

Agenda Item #14.1  
For Council Meeting of: September 26, 2023

CITY OF SANTA ROSA  
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL  
FROM: CLARE HARTMAN, DIRECTOR  
PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT  
SUBJECT: GRAFFITI ABATEMENT PILOT PROGRAM

AGENDA ACTION: RESOLUTION

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**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended by the Planning and Economic Development Department that the Council, by resolution: 1) accept and appropriate \$285,200 in one-time funding from the Sonoma County Landfill Settlement Agreement to establish an 18-month graffiti abatement pilot program; and 2) amend the City Classification and Salary Plan to add, for a period not to exceed 18 months, 1.0 FTE Limited Term Housing and Community Services (Code Enforcement) Technician and 0.5 FTE Limited Term Community Outreach Specialist.

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The purpose of the proposed action is to establish a graffiti abatement pilot program ("program") for the City of Santa Rosa. The program would consider the realities of limited funding sources and serve as an 18-month "proof of concept" trial for an interim strategy, designed – through a combination of enforcement efforts, alternative education, and outreach – to generate visible reductions in graffiti prevalence upon private property, restore aesthetic appeal, and foster community pride. This effort will serve as a companion piece to an interdepartmental city team that addresses graffiti abatement city-wide, including graffiti on public property. Furthermore, as a trial, the program would aim to lay the foundation for an upwardly scalable future program, should sustainable funding become available. Incorporating mindful enforcement actions, preventive measure implementation, community engagement, and productive leveraging of partnerships, the proposed program would seek to contribute to the City's economic health; create a safer community; support development; and enhance the vitality and resiliency of Santa Rosa. These benefits align closely with City Council Goal/Priority No. 4 (Promote economic and community vibrancy) and No. 5 (Build and maintain sustainable infrastructure).

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BACKGROUND

Historically, the City of Santa Rosa has addressed graffiti abatement through various initiatives and programs. In 2007, the City created a civilian Graffiti Coordinator position within the Police Department which ran a grant funded abatement program through 2014. In 2019, graffiti abatement duties fully shifted to the City's Code Enforcement program and was distributed across its general caseload. In recent years, Code has seen an increase in graffiti vandalism and its impact to the city's aesthetic appeal and community pride.

PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

The City Council passed Ordinance No. 3601 on April 29, 2003, establishing a program to restrict the possession and sale of graffiti implements and promote prompt removal. Ordinance No. 3729, passed on July 19, 2005, further strengthened the City's graffiti abatement efforts, emphasizing the importance of prompt removal and introducing additional provisions, including parental responsibility for minors involved in graffiti and penalties for offenders; under Ordinance No. 3729, responsibility to abate graffiti lies with the property owner.

ANALYSIS

The proposed graffiti abatement pilot would allow the City to abate graffiti; the program aims to add, for a period not to exceed 18 months, one full-time, limited term Housing and Community Services (Code Enforcement) Technician ("HCS Technician") and one part-time, limited term Community Outreach Specialist. These dedicated positions will constitute a team responsible for the constituent parts of this trial program: enforcement and community outreach.

The enforcement component will be responsible for daily proactive and reactive monitoring, public interaction, and engagement efforts to address graffiti-related issues throughout the City. With an initial focus on the higher-visibility regions of the city, the HCS Technician will engage in field work to identify areas prone to graffiti; raise awareness about its negative impacts; take enforcement actions when needed; maintain detailed case records for each incident; and strive to promote the rapid removal of graffiti – a crucial metric in deterring repetitive tagging incidents.

The community outreach component, correspondingly, will complement the enforcement effort by leveraging available community resources to the fullest extent possible, informing the need to allocate additional resources for supplemental efforts; aiming to strike a productive balance between enforcement actions and community impact; and ensuring a targeted, consistent, and scalable approach.

Because the program acknowledges the potential for disproportional impacts within certain segments of the community, staff will seek to maintain an awareness of and sensitivity to the capacity of individuals to self-abate graffiti nuisances upon their

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properties. In alignment with the education- and resource-based philosophy that is key to Code Enforcement, the HCS Technician will routinely coordinate with the Community Outreach Specialist – and, as needed, the City’s interdepartmental team – to actively explore alternatives to enforcement whenever such alternatives are required.

The overarching goal of these efforts is to create a cleaner and more vibrant environment that fosters collaboration and community pride while discouraging graffiti incidents. By prioritizing education, actively seeking alternatives to enforcement whenever possible, and utilizing available community resources, the program strives to establish an effective and sustainable foundation for later graffiti abatement efforts.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

Approving this pilot proposal would appropriate \$285,200 of one-time funding to support staffing costs of \$271,168 and incidental costs (printing of outreach materials, etc.) of \$14,032 over the course of the 18-month pilot program. The funding for the program is the one-time Sonoma County Landfill Settlement Agreement funds that are available to the City for landscape maintenance and graffiti abatement. The program will cease after 18 months unless additional funding is identified.

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

This action is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under CEQA Guidelines Sections 15061(b)(3) and 15378 as there is no possibility that the implementation of this action may have significant effects on the environment, and no further environmental review is required.

**BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Not Applicable.

**NOTIFICATION**

Not applicable.

**ATTACHMENTS**

- Resolution

**PRESENTER**

Lou Kirk, Assistant Chief Building Official