



GRAB

GRaffiti ABatement Partners, Inc.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

Ani-Graffiti Resource Guide



Membership Application

GRAB[®]
 GRaffiti ABatement Partners, Inc.[®]
 MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

GRAB relies on the participation of community members like you. To become a GRAB member and learn more about graffiti prevention and eradication, fill out the application below:

Name: _____

Organization Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone No: _____ Fax No: _____

E-Mail Address: _____

CATEGORY	ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEES
Individual	\$ 15
Civic/Community Organization	\$ 25
Municipality	
Town	\$ 50
City	\$100
Business (# of employees)	
1 Sole Proprietor	\$ 15
2 - 4	\$ 25
5 - 9	\$ 50
10 - 25	\$ 75
More than 25	\$100

Benefits of membership include: the Anti-Graffiti Resource Guide, discounts on graffiti removal products and supplies, and the newsletter. Additionally, members will be entitled to attend GRAB sponsored educational seminars free of charge.

I have enclosed a check in the amount of _____ to cover the cost of a _____ Membership.

Signature: _____

Mail to: GRaffiti ABatement Partners, Inc.
 P.O. Box 623
 Kensington, MD 20895-0623

Your contribution is tax deductible to the extent covered by law.

GRAB: A Partnership That Works

GRaffiti ABatement Partners, Inc., or GRAB, is a private-public partnership whose mission is to eliminate graffiti vandalism in Montgomery County. Through education, clean-up activities, and enforcement strategies, GRAB encourages local communities, governments and businesses to eliminate graffiti on both commercial and private properties in a timely manner. Since 1996, GRAB has established a hot-line to encourage citizens and businesses to report graffiti, developed and distributed educational materials designed to raise awareness of graffiti vandalism, established a Community Paint Bank to encourage prompt graffiti removal on private property, and sponsored and endorsed numerous community graffiti removal efforts. GRAB also has developed a Memorandum of



Understanding between government agencies to facilitate graffiti removal on public property and funded the purchase of digital cameras for use by law enforcement officials in documenting graffiti and creating a database of “tags”.

As GRAB gains greater support from the business community and recognition from graffiti vandals that their behavior will not be tolerated, all residents and businesses benefit from a safer, cleaner Montgomery County. Community resources—financial and manpower—enable GRAB to continue its education and awareness efforts as well as its civic-based activities to remove graffiti from our streets and buildings. Join GRAB (see application attached) and help keep our neighborhoods beautiful and secure.

Dispelling the Myths of Graffiti

The Myth: Graffiti is a victimless crime.

The Fact: When discussing the consequences of graffiti vandalism, social scientists and economic advisors often refer to “the broken window theory” (Glazer, 1979). This theory:

- draws a connection between the occurrence of graffiti and a perceived diminished quality of services;
- states that if graffiti is allowed to exist, it will persist; and
- argues that there is a correlation between graffiti and more serious forms of crime.

Municipalities that subscribe to this theory maintain that the presence of graffiti decreases property values, intimidates citizens, discourages tourism and increases property taxes. Studies reveal that cities and towns suffering from graffiti are also plagued with forced relocation of business, lower levels of tourism and higher crime rates.

The Myth: Graffiti is usually gang-related.

The Fact: Once regarded as territorial and the mark of inner-city gangs, graffiti is now considered sport by youth from every type of neighborhood. In fact, only 20-30% of all graffiti can be attributed to

gangs (National Graffiti Information Network, 1992).

Adolescents from all regions and socioeconomic backgrounds have joined together to form tagger crews and celebrate “the power of the hip hop movement.” Police estimate that 65-75% of all street-level graffiti in the United States is currently created by various members of the hip hop culture.

The Myth: Graffiti writers are disproportionately young, lower class, minority males with relatively little educational and occupational prestige.

The Fact: Recent data (Wilson, 1995) reveal a broader age range (12-50 years of age) and an increasingly larger number of Caucasian writers. Arrest data from 17 major cities indicate that 50-70% of all street level graffiti is caused by young adult Caucasians with college and career ambitions and pursuits.

The Myth: The link between graffiti and other forms of crime is remote.

The Fact: Various other forms of juvenile delinquency and crime have been linked to graffiti production. These include shoplifting (i.e., racking), drug use, including the sniffing of paint (i.e., huffing), underage alcohol consumption,

curfew violations, and other forms of vandalism. There is also a correlation to violent crimes. Many taggers now carry weapons for protection and to increase peer respect. This results in an increasing number of assaults, homicides and injuries.

The Myth: The motivation to produce graffiti is rooted in some personal malfunction.

The Fact: Regardless of social characteristics, hip hop graffiti writers commonly express four primary motivations for producing graffiti. They are the quest for power, self-expressionism, rebellion and fame.

The primary motivation is fame and it is achieved through (1) quantity of work; (2) exposure; (3) quality of work; (4) risk involved in applying graffiti. Quantity is the most important ingredient to achieving fame. A writer must “get up” more than everybody else. Up on walls. Up on overpasses. Up on any and all public property. Graffiti writers carefully choose where they will graffiti based on whether other graffiti writers (and to a much lesser degree, the general public) will see their graffiti. Style is the third key variable in attaining fame. This is especially true for elite writers who concentrate their efforts on more difficult and time-consuming pieces. Finally, graffiti is more highly valued if its application requires

the writer to experience risk or danger. Increased status and respect are given to graffiti writers who risk their lives to apply graffiti in dangerous and thus prestigious locations.

Artistic expression refers to the artistic value attributed to graffiti based on its style, originality and technique. Graffiti writers closely identify with their graffiti, viewing their work as an extension of themselves. Many believe that they are improving the environment by enlivening a “drab and dismal city with bright and colorful designs.” Most elite writers see themselves as artists, but even taggers believe that their efforts have some aesthetic appeal.

Writers obtain a sense of individual power by laying a symbolic claim to the area that they graffiti. Graffiti writers also experience collective power by belonging to a youth subculture.

Finally, graffiti is a method of rebellion. Condemned as “vandals, delinquents, and criminals,” graffitiists acknowledge that they are violating conventional norms. Yet, most do not believe that graffiti warrants punitive action. Indeed, many writers thrive on the push and pull with authorities that is inherent to graffiti production.

The Myth: Graffiti writing is not organized.

The Fact: Collectively sharing the graffiti experience, graffiti writers have formed separate and distinct groups. Members often refer to these groups as graffiti bands, tagger crews, posses or mobs. The most common term is crew. These groups vary in size and geographical dispersion. Some crews contain over 300 members and claim to stretch as far as Los Angeles, while other crews are school-based and contain as few as three to five members.

Technological advances have increased the accessibility of graffiti information and technique. Graffiti writers now share graffiti knowledge over the Internet. Underground magazines and videos provide additional networking capabilities by supplying resources and stylistic information, production techniques, suggestions on skirting law enforcement and a means for writers to familiarize themselves with the work of other graffitiists from around the world.

Copyright Victoria A. Wilson, 1996

Solving the Graffiti Problem

READ IT!

Keep a look out for graffiti offenders and, if you see a graffitist in action, call 911 immediately so he/she can be caught in the act.

Parents be alert to the signs that your child may be contributing to the graffiti problem.

Have you noticed aerosol cans around the house that you didn't purchase?

Have you noticed paint residue on your child's clothing?

Does your child come home with paint on his/her hands?

If yes, confront your child immediately.

REPORT IT!

Once you see graffiti, please report it to the GRAB hotline at (301) 607-GRAB (4722). In your message, be sure to include the location and description of the graffiti and your phone number in the event additional information is needed. Don't assume that someone else has or will report it. Also be sure to report any suspicious activity such as youngsters hanging around the rear of a shopping center or possessing spray paint.

REMOVE IT!

If it is your property, report it and then, after the police have seen it, quickly remove it. Studies indicate that prompt removal is the best deterrent to graffiti. Be persistent. But, it requires a sustained commitment. Frequently, after an area is cleaned and the graffiti removed, the offenders return and scrawl new graffiti. Be prepared to return to paint out the graffiti as frequently as necessary until the graffiti vandals concede defeat. Eventually, usually after no more than three times, they will give up and you will have won back your neighborhood. Establish a graffiti paint out in your neighborhood. (Assistance and supplies are available through GRAB.)

RESIST IT!

Join GRaffiti ABatement Partners, Inc., a public-private partnership that is working to prevent and eliminate graffiti in Montgomery County through education, eradication and enforcement.

All interested persons are invited to join. Call (301) 607-GRAB(4722) for information on becoming a member.

Graffiti Prevention Tips For Businesses

Graffiti can change the face of your business overnight. Between dusk and dawn on almost any given day, a business, a residential home or public place may undergo a transformation which, if no immediate response is made, can have a profound impact on your business and our community.

- Don't use graffiti images in advertising materials or in-store displays.
- Rapid and continual removal is the best graffiti prevention tool. In fact, it is the single most important contribution businesses and property owners can make in protecting the image of their business, property and preserving their customer's sense of security. Information on removal and paint products available to GRAB members at a discount or at no cost and appear in this guide. (Report graffiti to GRAB immediately.)



- Remove, replace or clean outside equipment damaged by graffiti—trash receptacles, storage sheds, utility boxes, etc.
- Landscape walls, fences and store-fronts with flowers, shrubs or other landscaping. National studies show graffiti, as well as litter, is less common in areas that are planted and landscaped. For persistent cases, plant shrubs and bushes that have thorns or prickly foliage that make an area less desirable to graffiti artists. A list of nurseries that will sell select plants to GRAB members at a discount appears in this Guide.
- Limit access to roofs by moving dumpsters away from walls and covering drainpipes to prevent vandals from scaling them.
- Increase exterior lighting and consider other security measures.
- Join GRAB.

Organizing a Community Clean-Up

SURVEY SITES

When organizing a community clean-up project, be sure to select realistic boundaries. The greatest community impact can be achieved when quality and completeness are emphasized.

- List each place where graffiti is located and determine the best way to remove it.
- Estimate the amount of manpower and material necessary to remove or cover graffiti.
- Document the graffiti by photographing it. Photographs are good tracking tools and may help police learn about criminal activity in the area.



RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS

When planning a community clean-up, consider using high school and middle school students. As a peer group, they make a strong statement against graffiti and set a positive example. Senior citizens are another solid volunteer base. Not only do many older residents have the time available, but they have years of experience, as well.

There is often a big difference between people who say they'll be there and those who actually participate at the event. An invitation, such as a flyer, is usually not enough. Phone calls, personal follow-ups and neighborhood recruitment should be used when possible.

Clean-up volunteers also tend to be concerned about the environment. If you are providing food and beverages, buy products with recyclable packaging and place recycling bins near the eating area.

Choose a date. Most successful volunteer clean-ups take place on Saturday mornings.

Confirm your core organizers and assign the different jobs necessary for the success of the clean-up.

Determine how and when materials and equipment will arrive. Make sure to

OBTAIN AUTHORIZATIONS

Always obtain written authorization from property owners prior to the clean-up date. A generic release form appears at the end of this section.

How to Effectively Paint Over Graffiti

Always think in terms of beautification! Carelessly painting over graffiti shows a lack of concern. When driving through Montgomery County, you may have noticed paint-outs characterized by haphazard patch-work and color clashes. These efforts, albeit well-intentioned, are aesthetically unappealing and costly in the long run. Over time, neighborhoods and business areas will find proper removal to be less labor intensive.

Consider the long-term effect of repainting an entire surface and saving enough paint for later.

The next time the surface is tagged, the touch-up effort will blend and will not involve a significant amount of time.



When painting over graffiti, always:

- Make sure to paint a straight and even border to delineate the area. The easiest way to accomplish this is to drag a paint-covered roller along the surface and then roll the area beneath to ground level.

- Try to color-match paint to surface whenever possible.
- Always save a few gallons of paint for touch-ups.
- Avoid drips and spills.
- Avoid painting a large surface area more than five times. This prevents the surface from breathing and can cause long-term deterioration to the structure.
- Do not paint unpainted masonry surfaces (e.g., brick, stucco, marble). These surfaces should be power-washed or chemically treated.
- Do not get discouraged. In all likelihood, you will need to repaint as taggers will deface your property again. However, if you remove the graffiti promptly, vandals will realize that graffiti on that building will not be tolerated and will move on.