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Graffiti Abatement Program in the City of East Palo Alto

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Graffiti Abatement Program in East Palo Alto

Graffiti Abatement Program in the City of East Palo Alto:

by

Oscar Ortiz

A Thesis Quality Research Project
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the
Masters of Public Administration

Prof. Frances Edwards. Ph.D.

The Graduate School

San Jose State University

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BACKGROUND

What is Graffiti?

Graffiti are inscriptions made on walls or other surfaces that are displayed for public viewing. Graffiti also pertains to a variety of markings, paintings, or drawings that mar the appearance of public and private property that turn into disorder and gang problems. (Abel & Buckley, 1977)

Modern graffiti illustrate the complex relationships of modern society, and the policies pertaining to space utilization encourage conflict between property-owners and property users. The current policies of many cities aim to reduce graffiti for a better quality of life, but graffiti writings continue to occur, vandalizing cities and defacing property. Graffiti reduces the value of properties, diminishes the quality of life, and negatively affects cities' images.. Moreover, today's graffiti is an indication of neighborhood deterioration, creates fear of local corruption, and gives the impression of instability. In addition, it generates an impression that community members lack consideration for the aesthetics of their neighborhoods . Community participation through volunteerism is important because healthy and sustainable communities need to develop collaborative problem-solving strategies that deal with both graffiti and graffiti writers (Abel & Buckley, 1977).

According to Winchester, Davidson, and O'Brien, (1996), "Graffiti have been found all over the world in sites ranging in antiquity from Ancient Rome to Pompeii to modern cities" (2). The term graffiti has been used to mean decoration or defacement, depending on the point of view. Graffiti attempt to mark, scar, and vandalize public spaces to contextualize visible resistance (Hermer & Hunt, 1996). According to Bowen (1999), "The term graffiti encompasses

place, style, and purpose. (24)” The graffiti writer uses words or symbols to mark spaces in the neighborhood.

Nowadays, gang activities and violence bring problems derived from stagnant economy, lack of opportunities, and hardships of poverty on adolescents who grow in inner-city neighborhoods. Youth’s vision of the future and their sense of social competence and identity are shaped by the environment where they live: family, schools, community organizations, prevailing culture, and economic factors (Lübbers, 2007).

Graffiti is produced violating the law and accompanied by other criminal activities, such as trespassing on private property, breaking into train yards, vandalizing overpasses, and street signage (Kramer, 2010). In other words, graffiti is accompanied by criminal activities, and represents a culture that operates on the defiant attitude towards the mainstream culture that graffiti writers live in. According to Miller in the review essay on Jeff Ferrell’s *Crime of Style*, Ferrell says, “The politics of graffiti writing are those of anarchism” (1993, 172). Miller (2002) states that graffiti is a “Response to the class tensions and combat the impositions of a consumer society by reshaping the alphabet to redefine their own identities and their environment” (85). However, Janice Rhan (2002) says that, “Graffiti is an adolescent obsession with knowledge/power and the struggle into adulthood that derives into such transition for teenagers” (143).

Graffiti Removal

The City of East Palo Alto’s Municipal Code defines graffiti as, “Any unauthorized inscription, word, design, or writing which is marked, drawn, painted, etched or scratched on any building, structure, fence, wall, street or sidewalk” (8.36.020).

Also, the city council determined that, “Graffiti constitutes a form of serious visual blight that degrades the appearance of the community, the value of property, and the quality of life...often associated with gang membership and activity; therefore, graffiti is declared as a public nuisance” (8.36.010).

In order to remove graffiti, the City needs a written order issued by the city manager. The order will describe, “The graffiti to be removed and its location upon the property, and indicate a date by which the removal work must be completed. In case the removal is not completed; the city will remove the defacement and all costs will be billed to the property owner” (8.36.040).

According to Deborah Weisel (2006), the problem of graffiti has expanded from large cities to small towns, and graffiti are not limited to gangs. Moreover, graffiti have a cumulative effect because they attract more graffiti and add to lost profits related to fewer riders using public transportation, decreased store and business sales, and lowering property values, while generating fear of gang activity among the population. Common targets and location of graffiti are public and private real estate next to freeways, storefronts on side streets, over-passes, landmarks, and any other highly trafficked areas. Graffiti writing gives the graffitiist an adrenaline rush, a feeling of dominance, and controlled danger that make it attractive for perpetrators. Rapid graffiti removals reduce its occurrence by providing increased monitoring of graffiti-prone locations in the process of the removal. Weisel (2006) says that there are four methods of elimination or erasing:

- 1) Painting over graffiti: it is the most common and relatively cheapest method because it requires no special skills or technology.
- 2) Removing graffiti chemically: there are many products that can be used for the removal, but on certain porous surfaces they may create a shadow of the graffiti.
- 3) Cleaning graffiti off: many surfaces can be cleaned of graffiti with high-pressure water jets and sometimes baking soda to remove graffiti from cement and unpainted surfaces.

4) Replacing signs, materials and other items vandalized: it is the appropriated way for surfaces where graffiti cannot be painted over, chemically removed or cleaned (24-25).

Likewise, there are strategies that can be adopted to increase the level of effort required to offend in graffiti-heavy areas. Surfaces can be modified with anti-graffiti coverings that allow for easier cleaning of the defaced property, and also raise the level of difficulty for writing on the surfaces:

- 1) Paint-like products such as polyurethane-based coatings that are resistant to graffiti and easy to clean.
- 2) Wash-off coatings such as wax or silicon applications on walls or buildings.
- 3) Textured surfaces are difficult for offenders to draw on or paint such as exposed rock, rough cement and stainless steel.
- 4) Dark or colorful surfaces make graffiti less visible and deter offenders.
- 5) Non-solid surfaces such as open-grill storefront security screens rather than solid panels.
- 6) Easily cleaned materials maybe installed in highly vulnerable areas Weisel (2006, 29).

It is important to point out that environmental design can limit graffiti and reduce the opportunity for graffiti (Weisel 2006).

Wilson's Broken Windows Theory

According to Wilson and Kelly (1982),

Disorder and crime are usually inextricably linked... if a window in a building is broken and it is left unrepaired, all the rest of the windows will soon be broken as a signal that no one cares, and so breaking more windows costs nothing (457).

In other words, the "Broken-windows theory" argues that not taking time and effort to control minor offenses such as graffiti writing and disorderly conduct destabilizes communities through generating a feeling of chaos and lack of control. If the area is perceived as unsafe, community residents move out of the neighborhood or remain indoors, weakening social controls

that work to keep criminals in check, because crime causes more crime, eventually leading to crimes of greater magnitude.

Neighborhoods free of graffiti are more walkable, make people feel safer, and they are more desirable for community residents. Likewise, streets free of graffiti have greater social capital, higher property values and attract more residents than those containing graffiti.

This research project will be of interest for community residents, local government, and non-profit organizations in the City of East Palo Alto. The three main objectives for this project are:

1. Strengthen or establish a relationship between community residents and officials in the City of East Palo Alto.
2. Provide data for local government officials that will help abate graffiti throughout the city.
3. Offer recommendations to improve neighborhood safety, sense of security, and appearance in East Palo Alto

The research question for this report is: How can community participation help abate graffiti in the City of East Palo Alto?

Social and Economic Effects of Graffiti

Graffiti abatement programs are repetitive costs that cities try to minimize or avoid. Therefore, local officials seek to incorporate community volunteer participation programs that improve the well being of its residents, sense of safety, and eliminate the eyesore that it causes to neighborhoods. Moreover, graffiti contributes to disordered appearances, increasing crime, and

lowering property value. (Docuyanan, 2000) Therefore, the City of East Palo Alto can encourage community participation to deal with this problem.

Graffiti is a common issue found not only in commercial corridors but also in residential areas and parks. There is a high cost for cleanup and prevention (Docuyanan, 2000). Graffiti expressions have a degrading effect in neighborhoods because a ‘run-down’ property or building can bring down real estate value, making it difficult for people to have quality of life, and self-pride in their communities (Docuyanan, 2000). Therefore, this report has been developed to understand and provide specific local strategies and patterns of graffiti in order to develop a comprehensive strategy for graffiti abatement supported by volunteers from the community.

History of Graffiti Abatement Efforts in the United States

In the 1960’s when graffiti appearances began to pop up much more frequently around the United States, law enforcement knew that they had to find a way to deal with it. The first step, while obvious, was a difficult one for some cities to recognize and want to face, simply that they had a problem. That period of time already had enough taboo activities for elected officials and law enforcement to monitor and reassure communities about, without having to add graffiti to the list. (Perkins, Wandersman, Rich, and Taylor, 1993) The first responses to the graffiti problem were to cover it up or remove it, i.e. painting over it, removing it chemically or physically such as with a power washer.

As the problem escalated, communities became frustrated because they had limited resources to remove the graffiti, and it was not being addressed at the state or federal level. Community leaders realized that the problem of graffiti writing existed within their local residents and thus, that is how it should be taken care of. Community volunteer programs

became increasingly popular for graffiti abatement (Perkins et al., 1993). The Broken Windows Theory also brings to light another important aspect of graffiti removal that officials were realizing, which is time. The faster the graffiti came down, the better. According to Black (1997), “The entire point of graffiti is to be seen and noticed, if it is immediately removed, then so is the motivation to put it up in the first place” (25). As graffiti has adapted, so has the ability to prevent and remove it. And now in our modern world, sensors and cameras can be used in high graffiti traffic areas, when financially possible. The overwhelming factors effecting graffiti abatement today are community involvement, community education, allocated finances, and expediency of removal (Black, 1997).

History of Graffiti Abatement Efforts in California

The state of California has faced one of the most intense graffiti problems around the nation, the City of Los Angeles in particular. According to Docuayan (2000),

In the 1950s writing on the walls could usually be categorized by who wrote it. If the writer was a recent immigrant, the content was usually political. If the person was white, there were often bad words. If writers were Chicanos; it was customarily the name of the group, small and confined to the neighborhood in which the group lived (107).

Similarly, to the graffiti abatement efforts around the country, California has struggled to keep its neighborhoods graffiti free. Therefore, legislation has been enacted to curtail the vandalism and punish offenders seeking to discourage them. Pressure from homeowners associations, law enforcement, business owners, and other groups have driven legislative modifications since 1980 (Docuayan, 2000). Section 594 of the California Penal Code

(vandalism and malicious mischief) is the most used code by law enforcement officials and prosecutors to control graffiti writers,

(a) Every person who maliciously commits any of the following acts with respect to any real or personal property not his or her own, in cases other than those specified by state law, and is guilty of vandalism:

- (1) Defaces with graffiti or other inscribed material.
- (2) Damages.
- (3) Destroys (Cal. Pen. Code § 594).

Meticulously and fully imposed, a graffiti abatement regulation can have a drastic effect on discouraging graffiti and re-establishing the neighborhood's feeling of well-being. Cities can enforce ordinances and hold taggers, or in the case of minors, the taggers' parents, responsible for the cost of the graffiti removal or cover-up. This keeps the city and victims of the crime from having to pay, and discourages these offenses in the future. According to Docuayan (2000),

Legislative modifications are animated by deep concerns about controlling, regulating, and monitoring the use of owned property. As the rights and interests of property owners have been challenged and violated by organized groups of graffiti writers, laws have been modified to increase fines, jail time, and other punishments (109).

According to Western Cities (2013) some costs that need be considered when forming a graffiti ordinance include:

Cleanup costs incurred by the city; attorneys' fees spent on the graffiti abatement, including any court action to recover the expenses; court costs; repair or replacement costs; and law-enforcement costs involved in identifying and apprehending the tagger (2).

However, if cities can recover costs and deter graffiti writers, the effort is worth it.

METHODOLOGY

There are three methods of research employed for this project. The first was library research. The term “graffiti” was searched for in several databases. Then, the bibliographies of articles found in the search were used to find other related articles. Also, cities that had established plans to deal with graffiti, ordinances, and their implementations were analyzed. Following that process, the scope of the research was narrowed down to three cities in the state of California with similar demographics to East Palo Alto: Healdsburg, Garden Grove, and Watsonville. The research then compared policy documents, identifying the most recurring and important themes among the similar cities listed above that had already implemented graffiti abatement programs.

The second measure taken in the research was to interview local officials in East Palo Alto. The researcher surveyed leaders of the Community Development Department and the Public Works Department. These departments provided contact information for individuals involved in community programs, to facilitate gathering volunteers for the graffiti abatement pilot projects.

Third, a participant observer approach was used to develop and implement a pilot program for graffiti removal in East Palo Alto. Participants were then surveyed to develop findings on the benefits of such a project. The ultimate outcome was a recommendation to the East Palo Alto leadership on graffiti abatement strategies that would be appropriate for their city.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review provides a background on what graffiti is and how to deal with it. Some of the references here take diverse approaches. The review also offers an overview that considers different ways in which graffiti has been perceived and the manner with which it was done.

The research relies on a wide range of academic literature. The literature on graffiti studies includes cities from coast to coast in the United States. It draws from literature dealing with the development of culture associated with graffiti, origins of graffiti, and graffiti evolution throughout communities. The report also includes information from government sources, such as policy-oriented literature on graffiti that has been developed by cities and law enforcement.

There are a wide variety of views regarding graffiti and the most effective methods to control its incidence and dealing with the graffiti already present. The literature evaluated for this report includes research on topics related to graffiti, graffiti removal, and policies surrounding the act of defacing property, as well covering or removing graffiti. The literature is categorized in three themes: studies on graffiti, the spread of graffiti, and understanding graffiti. The intent is to provide information regarding the history and context of graffiti to be used in conjunction with local knowledge of graffiti. It begins with a brief background of graffiti followed by a discussion of the current issues regarding graffiti.

Graffiti as a Social Phenomenon

Graffiti comes from the Italian word “graffiare” which means to scratch and the singular is graffito. Graffiti has become a form of communication that uses crude inscriptions and thoughts about society. Most often, graffiti inscriptions are signed by authors who identify themselves by

using nicknames that express their inner feelings. “Every graffito can be seen as a miniature autobiography of a member of a society for it reveals a part of himself and his society in all he writes” (Abel and Buckley, 1977).

The motivation behind the writing of private graffiti is unconscious impulses and conflicts that tend to touch on many themes, such as personal expression, anger against society or an escape mechanism. Also, graffiti “reflect the nature of the society that produce them, and more particularly the emotional make-up of the individual graffitiists” (Abel and Buckley, 1977, p. 19). People see graffiti as a public eyesore, (the graffitiists) emerge from neighborhoods individually or in gangs, spray can or felt pen in hand ready to leave marks. Visible places, such as buses and, signposts, are the targets (Abel and Buckley, 1977).

Alex Alonso (1998) emphasizes the concepts of location, culture, authority, and individuality by the use of graffiti. Alonso mentions that “In the past psychologists, sociologists, linguistics, law enforcement, anthropologists, and geographers have studied graffiti to interpret adolescent personality, ancient cultures, sexual attitudes, artistic style, and gender differences” (p, 3). Alonso (1998) classifies graffiti into five types:

- (1) Existential: Existential graffiti is the most common form of graffiti overall because contains personal commentaries regarding race, religion, sexuality, and outward manifestations of personality.
- (2) Tagging: It is the most common type of graffiti inscribed on the walls, public restrooms, buses, and trains with the purpose of gaining recognition in as many places as possible, and taggers constantly try to ‘tag’ the most obscure and inaccessible places such as freeway overpasses to gain fame.
- (3) Piecing: Piecing is a decorative expression of the name that demands an artistic skill and understanding of aerosol paint control. Thus, being a “piecer” is seen as an ability that requires a technique and style more sophisticated than that of a tagger, and more time.
- (4) Political: Political graffiti is the most open type of graffiti and anybody can understand the message conveyed.
- (5) Gang: It communicates sentiments, expresses group identity and dictates rules of socially constructed places. This type of graffiti is boastful, makes claims of supremacy, threatens other gangs, and makes territorial claims (13).

According to Joe Austin (2001), graffiti writing is “A long-standing aesthetic tradition that has always been intimately connected with the major social trends and cultural innovations of its time” (p. 39). Thus, graffiti has become part of the urban landscape on public walls and gives adolescents power and meaning. Youth learned to write through trial and error and observation, rather than through socialization in a local neighborhood gang practice (Austin, 2001). Early writers wrote their names everywhere they went, beyond the local places where they could reasonably expect their names to be recognized. Austin says, “The urban landscape became an unbounded billboard, a mass-mediated prestige economy pirated by the young” (2001, p. 47). Writers appropriated the mass-mediated public sphere to extend their alternative economy of prestige, their own brand of fame. Austin mentions, “The fame writers gained by getting around rewarded the hard work, dedication and long hours necessary to write successfully” (2001, p. 52). In doing so, graffiti writers experimented with designs and techniques to develop a common space for observation and discussion among themselves. The evolution of graffiti is one alternative by which young people’s expressions demonstrated some of the ways that youth cultures have continued to create and appropriate cultural and physical spaces of relative autonomy.

Avramidis and Drakopoulou (2012) say that, “Graffiti lies in the nature of intentions, meaning the construction of a structure which determines behavior, attitude, goals and strategies, praise and disapproval is what drives us to regard it as subculture” (328). According to Avramidis and Drakopoulou (2012) crews are, “Writers who band together and collaborate for success, therefore, the group brings status to all of its members” (329). The competitiveness on graffiti writing, illicit nature, and sophistication are the fundamental reasons for crew formations, and cooperation among themselves helps in their development. Crews form in different ways in

schools or neighborhoods and have mutual respect for one another. There is a hierarchical role to their members since a writer has to master his skills to move up and increase reputation (Avramidis and Drakopoulou, 2012).

Avramidis and Drakopoulou (2012) agreed that crews prepare each member to confront the difficulties and opportunities of the graffiti scene. Likewise, crews are “A safe sphere of valuation and at the same time spread the axiological premises that shape graffiti world” (Avramidis and Drakopoulou, 2012, p. 332). Therefore, crew members receive recognition, gain respect, get motivation to improve techniques that catapult them to stardom status by having inventive styles and by having taken risks in any community to earn a name in the history of graffiti. So, recognition by crew members is a great motivator of illegal tagging and piecing for all participants.

According to Pearlstein (1978) graffiti, “Exists in moments rather than influences, in gestures rather than techniques, and in dissatisfied impulses rather than discipline or development of theme” (8). Graffiti are usually the work of individuals who have little or no social position, access to media, or demonstrative privileges, and who are manifesting their frustration of the lack of public voice and influence. There are two basic motivations behind graffiti, “the need of the moment to personalize, integrate and possess the environment, and the desire to make one’s presence and perceptions known to otherwise unconnected persons who share the environment” (Pearlstein, 1978, p. 10). Pearlstein mentions, “Graffiti are the imprints of a revolutionary consciousness... because they are the vivid demonstration of the individual will which asserts itself without recourse to sanction or need for consultation” (1978, p. 13).

According to Reisner (1971), graffiti are a “Reflection of the banality of our lives, our education, our ideas and our thoughts”. (4). As the graffiti writer gets more into the open areas

where his chances of being seen are greater, there is a tendency for his message to be of a generalized nature. Inscriptions on advertisements and subway and outdoor walls are usually fairly comprehensively recognizable and open to a graffitist's distinct interpretation. The type of individual that writes graffiti lies in the nature of the message, the place where it is written, and the spirit of the times. Many graffiti writers flaunt their defiance by writing words on walls in an unconscious effort to recapture childhood or early youth and who enjoy nothing better than to violate a taboo (Reisner, 1971).

Ten Eyck and Fischer (2012) say, "To the graffiti writer practicing his/her craft, a piece of graffiti may be based on commemoration or some hopeful message, it may be an act of power, and it can be used to mark territory or promote violence against others" (832). Along with activities such as committing acts of graffiti comes the chance of trouble, including being caught and held by law enforcement, gang related activities, or burglary. Especially when graffiti contains a political message, the act can be seen as a way of communicating oppression, disgust with the status quo, a challenge of authority, or sending a hate message to other cultural groups. Ten Eyck and Fischer (2012) analyzed graffiti images on the Internet and found some images communicating a risk with violent symbols, and not communicating specific messages of social change. Also, they analyzed newspaper articles from the 10 most populated cities in the United States, which treated graffiti in a negative way. In general, the standard norm was that graffiti was treated as a threat, regardless of the aesthetics appearing on the Internet and communicated risks (Ten Eyck and Fischer, 2012).

Economic Impacts of Graffiti

According to Haworth, Bruce, and Iveson (2010) graffiti culture defines urban environments, and represents a challenge for local governments that unsuccessfully attempt to stop writing on the walls. Thus, graffiti represents a high cost for cities in the form of removal programs and the prevention initiatives. On the one hand, rapid removal tries to re-appropriate space and deter writing on the walls. On the other hand, implementing artwork by the community on designated spaces has reduced graffiti. Haworth et al. argue that the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) has the potential to spatially and temporarily help on the efforts of removal strategies because individual movements can be mapped with census and crime statistics and particular attention to graffiti can be given to reduce crime, disorder, and fear in the community.

Moreau and Alderman (2011) state, “Support for government, law enforcement, and long-term commitment to combat graffiti are the best way for businesses, private owners, and commercial property owners to protect the image of their street.” (120)

Graffiti as a Crime

The idea of territoriality is represented by graffiti writing, and those who understand these spatial conquests respect these socially claimed places. Similarly, Alonso (1998) found that as part of the street gang culture graffiti conveys the ideas of defiance of authority through the graffiti. Finally, Alonso (1998) explains that local governments have tried to end tagging by taking the offender off the streets and incarcerating them. Another attempt to reduce graffiti was to place it in art galleries in an effort to relocate the work of the graffiti. However, these strategies have been unsuccessful. According to Dickinson (2008) graffiti, “Emerged as a subculture in the late 1960s, as an attempt to create projects that completely saturated the insides and outsides of

subways with their names and images” (30). Most writers were young, poor and from minority backgrounds and their stereotypes translated into the portrayal of graffiti as a real threat to the well-being of cities. Public awareness campaigns to eradicate graffiti were launched and put a burden on tax payers. Moreover, Dickinson (2008) stresses the broken-window effect of problems like graffiti as an invitation to more serious crimes, given that there is a perception that communicates lack of control. However, Dickinson (2008) says that, “Blaming graffiti for street crime was part of the larger project of city government deflecting responsibility for the well-being of its citizens away from economic and social policy and onto poor minority communities as the cause of their own problems” (37).

Gross and Gross (1993) trace the changes that have occurred in graffiti writing from the earliest recorded incidents until the present with special emphasis on “tagging”. According to Gross and Gross there are, “three phases of visible form in the historical development of graffiti:

- 1) The imitative phase: written symbols are imitating responses to the sounds of oral speech, perceived objects mimicking the physical world.
- 2) The transition phase: moved from symbols imitating only visible objects to symbols representing sounds as well. This phase is subdivided into graffiti as social expression with letters of words, as a personal expression with drawings involving personal feelings and graffiti as word-message expression in which words dominate instead of drawings.
- 3) The apocryphal phase: the graffiti depict words in disguise, this label apocryphal where the words both reveal and conceal their identity. There are two subcategories individual tags and gang writing. (253).

According to Hamm (1993) on the review essay on Ferrell’s *Crime of Style* (1993), Ferrell used a grounded theory approach and joined graffiti writers on streets to observe and experience what criminology is involved and its risks. Ferrell offers insights of modern criminal youth subculture, and describes graffiti styles as covert and complex by necessity. Ferrell argues that, “Graffiti help elaborate anarchist criminology, serving as a revealing case study of the very sorts of issues most central to anarchist thinking and practice” (1993, p. 140). Ferrell uses

interviews to show how graffiti writing acts as resistance against the hegemonic power of government over the urban environment in anarchist resistance.

Iveson (2013) says that subcultural practices like graffiti in urban environments are meant to convey messages that oppose advertisement considered to be offensive to the population living in that area. Billboards were modified in an attempt to mobilize people against a myriad of issues. Civil disobedience and radicalism targeted exploitative activities of large corporations, and sought to protect the environment through graffiti use and defacing of advertisement. These practices challenged law enforcement to specify the uses of city property, and the vast possibilities they held (Iveson, 2013).

According to Moreau and Alderman (2011), municipal leaders have created ordinances that seek to convict and take legal action against graffiti artists through punitive measures. Graffiti change the visual representation of “A landscape, whether they are on public surfaces or private ones, they have a negative stigma and usually are associated with crime and gangs” (Moreau and Alderman, 2011, p. 107). For example, Graffiti Hurts, a national United States organization, cooperates with law enforcement to generate anti-graffiti regulations, task, neighborhood organizations, and informative programs that have a visible effect on landscape change and control (Moreau and Alderman, 2011). Some of the strategies are to designate spaces for art projects to deter people from writing graffiti, control urban space by rules of use such as “No skateboarding,” “No Pets Allowed,” “No Walking on Grass,” or “No Loitering” as ways of shaping public behavior and practices. Graffiti Hurts uses three strategies:

- 1) Order: creates its resolutions based upon concepts of hygiene, security, and maintenance that depend on punishment based programs to adjust, govern, and keep order in public space.
- 2) Well-being: order, health and safety are conjoined as a way of regaining a sense of safety and healthy public space.

- 3) Activism: reinforces the pressing responsibility for all of the actors to commit themselves to anti-graffiti campaigns (Moreau and Alderman, 114-119)

According to Oliver and Neal (2010), “graffiti marks territory, in an attempt to exclude outsiders or be invitations to dialogue. They can be subversive public statements, while others form a closed language for insiders” (2). Graffiti provides an understanding of society as symbols of urban life with dominant themes of degradation, but also resistance. Graffiti disrupts and disturbs an area’s residents targeting aspects of identity such as ethnic origin, and gender. Therefore, the illegality of graffiti, the clandestine nature of its appearance, and its association with youth or gang culture are an urban landscape problem. (Oliver and Neal, 2010)

Gregory Snyder (2009) states that the commonalities that graffiti artists have are not due to outward presence, language, place of origin, or social ranking. Rather, what groups them is the development of graffiti. Regardless of their background, graffiti is the social cohesive force that brings a diverse group of these writers together (Snyder, 2009). According to Snyder (2009), “unlike most indigenous forms of American music, graffiti is not specifically steeped in African-American cultural traditions, and white kids, black kids, brown kids, rich kids, and poor kids have all participated in the creation and perpetuation of graffiti culture from the beginning” (3). Graffiti are treated as acts of ‘criminal mischief,’ and the consequence is based on the level of defacement and its subsequent cost (Snyder, 2009). Those who are caught writing graffiti can be booked and detained from six to twenty-four hours and charged for the damage. (Snyder, 2009).

Public Agency Abatement Efforts

Lachmann (1988), identifies graffiti writers’ level of involvement in the practice and the splitting between this alternate art culture and vandalism. According to Lachmann, “the main difference between a career in deviance, and in art is grounded in the individual’s local ties to

mentors, peers, and audiences” (1988, p. 248-249). Therefore, social interactions and beliefs affect the graffiti writers’ final decision in the value of pursuing an artistic versus a deviant goal.

MacGillivray and Curwen (2007) state that, “Tagging can be conceived of as a local literacy practice and as an avenue into the construction of youth identity and group affiliation” (355). Taggers learn the distinctive aspects of tagging within their subculture’s community of practice that offers insights and opens up a way to escape gang membership in some instances. Tagging provides recognition, identity, and relationships, which are critical to understanding the meaning behind the representations used by young graffiti artists and to discover the motivation behind their writing. Educators can support young readers and writers by acknowledging and transforming their non-mainstream writing practices without sanctioning them (MacGillivray and Curwen, 2007).

FINDINGS

Survey of Similar California Cities for Graffiti Abatement Programs

The goal of this research is to develop a design for a successful graffiti abatement program for the City of East Palo Alto. Because of its fiscal limitations, the program will have to start as a volunteer effort. Therefore, it is beneficial to evaluate existing graffiti abatement programs that rely on volunteers in similar cities. The project is based on the analysis of three volunteer-run graffiti abatement programs, and graffiti abatement ordinances adopted by the cities of Healdsburg, Garden Grove, and Watsonville based on similarities in demographic characteristics and household median income to the City of East Palo Alto.

Data were collected to identify the conditions and impacts of the graffiti abatement programs in the cities mentioned above, to identify best practices that can be applied to East Palo Alto. While these cities went through the creation of their programs, they did not have unique problems like the fragmentation of East Palo Alto due to the alignment of route 101 nor the contamination from the former hazardous waste management facility. (US Environmental Protection Agency, 2016) They are, however similar in household median incomes and land area, total number of residents, demographic composition, and household median income.

The research included a review of the policy documents, policy reports, and articles on the cities under analysis to better understand their graffiti abatement programs. The intention of this research is to implement a graffiti abatement program based on community participation by volunteers.

This research will examine the following factors:

- Develop ways of dealing with graffiti constructively
- Engage community volunteers to participate in the program
- Develop a comprehensive strategy to address graffiti
- Determine the most effective strategies revealed through the analysis

Healdsburg

The City of Healdsburg assists property owners facing graffiti issues through encouraging community organization and removing graffiti vandalism on private property. The city encourages citizens to maintain their individual property. This is accomplished through organizing neighborhood cleanup efforts, specifically stating that the city alone cannot and will not be effective in graffiti abatement without community participation. (Healdsburg, CA, 2009).

The City of Healdsburg provides additional enforcement tools to protect the public from acts of vandalism and defacement by prosecuting those persons engaging in the defacement of property.

The City of Healdsburg local ordinance says:

It is unlawful and a misdemeanor for any person to apply graffiti to any building, structure, tree, shrub, curb, vehicle or other personal or real property public and private located within the city (2009, 4).

The City of Healdsburg enacted ordinance 1086 that, “Provides restrictions on the possessions and sale of graffiti implements and also places the responsibility on private owners for the removal of graffiti on their property” (City of Healdsburg, Graffiti Abatement Program flyer, p. 2). The owner of the defaced surface will be asked to complete the graffiti elimination using their own tools and funds. If the property owner requests to have the city workers remove the graffiti, it may be necessary for the property owner to put money down for the approximated

cost of abatement. In addition, the City of Healdsburg requests immediate reporting of any new graffiti spotted by residents.

The City of Healdsburg is an example of a community that asks its residents to take initiative in all aspects of graffiti abatement. The city asks that all new graffiti incidents be reported as soon as possible. They request that property owners repair any defaced area of their property on their own, or if needed, ask the city for assistance but still pay for the cost of repair. This is unfortunately necessary because often times, the graffiti writer who performed the act is not caught, leaving the owner responsible. However, Healdsburg has made purchasing of graffiti materials more difficult and easier to track, which lowers the number of incidents, and makes finding the perpetrator more likely.

Garden Grove

The City of Garden Grove has a plan of action to assist in eliminating graffiti, which consists of a reward available for reporting a graffitist, a volunteer graffiti paint-out program, and a continuing graffiti eradication project. It is called project GO. This is a resident-based program with volunteers who have expressed displeasure with the aesthetic image of their Garden Grove neighborhoods. People can participate through giving their time during one of the organized project days. So far, project GO has seen positive turnouts and is doing well because of community contribution and help from church youth groups and other local organizations. These allies have donated hours of labor, and companies within Garden Grove have mobilized their own volunteer employee work groups (Garden Grove, 2013).

The City of Garden Grove takes more of a community involvement approach as compared to Healdsburg. In fact, the city has organized an on-going graffiti abatement volunteer service called Project GO. In addition, Garden Grove encourages its community members to

report graffiti crimes and graffiti artists with a reward program. The Garden Grove's Graffiti Reward system incentivizes citizens to report offenders and assists law enforcement in finding and apprehending offenders who have committed graffiti crimes, with rewards,

Ranging from \$50 to \$500 dollars for information leading to the identity, arrest, and possible conviction of a "tagger" or any person who willfully damages or destroys property in the city (City of Garden Grove, 2016).

Volunteers can participate regularly in one of the scheduled paint out days, or can also organize their own graffiti removal days and proceed in their spare time with the approval of the city.

Watsonville

The City of Watsonville calls for graffiti removal by the property owner within 48 hours of its appearance. After three incidents of non-compliance with this request, a citation is issued. Property owners are instructed to apply paint or another method of covering, or utilize an elimination procedure so that the surface matches the original color.

The City of Watsonville regularly sponsors community paint-outs. This results in an assembly of community members that come together for the sole purpose of removing graffiti. The city organizes the event, provides the paint and equipment, negotiates with property owners, and provides insurance for the volunteers (Watsonville, 2009).

In addition, there is a project called "Neighborhood Pride-Adopt a Block" where community residents pledge to keep their neighborhood clean. The city provides material and training to support pride teams.

Also, the City offers a reward of up to \$500 dollars for information that assists in finding and apprehending graffiti offenders. Furthermore, youths found guilty of graffiti offenses are

required to pay for maintenance of the property they defaced. These young adults are also instructed to participate in classes with their parents. (City of Watsonville, 2016) People convicted of graffiti vandalism must pay for and perform restitution for the damages which include community service, fines, jail terms, payment for damages, and attend counseling (City of Watsonville, 2016).

Watsonville takes the approaches of Healdsburg and Garden Grove, and combines them. The City has regularly scheduled paint out events where the city provides equipment, supplies, protective gear, and insurance for the volunteers. Watsonville also encourages its citizens to “Adopt-a-Block” and pledge to keep their city clean. Like Garden Grove, additionally Watsonville offers a monetary compensation for tips that assist in the apprehension of a graffiti writer.

Statistical Comparisons

The following tables show how Healdsburg, Garden Grove, Watsonville, and East Palo Alto compared on total population, land area, demographic composition, and household median income. Since graffiti is a crime that occurs most frequently in lower income urban areas, and since lower income residents are less able to pay for graffiti abatement on their properties, these communities’ graffiti abatement programs were selected as possible models for an East Palo Alto program, because they each had median household incomes below their metropolitan area’s median income. Healdsburg and East Palo Alto have small populations, and small physical size, while Garden Grove and Watsonville closely match East Palo Alto’s minority demographic.

Thus, it appeared that the graffiti abatement programs in these communities could provide models on which an East Palo Alto program could be based.

Comparable Cities' Demographics

Table 1: Total population

	Total Population
Healdsburg	12,558 Residents
Garden Grove	170,883 Residents
Watsonville	66,746 Residents
East Palo Alto	28,155 Residents

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016

Table 2: Total land area

	Total Land Area
Healdsburg	4.1 Square Miles
Garden Grove	17.959 Square Miles
Watsonville	6.783 Square Miles
East Palo Alto	2.612 Square Miles

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016

Table 3: Demographic composition

	American Indian & Alaskan Native	Asian	African American	Hispanic	Pacific Islander	White
Healdsburg	1.6324%	0.9953%	0.4459%	30.4188%	0.1433%	66.3640%
Garden Grove	0.5752%	37.1312%	1.2610%	36.9135%	0.6495%	39.8805%
Watsonville	0.9423%	2.4930%	0.5363%	62.4097%	0.0599%	33.5585%
East Palo Alto	0.3503%	3.0861%	13.7343%	52.9839%	6.1839%	23.6613%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016

Table 4: Median household income

	Median Household Income
Healdsburg	\$65,683
Garden Grove	\$58,449
Watsonville	\$46,010
East Palo Alto	\$52,012

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016

East Palo Alto

East Palo Alto is located south of San Francisco, California. Highway 101 divides Palo Alto from East Palo Alto. The city was incorporated in 1983. The City of East Palo is in the Silicon Valley, and there are several large technology companies in the area. East Palo Alto is an exception to the wealth present in much of this region. The economic boost that most of the Silicon Valley has experienced did not positively affect East Palo Alto. East Palo Alto was once the county dump and a hazardous materials disposal site, making it undesirable for residential development for many years. Now, it is a city that still struggles to generate revenue, even though it sits between the wealthy communities of Palo Alto and Menlo Park.

East Palo Alto Demographics

The City of East Palo Alto faces a lack of social and economic opportunities. East Palo Alto is predominantly comprised of ethnic minority residents, and has a challenge increasing its tax base in order to provide services for residents (U.S Census Bureau, 2016). In East Palo Alto, a large percentage of the population is comprised of immigrants who primarily speak foreign languages.

Figure 1 shows that in 2010, the majority of the population is minorities. 54.99 % are Hispanic, 13.74 are African American, 6.18 are Pacific Islander, 3.08 are Asian, and 0.35 are American Indian & Alaskan, while only 23.66 are White/non-Hispanic.

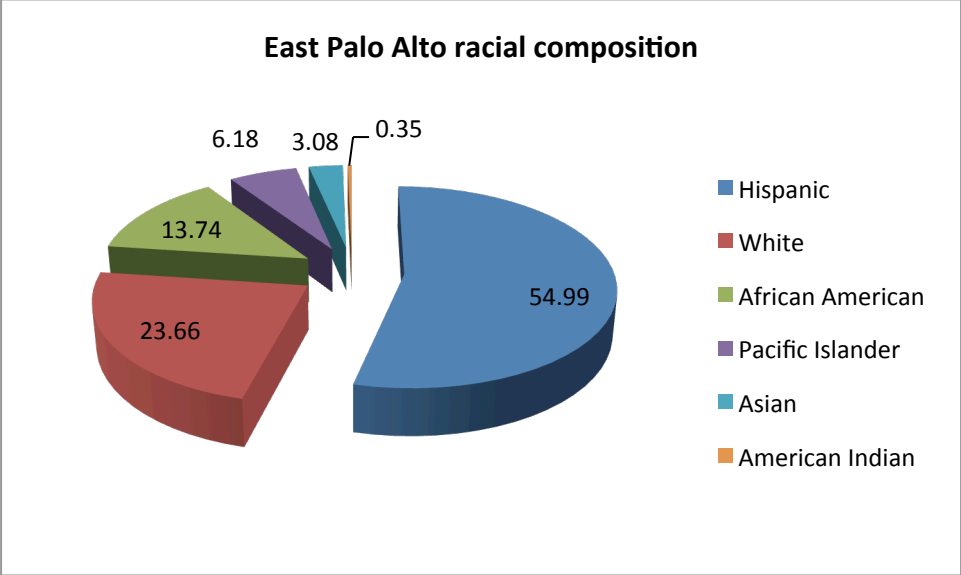
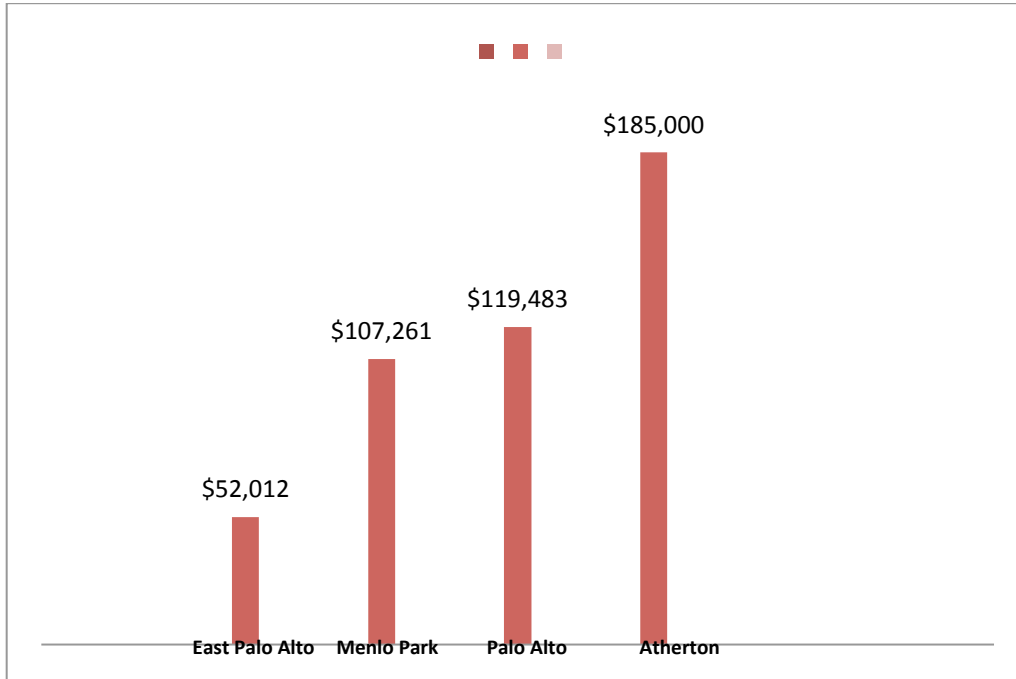


Figure 1: Racial Composition East Palo Alto
Source: U.S Census Bureau, City of East Palo Alto, 2015

Median Household Income

The U.S Census Bureau estimates the average per person income at \$18,385 for East Palo Alto, with the estimated median household income in 2009 at \$52,012 (2015). East Palo Alto is surrounded by affluent cities whose median household incomes are much higher: Menlo Park at \$ 107,261, Palo Alto at \$ 119, 483, and Atherton at \$ 185,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016).

Table 5: Median Household Income East Palo Alto



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016

Model Program Selection Process

Quantitative data was examined to select appropriate models for an East Palo Alto graffiti abatement program. The demographic characteristics such as median household income, land area, ethnicity, and total population provide valuable information on the cities, as discussed above. Another important factor was that the graffiti abatement program was run by community volunteers. As discussed above, this analysis led to studying programs in Healdsburg, Garden Grove, and Watsonville.

Median household income: The data indicate residents' spending power, and household income positively correlates with purchasing.

Ethnicity: Data show what ethnic groups are majority, influencing the characteristics, and preferences of that city.

Population: Data allow quantifying the needs of residents living in a certain geographic area, and the demand for government services.

Interviews of East Palo Alto Public Officials

Contact

Public officials of East Palo Alto were contacted initially by e-mail with an explanation of the project, the request to participate in a survey to gather data in support of the project, and the consent forms. An in-person interview was conducted with the office of Economic Development's Assistant Planner Daniel Berumen. He provided advice on additional officials to interview, including a public works official. This contact led to contacts with other officials with whom interviews were conducted.

Interviews Conducted

There were interviews conducted with five public officials and leaders in the community of East Palo Alto. The same questions were asked to everybody to gather their view of graffiti and to discover their insights and ideas regarding graffiti removal. Interviews lasted 20-30 minutes and most took place face-to-face, while a few occurred over the phone. The recordings taken in these interviews were analyzed for the most important and impactful content. These statements are listed below. Appendix A includes the forms and interview instrument.

When speaking about how the graffiti in the City affected its residents, a city of East Palo Alto official who preferred to remain anonymous stated:

It creates a negative appearance. It also puts racial tension on alert, which is so unfortunate. (personal communication, September 5th, 2016).

On the topic of implementing an effective graffiti abatement program for East Palo Alto, Daniel Berumen, Assistant Planner said:

One of our standard conditions of approval for development projects does state that applicants must address graffiti within a reasonable amount of time. Graffiti from any building or wall surface shall be removed within 72 hours of discovery in a manner, which retains the existing color, and texture of the building or wall surface as most practically feasible. Building materials amenable to graffiti removal shall be used to the extent feasible. (personal communication, September 5th, 2016).

About how graffiti is a recurrent problem in parks for East Palo Alto, Yeni Magana, Assistant Planner said:

The areas that are most affected by graffiti are parks and places where surveillance is minimal such as alleys, warehouses, streets along the 101 highways, and cul-de-sac streets especially for the negative effects on safety due to decreasing of foot and pedestrian traffic. (personal communication, September 5th, 2016).

When speaking with Administrative Services Manager Jaime Zarate, he had this to say about eliminating current graffiti and implementing an effective abatement program:

We need to have some programs developed for the schools that educate kids on how bad graffiti is for our city. We can also step-up police patrol in hot spot areas. We would also like to set up education in our schools about graffiti, explaining the trouble these offenders create with a can of spray paint. (personal communication, September 5th, 2016).

When interviewing Michelle Daher, Environmental Coordinator, on the topic of graffiti, she said:

A lot of public space and structures are vandalized, especially fences, walls, street signage, and parks, but what most people do not know is that the impacts of graffiti are not only detrimental to a community but also on the natural environment. Aerosol cans are often wasted and ended up in landfills, and the chemicals in the paints are toxic. (personal communication, September 5th, 2016)

These responses shed light on the severity of the graffiti problem in East Palo Alto. While the issues can sound very harsh, there are bits of positivity in the feedback and ideas to try within these statements. The hope for better graffiti abatement planning can also be seen from this feedback.

Survey Results from Public Officials

1. - How does graffiti affect the community and its residents?

	Answer	Percentage	Count
1	It creates a negative image	66.67%	4
2	It makes community residents feel unsafe	50%	3
3	It puts racial tension on alert	50.0%	3
	Total	100%	6

2. - How does the city deal with this problem?

	Answer	Percentage	Count
1	The City notifies property owners of graffiti	83.33%	5
2	Staff reports to the Police Department including pictures	33.33%	2
3	Public Works staff removes graffiti	83.33%	5
	Total	100%	10

3. -What has been the experience of the city's community and economic development departments removing graffiti?

	Answer	Percentage	Count
1	Public Works removes graffiti within 24 hours	50%	3
2	Graffiti appear again in the same or different location	66.67%	4
3	Graffiti is related to gang activity	33.33%	2
	Total	100%	6

4. - What are the barriers or constraints that the city faces?

	Answer	Percentage	Count
1	Public Works cannot remove graffiti from "memorial sites"	50%	3
2	Reduced budget	66.67%	4
3	Understaffed	33.33%	2
	Total	100%	6

5. - In your personal opinion, what actions can or should be taken to eliminate graffiti?

	Answer	Percentage	Count
1	Educational programs for youth	50%	3
2	Police patrolling in hot spot areas	50%	3
3	Provide free removal kits for property owners and volunteers	33.33%	2
	Total	100%	6

6. - Based on your experience, what do you think the city can do to implement an effective abatement program?

	Answer	Percentage	Count
1	Educational programs for youth	16.67%	1
2	Allow for designated areas for graffiti murals	50%	3
3	Establish a volunteer program	66.67%	4
	Total	100%	6

7. - What do you think is the first step that should be implemented?

	Answer	Percentage	Count
1	More policing in hot areas	0%	0
2	Establish a community graffiti removal day once a month	83.33%	5
3	Increase fines and penalties for repeating offenders	33.33%	2
	Total	100%	6

Survey of Residents

The interview with Jaime Zarate, Administrative Services Manager revealed that he had done some graffiti abatement in the past for the City of East Palo Alto. He said that community residents expressed a desire for removing graffiti, and so he assisted with coordinating the event for the graffiti abatement day. Outreach was conducted at St. Francis of Assisi Church in East Palo Alto to reach people who wanted to eliminate graffiti in their community. The project was

explained to them, and they received consent forms, and release of city liability forms (See Appendix C).

The ten volunteers who participated in painting over the graffiti were asked to fill out consent forms to participate in the survey, and release of liability forms for the city. Each of the ten consented to participate in the survey. Appendix B contains the forms and survey instrument. The questions in the surveys were designed to discover their feelings about participating in the project and continuing an abatement program in the future. They also probed for knowledge they might have about graffiti removal and the officials in their community who need to help implement such a program.

The volunteers were asked about their motivation to participate. The responses here varied, some even saying they helped because they had nothing better to do, but the majority of respondents said their incentive was simply to help improve their community. The participants were asked for their opinion about how much East Palo Alto has done to remove and abate graffiti. Most people thought they were doing “not enough.” Volunteer opinions were also sought about which actions the city needs to take to eliminate graffiti. Most people wanted to see stricter fines for offenders, promotion of cleaning and removal programs, and implementation of more youth recreational programs.

When asked about hurdles that East Palo Alto faces to remove graffiti, the most common answer was “not enough staff.” Among other top responses were “scarce money” and “lack of opportunities.” In following with the answers provided about the constraints the City faces, the volunteers were asked about the first step that should be taken, and most people said to remove the current graffiti and to hire more staff to assist in this project. The participants were asked if

they knew of any other programs in place to address graffiti in East Palo Alto. Every single response was and absolute “no.”

The volunteers were asked to give three positive aspects of a graffiti-free community. Responses here were varied, but the theme that was most common in the responses was to better the neighborhoods and make East Palo Alto a nicer place to live. When asked about why they thought graffitiists committed their crimes, most volunteers responded that they felt the tagger had a deep sense of rebellion, deriving “pleasure from defacing the property of others to whom they feel superior or inferior.” Other popular responses related to expressing their artistic side and personal egotism. Participants were questioned about what they felt could most improve the City’s graffiti abatement program. A wide variety of responses were given and ranged from simply caring more, stricter control and fines, and allocating more of a budget for such projects. The assortment of answers to this question indicates that there is not conclusive concept for implementing a graffiti removal program.

The most common responses when asked about who should be responsible for graffiti management in East Palo Alto were the Public Works Department and Police Department. Lastly, the volunteers were asked for any additional feedback they would like to give. There was only one response, but a very positive one. The participant who gave the feedback simply said they had a nice time, which is an important aspect to keeping this program up and running. The conclusions that can be drawn from the answers collected on the survey are that most participants felt that stricter fines and educational programs were important for a graffiti abatement program to succeed. The volunteers also recognized the need for more employees, and thus money to be allocated for the Public Works Department.

Survey Results from Residents

1. What motivated you to participate as volunteer?

	Answer	Percentage	Count
1	I did not have anything to do	10%	1
2	I wanted to be useful	40%	4
3	I wanted to improve my community	50%	5
	Total	100%	10

2.- In your view, what has East Palo Alto's community and economic development department done to remove graffiti and abate the graffiti problem?

	Answer	Percentage	Count
1	Nothing	0%	0
2	Not enough	70%	7
3	Something	30%	3
4	A lot	0%	0
	Total	100%	10

3. - In your opinion, what actions can or should be taken by the city to eliminate graffiti?

	Answer	Percentage	Count
1	Stricter fines	40%	4
2	More oversight	20%	2
3	Promote cleaning/removal graffiti programs	40%	4
	Total	100%	10

4. - In your opinion, what actions or policies are required by the local government for a graffiti-free city? (you may choose multiple answers).

	Answer	Percentage	Count
1	City should provide removal tools and paint	10%	1
2	Youth recreational programs	50%	5
3	Impose fines/penalties for offenders	60%	6
4	Partnerships among Police Department, community and city government	10%	1
	Total	100%	10

5. - What do you think are the barriers or constraints that the city faces?

	Answer	Percentage	Count
1	Scarce money	20%	2
2	Bigger problems	10%	1
3	Gentrification	10%	1
4	Lack of opportunities	20%	2
5	Not enough staff	50%	5
	Total	100%	10

6. - What do you think is the first step that should be implemented?

	Answer	Percentage	Count
1	Remove graffiti from city	40%	4
2	Create committee	0%	0
3	Create a group of volunteers	20%	2
4	Hire more staff in Public Works Department	30%	3
5	A problem-oriented policy that prevents graffiti	10%	1
	Total	100%	10

7. - Are you aware of any other programs in place to address graffiti issues?

	Answer	Percentage	Count
1	Yes	0%	0
2	No	100%	10
	Total	100%	10

8. - Can you name three positive aspects of having a graffiti-free city?

	Answer	Percentage	Count
1	Cleaner city	70%	7
2	It is more pleasant to the view	20%	2
3	Improve my neighborhood	30%	3
4	Safer recreational spaces	60%	6
5	Attract more jobs for the city	60%	6
6	Better sense of community	60%	6
	Total	100%	10

9. - What do you think compels ‘taggers’ to create graffiti?

	Answer	Percentage	Count
1	a) Artistic expression?	20%	2
2	b) Social statements?	0%	0
3	c) Political statements?	0%	0
4	d) Personal egoism or egotism?	30%	3
5	e) Pleasure from defacing the property of others to whom they feel superior or inferior?	50%	5
	Total	100%	10

10. - What are the three most important things you feel could improve the city’s graffiti abatement program?

	Answer	Percentage	Count
1	More effort/caring	30%	3
2	Free removal graffiti materials	40%	4
3	Job creation/creation of sports programs/after school programs	40%	4
4	Creating volunteer groups that clean graffiti periodically	20%	2
5	Stricter control and measure by the city	60%	6
6	Allocate more budget for graffiti removal	60%	6
7	Coordination between property owners and public works	50%	5
	Total	100%	10

Description of Graffiti Abatement Event

The researcher created the pilot graffiti abatement event. Permission to do the event was obtained from Jay Farr, Maintenance Division Manager, and the event was coordinated with Jaime Zarate, Administrative Services Manager. The City did not request any feedback from the event because Mr. Zarate was present at the event. Date and time for the event were chosen after

consultation with Mr. Zarate, making sure no other large community events were planned and most residents would be free to participate if they chose to.

The abatement event was advertised through the help of Mr. Zarate who contacted local members of the Rotary Club, Lion's Club, and several church groups. The locations that were selected were chosen because they had the highest concentration of graffiti throughout the city. The event took place on Saturday September 24th, 2016 from 12:30 PM to 4:00 PM.

The day of the event volunteers worked on two parks: Jack Farrell Park, and Martin Luther King Park. Volunteers abated graffiti on poles, concessions building, bathrooms, concrete benches, bleachers, and garbage containers. Supplies such as graffiti remover "Goof Off", stripper pads, breathing masks, latex gloves, roller pads, roller frames, buckets, roller pans, and drop clothes were provided to volunteers donated by Home Depot East Palo Alto which were retrieved on the day of the event by the researcher.

Residents who passed through the parks while the event was occurring had a very positive and friendly reaction. They were pleased to see their parks being cleaned up and to see individuals come together to do something productive.



Figure 2: City of East Palo Alto
Source: Oscar Ortiz

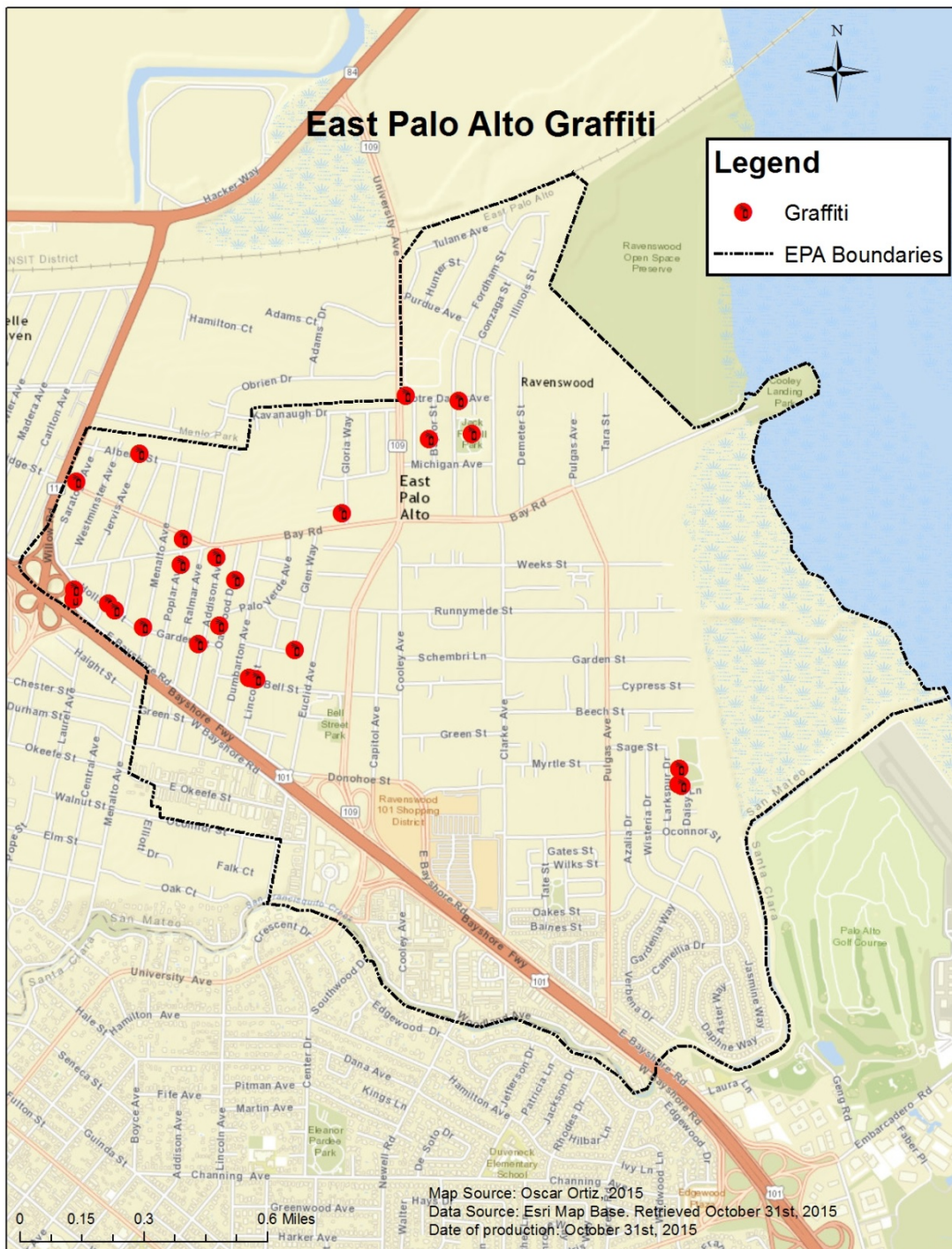


Figure 3: Graffiti areas in East Palo Alto
 Source: Oscar Ortiz

Graffiti throughout the city 'Before and After'



Figure 4: Graffiti on Bench



Figure 5: Bench After Painting



Figure 6: Graffiti on Concessions Stand



Figure 7: Concessions Stand After Paint



Figure 8: Wall after Paint



Figure 9: Graffiti on Wall



Figure 10: Graffiti on Fence



Figure 11: Fence After Paint



Figure 12: Graffiti on Bathroom



Figure 13: Bathroom After Paint

ANALYSIS

Strategies for Future Graffiti Abatement

The graffiti abatement event in East Palo Alto was a starting point from which to draw up a regular graffiti abatement event and team of volunteers who work to keep their city free of graffiti. Because graffiti is handled on a local level, there is no systematic approach as to how to set up such a program and each city affected needs one tailored to their specific needs. In general, most cities do require that property owners pay for rapid graffiti removal themselves. The exception here is when the graffiti writer is caught for their crime, and then the perpetrator (or the parents in the case of minors) is required to pay for graffiti removal from private property.

While most cities that have graffiti removal volunteer programs tend to focus on public property in high-traffic areas, sometime is dedicated to private property owners without the means to remove it. In the case of East Palo Alto, perhaps every third or fourth event held could be dedicated to graffiti abatement on places such as churches, non-profit organizations, homes of the elderly and other selected locations. Most cities with graffiti abatement volunteer programs require the volunteers to be 18 years of age, unless accompanied by a parent, in which case the age of the volunteer is left to the discretion of the parent. Graffiti removal does involve the use of toxic paints and chemicals and can be potentially dangerous, which is why some sort of oversight from an officer or official is required by any city volunteer programs.

The personal protective equipment of gloves and masks were donated from the local Home Depot in the case of the East Palo Alto graffiti abatement program. However, many times volunteers are asked to provide their own equipment. City liability waivers are used for this reason and they provide the details of potential hazards and dangers. While risks are relatively

low, unfortunately this kind of volunteering requires that participants “participate at their own risk.”

Program Strategies That Can Be Adopted From Other Cities

The City of East Palo Alto will require graffiti removal from private property by the owners within 48 hours. The Public Works Department will develop an operational volunteer and city worker program intended to help property owners with graffiti removal. Through collaboration with other city offices, volunteers, community groups, and schools the City of East Palo Alto will show greater commitment to making a better living place for everyone. The implementation of informative workshops to students, the police force, neighborhood organizations and city staff will motivate community residents to participate in the Volunteer Graffiti Abatement Program and remain associated with dedicated volunteers through organized volunteer events.

The greater the number of community members contributing to cleaning and covering graffiti, the faster and more consistently the graffiti can be removed. In order to better facilitate participants, the Graffiti Volunteer Program will have the following roles:

- *Regional Leader:* Individuals or small teams who are dedicated to keep watch over and assume responsibility for a larger portion of the City and facilitate the work of:
- *District Leaders:* Individuals or groups who are dedicated to keep watch over and assume responsibility for graffiti removal in smaller, individual portions of the city (i.e. a block, Cul-de-Sac.)

In addition, all community members should protect their property by installing landscaping that covers walls, and building fences with board gaps or lattices.

According to Sanoff (2000), a community building approach concentrates on the residents of a city, and the idea that community members must take action to be responsible for themselves and the state of their neighborhoods. Building social capital is the primary objective achieved by residents playing a central role in decision making and believing they own the process as they move away from being dependent (Sanoff, 2000). The principles of community building are:

- Involve residents in setting goals and strategies
- Identify a community's assets as well as its problems
- Work in communities of manageable size
- Develop unique strategies for each neighborhood
- Reinforce community values while building human and social capital
- Develop creative partnerships with public and private institutions in the city (7)

The use of community building for the Graffiti Abatement Program in the City of East Palo Alto will integrate “Traditional top-down approach with bottom-up, resident-driven initiatives to create a network of partnerships between residents, volunteers, City officials, and community organizations” (Sanoff, 2000, p. 7). This collaborative involvement will help build social capital, strengthening the capacities of residents to eradicate graffiti in the City of East Palo Alto. In addition, community building will take place at the neighborhood level allowing face-to-face interaction to address other kinds of problems that can be solved through collaboration between residents. Thus, community building and the participation of volunteers will be positive and constructive in creating action programs.

By combining ideas from the programs in Healdsburg, Garden Grove, and Watsonville, the City of East Palo Alto can create an effective graffiti abatement program. Community is very important to residents of East Palo Alto, and thus regularly organized events involving volunteer groups will work well. East Palo Alto should also develop a reward program for the reporting of information that may lead to the arrest of a graffiti writer. This discourages writers from

bragging or leaving an obvious “tag” that identifies them. It also holds residents of the city accountable for one another rather than turning a blind eye to the issues the city faces. East Palo Alto also needs to require expedient reporting and removal of new graffiti so that the broken windows effect will not continue.

Program Strategies That Can Be Adopted From Public Officials’ Surveys

Based on the responses of the public officials of East Palo Alto, community involvement is the most important aspect to developing an effective graffiti abatement program for the city. The answers indicated that involving residents in reporting the graffiti as well as in its removal are key to success. This community involvement also includes the education portion of the graffiti removal program. By providing its citizens with knowledge about the damage a can of spray paint can cause, the City of East Palo Alto is empowering its residents.

Program Strategies That Can Be Adopted From The Residents’ Surveys

The responses of the residents of in their survey mirrored the responses of the public officials of East Palo Alto. They too believed that the most crucial aspect of developing an effective, long term plan meant involving the community as much as possible. The residents of East Palo Alto recognize the lack of financial resources and know that the best way to keep graffiti out is through education and also through stricter and greater fines. Development of a volunteer graffiti removal program was a very common response among city officials and residents to keep graffiti at bay in East Palo Alto.

Successes and Challenges in Organizing the Graffiti Abatement Event

The greatest challenge to organizing the graffiti abatement event was that it was the first one. Getting the word out and advertising to community members was difficult. Making residents interested at first was also challenging. Another struggle was getting the materials for the event. Equipment and supplies for an event like this are quite expensive. Luckily, after talking with city officials, they were able to persuade Home Depot to donate the supplies. After successfully convincing one or two volunteers, they were able to recruit friends to also participate in the paint out day and eventually ten volunteers were found. Another success was the cooperation of the City of East Palo Alto, for without their help the event could not have happened at all, and certainly not as successfully as it did. The greatest success was the enthusiasm of the participants and recognizing how anxious they were to continue cleaning their city of graffiti.

CONCLUSION

Research has demonstrated that graffiti impacts the sense of safety, deters potential park goers, and exacerbates a public nuisance. Local taxpayers carry the burden for the cost of graffiti abatement. Society as whole is laden with the weight of the unseen financial load of discouraging new businesses in the City of East Palo Alto. The response mechanism that is already in place for the local police force should highlight disciplinary procedures that prevent youth violence and gang involvement, which frequently leads to graffiti. Effective strategies to reduce graffiti should be focused on adolescents, their caretakers, the neighborhood residents and school environment, and counseling for youngster who already have defaced public and private property. Some of the solutions developed from the research and applicable to East Palo Alto are as follows.

Breaking the Cycle of Violence Among Youth

If youngsters have an environment that is supportive and a community that employs deterrence, involvement, and counseling to lessen the likelihood of street violence, graffiti can be slowly reduced by informing the youngsters that graffiti affects their community and neighborhoods negatively (Haworth, Bruce, & Iveson, 2013).

Law Enforcement and Communities Working Together

East Palo Alto Police Department can be more effective at reducing graffiti in collaboration with the community by focusing on gang prevention. A non-threatening exchange of communication between adolescents and law enforcement in a comfortable setting help youth become more open

to talk about leaving gangs, receive protection, educational services, and to turn away from graffiti (Gallerani, Besanyi, Wilhelm, & Kacyznski, 2016).

Bridging the Gap Between Residents of the Community and Local Parents

Providing information about the effects of graffiti to students, their caretakers, and local residents is an important aspect of preventing graffiti. Parents could be taught which red flags to look for in their children that may indicate poor friend choices or possible gang involvement. Holding community information sessions with parents, and teaching parents to closely monitor the media that their children are exposed to, may help to prevent unsafe environments that may lead to graffiti expressions on public and private property.

This project puts theory into practice by presenting and examining a real case in the City of East Palo Alto. The implementation focused on graffiti removal by a group of volunteers. It is hoped that this report may be used to further develop guidelines for residents, department heads, and local elected officials to maintain a clean and graffiti-free East Palo Alto. Community residents play an essential role in the success or failure of this program. The collaboration and communication between the public officials and residents is also vital to the success of the program. This includes setting up “paint out” days, educating the young people of East Palo Alto, and possibly providing designated graffiti art events.

The project was conducted in Jack Farrell and Martin Luther King Junior parks in addition to varying locations throughout the neighborhoods. Based on the volunteer turnout and commentary, it is evident that graffiti deter people from wanting to be in areas where it is present. Therefore, parks and other public locations should receive special attention with regards to graffiti removal and maintenance to avoid any new graffiti. This will help create a safer

environment for all community residents. This is an ongoing, long-term project because all of the graffiti will not be able to be covered quickly and effectively. Additionally, it is crucial to keep in mind that new graffiti will most likely continue to appear, regardless of the community's efforts. Nevertheless, with an effective graffiti abatement program and enhanced surveillance in parks, graffiti will decline slowly.

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Appendix A: Public Officials Interviews

Opening script

Thank you for agreeing to be part of this project. This project looks to identify and learn more about graffiti in the City of East Palo Alto. This interview will take about 20-30 minutes.

Before I begin, let me restate the information about confidentiality that was in the e-mail you received and I provide a hard copy in case you need to review it. I will be taking notes and recording this interview.

REQUEST FOR INTERVIEW CONSENT

Graffiti Abatement Program for the City of East Palo Alto

Oscar Ortiz, San José State graduate student in the Master of Public Administration working under the supervision of Dr. Frances Edwards.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to gather information from different cities: Watsonville, Healdsburg, and Garden Grove that have graffiti abatement programs to discuss the city's current capabilities and challenges in graffiti removal in the city of East Palo Alto. To do so, an interview consent form is necessary and participants should agree to be part of this research.

PROCEDURES

You have been asked to participate in an interview that aims to ascertain your views about graffiti abatement in the City of East Palo Alto. You will be asked to participate in a 20-30 minute interview during which you will be asked questions that address this topic.

POTENTIAL RISKS

There is no anticipated risk to you from participating in this interview, and interviewees are public officials.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

There is no anticipated direct benefit to you from participating in this interview other than the extent to which you value contributing to graffiti abatement in the City of East Palo Alto.

COMPENSATION

No compensation will be given to the subjects.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Unless you ask request otherwise, your name and affiliation will be included at the end of the final report in a list of persons interviewed for the study. In addition, where your comments are especially insightful, the report may quote you and identify you by name. The interviewer will assume that your comments are on-the-record and that you agree to being quoted, unless you instruct the interviewer otherwise. If you wish to share any comments "off-the-record," simply let the interviewer know, and that information will be kept strictly confidential.

PARTICIPANT RIGHTS

Your consent is being given voluntarily. You may refuse to participate in the entire interview or in any part of the interview. You have the right to not answer questions you do not wish to answer. If you decide to participate in the interview, you are free to withdraw at any time without any negative effect on your relations with San Jose State University or with any other participating institutions or agencies.

Questions about this research may be addressed to Oscar Ortiz at (510) 375-8195. Complaints about the research may be presented to Dr. Frances Edwards Chair, San José State University Master of Public Administration (408) 924-5559. Questions about research subject's rights or research related injury may be presented to Dr. Thalia Anagnos, Associate Vice President, Graduate Studies and Research, at (408) 924-2427.

By agreeing to participate in the interview, it is implied that you have read and understand the above. Please keep this for your own records. And thank you for participating!

Date

Signature

Thank you for participating!

Sincerely,

Oscar Ortiz, San José State graduate student
Public Administration
San José State University
One Washington Square
San José, CA 95192

Dear interviewee,

My name is Oscar Ortiz. I am a graduate student in Public Administration at San José State University. I would like to ask you if you would be willing to participate in a research project called, *Graffiti Abatement Program for the City of East Palo Alto*. This project seeks to gather information regarding current policies and programs in the East Palo Alto pertaining to graffiti abatement. I would greatly appreciate your assistance sharing your knowledge about graffiti abatement in East Palo Alto and related experiences working for the city.

The interview would last approximately 30 minutes, during which I would like to ask about the following topics:

1. How does graffiti affect overall the community and its residents?
2. How does the city deal with this problem?
3. What has been the experience of the city's community and economic development departments removing graffiti?
4. What are the barriers or constraints that the city faces?
5. In your personal opinion, what actions can or should be taken to eliminate graffiti?
6. Based on your experience, what do you think the city can do to implement an effective abatement program?
7. What do you think is the first step that should be implemented?

A detailed explanation of your rights as a subject of research conducted through San José State University is attached. Please read the material carefully. By agreeing to participate in this study you confirm that you have read and understand your rights.

Thank you in advance for your participation

Kind regards,

Oscar Ortiz

San José State University Graduate Student

Master of Public Administration

Department of Political Science

E-mail: oortiz@sjsu.edu

Mobile: (510) 375-8195

Appendix B: Volunteer Surveys

Hi, thanks for volunteering today. Your work is highly valued. I would like to ask you some questions about graffiti in the City of East Palo Alto. The information provided will be used to recommend and tailor a graffiti abatement program run by volunteers.

I will not ask you for your name, and it is completely anonymous. Please feel free to skip any questions you do not like. The survey takes about 5-10 minutes and your participation will be greatly appreciated it.

REQUEST FOR SURVEY CONSENT

Graffiti Abatement Program for the City of East Palo Alto

Oscar Ortiz, San José State graduate student in the Master of Public Administration working under the supervision of Dr. Frances Edwards.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to gather information from different cities: Watsonville, Healdsburg, and Garden Grove that have graffiti abatement programs to discuss the city's current capabilities and challenges in graffiti removal in the city of East Palo Alto. To do so, a survey consent form is necessary and participants should agree to be part of this research.

PROCEDURES

You have been asked to participate in a survey that aims to ascertain your views about graffiti abatement in the City of East Palo Alto. You will be asked to participate in a 10-question survey, which address this topic.

POTENTIAL RISKS

There is no anticipated risk to you from participating in this survey, and participants are anonymous.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

There is no anticipated direct benefit to you from participating in this survey other than the extent to which you value contributing to graffiti abatement in the City of East Palo Alto.

COMPENSATION

No compensation will be given to the subjects for answering this survey.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your name will remain anonymous.

PARTICIPANT RIGHTS

Your consent is being given voluntarily. You may refuse to participate in this survey or in any part of it. You have the right to not answer questions you do not wish to answer. If you decide to participate in the survey, you are free to withdraw at any time without any negative effect on your relations with San Jose State University or with any other participating institutions or agencies.

Questions about this research may be addressed to Oscar Ortiz at (510) 375-8195. Complaints about the research may be presented to Dr. Frances Edwards Chair, San José State University Master of Public Administration (408) 924-5559. Questions about research subject's rights or research related injury may be presented to Dr. Thalia Anagnos, Associate Vice President, Graduate Studies and Research, at (408) 924-2427.

By agreeing to participate in the survey, it is implied that you have read and understand the above. Please keep this for your own records. And thank you for participating!

Date

Signature

Thank you for participating!

Sincerely,

Oscar Ortiz, San José State graduate student
Public Administration
San José State University
One Washington Square
San José, CA 95192

For Surveys:

My name is Oscar Ortiz. I am a graduate student in Public Administration at San José State University. I am conducting a survey for a research project called, *Graffiti Abatement Program for the City of East Palo Alto*.

I would greatly appreciate your anonymous participation in this survey by answering the following questions:

1. What motivated you to participate as volunteer?
2. In your view, what has East Palo Alto's community and economic development departments done to remove graffiti and abate the graffiti problem?
3. In your opinion, what actions can or should be taken by the city to eliminate graffiti?
4. In your opinion, what actions or policies are required by the local government for a graffiti-free city?
5. What do you think are the barriers or constraints that the city faces?
6. What do you think is the first step that should be implemented?
7. Are you aware of any other programs in place to address graffiti issues?
8. Can you name three positive aspect of having a graffiti-free city?
9. What do you think compels 'taggers' to create graffiti?
 - a) Artistic expression?
 - b) Social statements?
 - c) Political statements?
 - d) Personal egoism or egotism?
 - e) Pleasure from defacing the property of others to whom they feel superior – or inferior?
10. What are the three most important things you feel could improve the city's graffiti abatement program?
11. In your opinion, which groups, organizations, or city departments should be responsible and accountable to remove graffiti in East Palo Alto?
12. Is there anything else you would like to add regarding your experience today as volunteer?

Attached to this survey is a detailed explanation of your rights as a subject of research conducted through San José State University. Please read the material carefully. By agreeing to participate in the study it is implied that you have read and understand your rights.

Please feel free to ask any questions you may have about this research project.

Kind regards,

Oscar Ortiz

San José State University Graduate Student

Master of Public Administration

Department of Political Science

E-mail: ormaos@yahoo.com

Mobile: (510) 375-8195

Appendix C: Release of Liability

Hi, thanks for volunteering today. Your work is highly valued. This is a liability release form for the graffiti abatement participation. It is used to protect the City of East Palo Alto from any liability resulting for dangerous activities by allowing the participant to sign a release before participating.

Please feel free to ask any questions. If you do decide to participate, you need to turn in the signed waiver form to any of the organizers of the graffiti abatement program. .



CITY OF EAST PALO ALTO

RELEASE OF LIABILITY

The undersigned desires to participate as a volunteer in a graffiti abatement program operated by the City of East Palo Alto.

In consideration of the City allowing my volunteer participation, I do hereby agree to hold the City, its officers, agents, and employees, free and clear of any liability for injuries or damages that may occur to my person or property while participating in the program.

It is my understanding that the City consents to having me participate in the program on public property. In the event entry is to be on private property, the City will first obtain the consent of the appropriate party to allow entry on private property.

It is my understanding that I am to provide my own transportation and supervision. In the event of any media coverage, it will be my personal responsibility to advise reporters whether or not I will agree to pictures or publication of my participation.

I understand that the volunteer work will require some physical effort (bending, lifting, walking, kneeling, etc.) and the use of small hand tools; supplies will be provided by the City. I am in good health and able to acknowledge these conditions. I understand I shall receive no compensation for participating in the program, and that work will be completed under the direction of City personnel. I will be provided with a specific location or locations where work is to be done. To protect my co-workers, the public, and myself I will follow safety precautions to the best of my ability.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: _____

LOCATION: _____

PROJECT DATE: _____

I am over 18 years old _____

Date: _____

(Participant's name, Printed)

(Signature of participant)

(Address)

(City)

(Zip)

Daytime Telephone Number