

The City of Long Beach, California, had been adv  
graffiti vandals over a period of years. It affected the lives of  
most of the citizens and businesses and substantially reduced the  
quality of life.

As in most large cities, the majority of residents live in multi-  
unit dwellings such as apartment buildings, condos and town houses.  
The problem faced was gangs and drug dealers taking over the  
buildings for illegal-purposes-. Further investigation revealed  
that these law breakers were not tenants of the buildings and were  
intimidating those who did in fact live there. As that problem was  
eliminated through our Business and Apartment Watch jgograms,  
officers began to note the next external problem as graffiti  
vandalism.

Throughout the entire city, these multi-unit dwellings stood out as  
eyesores in our community. They were frequently covered with  
graffiti vandalism from both gangs and the more juvenile "tagger"  
groups. It was learned that this was a way the groups were able to  
distinguish specific areas as their domain.

The people affected by this type of activity included two groups.  
The first group is the residents and property owners who suffered  
because of the perception of a crime infested neighborhood  
resulting in low rents and a high vacancy rate. The phenomenon can  
occur in either low income or moderate to high income areas of any  
city. It has been a known fact that in our city, the majority of

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drive-by shootings occur with some form of graffiti in the background. Due to this, officers realized that graffiti was not only costly to the citizens it also was a danger to the public in general.

*graffiti causes drive by shootings? hmmm.*

In December of 1991, aproject was initiated by Officers Robert and Barry Fowks ("The Fowks Brothers"<sup>11</sup>) to investigate and eradicate graffiti. While investigating, the Fowks Brothers discovered that no individual and/or investigator was assigned full-time to monitor these activities.

They began using a video camera to document the graffiti, the date ~~of occurrence and the type of graffiti (gang or tagger)~~. An intense intelligence file was developed. During the course of this, numerous tag groups and gangs were identified by their moniker (or nickname) and group affiliation. Video cameras were utilized and still photos were taken, and the Fowks Brothers began using them to develop a system to identify graffiti writers.

A concentrated effort in particular areas most affected with the highest incidents of graffiti were targeted. Information was distributed to Patrol Officers working the area providing them with the most frequent time of occurrence and with suspect information. Also provided were different tag "crews" (more than one tagger in any group) and their monikers. All arrested taggers or gang members in a targeted area had a centralized file, which contained

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a copy of all reports to be reviewed for later follow-up reports and refiling of more serious charges, felony versus misdemeanor when applicable.

The most difficult problem to work out was the development of the most efficient way of filing a collective report regarding a vandalism incident. In a "tag war" or "bombing run" (where a group of one or more crews decides on an area to vandalize which could be several buildings or several city blocks) past practice would have numerous reports for numerous victims, even though one large incident had occurred. For example, if thirty businesses were vandalized, thirty crime reports would have to be taken. This would require thirty representatives to appear in court to testify that they did not give anyone permission to vandalize their building. The problem was overcome when the court system agreed that the city of Long Beach could be the victim of the multitude of crimes, as they in fact used their resources to eradicate it.

Another obstacle that was overcome was a Federal decision in San Francisco, California, where the paint industry challenged the lock-up law on spray paint and other graffiti materials.

On October 25, 1993, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors enacted a lock-up ordinance pertaining to spray paint and graffiti materials. Almost immediately, this ordinance was challenged by special interest groups representing the paint industry. During

this time period, San Francisco Assistant City Attorney Scott Embridge contacted, our City which has had such a lock-up since 1990. His interest was to determine how effective the law was and how it affected graffiti vandalism. A written declaration was provided to him and in that document, information was given that the lock-up law was a "spoke in the wheel" which greatly contributed to the decline of graffiti. The Fowks Brothers' investigations and experience in interviewing both taggers and gang members, revealed that the vast majority of spray paint and graffiti materials are stolen.

On February 28, 1994, a trial was held in the United States District court for the Northern District of California. Live and written testimony were presented to the court and at the conclusion of the trial, the San Francisco ordinance was upheld. The judge found that while a lock-up ordinance "would not provide a cure to the blight of graffiti, it would at least provide one reasonable measure toward reducing the amount of graffiti that is produced." The court also found that "the evidence suggested that less committed taggers, particularly those just beginning the practice, may well be deterred if a primary source of spray paint and markers are eliminated."

The cooperation between our City and the City of San Francisco overcame this obstacle as without the lock-up laws, the "spoke in the wheel" would be broken. This has since opened the doors for cities across the nation to adopt similar lock-up laws now that this opinion has been federally adjudicated.

In February of 1995, the Fowks Brothers spoke before the Phoenix, Arizona, City Council, and as a result Phoenix adopted a lock-up ordinance. The enacting of the ordinance was based in large part on the expertise of the Fowks Brothers and the problems they are involved with in our City.

Our common goal was to establish cohesive uniform standards for filing crime^ reports, collecting evidence, and identifying and prosecuting individuals involved in this type of activity, as well as cleaning up the graffiti as quickly as possible. Eradicating graffiti is the responsibility of the community, our public officials, law enforcement, the judiciary, educators, neighborhood organizations, parents, children and the media. All must join together in a consistent effort.

The ultimate goal was the eradication of graffiti throughout the community which encompasses 52 square miles and has a population of approximately 440,000 people.

A multitude of agencies are now involved including local city employees, police officers, city attorneys, judges, school employees, probation officers, utility company employees and the citizens of Long Beach. Collectively, everyone involved has helped in the enoraouireduction of this type of crime.

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Our other City entity, Public Service Graffiti Abatement, works hand in hand with the Police Department responding as needed to remove graffiti, city-wide. This Department consists of one full-time city employee and three to five part-time employees to run the equipment and drive the equipment to graffiti locations. A large percentage of their paint materials are donated by various paint manufacturers and community groups.

The majority of the graffiti abatement work force is court appointed citizens that chose to work in "community service" graffiti abatement in lieu of paying fines for various offenses ranging from traffic citations to non-violent low grade felony convictions.

Each graffiti removal location is recorded by address, color of paint, quantity of paint and identification of the gang or tagger crew. This information is then filed and readily available for use

in court at a later date to determine total cost of removal and possible restitution. A standardized formula of \$22.00 per tag (cost of removal) and eight "tags" per gallon of paint (allowing for bleed through and multiple coats) has been testified to in numerous court proceedings.

Today, patrol officers and citizens can call to have graffiti removed, and the Public Service Graffiti Abatement Unit will respond like a dispatched police unit. Due to the efforts of the Fowks Brothers and their working together and coordinating the community, courts and other City Departments, the City of Long Beach now enjoys a 95% reduction of graffiti city-wide. This program has become so effective that the City now has time to do blend-ins where buildings have been vandalized in the past to remove the "patch work" look that is caused by multiple colors of paint on a building.

Due to the extensive measures that have been taken primarily by the Fowks Brothers, property and business owners are not feeling as apprehensive as they once were to improve and/or maintain their buildings. This can be attributed to advanced intelligence information, aggressive prosecution and restitution as well as rigorous clean-up efforts.