

# City of Seattle Anti-Graffiti Efforts

Best Practices and Recommendations



# Graffiti – What is it?

Writing, painting, or  
drawing on public or  
private property

without the  
owner's  
permission

(per City of Seattle Municipal  
Code 12A.08.020)



# Nationally, about 80% of graffiti is tagger graffiti

“Tags”



“Throw-ups”



5% are large visual “pieces”;  
and 10% are gang graffiti

“Pieces”



Gang graffiti



The remaining 5% of graffiti nationally includes hate, message, political, and artistic graffiti.



# Graffiti audit – purpose & scope

- ◆ Seattle City Council asked us to examine how the City handles graffiti removal, prosecution of offenders, and public education efforts to discourage graffiti.
- ◆ Audit requested in response to people's concerns about lack of safety in their neighborhoods and street disorder.
- ◆ Specifically asked to compare Seattle to best practices in other cities.

# Why Should We Care About Graffiti?

- Public and Private Costs
  - Youth Risks
- Vandals Associated with Other Crime



# Costs of Graffiti for Seattle

## City Costs

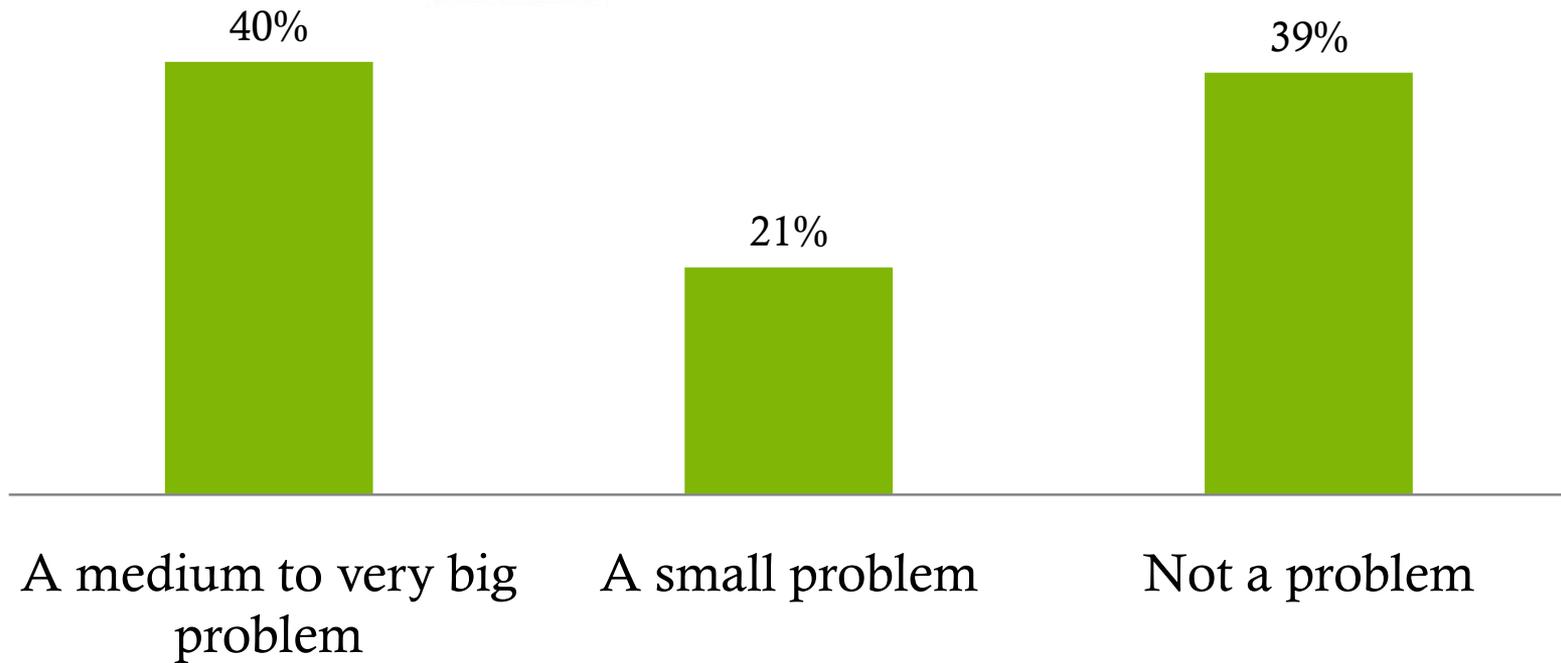
- ◆ City Departments spent over \$1.8 million in 2009.



## Private Property Owners

- ◆ Business Improvement Areas spent ~\$144,000 in 2009.
- ◆ Median annual cost for survey respondents was \$200. Average cost was \$790.
- ◆ Replacing glass panels that have been graffiti-etched can cost thousands.

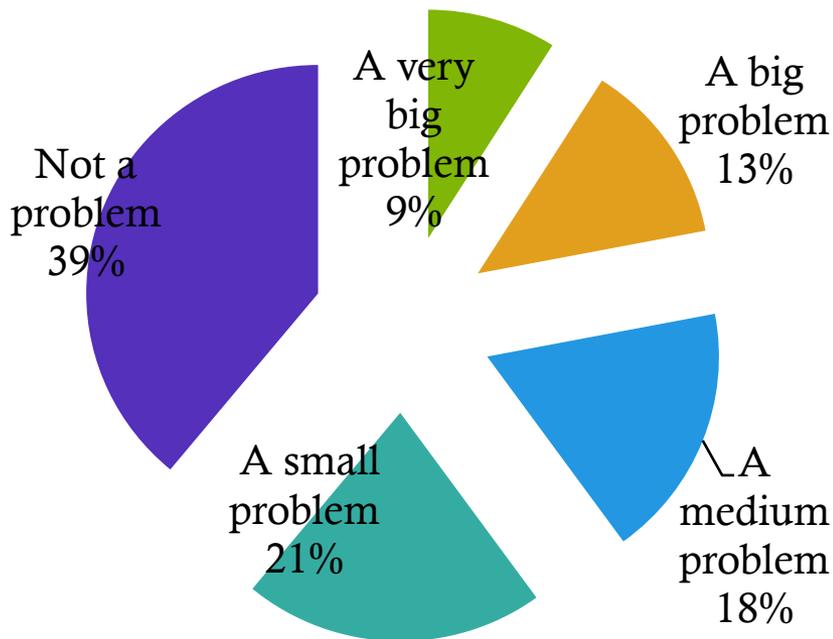
# Views on graffiti were mixed among over 900 survey respondents



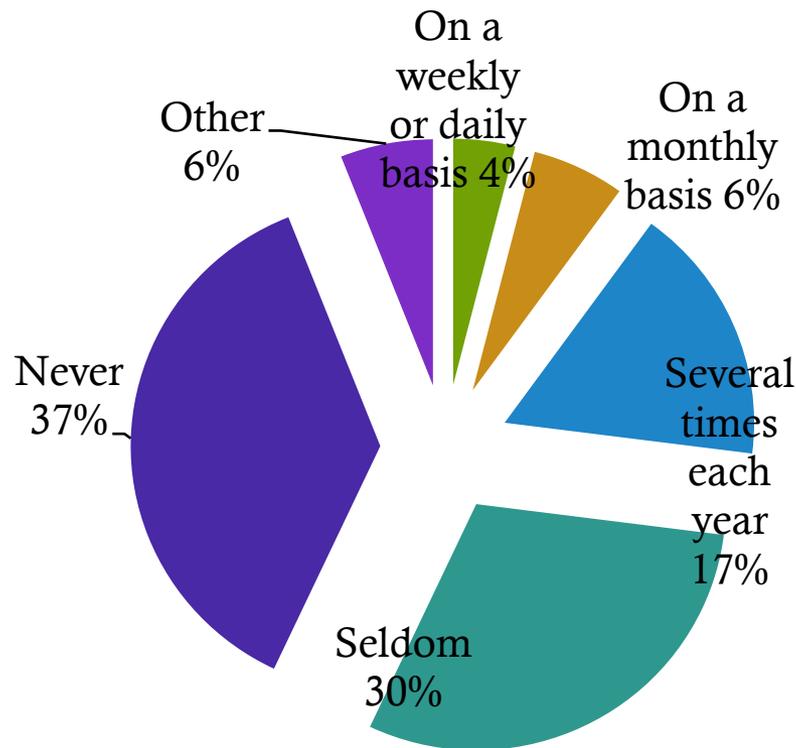
These reflect results from a web-survey of 913 Seattle residents. The survey was voluntary and cannot be considered scientific.

# Concerns about graffiti in Seattle correspond with rate of victimization

## Is Graffiti a Problem?



## How Often Affected?



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# Youth Risk

Graffiti is associated with the Community Risk Factor of “community disorganization”.

Research studies have linked this to an increased risk for youth substance abuse, delinquency, and violence.



**Communities That Care**

Risk Factors	Adolescent Problem Behaviors				
	Substance Abuse	Delinquency	Teen Pregnancy	School Drop-Out	Violence
<b>Community</b>					
Availability of drugs	•				•
Availability of firearms		•			•
Community laws and norms favorable toward drug use, firearms and crime	•	•			•
Media portrayals of violence					•
Transitions and mobility	•	•		•	
Low neighborhood attachment and community disorganization	•	•			•
Extreme economic deprivation	•	•	•	•	•
<b>Family</b>					
Family history of the problem behavior	•	•	•	•	•
Family management problems	•	•	•	•	•
Family conflict	•	•	•	•	•
Favorable parental attitudes and involvement in the problem behavior	•	•			•
<b>School</b>					
Academic failure beginning in late elementary school	•	•	•	•	•
Lack of commitment to school	•	•	•	•	•
<b>Peer and Individual</b>					
Early and persistent antisocial behavior	•	•	•	•	•
Rebelliousness	•	•		•	
Friends who engage in the problem behavior	•	•	•	•	•
Gang involvement	•	•			•
Favorable attitudes toward the problem behavior	•	•	•	•	
Early initiation of the problem behavior	•	•	•	•	•
Constitutional factors	•	•			•

# Seattle Graffiti Vandal Profile (adult misdemeanors )



- 94% of those charged for graffiti in 2007 were male, 72% were white and their median age was 24.
- 55% of Seattle graffiti offenders charged in 2007 had other criminal charges.
- Chronic graffiti vandals tag up and down West Coast.

# What Should We Do About Graffiti?

- Leadership from Policy-Makers
  - The 3 E's:
    - ✓ Eradication
    - ✓ Enforcement
    - ✓ Engagement

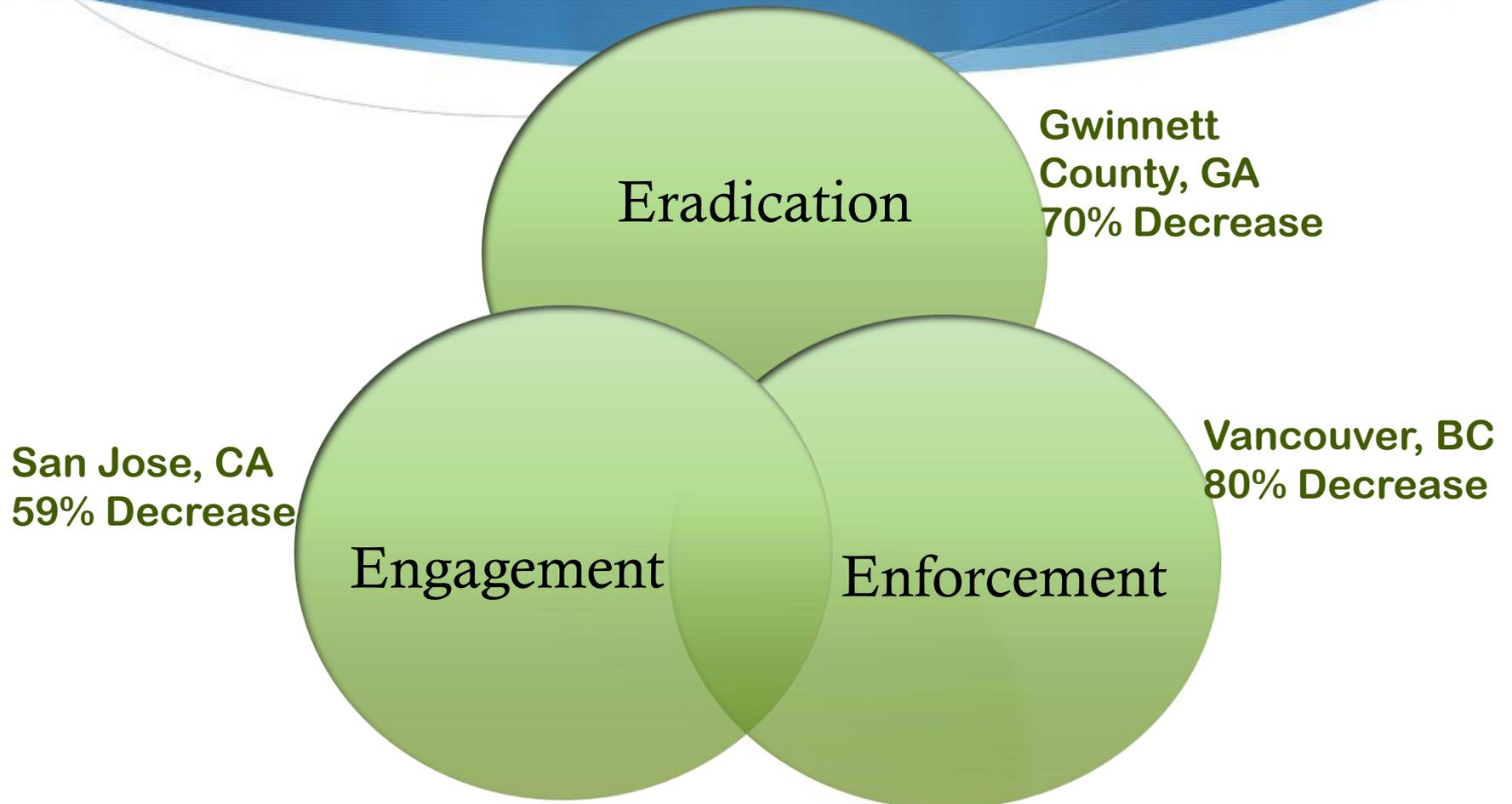


# What can the Mayor and City Council do?



- Make a clear policy statement
- Provide clear directives and accountability
- Set specific outcome goals
- Require baseline data
- Measure outcomes

# Jurisdictions have used the 3E's to reduce graffiti significantly



# Implementing the 3E's Approach in Seattle



## Eradication

- ◆ Reorganize pay station clean-up
- ◆ Ask City employees to report graffiti (PEOs, other field staff)
- ◆ Further study of graffiti removal in Business Improvement Areas

# Implementing the 3E's Approach in Seattle



## Enforcement

- ◆ Assign a graffiti detective for a pilot period
- ◆ Amend Municipal Code to include stickers and clarify restitution
- ◆ Create a graffiti crimes database
- ◆ Create diversion program for chronic offenders

# Implementing the 3E's Approach in Seattle



## Engagement

- ◆ Form a broad-based coalition (Keep America Beautiful model)
- ◆ Create a community outreach plan
- ◆ Educate public about costs and impacts of graffiti

# City Council Discussion and Questions