

WINSTON-SALEM POLICE DEPARTMENT

GRAFFITI REMOVAL PROGRAM

The City of Winston-Salem started the Graffiti Removal Program in November of 1996. The purpose of this program is to rid the City of graffiti which is plaguing our community.

Businesses on the Southeast side of the City contacted the local media in November to publicize the growing graffiti problem and public concern in the area.

The Winston-Salem Police Department along with citizens of the community are identifying locations throughout the City which are being defaced with graffiti. Educating the citizens on the importance of removing the graffiti is the top priority of this program. This is done by meeting with the property owner and providing them information on the detrimental affects of graffiti on their community. The quick removal of the graffiti by the property owner is recommended.

Should the property owner be unable to remove the graffiti, the Winston-Salem Police

Department has organized this program to provide them with the needed assistance to remove the graffiti. Utilizing the help of volunteer organizations and material donors, identified locations are being cleaned or painted.

This program is providing the citizens of Winston-Salem with a nicer and cleaner place to live and work.

II. DESCRIPTION

A. SCANNING:

1. What was the nature of the problem?

The City of Winston-Salem was experiencing an increasing amount of graffiti vandalism.

City government did not have a program in place to address the removal of graffiti.

2. How was the problem identified?

The community and beat officers located the graffiti and initiated investigations.

3. Who identified the problem (e.g., community, police managers, officers, politicians, press, etc.)?

Property owners and local media brought the rapidly increasing problem to the attention of the public and city officials.

4. How and why was this problem selected from among problems?

Graffiti is one of the most visible signs of a community in decline. The City of Winston-Salem needed to create a program to eliminate the graffiti.

5. What was the initial level of diagnosis/ unit of analysis (e.g., crime type, neighborhood, specific premise, specific offender group, etc.)?

The crime type, malicious injury to property, most affected the southeastern side of Winston-Salem. This area is predominantly a business community with several lower income houses in the area. Juveniles in the area were believed to be primarily responsible for the graffiti.

B. ANALYSIS:

- 1. What methods, data and information sources were used to analyze the problem (e.g., surveys, interviews, observations, crime analysis, etc.)?**

Information about graffiti prevention and removal was gathered from other police departments throughout the country utilizing the Internet. Officers were directed to complete and forward a "Graffiti Removal" Form to the Crime Prevention Unit so we could begin tracking the type and number of graffiti locations.

- 2. History: How often and for how long was it a problem?**

Graffiti has been a nuisance in Winston-Salem for the past two years. During the past year the number of locations significantly increased. A one time program was started in the Summer of 1996. Youth were paid to remove graffiti while out of school. This program became too expensive to maintain and ended when the children went back to school. The Graffiti Removal Program that was initiated last November was established to be an ongoing program.

- 3. Who was involved in the problem (offenders, victims, others) and what were their respective motivations, gains and losses?**

The perpetrators of graffiti were found to be males of different races with an age range of nine to thirty-four years of age. Some of the graffiti was painted to mark gang territory; the rest was painted by "taggers". "Taggers" are people who want their art work displayed for all to see. The victim of the crime is the private property owner or tax payer.

4. What harm resulted from the problem?

The property owner, city and state lost time and money in restoring the painted surfaces to their original appearance. The graffiti, when left unattended, brought a sense of loss of control to the neighborhood. It drove people away and threatened business. **How was the problem being addressed before the problem-solving project? What were the results of those responses?**

Prior to starting the Graffiti Removal Program, children were paid during the summer months to remove graffiti. This was a temporary solution to the graffiti problem. Once the children went back to school in the fall, the project ended due to a lack of manpower. The cost of paying the children also became expensive.

5. What did the analysis reveal about the cause and underlying conditions that precipitated the problem?

The cause of the graffiti in Winston-Salem seemed to be affiliated with gangs even though the gang structure in the area appears to be weak. The graffiti started in the growing Hispanic neighborhoods of Winston-Salem but quickly spread to other neighborhoods. Similar words and symbols were seen throughout the City.

7. What did the analysis reveal about the nature and extent of the problem?

The graffiti problem was researched on the Internet. The same gang graffiti markings were being seen in Winston-Salem that have appeared in larger cities.

8. What situational information was needed to better understand the problem (e.g., time of occurrence, location, other particulars of the environment, etc.)?

The graffiti would normally occur in industrial/ business areas on the weekend, late at night. This is when the area had the least amount of traffic.

9. Was there an open discussion with the community about the problem?

The graffiti problem was discussed at a Public Safety Meeting by the Chief of Police, George L. Sweat and the Board of Alderman of Winston-Salem on three occasions. Several options were discussed on how to respond to the graffiti problem.

C. RESPONSE:

1. What possible response alternatives were considered to deal with the problem?

Responses included a possible city ordinance making it the property owners' responsibility to remove the graffiti. This idea was not followed through because this would victimize the property owners twice. The idea of the police department creating a volunteer program utilizing donated materials was supported by city government and the tax payers.

2. What responses did you use to address the problem?

A Crime Prevention/ C.O.P.S. Officer met with each property owner to discuss the lasting effects of graffiti when left in place for an extended period of time. The property owner was provided with literature on detrimental effects of graffiti on businesses and in residential areas. Volunteer organizations and material donors were solicited to assist the Winston-Salem Police Department with graffiti removal.

3. How did you develop a response as a result of your analysis?

Contact was made with local businesses and volunteer organizations to seek their cooperation with this program. Most area businesses which could provide materials were eager to assist the police department with the program.

4. What evaluation criteria were most important to the department before implementation of the response alternative(s) (e. g. legality, community values, potential effectiveness, cost, practicality, etc.)?

The quick response and potential effectiveness were the most important aspects of this project. Graffiti locations were increasing rapidly when this program was started.

5. What did you intend to accomplish with your response plan (i.e., project goal and corresponding measurable objectives)?

The Winston-Salem Police Department intended to reduce the number of graffiti locations utilizing volunteer groups and material donations. This would keep the cost down for the property owner and tax payer. We also intended to educate the property owner about the detrimental effects of graffiti on the community.

6. What resources were available to help solve the problem?

The available resources were volunteer organizations which included the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, church groups, and Forsyth Court Volunteers, which includes juveniles sentenced to community service by the court system.

Donations from businesses such as Lowes Hardware, Home Depot and Duron Paints were also a valuable resource.

7. What was done before you implemented your response plan?

The above-mentioned organizations and businesses, along with others, were provided information about the Graffiti Removal Program. Affected property owners were contacted to ensure their cooperation in the program.

8. What difficulties were encountered during response implementation?

Property owners were initially slow in removing graffiti after stating it would be removed. The donated materials did not perform well in cold weather. Some of the materials were of poor quality.

9. Who was involved in the response to your problem?

During a "Graffiti Removal Day" a volunteer group of six to ten individuals respond to the predetermined location. One of the four Graffiti Officers meets the group with supplies to be used. The graffiti is then removed after the group is given instructions.

D. ASSESSMENT:

1. What were the results? What degree of impact did the response plan have on this problem?

The following statistical information is current as of 07-15-97. Sixty-one of seventy-eight identified graffiti locations have been eliminated. The public reaction to this program has been very positive. The property owners that have been assisted feel very grateful to the police department for starting the ongoing program.

2. What were your methods of evaluation and for how long was the effectiveness of the problem-solving?

Each area where graffiti was removed has been tracked to see if it reappears. As of 07-15-97, two locations have been defaced with graffiti for a second time.

3. Who was involved in the evaluation?

The City of Winston-Salem is divided into four sectors (southeast, southwest, northeast, and northwest). An officer was appointed for each sector, from the Crime Prevention/ C.O.P.S. Office, to track the progress of the Graffiti Removal Program.

4. Were there problems in implementing the response plan?

The initial startup of the program took a great deal of effort mainly due to the cold weather and the holiday season. Volunteer groups were busy with other projects.

5. If there was no improvement in the problem, were other systemic efforts considered to handle the problem?

The City of Winston-Salem has seen a reduction in the amount of graffiti being reported during the past six months. A plan was also developed regarding a city ordinance if the community did not want to take part in this volunteer program. A draft of the city ordinance has been completed but never released to the public or Board of Alderman due to the success of the Graffiti Removal Program.

6. What response goals were accomplished?

The major goal was to successfully reduce the amount of graffiti in the City. We have been successful thus far in the program.

7. How did you measure your results?

The results were measured through the positive comments of those involved and the large reduction of new and repeat graffiti. Direct observations of the affected neighborhoods reveal the productivity of the program.

8. How could you have made the response more effective?

The number one goal of this program is to completely rid the City of Winston-Salem of graffiti and to remove it in a more timely manner.

9. Was there a concern about displacement (i.e., pushing the problem somewhere else)?

No, the police department felt that showing the graffiti artists that their graffiti would be removed soon after it was painted would help reduce the problem. Also, making examples out of those arrested would deter it from occurring.

10. Will your response require continued monitoring or a continuing effort to maintain your results?

This program was started with the idea that it would be a continuing effort involving the police department and the community.

III. AGENCY AND OFFICER INFORMATION

1. At what level of the police organization was this problem-solving initiative adopted (e.g., the entire department, a few select officers, etc.)?

The Chief of Police, George L. Sweat, requested that an officer research the different

methods of graffiti reduction or possibly graffiti elimination. Officer M. R. Parrish was selected to head this program.

2. Did officers or management receive any training in problem-oriented policing and/ or problem solving before this project began or during its execution?

Each new police officer receives training in basic problem solving during their police academy training. Officers are also selected to attend advanced in-service problem-solving classes. Indirectly officers receive training in problem-oriented policing through their daily encounters with varying situations and the public. These lessons were applied when working on this program.

3. Were additional incentives given to police officers who engaged in problem solving?

No additional incentives were given to the officers who created or worked on this program. Projects such as this are initiated from the Crime Prevention/ C.O.P.S. Office, of the Winston-Salem Police Department, on a regular basis.

4. What resources and guidelines (manuals, past problem-solving examples, etc.) were used, if any, by police officers to help them manage this problem solving initiative?

Graffiti programs and information from other police departments were examined through the Internet. Officers also have access to problem-solving publications received on a weekly, bi-weekly, and monthly basis. Programs created in the Crime Prevention/ C.O.P.S Office are stored on disk for future reference.

5. What issues/ problems were identified with the problem-oriented policing model or the problem-solving model?

The Winston-Salem Police Department found no issues or problems with the problem-oriented policing model or the problem-solving model.

6. What general resources (monetary and/ or personnel) commitments were made to this project, and of those resources, what went beyond the existing department budget?

The Winston-Salem Police Department purchased graffiti removal materials to be donated on a case by case basis. The police department spent approximately \$900.00 on these materials. None of the money spent went beyond the department budget.

7. Project Contact Person:

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