Who is Responsible for Implementing the Plan?

The HRM Community Response Team (CRT) will play the leadership role in the overall coordination and implementation of the Graffiti Management Plan. The CRT will be responsible for ensuring that the organization is aware and is subscribing to the policies contained within the Plan, and that the actions listed in this chapter are completed. The CRT will also be responsible for monitoring the Plan, reporting to Council on the success of the Plan, and identifying potential gaps or weaknesses that may require changes to policy and approach.

Beyond the CRT, the Graffiti Management Plan will require the ongoing cooperation and joint administration of a number of HRM business units and staff:

- a) Halifax Regional Police
- b) RCMP
- c) Community Development (Culture, and Heritage)
- d) Community Development (Community Arts Facilitator)
- e) Transportation and Public Works
- f) Corporate Communications
- g) Call Centre

In addition, the Plan's whole community approach will require that a number of key community and corporate stakeholders play an active role in its implementation such as (but not limited to):

- a) Halifax Regional School Board
- b) Canada Post
- c) Aliant
- d) Nova Scotia Power
- e) Clean NS
- f) BIDCs (Business Improvement District Commissions)
- g) Residents Associations
- h) Community watch groups
- i) Parents
- j) NS Justice Department
- k) Graffiti Vandals
- l) Youth

- Policy 45 The CRT will coordinate and oversee the overall implementation of HRM's Graffiti Management Plan.
- Policy 46 The CRT will establish and support a Graffiti Task Force comprised of police, other staff, Council and Partners to:
- a) Implement this Plan
 - b) Work jointly on sponsored events and programs
 - c) Share knowledge and information
 - d) Facilitate ongoing inter-divisional/organizational education on graffiti trouble spots, writing instruments and investigative techniques; and
 - e) Develop long term collaborative initiatives.
- Policy 47 The Graffiti Task Force will annually tie in a departmental budget and business plan process in its comprehensive approach to graffiti management.

3.2 Evaluation and Monitoring

It is important to evaluate and monitor the progress of the Plan and to keep Council and the community informed. A reporting element will be a key component of implementation. The effectiveness of the Graffiti Management Plan will be evaluated regularly and improvements made to the Plan where required. Evaluation will enable staff and Council to understand 'what works' in graffiti management and builds an evidence base for future programs.

In terms of monitoring, the focus should be on the impacts of the program against its objectives, and the benefits and costs of the intervention.

- Policy 48 HRM will adopt the following performance measures to accurately assess the success of this Graffiti Management Plan:
- a) The number of reported incidences of graffiti on HRM assets;
 - b) Participation in graffiti tool kit/community clean-up programs;
 - c) Level of successful legal action that has been taken against apprehended offenders;
 - d) Participation in art projects and youth programs;
 - e) Participation by Partners
 - f) Participation on Graffiti Task Force;
 - g) Level of participation by local businesses in graffiti removal and prevention;
 - h) Number of people accessing information about graffiti removal and prevention; and
 - i) Initiatives undertaken to educate community.

Policy 49 HRM will provide an annual report on the progress of HRM's approach to graffiti management.

3.3 Communications

Effective communication is particularly important for the long term implementation of this Plan. A good communication program will encourage ongoing community involvement in graffiti management and help to reduce the perceptions of disorder and fear of crime that graffiti can generate.

Policy 50 HRM will develop a graffiti communication plan that delivers a consistent message to all stakeholders and works to achieve the following:

- a) keep the community informed of the issues involved in graffiti management
- b) advise the community of solutions to the problem of graffiti
- c) encourage active community involvement in managing graffiti.

Adopted August, 2006
Updated October, 2009

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

GRAFFITI ABATEMENT PLAN - 2012

Transportation and Public Works (TPW), Municipal Operations' department is responsible for implementation and oversight of the Graffiti Abatement Plan. Graffiti abatement includes the monitoring, identification, removal and control of graffiti from all HRM assets within the Municipality. Municipal Operations works in partnership with Halifax Regional Police and Community and Recreation services to provide timely information on the occurrence of graffiti on public and private property and is the lead on engaging business and community stakeholders in active management of graffiti in the community.

Halifax Regional Police (HRP) maintains the lead on the active enforcement of existing laws and works in partnership with Municipal Operations, Community and Recreation Services (CRS) and Corporate Communications in creating community awareness and educational campaigns; these initiatives facilitates community pride and ultimately to the reduction and prevalence of graffiti.

Abatement Objectives

The approach is comprised of four key objectives:

1. Graffiti Removal

Objective: Using a blend of internal and external resources manage graffiti in order to mitigate and control the incidence of graffiti in HRM and provide an environment for police to make successful apprehensions.

2. Education and Civic Responsibility

Objective: In conjunction with HRP, CRS and Corporate Communications create an education and public awareness campaign using multiple media streams in order to raise the profile of HRM's tough on graffiti mandate and raise awareness of how communities can get involved in the solution.

Objective: Seek alignment and support from community partners in the mitigation and control of assets in public domain. Confirm commitment of these groups; become active and engaged community members in community sponsored events.

3. Enforcement

Objective: Halifax Regional Police (HRP) will actively enforce applicable laws as it pertains to graffiti.

Objective: HRP will continue to educate internal personnel, as well as, the general public on tactics for managing the proliferation of graffiti within the community.

4. Reporting and Communication

Objective: Create standardized reporting that measures key indicators of successful graffiti management.

Abatement Approach

1) Graffiti Removal Approach

TPW – Municipal Operations respects that HRM in its entirety has been designated a “no tolerance” graffiti zone. “Therefore the quick removal of graffiti from the time of its occurrence is very important in the overall reduction of graffiti; a timely response to graffiti tends to discourage vandalism over time and provide an environment for enforcement to be more effective. The challenge with rapid removal is that the degree of effectiveness depends on the graffiti being removed from the entire area; this is complicated by the fact that HRM does not own all the infrastructure on which graffiti is found. “ (Graffiti Management Plan, 2009)

In an effort maximize the effectiveness and success of the graffiti abatement program, this plan includes the involvement of government partners, agencies, corporations, as well as, the involvement of small businesses and residents in controlling graffiti to the greatest degree possible.

1a) Removal of Graffiti from all HRM owned assets:

Approach:

1. Municipal Operations will conduct a spring sweep of all Right of Ways (ROW's), parks, sport fields and exteriors of Municipal buildings. The spring sweep will also include the inventory of graffiti located on the assets of community partners and private property.
2. All graffiti that is located will be entered into the Hansen system and removed by internal resources or contractors within appropriate standard. HRM will remove graffiti from HRM owned assets within three (3) business days of notification and five (5) business days in the outer core subject to resources and weather permitting. Graffiti of an offensive nature will be removed within 24 hours of notification.
3. Community Partners will be invited to participate in the Graffiti Abatement Program by way of Service Level Agreements. Community Partners will also be invited to participate in an annual graffiti clean-up as a part of this agreement. (Graffiti “hot spots” within the core area only)
4. Municipal Operations staff will regularly monitor and report the presence of graffiti and take corrective action.
5. All Municipal Operations staff and contractors are trained in the appropriate use, care and storage of chemicals; all chemicals used will limit the impact on environment and human health.
6. Municipal Operations staff will notify HRM's heritage planners of removals requiring special consideration.
7. Municipal Operations staff will manage the removal of all litter from the general vicinity of graffiti “hot spots”.

1b) Graffiti Removal from Private Property:

HRM will provide assistance to private property owners with the removal and prevention of graffiti through introduction of a graffiti removal program, focusing on, but not limited to:

- a) providing Graffiti Removal Tool Kits
- b) conducting targeted blitzes through community cleanups
- c) intervening where graffiti is racist or obscene.

Approach:

1. Graffiti removal kits are available to the public at Municipal Operations two main depots – Turner Drive and MacKintosh Street, as well as, all HRM Customer Service Centres.
2. Municipal Operations will support community groups in the eradication of graffiti through the provision of graffiti kits and will sponsor an annual community clean-up within graffiti “hot spots” utilizing internal and contract resources. The annual clean-up will be offered free of charge to homeowners of single-family dwellings. Commercial businesses, community partners, and owner’s multi-unit dwellings will be invited to show their civic pride and participate in the annual community clean-up.
3. When racist or obscene graffiti is identified on private property, Municipal operations will work with By-Law Services to have offensive graffiti removed.

2) Education and Civic Accountability

Municipal Operations and Halifax Regional Police have a role to play in creating public awareness of the “no tolerance” policy as it relates to the defacement of public property and promoting civic mindedness to the reporting of graffiti incidences. “Education is absolutely key to this success; a more informed community is more likely to adopt prevention measures and change from being passive victims to becoming active participants in the removal of graffiti within their community”. (Graffiti Management Plan 2009)

“Local community organizations such as Neighbourhood Watch groups and Citizens on Patrol should be supported and encouraged to facilitate the development of innovative and sustainable local approaches to graffiti management. Engaging residents in a range of volunteer based activities including surveillance and reporting has been an effective management technique.” (Graffiti Management Plan, 2009)

Approach:

1. Municipal Operations will work with HRP and CRS in the delivery of community based education programs.
2. Municipal Operations will work with Corporate Communications, as well as, HRP and CRS on a comprehensive communication plan to support education and awareness.
3. Municipal Operations will take the lead on enhancing its graffiti web page to act as a central communication resource for the public.
4. Municipal Operations will work with community groups on a local abatement practice and seek involvement of community in an annual community clean-up.
5. Municipal Operations will work with government, agencies and partners towards alignment on an abatement approach that mirrors HRM's service standards.
6. Municipal Operations will work with the local business community to fund local clean-up initiatives.
7. HRP will offer a graffiti module within CPTED Level 1 training.
8. HRP will present graffiti modules to students within DARE programs.
9. HRP will develop a video as an educational tool.
10. HRP will dialogue with the community through Police Week.
11. HRP will develop skill-set training for police volunteers.

3) Enforcement

“Apprehending, prosecuting and obtaining restitution from offenders is a key element of successful graffiti management. Therefore, Police, HRM staff and partners are required to work together to discourage graffiti.

An important aspect of an overall approach to enforcement is a coordinated supply of graffiti evidence. Police collect data on both the prevalence and nature of graffiti, linking the data to vandals.

The involvement of an entire community, both residents and business owners is necessary to fight this crime.” (Graffiti Management Plan, 2009)

Approach:

1. HRP will coordinate to ensure successful conviction of graffiti vandals.
2. HRP will maintain database of occurrences and suspects.

3. HRP will strengthen relations with Municipal Operations to establish a protocol for capturing pictures as evidence prior to removal.
4. HRP will liaise with CRS compliance staff on racial or offensive incidents.
5. HRP will liaise with Crime Stoppers which continues to be a tool that can be relied upon for people reporting graffiti anonymously.
6. HRP will host a graffiti enforcement workshop for NS Municipal Policing agencies for the purposes of sharing databases.
7. HRP will advocate for stiffer penalties for repeat offenders.
8. HRP will continue to develop programs for adult diversion and restorative justice for more positive outcomes.

4) Reporting and Communciation

Approach:

Municipal Operations will work with HRP and CRS to create standardized reporting that measure key indicators of successful graffiti management. This includes, but is not limited to:

- a) Number of reported incidences of graffiti on HRM assets; partner assets and private property.
- b) Number of incidences of graffiti removed from HRM assets; partner assets and private property.
- c) Participation rate of community cleanup programs.
- d) Number of graffiti kits dispensed to the public.
- e) Level of successful legal action that has been taken against apprehended offenders
- f) Participation by Partners.
- g) Level of participation by local businesses in graffiti removal and prevention.
- h) Number of people accessing information about graffiti removal and prevention from website.
- i) Initiatives undertaken to educate the community.
- j) Provide quarterly updates to DCAO.