



CITY OF RICHMOND
City Auditor's Office

DATE: August 23, 2022

TO: Lincoln Saunders
Chief Administrative Officer

FROM: Louis Lassiter *LL*
City Auditor

SUBJECT: DPW Graffiti Removal Audit

The City Auditor's Office has completed the Graffiti Removal audit and the final report is attached.

We would like to thank the Department of Public Works staff for their cooperation and assistance during this audit.

Attachment

cc: The Richmond Audit Committee
The Richmond City Council
Robert Steidel, DCAO of Operations
Bobby Vincent, Director of Public Works

Intentionally left blank

City of

RICHMOND

Office of the City Auditor

Audit Report# 2023-03
Department of Public Works
Graffiti Removal
August 23, 2022



Audit Report Staff

Lou Lassiter, City Auditor
Bret Lewis, Audit Manager
Toni Noel, Auditor
Chassidy Comer, Auditor
Rochelle Carter, Management Analyst

Executive Summary.....	i
Background, Objective, Scope, Methodology.....	1
Findings and Recommendations.....	7
Benchmarking Table Appendix.....	Appendix A
Management Responses.....	Appendix B

Highlights

Audit Report to the Audit Committee, City Council, and the Administration

Why We Did This Audit

The Office of the City Auditor conducted this audit as part of the FY2022 audit plan approved by the Audit Committee. The objective for this audit was to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the City’s Graffiti education outreach, enforcement and abatement program.

What We Recommend:

The Deputy Director of the Department of Public Works:

- Update SOPs related to the abatement of private property to include an enforcement process conducted by DPW or work with PDR to develop a process to implement City Code Section 11-135.
- Implement a process to ensure private property waivers that are completed by property owners are maintained by DPW Staff.
- Establish a formal budget for graffiti expenses.
- Collaborate with other departments and community stakeholders to collectively mitigate graffiti that addresses prevention, abatements and educational measures.
- Formally document and implement performance measures to assist in the timeliness of graffiti abatement, tracking and documenting of the process and expectations throughout the department and evaluation of employee.

Additional recommendations were made related to ensuring RVA311 cases transfer to Cityworks, establishing Cityworks as the system of record, and researching and applying for grants.

Graffiti Removal

Background – Richmond City Code authorizes the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) for the City to perform graffiti abatements or contract for the removal or repair of defacement for all graffiti that is visible from any public right-of-way. The Department of Public Works is responsible for graffiti removal within the City of Richmond on both public and private property. In March 2021, DPW reassigned graffiti abatements to the Surface Cleaning Division from the Roadway Management Division.

What Works Well

Graffiti Removal - The auditors observed graffiti removals in the field with DPW staff as well as some previously completed jobs and noted that the process was completed effectively.

Graffiti Expenditures – The auditors reviewed approximately \$35,000 graffiti related expenditures for appropriateness and determined that all observed expenditures were appropriate.

Needs Improvement

Finding #1 – Enforcement

DPW does not abate graffiti on private property if the owner does not comply as allowed by City Code. As of June 6, 2022, there were a total of 161 service requests created in FY2022 in Cityworks for private graffiti abatements. Additionally, 28 private graffiti abatements that were closed were opened in the last half of FY2021. The auditors noted a total of 90 requests still open for private properties averaging 108 days open.

Finding #2 – Private Property Waiver

DPW staff does not consistently maintain waivers for private property abatements. In FY22 the auditors reviewed 10 randomly selected private properties and 7 abandoned properties for waivers. The results showed that 80% of private properties did not have waivers and no waivers were on file for the 7 abandoned properties.

Finding #3 – Budget

The Department of Public Works does not have an established budget for graffiti removal. As of May 2022, DPW had \$194,255 total graffiti expenditures including payroll. Supplies, labor, and the equipment to abate graffiti are not being tracked per job. Without a documented budget, it is difficult to determine if these graffiti related expenses are reasonable.

Finding #4 – Program Awareness, Prevention, and Inter-Departmental Collaboration

DPW could improve collaboration efforts with other departments/community stakeholders. The City funds a program that offers a reimbursement for graffiti removal – a job that DPW offers free to citizens. Code Enforcement personnel in the field are not reporting graffiti instances to DPW. Also, a nonprofit organization offers a private graffiti removal service in a specified area downtown. The communication between this nonprofit and DPW needs improvement. Also, DPW does not have any prevention and outreach programs in place to assist in effectively controlling graffiti.

Finding #5 – Performance

The Department of Public Works does not have performance measures in place for staff or graffiti abatement. As of June 16, 2022, 95 graffiti service requests were still open for an average greater than 100 days for both public and private property. In addition, 186 were closed in Cityworks from FY22 on average 49 days (public) and 72 days (private) from their creation dates.

Finding #6 – System of Record

DPW is not maximizing use of the features for Cityworks as they are using an excel spreadsheet as their main database. The auditor compared FY22 abatement jobs on the tracking spreadsheet to the closed records in Cityworks and noted that 30 completed abatement jobs in Cityworks were not documented on the spreadsheet. The auditors also noted 5 records from RVA311 did not transfer to Cityworks.

Management concurred with 8 of 8 recommendations. We appreciate the cooperation received from management and staff while conducting this audit.



BACKGROUND, OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, METHODOLOGY, MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITY and INTERNAL CONTROLS

This audit was conducted in accordance with the Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards promulgated by the Comptroller General of the United States. Those Standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on the audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on the audit objectives.

BACKGROUND

Richmond City Code authorizes the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) for the City to perform graffiti abatements or contract for the removal or repair of defacement for all graffiti that is visible from any public right-of-way. The Richmond Department of Public Works (DPW) is responsible for graffiti removal within the City of Richmond. In March 2021, DPW reassigned graffiti abatements to the Surface Cleaning Division from the Roadway Management Division. City Code defines graffiti as,

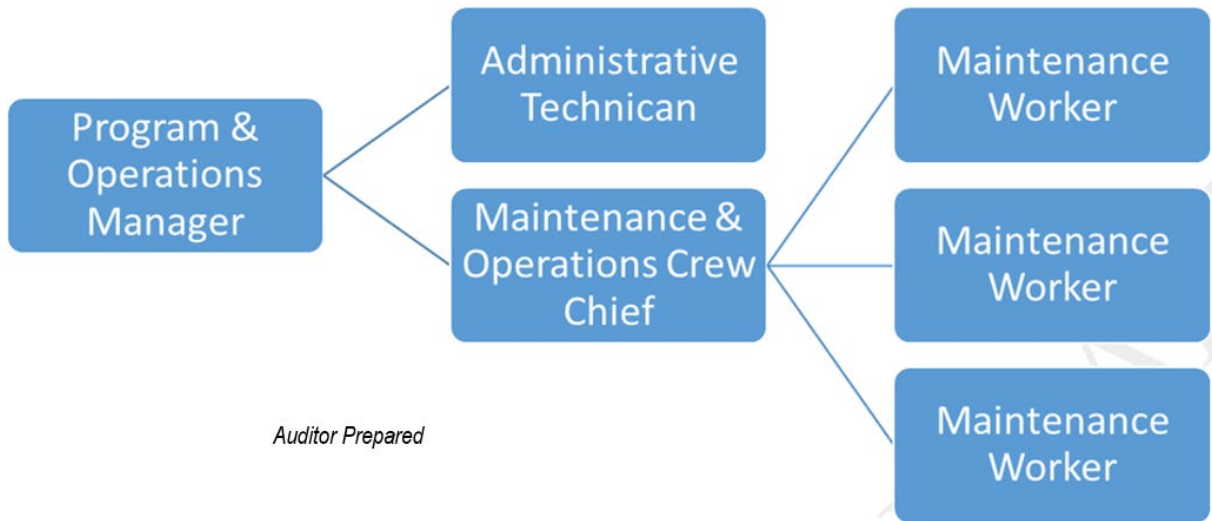
“the unauthorized application of any writing, painting, drawing, etching, scratching or marking of an inscription, word, figure, or design of any type on any public or private building or other real or personal property owned, operated or maintained by a governmental entity or an agency or instrumentality thereof or by a private person.”

Richmond City Auditor's Report #2023-03

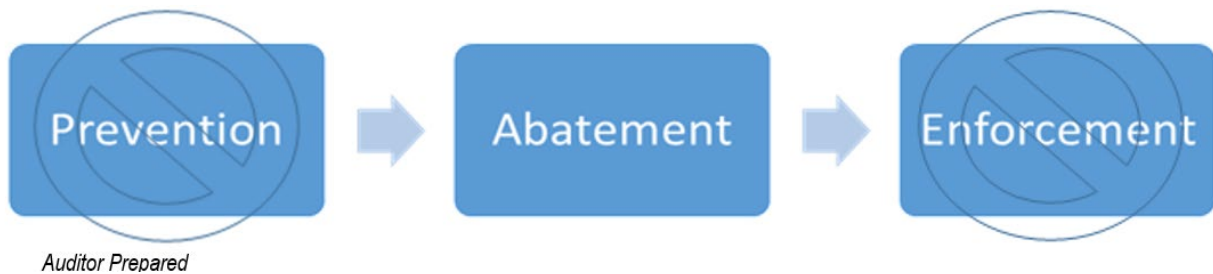
Department of Public Works - Graffiti Removal

August 23, 2022

The following chart depicts the organizational structure for the graffiti abatement team:



The below graphic demonstrates three components of a graffiti program: prevention, abatement, and enforcement.



Graffiti Prevention

Graffiti prevention includes awareness and outreach programs, working with schools, neighborhood involvement, and many other possibilities. DPW does not have any graffiti prevention or outreach programs in place.

Graffiti Abatement

DPW removes graffiti on both public and private property:

- Public property is property that is owned by the City which includes light poles, sidewalks, and traffic signs.
- Private property is privately owned businesses or personal residences within the City.

Richmond City Auditor's Report #2023-03

Department of Public Works - Graffiti Removal

August 23, 2022

Additionally DPW focuses on “hot spots” which are areas that contain large amounts of reoccurring graffiti. These properties can be either public or private. DPW will occasionally perform a “blitz” in which they clean many graffiti sites in the same area.

The following table outlines the total number of abatements based on property types in FY22 recorded by DPW through May 31, 2022:

Type of Property	FY2022 Abatements Completed As of 5/31/2022
Abandoned**	7
Private	342
Public	777
Grand Total	1,126

*****Abandoned are private properties that DPW identified as abandoned and serviced the location. *****

DPW removes graffiti using the following methods:

- chemical application,
- Power/pressure washing,
- painting, and
- wiping surfaces with wipes.

The graffiti removal method depends on the surface and type of material vandalized. Some jobs may require multiple types of removal. For example, some graffiti is sprayed with a chemical to make it easier to remove with the power washer. Also, if the chemicals and power washer are not effective, DPW may decide to paint over what remains.

Richmond City Auditor's Report #2023-03

Department of Public Works - Graffiti Removal

August 23, 2022

DPW tracks graffiti abatements using three systems:

- RVA311 - a customer service and response portal that allows citizens to communicate with city personnel to either report a problem or initiate a service request.
- Cityworks – A system maintained by DPW to track service requests and work orders for various functions throughout the City.
- Excel Spreadsheet – A spreadsheet created by DPW to track all graffiti abatements that includes the date of completion, location, and the removal method used.

RVA311 and Cityworks are integrated systems as any graffiti request created in RVA311 is transferred to Cityworks for the DPW staff.

Once a complaint has been entered into the RVA311 system, the abatement process begins and a corresponding service request is created. DPW's staff distributes the service requests to the Maintenance Operations Crew Chief who performs an inspection of the property. If the property is private, the Crew Chief will obtain a signed waiver from the owner to allow DPW to abate the property. Additional properties are abated that are not tracked in Cityworks. These jobs include requests from the administration and graffiti noticed on public property while working in the field.

Per Staff, at the end of a workday, staff turn in their daily logs noting all work performed, completed Cityworks service requests, and any waivers collected for the day. These items are then filed, Cityworks requests are closed, and the job details are tracked in multiple spreadsheets by the Administrative Technician.

Programs and Departments Assisting in Abating Graffiti

Aside from DPW, other City and community programs also assist in the removal of graffiti within the City. Venture Richmond, a local nonprofit is authorized to provide services within the City through June 30, 2026. The Venture Richmond Program is a grant-funded program that assists with graffiti removal in parts of downtown Richmond. When graffiti is identified on private

Richmond City Auditor's Report #2023-03

Department of Public Works - Graffiti Removal

August 23, 2022

property, Venture Richmond will attempt to contact the private property owner to remove the graffiti.

The Department of Planning and Development (PDR) has implemented the Façade Improvement Program to promote economic development in the City's Arts and Cultural District by supporting projects that enhance neighborhood-building facades. The Façade Improvement Program is funded by the City. Businesses in the City's Arts and Cultural District can apply to receive a reimbursement grant for their total façade improvement, which includes graffiti removal. The program does not provide funding solely for the purpose of graffiti removal.

Graffiti Enforcement

If private property owners do not abate graffiti, City Code states:

"the property owner will receive a thirty-day notice from the City before the abatement process begins. If the property owner fails to provide permission for the removal of the graffiti within thirty-days of the date of the notice, the CAO reserves the right to have the defacement removed or repaired by agents or employees of the City."

DPW is not currently enforcing this City Code.

The Richmond Police Department (RPD) also has the ability to enforce graffiti. City Code states that any person defacing or damaging private or public property by or through the application of graffiti shall be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor. RPD did not produce any citations in FY22, however, 49 incidents were recorded that were related to graffiti and three arrests were made.

OBJECTIVES

To evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the City's graffiti education outreach, enforcement and abatement program.

Richmond City Auditor's Report #2023-03

Department of Public Works - Graffiti Removal

August 23, 2022

SCOPE

The scope of the audit covered graffiti removal during the 12 months ended June 30, 2022 and the current environment.

METHODOLOGY

The auditors performed the following procedures to complete this audit:

- Observed the graffiti abatement process.
- Reviewed City Code to determine compliance.
- Reviewed graffiti related expenditures for appropriateness.
- Reviewed a randomly generated sample of 10 private properties and all 7 abandoned properties to determine if waivers were maintained in compliance with the DPW internal policy.
- Reviewed all tracking methods to identify a complete system of records
- Interviewed the Department of Public Works staff to gain an understanding of how the graffiti program is handled in the City.
- Judgmentally selected twelve localities to benchmark their graffiti practices and methods.
- Conducted other tests, as deemed necessary.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITY

City of Richmond management is responsible for ensuring resources are managed properly and used in compliance with laws and regulations; programs are achieving their objectives; and services are being provided efficiently, effectively, and economically.

INTERNAL CONTROLS

According to the Government Auditing Standards, internal control, in the broadest sense, encompasses the agency's plan, policies, procedures, methods, and processes adopted by management to meet its mission, goals, and objectives. Internal control includes the processes

Richmond City Auditor's Report #2023-03

Department of Public Works - Graffiti Removal

August 23, 2022

for planning, organizing, directing, and controlling program operations. It also includes systems for measuring, reporting, and monitoring program performance. An effective control structure is one that provides reasonable assurance regarding:

- Efficiency and effectiveness of operations;
- Accurate financial reporting; and
- Compliance with laws and regulations.

Based on the audit test work, the auditors concluded internal controls need improvement over the administration of the Graffiti Removal process. These observations are discussed throughout this report.

FINDINGS and RECOMMENDATIONS

What Works Well

Graffiti Removal

The auditors observed the graffiti abatement process in the field with DPW staff. The staff removed graffiti by applying chemicals, power washing or painting the tagged surface. The method of removal was determined by factors such as:

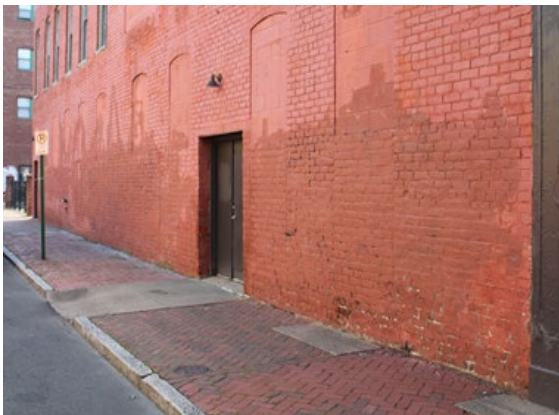
- Length of time the graffiti had been on the surface;
- The type of surface vandalized; and
- The size of the graffiti.

The auditors noted the removals were effective. The following are some completed abatement jobs as well as some before and after images of graffiti removal sites:

Richmond City Auditor's Report #2023-03

Department of Public Works - Graffiti Removal

August 23, 2022



Graffiti Expenditures

The auditors reviewed approximately \$35,000 of expenditures for appropriateness and determined that all observed expenditures were appropriate for Graffiti. The type of materials ordered by DPW staff include:

Richmond City Auditor's Report #2023-03

Department of Public Works - Graffiti Removal

August 23, 2022

- Wipes;
- Brushes;
- Nozzles;
- Gloves; and
- Chemicals.

What Needs Improvement

Finding #1 – Enforcement

Condition:

When Citizens submit requests DPW requires private property owners to complete a waiver form to have their property abated for graffiti. According to the Crew Leader, DPW will not abate property if the private property owner does not agree to it and complete the waiver form. Administrative staff will document it and no further communication is made.

As of June 6, 2022, there were a total of 161 service requests created in FY2022 in Cityworks for private graffiti abatements as noted in the table below. Additionally, 28 private graffiti abatements that were closed were opened in the last half of FY2021.

Type	Status	Total	Average Days to Close	Average Days Open
PRIVATE PROPERTY	CLOSED	71	72	
	OPEN	90		108
Created in FY2022 Total		161		
PRIVATE PROPERTY	CLOSED	28	201	
Worked in FY2022 Total		189		

- 99 Private property abatements were closed in Cityworks in FY2022.
 - Average Days to Close for those created in FY2021 was 201.
 - Average Days to Close for those created in FY2022 was 72.
- 90 requests are still open for private properties averaging 108 days open.

Richmond City Auditor's Report #2023-03

Department of Public Works - Graffiti Removal

August 23, 2022

Criteria:

City Code Section 11-135. Authority for City to remove or repair defacement of buildings, walls, fences, and other structures.

“(a) The Chief Administrative Officer is authorized to undertake or contract for the removal or repair of the defacement, by or through the application of graffiti, or any public building wall, fence or other structure or any private building, wall, fence or other structure where such graffiti is visible from any public right of way.

(b) Prior to such removal, the Chief Administrative Office shall provide the property owner with 30 days' notice by at least first class mail, together with such other means as may be legally required, of Chief Administrative Officer's intent to intent to undertake or contract for the removal or repair of the defacement and shall simultaneously with such notice seek the written permission of the property owner. Should the property owner fail to provide such permission or remove or repair the defacement within 30 days of the date of the notice, the Chief Administrative Officer may have such defacement removed or repaired by agents or employees of the City. Such agents or employees shall have any and all immunity normally provided to an employee of the City.”

Cause:

DPW Management has not established an enforcement process for private property abatements. The current SOPs do not address City Code Section 11-135.

Effect:

Private neighborhoods and businesses are left with graffiti indefinitely leading to dissatisfied neighbors and blight. Additionally, the City is not enforcing City Code section 11-135.

Richmond City Auditor's Report #2023-03

Department of Public Works - Graffiti Removal

August 23, 2022

Recommendation:

- 1. We recommend the Department of Public Works Deputy Director update SOPs related to the abatement of private property to include an enforcement process conducted by DPW or work with the Department of Planning and Review to develop a process to implement City Code Section 11-135.*

Finding #2 – Private Property Waiver

Condition:

During FY2022, 349 private property abatements (342 private and 7 abandoned properties) were tracked in the Graffiti Teams tracking spreadsheet. The Auditor requested to review the completed waivers for ten randomly selected private properties and the seven abandoned properties noting the following results:

- Two out of the ten properties had waivers on file.
- No waivers were on file for the seven abandoned properties.
 - No attempt was made to contact any of the abandoned property owners. These properties were abated based on a request from DPW Management. Properties with foul words or obscene pictures are abated right away.

Additionally, DPW doesn't verify private property waivers are being completed by homeowners.

Criteria:

City Code Section 11-135 states:

- CAO is authorized to remove or repair graffiti on any private building wall, fence, or other structure visible from the public right of way.
- CAO shall provide a 30-day written notice of plans to remove graffiti and shall seek written permission from the owner.
- If the owner does not consent or perform the requested abatement, the CAO is authorized to perform the necessary abatement with all immunity provided to the City employees.

Richmond City Auditor's Report #2023-03

Department of Public Works - Graffiti Removal

August 23, 2022

Additionally, DPW's Internal Graffiti Removal SOP states,

"Consent/Release form is generated from the ticket request to authorize the clean-up on private property. The property owner signs the authorization and returns it to DPW, Graffiti Division. Removal efforts will not be initiated until the consent form is returned. Delays in receiving this form may result in request being considered late."

Cause:

DPW Management noted that the process still needs to be refined and is new to the team.

Effect:

Abating private property without obtaining or maintaining a completed waiver by the homeowner or the required authority can result in increased liability for the City.

Recommendation:

- 2. We recommend the Department of Public Works Deputy Director implement a process to ensure private property waivers that are completed by property owners are maintained by DPW Staff.*

Finding #3 – Budget

Condition:

The Department of Public Works does not have an established budget for graffiti removal. Management relies on operating dollars from the Surface Cleaning budget which is shared by the entire Surface Cleaning Division. The following budget related observations were noted during the audit:

- The supplies, labor, and equipment used to abate graffiti are not being tracked for each job, although Cityworks has tracking and reporting capabilities for these expenditures.
- DPW does not research and apply for grants to assist with graffiti related expenses.

Richmond City Auditor's Report #2023-03

Department of Public Works - Graffiti Removal

August 23, 2022

Criteria:

A budget is essential to streamline expenses, assist in financial planning, and maximize the available use of resources and funding.

Cause:

DPW management has been utilizing available operating dollars under the Surface Cleaning Division instead of prioritizing the establishment of a formal budget for the graffiti abatement program.

Effect:

As of May 2022, DPW had \$194,255 total graffiti expenditures including payroll. However, without a documented budget, it may be difficult to determine if these graffiti related expenses are reasonable, as staff could overspend, leaving less money for other divisions in Surface Cleaning. For example, DPW has been renting a vehicle for one year through a private vendor to assist in graffiti abatements for \$1,395 a month instead of requesting to purchase one from the Fleet Division.

The Graffiti Crew Leader is making decisions in the field on which removal process to use based on which is less expensive, and not most effective, without a budget to adequately guide the decision-making. The lack of budgeting could lead to both the inadequate and inappropriate use of City resources.

Recommendations:

- 3. We recommend the Department of Public Works Deputy Director establish a formal budget for graffiti expenses.*
- 4. We recommend the Department of Public Works Deputy Director research and apply for grants to assist with the graffiti related expenses.*

Richmond City Auditor's Report #2023-03

Department of Public Works - Graffiti Removal

August 23, 2022

Finding #4 – Program Awareness, Prevention and Inter-Departmental Collaboration

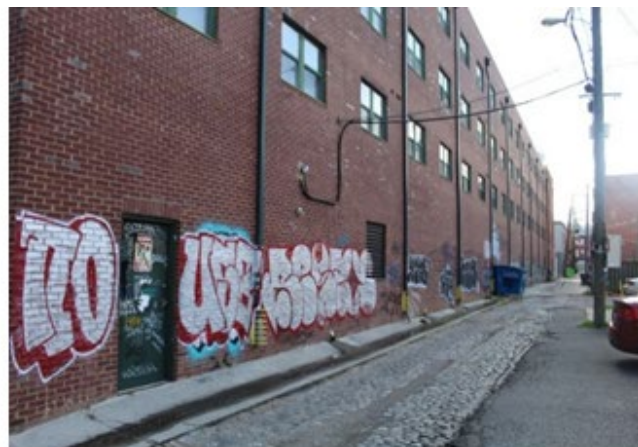
Condition:

DPW could improve collaboration with other departments/community stakeholders, and utilize preventative measures to collectively control graffiti.

DPW does not coordinate with the Planning and Development Review Department (PDR) as follows:

- Code Enforcement inspectors, who canvas the City for code violations, do not cite graffiti cases nor do they report them to DPW.
- PDR's Façade Improvement Program offers a matching grant to encourage façade improvements that can include reimbursement for graffiti removal services. PDR does not contact DPW concerning graffiti abatements, nor make recipients aware of the City's Graffiti program.

Additionally, Venture Richmond, a local nonprofit, received a grant from community partners to abate private properties in a specified area of downtown Richmond. Currently, DPW is not abating properties in this area nor is there a communication process established between the Graffiti Unit and Venture Richmond. Similar to other areas of the City, if a private property owner does not complete the required waiver, the property is not abated. The pictures below taken in month/year are within Venture Richmond's service area.



Richmond City Auditor's Report #2023-03

Department of Public Works - Graffiti Removal

August 23, 2022

Criteria:

In benchmarking with other major cities and Virginia localities (*See Appendix A*) it is standard practice to collaborate with other departments to prevent or remove graffiti. Some of the collaboration efforts include:

- Assistance with graffiti removal;
- Notification of graffiti;
- A Citizen Complaint System/Hotline;
- An Email Address to report graffiti;
- Volunteer programs and;
- A Citywide system that tracks and routes complaints to the appropriate department.

In addition, it is just as important to have prevention and outreach programs in place to effectively control graffiti. Some programs noted by the other localities are as follows:

- Neighborhood Watches,
- Mural and Cultural Arts Programs, and
- Student Educational Programs.

Cause:

DPW Management focused most of their initial resources on removing graffiti as the program was established. Further collaboration efforts that include prevention and enforcement would enhance the program as it matures.

Effect:

The process to control graffiti can be improved. Additionally, City resources are not being maximized when a department reimburses a contractor for a service the City offers for free.

Recommendation:

- 5. We recommend the Department of Public Works Director collaborate with other departments and community stakeholders to collectively mitigate graffiti that addresses prevention, abatements, and educational measures.*

Finding #5 – Performance

Condition:

The Department of Public Works does not have performance measures in place for graffiti abatement. During FY22, the Graffiti team performed 1,126 abatements averaging 6 per day worked. The Auditors observed in the field that abatement jobs vary in time needed to remove the tags as larger abatement jobs can take a whole day to complete while others can take less than a half hour.

As of June 16, 2022, 95 graffiti service requests were still open for an average greater than 100 days for both public and private property. In addition, 186 were closed in Cityworks from FY22 on average 49 days (public) and 72 days (private) from their creation dates. Auditors could not conclude on the timeliness of the Graffiti work only tracked in the excel spreadsheet as start dates were not documented. In meeting with staff, jobs not added to Cityworks are mainly proactive work performed as they come across it in the field.)

Additionally, Management does not physically document performance of the abatement process or anything related to staff's performance.

Criteria:

Performance measures are a common business practice that helps improve managerial oversight by gauging the productivity of the department, office, division, or unit against set goals or standards.

Cause:

DPW Management recently established a separate graffiti abatement unit and the establishment of performance measures logically will follow as it matures. Moving forward, management noted they plan to implement the following performance goals once a second graffiti crew is added:

Richmond City Auditor's Report #2023-03

Department of Public Works - Graffiti Removal

August 23, 2022

- Completing 1,500 graffiti abatements annually
 - 750 locations per crew.
 - 40 locations each week per crew.

Effect:

Service tickets have remained open in Cityworks with no defined goals to abate the graffiti and notify citizens of the completed job. Without clear measurable performance goals, the graffiti team's performance cannot be evaluated.

Recommendation:

6. *We recommend the Department of Public Works Deputy Director formally document and implement performance measures to assist in the:*
 - a. *Timeliness of graffiti abatement;*
 - b. *Tracking and documenting of the process and expectations throughout the department and;*
 - c. *Evaluation of employee performance.*

Finding #6 – System of Record

Condition:

Cityworks is DPW's system of record for tracking service requests (which transfers from RVA311), work orders, and inspections. However, the Graffiti Unit is not maximizing the use of the features for Cityworks as they are using an excel spreadsheet as their main database. The following capabilities are not being used by Graffiti:

- Creating work orders for abatements without service requests.
- Running reports on work performed.
- Documenting work performed with pictures.
- Tracking the following:
 - pre and post inspections
 - labor and material costs per job
 - changes and updates made to work orders to include who made them and when.

Richmond City Auditor's Report #2023-03

Department of Public Works - Graffiti Removal

August 23, 2022

The auditor compared the FY22 abatement jobs on the tracking spreadsheet (1,126) to the closed records in Cityworks (186) and noted that 30 completed abatement jobs in Cityworks were not documented on the spreadsheet.

The Auditor also reviewed the FY22 data (through the end of May 2022) for RVA 311 and Cityworks to verify the two systems were adequately relaying data and noted that 5 of the 279 records in RVA 311 didn't transfer to Cityworks.

Criteria:

It is a standard practice to have one system of record to centralize tracking of work to maintain a complete and up to date history along with documentation and other processes.

Cause:

DPW Management has not established a process to utilize Cityworks as a complete record management system for Graffiti. DPW responded the variances between Cityworks and the excel spreadsheet occurred prior to documenting all the completed jobs on the daily log. This process started in early FY22, however, the auditors could not verify this assertion.

DPW noted the RVA311 complaints that did not transfer to Cityworks were due to a system error. This was not caught as DPW does not have a process to ensure all RVA 311 data is transferred into Cityworks.

Effect:

The lack of one complete system of record for tracking all graffiti abatements can result in missing and/or incomplete abatement jobs. When reporting to management on work done, the data may be incomplete, leading to decisions being made with inaccurate information.

Richmond City Auditor's Report #2023-03

Department of Public Works - Graffiti Removal

August 23, 2022

Using an excel spreadsheet limits the department's reporting and tracking abilities. Additionally, there is not an audit trail which can lead to accidental deletions or alterations going unnoticed.

Recommendations:

- 7. We recommend the Department of Public Works Deputy Director establish Cityworks as the central system of record for Graffiti and ensure all completed abatement jobs are documented in Cityworks.*
- 8. We recommend the Department of Public Works Deputy Director implement the process to ensure all RVA311 cases are transferred to Cityworks.*

Appendix A

Graffiti Program	City of Richmond	Norfolk	VA Beach	Roanoke	**Fairfax
Outreach or Prevention Program	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Staff dedicated solely to graffiti	No	No	No	No	No
Performs public property abatements	Staff	Staff & Volunteers	Staff	Staff	Contractors
Performs private property abatements	Staff & Property Owners	Property Owners, Contractors & Volunteers	Property Owners	Property Owners & Staff	Property Owners
Have an ordinance to cite private property owners regarding graffiti abatement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Department that writes citations for private property owners not in compliance	N/A	Neighborhood Services DPW	Human Services/Housing Neighborhood Preservation	Planning Building & Development Code Enforcement	N/A
Timeframe to abate	30 days	5 Days	N/A	15 Days	N/A
Penalty associated if the graffiti is not abated by the property owner within timeframe	No	Yes - Cost of removal plus administration fee	Yes - CNC	No - Fee is cost of removal	N/A
Methods used to remove graffiti	Wipes Power Wash Paint Chemical	Power Wash Paint Chemical Asphalt Sealer Wipes	Power Wash Paint	Paint	Power Wash Chemical
Options offered to businesses and residents to abate private property graffiti without being fined	Offer Locality Resources free of charge with a waiver Require citizen to handle themselves.	Offer Locality Staff Resources (including contracted resources) free of charge with a waiver. Require citizen to handle themselves. If the property owner is not the cause of the graffiti there is a monetary incentive program in place.	DNR	Offer Locality Staff Resources (including contracted resources) free of charge with a waiver	Require citizen to handle themselves
Departments that collaborate for graffiti prevention/removal	Law Enforcement Public Works	Code Enforcement DPW Law Enforcement	Code Enforcement Public Works Public Utilities Law Enforcement	Code Enforcement Public Works	Code Enforcement Law Enforcement
How Graffiti Abatements are documented and tracked	Paper Based Database/Excel System	Paper Based & System	Paper Based Electronic Database/Excel	System	System
How program is funded	Special Fund & CVTA Funds	General Fund & Special Revenue Fund	General Fund	General Fund	N/A

DNR = Did not respond

CNC = Could not conclude

** Graffiti Program Temporarily suspended

Graffiti Program2	Raleigh	Arlington	Baltimore	Charlottesville	Alexandria	Philadelphia
Outreach or Prevention Program	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Staff dedicated solely to graffiti	Yes - 4 Full-Time Employees	No	Yes - 5 Full-Time Employees	No	No	Yes - 35 Full-Time Employees
Performs public property abatements	Staff	Staff	Staff	Staff	Staff	Staff
Performs private property abatements	Staff & Property Owners	Property Owners	Staff	Contractors	Property Owners	Staff
Have an ordinance to cite private property owners regarding graffiti abatement	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Department that writes citations for private property owners not in compliance	N/A	N/A	Housing Code Enforcement	Neighborhood Development Services (A notice is sent, not a citation.)	Code Enforcement	Community Life Improvement Program
Timeframe to abate	N/A	N/A	10 Days	5 Days	15 days	10 days
Penalty associated if the graffiti is not abated by the property owner within timeframe	N/A	N/A	Yes - \$250	No	Yes - \$500	Yes - CNC
Methods used to remove graffiti	Wipes Power Wash Paint Chemical	Wipes Power Wash Paint Chemical	Paint & Power Wash	Power Wash Paint	Power Wash Paint Chemical	Wipes Power Wash Paint Chemical
Options offered to businesses and residents to abate private property graffiti without being fined	Offer Locality Staff Resources (including contracted services) free of charge with a waiver Require citizen to handle themselves	Require citizen to handle themselves as do not deal with private property graffiti abatements	Offer Locality Staff Resources (including contracted services) free of charge with a waiver . Require citizen to handle themselves	Offer Locality Staff Resources (including contracted services) free of charge with a waiver	Does not deal with private property. However, sometimes may remove graffiti on private property per request.	Offer Locality Staff Resources (including contracted services) free of charge with a waiver
Departments that collaborate for graffiti prevention/removal	Law Enforcement Parks and Recreation	Law Enforcement Arlington Public Schools VDOT	Code Enforcement Law Enforcement	Code Enforcement Public Works	Code Enforcement Public Works Public Utilities Law Enforcement	Code Enforcement Public Works Law Enforcement
How Graffiti Abatements are documented and tracked	System	System	System	System	System	Electronic Database/Microsoft Excel
How program is funded	General Fund	General Fund	General Fund	General Fund	General Fund	General Fund

APPENDIX B: MANAGEMENT RESPONSE FORM

2023-03 DPW Graffiti Removal Audit

#	RECOMMENDATION	CONCUR Y/N	ACTION STEPS
1	We recommend the Department of Public Works Deputy Director update SOPs related to the abatement of private property to include an enforcement process conducted by DPW or work with the Department of Planning and Review to develop a process to implement City Code Section 11-135.	Y	DPW can update its current SOP and add language that would task our department with levying a fee for remediation work that has been completed. DPW can work with PDR and Finance to cite private properties that cannot be reached or will not sign a waiver.
	TITLE OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON		TARGET DATE
	Program & Operations Manager		31-Dec-23
	IF IN PROGRESS, EXPLAIN ANY DELAYS		IF IMPLEMENTED, DETAILS OF IMPLEMENTATION
#	RECOMMENDATION	CONCUR Y/N	ACTION STEPS
2	We recommend the Department of Public Works Deputy Director implement a process to ensure private property waivers that are completed by property owners are maintained by DPW Staff.	Y	DPW will work to maintain waivers signed by private property owners.
	TITLE OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON		TARGET DATE
	Program & Operations Manager		1-Oct-22
	IF IN PROGRESS, EXPLAIN ANY DELAYS		IF IMPLEMENTED, DETAILS OF IMPLEMENTATION
#	RECOMMENDATION	CONCUR Y/N	ACTION STEPS
3	We recommend the Department of Public Works Deputy Director establish a formal budget for graffiti expenses.	Y	Deputy Director will request funding in the FY24 budget for graffiti removal and also project spending for the upcoming fiscal year annually.
	TITLE OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON		TARGET DATE
	Deputy Director of Operations		1-Jul-23
	IF IN PROGRESS, EXPLAIN ANY DELAYS		IF IMPLEMENTED, DETAILS OF IMPLEMENTATION
#	RECOMMENDATION	CONCUR Y/N	ACTION STEPS
4	We recommend the Department of Public Works Deputy Director research and apply for grants to assist with the graffiti related expenses.	Y	DPW annually pursues grants as resources allow.
	TITLE OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON		TARGET DATE
	Program & Operations Manager		7/1/2023 (annually)
	IF IN PROGRESS, EXPLAIN ANY DELAYS		IF IMPLEMENTED, DETAILS OF IMPLEMENTATION

APPENDIX B: MANAGEMENT RESPONSE FORM

2023-03 DPW Graffiti Removal Audit

#	RECOMMENDATION	CONCUR Y/N	ACTION STEPS
5	We recommend the Department of Public Works Director collaborate with other departments and community stakeholders to collectively mitigate graffiti that addresses prevention, abatements, and educational measures.	Y	This is already being done. DPW works with Planning, Public Information and Engagement, Venture Richmond, RPD and Code Enforcement. We plan to schedule regular meetings with representatives from the various areas to discuss abatement and prevention initiatives.
	TITLE OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON		TARGET DATE
	Program & Operations Manager		31-Mar-23
	IF IN PROGRESS, EXPLAIN ANY DELAYS		IF IMPLEMENTED, DETAILS OF IMPLEMENTATION
#	RECOMMENDATION	CONCUR Y/N	ACTION STEPS
6	We recommend the Department of Public Works Deputy Director formally document and implement performance measures to assist in the: a. Timeliness of graffiti abatement; b. Tracking and documenting of the process and expectations throughout the department and; c. Evaluation of employee performance.	Y	Graffiti is in the process of being fully intergrated into Cityworks. This will allow the supervisor to create work orders that track timeliness, documentation and work performance. This intergration is dependent on the Cityworks upgrade in progress.
	TITLE OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON		TARGET DATE
	Program & Operations Manager		1-Jul-23
	IF IN PROGRESS, EXPLAIN ANY DELAYS		IF IMPLEMENTED, DETAILS OF IMPLEMENTATION
	City Works upgrade is in progress estimated completion 2023		
#	RECOMMENDATION	CONCUR Y/N	ACTION STEPS
7	We recommend the Department of Public Works Deputy Director establish Cityworks as the central system of record for Graffiti and ensure all completed abatement jobs are documented in Cityworks.	Y	see below
	TITLE OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON		TARGET DATE
	Deputy Director Of Operations		1-Jul-23
	IF IN PROGRESS, EXPLAIN ANY DELAYS		IF IMPLEMENTED, DETAILS OF IMPLEMENTATION
	No delays		Cityworks is currently the central repository for all request and work orders. When CW is updated we will start to track labor and materials through the system.

APPENDIX B: MANAGEMENT RESPONSE FORM**2023-03 DPW Graffiti Removal Audit**

#	RECOMMENDATION	CONCUR Y/N	ACTION STEPS
8	We recommend the Department of Public Works Deputy Director implement the process to ensure all RVA311 cases are transferred to Cityworks.	Y	All 311 request are automatically populated into CW as service request.
	TITLE OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON		TARGET DATE
	Deputy Director Of Operations		1-Jul-23
	IF IN PROGRESS, EXPLAIN ANY DELAYS		IF IMPLEMENTED, DETAILS OF IMPLEMENTATION