



GRAFFITI ABATEMENT

HELENA BID

URBAN BEAUTIFICATION

Clean Slate Group

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ABOUT US

Inspired by a passion for urban beautification and graffiti preventions, Clean Slate Group started in 2011. Our initial set of solutions was focused on protecting and beautifying physical assets by enhancing them with artistic designs and protecting them with our exclusive patented anti-graffiti film. With our cornerstone solution, we are able to recreate almost any image, art or texture, from a variety of artist mediums, on almost any surface. We took unsightly assets that were prone to vandalism and made them beautiful while protecting them. As of 2021 we have protected over 1,000 assets in more than 30 major cities across the United States.

In 2016 Clean Slate Group launched its graffiti abatement program and services. Expanding from our core mission to beautify and protect communities, we began working directly with cities, communities and neighborhoods to address their specific beautification needs.

Today we offer a complete solution, in that we can protect and beautify assets with our film, but also provide strategy, tactical plans, experts, and tools and equipment to remove graffiti and other vandalism. Through experience, research and an extensive network, we have become the experts at graffiti removal and abatement. Specializing in historic materials; rock, brick and other delicate surfaces, we are a one-stop shop to proactively and reactively help keep communities beautiful. Beautification branch of CSG. Specializing in historic brick and delicate surfaces graffiti removal.



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DID YOU **KNOW**

- Cities with higher instances of graffiti have higher suicide rates and drug use.
- Cities with growing graffiti problems experience a decrease in property value of up to 15%.
- Without an ordinance that doesn't deal with graffiti, studies show that residents have a decrease in the feeling of being safe by 35%.
- Gateway to youth crime.
- A 2017 DOJ study indicated that 72% of people from cities without a formal graffiti abatement plan or ordinance, felt "their city had lost control or didn't care enough to prevent graffiti."



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IMPACT OF GRAFFITI

The US Justice Department (US DOJ) study found that graffiti discourages people from using public transportation, makes business districts less attractive to shoppers and increases fear among residents. Graffiti is proven to decrease the communities sense of safety, which decreases attendance or frequency, which decreases spending and increases vacancy.

Each community is different, but it is well tracked and proven that graffiti has both direct costs of damage, costs to remove, costs to fix, etc...but also far reaching and long lasting costs with impacts to decreases in safety, desire to be in a place with graffiti, increased vacancy and decreased property value.

Former Sheriff of LA County, Tim Kephart reports, **"The negative perception of graffiti vandalism can send property values plummeting and it indicates that a community is losing or has lost control."**

Graffiti is done by individuals from all social, ethnic and economic backgrounds, but most common vandal is a suburban male, age range from pre-teen to early 20's and this group is responsible for over 50% of all graffiti.

The 4 primary motivating factors for graffiti vandals are: fame, rebellion, self-expression and power.

When working with communities, often the first question is "what's the difference between graffiti and street art?" or "Where do you draw the line between what is graffiti and what is street art?" Like the US DOJ, CSG focuses on inarguable data, showing the negative impact of graffiti and the lack of a graffiti abatement plan, has on a community and therefore leaves no room for opinions or an individuals preference of whether they deem it art or graffiti.

US DOJ researcher and Senior Fellow at the Manhattan Institute, Heather Mac Donald, gives a definition that has become internationally adopted; "Graffiti is always vandalism. By definition it is committed without permission on another person's property. Whether a particular viewer finds any given piece of graffiti artistically compelling is irrelevant. Graffiti's most salient characteristic is that it is a crime."



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IMPACT OF **GRAFFITI**

Regarding intent, graffiti artists are, in general, unconcerned with the public's reaction to their work. Graffiti isn't about pleasing or connecting with the masses, it is largely a means of self-expression.

In contrast, street art is created with a specific public audience in mind, especially when it's commissioned by businesses, local organizations, or city officials. Street artists and muralists often aim to provoke audience interest and interaction through their work, or at the very least, a certain degree of understanding or appreciation for whatever it is they're trying to convey.

The key piece as to the difference between graffiti vs. street art is "permission."



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ASSESSMENT

When working with communities, often the first question is “what’s the difference between graffiti and street art?” or “Where do you draw the line between what is graffiti and what is street art?”

Regarding intent, graffiti artists are, in general, unconcerned with the public’s reaction to their work. Graffiti isn’t about pleasing or connecting with the masses, it is largely a means of self-expression.

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The key piece as to the difference between graffiti vs. street art is “permission.”

In the initial phase of our work with the Helena BID, we assessed both type and quantity of vandalism in the current environment. We located and reviewed 115 specific instances of graffiti and vandalism in addition to the two “hot zone” sites in the alleyway and park underpass.

Across the 115 instances and the “hot zones” we discovered multiple sizes and methods, including: spray paint, slap tags (stickers), chalk pens, and attempted graffiti paint-overs across a number of categories.

In the following pages of this assessment, we have defined the categories, included visual examples of each, provided context on why it is important to prevent these activities, and recommended next steps for the Helena BID moving forward.

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GRAFFITI TYPE 1 - TAGS

Approximately 80% of graffiti activity is "tagging", with the motivation of fame notoriety. This type of graffiti can consist of monikers or "tags" in one color with communication secondary, if present at all. However, it can also consist of a mural with artistic effort a major consideration. They are the graffiti writer's signature. Pictures and symbols are dominant with letters and numbers being secondary. There are a variety of tags such as slap tags (stickers/decals) which are arguably the most common, spray paint, markers, pen. Below are some examples.



Anchor Park - Utilities



Breezeway - E. Lawrance & Back of Gold Bar



Walkway between Fuller Ave. & back area of Grand St. Theater



Walking Mall

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GRAFFITI TYPE 2 - S.H.A.F.T

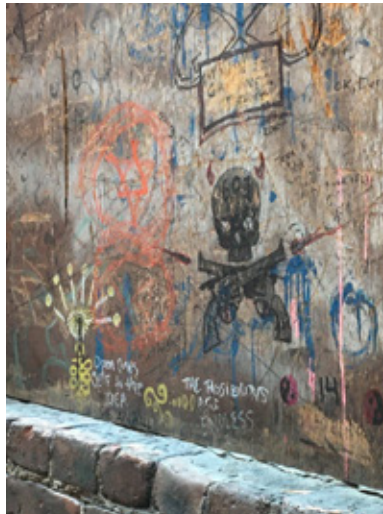
Sex. Hate. Alcohol. Firearms. Tobacco.

AND

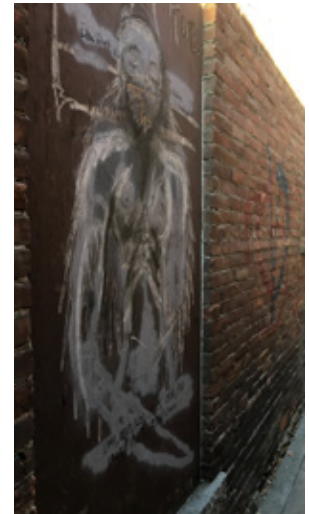
Satanic / Hate - This type of graffiti will be a religious, cultural or racial slur or aimed at a particular individual's sexual orientation. It also can appear more often during more religious times of the year. Satanic graffiti can include the inverted pentagram (five pointed star), an up side down cross, the numbers 666, or the word "natas" (Satan spelled backwards). It usually appears to be the work of kids trying it out; not an organized cult or group.



Anchor Park



Breezeway - E. Lawrance & Back of Gold Bar



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Walkway between Fuller Ave. & back area of Grand St. Theater

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GRAFFITI TYPE 3 - **GANG/RIVALRY**

Gang graffiti is meant to create a sense of intimidation and may increase the sense of fear within a neighborhood. Gang members use graffiti to mark their territory or turf, declare their allegiance to the gang, advertise a gang's status or power, and to challenge rivals.



Anchor Park



Walkway between Fuller Ave. & back area of Grand St. Theater

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GRAFFITI TYPE 4 - **GENERIC**

(Tagging-Non-Threatening) - This type will include random markings. They are non-threatening and can be an amateur "tagger".



Anchor Park



Walkway between Fuller Ave. & back area of Grand St. Theater



Walking Mall



Walkway between Fuller Ave. & back area of Grand St. Theater





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NEXT STEPS

CSG Urban Beautification (CSG UB) along with Helena BID is asking the City of Helena to enact a Graffiti ordinance, similar to that of Billings, Missoula, Kalispell and Great Falls, that allows formal notice to be given to a property owner requesting graffiti removal and if the property owner doesn't respond or remove the graffiti, the HBID will remove it. This applies to properties within HBID's boundaries only.

- Similar to other Montana Communities, the new ordinance in Helena will allow HBID to serve notice, work with the property owner to help remove the graffiti vandalism or deal directly with graffiti vandalism within their district.
- All graffiti removal within HBID's boundaries will be funded by the HBID (by way of the dues already paid to HBID from their members). The city will not be responsible for any payment.
- Whether the city decides to enforce the ordinance in part or completely, HBID has a proactive graffiti abatement plan in motion enabling the following immediate benefits to the city:
 - With the HBID handling graffiti removal within their footprint, City of Helena employees, Parks & Rec., Streets & Signs, etc can increase focus on their key roles for the city and no longer need to worry about the continued and frequent graffiti vandalism on their property (inside the boundaries of the HBID). The City can help identify the location of the graffiti and notify BID staff through a variety of channels, including leveraging the "My Helena" App.
 - City of Helena Police Department can increase focus on higher priority cases and issues with the help from HBID's graffiti abatement plan being in place. The abatement plan includes photo documentation and geo-tagging of each incident, which is then cataloged and stored for reference when/if needed.
 - HBID's graffiti abatement plan, with the ordinance in place, allows prompt removal of graffiti vandalism and will further increase the vibrancy of Downtown Helena. Residents and visitors will feel safer being in Downtown Helena which leads to increased spending and patronage of local businesses.



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WHY CLEAN IT?

- **Act Fast, Prevent More.**

Immediate removal is the key to successful prevention (within 24 - 48 hours). Quick removal can discourage vandals from offending again.

- **Keep Your Community Feeling Safe.**

There is another cost to graffiti - the human cost. Studies have shown that graffiti can give the impression that a neighborhood is **unsafe** or **uncared** for.

- **Keep Business/Economy Thriving.**

When a community feels unsafe these feelings can lead to a decreased level of involvement with in the community and its business. With time this can put a negative impact on these key relationships leading businesses to have reduced income or potential closure.

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