



Memorandum

TO: Kevin J. Jackson, Village Manager *KJ*

FROM: Cedric Melton, Community Relations Director *CM*
Tammie Grossman, Development Customer Services Director
John Wielebnicki, Public Work Director

FOR: Village President and Board of Trustees

DATE: April 27, 2022

SUBJECT: Graffiti Removal

Background

Over the past several weeks the Village has experienced an increase in graffiti on both private and public property. Additionally, multiple instances of graffiti over public art have occurred with this increase. Graffiti is reported to the Village either via the graffiti hotline or by filing an online complaint. Additionally, Village inspector staff are charged with addressing graffiti when out in the community. Following is an explanation of the current graffiti removal process and status of the Village removal efforts.

Graffiti Removal Process

Most complaints initially are responded to by the Community Relations Department. If the graffiti is on Village owned property, Community Relations notifies Public Works. Public Works will remove the graffiti generally within 24 hours. If the graffiti is located on other public property such as a public utility or public transportation, Community Relations will reach out to the applicable entity and work with that entity to get the graffiti removed. When incidents are reported, the usual turnaround time for cleaning is one week from the date of reporting the tagging to the utility. Examples of these locations are the CTA maintenance facility at Harrison and Ridgeland and the CTA blue line substations. As it pertains to IDOT, reportedly, there is a 3-man team responsible for graffiti removal on the expressway from downtown to Mannheim. Therefore, ascertaining a turn-around time has been a challenge as we have to await removal confirmation from IDOT.

Community Relations provides removal solution to homeowners on request for removal of tagging from their property. Police Department resident beat officers are also equipped with removal solution to address tagging that may occur in their particular area of service.

If the graffiti is located on private property, a Development Customer Services Inspector will contact the owner and request that the owner remove the graffiti as soon as possible. We normally start contact out with a phone call. If we are unable to reach the owner via the telephone, we will send a violation notice indicating that the private property owner has seven (7) days to remove the graffiti. We will also provide the property owner with graffiti removal solution. The inspectors have the removal solution in their cars to hand out.

If the owner does not remove the graffiti within the seven (7) day time period, the Village will issue a citation with an adjudication court date. In most situations, the private property owner will remove the graffiti prior to the court date. Since our primary goal is for the graffiti to be removed, we will normally ask the Administrative Law Judge to dismiss the citation. We do this because the private property owner is really the victim of the crime due to the tagging. In the vast majority situations, the private property owner will comply without the necessity of writing a citation.

If a fine is issued, the proceeds of the fine can be used for graffiti removal on private property if an owner claims economic hardship. Over the past 14 years, the Village has collected fines totaling \$1000 under Section 16-2-11 of the Village Code. In 2020, the Village Manager authorized the removal of graffiti on private property resulting from community protests in late May 2020 upon the execution of a waiver and release drafted by the Village Attorney.

Current Response Efforts

In response to graffiti complaints, the Community Relations Department determines the type of graffiti complaint (external [non-VOP], public, and private [residential or business]). Within 24 hours, the CRD notifies the appropriate VOP department or external entity (CTA or IDOT) of a complaint for removal of graffiti. Once confirmation of removal is received, the CRD closes the complaint. If requested, the initial complainant is notified that the issue is resolved.

Recently there have been incidents of graffiti on murals on the viaducts under the green line (Home Ave., Clinton Ave., Kenilworth Ave.). Public Works staff attempted to remove the graffiti but stopped since the removal process also removed the artwork. Ms. Camille Wilson White, Executive Director of the Oak Park Area Arts Council has been contacted to see if she has any suggestions. At this point it appears there are no real options other than repaint the mural or cover up the graffiti. It may be difficult to contact the groups that painted the murals since they have been there for quite some time. If there are no opportunities to have any of the groups who painted the murals to fix them then staff would paint over the graffiti. Staff is trying to find out who painted the original murals.

Please contact Cedric Melton, Community Relations Director with any questions or graffiti complaints at 708-358-5405 or cmelton@oak-park.us.

cc: Lisa Shelley, Deputy Village Manager
Ahmad Zayyad, Deputy Village Manager
Christina M. Waters, Village Clerk
All Department Directors