



Preventing Graffiti in Austin

This proposal would:

- Direct the City Manager to review the city’s current graffiti abatement strategies, study nationwide best practices, and recommend changes to the city’s graffiti abatement strategies.

Graffiti vandalism affects Austin residents’ quality of life.

- Last year, the City of Austin received more than 6,500 requests to remove graffiti vandalism.¹
- The presence and visibility of graffiti can send the signal of blight, which can attract other forms of crime and impact quality of life in Austin’s communities.
- According to a U.S. Department of Justice publication, “graffiti contributes to lost revenue associated with reduced ridership on transit systems, reduced retail sales, and declines in property value.”²

Austin does not currently have a comprehensive strategy to deter, prevent, and remove graffiti.

- Austin currently operates a number of graffiti abatement programs to remove graffiti from public and private property. The Austin Youth Development (AYD) program in the Health and Human Services Department is the main program, handling over 80 percent of all reported abatement requests.¹
- These programs focus on graffiti removal. While this is important, other major cities use comprehensive strategies that coordinate anti-graffiti efforts among different city programs, including mural arts programs.
- Investment in the AYD graffiti program has not kept pace with the city’s growth. The city has funded it at the same level for at least a decade, while Austin’s population grew by almost 30 percent over that time.³

This proposal could help the City of Austin develop a comprehensive graffiti abatement strategy based on nationwide best practices and maintain quality of life in our communities.

**Table 1. Graffiti Service Requests
AYD Graffiti Abatement, 2015**

District	Requests
1	678
2	431
3	1,081
4	452
5	477
6	97
7	361
8	106
9	1,319
10	218
N/A	65
Total	5,285

Source: “Graffiti Abatement,” Austin Open Data Portal

**Table 2. City of Austin
Graffiti Abatement Programs, 2015**

Program	Requests
Austin Youth Development (HHS)	5,285
Municipal Court	1,171
Parks & Recreation*	97
Total	6,553

Source: Austin Budget Questions #34 & #35, FY 2017.

Notes:

* Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) staff only perform small graffiti abatement requests. A vendor handles larger requests through a contract with Building Services, which charges PARD for the payments.

* Graffiti abatement requests on highway signs are sent to the Texas Department of Transportation and those on street signs are sent to Public Works.

¹ Austin Budget Questions #34 & #35, FY 2017.

² Deborah Lamm Weisel, “Graffiti,” U.S. Department of Justice Community Oriented Policies Services (2009).

³ Austin Budget Question #36, FY 2017.