



REPORT

TO: Mayor Lawlor and Members of Council

FROM: Catherine McLeod, Manager of Culture and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
Glodeane Brown, Public Art Coordinator

DATE: March 16, 2023

REPORT NO.: BEC-2023-004

SUBJECT: Graffiti Action Plan

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report No. BEC-2023-004, dated March 16, 2023, regarding the Graffiti Action Plan be received;

AND FURTHER THAT Council approve the Graffiti Action Plan outlined in this report;

AND FURTHER THAT Council direct staff to consider the potential future initiatives outlined in this report and, if feasible, to review them as part of the 2024 Budget Process.

KEY POINTS:

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this report:

- The Town is committed to a proactive and cooperative approach to managing graffiti vandalism in the public realm and taking steps to help prevent it.
- The Graffiti Action Plan outlined in this report addresses Council Resolution [No. 2023-0009](#).
- The Graffiti Action Plan lays out a process for public education and engagement.
- The Graffiti Action Plan includes both proactive and responsive components.
- The Town's Public Art Master Plan includes direction for responding to works of art that have been installed in public spaces, without the Town's approval and/or without being commissioned by the Town.

- The Graffiti Action Plan items can be delivered with existing resources and have no additional financial impact.
- To supplement the Graffiti Action Plan, additional potential future initiatives are presented for Council’s consideration. These would have resource impacts and, pending Council direction, could be explored as part of the 2024 Budget process.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION:

At its January 23, 2023 meeting, Council approved Resolution [No. 2023-0009](#). The Resolution directed staff to report back to Council on options to address graffiti, including engaging utilities and a communications approach to inform residents and businesses on how to report graffiti.

The purpose of this report is to outline the recommended Graffiti Action Plan which includes proactive and responsive actions. The report outlines: 1) existing processes and initiatives that are already in place; 2) recommended Graffiti Action Plan which can be implemented with existing resources); and 3) potential future initiatives, which have resource impacts and, pending Council direction, can be considered as part of the 2024 Budget process.

Staff reviewed the Town’s existing graffiti policies and processes, as well as those of eight comparator municipalities to identify gaps and determine best practices and innovative solutions.

1. Existing Anti-Graffiti Processes and Programs

1.1 Process for Reporting Graffiti

The existing process in-place to report graffiti is outlined below. When Councillors, Town staff or members of the public (including businesses) notice graffiti on private or public property they can report it as follows:

Location/Content	Report To	Contact Information	Responsibility for clean-up
Town Property	Town – Public Works	Service Request Form (905) 873-2600 ext. 2603	Town – Public Works
Private, or Public Property not owned by Town	Town – Enforcement Services	Enforcement Request Form (905) 873-2600 ext. 2330	Property Owner
Offensive Graffiti and Graffiti in-progress	Halton Regional Police Services	Non-emergency: 905-825-4777	Depends on location

1.2 Programs and Policies in Public Art

The following are examples of programs and policies within the Town's Public Art Program that relate to graffiti in terms of mitigation, facilitating removal and the distinction between graffiti art and graffiti vandalism.

1.2.1 Public Art Projects

The Town's public art projects consider anti-graffiti design principles, such as not including large areas of solid colour and/or blank spaces, and the minimization of the use of light colours, in order to discourage graffiti.

Anti-graffiti coating is applied to public art projects and programs as appropriate, such as the utility box projects [Under Wraps](#) and [Bell Box Mural Project](#). The anti-graffiti coating allows for easier graffiti removal and the artwork enlivens public space and provides options for artists to express themselves. Under Wraps features artwork by professional artists on vinyl wraps on Town-owned utility cabinets. The Bell Box Mural Project, a partnership between the Town and Bell Canada, features artist painted murals on Bell infrastructure. Both programs are ongoing with the number of cabinets wrapped or painted per year depending on available budget and staff capacity in relation to other public art projects being undertaken in any given year. The table below summarizes the program to-date, followed by images of completed Bell Box Murals (Figure 1) and Under Wraps Cabinets (Figure 2), as well as the artwork approved for three additional cabinets (Figure 3).

Program	Completed to-date	Planned for 2023	Total
Under Wraps	10	6	16
Bell Box Mural Project	4	2	6

Figure 1: Completed Bell Box Murals



Figure 2: Completed Under Wraps Cabinets



Figure 3: New Artwork - Coming this Spring to an Additional Three Cabinets



1.2.2 Public Art Master Plan (PAMP)

The [Public Art Master Plan](#) (PAMP) differentiates between graffiti vandalism and graffiti artwork. It provides a mechanism to assess graffiti and preserve graffiti artwork if appropriate or desired. The PAMP states that “in the event that a work of art is created that has not been approved or commissioned [for example graffiti], the Public Art Advisory Board may assess and recommend to Council on whether to retain/maintain or de-accession the artwork.”

2. Graffiti Action Plan

Building on what the Town already does in terms of graffiti mitigation and removal (per Section 1 above), the recommended Graffiti Action Plan includes the following initiatives which can be implemented with existing resources.

2.1 Public Education Campaign

Town staff have developed a public education campaign that includes the following content:

- What graffiti is and is not
- The Town's graffiti management plan
- How to report graffiti on public and private property, including offensive material
- Preventative measures to reduce/mitigate graffiti

The communications strategy includes the following components:

- Update Town's website information on graffiti utilizing cross-departmental expertise and best practices from other municipal websites to create a one-stop information page with relevant links and contact information.
- Optimize the webpage location to ensure ease of access.
- Raise the profile of the webpage with a homepage banner linking to the updated web page.
- Engage businesses through presentations to the Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) and the Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce so that they can share information with their membership about graffiti mitigation, reporting and removal.
- Develop a social media campaign including posts for use by the Mayor, Councillors, Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) and the Chamber of Commerce.
- Develop and tailor informational articles to different audiences and distribute through the Town's Economic Development, Cultural Services, and Recreation & Parks e-newsletters (e.g. tips for business owners, difference between public art and graffiti, focus on graffiti and outdoor amenities).
- Track webpage views, social media shares and comments to gauge the reach and effectiveness of the campaign.
- As needed, provide Council with an update on implementation, including the number of graffiti instances.

2.2 Engagement of Private Sector in Public Art Program

To be proactive, Town staff have reached out to utilities and service providers in the community to explore options around incorporating public art into their infrastructure. Building on past successes, this could include the expansion of existing public art programs to include their infrastructure. Discussions are ongoing.

The Town has the ability to financially charge private property owners, including utilities, for the removal of graffiti in the event that they have not responded to a request for graffiti removal in a timely manner. The Town works with utilities in a proactive and cooperative manner and, to date, has not needed to remove graffiti from utility infrastructure on their behalf and hence charge for this service.

Halton Hills Hydro removes graffiti from their utility boxes as soon as they become aware of it. In cases where that they are unable to remove the graffiti, they paint over the area with colour matching paint.

3. Potential Future Initiatives for Consideration

Based on best practices, there may be additional or supplementary actions that Council may want to consider for future implementation beyond the Graffiti Action Plan elements outlined above (per Section 2). These initiatives, however, would likely require additional resources and further review, and would need to be considered as part of the 2024 budget. Potential options include:

- Expansion of the Under Wraps and Bell Box Mural Programs - Increase the number of utility cabinets that are painted and wrapped annually, with a potential expansion to other utilities pending their interest in participating in the program.
- Development of Graffiti Focused Art Programs - Create space for positive public expression through graffiti art. This could include components such as designating a location for graffiti art and annually commissioning new work, a mentorship program, creating opportunities for the development and practice of graffiti art, and/or graffiti art exhibition at the Helson Gallery with complementary programming.
- Create a Graffiti Removal Assistance Program - This program would aid private property owners and make funds available to them for removal of graffiti on their property.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This report aligns to the Town's Strategic Plan recognizing the value to foster a healthy community that provides a clean environment and range of economic and social opportunities to ensure a superior quality of life in our community.

This report also identifies shaping growth as one of the Town's Strategic priorities.

RELATIONSHIP TO CLIMATE CHANGE:

This report is administrative in nature and does not directly impact or address climate change and the Town's Net Zero target.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

Public Engagement will be required; consultation with Communications staff to follow.

The communications strategy outlined in this report has been developed by Corporate Communications and will be rolled out this spring/summer.

Halton Regional Police Services were consulted on proper procedures to report graffiti in-progress as well as any offensive material.

The Downtown Acton Business Improvement Area, Downtown Georgetown Business Improvement Area, Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce and Halton Hills Hydro were informed of this report being brought to Council and will be engaged as part of its implementation.

The proposed Graffiti Action Plan ensures that residents and businesses know how to report graffiti vandalism, understand the roles and responsibilities of the Town, private property owners and Halton Region Police Services, and are aware of strategies that the Town is undertaking to mitigate graffiti on Town-owned property and steps they can take to reduce the chances of graffiti vandalism on private property.

INTERNAL CONSULTATION:

Town staff met with Councillors Somerville, Albano and Garneau in preparing this report.

Staff from By-law Enforcement, Corporate Communications, Public Works, and Planning and Development were consulted.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

This report is administrative in nature and does not have any financial implications.

Although this report is administrative in nature, per the recommendation, staff can further explore additional initiatives for potential consideration as part of the 2024 Budget process.

Reviewed and approved by,

Damian Szybalski, Commissioner of Business, Environment & Culture

Chris Mills, Chief Administrative Officer