

Graffiti Removal Tips for Property Owners

The best way to stop the spread of graffiti is to remove it as soon as it appears. That is why Vancouver's by-law requires property owners to remove unauthorized graffiti within 10 days of receiving a City notice. Graffiti that remains after receiving a notice may be removed at the property owner's expense.

The City has many resources available to help remove and prevent graffiti.

Tips for managing and removing graffiti

Most graffiti is untargeted in the form of advertising and tagging. Tags are stylized signatures written repeatedly to promote the writer's alias and obtain notoriety. Here are some tips to manage them:

- Remove graffiti quickly. The faster it is removed, the less desirable your property becomes to effectively display it
- Move vehicles, dumpsters and other items away from walls and cover pipes to prevent access to the roof or upper levels of a building
- Install motion detector lights
- Apply a protective coating on your walls, which facilitates graffiti removal and preserves the original wall surface.
- Keep your property tidy. Litter, broken fences and overgrown shrubs suggests the property is not frequently maintained
- Create a mural on a persistently hit wall
- Consider hiring a professional graffiti removal contractor to do regular or one-time cleaning
- Join a Neighborhood Cleanup Party and ask for support in cleaning graffiti. Learn more at vancouver.ca/cleanup

Heritage buildings

For designated heritage properties, cleaning treatments or protective coatings must not erode or alter the appearance of the surface. Previously painted surfaces can simply be repainted.

Help Removing and Preventing Graffiti

Free Paint Program

Thanks to a partnership with Dulux Paints, Vancouver property owners can receive free paint for graffiti removal (twice per calendar year). To get your free paint:

Step 1: Phone 3-1-1 with your name, address and phone number or email address.
OR Fill out an online form at vancouver.ca/freepaint. You will be provided with a case number.

Step 2: Visit a Dulux Paints store with your ID and case number. Paint matching is available, and you can bring in a sample to the paint store.

- 2630 Main Street
- 1920 Kingsway
- 1609 Boundary Road

Report Graffiti

Property enforcement and graffiti removal – phone 3-1-1, use the VanConnect phone app, or visit vancouver.ca/graffiti

Victim of graffiti – file a police report by calling 604-717-3321 non-emergency OR online at vancouver.ca/police

Vandalism in progress – call 9-1-1

Mural Program

Murals can be effective at abating graffiti. The City supports artists, property owners and community groups to create murals for stewardship and public realm enhancement. Learn more at vancouver.ca/murals

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Phone: 3-1-1
Visit: vancouver.ca/graffiti

Frequently Asked Questions Graffiti FAQ

What is graffiti?

In the Graffiti By-law, graffiti is defined as “one or more letters, symbols or marks, howsoever made, on any structure or thing” placed without the property owner or tenant’s prior, written authorization.

Unauthorized graffiti is a concern for many communities as it can lower perception of safety, is associated with urban decay, and incurs significant resident and City resources to remove it.

Why do people do graffiti?

There are many forms of graffiti. Below are the two most common:

Tags – Most commonly associated with graffiti. Tags are stylized signatures written repeatedly to promote the writer’s alias and obtain notoriety. People who write tags do not often target specific residents or property owners, instead they are motivated to tag in visible and hard to reach areas.

Advertising – Unauthorized posters, stickers, decals and chalk ads are also considered graffiti as they create visual noise, litter and incur costs to remove them. The City has designated poster cylinders, advertising boards in civic spaces, and various programs for businesses to display signs.

Is graffiti a sign of gang-related activity?

It is estimated that less than 1% of all graffiti in Vancouver are associated with gangs.

Why is it so important to remove graffiti as soon as possible?

Graffiti attracts more graffiti. Properties that ignore unauthorized graffiti for long periods of time are desirable locations for people doing graffiti. It will expand to adjacent properties and to the area if not dealt quickly.

Graffiti may still re-occur after several removals. Be persistent and send a message that it is being managed in your area.

Who is responsible for managing graffiti?

The City of Vancouver is responsible for removing graffiti from public property such as City buildings, light poles, signs, and other public amenities.

Companies such as BC Hydro, Telus, Translink, Canada Post, and newspaper publishers are responsible for removing graffiti on their furniture and utilities.

Private property owners and tenants are responsible for removing graffiti off their property. The City offers services to support graffiti removal:
vancouver.ca/graffiti

Residents can take part by reporting graffiti, participating in neighbourhood clean-up parties, and even organizing the creation of murals on frequently hit walls.

We all have a collective responsibility to manage graffiti and being stewards in our neighbourhoods.

What about artwork?

Graffiti also describes a sub-culture of writing and many have included art into their practice, enjoyed by the broader community.

Artwork that has prior written authorization from the property owner or tenant is not affected by the Graffiti By-law. Instead artwork is guided by public art policies.

Artists painting murals can receive City support and display their work by applying to the Mural Support Program: vancouver.ca/murals

I have a mural on my property that has been vandalized. What should I do?

Tenants and property owners are eligible to receive assistance in repairing the mural through the Mural Support program: vancouver.ca/murals

Most murals supported through the program have a protective sacrificial coating. We encourage contacting us prior to painting over a mural. We can identify if it has a coating and the possible options for repair.