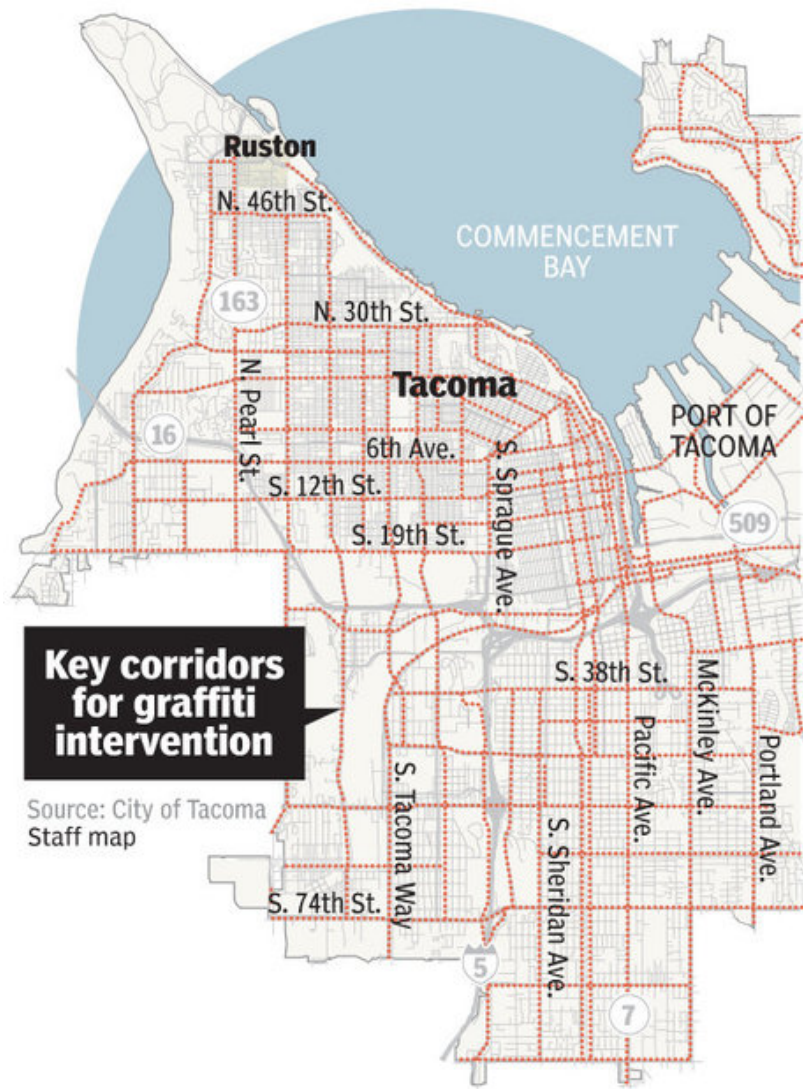


Tacoma teams with Goodwill to battle graffiti

By EVA REVEAR

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The city of Tacoma, responding to a sharp rise in graffiti offenses, is launching a program this month to make the tagging disappear quickly and to help property owners prevent it from reappearing.

The Graffiti Rapid Removal program will use crews from Goodwill’s Go2 Property Services to remove graffiti from properties along key corridors designated by the city.

Under the new program, Goodwill’s maintenance workers will paint over or remove graffiti within 72 hours of a report to the city at no cost to the property owner. The service is available up to three times within 12 months to business owners and homeowners who sign consent forms.

Current city ordinances require property owners to remove graffiti at their own expense within 18 days. If the owner fails to act, the city may remove the graffiti and bill the owner.

Scot Morrison, Go2 Property Services business manager, said the program is not just about beautifying the city, but also raising awareness and reducing vandalism.

So far this year, Tacoma has received 471 reported instances of graffiti, compared with 289 reports in 2012.

“The ideal goal is that we come out and paint over graffiti immediately, and then we don’t see a recurrence,” said Allyson Griffith, a program development specialist in the city’s Neighborhood and Community Services Department.

After a property owner reports a second incident at the same site, the city will assess to determine why the property is a recurring target and what measures the owner can take to prevent vandalism. The owner may be advised to install movement activated lighting or plant prickly shrubbery near large, open walls that may tempt vandals.

The key corridors selected by the city are largely arterial streets that have a concentration of commercial properties or are entrances and exits from the city.

“They are places where people will be coming and going and getting an impression of the city,” Griffith said.

Sixth Avenue is among the eligible streets. Nick Fediay, president of the Sixth Avenue Business District Association and owner of Constellation Art Gallery on Sixth Avenue, said he believes the program will be a big help.

Fediay owns two buildings on Sixth Avenue. Vandals have not tagged the gallery, which is monitored by cameras. But his other building, which is empty, has been tagged at least 10 times over the past eight months.

The city has budgeted \$50,000 from crime prevention funds for the contract with Go2 Property Services, which is Goodwill’s internal maintenance branch that also takes external contracts.

The Graffiti Rapid Removal pilot will run through the end of 2014 when it will be evaluated based on measurements such as whether the removal is preventing further tagging. Tacoma’s City Council will decide whether to continue to fund the program.

City officials say they decided to try this type of graffiti removal program after seeing that it had been successful in several areas in New York and California.

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